



Mental health, resilience and inequalities: some reflections on current debates

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Summary

A just society is one that is aware that it is not yet sufficiently just, that is haunted by this awareness and thereby spurred into action

Zygmunt Bauman

- *Crazy like us; happy like us*: diagnosis and its discontents
- *The true causes of things*: mental health as a determinant
- *I am, because we are*: relationships and the core economy
- *Mind the gap*: mental health and inequalities
- *What can we do*: priorities for action?
 - Resources – *equitable access to valued assets*
 - Relationships – *social solutions/social outcomes*
 - Meaning – *valued roles/occupations/contribution*

*Respectful
responses to
misfortune*

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,

Some momentary awareness comes

As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all.

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,

Who violently sweep your house

Empty of its furniture.

Still treat each guest honourably.

He may be clearing you out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,

Meet them at the door laughing,

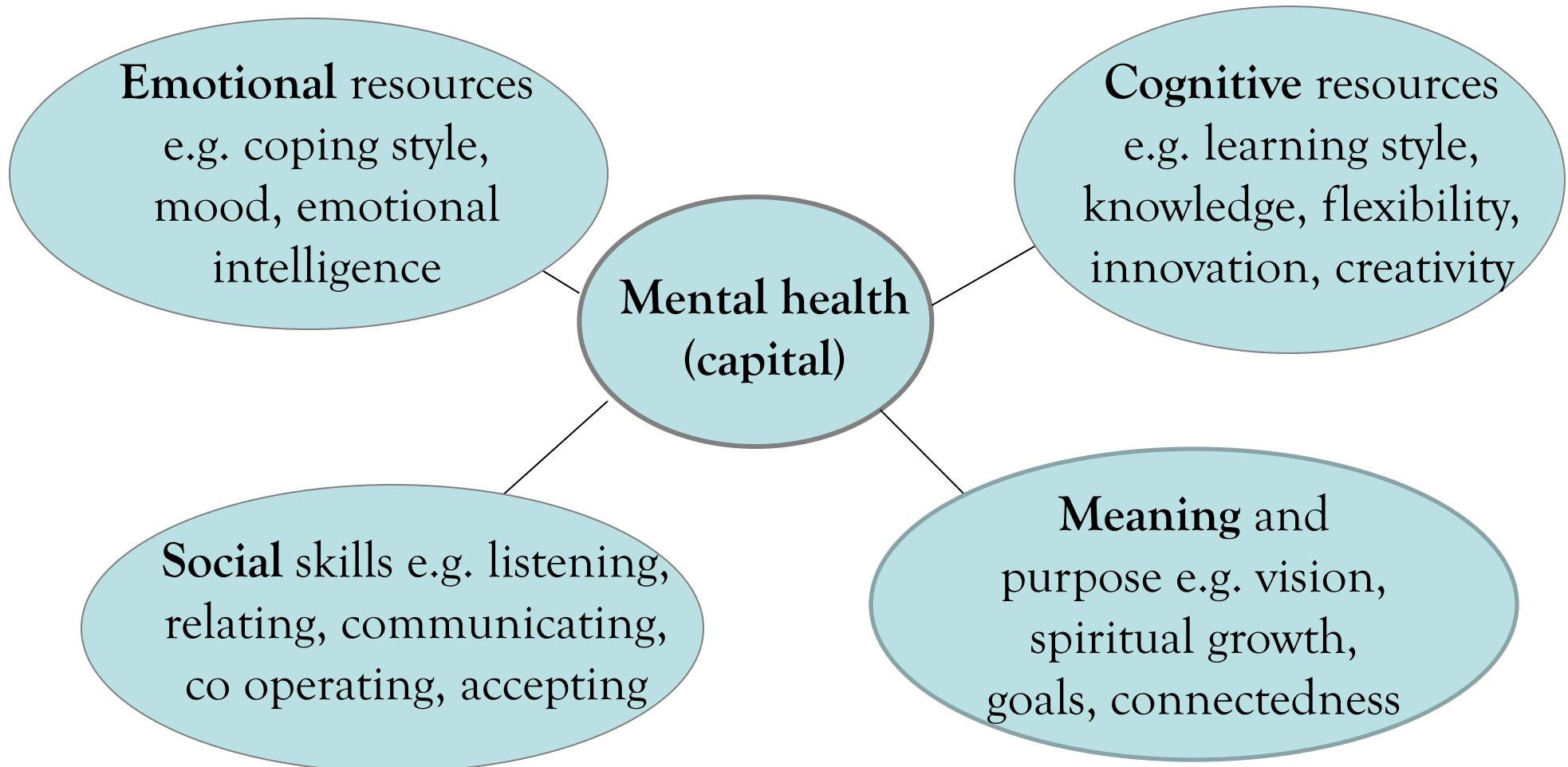
And invite them in.

(Jelaluddin Rumi, 1207-73)



Dimensions of mental health

*If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
And if I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?*



Mental health as a determinant?



Can mental health help to explain outcomes that cannot be wholly accounted for by other factors?

- Contribution mental health and mental illness make to wide range of outcomes
- The ‘unexplained excess’ – classical risk factors do not account for level of variation in outcomes
- Presence as well as absence...
- Key element of resilience

(Friedli 2009)

Outcomes associated with positive mental health



A worthwhile goal in itself and leads to better outcomes:

- reduces prevalence of mental illness
- physical health: mortality/morbidity
- health behaviour
- employability, productivity, earnings
- educational performance
- crime / violence reduction
- pro-social behaviour/social integration/relationships
- quality of life

Resilience, health assets and capabilities



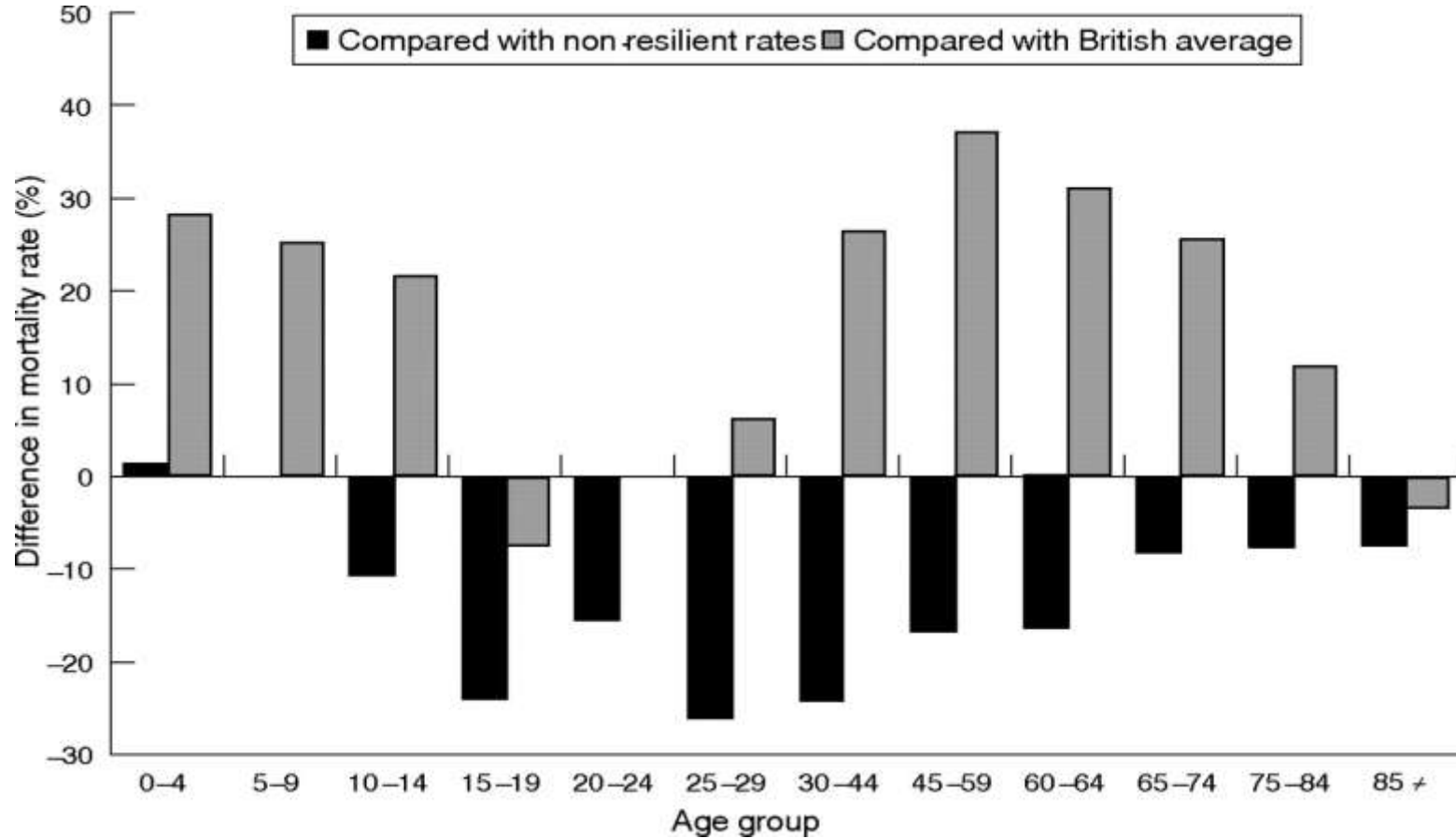
Towards an Index of Multiple Assets...

- Resilient places
- Resilient communities
- Resilient individuals

“extent to which communities are able to exercise informal social controls or come together to tackle common problems”

“mostly about the quality of human relationships”

Figure 3 Comparison between mortality in resilient and non-resilient constituencies, and between resilient constituencies and the British average (1996-2001).



Tunstall, H. et al. *J Epidemiol Community Health* 2007;61:337-343




Untangling the determinants



*I do worry about this emphasis on individual psychology;
You can't separate thoughts, feelings, self esteem, motivation from
the material circumstances of people's lives. Is it great to be positive?
Maybe people are right to be pissed off."*

Positive steps interviews

- Individual skills and attributes
- Social relationships, support and networks
- Material resources
- Inequalities in *distribution* of resources



“...the Greeks and Romans lived, I suppose, very comfortably though they had no linen. But in the present times, through the greater part of Europe, a **creditable day labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt**, the want of which would be supposed to denote that disgraceful degree of poverty which, it is presumed, nobody can fall into without extreme bad conduct. Custom in the same manner has rendered leather shoes a necessary of life in England. **The poorest creditable person of either sex would be ashamed to appear in public without them**”

(Adam Smith Wealth of Nations 1776 cited in Zaveleta 2008)



Mental wellbeing and rebuilding the *core* economy

“It gets so lonely around here that I phone myself seven or eight times a day, just to see how I am”

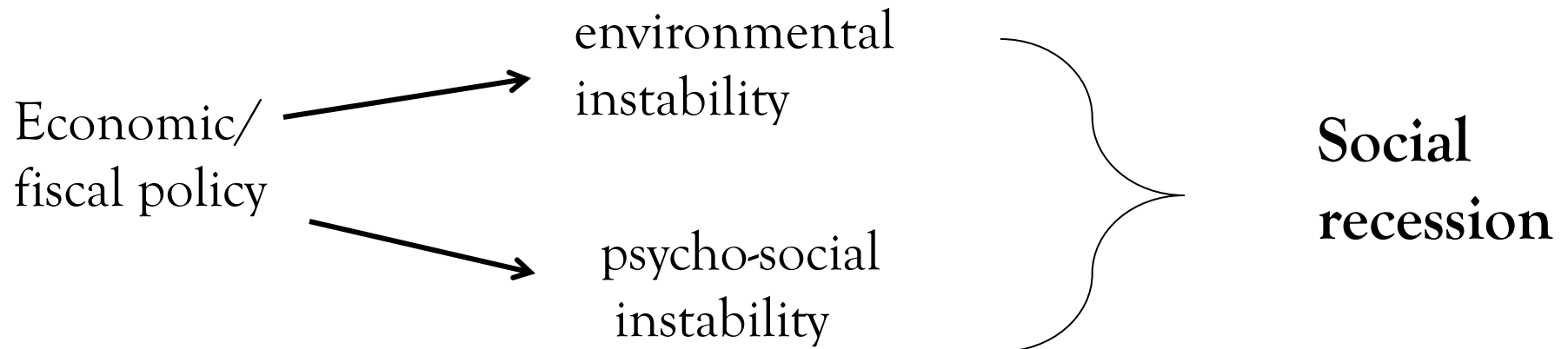
(Phantom Tolbooth)

Economic policy, sustainability and wellbeing



If “being poor” once derived its meaning from being unemployed, today it draws its meaning primarily from the plight of a flawed consumer.

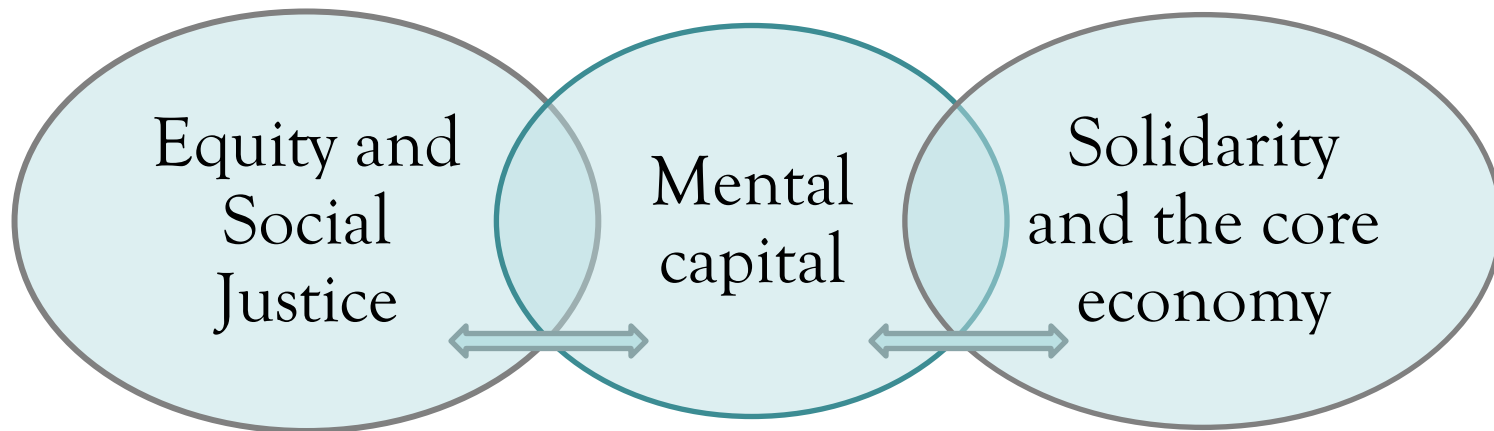
Zygmunt Bauman



Return to the social....

To value the contribution of those whom the market excludes or devalues and whose genuine work is not acknowledged or rewarded

Edgar Cahn

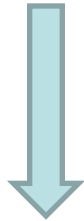


I am, because we are...

Untangling the politics of wellbeing

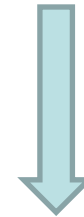


How things are done:
culture and values



well-being: critique
of **materialism**

How things are distributed:
economic/fiscal policy



inequalities: critique of
how material assets
are **distributed**



Mental health and inequalities

The importance of mental health is directly and indirectly related at every level to human responses to inequalities

Mental health and deprivation

Not 'every family in the land'

Findings from 9 large scale population based studies:

- Material and relative deprivation
- Childhood socio-economic position
- Low educational attainment
- Unemployment
- Environment: poor housing, poor resources, violence
- Adverse life events
- Poor support networks

(Melzer et al 2004; Rogers & Pilgrim 2003; Stansfeld et al 2008; APMS 2007)

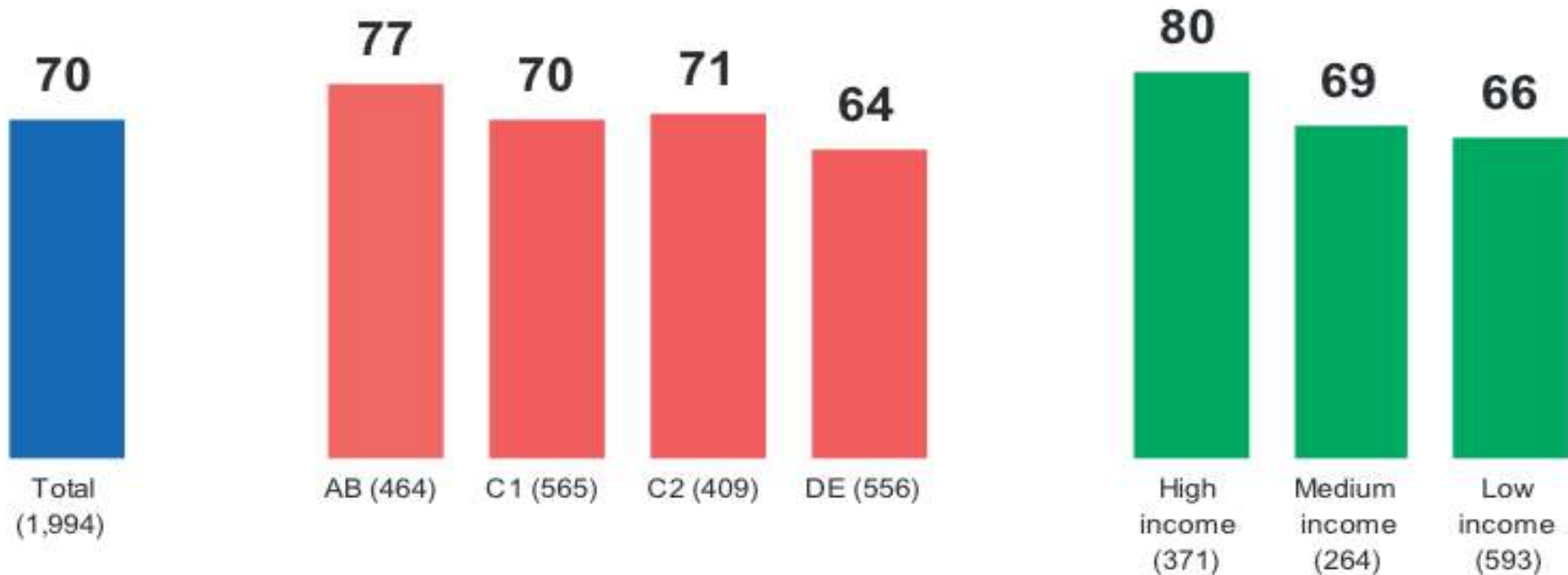
Cycle of invisible barriers:

- Poverty of hope, self-worth, aspirations

Optimism and social position

Agreement with statement: Over the next 5-10 years I expect to have many more positive than negative experiences.

% agreeing with statement

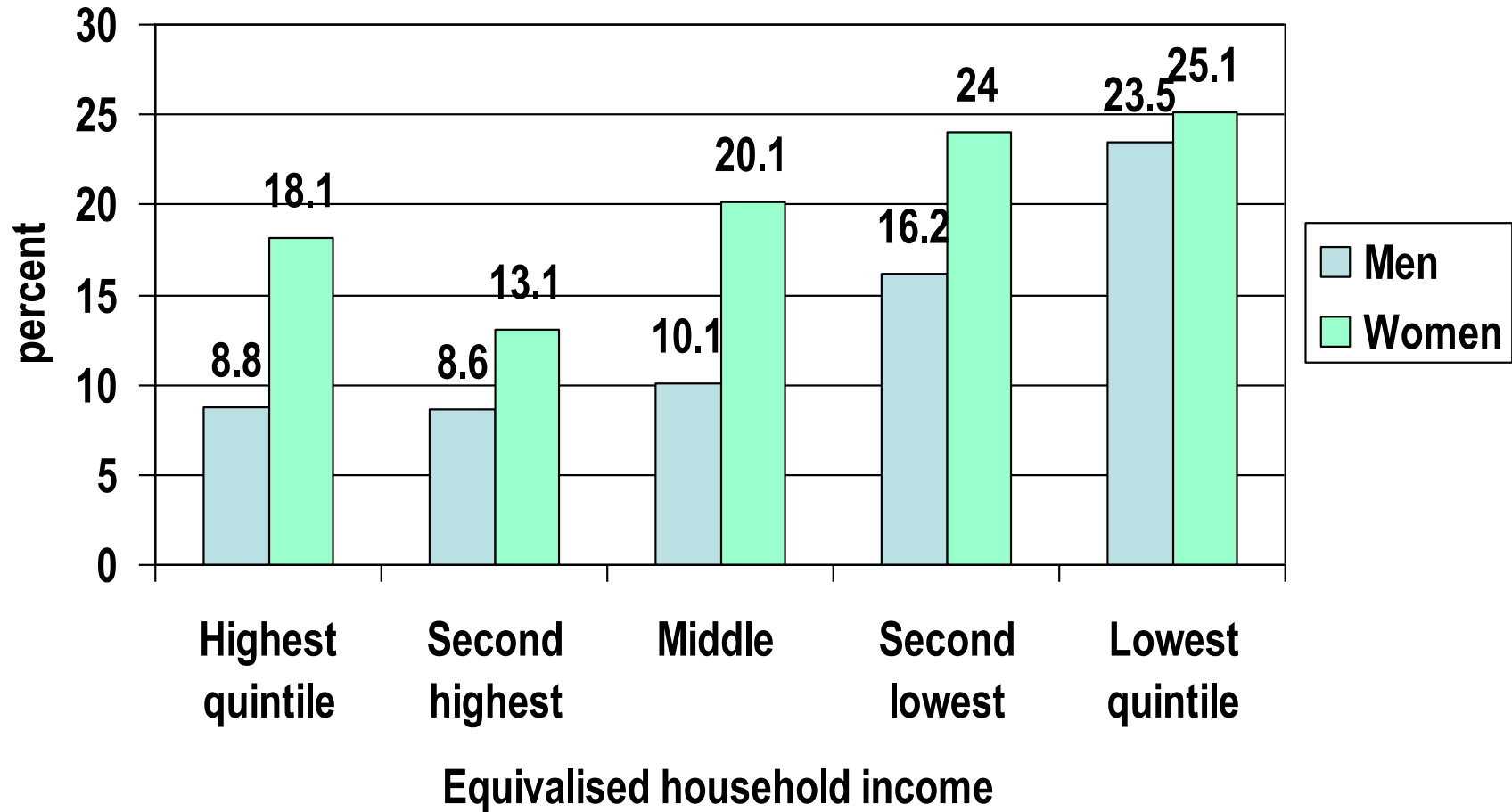


Base: British adults (base in bracket), 14-21 August 2008

Ipsos MORI

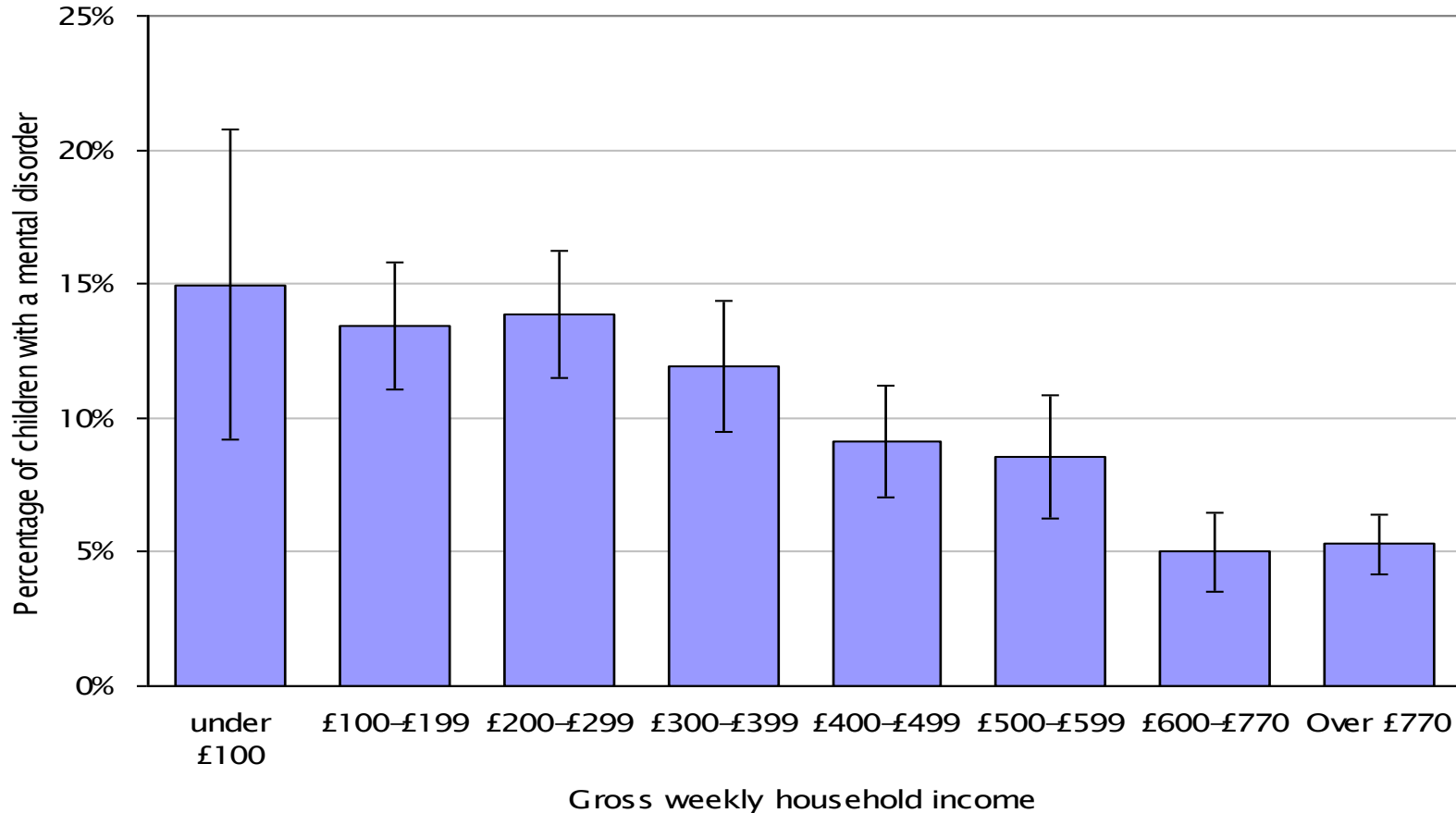


CMD, by household income and sex



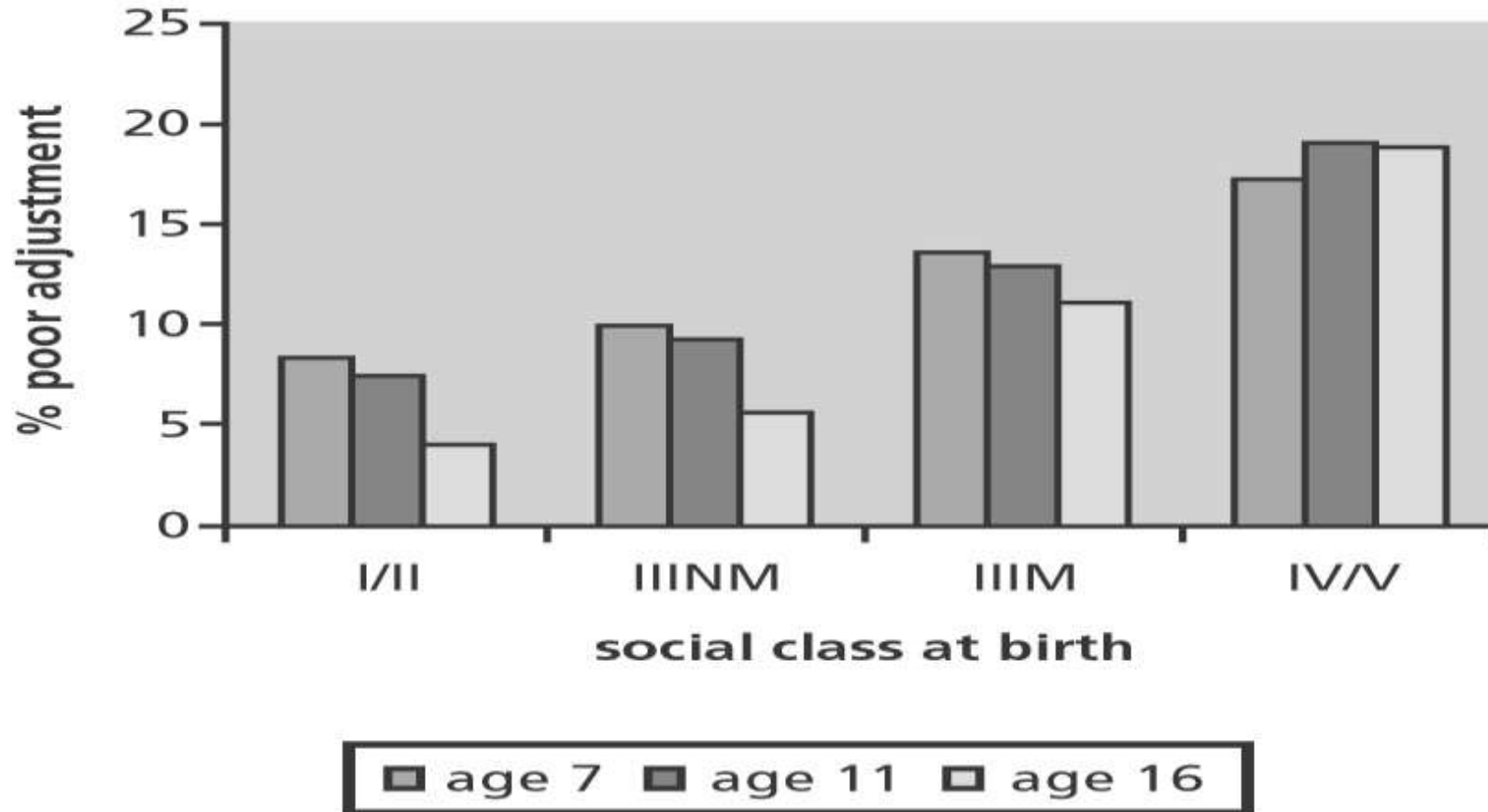
Source: APMS 2007, all adults, age-standardised

Mental health of children by parental income



Source: Meltzer et al 2000 *Mental health of children and adolescents in Great Britain*

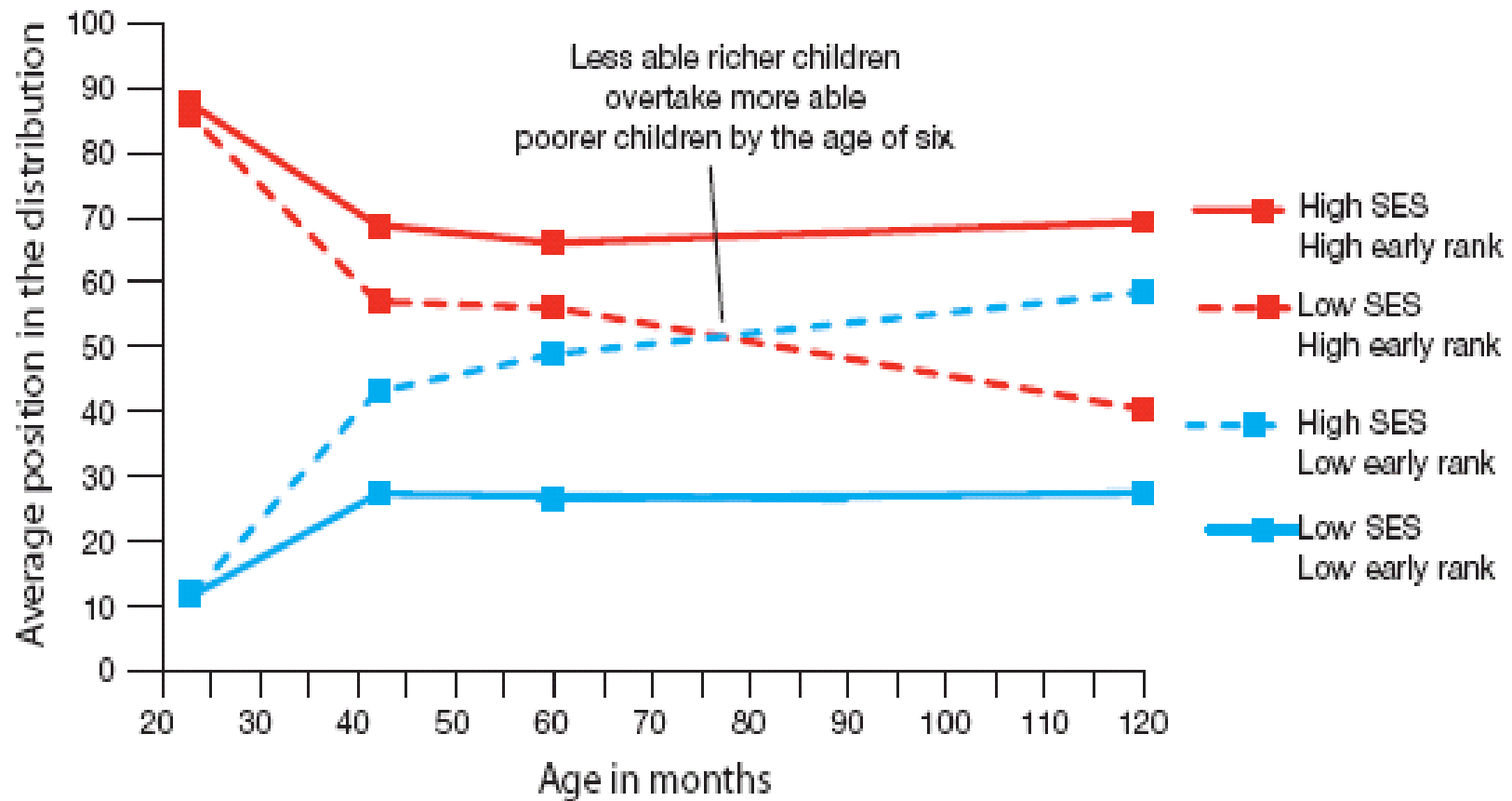
Rates of poor social/emotional adjustment



(Graham & Power 2004)



Figure 3.1: Progress in educational outcomes for very young children, by socio-economic status at birth³



Equalities Review 2007 Crown Copyright

Contribution of mental health to inequalities



Key domains: education/employment/behaviour /health/
consequences of illness /services

(Whitehead & Dahlgren 2006)

Mental health is a significant determinant in each case,
influencing:

- readiness for school/learning
- employability
- capacity, motivation and rationale for healthy behaviours
- risk for physical health (e.g. coronary heart disease),
- chronic disease outcomes (e.g. diabetes)
- relationship to health services, including uptake/treatment

What can we do?

Priorities for action



Tend to the social and the individual will flourish

Jonathan Rutherford

I have a deep conviction: we will not change our behaviour until we change our performance measures. And our behaviour absolutely must change.

President Nicolas Sarkozy

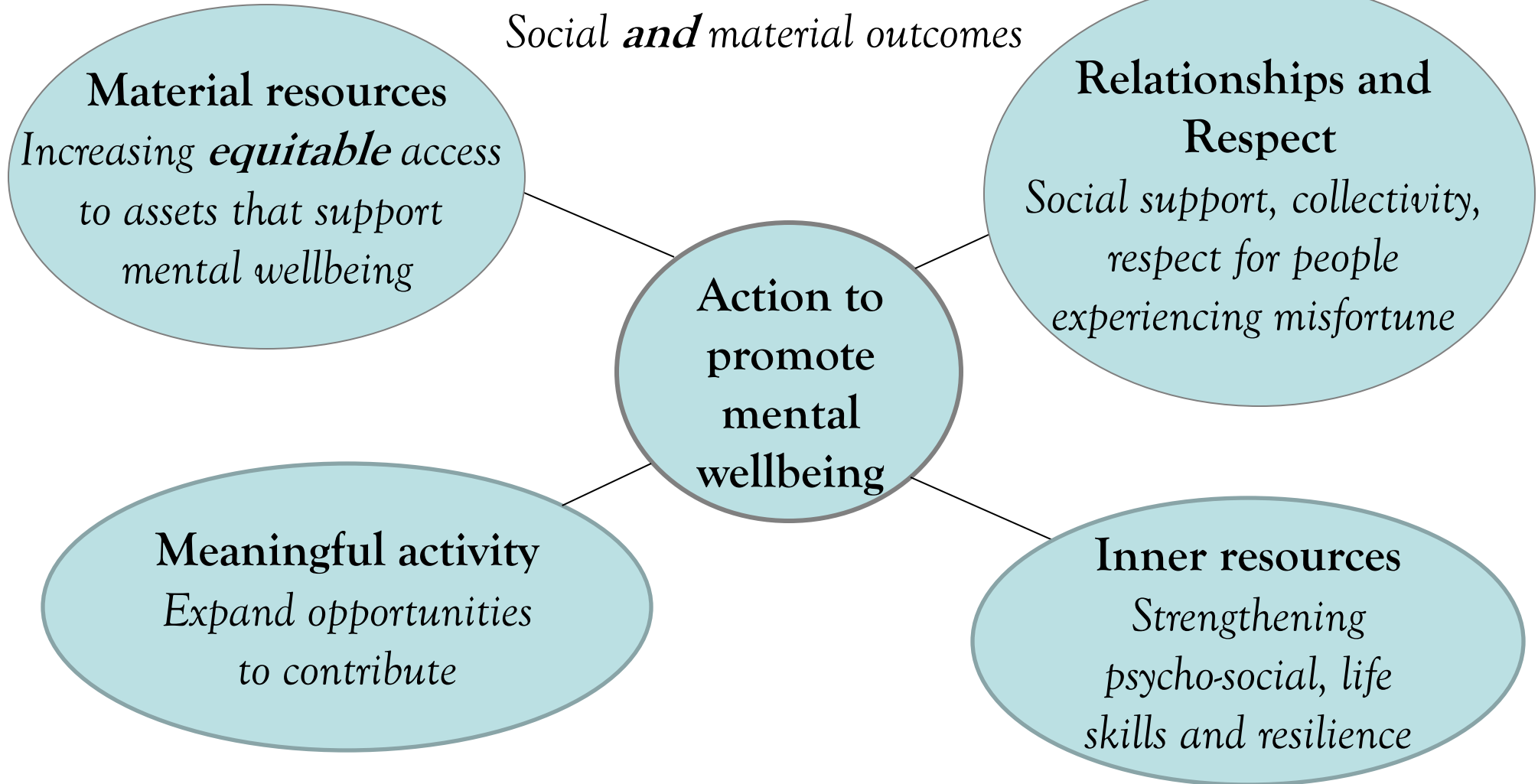
Social networks make change possible. Social networks are the very immune system of society.

Co production: a manifesto

Scope of public mental health



*Social **and** material outcomes*



Developing social *and* material solutions



- *Maximize Income*: debt; credit; social enterprise; asset transfer, benefits; pay; training; co production; online markets
- *Optimize Space*: green; blue; public; landshare
- *Expand opportunities to contribute*: time banks; volunteering, value those who contribute to core economy
- *Social Contact*: social prescribing; reduce barriers – think ‘social impact’ (bureaucracy, MVT, street level incivilities; transport)
- *Imagination*: arts, culture and creativity
- *Think children*: parenting support; play; contact with nature
- *Life long learning*: HLE; literacy, basic skills, apprenticeships

(the ecology of) Relationships matter



We do not have to be a Gandhi, or a Martin Luther King, or a Nelson Mandela or a Desmond Tutu or an Aung San Suu Kyi, to recognise that we can have aims or priorities that differ from the single minded pursuit of our own well being only.

Amartya Sen

- Mental health is produced socially
- Quality of social relationships is key factor in resilience
- Social integration buffers effects of low SES
- Re-building the core economy: home, family, community, neighbourhood, civil society
- Social as well as individual solutions

Responding to the determinants of mental health and well-being



Resources, relationships, meaning, respect

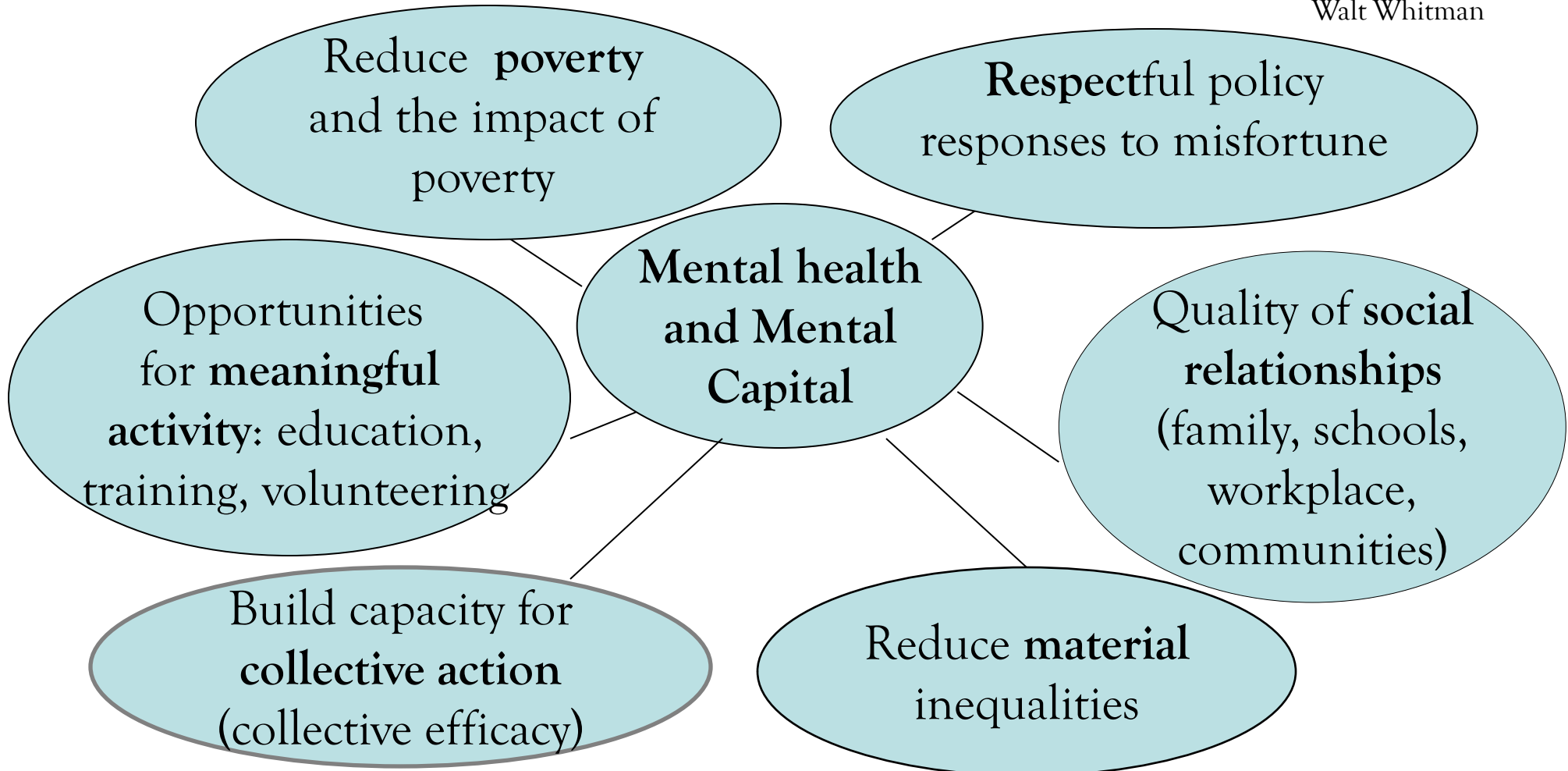
- Reduce economic inequalities i.e. *Mind the gap*
- Include social outcomes: *the quality of relationships matters*
- Strengthen opportunities for meaningful activity e.g. volunteering, community participation, timebanks
- Treat people experiencing problems with respect: *vulnerability and dependency are part of the human condition, not a mark of moral failure*

A (wider) framework for effective action

And what I shall endure, you shall endure

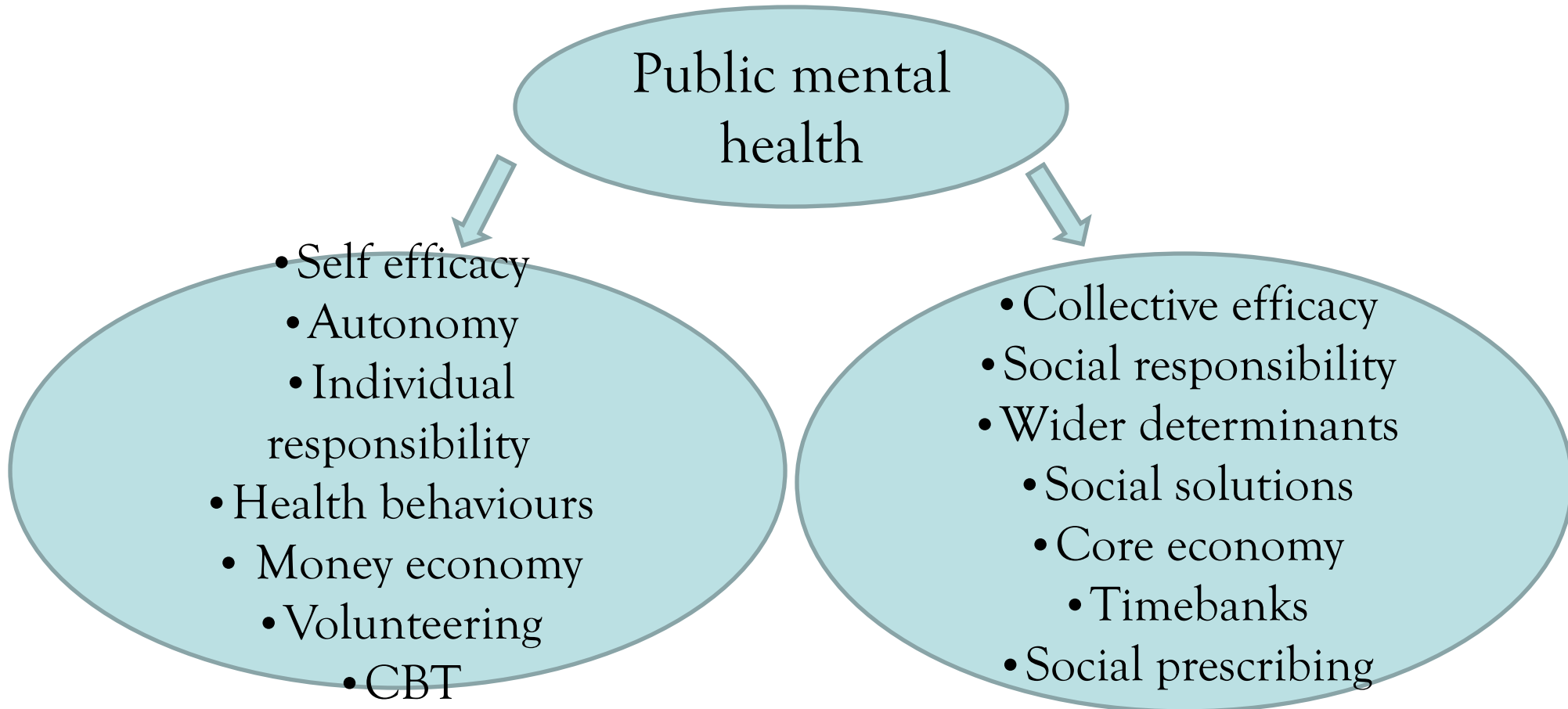
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.....

Walt Whitman



Promoting mental health: two routes

A disembodied psychology which separates 'what goes on inside people's heads' from social structure and context Critical Psychology Forum



*'To value the contribution of those whom the market excludes or devalues
and whose genuine work is not acknowledged or rewarded'*

Edgar Cahn



Landshare:

3620 Landowners; 28452 Growers; 4335 Helpers

<http://landshare.channel4.com/>



<http://www.capitalgrowth.org/home/>



What if?



[http://www.what-if.info/SIT IN part1.html](http://www.what-if.info/SIT_IN_part1.html)

