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Children Selectively Amend Structural Inequalities

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Structural inequalities refer to systems that have historically privileged (and continue to privilege) some groups over others. We explored children's propensity to amend structural inequalities in a resource reallocation task in the context of preexisting inequalities. In a preregistered experiment, U.S. children ($N = 120$; 60 girls, 60 boys; 59% White, 12% Asian, 5% Black, 4% Latine/Hispanic, 19% mixed race, and 1% identified as other) learned about two novel groups: one historically advantaged and the other historically disadvantaged. Children sequentially saw eight resources spanning four categories—*Basic Goods*: food and homes; *Public Goods*: schools and hospitals; *Luxury Goods*: fancy clothes and expensive cars; and *Opportunity Goods*: best jobs and money to start a business. On each trial, children saw an unequal allocation of resources (e.g., homes) in an 8:2 ratio favoring the advantaged group. Children had free rein in redistributing resources. Children generally amended the structural inequality, with older children adopting an equal distribution and younger children moving an average of one item from the advantaged to disadvantaged group. Importantly, children's resource redistributions were selective: Reallocations of Luxury Goods were more likely to continue to favor the advantaged group, while children preferred equality in their reallocations of Basic Goods. For Public Goods and Opportunity Goods, children were as likely to favor the advantaged group as they were to favor equality. Finally, parents' political beliefs predicted younger (but not older) children's reallocation strategies. These findings highlight an emerging capacity to reason about and selectively amend structural inequalities.

Public Significance Statement

Structural inequalities are pervasive and take on many forms, advantaging some groups over others. In a resource redistribution task in which there is a preexisting inequality in resources between groups, the present study finds that children in general tend to amend the inequality, yet they shift from favoring historically advantaged groups to favoring equality. Notably, children selectively amended structural inequalities based on the type of resource involved. We also find that parents' political ideologies influenced their children's propensity to amend structural inequalities.


Keywords: structural inequality, resource redistributions, resource type, development

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Structural inequalities refer to systems and institutions that have historically and systematically privileged some groups over other groups. Structural inequalities hinge on the historical disenfranchisement of a social group (e.g., slavery; Curtis & O'Connell, 2017; Payne et al., 2019; Shanks, 2017) and typically refer to macrolevel systems (e.g., education, housing, laws; England, 1993; Homan et al., 2021). These systems can operate independently of

individuals. For example, racism at a structural level (i.e., structural racism, in contrast to individual racism) may lead certain racial minority groups to experience inequality even when individual racism is not present (Gee & Ford, 2011; Roberts & Rizzo, 2021; Rucker & Richeson, 2021). From housing (Gerken et al., 2023; Nardone et al., 2020; Swope et al., 2022) and health care (Adler & Ostrove, 1999; McMaughan et al., 2020; Ohlson, 2020) to education

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The data and code that support the findings of this study are available on the Open Science Framework at <https://osf.io/h25t8>. This experiment was preregistered on AsPredicted (<https://aspredicted.org/b5gr-sszg.pdf>).

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(Meier, 2004; Murnane & Reardon, 2018; Noguera, 2003) and access to wealth (Ager & Szafarz, 2013; Asiedu et al., 2012; Mijid & Bernasek, 2013; Quillian, 2016), structural inequalities are embedded into the social fabric of a nation. With increasing recognition of the insidious and pervasive ways in which structures serve to perpetuate inequalities between social groups, the present research examines the developmental antecedents involved in people's reasoning about different manifestations of structural inequalities. Specifically, we examine children's redistribution of resources in the context of pre-existing inequalities, with a focus on whether they would exacerbate, maintain, or amend¹ different kinds of structural inequalities across development.

Recent research highlights children's cognitive capacity to understand structural constraints. Despite a proclivity to use inherent explanations for people's behaviors (Cimpian & Salomon, 2014; Gelman & Roberts, 2017; Xu et al., 2023), when provided with structural framing, children as young as 3 were able to identify structural constraints to explain differences between groups (Amemiya & Bian, 2024; Peretz-Lange et al., 2021; Vasilyeva et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2022). Scholars have also probed children's evaluations of structural inequalities, finding that children generally endorse equality. Regarding gender-based inequities, 3- to 8-year-olds believed it was unfair for an arbiter to allocate prizes on the basis of gender, as opposed to on the basis of merit (Rizzo et al., 2020; Rizzo & Killen, 2020), and 4- to 9-year-old children in both the United States and Peru corrected gender-based pay inequalities (Corbit et al., 2021). Regarding race-based inequities, both younger (i.e., 5- to 6-year-olds) and older (10- to 11-year-olds) children rectified an unequal allocation of school supplies, with younger children being especially sensitive to their own racial ingroup receiving fewer supplies (Elenbaas et al., 2016). In another study, 4- to 11-year-olds were more likely to rectify an unequal allocation of cookies between White and Black targets than they were to rectify an unequal allocation of cookies between White and Asian targets, demonstrating children's sensitivity to equality but also inchoate attention to whom the inequality is harming (Olson et al., 2011). These findings highlight children's sensitivity in understanding and addressing group-based inequalities at an early age.

Yet, open questions concern children's approach to (a) different forms of structural inequalities and (b) redistributing resources (as opposed to allocating new resources). First, given that structural inequalities manifest in diverse ways across different types of resources (e.g., housing, health care, education), understanding how children approach various forms of structural inequalities is an important question. By age 3, children differentiate between resource types. For example, the more valuable a resource is, the less likely children are to waste it (Choshen-Hillel et al., 2020). Children also make allocation decisions based on whether resources are described as necessary goods (e.g., "things that the Mug and Wump need") or luxury goods (e.g., "things that the Mug and Wump like"; Chernyak & Sobel, 2016; Essler et al., 2020; Meidenbauer et al., 2018; Rizzo et al., 2016). For example, preschoolers value equity more strongly when allocating necessary resources than luxury resources (Essler et al., 2020). Children may similarly show selectivity in the kinds of resources for which they would amend structural inequalities. Previous research has primarily constrained the landscape of resources to novel items that are described in child-friendly terms as luxury or necessary goods (as in the example above). This raises interesting questions about how children think about real-world resources (e.g.,

necessary goods such as food and homes), as well as a broader range of resources. We introduce additional resource categories that are especially pertinent to structural inequalities: Public Goods such as education and health care resources (An et al., 2018; Banerjee & Somanathan, 2007; Saich, 2008) and Opportunity Goods such as jobs and loans that help build wealth and status (Contreras et al., 2019; Ioannides & Loury, 2004; Lin et al., 1981; Price, 2004; Squires, 2008).

Second, the present study presents children with preexisting unequal allocations of resources between two novel groups and examines their *redistributive* strategies across development. Whereas much fairness research involves distributing new resources, certain inequalities such as structural inequalities necessitate unique considerations of how to redistribute resources with preexisting allocations. The embedded status quo allows us to better understand situations in which two groups already have unequal resource privileges. This parallels real-world challenges, such as calls for reparations and the rectification of systemic advantages, where achieving greater equity often hinges on redistributing resources from one group to another. In contrast to an early tendency to embrace fairness when allocating new resources (Blake et al., 2015; Olson & Spelke, 2008; Schmidt & Sommerville, 2011; Shaw & Olson, 2012; Sloane et al., 2012), young children may find preexisting structural inequalities acceptable and justifiable (Hussak & Cimpian, 2015; Schmidt et al., 2016), particularly in cases where the advantaged group emerged victorious in a conflict. Based on this reasoning, children may transition from maintaining preexisting inequalities to amending them to achieve equality in their redistribution of resources.

The Present Study

In a preregistered study, we examined whether 5- to 10-year-olds would exacerbate, maintain, or amend different kinds of structural inequalities in a resource reallocation task involving preexisting inequalities. Children sequentially saw resources that were unequally allocated between a historically advantaged and a historically disadvantaged group, with free rein in redistributing resources. We had two main predictions: First, older children would be more likely to amend structural inequalities compared to younger children. Second, children's reallocation strategies would vary based on the type of resource being considered. We also explored whether environmental factors, such as parents' political beliefs, predicted children's reallocations (see Fraley et al., 2012; Leshin et al., 2022, on the influence of parents' political ideology on children). These findings provide insight into the early emergence and subsequent development of children's thinking about, and participation in, addressing structural inequalities.

Method

Participants

We recruited 120 U.S. children between 5 and 10 years old (60 girls, 60 boys, $M_{\text{age}} = 95$ months, $SD = 21$ months) based on an a priori power analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) assuming a

¹ We use the term "exacerbate" to denote situations in which inequalities are made worse, the term "maintain" to denote situations in which existing inequalities are upheld, and the term "amend" to denote situations in which inequalities are reduced.

medium effect size (Cohen's $f = 0.25$) and at least 90% power. The participant sample was 59% White (not of Hispanic origin), 12% Asian, 5% Black, 4% Latine/Hispanic, 19% mixed race, and 1% identified as other (provided by 94% of parents). Socioeconomic information was provided for 79% of parents, of whom 12% came from families earning less than \$50,000, 15% came from families earning between \$50,000 and \$74,999, 16% came from families earning between 75,000 and 99,999, 25% came from families earning between 100,000 and 124,999, and 33% came from families earning over \$120,000. Parents reported their political beliefs on a 7-point scale from "Extremely liberal" to "Extremely conservative," with the middle-point "Moderate, Middle of the road." This information was provided by 82% of families; among those, 34% were liberal, 34% were conservative, 23% were moderate, 6% said they "haven't thought much about it," and 3% preferred not to answer. Families were compensated with a \$5 gift card.

Procedure

Children completed the study on Zoom. They first participated in three randomized practice trials to familiarize themselves with the dependent measure. On two trials, children matched (based on color) food on one side of the screen to plates on the other side of the screen, moving food from left to right and from right to left. These trials were intended to familiarize children with directing the experimenter to move items and to end the trial at their own discretion by saying "done." In the third practice trial, children were prompted to say "done" without moving any food, demonstrating to children that they could end a trial without moving items.

Next, participants heard a story about two novel groups of people, the Blues and the Yellows, who lived together on an island. Participants learned that the Blues were historically advantaged and that the Yellows were historically disadvantaged, an inequality that persists today (see Leshin & Rhodes, 2023, for supporting evidence that depicting high-status groups as creators of the unequal structures promotes an understanding of structural inequalities):

These are two groups of people, the Blues and the Yellows. They live together on this island. The Blues and the Yellows are not treated equally. The Blues usually get all the good things on the island, like the best jobs and the best schools, but the Yellows don't. Why? Well, a long time ago, the Blues won a war and made themselves the leaders of the island. Because they were the leaders they got more of the resources and they made rules that kept them in charge and got them the best stuff. Even today the Blues still get more things than the Yellows.

Participants next completed a manipulation check to confirm their understanding of which group was advantaged and disadvantaged. Whether the Blue group was advantaged or disadvantaged and

whether they were presented on the left or right side of the screen were counterbalanced.

Participants sequentially saw eight randomized trials. On each trial, children saw a resource alongside a visual aid. Resources broadly spanned four categories—(a) *Basic Goods*: food and homes; (b) *Public Goods*: schools and hospitals; (c) *Luxury Goods*: fancy clothes and expensive cars; and (d) *Opportunity Goods*: best jobs and money to start a business (Table 1). Children saw 10 items of a given resource (e.g., 10 homes; Figure 1a), followed by an unequal allocation of this resource that favored the advantaged group in a ratio of 8:2 (e.g., eight homes to Blues and two homes to Yellows; Figure 1b). Children were asked what they think should happen (i.e., "What do you think should happen? Do you want to move homes from the Blues to the Yellows, from the Yellows to the Blues, or keep things the way they are?"). We used the nomenclature "should" as past work suggests that children understand "should" as normative by age 3 (Christner & Paulus, 2022; Rakoczy et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2013). If children decided to keep things as they were, they proceeded to the next trial. Otherwise, the experimenter sequentially moved items in the direction of children's choice (e.g., moving items one at a time from the Blues to the Yellows), asking children "do you want to move another one or are you all done?" The trial ended once a child responded that they were done (see Figure 1c for an example of children's final allocation). At the end of the experiment, participants responded to a second manipulation check to confirm their understanding of the preexisting inequality between the two groups. Ninety-five percent of children passed both manipulation checks. One participant responded incorrectly the first time (and was corrected by the experimenter) and responded correctly the second time. Due to an experimental error, five participants were not prompted to answer the first manipulation check, though all five children responded to the second manipulation check correctly.

Our key dependent measure captures children's propensity to exacerbate, maintain, or amend the preexisting structural inequality, focusing on the relative difference in allocations between the advantaged and disadvantaged groups. The advantaged group initially possessed six more items than the disadvantaged group; thus, reallocations that produced a larger gap between the two groups were categorized as "exacerbate the inequality," reallocations that maintained the six-item difference were categorized as "maintain the inequality," and reallocations that reduced the difference were categorized as "amend the inequality." There are multiple pathways by which children may develop a preference to exacerbate the inequality (e.g., believing the advantaged group deserves more privileges because of "winning the war"), maintain the inequality (e.g., resistance to change and an aversion to taking away resources), or amend the inequality (e.g., increased considerations of fairness). However, our primary measure is centered on the *outcomes* of children's decisions

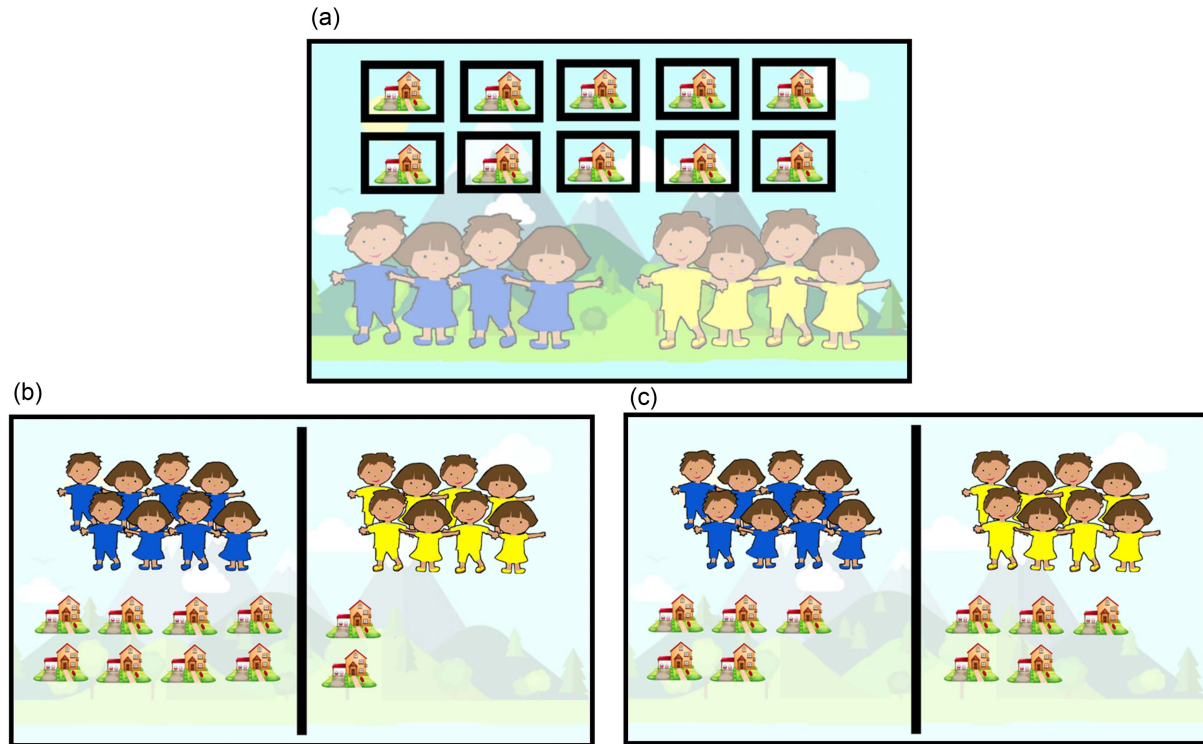
Table 1

Full Description of Resources

Basic goods	Public services	Luxury goods	Opportunities
Food: These are 10 plates of food. Homes: These are 10 homes.	Schools: These are 10 schools. Hospitals: These are 10 hospitals.	Fancy clothes: These are 10 fancy clothes. Expensive cars: These are 10 expensive cars.	Best jobs: These are 10 of the best jobs in town. Money to start a business: These are 10 bags of money to start a business.

Figure 1

Example Trial Depicting 10 Items (a), an Initial Unequal Allocation of the Items (b), and a Given Child's Final Allocation of the Items (c)



Note. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

(i.e., whether or not they preserve the preexisting inequality), rather than the *intentions* that ultimately dictate these outcomes. By focusing on outcomes, we gain a clearer understanding of the practical implications of children's choices in real-world scenarios. We return to speculate on potential intentions in the General Discussion section.

The data and code supporting these findings are available on the Open Science Framework at <https://osf.io/h25t8>.

Transparency and openness

The data and code that support the findings of this study are available on the Open Science Framework at <https://osf.io/h25t8>. This experiment was preregistered on AsPredicted (<https://aspredicted.org/b5gr-sszg.pdf>).

Results

Overall Pattern

Children in general tended to amend the structural inequalities, $\chi^2(2) = 763.81, p < .001$; children amended the existing inequality 75% of the time, maintained the existing inequality 17% of the time, and exacerbated the existing inequality 8% of the time. For Basic Goods, children amended the existing inequality 83% of the time, maintained it 11%, and exacerbated it 7%. For Public Goods, children amended the existing inequality 75% of the time, maintained it 18%, and exacerbated it 7%. For Opportunity Goods, children amended the existing inequality 72% of the time, maintained it 18%,

and exacerbated it 10%. For Luxury Goods, children amended the existing inequality 69% of the time, maintained it 23%, and exacerbated it 8%.

Next, looking closer at children's reallocating strategies and the relative degree to which children favored each group, for each resource category (e.g., Basic Goods), we averaged children's difference scores (number of items for the advantaged group minus number of items for the disadvantaged group) across the two trials (e.g., homes, food). This score was used to categorize children as favoring the advantaged group over the disadvantaged group (the mean difference score was above 0), favoring the disadvantaged group over the advantaged group (the mean difference score was below 0), or favoring an equal distribution of resources between groups (the mean difference score was at 0). For *Basic Goods*, children were more likely to favor an equal distribution than to favor the *advantaged* group or *disadvantaged* group (binomial exacts, $p = .008$ and $p < .001$, respectively). However, among children who did show a preference for one group over the other, they favored the *advantaged* group significantly more than the *disadvantaged* group (binomial exact, $p = .004$). For *Public Goods* and *Opportunity Goods*, children were as likely to favor an equal distribution as they were to favor the *advantaged* group (binomial exact, $p = .771$ [Public Goods] and $p = .624$ [Opportunity Goods]). Children were least likely to favor the *disadvantaged* group (binomial exacts, $ps < .001$). For *Luxury Goods*, children were most likely to favor the *advantaged* group (binomial exacts, $ps < .003$). Items within each preregistered category reliably paired together with the following

Cramer's V values: Basic Goods (.64), Public Goods (.57), Luxury Goods (.47), and Opportunity Goods (.51).

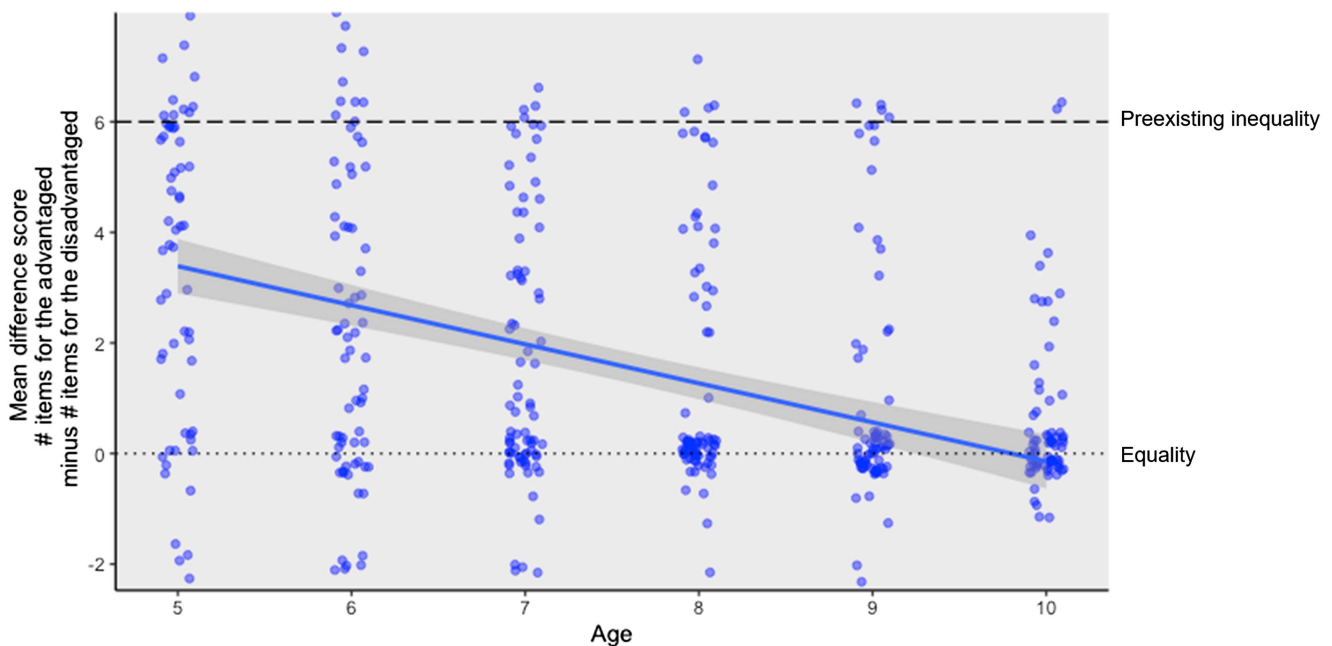
Strength of Reallocation

To explore the degree to which children amended inequalities, we constructed a linear mixed-effects model using mean difference scores, with age, resource, and their interaction as predictors, and a random intercept for participant. This revealed a main effect of age, $\chi^2(1, 120) = 33.41, p < .001$. Children with age reallocated more resources from the *advantaged* group to the *disadvantaged* group, reducing the inequality between the two groups (Figure 2). The youngest children (5- to 6-year-olds) moved on average one item from the *advantaged* to *disadvantaged* group (rendering a 7:3 distribution). In contrast, older children moved on average three items from the *advantaged* to *disadvantaged* group (i.e., rendering an equal 5:5 distribution).

This analysis also revealed a main effect of resource, $\chi^2(3, 120) = 16.49, p < .001$ (Figure 3). Across all resources, children moved on average 2.2 items from the *advantaged* group to the *disadvantaged* group; however, the extent to which children amended inequalities varied across resources: Basic Goods = 2.5 items ($M_{\text{difference}} = 0.91$), Public Goods = 2.2 items ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.64$), Opportunity Goods = 2.1 items ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.87$), and Luxury Goods = 1.96 ($M_{\text{difference}} = 2.08$). Compared to Basic Goods, children were less likely to move resources from the *advantaged* group to the *disadvantaged* group for Opportunity Goods, $B = -0.96, SE = 0.31, p = .010$, and Luxury Goods, $B = -1.17, SE = 0.31, p = .001$. We did not observe a significant interaction between age and resource, $\chi^2(3, 120) = 5.69, p = .13$.

Figure 2

The Extent to Which Children Amended Structural Inequalities With Age



Note. The dashed line represents the preexisting inequality (six items) between the advantaged and disadvantaged groups, the dotted line represents equal distributions between the two groups, the blue dots indicate participants' raw data, and the shaded area represents the 95% confidence interval. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

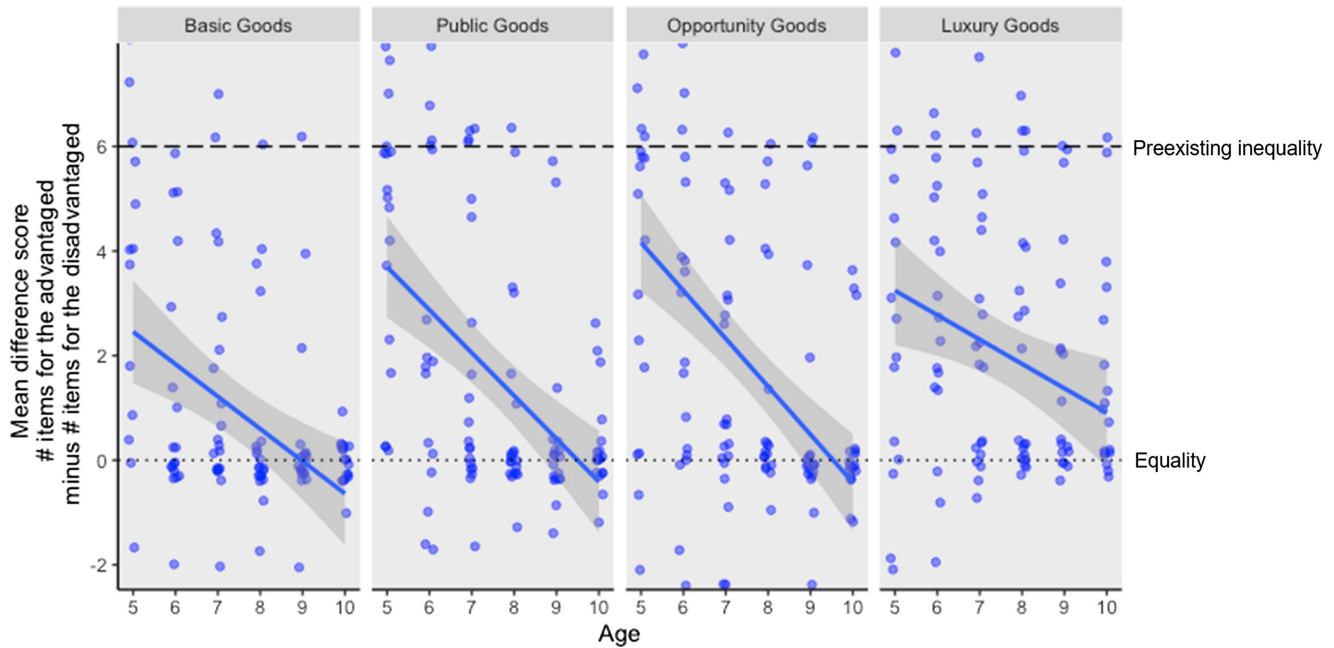
Demographic Factors

As preregistered, we examined whether demographic factors influenced children's reallocation choices. Using the 7-point political orientation Likert scale, we took the average political orientation of Parents 1 and 2; responses from a single parent represented a small set of the sample ($n = 5$). A likelihood ratio test confirmed that parents' political orientation explained additional variance in our findings, $\chi^2(1) = 7.31, p = .007$. Next, we constructed a linear regression model on mean difference scores, with age (in months), resource (categorical), and their interaction, finding a significant interaction between age and parents' politics, $F(1, 344) = 9.449, p = .002$. To better understand the relation between parents' politics and their children's redistributions, we ran these demographic analyses in each age bracket (5–6 years, 7–8 years, and 9–10 years). Parents' political orientation predicted children's responses for younger children (i.e., 5- to 8-year-olds), such that children of conservative parents were less likely to amend the inequalities than children of liberal parents— $p = .026$ (5–6 years) and $p = .005$ (7–8 years). However, parents' political orientation did not significantly predict older children's reallocating practice, $p = .694$ —see Supplemental Material S2. No other demographic variables reached significance.

Internal Consistency

A given child generally showed consistency in their redistribution strategies across the eight trials and across many of the resource types (e.g., across Basic Goods, Public Goods, and Opportunity Goods), with some evidence of modulating their strategy depending on the resource being considered (e.g., for Luxury Goods)—see Supplemental Material S1.

Figure 3
The Extent to Which Children Amended Structural Inequalities Across Age and Resource Type



Note. The dashed line represents the preexisting inequality (six items) between the advantaged and disadvantaged groups, the dotted line represents equal distributions between the two groups, the blue dots indicate participants' raw data, and the shaded area represents the 95% confidence interval. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

General Discussion

The present study underscores a developing tendency to address different manifestations of structural inequalities, with a focus on children's redistribution of resources amid preexisting inequalities. We find that children in general tend to amend structural inequalities, yet they transition from favoring historically advantaged groups to favoring equality. Importantly, children selectively amended structural inequalities based on the type of real-world resource. For Basic Goods, children generally divided resources equally between groups, but for Luxury Goods, children favored the advantaged group. For Public Goods and Opportunity Goods, children favored both the advantaged group and an equal distribution.

We observed notable age-related changes in children's reallocations of resources. Whereas previous research indicates a strong preference for fairness from a young age (particularly in third-party scenarios), we found that with age children switched from upholding the preexisting inequality to favoring an equal distribution when facing structural inequalities. Of note, even the youngest children in our sample amended the inequality to some extent; 5-year-olds on average moved one resource from the advantaged group to the disadvantaged group (i.e., rendering a 7:3 distribution), thus taking on a "partial rectification" approach. In contrast, older children demonstrated a stronger preference to reallocate resources equally, which may reflect their growing awareness of inequality (Elenbaas & Killen, 2016; Rizzo et al., 2016) and increasing sensitivity to fairness (Blake & McAuliffe, 2011; Kogut, 2012; Li et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2016).

There are multiple pathways by which younger children may more strongly endorse the preexisting inequality. One possibility is

that younger children view structural inequalities as more legitimate than other types of inequalities (Hussak & Cimpian, 2015; Schmidt et al., 2016), thus perceiving the original asymmetrical distribution as justifiable, especially because the advantaged group won a war (Heck et al., 2022; Leshin & Rhodes, 2023). Younger children may also be more resistant to change, thus preserving the status quo. Additionally, younger children may be more averse to the idea of "taking away" resources from a group (Vogelsang & Tomasello, 2016). While our data do not allow us to disentangle these pathways, we believe that each of these factors is likely to contribute to younger children's endorsement of the status quo, potentially operating in tandem. For instance, younger children may perceive structural inequalities as justifiable, which could lead to resistance to change and, ultimately, to preserving the status quo. Future research should examine which motivations explain these developmental changes, as well as whether these motivations function sequentially or simultaneously.

Children showed selectivity in the resources for which they amended inequalities. Compared to Opportunity Goods or Luxury Goods, children were more likely to move resources from the *advantaged* group to the *disadvantaged* group for Basic Goods (i.e., homes, food). In fact, children generally favored an equal distribution for Basic Goods. This pattern may be explained by children's sensitivity to needs (Huppert et al., 2020; Rizzo et al., 2016) and a general preference for equality (Blake & McAuliffe, 2011; Shaw & Olson, 2012). On the other hand, for Luxury Goods (i.e., expensive cars, fancy clothes), children were less likely to reallocate resources from the advantaged group to the disadvantaged group, indicating that children's preference for equality can be usurped by other

considerations. Children's equality considerations may only extend to goods that are seen as necessary but not those that are seen as superfluous. Indeed, in these latter cases, children may defer to other parameters such as perceived merit of the advantaged group (e.g., Rizzo et al., 2016). For Public Goods and Opportunity Goods, children were as likely to favor the advantaged group as they were to divide the resources equally. These patterns demonstrate nuanced selectivity in children's amendment of structural inequalities based on the kind of resource being considered. Children seem to have a graded notion of "need" such that they favor equality for resources that are essential, favor the advantaged group for resources that are superfluous, and show variable beliefs for resources that straddle a gray area.

Parents' political beliefs predicted young children's reallocation behaviors. Between the ages of 5 and 8, children of liberal parents were more likely to amend structural inequalities than children of conservative parents. These results mirror adult patterns of behavior, showing that conservatives are more likely than liberals to maintain the status quo (Brennan & Hamlin, 2004; Stenner, 2009) and that liberals more strongly endorse equality (Farwell & Weiner, 2000; Skitka & Tetlock, 1993; Swigart et al., 2020; Tetlock & Mitchell, 1993). Children from different politically minded households may be exposed to different messaging about inequality via their parents (Torney-Purta, 2017) or media (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), impacting their propensity to amend structural inequalities. These findings demonstrate how early parent ideology maps on to children's thinking about addressing structural inequalities (see Fraley et al., 2012; Leshin et al., 2022, for converging evidence in other domains). At the same time, these findings demonstrate the boundaries of parent political ideology; parents' political ideology impacted younger, but not older, children. One possibility is that older children's overwhelming preference for equality trumped the influence of parent political affiliation. Another possibility is that other external influences (e.g., schooling, peers, media) become increasingly influential with age, thus diluting the role of parent politics (Brody & Shaffer, 1982; Kandel, 1973; Newman, 2000; Wang et al., 2007; Wentzel, 1998). Though these results are preliminary, they highlight the potential role parent beliefs play in children's tendency to amend structural inequalities.

Our findings raise several lines of open inquiry. First, children's reallocations of resources may vary based on how the advantaged group obtained power (Leshin & Rhodes, 2023; Peretz-Lange et al., 2021). Children may be less likely to amend structural inequalities for historically advantaged groups who came to power based on "merit" (e.g., winning a war as in this study) compared to achieving power by chance or luck (Olson et al., 2006). Children may also be less inclined to amend inequalities for groups that have been in power for a long time. Additionally, only a minority of children in our sample favored the disadvantaged group, raising questions about the kinds of information children need to consider reparations more spontaneously. Children may be more inclined to use a reparatory approach if structures dramatically favor one group over another, if they were shown the consequences of a group lacking in structural power, or if the advantaged group gained status in a less legitimate way. Relatedly, open questions concern the psychological barriers involved in addressing structural inequalities, including an aversion to "taking away" resources from an advantaged group to level the playing field. By focusing on a paradigm in which the historically disadvantaged group could only benefit at the expense of

the historically advantaged group (mirroring how reparations and topics of historical inequalities are typically discussed), interesting questions concern how children think about third-party benefactors addressing structural inequalities, particularly in cases where the disadvantaged group benefits from new resources rather than redistributed ones.

These findings highlight a growing tendency to address structural inequalities, as children with age increasingly amend preexisting inequalities that favor historically advantaged groups. Importantly, children were selective—showing a stronger preference for maintaining structural inequalities for certain kinds of resources than others. Parents' political ideology may impact children's reasoning about how to approach structural inequalities. These findings provide novel insight into children's capacity to reason about and participate in amending various forms of structural inequalities.

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