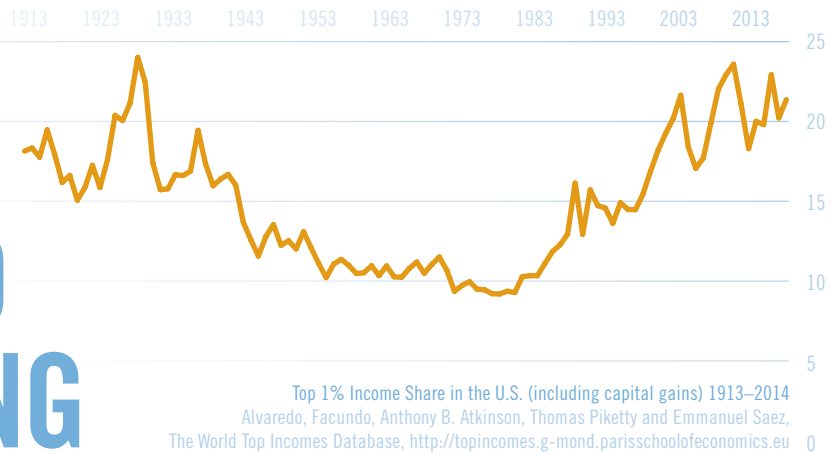


A CONFERENCE ON  
**INEQUALITY AND  
DECISION MAKING**



**HOW DOES INEQUALITY INFLUENCE INDIVIDUALS' BEHAVIOR AND DECISION MAKING, AND HOW MIGHT THIS IN TURN SHAPE BROADER SOCIAL OUTCOMES?**

The Tobin Project is accepting applications to present innovative, early-stage research at a conference exploring the effects of economic inequality on individual behavior and decision making. Successful applicants will present the results of their pilot studies and test their research designs with leading scholars at an invitation only, interdisciplinary conference, to be held August 4–5, 2016 in greater Boston. Authors of winning submissions will have the opportunity to apply for funding to support their pilot research. Junior scholars (doctoral students through assistant professors) who are selected to present work at the conference will also be considered for up to \$20,000 in awards for final papers following the conference. (See page 2 for details of the application process.)

In recent years, income inequality in the United States has reached heights not seen since the Great Depression. Yet despite a great deal of careful work devoted to the study of economic inequality, the *consequences* of inequality remain poorly understood.

While previous studies have produced plausible hypotheses, existing research has not produced an academic consensus on the impact of inequality. We believe this may be in part because extant scholarship has not privileged the study of mechanisms that might explain *how* inequality shapes broader outcomes. Economic inequality may have significant effects that are complex and subtle enough to defy detection at the macro-level, but it will be hard to know until scholars develop a deeper understanding of how inequality operates at the micro-level.<sup>1</sup>

A group of leading scholars working with the Tobin Project has begun running experiments in this field of inquiry, which has been described as “the most promising direction in inequality research today.”<sup>2</sup> Yet many important avenues of inquiry remain unexplored. We are organizing this conference to engage a multi-disciplinary community of scholars and stimulate new work to advance and deepen the research agenda on Inequality and Decision Making. The conference will provide a venue for a select group of creative researchers to define the frontier of an exciting research program committed to understanding what President Obama has called “the defining challenge of our time.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a review of the literature on inequality's consequences and a discussion of the rationale motivating the Tobin Project's Inequality and Decision Making Initiative see Moss, Thaker, and Rudnick (2013).

<sup>2</sup> See “Rebooting Social Science” in the July-August 2014 issue of *Harvard Magazine*.

<sup>3</sup> “Remarks by the President on Economic Mobility,” December 4, 2013.



## Application Process and Submission Criteria

We seek proposals for new work that promises to further understanding of how inequality may influence individual behavior and decision making. We will accept proposals from faculty, post-doctoral fellows, and doctoral students from any discipline. Proposals are due by January 11, 2016. Authors of winning submissions will be contacted in late January, at which time they may apply for funding to defray direct research costs. Applicants whose proposals are accepted will be asked to pilot their studies, draft short discussion papers, and present their research at the conference. Junior scholars (doctoral students through assistant professors) who are selected to present work at the conference will also be considered for up to \$20,000 in awards for final papers following the conference.

### RESEARCH DESIGN

We encourage creative new studies utilizing any methods that can shed light on potential mechanisms by which inequality affects society. Methods may include, but are not limited to, laboratory and field experiments, natural experiments, and surveys.

While we welcome proposals for studies of the potential effects of economic inequality in any context, we have identified a few leads that we believe are both under-studied and important to understand. (See [tobinproject.org/inequality2016](http://tobinproject.org/inequality2016) for details.)

- Financial Decision Making
- Behavior and Decision Making at the Top
- Political Decision Making
- Social Cognition
- Perceptions of Inequality

### SELECTION CRITERIA

Winning submissions will be those deemed most promising against the following criteria:

- The relevance of the research question to the goals of the conference: Does the proposed work hold promise for advancing our understanding of how and in what contexts inequality may affect individual behavior and decision making?
- The novelty and feasibility of the proposed study design: Does this proposal suggest a new and innovative research strategy that has a reasonable chance of success?

The Tobin Project, founded in 2005 on the belief that rigorous scholarship on major, real-world problems can make a profound difference over the long term, strives to be a catalyst for transformative research in the social sciences. The mission of the Tobin Project is to mobilize, motivate, and support a community of scholars across the social sciences and allied fields seeking to deepen our understanding of significant challenges facing the nation. Inspired by Professor James Tobin's belief that scholars have a vital role to play in the public sphere, the Project has built an interdisciplinary network of over 400 leading scholars across 80 universities, from Nobel Laureates to the most promising graduate students, who are together working to generate pioneering research on pressing problems of the 21st century. Currently, the Tobin Project is focused on four core research inquiries: Economic Inequality; Government & Markets; Institutions of Democracy; and National Security. For more information, please visit [www.tobinproject.org](http://www.tobinproject.org).

The Tobin Project is a non-partisan organization recognized as a public charity under sections 501(c)(3) and 509(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code.

**THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS JANUARY 11, 2016.**  
Please direct submissions and any questions to [research@tobinproject.org](mailto:research@tobinproject.org)