Social class and ideologies of inequality

Social Class and Ideologies of Inequality:

How They Uphold Unequal Societies

Rosa Rodriguez-Bailon[1], Boyka Bratanova[2], Guillermo B. Willis[1], Lucia Lopez-Rodriguez[3], Ashley Sturrock[4] & Steve Loughnan[5]

[1]University of Granada, [2] University of St. Andrews, [3]UNED, [4]University of Melbourne, [5]University of Edinburgh.

Authors' Note

Rosa Rodriguez-Bailon and Guillermo B. Willis. Departamento de Psicologia Social. Universidad de Granada. Campus de Cartuja s/n. 18011 Granada (Spain)

Boyka Bratanova, School of Management, University of St Andrews, St Andrews KY16 9AJ (United Kingdom).

Lucia Lopez-Rodriguez, Departamento de Psicología Social y de las Organizaciones. UNED. C/ Juan del Rosal, 10, 28040 Madrid (Spain).

Ashley Sturrock, School of Psychological Sciences, University of Melbourne, 3010 (Australia).

Steve Loughnan, Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, EH39JZ (United Kingdom).

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Corresponding author: Rosa Rodriguez-Bailon: rrbailon@ugr.es

Abstract

Many societies are becoming increasingly unequal, especially after the Great Recession. This is occurring despite the evidence showing that economic inequality undermines personal and social wellbeing, and that inequality impairs the safe functioning of our societies. Although the main known causes of economic inequality are macro-economic, some psychosocial factors can contribute to maintain it; these factors are the focus of this paper. Study 1 shows that feeling higher class and justifying the economic system increase the perception that the actual resource distribution is fair, and this in turn reduces the extent to which people see their society as unequal; effectively, social class and system justification blind people to inequality. Study 2 goes beyond blinded inequality to examine beliefs that oppose wealth redistribution. Both economic system justification (ESJ) and social dominance orientation (SDO) beliefs deepen inequality: People with strong ESJ or SDO tend not to endorse governmental and non-governmental activities that reduce inequality. Further, these effects were mediated by a belief in dispositional poverty (i.e., internal causes for being poor). Combined, these studies highlight the importance of beliefs about social standing (subjective SES) and, especially, of ideology regarding the organization of society (ESJ, SDO) in maintaining and deepening levels of inequality.

Keywords: Economic Inequality, Social Class, Great Recession, Ideology, SES, Wealth, Social Dominance, System Justification.

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Economic inequality, the polarization of wealth between the top and bottom, has become commonplace (Jencks, 2002; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2010), especially since the Great Recession. Inequality has been linked to poor health, increased crime, unwanted pregnancy (Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner, & Prothrow-Stith, 1997), lower levels of happiness (Oishi, Kesebir, & Diener, 2011), and less trust in others (Fiske, Moya, Russell, & Bearns, 2012, Fritsche et al., this issue). Despite these costs and the preference that individuals have for a more egalitarian society (Norton & Ariely, 2011), some individuals tend to legitimize or at least not oppose economic inequality (Hadler, 2005; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Ni Sullivan, 2003; Kelley & Evans, 1993). Moreover, justification of inequality negatively relates to attitudes toward low-income individuals and redistribution (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001; Dion, 2010). In this line, previous research has shown that people made aware of their illegitimate privileges are willing to reduce inequality (Stewart, Latu, Branscombe, Phillips, & Denney, 2012). Complementing this work on justification and awareness, the present research aims to investigate the role of legitimizing ideologies in relation to the perceptions of inequality and attitudes toward resource redistribution.

Factors Related to Perceptions of Inequality

Several perspectives address why people accept or even promote inequality (e.g., Grusky 1994; Hegtvedt & Johnson 2009; Jost & Major 2001; Kerbo 1983; Tyler 2006). Two groups of theories explain individual differences in the perception and justification of inequality (Alwin, 1992). First, theories based on self-interest emphasize that people endorse levels of inequality that favor their own position; that is, they favor attitudes congruent with their socioeconomic-status (e.g., Castillo, 2009; Castillo, Miranda, & Carrasco, 2011; Jury et al., this issue; Swencionis, Dupree, & Fiske, this issue; Wegener, 1987, 1990). Given the benefits for those at the top, higher socioeconomic-status individuals tend to perceive

inequality as less extreme and consider it fairer (Gijsberts, 2002; Hadler, 2005). Conversely, one could expect that belonging to a low-status group would heighten sensitivity and opposition toward inequality given its negative consequences for this group (Bullock & Limbert, 2003).

However, some researchers have found that when participants are asked to estimate the income gap, their estimations seemed affected by their knowledge about salaries in a society (Castillo, 2011; Wegener, 1990). People tend to most accurately estimate incomes of those close to them (Gijsberts, 2002), in part because they seem to base their understanding of inequality on evaluation of immediate others (Dawrty et al., 2015). Therefore, low-income individuals may underestimate high incomes, while high-income people may underestimate low incomes. The present research uses a new measure in an attempt to avoid these biases.

A second group of theories might be called ideological theories of inequality. Ideological factors can lead individuals to be insensitive to inequality, to consider current resource distribution fair, and in turn to endorse rather than oppose inequality (e.g., Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Ni Sullivan, 2003; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) proposes that systemic inequalities are in part maintained and legitimated due to individuals' beliefs about hierarchies, that is, their Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). This theory posits that using the measure of SDO we can identify individuals high in SDO—the ones who will endorse the belief that some groups deserve higher status. On the other hand, system justification theory also seeks to explain individual differences in the perception and legitimation of inequality (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). This theory posits that people have a tendency to legitimate the status quo and to prefer sociostructural stability. The economic system justification scale (ESJ) has been proposed as a measure of these individual differences (Jost & Thomson, 2000).

Supplementing broad ideological beliefs about the structure of society, people's

beliefs about specific social groups can also support unequal systems. For example, the stereotype content model (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) has examined stereotypes of high- and low-income individuals (Durante, Tablante, & Fiske, this issue) and can account for the way people rationalize social relations between groups. Such rationalizations are strongest in nations experiencing high levels of inequality (Durante, et al., 2012). More specifically, beliefs that being poor reflects a dispositional and thus intractable failing may serve to justify inequality (e.g., Bullock & Waugh, 2005). If low-income individuals are responsible for their poverty, and they cannot move up the societal ladder (i.e., have low social mobility), it makes sense that society is unequal. Previous research examined the relationship among feelings about poverty and low-income individuals, stereotypes about them, attributions of poverty, and sociopolitical ideologies (e.g., Cozarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001), between attributions of poverty and the legitimation of inequality (e.g., Schneider & Castillo, 2015), or between ideology and support for social welfare policies (Rice, 2001). However, to our knowledge, the relationships among ideologies of inequality, beliefs about poverty and the individuals who suffer from it, and support for redistribution have not yet been examined.

The Present Research

This paper explores the relationships among socioeconomic status (SES), ideologies about inequality, the perception of inequality, and support for redistribution in two separate studies. Study 1 tests the predictive role of ESJ and subjective SES — individuals' sense of their place in the social ladder — on the perception of economic inequality. We further examine the mediating role of the perceived fairness of resource-distribution. If the perception of inequality has a motivational base, subjective SES together with ideologies favoring inequality (e.g., ESJ) would negatively predict the perception of inequality, due to beliefs that the actual distribution of wealth is fair and just. Study 2 focuses on how ideology

(SDO, ESJ) can reduce support for governmental and non-governmental wealth redistribution, and it examines whether specific beliefs about society translate ideology into acquiescence.

Study 1

The aim of this study was twofold: First, to develop a new measure of perceived economic inequality. Secondly, we examined the effect of subjective SES and ESJ on perceived economic inequality. We further examined how perceptions of fairness of the status quo might mediate this effect.

Despite the importance of perceptions of economic inequality, few sociological surveys have measured it; when they have done so, they typically ask people to estimate the income gap between the salaries of those at the top and those at the bottom (e.g., Castillo, 2011; Kelley & Evans, 1993; Verwiebe & Wegener, 2000). Nevertheless, these measures reveal biases arising from the salience of participants' knowledge of their immediate social context (e.g., Castillo, 2011; Wegener, 1990).

Simpler, graphical measures that require respondents to indicate the percentage of the population in different social classes have also been used (see Castillo, Miranda, & Carrasco, 2011). However, these do not measure the perceived differences *between* those at the top and those at the bottom. Therefore, in Study 1 we developed a new, intuitive measure of perceived inequality, the Graphic Notes Inequality Measure (GNIM), which avoids biases introduced by participants' prior knowledge about salary structure and instead taps the construct of inequality.

This study was run in Spain, a country where the economic inequality has severely increased in the last years (CES, 2013). For example, in 2007, at the beginning of the economic crisis, the richest 20% earned 5.5 times more than the poorest 20%. By 2014, this difference had increased to 6.8 times more (EUROSTAT, 2014). In this context of increasing

economic inequality, we tested the predictive value of one of the most researched ideologies about economic inequality, ESJ, together with subjective SES, on the perception of actual inequality using this new measure. Both subjective SES and ESJ should negatively relate to perceived inequality. Additionally, we explored the mediational role of perceived resource-distribution fairness. Participants high in subjective SES and ESJ should perceive the wealth distribution as fairer, and in turn perceive lower levels of inequality.

Method

Participants. Three hundred Spaniards[1] (54% females; M_{age} = 26.82; SD=10.13) participated in public places (e.g., bus station, library, etc.). The sample included fifty-six more participants who did not answer all questions, and were excluded from the analyses. Regarding political orientation, 27% were left wing, 18% center-left, 26% center, 12% center-right, and 7% right wing.

Measures and Procedure. Participants completed four main measures.

***Perceived inequality*.** To select the measure of perceived inequality, a pretest (N = 90; 73% females; M_{Age} = 24.25; SD = 7.13) was run. Two different measures of perceived inequality were used: the ladder inequality measure (adapted from Adler et al., 2000) and the GNIM (see Appendix A, https://osf.io/72r94/)[1] in a pretest. The results of the pretest showed the GNIM was a better measure of perceived inequality and therefore it was chosen. The measure was slightly changed from the pretest by adding percentages and using a scale from 1 (*low inequality*) to 7 (high *inequality*) (see Appendix B, https://osf.io/72r94/). To measure perceived inequality, participants were asked to choose among seven graphs the one that most accurately represented the economic structure of contemporary Spanish society.

Economic resource-distribution-fairness. A single item asked: "To what extent do you think that the resource distribution in Spanish society is just/fair?" The response options ranged between 1 (*totally unfair*) and 7 (*totally fair*).

Ideological measure: Economic system justification (ESJ). This variable of domain-specific system justification was measured with 7 items (Alpha = .74), shortened and translated into Spanish by Jaume, Etchezahar, and Cervone (2012) from the original (Jost & Thompson, 2000). The scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Subjective socioeconomic status and demographics. Following previous studies of social class rank, participants' subjective SES was measured with the MacArthur Scale (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000; Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009). Participants placed an X on the step out of the ten rungs where they think they were in the Spanish society. They also reported political ideology, age, gender, and nationality.

Results and Discussion

In reporting subjective SES, the majority of the participants rated themselves as middle class (M = 5.07; SD = 1.62), with 61% of the participants locating themselves in the fourth (17%), fifth (21%), and sixth rung (23%) of the social ladder. Participants showed ESJ (M = 3.55; SD = .94), below the theoretical midpoint of the scale (4), $t(299) = -8.35$, $p < .001$, which varied by gender, with men (M = 3.74; SD = .97) justifying the system more than women (M = 3.39; SD = .88), $t(298) = 3.29$, $p = .001$. Age was weakly but significantly negatively correlated with ESJ, $r(300) = -.13$, $p = .026$.

Participants typically considered resource distribution as unfair (M = 2.68; SD = .98), under the theoretical midpoint of the scale (4), $t(299) = -23.36$, $p < .001$, and reported high perceptions of inequality (M = 5.57; SD = 1.39), over the theoretical midpoint of the scale (4), $t(299) = 19.64$, $p < .001$. These perceptions showed no reliable gender and age differences. As Table 1 displays, partial correlations controlling for gender and age showed subjective SES positively related to ESJ, and perceived resource-distribution fairness negatively related to perceived social inequality. ESJ was positively related to perceived resource-distribution fairness, but negatively related to perceived inequality. Contrary to

predictions, subjective SES was not related to perceived inequality in this study, but it was still positively related to the perception that resource distribution is fair and just (see Table 1).

Mediation analyses. All measures were standardized. To analyze the antecedents of perceived inequality, we performed a mediation analysis with ESJ (X_1) and subjective SES (X_2) predicting perceived inequality (Y) through perceived fairness of inequality, while controlling for gender (C_1) and age (C_2). The SPSS MEDIATE Macro (Hayes & Preacher, 2014, with 95% confidence intervals and 10,000 bootstraps), which allows testing the effect of multiple X variables, was used for this analysis. As expected, both ESJ and subjective SES increased the perceived fairness of resource distribution, with ESJ exerting a stronger effect. The perceived fairness of resource distribution in turn decreased the awareness of inequality (see Figure 1, see also https://osf.io/m9v5d/). A test for indirect effects revealed that ESJ and subjective SES reduced participants' perception of inequality through perceived resource-distribution fairness (R^2 = .10, $F(5, 294) = 7.68$, $p < .001$, Figure 1; see also https://osf.io/m9v5d/). The alternative model, with perceived inequality as mediator, showed that the indirect effect of ESJ on perceived resource fairness via perceived inequality was weaker, b = .05(.02) 95%CI = .01; .10) and the indirect effect of subjective SES via perceived inequality was non-significant, b = –.01(.01) 95%CI = -.03, .04.

In short, participants' subjective SES and ESJ decreased perceived inequality through perceived greater fairness in the distribution of wealth. This finding indicates that when people see the resource distribution as fair, they tend to perceive less inequality. These results point to the importance of people's ideology in their awareness of the inequality that surrounds them. This first study shows that Spanish participants perceived high levels of inequality and experience it as unfair. Also ideology influences the perceived level of inequality and its fairness; however, we did not examine how this could relate to attitudes toward redistribution. The next study addressed this question.

Study 2

This study aimed to examine how system-justifying beliefs might support inequality in the USA. Similarly to Spain, the USA is a highly unequal Western society (GINI of 41.1; World Bank, 2013), with levels of inequality increasing in all US states since the Great Recession (Sommeiller, Price, & Wazeter, 2016). In the context of rising inequality in the USA, we hypothesized that SDO and ESJ beliefs reduce support for governmental and non-governmental wealth redistribution. Further, we sought to examine processes via which this might occur: increased belief in positive social mobility, perceived causes for poverty, and the idea that inequality is motivating.

Method

Participants. Two hundred and four people were initially recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Sixty-seven participants were excluded for failing a simple catch trial, leaving 137 people (75 male, 62 female), mean age 35 years (*SD* = 11.6), ranging from 18 to 67. The sample consisted primarily of US citizens (*N* = 133, *M* time living in the US = 33.5 years, *SD* = 12.1 years). More respondents earned below the median income (*N*=99) than above (*N* = 38).

Measures and procedure. Participants reported basic demographic information (age, ethnic background, gender, citizenship, annual pre-tax household income assessed through 6 categories: below $15 000, between $15 001 and $25 000, between $25 001 and $35 000, between $45 001 and $55 000, and above $55 001, which was the median national income at the time the study was conducted). Unless otherwise stated, all scales used to measure the constructs employed a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) (materials available from https://osf.io/6zng8/).

Ideological measures. To measure Social Dominance Orientation, participants completed the 16-item SDO_6 Scale (Pratto & Sidanius, 1994). Next, participants completed

the 17-item Economic System Justification Theory Scale (Jost & Thompson, 2000) as a measure of domain-specific system justification.

Social mobility belief. A three-item scale assessed participants' beliefs about inter-generational social mobility (e.g., "Where I rank relative to all other Americans in terms of wealth has nothing to do with where my parents ranked").

Attribution for poverty. A five-item scale assessed participants' tendency to ascribe dispositional and situational attributions for poverty (e.g., "People are poor because they are lazy"; "People who are poor are not to blame for their circumstances [reversed]"). Lower scores indicated a dispositional attribution, whereas higher scores indicated a situational attribution.

Inequality-as-motivating belief. Five items assessed the idea that an unequal society promotes a positive work ethic (e.g., "Different income levels motivate me to reach the top"; "If wealth was distributed evenly amongst society no matter what, I would have nothing to motivate me to work hard").

Wealth redistribution. Support for four primary methods of wealth redistribution (government policy, social welfare, progressive taxation, charitable giving) assessed participants' attitudes toward wealth redistribution. For government policy, a four-item scale assessed participants' support for two key forms of redistributive policies (class-based affirmative action and wage subsidies). The scales were accompanied by brief definitions of each policy, and we took the mean score.

For social welfare, participants were told to "assume the government currently spends a certain amount of its budget on each of the following social welfare policies for the financially disadvantaged." They were then presented with –100 to 100 scales of six primary social welfare policies (healthcare benefits and subsidies; unemployment benefits; food stamps; social security; education grants, scholarships, and subsidized loans; public housing)

and were required to indicate the amount that the government should increase (toward 100) or decrease (toward -100) spending.

For progressive taxation, four- or five-item scales assessed support for progressive taxes on incomes (5-items), estates (5-items), luxury goods (4-items), and corporations (5-items). All scales were preceded by brief definitions of each tax, and participants rated agreement on a 7-point scale (1=*strongly disagree*; 7=*strongly agree*). Additionally, participants used a 100-point scale to indicate their preferred percentage tax rate on people earning: $0 to $9,075; $9,076 to $36,900; $36,901 to $89,350; $89,351 to $186,350; $186,351 to $405,100; $405,101 to $406,750; and $406,751+ (from Tax Foundation, 2013).

Finally, for charitable giving, participants had a hypothetical $100 to distribute among four charities. Two charities (United Way, Salvation Army) were considered redistributive, aiding the financially disadvantaged; the other two (American Cancer Society, Nature Conservancy) were considered non-redistributive charities. In addition, respondents indicated how "important" they thought each charity was (1=*not at all important*, 7=*very important*).

Results

Correlations. The descriptive statistics of all variables, along with the partial correlations between the ideology measures SDO and EJO and the proposed mediators and the redistributive measures are provided in Table 2. Consistent with our hypothesis, both SDO and ESJ were significantly negatively correlated with all of the wealth redistribution measures. Both were also significantly associated with all three proposed mediators. Given the high intercorrelations among the four indices of progressive taxation ($r > .50$, $p<.001$), these were averaged to produce a single "progressive taxation" measure for further analysis. Similarly, given the strong intercorrelation between SDO and ESJ ($r = 0.70$, $p < 0.001$), and their theoretical overlap in this context, these two variables were averaged to form a single variable[2], labeled "SJO" (i.e., social justification orientation).

Mediation analyses. Multiple mediation analysis tested the three mediation hypotheses (MacKinnon, Fairchild & Fritz, 2009). A separate mediation model was run for each of the four redistributive measures. Figures and tables for all analyses are available at OSF (https://osf.io/wab34/). Hayes' (2013) process macro was used to conduct ordinary least squares regression to estimate path coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for indirect effects using 10,000 bootstraps. We conducted multiple analyses. Correcting for the four key comparisons, the effects of the models, by using an α=0.0125 does not change the pattern of significant results (3 of 4 are significant). With 130 participants, the study could additionally have benefited from more participants to increase the power of the design.

The first mediation model (Figure 2, Panel A, see also https://osf.io/m9v5d/) examined redistributive government policies as the outcome measure. The model for this measure was significant, R^2 = .36, $F(4, 132) = 18.34$, $p < .001$, and indicated that the SJO–policy relationship became non-significant after the three proposed mediators were included. However, only attribution of poverty was associated with support for redistribution, and thus the mediation effect was carried entirely by this mediator [95%CI= -.65; -.17].

The second mediation model (Figure 2, Panel B, see also https://osf.io/m9v5d/) examined redistributive social welfare policies as the outcome measures. The model for this measure was significant, R^2=.28, $F(4, 132)=13.05$, $p<.001$, and indicated that the SJO–social welfare relationship became non-significant after the three proposed mediators were included. However, only dispositional attribution for poverty was associated with support for redistribution, and the mediation effect was carried entirely by this mediator, [95%CI=2.37; 15.39].

The third mediation model examined redistributive progressive taxation as the outcome measure. The model for this measure was significant, R^2=.38, $F(4, 132)=19.88$, $p <$ .001, but indicated that the significant SJO–progressive taxation relationship, b = -.46, p =

.0004, was not mediated any of the three proposed mediators.

The fourth mediation model examined redistributive charitable giving as the outcome measure. Four respondents were removed from the analysis because the sum of their hypothetical donations did not equal $100 (remaining $N = 133$ for the model). The model for this measure was non-significant, $R^2 = .12$, $F(1, 131) = 15.14$, $p > .10$. Neither the direct SJO-charitable giving, nor the indirect effects through any of the three proposed mediators were significant ($p_s > .10$).

Discussion

As expected, people who hold system-justifying beliefs tended to oppose redistribution. This effect was not limited to one type of redistribution; people high on SJO opposed a range of governmental and non-governmental redistributive acts. Consistent with previous research (Wakslak, Jost, Tyler, & Chen, 2007), this finding provides further evidence that a broad belief in inequality can manifest as opposition to a range of specific mechanisms that address that inequality.

This opposition seemed to be particularly tied to the idea that poor people are dispositionally or inherently poor; that is, the causes of their poverty are internal. This finding is in line with previous work showing that individualistic attribution of poverty predicts support for restrictive welfare policies (Bullock, Williams & Limbert, 2003) and may constitute a form of essentialist thinking about low-income people, which feeds into a belief that society does not need to be restructured. Put into the context of increasing inequality within the US, endorsement of system-justifying beliefs and essentialist attribution of poverty may be psychological mechanisms contributing to the deepening socio-economic divide.

General Discussion

Two studies examined the relationship among ideological variables (i.e., ESJ, SDO), perceived fairness, and support for redistribution. Ideology plays an important role,

influencing how people view inequality and their desire to redress it.

In Study 1, as predicted, subjective SES showed a negative relationship with perceptions of unequal wealth distribution as fair and just, but did not show the predicted negative relationship with perceptions of actual inequality. Therefore, it remains unclear if the relationship between subjective SES and perceived inequality has a self-interest basis or could be better explained in terms of knowledge and familiarity with the salary structure in a society. Yet, perceived fairness of wealth was found to be negatively related to perceived actual inequality. Although we did not explicitly ask the participants about the fairness of inequality (only about the fairness of the resource distribution), this negative relation reveals that people do not like inequality, consistent with previous research (e.g., Norton & Ariely, 2011). Future research should investigate if using a clearer measure of perceived fairness of actual inequality replicates these findings.

These results underline the role of ideology as an antecedent of perceived inequality. This result is novel, as most studies in the field conceptualize ideological variables and perceived inequality as independent predictors of the ideal level of inequality (e.g., Castillo, 2011; Hadler, 2005; Shepelak & Alwin, 1986; for an exception see Willis, Rodriguez-Bailón, López-Rodríguez, & García-Sánchez, 2015). In this study, we aimed to advance the literature by showing that ideology about the social structure and its causes can also influence the way individuals perceive social reality. In this way, perception processes are not independent from ideological and motivational factors (Kunda, 1990).

In the present paper, we also provide a new measure of perceived inequality, the GNIM. Past studies have used the potentially biased pay-gap index (e.g., Kelley & Evans, 1993; Verwiebe & Wegener, 2000). The experience of using the GNIM developed here revealed a simple and useful tool to measure perceived inequality using a procedure that tries to avoid the biases caused by participants' familiarity with salaries in their immediate social

context. However, it still remains to properly validate this measure and check its relationship with other measures of perceived inequality as well as with other related constructs (e.g., attitudes towards wealth redistribution). Furthermore, the sample of participants in Study 1 were mainly middle-upper class Spaniards; therefore, it also remains for future research to examine whether the influence of ideology replicates for low-income samples and for Spanish citizens less affected by the recent economic recession.

In Study 2, we found that SDO and ESJ ideologies were linked to opposition to redistribution. Moreover, they appear to create this opposition by influencing how people thought about the poor; these ideologies increased dispositional attributions of poverty, which in turn reduced desire and support for redistribution. Ideology can work to sustain inequality, in part by shifting people's beliefs about its victims. Because most participants in Study 2 had below median income, these findings strongly align with system justification theory.

In sum, the growth of inequality, exacerbated by the Great Recession that many countries have suffered in recent years, has generated different ideas about the best way to redistribute economic resources and services (Champernowne & Cowell, 1998). The present research showed that people's ideologies can influence perceptions of inequality and attitudes toward redistribution (Castillo, Miranda, & Carrasco, 2011).

These findings could be consequential for people seeking to challenge inequality. It may be helpful to highlight the structural causes of poverty in order to increase the support for governmental and non-governmental redistribution measures and foster less negative attitudes toward the poor. Thus system-blame leads to system-change (Jones, 2006). Negative and dispositional attributions toward the least privileged could also be improved as a function of the most privileged participants believing that they could be effective in combating a particular manifestation of economic inequality (Stewart et al., 2012). In this line, diversity training exercises following the ones developed to reduce racial prejudice could involve

increasing high-SES participants' awareness of their advantages and the social beliefs and structure maintaining that advantage (e.g., Stewart, La Duke, Bracht, Sweet, & Gamarel, 2003). Furthermore, experiential learning about social class (Williams & Melchiori, 2013), and the ideologies that uphold hierarchies at schools, would help students to understand the impact of privileges in a personal level and the role of ideologies to maintain them. Moreover, once psychology students are aware of the impact of ideologies on the maintenance of the *status quo,* it could be useful to train and encourage them to practice in contexts of poverty and social inequalities (APA, 2006; Smith, 2009), which will make them more sensitive to social justice and consequently more willing for social change. All in all, the inclusion in psychology curricula of social class, inequality, and ideologies that promote, maintain, or attenuate inequalities, could benefit undergraduate training (APA, 2008).

We live in a time where inequality and democracy are both commonplace. If we accept that inequality hurts us, and that we have the power to reduce it, then understanding how to do it becomes a pressing goal. This paper shows that class and ideology can form powerful barriers, making inequality seem fair and leading people to oppose wealth redistribution. Challenging these group and ideological barriers is a consideration in redressing historically high levels of inequality.

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Footnotes

1. Both measures used 5 response options (from A to E). In order to test the new measures, inequality was manipulated via a news article about fictitious societies, creating two experimental conditions (low, $N = 47$ *vs*. high inequality, $N = 43$). Participants rated

inequality using both the ladder and GNIM measures. A repeated measures analysis, using type of measure as a within-participants variable and level of inequality as a between participants variable, showed a significant interaction, $F(1,88) = 16.00$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$. Pairwise comparisons confirmed that participants perceived a greater difference between the high and the low quintiles when they used the GNIM ($F(1,88) = 240.38$, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = .73$; mean difference = 3.05) than when they used the ladder ($F(1,88) = 34.49$, $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = .28$; mean difference = 1.82). Moreover, when participants were directly asked which tool measures inequality better, the GNIM was preferred (73 % selected it), $Z = 5.98$, $p < .001$.

2. The pattern of results remains the same when using either individual-difference measure (i.e., SDO or SJT).

Author Bios

Rosa Rodríguez-Bailón, is associate professor in the University of Granada. Her research has examined how power inequality impacts perceptions, judgments, and behaviors. Currently she is working on antecedents and psychosocial consequences of inequality.

Boyka Bratanova is a lecturer in management at the University of St. Andrews. She is currently studying how poverty and inequality influence psychology and behavior.

Guillermo Willis, is associate professor of social psychology in the University of Granada. His research examines the cognitive and affective consequences of economic inequality.

Lucia Lopez-Rodriguez, is a postdoctoral researcher at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) in Madrid. Her research has been focused on intergroup conflict, acculturation process, stereotypes, and identity fusion. Her main current interests are related to the psychosocial processes involved in radicalism.

Ashley Sturrock was a student at the University of Melbourne. She recently completed her thesis with Prof. Nick Haslam and Dr. Steve Loughnan examining the role of ideology in maintaining inequality.

Steve Loughnan is a lecturer in social psychology at the University of Edinburgh. His research has examined the role that economic inequality plays in how people view themselves and people's attitudes toward wealth redistribution. Additionally, he has worked extensively on dehumanization and perception of animals.

Tables

Table 1. Partial correlations among ESJ, SES, economic resources distribution fairness, and perception of inequality while controlling for age and gender (Study 1)

	1	2	3	4
1. Economic System Justification	1	.37***	.42***	–.19**
2. Subjective Socioeconomic Status		1	.26***	–.09
3. Resource-distribution-fairness			1	–.33***
4. Perception of Inequality				1

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$

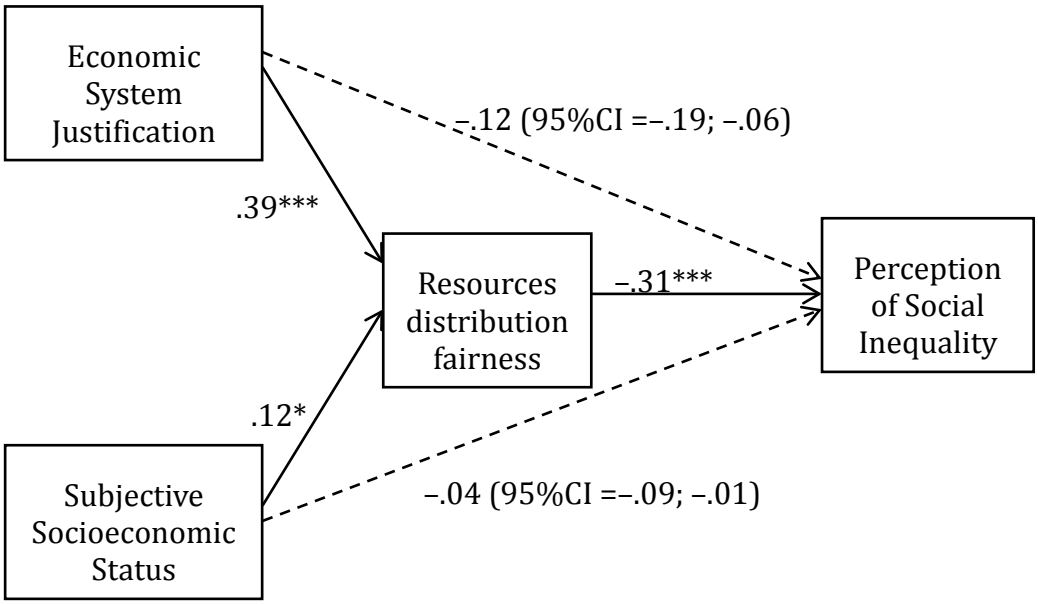
Table 2. Descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients of test variables, and partial correlation between ideology and proposed mediators, and redistribution measures while controlling for age and gender.

Construct	*M*	*SD*	Cronbach	SDO	ESJ
SDO/ESJ					
SDO	2.38	1.13	.96	-	.70***
ESJ	3.38	.87	.87		
Proposed Mediators					
Social Mobility Belief	4.30	1.38	.77	0.16*	-.24**
Attribution for Poverty	5.13	1.11	.84	-.70***	-.76***
Inequality-as-Motivating	4.43	1.05	.70	-.44***	-.60***
Redistributive Measures					
Income Tax	5.04	1.14	.83	-.50***	-.44***
Estate Tax	4.34	1.26	.82	-.41***	-.50***
Luxury Goods Tax	4.69	1.24	.81	-.46***	-.45***
Corporate Tax	4.67	1.18	.86	-.41***	-.43***
Social Welfare	13.9	31.1	.91	-.44***	-.46***
Government Policy	4.50	1.40	.90	-.41***	-.58***
Charitable Giving	45.85	26.03	–	-.39***	-.20***

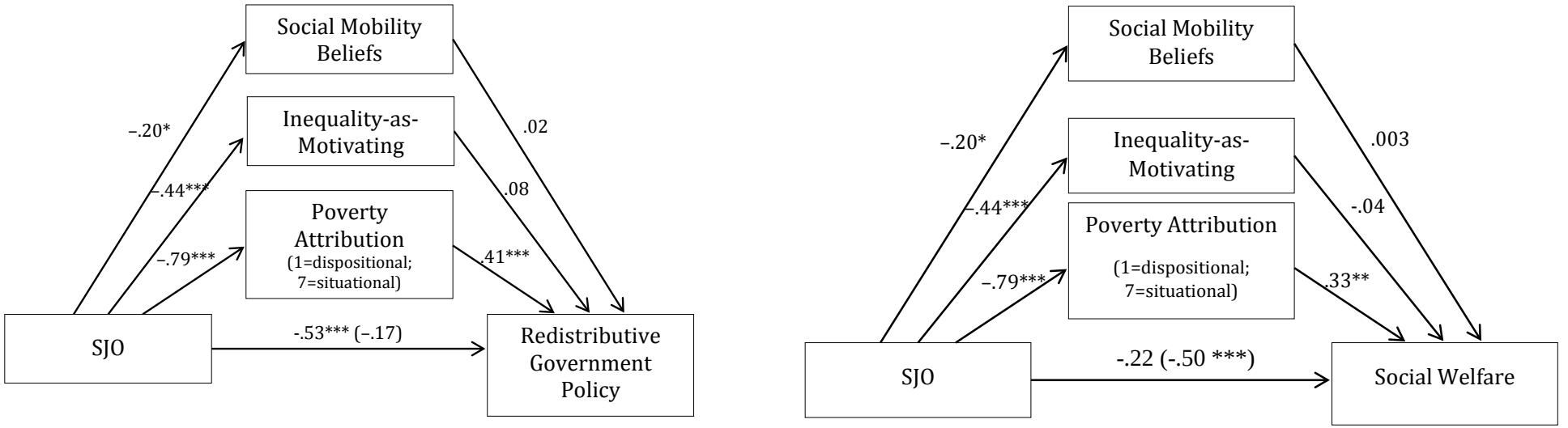
*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Figures

Figure 1. Mediation analysis showing the standardized coefficients for the indirect effect between ESJ and SES on the perception of social inequality as mediated by economic resources distribution controlling for gender and age (Study 1).



*** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$



****p <.001 **p <.01 *p <.01*

Figure 2. Path diagram of standardized coefficients for the relationship between SJO and government policy (left, Panel A) and social welfare (right, Panel B) as mediated by social mobility belief, inequality-as-motivating belief, and dispositional attribution for domestic poverty, while including gender and age as covariates. The standardized coefficients between SJO and government policy, controlling for the three mediators and the two covariates, is in parentheses (Study 2).