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Efectos psicosociales de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana

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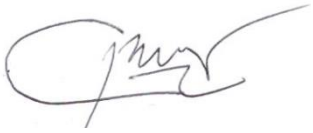

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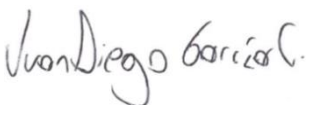

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Overview

Economic inequality is one of the most pressing problems in modern societies (Stiglitz, 2012). Over the last three decades, the richest 1% of the global population increased their income twice as much as the 50% least advantaged (Alvaredo et al., 2017). In this context, this doctoral dissertation aims to ascertain the psychosocial effects of perceived economic inequality in everyday life. To do so, we used different research designs and methods.

The economic information people receive is scarce (Son Hing et al., 2019); thus, there is a large gap between objective and subjective inequality (Hauser & Norton, 2017; Kuhn, 2019). Subjective inequality has a greater impact on the attitudes and behaviors of individuals than objective inequality (Choi, 2019; Curhan et al., 2014; Evans & Kelley, 2018; Loveless, 2013; Rodríguez-Bailón et al., 2020). However, until now, the vast majority of studies that have dealt with perceived economic inequality have used abstract measures that do not reflect people's daily experiences. Hence, numerous studies point out the importance of considering perceived inequality in everyday life when examining the psychological consequences of inequality (Akyelken, 2020; Boudreau & MacKenzie, 2018; Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2017; Cruces et al, 2013; Fatke, 2018; Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018; Gonthier, 2017; Grundler & Kollner, 2017; Mijs, 2019; Nair, 2018; Newman, 2020; Newman et al., 2018; Newman & Kane, 2017; Oshio & Urakawa, 2014; Page & Goldstein, 2016).

Our main argument is that measuring perceived economic inequality in everyday life is a better way of approaching people’s experiences of inequality than abstract measures of perceived inequality (e.g., measured at the country level). Therefore, we also believe that this variable will (causally) predict attitudes toward inequality and redistribution over and above more abstract measures of it.

In this thesis we pursue the following objectives:

1. To develop an instrument to measure perceived economic inequality in everyday life.

2. To investigate the effects of perceived economic inequality in everyday life on a) tolerance of inequality and b) attitudes toward redistribution.

3. To examine the longitudinal effects of perceived economic inequality in everyday life on a) tolerance of inequality and b) attitudes toward redistribution.

4. To explore the dimensions of everyday life used to estimate inequality.

The thesis has six chapters. In the first chapter, we review the literature to theoretically support the proposed objectives. We therefore present: a) the theoretical basis of the social psychology of economic inequality; b) what perceived economic inequality is and how it has been measured; c) a new approach to conceptualize perceived economic inequality in everyday life based on reference groups, social comparison, and daily context; d) the main correlations of perceived economic inequality: social class and ideology; and e) the psychosocial effects of perceived economic inequality, with special emphasis on tolerance to inequality and attitudes toward redistributive policies.

In the second chapter, we address the first objective of this thesis and we develop a scale of perceived economic inequality in everyday life. Given that most studies tend to use abstract measures of perceived inequality (Helgason & Mérola, 2017; Pedersen & Mutz, 2019), we designed a scale that measured more concrete and relatable everyday experiences. This chapter adds to the current literature by introducing a new instrument to measure perceived economic inequality that may be a useful means of deepening our understanding of its psychosocial effects.

In the third chapter, we present six studies (one correlational and five experimental) to achieve our second research objective into the effects of perceived economic inequality in everyday life on the tolerance of inequality and on attitudes toward redistribution. We developed a manipulation of perceived economic inequality in everyday life that showed construct validity (Chester & Lasko, 2019). This chapter examines whether there is a causal relationship between perceived economic inequality in everyday life and the tolerance to inequality and attitudes toward redistribution.

In the fourth chapter, we attained our third objective of examining the longitudinal effect of perceived economic inequality in everyday life on tolerance of inequality and on attitudes toward redistribution over time. We carried out a longitudinal study with four waves of the Chilean population. We aimed to replicate the experimental results and provide greater ecological validity for this line of research.

In the final chapter, we discuss the main results of this thesis. We reflect on whether the perceived economic inequality in everyday life's scale is a better instrument than the existing ones which also measure perceived inequality. We describe the reasons

why we believe that our results of perceived economic inequality in everyday life differ from previous studies (García-Sánchez et al., 2019; Trump, 2018; Willis et al., 2015). We discuss why we found the effects on intolerance of inequality and attitudes toward redistribution. We note the limitations and practical implications of our investigation and include our proposals for future research. We also develop the main conclusions of the thesis.

The empirical chapters are presented as scientific articles. By September 2020, two articles were already published and a further two were under review in scientific journals. Given this format, some themes or ideas may be presented repeatedly throughout the text. We have unified the bibliographic references at the end of this work. Following the guidelines of the International Graduate School of the University of Granada to obtain an international doctoral degree, the introduction, discussion, and abstract are written in Spanish; the overview, the empirical chapters, and the final conclusion are in English.

Resumen

La vida contemporánea está caracterizada por una extrema y creciente desigualdad económica (Piketty, 2020). En términos globales, en las últimas tres décadas el 1% más rico de la población mundial ha incrementado su riqueza el doble que el 50% menos aventajado (Alvarado et al., 2017). Además, se prevé que la crisis socio-sanitaria de la COVID-19 agudice aún más la desigualdad económica (Rodríguez-Bailón, 2020). La presente investigación busca conocer cuáles son los efectos psicosociales de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana.

A pesar de que estudios previos han examinado las consecuencias de la percepción de desigualdad, usualmente han utilizado medidas abstractas (e.g., brechas salariales o medidas diagramáticas; García-Sánchez et al., 2018). Sin embargo, la literatura señala que las personas evalúan la realidad acorde a las características más accesibles y prominentes de su entorno cercano y de sus grupos de referencia (Dawtry et al., 2015). Así entonces, en la presente tesis nos centramos en desarrollar una escala de percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana para conocer su relación con algunas importantes variables psicosociales, una manipulación experimental para profundizar en la relación causa-efecto de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana, un estudio longitudinal para replicar los efectos encontrados brindando una mayor validez ecológica y un análisis cualitativo exploratorio para conocer las dimensiones de la vida cotidiana que se utilizan para describir a los/as amigos/as con más y con menos dinero.

En primera instancia, presentamos un estudio exploratorio y un estudio confirmatorio en los cuales la escala de percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana se muestra como un instrumento unidimensional, válido y fiable. La escala predice la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad por encima de la medida de brechas salariales (que es el instrumento más utilizado hasta el momento para medir la percepción de desigualdad). Además, encontramos una asociación entre la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana y la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad, especialmente en las personas que se autodefinen con una ideología política de centro-derecha.

Seguidamente, confirmamos que la escala de percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana, además de predecir la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad por encima de las brechas salariales, también lo hace por encima de la medida diagramática más utilizada en la literatura. Asimismo, a través de los experimentos encontramos un efecto causal de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida

cotidiana sobre la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad, y un efecto indirecto sobre las actitudes hacia la redistribución (a través de la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad). Por último, un mini meta-análisis usando ideología política, clase social, sexo y edad como covariables corroboraron los resultados. Todos estos estudios fueron pre-registrados y los datos cuentan con acceso abierto.

Luego replicamos los resultados encontrados con un estudio longitudinal. Con esta metodología aportamos mayor validez ecológica a los resultados anteriores ya que confirmamos, a través del tiempo, el efecto directo de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana sobre la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad y su efecto indirecto sobre las actitudes hacia la redistribución. Además, encontramos un efecto directo de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana sobre las actitudes hacia la desigualdad a través del tiempo.

Por último, encontramos que las categorías más salientes que utilizaron las personas participantes para describir la desigualdad económica fueron el consumo, las oportunidades, el tiempo libre y la salud mental. Además, algunas personas participantes utilizaron estrategias compensatorias para mitigar su percepción de desigualdad. De forma exploratoria encontramos que estos indicadores cotidianos influencian el nivel de percepción de desigualdad entre sus amigos/as y el apoyo a políticas redistributivas. Los datos de este estudio también se encuentran en acceso abierto.

El estudio de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana es importante para expandir el conocimiento de cómo la desigualdad incide en los procesos psicológicos asociados a la disparidad de recursos. Se espera que, a mediano y largo plazo, los resultados generados sean útiles para elaborar políticas que busquen la disminución de la desigualdad y sus consecuencias perniciosas.

Capítulo 1.
Introducción

Psicología social de la desigualdad económica

La desigualdad económica en el mundo ha crecido rápidamente en los últimos años (Piketty, 2020; Wilkinson y Pickett, 2017), y se espera que siga creciendo en el futuro (Alvaredo et al., 2017). En términos globales, el decil más rico de la humanidad es dueño del 85% de la riqueza, mientras que la mitad de la población mundial solamente dispone del 1% de la riqueza que se genera (Naciones Unidas, 2020). En términos contextuales, España es uno de los países más desiguales de la Unión Europea (EUROSTAT, 2018) y América Latina es la región más desigual del mundo (Pérez, 2014).

A pesar de su persistencia histórica (Gootenberg, 2010), la desigualdad económica no es natural, es el resultado de un proceso de construcción social y de distintas decisiones políticas (Otero et al., 2011). Conceptualmente, el término responde a dos dimensiones básicas: ¿desigualdad de qué?, y ¿desigualdad entre quiénes? (Atkinson, 2015). Desde una postura radical, se asume que la desigualdad de recursos económicos es el resultado de las diferencias de poder en el mercado capitalista; y entre personas de diferentes grupos sociales, fundamentalmente, entre clases sociales (Pérez, 2014).

La desigualdad económica se ha concebido como una disparidad basada en tres aspectos fundamentales: desigualdad de riqueza, desigualdad de ingresos y desigualdad de salarios (Brown-Iannuzzi, Lundberg et al., 2017b). La desigualdad de riqueza es la categoría más amplía y se refiere a todo el capital o activos financieros que posea una persona, por ejemplo propiedades, inversiones o cualquier ingreso económico. La desigualdad de ingresos se refiere a salarios, ayudas sociales, bonos o retornos de inversiones. Y por último, la desigualdad de salarios hace alusión a un aspecto más concreto de los recursos que poseen las personas, al referirse exclusivamente a los ingresos obtenidos a través del empleo (Brown-Iannuzzi, Lundberg et al., 2017b).

La desigualdad no refleja el promedio de bienestar, el malestar económico, ni la pobreza de un país. La desigualdad refleja la distribución de recursos económicos: la diferencia entre los que más y menos tienen en un contexto determinado (Brown-Iannuzi y McKee, 2019). Así entonces, es un fenómeno eminentemente relacional, en el cual algunas personas y grupos sociales se apropian de la producción social, económica y simbólica, en detrimento de otras personas y otros grupos (Pérez, 2014).

Podríamos cuestionarnos ¿qué tiene que ver la desigualdad económica con la psicología? La investigación ha mostrado que la desigualdad económica impacta negativamente las relaciones sociales y los procesos psicológicos (Carvacho y Álvarez, 2019). Las personas que viven en sociedades más desiguales tienen menos confianza interpersonal (Elgar y Aitken, 2011; Wilkinson y Pickett, 2017), mayor ansiedad por el estatus (De Botton, 2005; Layte y Whelan, 2014; Melita et al., 2020), menos satisfacción con la vida (Oishi et al., 2011; Schalembieir, 2018), y suelen ser más individualistas y competitivas (Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2019b), entre otros efectos psicológicos.

Por ello, cada vez se reconoce más la necesidad de contar con una psicología que aborde cómo las sociedades se estructuran a través de los ingresos económicos y la riqueza, más allá de la psicología que se centra exclusivamente en analizar las relaciones intergrupales (Carvacho y Álvarez, 2019; Stephen et al., 2014). Sin embargo, a pesar de ser un campo de investigación de especial relevancia, la psicología social de la desigualdad apenas recientemente ha comenzado a dar sus primeros pasos (Jetten y Peters, 2019; Rodríguez-Bailón et al., 2020).

La psicología social de la desigualdad se cuestiona, entre otros aspectos: ¿cómo y por qué afecta la desigualdad económica la forma en que las personas sienten, piensan y actúan?, ¿qué pueden aportar las teorías psicosociales y la investigación empírica sobre los procesos psicológicos que hacen que la desigualdad se mantenga? (Manstead, 2018). Las respuestas de las personas a la desigualdad económica se ven influenciadas por diferentes procesos psicosociales como los implicados en las comparaciones sociales, la privación relativa, la percepción de justicia, la identidad social, las relaciones de poder y las ideologías. En este sentido, la psicología social puede ser útil para explicar los procesos a través de los cuales la desigualdad tiene consecuencias negativas para las personas y las sociedades, las dinámicas grupales que promueven el mantenimiento de la desigualdad y la importancia de la percepción subjetiva en estos procesos (Jetten y Peters, 2019).

La psicología social de la desigualdad tiene un interés común en estudiar cómo, por qué y bajo qué condiciones las personas se perciben diferentes, y como consecuencia, acceden diferencialmente a los recursos valorados por la sociedad. La desigualdad no es solo resultado del conflicto, la competición, la represión y explotación, también es resultado de la exclusión y la devaluación. Las relaciones interpersonales, las creencias

culturales compartidas y la desigualdad de recursos simbólicos reproducen la desigualdad económica (McLeod et al., 2014).

La investigación en este campo ofrece una visión renovada de un problema teórico más general: cómo la estructura social afecta a los procesos psicológicos (Carvacho y Álvarez, 2019). Sin embargo, presenta dos desafíos importantes. Por un lado, la necesidad de desarrollar una teoría general integradora; por el otro, evitar enfocarse exclusivamente en el individuo, ignorando los determinantes sociales del comportamiento (Hollander y Howard, 2000; Moya y Fiske, 2017).

El horizonte de la psicología social de la desigualdad económica es contribuir con conocimiento científico a la reducción de uno de los principales problemas de las sociedades actuales. Nuestro objetivo en el presente capítulo es justificar la importancia de considerar la percepción de la desigualdad en el análisis de las consecuencias psicosociales de la desigualdad económica (Jetten y Peters, 2019; Martín-Baró, 1983/1990). Por tanto, a continuación presentamos una revisión teórica que muestra la relevancia de esta variable.

Percepción de desigualdad económica

La información económica que es visible o voluntariamente compartida es limitada. Por lo general, las personas con dinero ocultan su riqueza por interés personal y las personas en condición de pobreza por vergüenza (Son Hing et al., 2019). Además, lo que las personas creen saber sobre los niveles de desigualdad con frecuencia es erróneo y sesgado, ya que no cuentan con toda la información sobre la distribución de recursos económicos en los contextos en los que viven (Gimpelson y Treisman, 2018). Éstas, entre otras razones, determinan la disparidad que se ha encontrado entre la desigualdad objetiva y la desigualdad percibida subjetivamente (Bublitz, 2017; Engelhardt y Wagener, 2014; Kuhn, 2019; Niehues, 2014). Se propone que debido a la gran brecha que existe entre la desigualdad subjetiva y objetiva, es la percepción de desigualdad, más allá que la desigualdad objetiva, la que tiene una mayor incidencia en las actitudes y el comportamiento (Curhan et al., 2014; Han et al., 2012; Loveless, 2013).

Conceptualización de la percepción de desigualdad económica

La percepción es un proceso cognitivo a través del cual reconocemos, organizamos y damos sentido a los estímulos del ambiente (Martín-Baró, 1983/1990; Sternberg, 1999). Las personas no son procesadores pasivos o mecánicos de la información, son activas en configurar lo que perciben y dotarlo de sentido (Martín-Baró, 1983/1990). La percepción de desigualdad económica es la percepción individual de cómo se distribuyen los recursos económicos entre las personas que conforman una sociedad (García-Sánchez, Willis, Rodríguez-Bailón, Palacio et al., 2018b; Kim et al., 2017).

El proceso cognitivo a través del cual los individuos perciben desigualdad económica incluye dos subprocesos: la estimación de la magnitud de las diferencias económicas y la de los principios que gobiernan la distribución de recursos (Han et al., 2012; Janmaat, 2013). Hasta el momento, la investigación psicosocial ha profundizado fundamentalmente en: (a) la percepción de la distribución de las diferencias de ingreso y riqueza, (b) las creencias que explican o justifican la desigualdad y (c) las evaluaciones acerca de la justicia de la distribución de recursos (García-Sánchez, Willis, Rodríguez-Bailón, García-Castro et al., 2018a; Janmaat, 2013).

Por lo general, las personas subestiman los niveles de desigualdad real. Esta subestimación, entre otras razones, se debe al desconocimiento sobre los ingresos económicos de las élites financieras (Son Hing et al., 2019). Los sesgos ideológicos o la posición que las personas ocupan dentro de la jerarquía social inciden en su percepción de la desigualdad (Bobzien, 2019; Franko, 2017). Además, la evidencia señala que la forma como se pregunta a las personas sobre la desigualdad que perciben incide en la estimación de sus respuestas (Bavetta et al., 2020; Son Hing et al., 2019).

¿Cómo se ha medido la percepción de desigualdad económica?

La percepción de desigualdad económica no es directamente observable. Generalmente, encontramos esta información a través de medidas indirectas de dicho constructo (Bavetta et al., 2019; Bavetta et al., 2020). Hasta el momento se han desarrollado algunas formas de evaluar la desigualdad económica pero no hay consenso sobre cómo conceptualizarla, operacionalizarla ni medirla (Choi, 2019). Diferentes métodos dan lugar a marcadas diferencias en la estimación de los niveles de desigualdad

percibida (Arsenio, 2018; Eriksson y Simpson, 2012; Eriksson y Simpson, 2013; Hauser y Norton, 2017; Knell y Stix, 2020).

La mayoría de investigaciones se han basado en cuatro técnicas distintas de recolección de información (ver Tabla 1). Primero, en uno de los trabajos más influyentes y que iniciaron esta línea de investigación, se les pedía a las personas asignar porcentualmente los recursos económicos que creían que cada quintil de la sociedad estadounidense poseía (Norton y Ariely, 2011). Está técnica de percepción en la distribución de recursos se ha replicado en otros contextos (Kanbayashi, 2019).

Segundo, por lo general lo que se utiliza en encuestas internacionales de opinión pública son indicadores de carácter genérico compuestos de uno o varios ítems, en los que se utiliza una escala de respuesta tipo Likert para medir el grado de acuerdo con la existencia de desigualdades económicas (Bavetta et al., 2019; Bobzien, 2019). Tercero, otras medidas preguntan sobre la percepción de la brecha salarial entre empleos situados en los extremos de la escalera socioeconómica y crean un índice con esta diferencia. Por último, algunas otras medidas diagramáticas utilizan evaluaciones gráficas que muestran distintos tipos de distribución de recursos entre los cuales las personas participantes escogen el que creen que más se asemeja a la sociedad en la que viven (Bavetta et al., 2019; Castillo et al., 2012).

Tabla 1

Resumen de algunas de las medidas de percepción de desigualdad económica utilizadas en la investigación

Técnica	Descripción	Críticas	Ejemplo
Asignación de recursos	Distribución porcentual percibida de los recursos económicos entre grupos	Complejidad y poca relación con la percepción de las personas	Norton y Ariely (2011)
Indicador de carácter genérico de uno o varios ítems	¿Cuánta desigualdad hay en su país?	Incapacidad de captar la variabilidad del constructo ‘‘percepción de desigualdad económica’’	Oshio y Urakawa (2013)
Brechas salariales	Se pregunta por el salario de una persona trabajadora con un alto y bajo salario en una empresa prototípica del contexto	Desconocimiento de los salarios especialmente más altos, lo que promueve sesgos de respuesta	Willis et al. (2015)
Medidas diagramáticas	Evaluaciones gráficas de distribución de recursos	Poca relación con la percepción de la desigualdad de las personas en su vida cotidiana	Rodríguez-Bailón et al.(2017)

Nota: Elaboración propia.

Las medidas usadas hasta el momento han sido pobremente conceptualizadas y presentan serios problemas de validez de constructo (Helgason y Mérola, 2017; Knell y Stix, 2020; Stephany, 2016). Así mismo, evalúan la desigualdad económica percibida de forma abstracta (Castillo et al., 2012; García-Sánchez et al., 2018a; Knell y Stix, 2020; Trump, 2018). No sabemos con exactitud si la desigualdad económica en la que las personas están pensando se refiere a desigualdades de salarios, ingresos, riqueza, oportunidades económicas, movilidad social o una combinación de todas las demás (Bavetta et al., 2020; Wright, 2018).

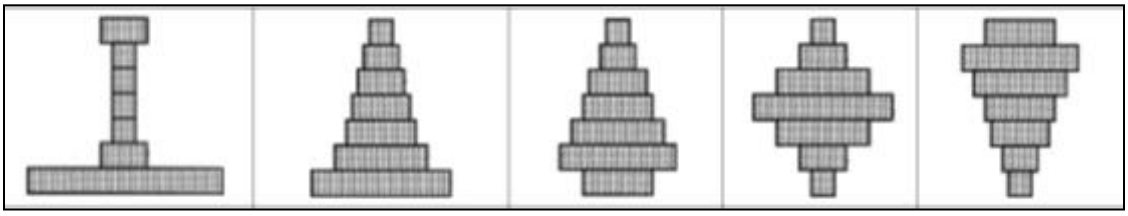
Por ejemplo, la medida de distribución de recursos de Norton y Ariely (2011) ha sido cuestionada por medir la percepción de diferencias económicas en términos porcentuales y distribuirla en quintiles, lo cual es complejo, ya que a las personas

participantes les cuesta transformar su percepción de desigualdad en términos numéricos y proporcionales (Eriksson y Simpson, 2012; Eriksson y Simpson, 2013). Además, en las investigaciones con encuestas, la utilización de medidas de un solo ítem o con un número reducido de ellos se ha criticado por no tener la capacidad de captar toda la variabilidad del constructo (García-Sánchez et al., 2018a).

En su caso, la medida de brechas salariales presenta el problema de que las personas no conocen cuánto gana un individuo ubicado en el escalón más alto y quizás tampoco más bajo de una empresa, lo cual genera una gran variabilidad en las respuestas de los individuos (Knell y Stix, 2020; Page y Goldstein, 2016). La incertidumbre promueve el uso de heurísticos maleables y sesgados por información arbitraria del contexto, especialmente cuando las referencias que deben estimar se encuentran fuera de la experiencia cotidiana de las personas o sus grupos de referencia (Knell y Stix, 2020; Liebig et al., 2015; Markovsky y Eriksson, 2012).

Otro de los problemas que presenta la medida de las brechas salariales es la influencia del sesgo de proporción. Cuando se les pregunta a las personas participantes por las brechas salariales no responden directamente sobre su percepción hacia la desigualdad, responden basándose en las estimaciones numéricas que realizan. El sesgo de proporción señala que las personas perciben las diferencias más grandes cuando éstas se presentan en números grandes que en números pequeños. Este sesgo induce a pensar que las personas perciben y muestran más diferencias en términos numéricos que en términos de proporciones (Pedersen y Mutz, 2019).

Por último, la medida diagramática más utilizada puede verse en la Figura 1. Esta medida suele utilizarse como una variable de intervalo, cuando en realidad es una variable ordinal. La distancia entre las diferentes de opciones no es la misma y es difícil de cuantificar.



Tipo A	Tipo B	Tipo C	Tipo D	Tipo E
Una pequeña élite en la cima, muy pocas personas en el medio y la gran mayoría en la base	Una sociedad como una pirámide con una pequeña élite en la cima, más personas en el medio y la mayoría en la base	Una pirámide, excepto que sólo unas pocas personas están en la base	Una sociedad con la mayoría de las personas en la mitad	Muchas personas cerca de la cima, y sólo unas pocas cerca de la base

Figura 1. Medida diagramática de la percepción de la desigualdad económica (ISSP, 2017)

Conscientes de la dificultad anteriormente citada, Rodríguez-Bailón et al. (2017) introdujeron una nueva medida diagramática para subsanar dicha debilidad (véase Figura 2).

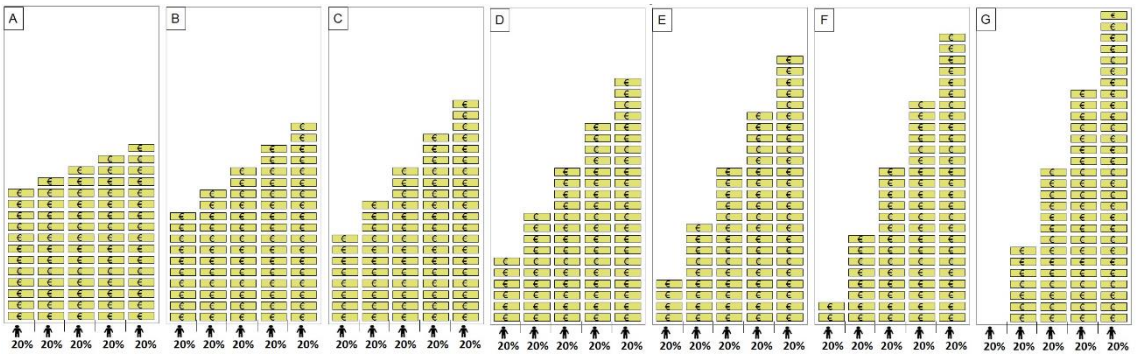


Figura 2. Adaptación de medida diagramática de la percepción de desigualdad económica (Rodríguez-Bailón et al. 2017).

Sin embargo, ambas medidas diagramáticas presentan varios problemas. La forma de la distribución económica que las personas tienen en mente puede no verse reflejada en las formas propuestas. Además, no sabemos cómo las personas evalúan las diferencias entre las opciones de la distribución en las figuras. Por ejemplo, si una figura representa mayor igualdad/desigualdad que otra (Knell y Stix, 2020).

Otros autores han intentado desarrollar una medida de la percepción utilizando una adaptación del coeficiente de Gini. Por ejemplo, Niehues (2014) utilizando la medida diagramática, utiliza el tamaño de las barras dentro de cada figura y las pondera dándoles

un valor numérico. Luego calcula un coeficiente de pseudo-Gini a partir del tamaño de cada barra y sus valores asignados. Así mismo, Willis et al. (2015) les pidieron a las personas participantes colocar fichas dentro un ábaco que pretendía representar la distribución de recursos que consideraban que existía en su país. Luego le daban un valor numérico a cada barra según las fichas colocadas y calculaban lo que llamaron un índice pseudo-Gini para cada persona. Sin embargo, estas medidas de la percepción de desigualdad transformadas en un coeficiente pseudo-Gini tienen muchas limitaciones. Por ejemplo, en la medida utilizada por Niehues (2014), el diferente tamaño de cada barra no fue diseñado para reflejar la distribución de recursos de una sociedad como un todo, el tamaño relativo de cada barra en sí mismo no supone ser significativo. Además, los valores asignados son una decisión *ad hoc* (Choi, 2019).

En síntesis, las medidas usadas hasta el momento no se han basado en las experiencias inmediatas o los grupos cercanos, aspectos con un impacto importante en las actitudes de las personas (Helgason y Mérola, 2017; Knell y Stix, 2020; Stephany, 2016). Algunos trabajos advierten de la necesidad de construcción de medidas diferenciadas de la percepción de desigualdad que puedan capturar estos efectos de la desigualdad en los grupos cercanos de las personas participantes en las investigaciones sobre el tema (Bobzien, 2019; García-Sánchez et al., 2018a; Grundler y Kollner, 2017; Knell y Stix, 2020; Stephany, 2016).

En este trabajo mantenemos que el proceso de percepción de la desigualdad económica va más allá del cálculo de brechas económicas o distribución de recursos, es un fenómeno que se puede percibir y experimentar de muchas formas diferentes que no se restringen al proceso matemático o meramente numérico. En lugar de conceptos abstractos o técnicos, las personas suelen usar referencias biográficas de su vida cotidiana para hablar de la desigualdad económica (García-Sánchez et al., 2018a; Irwin, 2018).

Percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana

La vida cotidiana se compone de las experiencias habituales que viven las personas (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Incluye su vida pública y privada, las rutinas laborales o educativas, la movilidad del día a día, los lugares que se frecuentan, el tiempo libre y el hogar (Lefebre, 1977/2014).

Conceptualización

La percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana se conceptualiza como las experiencias habituales en las que se presentan diferencias en los recursos económicos de las personas (Akyelken, 2020). Está condicionada por determinantes contextuales como el lugar de residencia, o individuales, como el grupo de referencia y la comparación social con otras personas y grupos (García-Sánchez et al., 2018a).

Diferentes trabajos apoyan la importancia de medir la percepción de desigualdad en la vida cotidiana en lugar de la percepción de desigualdad en general (Boudreau y MacKenzie, 2018; Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2017; Cruces et al., 2013; Fatke, 2018; Gimpelson y Treisman, 2018; Gonthier, 2017; Grundler y Kollner, 2017; Helgason y Mérola, 2017; Mijs, 2019; Nair, 2018; Newman y Kane, 2017; Oshio y Urakawa, 2014; Page y Goldstein, 2016), debido a que ésta se asemeja más a las vivencias de las personas, y produce resultados más acordes a sus experiencias (García-Sánchez et al., 2018a; Newman et al., 2018).

Las personas forman su percepción de la desigualdad a través de su experiencia cotidiana observando diferencias entre grupos de individuos. Quienes perciben variabilidad en la cantidad de recursos que poseen personas cercanas -como familia, amigos y grupos locales- los sienten de forma más visceral e inmediata (Gugushvili et al., 2020).

Las implicaciones de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana dependen de cómo las personas las entienden y experimentan. La proximidad de la desigualdad puede provocar emociones negativas (i.e., indignación, enojo, tristeza, etc.) que pueden llevar a los individuos a un cambio en sus actitudes hacia la redistribución económica. Por otro lado, si la desigualdad es vista como algo muy abstracto o lejano a la realidad propia puede crear mayor distancia psicológica y puede llevar a las personas a despreocuparse de estos temas y no prestarles atención (García-Sánchez et al., 2018a).

Las personas perciben la desigualdad a través de las dinámicas intergrupales e interpersonales que viven en su cotidianidad. Por ejemplo, a la hora de estimar diferencias económicas se basan en actores sociales (clases sociales, élites, las personas pobres y trabajadoras), en la discriminación a las personas pobres, la exclusión social y la privación de estándares básicos de vida de algunos individuos y grupos (García-Sánchez et al.,

2018a). Además, las personas reconocen que las instituciones reproducen la desigualdad en servicios como los sanitarios y educativos en los cuales se favorecen a las personas de mayor estatus a expensas del resto (García-Sánchez et al., 2018a). En la Figura 3 se presenta una síntesis conceptual de los componentes de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana: los grupos de referencia, la comparación social y el contexto cotidiano.

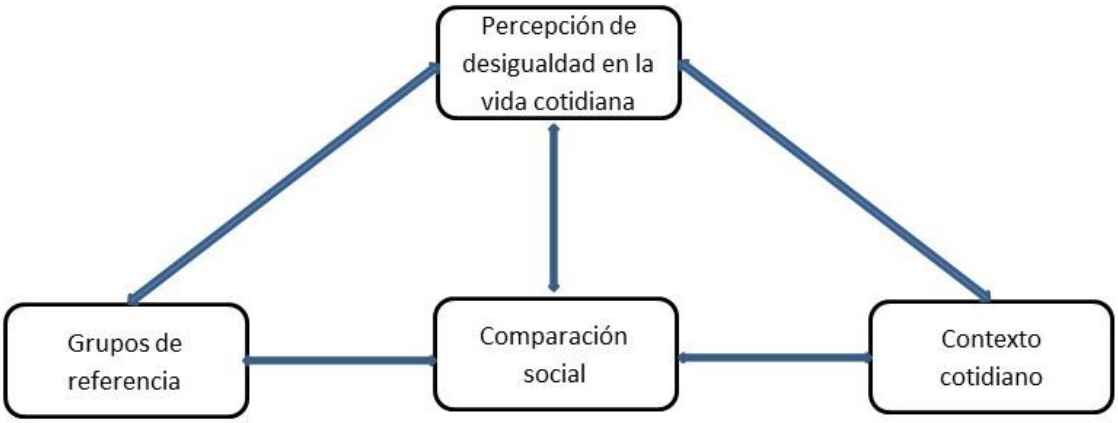


Figura 3. Componentes de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana

A continuación, se presenta cada componente de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana.

Grupos de referencia

La Teoría de los Grupos de Referencia señala que las personas recogen la información de la distribución económica de su propia experiencia y de las experiencias de sus familiares, amigos/as, compañeros/as de trabajo, incorporando solo pequeñas dosis de información sobre la sociedad en su conjunto (Evans y Kelley, 2017; Kanbayashi, 2019; Molina et al., 2019, Orton y Rowlingson, 2007). Las personas suelen extrapolar esta información de su grupo de referencia a toda la sociedad (Brown-Ianuzzi et al., 2015; Cruces et al., 2013; Evans y Kelley, 2017; Flanagan y Kornbluh, 2017; Irwin, 2018, Ishida, 2018, Mijs, 2019; Nair, 2018; Ordabayeva y Fernandes, 2017). Sin embargo, estos círculos sociales no son representativos, se construyen, lo que crea diferencias sistemáticas en la percepción de la desigualdad (Cruces et al., 2013; Dawtry et al., 2015, Flanagan y Kornbluh, 2017; Ishida, 2018).

La forma en que las personas evalúan las circunstancias de los otros individuos tiene gran influencia en su propio comportamiento. Las inferencias de cómo está distribuida y cómo funciona la sociedad se realizan muestreando sus ambientes sociales inmediatos (Galesic et al., 2012; Newman, 2014). Muestrear hace referencia al proceso de selección de una serie de estímulos determinados frente a un universo de posibilidades (Bergh y Lindskog, 2019).

Los grupos de referencia específicos de los individuos pueden ejercer una influencia notable en la estimación que éstos hacen de la desigualdad a su alrededor a través del heurístico de accesibilidad, un sesgo perceptual sistemático, bajo el cual los individuos forman sus impresiones a partir de su círculo cercano más accesible y saliente (Evans y Kelley, 2017; Flanagan y Kornbluh, 2017; Kanbayashi, 2019). Así, los individuos hacen un sondeo informal de sí mismos y de sus redes sociales resumiendo sus observaciones en ideas y actitudes sobre la realidad que los rodea (Evans y Kelley, 2017; Flanagan y Kornbluh, 2017). Sin embargo, normalmente las personas desconocen la poca representatividad de sus grupos de referencia y no corrigen esta deficiencia de ninguna forma (Bergh y Lindskog, 2019).

El sesgo proveniente del muestreo de grupos sociales se puede poner en marcha sin control por parte de los perceptores, siendo fruto principalmente de la forma en la que los recursos económicos están distribuidos en el ambiente más cercano. Aun así, las personas no son necesariamente pasivas en su búsqueda de información. Algunas veces su muestreo está motivado por alguna estrategia implícita o explícita de sesgo endogrupal (Bergh y Lindskog, 2019).

Los grupos de referencia más importantes para las personas son aquellos con los que más interactúan (Clark y Senik, 2010, Irwin, 2015). Por ejemplo, se ha predicho mejor los resultados de las elecciones nacionales preguntándole a las personas por quiénes van a votar sus amigos/as en lugar de por quiénes van a votar ellas mismas (Galesic et al., 2018). Además, se ha encontrado que contar con un conocido/a que tenga problemas económicos y además hablar de política, aumentó el apoyo a la redistribución (Newman, 2014).

Evidentemente los grupos de referencia no son la única fuente a la hora de estimar desigualdad económica. La realidad de la estructura social, las instituciones, los medios de comunicación y la historia de cada lugar también influyen. Lo que varía son los grupos

de referencia de las personas y la distribución de recursos económicos dentro de ellos. Sin embargo, el mecanismo psicológico consistente en extraer la información de la distribución de recursos en la sociedad a través de los grupos de referencia es universal y consistente a través de las culturas; lo que varía es la realidad social (Evans y Kelly, 2017, Kanbayashi, 2019).

Comparación social

La desigualdad económica es un concepto relacional que se asocia con la comparación de los ingresos (Cheung y Lucas, 2018; Sommet et al., 2018). Comparar es una forma de evaluar si dos objetos son iguales o diferentes (Festinger, 1954). Las comparaciones son rutinarias e importantes, ya que las personas entienden los procesos sociales y su lugar en el mundo a través de ellas (Norton, 2013). Satisfacen la necesidad psicológica de crear una imagen positiva de sí mismo/a y de su grupo (Condon y Wichowsky, 2020).

La percepción y las respuestas a la desigualdad en la vida cotidiana se deben en gran parte a la comparación social. La percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana envuelve un proceso de comparación social dentro del grupo de referencia, uno de los referentes más importantes en la vida de las personas (Leach y Vliek, 2008). De hecho, el ingreso económico del círculo social es tan importante para el bienestar como el ingreso personal (Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2005).

La desigualdad económica segrega a las personas y crea aislamiento social entre grupos económicos, disminuyendo la oportunidad de comparaciones sociales entre clases sociales diferentes (Condon y Wichowsky, 2020). Además, las comparaciones sociales en términos económicos tienen otros efectos más allá de las diferencias en la estimación de la desigualdad. Algunos estudios describen cómo personas que viven con otras de su misma condición económica cuentan con más creencias meritocráticas, mientras quienes conviven con grupos más heterogéneos son más propensas a pensar que el éxito se debe a situaciones más aleatorias e incontrolables (Mijs, 2019; Newman et al., 2015; Son Hing et al., 2019; Wu y Cho, 2017).

Aquellas personas que interactúan en ambientes sociales más homogéneos cuentan con una tendencia a utilizar atribuciones más individualistas, al no contar con información diversa que les brinde una perspectiva diferente de la realidad. Por el

contrario, quienes se desarrollan en ambientes más heterogéneos tienen una visión más estructural de la desigualdad al contar con información más diversa sobre las causas de la desigualdad en la vida cotidiana (Mijis, 2018; Pachur et al., 2013; Son Hing et al., 2019).

La desigualdad económica incrementa la comparación social a través del aumento de la frecuencia y a su vez, de las consecuencias de dicha comparación (Brown-Iannuzzi y Mckee, 2019; Cheung y Lucas, 2016). Las comparaciones hacia arriba (i.e., con individuos en mejor posición) o hacia abajo (i.e., compararse con individuos con peor posición social) son diferentes. Por ejemplo, se ha observado que aquellas personas en circunstancias aventajadas se comparan con quienes están en mejores y peores estatus socioeconómicos, sintiéndose relativamente mejor y más seguras (Irwin, 2015). No obstante, la literatura señala que por lo general son más frecuentes las comparaciones hacia arriba (con las personas más ricas) que con las personas más pobres, por eso es más común el sentimiento de deprivación que de gratificación relativa (Condon y Wichowsky, 2020), y esto es especialmente cierto en contextos con una alta desigualdad (Sanchéz-Rodríguez et al., 2019b).

La percepción económica del grupo de referencia influye también en las actitudes hacia las políticas redistributivas (Cruces et al., 2013, Newman, 2014; Senik, 2009). Aquellas personas que hacen más comparaciones económicas apoyan más políticas redistributivas (Clark y Senik, 2010; Senik, 2009). Las comparaciones favorables disminuyen las demandas de redistribución y las comparaciones desfavorables aumentan las demandas de redistribución (Senik, 2009). Las personas que expresan mayores demandas de redistribución declaran estar mucho peor que las personas con las que se comparan (Condon y Wichowsky, 2020).

Percepción de desigualdad económica en el contexto cotidiano

Las concepciones de las personas sobre los asuntos políticos y la sociedad son el resultado de su experiencia cotidiana debido a la observación casual en varios contextos sociales. Pasivamente y de forma rutinaria, esta información influye en la percepción de la realidad a través de procesos que pueden ser automáticos. Además, la información más accesible en la memoria es más probable que influyan en las inferencias subsecuentes (Ishida, 2018; Mijs, 2019).

Las experiencias que las personas utilizan para hacer inferencias causales se construyen en la cotidianidad. El proceso implicado se basa en las experiencias directas y en la información con la que cuentan los individuos para juzgar la realidad. Lo que las personas aprenden de sus ambientes no se basa solamente en lo que les han enseñado o les han dicho, sino en la inferencia que hacen de la información con la que cuentan. Es un proceso inferencial inductivo, a través del cual construyen sus ideas sobre la desigualdad a través de sus vivencias en el contexto en el que viven y con las personas con las que se relacionan. Este proceso se diferencia de lo que podría ser un proceso deductivo a través del cual las personas podrían explicar las causas de la desigualdad, por ejemplo, a través de una creencia generalizada en la meritocracia (Mijs, 2018).

Las personas que residen en ambientes caracterizados por una gran desigualdad económica es probable que observen un incremento de la desigualdad al atravesar barrios pobres y ricos, al hablar con vecinos/as y amigos/as, leer el periódico o ver las noticias sobre este tema. Resultados empíricos señalan que personas de lugares con mayores niveles de desigualdad perciben un mayor incremento de la misma que aquellas personas que residen en estados más igualitarios (Kelly y Moore-Clingenpeel, 2012; Minkoff y Lyons, 2019; Xu y Garand, 2010).

Así mismo, los ambientes más inmediatos a las personas ejercen gran influencia en la percepción de la desigualdad económica (Irwin, 2015; Sommet et al., 2018). Cuando los individuos deben estimar la desigualdad en su país, contestan describiendo la desigualdad alrededor de ellos (Flanagan y Kornbluh, 2017; Hauser y Norton, 2017, Ishida, 2018, Nair, 2018). Además, el contexto local incide en el comportamiento político, especialmente cuando éste se experimenta a nivel muy local y cuando es saliente para las personas (Larsen et al., 2019). En general, las investigaciones señalan que la desigualdad económica en el contexto local tiene efectos psicosociales más importantes y robustos que la percepción de desigualdad del país. Las personas conocen y se preocupan más por su contexto inmediato que por los lugares más alejados de su lugar de residencia (Newman, 2020; Newman et al., 2015).

Dentro de los ambientes que promueven mayores experiencias de desigualdad/igualdad se encuentran el barrio, y el colegio en la juventud (Mijs, 2018). Por eso, los lugares donde viven las personas son importantes. Los barrios permiten a los individuos interactuar entre sí y contar con experiencias interpersonales de observación y

emulación con consecuencias psicosociales. Los barrios son parte transcendental de la vida cotidiana de las personas, facilitan el contagio social, la socialización colectiva, las redes sociales y la privación relativa (Kearns et al., 2014).

Uno de los efectos psicosociales estudiados del contexto local es su influencia en el apoyo a políticas redistributivas. Quienes viven en contextos de mayor desigualdad económica tienden a votar por aquellos/as políticos/as que apoyan más políticas redistributivas, especialmente cuando tienen mayor información política (Newman y Hayes, 2019). La percepción de desigualdad económica en el contexto local incide en el apoyo a sindicatos (Newman y Kane, 2017), y en los lugares donde los sindicatos son más fuertes, hay más apoyo a políticas redistributivas como respuesta a la alta desigualdad económica (MacDonald, 2019).

El incremento de la desigualdad económica moldea las preferencias por la redistribución dependiendo del contexto económico y del tipo de redistribución considerado. El contexto inmediato tiene mayor influencia en las actitudes hacia la redistribución que el contexto nacional (Franko, 2016). Las personas que viven en ambientes de menores ingresos económicos ponen más énfasis en la desigualdad creciente y apoyan en mayor medida la redistribución (Franko, 2016). Así mismo, se ha encontrado que aquellas personas con mayores ingresos son más generosas cuando perciben que la desigualdad del estado en el que viven es menor que las personas que perciben que la desigualdad donde viven es mayor (Coté et al., 2015).

Correlatos de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana

La investigación psicosocial señala que hay dos variables que se asocian con la percepción de desigualdad: el interés personal, entendido como el lugar que se ocupa dentro de la jerarquía social (clase social) y la ideología (Mijis, 2018; Wu y Chou, 2017).

Figura 4. Correlatos de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana

Clase social

En este trabajo, la clase social se entiende desde la tradición marxista como el grupo al cual pertenece una persona en función del lugar que ocupa dentro de la producción social (Marx, 1867/2016). Dicho grupo varía en relación al volumen global del capital con el que cuente y a la relación con los medios de producción (Antunes, 2000). Esta adscripción se produce independientemente de la conciencia que las personas tengan al respecto (Martín-Baró, 1983/2004).

Diversas investigaciones ponen de manifiesto la relación entre la percepción de desigualdad y las propias circunstancias económicas y sociales de las personas (Bobzien, 2019; Castillo, 2011, 2012; García-Sánchez et al., 2018b; García- Sánchez et al., 2019; Hauser y Norton, 2017, Minkoff y Lyons, 2019), debido a que diversos contextos socioeconómicos producen diferentes imágenes de desigualdad (Bailey et al., 2013; Flanagan y Kornbluh, 2017; Hadler, 2005; Lierse, 2019; Minkoff y Lyons, 2019; Steele y Breznau, 2019; Oisho y Urakawa, 2014). Incluso, algunos autores argumentan, que la combinación del grupo de referencia y la clase social dan lugar a la percepción y la comprensión de la desigualdad económica (Evans y Kelley, 2004; Evans y Kelley, 2017; Irwin, 2018; Kanbayashi, 2019; Knell y Stix, 2020; Minkoff y Lyons, 2019).

Las personas de clase alta, con mayores ingresos económicos y nivel educativo discriminan mejor la desigualdad económica, que las personas de clase baja (Castillo et al., 2012; Evans y Kelley, 2017), especialmente en las áreas urbanas (Akyelken, 2020). Este resultado se ha explicado señalando que las personas de clase social más alta tienen una percepción más diversa de la sociedad que las personas de clase social baja y suelen tener mayor información sobre las estructuras salariales (i.e., conocen mejor los sueldos más altos y bajos). Este resultado pone de manifiesto que la relación entre las condiciones objetivas y la percepción de desigualdad no es directa, sino que se encuentra moderada por el estatus socioeconómico y el lugar de residencia (Binelli y Loveless, 2016).

Otras investigaciones señalan que sentirse de clase más alta, aumenta la percepción de que la actual distribución económica es justa, y esto reduce la medida en que las personas perciben la sociedad como desigual (Evans y Kelley, 2017; Rodríguez-Bailón et al., 2017). Además, vivir en un contexto más desigual disminuye las creencias meritocráticas (Newman et al., 2015).

Ideología

La ideología se entiende como un grupo de ideas compartidas por un conjunto de individuos. Funciona como un heurístico que organiza esquemas cognitivos que les permiten a las personas navegar en el mundo social. Les ayuda a reducir complejidad, compensar la falta de información y a entender de forma eficiente la información política y social. Es construida a través de la socialización durante las primeras etapas del ciclo vital (Meier, 2008; Steele y Breznau, 2019).

La ideología política influye en la percepción de desigualdad económica (Anderson y Singer, 2008; Hadler, 2005; Han et al., 2012; Son Hing et al., 2019). Algunos ejemplos de los efectos directos de la ideología sobre la percepción de desigualdad señalan que las personas conservadoras perciben menor desigualdad que las personas liberales, fundamentalmente porque se encuentran más satisfechas con el sistema, porque prefieren el principio de equidad (resultados proporcionales a las contribuciones) que el de igualdad (resultados iguales independientemente de las contribuciones), creen más fuertemente que el éxito se debe a esfuerzos individuales y tienen una visión más optimista de la vida (Chambers et al., 2013; Son Hing et al., 2019), entre otras. La orientación política también hace que las personas de derecha consideren en menor proporción que la desigualdad en su país es muy grande (Son Hing et al., 2019).

Así mismo, las personas de izquierda tienden a considerar la distribución como injusta ya que no consideran que el éxito económico se debe al esfuerzo personal o en general a factores individuales que se puedan controlar (Anderson y Singer, 2008; Bavetta et al., 2019; Hadler, 2005). Por ejemplo, justificar más el sistema aumenta la percepción de que la actual distribución es justa, y esto reduce la extensión de que las personas vean la sociedad como desigual (Rodríguez-Bailón et al., 2017). Además, aquellas personas con mayor dominancia social perciben menos diferencias económicas (Kteily et al., 2017), al igual que aquellas con altas creencias meritocráticas (Castillo et al., 2019; Hadler, 2005; Hauser y Norton, 2017). Considerando la religión como una ideología, las personas con mayores creencias religiosas consideran que las diferencias de ingresos son más pequeñas (Hadler, 2005).

Como no puede ser de otra manera, las personas ajustan sus ideales en relación a la distribución de los recursos en función de su percepción de la realidad (Mijs, 2018). Diferentes investigaciones también señalan que los efectos de la percepción de desigualdad son moderados por las ideologías de las personas (García-Sánchez, et al., 2018b; García-Sánchez et al., 2019; García-Sánchez et al., 2020; Willis et al., 2015). Por ejemplo, percibir más desigualdad produce: que se apoyen más políticas redistributivas en aquellas personas que rechazan la justificación de la desigualdad (García-Sánchez, et al., 2018b; García-Sánchez et al., 2020), que la igualdad que se considera ideal sea mayor para quienes cuentan con creencias meritocráticas y de igualdad de oportunidades (García-Sánchez et al., 2019), así como entre quiénes legitiman la desigualdad (Willis et al., 2015).

Efectos psicosociales de la percepción de desigualdad económica

La percepción de desigualdad económica genera efectos psicosociales y en la salud de las personas. Por ejemplo, en términos de la salud en general se ha encontrado que se relaciona con fumar (Siahpush et al., 2006), con problemas de alcoholismo (Chung y Lee, 2015), negativamente con el bienestar subjetivo (Oshio, y Urakawa, 2014), con el suicidio en hombres (Fernquinst, 2003), y con la salud auto-reportada (Han, 2014).

La percepción de elevados niveles de desigualdad conduce a estados psicológicos en los cuales el estrés y la atención a la inmediatez de la subsistencia perjudica a las personas (Loveless, 2013). Por ejemplo, en términos psicosociales las investigaciones señalan que una mayor percepción de desigualdad económica inhibe la cooperación

(Johnson y Smirnov, 2018; Nishi et al., 2015), incrementa la percepción de amenaza y las actitudes negativas hacia grupos minoritarios (De Botton 2005), disminuye la confianza y aumenta la ansiedad por el estatus (Buttrick y Oishi, 2016), disminuye la satisfacción con la vida (Schalembieir, 2018), promueve la percepción de competencia que influye sobre las metas personales y motivaciones y orientaciones social (Sommet et al., 2018).

Además, se ha encontrado que la percepción de una alta desigualdad conlleva desarrollar un auto concepto más individualista, pasando a tener menos importancia su componente relacional y colectivo (Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2019b). Así mismo, algunas investigaciones señalan que la alta percepción de desigualdad hace que las personas de clase media se sientan con menos riqueza (Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2019c; Schneider, 2019).

Entre otras de las consecuencias de la percepción de desigualdad económica, destaca su potencial influencia sobre la protesta social (Jo, 2016; Jo y Choi, 2019; Justino y Martorano, 2016). La percepción de desigualdad económica se asocia con una mayor conciencia de los efectos negativos de la desigualdad, con apoyar la intervención del gobierno para reducir la desigualdad y con una mayor insatisfacción de los ingresos propios (Kuhn, 2019).

En esta tesis, nos centramos en dos de los efectos psicosociales más importantes en aras de reducir la desigualdad económica: la tolerancia a la desigualdad y las actitudes hacia la redistribución.

Tolerancia a la desigualdad

Una de los principales constructos con los que se ha asociado la percepción de desigualdad económica es con la tolerancia a la desigualdad, operacionalizada con la pregunta: ‘‘¿consideras que las diferencias de ingreso en ‘‘País/Región’’ son demasiado grandes?’’ (Gonthier, 2017; Larsen, 2016; Niehues, 2014; Schröder, 2017). Sin embargo, la literatura hasta el momento no señala resultados contundentes. Así mismo, el efecto predictor de la percepción medida con brechas salariales es limitado (Khun, 2015; Knell y Stix, 2020; Shariff et al., 2016).

No obstante, la mayor parte de los estudios encuentran una pequeña relación negativa entre la percepción de desigualdad económica, medida con brechas salariales o con medidas diagramáticas, y la tolerancia a la desigualdad: cuanta más desigualdad se

percibe, menos se tolera (Castillo et al., 2012, Fatke, 2018; Khun, 2015; Knell y Stix, 2020). Esta relación se ha explicado a través de la percepción de justicia. La desigualdad económica no es algo que las personas consideren intolerable o indeseable *per se*, sino que su tolerancia depende de si se considera justa o no (Han et al., 2012; Kuhn, 2011; Son Hing et al., 2019; Trump, 2020).

En esta misma línea, algunas investigaciones han encontrado que la percepción de desigualdad incide en la desigualdad que se considera justa (García-Sánchez et al., 2018b; Salgado, 2019; Willis et al., 2015). Las actitudes hacia la desigualdad se expresan junto con la creencia de la justicia de esta desigualdad y bajo la lógica del merecimiento. Las personas no se oponen a ingresos altos que perciben como merecidos. Esta evaluación se ve influenciada por la percepción y las estrategias cognitivas que generan empatía. La creencia de que la desigualdad es inevitable hace que no se tomen en consideración preguntas sobre la justicia y lo que se podría hacer contra la desigualdad (Bamfield y Horton, 2009).

Por otro lado, algunas personas no solamente toleran la desigualdad, sino que además prefieren ciertos niveles de desigualdad relativa. No por egoísmo o razones morales sino porque consideran la desigualdad como un aliciente psicológico que lleva al avance económico y al incremento del bienestar para todas las personas (Arsenio, 2015; Son Hing et al., 2019; Starmans et al., 2017).

Entre las variables que se asocian con la tolerancia a la desigualdad destacan la percepción de movilidad social, la clase social, la ideología y la cultura de las sociedades. En relación a la percepción de movilidad, cuando las personas perciben que hay mayor posibilidad de ascender económicamente toleran más la desigualdad (Shariff et al., 2016; Trump, 2020).

En esta misma línea, se ha encontrado que la relación entre los ingresos económicos y la aceptación de la desigualdad económica se encuentra moderada por la percepción de movilidad social y la perspectiva futura (i.e., el hecho de estar focalizado en el largo en lugar del corto plazo). Solo cuando la percepción de movilidad y la perspectiva futura del tiempo son altas, mayor ingreso económico se asocia con aceptar más desigualdad y esto lleva a tener menos intenciones de acciones colectivas en contra de dicha desigualdad (Cheng et al., 2019). También se ha encontrado que quienes experimentaron movilidad social ascendente toleran menos la desigualdad en los países

en los cuales perciben que la sociedad desciende, pero toleran más desigualdad en los países en los que perciben que la sociedad avanza (Larsen, 2016).

En relación a la estructura social, las investigaciones señalan que las personas con mayor nivel educativo y clase social toleran más la desigualdad económica (Caricati, 2017; Cheng et al., 2019; LA Roex et al., 2019). Además, cuanto más abajo se encuentren en la escalera social más consideran que las diferencias de ingresos en su sociedad son muy grandes (Caricati, 2017; Cheng et al., 2019; Hadler, 2005; Knell y Stix, 2020; LA Roex et al., 2019; Son Hing et al., 2019). Por último, que las mujeres sean más sensibles a la desigualdad y que la toleren menos se podría explicar a través de su propia experiencia de discriminación patriarcal (Mijis, 2018).

La ideología también condiciona la tolerancia a la desigualdad (Trump, 2020). Las actitudes hacia la desigualdad están determinadas por las ideas que se tengan de ésta. En algunas culturas y contextos económicos, es más fácil y en otros es más difícil, legitimar la desigualdad económica. Por ejemplo, en los países menos prósperos o que tienen menos movilidad, es más común que las personas consideren que la desigualdad es demasiado alta (Son Hing et al., 2019). Además, en aquellos países con mayores creencias meritocráticas, la desigualdad se legitima en mayor medida, y en estos países las personas de bajo estatus son quienes más se oponen a la desigualdad (LA Roex et al., 2019).

En un estudio con niñas y niños se encontró que el contacto entre grupos con diferentes niveles de recursos económicos incidía en el deseo de aumentar la distribución de recursos (Elenbaas, 2019). También se ha señalado que cuando se muestra la riqueza de las personas con mayores recursos económicos se tiende a tolerar menos la desigualdad y a buscar una mayor redistribución (Hauser et al., 2016).

Actitudes hacia la redistribución

Las actitudes son el conjunto de emociones, creencias y comportamientos sobre un objeto determinado, persona o evento. Se trata de una estructura cognoscitivo-emocional que canaliza la significación y orienta el comportamiento (Hogg y Vaughan, 2005). Son útiles para las personas porque dan respuesta a necesidades individuales o grupales (Martín-Baró, 1983/1990).

Las personas siempre han redistribuido de alguna forma los recursos para obtener resultados más equitativos (Bechtel et al., 2017). La redistribución se define como el uso

de impuestos y transferencias sociales que pueden usarse para reducir la desigualdad económica (García-Sánchez et al., 2018b; Luebker, 2014). Así entonces, las actitudes hacia la redistribución son las creencias, sentimientos e intención conductual que las personas tienen sobre la posibilidad de redistribuir recursos económicos entre los integrantes de una sociedad.

Entre una condición objetiva de desigualdad y la respuesta de la gente subyacen la percepción, evaluación y expectativas de las personas (Fatke, 2018). Las preferencias redistributivas pueden ser consecuencias de la percepción y evaluación de la desigualdad económica (Bobzien, 2019). La percepción sobre la desigualdad económica incide más en las preferencias de redistribución que la propia desigualdad objetiva (Choi, 2019; García-Sánchez et al., 2020; Gimpelson y Treisman, 2018; Grundler y Kollner, 2017; Niehues, 2014, Yanai, 2017), entre otras razones porque las personas no conocen el nivel de desigualdad real (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2015; Bublitz, 2017; Evans y Kelley, 2018; Kuhn, 2011; Kuhn, 2012, Niehues, 2014; Yanai, 2017). Por ejemplo, se ha encontrado que cuando las personas votantes piensan que los niveles de desigualdad son demasiado altos e inaceptables, independientemente del nivel de desigualdad existente, demandan mayor redistribución (Choi, 2019; Eriksson y Simpson, 2012; Yanai, 2017).

Se ha estudiado si la relación entre la percepción de desigualdad económica y las preferencias por la redistribución varía en función del nivel socioeconómico de los/as perceptores/as. Los resultados son mixtos. Algunos estudios señalan que la distancia entre la clase media y las personas pobres es más importante que la distancia entre la clase media y las personas ricas para predecir las preferencias por la redistribución (Tóth y Keller, 2013). Sin embargo, lo opuesto también se ha encontrado, que lo importante en la predicción de dichas preferencias es la distancia de donde se ubiquen las personas en relación a la élite (Condon y Wichowsky, 2019).

Aun así, la evidencia señala que cuando los ingresos de las personas pobres aumentan, a pesar que la desigualdad económica también se eleve, la percepción de desigualdad disminuye al igual que el apoyo a políticas redistributivas también (Bredemeier, 2014). Otros estudios también señalan que la relación entre la desigualdad y las actitudes hacia la redistribución se encuentra mediada por el miedo al crimen (Becker, 2019).

Desigualdad económica y actitudes hacia la redistribución. A pesar de los deseos mostrados por los individuos por reducir el nivel de desigualdad económica (Arsenio, 2018; Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2015; Bullock, 2017; Evans y Kelly, 2017; Kiatpongsan y Norton, 2014; Norton y Ariely, 2011), la redistribución de recursos económicos sigue siendo impopular, especialmente entre quiénes se encuentran en lo más alto de la jerarquía social (Bailey et al., 2013; Bartels, 2005; Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2015; Kearns et al., 2014; Lierse, 2019; Ordabayeva y Fernandes, 2017). Sin embargo, las personas pueden percibir desigualdad y querer reducirla, pero no apoyar políticas redistributivas. No obstante, también se encuentran resultados contrarios (Bartels, 2005; Kuziemko et al., 2015; Trump, 2018), lo que nos lleva a concluir que se trata de una relación compleja con evidencia tanto en un sentido como en otro (García-Sánchez et al., 2018b; Trump, 2020; Wright, 2018).

Esta aparente incongruencia en la relación entre la desigualdad económica y el apoyo a políticas redistributivas se ha explicado en la literatura de distintas formas. Una de ellas postula que la posición sobre la desigualdad puede ser ambivalente. Se puede rechazar la desigualdad en el ámbito social, pero aceptarla en el ámbito económico (Boudreau y Mackenzie, 2018). Otra posible razón que podría explicar esta aparente contradicción es que las personas prefieren apoyar políticas que garanticen las oportunidades educativas más que impuestos redistributivos (Franko, 2016; McCall y Kenworty, 2009; Son Hing et al., 2019). Sobre esta cuestión algunos estudios han encontrado que se apoyan más formas no tradicionales de redistribución como programas educativos y de salud porque se centran más en desigualdad de oportunidades que de resultados. Esto se puede deber a que la percepción de desigualdad económica conlleva una percepción de desigualdad de oportunidades (Franko, 2016).

Otra posible razón para explicar la confusa relación entre el deseo de reducir la desigualdad y el apoyo a políticas redistributivas es la ignorancia de las personas sobre los niveles reales de desigualdad (Condon y Wichowsky, 2019). La incidencia de la percepción de desigualdad en el apoyo a las políticas redistributivas no es directa, se encuentra mediada por la magnitud de la desigualdad percibida. Sin embargo, las personas no tienen mucho conocimiento sobre el nivel de desigualdad real (Choi, 2019; Grundler y Kollner, 2017; Kim et al., 2017, Niehues, 2014; Norton y Ariely, 2011; Yania, 2017).

La falta de coherencia que en ocasiones aparece en la investigación sobre el tema entre la estimación de las diferencias económicas y el apoyo a políticas redistributivas no es un tema que se puede explicar exclusivamente a partir de la percepción errónea de la desigualdad económica, sino que también se relaciona con un pobre entendimiento de cómo las políticas redistributivas pueden combatir la desigualdad (Bartels, 2005; Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2015; García-Sánchez et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2016; MacDonald, 2020; Son Hing et al., 2019). Por ejemplo, las personas tienen problemas para manejar la información numérica que les permitiría entender y estimar precisamente la desigualdad de ingresos. Les es difícil entender las implicaciones de políticas que reduzcan la desigualdad o que eleven los ingresos medios de la población. Además, los individuos muestran su preocupación especialmente por la pobreza, no tanto por la equidad de recursos (Kim et al., 2016).

Otra de las razones por las cuales la relación entre la percepción de desigualdad económica y el apoyo a políticas redistributivas no es tan clara como cabría esperar se debe a que la percepción de desigualdad también incide en la falta de confianza en el gobierno y en la falta de conexión entre los temas sociales y las políticas públicas (Arsenio, 2018; Kuziemko et al., 2015; Son Hing et al., 2019). Es decir, aunque las personas estén de acuerdo en que la redistribución pueda ser una estrategia adecuada para reducir la desigualdad, no creen que el gobierno (por falta de capacidad, corrupción, etc.) sea capaz de implementarla. Esta puede ser una de las razones por las que las personas se oponen a aumentar las políticas redistributivas (Arsenio, 2018; Kuziemko et al., 2015).

Así mismo, en algunas ocasiones las personas en condición de pobreza no apoyan las políticas redistributivas. Entre las razones que los estudios sobre este tema han utilizado para explicar esta aparente incoherencia se encuentran el que los individuos más desfavorecidos no entienden el interés económico, que evalúan mal su posición en la sociedad, que consideran no solamente sus ingresos actuales si no también sus ingresos futuros, la influencia de sus creencias religiosas, sus preferencias sociales y la experiencia de dificultades económicas (Chang y Kang, 2018).

Aun así, los estudios que dan cuenta de la relación entre la percepción de desigualdad económica, el deseo de disminuir la desigualdad y el apoyo a políticas redistributivas tienen grandes limitaciones. En nuestra opinión, una de las principales es que en la mayoría de estudios sobre el tema no se pregunta a las personas participantes

por el apoyo a tipos de impuestos en específico o por diferentes tipos de políticas redistributivas. Generalmente, se utilizan índices y preguntas generales (Boudreau y MacKenzie, 2018). Por ejemplo, la pregunta sobre si se está de acuerdo con que es responsabilidad del gobierno reducir la desigualdad de ingresos es la medida más usada sobre preferencias de desigualdad en estudios empíricos (Bobzien, 2019; Choi, 2019).

Otra limitación de este tipo de estudios es que en su mayoría son descriptivos. Son pocos los trabajos que utilizan un enfoque experimental para estudiar las preferencias sobre la redistribución (Boudreau y MacKenzie, 2018; Nair, 2018) y en la mayoría de ellas las medidas utilizadas para medir las actitudes hacia la redistribución son pobremente conceptualizadas (Wright, 2018). Por último, una gran limitación de los mismos es que no cuentan con una teoría psicológica que los respalde (Boudreau y MacKenzie, 2018).

Hasta el momento hay pocas teorías psicológicas que tengan como objetivo explicar la relación entre la percepción de desigualdad y las actitudes hacia la redistribución. Recientemente se ha propuesto el modelo de proceso dual para el cambio de actitud. El modelo se basa en la idea de que las capacidades cognitivas de las personas son limitadas lo que no les permite revisar constantemente la información nueva que se les presenta. En cambio, las personas procesan la información de forma diferente dependiendo del esfuerzo que suponga el procesamiento de dicha información. El procesamiento que más esfuerzo requiere (proceso sistemático) supone revisar la información, y ponderar argumentos a favor o en contra de ella (Boudreau y MacKenzie, 2018). Por su parte, el procesamiento más sencillo (proceso heurístico) trata de usar estímulos más simples, señales y heurísticos en lugar de emplear muchos recursos en el análisis pormenorizado de la información recibida. Teniendo en cuenta que a la mayoría de las personas no les interesa la política ni la economía, generalmente utilizan heurísticos cuando son expuestos a información sobre la desigualdad (Boudreau y MacKenzie, 2018). Sin embargo, la aproximación del razonamiento motivado señala que las personas interpretan la información nueva de forma consistente con sus creencias anteriores, aunque la interpretación pueda no ser correcta (Boudreau y MacKenzie, 2018; Kim et al., 2016).

Nuestras experiencias con la desigualdad se basan en las evaluaciones que hacemos de la misma y cómo aprendemos a darles sentido. Algunas personas creen que

se deben a la justicia, al mérito y por tanto se esfuerzan personalmente para alcanzar sus estándares de éxito. Otras creen que la competitividad entre los individuos está condicionada por factores que escapan del control personal tales como la influencia de las categorías étnicas, de género, el estatus socioeconómico familiar, etc. Las actitudes políticas y el apoyo a ciertas políticas redistributivas no solamente están determinadas por la sociedad que idealmente imaginan los individuos, sino también a la idea que tienen de las causas de la riqueza y la pobreza (Edmiston, 2018; García-Sánchez et al., 2020; Isaksson y Lindskog, 2009; Lierse, 2019; Mijis, 2018; Ordabayeba y Fernandes, 2017, Orton y Rowlingson, 2007).

Sin embargo, la desigualdad económica no es la única variable que predice las actitudes hacia la redistribución. Otros factores que se han utilizado tradicionalmente para explicar las actitudes hacia la redistribución son el interés personal y los valores sociales o la ideología (Bailey et al., 2013; Becker, 2019; Bobzien, 2019; Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2015; Bullock, 2017; García-Muniesa, 2019; He et al., 2020; Steele y Breznau, 2019). Si las personas están motivadas fundamentalmente por su interés personal quienes se puedan beneficiar de las medidas redistributivas, tales como las/os desempleadas/os y personas de bajos ingresos la apoyarán, mientras que las personas ricas la desaprobarán (Bailey et al., 2013; He et al., 2020; Kearns et al., 2014; Lierse, 2019; Steele y Breznau, 2019). En esta misma línea, las personas mayores, quienes tienen más hijas/os y las mujeres suelen apoyar más la redistribución (Isaksson y Lindskog, 2009; Lierse, 2019; Wu y Chou, 2017).

En relación a los valores sociales o la ideología, las personas de ideología política de izquierda apoyan más las políticas redistributivas (Bobzien, 2019; He et al., 2020; Steele y Breznau, 2019). Lo que se percibe como las causas de la desigualdad, su magnitud y las causas de la pobreza, se asocian con las actitudes hacia la redistribución. Particularmente, las personas que perciben que la desigualdad económica es una consecuencia de los beneficios a las personas ricas, quienes viven en sociedades más desiguales y quiénes atribuyen la pobreza a la injusticia social apoyan más políticas redistributivas (Wu y Chou, 2017).

Aun así, recientemente la literatura señala que incluso controlando por estas variables (ideología y clase social) la percepción de desigualdad económica incide en las actitudes hacia la redistribución. Es decir, que a pesar de que ambas variables explican

parte de las actitudes hacia la redistribución, la percepción de desigualdad económica también explica otra parte adicional de su varianza (Bobzien, 2019).

Sin embargo, los mismos procesos psicosociales pueden no explicar todas las actitudes hacia las políticas redistributivas (García-Sánchez et al., 2020). Hay diferentes formas de operacionalizar el apoyo a la redistribución: enfocarse en quien es responsable de la reducción de la desigualdad (el gobierno), o hacer énfasis en las estrategias para reducir la desigualdad (García-Muniesa, 2019; García-Sánchez et al., 2020). Por ejemplo, mostrar que la desigualdad económica ha crecido hace que las personas apoyen medidas para disminuir la desigualdad y esta relación se encuentra mediada por el escepticismo hacia las oportunidades económicas brindadas por la sociedad (McCall et al., 2017).

¿Se pueden cambiar las actitudes hacia las políticas redistributivas? Las actitudes hacia las políticas redistributivas son estables en el tiempo y difíciles de cambiar. Cambian lentamente a través de los cambios en el entorno (Franko, 2016). Sin embargo, algunos estudios señalan la posibilidad de manipular externamente el apoyo hacia las políticas de redistributivas (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2014; Chow y Galak, 2012; Ordabayeva y Fernandez, 2017).

Por ejemplo, la literatura sugiere que para cambiar las actitudes hacia la redistribución por motivos de equidad social, es necesario cuestionar las creencias de la justicia de la desigualdad (Bamfield y Horton, 2009; Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2014; Chow y Galak, 2012; Ordabayeva, 2019). Además, crear conciencia de las dificultades de algunos grupos sociales para contar con oportunidades que otras personas tienen (Bamfield y Horton, 2009).

Los resultados de algunas investigaciones señalan que cuando las personas tienen una creencia errónea sobre su posición en la escalera de ingresos en la sociedad, corregir esta creencia hace que apoyen más políticas de redistribución cuando piensan que estaban más arriba en la jerarquía social de lo que realmente están. Sin embargo, apoyan menos políticas de redistribución cuando se dan cuentan que están mejor de lo que creían (Cruces et al., 2013; Hauser y Norton, 2017). Aun así, se han encontrado algunas diferencias por país con esta manipulación experimental, mostrando que el resultado todavía no es concluyente (Bublitz, 2017).

Así mismo, la literatura también señala que brindar información sobre el nivel más objetivo de la desigualdad económica (sin incluir la posición de las personas involucradas), tiene un efecto débil en el apoyo de políticas redistributivas que imponen impuestos a las personas más ricas (Boudreau y MacKenzie, 2018; Cruces et al., 2013; Hauser y Norton, 2017; Pellicer et al., 2019). Sin embargo, sí se encontraron resultados significativos cuando a las personas participantes se les mostraban a las personas participantes los niveles de desigualdad de otros países (manipulación inter-país). Aquellas personas en la condición experimental, que creían que había más diferencias económicas entre los países, apoyaban más políticas redistributivas y disminuían su percepción de que la desigualdad era inevitable en relación al grupo control (Pellicer et al., 2019).

Además, las actitudes hacia la redistribución pueden ser muy variables en función de la forma en la que se preguntan por ellas en las investigaciones (Arsenio, 2018; García-Sánchez et al., 2020; Hayes, 2014; McCafrey y Baron, 2005, Rosette y Zhou, 2018). Presentar la desigualdad como que las personas ricas tienen más que las pobres incrementa la voluntad de redistribución (Lowery et al., 2012; Rosette y Zhou, 2018), hace que las personas conservadoras apoyen más impuestos sobre las personas ricas (Chow y Galak, 2012) y deslegitima la desigualdad económica (Bruckmuller et al., 2017; Lowery et al., 2009).

Por otra parte, las actitudes positivas hacia la redistribución con el encuadre del favoritismo intragrupal se ha explicado como una respuesta a una percepción de amenaza al autoconcepto. Cuando el grupo al que pertenece una persona se encuentra en una posición desventajada, apoyar la redistribución puede ser el resultado de la motivación para alcanzar un mejor posicionamiento social (Lowery et al., 2012; Rosette y Zhou, 2018). Por el contrario, representar la desigualdad centrada en los que no tienen se asocia con proveer de ciertas necesidades a las personas pobres (Chow y Galak, 2012; Lowery et al., 2019; Rosette y Zhou, 2018). En un estudio experimental se encontró que cuando se concibe la desigualdad económica como un fenómeno colectivo que afecta a un grupo de personas, su efecto sobre las actitudes hacia las políticas redistributivas es mayor que cuando se concibe como un fenómeno meramente individual (Rosette y Zhou, 2018). Por último, cuando se presenta información sobre desigualdad en porcentajes en lugar de utilizar números reales, las personas apoyan mayor redistribución progresiva. Además, cuando se pregunta por un tipo de redistribución en específico, los individuos se centran

exclusivamente en ella, ignorando la posibilidad de compensar con otro tipo de redistribución (McCafrey y Baron, 2005).

Capítulo 2.
I know people who can and who cannot: A measure of the perception of economic inequality in everyday life

I know people who can and who cannot:
A measure of the perception of economic inequality in everyday life

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Abstract

This paper describes the development of the Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life (PEIEL) scale. It is written and validated in Spanish. We first carried out an exploratory study, using a sample of 205 participants (52.2% men and 47.8% women; age: M = 24.69, SD = 8.95). We then conducted a confirmatory study with a sample size of 215 individuals (43.7% men and 56.3% women; age: M = 23.83, SD = 6.46). Results showed that the PEIEL scale is a valid and reliable unidimensional instrument. This scale negatively predicted tolerance of economic inequality over and above perceived inequality measured by wage gap estimates. In addition, perceived economic inequality in everyday life was negatively associated with tolerance of inequality, particularly in individuals with right-wing political ideology.

Keywords: economic inequality, income inequality, tolerance of inequality, political ideology, social class

Introduction

Contemporary societies are characterized by increasing economic inequality, which impacts social relationships, health, life expectancy, academic performance, and violence, among other factors (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2017). Recent studies have highlighted that objective conditions alone are not sufficient to fully understand the consequences of inequality; subjective perceptions of economic inequality are equally relevant in the analysis of the psychosocial effects of the unequal distribution of resources (Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018; Kteily, Sheehy-Skeffington & Ho, 2017).

Perceptions of economic inequality are not directly observable. It is an abstract construct that has been measured by different indicators. The methods most frequently used to measure it involve asking participants questions regarding differences in wages between better- and less-paid individuals in a certain context. Other methods use diagrammatic measures in which participants are shown a chart of the distribution of resources representing the proportions of the population belonging to different social strata. Additionally, some surveys use a generic item (see Bavetta, Li Donni & Marino, 2019; Castillo, Miranda & Carrasco, 2012). These methods produce differences in the estimation of perceived inequality levels (Bavetta et al., 2019).

All of the indicators of perception of inequality used so far have been poorly conceptualized and have assessed economic inequality abstractly. They have not been based on immediate experiences or close reference groups, which have great effects on people's attitudes (Helgason & Mérola, 2017; Stephany, 2017). Moreover, and as we will next argue, some of these measures present other problems.

One way of investigating perceptions of economic inequality is through diagrammatic measures (Castillo et al., 2012), which consist of graphical evaluations of economic distribution within a society. In the specific case of the measure used by Castillo et al. (2012), participants were requested to indicate which one among five diagrams best described their country. However, it is not clear if this measure can be used as a continuous or categorical variable.

Another way of investigating perceptions of economic inequality is through surveys that use a generic indicator. This indicator generally consists of an item measured on a Likert scale of agreement-disagreement regarding the existence of inequalities in a

society, and it is frequently incorporated into national and comparative public opinion surveys. It is arguable that such an indicator can comprehensively encompass such a complex phenomenon, such as the perception of inequality (Castillo et al., 2012). Furthermore, it is a normative inquiry that cannot be taken as an assessment of perceived actual inequality (Knell & Stix, 2020).

The most widely used measure is the wage gap estimation. This measure has been used in several studies by the General Social Survey in United States and by the International Social Survey Programme (ISPP) (Pedersen & Mutz, 2018). However, when using wage gaps as an indicator of inequality perception, many people have difficulty estimating how much a person on the highest or lowest rungs of a company earns. Thus, ignorance generates a high variance in the responses, and uncertainty promotes the use of malleable and biased heuristics as a function of arbitrary context information (Knell & Stix, 2020; Page & Goldstein, 2016). This produces an anchoring effect wherein people are unsure about how much more or less individuals earn in a certain context, and they answer by starting randomly at one value (i.e., an "anchor") and then amend away from this number (Pedersen & Mutz, 2018). This is especially true when the references respondents estimate are outside of their daily experience or reference groups (Liebig, Sauer & Friedhoff, 2015; Markovsky & Eriksson, 2012; Pedersen & Mutz, 2018).

An additional concern with wage gap estimation is that it implies a personal evaluation of the degree of perceived inequality but does not take into consideration potential biases from inappropriate self-positioning (Engelhardt & Wagener, 2014). Most people fail to accurately designate their own location within income distribution. Scientific literature points out that incorrect self-positioning in income distribution generates a biased view and an underestimation of economic inequality (Cruces, Perez-Truglia & Tetaz, 2013; Engelhardt & Wagener, 2014).

Some authors argue in favor of developing different measures of economic inequality perceptions that capture the effects of inequality in the nearby reference groups (García-Sánchez et al., 2018; Grundler & Kollner, 2017; Nair, 2018; Stephany, 2017). Our goal in the present research was to concretely explore perceived economic inequality in individuals' everyday lives based on their experience by developing a specific measure: the Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life (PEIEL) scale.

Individuals estimate economic inequality by assessing economic differences according to the information available to them in their everyday lives. They use the availability heuristic (Schwarz, Bless, Wanke & Winkielman, 2003), thus overestimating the presence of those who are part of their everyday experience by using them as a reference group to estimate both actual and ideal inequality (Bisgaard, Thisted & Mannemar, 2016; Schneider, 2012). These immediate social contexts may not be representative of society as a whole, and this can create differences in perceived economic inequality within the same context depending on the social groups individuals are most frequently in contact with (Dawtry, Sutton & Sibley, 2015). The PEIEL scale considers individuals' everyday experiences, which, to our knowledge, are overlooked by all other measures. For this reason, we hypothesized that this measure would be a better predictor of many of the psychosocial effects of economic inequality than traditional abstract evaluation methods.

Perceived economic inequality

Perceived economic inequality is the individual perception of the way resources are distributed between the members of a society (Kim, Huh, Choi & Lee, 2017). Subjective perception of income inequality, and not just objective measures of it, have been shown to psychologically impact people's lives (Curhan et al., 2014) and to perpetuate social inequality (Jost & Van der Torn, 2012). For example, it has recently been discovered that high-perceived inequality leads to a more individualistic self-concept (Sánchez-Rodríguez, Willis & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2019c). Similarly, other studies have shown that higher perceived economic inequality inhibits the will to cooperate (Nishi, Shirado, Rand & Christakis, 2015), leads to increased perceptions of threat and negative attitudes towards minority groups (De Botton, 2005), and has negative consequences on individuals' health (Chung & Lee, 2015; Oshio & Urakawa, 2014).

Perceived economic inequality has generally been associated with social context (Hauser & Norton, 2017) and political ideology (Rodríguez-Bailón et al., 2017). Different economic contexts produce diverse images of inequality (Hadler, 2005; Oisho & Urakawa, 2014), and, despite not being the only variable at stake, experiences of economic inequality are conditioned by social class. Some scholars (Evans & Kelley, 2004; Irwin, 2018) argued that the combination of reference groups and social indicators, like income or education, form perceptions and understandings of economic inequality.

For example, individuals of higher social class with higher levels of income and education tend to better discriminate economic inequality than those of lower social class.

Additionally, political ideology influences perceptions of economic inequality (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Hadler, 2005; Janmaat, 2013). For example, individuals with a right-wing political ideology tend to have lower perceptions of economic inequality than left-wing individuals because, in general, they are more satisfied with the system, they prefer principles of equity over equality, they believe more strongly that success is due to individual efforts, and they have a more optimistic perception of life (Chambers, Swan & Heesacker, 2014).

Previous research showed that perceptions of economic inequality can be moderated by political ideology (Willis, Rodríguez-Bailón, López-Rodríguez & García-Sánchez, 2015), and people with more liberal, or leftist, beliefs have greater perceptions of inequality (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Hadler, 2005; Franko, 2017). However, to date, such a hypothesis has been tested using abstract measures of perceived inequality.

Another effect of perceived economic inequality that has been explored is tolerance of inequality, that is, the level of economic inequality that individuals are ready to accept or consider reasonable (Gonthier, 2017; Schröder, 2017). The fact that some people perceive large economic differences does not imply that they consider them unfair or unethical (Janmaat, 2013). The importance of tolerance of inequality is based on its relationship with the type of society individuals wish to live in, their attitude regarding redistribution policies and their level of involvement in efforts to reduce inequality (Shariff, Wiwad & Aknin, 2016).

However, existing literature on this topic does not show conclusive results on perceived economic inequality and tolerance of it. For example, the variance of tolerance towards inequality predicted by the wage gap estimation, one of the abstract measures of economic inequality, is limited and generally negative (Castillo et al., 2012; Knell & Stix, 2020; Shariff et al., 2016). Furthermore, tolerance towards inequality decreases with drops in socioeconomic status. For instance, people with lower socioeconomic status believe income differences in their society should be reduced (Hadler, 2005; Knell & Stix, 2020).

Considering this, the aim of the present research was to provide a valid and reliable instrument to measure perceived economic inequality in a more direct and experiential way than with those developed so far in the hope of finding more robust effects of perceived economic inequality. We expected the PEIEL scale to negatively predict tolerance of inequality better than perceived inequality assessed with the abstract measure of wage gap estimation.

Overview of the current research

Following DeVellis (2017), we first conceptually defined the construct "perceived economic inequality in everyday life." Next, the definition was assessed by a panel of five experts—researchers in the field of social psychology—who gave their opinion on its conceptualization and operationalization. After that, we developed individual items aimed at the Spanish general population in a unidimensional instrument.

On the basis of the experts' opinions, 17 items were constructed and, in turn, presented to another five experts to assess their representativeness, intelligibility, ambiguity, and conciseness. Following this assessment, certain changes were made to the items, which were then reassessed and measured with a Content Validity Index (CVI). The CVI is the grade to which a scale has a proper sample of items for the concept being measured. As a general principle, CVI values should be at least $\geq$.70 (Delgado-Rico, Carretero-Dios & Ruch, 2012). The second round of item assessments revealed a global CVI >.70, which indicates an acceptable agreement among experts for these criteria. These items were used in Study 1; the purpose of Study 2 was to confirm the findings of Study 1.

Study 1

In this study we conducted descriptive analyses of the items proposed to measure perceived economic inequality in everyday life, and we also explored their factor structure. To this end, the items were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis and an internal consistency analysis.

Participants and procedure. A total of 205 individuals took part in the study: 107 (52.2%) men and 98 (47.8%) women. Their ages ranged between 18 and 60 years (M = 24.69, SD = 8.95), and 80.9% were college students or already held a university degree.

Their participation was voluntary, no compensation was involved, and the anonymity of their responses was guaranteed in an informed consent form.

Data collection was carried out at the bus terminal in Granada, Spain, using a community convenience sample. The lead researcher asked for the voluntary participation of the people present in the waiting room. Participants required an average time of 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Instruments. The questionnaire, which was self-administered, included sociodemographic questions such as participant's gender, age, and level of education, as well as the PEIEL 17-item scale. The scale had a 7-point Likert response format ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). Examples of the items presented included "*Conozco a personas con niveles de ingresos muy diferentes*" ("I know people with very different levels of income") and "*Entre las personas que conozco algunas cuentan con viviendas más grandes y lujosas que otras*" ("Among the people I know, some have bigger and more luxurious homes than others").

Participants were also asked about their net monthly family income on a 10-option scale ranging from 1 (under 650 euros) to 10 (over 5,800 euros) (M = 4.1, SD = 2.0). They also indicated their mother's level of education on a 5-option scale ranging from 1 (no education) to 5 (university degree) (M = 3.2, SD = 1.3) and their father's level of education (M = 3.3, SD = 1.2).

Data analyses. We conducted descriptive analyses of each item and assessed their discrimination index with the corrected item-total correlation method. The item-total correlation method determines if an item's performance relates to the other items within the scale. We also performed an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using the principal axis method to reveal the internal structure of the scale.

In the EFA, we used the Predictive Mean Matching (PMM) to deal with missing data. A regression model was used to identify possible donor cases based on variables with full data that have similar covariate values, in this case the other items of the scale. After potential donor cases are identified, a potential donor case is randomly selected, and PMM directly assigns the donor case's value. Predictive mean matching is the method recommended in EFA analysis because it estimates factor loadings without bias (McNeish, 2017).

We also used Bartlett's test of sphericity to determine if the items were related to each other and to find a suitable structure detection. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was used to evaluate the proportion of variance in the items that could be influenced by causal factors (DeVellis, 2017). Finally, Horn's parallel analysis (1965) was used to create a set of data simulating a study like ours to determine the number of factors to retain and compare this result with the output of our EFA.

Results and discussion

Item analysis. The discrimination index (corrected item-total correlation) was greater than .40 in most of the items, with the exception of three. Standard deviations were higher than 1 in all cases. Average item scores ranged between 3.14 (*SD* = 1.44) and 5.74 (*SD* = 1.50). See the supplemental materials for a full analysis (osf.io/c68bg).

Exploratory factor analysis and internal consistency. Bartlett's test of sphericity, $\chi 2$ (136) = 1179.744; $p < .001$, and a KMO index value of .86 supported the validity of the correlation matrix to conduct the analysis.

Horn's parallel analysis (1965) created 100 sets of random data simulating (n = 205, 17 variables) with the Watkins program (2000). A comparison of these results with those of a principal component analysis of the 17 items of the PEIEL scale with oblimin rotation revealed a two-factor solution. The first factor accounted for 34.3% of the variance, and the second accounted for 8.6%. Of the 17 items, 12 (> .50) were loaded on the first factor and two items were loaded both on the first and second factors. Three items did not show high loadings on either of these factors. A content analysis of the two items that loaded on the second factor showed that they had no theoretical relationship with one another. Examples of the deleted items are "*En mi trabajo hay personas que ganan mucho más que otras*" ("Some of my work colleagues earn much more than others") and "*Conozco a personas que se pueden permitir económicamente aficiones que otros/as de mis conocidos/as no pueden permitirse*" ("Some of my acquaintances can afford hobbies that others can't"). We decided to remove this second factor and propose a unifactorial scale to measure PEIEL comprising the 12 items that loaded exclusively on the first factor. In this new version of the 12-item scale, all items had factor loadings > .50, and the variance explained was 42.6%.

Finally, a reliability analysis of the 12 selected items showed adequate values, α = .87. The reliability of the scale did not increase by eliminating any of the items. The result of using the split-half Spearman-Brown formula was .86. The total mean of the 12 sample items was 5.08 (*SD* = 1.06). The results produced a set of 12 items assessing perceived economic inequality in everyday life that conformed to a unifactorial structure. The purpose of Study 2 was to replicate the results of Study 1 by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis on an independent sample.

Study 2

The main goals of Study 2 were: a) to confirm the findings of Study 1 by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis using the 12 items suggested by the first study; and b) to explore the convergent validity evidence of the PEIEL scale. Specifically, we intended to explore the effect of PEIEL on tolerance of inequality compared to the abstract perception of inequality measured through wage gap estimation. We hypothesized that PEIEL would negatively predict tolerance of inequality better than perceived inequality measured by wage gap estimates.

In this study, we also conducted exploratory analyses to determine whether social class or political ideology could moderate the predicted relationship between PEIEL and tolerance of inequality. As stated before, perceptions of economy inequality are influenced by social context (Hauser & Norton, 2017) and political ideology (Rodríguez-Bailón et al., 2017). Other studies have found that ideology moderates perceptions of economic inequality, suggesting a motivational basis of this relation (Willis et al., 2015).

Participants and procedure. A total of 215 individuals took part in the study: 121 (56.3%) women and 94 (43.7%) men. Their ages ranged between 18 and 54 years (*M* = 23.83, *SD* = 6.46), and 76.8% of them were college students or already held a university degree. All participants provided informed consent.

As in Study 1, the data were collected at the bus terminal in Granada using a community convenience sample. People were asked for their voluntary participation; those who accepted were given assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. The average time required to complete the questionnaire was 15 minutes.

Instruments. We used the 12-item PEIEL scale (annex 1, *M* = 5.4, *SD* = 1.0, α = .88).

Sociodemographic data: We collected data on participants' age (*M* = 23.8, *SD* = 6.4) and gender (female = 56.3%, male = 43.7%), as well as their mother's level of education on a 5-option scale ranging from 1 (no education) to 5 (university degree) (*M* = 3.3, *SD* = 1.2) and their father's level of education (*M* = 3.4, *SD* = 1.3).

Tolerance of inequality: The following statement was used and taken from the surveys carried out by the ISPP and Kelly and Evans (2008) (see Castillo 2011; Schröder 2017): "*Las diferencias de ingreso en España son demasiado grandes*" ("Income differences in Spain are too large"). Response options ranged from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). Score (*M* = 5.8, *SD* = 1.2). Due to the way the data were presented, higher scores showed less tolerance of inequality.

Social class: In line with previous studies (Navarro-Carillo, Valor-Segura & Moya, 2018), social class measurement was computed using an index including the level of formal education achieved and the income. Net monthly income of all the family members was measured using a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (under 650 euros) to 10 (over 5,800 euros) (*M* = 3.9, *SD* = 2.1). Next, we divided net income by the number of family members who depend on it (*M* = 3.2, *SD* = 1.3). The formal educational level achieved by participants was measured using an 8-point scale ranging from 1 (primary education) to 8 (doctorate) (*M* = 5.1, *SD* = 1.2). We finally standardized both measures and computed their sum.

Political ideology: Political beliefs were measured on a scale ranging from 1 (left-wing) to 7 (right-wing) (*M* = 3.3, *SD* = 1.4) (see Piurko, Schwartz & Davidov, 2011).

Actual wage gap: Participants' perception of the average monthly salary of the highest-ranking person in a typical Spanish company, as opposed to that of one of the least-skilled employees in the same company, was estimated as the logarithmic ratio between these two magnitudes: ln (perceived high-status salary/perceived low status salary) (see Castillo 2011; Willis et al., 2015) (*M* = 2.2, *SD* = 1.7).

Ideal wage gap: The ideal wage gap is the perception of the wage gap that participants believe should exist in their ideal society. The specific question evaluates the average monthly salary that the highest-ranking person in a typical Spanish company should ideally receive as opposed to what an unskilled employee in the same company should ideally receive. It is estimated as the logarithmic ratio between these two

magnitudes: ln (perceived ideal high-status salary/perceived ideal low status salary) (see Castillo 2011; Willis et al., 2015) (*M* = 1.1, *SD* = .9).

Data analyses. We conducted descriptive analyses of each item and assessed its discrimination index with the corrected item-total correlation method. We also performed a confirmatory factor analysis to reveal the internal structure of the scale. We used the Robust Maximum Likelihood (MLR) estimation, as both the non-independence of the observations and the non-normality of the data were taken into consideration (Kaplan, 2000).

The moderation analyses were performed using Model 1 of the PROCESS Macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). Values for the moderator were the mean and plus/minus one standard deviation from the mean. Level of confidence for the confidence intervals was 95%. Resampled bootstrapping consisted of 5000 iterations. A listwise deletion method was used in most of the analyses (except in correlations where we used pairwise), but results not change using other methods (e.g., PPM, replace for mean, pairwise) of handling missing data.

Results and discussion

Item analysis. All items showed adequate results in the discrimination index (corrected item-total correlation) (≥ .49). All standard deviations were higher than 1. Participants' mean score on the scale was 5.40 (*SD* = 1.06). Results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.

Analysis of the items in the Perception of Economic Inequality in Everyday Life (PEIEL) Scale

Items	N	*r* corrected item-total	M	DT	Asymmetry	Kurtosis
ITEM 1	215	.53	5.62	1.52	-1.03	.535
ITEM 2	215	.49	5.25	1.71	-.855	-.242
ITEM 3	215	.47	5.86	1.54	-1.61	1.968
ITEM 4	215	.57	5.74	1.45	-1.23	.949
ITEM 5	214	.63	5.07	1.74	-.681	-.444
ITEM 6	215	.63	5.24	1.71	-.774	-.281
ITEM 7	215	.62	5.37	1.61	-.927	.149
ITEM 8	215	.67	5.38	1.43	-.806	.482
ITEM 9	215	.71	5.75	1.34	-1.29	1.72
ITEM 10	215	.62	5.43	1.60	-.732	-.641
ITEM 11	215	.51	4.49	1.93	-.243	-1.18
ITEM 12	214	.49	5.53	1.69	-1.15	.479

Confirmatory factor analysis. A unifactorial model including 12 items was specified. All items had factor loadings > .50. The variance explained by all the items was 44.3%. The results revealed an acceptable fit of the unidimensional model (χ^2 = 114.935, *df* = 54; $p < .001$, *RMSEA* = .07, *SRMR* = .05, *CFI* = .90). Results of this analysis are shown in Figure 1.

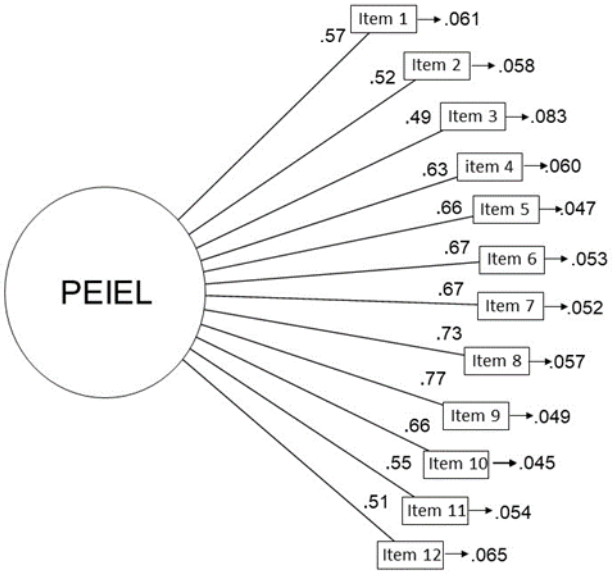

Figure 1. Factor structure of the PEIEL Scale.

Reliability. Internal consistency, as measured with Cronbach's alpha index, was adequate (α = .88). The reliability of the scale did not increase by eliminating any of the items. The result of applying the split-half Spearman-Brown formula was .86.

Relationship between the PEIEL scale and other variables. A correlation analysis was carried out between the PEIEL scale and all other variables included in this study. The PEIEL scale was found to correlate with social class, tolerance of inequality, and political ideology. However, no correlations were found with actual wage gap, ideal wage gap, gender, or age.

Table 2.
Relations between the Perception of Economic Inequality in Everyday Life (PEIEL) and other variables included in Study 2

	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. PEIEL	213	1	.33**	-.15*	-.17*	-.01	-.08	.02	.00
2. Inequality tolerance	215		1	-.07	-.29**	-.08	-.25**	.07	-.07
3. Social class	197			1	.06	.17*	.20**	-.08	.07
4. Political ideology	175				1	.01	.15*	-.16*	-.10
5. Actual wage gap	196					1	.54*	-.14*	-.01
6. Ideal wage gap	191						1	-.18*	-.02
7. Sex	215							1	-.21**
8. Age	209								1

***p* <.01, **p*<.05

PEIEL and tolerance of inequality

Subsequently, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed to predict tolerance of inequality. Gender, age, social class, and political ideology were included in Step 1 of the analysis; actual and ideal wage gap were included in Step 2; and PEIEL was included in Step 3.

Table 3.

Hierarchical regression analysis to predict inequality tolerance

Variable	B	ET	*B*
Step 1			
Sex	.162	.216	.062
Age	-.031	.019	-.135
Social class	-.054	.071	-.063
Political ideology	-.224	.074	-.248**
Step 2			
Sex	.018	.213	.007
Age	-.041	.019	-.178*
Social class	-.011	.070	-.012
Political ideology	-.186	.072	-.206*
Actual wage gap	.095	.067	.128
Ideal wage gap	-.457	.124	-.344**
Step 3			
Sex	.027	.20	.010
Age	-.044	.018	-.195*
Social class	.056	.068	.065
Political ideology	-.137	.069	-.151*
Actual wage gap	.069	.063	.093
Ideal wage gap	-.424	.117	-.320***
PEIEL	.033	.008	.326***

R^2=.097 for step 1 (p<.01). R^2=142, ΔR^2=.080 for step 2 (p< .001). R^2=273, ΔR^2=.096 for step 3 (p< .001). *p<.05, **p<.01, *** p<.001. Sex: 0=men, 1=women. N=151.

Results showed that PEIEL was a better predictor of tolerance of inequality than actual and ideal wage gap, social class, and political ideology. In fact, in Step 3 the only

significant predictors of tolerance of inequality were age, ideal wage gap, political ideology, and PEIEL.

Exploratory moderation analyses. We also performed two moderation analyses to explore whether the relationship between PEIEL and tolerance of inequality differed depending on social class and political ideology. In both analyses, PEIEL was always the predictor variable and tolerance of inequality was the criterion variable; the moderator variables were modified between analyses.

Results did not show any significant interaction between social class and PEIEL (*b* = .00 (.00); *t* = 1.7, *p* >. 05, CI 95% = -.0012, .0166). By contrast, an interaction effect was observed between PEIEL and political ideology (*b* = .01 (.00); *t* = 2.72, *p* < .01, CI 95% = .0044, .0277).

Table 4.

Moderated regression analysis to predict inequality tolerance

Variable				CI 95%	
	B	SE	t	Lower	Upper
Political Ideology	-.2276***	.0615	-3.697	-.3491	-.1061
PEIEL	.0302***	.0073	4.158	.0159	.0446
Political Ideology X PEIEL	.0161**	.0059	2.722	.0044	.0277

R^2=.21 (*p*<.001). ΔR^2 due to interaction=.03 (*p*< .01). **p<.01, *** *p*<.001. N=174. CI=Confidence Interval

Specifically, as shown in Figure 2, no relationship was found between PEIEL and tolerance of inequality in individuals of a left-wing ideology (-1 SD) (*b* = .00 (.01), *t* = .56, *p* > .05, CI 95% = -.0170, .0307). However, in individuals with a center (*b* = .03 (.00); *t* = 4.1, *p* < .001, CI 95% =.0159, .0446) or center-right (+ 1 SD[1]) (*b* = .05 (.01); *t* = 5.16, *p* < .001, CI 95% = .0332, .0741) political ideology, a positive relationship was observed between PEIEL and tolerance of economic inequality.

[1] Individuals with a score +1 SD above the mean are positioned at 4.7 points on the ideological spectrum; this justifies their classification as being of center-right ideology.

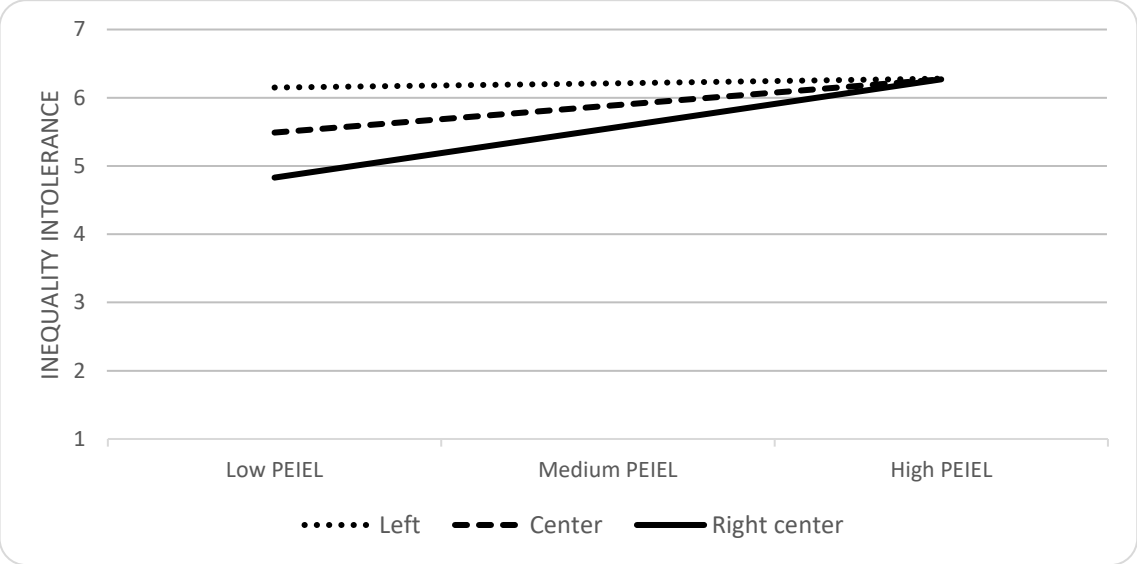

Figure 2. Moderation of political ideology in the relation between the perception of economic inequality in everyday life and inequality tolerance

Results suggest that the 12 items of the PEIEL scale obtained in Study 1 fit well into a unidimensional structure. The scale showed an acceptable convergent validity, correlating with social class, tolerance of inequality, and political ideology. In addition, it showed adequate discriminant validity compared to actual wage gap and ideal wage gap. Moreover, PEIEL was found to predict tolerance of inequality over and above the actual wage gap. Only PEIEL, the ideal wage gap, political ideology, and age predicted tolerance of inequality. From an exploratory perspective, a higher everyday perception of inequality was found to lead to a lower tolerance of inequality, especially in individuals from center and center-right wing.

General discussion

Results of Studies 1 and 2 revealed that the PEIEL scale is a valid and reliable measure of perceived economic inequality in the everyday lives of the general population. This measure was also found to better predict tolerance of inequality than perceived inequality assessed through the abstract estimation of wage gaps, one of the measures most frequently used in research on this topic (Castillo et al., 2012; Page & Goldstein, 2016). Moreover, daily exposure to perceived economic inequality predicted a lower tolerance of inequality in individuals with a self-reported center or center-right political ideology.

The development of a new instrument to measure perceived economic inequality can help to gain deeper insight into the psychosocial consequences of inequality. The main drawback of some of the abstract measures of economic inequality currently in use may be that individuals do not have access to enough information on the distribution of resources across society, and this lack of knowledge leads to inadequate responses. It is difficult for these respondents to estimate economic differences, so they do it randomly (Grundler & Kollner, 2017; Stephany, 2017).

However, people do not need to have accurate information about economic inequality to have attitudes about it. Most people do not actively seek information about economic conditions in their society, but they are exposed daily to all kinds of signals, especially through the people they interact with (Franko, 2017). The most important reference groups for people are those with which they interact the most (Clark & Senik, 2010).

Individuals get information about economic distribution from their reference group and generalize it to the whole society (Cruces et al., 2013; Irwin, 2018), and they give greater weight to more immediate experiences than distant ones (Evans & Kelley, 2004, Irwin, 2018). Passively and routinely, this information influences the judgment of reality through unconscious and automatic processes. Information that is more accessible in memory is more likely to influence subsequent inferences (Bisgaard et al., 2016).

Therefore, developing a measure of the perception of economic inequality in everyday life, such as PEIEL, allows researchers to explore perceived consequences of economic differences between acquaintances in a familiar context. Individuals estimate inequality through their everyday acquaintances; therefore, this measure involves a social sampling process that reflects their cognitive functioning within a given social structure and can generate systematic differences in perceived reality (Bisgaard et al., 2016; Dawtry et al., 2005).

Social sampling has illustrated that social cognition is situated and causally interdependent with the environment (Dawtry et al., 2005). The concept of economic inequality in their country is distant and difficult for people to concretize (García-Sánchez et al., 2018; Minkoff & Lyons, 2019). Individuals have problems managing representative samples of the general population, and this is why they count on available samples from

their social circles (Galesic, Olsson & Rieskamp, 2012). Abstract measures of perceptions of economic inequality do not take these problems into account.

The PEIEL provides a cognitive anchor by inquiring about everyday reality, therefore it is likely to better predict certain psychological effects of economic inequality than abstract measuring instruments. Indeed, the results of the studies presented here show that the PEIEL scale is a better predictor of tolerance of economic inequality than the estimation of wage gaps.

It has been suggested that individuals' tolerance of inequality is associated with not experiencing such inequality in everyday life. Individuals make social comparisons with the most salient people that they know and tend to tolerate inequality less or more depending on whether they perceive it more or less in their everyday life (Kelly & Moore-Clingenpeel, 2012; Xu & Garand, 2010).

A higher exposure to perceived economic inequality and its negative consequences on society and immediate social circles can trigger an intention to reduce it (Kelly & Moore-Clingenpeel, 2012). In addition, when the wealth of people with greater resources is evident, people tend to tolerate less inequality and show more positive attitudes towards redistribution (Hauser, Kraft-Todd, Rand, & Nowak, 2016). Furthermore, people who make more economic comparisons support more redistributive policies (Clark & Senik, 2010). This may explain why the effect of PEIEL on tolerance of inequality is higher than that of abstract measures of perceived economic inequality.

This relationship is even higher in individuals who define themselves as center-right wing on the political spectrum. Generally, these individuals have lower perceptions of inequality than those who define themselves as left-wing in their political ideology (Castillo et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2017) and consider these social differences to be inevitable (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski & Sulloway, 2003). According to the results of Study 2, the effect of PEIEL on tolerance of inequality in these individuals is even greater.

Left-wing individuals tend to consider economic inequality as unfair because they do not believe that economic success is always due to personal effort or, in general, to individual factors that can be controlled (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Bavetta et al., 2019; Hadler, 2005). Accordingly, for left-wing individuals, the PEIEL scale does not predict

tolerance of inequality in the same way, probably because these individuals are already predisposed to reject it.

By contrast, previous research has revealed that conservative individuals are more easily influenced by situational and salient elements within their environment due to their higher need of cognitive closure (Critcher, Huber, Ho & Koleva, 2009). Whenever a situation in their everyday life generates ambiguity or uncertainty, as might happen with the negative effects of economic inequality on people close to them, they are more likely to change their opinion on inequality to satisfy this need for cognitive balance.

Moreover, the conclusion that social class does not have a moderating effect on the relationship between the PEIEL and tolerance of inequality, as opposed to political ideology, further reinforces the importance of considering these ideological variables when assessing the psychosocial impacts of inequality.

The practical implications of having a measuring instrument, such as the PEIEL scale, open up the possibility of exploring the effects of perceived economic inequality on the psychosocial consequences of such inequality. For example, it could be used to reduce tolerance of economic inequality by presenting its negative effects on people's everyday lives. It can also provide a basis for the development of more accurate theoretical models, not only of tolerance of inequality but also of other psychosocial effects of perceived inequality.

The main limitation of this research is the specific context in which it was carried out. This can be solved by replicating it and adapting the measure to other circumstances and cultural contexts. Future studies should further explore the possible moderating role of perceived economic inequality in everyday life regarding the psychosocial processes associated with inequality (e.g., the support of redistribution policies or status-related anxiety). It would also be useful to conduct experimental manipulations to test causal relationships between PEIEL and its possible psychosocial effects.

The aim of this research was to improve and expand the existing knowledge on the effects of economic inequality in everyday life, given that economic inequality is one of the main defining characteristics of current societies. Our hope is that the results can be useful in the long term to develop social programs and policies aimed at reducing inequality and its associated effects.

Annex 1. PEIEL Scale*

1. Conozco a personas con niveles de ingresos muy diferentes

(I know people with very different levels of income)

2. Entre la gente de la que me rodeo, hay algunas personas que pueden permitirse económicamente acceder a mejores servicios sanitarios que otras

(Among the people I surround myself with, there are some people who can afford access to better health services than others)

3. Entre las personas de las que me rodeo, hay quiénes pueden irse de vacaciones al menos una semana al año y quiénes no van a ningún sitio porque no tienen dinero suficiente

(Among the people I surround myself with, there are those who can go on vacation for at least one week per year and those who cannot afford it)

4. Entre las personas que conozco algunas cuentan con viviendas más grandes y lujosas que otras (Among the people I know some have bigger and more luxurious homes than others)

5. Entre la gente de la que me rodeo, hay algunas personas que pueden permitirse económicamente acceder a mejor educación que otras

(Among the people I surround myself with, there are some people who can afford access to a better education than others)

6. Conozco tanto a personas que tienen muchos problemas para pagar su vivienda (alquileres, hipotecas) como a otras que no

(I know both: people who undergo many problems to pay for their home expenses (rents, mortgages) and others who do not)

7. Conozco tanto a personas que pueden permitirse ahorrar como a otras que no llegan a final de mes

(I know people who can afford to save money and others who struggle to reach the end of the month)

8. Entre las personas que conozco hay quiénes no pueden afrontar gastos imprevistos y hay quiénes los solventan sin ninguna dificultad

(Among the people I know some cannot afford unforeseen expenses and others cope with them without any difficulty)

9. Entre la gente de la que me rodeo, algunas personas pueden permitirse comprar muchas más y mejores cosas que otras

(Among the people I surround myself with, some people can afford to buy a lot more and better things than others)

10. En mi vida cotidiana percibo situaciones de desigualdad económica

(In my everyday life I perceive situations of economic inequality)

11. Conozco tanto a personas que pueden permitirse económicamente tener su vivienda a una temperatura adecuada como a otras que no se lo pueden permitir

(I know both people who can afford adequate heating at home and others who cannot afford it)

12. Conozco a personas que tienen que trabajar más que otras para poder ganar lo mismo

(I know people who have to work more than others to earn the same amount of money)

*The English version has not been validated. It is presented for illustration purposes.

Capítulo 3.
Perceiving economic inequality in everyday life decreases tolerance to inequality

Perceiving economic inequality in everyday life decreases tolerance to inequality

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Abstract

Economic inequality is one of the main issues of modern societies, and one of the ways to reduce it is through decreasing inequality tolerance and increasing support for economic redistribution. However, there are no consistent results in previous research about the relationship between perceived economic inequality, tolerance to inequality, and support for redistributive policies. In this paper, we argue that rather than measuring the effects of abstract perceived inequality (e.g., measured at the country level), it is important to consider Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life (PEIEL) and close relationships. In one correlational study (N = 207) we found that a PEIEL scale predicts intolerance toward inequality controlling for the common measures of perceived inequality. Moreover, we developed a novel manipulation which was validated in a pilot study (N=293), and in four experimental studies (N = 261; N = 373; N = 289, N = 289), we found that PEIEL decreases tolerance to inequality. Furthermore, we found a preliminary indirect effect of PEIEL on attitudes toward redistribution through intolerance to inequality. A mini meta-analysis using political ideology, social class, sex, and age as covariates, corroborated these results. All studies were preregistered. In short, these results highlight the importance of perceived inequality in everyday life as an additional tool when considering the psychosocial effects of economic inequality.

Keywords: economic inequality, everyday life, perceived inequality, tolerance to inequality, attitudes toward redistribution

Introduction

Economic inequality is one of the main issues of current societies (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2017; World Economic Forum, 2017). In the last three decades, the global top 1% of the world population increased their income twice as much as the 50% poorest segment (Alvaredo, Chancel, Piketty, Saez, & Zucman, 2017). In Spain, the context of the current study, inequality has increased significantly in the last years, and it is now one of the most unequal countries in the European Union (EUROSTAT, 2018).

One of the main ways to reduce economic inequality—and to stop its progression—is through redistribution (Atkinson, 2015). But is economic inequality perception enough to change tolerance to inequality? Do people have positive attitudes toward redistribution? Previous research has shown that living in highly unequal contexts does not have a straightforward impact on such attitudes, and it has instead highlighted the importance of considering perception and experience (Brown-Iannuzzi, Lundberg, Kay, & Payne, 2015; Choi, 2019; García-Sánchez et al., 2018b; Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018; Wright, 2018).

The literature posits that the subjectively perceived economic inequality produces greater psychosocial impact on attitudes towards inequality than objective economic inequality (Bobzien, 2019; Choi, 2019; Evans & Kelley, 2018; Loveless, 2013). However, the findings regarding the relationship between perceiving economic inequality, tolerance to inequality, and support for redistributive policies are inconclusive (García-Sánchez et al., 2018b; Wright, 2018). Researchers have pointed out that these inconclusive results might be due to different factors. The actual economic inequality could act as a cognitive anchor used to estimate the ideal world (García-Sánchez et al., 2018b; Trump, 2018). Thus, although people tend to reject inequality, in countries with greater inequality, they also tend to tolerate it more (Boudreau & Mackenzie, 2018; Castillo, Miranda, & Carrasco, 2012). Additionally, people have a poor understanding of how inequality works, and they do not know how redistributive policies can alleviate it (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2015; Kuziemko, Norton, Saez, & Stancheva, 2015).

In this article, we argue that one way to change tolerance to inequality and attitudes toward redistribution is to get people to pay attention to the economic inequality they experience in their everyday lives. Building on the literature showing that the immediate context has a greater influence on individuals' attitudes than national

aggregates (Franko, 2016; Newman & Hayes, 2019; Newman & Kane, 2017), and that social sampling process affects the perception and attitudes toward inequality (Dawtry, Sutton, & Sibley, 2015; Dawtry, Sutton, & Sibley, 2019), we propose that when people experience high inequality in their daily experiences, they tend to have worse attitudes toward inequality and to be more prone to redistribution.

Perceived economic inequality in everyday life, tolerance to inequality and attitudes toward redistribution

Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life (PEIEL) are the daily experiences in which individuals perceive differences in the way resources are distributed between the members of a society (García-Castro, Willis, & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2019). From this perspective, experience is the basis on which individuals evaluate inequality (Ignácz, 2018).

People tend to get information about wealth distribution from their own experience and the experiences of people with whom they interact in their daily lives. This is explained by the accessibility heuristic, a systematic perceptual bias, under which individuals form their impressions about the economy from their close social circles (Evans & Kelley, 2017; Flanagan & Kornbluh, 2017). These social circles are not representative of society and create systematic differences in the perception and experience of inequality. The information extracted from closer social relations is generalized to the whole society (Brown-Ianuzzi et al., 2015; Cruces, Perez-Truglia, & Tetaz, 2013). As such, it has been found that social sampling processes influence political attitudes toward poor and wealthy people (Dawtry et al., 2015).

Economic inequality is not always considered intolerable or undesirable. The extent to which it is tolerated depends on the perception people have of it (LA Roex, Huijts, & Sieben, 2019; Han, Janmaat, Hoskins, & Green, 2012). In fact, some people not only tolerate inequality but also prefer some relative inequality (Arsenio, 2018; Son Hing, Wilson, Gourevitch, English, & Sin, 2019). Until now, it has not been clear what the relationship between tolerance towards inequality and perceived economic inequality is. However, most studies have found a negative relationship between these two factors (Castillo, Miranda, & Carrasco, 2012; Khun, 2019). Despite these findings, the opposite has also been suggested in previous research (Loveless, 2013; Trump, 2018). In a previous study, measuring perceived inequality based on the closest context, PEIEL positively

predicted intolerance towards inequality over and above the most popular measures of general perception of inequality used in the literature (García-Castro et al., 2019).

Moreover, attitudes toward inequality and redistribution are influenced by the perception of economic inequality in everyday life too (Bailey, Gannon, Kearns, Livingston, & Leyland, 2013). It has already been shown that reference groups affect attitudes toward redistributive policies (Cruces et al., 2013; Newman, 2014). For example, people support more redistributive policies when they make more economic comparisons between people (Clark & Senik, 2010; Senik, 2009), when one of their friends has economic problems (Newman, 2014), and when they are in contact with the unemployed (Franko, 2016). Furthermore, individuals who live in more unequal contexts tend to vote for senators who support more redistributive policies (Newman & Hayes, 2019).

The Meltzer-Richard model proposed that economic inequality would make people demand greater redistribution. However, so far, its results are not conclusive (Choi, 2019; García-Sánchez et al., 2018b). As an extension of this model, it has been theoretically proposed that it is not just objective economic inequality but its subjective perception which may lead to a greater demand toward redistribution (Choi, 2019; Son Hing et al., 2019). Although the effect of perceived economic inequality, in support for redistributive policies, may not be lineal (Choi, 2019; Norton & Ariely, 2011). It has also been proposed that perceived economic inequality would make people care more about inequality, and that, in turn, would make them support more redistributive policies (Choi, 2019; Son Hing et al., 2019). Nonetheless, as far as we know, the indirect path of perceived economic inequality influencing attitudes towards redistribution through intolerance to inequality has not been empirically tested.

In this paper, we aimed to increase what we know about the relationship between perceived economic inequality, tolerance to inequality and attitudes toward redistribution in at least three ways. First, perceived inequality has been commonly assessed abstractly, bearing little relation to the ways in which people estimate the inequality within the context in which they live (García-Sánchez et al., 2018a). Hence, we aimed to deepen the research on inequality in a more direct and meaningful way, through the inequality that individuals experience in their daily lives. For instance, we used a scale that measures salient experiences of inequality in everyday life, and how individuals perceive inequality

in their close social circle (García-Castro et al., 2019). Second, although previous researchers have already examined the relationship between PEIEL and tolerance to inequality (García-Castro et al., 2019), no experimental research has been conducted to examine the causal direction of this effect. Finally, the possible relationship between the perception of economic inequality and attitudes toward redistribution mediated by intolerance to inequality has not yet been empirically examined. We therefore conducted four preregistered experimental studies to fulfill this gap.

Evidently, the perception of economic inequality is not the only variable that affects tolerance to inequality and attitudes toward redistribution. Literature has traditionally explained attitudes toward redistribution through personal interest and social values or ideology (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2015; García-Sánchez, Van der Toorn, Rodríguez-Bailón, & Willis, 2019; Mijis, 2018; Wu & Chou, 2017), and points out how other variables, like age (Elenbaas, 2019; García-Sánchez et al., 2019), and sex (Lierse, 2019; García-Sánchez et al., 2019), can also have an important influence. We consequently aim to control for these variables when examining the effects of PEIEL.

Summing up, we predicted that PEIEL would increase intolerance toward inequality and, in turn, increase support for redistribution. Specifically, in Study 1, we tested whether measured PEIEL predicts intolerance of inequality and attitudes toward redistribution when controlled for the common measures used in the literature about perceived economic inequality (H1). Then, we validated a novel manipulation of PEIEL in a pilot study. In Study 2, we corroborate the causality of the effects found in study 1(H2). In Study 3a we ran an experimental direct replication between the PEIEL condition and the control condition (H3a and H3b), and in Study 3b we improve the control condition of equality in daily life used in study 2 and replicate the results (H4a and H4b). Finally, in Study 4, we conceptually replicated the finding using a different experimental manipulation of PEIEL (H5a and H5b). All measures, pre-registrations, hypotheses, data, and results for all the studies can be consulted in the supplemental materials. Sample sizes were determined before any data analysis. (https://osf.io/krx8m/?view_only=ef3960d97afa4bf7b2f88b02c5d2e480).

Study 1

With this first study, we wanted to know if PEIEL's scale predicts intolerance to inequality, attitudes toward redistribution, attributions of poverty, and attitudes toward

the poor. We controlled for the common measures of perception of inequality and other covariates such as political ideology, social class, sex, and age. To do this, we ran a correlational study. The results described are on intolerance toward inequality and attitudes towards redistribution as these were the effects we focused in the following studies in this paper. The results on the attributions of poverty and attitudes toward the poor are presented in the supplementary materials.

Preregistered Hypothesis

H1. The PEIEL scale (García-Castro et al., 2019) would predict—when controlling by wage gap estimation and diagrammatic perception—intolerance of inequality and attitudes toward redistribution.

Participants

Data collection was carried out at a bus station in Granada, Spain. We collected data from 210 participants but following our pre-registration plan we removed three questionnaires that presented multivariate outliers. Our final sample was composed of a total of 207 individuals between 18 and 60 years (M = 26.3, SD = 8.0), 53.1% of whom were female. Most of them (84.1%) had a university degree. Incidental non-probabilistic sampling was used. Participants voluntarily filled out the questionnaire with all the measures; they took approximately 15 minutes to complete it. All participants provided informed consent before answering the questions. Based on sensitivity power analyses, with this sample, a statistical power of 80%, and $p < .05$, the minimum effect that can be found is $d = .07$.

Instruments

Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life scale. The measured PEIEL is a 12-item Likert scale with a 7-point response format ranging from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 7 (*completely agree*). Some examples of its items are as follows: "I know people who can afford to save money and others who do not reach the end of the month," "Among the people I know some cannot afford unforeseen expenses and others solve them without any difficulty" (García-Castro et al., 2019; α = .88, M = 5.69, 95% CI [5.55, 5.83]).

Wage gap inequality estimation. Participants were asked about their estimation of the monthly salary of the highest and lowest paid worker in a typical Spanish company. Afterward, a logarithmic ratio between these two magnitudes was computed: ln (perceived earning highest-paid worker/lowest-paid worker). Complete equality is represented by a ratio of 0 (see Willis, Rodríguez-Bailón, López-Rodríguez, & García-Sánchez, 2015; M = 2.40, 95% CI [2.20, 2.61]).

Diagrammatic inequality perception. We used a diagrammatic measure of the perception of economic distribution in society. Participants were asked to select from among five diagrams the one that most precisely represented Spanish society. The options range from "A," with small elite at the top and a large mass at the bottom, to "E," with most of the people in the upper level of the distribution. Higher numbers mean more people have more resources which translates into lower perceived inequality (Castillo et al., 2012; M = 2.50, 95% CI [2.35, 2.66]).

Tolerance of inequality. We used a question that is included in most international surveys: To what extent do you agree that the income differences in Spain are too large? Response options ranged from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). This question has been operationalized as tolerance of inequality in several studies (Gonthier, 2017; Larsen, 2016; Schröder, 2017; M = 5.88, 95% CI [5.70, 6.05]). Higher scores show less tolerance of inequality—therefore, we refer to this measure hereafter as intolerance of inequality.

Attitudes toward redistribution. We used two items measuring the support of redistribution actions promoted by the government (ISSP, 2017). Response options ranged from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 7 (*completely agree*). The items presented were "The Government has the responsibility to reduce the income differences between those who have high incomes and those who have low incomes" and "The Government should provide a decent standard of living for those who are unemployed" (α = .70, r = .54, p < .001, M = 5.64, 95%CI [5.46, 5.83]). This is the most widely used measure of redistribution preferences (Choi, 2019).

Political Ideology. ‘‘In politics, sometimes people talk about " left " and " right ", using a scale where 1 means " left " and 7 "right " where would you position yourself on this scale?’’ (M=3.21, 95%CI = [3.01, 3.41]) (Piurko, Schwartz, & Davidov, 2011).

Social Class. In line with previous studies (Piff, Kraus, Côte, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010), social class was measured by family income and completed formal education. Monthly family income in euros was coded into ten categories, with higher numbers representing greater income (M=4.19; 95%CI= [3.90, 4.48]). The formal educational level completed by participants was measured using an 8-point scale ranging from 1 (primary education) to 8 (doctorate) (M=5.40, 95%CI= [5.23, 5.56]). Responses on family per capita income and self-educational level were standardized and summed.

Other scales were also included. For space reasons, the details appear in Supplemental Materials.

Analysis Plan

To test whether PEIEL's scale predicts intolerance to inequality and attitudes towards redistribution, when controlled for the wage gap estimation, the diagrammatic perception of inequality, political ideology, social class, sex, and age, we performed two hierarchical regressions: one for each criterion variable. In the first step, we included the variables to control and in the second step we included PEIEL's measure.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

Hierarchical Regression Analysis to Predict Intolerance of Inequality and Attitudes Toward Redistribution (ATR)

Predicting Variables	Intolerance	ATR
Step 1	*B*	*B*
Wage gap inequality estimation	.113	.116
Diagrammatic inequality perception	-.336***	-.223**
Political ideology	-.233**	-.394***
Social class	.007	-.039
Sex	.092	.066
Age	.044	.143*
Step 2		
Wage gap inequality estimation	.080	.105
Diagrammatic inequality perception	-.261***	-.201**
Political ideology	-.189**	-.380***
Social class	.038	-.030
Sex	.079	.061
Age	.006	.132*
Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life scale	**.282*** **	.084

***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$. Sex: 1 = men, 2 = women.

As can be observed in Table 1, hierarchical regression analysis showed that measured PEIEL predicted intolerance of inequality ($B = .28$, $p < .001$) when controlling by the wage gap estimation, the diagrammatic perception of inequality, political ideology, social class, sex, and age, $F(7, 185) = 10.441$, $R^2 = .263$, $\Delta R^2 = .066$ for Step 2, $p < .001$. Moreover, measured PEIEL did not predict attitudes toward redistributive policies ($B = .08$, $p = .21$), when controlling by the wage gap estimation, the diagrammatic perception of inequality, political ideology, social class, sex, and age, $F(7, 189) = 10.898$, $R^2 = .296$, $\Delta R^2 = .006$ for Step 2, $p < .001$.

After running the preregistered analyses, we analyzed, in an exploratory way, whether the relationship between PEIEL and attitudes toward redistributive policies could

be mediated by intolerance of inequality when controlling for political ideology, social class, sex, and age. We indeed found an indirect effect (*B* = .14, *SE* = .05, 95% CI [.0517, .2685]) and a total effect (*B* = .20, *SE* = .09, *t*(187)=2.224, *p*=.027, 95% CI [.0231, .3853]), but not a direct effect (*B* = .05, *SE* = .09, *t*(188)=.628, *p*=.53, 95% CI [-.1243, .2407]). Even though we presented the hypothesis of this mediation in the introduction and from the study 3a onwards, when we ran the study we did not have this prediction, and this is why we still present the result as exploratory.

In general, the results show that PEIEL is an additional relevant tool to explore the psychosocial effects produced by economic inequality. In order to know the direction of those effects, we developed an experimental manipulation of PEIEL, which is evaluated in the following study.

Pilot Study

Based on the results of Study 1, we examined an experimental manipulation of PEIEL. We conducted a pilot study to evaluate the construct validity of the manipulation (Chester & Lasko, 2019) by testing its effects on the PEIEL scale used in Study 1, and on the manipulation check used in the following studies.

Pre-registered hypothesis

Participants assigned to the Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life condition will show a higher score in the PEIEL's scale compared to those assigned to the control condition.

Participants assigned to the Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life condition will show a higher score in the perception of economic differences among people compared in both conditions compared to those assigned to the control condition.

Participants

They were asked in the library of the university to participate anonymously and voluntarily. We collected data from 300 participants but following our pre-registration plan we removed seven questionnaires from non-Spaniards. Our final sample was composed of a total of 293 Spanish students. Their age range between 18 and 36 years (*M* = 22.2, *SD* = 3.7), 58.7% of whom were female. Participants filled out the questionnaire at one specific time with all the measures (approximate time 10 minutes)

and were randomly assigned to one of the conditions. Based on a sensitivity power analysis, with this sample, a statistical power of 80%, and $p < .05$, the minimum effect that can be found is $d = .32$.

Experimental Conditions and Dependent Variables

Perceived economic inequality in everyday life condition. Participants were asked to think about the wealthiest and the least wealthy persons they personally knew. Then, they were asked to write a paragraph about how economic resources influence the lives of the people they considered.

Control group. Participants assigned to this condition were asked to think about the tallest and shortest persons they personally knew. Then, they were asked to write a paragraph about how their height influences the lives of the people they considered. We chose this control group to test if the possible effects were due to PEIEL and not to the activation of social comparison processes.

As dependent variables, we used the PEIEL's scale used in the last study ($\alpha = .86$, $M = 5.52$, 95% CI [5.41, 5.64]) and a question about the differences in wealth between the two persons they described in the manipulation condition and the control condition ($M = 4.77$, 95% CI [4.55, 4.99]).

Results and Discussion

We found an effect of the inequality manipulation on the PEIEL's scale $t(291) = -3.260$, $p = .001$, $d = .38$, 95% CI [.61, .15]). Specifically, the results showed that participants in the perceived economic inequality in everyday life condition ($M = 5.71$, 95% CI [5.57, 5.86]) perceived more economic inequality in their everyday life than participants in the control condition ($M = 5.33$, 95% CI [5.15, 5.51]).

In addition, we also found an effect of the manipulation in the perception of economic differences among people compared in both conditions $t(291) = -10.941$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.27$, 95% CI [1.02, 1.52]). Participants in the perceived economic inequality in everyday life condition ($M = 5.79$, 95% CI [5.62, 5.97]) perceived more economic differences between the people they are comparing than the participants in the control condition ($M = 3.75$, 95% CI [3.42, 4.08]).

These results show that the manipulation effectively affects the construct we tried to manipulate. In the following studies, we will use this manipulation to examine whether it also has an effect on tolerance to inequality and attitudes toward redistribution.

Study 2

Based on the results of the previous studies, we used the manipulation of perceived economic inequality to test if it has a causal relationship with intolerance of inequality, attitudes toward redistribution, external attribution of poverty, and perceived inequality of opportunities. The results described are on intolerance toward inequality and attitudes toward redistribution as these were the effects we focused in the following studies in this paper. The results for external attribution of poverty and perceived inequality of opportunities are presented in the supplemental materials. We used the two conditions from the pilot study: an experimental condition of perceived economic inequality in everyday life, a control group, and a new experimental condition of perceived equality in daily life. We included this new condition to evaluate if the level of perceived economic inequality in everyday life is what produces the effects.

Preregistered Hypothesis

H2. Participants in the activation of PEIEL condition would show a higher increase in intolerance of inequality and support for economic redistribution than the two other groups.

We did not have a specific hypothesis for the comparison between the equality and the control conditions.

Participants

A total of 261 Spanish university students between 18 and 36 years (M = 22.3, SD = 3.6) participated, 52.1% of whom were female. They were asked in the library of the university to participate voluntarily and anonymously. None of the participants' answers were excluded from data analyses. Participants filled out the questionnaire at one specific time with all the measures (approximate time 25 minutes). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the conditions. Based on sensitivity power analyses, with this sample, a statistical power of 80%, and $p < .05$, the minimum effect that can be found is $d = .38$.

Experimental Conditions

We used the same conditions used in the pilot study and added a new condition of perceived equality in daily life. In this condition of perceived equality in daily life, participants were asked to think about two people they personally knew who were similar regarding their wealth. Then, they were asked to write a paragraph about how economic resources influence the lives of the people they considered.

Manipulation check. We included a manipulation check to assess the effectiveness of the manipulation (a question about the differences in wealth between the two persons they described at the beginning) and found a significant result, $F(2, 257) = 168.421$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .57$. There were differences between the PEIEL condition ($M = 5.93$, 95% CI [5.64, 6.21]) and the equality condition ($M = 2.73$, 95% CI [2.44, 3.03], $t(169) = 16.899$, $p < .001$), and between the PEIEL condition and the control group ($M = 2.55$, 95% CI [2.27, 2.84], $t(169) = 15.948$, $p < .001$).

Dependent Variables and Covariates

We used the same measures of intolerance of inequality ($M = 5.24$, 95% CI [5.07, 5.42]), attitudes toward redistribution with three items ($\alpha = .80$, $M = 5.11$, 95% CI [4.95, 5.28]) and political ideology ($M = 3.35$, 95% CI [3.18, 3.51]) as we used in Study 1. To measure social class, we used the same procedure from the previous study, except that this time instead of using the indicator of self- education's level we used the average educational level of both parents. The educational level of both parents is more informative with university students (Diemer, Mistry, Wadsworth, López, & Riemers, 2013). This formal education level was measured using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (without studies) to 5 (university studies; $M = 3.72$, 95% CI [3.57, 3.87]). Then we computed an index summing the standardized family income in euros ($M = 4.66$, 95% CI [4.35, 4.97]) plus the standardized index of the level of education of both parents. Other scales were also included. For space reasons, the details appear in Supplemental Materials.

Results and Discussion

We predicted (H2) that participants in the PEIEL condition would show a higher increase in intolerance of inequality and support for economic redistribution than the other two groups. We found that our manipulation of the PEIEL condition was not significant on the intolerance of inequality, $F(2, 258) = 2.652$, $p = .072$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. We found that

participants in the PEIEL condition (M = 5.52, 95% CI [5.23, 5.82]) tolerated less inequality compared with the control group (M = 5.06, 95% CI [4.77, 5.36], $t(172)$ = 2.147, p = .033, d = .32, 95% CI [.02, .62]). The effect was not significant when the PEIEL condition and equality condition (M = 5.14, 95% CI [4.85, 5.44]) were compared ($t(172)$ = 1.886, p = .061).

In short, although results were in the expected direction with respect to intolerance of inequality and the contrast between the PEIEL condition and the control group was statistically significant, the difference between the PEIEL condition and the equality condition was not significant. We realized that this might have been because in the equality condition participants were asked to think about two people of equivalent financial resources but the level of their resources was not specified. They could have supposed two equally rich persons, two equally average persons or two equally persons of lower socioeconomic status. This might mistakenly produce a sense of inequality rather than equality.

Likewise, it could be that the sample used was not large enough to be able to detect the effects. We therefore conducted two direct replications, Study 3a (for replicating the difference between the PEIEL condition and the control condition) and Study 3b (for replicating the comparison between the PEIEL and the equality condition).

Study 3a

Based on the results of Study 2, we ran an experimental direct replication study with two conditions. Because we only found differences between the PEIEL condition and control condition and to increase the statistical power, we only included these two conditions in Study 3a.

Preregistered Hypothesis

H3a. Participants assigned to the PEIEL condition would show a higher intolerance of inequality compared to those assigned to control condition.

H3b. Intolerance of inequality would mediate the effect of PEIEL on support for economic redistribution.

Participants

A total of 372 Spanish university students between 18 and 39 years (M = 22.3, SD = 3.4) participated, 54% of whom were female. The recruitment procedure, location, and randomization were the same as in the previous study. None of the participants' answers were excluded from data analyses. Based on a sensitivity power analysis, with this sample, a statistical power of 80%, and $p < .05$, the minimum effect that can be found is $d = .28$.

Experimental Conditions

We used the same procedure for manipulating PEIEL and for the control group; we also used the same manipulation check as in the previous study. In the manipulation check, we found a difference between the PEIEL condition (M = 5.83, 95% CI [5.62, 6.00]) and the control group (M = 2.99, 95% CI [2.78, 3.20], $t(370) = 18.631$, $p < .001$).

Dependent Variables and Covariates

In the current study, we used the same measures as in Study 2 to measure intolerance of inequality (M = 5.34, 95% CI [5.21, 5.47]), attitudes toward redistributive policies ($\alpha = .71$, M = 5.15, 95% CI [5.03, 5.28]), political ideology (M = 3.65, 95% CI [3.51, 3.79]), and social class.

Results and Discussion

Based on our preregistered hypotheses, participants assigned to the PEIEL condition showed higher intolerance of inequality (M = 5.50, 95% CI [5.31, 5.68]) compared to those assigned to the control group (M = 5.18, 95% CI [5.00, 5.37], $t(370) = 2.303$, $p = .022$, $d = .24$, 95% CI [.04, .44]). Moreover, the experimental manipulation had a total effect ($B = .37$, $SE = .12$, $t(370)=3.041$, $p=.0025$, 95% CI [.1374, .6167]), and a direct effect ($B = .24$, $SE = .10$, $t(370)=2.198$, $p=.0285$, 95% CI [.0254, .4560]) on attitudes toward redistributive policies. Additionally, it also had an indirect effect on attitudes toward redistributive policies through intolerance of inequality ($B = .13$, $SE = .06$, 95% CI [.0173, .2538]).

The results suggest that the perceived economic inequality in everyday life condition has an effect on the tolerance toward inequality, and an indirect effect on attitudes towards redistribution.

Study 3b

Based on the result of study 2, we corrected the manipulation of equality and carried out a new experiment to contrast the manipulation of PEIEL with this new control group. The study's purpose is to know if the level of perceived differences in economic inequality may cause the effects on inequality intolerance and attitudes toward redistribution found in Study 3a. Furthermore, we aim to disentangle if the level of inequality is what produces the effects and not just the description of economic issues. In this case, under the condition of equality, we asked participants to think of two middle-class earners they personally knew with a similar level of economic resources, and perform the same procedure. We chose this way to improve the manipulation of study 2, by specifying the level of income with the middle class of the people to be described.

Preregistered Hypotheses

H4a. Participants assigned to the PEIEL condition would show a higher intolerance of inequality compared to those assigned to control condition.

H4b. Intolerance of inequality would mediate the effect of PEIEL on support for economic redistribution.

Participants

The recruitment procedure, location, and randomization were the same as in the previous study. We collected data from 300 participants but following our pre-registration plan we removed eleven questionnaires from people who were not Spanish university students. A total of 289 Spanish university students between 18 and 37 years (M = 21.9, SD = 3.2) participated, 63.3% of whom were female. Based on a sensitivity power analysis, with this sample, a statistical power of 80%, and $p < .05$, the minimum effect that can be found is $d = .32$.

Experimental Conditions

We used the same procedure for manipulating PEIEL; for the control group of equality, we asked participants to think of two middle-class earners they personally knew with a similar level of economic resources. We also used the same manipulation check as in the previous study. In the manipulation check, we found a difference between the

PEIEL condition (*M* = 5.86, 95% CI [5.68, 6.05]) and the control group of perceived equality in daily life condition (*M* = 2.87, 95% CI [2.62, 3.12], *t*(289) =-19.086, *p*< .001).

Dependent Variables and covariates

In the current study, we used the same measures as in Studies 2 and 3a to measure intolerance of inequality (*M* = 5.18, 95% CI [5.03, 5.33]), attitudes toward redistributive policies (α = .75, *M* = 5.12, 95% CI [4.97, 5.27]), political ideology (*M* = 3.32, 95% CI [3.14, 3.50]), and social class.

Results and discussion

Based on our preregistered hypotheses, participants assigned to the PEIEL condition showed higher intolerance of inequality (*M* = 5.43, 95% CI [5.23, 5.63]) compared to those assigned to the control group of perceived equality in daily life condition (*M* = 4.93, 95% CI [4.72, 5.15], *t*(289) =-3.358, *p*= .001, *d* = .39, 95% CI [.16, .63]. Moreover, the experimental manipulation did not have a total effect (*B* = .19, *SE* = .15, *t*(287)=1.262, *p*=.2078, 95% CI [-.1078, .4937]), nor a direct effect (*B* = -.05, *SE* = .13, *t*(287)=-.4298, *p*=.6676, 95% CI [-.3263, .2063]) on attitudes toward redistributive policies but it had an indirect effect on attitudes toward redistributive policies through intolerance of inequality (*B* = .25, *SE* = .15, 95% CI [.1084, .4161]).

By improving the control group of equality of economic resources indicating the level of economic income from two middle-class earners, we have clarified the difference between the manipulation of PEIEL and the equality condition from Study 2. This result shows that the level of perceived economic inequality in daily life is relevant to the exploration of the psychosocial effects of economic inequality. Specifically, by contrasting income differences with height disparities, we can infer that paying attention to economic differences, rather than other differences, is what produces those effects. Likewise, by comparing the condition in which economic differences are made salient with a condition of economic equality, we may conclude that is the activation of the level of inequality that produces those results and not just the activation of economic issues in participants' minds.

Study 4

Based on the results found in Studies 3a and 3b, we ran a new study to conceptually replicate the effect of PEIEL on intolerance of inequality and attitudes toward redistribution through intolerance of inequality. We aimed to do so by asking participants to pay attention to the pictures that their friends post on Facebook. Social media is an important source of interaction and social comparison in daily life, and it has already been used in previous studies on economic inequality (Kraus, Park, & Tan, 2017).

Preregistered Hypotheses

H5a. Participants assigned to the PEIEL condition would show higher intolerance of inequality compared to those assigned to the control group.

H5b. Intolerance of inequality would mediate the effect of the difference between the PEIEL condition and the control group on the support for economic redistribution.

Participants

A total of 289 university students between 17 and 45 years (M = 20.8, SD = 4.2) participated, 69.6% of whom were female. None of the participants' answers were excluded from data analyses. A group of students was approached in their classrooms to participate for an exchange of course credits. They were also asked to send the study's link to at least five friends. We also distributed the link through students at the university libraries. Based on sensitivity power analyses, with this sample, a statistical power of 80%, and $p < .05$, the minimum effect that can be found is $d = .32$.

Experimental Conditions

We used the same procedure used in Study 3a. The only difference was that we asked participants to enter their Facebook account. For the PEIEL condition, we asked them to search for the most and least wealthy person among their friends, whereas in the control group, we asked them to look for the tallest and shorted friend on the same social media platform. Furthermore, we asked them to review the pictures and timelines of these persons (Kraus et al., 2017) and write at least a paragraph about how their wealth (height) influences their life.

As in previous studies, the manipulation checked consisted of a question about the differences in wealth between the two persons they described. We indeed found a difference between the PEIEL condition (M = 6.12, 95% CI [5.95, 6.29]) and the control group (M = 3.34, 95% CI [3.07, 3.62], $t(282) = -16.773$, $p < .001$).

Dependent Variables and Covariates

We used the same measures used in the previous studies: intolerance of inequality (M = 5.62, 95% CI [5.47, 5.78]), attitudes toward redistribution ($\alpha = .71$, M = 5.53, 95% CI [5.40, 5.65]), political ideology (M = 3.32, 95% CI [3.17, 3.48]), and social class.

Results and Discussion

Following our predictions, participants assigned to the PEIEL condition (M = 5.81, 95% CI [5.59, 6.02]) showed higher intolerance of inequality ($t(286) = -2.251$, p = .012[2], d = .26, 95% CI [.03, .49]) compared to those assigned to the control group (M = 5.47, 95% CI [5.26, 5.68]). Also, the experimental manipulation did not have a total effect (B = .10, SE = .12, $t(288)$=.857, p=.19, 95% CI [-.1411, .3587]), nor a direct effect (B =-.02, SE = .11, $t(288)$=-.196, p=.42, 95% CI [-.2468, .2019]) on attitudes toward redistributive policies. But, again, it had an indirect effect on attitudes toward redistributive policies through intolerance of inequality (B = .13, SE = .05, 95% CI [.0182, .2443]).

The meaning of this study is that it allows us to perform a conceptual replication of the effect. We replicated the results of Study 2 in Study 3a, and in Study 4, we use the same constructs but using a different manipulation to replicate the results of Studies 2 and 3a. A conceptual replication allows us to support our claim that the effects are due to the perception of economic inequality in everyday life and not to a specific conceptualization or paradigm to manipulate it. The results are the same in all studies. After these series of experimental replicas, we can suggest that PEIEL decreases tolerance of inequality. We now proceed to test these results with more robust analyses.

[2] The results shown are the ones with one tail because it was preregistered prior to the study.

Robustness Analyses

Given that we used the same measurements across the different experimental studies, and then in three studies we included a PEIEL and a control condition (i.e., comparing height), we ran a mini meta-analysis (Goh, Hall, & Rosenthal, 2016) with the data of Studies 2, 3a and 4. We used as covariates political ideology, social class, sex, and age. We did not run a mini meta-analysis with the equality condition from Studies 2 and 3b because the equality manipulation of Study 2 was not the best.

Effects on inequality intolerance

We meta-analyzed the results of Studies 2, 3a, and 4 with fixed effects in which the mean effect size was weighted by sample size. We converted out partial eta square (η_p^2) into Pearson's correlation for facilitating the analyses and presentation. In this analysis, we controlled for political ideology, social class, age, and sex. Results showed that the effect of PEIEL on intolerance to inequality was significant, *M r*=.11, *Z*=3.10, *p*=.001 (two-tailed).

This result allows us to argue that the effect of PEIEL on tolerance to inequality is maintained even when controlling for political ideology, social class, age, and sex. Furthermore, this result supports previous studies that found that there is a negative relationship between perceived economic inequality and tolerance to economic inequality (Castillo et al., 2012; García-Castro et al., 2019; Khun, 2019) in contrast to studies suggesting the opposite (Loveless, 2013; Trump, 2018).

Effects on attitudes toward redistributive policies

In Figure 1, we depict a representation of the mediation model of PEIEL increasing support for redistributive policies through intolerance of inequality.

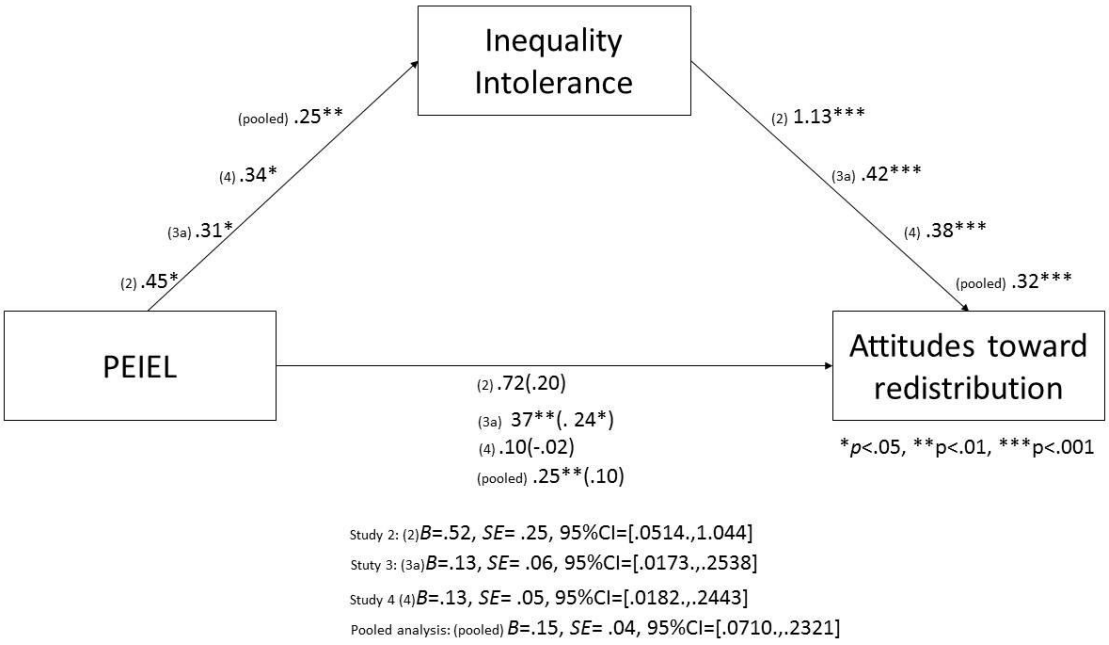

Figure 1. Summary of the mediation model of the PEIEL condition increasing support for redistributive policies through intolerance of inequality in the studies presented in the current research.

We also meta-analyzed the mediation model run in Studies 2, 3a, and 4 with fixed effects in which the mean effect size was weighted by sample size. In all these analyses we included political ideology, social class, age, and sex as covariates. In the case of the total effect and the direct effect, we converted the *t*-test scores into Pearson's correlation to facilitating the analyses and presentation. The total effect of PEIEL on attitudes toward redistribution through intolerance to inequality was significant, *M r*=.08, *Z*=2.16, *p*=.030 (two-tailed). Moreover, the direct effect was not significant, *M r*=.07, *Z*=1.85, *p*=.064 (two-tailed).

For analyzing the indirect effect, and following Peterson and Brown (2005), we also converted the standardized *B* coefficients into Pearson's correlation to facilitating the analyses and presentation. The indirect effect of PEIEL on attitudes toward redistribution through intolerance to inequality was significant, *M r*=.09, *Z*=2.37, *p*=.017 (two-tailed). However, converting standardized *B* coefficients is questioned. Whenever possible, it is recommended to use the original coefficients instead (Peterson & Brown, 2005). Therefore, in addition to the mini meta-analysis, we also carried out a pooled analysis (Taioli & Bonassi, 2003) for the indirect effect. In the pooled analysis (and after controlling for study, political ideology, social class, age, and sex), the experimental

manipulation showed an indirect effect on attitudes toward redistributive policies through intolerance to inequality (*B* = .09, *SE* = .03, 95% CI [.0306, .1511]).

The results of the mini meta-analysis consistently show a significant total and indirect effects of the PEIEL manipulation on attitudes toward redistributive policies through intolerance to inequality, but a non-significant direct effect. These results allow us to reconcile the discrepancies found in the mediation analyses across studies. Importantly, although we found that PEIEL has an indirect effect on attitudes toward redistributive policies, through intolerance of inequality, this result has to be interpreted with caution. The literature suggests carefulness with mediations in which the mediator is not experimentally manipulated, given the multiple plausible reasons that can cause this result (Fiedler, Harris, & Schott, 2018; Rohrer, 2019). These possible reasons are discussed in the next section.

General Discussion

We found that PEIEL has an effect on the intolerance of inequality shown by participants. In times of increasing economic inequality (Alvaredo et al., 2017; World Economic Forum, 2017), and an apparent passive attitude regarding this issue (García-Sánchez et al., 2018b, García-Sánchez et al., 2019), we show that focusing people's attention on the consequences of economic inequality in their daily lives leads people to tolerate less inequality.

Perceived economic inequality in everyday life and tolerance to inequality

Economic inequality results in societies being socially grouped according to economic resources, and this class segregation means that individuals interact daily with people more similar to themselves (Cruces et al., 2013; Mijs, 2019; Son Hing et al., 2019). Previous studies described how people who interact with others of their same economic condition have more meritocratic beliefs because they do not have diverse information that gives them a more accurate perspective of economic reality (Mijs, 2019; Newman, Johnston, & Lown, 2015; Wu & Cho, 2017). Therefore, beliefs about inequality have a quality of self-reinforcement that is difficult to break (Mijs, 2018), given that people make inferences about how economic resources are distributed in society by sampling their immediate social environments (Cruces et al., 2013; Dawtry et al., 2015).

People are psychologically biased when evaluating economic inequality (García-Castro et al., 2019; García-Sánchez et al., 2018b; García-Sánchez et al., 2019; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Individuals who interact in homogeneous environments do not have to cope with inequality in their daily lives and are not exposed to inconsistencies between the explanations given by justifying ideologies (e.g., meritocracy) and their knowledge taken from their relationships with close others. This is consistent with research showing that those who interact in heterogeneous social circles are more likely to think that success is due to situations beyond their control because they have diverse information about the causes of inequality in life (Mijs, 2019; Newman et al., 2015; Son Hing et al., 2019; Wu & Cho, 2017).

The intrinsic process by which PEIEL works may be related to the accessibility heuristic. People judge social events from their closest social circles in which they are inserted (Dawtry et al., 2015; Flanagan & Kornbluh, 2017). When participants are asked about an estimation of inequality, they use the accessible information they keep in memory about the inequality around them to answer.

The process by which PEIEL might influence intolerance of inequality could be related to the contact theory (Mijs, 2019). People's conceptions of political affairs and society are the result of their daily experience that they get through casual observation or direct interaction with other people in various social contexts (Evans & Kelley, 2017; Mijs, 2019). Likewise, people take into account immediate experiences more than distant ones (Newman & Kane, 2017). PEIEL brings inequality closer and puts people in contact with it. It frames individuals' representations of the influence of economic resources in their social circles through their relationship with wealthy and disadvantaged close others. The perception of economic inequality in everyday life can also produce a sense of threat to one's status. When people perceive inequality, the fear of descending on the social ladder increases (Sánchez-Rodríguez, Jetten, Willis, & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2019b), and this can lead them to tolerate less economic inequality.

Moreover, we found that the PEIEL scale predicts intolerance of inequality, even when we control for wage gap estimation, diagrammatic perception of economic inequality, political ideology, social class, age, and sex. This result confirms the need to take into account the PEIEL measure as an additional tool to explore the effects of perception of economic inequality. It also supports previous findings that indicate that

people think about economic inequality in terms of their daily lives (García-Castro et al., 2019; García-Sánchez et al., 2018a).

Perception of economic inequality in everyday life and attitudes towards redistribution

Being aware of the limitations of mediational models (Fiedler et al., 2018; Richer, 2019), we argue that the result of PEIEL's effect on attitudes toward redistribution through intolerance to inequality is preliminary. We do not rule out the possibility that other variables may be confounding the relationship we found between PEIEL and support for redistribution. For example, the literature suggests that perceived meritocracy might be an important covariate (García-Sánchez et al., 2019; Mijs, 2018).

To solve this issue in future studies, in addition to manipulating PEIEL, intolerance toward inequality should also be manipulated. In addition to what has already been indicated, it could be also important to conduct a longitudinal panel study that can capture the variations over time of these variables (García-Muniesa, 2019), as well as all possible relationships (i.e., cross-lagged analysis). Future research should deepen on the possibility that PEIEL influences attitudes towards redistribution through intolerance to inequality.

Conclusions

Other studies have already investigated the relationship between perception of economic inequality and tolerance of inequality. However, none of them had used a measure of PEIEL. Developing a procedure to activate PEIEL that decreases tolerance to inequality offers the possibility to deepen and discern the scientific discussion of the relationship between inequality and its psychosocial effects.

Theoretically, and following the scarce literature on the subject (García-Castro et al., 2019; García-Sánchez et al., 2018a; Kraus et al., 2017), we propose that in addition to the experience from within one’s social circle, PEIEL is also composed with what is immediately visible and salient in the environment. This may not be directly related to the experience of the social circle. For example, people may not know personally rich or poor earners but they could pass by rich and low economic status places in their daily routines. In the future, and as empirical evidence accumulates, the line of research on PEIEL’s psychosocial effects should integrate both dimensions.

Economic inequality has increased in the last years (Alvaredo et al., 2017; World Economic Forum, 2017). If we want to reduce inequality, one way to achieve it is by decreasing tolerance to inequality and increasing support for social policies that seek economic redistribution. This is the main contribution of this article. Focusing on the effects of PEIEL may be a useful additional tool that can enable us to understand the psychosocial consequences of economic inequality.

Open Practices

All measures, pre-registrations, hypotheses, data, and results for all the studies can be consulted in the supplemental materials: https://osf.io/krx8m/?view_only=ef3960d97afa4bf7b2f88b02c5d2e480.

Capítulo 4.
Changing attitudes toward redistribution: The role of perceived economic inequality in everyday life and intolerance to inequality

Changing attitudes toward redistribution: The role of perceived economic inequality in everyday life and intolerance to inequality*

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Abstract

Modern societies are characterized by extreme and rising economic inequality. Redistributive policies are one of the means proposed to reduce it. We argue that perceived economic inequality in everyday life and the intolerance toward it are central factors to enhance positive attitudes toward redistribution and to support inequality reduction measures. A four waves longitudinal panel study with a sample size of 1221 (at baseline T1, 960 at T2, 926 at T3, and 787 at T4) college students (M_{age} = 18.89) was conducted in Chile to test this hypothesis. As expected, a cross-lagged longitudinal analysis confirmed a strong positive relation between perceived economic inequality in everyday life and intolerance to inequality, which in turn was positively related to support for redistributive policies. This pattern of results was stable and consistent over time, supporting the idea that perceived economic inequality in everyday life strongly enhances positive attitudes toward inequality by increasing intolerance toward it. The results highlight the important role that the perception of inequality in daily life plays when predicting the support to redistributive policies.

Keywords: economic inequality, intolerance of inequality, attitudes toward redistribution, everyday life, perceived inequality, longitudinal analysis

Introduction

Despite all the social and economic advances of the last few centuries, societies still cannot solve a fundamental issue: ongoing economic inequality. The disparity has increased in most societies and is very likely to continue increasing in the future (Alvaredo, Chancel, Piketty, Saez, & Zucman, 2017; Piketty, 2014). Chile is one of the countries that leads economic inequality rankings worldwide (Salgado, 2019). Lately, it has received significant international attention for the civil movement that demands a more equitable society (Somma, Bargsted, Disi Pavlic & Medel, 2020). In this context, the present research examines the relationship between Chilean citizens' perceived economic inequality in everyday life, and two of its potential effects, namely, intolerance to inequality, and attitudes toward redistribution.

Notwithstanding the costs of inequality and the desire to diminish economic inequality (Evans & Kelly, 2017; Norton & Ariely, 2011), many individuals tend to legitimize or at least not oppose economic inequality (Hadler, 2005; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Ni Sullivan, 2003; Kelley & Evans, 1993), and the redistribution of economic resources is still unpopular among some people (Brown-Ianuzzi, Lundberg, Kay, & Payne, 2015; Son Hing, Wilson, Gourevitc, English, & Sin, 2019). In addition, individuals are not very precise when estimating the actual inequality in their countries (Condon & Wichowsky, 2020; Norton & Ariely, 2011), and are more inclined to support policies that foster educational opportunities than redistribute taxes (McCall & Kenworty, 2009; Franko, 2016). Furthermore, and related to it, citizens often do not trust the government to redistribute resources (Arsenio, 2018; Kuziemko, Norton, Saez & Stantcheva, 2015). However, some studies have recently suggested that the perception of economic inequality in everyday people's lives (better than a general and abstract estimation of it), may make people tolerate less inequality and be more open to redistribution (García-Castro, Rodríguez-Bailón & Willis, 2020; García-Castro, Willis, & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2019).

To measure perceived economic inequality, studies use tasks to ask participants how resources are distributed in their countries, measures such as diagrammatic representations of resources distributions or perceived wage gaps (Choi, 2019; Norton & Ariely, 2011; Willis, Rodríguez-Bailón, López-Rodríguez, & García-Sánchez, 2015). Nevertheless, these measures have raised serious concerns about their construct validity,

participants found it difficult to report their inequality perception using them, and their answers tend to reflect variability associated with cognitive biases or educational level (Helgason & Mérola, 2017; Pedersen & Mutz, 2019). Thus, numerous studies have pointed out the need to measure economic inequality that people experience on a day-to-day basis rather than using abstract measures of it (Boudreau & Mackenzie, 2018; Cruces, Perez-Truglia, & Tetaz, 2013; Gonthier, 2017; Mijs, 2019), but this has barely been done so far (see García-Sánchez et al., 2018a; Kraus, Park, & Tan, 2017, for exceptions).

In the present research, we aim to overcome this limitation by examining the role of perceiving economic inequality in everyday life as a critical factor that may trigger less tolerance toward inequality and subsequently to increase support for redistributive policies over time. This relationship has been theoretically proposed (García-Sánchez et al., 2018b; Son Hing et al., 2019) and it has been preliminarily tested in at least one experimental study (García-Castro et al., 2020). Moreover, to our knowledge, the current research is the first attempt to test these ideas using longitudinal data, a recommended approach to test relationships over time (Elliot, Holland, & Thompson, 2008; Newman, 2020; Salgado, 2019).

Perceived economic inequality in everyday life, intolerance to inequality and attitudes toward redistribution

Perceived economic inequality in everyday life is defined as the daily events in which people perceive variability in the way resources are distributed among the members of a society (Akyelken, 2020). Experience is the basis from which individuals assess inequality, and, from this perspective, perceived economic inequality in everyday life comprises at least two elements: the places people usually inhabit and the persons who are part of their close social circle (García-Sánchez et al., 2018a).

The most important social circles from which individuals can estimate inequality are those within which people interact the most often in their daily life (Clark & Senik, 2010, Irwin, 2015). People gather the economic distribution information from their own experience and the experiences of their relatives, friends, co-workers, etc., incorporating only small amounts of information about society as whole or other abstract images (Evans & Kelley, 2017; Molina, Bucca, & Macy, 2019). The information that people extract from their close reference group is generalized to the whole population (Brown-Ianuzzi et al., 2015; Cruces et al., 2013). In addition, it is well-documented that the mechanisms used

to extract information from the distribution of society from reference groups are present in many different cultures (Evans & Kelly, 2017, Kanbayashi, 2019).

Furthermore, the closest context impacts social perception, especially when it is highly salient for people (Larsen, Hjorth, Dinessen, & Sonderskov, 2019; Newman, 2020). Research on the accessibility heuristic, showed that when people cognitively assess any given situation, they base their judgment on their social circle and close environment (Cruces et al., 2013; Evans & Kelley, 2017), obtaining information that then influences their judgment of reality (Bisgaard, Thisted., & Mannemar, 2016). In the case of the estimation of economic inequality, the most immediate environments exert great influence on the perception of it (Evans & Kelley, 2017; Irwin, 2015; Kanbayashi, 2019).

Attitudes toward redistribution have been found to be influenced by perceived economic inequality in everyday life (Bailey, Gannon, Kearns, Livingston, & Leyland, 2013). Some evidence in this field of study shows that individuals who live in more unequal contexts tend to vote for senators who show higher levels of support for redistributing policies (Newman & Hayes, 2019). Those who interact with people in unemployment conditions also support to a greater extent redistribution of wealth (Franko, 2016). Moreover, the perceived economic situation of the reference group affects people's attitudes toward redistributive policies (Cruces et al., 2013; Dawtry, Sutton, & Sibley, 2015). These results demonstrate how the context and the reference groups in which people are immersed can affect not only individuals' perception of inequality but also their tendencies to agree with redistribution measures.

However, although people tend to reject economic inequality, particularly when is affecting the one they estimate (e.g., Castillo, Miranda, & Carrasco, 2012; Khun, 2019), economic inequality is not necessarily considered intolerable or undesirable (Rodríguez-Bailón, Bratanova, Willis, López-Rodríguez, Sturrock, & Loughnan, 2017) and the extent to which it is tolerated has been shown to be a function of the perception and beliefs people have about it (LA Roex, Huijts, & Sieben, 2019; Han, Janmaat, Hoskins, & Green, 2012). Indeed, the research that has used an approach on Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life (PEIEL) has found that PEIEL predicts intolerance to inequality over and above the most popular measures of the general perception of inequality (García-Castro et al., 2019). Further, experimentally, it has also been found that perceived economic inequality in everyday life has a positive effect on intolerance toward inequality

(García-Castro et al., 2020). Therefore, perceived economic inequality in everyday life seems to be a better a more reliable predictor than an abstract measure of inequality perception.

Moreover, it has been suggested that perceived economic inequality in everyday life has an indirect effect on attitudes toward redistribution through intolerance to inequality. Thus, the effect of perceived economic inequality in support for redistributive policies may not be direct (Choi, 2019; Norton & Ariely, 2011), but mediated by intolerance to inequality (García-Castro et al., 2020). Perceiving more inequality in day-to-day life could make people tolerate less inequality, and this, in turn, could make people support redistributive policies (García-Castro et al., 2020). Empirical evidence has previously confirmed this idea and revealed that intolerance toward inequality is indeed related to supporting redistributive policies. When intolerance to inequality is high, people support to a greater extent redistributive policies (Franko, Tolbert, & Witko, 2013; Kuziemko et al., 2015).

The indirect effect of PEIEL on attitudes toward redistribution through intolerance to inequality could be explained by the social segregation that makes individuals interact with people similar to themselves (Cruces et al., 2013). The social distance between social groups results in a lack of consciousness about the structural reasons that create inequality (Mijs, 2019). Then, when people become aware of the inequality around them, their tolerance for inequality decreases and they support more redistributive policies.

Current research

Our contribution is based on two aspects. First, in order to test the hypothesized model, a longitudinal panel methodology with four waves of data collection was used. As far as we know, this design has not been used before to test this model. This design provides us the optimal conditions to test how perceived economic inequality in everyday life influences changes in support for redistributive policies over time directly and indirectly by reducing the level of tolerance to inequality (See Figure 1). Second, the study presented here has been conducted in a sample of non-Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) population (Rad, Martingano, & Ginges, 2018) in Latin America, a region that has not often been represented in the literature addressing economic inequality and support for policy redistribution.

Specifically, the present research hypothesizes that the more people perceive economic inequality in daily life, the higher their support for redistributive policies (H1), and the higher their intolerance to it will be over time (H2). In addition, we expect the relationship between perceived economic inequality in everyday life and support for redistributive policies to be mediated by the level of intolerance toward inequality over time (H3). Thus, perceived economic inequality will predict support for redistributive policies because it increases the level of intolerance to inequality over time. Figure 1 shows the tested model:

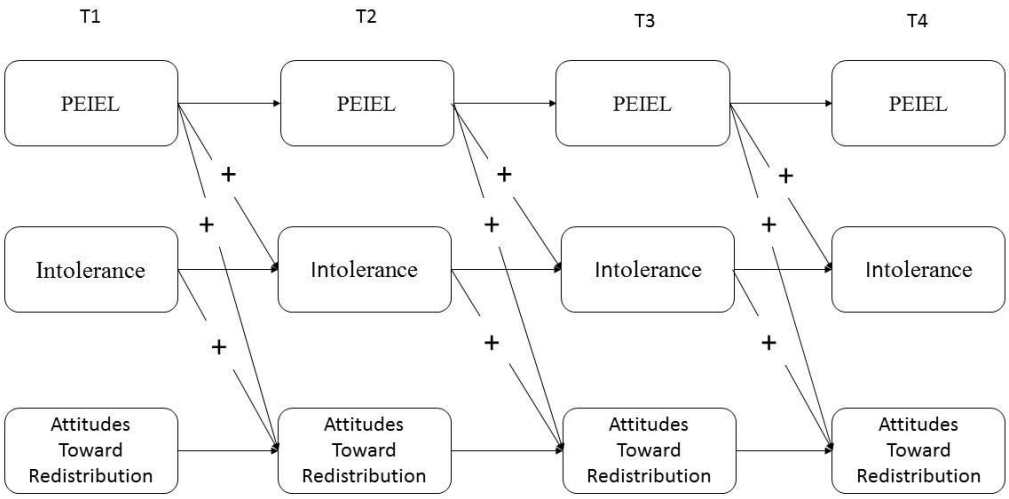

Figure 1. Model tested in the current study.

Method

Participants

Freshmen college students from different universities in Santiago, Chile, were recruited in the first wave of a longitudinal panel study (N = 1221; M_{age} = 18.89, SD_{age}=1.6, 66% women), 960 (67% women) at T2, 926 at T3 (67% women) and 787 at T4 (68.6% women), from five different universities. The attrition rates were generally low, meaning that only 21.42% of participants dropped out at T2, 1.15% at T3 and 4.03% at T4.

Procedure

Participants were enrolled by research assistants in their schoolrooms or through social networks (e.g., Facebook). Research assistants recruited them using a written procedure which first explained to participants the aim of the study, its longitudinal nature, and the reward system designed to incentivize participation. Those who were interested in participating in the study were instructed to provide their emails so they could receive the Qualtrics survey link. After giving their informed consent and receiving guarantees regarding data confidentiality and anonymity, participants answered a questionnaire comprising the target measures, which took around 45 minutes to complete. The time lag between waves was of 6 months (wave 1 in May 2017, wave 2 in November 2017, wave 3 in May 2018, wave 4 in November 2018), and data collection took about one month to be completed. After completing the questionnaire, participants were thanked and rewarded with payments of $10, $12, $15, and $20 USD respectively in each wave.

Data used in this study was gathered in the context of a broader project addressing social change and collective action. The project has the approval of the ethics committee. The sample size was originally set to enable a series of analyses despite the attrition rates. Hence, the sample size for this study was determined by its availability considering the number of participants needed to perform structural equations models (N>460) (Wolf, Harrington, Clark, & Miller, 2013) and mediation analysis (N>562) (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007) with a statistical power of at least 80%. Likewise, all available data for each participant was used. We used maximum likelihood procedures to impute missing observations. Accordingly, missing information can partly be recuperated from earlier waves rendering this statistical procedure a powerful tool for handling missing data (Schafer & Graham, 2002; Wothke, 2000).

Measures

All measures were the same over the four waves of the study.

Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life (PElEL). Adapted from (García-Castro et al., 2019), a single item measures this variable. Participants were asked to report the frequency they perceive economic inequality in everyday life by answering the following question (from 1 = never, to 5 = very frequently): ‘‘how often do you see situations of economic inequality in your daily life?’’

Intolerance to inequality. A single item commonly used in international surveys (e.g., ISSP, 2017) was considered in the present study. Participants were asked to report the level of agreement or disagreement (1 = totally agree, 5 = totally disagree) with the following question: "In Chile, income differences are too large''. This measure has been operationalized as tolerance toward inequality (Gonthier, 2017; Larsen, 2016; Schröder, 2017). Higher scores in this measure show less tolerance toward inequality. Therefore, we refer to this measure as intolerance to inequality.

Attitudes toward redistribution. Two items adapted from Dawtry et al. (2015) were used to measure support for redistributive policies. Participants were asked to report the level of agreement or disagreement (1 = totally agree, 5 = totally disagree) with the following statements: ''I think the government should redistribute wealth charging higher taxes to rich people.'' and, ''Wealth in this country should be distributed more equitably, also reaching groups with fewer resources.''. Scores were averaged to form a single measure at each given time (*r* ranging from .53 to .61).

Results

Descriptive statistics

Means, standard deviations, and correlations at each time point are presented in Table 1. As expected, the associations among all of the variables reported in Table 1 were, as expected, significantly positive, ranging in size from .36 to .53.

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics and correlations of the measures included in the current study

	Items	Range	M	95% CI		$r_{T1\text{-}T2}$	$r_{T2\text{-}T3}$	$r_{T3\text{-}T4}$
				Lower Limit	Upper Limit			
PEIEL								
T_1	1	1.00-5.00	4.33	4.27	4.38	.50**	.50**	.53**
T_2	1	1.00-5.00	4.29	4.23	4.35			
T_3	1	1.00-5.00	4.28	4.22	4.34			
T_4	1	1.00-5.00	4.28	4.22	4.34			
Tolerance to Inequality								
T_1	1	1.00-5.00	4.66	4.61	4.71	.36**	.43**	.41**
T_2	1	1.00-5.00	4.66	4.61	4.70			
T_3	1	1.00-5.00	4.63	4.58	4.67			
T_4	1	1.00-5.00	4.59	4.53	4.64			
Attitudes Toward Redistribution								
T_1	2	1.00-5.00	4.05	3.99	4.12	.60**	.61**	.62**
T_2	2	1.00-5.00	4.05	3.99	4.11			
T_3	2	1.00-5.00	4.04	3.98	4.11			
T_4	2	1.00-5.00	4.03	3.96	4.09			

Structural model

To estimate the longitudinal effect of PEIEL on attitudes toward redistribution, and the mediation role of intolerance to inequality through four-time points of data, longitudinal cross-lagged path analysis were conducted with robust maximum likelihood estimation in Mplus version 8.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2018). Our baseline model included only autoregressive effects between variables estimated over time. This model was subsequently compared step-by-step with models that constrained the autoregressive effects for each variable to be equal across different time points. If the later models did not substantially change the control format indicator (CFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) indicators, we retain and interpret the results of the more parsimonious constrained model in which the stability of variable scores across different time points is equal. This decision is made using the criteria introduced by Rutkowski and

Svetina (2014) and suggestions provided by Chen (2007). When determining invariance between different models with samples bigger than 300 cases, they recommend focusing on the change in CFI and RMSEA of the models in such a way that the CFI's decrease should not be greater than .02 when compared to the previous model, and the RMSEA should not change by more than .03. It is worth noting that Chen (2007) and Rutkowski and Svetina (2014) argued that the traditional scaled chi-square difference test (Satorra & Bentler, 2001) is less recommended when comparing models with large samples because it turns out to be a very sensitive technique that declares significant changes even if the variations in the fit of the models are very small. Unstandardized parameters are reported because the standardized parameters can result in inaccurate estimates and standard errors (Cole & Maxwell, 2003). The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Comparisons of autoregressive, unidirectional forward, unidirectional reverse and bidirectional longitudinal models tested in the current study

Model	Model Fit	Model Comparison	Model Invariance Testing
1a	$\chi^2(45) = 491.262$; $p < .001$; CFI = .801; RMSEA = .100; SRMR = .190		
1b	$\chi^2(51) = 488.424$; $p < .001$; CFI = .805; RMSEA = .093; SRMR = .193	1b vs. 1a	ΔCFI= .004; ΔRMSEA= -.007
2a	$\chi^2(30) = 204.117$; $p < .001$; CFI = .922; RMSEA = .076; SRMR = .097		
2b	$\chi^2(42) = 228.426$; $p < .001$; CFI = .917; RMSEA = .067; SRMR = .105	2b vs. 2a	ΔCFI= .005; ΔRMSEA= -.009
		2b vs. 1b	ΔCFI= .112; ΔRMSEA= -.026
3a	$\chi^2(30) = 170.175$; $p < .001$; CFI = .937; RMSEA = .068; SRMR = .074		
3b	$\chi^2(42) = 186.586$; $p < .001$; CFI = .935; RMSEA = .059; SRMR = .088	3b vs. 3a	ΔCFI= -.002; ΔRMSEA= -.009
		3b vs. 1b	ΔCFI= .130; ΔRMSEA= -.034
		3b vs. 2b	ΔCFI= .018; ΔRMSEA= -.008
4a	$\chi^2(21) = 109.101$; $p < .001$; CFI = .961; RMSEA = .065; SRMR = .038		
4b	$\chi^2(39) = 139.185$; $p < .001$; CFI = .955; RMSEA = .051; SRMR = .055	4b vs. 4a	ΔCFI= -.006; ΔRMSEA= -.014
		4b vs. 1b	ΔCFI= .150; ΔRMSEA= -.042
		4b vs. 2b	ΔCFI= .038; ΔRMSEA= -.016
		4b vs. 3b	ΔCFI= .020; ΔRMSEA= -.008

Note. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual; 1a = autoregressive model (freely estimated parameters); 1b = autoregressive model (within construct path equivalence); 2a = unidirectional forward model: predictor → mediators → outcomes (freely estimated parameters); 2b = unidirectional forward model (within construct path equivalence); 3a = unidirectional backward model: outcomes → mediators → predictor (freely estimated parameters); 3b = unidirectional backward model (within construct path equivalence); 4a= bidirectional model (freely estimated parameters); 4b=bidirectional model (within construct path equivalence for new paths.

Autoregressive longitudinal model

An important issue in the longitudinal analysis is to check if each variable is a predictor for itself over time. Thus, the first analysis tested a first-order autoregressive model. In the first model (1a) the parameters were freely estimated. After this model was tested, a second model (see Table 2, Model 1b) assessed if the autoregressive effects between T1 and T2 were equivalent to those between T2 and T3 and between T3 and T4; specifically, if the stability in a variable was itself consistent across time (Cole & Maxwell, 2003). Since invariance between models was confirmed (ΔCFI = .004; ΔRMSEA = -.007), the second, more parsimonious model (Model 1b) was retained. All estimated paths were significant ($p < .001$) in this model, which indicates that the variables predicted themselves showing constructs' stability over time.

Unidirectional forward longitudinal models

The next model was built on the autoregressive model (Model 1b) by estimating the hypothesized paths between predictor (perceived economic inequality in everyday life), mediator (intolerance to inequality), and the outcome variable (attitudes toward redistribution), respectively. The model showed a good fit (see Table 2 Model 2a). The next step was to constrain the hypothesized paths to be equivalent between T1 and T2, between T2 and T3, and between T3 and T4. This more constrained model also showed a good fit (see Table 1, Model 2b), and did not significantly differ from the former model (ΔCFI = 005; ΔRMSEA = -.009). Hence, the more restrained 2b model was retained. All estimated paths for this model were significant. See Figure 2.

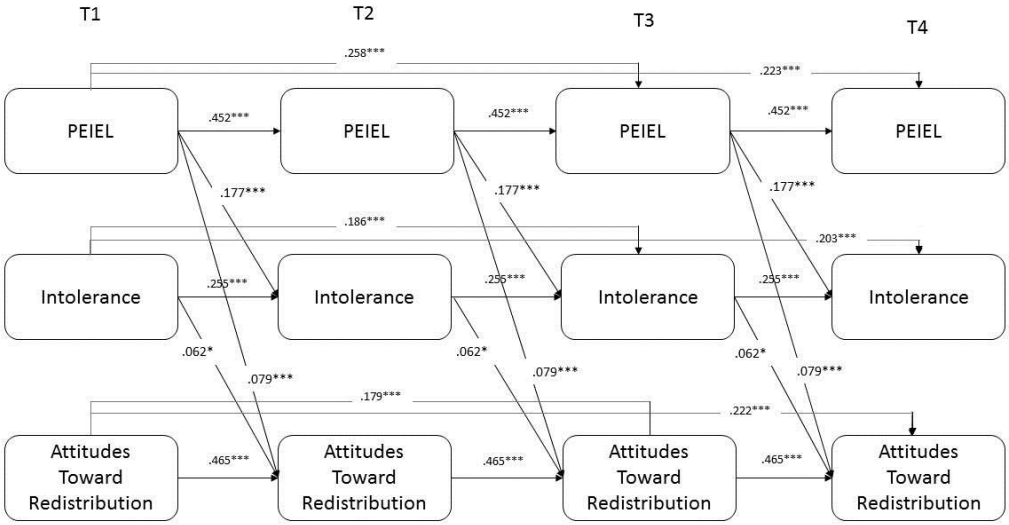

Figure 2. *Full longitudinal constrained forward model for perceived economic inequality in everyday life tested in the current study.*

Note. ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05. Model 2b in Table 2: $\chi 2$ (42) = 228.426; p < .001; CFI = .917; RMSEA = .067; SRMR = .105. Unstandardized coefficients are reported. Covariates were all positive and significant (ranges: .20 to .24 wave 1, .08 to .12 wave 2, .07 to .15 wave 3, .08 to .18 wave 14).

The results revealed that perceived economic inequality in everyday life predicted change in participant's attitudes toward redistribution to reduce inequality. Consistent with H1, the higher the perceived level of economic inequality in everyday life at Time 1, the more respondents increased their attitudes towards redistribution over the subsequent time points (six months, one year and eighteen months later). In addition, and consistent with H2, perceived economic inequality in everyday life predicted a change in the level of tolerance toward inequality six months later, which in turn predicted a change in the level of participant's attitudes toward redistribution to reduce inequality six months later (see the significant indirect effect in Table 3). This pattern of results strongly supported H3 and provided evidence about the longitudinal mediational role that intolerance toward inequality plays in the relationship between perceived economic inequality in everyday life and attitudes toward redistribution.

Table 3

Significance of the mediation effects tested in the current study

	T_1	T_2	T_3	T_4	Size of Indirect Effect (β)	*p*-value of Effects	95% C.I.	
							Lower	Upper
Forward Model (2b)								
Indirect effect	PEIEL	Intolerance	ATR	-	.011	.023	.001	.020
Indirect effect	-	PEIEL	Intolerance	ATR	.011	.023	.001	.020
Reverse Model (3b)								
Indirect effect	ATR	Intolerance	PEIEL	-	.013	.014	.003	.022
Indirect effect	-	ATR	Intolerance	PEIEL	.013	.014	.003	.022
Bidirectional Model (4b)								
Indirect effect	PEIEL	Intolerance	ATR	-	.008	.027	.000	.015
Indirect effect	-	PEIEL	Intolerance	ATR	.008	.027	.000	.015
Indirect effect	ATR	Intolerance	PEIEL	-	.009	.026	.001	.016
Indirect effect	-	ATR	Intolerance	PEIEL	.009	.026	.001	.016

Note. Unstandardized coefficients. *p* values are two tails. Explanation of the abbreviations: PEIEL= Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life; ATR=Attitudes Towards Redistribution.

Unidirectional reverse longitudinal models

To test the reverse causal specification, the predictor and outcome variables were then swapped. In this model, T1 attitudes towards redistribution was considered as a predictor of T2 intolerance to inequality, which in turn was a predictor of T3 perceived economic inequality in everyday life. This reverse model also showed good fit, as can be seen in Table 2 (Model 3a). As in the forward unidirectional model, equivalent paths were constrained to be equal in magnitude between time points. This inverse model with equivalent paths exhibited good fit indexes (see Model 3b), and demonstrated no significant decrease in fit when compared to an unconstrained Model 3a (ΔCFI= -.002; ΔRMSEA= -.009). All estimated paths were significant.

The reverse indirect path from attitudes towards redistribution at Time 1 to perceived economic inequality in everyday life at Time 3 via intolerance to inequality at Time 2 was significant (See Table 3), indicating the presence of a mediation. Models 3b and 2b had similar fit indices (see Table 2; ΔCFI = .018; ΔRMSEA = -.008), indicating that neither model was preferable over the other. We then proceeded to test a bidirectional

longitudinal model that estimated both the 'forward' and 'reverse' paths simultaneously, which is reported in the next section.

Bidirectional longitudinal models

Based on the results of the previous models, and given that perceived economic inequality in everyday life predicted changes in attitudes toward redistribution, and attitudes toward redistribution predicted changes on perceived economic inequality in everyday life, we combined the paths from the unidirectional forward and the unidirectional reverse longitudinal model. By including the bidirectional longitudinal models, we can test, in an exploratory way, whether the variables have a recursive effect. The first bidirectional model was freely estimated, except for the autoregressive paths that were already constrained to be equal in magnitude between T1 and T2, T2 and T3, and between T3 and T4, as in previous models. This model had a good fit (see Table 2, Model 4a), and was then compared with a model in which equivalent paths were constrained to be equal in magnitude between different time points (see Table 2, Model 4b). The two models did not vary in terms of their fit (ΔCFI= -.006; ΔRMSEA= -.014)), so the more parsimonious bidirectional model was treated as the definitive one for parameter estimation (Model 4b, see Figure 3). All estimated paths in this model were significant. These results suggest that a recursive relation between variables is possible. Thus, a reciprocal influence between perceived economic inequality in everyday life and attitudes toward redistribution over time was observed in this final model mediated by intolerance of inequality.

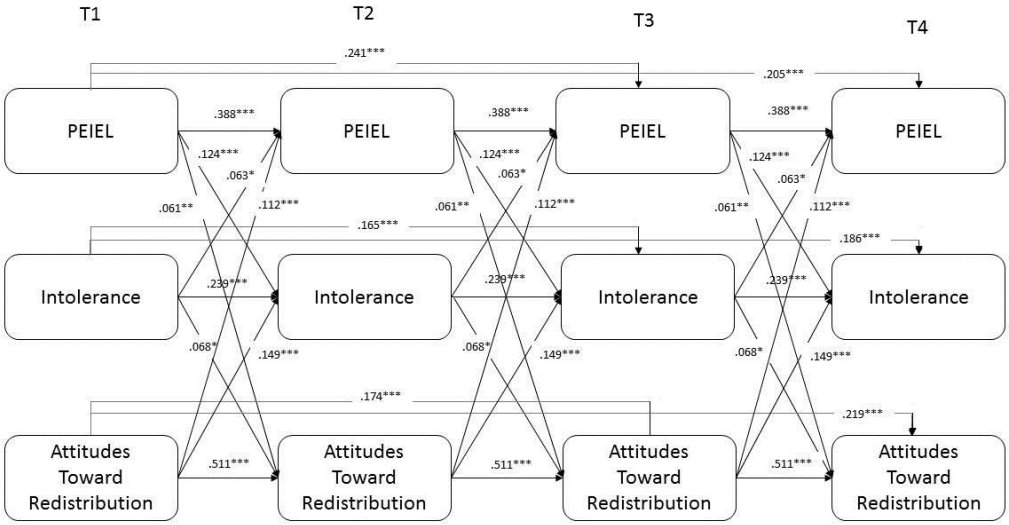

Figure 3. Full longitudinal constrained bidirectional model tested in the current study.

Note. ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05. Model 4b in Table 2: $\chi^2 2(39) = 139.185$; $p < .001$; CFI = .955; RMSEA = .051; SRMR = .055. Unstandardized coefficients are reported. Covariates were all positive and significant (ranges: .20 to .24 wave 1, .07 to .11 wave 2, .08 to .15 wave 3, .08 to .17 wave 14).

Discussion

Economic inequality is one of the most relevant problems in contemporary societies (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2017), and economic redistribution seems to be a useful way to decrease it (García-Sánchez, Osborne, Willis, & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2020). In this work, we studied one of the possible antecedents of attitudes toward inequality and redistribution: perceived economic inequality in everyday life. Consistent with our predictions, the results revealed that the extent to which people perceive economic inequality in everyday life trigger attitudes toward redistributive policies over time (H1). In addition, perceived economic inequality in everyday life also predicted, as expected, changes in the level of intolerance toward inequality, rendering people to be less tolerant toward it (H2). Finally, it was confirmed the central role that intolerance toward inequality plays in the process of linking economic inequality in their daily life and attitudes toward redistribution (H3). In particular, the more individuals are exposed to economic inequality in their daily life, the higher their intolerance toward it. Increasing intolerance toward

inequality, in turn, fostered the development or change of positive attitudes toward redistribution over time. The current results are relevant for many reasons.

First, the class structure of society anchors the perception and estimation of individuals to the phenomenon observed in the social groups in which people interact (Cruces et al., 2013; Mijs, 2019). These processes may distance individuals from different social groups (more or less disadvantaged than themselves) which, in turn, could make people unaware of the structural reasons that cause inequality. It has been shown that without direct experiences with people from different social strata, attitudes toward inequality tend to not change (Condon & Wichowsky, 2020; Son Hing et al., 2019). Furthermore, the effect of perceived economic inequality in everyday life on attitudes towards inequality and redistribution could be related to the contact theory (Allport, 1954; Mijs, 2019; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Perceived economic inequality in everyday life frames individuals' comparison between advantaged and disadvantaged close others, and constantly question these disparities. In line with this idea, past research has shown that individuals support more redistributive policies when they make more economic comparisons between people (Clark & Senik, 2010; Senik, 2009).

Second, having experiences that increase knowledge about inequality can change attitudes toward inequality over time (Kearns, Bailey, Gannon, Livingston, & Leyland, 2014). Previous research has indicated that inequality produces a threat to the self-concept (Lowery, Chow, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2012; Rosette & Zhou, 2018). Therefore, a threat to one's status is produced when the frequency of perceived economic inequality in everyday life increases, given that those who frequently perceive economic inequality in their daily lives may be more afraid of descending the social scale (Sánchez-Rodríguez, Jetten, Willis, & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2019c), and this can lead them to tolerate less economic inequality and tend to be more supportive of redistribution (García-Sánchez et al., 2018a).

To our knowledge, this the first study to show an effect of how perceived economic inequality in everyday life encourages people to support redistributive policies over time. Beliefs related to inequalities have a mechanism of self-reinforcement, making them hard to change (Mijs, 2018). However, attitudes are conditioned by knowledge accumulated in daily life (Kearns et al., 2014). The current results show that a change in attitude appears to need time. Everyday knowledge about inequality is accumulated

thanks to the information gathered from social groups, interpersonal contact, and direct observations, which in turn provides information on redistributive policies (Kearns et al., 2014). Longitudinal studies appear to be an adequate tool to track how this accumulation of daily knowledge affects support for redistributive policies (Newman, 2020).

The relationship between economic inequality and support for redistributive policies is complex and not necessarily direct (Evans & Kelley, 2018; Son Hing et al., 2019). The present results provide substantive evidence to support the mediational process involved in the relationship between perceived economic inequality in everyday life and attitudes toward redistribution through intolerance to inequality, a process that so far has not been tested empirically using a longitudinal panel design.

Despite these promising findings, we are aware of the limitations of mediation models (Fiedler, Harris, & Schott, 2018) and the partial mediation showed in the current study. We propose that intolerance toward inequality could be conceived as one of several mechanisms that are at play in the relationship between perceived economic inequality in everyday life and attitudes toward redistribution. Future research could test other possible mediators involved in this relationship such as justice or meritocracy beliefs.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that the items used to measure perceived economic inequality in everyday life and intolerance to inequality could be improved. For example, in the case of perceived economic inequality in everyday life, more items of the original scale (García-Castro et al., 2019) should be considered. The space limit in the questionnaire used in the current research constrained the possibility of including additional items. Furthermore, since intolerance toward inequality seems to be one of the key variables, new measures of this construct could also be taken into account in future studies (see Wiwad et al., 2019).

The present results also show important evidence supporting a bidirectional and dynamic relationship among the variables in which they influence each other in a recursive effect. That is, not only perceived economic inequality in everyday life produces intolerance to inequality and support for redistributive policies but the support of redistributive policies also causes intolerance to inequality and a greater perception of economic inequality in everyday life. This result is in line with previous work suggesting this possibility (Bobzien, 2019; Castillo, Torres, Atria, & Maldonado, 2019). The

evidence provided in the present research sheds light on this rather recursive dynamic approach.

In the present study, we have focused on the psychosocial consequences of perceived economic inequality in everyday life. The results, however, must be taken with caution to the extent that they seem to point out that unidirectional linear models account for only a small part of the psychosocial processes involved. This is inferred by inspecting the small effect size that we found in this study and in the previous one which experimentally tested the same mediation path (García-Castro et al., 2020).

Previous research indicates that there are different variables such as meritocracy that can predict the perception of inequality (Castillo et al., 2019; Son Hing et al., 2019). The results of the present study showed that tolerance toward inequality and attitudes toward redistribution may also be antecedents of perceived economic inequality. In order to deepen our understanding of the processes that are at play in this rather complex phenomenon, future research should explore this dynamic relationship more profoundly.

In conclusion, the results of this study revealed that directing people's attention to the economic inequality in their daily lives raises their concern about inequality and leads them to support policies to reduce it. Likewise, it shows the benefits of longitudinal studies to capture the psychosocial changes over time of perceived economic inequality in everyday life. If we want to live in more egalitarian societies, developing interventions that highlight the perception and experience of inequality in everyday life can be a way to promote more positive attitudes toward actions aimed to reduce inequality.

Capítulo 5.
The perception of economic inequality in everyday life: My friends with the most and least money

The perception of economic inequality in everyday life: My friends with the most and least money*

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Abstract

The study of perceived economic differences in everyday life is relevant to expand our knowledge of how inequality shapes psychological processes. In the current research, Spanish undergraduate students (*N*=547) were asked what their friends with the most and least money could do with their resources. Using a combined qualitative and quantitative methodological approach, we performed a content analysis of the 1,085 open-ended responses given (63,642 words), ran latent class analyses with the coded material to identify groups of participants, and explored whether class membership was associated with tolerance towards inequality and support for redistribution. Participants perceived inequality among their friends through daily indicators such as consumption, opportunities, leisure, and mental health; some participants also used compensatory strategies to mitigate perceived inequality. Latent class analyses suggested that the identified clusters of participants differed mostly in the attention paid to consumption and in the use of compensatory strategies. Moreover, exploratory analyses suggested that these daily indicators of inequality influenced the level of perceived economic differences among participants' friends and their support for redistributive policies. The study of perceived economic inequality in everyday life opens a new line of research with a potential to obtain results that are more consistent with people's experiences.

Keywords: everyday life, perceived inequality, reference groups, social class, economic inequality, latent class analysis.

Introduction

The present time is characterized by extreme and rising economic inequality. In global terms, half of the world's population owns only 1% of the world's wealth, while the richest decile owns 85% of it (United Nations, 2020). Despite the high relevance of this field, social psychology has only started to analyze inequality (Jetten & Peters, 2019).

This study has the purpose of describing the perceptions of economic inequality in everyday life and to explore their implications on tolerance towards inequality and support for redistribution. Although previous studies have examined the consequences of perceived economic inequality, they have typically used abstract measures (e.g. figures representing society) to do so (García-Sánchez et al. 2018). Indeed, research has shown that people perceive and evaluate reality according to the most accessible and prominent characteristics of their social circles (Dawtry, Sutton, & Sibbley, 2015). Thus, we approach perceived economic inequality by identifying the dimensions of inequality that participants are most aware of in the context of their everyday life.

Several studies have highlighted the need to focus on how people perceive economic inequality in their daily lives (Kraus, Won, & Tan, 2017; Mijs, 2019). The implications of perceived inequality depend on how people understand it, but few studies have qualitatively analyzed what people think and experience about economic inequality (see Edmiston, 2018; García-Sánchez et al. 2018; Pahl, Rose, & Spencer, 2007). The overwhelming majority of research in this field has used quantitative approaches. To gain greater insight, we argue that deeply understanding how individuals perceive economic inequality in their everyday life will help expand our knowledge of how economic inequality shapes psychological processes and behaviors. Since inequality implies unequal distributions between groups and people, we contextualized perceived economic inequality in everyday life in terms of social comparisons between individuals with the most and least resources.

Perceived economic inequality in everyday life

Perceived economic inequality in everyday life refers to the daily events in which people perceive differences in the way resources are distributed among group members (Akyelken, 2020). People build their conceptions of political affairs and society through

casual observation, direct interaction and social comparisons with other individuals in various social contexts in their daily life (Mijs, 2019).

People are generally misinformed of distant economic issues. They better understand and perceive close, direct economic aspects that they experience in their daily life (Helgason & Mérola, 2017; Kraus, Torrez, Won, & Ghayebi, 2019). When people are asked how they perceive economic inequality, they describe inequality of opportunities and access to relevant goods or services such as health, education, and consumption. Moreover, they compare social classes (e.g. the elite vs. workers) and refer to social exclusion, discrimination of advantaged groups towards others, differences in work conditions, and living standards (García-Sánchez et al. 2018).

Individuals draw their ideas on economic distribution from the experiences of their family, friends, co-workers, and their own, incorporating only small fragments of information about the rest of society (Evans & Kelley, 2017; Kanbayashi, 2019). Passively and routinely, information from reference groups influences the judgment of reality through subconscious and automatic processes (Bisgaard, Thisted, & Mannemar, 2016). The influence of social circles functions as accessibility heuristics, according to which individuals form their impressions of social life (Evans & Kelley, 2017; Kanbayashi, 2019). For example, having friends who are unemployed influences the perception of the labor market (Bisgaard et al. 2016).

Perceived economic inequality in everyday life involves a process of social comparison within the reference group (García-Castro, Willis, & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2019). Such comparisons are important because people understand social processes and their place in the world through them (Condon & Wichowsky, 2020). Social comparisons are made fundamentally within the reference group because they provide the most important referent for people (Leach & Vliek, 2008). In fact, the economic income of the social circle is as important to well-being as people's own income (Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2005).

Economic inequality increases social comparison by increasing the frequency and consequences of such comparison (Brown-Ianuzzi & Mckee, 2019; Cheung & Lucas, 2016). Literature shows that, in general, more comparisons are made with those who have more resources than with poorer people (Condon & Wichowsky, 2020; Sanchéz-Rodríguez, Jetten, Willis, & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2019). The upward comparison with

better-off members of a person's social circle could carry a feeling of relative deprivation if the difference is considered unfair. Nevertheless, if the difference is considered legitimate, the comparison within the reference group can trigger motivation to success (Leach & Vliek, 2008).

People assess inequality differently depending on the groups they use as a reference to compare with and on how these inequalities are described (Son Hing, Wilson, Gourevitch, English, & Sin, 2019). When perceiving economic inequality in everyday life, people use their immediate social environments as reference points (Galesic, Olsson, & Rieskamp, 2012). In this study, friends are the reference points of social comparisons because of the emotional or cognitive closeness between the members that constitute the social circle; interpersonal evaluations are more likely and more important in their lives (Leach & Vliek, 2008). People usually have information about the problems, consumption habits, and life standards of their friends and they are especially important during the years of higher education study (Buote et al. 2007). Comparisons are frequently related to material issues, and individuals are especially prone to comparing their own lifestyle and forms of consumption to those of others close to them with whom they share occupational contexts (Irwin, 2015; Pahl et al. 2007).

Everyday perceptions and social comparisons have relevant implications on how people understand inequality and respond to it (García-Sánchez et al. 2018). The cognitive process of perceiving inequality involves two main processes: first, the evaluation of the magnitude of the economic differences, and afterwards the evaluation of the principles that govern the distribution of resources (Janmaat, 2013). For example, perceived economic inequality in everyday life affects tolerance towards inequality and support for redistribution (Bailey, Gannon, Kearns, Livingston & Leyland, 2013). Research has shown that people who perceive more inequality in their daily lives tend to consider that the level of economic inequality in their country is too large (García-Castro et al. 2019). Likewise, reference groups affect the level of support for redistribution (Dawtry et al. 2015), and people who make more social comparisons between friends have more positive attitudes towards redistributive policies (Clark & Senik, 2010).

Current research

The present research has two main goals. First, to identify which dimensions of daily life people use to compare the influence of economic resources in their friends' lives. To achieve this goal, we asked participants[1] what their friends with the most and least money could do with the resources they had. We used content analysis to analyze the categories used in this social comparison process, and then, performed descriptive statistics to examine the frequency of appearance and associations of categories.

Second, we used Latent Class Analysis (LCA) on the coded data to identify groups according to their similarities in the way they described the differences between their friends with the most and least money. Finally, we explore how latent class membership was related to their tolerance towards inequality and support towards redistribution. Given the descriptive and exploratory nature of the study, we did not have specific hypotheses. Instead, this study aims to provide insights to advance our knowledge in this emerging field of research. Supplementary Materials, the data corpus and raw dataset are available at

https://osf.io/xqdby/?view_only=1edae45ffc35459a83edf993958c5867

Method

Participants and data corpus

The sample was composed of 547 (*M*=21.85 years, *SD*=3.72, 51.1% female) Spanish university students. Participants were contacted in university libraries and through social media and were invited to voluntarily answer an anonymous questionnaire. All participants provided informed consent before answering the questionnaire. Data were collected from November 2017 to April 2018 in three waves. Participants were asked to provide open-ended responses to the following statement: *Please think about the friend who has the most financial resources and the friend who has the least financial resources. Describe what they can and cannot do with the resources they have. Tell us how financial resources influence their lives by writing at least one paragraph for each of these two people. Please DO NOT describe their attributes or characteristics (e.g. The way they are). We are especially interested in how economic resources influence their lives*.

Each participant provided two responses: one for the friend with the most resources and one for the friend with the least resources. In total, we obtained 1,085 responses (543 describing friends with the most resources, and 542 describing friends with the least resources), which provided us with a data corpus of 63,642 words. Open-ended responses were processed using content analysis techniques (Krippendorff, 2004). All responses were coded according to a predefined category framework. Next, we analyzed the data both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Participants also answered questions about their tolerance towards inequality and their support towards redistribution.[2] Tolerance towards inequality was measured as the perceived economic differences among friends by using a single item: "Could you estimate the economic differences between the friends you described at the beginning?" (*M*=5.87, *SD*=1.12). Perceived economic differences between groups and people have been used as an indicator of tolerance towards inequality in previous studies (Gonthier, 2017; Larsen, 2016; Schröder, 2017). In the case of the present research, we focused on the economic differences perceived between friends to adapt the measure to the goal of the current study.

Support for redistribution was measured with three items evaluating the support of redistribution actions promoted by the government (ISSP, 2017). For example, "The government is responsible for the reduction of income differences between people with high incomes and low incomes" (α=.74, *M*=5.36, *SD*=1.23). This is a widely used measure to identify redistributive preferences (Choi, 2019). All the questions had a 7-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree).

We also included socioeconomic status to account for its influence on the relationship of class membership with both support for redistribution and tolerance towards inequality. Socioeconomic status was measured with a composite standardized index of monthly family income and the educational level of both parents (Diemer, Mistry, Wadsworth, López, & Riemers, 2013). Monthly family income in euros was coded into ten categories (1=below €560 to 10=above €5,800) (*M*=4.11, *SD*=2.02); the formal education level of parents was measured using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (no education) to 5 (university studies) (*M*=3.63, *SD*=1.13). Participants took a mean of 15 minutes to answer the survey.

Procedure

The data analysis was conducted both from a qualitative and quantitative perspective. For the qualitative analysis, all responses were coded using a predefined category framework composed of six main categories developed on the basis of a similar previous study (García-Sánchez et al. 2018), their theoretical relevance, and the exploration of the raw material. The main categories were consumption, opportunities, leisure, compensation, mental health, and justification of economic inequality. Each category included a number of subcategories that were used as indicators to facilitate the coding (See category framework on Table 1). Categories were not mutually exclusive, since participants could mention several categories in the same response.

Table 1

Category framework

Category and definition	Indicators
Consumption: The action of buying products and services with money. Its function is to cover primary and secondary needs, real or fictitious (Dubois, Jung, & Ordabayeva, 2020).	● Cars ● Clothing ● Deprivations ● Exhibition ● Food ● Housing ● Quality of products ● Technology ● Whims
Opportunities: The advantages and disadvantages that are available in society because of the economic resources that people possess (Paes de Barros et al. 2009).	● Aesthetics ● Autonomy ● Businesses ● Domestic services ● Education ● Family ● Future ● Health ● Mobility ● Scholarships/grants ● Social apital ● Stability ● Work
Leisure time: The moments when there is no obligation to do any activity, and	● Diversity of activities ● Eating in restaurants and bars

individuals can enjoy recreation and leisure (Mannell, Kleiber, & Staempfli, 2006).	● Fun ● Holidays ● Partying ● Social life ● Sports ● Time available ● Travelling
Mental Health: A state of subjective well-being that allows people to enjoy good quality of life. It includes emotional stability and personal autonomy (World Health Organization, 2013).	● Alcohol and drugs (palliative) ● Bets ● Happiness ● Personal satisfaction ● Personality ● Preoccupation ● Relations ● Resignation ● Sadness / depression ● Self-esteem ● Stress / anxiety ● Wellness
Compensation: A psychological strategy through which material deficiencies are compensated by attributing positive characteristics to people with fewer resources or negative characteristics to people with abundant economic resources (Kay & Jost, 2003).	● Identification ● Negative attributes to high status groups ● Positive attributes to low status groups
Justification of economic inequality: The conscious or unconscious motivation to maintain social inequalities, that is, the legitimation of economic differences (Jost, 2020).	● Meritocracy ● Negative attributes with low status groups ● Positive attributes with high status groups ● System Justification

For the coding, the record unit was each participant's response. Two coders were instructed to code the data, and double checked their coding, according to the category framework. We estimated intercoder agreement and found substantial agreement in all categories, indicating appropriate reliability of the data (Krippendorff, 2004). (Mental health, α_{Kripp}[3]=.89; Compensation, α_{Kripp}=.89; Consumption, α_{Kripp}=.93; Justification, α_{Kripp}=.83; Leisure, α_{Kripp}=.93; and Opportunities, α_{Kripp}=.91) (for other intercoder agreement indices, see Table S1 in the Supplementary Materials). Coding was supported

by ATLAS.ti 8 software and intercoder agreement was supported by the irr R package (Gamer, Lemon, Fellows, & Singh, 2019).

From a quantitative approach, we first conducted a frequency analysis of the coded material; and then explored the relationship between variables by using Pearson's correlations. This strategy uses a variable-centered approach that allows us to identify whether categories are expected to be associated, on average, with other categories and variables. As such, this approach assumes a homogeneous population, focusing on the positioning of the overall group of individuals on particular latent dimensions (Larsen & Hoff, 2006).

Second, we used LCA to identify underlying latent classes of people based on the categories they used to describe their friends with the most and least resources respectively. The input variables to estimate the latent classes were the presence of each category used when perceiving their wealthiest and poorest friends. Each category became a dichotomous variable (2=presence, and 1=absence), indicating whether participants used the category in their responses. LCA is a person-centered statistical tool that allows the identification of homogeneous groups of people that form latent classes and also exacerbates the heterogeneity between classes to differentiate them (Collins & Lanza, 2010). This tool is well-suited to describe common patterns of responses of individuals and thus establish classes of participants using similar categories on the way they perceive inequality in their social circles. Therefore, this strategy allows us to account for non-linear relationships between categories to identify groups of individuals who report particular patterns in the variables measured (Larse & Hoff, 2006), in our case, individuals who perceive economic inequality by particular combinations of categories. We used the poLCA package (Linzer & Lewis, 2011) implemented in R to perform the LCA.

Third, we examined the potential implications of latent class memberships on tolerance towards inequality and support towards redistribution by using regression analyses. Thus, we regressed tolerance towards inequality and support for redistribution on latent class memberships, and explored whether such relationship was conditioned by individuals' socioeconomic status.

Results

First, we present the results of descriptive analyses; second, we identify the latent classes; and third, we explore the relationships between latent classes and tolerance towards inequality and support for redistribution.

Descriptive analysis

When participants responded how they perceived economic inequality by thinking about their wealthiest and least wealthy friends, they mainly referred to consumption (26.2%), opportunities (21.7%), leisure time (21.6%), and mental health (16.7%). Participants also used compensation strategies (11.3%), and justifications of inequality (2.2%) to describe their friends' lives. Figure 1 shows the frequency of each category (see Tables S2 and S3 in the Supplementary Materials for detailed information on the coding).

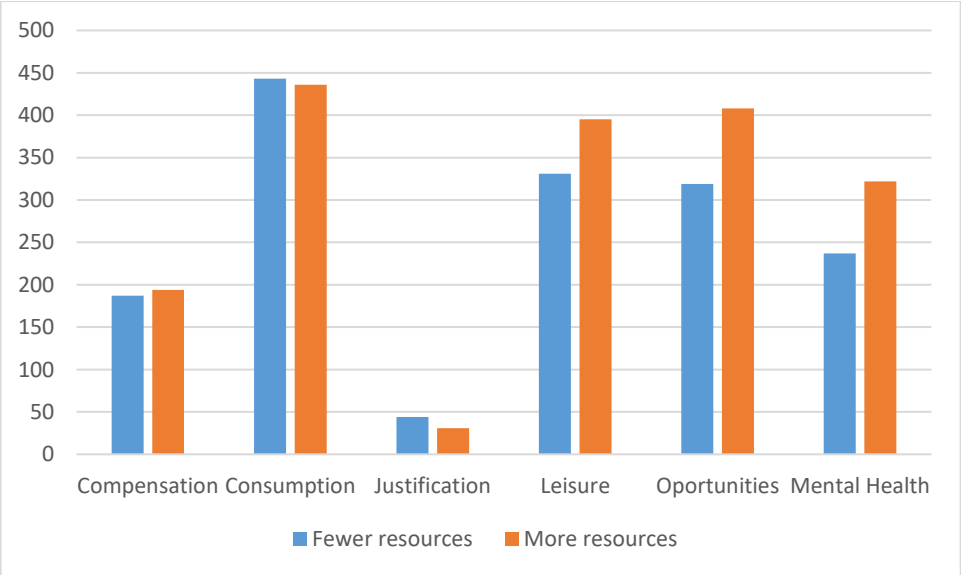


*Figure 1***.** Category frequency as a function of social comparison.

The category most frequently mentioned was consumption. The main consumption indicators were the privation of consumption (24.9%[4]), whims (20.9%), clothes (15.7%), housing (8.6%), and cars (8.4%). When thinking of their advantaged friends, participants stressed the possibility they have to buy whatever they want (i.e. whims), clothes, housing quality and expensive vehicles. By contrast, when they referred to their least wealthy friends, the privation of consumption was the indicator most frequently mentioned, representing economic hardships.

(…) it is easier for him/her, for example, he/she can go shopping and not skimp on price or quantity, he/she has a good mobile, a great house… (25:advantaged[5]).

His/her economic resources are indispensable for mere survival (415:disadvantaged).

Another frequently used dimension was opportunities in life. The indicator most mentioned in this dimension was access to education (30.8%), followed by autonomy (17.4%), and the need to work (9.6%). These results are consistent with the sample of young university students, who tend to compare themselves with others in the relevant areas of their everyday life such as studies, freedom to decide what to do, independence from their parents, and the need to find a job.

Education highlighted the different opportunities between friends with the most and least money. The wealthiest friends were seen as having easy access to high quality and expensive (e.g. private) education, whereas the poorest friends were seen as having to access a certain level of education. Autonomy followed the same pattern. Additionally, participants stressed the need of their poorest friends to work (e.g. to make ends meet, university payments).

He/she can freely decide between public or private education (11:advantaged).

He/she would like to study at the university but cannot afford to pay the fees and move outside his/her home town (64:disadvantaged).

Another relevant topic was leisure time. In this category participants mainly mentioned topics such as travelling (35.1%), having fun (17.1%), eating out (12.9%), and diverse activities (10.2%). In addition, people with high resources were perceived as having fun and eating in restaurants and bars very frequently while people with low resources were seen as having difficulties to enjoy their time off.

Going on holidays to faraway destinations without thinking of the expenses (220:advantaged).

(…) not being able to go to restaurants, to the cinema, etc., limits their interactions with other people (119:disadvantaged).

The next category was mental health. Wellness appeared as the most mentioned topic (41.9%), followed by preoccupation (17.4%), and the quality of relationships

(8.9%). Friends with the most money were perceived to have a high quality of life, mainly linked to lack of worry, whereas those with the least money were perceived as being worried about education and their financial situation.

(…) has more support and fewer worries to get ahead in life (72:advantaged).

His/her quality of life is quite low and he/she is always deciding what to spend and what not to spend his/her money on (458:disadvantaged).

The following category was compensation. Results showed that some participants associated negative characteristics to the friend with the most money (e.g. cannot enjoy things nor buy happiness) (47.9%), whereas other participants attributed positive characteristics to the friend with the fewest resources (e.g. poor but happy, no need for anything else) (46.4%), and some identified with either one of their friends (5.6%).

He doesn't appreciate what he has and looks down to people while thinking he is superior (105:advantaged).

She can enjoy the little things of life, everyday life stuff, her family… (528:disadvantaged).

Finally, the least mentioned dimension was related to justification of economic inequality. This includes meritocracy (47.5%), associating positive characteristics to the friend with most resources (e.g. effort, responsibility) (35.3%) or negative characteristics to the friend with low resources (e.g. lack of studies, poor money management) (13.4%), and system justification beliefs (3.6%).

He/she got their money through hard work and achieved great goals (…) (123:1).

He/she rejects jobs that would help him/her and wastes the little money that enters his/her home (…) (238:2).

We conducted Pearson's Chi-square test to examine the relationships between categories (see Table 2). When people described their friends with the most money, we found that consumption was more likely to appear associated with leisure (OR = 2.34, *95% CI* = [1.46, 3.73]) but less likely to appear jointly with opportunities (OR = 0.35, *95% CI* = [0.17, 0.67]). On the other hand, when people think about their friends with least money, we found that compensation was associated with a higher probability of

using justification (*OR* = 2.46, 95% *CI* = [1.26, 4.84]) and with less probability of mentioning opportunities (*OR* = 0.56, *95% CI* = [0.38, 0.82]); and opportunities were less likely to be mentioned together with consumption (*OR* = 0.39, *95% CI* = [0.23, 0.65]). Other associations between categories were not statistically significant under a p < .003, the threshold we used after applying a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. As for the association between categories of perceived economic inequality in everyday life with tolerance towards inequality and support redistribution, we conducted a point-biserial Pearson correlation and found that when participants used compensation elements linked to their friends with most resources—using negative attributes about the rich—, they were more likely to support redistribution (r = .085, p = .04). In addition, when participants talked about their friends with the least resources, mentioning opportunities was related to being more aware of the economic differences between their friends (r = .163, p < .001) (correlations are displayed in Table S4).

Table 2

Pearson's Chi square test to determine the associations between categories of perceived economic inequality in everyday life

	Categories					
Categories	Compensation	Consumption	Justification	Leisure	Opportunities	Mental Health
Compensation	-	2.64	5.49†	5.01†	0.61	1.17
Consumption	0.44	-	0.00	14.72*	11.53*	0.12
Justification	8.51*	8.03†	-	1.12	0.02	2.72
Leisure	2.91	0.01	0.36	-	0.03	4.03†
Opportunities	9.82*	14.28*	0.12	0.10	-	0.17
Mental Health	1.29	0.92	0.06	0.23	1.73	-

Note: Degrees of freedom = 1, for all tests. The tests for the perception of the friends with the most resources are shown *above* the diagonal, and for the perception of the friends with the least resources are shown *below* the diagonal. † = p <.05, * = p < .003 (using the Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons, we state the significance level below p <. 003).

Latent classes of perceived inequality according to the friend of reference

A set of latent class models was fitted per friend of reference. Based on goodness-of-fit statistics (see Table 3), conditional proportions in each class (see Table S5 in Supplementary Materials), and parsimony, we decided to retain a three-class model for participants when they think about their friend with the most resources, and a two-class model for participants when they focused on their friend with the least resources.

Table 3

Fit statistics for Latent Class Model Solutions of perceived inequality by social comparison

Friends	Number of Classes	AIC	BIC	G^2	χ^2	Entropy	MLL	DF
Most resources	2	3459,991	3515,854	58.88797	59.49933	3,162103	-1716.991	50
	3	**3457,006**	**3452,949**	**41,9033**	**42,07669**	**3,146452**	**-1708.503**	**43**
	4	3465,504	3581,526	36,4004	36,3751	3,131816	-1705.752	36
Fewest resources	**2**	**3723.359**	**3779.198**	**8284874**	**93.28648**	**3,410497**	**-1848.680**	**50**
	3	3704.365	3790.27	4985432	45.41396	3,379363	-1838.182	43
	4	3706,481	3822,453	37,97024	37,3119	3,367128	-1826.24	36

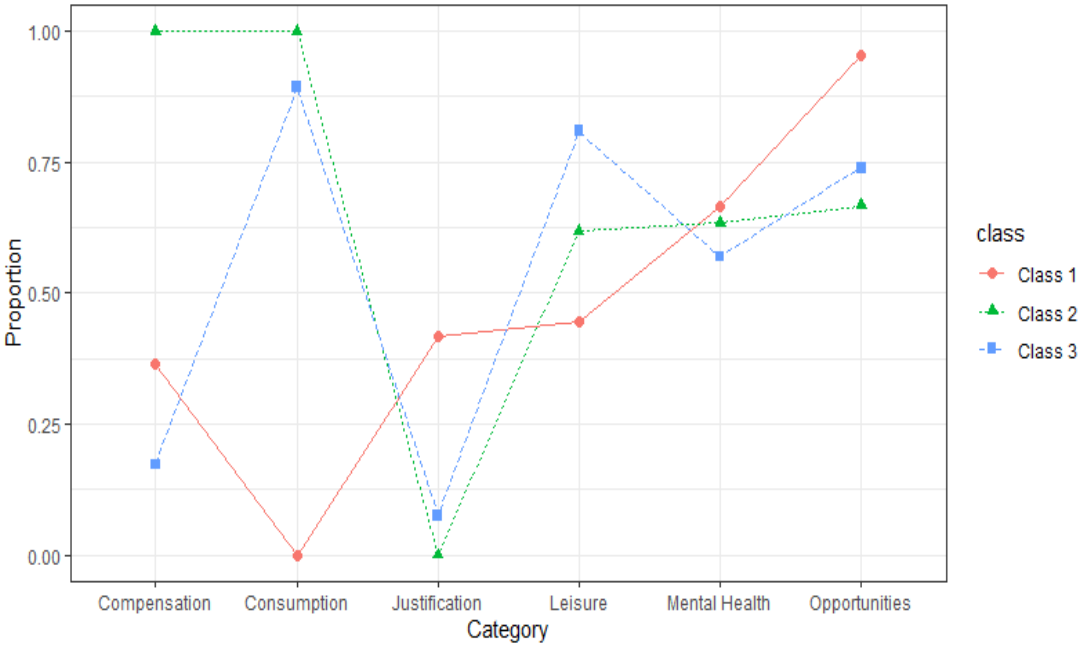
Note. *AIC* = Akaike Information Criterion; *BIC* = Bayesian Information Criterion; *G*2* = Likelihood ratio/deviance statistic; *X2* = Chi-square goodness of fit; *MLL* = Maximum log-likelihood; *DF* = Degrees of freedom. The selected model is indicated in **bold**.

Regarding the way participants perceived economic inequality when thinking about the friend with the most resources, Class 3 was the most prevalent (*n*=311, 57.27%), followed by Class 2 (*n*=158, 29.09%), and Class 1 (*n*=74, 13.62%). Participants in Class 3 were more likely to describe their friend with the most resources by mentioning consumption (89.28%), leisure activities (80.92%), and access to opportunities (73.9%). Participants in Class 2 had a high probability of mentioning consumption (100%), but also of using compensation strategies (100%). Participants in Class 1 displayed a different

pattern, given they did not have any probability of mentioning consumption (0%) and instead focused on having access to opportunities (95.23%) and mental health (66.67%). As illustrated in Figure 2-Panel A, the main differences were found between Class 1 and both Classes 2 and 3, in terms of the probability to refer to consumption issues. Classes 2 and 3 had a similar pattern of responses in all the categories, except in the use of compensation strategies, where Class 2 reported a higher probability of mentioning it.

As for the two latent classes selected for the participants describing their friend with the least resources, most participants were assigned to Class 1 (n = 417, 76.94%), and the rest were assigned to Class 2 (n = 125, 23.06%). Latent Class 1 participants had a higher probability to use categories such as consumption (82.73%), leisure (64.04%), and opportunities (63.6%). By contrast, Class 2 participants had a high probability of describing their friend using compensation strategies (100%) and mentioning consumption (77.62%). In Figure 2-Panel B, the pattern of responses between classes was similar in all the categories except in compensation, being that Class 2 displayed a higher probability of mentioning it. Figure 2-Panel B depicts the probability of mentioning each category of friends for each latent class (see Table S5 for detailed percentages in all the estimated models).

Panel A



Panel B

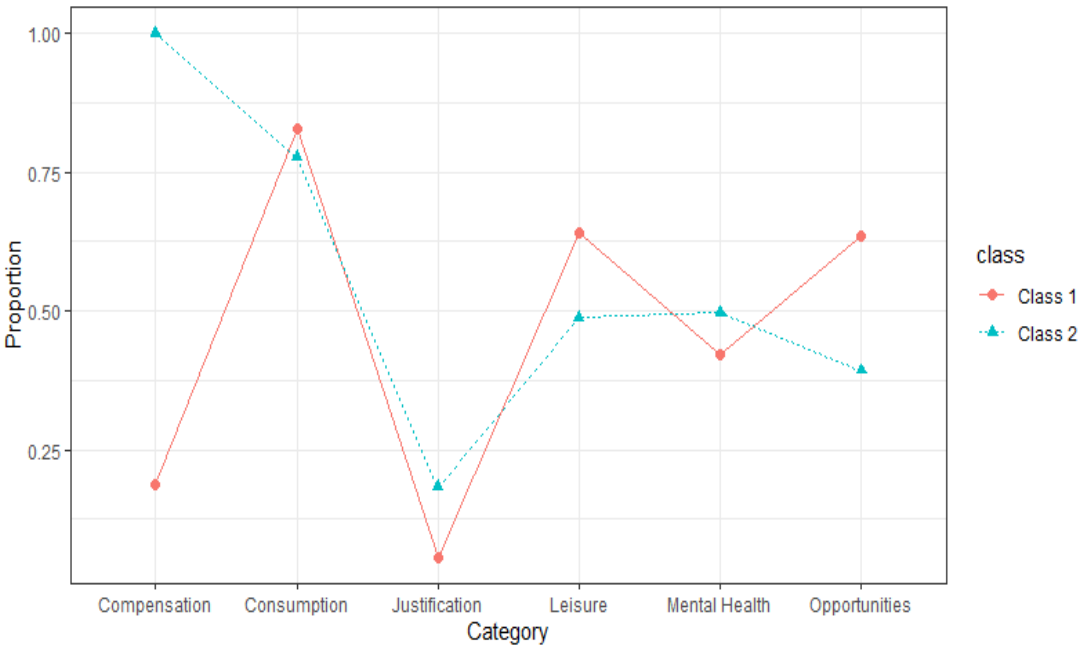


Figure 2. Probability of responses to each category as a function of latent class membership in inequality perception focusing on friends with the most resources (Panel A) and the fewest resources (Panel B).

Predicting tolerance towards inequality and support for redistribution according to latent class membership

Next, with exploratory purposes, we tested the main effects of each latent class on tolerance towards inequality and support for redistribution. We also included the interaction term with socioeconomic status, since it is a key factor determining participants' groups of reference and their perceptions (Evans & Kelley, 2017).

To test these ideas when participants focused on their friend with the most resources, we created a dummy variable comparing Class 2 (high compensation, high consumption) and Class 3 (low compensation, high consumption and leisure) to Class 1 (more opportunities). Latent classes were not directly associated with support for redistribution; but there was an interaction between socioeconomic status and Class 3. Simple slope analysis revealed that socioeconomic status was negatively associated with support for redistribution for participants in Class 3 (b = –0.17, SE = 0.05, t = –3.06, p < .001), but was non-significant for participants in Class 1 (b = 0.07, SE = 0.08, t = .82, p = .41) (see Figure 3).

Table 4

Unstandardized regression coefficients of support for redistribution and perceived differences predicted by latent classes when considering friends with the most resources

	Support for redistribution						Perceived differences					
	M1			M2 + interaction			M3			M4+ interaction		
Predictors	*b* (SE)	CI	*p*	*b* (SE)	CI	*p*	*b* (SE)	CI	*p*	*b* (SE)	CI	*p*
(Intercept)	5.89	5.20 – 6.58	<0.001	5.89	5.20 – 6.58	<0.001	4.97	4.35 – 5.60	<0.001	4.95	4.32 – 5.59	<0.001
	(0.35)			(0.35)			(0.32)			(0.32)		
Age	-0.03	-0.06 – 0.00	0.053	-0.03	-0.05 – 0.00	0.078	0.03	0.00 – 0.05	0.029	0.03	0.00 – 0.06	0.024
	(0.01)			(0.01)			(0.01)			(0.01)		
Gender (female)	0.12	-0.09 – 0.33	0.280	0.10	-0.12 – 0.31	0.378	0.09	-0.10 – 0.28	0.351	0.09	-0.11 – 0.29	0.376
	(0.11)			(0.11)			(0.10)			(0.10)		
Class 2 (C2, vs. Class 1)	0.13	-0.21 – 0.48	0.448	0.09	-0.26 – 0.44	0.623	0.38	0.06 – 0.69	0.018	0.34	0.02 – 0.66	0.040
	(0.18)			(0.18)			(0.16)			(0.16)		
Class 3 (C3, vs. Class 1)	-0.01	-0.33 – 0.31	0.948	-0.06	-0.38 – 0.27	0.728	0.20	-0.09 – 0.49	0.177	0.18	-0.12 – 0.48	0.235
	(0.16)			(0.16)			(0.15)			(0.15)		
SES				0.13	-0.09 – 0.35	0.239				-0.02	-0.23 – 0.18	0.830
				(0.11)						(0.10)		
SES x C2				-0.22	-0.49 – 0.04	0.101				-0.14	-0.38 – 0.11	0.265
				(0.14)						(0.12)		
SES x C3				-0.24	-0.47 – -0.00	0.048				0.01	-0.21 – 0.22	0.934
				(0.12)						(0.11)		
Observations	533			511			533			511		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.013 / 0.005			0.032 / 0.018			0.021 / 0.014			0.034 / 0.021		

Note. M=model; *b*=beta; *SE*=Standard Error; *CI*=Confidence Interval, *p*=p value, SES= Socio Economic Status.

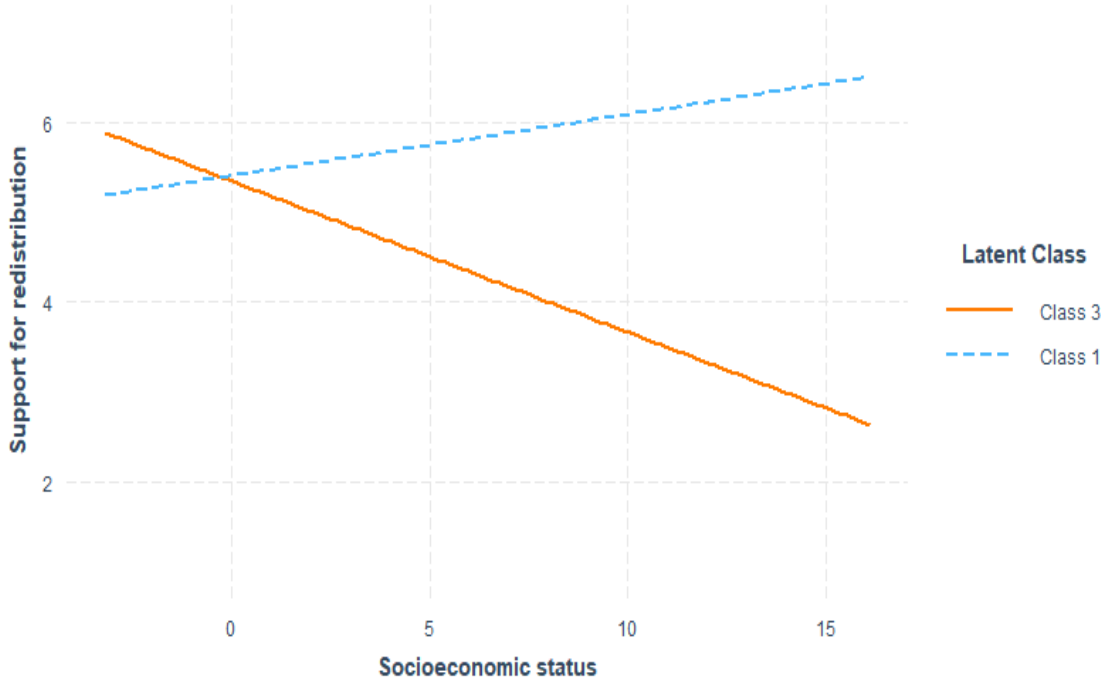


Figure 3. Effects of socioeconomic status on support for redistribution of wealth influenced by latent class.

As for tolerance towards inequality, we found that participants in Class 2 (vs. Class 1) were more likely to perceive greater differences between their friends with the most and fewest resources (see Model 3, Table 4). In other words, people who used compensation strategies (i.e. making negative attributions on their advantaged friends) and used more consumption elements when talking about their richest friends were more likely to acknowledge the differences between their friends with different socioeconomic status.

From the perspective of latent classes of participants describing their friends with the fewest resources, we found no clear relationship between participants in Class 2 and support for redistribution. However, participants in Class 2 (i.e. high compensation, high consumption) had a negative main effect on perceived economic differences between friends: people focusing on compensation strategies (i.e. making positive attributions of their disadvantaged friends) and consumption were less likely to acknowledge differences between people with different socioeconomic status (for more details on this result, see Figure S1 in the Supplementary Materials).

Table 5

Unstandardized regression coefficients of support for redistribution and perceived differences predicted by latent classes when considering friends with the least resources

	Support for redistribution						Perceived differences					
	M1			M2 + interaction			M3			M4+ interaction		
Predictors	*b* (SE)	CI	*p*	*b* (SE)	CI	*p*	*b* (SE)	CI	*p*	*b* (SE)	CI	*p*
(Intercept)	5.94	5.30 – 6.58	<0.001	5.89	5.25 – 6.54	<0.001	5.28	4.70 – 5.86	<0.001	5.28	4.69 – 5.87	<0.001
	(0.32)			(0.33)			(0.30)			(0.30)		
Age	-0.03	-0.06 – 0.00	0.051	-0.03	-0.05 – 0.00	0.081	0.03	0.00 – 0.05	0.037	0.03	0.00 – 0.05	0.044
	(0.01)			(0.01)			(0.01)			(0.01)		
Gender (female)	0.14	-0.07 – 0.35	0.184	0.13	-0.08 – 0.35	0.216	0.09	-0.10 – 0.28	0.347	0.11	-0.09 – 0.30	0.275
	(0.11)			(0.11)			(0.10)			(0.10)		
Class 2 (vs. Class 1)	-0.08	-0.33 – 0.17	0.518	-0.13	-0.38 – 0.13	0.331	-0.23	-0.46 – 0.00	0.053	-0.26	-0.50 – -0.03	0.027
	(0.13)			(0.13)			(0.12)			(0.12)		
SES				-0.09	-0.16 – -0.01	0.030				0.01	-0.06 – 0.08	0.730
				(0.04)						(0.04)		
SES x C2				0.01	-0.13 – 0.14	0.937				-0.18	-0.30 – -0.06	0.004
				(0.07)						(0.06)		
Observations	532			510			532			510		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.011 / 0.006			0.024 / 0.014			0.017 / 0.012			0.042 / 0.032		

Note. M=model; *b*=beta; *SE*=Standard Error; *CI*=Confidence Interval, *p*=p value, SES= Socio Economic Status.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to describe the dimensions of inequality in everyday life by using social comparisons between close friends. We also identified how these dimensions grouped profiles of participants, and explored how such clusters were associated with tolerance towards inequality and support for redistribution.

The main findings were that participants were aware of economic inequalities in their everyday life beyond strictly monetary issues. Participants perceived inequality through daily indicators such as consumption habits, access to opportunities, leisure time, and mental health. Some of them used compensation strategies and a few provided an explicit justification of their friends' economic resources. A latent class analysis allowed

us to identify groups of participants who especially differed in the degree of attention they paid to consumption behaviors and in the use of compensatory strategies. These perceptions were able to influence participants' tolerance towards inequality and support for redistribution.

Our results show that people are aware of the marks of status present in accessories and habits (Kraus et al. 2019). The main social comparisons are based on salient aspects of our environment such as consumption patterns (Irwin, 2015; Pahl et al. 2007). Consumption decisions are a central part of our daily life and do not just involve the purchase of basic goods. The consumption and possession of material assets allows people to build lifestyles and differentiate them from others, communicating acquired status or social prestige (Dubois et al. 2020).

In addition, perceived economic inequality entails perceived inequality of opportunities (Choi, 2019; Franko, 2016). Economic resources divide large social groups according to the possibilities they have to develop human capabilities in their immediate social surroundings. In societies characterized by inequality and social comparison, the opportunities that some groups have above others are highly salient in people's lives (Kraus et al. 2017). Previously, it has also been found that perceived economic inequality in everyday life implies comparing the opportunities that some people have with those of others (García-Sánchez et al. 2018).

Results also showed that perceived economic inequality in everyday life can influence tolerance towards inequality and support for redistribution. On the one hand, from a variable-centered approach, we found that, on average, compensating their advantaged friends was associated with less support for redistribution. We also found that mentioning the lack of opportunities for their disadvantaged friends was related to more awareness of the economic differences between their friends. Though informative, these relationships should be interpreted with caution, since people perceive inequality by combining categories, rather than isolating them. Thus, inspecting the combination of categories through latent class analyses can provide a more insightful perspective.

On the other hand, from a person-centered approach, although participants mostly agree on how they perceive economic inequality, our analysis allows us to construct groups based on the differences of the probability that participants mention consumption, opportunities, and compensation. Specifically, most participants perceived inequality in

the same terms, but some of them engaged in a subtle way to justify inequality by compensating for it.

We also found that these groups —the latent classes— were also related to tolerance towards inequality and support for redistribution. For instance, participants who referred more to consumption and used negative attributes towards the rich when talking about their advantaged friends were also more likely to perceive greater economic differences between their friends. By contrast, participants who use positive attributes towards the poor and mentioned less opportunities when talking about their disadvantaged friends, were less likely to perceive economic differences between their friends. In other words, participants were more likely to acknowledge greater economic differences when they perceived undeserving rich; and they belittle economic differences when they described deserving poor.

These compensatory strategies are a way to alleviate psychological distress (Jost, 2020; Kay & Jost, 2003), since perceived economic inequality in the reference group creates a threat to the self because of the cognitive dissonance generated by a social system that discriminates against some friends and rewards the others. Compensating the disadvantaged friend by attributing him/her more positive features (e.g. poor but happy) made participants less aware of economic differences, suggesting that praising the poor might obscure their disadvantaged position. By contrast, participants attributing more negative features to the advantaged friend (e.g. not appreciating what he/she has, wasting money) were more aware of economic differences, which is a way to raise concerns about inequality (Kay & Jost, 2003).

According to the literature (Son Hing et al. 2019), we also found that, when referring to the friend with the most resources, socioeconomic status was negatively associated with support for redistribution, but only in the group that was more likely to mention consumption, leisure time, and less compensation. The main differentiating category was the use of compensation. In this case, it seems that participants of higher socioeconomic status, who attributed fewer negative features to the rich, showed less support for redistribution. As such, positive views towards the rich are a way to ease the moral outrage needed to demand measures to reduce inequality (Wakslak, Jost, Tyler & Chen, 2007).

The main limitation of the present research is the limited representative nature of the results given the context and the sample of the study. Nevertheless, our results showed the need to focus on individuals' most immediate contexts and their social circles to explore in greater depth how people's attitudes towards inequality are formed (García-Castro et al. 2019; Mijs, 2019).

Individuals do not just estimate inequality by comparing themselves to others, but also base their responses to inequalities using social comparisons between social groups and people (Condon & Wichowsky, 2020; Kraus et al. 2017). The literature on social comparisons has focused on intergroup and interpersonal comparisons. However, this separation of both dimensions does not seem adequate since any intergroup comparison involves an interpersonal comparison (Leach & Vliek, 2008). As far as we know, making a comparison between friends with most and least money without including the person himself/herself as a reference had not been previously done. It remains to be explored in the future how people themselves are involved in this comparison. Previous research and the results of the present one would support the hypothesis that while comparing friends, people include themselves in the comparison.

Our results highlight that inequality is perceived in different ways but important elements are based on daily aspects of individuals' lives, such as consumption habits and compensation strategies. In short, the current qualitative and quantitative study on perceived inequality in everyday life opens the possibility of exploring the effects of economic inequality using data more attuned with people's experiences.

Endnotes

1. This question was used in a previous study but the responses had not been analyzed before. The questions about tolerance towards inequality and support for redistribution were taken from the same previous study for other purposes, but have been analyzed again for the purposes of the current research.
2. The item: ‘‘Economic differences in Spain are too large’’ was also used with exploratory purposes. Results can be found in the Supplementary Materials (Table S5).
3. α_{Kripp}= Krippendorff’s alpha.
4. These percentages refer to the indicators within each category.
5. The first number identifies the participant and his/her response number.

Capítulo 6.
Discusión

Esta tesis doctoral estuvo motivada por la creciente y extrema desigualdad económica que vive el mundo (Piketty, 2020) y por la necesidad de que la psicología social de la desigualdad contara con medidas más precisas y acordes a la realidad cotidiana de las personas (Brown-Ianuzzi et al., 2017b). Así, la presente investigación tenía como objetivo indagar sobre los efectos psicosociales que produce la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana. Partimos de la idea de que la percepción de desigualdad económica experimentada en un contexto cercano y entre personas conocidas, provoca importantes cambios actitudinales hacia la propia desigualdad. En concreto, predijimos que la percepción cercana de la desigualdad hace que las personas se vuelvan más igualitarias: hace que tengan peores actitudes hacia la desigualdad (e.g., se vuelven más intolerantes hacia ella) y mejores actitudes hacia aquellas políticas que buscan disminuirlas (e.g., las políticas redistributivas).

Los efectos de la percepción de desigualdad son diferentes dependiendo de cómo se defina ésta (García-Sánchez et al., 2018a). Por eso, en una primera fase de esta tesis doctoral construimos una escala para medir la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana (PEIEL, por sus siglas en inglés) y conocer si esta nueva medida predecía algunos efectos psicosociales más allá de lo que lo hacían las principales medidas utilizadas en la literatura (e.g., las medidas de brechas salariales o diagramáticas). Encontramos que el instrumento elaborado como parte de este trabajo predice la intolerancia a la desigualdad por encima de la medida frecuentemente usada sobre brechas salariales, y que el efecto sobre la intolerancia es mayor en las personas con una ideología política de centro-derecha que en las personas de ideología política de izquierda. Más adelante, replicamos este efecto controlando también por una medida diagramática utilizada frecuentemente. Además, encontramos que la escala PEIEL predijo significativamente una parte de la varianza de las actitudes hacia la redistribución económica incluso controlando por la medida de brechas salariales y la percepción diagramática.

En una segunda parte de esta tesis, basándonos en resultados de estudios correlaciónales previos, desarrollamos una manipulación de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana. En un principio evaluamos la validez de constructo de la manipulación (Chester y Lasko, 2019). Luego, probamos sus efectos en diferentes variables psicosociales, y por último replicamos en dos experimentos adicionales (incluida una replicación conceptual; Crandall y Sherman, 2016) que la percepción de

desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana hace que las personas toleren menos la desigualdad, y esto a su vez mejora sus actitudes hacia la redistribución. Un mini meta-análisis (Goh, Hall, y Rosenthal, 2016) controlando por la ideología política, clase social, género y edad confirmó estos resultados. Todos los estudios de este capítulo fueron pre-registrados y los datos son de acceso abierto.

En tercer lugar, con el objetivo de mejorar la validez ecológica de los resultados experimentales previos (Schmuckler, 2001), los replicamos usando un estudio longitudinal de cuatro olas con población chilena. Con estos datos longitudinales pusimos a prueba si los efectos encontrados previamente se mantenían a través del tiempo con una muestra diferente, proveniente de población latinoamericana, generalmente sub-representada en la psicología social hegemónica (Rad et al., 2018). Encontramos, en línea con los resultados anteriores, que la frecuencia de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana predijo positivamente la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad y las actitudes hacia la redistribución. Asimismo, replicamos el modelo de mediación del efecto de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana sobre las actitudes hacia la redistribución a través de la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad. Además, de forma exploratoria, encontramos un efecto recursivo: la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad y las actitudes hacia la redistribución también predijeron la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana.

Por último, con el objetivo de explorar las dimensiones de la vida cotidiana que se utilizan para estimar la desigualdad (comparando a los/as amigos/as con más y con menos dinero), analizamos de forma cualitativa las respuestas obtenidas en los experimentos que manipulamos la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana; esto es, analizamos los textos de los/as participantes cuando les pedíamos que pensaran en su amigo/a con más dinero y menos dinero. Encontramos que las personas participantes perciben desigualdad económica entre sus amigos/as a través de indicadores cotidianos como el consumo, las oportunidades, el tiempo libre y la salud mental. Luego, con el material codificado, las personas se agruparon a través de un análisis de clases latentes entre quienes prestaban más atención a los hábitos de consumo y quiénes utilizaban con mayor frecuencia estrategias compensatorias. Además, encontramos que los/as participantes que se referían negativamente hacia su amigo/a con más dinero percibían mayores diferencias económicas entre sus amigos/as, y por el contrario, los/as participantes cuando se referían positivamente hacia su amigo/a con menos dinero

percibían menos diferencias económicas. Asimismo, los/as participantes de clase social alta y que describían a su amigo/a con más dinero positivamente apoyaban menos la redistribución de recursos económicos.

Consideramos que los principales aportes de la presente tesis se centran en primer lugar en la profundización de un tema importante, pero novedoso en el campo: la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana. En segundo lugar, la diversidad metodológica utilizada, en la que se incluyen estudios correlacionales, experimentales, un estudio longitudinal y un estudio que emplea metodología cualitativa. En tercer lugar, en términos metodológicos, la investigación también generó una manipulación experimental válida para explorar otros efectos psicosociales que exceden los objetivos de la presente tesis. Asimismo, la coherencia de los resultados a través de distintos métodos, muestras y medidas, genera evidencia contrastada de los efectos encontrados. Y por último, en un momento de incertidumbre por la crisis que atraviesa el mundo, ocasionada por la COVID-19, creemos que el presente trabajo transmite un mensaje esperanzador. En él se muestra que las actitudes hacia la desigualdad económica pueden cambiarse y se abre el camino a una línea de investigación que tiene como objetivo la disminución de la desigualdad económica.

A continuación, discutiremos con más profundidad los principales resultados de esta tesis. En primer lugar, se discutirá el alcance de la escala desarrollada. Más adelante se plantea una reflexión sobre las diferencias de los resultados entre la percepción de desigualdad económica en general y la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana. Luego, dedicaremos un apartado a discutir por qué consideramos que la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana logra cambiar las actitudes hacia la desigualdad. Por último, plantearemos las limitaciones de los resultados y sus implicaciones prácticas.

¿Es la escala de percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana un mejor instrumento que los que miden la percepción de desigualdad económica de forma general?

Los resultados encontrados confirman que la escala PEIEL es un instrumento que presenta evidencia de validez y fiabilidad para medir la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana en la población española. Resultados preliminares de otras

investigaciones en curso también muestran que el instrumento puede usarse en diferentes contextos como Estados Unidos, México o Colombia.

La evidencia de la presente investigación sugiere que la escala de percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana (PEIEL) predice mejor algunos efectos psicosociales, como la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad y las atribuciones situacionales de la pobreza (Cozzarelli et al., 2001) (ver capítulo 3). Sin embargo, no es así para todos los efectos psicosociales. Por ejemplo, la medida diagramática (ISPP, 2017) predijo por encima de la escala PEIEL las actitudes hacia la redistribución y las atribuciones disposicionales de la pobreza. La medida de las brechas salariales no predijo ninguno de los efectos medidos por encima de la escala PEIEL ni de la medida diagramática.

La percepción de desigualdad económica es un constructo multidimensional que incluye diferentes ámbitos de la vida de las personas. Es un fenómeno que se puede percibir y experimentar de muchas formas diferentes que no se ciñen solamente a los ingresos económicos (García-Sánchez et al, 2018a; Irwin, 2016). La escala PEIEL se construyó para permitir que los individuos estimen la desigualdad en un contexto familiar y cercano. Implica un muestreo social que refleja un proceso cognitivo en un grupo social determinado, el grupo de amigos/as como grupo de referencia (Dawtry et al., 2015). Aun así, la desigualdad en el grupo de referencia no es la única desigualdad económica que existe, y por ello consideramos que la medida diagramática podría explicar mejor otros efectos psicosociales de la desigualdad económica.

La literatura sugiere que diferentes métodos de medición producen diferencias en la estimación de los niveles de desigualdad percibida (Arsenio, 2018; Eriksson y Simpson, 2012; Eriksson y Simpson, 2013; Hauser y Norton, 2017), y que las personas evalúan de forma diferente la desigualdad económica dependiendo de con qué grupos se comparen y cómo se describan estas desigualdades (Bruckmuller et al., 2017). La medida diagramática se basa en la percepción de desigualdad en el conjunto de la sociedad, y a pesar de sus grandes limitaciones, es fácil de responder para las personas.

En suma, la escala PEIEL y la medida diagramática podrían medir la percepción de diferentes, aunque relacionadas, formas de desigualdad. Por ende, cada instrumento parece explicar mejor diferentes efectos psicosociales. Aun así, insistimos en señalar lo que a nuestro criterio es la principal debilidad de la medida diagramática, que utilice una escala ordinal donde la distancia entre las diferentes opciones de respuesta no es la misma.

Estudios futuros pueden seguir mejorando éste y otros instrumentos para medir la percepción de desigualdad económica (e.g., Rodríguez-Bailón et al., 2017).

De esta forma, se puede sugerir que la escala PEIEL es un instrumento que puede sumar a la medida diagramática y a la medida de la percepción de desigualdad económica con brechas salariales. La investigación en psicología social de la desigualdad comenzó utilizando la medida de las brechas salariales y su uso se ha extendido porque grandes encuestas internacionales (e.g., ISSP) la siguen empleando. Sin embargo, en aras de seguir avanzando en nuestro campo de estudio, es importante cuestionarse el uso de esta medida y el constructo que está midiendo. El presente trabajo, en línea con estudios previos (Knell y Stix, 2020; Liebig et al., 2015; Markovsky y Eriksson, 2012; Page y Goldstein, 2016; Pedersen y Mutz, 2019), evidencia que es una medida cuestionable.

Sin embargo, como cualquier otro instrumento, es importante mencionar que la escala PEIEL también cuenta con limitaciones. En nuestra opinión, la principal debilidad de la misma es la omisión de un ítem que verse sobre el desempleo en el grupo de referencia. Por ejemplo, la percepción del desempleo influye en la percepción de la realidad social (Bisgaard et al., 2016), incide en el apoyo a políticas redistributivas (Franko, 2016), es sencillo de entender (Kim et al., 2016) y contribuye a la desigualdad económica (Helpman et al., 2010). Esta limitación se puede subsanar realizando una revisión de la escala que permita testear si el instrumento mejoraría incluyendo un ítem sobre ello (van de Vijver y Tanzer, 2004).

¿Son diferentes los efectos de la percepción de desigualdad económica en general que los de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana?

Anteriores investigaciones han encontrado que percibir mayor desigualdad lleva a desear una mayor desigualdad (García-Sánchez et al., 2019; Trump, 2018; Willis et al., 2015), mientras que en la presente investigación hemos encontrado un resultado aparentemente contrario: percibir mayor desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana hace que las personas la toleren menos. El presente apartado tiene como objetivo discutir acerca de esta ‘‘aparente’’ divergencia.

Antes de exponer la argumentación teórica que creemos nos permite explicar esta aparente contradicción, es necesario describir las diferencias metodológicas en los

estudios que reportan unos y otros resultados. Tanto en el artículo de Willis et al. (2015), el de Trump (2018) como en el de García-Sánchez et al. (2019), la variable predictora utilizada fue la percepción de desigualdad, medida con brechas salariales, y la variable criterio la desigualdad ideal, también medida con las brechas salariales ideales. Estos estudios comparten la limitación de que la brecha salarial percibida (medida en primer lugar) correlaciona con la brecha salarial ideal, lo cual puede conllevar un efecto de anclaje que explique en parte sus resultados (Son Hing et al., 2019). A ello se pueden sumar las críticas sobre la medida de percepción de desigualdad con brechas salariales, que ya se han tratado en el apartado anterior.

Asimismo, en nuestra opinión una cuestión importante para explicar esta divergencia de resultados se encuentra en las diferencias en las medidas que se utilizan para operacionalizar el constructo ‘‘reducción de la desigualdad’’, en una y otra línea de investigación: en un caso la brecha ideal y en el otro, un ítem sobre la tolerancia hacia la desigualdad. La desigualdad ideal medida con la brecha salarial ideal y la tolerancia hacia la desigualdad medida con el ítem que normalmente se utiliza en las encuestas internacionales ‘‘En (país/región) la desigualdad es demasiado grande’’ aunque se refieren a elementos subjetivos de la desigualdad económica, evalúan diferentes procesos cognitivos asociados a la desigualdad (Son Hing et al., 2019). La brecha salarial ideal mide la desigualdad que se considera justa, consideración que está condicionada por lo que la gente piensa que pasa en la realidad. Es decir, la estimación de un salario ideal no se realiza en el vacío, sino que se ancla a partir de lo que se considera que son los salarios reales (García-Sánchez et al., 2019).

Por otro lado, la medida ‘‘En país/región la desigualdad es demasiado grande’’ es una medida actitudinal sobre el nivel de rechazo o aceptación que genera la desigualdad percibida (Choi, 2019). Un aspecto crucial de nuestra argumentación se basa en el adjetivo ‘‘demasiado’’, el cual implica una evaluación sobre si existe más desigualdad de la que debería haber (Son Hing et al., 2019). Por esta razón, en la presente investigación, en línea con investigaciones previas, consideramos que esto es un ítem que mide la tolerancia hacia la desigualdad (Gonthier, 2017; Larsen, 2016; Schröder, 2017).

La diferenciación entre la brecha salarial ideal y la tolerancia hacia la desigualdad también se encuentra respaldada por los resultados empíricos que encontramos en la presente investigación, los cuales muestran que ambas variables se relacionan poco (ver

Tabla 2 del capítulo 2; r=-.25, p<.01). Así, la primera conclusión sería que los resultados difieren porque estamos midiendo diferentes constructos: la desigualdad ideal no es exactamente lo mismo que la tolerancia hacia la desigualdad.

Ahora bien, también consideramos que como se ha mostrado en el apartado anterior, existen diferencias entre la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana y la percepción de desigualdad económica en general-y que estas diferencias podrían ayudar a explicar los resultados encontrados-. La literatura ha sugerido que la relación entre percibir desigualdad económica y legitimarla se encuentra relacionada con el nivel de exposición a la desigualdad y su mantenimiento a lo largo del tiempo. En un principio, cuando existe un cambio considerable en el aumento de la desigualdad percibida, las personas tienden a rechazarla (Son Hing et al., 2019). Sin embargo, a medida que este nuevo nivel de desigualdad se mantiene a lo largo del tiempo, las personas se pueden habituar a ella y pueden llegar a legitimarla a través de un proceso heurístico: ‘‘lo que es, es lo que debería ser’’ (García-Sánchez et al., 2019; Homans, 1974).

En este trabajo, sin embargo, proponemos un proceso complementario: cuando la desigualdad se da en entornos cercanos, no se produce el proceso de habituación anteriormente descrito. Diferentes estudios dan cuenta de la habituación a la desigualdad a través del tiempo cuando ésta es medida de forma general o abstracta (Austen, 2002; Osberg y Smeeding, 2006). Por el contrario, en la presente investigación mostramos evidencia de que cuando la desigualdad se percibe en la vida cotidiana la intolerancia a la misma se mantiene a lo largo del tiempo.

En síntesis, nuestros resultados difieren de los encontrados previamente en la literatura (García-Sánchez et al., 2019; Trump, 2018; Willis et al., 2015) porque quizás los constructos medidos no son los mismos y porque la tendencia a la legitimación de la desigualdad a través del tiempo parece ser diferente cuando la desigualdad se percibe en la vida cotidiana que cuando se estima de forma más general y/o abstracta.

¿Por qué la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana logra cambiar las actitudes hacia la desigualdad?

El proceso a través del cual la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana incide en la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad y las actitudes hacia la

redistribución puede explicarse, al menos en parte, por medio de la Teoría del Contacto (Allport, 1954; Mijs, 2019; Pettigrew y Tropp, 2006) y al heurístico de accesibilidad (Dawtry et al., 2015; Flanagan y Kornbluh, 2017).

La desigualdad económica produce sociedades agrupadas en torno a la disposición de dinero. Los grupos sociales con más recursos económicos incluso se distancian geográficamente del resto de la población y las personas interactúan cotidianamente sobre todo con personas de su mismo nivel socioeconómico (Cruces et al., 2013; Mijs, 2019; Son Hing et al., 2019). La literatura señala que aquellas personas que interactúan solamente con personas de su misma condición económica cuentan con más creencias que legitiman la desigualdad porque no cuentan con información diversa que les brinde una perspectiva más amplia y precisa de la realidad económica (Mijs, 2019; Newman et al., 2015; Wu y Cho, 2017). De esta forma, las creencias sobre la desigualdad tienen una cualidad de auto reforzamiento difícil de romper: las personas hacen inferencias sobre la distribución de recursos en la sociedad a partir de lo que perciben en los contextos sociales inmediatos en los que viven (Cruces et al., 2013; Dawtry et al., 2015).

La percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana muestra la desigualdad en el entorno inmediato de las personas. Las personas que viven en ambientes homogéneos no tienen que analizar críticamente las ideologías que justifican la desigualdad (e.g., meritocracia). Por el contrario, aquellas personas que interactúan con grupos sociales más heterogéneos, y por tanto perciben más desigualdad económica en su vida cotidiana, es más probable que cuenten con creencias situacionales sobre el origen del éxito económico porque cuentan con información diversa sobre las causas de la desigualdad (Mijs, 2019; Newman et al., 2015).

Uno de los procesos cognitivos detrás de este efecto es el del heurístico de accesibilidad; esto es, la tendencia a juzgar la probabilidad de un evento a través de la facilidad con la que éste se recupere (Evans y Kelley, 2017; Flanagan y Kornbluh, 2017). Las personas juzgan los eventos sociales a través de los grupos de referencia en los cuales están insertos (Dawtry et al., 2015; Flanagan y Kornbluh, 2017). Cuando las personas tienen que juzgar la desigualdad económica utilizan la información accesible en su memoria sobre la desigualdad en su entorno inmediato.

Asimismo, la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana puede producir una amenaza al estatus personal. Investigaciones previas señalan que la

desigualdad produce una amenaza al auto-concepto (Lowery et al., 2012; Rosette y Zhou, 2018). Cuando las personas perciben la desigualdad en su entorno cercano, se sienten más vulnerables y el miedo de descender en la escala social puede aumentar (Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2019), y esto también puede llevar a que toleren menos desigualdad y apoyen más políticas redistributivas. En esta misma línea, otras investigaciones han señalado que las personas que realizan más comparaciones sociales cuentan con actitudes más positivas hacia la redistribución económica (Clark y Senik, 2010; Senik, 2009).

No obstante, la relación entre la percepción de desigualdad económica y el apoyo a políticas redistributivas es inconclusa hasta el momento (Choi, 2019). Los resultados de la presente investigación muestran que se trata de una relación compleja y que no es necesariamente lineal (Evans y Kelley, 2018; Song Hing et al., 2019). A pesar de encontrar consistentemente un efecto indirecto-la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana aumenta las actitudes positivas hacia la redistribución económica a través de la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad-, somos conscientes de las limitaciones de los modelos de mediación (Fiedler et al., 2018), por lo que consideramos este resultado con cautela.

No descartamos la posibilidad de que otras variables puedan incidir en la relación entre la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana y las actitudes hacia la redistribución. Por ejemplo, la literatura sugiere que las creencias meritocráticas (García-Sánchez et al., 2019; Mijs, 2018) y la percepción de justicia (Han et al., 2012; Kuhn, 2011; Son Hing et al., 2019; Trump, 2020) pueden ser covariables importantes en esta relación. Para profundizar en el mecanismo psicosocial involucrado en este proceso sugerimos que en próximos estudios se manipule la variable mediadora (Spencer et al., 2005), esto es, que se manipule la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad además de manipular la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana.

Es necesario resaltar que, en medio de la crisis de replicabilidad en la ciencia psicológica, y especialmente en la psicología social (Nosek et al., 2018), contar con evidencia convergente en diseños correlacionales, experimentales y longitudinal, es importante. Esto hace que podamos tener una mayor confianza en el efecto de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana sobre la intolerancia la desigualdad.

A pesar de ello, en esta línea quedan pendientes de investigar al menos dos aspectos que consideramos relevantes. El primero es el efecto recursivo exploratorio reportado en el estudio longitudinal, en el cual la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad y las actitudes hacia la redistribución también predijeron la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana. Este resultado parece mostrar una relación dinámica recursiva, más que una relación lineal entre las variables. Anteriores investigaciones han explorado los antecedentes de la percepción de desigualdad (Castillo et al., 2019; Son Hing et al., 2019). A pesar de que en el presente trabajo nos centramos en las consecuencias de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana, profundizar en las variables que inciden en su formación puede aumentar el conocimiento sobre dicho constructo.

Por último, es necesario señalar que no encontramos efectos en otras variables en las cuales pensábamos que la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana podía incidir. Por ejemplo, en las atribuciones situacionales de la pobreza. Anteriores investigaciones dan cuenta de la relación entre la percepción de la desigualdad y las atribuciones sobre la pobreza (Piff et al., 2020; Schneider y Castillo, 2015). Así, futuros estudios deberían indagar sobre las razones por las que en nuestro caso no encontramos un efecto sobre dicha variable.

Limitaciones

Como todos los proyectos de investigación éste cuenta con limitaciones. La principal ha sido que la crisis sanitaria y social provocada por la COVID-19 no nos ha permitido ejecutar el último estudio que teníamos planeado para la última etapa de la presente tesis. En el momento en que el estado español decretó el confinamiento general de la población (marzo 2020) nos encontrábamos ejecutando la prueba piloto de una aplicación telefónica que habíamos desarrollado junto con un equipo de investigación del Centro de Sistemas de Investigación y Supercomputación (CSIRC) de la Universidad de Granada.

Íbamos a realizar un estudio de muestreo experiencial (Hektner et al., 2007) sobre la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana. El estudio consistía en enviar señales a los móviles de las personas participantes todos los días durante una semana, con el fin de conocer las variaciones de la percepción de desigualdad en el día a día en tiempo real y seguir profundizando en los efectos psicosociales que se pueden

derivar de dichas variaciones (ver Figura 1). A pesar de que la aplicación desarrollada es otro de los productos de la tesis, lamentablemente las circunstancias fuera de nuestro control no nos han permitido recolectar los datos. Sin embargo, nuestra intención es continuar profundizando en los resultados aportados por la investigación incluida en el presente trabajo, llevando a cabo este estudio en el momento en el que podamos desarrollarlo con seguridad.

Figura 1. Muestro experiencial

Por otro lado, la psicología social de la desigualdad económica al ser un campo especial de reciente desarrollo, carece de una teoría general integradora (Carvacho y Álvarez, 2019; Stephen et al., 2014). La falta de una teoría consolidada presenta limitaciones para poder explorar empíricamente efectos con mayor respaldo conceptual y contar con instrumentos de medición con alta validez de constructo.

Por ejemplo, siguiendo la escasa literatura sobre el tema (García-Sánchez et al., 2018a; Krauss et al., 2017) nuestra operacionalización de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana se basó principalmente en la percepción de desigualdad económica en el grupo de referencia. Lo cual constituye uno de los elementos más importantes de dicho constructo (Dawtry et al., 2015), pero no el único. Los aspectos de la cotidianidad que son visibles y salientes del ambiente social-como el barrio en el que se vive o los lugares en los que se moviliza la gente- también forman parte de la

percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana. No realizamos ningún estudio que contemplara dichas dimensiones.

Así mismo, una de las principales variables dependientes utilizadas en esta tesis fueron las actitudes hacia la redistribución económica. Esta variable se ha operacionalizado como el apoyo a políticas que el gobierno puede tomar para redistribuir recursos entre la sociedad, por otra parte, la forma más usada para medir este constructo (Choi, 2019). Sin embargo, no es una medida exenta de limitaciones, ya que las personas pueden estar a favor de la redistribución económica pero no confiar en el gobierno para llevarla a cabo (Arsenio, 2018; Kuziemko et al., 2015). También pueden apoyar más políticas de creación de oportunidades que, por ejemplo, redistribución a través de impuestos (Franko, 2016; McCall y Kenworty, 2009). Esta es una limitación que transciende esta investigación y que forma parte de la discusión conceptual del campo de apoyo a políticas redistributivas que incluye a las ciencias políticas, la sociología y la economía, entre otras. En el futuro por tanto, será necesario probar estos efectos con otras medidas de redistribución como podrían ser, el apoyo al ingreso mínimo vital, o la eliminación de subvenciones a ciertas entidades u organismos (como la iglesia católica o la monarquía), con objeto de usar ese dinero en el fortalecimiento de los servicios públicos y garantizar salarios dignos.

Por último, es importante señalar que la mayoría de los estudios contaron con participantes que eran estudiantes universitarios. Este tipo de muestra no es representativa de la población general, por lo que los resultados no se pueden generalizar sin ser antes replicados en otras muestras. Esta limitación es muy frecuente en la investigación en psicología social (Rad et al., 2018). A pesar de que la escala de percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana sí se construyó con estudios en los que participó población general, el resto de estudios se realizaron con población universitaria.

Implicaciones prácticas e investigación futura

El presente trabajo no parte de una posición ingenua de neutralidad científica. Nosotros/as nos posicionamos entre los/as psicólogos/as sociales que buscan reducir la desigualdad económica. La investigación sobre las consecuencias psicosociales de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana aquí presentada abre un panorama esperanzador, ya que uno de los principales resultados de la misma es que entre

sus efectos se encuentra el deseo de querer reducir la desigualdad (Rodríguez-Bailón, 2020).

La implicación práctica de la tesis es desarrollar una intervención psicosocial en la cual se pueda utilizar lo evidenciado para convertir en más positivas las actitudes de las personas hacia las políticas redistributivas. Esta aproximación iba a ponerse a prueba con el estudio del muestro experiencial antes comentado. Íbamos a poner a prueba la idea de si hacer más conscientes a las personas sobre la desigualdad económica a su alrededor cambiaban sus actitudes hacia la misma. No obstante, la evidencia generada por esta investigación hasta el momento respalda la hipótesis de que de esta forma se podría lograr mayor apoyo hacia la lucha contra la desigualdad económica. En esta misma línea, nos encontramos probando por medio de un nuevo estudio si la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana durante la crisis del COVID-19 puede incrementar el apoyo al ingreso mínimo vital, una de las principales políticas públicas para la reducción de la desigualdad económica (Stahl y MacEachen, 2020). Los resultados preliminares son positivos.

Como se ha detallado anteriormente, la desigualdad económica puede generar un círculo vicioso a través del cual se produzcan mecanismos psicológicos que pueden provocar que las personas toleren niveles extremos de desigualdad y se opongan a acciones para reducirla (García-Sánchez et al., 2019). Además, la ideología dominante busca desalentar la movilización social y que las personas desarrollen actitudes sumisas frente al enriquecimiento de algunos sectores sociales a costa de la pobreza y limitaciones de otros (Chomsky, 2016). Por eso, los resultados del presente trabajo son promisorios porque incluso tomando en cuenta variables como la ideología política, la clase social, el género y la edad, las personas que perciben más desigualdad en sus entornos cercanos apoyan más la redistribución.

Somos conscientes que el apoyo a más políticas redistributivas no conllevará una disminución de la desigualdad económica inmediatamente y en la misma medida. Entre los factores que explican la relación entre el apoyo a políticas redistributivas y la reducción de la desigualdad no sea directa se encuentran las diferencias en el interés por la participación política. La desigualdad económica hace que especialmente los/as más desfavorecidos/as resten importancia al activismo político, por lo que los intereses de las personas más poderosas suelen tener más peso en las decisiones políticas (Lee et al.,

2005). Por tanto, una de las líneas de investigación futura podría indagar sobre la posible relación entre la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana y la participación en acciones colectivas en las que las personas busquen recuperar su poder político y reducir la desigualdad. La literatura sugiere que un primer paso en esta línea es que las personas tomen conciencia de la desigualdad (Simon y Klandermans, 2001).

En definitiva, con la presente tesis doctoral creemos haber mostrado que el estudio de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana es un campo novel en el que se necesita profundizar. Los resultados de esta investigación apoyan la tesis de que las personas perciben desigualdad económica en su día a día más allá de las cuestiones relacionadas con el dinero (García-Sánchez et al., 2018). En el futuro es necesario conocer más sobre las dimensiones de la vida cotidiana en las cuales las personas perciben con mayor detalle la desigualdad. Esta era nuestra intención con el análisis cualitativo llevado a cabo en el capítulo cinco.

En dicho estudio, las personas percibieron la desigualdad a través de indicadores cotidianos como los hábitos de consumo, el acceso a oportunidades, el tiempo libre y la salud mental. Los hábitos de consumo mencionados por las personas participantes fueron uno de los indicadores más importantes relacionados con las actitudes hacia la desigualdad. Los individuos son conscientes de las marcas de estatus presentes en los accesorios y hábitos (Kraus et al., 2019). Las decisiones de consumo se muestran como una parte esencial en la vida de las personas y no están involucradas solamente en la compra de bienes básicos. La posesión de bienes materiales construye estilos de vida y diferencia a las personas, comunican estatus y prestigio social (Dubois et al., 2020). La literatura muestra los efectos adversos que la comparación social en términos de consumo acarrea, por ejemplo con el aumento de la privación relativa (Chipp et al., 2011) o la ansiedad por el estatus (Melita et al., 2020). La investigación futura debe profundizar también en este aspecto.

Además, la percepción de desigualdad económica conlleva la percepción de desigualdad de oportunidades (Choi, 2019; Franko, 2016). Es necesario prestar más atención a los resultados que la línea de investigación sobre la percepción de desigualdad de oportunidades ha generado (Brunori, 2017). Los resultados de esta tesis señalan la necesidad de incluir conceptual y empíricamente esta perspectiva, ya que la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana implica también la comparación de las

oportunidades entre las personas (García-Sánchez et al., 2018). Además, una de las dimensiones de la vida cotidiana más importantes que surgieron en el análisis cualitativo reportado en el capítulo 5, fue la comparación de las oportunidades que el amigo/a con más dinero tenía en relación al amigo/a con menos dinero. En las sociedades caracterizadas por la desigualdad económica, las oportunidades que unos grupos tienen sobre otros sobresalen y tienen un gran impacto en la vida de las personas (Kraus et al., 2017).

Por último, es necesario replicar los resultados de esta tesis y seguir explorando nuevas consecuencias de la percepción de desigualdad económica en la vida cotidiana en otros contextos. Por ejemplo, en América Latina que es la región más desigual y violenta del mundo (Pérez, 2014). El estudio de los mecanismos psicosociales que explican la relación entre la desigualdad y la violencia parece una de las tareas más urgentes entre la población que más sufre sus consecuencias.

Final Conclusions

If we want to live in more egalitarian societies, it is important to increase intolerance toward inequality and the support for redistributive public policies. In this thesis we found that focusing on the effects of perceived economic inequality in everyday life is a useful strategy that allows us to understand the psychosocial consequences of economic inequality.

In the present doctoral thesis we can make several conclusions. First, the Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life (PEIEL) scale is a valid and reliable unidimensional instrument. This scale predicts intolerance to inequality controlling for wage gaps estimation and diagrammatic inequality perception. Second, we found that perceived economic inequality in everyday life increases intolerance to inequality and it also has an indirect effect on attitudes toward redistribution through intolerance to inequality. Third, our results highlight that the inequality in everyday life is perceived in different ways, such as consumption habits, access to opportunities, leisure time and mental health.

The study on the perception of inequality in everyday life opens the possibility of exploring the effects of economic inequality using more attuned data with people's experiences. These results can be useful in the long term to develop social programs and

policies aimed at reducing inequality and its associated effects. It is our responsibility to do it.

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