

Tesis doctoral – PhD Thesis  
Programa de Doctorado en Psicología

---

**Atribuciones sobre la pobreza. Antecedentes y consecuencias sobre las  
actitudes hacia la protección social**

**Attributions for poverty. Antecedents and consequences on attitudes  
toward social protection.**

Joaquín Alcañiz Colomer

Directores/as

Miguel C. Moya Morales

Inmaculada Valor Segura



**UNIVERSIDAD  
DE GRANADA**

Granada, septiembre de 2023

Editor: Universidad de Granada. Tesis Doctorales  
Autor: Joaquín Alcañiz Colomer  
ISBN: 978-84-1195-087-9  
URI: <https://hdl.handle.net/10481/85687>

Esta tesis doctoral ha sido posible gracias a la financiación de las ayudas para contratos predoctorales para la formación de doctores (FPI) contemplada en el Subprograma Estatal de Formación del Programa Estatal de Promoción del Talento y su Empleabilidad en I+D+i, en el marco del Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica y Técnica y de Innovación 2017-2020 (PRE2018-083480). Asimismo, el autor agradece el apoyo financiero ofrecido por los proyectos “Clase social, crisis económica y confianza. Variables psicosociales mediadoras y moderadoras” (PSI14-59659-R) y “Realidades macrosociales (crisis económica y clase social) y procesos psicosociales: confianza, bienestar, altruismo y política” (PSI2017-83966-R), concedidos por el Ministerio de Economía, Industria y Competitividad (MINECO/AEI/FEDER/UE) y el proyecto “Reacciones cognitivas y emocionales ante la pobreza y la inestabilidad económica: efectos sobre la ayuda individual y colectiva” (P20\_00199), concedido por la Junta de Andalucía.

This doctoral thesis has been made possible thanks to the funding provided by the predoctoral contracts for doctoral training (FPI) under the State Subprogram for Training of the State Program for the Promotion of Talent and Employability in R&D&I, within the framework of the State Plan for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation 2017-2020 (PRE2018-083480). Additionally, the author acknowledges the financial support provided by the projects "Social class, economic crisis, and trust: Mediating and moderating psychosocial variables" (PSI14-59659-R) and "Macrosocial realities (economic crisis and social class) and psychosocial processes: trust, well-being, altruism, and politics" (PSI2017-83966-R), granted by the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (MINECO/AEI/FEDER/UE), and the project "Cognitive and emotional reactions to poverty and economic instability: Effects on individual and collective assistance" (P20\_00199), granted by the Spanish Junta de Andalucía.

Universidad de Granada

Programa de Doctorado en Psicología

Centro de Investigación, Mente, Cerebro y Comportamiento (CIMCYC)

Departamento de Psicología Social

Facultad de Psicología

Garantizamos, al firmar esta tesis doctoral, que el trabajo ha sido realizado por la doctoranda bajo la dirección de los directores de la tesis y, hasta donde nuestro conocimiento alcanza, en la realización del trabajo, se han respetado los derechos de otros autores al ser citados, cuando se han utilizado sus resultados o publicaciones.

*Guarantee, by signing this doctoral thesis, that the work has been done by the doctoral candidate under the direction of the thesis supervisors and, as far as our knowledge reaches, in the performance on the work, the rights of the other authors to be cited (when their results or publications have been used) have been respected.*

Granada, 1 de septiembre de 2023

Directores/as de la tesis / Thesis supervisor/s;

Doctorando / Doctoral candidate

Fdo: Miguel Moya

Fdo: Inmaculada Valor Segura

Fdo: Joaquín Alcañiz Colomer

*A la memoria de Joaquín Colomer Sala y Concha Colomer Revuelta*

*«El mapa hace visibles unas cosas y oculta otras, da forma y deforma. Si un cartógrafo te dice "soy neutral", desconfía de él. Si te dice que es neutral, ya sabes de qué lado está. Un mapa siempre toma partido.»*

El cartógrafo, Juan Mayorga

*“And you that love the commons follow me”*

Cade en Henry VI, William Shakespeare

*“Everything that lives,*

*Lives not alone, nor for itself”*

The book of Thiel, William Blake

*“Jo vinc d'un silenci  
que romprà la gent*

*que ara vol ser lliure*

*i estima la vida,*

*que exigeix les coses*

*que li han negat”*

*Jo vinc d'un silenci, Raimon*

## Tabla de contenido

<b>Resumen .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Overview.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Capítulo 1. Marco conceptual .....</b>	<b>10</b>
1.1. <i>La pobreza como problema social y sus percepciones asociadas.....</i>	<i>12</i>
1.2. <i>Variables fundamentales relacionadas con la percepción de la pobreza.....</i>	<i>20</i>
1.3. <i>Referencias .....</i>	<i>42</i>
<b>Capítulo 2. Planteamiento general, preguntas de investigación y objetivos específicos.....</b>	<b>59</b>
2.1. <i>Planteamiento general.....</i>	<i>59</i>
2.2. <i>Preguntas y objetivos de investigación específicos.....</i>	<i>60</i>
2.3. <i>Referencias .....</i>	<i>66</i>
<b>Chapter 3. Not all Poor Are Equal: The Perpetuation of Poverty Through Blaming Those Who Have Been Poor all Their Lives.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<i>Abstract.....</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>Causal Attributions of Poverty and Help Deservingness.....</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>Group Membership and Attitudes Towards People in Poverty.....</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Stereotypes About People in Poverty.....</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Overview of the Present Research.....</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>Study 1.....</i>	<i>78</i>
Method .....	78
Preregistered Hypotheses.....	82
Results.....	83
Discussion .....	87
<i>Study 2.....</i>	<i>88</i>
Method .....	89
Preregistered Hypotheses.....	90
Results.....	91
Discussion .....	98
<i>Meta-Analysis of Studies 1 and 2.....</i>	<i>98</i>
<i>General Discussion.....</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Open Practices.....</i>	<i>104</i>
<i>References.....</i>	<i>104</i>

**Chapter 4. Gendered Social Perception of “the Poor”: Differences in Individualistic Attributions, Stereotypes, and Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies..... 114**

<i>Abstract</i> .....	115
<i>Attributions for Poverty and Gender</i> .....	117
<i>Stereotypes About Men and Women in Poverty</i> .....	119
<i>Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies</i> .....	120
<i>The Present Research</i> .....	122
<i>Study 1</i> .....	124
Method .....	124
Results.....	128
Discussion .....	131
<i>Study 2</i> .....	132
Method .....	132
Results.....	134
Discussion .....	136
<i>Study 3</i> .....	137
Method .....	137
Results.....	138
Preliminary Analyses.....	139
Discussion .....	141
<i>General Discussion</i> .....	142
Limitations and Future Research Directions .....	146
Practice Implications.....	147
Conclusion.....	148
<i>Data Availability</i> .....	149
<i>References</i> .....	149

**Chapter 5. Social Justice Orientations: Exploring Their Impact on Poverty Attributions and Support for Social Protection ..... 159**

<i>Abstract</i> .....	160
<i>Principles of Distributive Justice</i> .....	161
<i>Attributions for Poverty</i> .....	163
<i>Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies and Resource Redistribution</i> .....	164
<i>Distributive Justice Principles, Attributions for Poverty, and Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies</i> .....	164
<i>The Present Research</i> .....	166
<i>Study 1</i> .....	168
Method .....	168
Results.....	170
Discussion .....	172



<i>Study 2</i> .....	173
Hypotheses.....	173
Method .....	173
Results.....	175
Discussion .....	175
<i>Study 3</i> .....	176
Pre-registered Hypotheses.....	176
Method .....	179
Results.....	180
Discussion .....	185
<i>General Discussion</i> .....	186
<i>Data Accessibility Statement</i> .....	189
<i>References</i> .....	190
<b>Chapter 6. The influence of poverty definitions on attributions of the causes of poverty and attitudes towards poverty reduction</b> .....	<b>198</b>
<i>Abstract</i> .....	199
<i>Defining Poverty</i> .....	200
<i>Attributions for Poverty and Attitudes Toward Poverty Reduction and Political Participation of People in Poverty</i> .....	201
<i>Research Overview</i> .....	204
<i>Study 1</i> .....	205
Method .....	205
Results.....	207
Discussion .....	213
<i>Study 2</i> .....	213
Pre-registered Hypotheses.....	214
Method .....	214
Results.....	216
Discussion .....	223
<i>Study 3</i> .....	223
Pre-registered hypotheses.....	224
Method .....	224
Results.....	225
Discussion .....	227
<i>General Discussion</i> .....	228
<i>References</i> .....	231
<b>Capítulo 7. Discusión general</b> .....	<b>239</b>
7.1. Preguntas y respuestas de investigación.....	239
7.2. Implicaciones.....	249

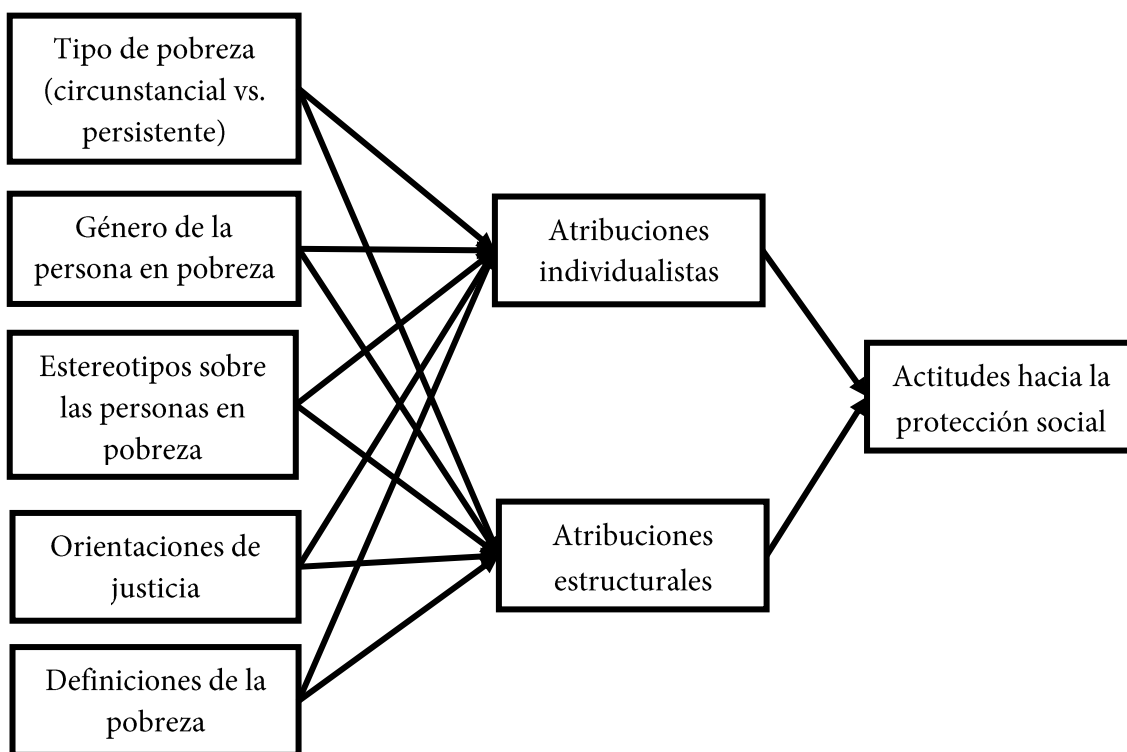
7.3. <i>Limitaciones</i> .....	256
7.4. <i>Futuras direcciones</i> .....	260
7.5. <i>Conclusion</i> .....	263
7. 6. <i>Referencias</i> .....	264



## Resumen

Esta tesis doctoral pretende profundizar en la influencia que tienen las atribuciones sobre la pobreza en las actitudes hacia las políticas dirigidas a erradicar esta última. Nos centramos aquí en el papel mediador de las atribuciones en la relación entre una serie de variables conceptualizadas como variables independientes y las actitudes hacia la protección social y la reducción de la pobreza, conceptualizadas como variables dependientes.

Nuestro planteamiento general es el siguiente: las atribuciones causales sobre la pobreza son influidas por una serie de variables ideacionales (e.g., las orientaciones sobre la justicia social o las definiciones sobre la pobreza) y otras relacionadas con las características de las personas en esa situación (e.g., la tipología de su pobreza o su género). Además, estas atribuciones tendrán consecuencias en las actitudes hacia la forma de abordar y gestionar el problema. El esquema conceptual de la presente tesis aparece en la siguiente figura (ver Figura 1).



**Figura 1.** Esquema conceptual que refleja las investigaciones presentadas en esta tesis.

Este documento consta de tres partes diferenciadas. En la primera parte, conformada por los capítulos 1 y 2, se exponen los fundamentos teóricos y el marco conceptual. En el capítulo 1 se aborda la pobreza como fenómeno socioeconómico, político e históricamente situado. El objetivo es ofrecer un contexto más amplio en el que dotar de sentido a nuestra investigación y resultados, algo en ocasiones incompatible con el formato de publicaciones académicas en revistas de impacto. También en el capítulo 1 introducimos brevemente las variables fundamentales analizadas en la presente tesis, teniendo en cuenta algunas matizaciones que realizaremos posteriormente. En el capítulo 2 presentamos la motivación, las preguntas de investigación y objetivos específicos de este trabajo.

La segunda parte se corresponde con el apartado empírico de esta tesis y está conformada por cuatro capítulos. En estos capítulos utilizamos tanto bases de datos secundarias provenientes de encuestas internacionales como datos recogidos *ex profeso* para comprobar nuestras hipótesis. En el capítulo 3 presentamos dos estudios experimentales y un mini meta-análisis que analizan la influencia del grupo de personas en pobreza presentado (en esta situación como consecuencia de la crisis económica vs. en pobreza persistente) en las atribuciones sobre la pobreza (internas y externas), el merecimiento de ayuda institucional percibido en el grupo y las actitudes hacia la protección social. Como será recurrente en esta tesis, analizamos el papel mediador de las atribuciones sobre la pobreza en la relación entre el grupo percibido y las actitudes generales hacia la protección social.

El capítulo 4 lo conforman tres estudios experimentales en los que estudiamos también la influencia del grupo de personas en pobreza presentado, aunque en este caso comparamos la percepción que recae en hombres y mujeres en pobreza. Además, analizamos la influencia del grupo percibido en los estereotipos sobre el *target*, las actitudes clasistas, las atribuciones sobre la pobreza, la eficacia percibida en el uso de las ayudas y las actitudes generales hacia la protección social. De nuevo, analizamos el papel

mediador de las atribuciones sobre la pobreza entre el grupo percibido y las actitudes generales hacia la protección social.

En el capítulo 5 examinamos en tres estudios correlacionales la relación entre las orientaciones sobre la justicia social (o actitud hacia los principios de justicia social), las atribuciones sobre la pobreza y las actitudes generales hacia la protección social. De forma exploratoria y tentativa, sugerimos un modelo causal en el cuál las orientaciones sobre la justicia influyen en las atribuciones sobre la pobreza y éstas, a su vez, en las actitudes hacia la protección social. Para establecer este modelo nos basamos en la literatura previa. Sin embargo, la naturaleza correlacional de nuestros estudios nos impide extraer conclusiones causales firmes.

El capítulo 6 incluye tres estudios en los que analizamos la influencia de las definiciones de la pobreza en las atribuciones causales sobre ésta y las actitudes hacia la reducción de la pobreza y hacia la participación política de las personas en pobreza. Incluimos aquí una variable dependiente conceptualmente distinta, aunque similar, introduciendo la variable de actitudes hacia la participación política de las personas en pobreza. Esta última supone algo novedoso, hasta donde sabemos, en la literatura sobre percepción de pobreza.

Nuestros resultados subrayan la importancia de las atribuciones causales sobre la pobreza en la forma de entender y reaccionar ante ella. Por un lado, replicamos de forma consistente el efecto negativo de las atribuciones individualistas sobre las actitudes generales hacia la protección social y hacia la reducción de la pobreza; las atribuciones estructurales, por su parte, mostraron un efecto positivo sobre estas variables, replicando resultados anteriores (e.g., Bullock et al., 2003; Piff et al., 2020).

Pero quizás la principal aportación de esta tesis es que nuestras investigaciones señalan una serie de variables que influyen en estas atribuciones, que a su vez influyen en las actitudes hacia la protección social institucionalizada. Respecto al grupo de personas en pobreza percibido: cuando se presenta a una persona en pobreza persistente, en comparación con una persona en pobreza debido a la crisis económica, las personas hacen

más atribuciones individualistas sobre su situación, lo que lleva a una peor actitud hacia la protección social (capítulo 3). Algo similar ocurre cuando comparamos la percepción de hombres en pobreza (vs. mujeres): se les responsabiliza más de su situación, lo que lleva a una peor actitud hacia la protección social (capítulo 4).

Respecto a la importancia de las orientaciones sobre la justicia social (capítulo 5), las personas que apoyan los principios de igualdad y necesidad llevan a cabo menos atribuciones individualistas sobre la pobreza, lo que lleva a una mejor actitud hacia la protección social. Lo contrario ocurre con los principios de equidad y *entitlement*: cuanto más apoya la gente estos principios, más atribuciones individualistas realiza, lo que lleva a una peor actitud hacia la protección social.

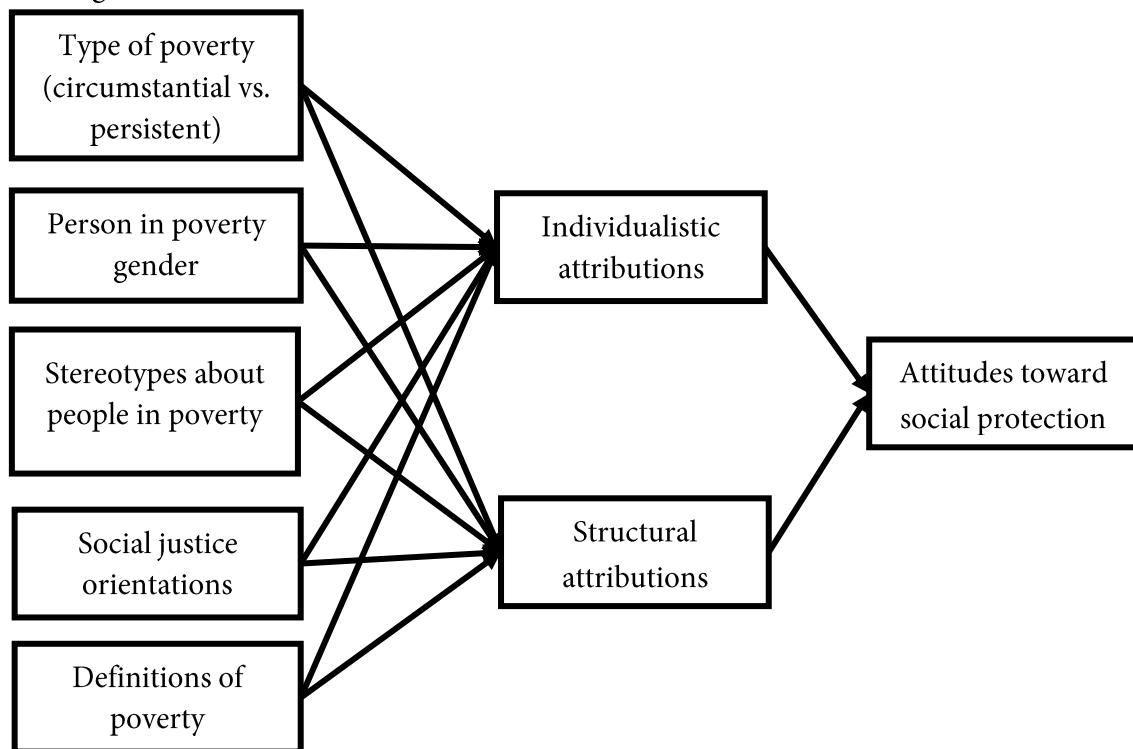
Por último, las atribuciones causales sobre la pobreza también median la relación entre las definiciones de pobreza y las actitudes hacia la reducción de esta (capítulo 6). Esto es, cuando la gente apoya más la definición de la pobreza como falta de participación social, menos atribuciones individualistas realiza, lo que lleva a una mejor actitud hacia la reducción de la pobreza.

En la tercera parte, conformada por el capítulo 7, se lleva a cabo una discusión general de nuestros resultados, poniéndolos en relación con nuestra fundamentación teórica así como el contexto sociopolítico y económico en el que se desarrolla la presente tesis doctoral.

## Overview

This doctoral thesis aims to delve into the influence that attributions about poverty have on attitudes towards policies aimed at eradicating the latter. We focus on the mediating role of attributions in the relationship between a set of variables conceptualized as independent variables and attitudes towards social protection and poverty reduction, conceptualized as dependent variables.

Our general approach is as follows: causal attributions about poverty are influenced by a series of ideational variables (e.g., orientations towards social justice or definitions of poverty) related to the characteristics of individuals in that situation (e.g., the typology of their poverty or their gender). Furthermore, these attributions have consequences. In other words, they will have implications for attitudes towards how to address and manage the problem. This is the conceptual framework of the current thesis (see Figure 1 below).



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework of the research presented in this thesis.



This document consists of three distinct parts. The first part, comprised of chapters 1 and 2, presents the theoretical foundations and conceptual framework. Chapter 1 addresses poverty as a socio-economic and political phenomenon, situated within a historical context. The objective is to provide a broader context in which to give meaning to our research and findings, something that is at times incompatible with the format of academic publications in high-impact journals. In Chapter 1, we also briefly introduce the key variables analyzed in this thesis, considering certain nuances that we will address later. In Chapter 2, we present the motivation, research questions, and specific objectives of this work.

The second part corresponds to the empirical section of this thesis and consists of four chapters. In the different empirical chapters, we utilize both secondary database sources from international surveys and data collected specifically to test our hypotheses. In Chapter 3, we present two experimental studies and a mini meta-analysis that analyze the influence of the presented group of people in poverty (either as a consequence of the economic crisis or as persistently poor) on attributions about poverty (internal and external), perceived deservingness of institutional aid within the group, and attitudes towards social protection. As will be recurrent throughout this thesis, we analyze the mediating role of attributions about poverty in the relationship between the perceived group and general attitudes towards social protection.

Chapter 4 comprises three experimental studies in which we also examine the influence of the presented group of people in poverty, but in this case, we compare the perception about men and women in poverty. Additionally, we analyze the influence of the perceived group on stereotypes about the target, class-based attitudes, attributions about poverty, perceived effectiveness of aid utilization, and general attitudes towards social protection. Once again, we analyze the mediating role of attributions about poverty between the perceived group and general attitudes towards social protection.

In Chapter 5, we examine, through three correlational studies, the relationship between orientations towards social justice (or attitudes towards social justice principles),

attributions about poverty, and general attitudes towards social protection. In an exploratory and tentative manner, we propose a causal model in which orientations towards justice influence attributions about poverty, which in turn influence attitudes towards social protection. To establish this model, we draw from existing literature. However, the correlational nature of our studies prevents us from drawing definitive causal conclusions.

Chapter 6 encompasses three studies in which we analyze the influence of definitions of poverty on causal attributions about it and attitudes towards poverty reduction and the political participation of people in poverty. We introduce a conceptually distinct yet similar dependent variable here and introduce the variable of attitudes towards the political participation of people in poverty. This latter variable represents something novel, to the best of our knowledge, in the literature on perceptions of poverty.

Our results underline the importance of causal attributions about poverty in shaping how it is understood and responded to. On one hand, we consistently replicate the negative effect of individualistic attributions on general attitudes towards social protection and poverty reduction. In contrast, structural attributions exhibit a positive effect on these variables, replicating previous findings (e.g., Bullock et al., 2003; Piff et al., 2020). Furthermore, our research highlights a set of variables that influence these attributions, which in turn impact attitudes towards institutionalized social protection.

Regarding the perceived group of people in poverty: when an individual in persistent poverty is presented compared to someone in poverty due to an economic crisis, individuals tend to make more individualistic attributions about their situation, resulting in a poorer attitude towards social protection (Chapter 3). A similar trend emerges when comparing perceptions of men in poverty versus women: men are held more accountable for their situation, leading to a worse attitude towards social protection (Chapter 4).

Concerning the significance of orientations towards social justice (Chapter 5), individuals who support principles of equality and need make fewer individualistic attributions about poverty, leading to a more positive attitude towards social protection. The converse holds true for equity and entitlement principles: the more people support these principles, the more individualistic attributions they make, resulting in a more negative attitude towards social protection.

Lastly, causal attributions about poverty also mediate the relationship between definitions of poverty and attitudes towards its reduction (Chapter 6). In other words, when people endorse the definition of poverty as a lack of social participation, they make fewer individualistic attributions, leading to a more positive attitude towards poverty reduction.

In the third part, consisting of Chapter 7, a comprehensive discussion of our results is conducted, contextualizing them within our theoretical framework as well as the socio-political and economic context in which this doctoral thesis unfolds.

## **Capítulo 1. Marco conceptual**

## 1. Marco conceptual

En principio no parece complicado acercarse a una definición de pobreza. Intuitivamente la asociamos a aquella situación en la que falta algo, sean ingresos, recursos materiales o cualquier otra cosa que la sociedad considere valiosa. En definitiva, serían pobres aquellas personas que no tienen lo suficiente. No obstante, cuando tratamos de profundizar, empezamos a encontrar los primeros problemas en la conceptualización de la pobreza: ¿qué es *suficiente*?, ¿qué cosas son necesarias y qué cosas no lo son?, ¿qué línea separa a las personas pobres de las que no lo son?, ¿cómo se traza esta línea? Estas son solo algunas de las primeras preguntas que apuntan a las dificultades de definir la pobreza y quiénes son las personas pobres. Por supuesto, los debates académicos sobre su medida, que son al fin y al cabo debates sobre su naturaleza y definición, han sido muy extensos (puede consultarse un resumen en Ravallion, 2015). Esta tesis está centrada en la *percepción psicosocial* de las personas en situación de pobreza, por lo que en cierta medida podemos evitar centrarnos en el problema de su definición y medición, no porque no sean relevantes. No obstante, en nuestra investigación también abordaremos qué entienden las personas por pobreza o en qué grupos concretos piensan.

Para contextualizar la relevancia del problema ofrecemos a continuación algunos indicadores objetivos sobre la incidencia de la pobreza en España.

En España, en 2022 y teniendo en cuenta la renta del año anterior, el 20,4% de la población se hallaba en riesgo de pobreza, esto es, viviendo por debajo del 60% de la mediana de ingresos tras las transferencias sociales. Aunque hay diferencias importantes en función del grupo concreto en el que nos centremos: en cuanto al género, el 19,8% de los hombres están en riesgo de pobreza, frente al 21,1% de mujeres; en lo que concierne a la nacionalidad, el 16,2% de personas con nacionalidad española están en riesgo de pobreza, siendo la incidencia del 35,2% en las personas extranjeras de la Unión Europea, y del 52,6% en la población extranjera del resto del mundo (Instituto Nacional de Estadística [INE], 2023). Para el mismo año, el porcentaje de población en riesgo de exclusión social fue del 26%. El riesgo de exclusión social se entiende como aquella

situación en la que concurren una o más de las siguientes causas: riesgo de pobreza, es decir estar por debajo del 60% de la mediana de ingresos por unidad de consumo, carencia material severa o en hogares sin empleo o con empleo de baja intensidad (INE, 2023). De hecho, cerca del 16% de los hogares con personas trabajadoras en España están en situación de pobreza, afectando especialmente a hogares con menores a cargo y encabezados por mujeres (Lanau y Lozano, 2022). Esto supone que uno de los mecanismos que en los últimos años se consideraban fundamentales para la erradicación de la pobreza, la integración en el mercado laboral, parece que no está surtiendo su efecto. Este resultado no resulta sorprendente si tenemos en cuenta la historia de la imposición de las relaciones laborales asalariadas como forma principal de acceso a los medios de vida. Sin embargo, sí supone una quiebra importante del imaginario social que vincula pobreza a desempleo, pereza, poca ética de trabajo, etc.

Este último aspecto es especialmente relevante para esta tesis doctoral, puesto que nuestra variable fundamental serán las explicaciones sobre el origen de la pobreza, o atribuciones causales sobre ella. Diferenciaremos entre las atribuciones individualistas, relacionadas con la falta de voluntad, la pereza, la falta de moral, y las estructurales, relacionadas con factores sociales más amplios, como los bajos salarios o la injusticia del sistema (Davidai, 2022). Las atribuciones individualistas recogen esta idea fundamental de que la pobreza se relaciona con problemas inherentes a las personas pobres que, por pereza o por falta de habilidad, son incapaces de salir adelante. Esta idea de las personas pobres como grupo que necesita ser disciplinado y rescatado para el mundo del trabajo tiene hondas raíces en nuestro imaginario colectivo. En el siguiente apartado realizaremos un breve recorrido histórico que pone de manifiesto la importancia de estas imágenes a la hora de lidiar, tanto a nivel institucional como popular, con el problema de la pobreza. Estudiar estas continuidades y discontinuidades en las imágenes generadas y fomentadas en distintos momentos históricos, y su relación con el momento que vivimos actualmente, nos ayuda a entender qué función tienen estas visiones, en qué contextos emergen y de qué forma influyen en las respuestas ante la pobreza. En este sentido, es necesario contar

con un contexto histórico y socioeconómico sólido para poder llevar a cabo cualquier investigación en ciencias sociales. De lo contrario, haciendo investigaciones descontextualizadas y ajenas a los desarrollos históricos, perdemos parte importante de nuestra capacidad para entender los fenómenos sociales y enmarcarlos en contextos amplios que los dotan de sentido, así como para, eventualmente, transformar este contexto.

### **1.1. La pobreza como problema social y sus percepciones asociadas**

La historia de la pobreza es la historia de las relaciones sociales de producción. Esto es, está estrechamente relacionada con las formas en las que los seres humanos se han organizado política, social y económicamente para cubrir sus necesidades y reproducir su vida. Es por ello que sería engañoso, y poco útil para la investigación social, pensar que se trata de un concepto transhistórico y universal, puesto que la conceptualización de la pobreza está situada histórica, social y políticamente en contextos específicos que requieren de análisis concretos. En definitiva, se trata de historizar la pobreza. Esto no significa que, en mayor o menor medida, cualquier sociedad haya tenido que hacer frente a problemas derivados de la gestión de recursos ilimitados. En definitiva, que aunque la pobreza sea una realidad casi universal, su percepción y conceptualización varían notablemente según la sociedad o el periodo histórico. En este apartado tratamos de realizar un recorrido histórico muy breve por las formas de pobreza y los procesos históricos de desposesión, así como por sus representaciones culturales, en Europa, enfatizando algunos aspectos del territorio que hoy se considera España. Inevitablemente, este recorrido es incompleto y parcial, centrado en Europa y España, pero nos servirá para situar el tema principal de esta tesis.

#### ***1.1.1. La pobreza en la Edad Antigua y en la Edad Media***

En la Antigüedad grecolatina la visión de la pobreza fue generalmente negativa. Es imposible dar una imagen coherente y exhaustiva de la visión de la pobreza en un periodo de tiempo tan amplio, con cambios culturales importantes y diferencias entre territorios. Lo mismo sobre la definición de quiénes eran los pobres, la noción de ciudadanía o el

papel de otros grupos como los metecos, o extranjeros residentes, o los esclavos. Con todo, un breve repaso por esta época nos da algunas pistas importantes del tratamiento de la pobreza y algunas de las continuidades en las representaciones sociales de ella que llegan hasta nuestros días.

Ya en esta época hay muestras de un rechazo a definir la pobreza en términos puramente económicos y objetivos, concibiéndola en términos relacionales y más amplios, como ocurre en el caso de Aristóteles (Carlà-Uhink et al., 2022). Sin embargo, esto no debe llevarnos a la conclusión de que la visión sobre la pobreza era positiva. El propio Aristóteles dejó escrita su célebre frase sobre cómo “la pobreza es la madre de la revolución y el crimen”. Huelga decir que Aristóteles no fue un entusiasta de la revolución. Esta representación de la pobreza, de las masas de personas pobres como amenaza al orden, al decoro y a la moral de la sociedad será una constante durante muchos periodos históricos y algunas de estas ideas han pervivido hasta nuestros días. Si bien la visión general de los registros que llegan de la época es negativa, algo esperable puesto que en su mayoría provienen de las clases altas de las sociedades griegas y romanas, también hubo reformas importantes para frenar la marginalización de las personas pobres o las clases más populares. En este sentido puede entenderse las reformas de Efialtes hacia finales del 460 A.C., continuadas posteriormente por Pericles y enfocadas en limitar el poder de los órganos menos democráticos (como el Areópago, compuesto por aristócratas y antiguos magistrados) y fomentar la participación ciudadana en la política (Moreno-Pestaña, 2019). Un ejemplo paradigmático es la instauración de un sueldo para los funcionarios públicos. El objetivo de esto era permitir la participación de las personas con menos recursos, con poco tiempo para dedicarse a los asuntos políticos debido a sus trabajos, al mismo tiempo que disminuía el poder de los aristócratas. Esta reforma puede ser entendida como una profundización democrática del sistema político griego, ampliando las posibilidades de participación en la vida pública de quienes menos recursos tenían (Moreno-Pestaña, 2019). Sin embargo, salvo algunas excepciones, no



encontramos instituidos sistemas formales de caridad o ayuda a las personas en pobreza, ni están en el centro de los discursos sobre la virtud y las donaciones (e.g., Lampe, 2016).

Las cosas cambian con la expansión del cristianismo en el imperio romano. Mientras que en los primeros siglos de la era común la percepción de las personas pobres y las medidas enfocadas en ayudarlas son esencialmente similares a las anteriores griegas, conforme aumentan su poder en el imperio, los referentes cristianos subrayan la condición de las personas más pobres y la necesidad de ayudarlas. A pesar de variar la posición y la radicalidad de los planteamientos sobre las personas pobres a lo largo de las primeras etapas del cristianismo, la pobreza material no fue un objetivo a eliminar por las autoridades cristianas, al menos no en el sentido de practicar una igualación radical de la sociedad. Si bien algunos religiosos abogan por medidas radicales y situaban el origen de la pobreza en la propia existencia de la riqueza, estas tesis no fueron las que predominaron ni terminaron imponiéndose. Por lo general, tanto las medidas como los discursos se centraban en alentar a las personas ricas a que compartiesen parte de su riqueza, a través de la Iglesia, con las personas con menos recursos como parte de su obligación moral con la comunidad (Agulles, 2023). Más aún, salvo algunas excepciones, las atribuciones sobre la pobreza en los discursos públicos suelen referirse a causas fatalistas, específicamente a la voluntad de Dios, sin ser esto óbice para compatibilizarlo con ciertas demandas hacia las personas ricas. Esto es relevante, durante esta época empiezan a institucionalizarse formas de ayuda a las personas pobres mediante limosnas como la *matrícula*, una lista en la que se registraba a las personas a las que se entregaría limosna. Como apunta Agulles, en cierta medida la pobreza “estuvo capitalizada por determinados grupos que pugnaban por dominar los espacios centrales de la organización social” (2023, p. 49), a pesar de que en ciertos momentos el reparto de limosna fue una forma eficaz de redistribución. Esto es, estos grupos buscaron sacar provecho de la situación de pobreza de ciertas personas para ganar poder o posición en la sociedad, concentrando recursos, controlando instituciones o tomando ventaja de las circunstancias económicas de estas personas pobres.

La transición de la Edad Antigua a la Edad Media implica cambios importantes en la organización social. Con la desintegración del Imperio Romano, y como consecuencia, del sistema de gobierno centralizado, empiezan a ganar poder los señores feudales a los que se acudía en busca de ayuda por las continuas invasiones extranjeras (para una interpretación económica ver Wickham, 1984). La servidumbre trabaja las tierras de los señores a cambio de protección y seguridad. En estas sociedades fuertemente estratificadas también pueden surgir dificultades en la inclusión y desgarros en la comunidad. Un ejemplo sería una persona con alguna discapacidad física, lo que podría llevarla a una situación de dependencia sin reciprocidad (Castel, 1997). En esta situación, la familia o la comunidad local podrían movilizar recursos para contrarrestar esta desintegración y mantener la cohesión del grupo. En definitiva, los sistemas de ayuda y protección se configuran en el entorno cercano de las relaciones de vasallaje, a nivel vertical, y vecinales, a nivel horizontal en un sistema autorregulado de interdependencias y reciprocidades. La pobreza se vive, por lo general, como un fenómeno integrado y, aunque haya sido inmensa en este periodo, no se vive como una cuestión social. Aun así, hay criterios importantes para identificar a las personas que, sin recursos, serán ayudadas: el territorial, ser miembro del grupo, y el de ineptitud para el trabajo (Castel, 1997). Se ayuda preferentemente a las personas que no pueden solventar sus necesidades por medio del trabajo, volviéndose a poner de manifiesto la importancia de la relación entre necesidad-trabajo-ayuda y la compleja articulación de estos conceptos a lo largo de la historia. Sin embargo, sería más tarde cuando la relación entre pobreza-pereza tomaría unas dimensiones completamente nuevas, fruto de los cambios en la propia concepción y organización del trabajo.

### ***1.1.2. Los orígenes del capitalismo y la nueva organización social***

Los orígenes del capitalismo y las parcelaciones de las tierras comunales son fundamentales para entender algunos desarrollos posteriores, y que llegan a nuestros tiempos, sobre el tratamiento de la pobreza y las imágenes asociadas a ella. De forma muy resumida, el capitalismo puede entenderse como un sistema definido por la relación de

producción en la que hay, por un lado, personas que poseen el dinero, los medios de producción y subsistencia y, por otro lado, trabajadores/as *libres* que venden su fuerza de trabajo (Marx, 2000). Esta novedosa forma de relación social no surge como consecuencia lógica del aumento de la industria o la expansión del comercio, si no que es fruto de una serie de transformaciones en las relaciones de propiedad y acceso a los recursos (Wood, 2021). El poder político juega un papel fundamental para conseguir que la propiedad sea el factor central de organización. Para ello hicieron falta dosis increíbles de violencia y desposesión de las clases populares. Ahora nos centramos en el caso británico y, concretamente en las parcelaciones de tierras comunales, aunque en España, con retraso cronológico, se dio un proceso similar en ciertos aspectos.

Los orígenes de la expansión de la relación social capitalista se caracterizan por el proceso de desposesión del campesinado inglés principalmente, aunque no solo, a través de los procesos de cercamientos de las tierras comunales (para explicaciones más amplias del proceso de emergencia del capitalismo pueden verse McNally, 1993; Wood, 2028, 2021). Con la pérdida de derechos de acceso a las tierras comunales, mientras las tierras se fueron concentrando en las manos de terratenientes ricos, una fracción creciente del campesinado se vio obligada a migrar a núcleos urbanos para encontrar trabajo en el creciente sector industrial o a emplearse como trabajadores asalariados en los campos de los terratenientes. De esta forma se desintegraban las viejas relaciones feudales, opresivas pero seguras, donde se garantizaba la subsistencia sin necesidad de acudir al mercado, para dar pie a un nuevo sistema. Esta desposesión no se produjo sin convulsiones ni resistencias, como las revueltas de Cade o la rebelión de Kett. Es ilustrativo, por ejemplo, que en 1583, Stubbes escribiese que “los hombres ricos engullen a los pobres del mismo modo que las bestias comen hierba” (citado en McNally, 2021). Sin embargo, surgieron imágenes similares sobre la monstruosidad de las masas de desposeídos/as, que necesitaban ser civilizadas; es decir, acomodarse a los procesos de separación de sus medios de producción y entrar en el mercado laboral asalariado.

Un punto fundamental es que estos cercamientos fueron celebrados entre las clases altas por el posible efecto instructor en las clases bajas, puesto que se pensaba que acabaría con su vagancia e insubordinación. Esto es importante porque cobrará una especial significación la relación entre pobreza, ociosidad y la virtud del trabajo que se mantendrá a lo largo del tiempo y sigue presente actualmente. Si bien es cierto que anteriormente se habían planteado los efectos redentores del trabajo para las personas pobres y su espíritu (Agulles, 2023), con la necesidad de incorporarlos a un mercado de trabajo asalariado “libremente”, la concepción de la laboriosidad como sinónimo de virtud adquiere mayor prominencia. El desarrollo moral de la gente pobre es sinónimo de la subordinación a la disciplina laboral (McNally, 2021). Vemos como de las explicaciones basadas en la providencia, se da entrada a la explicación individualista: la pobreza es falta de voluntad y de moral, es responsabilidad individual. Desde otra perspectiva, se ha considerado el papel de la religión protestante, en especial la ética calvinista, en el auge del capitalismo modelo. Según Weber (2012/1904) los calvinistas entendían el éxito económico y la acumulación de riqueza como una señal de predestinación hacia la salvación divina. Esto llevaría a una rigurosa ética del trabajo que influiría en la mentalidad de ahorro, inversión y acumulación de capital, racionalidad, planificación y disciplina que irían extendiéndose más allá de su contexto religioso específico al que estaban adscritas en un primer momento.

En España las casas de la misericordia empiezan a proliferar entre finales del siglo XVII y el XVIII. En ellas se pretendía encerrar a las personas pobres, puesto que “divagando por la ciudad y Reyno, servían de grave perjuicio al público, y que para ellos mismos servía de la mayor utilidad tenerlos en christiano recogimiento” (citado en González Duro, 2021). En estos hacinados centros, dotados de fábricas y talleres, se les sometía a una dura disciplina laboral con el objetivo de que la incorporasen como propia y se convirtiesen en personas honradas y laboriosas: no se trataba solo de no alterar el orden de las ciudades, si no de transformar la misma subjetividad de las personas con menos recursos. Al mismo tiempo, esto transmite un mensaje al resto de la población: las

personas pobres, especialmente aquellas que no quieren trabajar, suponen un problema de orden público. Así se va entretejiendo una visión de las personas con menos recursos como personas a las que disciplinar, por un lado, y que deben ser incorporadas al mercado de trabajo asalariado, por otro, cumpliendo así una función ejemplarizante. Sin embargo, a quiénes se aplica el concepto de pobreza en la sociedad española preindustrial es complicado. De hecho, la pobreza forma parte de la experiencia de las personas trabajadoras, definida por su condición de *pauperizable* (Díez, 1992). También hay que tener en cuenta que, desde el final de la Antigüedad hasta ahora se ha diferenciado entre personas pobres *verdaderas*, aquellas que eran víctimas del infortunio pero honestas, y las *falsas*, aquellas que aun pudiendo trabajar decidían llevar vidas reprobables y dedicarse a la mendicidad (ver, por ejemplo, Castel, 1997 o, para el caso de la España moderna, Sánchez, 1981).

En España el proceso de industrialización ocurre con retraso frente a otros países europeos. Sin embargo, aunque con sus especificidades, los planteamientos de los reformadores eran relativamente similares. La principal preocupación fue incorporar al sistema productivo a todos los miembros del sistema (Agulles, 2023), usando para ello el aparato estatal y no dejando esta función a la Iglesia, que seguiría manteniendo un papel importante en la asistencia a la pobreza. Para ello llevaron a cabo leyes forzosas con el objetivo de introducir a las personas desocupadas en el aparato productivo (Agulles, 2023). Esta disciplina de la pobreza tuvo la doble función de garantizar el orden social, puesto que la pobreza se asociaba a la rebelión, y la creación de un nuevo tipo de sociedad, con un papel destacado del trabajo como centro fundamental en torno al que gira la vida. Para ello, por supuesto, hicieron falta medios represivos y sofocar las resistencias de la población

### ***1.1.3. Posguerra y estados del bienestar***

A lo largo del siglo XIX, especialmente a finales, se produjeron en varios países de Europa amplios movimientos políticos y sociales, como sindicatos o partidos socialistas que buscaron la mejora de las condiciones de vida de la población en una situación más

vulnerable, mediante mejoras de las condiciones laborales, por ejemplo. En un momento en el que la pobreza sigue tratándose generalmente como un problema individual y de falta de moral, esto supone un cambio importante, especialmente junto al énfasis de los teóricos sociales y militantes políticos en las causas estructurales de la pobreza. Todo ello lleva a que la percepción de la pobreza, en parte, varíe sustancialmente al explicar su naturaleza en función del propio desarrollo del sistema económico, no como problema individual.

Las dos guerras mundiales tuvieron un efecto devastador en el mundo, especialmente en Europa. Tras el fin de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, aunque con sus orígenes en políticas previas que ya se desarrollaban en algunos países, empiezan a tomarse medidas políticas para paliar las consecuencias negativas de la guerra, muchas veces en respuesta a las demandas sociales de sindicatos y del movimiento obrero (Esping-Andersen, 1993). En estos momentos se producen cambios significativos: se pasa de las políticas sociales al estado del bienestar, se aumenta el gasto social y se aprueban nuevos programas, con mayor cobertura y más generosos (Nullmeier y Kaufmann, 2021). Sin embargo, el trabajo asalariado, que ahora sí cumple con ciertas promesas de ascenso social y bienestar material, sigue siendo el pilar fundamental sobre el que se asienta el desarrollo social y, aunque más generosas, las políticas del tratamiento de la pobreza para aquellos grupos capacitados para el trabajo siguen pivotando alrededor de este. Esto se agudizará más con la crisis económica del 73 y el giro neoliberal en las políticas de algunos de los principales países del mundo: Estados Unidos y Reino Unido, cuyos modelos serán exportados a otros países (Jessop, 2012). Las políticas en este periodo van dirigidas a liberalizar mercados, desregularizarlos y reducir ostensiblemente el gasto social que había aumentado desde el final de la segunda guerra mundial. Esto no implica un estado débil, si no cambiar los objetivos de intervención del gobierno (Jessop, 2002). Las políticas adoptadas redujeron considerablemente la cobertura y generosidad de los programas de bienestar social poniendo el foco de manera más acentuada en el mercado laboral, cada vez más flexible, como medio para solucionar la pobreza, algo que ocurrió también en

España desde los años 80 (González-Sánchez, 2021). Estos movimientos indican una pauta clara de atribución: se enfatiza la responsabilidad individual y la libre elección, por tanto, fomenta las explicaciones causales individualistas. En los últimos años nos encontramos con políticas similares, que implican sanciones para las personas desempleadas que rechacen los trabajos o planes formativos que se les ofrezcan, o que no busquen activamente empleo (Knotz, 2018). Esta aproximación individualista vuelve a poner el foco en el empleo y la responsabilidad de la pobreza en la propia persona. Siguiendo la tendencia en los últimos siglos bosquejada más arriba, se ha sugerido que los bajos subsidios, mínimos para poder sobrevivir, y el estigma asociado a ellos, siguen sirviendo para asegurar una fuerza de trabajo lista para emplearse por bajos salarios (Piven y Cloward, 1993). Las atribuciones individualistas, unidas a bajos subsidios y el estigma asociado a ellos, llevaría a que la gente considere que el trabajo es una meta importante en sus vidas, aunque los salarios sean insuficientes para permitirles salir de su situación de pobreza.

## **1.2. Variables fundamentales relacionadas con la percepción de la pobreza**

### ***1.2.1 Atribuciones sobre la pobreza***

La teoría de las atribuciones se refiere más a un campo de investigación que a una concepción científica específica (Weiner, 1985). En la teoría de las atribuciones, el foco de estudio son los procesos de inferencia sobre las causas de los eventos y los resultados que se obtienen, así como las consecuencias de esas atribuciones. Es decir, a qué factores o causas atribuyen las personas el comportamiento de las demás, así como los resultados de ese comportamiento. Heider lo ilustra de la siguiente manera: al ver un objeto A en movimiento, podemos atribuir su movimiento al propio objeto A u a otro objeto B, que causaría el movimiento de A. En el primer caso el movimiento de A sería percibido como un acto propio A, en el segundo como un movimiento pasivo inducido por B (Heider, 1994, p. 358). Así, en este campo de estudio, generalmente se ha diferenciado entre atribuciones internas y externas (para un ejemplo temprano, ver Thibaut y Riecken, 1955); aunque ha habido algunos intentos de revisar o de reemplazar esta distinción (e.g.,

Kruglanski, 1975). Una atribución es externa cuando se percibe que no es la propia persona la que causa el comportamiento o evento, si no alguien o algo del entorno de la persona. Por el contrario, una atribución es interna cuando se percibe que es la propia persona la responsable de ese comportamiento, algo en ella lo está provocando.

Trasladándolo a nuestro objeto de estudio concreto, las atribuciones sobre la pobreza se refieren a las inferencias causales sobre la situación de las personas en pobreza; es decir, a qué factores se responsabiliza de dicha situación. Así, siguiendo con la clasificación amplia anterior: las personas pueden responsabilizar de la pobreza a las propias personas que se encuentran en esa situación (atribuciones internas, disposicionales o *individualistas*) o a causas más amplias que escapan a su control (atribuciones externas, situacionales o *estructurales*). Antes de continuar quisiera hacer un pequeño paréntesis respecto a la nomenclatura. En este trabajo usaremos los términos individualistas y estructurales para referirnos a las dos grandes categorías de atribuciones causales. Aunque en la literatura pueden encontrarse distintos términos para referirse a estas atribuciones de forma intercambiable, en el sentido de que se refieren a los mismos factores, optamos por usar estos términos por parecernos los más apropiados en el contexto del estudio de la pobreza. Por ejemplo, el término estructurales recoge bien la idea de que hay causas y estructuras sociales más amplias (e.g., el sistema económico) que son responsables de la situación de pobreza.

Algunos ejemplos de atribuciones individualistas sobre la pobreza son la falta de capacidad, la falta de esfuerzo o la falta de talento. Entre los ejemplos de las atribuciones estructurales encontramos la falta de empleos, los bajos salarios o la quiebra de empresas. Esta diferenciación amplia entre estos dos factores se ha utilizado últimamente en la literatura especializada sobre el tema (Bai et al., 2022; Piff et al., 2020; Sainz et al., 2020; Wiwad et al., 2021). No obstante, también se han propuesto otros tipos de explicaciones sobre la pobreza, diferentes a los dos anteriores. Uno de los que ha tenido mayor recorrido es el tipo *fatalista*, que se refiere a causas que están más allá del control de los individuos pero que tampoco se pueden achacar a la sociedad o a factores estructurales, como la mala



suerte (Feagin, 1972; Feather, 1974; Kluegel y Smith, 1986). Otro de estos tipos de explicaciones son las atribuciones *culturales*, que reflejarían ideas relacionadas con una suerte de subcultura de la pobreza y se expresarían en causas como la desintegración de la familia nuclear o el haber nacido en la pobreza (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Smith y Stone, 1989). Por lo general, desde la tradición más psicosocial en el estudio de las atribuciones se han empleado aproximaciones factoriales, midiendo cada tipo de atribuciones a través de varios ítems y analizando su estructura factorial. En el estudio de las atribuciones desde la literatura sociológica se han empleado otras aproximaciones, probablemente debido a las limitaciones de espacio en las macroencuestas que suelen usarse en la investigación. En estas encuestas suele plantearse una pregunta sobre las posibles causas de la pobreza y las personas encuestadas seleccionan exclusivamente una de ellas. Por ejemplo, en la Ronda 3 de la World Values Survey (Inglehart et al., 2014) se usan dos ítems que diferencian entre atribuciones individualistas y estructurales, aunque por lo general se suelen dar cuatro opciones de respuesta que se categorizan en: culpa individual (e.g., pereza y falta de voluntad), destino individual (e.g., mala suerte), culpa social (e.g., la injusticia de la sociedad) o destino social (e.g., consecuencia inevitable del progreso). Esta clasificación ha sido usada ampliamente en la literatura sociológica (Kallio y Niemelä, 2014; Marquis, 2020; Marquis y Rosset, 2021; van Oorschot y Halman, 2000). Una revisión crítica más amplia sobre las distintas medidas de atribuciones de pobreza, aunque algo desactualizada, en el sentido de que no tiene en cuenta las aportaciones de los últimos años, puede encontrarse en Lepianka et al. (2009).

Con todo, decidimos centrarnos en la distinción básica entre atribuciones estructurales e individualistas. Esta parece la distinción factorial más consistente en la literatura. Por ejemplo, en el caso del factor cultural, las evidencias empíricas sobre su consistencia son ambivalentes y muchas veces los ítems que supuestamente la reflejan también cargan en los factores individualista o estructural (Sainz et al., 2020; Sainz et al., 2023). Algo similar ocurre con las explicaciones fatalistas: muestran un carácter mixto (cargan en varios factores) o no aparecen como un factor distintivo (Cozzarelli et al., 2001;

Furnham, 1982). Como cualquier decisión a la hora de encarar la investigación empírica, la elección de solo dos tipos de causas implica ciertas ventajas y desventajas. La clasificación que utilizamos quizás puede ser algo gruesa y obviar diferencias sutiles, pero importantes, entre las explicaciones que conforman los distintos grupos de investigaciones (por ejemplo, la falta de voluntad y la falta de capacidad, aunque ambas individualistas, pueden tener significados distintos). Sería posible establecer tipologías de las causas de la pobreza mucho más detalladas. Sin embargo, la diferenciación utilizada es consistente, coherente y, como muestra la literatura y esta misma tesis doctoral, muy relevante a la hora de explicar variables relacionadas con el apoyo a las acciones y políticas enfocadas en mejorar la vida de las personas pobres. Pensamos que esto tiene un peso suficiente para mantenerla y centrarnos en ella, sin dejar de reconocer que otras categorizaciones son posibles y merezca la pena explorarlas.

Las atribuciones sobre la pobreza son importantes porque afectan a una serie de variables relacionadas con el bienestar, acceso a recursos y condiciones de vida de las personas en situación de pobreza. Las causas percibidas que explican la pobreza influyen en las creencias sobre la responsabilidad del gobierno en la reducción de la pobreza y la desigualdad (Piff et al., 2020; Shirazi, y Biel, 2005; Wiwad et al., 2021), en el apoyo a los sistemas progresistas de ayudas (Bullock et al., 2003) y al estado del bienestar (Marquis y Rosset, 2021), en la predisposición a apoyar el gasto público en políticas sociales (van Oorschot, 2000), apoyar mayores esfuerzos para ayudar a las personas pobres (Williamson, 1974), o en las creencias sobre si se gasta demasiado dinero en gasto social (Alston y Dean, 1972), entre otras. El patrón encontrado es bastante claro: cuanto más se atribuye la pobreza a causas individuales, más en contra se está de la ayuda institucional para combatirla. Por el contrario, cuanto más se atribuye a causas estructurales, más a favor se está de esta ayuda. Así, cuando se culpa a las propias personas pobres de su situación, cuando la pobreza se explica por su falta de capacidad o de inteligencia, las personas creen que no debería ser problema del Estado o de otros organismos ayudar a escapar de esa situación.

Las atribuciones que la gente realiza sobre la pobreza se ven influidas por ciertas variables (e.g., Davidai, 2022). En primer lugar, la posición socioeconómica de la persona que hace las atribuciones afecta a la forma en la que percibe la pobreza. Cuanto mayores son los ingresos, mayor es la tendencia a atribuir la pobreza a causas internas y menos a causas externas (Lei & Yu, 2021). Sin embargo, la tendencia es la opuesta cuando tenemos en cuenta el nivel educativo: cuanto mayor es este, menos atribuciones individualistas y más estructurales se suelen hacer (Marquis, 2020).

En segundo lugar, hay una serie de variables ideológicas, o formas de ver el mundo, que influyen en la comprensión las causas atribuidas de la pobreza (por ejemplo, ver Davidai, 2022, o Hunt y Bullock, 2016). Respecto a la ideología política, en la investigación empírica se encuentra de forma consistente que las personas conservadoras, en comparación con las personas más progresistas, tienen a atribuir la pobreza a factores individuales en mayor medida, y a factores estructurales en menor medida (Furnham, 1983; Weiner et al., 2011). La investigación también ha puesto de manifiesto la importancia de otras variables ideológicas, como la orientación hacia la dominancia social, la justificación del sistema, el conservadurismo económico, las creencias en un mundo justo o el apoyo a la ética protestante del trabajo (Bobbio et al., 2010; Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Furnham & Gunter, 1984; Rodríguez-Bailón et al., 2017). Por lo general, cuanto mayor es la orientación hacia la dominancia social, la justificación del sistema, el conservadurismo económico, las creencias de que el mundo es justo y la adhesión a la ética del trabajo protestante, más se culpa a las personas pobres de su situación y menos se responsabiliza a factores sociales más amplios que escapan a su control. Otras variables como la etnia (Hunt, 1996), la religiosidad (Hunt, 2002) o el contacto con las personas pobres (Wilson, 1996) también moldean la forma en que las personas explican la pobreza.

### ***1.2.2. La percepción de la pobreza en función del grupo percibido***

Es habitual en los estudios psicosociales sobre la percepción de la pobreza enfocar las encuestas y los cuestionarios en las personas pobres en general, como si fuesen una categoría homogénea sin ninguna variabilidad entre distintos grupos que la conforman

(e.g., personas migrantes, personas sin hogar). Este tipo de planteamientos genéricos puede ser objeto de críticas, en la medida en la que las personas pueden tener diferentes actitudes hacia diferentes grupos de personas en pobreza y es posible que se pierda cierta precisión a la hora de determinar estas actitudes. Sin embargo, cuando se habla de pobreza en medios de comunicación o en debates, sean institucionales o no, sobre políticas públicas, en muchos casos no se especifican subgrupos o se utilizan estos términos genéricos. No pretendemos negar la utilidad de este tipo de planteamientos, sino defender que diferenciar entre diferentes tipos de personas en situación de pobreza puede ser un enfoque complementario. Una mayor teorización sobre este asunto, así como investigación empírica, especialmente sobre si realmente las personas piensan espontáneamente en grupos específicos de personas pobres al ser preguntadas de forma genérica por la pobreza, es necesaria. En esta tesis se utilizan ambos enfoques..

Según investigación previa, sabemos que existen diferencias importantes en la percepción de distintos grupos en situación de pobreza. Por ejemplo, Wilson (1996) mostró que las creencias sobre las causas de la pobreza son diferentes en función del grupo por el que se pregunte: si son las personas sin hogar, las atribuciones estructurales predominan; si son las personas que dependen de la beneficencia, las atribuciones individualistas son las preferidas; en el caso de los trabajadores migrantes empobrecidos hay un patrón mixto en el que ninguna atribución predomina sobre la otra.

Estos resultados nos muestran la importancia del contexto sociopolítico e histórico en el estudio de la percepción de la pobreza; siendo necesario siempre tener en cuenta el contexto específico en el que se hacen estos hallazgos. Llevadas a cabo en la última década del siglo pasado en Estados Unidos, los resultados de muchas investigaciones parecen difíciles de replicar actualmente. Así, en los primeros estudios sobre las explicaciones causales de la pobreza, realizados en los países anglosajones, se observó cierta predominancia de las explicaciones individualistas respecto a las estructurales (Feagin, 1972; Kluegel y Smith, 1986). Sin embargo, en los últimos años parece que las atribuciones estructurales predominan sobre las individualistas (Piff et al.,

2020; Wiwad et al., 2021). Ello debería convencernos de que la visión de la pobreza, y las explicaciones sobre ella, son dinámicas e históricamente situadas, un campo de estudio en continua evolución. Esto no quiere decir que, por ejemplo, las relaciones de las atribuciones sobre la pobreza con distintas variables (como las ideológicas) no sean bastante estables y se encuentren en diferentes países y diferentes momentos dentro de los propios países.

Volviendo a la percepción de distintos grupos de personas en situación de pobreza, las investigaciones han mostrado que estos pueden ser percibidos de forma diferente a lo largo de distintas dimensiones, como la responsabilidad sobre su situación (Henry et al., 2004), los estereotipos que se asocian a ellos (Fiske et al., 2007), el merecimiento de protección social (Cook, 1976) o las actitudes hacia la protección social (Appelbaum, 2001). Es decir, las imágenes y creencias sobre distintos grupos de personas en pobreza son distintas, así como las consecuencias que puede haber de estas atribuciones según el grupo de que se trate. Una tarea importante a la hora de estudiar las barreras hacia el apoyo de las políticas públicas dirigidas a mejorar las condiciones de vida de las personas en pobreza puede ser estudiar la percepción de grupos concretos. En los siguientes apartados, así como en los capítulos 3 y 4, nos centramos en las diferencias entre las personas en pobreza persistente y a raíz de la crisis (capítulo 3) y entre hombres y mujeres en pobreza (capítulo 4). Esbozaremos aquí algunos apuntes teóricos sobre la importancia de estas percepciones diferenciales de los distintos grupos. Sin embargo, la fundamentación teórica más amplia puede encontrarse en la introducción de los respectivos capítulos empíricos dedicados a cada grupo. Por último, la elección de estos grupos no implica que haya otros (e.g., personas migrantes, de diferentes edades, etc.) que también sean relevantes para la investigación y su aplicación práctica, pero el objetivo de esta tesis no es tanto una comparación exhaustiva de la percepción de diferentes grupos como una profundización en las atribuciones sobre la pobreza como mecanismo para apoyar o rechazar la protección social y el apoyo a las personas pobres, e ilustrar, al mismo tiempo, la importancia de considerar diferentes subgrupos en situación de pobreza.

### *1.2.2.1. Pobreza persistente y pobreza circunstancial*

Las crisis económicas tienen consecuencias devastadoras sobre la gran mayoría de población. La gran crisis económica de 2008 tuvo un impacto desigual en los distintos territorios de Europa, concentrando las peores consecuencias en los países del sur (Groot et al., 2011). Para el caso de España, esto implicó, entre otras muchas cosas, un pronunciado aumento del número de personas desempleadas, alcanzando una tasa de desempleo máxima del 26,65% en 2013, así como un aumento de 2,4 puntos porcentuales de la tasa de pobreza, situándose en un 22,2% en 2014 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2001-2013; 2007-2014). En estos casos, se produce un rápido deterioro del mercado laboral y el número de personas en desempleo aumenta de forma abrupta. Por supuesto, esto tiene unas implicaciones profundas en la vida de muchas personas, que pueden pasar de un nivel de ingresos relativamente estable, con su correspondiente acceso regular al consumo, a vivir en una situación de escasez y dependencia institucional o familiar. Más aún, esto puede llevar al deterioro de la salud mental, asociándose con un incremento de las muertes prematuras por la violencia intencional, incluyendo los suicidios (Marazziti et al., 2021).

Esta situación se corresponde con una de las formas elementales de la pobreza que describe Paugam (2007): la pobreza descalificadora. Frente a los tipos de pobreza marginal o integral, la pobreza descalificadora supone una forma de interdependencia diferente entre las personas en pobreza y el resto de la sociedad, así como un cambio en la representación social de la misma. Se produce un temor colectivo frente al riesgo de exclusión, siendo el grupo de personas que se considera en pobreza cada vez mayor y más heterogéneo, y difuminándose las imágenes previas sobre estos colectivos. Ante estas situaciones, se establece una diferencia entre las personas recién llegadas a la situación de pobreza por la pérdida de su empleo y aquellas que han vivido la pobreza como una situación reproducible y cronificada. En esta tesis doctoral se pretende estudiar si las atribuciones causales de pobreza sobre estos dos grupos son diferentes, así como si llevan a diferentes actitudes generales hacia la protección social.

Esto no quiere decir que la situación de las personas que han perdido su empleo y han pasado a estar en riesgo de pobreza no sea importante y urgente de atajar. Nuestro objetivo es estudiar si, a pesar de lo “arbitraria” que puede ser la pobreza, aquellas personas que lo han vivido como un fenómeno cronificado son más responsabilizadas de su situación en comparación con quienes están en situación de pobreza circunstancialmente. Si esto es así, además de las propias dificultades inherentes a la situación de escasez material, falta de oportunidades, etc., se suma una actitud más negativa de la población hacia ellos y hacia las políticas dirigidas a mejorar su situación. Esto es relevante porque las personas que están en pobreza persistente, frente a las personas que lo están como consecuencia de la crisis, requieren de medidas económicas diferentes y adaptadas a su situación (Cantó et al., 2012), que pueden ser más difíciles de implementar si la ciudadanía no se muestra favorable a ellas y no entran dentro de la esfera de prioridades políticas de los partidos.

Hay varios motivos que nos hacen pensar que es posible que se culpabilice más a las personas en pobreza persistente de su situación y que, además, se muestre una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social cuando ellas sean las beneficiarias de las políticas sociales. En primer lugar, como exponemos con más detalle en la introducción del capítulo 3, las atribuciones sobre la pobreza pueden variar en función del grupo por el que se pregunte (Henry et al., 2004). Según muestran estos autores, cuando se cambia la etiqueta del grupo que recibirá la ayuda social, en este caso receptores de beneficencia o personas en pobreza (*welfare recipients vs. poor people*) las atribuciones sobre su situación son diferentes. Al primer grupo, se le responsabiliza más de su situación, atribuyéndola en mayor medida a causas individuales y no tanto estructurales (Henry et al. 2004). Se puede inferir que las imágenes y representaciones sobre estos grupos son diferentes y llevan a diferentes explicaciones sobre el origen de su situación. Nuestro razonamiento aquí es similar: cuando se perciba a una persona en pobreza a raíz de la crisis, se le hará menos responsable de su situación que a la persona en pobreza persistente.

En segundo lugar, como resaltamos más arriba e insistiremos en toda esta tesis, las atribuciones sobre la pobreza influyen en las actitudes hacia la protección social. Hemos visto que cuando se atribuye la pobreza a causas individuales, por lo general se muestra una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social y las políticas planeadas para mejorar la situación de estos grupos. Por otro lado, varios estudios muestran que es más probable preferir políticas de protección más amplias o mayor asistencia económica cuando no se considera culpable a la persona de su situación (Appelbaum, 2001; Farwell y Weiner, 2000; Skitka y Tetlock, 1992). Por ejemplo, es más probable que se prefieran políticas más expansivas para viudas con hijos que para hombres capaces de trabajar pero que no lo hacen (Appelbaum, 2001). Articulando todo lo anterior en referencia a nuestro objeto de estudio, nuestro planteamiento es el siguiente: cuando se perciba a una persona en pobreza persistente, en comparación con una en pobreza a raíz de la crisis, se la hará más responsable de su situación, lo que, a su vez, llevará a una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social.

#### 1.2.2.2. Género y pobreza

En el apartado inmediatamente anterior comentábamos que, a pesar de que a veces se trate a las personas pobres como un grupo homogéneo, hay subgrupos con características diferentes. Esto es, hay ciertos grupos que por sus características adscriptivas, el contexto sociohistórico o su posición específica dentro del sistema de producción, *habitan* o viven la pobreza de forma sustancialmente diferente a otros, a pesar de que a nivel estadístico puedan aparecer conjuntamente bajo el mismo epígrafe de riesgo de pobreza, por ejemplo. A su vez, la interacción de varias de estas características (e.g., etnia y clase social) pueden explicar la posición social y las experiencias vividas por las personas de ese grupo. Esto es lo que trata de recoger el concepto de *interseccionalidad*, principalmente desde el feminismo, o la fórmula de *síntesis de múltiples determinaciones* desde el marxismo (Marx, 2007). Resumiendo, ciertos grupos de personas, por compartir ciertas características, han estado sujetos a sistemas de opresión diferenciados, pero cuando varias de estas características confluyen,



las personas pueden quedar insertas en varios de estos sistemas. En este sentido, una perspectiva histórica y socioeconómica es fundamental para entender esta realidad.

En este apartado nos centramos en la síntesis de dos características concretas: la escasez económica y el género. Como se plantea en la introducción del capítulo 4, muchos indicadores económicos muestran que la pobreza afecta de forma desigual a hombres y a mujeres. Por poner algunos ejemplos, las mujeres están sobrerrepresentadas en la población en riesgo de pobreza, en la mayoría de indicadores sobre privación material, entre las personas desempleadas o entre las personas con contratos temporales (INE, 2020a; 2020b). *Grosso modo*, a esto se refiere el término de feminización de la pobreza, al aumento y sobrerrepresentación de las mujeres en esta situación (e.g., Peterson, 1987). Sin embargo, no hay que olvidar que más allá de los indicadores económicos, hay que tener en cuenta las consecuencias en términos de rango de elecciones y oportunidades (Fukuda-Parr, 1999). Sobre esto último volveremos en el apartado dedicado a las definiciones sobre la pobreza.

Un punto importante es que aquí no nos centramos en la percepción de las propias personas en pobreza y cómo la confluencia de esas características afecta a las vivencias de estos grupos. Nuestro objetivo es la percepción *sobre* estos grupos, así como la influencia que pueda tener esta percepción en otra serie de variables. Como explicaremos a continuación, esto supone que no necesariamente hay una actitud más negativa hacia los grupos más oprimidos (en este caso mujeres en pobreza), si no que en el análisis de expectativas sociales y atribuciones de responsabilidad, el grupo aventajado puede ser objeto de una opinión relativamente más desfavorable. De ningún modo, como resaltamos aquí y en el capítulo 4, esto supone que el primer grupo esté en una mejor situación.

A lo largo de la historia, las mujeres han sido históricamente relegadas a roles de cuidado y hogar, mientras que los hombres han sido más asociados con el ámbito laboral remunerado. Este modelo, conocido como 'male bread-winner model' (ver Pfau-Effinger, 2004), ha llevado a una división laboral rígida durante parte importante de los últimos

siglos, aunque la tendencia está cambiando en la actualidad y, cuando la producción lo ha requerido, las mujeres se han incorporado al mundo del trabajo industrial. Aunque las dinámicas han variado en diferentes momentos históricos y no es exclusivamente un producto del capitalismo, la concentración de la producción en el hogar previa al desarrollo capitalista, ofrecía a hombres y mujeres cierto grado de independencia y control sobre la producción (McNally, 1993; Pinchbeck, 1931/2013). No obstante, puede observarse cierta tendencia a que el trabajo de la mujer fuese entendido como algo no debido a su voluntad propia (causa interna), sino como algo exigido por circunstancias externas (causa externa).

Desde una perspectiva de expectativas de género estereotípicas, esperamos que los hombres, en comparación con las mujeres, sean más responsabilizados por su pobreza, puesto que típicamente se espera que sean ellos quienes “ganen el pan” y, por tanto, también son responsables cuando no lo ganan. Teniendo en cuenta esto, además de lo detallado en apartados anteriores sobre la influencia de las atribuciones sobre la pobreza en las actitudes hacia la protección social, cabría que esperar que, además, se muestre una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social cuando la persona beneficiaria de esa política sea un hombre. Estos planteamientos, así como las consecuencias y una discusión más amplia y matizada, se encuentran en el capítulo 5 de esta tesis doctoral.

### *1.2.3. Merecimiento de protección social*

Una de las variables que más influyen en las actitudes hacia la protección social es la percepción de que la persona o grupo que será beneficiaria de esa política se la merece. Más aún, cuando hay pistas claras sobre el merecimiento de un grupo, el efecto de los valores en las actitudes hacia las políticas de bienestar disminuye de manera importante (Petersen et al., 2011), aunque este proceso está influido por el humanitarismo o las creencias de que se debe ayudar a las personas en situación de necesidad (Hansen, 2019). Esto es, cuando un grupo aparece claramente como no merecedor de ayuda, por ejemplo, debido a su conducta pasada, los valores no influyen con la misma fuerza que si no hay pistas claras sobre ello. La idea fundamental es que hay ciertos criterios básicos que las

personas utilizan para decidir si una persona o grupo son dignas de protección social. La consecuencia lógica es que estamos más predispuestos a apoyar las ayudas cuando consideramos que las personas benefactoras merecen esa ayuda (van Oorschot, 2006). En este sentido, van Oorschot (2000) distinguió entre cinco criterios diferentes de merecimiento: control, necesidad, identidad, obediencia y reciprocidad (ver Tabla 1).

**Tabla 1. Criterios de merecimiento de protección social**

<b>Criterio</b>	<b>Definición</b>	<b>Relación con merecimiento</b>
Control	Grado de control o responsabilidad que los individuos tienen sobre su propia situación.	Cuanto menor es el control, mayor merecimiento.
Necesidad	Percepción de que las personas se encuentran en situación de necesitar esa ayuda para mejorar su situación.	Cuanta mayor es la necesidad, mayor merecimiento.
Identidad	La identidad de la persona en pobreza, así como la cercanía a la propia persona que juzga la ayuda.	Cuanto más cercano a la propia persona, mayor merecimiento.
Actitud	La actitud de la persona pobre hacia la propia ayuda (e.g., si siguen las reglas de manera sumisa al solicitar subsidios)	Cuanto mejor sea la actitud, mayor percepción de merecimiento.
Reciprocidad	La creencia de que las personas harán algo a cambio de la ayuda recibida.	Cuanta mayor reciprocidad se perciba, mayor merecimiento.

Nota: elaboración propia a partir de van Oorschot (2000).

Esta perspectiva en el estudio del merecimiento de protección social ha sido fructífera para la investigación, dando lugar a numerosas puestas a prueba del modelo (modelo CARIN por sus siglas en inglés) en sucesivas investigaciones (ver, por ejemplo, van Oorschot et al., 2017); aunque también ha estado sujeto a algunos problemas de operacionalización y confusión conceptual (Knotz et al., 2022; Meuleman et al., 2017). Podría pensarse que el principio de control es relativamente similar a las atribuciones sobre la pobreza. Esto es, cuando se atribuye la pobreza a causas individuales como la falta de voluntad, se considera que la persona tiene control sobre su situación; cuando se atribuye a causas estructurales como la falta de empleos, la persona no tendría control

sobre su situación. Sin embargo, aunque hay ciertas similitudes, la situación no es tan simple. Las operacionalizaciones de la dimensión de control han variado de forma considerable en función del estudio concreto. Por ejemplo, a veces se operacionaliza como los esfuerzos para encontrar empleo o simplemente como la edad (Buss, 2019; Kootstra, 2016). De hecho, en un intento de operacionalización y desarrollo de una escala sobre estos criterios de merecimiento, Meuleman et al. (2020) operacionalizan la dimensión de control con estos dos ítems:

- *People who fall into poverty because of their own mistakes should be entitled to a living wage of the OCMW (OCMW se refiere a la oficina de seguridad social belga, dónde tiene lugar el estudio).*
- *People who are themselves to blame for their problems do not deserve any social security.*

Si bien esto se relaciona con las atribuciones individualistas sobre la pobreza, en sí mismos estos ítems también incluyen la actitud hacia la protección social. En nuestro caso, concebimos las atribuciones sobre la pobreza como algo diferenciado, aunque con cierto solapamiento, del criterio de control del CARIN model. Por ejemplo, en el capítulo 3 planteamos unos análisis exploratorios en los que las atribuciones sobre la pobreza anteceden a los criterios de control. Como se desprende de lo anterior, esto es tanto una decisión teórica como empírica, altamente dependiente de la forma en la que se operacionalizan las variables.

#### ***1.2.4. Estereotipos sobre la pobreza***

En todas las variables que hemos descrito hasta ahora hay, al menos parcialmente, una presuposición importante: las imágenes normativas de las personas en pobreza informan al público sobre una serie de variables relacionadas con la explicación de su posición en la sociedad y las actitudes hacia las medidas destinadas a estas personas (e.g., su merecimiento de ayuda). Así, las imágenes estereotípicas de las personas en pobreza pueden ser un factor relevante a la hora de explicar las actitudes hacia ellas. En este sentido, una de las aproximaciones más fructíferas de las últimas décadas para estudiar

los estereotipos ha sido el modelo del contenido del estereotipo (Glick y Fiske, 1999). La idea fundamental es que hay dos dimensiones básicas en la percepción estereotípica de los grupos sociales: la competencia y la sociabilidad. La competencia se refiere a la capacidad para conseguir metas y se encarnaría en atributos como la inteligencia, la competencia o la habilidad; la sociabilidad se refiere a la simpatía interpersonal, encarnada en atributos como la bondad, la simpatía o la calidez (Cuddy et al., 2008). También se han propuesto otras dimensiones similares en la percepción estereotípica (e.g., agencia y comunión; Abele y Wojciszke, 2014).

Respecto a las personas de bajo estatus socioeconómico, la evidencia disponible es ambivalente. Por una parte, hay algunos estudios que muestran que las personas de bajo estatus tienden a ser percibidas como bajas en competencia y bajas en sociabilidad (Fiske et al., 2007), mientras que otros muestran que son percibidos con baja competencia pero con alta sociabilidad (Durante et al., 2017; Durante et al., 2013). En este último caso, una de las posibles funciones que podría tener esta ambivalencia podría ser la de justificar el sistema que posibilita que se encuentren en pobreza. El hecho de que los estereotipos muestren un componente positivo (la alta sociabilidad) y uno negativo (la baja competencia) puede llevar a que la gente acepte y justifique el sistema y racionalice la desigualdad. En este sentido, Kay y Jost (2003) muestran que cuando la gente es expuesta a estereotipos complementarios, en este caso a los casos tipo de pobre pero feliz o rico pero infeliz, muestra una mayor disposición para justificar el sistema, a nivel explícito, y se satisface su motivo de justicia, a nivel implícito. Recuperando lo dicho respecto a la competencia y la sociabilidad percibida en las personas de bajo estatus socioeconómico, vemos que una constante, más allá de los resultados inconsistentes respecto a la sociabilidad, es que sistemáticamente se les asigna baja competencia, especialmente en comparación con las personas de alto estatus socioeconómico. En este sentido y en el contexto de la pobreza, esta asignación estereotípica de baja competencia podría estar asociado con la imagen cultural de las personas en situación de pobreza como carentes de habilidades, capacidades y recursos para llevar a cabo trayectorias vitales exitosas en el

sentido de acceso a ingresos y posesión de cualidades potencialmente valiosas en el mercado laboral. Es decir, podrían estar relacionadas con las atribuciones individualistas sobre la pobreza. Esto es importante puesto que los diferentes estereotipos tienen consecuencias en términos de intención conductual, esto es, de como las personas tienden a comportarse hacia estos grupos (Cuddy et al., 2007).

Otro aspecto relevante para esta tesis doctoral es que investigaciones previas, utilizando el marco conceptual del modelo del contenido del estereotipo, han encontrado diferencias en la asignación de competencia y sociabilidad en función del grupo de personas en pobreza objeto de evaluación. Por ejemplo, Fiske et al., (2007) encontraron que la percepción estereotípica más negativa recae sobre las personas sin hogar. Es decir, son el grupo al que se asigna menor competencia y sociabilidad; esto incluso en comparación con otros grupos de personas en pobreza como las personas receptoras de beneficencia o las personas pobres en general. Estos resultados refuerzan nuestra idea de que es importante atender a las imágenes específicas sobre los distintos grupos de personas en pobreza, situadas histórica y culturalmente, para entender mejor tanto las actitudes hacia los grupos específicos como la forma en la que estas actitudes influyen en la predisposición a ayudar a estas personas. En las introducciones de los capítulos 3 y 4 se tratan con mayor profundidad las posibles diferencias en el contenido del estereotipo entre los grupos que comparamos: personas en pobreza persistente vs. en pobreza circunstancial, en el capítulo 3, y mujeres en pobreza vs. hombres en pobreza, en el capítulo 4.

#### ***1.2.5. Orientaciones de justicia***

El estudio sobre las orientaciones hacia la justicia es especialmente interesante en tanto que en él confluyen disciplinas normativas, la filosofía política en este caso, y empíricas, la psicología social aquí (por ejemplo, ver la diferencia entre *juicios de justicia* y *actitudes de justicia* en Liebig, 2001). Aunque cada vez hay más ejemplos interesantes de filosofía experimental, por lo general la reflexión filosófica sobre la justicia ha consistido en experimentos mentales (N = 1) en los que, en un virtuoso ejercicio

epistémico, se dirimen qué principios normativos de justicia son los más adecuados para guiar la asignación de recursos en una sociedad o qué condiciones deben darse para poder decidir sobre ellos. Uno de los ejemplos paradigmáticos es la teoría de la justicia de Rawls planteada en *A theory of justice* (1971/2020). En ella, Rawls plantea una serie de conceptos resueltamente exóticos como el de “posición original” o “velo de la ignorancia” para poder llegar al contenido de la justicia. Sin entrar a debatir estos conceptos en profundidad (una crítica muy interesante puede verse en Geuss, 2008), este tipo de perspectivas suponen unos prerrequisitos inasumibles a nivel empírico. En parte suponen que las personas pueden ser portadores abstractos de la racionalidad universal y no seres históricos concretos y con un historial de opiniones, acciones y asociaciones previas (Geuss, 2009).

Sin embargo, hay importantes razones para pensar que ambos campos pueden beneficiarse mutuamente y, en general, nos beneficiaríamos en gran medida de un acercamiento a la filosofía política que ha tratado muchas veces temas de la psicología social, la justicia entre ellos (Swift, 1999). Algunas de los trabajos que en esta tesis se plantean tratar de hacer esto último (por ejemplo, en el capítulo sobre las definiciones de la pobreza). Sin embargo, aquí nos centramos en el entendimiento de las personas sobre qué principios deberían servir como base para distribuir los recursos en una sociedad, tratando de estudiarlos empíricamente en relación con las atribuciones sobre la pobreza y las actitudes hacia la protección social.

Las personas tienen diferentes opiniones sobre qué papel deberían jugar los estados y qué políticas públicas deberían seguirse para asistir a las personas en pobreza. Entre otras cosas, las personas pueden orientar sus preferencias políticas y redistributivas en función de sus intereses materiales, sus valores, su socialización o sus percepciones sobre la desigualdad (para una breve introducción ver Steele & Breznau, 2019). Entre esos valores podemos incluir la adhesión a distintos principios de justicia distributiva u orientaciones de justicia. Como se desarrolla en la introducción del capítulo 6, en la investigación en psicología social, siguiendo a Deutsch (1975), por lo general se identifican tres principios de justicia: igualdad, necesidad y equidad (ver Tabla 2). Como

se ilustra en la Tabla 2, estos principios adquieren un significado específico en el contexto de la provisión de servicios por parte del estado del bienestar (Clasen & van Oorschot, 2002). Se han propuesto otros principios como el de *entitlement* o titularidad (Hülle et al., 2018; Konow, 2003), aunque a nivel empírico ha sido difícil diferenciarlo del principio de equidad (Van Hootegem et al., 2021).

**Tabla 2. Distintos principios u orientaciones de justicia propuestos en la literatura**

Principio	Implicaciones en la provisión de bienestar
Igualdad	Redistribución equitativa de recursos entre los ciudadanos. Se asigna la misma cantidad de recursos a todos los ciudadanos.
Necesidad	Asignación de recursos únicamente a aquellos que no cumplen con el estándar mínimo de subsistencia o a quienes más los necesiten.
Equidad	Redistribución de recursos de manera que aquellos que contribuyen más reciban más.
<i>Entitlement</i> o titularidad	Los recursos deben asignarse teniendo en cuenta características adscriptivas o el estatus que una persona ha adquirido en el pasado.

Nota: elaboración propia.

Como comentamos con más detalle en la introducción del capítulo 5, estos principios se han estudiado tanto de forma abstracta como aplicada a ámbitos concretos como la prestación por desempleo o las pensiones (Arts & Gelissen, 2001; Reeskens & Van Oorschot, 2013; Van Hootegem et al., 2020). En nuestro caso nos centramos en la actitud hacia los principios de justicia en general, sin aplicar a ningún dominio específico. Así, los entendemos como parte de los valores y características personales de la gente y, en línea con otras investigaciones previas, como antecedente a la comprensión sobre las causas de la pobreza (Habibov et al., 2017; Lepianka et al., 2010). Sin embargo, no excluimos que la relación sea la contraria; esto es, que sean las explicaciones sobre el origen de la pobreza las que explican las actitudes hacia los principios de justicia.



### *1.2.6. Definiciones de pobreza*

La pregunta sobre qué es la pobreza va más allá de qué criterios cuantitativos podemos establecer para delimitar quienes son pobres en un determinado territorio. Implican preguntas y reflexiones sobre qué es una vida digna, qué proyectos vitales merecen la pena y qué objetivos sociales definimos colectivamente como valiosos. Más aún, fue en relación con el problema de la pobreza cuando se comenzó a explorar el significado de la vida en una sociedad compleja (Polanyi, 1944/2003).

Cómo definimos un problema es importante porque las definiciones enmarcan las posibles soluciones. Consideremos el ejemplo de dos políticos que abordan el desempleo. El político A define el desempleo como una situación en la que las habilidades de la fuerza laboral no coinciden con las habilidades requeridas para el empleo. El político B define el desempleo como una situación en la que las dinámicas a largo plazo de acumulación de capital generan un "ejército de reserva" privado de la posibilidad de trabajar. La solución para el político A parece bastante clara: aumentar las habilidades de la fuerza laboral para que puedan conseguir empleo. Una posibilidad sería fomentar la formación individual de los trabajadores para que sus habilidades se ajusten a las demandas del empleo. Además, adoptando este tipo de política, se está sumiendo una responsabilidad; en este caso, la falta de adaptación del trabajador. La solución para el político B, por otro lado, parece centrarse más en las causas estructurales, en las ineficiencias del funcionamiento del sistema económico de mercado. Una solución centrada en las fallas del mercado traslada la responsabilidad de los individuos desempleados a causas sociales más amplias. La adopción de uno u otro tipo de política ayuda a configurar diferentes formas de sentido común sobre los problemas sociales entre la población, influyendo en la atribución de responsabilidad y en la posición social que ocupan las personas desempleadas en nuestra sociedad. Por lo tanto, la forma en que definimos un problema puede tener implicaciones fundamentales para cómo lo abordamos y sus implicaciones sociales.

Así, podemos definir la pobreza de varias formas diferentes, con implicaciones diferentes para su comprensión. Como detallamos en la introducción del capítulo 7, podemos establecer una definición más estrecha sobre qué es la pobreza, comprendiéndola como falta de recursos materiales, abrigo o comida (Ashton, 1984) o una definición más amplia, incluyendo elementos como la falta de oportunidades, la imposibilidad de participar en la vida social y política del contexto o incluso la pérdida de libertad (Sen, 1999). En este sentido, es difícil encontrar un consenso sobre cómo definir la pobreza y son muchas las definiciones que pueden encontrarse en la literatura (Spicker, 2007). Más aún, la forma en la que definamos la pobreza (e.g., como falta de ingresos o basándonos en el enfoque de las capacidades u oportunidades para hacer cosas valiosas y desarrollarse), las personas que serán incluidas entre el grupo de personas pobres serán distintas (Anand et al., 2021; Laderchi et al., 2003).

Según nuestro planteamiento, si se define la pobreza de forma amplia, enfatizando no sólo aspectos económicos sino otros como la falta de participación social o de libertad, se ponen de manifiesto o se activarán en la mente de las personas los constreñimientos estructurales de la pobreza. Por tanto, este tipo de definiciones podrían estar relacionadas con un mayor apoyo a las atribuciones estructurales y un menor apoyo a las atribuciones individualistas. Como hemos puesto de manifiesto en el apartado sobre las atribuciones de la pobreza, esto a su vez puede llevar a una mejor actitud hacia la reducción de la pobreza y las actitudes hacia la protección social.

### ***1.2.7. Actitudes hacia la protección social y la reducción de la pobreza***

Las causas que han conducido a la génesis y consolidación de los estados del bienestar modernos son, como cabría esperar, múltiples, y el resaltar unas u otras depende en gran medida de la perspectiva que adoptemos. Los estados del bienestar modernos se han forjado, en parte, a raíz de varias emergencias y grandes momentos de crisis, como la hiperinflación, la Gran Depresión y las dos grandes guerras mundiales (Castles, 2010). Por ejemplo, la Segunda Guerra Mundial generó una demanda de protección social en una magnitud tal que requirió de la intervención estatal, especialmente en los países en

cuyo territorio se había combatido (Obinger & Schmitt, 2020), inaugurando un periodo de expansión del gasto social nacional conocido como la *edad dorada del capitalismo*, en palabras de Hobsbawm. Desde otro punto de vista, aunque también relacionado con las nuevas demandas de protección social, el estado del bienestar moderno surgiría como respuesta al empeoramiento de las condiciones materiales de existencia de la clase trabajadora conforme el capitalismo se desarrollaba. Así, las políticas de bienestar públicas serían medidas destinadas a contener las tensiones sociales y garantizar la estabilidad del sistema para poder mantener el proceso continuado de revalorización del capital, lo que no implica que estas medidas no sean conquistas históricas logradas a través de la acción colectiva de la clase trabajadora.

Así, los estados del bienestar suponen la institucionalización de una serie de acciones y políticas públicas para garantizar ciertos niveles de bienestar social y económico de la ciudadanía mientras permiten la acumulación continuada del capital. Aunque hay gran variación espacial y temporal, entre estas políticas públicas destacan los sistemas de protección por desempleo, los sistemas de pensiones, políticas educativas o de acceso a sistemas públicos de salud o la asistencia social a las personas desfavorecidas (e.g., Nullmeier & Kaufmann, 2021). Las políticas públicas de asistencia pueden suponer una red de apoyo para evitar o salir de la pobreza más allá de las redes de apoyo familiar, por ejemplo. Una de las funciones de las políticas sociales en los estados del bienestar es la de *desmercantilizar* la vida de los y las ciudadanas. Esto es, hacer que sus vidas y su fuerza de trabajo puedan reproducirse de forma más o menos independiente del mercado (Esping-Andersen, 1993), aunque en los últimos tiempos hemos asistido a una *remercantilización* de la vida de las personas, en el sentido de una reconfiguración de las políticas públicas centradas en las necesidades del mercado, a las que se supeditan las políticas sociales. Sería el paso del *welfare* al *workfare* (Jessop, 2000).

En este sentido, la opinión pública sobre estas políticas es importante porque influyen en que en último término se lleven a cabo por parte de los partidos políticos en las democracias parlamentarias representativas. Esto es, la inclusión de estas políticas

dentro de la agenda política estará sujeta a la evaluación que los/as políticos/as realicen acerca de si al hacerlo lograrán obtener la aprobación de su electorado (Luhmann, 1993). Esto implicaría que los agentes políticos considerarían la recepción y aceptación pública como un factor determinante al seleccionar y priorizar las políticas a implementar, con el fin de mantener o incrementar su apoyo popular. La investigación empírica, aunque con matices, ha demostrado que esto es en parte así (Brooks & Manza, 2006; Burstein, 2003), aunque también las propias políticas influyen en las actitudes ciudadanas (e.g., Campbell, 2012).

Hay un extenso cuerpo de investigaciones que han tratado de esclarecer qué factores influyen en las preferencias por la redistribución y la protección social. Sin ánimo de ser una lista exhaustiva, presentamos a continuación algunos de los principales y más relevantes en el ámbito de la psicología social. Uno de los que ha tenido mayor recorrido, aunque también críticas e intentos de reformulación, ha sido el del interés propio, reflejado en la hipótesis del votante egoísta de Meltzer y Richard (1981). La idea fundamental es que los y las votantes llevan a cabo un cálculo racional sobre qué será lo más beneficioso para su interés propio y actuarían electoralmente en consecuencia, por ejemplo en términos de si racionalmente les convendría que hubiese mayor redistribución. Aunque fructífera en términos académicos, esta idea también ha sido cuestionada y corregida en diversas investigaciones.

Fundamentalmente se han propuesto otras variables cuyo poder explicativo, sin negar el interés propio, matizarían las conclusiones y la relación entre las condiciones objetivas y las actitudes hacia la redistribución. La ideología o las creencias políticas han sido una de las principales alternativas. Tanto la ideología política entendida en un sentido clásico de posicionamiento en un eje desde la izquierda hasta la derecha, como otras variables, entre las que pueden situarse a la justificación del sistema o la orientación hacia la dominancia social, han mostrado tener una clara influencia en las actitudes hacia la redistribución (Jæger, 2008; Rodríguez-Bailón et al., 2017). Por lo general, las personas de derechas muestran una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social, igual que

aquellas con una mayor tendencia hacia la justificación del sistema o una mayor orientación hacia la dominancia social. Estas dos dimensiones (interés propio y creencias ideológicas) no necesariamente son ortogonales entre sí. Por ejemplo, Armingeon y Weisstanner (2022) muestran que las diferencias en las preferencias distributivas entre personas de derechas y de izquierdas son menores entre las personas que tienen menos recursos que entre las personas que tienen más recursos.

También las actitudes hacia la redistribución y la protección social se ven influidas por la desigualdad percibida, tanto a nivel nacional como en la vida diaria (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2022; García-Sánchez et al., 2019), por el estatus socioeconómico subjetivo de las personas (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2015) y a través de la comparación social (Condon & Wichowsky, 2020) y los procesos de muestreo en el ámbito social (*social sampling processes*; Dawtry et al., 2015).

Otras variables personales como el género (Buser et al., 2020) o el hecho de ser una persona migrante (Luttmer & Singhal, 2011) también influyen en cómo de favorable o desfavorable se muestran las personas hacia la redistribución y las políticas de protección social. Además, hay factores institucionales de largo alcance como el tipo de régimen de bienestar del territorio que moldean el apoyo a la redistribución (e.g., Svallfors, 1997).

### 1.3. Referencias

- Abele, A. E., & Wojciszke, B. (2014). Communal and agentic content in social cognition: A dual perspective model. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 50, 195-255. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-800284-1.00004-7>
- Agulles, J. (2023). *La negación de la virtud: Una historia sobre la pobreza y el progreso*. Virus Editorial.
- Alston, J. P., & Dean, K. I. (1972). Socioeconomic factors associated with attitudes toward welfare recipients and the causes of poverty. *Social Service Review*, 46(1), 13-23. <https://doi.org/10.1086/642795>

- Anand, P., Jones, S., Donoghue, M., & Teitler, J. (2021). Non-monetary poverty and deprivation: A capability approach. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 31(1), 78-91. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0958928720938334>
- Appelbaum, L. D. (2001). The influence of perceived deservingness on policy decisions regarding aid to the poor. *Political Psychology*, 22(3), 419-442. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00248>
- Armingeon, K., & Weisstanner, D. (2022). Objective conditions count, political beliefs decide: The conditional effects of self-interest and ideology on redistribution preferences. *Political Studies*, 70(4), 887-900. <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-204203>
- Arts, W., & Gelissen, J. (2001). Welfare states, solidarity and justice principles: does the type really matter?. *Acta Sociologica*, 44(4), 283-299. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F000169930104400401>
- Ashton, P. (1984). Poverty and its beholders. *New Society*, 70(1139), 95-98.
- Bai, J., Xu, B. X., Yang, S. L., & Guo, Y. Y. (2022). Why are higher-class individuals less supportive of redistribution? The mediating role of attributions for rich-poor gap. *Current Psychology*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02836-2>
- Bobbio, A., Canova, L., & Manganelli, A. M. (2010). Conservative ideology, economic conservatism, and causal attributions for poverty and wealth. *Current Psychology*, 29(3), 222-234. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-010-9086-6>
- Brooks, C. & Manza, J. (2007). *Why welfare states persist*. Chicago University Press.
- Brown-Iannuzzi, J. L., Lundberg, K. B., & McKee, S. E. (2021). Economic inequality and socioeconomic ranking inform attitudes toward redistribution. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 96, 104180. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2021.104180>

- Brown-Iannuzzi, J. L., Lundberg, K. B., Kay, A. C., & Payne, B. K. (2015). Subjective status shapes political preferences. *Psychological Science*, 26(1), 15-26.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0956797614553947>
- Bullock, H. E., Williams, W. R., & Limbert, W. M. (2003). Predicting support for welfare policies: The impact of attributions and beliefs about inequality. *Journal of Poverty*, 7(3), 35-56. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J134v07n03\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J134v07n03_03)
- Burstein, P. (2003). The impact of public opinion on public policy: A review and an agenda. *Political Research Quarterly*, 56(1), 29-40.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3219881>
- Buser, T., Grimalda, G., Putterman, L., & van der Weele, J. (2020). Overconfidence and gender gaps in redistributive preferences: Cross-country experimental evidence. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 178, 267-286.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2020.07.005>
- Buss, C. (2019). Public opinion towards targeted labour market policies: A vignette study on the perceived deservingness of the unemployed. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 29(2), 228-240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928718757684>
- Campbell, A. L. (2012). Policy makes mass politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15, 333-351. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-012610-135202>
- Cantó, O., Gradín, C., & Del Rio, C. (2012). Pobreza crónica, transitoria y recurrente en España. *Revista de Economía Aplicada*, 20(58), 69-94.
- Carlà-Uhink, F., Cecchet, L., & Machado, C. (Eds.). (2022). *Poverty in Ancient Greece and Rome: Discourses and realities*. Taylor & Francis.
- Castel, R. (1997). *La Metamorfosis de la cuestión social*. Paidós.
- Castles, F. G. (2010). Black swans and elephants on the move: the impact of emergencies on the welfare state. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 20(2), 91-101.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928709358793>

- Clasen, J., & Van Oorschot, W. (2002). Changing principles in European social security. *European Journal of Social Security*, 4(2), 89-115.  
<https://doi.org/10.1023%2FA%3A1020520321533>
- Condon, M., & Wichowsky, A. (2020). Inequality in the social mind: Social comparison and support for redistribution. *The Journal of Politics*, 82(1), 149-161.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/705686>
- Cook, F. L. (1979). *Who should be helped?: Public support for social services*. Sage.
- Cozzarelli, C., Wilkinson, A. V., & Tagler, M. J. (2001). Attitudes toward the poor and attributions for poverty. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(2), 207-227.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00209>
- Cuddy, A. J., Fiske, S. T., & Glick, P. (2008). Warmth and competence as universal dimensions of social perception: The stereotype content model and the BIAS map. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 40, 61-149.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(07\)00002-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(07)00002-0)
- Davidai, S. (2022). How do people make sense of wealth and poverty?. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 43, 42-47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.06.010>
- Dawtry, R. J., Sutton, R. M., & Sibley, C. G. (2015). Why wealthier people think people are wealthier, and why it matters: From social sampling to attitudes to redistribution. *Psychological Science*, 26(9), 1389-1400.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0956797615586560>
- Deutsch, M. (1975). Equity, equality, and need: What determines which value will be used as the basis of distributive justice?. *Journal of Social issues*, 31(3), 137-149.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1975.tb01000.x>
- Díez R, F. (1992). Estructura social y sistema benéfico-asistencial en la ciudad preindustrial. *Historia Social*, 13, 101-121. Accesible en:  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40340560>



- Durante, F., Fiske, S. T., Kervyn, N., Cuddy, A. J., Akande, A., Adetoun, B. E., et al. (2013). Nations' income inequality predicts ambivalence in stereotype content: How societies mind the gap. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(4), 726–746. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12005>
- Durante, F., Tablante, C. B., & Fiske, S. T. (2017). Poor but warm, rich but cold (and competent): Social classes in the stereotype content model. *Journal of Social Issues*, 73(1), 138–157. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12208>
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1993) *Los tres mundos del estado del bienestar*. Edicions Alfons el Màgnanim.
- Farwell, L., & Weiner, B. (2000). Bleeding hearts and the heartless: Popular perceptions of liberal and conservative ideologies. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(7), 845–852. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167200269009>
- Feagin, J. R. (1972). Poverty: We still believe that God helps those who help themselves. *Psychology Today*, 6(6), 101-110.
- Feather, N. T. (1974). Explanations of poverty in Australian and American samples: The person, society, or fate? *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 26(3), 199-216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049537408255231>
- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J., & Glick, P. (2007). Universal dimensions of social cognition: Warmth and competence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11(2), 77–83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2006.11.005>
- Fukuda-Parr, S. (1999). What does feminization of poverty mean? It isn't just lack of income. *Feminist Economics*, 5(2), 99-103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135457099337996>
- Furnham, A. (1982). Why are the poor always with us? Explanations for poverty in Britain. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 21(4), 311-322. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1982.tb00553.x>

- Furnham, A. (1983). Attitudes toward the unemployed receiving social security benefits. *Human Relations*, 36(2), 135-149.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/001872678303600204>
- Furnham, A., & Gunter, B. (1984). Just world beliefs and attitudes towards the poor. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 23(3), 265-269.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1984.tb00637.x>
- Geuss, R. (2008). *Philosophy and real politics*. Princeton University Press.
- Geuss, R. (2009). *Politics and the imagination*. Princeton University Press.
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1999). Sexism and other “isms”: Independence, status, and the ambivalent content of stereotypes. In W. B. Swann Jr., J. H. Langlois, & L. A. Gilbert (Eds.), *Sexism and stereotypes in modern society: The gender science of Janet Taylor Spence* (pp. 193–221). American Psychological Association.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/10277-008>
- González Duro, E. (2021). *Historia de la locura en España*. Siglo XXI de España Editores.
- González-Sánchez, I. (2021). *Neoliberalismo y castigo*. Bellaterra Editorial.
- Groot, S. P., Möhlmann, J. L., Garretsen, J. H., & de Groot, H. L. (2011). The crisis sensitivity of European countries and regions: stylized facts and spatial heterogeneity. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 4(3), 437-456. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsr024>
- Habibov, N., Cheung, A., Auchnnikava, A., & Fan, L. (2017). Explaining support for structural attribution of poverty in post-communist countries: Multilevel analysis of repeated cross-sectional data. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 44(3), 173-197.
- Hansen, K. J. (2019). Who cares if they need help? The deservingness heuristic, humanitarianism, and welfare opinions. *Political Psychology*, 40(2), 413-430.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12506>

- Heider, F. (1944). Social perception and phenomenal causality. *Psychological Review*, 51(6), 358–374. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0055425>
- Henry, P. J., Reyna, C., & Weiner, B. (2004). Hate welfare but help the poor: How the attributional content of stereotypes explains the paradox of reactions to the destitute in America. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 34(1), 34–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2004.tb02536.x>
- Hülle, S., Liebig, S., & May, M. J. (2018). Measuring attitudes toward distributive justice: The basic social justice orientations scale. *Social Indicators Research*, 136, 663–692. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1580-x>
- Hunt, M. O. (1996). The individual, society, or both? A comparison of Black, Latino, and White beliefs about the causes of poverty. *Social Forces*, 75(1), 293–322. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/75.1.293>
- Hunt, M. O. (2002). Religion, race/ethnicity, and beliefs about poverty. *Social Science Quarterly*, 83(3), 810–831. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6237.00116>
- Hunt, M. O., & Bullock, H. E. (2016). Ideologies and beliefs about poverty. In D. Brady & L. M. Burton (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of the social science of poverty* (pp. 93–116). Oxford University Press.
- Inglehart, R. et al. (2014) World Values Survey: Round three – country-pooled datafile. *World Values Survey*. [www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV3.jsp](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV3.jsp)
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2001-2013). *Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA)*. Instituto Nacional de Estadística.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2007-2014). *Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida (ECV)*. Instituto Nacional de Estadística.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2023). *Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida (ECV)*. Madrid: Instituto Nacional de Estadística. Disponible en: <https://www.ine.es>

- Instituto Nacional de Estadística. (2020a). *Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida (ECV)*.  
Instituto Nacional de Estadística.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística. (2020b). *Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA)*. Instituto Nacional de Estadística.
- Jæger, M. M. (2008). Does left–right orientation have a causal effect on support for redistribution? Causal analysis with cross-sectional data using instrumental variables. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 20(3), 363-374.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edn030>
- Jessop, B. (2000) 'From the KWNS to the SWPR', en G. Lewis, S. Gewirtz and J. Clarke (eds), *Rethinking Social Policy*. Sage.
- Jessop, B. (2002). Liberalism, neoliberalism, and urban governance: A state–theoretical perspective. *Antipode*, 34(3), 452-472.
- Jessop, B. (2012). *Neoliberalism*. The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470670590.wbeog422>
- Kallio, J., & Niemelä, M. (2014). Who blames the poor? Multilevel evidence of support for and determinants of individualistic explanation of poverty in Europe. *European Societies*, 16(1), 112-135.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2013.787435>
- Kay, A. C., & Jost, J. T. (2003). Complementary justice: Effects of "poor but happy" and "poor but honest" stereotype exemplars on system justification and implicit activation of the justice motive. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(5), 823–837. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.823>
- Kluegel, J. R., y Smith, E. R. (1986). *Beliefs about inequality: Americans' views of what is and what ought to be*. Routledge.

- Knotz, C. M. (2018). A rising workfare state? Unemployment benefit conditionality in 21 OECD countries, 1980–2012. *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, 34(2), 91-108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21699763.2018.1472136>
- Knotz, C. M., Gandenberger, M. K., Fossati, F., & Bonoli, G. (2022). A recast framework for welfare deservingness perceptions. *Social Indicators Research*, 159(3), 927-943. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-021-02774-9>
- Konow, J. (2003). Which is the fairest one of all? A positive analysis of justice theories. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 41(4), 1188-1239. <https://doi.org/10.1257/002205103771800013>.
- Kootstra, A. (2016). Deserving and undeserving welfare claimants in Britain and the Netherlands: Examining the role of ethnicity and migration status using a vignette experiment. *European Sociological Review*, 32(3), 325–338. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcw010>
- Kruglanski, A. W. (1975). The endogenous-exogenous partition in attribution theory. *Psychological Review*, 82(6), 387–406. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.82.6.387>
- Laderchi, C. R., Saith, R., & Stewart, F. (2003). Does it matter that we do not agree on the definition of poverty? A comparison of four approaches. *Oxford Development Studies*, 31(3), 243-274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360081032000111698>
- Lampe, P. (2016). Social welfare in the Greco-Roman world as a background for early christian practice. *Acta Theologica*, 1-28. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v23i1s.1>
- Lanau, A., y Lozano, M. (2022). *Entrar y salir de la pobreza en España*. El Observatorio Social de la Fundación "la Caixa". Disponible en: <https://elobservatoriosocial.fundacionlacaixa.org/-/entrar-y-salir-de-la-pobreza-laboral-en-espana>

- Lei, L., & Yu, W. H. (2021). What does it take to get ahead? Individual characteristics, community contexts, and stratification beliefs among youth in China. *Social Forces*, 100(2), 738-764. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soaa143>
- Lepianka, D., Gelissen, J., & Van Oorschot, W. (2010). Popular explanations of poverty in Europe: Effects of contextual and individual characteristics across 28 European countries. *Acta Sociologica*, 53(1), 53-72. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0001699309357842>
- Lepianka, D., Van Oorschot, W., & Gelissen, J. (2009). Popular explanations of poverty: A critical discussion of empirical research. *Journal of Social Policy*, 38(3), 421-438. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279409003092>
- Liebig, S. (2001). Lessons from philosophy? Interdisciplinary justice research and two classes of justice judgments. *Social Justice Research*, 14, 265-287. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1014367907348>
- Luhmann, N. (1993) *Teoría política del Estado del bienestar*. Alianza Editorial.
- Luttmer, E. F. P., & Singhal, M. (2011). Culture, context, and the taste for redistribution. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 3(1), 157-179. <https://doi.org/10.1257/pol.3.1.157>
- Marazziti, D., Avella, M., Mucci, N., Della Vecchia, A., Ivaldi, T., Palermo, S., & Mucci, F. (2021). Impact of economic crisis on mental health: A 10-year challenge. *CNS Spectrums*, 26(1), 7-13. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1092852920000140>
- Marquis, L., & Rosset, J. (2021). When explanations for poverty help explain social policy preferences: The case of European public opinion amidst the economic recession (2009–2014). *Social Justice Research*, 34, 428-459. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-021-00381-0>
- Marquis, L. (2020). Lay explanations for poverty: a multilevel analysis of European public opinion (1976 - 2014). En: R. Careja, P. Emmenegger, y N. Giger

- (Eds.) *The European social model under pressure* (pp. 253-275). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-27043-8\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-27043-8_15).
- Marx, K. (2007). *Elementos fundamentales para la crítica de la economía política: borrador 1857-1858* (Vol. 1). Siglo XXI.
- Marx, K., (2000) *El capital (obra completa)*. Akal editores.
- McNally, D. (1993). *Against the market: Political economy, market socialism and the Marxist critique*. Verso.
- McNally, D. (2021). *Monstruos del mercado: Zombis, vampiros y capitalismo global*. Levanta Fuego.
- Meltzer, A. H., & Richard, S. F. (1981). A rational theory of the size of government. *Journal of Political Economy*, 89 (5), 914-927.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/261013>
- Meuleman, B., Roosma, F., & Abts, K. (2020). Welfare deservingness opinions from heuristic to measurable concept: The CARIN deservingness principles scale. *Social Science Research*, 85, 102352.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2019.102352>
- Meuleman, B., Roosma, F., & van Oorschot, W. (2017). Evaluating the fruitfulness of deservingness theory. En W. van Oorschot, F. Roosma, B. Meuleman, & T. Reeskens (Eds.) *The social legitimacy of targeted welfare* (pp. 335-351). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Nullmeier, F., & Kaufmann, F. X. (2021). Post-war welfare state development. En D. Béland, K. J. Morgan, H. Obinger, & C. Pierson (Eds.). *The Oxford handbook of the welfare state*, pp. 81-101. Oxford University Press.
- Obinger, H., & Schmitt, C. (2020). World war and welfare legislation in western countries. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 30(3), 261-274.  
<https://doi.org/10.26092/elib/617>

- Paugam, S. (2007). *Las formas elementales de la pobreza*. Alianza Editorial.
- Pestaña, J. L. M. (2019). *Retorno a Atenas: la democracia como principio antioligárquico*. Siglo XXI de España Editores.
- Petersen, M. B., Slothuus, R., Stubager, R., & Togeby, L. (2011). Deservingness versus values in public opinion on welfare: The automaticity of the deservingness heuristic. *European Journal of Political Research*, 50(1), 24-52.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2010.01923.x>
- Peterson, J. (1987). The feminization of poverty. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 21(1), 329-337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.1987.11504613>
- Pfau-Effinger, B. (2004). Socio-historical paths of the male breadwinner model—an explanation of cross-national differences. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 55(3), 377-399. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2004.00025.x>
- Piff, P. K., Wiwad, D., Robinson, A. R., Akin, L. B., Mercier, B., & Shariff, A. (2020). Shifting attributions for poverty motivates opposition to inequality and enhances egalitarianism. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(5), 496-505.  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0835-8>
- Pinchbeck, I. (2013). *Women workers in the Industrial Revolution*. Routledge. Versión original de 1930).
- Piven, F. F., & Cloward, R. (1972). *Regulating the poor: The functions of public welfare*. Vintage Books.
- Polanyi, K. (2016). *La gran transformación. Crítica del liberalismo económico*. Virus editorial. Versión original de 1944.
- Ravallion, M. (2015). *The economics of poverty: History, measurement, and policy*. Oxford University Press.
- Rawls, J. (2020). *A theory of justice: Revised edition*. Harvard university press. Versión original de 1971.



- Reeskens, T., & Van Oorschot, W. (2013). Equity, equality, or need? A study of popular preferences for welfare redistribution principles across 24 European countries. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20(8), 1174-1195.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2012.752064>
- Rodríguez-Bailón, R., Bratanova, B., Willis, G. B., Lopez-Rodriguez, L., Sturrock, A., & Loughnan, S. (2017). Social class and ideologies of inequality: How they uphold unequal societies. *Journal of Social Issues*, 73(1), 99-116.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12206>
- Sainz, M., García-Castro, J. D., Jiménez-Moya, G., & Lobato, R. M. (2023). How do people understand the causes of poverty and wealth? A revised structural dimensionality of the attributions about poverty and wealth scales. *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 31(1), 81-100.  
<https://doi.org/10.1332/175982721X16645485533332>
- Sainz, M., Martínez, R., Sutton, R. M., Rodríguez-Bailón, R., & Moya, M. (2020). Less human, more to blame: Animalizing poor people increases blame and decreases support for wealth redistribution. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 23(4), 546-559. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430219841135>
- Sánchez, Á. R. (1981). Pobreza y marginación social en la España moderna. *Norba: Revista de Arte, Geografía e Historia*, 2, 233-244.
- Sen, A., K. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Shirazi, R., y Biel, A. (2005). Internal-external causal attributions and perceived government responsibility for need provision: a 14-culture study. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 36(1), 96-116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022104271428>
- Skitka, L. J., & Tetlock, P. E. (1992). Allocating scarce resources: A contingency model of distributive justice. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 28(6), 491-522.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031\(92\)90043-J](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(92)90043-J)

- Smith, K. B., & Stone, L. H. (1989). Rags, riches, and bootstraps: Beliefs about the causes of wealth and poverty. *Sociological Quarterly*, 30(1), 93-107.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.1989.tb01513.x>
- Spicker, P. (2007). Definitions of poverty: twelve clusters of meaning. In Spicker, P., Leguizamón, S. Á., & Gordon, D. (Eds.) *Poverty: An international glossary* (pp. 229-243). Zed Books.
- Steele, L. G., & Breznau, N. (2019). Attitudes toward redistributive policy: An introduction. *Societies*, 9(3), 50. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc9030050>
- Svallfors, S. (1997). Worlds of welfare and attitudes to redistribution: A comparison of eight western nations. *European Sociological Review*, 13(3), 283–304.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.esr.a018219>
- Swift, A. (1999). Public opinion and political philosophy: The relation between social-scientific and philosophical analyses of distributive justice. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 2, 337-363. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009903718660>
- Thibaut, J. W., y Riecken, H. W. (1955). Some determinants and consequences of the perception of social causality. *Journal of Personality*, 24(2), 113-133.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1955.tb01178.x>
- Van Hootehem, A., Abts, K., & Meuleman, B. (2020). Differentiated distributive justice preferences? Configurations of preferences for equality, equity and need in three welfare domains. *Social Justice Research*, 33(3), 257-283.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-020-00354-9>
- Van Hootehem, A., Meuleman, B., & Abts, K. (2021). Measuring public support for distributive justice principles: assessing the measurement quality of the Basic Social Justice Orientations scale. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 33(4), 986-997. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edaa041>

- Van Oorschot, W. (2000). Who should get what, and why? On deservingness criteria and the conditionality of solidarity among the public. *Policy & Politics*, 28(1), 33-48. <https://doi.org/10.1332/0305573002500811>
- Van Oorschot, W. (2006). Making the difference in social Europe: deservingness perceptions among citizens of European welfare states. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 16(1), 23-42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928706059829>
- Van Oorschot, W., & Halman, L. (2000). Blame or fate, individual or social? An international comparison of popular explanations of poverty. *European societies*, 2(1), 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/146166900360701>
- van Oorschot, W., Roosma, F., Meuleman, B., & Reeskens, T. (Eds.). (2017). *The social legitimacy of targeted welfare: Attitudes to welfare deservingness*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Weber, M. (2012). *La ética protestante y el "espíritu" del capitalismo*. Alianza editorial. Versión original de 1904.
- Weiner, B. (1985). Attribution theory. En B. Weiner: *Human Motivation*. Springer [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4612-5092-0\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4612-5092-0_7).
- Weiner, B., Osborne, D., & Rudolph, U. (2011). An attributional analysis of reactions to poverty: The political ideology of the giver and the perceived morality of the receiver. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(2), 199-213. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1088868310387615>
- Wickham, C. (1984). The other transition: from the ancient world to feudalism. *Past & Present*, 103(1), 3-36. Accesible en: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/650723>
- Williamson, J. B. (1974). Beliefs about the motivation of the poor and attitudes toward poverty policy. *Social Problems*, 21(5), 634-648. <https://doi.org/10.2307/799639>

- Wiwad, D., Mercier, B., Piff, P. K., Shariff, A., y Aknin, L. B. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on attitudes toward poverty and inequality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 104083. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2020.104083>.
- Wood, E. M. (2021). *El origen del capitalismo: Una mirada de largo plazo*. Siglo XXI de España Editores.
- Wood, E. M. (2018). *La prístina cultura del capitalismo: Un ensayo histórico sobre el Antiguo Régimen y el Estado moderno*. Traficantes de sueños.

## **Capítulo 2. Planteamiento general, preguntas de investigación y objetivos específicos**

## 2. Planteamiento general, preguntas de investigación y objetivos específicos

### 2.1. Planteamiento general

La pobreza es un problema social al que todas las sociedades conocidas, en mayor o menor medida, han tenido que hacer frente. No se trata tanto de la falta de recursos si no de cómo se generan y distribuyen en una sociedad determinada. Es un problema social complejo y multifacético, y sus causas son múltiples: hay en juego factores económicos y políticos, históricos y sociales, que es necesario tener en cuenta para explicar el fenómeno en cada situación concreta. Otro factor fundamental, clave para este trabajo, es que las propias percepciones sobre la pobreza influyen en cómo se trata y actúa frente al problema en el plano social. Esta es la idea que subyace en toda esta tesis: las percepciones de la gente sobre la pobreza, su actitud y sus creencias sobre ella, son relevantes porque, en cierta medida, pueden contribuir a perpetuarla.

En los dos capítulos anteriores hemos puesto de manifiesto las múltiples posibilidades a la hora de acercarnos a la percepción social de la pobreza, así como la gran variedad de variables que pueden influir en dicha percepción y en las actitudes hacia la protección social. Una tesis doctoral no puede pretender abordar todos estos factores y variables. Por ello, hemos optado por profundizar en una serie de cuestiones relacionadas con la percepción de la pobreza, centrándonos fundamentalmente en el papel que desempeñan las atribuciones sobre la pobreza. Nuestro objetivo es más bien humilde, pues no buscamos la resolución definitiva de algunos debates que se vienen dando desde hace tiempo, como qué categorías componen las atribuciones sobre la pobreza, por ejemplo. Nuestro objetivo general es profundizar en algunas relaciones relevantes, informadas por la investigación previa, concretamente entre las atribuciones sobre la pobreza y las actitudes hacia la protección social. Además, planteamos otras variables novedosas que pueden ser fructíferas para futuras investigaciones, además de útiles en el presente. En particular, comparamos los patrones atribucionales sobre la pobreza de diferentes grupos (pobreza persistente vs. circunstancial y, por otra parte, hombres y mujeres en esa situación) e incluimos las definiciones de la pobreza como variable

predictora tanto de las atribuciones de pobreza como de las actitudes hacia la protección social y la reducción de la pobreza.

## 2.2. Preguntas y objetivos de investigación específicos

Una vez delineado el planteamiento general, detallaremos las líneas específicas en las que toma cuerpo. La presente tesis consta de cuatro capítulos empíricos, los dos primeros exploran la percepción de la pobreza comparando diferentes grupos de personas en pobreza con particular relevancia en nuestro contexto. Los dos últimos exploran la relación de diferentes variables ideacionales (orientaciones sobre la justicia y definiciones de la pobreza) con las atribuciones sobre la pobreza y las actitudes hacia la protección social y la reducción de la pobreza.

La gente tiende a mostrar diferentes actitudes hacia las personas en pobreza en función del grupo específico del que se trate. Es decir, en tanto que las personas en pobreza no son un conjunto homogéneo y monolítico, hay características diferenciales en las personas en situación de pobreza que influyen en cómo son percibidos y qué consecuencias tiene esa percepción (Appelbaum, 2001; Henry et al., 2004). En este sentido, los capítulos 4 y 5 se centran en las diferencias en la percepción social de diferentes grupos en situación de pobreza (personas en situación de pobreza persistente vs. circunstancial, y hombres vs mujeres), así como en las consecuencias de esa posible percepción diferenciada en las actitudes hacia las políticas de protección social. Estos grupos son considerados relevantes en nuestro contexto (poscrisis económica y en el que persisten diferencias por género en muchos aspectos importantes), pero, como en cualquier decisión de este tipo, es hasta cierto punto arbitraria y quedan muchas posibilidades fuera de esta investigación. Esto es, existen otros muchos otros grupos en situación de pobreza que merecerían ser estudiados.

Específicamente, la investigación del capítulo 3 busca responder a las siguientes preguntas: ¿Se percibe -en términos de estereotipos y atribuciones de responsabilidad- de forma diferente a las personas en pobreza a raíz de la crisis económica y a las personas en pobreza crónica? ¿Esta posible percepción diferenciada influye en las actitudes hacia la

protección social? Esto es, buscamos responder a la pregunta de si la naturaleza y duración de la pobreza influye en la atribución de responsabilidad sobre su situación (si se responsabiliza más a un grupo que a otro) y si a un grupo se le asigna más competencia y calidez que al otro. Además, analizamos si este patrón de responsabilidad diferenciado influye en las actitudes hacia la protección social en general.

Por su parte, la investigación del capítulo 4 busca responder a dos preguntas similares, aunque cambiando al grupo objetivo. En concreto, ¿Se percibe de forma diferente a las mujeres y a los hombres en situación de pobreza? ¿Qué consecuencias tiene esta diferente percepción en las actitudes hacia la protección social? Este caso es especialmente interesante puesto, aunque puedan existir ciertos paralelismos entre los estereotipos hacia las mujeres y hacia las personas pobres (e.g., menor competencia y mayor sociabilidad), los estereotipos en la intersección de múltiples categorías sociales no suelen ser la suma aritmética de los estereotipos sobre las distintas categorías, sino que tienen su entidad y especificidad propias (Lei et al., 2023).

El capítulo 5 se centra en la relación entre las orientaciones sobre la justicia, las atribuciones sobre la pobreza y las actitudes hacia la protección social y la redistribución. La literatura previa ha relacionado, por una parte, las orientaciones sobre la justicia con las atribuciones sobre la pobreza (Habibov et al., 2017; Lepianka et al., 2010) y con las actitudes hacia la redistribución, cobertura deseada del estado del bienestar (más o menos implicación del estado a la hora de ofrecer servicios) o sus diferentes dominios, como pensiones, prestaciones por desempleo o sanidad (Andress y Heien, 2001; Lewin-Epstein et al., 2003; Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2013). Sin embargo, la investigación previa no ha puesto estos tres conceptos en relación. Aquí, nuestra pregunta es: ¿cuál es la relación entre las orientaciones sobre la justicia, las atribuciones sobre la pobreza y las actitudes hacia la protección social y redistribución? Como se pone de manifiesto en la introducción del propio capítulo 5, hay en esta literatura algunas carencias y vacíos que nuestra investigación pretende llenar. Aquí planteamos una articulación novedosa y con



resultados prometedores entre los tres campos, proveyendo un marco conceptual útil y, esperamos, fructífero en el futuro.

El capítulo 6 introduce, hasta donde sabemos, una variable pionera en el estudio de la percepción de la pobreza y la atribución de responsabilidad sobre ella, planteando la influencia que puede tener la forma en la que se define la pobreza en la culpabilización de las personas en esa situación y, en consecuencia, en las actitudes hacia la reducción de la pobreza. En otros términos, nuestra pregunta sería: ¿influye la forma en la que se define la pobreza en las atribuciones causales sobre esta? ¿y, si es así, cómo influyen estas definiciones en las actitudes hacia su reducción? Intentamos aplicar aquí resultados de otras disciplinas, como la filosofía social, a la investigación en psicología social. Al igual que en el capítulo anterior, confiamos en que la incorporación de esta nueva variable sea beneficiosa tanto para ampliar nuestra comprensión de la percepción de la pobreza como para impulsar futuras investigaciones que desarrollen el armazón teórico y la evidencia empírica sobre esta variable.

En total, esta tesis está conformada por ocho capítulos. Los dos primeros sitúan nuestra investigación en su contexto teórico y describen las variables que empleamos. Los capítulos 3, 4, 5 y 6 son artículos científicos independientes, con su estructura típica. Como ya hemos indicado, esto hace que algunos contenidos aparezcan repetidos en la introducción general y en la introducción de cada uno de estos capítulos empíricos. El capítulo 8 aborda la discusión general de los resultados encontrados en las diversas investigaciones llevadas a cabo.

Con el objetivo de cumplir con los requisitos para optar a la mención del doctorado internacional en esta tesis algunos capítulos aparecen en inglés y otros en castellano.

En la tabla 1. aparecen resumidos los objetivos de investigación, así como los objetivos e hipótesis.

**Tabla 1.** Resumen de las preguntas de investigación, objetivos e hipótesis

<b>Objetivo general</b>			
Profundizar en la relación entre las atribuciones sobre la pobreza y las actitudes hacia la protección social, en función de diferentes grupos en situación de pobreza, y analizar la influencia de otras variables (orientaciones sobre la justicia y definiciones de pobreza) en esta relación.			
Pregunta de investigación	Objetivos específicos	Hipótesis	Capítulos
<p>1. ¿Se percibe de forma diferente a las personas en pobreza a raíz de la crisis económica y a las personas en pobreza persistente, en términos de estereotipos, atribuciones de responsabilidad, merecimiento de protección social ? ¿Es diferente la actitud hacia la protección social para un grupo u otro?</p> <p>2. ¿Esta posible percepción diferenciada influye en las actitudes hacia la protección social?</p>	<p>Analizar las diferencias en la percepción de estos dos grupos en términos de atribuciones sobre la pobreza (individualistas y estructurales), contenido del estereotipo y actitudes hacia la protección social cuando se presenta a un grupo u a otro.</p> <p>Analizar si las atribuciones median la relación entre el grupo percibido y las actitudes hacia la protección social.</p>	<p>H<sub>1</sub> Cuando se perciba a una persona en pobreza persistente (vs. circunstancial) se harán más atribuciones individualistas (H<sub>1a</sub>), menos estructurales (H<sub>1b</sub>) y se mostrará una peor actitud hacia la protección social (H<sub>1c</sub>).</p> <p>H<sub>2</sub> Se atribuirá menos competencia y calidez a la persona en pobreza persistente (vs. circunstancial).</p> <p>H<sub>3</sub> Se considerará menos merecedora de protección social a la persona en pobreza persistente (vs. circunstancial).</p> <p>H<sub>4</sub> Las atribuciones sobre la pobreza mediarán la relación entre el grupo percibido y las actitudes hacia la protección social.</p>	<p>Capítulo 3.</p> <p>Dos estudios experimentales (N<sub>1</sub> = 252; N<sub>2</sub> = 266).</p> <p>Muestra de estudiantes (E1) y de la población general (E2).</p>

3. ¿Se percibe de forma diferente a las mujeres y a los hombres en situación de pobreza?

Similares a los estudios anteriores, aunque cambiando los grupos objeto de evaluación.

4. ¿Qué consecuencias tiene esta diferente percepción en las actitudes hacia la protección social?

Analizar la relación entre las actitudes hacia los cuatro principios de justicia redistributiva (igualdad, necesidad, equidad y *entitlement*), las atribuciones sobre la pobreza y las actitudes hacia la redistribución y hacia la protección social.

5. ¿Cuál es la relación entre las orientaciones sobre la justicia, las atribuciones sobre la pobreza y las actitudes hacia la protección social y redistribución?

H<sub>5</sub> Cuando se perciba a un hombre en pobreza (vs. una mujer) se harán más atribuciones individualistas (H<sub>5a</sub>), menos estructurales (H<sub>5b</sub>) y se mostrará una peor actitud hacia la protección social (H<sub>5c</sub>).

H<sub>6</sub> Se atribuirá más rasgos comunales (H<sub>6a</sub>), menos agencia (H<sub>6b</sub>) e igual competencia (H<sub>6c</sub>) a la mujer en pobreza (vs. el hombre).

H<sub>7</sub> Las atribuciones sobre la pobreza mediarán la relación entre el grupo percibido y las actitudes hacia la protección social.

H<sub>8</sub> Las actitudes hacia la protección social serán positivamente predichas por los principios de igualdad (H<sub>8a</sub>) y necesidad (H<sub>8b</sub>) y negativamente por los de equidad (H<sub>8c</sub>) y *entitlement* (H<sub>8d</sub>).

H<sub>9</sub> Exploratoriamente, esperamos que las atribuciones sobre la pobreza medien la relación entre las actitudes hacia los principios de justicia y hacia la protección social

#### Capítulo 4.

Tres estudios experimentales (N<sub>1</sub> = 484; N<sub>2</sub> = 256; N<sub>3</sub> = 358).

Muestras de la población general (E1 y E3) y de estudiantes (E2).

#### Capítulo 5.

Tres estudios correlacionales (N<sub>1</sub> = 325; N<sub>2</sub> = 49.519; N<sub>3</sub> = 494).

Muestras de la población general (E1 y E2) y de estudiantes (E3).

6. ¿Influye la forma en la que se define la pobreza en las atribuciones causales sobre esta? ¿Influyen las definiciones en las actitudes hacia las políticas para reducir la pobreza?

7. ¿Median las atribuciones la relación entre definiciones de pobreza y actitudes hacia la reducción de la pobreza?

Analizar la influencia de la forma en la que se define la pobreza (amplias vs. estrechas) en las atribuciones sobre ésta y en las actitudes hacia la redistribución y la protección social.

H<sub>10</sub> Mayor acuerdo con las definiciones amplias de la pobreza predecirá negativamente las atribuciones individualistas y positivamente las estructurales (H<sub>10a</sub>). Mayor acuerdo con las estrechas predecirá positivamente las atribuciones individualistas y negativamente las estructurales (H<sub>10b</sub>).

H<sub>11</sub> Mayor acuerdo con las definiciones amplias de la pobreza predecirá positivamente las actitudes hacia la reducción de la pobreza (H<sub>11a</sub>). Mayor acuerdo con las estrechas predecirán negativamente estas actitudes (H<sub>11b</sub>).

H<sub>12</sub> Las atribuciones estructurales mediarán la relación entre definiciones de pobreza y actitudes hacia la reducción de la pobreza.

## Capítulo 6.

Tres estudios correlacionales (N<sub>1</sub> = 26.635; N<sub>2</sub> = 374; N<sub>3</sub> = 325).

Muestras de la población general (E1 y E3) y de estudiantes (E2).

### 2.3. Referencias

- Andress, H. J., & Heien, T. (2001). Four worlds of welfare state attitudes? A comparison of Germany, Norway, and the United States. *European Sociological Review*, 17(4), 337-356. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/17.4.337>
- Appelbaum, L. D. (2001). The influence of perceived deservingness on policy decisions regarding aid to the poor. *Political Psychology*, 22(3), 419-442. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00248>
- Habibov, N., Cheung, A., Auchnnikava, A., & Fan, L. (2017). Explaining support for structural attribution of poverty in post-communist countries: multilevel analysis of repeated cross-sectional data. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 44(3), 173-197.
- Henry, P. J., Reyna, C., & Weiner, B. (2004). Hate welfare but help the poor: How the attributional content of stereotypes explains the paradox of reactions to the destitute in America. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 34(1), 34-58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2004.tb02536.x>
- Lei, R. F., Foster-Hanson, E., & Goh, J. X. (2023). A sociohistorical model of intersectional social category prototypes. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 2(5), 297-308. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-023-00165-0>
- Lepianka, D., Gelissen, J., & Van Oorschot, W. (2010). Popular explanations of poverty in Europe: Effects of contextual and individual characteristics across 28 European countries. *Acta Sociologica*, 53(1), 53-72. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0001699309357842>
- Lewin-Epstein, N., Kaplan, A., & Levanon, A. (2003). Distributive justice and attitudes toward the welfare state. *Social Justice Research*, 16(1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022909726114>
- Reeskens, T., & Van Oorschot, W. (2013). Equity, equality, or need? A study of popular preferences for welfare redistribution principles across 24 European

countries. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20(8), 1174-1195.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2012.752064>

# Empirical chapters

---

**Chapter 4. Not all Poor Are Equal: The Perpetuation of  
Poverty Through Blaming Those Who Have Been Poor all  
Their Lives**



**Not all Poor Are Equal: The Perpetuation of Poverty Through Blaming Those  
Who Have Been Poor all Their Lives**

Joaquín Alcañiz-Colomer<sup>1,2</sup>, Miguel Moya<sup>1,2</sup>, and Inmaculada Valor-Segura<sup>1, 2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Granada, Department of Social Psychology, Granada, Spain.

<sup>2</sup>Research Centre in Mind, Brain, and Behavior (CIMCYC), Granada, Spain

This paper has been published as:

Alcañiz-Colomer, J., Moya, M., & Valor-Segura, I. (2022). Not all poor are equal: The perpetuation of poverty through blaming those who have been poor all their lives. *Current Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03804-6>

## Abstract

The economic crisis of 2008 severely affected the welfare states. As the economic situation of a country worsens, the resources that the public administration can devote to improve the situation of the people also decrease, endangering the advancement of those in a disadvantaged situation. People who have always lived in poverty, besides having their opportunities reduced, also face negative public views that affect the perceived legitimacy of such public aid, which can in turn be a mechanism for perpetuating their situation. Two studies (N = 252 and N = 266) analyse how a person in persistent poverty is perceived compared to a person in poverty due to the crisis—a circumstantial poverty. We also study some feasible mechanisms underlying this different perception, as well as their effects on attitudes toward social protection policies. In Study 1, results indicated that people showed more favourable attitudes toward social protection policies when they perceived someone in poverty due to the crisis, compared to the target who had been in poverty all his/her life. Individualistic attributions for poverty mediated this effect: when people think of someone in persistent poverty, they make more individualistic attributions concerning their situation, which leads to worse attitudes toward social protection policies. Identification with the group moderates this relation. Furthermore, Study 2 showed that participants perceive people who are in poverty because of economic crisis as more deserving of help than people who have always been poor. Some theoretical and practical implications for intergroup relations and public policy are discussed.

**Key Words:** Poverty perception, Public policies attitudes, Attributions for poverty, Deservingness, Economic crisis, Identification

Poverty and inequality not only persist due to inefficient economic systems or lack of resources for people in poverty, but also because they are a product of human relationships, which determine how resources are distributed (Lemieux & Pratto, 2003). People in persistent poverty, who have lived this as a permanent and reproducible phenomenon, are at the bottom of the social hierarchy and have less access to resources and opportunities (Rucker et al., 2018). Here, we explore some mechanisms that may perpetuate this situation; specifically, we focus on attitudes towards social protection policies and how they are affected by attributions for poverty, deservingness of social protection, and stereotypes, comparing the perception of the aforementioned group with people made poor in the wake of economic crisis—which can be considered as a situation of circumstantial poverty. We also consider the role of the participants' group membership in the perception of different types of poverty.

#### **Different Types of Poverty in Times of Economic Crisis and Social Protection Policies**

In Spain, during the last economic crisis the number of unemployed people soared from 1,806,200 million (an unemployment rate of 8.1%) in the third quarter of 2007 to the highest peak of 5,943,400 million (an unemployment rate of 25.65%) in the third quarter of 2013 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2007-2013). The average unemployment rate in the previous years was 10.05 (Instituto Nacional Estadística, 2001-2006). Based on European Community Household panel data, the average number of Spanish households below the poverty line was 18.8 between 1994 and 2000 (Instituto Nacional Estadística, 1994-2001). This indicator, the poverty risk rate, increased from 19.8% in 2007 to 22.2% in 2014 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2007-2014). The deterioration of the labor market implies an increase in the heterogeneity of the group of people with few resources. It contains both people who have lived through poverty as a permanent and reproducible phenomenon, in addition to declassed people who have lost their social status or have been victims of difficulties that they did not encounter before (Paugam, 2007). The crisis also led to austerity policies in most countries, which reduced

investments in social policies, something especially important in Spain (Guillén et al., 2016).

The consequences of the crisis have been devastating for many people, but this reality could be eclipsing a tougher one: the life doomed to poverty of many who have not known another situation. We face a theoretical vacuum that may have important practical implications, because public opinion influences policies to guarantee the welfare of the most disadvantaged people (Brooks & Manza, 2006; Burstein, 1998; Myles, 2006; Stimson et al., 1995). Furthermore, people who have been in poverty all their lives might need different social protection policies by comparison with those who are poor due to economic crisis. For example, the former need social protection measures focused on their income needs and not in their work history, insofar as these households have different characteristics (e.g., Cantó et al., 2012).

Social protection policies are one of the foundations of the welfare state, hence the importance of public opinion on welfare policies in general and poverty assistance in particular. The incorporation of these policies into the sphere of political priorities will depend on the perception by politicians that, in doing so, they will gain the approval of their electorate for their management (Luhmann, 1990). Public opinion legitimizes which populations are seen as deserving of the social policies that protect them, which in turn influences support for the welfare state itself (van Oorschot, 2010). Previous research has shown that attitudes towards social protection are influenced by several variables including self-interest (Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989), ideological preferences (Armingeon & Weisstanner, 2021), the perception of whether people deserve their poverty status (Appelbaum, 2001), and causal attributions about the origin of poverty (Alston & Dean, 1972; Bullock et al., 2003; Piff et al., 2020).

Crucially, the group target of social protection policies also influences the support shown towards it (Appelbaum, 2001; van Oorschot, 2000). Appelbaum (2001) showed that people were more favourable to recommend liberal policies (e.g., full medical coverage with no time limits) to some groups of the needy (e.g., physically handicapped

people) in comparison with others (e.g., able-bodied men), being the former group seen as more deserving and less responsible.

### **Causal Attributions of Poverty and Help Deservingness**

Beliefs about the nature of poverty affect several attitudes related to the difficulties in eradicating it. People can attribute poverty to various causes, mainly: a) individualistic, that is, to the person in poverty; b) structural causes, such as external, social and structural forces; c) fatalistic causes, where the responsibility for poverty lies with factors such as illness or bad luck (Feagin, 1972; Feather, 1974). Other more detailed categorizations are possible, but in this article we are interested in comparing structural attributions with individualistic ones. Individualistic attributions involve factors related to people in poverty themselves, such as their lack of will or lack of capacity, which implies making them responsible for their situation. Structural attributions stress factors beyond the person's own control, such as lack of jobs to access or low wages, thus not placing the responsibility for the person's situation on them.

These attributions may vary depending on the perceived group of people in poverty. For example, Henry et al. (2004) found that individualistic attributions are more likely for welfare recipients relative than for poor people. Previous research has found that preferences for structural explanations of poverty predicts support for progressive welfare programs, while individualistic attributions predict support for restrictive welfare programs (Bullock et al., 2003). As we stated above, the group that will be the object of such assistance influences the preference for progressive compared to restrictive welfare programs; for example, it is more likely that liberal policies will be recommended (e.g., cash benefits and no-cash benefits with no time limits) for widows with children, who are seen as less responsible of their situation, than for able-bodied men, who can be seen as more responsible (Appelbaum, 2001). In addition to the correlational evidence, some studies have explored the causal influence of poverty attributions on other relevant variables related to poverty alleviation. For instance, Farwell and Weiner (2000) presented different vignettes where the responsibility of the person in need for their situation was

manipulated (responsible vs. nonresponsible) and participants were asked how much financial assistance they would recommend for each character. Their results showed that participants recommended more funds when the person in need was not responsible for their situation. A similar reasoning, explaining financial support to people in need in terms of responsibility for their situation, has been found in other studies (Skitka & Tetlock, 1992). According to the mentioned findings, we expect that people in persistent poverty will receive more individualistic attributions about their poverty, in comparison to people who are poor as consequence of the economic crisis.

While attributions for poverty are important in explaining support for social protection, there are other important factors related to the characteristics of benefit recipients that influence greater or lesser support for these policies, namely the extent to which they are considered deserving of social protection. Van Oorschot (2000), based on the literature in support for social protection policies in welfare states, raises five dimensions or criteria of “deservingness”: i) control, or responsibility of individuals for their own situation—the less control or responsibility, the greater the deservingness—; ii) need—the greater need perceived, the greater the deservingness—; iii) identity—the closer to “us”, the greater the deservingness—; iv) compliance—the more obedient, the more deserving—(e.g., if they follow the rules in a docile manner when applying for subsidies); and v) reciprocity, or the belief that they will do something in return for the help. For instance, Cook (1979) observed that people showed higher levels of support when recipients were considered to have a higher level of need and when they were perceived as not responsible for their situation. This perceived deservingness may vary depending on the characteristics of the person that would receive the help (Kootstra, 2016). Thus, we expect that people in persistent poverty will be perceived as less deserving of social protection policies, in comparison to people who are in poverty as consequence of the economic crisis.

## **Group Membership and Attitudes Towards People in Poverty**

Attitudes towards people in poverty and towards resources distribution also depend on some characteristics of the people who maintain such attitudes. One of these important characteristics is their membership' group. Thus, for instance, middle-class people tend to make more individualistic attributions, blaming people in poverty for their situation, while social assistance beneficiaries tend to make more structural attributions (Bullock, 1999).

Another factor related to group membership is the stability with which such belonging is perceived. For instance, middle-class perceivers might identify more with people who have just fallen into poverty as consequence of the crisis -thinking that they could find in the same situation- and this identification led them to make less individualistic attributions about this group and perceive them as more deserving of social protection. Also is possible that the middle-class people seek to obtain a more positive identity by differentiating itself from those in permanent poverty.

### **Stereotypes About People in Poverty**

Lastly, stereotypes play an important role in the perpetuation of inequality and poverty insofar as they help maintain the system by justifying a series of social actions (Tajfel, 1981). Stereotype Content Model (Glick & Fiske, 1999) postulate that there are two basic dimensions in stereotypes towards any group: competence and warmth. The first would be the ability to achieve goals and the second would be interpersonal sympathy. These two dimensions, supposedly, would have a universal character (Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2007), although some aspects of certain stereotypes show some cultural variations (Cuddy et al., 2009). In the case of people with low socioeconomic status, empirical evidence showed that they are seen as not very competent and with low warmth (Fiske et al., 2007), although other times they are seen as not competent but with higher levels of sociability compared to rich people (Durante et al., 2017; Durante et al., 2013). Cuddy et al. (2007) found that warmth stereotypes eliciting active facilitation

(helping, protecting) whereas competence stereotypes were not related with these behavioral tendencies.

Empirical evidence from the Stereotype Content Model also shows differences among subgroups within people in poverty, such as homeless people, recipients of charity, or poor people in general (Fiske et al., 2007). For example, Fiske et al. (2007) found that people had a worse perception of homeless people than that they had of welfare recipients, that is, the former were seen as less competent and warm in comparison with the latter. In this research we also explored whether stereotypes about people in poverty due to economic crisis and people in persistent poverty are different.

### **Overview of the Present Research**

In these studies, we focused on examining the perceptions about people in persistent poverty compared to those of people in poverty as a result of an economic crisis as well as the influence that these perceptions may have on attitudes towards social protection. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of beliefs about the origin of poverty, or attributions for poverty, in attitudes towards social protection. With this emphasis in mind, we consider this variable fundamental in people's perceptions of the aforementioned groups. Specifically, we propose that a differentiated pattern of attributions of these two groups' situations will lead to different general attitudes towards social protection policies. We also will analyse the influence of deservingness perceptions, the participants' identification with both groups, and the various stereotypes people apply to people in poverty shown in their attitudes towards social protection of both groups of people in poverty.

These studies make two contributions to the literature. First, they contribute to the literature by demonstrating that individuals' attitudes towards social protection policies differ depending on which type of poor person is activated in their mind: the poor person due to the crisis or the poor person who was born and raised in poverty. Therefore, when social debates concern "the poor", it is convenient to be clear about what kind of people in poverty we are talking about. If politicians, for instance, want citizens to support



their policies of increasing aid to people in poverty, one tactic might be to make certain types of people in poverty (those whom people may perceive as more deserving of help) salient in the citizens' minds. Second, analysing the importance of attributions for poverty in the perception of various groups of people in poverty, deservingness, and stereotypes as well as the participants' identification with each group will help explain how people perceive poverty as well as the opposition to policies to eradicate poverty. This analysis will also show where we should intervene if we want to change these attitudes.

All datasets, measures, and preregistered forms of both studies are publicly available at [https://osf.io/ne6ug/?view\\_only=af98fb36c3ef4eb98fa19542cde3467b](https://osf.io/ne6ug/?view_only=af98fb36c3ef4eb98fa19542cde3467b).

## Study 1

In Study 1, we aimed to analyse the perception of the aforementioned two groups of people in poverty in terms the perceived causes of their poverty, stereotypes about them, identification with these groups, and attitudes towards social protection policies. We also include some measures of the objective and subjective social class, system justification ideology, social-dominance orientation, and financial threat with an exploratory purpose. We present the results concerning these additional variables in the supplementary materials.

### Method

#### *Participants*

We recruited a sample of 290 Spanish undergraduate students in university libraries at a university in Southern Spain. We excluded 38 participants because Spanish was not their native language or they failed the attention check. As noted in the preregistration, we attempted to recruit 260 participants to observe an effect size of  $d = 0.35$  with a power of .80 and an alpha of .05. We determined this small to medium effect size taking into account our available resources and the necessary time to collect the sample. So this effect size was determined based on our availability of resources to obtain the sample and we relied on a benchmark. This may not be the best possible strategy, however,

because we are not answering any theoretical questions (see Lakens et al., 2018). The final sample included 252 participants (152 women); their mean age was 21.98 (SD = 3.16; see Table 1 for descriptive information about the samples in both studies). In the final sample, 122 participants were assigned to the condition referring to a person in persistent poverty and 130 to the condition referring to a person in poverty due to an economic crisis. We performed a sensitivity analysis using G\*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2007) to find differences between two independent groups (alpha level = .05, 80% power). This analysis, performed on the sample after we applied our exclusion criteria, suggested that we were able to detect an effect size  $d = 0.35$ .

### *Procedure and Materials*

Participants agreed to participate voluntarily in a study on poverty perception. We randomly assigned them to one of two possible conditions. In each condition, they had to read a text about a poor person. In one condition, this person became poor in the wake of an economic crisis, and in the other, the person had been poor all his life. Next, participants had to complete the measures listed below. All measures except for the group identification measure were generic, not specifically worded for each group of people in poverty in each condition.

**Experimental Manipulation.** We asked the participants to read a short vignette about a character named Antonio. The text was similar in both experimental conditions, but the information about the duration and causes of his poverty was different. The text was as follows:

Antonio is from a city in eastern Spain. He's married and has two children. Antonio has difficulty reaching the end of the month since he lost his job because of the crisis (has had difficulties reaching the end of month all his life). As for many other people, his loss of employment because of the crisis made him go from being in a financially comfortable situation to being considered poor (he was born and raised in a poor home). Since then (since he was old enough), he has been

doing some occasional jobs to get some money or borrowing from his acquaintances to meet the needs of his household.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Information about Samples in Study 1 and Study 2.*

Variable	Study 1		Study 2	
	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Men	100	39.7	117	44
Women	152	60.3	149	56
Not reported	-	-		
Income				
< 650	12	4.8	24	9
651-1.300	50	19.8	59	22.2
1.301-1.950	65	25.8	79	29.7
1.951-2.600	62	24.6	57	21.4
2.601-3.251	29	11.5	20	7.5
3.251-3.900	18	7.1	11	4.1
3.901-4.550	4	1.6	8	3
4.551-5.200	6	2.4	1	0.4
>5.200	5	2	5	1.7
Not reported	1	0.4	3	1
Participant education				
Primary School	3	1.2	1	0.4
Secondary education	-	-	7	2.6
Vocational Training	8	3.2	45	16.9
High School/Diploma	1	0.4	15	5.6
University not completed	187	74.2	95	35.7
University completed	29	11.5	65	24.4
Master's degree	14	5.6	29	10.9
Doctorate	10	4	6	2.3
Not reported	-	-	3	1.1

As an attention check, we required the participants to answer a question about the nature of the poverty concerning the person in the story, which they had read immediately beforehand (He has always been poor/He is poor in the wake of an economic crisis). This was our main independent variable in both studies.

**Stereotypes About the Poor.** We measured stereotypes for the two targets along two core dimensions, competence ( $\alpha = .83$ ) and warmth ( $\alpha = .78$ ), based on the Stereotype-Content Model (Cuddy et al., 2007; Glick & Fiske, 1998). The participants evaluated the extent to which the target had some competence (five items; e.g., “competent,” “competitive”) and warmth (six items; e.g., “tolerant,” “trustworthy”) on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *totally disagree* to 5 = *totally agree*) to indicate their degree of agreement with every item. The scale was preceded by an introduction that clarified that we sought to know the opinion of society, not of the concrete respondent, to avoid desirability bias.

**Attributions for Poverty.** We measured this construct using an 18-item scale. The respondents answered on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *totally disagree* to 5 = *totally agree*). We translated the items into Spanish from Furnham (1982a) and Weiner et al. (2011), and added some items concerning the Spanish context (e.g., “People do not want to move to work in other locations”). The individualistic attributions subscale contained 10 items ( $\alpha = .81$ ; e.g., “Lack of effort or laziness”), and the structural attributions subscale contained eight items ( $\alpha = .67$ ; e.g., “Lack of opportunity”).

**Group Identification.** We measured participants’ identification with our two groups of people in poverty by adapting to this context, changing the targets, the collective identity scale from Leach et al. (2008). The possible responses ranged from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). Specifically, we used items from the solidarity subscale and the individual self-stereotyping items that best fit our purpose. Our scale contained seven items (e.g., “I feel committed with poor people”) and was preceded by the next text: “Think of someone who has been poor all his/her life (is poor due to the economic crisis) and answer the following questions.” Subjects responded to these items twice, once referring to the group perceived in their experimental condition and once referring to the other group. We subtracted from the score on the identification scale regarding poor people in the wake of the crisis ( $\alpha = .67$ ) the score on the identification scale regarding people in chronic poverty ( $\alpha = .71$ ) to obtain a global identification index. Higher positive

scores indicate a stronger identification with the poor in the wake of the crisis (versus the poor in chronic poverty).

**Attitudes Towards Social Protection Policies** ( $\alpha = .76$ ). We measured this variable, our main dependent variable, on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *totally disagree* to 5 = *totally agree*), with which subjects indicated their degree of agreement with 20 statements about social protection policies (e.g., “Many people on social benefits try to find work in order to be able to live on their own”). We used a scale inspired in Furnham (1985) scale—in Spanish in this study—referred to social policies in this study; in addition, we included some items about the Spanish context (e.g., “In general, little money is spent on social policies in this country”). Higher scores indicate a better general attitude towards social protection.

**Political Ideology.** We measured political ideology using an item whose possible responses ranged from 1 to 10: “In politics, sometimes people talk about ‘left’ and ‘right.’ Using a scale where 1 means ‘extreme left’ and 10 ‘extreme right,’ where would you position yourself on this scale?” As we indicated in the Method section, we also included other scales. For space reasons, we provide the details in supplementary materials.

### **Preregistered Hypotheses**

We expected that compared to people in chronic poverty, those who were in poverty due to the economic crisis would receive less individualistic and more structural attributions (Hypothesis 1a) and would be perceived as more competent and warmer (Hypothesis 1b); we also predicted that attitudes towards social protection policies would be better when participants perceive someone in poverty due to the economic crisis relative to those in chronic poverty (Hypothesis 1c). For this group of hypotheses, our main independent variable was the experimental condition and attributions for poverty, competence, and warmth perceptions, and attitudes towards social protection policies were our dependent variables.

Identification with the group would moderate the relationship between the perceived group—person in chronic poverty versus person in poverty due to economic crisis—and the assignment of competence and warmth scores (Hypothesis 2) and attitudes towards social protection policies (Hypothesis 3). We expected that the tendency to assign greater competence and sociability to people in poverty in the wake of a crisis (versus people in persistent poverty) and to show a better attitude towards social protection policies when perceiving the former would be more intense among people who identify with those who are in poverty because of the economic crisis. Therefore, in this set of hypotheses, our independent variable was the experimental condition, the moderator variable was identification with the group, and the dependent variables were warmth and competence perceptions and attitudes towards social protection policies.

Finally, we expected that attributions for poverty would mediate the relationship between the perceived group (poverty due to economic crisis vs. persistent poverty) and support for social protection policies (Hypothesis 4), in the sense that perceiving people falling into poverty due to economic crisis would lead to fewer individualistic attributions for their poverty and more support for social protection policies.

## **Results**

### *Differences Among Causal Attributions for Poverty, Attitudes Towards Social Protection Policies, and Stereotypes About Poor People*

To test our first hypotheses, H1a, H1b, and H1c, we conducted a *t* test for differences between two independent means (see Table 3 for means and standard deviations of main variables). We found partial support for Hypothesis 1a because the hypothesised results were confirmed only for individualistic attributions, not for structural ones: Participants who had read about someone who has been poor all his life made more individualistic attributions than those who had read about someone who is poor due to the economic crisis,  $t(250) = -2.16, p = .03, \text{BCa } 95\% \text{ CI } [0.02, 0.38], d = 0.27$ . This effect size was smaller than the effect size that sensitivity analyses suggested we could detect, so we conducted a post hoc analysis using G\*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) for

differences between the two independent groups. We computed the observed effect size and sample size for each condition, and post hoc analysis revealed that the power achieved for this analysis was 0.63. Differences in structural attributions for poverty were not statistically significant,  $t(250) = -0.83, p = .41$ , BCa 95% CI [-0.18, 0.07],  $d = -0.10$ . Our findings partially supported Hypothesis 1b because the hypothesised results were confirmed only for the competence dimension. As we expected, the participants perceived the person in persistent poverty as less competent than the person in poverty due to an economic crisis,  $t(250) = 4.17, p < .001$ , BCa 95% CI [-0.56, -0.20],  $d = -0.53$ . We found no statistically significant differences in the warmth subscale scores,  $t(250) = -1.79, p = .08$ , BCa 95% CI [-0.33, 0.02],  $d = -0.22$ . Our findings supported Hypothesis 1c: Attitudes towards social protection policies were less favorable after reading a vignette about a person who has been in poverty all his life than after reading a vignette about person in poverty as a result of the economic crisis,  $t(250) = 3.19, p = .002$ , BCa 95% CI [-0.37, -0.09],  $d = -0.40$ . Table 2 presents correlations between variables in this study.

**Table 2**

*Correlations Between Variables in Study 1*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Competence	-						
2. Warmth	.65**	-					
3. Individualistic attributions	-.03	-.03	-				
4. Structural attributions	.11	.03	-.07	-			
5. Social protection policies attitudes	.00	-.07	-.57**	.05	-		
6. Index identification	-.08	.01	.07	-.16	-.12	-	
7. Political ideology	.01	-.01	.41**	-.04	-.59**	.03	-

NOTE: \*\*  $P < 0.01$  (2-TAILED) \*  $P < 0.05$  LEVEL (2-TAILED)

*Group Identification as Moderator in the Relationship Among Perceived Group, Stereotypes, and Attitudes Towards Social Protection Policies*

We tested Hypotheses 2 and 3 using the PROCESS macro for SPSS, Model 1, with 10,000 bootstrapped samples. To test Hypothesis 2, we included the experimental condition as the independent variable and the global identification index as the moderator variable. We built two models. In one model, the criteria variable was competence scores and in the other one, warmth scores. We used the same analytical strategy to test our hypotheses in this case, including attitudes towards social protection policies as a dependent variable.

**Table 3**

*Means and Standard Deviations for Main Measures in Study 1 and Study 2.*

	Study 1		Study 2	
	Condition		Condition	
	Persistent poverty	Poverty due to economic crisis	Persistent poverty	Poverty due to economic crisis
Competence	2.17 <sup>a</sup> (0.69)	2.55 <sup>b</sup> (0.76)		
Warmth	2.95 <sup>a</sup> (0.72)	3.11 <sup>a</sup> (0.66)		
Individualistic attributions	2.58 <sup>a</sup> (0.83)	2.38 <sup>b</sup> (0.61)	2.53 <sup>a</sup> (0.78)	2.05 <sup>b</sup> (0.65)
Structural attributions	3.02 <sup>a</sup> (0.58)	3.07 <sup>a</sup> (0.44)	3.01 <sup>a</sup> (0.65)	3.21 <sup>b</sup> (0.47)
Identification index	0.35 <sup>a</sup> (0.90)	0.45 <sup>a</sup> (0.78)	0.29 <sup>a</sup> (1.16)	0.72 <sup>b</sup> (0.99)
Attitudes toward social protection policies	3.24 <sup>a</sup> (0.59)	3.47 <sup>b</sup> (0.56)	3.16 <sup>a</sup> (0.64)	3.54 <sup>b</sup> (0.53)
Deservingness of social protection			3.64 <sup>a</sup> (0.70)	4.06 <sup>b</sup> (0.54)
Political Ideology	3.80 <sup>a</sup> (1.97)	3.72 <sup>a</sup> (1.78)	4.10 <sup>a</sup> (1.97)	4.04 <sup>a</sup> (1.95)

Note: Standard deviations are presented within parentheses. Within the same study, rows with a different superscript differ at  $p < .05$



We did not find support for Hypothesis 2, that group identification will moderate the relation between perceived group and assignment of competence and warmth. For warmth, the interaction effect of poverty condition  $\times$  group identity was  $b = 0.20$ ,  $t(248) = 1.96$ ,  $p = .051$ , 95% CI = [-0.00, 0.41], and for competence, this interaction effect was  $b = 0.20$ ,  $t(248) = 1.87$ ,  $p = .062$ , 95% CI = [-0.01, 0.42]. As we hypothesized in Hypothesis 3, group identification moderated the relationship between perceived group and attitudes towards social protection policies,  $b = 0.25$ ,  $t(248) = 2.95$ ,  $p = .003$ , 95% CI = [0.84, 0.42]. Perceiving someone in poverty due to economic crisis (compared to someone in persistent poverty) increased positive attitudes towards social protection policies among those who identified more with the first group (understood as a standard deviation above the mean score on the identification index),  $b = 0.44$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = [0.24, 0.65]; among those who identified less with people the economic crisis made poor, the effect was nonsignificant (understood as a standard deviation below the mean score on the identification index),  $b = 0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $p = .91$ , 95% CI = [-0.16, 0.22].

*The Mediating Role of Attributions for Poverty in the Relationship Among Perceived Group, Attitudes Towards Social Protection Policies, and Stereotypes*

We tested Hypothesis 4 by conducting a linear regression analysis using the PROCESS macro for SPSS, testing mediation Model 4. All confidence intervals for indirect effects are a BCa CI based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples. We found partial support for Hypothesis 4 because the hypothesised results were confirmed only for individualistic attributions, not for structural ones. Therefore, we found a significant indirect effect of the perceived group on the attitudes towards social protection policies, through individualistic attributions for poverty,  $b = 0.09$ , BCa 95% CI [0.01, 0.17]. In this model, the direct effect was  $b = 0.14$ ,  $p = .01$  and the total effect  $b = 0.23$ ,  $p = .002$ ; the perceived condition's effect on individualistic attributions was  $b = -0.20$ ,  $p = .03$ , and the effect of the latter on attitudes towards social protection policies was  $b = -0.44$ ,  $p < .001$ . Following Wen and Fan's (2015) recommendations regarding monotonic indices, we

reported the proportion of indirect effect relative to the total effect ( $P_M$ ) together with the total effect. We calculated this measure using the lavaan (Rosseel, 2012) R package (R Core Team, 2017), with 10,000 bootstrap replications, BCa method. In this case,  $P_M$  was 0.38, BCa 95% CI [0.04, 0.76]. The indirect effect remained significant, even when we controlled for political ideology. Structural attributions did not play a significant mediator role in the relationship between the type of poor person perceived and attitudes towards social protection policies,  $b = 0.00$ , BCa 95% CI [-0.01, 0.02]. We controlled for participants' political ideology, considering that previous research shows that conservatism is an important factor affecting poverty attributions (e.g., Zucker & Weiner, 1993), and it remained statistically significant. In addition, we built a model to test Hypotheses 3 and 4 together (see Figure S1 in Supplementary Information). This model yielded results quite similar to those of testing the hypotheses separately; however, the interaction between the experimental condition and group identification was no longer significant ( $b = 0.16$ ,  $p = .054$ ) although the analysis of the simple lines showed the same pattern we previously found. Individualistic attributions remained a significant mediator between experimental condition and attitudes towards social protection policies.

## Discussion

Our results showed that attitudes towards social protection policies differ depending on the nature of the perceived target's poverty: people who have been in poverty all their lives versus people in poverty in the wake of economic crisis. Individualistic poverty attributions mediated the relationship between perceived group and attitudes towards social protection policies. When participants perceived someone who has been poor all his life, they made more individualistic attributions, which led to a worse attitude towards social protection policies (in comparison to those who perceived someone who is poor due to an economic crisis). Considering the studies that causally link individualistic attributions with lower support for the provision of funds to people in poverty (e.g., Farwell & Weiner, 2000), our proposed causal model seems the most plausible. Our results are also consistent with those of recent studies, which have shown

a causal relationship between individualistic poverty attributions and attitudes towards redistribution (Bai et al., 2022).

The person in persistent poverty was seen as less competent although the perception of the targets in terms of competence and warmth did not significantly affect the attitudes towards social protection policies targeted to both groups. Identification with the group was a significant moderating variable: Participants who identify more with people who became poor in the wake of an economic crisis show a better attitude towards social protection policies when presented with this group. However, when we tested all the effects in a single model, this effect was no longer significant, so this variable's ability to explain attitudes towards social protection must be nuanced.

A possible limitation of the present study is the sample—college students in this case. Therefore, in Study 2, we sought to examine these findings' robustness in a general-population sample. As we previously theorized, we included other variables, such as the perceived deservingness of social protection, that may help shed light on this relationship between the perceived person and attitudes towards social protection policies.

## Study 2

To replicate the results from Study 1 in a general population sample and to explore perceived deservingness's effect on social protection, we used the same experimental manipulation and most of the measures presented in Study 1. We included measures apart from those reported here (objective and subjective social class and social-dominance orientation); we present results concerning these measures in the supplementary materials. As we did in Study 1, and following the same rationale, we controlled for political ideology. In this study, we attempted to recruit 300 participants to increase the statistical power to test our hypothesis about mean differences, taking into account the number of participants excluded from the first study. However, we were not able to collect more than 280 observations. We also performed a sensitivity analysis using G\*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) in this study for differences between the two independent

groups ( $\alpha = .05$ , 80% power). Sensitivity analysis of the sample after exclusions suggested that we were able to detect an effect size  $d = 0.34$ .

## Method

### *Participants*

We recruited a sample of 280 participants from the Spanish general population at a public-transport station. Participants agreed to participate voluntarily, without any compensation, in a study on poverty perception, and then we randomly assigned them to one of two possible conditions. As in the previous study, in each condition, they had to read a text about a poor person. In one condition, this person became poor in the wake of an economic crisis, and in the other condition, this person had been poor all his life. Next, participants had to complete other measures, listed below. After we applied our exclusion criteria, 266 participants (149 women) remained; their mean age was 30.55 ( $SD = 11.85$ ; see Table 1 for descriptive information about the sample). In the final sample, 130 participants completed the questionnaire about a person in persistent poverty and 136 answered the questionnaire about a person in poverty due to an economic crisis.

### *Procedure and Materials*

As in Study 1, participants agreed to participate voluntarily in a study on poverty perception without obtaining any economic or other type of reward. After they agreed to participate, we assigned them to one of two possible experimental conditions and asked them to respond to the measures presented here.

**Experimental Manipulation.** The text they had to read was the same as that described in Study 1 except for the information about the target's marriage and children, which we eliminated to control for distortion's possible effect on the perceived deservingness of social protection, as we know that this information can affect it (e.g., Will, 1993).

**Dependent Variables and Covariates.** We used the same measures as in Study 1: individualistic poverty attributions ( $\alpha = .85$ ) and structural attributions ( $\alpha = .75$ ), a group

identification index (subtracting from the score on the identification scale with poor people in the wake of the crisis ( $\alpha = .78$ ) the score on the identification scale with people in chronic poverty ( $\alpha = .80$ ), attitudes towards social protection policies ( $\alpha = .89$ ), and political ideology (see Table 3 for means and standard deviations of main variables in this study).

**Perception of Social Protection Deservingness** ( $\alpha = .87$ ). We measured this variable using a 10-item scale, in which the participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *totally disagree* to 5 = *totally agree*), with which subjects indicated their degree of agreement with statements about poor people's deservingness of social protection. The scale is based on van Oorschot's (2000) work. Higher scores indicate greater perceived deservingness of social protection policies. Van Oorschot (2000) initially postulated five dimensions (control, need, identity, attitude, and reciprocity). We decided to include only the dimensions of need (three items; e.g., "people in that situation usually have a great need to be helped"), attitude (four items; e.g., "people in that situation appreciate being supported"), and reciprocity (three items; e.g., "the state can help people in that situation, and these people will somehow return to the state what they have received"). We excluded group identity and control over their situation because we believe they are redundant in our scales of identification and individualistic attributions for poverty. A factor analysis showed the existence of only one factor with eigenvalues greater than 1 (4.10), which explained 41% of the variance. Therefore, we calculated the total score of all the items included in the three dimensions. We also included other scales, but they are not relevant for the purpose of this study. For space reasons, we present the details in the Supplemental Materials.

### **Preregistered Hypotheses**

We expected that compared to people in chronic poverty, those who are in poverty due to an economic crisis would receive less individualistic and more structural attributions (Hypothesis 1a) and would be perceived as more deserving (Hypothesis 1b). Although the differences in structural attributions were not significant in Study 1, we

preregistered this hypothesis again because we thought that perhaps the absence of effects occurred due to the nature of the sample (college students in Study 1). Participants who perceive someone in poverty due to an economic crisis would also have better attitudes towards social protection policies (Hypothesis 1c). Our independent variable for these hypotheses was the experimental condition. Attributions for poverty, deservingness of social protection, and attitudes towards social protection were the dependent variables.

Identification with the group would moderate the relationship between the perceived group—person in chronic poverty versus person in poverty due to economic crisis—as well as perceived deservingness of social protection (Hypothesis 2) and attitudes towards social protection policies (Hypothesis 3). We expected that the tendency to assign greater deservingness to people in poverty in the wake of the crisis (versus people in persistent poverty) and to show a better attitude towards social protection policies when perceiving the former would be more intense in people who identify with those who are in poverty because of an economic crisis. Again, in these hypotheses, our independent variable was the experimental condition, the moderating variable was identification with the group, and the dependent variables were perceived deservingness of social protection and attitudes towards social protection policies.

Finally, attributions for poverty would mediate the relationship among the perceived group (poverty due to economic crisis versus chronic poverty), perceived deservingness of social protection (Hypothesis 4), and attitudes towards social protection policies (Hypothesis 5).

## **Results**

### *Differences Among Causal Attributions for Poverty, Attitudes Towards Social Protection Policies and Deservingness of Social Protection*

We conducted a *t* test to identify differences between the two independent means (two groups) to test our first hypotheses: H1a, H1b, and H1c. Table 3 presents the mean scores. Our findings fully supported Hypothesis 1a. Replicating Study 1's findings,

participants who perceived someone who has been poor all his life made more individualistic attributions than those who perceived someone made poor due to an economic crisis,  $t(264) = 5.43, p < .001$ , BCa 95% CI [0.31, 0.65],  $d = 0.67$  and fewer structural attributions,  $t(264) = -2.99, p = .003$ , BCa 95% CI [-0.34, -0.06],  $d = -0.36$ . We also found support for Hypothesis 1b: Participants who perceived a person in persistent poverty considered them less deserving of receiving support than those who were assigned to the other condition,  $t(264) = 5.39, p < .001$ , BCa 95% CI [0.26, 0.53],  $d = 0.56$ . Our findings also confirmed Hypothesis 1c: Participants who perceived someone in persistent poverty showed a worse attitude towards social protection policies than participants who perceived someone in poverty due to economic crisis,  $t(264) = -5.23, p < .001$ , BCa 95% CI [-0.52, -0.24],  $d = -0.64$ . Table 4 presents the correlations between variables.

**Table 4**

*Correlations Between Variables in Study 2.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Individualistic attributions	-					
2. Structural attributions	-.21**	-				
3. Deservingness of social protection	-.54**	.41**	-			
4. Social protection policies attitudes	-.55**	.27**	.60**	-		
5. Index identification	.09	-.01	.07	.16**	-	
6. Political ideology	.35**	-.18**	-.27**	-.45**	-.02	-

NOTE: \*\* P < 0.01 (2-TAILED) \* P < 0.05 LEVEL (2-TAILED)

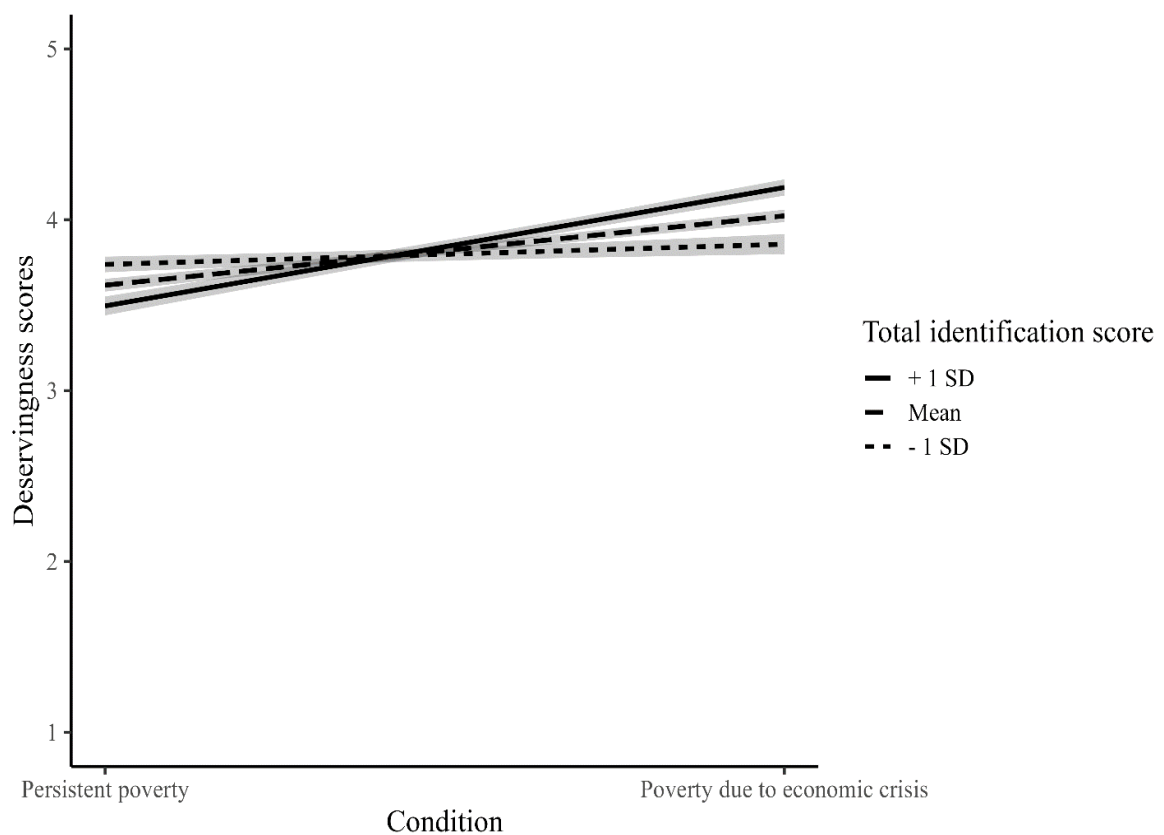
*Group Identification as Moderator in the Relationship Among Perceived Group, Deservingness of Social Protection, and Attitudes Towards Social Protection Policies*

We tested hypotheses H2 and H3 by conducting a linear regression analysis using the PROCESS macro for SPSS, testing moderation Model 1. Our results supported Hypothesis 3: Group identification moderated the relationship between perceived group and perceived deservingness of social protection,  $b = 0.26, t(262) = 3.71, p < .001$ , 95% CI

= [0.12, 0.40]. Therefore, perceiving someone who is poor due to economic crisis (compared to someone in persistent poverty) increased deservingness perception among those who identified more with this group,  $b = 0.68$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = [0.48, 0.89], but not among those who identified less with this group,  $b = 0.11$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $p = .28$ , 95% CI = [-0.51, 0.38] (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Identification with People in Poverty due to Economic Crisis as a Moderator Between Perceived Group and Deservingness Scores*



*Note:* One standard deviation above the mean means more identification with those who are in poverty because economic crisis; one standard deviation below the mean means more identification with those in persistent poverty.

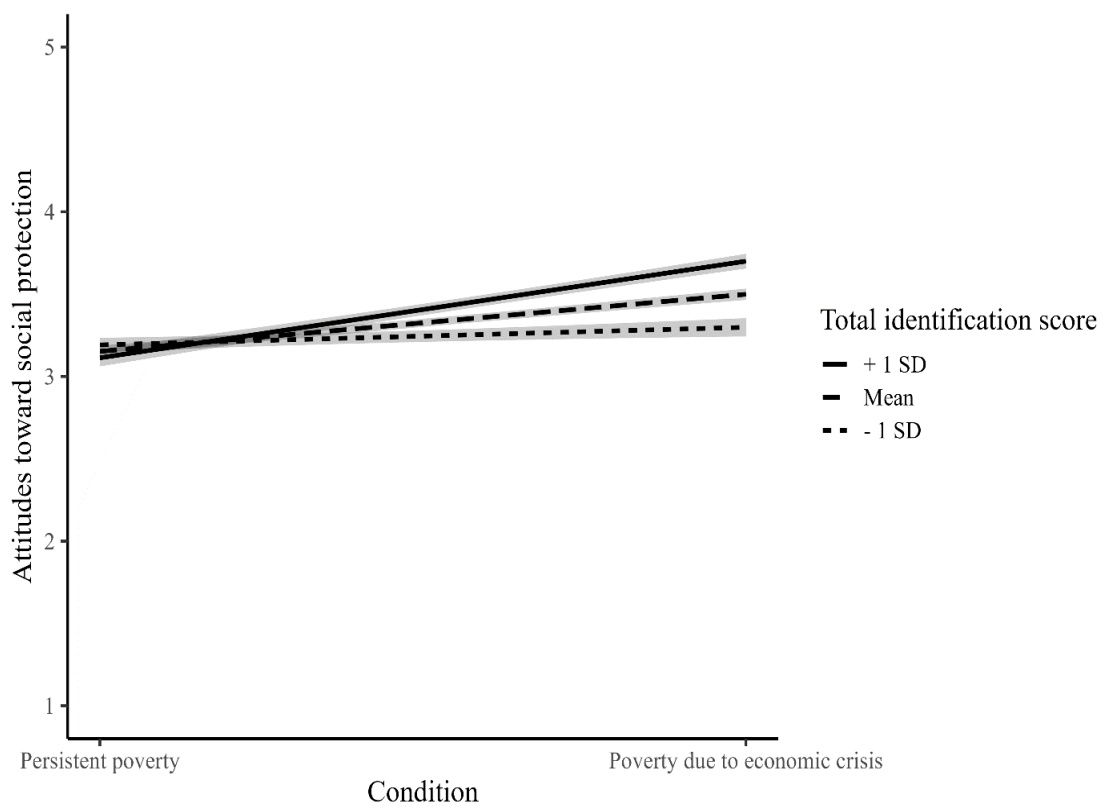
As in Study 1, Hypothesis 3 was supported: Group identification moderated the relationship between perceived group and attitudes towards social protection policies,  $b = 0.22$ ,  $t(262) = 3.29$ ,  $p = .001$ , 95% CI = [0.09, 0.36]. As in Study 1, perceiving someone who is poor due to an economic crisis (compared to someone in persistent poverty)



increased positive attitudes towards social protection policies among those who identified more with the first group,  $b = 0.58$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = [0.35, 0.78], but not among those who identified less with this group,  $b = 0.11$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $p = .30$ , 95% CI = [-0.02, 0.35] (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Identification With People in Poverty due to Economic Crisis as a Moderator Between Perceived Group and Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies*



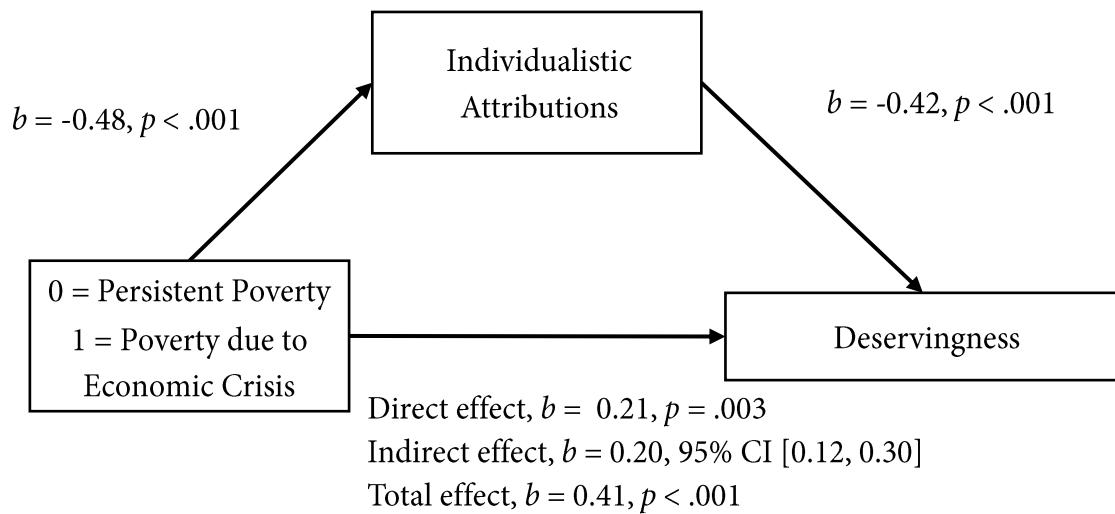
*Note:* One standard deviation above the mean means more identification with those who are in poverty because economic crisis; one standard deviation below the mean means more identification with those in persistent poverty.

*The Mediating Role of Attributions for Poverty in the Relationship Among Perceived Group, Deservingness of Social Protection, and Attitudes Towards Social Protection Policies*

We tested Hypotheses 4 and 5 by conducting a linear regression analysis using the PROCESS macro for SPSS, testing mediation Model 4. All confidence intervals for indirect effects were BCa CI based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples. The results supported Hypothesis 4: Structural and individualistic attributions mediate the relationship between perceived group and perceived deservingness of social protection (see Figures 3 and 4). Regarding effect-size measures,  $P_M$  for structural attributions was 0.21, BCa 95% CI [0.06, 0.40], and  $P_M$  for individualistic attributions was 0.49, BCa 95% CI [0.31, 0.74].

**Figure 3**

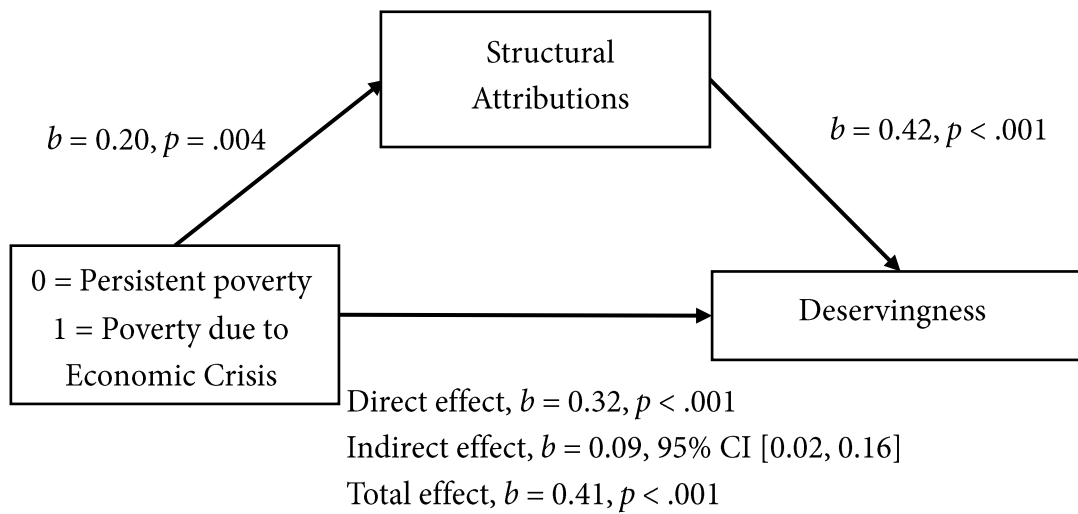
*Individualistic Attributions as a Mediator Between Perceived Group and Deservingness Perception*



Note: All confidence intervals for indirect effects are a BCa bootstrapped CI based in 1000 samples.

**Figure 4**

*Structural Attributions as a Mediator Between Perceived Group and Deservingness Perception*



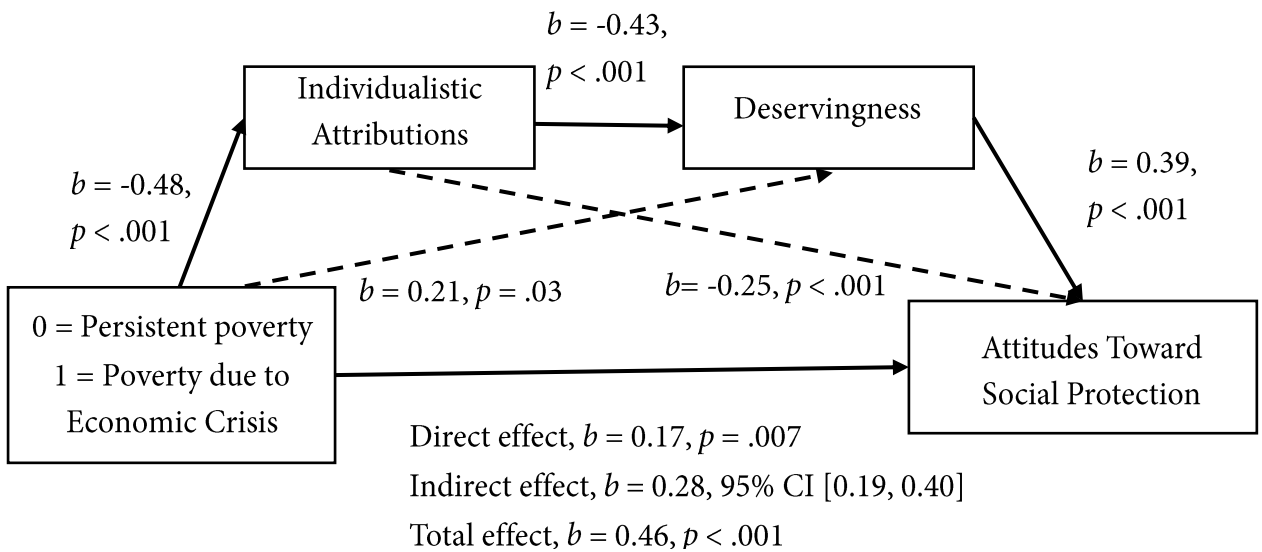
Note: All confidence intervals for indirect effects are a BCa bootstrapped CI based in 1000 samples.

The results fully support Hypothesis 5. We found a significant indirect effect of the perceived group on the attitudes towards social protection policies through individualistic attributions for poverty,  $b = 0.20$ , BCa 95% CI [0.12, 0.28];  $P_M = 0.53$ , BCa 95% CI [0.33, 0.79]. In this model, the direct effect was  $b = 0.18, p = .006$  and the total effect  $b = 0.38, p < .001$ ; the perceived condition's effect on individualistic attributions was  $b = -0.48, p < .001$ , and individualistic attributions' effect on attitudes towards social protection policies was  $b = -0.41, p < .001$ . Structural attributions also played a statistically significant mediator role in this relationship,  $b = 0.05$ , BCa 95% CI [0.01, 0.10];  $P_M = 0.13$ , BCa 95% CI [0.04, .29]. In this model, the direct effect was  $b = 0.33, p < .001$  and the total effect  $b = 0.38, p < .001$ ; the perceived condition's effect on structural attributions was  $b = 0.20, p = .004$ , and structural attributions' effect on attitudes towards social protection policies was  $b = 0.24, p < .001$ . All the indirect effects described above remained significant when we controlled for political orientation.

In an exploratory regard, we tested a serial multiple-mediation model using the PROCESS macro for SPSS, Model 6, including attributions for poverty as the first mediating variable and deservingness of social protection as the second mediator. The independent variable was experimental condition, and the dependent variable was attitude towards social protection policies. This mediation model was also significant (see Figure 5). We did not conduct the same analysis with structural attributions because considering the combined results of both studies, it seems that their role is not as relevant in this relationship. Finally, as in Study 1, using the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012), we built a model including poverty attributions as parallel mediators, deservingness as a second serial mediator, condition as an independent variable, and attitudes towards social protection as a criterion in addition to group identification's moderating effect (see Figure S2 in Supplementary Materials). Individualistic and structural attributions remained significant mediators through social protection deservingness although, again, identification with the group ceased to play a significant moderating role.

**Figure 5**

*Model With Individualistic Attributions and Deservingness Perception as Mediators Between Perceived Group and Attitudes Towards Social Protection Policies*



Note: All confidence intervals for indirect effects are a BCa bootstrapped CI based in 1000 samples.  
Condition 0 = persistent poverty; condition 1= poverty due to economic crisis

## Discussion

Our findings from Study 1 were replicated in Study 2, and the hypotheses that were not confirmed in Study 1 are now confirmed. First, we found a different attitude towards social protection policies depending on the nature of the perceived target's poverty. Again, the participants considered the person in persistent poverty more responsible for his situation and less deserving of help, and participants who perceived him showed a worse attitude towards social protection policies. Further, regarding people in poverty due to an economic crisis, this study supported our hypothesis (which was not supported in Study 1) that structural attributions for this poverty will lead to a better attitude towards social protection policies. The moderating effect of identification with people who are in poverty because of an economic crisis was replicated, but, again, it ceased to play a significant role as a moderator when we included all mediating variables in the same model. Interestingly, we found support for our double-mediation model: The type of person in poverty influences the attributions for his poverty, which influence the target's deservingness of social protection, which influences the attitudes towards social protection.

### Meta-Analysis of Studies 1 and 2

Following the recommendations Goh et al. (2016) made regarding meta-analysis, we conducted a meta-analysis with fixed effects, including measures present in both studies, analysing perceived condition's overall effect on individualistic attributions, structural attributions, and attitudes towards social-protection policies. We did not preregister this analysis; therefore, it should be understood as exploratory. First, we transformed Cohen's  $d$  into Pearson's correlation coefficients and calculated the weighted means of correlations, previously transforming correlations coefficients into Fisher's  $z$  for normalization. Then, we combined  $r_z$  values meta-analytically using the formula Goh et al. (2016) provided. We transformed Fisher's  $z$  values into Pearson's correlation coefficients and the latter into Cohen's  $d$  values to facilitate interpretation of the results. Moreover, we aggregated  $p$  values using Fisher's method using the "aggregation" R

Package (R Core Team, 2017). Considering both studies described in this paper, people in persistent poverty, compared to those in poverty due to an economic crisis, received more individualistic attributions,  $d = 0.48$ ,  $p < .001$ , and less structural attributions,  $d = 0.24$ ,  $p = .01$ . Participants also showed better attitudes towards social protection policies when they perceived the latter,  $d = 0.54$ ,  $p < .001$ .

To test mediation effects across both studies, we performed an integrative data analysis (Curran & Hussong, 2009). Mediation analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of the group perceived on the attitudes towards social protection policies through individualistic attributions for poverty,  $b = 0.14$ , BCa 95% CI [0.09, 0.20];  $P_M = 0.47$ , BCa 95% CI [0.31, 0.66]. In this model, the direct effect was  $b = 0.16$ ,  $p < .001$  and the total effect  $b = 0.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ; perceived condition's effect on individualistic attributions was  $b = -0.34$ ,  $p < .001$ , and individualistic attributions' effect on attitudes towards social protection policies was  $b = -0.42$ ,  $p < .001$ . Considering both studies, structural attributions also significantly mediated the relationship between perceived group and attitudes towards social protection policies,  $b = 0.02$ , BCa 95% CI [0.00, 0.04];  $P_M = 0.07$ , BCa 95% CI [0.01, 0.16]. In this model, the direct effect was  $b = 0.29$ ,  $p < .001$  and the total effect  $b = 0.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ; the perceived condition's effect on structural attributions was  $b = 0.13$ ,  $p = .007$ , and structural attributions' effect on attitudes towards social protection policies was  $b = 0.16$ ,  $p = .001$ . These indirect effects remained significant even after we controlled for political orientation.

These analyses provide evidence of the robustness of the effect of individualistic poverty attributions on the relationship between perceived group of people in poverty and attitudes towards social protection policies. However, the case is more complex regarding structural attributions, as we found significant effects. Indirect effect and effect size showed small values, raising concerns about their importance in the relationship mentioned above.

## General Discussion

These two studies show that when someone who has always been in poverty is perceived, people's general attitudes towards social protection policies are worse than when they perceive someone who is in more circumstantial poverty, such as that caused by an economic crisis. Our study gives us some clues about how this could happen. People perceive those in persistent poverty as more responsible for their situation and less deserving of help, which leads to a worse attitude towards social protection policies. People in persistent poverty are also perceived as less competent than those who are poor due to an economic crisis. These results are stronger in the second study, which we conducted with a sample drawn from the general population. Although in our other study we had already studied the differences in perception between different subgroups of people with few resources (e.g., Fiske et al., 2007) and how different poverty types affect attitudes towards public policies (Henry et al., 2004), as far as we know, this is the first study comparing these two specific subgroups.

Regarding attributions, our results show that individualistic attributions for poverty are important in the perception of both types of people in poverty and in the attitudes towards social protection policies for these groups, considering that people in persistent poverty are considered more responsible for their situation, which leads to a worse attitude towards social protection policies. This result makes sense given previous research on how different groups of people with few resources evoke different levels of support for social protection policies (Alston & Dean, 1972; Bullock et al., 2003). Regarding structural attributions, we found a significant effect of these attributions on attitudes towards social protection policies in Study 2 but not in Study 1. The analysis of the results of both studies combined suggests that the effect is significant but small and not of great relevance in explaining how poverty type influences attitudes towards social protection policies.

Determining attributions' influence on social policies, however, can be a somewhat complex task. Although we distinguished individualistic from structural

attributions, this division may pose some problems. For example, in our research, we considered attributions to ability an individualistic cause, but we do not know if people perceive this cause as something totally dependent on the person or also as a consequence of society (e.g., they may not have capacity because they have not received a “good” education, or they may not want to move to other places to work because they lack the resources to do so; for a critique, see Lepianka et al., 2009). We can say the same about the lack of savings. It is basically an individualistic cause but one that can also be perceived as structural (a consequence of the education received; for a critique, see Lepianka et al., 2009). Therefore, in the second study, we introduced a complementary measure of deservingness perceptions of social protection to determine whether those who participated in our study believe that the types of people in poverty considered deserve to receive support from institutions. This also allowed us to verify the direct relationship between the attributions, this deservingness and the general support for social protection policies. The results show that people who have always been poor are perceived as less deserving of help than those who are poor due to an economic crisis. Specifically, the participants considered those in the first group less needy and had a worse attitude towards those receiving help and less able to offer reciprocity. In addition, our results show that individualistic attributions are closely related to the deservingness of help that the person belonging to each group of people in poverty is believed to have. Specifically, the mediation carried out in Study 2 shows that perceiving people in persistent poverty leads to more individualistic attributions, and this perception leads to less deservingness of social protection and the latter to have worse attitudes towards social protection policies. Therefore, our measures of attribution could be questioned. However, the participants clearly believed those causes considered individualistic in our research imply lower deservingness of receiving help and attributed these causes more frequently to the persistently poor. This finding also fits with the previous literature on how deservingness judgements affect attitudes towards social protection policies (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006; Will, 1993).



We must also bear in mind that our results show that the participants' identification with each of the groups of poor can influence the results. Perceiving someone who is poor due to an economic crisis (in comparison to someone in persistent poverty) increased deservingness perception of social protection among those who identified more with this group but not among those who identified less with this group.

Somewhat surprisingly, stereotypes about people in poverty, at least measured according to the stereotype-content model (Glick & Fiske, 1999), did not have a significant effect on the relationship between perceived group and attitudes towards social protection policies. Although we found that people in persistent poverty are perceived as less competent, this perception does not seem to explain the worse attitude towards social protection policies. This may be because we are nonetheless comparing two groups of people in poverty and the differences in these stereotypes between both groups are not so large.

The effects of the 2008 economic crisis have been terrible for much of the world's population, and now these effects can join those caused by the COVID-19 crisis. The massive loss of employment in the wake of the economic crisis led many people to become declassed, facing difficulties they had not previously known. Although this striking new reality—and its psychosocial effects on people—justifies the topic's relevance in empirical research, we run the risk of neglecting another disadvantaged group that regrettably has always existed in most societies: people in persistent poverty.

Recent research has highlighted the importance of dehumanization processes towards people living in poverty in attitudes towards poverty alleviation policies (Sainz et al., 2019, 2020a) and the mediation role of attributions for poverty in this relationship (Sainz, 2020b). Our study offers an opportunity to determine whether the processes of dehumanization of people in poverty are differentiated based on the group in question as well as how this differentiation may influence attitudes towards social protection. Other studies have shown that enhancing structural attributions for poverty can lead to more egalitarian attitudes and less support for inequality (Piff et al., 2020). Our results suggest

that another related factor to take into account when planning actions to improve these attitudes may be the type of poverty we are talking about. Another important line of future research could be to examine how contact with each of the two groups influences attitudes towards social protection and the way in which attributions for poverty vary. Contact with inequality in everyday life has been shown to influence attitudes towards redistribution (García-Castro et al., 2019), and this inequality is perceived through indicators such as consumption and opportunities (García-Castro et al., 2022). Given that different groups in poverty may have different consumption patterns, leisure habits, opportunities, and contact with people from other economic groups, this perception of inequality in everyday life may be an important factor in the relationship we examined.

Our studies present some limitations. First, the samples in both studies have some potential weaknesses. The sample in Study 1 comprised undergraduate students, which may affect the results' generalizability, especially for a topic such as the one we addressed (e.g., Wintre et al., 2001). The sample in Study 2 comprised participants from the general population. This sample added variability in terms of social background, but we recruited them in a public-transport station, so they might not represent the entire population. Nevertheless, the results of the mini meta-analysis showed consistency in the patterns we found. Second, the protagonist of our manipulation was a man, and we know that men and women in poverty can be perceived differently (Cozzarelli et al., 2002). Therefore, it would be interesting to test in future research whether our findings are replicated when the perceived target is a woman. Third, although the mediation process we propose is theoretically grounded, other relevant variables may influence this relationship between type of poverty and attitudes towards social-protection policies. Fourth, although our measures have shown acceptable internal consistency in both studies and have correlated with other variables as expected according to previous literature, they have not followed a process of adaptation and validation in Spanish as such. Future research on the adaptation of these measures could strengthen the validity of the results obtained. Finally, another limitation arises from the fact that we conducted these studies in 2019, before the

emergence of the global threat of COVID-19. This fact does not diminish our findings' significance, but it raises new questions about the object of study, as we know that recognizing COVID-19's impact shifts attributions for poverty (Wiwad et al., 2020).

The greater responsibility attributed to the persistently poor and its effects on attitudes towards social protection policies could also mean that their needs do not become part of the priorities of the political sphere that makes decisions about resource distribution. This is a presupposition that should be tested in future studies, but the previous literature on how public perception influences political decisions suggests that it may be something to consider (Brooks & Manza, 2006). The process described above may be an important mechanism in the perpetuation of poverty.

### Open Practices

Data, scripts for the main analyses, measures, and pre-registration forms of both studies are publicly available at:

[https://osf.io/ne6ug/?view\\_only=af98fb36c3ef4eb98fa19542cde3467b](https://osf.io/ne6ug/?view_only=af98fb36c3ef4eb98fa19542cde3467b)

### References

- Alston, J. P., & Dean, K. I. (1972). Socioeconomic factors associated with attitudes toward welfare recipients and the causes of poverty. *Social Service Review*, 46(1), 13-23. <https://doi.org/10.1086/642795>
- Appelbaum, L. D. (2001). The influence of perceived deservingness on policy decisions regarding aid to the poor. *Political Psychology*, 22(3), 419-442. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00248>
- Armingeon, K., & Weisstanner, D. (2021). Objective conditions count, political beliefs decide: the conditional effects of self-interest and ideology on redistribution preferences. *Political Studies*, 1-14 <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0032321721993652>

- Bai, J., Xu, B. X., Yang, S. L., & Guo, Y. Y. (2022). Why are higher-class individuals less supportive of redistribution? The mediating role of attributions for rich-poor gap. *Current Psychology*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02836-2>
- Brooks, C., & Manza, J. (2006). Why do welfare states persist? *The Journal of Politics*, 68(4), 816-827. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00472.x>
- Bullock, H. E. (1999). Attributions for poverty: A comparison of middle-class and welfare recipient attitudes 2059-2082. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 29(10), 2059-2082. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1999.tb02295.x>
- Bullock, H. E., Williams, W. R., & Limbert, W. M. (2003). Predicting support for welfare policies: The impact of attributions and beliefs about inequality. *Journal of Poverty*, 7(3), 35-56. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J134v07n03\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J134v07n03_03)
- Burger, J. M. (1981). Motivational biases in the attribution of responsibility for an accident: A meta-analysis of the defensive-attribution hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 90(3), 496-512. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.90.3.496>
- Burstein, P. (1998). Bringing the public back in: should sociologists consider the impact of public opinion on public policy? *Social Forces*, 77(1), 27-62. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/77.1.27>
- Cantó, O., Gradín, C., & Del Río, C. (2012). Pobreza crónica, transitoria y recurrente en España. *Revista de Economía Aplicada*, 20(58), 69-94.
- Cook, F. L. (1979). *Who should be helped?: Public support for social services*. Sage.
- Cozzarelli, C., Tagler, M. J., & Wilkinson, A. V. (2002). Do middle-class students perceive poor women and poor men differently? *Sex Roles*, 47(11-12), 519-529. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022038200071>

- Cozzarelli, C., Wilkinson, A. V., & Tagler, M. J. (2001). Attitudes toward the poor and attributions for poverty. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(2), 207-227.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00209>
- Cuddy, A. J., Fiske, S. T., & Glick, P. (2007). The BIAS map: behaviours from intergroup affect and stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(4), 631-648. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.4.631>
- Cuddy, A. J., Fiske, S. T., Kwan, V. S., Glick, P., Demoulin, S., Leyens, J. P., ... & Htun, T. T. (2009). Stereotype content model across cultures: Toward universal similarities and some differences. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 48(1), 1-33. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466608X314935>
- Curran, P. J., & Hussong, A. M. (2009). Integrative data analysis: the simultaneous analysis of multiple data sets. *Psychological Methods*, 14(2), 81-100.  
<https://dx.doi.org/10.1037%2Fa0015914>
- Durante, F., Fiske, S. T., Kervyn, N., Cuddy, A. J., Akande, A., Adetoun, B. E., ... & Barlow, F. K. (2013). Nations' income inequality predicts ambivalence in stereotype content: How societies mind the gap. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(4), 726-746. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12005>
- Durante, F., Tablante, C. B., & Fiske, S. T. (2017). Poor but warm, rich but cold (and competent): Social classes in the stereotype content model. *Journal of Social Issues*, 73(1), 138-157. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12208>
- Ehrenreich, B. (1989). *Fear of falling: The inner life of the middle class*. Perennial.
- Ellemers, N., Doosje, B., Van Knippenberg, A., & Wilke, H. (1992). Status protection in high status minority groups. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 22(2), 123-140. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420220203>
- Farwell, L., & Weiner, B. (2000). Bleeding hearts and the heartless: Popular perceptions of liberal and conservative ideologies. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(7), 845-852. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0146167200269009>

- Feagin, J. R. (1972). Poverty: We still believe that God helps those who help themselves. *Psychology Today*, 6(6), 101-110.
- Feather, N. T. (1974). Explanations of poverty in Australian and American samples: The person, society, or fate? *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 26(3), 199-216.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00049537408255231>
- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J., & Glick, P. (2007). Universal dimensions of social cognition: Warmth and competence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11(2), 77-83.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2006.11.005>
- Furnham, A. (1982a). Why are the poor always with us? Explanations for poverty in Britain. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 21(4), 311-322.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1982.tb00553.x>
- Furnham, A. (1982b). Explanations for unemployment in Britain. *European Journal of social psychology*, 12(4), 335-352. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420120402>
- Furnham, A. (1985). The determinants of attitudes toward social security recipients. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 24(1), 19-27.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1985.tb00656.x>
- Gallander Wintre, M., North, C., & Sugar, L. A. (2001). Psychologists' response to criticisms about research based on undergraduate participants: A developmental perspective. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 42(3), 216-225. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0086893>
- García-Castro, J. D., García-Sánchez, E., Montoya-Lozano, M., & Rodríguez-Bailón, R. (2022). The perception of economic inequality in everyday life: My friends with the most and least money. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 25(1), 20-34.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.12476>
- García-Castro, J. D., Rodríguez-Bailón, R., & Willis, G. B. (2020). Perceiving economic inequality in everyday life decreases tolerance to inequality. *Journal of*

*Experimental Social Psychology*, 90, 104019.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2020.104019>

Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1999). Sexism and other "isms": Independence, status, and the ambivalent content of stereotypes. In W. B. Swann, Jr., J. H. Langlois, & L. A. Gilbert (Eds.), *Sexism and stereotypes in modern society: The gender science of Janet Taylor Spence* (pp. 193–221). American Psychological Association.

<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/10277-008>

Goh, J. X., Hall, J. A., & Rosenthal, R. (2016). Mini meta-analysis of your own studies: Some arguments on why and a primer on how. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 10(10), 535-549. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12267>

Guillén Rodríguez, A. M., González Begega, S., & Luque Balbona, D. (2016). Austeridad y ajustes sociales en el sur de Europa. La fragmentación del modelo de bienestar mediterráneo. *Revista Española de Sociología*, 25 (2), 261-272.

Hasenfeld, Y., & Rafferty, J. A. (1989). The determinants of public attitudes toward the welfare state. *Social Forces*, 67(4), 1027-1048.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/67.4.1027>

Henry, P. J., Reyna, C., & Weiner, B. (2004). Hate welfare but help the poor: how the attributional content of stereotypes explains the paradox of reactions to the destitute in America. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 34(1), 34-58.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2004.tb02536.x>

Instituto Nacional de Estadística (1994-2001) *European Community Household Panel (ECHP)*. Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2001-2013) *Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA)*. Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2007-2014) *Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida (ECV)*. Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

- Kootstra, A. (2016). Deserving and undeserving welfare claimants in Britain and the Netherlands: Examining the role of ethnicity and migration status using a vignette experiment. *European Sociological Review*, 32(3), 325-338.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcw010>
- Lakens, D., Scheel, A. M., & Isager, P. M. (2018). Equivalence testing for psychological research: A tutorial. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 1(2), 259-269. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2515245918770963>
- Leach, C. W., Van Zomeren, M., Zebel, S., Vliek, M. L., Pennekamp, S. F., Doosje, B., ... & Spears, R. (2008). Group-level self-definition and self-investment: a hierarchical (multicomponent) model of in-group identification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(1), 144-165. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.95.1.144>
- Lemieux, A. F., & Pratto, F. (2003). Poverty and prejudice. In Carr, S., C., & Sloan, T., S. (Eds.) *Poverty and Psychology* (pp. 147-161). Springer.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-0029-2\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-0029-2_8)
- Lepianka, D., Van Oorschot, W., & Gelissen, J. (2009). Popular explanations of poverty: A critical discussion of empirical research. *Journal of Social Policy*, 38(3), 421-438. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279409003092>
- Luhmann, N. (1990). *Political theory in the welfare state*. De Gruyter.
- Myles, J. (2006). Comments on welfare states and public opinion. *American Sociological Review*, 71(3), 495-498.
- Paugam, S. (2007). *Las formas elementales de la pobreza*. Alianza Editorial.
- Piff, P. K., Wiwad, D., Robinson, A. R., Aknin, L. B., Mercier, B., & Shariff, A. (2020). Shifting attributions for poverty motivates opposition to inequality and enhances egalitarianism. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(5), 496-505.  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0835-8>



- R Core Team (2017). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing. URL: <https://www.R-project.org/>
- Rosseel, Y. (2012). lavaan: An R Package for Structural Equation Modeling. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 48(2), 1-36. URL: <https://www.jstatsoft.org/v48/i02/>
- Rucker, D. D., Galinsky, A. D., & Magee, J. C. (2018). The agentic–communal model of advantage and disadvantage: How inequality produces similarities in the psychology of power, social class, gender, and race. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 58, 71-125. <https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.aesp.2018.04.001>
- Sainz, M., Martínez, R., Moya, M., & Rodríguez-Bailón, R. (2019). Animalizing the disadvantaged, mechanizing the wealthy: The convergence of socio-economic status and attribution of humanity. *International Journal of Psychology*, 54(4), 423-430. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12485>
- Sainz, M., Loughnan, S., Martínez, R., Moya, M., & Rodríguez-Bailón, R. (2020a). Dehumanization of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Groups Decreases Support for Welfare Policies via Perceived Wastefulness. *International Review of Social Psychology*, 33(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.5334/irsp.414>
- Sainz, M., Martínez, R., Sutton, R. M., Rodríguez-Bailón, R., & Moya, M. (2020b). Less human, more to blame: Animalizing poor people increases blame and decreases support for wealth redistribution. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 23(4), 546-559. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1368430219841135>
- Santiago, C. D., Wadsworth, M. E., & Stump, J. (2011). Socioeconomic status, neighbourhood disadvantage, and poverty-related stress: Prospective effects on psychological syndromes among diverse low-income families. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 32(2), 218-230. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joep.2009.10.008>
- Skitka, L. J., & Tetlock, P. E. (1992). Allocating scarce resources: A contingency model of distributive justice. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 28(6), 491-522. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031\(92\)90043-J](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(92)90043-J)

- Stimson, J. A., MacKuen, M. B., & Erikson, R. S. (1995). Dynamic representation. *American Political Science Review*, 89(3), 543-565.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2082973>
- Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Van Oorschot, W. (2000). Who should get what, and why? On deservingness criteria and the conditionality of solidarity among the public. *Policy & Politics*, 28(1), 33-48. <https://doi.org/10.1332/0305573002500811>
- Van Oorschot, W. (2006). Making the difference in social Europe: deservingness perceptions among citizens of European welfare states. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 16(1), 23-42. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0958928706059829>
- Van Oorschot, W. (2010). Public perceptions of the economic, moral, social and migration consequences of the welfare state: an empirical analysis of welfare state legitimacy. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 20(1), 19-31.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0958928709352538>
- Weiner, B., Osborne, D., & Rudolph, U. (2011). An attributional analysis of reactions to poverty: The political ideology of the giver and the perceived morality of the receiver. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(2), 199-213.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1088868310387615>
- Wen, Z., & Fan, X. (2015). Monotonicity of effect sizes: Questioning kappa-squared as mediation effect size measure. *Psychological methods*, 20(2), 193-203. <https://doi.org/10.1037/met0000029>
- Wiwad, D., Mercier, B., Piff, P. K., Shariff, A., & Aknin, L. B. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on attitudes toward poverty and inequality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 104083. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2020.104083>.
- Yi, L. & Pachter, L. (2018). aggregation: p-Value Aggregation Methods. R package version 1.0.1. <https://CRAN.R-project.org/package=aggregation>

Zucker, G. S., & Weiner, B. (1993). Conservatism and perceptions of poverty: An attributional analysis 1. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 23(12), 925-943.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1993.tb01014.x>

**Chapter 4. Gendered Social Perception of “the Poor”:  
Differences in Individualistic Attributions, Stereotypes, and  
Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies**

**Gendered Social Perception of “the Poor”: Differences in Individualistic Attributions, Stereotypes, and Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies**

Joaquín Alcañiz-Colomer<sup>1,2</sup>, Miguel Moya<sup>1,2</sup> and Inmaculada Valor-Segura<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Granada, Department of Social Psychology, Granada, Spain.

<sup>2</sup>Research Centre in Mind, Brain, and Behavior (CIMCYC), Granada, Spain

This paper has been published as:

Alcañiz-Colomer, J., Moya, M. & Valor-Segura, I. Gendered social perceptions of “the poor”: Differences in individualistic attributions, stereotypes, and attitudes toward social protection policies. *Sex Roles* (2023).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-023-01375-9>

## Abstract

Poverty is a phenomenon that affects men and women differently. In the current research, we examined social perceptions of poor men and women across three experiments focusing on attributions for poverty, classist attitudes, and stereotypes about poor people. In Study 1, participants from the general population (N = 484) made more individualistic (dispositional) attributions for men's poverty compared to women's poverty, blaming men more for their poverty. Participants also believed that men would manage the assistance they received from the state more poorly than women. These patterns were observed across all three studies. In Study 2 (N = 256), we also found that more individualistic attributions for why men were in poverty predicted more negative attitudes toward social protection policies concerning men. In Study 3 (N = 358), we replicated the results observed in Study 2, and found that women in poverty were described as more communal and competent than men in poverty. We interpret these results considering the operation of traditional gender roles as well as the parallelism between stereotypes of women and poor people. Our results are relevant to the framing of the proposals by social organizations, political parties, and emancipation movements that advocate for policies and programs to address poverty.

**Key words:** Poverty, Gender, Attributions for poverty, Support for social protection, Gender stereotypes, Classist attitudes

Poverty is a reality present in almost all societies, and Spain stands out in the European Union for its high rate of poverty and its limited capacity to reduce it: one in five Spaniards live below the poverty line (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2020a). As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, these poverty rates have further increased (FOESSA, 2021). There are numerous, and related, explanations for the ubiquity and persistence of poverty: economic factors (the capitalist system that guides the genesis of resources and their distribution), social factors (e.g., legal norms for the different groups that make up society), or historical reasons, among other explanations. Social psychologists have suggested that the explanations that people give about poverty, the stereotypes that exist about people in poverty, and shared ideologies about this reality can contribute to perpetuating poverty.

A wide variety of economic indicators show that poverty does not affect men and women similarly. For instance, in 2020, according to the Spanish National Statistics Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística [INE], 2020a), the percentage of Spanish women at risk of poverty was 21.7%, while the percentage of men was 20.2%. The percentages of women with material deprivation were greater than those for men across almost all indicators: for instance, 23.2% of women (vs. 22.4% of men) indicated that they make ends meet with difficulty or great difficulty (INE, 2020a). Most people's main form of access to societal resources is through income derived from labor. In relation to this, in the last quarter of 2020, the percentage of unemployed women in Spain was 18.39%, compared to 14.39% of men (INE, 2020b). Moreover, in this same period, the percentage of women in temporary employment was 25.6% compared to 22.9% for men (INE, 2020b). As a final example, the number of Spanish single-parent households headed by a woman was 1,582,100 in 2020, while the number of single-parent households headed by a man was 362,700. This may be related to poverty because the percentage of 38.9% of single-parent households were at risk of poverty in 2020 (INE, 2020b).

In this research, we examine whether thinking about the gender of the person in poverty influences causal attributions about poverty, ambivalent classism, stereotypes (in terms of competence, agency, and communality), perceptions of their ability to manage

support provided to them, and attitudes towards social protection. In addition, we test the mediating role of individualistic attributions in the association between perceived group in poverty (men or women) and support for social protection policies related to poverty.

### **Attributions for Poverty and Gender**

Poverty can be attributed to internal factors that may be viewed as controllable (e.g., lack of will) or uncontrollable factors (e.g., lack of capacity), which we refer to as individualistic (or dispositional) attributions. Poverty may also be attributed to external factors beyond the control of individuals (e.g., shortage of jobs; Weiner et al., 2011), which we refer to as structural (or situational) attributions. There are other possible causes to which people may attribute poverty, such as fatalistic (e.g., bad luck; Feagin 1972) or cultural ones (e.g., the breakdown of the nuclear family; Cozzarelli et al., 2001). We focus on the basic distinction presented above between individualistic and structural factors, since research has shown that sometimes they do not appear as a distinct factor (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Furnham, 1982).

Causal attributions about poverty are relevant for explaining support for social protection policies related to living in poverty. Endorsement of individualistic attributions has been linked to less support for government interventions (Piff et al., 2020) and greater agreement with the idea that too much money is spent on social programs (Alston & Dean, 1972). Greater endorsement of structural attributions has been related to more positive attitudes toward people in poverty (Cozzarelli et al., 2001) and preferences for progressive welfare policies (Bullock et al., 2003).

To our knowledge, only one study has addressed the question of whether there are different patterns of causal attributions for men and women in poverty. In an exploratory study with a sample of U.S. college students, Cozzarelli et al. (2002) found that individualistic attributions for men's poverty centered on issues related to lack of effort. These motives were also present in attributions for women's poverty, although to a lesser extent.



Why in the case of women, in comparison with men, is it less likely that perceivers attribute poverty to individualistic causes and more likely that perceivers make structural attributions? The field of paid labor has traditionally been a male-dominated area, with the breadwinner role being the responsibility of men. Women have historically been excluded from the sphere of work outside domestic space (see Pfau-Effinger 2004). Women's work was considered optional, not something they did of their own free will (internal causes) but when circumstances required it (due to external causes). At the same time, the research has shown that people think that both wealth and poverty are due to internal dispositions rather than external factors that are beyond one's control (e.g., Bullock et al., 2003; Davidai, 2018). Thus, in line with the research of Cozzarelli et al. (2002) and given the higher expectations that men will dedicate themselves to work and develop a career, we think that the trend to attribute poverty to internal or individualistic causes would be stronger in the case of attributions for men's poverty (vs. women's poverty); and the attribution of poverty to structural causes would be stronger in the case of women's poverty (vs. men's poverty). Gender role expectations and norms associated with women and men could influence the way they are perceived, even in the context of poverty. From a gender-stereotyped perspective, people may be more lenient towards women in poverty compared to men, as men are typically expected to be the breadwinner and therefore, not be poor. In contrast, women are often seen as dependent on men, so if they are poor, it may be perceived as less directly their fault. In addition, previous research on the study of attributions of success and failure of men's and women's in the workplace showed that people make more internal attributions for men's (compared to women's) success in leadership roles in masculine or unspecified industries; and make more internal attributions for women's success in leadership roles in feminine industries (García-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2009).

We propose that poverty attributions may be an important mechanism for explaining differences in social protection support depending on whether the focus is on men or women in poverty. On the one hand, previous research has shown that the perceived group of people in poverty influences causal attributions about their situation

(Alcañiz-Colomer et al., 2022; Henry et al., 2004). For instance, Henry et al. (2004) demonstrated that individuals receiving welfare are subject to greater blame for their poverty compared to those who are simply described as poor. On the other hand, attributions for poverty have been causally linked to redistributive preferences. Using an experimental priming paradigm, Bai et al. (2022) found that participants exhibit reduced support for redistribution after being primed with a text passage emphasizing internal attributions (compared to those exposed to a passage emphasizing external attributions). This, together with the above explanation, leads us to propose that when perceiving a man, compared to a woman, it is the different attributional pattern about their poverty that would lead to a different attitude towards social protection. In short, we expect that participants will have more positive views of social protection policies when thinking about women compared to men, and that these target gender differences can be explained in part by the different attributions people make toward men versus women for their poverty.

### **Stereotypes About Men and Women in Poverty**

Two basic dimensions are understood to distinguish perceptions of other people and groups: competence (agency) and warmth (communion; Cuddy et al., 2008), and some authors have further distinguished between competence (e.g., intelligent, competent) and agency (e.g., bold, adventurous; Eagly et al., 2020). In this paper, we focus on communion, agency, and competence as stereotypical traits differentially assigned to men and women. Traditionally, communal traits (e.g., sensitivity, emotionality) are ascribed to women, whereas competence and agentic traits are ascribed to men, although these stereotypes have varied over time (Eagly et al., 2020; Moya & Moya-Garófano, 2021). For example, perceptions of competence for men and women have become more similar over time, whereas women are still perceived as having more communal and less agentic traits than men (Eagly et al., 2020).

Images and stereotypes of people with fewer resources can serve to justify and perpetuate their situations. Stereotypes about people in poverty are more negative than

those about the middle class (Cozzarelli et al., 2001): those in poverty tend to be perceived as warm, but lacking competence (Durante et al., 2013, 2017). Thus, stereotypes of women and people in poverty have a certain parallelism, as both groups tend to be seen as sociable and less competent than men and upper-class people. For example, both groups tend to be similarly animalized, although for different reasons. Women are considered more emotional than men (Plant et al., 2000), and poor people are also considered more incapable of controlling their emotions (Sainz et al., 2020). In one case, they may be perceived as more dependent on men, while in the other, they may be seen as reliant on public assistance or society at large. Indeed, like ambivalent sexism, concepts have been developed to investigate hostile and paternalistic classism toward individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Jordan et al., 2021). In a social context characterized by unequal power dynamics, such stereotypes often serve to justify and perpetuate these power imbalances, ensuring that these groups remain subordinated. However, when it comes to gender stereotypes surrounding individuals living in poverty, it is not entirely clear that the same stereotypes are directly applied to both men and women. Due to the differing gender expectations and roles discussed previously, the stereotypes surrounding poverty may differ between genders.

### **Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies**

Social protection policies are one way in which welfare states can protect their citizens from the inequalities and adverse effects produced by the economic system. People's attitudes toward these policies are important because public political preferences can influence the types of policies that are implemented (Brooks & Manza, 2006; Burstein, 2003). In the case of protecting low-income individuals, these attitudes can be influenced by causal attributions for these situations (Bullock et al., 2003), stereotypes (Shepherd & Campbell, 2020), and ideologies (Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Hasenfeld & Rafferty, 1989).

As a system-justifying ideology, ambivalent classism is particularly relevant to the current research. Jordan et al. (2021) proposed that ambivalent classism encompasses

both hostile and benevolent beliefs. Hostile classism includes the belief that people with fewer resources should be controlled, as they are seen as insubordinate. For instance, the belief that low-income individuals should lose their benefits if they do not meet some behavioral criteria (e.g., completing necessary paperwork to receive benefits on time). Benevolent beliefs in the form of protective paternalism include the belief that people with fewer resources need care and guidance to become productive members of society. Hostile classism correlates negatively with support for progressive welfare policies and positively with restrictive welfare policies, whereas protective paternalism correlates positively with support for both (Jordan et al., 2021, Study 4). The construct of ambivalent classism mirrors that of ambivalent sexism, which includes both hostile sexist attitudes (negative views of women) and benevolent sexist attitudes (subjectively positive but stereotypical views of women in certain specific social roles; Glick & Fiske 1996). These ideologies may influence the causal explanations given for different social groups' outcomes (Brandt & Reyna, 2011). For example, Connor and Fiske (2019), using both correlational and experimental designs, found that hostile sexism was linked with internal attributions for gender income inequality, claiming that one's personal choices cause gender income inequality. That is, people with higher hostile sexism scores (or exposed to the condition where hostile sexism was primed) explained the gender wage gap in terms of women's personal choices to a greater extent. This in turn led to greater acceptance of gender income inequality. It is also possible that sexism, specifically benevolent sexism, is related to perceptions of how women in poverty manage resources.

Additionally, there are other factors that could be important in influencing attitudes toward social protection policies. Deservingness perceptions are one factor that affects the attitudes toward social assistance, referring to beliefs about whether individuals should have access to such assistance based on their personal characteristics or behavior (Appelbaum, 2001). For example, widows are generally considered more deserving of assistance than teenage mothers. Beliefs about how beneficiaries will manage benefits is another relevant factor. When individuals perceive those beneficiaries will waste resources, they show less support for welfare policies (Sainz et al., 2020). Finally, beliefs

about the potential effects of different types of aid on its recipients can also be relevant to understanding attitudes towards social protection.

In relation to the different types of assistance, it is possible to distinguish between dependency-oriented assistance and autonomy-oriented assistance, which may reflect power relations between groups (Nadler, 2002). Dependency-oriented assistance seeks to provide a complete solution to the problem, with the understanding that the assisted persons cannot contribute to that solution. The second type, autonomy-oriented assistance, is focused on providing tools for the assisted persons to solve their own problems, assuming that they can do so (Nadler, 1997). These two different types of assistance have also different consequences. For instance, to maintain their privileged position, members of high-status groups may prefer to provide dependency-oriented assistance, especially when the people who will receive such aid are considered potential competitors (Nadler, 2002).

Regarding the psychological consequences for beneficiaries of dependency-oriented assistance, those who receive cash benefits experience greater autonomy than those who receive vouchers (Álvarez et al., 2018). Bearing this in mind, we explore whether differences exist in preference for support programs that promote autonomy or dependency depending on the gender of the person in poverty. Our rationale is that policies promoting autonomy may be preferred to a greater extent for groups that are considered capable of overcoming their situation. That is, if men are perceived as responsible for both earning and avoiding poverty, they may be seen as more capable of improving their situation on their own. As a result, policies that promote individual autonomy may be preferred for them.

### **The Present Research**

The objective of our research was to analyze the perceptions of men and women in poverty and how the gender of the person in poverty influences support for social protection policies. To do so, we focused on others' beliefs about the causes of their poverty, the content of stereotypes regarding gender and poverty, and system-justifying

ideologies related to social class and gender. All materials, measures, databases, and preregistration for our studies can be found at: [https://osf.io/c7qfw/?view\\_only=17e978b6cff640d4b06114c96fae0f77](https://osf.io/c7qfw/?view_only=17e978b6cff640d4b06114c96fae0f77). All sociodemographic information about participants in all studies is presented in Table S1 in the Supplement A in the online supplement. This research has been conducted to conform to the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants and studies were reviewed and approved by an institutional review board.

### *Hypotheses for Study 1*

We predicted that women in poverty would receive less individualistic and more structural attributions than men (Hypothesis 1). We expected that participants perceiving different groups (women in poverty vs. men in poverty) would lead to different scores in the following variables. We expected that participants would show a greater preference for autonomy-oriented policies (Hypothesis 2a) and a lower preference for dependency-oriented policies (Hypothesis 2b) for men in poverty, compared to women in poverty. Furthermore, we hypothesized that participants would exhibit more protective and paternalistic behaviors and attitudes (Hypothesis 2c), as well as fewer hostile and classist attitudes (Hypothesis 2d), towards women in poverty than towards men in poverty. We also predicted that participants would believe that a woman in poverty would manage her assistance more efficiently than a man in poverty (Hypothesis 2e). These hypotheses were preregistered.

We also preregistered several exploratory hypotheses for Study 1 regarding the mediating roles played by individualistic attributions for poverty, protective paternalism attitudes, and hostile classism in the association between one's perception of a man or a woman in poverty and preferences for dependency-oriented or autonomy-oriented policies. We also included the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory in an exploratory test in Study 1.

### *Hypotheses for Study 2*

Alongside testing Hypothesis 1 again, we expected that participants would show more positive attitudes toward social protection policies when they think about a woman in poverty as the policies' recipient, compared to those who think about a man in poverty (Hypothesis 3). We also expected that the association between the gender group and support for social protection policies would be mediated by causal attributions of poverty (Hypothesis 4): structural attributions for poverty would be greater in women than men, and individualistic attributions for poverty would be greater in men than women, and, in turn, more structural attributions will be associated with less negative attitudes toward social protection policies, whereas more individualistic attributions will be more associated with more negative attitudes toward social protection policies.

### *Hypotheses for Study 3*

In Study 3, we tested Hypothesis 1, 3 and 4 again. Further, we predicted that women in poverty would be perceived as having more communal traits than men (Hypothesis 5a), as less agentic than men (Hypothesis 5b), and as equally competent than men (Hypothesis 5c).

## **Study 1**

In the first study, we aimed to investigate whether perceptions of men and women in poverty vary in terms of individualistic and structural attributions. In addition, we also test whether attitudes toward how people manage received support and ambivalent classism (Jordan et al., 2021) vary depending on the gender of the target person in poverty.

### **Method**

#### *Participants and Procedure*

The initial sample was composed of 572 participants from the general population who completed an online survey hosted by Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). Data from 88 participants were removed because they met the preregistered exclusion criteria: 16 failed the attention check, 23 reported that Spanish was not their native language, and 49

completed the survey in more than one hour. The final sample was composed of 484 participants. Two-hundred forty participants answered the survey related to men in poverty (134 women,  $M_{age} = 35.50$ ,  $SD = 14.08$ ) and 244 answered the survey related to women in poverty (157 women,  $M_{age} = 37.99$ ,  $SD = 15.08$ ). We conducted sensitivity analysis for differences between two independent groups using G\*Power (Version 3.1; Faul et al., 2007). This suggested that we could reasonably detect an effect size as small as  $d = 0.25$  with a power of 0.80.

### ***Materials and Measures***

***Gender of Poor Target Condition.*** Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. In each condition, they had to answer a survey about a group of people in poverty. In the poor woman condition, the survey questions specifically asked about women in poverty. In the poor man condition, the survey questions specifically asked about men in poverty. Items from the survey were standardized across the conditions except for the gender of the target. We included an attention check item asking which group of people in poverty (men or women) they were thinking of when they answered the questions.

***Poverty Attributions.*** We measured participants' attributions for poverty using 20 items translated and adapted for Spanish (Furnham, 1982; Weiner et al., 2011). We also added four items concerning the Spanish context (e.g., "The seasonality of the labor market"). Participants responded to all items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Nine items were used to assess the individualistic attributions dimension ( $\alpha = .80$ ; e.g., "lack of ability," "lack of will," "people do not want to move to other places to work"), and 10 items were used to assess structural attributions ( $\alpha = .81$ ; e.g., "lack of access to jobs," "bankruptcy of companies," "low wages"). In this case, the individualistic attributions comprised both controllable and uncontrollable causes, but all of them were internal. We averaged across items for each type of attribution. Higher scores for individualistic attributions indicated greater blaming of the



person living in poverty; higher scores for structural attributions indicated greater support for the idea that broad social factors were the cause of poverty.

*Attitudes Toward Dependency- and Autonomy-Oriented Social Policies.* We measured degree of agreement with 12 social protection policies, with participants using 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to respond to items. We measured attitudes toward dependency-oriented social policies with seven items (e.g., “Give stamps to poor women (men) to exchange for basic products like food or hygiene products”) and attitudes toward autonomy-oriented social policies with 5 items (e.g., “Give cash or checks to women (men) with few resources to spend as they see fit”). We were unable to analyze data from this measure as explained in the “Results” section.

*Ambivalent Classism.* This variable was measured using the Ambivalent Classism Inventory (Jordan et al., 2021), which also uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), validated and adapted for Spanish by Sainz et al. (2021). We changed the term “poor people” to “men in poverty” or “women in poverty” to adapt the scale to each condition. This scale is composed of three dimensions: hostile classism ( $\alpha = .89$ ; 12 items; e.g., “By and large, if you give poor women (men) an inch, they’ll take a mile”), protective paternalism ( $\alpha = .85$ ; 4 items; e.g., “Poor women (men) ought to receive extra help with making good decisions about their health”), and complementary class differentiation (4 items; e.g., “Poor women (men) are often more humble than nonpoor people”). For our analysis, we used the hostile classism and protective paternalism dimensions to the extent that our interest was focused on the differences between the two groups and not on complementary class differentiation. Higher scores meant higher hostile classism and protective paternalism, respectively. In Spanish, the two subscales have shown good internal consistency in the past: hostile classism  $\alpha$ 's = .93–.94, and protective paternalism  $\alpha$ 's = .87–.89 (Sainz et al., 2021).

*Ambivalent Sexism Inventory.* Ambivalent sexism was measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) validated in Spain by Expósito et al. (1998) from the original version (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This scale comprises two

subscales with 11 items each: hostile sexism ( $\alpha = .91$ ; e.g., “When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against”) and benevolent sexism ( $\alpha = .83$ ; e.g., “Women should be cherished and protected by men”). Mean scores were used, with higher scores representing higher levels of sexism. The structural validity of scores for the Spanish version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory has been supported via both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses (Expósito et al., 1998).

***Perceived Use of Assistance.*** We included three items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to measure perceptions of poor women’s and men’s use of assistance provided to them ( $\alpha = .76$ ). The items were “Women (men) with few resources will make good use of the aid they receive;” “Women (men) with few resources will waste part of the aid they receive;” and “Women (men) with few resources will adequately manage the aid they receive.” Although it is probable that the participants were thinking of financial assistance, given the context and phrasing, we used the term ‘aid’ generically without specifying the type of assistance. We averaged scores across items. Higher scores indicated greater perceived efficiency in using assistance. Detailed distributions for these variables across conditions are presented in Supplement B1 in the online supplement.

***Political Ideology.*** Political ideology was assessed by asking participants to place themselves on a scale ranging from 1 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right).

***Objective and Subjective Socioeconomic Status.*** To measure objective socioeconomic status, participants indicated their income and education levels. We standardized and summed these scores (see Piff et al., 2010). We measured subjective socioeconomic status using the MacArthur Scale of Subjective SES, a ladder with 10 rungs representing higher levels of education, income, and occupational status at the top of the ladder, and lower levels at the bottom. Participants placed themselves on the rung where they felt they stood relative to society.

***Gender and Age.*** Participants also indicated their gender (man/woman/other) and age.

## Results

### *Preliminary Analyses*

As preregistered, we conducted a factorial analysis of participants' attitudes toward dependency- and autonomy-oriented social measures. This analysis revealed a three-dimensional factor structure. These dimensions were difficult to interpret at a theoretical level, and the reliability indices of their subdimensions were low. Given this, we decided not to include these variables in subsequent analyses despite having preregistered them. Consequently, we did not analyze the hypotheses concerning these variables (Hypothesis 2a and 2b).

To interpret the effect sizes we followed the benchmarks in social psychology established by Lovakov and Agadullina (2021), which rely on empirically derived effect size distributions different from those suggested by Cohen (1988). Lovakov and Agadullina suggest interpreting effect sizes (in Cohen's  $d$ s) of 0.15, 0.36, and 0.65 as small, medium, and large effects, respectively.

### *Hypotheses Testing*

We performed a t-test for differences between two independent means using SPSS (Version 25). Hypothesis 1a predicted that women in poverty would receive less individualistic attributions and more structural attributions than men in poverty. As shown in Table 1, this hypothesis was partially confirmed: women in poverty received less individualistic attributions in comparison to men in poverty,  $t(482) = 5.23, p < .001$ , Bca 95% CI [0.23, 0.50],  $d = 0.48$ . However, we did not find statistically significant differences in structural attributions between participants who were presented with a man in poverty and participants who were presented with a women in poverty,  $t(482) = 0.29, p = .78$ , Bca 95% CI [-0.11, 0.15],  $d = 0.03$ .

Although in the opposite predicted direction, we found a statistically significant difference in protective paternalism scores between the two conditions (Hypothesis 2c): people who answered the questionnaire about women in poverty showed less paternalistic attitudes in comparison to those who answered the questionnaire about men in poverty,

$t(482) = 3.02, p = .001, \text{Bca } 95\% \text{ CI } [0.12, 0.49], d = 0.29$ . We also found differences regarding hostile classism (Hypothesis 2d): participants showed less hostile classist attitudes toward women in poverty compared to their attitudes toward men in poverty,  $t(482) = 5.65, p < .001, \text{Bca } 95\% \text{ CI } [.25, .51], d = .51$ . A similar pattern emerged in regard to perceived use of assistance (Hypothesis 2e): women in poverty were perceived to use assistance more efficiently than men in poverty,  $t(482) = -6.62, p < .001, \text{Bca } 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.62, -0.33], d = 0.60$ . The interaction between participant gender and experimental condition did not significantly affect the scores in these variables (see Supplement B2 in the online supplement).

**Table 1**

*Means and Standard Deviations for Main Measures in All Studies*

	Study 1		Study 2		Study 3	
	Condition		Condition		Condition	
	Men in poverty	Women in poverty	Men in poverty	Women in poverty	Men in poverty	Women in poverty
Individualistic attributions	3.09 <sup>a</sup> (0.72)	2.72 <sup>b</sup> (0.80)	3.22 <sup>a</sup> (0.78)	2.89 <sup>b</sup> (0.79)	3.27 <sup>a</sup> (0.67)	2.96 <sup>b</sup> (0.66)
Structural attributions	3.50 <sup>a</sup> (0.73)	3.48 <sup>a</sup> (0.71)	3.93 <sup>a</sup> (0.60)	3.98 <sup>a</sup> (0.60)		
Protective paternalism	3.46 <sup>a</sup> (0.97)	3.15 <sup>b</sup> (1.12)				
Hostile classism	2.22 <sup>a</sup> (0.73)	1.84 <sup>b</sup> (0.75)				
Perceived use of assistance	3.41 <sup>a</sup> (0.74)	3.89 <sup>b</sup> (0.85)				
Attitudes toward social protection policies			3.46 <sup>a</sup> (0.62)	3.45 <sup>a</sup> (0.71)	3.16 <sup>a</sup> (0.57)	3.34 <sup>b</sup> (0.56)
Communion					3.09 <sup>a</sup> (0.67)	3.43 <sup>b</sup> (0.68)
Agency					2.88 <sup>a</sup> (0.64)	2.98 <sup>a</sup> (0.59)
Competence					2.69 <sup>a</sup> (0.88)	2.97 <sup>b</sup> (0.97)

*Note.* Standard deviations are presented within parentheses. Within the same study, rows with a different superscript differ at  $p < .05$ .

Although it was not preregistered, we performed a mediation analysis using the PROCESS Macro (Model 4) for SPSS (Hayes, 2017) with confidence intervals for indirect effects based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples. We included individualistic attributions as a mediator, perceived group as the independent variable, and perceived use of assistance as the dependent variable. As poverty attributions are known to influence attitudes towards social protection, we sought to determine if they also affected the perceived effectiveness of welfare use. We reasoned that if women in poverty, compared to men, receive less individualistic attributions (e.g., lack of ability), this might lead to the belief that they manage assistance better. Indeed, the gender of the target in poverty had an effect on perceived use of assistance through individualistic attributions. The indirect effect in this model was  $b = .13$ , Bca CI [.07, .19]. The direct effect of poor target's gender on perceived use of assistance was  $b = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ , and the total effect  $b = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ . The effect of perceived condition on individualistic attributions was  $b = -.36$ ,  $p < .001$ , and the effect of individualistic attributions on perceived efficacy of aid management was  $b = -.35$ ,  $p < .001$ . However, when structural attributions were considered as mediators in our other analyses, this variable did not play a significant role in the relationship between perceived group and perceived aid management efficiency. In addition, we also performed several analyses exploring the moderator effects of hostile and benevolent sexism on protective paternalism and hostile classism (see Supplements B3-B7 in the online supplement).

As the correlations in Table 2 show, participants' benevolent sexism scores were negatively correlated with the perceived use of assistance in both gender target conditions. This result suggests that the more positive view of use of assistance when a woman receives aid does not seem to be due to a condescending attitude toward her. Hostile sexism was related in the same way to the perceived use of assistance for both gender conditions, although the correlation was of greater magnitude when the target was women in poverty. Surprisingly, in the condition where the target group was men in

poverty, the structural attributions correlated positively with the individualistic attributions, although this did not occur in the women target group.

## Discussion

These results confirmed our hypotheses, showing a gendered pattern of attributions for poverty. Compared with women in poverty, men in poverty were perceived as more responsible for their poverty, which led to more negative views of how they use assistance. Regarding structural attributions, at least with the measure used, we found no differences between the two subgroups, although as expected given the context of our study, scores for structural attributions were higher than those for individualistic attributions (e.g., Lepianka et al., 2010). Perhaps this greater consensus regarding structural attributions makes them less of a decisive factor in the perceptions of these two groups, and less important for explaining attitudes toward social protection policies.

**Table 2**

*Correlations Between Main Variables in Study 1*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Individualistic attributions	-	.1	.37**	.55**	.33**	.51**	-.40**
2. Structural attributions	.47**	-	.01	-.12	.17**	-.05	.14*
3. Benevolent sexism	.36**	.11	-	.58**	.30**	.46**	-.17**
4. Hostile sexism	.45**	.04	.56**	-	.28**	.54**	-.33**
5. Protective paternalism	.31**	.32**	.10	.07	-	.47**	-.23**
6. Hostile classism	.48**	.06	.46**	.47**	.34**	-	-.54**
7. Perceived use of assistance	-.24**	.05	-.15*	-.23**	.02	-.44**	-

*Note.* correlations between variables in women in poverty condition (above the diagonal) and men in poverty condition (below the diagonal). \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed) \*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

The participants also showed more hostile classist and protective paternalist attitudes toward men in poverty compared to women in poverty. Men in poverty were perceived as more needful of dominative control and paternalistic assistance compared with women in poverty. This makes sense given that men are typically seen as more responsible for their financial situations and less competent to manage the financial support they receive. However, it is possible that the negative view of men who are perceived as unable to ‘win their bread’ may be even greater, despite the assumption that men are expected to fulfill this role.

Finally, the correlations of the scores for sexism, both hostile and benevolent, with the other variables showed similar patterns whether it was the man or the woman in poverty: the more sexist the participants were, the more individualistic their attributions were, and the less they considered the man or woman able to handle the help well. This suggests that sexist ideology does not seem to play a differentiated role in gendered perceptions of poverty.

## Study 2

In Study 1, the main dependent variable was a simple measure (three items) about how people think that people in poverty manage the financial help they receive. Here, we included a broader measure of attitudes toward social protection policies to test whether people have more positive attitudes toward these policies when they think about women in poverty in comparison with men in poverty. We also explored how attributions for poverty may affect this pattern. In our analyses, we controlled for participants’ political ideology, gender, and subjective and objective socioeconomic status.

### Method

#### *Participants and Procedure*

The initial sample for Study 2 consisted of 304 undergraduate students, who completed an online survey hosted in Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). The participants were recruited through the mailing list of a university in southern Spain. They were sent

a link to the study in the email. As compensation for their participation, they were entered into a 50 Euro raffle. Data from 48 participants were removed because they met the exclusion criteria: 21 participants failed the attention check, 20 reported that Spanish was not their native language, and seven completed the survey over periods of time that were more than three standard deviations above the mean. Of the remaining 256 participants, 124 (89 women;  $M_{\text{age}} = 22.74$ ,  $SD = 3.79$ ) answered a version of the survey that referred to men in poverty, and 132 (97 woman;  $M_{\text{age}} = 22.98$ ,  $SD = 5.86$ ) answered a version of the survey that referred to women in poverty. We conducted sensitivity analyses using G\*Power (Version 3.1; Faul et al., 2007) for differences between two independent groups. Considering our sample size in each condition, the sensitivity analyses suggested that we could reasonably detect an effect size as small as  $d = 0.35$  with a power of .80 and  $\alpha = .05$ .

### *Materials and Measures*

***Gender of Poor Target Condition.*** Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. At the beginning of the survey, they were asked to think in general about either a man in poverty or a woman in poverty. The items that followed did not refer to men and women, unlike Study 1. We included an attention check asking participants which group of people in poverty (men or women) they were thinking of when they answered the questionnaire. The purpose of this task was to confirm that participants had carefully read the text and considered its contents when responding to the questions.

***Poverty Attributions.*** We used the same measure as in Study 1. The alpha coefficient for individualistic attributions was .83, and for structural attributions, it was .81.

***Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies.*** We used 20 statements about social protection policies ( $\alpha = .89$ ; e.g., “There is no reason for a person benefiting from social protection policies to be controlled by the authorities”) to assess participants’ general attitude toward social protection policies. Participants responded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and some items were reversed (e.g., “An extensive welfare system only fosters laziness”). Furnham (1985) inspired the



scale, but items were reformulated, and others were adapted so that they measured attitudes toward social protection in general. To verify the scale structure, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis and found that the indicators for the one-factor solution were acceptable (see Supplement C1 in the online supplement). Scale scores were created by averaging across the items. Higher scores indicated a more positive overall predisposition toward protection policies for people in poverty.

*Political Ideology, Objective and Subjective Socioeconomic Status, Gender, and Age.* The same measures were used as Study 1.

## Results

In both conditions, individualistic attributions correlated negatively with attitudes toward social protection policies; conversely, structural attributions correlated positively (see Table 3). All measures and pre-registered analyses can be consulted in Supplement C2 and C3 in the online supplement.

**Table 3**  
*Correlations Between Main Variables in Study 2*

	1	2	3
1. Individualistic attributions	-	.11	-.51**
2. Structural attributions	.07	-	.40**
3. Attitudes toward social protection policies	-.61**	.37**	-

*Note.* Women in poverty condition (above the diagonal) and men in poverty condition (below the diagonal) correlations between variables. \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed) \*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

To test Hypotheses 1 and 3, we performed a t-test for differences between two independent means using SPSS. As in Study 1, we found partial support for Hypothesis 1: women in poverty received less individualistic attributions ( $M = 2.89$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) in comparison with men in poverty,  $t(254) = 3.39$ ,  $p < .001$ , Bca 95% CI [0.14, 0.52],  $d = 0.42$  (see Table 1). However, we did not find statistically significant differences in structural attributions between participants who were presented with a man in poverty and

participants who were presented with a woman in poverty,  $t(254) = -.59, p = .55$ , Bca 95% CI [-0.19, 0.10],  $d = 0.08$ . The data in this study did not support Hypothesis 3—that participants would show more favorable attitudes toward social protection policies when they thought about a woman in poverty compared with those who thought about a man in poverty,  $t(254) = .27, p = .98$ , Bca 95% CI [-0.16, 0.17],  $d = 0.02$ .

To test Hypothesis 4, we performed a mediation analysis using the Hayes' (2017) PROCESS Macro (Model 4) for SPSS. The confidence intervals for indirect effects were based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples. Individualistic attributions for poverty mediated the relationship between perceived target group (men in poverty in Condition 1, and women in poverty in Condition 2) and attitudes toward social protection policies (see Table 4). This indirect effect remained significant after we controlled for political ideology, objective and subjective socioeconomic status, and gender. However, structural attributions did not play a mediating role in the relationship between the perceived group and attitudes toward social protection policies (see Table 4).

Although female participants made more structural attributions and were more in favor of social protection policies, the interaction of participant gender with the target group condition was not significant for either of these variables (see Supplement C4 in the online supplement). That is, our findings were not due to women's in-group favoritism bias.

**Table 4**

*Mediational Analyses of the Role of Individualistic and Structural Attributions in the Relation Between Gender of Poor Target and Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies in Study 2.*

	Individualistic attributions			Structural attributions		
	<i>b</i> (SE)	95%CI	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (SE)	95%CI	<i>p</i>
Condition → Mediator						
	-0.33 (0.10)	[-0.52, -0.14]	< .001	0.05 (0.08)	[-0.10, 0.20]	.554
Mediator → Attitudes toward social protection						
	-0.47 (0.05)	[-0.56, -0.38]	< .001	0.43 (0.07)	[0.31, 0.56]	< .001
Total effect						
	0.00 (0.08)	[-0.17, 0.16]	.978	0.00 (0.08)	[-0.16, 0.16]	.003
Direct effect of gender of poor target						
	-0.15 (0.05)	[-0.30, -0.02]	.028	-0.02 (0.07)	[-0.17, 0.13]	.782
Indirect effect through individualistic attributions						
	0.16 (0.05)	[0.06, 0.30]	-	0.02 (0.03)	[-0.05, 0.08]	-

*Note.* SE = Standard Error; CI = Confidence intervals. Condition 1 = Men in poverty, Condition 2 = Women in poverty.

## Discussion

The results of Study 2 confirmed a gendered pattern of attributions for poverty. Men in poverty were perceived as more responsible for their poverty, which led to worse attitudes toward social protection policies. Individualistic attributions for poverty mediated the relationship between the target group condition (men in poverty vs. women in poverty) and attitudes toward social protection policies. When the participants thought about men in poverty (compared to women in poverty), they made more individualistic attributions, which led to worsened attitudes toward social protection policies. These results fit with previous research on how poverty attributions influence attitudes toward social protection (e.g., Bullock et al., 2003). In Study 2, we confirmed that structural attributions—at least as we have measured them here—did not seem to play a relevant

role for our object of study. Therefore, we did not include them in the results of the following study.

### Study 3

In addition to replicating findings from Study 1 and Study 2 in a general population sample, this study extended our knowledge about the previously observed differential social perception patterns of men and women in poverty. Specifically, we analyzed the roles of stereotypes in terms of agency, communion, and competence insofar as we know that gender-specific and class-specific differences exist in these stereotypical views. We also explored how these stereotypical perceptions of men and women in poverty could be related to attitudes toward social protection policies.

#### Method

##### *Participants and Procedure*

We collected a total of 419 responses from an online survey hosted by Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). Participants were from Spain's general population. Data from 61 participants were removed because they met the exclusion criteria: 17 failed the attention check, 23 reported that Spanish was not their native language, and 21 completed the survey in more than one hour. The final sample was composed of 358 participants: 186 answered a version of the questionnaire that referred to men in poverty (112 women,  $M_{\text{age}} = 27.93$ ,  $SD = 12.69$ ) and 172 answered a version referring to women in poverty (93 women,  $M_{\text{age}} = 27.77$ ,  $SD = 12.38$ ). Sensitivity analysis for differences between two independent groups using G\*Power (Version 3.1; Faul et al., 2007) suggested that we could reasonably detect an effect size as small as  $d = 0.29$  with a power of .80 and  $\alpha = .05$ .

##### *Materials and Measures*

Poverty conditions and most of the measures in Study 2 were used once again. We presented conditions in the same way as in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha was .71 for individualistic attributions for poverty. Although we used the full attributions for poverty scale from Study 1, including structural attributions, we did not hypothesize or analyze

these insofar as our previous results showed that they were not a relevant variable, at least in the form in which they were operationalized here. For attitudes toward social protection policies, Cronbach alpha was .76.

In addition to these measures, we evaluated targets' agency, communion, and competence. Competence ( $\alpha = .85$ ) was measured with five items (i.e., competent, self-confident, independent, competitive, intelligent) based on the stereotype content model (Cuddy et al., 2008). Agency was measured with seven items ( $\alpha = .62$ ; i.e., aggressive, daring, adventurous, courageous, dominant, withstand pressure well, and they don't get nervous). Communion ( $\alpha = .86$ ) was measured with eight items. We used the items for agency and communion from Diekmann and Eagly (2000), which were previously used in Spanish (Moreno-Bella et al., 2022): sensitive, affectionate, nice, gentle, sensible, understanding, kind, warmth, and caring. For these three constructs, participants responded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Specifically, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they believed women (or men) living in poverty were perceived as possessing these traits. Mean scores were used, with higher scores representing greater perceived levels of agency, communion, or competence. We measured political ideology and objective and subjective socioeconomic status with the same measures used in Studies 1 and 2.

## **Results**

Communion, competence, and agency did not correlate with individualist attributions or attitudes toward social protection; however, communion, competence, and agency did correlate with one another (see Table 5). All measures and pre-registered analyses are presented in Supplements D1 and D2 in the online supplement. Correlations among all variables are presented in Supplement D3 in the online supplement.

**Table 5***Correlations Between Main Variables in Study 3*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Individualistic attributions	-	-.55**	.08	.09	.12
2. Attitudes toward social protection	-.47**	-	-.8	-.13	-.05
3. Communion	.06	.00	-	.64**	.57**
4. Competence	-.08	.04	.62**	-	.77**
5. Agency	-.01	.02	.56**	.79**	-

*Note.* correlations between variables in women in poverty condition (above the diagonal) and men in poverty condition (below the diagonal). \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed) \*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

### Preliminary Analyses

First, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the factorial structure of our measure of stereotypes. We used the MVN package (Korkmaz et al., 2014) to test for multivariate normality, and we used the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) to conduct the CFA, both in R (R Core Team, 2020). The indicators we achieved, using maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors for a three-factor structure, were acceptable,  $X^2 = 378.547$ ,  $df = 167$ , CFI = .91, TLI = .89, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06 (see Supplement D4 in the online supplement for more details about the CFA process as well as other indicators). We conducted this analysis because the literature on agency, communion, and the stereotype content model often treats competition and agency as similar dimensions (Cuddy et al., 2008), although some differences and other distinct classifications have been proposed (Abele et al., 2016).

### Preregistered Analyses

As in Studies 1 and 2, we performed a t-test for differences between two independent means using SPSS. Replicating our findings in Studies 1 and 2, we found support for Hypothesis 1: women in poverty received less individualistic attributions in

comparison with men in poverty,  $t(356) = 4.47, p < .001$ , Bca 95% CI [0.18, 0.45],  $d = 0.47$  (see Table 1 for the means and standard deviations for these measures). Hypothesis 3 was supported in this study: participants who completed the survey referring to women in poverty showed more favorable attitudes toward social protection policies compared with participants who completed the survey referring to men in poverty,  $t(356) = -2.99, p = .003$ , Bca 95% CI [-0.30, -0.06],  $d = 0.32$ .

Regarding differences in communion scores (Hypothesis 5a), women in poverty were perceived as being more communal compared with men in poverty,  $t(356) = -4.72, p < .001$ , Bca 95% CI [-0.48, -0.20],  $d = 0.50$ . We found no significant differences in the agency scores (Hypothesis 5b) between men and women in poverty,  $t(356) = -1.74, p = .08$ , Bca 95% CI [-0.24, 0.02],  $d = 0.18$ . Hypothesis 5c was also not confirmed: we found differences in competence between men and women in poverty, but these differences were in the opposite direction than we had hypothesized. Women in poverty were perceived as more competent than men in poverty,  $t(356) = -2.82, p = .005$ , Bca 95% CI [-0.47, -0.08],  $d = 0.30$ .

We performed a mediation analysis using PROCESS (Model 4) Macro (Hayes, 2017) for SPSS. The confidence intervals for indirect effects were based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples to test Hypothesis 4. As we expected, and replicating the findings in Study 2, individualistic attributions for poverty mediated the relationship between the perceived group (men in poverty in Condition 1, women in poverty in Condition 2) and attitudes toward social protection policies (see Table 6). This effect remained significant even after we controlled for political ideology, objective and subjective socioeconomic status, and gender. As in Study 2, the interaction between the participant's gender and the experimental condition was not significant for these variables' scores (see Supplement D5 in the online supplement).

**Table 6**

*Mediational Analyses of the Role of Individualistic Attributions in the Relation Between Gender of Poor Target and Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies in Study 3.*

	<i>b</i> (SE)	95%CI	<i>p</i>
Condition → Individualistic attributions	-0.31 (0.07)	[-0.45, -0.18]	< .001
Individualistic attributions → Attitudes toward social protection	-0.43 (0.04)	[-0.51, -0.35]	< .001
Total effect	0.18 (0.06)	[0.06, 0.30]	.003
Direct effect of gender of poor target	0.04 (0.05)	[-0.06, 0.15]	.411
Indirect effect through individualistic attributions	0.14 (0.03)	[0.06, 0.30]	-

*Note.* SE = Standard Error; CI = Confidence intervals. Condition 1 = Men in poverty, Condition 2 = Women in poverty.

We tested whether stereotypical traits mediated the relationship between the perceived target and attitudes toward social protection policies. As expected, considering the correlations presented in Table 5, none of the three traits showed a significant mediating role in this relationship. For competence, the indirect effect was  $b = -.02$ , Bca CI [-.05, .00]; for communion the indirect effect was  $b = -.02$ , Bca CI [-.06, .01]; and for agency, the indirect effect was  $b = -.01$ , Bca CI [-.05, .01].

## Discussion

Consistent with the results from Studies 1 and 2, women in poverty were seen as less responsible for their situations, and the participants reported more support for social protection policies for them. Again, individualistic attributions mediated the relationship between the poverty condition (men in poverty vs. women in poverty) and attitudes toward social protection policies. That is, when the participants thought about women in poverty, they made less individualistic attributions, which led to better attitudes toward



social protection policies. We found a similar pattern in Study 1, although with a relatively different dependent variable. In line with the previous literature about the stereotypes of women and men in general, women in poverty were perceived as more communal than men in poverty. Somewhat surprisingly, women in poverty were also perceived as more competent than men in poverty. This might make sense in line with other research showing how stereotype activation is context dependent (De Lemus et al., 2014), so it is possible that the stereotype varies depending on the group of men or the context in which they exist. We did not find significant differences in agency scores. These results partially fit with previous research on gender stereotypes, and they reinforced and deepened the pattern found in Study 2.

It should be noted that our studies focused on specific groups of women and men, namely those living in poverty. Gender stereotypes and roles, as well as widely held beliefs about poverty, are likely to influence the perceptions of these groups. As we suggested in the introduction, the public sphere has traditionally been inhabited by men, whereas women were relegated to the domestic sphere. This could lead one to think that the situations of men in poverty could be due to internal factors; thus, one might stereotypically perceive these men as less competent. Our results in Studies 2 and 3 suggest that the overall view of men with few resources, in terms of stereotypes and causal attributions, is more negative compared with the view of women in the same situation. However, the lack of a relationship between these stereotypical dimensions and individualistic attributions, as well as between stereotypical dimensions and attitudes toward social protection policies, suggests that these stereotypes do not seem to play an important role in the perceptions of women in poverty. It also suggests that they play a much more complex role than we have discussed here.

### **General Discussion**

The fundamental contribution of this article is twofold. First, we show that there are differences in perceptions of men and women in poverty (as targets) on several variables relevant both to ending poverty (e.g., poverty attributions and attitudes towards

social protection) and to understanding how these groups (men and women in poverty) relate to each other (e.g., ambivalent classism and stereotype content). Second, we show the role of attributions for poverty as a causal mechanism to explain differences in support for social protection as a function of the gender of people in poverty.

Our studies provide convincing evidence that perceptions and attitudes toward people in poverty differ depending on whether the person is a man or a woman. Across three studies, we consistently showed that people made more individualistic causal attributions about men in poverty compared to women in poverty. In addition, stronger individualistic attitudes led to less support toward social protection policies when the targets were men (Studies 2 and 3), and men were perceived as using their assistance less effectively than women (Study 1). This is consistent with previous research on how people differentiate between types of people in poverty when attributing responsibility for their situations (e.g., Henry et al., 2004). It is also consistent with how attributions for poverty influence attitudes toward social policies (see for example Bullock et al., 2003; van Oorschot, 2000). Apparently, the weaker individualistic attributions toward women in poverty seem to have positive consequences, because women are seen as more deserving of social policies to alleviate their poverty. However, these less individualistic attributions to women could have a negative side: because poverty is not perceived to depend on the women themselves, it would be logical to think that they cannot do much to get out of their situations. It is important to note that this is not to suggest that women are inherently more protected from poverty or any similar assumptions. As stated in the introduction, poverty disproportionately affects women, who represent the majority of the world's poor. Furthermore, despite an increase in women's labor market participation and a narrowing of the income gap, significant class differences persist among women, as well as disparities in the impact of welfare policies as a function of their social class (Mandel, 2012). Thus, while women in poverty may be perceived more positively, this does not necessarily translate into improved material circumstances. The same mechanisms that perpetuate differences in power and income persist. These views shape

people's perceptions, but they do not necessarily change the structural inequalities that women and other marginalized groups face by themselves. In fact, previous research has highlighted how gender stereotypes can impact the advancement of women in their careers (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021).

As we have suggested, our findings can be understood, at least in part, as a logical corollary of the male breadwinner model and the exclusion of women from the productive sphere outside of the household (Pfau-Effinger, 2004). This model assigns different roles related to social reproduction, especially in capitalist societies, where social reproduction enables sustained capital accumulation (Fraser, 2016; Laslett & Brenner, 1989). If a traditional role for men is to provide the resources needed to sustain life, which in modern society is mainly achieved through paid work, it appears more likely that his failure to obtain these resources would be due to some inherent failure. However, by the same logic, when men are financially successful (compared with when women are), this also would be more likely attributed to their inner qualities, which is suggested by studies showing that men's success is more likely to be attributed to internal factors, when it comes to leadership in masculine or unspecified industries (García-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2009). Indeed, this pattern is consistent with the results we obtained in Studies 1 and 2. Women in poverty were perceived as being more communal compared with men in poverty, which fits with the previous literature on gender stereotypes (e.g., Eagly et al., 2020). Women in poverty were also perceived as more competent, which did not fit with the literature on gender stereotypes, where "typical" men have generally been stereotyped as more competent (Eckes, 2002; Fiske et al., 2002). However, the situation may moderate this view (De Lemus et al., 2014). In addition, in Study 1, the participants showed more hostile classist and protective paternalist attitudes toward men in poverty compared with women in poverty; men were perceived as needing to be more closely supervised and unable to obtain or manage their own resources (Jordan et al., 2021). This is also consistent with research showing more negative attitudes exist toward people who do not meet the expectations of the social roles they should perform (e.g., Glick et al., 1997).

We argue that blaming men in poverty to a greater extent for their situations, as well as viewing them as more incompetent and in need of external control over their lives, may be due at least partly to a simmering and long-standing social dynamic. This dynamic has historically excluded women from the public and productive sphere, relegating them to a position of subordination. However, our studies also showed how this gendered division of social tasks has negative consequences for men who do not fulfil the expectations of their social role in the production process (i.e., those who are disadvantaged in terms of income). This would also match the psychological literature illustrating how the social construction of what it means to be a man, as well as its internalization, is an important factor in understanding the world as synthesized by the concept of precarious manhood (Vandello et al., 2008; Vandello & Bosson, 2013). This in turn is related to a lower inclination to confront sexual prejudice (Kroeper et al., 2014), among other issues. That is, although men benefit to a greater extent from the privileged position they occupy in the system due to their gender, they are also restricted by its gender mandates and treated accordingly. This is especially true for those who do not comply with the normative ideals of how they should fit into the relations of production. We interpret our results in this sense, but other ways of making sense of them are possible. In this series of studies, we have not tested this broad theoretical framework, as our objective was different. Thus, we merely propose this possible interpretation in a broader sociohistorical context. However, it is by no means the only possibility or the exclusive explanation for our results.

Despite the changing nature of gender stereotypes in the Spanish context over time, certain disparities persist. In a study by Moya and Moya-Garófano (2021), changes in gender stereotypes related to traits, role behaviors, occupations, and physical characteristics were analyzed using data collected in 1985 and 2018. The results indicated that while some stereotypes had shifted, the perception of women as more communal persisted. On the other hand, research has indicated that although men and women are generally perceived as more similar in terms of feminine characteristics, they still diverge

significantly with regards to masculine traits (López-Zafra & García-Retamero, 2021). Although this provides a approximation of stereotypes and gender role ideologies, it is important to note that our study focuses on specific groups (e.g., those experiencing poverty) and there may not be a direct application of these stereotypes to these populations. Despite significant progress in gender equality in recent years, there are still areas related to our work where these advancements have been minimal. For instance, persistent gender inequalities can be observed in the areas of caregiving responsibilities, workforce participation, and income distribution (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2019).

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

As in any research study, certain limitations should be highlighted. A limitation of Study 2 was its undergraduate student sample, which may affect the generalizability of the results (although Studies 1 and 3 were conducted with samples drawn from the general population). Still, we found consistent evidence that both social perceptions and attitudes toward social protection were more positive when thinking about women in poverty compared to men. In Study 1, our measure for preferences for dependency- or autonomy-oriented protection policies did not work adequately. We believe that this topic is relevant for studying possible differences in the perceptions of women and men in poverty, as well as other groups of people with few resources. Thus, future research should focus on developing reliable measures for this variable. In addition, we used a general measure of attitudes toward social protection policies, not focused on specific aspects or policies. It would be important for future research to build upon these findings and further explore the potential effects on various aspects of social protection. We have solely examined perceptions of individuals identifying as women and men, thus concentrating on the gender binary. It is important that future research expands on this work to include gender groups beyond the binary.

Our research was also limited by examining poverty perceptions with a generic focus on “men” and “women” in poverty. However, other salient characteristics such as

ethnicity or disability may also shape how specific groups are perceived. For example, as evidenced by prior research (Urbiola et al., 2022), there may be an interplay between ethnicity and social class that affects prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors. Future research should explore these intersections and their potential influence on poverty attributions and perceptions. Similarly, the results may also vary manipulating the type of woman in poverty. “Good” women, those that represent more what a stereotypical woman should be like (e.g., caregiver, etc.), receive more benevolent treatment whereas women who defy the gender rules are treated in a more hostile manner (Glick et al., 1997). Additionally, it is known that demonstrating a certain level of compliance and adherence to instructions can increase the perception of deservingness for those in need of help (van Oorschot, 2000). It would be valuable to investigate how perceptions of different subtypes of women may vary based on these factors.

We have framed our findings within a broader socio-historical explanation about the male breadwinner model and the exclusion of women from the productive sphere outside of the household. However, we did not test this empirically in our study. More theorizing and development of tools to capture these constructs is needed in the future to advance our understanding of poverty perception.

### **Practice Implications**

This research provides the first experimental evidence showing that attitudes toward social protection policies vary as a function of the gender of the target person in poverty, which has important practical implications. Popular and media images of poverty may play an important role in the perception of this phenomenon, as they can stress some aspects of poverty and ignore others (Bullock et al., 2001). For instance, when the media use images of homeless men to garner support for programs and policies aimed at combating poverty, negative stereotypes and attributions about their situation are likely to be reinforced, such as blaming them more for their situation. As a result, it is plausible that such policies may be viewed less favorably, given previous research indicating that attitudes toward homelessness are generally more negative (Cuddy et al., 2008), and our

own findings which suggest that men are disproportionately held responsible for their poverty condition.

In a similar way, our research is relevant for social organizations, political parties, or emancipation movements in general, specially to the framing of their proposals for protection and social change, especially for proposals related to gender differences and economic resources. Given that poverty disproportionately affects women, and that society holds a less negative view of women experiencing poverty, it may be beneficial to propose targeted policies to improve their situation. Alternatively, general policies could be proposed with a detailed explanation of how they will specifically benefit women in poverty, as our research suggests that such policies are viewed more favorably when directed towards women. This approach recognizes that society tends to attribute less responsibility to women for their economic circumstances and generally holds a less negative attitude towards social protection for women in need.

For interventions aimed at raising awareness of poverty and encouraging collective participation to end poverty, as well as raising awareness of gender inequalities and their pernicious effects, this work may provide some helpful insights. Specifically, we highlight how these explanations of poverty, which are a sociohistorical product, relate to social roles, stereotypes, class attitudes, and ultimately to attitudes toward protection policies that influence whether they are incorporated into political priorities. For example, these interventions should focus on emphasizing the structural causes of poverty, for both men and women, to hold both groups less accountable. Furthermore, the focus should be on the origin of this differentiated gender perception: the stereotypical beliefs about gender and the associated expectations.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, our research shows that women and men in poverty are perceived differently. Specifically, men are viewed as more personally responsible for being poor than women. This greater individualistic attribution of responsibility for being poor, in turn, was linked to less support for social protection policies when the recipients are men.

Moreover, men are perceived as less communal and less competent, in addition to being the object of hostile classist and paternalistic attitudes to a greater extent than women. Traditional gender roles typically assign caregiving and nurturing tasks to women, while breadwinning and provider roles are assigned to men. Our findings indicate that men who fail to fulfill their traditional role as “providers” receive more negative evaluations. However, it is important to note that this perception does not necessarily reflect reality, as women still tend to experience poverty at a higher rate than men.

### Data Availability

All materials, measures, databases, and preregistration forms for our studies can be found at [https://osf.io/c7qfw/?view\\_only=17e978b6cff640d4b06114c96fae0f77](https://osf.io/c7qfw/?view_only=17e978b6cff640d4b06114c96fae0f77).

### References

- Abele, A. E., Hauke, N., Peters, K., Louvet, E., Szymkow, A., & Duan, Y. (2016). Facets of the fundamental content dimensions: Agency with competence and assertiveness—Communion with warmth and morality. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 1810. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01810>
- Alcañiz-Colomer, J., Moya, M., & Valor-Segura, I. (2022). Not all poor are equal: the perpetuation of poverty through blaming those who have been poor all their lives. *Current Psychology*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03804-6>
- Alston, J. P., & Dean, K. I. (1972). Socioeconomic factors associated with attitudes toward welfare recipients and the causes of poverty. *Social Service Review*, 46(1), 13-23. <https://doi.org/10.1086/642795>
- Álvarez, K., van Leeuwen, E., Montenegro-Montenegro, E., & van Vugt, M. (2018). Empowering the poor: A field study of the social psychological consequences of receiving autonomy or dependency aid in Panama. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 57(2), 327-345. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12234>



- Appelbaum, L. D. (2001). The influence of perceived deservingness on policy decisions regarding aid to the poor. *Political Psychology*, 22(3), 419-442.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00248>
- Bai, J., Xu, B. X., Yang, S. L., & Guo, Y. Y. (2022). Why are higher-class individuals less supportive of redistribution? The mediating role of attributions for rich-poor gap. *Current Psychology*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02836-2>
- Blekesaune, M., & Quadagno, J. (2003). Public attitudes toward welfare state policies: A comparative analysis of 24 nations. *European Sociological Review*, 19(5), 415-427.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/19.5.415>
- Brandt, M. J., & Reyna, C. (2011). Stereotypes as attributions. In E. L. Simon (Ed.), *Psychology of stereotypes* (pp. 47-80). Nova.
- Brooks, C., & Manza, J. (2006). Why do welfare states persist? *The Journal of Politics*, 68(4), 816-827. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00472.x>
- Bullock, H. E., Fraser Wyche, K., & Williams, W. R. (2001). Media images of the poor. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(2), 229-246. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00210>
- Bullock, H. E., Williams, W. R., & Limbert, W. M. (2003). Predicting support for welfare policies: The impact of attributions and beliefs about inequality. *Journal of Poverty*, 7(3), 35-56. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J134v07n03\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J134v07n03_03)
- Burstein, P. (2003). The impact of public opinion on public policy: A review and an agenda. *Political Research Quarterly*, 56(1), 29-40.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F106591290305600103>
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Routledge Academic.

- Connor, R. A., & Fiske, S. T. (2019). Not minding the gap: How hostile sexism encourages choice explanations for the gender income gap. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 43(1), 22-36. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0361684318815468>
- Cozzarelli, C., Tagler, M. J., & Wilkinson, A. V. (2002). Do middle-class students perceive poor women and poor men differently?. *Sex Roles*, 47(11), 519-529. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022038200071>
- Cozzarelli, C., Wilkinson, A. V., & Tagler, M. J. (2001). Attitudes toward the poor and attributions for poverty. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(2), 207-227. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00209>
- Cuddy, A. J., Fiske, S. T., & Glick, P. (2008). Warmth and competence as universal dimensions of social perception: The stereotype content model and the BIAS map. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 40, 61-149. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(07\)00002-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(07)00002-0)
- Davidai, S. (2018). Why do Americans believe in economic mobility? Economic inequality, external attributions of wealth and poverty, and the belief in economic mobility. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 79, 138–148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.07.012>.
- Diekmann, A. B., & Eagly, A. H. (2000). Stereotypes as dynamic constructs: Women and men of the past, present, and future. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(10), 1171–1188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167200262001>
- De Lemus, S., Moya, M., & Glick, P. (2010). When contact correlates with prejudice: Adolescents' romantic relationship experience predicts greater benevolent sexism in boys and hostile sexism in girls. *Sex Roles*, 63(3-4), 214-225. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-013-0328-6>
- Durante, F., Fiske, S. T., Kervyn, N., Cuddy, A. J. C., Akande, A. (D.), Adetoun, B. E., Adewuyi, M. F., Tserere, M. M., Ramiah, A. A., Mastor, K. A., Barlow, F. K., Bonn, G., Tafarodi, R. W., Bosak, J., Cairns, E., Doherty, C., Capozza, D.,

- Chandran, A., Chrysochoou, X., . . . Storari, C. C. (2013). Nations' income inequality predicts ambivalence in stereotype content: How societies mind the gap. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(4), 726-746.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12005>
- Durante, F., Tablante, C. B., & Fiske, S. T. (2017). Poor but warm, rich but cold (and competent): Social classes in the stereotype content model. *Journal of Social Issues*, 73(1), 138-157. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12208>
- Eagly, A. H., Nater, C., Miller, D. I., Kaufmann, M., & Sczesny, S. (2020). Gender stereotypes have changed: A cross-temporal meta-analysis of U.S. public opinion polls from 1946 to 2018. *American Psychologist*, 75(3), 301–315. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000494>
- Eckes, T. (2002). Paternalistic and envious gender stereotypes: Testing predictions from the stereotype content model. *Sex Roles*, 47(3), 99-114.  
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021020920715>
- European Institute for Gender Equality. (2019). Gender Equality Index, EIGE, Vilnius. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index>
- Expósito, F., Moya, M. C., & Glick, P. (1998). Sexismo ambivalente: Medición y correlatos. *Revista de Psicología social*, 13(2), 159-169.  
<https://doi.org/10.1174/021347498760350641>
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, AG. & Buchner, A. (2007). G\*Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences. *Behavior Research Methods* 39, 175–191.  
<https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03193146>
- Feagin, J. R. (1972). Poverty: We still believe that God helps those who help themselves. *Psychology Today*, 6(6), 101-110.
- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived

- status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 878–902. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.82.6.878>
- FOESSA. (2021). *Análisis y Perspectivas 2021: Sociedad expulsada y derecho a ingresos*. Fundación FOESSA. <https://www.caritas.es/main-files/uploads/2021/10/analisis-y-perspectivas-2021.pdf>
- Fraser, N. (2016). Contradictions of capital and care. *New Left Review* 100, 99-117. Available at: <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii100/articles/nancy-fraser-contradictions-of-capital-and-care>
- Furnham, A. (1982). Why are the poor always with us? Explanations for poverty in Britain. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 21(4), 311-322. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1982.tb00553.x>
- Furnham, A. (1985). The determinants of attitudes towards social security recipients. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 24(1), 19-27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1985.tb00656.x>
- García-Retamero, R., & López-Zafra, E. (2009). Causal attributions about feminine and leadership roles: A cross-cultural comparison. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 40(3), 492-509. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022108330991>
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1996). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(3), 491–512. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.3.491>
- Glick, P., Diebold, J., Bailey-Werner, B., & Zhu, L. (1997). The two faces of Adam: Ambivalent sexism and polarized attitudes toward women. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23(12), 1323-1334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672972312009>
- Hasenfeld, Y., & Rafferty, J. A. (1989). The determinants of public attitudes toward the welfare state. *Social Forces*, 67(4), 1027-1048. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/67.4.1027>

- Hayes, A. F. (2017). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. Guilford publications.
- Henry, P. J., Reyna, C., & Weiner, B. (2004). Hate welfare but help the poor: How the attributional content of stereotypes explains the paradox of reactions to the destitute in America. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 34(1), 34-58.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2004.tb02536.x>
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2020a) *Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida (ECV)*. Madrid: Instituto Nacional de Estadística. Available at: <https://www.ine.es>
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2020b) *Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA)*. Madrid: Instituto Nacional de Estadística. Available at: <https://www.ine.es>
- Jordan, J. A., Lawler, J. R., & Bosson, J. K. (2021). Ambivalent classism: The importance of assessing hostile and benevolent ideologies about poor people. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 43(1), 46-67.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01973533.2020.1828084>
- Korkmaz, S., Goksuluk, D., Zararsiz, G. (2014) MVN: An R package for assessing multivariate normality. *The R Journal*. 6(2), 151-162.  
<https://doi.org/10.32614/RJ-2014-031>
- Kroeper, K. M., Sanchez, D. T., & Himmelstein, M. S. (2014). Heterosexual men's confrontation of sexual prejudice: The role of precarious manhood. *Sex Roles*, 70(1-2), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-013-0306-z>
- Laslett, B., & Brenner, J. (1989). Gender and social reproduction: Historical perspectives. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 15(1), 381-404.  
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.15.080189.002121>
- Lepianka, D., Gelissen, J., & Van Oorschot, W. (2010). Popular explanations of poverty in Europe: Effects of contextual and individual characteristics across 28 European countries. *Acta Sociologica*, 53(1), 53-72.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0001699309357842>

- López-Zafra, E., & García-Retamero, R. (2021). Are gender stereotypes changing over time? A cross-temporal analysis of perceptions about gender stereotypes in Spain. *International Journal of Social Psychology*, 36(2), 330-354.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02134748.2021.1882227>
- Lovakov, A., & Agadullina, E. R. (2021). Empirically derived guidelines for effect size interpretation in social psychology. *European Journal of Social Psychology*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2752>
- Mandel, H. (2012). Winners and losers: The consequences of welfare state policies for gender wage inequality. *European Sociological Review*, 28(2), 241-262.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcq061>
- Moreno-Bella, E., Willis, G. B., Quiroga-Garza, A., & Moya, M. (2022). Economic inequality shapes the agency–communion content of gender stereotypes. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13684302221095338>
- Moya, M. C., & Moya-Garófano, A. (2021). Evolution of gender stereotypes in Spain: From 1985 to 2018. *Psicothema*, 33(1), 53-59.  
<https://doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2020.328>
- Nadler, A. (1997). Autonomous and dependent help seeking: Personality characteristics and the seeking of help. In B. Sarason, I. Sarason, & R. G. Pierce (Eds.), *Handbook of personality and social support* (pp. 258–302). Plenum.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-1843-7\\_17](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-1843-7_17)
- Nadler, A. (2002). Inter-group helping relations as power relations: Maintaining or challenging social dominance between groups through helping. *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(3), 487-502. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-4560.00272>
- Pfau-Effinger, B. (2004). Socio-historical paths of the male breadwinner model—an explanation of cross-national differences. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 55(3), 377-399. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2004.00025.x>

- Piff, P. K., Kraus, M. W., Côté, S., Cheng, B. H., & Keltner, D. (2010). Having less, giving more: The influence of social class on prosocial behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99(5), 771-784. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020092>
- Piff, P. K., Wiwad, D., Robinson, A. R., Aknin, L. B., Mercier, B., & Shariff, A. (2020). Shifting attributions for poverty motivates opposition to inequality and enhances egalitarianism. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(5), 496-505. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0835-8>
- Plant, E. A., Hyde, J. S., Keltner, D., & Devine, P. G. (2000). The gender stereotyping of emotions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 24(1), 81-92. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2000.tb01024.x>
- R Core Team (2020). *R: A language and environment for statistical computing*. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria. URL: <https://www.R-project.org/>
- Rosseel, Y. (2012). lavaan: An R package for structural equation modeling. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 48(2), 1-36. URL: <https://www.jstatsoft.org/v48/i02/>
- Sainz, M., Lobato, R., Jiménez-Moya, G. (2021). Spanish adaptation of the Ambivalent Classism Inventory (ACI). *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología*, 53, 164-171. <https://doi.org/10.14349/rlp.2021.v53.18>
- Sainz, M., Loughnan, S., Martínez, R., Moya, M., & Rodríguez-Bailón, R. (2020). Dehumanization of socioeconomically disadvantaged groups decreases support for welfare policies via perceived wastefulness. *International Review of Social Psychology*, 33(1), 12, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.5334/irsp.414>
- Shepherd, S., & Campbell, T. (2020). The effect of egocentric taste judgments on stereotyping of welfare recipients and attitudes toward welfare policy. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 39(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0743915618820925>

- Tabassum, N., & Nayak, B. S. (2021). Gender stereotypes and their impact on women's career progressions from a managerial perspective. *IIM Kozhikode Society & Management Review*, 10(2), 192-208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2277975220975513>
- Urbiola, A., Navas, M., Carmona, C. *et al.* Social Class also Matters: The Effects of Social Class, Ethnicity, and their Interaction on Prejudice and Discrimination Toward Roma. *Race and Social Problems* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-022-09368-1>
- van Oorschot, W. (2000). Who should get what, and why? On deservingness criteria and the conditionality of solidarity among the public. *Policy & Politics*, 28(1), 33-48. <https://doi.org/10.1332/0305573002500811>
- Vandello, J. A., & Bosson, J. K. (2013). Hard won and easily lost: A review and synthesis of theory and research on precarious manhood. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 14(2), 101-113. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029826>
- Vandello, J. A., Bosson, J. K., Cohen, D., Burnaford, R. M., & Weaver, J. R. (2008). Precarious manhood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(6), 1325-1339. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012453>
- Weiner, B., Osborne, D., & Rudolph, U. (2011). An attributional analysis of reactions to poverty: The political ideology of the giver and the perceived morality of the receiver. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(2), 199-213. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1088868310387615>



## Chapter 5.

Social Justice Orientations: Exploring Their Impact on Poverty

Attributions and Support for Social Protection

# **Social Justice Orientations: Exploring Their Impact on Poverty Attributions and Support for Social Protection**

Joaquín Alcañiz-Colomer<sup>1,2</sup>, Inmaculada Valor-Segura<sup>1, 2</sup>, and Miguel Moya<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Granada, Department of Social Psychology, Granada, Spain.

<sup>2</sup>Research Centre in Mind, Brain, and Behavior (CIMCYC), Granada, Spain

This paper has been submitted for peer review.

## Abstract

Distributive justice remains a central issue in contemporary welfare states, even more during times of economic hardship and social uncertainty. In this paper, we analyze how attitudes toward the principles of normative distributive justice (equality, need, equity, and entitlement) are related to support for the redistribution of resources (Study 2) and attitudes toward social protection policies (studies 1 and 3). In Study 1 ( $N = 325$ ), we found that equality and need positively predicted attitudes toward social protection policies while equity and entitlement negatively predicted these attitudes. In Study 2 ( $N = 49,519$ ), using data from Round 9 of the European Social Survey, we replicated this linking normative orientation toward different distributive justice principles with support for redistribution. We replicated these results in Study 3 ( $N = 494$ ). In addition, we explored the role of attributions for poverty in the relationship found in Studies 1 and 2. Attributions for poverty mediated the relationship between orientations toward justice principles and attitudes toward social protection policies.

**Key words:** Justice principles, attributions for poverty, public policy attitudes, support for redistribution, social justice.

In Western societies, there is a wide debate about what governments should do to help the most disadvantaged people or to reduce the wide economic inequality that exists in these societies. Citizens hold different views on the role the state should play in reducing inequality and poverty (Rudolph & Evans, 2005; Steele & Breznau, 2019). One key factor underlying different positions on this issue is the conception of justice that people have, specifically the conception of distributive justice. Theories of distributive justice specify the conditions under which particular forms of the distribution of resources in society are perceived to be “just” or “fair” (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983; Deutsch, 1975). In the present research, we focus on how these principles of social or distributive justice influence attitudes toward public policies for coping with inequality and distributing resources among citizens. In modern welfare states these public policies are among the most powerful instrument to distributing resources. We adopt a social psychological approach that is focused on subjective aspects, that is, the way individuals think and feel about justice (Gollwitzer & van Prooijen, 2016).

### **Principles of Distributive Justice**

Generally, there is a consensus in social psychological literature on identifying three principles of justice, following the classification proposed by Deutsch (1975): equality, need, and equity.

While these principles can be extended to diverse contexts of sharing or exchange (e.g., a school classroom), our focus remains on their application to the distribution of resources within a particular society. In the case of resources’ distribution among the people who belong to the same country or society, equality refers to the even redistribution of resources equally among citizens (i.e., each citizen receives the same amount of resources). The principle of need refers to providing resources only to those who do not meet the minimum standard of subsistence, or whoever needs them most. Equity involves distributing resources so that those who contribute more receive more (Hülle et al., 2018). Other principles have been proposed, such as entitlement, which refers to distribution of resources based on ascriptive, or status characteristics acquired

in the past; for instance it will be considered fair if individuals from affluent or esteemed families might possess advantages stemming from their background (Konow, 2003). Although entitlement has recently been criticized for the difficulties in distinguishing it from other principles at the empirical level (Van Hootegem et al., 2021), we have decided to include it. Despite its potential relationship to the concept of equity, it possesses significant nuances at a theoretical level, focusing on privileges or status acquired in the past. We cannot dismiss the possibility that this is an important factor in explaining distinctive preferences toward social protection policies.

We can distinguish two broad approaches regarding how distributive justice principles are related with welfare protection policies. First, some researchers have studied public preferences for distributive principles at an abstract level, analyzing individuals' attitudes toward the principles of justice in general, that is, without applying these principles to any particular policy (e.g., unemployment benefits) or group (Arts & Gelissen, 2001; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Marshall et al., 1999). Second, another line of research has focused on how preferences for the principles of justice vary depending on contextual factors. For instance, some principles, such as equity, are considered appropriate in the world of work, while others, such as equality, are considered more appropriate in interpersonal or family relationships (Scott & Bornstein, 2009). In the specific case of social protection policies, preferred principles of justice vary according to the welfare program referred to, as well as the target of these programs (Reeskens & Van Oorschot, 2013; Van Hootegem et al., 2020). Our research aligns with the first approach, as the measure we employ centers around attitudes toward abstract principles of resource allocation. This measure is not tethered to any particular context but rather captures individuals' overarching beliefs about how resources should be distributed in a broader sense.

A limitation of studies conducted within these two approaches, mostly based on international databases, is their reliance on limited justice principle measures. For example, Reeskens and Van Oorschot (2013), using data from the 2008 European Social

Survey wave, operationalized preferences for each justice principle based on three potential responses to whether higher earners should receive higher (unemployment/pension) benefits. The three potential answers, and the justice principle they represented, were: higher earners should receive more (equity); high and low earners should receive the same amount (equality); and lower earners should receive more (need). While this approach provides valuable insights, it doesn't fully capture the diversity and coexistence of preferences for justice criteria and how they are applied.

### **Attributions for Poverty**

The issue of whether we attribute responsibility for their situation to the people with less resources is related with the principles of distributive justice and with a significant range of outcomes. Two broad types of causal explanations of poverty, based on the locus of control of the person in poverty (i.e., whether the causes of the situation lie within or outside individuals), can be distinguished: people may attribute the responsibility for their poverty to the person in that situation—individualistic attributions—or to wider social causes—structural attributions (Feather, 1974; Furnham, 1982; Kluegel & Smith, 2017). We have chosen to primarily focus on the distinction between individualistic and structural attributions, which has been explored in the context of recent social psychology research (e.g., Piff et al., 2020; Wiwad et al., 2021), and not including other dimensions such as cultural or fatalistic attributions. Indeed, there are various ways of categorizing attributions. For instance, research conducted from a more sociological perspective has adopted a fourfold division, distinguishing between individual blame, individual fate, social blame, or social fate (Marquis and Rosset, 2021; van Oorschot and Halman, 2000). While acknowledging the relevance of these additional dimensions, research has reported mixed findings for these dimensions (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Furnham, 1982). For instance, recent studies conducted in Spain have encountered challenges in establishing robust empirical evidence for cultural and fatalistic attributions (Sainz et al., 2020; Sainz et al., 2023).

## **Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies and Resource Redistribution**

Attitudes toward social protection policies and welfare programs hold significant relevance in our social context, especially during times of economic and social hardship (Meuleman et al., 2020). Politicians and the public policies they implement reflect public policy preferences (Brooks & Manza, 2007), so it is essential to study the factors that influence these preferences, as social justice orientations and attributions for poverty in our research. Although it is true that policies themselves can also influence citizen attitudes (e.g., Campbell, 2012), and that this relationship may be moderated by other variables, -such as the federal or centralist state's- (e.g., Wlezien & Soroka, 2012), we have chosen to focus on only one of these possible relationships, although we recognize the importance of the others.

In our case, we will focus on general attitudes toward assistance with a focus on people experiencing poverty without zooming on any specific policy (in our studies 1 and 3). These general attitudes toward social protection policies are closely related to support for redistribution, another concept that refers to those beliefs about the active role and responsibility of the state in the allocation of resources in a nation or state to reduce inequality. This variable, attitudes toward redistribution, has been used extensively both in comparative welfare state research (Kulin & Svallfors, 2013) and in the study of individual attitudes toward social protection (Dawtry et al., 2015), and will be analyzed in Study 2.

### **Distributive Justice Principles, Attributions for Poverty, and Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies**

Principles of justice can be directly related to attitudes toward social protection policies. Reeskens and Van Oorschot (2013) showed that European citizens vary in their preference for different principles of justice depending on the welfare program target and the nature of target's need: equality was preferred for less predictable and controllable social risks (which correspond to an external locus of control, analogous to structural attributions), like unemployment; equity was preferred for predictable social risks (an

internal locus of control, resembling individualistic attributions), like pension schemes. Recently, Van Hootehem et al. (2020) investigated distributive justice preferences (in terms of equality, need, and equity) in several welfare state domains (healthcare, pensions, and unemployment benefits), differentiating them by their varying degrees of predictability, locus of control (e.g., whether the causes of the situation lie within or outside individuals), and prevalence. Their results indicated that equality was the most popular principle in all welfare domains and that, after this, citizens prefer the equity principle for pensions and the need principle for unemployment benefits. Andress and Heien (2001) showed that need positively predicted preferences for broader government intervention (including here the responsibility to reduce income differences) across East and West Germany, Norway, and the U.S. Similarly, Lewin-Epstein et al. (2003) found that equality and need predicted support for redistribution in Israel. While these approaches are relevant and fruitful, it must be pointed out that researchers establish the locus of control of the different social risks (e.g., unemployment or becoming a pensioner) without directly querying participants. This may not capture individual variability in causal inferences about the nature of these different situations. For instance, in the context of unemployment, people vary in the degree to which they support structural and individualistic explanations (e.g., Furnham & Hesketh, 1987). That is, some people may consider unemployment to be the person's own fault, while others may consider it due to factors beyond the person's control.

Justice orientations also predict attributions for poverty (Habibov et al., 2017; Lepianka et al., 2010). For example, Lepianka et al. (2010) found that those who adhered more strongly to the norms of need and equality were more likely to attribute poverty to societal injustice rather than fatalistic factors. Beliefs regarding the distribution of resources in a given situation are included as part of the normative values individuals employ to comprehend the world around them. Consequently, if an individual holds egalitarian views, advocating for the equal distribution of resources in society, it is



probable that such beliefs will encourage a heightened focus on the structural dimensions of poverty.

Finally, explanations about the nature of poverty impact several variables related to attitudes toward social protection, like inclination to accept social spending (Appelbaum, 2001), support for progressive welfare programs (Bullock et al., 2003), support for greater efforts to help the poor (Williamson, 1974), the belief that too much money is spent on social programs (Alston & Dean, 1972) or the support for the welfare state (Marquis & Rosset, 2021). As previously stated, broadly speaking, individuals who recognize structural attributions are inclined to exhibit more favorable attitudes toward social protection and public expenditure on programs aimed at supporting the economically disadvantaged. Therefore, from a theoretical standpoint, it is plausible to anticipate that poverty attributions could potentially act as mediators in the relationship between justice orientations and attitudes toward social protection and redistribution. In essence, the way individuals attribute the causes of poverty may play a pivotal role in linking their broader justice principles to their specific stances on social welfare and resource allocation.

### **The Present Research**

Our aim of this research is twofold. First, we seek to extend and improve previous findings on the relationship between different orientations toward principles of justice and attitudes toward redistribution and social protection policies. In this sense, our research represents an advance compared to previous one. In the first place because in one of our studies we will analyze representative data from numerous countries. And secondly because we have tried to improve the way in which it is measured both the principles of justice as the attitudes toward social protection policies. For instance, the research of Andress and Heien (2001) and Lewin-Epstein et al. (2003), in which they analyzed the relationship between justice principles and social protection policies, did not include all the principles of justice identified in the literature and were restricted to one or a few countries. In addition, some justice principles were measured based on how

important certain factors should be in determining a wage. This approach is beneficial and relevant, but it might not comprehensively capture the normative inclinations towards how resources should be allocated across an entire society. Our predictions concerning the relationship between principles of justice and attitudes toward social protection policies are that equality and need would be positively related with a positive attitude toward social protection policies and resources distribution, whereas that equity and entitlement would be negatively related.

One of the primary contributions of our research lies in relating social justice orientations and attitudes toward redistribution through attributions for poverty. For instance, individuals who believe that a society's resources should be allocated based on individuals' merits (rather than their needs) would be more inclined to assign blame to those in need of assistance for their circumstances. As a result, they may be less supportive of public policies that advocate for the well-being of such individuals. By illuminating this connection between justice principles, attributions, and attitudes toward redistribution, our research offers valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms influencing public policy attitudes and societal perspectives on social protection. We included several relevant variables, namely socioeconomic status, gender, and political ideology, as covariates in our analyses. The purpose of incorporating these covariates was to discern the unique effects contributed by the variables under study in this manuscript – poverty attributions, social justice orientations, and attitudes toward social protection. Previous research indicates that middle-class individuals, conservatives, and men tend to make more individualistic attributions (Bullock, 1999; Weiner et al., 2011). Similarly, concerning attitudes toward social protection, existing studies have observed a similar pattern where women, particularly in contexts of low welfare provision (Shorrocks & Grasso, 2020), and left-wing individuals (Jæger, 2008, but also see Armingeon & Weisstanner, 2022) exhibit more positive attitudes toward social protection policies. Finally, it's worth noting that gender, political orientation, and socioeconomic status have

previously been found to be associated with attitudes toward social justice principles (Adriaans & Fourré, 2022; Hülle et al., 2018; Reeskens & Van Oorschot, 2013).

All materials, R codes for all the studies as well as measures, databases, and preregistration forms for studies 1 and 3 can be found at: [https://osf.io/xe29n/?view\\_only=628c513813e345fca52b174d004703c9](https://osf.io/xe29n/?view_only=628c513813e345fca52b174d004703c9)

## Study 1

In its original design, Study 1 aimed to test different hypotheses that were not supported by the data. These pre-registered hypotheses were that participants who are presented with someone in poverty due to the COVID-19 crisis would show more positive attitudes toward social protection policies in comparison with those who are presented with someone who has been in poverty all their life, and that attitudes toward equity, entitlement, equality, and need as social justice principles would moderate the relation between the perceived group and attitudes toward social protection policies. No hypothesis was supported (see Supplementary materials for details about the our rationale, experimental manipulation, and results).

However, this data allowed us to check if there was some relationship between the four principles of justice and support for social protection policies, although these analyses were not pre-registered.

## Method

### *Participants*

A total of 391 adults completed our online survey. The participants were recruited from undergraduate students at a university in southern Spain among their relatives, friends, and acquaintances, and they completed an online survey. To incentivize participation, the recruiting students received a small amount of extra credit as compensation. The data collection took place in October, 2020. Sixty-six participants were excluded from the analyses because they met one of the pre-registered exclusion criteria (e.g., being under 18 years old). The final dataset comprised of 325 observations

( $M_{\text{age}} = 28.09$ ,  $SD = 13.15$ ; 55.69% women); descriptive statistics about the sample are provided in Table S1.

### **Measures**

**Attitudes Toward Principles of Social Justice.** We measured this variable using the Basic Social Justice Orientations scale (Hülle et al., 2018). This scale is composed of 12 items with a 1 (“Totally disagree”) to 5 (“Totally agree”) Likert response format, and it was adapted into Spanish through a back translation process. This scale assesses four social justice principles: equality (the average inter-item correlation = .26) with three items (e.g. “It is just if income and wealth are equally distributed among the members of our society”); need (average inter-item correlation = .29) with three items (e.g. “A society is just if it takes care of those who are poor and needy”); equity (average inter-item correlation = .23) with three items (e.g. “It is just if hard working people earn more than others”); and entitlement ( $r = .44$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with two items (e.g. “It is fair if people at a higher level of society have better living conditions than those on the lower level”). Originally the entitlement construct was measured with 3 items, but as will be explained below we decided to retain only two items for this variable.

**Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies** ( $\alpha = .86$ ). We measured this variable with 20 statements related with social protection policies, for example “Many people on welfare benefits spend their money on alcohol” (reversed). Participants indicated their degree of agreement in a 1 (“Totally disagree”) to 5 (“Totally agree”) Likert scale. The scale was inspired by Furnham (1985), changing the words *social security* into social policies; we added some items for the Spanish context. We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis on the items, and these showed satisfactory fit indicators for a one-factor solution (see Supplementary Materials). Higher scores indicated more favorable attitudes toward social protection policies and their recipients. Scores were standardized and summed. Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables can be found in Table 1.

We also measured political ideology, subjective and objective socioeconomic status, and gender (see Supplementary Materials for details about these measures).

**Table 1**

*Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations Between Variables in Study 1*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Equality	3.19 (.94)								
2. Need	.39***	4.43 (.65)							
3. Equity	-.09	.04	3.45 (.79)						
4. Entitlement	-.34***	-.23***	.22***	1.57 (.76)					
5. Attitudes toward social protection policies	.43***	.32***	-.34***	-.41***	3.50 (.60)				
6. Political ideology	-.44***	-.24***	.26***	.39***	-.60***	4.86 (1.97)			
7. Age	-.03	-.08	-.04	-.09	-.01	.09	28.09 (13.15)		
8. Objective SES	-.05	.08	-.05	-.06	.24***	-.1	.18**	0 (1.56)	
9. Subjective SES	-.03	.02	.04	-.04	.07	.04	.13*	.48***	5.73 (1.36)

Note: Pearson correlation. \*\*\*p < .001, \*\*p < .01, \*p < .05.

## Results

### *Preliminary Analysis*

After we conducted and analyzed the studies presented in this paper, we became aware of some relevant critiques and nuances of the Basic Social Justice Orientations scale (van Hootegem et al., 2021). We found that their claims about the low internal consistency of the scale and both conceptual and operational ambiguity should be considered when drawing conclusions on the results obtained with this instrument. To address this issue, we pooled the samples from studies 1 and 3 and conducted a

confirmatory factor analysis on the pooled database. As we employed two distinct samples that were combined for our analyses, we took measures to examine the multivariate normality of the data. Additionally, to ensure the accuracy and reliability of our findings, we utilized robust estimators, which are designed to provide unbiased results even in the presence of non-normal data distributions or potential outliers. A description of the process, fit statistics, and methodological and theoretical decisions can be found in the supplementary materials; the dataset and R syntax used in this analysis can be found at the OSF page provided above. We decided to remove one item of the entitlement dimension (“It is just if people who have achieved good reputations and wealth profit from this later in life”) because of the low load on the entitlement factor and the model’s poor fit. We conducted again all analyses planned. Both internal consistency statistics for justice principles and analyses reported in this paper are based on this conceptualization of the scale.

### *Exploratory Analyses*

In our exploratory analyses concerning the relationship between the four principles of justice and support for social protection policies, we fitted two multiple regression models. We adjusted the  $p$  value for multiple testing using the Holm’s method (Holm, 1979). In the first model we included gender, political ideology, objective and subjective socioeconomic status, in order to control for these variables in our second model, being our dependent variable the attitudes toward social protection policies in both models. Next, we estimated a model also including the four social justice principles. As shown in Table 2, an increase in the endorsement of equality and need as principles of social justice was related to more positive attitudes toward social protection policies. Conversely, an increase in the endorsement of equity and entitlement as social justice principles was associated to more negative attitudes toward social protection policies. As part of our exclusion criteria, we used an attention check that was originally intended for an experimental manipulation. To ensure the robustness of our findings and to verify if there were any effects of the manipulation on the results presented here, we performed

additional analyses (see the code for Study 1 in the OSF page provided above). These included participants who failed the manipulation check, as well as incorporating the experimental manipulation as a predictor in the models. The results from these supplementary analyses were similar to those presented here.

**Table 2**

*Exploratory Regression Models in Study 1 on Attitudes toward Social Protection Policies*

	Model 1. Only covariates					Model 2. All variables				
	<i>B</i>	CI	SE <i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	CI	SE <i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	4.18	3.87, 4.48	0.14	0	<.001	3.76	3.26, 4.27	0.26	0	<.001
Political ideology	-0.17	-0.20, -0.15	0.01	-.57	<.001	-0.12	-0.14, -0.09	0.01	-.37	<.001
Objective Status	0.08	0.04, 0.12	0.02	.21	<.001	0.08	0.04, 0.11	0.02	.19	<.001
Subjective status	-0.01	-0.05, 0.03	0.02	-.02	.697	-0.01	-0.05, 0.03	0.02	-.01	.789
Gender <sup>1</sup>	0.14	0.04, 0.24	0.05	.12	.018	0.06	-0.04, 0.16	0.05	.05	.426
Equality						0.10	0.05, 0.17	0.03	.17	.006
Need						0.12	0.04, 0.20	0.04	.13	.013
Equity						-0.14	-0.21, 0.08	0.03	-.19	<.001
Entitlement						-0.09	-0.17, 0.03	0.05	-.13	.033
Observations			319					319		
R <sup>2</sup> / R <sup>2</sup> adjusted			.403 / .396					.501 / .488		
$\Delta R^2$								.098***		

Note: <sup>1</sup>Reference category for gender is “Man” \*\*\**p* < .001

**Discussion**

Our non-preregistered analyses yielded interesting results. We found that endorsing ideas such as that a society is fair when goods and desserts are equally distributed among members of this society or when the society takes care of those in need, predicted more favorable attitudes toward social protection policies. Conversely, agreeing with ideas such as that it is just that hard-working people earn more than others, or that it is just that people with higher resources enjoy better living conditions predicted more negative attitudes toward social protection policies.

## Study 2

In Study 2, we aimed to confirm the exploratory results previously found in Study 1 with a high-quality dataset including representative samples from 29 European countries and using a different, although related, dependent measure: attitudes toward redistribution. This concept is related to social protection policies, but is more specific, focused on those beliefs about the active role and responsibility of the state in the allocation of resources in a nation or state to reduce inequality. The data is publicly available at the European Social Survey website (ESS, 2018).

### Hypotheses

Based on results of exploratory analyses of Study 1, we hypothesized that on one hand, endorsing equality (H1a) and need (H1b) as social justice principles would positively predict attitudes toward redistribution. On the other hand, we expected that endorsing equity (H1c) and entitlement (H1d) as social justice principles would negatively predict attitudes toward redistribution.

### Method

#### *Participants*

We used data from the European Social Survey Round 9 (ESS, 2018) released in June 2020. The survey collected data from 49,519 participants (53.51% women,  $M_{\text{age}} = 51.06$ ,  $SD = 18.65$ ) in 29 countries.

#### *Measures*

**Attitudes Toward Social Justice Principles.** The distributive principles were measured in the survey using a single item for each one. The heading of the question was as follows: “There are many different views as to what makes a society fair or unfair. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?” For equality, the item was “A society is fair when income and wealth are equally distributed among all people.” The item to capture attitudes toward the need principle was “A society is fair when it takes care of those who are poor and in need, regardless of what they give back.”



The attitude toward equity as social justice principle was measured with the following item: “A society is fair when hard-working people earn more than others.” The last item, “A society is fair when people from families with high social status enjoy privileges,” measured attitudes toward entitlement as a principle of social justice. These four items used a Likert scale with a range of 1 (“Agree strongly”) to 5 (“Disagree strongly”). Participants indicated the degree of agreement with each one. We reversed these items so that higher scores mean a higher degree of agreement in our analyses. This measure has been assessed before and showed acceptable levels of measurement quality, except in Bulgaria (Adriaans & Fourré, 2022)

**Support for Redistribution.** This variable was measured with the item: “The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels.” Participants indicated their degree of agreement using a Likert scale with a range of 1 (“Agree strongly”) to 5 (“Disagree strongly”). As with the previous measure, we reversed the scores so that higher ones mean a higher degree of agreement in our analyses.

We also included political ideology, income, educational level, country’s Gini index, poverty rate, and gross domestic product per capita (see Supplementary Materials for details on how these variables were measured).

### *Analytical Approach*

We fitted four multilevel models using the lmer4 package (Bates et al., 2015) in the R program (R version 4.1.2; R Core Team, 2020). This involved fitting four distinct models that progressively integrated individual and country-level variables. The intercept-only model revealed 8% of variance attributed to country-level differences in support for redistribution. To counter potential bias, we continued with multilevel analysis. Model 1 incorporated individual-level control variables, while Model 2 integrated predictor variables, providing insights into the relationship. Model 3 extended this by considering both individual and country-level factors. Supplementary materials contain comprehensive details about our analytical approach, process, and these models,

including statistical indices that affirm the adequate fit of our approach to the data (Table S3).

## Results

As shown in Table 3, including all control variables at individual and country level, attitudes toward equality (H1a) and need (H1b) as social justice principles positively predicted participants' support for redistribution across models. Attitudes toward equity (H1c) as social justice principle did not significantly predict support for redistribution. As predicted, attitudes toward entitlement (H1d) as principle of social justice negatively predicted the degree of agreement with government intervention to reduce income disparities in the country. Individual variables included as controls also significantly predicted support for redistribution: political ideology as well as income and educational level negatively predicted support for redistribution, that is, the more right-wing a person is and the more income and education they have, the less in favor they are of resource redistribution. Compared to men, women displayed higher levels of support for income redistribution through government action. Country level variables included as controls did not show a significant predictive role in our models. In addition, we tested these same models by holding the number of observations across them constant. The results were similar.

## Discussion

Results of this study suggest that attitudes toward social justice principles may play an important role in one important construct related to public resource governance: the support for income redistribution through government action. However, several limitations in the present study invite us to be cautious in our interpretations. All the constructs were assessed using one-item only measures, which are far from being perfect in most cases. Further, the validity of these measures for assessing attitudes toward social justice principles has recently been questioned (van Hootegem et al., 2021). As these authors have argued, *inter alia*, the conceptualization of the need principle in the ESS survey, may reflect only one specific aspect of these principles. In particular, they

suggested that it provides a very generous understanding of the need principle, conceptually close to the equality one. In the same vein, Adriaans and Fourré (2022) warned about the possible limitations of need and equity items as independent variables in empirical models because of the low within and between-country variation in responses to these items.

### **Study 3**

Given our previous results, Study 3 was designed to replicate them and explore the relationship between attitudes toward social justice principles and attitudes toward social protection policies including attributions for poverty as a mediator variable. Considering that the results obtained in the preceding studies were exploratory (in Study 1) and not pre-registered (in Study 2), in Study 3, we seek to replicate these findings by pre-registering the hypotheses and conducting new data collection to subject them to rigorous examination. This approach aligns with recommendations from some authors concerning pre-registrations (e.g., van't Veer & Giner-Sorolla, 2016).

#### **Pre-registered Hypotheses**

We hypothesized that attitudes toward social protection policies would be positively predicted by attitudes toward equality (Hypothesis 1a) and need (Hypothesis 1b) and negatively predicted by attitudes toward equity (Hypothesis 1c) and entitlement (Hypothesis 1d) as social justice principles. Regarding attributions for poverty, we expected that individualistic attributions would negatively predict attitudes toward social protection policies (Hypothesis 2a) and that structural attributions would positively predict the latter (Hypothesis 2b).

**Table 3**

*Estimated Multilevel Models in Study 2*

<i>Predictors</i>	<b>Model. Intercept only</b>				<b>Model 1. Individual level controls</b>				<b>Model 2. All individual level variables</b>				<b>Model 3. Individual and country level variables</b>			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	.01	.05	-.09 – .11	.826	-.02	.05	-.12 – .08	.659	-.02	.05	-.12 – .08	.748	0	.04	-.08 – .09	.912
Gender <sup>1</sup>					.09	.01	.07 – .11	<.001	.08	.01	.06 – .10	<.001	.08	.01	.06 – .10	<.001
Income					-.04	0	-.05 – -.04	<.001	-.03	0	-.03 – -.02	<.001	-.03	0	-.03 – -.02	<.001
Education					-.03	0	-.04 – -.02	<.001	-.02	0	-.02 – -.01	<.001	-.02	0	-.02 – -.01	<.001
Ideology					-.08	0	-.09 – -.08	<.001	-.06	0	-.06 – -.06	<.001	-.06	0	-.06 – -.05	<.001
Equality									.26	0	.25 – .27	<.001	.25	0	.24 – .26	<.001
Equity									0	.01	-.02 – .01	.48	0	.01	-.01 – .02	.554
Need									.08	.01	.07 – .09	<.001	.08	.01	.07 – .09	<.001
Entitlement									-.1	0	-.11 – -.09	<.001	-.1	0	-.11 – -.09	<.001
Gini Index													0	.02	-.04 – .04	.833
Poverty rate													.01	.02	-.02 – .05	.493
GDP													0	0	-.00 – .00	.191
<b>Random Effects</b>																
$\sigma^2$			.89				.85				.75				.75	
$\tau_{00}$			.07	country			.08	country			.07	country			.04	country
ICC			.08				.08				.09				.06	
N			29	country			29	country			29	country			27	country
Observations			48586				34778				33758				31771	

Marginal $R^2$ / Conditional $R^2$	.000 / .077	.063 / .140	.159 / .235	.172 / .219
Deviance	132529.973	93143.935	86428.382	81043.595
AIC	13254.087	932.332	86527.801	81187.161
log-Likelihood	-66267.044	-46593.166	-43252.901	-40579.58

---

Note: Models fitted using Maximum Likelihood (ML). <sup>1</sup>Reference category for gender is “Man”

Exploratorily, we propose that scores in individualistic poverty attributions will negatively correlate with attitudes toward equality and need as social justice principles and positively with attitudes toward equity and entitlement as social justice principles. In the case of structural attributions, we expect to find the reverse pattern: scores in these attributions will positively correlate with attitudes toward equality and need as social justice principles and negatively with attitudes toward equity and entitlement as social justice principles. We will also explore whether attributions for poverty will mediate the relation between social justice orientations and attitudes toward social protection policies.<sup>1</sup>

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

Our online survey yielded 566 responses from undergraduate students at a university in the South of Spain. These participants willingly volunteered to take part in the study and were offered a chance to enter a prize draw for 50 euros. Data collection occurred in April 2021, and the survey was distributed through the university's mailing list. Answers from 72 participants were removed because they met our exclusion criteria (e.g., taking more than one hour to complete the questionnaire). After this, 494 responses remained ( $M_{\text{age}} = 24.53$ ,  $SD = 7.25$ ; 70.45% women).

### ***Measures***

We measured attitudes toward social protection policies ( $\alpha = .90$ ) with the same scale as in Study 1. We also used the Basic Social Justice Orientations scale (Hülle et al.,

---

<sup>1</sup> It is important to acknowledge that there are some manual errors in the wording of the hypotheses as formulated in the pre-registration process. Specifically, in Hypothesis 2b, it is stated that structural attributions will negatively predict attitudes toward social protection. However, from a theoretical standpoint, it is logically expected that they would positively predict the latter. Secondly, in the hypotheses concerning mediations, the mediator variable appears mistakenly as the independent variable, and vice versa. While these were originally intended as exploratory hypotheses, we deem it crucial to address and highlight these discrepancies.

2018) to assess attitudes toward equality (average inter-item correlation = .45), need (average inter-item correlation = .35), equity (average inter-item correlation = .40), and entitlement ( $r = .62, p < .001$ ). Political ideology and subjective SES were also measured as in Study 1. To measure objective SES, in addition to household income and educational level, we included parents' educational level, considering that most of our participants would be university students. We standardized and summed these scores to obtain a general measure of objective SES.

**Attributions for Poverty.** We adapted to Spain 19 items taken from Furnham (1982) and Weiner et al. (2011) to measure individualistic and structural attributions for poverty. The format of response was from 1 (“Totally disagree”) to 5 (“Totally agree”). We measured individualistic attributions ( $\alpha = .90$ ) with nine items (e.g., “Lack of effort”) and structural attributions ( $\alpha = .77$ ) with 10 items (e.g., “Lack of jobs to access”). We also conducted a confirmatory factor analysis that showed acceptable fit indicators for a two-factor solution (see Supplementary Materials). As might be expected, individualistic attributions were positively related to political ideology and negatively related to attitudes toward social protection, while structural attributions were positively related to attitudes toward social protection and negatively related to ideology. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations between variables in this study.

## Results

### *Preregistered Hypotheses*

To test the first set of hypotheses (1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d) we fitted two multiple regression models using ordinary least squares (OLS), including attitudes toward social protection policies as dependent variables; as in Study 1, we adjusted the  $p$  value for multiple testing. In the first model we included control variables (objective and subjective SES, political ideology). In the second model we included the four justice principles. This model explained a significant proportion of the variance,  $R^2 = .59, F(8, 481) = 86.58, p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .58$ . We also checked for multiple regression assumptions (see supplementary materials). As shown in Table 5, the results confirmed and replicated our

findings from studies 1 and 2. Attitudes toward equality and need as social justice principles positively predicted attitudes toward social protection policies; attitudes toward equity and entitlement as social justice principles were negatively associated with these attitudes.

**Table 4**

*Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlations Between Variables in Study 3.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Individualistic attributions	2.81 (0.87)										
2. Structural attributions	-.11*	3.82 (0.58)									
3. Equality	-.38***	.33***	3.55 (1.00)								
4. Need	-.22***	.38***	.43***	4.34 (0.64)							
5. Equity	.52***	-.04	-.21***	-.02	3.49 (0.88)						
6. Entitlement	.41***	-.35***	-.37***	-.46***	.20***	1.70 (0.90)					
7. Attitudes toward social protection	-.73***	.29***	.49***	.49***	-.47***	-.46***	3.48 (0.66)				
8. Political ideology	.51***	-.19***	-.35***	-.34***	.36***	.43***	-.59***	4.69 (1.96)			
9. Age	-.01	-.05	.11*	.07	-.05	-.12**	.04	-.01	24.53 (7.25)		
10. Objective SES	-.01	-.15***	-.10*	.04	.02	.15**	.03	.09*	.08	0 (2.61)	
11. Subjective SES	.18***	-.15**	-.12**	-.05	.18***	.12**	-.19***	.26***	0	.41***	5.65 (1.40)

Note: Pearson correlation. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

We followed the same procedure to test Hypothesis 2.a, that individualistic attributions would negatively predict attitudes toward social protection policies, and Hypothesis 2.b., that structural attributions would positively predict the latter. To achieve these goals, we fitted two regression models using OLS (see Table 6); assumptions checking can be found in the supplementary materials. The first model included the covariates. As shown in Table 6, objective SES positively predicted attitudes toward social protection policies, whereas subjective SES negatively predicted political ideology (higher scores reflecting right-win orientation). The second model, including all variables,



explained a significant proportion of the variance,  $R^2 = .65$ ,  $F(6, 483) = 148.44$ ,  $p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .64$ . As expected, higher scores in individualistic attributions predicted negative attitudes toward social protection policies, while higher scores in structural attributions predicted positive attitudes toward social protection policies, confirming Hypothesis 2.a and Hypothesis 2.b.

**Table 5**

*Regression Models with Attitudes Toward Social Justice Principles as Predictors and Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies as Dependent Variable (Study 3)*

<i>Predictors</i>	Model 1. Only Covariates					Model 2. All Variables Included				
	<i>B</i>	CI	SE B	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	CI	SE B	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	4.43	4.15, 4.72	0.14	0	<.001	3.30	2.85, 3.75	0.17	0	<.001
Objective SES	0.03	0.01, 0.05	0.01	.11	.018	0.02	0.01, 0.04	0.01	.10	.016
Subjective SES	-0.05	-0.08, -0.01	0.02	-.10	.030	-0.03	-0.06, 0.00	0.02	-.06	.157
Political ideology	-0.19	-0.21, -0.16	0.01	-.55	<.001	-0.09	-0.12, -0.07	0.01	-.27	<.001
Gender <sup>1</sup>	0.11	0.01, 0.22	0.05	.08	.039	0.03	-0.05, 0.12	0.05	.02	.437
Equality						0.11	0.07, 0.16	0.02	.17	<.001
Need						0.28	0.21, 0.36	0.04	.27	<.001
Equity						-0.23	-0.28, -0.18	0.03	-.23	<.001
Entitlement						-0.07	-0.12, 0.01	0.03	-.09	.040
Observations			482					490		
$R^2$ /										
$R^2$ adjusted				.345 / .339					.564 / .557	
$\Delta R^2$									.219***	

Note: <sup>1</sup>Reference category for gender is "Man" \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Table 6**

*Regression Models with Attributions for Poverty as Predictors and Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies as Dependent Variable (Study 3)*

	Model 1. Only Covariates					Model 2. All Variables Included				
	<i>B</i>	CI	SE <i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	CI	SE <i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	4.43	4.40, 4.85	0.12	0	<.001	4.41	4.08, 4.75	0.18	0	<.001
Objective SES	0.03	0.01, 0.05	0.01	.11	.018	0.02	0.00, 0.03	0.01	.06	.128
Subjective SES	-0.05	-0.09, -0.01	0.02	-.09	.030	-0.01	-0.04, 0.02	0.02	-.01	.67
Political ideology	-0.19	-0.21, -0.16	0.01	-.57	<.001	-0.09	-0.11, -0.09	0.01	-.26	<.001
Gender <sup>1</sup>	0.11	0.01, 0.22	0.05	.08	.039	-0.07	-0.16, 0.01	0.04	-.05	.198
Individualistic attributions						-0.44	-0.49, -0.39	0.03	-.58	<.001
Structural attributions						0.23	0.16, 0.30	0.03	.20	<.001
Observations			482					482		
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> / <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> adjusted				.345 / .339					.624 / .619	
$\Delta R^2$									.279***	

Note: <sup>1</sup>Refence category for gender is "Man" \*\*\**p* < .001.

### *Exploratory Hypotheses*

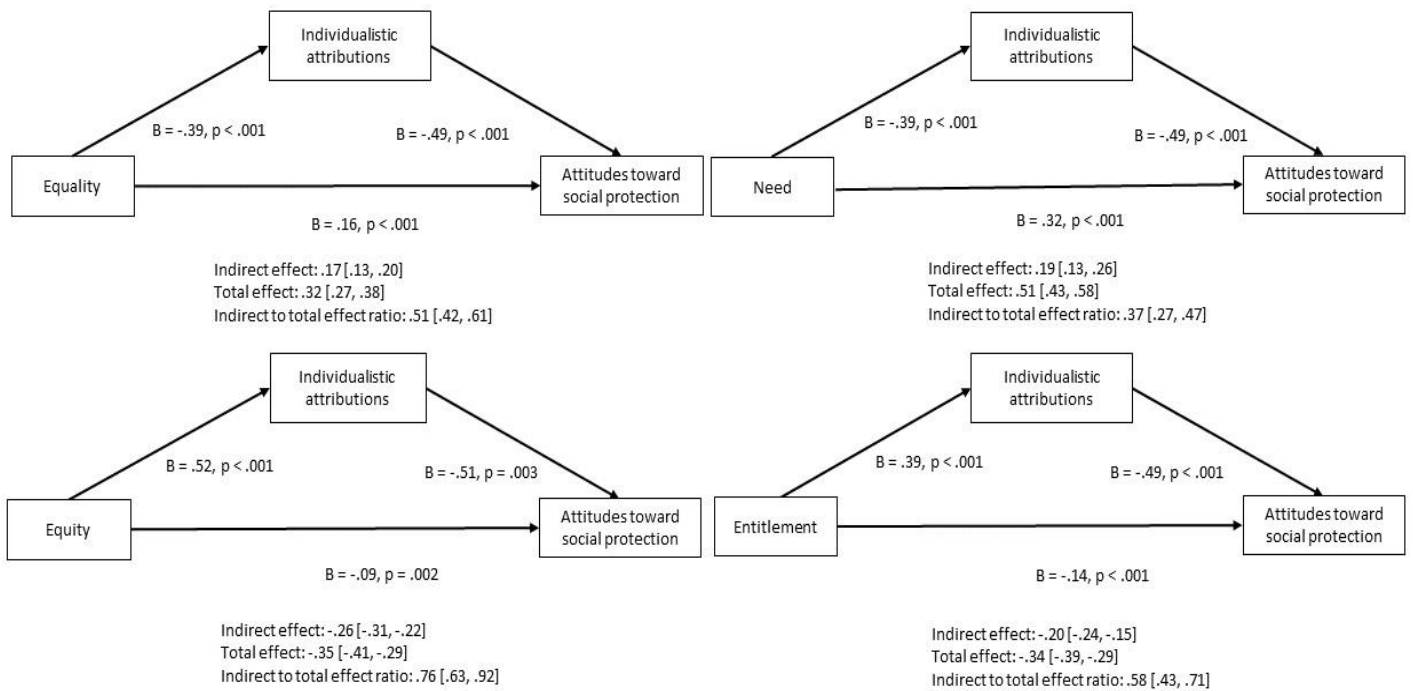
As we hypothesized, exploratorily, individualistic attributions for poverty correlated negatively with equality and need as justice principles but correlated positively with equity and entitlement as justice principles (see Table 4). Structural attributions, on the other hand, were related positively to equality and need, but related negatively to equity and entitlement as social justice principles.

We estimated several mediation models including the four justice principles as predictor variables, one in each model, attitudes toward social protection policies as criteria variables, and individualistic attributions and structural attributions as mediators, so we conducted 8 mediation analyses (see Figures 1 and 2). Individual attributions mediated the relationship between the four social justice principles and attitudes toward social protection policies. On one hand, attitudes toward equality and need negatively

predicted individualistic attributions leading to more favorable attitudes toward social protection policies; equity and entitlement positively predicted individualistic attributions, which led to a more negative attitude toward these policies. Structural attributions for poverty also mediated the relation between attitudes toward social justice principles and attitudes toward social protection policies except for attitudes toward equity, where no indirect effect was observed. However, these indirect effects were small and explained a small proportion of the total effect, used here as a measure of effect size for the mediation models.

**Figure 1**

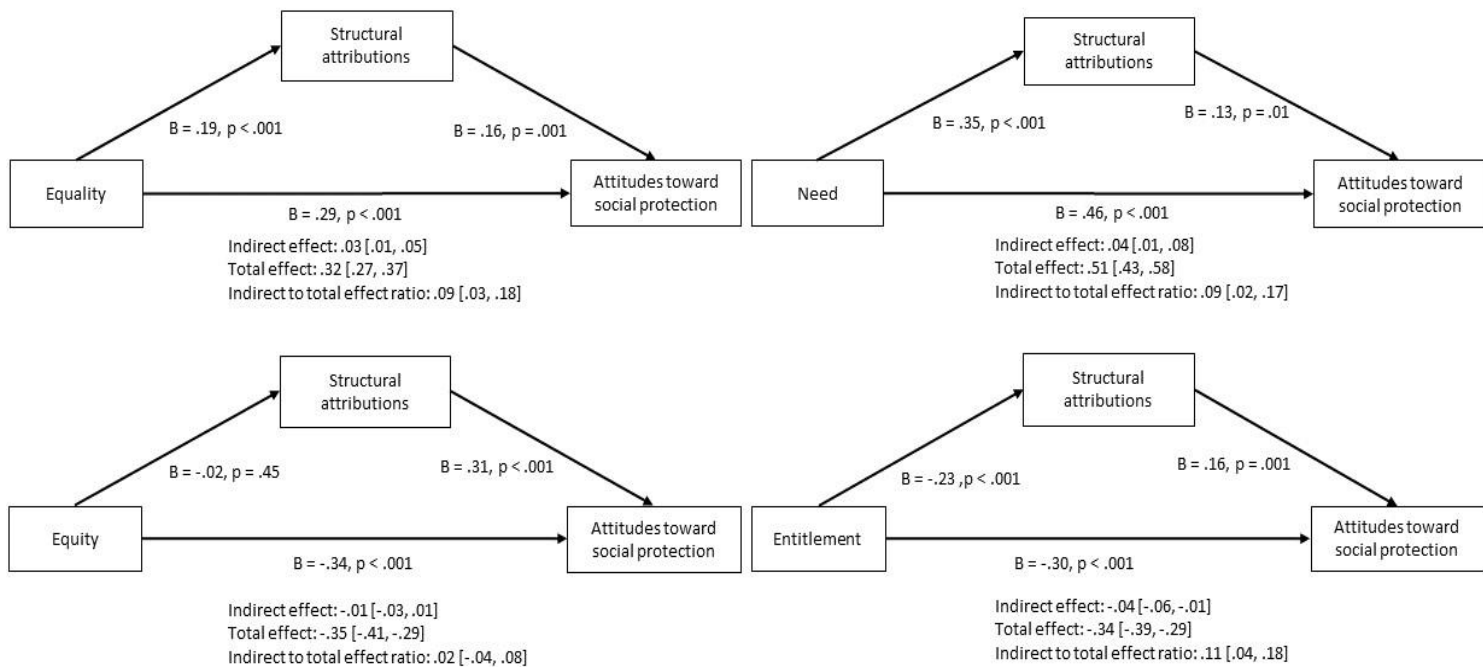
*Individualistic Attributions for Poverty as Mediators Between Attitudes Toward Social Justice Principles and Attitudes Toward Social Protection Policies.*



Note: The numbers in brackets refer to the 95% confidence intervals.

**Figure 2**

*Structural Attributions for Poverty as Mediators Between Attitudes Toward Social Justice Principles and Attitudes Toward Social Protection*



Note: The numbers in brackets refer to the 95% confidence intervals.

**Discussion**

Results of Study 3 replicated our previous findings. These outcomes further suggest the role of attributions in the relationship between normative orientations toward the distributive justice principle and social protection policies, linking attribution theory with theories on individual orientations toward distributive justice principles. Greater belief in equality and necessity as justice principles that should guide the allocation of resources in a society lead to less blaming of people in poverty for their situation, which in turn leads to more positive attitudes toward protection policies focused on people in poverty. The belief that resources should be allocated equitably based on individual contributions or entitlements based on ascriptive characteristics highlights individualistic causes for poverty, which leads to a more negative attitude toward social protection policies.

## General Discussion

Our studies provided consistent evidence demonstrating the impact of citizens' normative orientations towards general social justice principles on their attitudes towards social protection policies. People who support the notion that a society is fair when all people coexisting in it have similar living conditions and incomes (equality) also support the idea that government should intervene to reduce differences in income levels and have a more positive attitude toward social protection policies targeting people in poverty. Similarly, the trend observed for the orientation towards need as a social justice principle was consistent across all three studies: the notion that a just society takes care of those members who are in need is positively related with supporting government intervention for redistribution and with more favorable attitudes toward social protection policies focused on people in poverty.

However, endorsing equity as the logic of resources allocation leads to less support for government intervention to reduce income differences and to a more negative attitude toward social protection policies. This observation is in line with theoretical expectations, given that the conceptualization of equity aligns reasonably with meritocracy—that is, the belief that rewards are based on individual merits, whose relationship with attitudes toward redistribution has been previously documented (e.g., García-Sánchez et al., 2020). Regarding attitudes toward entitlement as a principle of social justice, we found evidence in our studies that high scores in this principle predicted lower support for reducing income differences and a more negative attitude toward social protection policies. Despite criticisms directed at this construct (Van Hootehem et al., 2021), we have found consistent results and, although in the same direction, not equivalent to those of the equity principle (e.g., the latter was not a significant predictor in Study 2). Beliefs that resources should be redistributed based on status acquired in the past do seem relevant to our case.

Our work confirms and extends the findings of other studies on the relationship between principles of justice and attitudes toward redistribution and social protection

(Andress & Heien, 2001; Epstein et al., 2003). Distinctively, we use more elaborate measures of social justice principles and of how resources should be distributed in society. This sets us apart from other important contributions that have used proxy measures such as the importance that certain criteria should have in determining wages (Lewin-Epstein et al., 2003) or have not included all justice principles (Andress & Heien, 2001). In addition, we replicate these findings using a database with representative samples from 29 European countries.

Another important contribution of this research is to extend the framework of the research conducted to date, proposing a model in which the relation between preferences for different principles of social justice and attitudes toward social protection policies is mediated by attributions for poverty. Notably, this model reveals that individualistic attributions played a more substantial role than structural attributions in elucidating the causal connection between attitudes towards social justice principles and attitudes towards social protection policies. Orientations toward equity and entitlement are positively related to explaining poverty in terms of personal responsibility for such a situation, which leads to a more negative attitude toward social protection policies. In turn, when people prefer the justice principles of equality and need, they are more likely to explain poverty in wider sociostructural terms, which results in a more positive attitude toward social protection policies. In this manner, our research bridges two previous lines of research. The first one demonstrates that normative orientations toward justice, as part of personal values, influence poverty attributions (Lepianka et al., 2010), while the second illustrates how poverty attributions influence attitudes toward social protection (Bullock et al., 2003). However, other interpretations are also possible, and future research should be conducted to address this. For instance, one might think that attributions for poverty influence social justice orientations. That is, beliefs about the root causes of poverty could exert an influence on individuals' convictions regarding the principles that should govern resource allocation within a society. Subsequently, these principles could impact attitudes toward social protection. In line with the dynamics of many intricate psychosocial

phenomena, one would expect a bidirectional and not just a unidirectional relationship. While this bidirectional nature seems plausible, further exploration is necessary, and such nuanced relationships warrant investigation in future research endeavors.

We treated attitudes toward principles of justice as general normative orientations, not referring to concrete domains of welfare. Thus, our research question has a different focus from research studying how citizens prefer different social justice principles for different welfare domains (Van Hootegem et al., 2021). These approaches respond to different interests, but they could be complementary. New research could address how preferences for different distribution logics in different welfare domains, considering what will be distributed, are shaped by previous normative orientations about ideas of what is a just society, as well as the variables explaining this. On the other hand, because it is outside our main objective, we have decided not to focus on the role of political ideology in the link between social justice principles. While political ideology undoubtedly represents an essential aspect in understanding the dynamics of the variables examined in this study, we acknowledge that its comprehensive exploration lies beyond the scope of this article.

Our research has several limitations that should be noted. First, the studies presented here have a correlational nature, so our capacity to draw causal inferences is limited, and we cannot definitively exclude other explanations for the relationship found. We found consistent and significant relations that supported the predictions made in studies 2 and 3, based on Study 1 results; we have also suggested a causal path for these relations. However, as mentioned earlier, more theoretical development and empirical research is needed. Indeed, to further elucidate and strengthen the model proposed in this study, it would be beneficial to conduct new studies that involve manipulating social justice orientations. By directly manipulating these orientations, we could determine causal relationships and gain a deeper understanding of their impact on attitudes toward social protection and public policies through attributions for poverty. Certain precautions must be acknowledged concerning the characteristics of the samples in Studies 1 and 3.

For instance, in Study 3 participated more women than men. Although we have controlled for gender in our analyses, it is important to remain mindful of the disproportionality in gender representation. Furthermore, both Study 1 and Study 3 samples consist of relatively young individuals with relatively low socioeconomic status, although we found similar results in Study 2, which representative samples from many countries.

We must recognize that our study focused on two primary dimensions of poverty attributions, namely individualistic and structural attributions. We acknowledge that this approach may not capture the entirety of the complexity surrounding poverty attributions. Future research efforts could explore a more comprehensive model that includes a broader array of dimensions.

Finally, another constraint lies in the way that our main variable, attitudes toward justice principles, is operationalized. In our sample, the Basic Social Justice Orientations scale did not fully meet some of the statistical criteria, in terms of its dimensionality, that would be expected. Although they were acceptable overall, we join concerns about the need for further theoretical and empirical development on how to measure these constructs expressed by other authors (Van Hootegeem et al., 2021). This does not undermine the validity of our conclusions, but points to the need for further improvement in the measures used to capture attitudes and normative orientations toward principles of social justice. Here we established a framework for further research on this topic in what we hope will be a fruitful way in the future; we emphasize that, as in any other field of study, in-depth collective theoretical and methodological discussion is necessary.

### **Data Accessibility Statement**

Pre-registration forms for studies 1 and 3 as well as datafiles, questionnaires, and R code used in studies 1, 2, and 3 are available at:

[https://osf.io/xe29n/?view\\_only=94d11c42c5c24ffb813875736155d7a4](https://osf.io/xe29n/?view_only=94d11c42c5c24ffb813875736155d7a4)



## References

- Adriaans, J., & Fourré, M. (2022). Basic social justice orientations—measuring order-related justice in the European Social Survey Round 9. *Measurement Instruments for the Social Sciences*, 4(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42409-022-00040-3>.
- Alston, J. P., & Dean, K. I. (1972). Socioeconomic factors associated with attitudes toward welfare recipients and the causes of poverty. *Social Service Review*, 46(1), 13-23. <https://doi.org/10.1086/642795>
- Andress, H. J., & Heien, T. (2001). Four worlds of welfare state attitudes? A comparison of Germany, Norway, and the United States. *European Sociological Review*, 17(4), 337-356. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/17.4.337>
- Appelbaum, L. D. (2001). The influence of perceived deservingness on policy decisions regarding aid to the poor. *Political Psychology*, 22(3), 419-442. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00248>
- Armingeon, K., & Weisstanner, D. (2022). Objective conditions count, political beliefs decide: The conditional effects of self-interest and ideology on redistribution preferences. *Political Studies*, 70(4), 887-900. <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-204203>
- Arts, W., & Gelissen, J. (2001). Welfare states, solidarity and justice principles: does the type really matter? *Acta Sociologica*, 44(4), 283-299. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F000169930104400401>
- Bates, D., Mächler, M., Bolker, B. M., & Walker, S. C. (2015). Fitting linear mixed-effects models using lme4. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 67, 1-48. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1406.5823>
- Brooks, C. & Manza, J. (2007). *Why welfare states persist*. Chicago University Press.
- Bullock, H. E. (1999). Attributions for poverty: A comparison of middle-class and welfare recipient attitudes 2059-2082. *Journal of Applied Social*

*Psychology*, 29(10), 2059-2082. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1999.tb02295.x>

Bullock, H. E., Williams, W. R., & Limbert, W. M. (2003). Predicting support for welfare policies: The impact of attributions and beliefs about inequality. *Journal of Poverty*, 7(3), 35-56. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J134v07n03\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J134v07n03_03)

Campbell, A. L. (2012). Policy makes mass politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15, 333-351. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-012610-135202>

Clasen, J., & Van Oorschot, W. (2002). Changing principles in European social security. *European Journal of Social Security*, 4(2), 89-115. <https://doi.org/10.1023%2FA%3A1020520321533>

Cook, K. S., & Hegtvedt, K. A. (1983). Distributive justice, equity, and equality. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9(1), 217-241.

Cozzarelli, C., Wilkinson, A. V., & Tagler, M. J. (2001). Attitudes toward the poor and attributions for poverty. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(2), 207-227. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00209>

d'Anjou, L., Steijn, A., & Van Aarsen, D. (1995). Social position, ideology, and distributive justice. *Social Justice Research*, 8(4), 351-384. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02334712>

Dawtry, R. J., Sutton, R. M., & Sibley, C. G. (2015). Why wealthier people think people are wealthier, and why it matters: From social sampling to attitudes to redistribution. *Psychological Science*, 26(9), 1389-1400. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0956797615586560>

Deutsch, M. (1975). Equity, equality, and need: What determines which value will be used as the basis of distributive justice?. *Journal of Social issues*, 31(3), 137-149. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1975.tb01000.x>

- ESS Round 9: European Social Survey (2020): ESS-9 2018 Documentation Report. Edition 2.. Bergen, European Social Survey Data Archive, NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data for ESS ERIC. <https://doi.org/1.21338/NSD-ESS9-2018>.
- Feather, N. T. (1974). Explanations of poverty in Australian and American samples: The person, society, or fate? *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 26(3), 199-216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049537408255231>
- Furnham, A. (1982). Why are the poor always with us? Explanations for poverty in Britain. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 21(4), 311-322. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1982.tb00553.x>
- Furnham, A. (1982). Why are the poor always with us? Explanations for poverty in Britain. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 21(4), 311-322. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1982.tb00553.x>
- Furnham, A. (1985). The determinants of attitudes toward social security recipients. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 24(1), 19-27. <https://doi.org/1.1111/j.2044-8309.1985.tb00656.x>
- Furnham, A., & Hesketh, B. (1987). Explanations for unemployment in Great Britain and New Zealand. *The Journal of social psychology*, 129(2), 169-181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1989.9711718>
- García-Sánchez, E., Osborne, D., Willis, G. B., & Rodríguez-Bailón, R. (2020). Attitudes towards redistribution and the interplay between perceptions and beliefs about inequality. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 59(1), 111-136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12326>
- Gollwitzer, M., & van Prooijen, J. W. (2016). Psychology of justice. In Sabbagh, C., Schmitt, M. (eds.) *Handbook of social justice theory and research* (pp. 61-82). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-3216-0\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-3216-0_4)

- Habibov, N., Cheung, A., Auchnnikava, A., & Fan, L. (2017). Explaining Support for Structural Attribution of Poverty in Post-Communist Countries: Multilevel Analysis of Repeated Cross-Sectional Data. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 44(3), 173-197.
- Hegtvædt, K. A. (1992). When is a distribution rule just?. *Rationality and Society*, 4(3), 308-331. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1043463192004003005>
- Holm, S. (1979). A simple sequentially rejective multiple test procedure. *Scandinavian Journal of Statistics*, 6, 65–70. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4615733>.
- Hülle, S., Liebig, S., & May, M. J. (2018). Measuring attitudes toward distributive justice: The basic social justice orientations scale. *Social Indicators Research*, 136(2), 663-692. <https://doi.org/1.1007/s11205-017-1580-x>
- Jæger, M. M. (2008). Does left–right orientation have a causal effect on support for redistribution? Causal analysis with cross-sectional data using instrumental variables. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 20(3), 363-374. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edn030>
- Kluegel, J. R., & Smith, E. R. (2017). *Beliefs about inequality: Americans' views of what is and what ought to be*. Routledge.
- Konow, J. (2003). Which is the fairest one of all? A positive analysis of justice theories. *Journal of economic literature*, 41(4), 1188-1239. <https://doi.org/10.1257/002205103771800013>.
- Kulin, J., & Svallfors, S. (2013). Class, values, and attitudes towards redistribution: A European comparison. *European Sociological Review*, 29(2), 155-167. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcr046>
- Lepianka, D., Gelissen, J., & Van Oorschot, W. (2010). Popular explanations of poverty in Europe: Effects of contextual and individual characteristics across 28 European countries. *Acta Sociologica*, 53(1), 53-72. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0001699309357842>

- Lewin-Epstein, N., Kaplan, A., & Levanon, A. (2003). Distributive justice and attitudes toward the welfare state. *Social Justice Research*, 16(1), 1-27.  
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022909726114>
- Marquis, L., & Rosset, J. (2021). When explanations for poverty help explain social policy preferences: The case of European public opinion amidst the economic recession (2009–2014). *Social Justice Research*, 34, 428-459.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-021-00381-0>
- Marshall, G., Swift, A., Routh, D., & Burgoyne, C. (1999). What is and what ought to be popular beliefs about distributive justice in thirteen countries. *European sociological review*, 15(4), 349-367.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.esr.a018270>
- Meuleman, B., van Oorschot, W., & Laenen, T. (2020). Welfare Attitudes in Times of Crisis and Austerity. In Laenen, T., Meuleman, B., & van Oorschot, W. (eds.). *Welfare State Legitimacy in Times of Crisis and Austerity*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Piff, P. K., Wiwad, D., Robinson, A. R., Akin, L. B., Mercier, B., & Shariff, A. (2020). Shifting attributions for poverty motivates opposition to inequality and enhances egalitarianism. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(5), 496-505.  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0835-8>
- R Core Team (2020). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing. URL: <https://www.R-project.org/>
- Reeskens, T., & Van Oorschot, W. (2013). Equity, equality, or need? A study of popular preferences for welfare redistribution principles across 24 European countries. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20(8), 1174-1195.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2012.752064>

- Rudolph, T. J., & Evans, J. (2005). Political Trust, Ideology, and Public Support for Government Spending. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(3), 660–671. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2005.00148.x>
- Sainz, M., García-Castro, J. D., Jiménez-Moya, G., & Lobato, R. M. (2023). How do people understand the causes of poverty and wealth? A revised structural dimensionality of the attributions about poverty and wealth scales. *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 31(1), 81-100. <https://doi.org/10.1332/175982721X16645485533332>
- Sainz, M., Martínez, R., Sutton, R. M., Rodríguez-Bailón, R., & Moya, M. (2020). Less human, more to blame: Animalizing poor people increases blame and decreases support for wealth redistribution. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 23(4), 546-559. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430219841135>
- Scott, J. T., & Bornstein, B. H. (2009). What's fair in foul weather and fair? Distributive justice across different allocation contexts and goods. *The Journal of Politics*, 71(3), 831-846. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381609090744>
- Shorrocks, R., & Grasso, M. (2020). The attitudinal gender gap across generations: Support for redistribution and government spending in contexts of high and low welfare provision. *European Political Science Review*, 12(3), 289-306. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773920000120>
- Steele, L. G., & Breznau, N. (2019). Attitudes toward redistributive policy: An introduction. *Societies*, 9(3), 50. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc9030050>
- Van Hootegem, A., Abts, K., & Meuleman, B. (2020). Differentiated Distributive Justice Preferences? Configurations of Preferences for Equality, Equity and Need in Three Welfare Domains. *Social Justice Research*, 33(3), 257-283. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-020-00354-9>
- Van Hootegem, A., Meuleman, B., & Abts, K. (2021). Measuring public support for distributive justice principles: assessing the measurement quality of the Basic

- Social Justice Orientations scale. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. <https://doi.org/1.1093/ijpor/edaa041>
- Van Oorschot, W., & Halman, L. (2000). Blame or fate, individual or social? An international comparison of popular explanations of poverty. *European societies*, 2(1), 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/146166900360701>
- Van't Veer, A. E., & Giner-Sorolla, R. (2016). Pre-registration in social psychology—A discussion and suggested template. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 67, 2-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2016.03.004>
- Weiner, B., Osborne, D., & Rudolph, U. (2011). An attributional analysis of reactions to poverty: The political ideology of the giver and the perceived morality of the receiver. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(2), 199-213. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1088868310387615>
- Williamson, J. B. (1974). Beliefs about the motivation of the poor and attitudes toward poverty policy. *Social Problems*, 21(5), 634-648. <https://doi.org/10.2307/799639>
- Wiwad, D., Mercier, B., Piff, P. K., Shariff, A., y Aknin, L. B. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on attitudes toward poverty and inequality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 104083. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2020.104083>.
- Wlezien, C., & Soroka, S. N. (2012). Political institutions and the opinion–policy link. *West European Politics*, 35(6), 1407-1432. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2012.713752>

Chapter 6: The influence of poverty definitions on attributions of  
the causes of poverty and attitudes towards poverty reduction



**The influence of poverty definitions on attributions of the causes of poverty and attitudes towards poverty reduction**

Joaquín Alcañiz-Colomer<sup>1,2</sup>, Miguel Moya<sup>1,2</sup>, Inmaculada Valor-Segura<sup>1, 2</sup>, and Steve Loughnan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Granada, Department of Social Psychology, Granada, Spain.

<sup>2</sup>Research Centre in Mind, Brain, and Behavior (CIMCYC), Granada, Spain

<sup>3</sup>University of Edinburgh, Department of Psychology, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

## Abstract

How we define a social problem is important for the way we think about it, its causes, and consequences. In three studies we analysed the relationship between the way poverty is defined and people's poverty attributions, attitudes towards poverty reduction and political participation. We differentiate between narrow definitions, which focus solely on resources and status, and broad definitions, which refer to elements such as lack of political participation or capacity development. In Study 1, using data from Eurobarometer 74.1 ( $N = 26,635$ ), we found that when people adopt broad definitions of poverty, they show more positive attitudes towards wealth redistribution and prefer structural attributions for poverty compared to those who understand poverty as low social status or dependence on public benefits. In Study 2 (Spanish sample,  $N = 374$ ), using higher quality measures, we found that broad and narrow definitions of poverty differently predicted attributions for poverty, attitudes towards poverty reduction, and political participation of people experiencing poverty. We also analysed the mediating role of poverty attributions in the relationship between definitions and attitudes towards poverty reduction. In Study 3 (UK sample,  $N = 325$ ) we replicated results from studies 1 and 2. We discuss some theoretical and practical implications.

**Key words:** Definitions of poverty, attributions for poverty, attitudes poverty reduction, poverty perception

What does it mean to be living in poverty? At one level, poverty can be as a simple a lack of material resources; that is, being poor means not having enough food, money, or quality shelter (Ashton, 1984). Poverty can however be construed more broadly to encompass a lack of opportunity, diminished ability to engage with political and civil life, and even a loss of freedom (Sen, 1999). In short, being poor can be understood narrowly as a lack of wealth or broadly as a lack of wealth, opportunity, engagement, and freedom. Critically, the way people define poverty could influence how they think about poor people and poverty reduction. In this paper, we focus on how definitions of poverty influence both attributions of responsibility for poverty and attitudes towards reducing poverty.

### **Defining Poverty**

The definition of poverty is widely debated within the social sciences. For instance, Spicker (2007) identified twelve different meanings for poverty grouped into three clusters: poverty as a material concept, poverty as an economic circumstance, and poverty as social position. These definitions imply different approaches to measuring poverty and identifying who is considered poor. In brief, from a monetary approach, poverty is understood as a financial material deficit (Laderchi, 2000). This indicator can be absolute or relative (Foster, 1998), direct or indirect (Ringen, 1988). Although it is arguably the most widely used approach, it has been widely criticized as being too narrow (Sen, 1976; Townsend, 1962).

Alternative approaches have adopted a broader definition of poverty. One of the most influential and celebrated is the capabilities approach, originally proposed by Amartya Sen (1985, 1999) and further developed by Martha Nussbaum (2000, 2011). This approach underlines the importance of developing a broader definition of poverty, which is not only characterized by monetary deprivation, but also has less material elements. As Sen (1999) puts it, “there is a strong case for judging individual advantage in terms of the capabilities a person has, that is, the substantive freedoms he or she enjoys to lead the kind of life she or he has reason to value” (p. 87). These substantive freedoms include bodily

health and integrity, being able to affiliate with others, being able to participate in political choices or being able to hold property, among others (Nussbaum, 2000). This concern about the heterogeneous implications of poverty is not new. Consider Pericles (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE), the Ancient Greek politician who introduced salaries for public functionaries, making it possible for poor people to participate politically. Likewise, the notion that economic conditions impede human flourishing and self-realization plays an important role in Marx's work. For example, when Engels and Marx (1848/2004) said that "we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (p. 244). The struggle to overcome oppressive economic relations aims at the establishment of a society where people can develop to their full potential, not simply have sufficient food, water, and shelter.

In sum, whilst some theories have defined poverty as a problem of subsistence, others point to deeper social and political elements of poverty. How we define poverty may have important implications for subsequent judgements. For example, when a definition based on the capabilities approach is used to identify who is poor, the number of people in poverty is not the same as when using another method, such as the income-based approach (Anand et al., 2021; Laderchi et al., 2003). This leads us to consider that the way in which poverty is defined and presented may have important implications for other poverty-related variables, such as the explanations given about the nature of poverty and attitudes towards poverty alleviation measures.

### **Attributions for Poverty and Attitudes Toward Poverty Reduction and Political Participation of People in Poverty**

Attitudes toward poverty reduction policies may depend on the attributions people make about poverty. People often have lay explanations for why people find themselves in poverty, which often entail ideas about the causes of their situation. The most basic distinction can be found between individualistic, or dispositional, attributions and structural, or situational, attributions (Davidai, 2022). The first category encompasses individual characteristics such as poor money management skills and lack of effort. The

locus of control is focused on the person in poverty, who is held responsible for their situation. The second category encompasses wider social causes beyond the control of individuals, like the market failing to provide jobs or decent wages. Here, the locus of control is focused on broader social causes, and this reduces the individual's responsibility for their situation. Poverty attributions matter, especially for social protection. Poverty attributions have been linked with different levels of financial assistance for people in need (Farwell & Weiner, 2000), support for progressive welfare programs (Bullock et al., 2003), support for government intervention (Piff et al., 2020), support for the welfare state (Marquis & Rosset, 2021), attitudes toward welfare in general (Feagin, 1972), and the predisposition to accept social spending (van Oorschot, 2000). The general finding across this research is that individualistic attributions – holding the individual responsible for their poverty - are related to worse attitudes towards social protection and policies aimed at helping people in poverty. Conversely, structural attributions – blaming broader societal causes for this situation – positively influence these attitudes.

Likewise, attitudes towards poverty reduction policies may depend on how people perceive these measures. Broadly, wealth redistribution can be understood as a poverty reduction action taken by the government to transfer resources from those who have the most resources to those who have the least resources (Bowles & Ginis, 2000). This redistribution can be on income or wealth and is mainly carried out through taxation (Lambert, 2001). Thus, the fundamental objective would be to achieve a more equal distribution of post-tax income or wealth than the pre-tax distribution. Several psychological mechanisms have been proposed to explain people's support for wealth redistribution. Self-interest is often cited to help explain individual differences (e.g., Meltzer & Richard, 1981; Rueda & Stegmueller, 2016). However, attitudes towards redistribution are not purely determined by simple self-interest. For instance, the endorsement of some ideologies such as left-wing political ideology, economic system justification, and social dominance orientation has been linked with lower support for wealth redistribution (Rodríguez-Bailón et al., 2017). Thus, leftists are more likely to

support redistribution compared to conservatives or right-wing people, although this difference is lower among those in the bottom of the social hierarchy (Armingeon & Weisstanner, 2021). Justice-related beliefs also play an important role explaining support for redistribution: For example, adherence to the norms of need or equality as social justice principles is correlated with more positive attitudes toward redistribution and social protection (Andress & Heien, 2001; Lewin-Epstein et al., 2003). Attitudes toward redistribution are also influenced by perceived economic inequality (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2022; Dawtry et al., 2015; García-Castro et al. 2020; García-Sánchez et al., 2019). However, to our knowledge, there is no literature that focuses on how *definitions* of poverty influence support for social protection and wealth redistribution.

As we have indicated, when a broad vision of poverty is adopted, one of the characteristics attributed to poverty also is a lack of political and social participation (Ferragina et al., 2017). By this we mean that poverty can imply structural barriers to political and social participation in the communities to which people in poverty belong. Studying attitudes towards the political participation of people in poverty can make an important contribution to our understanding of attitudes towards poverty in general, as well as the barriers to demand for wider social change. By the term "attitudes towards political participation of people experiencing poverty" we refer to people's beliefs about whether people experiencing poverty should be involved in the political life of the territory they inhabit and that they have valuable knowledge to take into account in political decisions. That is, if people in poverty should participate more in these areas, for example, involving them in activities like participatory budgeting or that they should have more influence on media.

Exploratorily, we also try to connect in this article the support for different definitions of poverty, the attributions of poverty, and the attitude towards political participation of people in poverty.

## Research Overview

As we discussed earlier, broad definitions of poverty contain more elements of what it entails to be poor. By not focusing on purely economic aspects and emphasizing other forms of deprivation involved (e.g., failure to develop capabilities, lack of freedom), they may lead to less blaming poor people for their situation and more blaming structural factors. This, in turn, would lead to a better attitude towards social protection and the promotion of political participation of the poor. That is, by highlighting the multiple deprivations experienced by people in poverty, broad definitions make more accessible to people the difficulties associated with getting out of poverty, so that poverty can be understood more in structural terms (structural attributions) and less in individual terms (individualistic attributions).

Take the example of poverty as a lack of opportunities to develop one's own capacities. Poverty can be defined as the lack of resources to develop skills that are useful in the world we live in, one might even focus on skills that are valuable in the marketplace for economic reward (e.g., technological expertise). If poverty is understood in these terms, it is difficult to attribute responsibility for the situation to the person in poverty. In fact, it may lead to greater concern for the situation of poor people. As stated above, attributions about poverty influence attitudes towards social protection. If people hold people in poverty responsible for their situation, they will have worse attitudes towards policies to reduce poverty. Of course, this is not what is meant by poverty as a lack of opportunities to develop one's own capacities as proposed by Sen, but it illustrates our reasoning about the influence of poverty definitions on attributions for poverty and attitudes towards policies to reduce poverty.

This research investigates the relationship between how poverty is defined, attributions for poverty, and attitudes toward poverty reduction. We focus on whether broader definitions of poverty (including elements such as the inability to participate in social life), compared to narrow definitions (based on resources or aid dependency), are linked to lower individualistic attributions, higher structural attributions, and more

positive attitudes toward poverty reduction. In addition, we explore their influence on attitudes towards the political participation of poor people (i.e., that poor people should participate more in social and political life and have important things to contribute). In Study 1, using data from the Eurobarometer 74.1. (European Commission, 2010), we linked definitions of poverty with attributions for poverty and attitudes toward poverty reduction. Then, we conducted a supplementary study to evaluate whether people use these definitions spontaneously (this study is presented in Supplementary Information). In Study 2, we tested the relationship poverty's definitions – attributions – attitudes toward poverty reduction in a Spanish sample. In Study 3, we used an experimental design to test the causal effect of definitions of poverty on attributions for poverty, attitudes toward poverty reduction and attitudes toward political participation of people in poverty. All datasets, questionnaires, code used for analysis, and pre-registrations for Study 2 and Study 3, are publicly available at [https://osf.io/n3gex/?view\\_only=beaf5ef8116d45e390e6bd4d9c813527](https://osf.io/n3gex/?view_only=beaf5ef8116d45e390e6bd4d9c813527)

## Study 1

Study 1 aimed to analyse the relationship between definitions of poverty, poverty attributions, and attitudes towards poverty reduction. We expected that a broader definition of poverty, encompassing deprivation of participation in public life, would predict better attitudes toward poverty reduction. Further, we expected that a broad definition of poverty, including social participation, would predict a preference for structural over individualistic attributions compared to other definitions. To test these ideas, we employed the results from Eurobarometer 74.1 (European Commission, 2010).

### Method

#### *Data and Participants*

Data for this study come from the Eurobarometer 74.1 (European Commission, 2010), version 4.2.0. This survey was conducted in 28 countries and the present dataset is



composed of 26,635 responses ( $M_{age} = 47.93$ ,  $SD = 18.26$ , 54.75% women). The sample was collected through a proportionate stratified multistage sampling method.

### **Measures**

**Definitions of Poverty.** Participants were asked to choose a statement that reflect their definition of what is to be poor (see Table 1). Since the responses coded as "Other" were so few (1%), we decided to exclude them from the analyses. We treat this variable as nominal and as such include it in the analyses.

**Attributions for Poverty.** Participants selected the statement that best captured their beliefs about why there are people living in poverty from amongst the following: "Because they have been unlucky", "Because of laziness and lack willpower," "Because there is much injustice in our society," "Because it's an inevitable part of progress". We categorised these responses according to the international comparative literature on poverty attributions (e.g., van Oorschot & Halman, 2000). Specifically, "laziness and lack of willpower" was categorized as an individual-blame attribution; "injustice in society" was categorized as social-blame attribution; and the "inevitable part of progress" explanation was categorized as a social-fate attribution. However, we focus here on the distinction between individual and social-blame attributions.

**Attitudes Toward Poverty Reduction.** We averaged participants scores across four items: "Poverty in (country) is a problem that needs urgent action by the Government", "Nowadays in (country) income differences between people are far too large", "The (nationality) Government should ensure that the wealth of the country is redistributed in a fair way to all citizens", "People who are well-off should pay higher taxes so the (nationality) Government has more means to fight poverty". These items were measured on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *totally agree* to 4 = *totally disagree*). Scores were reversed such that higher values means a more positive attitude toward poverty reduction. The four items cohered well using both Cronbach's reliability ( $\alpha = .71$ ) and a confirmatory factor analysis: Chi-square value of the measurement model ( $X^2 = 17981.163$ ; degrees of freedom = 6; comparative fit index (CFI) = .98; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .95; root

mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .077; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = .018; Loglikelihood = -9276.91; Akaike Information Criteria (AIC) = 216612.304, Bayesian Information Criteria (BIC) = 216709.855.

In addition to these measures, we included several covariates at an individual and country level. At an individual level, we included participants' gender, subjective income, education level, and political ideology (see Supplementary Information for a description of how these variables were measured). We controlled for educational level and subjective income as we know that self-interest might influence support for poverty reduction. Political ideology also can influence preferences for social protection and attributions for poverty (e.g., Weiner et al., 2011), so we also controlled for this variable. At societal level we controlled for GDP per capita and national unemployment rates. We retrieved this information from the World Bank data set (World Bank, 2010a; World Bank, 2010b) for the year the data collection took place. We used GDP per capita indicator in purchasing power parity. See Table S1 in Supplementary Information for descriptive statistics about measures used in Study 1.

## Results

Since we are working with hierarchical data (i.e., individuals clustered within countries), we created a multilevel model. We fitted four models using the lmer4 package (Bates et al., 2015) in R programme (R version 4.1.2; R Core Team, 2022). Individual variables were cluster-centred and country level variables grand-mean centred. We adopted a conservative approach and fitted an intercept-only model (Model 0) and then included individual control level variables (Model 1), added country level controls (Model 2) and finally added our predictor variables (Model 3). We included definitions of poverty variable as a factor and set the reference to “Their resources are so limited that they cannot participate fully in the life of the society they live in” Our results show that people who endorsed a broader definition of poverty, which contains deprivation to participate in social life, showed more positive attitudes toward poverty reduction compared to people who chose definitions based on the low status of people in poverty or their dependence

on public subsidies, and also compared those that did not offer a definition of poverty (see Table 2). Concerned about the possibility that broader definitions function in fact as a proxy indicator for the severity or extent of poverty, we included the both variables in a new model (see Supplementary Information for information on how these variables were operationalised and Table S2 for the model). In this model the effect of definitions remained fairly stable. In short, consistent with our expectations, broader definitions of poverty predicted more positive attitudes toward poverty reduction.

**Table 1**

*Definitions of Poverty used in Eurobarometer 74.1*

	N	%
1. Their resources are so limited that they cannot participate fully in the life of the society they live in	6,923	25.99
2. They have less than (poverty threshold in each country) per month to live on	5,228	19.63
3. They have a very low social status in our society, independently from their resources	2,175	8.17
4. They depend on charity or public subsidies	5,991	22.49
5. They cannot afford the basic goods they need to live (food, shelter, clothes, etc.) <sup>1</sup>	4,705	17.66
6. Other <sup>1</sup>	278	1.04
7. It is impossible to define poverty just by one statement <sup>1</sup>	1108	4.16

<sup>1</sup>These options were not offered to participants and were coded when participants expressed them spontaneously.

**Table 2**

*Multilevel Regression Models Predicting Attitudes Toward Poverty Reduction*

<i>Predictors</i>	<b>Model 0. Intercept only</b>				<b>Model 1. Individual level controls</b>				<b>Model 2. All individual level variables</b>				<b>Model 3. Individual and country level variables</b>			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	3.36	.04	3.28, 3.43	< .001	3.34	.04	3.26, 3.41	< .001	3.34	.03	3.28, 3.41	< .001	3.38	.03	3.32, 3.45	< .001
Ideology					-.05	.00	-.05, -.05	< .001	-.05	.00	-.05, -.05	< .001	-.05	.00	-.05, -.05	< .001
Income					-.06	.00	-.06, -.05	< .001	-.06	.00	-.06, -.05	< .001	-.06	.00	-.06, -.05	< .001
Education					-.02	.00	-.02, -.02	< .001	-.02	.00	-.02, -.02	< .001	-.02	.00	-.02, -.02	< .001
Gender <sup>1</sup>					.04	.01	.03, .06	< .001	.04	.01	.03, .06	< .001	.04	.01	.03, .06	< .001
GDPPC									-.08	.03	-.14, -.02	.012	-.08	.03	-.13, -.02	.012
Unemployment rate									.04	.04	-.03, .11	.288	.04	.03	-.03, .11	.246
<i>Definitions<sup>2</sup></i>																
Less than poverty threshold													-.01	.01	-.03, .01	.449
Low social status													-.09	.02	-.12, -.06	< .001
Depend on public subsidies													-.08	.01	-.10, -.06	< .001
No basic goods													-.03	.01	-.06, -.01	.011

No definition					-.09	.02	-.13, -.04	< .001
<b>Random Effects</b>								
$\sigma^2$	0.30	0.28	0.28				0.28	
$\tau_{00}$	0.04 Country	0.04 Country	0.03 Country				0.03 Country	
ICC	0.11	0.12	0.09				0.09	
N	27 Country	27 Country	27 Country				27 Country	
Observations	26558	18388	18388				18123	
Marginal $R^2$ / Conditional $R^2$	0.000 / 0.114	0.079 / 0.192	0.107 / 0.189				0.111 / 0.193	
Deviance	43122.059	28778.437	28768.235				28152.822	
AIC	43132.774	28836.871	28841.152				28269.922	
log-Likelihood	-66267.044	-46593.166	-14411.576				-40579.58	

<sup>1</sup>Reference category is male <sup>2</sup>Reference category is “Their resources are so limited that they cannot participate fully in the life of the society they live in”

To test if broad definitions of poverty predict a preference for structural over individualistic attributions compared to other definitions, we fitted several multilevel logistic regression models including attributions for poverty as dependent variable. Since our interest is in comparing individualistic and structural attributions, we built two different models as follows. For the model predicting individualistic attributions, we coded individualistic attribution (“Because of laziness and lack willpower”) as 1 and the rest as 0; for the model predicting structural attribution, we code the social-blame attribution (“Because there is much injustice in our society”) as 1 and the rest as 0. We include all control variables and definitions in both models (see Table 3). The odds ratio (OR) shows that the odds of choosing individualistic attributions over other explanations are higher among those who define poverty in terms of low-status and dependency from subsidies and in general among those who prefer other explanation than the social participation one. Conversely, when comparing the odds of choosing the structural attribution above the others, those who define poverty as lack of participation in social life are more likely to choose this explanation, especially compared with those who choose the low-status explanation, the dependency-based definition or those who do not offer a definition. In short, broader definitions of poverty tend to be associated with more socially located attributions of poverty.

**Table 3**

*Multilevel Logistic Regression Models with Definitions of Poverty Predicting Attributions for Poverty*

	Model Predicting Individualistic Attributions			Model Predicting Structural Attributions		
	<i>Odds Ratios</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Odds Ratios</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	0.16	0.13, 0.19	< .001	1.12	0.94, 1.34	.192
Ideology	0.87	0.80, 0.94	.001	1.09	1.02, 1.16	.010
Income	1.10	1.08, 1.12	< .001	0.89	0.88, 0.90	< .001
Education	1.24	1.20, 1.27	< .001	0.83	0.81, 0.85	< .001
Gender <sup>1</sup>	0.92	0.90, 0.94	< .001	1.03	1.02, 1.05	< .001
GDPPC	0.86	0.73, 1.03	.096	0.91	0.78, 1.06	.230
Unemployment rate	0.89	0.73, 1.08	.246	1.03	0.86, 1.22	.752
<i>Definitions<sup>2</sup></i>						
Less than poverty threshold	1.15	1.01, 1.31	.039	0.96	0.87, 1.05	.376
Low social status	1.54	1.31, 1.81	< .001	0.71	0.63, 0.80	< .001
Depend on public subsidies	1.49	1.32, 1.68	< .001	0.71	0.65, 0.77	< .001
No basic goods	1.32	1.14, 1.52	< .001	0.88	0.80, 0.98	.022
No definition	1.32	1.03, 1.68	.025	0.69	0.57, 0.83	< .001
Random Effects						
$\sigma^2$		3.29			3.29	
$\tau_{00}$		0.22 Country			0.18 Country	
ICC		0.06			0.05	
N		27 Country			27 Country	
Observations		16975			16975	
Marginal R <sup>2</sup> / Conditional R <sup>2</sup>		0.062 / 0.122			0.053 / 0.102	
Deviance		14231.767			22178.105	
AIC		14257.767			22204.105	
log-Likelihood		-7115.884			-11089.052	

<sup>1</sup>Reference category is male <sup>2</sup>Reference category is “Their resources are so limited that they cannot participate fully in the life of the society they live in”

## Discussion

Our results suggest a relatively clear direction. When people hold broad definitions of poverty, their attitudes towards wealth redistribution and beliefs about the causes of poverty differ from those who understand poverty as low social status or dependence on public benefits. Specifically, they show more positive attitudes toward redistribution and explain poverty in structural terms. This study contains some important limitations. Although we have used a high-quality database to test our exploratory predictions, especially in terms of representativeness and sample size, the way our variables of interest are measured is somewhat limited. For example, when measuring attributions of poverty, participants were forced to choose only one option, when research has shown that people can possess complex and even contradictory beliefs about the causes of poverty (Kluegel et al., 1995; Lepianka et al., 2009). The same could be said for definitions of poverty; it is difficult to think that people subscribe to a single definition univocally and do not perceive the others as correct to some extent. In our next studies we adopt a more nuanced approach. Before conducting Study 2, we conducted a study to check whether these broad definitions spontaneously emerge in people's minds or whether they simply endorse them once they are presented to them (see Supplementary Study in Supplementary Information). The results suggested that people primarily define poverty in economic terms, indicating that this broad definition of poverty do not spontaneously emerge in people's mind, but one they are presented with these broad definitions, they endorse them.

## Study 2

Study 2 aimed to further explore the relationship between definitions of poverty, attributions about poverty, attitudes towards poverty reduction, and attitude toward political participation of people in poverty. Building on Study 1 we sought to improve the way in which the variables of interest were measured. Further, we pre-registered both our hypotheses and planned analyses.



## Pre-registered Hypotheses

Higher agreement levels with broad definitions of poverty (i.e., social participation, capabilities), as predictor variables, would predict lower scores in individualistic attributions for poverty and higher scores in structural attributions (H1a) and more favourable attitudes toward poverty reduction (H2a). Higher agreement with narrow definitions (i.e. dependence or low status) would predict higher scores in individualistic attributions for poverty and lower scores in structural attributions for poverty (H1b) and worse attitudes toward poverty reduction (H2b). Exploratorily, we tested if broad definitions predict more positive attitude toward political participation of people in poverty (H3a) and narrow definitions a more negative attitude toward this participation (H3b). We also tested if attributions for poverty mediate the relation between the four definitions of poverty and attitudes toward poverty reduction (H4).

## Method

### *Participants*

We recruited a sample of 428 participants in Spain through a mailing list, with participants completing the survey in exchange for entering a 50-euro prize draw. Of these, 26 participants were removed because Spanish was not their native language or they did not answer this question, 20 participants were excluded because it took them more than an hour to do the survey and nine for doing the survey in less than two minutes. The final sample was composed of 374 observations (75.67% women;  $M_{age} = 24.31$ ,  $SD_{age} = 8.06$ ). We conducted, on the sample after we applied our exclusion criteria, a sensitivity analysis using G\*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2007) for linear multiple regression (fixed model,  $R^2$  deviation from 0) including four predictor variables (alpha level = .05, 80% power). Results from this analysis suggested that we were able to detect a  $f^2 = .032$ , equivalent to  $R^2 = .031$ .

## *Measures*

**Definitions of Poverty.** Participants were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with four possible definitions of poverty using a 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*) Likert scale. The presented definitions were: “People are poor when their resources are so limited that they cannot participate fully in the life of the society they live in;” “People are poor when they cannot fully develop their capabilities;” “People are poor when they have a very low social status in our society, independently of their resources;” “People are poor when they depend on charity or public subsidies”. The first two definitions are broad definitions of poverty and the last two are status-dependency based.

**Attributions for Poverty.** We used a Spanish version of the original scale developed by Feagin (1975), following the results of the factor analysis of Kluegel and Smith (1986). This measure has been used recently and showed adequate internal consistency. For instance, in the research conducted by Piff et al. (2020), the Cronbach’s alpha for structural attributions was .85 and it was .79 for individualistic attributions. In addition, we included some items of some relevant causes in the economic context. Participants indicated their degree of agreement with several causes explaining why people experience poverty using a 7-points Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Individualistic attributions ( $\alpha = .87$ ,  $\omega = .87$ ) were measured using seven items (e.g., “Lack of effort by the poor themselves”) and structural attributions ( $\alpha = .71$ ,  $\omega = .73$ ) were also measured using 7 items (e.g., “Failure of private industry to provide enough jobs”). Given that we included additional items, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis which showed satisfactory fit indicators for a two-factor solution: ( $\chi^2$ ) = 228.418; degrees of freedom = 76; comparative fit index (CFI) = .91; Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = .89; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .073; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = .063.

**Attitudes Toward Poverty Reduction.** This variable was measured with four items ( $\alpha = .86$ ,  $\omega = .87$ ; e.g., “How much, if anything, should the government do to reduce

poverty?”) adapted from the Pew Research Center (see also Piff et al., 2020). Participants answered using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *nothing at all* to 7 = *a lot*).

**Attitudes Toward the Political Participation of People in Poverty.** We elaborated a scale composed of seven items (e.g., “People in poverty have valuable knowledge to take into account in policy decisions.”) to capture prescriptive beliefs about participation of people in poverty in political life. Participants answered using a 7-points Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Since we developed the measure ourselves, we carried out a confirmatory factor analysis to observe its structure and we decided to remove one item (see Supplementary Information for a detailed explanation of the process). Our final measure cohered well in terms of reliability ( $\alpha = .82$ ,  $\omega = .82$ ) and in terms of factorial structure:  $X^2 = 17981.163$ ; degrees of freedom = 6; CFI = .98; TLI = .95; RMSEA = .077; SRMR = .018; Loglikelihood = -9276.91; AIC = 216612.304; BIC = 216709.855.

Participants also reported their ideological position in social (e.g., immigration, abortion) and economic (e.g., taxes, free market) issues, their subjective socioeconomic status using the 10-step MacArthur ladder (Adler et al., 2020), their objective socioeconomic status (income and educational level), age, and gender. Details on how these variables were measured can be found in the Supplementary Information.

## Results

Intercorrelations between all variables were calculated (see table 4). To test hypotheses 1a and 1b – that poverty definitions would predict attributions for poverty – we computed two multiple regression models for each type of attribution. In the first model, we included only the definitions of poverty, as four different independent variables, and in the second model we also included political ideology, subjective and objective socioeconomic status. As hypothesised, both narrow definitions (i.e., dependency, low status) were significant and positive predictors of individualistic attributions. Although one broad definition (i.e., social participation) was a significant negative predictor of individualistic attributions in the first model, when we included

ideological and socioeconomic variables its effect faded to non-significance. Regarding structural attributions we found mixed support for our hypotheses; one broad definition (i.e., capabilities) was a significant positive predictor, however the other broad definition (i.e., social participation) and the narrow definitions did not significantly predict (see Table 5). Overall, we found mixed evidence with some clear effects linking narrow definitions to individualistic attributions, and weaker evidence linking broad definitions to structural attributions.

We used the same analytic strategy to test hypotheses 2a and 2b; whether definitions of poverty, as independent variables, predict attitudes towards poverty reduction, as dependent variable. The social participation definition positively predicted in both models attitudes toward poverty reduction, although its effect diminished significantly when political ideology, subjective, and objective socioeconomic status were included in the second model (see Table 6). However, none of the other definitions played a significant role in predicting attitudes towards poverty reduction.

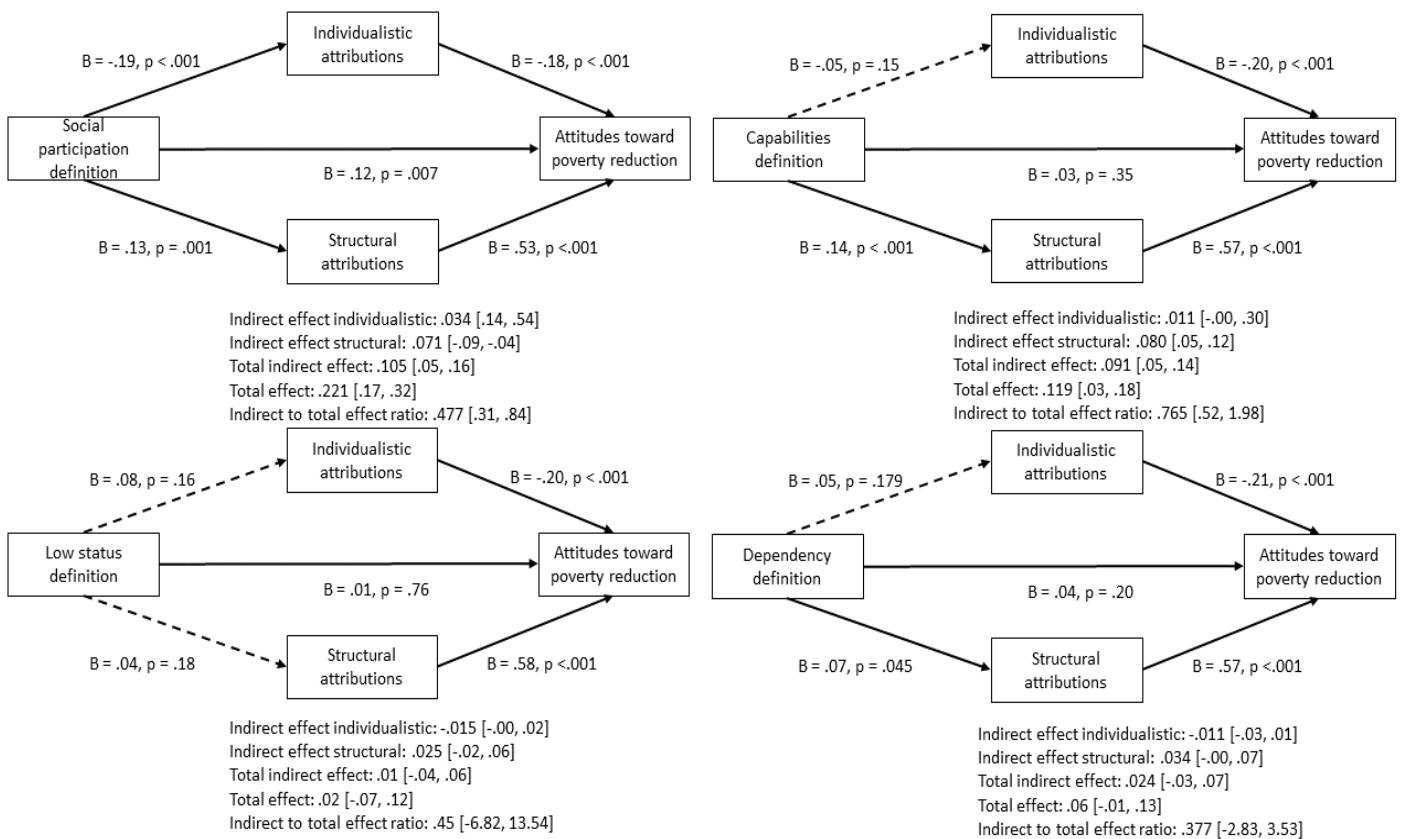
To test our exploratory hypotheses 3a and 3b, again, we built two different regression models including attitudes toward political participation of people in poverty as criteria variable (see Table 6). In this case, both broad definitions (social participation and capabilities) predicted positively this variable, however, the effect of the social participation definition faded away when we included the participant's political ideology, subjective and objective socioeconomic status. Narrow definitions were not significant predictors.

We tested Hypothesis 4 building several regression models using *lavaan* package (Rosseel, 2012) in R software (R Core Team, 2022). Specifically, we fitted one model for each definition including individualistic and structural attributions as parallel mediators and attitudes toward poverty reduction as criteria variable (see Figure 1). Both structural and individualistic attributions mediated the relation between the social participation definition and attitudes toward poverty reduction: higher levels of agreement with this definition led to less individualistic and more structural attributions which led to better

attitudes toward poverty reduction. Structural attributions also mediated the relation between the capabilities definition and our criteria variable: higher agreement with this definition lead to more structural attributions which led to better attitudes toward poverty reduction. However, neither individualistic nor structural attributions mediated the relationship between the other two definitions and attitudes towards poverty reduction.

**Figure 1**

*Multiple Mediation Model Including Individualistic and Structural Attributions as Mediators Between Definitions of Poverty and Attitudes Toward Poverty Reduction*



**Table 4**

*Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations Between Variables in Studies 2 and 3*

	Study 2	Study 3												
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Social participation	5.57 (1.28)	5.91 (1.15)	–	.47***	.49***	.32***	-.34***	.49***	.39***	.52***	-.34***	-.32***	-.10	.04
2. Capabilities	4.69 (1.64)	5.18 (1.36)	.34***	–	.55***	.33***	-.17**	.36***	.24***	.40***	-.08	-.13*	.01	.03
3. Low status	2.94 (1.49)	4.90 (1.51)	.19***	.25***	–	.36***	-.16**	.32***	.28***	.34***	-.14*	-.17**	-.01	.04
4. Welfare dependency	4.86 (1.69)	5.46 (1.48)	.16**	.12*	.05	–	-.14*	.24***	.24***	.26***	-.06	-.12*	-.05	-.01
5. Individualistic attributions	3.14 (1.21)	3.53 (1.21)	-.17***	-.06	.10	.09	–	-.27***	-.34***	-.43***	.52***	.51***	.14*	-.14*
6. Structural attributions	4.92 (0.88)	4.79 (0.92)	.16**	.25***	.07	.10	-.19***	–	.55***	.53***	-.48***	-.42***	-.22***	-.02
7. Poverty reduction	5.85 (1.13)	5.66 (1.21)	.23***	.16**	.01	.08	-.29***	.49***	–	.58***	-.45***	-.38***	-.13*	.03
8. Political participation	5.38 (1.06)	5.60 (1.01)	.23***	.26***	.04	.02	-.41***	.50***	.48***	–	-.43***	-.42***	-.10	.04
9. Economic ideology	4.78 (2.56)	4.99 (2.28)	-.22***	-.19***	-.10	.02	.45***	-.38***	-.45***	-.45***	–	.82***	.19***	-.07
10. Social ideology	3.52 (2.42)	4.53 (2.24)	-.24***	-.18***	.00	-.04	.50***	-.40***	-.41***	-.51***	.68***	–	.10	-.13*

11. Subjective status	5.68 (1.32)	5.19 (1.56)	-.07	-.10	-.03	.02	.13*	-.08	-.20***	-.13*	.07	.08	-	.49***
12. Objective status	0 (2.56)	0 (1.57)	.02	-.03	.01	.16**	.10	-.10	-.19***	-.05	.10	.05	.35***	-

Note: 'Social participation', 'Capabilities', 'Low status', and 'Dependence' refer to the four definitions of poverty that have been measured as listed in the measures section.

Below the diagonal are the correlations between measures in Study 2. Above the diagonal, in Study 3.

**Table 5**

*Regression Models with Definitions of Poverty as Predictors and Attributions as Criteria Variable in Study 2*

	Individualistic Attributions						Structural Attributions					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	CI	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	CI	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	CI	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	CI	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.79	3.17, 4.40	< .001	1.39	0.57, 2.22	.001	3.84	3.39, 4.28	< .001	4.98	4.33, 5.62	< .001
Social participation	-0.22	-0.32, -0.12	< .001	-0.09	-0.18, 0.01	.064	0.07	-0.01, 0.14	.076	-0.00	-0.07, 0.07	.915
Capabilities	-0.03	-0.11, 0.05	.466	0.02	-0.05, 0.09	.496	0.12	0.06, 0.18	< .001	0.09	0.03, 0.14	.002
Low status	0.12	0.03, 0.20	.007	0.10	0.03, 0.18	.005	-0.00	-0.06, 0.06	.883	0.00	-0.05, 0.06	.908
Welfare dependency	0.08	0.01, 0.15	.029	0.07	0.00, 0.13	.042	0.03	-0.02, 0.09	.190	0.04	-0.00, 0.09	.074
Social ideology				0.16	0.10, 0.22	< .001				-0.09	-0.13, -0.04	< .001
Economic ideology				0.11	0.05, 0.16	< .001				-0.06	-0.11, -0.02	.006
Objective Status				0.01	-0.03, 0.06	.605				-0.02	-0.06, 0.01	.162
Subjective status				0.07	-0.02, 0.15	.108				-0.01	-0.07, 0.06	.785
Observations	374			363			374			363		
R <sup>2</sup> / R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	0.073 / 0.062			0.311 / 0.295			0.084 / 0.074			0.220 / 0.202		



**Table 6**

*Regression Models with Definitions of Poverty as Predictors and Attitudes Toward Poverty Reduction and Political participation of People in Poverty as Criteria Variables in Study 2*

	Poverty reduction						Political participation of people in poverty					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	CI	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	CI	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	CI	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	CI	<i>p</i>
Intercept	4.43	3.86, 5.00	< .001	6.55	5.75, 7.34	< .001	4.03	3.50, 4.57	< .001	6.02	5.31, 6.73	< .001
Social participation	0.19	0.10, 0.28	< .001	0.10	0.01, 0.18	.031	0.17	0.08, 0.26	< .001	0.05	-0.03, 0.13	.225
Capabilities	0.07	-0.01, 0.14	.070	0.02	-0.05, 0.08	.611	0.14	0.07, 0.21	< .001	0.09	0.03, 0.15	.003
Low status	-0.03	-0.11, 0.05	.412	-0.04	-0.11, 0.03	.304	-0.03	-0.11, 0.04	.342	-0.02	-0.08, 0.04	.534
Welfare dependency	0.03	-0.04, 0.10	.404	0.05	-0.01, 0.11	.087	-0.03	-0.09, 0.04	.393	-0.01	-0.06, 0.04	.714
Social ideology				-0.08	-0.13, -0.02	.011				-0.15	-0.20, -0.10	< .001
Economic ideology				-0.13	-0.19, -0.08	< .001				-0.07	-0.12, -0.02	.005
Objective Status				-0.06	-0.10, -0.01	.009				0.01	-0.03, 0.05	.679
Subjective status				-0.10	-0.18, -0.02	.016				-0.06	-0.13, 0.01	.100
Observations		374			363			374			363	
R <sup>2</sup> / R <sup>2</sup> adjusted		0.074 / 0.064			0.283 / 0.267			0.107 / 0.097			0.318 / 0.303	

## Discussion

Our hypotheses received mixed support. We did find evidence of a relationship between definitions, attributions, and attitudes towards poverty reduction, replicating the findings of Study 1. However, the connection does not appear to be as straightforward as we had hypothesised. Endorsing some broad definitions of poverty (i.e., social participation) is linked with lower individualistic attributions and both a better attitude toward poverty reduction and attitudes toward political participation of people in poverty. When we include political ideology and both subjective and objective socioeconomic status in our models, the effect of social participation definition importantly decreased, something to be expected given the correlation between political ideology variables and the social participation definition. The other broad definition (i.e., capabilities) positively predicted both structural attributions and attitudes toward political participation of people in poverty. As hypothesized, both narrow definitions (low status-based and dependency-based) positively predicted individualistic attributions. Yet, these two definitions did not significantly predict the other dependent variables.

These results reinforce the idea that different definitions of poverty, either broader or narrower, do differentially predict attitudinal variables related to poverty. Our results suggest that a broad definition based on social participation is the most relevant in predicting both poverty attributions and attitudes towards poverty reduction and political participation of people experiencing poverty.

### Study 3

While studies 1 and 2 show a mixed pattern of links between poverty definitions, attributions, and support for reduction, as correlational designs they cannot determine causality. Study 3 was designed to test whether there is a causal relationship by manipulating participants' definition of poverty. We tried to experimentally manipulate the definition of poverty by means of a newspaper story (supporting a dependency-based definition in one condition and supporting a broader definition including social participation in the other condition). However, as we show below, our manipulation

failed to influence definitions of poverty, so we do not further test the hypotheses here. For the sake of transparency, the hypotheses are presented here and the analyses to test them appear in the Supplementary Information.

### **Pre-registered hypotheses**

Participants in the broad definition condition would score lower in individualistic attributions, compared to participants assigned to the status and dependency-based definition condition (H1a). They also would score higher in structural attributions (H1b), show a more positive attitude toward poverty reduction (H2), and toward political participation of people in poverty (H3) compared to participants in the status and dependency-based definition of poverty condition. We also predicted that attributions for poverty would mediate the relationship between the experimental condition and attitudes toward poverty reduction (H4) and between the experimental condition and attitudes toward political participation of people in poverty (H5).

### **Method**

#### ***Participants***

Three hundred and twenty-six participants on Prolific answered our survey in exchange for a small monetary compensation. We pre-registered that we would eliminate non-native English speakers. However, prior to data collection we determined that this was too strict an exclusion criterion and instead opted to restrict sampling to people who have lived in the UK for more than 25 years. We note this as a deviation from the pre-registration. We repeated all analyses using both exclusion criteria (i.e., native speaking, more than 25 years residency) and the results were similar. One participant was eliminated for taking more than one hour to complete the questionnaire, so the final sample was composed of 325 participants (67.38% women;  $M_{\text{age}} = 41.68$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.76$ ). Given our sample size in each condition, the sensitivity analysis suggested that we could detect an effect size as small as  $d = 0.31$  with a power of .80 at  $\alpha = .05$ . Sensitivity analysis for multiple regression with four predictor variables indicated that we could detect an

effect size as small as  $f^2 = 0.037$  (equivalent to  $R^2 = 0.037$ ). Here also considering a power of .80 at  $\alpha = .05$ .

### **Measures**

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions. In each condition they were presented with text and a graphic, purportedly taken from a newspaper report, explaining a definition of poverty (see Materials in the OSF page provided above for both complete manipulations). In one condition, the definition was focused on the lack of social participation, and in the other the definition was based on low status and dependency. Next, participants completed the same variables as in Study 2: individualistic attributions ( $\alpha = .89, \omega = .89$ ), structural attributions ( $\alpha = .75, \omega = .76$ ), attitudes toward poverty reduction ( $\alpha = .86, \omega = .86$ ), and attitudes toward political participation of people in poverty ( $\alpha = .86, \omega = .87$ ). After these, we included the measure of agreement with the four definitions of poverty used in Study 2, as manipulation check. Finally, participants completed the same socio-demographic and ideology measures from Study 2 but adapted to United Kingdom (e.g., different income ranges based on income deciles provided by the United Kingdom's Office for National Statistics).

### **Results**

First, we checked whether the manipulation influenced definitions of poverty. We did not find significant differences in the endorsement of this definition between participants who were presented with a broad definition ( $M = 5.89, SD = 1.19$ ) and participants who were presented with a definition based on low status and dependency ( $M = 5.92, SD = 1.11$ ),  $t(321.73) = -0.28, p = .78$ , BCa 95% CI [-0.29, 0.22], Hedges'  $g = -0.03$ . We also found no significant differences between the groups with respect to the other definitions. In short, our manipulation failed to systematically shift definitions of poverty. Therefore, we do not test our hypotheses, although we report the results of these analyses in the Supplementary Information.

**Table 7**

*Regression Models Including Definitions of Poverty as Predictors in Study 3*

	Individualistic attributions			Structural attributions			Poverty reduction			Political participation		
	<i>B</i>	CI	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	CI	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	CI	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	CI	<i>p</i>
Intercept	5.71	4.99, 6.44	< .001	2.14	1.64, 2.65	< .001	2.87	2.17, 3.57	< .001	2.51	1.97, 3.05	< .001
Social participation	-0.35	-0.48, -0.21	< .001	0.32	0.23, 0.41	< .001	0.32	0.20, 0.45	< .001	0.36	0.26, 0.46	< .001
Capabilities	-0.01	-0.13, 0.10	.835	0.10	0.02, 0.18	.016	0.02	-0.09, 0.13	.770	0.13	0.04, 0.21	.004
Low status	0.02	-0.09, 0.13	.731	0.02	-0.06, 0.09	.669	0.06	-0.04, 0.17	.218	0.01	-0.07, 0.09	.736
Welfare dependency	-0.03	-0.12, 0.06	.535	0.03	-0.03, 0.10	.298	0.09	0.00, 0.18	.048	0.04	-0.03, 0.11	.213
Observations	325			325			325			325		
R <sup>2</sup> / R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	0.114 / 0.103			0.269 / 0.260			0.174 / 0.163			0.305 / 0.296		

Although it was not pre-registered, we performed the same analyses as in Study 2 to determine if our results replicate. As shown in Table 7, the broad definition of poverty as lack of social participation was a significant predictor of both individualistic and structural attributions and attitudes towards poverty reduction and political participation of poor people. In this case, this definition maintained its effect even controlling for political ideology, and objective and subjective socio-economic status (complete models can be consulted in Tables S3 and S4 in Supplementary Information). This replicated results from Study 2 and here the broad definition of poverty was also a significant predictor of structural attributions. The same is true for the mediation model discussed in the previous study, although in this case we did find a positive significant indirect effects of the other definitions in the same direction found in the social participation definition (see Figures S3 and S4 in Supplementary Information). We also replicated results concerning the other broad definition based on capabilities. This variable was a significant and positive predictor of structural attributions and attitudes toward political participation of people in poverty. However, in this study, with a sample from the UK, the narrow definitions did not play a significant role in predicting any of our dependent variables.

## **Discussion**

Even though our manipulation did not work, Study 3 confirmed most of the results found in Study 2 in a sample from the general population and from another country. Again, the more people endorsed the definition of poverty as a lack of social participation, the less they blamed poor people for their poverty and the more they placed responsibility on socio-structural factors beyond their control. Moreover, the people who perceive poverty as a lack of social participation showed a more positive attitude toward poverty reduction and political participation of people in poverty. In this study, both the regression coefficients and the R-squares of the models were noticeably higher than in Study 2. In addition, we replicated the mediational models proposed in the previous study. However, in this case the other definitions of capabilities, low status and

dependency showed a similar, albeit smaller, effect to the definition of poverty as lack of social participation (see Figures S3 y S4 in Supplementary Information).

### General Discussion

What it means to be poor has been a widely debated question throughout history, in fields such as political philosophy, religion and economics. The way we define poverty will affect the solutions proposed to alleviate it as well as the common sense explanations of the problem. While this is an issue worthy of research, social psychology has neglected lay definitions of poverty. Previous research has studied the perceptions of different social groups in situations of poverty (Urbiola et al., 2022) or different ways of conceptualizing them (e.g., using the label poor people vs. welfare recipients; Henry et al., 2004). However, to our knowledge, this is the first research to specifically focus what people understand by poverty.

This paper introduces the concept of poverty definitions into social psychology. It also examines the role of poverty definitions on attitudes towards poverty reduction and attributions for poverty. Across three studies, we consistently linked endorsement of a broad definition of poverty, understood in terms of lack of social participation, with lower individualistic attributions for poverty, higher structural attributions, more positive attitudes toward poverty reduction and to political participation of people experiencing poverty. To this end, we have used quality multi-national data and carried out two studies in two different countries improve in addition the quality of the measurement instruments. Regarding the role of the other definitions (e.g., lack of resources, low status or capabilities) results are less clear and more ambiguous. Future research should continue to explore them further.

In a functioning democracy, people's opinions on social phenomena and the public policies that focus on them should inform policy makers on how to act. Here we have highlighted the importance of how poverty is defined with regard to attributions for poverty. This is important because other research has highlighted the role of attributions in supporting social protection and redistribution (e.g., Piff et al., 2020; Wiwad et al.,

2021). Specifically, the literature shows that support for individualistic explanations of poverty influences worse attitudes towards social protection and redistributive policies. On the other hand, support for structural explanations of poverty has been related to greater support for such policies. It is generally assumed that attitudes towards the policies that are, or potentially could be, implemented by rulers in representative democracies have an influence on the measures that will be taken in the future; that is, politicians are expected to be responsive to citizens' preferences. Although with important differences according to countries' institutional architecture, political context or citizens' social class or political resources, elites have generally been found to respond to some extent to citizens' preferences (Elkjær & Klitgaard, 2021; Grimes & Esaiasson, 2014; Stimson et al., 1995). In this sense, we have shown that definitions of poverty can be an important precedent for poverty attributions. Moreover, we have also shown that definitions of poverty also influence attitudes towards social protection and redistribution by themselves, specially the definition of poverty as lack of social participation. In all our studies this definition seems to be the most promising one to explain attitudes towards poverty reduction. In all three studies we find that, consistently, the more people support this definition, the better attitudes they show towards poverty reduction.

Another important novelty is that we include a measure of attitudes toward political participation of poor people, a previously neglected element of being poor. The focus of prior work on economic elements of poverty has proven fruitful; we have learned much about support for social protection or redistribution (Bullock et al, 2003; Piff et al., 2020), willingness to help the poor (Osborne & Weiner, 2015), and feelings about the poor (Cozzarelli et al., 2003). By recognizing that poverty is more than just a lack of resources we open the field for research into broader, *non-economic* impacts of poverty. For example, full political inclusion. This can be a starting point on which to build.

One might ask whether people spend time reflecting on poverty and what elements its definition implies for them. The results of a supplementary study suggest that people do not define poverty in broad terms spontaneously, but once they are presented



with these definitions they do adhere to them. This point out that working on these definitions could be an important tool in raising awareness of the problem and improving attitudes towards people experiencing poverty, with important policy implications. This can be important for politicians seeking to implement policies favorable to people experiencing poverty, and especially for organizations and social movements trying to lobby for measures to improve the lives of poor people or to generate a broad social debate about the system. That is, if we know how to frame poverty issues in such a way that they are not blamed for their situation and their situation is explained in structural terms, people can show a better attitude towards their support and change in the system.

Our research has some limitations that should be noted. The fact that our experimental manipulation failed in Study 3 prevents us from drawing causal conclusions about the role of poverty definitions in relation to causal attributions for poverty and attitudes toward poverty reduction policies. Although at a theoretical level this argument makes sense and the causal relationship between poverty attributions and attitudes towards poverty reduction is well established (Bai et al., 2022; Wiwad et al., 2021), more research is needed. Another limitation, mentioned above, is that our results, specially regarding narrower definitions, are less clear and ambiguous. Future research could focus on the role of these definitions and the effects, if any, they have on variables related to poverty perceptions. Lastly, although we have relied on theory for the definitions used, and they were consistent with the purpose of the research, there are other possible definitions that may be important. For example, we did not use a definition purely based on lack of financial resources. In the future it might be interesting to further include and refine different definitions.

Ultimately, the present research was designed with the aim of testing whether the way poverty is defined influences the way poverty is explained and the attitude towards it. In essence, our results indicate that they do. We consistently found that the endorsement of a broader definition of poverty, including lack of social participation, is related to lower individualistic attributions, higher structural attributions, a more positive

attitude toward poverty reduction and a more positive attitude toward political participation of people in poverty. This opens a new field of possibilities for research both at the theoretical level, in relation to definitions of poverty in the study of poverty perceptions, and at the practical level, in working to redefine poverty and the consequences of this (e.g., increasing social awareness of the problem and favorability of policies to support these people).

### References

- Adler, N. E., Epel, E. S., Castellazzo, G., & Ickovics, J. R. (2000). Relationship of subjective and objective social status with psychological and physiological functioning: Preliminary data in healthy white women. *Health Psychology, 19*(6), 586-592. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-6133.19.6.586>
- Anand, P., Jones, S., Donoghue, M., & Teitler, J. (2021). Non-monetary poverty and deprivation: A capability approach. *Journal of European Social Policy, 31*(1), 78-91. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0958928720938334>
- Andress, H. J., & Heien, T. (2001). Four worlds of welfare state attitudes? A comparison of Germany, Norway, and the United States. *European Sociological Review, 17*(4), 337-356. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/17.4.337>
- Armingeon, K., & Weisstanner, D. (2021). Objective conditions count, political beliefs decide: the conditional effects of self-interest and ideology on redistribution preferences. *Political Studies*, 0032321721993652. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0032321721993652>
- Ashton, P. (1984). Poverty and its beholders. *New Society, 70*(1139), 95-98.
- Bai, J., Xu, B. X., Yang, S. L., & Guo, Y. Y. (2022). Why are higher-class individuals less supportive of redistribution? The mediating role of attributions for rich-poor gap. *Current Psychology, 1-11*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02836-2>

- Bates, D., Mächler, M., Bolker, B. M., & Walker, S. C. (2015). Fitting linear mixed-effects models using lme4. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 67, 1–48.  
<https://doi.org/10.18637/jss.v067.i01>
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (2000). Reciprocity, self-interest, and the welfare state. *Nordic Journal of Political Economy*, 26(1), 33-53.
- Brown-Iannuzzi, J. L., Lundberg, K. B., & McKee, S. E. (2021). Economic inequality and socioeconomic ranking inform attitudes toward redistribution. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 96, 104180.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2021.104180>
- Bullock, H. E., Williams, W. R., & Limbert, W. M. (2003). Predicting support for welfare policies: The impact of attributions and beliefs about inequality. *Journal of Poverty*, 7(3), 35-56. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J134v07n03\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J134v07n03_03)
- Cozzarelli, C., Wilkinson, A. V., & Tagler, M. J. (2001). Attitudes toward the poor and attributions for poverty. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(2), 207-227.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00209>
- Davidai, S. (2022). How do people make sense of wealth and poverty?. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 43, 42-47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.06.010>
- Dawtry, R. J., Sutton, R. M., & Sibley, C. G. (2015). Why wealthier people think people are wealthier, and why it matters: From social sampling to attitudes to redistribution. *Psychological Science*, 26(9), 1389-1400.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0956797615586560>
- Elkjær, M. A., & Klitgaard, M. B. (2021). Economic Inequality and Political Responsiveness: A Systematic Review. *Perspectives on Politics*, 1–20.  
<http://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592721002188>
- Engels, F., & Marx, K. (2004). *The communist manifesto*. Penguin UK.

- European Commission (2013). Eurobarometer 74.1 (AUG-SEP 2010). *GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA5237 Data file Version 4.2.0*, <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.11625>
- Farwell, L., & Weiner, B. (2000). Bleeding hearts and the heartless: Popular perceptions of liberal and conservative ideologies. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(7), 845-852. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0146167200269009>
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, AG. & Buchner, A. (2007). G\*Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences. *Behavior Research Methods* 39, 175–191. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03193146>
- Feagin, J. R. (1972). Poverty: We still believe that God helps those who help themselves. *Psychology Today*, 6(6), 101-110.
- Ferragina, E., Tomlinson, M., & Walker, R. (2017). Poverty and Participation in Twenty-First Century Multicultural Britain. *Social Policy and Society*, 16(4), 535-559. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1474746416000440>
- Foster, J. E. (1998). Absolute versus relative poverty. *The American Economic Review*, 88(2), 335-341. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/116944>
- García-Castro, J. D., Rodríguez-Bailón, R., & Willis, G. B. (2020). Perceiving economic inequality in everyday life decreases tolerance to inequality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 90, 104019. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2020.104019>
- García-Sánchez, E., Osborne, D., Willis, G. B., & Rodríguez-Bailón, R. (2020). Attitudes towards redistribution and the interplay between perceptions and beliefs about inequality. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 59(1), 111-136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12326>

- Grimes, M., & Esaiasson, P. (2014). Government Responsiveness: A Democratic Value with Negative Externalities? *Political Research Quarterly*, 67(4), 758–768. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912914543193>
- Henry, P. J., Reyna, C., & Weiner, B. (2004). Hate welfare but help the poor: how the attributional content of stereotypes explains the paradox of reactions to the destitute in America 1. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 34(1), 34-58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2004.tb02536.x>
- Kluegel, J. R., & Smith, E. R. (1986). *Beliefs about inequality: Americans' views of what is and what ought to be*. Routledge.
- Kluegel, J. R., Csepeli, G., Kolosi, T., Orkeny, A., & Nemenyi, M. (1995). Accounting for the rich and the poor: Existential justice in comparative perspective. In J. Kluegel, D. Mason and B. Wegener (eds), *Social justice and political change: Public opinions in capitalist and post-communist States*, 179-207. Walter de Gruyter.
- Kulin, J., & Svallfors, S. (2013). Class, values, and attitudes towards redistribution: A European comparison. *European Sociological Review*, 29(2), 155-167. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcr046>
- Laderchi, C. R. (2000). *The monetary approach to poverty: a survey of concepts and methods* (Working Paper No. 58.) QEH Working Paper Series. [https://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/sites/www.odid.ox.ac.uk/files/www3\\_docs/qehwps58.pdf](https://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/sites/www.odid.ox.ac.uk/files/www3_docs/qehwps58.pdf)
- Laderchi, C. R., Saith, R., & Stewart, F. (2003). Does it matter that we do not agree on the definition of poverty? A comparison of four approaches. *Oxford Development Studies*, 31(3), 243-274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360081032000111698>
- Lambert, P. (2001). *The distribution and redistribution of income*. Manchester University Press.

- Lepianka, D., Van Oorschot, W., & Gelissen, J. (2009). Popular explanations of poverty: A critical discussion of empirical research. *Journal of Social Policy*, 38(3), 421-438. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279409003092>
- Lewin-Epstein, N., Kaplan, A., & Levanon, A. (2003). Distributive justice and attitudes toward the welfare state. *Social Justice Research*, 16(1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022909726114>
- Marquis, L., & Rosset, J. (2021). When Explanations for Poverty Help Explain Social Policy Preferences: The Case of European Public Opinion Amidst the Economic Recession (2009–2014). *Social Justice Research*, 34(4), 428-459. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-021-00381-0>
- Meltzer, A. H., & Richard, S. F. (1981). A rational theory of the size of government. *Journal of Political Economy*, 89(5), 914-927.
- Nussbaum, M., C. (2000) *Women and Human Development – The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, M., C. (2011) *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Harvard University Press.
- Osborne, D., & Weiner, B. (2015). A latent profile analysis of attributions for poverty: Identifying response patterns underlying people’s willingness to help the poor. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 85, 149-154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.05.007>
- Piff, P. K., Wiwad, D., Robinson, A. R., Akinin, L. B., Mercier, B., & Shariff, A. (2020). Shifting attributions for poverty motivates opposition to inequality and enhances egalitarianism. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(5), 496-505. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0835-8>
- R Core Team (2022). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing. URL: <https://www.R-project.org/>

- Ringen, S. (1988). Direct and Indirect Measures of Poverty. *Journal of Social Policy*, 17(3), 351–365. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279400016858>
- Rodríguez-Bailón, R., Bratanova, B., Willis, G. B., Lopez-Rodriguez, L., Sturrock, A., & Loughnan, S. (2017). Social class and ideologies of inequality: How they uphold unequal societies. *Journal of Social Issues*, 73(1), 99-116. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12206>
- Rosseel, Y. (2012). lavaan: An R Package for Structural Equation Modeling. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 48(2), 1-36. URL: <https://www.jstatsoft.org/v48/i02/>
- Rueda, D., & Stegmüller, D. (2016). The externalities of inequality: Fear of crime and preferences for redistribution in Western Europe. *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(2), 472-489. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12212>
- Sen, A., K. (1985) *Commodities and Capabilities*. North-Holland.
- Sen, A., K. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Spicker, P. (2007). Definitions of poverty: twelve clusters of meaning. In Spicker, P., Leguizamón, S. Á., & Gordon, D. (Eds.) *Poverty: An international glossary* (pp. 229-243). Zed Books.
- Stimson, J. A., Mackuen, M. B., & Erikson, R. S. (1995). Dynamic Representation. *American Political Science Review*, 89(3), 543–565. <http://doi.org/10.2307/2082973>
- Townsend, P. (1962). The meaning of poverty. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 13(3), 210-227. <https://doi.org/10.2307/587266>
- Urbiola, A., Navas, M., Carmona, C., & Willis, G. B. (2022). Social Class also Matters: The Effects of Social Class, Ethnicity, and their Interaction on Prejudice and Discrimination Toward Roma. *Race and Social Problems*, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-022-09368-1>

- Van Oorschot, W. (2000). Who should get what, and why? On deservingness criteria and the conditionality of solidarity among the public. *Policy & Politics*, 28(1), 33-48. <https://doi.org/10.1332/0305573002500811>
- Van Oorschot, W., & Halman, L. (2000). Blame or fate, individual or social? An international comparison of popular explanations of poverty. *European Societies*, 2(1), 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/146166900360701>
- Weiner, B., Osborne, D., & Rudolph, U. (2011). An attributional analysis of reactions to poverty: The political ideology of the giver and the perceived morality of the receiver. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(2), 199-213. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1088868310387615>
- Wiwad, D., Mercier, B., Piff, P. K., Shariff, A., & Aknin, L. B. (2021). Recognizing the impact of COVID-19 on the poor alters attitudes towards poverty and inequality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 93, 104083. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2020.104083>
- World Bank. (2017a). World development indicators. Data Bank. Retrieved 2022 April 6th from: <https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicador/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD>
- World Bank. (2017b). World development indicators. Data Bank. Retrieved 2022 April 6th from: <https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicador/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>



## Capítulo 7. Discusión general

## Capítulo 7. Discusión general

### 7.1. Preguntas y respuestas de investigación

El objetivo de la presente tesis doctoral ha sido analizar la relación entre las atribuciones sobre la pobreza, de una parte, y la actitud hacia la protección social y la reducción de la pobreza, de otra, incluyendo en el análisis la influencia del grupo de personas en pobreza presentado, las orientaciones hacia la justicia y las definiciones sobre la pobreza. Los capítulos 3, 4, 5 y 6 han tratado de dar respuesta a las preguntas planteadas en el Capítulo 2. En los capítulos 3 y 4 llevamos a cabo un total de cinco experimentos en los que estudiamos la influencia del grupo de personas en pobreza percibido en las atribuciones sobre la pobreza, los estereotipos sobre estos grupos y las actitudes hacia la protección social. En el capítulo 5 nos centramos en el papel de las orientaciones hacia la justicia social y, mediante tres estudios correlacionales, profundizamos en su relación con las atribuciones de pobreza y las actitudes hacia la protección social y la redistribución de recursos. En el capítulo 6, nuestro objetivo fue analizar la influencia de las definiciones de pobreza en las atribuciones sobre esta y las actitudes hacia las políticas para reducirla. Para ello llevamos a cabo tres estudios correlacionales.

A continuación, teniendo en cuenta las investigaciones empíricas llevadas a cabo y los resultados obtenidos, tratamos de dar respuesta a las preguntas planteadas en el capítulo 2.

**¿Se percibe de forma diferente a las personas en pobreza a raíz de la crisis económica y a las personas en pobreza persistente, en términos de estereotipos, atribuciones de responsabilidad, merecimiento de protección social y actitudes hacia la protección social? ¿Es diferente la actitud hacia la protección social en estos dos grupos?**

En el capítulo 3 incluimos dos estudios experimentales que compararon la percepción de una persona en situación de pobreza debido a la crisis económica frente a una que había sido pobre durante toda su vida, ambas como *targets* o grupo objetivo. En

ambos estudios incluimos dos condiciones experimentales diferentes. Cada persona participante fue asignada de forma aleatoria a una de ellas. En una de las condiciones se presentaba la historia de un hombre que se encontraba en situación de pobreza y tenía problemas para obtener ingresos debido a la pérdida de su empleo por la crisis económica de 2008; en la otra condición, el texto era el mismo, con la salvedad de que la persona presentada había estado en pobreza y sufrido las dificultades económicas descritas durante toda su vida.

Específicamente, medimos las atribuciones de responsabilidad-individualistas y estructurales-, los estereotipos (estudio 1), -en términos de competencia y calidez-, la percepción de merecimiento de protección social (estudio 2) y la actitud hacia la protección social en general. Nuestros resultados indican que se percibe de forma diferente a estos dos grupos. En primer lugar, las personas en pobreza persistente fueron percibidas como menos competentes en comparación con las personas en pobreza circunstancial, aunque no encontramos diferencias significativas en la dimensión de calidez en las puntuaciones asignadas a cada grupo. En segundo lugar, se realizaron más atribuciones individualistas cuando se trataba de las personas en pobreza persistente. Asimismo, se realizaron menos atribuciones estructurales sobre su pobreza; y aunque los resultados del primer estudio no fueron significativos, los resultados de nuestro mini meta-análisis mostraron que sí había un efecto. En tercer lugar, en el segundo estudio del capítulo 3, quienes participaron en la investigación consideraron a las personas en pobreza persistente menos merecedoras de protección social. En cuarto lugar, se mostró una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social cuando se presentó a un hombre en situación de pobreza persistente, en comparación con las personas a las que se presentó a un hombre en pobreza circunstancial. Todo ello muestra que la duración y la naturaleza de la pobreza son factores importantes que moldean la percepción sobre la pobreza y sobre los grupos de personas en pobreza. En definitiva, se consideró menos capaz al *target* que había estado en pobreza durante toda su vida, se asignó mayor responsabilidad a factores internos de la propia persona, como su pereza, y menor responsabilidad a factores

estructurales, como la falta de oportunidades. Además, fueron considerados menos dignos de protección social que las personas en pobreza debido a la crisis económica. Nuestros resultados se alinean con otros previos que muestran que los patrones atribucionales son diferentes en función del grupo de pobreza que se percibe (Appelbaum, 2001; Cook, 1976; Henry et al., 2004). No obstante, en nuestro caso lo aplicamos a dos grupos de especial relevancia en el momento de la investigación.

**¿Son las atribuciones responsables de que se tengan actitudes sobre la protección social diferentes según se trate de personas en situación de pobreza permanente o circunstancial?**

Una vez mostrada las diferentes atribuciones que se hacen de los dos grupos en situación de pobreza, así como las diferentes actitudes hacia la protección social de estos dos grupos, analizamos si las atribuciones pudieran ser la explicación de estas diferentes actitudes hacia la protección social. Así, en las investigaciones incluidas en el capítulo 3, realizamos dos modelos de mediación en el que incluimos como variable predictora la condición experimental (persona en situación de pobreza permanente vs. circunstancial), las actitudes hacia la protección social como variable criterio y las atribuciones sobre la pobreza (individualistas en un modelo y estructurales en el otro) como variable mediadora. El primer modelo, con las atribuciones individualistas, obtuvo apoyo empírico en ambos estudios. Esto es, cuando quienes participaron percibieron a un hombre en pobreza persistente (vs. pobreza circunstancial) hicieron más atribuciones individualistas sobre su situación. Esto, a su vez, llevó a que mostraran una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social. El segundo modelo, con las atribuciones estructurales como variable mediadora, únicamente obtuvo apoyo empírico en el estudio 2. En este caso, cuando se presentó a un hombre en pobreza persistente (vs. circunstancial) se hicieron menos atribuciones estructurales, lo que también llevó a una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social en general.

Estos resultados creemos que suponen una valiosa contribución a la literatura sobre la percepción de la pobreza y las atribuciones sobre ella. Además de mostrar que se

percibe de forma diferente a dos grupos de personas en situación de pobreza que son relevantes en nuestro contexto, analizamos las consecuencias de esta percepción en las actitudes hacia la protección social. Es decir, vamos un paso más allá al tratar de establecer una cadena causal en la que el grupo percibido influye en las atribuciones sobre su situación, lo que a su vez influye en las actitudes hacia la protección social. Mientras que investigaciones previas han puesto a prueba el segundo *path* (e.g., Bai et al., 2022), aquí nos centramos en el primero.

Tratando de profundizar en los mecanismos explicativos sobre las diferencias en las actitudes hacia la protección social en función del grupo percibido, planteamos en el segundo estudio un modelo de mediación en serie en el que sumamos las percepciones de merecimiento como segundo mediador en serie (siendo el primero las atribuciones individualistas) al primer modelo que planteamos más arriba. Este modelo también obtuvo apoyo empírico. Así, cuando se presentó a la gente a una persona en pobreza persistente, le culparon en mayor medida de su situación, llevando esto a considerarla menos merecedora de protección social. Esto, a su vez, llevó a una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social.

### **¿Se percibe de forma diferente a las mujeres y a los hombres en situación de pobreza?**

Siguiendo un planteamiento y diseño similar a los usados en el capítulo 3, en el capítulo 4 llevamos a cabo tres experimentos analizando las diferencias en la percepción de los hombres y las mujeres en situación de pobreza, de nuevo como *targets* o grupos objetivo. En este caso, en lugar de incluir un texto para cada condición presentando a una mujer o a un hombre en situación de pobreza, tomamos un enfoque ligeramente distinto. En los estudios 1 y 3 adaptamos los cuestionarios teniendo en cuenta el género de la persona en situación de pobreza (en una condición mujeres y, en la otra, hombres), y en el estudio 2 pedimos a quienes participaron que pensasen en un grupo u otro.

En este caso también analizamos la influencia del *target* en las atribuciones sobre la pobreza, los estereotipos sobre el grupo y las actitudes hacia la protección social.

Teniendo en cuenta los últimos desarrollos sobre los cambios en los estereotipos de género, decidimos diferenciar tres dimensiones: competencia, agencia y comunalidad (Eagly et al., 2020). En los tres estudios encontramos consistentemente que cuando se percibe a un hombre en situación de pobreza se realizan más atribuciones individualistas sobre su situación; es decir, se le culpa más por su pobreza. Respecto a las atribuciones estructurales, no encontramos diferencias en ninguno de los estudios. Nuestros resultados también muestran que los hombres en situación de pobreza son percibidos como menos comunales y competentes, no encontrándose diferencias significativas en la calidez que se les asigna en comparación con las mujeres en pobreza. En la misma línea, encontramos que se muestra una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social cuando el beneficiario de esta era un hombre en situación de pobreza, en comparación con una mujer en esa misma situación.

Estos resultados profundizan en la escasa literatura previa que comparaba la percepción sobre hombres y mujeres en situación de pobreza (Cozzarelli et al., 2022). En general, muestran una imagen bastante coherente sobre la percepción diferenciada de hombres y mujeres en pobreza: la imagen de los primeros es más negativa que la de las segundas. Como proponemos tanto en el capítulo 1 como en la discusión del 4, esto puede deberse en parte a la exclusión histórica de las mujeres del mundo del trabajo remunerado, relegándolas al ámbito doméstico, en lo que se conocería como el modelo “male bread-winner model” (Pfau-Effinger, 2004). Los hombres pobres, al no cumplir con lo que sería su rol social (esto es, obtener los recursos del hogar para garantizar su acceso al consumo, etc.), recibirían un mayor castigo. Esto, por supuesto, no implica que su situación sea peor a nivel objetivo. Como remarcamos en el capítulo 4, la pobreza afecta desproporcionalmente a las mujeres. Bajo nuestro punto de vista, lo fundamental es que, en general, aunque los hombres se beneficien de una situación privilegiada en la sociedad, también están sujetos a presiones y mandatos de género que tienen consecuencias negativas para ellos.

Además, estos resultados ilustran bien una idea fundamental sobre la que hasta hace poco no se había teorizado con profundidad en la psicología social: las personas pertenecen a distintas categorías, a las que están asociadas distintos estereotipos, que no se suman simplemente. Para entender estas representaciones socioculturales hay que tener en cuenta contextos más amplios como el contexto histórico y las instituciones culturales (Lei et al., 2023). Así pues, no hay una suma aritmética de los estereotipos. Atendiendo a la literatura sobre el tema, cabría esperar que el estereotipo de las personas pobres en comparación con clases más altas (menos competentes, más cálidas; Durante et al., 2013, 2017) y el de las mujeres en comparación con hombres (menos competentes, más cálidas; Fiske et al., 2002, pero ver también Eagly et al., 2020 y Moya y Moya-Garófano, 2021) se solapase, y en el caso de las mujeres pobres se encontrase lo mismo al compararlas con los hombres en pobreza. Sin embargo, nuestros resultados muestran que no es así. Esto remarca la importancia de tener una mirada histórica, sociopolítica y económica amplia a la hora de encarar los estudios en psicología social para no caer en sobre simplificaciones ni análisis incompletos.

**¿Son las atribuciones responsables de que se tengan actitudes sobre la protección social diferentes según se trate de hombres o de mujeres en situación de pobreza?**

Igual que nos planteamos en el caso de las personas en situación de pobreza permanente o circunstancial, nos preguntamos sobre el posible papel mediador de las atribuciones sobre la pobreza en la relación entre el grupo percibido (hombres o mujeres) y las actitudes hacia la protección social.

Para responder a esta pregunta, en el capítulo 4 planteamos un modelo de mediación simple en el que incluimos la condición experimental (hombres vs. mujeres en pobreza) como variable predictora, las atribuciones individualistas sobre la pobreza como mediadora y las actitudes hacia la protección social como variable criterio. Nuestros resultados confirman el efecto de la condición experimental en las actitudes hacia la protección social a través de las atribuciones individualistas. Esto quiere decir que cuando se percibe a un hombre en situación de pobreza (vs. una mujer) se le responsabiliza en

mayor medida de su situación, lo que a su vez lleva a una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social. No incluimos las atribuciones estructurales en nuestros análisis de mediación puesto que no encontramos efecto de la condición experimental en éstas.

Por tanto, volvemos aquí a plantear el papel de las atribuciones individualistas como mecanismo explicativo en la relación entre el grupo de personas en pobreza percibido y las actitudes hacia la protección social. Pensamos que, tanto por la relevancia de los grupos estudiados como por la contribución a la investigación sobre la percepción de la pobreza y las atribuciones causales sobre esta, estos resultados suponen una valiosa contribución al campo.

### **¿Cuál es la relación entre las orientaciones sobre la justicia, las atribuciones sobre la pobreza y las actitudes hacia la protección social y redistribución de recursos?**

Recordando brevemente, las orientaciones sobre la justicia social se refieren a las preferencias o actitudes que mostramos ante las reglas básicas que se utilizan a la hora de distribuir cargas y beneficios (Hülle et al., 2018). Principalmente, se distinguen cuatro principios: igualdad, cuando se asignan los mismos recursos a todas las personas; necesidad, cuando se asignan los recursos en función de quién los necesita más; equidad; cuando se asignan los recursos de forma que quien contribuye más, recibe más; *entitlement*, cuando se asignan teniendo en cuenta características de estatus (Deutsch, 1975; Konow, 2003).

En el capítulo 5, a través de 3 estudios correlacionales, analizamos la relación entre estas orientaciones sobre la justicia social, las atribuciones causales sobre la pobreza y las actitudes hacia la protección social (estudios 1 y 3) o las actitudes hacia la redistribución (estudio 2). En los tres estudios encontramos ciertas regularidades en el papel predictivo de las orientaciones sobre la justicia en las actitudes hacia la protección social o redistribución. En todos los estudios encontramos que las actitudes hacia la igualdad y hacia la necesidad como principios de justicia predicen positivamente las actitudes hacia la protección social o la redistribución. Asimismo, encontramos que las actitudes hacia el *entitlement*, en todos los estudios, y hacia la equidad (en los estudios 1 y 3), predicen



negativamente las actitudes hacia la protección social. El no encontrar los resultados esperados en el estudio 2 puede deberse, como comentamos en la discusión general del capítulo 5, a la forma de operacionalizar el principio de equidad. Estos resultados replican y expanden los resultados encontrados previamente sobre la relación entre las actitudes hacia los principios de justicia y hacia la protección social (Andress & Heien, 2001; Lewin-Epstein et al., 2003).

### **¿Influyen las atribuciones en la relación entre las orientaciones hacia la justicia social y las actitudes hacia la protección social?**

Igual que hicimos en los estudios previos de la tesis, en el estudio 3 probamos varios modelos de mediación en los que incluimos los distintos principios de justicia como variables predictoras (uno en cada modelo), las atribuciones de pobreza como variable mediadora (en diferentes modelos) y las actitudes hacia la protección social como variable criterio. Nuestros resultados sugieren que las atribuciones individualistas pueden ser un importante mecanismo explicativo del efecto de las orientaciones sobre la justicia social en las actitudes hacia la protección social. Específicamente, cuanto mayor es la orientación hacia los principios de igualdad y necesidad, menores son las atribuciones individualistas sobre la pobreza, lo que a su vez lleva a una mejor actitud hacia la protección social. Lo contrario ocurre con los principios de equidad y *entitlement*: cuanto mayores son las puntuaciones en estos principios, mayor grado de responsabilidad individual atribuida a las personas en pobreza, lo que a su vez lleva a una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social. Con las atribuciones estructurales encontramos el patrón inverso. Por ejemplo, mayores puntuaciones en el principio de igualdad llevan a realizar más atribuciones estructurales, lo que a su vez lleva a una mejor actitud hacia la protección social. Con todo, en todos los casos los efectos indirectos son relativamente pequeños y en el caso del principio de equidad los resultados no son significativos.

Pensamos que nos encontramos aquí con otra contribución valiosa a la literatura sobre justicia, por un lado, y a la de las atribuciones sobre la pobreza, por otro. Pocos estudios han relacionado las orientaciones sobre la justicia con las atribuciones de pobreza

(algunos ejemplos son Habibov et al., 2017, y Lepianka et al., 2010). Aquí planteamos un marco que puede ser fructífero para seguir estudiando las relaciones entre estas tres variables. En él, las orientaciones sobre la justicia, como parte del conjunto de los valores ideológicos de las personas, influyen sobre las atribuciones causales sobre la pobreza, lo que a su vez influye en las actitudes hacia la protección social.

**¿Influye la forma en la que se define la pobreza en las atribuciones causales sobre esta? ¿Influyen las definiciones de pobreza en las actitudes hacia las políticas para reducir la pobreza?**

En los tres estudios correlacionales del capítulo 6 probamos la relación entre estas definiciones y las atribuciones sobre la pobreza, así como con las actitudes hacia la reducción de la pobreza. En esta serie de estudios diferenciamos entre definiciones estrechas y amplias. Las estrechas serían aquellas que únicamente tienen en cuenta elementos de la pobreza como la falta de recursos materiales, de estatus o de dependencia. Las amplias serían aquellas que tienen en cuenta más elementos sobre qué significa estar en pobreza, como la falta de participación social en la comunidad a la que se pertenece o la imposibilidad para desarrollar las propias capacidades. En el estudio 1 encontramos que quienes se inclinan por la definición de la pobreza como falta de participación social también tienden a preferir las atribuciones estructurales sobre las individualistas y consecuentemente, muestran una mejor actitud hacia las políticas de protección social. En los estudios 2 y 3 encontramos resultados ambivalentes, aunque por lo general apuntando en la dirección esperada. En el estudio 2, las definiciones estrechas predijeron de forma positiva las atribuciones individualistas, aunque no influyeron en las atribuciones estructurales. Entre las definiciones amplias, únicamente la basada en las capacidades predijo de forma positiva el apoyo a las atribuciones estructurales. La única definición que predijo significativamente las actitudes hacia la reducción de la pobreza fue la de participación social: cuanto más apoyo la gente esta definición, mayor apoyo a las políticas para reducir la pobreza mostró. En el estudio 3, la definición de la pobreza como falta de participación social resultó ser la más prometedora: predijo de forma

negativa el apoyo a las atribuciones individualistas y de forma positiva el apoyo a las estructurales y a las políticas para reducir la pobreza. La definición de la pobreza como imposibilidad para desarrollar las propias capacidades predijo positivamente el apoyo a atribuciones. Sin embargo, las definiciones estrechas no fueron predictores significativos en este estudio.

En general, aunque con matices, se confirma la idea que subyacía en estos estudios: la forma en la que se define la pobreza puede influir tanto en las explicaciones hacia ella como en las actitudes hacia las políticas para reducirlas. Como hemos desarrollado en la discusión del capítulo 6, y a lo que volveremos en breve, todavía queda mucho que investigar sobre las definiciones de pobreza. No obstante, este capítulo es especialmente valioso por introducir, hasta donde sabemos, el concepto de definiciones de la pobreza en el estudio de la percepción social de la pobreza en psicología social. En este sentido abre un campo de posibilidades prometedor.

### **¿Median las atribuciones la relación entre definiciones de pobreza y actitudes hacia la reducción de la pobreza?**

Como en los capítulos anteriores, en el capítulo 6 tratamos de analizar si las atribuciones sobre la pobreza median la relación entre las definiciones sobre ésta y las actitudes hacia la reducción de la pobreza. Para ello montamos varios modelos de mediación en paralelo, con las atribuciones individualistas y estructurales como mediadoras, las distintas definiciones como predictoras, una en cada modelo, y las actitudes hacia la reducción de la pobreza como variable criterio.

En el estudio 2 del capítulo 6 encontramos que este efecto de mediación fue significativo tanto para la definición de la pobreza como falta de participación social como para la de imposibilidad de desarrollar las propias capacidades. Específicamente, cuanto más de acuerdo se mostró la gente con estas definiciones, más apoyo mostraron a las atribuciones estructurales y menos a las individualistas. Esto último, a su vez, llevó a una actitud más positiva actitud hacia las políticas para reducir la pobreza. En el estudio 3 encontramos resultados bastante similares en lo que se refiere a las definiciones amplias,

aunque con diferencias importantes en lo que se refiere a las definiciones estrechas: en este caso las atribuciones sobre la pobreza también mediaron la relación entre ambas definiciones estrechas (e.g., falta de estatus y dependencia de ayudas públicas) y las actitudes hacia la reducción de la pobreza.

## 7.2. Implicaciones

A continuación, describiremos algunas de las implicaciones de nuestro trabajo. Como la mayoría de las investigaciones en psicología social, al menos idealmente, tiene tanto implicaciones teóricas y relacionadas con la investigación empírica como prácticas. Por teóricas nos referimos a aquellas cuestiones relacionadas con la teorización sobre la percepción de la pobreza y las consecuencias de esta percepción. Es decir, en qué sentido son relevantes nuestros resultados para matizar, extender o problematizar las investigaciones previas sobre nuestro objeto de estudio. En este sentido, esta tesis propone algunos marcos de estudio, basándose en la literatura previa, que pueden ser fructíferos en el futuro. Por otro lado, con implicaciones prácticas nos referimos a aquella información que se deriva de nuestro trabajo y puede ser útil a la hora de programar intervenciones en un sentido amplio. Es decir, campañas de sensibilización, el *framing* de las políticas, formación para profesionales en contacto con personas en pobreza, etc. Aunque son aspectos estrechamente relacionados, los dividimos para facilitar la exposición. En definitiva, hemos tratado tanto de aumentar el conocimiento disponible sobre la percepción de la pobreza y nuestra comprensión del mundo como de, dentro de nuestras posibilidades, generar los recursos críticos con los que transformarlo.

### 7.2.1. Implicaciones teóricas y para la investigación

La principal aportación de nuestra investigación gira en torno a la importancia que las atribuciones desempeñan en la percepción de la pobreza, las consecuencias que ésta tiene, y la forma de abordar su reducción. Las atribuciones, pues, se convierten en la principal contribución teórica de nuestro trabajo. Siguiendo a Kelley y Michella (1980) es posible distinguir entre teorías e investigaciones centradas en los antecedentes de las atribuciones que las personas realizamos (e.g., las teorías de Heider, Jones y Davis, Kelley,

los sesgos atributivos, etc.), y las teorías e investigaciones centradas en las consecuencias que tiene realizar un tipo determinado de atribución (e.g., la teoría de Weiner). Nuestras investigaciones sobre atribuciones y pobreza abordan esta doble perspectiva.

En cuanto a los antecedentes de las atribuciones, nuestro enfoque podría encuadrarse en los planteamientos de Kelley (1972) sobre los esquemas causales (o modelo de la configuración), esto es, sobre las creencias previas que la gente tiene acerca de qué causas anteceden y conforman qué efectos. Así, en primer lugar, los resultados de nuestras dos primeras series de estudios (capítulos 3 y 4) subrayan la importancia de considerar las características del grupo en pobreza en cuestión a la hora de estudiar su percepción y las atribuciones sobre las causas de su pobreza. Así, cuando se trata de personas en situación de pobreza persistente, o de hombres, se tiende a pensar que la causa de la pobreza es individualista; mientras que cuando se piensa en personas en situación de pobreza circunstancial (e.g., a raíz de la crisis), o en mujeres, se tiende a pensar que la causa es estructural. Otros estudios ya habían estudiado las diferencias en la percepción de diferentes grupos (e.g., Appelbaum, 2001; Cozzarelli et al., 2002), ninguno se había centrado en diferenciar la pobreza según su duración o en estudiar en profundidad las diferencias en la percepción de hombres y mujeres en pobreza. Como comentaremos más adelante, estos esquemas causales que se activan en función del tipo de personas pobres en las que se esté pensando, tienen consecuencias.

Nuestra investigación sugiere, pues, que es importante, cuando se diseña una investigación sobre la percepción de la pobreza, sus causas, consecuencias, formas de abordarla, etc..., tener en cuenta de manera explícita sobre qué tipo de pobreza se está investigando, pues el tipo de pobreza que se active en la mente de quien participa en la investigación, repercute en los resultados que se obtengan. Y es importante tener en cuenta que esa activación puede realizarse de manera explícita (e.g., según las instrucciones que se den en la investigación), o de manera implícita (e.g., los investigadores pueden pensar que se está preguntando por la pobreza en general, pero

quienes participan en la investigación pueden estar pensando en tipos específicos de pobreza).

Una segunda aportación de nuestro trabajo, sobre los antecedentes de las atribuciones sobre la pobreza, se centra en la importancia de tener en cuenta las preferencias sobre los valores que subyacen a la redistribución de recursos, o las guías que deberían seguirse para dicha redistribución (capítulo 5). Pocos estudios han estudiado la relación entre estas preferencias, u orientaciones hacia los principios de justicia social como nos referimos a ellas aquí, y las atribuciones sobre la pobreza (Habibov et al., 2017; Lepianka et al., 2010). Como se indica en el capítulo 5, nuestros estudios superan algunas de las limitaciones previas y arrojan luz sobre esta relación: quienes son más proclives a aceptar la igualdad y la necesidad como principios de justicia social tienden a realizar menos atribuciones individualistas y más estructurales, mientras que quienes son más proclives a los principios de equidad y titularidad (*entitlement*), tienden a realizar más atribuciones individualistas y menos atribuciones estructurales. Proponemos una articulación novedosa de la relación entre tres campos de investigación diferentes (creencias sobre la justicia, atribuciones de pobreza y actitudes hacia la protección social) que puede dar lugar a nuevas investigaciones para profundizar en la compleja relación entre los diferentes tipos de creencias sobre la justicia y el resto de variables que estudiamos.

Nuestra tercera aportación teórica también trata sobre los antecedentes de las atribuciones en el caso de la pobreza, pero en este caso se trata, hasta donde sabemos, de una nueva variable en el estudio de la percepción de la pobreza en psicología social: las definiciones sobre la pobreza (capítulo 6). Cuando la gente piensa en la pobreza en términos amplios, tienen a realizar atribuciones estructurales de la pobreza, mientras que cuando conciben a la pobreza de una forma mucho más concreta, simplemente como falta de recursos económicos, tienen a realizar atribuciones individualistas. Por una parte, esto supone un importante avance teórico al introducir una nueva variable no estudiada previamente en la investigación desde la psicología social y mostrar el efecto que tiene

sobre las atribuciones de pobreza. Añadir una nueva herramienta al aparato conceptual con el que contamos para estudiar la percepción de la pobreza tiene valor en sí mismo, pero además ofrece algunas pistas y demanda ciertas cautelas a la hora de llevar a cabo investigaciones sobre la pobreza. Esto es, sabemos que la forma en la que se define esta última puede influir en las explicaciones causales sobre ella. Por tanto, hay que tener cuidado, especialmente en un entorno experimental, cuando se plantean preguntas o escenarios sobre la pobreza. Si en estos escenarios se plantean, implícita o explícitamente, alguna definición concreta sobre la pobreza sin ser el objeto de estudio, puede que los efectos que se encuentren en el resto de variables del estudio estén “contaminados” por la propia definición dada.

En cuanto a las consecuencias que tiene realizar determinadas atribuciones causales sobre la pobreza, nosotros nos hemos centrado en las políticas destinadas a reducir la pobreza o, de manera más amplia, medidas orientadas a asistir a las personas que cuentan con menos recursos. Claramente, nuestras investigaciones han mostrado que realizar atribuciones individualistas (la persona es responsable de su situación de pobreza) lleva a actitudes menos favorables a las políticas contra la pobreza, mientras que realizar atribuciones estructurales lleva a actitudes más favorables. A diferencia de otros estudios previos, que giran en torno a las consecuencias individuales de las atribuciones (e.g., sobre la emociones que experimenta la persona que hace las atribuciones, o sus expectativas), nuestra investigación gira en torno a las consecuencias sociales de las atribuciones, como es el apoyo a determinado tipo de políticas sociales. En este sentido, replicamos usando diversas variables dependientes (e.g., actitudes hacia la redistribución, hacia la reducción de la pobreza, hacia la protección social en general) resultados que la literatura había establecido previamente, lo que supone un punto importante para la confianza en la literatura que vincula las atribuciones de la pobreza con las actitudes hacia la protección social o redistribución.

Una última aportación teórica de esta tesis es que en nuestros estudios ponemos a prueba directamente la relación causal entre grupo percibido, atribuciones sobre la

pobreza y actitudes hacia la protección social. Algunos estudios previos, aunque escasos, han estudiado la relación entre el grupo percibido y las atribuciones de pobreza (Henry et al., 2004), por una parte, y entre el grupo percibido y el apoyo a la protección de estos grupos (Appelbaum, 2001; Bai et al., 2022; Farwell and Weiner, 2000; Skitka & Tetlock, 1992). Aquí probamos modelos de mediación incluyendo directamente tanto el grupo percibido como las atribuciones y las actitudes hacia la protección social.

Por una parte, los resultados de nuestra investigación muestran una relación directa entre el tipo de persona que está en situación de pobreza, los principios de justicias que asumen quienes hacen los juicios, o sus concepciones sobre la pobreza, y las actitudes hacia las políticas para reducir la pobreza. Pero lo que es más importante es el efecto indirecto que los antecedentes mencionados tienen sobre las actitudes hacia las políticas a través de las atribuciones. Esto es, cuando se percibe a una persona en situación de pobreza circunstancial (vs. a otra que está en pobreza permanente), a un hombre (vs. a una mujer), se asumen los principios de justicia de igualdad y necesidad (vs. equidad y entitlement) y se tiene una visión amplia de la pobreza (vs. una visión estrecha centrada en la escasez de recursos materiales), se tienden a hacer más atribuciones estructurales (vs. individualistas) y esto hace que se esté más a favor de las políticas diseñadas para reducir la pobreza. En primer lugar, la naturaleza y la duración de la pobreza, como mostramos en el capítulo 3, son factores importantes a la hora de entender la percepción social de esta. Eso puede ser relevante a la hora de diseñar nuevos estudios analizando las diferencias entre distintos grupos. Por ejemplo, si se quiere comparar la percepción sobre las personas pobres españolas y las personas pobres migrantes, sería recomendable igualar ambas condiciones en términos de tipo de pobreza y duración. Esto es, puede que intuitivamente las personas asuman que la pobreza de la persona migrante es de larga duración, y por tanto realicen más atribuciones individualistas sobre ella. Para poder analizar únicamente los efectos debidos al hecho de que se trata de una persona migrante, y estudiar cómo influye esto en cómo son percibidas las personas migrantes en situación de pobreza, habría que controlar por esta variable. Por otra parte, y de forma



complementaria, sería importante analizar cómo diferentes situaciones de pobreza (e.g., pobres españoles y migrantes) son percibidas en términos de estabilidad, pues nuestras investigaciones muestran que si se perciben como estable la situación de pobreza, eso lleva a culpar en mayor medida a la persona de su situación y a mostrar una peor actitud hacia las políticas pensadas para ayudarlas. Algo similar ocurre con nuestra segunda línea de estudios (capítulo 4): incide en la importancia de considerar el género de la persona en pobreza al tratar de estudiar las percepciones sociales sobre ella. Siguiendo el ejemplo anterior, habría que tratar de controlar el género de la persona en la situación los diseños experimentales para poder aislar los efectos específicos debidos a la condición de persona migrante.

### *7.2.2. Implicaciones prácticas*

Las principales implicaciones prácticas que se siguen de nuestros resultados tienen que ver con las imágenes populares sobre la pobreza y las consecuencias de estas imágenes, así como la necesidad de tenerlas en cuenta para el cambio social, ya sea a nivel de diseño y comunicación de políticas públicas, campañas de concienciación, formación, guías de estilo al informar sobre la pobreza, etc. Por ejemplo, las imágenes que aparecen en los medios de comunicación ayudan a conformar el imaginario colectivo sobre el fenómeno y pueden jugar un papel importante en cómo se percibe, así como a qué causas se atribuye su situación (Bullock et al., 2001).

Por ser el tema menos tratado en la discusión de los artículos, nos centraremos en las implicaciones relacionadas con la información sobre la pobreza en los medios de comunicación, aunque mucho de lo que plantearemos aquí será aplicable a otro tipo de prácticas (e.g., presentación de políticas públicas, campañas de sensibilización, etc.) que comentaremos más adelante. En primer lugar, desarrollaremos los principales argumentos y posteriormente solo incluiremos algunos ejemplos de cómo se traducen a otros campos.

Ya hay varias guías de estilo para informar sobre la pobreza que incluyen puntos importantes (e.g., European Anti Poverty Network, 2013; European Journalist Center,

2022), necesarios, y que intentan informar de forma seria y no estigmatizante sobre la pobreza. Estas mismas guías adolecen de algunas limitaciones, como el foco individual a la hora de informar de la pobreza. Nuestro trabajo aporta datos y evidencias sobre cómo podría informarse de los asuntos relacionados con la pobreza desde una perspectiva crítica y que busque sensibilizar y aumentar el apoyo a las acciones para acabar con ella.

Una primera consideración es que hay que tener en cuenta de qué tipo de pobreza se está informando. Nuestros estudios muestran que cuando se presentan personas en pobreza a raíz de la crisis económica, o en una pobreza circunstancial, la gente muestra mejores actitudes hacia estas personas. Sin embargo, no es el caso cuando se presenta a personas en pobreza persistente. En este caso hay que tener especial cuidado a la hora de presentar la información, no centrándose en narrativas individuales y, sobre todo, incidiendo en los factores estructurales que perpetúan la situación de estas personas. De la misma forma, al hablar de la pobreza en términos genéricos, las habituales imágenes que acompañan a los reportajes (personas en situación de sinhogarismo, etc.) probablemente susciten valoraciones más negativas que otro tipo de imágenes. Este uso de las imágenes se centra en explotar la imagen de las personas en pobreza para suscitar pena y aumentar el impacto mediático de las noticias, lo que se conoce como *porno de la pobreza*. Estas imágenes, a su vez, crean narrativas distorsionadas sobre la pobreza, sus causas y los estereotipos que se asocian a ella, que pueden impedir los esfuerzos para actuar sobre la raíz del problema (Jensen, 2014). En este sentido, un planteamiento similar podría hacerse respecto al género de la persona en pobreza y nuestros resultados en el capítulo 4.

Una segunda consideración relevante es que hay que tener en cuenta la forma en la que se define la pobreza. Al igual que las imágenes que se ofrecen sobre la pobreza conforman el sentido común de la ciudadanía sobre el fenómeno, reforzando algunos estereotipos y oscureciendo algunas causas, la forma en la que se define la pobreza influye en este sentido común. Nuestros resultados muestran que si se define de forma amplia, incluyendo elementos que tienen que ver con la falta de libertad, la falta para desarrollar

las propias capacidades o la falta de participación en la vida social, se responsabiliza menos a las personas en pobreza de su situación y se muestra una mejor actitud ante las políticas públicas para reducirlas. En este sentido, al informar sobre la pobreza es importante no reducirla a la mera carencia económica, la falta de estatus o la dependencia de las ayudas públicas. Para generar una actitud más positiva y una mayor proclividad al cambio social, es importante no sobresimplificar qué es la pobreza y ofrecer definiciones amplias que no oscurezcan factores asociados con su reproducción, como la falta de participación social.

Como decíamos, estas implicaciones son fácilmente trasladables a otros campos. De forma simple, si queremos campañas más eficaces contra la pobreza en general, habría que enfatizar las causas estructurales de la pobreza, que afecta a personas que conforman un grupo heterogéneo, en el que también hay personas que han descendido recientemente en la escala social, y definir la pobreza de forma amplia, incluyendo la falta de libertad y la de participación social. Esto mismo se aplicaría para los anuncios de todo diseñados para publicitar o explicar las políticas públicas que se toman para luchar contra la pobreza. En este caso es especialmente relevante cuando estas políticas van dirigidas a personas en situación de pobreza crónica, puesto que nuestras investigaciones muestran que las actitudes hacia estas son, por lo general, peores. En definitiva, nuestros resultados son especialmente relevantes para las cuestiones de *framing*, tanto para medios de comunicación como para organizaciones políticas, asociaciones contra la pobreza o movimientos emancipadores.

### **7.3. Limitaciones**

Como en cualquier trabajo de investigación, las decisiones que se toman durante el proceso tienen implicaciones para su desarrollo, permitiendo ciertas posibilidades pero negando otras. Así, las decisiones tomadas a lo largo de estos años han supuesto algunas ventajas, pero también algunas limitaciones, que debemos tener en cuenta a la hora de enmarcar e interpretar nuestros resultados. Discutiremos aquí las más generales, las que afectan al trabajo en su conjunto. Un desarrollo más detallado de las limitaciones

individuales de cada estudio y artículo se puede encontrar en la discusión general de cada capítulo empírico.

En primer lugar, a lo largo de la presente tesis doctoral nos hemos centrado en la distinción entre atribuciones individualistas y estructurales, omitiendo otras posibles dimensiones, como las fatalistas o las culturales. En el capítulo 2 explicamos el porqué de nuestra decisión: la investigación ha encontrado algunas dificultades para hallar estas últimas dimensiones a nivel empírico (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Furnham, 1982; Sainz et al., 2023) y la distinción simple entre individualistas, o internas, y estructurales, o externas, ha sido usada en las últimas investigaciones sobre atribuciones de pobreza (Bai et al., 2022; Piff et al., 2020; Sainz et al., 2020; Wiwad et al., 2021). Pese a esto, no podemos dejar de incidir en que se trata de una simplificación de la complejidad de las causas a las que las personas atribuyen la pobreza. Aunque puede resultar práctica a la hora de la investigación, perdemos matices a la hora de entender cómo son estos procesos sobre asignación de la responsabilidad sobre la pobreza. Por ejemplo, podría ser que al percibir a una persona en pobreza persistente, en comparación con una en pobreza circunstancial, no solo las atribuciones individualistas fueran mayores, si no también las fatalistas (e.g., la mala suerte o la pobreza como consecuencia inevitable del progreso) y esto también llevase a una peor actitud hacia la protección social. Sin embargo, en este ejemplo hipotético, dos razones nos llevan a pensar que nuestros resultados seguirían siendo útiles: encontramos que la actitud hacia la protección social es en general peor cuando se presenta a una persona en pobreza persistente, por una parte, y hay un efecto indirecto de las atribuciones individualistas en la relación entre el grupo percibido y las actitudes hacia la protección social. Esto, a pesar de las limitaciones que puede suponer no incluir otras tipologías de atribuciones, nos hace confiar en que nuestros resultados son relevantes. Lo mismo podría aplicarse al resto de estudios presentados aquí.

En segundo lugar, en los dos primeros capítulos empíricos hemos seleccionado cuatro grupos (pobreza persistente vs. circunstancial; hombres vs. mujeres), lo que implica dejar de lado muchos otros. Creemos que está justificada la utilización de los

grupos que hemos seleccionado por la relevancia social que tiene la actitud hacia su pobreza en estos casos concretos. No sería posible incluir a todos los grupos siguiendo los diseños experimentales que hemos utilizado aquí, corriendo el riesgo de que nuestra investigación se convierta en el mapa borgiano que ocupa todo el territorio que debería representar. No obstante, esto no quita que muchos otros grupos de especial relevancia hayan quedado fuera de nuestros análisis. Por ejemplo, hay trabajos que han puesto de manifiesto la importancia de la intersección entre clase social y etnia en los comportamientos discriminatorios y el prejuicio (Urbiola et al., 2022). Aunque el enfoque y las variables dependientes sean distintas, esto ofrece perspectivas distintas para seguir avanzando. Esto también se aplica a otras características grupales como la edad, la discapacidad, etc.

En tercer lugar, nos hemos centrado en la percepción de la pobreza, dejando de lado la percepción de la riqueza y las atribuciones sobre esta. Aunque la tradición respecto a las atribuciones de riqueza es larga (e.g., Bullock et al., 2005; Forgas et al., 1982; Furnham, 1983), en los últimos años han aparecido trabajos interesantes hablando sobre estas atribuciones sobre la riqueza y el papel que pueden tener para justificar la desigualdad y la pobreza (Black & Davidai, 2020; Davidai, 2018, 2022; Sainz et al., 2023). Incluir las explicaciones causales que la gente realiza sobre la riqueza, más allá de las de pobreza, podría aportar información relevante a la hora de explicar las actitudes hacia la protección social. La forma en la que la gente da sentido a la riqueza (si es por méritos propios o por aprovecharse de la gente con menos recursos) es una variable importante a tener en cuenta. Por ejemplo, si se atribuye la riqueza a la injusticia del sistema, es más probable que la gente se muestre a favor de políticas redistributivas y de protección social. Aquí no se trataría tanto de incluir esta variable en nuestros diseños como tal, si no de generar nuevos diseños donde tengan sentido.

En cuarto lugar, la variable dependiente en la mayoría de nuestros estudios ha sido la actitud hacia la protección social en general o hacia el papel del estado en la redistribución o en la reducción de la pobreza. Esto ha supuesto no incluir medidas

políticas concretas, como la renta básica universal, o medidas en dominios del bienestar concretos, como las pensiones, el desempleo o la educación. Eso es importante, porque las actitudes pueden variar en función de las medidas o campos concretos por las que se preguntan (e.g., van Hootegem et al., 2021). Esto plantea la necesidad de matizar nuestros resultados o, al menos, circunscribirlos a las actitudes generales sobre la reducción de la pobreza. No necesariamente supone una desventaja, pero sí hemos de tener en cuenta que, con medidas políticas concretas, los resultados pueden ser ligeramente diferentes. De hecho, nuestra apuesta por medidas generales tiene la ventaja de evitar la polarización que hay en torno a ciertas medidas en función del partido o grupo político que las proponga (e.g., la renta básica), lo que evita algunos posibles efectos de confusión producidos por esta polarización.

En quinto lugar, en los capítulos 5 y 6 nuestros datos son correlacionales y, cuando hemos tratado de llevar a cabo una manipulación experimental, esta no ha funcionado (capítulo 6). Aunque el modelado estadístico de ambos capítulos se ha usado para sugerir causalidad y se han ofrecido tanto evidencias previas, cuando había disponible, como la justificación teórica de nuestro razonamiento, no deja de ser una limitación no haber podido poner a prueba las relaciones causales que sugerimos. Por otra parte, en varios de nuestros estudios utilizamos estudiantes como muestra. Esta población no necesariamente tiene por qué ser representativa del resto de la sociedad y es un problema de la investigación en psicología en general. Aún así, en todas las series en las que incluimos estudiantes como participantes de nuestros estudios también hay otros estudios en los que se incluye a participantes de la población general y los resultados son similares. Aunque el hecho de incluir mayoritariamente estudiantes pueda suponer una limitación debida a la falta de recursos para llegar a personas de la población general en todos los estudios, el incluir participantes de la población general en al menos un estudio de cada capítulo empírico nos hace confiar en que nuestros resultados son, hasta cierto punto, generalizables al resto de la población, al menos en los países y territorios donde se han llevado a cabo.

Por último, aunque en varios estudios (capítulos 5 y 6) incluimos bases de datos con muestras representativas de varios países, no analizamos estas teniendo en cuenta la influencia de las variables culturales. Esto es, no estudiamos hasta qué punto nuestros resultados son similares en los diferentes países, en función de las diferencias culturales y socioeconómicas entre estos ellos. Sabemos que diferentes naciones y marcos institucionales generan diferentes creencias públicas sobre los problemas nacionales (Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Linos & West, 2003). Por ejemplo, en los países con regímenes postsocialistas el apoyo a la redistribución es mayor (Dallinger, 2010). El enfoque que adoptamos en nuestras investigaciones es diferente, nos centramos en las diferencias individuales eliminando la varianza entre países. Esto puede suponer una reducción importante, pero hemos de tener en cuenta que nuestra pregunta de investigación no se centra tanto en las diferencias nacionales o culturales como en los efectos de las variables en un plano individual. Con esto no se quiere decir que los efectos de estas variables sean universales y que se produzcan de la misma forma para todo el mundo independientemente de las diferencias culturales. Simplemente, nuestra pregunta de investigación es diferente. Entender cómo y en qué direcciones se dan esas diferencias debidas a factores culturales desde luego es algo valioso y en lo que merece la pena adentrarse en el futuro.

#### **7.4. Futuras direcciones**

Cada limitación recogida en el apartado anterior implica una nueva dirección futura en la investigación, sin embargo obviaremos aquí esta fórmula, porque de alguna manera ya lo hemos realizado en la sección anterior. Preferimos usar este espacio para vincular nuestras investigaciones con otras realizadas y exponer qué nuevas direcciones puede tomar la investigación.

En los últimos tiempos han ganado terreno en Europa las llamadas políticas de activación (Knotz, 2018), formando parte de lo que algunos autores han llamado el cambio de paradigma del *welfare* al *workfare* (Jessop, 1999). Estas políticas implican sanciones, como la pérdida de beneficios, para las personas desempleadas en caso de no

buscar activamente empleo o rechazar los que se le ofrezcan, por ejemplo. A nuestro modo de ver, esto implica un fuerte componente de punitivismo, esto es, enfatizar el castigo como forma de solucionar los problemas sociales. En este sentido, las percepciones y atribuciones sobre la pobreza pueden jugar un papel importante en la formación de las actitudes punitivas hacia la pobreza y, posiblemente, esto influya a su vez tanto en la actitud hacia las políticas de protección social como en la preferencia por las más progresistas sobre las más restrictivas. Hay varios estudios que se han centrado en el punitivismo en el caso del desempleo (Buss, 2019; Fossati, 2018; Laenen y Meleuman, 2018; Rossetti et al., 2021). Sin embargo, poco se ha trabajado con la percepción de la pobreza y las atribuciones sobre esta realidad. Una contribución valiosa para el futuro puede ser unir ambas literaturas, teorizar sobre el concepto de punitivismo, más allá de las políticas de activación, y tratar de operacionalizar el constructo para entender mejor cómo percibe la gente la pobreza y qué consecuencias tiene esa percepción. Las atribuciones sobre la pobreza pueden ser un antecedente importante del punitivismo hacia las personas pobres. Así, si se culpa a las personas pobres de su situación, debido a su falta de voluntad por ejemplo, cabría esperar que se prefieran castigos más severos hacia ellas cuando no se comportan “como deberían”. Lo contrario cabría esperar si se responsabiliza de su situación a factores que escapan a su control, si se hacen atribuciones estructurales.

Por otra parte, hemos tenido poco en cuenta la desigualdad, y su percepción, en esta tesis doctoral. Hay algunos trabajos relevantes que apuntan direcciones sugerentes para futuras investigaciones. Por ejemplo, algunos estudios muestran que la desigualdad económica provoca que los atributos masculinos (e.g., tener una fuerte personalidad) se perciban como más prototípicos (Moreno-Bella et al., 2019). Además, la desigualdad económica moldearía el contenido agéntico y comunal de los estereotipos (Moreno-Bella et al., 2023). En el capítulo 4 hemos mostrado como varían los estereotipos y las atribuciones de pobreza en función del género de la persona en pobreza, tener en cuenta los niveles de desigualdad puede ofrecer nuevas perspectivas interesantes para



profundizar en ello. Esto es, quizás en sociedades más desiguales las diferencias en la percepción de hombres y mujeres en pobreza se pronuncien y los primeros sean percibidos como menos competentes y más responsables de su situación. Esto especialmente teniendo en cuenta que la desigualdad percibida influye en que el clima normativo es individualista y competitivo (Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2019). Otro aspecto importante es que nos hemos centrado en casos hipotéticos o personas pobres abstractas. Varios estudios muestran que la percepción de la desigualdad en la vida cotidiana es relevante para las actitudes hacia la redistribución y la tolerancia hacia la desigualdad (García-Castro et al., 2020; 2022). En este sentido, el contacto directo con personas en situación de pobreza, o la percepción cotidiana de la pobreza, pueden ser variables importantes a la hora de moldear las creencias sobre las causas de la pobreza de las personas y podrían derivarse interesantes líneas de trabajo a partir de esto.

Otra cuestión importante es en quién se piensa cuando se pregunta por la pobreza. En primer lugar, habría que estudiar si, cuando se pregunta por esta última, la gente visualiza o piensa en grupos específicos de personas o, por el contrario, se lo plantean en términos abstractos sin concretarlo en imágenes específicas. En caso de que ocurra lo primero, una tarea importante de las futuras investigaciones será determinar en qué personas están pensando los y las participantes cuando se les pregunta por personas en situación de pobreza. Es decir, si hay tendencia a pensar en grupos concretos (e.g., migrantes, personas mayores, etc.) cuyas características puedan estar influyendo en los resultados que se encuentran generalmente en la literatura. Supongamos que la gente piensa sobre todo en personas sin hogar cuando se les pregunta por la pobreza. Sabiendo que los estereotipos y las actitudes hacia estos grupos son por lo general más negativas (e.g., Fiske et al., 2007), los resultados podrían estar sesgados hasta cierto punto y encontraríamos actitudes más negativas hacia la pobreza de las que en realidad se tienen hacia la pobreza en general. En las dos primeras series de estudios ofrecemos más información sobre los grupos específicos que planteamos en los experimentos, pero en las dos últimas series preguntamos por la pobreza en abstracto. Algunos estudios ya han

tratado de dar respuesta a preguntas similares, aunque centrándose en los grupos sociales basados en la distribución de riqueza en general que las personas perciben que conforman la sociedad (del Fresno-Díaz et al., 2023). En el futuro sería realmente útil llevar a cabo investigaciones de corte cualitativo para determinar en qué grupos piensa la mayoría de las personas cuando se les pregunta por la pobreza, así como la influencia de estos grupos en las respuestas que se dan.

## 7.5. Conclusion

Esta tesis doctoral se ha centrado en estudiar el papel mediador de las atribuciones sobre la pobreza, individualistas y estructurales, entre una serie de variables predictoras y las actitudes hacia la protección social y la reducción de la pobreza como variables criterio. Mostramos que, en comparación con la pobreza circunstancial, las personas en pobreza persistente son percibidas como menos competentes y más responsables de su situación. Esto último lleva, a su vez, a una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social. En la misma línea, cuando se presenta a un hombre en situación de pobreza, en comparación con una mujer, se le percibe como menos competente, menos cálido y más responsable de su situación. De nuevo, esto último lleva a que se muestra una actitud más negativa hacia la protección social. Por otra parte, mostramos que las actitudes hacia los valores que guían la asignación de recursos, las orientaciones hacia la justicia social, son relevantes para explicar tanto las atribuciones sobre la pobreza como las actitudes hacia la protección social y la redistribución; además, las atribuciones causales de la pobreza median la relación entre las orientaciones hacia la justicia social y las actitudes hacia la protección social. Por último, introducimos la variable de definiciones de pobreza y demostramos su influencia tanto en las atribuciones como en las actitudes hacia su reducción. Cuando se define la pobreza de forma que abarca más elementos que la mera carencia económica, como la falta de participación social, las personas tienden a responsabilizar menos a las propias personas en esa situación y más a factores estructurales ajenos a su control, lo que a su vez lleva a una mejor actitud hacia las políticas para reducirla.

A lo largo de la historia las personas pobres han sido retratadas como un mal a contener, como una masa monstruosa a la que no le importaba traspasar los límites del orden, la propiedad y la civilización (McNally, 2022). Demonizar a la masa, negar su virtud y su capacidad, suponen claros mecanismos para poder mantener la dominación y el control sobre ella (un recorrido muy interesante sobre la historia de la pobreza y la negación de su virtud puede verse en Agulles, 2023). Cuando culpamos a las personas pobres de su situación, especialmente al no adaptarse a los imperativos del mercado, estamos perpetuando una situación terriblemente injusta. Esta tesis ha intentado comprender con más profundidad algunos de los mecanismos que contribuyen a ello.

## 7. 6. Referencias

- Agulles, J. (2023). *La negación de la virtud: Una historia sobre la pobreza y el progreso*. *Virus Editorial*
- Andress, H. J., & Heien, T. (2001). Four worlds of welfare state attitudes? A comparison of Germany, Norway, and the United States. *European Sociological Review*, 17(4), 337-356. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/17.4.337>
- Appelbaum, L. D. (2001). The influence of perceived deservingness on policy decisions regarding aid to the poor. *Political Psychology*, 22(3), 419-442. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00248>
- Bai, J., Xu, B. X., Yang, S. L., & Guo, Y. Y. (2022). Why are higher class individuals less supportive of redistribution? The mediating role of attributions for rich-poor gap. *Current Psychology*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02836-2>
- Black, J. F., & Davidai, S. (2020). Do rich people “deserve” to be rich? Charitable giving, internal attributions of wealth, and judgments of economic deservingness. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 90, 104011. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2020.104011>

- Blekesaune, M., & Quadagno, J. (2003). Public attitudes toward welfare state policies: A comparative analysis of 24 nations. *European Sociological Review*, 19(5), 415-427. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/19.5.415>
- Bullock, H. E., & Fernald, J. L. (2005). Predicting support for eliminating the dividend tax: The role of framing and attributions for wealth. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 5(1), 49-66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-2415.2005.00055.x>
- Bullock, H. E., Wyche, F., & Williams, W. R. (2001). Media images of the poor. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(2), 229-246. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00210>
- Buss, C. (2019). Public opinion towards targeted labour market policies: A vignette study on the perceived deservingness of the unemployed. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 29(2), 228-240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928718757684>
- Cook, F. L. (1979). Who should be helped?: Public support for social services. Sage.
- Cozzarelli, C., Tagler, M. J., & Wilkinson, A. V. (2002). Do middle-class students perceive poor women and poor men differently? *Sex Roles*, 47(11), 519-529. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022038200071>
- Cozzarelli, C., Wilkinson, A. V., & Tagler, M. J. (2001). Attitudes toward the poor and attributions for poverty. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(2), 207-227. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00209>
- Dallinger, U. (2010). Public support for redistribution: what explains cross-national differences? *Journal of European Social Policy*, 20(4), 333-349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928710374373>
- Davidai, S. (2018). Why do Americans believe in economic mobility? Economic inequality, external attributions of wealth and poverty, and the belief in economic mobility. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 79, 138-148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.07.012>

- Davidai, S. (2022). How do people make sense of wealth and poverty? *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 43, 42-47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.06.010>
- del Fresno-Díaz, Á., García-Sánchez, E., Padial-Rojas, E., Willis, G. B., & de Lemus, S. (2023). Economic inequality and representations of wealth-based groups: Unravelling social classes and stereotyping [Unpublished manuscript]. Department of Social Psychology, University of Granada.
- Deutsch, M. (1975). Equity, equality, and need: What determines which value will be used as the basis of distributive justice?. *Journal of Social issues*, 31(3), 137-149. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1975.tb01000.x>
- Durante, F., Fiske, S. T., Kervyn, N., Cuddy, A. J., Akande, A., Adetoun, B. E., et al. (2013). Nations' income inequality predicts ambivalence in stereotype content: How societies mind the gap. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(4), 726–746. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12005>
- Durante, F., Tablante, C. B., & Fiske, S. T. (2017). Poor but warm, rich but cold (and competent): Social classes in the stereotype content model. *Journal of Social Issues*, 73(1), 138–157. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12208>
- Eagly, A. H., Nater, C., Miller, D. I., Kaufmann, M., & Sczesny, S. (2020). Gender stereotypes have changed: A cross-temporal meta-analysis of U.S. public opinion polls from 1946 to 2018. *American Psychologist*, 75(3), 301–315. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000494>
- European Anti Poverty Network (2013). *Guía de estilo para periodistas: Pobreza, vulnerabilidad y voluntariado*. <https://www.eapn.es/publicaciones/140/guia-de-estilo-para-periodistas-pobreza-vulnerabilidad-y-voluntariado>
- European Journalist Center (2022). *A freelancer's guide to reporting on poverty*. <https://ejc.net/resources/a-freelancers-guide-to-reporting-on-poverty>

- Farwell, L., & Weiner, B. (2000). Bleeding hearts and the heartless: Popular perceptions of liberal and conservative ideologies. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(7), 845–852. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167200269009>
- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 878–902. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.82.6.878>
- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J., & Glick, P. (2007). Universal dimensions of social cognition: Warmth and competence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11(2), 77–83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2006.11.005>
- Forgas, J. P., Morris, S. L., & Furnham, A. (1982). Lay explanations of wealth: Attributions for economic success 1. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 12(5), 381-397. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1982.tb00873.x>
- Fossati, F. (2018). Who wants demanding active labour market policies? Public attitudes towards policies that put pressure on the unemployed. *Journal of Social Policy*, 47(1), 77-97. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279417000216>
- Furnham, A. (1982). Why are the poor always with us? Explanations for poverty in Britain. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 21(4), 311-322. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1982.tb00553.x>
- Furnham, A. (1983). Attributions for affluence. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 4(1), 31-40. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869\(83\)90050-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(83)90050-8)
- García-Castro, J. D., García-Sánchez, E., Montoya-Lozano, M., & Rodríguez-Bailón, R. (2022). The perception of economic inequality in everyday life: My friends with the most and least money. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 25(1), 20-34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.12476>
- Garcia-Castro, J. D., Rodriguez-Bailon, R., & Willis, G. B. (2020). Perceiving economic inequality in everyday life decreases tolerance to inequality. *Journal of*

*Experimental Social Psychology*, 90(104019), 1-10.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2020.104019>

González-Sánchez, I. (2021). *Neoliberalismo y castigo*. Bellaterra Ed.

Habibov, N., Cheung, A., Auchnnikava, A., & Fan, L. (2017). Explaining support for structural attribution of poverty in post-communist countries: multilevel analysis of repeated cross-sectional data. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 44(3), 173-197.

Henry, P. J., Reyna, C., & Weiner, B. (2004). Hate welfare but help the poor: How the attributional content of stereotypes explains the paradox of reactions to the destitute in America. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 34(1), 34–58.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2004.tb02536.x>

Hülle, S., Liebig, S., & May, M. J. (2018). Measuring attitudes toward distributive justice: The basic social justice orientations scale. *Social Indicators Research*, 136, 663-692. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1580-x>

Jensen, T. (2014). Welfare commonsense, poverty porn and doxosophy. *Sociological Research Online*, 19(3), 277-283. <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.3441>

Jessop, B. (1999). The changing governance of welfare: recent trends in its primary functions, scale, and modes of coordination. *Social Policy & Administration*, 33(4), 348-359. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9515.00157>

Kelley, H. H. (1973). The processes of causal attribution. *American Psychologist*, 28(2), 107–128. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0034225>

Kelley, H. H., & Michela, J. L. (1980). Attribution theory and research. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 31(1), 457-501. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.ps.31.020180.002325>

Knotz, C. M. (2018). A rising workfare state? Unemployment benefit conditionality in 21 OECD countries, 1980–2012. *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, 34(2), 91-108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21699763.2018.1472136>

- Konow, J. (2003). Which is the fairest one of all? A positive analysis of justice theories. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 41(4), 1188-1239.  
<https://doi.org/10.1257/002205103771800013>.
- Laenen, T., & Meuleman, B. (2019). Public support for the social rights and social obligations of the unemployed: Two sides of the same coin? *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 28(4), 454-467. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12369>
- Lei, R.F., Foster-Hanson, E. & Goh, J.X. (2023). A sociohistorical model of intersectional social category prototypes. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 2, 297–308.  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-023-00165-0>
- Lepianka, D., Gelissen, J., & Van Oorschot, W. (2010). Popular explanations of poverty in Europe: Effects of contextual and individual characteristics across 28 European countries. *Acta Sociologica*, 53(1), 53-72.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0001699309357842>
- Lewin-Epstein, N., Kaplan, A., & Levanon, A. (2003). Distributive justice and attitudes toward the welfare state. *Social Justice Research*, 16(1), 1-27.  
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022909726114>
- Linos, K., & West, M. (2003). Self-interest, social beliefs, and attitudes to redistribution. Re-addressing the issue of cross-national variation. *European Sociological Review*, 19(4), 393-409. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/19.4.393>
- McNally, D. (2022). *Monstruos del mercado: zombis, vampiros y capitalismo global*. Levanta Fuego ed.
- Moreno-Bella, E., Willis, G. B., Quiroga-Garza, A., & Moya, M. (2023). Economic inequality shapes the agency–communion content of gender stereotypes. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 26(5), 1075-1098. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13684302221095338>
- Moreno-Bella, E., Willis, G. B., & Moya, M. (2019). Economic inequality and masculinity–femininity: The prevailing perceived traits in higher unequal



contexts are masculine. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 1590.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01590>

Moya, M. C., & Moya-Garófano, A. (2021). Evolution of gender stereotypes in Spain: From 1985 to 2018. *Psicothema*, 33(1), 53–59.

<https://doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2020.328>

Pfau-Effinger, B. (2004). Socio-historical paths of the male breadwinner model—an explanation of cross-national differences. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 55(3), 377-399. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2004.00025.x>

Piff, P. K., Wiwad, D., Robinson, A. R., Aknin, L. B., Mercier, B., & Shariff, A. (2020). Shifting attributions for poverty motivates opposition to inequality and enhances egalitarianism. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(5), 496-505.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0835-8>

Rossetti, F., Abts, K., Meuleman, B., & Swyngedouw, M. (2021). “First the grub, then the morals”? Disentangling the self-interest and ideological drivers of attitudes towards demanding activation policies in Belgium. *Journal of Social Policy*, 50(2), 346-366. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279420000197>

Sainz, M., García-Castro, J. D., Jiménez-Moya, G., & Lobato, R. M. (2023). How do people understand the causes of poverty and wealth? A revised structural dimensionality of the attributions about poverty and wealth scales. *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 31(1), 81-100.

<https://doi.org/10.1332/175982721X16645485533332>

Sainz, M., Martínez, R., Sutton, R. M., Rodríguez-Bailón, R., & Moya, M. (2020). Less human, more to blame: Animalizing poor people increases blame and decreases support for wealth redistribution. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 23(4), 546-559. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430219841135>

Sánchez-Rodríguez, Á., Willis, G. B., Jetten, J., & Rodríguez-Bailón, R. (2019). Economic inequality enhances inferences that the normative climate is individualistic and

competitive. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 49(6), 1114-1127.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2557>

Skitka, L. J., & Tetlock, P. E. (1992). Allocating scarce resources: A contingency model of distributive justice. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 28(6), 491–522.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031\(92\)90043-I](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(92)90043-I)

Urbiola, A., Navas, M., Carmona, C., et al. (2022). Social class also matters: The effects of social class, ethnicity, and their interaction on prejudice and discrimination toward Roma. *Race and Social Problems*. [https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-022-](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-022-09368-1)

[09368-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-022-09368-1)

Van Hootegem, A., Abts, K., & Meuleman, B. (2020). Differentiated distributive justice preferences? configurations of preferences for equality, equity and need in three welfare domains. *Social Justice Research*, 33(3), 257-283.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-020-00354-9>

Wiwad, D., Mercier, B., Piff, P. K., Shariff, A., & Aknin, L. B. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on attitudes toward poverty and inequality. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 93, 104083. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2020.104083>.