The Inequality Trap: psychological antecedents of the behavioural intentions to reduce economic inequality and corruption

by

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Declaration

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Summary

Economic inequality and corruption are two extremely harmful phenomena whose causes and consequences share a recursive relationship as higher levels of one lead to an increase of the other phenomenon, and vice-versa. Uslaner (2008) named this relationship the *Inequality Trap*. So far, the inequality trap has been explored mainly from an economic perspective. However, the author posited that one issue offers a breeding ground for the other by creating a socio-psychological climate that makes the status quo perceived as inevitable. This research presented in this thesis is a first attempt to tackle the inequality trap from a socio-psychological perspective. In **Chapters 1-3**, I will introduce the current literature concerning the perception and the effects of economic inequality and corruption and how their recursive relationship is shaped. In **Chapter 4**, I will discuss the antecedents of protest highlighted by the literature, to better identify the ones that may be involved for shaping people's intentions of contrasting the inequality trap. In **Chapter 5**, I will present three studies investigating the topic of the inequality trap by recruiting an Italian sample (Study 1: N = 158), a British student sample (Study 2: N = 114), and a British sample (Study 3: N = 233). Using a fictional scenario, I manipulated participants' perception of economic inequality, corruption, and their subjective socio-economic status while assessing their anger reaction, their behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption, and their preference for the taxation system. Throughout the samples, I consistently found that being exposed to higher levels of economic inequality and corruption raised participants' willingness to engage in actions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption, respectively. The effects of the manipulations were fully mediated by their anger response. Being exposed to higher levels of economic inequality (or corruption) raised participants' levels of anger which, in turn, significantly predicted their willingness to contrast corruption (or economic inequality). Hence, the inequality trap influences people's contrasting intentions at least through an emotional mechanism. In **Chapter 6**, I will present two studies that further explored the inequality trap with Italian and British samples. I used the same fictional scenario employed for the studies reported in Chapter 5, but I manipulated one phenomenon at the time and assessed participants' inferences of other one, while measuring participants' emotional responses in terms of anger and hope, their behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption, and their equality preferences. The results showed that people use information about corruption to draw inferences about economic inequality (Study 4a: N = 147/Study 5a: N = 121), and information about economic inequality to draw inferences about corruption (Study 4b: N = 111/Study 5b: N = 126). Additionally, I found that participants' inferences concerning corruption made them more willing to contrast economic inequality, whereas their inferences about economic inequality did not lead them to display higher behavioural intentions of contrasting corruption. I explained this result by speculating that people's may display a higher tolerance towards economic inequality than corruption and perceive the former more negatively when they infer its relationship with corruption. In **Chapter 7**, two studies exploring this

speculation will be presented. Once again, I considered an Italian (<u>Study 6</u>: *N* = 190) and a British sample (<u>Study 7</u>: *N* = 391). To understand the participants' tolerance of inequality over corruption, I adapted the Tajfel's matrices (Tajfel et al., 1979). Participants were asked to select, among different alternatives, the combination of economic inequality and corruption that they deemed optimal for the fictional society they imagined being a citizen of. Such relative preference was explored also through a zero-sum task and a distribution of resources task. Finally, I explored if such relative preference was influenced by the saliency of economic inequality and corruption, which I manipulated by making participants watch a brief video. Throughout the samples and tasks, I found a consistent tolerance of economic inequality over corruption, meaning that participants were more willing to tolerate higher levels of the former as long as it meant having lower levels of the latter. Such tolerance was not affected by the saliency manipulation. Finally, in **Chapter 8**, I will discuss the results obtained along with their implications and future directions.

Chapter 1
Economic Inequality

Economic inequality has been identified as one of the most prominent social problems of our times and, across nations and history, it has developed in many forms affecting societies, economies, and human life in general (Bohnke & Kohler et al., 2010). Economic inequality has increased worldwide in the last decades (World Bank Organization), and it has been defined as one of the greatest challenges of our time by the former president of the United States Obama (Organization for Economic-Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2020). At a global level, economic inequality seems to be even more shocking as only 26 individuals own as much wealth as the 50% of the world's population (Lawson et al., 2019) while, according to the World Bank Organization (2019), more than 689 million people live in extreme poverty conditions with less than 1.9$ a day. According to the PEW Research Centre (2020), in the U.S. the top 20% of the total households share an income that surpasses in its totality the one of the remaining 80% of the population. This wealth-gap raised significantly from 1989, when the richest 5% of the households owned 114 times more than the median, to the 2016, when the top 5% held 248 times the median. Those at the top of the wealth distribution were also the minority of the population that was not hindered by the Great Recession started in 2008, as their net worth from 2007 to 2016 increased by the 13%. This wealth inequality, in the U.S., lead to a steady decrease of the middle-class population that in the 1971 was equal to the 61% of the total population, while in 2019 it had reached the 51%. A similar pattern can be assessed in the European Union, where the 20% of the population at the top quintile owns more than one third of the total income (Eurostat, 2020). The economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have taken their toll on economic inequality as well. At the beginning of 2021, more than 255 million jobs were lost, and unemployment rose worldwide by 6.5 percentage points (International Labor Organization [ILO], 2021). Those at the bottom of the wealth distribution were the ones more disproportionately affected, and scholars have argued that the pandemic will have long-lasting effects on the global inequality levels (Furceri et al., 2021). Overall, the topic of economic inequalities seems to have become more relevant in the international public debate, becoming the focus of political campaigns and media coverage (Epp & Jennings, 2020).

From an academic point of view, economic inequalities have raised quite a debate, especially in the field of social psychology. According to Jetten & Peters (2019), exploring the topic of economic inequality from a psychology perspective is necessary for understanding the processes that explain the perception of the phenomenon and for having a better insight on the group dynamics that support its negative effects on people's lives. Research has found that the actual level of inequalities, measured through quantitative data, has little correlation with the perception people have of the phenomenon (Garcia-Castro et al., 2022; Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018; Loughnan et al., 2011). Understanding which psychological process can

underpin this erroneous evaluation of the issue is an important line of research that can provide useful insights on the phenomenon and on the support for redistribution policies.

In the first section of this chapter, it will be discussed how people's worldview influence people's perception of economic inequality. In fact, although there are some objectives measures for assessing economic inequalities, people rely on their perception of the phenomenon. These perceptions are not always consistent with the real levels of the issue. This is true both when considering the overall economic inequality level of a country and when considering one's own situation. Understanding people's perception of the phenomenon is extremely important because the literature has found evidence that some of the consequences of economic inequalities rely on people's perception of the phenomenon rather than its actual levels, especially when considering people's wellbeing (Wienk et al., 2022).

In the second section of this chapter, it will be discussed how the perception of economic inequality, in turn, shapes people's worldview. Economic inequalities, in fact, create a specific environment that forces people to reshape the worldview they have of their social world, altering their perception of the social groups, the interaction they have with them and the overall evaluation of their society. The wealth gap between social classes, in fact, has an impact on the individuals' minds, especially those at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder.

1.1.   People's perception of economic inequality

The first step for understanding how people interact with economic inequality is providing a definition of the construct. From an economic point of view, economic inequality has been conceptualized using different measures such as the Lorenz curve, the Theil Index, the Atkinson Index and, the most popular of all, the Gini Index (Jenkins & Van Kerm, 2009). The Gini Index is a measure of dispersions that quantifies the wealth (or income) inequality that is present in a nation, region, or even a social group. It ranges from a minimum of 0 (which represents a perfect equality of endowment among all the parties) and a maximum of 100 (which represents a situation of maximum inequality, where all the wealth is attributed to one party of the group). Organizations such as the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) and the World Bank provide reports on the trends of economic inequality, combining different measures together, on a regular basis and, for this reason, one could argue that understanding the level of economic inequality present in a country is a relatively easy task.

Psychologists, however, have found that that people have difficulties in correctly perceiving economic inequality (e.g., Wienk et al., 2022). Understanding how the subjective measures of the (mis)perception of economic inequality work has become an important line of research in the domain of social psychology. People, in fact, commit many mistakes when asked to rate the levels of inequality they live in: they fail to estimate the wealth or income percentage owned by different percentiles of the populations

(Chambers et al., 2014), to choose the correct wealth distribution present in their country among different representations (Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018) and even to estimate their own percentile position (Engelhardt & Wagener 2014). These errors are consistent across domains: people fail to report not only estimates about incomes but about wealth as well (Eriksson & Simpson, 2012), making it clear that people's perceptions of economic inequality are not representative of their reality (Hauser & Norton, 2017).

Overall, people tend to overestimate the middle class: they are likely to underestimate the assets of the highest percentiles and to overestimate the ones of the lowest sectors of the population (Kraus & Tan, 2015). This tendency occurs also when evaluating one's own situation: people, despite their real economic conditions, are likely to position themselves as middle class (Hauser & Norton, 2015). Researchers have tried to motivate these results, providing explanations that range from people's preferences and cognitive biases to ideologies and worldviews. A still growing corpus of research has highlighted how, overall, people prefer economic equality to inequality, a preference that remains stable across different political and socio-economic factors (Norton & Ariely, 2013). All levels of economic inequality, however, are not considered unsufferable (Garcia-Castro et al., 2020) and the tolerance for such an issue is highly influenced by individual factors such as the socio-economic status, age, gender, and the political orientation of the subject under examination. For instance, people are more likely to tolerate higher levels of economic inequality the higher their perceived socio-economic status is, if they are male and if their political beliefs are closer to the right wing (Norton et al. 2014). Older people and less educated individuals are also more likely to tolerate higher levels of wealth gaps among different sectors of the populations (Easterbrook, 2021). Higher levels of tolerance for the phenomenon lead to a reduced perception of it: the more a phenomenon is considered unjust the more likely people are at spotting it and becoming aware of it; if a phenomenon, on the other hand, is in line with their idea of tolerability, people are less likely to pay attention to it (Garcia-Castro et al, 2021).

The fallacious estimate of economic inequality may be explained through the cognitive biases people are subject to when trying to draw estimates about phenomena. When asked to assess measures, people rely on the anchoring-and adjustment heuristics (for a review, see Furnham & Boo, 2011), meaning that they are heavily influenced by the first information they acquire. The first piece of information acts as anchor for future judgments: the initial estimation becomes, therefore, the most salient one and is likely to influence the perception of the phenomenon in its entirety. Pedersen and Mutz (2019), for example, found that, when measuring the ideal pay ratios, people's judgments were influenced by the anchoring effect. When participants were presented with the ideal before the real pay ratio, they were more likely to perceive income differences as too large than when they were presented with the real pay ratio first. Therefore, when people are asked to draw inferences about the economic inequality present in their country, they may use information that are available to them such as their own salaries and the ones of people they know, such as

friends and family, and use them as an anchor for judgment. This speculation seems to be confirmed by research: according to Dawtry et al. (2015), people whose social circles are composed by wealthier individuals are more likely to overestimate the national wealth. Overall, people seem to over-generalize the situation of their reference group (Xu & Garand, 2010). Since in everyday life most people seem to come across with people whose economic situation is better or worse, although by little, they may infer their own position as belonging to the middle and that the overall wealth variance is small. Furthermore, economic inequality leads to societies being segregated according to income: when economic inequality is high, people are more likely to interact daily with people who share their socio-economic background (Marcińczak et al., 2015). This makes the average reference group of the individual more homogeneous, leading to an underestimation of economic differences. Media representation may also play a role: media tend to represent the extremes of the economic distribution, focusing either on the richest ones, especially trough television and entertainment, or on the lowest sectors of the population (Kellner & Share, 2019). However, while the top 1% is discussed with an abundance of details, the lowest sectors are often talked about as a homogeneous group, and this may lead people to overestimate the presence and representation of the rich at the expense of the poor. Media may also shape people's perceptions of economic inequality through their coverage of the issue and the frame they use for discussing it. For example, the more screening time of the news are dedicated to the problem of economic inequality, the more the public becomes concerned with the situation (Diermeier et al. 2017; Phillips et al., 2020). Furthermore, if media discuss economic inequality framing it as the advantaged group having more rather than the disadvantaged group having less, people are more likely to perceive the inequality as more extreme and less legitimate (Bruckmuller et al, 2017).

People's inability to correctly assess economic inequality may also be guided by a self-interested worldview: people are inclined to perceive the reality they live in in a way that may help them to preserve and improve their own worldview and position (Philipps et al., 2020). They tend to interpret situations in ways that support their already existing political and moral ideals, trying to make sense of their social world through the lenses crated by their values. People tend to avoid conflicting information and to maintain a coherent sense of the world by avoiding information that may make them question their sense of the world and society (*confirmation bias*; Klayman, 1995). When possible, people are tempted to interpret information in a way that garners support for their ideologies and to dismiss conflicting instances as less important or not as severe. The misperception of economic inequality is guided by the people's ideologies in opposing ways: for example, Chambers et al. (2014) found that left-wing oriented people are more likely to overestimate existing inequalities while right-wing ones are more likely to minimize them. Furthermore, people who believe that economic inequality's consequences are extreme are more likely to overestimate their presence and magnitude (Kiatpongsan & Norton, 2014). People also have the tendency to justify their privileged position by positing that they gained it through personal merit, and to put the blame of their disadvantaged conditions on external factors (*fundamental attribution error*; Jones & Harris, 1967; Berry & Friederickson,

2015). This means that rich people are more likely to attribute the merit of their socio-economic positions to their skills and hard work, while poor people are more likely to attribute their condition to external factors that are independent from their agency (Schneider & Castillo, 2015). Consistently, Newman et al. (2015) found that high-status individuals are more likely to perceive their position as legitimate and, in turn, to underestimate both the magnitude of economic inequality and its consequences, allowing them to reject the support for redistribution policies. On the other hand, low-status individuals consider their position as being the result of external forces, which leads them to justify their support for redistribution policies. Such tendency is likewise present when people think about the future: individuals who believe that they will be able to gain higher socio-economic positions in the future through their merits are more likely to underestimate the diffusion and impact of economic inequality (Ravallion & Lokshin, 2001). When an issue is considered structural, people are less likely to perceive it as a problem but rather as an unchanging, inevitable condition and are more likely to consider it as legitimate. Legitimate conditions, in turn, are less likely to be perceived as problems and to be noticed in the long run (Blanchar & Eidelman 2013). This also happens when talking about economic inequality: when economic gaps are presented as long-standing within a society, they are considered more justifiable (Blanchar & Eidelman 2013).

Economic inequality is a determinant for many negative consequences in the population (Van de Werfhost & Salverda, 2012). It is interesting to notice, however, that some of its negative, psychological effects are determined by its *perceived* levels rather than their actual ones. For example, Schneider (2012, 2016) argued that what impacts people's well-being is not economic inequality *per se*, but rather how people perceive it and whether they consider their position on the social ladder inevitable or mutable according to their actions and merits (in other words, their perception of social mobility). According to this point of view, what threatens people's well-being is not their experience of the economic inequality but rather their fear or hope of moving on the economic ladder toward a less or more favorable position. This claim seems to be supported by some panel surveys (e.g., Clark, 2003) that found a positive correlation between economic inequality and well-being for people who were placed in the steepest upward trajectories; those who were more likely to increase their economic position were more likely to report higher level of well-being independently from their actual economic position. On the other hand, living in a world where socio-economic mobility is considered possible is not necessarily better for the well-being. Oishi et al.(2011), for example, found that when social mobility is considered frequent, rich people are more likely to report lower levels of well-being as they may fear falling down the socio-economic ladder and lose their privileges. This fear becomes even more threatening when the country welfare system is flawed.

To reconcile these two apparently opposing perspectives on social mobility, Alesina et al. (2004) found that the impact of economic inequality on well-being was stronger for the poor in Europe, while, in the U.S., it had a stronger impact on the rich. This result was justified in the following way: in Europe the social mobility is perceived to be lower than in the U.S and this may lead poor people to feel trapped in their socio-economic

condition; on the other hand, rich people in the U.S may feel that their socio-economic status may be reversed in the future. Additionally, the US welfare system is considered more flawed than the European one, making the fear of an economic decline more threatening. Jetten et al. (2015) matched these results at an experimental level. In these experiments, they manipulated the economic position of the participants in a fictitious society and then provided information about the economic future, describing a situation where economic inequality would increase. The prospect of rising inequalities affected both the rich and the poor, although for different reasons. The participants assigned to the poor condition experienced an increase in their levels of anxiety and fear for their future. Those assigned to the rich condition, on the other hand, experienced similar level of anxiety although explained by the prospect of losing their endowment. According to the authors, the anxiety experienced by the poor is due to a feeling of relative deprivation or knowing that they own less compared to the others. The anxiety perceived by rich is instead due to the idea that their position is not stable and that in the future they might be on the worst end of the comparison. Overall, these results suggest that it is not economic inequality per se what influences people's wellbeing, but rather people's perception of it and their ideas concerning the immutability of the economic situation in the future.

1.2. The perception of economic inequality shapes people's worldview

As already mentioned, people's perception of economic inequality is influenced by their worldview. At the same time, however, such worldview is affected by people's exposure to economic inequality. Being exposed to different levels of inequalities shapes people's life experiences and contributes to determine how people make sense of their social world and the group dynamics they perceive. It influences how people think about themselves, their peers, and the way they make decisions.

1.2.1. Economic Inequality shapes the way people think about themselves and make decisions

Scholars (e.g., Smith & Pettigrew, 2014) have posited that in economically unequal societies people experience a situation of *relative deprivation.* An unequal society, in fact, is composed by a small élite that has access to most of the resources while the rest of the society (although composed by more individuals) must contend for the remaining, fewer ones. In such a way, poor people have access not only to less resources, but they also face less chances to win them, as the competition is higher. Goya-Tocchetto and Payne (2022) have argued that being in a situation of relative deprivation (e.g., being at the bottom of the social ladder in an unequal society and therefore perceiving that oneself is worse off than the rest of the society) makes people develop a form of *learned helplessness*, a false intuition of the individuals according to which they do not have power over their own actions and that the outcomes of such actions are

independent from their will. Due to the situation of relative deprivation they experience, in fact, poor people face more chances of failure which, in turn, is likely to lead them to develop thoughts of low self-efficacy (e.g., "*Since I did not get what I wanted, my efforts are not enough for obtaining what I want*") that may later lead to a situation of learned helplessness (e.g., "*Since my efforts are not enough for getting what I want, it is not worth doing anything*"). This intuition has been supported by correlational evidence, as higher levels of learned helplessness have been assessed among poorer children (Evans & DeFrance, 2021), students (Jensen, 2013) and workers (Browman et al., 2019). Moreover, Tayfur et al. (2013) have argued that being in a situation of relative deprivation causes in people an emotional exhaustion, which develops in cynicism that is associated with learned helplessness and inaction. According to the author, this kind of mindset is likely to affect the whole process of decision making.

According to Sheehy-Skeffington (2019) people's economic status and the feelings of learned helplessness associated with it, causes a *psychological shift* in the way people think and make decisions. Such decisions, in turn, create long-term consequences and decision-making patterns that may reinforce the economic inequality and impact social mobility. When people are at the bottom of the social ladder they are in a situation of relative deprivation, meaning that the resources that they have access to are subject to scarcity. When resources are scarce, their availability is instable, meaning that low-status people are in a competition against each other for those resources. Such competition makes them aware of their subjective status. Therefore, the experience of these socio-economic contextual cues (*scarcity, instability, and subjective socio-economic status*; Uskul & Oishi, 2018) appears as a threat for the low-status individuals. People feel the threat of the lack of resources, of the competition and, overall, consider their own social status as the cause behind such threats (e.g., "*I'm at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, that is why I have to fight for what I want with the other ones that are in my own position*").

These threats prompt individuals to make a psychological shift in their worldviews. The first shift lays in how low status people change the perception of their control over their future (*learned helplessness -> "My efforts are not enough for getting what I want, therefore I have no control over my future"*). This leads to the second shift: a preference for the immediate gains at the expense of the long-term ones . People's diminished sense of control over the future changes their regulatory focus from the distant future to the near one. This makes them favor short term goals over long-term ones and shift the attention from the long-term threats to the short-term gains. This justifies their preference for high-risk/high-gains actions over low-risk/low-gains ones. Risky behaviours are described as those whose outcomes have a wide variance of outcomes or whose intended outcomes have a low probability. An action that is associated with a high probability of losses and low probability of gains is considered risky. Buying a lottery ticket could be considered a perfect example for a risky behaviour: while the chances of losing the initial sum (the price of the ticket) are high, the ones of winning the prize pool are very low. Scholars have argued that economic inequality is linked with more frequent risky behaviours (Hannay et al., 2021). For example, Payne et al. (2017) divided participants in two

experimental conditions: one where there was depicted a low level of economic inequality and one that depicted a high level of economic inequality. Participants were then asked to choose between two lottery tickets: the first one was high risk and high rewarding (the changes of winning were low, but the prize pool was high) and the second one was low risk and low rewarding (the chances of winning were high, but the prize pool was low). Across different studies, participants assigned to the high inequality condition were more likely to choose the high-risk option. The results of these experiments were matched with observational data as well: the frequency of monetary risky behaviours (such as buying lottery tickets or invest money in unstable stock) was positively correlated with the Gini Index of the country in which they were performed.

1.2.2. Economic inequality shapes the way in which people perceive their peers and group dynamics

According to Jetten et al. (2021) economic inequality shapes the way people experience their social world. These scholars have posited that the social consequences of such issue could be understood using the Social Identity Theory and the Self-Categorization approach. The *Social Identity Theory* (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) argues that people build their social identity starting from the social groups they belong to rather than their own personal characteristics, salient structural factors (in this case, economic inequality) become therefore determinant for shaping one's own identity. The membership to a social group is linked with a cognitive and emotional meaning that include a positive (or negative) valence along with a set of stereotypes about the group. People make sense of their social world by using group-memberships and the cognitive and emotional information attached to them, as a tool for allowing comparisons between members of one own's group and the others (ingroup vs. outgroup, in this specific case rich vs. poor). *Self-categorization Theory* (SCT; Turner et al., 1987) can be considered as a further development of SIT. It maintains the main concept of the former but switches its focus from the intergroup relationship to the understanding of the self. In this case, people may use the wealth category for understanding their identity that would revolve around the concept of being rich rather than being poor.

According to Jetten et al. (2021), when economic inequalities are high, they become a structural factor, relevant enough to start categorizing people according to their wealth, and to divide peers into two groups: the rich and the poor. This categorization allows a comparison between groups in terms of "us" versus "them", creating important group dynamics in countries in which economic inequalities are high. Furthermore, for each category (rich vs. poor) there will be a set of emotional and cognitive stereotypes that will be used by people for making sense of the others and of themselves. In the end, the perception of the boundaries between the categories of rich versus poor, or how easy it is to move across the social ladder, will lead to naïve theories about the social world, revolving around how essentials the characteristics of the group's members are. For example, if one thinks that it is extremely difficult for a poor person to become rich, one could justify such perception by thinking that it is because the characteristics that make them poor

(e.g., low competence) are essential to poor people. Correlational and experimental data seem to support this reasoning (Jetten et al., 2021).

First, when economic inequality is high, wealth becomes a salient and fitting category for depicting the social world an individual is living in. Peters et al. (2021) for example, found that people use the category of wealth for describing the society they live in more frequently, the higher the Gini Index of their country. Conducting an archival analysis, the authors found that in British and U.S. media the words "rich" and "poor" were more used throughout the years when the levels of economic inequality rose. These findings were also replicated also at an experimental level. They divided participants in two experimental conditions: in the first one, participants were presented with a fictional society with a high level of economic inequality while, in the second one, participants were presented with an economically equal fictitious society. When asked to describe the life of the society they had been assigned to, participants who had been randomized to the unequal one, were more likely to mention the words "rich" and "poor" and, overall, to describe it using wealth as a parameter.

Second, the literature shows that when inequality is high, people do tend to compare rich and poor people more frequently, in an optic of "us" versus "them". This leads people to perceive their social world as more threatening and competitive, eroding social values such as cooperation. In an experimental study (Goth & Jetten, 2015), participants were made to identify with a citizen of a fictional society and were randomized to two conditions: first, they were randomized to one out of two levels of economic inequality (high vs. low) and then to one out of two wealth groups (rich vs. poor). Then, they were asked to answer to some questions concerning the group relationships between those at the top of the economic ladder and those at the bottom. Independently from the wealth group they were assigned to, participants in the high inequality condition described the relationship between the rich and the poor as more conflicting. In a second task, participants were told that a new group of people, labeled as "newcomers" would have joined their fictional society and they were asked to describe how the relationship with such group would be. Once again, participants assigned to the high inequality manipulation described more negative relationships, independently of their wealth group. Another study by Jetten et al. (2015) divided participants into three conditions (Socio-economic ladder position: high, middle, low) and provided them with information about the inequality in their country, specifying in one condition that it was rising and in the other that it was declining. Then, they asked participants how willing they were to welcome immigrants to their society. Once again, independently from their position on the social ladder, participants were less welcoming when they were told that economic inequality levels were rising. These results seem to indicate that economic inequality create a condition of competition in which everyone, independently of their position, feel threatened. These kinds of threats may create a situation of status competition that crosses people's status position, as reported

by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009). Overall, high inequality seems to create intergroup hostility, and intergroup divisions that impact solidarity and causes people to act less pro-socially (Cotè et al., 2015).

Economic inequalities seem to make the concept of status more salient: people become more aware of their position on the social ladder and its importance, as well the one of others (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). Social class information is experienced daily by people through social class signals, a set of behaviours and cues that indicate a person's income and position in the socio-economic hierarchy (Kraus & Keltner, 2009). These signals become more salient when wealth is considered a fitting structural factor for drawing social categories and act as boundaries for recognizing the rich from the poor. Scholars have found that people can infer individuals' social class from many domains such as cultural objects (Davis, 1956; Mass & Hall, 2004), physical appearance (Bjornsdottir & Rule, 2016), voices (Kim et al., 2021) and micro-behaviours (Kraus & Keltner, 2009). These signals are useful not only for differentiating social classes but also for defining the essence of the people they encompass, providing an impactful tool for maintaining group boundaries. In other words, these clues are used not only for recognizing the rich from the poor but also for explaining *why* the rich are different from the poor. Throughout history, essentialist instances about social classes have helped to maintain distances between groups as well as reducing class-mobility (Desmond, 2016). From an empirical point of view, this concept has been first studied by Bergeron and Zanna (1973) using a Peruvian student sample. Participants were asked to read and evaluate essays and were provided with the information that they had been written by either a fellow student (considered belonging to a higher social class) or to by a member of an indigenous Peruvian population (considered belonging to a lower class). Despite their appreciation for the essays, participants reported to be more willing to form a relationship with the writer when they thought he/she belonged to their own social class, thinking they would have had more similarities and affinities. Cotè et al. (2014), similarly, found that rich participants found themselves to feel more affine to target individuals describing upper class signals, while poor participants reported to feel more similar and to be more willing to interact with target individuals described through lower class signals. Social class signals contribute to the formation of stereotypes (Tanjitpiyanond et al., 2022), and one could argue that the negative stereotypes that are linked with the lower classes in unequal societies may drive people to escape them by trying to keep up with the higher classes, using class signals to ascend the economic ladder. Acting rich (e.g., buying counterfeit luxury products) can be considered as an attempt for evading the stereotypes associated with one own's social class (Purwanto et al., 2019). In fact, when being poor is associated with so many negative connotations, being perceived as rich becomes the easiest way for escaping such stereotypes and to be perceived positively. Correlational studies seem to confirm this reasoning as it has been found that when economic inequality rises, the luxury market is not affected by it but rather it increases its demand not only among the wealthy individuals but among the poor ones as well (Dubois et al., 2021).

1.2.3. Economic inequality shapes the way people make sense of and navigate their social world

As already mentioned, being exposed to economic inequality shapes people's perception of social groups and the dynamics interplaying among them. Moreover, economic inequality influences the explanations people develop about the existence of said groups. People, in fact, tend to provide naïve explanations concerning why people belong to different social groups (in this case, the rich and the poor). When inequalities reach a high level, people tend to consider the characteristics of these social groups as *essentialized,* innate features that are intrinsic to one's own being and that are not considered the result of their life experiences (Piff et al., 2018). According to the Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Fiske et al., 2002), the content of groups' stereotypes revolves around two fundamental dimensions of social perception, namely, warmth and competence. Jetten et al. (2021; bus see also Durante et al., 2017) argue that the stereotypes concerning the competence dimension serve to justify the positions along the socio-economic ladder (e.g., "*The rich are at the top because they are more assertive and are better at dealing with money*") and have a normative connotation. On the other hand, the stereotypes concerning the warmth dimension are not contingent to the socio-economic position but rather are developed to compensate for the negative attribution of the first dimension (e.g., "*Poor people are less competent but have their heart in the right place*"). According to Fiske and Durante (2019), in order to compensate for the favorable contents (*compensation hypothesis*: Judd et al., 2005) concerning rich people along the competence dimension, people develop negative stereotypes on the other dimension, depicting rich people as "cold and immoral" or as "snobs". (Christopher & Schlenker, 2000; Ragusa, 2015). Tantjitpiyanond et al. (2021) provided some evidence for these accounts. They randomized participants to one out of two fictional countries with different levels of inequality (high vs. low), then they asked to rate two target individuals: a rich and a poor one. When assigned to the high inequality condition, participants rated the wealthy individual as more assertive, competent, and goal-driven than the poor one. Furthermore, in the high inequality condition, the poor target was considered as less ambitious and lazier. When in the high inequality condition, participants rated both the rich and the poor targets as less cooperative and friendly even if the poor target was rated higher than the rich one on these dimensions. This last result is in line with instance argument discussed previously: inequality acts as a threat that forces people to compete against each other for status and resources: when the competition is high, traits such as friendliness and cooperation are considered less likely.

According to Jetten et al. (2021), the content of the previously described stereotypes are used by people to build naïve theories about their societies. These theories are likely to justify their current status quo or, alternatively, to lead people to mobilize together for social change. People tend to justify their current society rather than questioning it as this second option would imply a huge psychological distress and the urgency to change their current situation implying a great expenditure of material, cognitive and emotional

resources (Jost, 2018). These justifying worldviews are grounded on the legitimacy of the current situation and, according to Jetten et al. (2021), they are construed around the permeability of the economic classes (how likely it is for a poor person to become rich, and vice versa), the stability of the social system (how long it has endured in time) and the perceived legitimacy of the wealth gap (if people consider that rich people deserve to be rich or not). Consistent to Jetten et al.'s (2021) theoretical account, it is important to notice that, just like some of the consequences of economic inequality are predicted by its perception rather than its objective measure, the tolerance for inequality is linked to its perceived legitimacy rather than its levels across time (Akbaş et al., 2019).

The concept of legitimacy, in turn, is linked to the perceived ability people have to move on the socio-economic ladder according to their skills and merits (Starmans et al., 2017). In other words, the current socio-economic scenario is perceived to be determined by meritocracy and not by luck (Nettle & Saxe, 2019). The term meritocracy was first introduced by Michael Young in his dystopian book *The rise of Meritocracy*, in which he described a form of government that favored people with skills, intelligence and, therefore, merit above everything else. It was associated with negative implications, as it was suggested that meritocracy was a form of discrimination between the few talented ones and the unworthy majority that, however, created a vicious cycle of opportunities in which one could no longer distinguish if elites where such due to essential characteristics or due to their over-abundance of opportunities. This negative connotation was later lost in the common language, and it was substituted with a positive one: meritocracy, according to the Cambridge Dictionary is a system in which "People get success or power because of their abilities, not because of their money or social position" and people usually hold a strong preference for meritocracy (Castillo et al., 2021). When economic inequality is perceived as high (independently of its real assessment), people do not think that their society is governed by meritocracy and display a bigger support for redistribution policies (Kuhn, 2019). However, one could argue that this kind of correlation could also be interpreted the other way around: people are able to perceive high economic inequalities only when they refuse a meritocratic interpretation of the socio-economic differences. This seems to be supported by some cross-sectional studies. Mijs (2019), for example, examined 25 years of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) data. Results showed that the rising of economic inequality is accompanied by the beliefs that attribute the gap between the rich and the poor to meritocratic factors rather than situational ones, such as family's wealth, connections, and opportunities. These beliefs were supported not only by the elites but also by those at the bottom of the social ladder. Roth and Wohlfart (2018), additionally, found a negative correlation between one's country's economic inequality and support for redistribution policies. Also in this case, the authors argued that being exposed to inequalities makes people develop justifying theories about the merit, that, in turn, diminishes people support for redistribution, which is perceived as "stealing from the deserving individuals for providing to the underserving ones". Experimental studies seem to provide converging results as well: when participants are made aware of the real levels of economic inequality (rather than relying on their perceiving

ones), they diminish their meritocratic, justifying views and their perception of the social mobility lowers. This makes them keener to support redistribution policies and social spending (McCall et al., 2017). Economically unequal countries display higher beliefs of Economic System Justification (ESJ) beliefs (Goudarzi et al., 2020), a set of naïve theories according to which "the capitalistic system provides individuals with equal opportunity to succeed and that outcomes are based upon personal deservingness and merit. These beliefs enable system justifiers to interpret patterns of wealth and poverty as fair, legitimate, and appropriate, thereby reducing the distress in face of inequality" (Goudarzi et al., 2020; p. 2). Overall, one could argue that the perception of economic inequality is filtered trough one's meritocratic beliefs, meaning that people who think that meritocracy rules society are less likely to perceive economic inequalities or, if they do, they are less likely to perceive them as illegitimate. On the other way around the perception of economic inequalities is used to support or discard one own's worldview concerning meritocracy.

The way people conceptualize and justify the existence of inequalities, in turn, shapes the way people emotionally react in face of them and their support for contrasting actions (Costa-Lopes et al., 2013). Roth and Wohlfart (2018), for example, justified the negative correlation between one's country's level of economic inequality and the support for distribution policies by arguing that in such countries people a higher belief in justifying theories about merit. Such beliefs, in turn, diminish people's support for redistribution which is perceived as "stealing from the deserving individuals for providing for the undeserving ones". Experimental studies seem to provide converging results as well: when participants are made aware of the real levels of economic inequality (rather than relying on their perceiving ones), they diminish their meritocratic, justifying views and their perception of the social mobility lowers. This makes them keener to support redistribution policies and social spending (McCall et al., 2017).

When people perceive higher levels of economic inequality, but do justify such phenomenon with their worldviews, other social issues may emerge, such as higher levels of distrust in the institutions and the democratic system. Elgar (2010) found that panel data from 33 countries showed a decrease in social trust when economic inequalities rise, a correlation that was replicated by other scholars (e.g., Gustavsson & Jordahl, 2008; Van de Werfhost & Salverda, 2012). This association has been argued to lead to other negative socio-political consequences, such a decrease in the public political involvement (Solt, 2008) that, in turn, leads to a decrease in the democratic values (Anderson & Beramendi, 2012). These factors are likely to induce a situation of *anomie*, a sociological concept first theorized by the sociologist Emile Durkheim (Durkheim, 1897), that refers to a highly dysfunctional social scenario characterized by the breakdown of the social order where the State and the authorities provide no moral guide to the citizens that in turn, feel culturally alienated (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Sociologists (e.g., Burgoon et al., 2016) have argued that the rising of economic inequalities may have contributed to the rise of populist parties and the radicalization of the dominant political ideas by creating a situation of anomie, which, in turn, is a breeding ground for the fall of

democratic values. From a psychological point of view, this instance has been tested by Sprong et al. (2019) both at a correlational and experimental levels. In a first study, researchers found a correlation between the levels of economic inequalities present in 28 countries and the sample's preference for a strong leader. In two experimental studies, they found converging results by manipulating the level of inequalities of e a fictional society and randomly assigning participants to either a high or low inequality condition. When participants were assigned to the high inequality condition, their perception of anomie raised and this, in turn, predicted participants wish for a stronger leader.

Chapter 2
Corruption

In this chapter I will introduce the second social phenomenon I plan to investigate in our current research: corruption. I will introduce its definition, measures and operationalizations across different fields and we will describe its negative impacts on the fields of economic and welfare. Then, I will describe how corruption affects the socio-political scenario in which people live in. Despite the relevance of the corruption phenomenon in the socio-political world people live in, the topic has not been investigated from a socio-psychological perspective in details and the few instances of such efforts will be described in the last section of this chapter.

2.1. What is corruption and how it is measured

According to Gardiner et al. (2002) there is not a universal definition of corruption and throughout the literature it has been defined differently according to the field in which it was investigated (such as the legal, criminological, or economical one) and to the specific socio-historical framework in which it has been studied. The most common interpretation of the term used nowadays is the one provided by Transparency International, that states that corruption is "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain." The popularity of this definition lies in three factors: first, it is comprehensive of many different types of actions, independently from their magnitude and severity. It includes actions of *Petty Corruption*, or the everyday malpractices such as paying small briberies, and actions of *Grand Corruption*, which, on the other hand, refer to the highest levels of corruption that distort the central functions of the government such as electoral fraud (Fazekas et al., 2014). Secondly, because it does not imply the necessity of breaking the law. Corruption, in fact, lurks at the edge of the law and not all corrupted behaviours can be considered illegal (Herzfel & Weiss, 2003). This applies not only for petty but for grand corruption as well. For example, improper political contributions in forms of economical donations to political parties are difficult to detect from a legal point of view. While making and receiving donations is at the core of many political systems, it is difficult to interpret the intentions of the donor that might lie, rightfully, in the support of the party or in the expectance of favors that may overstep the interests of the public. The third strength of the Transparency International's definition lies, in fact, in the assumption of malevolent intentions and in the breaking of a social norm: trust. As proposed by the United Nations Manual of Anti-corruption Policy (Rose et al., 2019), corruption stems from the abandonment of professional and ethical responsibilities for egoistic benefits. Corruption, therefore, is a conduct that revolves around the breaking of social norms for the benefit of the few at the expense of the majority. What constitutes corruption, revolves, for this reason, around specific social norms that may vary in different countries, across different historical periods. Under this light, the same action may be considered an act of corruption or not according to culture in which it is embedded. One stark example of this is the

concept of nepotism, which, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is described as the act of "appointing and promoting family and relatives. In an organization, it means that family members are favored over others, even though they may not be as qualified or skilled." While in most modern, Western societies such practice is frowned upon (Yavuz et al., 2020), it was the core of many political systems such as the monarchies of the *Ancien Regime* where most of the public offices were hereditary.

Given the broad definition of corruption, correctly operationalizing such a phenomenon across time and countries, is far from simple. According to Rose (2018) for quantifying corruption one must look for data regarding its occurrence, typology, costs, provoking factors and, most importantly, its perception. Subjective assessment coming from the general population is necessary for the following reasons: first, because, as previously mentioned, corruption involves the breaking of the social norms whose deviations can be understood and spotted only by those who are part of the society in examine. Secondly, because objective measures (such as the number of trials, lawsuits, and formal complaints) are a proxy of the efforts for *contrasting* corruption, rather than an actual measure of the latter. In countries where corruption reaches its extreme, such as Somalia and Venezuela, the number of trials and lawsuit against it are not at the maximum (Transparency International, 2018). This paradox is explained by fact that the more corruption is rooted in a society, the lowest the successful attempts of contrasting it are (Fadda et al., 2018). One of the most used measures of corruption according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2008) is provided by Transparency International through their Corruption Perception Index (CPI), a measure that takes into account subjective and objective measures of corruption. Subjective measures are collected in forms of surveys addressed both to the general population and to specific sectors that might be more exposed to it (e.g., those who have some regular contacts with particular governmental areas and contracts), focus groups and field observations. More objective measures include, among others, professional assessment coming from legal practices that provide reviews highlighting the gaps in the current criminal law legislations as well as the frequencies of formal complaints and trials. For these reasons, Transparency International refers to the CPI as a "poll of polls". Other vastly used measures of corruption are provided by the World Economic Forum (WEF), that include a measure of the phenomenon in the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) and by the World's Bank Worldwide Governance Indicator (WBGI). All these measures are consistent among each other (Transparency International, 2018).

2.2.   Consequences of corruption

Measuring corruption is necessary for calculating the consequences of this phenomenon and to quantify its costs. The negative outcomes of corruption, in fact, are vast and take a toll on the life of the individuals living in a corrupt society by hindering the economic growth of their country as well as worsening their quality of life through a worsened welfare state.

2.2.1. The consequences of corruption in the economic field

From an economical point of view, corruption is considered one of the main causes of economic disparity of the last 30 years (Robinson, 2012) and the World Bank has stated that it is one of "the greatest obstacles to economic and social development, as it undermines development by distorting the rule of law and weakening the institutional foundation on which economic growth depend" (World Bank, 2018). Many studies throughout the years (e.g., Cooray & Schneider, 2018; Li et al., 2000; Mauro, 1995; Meon & Weill, 2010) have linked corruption to the economic development and the economic growth of a country. Scholars over time (e.g., Hodge et al., 2011; Meon & Sekkat, 2005) have debated whether corruption can increase the economic growth of a country (the "*grease the wheels*" hypothesis) or if it can hinder it in the long run ("*sand the wheels*" hypothesis). Ahmad et al. (2012), for example, stand by the first hypothesis and speculate that the relationship between the corruption decrease and economic growth assumes an inverted U-shape, meaning that growth-maximizing levels of corruption are not always equal to zero. The authors suggest that a certain level of corruption can in fact act as a short-cut for overcoming long, complex bureaucratic procedures that prevent new businesses to grow and thrive. Similar conclusions were drawn by Huang (2016), who found a similar trend while exploring the data coming from Asia-Pacific countries from the time stamp 1997-2013. High corruption rates do not seem to impact the so-called *Asian Tiger* economies[1] as well, that offer a high-corruption and high-economic growth example (Taskinsoy, 2019). Scholars, however, postulate that, if in such nations corruption was tamed, growth could become even higher, and that the revenue of such growth could be distributed more fairly across the population (Quah, 2021). Asian Tiger economies, in fact, are characterized by high levels of economic inequality (Taskinsoy, 2019).

While the first hypothesis may explain smaller frameworks, in which corruption may act as a coping mechanism for circumventing feckless laws and regulations, the second hypothesis seems to support a much bigger picture, depicting the global links between corruption and economic growth. Swaleheen (2009), for example, examined data coming from a panel of countries in the time stamp between 1984 and 2007 and concluded that although the relationship between corruption and economic growth is not always linear, other things being equal, corruption negatively affects the economic growth of a country in the long run. In a more recent study, Grundler and Potrafke (2019) explored the nexus between the CPI (Corruption Perception Index) and the economic growth of 175 countries, in the time period 2012-2018. They found that corruption affects the GDP per capita. They estimated that when the CPI is increased by one standard deviation, the economic growth rate of a country decreases, on average, by 17%. It is also important to notice that evaluating the impact of corruption on the economic growth rate of a country is far from simple, as the

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[1] The term *Asian tigers* refers to the economies of five East-Asian Countries: Hong-Kong, Singapore, South Korean, Taiwan, and Japan (Paldam, 2003).

latter happens to be affected by many different factors, such as the political system, global economic phenomena (such as local and world-wide economic crises) and historical events, that may affect scholars' interpretation of the data. For this reason, understanding how and why corruption may affect the economy seems to be an essential part for interpreting the complexity of the correlational data available.

As previously mentioned, corruption may have beneficial effects on the economy by providing a quick coping mechanism for overcoming a slow bureaucratic system; on the other hand, the negative impacts of corruption may be explained thorough the negative correlation corruption has on investment rates, sovereign bonds, and the shadow economy. From an investment point of view, more corrupt countries experience significantly lower investment rates (Fazira & Cahyadin, 2018), especially coming from privates. Cieslik and Goczek (2018), for example, examined the data coming from 142 countries for the time period 1994-2014 and found that lower levels of corruption were correlated with higher investment rates. This is to be attributed to the practice of bribery, which can be considered as a kind of informal taxation; opening a new business in a corrupt country means facing ulterior enterprises' risks that lie in hidden costs and unfair competition, made possible by such malpractices (Sharma & Biswas, 2020). For these reasons, the market of corrupt countries is considered less competitive as suggested by the World Economic Forum Global Competitive Reports (2020). Furthermore, the inflation and exchange rates are negatively impacted by corruption (Bahmai-Oskooee & Nasir, 2002; Al-Marhubi, 2000), menacing people's ability to develop business opportunities in the first place. A correlation between high corruption levels and the premium in sovereign bonds has been highlighted: investors are more likely to request greater interests on bonds issued in a corrupt country, making the process of borrowing money for opening a new activity more difficult (Ciocchini et al., 2003). The overall impact of corruption on the economic growth of a country can be explained through its impact on the shadow economy as well. Shadow economy is an umbrella term used for describing a vast set of illegal activities that generate profits and that exist alongside a country legal economy, it encompasses activities such as the production and sale of illegal products, drug-trafficking, illegal gambling, the exploitation of the prostitution and loansharking (Fleming et al., 2000). Hoinaru et al. (2020) have examined the link between corruption and estimates of the shadow economy in European countries between 2005 and 2014 and the authors have found that when corruption rises so does the shadow economy, that, in turn, impacts the economic growth of a country.

2.2.2. The consequences of corruption on the welfare

As a consequence of an impaired economy and tax evasion linked to higher levels of corruption (Cerqueti & Coppier, 2011), a country's revenues are limited, leading to restricted government expenditures, especially in the sectors of health and education. These sectors, along with other corrupt malpractices, directly negatively impact the citizens' lives.

2.2.2.1. Health

According to Transparency International (2013) in more than 40 countries, over 50% of their citizens considered their national health system to be extremely corrupt. Hanf et al. (2011) have stated that more than 140.000 child deaths can be linked to corruption annually. Most countries rely on public systems for delivering health services, and in most countries such services are administered at a central rather than local level, meaning that corruption is more likely to infiltrate (World Economic Forum, 2018). The national health system of a country is severely impacted by corruption through both petty and grand corruption (Gideon, 2001). Petty corruption influences the doctor-patient relationship as, for example, doctors may improperly ask their patience to rely on their private practices. Grand corruption, on the other hand, may influence the hospital-supplier relationship and the hospital government ones through the falsification of bills, the overpayment of supplies, or by agreeing on buying less-performing machines and medicines in exchange for money (Garcia, 2019).

Vian (2008) has established a theoretical framework for linking together corruption and its consequences in the health domain. He argues that corruption infiltrates through different areas of process that, together, damage the social welfare and people's health. Corruption affects the State's efforts for constructing modern health facilities and for re-habilitating existing ones. This happens mainly in two forms: either by bribing those in charge of commissioning the works so that the funds can be diverted or by bribing contractors, compromising the quality of the work, independently from the money invested. This leads to higher public expenditures with lower quality payoffs and health facilities that are not up to the standards established (and paid for) by the local authorities. For the population, it means that private infrastructures usually hold higher standards than the public ones, leading to economic and geographic discriminations among the citizens. Similarly, corruption practices involve the purchase of new equipment and the re-stocking of drugs. Bribes may influence the choice of the winners in public calls for suppliers, impacting the prices of the stockings (as low-cost and high-quality competitors may be eliminated through such practices), and even by choosing more obsolete and less effective drugs over new ones. This leads to inflated public costs that, in turn, guarantee lower availabilities of supplies and drugs as well as lower quality standards. In these cases, often patients find themselves in the position of having to pay for drugs or to interrupt unaffordable therapies, leading them to medical complications and, in some cases, even death.

Vian (2008) states that the quality of the health treatments available to the population is impacted by the corruption in the education of the health professionals and in the medical research as well. Bribes for having accesses to medical schools or for obtaining passing grades, as well as job promotions dictated by nepotism, create a class of incompetent professionals. This hurts the general population in two ways: first, more directly, by not receiving adequate medical assistance, and secondly, by affecting the trust people have in the medical system, pushing them to rely on untrained and uncertified self-proclaimed healers. Lastly, when corruption reaches the medical research trough practices such as trials funded by pharmaceutical companies for marketing purposes or by cherry-picking the data that support the economic interests of the sponsors, the scientific community is affected as a whole, trough the creation of biases and a misleading literature that undermines the progress of modern medicine.

According to Hutchinson et al. (2019), contrasting corruption in the health field is complex for the following reasons: first, because the laws are often incapable of framing specific behaviours as corruption and some practices (such as pharmaceutical companies sponsoring medical conventions or hosting events) are considered regular marketing campaigns. The authors argue that, for example, it would be difficult to understand if the professionals select one drug over another because they have been influenced by such marketing strategies, and it would be even more difficult to persecute them. Secondly, because some actions, that may be perceived as corruption, may be interpreted by those performing them as a way for coping with complex and inadequate health systems. The authors provide this situation as an example: altering system-provided waiting lists for favoring some individuals over others is a practice that is generally frown upon, however doctors may use them in the case in which they feel that the system they should adhere to does not provide them with enough tools for expressing the urgency dictated by the situation. Doctors may be found to be facing moral dilemmas when tempted to illegally alter waiting lists that may result in saving their patients' lives.

2.2.2.2. Educational System

Several studies have linked corruption to a negative impact in the education system that range from illegal payments for school entrances and promotions to high dropout rates and lower scores in national tests (Olmstead, 2018). The students' right to have access to proper and accessible buildings is put at risk when the school rehabilitations funds are embezzled, as well as by the frauds committed in public tendering (Asiyai, 2020). Furthermore, a corrupt management of public funds means that the services provided to low-income students (such as free-meals and free school equipment) are put at risk too, favoring the percentages of dropouts among the poorest sections of the population (Thomson, 2020). At a personal level, petty corruption is likely to affect the student-teacher behaviour creating an unequal and non-meritocratic system that allows bribe-paying students to have access to illicit private-tutoring, tests, passing grades, access to scholarships and an overall better treatment. At a national level, such detrimental effects can be covered by

additional grand corruption that, in turn, filters the data and the results of national tests and reports, allowing the possibility of maintaining the corrupt status quo (Thomson, 2020). According to Ortix-Ospina et al., (2008) the consequences of corruption on the higher educational system can be organized around three clusters that revolve around access, quality, and equity. In other words, corruption impacts the meritocratic access to higher education through bribes that alter admissions ranking. It hinders the quality of it, when teachers are hired through non-meritocratic processes, or when the funds destined to new materials are diverted. Lastly, it impacts the equity among the students as they may be treated differently according to the personal relationship they have with teachers.

2.2.3. The consequences of corruption on the socio-political world

Corruption affects the socio-political life of a country, and its detrimental effects contribute to diminish citizens' political trust and their perception of the political legitimacy of institutions (Della Porta, 2000; Seligon, 2002). Anderson and Tverdova (2003), for example, found that citizens of countries with higher corruption levels are more critical towards their political system and perceive it as less legitimate, furthermore, they also found that the perception of corruption is a valid predictor of political engagement. Some political systems seem to be more correlated with corruption and, for example, Rudolph and Daubler (2016) suggest that majoritarian electoral systems are less correlated with corruption than proportional ones as they promote political competition instead of political compromises that, in turn, are a breeding ground for corrupt practices. In democratic countries, however, elections allow citizens to punish or reward (non)corrupt politicians through their vote, and citizens who perceive to be living in corrupt countries should be able to vote corrupt politicians out. This core assumption that corruption can be punished through vote, however, is not always matched by empirical data. While some scholars found that corruption scandals do have an impact on the incumbent elections (e.g., Klasnja, 2016; Winters & Weitz-Shapiro, 2013) other research have found that the presence of corruption does not always affect the voter turnout or the elections results in a significant way, even in established democracies such as Italy (Chang et al., 2010) or Japan (Reed, 1996). De Vries and Solaz (2017) point out that voting corruption out is however not as straightforward as it may appear, especially once people start to break down in details the Retrospective Voting Theory. The Retrospective Voting Theory (RVT; Key, 1966; Fearon 1999) states that citizens, through their vote, are able to sanction unworthy politicians and select high-performing ones through a four-step process. The first step illustrates a situation in which voters observe a worsening of their society (e.g., they perceive their societal welfare to be worse). In the second step, citizens attribute the responsibility of such conditions to the elected authorities, and they change their voting behaviour accordingly (third step). Lastly, the elections will punish or reward politicians according to their actions, so political parties they will be encouraged to better their conducts. When one of these four steps is impacted, however, the whole RVT model is affected, and corruption is not likely to be voted out through democratic elections. The traditional RVT model has been

expanded by De Vries and Solaz (2017) so that it could be more fitting for framing the corruption's electoral consequences (*see Figure 1.*).

Figure 1: The relationship between the corruption evaluation in the traditional RVT model (A) and in the revisionist one (B) proposed by De Vries and Solaz (2017). Adapted from De Vries and Solaz (2017).

A.

| CORRUPTION EVALUATION | → | VOTING BEHAVIOR |

B.

CORRUPTION EVALUATION —Causal Attribution→ PERFORMANCE EVALUATION —Behavioral Response→ VOTING CHOICE

Information Acquisition

CORRUPTION EXPERIENCE   CORRUPTION MEDIA EXPOSURE
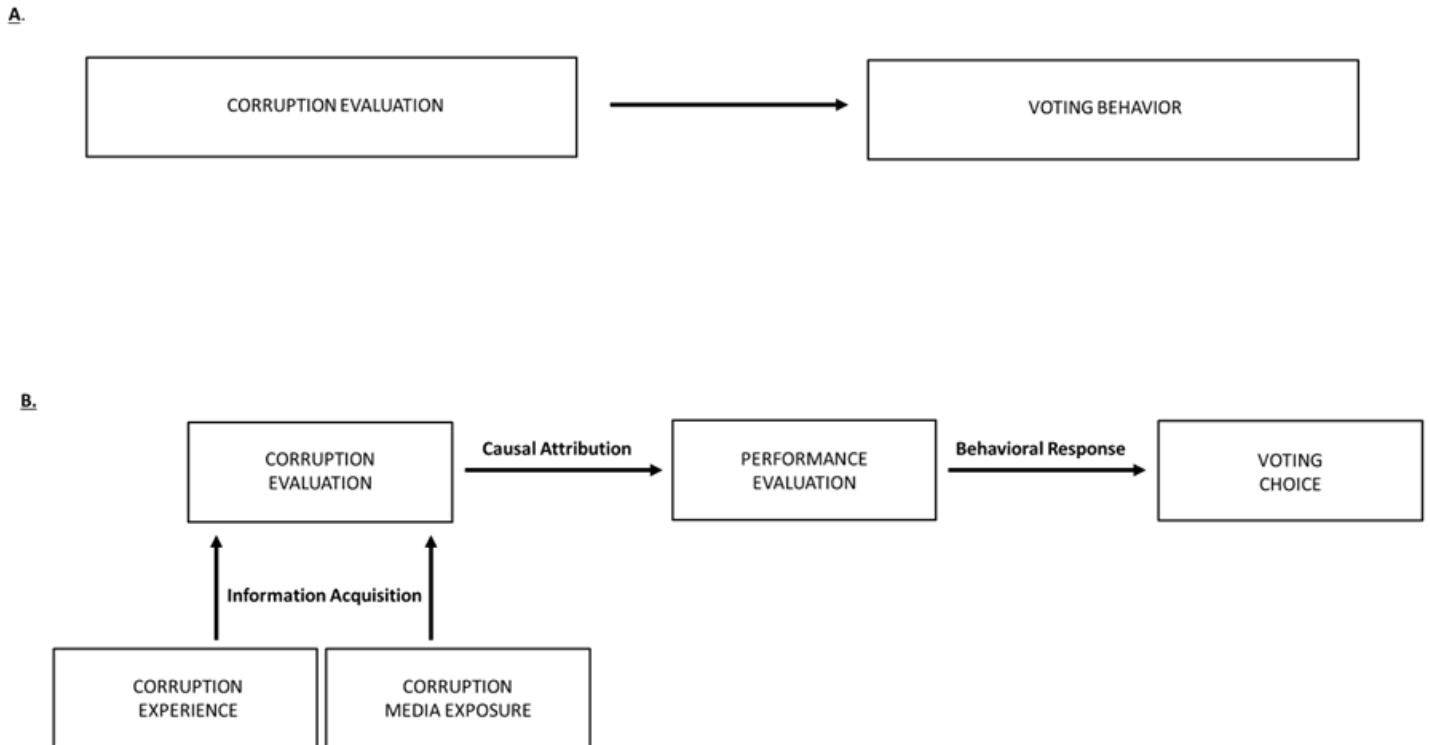
According to the authors, the first step of the RVT model (the *corruption evaluation* step) is influenced, in turn, by the *information acquisition* process that encompasses the individuals' corrupt experiences as their perception of corruption. According to Klašnja et al. (2016), people acquire information about corruption in two ways: direct experience (e.g., being asked to pay a bribe for having access to a public service provided by the welfare system), and through media exposition (e.g., articles covering corruption cases). When the perception of corruption is altered by insufficient media coverage, people's ability to vote corruption out is impaired as well and, likewise, an appropriate media coverage of corruption scandals will likely have an impact on both the voter turnout and results (Chang et al. 2010; Costas-Perez et al. 2012). For example, Ferraz and Finan (2008) found that, when Brazil's federal government publicly disclosed information about corruption practices, the media coverage that resulted from it had a positive impact on the electoral accountability. Klašnja and Tucker (2013), however, argue that appropriate media coverage of corrupt scandals has different effects on citizens' voting behaviour according to their country history of corruption. The authors compared empirical evidence coming from Sweden and Moldova, countries that historically are linked with respectively low and high level of corruption and found that while media coverage

of corruption scandals made Sweden citizens more prone to vote corruption out, raising their voter turnout, Moldovan citizens were affected in the opposite direction, decreasing their voter turnout. In the same direction, Chong et al. (2015) found that Mexican citizens reacted to news about corruption by decreasing their intentions of voting in upcoming elections.

According to De Vries and Solaz (2017), citizens elaborate their information about corruption and produce a performance evaluation of their authorities by actively attributing the blame of corrupt scandals to politicians. In other words, citizens find themselves in position to blame the politicians for the scandals they are exposed to. Such attribution, however, is not as straightforward as one might thing for two main reasons. The first cause of a biased blame attribution may lie in the institutional complexity that, in turn, affects *institutional clarity* (De Vries et al. 2010). In the socio-political literature, the concept of institutional clarity is used for describing how complex it is for citizens to identify for each institution their correct responsibilities. De Vries and Solaz (2017) argue that when people have a direct experience of corruption (e.g., they are asked to pay a bribe by a police agent), they might not be able to attribute such experiences to the institutions that enable or tolerate such actions, and their voting behaviour might not be affected. The second cause of fallacious blame attribution lies in psychological factors that, although they have not been examined in detail in the field of corruption, are likely to play a role. The field of psychology, in fact, has established that blame attribution processes are affected by self- and group-serving biases and, more specifically, people are more likely to attribute the cause of negative events to external factors or blame members of the out-group, while they are more likely to attribute the merits of positive events to themselves or members of their own ingroup. Anduiza et al. (2013), for example, found that Spanish citizens' evaluation of corrupt actions was impacted by using partisan labels. More specifically, participants evaluated the same corrupt actions as less severe when they were told that the politicians who performed them was a member of the political party they supported. According to De Vriez and Solaz (2017) correct information acquisition and blame attribution are necessary but not sufficient for elections results to be impacted and a behavioural response is needed as well. Citizens, in fact, need to vote out the corrupt politicians and for doing so they need to coordinate their voting preferences towards a credible political alternative, namely a political party that must be perceived not only as non-corrupt but credible enough to be appealing to the voters also in other aspects such as their foreign policies and economic agenda (Voznaya, 2016). When citizens think that a viable political alternative is absent, they are likely to decrease their vote turnover (e.g., Davis et al., 2004; Slomeczynski & Shabad, 2012; Sundström & Stockemer, 2015). Furthermore, De Vriez and Solaz (2017) argue that when citizens ponder which political party they should vote they take in account multiple factors that contribute to shaping their voting behaviour. People might be willing to turn a blind eye to corrupt behaviours coming from members of a political party that supports ideas and values close to them (Solaz et al. 2017). The polarization of political values experienced in the last decade (Piazza, 2020) might contribute to such a process.

2.3.   Conduct of Corruption

Given the enormous economic and political importance, as well as the heavy impact corruption has on people's lives, the field of psychology has oddly not focused on the issue in depth, and it is still considered a rather uncommon topic (Zaloznaya, 2014). According to Zaloznaya (2014) such lack of literature can be attributed mainly to a dearth of micro-level empirical data measuring corruption that could be used for establishing correlations between the phenomenon and personal outcomes. The gaunt corpus of psychological literature has so far focused on the cognitive mechanisms, the individual and personality differences that are correlated with engaging in corrupt activities, and, at a sociopsychological level, the rationalizing myths that justify corruption at an ethical level.

The Rational Choice Theory (RTC) is the most prominent approach that has dominated the cognitive field regarding corruption. It postulates that corruption can be conceptualized as a self-interested motivated behaviour, whose outcomes have a certain degree of uncertainty: it could provide benefits for the actor or, if persecuted by the law, negative consequences. Deciding whether engage in corrupt actions requires estimating the risks and the benefits and acting according to the strategy considered as most fitting for making the rational choice, which, in this case, can be identified with obtaining the maximum profits and the minimum penalties. Such process, however, is deeply impacted by psychological variables and is not a simple matter of objective calculation. According to Jon Mercer (2005, p. 542), "rational choice theories explain how one *should* reason and not how one *actually* reasons" and, for fully explaining and predicting one's behaviour, it is necessary to take into account personal evaluations, biases, and ideas. Moreover, Kahneman and Tversky (1979) have established how, when considering human behaviour, people are susceptible to biases that regularly affect their decision making, such as the loss aversion mindset. Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 2013)'s Prospect Theory introduces the concept of *loss aversion* that postulates that "losses loom larger than gains," meaning that people consider psychologically more impactful losing a certain endowment rather than gaining the same one. This translates into two facts: first, people are more likely to accept risks when they face the prospect of losing something they already have rather than gaining something they do not have yet. Secondly, in order to accept a risk, people must be presented with a situation whose future gains greatly surpass the impact of possible losses. Applying these findings to the corruption field, scholars have found that individuals are more likely to act corruptly (or be risk-acceptant, from a Prospect Theory point of view) if they are in the situation of losing something rather than gaining it (Dupuy, 2018). For example, in a business situation, managers are more likely to pay a bribe if it means being able to maintain an already existing contract with a costumer or a supplier rather than if it means acquiring a new one with a new costumer/supplier (Dupuy, 2018). Being in a position of power, furthermore, limits the estimate of the negative consequences associated with corruption, which translates into considering the losses associated with being risk-acceptant less probable and impactful. Being in a position of power, in fact, may result in

overconfidence, which, in turn makes people focus on the rewards rather than the risks (Rusch, 2016; Yap, 2013).

From a psychological point of view, there are also many self-serving biases, distorted thinking processes that maintain and/or enhance one's self-esteem and favorable perceptions, which may explain how people can perceive themselves as honest even if they act corruptly (Zaloznaya, 2014). The fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977) is the tendency to over-emphasize personality and dispositional explanations for behaviours observed in others while under-emphasizing these same motivations in one's own behaviour. In other words, it is the people's tendency to indicate that others act in a certain way because they *are* that way, while thinking that themselves act in a certain way because they *find themselves to be in the position* to act in that specific way. This bias has been explored in the corruption research field for explaining some corrupt behaviour. People are in fact more likely to engage in acts of corruption if they think that the situation is *forcing* them to act corruptly rather than their own agency (Li et al., 2006).

The *halo effect*, or the cognitive bias of forming an impression about an attribute of an entity based on previously formed predispositions towards another non-related attribute of the same entity (Ries, 2006), or the tendency of letting the emotional valence of the gestalt of one entity affect the positive (or negative) evaluation of further information concerning the same entity, explains some corrupt behaviours as well. As posited by Kobis et al. (2017, p.322) "corrupt acts may stem from previous actions that were not viewed as unethical or were in an ethical grey area. People may accept initial actions as being ethical, while the next action may be less ethical but hard to distinguish from the first action – a type of slippery slope." Accepting previous practices as "ethical" may make people judge corrupt actions as ethical as well through the halo-effect (Rusch, 2016). In order to accept the status quo and their own actions, people need personal and cultural narratives supporting them (Jost et al., 2004).

The tendency of providing self-preserving myths is true also for Corruption (Chugh, 2012). As stated by Ashforth and Anand (2003, p.187) "individuals who engage in corrupt acts use socially constructed accounts to legitimate the acts in their own eyes" that allows corrupt individual to see themselves as honest. These narratives take many forms, but the most predominant ones are the ones regarding legality, denial of responsibility and denial of injury/victims. People are more likely to accept corruption if they consider an act not technically illegal (Gellerman, 1986), meaning that they are more likely to condone corruption if it happens in a grey legal area or if it exploits loopholes. The denial of responsibility narratives, on the other hand, describe the actors as not having power over their own actions and switch the blame to other external factors through defeasibility, scapegoating and externalization. In other words, they re-direct the attention on existing precedents, unwritten norms, and the idea that "everybody does so". For example, Elsbach (1994) cited cattle industry managers, accused of altering the reported used of hormones, who justified their actions as a "standard industry practice." A similar example of narration can be found at the beginning of the *Mani*

Pulite scandal, a nationwide Italian judicial investigation that brought to the public exposition of a vast network of political corruption that, lately, brought to the downfall of many political parties. At the time, Bettino Craxi, an Italian deputy, made an infamous speech in which he defended himself from the accusations of corruption by stating that accepting private donations was a common practice and that every political party was doing so. The denial of injury and victim narratives are the ones that attempt to depict corruption as a "victimless crime" by trying to minimize the costs (Greenberg, 1998). These narratives often reduce the perceived impact of corruption by comparing it to other crimes, or by confronting a specific corrupt action to other more extreme forms (*recalibration*; Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). In other cases, corrupt actors may try to deny their responsibility by attributing part of the blame to their own victims (*victim-blaming*, e.g., Eigenber, 2008). Hollinger and Clark (1983) for example, argue that some corporations may consider corruption as a proper response for government actions deemed as unfair; in the same way employees justify theft of the company property as a rightful act of "revenge" for unjust working conditions.

2.3.1. Psychological models of corrupt behaviours

In the field of psychology, the concept of corruption has been identified using its similarities with other correlated constructs, such as unethical and dishonest behaviour. According to Trevino et al. (2006), un(ethical) behaviour can be described as the behaviour of a person who is subject to the moral norms of a group, while corrupt behaviour, according to Modesto and Pilati (2020), can be identified as a specific type of unethical behaviour, in which the agent (who is subject to the moral norms of a group) breaks a moral norm bearing in mind the goal of generating a reward for themselves, at the expense of somebody else.

Thinking back to the definition of corruption, as the "abuse of entrusted power for private gain," it is easy to understand how corruption can be identified as a specific type of dishonest behaviour. The agent, in fact, has to break the moral norms of a certain group, and do it so for personal gain at the expense of the rest of the community. What differentiates corrupt behaviours from dishonest ones is the concept of the abuse of power. Corruption, in fact, can take place only if the agents find themselves in a position in which corruption is accessible, namely have a position of power. Bearing in mind this psychological conception of corruption, throughout the literature only three models have been developed that tried to identify the antecedents of corrupt behaviour taking into account psychological factors.

The first model was developed by Collier (2002) and is called the Corruption Institutional Choice Analytic Frame (CICAF) (see *Figure* 2).
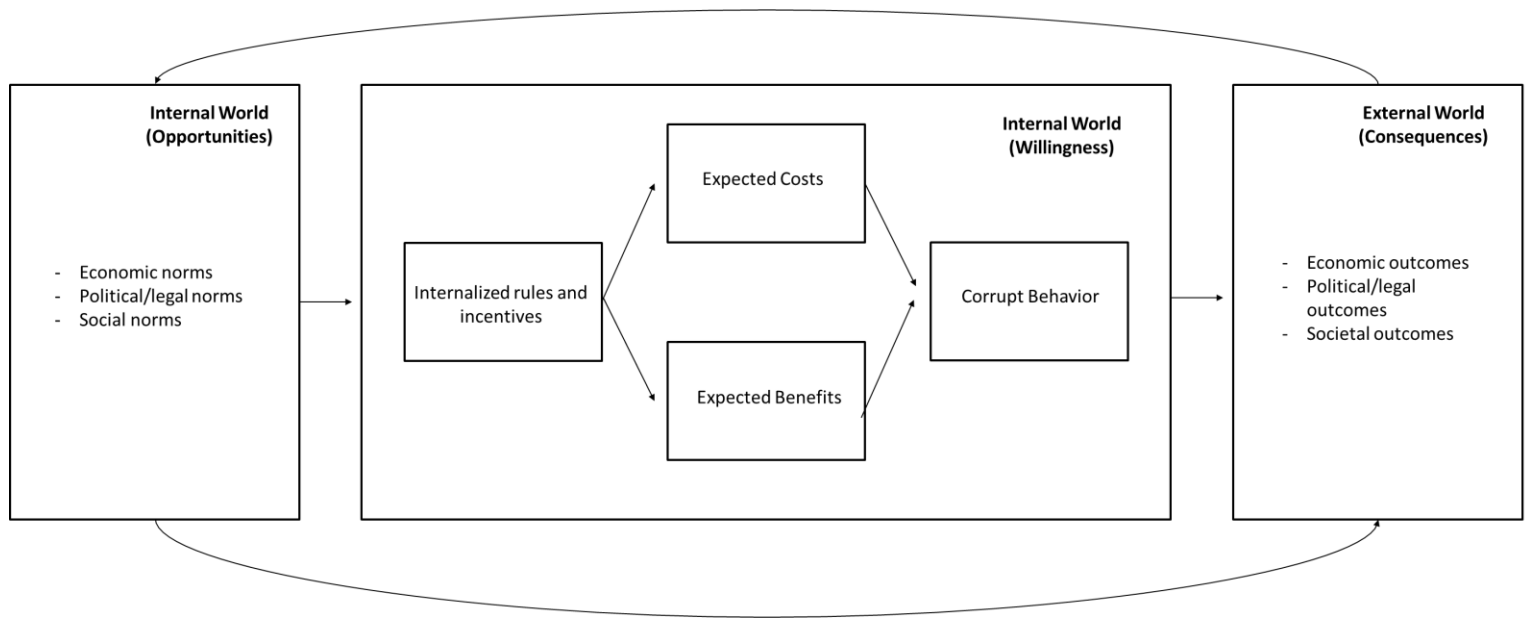
It proposes that corrupt behaviour is determined by two clusters of factors, two "worlds", one called the "*internal world*" that encompasses the micro-level decision making processes and analysis of the individual, and the "*external world*" that includes the socio-political and legal scenario in which the agent operates. These worlds have a recursive relationship as the external world influences the micro-level decision making of the individual, while the behaviour of the individuals contribute to shaping the external world. The internal world, or the process of deciding whether to perform a corrupt action or not, is deeply influenced by economic models of decision making that consider an action (or inaction) as the final result of a conscious, deliberative assessment of costs and benefits. An action takes place in the case in which the agent considers the benefits to outnumber the costs. The internal world is however related to the external one, as the author suggests that the individuals' decision of engaging or not in an act of corruption is influenced by the context in which they operate. The external world, in fact, provides the agents the context in which evaluating the costs and benefits of their action; in other words, it helps them understand which costs and which benefits will be provided in case of action. In the other way around, the consequences of corrupt actions will shape the external world by affecting the context in which future cost-benefit evaluations will take place. While the CICAF has the merit of being a first attempt of including psychological factors in a model for identifying the antecedents of corruption, Modesto and Pilati (2020) pointed out three main critics. The first one revolves around the internal world, and states that the decision-making model offered is limited as it does not offer space for considering all the biases that take place in decision-making processes (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) as well as ones typical of dishonest decision-making processes (Mazar & Ariely, 2006). Secondly, they

criticized the inner vs. outer world dichotomy, stating that such harsh separation does not take into account the influence of groups that has been long established in the field of social psychology. Lastly, they point out that the CICAF model does not include the concept of the power's abuse which, as I have previously mentioned, is essential for framing corruption.

Following the CICAF, a second, more recent, interdisciplinary model has been proposed by Dimant and Schulte (2016) for identifying the antecedents of corrupt behaviour (see *Figure* 3).

Figure 3: The interdisciplinary perspective of corruption. Adapted from Dimant and Schulte (2016)
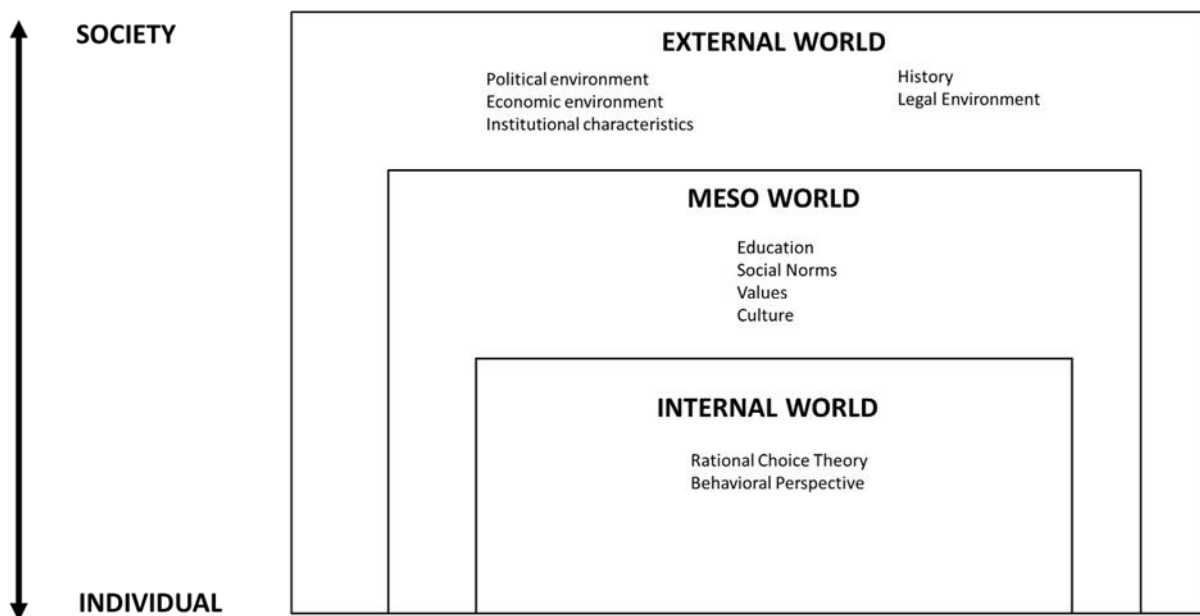
The authors expanded the CICAF model by adding a third, intermediate level, the so-called "meso-world." This new model identifies three layers that influence the individual towards corrupt behaviour. The more distant one is the "external word" that takes into account the general context in which the individual operates and includes the history, the socio-political situation as well as the legal and economic environment in which the corrupt behaviour might take place. The meso-world is influenced by the external one and encompasses the education, the social norms as well as the values and the culture that the individual is exposed to. In other words, the meso-world offers more tangible ways in which the external world may help shape the individual. The internal world, according to Dimant and Schulte (2016), includes not only the deliberate decision-making processes of the CICAF, but a behavioural perspective as well, meaning that the authors also consider the fact that individual, when pondering behaviours, do not always act in a rational way but are subject to biases dictated by the context. According to Modesto and Pilati (2020), this model provides an additional step in defining the antecedents of corrupt behaviour, but still they criticize the model's use of the meso-world that do not solve the lack of focus on group-processes that flawed the original CICAF model. Furthermore, they criticize the fact that the power dynamics that characterize corrupt behaviours are once

again not taken into consideration in such a theoretical perspective. For these reasons, the authors conceptualized a further model, called Multilevel Analytical Model of Corruption (MAMC; see *Figure* 4).

Figure 4: The Multilevel Analytical Model of Corruption (MAMC). Adapted from Modesto and Pilati (2020)
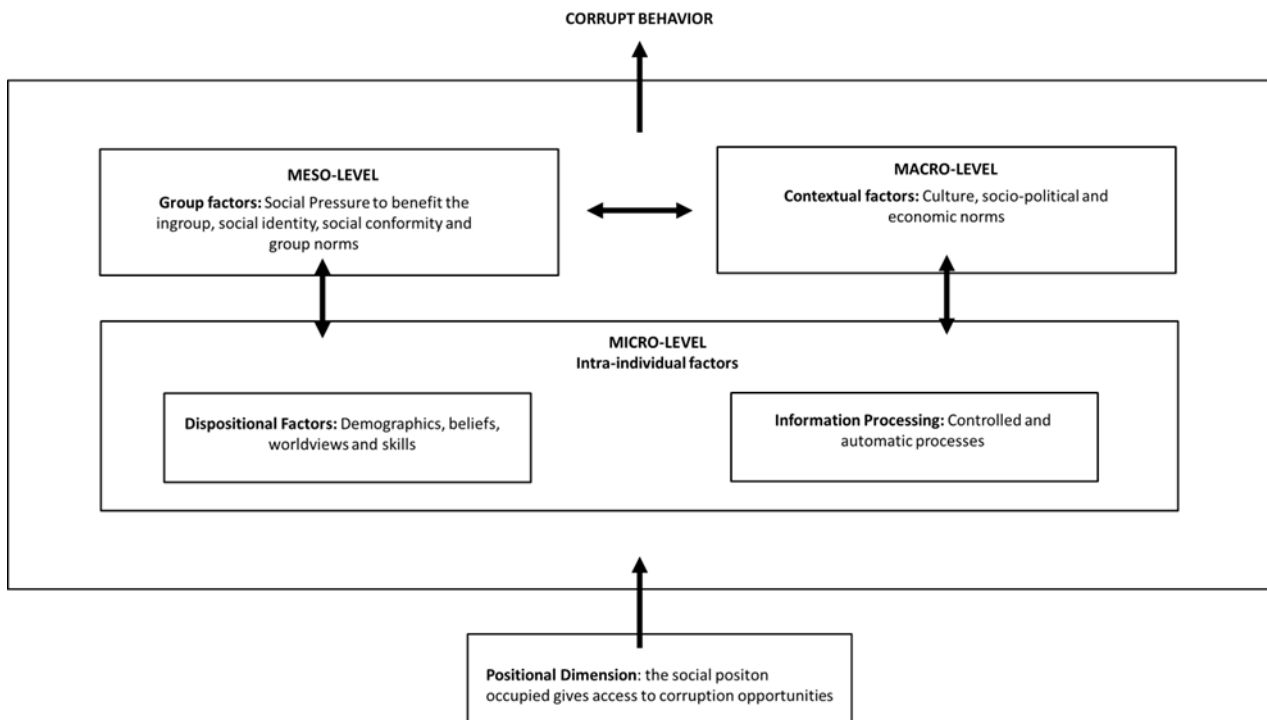
The MAMC offers the inclusion of the "positional dimension" or the observation that corrupt behaviours are possible only in accordance with the social position occupied, in other words if an agent is in the position of holding "entrusted power." At the micro-level, the models take into account the intra-individual factors in the forms of individual characteristics (also referred to as dispositional traits), and in the form of patterns of information processing (that encompass controlled and automatic processes of decision-making). Individual characteristics are demographic and personality variables that have been found to be correlated with willingness to perform corrupt actions. For example, Blickle et al. (2006) found that people with higher levels of hedonism and narcissism are more inclined to corruption, while Collins and Schmidt (2006) found a link between low indices of social consciousness and blue-collar crimes. Also, in such a theoretical framework, the vast literature concerning personality variables and unethical behaviour (e.g., Lehnert et al., 2015; Knoll et al., 2016) can be included, as corruption can be considered a specific type of unethical behaviour. The MAMC model includes at the micro-level, together with individual, dispositional factors, also the processing of information related to potential corrupt actions and how such processing influence the individuals' decision-making. Differently from the CICAF, the MAMC assumes that corrupt actions may result out as controlled or automatic processes, in line with the literature concerning moral cognition (Hallsson et al., 2018). Scholars, in fact, have posited that in situations of sufficient time and cognitive resources, controlled processes prevail on automatic ones, that, however, are predominant in

situations in which time-pressure is present or when the cognitive load is high (e.g., Evans & Stanovich, 2013). The switch between automatic and controlled decision-making processes is also influenced by other factors, such as the emotional load, which, in turn, is correlated with risky situations typical of dishonest behaviours (Reyna, 2004). Furthermore, Modesto and Pilati (2020) argue that, in addition to the risks and benefits analysis, people will select their (in)action towards corruption according to the justification strategies that they can use for maintaining a positive evaluation of their actions. In line with the Theory of Self-Concept Maintenance (Mazar et al., 2008), in fact, people tend to use justifications for their dishonest behaviours, so that they can both gain the external rewards associated with them, while maintaining a positive self-perception, and avoiding the intrinsic discomfort associated with dishonest behaviour.

Chapter 3
The recursive relationship between economic inequality and corruption

While exploring the socio-economic literature concerning economic inequality and corruption one can notice that, throughout the years, scholars have established significant, positive, correlational links between the two in a consistent way across methodologies (see *Table 1*).

The research in such a field, however, is relatively young and, although since the 1980s scholars have listed among the consequences of economic inequality corruption (Macrae, 1982) and vice-versa (Johnson, 1989), only in the last two decades scholars have tried to come up with theoretical contributions for justifying such links (Begovic, 2007). According to Begovic (2007) the first theoretical explanations were centered around two opposite approaches: the first one highlighted inequality as a consequence of corruption while the second one saw economic inequality as a factor contributing to corruption. Such approach will be briefly discussed in the first two sections of this chapter

Table 1: Papers that found a significant correlation between Corruption and Economic Inequality, adapted from Sharmila (2019)
Note. CCI= Control of Corruption Index; CPI= Corruption Perception Index; ICRG= International Country Risk Guide; IV= Instrument Variable; LIML= Limited Information Maximum Likelihood; OLS= Ordinary Least Square; PRS=Political Risk Service; SWIID= Standardized World Income Inequality Database; WIID= United Nations World Income Inequality Database

Paper	Corruption Measure	Economic Inequality Measure	Methods
Apergis et al. (2010)	n° of government official convicted per capita in a state	Personal Income per capita	Pedroni's heterogeneous panel cointegration test
Brempong & Camacho (2006)	CPI	Gini Coefficient of Income Inequality	Panel regression, OLS, IV, LIML
Chong & Gradstein (2007)	ICRG corruption index	Gini Coefficient from previous reviews	GMM system estimator technique for panel data
Dobson & Dobson (2010)	ICRG corruption index	Gini Coefficient from WIID	Fixed effects model
Dwiputri et al. (2018)	CPI	Gini Coefficient from WIID	OLS, Tobit and 2SLS methods

Paper	Corruption Measure	Economic Inequality Measure	Methods
Gupta et al. (2002)	CPI, ICRG	Gini Coefficient from previous reviews	OLS, IV and Sensitivity Analysis
Gyimah-Brempong (2002)	CPI	Gini Coefficient of Income Inequality	OLS, IV and LIML
Huang (2013)	CPI	Gini Coefficient from SWIID	Bootstrap panel Granger causality testing method
Jong-Sung & Khagram (2005)	CPI, CCI, ICRG, PRS	Gini Coefficeint from previous reviews	Instrumental variables (IV) and 2SLS
N'zue & N'Guessan (2005)	CPI	Inequality data from previous reviews	Panel data models, Granger causality test
Policardo & Carrera (2018)	CPI	Gini Coefficient from WIID	Dynamic GMM model
Sulemana & Kpien (2018)	CPI	Gini Coefficient from SWIID	Granger causality test, OLS, random effects and fixed effects models

3.1.   Corruption as an antecedent of economic inequality

Concerning the first approach, Johnson (1989) was one of the first scholars who tried to explain the correlation between these issues, stating that corruption was one of the mechanisms through which economic inequality is preserved or even created. According to the author, corruption is a practice that has one main consequence: creating an unequal, better treatment for the well-connected, bribe-paying ones. In an economically unequal country, there are already differences in opportunities between the rich and the poor. Such differences can be widened both inter-class and intra-class through corruption practices. When rich people are corrupt, they create a gap with other rich people, having access to illicit opportunities that allow them to surpass the competitors in business environments. When poor people are corrupt, they have the opportunity to ease the costs of poverty in an uneven way, so that the existing welfare programs will not benefit all the recipients equally. Moreover, corrupt rich people will have more chances of evading taxes, so that such welfare programs will be even less effective for a lack of funding, creating, in such a way, incentives for poor people to become corrupt. The effects of corruption on economic inequality have been theorized by Li et al. (2000) from an econometric perspective that suggested that such effects are not linear but rather assume a reversed U shape. In the presence of extremely low or extremely high levels of corruption, the Gini coefficient approaches the zero, while it reaches its maximum in the presence of an intermediate level of corruption.

Such model, although not always significantly effective when applied to empirical data (Gyimah-Brempong, 2002), has been further developed from a theoretical point of view by Gupta et al. (2002). The authors illustrated four main mechanisms that may be behind such distribution. The first mechanism they individuated was a biased tax system: taxes are in fact the primary tool of redistribution and a defective tax system favoring the bribe paying ones (that are likely to be the rich or the ones that can afford such payments) will lead to a failure of redistribution policies, preserving, in such a way, the existing inequalities. If poorer people, however, have access to corrupt practices that will allow them to evade the taxes. In that case, they may benefit from a decrease in the tax burden, increasing poor people's liquidity. Therefore, when only the rich are corrupt, the effect of economic inequality is higher than when everybody (rich and poor) is corrupt. Furthermore, it is suggested that how corruption affects inequality through an impaired taxation system is heavily dependent on the allocation of public funds: if the majority of them are not directed to redistribution or welfare programs, the effects of corruption on inequality are likely to have a smaller reach. The second mechanism illustrated by the authors is a distorted targeting of the welfare social programs. Gupta et al. (2002), in fact, argue that corruption does not affect the levels of economic inequalities per se, but rather its consequences on poor people's lives. Corruption, in fact, infiltrates in the public administration, siphoning away the funds allocated to poverty-alleviation programs. This will lead to two main interrelated consequences for poor people: the quality of the services provided to the public will not be up to the standards promised by the initial investment, and such lack of quality and efficiency will be translated into the idea that welfare programs are useless and a waste of the citizens' money, decreasing, in such a way, the public support for such expenditures. The third mechanism proposed by Gupta et al. (2002) is linked to human capital. The reduced tax revenues, along with distorted funds and lack of public support for public expenditures, lead to decreased investments in public education, more specifically, in the poor people's ability to acquire human capital. In turn, the literature has identified investments in public education as one of the main moderators of economic inequality (Solga, 2014). The fourth and final mechanism identified by Gupta et al. (2002) revolves around the fact that corrupt behaviours are linked to different levels of risk for the rich and the poor people. According to the authors, in fact, corruption represents for the rich a high-rewarding, low-risk activity, as their economic assets consent them to offer better bribes in extremely remunerative fields that revolve around Grand Corruption. For poor people, on the other hand, corruption is a low-rewarding, high-risk activity as poor people often engage in Petty Corruption for having access to basic services, and their small monetary assets as well as their smaller connections make them easier targets to be persecuted by the law. In such a way, even engaging in corrupt activities leads to widening the differences between poor and rich people's quality of life, as the risks associated with such behaviours are not distributed in an equal way.

3.2. Economic Inequality as an antecedent of corruption

Concerning the second approach, the first author that tackled economic inequality as a factor leading to corruption is Alam (1997). The author focused on the corruption-preventing actions, namely those practices that people put into action for preventing corruption or for persecuting the existing one. According to Alam (1997), economic inequality is a vulnerability factor that exposes people to be more willing to condone corruption. The disparity of power present in a country where there is a vast majority of poor people and a small elite of rich ones will make bribes more tempting and will decrease victims' ability to fight against such illicit activities. In economically unequal countries, the practices of vote-buying and vote rigging are more common (Lehoucq, 2003). Although these countries are also the ones that would benefit the most from redistribution policies, most of the citizens seems to not endorse politicians sponsoring such programs (Andersson, 2008). Although many other factors must be taken into account, it is also important to notice that in those same countries, even a small amount of money offered in exchange for votes is likely to make a change in poor people's lives (Jensen & Justesen, 2014), that may be therefore more tempted by a tangible compensation in the present than by the prospect of an uncertain future where redistribution policies might take place. Furthermore, according to Scott (1997), economic inequalities are one of the biggest contributors to the erosion of the middle class, which, in turn, has been highlighted as a barrier to corruption. According to the author, in fact, the middle class can fight corruption by creating organizations of interest because they have enough funds to both finance them and be above the temptation of small bribes.

Dabla-Norris and Wade (2002), on the other hand, hypothesized a different mechanism through which inequality may lead to corruption, and it involves the allocation of human capital. According to the authors, in fact, human capital can be distributed in two allocations: productive activities and rent-seeking ones (including corruption). Rent-seeking activities, in fact, are described as those occupations that manipulate the socio-economic environment for the economic benefit of the actor without creating any

wealth (Tollison, 2004). People choose between these two sectors according to their perceived expected returns. According to the authors, however, there are barriers to entry for taking part in rent-seeking activities, such as the one reported by Rose-Ackerman (1999) of senior civil servants asking for illegal payments as an entry fee for taking part in bribing activities. Dabla-Norris and Wade (2002) posit that the initial financial endowment of the subjects prevents them from entering rent-seeking activities because they would not be able to afford the initial lump sums required. In this perspective, only wealthy people can afford to enter rent-seeking activities, whose entry barriers are higher the more remunerative they are.

According to Hellman and Kaufman (2002), economic inequality provides a breeding ground for corruption by laying the foundation for *crony bias*. Crony bias or *cronyism* is a generally illegal economic system that is not based on the free enterprise principle but rather on the relationship between the wealthy business class and the political system (Enderwick, 2005). In such a system, the economic success of a company is not dictated by its competitiveness in the market but rather by its ability to infiltrate the political system to dictate beneficial laws that will eliminate competition or provide favorable conditions. According to the authors, only in situations of extreme economic inequalities are such systems possible as there must be companies or individuals whose lobbying power (that is strictly correlated to their wealth) must be far above the one of the rest of the competition. This idea was later developed by Glaeser and Scheinkman (2003), who examined the American economic history from a property rights perspective. When high economic inequalities were present, poor people were exposed to worse property rights for two main reasons: first, because the rich had the opportunity to undermine the institutions through grand corruption (e.g., judicial corruption), and second because poor people did not have the financial ability to sue the so-called *robber barons*. Even in the case in which poor plaintiffs had the chance to go to trial, rich defendants had higher chances of successfully bribing the judges involved in the litigations. This historical view is supported by correlational data analyzed by Glaeser and Saks (2006), that used a set of federal corruption convictions in the U.S to support this theoretical hypothesis.

Another interesting perspective that links economic inequality to corruption is the one provided by Alesina and Angeltos (2005): according to the authors, when large inequalities are present, people will try to counterbalance them using large public projects that will involve large sums of public funds. In the presence of non-repayable grants, corruption is likely to infiltrate and hard to monitor and keep at bay. In this perspective, it is not inequality per se to attract corruption, but rather the state efforts for redistribution. Alesina and La Ferrara (2005), however, argue that when economic inequality is high enough for people to call for redistribution policies, corruption may be interpreted as a price-worth paying for reducing such an issue.
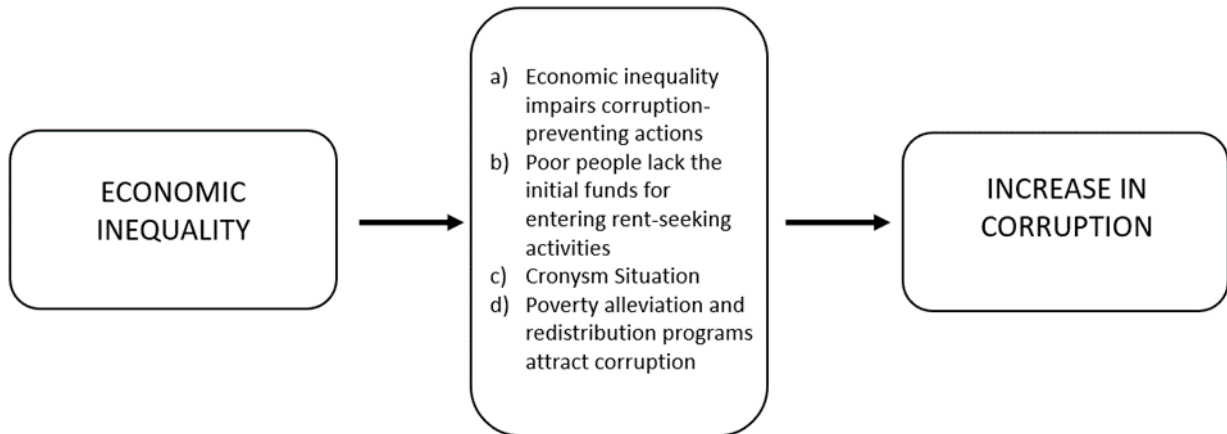
3.3. Corruption and economic inequality: a recursive relationship

Although in the previously mentioned theorical frameworks of corruption as an antecedent of economic inequality (and vice-versa), a recursive relationship was easy to imagine. In fact, the scholars previously mentioned did not provide an exhaustive theoretical explanation of such mutual link. Samadi and Farahmandpour (2013) however used a panel of different country from the time stamp (1995-2007) for developing and testing a more comprehensive model that explored the reciprocal influence of such issues (see *Figure* 3).

Figure 7: A schematic representation of the recursive relationship between economic inequality and corruption, adapted from Sharmila (2019)
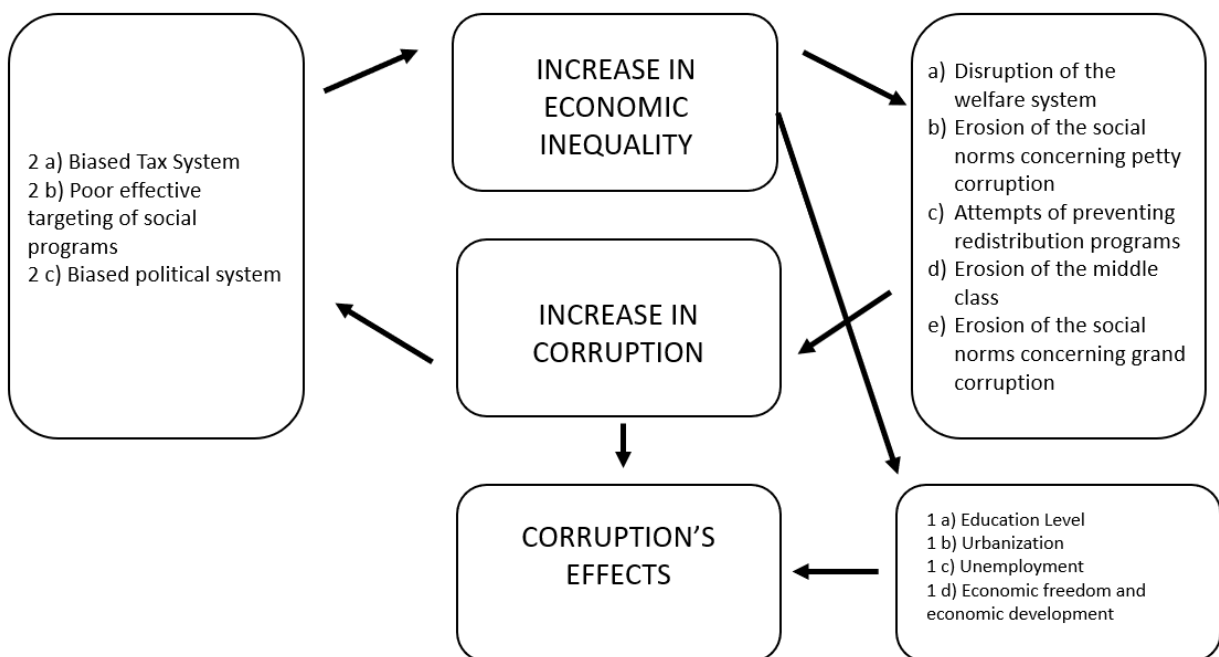
According to the model depicted in *Figure* 3, a rise in the economic inequality is likely to cause five main consequences that, in turn, will cause an increase in the corruption level. These consequences follow:

a) **Disruption of the welfare system**: First, poor people will experience reduced access to public services. The rise of economic inequality is translated into a bigger number of people living in poverty conditions, meaning that the demand for public services such as free health care, public housing, and food stamps will increase. This means that either the welfare funds are raised (by increasing the tax wedge for the rich ones) or the quality of the services provided will decrease (meaning that fewer people will have access to adequate public services). In cases like this, corruption is likely to raise in two ways: the rich will try to avoid higher property taxes through grand corruption, while the poor will try to have access to the needed public services through petty corruption.

b) **Erosion of the social norms concerning petty corruption**: The economic inequality leads to decreased real incomes, meaning that the lowest sections of the population (that are also the most populated ones) will have access to reduced funds. This situation of relative deprivation will make people more willing to accept illegal activities. Furthermore, according to the authors, since poor people feel like they are forced to engage in such activities for having access to essential and fundamental commodities (such as food or housing), they will feel morally justified, overcoming the main taboo associated with corruption: breaking social norms (Helgson & Mickelson, 1995).

c) **Attempts of preventing redistribution programs**: The feelings of discrimination and relative deprivation that economic inequality elicits will make poor people more likely to support redistribution programs. Rich people will be tempted to prevent such programs using their affluence, increasing in such a way the grand corruption and the electoral fraud.

d) **Erosion of the middle class**: Although in such situations the best interests of the majority of the population will be to monitor and stop grand corruption, the high inequality levels will act as a moderator for people's capacity to organize. The erosion of the middle class will be translated into the lack of a population section with both the power and the interests of monitoring the corrupt activities of the elites (McCarthy & Zald, 1997).

e) **Erosion of the social norms concerning grand corruption:** According to Jong-Sung and Khagram (2005), when economic inequality reaches high levels, rich people are more likely to condone corruption and to see it as a common (and therefore acceptable) method for protecting and promoting one's social position. In such a way, grand corruption becomes a social norm that is socialized and passed down to the next generations, assisting the already existing unequal distributions of resources.

Along with these direct antecedents of corruption, Samadi and Farahmandpour (2013) also identified four other determinants of corruption that are influenced by economic inequality. These elements, indirectly, increase the scale of the consequences of both economic inequality and corruption on people's lives.

1a) Education level: As previously stated, economic inequalities are likely to disrupt public services, including a free, public, education system. A lack of literacy and education is translated into a biased perception of the governmental activities (Graeff & Mehlkop, 2003). As stated in the previous chapter, a correct perception of the phenomenon is at the basis of any collective action for contrasting corruption.

1b) Urbanization: Economic inequalities often modify the geographical distribution of a population in a territory and, according to Billger and Goel (2009), the resulting urbanization process is likely to increase corruption. According to the authors, this happens because moving citizens are likely to experience bureaucratic difficulties ad waiting ques that they may try to escape using illicit practices.

1c) Unemployment: According to Samadi and Farahmandpour (2013), in economically unequal societies small activities are unlikely to survive, eliminating many job positions. This will make the living costs unbearable for many citizens that, in turn, will be more prone to engage in or to condone corruption for their own survival.

1d) Economic freedom and economic development: Whenever government intervention in a sector yields an improper gain, corruption increases. Economic freedom reduces the monopoly power of governments. In addition, as economic freedom increases and the complicated laws preventing companies from entering the formal economy decrease, the size of the informal segment also decreases. The shrinking of the informal sector helps reduce corruption. With economic freedom, tariffs and import restrictions are falling. Tariffs draw imports into bribery and also result in domestic industry gaining more monopoly power. In order to support these industries, the government must again impose high tariffs (Mauro, 1995). The existence of tariffs causes smuggling and reduces legal imports. Finally, the decline in economic freedom exacerbates corruption. Therefore, a negative correlation between economic freedom and corruption is expected. This means that free countries have low levels of corruption. In addition, corruption has a negative relationship with economic development and per capita GDP growth (Treisman, 2000).

The overall increase in corruption, in turn, is supposed to increase and facilitate the unequal wealth distribution, while preventing the structural and institutional changes needed for fighting economic inequality. This will unfold through the following steps:

2a) Biased Tax System: Corruption may lead to tax evasions, lowering the revenues of the country that could be allocated to redistribution and welfare programs. This may happen either through petty

corruption (e.g., by bribing tax administration employees) or through grand corruption (e.g., big corporations lobbying against progressivity of taxations) (Gupta et al., 2002).

2b) Poor Effective Targeting of Social Programs: Corruption may be siphoning away the funds allocated to poverty-alleviations programs, increasing in such a way not the income inequality per se, but rather its consequences on the population.

2c) Biased political system: Political corruption creates a biased political system that, in turn, is not inclined to defend the best interests of the majority of the population but rather those of the well-connected ones. This may result in the approval of unequal laws and policies biased towards the property owners (Dong & Torgler, 2011).

3.3.1. The inequality Trap

One of the most prominent theories concerning the recursive relationship between economic inequality and corruption was developed by Uslaner (2003, 2008, 2011, 2013, 2017), namely, the *Inequality Trap*. Although as previously mentioned, other scholars had drawn links between these concepts, Uslaner was the first to connect such issues not only from a legal-economic point of view, but also integrating a socio-psychological perspective. He focused not only on the quantitative effects that such problems have on the economic and the legal systems, but also on the social climate people are immersed into, in particular on people's *perceptions* of the phenomena (see *Figure 4*). According to the author, economic inequalities and corruption contribute to creating a climate of low social trust and perceived high unfairness, which leads people to be less prone to engage in actions for contrasting such issues. Such links have been proved from a correlational point of view analyzing panel data from 31 countries about corruption, economic inequality, and national surveys on social trust (Uslaner, 2003; Uslaner, 2008).

Figure 8: A schematic representation of the Inequality Trap, as proposed by Uslaner (2008). Adapted from Uslaner (2017)
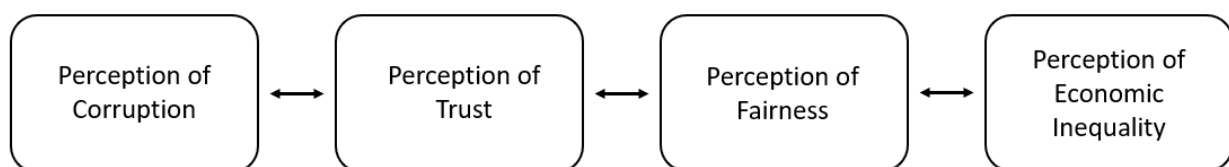
3.3.1.1.   Corruption and trust

Despite being a concept at the center of psychological and economic research and literature (Evans & Krueger, 2009), trust has a somewhat elusive definition (O'Hara, 2012). Overall, it can be conceptualized as a psychological construct concerning the basis of interpersonal relationships and assumes at least two actors: the trustor and the trustee. The trustor evaluates the trustee's intentions under the perception that the trustee's actions will not result in negative consequences for the trustor. The trustor, therefore, is accepting the vulnerability (or the risk) associated with such judgment in exchange for the ability of navigating the social environment and planning one's own actions accordingly (Simpson, 2007). Trusting is therefore a necessary but risky heuristic that is crucial for making assumptions about other people's actions in situations of uncertainty (Ries et al., 2011). The risks associated with mis-interpreting other people's intentions are not limited to the negative consequences resulting from their behaviours but have also a psychological nature and are called *trust-betrayal costs* (Bohnet & Zeckhauser, 2004). According to the Bohet et al. (2008), such psychological costs involve the necessity of re-calibrating one's understanding of the social world as well as a potentially debilitating risk-aversion attitude that may prevent future actions. Throughout the literature, scholars have tried to argue whether interpersonal trust can be conceptualized as a dispositional tendency (Ito, 2022) or as a reflection of ones' history of social experiences (Fareri et al., 2012). Although both instances have been proved to have valid support, the predominant idea in the current psychological literature is that trust is not a fixed characteristic of an individual, but is the result of social learning, and is heavily influenced by one's social background and experiences (Krueger, 2019). According to the Social Trust Survey (2013) and the Social Benchmark Survey (2014), interpersonal trust levels have significant geographic distinctions, corroborating the theory that the average trustworthiness among members of a community is likely to influence trust at the individual level (You, 2002).

Corruption is a type of untrustworthy behaviour (You, 2017), and the definition of corruption itself ("abuse of *entrusted* power for private gain") requires the concept of trust. According to You (2017), the levels of corruption in a society will affect the overall perception of interpersonal relationships of its members, shaping in such a way their interpersonal trust levels. Likewise, interpersonal trust will influence people's socialization of corruption, or the way in which corruption is accepted or condemned in a society. The mechanisms through which such relationship unfolds are the following:

1. <u>Conceptualization of corruption</u>: According to the author, different levels of corruption are translated into different levels of tolerance for corruption: the higher it is the more likely people will be willing to accept such practices as inevitable cultural norms or unavoidable common practices. The more corruption is socialized in everyday life, the more it will be accepted and the less it will impact societal levels of interpersonal trust.

2. <u>Perception of corruption</u>: You (2017) argues that only a small portion of corruption activities are revealed to the public, nevertheless people are able to make estimates of the corruption that may (or may not) be present in their society. According to the author, such assessment is influenced by the interpersonal levels of trustworthiness in a society. In turn, the perception of corruption affects the judgment of other people's intentions.

3. <u>Ingroup trust</u>: Corruption activities and transactions are themselves based on trust. One could argue that, since such activities do not involve legal guarantees, corruption networks may require even higher levels of interpersonal trust. Scholars distinguish between ingroup and outgroup trust (Lei & Vesely, 2010), differentiating between generalized trust (or the tendency to assume benevolent intentions from strangers) and socialized trust (assuming that a specific person's interests will match one's own, as a result of understanding that person's social background). In this perspective, You (2017) argues that corruption is likely to erode generalized trust while enhancing the importance of the ingroup trust. According to the author, in corrupt societies illegal organizations have strict ingroup vs. outgroup boundaries, which preserve the high levels of intergroup trust necessary for engaging in corrupt activities minimizing the risks. This may explain why organized crime is often associated with families and even rituals that symbolize the fidelity to a certain gang (Catino, 2019).

Throughout the literature, empirical studies have established a link between trust and corruption, and vice-versa. For example, Putnam (1993) found that the Italian regions with lower social trust had higher levels of political corruption, and such correlation was also confirmed in a series of cross-national studies (Bjonrskov, 2010; Graeff & Svendsen, 2013; Kube, 2013). Such correlation was tested and explored further by Uslaner (2008) too, who found a link between high inequality, social trust and corruption that was recursive across each step.

3.3.1.2. Corruption and fairness

Given the critical role of trust in understanding the phenomenon of corruption, it is important to explore which other social constructs determine interpersonal trust and if they can help provide a better insight on the topic of corruption and economic inequality. According to the psychological literature (e.g., Krosgaard et al., 2002), the perception of trustworthiness is influenced by one's judgments concerning societal and institutional fairness. People are more likely to trust other members of their society if they think that there are some efficient societal structures that will prevent its members from taking advantage of each other without any consequence. Lind (2001) argues that people are quicker to develop fairness perceptions rather than trustworthiness ones, and this seems supported by empirical data (Roy et al. 2015). In this perspective, the perception of fairness will predict people's perception of trust that, in turn, will affect their perception of corruption. The concept of economic inequality is strictly correlated with fairness perceptions. As noted

above, people are more willing to tolerate economic inequalities when they can justify them (or perceive them as fair). On the contrary, they are better at spotting them when they perceive them as illegitimate. In this perspective, people's perception of unfairness may be influenced by their appraisal of divisions among the population due to class and economic resources, which could lower people's interpersonal trust. Therefore, economic inequalities may help create a social climate of personal distrust (e.g., Barone & Mocetti, 2016; Gould & Hijzen, 2016), that may worsen the one already disrupted by the perception of corruption.

Chapter 4
Cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses to inequality and corruption

So far, we have seen how economic inequality and corruption share a mutual, recursive relationship. These phenomena share other core characteristics: first, their consequences on people's lives derive from individuals' perceptions of the phenomena rather than their actual levels; second, they are societal issues that cannot be tackled by single individuals but rather they require group-actions in the forms of political vote and active protest. Psychology can provide important insights through the investigation of how people perceive and process these phenomena. Before understanding which antecedents lead people to contrast economic inequalities and corruption, it is important to understand the state of the art of the current psychological literature concerning protest in general. Protesting is an effortful activity that requires major costs in terms of time, money and cognitive as well as emotional resources. Understanding why people protest has always been a relevant question in the field of social psychology and scholars have tried to answer it since the discipline was born. Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans (2013) in their review of the literature concerning protest have identified the following instances as the key elements of protest.

4.1. Grievance

The first theories concerning social protest revolved around the concept of grievance (Berkowitz, 1972; Gurr, 1970; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Runciman, 1966). According to these early theories, grievance stemmed from feelings of relative deprivation or an active comparison between the subject's situation with a standard. Such standards could include one's past condition, somebody else's, or even an idea, such as justice or equity (Folger, 1986). When people feel that the results of such comparisons are negative, or they feel that their current situation is below the one provided by the standard, they develop feelings of relative deprivation. According to Runciman (1966) relative deprivation is distinguished in two typologies: *egoistic* deprivation (which is experienced when subjects make personal comparisons) and *fraternalistic* deprivation (which, on the other hand, is experienced when people feel that their ingroup is in a situation of relative deprivation). Empirical data have shown that fraternalistic deprivation is a far more significant determinant of protest than the egoistic one (e.g., Foster & Matheson, 1999; Walker & Mann, 1987). Van Zomeren et al. (2008) have explored the literature on this topic in a meta-analysis. They have concluded that when the group's experience becomes relevant to one's own experience (e.g., " I am in a situation of relative deprivation because my ingroup is in a situation of relative deprivation"), the motivation to protest reaches its maximum. Furthermore, the authors highlighted that the best predictor of protests is the emotional (rather than cognitive) component of relative deprivation . In other words, it is not the situation of inequality per se that

drives people to protest, but rather its emotional perception, manifested in negative feelings such as discontent, dissatisfaction, and unfairness. According to Van Zomeren et al. (2008), these findings are in line with both the Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the literature on Social Justice. SIT, in fact, argues that people's social identity is strictly related with their ingroups. SIT postulates that when individuals cannot escape the negative social identity deriving from their ingroup membership due to impermeable groups boundaries, they are more willing to engage in collective actions for bettering the ingroup situation. The literature concerning social justice, on the other hand, illustrates how there are two types of justice judgment: distributive and procedural. While *distributive* judgment refers to the fairness of the outcomes, the *procedural* ones refer to the fairness of the reasoning behind such judgments. People are more emotionally affected by procedural judgments (Blader, 2007; Tyler & Lind, 2002) or how they feel they are treated rather than by the effective outcomes of such treatments.

Overall, the literature about grievance and protest emphasizes how, for a protest to start, people must perceive they are experiencing an illegitimate situation of disadvantage, eliciting negative feelings of injustice in them.

4.2.   Efficacy

While feelings of grievance are necessary for starting protests, scholars have argued that many aggrieved people do not engage in them (McAdam, 1982). In other words, motivation is necessary but not sufficient for mobilizing people. According to scholars (e.g., McAdam, 1982; McCarthy & Zald, 1977), people must also feel that they have enough resources and opportunities to transform their grievances into active change. This stance is in line with the *political efficacy* conceptualization provided by Gamson (1992), who argued that for people to engage in protest, they must feel like their political actions have enough power to impact the political system. Political efficacy is composed of two dimensions: *internal efficacy*, which refers to people's evaluations of their own ability to engage in such actions, and *external efficacy*, that in turn is translated into people's faith in the institutions to be receptive to such actions. Overall, metanalytical data (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; Van Zomeren et al., 2008) indicate that efficacy (declined in different forms such as personal, group, and political) is a significant predictor of protest. Moreover, different levels of efficacy determine distinct types of behaviour. While efficacious people are more likely to engage in normative actions, inefficacious ones are more attracted to non-normative forms of contestation (Tausch et al., 2008). According to Klandermans et al. (2008), another concept related to political efficacy is *political cynicism* (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997), which refers to the distrust in institutions that may reduce or reinforce political participation if it is matched or not with feelings of perceived unfairness.

4.3. Emotions: Anger and Hope

While early theories identified emotions as error terms in their models concerning protest, more recently, scholars have emphasized the role played by emotions (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2007) have defined emotions as "*accelerators or amplifiers*" of protest, meaning that they have the power to make more relevant the motivational elements. The authors developed such intuition analyzing the Appraisal Theory of Emotions (Lazaurs, 1966), according to which people evaluate their situation in terms of implications for their well-being. In this perspective, different people can appraise the same situation differently, depending on the emotions they experience in that situation, both as individuals and members of a social group. With reference to protest, anger has been identified as the prototypical emotion (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2007), especially when it is experienced by disadvantaged groups (Van Zomeren et al., 2013). Furthermore, scholars have found that anger and efficacy are mutually linked: anger may help people feel more powerful and, vice versa, people are more likely to express their anger when they feel powerful (Devos et al. 2002). Taylor (2009) stated that angry aggrieved people are more likely to question authorities and to repress emotions such as despair or fear that, in turn, may prevent people from participating in protests. Different actions seem to be elicited by different emotions: while anger seems to drive normative actions, non-normative ones seem to be better predicted by emotions such as contempt and despair (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Tausch et al., 2008), which may lead to more violent and disruptive actions.

According to Sabucedo & Vilas (2014) anger is the most important emotion associated with the framework of collective actions in situations of injustice and has the role of mobilizing citizens to defend a cause. Likewise, Sturmer and Simon (2009) identified group-based anger as a significant antecedent of collective actions. According to the authors, citizens mobilization and actions cannot be explained only through the assessment of the social problem and the identification with an ingroup, as the emotional role played by anger is to be considered the key element that starts protests. Such affirmations were supported by both correlational and empirical data. In a first study, the authors found through a field study that individuals taking part in a students' protest had in common strong feelings of anger. Moreover, a laboratory experiment matched such result, identifying anger as a significant antecedent of protest participation.

Another emotion that has been explored concerning the topic of collective actions is the one of hope. The link between these entities is easily explained by the fact that hope can be described as the desire (and the ability to imagine) a possible, better future for a certain situation that is currently not perceived as optimal (Lazarus, 1999). Being hopeful means being able to imagine, at least, a positive change that, in turn, may motivate people to engage in collective actions to reach it. According to scholars (Stroebe et al., 2015) such emotion is pivotal for understanding the behavioural intentions that precede the actions aimed at advancing equality. Nevertheless, the link between hope and collective actions may be more complex than what it

appears (Hasan-Aslih et al., 2019). In fact, some scholars (e.g., Wright et al., 1990) found that hope was positively associate with behavioural intentions for changing an aggrieved situation while feelings of hopelessness negatively correlated with them, whereas other scholars (e.g., Hornsey & Fielding, 2016) found that hope may act as a collective action buffer as it reduces the perceived risk of the aggrieved situation, and therefore limits the urgency to engage in collective actions.

Hope, on one hand, seems to make change appear as possible (e.g., "*If I can imagine a change then it might be attainable through my efforts*") but, on the other hand, it limits the perception of the gravity of such aggrieved situation (e.g., "*If it is so easy to imagine a change then the problem must not be that severe*").

4.4. Social Embeddedness

Finally, it is important to understand that people's actions are planned and evaluated in a social context, they are embedded in the current socio-political history and climate the actors are immersed into. People in different environments have access to distinct levels and forms of *social capital*, defined by Lin (1999: p.35) as "the resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions". In other words, people's tools of protest are rooted in their current socio-historical situation and this, in turn, influence their motivations, efficacy and emotions. Social capital has different components: a *structural* one, that refers to the presence (or absence) of a network type among people that share a common experience, or, in other words, the ability of people to be connected with their in-group. Such component determines cooperative behaviour and encourages collective mobilization (Baldassarri & Diani, 2007). Secondly there is the *relational* component, which refers to the typology of human interactions that people are able to develop throughout their lives. While the structural dimension referred to the existence of the social links, the relational one determines the quality of them, more specifically around the dimensions of respect, trust, and friendship. When people are able to receive support from their in-group and develop trust feelings towards it, they are more likely to engage in protests and are even willing to sacrifice personal resources for its benefit (Strumer & Simon, 2003). Finally, there is the *cognitive* component, which is defined by Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013, p.894) " those resources providing shared representations, interpretations, and systems of meaning." It constitutes a form of shared consciousness about the socio-political structure of the society that is developed and shared among the social links developed by people. It is the ground where feelings of collective grievance are born and communicated between members of the in-group and where they assess their efficacy and ability to mobilize against its causes (Diani & McAdam, 2003). Paxton (2002), for example, found that the creation and the quality of the networks (respectively the structural and relational components) determined the dissemination of critical discourse about authorities (cognitive component) that, in turn, influenced people's willingness to protest.

4.5.   Protesting economic inequality and corruption

It is interesting to notice how economic inequality and corruption share some communalities that could explain their recursive role even in the domain of social protest. Starting from the grievance point of view, we can draw some similarities between corruption and economic inequality. First, for people to become aggrieved they must feel that they are on the negative side of a comparison with a certain outgroup and such difference must be perceived as unfair. Concerning economic inequality, we have already pointed out that people's perception of such a phenomenon is not strictly correlated with the actual Gini index of a society, but rather on people's perceptions that such inequalities are fair. If people feel that economic differences are the result of a biased system that cannot be escaped through one's personal efforts (i.e., low social mobility), they are more likely to perceive high level of economic inequality, to feel aggrieved by disparities and engage in protest (Harris & Hern, 2019; Kurer et al., 2019). Corruption's perceptions are also strictly correlated with perceptions of unfairness. People that think that economic inequalities are not the result of merit but rather the product of a biased system that favors the well-connected, bribe-paying ones at the expense of most of the honest population, they may become aggrieved and be more willing to engage in protests. In this perspective, one could argue that the perception of economic inequality is based on legitimacy and fairness: when legitimizing myths are endorsed (such as the Economic System Justification, Meritocracy or Beliefs in a Just World), people are less likely to perceive economic inequality. On the contrary, lower tolerance for economic inequality makes people better at spotting it when they perceive those unequal distributions are the result of luck or dishonesty (Garcia-Castro et al., 2020). In other words, if people think that economic inequalities are based on a corrupted system that favors the rich, they may be less prone to support justifying myths and less tolerant about corruption.

Economic inequality leads also to an unequal distribution of power, as rich people usually have more resources for making their voices heard in the public debate. Furthermore, corruption strongly influences the efficacy perception: as stated by Xiao and Gong (2016), when people perceive high levels of corruption their efficacy levels decrease. This could happen because corruption may decrease their perceived *external efficacy*. Therefore, high levels of corruption may increase people's political cynicism; this, in turn, could justify why in highly corrupt societies, people seem to be detached and disinterested in politics, with low voter turnouts and high rates of vote rigging (Klašnja & Tucker, 2013). In corrupt, unequal societies, people do not trust political institutions and candidates, even when they support re-distribution policies that could potentially benefit the majority of the population.

Finally, protests seem to be influenced by emotions, and in the last decade, the literature has shifted its focus on this dimension to explain social mobilizations better. For example, scholars have highlighted the role of anger in the most popular public social movements of recent history, such as Black Lives Matter (Banks & White, 2019; Towler & Parker, 2018), the Gilets Jaunes (Dubuffet, 2019; Poissenot, 2018), and Occupy Wall

Street (Langer et al., 2019). Economic inequality and corruption seem to be linked to two similar emotions: anger and hopelessness. When people feel that economic inequality is high and illegitimate, they experience anger (Schieman, 2010). However, if they feel that these inequalities are not the result of a sudden, abrupt change but rather are the product of a structural issue, they may develop feelings of hopelessness (Lewis, 2017). Likewise, high levels of corruption may spark anger in the case of scandals, while they may lead people to hopelessness when it is perceived as an endemic issue in a society (Klašnja & Tucker, 2013).

Chapter 5
Study 1, Study 2 and Study 3

5.1.   Introduction

In the previous chapters I have illustrated how the phenomena of corruption and economic inequality are mutually linked in a recursive relationship called "Inequality trap".

The literature has explored the topic of the inequality trap mainly from an econometric perspective, analyzing panels of data from different countries across multiple time stamps finding rather consistent results (see Chapter 3). Uslaner (2008) first tried to explain such relationship introducing a socio-psychological perspective, affirming that the existing of such recursive relationship was supported by people's resignation towards such issue, that limited their effort towards contrasting corruption and economic inequality.

According to the author, in fact, being exposed to high levels of economic inequality and corruption would create a climate of low-trust and inevitability that would limit protesting intentions, therefore letting the status quo thrive. Although interesting, such interpretation was mainly based on a speculation of the author, as, to the best of our knowledge, no empirical study has ever tried to link together the perception of the inequality trap to people's intentions of contrasting corruption and economic inequality, especially from a socio-psychological perspective. The existing literature has linked people's intentions of protesting economic inequality to its perception (e.g., Power, 2018; Jo & Choi, 2019), although different patterns of response have been assessed. Some scholars, in fact, have posited that being exposed to higher levels of inequality would trigger a protesting response towards such issue, while others have posited that a prolonged assessment of inequality would habituate people toward such phenomenon, therefore raising people' tolerance towards it (Kurer et al., 2019). Although scarcer, the literature concerning corruption has found a similar response concerning the exposure towards corruption: some scholars have assessed that being exposed to corruption scandals would trigger protests (Klasna & Tucker, 2013), while others have linked higher levels of corruption to diminished intentions of protesting corruption (Chong et al, 2015). Moreover, while the economic inequality literature has investigated such intentions also from an empirical perspective, the one concerning corruption has mainly used correlational data (e.g., Klasna & Tucker, 2013)

To the best of our knowledge, no study has ever tried to link together the perception of economic inequality *and* corruption while exploring participants' intentions of contrasting such issue, especially from an empirical perspective in which such perceptions had been manipulated and while taking in account the current psychological literature concerning protest.

As previously illustrated, in fact, the literature has pointed out that a simple assessment of an aggrieved situation (which in this case would be the perception of the inequality trap) is not enough for triggering a protest reaction, as the role of a catalyst is needed. Emotions have been identified as catalyst of protesting

behaviours and, in particular, scholars have emphasized the role played by anger (Van Stekelensburg & Klandermans, 2011; Van Stekelenburg, 2013).

The main goal of the current study, therefore, was to explore the perception of the inequality trap and linking it to participants' contrasting intentions, taking in account their anger response and how it might shape their responses. In order to do so, I decided to manipulate participants perception of economic inequality and corruption in a fictional scenario. Our choice was motivated by trying to find a more causal link between the perception of higher levels of such phenomena and participants behavioural intentions of protest, leaving out participants' already existing perception of the corruption and economic inequality present in their country, that would have hindered the success of a manipulation.

Moreover, I decided to test two different populations: the Italian and the British one. In fact, while Italy, scores higher than average in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and lower in the Gini Index, compared to the European mean (Transparency International, 2020; World Bank Organization, 2018;), U.K. displays an opposite pattern: scoring lower than average in the CPI and higher in the economic inequality indexes.

I also decided to explore the anger evoked by the inequality trap, investigating if participants' behavioural intentions are indeed assisted by an emotional response, as posited by the literature concerning protest.

Social status has been linked to the different perceptions of economic inequality (e.g., Du & King, 2022; Kraus et al, 2017) and the literature has posited that, according to their position on the social ladder, people hold different attitudes towards such issue along with displaying different willingness to contrast it (e.g., Bamfield & Horton, 2009, Steele, 2015; Jetten et al., 2017).

Likewise, the exposure to corruption has been linked to different consequences, according to people's social status, being those at the bottom of the social ladder more vulnerable towards its negative consequences (Chetwynd et al., 2003). Given these instances, I decided to manipulate participants' perception of their subjective socio-economic status, exploring if it affected the behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption and economic inequality displayed.

Taxes are strongly linked to the economic inequality and corruption as well. Taxes are considered the main redistribution tool available in a state and redistribution programs, in fact, are mainly funded through taxes' revenues. Furthermore, people's attitudes towards contrasting economic inequality are strongly linked to people's attitudes towards the taxation system (Garcia-Sachez et al., 2020; Salvador-Casara et al., 2022).

Likewise, corruption has been linked towards taxes as well: higher levels of corruption lead to lower taxes' revenues in the presence of similar taxes rates (Gauthhier & Goyette; 2014) and people's attitudes towards taxes are indeed affected by the perception of corruption (Boly et al., 2021; Svallfors; 2013) as people are more tolerant to tax evasion if they think that taxes' revenues are used for the benefit of the few, at the expense of the majority (Torgler & Valey; 2010). For these reasons, I decided to explore if the manipulations used changed participants willingness to raise or decrease the taxation rates existing.

Finally, the literature has posited that people's perception of economic inequality is affected by people's

worldviews that may act as justifying myths towards such phenomenon (see Chapter 1). The same level of economic inequality may be tolerated differently by people, according to whether they perceive it as the result of a just system or not. People's emotional response in front of economic inequality is predicted by such worldviews, such as the Economic System Justification (Goudarzi et al., 2020) and Meritocracy (Arrow et al., 2018). For these reasons, I decided to explore if participants' support of such worldview would have affected their emotional responses when manipulating economic inequality.

5.2. Methodology

5.2.1. Survey Flow

Our study was structured as it follows. Participants recruited online through a snowball sampling method were instructed to access a Qualtrics survey (which has been summarized in *Figure* 1). After giving their consent to data treatment, they were asked to complete two scales concerning their levels of Economic System Justification and Meritocracy. Then, participants were asked to identify with a citizen of a fictious city, Trebena, located in a fictious country, Velonia. They were randomized to one (out of three: high vs. middle vs. low) subjective socio-economic status, which was manipulated through a brief text describing the finances, level of education and career of the citizen participants were asked to identify with. Subsequently, I manipulated their perception of corruption in Velonia by making them read one (out of two: high corruption vs. low corruption) newspaper page reporting news about the corruption of the country. The economic inequality level was manipulated as well by presenting to participants one (out of two: high inequality vs. low inequality) table describing the average net salary for five different economic sections, as well as information concerning how the population of Velonia was distributed across them. Overall, participants were exposed to three manipulations, resulting in a 3 (Subjective socio-economic status: high vs. medium vs. low) x 2 (Inequality: high vs. low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs. low) between-subjects design. I assessed their level of anger, and behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption. Subsequently, I asked participants to modify the taxation rates assigned to the different income sections of the population of the fictional society described to assesses whether the different combinations of manipulations resulted in any differences across participants.

Figure 1: A schematic representation of the survey flow of the experiment

Consent form

Meritocracy questions (2 questions): 1 ("Extremely disagree") to 7 ("Extremely agree")

Economic System Justification questions (17 questions + 1 Attention Check): 1 ("Extremely disagree") to 7 ("Extremely agree")

Introduction to the manipulation: participants are asked to imagine a fictional City, Trebena, located in a fictional country , Velonia

Status manipulation: participants are asked to read a brief text describing their socio-economic status (randomized among Low vs Middle vs High) and rate their perceived status on a scale ranging from 0 ("Extremely low social status") to 10 ("Extremely high social status")

Inequality manipulation: participants are presented with a table (one out of the two: Low Inequality vs High Inequality) describing the average income of different sections of the population ranging from the richest one (Section A) to the poorest (Section E). Then, they are asked to rate the economic inequality of Velonia on a scale ranging from 1 ("Extremely limited") to 5 ("Extremely widespread")

Corruption Manipulation: participants are asked to read a newspaper page (one out of two: High Corruption vs Low Corruption) describing the corruption present in the country. Then, they are asked to rate the corruption of Velonia on a scale ranging from 1 ("Extremely limited") to 5 ("Extremely widespread").

Anger: participants are asked to rate how angry they feel (3 questions) on a scale ranging from 1 ("Extremely disagree") to 7 ("Extremely agree")

Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality (5 questions): participants are asked how much they intend to contrast economic inequality on a scale ranging from 1 ("Extremely unlikely") to 7 ("Extremely likely")

Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption (5 questions): participants are asked how much they intend to contrast corruption on a scale ranging from 1 ("Extremely unlikely") to 7 ("Extremely likely")

Taxation preference: participants are asked to modify the fiscal rates currently present for the five income sections previously presented during the economic inequality manipulation. For each section, participants are able to add or reduce up to 10% the current fiscal rate applied.

Debriefing and demographic questions

5.2.2. Scales and manipulations

- Belief in Meritocracy: Two ad hoc items were created: "Generally, I think that a person's economic success and wealth mirror his/her abilities and efforts", "Generally, hard work does not lead to economic success and wealth, it is more a matter of luck and good connections".

- Economic System Justification: I used an adaptation of the 17 items of the Economic System Justification (ESJ; Jost & Thompson, 2000), for the British Sample. Concerning the Italian one, I used an adaptation of ESJ, adapted for the Italian context (Caricati; 2008).

- Subjective socio-economic status: Participants were asked to read a brief text (one out of the three available: low status, middle and high) describing their socio-economical position in the fictional society of Velonia. The text briefly described their educational level, job position and lifestyle, elements that according to Shaked et al. (2016) are mainly used for inferring the social status of an individual. In order to check the efficacy of the manipulation used, I used a McArthur scale adapted from Giatti et al., (2012) in which the participants were asked to position themselves on a 10 steps ladder, at the top of which, they were described to be situated the élite of the society.

- Economic Inequality: Participants were asked to read one brief text (out of the two available: low inequality vs high inequality) describing how the society of Velonia was composed. Participants read that Velonia was composed by five income sections (nominated with letters from A to E, where A was the richest one) and were presented with the average (monthly and annual) net income for each of them, reported in a table. Participants were also instructed on the percentage of the population belonging to each section. The income inequality manipulation was carried out keeping in mind the two axes in which it develops: a first one accounting the difference among social ranks in terms wealth and a second one accounting the population density of each rank. In fact, a society is considered unequal the less people occupy the highest steps of the social ladder and the starker the economic disparity among ranks is. Such information was assisted by a figure describing the composition of the Velonian society, adapted from the diagrams used in the ISSP National Surveys (see *Figure* 2). I modified the original stimuli used in the ISSP Social Survey (2009) in the following ways: I added some graphic symbols depicting people so that, even at first glance, participants could guess the different distribution of people across ranks. Furthermore, I decided to reduce the initial 7 sections to 5: in such way I managed to both reduce the complexity of the stimuli and to establish a continuity with the Italian fiscal system which provides only 5 rates of income. A further step was made assigning to each income section a percentage of the population that fell in the said section. In order to improve the saliency of the information about the income disparity across ranks, I provided participants a table depicting the net monthly income of each class. Incomes were calculated using the following method: I first split the whole population (100%) in different percentages that could depict the width of the rectangle used by the ISSP Social Survey (2009) to

represent each class. After that, I assigned to each manipulation society (Inequality: high vs low) a total wealth equal to 100 (in such way, in a completely equal society each citizen would have had a personal asset equal to 1). I then split the initial total wealth across classes in an arbitrary way so that in the equal society the majority of the total wealth was assigned to the middle class, while in the unequal one it belonged to the top of the social ladder. Then I dived the total wealth of each class by the number of people assigned to each class ending up with the individual wealth of each citizen. The closer such numbers were to 1 the more equal the society depicted was. These numbers were then multiplied by an arbitrary number selected, so that the obtained results could resemble a monthly gross salary in a highly developed country. To the gross salary (previously described) I applied the tax rates provided by the Italian fiscal system for each income section. Although the actual tax rates in Italy are applied using a much more complicated system, in order to simplify the table provided to participants I decided not to implement the actual method but rather a simplification of it, especially considering the fact that later in the survey I asked participants to modify such tax rates in order to depict their preferences. Using the actual Italian fiscal rates would have come with a high cognitive burden that might invalidate participants' responses. The figure and the table were assisted by a small text that summarized their content, as well as some considerations about the situation of the majority of the population depicted. The efficacy of such manipulation was tested using a scale ranging from 0 (extreme equality) to 5 (extreme inequality) which partially matched the one used in the ISSP National Surveys.

A

The socio-economic distribution of the people living in Velonia, the State in which you live, is represented by the picture below: there is a small, very rich elite at the top (sector A), an increasing number of people in the middle and the majority of the population at the bottom of the pyramid (Sectors D and E).
This means that the 70% of the population occupies the last steps of the socio-economic ladder.

A. 5%

B. 10%

C. 15%

D. 30%

E. 40%
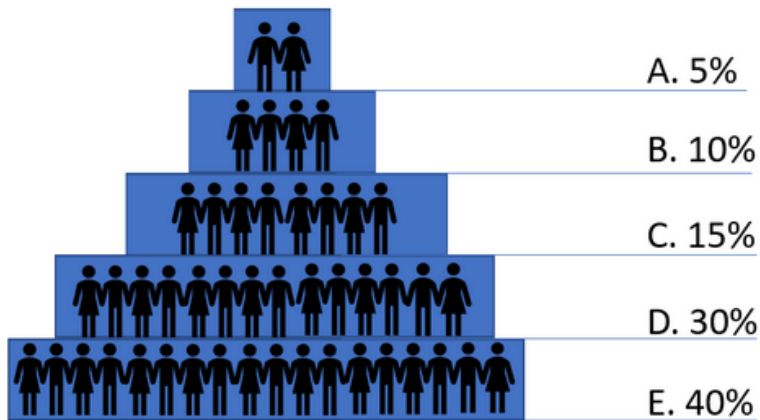
Down below there is a table which describes the average income, expressed in Velonian Dollars, for each sector of the population
This means that the 70% of the population lives with a monthly income lower or equal to 900 Velonian Dollars.

Sector	% of the population belonging to the sector	Monthly average net wage	Annual average net wage
A	5%	$ 17.600,00	$ 211.200,00
B	10%	$ 7.100,00	$ 85.200,00
C	15%	$ 1.600,00	$ 19.200,00
D	30%	$ 900,00	$ 10.800,00
E	40%	$ 500,00	$ 6.000,00

B

The socio-economic distribution of the people living in Velonia, the State in which you live, is represented by the picture below: half of the population is located in the middle (50%, sector C). At the top there is a small, very rich elite (3%, sector A) and at the bottom there is an equally small number of poor people (3%, sector E).
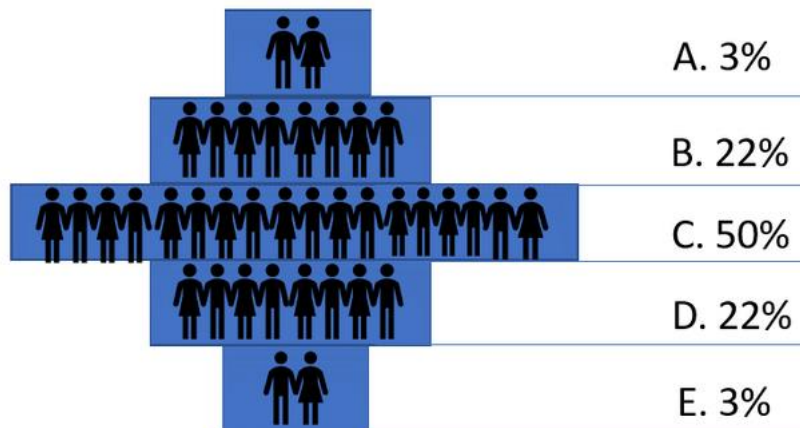
The table below describes the average income, expressed in Velonian Dollars.

This means that the 94% of the population lives with an average monthly net wage ranging between 1.840 $ and 3.700 $

Sector	% of the population belonging to the sector	Monthly average net wage	Annual average net wage
A	3%	$ 5.150,00	$ 61.800,00
B	22%	$ 3.700,00	$ 44.400,00
C	50%	$ 2.800,00	$ 33.600,00
D	22%	$ 1.840,00	$ 22.080,00
E	3%	$ 1.450,00	$ 17.400,00

- Corruption: Participants were exposed to one (out of two: high corruption vs low corruption) newspaper page, describing Corruption news concerning the society of Velonia. In the high corruption condition, participants were exposed to news concerning corrupt events that ranged from nepotism to the overall position of Velonia in international ratings of corruption. In the low corruption condition, participants read news concerning how well Velonia was performing in the Corruption International Index, compared to other countries. At the end of the manipulation, participants were asked to rate the corruption level present on a scale ranging from 0 (corruption extremely limited) to 5 (corruption extremely widespread), that matched the one used for assessing the Inequality manipulation.

- Anger: A four-item scale derived from Mackie et al. (2000) was used: "I feel angry/irritated/furious/displeased thinking about the situation just described." It was a 7 points Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Extremely*)

- Behavioural Intentions for Contrasting Economic Inequality: A five-item scale with items taken and adapted from Tausch et al. (2015) and Velasquez and LaRose (2014). Examples of items are "*I intend to vote for politicians that are willing to fight economic-inequality*", "*I intend to participate in demonstrations against economic inequality*". Participants were asked to rate how likely they were to perform the action described on a Likert scale from 1 (*Extremely unlike*) to 7 (*Extremely likely*).

- Behavioural Intentions for Contrasting Corruption: The same five-item scale with items taken and adapted from Tausch et al. (2015) and Velasquez and LaRose (2014) used for assessing participants' intentions of contrasting economic inequality was adapted for assessing their intentions of contrasting corruption. Examples of items are "*I intend to vote for politicians that are willing to fight corruption*", "*I intend to participate in demonstrations against corruption*". Participants were asked to rate how likely they were to perform the action described on a Likert scale from 1 (*Extremely unlike*) to 7 (*Extremely likely*).

- Taxation Preference Participants were presented with the table depicting the incomes of the five sections of the Velonian population, that was already used during the Economic Inequality manipulation. In this section, two columns were added, one depicting the taxation rates, for each section, and one depicting the gross income (see *Figure* 3). The taxation rates adopted mirrored the ones used in the Italian taxation system. For each section, participants were asked if they were willing to add or reduce the taxes' rates by +10%/-10%, or if they wanted to maintain the current ones. When participants modified the taxation rates, a pop-up window illustrated the new taxation rate adopted along with the new net income, once adopted the new taxation rate.

Currently, the fiscal rates of the State of Velonia are organized as described in the table below

Sector	% of the population belonging to the sector	Monthly average gross wage	Rate	Monthly average net wage
A	5%	$ 30.800,00	43%	$ 17.600,00
B	10%	$ 12.000,00	41%	$ 7.100,00
C	15%	$ 2.500,00	38%	$ 1.600,00
D	30%	$ 1.300,00	27%	$ 900,00
E	40%	$ 700,00	23%	$ 500,00

We ask you to answer the following questions keeping in mind that there is no right or wrong choice

The A Sector of the population, with a monthly average gross wage of 30.800 Velonian Dollars, currently pays a 43% rate. According to your opinion, should sector A pay more or less than their current rate? Please slide right to increase the percentage rate, slide left to decrease it, click on 0 if you think it's fair.

-10 -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The reliability of the scales described has been summed in *Table* 1

Table 1: The Cronbach's alpha of the scales used, across Study 1, Study 2 and Study 3

	Cronbach's α		
	Study 1	**Study 2**	**Study 3**
Belief in Meritocracy	0.90	0.66	0.74
Economic System Justification	0.68	0.67	0.81
Anger	0.90	0.95	0.96
Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality	0.85	0.88	0.89
Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.86	0.89	0.87

5.3.   Hypotheses

Our expectations concerning this study are outlined in the following hypotheses:

H1)   Concerning the inequality manipulation, I expected it to have a significant main effect on the anger variable as well as on the behavioural intentions listed. More specifically I expected that:

H1a)   Higher levels of inequality would result in higher levels of anger displayed by participants.

H1b)   Higher levels of inequality would result in higher levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality.

H1c)   If participants were able to spot the inequality trap, I expected that higher levels of inequality would result in higher levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption, in a spill-over effect.

H2)   Concerning the corruption manipulation, I expected it to have a significant main effect on the anger variable as well as on the behavioural intentions listed. More specifically I expected that:

H2a)   Higher levels of corruption would result in higher levels of anger displayed by participants.

H2b)   Higher levels of corruption would result in higher levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption.

H2c)   If participants were able to spot the inequality trap, I expected that higher levels of corruption would result in higher levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality, in a spill-over effect mirroring the one posited by H1c.

H3)   Concerning the inequality and corruption manipulations, if people were able to spot the inequality trap, I expected to detect interaction effects on the anger variable as well as on the behavioural intentions. More specifically:

H3a)   I expected to find a positive, multiplicative interaction effect between the corruption and inequality manipulations on the anger variable. In particular, I expect that being exposed to high levels of Economic Inequality and Corruption would lead to a higher response higher than the sum of the effects of each manipulation per se.

H3b)   Likewise, I expected to find a positive, multiplicative interaction effect between the corruption and the inequality manipulations on the behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality

H3c)   Likewise, I expected to find a positive, multiplicative interaction effect between the corruption and the inequality manipulations on the behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption.

H4)   I expected anger to mediate the link between the manipulation of inequality and corruption and the behavioural intentions for contrasting them. More specifically I expected:

H4a)   Anger to be a significant mediator between the inequality manipulation and the behavioural intentions for contrasting inequality.

H4b)   Anger to be a significant mediator between the corruption manipulation and the behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption.

For what concerns the subjective socio-economic status manipulation I did not formulate any specific hypotheses, but I simply wanted to explore if the participants anger levels, as well as their behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption changed according to the participants' perceived position on the social ladder. Likewise, I did not have any specific hypotheses concerning the taxation rates task, but I wanted to explore whether the manipulations had any effects on participants' responses. No specific hypotheses were formulated concerning the Economic System Justification and the Meritocracy scales, as I planned to use them to explore whether these constructs had any effects on the anger response expressed by participants.

5.4.   Study 1: Italian Sample

As a first step, I decided to test the previously described study design on an Italian population. All the materials used were pre-tested for an Italian population. The results of the pre-tests can be found in the section 1.1 of the Appendix along with descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables. All the analyses that will be described from now on have been performed using Jamovi (Version 1.2) and R Statistical Software (v4.1.2; R Core Team, 2021). For each analyses performed I checked for assumptions, unless differently reported such assumptions have been respected. Both the pre-tests and the study have been approved as a minimum risk study by the ethical committee of the University of Milano-Bicocca.

5.4.1. Participants

An a-priori power analysis was performed using the G*Power software (Version 3.1.9.2; Faul et al., 2007). Our criteria (f = .25, α = .05 and β = .80) for a 3 x 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVA showed a required sample size of at least 158 participants. I recruited 186 participants aged 18 to 77 (M_{age}= 35.5 year, SD_{age}=13.1; $N_{Females}$= 113, N_{Males}=73). Participants were asked to rate their political orientation on a scale ranging from 1 ("*I'm extremely close to the left-wing orientation*") to 7 ("*I'm extremely close to the right-wing orientation*") and they scored on average 3.9 (*SD* = 1.75).[2]

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[2] Concerning the political orientation of the participants, I checked if such variable influenced their responses concerning the manipulations and the hypotheses predicted, nevertheless, I did not find any significant result. Therefore, such variable will not be mentioned further on in the discussion of the results.

Table 2: Italian sample demographic information

	N	% of Total
Highest Educational Level		
I have not finished high school	14	7.5%
I have a high school diploma	64	34.4%
I have been enrolled/ I am currently enrolled in a university program	21	11.3%
I have a bachelor's degree	35	18.8%
I have a master's degree/Ph.D.	49	26.4%
Other/Prefer not to say	3	1.6%
Employment		
Unemployed	8	4.3%
Student	32	17.2%
Employed	106	57%
Self-Employed	33	17.7%
Retired	3	1.6%
Other	4	2.1%

5.4.2. Manipulation Checks

To test if the manipulations used changed participants' perception of subjective socio-economic status, economic inequality, and corruption in the desired way, I conducted the following analyses

5.4.2.1. Subjective socio-economic status

A one-way (Status: low vs medium vs high) ANOVA was performed on the participants' status perception. A significant effect of the status manipulation was found, $F(2, 183) = 99.2$, $\eta^2 = 0.52$, $p < .05$ Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD) indicated that participants in the low status condition ($M = 4.72$, $SE = 0.18$) perceived their status as significantly lower than those assigned to the middle ($M = 6.44$, $SE = 0.18$; $p < .001$) and high ($M = 8.24$, $SE = 0.17$; $p_{Tukey} < .001$) status conditions. Moreover, those in the high-status condition perceived themselves as having more status than those in the middle status condition ($p_{Tukey} < .001$). These results confirm that the Status manipulation was successful.

5.4.2.2. Economic inequality

To assess differences on the inequality perceptions between inequality conditions, an independent samples *t*-test was run. Using the Levene's test ($p = .008$), it appears that there was a violation of the assumption of equal variance. Hence, the Welch's *t*-test was used. The results showed that participants assigned to the

high-inequality condition (*M* = 2.05, *SD* = 0.81) perceived the society they were presented to as significantly more unequal than those in the low-inequality condition (*M* = 3.19, *SD* = 1.02), Welch's *t*(165) = 8.41, *p* < .001, confirming the efficacy of the Inequality manipulation.

5.4.2.3. Corruption

To assess differences on corruption perceptions, an independent samples *t*-test was run. The results showed that participants in the high-corruption condition (*M* = 4.2, *SD* = 0.89) perceived the society they were presented with as significantly more corrupt than those in the low-corruption condition (*M* = 1.89, *SD* = 1.03), *t*(184) = 16.4, *p* <.001, in line with the intentions of the manipulation.

5.4.3. Hypotheses testing

5.4.3.1. Anger

A 2 (Inequality: high vs low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs low) x 3 (Status: high vs medium vs low) between-subjects ANOVA was performed on Anger. The results showed a significant main effect of Inequality, *F*(1,174) = 10.17, *p* = .002, η² = .038. Confirming H1a, participants in the high inequality condition (*M* = 4.28, *SE* = 0.13) reported more anger than those in the low inequality condition (*M* = 3.65, *SE* = 0.14). Moreover, a significant main effect of Corruption, *F*(1,174) = 65.99, *p* < .001, η² = .249, showed that participants in the high corruption condition (*M* = 4.77, *SE* = 0.13) reported more anger than those in the low corruption condition (*M* = 3.16, *SE* = 0.14), in line with H2a. Finally, a significant main effect of Status, *F*(2,174) = 4.77, *p* = .01, η² = .036, occurred. Pairwise comparisons (*p*_{Tukey} < .001) indicated that participants in the low status condition (*M* = 4.29, *SE* = 0.17) reported higher levels of anger compared to those in the middle status condition (*M* = 3.55, *SE* = 0.17; *p* = .008). No difference emerged between the low and high status (*M* = 4.05, *SE* = 0.16) conditions (*p* = .57), nor between the middle and high ones (*p* = .092). No main effect significant interactions emerged (*p*s > .05), in contrast to what stated in H3a. The Inequality x Corruption interaction, *F*(2,174) = 0.39, *p* = .63, η² = .001, was not significant, in contrast to what stated in H3a, neither the Status x Inequality interaction, *F*(2,174) = 0.31, *p* = .728, η² = .002, the Status x Corruption interaction, *F*(2,174) = 0.46, *p* = .63, η² = .003, the and the Status x Inequality x Corruption, *F*(2,174) = 2.02, *p* = .13, η² = .015 reached the level of significance.

5.4.3.2. Behavioural intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

A 2 (Inequality: high vs low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs low) x 3 (Status: high vs medium vs low) between-subjects ANOVA was performed on behavioural intentions to contrast economic inequality. The results showed a significant main effect of Inequality, *F*(1,174) = 7.51, η² = .039 *p* = .007,. Participants in the high inequality condition (*M* = 4.32, *SE* = 0.15) reported a higher willingness to engage in behaviours to fight economic inequalities than those in the low inequality condition (*M* = 3.73, *SE* = 0.15), in line with H1b. No other significant main effects or interactions reached the level of significance (*p*s > .05), in contrast to H2c and H3b.

5.4.3.3.   Behavioural intentions for contrasting Corruption

A 2 (Inequality: high vs low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs low) x 3 (Status: high vs medium vs low) between-subjects ANOVA was performed on behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption. The results showed a significant main effect of the corruption manipulation, $F(1,174) = 9.49$, $p = .007$, $\eta^2 = .05$, indicating that participants in the high corruption condition ($M = 4.74$, $SE = 0.14$) reported a higher willingness to fight corruption than those in the low corruption condition ($M = 4.6$, $SE = 0.16$), in line with H2b. No other significant main effects or interactions emerged ($p > .05$), in contrast with H1c and H3c.

5.4.3.4.   Mediation Models

In order to test our H4 hypothesis and investigate if anger was a significant mediator between the experimental manipulations and the behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption, I used the models depicted in *Figure* 4 (Model 1) and *Figure* 5 (Model 2). The analyses were carried out using the GLM Mediation Model function, included in the package jAMM Jamovi Advanced Mediation Models (Version 1.01) by Gallucci (2019). The Status manipulation was a three-level variable, for this reason the contrasts were organized in Status 1 (Middle vs Low) and Status 2 (High vs Low).

Figure 4: Mediation model depicting anger as the mediator between Status, Inequality and Corruption and the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality
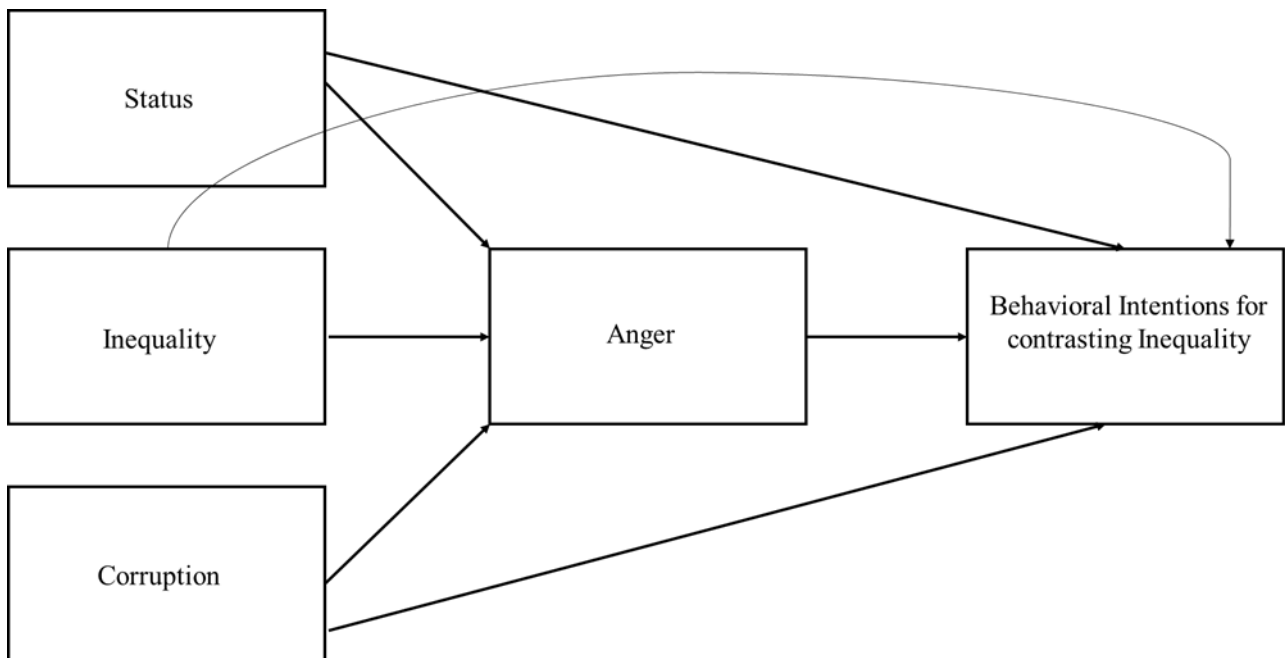
Figure 5: Mediation model depicting anger as the mediator between Status, Inequality and Corruption and the behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption
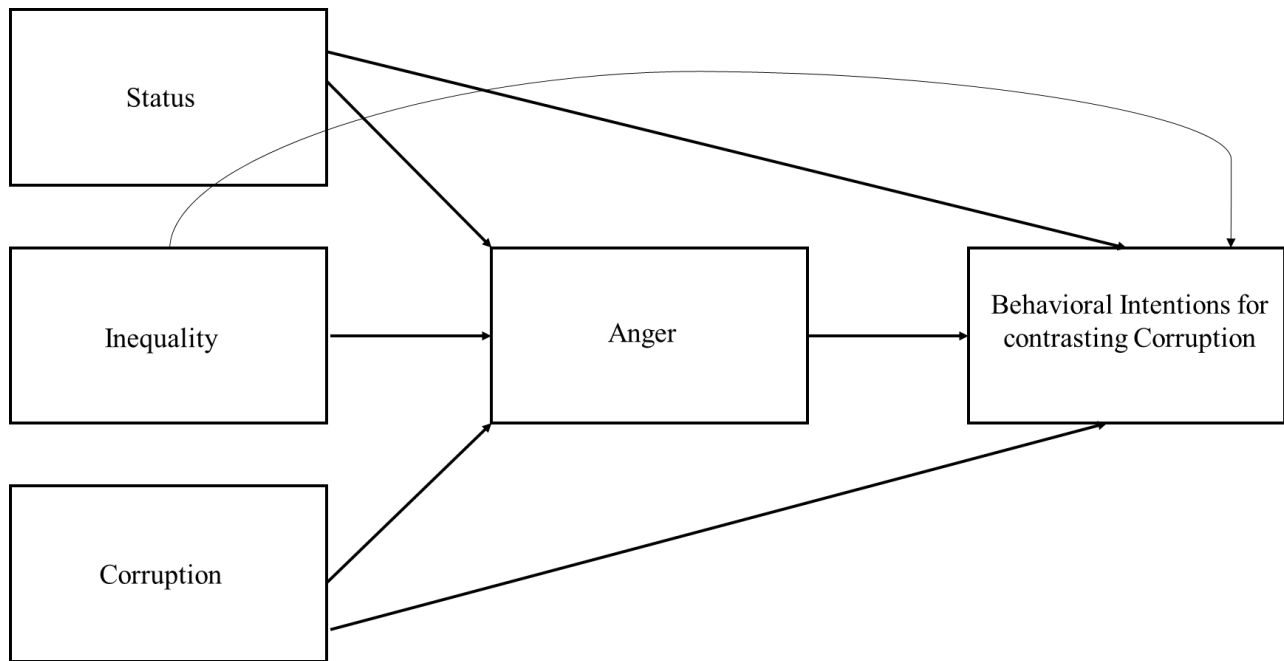
5.4.3.4.1. Model 1: Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality and the mediation of Anger

I conducted a mediational analysis for assessing whether the effects of the experimental manipulations on the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality were mediated by the Anger felt by participants, as reported by Figure 4. The results, summed in *Table* 2, indicate that Anger was identified as a significant positive predictor of the Behavioural intentions for fighting Economic Inequalities. Moreover, Inequality was the only variable that had a significant effect on Behavioural Intentions. This effect was fully mediated by the Anger perception, as the direct effect of the Inequality manipulation was not statistically significant ($p > .05$), meaning that participants exposed to high inequality were also more likely to contrast such issue only in the case in which it provoked in them feelings of anger. I found a significant, indirect negative effect of Status on the dependent variable, meaning that participants assigned to the low status manipulation, compared to those assigned to the middle one, expressed higher levels of Anger, that, in turn, led to higher Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality. Moreover, I found a significant, negative direct effect of the Corruption manipulation and a positive, indirect effect of the Corruption manipulation, that, together suppress the total effect which does not reach the level of significance ($p > .05$). This is a *suppression effect* as described by MacKinnon (2000). Such effect means that the Corruption manipulation led participants to express more

Behavioural Intentions for fighting economic inequality by eliciting in them more anger feelings. However, if the Corruption manipulation failed to increase their anger, it led to an opposite outcome, inhibiting the participants' Behavioural Intentions for contrasting economic inequality. The analyses reported confirm H4a.

Table 3: Indirect, Direct and Total effects of the Mediation Model 1

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. Lower	95% C.I. Upper	β	z	p
Indirect	Status 1 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.3479	0.1243	-0.5916	-0.1042	-0.11113	-2.798	0.005
	Status 2 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.1052	0.1110	-0.3227	0.1122	-0.03456	-0.948	0.343
	Inequality ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.2816	0.1000	0.0855	0.4776	0.09663	2.814	0.005
	Corruption ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.7442	0.1452	0.4595	1.0289	0.25420	5.124	< .001
Component	Status 1 ⇒ Anger	-0.7380	0.2387	-1.2059	-0.2702	-0.21687	-3.092	0.002
	Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.4714	0.0717	0.3308	0.6119	0.51241	6.574	< .001
	Status 2 ⇒ Anger	-0.2233	0.2329	-0.6798	0.2333	-0.06745	-0.958	0.338
	Inequality ⇒ Anger	0.5973	0.1918	0.2214	0.9733	0.18857	3.114	0.002
	Corruption ⇒ Anger	1.5788	0.1931	1.2004	1.9572	0.49610	8.177	< .001
Direct	Status 1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.0262	0.2393	-0.4430	0.4953	0.00836	0.109	0.913

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. Lower	Upper	β	z	p
	Status 2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.3061	0.2283	-0.7536	0.1415	-0.10051	-1.340	0.180
	Inequality ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.2613	0.1924	-0.1157	0.6384	0.08969	1.358	0.174
	Corruption ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.6695	0.2201	-1.1009	-0.2380	-0.22868	-3.041	0.002
Total	Status 1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.3217	0.2598	-0.8310	0.1875	-0.10277	-1.238	0.216
	Status 2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.4113	0.2535	-0.9082	0.0856	-0.13508	-1.622	0.105
	Inequality ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.5429	0.2088	0.1337	0.9521	0.18631	2.600	0.009
	Corruption ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.0747	0.2101	-0.3371	0.4866	0.02553	0.356	0.722

Note: For the variable Status, the contrasts are Status 1 = Middle vs Low and Status 2 = High vs Low, for the variable Inequality th e contrast is High Inequality vs Low Inequality and for the variable Corruption the contrast is High Corruption vs Low Corruption . Confidence intervals have been computed using the Delta method.

5.4.3.4.2. Model 2: Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption and the mediation of Anger

I conducted a mediational analysis for assessing whether the effects of the experimental manipulations on the behavioural intentions for fighting corruption were mediated by the Anger perception they elicited in participants, as depicted by the Model 2, depicted in *Figure* 5. Results (summed in *Table* 3) indicate that Anger was predicted the Status 1 Manipulation, by the Economic Inequality and by the Corruption one. Anger was identified as significant positive predictor of the behavioural intentions for corruption. The only significant total effect was the one of the Corruption manipulation. However, this effect was fully mediated by the Anger perception as the direct effect of the corruption manipulation is not statistically significant ($p >$ .05), meaning that participants exposed to the high corruption manipulation were also more likely to contrast such issue only in the case in which it provoked in them feelings of Anger. I found significant indirect positive effects of the Status 1 Manipulation, of the Economic Inequality one and of the Corruption one, meaning that participants exposed to low status, high economic inequality and high corruption manipulations were more likely to express anger feelings, that, in turn, led them to express behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption. The analyses reported confirm H4b.

Table 3: Indirect, Direct, and Total effects of the Mediation Model 2

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. Lower	95% C.I. Upper	β	z	p
Indirect	Status 1 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.172	0.0811	-0.331	-0.013	-0.053	-2.12	0.033
	Status 2 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.052	0.0573	-0.164	0.0601	-0.016	-0.91	0.362
	Inequality ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.1396	0.0654	0.0114	0.2678	0.0466	2.135	0.033
	Corruption ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.3690	0.1337	0.1069	0.6310	0.1227	2.760	0.006
Component	Status 1 ⇒ Anger	-0.738	0.2387	-1.205	-0.270	-0.216	-3.09	0.002
	Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.2337	0.0797	0.0775	0.3899	0.2473	2.932	0.003
	Status 2 ⇒ Anger	-0.223	0.2329	-0.679	0.2333	-0.067	-0.95	0.338
	Inequality ⇒ Anger	0.5973	0.1918	0.2214	0.9733	0.1886	3.114	0.002
	Corruption ⇒ Anger	1.5788	0.1931	1.2004	1.9572	0.4961	8.177	< .001
Direct	Status 1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.0438	0.2661	-0.477	0.5653	0.0136	0.165	0.869

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I.		β	z	p
				Lower	Upper			
	Status 2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.087	0.2538	-0.585	0.4100	-0.028	-0.34	0.730
	Inequality ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.0968	0.2139	-0.324	0.5159	0.0323	0.452	0.651
	Corruption ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.2968	0.2447	-0.182	0.7764	0.0987	1.213	0.225
Total	Status 1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.1287	0.2661	-0.650	0.3929	-0.040	-0.48	0.629
	Status 2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.139	0.2597	-0.648	0.3693	-0.044	-0.53	0.591
	Inequality ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.2364	0.2138	-0.182	0.6555	0.0790	1.105	0.269
	Corruption ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.6657	0.2152	0.2439	1.0876	0.2214	3.093	0.002

Note: For the variable Status, the contrasts are Status 1 = Middle vs Low and Status 2 = High vs Low, for the variable Inequality the contrast is High Inequality vs Low Inequality and for the variable Corruption the contrast is High Corruption vs Low Corruption. Confidence intervals have been computed using the Delta method.

5.4.4. Explorative Analyses

5.4.4.1. Moderators

I conducted some exploratory analyses to check if the effects of the experimental manipulations on the anger expressed by participants were moderated by the level of Meritocracy or by the Economic System Justification (ESJ) they expressed, as expressed by *Figure* 6 and *Figure* 7. The models were tested using the GLM Mediation Model function, included in the package jAMM Jamovi Advanced Mediation Models (Version 1.01) by Gallucci (2019).

Figure 6: Meritocracy as a moderator between the manipulations Status, Inequality and Corruption and the Anger response
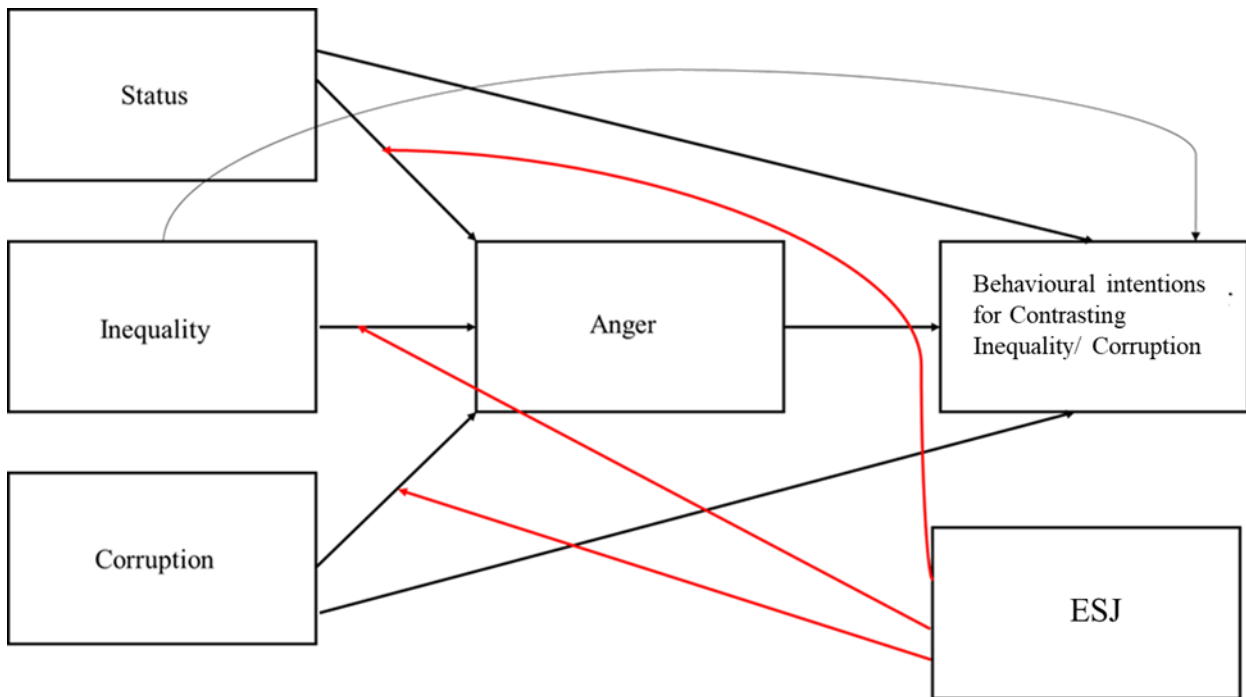
I conducted a moderation analysis for assessing the model depicted in *Figure* 6. I assessed that meritocracy significantly moderated the path between the Corruption manipulation and Anger, *b* = 0.48, *SE* = 0.16, 95% CI [0.15; 0.81], β = 0.17, *p* = .004, meaning that as the levels of the meritocracy increased the corruption manipulation provoked higher levels of anger in participants (see *Table* 4).

Table 4: Meritocracy as a Moderator

	Estimate	**SE**	**Z**	**p**
Average	1.56	0.202	7.72	< .001
Low (-1SD)	1.01	0.286	3.54	< .001
High (+1SD)	2.10	0.284	7.41	< .001

Note. shows the effect of the predictor (Corruption) on the dependent variable (Anger) at different levels of the moderator (Meritocracy)

Likewise, I tested if Meritocracy moderated the path between the Inequality manipulation and Anger and the Status (1 and 2) manipulation and Anger but no significant moderation effect of Meritocracy was found, *p* > .05. I conducted a moderation analysis for assessing the model depicted in *Figure* 7. I assessed that Economic System Justification significantly moderated the path between the Corruption manipulation and Anger (*b* = 1.6, *SE* = 0.18, 95% CI [1.23; 1.97], β = 0.5, *p* < .001) meaning that as the levels of the Economic

System Justification increased, the Corruption manipulation provoked higher levels of Anger in participants (see *Table* 5).

Table 5: Economic System Justification (ESJ) as a Moderator of the Corruption manipulation on the Anger variable

	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Average	1.60	0.199	8.03	< .001
Low (-1SD)	1.31	0.282	4.64	< .001
High (+1SD)	1.88	0.283	6.65	< .001

Note. shows the effect of the predictor (Corruption) on the dependent variable (Anger) at different levels of the moderator (ESJ)

Likewise, I tested if Economic System Justification moderated the path between the Inequality manipulation and Anger and I found a significant result ($b = 0.59$, $SE = 0.18$, 95% CI [0.23; 0.96], $\beta = 0.28$, $p = .001$), meaning that as the Economic System Justification levels decreased the Inequality manipulation provoked more anger in the participants (see *Table* 6).

Table 6: Economic System Justification (ESJ) as a Moderator of the Inequality manipulation on the Anger variable

	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Average	0.581	0.226	2.575	0.010
Low (-1SD)	0.985	0.318	3.095	0.002
High (+1SD)	0.177	0.318	0.556	0.578

Note. shows the effect of the predictor (Inequality) on the dependent variable (Anger) at different levels of the moderator (ESJ_Jost)

No significant moderation effect of Economic System Justification was found in the path between the Status manipulation (1 and 2) and the Anger response ($p > .05$).

5.4.4.2. Taxation Preference

During the inequality manipulation, participants were presented with 5 different income sections. In the taxation task, I re-presented such sections along with the taxation rates assigned for each section. Participants were asked to modify such rates by increasing/decreasing by -10%/+10% until they reached the taxation rates they considered preferable.

A 2 (Inequality: high vs low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs low) x 3 (Status: high vs medium vs low) repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted using the first three variables as between-groups factors and the taxation sections (Taxation section: A, B, C, D, E) as the within-subject variable. The dependent variable used was the percentage points they had decided to add to (or subtract from) the taxation rate assigned to each section. I found a significant main effect of taxation sections, $F(1.95, 5577) = 106.39$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .061$ (Greenhouse-Geisser correction), indicating a progressive preference which was consistent independently from the experimental conditions participants were assigned to. More specifically, as illustrated in *Table* 7, participants significantly decreased the taxation rate the more they reached the lower levels of the sections, exception made for the sections C and D that were not significantly different, $p > .05$, while they decided to raise the taxes only for section A. There was also a significant main effect of corruption, $F(1, 174) = 5.21$, $p = .024$, $\eta^2 = .002$, indicating that participants in the high Corruption condition ($M = -2.61$, $SE = 0.36$), on average, decided to reduce the taxation rates less than those that were exposed to the low Corruption one ($M = -3.81$, $SE = 0.36$), as depicted in *Figure* 8 and *Table* 7. No other main effect or interaction reached the level of significance ($ps > .05$).

Figure 8: Plot of the average increase/decrease in the taxation rates participants selected for each income section, according to the corruption manipulation they were exposed to.
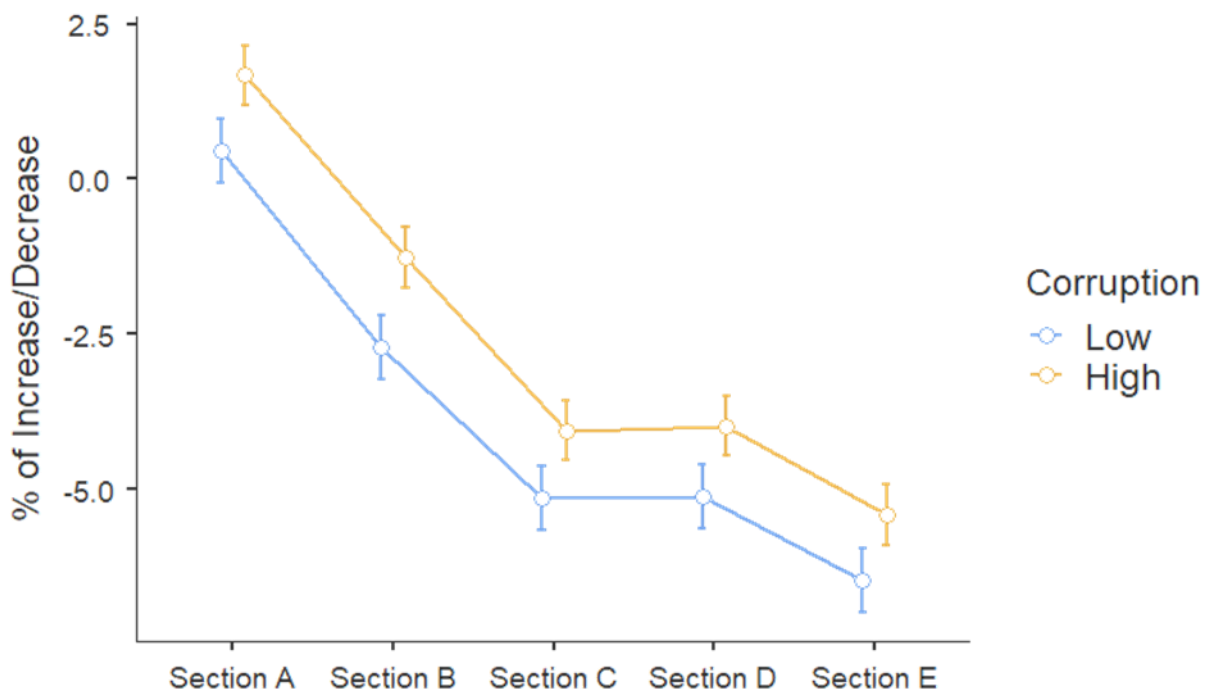
Table 7: Estimated marginal means of the increase/decrease in the taxation rates displayed by participants for each income section, according to the corruption manipulation they were exposed to

Corruption	Section	*M*	*SE*	Lower	Upper
Low	Section A	0.452	0.515	-0.559	1.464
	Section B	-2.727	0.515	-3.738	-1.715
	Section C	-5.158	0.515	-6.169	-4.146
	Section D	-5.132	0.515	-6.143	-4.120
	Section E	-6.475	0.515	-7.487	-5.464
High	Section A	1.668	0.489	0.708	2.628
	Section B	-1.269	0.489	-2.229	-0.308
	Section C	-4.055	0.489	-5.015	-3.095
	Section D	-3.982	0.489	-4.943	-3.022
	Section E	-5.409	0.489	-6.369	-4.448

5.5.   Study 2: British Students Sample

I decided to replicate the previously described results on a different population: the British one. As already mentioned, in fact, the levels of Economic Inequality and Corruption present in the U.K. follow an opposite trend compared to the ones present in Italy. In fact, According to Transparency International (2021) and the World Economic Forum (2020), Italy has below the European average levels of economic inequality and above the European average levels of corruption, while the U.K. has above the European average levels of economic inequality and below the European average levels of corruption. Using a different population, therefore, would help us extend the validity of the previous results, while also checking if such results were influenced by cultural differences and different levels of exposure to corruption and economic inequality, respectively. Even if I explored the perceptions of such phenomena in a fictional, empirical setting, cultural effects might still linger. As a first step, I pre-tested the stimuli previously used using a British sample. The results of such pre-tests can be found in the section 1.2 of the Appendix. Both the pre-tests and the study have been approved as a minimum risk study by the ethical committee of the University of Surrey.

5.5.1. Participants

I recruited a sample composed by 114 students (N_{Males} = 18[3], M_{age} = 19.4, SD_{age} = 1.15) of the University of Surrey using the research participation platform SONA system, in exchange for university credit. I used as an inclusion criterion for participation having a British citizenship. [4]

5.5.2. Manipulation Checks

5.5.2.1.   Subjective socio-economic status

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was performed to compare the effects of the three different status manipulations (Status: low vs medium vs high) on the participants' subjective socio-economic status and the results indicate a significant main effect of the manipulation, F (2, 111) = 138, η^2 = 0.71, p < .001. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD) indicated that participants in the low status condition (M = 4.68, SE = 0.18) perceived their status as lower than those assigned to the middle (M = 6.41, SE = 0.17; p < .001) and high (M = 8.84, SE = 0.17; p < .001), that, in turn, perceived themselves as significantly higher than those assigned to the other conditions, in line with the purpose of the manipulation.

5.5.2.2.   Economic Inequality

In order to assess whether there were any differences on the inequality perceptions between participants assigned to the high-inequality manipulation and the low-inequality one, an independent samples t-test was

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[3] The gender imbalance assessed in the sample did not significantly affect the results as no significant difference was assessed between the male and female participants' answers.

[4] Due to the University of Surrey ethical committee policies, we did not assess the samples' political orientation or occupation like we did in the Italian sample.

run. The results showed that the 58 participants assigned to the high-inequality manipulation (M = 1.91, SD = 0.99), compared to the 56 that were assigned to the low-inequality one (M = 3.04, SD = 0.93), perceived the society they were presented to as significantly more unequal, $t(112)$ = 6.2, p < .001 $M_{Difference}$ = -1.12, in line with the purpose of the manipulation.

5.5.2.3.   Corruption

In order to assess whether there were any differences on the corruption perceptions between participants assigned to the high-corruption manipulation and the low-corruption one, an independent samples t-test was run. The results showed that the 56 participants assigned to the high-corruption manipulation (M = 4.02, SD = 0.86), compared to the 58 that were assigned to the low-corruption one (M = 1.84, SD = 1.06), perceived the society they were presented to as significantly more corrupt, $t(112)$ = 12, p <.001 $M_{Difference}$ = 2.17, in line with the purpose of the manipulation.

5.5.3. Hypotheses testing

5.5.3.1.   Anger

A 2 (Inequality: high vs low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs low) x 3 (Status: high vs medium vs low) between-subjects ANOVA was performed on Anger. I found a significant main effect of Inequality, $F(1,102)$ = 10.66, p = .016, η^2 = .037, as participants assigned to the high inequality condition (M = 4.41, SE = 0.17) compared to those assigned to the low inequality one (M = 3.8, SE = 0.17) reported significantly higher levels of anger. The Corruption main effect was significant as well, $F(1,102)$ = 78.11, p < .001, η^2 = .272, and participants assigned to the high corruption condition (M = 4.93, SE = 0.17) compared to the ones assigned to the low corruption one (M = 3.28, SE = 0.17) reported significantly higher levels of anger. The Status manipulation did not reach the level of significance, as well as the interactions (ps> .05) These results confirm H1a and H2b, while the lack of interaction effect between the Corruption and Inequality manipulations disconfirms H3a.

5.5.3.2.   Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

In order to assess whether the experimental conditions had had any effects on the participants' reported levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequalities, a 2 (Inequality: high vs low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs low) x 3 (Status: high vs medium vs low) between-subjects ANOVA was performed. The results showed a significant main effect of the Inequality manipulation, $F(1,102)$ = 7.99, p = .036, η^2 = .038, as participants assigned to the high inequality condition (M = 4.85, SE = 0.17), compared to those assigned to the low inequality one (M = 4.32, SE = 0.17), reported higher levels of behavioural intentions for fighting economic inequalities, in line with H1b. The corruption manipulation, the status one as well as their interaction did not provide a significant effect (ps > .05). These results confirm H1b, while disconfirming H2c and H3b, in line with the results obtained with the Italian sample.

5.5.3.3. Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption

In order to assess whether the experimental conditions had had any effects on the participants' reported levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption, a 2 (Inequality: high vs low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs low) x 3 (Status: high vs medium vs low) between-subjects ANOVA was performed. The results showed a significant main effect of the Status manipulation, $F(2,102) = 3.33$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .057$, indicating that participants assigned to the high-status condition ($M = 4.21$, $SE = 0.22$) reported significantly lower levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting Corruption than those assigned to the low ($M = 4.72$, $SE = 0.22$) and middle status ($M = 5.01$, $SE = 0.21$), as reported in *Table* 7. No other main effects or interaction reached the level of significance, $p > .05$, disconfirming H1c, H2b and H3c.

Table 8: Post-hoc comparisons: Status Manipulation

Comparison							
Status		**Status**	$M_{\text{Difference}}$	*SE*	df	*t*	$p_{t\text{ukey}}$
Low	-	Middle	-0.291	0.313	102	-0.929	0.623
	-	High	0.503	0.315	102	1.599	0.251
Middle	-	High	0.794	0.311	102	2.556	0.032

5.5.3.4. Mediation Models

In order to test our H4 hypothesis and investigate if anger was a significant mediator between the experimental manipulations and the behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption, I used the models depicted in *Figure* 4 (Model 1) and *Figure* 5 (Model 2). The analyses were carried out using the GLM Mediation Model function, included in the package jAMM Jamovi Advanced Mediation Models (Version 1.01) by Gallucci (2019). The Status manipulation was a three-level variable, for this reason the contrasts were organized in Status 1 (Middle vs Low) and Status 2 (High vs Low).

5.5.3.4.1. Model 1: Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality and the mediation of Anger

I conducted a mediational analysis to test whether the effects of the experimental manipulations on the behavioural intentions for fighting economic inequality were mediated by the anger perception they elicited in participants as depicted in Model 1 (*Figure* 4). Anger was positively predicted by the Economic Inequality manipulation and by the Corruption one. Furthermore, Anger was a significant positive predictor of the behavioural intentions for fighting economic inequalities. The only total effect that reached the significance level was the one of the Economic Inequality manipulation. However, this effect was fully mediated by the Anger perception as the direct effect of the Economic Inequality manipulation is not statistically significant ($p > .05$), meaning that participants exposed to high economic inequality were also more likely to contrast such issue only in the case in which it provoked in them feelings of anger. I found a significant, positive, indirect effect of the Corruption manipulation, and a significant, positive, indirect effect of the Inequality manipulation, meaning that, indirectly, these experimental manipulations raised participants behavioural intentions for fighting economic inequality, by raising their anger perception that, in turn, predicted their intentions. Interestingly, I found a significant direct negative effect of the Corruption manipulation, meaning that when the Corruption manipulation failed to evoke anger feelings in the participants it actually led to a decrease in their behavioural intentions for fighting economic inequality, or an inversion effect as described by MacKinnon (2000). These results confirm our third hypothesis, identifying anger as a significant mediator of the behavioural intentions for contrasting inequality. These results confirm H4a and are in line with the ones obtained with the Italian sample.

Table 8: Indirect, Direct, and Total effects of the Mediation Model for the behavioural intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. Lower	Upper	β	z	p
Indirect	Status_1 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.1250	0.1494	-0.417	0.1679	-0.043	-0.83	0.403
	Status 2 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.0514	0.1492	-0.343	0.2411	-0.017	-0.34	0.731
	Corruption ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.8002	0.1785	0.4503	1.1501	0.2937	4.482	< .001
	Inequality ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.2981	0.1304	0.0425	0.5537	0.1094	2.286	0.022
Component	Status 1 ⇒ Anger	-0.2550	0.3021	-0.847	0.3370	-0.074	-0.84	0.398

Table 8: Indirect, Direct, and Total effects of the Mediation Model for the behavioural intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. Lower	95% C.I. Upper	β	z	p
	Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.4900	0.0805	0.3323	0.6477	0.5701	6.090	< .001
	Status 2 ⇒ Anger	-0.1049	0.3040	-0.700	0.4910	-0.031	-0.34	0.730
	Corruption ⇒ Anger	1.6330	0.2466	1.1496	2.1164	0.5152	6.621	< .001
	Inequality_ ⇒ Anger	0.6083	0.2466	0.1249	1.0917	0.1919	2.467	0.014
Direct	Status 1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.1689	0.2603	-0.341	0.6791	0.0588	0.649	0.516
	Status 2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.4860	0.2613	-0.998	0.0262	-0.168	-1.86	0.063
	Corruption ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.5195	0.2493	-1.008	-0.030	-0.190	-2.08	0.037
	Inequality ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.2280	0.2175	-0.198	0.6543	0.0837	1.049	0.294

Table 8: Indirect, Direct, and Total effects of the Mediation Model for the behavioural intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. Lower	95% C.I. Upper	β	z	p
Total	Status 1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.0440	0.3001	-0.544	0.6321	0.0153	0.147	0.884
	Status 2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.5374	0.3020	-1.129	0.0546	-0.186	-1.77	0.075
	Corruption ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.2808	0.2450	-0.199	0.7610	0.1030	1.146	0.252
	Inequality ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.5261	0.2450	0.0459	1.0063	0.1931	2.147	0.032

Note: For the variable Status, the contrasts are Status 1 = Middle vs Low and Status 2 = High vs Low, for the variable Inequality the contrast is High Inequality vs Low Inequality and for the variable Corruption the contrast is High Corruption vs Low Corruption. Confidence intervals have been computed using the Delta method.

5.5.3.4.2. Model 2: Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption and the mediation of Anger

I conducted a mediational analysis for assessing whether the effects of the experimental manipulations on the behavioural intentions for fighting corruption were mediated by the Anger perception they elicited in participants as depicted in Model 2 (*Figure* 5). Results (summed in *Table* 9) indicate that Anger was predicted by the Economic Inequality manipulation and by the Corruption one. Furthermore, Anger was identified as a significant positive predictor of the behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption. I found a significant, positive, indirect effect of the Corruption manipulation and a significant, positive, indirect effect of the Inequality one manipulation meaning that indirectly, these experimental manipulations raised participants behavioural intentions for fighting economic inequality, by raising their anger perception that, in turn, predicted their intentions. These results confirm H4b.

Table 9: Indirect, Direct, and Total effects of the Mediation Model for the behavioural intentions for contrasting Corruption

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. Lower	95% C.I. Upper	β	z	p
Indirect	Status_1 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.106	0.1284	-0.358	0.1448	-0.036	-0.83	0.405
	Status 2 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.043	0.1276	-0.294	0.2062	-0.015	-0.34	0.731
	Corruption ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.6839	0.1736	0.3437	1.0241	0.2474	3.940	< .001
	Inequality ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.2548	0.1156	0.0281	0.4814	0.0921	2.203	0.028
Component	Status 1 ⇒ Anger	-0.255	0.3021	-0.847	0.3370	-0.076	-0.84	0.398
	Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.4188	0.0854	0.2513	0.5862	0.4802	4.902	< .001
	Status 2 ⇒ Anger	-0.104	0.3040	-0.700	0.4910	-0.031	-0.34	0.730
	Corruption ⇒ Anger	1.6330	0.2466	1.1496	2.1164	0.5152	6.621	< .001
	Inequality ⇒ Anger	0.6083	0.2466	0.1249	1.0917	0.1919	2.467	0.014
Direct	Status 1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.3776	0.2764	-0.164	0.9193	0.1296	1.366	0.172
	Status 2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.470	0.2775	-1.014	0.0735	-0.160	-1.69	0.090
	Corruption ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.326	0.2647	-0.845	0.1927	-0.118	-1.23	0.218

Table 9: Indirect, Direct, and Total effects of the Mediation Model for the behavioural intentions for contrasting Corruption

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. Lower	95% C.I. Upper	β	z	p
	Inequality ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.0634	0.2309	-0.389	0.5159	0.0229	0.274	0.784
Total	Status 1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.2708	0.3045	-0.326	0.8676	0.0930	0.889	0.374
	Status 2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.514	0.3065	-1.114	0.0865	-0.175	-1.67	0.093
	Corruption ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.3577	0.2486	-0.129	0.8451	0.1294	1.439	0.150
	Inequality ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.3181	0.2486	-0.169	0.8054	0.1151	1.279	0.201

Note: For the variable Status, the contrasts are Status 1 = Middle vs Low and Status 2 = High vs Low, for the variable Inequality the contrast is High Inequality vs Low Inequality and for the variable Corruption the contrast is High Corruption vs Low Corruption. Confidence intervals have been computed using the Delta method.

5.5.4. Explorative analyses

5.5.4.1.   Moderators

I conducted some exploratory analyses to check if the effects of the experimental manipulations on the anger expressed by participants were moderated by the level of Meritocracy or by the Economic System Justification (ESJ) they expressed, as expressed by *Figure* 6 and *Figure* 7. The models were tested using the GLM Mediation Model function, included in the package jAMM Jamovi Advanced Mediation Models (Version 1.01) by Gallucci (2019). Concerning both the models depicted in *Figure* 13 and *Figure* 14 I found that neither Meritocracy nor Economic System Justification significantly moderated the anger reactions of participants when exposed to the economic inequality, corruption, and status manipulations (ps > .05).

5.5.4.2.   Taxation Preference

A 2 (Inequality: high vs low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs low) x 3 (Status: high vs medium vs low) mixed-measures ANOVA was conducted using the first three variables as between-groups factors, and the taxation sections (Taxation sections: A, B, C, D, and E) as the within-subject variable. The dependent variable used was the percentage points participants had to add to (or subtract from) the taxation rate assigned to each section. I found a significant main effect of Taxation section, F (4, 408) = 108.86, p < .001, η^2 = .061 [Greenhouse-Geisser correction], indicating a progressive preference which was consistent independently from the manipulations participants were exposed to. More specifically, as illustrated in *Figure* 9 and Table 10 participants decided to raise the taxes only for the richest income section, while they decided to decrease them progressively for all the other ones (exception made for the section C and D, whose difference was not statistically significant). I did not find a significant effect of the Inequality, Corruption or Status manipulation, nor of their interaction (ps > .05)

Figure 9: Plot of the average increase/decrease in the taxation rates participants selected for each income section
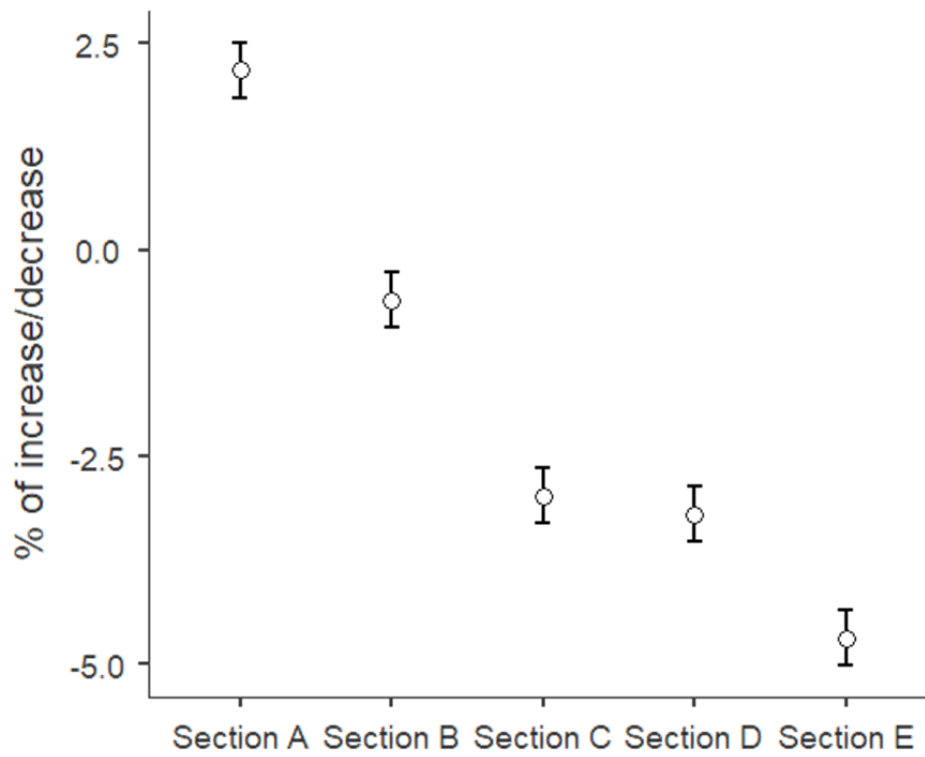
Table 10: Estimated marginal means of the increase/decrease in the taxation rates selected by participants for each income section

	Mean	*SE*	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Section A	2.178	0.334	1.52	2.8354
Section B	-0.608	0.334	-1.27	0.0493
Section C	-2.968	0.334	-3.63	-2.3109
Section D	-3.197	0.334	-3.85	-2.5396
Section E	-4.686	0.334	-5.34	-4.0285

5.6. Study 3: British Sample (Prolific)

Our results obtained with a British sample composed by students partially replicated the ones obtained with the Italian sample. Nevertheless, the literature has pointed out that a sample composed by students may not be fully representative of the real population (Henrich et al., 2010). Therefore, to increase the validity of our results I decided to recruit a new British sample using the online recruiting platform Prolific. Participants received a monetary compensation equal to 9£ per hour. The ethical committee of the University of Surrey approved the study as a minimal risk study.

5.6.1. Participants

I recruited 233 participants aged 18 to 75 (M_{age}= 39.4 year, SD_{age} = 15.2; $N_{Females}$ = 136, N_{Males} = 95, $N_{Non-Binary}$ = 2). The educational level, as well as the occupation of the sample have been summarized in *Table* 11[5].

Table 11: Demographic Information of the Sample

Level of Education	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
GCSE	29	12.4 %	12.4 %
A levels	56	24.0 %	36.5 %
Bachelor's degree	110	47.2 %	83.7 %
Master's degree	32	13.7 %	97.4 %
Ph.D.	6	2.6 %	100.0 %

5.6.2. Manipulation Checks

5.6.2.1. Subjective socio-economic status

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was performed) to compare the effects of the three different status manipulations (Status manipulation: low vs. medium vs. high) on the participants' status perception, and the results indicate a significant effect of the empirical manipulation, $F (2, 230) = 268$, $\eta^2 = 0.699$, $p < .001$. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test ($p < .001$), indicate that participants assigned to low status manipulation (M = 3.9, SE = 0.14) perceived their status as significantly lower than those assigned to the

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[5] Due to the ethical policies of the University of Surrey, we did not collect information concerning the occupation and the political orientation of the sample.

middle (*M* = 6.54, *SE* = 0.14) and high (*M* = 8.73, *SE* = 0.14), that, in turn, perceived themselves as significantly higher than those assigned to the other conditions, in line with the purpose of the manipulation.

5.6.2.2. Economic Inequality

In order to assess whether there were any differences on the inequality perceptions between participants assigned to the high-inequality manipulation and the low-inequality one, an independent samples t-test was run. The results showed that the 118 participants assigned to the high-inequality manipulation (*M* = 1.7, *SD* = 0.77), compared to the 115 that were assigned to the low-inequality one (*M* = 2.92, *SD* = 0.95), perceived the society they were presented to as significantly more unequal, Welch's $t(219)$ = 10.7, $p < .001$ $M_{\text{Difference}}$ = -1.22, in line with the purpose of the manipulation.

5.6.2.3. Corruption

In order to assess whether there were any differences on the corruption perceptions between participants assigned to the high-corruption manipulation and the low-corruption one, an independent samples t-test was run. The results showed that the 115 participants assigned to the high-corruption manipulation (*M* = 4.34, *SD* = 0.64), compared to the 118 that were assigned to the low-corruption one (*M* = 1.94, *SD* = 0.95), perceived the society they were presented to as significantly more corrupt, Welch's $t(206)$ = 22.5, $p < .001$ $M_{\text{Difference}}$ = 2.4, in line with the purpose of the manipulation.

5.6.3. Hypotheses Testing

5.6.3.1. Anger

In order to assess whether the experimental conditions had had any effects on the participants' reported levels of anger, a 2 (Inequality: high vs low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs low) x 3 (Status: high vs medium vs low) between-subjects ANOVA was performed. The results showed a significant main effect of the Inequality manipulation , $F(1,221)$ = 23.91, $p < .001$, η^2 = .034 as participants assigned to the assigned to the low inequality condition (*M* = 3.92, *SE* = 0.12), compared to those assigned to the high inequality one (*M* = 4.56, *SE* = 0.12), reported significantly lower levels of anger, Student's t (221) = -3.71, $M_{\text{Difference}}$ = -0.64, *SE* = 0.17, $p_{\text{Tukey}} < .01$. The Corruption main effect was significant as well, $F(1,221)$ = 151.75, $p < .001$, η^2 = .372), as that participants assigned to the high corruption condition (*M* = 5.3, *SE* = 0.12) compared to the ones assigned to the low corruption one (*M* = 3.17, *SE* = 0.12) reported significantly higher levels of anger (Student's t (174) = 8.12, $M_{\text{Difference}}$ = 1.16, *SE* = 0.19, $p_{\text{Tukey}} < .01$). These results confirm H1a and H2a.

I also assessed a significant interaction effect of the Corruption * Inequality manipulations, $F(1,221)$ = 11.07, p = .012, η^2 = .016). Exploring the Corruption * Inequality interaction, illustrated in *Figure* 10, one can notice that participants assigned to the low-Corruption manipulation, reported significantly different levels of Anger (as described in the post-hoc *Table* 12) according to the Inequality manipulation they were assigned to, more

specifically, those assigned to the high-inequality manipulation reported higher levels of Anger than those assigned to the low-one. This difference, however, was not statistically significant for those assigned to the high-Corruption manipulation, as participants, independently from the inequality manipulation they were assigned to, reported similar levels of Anger. This type of interaction effect, therefore, does not confirm H3a.

Figure 10: The Corruption*Inequality Manipulation
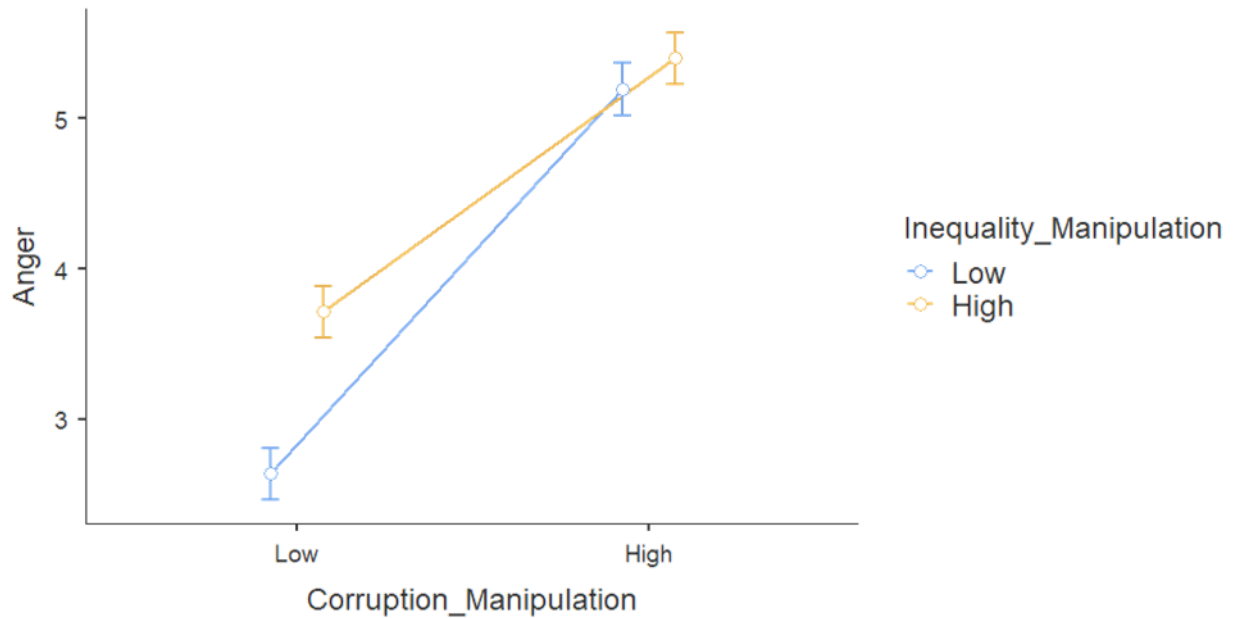
Table 12: The Corruption * Inequality manipulations interaction post-hoc table

Comparison

Corruption	Inequality		Corruption	Inequality	$M_{Difference}$	SE	df	t	p_{tukey}
Low	Low	-	Low	High	-1.077	0.243	221	-4.442	< .001
		-	High	Low	-2.562	0.246	221	-10.430	< .001
		-	High	High	-2.767	0.245	221	-11.311	< .001
	High	-	High	Low	-1.485	0.243	221	-6.099	< .001
		-	High	High	-1.690	0.242	221	-6.970	< .001
High	Low	-	High	High	-0.205	0.246	221	-0.834	0.838

The Status * Corruption manipulations interaction reached the level of significance as well, $F(1,221) = 4.05$, $p = .019$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Exploring the Status * Corruption interaction, illustrated in *Figure* 11 and in *Table* 13, one can notice that when assigned to the low-corruption manipulation, participants reported different levels of Anger according to the Status manipulation they were assigned to, and, more specifically, those assigned to the low-status one reported the highest levels of Anger while those assigned to the high-status one reported the lowest. However, when assigned to the high Corruption manipulation, participants' levels of anger did not differ according to the Status manipulation.

*Figure 11: The Corruption * Status Manipulations interaction*

Status	Corruption		Status	Corruption	$M_{Difference}$	SE	df	t	p_{tukey}
Low	Low	-	Low	High	-1.5849	0.298	221	-5.3148	< .001
		-	Middle	Low	0.4187	0.294	221	1.4226	0.713
		-	Middle	High	-1.5980	0.298	221	-5.3589	< .001
		-	High	Low	0.8972	0.298	221	3.0067	0.035
		-	High	High	-1.8789	0.296	221	-6.3418	< .001
	High	-	Middle	Low	2.0036	0.298	221	6.7191	< .001
		-	Middle	High	-0.0132	0.302	221	-0.0436	1.000
		-	High	Low	2.4821	0.302	221	8.2132	< .001
		-	High	High	-0.2941	0.300	221	-0.9799	0.924
Middle	Low	-	Middle	High	-2.0168	0.298	221	-6.7632	< .001
		-	High	Low	0.4785	0.298	221	1.6034	0.597
		-	High	High	-2.2977	0.296	221	-7.7551	< .001
	High	-	High	Low	2.4952	0.302	221	8.2568	< .001
		-	High	High	-0.2809	0.300	221	-0.9361	0.937
High	Low	-	High	High	-2.7762	0.300	221	-9.2442	< .001

5.6.3.2. Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

In order to assess whether the experimental conditions had had any effects on the participants' reported levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequalities, a 2 (Inequality: high vs low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs low) x 3 (Status: high vs medium vs low) between-subjects ANOVA was performed. The results showed a significant main effect only of the Corruption manipulation, $F(1,221) = 18.97$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .032$, while no other main effects or interactions resulted statistically significant ($p > .05$). Exploring the Corruption main effect, it is possible to see that participants assigned to the high Corruption condition ($M = 4.5$, $SE = 0.14$), compared to those assigned to the low Corruption one ($M = 3.95$, $SE = 0.14$), reported higher

levels of behavioural intentions for fighting economic inequalities (Student's t (174) = 2.78 $M_{Difference}$ = 0.55, SE = 0.2, p_{Tukey} = .006). These results seem to confirm H2a while disproving H1b and H3b.

5.6.3.3. Behavioural Intentions for Contrasting Corruption

In order to assess whether the experimental conditions had had any effects on the participants' reported levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption, a 2 (Inequality: high vs low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs low) x 3 (Status: high vs medium vs low) between-subjects ANOVA was performed. The results showed a significant main effect only of the Corruption manipulation. $F(1,221)$ = 24.95, $p < .001$, η^2 = .048, while no other main effects or interactions resulted statistically significant ($p > .05$). Exploring the Corruption main effect, it is possible to see that participants assigned to the high Corruption condition (M = 4.7, SE = 0.13), compared to those assigned to the low Corruption one (M = 4.05, SE = 0.13), reported higher levels of behavioural intentions for fighting economic inequalities, Student's t (174) = 3.41 $M_{Difference}$ = 0.65, SE = 0.19, p_{Tukey} < .001. These results confirm H2b, while disproving H1c and H3c.

5.6.3.4. Mediation Models

In order to test our H4 hypothesis and investigate if anger was a significant mediator between the experimental manipulations and the behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption, I used the models depicted in *Figure* 4 (Model 1) and *Figure* 5 (Model 2). The analyses were carried out using the GLM Mediation Model function, included in the package jAMM Jamovi Advanced Mediation Models (Version 1.01) by Gallucci (2019). The Status manipulation was a three-level variable, for this reason the contrasts were organized in Status 1 (Middle vs Low) and Status 2 (High vs Low).

5.6.3.4.1. Model 1: Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality and the mediation of Anger

I decided to test Model 1 and the results are summed in *Table* 14. Anger was identified as a significant predictor of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality. In turn, I found a positive, significant, indirect effect of the corruption and the inequality manipulation. Although it did not reach the level of significance, I notice a negative direct effect of the Corruption manipulation, which is in line with the Inversion effect I significantly assessed in the other samples.

Table 14: Indirect, Direct, and Total effects of the Mediation Model for the behavioural intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

Type	Effect	b	SE	Lower	Upper	β	z	p
				95% C.I. (a)				
Indirect	Status 1 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	-0.092	0.0957	-0.279	0.0954	-0.028	-0.963	0.336
	Status ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	-0.136	0.0973	-0.326	0.0544	-0.041	-1.401	0.161
	Corruption⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	0.9364	0.1639	0.6151	1.2577	0.3016	5.713	< .001

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. (a)		β	z	p
				Lower	Upper			
	Inequality ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	0.2847	0.0890	0.1102	0.4592	0.0917	3.197	0.001
Component	Status 1⇒ Anger	-0.2083	0.2140	-0.627	0.2111	-0.056	-0.973	0.330
	Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	0.4422	0.0682	0.3085	0.5759	0.4950	6.482	< .001
	Status 2⇒ Anger	-0.308	0.2148	-0.729	0.1127	-0.083	-1.435	0.151

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. (a)		β	z	p
				Lower	Upper			
	Corruption ⇒ Anger	2.1176	0.1752	1.7743	2.4609	0.6093	12.090	< .001
	Inequality ⇒ Anger	0.6438	0.1752	0.3005	0.9871	0.1852	3.675	< .001
Direct	Status 1⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	-0.100	0.2233	-0.537	0.3375	-0.030	-0.449	0.654
	Status 2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	-0.210	0.2246	-0.651	0.2293	-0.063	-0.939	0.348

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. (a)		β	z	p
				Lower	Upper			
	Corruption ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	-0.382	0.2327	-0.838	0.0738	-0.123	-1.643	0.100
	Inequality ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	0.0561	0.1876	-0.311	0.4238	0.0181	0.299	0.765
Total	Status 1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	-0.192	0.2426	-0.667	0.2833	-0.058	-0.793	0.428

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. (a)		β	z	p
				Lower	Upper			
	Status 2 ⇒ I Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	-0.347	0.2435	-0.824	0.1300	-0.105	-1.426	0.154
	Corruption ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	0.5541	0.1986	0.1649	0.9433	0.1785	2.790	0.005
	Inequality ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	0.3407	0.1986	-0.048	0.7300	0.1097	1.716	0.086

Note: For the variable Status, the contrasts are Status 1 = Middle vs Low and Status 2 = High vs Low, for the variable Inequality the contrast is High Inequality vs Low Inequality and for the variable Corruption the contrast is High Corruption vs Low Corruption. Confidence intervals have been computed using the Delta method.

5.6.3.4.2. Model 2: Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption and the mediation of Anger

I conducted the mediation analyses depicted in the Model 2 (see *Figure* 5), the results have been summed in *Table* 15. Anger was significantly predicted by the economic inequality and the corruption manipulation, and, in turn, it was assessed as a significant predictor of behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption. I found a significant indirect effect of the corruption and the economic inequality manipulations. The direct effect of corruption was non-significant, indicating a full mediation of the Anger variable.

Table 15: Indirect, Direct, and Total effects of the Mediation Model for the behavioural intentions for contrasting Corruption

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I. Lower	95% C.I. Upper	β	z	p
Indirect	Status 1 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.0643	0.0676	-0.196	0.0681	-0.0204	-0.9522	0.341
	Status 2 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.0952	0.0695	-0.231	0.0411	-0.0301	-1.3693	0.171
	Corruption ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.65418	0.1529	0.3545	0.9538	0.22008	4.2787	< .001
	Inequality ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.19887	0.0694	0.0628	0.3349	0.06691	2.8652	0.004
Component	Status 1 ⇒ Anger	-0.2083	0.2140	-0.627	0.2111	-0.0565	-0.9735	0.330
	Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.30893	0.0675	0.1766	0.4413	0.36122	4.5748	< .001
	Status 2 ⇒ Anger	-0.3081	0.2148	-0.729	0.1127	-0.0834	-1.4350	0.151
	Corruption ⇒ Anger	2.11759	0.1752	1.7743	2.4609	0.60927	12.0896	< .001
	Inequality ⇒ Anger	0.64376	0.1752	0.3005	0.9871	0.18522	3.6753	< .001
Direct	Status 1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.29769	0.2210	-0.135	0.7309	0.09453	1.3468	0.178
	Status 2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.24319	0.2223	-0.192	0.6790	0.07698	1.0938	0.274

Type	Effect	b	SE	95% C.I.		β	z	p
				Lower	Upper			
	Corruption ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.0033	0.2303	-0.454	0.4480	-0.0011	-0.0147	0.988
	Inequality ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.11822	0.1857	-0.245	0.4822	0.03977	0.6366	0.524
Total	Status 1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.23333	0.2308	-0.219	0.6857	0.07409	1.0110	0.312
	Status 2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.14799	0.2316	-0.305	0.6019	0.04684	0.6390	0.523
	Corruption ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.65080	0.1889	0.2806	1.0210	0.21894	3.4454	< .001
	Inequality ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.31709	0.1889	-0.053	0.6873	0.10668	1.6787	0.093

Note: For the variable Status, the contrasts are Status 1 = Middle vs Low and Status 2 = High vs Low, for the variable Inequality the contrast is High Inequality vs Low Inequality and for the variable Corruption the contrast is High Corruption vs Low Corruption. Confidence intervals have been computed using the Delta method.

5.6.4. Explorative analyses
5.6.4.1. Moderators

I conducted some exploratory analyses to check if the effects of the experimental manipulations on the anger expressed by participants were moderated by the level of Meritocracy or by the Economic System Justification (ESJ) they expressed, as expressed by *Figure* 6 and *Figure* 7. The models were tested using the GLM Mediation Model function, included in the package jAMM Jamovi Advanced Mediation Models (Version 1.01) by Gallucci (2019). I assessed a significant moderation of Meritocracy between the economic inequality manipulation and the Anger response it elicited ($b = 0.667$, $SE = 0.28$, 95% CI [0.101; 1.23], $\beta = 2.33$, $p = .021$). As depicted in *Table* 16, when participants' Meritocracy level was higher, the economic inequality manipulation elicited in them higher feelings of Anger.

Table 16: Meritocracy as a moderator between the Economic Inequality manipulation and Anger

	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence Interval		Z	p
			Lower	Upper		
Average	0.667	0.291	0.0966	1.24	2.292	0.022
Low (-1SD)	0.269	0.413	-0.5409	1.08	0.651	0.515
High (+1SD)	1.065	0.415	0.2512	1.88	2.565	0.010

Note. The table shows the effect of the predictor (Inequality Manipulation) on the dependent variable (Anger) at different levels of the moderator (Meritocracy)

5.6.4.2. Taxation Preference

A 2 (Inequality: high vs low) x 2 (Corruption: high vs low) x 3 (Status: high vs medium vs low) mixed-measures ANOVA was conducted using the first three variables as between-groups factors, and the taxation sections (Taxation sections: A, B, C, D, E) as the within-subject variable. The dependent variable used was the percentage points participants had to add to (or subtract from) the taxation rate assigned to each section. I found a significant main effect of Taxation section, $F(1.79, 394.67) = 218.69$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .121$ [Greenhouse-Geisser correction], indicating a progressive preference which was consistent independently from the manipulations participants were exposed to. Moreover, I found a significant effect of the Economic Inequality manipulation, $F(1, 221) = 3.92$, $p = .049$, $\eta^2 = .002$. As seen in *Figure* 12 and *Table* 17, participants assigned to the high inequality manipulation decided to reduce the taxes of the lowest income sections (C, D and E)

more than those participants assigned to the low inequality condition. No other effect or interaction reached the level of significance (ps > .05).

Figure 12: Plot of the average increase/decrease in the taxation rates participants selected for each income section, according to the economic inequality manipulation they were exposed to.
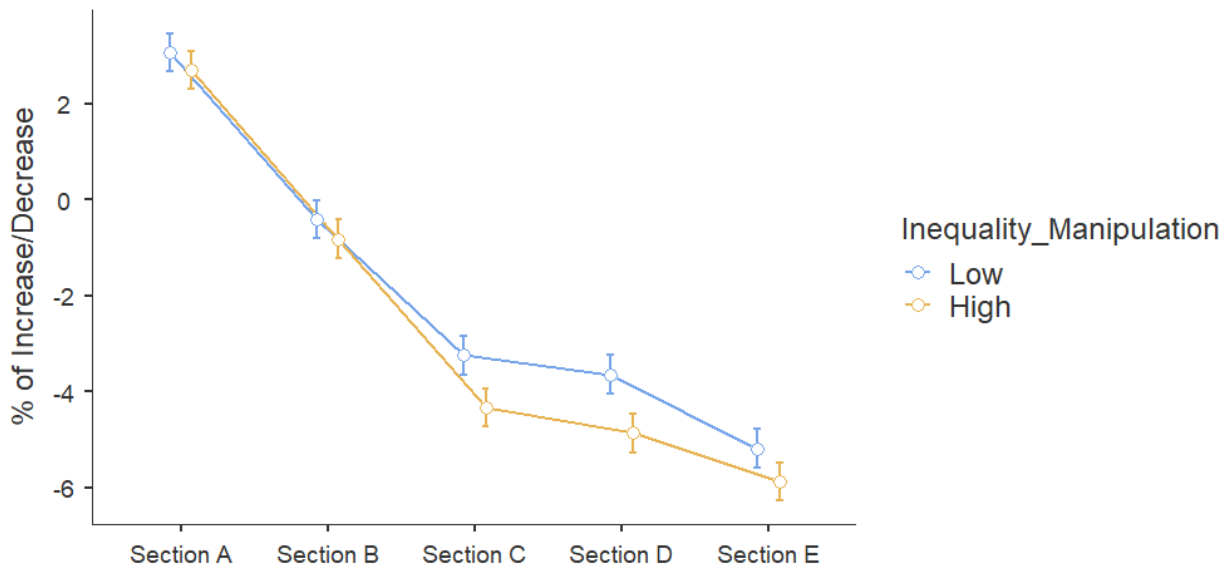
Inequality	Section	M	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Low	Section A	3.078	0.398	2.30	3.8604
	Section B	-0.408	0.398	-1.19	0.3743
	Section C	-3.242	0.398	-4.02	-2.4603
	Section D	-3.644	0.398	-4.43	-2.8619
	Section E	-5.184	0.398	-5.97	-4.4024
High	Section A	2.703	0.396	1.93	3.4797
	Section B	-0.816	0.396	-1.59	-0.0400
	Section C	-4.326	0.396	-5.10	-3.5492
	Section D	-4.869	0.396	-5.65	-4.0927
	Section E	-5.876	0.396	-6.65	-5.0997

5.7.   Discussion

Our manipulations were proved to be successful, across samples, in changing people's perception of economic inequality, corruption and subjective socio-economic status, identifying the fictional setting as an effective way to manipulate such perceptions in an empirical perspective. I consistently found that being exposed to higher levels of economic inequality and corruption raised participants levels of anger, although a positive, multiplicative interaction effect (that I postulated could have been a signal of the inequality trap) was not assessed. Given the average high means concerning the anger ratings, however, such lack of significance could have been due to a ceiling effect that may have prevented the interaction from emerging.

Concerning the inequality trap I had also postulated that, if participants perceived it, being exposed to higher levels of economic inequality (or corruption) would have affected participants' willingness to contrast corruption (or economic inequality), through a spillover effect. While I did not assess a direct effect of the corruption manipulation on participants' willingness to contrast economic inequality (or vice-versa) directly, I found an indirect effect of one manipulation on participants' behavioural intentions for contrasting the other phenomenon, through anger. Being exposed to high levels of corruption (or economic inequality) in fact, raised participants' levels of anger, which in turn was identified as a significant predictor of both the intentions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption. This result seems to suggest that, at least at an emotional level, the inequality trap has an influence on participants' intentions of contrasting such issues. Uslaner (2008) had postulated that the combined exposure to the inequality trap might hinder people willingness to protest, such effect, however, was not assessed in our results, given the role of anger. Although not always significantly, however, I found that being exposed to higher levels of corruption reduces participants will of contrasting economic inequality when such exposure is not assisted by an anger reaction, through an inversion effect. This could indicate that, in the absence of an emotional response, the combined effects of economic inequality and corruption might be different and even opposed to the ones I assessed.

Although our subjective socio-economic status manipulation was effective in changing participants' perception of their position on the social ladder, I did not assess consistent significant differences in their pattern of responses concerning their willingness to contrast economic inequality and corruption.
Although the existing literature (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 2) has identified status has directly linked to the consequences of corruption and economic inequality, the fictional setting used might have prevented such effects from emerging. While social status can be successfully manipulated in an empirical setting, the life-experiences and the worldview associated with belonging to a higher or lower position on the social ladder will not be altered. Participants can imagine how it is belonging to a different social position, nevertheless their interpretation of the world provided by their social position is less likely to be significantly changed. Therefore, eventual differences in the patterns of appraisal of the inequality trap, along with the behavioural intentions displayed, were less likely to emerge in such setting. Although other studies have successfully

manipulated the socio-economic status of participants in a fictional setting (e.g., Jetten, 2018; Jetten 2019; Jetten et al., 2019) in these specific studies I was interested in seeing if belonging to different sections of the populations affected the perception of economic inequality and corruption, a concept that is more linked to daily experiences of such phenomena across different social statuses. In our studies, due to methodological limits, we were not able to provide to participants daily experiences of these phenomena and this might have hindered our results.

Likewise, the measures concerning the Economic System Justification and Meritocracy did not provide consistent effects through all samples, although, when significant, were in line with the literature concerning them. For example, in the Italian Sample, I found that the being exposed to Corruption caused stronger anger reactions in participants who displayed higher levels of Meritocracy, while participants who displayed higher levels of Economic System Justification were less enraged by the high levels of inequality while were angrier than the average when exposed to higher levels of Corruption.

Corruption, in fact, may represent an element in stark contrast with the worldviews I assessed, that depict the world as guided by fair and just system, in which people's talents and abilities determine their position in the society and in the economic ladder. If people think that the strong income differences depicted in the manipulation may be due to people's merits, they feel less alarmed by them, likewise, the presence of corruption represents a threat to their fair worldview, therefore sparking a stronger anger reaction. Given the fictional settings, however, participants might have not translated their worldviews (that are usually strongly embedded in the society one is living in) into the country of Velonia.

In this set of experiments, I also assessed people's willingness to change the taxation rates depicted.

While, as previously described, the attitudes towards the taxation rates are strongly correlated with the perception of both corruption and economic inequality, I did not find significant, consistent effects of the manipulations. Reasoning about the effects of changing the taxation rates, in terms of tax revenues and their use, is a far from simple task and, given the fictional settings, participants might have not been strongly motivated to ponder all the possible consequences of their choices on the society of Velonia.

Through this task, however, I found a consistent preference for progressivity, as participants, on average, displayed a preference for reducing the taxation rates more the smaller the income of the section of the population examined.

The current studies seem to indicate that people may perceive the inequality trap, at least at an emotional level, however, the lack of consistent spillover effects and interactions lead us to think that further studies are needed to better understand people's perception of the inequality trap.

In the future sections of this thesis (Chapter 6), I will try to tackle this research question through a different methodology to better disentangle the results currently obtained.

Chapter 6
Study 4a/4b and Study 5a/5b

6.1.   Introduction

In the first studies (1, 2 and 3) I explored the concept of the inequality trap, investigating how different perceptions of economic inequality and corruption would interact with each other in an experimental setting, and how people's willingness to engage in actions against these issues was mediated by anger reactions. The data I examined provided support for some of our hypotheses: I assessed that higher levels of inequality and corruption would lead to higher levels of anger and to higher levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption respectively; furthermore, I found these behavioural intentions to be significantly mediated by the anger response evoked by these issues. These data provide an interesting input for our line of research as they provide a first step in an empirical investigation of corruption and inequality using a sociopsychological perspective. The results concerning the perception of the inequality trap, however, did not lead to an unambiguous interpretation. The hypotheses concerning our first experiments, in fact, postulated that higher levels of economic inequality and corruption, taken together, would have generated an interaction effect concerning both the anger response and the behavioural intentions. Furthermore, I had argued that, if participants were aware of the inequality trap, they would have responded to higher levels of economic inequality by raising their willingness to contrast corruption as well, and vice versa. The data I obtained seem to partially disregard these assumptions. The absence of a pattern of response consistent with our expectations challenged us to explore the inequality trap using a different empirical methodology. In fact, I considered that the lack of an interaction effect may be due to some experimental confounds such as the presence of a ceiling effect. Moreover, the absence of an impact of the corruption manipulation on the behavioural intentions for contrasting inequality (and vice-versa) may have also been due to some methodological issues in the experimental procedure. Participants, in fact were exposed to three different manipulations (inequality, corruption and status) that may have fatigued their assessments. Furthermore, due to the vast number of experimental conditions (the first studies in fact provided 12 of them), I did include a control one. In other words, participants were provided with experimental manipulations in which corruption and economic inequality were depicted at either high or low levels, lacking a neutral condition. In such a way, I could attribute the lack of a spillover effect from a corruption manipulation to the inequality behavioural intentions (or vice-versa) to the experimental design. For example, I had hypothesized that when a participant was exposed to high corruption and low economic inequality, if they intended the issue of corruption to be a threat for economic inequality as well, they would have raised their behavioural intentions for fighting economic inequality as well. However, the participant may have given their response using the information provided by the economic inequality manipulation being

low, that may have indirectly suggested that high corruption does not pose a threat for economic inequality (due to the fact that the latter is described as being low despite high levels of the former). To disentangle this potential confounds and provide better evidence to support our hypotheses, I decided to investigate the concept of the inequality trap using a different empirical methodology. More precisely, I decided to manipulate for each participant either corruption or economic inequality at three different levels (low, high and control) while asking to infer the extent of the other phenomenon and measuring their behavioural intentions for contrasting both issues. In such a way, for example, participants who had been exposed to a manipulation of corruption would have used such information to draw inferences about the inequality levels present in the fictional country about which I did not provide any information. This methodology would therefore rely on *inferences* that have been defined as a "formalized cognitive process that reasons a possible causal conclusion from given premises based on known causal relations between a pair of cause and effect proven true by empirical observations, theoretical inferences or statistical regulations" (Wan, 2011, p. 75). As the definitions of inferences suggest, assessing one's perception of the spread of economic inequality given information about corruption (or vice-versa) would imply that participants are aware of *a known causal relation between a pair of cause and effect,* which, in this case, would be the awareness of the inequality trap.

The second main reason behind this new study lies in wanting to further explore the emotional responses that may assist people when deciding to engage in actions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption. The previous study, in fact, had successfully identified anger as a key element for determining people's engagement. In this context, I decided to further explore the role played by another emotion: hope. The literature discussed in the first chapters has in fact identified hope as an emotional factor that is linked to both economic inequality (e.g., Ritzen & Zimmerman, 2018) and corruption (e.g., Chong et al., 2015). Moreover, the literature has identified hope as an ambiguous element for determining people's participation in actions of protest: some scholars, in fact, have posited that hope increases behavioural intentions for contrasting actions, as the ability to imagine positive consequences for future is at the core of acting for change (e.g., Chadwick, 2010; Feldman & Hart, 2016). On the other hand, some scholars (e.g., Marlon et al. 2019; Ojala, 2012) have identified hope as a factor that may limit people's willingness to protest as they may hold an optimistic view of the future in which a certain issue will solve itself without the need of an external (and effortful) action. The existing literature concerning hope and economic inequality has reached quite a consensus in stating that being exposed to high levels of economic inequality leads people to develop feelings of helplessness. Likewise, when examining the literature about corruption, it is possible to notice that being exposed to high levels of corruption makes people develop feelings of hopelessness. How (the lack of) hope provoked by exposure to inequality and corruption operates in determining people's protesting action is however far from clear. Uslaner (2008) has argued that the inequality trap itself may evoke feelings of hopelessness that, in turn, may guide people to distrust the authorities, leading to a stagnation of the status

quo. This statement, however, was an interpretation of the author when examining a panel of data, and to the best of our knowledge no empirical studies so far have tried to link corruption and economic inequality, together, to hope and the behavioural intentions for constrasting such issues.

Lastly, in this study I decided to introduce a new measure concerning the perceived effectiveness of the behavioural intentions people were asked to rate. This decision is rooted in mainly in two considerations. First, because declaring one's willingness to engage in actions of protest in an empirical, fictitious setting is a cost-free action. In other words, people, due to the absence of such costs, may overestimate their actual participation. The literature has shown that people's behavioural intentions scores are not always predictive of one's behaviour due to the costs linked to the action itself (Sheeran & Webb, 2016). Generally, people are willing to pay those costs only in the case in which they believe that the action will pay-off with a rather probable desired outcome (Hornsey et al. 2006), in other words if they think they consider their action effective. In this sense, therefore, exploring people's perceived action effectiveness may be a closer representation of people's future behaviour rather than their intentions. Secondly, because different levels of corruption and economic inequality may have an impact of people's actions effectiveness' perception. In fact, people's exposure to these issues may help contribute to an environment of distrust, as posited by Uslaner (2008), that may lead people to consider the status quo unchangeable with one's efforts.

6.2. Methodology

6.2.1. Study Design and Survey Flow

I asked again participants to identify with a citizen of a fictitious country named Velonia. Once participants were instructed, they read information about this imaginary country, and I provided them with information concerning either economic inequality or corruption.

More specifically, I distributed two separate and parallel Qualtrics surveys (Surveys A and B; see Figure 1): in one (Survey A), I manipulated the level of corruption of Velonia by presenting one newspaper page out of the three available (Corruption: low vs. high vs. control). In the control version, I provided the participant with information concerning sport and cultural events available in the state of Velonia. The other two conditions mirrored those used in the first study for manipulating corruption. In the parallel survey (Survey B), instead, I manipulated the economic inequality perception by presenting participants with one table depicting the economic sections the Velonian population was divided into, ranging from A, the richest, to E, the poorest. Also in this case, participants were randomly assigned to one condition out of the three available (Inequality: low vs. high vs. control). In the control condition, participants saw a table illustrating the composition of the age sections of Velonia. After the experimental manipulation, as a manipulation check, participants were asked to rate an on a scale ranging from 0 to 10 how limited (0) or widespread (10) they considered corruption or economic inequality, respectively, in Velonia.

Then, participants exposed to the corruption manipulation were asked to read a brief text describing what the Gini coefficient is and were asked to rate to what extent they considered Velonia to be economically unequal (0) or equal (10). In the other parallel survey, participants exposed to the economic inequality manipulation were presented with a text describing the what the Corruption Perception Index is and were asked to rate how corruption was limited (0) or widespread (10) in Velonia.

The remaining parts of the survey were identical in both Survey A and B: participants were asked to rate their overall judgment of Velonia as a society; their emotional response concerning it in terms of anger and hope; their behavioural intentions for fighting economic inequality and corruption, as well as how likely they were to consider these actions effective for reaching the intended goal.

Finally, before providing their demographic information, participants were asked to distribute a fixed amount of money across the five different sections of the population (ranging from A, the richest, to E, the poorest), to better understand participants' idea of an economically equal country. Figure 1 presents a schematic representation of the surveys structure, along with the dependent variable employed.

6.2.2. Scales and Manipulations

- Corruption Manipulation: I manipulated participants' perception of corruption using a newspaper pager (the same ones I used in the previous studies). Concerning the control condition, I created a newspaper page depicting news about the weather of Velonia and sport related articles.

- Corruption Check : To check the efficacy of the corruption manipulation I asked participants to rate the spread of corruption in Velonia using a single item. The Likert scale I used ranged from 0 ("Extremely Limited") to 10 ("Extremely Widespread")

- Economic Inequality Manipulation I manipulated participants' perception of economic inequality using the tables and brief texts used in the previous studies. Concerning the control condition, I created a new text and table depicting the composition of the Velonian population in terms of age.

- Economic Inequality Manipulation Check To check the efficacy of the economic inequality manipulation I asked participants to rate how equal/unequal Velonia using a single item. The Likert scale I used ranged from 0 ("Velonia is extremely unequal") to 10 ("Velonia is extremely equal").

- Corruption Inferences: I decided to assess participants' inferences concerning corruption in the following way. I made them read a brief text describing what the CPI (Corruption Perception Index) is, then I explained that for that specific year the CPI data for Velonia were not available yet, and they had to estimate the Corruption present in Velonia. I used a single item ranging from 0 ("Corruption in Velonia is extremely limited") to 10 ("Corruption in Velonia is extremely widespread")

- Economic Inequality Inferences I decided to assess participants' inferences concerning economic inequality in the following way. I made them read a brief text describing what the Gini Index is, then I explained that for that specific year the data about Gini Index of Velonia were not available yet,

and they had to estimate the Economic Inequality present in Velonia. I used a singe item ranging from 0 ("Velonia is extremely unequal") to 10 ("Velonia is extremely equal")

- Velonia's Appreciation I asked participants to evaluate their appreciation for Velonia using a single item ("Overall my judgment about Velonia is") ranging from 0 ("Extremely negative") to 10 ("Extremely positive")

- Anger: A four-item scale derived from Mackie et al. (2000) was used: "I feel angry/ irritated/ furious/displeased" thinking about the Velonian society. The Likert scales ranged from 0 ("Not at all") to 10 ("Extremely")

- Hope: A four-item scale was created ad hoc for the study, mirroring the one used for assessing Anger ("I feel hopeful/confident/optimistic/assured thinking about the Velonian society"). The Likert scale ranged from 0 ("Not at all") to 10 ("Extremely")

- Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality : I used the same 5-items scale adapted from Tausch et al. (2015) and Velasquez and LaRose (2014) I used in the previous study. item scale with items taken and adapted from Tausch et al. (2015) and Velasquez and LaRose (2014). Examples of items are "*I intend to vote for politicians that are willing to fight income-inequality*", "*I intend to participate in demonstrations against income inequality*". Participants were asked to rate how likely they were to perform the action described on a Likert scale from 0 (*Extremely unlike*) to 10 (*Extremely likely*).

- Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption I used the same 5-items scale adapted from Tausch et al. (2015) and Velasquez and LaRose (2014) I used in the previous study. item scale with items taken and adapted from Tausch et al. (2015) and Velasquez and LaRose (2014). Examples of items are "*I intend to vote for politicians that are willing to fight corruption*", "*I intend to participate in demonstrations against corruption*". Participants were asked to rate how likely they were to perform the action described on a Likert scale from 0 (*Extremely unlike*) to 10 (*Extremely likely*).

- Perceived Effectiveness of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality For each item depicted in *the Behavioural intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality* scale I asked participants to rate how effective they perceived that action for contrasting Economic Inequality on a Likert scale that ranged from 0 ("Extremely Ineffective") to 10 ("Extremely Effective"). (e.g., "*How effective for contrasting economic inequality do you think it is voting for politicians that are willing to contrast economic inequality?*")

- Perceived Effectiveness of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption For each item depicted in *the Behavioural intentions for contrasting Corruption* scale I asked participants to rate how effective they perceived that action for contrasting Corruption on a Likert scale that ranged from 0 ("Extremely Ineffective") to 10 ("Extremely Effective"). (e.g., "*How effective for contrasting corruption do you think it is voting for politicians that are willing to contrast corruption?*")

- Equality Preference : Participants were instructed that the population of Velonia was divided in five income sections (A, B, C, D and E) . Then, they were presented with a zero-sum task, in which they were asked to redistribute a fixed amount of resources (15.000 Velonian Dollars) so that the resulting distribution would depict their representation of an economically equal society. In the *Example 1* it is show the task, as presented to participants

Example 1: The equality preference task

Please, remember that the total sum available is constant (equal to 15.000 Velonian money), meaning that if you will raise the income of a section you will have to lower the one of another one.

	0 1500 3000 4500 6000 7500 9000 10500 12000 13500 15000	
SECTION A		5491
SECTION B		2515
SECTION C		2270
SECTION D		2301
SECTION E		2423
Total:		**15000**
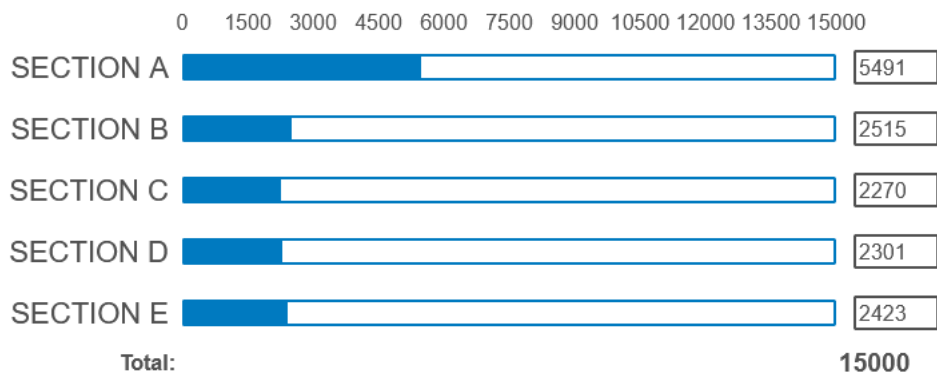
The reliability of the scales used has been summed in *Table* 1.

Table 1: The Cronbach's alpha of the scales used in Study 4a, Study 4b, Study 5a and Study 5b

	Cronbach's α			
	Study 4a	**Study 4b**	**Study 5a**	**Study 5b**
Anger	0.97	0.96	0.96	0.98

Hope	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.97
Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality	0.86	0.90	0.76	0.75
Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.90	0.90	0.74	0.74
Perceived effectiveness of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality	0.88	0.94	0.77	0.77
Perceived effectiveness of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.90	0.89	0.83	0.82

Figure 1: The Structure of the Survey A and the Survey B

Study A) Inferences about Economic Inequality	Study B) Inferences about Corruption
Participants are introduced to the Velonia, an fictious country they are instructed to imagine being a citizen of.	Participants are introduced to the Velonia, an fictious country they are instructed to imagine being a citizen of.
Participants are presented with one (out of three: High Corruption, Low Corruption and Control) newspapaper page describing news about the Corruption in Velonia. They will be asked to rate the Corruption perceived on a scale raning from 0 (very limited) to 10 (very widespread).	Participants are presented with one (out of three: High Inequality, Low Inequality and Control) table describing how the population of Velonia is distrubuted across the incom sections. They will be asked to rate the inequality perceived on a scale raning from 0 (Inequality very limited) to 10 (Inequality very widespread.
Participants are presented with a text describing what the GINI Index is and are asked to guess the Inequality levels present in Velonia, on a scale ranging from 0 (Very Unequal) to 10 (Very Equal)	Participants are presented with a text describing what the Corruption Perception Index is and are asked to guess the Corruption levels present in Velonia, on a scale ranging from 0 (Corruption extremely limited) to 10 (Corruption extremely widespread)
Participants are asked to rate on a scale ranging from 0 (Not at all) to 10 (Completely) - How positive their overall judgement of Velonia is (1 question) - How angry they feel about Velonia's Society (5 questions) - How hopeful they feel about Velonia's Society (5 questions)	Participants are asked to rate on a scale ranging from 0 (Not at all) to 10 (Completely) - How positive their overall judgement of Velonia is (1 question) - How angry they feel about Velonia's Society (5 questions) - How hopeful they feel about Velonia's Society (5 questions)
Participants are asked to rate on a scale ranging from 0 (Extremely unlikely) to 10 (Extremely likely) how willing they would be to engage in actions for contrasting -Corruption (5 questions) -Economic Inequality(5 questions). In addition to it, they are also asked to rate on a scale ranging from 0 (Ineffective) to 10 (Effective) how effective they consider each of the previously rated actions for contrasting - Corruption (4 questions) - Economic Inequality(4 questions)	Participants are asked to rate on a scale ranging from 0 (Extremely unlikely) to 10 (Extremely likely) how willing they would be to engage in actions for contrasting -Economic Inequality (5 questions) -Corruption (5 questions). In addition to it, they are also asked to rate on a scale ranging from 0 (Ineffective) to 10 (Effective) how effective they consider each of the previously rated actions for contrasting - Economic Inequality (4 questions) -Corruption (4 questions)
Participants are asked to distribute a fixed amount of money (15.000 Velonian money) across the existing five different sections of the population (ranging from A, the one at the top, to E, the one at the bottom) described, so that they would reach what they consider an equal distribution of resources.	Participants are asked to distribute a fixed amount of money (15.000 Velonian money) across the existing five different sections of the population (ranging from A, the one at the top, to E, the one at the bottom) described, so that they would reach what they consider an equal distribution of resources.

6.3.   Hypotheses

6.3.1. Survey A Hypotheses

H1a) I expect that participants assigned to the high corruption condition would display a higher perception of the issue than those assigned to the low corruption and the control ones.

H2a) If participants are aware of the inequality trap, I expect that participants assigned to the high corruption condition would infer higher levels of inequality than those assigned to the low corruption one and the control ones.

H3a) I expect that participants assigned to the high corruption condition would display lower levels of appreciation for Velonia than those assigned to the low corruption and control conditions.

H4a) I expect that participants assigned to the high corruption condition would display lower levels of hope and higher levels of anger than those assigned to the low corruption and control conditions.

H5a) I expect that participants assigned to the high corruption condition would display higher levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption than those assigned to the low corruption and the control conditions.

H6a) If participants are aware of the inequality trap, I expect that participants assigned to the high corruption condition would display higher levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting inequality than those assigned to the low corruption and control condition.

H7a) I expected the effect of the experimental manipulation on the behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption to be mediated by the emotions perceived by participants, replicating the results obtained in the previous study

For all expected results illustrated above, I did not have specific hypotheses concerning the comparisons between the control condition and the low corruption one.

Finally, I also planned to explore:

- If the inequality inferences made by participants influence their judgment of Velonia, their emotional responses, their display of behavioural intentions and the perceived effectiveness of the actions.

- If the experimental manipulation influences participants' preference for a fair distribution of resources across the sections of the society.

6.3.2. Survey B Hypotheses

Similar hypotheses for this parallel survey were made but, in this case, contrasting high- vs. low-inequality vs. control conditions:

H1b) I expect that participants assigned to the high inequality condition would display a higher perception of the issue than those assigned to the low inequality and the control ones.

H2b) If participants are aware of the inequality trap, I expect that participants assigned to the high inequality condition would infer higher levels of corruption than those assigned to the low inequality one and the control ones.

H3b) I expect that participants assigned to the high inequality condition would display lower levels of appreciation for Velonia than those assigned to the low inequality and control condition.

H4b) I expect that participants assigned to the high inequality condition would display lower levels of hope and higher levels of anger than those assigned to the low inequality and control condition.

H5b) I expect that participants assigned to the high inequality condition would display higher levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting inequality than those assigned to the low inequality and the control condition

H6b) If participants are aware of the inequality trap, I expect that participants assigned to the high inequality condition would display higher levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption than those assigned to the low inequality and control condition

H7b) I expect the effect of the experimental manipulation on the behavioural intentions for contrasting inequality to be mediated by the emotions perceived by participants, replicating the results obtained in the previous study.

As for Survey A, I did not have specific hypotheses concerning the comparisons between the control condition and the low economic inequality one.

Similarly, I also planned to explore:

- If the corruption inferences made by participants influence their judgment of Velonia, their emotional response, their display of behavioural intentions and the perceived effectiveness of the actions.

- If the experimental manipulations influence participants preference for a fair distribution of resources across the sections of the society.

As for Study 1,2 and 3 both parallel Surveys were conducted with an Italian and a British sample to verify if the different levels of economic inequality and corruption present in the two countries could influence participants' pattern of response.

6.4. Italian Sample (Study 4a and Study 4b)

As a first step, I decide to collect an Italian sample. Before starting the recruitment, I estimated a minimal sample size of 159 participants per survey, using G*Power 3.1.9.7, given a one-way ANOVA with $\alpha = 0.5$, a power $(1 - \beta) = 0.8$ and an effect size $f = .25$. All the data analyses have been performed using Jamovi (Version 1.2) and R Statistical Software (v4.1.2; R Core Team 2021). The mediation models described have been computed using the jAMM: Jamovi Advanced Mediation Models package. power analysis. For each analyses performed I checked for assumption, unless differently reported such assumptions have been respected. Both surveys (A and B) have been approved by the ethical committee of the University of Milano-Bicocca as minimal-risk studies.

6.4.1. Survey A

6.4.1.1. Participants

I recruited 150 participants through a snow-ball sampling method, only 147 of them answered correctly to the attention check item and were therefore included in the analyses ($N_{Females} = 91$, $N_{Non\text{-}binary} = 2$)[6], whose age ranged between 19 and 68 ($M_{age} = 33$, $SD_{age} = 1.19$). Their level of education and occupation are summarized in Table 2. I checked for the sample's political orientation on a scale ranging from 1 ("*I am extremely close to the left-wing orientation*") to 7 ("*I am extremely close to the right-wing orientation*"), and a mean score equal to 3.34 ($SD = 0.12$)[7].

Table 2: Frequencies of the level of education and occupation of the Italian Sample, Survey A

Levels of Education	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
I do not have a high school diploma	2	1.4 %	1.4 %
I have a high school diploma	39	26.5 %	27.9 %
I am enrolled in a university program	46	31.3 %	59.2 %
I have a bachelor's degree	21	14.3 %	73.5 %
I have a master's degree	33	22.4 %	95.9 %
I have a Ph.D.	3	2.0 %	98.0 %

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[6] The gender imbalance assessed in the sample did not significantly affect the results as no significant difference was assessed between the male and female participants' answers.

[7] Concerning the political orientation of the participants, I checked if such variable influenced their responses concerning the manipulations and the hypotheses predicted, nevertheless, I did not find any significant result. Therefore, such variable will not be mentioned further on in the discussion of the results.

Levels of Education	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
I prefer not to answer	3	2.0 %	100.0 %

Occupation	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Student	40	27.2 %	27.2 %
Unemployed	5	3.4 %	30.6 %
Employed	76	51.7 %	82.3 %
Self-Employed	7	4.8 %	87.1 %
Home-maker	8	5.4 %	92.5 %
Retired	9	6.1 %	98.6 %
I prefer not to answer	2	1.4 %	100.0 %

6.4.1.2. Manipulation Check

As a first step, I wanted to verify that the corruption manipulation used acted as intended. To assess differences between the corruption conditions, an independent t-test was run. The results showed that participants assigned to the high corruption condition ($M = 9.28$, $SD = 2.35$) perceived Velonia as more corrupt than those assigned to the low corruption one ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.93$), $t(121) = 16.2$, $p < .001$, supporting H1a.

6.4.1.3. Inferences on Economic Inequality

In order to check if being exposed to different levels of corruption changed participants' inferences about the inequality levels present in Velonia, I ran a one-way ANOVA (Experimental condition: high corruption vs. low corruption vs. control), and I found a significant effect of the manipulation, $F(2, 144) = 18.2$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.2$. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, $p < .001$) indicated that participants assigned to the high corruption condition ($M = 3.52$, $SE = 0.21$) compared to those assigned to the low corruption ($M = 5.19$, $SE = 0.21$) and control ($M = 5.37$, $SE = 0.34$) ones inferred lower levels of equality, in line with H2a. No significant difference was found between low corruption and the control conditions ($p_{Tukey} = .366$).

6.4.1.4. Velonia's Appreciation

I checked if the overall satisfaction with the society of Velonia changed according to the experimental manipulation. A one-way ANOVA (Experimental condition: high-corruption vs. low-corruption vs. control) showed a significant main effect, $F(2, 144) = 113$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.611$, in line with H3a. Participants assigned

to the low-corruption condition reported the highest levels of satisfaction (M = 7.55, SE = 0.21), followed by those assigned to the control condition (M = 5.67, SE = 0.34), while those assigned to the high-corruption condition reported the lowest levels (M = 3.01, SE = 0.21). Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, p < .001) indicated that the scores of each condition were significantly different from each other. I also decided to explore if the corruption inferences contributed to the appreciation of Velonia by running a simple linear regression. A significant regression equation was found, F(1,145) = 52.1, p < .001, with a R^2 = 0.26. The average appreciation of Velonia increased by an estimate of 0.72 (SE = 0.1, t = 7.22, p < .001) when equality inferences raised by one unit.

6.4.1.5. Anger

The same ANOVA was run to test if different levels of corruption changed participants' levels of anger. A significant effect of the manipulation was found, F(2, 144) = 117, p < .001, η^2 = 0.61. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, p < .001) indicated that participants assigned to the high-corruption condition (M = 7.84; SE = 0.26) compared to those assigned to the low-corruption (M = 2.47; SE = 0.26) and control (M = 2.89; SE = 0.42) ones displayed higher levels of anger, in line with H4a. No significant difference was found between those assigned to the low-corruption and the control conditions (p_{Tukey} = .647).

I explored if the inequality inference contributed to determining anger scores, again, by running a simple linear regression. A significant regression equation was found, F(1,145) = 37.9, p < .001, with a R^2 = 0.2. The average anger displayed by participants decreased by an estimate of -0.79 (SE = 0.12, t = -6.16, p < .001) when equality inferences raised by one unit.

6.4.1.6. Hope

The ANOVA ran to verify if different levels of corruption changed participants' levels of hope showed a significant effect of the manipulation, F(2, 144) = 13.3, p < .001, η^2 = 0.14. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, p < .001) indicated that participants assigned to the low-corruption (M = 6.1; SE = 0.25) and control (M = 6.24; SE = 0.41) conditions displayed higher levels of hope than those assigned to the high-corruption one (M = 4.46; SE = 0.25), in line with H4a. No significant difference found between the high corruption and control conditions (p_{Tukey} = .742).

The inequality inferences contributed to determining the hope scores, F(1,145) = 13.4, p < .001, R^2 = 0.084. The average hope displayed by participants decreased by an estimate of -0.33 (SE = 0.09, t = -3.65, p < .001) when equality inferences raised by one unit.

6.4.1.7. Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption

Results showed a significant effect of the manipulation, F(2, 144) = 18, p < .001, η^2 = 0.2. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, p < .001) indicated that participants assigned to the low-corruption condition (M = 5.41, SE = 0.25) displayed lower levels of behavioural intentions than those assigned to the high-corruption (M = 7.54;

SE = 0.25) and control ones (*M* = 7; *SE* = 0.4), in line with H5a. No significant difference was assessed between those assigned to the high-corruption condition and the control one (p_{Tukey} = .524). The inequality inferences did not contributed to determining these behavioural intentions, $F(1, 145)$ = 3.22, p = .075.

6.4.1.8. Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

The manipulation of corruption proved to be significant also on this dependent variable, $F(2, 144)$ = 21.8, $p <$ .001, η^2 = 0.23. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, $p < .001$) indicated that participants assigned to the high-corruption (*M* = 6.07; *SE* = 0.26) and control conditions (*M* = 6.75; *SE* = 0.4), compared to those assigned to the low-corruption one (*M* = 4.06; *SE* = 0.25), reported higher levels of behavioural intentions, in line with H6a. No significant difference was assessed between those assigned to the high-corruption and control conditions (p_{Tukey} = .996). The inequality inferences contributed to determining participants behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality, $F(1,145)$ = 84.5, $p < .001$, R^2 = 0.36. The average behavioural intentions displayed by participants increased by an estimate of 0.62 (*SE* = 0.068, t = 9.19, $p < .001$) when inequality inferences raised by one unit.

6.4.1.9. Perceived Effectiveness of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption

Our manipulation showed a significant effect on this dependent variable, $F(2, 144)$ = 52.1, $p < .001$, η^2 = 0.42. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, $p < .001$) showed that all conditions were significantly different from each other. Participants assigned to the control condition (*M* = 6.93, *SE* = 0.2) displayed the highest levels of perceived efficacy, followed by those assigned to the low-corruption condition (*M* = 3.82, *SE* = 0.2), and then bt the high-corruption condition (*M* = 2.95, *SE* = 0.2). The inequality inferences contributed to determining such scores, $F(1,145)$ = 4.55, p = .035, R^2 = 0.03. The average effectiveness perceived by participants increased by an estimate of 0.19 (*SE* = 0.09, t = 2.13 p = .035) when equality inferences raised by one unit. I also explored if the emotions reported by participants predicted this variable: a significant regression equation, $F(1,145)$ = 9.28, p = .003, R^2 = 0.06, showed that when anger raised by one unit, participants' perceived effectiveness decreased by an estimate of -0.157 (*SE* = 0.05, t = -3.05 p = .003); a significant regression equation, $F(1,145)$ = 11.1, p = .001, R^2 = 0.07, also showed that when hope raised by one unit, perceived effectiveness raised by an estimate of 0.26 (*SE* = 0.07, t = 3.34, p = .001).

6.4.1.10. Perceived Effectiveness of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

The ANOVA showed a significant effect of the manipulation, $F(2, 144)$ = 50, $p < .001$, η^2 = 0.41. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, $p < .001$) indicated that participants assigned to the control condition (*M* = 6.65, *SE* = 0.32) displayed the highest levels of perceived effectiveness, followed by those assigned to the low-corruption condition (*M* = 4.95; *SE* = 0.19), then the high-corruption one (*M* = 3.08; *SE* = 0.2). The scores of each condition were significantly different from each other. Additionally, the average perceived effectiveness increased by an estimate of 0.33 (*SE* = 0.08, t = 3.99, $p < .001$) when equality inferences raised by one unit

($F(1,145) = 16$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.09$); when anger raised by one unit, perceived effectiveness decreased by an estimate of -0.258 ($SE = 0.04$, $t = -5.06$, $p < .001$; $F(1,145) = 31.4$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.17$); Finally, when hope raised by one unit, effectiveness raised by an estimate of 0.19 ($SE = 0.07$, $t = 2.55$, $p = .012$; $F(1,145) = 6.51$, $p = .012$, with a $R^2 = 0.04$).

6.4.1.11. Hope and Anger as Mediators

Figure 2: The mediation model depicting Anger and Hope as mediator
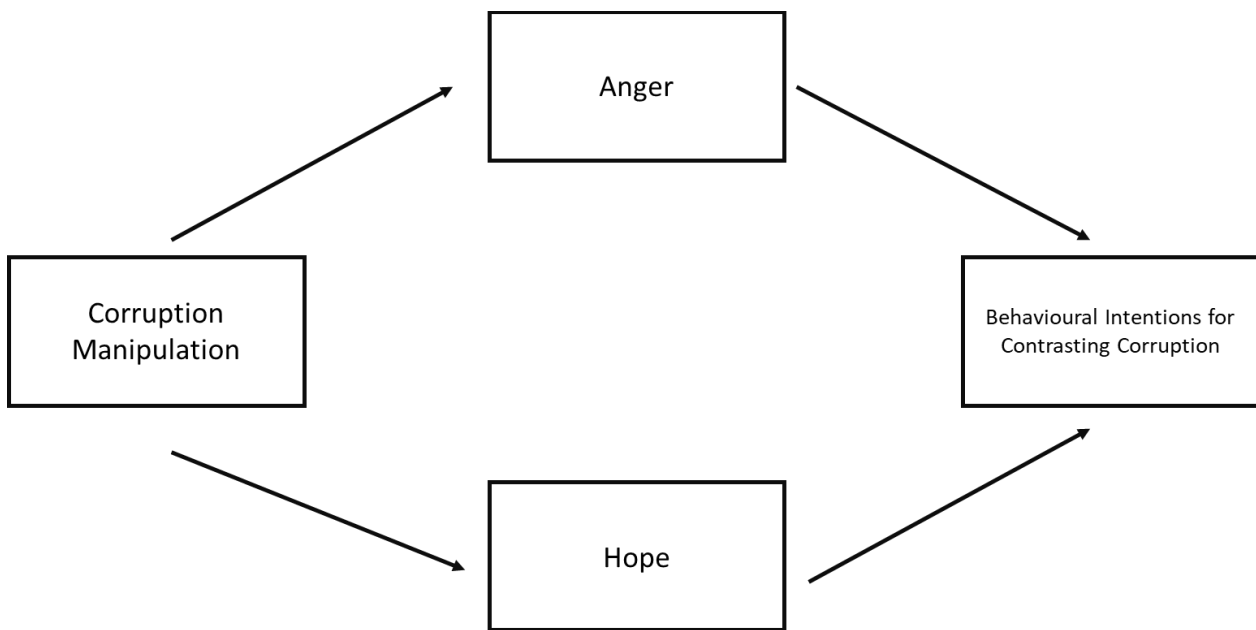
The model depicted in *Figure* 2 was tested to verify H7a.

Table 3 reports the indirect, direct and total effects of the mediation model, along with each component. Being assigned to low-corruption and control conditions predicted negative anger responses and positive hope ones, while being assigned to the high-corruption condition predicted positive anger responses and negative hope ones. In turn, anger predicted positively the behavioural intentions for contrasting corruption while hope predicted it negatively. Looking at the indirect effects, one could notice that both anger and hope are significant mediators. Given the non-significance of the direct effects, one could conclude that the influence of the corruption manipulation is fully mediated by the emotional responses provoked by it, in line with H7a.

Table 3: Indirect, Direct and Total Effects of the mediation model depicted in Figure 2

Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	95% C.I.		β	z	p
				Lower	Upper			
Indirect	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-1.063	0.3864	-1.820	-0.305	-0.179	-2.75	0.006
	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Hope ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.368	0.168	-0.698	-0.037	-0.062	-2.18	0.029
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-1.152	0.410	-1.957	-0.347	-0.260	-2.81	0.005
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Hope ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.338	0.145	-0.623	-0.052	-0.076	-2.32	0.020
Component	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Anger	-4.955	0.490	-5.916	-3.992	-0.555	-10.0	< .001
	Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.214	0.075	0.0674	0.3615	0.3235	2.86	0.004
	Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption ⇒ Hope	1.776	0.480	0.8340	2.7190	0.3040	3.69	< .001
	Hope ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.207	0.076	-0.357	-0.057	-0.204	-2.70	0.007
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Anger	-5.372	0.367	-6.092	-4.652	-0.804	-14.6	< .001
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Hope	1.634	0.359	0.9283	2.3390	0.3735	4.54	< .001
Direct	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.894	0.596	-0.276	2.0634	0.1511	1.50	0.134
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.635	0.538	-1.690	0.4203	-0.143	-1.18	0.238
Total	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.537	0.479	-1.476	0.4023	-0.089	-1.12	0.263
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-2.126	0.358	-2.828	-1.422	-0.473	-5.93	< .001

Note. Confidence intervals computed with method: Delta method. Betas are completely standardized effect sizes

Contrasts are Manipolation_1: Control – High-Corruption; Manipulation_2: Low-Corruption – High-Corruption

6.4.1.12. Equality Preference

Participants were asked to distribute a fixed amount of money (15.000 Velonian money) across five different sections of the population, so that they would reach what they would consider an equal distribution of resources. To check if being exposed to different empirical manipulation changed participants' ideal distribution, I run a repeated measure, between-participants ANOVA (Experimental condition: high-corruption vs. low-corruption vs. control) using as the dependent variable the amount of money allocated to each section (Section A to Section E).

I found a significant effect of the experimental manipulation, $F(8, 328) = 2.76$, $p < .006$, $\eta^2 = .043$). As illustrated in *Figure* 3 and *Table* 4, participants assigned to the high- and low-corruption conditions, on average, assigned more resources to the highest section of the population when compared to those assigned to the control one, while they also assigned overall less resources to the lowest sections. Participants in the control condition, assigned the lowest amount of resources to section A than those assigned to the other two conditions, but they also assigned the highest amounts to the lowest sections.

Figure 3: The average amount of resources distributed across sections for each manipulation
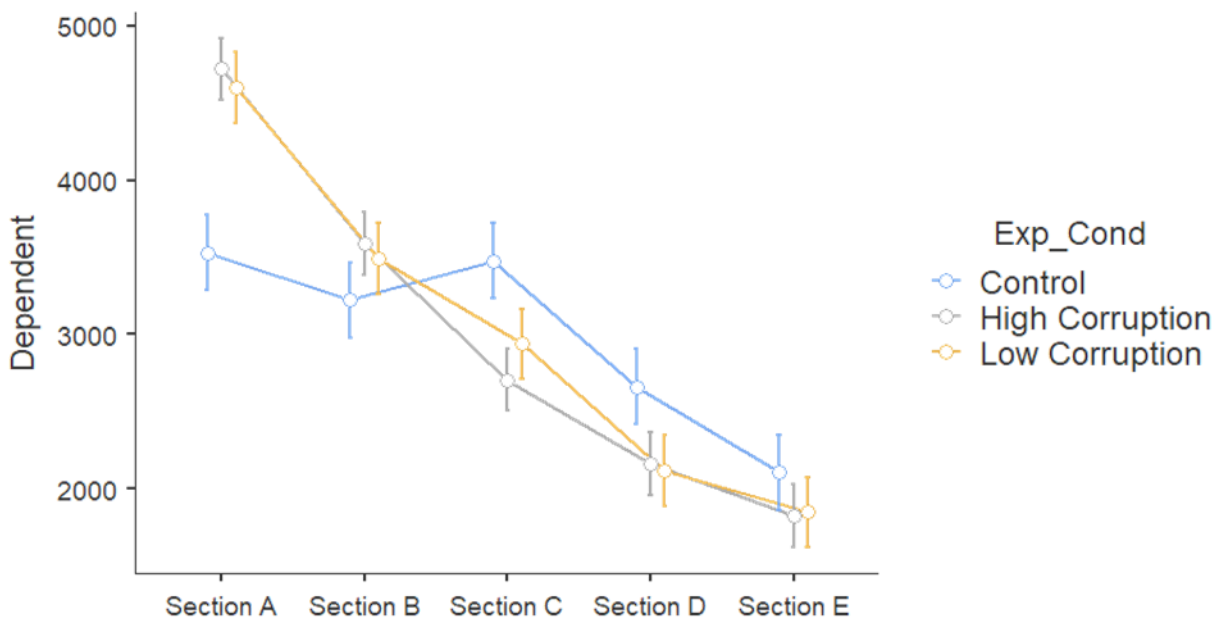
Table 4: Estimated marginal means of the resources attributed across sections, for each manipulation

				95% Confidence Interval	
Experimental Condition	**Section**	*M*	*SE*	Lower	Upper
Control	Section A	3531	242	3055	4006
	Section B	3223	242	2748	3699
	Section C	3477	242	3001	3953
	Section D	2661	242	2186	3137
	Section E	2108	242	1632	2583
High Corruption	Section A	4719	203	4319	5119
	Section B	3586	203	3186	3985
	Section C	2707	203	2307	3107
	Section D	2163	203	1763	2562
	Section E	1826	203	1426	2225
Low Corruption	Section A	4600	228	4152	5049
	Section B	3490	228	3042	3939
	Section C	2940	228	2491	3388
	Section D	2120	228	1672	2569
	Section E	1850	228	1401	2298

6.4.2. Survey B

6.4.2.1.   Participants

I recruited 150 Italian participants through a snow-ball sampling method, among them only 111 participants correctly answered to the attention check item and were therefore included in the analyses ($n_{Females}$ = 56), whose age ranged between 19 and 78 (M_{age} = 34.9, SD_{age} = 15.3). Their level of education and occupation are summarized in *Table* 5. As for Survey A, I assessed the sample's political orientation (M = 3.25, SD = 1.42)[8].

Table 5: The demographic informartion of the Survey B sample

Levels of Education	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
I do not have a high school diploma	3	2.7 %	2.7 %
I have a high school diploma	28	25.2 %	27.9 %
I am enrolled in a university program	24	21.6 %	49.5 %
I have a bachelor's degree	30	27.0 %	76.6 %
I have a master's degree	22	19.8 %	96.4 %
I have a Ph.D.	1	0.9 %	97.3 %
I prefer not to answer	3	2.7 %	100.0 %

Occupation	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Student	40	36.0 %	36.0 %
Unemployed	4	3.6 %	39.6 %
Employed	44	39.6 %	79.3 %
Self-Employed	8	7.2 %	86.5 %
Home-maker	1	0.9 %	87.4 %
Retired	11	9.9 %	97.3 %

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[8] Concerning the political orientation of the participants, I checked if such variable influenced their responses concerning the manipulations and the hypotheses predicted, nevertheless, I did not find any significant result. Therefore, such variable will not be mentioned further on in the discussion of the results.

Levels of Education	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
I prefer not to answer	3	2.7 %	100.0 %

6.4.2.2. Manipulation Check

The independent *t*-test showed that participants assigned to the high-inequality condition (M = 2.03, SD = 1.47) perceived Velonia as less egalitarian than those assigned to the low-inequality one (M = 6.17, SD = 2.07), $t(80)$ = 10, p < .001, in line with H1b.

6.4.2.3. Inferences on Corruption

I found a significant effect of the manipulation, $F(2, 108)$ = 8.4, , p < .001, η^2 = 0.135. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, p < .001) indicated that participants assigned to the high-inequality condition (M = 5.56, SE = 0.27) compared to those assigned to the low-inequality (M = 4.23, SE = 0.22) and control ones (M = 4.21; SE = 0.29) inferred higher levels of corruption, in line with H2b. No significant difference was found (p > .988) between the low-inequality and control conditions.

6.4.2.4. Velonia's Appreciation

A significant effect of the manipulation was found, $F(2, 108)$ = 28.6, p < .001, η^2 = 0.346. Participants in the low-inequality condition reported the highest levels of appreciation (M = 6.27, SE = 0.25), followed by those assigned to the control condition (M = 5.31, SE = 0.32), although no significant difference was found between the two conditions (p = 0.56). Participants in the high-inequality condition reported the lowest levels (M = 3.32; SE = 0.29), significantly different both the other conditions (Tukey HSD, p < .001). These results seem to confirm H3b. The corruption inferences contributed, $F(1,109)$ = 30.6, p < .001, R^2 = 0.21: The average appreciation of Velonia decreased by an estimate of -0.59 (SE = 0.1, t = -5.54, p < .001) when corruption inferences raised by one unit.

6.4.2.5. Anger

The ANOVA showed a significant effect of our manipulation on anger, $F(2, 108)$ = 34.2, η^2 = 0.38, p < .001. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, p < .001) indicated that participants assigned to the high-inequality condition (M = 6.85, SE = 0.38), compared to those assigned to the low-inequality (M = 3.04, SE = 0.32) and control ones (M = 2.99, SE = 0.41), displayed higher levels of anger, in line with H4b. No significant difference was found between the low-inequality condition the control conditions (p_{Tukey} = .995). Additionally, the average anger displayed by participants raised by an estimate of 0.75 (SE = 0.14, t = -5.21, p < .001) when corruption inferences raised by one unit ($F(1,109)$ = 27.2, p < .001, R^2 = 0.19).

6.4.2.6.   Hope

Similarly, results showed a significant effect on hope, $F(2, 108) = 3.47$, $p = .035$, $\eta^2 = 0.06$. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, $p < .001$) indicated that participants assigned to the low-inequality condition ($M = 6.73$; $SE = 0.35$), compared the high-inequality ($M = 5.3$; $SE = 0.42$) and control ones ($M = 5.85$; $SE = 0.45$), displayed higher levels of hope, in line with H4b. No significant difference was assessed between the latter two conditions ($p_{Tukey} = .651$). Additionally, a significant regression equation, $F(1,109) = 17.1$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.135$, showed that the average hope displayed by participants decreased by an estimate of -0.54 ($SE = 0.34$, $t = -4.13$, $p < .001$) when corruption inferences raised by one unit.

6.4.2.7.   Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

I found a significant effect of the manipulation, $F(2, 108) = 6.92$, $p = .035$, $\eta^2 = 0.11$. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, $p < .001$) indicated that those assigned to the high inequality condition ($M = 8.27$; $SE = 0.37$), compared to those assigned to the low-inequality ($M = 6.53$; $SE = 0.31$) and control ones ($M = 6.72$; $SE = 0.4$), reported higher levels of behavioural intentions, in line with H5b. No significant difference was found between the two latter conditions ($p_{Tukey} = .922$). A significant regression equation was found, $F(1,109) = 5.27$, $p = .024$, $R^2 = 0.046$, indicating that the average intentions displayed by participants increased by an estimate of 0.29 ($SE = 0.12$, $t = 2.29$, $p = .024$) when corruption inferences raised by one unit.

6.4.2.8.   Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption

Conversely to H6b, no significant effect was found, $F(2, 108) = 2.55$, $p = .083$, $\eta^2 = 0.045$. Additionally, the corruption inference did not exert any effect on this dependent variable, $F(1,109) = 2.32$, $p = .131$.

6.4.2.9.   Perceived Effectiveness of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

Conversely to Survey A, I found no significant results, $F(2, 108) = 0.085$, $p = .919$, $\eta^2 = 0.002$. Similarly, the corruption inference played no role on this dependent variable, $F(1,109) = 0.006$, $p = .93$, neither did hope, $F(1,109) = 0.22$, $p = .63$, and anger, $F(1,109) = 0.75$, $p = .38$.

6.4.2.10.   Perceived Effectiveness of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption

Again, and conversely to Survey A, I found no significant results, $F(2, 108) = 0.28$, $p = .75$, $\eta^2 = 0.005$. No role was played by the corruption inference, $F(1,109) = 0.28$, $p = .59$, hope, $F(1,109) = 1.37$, $p = .244$, nor anger, $F(1,109) = 1.57$, $p = .213$

6.4.2.11. Mediation Model: Anger and Hope as mediators

To test H7b, I run the mediation analyses depicted in *Figure* 4.

Figure 4: The mediation model depicting Anger and Hope as mediators
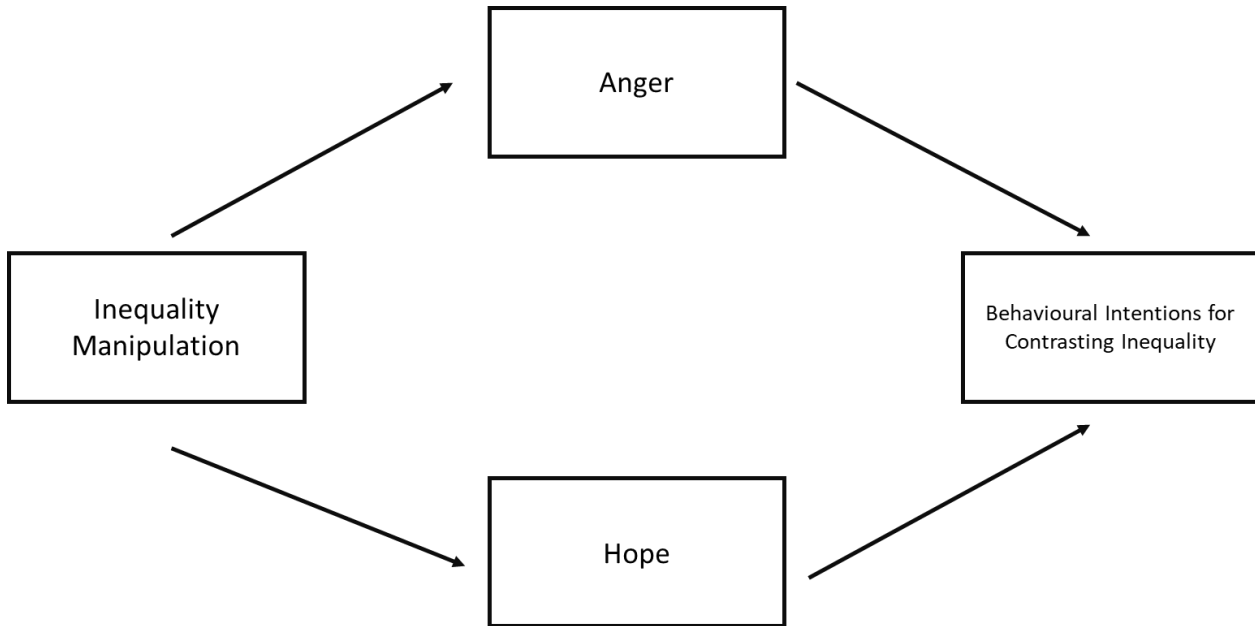
Because the ANOVAs concerning the levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting inequality, hope, and anger showed no significant difference between the conditions of low-inequality and control, I decided to collapse these two manipulations into a single variable.

Table 6 reports the indirect and total effects of the mediation model, along with each component. Overall, being assigned to a condition of low inequality (or control) predicted lower levels of anger and higher levels of hope. In turn, anger predicted positively the behavioural intentions for contrasting inequality, as it did in the previous study, while hope predicted it negatively. According to the Hayes (2009) interpretation of mediation model, both anger and hope can be considered significant mediators of the relationship between the experimental manipulations and the behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality. Looking at the indirect effects, however, one could notice that only the path that goes through anger reaches the level of significance. This could be interpreted as the fact that the variance explained by the anger mediator is greater than the one explained by the hope one that therefore, in this context, becomes negligible. Since the direct effect is not significant, the effect of the experimental manipulation is totally mediated by anger, partially confirming H7b.

Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	95% C.I.		β	z	p
				Lower	Upper			
Indirect	Manipulation ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.786	0.240	-1.25	-0.309	-0.170	-3.24	0.001
	Manipulation ⇒ Hope ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.184	0.114	-0.40	0.040	-0.040	-1.60	0.108
Component	Manipulation ⇒ Anger	-2.0337	0.5076	-3.02	-1.038	-0.355	-4.00	< .001
	Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	0.3838	0.0691	0.248	0.5193	0.4787	5.554	< .001
	Manipulation ⇒ Hope	1.1736	0.4680	0.256	2.0909	0.2315	2.508	0.012
	Hope ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.1573	0.0750	-0.30	-0.010	-0.173	-2.09	0.036
Direct	Manipulation⇒ Intenzioni_Disuguaglianz Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-0.0683	0.4051	-0.86	0.7257	-0.014	-0.16	0.866
Total	Manipulation ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Inequality	-1.0335	0.4313	-1.87	-0.188	-0.222	-2.3	0.017

Note. Contrasts for Manipulation: (Low Inequality + Control) vs. High Inequality. Confidence intervals have been computed using the Delta method.

6.4.2.12. Equality Preferences

As done for Survey A, I explored whether being exposed to different manipulation of inequality changed participants' ideal distribution. As illustrated above, I run a repeated measure, between-participants ANOVA. I found an effect of the experimental manipulation, $F(8, 436) = 4.6$, $\eta^2 = .049$, $p < .001$. As illustrated in *Figure* 5 and *Table* 7, participants in the high-inequality condition, on average, assigned more resources to richest section (A) of the population when compared to those in the control and low-inequality conditions; they also

assigned overall less resources to the following sections. Participants in the control condition, assigned the lowest amount of resources to section A than those assigned to the other two conditions, but they also assigned the highest amounts to the lowest sections.

Figure 5: The average amount of resources distributed across the population sections, for each manipulation
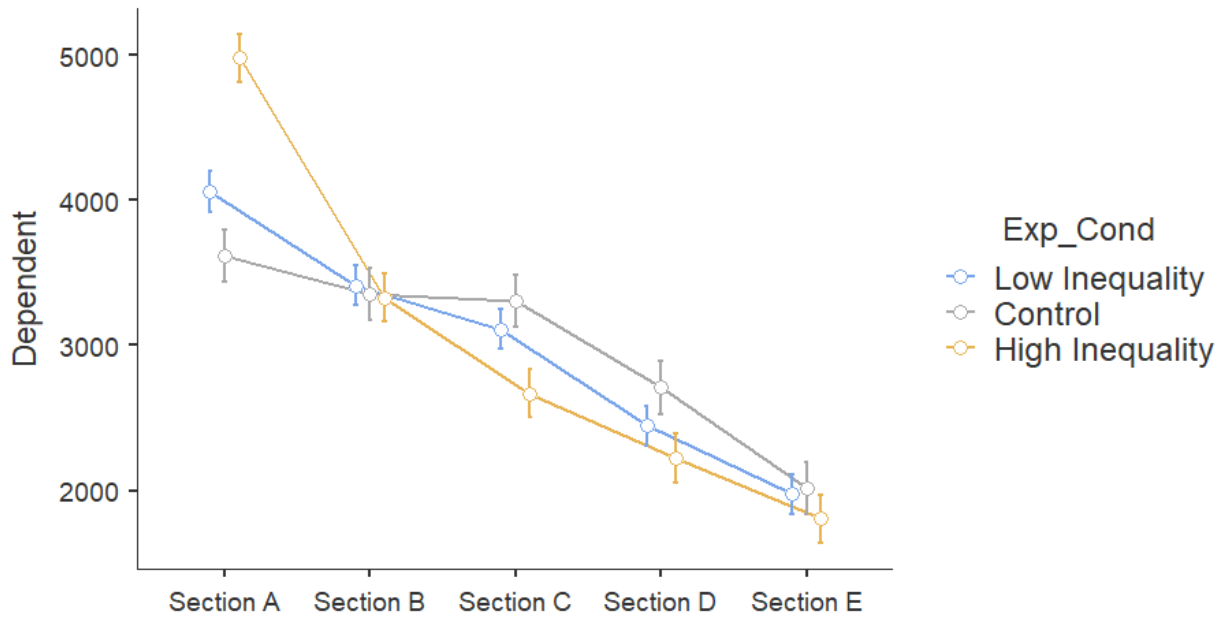
Table 7: Estimated marginal means of the resources distributed across the sections of the population, according to the experimental condition

Experimental Condition	Section	*M*	*SE*	Lower	Upper
Low Inequality	Section A	4061	138	3789	4333
	Section B	3413	138	3141	3685
	Section C	3110	138	2838	3382
	Section D	2444	138	2172	2716
	Section E	1973	138	1701	2245
Control	Section A	3616	180	3262	3970
	Section B	3354	180	3000	3708

Experimental Condition	Section	M	SE	Lower	Upper
	Section C	3305	180	2951	3659
	Section D	2708	180	2354	3062
	Section E	2017	180	1663	2371
High Inequality	Section A	4981	166	4655	5308
	Section B	3326	166	3000	3653
	Section C	2667	166	2341	2994
	Section D	2222	166	1895	2548
	Section E	1803	166	1477	2130

6.4.3. Italian Sample Discussion

The data showed the efficacy of our manipulation (H1a and H1b), in line with the results of the previous experiment. This corroborated the idea that the method used was effective in shifting participants perceptions of economic inequality and corruption, in a fictional scenario, therefore validating a new tool that could be used in future paradigms for exploring the inequality trap in a psychological setting.

Secondly, as hypothesized in H2a and H2b, being exposed to higher levels of corruption or economic inequality led participants to infer higher levels of the other phenomenon under scrutiny. This result led us to believe that people are indeed able to link these two phenomena, supporting the idea that even in lay people's perceptions there is the understanding of an inequality trap. Moreover, I replicated the results of the first study in which the manipulations of economic inequality and corruption influenced participants' intentions for contrasting these issues so that participants, when exposed to higher levels of one issue, were more willing to contrast it. The design of this study, however, was such that I could disentangle the influence of the two phenomena when manipulated (and when inferred) on the behavioural intentions. When participants were exposed to high levels of corruption, they displayed higher levels for contrasting not only corruption but economic inequality as well. On the contrary, when exposed to high levels of economic inequality, they only displayed higher levels of intentions for contrasting this phenomenon but not corruption. In this sense, I were able to assess a spillover effect (that I had postulated being an effect of the inequality trap's perception in H6a and H6b), but only when corruption was manipulated. Participants' inferences about corruption and economic inequality contributed to determining their judgment of Velonian and their emotional responses, amplifying the effect of the manipulation on these variables. However, while the inequality inferences made by participants (when corruption was the manipulated variable) had a significant effect in raising their will to contrast economic inequality but not corruption, the corruption

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inferences made by participants (when inequality was the manipulated variable) did not have a significant effect on their willingness to contrast corruption but provided a significant effect on raising their will to contrast economic inequality. When exploring the effects of the manipulations on participants' perception of the effectiveness of their contrasting actions, I found that the corruption manipulation changed participants' perception of both the actions for contrasting corruption and those for contrasting economic inequality. However, the manipulation of economic inequality did not modify either such perceptions.

The mediating effect anger was confirmed (H7a and H7b), as participants exposed to higher levels of economic inequality and corruption displayed higher levels of behavioural intentions for contrasting inequality and corruption, respectively. Despite the manipulation did influence the hope expressed by participants, such an emotion, however, did not mediate their behavioural responses significantly. Lastly, when asked to imagine an economically equal society, I found that participants still display a progressive preference, which remains consistent across the manipulations of economic inequality and corruption. To check the robustness of these results, I replicated the study (both parallel surveys) with British samples.

6.5. British Sample (Study 5a and Study 5b)

I decided to explore the results obtained using an Italian sample on a new population; for this reason, I recruited a British sample. Both surveys (A and B) have been approved by the ethical committee of the University of Surrey as minimal-risk studies. Participants were recruited using the survey platform Prolific and were compensated for their time (9£ per hour).

6.5.1. Survey A

6.5.1.1. Participants

I recruited 150 participants using the recruiting platform Prolific. Among those, 29 participants failed to correctly respond to the two attention checks in the survey and therefore were eliminated from the dataset. Our sample was composed by 121 individuals ($N_{Females}$ = 63), whose age ranged between 18 and 68 (M_{age} = 42.5, SD_{age} = 14.4). Their levels of education are summarized in *Table 8*.[9]

Table 8: the demographic information of the British sample, survey A

Level of Education	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
I do not have a high school diploma	3	2.5 %	2.5 %
I have a high school diploma	76	62.8 %	65.3 %
I have a bachelor's degree	29	24.0 %	89.3 %
I have master's degree /PhD	13	10.7 %	100.0 %

6.5.1.2. Manipulation Check

An independent *t*-test showed that participants assigned to the high corruption condition (*M* = 9.24, *SE* = 0.35) perceived Velonia as more corrupt than those assigned to the low corruption condition (*M* = 3.88, *SE* = 0.34), $t(118)$ = 12.2, $p < .001$, confirming the efficacy of the manipulation used, and H1a.

6.5.1.3. Inferences on Economic Inequality

The one-way ANOVA showed a significant effect of the manipulation, $F(2, 118)$ = 49.6, $p < .001$, η^2 = 0.45. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, $p < .001$) indicated that participants assigned to the high-corruption condition (*M* = 2.51; *SE* = 0.27) compared to those assigned to the low-corruption (*M* = 6.05; *SE* = 0.27) and

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[9] Due to the policies of the ethical committee of the University of Surrey we did not assess participants' occupation and political orientation.

control ones (M = 5.52; SE = 0.27) inferred higher levels of inequality, in line with H2a. No significant difference was found between the low-corruption and control conditions (p_{Tukey} = .36).

6.5.1.4. Velonia's Appreciation

The ANOVA showed a significant effect of the manipulation, $F(2, 118) = 68.7$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.53$. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, $p < .001$) indicated that participants assigned to the low-corruption (M = 6.88; SE = 0.27) and control conditions (M = 6.35; SE = 0.27) reported higher levels of appreciation of Velonia than those assigned to the high-corruption condition (M = 2.76; SE = 0.26), in line with H3a. No significant difference was found between the low-corruption and the control conditions (p_{Tukey} = .365). As previously done, I explored if the inequality inference made by participants contributed to determining their scores concerning the appreciation of the society by running a simple linear regression. A significant regression equation was found, $F(1,119) = 245$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.67$. The average appreciation of Velonia increased by an estimate of 0.88 (SE = 0.05, t = 15.66 $p < .001$) when equality inferences raised by one unit.

6.5.1.5. Anger

Results showed a significant effect of the manipulation, $F(2, 118) = 79.9$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.57$. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD $p < .001$) indicated that participants assigned to the high-corruption condition (M = 6.52; SE = 0.29) compared to those assigned to the low-corruption (M = 2.08; SE = 0.3) and control ones (M = 1.7; SE = 0.3) displayed higher levels of anger, in line with H4a. No significant difference was assessed between latter two conditions (p_{Tukey} = .647).

Exploring the role of the inference made by participants on this dependent variable, I found that the average anger displayed by participants decreased by an estimate of -0.74 (SE = 0.09, t = -8.07 $p < .001$) when equality inferences raised by one unit ($F(1,118) = 65.1$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.25$).

6.5.1.6. Hope

Also for hope, the ANOVA showed a significant effect of the manipulation, $F(2, 118) = 26.1$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.307$. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD $p < .001$) indicated that participants assigned to the low-corruption (M = 6.81; SE = 0.38) and control conditions (M = 6.41; SE = 0.38) displayed higher levels of hope than those assigned to the high-corruption one (M = 3.28; SE = 0.37), in line with H4a. No significant difference was assessed between those assigned to the low-corruption and control conditions (p_{Tukey} = .739). Additionally, the average hope displayed by participants decreased by an estimate of 0.81 (SE = 0.08, t = 9.51 $p < .001$) when equality inferences raised by one unit ($F(1,119) = 90.4$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.43$).

6.5.1.7. Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption

Conversely to what expected, I found no significant effect of the experimental manipulation on this dependent variable, $F(2, 118) = 1.76$, $p = .176$, $\eta^2 = 0.029$. Regardless the experimental condition, participants displayed a similar level of willingness to engage in actions against corruption. This result not only is in

contrast with H5a, but it also differs from the result obtained with the Italian sample. Furthermore, the inequality inference did not play a role, $F(1, 119) = 2.27$, $p = 0.135$.

6.5.1.8. Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

Also in this case, results contradict both the hypothesis (H6a) and the results found with the Italian sample, $F(2, 118) = 1.8$, $p = .181$, $\eta^2 = 0.029$. The linear regression proved again that the inequality inferences made by participants did not contribute to determining their behavioural intentions for contrasting economic inequality, $F(1,119) = 2.73$, $p = .101$, $R^2 = 0.02$.

6.5.1.9. Perceived Effectiveness of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption

Adding to the null results, I found no significant effect of the manipulation on this dependent variable, $F(2, 118) = 0.76$, $p = .013$, $\eta^2 = 0.13$, nor the inequality inference played a role, $F(1,119) = 2.93$, $p = .09$, $R^2 = 0.02$.

6.5.1.10. Perceived Effectiveness of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

Mirroring what I found for the previous dependent variable, no significant effect of the manipulation was found also here, $F(2, 118) = 4.79$, $p = .325$, $\eta^2 = 0.019$, and no role was played by the inequality inference, $F(1,119) = 0.19$, $p = .663$, $R^2 = 0.001$.

6.5.1.11. Anger and Hope as mediators

The model depicted in *Figure* 6 was tested to find support for H7a. As *Table* 9 suggests, no indirect effects reached the level of significance, indicating no significant mediation occurred.

Figure 6: The model depicting Anger and Hope as mediators
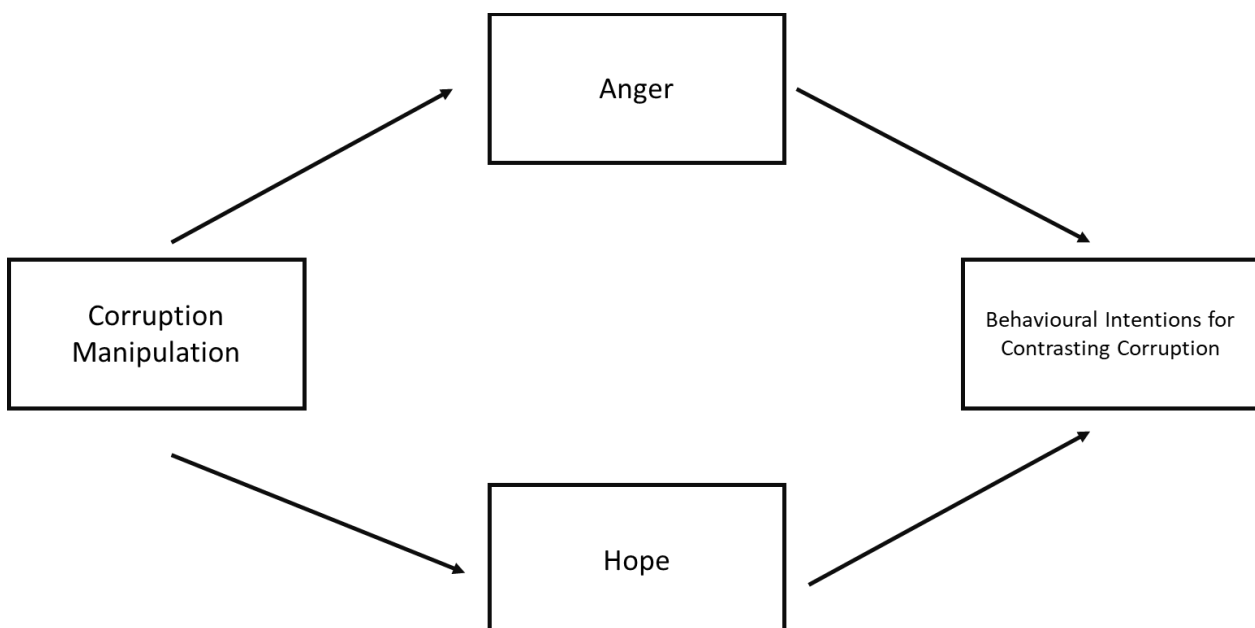
Table 9: Indirect, Direct and Total effects of the Mediation model depicted in Figure 6

Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	95% C.I. Lower	95% C.I. Upper	β	z	p
Indirect	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.300	0.4228	-1.12	0.52	-0.07	-0.711	0.477
	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Hope ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.174	0.2671	-0.69	0.34	-0.04	-0.654	0.513
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.326	0.4589	-1.22	0.57	-0.07	-0.712	0.477
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Hope ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.1548	0.2371	-0.61	0.30	-0.03	-0.653	0.514
Component	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Anger	-4.443	0.4199	-5.26	-3.62	-0.72	-10.582	< .001
	Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.0677	0.0949	-0.11	0.25	0.09	0.713	0.476
	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Hope	3.5258	0.5288	2.49	4.56	0.58	6.668	< .001
	Hope ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.049	0.0754	-0.19	0.09	-0.07	-0.657	0.511
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Anger	-4.824	0.4199	-5.64	-4.00	-0.78	-11.49	< .001
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Hope	3.1258	0.5288	2.08	4.16	0.51	5.91	< .001
Direct	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	0.1289	0.6640	-1.17	1.43	0.03	0.19	0.846
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.352	0.6764	-1.67	0.9732	-0.08	-0.52	0.602
Total	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.346	0.4422	-1.21	0.5202	-0.08	-0.78	0.433
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Corruption_Behavioural_Intenti Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption	-0.834	0.4422	-1.70	0.0327	-0.195	-1.886	0.059

Note. Contrasts: Manipulation_1: Low-corruption - High-Corruption; Manipulation_2: Control - High-Corruption. **Confidence intervals have been computed using the Delta method.**

6.5.1.12. Equality Preference

As for the Italian samples, participants were asked to distribute a fixed amount of money (15.000 Velonian money) across the existing five different sections of the population described, so to reach what they would consider an equal distribution of resources. The repeated measure, between-participants ANOVA showed that participants displayed a progressive preference, $F(4, 472) = 30.08$, $\eta^2 = 0.2$, $p < .001$, however, I did not find a significant interaction effect of the manipulation participants were exposed to, $F(8, 472) = 1.1$, $p = .362$, $\eta^2 = 0.015$. As illustrated in *Figure* 7 and *Table* 10, participants independently from the experimental condition they were sorted into, on average, assigned similar resources to each section.

Figure 7: The average amount of resources distributed across the population sections, for each manipulation
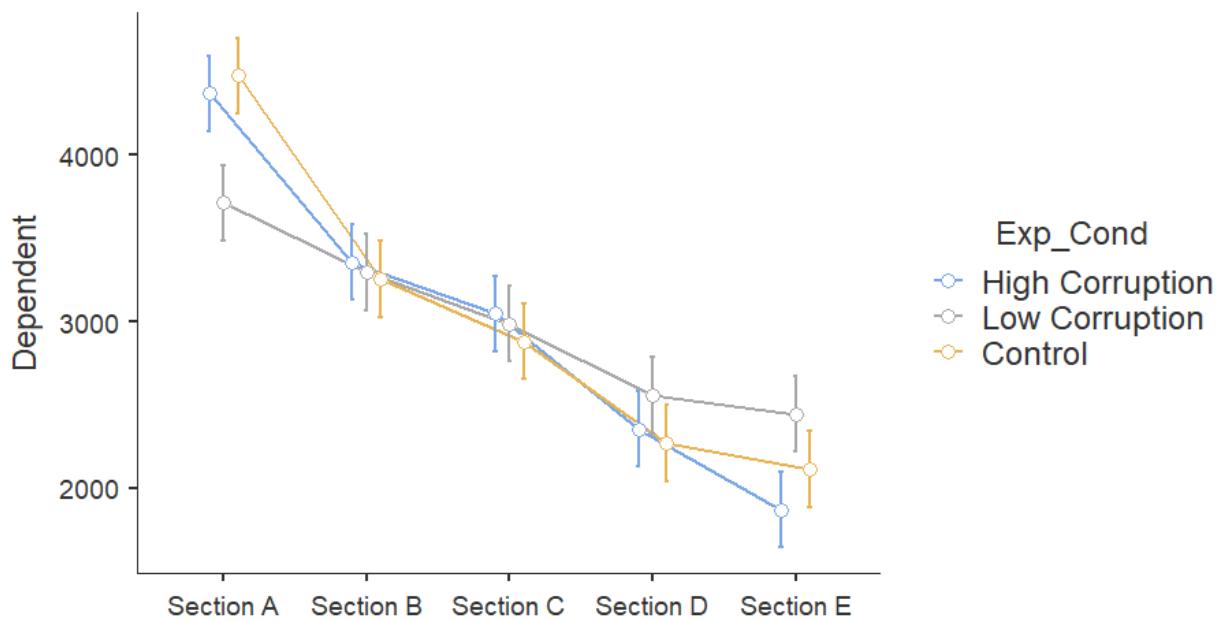
Table 10: Estimated marginal means of the resources distributed across the sections of the population, according to the experimental condition

Experimental Condition	Section	M	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
High Corruption	Section A	4373	226	3929	4818
	Section B	3356	226	2912	3800
	Section C	3047	226	2603	3492
	Section D	2353	226	1909	2797
	Section E	1870	226	1426	2315
Low Corruption	Section A	3713	229	3263	4162
	Section B	3296	229	2846	3746
	Section C	2988	229	2538	3438
	Section D	2557	229	2107	3007
	Section E	2446	229	1996	2895
Control	Section A	4477	229	4027	4927
	Section B	3259	229	2809	3708
	Section C	2881	229	2431	3331
	Section D	2272	229	1822	2722
	Section E	2111	229	1661	2560

| | | | | 95% Confidence Interval | |
Experimental Condition	Section	*M*	*SE*	Lower	Upper

6.5.2. Survey B

6.5.2.1. Participants

I recruited 150 participants using the recruiting platform Prolific. Among those, 24 participants failed to correctly respond to the two attention checks in the survey and therefore were eliminated from the dataset. Our sample was composed by 126 individuals ($N_{Females}$ = 58; $N_{Non-Binary}$ = 15), whose age ranged between 18 and 80 (M_{age} = 37.5, SD_{age} = 14.6). Their level of education is summarized in *Table* 11.

Table 11: The demographic information of the Survey B British sample

Level of Education	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
I do not have a high school diploma	5	4.0 %	4.0 %
I have a high school diploma	44	34.9 %	38.9 %
I have a bachelor's degree	56	44.4 %	83.3 %
I have master's degree /Ph.D.	21	16.7 %	100.0 %

6.5.2.2. Manipulation Check

An independent *t*-test showed that participants assigned to the high-inequality condition (M = 2.93, SE = 0.29) perceived the society they were exposed to as less egalitarian than those assigned to the low-inequality one (M = 5.79, SE = 0.29), $t(124)$ = 6.92, $p < .001$, confirming the efficacy of the manipulation used and in line with H1b.

6.5.2.3. Inferences on Corruption

The ANOVA showed a significant effect of the manipulation, F (2, 123) = 10.8, $p < .001$, $η^2$ = 0.15. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, $p < .05$) indicated that participants assigned to the high-inequality condition (M = 6.6; SE = 0.26), compared to those assigned to the low-inequality (M = 5.37; SE = 0.26) and control ones (M = 4.9; SE = 0.26), inferred higher levels of corruption, in line with H2b. No significant difference was found between the low-inequality control conditions (p_{Tukey} = .424).

6.5.2.4. Velonia's Appreciation

The ANOVA showed a significant effect of the manipulation on this dependent variable, $F(2, 123)$ = 24.8, $p < .001$, $η^2$ = 0.288. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, $p < .05$) indicated that participants assigned to the low-inequality (M = 5.73; SE = 0.23) and control conditions (M = 5.63; SE = 0.23) reported higher levels of appreciation than those assigned to the high-inequality condition, who reported the lowest levels (M = 3.67; SE = 0.23), in line with H3b. No significant difference (p_{Tukey} = .94) was assessed between the low-inequality

and the control conditions. As in the previous surveys, I explored if the corruption inferences made by participants contributed to determining their scores concerning the appreciation of Velonia by running a simple linear regression. A significant regression equation was found, $F_{(1,124)} = 106$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.46$. The average appreciation of Velonia decreased by an estimate of -0.65 ($SE = 0.06$, $t = -10.3$ $p < .001$) when corruption inferences raised by one unit.

6.5.2.5.   Anger

Results showed a significant effect of the manipulation, $F_{(2, 123)} = 9.49$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.13$. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, $p < .05$) indicated that participants assigned to the high-inequality condition ($M = 5.24$; $SE = 0.4$) compared to those assigned to low-inequality ($M = 3.97$; $SE = 0.4$) and control conditions ($M = 2.72$; $SE = 0.41$) displayed higher levels of anger, in line with H4b. No significant difference was found between the two latter conditions ($p_{Tukey} = .079$).

Additionally, I found that the average anger displayed by participants raised by an estimate of 0.81 ($SE = 0.11$, $t = 7.033$ $p < .001$) when corruption inferences raised by one unit ($F_{(1,124)} = 49.5$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.28$).

6.5.2.6.   Hope

Similarly, results were significant for the dependent variable hope, $F_{(2, 123)} = 7.37$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.107$. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey HSD, $p < .05$) indicated that participants assigned to the low-inequality ($M = 5.6$; $SE = 0.35$) and control conditions ($M = 6.24$; $SE = 0.34$) displayed higher levels of hope compared to those assigned to the high-inequality one ($M = 4.42$; $SE = 0.33$), in line with H4b. No significant difference was found between low-inequality and control conditions ($p_{Tukey} = .431$). Furthermore, the average hope displayed by participants decreased by an estimate of -0.64 ($SE = 0.09$, $t = -6.68$ $p < .001$) when corruption inferences raised by one unit, $F_{(1,124)} = 44.6$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.264$).

6.5.2.7.   Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

As for Survey A and in contrast with the results from the Italian sample, results from this British sample did not support our hypothesis (H5b), $F_{(2, 123)} = 2.23$, $p = .11$, $\eta^2 = 0.035$. However, I found that the average intentions displayed by participants increased by an estimate of 0.37 ($SE = 0.09$ $t = 3.81$ $p < .001$) when corruption inferences raised by one unit, $F_{(1,124)} = 14.5$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.105$.

6.5.2.8.   Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption

Similarly to Survey A, results did not support H6b, $F_{(2, 123)} = 0.91$, $p = .404$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$. Nonetheless, I found that the average intentions displayed by participants increased by an estimate of 0.303 ($SE = 0.09$ $t = 3.07$, $p = .003$) when corruption inferences raised by one unit, $F_{(1,124)} = 9.4$, $p = .003$, $R^2 = 0.07$.

6.5.2.9. Perceived Effectiveness of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Economic Inequality

As For Survey A, no significant result was found, $F(2, 123) = 0.02$, $p = .98$, $\eta^2 = 0.0001$, and no role was played by the corruption inference on this dependent variable, $F(1,124) = 0.342$, $p = .56$.

6.5.2.10. Perceived Effectiveness of the Behavioural Intentions for contrasting Corruption

Once again, no significant results, $F(2, 123) = 0.21$, $p = .81$, $\eta^2 = 0.003$, and no role was played by the corruption inference, $F(1,124) = 0.344$, $p = .55$.

6.5.2.11. Anger and Hope as Mediators

The model depicted in *Figure* 8 was tested to address H7b. *Table* 12 reports the indirect and total effects of the mediation model, along with each component. Given the absence of a significant indirect effect, the mediation model was not significant. However, it is interesting to notice that participants' actions for contrasting economic inequality are significantly predicted by participants' anger.

Figure 8: The mediation model depicting Anger and Hope as mediators
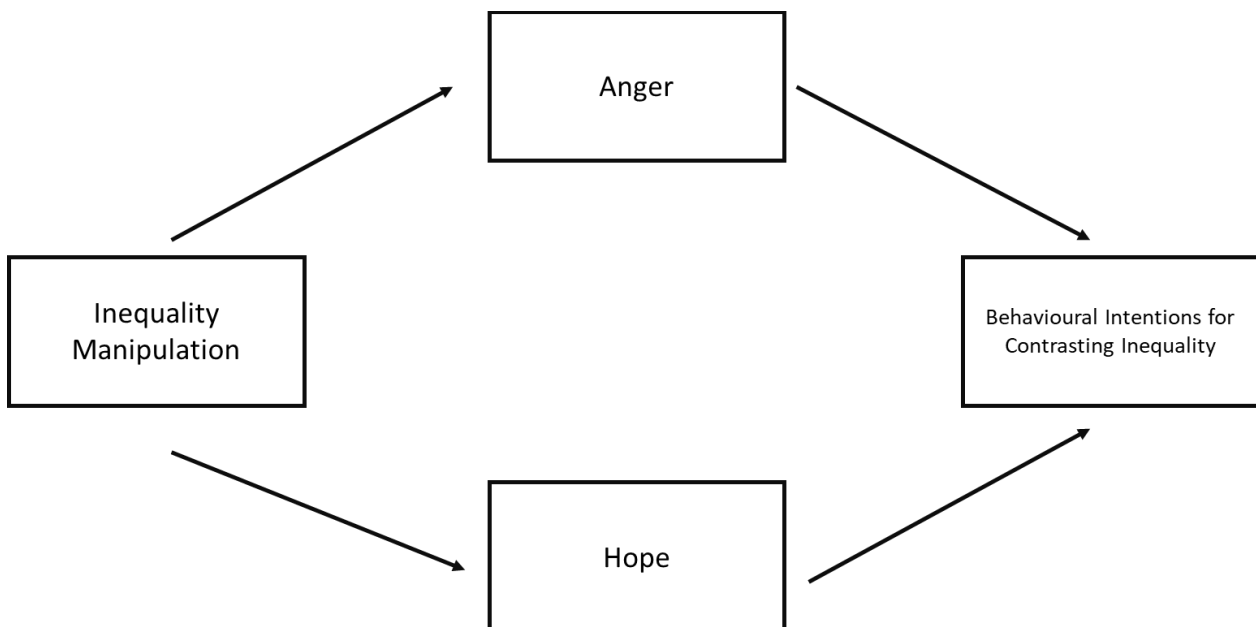
Table 12: Indirect, Direct and Total effects of the mediation model depicted in Figure 8

Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	95% C.I. (a) Lower	95% C.I. (a) Upper	β	z	p
Indirect	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	-0.2750	0.1509	-0.570	0.020	-0.061	-1.82	0.068
	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Hope ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	-0.0646	0.0706	-0.203	0.0738	-0.014	-0.91	0.360
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	0.2785	0.1509	-0.017	0.5742	0.0622	1.846	0.065
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Hope ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	0.1195	0.1072	-0.090	0.3296	0.0267	1.115	0.265
Component	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Anger	-1.2514	0.5679	-2.364	-0.138	-0.209	-2.20	0.028
	Anger ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	0.2198	0.0678	0.0870	0.3526	0.2913	3.244	0.001
	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Hope	0.6393	0.4736	-0.289	1.5675	0.1304	1.350	0.177
	Hope ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	-0.1011	0.0813	-0.260	0.0582	-0.110	-1.24	0.213
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Anger	1.2672	0.5644	0.1609	2.3735	0.2137	2.245	0.025
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Hope	-1.1820	0.4707	-2.1046	-0.259	-0.242	-2.51	0.012

Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	95% C.I. (a) Lower	95% C.I. (a) Upper	β	z	p
Direct	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	-0.0808	0.4433	-0.949	0.7880	-0.017	-0.18	0.855
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	0.1557	0.4482	-0.722	1.0342	0.0348	0.347	0.728
Total	Manipulation_1 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	-0.4204	0.4564	-1.315	0.4741	-0.092	-0.92	0.357
	Manipulation_2 ⇒ Behavioural Intentions for contrasting inequality	0.5537	0.4536	-0.3354	1.4428	0.1231	1.221	0.222

| Type | Effect | Estimate | SE | 95% C.I. (a) | | β | z | p |
				Lower	Upper			

6.5.2.12. Equality Preference

As found for Survey A, I did not find a significant between-subjects effect due to the experimental manipulation, $F(8, 492) = 1.01$, $p = .425$, $\eta^2 = 0.012$. As illustrated in *Figure* 9 and *Table* 13, participants, independently from the experimental condition, on average, assigned similar resources to each section of the population. However, as for the previous survey, I found a progressive preference, $F(2, 492) = 42.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.254$.

Figure 9: The average amount of resources distributed across the population sections, for each manipulation
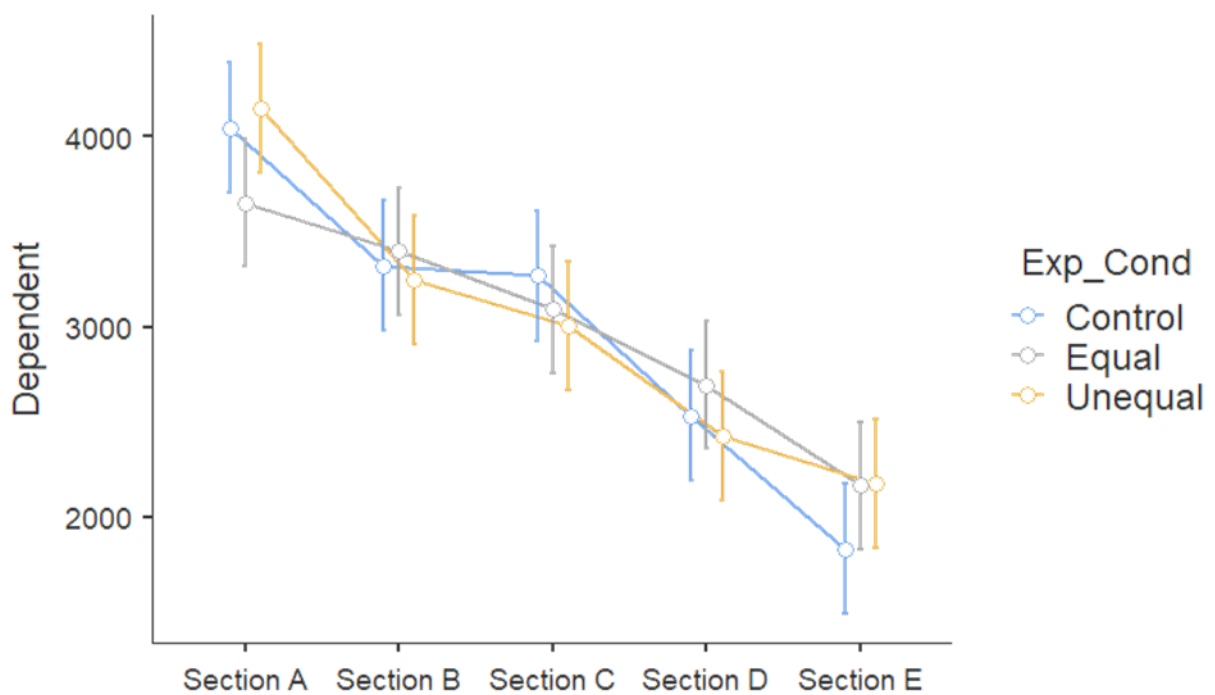
Table 13: Estimated marginal means of the resources distributed across the sections of the population, according to the experimental condition

Experimental Condition	Section	*M*	*SE*	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Control	Section A	4047	174	3704	4390
	Section B	3321	174	2978	3664
	Section C	3269	174	2926	3611
	Section D	2531	174	2188	2873
	Section E	1833	174	1490	2176
Low Inequality	Section A	3650	170	3316	3985
	Section B	3399	170	3064	3733
	Section C	3092	170	2757	3426
	Section D	2693	170	2358	3028
	Section E	2166	170	1832	2501
High Inequality	Section A	4152	172	3813	4491
	Section B	3246	172	2907	3584
	Section C	3005	172	2666	3343
	Section D	2425	172	2086	2763
	Section E	2173	172	1835	2512

6.5.3. British Sample Discussion

The results obtained with British samples supported our hypothesis concerning the perception of the inequality trap, as, consistently with the Italian samples, participants exposed to higher levels of corruption displayed higher inequality inferences and vice-versa. Moreover, the experimental manipulations changed participants' emotional response, appreciation of Velonian, and inferences in a way similar to the one displayed by the Italian samples. However, participants willingness to contrast economic inequality or corruption was not influenced by the experimental manipulations. Nonetheless, the inferences made by participants had an influence on their behavioural intentions as the inequality inferences made by participants when exposed to high corruption made them more willing to contrast economic inequality, and the corruption inferences made by participants increased their behavioural intentions for contrasting both economic inequality and corruption. Unlike the Italian results, the corruption manipulation did not influence the perceived effectiveness of the behavioural intentions, nor the inequality manipulation had any significant effect on them. Also, British samples displayed a preference for a progressive distribution, independently from the experimental manipulation.

6.6. Discussion

In both samples I found that people were able to infer higher levels of corruption given information about high inequality and vice-versa, an element that seems to support our hypothesis that people understand the inequality trap and perceive these two issues as related.

For what concerns the behavioural intentions for contrasting these issues, however, the interpretation of the data is less straightforward. Concerning the Italian samples, in fact, I found that being exposed to a manipulation of high corruption was enough to make people display not only a higher willingness to contrast corruption but also a higher willingness to contrast economic inequality. However, a similar spill-over effect was not found when participants were exposed to a manipulation of high inequality: it led to raise participants' willingness to engage in actions for contrasting inequality but not for contrasting corruption. Moreover, when participants were exposed to a manipulation of high corruption, their inequality inferences made them more willing to contrast economic inequality. On the other hand, when participants were exposed to a high inequality manipulation, their inferences about corruption did not drive them to be more willing to contrast corruption but led them to be more prone to contrast economic inequality. One could argue that people without a first-hand perception of economic inequality are more sensitive to the issue of contrasting it when they think a biased, corrupt system may cause it. At the same time, they might need an actual assessment of the issue (like in the condition of high inequality) to be prone to contrast it, as simple inferences about the issue are not enough to drive people to the intent of the action.

Although the results obtained with the Italian samples were not fully replicated with the British ones, in this latter context, I found that participants' willingness to contrast economic inequality was influenced by their corruption inferences. This result led us to believe that people may consider corruption and economic inequality as two problems not equally concerning, and people may be more prone to tolerate economic inequality than corruption. In other words, although people might be aware that corruption and inequality share a mutual, recursive relationship, they might not consider these two issues at the same level. Perhaps, they have a higher tolerance for economic inequality over corruption, displaying aversion toward the former if they perceive it to be caused by the latter. This might explain why participants, in the first studies, displayed on average higher intentions for contrasting corruption than economic inequality and why, with the Italian samples, I found evidence of a spillover effect of the corruption manipulation on the intentions for contrasting inequality, but not of the inequality manipulation on the intentions for contrasting corruption.

The literature suggests that while corruption is generally condemned by people and is likely to provoke feelings of moral outrage (Tan et al., 2013), economic inequality does not elicit consistent negative feelings in the population, and different people display different levels of tolerance for it (Garcia-Castro et

al., 2020). Various reasons of why this may be the case can be argued. First, a certain degree of economic inequality is not only expected but also perceived as fair (see Wienk et al., 2022). In fact, when our participants were asked to distribute resources according to their idea of an equal society, they decided to maintain a progressive distribution considering fair the existence of a smaller, richer elite. Second, the literature has highlighted how inequalities are tolerated and even supported when people hold legitimizing view of extreme differences in wealth between the rich and the poor (Costa-Lopes et al., 2013). However, when the differences between the rich and the poor are not justified through a mechanism perceived as legitimate, people seem to be more averse to economic inequality, even if the gap occurring is small. For example, people seem to be more prone to contrast economic inequality if they think about it as the result of an advantaged background or the product of unequal opportunities (Gimpelson & Monusova, 2014).

In this perspective, I may argue that people might display, in general, a higher tolerance for economic inequality than corruption, considering the first as a phenomenon both inevitable and justifiable to some degree and may be more willing to contrast economic inequality if they perceive it as the result of a corrupt system. Thus, the perception of corruption may act as a cue that economic inequality may not be the reflection of just differences among people's ability but may be caused by an unfair situation.

Chapter 7
Study 6 and Study 7

7.1.   Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that people may consider corruption as a phenomenon always perceived as negative, independently of its level, while people might consider economic inequality tolerable to a certain degree. I additionally argued that people may change their tolerance for economic inequality according to its perceived origin: the same level of economic inequality may be tolerated if people consider it as the result of the different economic abilities of the population, whereas they may oppose it if they perceive it as the result of a biased, unmeritocratic system (as the one existing in the presence of corruption). Therefore, people might tolerate higher levels of economic inequality than corruption.

Starting from these considerations, I designed a new set of studies with the following aims:

A1) First, we intended to understand if people display a relative tolerance for economic inequality over corruption. To this aim, I devised three measures. First, an adaptation of the Tajfels' matrices with different combinations of percentages of corruption and economic inequality that participants could select. The selection could follow three strategies: one aimed at reducing corruption at the expense of economic inequality (i.e., a relative tolerance for this late phenomenon); one aimed at reducing economic inequality at the expense of corruption (i.e., a relative tolerance for corruption); and one aimed at balancing these phenomena (i.e., parity). Secondly, I considered a sum-zero task. Here, participants could spontaneously allocate a fixed amount of percentage points to corruption and economic inequality until they reached the combination they deemed as preferable. While through the matrices task I could assess participants' *relative* tolerance among pre-fixed combinations, the latter task allowed me to identify participants' *ideal* combination. Thirdly, a task in which participants could freely allocate a fixed amount of money between two non-profit organizations: one contrasting corruption and one contrasting economic inequality. This was a task allowing us to assess behaviours (behavioural task).

A2) Our second aim was to explore whether manipulating the salience of economic inequality over corruption (and vice versa) would shift any potential tolerance for an issue over the other. Indeed, scholars have posited that the aversion and tolerance towards certain social issues is correlated to its saliency. Some researchers have found that a prolonged exposure to an issue may raise people's tolerance for it (Kehrberg, 2007), while others have posited that bringing to the light a phenomenon may decrease people's tolerance for it (Dill & Brown, 2008). To the best of our knowledge, no empirical study has investigated the tolerance for corruption over economic inequality (and vice versa) when one of the two constructs has been made relevant. I manipulated the constructs saliency

by using three videos: one describing corruption, one economic inequality, and one used as a control and referring to something neutral (i.e., solar system). I first examined the perceived relevance of one constructed over the other. Specifically, I tested whether the economic inequality video influenced beliefs on such a construct as more relevant than corruption and the opposite for the corruption video, and if this differed when no salience was involved (control). Then, I examined whether the videos affected the emotional reactions associated with both issues. I specifically focused on anger, hope, and resignation as some of these emotions were found to be related to economic inequality and corruption in our previous studies. Hence, I tested whether the economic inequality video increased emotions concerning this construct compared to corruption and, vice versa, for the corruption video. I compared this with emotional reactions reported in the control video condition. Finally, I examined whether the videos affected participants' choices on the matrices, zero-sum task, and the behaviour task.

As for previous studies, the experiment presented in this chapter was administered to both an Italian and a British sample.

7.2. Methodology

7.2.1. Procedure, Experimental Materials and Measures

The current research encompassed three experimental conditions: Corruption saliency vs. Economic Inequality saliency vs. Control. As in the previous studies, I asked participants to identify with a citizen of a fictional nation (i.e., Velonia). Then, one of the videos (see the next section for details) was randomly presented. At the end of the video, participants completed a video-related attention check item, two items concerning the impact/relevance that economic inequality and corruption have on society (one item for each construct), and they were asked about their emotions concerning the two phenomena (hope/ anger and resignation). Finally, they familiarised with the matrices task, provided their answers on five different matrices, a zero-sum task, and a behaviour task. Because I used an online survey, two attention check items were also added to the survey. Before being thanked and dismissed, participants provided their demographical information. The experimental materials are described below according to the order they were presented to the participants.

7.2.1.1. Videos

I prepared three short, animated videos of a similar length (< 2 minutes), one describing the issue of corruption, one about economic inequality, and a control one which presented some facts about the Solar system. Corruption and economic inequality were illustrated by providing a definition (taken from the Corruption International and World Bank websites, respectively) and practical examples. For instance, in the economic inequality video, I transposed visually an unequal distribution of wealth, while in the corruption

video, I numerated different areas in which corruption has its effects such as the public sector, the private one, the media, and so on.[10] After watching one of the three randomly presented videos, participants were presented with a list of six topics and were asked to indicate which one was the topic of the video (video-related attention check).

7.2.1.2. Relevance of Corruption and Economic Inequality

After watching the videos, regardless of the experimental condition, participants were asked to rate the relevance of economic inequality and corruption on a scale ranging from 0 ("*Not relevant at all"*) to 10 ("*Extremely relevant"*). To examine the perceived relevance of an issue over the other I subtracted the rating for the economic inequality from that one for corruption, obtaining a variable called Saliency Differential Score. In such a way, negative scores indicated that participants considered economic inequality more relevant than corruption, while positive scores that corruption was more relevant than economic inequality. Zero would indicate that both phenomena are equally relevant.

7.2.1.3. Emotional Reaction

To understand whether making one phenomenon as more relevant than the other (or irrelevant) changed participants' emotional reaction towards corruption and economic inequality, I asked participants to rate how angry, hopeful, and resigned they were concerning both issues on a scale ranging from 0 ("*Not at all"*) to 10 ("*Extremely"*). For each emotional reaction, I used a single item

7.2.1.4. Matrices

Participants were first presented a familiarisation task concerning the use of matrices. The task involved indicating for five times (corresponding to the number of matrices) what they considered the optimal balance between economic inequality and corruption in the society of Velonia. To the best of our knowledge, no measure assessing a possible relative tolerance between these phenomena exists. I therefore relied on a modified version of the Tajfel's matrices. Tajfel's matrices are the core of the Minimal Group Paradigm, that was created to investigate intergroup relationships (Otten, 2016) and assess people's tendencies to divide limited resources between members of the ingroup and the outgroup. This is a validated tool that has been vastly used (see Otten, 2016) for assessing people's preferences for the ingroup over the outgroup. I adapted this tool to assess the preference/tolerance toward economic inequality over corruption and vice versa.

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[10] Videos were pre-tested to be equal in terms of understandability, emotional valence, and efficacy in changing participants' perception of the saliency concerning economic inequality and corruption. Results of the pre-test are presented in the section 2.1 of the Appendix.

7.2.1.4.1.   Tajfel's Matrices

Originally, Tajfel and colleagues (1971) created six different matrices, each composed by thirteen bundles. The number of resources to be assigned to the ingroup was depicted in the top row of each bundle while the resources to be assigned to the outgroup were indicated in the bottom row (see *Figure 1*). Hence, by selecting one bundle, participants selected the preferred distribution of resources between the ingroup and the outgroup.

Such matrices allowed to assess five strategies of resource distribution:

1. *Fairness or Parity* **(P)**: a strategy consisting of awarding the same proportion of resources to both the ingroup and the outgroup.

2. *Maximum Joint Profit* **(MJP)**: the strategy of selecting the bundle that maximizes the resources of both the ingroup and the outgroup.

3. *Maximum Ingroup Profit* **(MIP)**: the strategy aimed at maximizing the resources assigned to the ingroup, independently of the ones assigned to the outgroup.

4. *Maximum Differentiation* **(MD)**: the discriminatory strategy aimed at maximizing the difference between the ingroup and the outgroup, independently of the absolute number of the resources available. Participants who use this strategy want members of the ingroup to have more resources than members of the outgroup, independently of the real amount of resources.

5. *Outgroup Favouritism* **(OF)**: the strategy of maximizing the difference between the ingroup and the outgroup in favour of the outgroup.

The matrices (depicted in *Figure* 1) were created in such a way to allow a comparison between the previously mentioned strategies and were divided among three typologies.

- **Matrix Type A**: which allowed to compare the strategies favouring the ingroup (FAV = MIP+MD) with the maximum joint profit (MJP).

- **Matrix Type B**: allowed to compare the maximum difference strategy (MD) with the maximum ingroup profit (MIP) and the maximum joint one (MJP).

- **Matrix Type C**: allowed a comparison between parity (P) and favouritism for the ingroup (FAV= MIP+MD).

Through such matrices, it is possible to identify the strategy used by participants (in the form of a categorical dependent variable) along with the commitment expressed by each participant toward such a strategy (which is presented in the form of a continuous dependent variable, originally called *pull scores*). Therefore, it is

possible not only to understand whether participants display a preference for the ingroup over the outgroup, but also the extent of preference.

Figure 1: A visual representation of the Tajfel's matrices
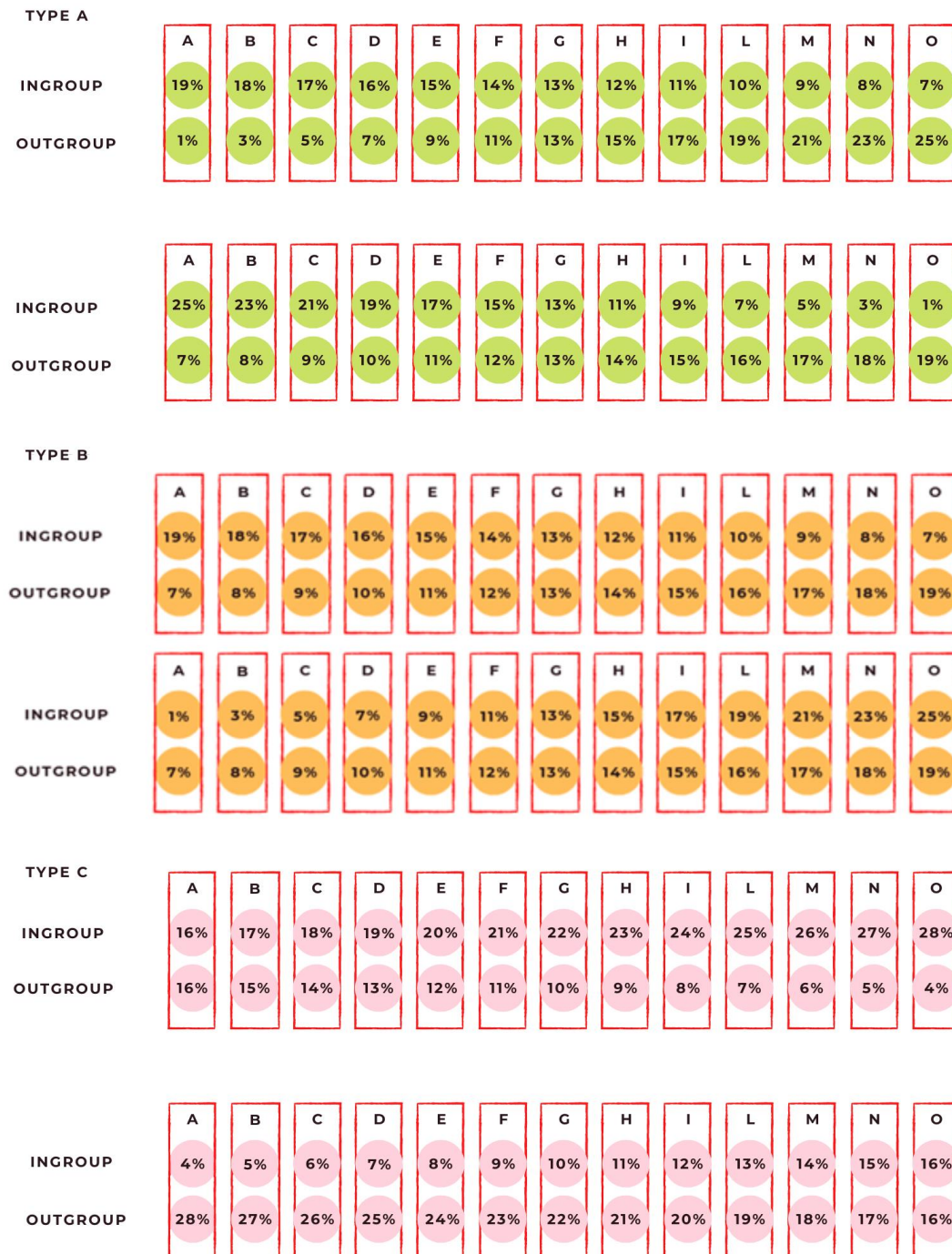
7.2.1.4.2.   Adaptation of the Tajfel's Matrices

As noted, I adapted this paradigm to investigate a possible relative preference/tolerance for economic inequality over corruption, and vice versa, and understand if people consider these issues as equally negative or if they hold a relative preference for one over the other. I asked participants to select a combination (among the 13 possible ones) of percentages of inequality and corruption levels that they deem preferable among the others. In such a context, participants are asked to express their relative preferences through six different matrices, each providing different sets of 13 combinations. Hence, this kind of paradigm allows us to understand whether people consider one of these social phenomena as more severe than the other and whether they are willing to endure higher levels of one if this means having lower levels of the other. Differently from the original strategies assessed by Tajfel and colleagues (1971), I investigated whether participants implemented the following strategies:

1. **Parity (P)**: equal percentages of income inequality and corruption. This choice indicates that participants do not deem economic inequality (or corruption) preferable to corruption (or economic inequality).

2. **Minimum Economic-Inequality percentage (MEIP)**: a choice that minimizes the overall percentages of economic inequality, regardless of the percentage of corruption. This choice indicates that participants consider economic inequality as more impactful and severe than corruption, and therefore are willing to reduce its level even at the cost of enduring increased levels of corruption. Participants who implement this strategy hold a relative tolerance for corruption.

3. **Minimum Corruption percentage (MCP)**: a choice that minimizes the overall percentages of corruption, regardless of the percentage of economic inequality. This choice indicates that participants consider corruption as more impactful and severe than economic inequality, and therefore are willing to reduce its level even at the cost of enduring higher levels of economic inequality. Participants who implement this strategy hold a relative tolerance for economic inequality.

In the following sections I will present how each matrix type was adapted.

7.2.1.4.2.1.Type A Matrices

I adapted the original type A matrices as depicted in *Figure* 2.

Figure 2: The type A matrices, adapted for our context

These matrices are designed so that the overall amount of percentage points assigned to corruption and economic inequality are not constant throughout all the bundles, but they range from a minimum of 20 to a maximum of 32. This means that selecting a bundle over another corresponds to selecting different overall percentage points distributed across economic inequality and corruption. For instance, in the upper matrix type A depicted in *Figure* 2 (from this point onwards M1), selecting the bundle A means selecting an overall total of corruption and economic inequality percentage points equal to 20 (1% + 19%), while selecting the bundle O provides 32 total percentage points (25% + 7%). Type A matrices provide information concerning how much corruption (or economic inequality) people are willing to endure to reduce economic inequality (or corruption) by one unit. In M1, the overall minimizing strategy is represented by the bundle A, while the preference for reducing economic inequality is represented at its extreme by the bundle O. This means that participants should be drawn to the minimizing bundle (bundle A) unless they want to reduce the percentage of economic inequality and, thus, should move toward bundles positioned on the right (i.e., the percentage of economic inequality decreases from left to right). It is important to notice that to reduce economic inequality by one percentage point, it is necessary to raise corruption by two percentage points.

In the lower matrix depicted in *Figure* 2 (henceforth M2), the minimizing choice is positioned on the far right and is compared against the preference for reducing corruption. If participants want to reduce corruption, they must distance themselves from the minimizing choice. More specifically, reducing corruption by one percentage point means raising economic inequality by two. In the case in which participants hold a strong preference for reducing economic inequality at all costs, they will select the bundle O in both matrices, while if they hold a preference for reducing corruption at all costs, they will select the bundle A in both matrices (see Figure 3). Just like in the original matrices it is also possible to combine the scores of the two matrices

together to obtain further information. Subtracting the reversed scores of the second matrix from the ones of the first matrix I will obtain a score ranging from -12 to +12, whose interpretation in terms of strategy has been summed in *Table 1*. For example, in *Figure* 3 I provided an example of the use of the type A Matrices. In M1 the participant selected the Bundle C and so did when using M2, combining the two scores, I obtain a score equal to -8, which indicates a relative tolerance for economic inequality over corruption, therefore a Minimum Corruption Percentage strategy.

Table 1: The interpretation of the scale obtained combining the scores of type A matrices (M1-M2 reversed)

	Scale Obtained	Scale Interpretation	Strategy
M1 – M2 (Reversed)	-12 to + 12	< 0 Relative tolerance for economic inequality over corruption	MCP
		= 0 No relative preference	P
		> 0 Relative tolerance for corruption over economic inequality	MEIP

Figure 3: Example of the use of the matrices of type A
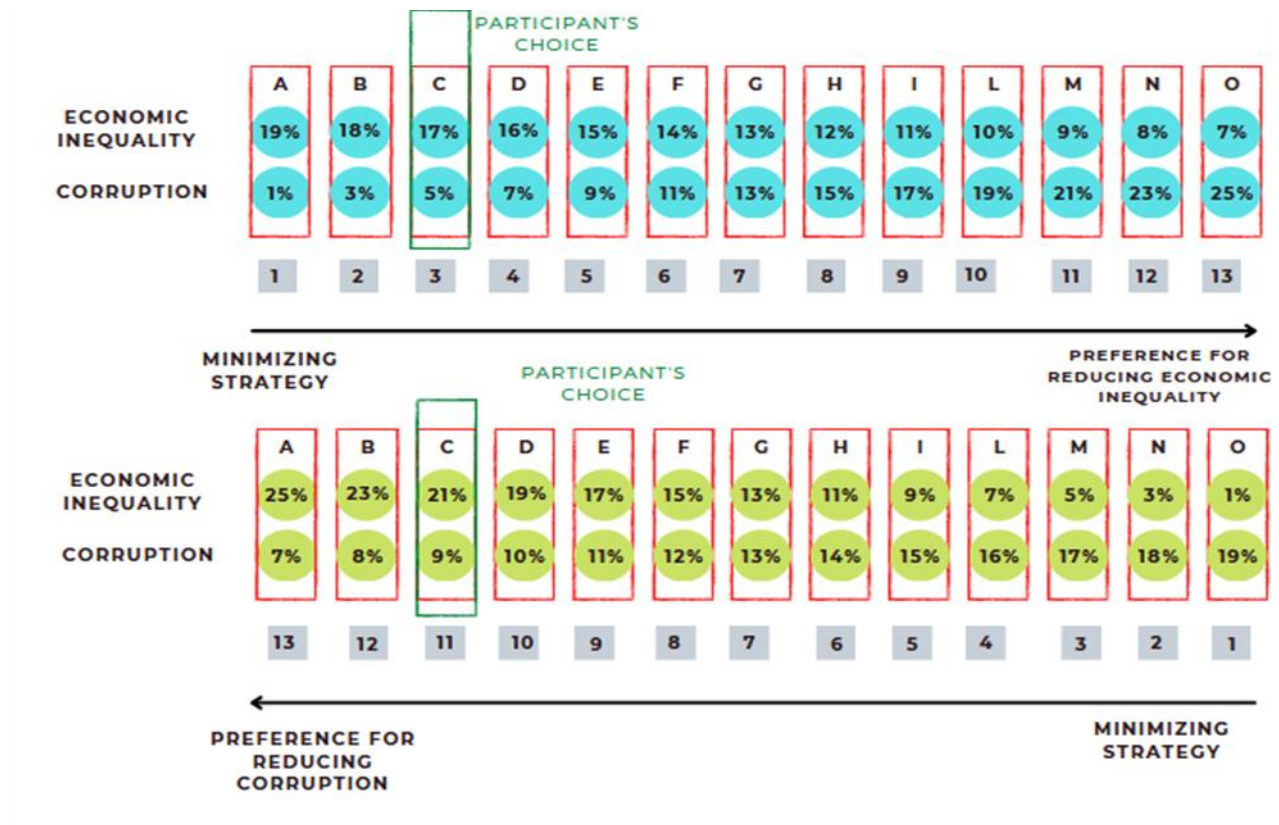
7.2.1.4.2.2. Type B Matrix

The original Tajfel's matrices of type B (depicted in *Figure* 4) were designed to calculate the pull of the Maximum Differentiation strategy over the Maximum Joint profit and the Maximum Ingroup profit. However, when adapting these matrices to our context, there would be no rational reasons for participants to select any other bundles but the first one on the left; in fact, there would be no reasons for participants to prefer more points assigned to both corruption and economic inequality. Thus, I excluded the second matrix of type B from our design.

Figure 4: The original Type B matrices
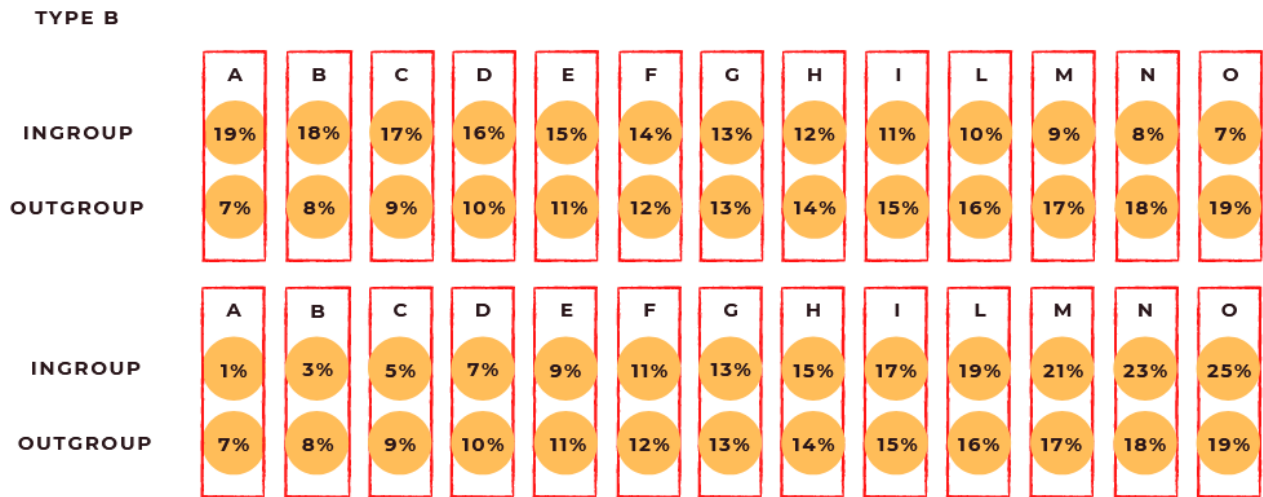
Hence, I only adapted the second matrix of type B (henceforth M3) as depicted in *Figure* 5. This matrix does not have a choice that minimizes both issues as the total of percentage points assigned to corruption and economic inequality add up to the same amount (26%) in each bundle. Its interpretation is straightforward: bundles closer to the left indicate a relative tolerance for economic inequality over corruption while bundles closer to the right indicate the opposite preference. The bundle G, on the other hand, indicates that the participants do not prefer a construct over the other (i.e., parity). To interpret M3, I used the same scale of scores illustrated in Table 1. Note that the original 0 to +13 scale was recoded into a -12 to +12 scale to match the one obtained combining the matrices of type A.

Figure 5: The adaptation of M3 for our context, along with its interpretation
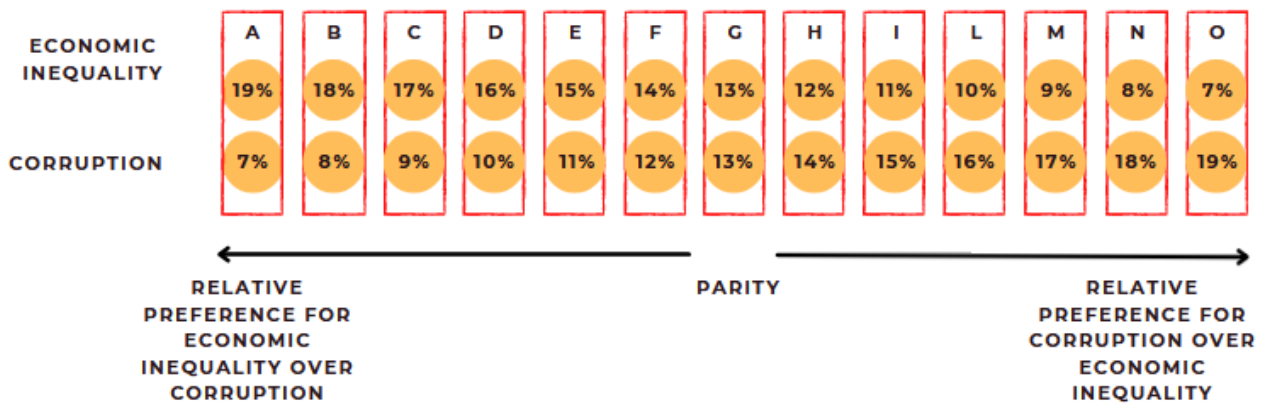
7.2.1.4.2.3. Type C Matrices

I adapted type C matrices (henceforth, M4 and M5 respectively) as illustrated in *Figure* 6. By subtracting the M4 scores from the M5 ones I obtained a new scale (-12 to + 12), with an interpretation in line with the one previously described for matrices of type A (see *Table* 1 of the Matrix type A section).

Figure 6: The type C matrices, adapted for the context
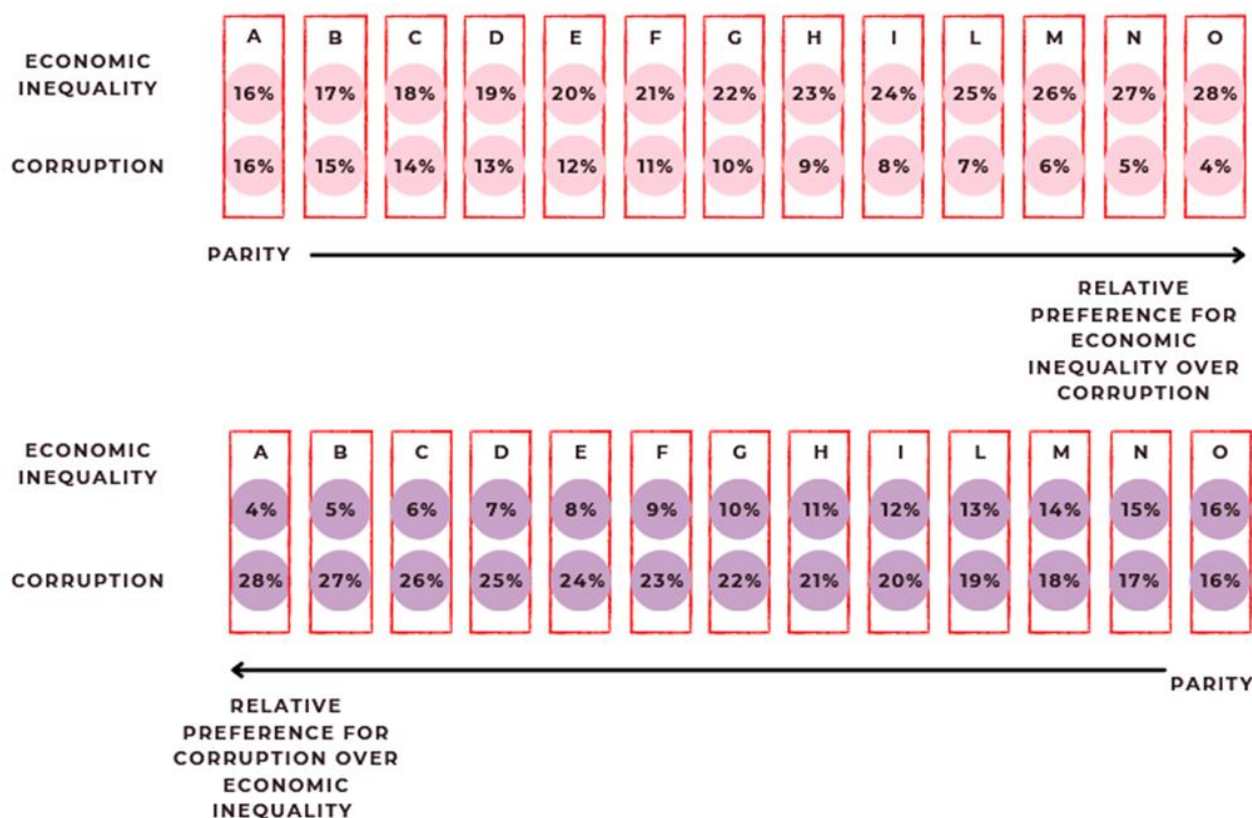
7.2.1.5.   Participants' motivations

After each matrix, participants were asked four questions, labelled "*Motivation 1*", "*Motivation 2*", "*Motivation 3*" and "*Motivation 4*". Motivation 1 asked participants the reason why they selected a bundle over the others on a scale ranging from -5 ("I wanted to limit corruption as much as possible) to + 5 ("I wanted to limit economic inequality as much as possible") with a middle point 0 ("I wanted to balance corruption and economic inequality as much as possible"). The reasons to introduce such measure were multiple: first, I wanted to check whether participants were aware that, when selecting a specific bundle, they were actually making the decision to adopt a strategy of either reducing corruption or economic inequality at the expense of the other; second, it allowed us to check if the motivation they had declared matched with the bundle they had selected, thus providing converging evidence for the strategy they used; third, I checked if participants, displayed a consistent motivation for selecting a bundle over the others across matrices. The other questions (*Motivation 2-4*) asked participants, respectively, how important it was for them to contrast

economic inequality, corruption, or economic inequality and corruption together on a scale ranging from 0 ("*Not at all*") to 10 ("*Extremely*"). I decided to introduce these measures because participants may display a preference for Economic Inequality over Corruption (or vice-versa) for different reasons: because they consider contrasting corruption important, but they do not consider contrasting Economic Inequality relevant (or vice-versa) or because they consider contrasting economic inequality and corruption important but still consider contrasting the former more important than contrasting the second.

7.2.1.6.   Zero-Sum Task

In this task, I asked participants to allocate a fixed amount of percentage points to either corruption or economic inequality, to identify which trade-off between these issues they consider preferable. Participants were provided with 32 percentage points[11] that they could freely allocate to either of the issues or both, in the desired combination, as represented in *Figure* 7. Assigning more percentage points to Economic Inequality (or Corruption) than Corruption (or Economic Inequality) indicated a relative preference for the former, at the expense of the latter and vice-versa. This measure allowed us to identify the ideal trade-off between Corruption and Economic Inequality of the participants.

Figure 7: The zero-sum task, as presented to participants

You now have the option to decide which percentage of Corruption and Economic Inequality you think is best for the Velonian society. In this case, you will not have to choose between pre-set combinations but you can freely decide to attribute percentages of Corruption and Economic Inequality as you deem optimal. The total sum is equal to 32 percentage points that you can choose how to freely distribute between the two constructs. The total sum of the percentage points, freely distributed across Corruption and Economic Inequality must be equal to 32.

7.2.1.7.   Behavioural Task

Finally, participants were asked to freely allocate a hypothetical fixed amount of money (1000 Velonian dollars) to two non-profit organizations: one devoted to contrasting Corruption and one to Economic Inequality. I hypothesized that the participants would assign more funds for contrasting the phenomenon

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[11] The overall percentage points available were 32, to match the ones available in different combination between Corruption and Economic Inequality in matrixes of type C.

they would consider as more severe, therefore if participants assigned more funds for contrasting Corruption (or Economic Inequality) it would be interpreted as a relative preference for Economic Inequality over Corruption (or vice-versa). I introduced this task to assess if the relative tolerance expressed by participants would translate into behaviour.

7.3. The Studies

Given the exploratory nature of the study and the adaptation of the matrices to this new context, I ran a pilot study in which participants were presented with a simplified version of the experiment (namely, only the videos and the matrices were included). For doing so, I recruited a sample of 200 Italian participants using Prolific. A consistent pattern of results emerged, indicating that the material *ad hoc* designed for this experiment worked as intended. A detailed description of the results concerning the pilot study is reported in the section 2.2 of the Appendix. Then, I proceeded to run the same study first with an Italian sample and then with a British one. Before running the studies, a power analysis was conducted using the GLIMMPSE software. A sample size of 65 participants per condition (i.e., 3), for a total of 195 participants (α = .05, power = .85, effect size = .3) was deemed adequate for the study design. All the analyses that will be described from now on have been performed using Jamovi (Version 1.2) and R Statistical Software (v4.1.2; R Core Team, 2021).

7.3.1. Study 6: Italian Sample

I recruited an Italian sample using a snowball sampling method. The study was approved by the University of Milano-Bicocca ethical committee as a minimal risk study. Participants were recruited using the Prolific Platform and were compensated for their time 9£ per hour.

7.3.1.1. Participants

I recruited a sample of 200 participants using Prolific. Only 190 correctly answered the attention checks I inserted in the survey and were therefore included in the final sample. The sample's ($N_{Females}$ = 92, $N_{Non-Binary}$ = 4, M_{Age} = 33.4, SD_{Age} = 8.7) composition in terms of level of education and occupation is summarized in the *Table* 2.

Table 2: Italian Sample demographic information

Levels of Education	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
I do not have a High School Diploma	1	0.5 %	0.5 %
I have a High School Diploma	26	13.7 %	14.2 %
I am currently enrolled in a university program	60	31.6 %	45.8 %
I have a bachelor's degree	48	25.3 %	71.1 %

	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
I have a master's degree	44	23.2 %	94.2 %
I have a Ph.D.	8	4.2 %	98.4 %
Other/Prefer not to say	3	1.6 %	100.0 %

Occupation	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Student	93	48.9 %	48.9 %
Unemployed	13	6.8 %	55.8 %
Employed	53	27.9 %	83.7 %
Self-Employed	21	11.1 %	94.7 %
Homemaker	3	1.6 %	96.3 %
Retired	1	0.5 %	96.8 %
Other/Prefer not to say	6	3.2 %	100.0 %

7.3.1.2. Relevance Perception

As a first step, I ran 3 one-sample t-tests against 0 on the Relevance Differential Score. Results are summarised in *Table* 3. Participants who watched the economic inequality video and the corruption one evaluated the phenomenon that was made relevant as more important over the other. Participants who watched the control video rated the two phenomena as equally relevant. Next, I conducted a one-way ANOVA (Video: Corruption vs. Control vs. Economic Inequality) on the Saliency Differential Score to examine whether the relevance of one phenomenon over the other changed depending on the video. A significant effect of the video, $F(2, 187) = 2.97$, $p = .045$, $\eta^2 = 0.031$, was found. Post-hoc comparisons indicated that participants who watched the Corruption video ($M = 0.3$; $SE = 0.18$) considered such issue significantly more relevant than economic inequality, compared to those assigned to the Inequality video ($M = -0.32$, $SE = .18$, $p_{Tukey} = .043$). However, no significant difference was found between the control ($M = 0.048$, $SE = 0.185$) and both the corruption video ($p_{Tukey} = .326$) and the inequality video conditions ($p_{Tukey} = .597$).

Table 3: One-sample t-tests against 0, for the Relevance Differential score across each manipulation condition

Video Watched		Statistic	df	p	Mean Difference	Cohen's d
Corruption	Student's t	2.09	62	0.041	0.302	0.263
Economic Inequality	Student's t	-1.46	65	0.015	-0.323	-0.181
Control	Student's t	0.28	61	0.780	0.0484	0.0356

7.3.1.3. Emotional reaction

I ran six one-way ANOVAs (Video: Corruption vs. Control vs. Economic Inequality) on participants' ratings of anger, hope, and resignation concerning economic inequality and corruption, respectively. With reference to emotional reaction concerning economic inequality, a significant effect of the video on Hope, $F(2, 187) = 3.16$, $p = .045$, $\eta^2 = 0.033$, was found. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey correction) showed that participants who watched the economic inequality video were less hopeful about such issue ($M = 4.14$, $S.E. = 0.3$) than those assigned to watch the Control video ($M = 5.24$, $SE = 0.31$; $p_{Tukey} = .036$). No significant difference was found between the economic inequality and the corruption video conditions ($p = .612$), or the corruption and the control ones ($p = .275$). No significant effect was found for anger, $F(2, 187) = 2.93$, $p = .056$, $\eta^2 = .030$, and the resignation, $F(2, 187) = 2.19$, $p = .116$, $\eta^2 = 0.023$, concerning economic inequality. Moreover, no significant effects of the video were found on anger, $F(2, 187) = 1.58$, $p = .208$, $\eta^2 = 0.017$, hope, $F(2, 187) = 2.17$, $p = .117$, $\eta^2 = .023$, and resignation, $F(2, 187) = 1.07$, $p = .345$, $\eta^2 = .011$, concerning corruption.

Since I was interested in the tolerance for economic equality over corruption, and vice versa, I decided to explore whether there was a difference in the emotional reactions for the two issues. Hence, I subtracted the scores concerning the anger, hope, and resignation evoked by economic inequality from the ones evoked by corruption, so that positive scores indicate that participants rated the emotions evoked by corruption higher than the ones evoked by economic inequality, and negative scores vice versa. A one-sample t-test against zero was performed on each emotion (see *Table* 4). Participants, on average, were significantly angrier towards corruption than economic inequality, and significantly more hopeful towards economic inequality than corruption.

Table 4: One sample t-test against zero on participants differences between the emotional ratings expressed towards Corruption minus the ones expressed against Economic Inequality

Ratings (Corruption - Economic Inequality)	Statistic		df	p	Mean Difference	Cohen's d
Anger	Student's t	7.50	189	< .001	1.084	0.544
Hope	Student's t	-7.85	189	< .001	-1.26	-0.570
Resignation	Student's t	-0.03	189	0.974	-0.005	-0.00236

7.3.1.4. Matrices

After checking that participants did not select a bundle over another randomly, [12] and hence the matrices were used following a criterion, I calculated participants' probability of selecting a strategy (P vs. Minimum Corruption Percentage vs. Minimum Economic Inequality P) over another throughout the experiment, running a log-linear regression. A significant effect of the strategy, $\chi^2(2; 570) = 39.6$, $p < .001$, emerged. As shown in *Table* 5, participants displayed a significant higher probability of selecting the Minimum Corruption Percentage strategy over MEIP and P, while they were not significantly more likely to select MEIP over P.[13] In *Figure* 8 I display participants' probability of selecting one strategy, over the other, across matrix type.

Table 5: Participants probability of selecting a strategy, over the other, across all matrices

Model Coefficients

Predictor	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Intercept	5.565	0.0619	89.90	< .001
Strategy:				
P – MCP	-0.602	0.1040	-5.78	< .001
MEIP – MCP	-0.453	0.0993	-4.56	< .001
MEIP – P	0.149	0.1141	1.31	0.191

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[12] For further analyses concerning this statement, see the section 2.3.1 of the Appendix.

[13] Participants' declared motivations seem to confirm that they were aware of the strategy they engaged in and that, therefore their preference for economic inequality over corruption was explicit, for further details see the section 2.3.2 of the Appendix
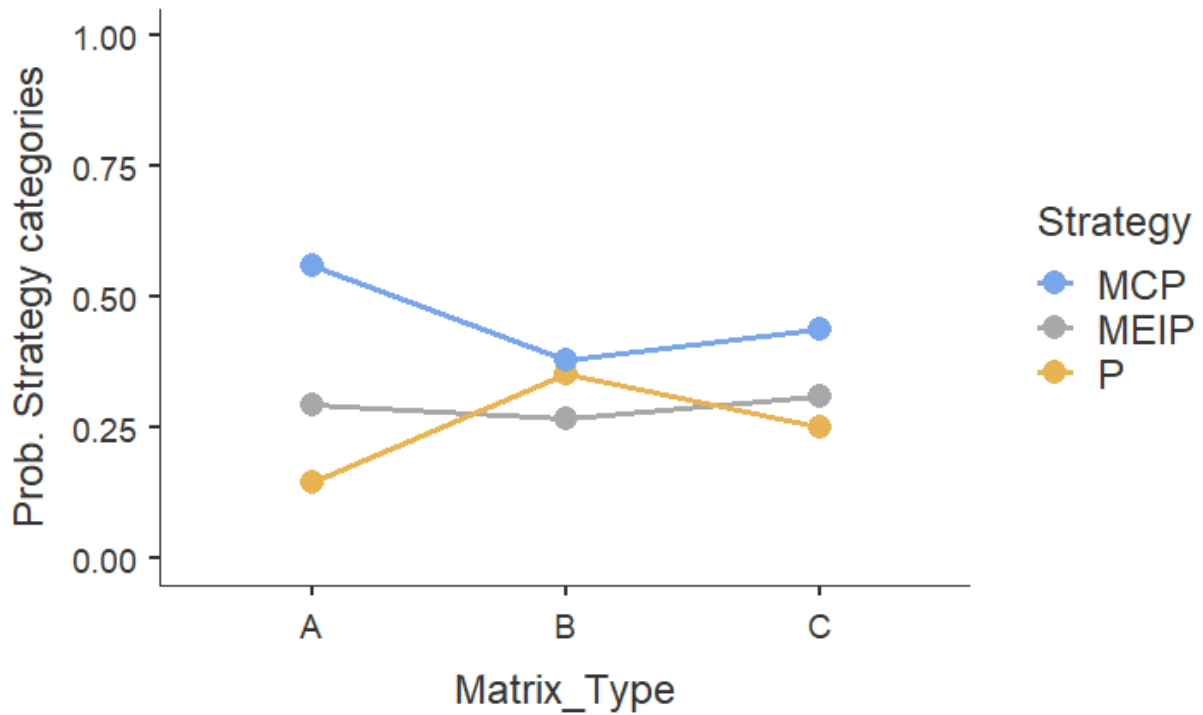
7.3.1.5.   Effect of Video Condition on Matrices Strategy

To check if making a phenomenon relevant (vs. irrelevant) had an influence on the strategy pursued by participants, I ran a generalized linear model. However, I did not find a significant effect of the video manipulation, $\chi^2(8, 570) = 1.18$, $p = .997$. As illustrated in *Table* 6 and *Figure* 9, participants, independently from the Video manipulation they were exposed to did not select a strategy over another in a way significantly different

Figure 9: Participants' probability of selecting a strategy over another, according to the manipulation they were exposed to
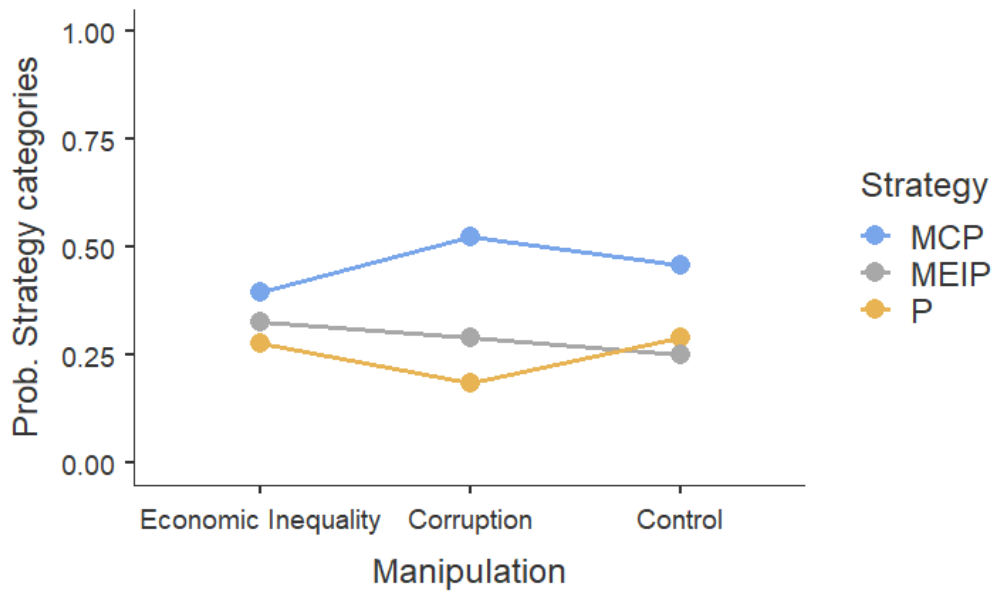
Table 6: Probability of selecting a Strategy, across different experimental manipulations

Strategy	Comparison			Difference	SE	z	$p_{bonferroni}$
	Manipulation		Manipulation				
P	Economic Inequality	-	Corruption	0.0917	0.0427	2.147	0.226
	Economic Inequality	-	Control	-0.0134	0.0462	-0.290	1.000
	Corruption	-	Control	-0.1051	0.0437	-2.408	0.158
MCP	Economic Inequality	-	Corruption	-0.1289	0.0504	-2.556	0.129
	Economic Inequality	-	Control	-0.0621	0.0506	-1.228	0.796
	Corruption	-	Control	0.0668	0.0515	1.297	0.727
MEIP	Economic Inequality	-	Corruption	0.0372	0.0471	0.789	1.000
	Economic Inequality	-	Control	0.0755	0.0463	1.630	0.463
	Corruption	-	Control	0.0383	0.0459	0.835	1.000

7.3.1.6.   Zero-sum Task

Participants were asked to allocate, in a constant sum task, 32 percentage points freely between corruption and economic inequality to create the combination of the two phenomena they considered more tolerable. I ran our analyses on the percentage points assigned to economic inequality, keeping in mind that, being such task a zero-sum one, the percentage points assigned to corruption were complementary. Knowing how many percentage points a participant assigned to economic inequality means also knowing how many were assigned to corruption. As a first step, I explored if, independently of the video, participants displayed a relative preference for economic inequality over corruption, by running a paired samples *t*-test between the

percentage points assigned to corruption and those assigned to economic inequality. Results, $t(189) = 4.35$, $p < .00, 1$, Cohen's $d = 0.316$, indicated that, on average, participants assigned fewer percentage points to corruption ($M = 13.6$, $SE = 0.55$) than economic inequality ($M = 18.4$, $SE = 0.55$), displaying a relative tolerance for this latter phenomenon, in line with what I found using the matrices.

I also explored if the video participants were exposed to had an impact on such relative tolerance. I ran a one-way ANOVA on participants' percentage points allocated to economic inequality over those allocated to corruption. A significant main effect was found, $F(2, 187) = 5.38$, $p = .005$, $\eta^2 = .054$. Pairwise comparisons (Tukey correction) indicated that participants in the economic inequality video condition ($M = 16.00$, $SE = .925$) allocated fewer percentage points to economic inequality than those assigned to the corruption condition ($M = 19.9$, $SE = .939$; $p_{Tukey} < .001$) and the control one ($M = 19.5$, $SE = .945$; $p_{Tukey} < .001$). No significant difference was found between these two latter conditions ($p_{Tukey} = 0.942$). These results indicated that the Economic Inequality video watched managed to reduce the relative tolerance for economic inequality displayed by participants in the control condition, a tolerance that however was not significantly increased by the corruption manipulation. It is also important to notice that participants assigned to the economic inequality video allocated a mean of percentage points to corruption equal to 16, meaning that, on average, they showed what in the matrices task I would call a Parity strategy.

7.3.1.7. Behavioural Task

Participants were asked to allocate a constant sum (1000 Velonian Dollars) freely between two non-profit organizations: one contrasting corruption and one contrasting economic inequality. I first examined the overall behavioural preferences of allocation of money to one organisation over the other. A paired sample t-test was not significant, $t(189) = 1.35$, Cohen's $d = 0.098$, indicating that participants attributed a similar amount of money to the non-profit organisation contrasting corruption ($M_{Corruption} = 520$, $SE_{Corruption} = 14.7$) and the one contrasting economic inequality ($M_{Economic\_Inequality} = 480$, $SE_{Economic\_Inequality} = 14.7$). Then, I ran a one-way ANOVA (Video: Corruption vs. Economic Inequality vs. Control) on the funds allocated to the corruption non-profit organization. No significant effect of video, $F(2, 187) = 0.797$, $p = .452$, $\eta^2 = .008$, emerged. Regardless of the manipulation, participants assigned the same sum of money for contrasting corruption and economic inequality.

7.3.1.8. Relative Tolerance and Emotional Reactions

I decided to explore if the emotional reactions displayed by participants affected the strategy, they selected using the matrices. For doing so, I ran a multinomial Logistic Regression, using the emotional reactions displayed by participants as predictors of the strategy they selected. I assessed a significant model, depicted in *Table* 7. Overall, I found that participants were significantly more likely to select the P strategy over Minimum Corruption Percentage the higher their levels of Anger towards Economic Inequality, while they were significantly more likely to select the Minimum Corruption Percentage over P the higher they Anger

towards Corruption. Moreover, participants were more likely to select the MEIP strategy over Minimum Corruption Percentage the angrier they were towards Economic Inequality, while they were significantly more likely to select the Minimum Corruption Percentage strategy over the MEIP the higher their levels of Anger towards Corruption. From these analyses it emerges that participants' relative tolerance for Economic Inequality or Corruption was influenced by the anger elicited by such phenomena.

Table 7: Multinomial Logistic Regression

Model Fit Measures

Model	Deviance	AIC	R^2_{McF}
1	1156	1184	0.0466

Strategy	Predictor	Estimate	SE	Z	p
P - MCP	Intercept	-0.2082	0.9117	-0.228	0.819
	Anger_Inequality	0.2578	0.0637	4.047	< .001*
	Hope_Inequality	-0.0597	0.0532	-1.123	0.261
	Resignation_Inequality	0.1231	0.0591	2.082	0.057
	Anger_Corruption	-0.2764	0.0945	-2.925	0.003*
	Hope_Corruption	0.0637	0.0562	1.134	0.257
	Resignation_Corruption	-0.1022	0.0543	-1.882	0.060
MEIP - MCP	Intercept	1.3672	0.8670	1.577	0.115
	Anger_Inequality	0.2947	0.0617	4.778	< .001*
	Hope_Inequality	-0.0840	0.0522	-1.611	0.107
	Resignation_Inequality	0.0425	0.0548	0.776	0.438
	Anger_Corruption	-0.3894	0.0909	-4.283	< .001*
	Hope_Corruption	-0.0408	0.0584	-0.699	0.484
	Resignation_Corruption	-0.0504	0.0516	-0.978	0.328

Moreover, I decided to explore if participants' preferences expressed by participants in the zero-sum task were predicted by their emotional reactions. As depicted by the models summarized in *Table* 8, participants' percentage points assigned to Corruption were significantly positively predicted by the Anger people perceived towards Economic Inequality, while they were negatively predicted by Anger participants' displayed towards Corruption. In other words, participants were more willing to tolerate higher levels of Corruption (in order to decrease Economic Inequality) the more the phenomenon of Economic Inequality elicited in them feelings of Anger. Likewise, participants were more willing to tolerate higher levels of

Economic Inequality (in order to decrease Corruption) the more such phenomenon elicited in them feelings of Anger.

Table 8: Emotions as predictors of the Corruption percentage points selected by participants

Model	R	R²	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.364	0.133	4.66	6	183	< .001

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	22.080	4.114	5.368	< .001
Anger Inequality	0.936	0.280	3.346	< .001
Hope Inequality	-0.331	0.263	-1.258	0.210
Resignation Inequality	0.430	0.279	1.539	0.126
Anger Corruption	-1.489	0.402	-3.704	< .001
Hope Corruption	-0.153	0.285	-0.537	0.592
Resignation Corruption	-0.431	0.259	-1.663	0.098

Table 9: Emotions as predictors of the amount of money assigned by participants for contrasting Corruption

Model	R	R²	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.203	0.0412	1.31	6	183	0.255

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	410.58	114.98	3.571	< .001
Anger Inequality	-16.70	7.82	-2.134	0.034
Hope Inequality	2.60	7.34	0.353	0.724
Resignation Inequality	-1.84	7.81	-0.236	0.814
Anger Corruption	22.12	11.24	1.968	0.049
Hope Corruption	-7.16	7.96	-0.900	0.369
Resignation Corruption	3.33	7.24	0.460	0.646

Lastly, I explored if the emotional reactions displayed by participants influenced the amount of money assigned to the two non-profit organizations for contrasting economic inequality and corruption, in the

behavioural task (*Table* 9). I decided to explore the emotional reactions displayed by participants as regressors of the money assigned towards contrastng Corruption. In such case, I found that the funds assigned to corruption were negatively predicted by participants' anger towards economic inequality and positively predicted by their anger towards corruption, in line with the previously assessed effects of anger.

7.3.2. Study 7: British Sample

I recruited a British sample using a snowball sampling method. The study was approved by the University of Surrey ethical committee as a minimal risk study. Participants were recruited using the Prolific Platform and were compensated for their time 9£ per hour.

7.3.2.1. Participants

I recruited a sample of 400 British participants using the platform Prolific. Among them, only 391 passed the two attention checks I inserted in the survey and were therefore included in the analyses. The final sample's ($N_{Females}$ = 192, $N_{Non-Binary}$ = 10, M_{age} = 39.9; SD_{age} = 14.4) composition in terms of level of education is summarized in the *Table* 10. All participants correctly identified the topic of the video they watched.

Table 10: British Sample demographic information

Participants' Level of Education	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
I do not have a High School Diploma	18	4.6 %	4.6 %
I have a High School Diploma	129	33.0 %	37.6 %
I have a bachelor's degree	157	40.2 %	77.7 %
I have a master's Degree / Ph.D.	87	22.3 %	100.0 %

7.3.2.2. Relevance Perception

I ran 3 one-sample *t*-tests against 0 on the Relevance Differential Score. Results are summarised in *Table* 11. Participants assigned to the corruption video condition reported higher relevance for corruption than economic inequality. Similarly, those assigned to the economic inequality video condition evaluated this phenomenon as more relevant that corruption. Participants assigned to the control condition rated the two phenomena as equally relevant.

Table 11: One-sample t-tests against zero on the relevance differential score, for each video watched

Video Watched	Student's *t*	df	*p*	Mean Difference	Cohen's *d*
Corruption	3.84	131	<.001	0.386	0.334
Economic Inequality	-5.20	132	<.001	-1.12	-0.451
Control	0.403	125	0.687	0.0055	0.0359

I then tested differences across conditions. A one-way ANOVA (Video: Inequality vs. Corruption vs. Control) confirmed the effect of the video on participants' Relevance Differential Score, $F(2, 388) = 3.32$, $p < .001$, η^2

= 0.114. Post-hoc comparisons indicated that participants who watched the video concerning corruption (M = 0.38; SE = 0.15) considered such an issue significantly more relevant than economic inequality than those assigned to the video concerning inequality (M = -1.12; SE = 0.15, p_{Tukey} < .001). Moreover, those who watched the economic inequality video considered this issue significantly more relevant than corruption, than those assigned to the Control condition (M = 0.055; SE = 0.162, p_{Tukey} = .313). However, no significant difference was found between the Control and the Corruption video conditions (p_{Tukey} = .313).

7.3.2.3.   Emotional reactions

I examined if the video watched significantly changed participants' emotional reactions by running 6 one-way ANOVAs. First, I checked if the video manipulation significantly changed participants' levels of Anger, Hope and Resignation concerning Economic Inequality. While the manipulation did not significantly influence anger levels, $F(2, 388)$ = 0.67, p = .509, η^2 = 0.003, nor their resignation ones, $F(2, 388)$ = 2.53, p = .081, η^2 = 0.013, it yielded a significant effect on hope ratings, $F(2, 388)$ = 4.78, p = .009, η^2 = 0.024. Participants who watched the economic inequality video were less hopeful about such an issue (M = 3.79, SE = 0.2) than those assigned to the corruption one (M = 4.7, SE = 0.208), p_{Tukey} = .006. However, no significant difference was assessed between the inequality video condition and the control one, p_{Tukey} = .229, or the corruption and the control video conditions, p_{Tukey} = .338.

Then, I explored if the video manipulations changed participants' emotions concerning Corruption, and I found that the video watched did not significantly change participants' levels of resignation, $F(2, 388)$ = 1.66, p = .191, η^2 = 0.009, Hope, $F(2, 388)$ = 0.423, p = .655, η^2 = 0.002 or Anger $F(2, 388)$ = 2.67, p = .07, η^2 = 0.014. Since I was interested in the tolerance for economic inequality over corruption, and vice-versa, I explored whether there was a difference in the emotional reactions for the two issues. Hence, I subtracted the scores concerning the anger, hope, and resignation evoked by the economic inequality video from the ones evoked by the corruption video, so that positive scores indicate that participants rated the emotions evoked by corruption (vs. inequality) higher, and negative scores indicate higher ratings for inequality (vs. corruption). A one-sample t-test against 0 was performed on each emotion differential score (see *Table* 12). I found that, on average, participants were significantly angrier towards corruption than economic inequality and significantly more hopeful towards economic inequality than corruption.

Table 12: One-sample t-tests against zero on participants differential scores between the emotional ratings expressed towards Corruption minus the ones expressed against economic inequality

Ratings (Corruption-Economic Inequality)	Student's t	df	p	Mean Difference	Cohen's d
Anger	8.962	390	< .001	0.936	0.453
Hope	8.189	390	< .001	-0.915	-0.414
Resignation	0.333	390	0.742	0.035	0.016

Then, I ran 3 one-way ANOVAs (Video: Corruption vs. Economic Inequality vs. Control) on participants' emotional reactions differential scores. While I did not find a significant effect for resignation, $F(2, 388) = 0.245$, $p = .783$, $\eta^2 = 0.001$, I found a significant difference when for hope, $F(2, 388) = 3.35$, $p = .036$, $\eta^2 = 0.017$, and anger, $F(2, 388) = 3.08$, $p = .047$, $\eta^2 = 0.016$. Participants in the corruption video condition were significantly more hopeful concerning economic inequality than corruption ($M = -1.28$, $SE = 0.19$), compared to those in the economic inequality video condition ($M = -0.59$, $SE = 0.19$, $p_{Tukey} = .006$). No other significant difference was found ($ps_{Tukey} \geq .271$). Concerning anger, participants assigned to the corruption video condition ($M = 1.25$, $SE = 0.17$) displayed significantly more anger towards corruption (vs. inequality) than those assigned to the inequality video condition ($M = 0.63$, $SE = 0.17$), $p_{Tukey} = .036$. Again, no significant differences were found in the other comparisons ($ps_{Tukey} \geq .387$). The video, therefore, did not shift the emotional reactions evoked by a phenomenon, but rather they intensified the differences already displayed in the emotional ratings.

7.3.2.4. Matrices

After checking that participants did not select a bundle over another casually,[14] and that therefore the matrices were used following a criterion, I calculated participants' probability of selecting a strategy over another throughout the matrices, running a log-linear regression and finding a significant effect, $\chi^2(2; 1173) = 99.3$, $p < .001$. As displayed in *Table* 13, participants displayed a significant higher probability of selecting the Minimum Corruption Percentage strategy over MEIP and P, and they were significantly more likely to select P over MEIP. Overall, participants displayed a relative tolerance for economic inequality over corruption, in line with the data found with the Italian sample.[15] In *Figure* 10 I display participants' probability of selecting a strategy over the other across matrix type (A, B, and C).

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[14] For further analyses concerning this statement, see the section 2.4.1 of the Appendix.
[15] Just like with Italian participants, we found that the declared motivations seem to confirm that the participants were indeed aware of the strategy selected and that, therefore, their preference for economic inequality over corruption was explicit. For further analyses see the section 2.4.2 of the Appendix

Table 13: Participants' probability of selecting a strategy over the others across matrices

Predictor	Estimate	*SE*	*Z*	*p*
Intercept	6.314	0.0426	148.33	< .001
Strategy:				
P – MCP	-0.491	0.0691	-7.10	< .001
MEIP – MCP	-0.668	0.0731	-9.14	< .001
MEIP – P	-0.178	0.0806	-2.20	0.028

Figure 10: Participants' probability of selecting a strategy over another across matrix type (A, B and C)
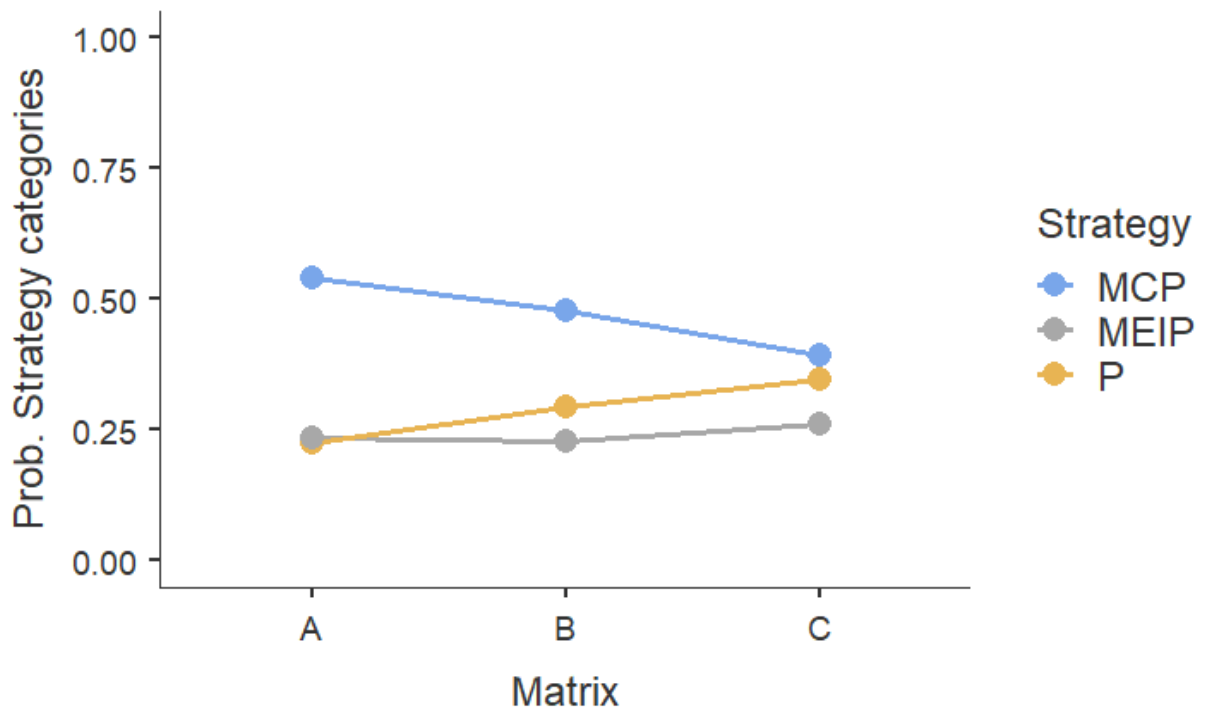
7.3.2.5. Effect of Video Condition on Matrices Strategy

To check if making a phenomenon relevant (vs. irrelevant) had an influence on the strategy pursued by participants, I ran a generalized linear model. However, I did not find a significant effect of the video manipulation, $\chi^2(4, 1173) = 7.3$, $p = .121$, indicating that the strategies were not affected by increasing the relevance of one specific phenomenon. As illustrated in *Table* 14 and *Figure* 11, participants, independently from the Video manipulation they were exposed to did not select a strategy over another in a way significantly different.

Figure 11: Participants' probability of selecting one strategy over the other, across manipulation conditions.
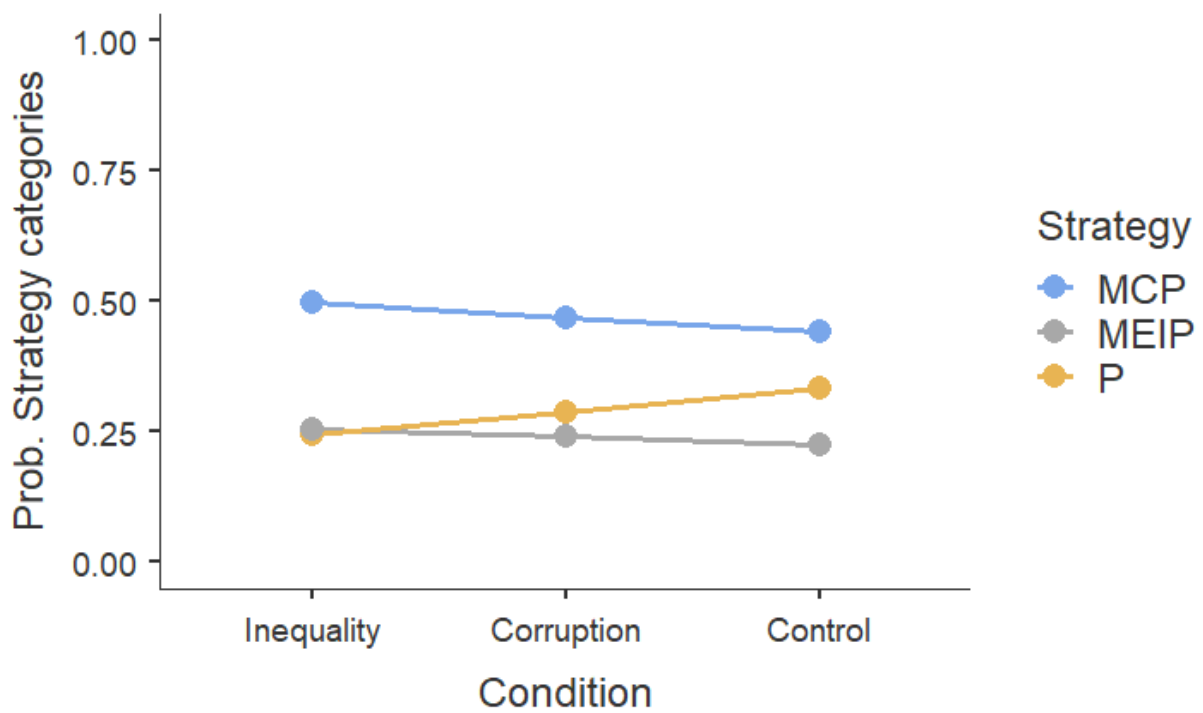
Table 14: Probability of selecting a Strategy, across different experimental manipulations

Strategy	Comparison		Difference	SE	z	$p_{bonferroni}$
	Condition	Condition				
P	Inequality	- Corruption	-0.0423	0.0313	-1.349	0.678
	Inequality	- Control	-0.0877	0.0324	-2.704	0.106
	Corruption	- Control	-0.0455	0.0333	-1.367	0.662
MCP	Inequality	- Corruption	0.0290	0.0354	0.820	1.000
	Inequality	- Control	0.0569	0.0358	1.592	0.487
	Corruption	- Control	0.0279	0.0358	0.779	1.000

Strategy	Comparison Condition		Condition	Difference	SE	z	$p_{bonferroni}$
MEIP	Inequality	-	Corruption	0.0132	0.0307	0.431	1.000
	Inequality	-	Control	0.0308	0.0306	1.005	1.000
	Corruption	-	Control	0.0176	0.0304	0.577	1.000

7.3.2.6. Zero-Sum Task

As done on the Italian data, I first explored if, independently of the manipulation, participants displayed a relative preference for economic inequality over corruption. I ran a paired samples t-test between the percentage points assigned to corruption and those assigned to economic inequality. A significant result emerged, $t(189) = 5.81$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.29$, $M_{Difference} = 3.97$. Participants, on average assigned fewer percentage points to corruption ($M = 14.0$, $SE = 0.341$) than economic inequality ($M = 18.0$, $SE = 0.341$), displaying a relative tolerance for this latter phenomenon, consistent with the results found using the matrices. Secondly, I checked if the video manipulation affected such a relative tolerance, by running a one-way ANOVA (Video: Corruption vs. Economic Inequality vs. Control) on participants' percentage points allocated to economic inequality, which did not yielded a significant effect, $F(2, 388) = 0.64$, $p = .526$, $\eta^2 = .003$.

7.3.2.7. Behavioural Task

The same analyses described for the Italian sample were performed here. First, I investigated if participants displayed an overall relative behavioural preference for economic inequality over corruption. A paired samples t-test between the funds allocated to a non-profit organisation concerning corruption and to the one concerning economic inequality was significant, $\underline{t}(390) = 4.43$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.22$. Participants allocated slightly more money for contrasting economic inequality ($M = 551$, $SE = 11.4$) than corruption ($M = 449$, $SE = 11.4$). Next, I considered the effect of the video on the behavioural task. I ran a one-way ANOVA (Video: Corruption vs. Economic Inequality vs. Control) on money allocation. A significant effect of the video, $F(2, 388) = 4.60$, $p = .011$, $\eta^2 = .023$, was found. Participants in the economic inequality video condition allocated significantly less funds ($M = 402$, $SE = 19.4$) for contrasting corruption (and consequently more funds for contrasting economic inequality) than those in the corruption ($M = 471$, $SE = 19.5$, $p_{Tukey} = 0.033$) and Control video conditions ($M = 477$, $SE = 20.0$, $p_{Tukey} = 0.019$). No significant difference was found between the latter two conditions ($p_{Tukey} = 0.973$).

7.3.2.8. Relative Tolerance and Emotional Reactions

I decided to explore if the emotional reactions displayed by participants affected the strategy, they selected using the matrices. For doing so, I ran a multinomial Logistic Regression, using the emotional reactions displayed by participants as predictors of the strategy they selected. I assessed a significant model, depicted in *Table* 15. Overall, participants probability of selecting the MEIP over Minimum Corruption Percentage was positively predicted by participants levels of Anger concerning Economic Inequality and by their Hope concerning Corruption. Meaning that they were more likely to adopt a strategy aimed at reducing Economic Inequality (even if at the expense of Corruption) the angrier they were towards economic inequality and the more hopeful they were about corruption. Moreover, I found that participants' probability of selecting Minimum Corruption Percentage over P was higher when participants displayed a higher level of hope towards Economic Inequality.

Table 15: Multinomial Logistic Regression

Model	Deviance	AIC	R^2_{McF}
1	2426	2454	0.0209

Strategy	Predictor	Estimate	SE	Z	p
MEIP - MCP	Intercept	-1.0339	0.4751	-2.176	0.030
	Anger_Inequality	0.0836	0.0393	2.125	0.034
	Hope_Inequality	-0.1894	0.0427	-4.435	< .001
	Resignation_Inequality	-0.0250	0.0409	-0.610	0.542
	Anger_Corruption	-0.0252	0.0513	-0.492	0.623
	Hope_Corruption	0.1525	0.0437	3.493	< .001
	Resignation_Corruption	0.0536	0.0422	1.269	0.204
P - MCP	Intercept	0.2195	0.4334	0.507	0.612
	Anger_Inequality	0.0287	0.0347	0.828	0.408
	Hope_Inequality	-0.1117	0.0377	-2.967	0.003
	Resignation_Inequality	0.0138	0.0373	0.371	0.711
	Anger_Corruption	-0.0280	0.0465	-0.601	0.548
	Hope_Corruption	-0.0312	0.0421	-0.741	0.459
	Resignation_Corruption	-0.0321	0.0390	-0.824	0.410

I decided to explore if participants' emotions affected their responses in the zero-sum task. As illustrated in *Table* 16, I decided to run a regression model using participants' emotions as predictors of the percentage points they decided to attribute to corruption (instead of economic inequality) when describing their ideal trade-off between these issues. I found that participants were more likely to rise the percentage of corruption they were willing to endure (while lowering their tolerance of economic inequality) the higher their hope towards such issue was and the angrier they were towards economic inequality.

Lastly, I decided to explore if the emotional reactions expressed influenced participants' responses in the behavioural task in which I asked them to distribute a fixed amount of money between two non-profit, contrasting economic inequality and corruption respectively. As seen in *Table* 17, participants funds allocated to Corruption was negatively predicted by their anger towards economic inequality, meaning that for higher levels of said emotion they dedicated more funds to contrast such issue instead of corruption.

Table 16: Emotional reactions as predictors of the corruption percentage points selected by participants in the zero-sum task

| Model | R | R² | Overall Model Test | | | |
			F	df1	df2	p
1	0.221	0.0489	3.29	6	384	0.004

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	10.5418	2.098	5.024	< .001
Anger Inequality	0.4125	0.169	2.444	0.015
Hope Inequality	-0.3583	0.181	-1.978	0.049
Resignation Inequality	0.1828	0.181	1.009	0.314
Anger Corruption	-0.0360	0.226	-0.159	0.873
Hope Corruption	0.4081	0.195	2.094	0.037
Resignation Corruption	-0.0882	0.188	-0.469	0.640

Table 17: Emotional reactions as predictors of the funds assigned for contrasting corruption in the behavioural task

Model	R	R²	Overall Model Test			
			F	df1	df2	p
1	0.227	0.0517	3.49	6	384	0.002

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	453.726	70.18	6.4651	< .001
Anger Inequality	-22.818	5.65	-4.0416	< .001
Hope Inequality	1.950	6.06	0.3218	0.748
Resignation Inequality	-2.460	6.06	-0.4057	0.685
Anger Corruption	14.389	7.55	1.9067	0.057
Hope Corruption	0.421	6.52	0.0645	0.949
Resignation Corruption	9.045	6.29	1.4374	0.151

7.4. Discussion

The first goal of our research was to investigate if participants displayed a relative tolerance for economic inequality over corruption. Results seem to support this expectation. Across both studies, I found that participants were significantly more likely to select the Minimum Corruption Percentage strategy over the others. While corruption is almost universally condemned and is associated with moral outrage feelings (Hechler & Kessler, 2018), people's perception of economic inequality is not unanimous (Willis et al., 2022) and depending on one's own worldview it may be considered acceptable or even preferable to some extent (Davidai, 2018). I found corroboration for this tendency also in the zero-sum task, where participants displayed a relative tolerance for economic inequality over corruption. The average ideal trade-off indicated by participants, however, seems to suggest that this tolerance is rather small: on average, participants were willing to tolerate two more percentage points of economic inequality for reducing corruption by two points. Interestingly, however, this result was not matched by the behavioural task, which was meant to be a proxy of their behaviour for contrasting corruption and economic inequality. While the Italian sample displayed no differences in the funds allocated to the non-profit organizations, the British one, in contrast to the relative tolerance consistently displayed in the previous tasks, was more willing to allocate a slightly larger sum to the non-profit dedicated to contrasting economic inequality. Although the difference in the sums allocated is rather small, this result might be explained by considering that contrasting economic inequality may also mean redistributing wealth to the poorest sections of the population. British participants, therefore, may

have considered that donating money towards the non-profit contrasting economic inequality might have been more impactful for contrasting the issue than it is donating money for contrasting corruption.

As our second goal, I intended to investigate whether making a phenomenon relevant could change the relative preference described above. Our video manipulation significantly changed the relevancy of the two phenomena, in the expected direction. However, I found that participants were angrier towards corruption than economic inequality, they were more hopeful toward the latter (vs. former) phenomenon, while they were equally resigned toward both. This result is consistent with the results illustrated in the previous chapters, in which I found that corruption evoked stronger anger responses than economic inequality. The video watched, however, did not significantly changed the emotions expressed by participants. Nevertheless, in the British sample, I found that corruption video accentuated the fact that participants were more hopeful concerning economic inequality than corruption, and the fact that they were angrier about the latter than the former.

Additionally, the video manipulation did not significantly change participants' probability of selecting a strategy over the other, as participants displayed a higher probability of selecting the Minimum Corruption Percentage strategy, across all experimental conditions. Concerning the Italian sample, however, the ideal trade-off between corruption and economic inequality displayed in the sum-zero task was influenced by the economic inequality video. While in the other conditions participants considered ideal a combination in which the percentage points assigned to corruption were slightly fewer than those assigned to economic inequality, those assigned to the inequality video preferred a combination in which such percentages were equal. This result, however, was not replicated with the British sample.

Regardless of the experimental condition, Italian participants allocated the same amount of money to both the non-profit organizations. Instead, the British participants in the inequality video condition were more likely to assign more funds to the non-profit organization contrasting economic inequality. The lack of consistent results provided by our experimental manipulation is not sufficient to completely disregard the argument that the relative tolerance that I found is connected to making an issue more relevant than the other. Future studies may try to test such a relationship using a stronger relevance manipulation.

Although it was not part of our initial goals, through explorative analyses, I found that the emotional reactions elicited by economic inequality and corruption significantly predicted the strategies selected by participants in the matrices. In particular, in the Italian sample, I found that anger towards corruption raised participants probability of selecting the Minimum Corruption Percentage strategy, while anger towards economic inequality raised participants probability of selecting the MEIP one. Concerning the British sample, I found that participants probability of selecting the Minimum Corruption Percentage and MEIP strategies were negatively predicted by the hope they expressed towards such both phenomena: the more hopeful

they were towards economic inequality, the less likely they were to select the MEIP strategy, while the less hopeful they were towards corruption the less likely they were to select the Minimum Corruption Percentage strategy. Our data seem to indicate that emotional responses play a part in shaping people's trade-off across issues, and, in line with the existing literature about protest, anger specifically acts as a facilitator of behaviour (Shuman et al., 2018). In line with our previous findings (see Chapter 6), hope seems to act in the opposite direction of anger: the more hopeful participants are towards one issue, the less likely they are to act for contrasting it, and, in our case, of selecting a strategy aimed at minimizing it.

This set of studies represents a first attempt to assess the issue of the inequality trap by considering people's trade-off between economic inequality and corruption. The literature concerning the psychological aspects of these issues has focused on analysing people's response to these issues considering them individually, overlooking the fact that people analyse social situations by ranking priorities and establishing compromises between them. Contrasting social problems is an extremely demanding task which requires cognitive, emotional, physical, temporal, and monetary resources (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). Although people might consider a social matter worthy of a response, they might not act against it. This is not because they align with the current *status quo* but rather because they have decided to devolve their limited resources to other more prominent and addressable issues.

This line of research might have some practical implications. When analysing people's political compass, knowing their trade-off about two issues may help predict their voting behaviour more accurately. For example, people's willingness to contrast economic inequality has been positively correlated with left-wing orientations (Dassonneville & Lewis-Beck, 2020). However, if people consider fighting another issue (e.g., corruption) more compelling, they might be more attracted to vote for other parties that prioritise the latter. In this sense, people might be willing to postpone the fight against one issue to immediately tackle another one, therefore being willing to endure higher levels of the first to reduce the second (Horowitz et al, 2020).

Chapter 8
General Discussion

8.1.   Tracing the red thread

The present research was a first attempt to explore the recursive relationship between corruption and economic inequality, labelled "Inequality Trap" by Uslaner (2008), from a sociopsychological perspective. In fact, these issues are two disruptive phenomena, whose causes and consequences influence each other, worsening their effects. The Inequality Trap has been investigated mainly from an economic point of view, with Uslaner (2008) being the first to speculate that the psychological consequences of this situation may create a climate of unfairness and low trust, likely to affect people's willingness to protest and contrast such issues, favouring the stagnation of the status quo. This speculation of the author, however, lacked a consistent and systematic support from sociopsychological data as no empirical study, to the best of our knowledge, had ever explored people's perception of economic inequality *and* corruption, along with their intentions of contrasting them (e.g., protests). Moreover, Uslaner's considerations, although relevant in the context of an economic analysis, did not consider the psychological literature concerning collective action, that highlights the importance of the emotions as catalysts of contrasting behaviours (e.g., Altomonte et al., 2019; Tausch et al., 2011; Troost et al., 2013; Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). For this reason, I decided to conduct what I believe was the first sociopsychological attempt to investigate the perceptions of corruption and economic inequality, linking them to people's behavioural intentions to protest against such phenomena and the emotional responses they provoked. In doing so, I used different methodologies and compared two cultural contexts, Italy and the U.K., that differ in terms of their levels of economic inequality and corruption. In fact, Italy scores below the European mean in terms of economic inequality (World Bank Organization), and above it in terms of corruption (Transparency International), while the U.K. displays an opposite pattern. These methodological choices were adopted to find consistent results across measures and samples, ensuring convergent and external validity.

As a first step, in Studies 1, 2, and 3 (see Chapter 5), I decided to manipulate participants' perception of economic inequality and corruption, through a fictional scenario, while measuring their willingness to contrast such phenomena, along with their anger reactions. The corruption manipulation (high vs. low) was provided by making participants read a newspaper page that displayed news about the phenomenon in the fictional society they were told to be citizens of. The economic inequality manipulation (high vs. low) was provided through a brief text and a table describing the income differences across different sections of the population. Across three studies, I consistently found that being exposed to higher levels of economic inequality and corruption raised participants willingness to contrast such issues, and that such effects were fully mediated by the anger they felt. In other words, assessing higher levels of corruption or economic inequality did not significantly raise participants' willingness to contrast them unless it was underlain by an

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anger response. Although not always consistently, I also found that, when there was no anger response, participants' exposure to higher levels of corruption reduced their willingness to contrast economic inequality. This describes a situation of stagnation, which is in line with the one posited by Uslaner (2008, 2011). The author, in fact, argued that the inequality trap thrives due to the reduced contrasting intentions of the citizens, that, in turn, are linked to a prolonged exposure to economic inequality and corruption that generate a climate of inevitability. In the first three studies, I found that the exposure to corruption influenced people's intentions of contrasting economic inequality and vice versa. The influence of the perception of an issue on the intentions for contrasting the other, however, was not found through the spill-over effects I had originally hypothesised, but through the mediation of anger. In fact, being exposed to higher levels of corruption (or economic inequality) raised participants' levels of anger that, in turn, predicted their willingness to contrast economic inequality (or corruption). This led us to think that people, at least at an emotional level, perceive the existence of the inequality trap and are indeed able to recognize a recursive pattern of influence between these issues.

Given the novelty of the research, I also explored if being assigned to different subjective socio-economic statuses (that I manipulated within the fictional scenario context, by making participants identify with characters that differed in terms of status) changed participants' pattern of responses, finding no consistently significant results across the studies. Although the literature concerning economic inequality (e.g., Van der Werfhorst & Salverda, 2012) and corruption (e.g., Galiani & Weinschelbaum, 2007) identifies the social status of an individual as a significant factor contributing to the different motivations and the benefits obtained by contrasting such issues, our empirical manipulation might have not been strong enough to change participants' responses, especially in a fictional scenario. Social status is a dimension which is difficult to manipulate. While people belonging to different sections of the population can image how it is to belong to an upper or lower social class, this may not be enough to change their overall worldview and personal life experiences (see Jetten et al., 2017) linked to corruption and economic inequality. This may explain why our status manipulation did not have a significant impact. A fictional scenario, although successful in manipulating participants' perception of the phenomena under investigation, might have hindered the role of people's worldviews (i.e., Economic System Justification and the belief in Meritocracy) on their emotional appraisal of corruption and economic inequality. While in the Italian sample, in fact, I found that participants' levels of Economic System Justification and Meritocracy moderated their anger response concerning the Economic Inequality and Corruption manipulations, in line with the existing literature (e.g., Goudarzi et al. 2020, Mijs & Savage et al., 2020) such effects were only partially replicated in the British samples. The lack of consistent responses concerning these systems of beliefs might be linked to the methodological setting adopted, which might conceal cultural differences, and future studies should try to investigate their role in a more ecological setting.

In the first three studies, I also assessed participants' willingness to increase or reduce the tax rates of

different income sectors of the population. The taxation system has in fact been linked to both corruption and economic inequality. Jourmard et al. (2013) posited that taxes are one of the main redistribution tools, while Belitski et al. (2016) explained how the taxes revenues are deeply impacted by corruption. Nevertheless, I did not find any consistent result concerning the corruption and economic inequality manipulation on participants' taxation preferences. Concerning Study 1, I found that participants who had been exposed to a high corruption scenario decreased the taxes rates of the different income sections less than those assigned to a low corruption condition. In Study 3, instead, I found that those assigned to a high inequality manipulation lowered the taxes of the lowest income sections more than those assigned to a low inequality condition. Nevertheless, I found a consistent result concerning the taxes variable across studies: participants, on average, wanted to slightly increase the taxation rates of the highest income section of the population, while wanting to progressively decrease the other ones. Once again, the lack of consistent significant effects of the manipulations could be attributed to the methodological setting and lack of ecological validity. Reasoning about taxes' revenues might have been a too complex task, especially in a fictional setting where participants were not provided with a vast set of information concerning the taxation system present in Velonia.

In the second set of studies (Studies 4a, 4b, 5a and 5b, see Chapter 6), I decided to further explore the perception of the inequality trap. Previously, I found that participants' behavioural intentions for contrasting one issue (e.g., economic inequality) were linked to the perception of the other (e.g., corruption), through anger. However, due to the methodological design employed, I was not able to clearly state if people were indeed able to perceive the inequality trap, namely if they were aware that higher levels of corruption generate higher levels of economic inequality, and vice versa. To fill this gap, I decided to manipulate only the perception of economic inequality (high vs. low vs. control) or corruption (high vs. low vs. control) while measuring participants' inferences concerning the phenomenon that had not been manipulated. I developed such manipulations in a fictional scenario, analogous to the one used in the previous studies. Moreover, I extended our findings by considering another emotion, *hope*. Hope has been identified as an emotional antecedent of protest (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013), although its role has been assessed in opposing directions: some scholars have posited it fuels contrasting actions (e.g., Chadwick, 2010; Feldman & Hart, 2016), while others have linked it to reduced levels of actions (e.g., Marlon et al. 2019; Ojala, 2012). Moreover, in these studies I investigated the effects of the corruption and inequality manipulations on participants' effectiveness perception concerning the actions for contrasting such issues. The literature has posited that the gap between people's behavioural intentions and actual behaviour can be explained by people's perception of the effectiveness of their actions (Hornsey et al., 2006). While in a fictional scenario participants' intentions may have not been reduced by the inequality trap's perception, given the lack of behavioural costs, such perception could however lower their perception of actions' effectiveness. If this is the case, that would explain the phenomenon of stagnation and lack of actions posited by Uslaner (2008).

In this set of studies, consistently across the Italian and the British samples, I found that participants used the information provided about one phenomenon to make inferences about the other, correctly perceiving the recursive loop. I also found that the information about corruption (or economic inequality) along with the inferences made about economic inequality (or corruption) predicted participants' emotional responses in terms of both anger and hope, along with their overall satisfaction with the fictional society they were asked to imagine to live in.

Considering the Italian sample, I found that the participants' willingness to contrast economic inequality was predicted by both the corruption inferences (when inequality was manipulated) and by the manipulation of corruption itself. Also, participants' intentions to contrast corruption were affected by participants' inequality inferences when corruption was manipulated. However, participants' intentions to contrast corruption were not affected by the inequality manipulation and their corruption inferences. In other words, participants were overall more willing to contrast economic inequality when they linked this phenomenon to corruption; the same pattern of results did not appear on the intentions to contrast corruption when they inferred this latter phenomenon from economic inequality. The British samples' results were not completely consistent. In Studies 5a and 5b, participants' inferences concerning corruption significantly affected participants' willingness to contrast economic inequality but not vice versa. These results seemed to suggest that, even though participants may display an overall aversion towards corruption, independently of its correlation with economic inequality, they may hold different levels of tolerance for economic inequality according to its origins: in their eyes, economic inequality stemming from corruption may be perceived as more severe than economic inequality *per se*.

As noted, in this second series of studies, along with anger, I investigated hope. Whereas higher levels of anger acted as a catalyst of behavioural intentions, prompting participants to contrast economic inequality and corruption, higher levels of hope reduced them. Overall, the effect of hope was smaller than the effect of anger, and it was found in the Italian but not in the British sample. Therefore, the effects of participants' hope on their behavioural intentions in the current context can be considered inconsistent and negligible when compared to the stronger effects of anger.

Concerning perceived effectiveness of the behavioural intentions, I found a relatively consistent effect of the corruption manipulation and corruption inferences in diminishing participants' perception of effectiveness of the behaviours described. This result is in line with both the previous results (Studies 1-3) and the literature on collective action and corruption. Perceiving corruption, in fact, is linked to a lower voter turnover, and a lower participation to collective actions (Dahlberg & Solevid, 2016; Stockemer et al., 2013). If we do not consider the role of anger, it seems that Uslaner's intuition might be correct: the inequality trap might limit people's willingness to contrast these issues leading to a stagnant situation. However, anger seems to increase people willingness to overcome their perception of inevitability of the Inequality trap. Despite its mobilizing effect, anger is to be considered an "explosive" emotion (Lambert et al., 2019), whose effects are

likely to wear off in a short period of time, leaving space for feelings of resignation in the long run. The methodological settings employed in these studies was such that participants' emotional reactions were recorded right after the experimental manipulation, so that the anger responses were not likely to wear off during the experiment. Future studies might try to investigate people' reactions to the inequality trap over time when the catalyst action of emotions might have been diminished by a prolonged exposure.

Finally, results on participants' equality preferences were not consistent across the Italian and the British samples and the effect size of the preferences displayed was rather small. However, I consistently found an overall progressive preference in all the samples: participants' perception of an economically equal society was such that a difference between the incomes of different sections of the population was still present. This result seems to suggest that people might consider corruption and economic inequality as not equally negative, despite being able to recognize their recursive loop. While people ideal level of corruption is likely to be zero, their ideal level of economic inequality is not translated into a total absence of any difference among the different income sections a society is composed of. This different consideration of corruption and economic inequality may be due to the anger reaction provoked by each phenomenon since corruption, overall, provoked higher levels of anger than economic inequality.

To test this late interpretation, I implemented a final series of studies (Study 6 and 7, see chapter 7). Here I decided to explore this alleged relative preference for economic inequality over corruption, while exploring if it was possibly influenced by the saliency of a phenomenon over the other by manipulating it with a video (video: corruption vs inequality vs control). Moreover, I also expanded our previous work by considering emotions such as anger, hope, and resignation. This last emotion was included due to Uslaner's (2008) considerations considering the inevitability climate he posited the inequality trap would create. Across the Italian and the British samples, I consistently found a relative preference for economic inequality over corruption which was assessed using both an adaptation of the Tajfel's matrices and a zero-sum task. Participants, overall, showed a significant preference for adopting a strategy aimed at reducing corruption over economic inequality. Moreover, I also found that the strategy used, along with the amount of economic inequality participants were willing to tolerate to reduce corruption, was partially influenced by their emotional reaction: the angrier participants were towards corruption, the more likely they were to select a strategy aimed at reducing it, and vice versa for their anger towards economic inequality. This preference was not influenced by the saliency of corruption and economic inequality, since participants, independently of the video watched, displayed the same pattern of preferences across samples. This might be interpreted as further evidence that people's willingness to contrast corruption and economic inequality is not influenced by mere saliency of the issue, but rather by the emotional responses the issues evoke. This interpretation is in line with the current literature about protest, that identifies the perception of an aggrieved situation as

necessary but not sufficient for inducing a behavioural response, while an anger emotional reaction might light the fuse (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). In these final set of studies, I also decided to explore another emotion that might be linked to the perception of the Inequality trap, namely, resignation, finding that it did not predict participants' willingness to select a strategy over another. As previously stated, this emotion might play a more impactful role in a more ecological setting, in which the other emotions' roles might have worn off.

Uslaner (2008), in fact, had initially stated that the stagnation of the inequality trap might be a result of feelings of hopelessness and inevitability that lead people to be discouraged from protesting corruption and economic inequality. Feelings of resignation, however, may be more likely to emerge after a *prolonged* exposure to corruption and economic inequality. Future studies should evaluate such link in a different, setting, trying to investigate the effects of prolonged exposure to corruption and economic inequality and evaluate if, in the long run, they influence people's contrasting actions.

The overall findings I found across all the studies provide interesting insights concerning the topic of the inequality trap and represent a first attempt to investigate the topic from a sociopsychological perspective. Our work and results expand the current knowledge on the inequality trap, supporting the already existing, although scarce, literature. As a first finding, our work seems to confirm the intuition proposed by Uslaner (2008) who posited that the recursive link between corruption and economic inequality is rooted in people's perception. From our studies, in fact, I have assessed that people seem to use the information concerning corruption for making inferences about economic inequality, and vice-versa. This perception, however, does not hinder their willingness to contrast economic inequality and corruption, if a strong emotional reaction is present, such as the one provided by anger. This finding is in line with the current literature concerning protest that states that being aggrieved by a situation (in this case, perceiving the inequality trap) is necessary but not sufficient for initiating a protest, as the role of an emotional catalyst (in this case the anger response it evoked) is needed. Despite perceiving a recursive loop between these phenomena, people consider corruption slightly more concerning than economic inequality and display a tolerance for higher levels of the latter as long as it implies lower levels of the former. This preference does not seem to be influenced by the saliency of either of the phenomena, but rather by the emotional response evoked by them.

8.2.   Limitations and future directions

One of the main strengths of this research lay in its novelty: the studies described in this thesis, in fact, represent a first attempt to empirically investigate the perception and the effects of the inequality trap from a sociopsychological perspective, providing interesting insights into the topic that may expand the current (exiguous) literature. Moreover, our main results were consistent across findings and two populations (the Italian and the British one). Cross-cultural validation is, indeed, extremely important in the

sociopsychological context to understand how much people's appraisal and reactions to a specific phenomenon is to be attributed to the phenomenon per se, or to the cultural context in which it manifests. To prevent a predominant influence of people's cultural context, I shifted people's perception of economic inequality and corruption from a real to a fictional scenario. Nevertheless, people's appraisal of the fictional scenario may have been guided by their cultural experiences and beliefs on the topic, that an empirical manipulation is not likely to completely cancel. Our assessment of these two populations, (whose levels of corruption and economic inequality are respectively above and below the European mean for Italy, and vice-versa for U.K.) helped us to keep at bay such risk.

While the fictional scenario methodology I employed was appropriate to set the bases of the sociopsychological approach to this topic, future research should explore if the results I found in these controlled settings can be replicated in more ecological settings in which other variables may intervene. For instance, Uslaner (2008) speculated that the inequality trap may bring out feelings of low trust among fellow citizens and towards the institutions, leading to what could be described as the absence of *internal efficacy* (people's evaluation of their own ability to engage in contrasting actions in a specific situation) and *external efficacy* (people's faith in the institutions to be receptive of such contrasting actions) which together contribute to the formation of *political efficacy* (Sulitzeanu-Kenan & Halperin, 2013). A new study may try to replicate our results assessing (and not manipulating) people's perception of economic inequality and corruption, while exploring if the perception of such phenomena is indeed correlated with the perception of political efficacy. In our studies (4a/4b, 5a/5b), I decided to explore only the perception of the effectiveness of the actions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption, leaving out other factors, such as the group's efficacy, which is identified as relevant in the literature concerning protest (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans; 2013). The decision is once again justified by the methodological design I adopted: participants were asked to identify with a citizen of a fictional country, about which they had little information. Therefore, developing a consistent perception of external efficacy (or group's efficacy) would have been unlikely. Other studies, however, may try to assess these factors and their effects in the perception of the inequality trap, along with their alleged effects on participants' intentions of contrasting inequality and corruption.

Our results are in line with the literature concerning protest, according to which being aggrieved (i.e., perceiving the existence of the inequality trap) is necessary but not sufficient for engaging in contrasting actions, since a catalyst (i.e., the emotional reaction of anger) is necessary to initiate actions. Our studies have highlighted the central role played by anger and point to the direction that, in its absence, people' intentions for contrasting economic inequality and corruption may be diminished or not impacted at all by being exposed to these issues. However, future studies should focus on how the assessment of the inequality trap influences people's behavioural intentions over time, specifically when the presence of "explosive"

emotions such as anger has worn off leaving space to feelings of inevitability and hopelessness, which might contribute to the stagnation of the Inequality trap (Uslaner, 2008).

In our research, participants displayed a consistent greater tolerance for economic inequality over corruption. I posited that people may be more tolerant towards economic inequality than corruption because they perceive the former to be not only inevitable but also fair to a certain extent, as it may reflect different entrepreneurial and economic abilities distributed in the population. I also posited that people may be more willing to contrast economic inequality when they perceive this late phenomenon to be linked with corruption, as the latter may challenge people's interpretation of economic inequality as the result of a meritocratic system. This stance, however, needs more empirical support. Future studies could explore whether the tolerance for economic inequality over corruption may be shifted by people's worldview concerning the legitimacy of inequalities, as well as individual meritocratic views.

Lastly, throughout our studies, I did not assess only participants' behavioural intentions, but I also administered measures that could be considered as proxies of people's behaviours: support for raising/reducing the taxes' rates (Study 1, 2 and 3), and the distribution of resources between two non-profits contrasting corruption and economic inequality, respectively (Study 6 and 7). These measures, however, did not provide consistent, significant results. This may be because the tasks may have been too complex and might have required a higher level of analysis that may be difficult to elicit through a fictional setting. Future studies may use different proxies of behaviour. Alternatively, they could investigate the actual participants' behaviour in a more ecological setting to explore if the preferences and intentions I assessed correspond to people's actions.

8.3. Methodological contributions and implications

These studies not only provide a first attempt to investigate the sociopsychological aspects of the inequality trap, but also provide some interesting methodological tools that may be useful for researchers in the sociopsychological domain. In the first three studies I managed to successfully manipulate people's perception of corruption, economic inequality, and subjective socio-economic status. Such manipulations were consistent across samples and populations and future studies may adopt a similar methodological setting for exploring and manipulating such variables. Although the literature provides other successful examples of economic inequality and subjective socio-economic status manipulations even in a fictional scenario (e.g., Jetten et al., 2015), there are fewer attempts of manipulating the perception of corruption (e.g., Zheng et al., 2017). The current stimuli, along with the fictional scenario I created, therefore, may be considered a helpful tool for investigating the inequality trap perception and consequences.

The methodological novelties provided by this thesis also find a match in the final studies I described. First, I successfully developed a way for enhancing participants' saliency of either corruption or economic

inequality, by developing three videos (Topic: corruption, economic inequality and control) that I pretested for understandability and emotional valence.

Second, in that context, I adapted the Tajfel's matrices for assessing a relative preference between two social issues, identifying three different strategies of use. This adapted measure provides an interesting approach for measuring participants' relative interest towards two elements. When people hold rather negative or positive attitudes towards two different issues, measuring their intentions or evaluation towards them through Likert scales may be quite problematic and some response biases may hinder the interpretation of the data collected (Smith, 2014).

Participants, in fact, often display an extremity bias that might not let emerge a difference in the negative (or positive) assessment between two entities. For example, if we were to evaluate people's attitudes towards two crimes (e.g., homicide and theft) and we asked participants to rate their evaluations of such crimes on a scale ranging from 0 ("extremely negative") to 10 ("extremely positive") we would be very likely to obtain two scores non statistically different from each other, both of them close to zero.

Such result may lead researchers to conclude that people evaluate both crimes as equally negative. However, if we asked participants to choose between different rates of homicides and theft (as we did in our research, forcing them to pick between different bundles of corruption and economic inequality) a relative preference between these entities may emerge, therefore falsifying the first conclusion.

Exploring relative preferences between two or more entities allows researchers to explore more complex social scenarios, in which people's actions are not guided only by their evaluations and attitudes towards each entity per se, but rather by their relative prioritization of each entity over the others.

People's inaction towards one social problem may be explained not by the fact that they consider it unimportant, but rather by the fact that they consider other ones *more* important and are therefore more likely to dedicate their limited time and resources to the latter, at the expense of the former.

Our results may provide valuable insights to support the efforts of policy makers and media professionals. People's attitudes towards corruption are in fact quite homogenously negative (Bierstaker, 2009), whereas people's attitudes towards economic inequality are much more nuanced (Orton & Rowlingson, 2007). Scholars have posited that people's tolerance for the same level of economic inequality differs according to the socio-historical background of one country (Pedersen & Mutz, 2019), people's worldviews (Haack & Sieweke, 2018), and their social position (Trump, 2020). Moreover, people's attitudes towards redistribution programs are affected by their attitudes towards economic inequality (Kulin & Svallfors, 2013). Rising inequality can be considered one of the major challenges of todays' world (Garcia-Castro et al., 2020) and contrasting attitudes towards such construct may alter the support and the success of the redistribution programs aimed at reducing it. The endorsement of these programs by laypeople could therefore be enhanced by emphasizing that contrasting economic inequality can be an effective strategy also to contrast corruption, a phenomenon towards which people hold clearer and stronger negative attitudes.

When discussing the topic of economic inequality, media professionals should therefore focus on its broader implications on society, such as its effects on corruption, towards which people display more consistent attitudes. Furthermore, people's attitudes towards redistribution programs are affected by the idea that they may be financed by an increase in taxes (Faricy & Ellis, 2014). Tax revenues, however, are deeply impacted by the spread of corruption, and the same tax rates generate lower tax revenues when corruption is high (Ajaz & Ahmad, 2010). Understanding that redistribution programs are linked to corruption and stopping the recursive loop between corruption and economic inequality, might lead people to overcome their fears of taxes. In conclusion, contrasting economic inequality would also be effective in contrasting corruption, therefore limiting the effects of the latter on tax revenues, and thus bringing about a positive social impact.

Appendix

1. Appendix of Chapter 5

1.1.   Italian Sample Stimuli Pre-test

1.1.1. Participants (Inequality and Corruption stimuli validation)

I recruited 38 participants, aged from 21 to 62 (M_{age} = 27.4; SD_{age} = 8.4; N_{Female} = 21) through a snowball sampling method on social networks. Participants were asked to report their political orientation on a scale ranging from 1 ("*I'm extremely close to the left-wing orientation*") to 7 ("*I'm extremely close to the right-wing orientation*") and they scored on average 2.66 (*SD* = 1.24).

1.1.2. Inequality Stimuli

In order to assess if the inequality manipulation acted in the intended way, I ran an independent samples t-test comparing the 18 participants assigned to the high-inequality manipulation (*M* = 1.72, *SD* = 0.89) to the 19 that were assigned to the low-inequality one (*M* = 3.47, *SD* = 1.26), finding a significant effect (Student's $t(37)$ = 4.84, *p* < .001 $M_{Difference}$ = 1.75), in line with the purpose of the manipulation.

1.1.3. Corruption Stimuli

I assessed if the corruption manipulation significantly changed participants' perception of such issue by running an independent sample t-test. The results showed that the 16 participants assigned to the high-corruption manipulation (*M* = 4.19, *SD* = 0.83), compared to the 22 that were assigned to the low-corruption one (*M* = 1.64, *SD* = 0.79), perceived the society they were presented to as significantly more corrupt (Student's $t(35)$ = -9.6, *p*<.001 $M_{Difference}$ = -2.55), in line with the purpose of the manipulation.

1.1.4. Participants (Subjective socio-economic status stimuli validation)

I recruited 103 participants, aged from 19 to 72 (M_{age} = 29.3; SD_{age} = 13.3; N_{Female} = 54) through a snowball sampling method on social networks. Participants were asked to report their political orientation on a scale ranging from 1 ("*I'm extremely close to the left-wing orientation*") to 7 ("*I'm extremely close to the right-wing orientation*") and they scored on average 2.42 (*SD* = 1.64).

1.1.5. Subjective socio-economic status Stimuli

In order to assess if the manipulation used (Social Status: High vs Middle vs Low) changed participants perception of their subjective socio-economic status, I ran a one-way ANOVA, finding a significant effect $F(2, 101)$ = 106, η^2 = 0.665, *p* < .001. Post hoc comparisons (p_{Tukey} < .001) indicate that all the experimental conditions are significantly different from each other, and participants assigned to the Low Status condition

(M = 4.15; SE = 0.22) position themselves significantly lower than those assigned to the Medium (M = 6.19; SE =0.33) and High condition (M = 8.53; SE =0.31).

1.2. British Sample Stimuli Pre-test

1.2.1. Participants

I recruited 30 participants ($N_{Females}$ = 18, M_{Age} = 19.5; SD_{Age} = 0.32) using the University of Surrey Sona System, one participant did not pass the attention check and was therefore excluded from the analyses.

1.2.2. Inequality Stimuli

In order to assess if the Inequality manipulation acted in the intended way, I ran an independent sample t-test, finding a significant effect, Student's t (28) = 3.91, Cohen's d = 1.45, p < .001.
Participants assigned to the low inequality condition considered rated Velonian society more equal (M = 2.89; SE =0.3) than those assigned to the high inequality condition (M = 1.43; SE =0.13).

1.2.3. Corruption Stimuli

I explored if the corruption manipulation changed participants' perception of such issue by running an independent sample t-test, finding a significant result Student's t (28) = 7.05, Cohen's d = 2.63, p < .001.
Participants assigned to the high corruption condition considered rated Velonian society more corrupt (M = 4.46; SE =0.21) than those assigned to the low corruption condition (M = 1.38; SE = 0.2).

1.2.4. Subjective socio-economic status Stimuli

In order to assess if the manipulation used (Social Status: High vs Middle vs Low) changed participants perception of their subjective socio-economic status, I ran a one-way ANOVA, finding a significant effect F (2, 27) = 23.3, η^2 = 0.642, p < .001. Post hoc comparisons (p_{Tukey} <.001) indicate that all the experimental conditions are significantly different from each other, and participants assigned to the Low Status condition (M = 4.25; SE = 0.50) position themselves significantly lower than those assigned to the Medium (M = 6.20; SE =0.45) and High condition (M = 8.73; SE =0.43).

2. Appendix of Chapter 7

2.1. Video Stimuli Validation

The efficacy of the videos used was pre-tested for their efficacy, using an Italian sample. The videos' pre-test was designed to explore the perception of the videos created for soliciting the salience of economic inequality (vs corruption), as well as a video designed to act as a control condition (in which I presented to participants some information about the Solar System). Our validation study was structured as it follows. Participants, after providing their consent, were asked to watch a one, out of three (Topic: Corruption vs. Economic Inequality vs. Control) short video (< 2 minutes). After that, I checked if asked them to identify the topic of the video they had watched in a pull of six different options, to check if they had paid attention. Then participants were asked to answer to the following questions, each of them assessed:

- Understandability. Participants were asked to rate how clear the video was on a scale ranging from 0 ("Totally incomprehensible") to 10 ("Completely comprehensible"). In the case in which the video was rated 5 or lower, participants were asked to answer an open question specifying why the video was unclear.

- Videos' emotional valence. Participants were asked to rate the positivity of the emotions they felt watching the video on a scale that ranged from 0 ("Extremely negative") to 10 ("Extremely positive")

- Economic Inequality Salience Participants were asked to rate how relevant economic inequality is for evaluating a society on a scale ranging from 0 ("Not relevant at all") to 10 ("Extremely relevant").

- Corruption Salience Participants were asked to rate how relevant corruption is for evaluating a society on a scale ranging from 0 ("Not relevant at all") to 10 ("Extremely relevant").

 I hypothesised that:

a) Participants assigned to the corruption video would rate corruption as more relevant for defining a society than those assigned to the economic-inequality video and the control one.

b) Participants assigned to the income inequality video would rate corruption as more relevant for defining a society than those assigned to the corruption condition video and the control one.

2.1.1. Participants

I involved 61 Italian participants (35 Female, 26 Males; M_{age} = 29.8, SD_{age} = 9.42) with a direct link to Qualtrics, using a snow-ball sampling method. Participants were not compensated and completed the questionnaire

for free. Using the software G.Power 3.1.9.2 (setting a medium required effect size (0.3), an α of .05 and a power of .85) I estimated a required sample of at least 20 participants per conditions, for a total of at least 60 participants. Participants were asked to rate their political orientation on a scale ranging from 1 ("I'm extremely close to the left wing) to 7 (I'm extremely close to the right wing") and the overall sample reported a mean equal to 3.57 (SD=1.09). All participants correctly identified the topic of the video they had watched, therefore passing the attention check.

2.1.1.1. Understandability

On average, participants considered the videos as highly comprehensible (M=8.54, SD=0.94) and no subject rated it lower than 5, meaning that no open questions were provided. I ran a one-way ANOVA (Video watched: Corruption vs. Economic Inequality vs. Control) to explore if one video was rated as more comprehensible than the others, finding no significant result, $F_{(2, 59)} = 1.17$, $\eta^2 = 0.039$, $p = 0.319$.

2.1.1.2. Emotional Valence

I ran a one-way ANOVA (Video: Corruption vs Economic Inequality vs Control) on participants' positivity of the emotions reported, finding a significant effect of the content of the video, $F_{(187,2)} = 63.0$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .68$. Post hoc tests ($p_{\text{Tukey}} < .001$) indicated that those assigned to the control condition reported the most positive emotions concerning the video ($M = 7.90$, $SE = 0.27$), followed by those assigned to the inequality one ($M = 5.00$, $SE = 0.27$) and those assigned to the corruption video ($M = 3.71$, $SE = 0.26$). These data suggest that exposure to corruption provokes more negative emotions than the exposure to economic inequality.

2.1.1.3. Relevance Perception

Concerning the saliency of the issues in consideration, a one-way ANOVA (Video: Corruption vs Economic Inequality vs Control) confirmed that the manipulation acted in the intended way, $F_{(185,2)} = 66.5$, $p < .005$, $\eta^2 = .69$. Post hoc tests ($p_{\text{Tukey}} < .001$) revealed that participants assigned to the economic inequality video reported the highest levels of saliency for such issue ($M = 7.55$, $SE = 0.26$), followed by those assigned to the corruption video ($M = 4.38$, $SE = 0.25$) and the control one ($M = 3.44$, $SE = 0.26$). Likewise, the corruption video successfully increased the relevance of the construct, $F_{(96,2)} = 44.2$, $p < .005$, $\eta^2 = .604$). Post hoc tests ($p_{\text{Tukey}} < .001$) indicated that those assigned to the Corruption video rated the saliency of such construct the highest ($M = 8.81$, $SE = 0.22$) followed by those assigned to the Inequality video ($M = 6.85$, $SE = 0.23$) and those assigned to the control one ($M = 5.8$, $SE = 0.23$). I performed three paired t-test on those assigned to the control condition, those assigned to the video about inequality and those assigned to the video about corruption to assess if these participants rated corruption as more salient than economic inequality or vice-versa. I found a significant difference, Student's $t_{(19)} = 10.6$, $p < .001$, on those assigned to the control condition ($N = 20$) as these participants rated corruption as more relevant ($M = 6.85$, $SE = 0.22$) than economic inequality ($M = 3.45$, $SE = 0.23$). Likewise, I found a significant difference for those assigned to the Corruption

video (N = 21), Student's t(20) = 12.7, p < .001, as these participants rated corruption as more relevant (M = 8.81, SE = 0.24) than economic inequality (M = 4.38, SD = 0.2). Concerning those assigned to the Inequality video (N = 20) I found a significant effect, Student's t(19) = 14.7, p < .001, but with an opposite direction of the ones previously assessed as they rated corruption (M = 5.8, SE = 0.76) less salient than economic inequality (M = 7.55, SE = 0.88). Given these results, I decided that the video created were efficacious enough to be used as a manipulation for the main survey

2.2. Pilot Study

2.2.1. Participants

I recruited a sample of 200 Italian participants using Prolific, who were compensated 9£ per hour for their time. Among them, only 196 passed the attention checks I inserted in the survey and were therefore included in the analyses. The sample's ($N_{Females}$ = 97, $N_{Non-Binary}$ =3) composition in terms of level of education and occupation is summarized in *Table* 1

Table 9: Demographic Information of the Pilot

Level of Education	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
I do not have a High School Diploma	4	2.0 %	2.0 %
I have a High School Diploma	38	19.4 %	21.4 %
I am currently enrolled in a university program	66	33.7 %	55.1 %
I have a bachelor's degree	54	27.6 %	82.7 %
I have a master's degree	27	13.8 %	96.4 %
I have a Ph.D.	7	3.6 %	100.0 %
Levels of Occupation	**Counts**	**% of Total**	**Cumulative %**
Student	104	53.1 %	53.1 %
Unemployed	28	14.3 %	67.3 %
Employed	41	20.9 %	88.3 %
Self-Employed	15	7.7 %	95.9 %
Homemaker	2	1.0 %	96.9 %
Other/Prefer not to say	6	3.1 %	100.0 %

2.2.2. Relevance Perception

As a first step, I ran 3 one-sample t-tests against 0 on the Relevance Differential Score, whose results have been summed in *Table* 2. Participants assigned to the Corruption and Economic Inequality Video displayed higher saliency ratings for Corruption than Economic Inequality and vice-versa, respectively. On the other hand, participants assigned to the Control Condition did not display significant higher saliency ratings for one construct over the other. I then ran a one-way ANOVA (Video: Corruption vs. Economic Inequality vs. Control) on the Saliency Differential Score, that showed a significant effect of the video, $F(2, 193) = 9.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.086$. Participants assigned to the Economic Inequality Video rated economic inequality as more relevant than corruption ($M = -0.59$, $SE = 0.17$) more than those assigned to the Corruption Video ($M = 0.364$, $SE = 0.17$; $p_{Tukey} < .001$) and the Control one ($M = 0.25$, $SE = 0.17$; $p_{Tukey} < .001$) while no difference emerged between the last two conditions ($p_{Tukey} = .889$). Given these results, I can conclude that the video manipulation used was successful in changing participants' perception of the saliency of Corruption and Economic Inequality.

Table 10: 3 one-sample t-tests on the saliency differential scores for each manipulation condition

Video Watched		Statistic	df	*p*	Mean Difference	Cohen's *d*
Corruption	Student's *t*	2.08	65	0.042	0.362	0.256
Economic Inequality	Student's *t*	-3.48	65	< .001	-0.591	-0.428
Control	Student's *t*	1.43	63	0.159	0.250	0.178

2.2.3. Emotions

I ran six one-way ANOVAs (Video: Corruption vs. Economic Inequality vs. Control) on participants' ratings of Anger, Hope and Resignation concerning economic inequality and corruption, respectively. I first examined emotions concerning economic inequality. A significant effect of Video on their Hope, $F(2, 193) = 4.84$, $p = .009$, $\eta^2 = 0.048$, was found. Participants in the Economic Inequality Video reported less hope concerning economic inequality ($M = 3.79$, $SE = 0.3$) than those in the Control video condition ($M = 5.14$, $SE = 0.31$; $p_{Tukey} = .002$). No significant differences were found between the Inequality video condition and the Corruption one ($p_{Tukey} = .071$) or the Corruption and the Control ones ($p_{Tukey} = .198$). No significant effect of video was found on anger, $F(2, 193) = 0.581$, $p = .56$, $\eta^2 = 0.006$, and resignation, $F(2, 193) = 1.92$, $p = .149$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$. Analyses on participants' emotions concerning corruption showed no significant effect of video on anger, $F(2, 193) = 0.698$, $p = .499$, $\eta^2 = 0.007$, hope, $F(2, 193) = 1.4$, $p = .25$, $\eta^2 = 0.014$, or resignation, $F(2, 193) = 1.16$, $p = .315$, $\eta^2 = 0.012$. I then decided to check if participants, accordingly to the video watched, rated the emotions evoked by corruption more extreme than the ones evoked by economic inequality, or vice versa To do so subtracted the scores concerning the anger evoked by economic inequality from the ones evoked by corruption, and so on for the hope scores and the resignation ones. A positive score of the newly created

index would indicate a higher level of the emotion in the Corruption condition than in the Economic Inequality condition. Vice versa, a negative score would indicate that the Economic Inequality condition evoked higher emotion levels. On such computed scores, I ran 3 one-way ANOVAs (Video: Corruption vs Economic Inequality vs Control) and I found a significant effect of the manipulation on the hope scores, $F(2, 193) = 4.98$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = 0.049$, but not on the anger ones, $F(2, 193) = 1.23$, $p = .296$, $\eta^2 = 0.013$, or the resignation ones, $F(2, 193) = 0.083$, $p = .92$, $\eta^2 = 0.001$. Overall, participants were more hopeful towards Economic Inequality than Corruption, as the negative means suggests, however when assigned to the Inequality condition ($M = -0.409$; $SE = 0.311$) or the Corruption one ($M = -0.545$; $SE = 0.311$), such difference was significantly reduced ($p_{Tukeys} < .001$) from the one of those assigned to the Control Condition ($M = -1.687$; $SE = 0.316$). After checking the correlations between the emotion scores and the saliency ones (reported in the Appendix) and finding a positive correlation between the saliency ratings and the anger ones, I ran a linear regression to check if the inequality saliency predicted participants anger towards such issue, and I found a significant regression equation, $F(1,196) = 21.4$, $p < .001$, with a $R^2 = 0.148$, as when the saliency of inequality was raised by one unit, the anger towards such issue was raised by an estimate of 0.2 ($SE = 0.2$, $t = 4.63$, $p < .001$). I also found the corruption saliency to significantly predict participants' anger towards such issue, $F(1,196) = 21.3$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.148$, as when participants saliency ratings were raised by one unit, their anger towards corruption was raised by an estimate of .311 ($SE = 0.311$, $t = 4.63$, $p < .001$).

2.2.4. Matrices and Strategies

For each matrix (Type A, B and C) I explored participants' frequencies of response, to check if they had selected one bundle over another casually. In *Table* 5 I report the frequencies of selection for each bundle, along with the expected count and proportion, given a casual selection. In *Table* 4, I illustrate the plotting of the bundle selected for each matrix type. I assessed that for Matrix A1 ($\chi^2 (12, 196) = 80.7$, $p < .001$), A2 ($\chi^2 (12, 196) = 60.2$, $p < .001$), B ($\chi^2 (12, 196) = 34.8$, $p < .001$), C1 ($\chi^2 (12, 196) = 196$, $p < .001$) and C2 ($\chi^2 (12, 196) = 192$, $p < .001$) the distribution of responses was not casual, letting us infer that participants used the matrices following a criterion. Then I explored participants' probability of selecting a strategy over the others by running a log-linear regression and finding a significant effect, $\chi^2(2; 570) = 39.6$, $p < .001$. As displayed in *Table* 3, participants displayed a significant higher probability of selecting the Minimum Corruption Percentage strategy over MEIP and P, while they were not significantly more likely to select MEIP over P. I decided to explore if the video watched influenced the strategy selected by participants throughout the study, by running a generalized linear model. However, I did not find a significant effect of the video manipulation, $\chi^2(8, 570) = 1.18$, $p = .997$.

Table 11

Model Coefficients

Predictor	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Intercept	5.565	0.0619	89.90	< .001
Strategy:				
P – MCP	-0.602	0.1040	-5.78	< .001
MEIP – MCP	-0.453	0.0993	-4.56	< .001
MEIP – P	0.149	0.1141	1.31	0.191

Table 12: Participants' bundle selection, for each matrix.

Matrix A1

Matrix A2

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
CORRUPTION	19%	18%	17%	16%	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%	9%	8%	7%
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	7%	8%	9%	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%	16%	17%	18%	19%
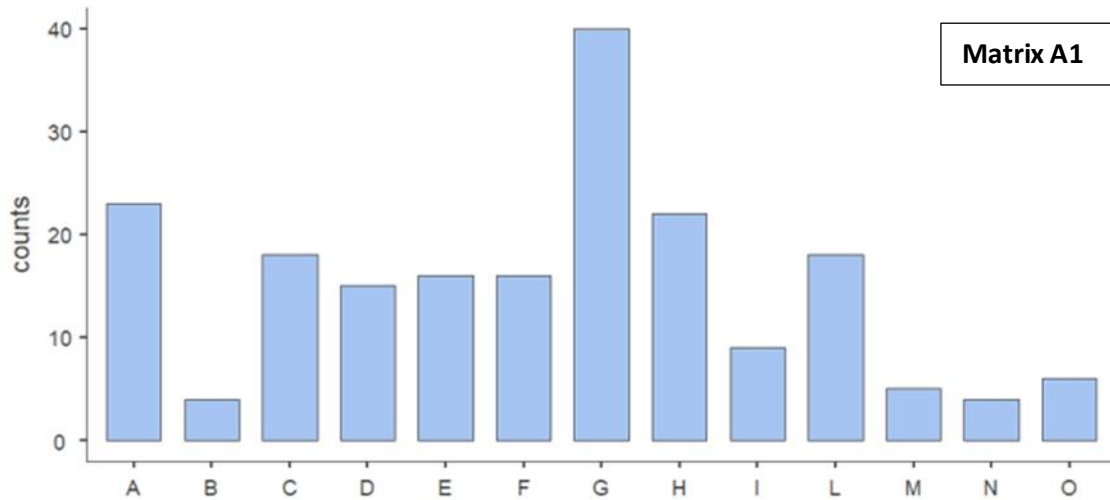
Matrix B

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
CORRUPTION	16%	17%	18%	19%	20%	21%	22%	23%	24%	25%	26%	27%	28%
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	16%	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%	9%	8%	7%	6%	5%	4%

Matrix C1

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
CORRUPTION	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%	16%
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	28%	27%	26%	25%	24%	23%	22%	21%	20%	19%	18%	17%	16%
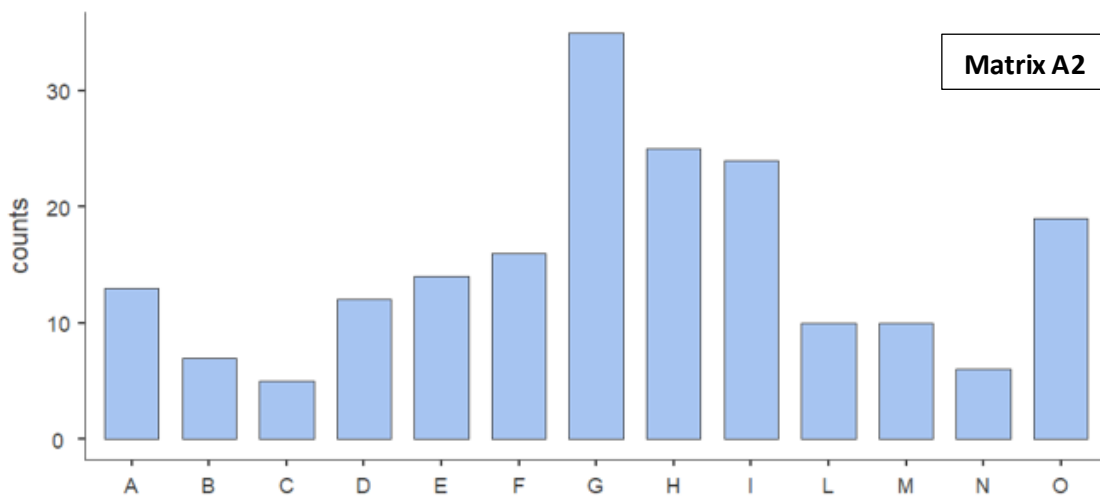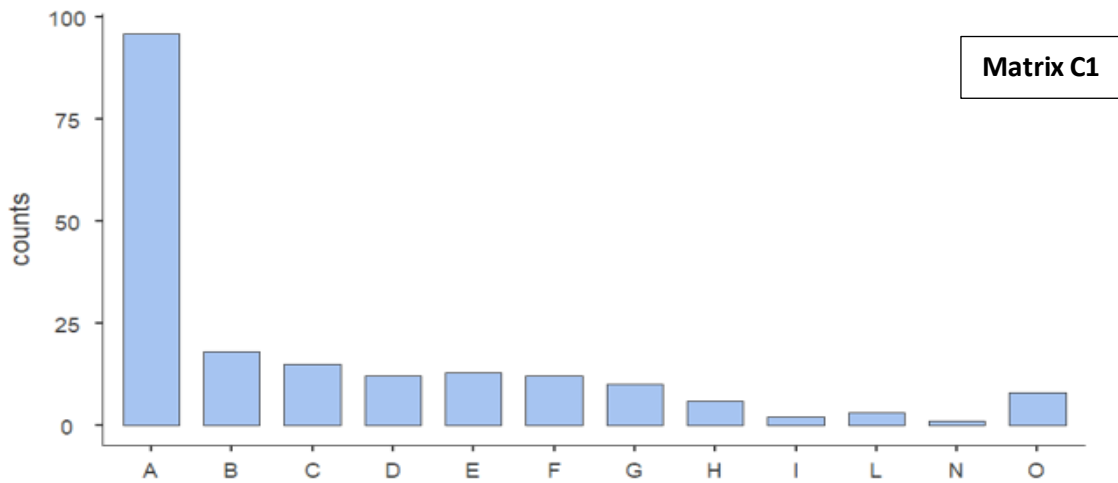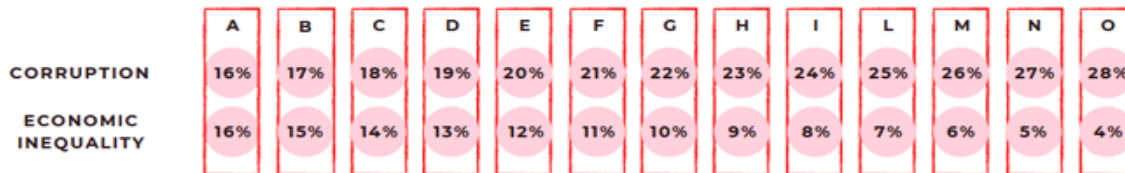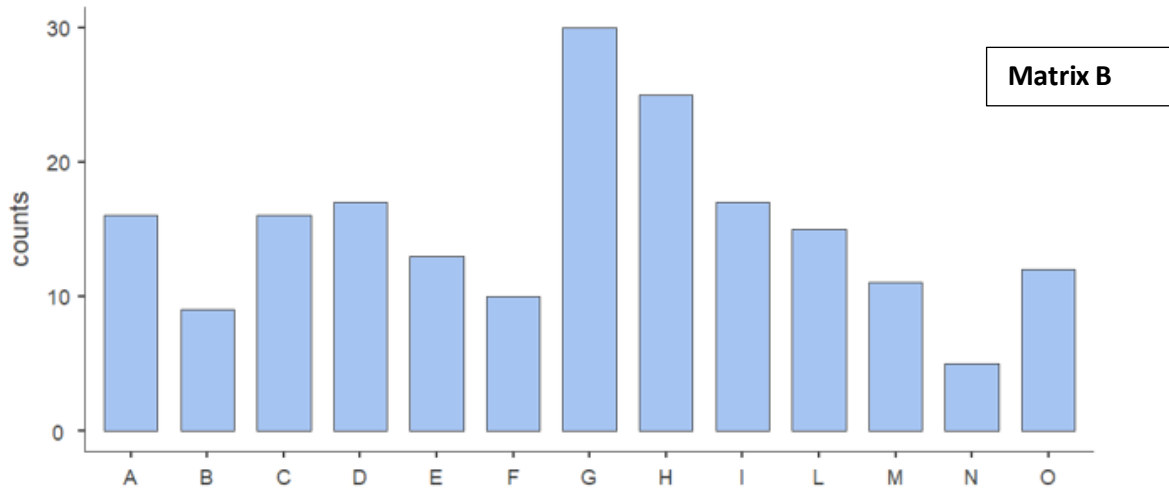
Matrix C2

Table 13: Frequencies of bundle chosen for each matrix, along with the observed and expected count, given the casualty of the selection

Matrix

A1 Bundle		Count	Proportion	A2 Bundle		Count	Proportion	B1 Bundle		Count	Proportion	C1 Bundle		Count	Proportion	C2 Bundle		Count	Proportion
A	Observed	23	0.1173	A	Observed	13	0.0663	A	Observed	16	0.0816	A	Observed	96	0.48980	A	Observed	9	0.0459
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769
B	Observed	4	0.0204	B	Observed	7	0.0357	B	Observed	9	0.0459	B	Observed	18	0.09184	B	Observed	2	0.0102
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769
C	Observed	18	0.0918	C	Observed	5	0.0255	C	Observed	16	0.0816	C	Observed	15	0.07653	C	Observed	5	0.0255
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769
D	Observed	15	0.0765	D	Observed	12	0.0612	D	Observed	17	0.0867	D	Observed	12	0.06122	D	Observed	3	0.0153
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769
E	Observed	16	0.0816	E	Observed	14	0.0714	E	Observed	13	0.0663	E	Observed	13	0.06633	E	Observed	7	0.0357
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769
F	Observed	16	0.0816	F	Observed	16	0.0816	F	Observed	10	0.0510	F	Observed	12	0.06122	F	Observed	5	0.0255
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769
G	Observed	40	0.2041	G	Observed	35	0.1786	G	Observed	30	0.1531	G	Observed	10	0.05102	G	Observed	16	0.0816
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769
H	Observed	22	0.1122	H	Observed	25	0.1276	H	Observed	25	0.1276	H	Observed	6	0.03061	H	Observed	14	0.0714
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769
I	Observed	9	0.0459	I	Observed	24	0.1224	I	Observed	17	0.0867	I	Observed	2	0.01020	I	Observed	15	0.0765
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769
L	Observed	18	0.0918	L	Observed	10	0.0510	L	Observed	15	0.0765	L	Observed	3	0.01531	L	Observed	22	0.1122
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769
M	Observed	5	0.0255	M	Observed	10	0.0510	M	Observed	11	0.0561	M	Observed	1	0.00510	M	Observed	18	0.0918
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769
N	Observed	4	0.0204	N	Observed	6	0.0306	N	Observed	5	0.0255	N	Observed	8	0.04082	N	Observed	62	0.3163
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769
O	Observed	6	0.0306	O	Observed	19	0.0969	O	Observed	12	0.0612	O	Observed	6	0.0306	O	Observed	18	0.0918
	Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769		Expected	15.1	0.0769

2.3. Study 6: Additional Analyses

2.3.1. Participants' pattern of response

For each matrix (Type A, B and C) I explored participants' frequencies of response, to check if they had selected one bundle over another casually. In *Table* 6 I report the frequencies of selection for each bundle, along with the expected count and proportion, given a casual selection. In *Table* 6, we illustrate the plotting of the bundle selected for each matrix type. I assessed that for Matrix A1 (χ^2 (12, 189) = 112, p < .001), A2 (χ^2 (12, 189) = 113, p < .001), B (χ^2 (12, 189) = 116, p < .001), C1 (χ^2 (12, 189) = 108, p < .001) and C2 (χ^2 (12, 189) = 116, p < .001) the distribution of responses was not casual, letting us infer that participants used the matrices following a strategy.

Table 6: Participants' bundle selection, for each matrix.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	19%	18%	17%	16%	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%	9%	8%	7%
CORRUPTION	1%	3%	5%	7%	9%	11%	13%	15%	17%	19%	21%	23%	25%

Matrix A1

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	25%	23%	21%	19%	17%	15%	13%	11%	9%	7%	5%	3%	1%
CORRUPTION	7%	8%	9%	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%	16%	17%	18%	19%

Matrix A2

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	19%	18%	17%	16%	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%	9%	8%	7%
CORRUPTION	7%	8%	9%	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%	16%	17%	18%	19%

Matrix B

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	16%	17%	18%	19%	20%	21%	22%	23%	24%	25%	26%	27%	28%
CORRUPTION	16%	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%	9%	8%	7%	6%	5%	4%

Matrix C1

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%	16%
CORRUPTION	28%	27%	26%	25%	24%	23%	22%	21%	20%	19%	18%	17%	16%

Matrix C2

Table 14: Frequencies of bundle chosen for each matrix, along with the observed and expected count, given the casualty of the selection

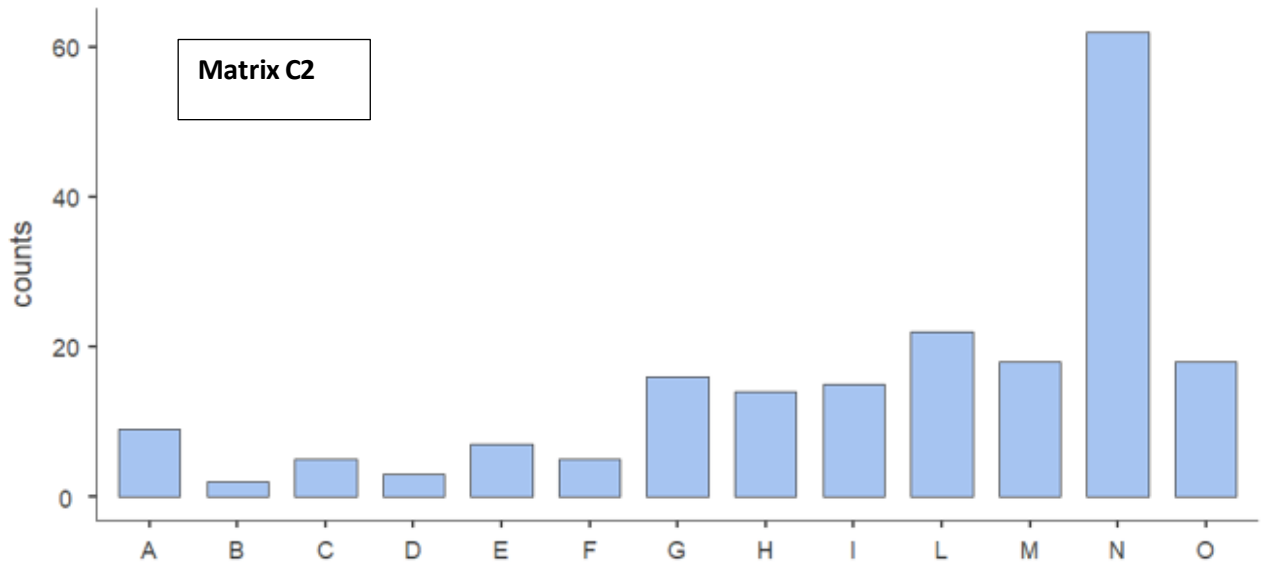|																			
									Matrix										
		A1				A2				B				C1				C2	
Bundle		Count	Proportion	Bundle		Count	Proportion	Bundle		Count	Proportion	Bundle		Count	Proportion	Bundle		Count	Proportion
A	Observed	37	0.1947	A	Observed	20	0.1053	A	Observed	28	0.1474	A	Observed	96	0.50526	A	Observed	9	0.04737
	Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769
B	Observed	11	0.0579	B	Observed	4	0.0211	B	Observed	7	0.0368	B	Observed	14	0.07368	B	Observed	1	0.00526
	Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769
C	Observed	15	0.0789	C	Observed	6	0.0316	C	Observed	16	0.0842	C	Observed	8	0.04211	C	Observed	0	0
	Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769
D	Observed	15	0.0789	D	Observed	20	0.1053	D	Observed	18	0.0947	D	Observed	6	0.03158	D	Observed	4	0.02105
	Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769
E	Observed	17	0.0895	E	Observed	15	0.0789	E	Observed	6	0.0316	E	Observed	11	0.05789	E	Observed	4	0.02105
	Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769
F	Observed	18	0.0947	F	Observed	13	0.0684	F	Observed	8	0.0421	F	Observed	9	0.04737	F	Observed	5	0.02632
	Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769
G	Observed	24	0.1263	G	Observed	47	0.2474	G	Observed	48	0.2526	G	Observed	13	0.06842	G	Observed	14	0.07368
	Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769
H	Observed	15	0.0789	H	Observed	22	0.1158	H	Observed	15	0.0789	H	Observed	6	0.03158	H	Observed	4	0.02105
	Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769
I	Observed	14	0.0737	I	Observed	11	0.0579	I	Observed	13	0.0684	I	Observed	3	0.01579	I	Observed	1	0.00526
	Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769
L	Observed	6	0.0316	L	Observed	11	0.0579	L	Observed	10	0.0526	L	Observed	7	0.03684	L	Observed	11	0.05789
	Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769
M	Observed	6	0.0316	M	Observed	4	0.0211	M	Observed	4	0.0211	M	Observed	1	0.00526	M	Observed	8	0.04211
	Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769
N	Observed	0	0	N	Observed	2	0.0105	N	Observed	7	0.0368	N	Observed	1	0.00526	N	Observed	10	0.05263
	Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769		Expected	14.6	0.0769
O	Observed	12	0.0632	O	Observed	15	0.0789	O	Observed	10	0.0526	O	Observed	15	0.07895	O	Observed	119	0.62632

| | Expected | 14.6 | 0.0769 | | Expected | 14.6 | 0.0769 | | Expected | 14.6 | 0.0769 | | Expected | 14.6 | 0.0769 | | Expected | 14.6 | 0.0769 |

2.3.2. Participants Motivations

I explored if participants were aware of the strategy they adopted when selecting a bundle for each matrix, by exploring the correlation of the motivations they declared (*Motivation 1 - Motivation 4*) with the bundle they selected.[16]

2.3.2.1. Matrix A1

Table 15: Correlation matrix of the bundle selected in Matrix A1 by participants and the motivations they declared

		Bundle	Motivation_1_ A1	Motivation_2_ A1	Motivation_3_ A1	Motivation_4_ A1
Bundle Selected A1	Pearson's r	—				
	p-value	—				
Motivation_1_ A1	Pearson's r	0.790 ***	—			
	p-value	< .001	—			
Motivation_2_ A1	Pearson's r	0.599 ***	0.676 ***	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—		
Motivation_3_ A1	Pearson's r	-0.673 ***	-0.710 ***	-0.341 ***	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—	
Motivation_4_ A1	Pearson's r	0.232 **	0.257 ***	0.220 **	-0.179 *	—
	p-value	0.001	< .001	0.002	0.014	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

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[16] We transformed the bundle selected (Which ranged from A to O) into a scale ranging from 1 to 13.

2.3.2.2. Matrix A2

Table 16: Correlation matrix of the bundle selected in Matrix A2 by participants and the motivations they declared

		Bundle	Motivation_1_ A2	Motivation_2_ A2	Motivation_3_ A2	Motivation_4_ A2
Bundle Selected A2	Pearson 's *r*	—				
	p-value	—				
Motivation_1_ A2	Pearson 's *r*	0.744 ***	—			
	p-value	< .001	—			
Motivation_2_ A2	Pearson 's *r*	0.550 ***	0.660 ***	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—		
Motivation_3_ A2	Pearson 's *r*	-0.568 ***	-0.624 ***	-0.144 *	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	0.048	—	
Motivation_4_ A2	Pearson 's *r*	0.075	0.050	-0.090	-0.092	—
	p-value	0.305	0.501	0.219	0.209	—

Note. * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001

2.3.2.3. Matrix B

Table 17: Correlation matrix of the bundle selected in Matrix B by participants and the motivations they declared

		Bundle	Motivation_1_B	Motivation_2_B	Motivation_3_B	Motivation_4_B
Bundle Selected B	Pearson's r	—				
	p-value	—				
Motivation_1_B	Pearson's r	0.823 ***	—			
	p-value	< .001	—			
Motivation_2_B	Pearson's r	0.576 ***	0.701 ***	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—		
Motivation_3_B	Pearson's r	-0.587 ***	-0.639 ***	-0.218 **	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	0.002	—	
Motivation_4_B	Pearson's r	0.158 *	0.170 *	0.038	-0.180 *	—
	p-value	0.029	0.020	0.604	0.013	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

2.3.2.4. Matrix C1

Table 18: Correlation matrix of the bundle selected in Matrix C1 by participants and the motivations they declared

		Bundle Selected C1	Motivation_1_C1	Motivation_2_C1	Motivation_3_C1	Motivation_4_C1
Bundle Selected C1	Pearson's r	—				
	p-value	—				
Motivation_1_C1	Pearson's r	-0.600 ***	—			
	p-value	< .001	—			

		Bundle Selected C1	Motivation_1_C1	Motivation_2_C1	Motivation_3_C1	Motivation_4_C1
Motivation_2_C1	Pearson's r	-0.463 ** *	0.674 ***	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—		
Motivation_3_C1	Pearson's r	0.435 ***	-0.624 ***	-0.234 **	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	0.001	—	
Motivation_4_C1	Pearson's r	-0.544 ***	0.216 **	0.147 *	-0.080	—
	p-value	< .001	0.003	0.043	0.274	—

Note. * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001

2.3.2.5. Matrix C2

Table 19: Correlation matrix of the bundle selected in Matrix C2 by participants and the motivations they declared

		Bundle Selected C2	Motivation_1_C2	Motivation_2_C2	Motivation_3_C2	Motivation_4_C2
Bundle Selected C2	Pearson's r	—				
	p-value	—				
Motivation_1_C2	Pearson's r	-0.552 ***	—			
	p-value	< .001	—			
Motivation_2_C2	Pearson's r	-0.393 ***	0.603 ***	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—		
Motivation_3_C2	Pearson's r	0.379 ***	-0.619 ***	-0.113	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	0.125	—	
Motivation_4_C2	Pearson's r	0.354 ***	0.090	0.071	-0.147 *	—

	Bundle Selected C2	Motivation_1_C2	Motivation_2_C2	Motivation_3_C2	Motivation_4_C2
p-value	< .001	0.222	0.336	0.045	—

Note. * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001

2.4. Study 7: Additional Analyses

2.4.1. Participants' pattern of response

For each matrix (Type A, B and C) I explored participants' frequencies of response, to check if they had selected one bundle over another casually. In *Table* 14 I report the frequencies of selection for each bundle, along with the expected count and proportion, given a casual selection. In *Table* 13 , we illustrate the plotting of the bundle selected for each matrix type. I assessed that for Matrix A1 (χ^2 (12,391) = 245, *p* < .001.), A2 (χ^2 (12,391) = 278, *p* < .001), B (χ^2 (12,391) = 345, *p* < .001), C1 (χ^2 (12,391) = 937, *p* < .001.) and C2 (χ^2 (12,391) = 106, *p* < .001) the distribution of responses was not casual, letting us infer that participants used the matrices following a strategy.

Table 20: Participants' bundle selection, for each matrix.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	19%	18%	17%	16%	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%	9%	8%	7%
CORRUPTION	1%	3%	5%	7%	9%	11%	13%	15%	17%	19%	21%	23%	25%

Matrix A1

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	25%	23%	21%	19%	17%	15%	13%	11%	9%	7%	5%	3%	1%
CORRUPTION	7%	8%	9%	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%	16%	17%	18%	19%

Matrix A2

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	19%	18%	17%	16%	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%	9%	8%	7%
CORRUPTION	7%	8%	9%	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%	16%	17%	18%	19%

Matrix B

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	16%	17%	18%	19%	20%	21%	22%	23%	24%	25%	26%	27%	28%
CORRUPTION	16%	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%	9%	8%	7%	6%	5%	4%

Matrix C1

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L	M	N	O
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%	16%
CORRUPTION	28%	27%	26%	25%	24%	23%	22%	21%	20%	19%	18%	17%	16%

Matrix C2

Table 21: Frequencies of bundle chosen for each matrix, along with the observed and expected count, given the casualty of the selection

	A1				A2				B1				C1				C2		
Bundle		Count	Proportion	Bundle		Count	Proportion	Bundle		Count	Proportion	Bundle		Count	Proportion	Bundle		Count	Proportion
A	Observed	77	0.1969	A	Observed	55	0.14066	A	Observed	61	0.1560	A	Observed	187	0.4783	A	Observed	23	0.05882
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769
B	Observed	19	0.0486	B	Observed	11	0.02813	B	Observed	21	0.0537	B	Observed	31	0.0793	B	Observed	3	0.00767
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769
C	Observed	37	0.0946	C	Observed	23	0.05882	C	Observed	15	0.0384	C	Observed	19	0.0486	C	Observed	4	0.01023
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769
D	Observed	23	0.0588	D	Observed	25	0.06394	D	Observed	32	0.0818	D	Observed	16	0.0409	D	Observed	10	0.02558
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769
E	Observed	31	0.0793	E	Observed	17	0.04348	E	Observed	20	0.0512	E	Observed	16	0.0409	E	Observed	5	0.01279
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769
F	Observed	29	0.0742	F	Observed	49	0.12532	F	Observed	38	0.0972	F	Observed	14	0.0358	F	Observed	11	0.02813
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769
G	Observed	86	0.2199	G	Observed	103	0.26343	G	Observed	115	0.2941	G	Observed	26	0.0665	G	Observed	20	0.05115
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769
H	Observed	29	0.0742	H	Observed	32	0.08184	H	Observed	18	0.0460	H	Observed	8	0.0205	H	Observed	9	0.02302
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769
I	Observed	9	0.0230	I	Observed	22	0.05627	I	Observed	16	0.0409	I	Observed	6	0.0153	I	Observed	11	0.02813
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769
L	Observed	22	0.0563	L	Observed	12	0.03069	L	Observed	16	0.0409	L	Observed	13	0.0332	L	Observed	10	0.02558
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769
M	Observed	7	0.0179	M	Observed	12	0.03069	M	Observed	8	0.0205	M	Observed	5	0.0128	M	Observed	21	0.05371
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769
N	Observed	6	0.0153	N	Observed	3	0.00767	N	Observed	4	0.0102	N	Observed	6	0.0153	N	Observed	24	0.06138
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769
O	Observed	16	0.0409	O	Observed	27	0.06905	O	Observed	27	0.0691	O	Observed	44	0.1125	O	Observed	240	0.61381
	Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769		Expected	30.1	0.0769

2.4.2. Participants' Motivations

I explored if participants were aware of the strategy they adopted when selecting a bundle for each matrix, by exploring the correlation of the motivations they declared (*Motivation 1- Motivation 4*) with the bundle they selected.[17]

2.4.2.1. Matrix A1

Table 22: Correlation Matrix of the bundle selected in Matrix A1 by participants and the motivations they declared

		Bundle Selected A1	Motivation_A1_1	Motivation_A1_2	Motivation_A1_3	Motivation_A1_4
Bundle Selected A1	Pearson's *r*	—				
	p-value	—				
Motivation_A1_1	Pearson's *r*	0.529 ***	—			
	p-value	< .001	—			
Motivation_A1_2	Pearson's *r*	0.325 ***	0.614 ***	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—		
Motivation_A1_3	Pearson's *r*	-0.289 ***	-0.529 ***	-0.015	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	0.766	—	
Motivation_A1_4	Pearson's *r*	0.329 ***	0.323 ***	0.377 ***	-0.164 **	—
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.001	—

Note. * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001

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[17] We transformed the bundle selected (Which ranged from A to O) into a scale ranging from 1 to 13.

2.4.2.2. Matrix A2

Table 23: Correlation Matrix of the bundle selected in Matrix A2 by participants and the motivations they declared

		Bundle Selected A2	Motivation_A2_1	Motivation_A2_2	Motivation_A2_3	Motivation_A2_4
Bundle Selected A2	Pearson's r	—				
	p-value	—				
Motivation_A2_1	Pearson's r	0.455 ***	—			
	p-value	< .001	—			
Motivation_A2_2	Pearson's r	0.315 ***	0.544 ***	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—		
Motivation_A2_3	Pearson's r	-0.207 ***	-0.472 ***	0.075	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	0.141	—	
Motivation_A2_4	Pearson's r	0.176 ***	0.221 ***	0.276 ***	-0.022	—
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.672	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

2.4.2.3. Matrix B

Table 24: Correlation Matrix of the bundle selected in Matrix B by participants and the motivations they declared

		Bundle Selected B	Motivation_B1_1	Motivation_B1_2	Motivation_B1_3	Motivation_B1_4
Bundle Selected B	Pearson's r	—				
	p-value	—				
Motivation_B1_1	Pearson's r	0.446 ***	—			
	p-value	< .001	—			

		Bundle Selected B	Motivation_B1 _1	Motivation_B1 _2	Motivation_B1 _3	Motivation_B1 _4
Motivation_B1 _2	Pearson's r	0.281 ***	0.584 ***	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—		
Motivation_B1 _3	Pearson's r	-0.226 ***	-0.490 ***	0.042	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	0.408	—	
Motivation_B1 _4	Pearson's r	0.179 ***	0.215 ***	0.301 ***	-0.034	—
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.505	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

2.4.2.4. Matrix C1

Table 25: Correlation Matrix of the bundle selected in Matrix C1 by participants and the motivations they declared

		Bundle selected C1	Motivation_C1 _1	Motivation_C1 _2	Motivation_C1 _3	Motivation_C1 _4
Bundle selected C1	Pearson's r	—				
	p-value	—				
Motivation_C1 _1	Pearson's r	-0.392 ***	—			
	p-value	< .001	—			
Motivation_C1 _2	Pearson's r	-0.290 ***	0.583 ***	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—		
Motivation_C1 _3	Pearson's r	0.219 ***	-0.498 ***	0.067	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	0.184	—	
Motivation_C1 _4	Pearson's r	-0.469 ***	0.140 **	0.313 ***	0.026	—

	Bundle selected C1	Motivation_C1_1	Motivation_C1_2	Motivation_C1_3	Motivation_C1_4
p-value	< .001	0.006	< .001	0.613	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

2.4.2.5.   Matrix C2

Table 26: Correlation Matrix of the bundle selected in Matrix C2 by participants and the motivations they declared

		Bundle selected C2	Motivation C2_1	Motivation_C2_2	Motivation_C2_3	Motivation_C2_4
Bundle selected C2	Pearson's *r*	—				
	p-value	—				
Motivation C2_1	Pearson's *r*	-0.251 ***	—			
	p-value	< .001	—			
Motivation_C2_2	Pearson's *r*	-0.084	0.522 ***	—		
	p-value	0.099	< .001	—		
Motivation_C2_3	Pearson's *r*	0.135 **	-0.447 ***	0.093	—	
	p-value	0.008	< .001	0.067	—	
Motivation_C2_4	Pearson's *r*	0.365 ***	0.164 **	0.296 ***	-0.037	—
	p-value	< .001	0.001	< .001	0.469	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

3. Correlation Matrices

4.

Correlation Matrix_ Study 1

		Merit ocracy	ESJ	Status_ Check	Inequalit y_Check	Corrupti on_Chec k	Ang er	Inequality_Beha vioral_Intention s	Corruption_Beh avioral_Intentio ns	Gen der	Level of educ ation	Politic al orient ation	occup ation	Ag e
Meritocracy	Pear son's r	—												
	p-valu e	—												
ESJ_Jost	Pear son's r	0.297	—											
	p-valu e	< .00 1	—											
Status_Check	Pear son's r	0.049	-0.0 41	—										
	p-valu e	0.509	0.5 83	—										
Inequality_Chec k	Pear son's r	0.136	0.1 23	0.029	—									
	p-valu e	0.064	0.0 94	0.698	—									

		Merit ocracy	ESJ	Status_ Check	Inequalit y_Check	Corrupti on_Chec k	Ang er	Inequality_Beha vioral_Intention s	Corruption_Beh avioral_Intentio ns	Gen der	Level of educ ation	Politic al orient ation	occup ation	Ag e
Corruption_Che ck	Pear son's r	0.034	0.0 07	- 0.088	-0.041	—								
	p- valu e	0.640	0.9 19	0.234	0.580	—								
Anger	Pear son's r	- 0.106	- 0.1 54	- 0.075	-0.359	0.572	—							
	p- valu e	0.149	0.0 36	0.310	< .001	< .001	—							
Inequality_Beha vioral_Intention s	Pear son's r	- 0.103	- 0.2 41	0.003	-0.270	0.056	0.4 14	—						
	p- valu e	0.161	< . 00 1	0.969	< .001	0.445	< . 00 1	—						
Corruption_Beh avioral_Intentio ns	Pear son's r	- 0.014	- 0.2 10	- 0.009	-0.107	0.244	0.3 00	0.534	—					
	p- valu e	0.849	0.0 04	0.900	0.145	< .001	< . 00 1	< .001	—					
Gender	Pear son's r	- 0.138	- 0.2 04	- 0.018	0.020	0.032	- 0.0 05	0.145	0.028	—				

Correlation Matrix_ Study 1

		Meritocracy	ESJ	Status_Check	Inequality_Check	Corruption_Check	Anger	Inequality_Behavioral_Intentions	Corruption_Behavioral_Intentions	Gender	Level of education	Political orientation	occupation	Age
	p-value	0.060	0.005	0.806	0.791	0.661	0.945	0.048	0.700	—				
Level of education	Pearson's r	0.084	-0.069	-0.066	0.050	-0.029	-0.006	-0.108	-0.047	-0.079	—			
	p-value	0.257	0.350	0.371	0.498	0.696	0.933	0.142	0.528	0.281	—			
Political orientation	Pearson's r	0.067	0.263	-0.023	0.023	-0.008	-0.094	-0.237	-0.081	-0.211	0.089	—		
	p-value	0.367	<.001	0.753	0.759	0.910	0.201	0.001	0.271	0.004	0.229	—		
Occupation	Pearson's r	-0.010	-0.032	0.014	-0.121	0.011	0.027	0.021	-0.096	-0.089	0.129	0.047	—	
	p-value	0.887	0.665	0.844	0.101	0.882	0.720	0.778	0.193	0.228	0.078	0.528	—	
Age	Pearson's r	0.000	-0.105	0.036	-0.080	0.121	0.152	0.139	-0.052	0.042	-0.019	-0.019	0.504	—
	p-value	0.999	0.153	0.630	0.280	0.099	0.039	0.058	0.483	0.567	0.801	0.796	<.001	—

Correlation Matrix_ Study 2

		Age	Meritocracy	ESJ	Status_Check	Inequality Check	Corruption_Check	Anger	Inequality Behavioural Intentions	Corruption behavioural Intentions	Gender
Age	Pearson's r	—									
	p-value	—									
Meritocracy	Pearson's r	-0.143	—								
	p-value	0.128	—								
ESJ	Pearson's r	0.050	-0.188	—							
	p-value	0.600	0.045	—							
Status_Check	Pearson's r	-0.016	0.059	0.027	—						
	p-value	0.864	0.532	0.772	—						
Inequality_Check	Pearson's r	-0.044	-0.060	-0.061	-0.027	—					
	p-value	0.641	0.523	0.518	0.776	—					
Corruption_Check	Pearson's r	-0.079	0.106	-0.039	-0.028	-0.122	—				
	p-value	0.402	0.260	0.681	0.765	0.196	—				
Anger	Pearson's r	-0.086	0.011	-0.054	-0.028	-0.300	0.637	—			
	p-value	0.364	0.909	0.567	0.768	0.001	< .001	—			

Correlation Matrix_ Study 2

		Age	Meritocracy	ESJ	Status_Check	Inequality Check	Corruption_Check	Anger	Inequality Behavioural Intentions	Corruption behavioural Intentions	Gender
Inequality behavioural Intentions	Pearson's r	-0.116	-0.008	0.288	-0.146	-0.299	0.145	0.482	—		
	p-value	0.217	0.932	0.002	0.120	0.001	0.124	< .001	—		
Corruption Behavioural Intetions	Pearson's r	-0.058	-0.099	0.225	-0.196	-0.141	0.138	0.414	0.814	—	
	p-value	0.540	0.295	0.016	0.037	0.133	0.142	< .001	< .001	—	
Gender	Pearson's r	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	—
	p-value	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	—

Correlation Matrix_ Study 3

		Meritocracy	ESJ	Status_Check	Inequality Check	Corruption Check	Anger	Inequality Behavioural Intentions	Corruption Behavioural Intentions	Age	Education	Gender
Meritocracy	Pearson's r	—										
	p-value	—										
ESJ	Pearson's r	-0.434	—									
	p-value	< .001	—									

Correlation Matrix_ Study 3

		Meritocracy	ESJ	Status_Check	Inequality Check	Corruption Check	Anger	Inequality Behavioural Intentions	Corruption Behavioural Intentions	Age	Education	Gender
Status_Check	Pearson's r	-0.077	-0.004	—								
	p-value	0.244	0.954	—								
Inequality Check	Pearson's r	-0.023	-0.082	-0.110	—							
	p-value	0.732	0.215	0.095	—							
Corruption Check	Pearson's r	-0.157	0.196	-0.018	-0.218	—						
	p-value	0.017	0.003	0.790	< .001	—						
Anger	Pearson's r	-0.156	0.228	-0.051	-0.313	0.665	—					
	p-value	0.017	< .001	0.440	< .001	< .001	—					
Inequality behavioural intentions	Pearson's r	-0.311	0.284	0.024	-0.180	0.271	0.427	—				
	p-value	< .001	< .001	0.711	0.006	< .001	< .001	—				
Corruption Behavioural Intentions	Pearson's r	-0.208	0.226	0.118	-0.143	0.289	0.363	0.772	—			
	p-value	0.001	< .001	0.072	0.029	< .001	< .001	< .001	—			
Age	Pearson's r	-0.004	0.057	-0.024	0.034	0.110	0.091	-0.204	-0.222	—		
	p-value	0.949	0.386	0.720	0.606	0.094	0.166	0.002	< .001	—		

Correlation Matrix_ Study 3

		Meritocracy	ESJ	Status_Check	Inequality Check	Corruption Check	Anger	Inequality Behavioural Intentions	Corruption Behavioural Intentions	Age	Education	Gender
Education	Pearson's r	-0.094	0.025	-0.030	-0.067	-0.017	-0.008	0.149	0.075	-0.156	—	
	p-value	0.154	0.706	0.648	0.306	0.801	0.902	0.023	0.251	0.017	—	
Gender	Pearson's r	0.158	-0.061	-0.019	0.062	0.004	-0.039	-0.059	-0.047	-0.082	-0.011	—
	p-value	0.016	0.354	0.771	0.346	0.952	0.553	0.373	0.471	0.212	0.865	—

Correlation Matrix Study 4a

		Gender	Level of Education	Political Orientation	Occupation	Corruption Check	Inequality Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Corruption Behavioural Intentions	Corruption Efficacy	Inequality behavioural intentions	Inequality Efficacy	Age
Gender	Pearson's r	—													
	p-value	—													
Level of Education	Pearson's r	-0.000	—												
	p-value	0.999	—												
Political Orientation	Pearson's r	-0.066	-0.223	—											
	p-value	0.426	0.007	—											
Occupation	Pearson's r	0.152	-0.166	-0.059	—										
	p-value	0.066	0.044	0.477	—										
Corruption Check	Pearson's r	0.111	-0.188	0.036	0.179	—									
	p-value	0.220	0.037	0.695	0.048	—									

Correlation Matrix Study 4a

		Gender	Level of Education	Political Orientation	Occupation	Corruption Check	Inequality Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Corruption Behavioural Intentions	Corruption Efficacy	Inequality behavioural intentions	Inequality Efficacy	Age
Inequality Inferences	Pearson's r	0.018	0.093	0.049	-0.073	-0.470	—								
	p-value	0.825	0.262	0.552	0.378	< .001	—								
Society Appreciation	Pearson's r	-0.154	0.102	0.001	-0.157	-0.790	0.514	—							
	p-value	0.062	0.217	0.995	0.058	< .001	< .001	—							
Anger	Pearson's r	0.135	-0.123	0.029	0.132	0.818	-0.455	-0.771	—						
	p-value	0.104	0.139	0.726	0.110	< .001	< .001	< .001	—						
Hope	Pearson's r	-0.005	0.186	-0.106	-0.028	-0.508	0.290	0.506	-0.506	—					
	p-value	0.955	0.024	0.203	0.739	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—					

Correlation Matrix Study 4a

		Gender	Level of Education	Political Orientation	Occupation	Corruption Check	Inequality Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Corruption Behavioural Intentions	Corruption Efficacy	Inequality behavioural intentions	Inequality Efficacy	Age
Corruption Behavioural Intentions	Pearson's r	-0.043	-0.150	0.008	0.117	0.514	-0.147	-0.420	0.468	-0.376	—				
	p-value	0.609	0.069	0.924	0.157	< .001	0.075	< .001	< .001	< .001	—				
Corruption Efficacy	Pearson's r	0.041	0.115	-0.187	0.095	-0.267	0.174	0.156	-0.245	0.267	0.060	—			
	p-value	0.619	0.165	0.024	0.253	0.003	0.035	0.059	0.003	0.001	0.472	—			
Corruption Efficacy	Pearson's r	0.116	-0.135	-0.088	0.282	0.357	-0.086	-0.199	0.224	-0.081	0.607	0.219	—		
	p-value	0.161	0.102	0.287	< .001	< .001	0.298	0.016	0.006	0.327	< .001	0.008	—		
Inequality Efficacy	Pearson's r	-0.075	0.144	-0.194	0.124	-0.442	0.315	0.371	-0.422	0.207	0.004	0.744	0.117	—	
	p-value	0.367	0.081	0.019	0.135	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.012	0.964	< .001	0.159	—	

Correlation Matrix Study 4a

		Gender	Level of Education	Political Orientation	Occupation	Corruption Check	Inequality Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Corruption Behavioural Intentions	Corruption Efficacy	Inequality behavioural intentions	Inequality Efficacy	Age
Age	Pearson's r	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	—
	p-value	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	—

Correlation Matrix Study 4b

		Age	Gender	Level of Education	Political Orientation	Inequality Check	Corrption Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Corruption Behavioural Intentions	Corruption Efficacy	Inequality Behavioural Intentions	Inequality Efficacy
Age	Pearson's r	—												
	p-value	—												
Gender	Pearson's r	0.109	—											
	p-value	0.255	—											
Level of Education	Pearson's r	-0.310	-0.184	—										
	p-value	< .001	0.054	—										
Political Orientation	Pearson's r	0.087	-0.100	0.113	—									
	p-value	0.364	0.296	0.238	—									
Inequality Check	Pearson's r	-0.074	-0.018	-0.026	0.191	—								
	p-value	0.506	0.870	0.817	0.085	—								

Correlation Matrix Study 4b

		Age	Gender	Level of Education	Political Orientation	Inequality Check	Corruption Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Corruption Behavioural Intentions	Corruption Efficacy	Inequality Behavioural Intentions	Inequality Efficacy
Corruption Inferences	Pearson's r	0.136	0.078	-0.143	0.077	-0.439	—							
	p-value	0.154	0.413	0.135	0.422	< .001	—							
Society Appreciation	Pearson's r	0.021	0.030	-0.044	-0.007	0.692	-0.468	—						
	p-value	0.825	0.754	0.649	0.944	< .001	< .001	—						
Anger	Pearson's r	-0.013	-0.030	-0.017	-0.153	-0.655	0.447	-0.687	—					
	p-value	0.892	0.752	0.863	0.109	< .001	< .001	< .001	—					
Hope	Pearson's r	-0.042	-0.036	-0.045	-0.091	0.372	-0.368	0.420	-0.221	—				
	p-value	0.664	0.710	0.636	0.341	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.020	—				
Corruption behavioural Intentions	Pearson's r	0.117	0.240	-0.078	0.039	-0.124	0.144	0.015	-0.046	-0.138	—			

Correlation Matrix Study 4b

		Age	Gender	Level of Education	Political Orientation	Inequality Check	Corruption Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Corruption Behavioural Intentions	Corruption Efficacy	Inequality Behavioural Intentions	Inequality Efficacy
	p-value	0.223	0.011	0.413	0.685	0.266	0.131	0.875	0.632	0.150	—			
Corruption Efficacy	Pearson's r	-0.006	0.135	-0.116	-0.141	-0.186	0.051	-0.067	0.119	0.112	0.281	—		
	p-value	0.950	0.156	0.226	0.140	0.094	0.592	0.482	0.213	0.244	0.003	—		
Inequality Behavioural Intentions	Pearson's r	-0.237	-0.003	0.075	0.020	-0.540	0.215	-0.519	0.516	-0.280	0.281	0.114	—	
	p-value	0.012	0.971	0.436	0.832	< .001	0.024	< .001	< .001	0.003	0.003	0.232	—	
Inequality Efficacy	Pearson's r	-0.077	0.159	-0.113	-0.144	-0.175	0.008	-0.099	0.083	0.045	0.217	0.911	0.150	—
	p-value	0.419	0.095	0.239	0.132	0.116	0.938	0.299	0.386	0.637	0.022	< .001	0.116	—

Correlation Matrix Study 5a

		Corruption_Check	Inequality Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Corruption_Behavioral_Intentions	Perceived_Efficacy_Corruption	Inequality_Behavioural_Intentions	Perceived_Efficacy_Inequality	Age	Gender	Level of Education
Corruption_Check	Pearson's r	—											
	p-value	—											
Inequality Inferences	Pearson's r	-0.742	—										
	p-value	< .001	—										
Society Appreciation	Pearson's r	-0.832	0.821	—									
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—									
Anger	Pearson's r	0.684	-0.595	-0.697	—								
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—								

Correlation Matrix Study 5a

		Corruption_Check	Inequality Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Corruption_Behavioral_Intentions	Perceived_Efficacy_Corruption	Inequality_Behavioural_Intentions	Perceived_Efficacy_Inequality	Age	Gender	Level of Education
Hope	Pearson's r	-0.595	0.657	0.737	-0.465	—							
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—							
Corruption_Behavioral_Intentions	Pearson's r	0.153	-0.137	-0.134	0.155	-0.125	—						
	p-value	0.093	0.135	0.144	0.089	0.173	—						
Perceived_Efficacy_Corruption	Pearson's r	-0.108	0.155	0.123	0.042	0.139	0.571	—					
	p-value	0.239	0.090	0.178	0.644	0.129	< .001	—					
Inequality_Behavioural_Intentions	Pearson's r	0.188	-0.150	-0.149	0.199	-0.072	0.852	0.562	—				
	p-value	0.039	0.101	0.102	0.029	0.436	< .001	< .001	—				
Perceived_Efficacy_Inequality	Pearson's r	0.056	0.040	0.020	0.150	0.070	0.567	0.781	0.690	—			

Correlation Matrix Study 5a

		Corruption_Check	Inequality Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Corruption_Behavioral_Intentions	Perceived_Efficacy_Corruption	Inequality_Behavioural_Intentions	Perceived_Efficacy_Inequality	Age	Gender	Level of Education
	p-value	0.542	0.663	0.827	0.100	0.447	< .001	< .001	< .001	—			
Age	Pearson's r	-0.168	0.074	0.082	-0.016	0.090	0.147	0.196	0.129	0.099	—		
	p-value	0.066	0.418	0.370	0.863	0.329	0.108	0.031	0.159	0.279	—		
Gender	Pearson's r	0.032	0.009	-0.048	0.003	-0.032	0.049	0.013	0.065	0.090	0.091	—	
	p-value	0.725	0.919	0.601	0.977	0.731	0.591	0.883	0.479	0.328	0.322	—	
Level of Education	Pearson's r	-0.012	-0.006	0.005	-0.133	0.080	-0.144	-0.288	-0.146	-0.205	0.004	-0.118	—
	p-value	0.894	0.946	0.956	0.147	0.381	0.115	0.001	0.111	0.024	0.966	0.199	—

Correlation Matrix Study 5b

		Inequality_Check	Corruption Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Inequality_Behavioural Intentions	Efficacy_Inequality	Corruption_Behavioural_Intentions	Efficacy_Corruption	Age	Gender	Level of Education
Inequality_Check	Pearson's r	—											
	p-value	—											
Corruption Inferences	Pearson's r	-0.571	—										
	p-value	< .001	—										
Society Appreciation	Pearson's r	0.672	-0.680	—									
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—									
Anger	Pearson's r	-0.342	0.534	-0.509	—								
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—								
Hope	Pearson's r	0.467	-0.514	0.614	-0.279	—							
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.002	—							

Correlation Matrix Study 5b

		Inequality_Check	Corruption Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Inequality_Behavioural Intentions	Efficacy_Inequality	Corruption_Behavioural_Intentions	Efficacy_Corruption	Age	Gender	Level of Education
Inequality_Behavioural Intentions	Pearson's r	-0.275	0.323	-0.334	0.337	-0.205	—						
	p-value	0.002	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.021	—						
Efficacy_Inequality	Pearson's r	0.036	0.052	-0.051	0.059	0.140	0.409	—					
	p-value	0.687	0.560	0.574	0.508	0.119	< .001	—					
Corruption_Behavioural_Intentions	Pearson's r	-0.188	0.265	-0.247	0.261	-0.102	0.854	0.434	—				
	p-value	0.035	0.003	0.005	0.003	0.256	< .001	< .001	—				
Efficacy_Corruption	Pearson's r	0.044	0.053	-0.041	0.053	0.178	0.261	0.775	0.484	—			
	p-value	0.621	0.559	0.645	0.554	0.046	0.003	< .001	< .001	—			
Age	Pearson's r	-0.083	-0.082	0.098	-0.263	0.124	-0.188	-0.030	-0.091	-0.006	—		
	p-value	0.353	0.362	0.276	0.003	0.166	0.035	0.742	0.309	0.946	—		
Gender	Pearson's r	0.038	0.032	-0.079	0.161	0.089	0.095	0.214	0.049	0.163	0.034	—	

Correlation Matrix Study 5b

		Inequality_Check	Corruption Inferences	Society Appreciation	Anger	Hope	Inequality_Behavioural Intentions	Efficacy_Inequality	Corruption_Behavioural_Intentions	Efficacy_Corruption	Age	Gender	Level of Education
	p-value	0.674	0.722	0.381	0.072	0.321	0.290	0.016	0.583	0.067	0.709	—	
Level of Education	Pearson's r	0.157	-0.090	0.059	-0.023	0.074	-0.078	-0.119	-0.093	-0.141	-0.054	-0.074	—
	p-value	0.078	0.314	0.511	0.801	0.413	0.385	0.184	0.298	0.114	0.550	0.409	—

Correlation Matrix Study 6

		Corruption Saliency	Inequality Saliency	Anger Inequality	Hope Inequality	Resignation Inequality	Anger Corruption	Hope Corruption	Resignation Corruption	Inequality Funds	Corruption Funds	Age_	Political Orientation	Gender
Corruption Saliency	Pearson's r	—												
	p-value	—												
Inequality Saliency	Pearson's r	0.261	—											
	p-value	< .001	—											
Anger Inequality	Pearson's r	0.253	0.522	—										
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—										
Hope Inequality	Pearson's r	-0.096	-0.220	-0.118	—									
	p-value	0.187	0.002	0.106	—									
Resignation Inequality	Pearson's r	0.037	0.064	0.105	-0.172	—								
	p-value	0.614	0.382	0.150	0.018	—								
Anger Corruption	Pearson's r	0.495	0.272	0.412	-0.010	0.142	—							
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.892	0.051	—							
Hope Corruption	Pearson's r	-0.134	-0.168	-0.072	0.578	-0.155	-0.129	—						
	p-value	0.066	0.020	0.324	< .001	0.032	0.077	—						
Resignation Corruption	Pearson's r	0.071	-0.062	0.054	-0.005	0.598	0.094	-0.091	—					
	p-value	0.329	0.396	0.461	0.942	< .001	0.196	0.214	—					

Correlation Matrix Study 6

		Corruption Saliency	Inequality Saliency	Anger Inequality	Hope Inequality	Resignation Inequality	Anger Corruption	Hope Corruption	Resignation Corruption	Inequality Funds	Corruption Funds	Age_	Political Orientation	Gender
Inequality Funds	Pearson's r	-0.224	0.213	0.104	-0.007	-0.015	-0.100	0.071	-0.042	—				
	p-value	0.002	0.003	0.155	0.918	0.838	0.170	0.329	0.567	—				
Corruption Funds	Pearson's r	0.224	-0.213	-0.104	0.007	0.015	0.100	-0.071	0.042	-1.000	—			
	p-value	0.002	0.003	0.155	0.918	0.838	0.170	0.329	0.567	< .001	—			
Age	Pearson's r	0.105	0.036	-0.082	-0.022	-0.150	0.029	-0.049	-0.249	-0.126	0.126	—		
	p-value	0.149	0.619	0.261	0.763	0.039	0.690	0.501	< .001	0.083	0.083	—		
Political Orientation	Pearson's r	-0.086	-0.277	-0.328	0.044	-0.017	-0.172	0.011	0.038	-0.180	0.180	0.211	—	
	p-value	0.238	< .001	< .001	0.544	0.811	0.017	0.885	0.607	0.013	0.013	0.003	—	
Gender	Pearson's r	-0.007	0.218	0.216	-0.053	-0.037	0.124	-0.012	-0.121	0.135	-0.135	-0.145	-0.242	—
	p-value	0.919	0.003	0.003	0.467	0.609	0.088	0.869	0.096	0.064	0.064	0.045	< .001	—
Level of Education	Pearson's r	-0.119	0.076	-0.006	0.075	0.007	0.092	0.037	-0.091	0.078	-0.078	0.133	-0.108	0.208	—
	p-value	0.101	0.296	0.934	0.304	0.921	0.207	0.614	0.209	0.286	0.286	0.066	0.136	0.004	—
Occupation	Pearson's r	-0.019	0.027	0.001	-0.184	0.009	0.036	-0.168	0.026	-0.133	0.133	0.513	0.188	-0.097	0.175	—
	p-value	0.793	0.714	0.991	0.011	0.901	0.622	0.021	0.720	0.068	0.068	< .001	0.009	0.182	0.016	—

Correlation Matrix Study 7

		Corruption Saliency	Inequality Saliency	Inequality Anger	Inequality Hope	Inequality Resignation	Corruption Anger	Corruption Hope	Corruption Resignation	Inequality Funds	Corruption Funds	Age	Gender	Level of Education
Corruption Saliency	Pearson's r	—												
	p-value	—												
Inequality Saliency	Pearson's r	0.582	—											
	p-value	< .001	—											
Inequality Anger	Pearson's r	0.274	0.414	—										
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—										
Inequality Hope	Pearson's r	0.021	-0.119	-0.138	—									
	p-value	0.682	0.019	0.006	—									
Inequality Resignation	Pearson's r	-0.007	0.019	0.063	-0.237	—								
	p-value	0.886	0.714	0.215	< .001	—								

		Corruption Saliency	Inequality Saliency	Inequality Anger	Inequality Hope	Inequality Resignation	Corruption Anger	Corruption Hope	Corruption Resignation	Inequality Funds	Corruption Funds	Age	Gender	Level of Education
Corruption Anger	Pearson's r	0.337	0.326	0.623	-0.055	-0.000	—							
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	0.281	0.996	—							
Corruption Hope	Pearson's r	-0.034	-0.094	-0.098	0.542	-0.025	-0.224	—						
	p-value	0.501	0.064	0.052	< .001	0.616	< .001	—						
Corruption Resignation	Pearson's r	-0.007	-0.008	0.038	-0.009	0.606	0.038	-0.070	—					
	p-value	0.889	0.879	0.459	0.858	< .001	0.458	0.165	—					
Inequality Funds	Pearson's r	-0.038	0.119	0.185	-0.058	-0.008	0.036	-0.007	-0.071	—				
	p-value	0.452	0.018	< .001	0.253	0.879	0.478	0.889	0.161	—				
Corruption Funds	Pearson's r	0.038	-0.119	-0.185	0.058	0.008	-0.036	0.007	0.071	-1.000	—			
	p-value	0.452	0.018	< .001	0.253	0.879	0.478	0.889	0.161	< .001	—			
Age	Pearson's r	0.059	-0.014	-0.148	0.099	-0.097	0.057	0.001	-0.044	-0.153	0.153	—		

Correlation Matrix Study 7

		Corruption Saliency	Inequality Saliency	Inequality Anger	Inequality Hope	Inequality Resignation	Corruption Anger	Corruption Hope	Corruption Resignation	Inequality Funds	Corruption Funds	Age	Gender	Level of Education
	p-value	0.243	0.785	0.003	0.051	0.056	0.265	0.988	0.391	0.002	0.002	—		
Gender	Pearson's r	0.129	0.070	0.069	-0.015	0.029	0.072	-0.017	-0.050	0.118	-0.118	0.100	—	
	p-value	0.011	0.170	0.172	0.771	0.567	0.157	0.735	0.324	0.020	0.020	0.049	—	
Level of Education	Pearson's r	0.095	0.130	0.102	-0.035	-0.049	0.064	0.002	-0.038	0.001	-0.001	-0.203	-0.027	—
	p-value	0.060	0.010	0.044	0.495	0.335	0.206	0.971	0.450	0.981	0.981	< .001	0.597	—

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