SES, Inequality and Me:
The Effects of Subjective Socioeconomic Status and
Perceived Economic Inequality on Self-Centeredness

by

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B.A., The University of British Columbia, 2016
M.A., The University of British Columbia, 2018

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES
(Psychology)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)
August 2023

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SES, Inequality, and Me: The Effects of Subjective Socioeconomic Status and Perceived Economic Inequality on Self-Centeredness

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Abstract

Economic inequality is on the rise in much of the world and has been associated with increased anxiety about one’s position in the social hierarchy (i.e., socioeconomic status; SES) and downstream consequences such as increased competitiveness and antisocial behaviour, decreased trust and well-being and other social ills. High socioeconomic status is characterized by a greater access to valued resources and leads to a heightened sense of power which has also been associated with downstream consequences such as increased unethical behaviour and dominance and decreased empathic accuracy. In this thesis, I aimed to replicate the previously found associations between SES and unethical behaviour, dominance, and empathic accuracy and I extended the research on economic inequality by exploring the relationship between inequality and the same outcome variables. I further built on previous research by bringing these two economic factors, inequality and SES, together and exploring their interactive effects. To the extent that the effects of SES on different outcome variables are mediated through a heightened sense of power caused by a greater access to valued resources by high SES individuals, this sense of power should be increased under conditions of higher economic inequality where the distance between people of high and low SES in the amount of resources they have is further exacerbated. While I did not replicate the previously found association between SES and unethical behaviour (Chapter 2), I found a positive association between SES and dominance expectations (Chapter 3) and a negative association between SES and empathic accuracy (Chapter 4). In line with the hypotheses, there was further largely a positive association between perceived inequality and unethical behaviour and dominance and a negative association between perceived inequality and empathic accuracy, and the effects of SES on dominance and empathic
accuracy were most pronounced under conditions of high perceived economic inequality. But there was no interaction between SES and inequality in predicting unethical behaviour. Taken together, these results suggest that the effects of SES may depend on the amount of inequality people perceive. In this thesis, I focused on people’s perceptions of both SES and inequality which I assessed and manipulated.
Lay Summary

Many people believe that the rich are selfish. In this thesis, I further test this assumption and find that people of higher SES are expected to act more dominantly and are worse at recognizing the emotions of other people, but they don’t say they would act more unethically. There is also much concern about increasing levels of wealth and income inequality and their effects on societies. I find that the more inequality that people perceive the more likely they become to expect themselves and others to act unethically and dominantly and the less accurate they become in recognizing the emotions of other people. Furthermore, I find that the effects that SES has on dominance and emotion recognition are most extreme when people perceive high amounts of inequality. This suggests that rich people may not be selfish per se, but rather that their behaviour depends on the economic environment they perceive.
Preface

Chapter 2 is unpublished. A shortened version has been prepared for publication as Schmalor, A., Schroeder, A. K., & Heine, S. J. (2023). Economic inequality makes people expect more everyday unethical behavior. I developed the research question. All authors contributed to the study design. Together with Adrian Schroeder, I collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data. I drafted the manuscript. Steve Heine and Adrian Schroeder provided critical revisions to the manuscript.

Chapter 3 is unpublished. It is currently being prepared for publication as Schmalor, A., Mercadante, E., Tracy, J. L., & Heine, S. J. (2023). Perceived economic inequality causes people to expect more dominance, especially from people of high SES. I developed the research question. All authors contributed to the study design. I collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data, with input from Eric Mercadante.

A version of Chapter 4 has been published as Schmalor, A., & Heine, S. J. (2023). Subjective economic inequality decreases empathic accuracy, especially for people of high social class. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 13*, 608-617. I developed the research question. Both authors contributed to the study design. I collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data and drafted the manuscript. Steve Heine provided critical revisions to the manuscript.

Part of the Overall Discussion and Conclusion (discussing the role of perceptions of economic inequality; Chapter 5) of this thesis are published as Schmalor, A., & Heine, S. J. (2021). The construct of subjective economic inequality. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 13*, 210-219. I was the primary author developing the theoretical argument with critical input from Steve Heine. The argument has been extensively expanded upon for this dissertation.
All studies have been approved by the Behavioral Research Ethics Board at the University of British Columbia (#H17-03493 and # H17-03592).
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Acknowledgements

This thesis concludes a decade-long chapter of my life that I will forever be grateful for. I have learned so much more than “just” the science of psychology. Many people were part of this journey and deserve my gratitude and thanks.

I would like to express special thanks to my research advisor Dr. Steven Heine. Dr. Heine took me on as a grad student despite my path into grad school not being the most conventional one. He also allowed me the freedom to explore my own interests and develop a new line of research. Dr. Heine’s openness, curiosity, and critique was motivating and helped sharpen my theorizing. Besides his support of my academic journey, Dr. Heine has also supported me personally. Most profoundly, he has wholeheartedly supported the changes that becoming a mother brought about and helped me balance grad school and motherhood in a way that felt right to me. To me, Dr. Heine has become much more than just my advisor; I view him as a mentor I look up to, as someone I love having debates with, and as a friend I care about. And last but not least, he is a great person to make bets with. I still owe him a dinner from the last one. May there be many more bets in the future (that I will win).

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Mark Schaller and Dr. Alan Kingstone. Dr. Schaller’s sharp evolutionary reasoning (which I first encountered during an undergrad evolutionary psychology course) and passion for systematic (and numerical) deriving of hypotheses has always been inspiring to me and I enjoyed the meetings to discuss how to make psychology a better science he organised for grad students and faculty at his house. This thesis directly benefitted from Dr. Schaller’s suggestions to lay out the theorizing for the interaction between SES and inequality in a more logical way. Dr. Kingstone has also been an inspiration to me. He generously allowed me to use his lab and equipment and collaborate on a
project I proposed to him despite it not being the purview of his own research. He was always welcoming, invited me to lab events, checked in with me, and, far beyond what anyone could expect of a random collaboration across different areas within Psychology, he stopped at my home to bring me a bunch of children’s books for my daughter when she was born (some of which are currently very popular with her).

Many other people have been involved in the research presented in this thesis. Adrian Schroeder (now a grad student at the University of Toronto) was involved in the research described in Chapter 2 while working with me as a directed studies student. He is co-author on the manuscript. Dr. Jessica Tracy and fellow graduate student Eric Mercadante have collaborated with Dr. Heine and me on the studies described in Chapter 3. They have provided valuable feedback and suggestions, and Eric has trained the coders and helped with the study design. I have enjoyed the help of many undergraduate research assistants and directed studies and honours students who have volunteered their time. They are too many to name, but the ones that were directly involved in the research that is part of this thesis are Scotia Barry, Megan Chua, Lydia Guengerich, Mali McHugh, Mina Sidhu, Samarth Srivastava, and Ugur Mert Yasar.

Many more people have been involved in the research I conducted over my time at grad school. At UBC, I would like to thank Dr. Azim Shariff, Dr. Kristin Laurin, Dr. Jeremy Biesanz, Dr. Frances Chen, and Dr. Friedrich Goetz all of whom I have worked on different projects with and have learned different aspects about the research process from. I would like to thank Dr. Paul Piff, Dr. Oliver Sng, and Dr. Pia Dietze at the University of California Irvine where I spent a semester. I am grateful for their collaborations, conversations, and for welcoming me with open arms. I consider them all friends. I would also like to thank the members of my lab, the grad students of the Social/Personality Psychology Area, and my graduate student cohort. They have
made this entire experience so much more joyful in many ways. I am also grateful to the staff, in particular Jackie Shaw. They were always helpful and fun to have a random conversation with.

I want to thank my partner and best friend Brent Stewart. I am grateful to continue this journey together and am open to and excited about whatever the next chapter of our lives holds for us. Finally, I want to thank Matilda. She has taught me to be effective with the work time I get. And she has shown me what truly matters in life.

I am thankful for the financial support provided during my PhD program by SSHRC (SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship, #6567), Killam Doctoral Fellowships (Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, #333) and UBC (Four Year Fellowship, #6456).
Chapter 1: Introduction

During the American presidential campaign in 1992, James Carville, then strategist for Bill Clinton’s campaign, quipped to other campaign workers ‘It’s the economy stupid’. Clinton’s campaign was ultimately successful in unseating George H. Bush perhaps, in part, due to Carville’s admonishment. From hikes in interest rates to inflation to trade-agreements, we are accustomed to the effects the economy has on the arc of our lives. In turn, we also realize how these macro-economic trends can have large effects on our psychology. One example is the role economic recessions have on suicide (Oyesanya et al., 2015); such an effect is most likely filtered through many causal pathways - for example, losing one’s job or lifesavings. What is less intuitive, is the direct effect that the economy has on our psychology; so, in this example, it would be the effect of perceiving the recession itself. This thesis attempts to further this area of research. How do economic factors affect people’s ways of thinking?

1.1 Socioeconomic Status and Power

One aspect of the economy has received much attention in psychological research: an individual’s socioeconomic status (SES). SES describes a person’s rank vis-à-vis others based on their income, education, and occupation. In other words, people of higher SES have greater access to valued resources. Having greater access to valued resources enables people to control their own outcomes better and to exert influence over others; that is, it gives people power; or, more specifically, the psychological sense that they are powerful (Dubois et al., 2015). Having more power means that people of high SES can more easily act in self-centered ways to benefit themselves over others. By self-centeredness, I mean the prioritizing of an individual’s attention
on their own needs, rights, and experiences over those of other people (see also Belmi & Laurin, 2016). People of lower SES, on the other hand, have less access to valued resources, and hence, less power to control their own and other peoples’ outcomes. Lacking power in this way, people of lower SES are less able to successfully act in self-centered ways. They remain more dependent on the actions of others. It follows that people of higher SES might be more likely to show self-centered cognitions and behaviours, relative to their lower SES counterparts.

1.2 Socioeconomic Status and Self-Centeredness

A large literature has found that SES is associated with various self-centered correlates (for a review see Piff & Robinson, 2017). For example, people of higher SES tend to feel more entitled (Piff, 2014). In two separate studies, Piff found a positive association between SES and endorsing items of the Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et al., 2004; e.g., “I honestly feel I’m just more deserving than others”). In a third study, he found a positive association between SES and the Me Versus Other Scale – where participants have to choose which depiction of four circles (3 circles depicting other people, and 1 circle depicting oneself; Campbell et al., 2004) best reflects how they view themselves relative to others; while the size of the “other” circles is the same in all 7 pictures, the size of the “self” circle increases – and hence a positive association means that people of higher SES viewed themselves as relatively bigger (i.e., more important) than other people compared to lower SES people. In another study, people of higher SES compared to people of lower SES acted in more self-interested ways in an economic game where they allocated fewer resources to an anonymous player in a different room who had no input in their decision making (Piff et al., 2010). With their increased entitlement, a
person of high SES tends to believe that they have more of a right to claim resources than other people, thus making them more self-centered.

Other research finds that people of high SES are more likely to engage in unethical behaviour. For example, drivers of more expensive cars were more likely to cut off other drivers at an intersection with stop signs on all sides, and a different study showed that drivers of more expensive cars were more likely to cut off pedestrians at a crosswalk (Piff et al., 2012). In another study, participants of higher SES were more likely to say they would engage in various kinds of unethical behaviour, such as taking copying paper home from work (Piff et al., 2012). In yet another study, participants of higher SES were more likely to report a higher sum of 5 separate die rolls on the computer than the actual, pre-determined sum to increase their chance of winning a cash prize that was dependent on the sum being high (Piff et al., 2012). On average, people of higher SES are more independent, have greater control over their lives, have more freedom of choice, and more power to take what they want (Dubois et al., 2015; Kraus et al., 2011; Snibbe & Markus, 2005; Stephens et al., 2007). Therefore, it seems they may become more self-centered and hence willing to engage in unethical behaviour without regard to its effect on others. When engaging in unethical behaviour, the immediate needs of the individual are prioritized over those of the victim. People of lower SES, on the other hand, depend more on others and have less control (Argyle, 1994; Domhoff, 1998) and may therefore be more attuned to how their behaviour affects others. In line with this reasoning, Dubois and colleagues (2015) found that a sense of power mediated the relationship between SES and unethical behaviour. While there is compelling evidence for the relationship between SES and unethical behaviour, there is also research showing no correlation or even a negative association between SES and unethical behaviour. For example, 2 high-powered pre-registered replications testing the
association between car model and cutting off other drivers (Study 1) or cutting off pedestrians (Study 2) failed to find the positive correlation originally found by Piff and colleagues (Piff et al., 2012; Jung et al., 2023). And another study found across 30 countries that people of high SES were more likely to donate money to charities and to donate a larger proportion of their income (Korndörfer et al., 2015; see also Gittell & Tebaldi, 2006; Hughes & Luksetich, 2008; James & Sharpe, 2007). What explains these different findings? The jury is still out on this, but it is likely that the relationship between SES and unethical behaviour is multifaceted and context dependent. For example, one study showed that people of higher SES are more prosocial when their prosocial behaviour occurs in public, while people of lower SES are more prosocial when it occurs in private (Kraus & Callagahn, 2016). And another set of studies found that people of lower SES were more likely to engage in unethical behaviours if they benefitted another person while people of higher SES were more likely to engage in unethical behaviours when it benefitted themselves (Dubois et al., 2015). In addition, unethical behaviours among people of higher SES were driven by their feelings of power, but not by their feelings of status. Besides the need to further explore the exact mechanisms underlying the relationship between SES and unethical behaviour (or lack thereof), the conflicting findings beg more replication efforts to be able to draw firmer conclusions.

People of higher SES are also more likely to use dominant tactics (i.e., being aggressive and intimidating) to get their way (Belmi and Laurin, 2016). For example, in one study, MBA students from lower social class backgrounds were less likely to choose an elective course teaching how to acquire power through dominant tactics. In another study, participants of higher social class were more interested to seek power in an imaginary organization if they had to do so by means of dominance than their lower-class counterparts. In two other studies, participants of
higher social class indicated that they were more interested in using dominant tactics to achieve power in their workplace than participants of lower social class (Belmi and Laurin, 2016). The same paper also found that the relative lack of interest in seeking power through dominant tactics by people of lower SES, may in part be explained by their stronger focus on other people and their lesser focus on themselves compared to people of higher SES. Being willing to use dominant tactics to get ahead puts one’s goals ahead of those of the group, and hence is another form in which people of higher SES may exhibit greater self-centeredness.

People of higher SES are also worse at correctly inferring the emotions of other people (i.e., they have lower empathic accuracy; Dietze & Knowles, 2016, 2020; Kraus et al., 2010). For example, people of higher social class were less accurate in identifying the emotions of other people in photographs, and to correctly identify the emotions of an interaction partner in a lab task than their lower social class counterparts (Dietze & Knowles, 2020; Kraus et al., 2010). In another study, participants walked down a street while wearing an electronic device that recorded their visual field. Participants of higher SES were less likely to look at other people than people of lower SES (Dietze & Knowles, 2016). In two other studies described in the same paper, people of higher SES spent less time looking at people in pictures on the computer screen in the lab than people of lower SES, but there was no difference in time spent looking at other objects. Finally, in another study people of higher social class took significantly longer to detect changes in faces that were shown on a computer screen than did their lower SES counterparts; but there was no difference in detecting changes in objects (Dietze & Knowles, 2016). Correctly inferring the emotions of another and paying attention to others requires one to temporarily decrease one’s self-centered focus of one’s own experience. Thus, the relatively worse performance of people of higher social class suggests heightened self-centeredness. As Dietze and Knowles (2016) point
out, the latter study suggests that this visual attention to stimuli occurs outside people’s voluntary control and may reflect their (subconscious) appraisal of other people being motivationally relevant. Because people of higher SES have more control over their lives, they don’t need to focus as much on others and may therefore be less motivated to do so. Despite there being much research supporting the negative correlation between SES and empathic accuracy, there is also some evidence suggesting that there may be no or even a positive correlation (Deveney et al., 2018; see also Hall et al., 2015) in large (and more diverse) online samples using different operationalizations of empathic accuracy (but see Dietze & Knowles, 2020 for a critic of this research). Again, this shows the importance of further replicating the original results (something I aim to do as part of this thesis).

   Last, one other relevant correlate of SES is that people of higher SES have been found to have a more independent self-construal (i.e., the self is less intertwined with close relationships; Stephens et al., 2014) than are their lower SES counterparts. More independent self-construals suggest a greater amount of self-centeredness at a basic cognitive level.

   To summarize, much past research has found that social class shapes people’s thoughts, emotions, and behaviours (e.g., Fiske & Markus, 2012; Kraus et al., 2012; Piff et al., 2010; Stephens et al., 2012). Having greater access to resources gives people of higher SES more power (e.g., Dubois et al., 2015). They have more freedom of choice and control over their lives and are less in need of relying on others. This all paints a psychological profile of relatively high levels of self-centeredness: people of higher SES feel more entitled to take what they want, engage in unethical behaviour, act in dominant ways, pay less attention to the emotions of others, and have a more independent self-construal (e.g., Belmi & Laurin, 2016; Dietze & Knowles,
As part of this thesis, I seek to replicate the findings of the effect of high SES on unethical behaviour, dominance, and empathic accuracy. I chose to focus on everyday unethical behaviour, dominance, and empathic accuracy because past research shows a correlation between SES and these outcomes (e.g., Belmi and Laurin, 2016; Dietze & Knowles, 2016, 2020; Kraus et al., 2010; Piff, 2013; Piff et al., 2012), and for unethical behaviour and empathic accuracy there are also inconsistent findings which warrant further replication (see for example, Deveney et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2015; Jung et al., 2023).

In this thesis, I refer to these cognitions and behaviours (i.e., an expectation of increased unethical behaviour, of increased dominant behaviour, and a decrease in empathic accuracy) as indicators of self-centeredness. Describing them as aspects of self-centeredness is in no way an attempt to provide a theoretical framework but rather a way to organize different findings in the literature showing that SES (and/or inequality) are associated with some people becoming in some way more self-centered and less focused on others.

1.3 Definition of Socioeconomic Status

A final question remains: What do I mean by SES? SES is a multifaceted construct (e.g., Trautman et al., 2013). It can be measured as income (e.g., Duncan & Petersen, 2001), education (e.g., Stephens et al., 2007), occupational prestige (e.g., Nakao & Treas, 1994), and as one’s own perceived socioeconomic standing (which is most often done by asking participants to place themselves on a rung of a ladder where a higher rung represents relatively more income, education, and occupational prestige compared to other people in the same society; e.g., Adler et
al., 2000; Piff et al., 2012). In addition, people can also indicate which social class (from “poor” to “upper class”) they belong to (Dietze & Knowles, 2016; Jackman & Jackman, 1983). As Dietze and Knowles (2016) point out, social class, assessed in this way, represents a group-based categorization, and captures the distinct group-culture people belong to. In this thesis, I use the terms SES and social class interchangeably.

Furthermore, inherent in the definition of SES (one’s relative rank in society with respect to one’s income/wealth, education, and occupational prestige), are two distinct components: status and power (Dubois et al., 2015). While status is defined as being respected by others, power is defined as having control over others (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). The relationship between SES and self-centeredness found in the extant literature has been explained by having a greater access to valued resources, and hence power, by people of higher SES. The measures (or manipulations) I use to assess SES all imply (although don’t focus explicitly on) an asymmetry in power between people of low and high SES.

1.4 Economic Inequality and Status Anxiety

A second economic factor that has received much attention by psychologists is economic inequality. While SES describes people’s relative position within a population, economic inequality, describes the dispersion of resources (e.g., wealth and income) within a population. The greater the amount of inequality, the more that resources are concentrated among a small proportion of the population. Thus, each person can be assigned their own SES, while the amount of inequality present describes an entire population (e.g., a country, state, or city).

With increasing levels of inequality, one’s relative position in society becomes more consequential. Suppose a society has perfect equality – each person holds the same amount of
wealth, and there is in effect no status difference (if status were defined solely by the amount of wealth one holds). On the other hand, perfect inequality would mean that one person holds all the wealth while everyone else has no wealth at all. In reality, all societies fall somewhere in between these extremes, but the extent to which resources like income and wealth are distributed (unequally) varies wildly. For example, in Canada the top quintile holds about 67% of all the wealth (Statistics Canada, 2022), while in the US the top quintile holds more than 80% of all the wealth (Norton & Ariely, 2011).

The amount of inequality in a society affects peoples’ psychology in profound ways (e.g., Daly, 2016; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Everything else being equal, the higher the amount of inequality, the more consequential is one’s relative position within society. In more unequal societies it is more costly to be of low SES and/or to fall in the status hierarchy. Likewise, as inequality rises, it becomes more beneficial to be of high SES and/or to rise in the status hierarchy. For example, suppose the bottom quintile of society holds 1% of the total wealth whereas the top quintile holds 80% of the total wealth. When comparing this to a society where the bottom quintile of society holds 15% of the total wealth whereas the top quintile holds 60%, we can see that one’s relative position has a greater impact on one’s access to power and resources in the more unequal society, holding all else constant. In the unequal society, people at the bottom have even fewer resources while those at the top have even more resources and thus control over their lives. Since status directly affects one’s access to resources, it seems plausible that people care more about their own status when resource acquisition becomes more important or consequential, which should occur when economic inequality is higher. In other words, when inequality is higher, people (regardless of their relative position) should be more occupied about their status and have greater status anxiety (e.g., Frank 2011; Marmot 2004; Wilkinson, 2005;
Wilkinson, 2010; Wilkinson & Pickett 2010). This means that people should be more attuned to and aware of their own position relative to others, as well as to any markers of status, such as material goods (e.g., Frank, 2007; Wilkinson, 2005; Wilkinson, & Pickett, 2010, 2019).

There is much research supporting this link between inequality and status anxiety (although see Goldthorpe, 2010; Lynch et al., 2000 for a criticism of this research). For example, Layte and Whelan (2014) correlated an objective measure of inequality with a question about status anxiety (“Some people look down on me because of my job situation or income”) from the European Quality of Life Survey. Countries with higher levels of income inequality had higher levels of status anxiety at each level of income relative to higher inequality countries. Another study found that status anxiety (operationalized by the same question as above plus another question, “I don’t feel the value of what I do is recognized by others”) was higher in countries with more economic inequality (Delhey & Dragolov, 2014; but see Paskov et al., 2013 for a negative relationship between economic inequality and status seeking). Income inequality was also associated with higher levels of status anxiety, and status anxiety increased among all income groups as inequality increased. Thus, both the poor and the rich feel more anxious about their status in unequal societies. Another study found that people living in US states with more income inequality more often used Google search terms that referred to status goods (e.g., “fur vests”), but there was no difference in searching for terms that were unrelated to status (e.g., “chick flicks”; Walasek, 2016). In my own research, I have found previously across six different countries, that people who perceive more inequality in their country and/or their state of residence also reported feeling more status anxiety using the same measure of status anxiety that Delhey and Dragolov (2014) used in their research (Schmalor & Heine, 2022).
1.5 Economic Inequality and Self-Centeredness

The increased status anxiety that is caused by higher economic inequality, should also make people more self-centered (for a review see Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Because people’s relative position in society is more consequential, they should become more preoccupied with their own advancement and/or avoiding falling behind and, as a result, engage in various behaviours and cognitions that show an increased valuation of the self over others (e.g., Frank, 2007). For example, high inequality tends to lead to more competition (e.g., Krupp & Cook, 2018). In one study that employed an economic game, participants had to choose between a hawk or dove strategy and the strategies that they and their partner chose determined their payoff. If one player chose the hawk strategy (competition) and the other the dove (cooperation), the hawk strategist would maximize their payoff while the hawk player would receive no payoff. In contrast, if both players chose the dove strategy (cooperation), they would share the payoff equally, and if both chose the hawk strategy (competition), their payoff would be negative. Participants acted most competitively (by more often opting to choose the hawk strategy) when inequality (the difference in payoff between the different strategies) was high and was between players rather than between groups (Krupp & Cook, 2018; see also Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Similarly, when inequality is high, people also come to see competitive and individualistic behaviour as more normative and likely to occur (Pierce et al., 2013; Sommet et al., 2019; Sánchez- Rodríguez et al., 2019). Increased competitiveness can be conceptualized as an increase in self-centeredness as people become more willing to choose strategies to maximize their own payoff at the cost of others.

Higher economic inequality is also associated with an increased likelihood of students cheating (Neville, 2012). For example, students in more unequal US states were more likely to
use Google search terms that imply some kind of unethical behaviour such as downloading or paying for term papers on the same topic previously completed by other students. Higher inequality has also been linked to an increased acceptability of unethical behaviours such as not paying one’s taxes or using office supplies for oneself; To et al., 2022). Being willing to act more unethically also presupposes an increased valuation of one’s self over other people and hence reflects higher levels of self-centeredness. In addition, people living in US states with higher levels of economic inequality show less agreeableness even after controlling for various potential confounding variables (de Vries et al., 2011). Less agreeableness implies more antagonistic and less cooperative behaviour, and thus also indicates greater self-centeredness. Finally, people who perceived more inequality also showed a more independent self-construal and people who imagined living in a more unequal (as opposed to equal) society remembered a higher percentage of independent and a lower percentage of interdependent events (Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2017). These results suggest that there is an increased focus on the self and that this increased self-focus occurs even at a basic cognitive level. In sum, a variety of sources of evidence supports the notion that economic inequality is associated with more self-centeredness, and a second aim of this thesis is to further test this association. Specifically, I will focus on the association between economic inequality and expectations of everyday unethical behaviour and dominance, and performance on an empathic accuracy task (i.e., the same variables as for SES).

Why would inequality be associated with these variables? Heightened inequality creates status anxiety in people, or a preoccupation with their relative standing in society; people become more concerned about rising and preventing to fall in the status hierarchy, and they become more competitive (Delhey & Dragolov, 2014; Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Sommet et al., 2018; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). They may therefore also become more willing to use
unethical means to get ahead (e.g., Neville et al., 2012, To et al., 2022). While there is some
evidence that inequality is associated with unethical behaviour, to my knowledge, there is no
evidence yet that inequality is associated with increased expectations of unethical behaviour and
dominance or with worse performance of empathic accuracy. If more unethical behaviour
becomes more attractive and is also seen as more normative (To et al., 2022), it seems plausible
that people also come to expect more unethical behaviours (both of other people and of
themselves).

Similarly, a dominance strategy, which is characterized by a willingness to use force and
intimidation to get one’s way, might become more likely under conditions of heightened status
anxiety and competition. When inequality is high people’s relative position holds more
consequences, which may lead people to become more desperate and willing to attempt to
control others. In support of this hypothesis, Pierce & White (2006) found in a group task where
the resources participants had to compete over were either clustered (i.e., high in inequality or
easy to monopolize by one player) or dispersed (i.e., low in inequality or difficult to
monopolize), that people became more dominant in the high inequality condition. An increased
likelihood to use a dominance strategy reflects an increased willingness to try to get ahead at the
cost of others, and hence, another form of self-centeredness. If people are more willing to use a
dominance strategy, they may also come to expect others and themselves to act more dominantly
under conditions of high inequality.

Finally, because high inequality creates an ecology that fosters a more competitive
mindset where people become more self-centered and less focused on others, it seems also
possible that they are less motivated to attend to the emotions of other people, and hence perform
worse at an empathic accuracy task.
As described above, I refer to an increased expectation of unethical behaviour and dominance, and decreased empathic accuracy as self-centeredness to organize these different constructs rather than to provide an overarching theoretical framework. In sum, I look at the same three outcome variables and how both SES and inequality are associated with them. While the effects of high SES may affect only a certain segment of a population, I hypothesize that inequality increases the self-centeredness of a society as a whole.

1.6 The interactive effects of SES and economic inequality on self-centeredness

While research on SES and economic inequality has proceeded, for the most part, completely separate from each other, these two factors are actually deeply conceptually related. This is true despite the fact that they reside at different levels of description. SES is an individual-level factor that describes a person’s relative position within a hierarchy, whereas economic inequality is a population-level factor that describes the dispersion of resources across a hierarchy. Thus, each person has their own level of SES, whereas each society has its own level of inequality. At the same time, though, SES and inequality are conceptually interrelated: differences in SES cannot exist without some level of inequality, and the existence of inequality presupposes different levels of SES. In other words, if differences in SES exist in a society, then it must have some amount of inequality. In this sense, both SES and inequality are distinct economic factors that, at the same time, mutually necessitate each other.

Thus, the amount of inequality that exists in a society has implications for people’s SES: When inequality is higher, people of higher SES have an even greater access to resources, and thus, have even more power, than they do when inequality is lower. To illustrate this with an example, take the change in inequality in the US from 1989 to 2019. In 1989, people in the top
half of SES controlled 96% of total U.S. wealth, and people in the bottom half controlled 4%; in 2019—after three decades of increasing economic inequality—those numbers were 98% and 2%, respectively (Congressional Budget Office, 2022). This 2% increase of total wealth for the top half represents a SES by inequality interaction on access to valued resources, and hence, an interaction of relative power. Thus, if being of high SES leads to an increase in self-centered cognitions and behaviours (compared to being of low SES) and this increase is driven by a heightened sense of power, then it should be exacerbated under conditions of high as opposed to low inequality.

To illustrate this point in a different form, imagine two societies that are identical in every respect, except that one society is more unequal than the other. Figure 1 shows two ladders. The rungs of the ladder represent people’s SES within their society and the distance between the rungs represents the amount of economic inequality in that society. Society B shows a society where the rungs are stretched farther apart than the rungs of Society A; people at the bottom of Society B have even fewer resources (and hence, power) than people at the bottom of Society A, whereas people at the top have even more resources (and hence, power) than people at the top of Society A. Comparing these two societies, the hypothesis would predict that (I) high SES individuals within each society show more self-centeredness than low SES individuals (i.e., the unique effect of SES on self-centeredness), that (II) people in Society B, are, on average, more self-centered than in Society A (i.e., the unique effect of inequality on self-centeredness), and (III) that the high SES individuals of Society B are more self-centered than the high SES individuals of Society A (i.e., the interactive effects of SES and inequality on self-centeredness). Because people at the top of Society B have more resources than people at the top of Society A, they have more power. And so, to the extent that having more power causes more self-
centeredness, we should expect more self-centeredness from people of high SES in Society B than in Society A.

![Figure 1](image.png)  

Figure 1 Ladders representing two societies with the same amount of overall wealth ($M=0$ SD), but different amounts of inequality (Society A: $SD=0.47$ SD; Society B: $SD=1.41$).

Thus, in addition to testing the unique effects of both SES and inequality, in this thesis, I will also test the interaction between SES and inequality in predicting expectations of unethical behaviour and dominance and in predicting changes in empathic accuracy. Specifically, I hypothesize that people who perceive themselves or others as high SES expect increased unethical and dominant behaviour and show decreased empathic accuracy when they perceive inequality to be high as opposed to low. If people expect others and themselves to act more unethically when they are of high as opposed to low SES, and they do so because people of high SES have more power to get away with taking what they want for themselves, then, we should observe an interaction such that people of higher SES should be expected to act even more
unethically when they live in a society that has a lot of inequality. Similarly, if people expect others and themselves to act more dominantly when they are of high as opposed to low SES, and they do so because people of high SES have more power to get away with intimidating and coercing others, then we should observe an interaction such that people of higher SES should be expected to act even more dominantly when they live in a society that has a lot of inequality. And finally, if people of higher SES show less empathic accuracy than people of lower SES, and they do so because they need to rely less on others and are hence less motivated to pay attention to them (e.g., Dietze & Knowles, 2016; Kraus et al., 2010), then they should be even less motivated to pay attention to others, and thus show even less empathic accuracy in a context of high economic inequality.

Conceptualizing these three different outcome variables as self-centeredness (*increased* self-centeredness here corresponds to increased expected unethical and dominant behaviour and to *decreased* empathic accuracy), Figure 2 illustrates the unique main effects and the hypothesized interactive effects. The solid line, representing high SES individuals, has a higher mean of self-centeredness than the dotted line, representing low SES individuals (showing the unique effects of SES). At the same time, both lines show an upward slope, representing the unique effect of inequality in making everyone in a population more self-centered. For people of high SES, specifically, the graph shows even greater self-centeredness when inequality is high as opposed to low (showing the interactive effects of SES and inequality).
1.7 The Role of Perceptions

How is it that being of high as opposed to low SES or living in a society with high as opposed to low levels of economic inequality can have any effect at all on individuals? Here, there are broadly two possibilities. The first possibility is that SES and economic inequality cause environmental changes that lead to certain outcomes. For example, people of different SES may attend different schools (Baird, 2012; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008), or economic inequality may affect the availability of health insurance, or the prevalence of crime (e.g., Daly, 2016; Daly et al., 2001; Dickman et al., 2017; Elstad, 2016). These differences, in turn, have their effects mediated through the psychology of the individual. Much past research has focused on the correlates of objective measures of SES and inequality. For example, higher income inequality (measured, for example, as the ratio of the incomes of the top quintile to the bottom quintile) is
associated with greater obesity, mortality, teenage pregnancies, depression, and crime and homicide rates, as well as with lower math and literacy mastery, trust, and well-being (e.g., Daly, 2016; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). But correlations observed between an aggregate level variable (such as the amount of inequality in a particular geographic area such as a country or state) and an individual level variable (such as how much people trust others) may be different from correlations observed between two individual level variables (such as how much inequality people perceive and how much they trust others), which can lead to an ecological fallacy (e.g., Robinson, 2011). In fact, there is also much research showing no association or an association in the opposite direction between objective inequality and various health and social outcomes (e.g., Bjørnskov, et al., 2013; Hastings, 2018; Kelley & Evans, 2017; Kim et al., 2022; Paskov et al., 2017), and thus far, researchers are still trying to explain these different results.

The second possibility is that humans perceive these economic factors in the environment, and they are reacting to their perceptions. While there is also much research showing an association between people’s self-perceived SES and various health and social outcomes (e.g., Adler et al., 2000; Kraus et al., 2011; Marmot, 2004), research on the relationship between perceived economic inequality and health and social outcomes has begun more recently. Unlike objective measures of inequality, perceptions of inequality are measured at the individual level which precludes the risk of an ecological fallacy. It also accounts for individual experiences that may inform differences in perceptions within one geographic area (see also Schmalor & Heine, 2022), and it is also possible to manipulate inequality perceptions to establish causality.

Therefore, this thesis focuses on how perceptions of perceived economic inequality affect people’s expectations of cheating and dominant behaviour as well as their empathic accuracy.
This thesis further also focuses on how people’s subjective social class affects these variables. Because previous research finds that the association between SES and these self-centered cognitions and behaviours is caused by feeling powerful and not needing to rely on others (e.g., Dietze & Knowles, 2016; Dubois et al., 2015), it seems plausible that people’s perceptions of their own SES more strongly are associated with these variables; after all, in order to feel powerful and in control, one must perceive to have a greater share of the overall resources.

1.8 Putting it together

Bringing all these considerations together, to further our understanding of how SES and inequality affect self-centeredness (operationalized as increased cheating and dominance and decreased empathic accuracy), this thesis aims to investigate the unique effects of both SES and inequality on these variables – as well as their interactive effects. In addition, this thesis makes use of subjective perceptions of SES and inequality as its independent variables and both expectations of self and other behaviour (for cheating and dominance) as well as actual performance (for empathic accuracy) as outcome variables.

Chapter 2 will look at expectations of other people and oneself to engage in everyday unethical behaviour. I focus on people’s expectations of everyday unethical behaviours, such as keeping extra change instead of returning it to the clerk, keeping a pair of pants that was delivered to the wrong address, or cheating in a game when their behaviour is unobserved. Expecting that such everyday unethical behaviour is more common in unequal situations suggests that people (both others and oneself) shift towards more self-centeredness. Chapter 3 will adopt another operationalization of self-centeredness: increasing use of dominant behaviour. These studies look at expectations of other people and oneself to engage in dominant
behaviour such as using aggressive tactics to get one’s way. Chapter 4 will look at people’s ability to correctly identify what emotions others are expressing or likely experiencing (i.e., empathic accuracy). If people are more self-centered and less focused on other people, it is possible that they also pay less attention to the emotions of other people. Here I move from people’s expectations to their performance in two different tasks of empathic accuracy.

Because past research has found that people of high compared to low SES are more likely to cheat (Piff et al., 2012, but see Jung et al., 2023), to act dominantly (Belmi and Laurin, 2016), and to show lower empathic accuracy (Dietze & Knowles, 2016, 2020; Kraus et al., 2010; but see Deveney et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2015), in each chapter, I will attempt to replicate the previously found association between SES and the specific self-centered behaviour; further I will test whether economic inequality has a similar effect, and finally I will test whether there is an interaction between SES and inequality. For all studies, I will use perceptions of SES and inequality, which are either assessed or manipulated. To summarize, for my dissertation, I aim to test the following hypotheses:

CHAPTER 2

Hypothesis 2.1: People of high SES expect themselves to engage in more everyday unethical behaviour than people of low SES (replication of previously found association).

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1 Note that the hypotheses are numbered such that the first number indicates the chapter in which they are tested, and the numbers after the decimal point refer to predictor (1 = SES, 2 = inequality, 3 = interaction between SES and inequality)
**Hypothesis 2.2a:** People *expect other people* to engage in more everyday unethical behaviour when they perceive inequality to be high as opposed to low.

**Hypothesis 2.2b:** People *expect themselves* to show more everyday unethical behaviour when they perceive inequality to be high as opposed to low.

**Hypothesis 2.3:** The difference in *expecting themselves* to show more everyday unethical behaviour when perceiving high as opposed to low inequality, is greater for people of high SES than for people of low SES.

**CHAPTER 3**

**Hypothesis 3.1a:** People *expect other people* of high SES to engage in more dominant behaviour than other people of low SES.

**Hypothesis 3.1b:** People of high SES *expect themselves* to engage in more dominant behaviour than people of low SES (replication of previously found association).

**Hypothesis 3.2a:** People *expect other people* to show more dominant behaviour when they perceive inequality to be high as opposed to low.

**Hypothesis 3.2b:** People *expect themselves* to show more dominant behaviour when they perceive inequality to be high as opposed to low.

**Hypothesis 3.3a:** The difference in *expecting other people* to show more dominant behaviour when perceiving high as opposed to low inequality, is greater for other people of high SES than for other people of low SES.

**Hypothesis 3.3b:** The difference in *expecting themselves* to show more dominant behaviour when perceiving high as opposed to low inequality, is greater for people of high SES than for people of low SES.
CHAPTER 4

**Hypothesis 4.1**: People of high SES *show* less empathic accuracy than people of low SES (replication of previously found association).

**Hypothesis 4.2**: People *show* less empathic accuracy when they perceive inequality to be high as opposed to low.

**Hypothesis 4.3**: The difference in *showing* less empathic accuracy when perceiving high as opposed to low inequality, is greater for people of high than for people of low SES.
Chapter 2: Perceived Economic Inequality (but not SES) Causes People to Expect More Everyday Unethical Behaviour

Societies vary considerably in their extent of economic inequality, and, in recent years, economic inequality has increased across much of the globe (e.g., Brandolini & Smeeding, 2011; Piketty, 2014) and is expected to continue to increase (Sokoloff & Engerman, 2000). There has been growing interest in how inequality shapes people’s psychology. One question of interest is how inequality affects ethical behaviours (e.g., Choe, 2008; Neville, 2012). Previous research suggests that higher inequality is associated with an increase in people’s own unethical behaviours (e.g., Choe, 2008; Gino & Pierce, 2009; Neville, 2012). Furthermore, correlational research finds that objective indicators of economic inequality are associated with such unethical behaviours as increased corruption (Husted, 1999; You & Khagram, 2005), tax evasion (Bloomquist, 2003), higher crime and homicides rates (Daly et al., 2001; Wilson & Daly, 1997); and students from more unequal US states were found to conduct more web search queries with terms related to academic dishonesty (Neville, 2012).

While the relations between inequality and various forms of unethical behaviours appear to be fairly robust, it is unclear whether people are aware of this relation. In this chapter, I tested whether people expect that both other people and themselves would behave more unethically (as past research suggests) in high inequality contexts or whether their expectations remain unchanged under both conditions. If people are sensitive to changes in inequality, they may adjust their expectations around unethical behaviour accordingly. Therefore, I both manipulated
and assessed people’s perceptions of inequality and tested how it affects their expectations of everyday unethical behaviour.

Past research has posited a relation between economic inequality and heightened competition between people (Krupp & Cook, 2018; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). These findings are typically seen to be the product of what occurs when resources (i.e., income or wealth) are concentrated among people at the top of the distribution (but see Liu & Gastwirth, 2020). Under such circumstances, climbing or falling down the social ladder can make a marked difference in one’s economic standing. On the other hand, when inequality is low, rising or falling in the ranks makes relatively less difference in terms of one’s economic situation. As a consequence, when inequality is high, people experience more status anxiety (Delhey & Dragolov, 2014; Frank, 2007; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010, 2019); they become more competitive (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010), and view competitive and individualistic behaviour as more likely to occur (Pierce et al., 2013; Sommet et al., 2019; Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2019).

Similarly, when inequality is higher people are more willing to take risks in an effort to get ahead (Payne et al., 2017). Taken together, this past research leads me to predict that when people perceive more inequality, they will become more likely to expect others and themselves to act more unethically. In line with this, recent research showed that when perceived and actual levels of inequality were higher, people found unethical behaviour of others to be more acceptable (To et al., 2022).

In the present research, I focus on people’s expectations of everyday unethical behaviours, such as keeping extra change instead of returning it to the clerk, keeping a pair of pants that was delivered to the wrong address, or cheating in a game when their behaviour is unobserved. I define unethical behaviour here as everyday transgressions that violate social
norms, although they aren’t necessarily against the law. Much research has focused on the effects of inequality on more severe forms of unethical behaviours such as crime (e.g., Choe, 2008) or corruption (Husted, 1999). While it seems unlikely that many people would expect that they would engage in more severe criminal activities, if people do expect that benign everyday unethical behaviour is more common in unequal situations, it may shape their view of people as more selfish more generally, deteriorate trust and undermine societal functioning.

I test whether people expect both others and themselves to engage in more unethical behaviour when they perceive inequality to be high as opposed to low. Past research shows that people find unethical behaviour more acceptable when they perceive inequality to be high (To et al., 2022). This shift in acceptability suggests that it is possible that people expect others to engage in more unethical behaviour and it also suggests that it is possible that people are more likely to say they would engage in unethical behaviours too.

In addition, I also aim to replicate the previously found association between SES and unethical behaviour (e.g., Piff et al., 2012). Because people of higher social class have a greater access to valued resources, they come to feel more powerful (Dubois et al., 2015) and less dependent on others to achieve their goals (Dietze & Knowles, 2060; Kraus et al., 2010). Consequently, they tend to feel more entitled (Piff, 2014) and may also be more likely to act unethically. Therefore, a second aim of this chapter is to test whether people of high SES are more likely to expect that they would engage unethically relative to their lower SES counterparts.

If people of higher SES say they are more likely to act unethically compared to people of lower SES, and if this difference is caused by a greater access to resources and hence greater feelings of power among people of high SES, then this effect should be exacerbated under
conditions of high inequality. When inequality is high, the difference in access to resources and hence, power between people of higher and lower SES is greater than it is when inequality is low. Therefore, a third aim of this chapter is to test whether there is an interaction between SES and inequality, such that the difference between people of low and high SES is most pronounced when people perceive high amounts of inequality.

In sum, I hypothesized that perceptions of higher economic inequality would lead people to expect others to engage in more unethical behaviour (Hypothesis 2.2a), to say that they themselves would engage in more unethical behaviour (Hypothesis 2.2b), that being of higher SES would lead people to say that they themselves would engage in more unethical behaviour (Hypothesis 2.1), and that people of high SES would be most likely to say they would engage in unethical behaviour when they perceive inequality to be high (Hypothesis 2.3). I tested these hypotheses across 6 studies (N=3,836; 4 studies were pre-registered) utilizing 4 different means of manipulating/assessing perceptions, along with 2 different ways of assessing unethical behaviour. In contrast to some of the past literature, I assessed the impact of economic inequality by using both experimental manipulations and correlational data.

2.1 Study 2.1a

In Study 2.1a, I tested the hypothesis that people would expect others to cheat more in a die rolling task where players received different payoffs for different die rolls when the distribution of payoffs was high as opposed to low in inequality (Hypothesis 2.2a).

2 Note that for all studies the number before the decimal point refers the chapter and the number after the decimal point refers to the study number within each chapter.
Method

Determining effect sizes. Across all studies in this thesis, I chose an effect size estimate based on practical considerations. Because the measures used in these studies are operationalizations of various constructs that are somewhat removed from how they might actually occur in the real world, any effect size(s) found in this research does not represent the actual effect size(s) in the real world. Ultimately, in my view the goal of science is to translate statistically significant effects found in laboratory research (in more or less artificial settings) into effect sizes in the real world (for example, by defining in monetary terms the costs to society of an increase in inequality by a certain amount which may be caused by increased violence and/or purchase of security devices and/or health care costs). Of course, that is a dauntingly difficult task, and a first (and simpler step) is to establish whether there is an effect at all, whether that effect is reliable, and under what circumstances it occurs. With these considerations in mind, I determined the sample sizes for all studies based on 1) the smallest estimated effect size I believe would still be of interest to other researchers, 2) available resources to collect that sample size (both financial and, where necessary, the amount of time it would take to collect and/or code the data), and 3) the expected strength of the manipulation (in my experience the effect size tends to be larger when manipulating expectations about other people rather than oneself and when manipulations are removed from one’s own life such as imagining to be living in a hypothetical society rather than learning new information about the society people live in).

Participants. I solicited a convenience sample of Americans on TurkPrime. Estimating a small effect size of $d=.20$, 80% power, alpha of .05, and a two-tailed test, I needed a sample size of about 200 for a within-subjects design (as calculated in GPower, Faul et al., 2009). To ensure I would be above this number I collected data from 402 participants. After excluding participants
who indicated that they had not taken the survey seriously in response to a binary question, the final sample consisted of 400 participants (\(M_{\text{age}} = 37.89\); 48% female; 69% Caucasian, 11% African American, 10% Asian, 10% other).

**Measures.**

**Economic Inequality.** Participants were asked to imagine other people completing a task for a monetary reward. Participants learned about the task and the basis of the reward: Each person in this scenario was described as sitting alone in a room and rolling a six-sided die twice, but as being instructed to only report the first die roll. The reward was described as depending upon the number people reported; the smallest reward would be earned for reporting a 1 or 2; the middle reward for a 3 or 4; and the largest reward for a 5 or 6 (paradigm is adapted from Fischbacher & Föllmi-Heusi, 2013). Then participants saw in random order two graphs that showed different distributions of the rewards (see Figure 3; design of reward structure adapted from Payne et al., 2017). To avoid anchoring effects, I showed distributions with bar graphs of different lengths for the different rewards, but I didn’t provide concrete numerical values. In the low inequality condition, the rewards for the different die rolls had relatively low variability, whereas in the high inequality condition, the rewards had more variability. Across both conditions, the length of the bar for reporting a 3 or 4 (i.e., the middle reward) had the same length, and the length of all three bars (i.e., the sum of all rewards) was identical. Thus, the only difference between the conditions was the degree of inequality between the rewards.
Figure 3 Distribution of rewards for the low (left panel) and high (right panel) inequality conditions.

**Unethical Behaviour.** This study employed a within-subjects design. Participants were randomly assigned to see either the low or the high inequality condition first. For each distribution, they had to indicate how likely they thought it was that other people would report a value higher than their actual die roll on a scale from 0 (“not at all likely”) to 100 (“very likely”).

**Results and Discussion**
To test whether the manipulation was successful, I asked participants how unequal they found the distribution of rewards both for the low and the high inequality condition on a scale from 0 (“not at all unequal”) to 100 (“very unequal”). Participants perceived the distribution of rewards as significantly more unequal for the high inequality condition (\(M=83.17, SD=20.91\)) than for the low inequality condition (\(M=36.50, SD=22.64\)), \(t(399)=29.36, p<.001, 95\%CI = [43.54,49.79], d=1.47\). Next, I tested the hypothesis that people would expect others to report a higher die roll in the high inequality condition. In line with my hypothesis, participants thought that it was significantly more likely for people to report that they rolled a value higher than their actual first die roll when they saw the distribution of rewards of the high inequality condition (\(M=81.44, SD=21.43\)) than the low inequality condition (\(M=59.94, SD=25.45\)), \(t(399)=17.73, p<.001,\)
95% CI = [19.12, 23.89], $d=0.89$. As a robustness check, I also analyzed the results after including only participants who correctly responded to three comprehension check questions about the instructions of the game before proceeding to the dependent variable. The results hold, and are described in Appendix A.1. In addition, I analyzed the results by correlating people’s judgments of the inequality of the payoffs with their expectations of cheating behaviours: these correlations were significantly positive showing that the more inequality people perceived, the more cheating they expected; and they were similar both for judgments of the low inequality ($r(399)=.23, p<.001$) and the high inequality conditions ($r(399)=.28, p<.001$). The results provide initial evidence that people expect others to cheat more when the outcome is more unequal.

### 2.2 Study 2.1b

In Study 2.1b, I conducted a direct replication of Study 2.1a. I pre-registered the hypothesis, measures, exclusion criteria, and analyses on the Open Science Framework (OSF; see Appendix A.2).

**Method**

**Participants** As pre-registered, I solicited a convenience sample of 400 Americans, the same sample size as Study 2.1a, on TurkPrime. After excluding participants who indicated that they had not taken the survey seriously in response to a binary question, the final sample consisted of 398 participants ($M$ age=36.02; 45% female; 72% Caucasian, 16% African American, 12% other).

**Measures.**

The measures and procedures were the same as in Study 2.1a.
Results and Discussion

As in Study 2.1a, participants perceived the distribution of rewards as significantly more unequal for the high inequality condition (\(M=78.27\), \(SD=24.36\)) than for the low inequality condition (\(M=42.55\), \(SD=26.62\)), \(t(397)=19.13, p<.001\), 95%CI = [32.05,39.40], \(d=0.96\). Next, I tested the pre-registered hypothesis. Replicating the results from Study 2.1a, participants thought that it was significantly more likely for people to report that they rolled a value higher than their actual first die roll when they saw the distribution of rewards of the high inequality condition (\(M=79.05\), \(SD=23.62\)) than the low inequality condition (\(M=61.36\), \(SD=27.46\)), \(t(397)=12.46, p<.001\), 95%CI = [14.89, 20.47], \(d=0.63\). As a robustness check, I again analyzed the results after including only participants who correctly responded to three comprehension check questions about the instructions of the game before proceeding to the dependent variable. The results hold and are described in Appendix A.2. In addition, I again analyzed the results by correlating people’s judgments of the inequality of the payoffs with their expectations of cheating behaviours: these correlations were significantly positive both for judgments of the low inequality (\(r(397)=.42, p<.001\)) and the high inequality conditions (\(r(397)=.21, p <.001\)).

While these first two studies provide some initial evidence for the hypothesis that people expect others to cheat more under contexts of high inequality, the structure of the rewards, and hence, the outcome variable (i.e., misreporting the die roll), created the amount of inequality, and hence both the independent variable or manipulation and the dependent variable were inherently linked. In other words, in the high inequality condition, more rewards could be gained (or, to put it differently, more of the resources could be monopolized), by choosing to cheat, compared to the low inequality condition. So in a sense, then, inequality was created as a consequence of choosing to cheat. While I would argue that this is inherent in contexts of high inequality (and
something that further exacerbates existing levels of inequality), the rationale I laid out in the introduction of this thesis, rests on the idea that inequality already exists; and as a consequence of this existing inequality, people feel more anxious about their position in the social hierarchy, and therefore become more willing to act in self-centered ways such as cheating. In addition, in the high inequality condition, the potential reward people stand to gain is much higher than in the low inequality condition. This raises the question whether it is inequality per se, or simply a larger potential reward that led to greater expectations of cheating. For these reasons, these two studies don’t map perfectly on the laid-out hypotheses. In the remaining studies of this thesis, I aim to address this issue. Specifically, when using an experimental paradigm, I will manipulate perceptions of inequality first (for example, by asking people to imagine living in a society of either high or low inequality), and then I will ask them to indicate how they would act or give them a task to do that is situated within that manipulation. In these cases, then, the outcome variables (i.e., acting unethically, acting dominantly, and correctly identifying other people’s emotions), will be independent from the inequality manipulation in the sense that choosing to act in more self-centered ways doesn’t lead to a greater absolute reward (or benefit) in the high compared to the low inequality condition. I will also use correlational designs where I ask people to indicate how much inequality they perceive and test the extent to which these perceptions are associated with these various self-centered cognitions and behaviours.

2.3 Study 2.2

While Studies 2.1a and 2.1b manipulated inequality of rewards via competing distributions of payoffs for a dice-rolling task, in Study 2.2, perceived inequality was manipulated by asking participants to imagine living in one of two societies which varied in terms of their inequality. I
then assessed whether 1) their own SES predicted their expectations of acting unethically (Hypothesis 2.1), 2) the inequality condition they were assigned to predicted their expectations of acting unethically (Hypothesis 2.2b), and 3) there was an interaction between SES and inequality condition in predicting their expectations of acting unethically (Hypothesis 2.3). I used a variety of different unethical behaviours in a vignette task. I pre-registered the hypothesis, measures, exclusion criteria, and analyses on the OSF (see Appendix A.3).

**Method**

**Participants.** I solicited a convenience sample of Americans on TurkPrime. A sample of 800 participants allows us to detect an effect of $d=0.20$ at an alpha of .05, with 80% power in this between-groups design (as calculated in GPower, Faul et al., 2009). To be above this number I pre-registered to collect data from 1040 participants. After excluding participants who failed any of the pre-registered attention checks (I excluded $n=13$ for failing to correctly identify which income group they were assigned to in a hypothetical society they read about; $n=131$ for failing to choose the answer on the far left in response to a question asking them to do so, and $n=14$ for not indicating that they had taken the study seriously)$^3$, the final sample consisted of 907$^4$ participants ($M$ age=38.86; 62% female; 75% Caucasian, 9% African American, 16% other).

**Measures.**

**Social Class.** I operationalized SES in two ways. First, participants indicated their subjective SES (Adler et al., 2000) on a ladder with 10 rungs that indicated one’s relative standing in

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$^3$ I also pre-registered to exclude participants who correctly guessed the hypothesis, but no one did.

$^4$ Note that for this and all subsequent studies the sum of the final sample plus number of excluded participants may add up to a number that is higher or lower than the number of participants originally collected because 1) some participants failed more than one of the attention checks and/or 2) the total number may include participants who didn’t finish the study and were therefore automatically dropped from the analyses.
society ($M=5.19$, $SD=1.64$). Second, participants indicated which of 5 social classes they thought they belonged to (i.e., poor, working-class, middle-class, upper middle-class, and upper-class; Jackman & Jackman, 1983; $M=2.63$, $SD=0.77$).

**Economic Inequality.** Participants read that they were to imagine living in Bimboola, a hypothetical society. They learned that Bimboola has three income tiers and that they would be randomly assigned to one of them (adopted from Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2017). In the low inequality condition (Bimboolen Dollars 30,000; 40,000; 50,000), the income tiers had lower variability than in the high inequality condition (Bimboolen Dollars 3,000; 40,000; 77,000). The mean income per condition was the same, and all participants were assigned to the second income tier. Thus, only the level of inequality varied between conditions. To strengthen the manipulation, participants also had to choose a house, car, and vacation spot for their new life. For each category they saw three different options that people with high, middle, and low incomes could choose from. While all participants had to choose from the same options for the second tier, they saw different options for people of low and high incomes in the two different conditions.

**Unethical Behaviour.** Participants read 10 scenarios (adapted from Piff et al., 2012; see Appendix A.3 for all 10 scenarios) in which they engaged in unethical behaviour they benefitted from (e.g., “You work in a fast-food restaurant in downtown Bimboola. It’s against policy to eat food without paying for it. You came straight from a doctor’s appointment and are therefore hungry. Your supervisor isn’t around, so you make something for yourself and eat it without paying.”) and had to indicate how likely they would be to engage in the behaviour on a 7-point Likert scale from “extremely unlikely” to “extremely likely” ($M=3.43$, $SD=1.23$, $\alpha=.85$).

**Results and Discussion**
To test whether the manipulation was successful, I created a mean score of two questions asking participants the extent that the fictitious society of “Bimboola” was unequal on a 9-point scale where higher values indicate more inequality. Participants in the high inequality condition ($M = 7.05, SD = 1.37$) perceived Bimboola to be significantly more unequal than participants in the low inequality condition ($M = 4.06, SD = 1.56$), $b = 2.98, p < .001, 95\%CI = [2.79, 3.17], d = 2.04$ (see Table 1 in Appendix A.3 for a correlation table of all variables). Next, I tested whether participants in the high inequality condition were more likely to say they would engage in unethical behaviour (Hypothesis 2.2b). Participants in the high inequality condition ($M = 3.51, SD = 1.27$) were marginally more likely to say they would engage in a variety of everyday unethical behaviours than participants in the low inequality condition ($M = 3.35, SD = 1.18$), $b = 0.16, p = .057, 95\%CI = [-0.004, 0.32], d = 0.13$. I also pre-registered to conduct these analyses with ethnicity, age, and gender as covariates. The results are statistically significant ($p = .026$) with these covariates and are reported in Table 2 in Appendix A.3. Next, I tested whether participants’ self-identified SES in the real world would predict their likelihood to expect themselves to engage in unethical behaviour (Hypothesis 2.1), and whether there was an interaction between SES and inequality (Hypothesis 2.3). Unlike hypothesized, people of lower SES were marginally more likely to say they would engage in unethical behaviour in Bimboola, both when SES was measured with the 10-rung ladder, $b = -0.07, p = .073, 95\%CI = [-0.004, 0.32]$, and when it was measured as social class, $b = -0.07, p = .078, 95\%CI = [-0.15, 0.01]$ (note that all continuous predictor variables are standardized, across Studies 2.2-2.4). Following the study design of Piff and colleagues (2012, Study 3), I also pre-registered to conduct these analyses with ethnicity, age, and gender as covariates. The results become non-significant after including these covariates and are reported in Table 2 in Appendix A.3.
Further, and unlike hypothesized, there was no interaction between SES and inequality in predicting unethical behaviour, neither when SES was measured with the 10-rung ladder, $b = 0.07, p = .404, 95\%CI = [-0.09, 0.23]$ (Figure 4), nor when it was measured as social class, $b = 0.02, p = .819, 95\%CI = [-0.15, 0.18]$.

To summarize, these results provide some support for the hypothesis that people are more likely to expect themselves to engage in everyday unethical behaviour when they perceive inequality to be high as opposed to low. However, they failed to replicate the previously found association between SES and unethical behaviour (Piff et al., 2012) and the hypothesized interaction between SES and inequality. However (and as laid out in the pre-registration), these findings are perhaps not all that surprising as both the cheating vignettes and inequality perceptions were within the context of the experiment where participants had to imagine a hypothetical society while they reported their subjective SES in the real world. To draw more reliable conclusions about the association between SES and unethical behaviour and the interaction between SES and inequality, all variables should be assessed and/or manipulated within the same context (i.e., all in a hypothetical society or all in the real world), something we will turn to in Studies 2.3a-2.4.
Figure 4 Association between economic inequality and expected unethical behaviour for people who are 1SD above ($b = 0.22, p = .060$) and 1SD below ($b = 0.07 p = .524$) the mean of SES. Intervals around regression lines are 95% confidence intervals.\(^5\)

2.4 Study 2.3a

Whereas Study 2.2 had placed participants in a hypothetical context of either low or high inequality, in Study 2.3a, I tested whether people’s subjective perceptions of economic inequality in the real world would correlate with their expectations of themselves engaging in unethical behaviours (Hypothesis 2.2b). I also tested whether people’s self-reported SES (Hypothesis 2.1) and an interaction between self-reported SES and perceptions of economic inequality (Hypothesis 2.3) predicted their expectations of themselves engaging in unethical behaviours.

\(^5\) Note that I provide the betas in all figures where the interaction is non-significant (for significant interactions, the betas are provided in text). All continuous predictors for given betas are standardized, while the figures depict unstandardized variables.
Method

Participants. I solicited a convenience sample of Americans on TurkPrime. A sample size of 470 participants allows us to detect a true correlation of .10 with a 95% CI when the corridor of stability is set to a half-width of .10 (Schönbrodt & Perugini, 2013). I collected data from 581 participants to be above this amount. After excluding participants who failed to pick the answer on the far right to any one of two questions prompting them to do so (n=64 and n=32), and/or who indicated that they did not take the study seriously in response to a binary question (n=10), the final sample consisted of 397 participants (M age=37.50; 52% female; 78% Caucasian, 8% African American, 14% other).

Measures.

Social Class. I used the same measures of social class (M=5.15, SD=1.63 for the ladder; M=2.66, SD=0.75 for the 5-point scale) as in Study 2.2.

Perceived Economic Inequality and Unfairness Beliefs about Inequality. To assess perceptions of economic inequality, participants completed the 8-item Subjective Inequality Scale on a 7-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The Inequality subscale measures the extent participants think that economic inequality in their state of residence is high (M=4.17, SD=1.47, α=.90; sample item: “Almost all of the money that is earned goes to only a few people”) and the Fairness subscale measures how unfair they find high levels of inequality to be (M=4.89, SD=1.44, α=.83; e.g., “It is extremely unfair if the overall amount of economic inequality is very high”; Schmalor & Heine, 2022).

Unethical Behaviour. Participants read the same 10 scenarios from Study 2.2 (except that they were adapted to apply to society in general rather than in Bimboola, see Appendix A.4) in which they engaged in unethical behaviour that they benefitted from (e.g., “You work in a restaurant.
It’s against policy to eat food without paying for it. You came straight to your shift from a doctor’s appointment and are therefore hungry. Your supervisor isn’t around, so you make something for yourself and eat it without paying.” Across all 10 scenarios, $M=3.60$, $SD=1.28$, $\alpha=.86$). I also collected variables for a different study that is not part of this project and are not described here.

**Results and Discussion**

The more participants reported that they perceived economic inequality, the more likely they said they were to engage in unethical behaviour, $b = 0.24$, $p < .001$, 95%CI = [0.11, 0.36] ($r=.19$, $p<.001$; Hypothesis 2.2b; see Table 3 in Appendix A.4 for a correlation table with all variables).

As a robustness check, I reran these analyses with ethnicity, age, and gender as covariates. The results are statistically significant with these covariates and reported in Table 4 in Appendix A.4. I also reran the same analysis with political orientation and judgments of unfairness as covariates and they remain significant (Table 4). Both fairness judgments about inequality and political orientation are correlated with perceptions of inequality (Schmalor & Heine, 2022). If, as described in the introduction to this chapter, the relationship between perceived inequality and unethical behaviour is driven by increased status anxiety, then it should occur regardless of people’s judgments about inequality and their political beliefs (which themselves also affect people’s attitudes towards inequality, e.g., Chambers et al., 2014; Du & King, 2021). These results replicate the finding that perceived inequality is associated with everyday unethical behaviours. However, unlike hypothesized, people of higher SES did not report an increased likelihood to engage in unethical behaviour, neither when measured as one’s standing on a 10-rung ladder, $b =0.09$, $p=.165$, 95%CI=[-0.04, 0.22] ($r=.07$, $p=.165$), nor when measured as social class $b =0.02$, $p=.813$, 95%CI=[-0.11, 0.14] ($r=.01$, $p=.813$). However, when ethnicity, age, and
gender, and ethnicity, age, and gender and fairness judgments about inequality and political orientation were included as covariates the association between SES and unethical behaviour became (marginally) significant (but not between social class and unethical behaviour (see Table 4 in Appendix A.4). Further, in line with Hypothesis 2.3, there was a significant interaction between SES and inequality and a marginally significant interaction between social class inequality, $b = 0.11, p = .100, 95\% CI = [-0.02, 0.24]$ in predicting unethical behaviour. People who were 1 SD above the mean of SES, were more likely to say they would engage in everyday unethical behaviour when perceiving inequality to be high as opposed to low, $b = 0.40, p < .001$ (Figure 5). Likewise, people who were 1 SD above the mean of social class, were also more likely to say they would engage in everyday unethical behaviour when perceiving inequality to be high as opposed to low, $b = 0.37, p < .001$. For people 1 SD below the mean, the association between perceived inequality and unethical behaviour was $b = 0.15, p = .090$ for people’s self-reported SES and $b = 0.14, p = .120$ for people’s self-reported social class. These interactions, however, became non-significant with ethnicity, age, and gender, and with ethnicity, age, and gender and fairness judgments about inequality and political orientation as covariates (see Table 5 in Appendix A.4) and are therefore to be taken with a grain of salt.

To summarize, Study 2.3a provides further evidence that perceiving high economic inequality is associated with increased expectations that people themselves will engage in unethical behaviour. The results for SES and an interaction between SES and inequality are more mixed.
2.5 Study 2.3b

Study 2.3b was a direct replication of Study 2.3a. I pre-registered the hypothesis, measures, exclusion criteria, and analyses on the OSF (see Appendix A.5).

Method

Participants. I again solicited a convenience sample of Americans on TurkPrime. As pre-registered, based on the lower bound of the 95% CI from Study 2.3a, I aimed to have a large enough sample to reliably detect a true correlation of .10 at a 95% CI with a corridor of stability of a half-width of .10 (Schönbrodt & Perugini, 2013); a sample size of at least 470. I collected data from 552 participants to be above this amount after excluding participants who failed to
pick the answer on the far right/ at the bottom to one question prompting them to do so (n=37),
the final sample consisted of 513 participants (M age = 38.18; 53% female; 71% Caucasian, 12%
Asian, 17% other).

Measures.
I used the same measures of social class (M=5.39, SD=1.54 for the ladder; M=2.77, SD=0.75 for
the 5-point scale), perceived economic inequality (M=4.01, SD=1.53, α=.91 for perceived
inequality and M=4.79, SD=1.48, α=.86 for unfairness beliefs) and unethical behaviour (M=3.45,
SD=1.24, α=.86) as in Study 2.3a.

Results and Discussion
First, I ran the pre-registered analysis. As hypothesized, the more economic inequality
participants reported perceiving, the more likely they said they would engage in various
unethical behaviours, $b = 0.35, p < .001, 95\% CI=[0.24, 0.45]$ ($r = .28, p < .001$; see Table 6 in
Appendix A.5 for the correlations between all variables). As a robustness check, I again reran
these analyses with ethnicity, age, and gender as covariates. The results are statistically
significant with these covariates and reported in Table 7 in Appendix A.5. As in Study 2.3a, I
again reran the same analysis with political orientation and judgments of unfairness as
covariates. The results remain statistically significant (Table 7 in Appendix A.5).

Unlike hypothesized, people of higher SES did not report an increased likelihood to
engage in unethical behaviour, neither when measured as one’s standing on a 10-rung ladder, $b$
$= -0.07, p = .226, 95\% CI=[-0.17, 0.04]$ ($r=-.05, p = .230$), nor when measured as social class $b =$-

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6 Note that I also pre-registered to exclude participants who indicated that they did not take the study seriously in response to a binary question, but no one did.
7 Note that I didn’t pre-register the analyses including SES.
0.06, \( p=.265, 95\% CI=[-0.17, 0.04] \) \((r=.05, p=.260)\), and there was also no interaction between SES and inequality, \( b =0.02, p=.756, 95\% CI=[-0.09, 0.12] \) (Figure 6), nor between social class and inequality, \( b =0.06, p=.270, 95\% CI=[-0.05, 0.16] \) in predicting unethical behaviour. All of these results remain non-significant with ethnicity, age, and gender, and with ethnicity, age, and gender and political orientation and judgments of unfairness as covariates and are provided in Table 8 in Appendix A.5.

To sum, further replicating the results from Study 2.3a, people who reported perceiving more inequality reported a greater likelihood to engage in unethical behaviours, and this relationship held after including various covariates. However, people’s SES did not predict their self-reported likelihood of engaging in unethical behaviour and there was also no interaction between SES and inequality in predicting self-reported likelihood of engaging in unethical behaviour. The absence of a relationship between SES and unethical behaviour is noteworthy as the vignettes I used to assess expectations of unethical behaviour were adapted from Piff and colleagues (2012), who found a positive association. I will return to this in the General Discussion of Chapter 2.
Figure 6 Association between economic inequality and expected unethical behaviour for people who are 1SD above ($b=0.37, p<.001$) and 1SD below the mean ($b=0.34, p<.001$) of SES. Intervals around regression lines are 95% confidence intervals.

### 2.6 Study 2.4

In Study 2.4, I explored whether informing people (via a video) that the level of inequality in society was high would lead them to say they would behave more unethically in comparison with those who were informed that the level of inequality in society was low (Hypothesis 2.2b). I again tested whether people’s self-reported SES (Hypothesis 2.1) and an interaction between self-reported SES and inequality condition (Hypothesis 2.3) predicted their expectations of themselves engaging in unethical behaviours. I pre-registered the hypothesis, measures, exclusion criteria, and analyses on the OSF (see Appendix A.6).
**Method**

**Participants.** I solicited a convenience sample of Americans on TurkPrime. Given the new manipulation, I estimated an effect size of $d=.15$. A sample of 1100 participants allows us to detect such an effect with 80% power, at an alpha level of .05, with a one-tailed test (calculated in GPower, Faul et al., 2009). To be above this minimum after excluding participants who failed to choose the answer option on the far right in response to a prompt ($n=197$) and/or who said they didn’t take the study seriously ($n=29$)$^8$, I pre-registered to collect data from 1400 participants. I recruited 1437 participants, and after exclusions had a final sample of 1221 participants ($M$ age=36.95; 66% female; 74% Caucasian, 9% African American, 17% other).

**Measures**

**Social Class.** I used the same measures of social class ($M=5.09$, $SD=1.70$ for the ladder; $M=2.59$, $SD=0.81$ for the 5-point scale) as in Study 2.2.

**Economic Inequality.** Participants watched a short video that either described that inequality has increased over recent decades or that de facto inequality has dropped because of increases in social spending. To strengthen the effect of the manipulation, after watching the video, participants had to describe in 1-3 sentences how the society they live in is relatively low/high in inequality (low and high inequality conditions, respectively).

**Unethical Behaviour.** I used the same measure of unethical behaviour as in Study 2.3a ($M=3.32$, $SD=1.26$, $\alpha=.85$).

**Results and Discussion**

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$^8$ I also pre-registered to exclude participants who guessed the hypothesis correctly, but no one did.
As pre-registered, I first tested whether participants in the high inequality condition perceived more inequality in their society than participants in the low inequality condition. I created a mean score of two questions asking to what extent the society participants live in is unequal on a 9-point scale where higher values indicate more inequality. Participants in the high inequality condition ($M=6.25, SD=1.56$) perceived significantly more inequality than participants in the low inequality condition ($M=4.87, SD=1.68$), $b=1.39, p<.001, 95\%CI=[1.20, 1.57]$ (see Table 9 in Appendix A.6 for correlations between all variables). Next, I tested whether participants in the high inequality condition were more likely to say they would engage in unethical behaviour (Hypothesis 2.2b). In contrast to the hypothesis, participants in the high inequality condition ($M=3.36, SD=1.28$) did not say they would be more likely to act unethically compared with participants in the low inequality condition ($M=3.27, SD=1.24$), $b=0.09, p=.202, 95\%CI=[-0.05, 0.23], d=0.07$. I also pre-registered to rerun these analyses controlling for ethnicity, age, and gender, and ethnicity, age, and gender and fairness judgments about inequality and political orientation and after excluding participants whose description of the video was not in line with the content of the video. The results were still not significant and are reported in Table 10 in Appendix A.6.

Unlike hypothesized, people of higher SES did not report an increased likelihood to engage in unethical behaviour, neither when measured as one’s standing on a 10-rung ladder, $b=-0.04, p=.255, 95\%CI=[-0.11, 0.03]$ ($r=.03, p=.259$), nor when measured as social class $b=0.03, p=.487, 95\%CI=[-0.05, 0.10]$ ($r=.02, p=.480$). These results remain non-significant with ethnicity, age, and gender as covariates but, for social class, they become significant in the predicted direction with ethnicity, age, gender, political orientation and judgments of unfairness as covariates and are provided in Table 11 in Appendix A.6 ($p=.035$). There was also no
interaction between SES and inequality, $b = -0.09, p = .226, 95\% \text{CI} = [-0.23, 0.05]$ (Figure 7), nor between social class and inequality, $b = -0.06, p = .419, 95\% \text{CI} = [-0.20, 0.08]$ in predicting unethical behaviour. The interaction remains non-significant after including these covariates (see Table 12 in Appendix A.6) To sum, Study 2.4 does not provide support for any of the hypotheses.

Figure 7 Association between economic inequality and expected unethical behaviour for people who are 1SD above ($b = -0.001, p = .991$) and 1SD below ($b = 0.18, p = .090$) the mean of SES. Intervals around regression lines are 95% confidence intervals.

2.7 Internal Meta-Analysis Studies 2.2-2.4

Across 6 studies, I aimed to replicate the previously found association between SES and unethical behaviour (note that this test could only be done in Studies 2.2-2.4), tested whether
higher levels of perceived economic inequality are associated with increased expectations for unethical behaviour, both in terms of their expectations for others (Studies 2.1a and 2.1b) and for themselves (Studies 2.2-2.4), and whether the difference in unethical behaviour between people of high and low SES is most pronounced when people perceive high levels of inequality. I did not replicate the association between SES and unethical behaviour in any of the 4 studies (see Figure 8 for a summary of the results, \( r=-.03, z=-1.62, p=.106, 95\% \text{CI}=[-0.06, 0.01] \)). In 5 of the 6 studies, I found a positive association between inequality and unethical behaviour (although the results were marginal for Study 2.2). To get a better estimate of the effect size, I conducted an internal meta-analysis for studies 2.2-2.4 (I did not include Studies 2.1a and 2.1b as they looked at the relationship between inequality and expectations of others’ unethical behaviour using a different experimental design). I used the estimates for each study and converted them into correlations using the metafor package (Viechtbauer, 2010). A fixed-effect internal meta-analysis confirms that across the 4 studies greater economic inequality is associated with increased expectations for unethical behaviour, \( r=.11, z=6.20, p<.001, 95\% \text{CI}=[0.08, 0.15] \) (Figure 9).

Unlike hypothesized, there was no significant interaction between SES and economic inequality in predicting unethical behaviour (see Figure 10 for a summary of the results, \( r_{\text{partial}}=.02, z=0.83, p=.408, 95\% \text{ CI} [-0.02, 0.05] \)).
Figure 8 Internal meta-analysis of the association between SES and everyday unethical behaviour. Forest plot showing the correlation between SES and unethical behaviour. The size of each square in the forest plot is proportional to the weight of that sample. The estimate for the fixed-effects model is also given. CI = confidence interval.
Figure 9 Internal meta-analysis of the association between perceived economic inequality and everyday unethical behaviour. Forest plot showing the correlation between economic inequality and unethical behaviour. The size of each square in the forest plot is proportional to the weight of that sample. The estimate for the fixed-effects model is also given. CI = confidence interval.
Figure 10 Internal meta-analysis of the interaction between SES and between perceived economic inequality in predicting everyday unethical behaviour. Forest plot showing the partial correlation between the interaction of SES and perceived economic inequality in predicting everyday unethical behaviour. The size of each square in the forest plot is proportional to the weight of that sample. The estimate for the fixed-effects model is also given. CI = confidence interval.
2.8 General Discussion

Economic inequality has been increasing over recent decades, and this is problematic because inequality has been associated with several negative consequences (e.g., Brandolini & Smeeding, 2011; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) including more unethical behaviours (e.g., Choe, 2008; Neville, 2012), and the acceptance of unethical behaviours by others (To et al., 2022). The present research suggests that perceiving high levels of inequality leads people to expect that they themselves and others will act more unethically.

In Studies 2.1a and 2.1b, people expected others to be more likely to wrongly report a higher die roll for a larger reward when inequality of outcomes was high compared to low. In Study 2.2, there was a marginal effect for people who imagined living in a society with high compared to low inequality saying they would be more likely to engage in everyday unethical behaviour. In Studies 2.3a and 2.3b, people who perceived more inequality, said they would be more likely to engage in everyday unethical behaviour. However, in Study 2.4, participants who saw a video informing them that their society had higher levels of inequality were not significantly more likely to report a willingness to engage in unethical behaviour compared with those who were informed that economic inequality was relatively low. An internal meta-analysis across Studies 2.2-2.4 (which all focused on whether people would expect themselves to act unethically) showed a small but significant effect.

This provides a plausible mechanism for the common finding of past research that higher economic inequality is associated with lower levels of trust (e.g., Alesina & La Ferrera, 2000; Delhey & Dragolov, 2014). As suggested by the present research, people are expecting others (and themselves) to act more unethically. In turn, this belief may then decrease levels of trust.
Further, this belief can also increase the actual occurrence of unethical behaviour (Gino, Ayal, et al., 2009; Gino & Bazerman, 2009).

The effect was consistently stronger when people indicated their expectations about others’ unethical behaviours (Studies 2.1a and 2.1b) as opposed to their own (Studies 2.2-2.4). It is possible that people expect others to be more affected by inequality than they would be themselves (cf., Pronin, Lin, & Ross, 2002). But as laid out in the discussion to Study 2.1b, it is also conceivable that this difference is caused by the different methods used. Specifically, in Studies 2.1a and 2.1b, the inequality manipulation was tied to people’s expectations of whether others would misreport the die roll. This means that inequality was created through people’s decisions rather than their decisions being a consequence of existing levels of inequality. Research on primates and comparisons among small-scale societies suggests that the monopolizability of resources (such as food or wealth) creates more competitive behaviours (Boehm, 1999; Chagnon, 1968, 2013; Gross, 1975; Kaplan et al., 2005; King et al., 2008; Malenky & Wrangham, 1994; Marlowe, 2010; Wrangham & Peterson, 1996; see also Ronay et al., 2020). However, in this thesis, I focus on the effects existing levels of inequality have on expectations of unethical behaviours (as well as dominance and empathic accuracy, see Chapters 3 and 4, respectively). In reality, both of these probably co-occur and reinforce each other. Nonetheless, for these reasons, after completing Studies 2.1a and 2.1b, I shifted gears to manipulate inequality perceptions first and then assessed people’s self-reported expectations within that inequality paradigm.

Across all 4 studies testing for an association between SES and unethical behaviour (Studies 2.2-2.4), I failed to find the hypothesized relationship (Hypothesis 2.2b). This is noteworthy because I used the same vignettes to assess cheating behaviour that have been used
in previous research finding a positive association between SES and unethical behaviour (Piff et al., 2012). While Piff and colleagues (2012) conducted their research with undergraduate students at an American University, I conducted it with online samples of American adults. It is also conceivable that the lack of association found here suggests that the hypothesis that people of higher SES are more likely to say they would act unethically is false, or that it is only true in certain contexts. People of higher SES feel more entitled and powerful, and this may drive their tendencies to act more unethically (Dubois et al., 2015; Piff, 2014). However, in this research I focused on people’s expectations; it is possible that while people of higher SES are, in fact, more likely to engage in everyday unethical behaviour, they are either not aware of it or not willing to admit it. Furthermore, it is also possible that unethical behaviour, and hence expectations about one’s own unethical behaviour depends on the severity or type of unethical behaviour. For example, people of higher SES are more likely to avoid paying their taxes while people of lower SES are more likely to engage in violent crimes (e.g., Daly, 2016; Johns & Siemrod, 2010). Future research would benefit from further exploring the relationship between SES and expectations of acting unethically.

Finally, across 3 out of 4 studies testing for an interaction between SES and inequality in predicting unethical behaviour (Studies 2.2-2.4), I failed to find the hypothesized relationship (Hypothesis 2.3). Given the proposed explanation for this interaction – that the higher likelihood to say one would act unethically among people of higher SES should be exacerbated when people of higher SES have an even greater access to valuable resources and feel therefore even more powerful (i.e., under conditions of high inequality) – it is perhaps not so surprising that there was no interaction in the absence of a main effect of SES, something I will return to in the overall discussion in Chapter 5.
While I found convergent evidence for the relationship between perceived inequality and unethical behaviour across different conceptualizations of inequality and both for people’s expectations of other people’s behaviour as well as their own behaviour, the studies also have some limitations. First, I only asked people how likely they would be to engage in unethical behaviour and did not measure actual behaviour. It is possible that people wrongly assume that they and others would be more likely to act unethically when inequality is high. Nonetheless, this assumption itself, even if wrong, likely has negative consequences such as undermining trust. Future research would benefit from replicating these results with measures that tap into actual unethical behaviour and other potential downstream consequences.

When I manipulated perceptions of inequality (Studies 2.1a, 2.1b, 2.2 and 2.4), I only included conditions of low and high inequality. While my theorizing hypothesizes that a context of high inequality increases expectations of unethical behaviour, it is also possible that a perceived context of low inequality decreases expectations of unethical behaviour, or that both of these happen. Future research might benefit by adding a condition that doesn’t provide any information about inequality to compare the high and low inequality contexts against a baseline level of expectations of unethical behaviour. Furthermore, in manipulating inequality, I didn’t provide any context about how this inequality came to be in the first place. In reality, people likely have assumptions why there is inequality and those assumptions themselves may affect expectations about the likelihood of unethical behaviour. For example, if people believe that the society they live in is meritocratic (or came about through fair means), they may be less likely to expect unethical behaviour. Future research could investigate how beliefs about the fairness or unfairness of inequality affect expectations of unethical behaviour.
Another limitation is that I conducted all studies online, and it is possible that the anonymity of an online context makes people more likely to consider engaging in unethical behaviour as opposed to an in-person study. Moreover, the studies were conducted exclusively with American samples which limits their generalizability. Specifically, the US has higher levels of inequality than most other industrialized countries, and it is possible that these results wouldn’t replicate in less unequal countries. Furthermore, it is also possible that in less developed countries with higher poverty rates, inequality may be less relevant for unethical behaviour. Moreover, it is conceivable that in some cultural contexts, such as in societies with less anonymity, the costs of unethical behaviour may outweigh the benefits even at very high levels of inequality. The measures of unethical behaviour in this research focused on financial advantages. It is possible that in societies where status is less dependent on a person’s income, but, for example, on occupational prestige or adherence to religious norms (Cohen et al., 2017), unethical behaviour would be more likely to occur in other domains that are more relevant for status.
Chapter 3: Perceived Economic Inequality Causes People to Expect More

Dominance, Especially from People of High SES

Since economic inequality changes the structure of SES in a society, it is possible that changes in inequality also affect the strategies by which people increase their status. Dual strategies theory (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001) maintains that people can achieve higher status either through dominance or prestige. A dominance strategy of status enhancement is one that is characterized by coercion and intimidation. Dominance is claimed from others; those individuals often take a disproportionately large proportion of available resources for themselves and are typically feared and resented by their followers (Cheng et al., 2010, 2013). A prestige strategy, on the other hand, is characterized by the demonstration of expertise, and the willingness to freely share skills and knowledge with others. Prestige, in contrast to dominance, is granted by others (Boyd & Richerson, 1988; Cheng et al., 2013; Henrich & Gil-White, 2001) as their followers typically show much deference and respect to them. The tendencies to use dominance and prestige strategies are in part stable personality traits and at the same time strategies that can be employed flexibly in response to contextual factors (e.g., Ronay et al., 2018). Both strategies likely have trade-offs for the individual employing them; for example, a dominance strategy may the opportunity to maximize the amount of resources an individual can accrue, but if unsuccessful, it may lead to ostracism or other forms of punishment. On the other hand, a prestige strategy may require an individual to spend a lot of time trying to master skills, and thus, if unsuccessful, a loss of resources that could have gone elsewhere.
In societies that vary in their levels of inequality, we would expect that people would spontaneously opt for different strategies to rise in the hierarchy. In contexts of high inequality, a greater share of the resources is held by a smaller proportion of society. This renders people’s changes in status to be more consequential as there are larger differences in wealth between different levels of status. Such kinds of contexts create status anxiety over one’s position in society (Delhey & Dragolov, 2014; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) and an increase in competitive behaviour (Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Sommet et al., 2018), and hence people’s willingness to risk using a dominance strategy by attempting to wield control over valuable resources (regardless of their social class) may increase (see also Pierce & White, 2006). In line with this, previous research shows that higher inequality is associated with more risk-taking (Payne et al., 2017), less agreeableness (de Vries et al., 2011), greater aggression and hostility (Greitemeyer and Sagioglou, 2017), and a more independent construal of the self (Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2017). These correlates with inequality all presuppose an increased valuation of one’s self over others, and an increased independent construal of the self suggests that this occurs even at a basic cognitive level (see also Wilkinson & Pickett, 2019). This greater valuation of and concern about oneself over others, in turn, could lead people to become more willing to use a dominance strategy. In addition, because people’s relative position holds more consequences, people may become more desperate and willing to attempt to control others.

While I expect that lower inequality is associated with a decreased likelihood of employing a dominance strategy, a separate question is whether it is also associated with an increased likelihood to employ a prestige strategy. Given the rationale laid out above, it seems plausible that a prestige strategy is more likely to occur in contexts of low inequality. In such contexts there is less status anxiety over one’s position in society (Delhey & Dragolov, 2014;
Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010), less competitive behaviour (Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Sommet et al., 2018), and people don’t stand to lose as much by gaining the skills and knowledge needed to employ a prestige strategy. At the same time, prestige and dominance are not correlated so any changes in one might not be accompanied by changes in the other (Cheng et al., 2010; Cheng et al., 2013). In the present research, I included measures of both dominance and prestige for all studies.

While I argue that higher inequality creates an overall more competitive environment, I expect that one’s position in the hierarchy should also matter for people’s efforts to rise within the hierarchy. People who have higher SES are characterized by having greater access to valued resources, and wealth can be a reliable proxy for power because it affords the capacity to control one’s own outcomes and to exert influence over others’ outcomes (e.g., Dubois et al., 2015). When individuals have more access to wealth and power, then a dominance strategy should be more successful and therefore more appealing. This is because when people have power, they are more likely to be able to employ a dominance strategy even if other people don’t like it – they can claim it and others are less likely to be able to successfully stop them. For example, research has found that people of higher SES are more likely to use dominant tactics to get their way (Belmi & Laurin, 2016).

In addition, as economic inequality increases, people at the top of the hierarchy accrue more and more power relative to those below them. This transfer of power to the top creates a type of economic ecology where dominance becomes increasingly less risky as those at the bottom have access to fewer resources and hence, less power. In these contexts, people of high SES should be more tempted to maintain their power by use of dominance strategies. While it is definitional that people of high SES always have greater access to valued resources relative to
their lower SES counterparts, this relation is exacerbated under conditions in which there is greater economic inequality. This is because a greater percentage of total economic resources accrues to people of higher SES in more unequal populations. Because people of higher SES are able to exert power based on their ability to disproportionally wield control over valuable resources, people of higher SES should be more able to successfully employ a dominance strategy when they have control over a relatively larger share of the overall resources. On the other hand, when inequality is low, people at the top have a smaller proportion of the overall wealth and therefore their chances of successfully employing a dominance strategy should decrease as a result. Thus, in more equal contexts the benefits of employing a dominance strategy may no longer outweigh its costs (see also Ronay et al. 2018). I also tested whether there is an interaction between perceived inequality and SES in expecting prestige strategies.

The above rationale suggests that a dominance strategy will become more appealing and likely 1) for people of high as opposed to low SES (Hypotheses 3.1a and 3.1b), 2) under conditions of high as opposed to low inequality (Hypotheses 3.2a and 3.2b), and 3) especially for people of high SES in high inequality contexts (i.e., there should be an interaction between SES and inequality; Hypotheses 3.3a and 3.3b). I further propose that differences in status and inequality are somewhat consciously accessible to people such that they expect that others and themselves would act more dominantly in these contexts. Such expectations are adaptive as they afford individuals the ability to adjust the character of their social interactions according to the context in a flexible manner. In the present research, I focus on these expectations. I tested these hypotheses across 4 studies (N=2,739) utilizing different means of manipulating/assessing perceptions of inequality and SES, along with 2 different ways of assessing dominance and prestige.
I focus on the effects of people’s perceptions of their own and other people’s social class as well as of the amount of inequality in the environment (which I both assess and manipulate).

### 3.1 Study 3.1a

In Study 3.1a, I tested whether people would expect other people to be more likely to use dominant tactics when they were described as rich as opposed to poor (Hypothesis 3.1a), when they were described as living in an economically unequal society as opposed to a more equal one (Hypothesis 3.2a), and I tested the hypothesis that rich people are expected to be most likely to use dominant tactics when living in a highly unequal as opposed to a more equal society (Hypothesis 3.3a). I also tested people’s expectations about the likelihood of employing a prestige strategy for rich (vs. poor) people living in unequal (vs. more equal) societies and the interaction between wealth and inequality.

**Method**

**Participants.** I solicited a convenience sample of Americans on Prolific. Estimating a medium effect size of $f=.25$, 80% power, alpha of .05, with two groups for the between factor, 4 measurements (for an interaction between 2 groups x 2 repeated measures), and an estimated correlation of 0.5 among repeated measures, I needed a sample size of about 82 (as calculated in GPower, Faul et al., 2009). To ensure the sample size was above this number, I collected data from 420 participants. After excluding participants who failed one of two attention check questions at least once (“For this question, please choose the answer on the far right/at the bottom”, $n=33$, and $n=34$) and/or who indicated that their answers shouldn’t be included in response to a question about whether they had taken the study seriously ($n=10$), the final sample
size was 368 participants ($M$ age = 31.23; 49% female, 50% male, 1% other; 55% Caucasian, 19% Asian, 11% Hispanic, 10% African American, 5% other).

Measures.

Economic Inequality. To manipulate perceptions of inequality, participants were randomly assigned to read a vignette about a society that was either high or low in inequality:

High Inequality

Imagine a society where most people have low incomes and own no or little wealth while a few people have extremely high incomes and own almost all of the wealth. In other words, income and wealth inequality are high; the vast majority of people have only a small proportion of the overall income and wealth, while a small minority have most of the income and wealth.

Low Inequality

Imagine a society where most people have fairly similar incomes and own a fairly similar amount of wealth. In other words, income and wealth inequality are low; the vast majority of people have pretty similar overall incomes and wealth.

Wealth. After reading about either high or low inequality, all participants were asked what rich and poor people in this society were like:

In general, what do you think rich [poor] people are like in this society?

As laid out in the intro to this chapter, I hypothesize that there is a positive association between SES and dominance expectations because of the relatively greater access to valued resources (such as material wealth) for people of higher SES, which in turn, gives them a greater sense of power. Therefore, in this study, I focused on one aspect of SES: people’s material wealth (being either rich or poor).
The order of wealth was counterbalanced; about half of the participants first saw the statement about rich people and responded to the DVs for rich people only, and after they had finished, they read the same vignette describing society as high or low in inequality they had read in the beginning, but this time they were asked to respond to the DVs thinking about poor people. For the other half, the order of social class was reversed.

**Dominance & Prestige.** Participants responded to the 17-item Dominance and Prestige scale (Cheng, Tracy, & Henrich, 2010). Eight items (e.g., “They enjoy having control over other members of the society”) assess the extent to which others are seen as acting in dominant ways and nine items (e.g., “Other citizens of this society respect and admire them”) assess the extent to which others are seen as acting in prestigious ways on a 7-point scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“very much”). Each participant responded to all items of the Dominance and Prestige Scale twice; once referring to rich, and once referring to poor people in the hypothetical society they had read about.

**Results and Discussion**

To test whether participants expected rich people ($M=5.24$, $SD=1.17$, Cronbach’s $\alpha=0.86$) to act in more dominant ways than poor people ($M=3.50$, $SD=0.98$, Cronbach’s $\alpha=0.69$, Hypothesis 3.1a), I collapsed across inequality condition and ran a mixed effects linear model with wealth as predictor and because it was a within-subjects factor, I also included random intercept for wealth. As hypothesized, participants expected rich people to act in more dominant ways than poor people, $b=1.74$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[1.59, 1.89].

Next, I tested whether participants expected people living in societies with high economic inequality ($M=4.64$, $SD=0.65$) to act in more dominant ways than people living in societies with low economic inequality ($M=4.03$, $SD=0.80$, Hypothesis 3.2a, see Table 13 in Appendix B.1 for
correlations among all between-subject variables). Because participants had to indicate to what extent they expected both rich and poor people to act dominantly (i.e., wealth was a within-subjects measure), I created a mean score and collapsed across wealth. As hypothesized, participants were significantly more likely to expect people to act dominantly when living in a society of high as opposed to low inequality, $b=0.62$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[0.47, 0.77].

To test the hypothesis that participants would expect rich people to act in more dominant ways when living in a society of high ($M=5.69$, $SD=0.94$) as opposed to low inequality ($M=3.60$, $SD=1.05$, Hypothesis 3.3a), I ran a mixed linear effects model predicting dominance from inequality, wealth, and the interaction between inequality and wealth, and because wealth was a within-subjects factor, I included a random intercept for social class. As hypothesized, there was a significant interaction between inequality and wealth, $b=0.81$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[0.51, 1.10]. Since the interaction was significant, I probed for the simple slopes of inequality for rich and poor people (Figure 11). Consistent with the hypothesis, in the rich condition, the association between economic inequality and expected dominance was $b=1.02$, $p<.001$, whereas in the poor condition, it was $b=0.21$, $p=.046$. Thus, participants expected rich people to be especially dominant when living in a society of high inequality.
I conducted the same analyses also with prestige as outcome variable. First, I tested whether participants expected rich people ($M=5.08$, $SD=0.99$, Cronbach's $\alpha=0.81$) to act in more (or less) prestigious ways than poor people ($M=3.02$, $SD=1.23$, Cronbach's $\alpha=0.85$). I collapsed across inequality condition and ran a mixed effects linear model with wealth as predictor and because it was a within-subjects factor, I also included random intercepts for wealth. Participants expected rich people to act in more prestigious ways than poor people, $b=2.06$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[1.90, 2.23].

Next, I tested whether there was a difference in expecting prestige behaviour between people living in societies with high economic inequality ($M=4.01$, $SD=0.69$) compared to people
living in societies with low economic inequality ($M=4.08$, $SD=0.73$). Because participants had to indicate to what extent they expected both rich and poor people to act prestigiously (i.e., wealth was a within-subjects measure), I created a mean score and collapsed across wealth. There was no difference in the extent to which participants expected people living in a society of high as opposed to low inequality to act prestigiously, $b=-0.07$, $p=.347$, 95%CI=[-0.22, 0.08].

I also tested whether participants would expect a difference in rich people acting in prestigious ways when living in a society of high ($M=5.20$, $SD=0.96$) as opposed to low inequality ($M=4.93$, $SD=1.01$). I ran a mixed linear effects model predicting prestige from inequality, wealth, and the interaction between inequality and wealth, and because wealth was a within-subjects factor, I included a random intercept for wealth. There was a significant interaction between inequality and wealth, $b=0.67$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[0.35, 0.99]. Since the interaction was significant, I probed for the simple slopes of inequality for the rich and poor conditions (Figure 12). In the rich condition, there was a positive association between economic inequality and expected prestige, $b=0.27$, $p=.020$, whereas in the poor condition, there was a negative association, $b=-0.40$, $p<.001$. Thus, participants expected rich people to be more prestigious when living in a society of high as opposed to low inequality while they expected poor people to be less prestigious when living in a society of high as opposed to low inequality.

To summarize, as hypothesized, participants expected people to be more dominant when they were described as rich as opposed to poor, as living in a society with high as opposed to low inequality, and rich people were expected to be most dominant when living in a highly unequal society. Furthermore, participants also expected rich people to be more prestigious than poor people, but there was no difference in expected prestige between people living in a society with high as opposed to low inequality. There was also an interaction between SES and inequality in
predicting prestige: Participants expected rich people to be more prestigious when living in a highly unequal compared to a more equal society while they expected the reverse pattern for poor people.

![Figure 12](image-url)

**Figure 12** Association between economic inequality and expected prestige for rich and poor people. Intervals around regression lines are 95% confidence intervals.

### 3.2 Study 3.1b

Study 3.1b was a conceptual replication of Study 3.1a. I tested the hypothesis that people would expect a store manager to lead their team in more dominant ways when the difference between the salary of the store manager and their employees was highly unequal compared to being less unequal (Hypothesis 3.3a). The focus of this study was on the difference between people of high
SES in a context of high versus low inequality, and I did therefore not include conditions of low SES.

**Method**

**Participants.** I solicited a convenience sample of Americans on Prolific. Estimating an effect size of $d=.30$, 80% power, alpha of .05, and a two-tailed test, I needed a sample size of about 352 participants (calculated in GPower, Faul et al., 2009). To ensure I was above this number, I collected data from 550 participants. After excluding participants who failed one of two attention check questions (picking the answer option on the far right/at the bottom, $n=25$; correctly recalling how much larger the salary of the store manager was described to be in response to a multiple choice question, $n=9$ for the low inequality condition and $n=32$ for the high inequality condition) and/or who indicated they had not taken the study seriously in response to a binary question, the final sample consisted of 487 participants ($M$ age = 32.52; 53% female, 46% male, 1% other; 62% Caucasian, 20% Asian, 8% Hispanic, 7% African American, 3% other).

**Measures.**

**Economic Inequality.** Participants read a vignette about department stores that described the difference in salary between the store managers and sales people (see below). In the high inequality condition, they read that the store managers make 30 times as much as a full time sales person, whereas in the low inequality condition they read that the store managers make 3 times as much. Because setting their own salary to be much higher could itself be a marker of dominant behaviour and thus a potential alternative explanation for expecting more dominant behaviour in the high inequality condition, I described that the salaries were set by the HR department.

**Vignette**

SES in a context of high versus low inequality, and I did therefore not include conditions of low SES.
For the different department stores around the country, the salaries for both the sales people and the store managers are set by the HR department in the headquarters. Generally, the salaries for the different positions are the same across the different stores. The salary of a store manager is thirty times [three times] larger than the salary of a full time sales person in their store. An important aspect of a manager's job is to use strategies to most effectively lead their team, in order to maximize their store's performance.

**Dominance & Prestige.** Participants completed a version of the Dominance and Prestige scale on a 7-point scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“very much”; Cheng et al., 2010) that was adapted to focus on the situation of the manager and employees (see Appendix B.2 for a list of the adapted items). Eight items assessed dominance ($M=4.54$, $SD=0.87$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.76$) and nine items assessed prestige ($M=4.72$, $SD=0.90$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.85$).

**Results and Discussion**

To test whether the manipulation was successful, participants had to indicate how much of a difference in pay there was between the store manager and their employees on a scale from 1 (“not a big difference”) to 9 (extremely big difference”). Participants in the high inequality condition ($M=8.34$, $SD=1.04$) perceived the pay difference to be significantly higher than participants in the low inequality condition ($M=6.61$, $SD=1.88$), $b=1.73$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[1.45, 2.00] (see Table 14 in Appendix B.2 for correlation between all variables). To test the hypothesis that participants would expect the store manager to be more dominant in the high compared to the low inequality condition, I regressed the mean dominance score on the inequality condition. Consistent with the hypothesis, participants in the high inequality condition ($M=4.64$, $SD=0.90$) expected the store manager to be more dominant than participants in the low inequality condition.
(M=4.46, SD=0.83), b=0.18, p=.020, 95%CI=[0.03, 0.34]. I also tested whether there would be a difference in expectations that the store manager would act in prestigious ways between the high and low inequality conditions. There was no difference between participants in the high inequality condition (M=4.70, SD=0.93) and the low inequality condition (M=4.74, SD=0.87) in expecting the store manager to be prestigious, b=-0.34, p=.677, 95%CI=[-0.19, 0.13]. These results further support the hypothesis that people of high SES are especially likely to be expected to act dominantly in contexts of high as opposed to low inequality.

3.3 Study 3.2

Studies 3.1a and 3.1b focused on people’s expectations about the behaviour of people of high SES in a context of high compared to low inequality. In Study 3.2, I built on these findings by focusing on people’s beliefs about their own behaviour (Hypotheses 3.1b, 3.2b, 3.3b).

Method

Participants. I solicited a convenience sample of Americans on MTurk. The data was collected together with data for a different project. The sample size was based on that project and was determined to be 1040 participants. After excluding participants who failed one attention check question (“For this question, please choose the answer on the far left”, n=77) and/or who indicated that their answers shouldn’t be included in response to a question about whether they paid attention and took the study seriously (n=13), the final sample size was 962 participants (M age = 37.16; 53% female, 46% male; 72% Caucasian, 12% African American, 8% Hispanic, 6% Asian, 2% other).

Social Class. I operationalized SES in two ways. First, participants indicated their subjective SES (Adler et al., 2000) on a ladder with 10 rungs that indicated their relative standing in society
(M=5.29, SD=1.74). Second, they also indicated which of 5 social classes they thought they belonged to (i.e., poor, working-class, middle-class, upper middle-class, and upper-class; Jackman & Jackman, 1983; M=2.70, SD=0.73).

**Perceived Economic Inequality & Unfairness Beliefs.** Participants completed the 8-item Subjective Inequality Scale (Schmalor & Heine, 2022) which consists of two subscales: one measures how much inequality people perceive in their state of residence (M=4.14, SD=1.47, Cronbach’s α = 0.89; e.g., “Almost all of the money that is earned goes to only a few people”) and the other measures how unfair they find high levels of inequality (M=4.86, SD=1.40, α = 0.85; e.g., “It is extremely unfair if the overall amount of economic inequality is very high”) on a 7-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

**Dominance & Prestige.** Participants completed the 17-item Dominance and Prestige Scale (Cheng et al., 2010; sample item for dominance “I enjoy having control over others, 8 items assess dominance, M=2.96, SD=1.18, α = 0.84; sample item for prestige “Members of my group respect and admire me”, 9 items assess prestige, M=4.80, SD=0.95, α = 0.79) on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“very much”).

**Results and Discussion**

I first tested the association between subjective SES as well as self-reported social class and self-reported dominance and perceived inequality and self-reported dominance. As hypothesized, the groups of people that included those of higher SES, b=0.35, p<.001, 95%CI=[0.28, 0.42] (r=.30, p<.001; Hypothesis 3.1b; note that all continuous predictor variables are standardized for all studies in Chapter 3), those of higher social class, b=0.28, p<.001, 95%CI=[0.20, 0.35] (r=.24, p<.001; Hypothesis 3.1b), and those who perceived more inequality, b=0.18, p<.001, 95%CI=[0.11, 0.25] (r=.15, p<.001; Hypothesis 3.2b) each described themselves to act in more
dominant ways (see Table 15 in Appendix B.3 for correlations between all variables). Because perceived inequality has been found to be associated with age, SES, and political orientation (Schmalor & Heine, 2022) and dominance was also correlated with all three variables in the present study, I reran all analyses including these covariates. The results hold and are reported in Table 16 in Appendix B.3. To test whether there was an interaction between SES and perceived inequality, I regressed participants’ perceived amount of inequality, their subjective SES, and the interaction term on their self-reported dominance. There was a significant interaction, $b=0.16$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[0.09, 0.23]. Since the interaction was significant, I probed for the simple slopes at 1 SD above and below the mean of subjective SES (Figure 13). Consistent with the hypothesis (Hypothesis 3.3b), at 1 SD above the mean the association between perceived economic inequality and self-reported dominance was $b=0.35$, $p<.001$, whereas at 1 SD below the mean, it was $b=0.04$, $p=.483$. Thus, when people of high SES perceive a lot of inequality, they report being more dominant than when they perceive less inequality.

To test the robustness of these effects, I conducted the same analyses with the alternative 5-point measure of social class. There was again a significant interaction, $b=0.11$, $p=.001$, 95%CI=[0.05, 0.18]. Since the interaction was significant, I probed again for the simple slopes at 1 SD above and below the mean of self-reported social class. Replicating the results from above, at 1 SD above the mean the association between perceived economic inequality and self-reported dominance was $b=0.32$, $p<.001$, whereas at 1 SD below the mean, it was $b=0.10$, $p=.073$. Both the interaction between SES and perceived inequality and between social class and perceived inequality hold when controlling for fairness judgments of inequality and political orientation (see Table 16). When people of a higher social class perceive a lot of inequality, they report being more dominant than when they perceive less inequality.
Figure 13 Association between perceived economic inequality and self-reported dominance for people who are 1SD above and 1SD below the mean of SES. Intervals around regression lines are 95% confidence intervals.

Next, I tested the association between subjective SES, self-reported social class, perceived inequality, and self-reported prestige. People of higher SES, $b=0.19$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[0.14, 0.25] ($r=.20$, $p<.001$), and of higher social class, $b=0.17$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[0.11, 0.23] ($r=.18$, $p<.001$), described themselves to use more prestige strategies, and people who perceived more inequality, $b=-0.11$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[-0.17, -0.05] ($r=-.11$, $p<.001$), described themselves to use fewer prestige strategies. I again controlled for age, SES, and political orientation. The results hold with these covariates and are reported in Table 17 in Appendix B.3. I also tested for an interaction between perceived inequality and SES in predicting prestige.
strategies. There was a significant interaction, $b=-0.09, p<.001$, $95\% \text{CI}=[-0.15, -0.03]$. Since the interaction was significant, I probed for the simple slopes at 1 SD above and below the mean of subjective SES (Figure 14). At 1 SD above the mean the association between perceived economic inequality and self-reported prestige was $b=-0.17, p<.001$, whereas at 1 SD below the mean, it was $b=0.01, p=.856$. Thus, when people of high SES perceive a lot of inequality, they report having less prestige than when they perceive less inequality.

To test the robustness of these effects, I conducted the same analyses with the alternative 5-point measure of social class. There was a marginally significant interaction, $b=-0.06, p=.053$, $95\% \text{CI}=[-0.11, 0.0008]$. Since the interaction was marginally significant, I probed again for the simple slopes at 1 SD above and below the mean of subjective SES. Replicating the results from above, at 1 SD above the mean the association between perceived economic inequality and self-reported prestige was $b=-0.14, p=.001$, whereas at 1 SD below the mean, it was $b=-0.03$, $p=.523$. Both the interaction between SES and perceived inequality and between social class and perceived inequality (it is marginally significant in the latter case) hold when controlling for age, SES, and political orientation (see Table 17).
3.4 Study 3.3

In Study 3.2, I correlated self-reported SES and inequality perceptions with expectations that participants would act dominantly. In Study 3.3, I manipulated both people’s perceived SES and how much inequality they perceived to be in a fictional society and assessing whether perceiving inequality to be high would make them more likely to act in dominant ways (Hypothesis 3.3a). As in Study 3.2b, I focused only on people of high SES.

**Method**

**Participants.** I solicited a convenience sample of Americans on Prolific. Even though the analysis for this study was the same as in Study 3.1b, I estimated a smaller effect size in this
study as participants were asked to report the likelihood of themselves acting dominantly rather than other people. Because people likely believe themselves to act in nicer ways, I expected the effect size to be smaller. Estimating an effect size of $d=.20$, 80% power, alpha of .05, and a two-tailed test, I needed a sample size of about 800 participants (calculated in GPower, Faul et al., 2009). To ensure I was above this number I collected data from 1113 participants. After excluding participants who failed at least one of two attention check questions (“Which income level have you been assigned to?”, $n=12$; “For this question, please move the slider to the very right”, $n=24$) and/or chose the wrong answer to a question testing basic English comprehension ($n=30$) and/or who indicated that their answers shouldn’t be included in response to a question about whether they paid attention and took the study seriously ($n=16$), the final sample size was 922 participants ($M$ age = 34.57; 52% female, 46% male, 1% other; 69% Caucasian, 14% Asian, 7% Hispanic, 6% African American, 4% other).

**Economic Inequality.** Participants read about a fictitious society, Bimboola, that they had to imagine becoming part of (adapted from Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2017). They learned that Bimboola has different income tiers, and that they would be assigned to one of these incomes. In the high inequality condition, participants learned that people in income group 1 earn, on average, 120,000 Bimboolan Dollars (BD) and in income group 2 they earn 20,000 BD. In the low inequality condition, participants learned that people in income group 1 earn, on average, 120,000 BD and in income group 2, they earn 90,000 BD. All participants were assigned to income group 1. Thus, across both conditions participants had the same income, but the

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9 I included this question because at the time of data collection, researchers were concerned about people from non-English speaking countries accessing studies.
10 Due to an error, the second attention check question and the question testing English comprehension were only given to half of the sample.
heterogeneity in income was higher in the high as opposed to the low inequality condition. To strengthen the manipulation, participants also had to choose among a house, car, and vacation spot for their life as a Bimboolean citizen. They saw three different options of houses, cars, and vacations that income group 1 could choose from and three different options that income group 2 could choose from. Importantly, across both conditions, the options provided for income group 1 were identical, and as all participants were assigned to income group 1, they all had the same options. Thus, there was no difference in the kind of lifestyle they could afford. But the options they saw available to people in income group 2 differed by condition: In the high inequality condition, the difference in the value of the houses, cars, and vacation types between income group 1 and 2 were much more extreme than in the low inequality condition.

**Dominance & Prestige.** To assess people’s expectations about their likelihood to act in dominant ways, they first read the following information about their job in Bimboola:

You are the CEO of a Bimboolean corporation. Both your salary and the salary of your employees were determined by the board and are beyond your control. As the CEO, your annual salary is 120,000 Bimboolean Dollars (BD) per year; a full time worker in the corporation has an average salary of BD 90,000 [20,000] per year.

To avoid participants inferring they must be dominant because they would have (hypothetically) chosen to have a much higher salary than their employees, the vignette explained that they didn’t have any control over the amount of their or their employees’ salary. Participants also learned that about 5% of all Bimboolean citizens belonged to income group 1 and 95% to income group 2.
1) Open Response. To assess participants’ expectations to act in dominant ways, they had three minutes to describe how they would lead people in their job. They were given the following prompt:

In the space below, please describe your management style. What strategies might you use to get your employees to do what you want them to do, in order to achieve your goals as CEO in Bimboola? For example, how would you get your employees to work hard? How would you deal with conflicts between employees? How would you deal with an employee not fulfilling their responsibilities?

You will be able to proceed to the next question after 3 minutes.

2) Dominance & Prestige Scale. After completing the open response question, participants completed a version of the Dominance and Prestige scale that was adapted for this situation on a 7-point scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“very much”; Cheng et al., 2010). Five items assessed dominance ($M=3.02$, $SD=1.32$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.88$), and five items assessed prestige ($M=5.67$, $SD=0.92$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.75$) (see Appendix B.4 for complete list of items).

Results and Discussion

To test whether the manipulation was successful, participants completed one item assessing to what extent they found Bimboola to be equal or unequal on a 9-point scale from 1 (“extremely equal”) to 9 (“extremely unequal”). Participants in the high inequality condition ($M=7.94$, $SD=2.11$) perceived Bimboola to be significantly more unequal than participants in the low inequality condition ($M=3.76$, $SD=2.12$), $b=4.18$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[3.90, 4.45] (see Table 18 in Appendix B.4 for correlations between all measures).
Next, I tested the hypothesis that people in the high inequality condition would say they would act in more dominant ways than participants in the low inequality condition (note that all participants were assigned to be in the high SES condition; Hypothesis 3.3b). I tested this hypothesis in two ways. First, coders, who were blind to the hypothesis and condition participants were assigned to, rated the extent to which the open responses described dominant behaviour. 4 Research Assistants (RAs) were trained together, and each response was coded by at least 2 Ras (intrarater reliability: ICC = 0.79, 95% CI=[0.77, 0.81]; I calculated the ICC using the psych package and ice function in R based on the average rating across coders and coders’ agreement in a one-way random effects model which treats the coders but not the participants as random effects\textsuperscript{11}; an ICC between 0.75 and 0.90 is considered good; Koo & Li, 2016). Consistent with the hypothesis, participants in the high inequality condition (M=2.03, SD=1.10) described their management style as significantly more dominant than participants in the low inequality condition (M=1.89, SD=0.96), \( b=0.14, p=.037, 95\% CI=[0.01, 0.28] \).

Second, participants in the high inequality condition (M=3.12, SD=1.40) also indicated in response to the items in the dominance scale that they would act in more dominant ways than participants in the low inequality condition (M=2.93, SD=1.24), \( b=0.19, p=.032, 95\% CI=[0.02, 0.36] \).

I then tested whether there was also a difference in expecting to act in prestigious ways for people of high SES in the high as opposed to the low inequality condition. I again

\textsuperscript{11} Note that it is not possible to use the two-way random-effects model (which treats participants as random effects as well) when each coder rates a different subset of participants (Koo & Li, 2016).
tested this in two ways. The same coders also rated the extent to which the same open
responses described prestige behaviour (intrarater reliability: ICC = 0.80, 95% CI=[0.78,
0.82]). Participants in the high inequality condition (M=3.02, SD=1.17) described their
management style as marginally less prestigious than participants in the low inequality
condition (M=3.16, SD=1.13), b=-0.14, p=.072, 95%CI=[-0.29, 0.01].

Second, there was no difference between participants in the high inequality
condition (M=3.12, SD=1.40) and participants in the low inequality condition (M=2.93,
SD=1.24) in indicating in response to the prestige items that they would act in more
prestigious ways, b=0.03, p=.624, 95%CI=[-0.09, 0.15]. Together, these results suggest that people of high SES expect themselves to behave more
dominantly when they perceive their environment to be high as opposed to low in inequality. For
prestige, the results were more mixed.

3.5 General Discussion

Across 4 studies, I found that people expect both others and themselves to act more dominantly
when being of high as opposed to low SES, when perceiving high as opposed to low inequality,
and that expectations of dominance behaviour for people of high SES are greatest when
inequality is high as opposed to low suggesting that perceiving high levels of inequality
exacerbates the effects of SES.

When people perceive high inequality, they become more concerned about their own
status and competitive, as their relative standing in society holds more consequences (Frank,
2007; Schmalor & Heine, 2022). Inequality is associated with greater risk-taking (Payne et al.,
2017), less agreeableness (de Vries et al., 2011), and greater aggression and hostility
The studies in this chapter show that inequality also causes people to expect that they and others will act in more dominant ways. Dominance is one avenue by which people can attain status (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001). Dominance is based on intimidation and force. As people become more preoccupied about their status when they perceive inequality to be high (Frank, 2007; Schmalor & Heine, 2022), they may also become more willing to employ a dominance strategy.

People of higher SES have more power, control over their lives, and need to rely less on others to get their way (e.g., Dietze & Knowles, 2016; Dubois et al., 2015). As a result, they may also be more willing to use dominant tactics to get their way (Belmi & Laurin, 2016), and hence to expect that others and they themselves would use dominant tactics. In line with this, research finds that people of higher SES feel more entitled and narcissistic (Piff, 2014).

If people of higher SES say they would act in more dominant ways (and if people expect others to act in more dominant ways when they are of high as opposed to low SES) because people of high SES have a greater access to valued resources and hence, feel more powerful, then there should also be an interaction between SES and inequality perceptions such that people of high SES should be even more dominant when they perceive inequality to be high. I found evidence for this hypothesis across all 4 studies – 2 studies focused on people’s expectations of other people’s behaviour and 2 studies focused on their expectations about their own behaviour (note that in 2 experiments in this chapter, everyone was assigned to be (Study 3.3) or think of another person (Study 3.1b) of high SES and the only variable I manipulated was the inequality condition participants were assigned to thus allowing me to test for the main effect of high SES under conditions of high compared to low inequality.
Study 3.3 asked participants to describe their management style before participants responded to the Dominance and Prestige Scale. The fact that coders perceived the responses of participants in the high inequality condition to be more indicative of using a dominance strategy suggests that people spontaneously expect to employ this strategy (rather than simply endorsing items of a scale after being prompted with and reflecting about them). Furthermore, Studies 3.1b and 3.3 both described a context where the person of high SES was the manager of a store or CEO of a company, respectively, who had a higher income in the high as opposed to low inequality condition, whereas Studies 3.1a and 3.2 described rich and poor people in a society with high or low inequality or asked people about their subjective SES and perceived inequality in society, respectively. Thus, I find evidence for the hypothesized relationship between SES and dominance, inequality and dominance, and the interaction between SES and inequality in predicting dominance across different conceptualizations of SES and inequality.

These findings have some important implications. First, if perceiving higher inequality is associated with expectations that others and oneself will act increasingly in dominant ways, it may undermine trust and cooperation. These findings further build on the extant literature suggesting that high (perceived) inequality leads to a host of social ills more broadly (see also Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) and to an increase in self-centeredness more specifically. Furthermore, these findings also replicate past research showing that people say they are more likely to act in dominant ways when they are of high as opposed to low SES (Belmi & Laurin, 2016), and they further show that people also expect others to act in more dominant ways when they are of high as opposed to low SES. This also further suggests that being of high SES leads people to expect themselves and others to become more self-centered. But importantly, these results also show that high SES doesn’t lead unequivocally to the same expectations of dominant
behaviour; rather the context matters, and specifically, I found that the effects of SES are exacerbated under conditions of high perceived economic inequality. This is important for at least two reasons. One, it suggests that a complete understanding of the psychological effects of SES may not be possible without also considering the effects of perceived inequality. Two, it also suggests that at least some of the ill effects that have been observed to be associated with being of high SES aren’t actually inherent to being of high SES per se, but to being high SES in a context of perceiving high inequality (i.e., perceiving a greater psychological difference between people of low and high SES or more power). If true, then this would have consequences for policies aimed at reducing these ill effects.

I also included a measure of prestige in all studies, but the results were more mixed. In both studies testing the relationship between SES and prestige, I found that people of higher SES are expected to act in more prestigious ways (both when thinking about other people and about oneself). However, the relationship between inequality and prestige was inconsistent. In Study 3.1a, I found no difference in expectations about the use of prestige strategies for people living in societies of high compared to low inequality. But the effect of inequality was collapsed across imagining rich and poor people living in a society of either high or low inequality (i.e., wealth was a within-subjects factor), and a pure measure of inequality may be more informative. In Study 2, I found that people who say they perceive more inequality also say they use a prestige strategy less than people who perceive less inequality.

Finally, there was a significant interaction between SES and inequality in predicting prestige strategies for 3 out of 5 tests (Study 3.3 contained two separate measures to assess people’s expectations of prestige strategies); 2 of these measures yielded a negative association between inequality and prestige among people of high SES and 1 measure yielded a positive
association. More research is needed to further explore whether and in which ways inequality perceptions affect the use of prestige strategies.

These studies also have some limitations. First, all studies focused exclusively on people’s expectations about other people’s (Studies 3.1a and 3.1b) or their own (Studies 3.2 and 3.3) behaviours. To the extent that it is adaptive to tailor the employment of a dominance strategy to one’s own SES and the amount of perceived inequality in the environment, it would also seem adaptive to tailor one’s expectations about the likelihood that others and oneself will act dominantly. However, I have not tested actual behaviour.

Furthermore, I focused only on perceptions of economic inequality and SES (which were both either assessed or manipulated). While perceptions of these economic factors are associated with various self-centered cognitions and behaviours (e.g., Belmi & Laurin, 2016; Piff, 2014; Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2017; To et al., 2022) and it seems plausible that perceiving these factors (in the environment) is itself adaptive, future research would benefit from testing how these results compare to research looking at objective indices of inequality and SES. Finally, all studies described in this chapter were conducted exclusively with online and American samples which limits their generalizability.
Chapter 4: Perceived Economic Inequality Decreases Empathic Accuracy, Especially for People of High SES

Much past research has investigated the role of social class in empathic accuracy. One line of reasoning argues for an inverse relationship between social class and empathic accuracy (i.e., correctly inferring the emotions of others). This is because people of high SES have a greater share of the resources, rendering them less dependent on others and less motivated to attend to them (Dietze & Knowles, 2016). That is, the greater self-sufficiency of high SES individuals makes them more self-focused (Dietze & Knowles, 2016; Kraus et al., 2010). Research supporting this finds that higher SES individuals tend to be less engaged with others (Kraus & Keltner, 2009), pay less attention to contextual cues when judging people’s emotions (Kraus et al., 2009), and are less accurate at perceiving others’ emotions (Krause et al., 2010). On the other hand, other research finds that high SES individuals are better at judging emotions (Deveney et al., 2018) or finds no association between SES and empathic accuracy (Hall et al., 2015).

These mixed findings raise the possibility that moderators may influence the relationship between SES and empathic accuracy. One such potential moderator is the degree of economic inequality that people perceive. Although SES and inequality are conceptually interrelated, they are distinct constructs that may have diverging effects. While much research has explored the links between SES and empathic accuracy (e.g., Dietze & Knowles, 2016, 2020; Kraus et al., 2010), the role of inequality remains unclear.

Why might inequality impact empathic accuracy? Here I propose and test two different effects: First, I expect that higher levels of perceived inequality will lead to lower empathic
accuracy overall. In highly unequal settings, one’s position within the social hierarchy is even more consequential because people at the top receive an even larger portion of benefits. High inequality thus forms an ecology that should foster a more competitive mindset where people are motivated to reach the top because of the greater stakes and, as a result, are more self-focused and concerned about their own success. Consistent with this hypothesis, greater inequality is associated with more competition (Krupp & Cook, 2018), risk-taking (Payne et al., 2017), and independent self-concepts (Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2017). These correlates of inequality suggest a greater self-focus that may be associated with lower empathic accuracy. Therefore, I hypothesize that people who perceive more inequality will show less empathic accuracy overall (Hypothesis 4.2).

Second, I expect this main effect will be qualified by an interaction between SES and perceived inequality that exacerbates the decrease in empathic accuracy for individuals of high SES (Hypothesis 3c). Previous research that has linked high SES with a decrease in empathic accuracy suggests that individuals of high SES are more self-sufficient and therefore need not spend as much social-cognitive resources on correctly judging the emotions of others (e.g., Dietze & Knowles, 2016, 2020; Kraus et al., 2010; but see Hall et al., 2015). As high SES individuals perceive greater inequality this effect should grow even stronger, as they should perceive an even larger gulf between themselves and the rest of the SES hierarchy, thereby leading them to view themselves as even more self-sufficient and, as a result, displaying even less empathic accuracy. In contrast, for those low in SES, perceiving more inequality does not lead them to feel any more self-sufficient compared with those who perceive little inequality. Regardless of levels of perceived inequality, people of low SES find themselves at the bottom of a hierarchy, somewhat dependent upon others and thus needing to attend more closely to them.
As in Chapters 2 & 3, I focus on people’s subjective perceptions of SES and inequality. While each can be measured objectively, SES and inequality can also be subjectively perceived, and these feelings can influence one’s thoughts and behaviours (e.g., Adler et al., 2000; Schmalor & Heine, 2022). When individuals feel that they have high rank, or that there are large differences in rank within their societies, this should affect their motivation to attend to others. With respect to empathic accuracy, I focus on two aspects of empathic accuracy: emotional understanding (the ability to infer the emotions of others from context which I look at in Studies 4.1a and 4.1b) and emotional perception (the ability to correctly perceive the emotions of others which I look at in Studies 4.2a, 4.2b, and 4.3). In this chapter, across 5 studies (N=2,481; 3 studies were pre-registered), I aim to address some of the mixed findings by assessing whether high SES predicts decreased empathic accuracy (Hypothesis 4.1) and test the following two novel hypotheses: specifically, I predict that (1) people who perceive more inequality show less empathic accuracy (Hypothesis 4.2) and (2) that the relative worse performance of people of higher SES is most pronounced among people who perceive high inequality (Hypothesis 3c).

4.1 Study 4.1a

In Study 4.1a, I investigated whether people of high SES show less empathic accuracy than people of low SES (Hypothesis 4.1), whether people who perceive a lot of inequality show less empathic accuracy than people who perceive less inequality (Hypothesis 4.2), and whether people of high SES who perceive a lot of inequality show less empathic accuracy than people of high SES who perceive less inequality (Hypothesis 3c).

Method
**Sample Size.** The target sample size for all 5 studies was based on a power analysis for the expected main effect of perceived inequality on empathic accuracy. For Studies 4.1a-4.2b, which were all correlational designs, I chose the target sample size based on recommendations from Schönbrodt and Perugini (2013; power analysis for Study 4.3 will be discussed in the Methods section of Study 4.3). Simulations described by Schönbrodt and Perugini (2013) demonstrated that a sample size of 252 will allow a true correlation of $\rho=.10$ to be detected 80% of the time, and in all 4 correlational studies, I ensured that a final sample size was larger than this minimum.

**Participants.** I solicited a convenience sample of Americans on TurkPrime and collected data from 469 participants. After excluding participants who failed attention checks to either pick the answer option on the far left upon being requested to do so ($n=80$) and/or to indicate that they had taken the survey seriously in response to a binary question ($n=13$), the final sample consisted of 379 participants ($M_{age}=34.43$, $SD=10.06$; 43% female; 64% Caucasian, 22% African-American, 14% other).

**Measures.**

**Social Class.** I operationalized SES in two ways. First, participants indicated their subjective SES (Adler et al., 2000) on a ladder with 10 rungs that indicated one’s relative standing in society ($M=5.53$, $SD=1.98$). Second, participants indicated which of 5 social classes they thought they belonged to (i.e., poor, working-class, middle-class, upper middle-class, and upper-class; Jackman & Jackman, 1983; $M=2.78$, $SD=0.80$).

**Perceived Economic Inequality and Unfairness Beliefs about Inequality.** Participants completed the 8-item Subjective Inequality Scale (Schmalor & Heine, 2022) which consists of two subscales: one assesses how much inequality people perceive in their state of residence ($M=4.57$, $SD=1.52$, Cronbach’s $\alpha=.92$; e.g., “Almost all of the money that is earned goes to only
a few people”) and the other assesses how unfair they find high levels of inequality to be 
($M=5.11$, $SD=1.33$, $\alpha=.85$; e.g., “It is extremely unfair if the overall amount of economic 
inequality is very high”) on a 7-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

**Empathic Accuracy.** Participants took the Situational Test of Emotional Understanding 
(MacCann & Roberts, 2008), in which they read 42 different scenarios, and chose the emotion a 
target person is most likely to experience (e.g., “If the current situation continues, Denise’s 
employer will probably be able to move her job to a location much closer to her home, which she 
really wants. Denise is most likely to feel?”). I summed the number of correct responses 
($M=22.28$, $SD=9.00$, $\alpha=.90$).

**Results and Discussion**

First, I aimed to replicate the negative association between subjective SES and empathic 
accuracy (Hypothesis 4.1). People who reported higher SES showed lower empathic accuracy, 
$b=-4.61$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[-5.39, -3.83] ($r=-.51$, $p<.001$; predictor variables in all studies are 
standardized; see Table 19 Appendix C.1 for correlation table).

Next, I tested whether people who perceived more inequality showed less empathic 
accuracy (Hypothesis 4.2). As hypothesized, people who perceived more inequality showed 
worse empathic accuracy, $b=-3.89$, $p<.001$, 95%CI=[-4.71, -3.07] ($r=-.44$, $p<.001$). Finally, I 
added an interaction term between perceived inequality and SES to the model, $b=-1.96$, $p<.001$, 
95%CI=[-2.73, -1.18]. Since the interaction was significant, I probed for the simple slopes at 1 SD above 
and below the mean on SES (Figure 15). As hypothesized, for people of high SES, the more 
inequality they perceived, the worse was their performance on the empathic accuracy task, $b=-
5.24$, $p<.001$ (Hypothesis 3c). For people of lower SES, the association between perceived
inequality and empathic accuracy was $b=-1.32$, $p<.001$. As a robustness check, I also conducted these analyses with conservatism, gender, and unfairness beliefs about inequality as covariates, because all three variables tend to be associated with perceived inequality (Schmalor & Heine, in 2022) and were also associated with empathic accuracy. The results hold with these covariates (see Table 20 in Appendix C.1).

To further test the robustness of these effects, I conducted the same analyses with the alternative 5-point measure of SES; the same patterns as described above emerged. People of higher social class showed less empathic accuracy than people of lower social class, $b=-3.57$, $p<.001$ ($r=-.39$, $p<.001$), and there was also a significant interaction between social class and perceived inequality in predicting performance on the empathic accuracy task, $b=-1.70$, $p<.001$. Probing for the simple slopes showed that people of higher social class demonstrated the least empathic accuracy when they perceived inequality to be high as opposed to low, $b=-5.23$, $p<.001$. For people of lower social class, the association between perceived inequality and empathic accuracy was $b=-1.83$, $p=.002$. These results also held when controlling for conservatism, gender, and unfairness beliefs about inequality as covariates (see Table 21 in Appendix C.1).

To summarize, consistent with the hypotheses, in Study 4.1a, people of higher SES performed worse at the empathic accuracy task than people of lower SES, people who perceived more inequality performed worse than people who perceived less inequality, and people of higher SES showed the least empathic accuracy when they perceived high as opposed to low levels of economic inequality.
4.2 Study 4.1b

In Study 4.1b, I sought to replicate the findings of Study 4.1a. I pre-registered the hypotheses, methods, sample size, exclusion criteria, and the analysis plan on the OSF (https://osf.io/34zw7; see also Appendix C.2).

Method

Participants. I pre-registered to collect data from 550 American participants on TurkPrime. After excluding participants who failed the attention checks to either pick the answer option on the far left (or at the top) upon being requested to do so \( (n=111) \) and/or to indicate that they had taken the survey seriously in response to a binary question \( (n=3) \), the final sample consisted of 440
participants (Mage=36.04, SD=10.96; 41% female; 63% Caucasian, 20% African-American, 17% other).

**Measures.**

I used the same measures of subjective social class (M=5.99, SD=1.82 for the ladder; M=2.99, SD=0.73 for the 5-point scale), perceived economic inequality (M=4.53, SD=1.46, \( \alpha = .89 \) for perceived inequality and M=5.10, SD=1.23, \( \alpha = .81 \) for unfairness beliefs), and empathic accuracy (M=21.82, SD=8.96, \( \alpha = .90 \)) as in Study 4.1a.

**Results and Discussion**

Replicating Study 4.1a, I again found a negative association between SES and empathic accuracy, \( b=-3.74, p<.001, 95\% CI=[-4.51, -2.98] \) (\( r=-.42, p<.001; \) Hypothesis 4.1; see Table 22 in Appendix C.2 for correlation table). Next, I tested the hypothesis that people who perceive more inequality show less empathic accuracy (Hypothesis 4.2). Consistent with the hypothesis, participants who perceived more inequality performed worse on the empathic accuracy task, \( b=-2.99, p<.001, 95\% CI=[-3.78, -2.20] \) (\( r=-.33, p<.001 \)). Finally, I added an interaction term between perceived inequality and SES to the model, \( b=-1.91, p<.001, 95\% CI=[-2.63, -1.19] \). Since the interaction was significant, I probed the interaction for the simple slopes at 1 SD above and below the mean on SES (Figure 16). As hypothesized, people of higher SES performed worse on the empathic accuracy task when they perceived economic inequality to be high as opposed to low, \( b=-4.36, p<.001 \) (Hypothesis 3c). For people of lower SES the association between perceived economic inequality and empathic accuracy was \( b=-1.91, p=.003 \). As a robustness check, I also pre-registered to conduct these analyses with conservatism, gender, and
with unfairness beliefs of high inequality as covariates. The results hold with these covariates (see Table 23 in Appendix C.2).

To further test the robustness of these effects, I again conducted the same analyses with the 5-point measure of SES, and again found the same patterns. People of higher social class showed less empathic accuracy than people of lower social class, \( b = -2.59, p < .001 \) (\( r = .29, p < .001 \)), and there was also a significant interaction between social class and perceived inequality in predicting performance on the empathic accuracy task, \( b = -1.49, p < .001 \). Probing for the simple slopes showed that people of higher social class demonstrated the least empathic accuracy when they perceived inequality to be high as opposed to low, \( b = -4.64, p < .001 \). For people of lower social class, the association between perceived inequality and empathic accuracy was \( b = -1.67, p = .002 \). These results also held when controlling for conservatism, gender, and unfairness beliefs about inequality as covariates (see Table 24 in Appendix C.2).

To summarize, consistent with the hypotheses and replicating the results from Study 4.1a, in Study 4.1b, people of higher SES performed worse at the empathic accuracy task than people of lower SES, people who perceived more inequality performed worse than people who perceived less inequality, and people of higher SES showed the least empathic accuracy when they perceived high as opposed to low levels of economic inequality.
4.3 Study 4.2a

In Study 4.2a, I sought to replicate the results from Studies 4.1a and 4.1b using a different operationalization of empathic accuracy. I again investigated whether people of high SES show less empathic accuracy than people of low SES (Hypothesis 4.1), whether people who perceive a lot of inequality show less empathic accuracy than people who perceive less inequality (Hypothesis 4.2), and whether people of high SES who perceive a lot of inequality show less empathic accuracy than people of high SES who perceive less inequality (Hypothesis 3c).

Method
**Participants.** I collected data from 284 Americans through TurkPrime (\(M_{\text{age}}=37.34, SD=13.23; 47\% \text{ female; 75\% Caucasian, 11\% African-American, 14\% other}\)). This study did not contain any exclusion criteria.

**Measures.**

**Social Class.** Participants indicated their subjective SES on the same 10-rung ladder as in Study 4.1a (\(M=5.34, SD=2.16\)).

**Perceived Economic Inequality and Unfairness Beliefs about Inequality.** I used the same measure of perceived inequality (\(M=4.44, SD=1.50, \alpha=.91\)) and unfairness beliefs about inequality (\(M=4.85, 1.49, \alpha=.86\)) as in Study 4.1a.

**Empathic Accuracy.** To assess empathic accuracy, participants took the “Mind-in-the-Eyes” task (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001). In this task, participants viewed 36 pictures showing only the eyes of people displaying different emotions and chose among 4 options which emotion the person is displaying. I summed the number of correct responses (\(M=21.35, SD=8.58, \alpha=.91\)).

**Results and Discussion**

First, I again replicated the negative association between SES and empathic accuracy previous research has found, \(b=-3.11, p<.001, 95\% \text{CI}=[-4.08, -2.13] (r=-.37, p<.001; \text{Hypothesis 4.1}; \text{see Table 25 in Appendix C.3 for correlation between all variables}). Next, I tested whether there was a negative association between perceived inequality and empathic accuracy (Hypothesis 4.2). As hypothesized, people who perceived more inequality had lower empathic accuracy, \(b=-2.79, p<.001, 95\% \text{CI}=[-3.74, -1.84] (r=-.31, p<.001). Finally, I added an interaction term between perceived inequality and SES to the model, \(b=-1.26, p=.004, 95\% \text{CI}=[-2.101, -0.42].\) Since the interaction was significant, I probed for the simple slopes at 1 SD above and below the mean on SES (Figure 17). As hypothesized, people of higher SES performed worse on the empathic
accuracy task when they perceived economic inequality to be high as opposed to low, $b=-3.90$, $p<.001$. For people of lower SES the association between perceived economic inequality and empathic accuracy was $b=-1.38, p=.026$ (Hypothesis 3c). As a robustness check, I also conducted these analyses with conservatism, gender, and with unfairness beliefs about inequality as covariates. The results hold with these covariates (see Table 26 in Appendix C.3). Replicating the results from Study 4.1a and Study 4.1b, people of higher SES performed worse at the empathic accuracy task than people of lower SES, people who perceived more inequality performed worse than people who perceived less inequality, and people of higher SES showed the least empathic accuracy when they perceived high as opposed to low levels of economic inequality.

![Figure 17 Association between perceived economic inequality and empathic accuracy at 1 SD above and below the mean of SES. Intervals around regression lines are 95% confidence intervals.](image)
4.4 Study 4.2b

In Study 4.2b, I sought to replicate Study 4.2a in a community sample. I pre-registered the hypotheses, methods, sample size, exclusion criteria, and the analysis plan on the OSF (https://osf.io/6yvue, see also Appendix C.4).

Method

Participants. I pre-registered to collect data from a community sample in Vancouver, Canada until reaching a final sample of 400 participants after excluding those who failed attention checks. I collected data from 564 participants, and excluded 158 participants for failing attention checks (to either pick the answer option on the far left upon being requested to do so, \(n=134\); and/or to indicate that they had taken the survey seriously in response to a binary question, \(n=18\)) or not completing the study, leaving a final sample of 406 (\(M_{\text{age}}=35.44, SD=15.90, 54\% \text{ female}; 58\% \text{ Caucasian, 22\% Asian, 20\% other}\)). I recruited participants in different public spaces around Vancouver such as train stations, malls, and libraries. Research assistants approached people, and those who agreed to participate completed the survey on an iPad.

Measures.

I used the same measures of subjective social class (\(M=6.44, SD=1.53\)), subjective economic inequality (perceived inequality \(M=3.88, SD=1.31, \alpha=.78\) and unfairness beliefs \(M=5.11, SD=1.29, \alpha=.76\)), and empathic accuracy (\(M=25.73, SD=4.47, \alpha=.66\)) as in Study 4.2a.

Results and Discussion

First, I again aimed to replicate the negative association between SES and empathic accuracy (Hypothesis 4.1), however, the two measures were not significantly related, \(b=0.19, p=.395, 95\%\text{CI}=[-0.25, 0.62] (r=.03, p=.504; \text{see Table 27 in Appendix C.4 for correlations between all variables})\). Next, I tested the hypothesis that people who perceive more inequality show less
empathic accuracy (Hypothesis 4.2). The analyses were pre-registered both with and without political orientation, gender, SES, and subjective unfairness as covariates. Without covariates in the model, people who perceived more inequality did not show significantly lower empathic accuracy, $b=-0.12$, $p=.586$, 95%CI=[-0.56, 0.31] ($r=-.04$, $p=.482$). However, when political orientation, gender, SES, and unfairness beliefs were added as covariates, greater perceived inequality was associated with lower empathic accuracy, $b=-0.60$, $p=.014$, 95%CI=[-1.08, -0.12]. To test Hypothesis 3c, I added an interaction term between perceived inequality and subjective SES to the model. Unlike as I had hypothesized, the interaction was nonsignificant, neither without covariates in the model, $b=-0.09$, $p=.696$, 95%CI=[-0.53, 0.35] (Figure 18), nor with covariates, $b=-0.04$, $p=.869$, 95%CI=[-0.47, 0.40] (see Table C28 in Appendix C.4).

I failed to replicate the association between SES and empathic accuracy in a community sample. However, supporting Hypothesis 4.2, people who perceived more inequality showed less empathic accuracy (when covariates were included). But there was no interaction between perceived inequality and SES in predicting empathic accuracy. This is less surprising given that there was no effect of SES on empathic accuracy. I will return to consider the nonsignificant results of this study in the General Discussion at the end of this chapter.
Figure 18 Association between perceived economic inequality and empathic accuracy at 1 SD above \( b=0.09, p=0.798 \) and below \( b=0.26 p=.384 \) the mean of SES. Intervals around regression lines are 95% confidence intervals.

4.5 Study 4.3

In Study 4.3, I explored whether I could affect people’s empathic accuracy by manipulating perceptions of inequality. I again investigated whether people of high SES show less empathic accuracy than people of low SES (Hypothesis 4.1), whether people in the high inequality condition show less empathic accuracy than people in the low inequality condition (Hypothesis 4.2), and whether people of high SES in the high inequality condition show less empathic accuracy than people of high SES in the high inequality condition (Hypothesis 3c).
The hypotheses, methods, sample size, exclusion criteria, and analysis plan are pre-registered on the OSF (https://osf.io/p7v9t, see also Appendix C.5).

**Method**

**Participants.** I calculated in GPower (Faul et al., 2009) that a sample size of 800 participants would reliably detect a difference between two means of $d=.20$ (testing the main effect) at an alpha level of .05. I recruited 1040 participants on TurkPrime, and after excluding participants who failed the attention checks specified in the pre-registration to provide the correct answer to a question about a short description of a person moving ($n=60$) and/or to indicate that they had taken the survey seriously in response to a binary question ($n=11$), I had a final sample size of 972 American participants ($M_{age}=37.05, SD=13.94$, 63% female; 74% Caucasian, 9% African-American, 17% other).

**Measures**

**Social Class.** I used the same 10-rung ladder to measure subjective SES as in Study 4.1a ($M=5.09, SD=1.63$).

**Economic Inequality.** Participants were randomly assigned to watch one of two 1.5-minute animated videos I created. In the high inequality condition, the video argued that economic inequality in our society has increased over recent decades, while in the low inequality condition, the video argued that inequality has not increased over time because of increases in social spending over the past century (see https://osf.io/6vseh/?view_only= for the videos). To strengthen the manipulation, following the video, participants were asked to describe how inequality in their society was relatively low or high.

**Empathic Accuracy.** Participants completed the same Mind-in-the-Eyes task as in Study 4.2a ($M=25.65, SD=4.91, \alpha=.73$).
Results and Discussion

After watching the video, as a manipulation check, participants responded to two questions that asked the extent to which the society they live in was unequal on a 9-point scale where a higher score indicates more inequality ($M=6.38$, $SD=1.92$; see Table 29 in Appendix C.5 for correlation between all measures). Participants in the high inequality condition ($M=7.10$, $SD=1.65$) perceived more inequality than participants in the low inequality condition ($M=5.65$, $SD=1.90$), $b=1.45$, $p<.001$, $95\%CI=[1.23, 1.67]$, indicating that the video manipulation was successful.

Next, I tested the association between SES and empathic accuracy (Hypothesis 4.1). I again found that people who reported higher SES showed lower empathic accuracy, $b=-0.62$, $p<.001$, $95\%CI=[-0.93, -0.32]$. I then tested the pre-registered hypotheses. In contrast to the hypothesis, people in the high inequality condition ($M=25.61$, $SD=4.98$) did not show significantly less empathic accuracy than participants in the low inequality condition ($M=25.69$, $SD=4.85$), $b=-0.08$, $p=.806$, $95\%CI=[-0.70, 0.54]$ (Hypothesis 4.2). Next, I added an interaction term between SES and the inequality conditions, $b=-0.62$, $p=.046$, $95\%CI=[-1.24, -0.01]$. Since the interaction was significant, I probed for the simple slopes at 1 SD above and below the mean on SES (Figure 19). As hypothesized, people of high SES in the high inequality condition showed marginally significantly less empathic accuracy than people of high SES in the low inequality condition, $b=-0.76$, $p=.085$. There was no difference in empathic accuracy between people of low SES in the high compared to the low inequality condition, $b=0.49$, $p=.272$. As a robustness check, I also pre-registered to conduct these analyses with conservatism and gender as covariates. The results hold with these covariates (although the interaction becomes only marginally significant; see Table C30 in Appendix C.5). I also pre-registered two additional more liberal exploratory analyses in which I planned to exclude participants who weren’t
convinced by the arguments made in the video. Although these analyses (partly) support the hypotheses, in retrospect, I believe that these exclusion criteria render the samples nonrandom. These analyses are in Tables 31 and 32 in Appendix C.5.

![Figure 19](image)

**Figure 19** Association between economic inequality condition and empathic accuracy at 1 SD above and below the mean of SES. Intervals around regression lines are 95% confidence intervals.

### 4.6 Internal Meta-Analysis Studies 4.1a-4.3

Across Studies 4.1a-4.3, I tried to replicate the previously found negative association between SES and empathic accuracy (Hypothesis 4.1), I tested whether perceptions of inequality (either measured or manipulated) were negatively associated with empathic accuracy (Hypothesis 4.2), and whether the difference in empathic accuracy between people of low and high SES would be most pronounced at high levels of perceived inequality (Hypothesis 3c). Replicating much of
past research, there was a negative association between SES and empathic accuracy in 4 of the 5 studies. The hypothesized negative association between perceived inequality and empathic accuracy was supported in Studies 4.1a, 4.1b, 4.2a, but not in Studies 4.2b and 4.3, and the hypothesized interaction between perceived inequality and SES was supported in Studies 4.1a, 4.1b, 4.2a, and 4.3, but not in Study 4.2b. To get a better estimate of the effect size for the three tests, I conducted an internal meta-analysis. A fixed-effect internal meta-analysis for the main effect of subjective SES predicting lower empathic accuracy, $r = -0.28$, $z = -15.45$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [-0.31, -0.24] was significant (Figure 20; calculated in R using the metafor package, Viechtbauer, 2010). Further, both a fixed-effect internal meta-analysis for the main effect of perceived inequality predicting lower empathic accuracy, $r = -0.20$, $z = -10.59$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [-0.23, -0.16] (Figure 21), and a fixed-effect internal meta-analysis predicting the interaction between perceived inequality and SES in predicting empathic accuracy were significant, $r_{\text{partial}} = -0.13$, $z = -6.80$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [-0.17, -0.10] (Figure 22). In conclusion, across five studies I find evidence that people of higher SES show less empathic accuracy, that greater perceived inequality is associated with less empathic accuracy and that the difference in empathic accuracy between people of low and high SES is most pronounced when perceived inequality is high.
Figure 20 Internal meta-analysis of the association between SES and empathic accuracy. Forest plot showing the correlation between SES and empathic accuracy. The size of each square in the forest plot is proportional to the weight of that sample. The estimate for the fixed-effects model is also given. CI = confidence interval.
Figure 21 Internal meta-analysis of the association between perceived economic inequality and empathic accuracy. Forest plot showing the correlation between perceived economic inequality and empathic accuracy. The size of each square in the forest plot is proportional to the weight of that sample. The estimate for the fixed-effects model is also given. CI = confidence interval.
Figure 22 Internal meta-analysis of the interaction between SES and perceived economic inequality in predicting empathic accuracy. Forest plot showing the partial correlation between the interaction of SES and perceived economic inequality in predicting empathic accuracy. The size of each square in the forest plot is proportional to the weight of that sample. The estimate for the fixed-effects model is also given. CI = confidence interval.
4.7 General Discussion

Much past research finds a negative association between SES and empathic accuracy (e.g., Dietze & Knowles, 2016, 2020; Kraus et al., 2010), but there are also some studies showing a positive (Deveney et al., 2018) or no association (Hall et al., 2015). Replicating past research, I found in 4 out of 5 studies that people of lower SES showed less empathic accuracy. People of higher SES focus more on themselves and less on others than their lower-class counterparts, and consequently have lower empathic accuracy (e.g., Dietze & Knowles, 2016; Kraus et al., 2010). Similarly, higher levels of perceived inequality make a person’s position within the rank hierarchy more consequential and shift peoples’ focus away from others and towards the self (e.g., Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2017). This suggests that people who perceive more economic inequality should also exhibit less empathic accuracy. In 3 out of 5 studies, people who perceived more inequality scored lower on two different measures of empathic accuracy, and these results were robust to relevant covariates. An internal meta-analysis across all studies yielded a small but significant effect.

Likewise, because perceiving greater inequality intensifies the magnitude of the differences between those who are low and high in SES, people of high SES should show the least empathic accuracy when they perceive inequality to be high as opposed to low. In line with this reasoning, in 4 out of 5 studies, people of high SES showed even less empathic accuracy when they perceived inequality to be high. Moreover, this effect emerged across two aspects of empathic accuracy – emotional understanding (Studies 1a and 1b) and emotional perception (Studies 2a-3), and two measures of social class that were included in Studies 1a and 1b.

An internal meta-analysis across all studies yielded a small but significant effect, and these results were robust to relevant covariates. More generally, these results suggest that the
effects of SES on people’s psychology may depend, in part, on the amount of inequality people perceive in their environment. When economic inequality is low, the distance between people of low and high SES is less pronounced, and therefore the psychological difference between people of low and high SES may also be less pronounced. Thus a complete understanding of the psychological effects of SES may require considering the effects of perceived inequality. It is possible that the mixed effects of the relation between SES and empathic accuracy from past research may be a product of differences in the samples in people’s degree of perceived inequality.

While the effects tended to be relatively small (internal meta-analytic $rs=-.13$ to -.20), at the societal level they may lead to substantial consequences. Indeed, many of the societal ills that have been linked to inequality (e.g., violence, depression, less trust; see Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010 for a review) are related to people’s tendencies to fail to attend to the emotions and needs of others. Perhaps one of the reasons that countries with lower inequality suffer less from these problems may be that their citizens are more attentive to the struggles of those around them.

In line with previous research, I proposed that feelings of increased self-sufficiency, power, and focus on the self are the potential mechanisms that may underlie the interaction between SES and perceptions of inequality, however, I have not tested them. One potential alternative explanation for the observed effects could be that people of higher SES are generally less motivated to perform well on tests – irrespective of whether the tests are specific to social cognitive performance. However, other research finds that participants of higher SES perform comparably or better on tasks not related to empathic accuracy (such as object recognition; Dietze & Knowles, 2016, 2020; or cognitive tasks; Mani et al., 2013) suggesting that this is an unlikely account.
These studies were conducted exclusively with North American samples which limits their generalizability. In particular, because 4 of the 5 studies were conducted in the USA, which has among the highest inequality among industrialized countries (Gini=.391; data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018), the results may not generalize to less unequal countries. The only study (Study 2b) that did not replicate the finding that high SES predicted lower empathic accuracy was conducted in Canada (Gini=.307; data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018). The Canadian sample in Study 2b perceived significantly less inequality (M=3.88) than the American sample in Study 2a (M=4.44; b=-0.56, p<.001), and this difference may have contributed to this failed replication. In addition, the reliability for the Mind-in-the-Eyes test in Study 2b (.66) was considerably lower than in Study 2a (.91), suggesting poor data quality. Furthermore, all of the studies that found the hypothesized effects were conducted online, and future research would benefit from exploring samples collected in more diverse settings.

These findings focused only on perceptions of economic inequality. Inequality perceptions and objective indices of inequality have been found to be weakly to moderately correlated (see Schmalor & Heine, 2022). This is not so surprising given that objective indices of inequality are calculated based on the distribution of income/wealth in a specific geographic area while perceived inequality is informed by other aspects of people’s lives such as their SES, political orientation, and media habits (e.g., Diermeier et al., 2017; Schmalor & Heine, 2022). Future research would benefit from exploring how these results compare to studies looking at objective indices of inequality.
Furthermore, I focused on the subjective experience of SES, yet to get a complete understanding of the relationship between SES and empathic accuracy, it is important to also look at objective SES indices such as income and education.
Chapter 5: Overall Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

Humans live in social hierarchies in which their relative social standing is grounded in their material resources and prestige. People of higher SES have more access to valued resources than their lower SES counterparts. This gives them more freedom and control over their lives, making them less dependent on others, and thus leading to feelings of power (e.g., Dietze & Knowles, 2016; Dubois et al., 2015; Kraus et al., 2010). In other words, people of higher SES can more easily get away with acting in ways that value their own outcomes over those of others. Much past research suggests that people of higher SES show more self-centered cognitions and behaviours such as more entitlement, unethical behaviours, dominance, and less empathic accuracy (e.g., Belmi & Laurin, 2016; Dietze & Knowles, 2016, 2020; Piff, 2014; Piff et al., 2012), although there is also research showing either no effect or less self-centered cognitions and behaviours among people of higher SES (e.g., Deveney et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2015; Jung et al., 2023).

As part of this thesis, I aimed to replicate some of these findings. Across 11 studies, I tested the hypotheses that people expect others of higher SES to act more dominantly, that people who are of higher SES say they would act more unethically and dominantly than their lower SES counterparts, and that people of higher SES would show less empathic accuracy. I replicated previous research finding that people of higher SES show less empathic accuracy in 4 out of 5 studies (and an internal meta-analysis found a small but significant effect). In 2 out of 2 studies, I found a positive association between SES and expected dominance (in Study 3.11, this association referred to expectations of other people’s behaviour and in Study 3.2 it referred to
self-reported behaviour). However, I did not find the hypothesized positive association between SES and expected unethical behaviour in any of the 4 studies testing it. Thus, while I largely replicated previous research showing a positive association between SES and dominance and a negative association between SES and empathic accuracy, I did not replicate previous research showing a positive association between SES and unethical behaviour.

Another economic factor that shapes people’s cognitions and behaviours is the amount of inequality people perceive in their environment. While SES describes a person’s relative position within the social hierarchy, economic inequality describes the heterogeneity of that hierarchy, or the extent to which resources like wealth and income are unequally distributed. Everything else being equal, when inequality is high as opposed to low, one’s position in the social hierarchy holds more consequences for one’s life outcomes; more is to be gained from being high and/or climbing the status hierarchy, and more can be lost from being low and/or falling in the status hierarchy. This causes people to become preoccupied and anxious about their status (e.g., Delhey & Dragolov, 2014; Frank, 2007; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). This heightened status anxiety, in turn, also causes people to focus more on themselves and their own outcomes and to show increasing self-centeredness. For example, past research finds that higher inequality is associated with more competitiveness, less cooperation and trust, less well-being, less agreeableness, more unethical behaviours and higher homicide rates (e.g., Alesina & La Ferrera, 2000; Daly, 2016; de Vries et al., 2011; Krupp & Cook, 2018; Neville, 2012; Oishi et al., 2011; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). But here, too, there is also research showing no association between inequality and these outcomes or an association in the opposite direction (Bjørnskov et al., 2013; Hastings, 2018; Kelley & Evans, 2017; Kim et al., 2022).
A second aim of this thesis was to further build on research exploring the relationship between economic inequality and self-centered cognitions and behaviours. Across 13 studies, I tested the hypotheses that people expect others to act more unethically and dominantly when perceiving high as opposed to low inequality, that people say they would act more unethically and dominantly when perceiving high as opposed to low inequality, and that people would show less empathic accuracy when perceiving high economic inequality. In 2 out of 2 studies, I found that people expected others to act more unethically when the rewards to be gained were more unequal, and in 3 out of 4 studies, I found support for the hypothesis that people are more likely to say they would act unethically when they perceived inequality to be high (note though, that the effect was only marginally significant in 1 of the 3 studies that found the hypothesized relationship). An internal meta-analysis across these 4 studies yielded a small but significant effect. Furthermore, in 2 out of 2 studies, I found a positive association between inequality perceptions and expected dominance (in Study 3.1a, this association referred to expectations of other people’s behaviour and in Study 2 it referred to self-reported behaviour). Finally, in 3 out of 5 studies, I found the hypothesized negative association between perceived inequality and empathic accuracy. An internal meta-analysis across these 5 studies yielded a small but significant effect.

A third aim of this thesis was to explore whether the effects of SES on these different outcome variables would be moderated by people’s perceptions of economic inequality. If people of higher SES become more self-centered because their relatively greater access to valued resources gives them a sense of power (Dubois et al., 2015), then this effect should be exacerbated under conditions of higher inequality. Because perceiving a greater degree of inequality means that the psychological distance between people of low and high SES is larger;
people of higher SES perceive themselves as having even greater access to valued resources and to have thus even more power than they do when perceiving less inequality. Therefore, when people of high SES perceive high amounts of inequality, they should show even more pronounced self-centered cognitions and behaviours than they do when they perceive low amounts of inequality. Across 13 studies, I tested the hypotheses that people expect others of higher SES to act more dominantly when perceiving high as opposed to low inequality, that people of higher SES say they would act more unethically and dominantly when perceiving high as opposed to low inequality, and that people of higher SES would show less empathic accuracy when perceiving high economic inequality. I found the hypothesized effect that people of higher SES would show less empathic accuracy when perceiving high as opposed to low inequality in 4 out of 5 studies (and an internal meta-analysis showed a small but significant effect). Further, in 4 out of 4 studies, I found a positive association between perceived inequality and expected dominance for people of higher SES (in Studies 3.1a and 3.1b, this association referred to expectations of other people’s behaviour and in Studies 3.2 and 3.3 it referred to self-reported behaviour). However, I found the hypothesized positive association between perceived inequality and expected unethical behaviour for people of higher SES in only 1 out of 4 studies (and it became non-significant when including covariates; and was non-significant in an internal meta-analysis across the 4 studies).

Finally, across all 15 studies that are part of this thesis, I focused on people’s perceptions both of economic inequality and SES in predicting these outcomes. I either measured or manipulated these perceptions. The extent that similar findings would emerge with alternative ways of assessing these perceptions, or for more objective assessments of economic inequality and SES remains an open question.
5.2 Theoretical Contributions and Implications

These results build on the extant literature showing that economic inequality is associated with various social ills and an increased valuation of oneself over others (e.g., Daly, 2016; Frank, 2007; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010, 2019). I found that greater inequality perceptions are associated with increased expectations that others and oneself will act unethically and more dominantly. Thus, when people perceive more inequality, they expect others and themselves to be more willing to act in ways that benefit themselves at the cost of others and they come to pay less attention to the emotions other people experience. While I focused on expectations about unethical behaviour and dominance rather than actual behaviour, an overall increase in expecting such self-serving behaviours likely undermines trust and cooperation in society. Furthermore, to my knowledge, this is the first time anyone has explored the relationship between economic inequality and empathic accuracy, and between economic inequality and expectations of unethical behaviour and dominance.

In addition, these results further corroborate the previously found positive association between SES and dominance and the previously found negative association between SES and empathic accuracy. However, I did not replicate the previously found positive association between SES and everyday unethical behaviour, which raises the question why. No replication, no matter how close in design to the original study, can ever be a perfect direct replication (Schmidt, 2009). For example, the paper that describes the original studies I tried to replicate was published over a decade ago and the studies were conducted among American university students (Piff et al., 2012) while the studies described here were conducted with American adults online. But more substantively and considering other research that has found conflicting results
regarding the relationship between SES and unethical behaviour, this raises the question about the mechanism underlying a potential relationship between SES and unethical behaviour.

In line with previous research, I hypothesized that people of higher SES, because of their relatively greater access to resources, would feel more powerful and hence more inclined to use their power to act in unethical ways. However, it is also possible that people of higher SES might use their heightened sense of power not for minor everyday unethical behaviours, but rather in situations where the outcome has starker consequences for them, such as, for example, to avoid paying taxes. In fact, research finds that people of higher SES are more likely to cheat to avoid paying taxes (Johns & Slemrod, 2010). This might be the case especially for working adults to whom the consequences of these minor ethical transgressions (such as taking a ream of copy paper home from work or keeping extra change they were given by accident) may not be so relevant. In the original studies using the same vignettes, university students were more likely to say they would cheat when they were of higher SES; and as they are not yet part of the full-time working adult population, these transgressions, when successful, might seem to make a bigger difference to their lives. Hence, they might be more willing to engage in them (or at least say they would).

Additionally, it is also possible that there are two different mechanisms at play; one that drives increased unethical behaviour among people of higher SES and one that drives increased unethical behaviour among people of lower SES. I have already laid out the proposed mechanism that could explain why people of higher SES might say they are more likely to act unethically: a heightened sense of power. But people of lower SES, on the other hand, may, for example, believe that society (or their position within it) is unfair and/or they may feel desperate, and either of these could cause them to show an increased likelihood to say they would act
unethically as well. As I did not measure any potential mechanisms, it remains unclear what explains the lack of association. And additionally, in those studies where I manipulated inequality perceptions, I did not include a third control condition with which the effects of both low and high inequality could have been compared. Such a third condition would have made it possible to test whether there is an increase in unethical behaviour for both people of low and high SES (which, in turn, may be driven by different mechanisms) or whether there is no change.

I further extended the research on both SES and inequality by looking at both economic factors together and testing for their interactive effects. I found the hypothesized interaction for people’s expectations of dominance behaviour as well as for empathic accuracy: People of higher SES expected themselves/were expected to show the most dominance in contexts of high perceived inequality, and people of high SES showed the least empathic accuracy when they perceived high inequality. This suggests that the effects SES has on both empathic accuracy and expectations of dominance depend upon the amount of inequality people perceive.

The possibility that individuals of high SES are the most self-centered in contexts of high inequality has implications for both research and society at large. First, in the case of research, this interaction between SES and inequality may help to explain some puzzling null-results (or results showing a reverse direction) in the literature looking at the link between SES and self-centered behaviour (e.g., Deveney et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2015). If individuals of high SES in these studies perceived relatively low levels of inequality, the expected effect on self-centered behaviour may have been dampened or even have disappeared altogether. In low inequality contexts, researchers may be better not to expect certain effects or, as the case may be, power their studies in order to detect such dampened effects. For example, in the present thesis, in 2 of the 4 studies finding an interaction between SES and inequality in predicting empathic accuracy,
there was no significant difference in people’s performance on the empathic accuracy task between people of low and high SES for people perceiving *low* inequality.

This same point has implications for society as well. If citizens of a country are concerned about high SES individuals being too self-centered, one possible way of mitigating this outcome is to keep inequality in check. While SES may be an inherent part of any society's social fabric, the degree of inequality is more plastic and can be modified, for example, through tax policy. The results in this thesis point to the possibility that it is not one’s high position in society *per se* that causes increased self-centeredness, but rather the (economic) context it is situated in; under conditions of high inequality, people become more anxious about their status and hence, valuing one’s own outcomes over those of others becomes more attractive, and adopting cognitions and behaviours that help achieve these outcomes also becomes easier for people of high SES. If true, this is a hopeful message as it implies that people of high SES aren’t inherently more self-centered, their self-centeredness is context-dependent. Such considerations also point to the utility of considering SES and inequality as conceptually distinct aspects of a single factor. Whenever researchers ask questions of either SES or inequality, it would be useful to consider the potential moderating effect of the other.

Though I found evidence that perceptions of inequality moderate the relationship between SES and dominance and SES and empathic accuracy, perceived inequality did not moderate the relationship between SES and everyday unethical behaviour. Since there was no main effect of SES, this is perhaps not so surprising. In fact, I proposed that an interaction should emerge *because* the magnitude of the heightened sense of power experienced by people of higher SES causing a positive relationship between SES and unethical behaviour (i.e., the underlying mechanism), would be increased under conditions of high inequality. Since there was no main
effect of SES, it is possible that a heightened sense of power does not lead to increased unethical behaviour, and thus, an exacerbation of this power through greater inequality would also not lead to increased unethical behaviour. More research is needed to better understand the mechanism(s) underlying the relationship between SES, inequality, and various forms of unethical behaviour.

I further built on previous research by focusing specifically on people’s perceptions of economic inequality which I both assessed and manipulated. Unlike objective measures of inequality, perceptions are measured at the level of the individual, and thus allow for individual differences within a geographic area. The results in this thesis further support the notion that perceptions are a fruitful avenue of research.

5.2.1 A Case for an Evolved Sensitivity to Perceive Economic Factors

I would like to take a step back and muse about the usefulness of studying the effects of economic perceptions, and argue for the possibility that we actually have evolved to perceive economic factors such as SES and economic inequality in the environment. Much research suggests that the economy is not some abstract epiphenomenon but is actually deeply rooted in human psychology (see for example, Thaler, 2015). Thus, it is possible that the economy is actually a very basic – and evolutionarily important – part of a human’s environment. This general thesis suggests that humans, as well as other animals, have evolved to perceive such economic factors as SES or inequality (in the nascent forms) because doing so paid off in increased fitness. Looking at SES, consider a male baboon living in a large troop. Such baboon ‘societies’ are hierarchically organized; they have a SES ladder as do humans (Cheney & Seyfarth, 2008). Of course, whereas SES may be determined for humans by, say, earning power,
a male baboon’s SES is determined by his weight, teeth size, and strength of his coalition, among other factors. Where a male baboon finds himself on the SES ladder has very important implications for his fitness: it determines with whom he can mate. As a result, it makes much evolutionary sense for baboons to both perceive their own SES – and that of others – so as to optimally tailor their behaviour.

In addition to perceiving SES, there is an evolutionary case for the perception of inequality as well. For many nonhuman animals, resources (typically food) vary in their patchiness – the extent to which they are concentrated or dispersed in space. For example, bonobos and chimpanzees are closely related species that don’t differ in their risk of predation or food availability (Hohmann et al., 2010; Wrangham & Pilbeam, 2001). But the patchiness of food varies considerably: for bonobos it is distributed more evenly across their territory, whereas for chimpanzees it is concentrated in some patches (Malenky & Wrangham, 1994; Wrangham & Peterson, 1996). When food is concentrated in certain areas, it can be monopolized more easily by individuals than food that is dispersed across an entire territory. Thus chimpanzees have an incentive to compete for the specific areas containing large amounts of food, through aggression and establishing a clear dominance hierarchy. Because food cannot be easily monopolized by bonobos, there is less of an incentive to compete over resources, and their social hierarchies are flatter. Moreover, depending on how much food inequality exists in an environment, certain behavioural strategies are more adaptive than others (e.g., such as vigorously defending an area with high concentration of food), and, as such, the ability to perceive such inequality would have high fitness payoffs.

Comparing the effects of (food) inequality between species, although thoroughly studied, (e.g., Malenky & Wrangham, 1994; Wrangham & Peterson, 1996; Heilbrunner et al., 2008) has
obvious limitations. Even though researchers take great care to control for potential third variables, it is possible that there are alternative explanations that haven’t been accounted for. But this effect has been observed within species as well. For example, King and colleagues (2008) conducted a ‘foraging’ experiment with groups of wild baboons. The researchers added patches where larger amounts of food were concentrated. High ranking baboons more often led their colony to those food patches than to other areas where food was more evenly distributed across space. Even though this led to a greater calorie intake by the high SES baboons, it also led to an overall decrease in calorie intake, leaving other group members with less food. Thus, baboons spontaneously changed their behaviour in response to changes in food patchiness suggesting that they perceived those changes. As the researchers suggest, the subordinate individuals accepted the lowered calorie intake to benefit from the protection provided by staying with the stronger higher ranking group members.

Such differences have also been observed across different human populations, in comparisons of hunter gatherers with hunter-horticulturalists. For example, the Hadza, nomadic hunter-gatherers living in Northern Tanzania, live from the foods they gather and hunt; they rely on sharing what they have hunted successfully, and, as they can only accumulate what they can carry, there is not much opportunity for inequality in resources to arise. There is thus not much to be gained by dominating others and the Hadza have strict norms that enforce equality (e.g., Boehm, 1999; Kaplan et al., 2005; Marlowe, 2010; see also Ronay et al., 2020 for a similar argument for the emergence of dominance vs. prestige-oriented leaders in organizations). On the other hand, the Yanomamö, hunter-horticulturalists living in Venezuela and Brazil, have a relatively more sedentary lifestyle and rely on cultivated crops as well as hunting animals. Because game is clustered in specific areas, different tribes compete for access providing an
incentive to act in more aggressive and dominant ways (e.g., Chagnon, 1968, 2013; Gross, 1975; see also Ronay et al., 2020). The distribution of resources affects the particular social structures and behaviours of different groups; when resources are distributed more evenly and can’t be easily stored or kept by an individual, human groups tend to be more egalitarian and cooperative. But when resources are clustered and can be easily stored or kept by an individual, human groups are more dominant and competitive. As these examples illustrate, it is likely that many animals - including humans - have the ability to perceive and then flexibly adapt to changes in the economic environment.

In general, then, I argue that different levels of SES and inequality afford different adaptive behavioural strategies – and, hence, that humans have evolved the ability to perceive these economic factors (see also Sng et al., 2018). Furthermore, the psychological effects of such perceptions most likely are not simply contained to affecting one's own behaviour - but also affect how one expects other people to behave as well. For example, lower ranking male baboons expect high ranking baboons to act more dominantly; chimpanzees expect other chimps to defend patches of food very aggressively. The expectations are also adaptive because they allow individuals to best predict the likely tenor of their social interactions. While the studies in this thesis didn’t directly test this evolutionary account, they are nonetheless in line with this reasoning.

5.2.2 A Possible Objection

One possible objection against studying the effects that such perceptions of inequality have is that people don’t appear to be very good at accurately perceiving inequality – at least in modern Western cultures. Much research finds that people regularly underestimate the actual
amount of inequality (e.g., Arsenio & Willems, 2017; Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018; Niehues, 2014; Norton, & Ariely, 2011; Norton et al., 2014). If, as I laid out above, it is so important to be sensitive to inequality, shouldn’t people be able to perceive it more accurately? And, if they cannot do so, perhaps perceptions of inequality is not a fruitful avenue to pursue in studying its effects. After all, if the goal was, for example, to address the ill effects that economic inequality has on societies through changes in policy that aim to reduce actual amounts of inequality, then this might not affect inequality perceptions and hence the ill effects associated with these perceptions.

I would argue that this objection is off the mark for two reasons. First, it is obvious that perceptions can have psychological effects even if they are wrong. Psychology has a long list of examples of how misperceptions have real cognitive, emotional, and behavioural effects; such a list includes, among others, the better-than-average effect (e.g., Zell et al., 2020), the Dunning-Kruger effect (Kruger & Dunning, 1999), and the Muller-Lyer illusion (Segall et al., 1966). In previous work, I have demonstrated how perceptions of inequality are associated with different outcomes. Specifically, I developed the Subjective Inequality Scale which assesses the extent that people perceive inequality to be high (Schmalor & Heine, 2022). I found that 1) people living in the US reported greater status anxiety, depression, anxiety, and less trust and subjective wellbeing when perceiving inequality to be high in their state of residence, and 2) across six countries, people who perceived more economic inequality in their country of residence reported more status anxiety. These correlations occurred despite that these perceptions of inequality only weakly correlated with an objective measure of economic inequality, the Gini index (the Gini index measures the distribution of income or wealth in a population; Schmalor & Heine, 2022; see also Gimpelson & Treisman, 2018; Hauser & Norton, 2017; Niehues, 2014; Norton, 2014).
It is also possible that these perceptions were much more accurate in smaller groups. In small groups it is much easier to track the extent to which resources are distributed unequally. Moreover, before the advent of permanent dwellings, one’s wealth could not be hidden away, and was out in the open, for all to see. This occlusion of one’s wealth grows even greater still with the advent of bank accounts. If the ability to perceive different levels of inequality evolved in small groups where wealth was not hidden away, the modern economic environment would certainly lead these perceptions astray. Therefore, such misperceptions are actually to be expected and yet, still provoke different reactions in the individual.

Second, this objection assumes a type of over-simplified reductionism. The argument against the role of perceptions in mediating the effects of inequality is based on the idea that inequality is simply defined by objective indices like the Gini coefficient. However, the claim that economic inequality simply is the Gini is itself a substantive claim. The Gini coefficient assigns a number between 0 and 1 to a geographic area where 0 indicates that everyone has the same income or wealth or perfect equality and 1 indicates that one person has all the wealth or income or perfect inequality. But given any single individual, what is the appropriate scope of this geographic area? Previous research has, for the most part, used countries (or states) as a unit of comparison. But what makes this the appropriate level? Why not counties or neighbourhoods, or, moving the other direction, continents or the world as a whole? To my knowledge, no attempt to answer such questions has been made in the literature and the choice of countries seems to be borne of convenience.

From an evolutionary perspective, what should matter most is how a person fares relative to local competition, not how an individual fares relative to those who live far away in time or space (Frank, 2007). Thus, the amount of inequality within a country or state of residence may
be too global for that person to care enough to perceive it very accurately, let alone to have sufficient information about people in distant places to guide their perceptions. In line with this reasoning, research finds that people living in a neighbourhood with more income diversity (i.e., where many people of both higher and lower incomes live) also perceive more inequality. As the researchers calculated the income diversity for each participant’s unique neighbourhood (defined as a 1-mile radius from their home), this suggests that a person’s immediate environment informs perceptions (Minkoff & Lyons, 2019; see also Gugushvili et al., 2020). Other research showed that people’s perceptions of inequality at the county level were positively associated with the county level Gini coefficients (Newman et al., 2018).

I argue that a more promising approach would be to ground such a decision in the psychology of the individual – and, indeed, in the perceptions of the individual. To do so researchers need to begin to ask questions such as what cues people use to construct their sense of how much inequality exists; these could include their neighbourhood, their commute to work, the workplace itself, their social circle, and the (social) media they consume. Before we can conclude that people mis-perceive how much inequality there is, we need to understand what forms their perceptions in the first place – that is what reference group(s) people use (see also Hauser & Norton, 2017; Jachimowicz et al., 2022; Minkoff & Lyons, 2019; Willis et al., 2022).

For example, García-Sánchez and colleagues (2018) asked participants from Colombia to describe how they perceive economic inequality. They found that participants wrote about various aspects that inform their perceptions that go well beyond a simple consideration of the actual income or wealth distribution including, discrimination, seeing beggars in the street, and holding precarious jobs. In my own research I found that people of lower SES, with less income, who were politically more liberal, and who were less religious perceived more inequality
(Schmalor & Heine, 2022) suggesting that sociodemographic differences may shape people’s perceptions as well (see also Hing et al., 2019). Other research suggests that ideological beliefs may also affect inequality perceptions. For example, across several studies Kteily and colleagues (2017) found that the more people supported the existence of hierarchies among groups differing by social class, race, and gender, the less inequality they perceived (see also Willis et al., 2022 for a review of research on the role of different ideologies shaping inequality perceptions).

One additional advantage of studying perceptions is that they can be experimentally manipulated, unlike objective inequality. I manipulated inequality perceptions in 8 out of the 15 studies. In all studies, the manipulation was successful, and in 6 of the 8 studies it led to the hypothesized difference between the low and high inequality conditions (note that the results were marginal for 1 of these 6 studies). In 2 studies, however, even though the manipulation appeared to shift people’s perceptions, it did not lead to the hypothesized effect. Notably, in both these cases (Studies 2.4 and 4.3), participants watched a video that informed them about the change in inequality in the society they live. People’s open-ended responses to these videos seemed to be informed by their political views and attitudes towards inequality, and this further shows that beliefs about inequality in the real world are embedded in people’s lives and experiences, which may suppress any effects the manipulation itself might have otherwise. Methodologically, this raises the question whether it is useful to manipulate inequality perceptions in the real world, because people already have pre-existing beliefs and attitudes that may be resistant to change. Theoretically, this raises the possibility that part of the reason why objective measures of inequality don’t always yield the same results is because they don’t map perfectly onto people’s perceptions or are suppressed by people’s beliefs about and attitudes towards inequality. For example, research has found that people who believe in social mobility
also perceive less inequality and show greater well-being than people who don’t believe in mobility (Alcántara et al., 2014; Bullock, 2008; Shariff et al., 2016; Wiwad, 2015).

5.3 Open Questions

As laid out above, perceptions of inequality may mediate the relationship between objective inequality and expectations of unethical behaviour, expectations of dominance, and empathic accuracy. However, in this thesis, I have not tested the link between objective inequality and perceptions of inequality. Future research would benefit from doing so.

Similarly, in line with previous research, I argued that the effects of SES and inequality are mediated through a heightened sense of power and greater self-reliance among individuals of higher SES and through greater status anxiety for people perceiving more inequality. However, in the studies described in this thesis, I haven’t assessed these proposed mediators. While plausible and in line with the findings, it is possible that different mediators can better (or additionally) explain the effects I found.

For example, one such alternative/additional mediator could be a change of social norms under conditions of high inequality. When inequality is high, competitive behaviour comes to be seen as more normative (Sánchez-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Sommet et al., 2019; Sánchez-Rodriguez et al., 2019) and unethical behaviour is viewed as more acceptable (To et al., 2022). It is also possible that in high inequality contexts, where the psychological (and material) distance between people of high and low SES is increased, that people of high SES are expected to become more selfish. Future research might further explore whether and how a change in social norms under conditions of high inequality moderates the relationship between SES and various self-centered cognitions and behaviours.
One advantage of testing for mediators alongside the outcome variables is that it would be possible (and informative) to hypothesize about the effect size of the interaction between SES and inequality. If, as I argued above, this interaction is mediated by access-to-resources and, consequently, by power, the upshot is that the effect sizes of the outcome variables will depend on 1) the magnitude of the effect of access-to-resources on power, and 2) the magnitude of the effect of power on downstream variables (such as dominance expectations and empathic accuracy). While the former effect will have the same size (at least for study designs where the measurement of access-to-resources and power are the same) regardless of the outcome variable (for all variables where power is, in fact, the mediating variable), the latter effect size will vary for different psychological outcome variables, and it may also be robust across different contexts for some outcome variables but context-dependent for others. Therefore, assessing and/or manipulating all variables within the same study would allow researchers to make hypotheses about and derive specific effect sizes.

Relatedly, in this thesis I defined SES as people’s perceived position in the social hierarchy due to their wealth, income, and occupational prestige and/or the social class they view themselves as part of. Participants in these studies had to place themselves on a rung of a ladder to indicate their subjective SES or indicate which social class they thought they belong to. And in 3 studies, I manipulated SES perceptions and operationalized SES as wealth or income. Thus, it is not clear from this research which aspect(s) of SES drive the relationship between SES and the different outcome variables. Future research might tease them apart and explicitly test which aspect(s) is (are) associated with which outcome variables.

All studies in this thesis were conducted in North America (and all but 1 study in the US) which limits their generalizability. The US in particular has been found to be psychologically
distinct and not very representative of the world population at large. Americans are WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic; Henrich et al., 2010), and this economic, cultural, and social organization of society shapes their cognition, emotional experience, and behaviour in profound ways. While there are many differences between industrialized and non-industrialized countries, and between Western and non-Western countries, there are also differences within Western countries, and the US has been found to be in many ways more extreme than and psychologically distinct from other Western countries. For example, Americans are even more analytic and individualistic (e.g., Kitayama et al., 2009; Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008; Oyserman et al., 2002).

Thus, it is possible that some of the effects found in this thesis might not replicate in other countries. Specifically, economic inequality in the US is higher than in most other industrialized countries, and it is an open question if we would find the same results in less unequal countries. Additionally, in countries where poverty rates are high, inequality may be less relevant to people’s psychology and behaviour. People might be more affected by their absolute material conditions (especially if their livelihood is threatened) than by their relative position in society. Furthermore, the effects of SES on various self-centered cognitions and behaviours may themselves depend on what it means to be of high SES. If being of high SES comes with a responsibility to help others, it may well be associated with less self-centeredness.

For example, in places with less anonymity, people of higher SES might also show fewer self-centered cognitions and behaviours and are more dependent on having prestige and acting in ways that benefit others. Furthermore, if status is based on other aspects than material wealth such as a person’s occupational prestige or adherence to religious norms (Cohen et al., 2017),
self-centered cognitions and behaviours may be less likely to occur among high SES individuals or may occur in different contexts.

Another limitation of this research is that it is largely correlational (especially with respect to SES). Thus, it is possible that it is not subjective SES and perceived inequality that lead to different forms of self-centered cognitions and behaviours, but that different personality traits cause people to view themselves as having a certain SES or perceiving a certain amount of inequality (or even that these personality traits affect people’s objective social standing, and, if occurring at a greater rate in an entire society, the kinds of policies and hence amount of inequality in that society). Additionally, it is also possible that there are other (unmeasured) variables that are responsible for the apparent relationships I found. Future research is needed to further corroborate the proposed causal relationships. Of course, it is also possible that the causation goes both ways. Both experimental designs and studies including mediators (and comparing different analytical models) would help further clarify the relationships between these variables.

Another open question is the extent that people’s expectations about their own and other peoples’ behaviour are accurate. I argued that to the extent that subjective SES and inequality affect people’s cognitions and behaviours, it would be adaptive to tailor one’s expectations accordingly. In line with this, past research finds that higher inequality leads to more unethical behaviour and makes unethical behaviour more acceptable (Neville, 2012; To et al., 2022), and in this thesis I found that it also increases people’s expectations of acting unethically. But much research shows that people are often quite wrong in predicting how they will feel or act in the future (e.g., Dunn & Laham, 2006; Wilson & Gilbert, 2003; Wilson et al., 2005). Thus, it would be more informative to test both people’s expectations and their actual behaviour in the same
studies. However, even if people’s expectations were wrong, saying oneself or others would act in more self-centered ways likely affects societal trust and social cohesion and may itself have downstream consequences.

Relatedly, I argued that SES and inequality should shape expectations about both one’s own and other people’s behaviours. This raises the question if there could be a causal relationship between the two. For example, it is possible that people expect others to act in more self-centered ways when they are of high SES or in high inequality contexts, and this mistrust in others, then, makes them adjust their (expectations about their) own behaviour. Or it is also possible that people think that they would act in more self-centered ways and therefore, they project their view of themselves onto other people. Another possibility is that a change in expectations (either of one’s own or other people’s behaviour) causes a change in actual behaviour. Future research could further explore how these variables relate to each other.

Finally, all but 1 of the studies were conducted online (and that study failed to find any of the hypothesized effects). Thus, it remains an open question whether the same results would occur in studies in the lab or in a natural setting. Relatedly, I described the empathic accuracy tasks as measuring actual performance (i.e., behaviour); however, it is likely that people’s behaviours would change when looking at or interacting with real people in the world rather than looking at images or reading scenarios describing people’s experience. While other research looking at the relationship between SES and empathic accuracy has done so in interactions in lab settings or by recording people’s looking patterns in the real world (e.g., Dietze & Knowles, 2016; Kraus et al., 2010), it would be helpful to replicate these designs with perceived inequality as well.
5.4 Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to zoom out and consider some of the more general implications of this research. The results, for the most part, support the hypothesis that both high SES and perceived economic inequality independently lead to increased expectations of dominance and are associated with decreased empathic accuracy, and that high perceived inequality but not SES leads to increased expectations of unethical behaviour. While replicating the previously found relationship between SES and dominance, and SES and empathic accuracy, I failed to replicate the previously found relationship between SES and unethical behaviour.

More novel, this research also suggests that SES and inequality interact, increasing self-centeredness (when operationalized as dominance and empathic accuracy) in a multiplicative manner. This shows that the effects of SES may themselves, in part, depend on the amount of inequality people perceive, and that some of the ill effects that appear to be caused by being high SES may be caused by high inequality contexts. This would have important implications for policies aimed at reducing these effects.

Beyond the specific results in this thesis, the methodological approach adopted here also has implications for future research. First, as I argued, it is likely that humans have evolved a sensitivity to different economic factors present in their environment. In addition, such perceptions are also likely paired to functional responses - both behavioural and psychological. While directly supporting this evolutionary perspective was not the focus of this thesis, future research can more systematically investigate the type of economic factors that humans have evolved to perceive (e.g., the amount of meritocracy or corruption in a society) and the adaptive responses to changes in these factors. Such a perspective would have the potential to expand
behavioural economics to include not only the psychological basis of economic behaviour but also the economic basis for certain psychological effects, as grounded in evolutionary science. A more broad area of research based on perceptions of economic factors, such as inequality or SES could look to consider the following: (1) The unique effect of perceptions of each different economic factor, (2) the interactive effects between these factors, (3) the source of these perceptions themselves, and (4) the evolutionary bases for 1 through 3. While James Carville's famous quip that ‘it's the economy stupid’ was directed at campaign staffers, the results of this thesis and those of this growing area of research suggest that social scientists may benefit from taking heed to his words as well.
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Appendices

Appendix A  Supplementary Results for Chapter 2

A.1  Supplementary Results for Chapter 2 Study 2.1a

Analyses with participants who correctly responded to three comprehension check questions only

To test the robustness of the effects, I reanalyzed the data after excluding participants who failed to respond to 3 comprehension check questions correctly. After learning how people in this hypothetical game would be rewarded, participants were asked 3 comprehension check questions ("What will lead to the highest reward?"; "People are instructed to roll a die twice and to report..."); "What would be the most likely reason for people to report a number that is higher than their first die roll?"). For each question, participants had to choose the correct answer among 4 options. If participants answered any of the questions wrong, they were redirected to the instructions and had to answer all 3 questions again. After answering all questions correctly or after going through the instructions and comprehension check questions 3 times (whichever came first), participants moved on to the dependent variable. Twelve participants failed to answer all questions correctly in any of the three trials. After excluding them the final sample size was 388. Replicating the results with the full sample size, participants thought that it was significantly more likely for people to report that they rolled a value higher than their actual first die roll when they saw the distribution of rewards of the high inequality condition ($M=81.70$, $SD=21.60$) than the low inequality condition ($M=59.80$, $SD=25.60$), $t(387)=17.76$, $p<.001$, $95\%CI = [19.50,24.36]$, $d=0.90$. 


A.2 Supplementary Results for Chapter 2 Study 2.1b

Pre-registration on the OSF

1. What’s the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study? To what extent do people expect that a greater variance in the distribution of rewards (higher inequality of outcome) increases the likelihood that people will cheat? Hypothesis: When rewards are distributed more unequally, people think it is more likely that others will cheat.

2. Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured. Adapted from Payne, Brown-Iannuzzi & Hannay, 2017 Participants will see 2 bar graphs that show different distributions of monetary rewards. Each bar graph will show the potential reward of those performing the best, the second best, and the worst. Across the two bar graphs the mean distribution is the same, so the only difference is the variance. Participants will read the following: ‘Imagine people are completing a task for a monetary reward. Each person’s reward will be based on their performance in the task. People sit alone in a room and are asked to roll a six-sided die twice. However, they are instructed to report the first roll only. The reward is based on the number they report. People who report a 1 or 2 get the smallest reward, people who report a 3 or 4 get the middle reward, and people who report a 5 or 6 get the biggest reward. Because participants are alone when they roll the die, their reports cannot be verified. Although they aren’t supposed to, people could bend the rules by reporting the second die roll if it were higher than the first or they could just report that they rolled a 5 or 6 to get a larger reward. You will shortly see a few different graphs that each show different monetary rewards that people reporting a 5 or 6 get, that people reporting a 3 or 4 get, and that people reporting a 1 or 2 get. For each different graph you see, please indicate how likely you find it that people rolling the die would report that they rolled a value higher than their actual first die roll.’ Question for the dependent variable: ‘How likely do you think it would for people to report that they rolled a value higher than their actual first die roll?’

3. How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to? This is a within-subjects design. Participants will complete 2 trials (1 with low inequality and 1 with high inequality).

4. Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis. To test the hypothesis, we will conduct a paired samples t-test.

5. Any secondary analyses?

6. How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? Participants will be collected from TurkPrime and must live in the US. With an estimated effect size of $d = .20$, power of 80%, alpha of .05, and a two-tailed test, we would need a sample size of about 200. Since we don’t have a good estimate of the effect size, and since we expect to exclude data from some participants for failing an attention check question (see point 7), we will collect data from 400 participants.

7. Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., data exclusions, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?) There will be a question that asks participants whether they think their data should be analyzed. For any research question to be tested empirically, it is crucial that study participants take a study seriously and answer questions honestly. Please tell us whether you think we should analyze your results. Response Options: 1. My results can be analyzed; 2. You shouldn’t analyze my results. Only participants who pick the first response option will be included in the analysis.
8. Have any data been collected for this study already? No data has been collected yet for this study.

Analyzes with participants who correctly responded to three comprehension check questions only

To test the robustness of the effects, I reanalyzed the data after excluding participants who failed to respond to 3 comprehension check questions correctly. The procedure and exclusion criteria were identical to those in Study 2.1a. Thirty-nine participants failed to answer all questions correctly in any of the 3 trials. After excluding them the final sample size was 359. Replicating the results with the full sample size, participants thought that it was significantly more likely for people to report that they rolled a value higher than their actual first die roll when they saw the distribution of rewards of the high inequality condition ($M=79.70, SD=24.20$) than the low inequality condition ($M=60.20, SD=28.00$), $t(358)=12.83, p<.001, 95\%CI = [16.54,22.53], d=0.68.$

A.3 Supplementary Results for Chapter 2 Study 2.2

Pre-registration on the OSF
1. What’s the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study? To what extent do perceptions of higher inequality increase cheating? Direct replication (Piff, Stancato,Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012 Study 3) Hypothesis 1: People of higher SES cheat more. Extension Hypothesis 2 (main hypothesis): People who perceive more economic inequality cheat more.

2. Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured. Participants will read the following 10 cheating vignettes (in random order) and have to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale from “Extremely unlikely” to “Extremely likely” how likely they would be to engage in the behavior (adapted from Piff et al., 2012). For the next task, you will read several short descriptions of different situations that you might encounter in Bimboola. For each situation, you have to indicate how likely you would be to engage in the behaviors described. Please try to picture yourself in each situation as best as possible. When you are able to imagine that you are in a certain situation, you are also able to predict what you would do and what you would not do if you were in such a situation. 1. You work in a fast-food restaurant in downtown Bimboola. It’s against policy to eat food without paying for it. You came straight from a doctor’s
appointment and are therefore hungry. Your supervisor isn’t around, so you make something for yourself and eat it without paying. 2. You work as an office assistant for a large Bimboolian corporation. You’re alone in the office making copies and realize you’re out of copy paper at home. You therefore slip a ream of paper into your bag. 3. You are a student at the University of Bimboola. You are preparing for the final examination of a ‘Creative Writing’ course. Some of your friends have somehow obtained the writing prompt that will be part of the final exam. You ask them for the prompt and plan your essay out accordingly. 4. You’ve waited in line for 10 minutes to buy a coffee and muffin at a coffee shop in downtown Bimboola. When you’re a couple of blocks away, you realize that the clerk gave you change for 20 Bimboolian Dollars rather than for the 10 Bimboolian Dollars you gave him. You savor your coffee, muffin and free 10 Bimboolian Dollars. 5. You are a student at the University of Bimboola. You get the final examination back from your professor and notice that he’s marked correct three answers that you got wrong. Revealing these errors would mean the difference between an A and a B grade. You say nothing. 6. Your accounting course requires you to purchase a software package that sells for 50 Bimboolian Dollars. Your friend, who is also in the course, has already bought the software and offers to lend it to you. Even though this is not allowed, you take it and load it onto your computer. 7. Your boss asks you to get confidential information about a competitor’s product. You therefore pose as a university student doing a research project on the competitor’s company and ask for the information. 8. You are a student at the University of Bimboola. You are assigned a team project in one of your courses. Your team waits until the last minute to begin working. Several team members suggest using an old project out of their fraternity/sorority files. You go along with this plan. 9. You are checking your bank account balance online and notice that a transfer of 50 Bimboolian Dollars to your account had been made a week ago. You do not recall anyone owing you that sum of money but you say nothing to the bank about it. 10. You receive a package at your doorstep from a trendy fashion store one day. You are not expecting any gifts or online orders from this store. You realize that the package was addressed to the previous tenant. Inside the package is a pair of expensive looking pants that fit you perfectly. You keep them for yourself.

3. How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to? Participants will be randomly assigned to one of two conditions, in one condition they will be told that they are moving to a society with an unequal wealth distribution, and in the other condition they will be told that they are moving to a society with a relatively equal wealth distribution. Participants in both conditions will be told that there are three different income groups (unequal condition: 77,000, 40,000, 3,000; equal condition: 50,000, 40,000, 30,000 Bimboolian Dollars per year). All participants will be assigned to the middle income group (manipulation from Sánchez-Rodríguez, Willis, & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2017, materials shared by Sánchez-Rodríguez). To strengthen the manipulation, participants will also be asked to choose a house, car, and vacation spot. They will see 9 options for each category, but they can only choose among the ones that their own income group and the income group below them can afford (i.e., six options). The options for their own income group are identical across conditions. To assess people’s subjective socioeconomic status, participants will be asked two questions. 1. Please think of this ladder with 10 rungs as representing people with different levels of income, education, and occupation status in the US. People at the top of the ladder are those who are the best off, have the most money, most education, and best jobs, whereas people at the bottom of the ladder are those who are the worst off, have the least money, least education, and worst jobs or no job. Where would you
place yourself on this ladder relative to others in the US? (People have to place themselves on a 10-rung ladder, based on Adler et al., 2000) 2. People talk about social classes such as the poor, the working class, the middle class, the upper-middle class, and the upper class. Which of these classes would you say you belong to?

4. **Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.** To test Hypothesis 1, we will conduct a regression with a mean cheating score across all 10 DVs as criterion and people’s self-reported SES as predictor (we will run this analysis twice, once for each of the two SES measures). To test Hypothesis 2, we will conduct a regression with a mean cheating score across all 10 DVs as criterion and condition as predictor. Following the procedure of Piff et al. (2012), we will rerun all analyses listed above including ethnicity, gender, and age as covariates.

5. **Any secondary analyses?** Hypothesis 3: The relationship between perceived economic inequality and cheating is moderated by people’s subjective socioeconomic status (SES), such that the relationship between perceived inequality and cheating is strongest for people high in SES. (Note that we are less certain about this hypothesis because both the DV and the inequality manipulation refer to participants’ life in a hypothetical society while we ask for people’s subjective SES in the real world. To test Hypothesis 3, we will conduct a regression where we test for an interaction between the inequality condition and each of the SES measures in predicting cheating behavior.

6. **How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size?** Participants will be collected from TurkPrime and must live in the US. With an estimated effect size of \( d = .20 \), power of 80%, alpha of .05, and a two-tailed test we need a total of about 800 participants (calculated in GPower). Since we expect that around 30% of participants will be excluded from the analyses due to failing the attention check, we will collect data from 1040 participants.

7. **Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., data exclusions, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)** If our main hypothesis is not supported by the data, we will explore whether there is an effect for any of the individual cheating vignettes. We will exclude data from participants who fail to correctly identify the income group they have been assigned to in response to the question: “Which income level have you been assigned to?” (options 1, 2 and 3, correct: 2). Participants will further read the following attention check question embedded in the cheating vignettes: ‘You are working at a local bar and really enjoy your job a lot. It gives you a chance to meet new people and the tips aren't bad either. You've been given this very prompt with one request. In responding to it, pick the answer on the far left.’ Anyone who fails to pick the response option on the very left (extremely unlikely) will be excluded from the analyses. There will further be a question that asks participants whether they think their data should be analyzed. ‘For any research question to be tested empirically, it is crucial that study participants take a study seriously and answer questions honestly. Please tell us whether you think we should analyze your results.’ Response Options: 1. My results can be analyzed; 2. You shouldn’t analyze my results. Only participants who pick the first response option will be included in the analysis. Finally, we will ask participants what they think the study is about. We will exclude anyone who guesses the hypothesis correctly.

8. **Have any data been collected for this study already?** No data has been collected yet for this study.
### Table 1 Correlation between all Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th>Economic Inequality</th>
<th>Manipulation Check</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Inequality</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>(0.063)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manipulation Check</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1-9, higher score = more perceived inequality)</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.713</td>
<td>(0.050)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.060</td>
<td>(0.069)</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>-0.098</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Class</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.061</td>
<td>(0.067)</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>-0.129</td>
<td>0.717</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.279</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>-0.064</td>
<td>-0.083</td>
<td>-0.050</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>-0.057</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Computed correlation used pearson-method with listwise-deletion.*

*Note.* Economic Inequality: 0 = low inequality condition, 1 = high inequality condition. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Ethnicity dummy coded, White/Caucasian is the reference group.
Table 2 Relationship between 1) economic inequality condition, 2) SES, and 3) an interaction between inequality and SES in predicting unethical behaviour with covariates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Inequality</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/ African American</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.309</td>
<td>0.306</td>
<td>0.306</td>
<td>0.306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.121</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>0.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ethnicity</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.102</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES * Condition</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.666</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R^2 / R^2 adjusted</td>
<td>0.095 / 0.087</td>
<td>0.092 / 0.085</td>
<td>0.092 / 0.085</td>
<td>0.097 / 0.088</td>
<td>0.097 / 0.088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Economic Inequality: 0 = low inequality condition, 1 = high inequality condition. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Ethnicity dummy coded, White/Caucasian is the reference group. SES, social class, and age are standardized.
A.4 Supplementary Results for Chapter 2 Study 2.3

Cheating Vignettes (adapted from Piff et al., 2012)
Participants read the following 10 cheating vignettes (in random order) and have to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale from “Extremely unlikely” to “Extremely likely” how likely they would be to engage in the behavior (adapted from Piff et al., 2012).

For the next task, you will read several short descriptions of different situations that you might encounter in everyday life. For each situation, you have to indicate how likely you would be to engage in the behaviors described. Please try to picture yourself in each situation as best as possible. When you are able to imagine that you are in a certain situation, you are also able to predict what you would do and what you would not do if you were in such a situation.

1. You work in a restaurant. It’s against policy to eat food without paying for it. You came straight to your shift from a doctor’s appointment and are therefore hungry. Your supervisor isn’t around, so you make something for yourself and eat it without paying.
2. You work as an office assistant for a large corporation. You’re alone in the office making copies and realize you’re out of copy paper at home. You therefore slip a ream of paper into your bag.
3. You are a university student preparing for the final examination of a ‘Creative Writing’ course. Some of your friends have somehow obtained the writing prompt that will be part of the final exam. You ask them for the prompt and plan your essay out accordingly.
4. You’ve waited in line for 10 minutes to buy a coffee and muffin at a coffee shop. When you’re a couple of blocks away, you realize that the clerk gave you change for $20 rather than for the $10 you gave him. You savor your coffee, muffin and free $10.
5. You have completed a test for a routine safety course at work. When you receive your test results back, you notice that your supervisor has marked correct three answers that you got wrong. Revealing these errors would mean the difference between you passing and you having to study for the test all over again to retake it next month. You say nothing.
6. Your accounting course requires you to purchase a software package that sells for $50. Your friend, who is also in the course, has already bought the software and offers to lend it to you. Even though this is not allowed, you take it and load it onto your computer.
7. Your boss asks you to get confidential information about a competitor’s product. You therefore pose as a researcher doing a study on the competitor’s company and ask for the information.
8. You own a high-quality counterfeit designer wallet that you are trying to sell online. Someone mistakenly thinks that the wallet is actual brand-name and offers you a lot of money for it. After realizing the misunderstanding, you say nothing and allow them to overpay for the wallet.
9. You are checking your bank account balance online and notice that a transfer of $50 to your account had been made a week ago. You do not recall anyone owing you that sum of money but you say nothing to the bank about it.
10. You receive a package at your doorstep from a trendy fashion store one day. You are not expecting any gifts or online orders from this store. You realize that the package was addressed to the previous tenant. Inside the package is a pair of expensive looking pants that fit you perfectly. You keep them for yourself.
### Table 3 Correlation between all Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th>Perceived Inequality</th>
<th>Unfairness Beliefs of Inequality</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Conservatism</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.675</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness Beliefs of Inequality</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>-0.267</td>
<td>-0.223</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>-0.390</td>
<td>-0.553</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>0.192</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-0.350</td>
<td>-0.222</td>
<td>-0.118</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>-0.041</td>
<td>-0.050</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>-0.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.420</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Computed correlation used pearson-method with listwise-deletion.*

*Note.* Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, $M=3.72$, $SD=1.72$). Ethnicity dummy coded, White/Caucasian is the reference group.
Table 4 Relationship between 1) perceived economic inequality and 2) SES in predicting unethical behaviour with covariates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.39 – 3.74</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.39 – 3.74</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.39 – 3.74</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.03 – 0.27</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.02 – 0.35</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>-0.51 – -0.27</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>-0.51 – -0.27</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td>-0.55 – -0.31</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.20 – 0.28</td>
<td>0.743</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.21 – 0.27</td>
<td>0.806</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/ African American</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.36 – 0.50</td>
<td>0.744</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.35 – 0.52</td>
<td>0.698</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.09 – 1.16</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.12 – 1.20</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ethnicity</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
<td>-2.27 – -0.49</td>
<td>0.940</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.46 – 0.50</td>
<td>0.937</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness Beliefs of Inequality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.06 – 0.22</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.08 – 0.21</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² / R² adjusted</td>
<td>0.166 / 0.151</td>
<td>0.170 / 0.150</td>
<td>0.160 / 0.145</td>
<td>0.167 / 0.148</td>
<td>0.155 / 0.139</td>
<td>0.160 / 0.141</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, M=3.72, SD=1.72). Ethnicity dummy coded, White/Caucasian is the reference group. Perceived inequality, age, unfairness beliefs, conservatism, SES, and social class are standardized.
Table 5 Relationship between the interaction between perceived economic inequality and SES in predicting unethical behaviour with covariates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th></th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th></th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th></th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.42 – 3.77</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.41 – 3.77</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.41 – 3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.06 – 0.31</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.05 – 0.38</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.04 – 0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
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<td>0.02 – 0.27</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.01 – 0.26</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.38</td>
<td>-0.51 – -0.26</td>
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<td>-0.51 – -0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>-0.23 – 0.25</td>
<td>0.934</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.23 – 0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-0.27 – 0.60</td>
<td>0.455</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-0.26 – 0.60</td>
<td>0.438</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.30 – 0.57</td>
</tr>
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<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.03 – 1.10</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.05 – 1.13</td>
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<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.07 – 1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.47 – 0.48</td>
<td>0.976</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.47 – 0.48</td>
<td>0.971</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.47 – 0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ethnicity</td>
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<td>-2.16 – -0.38</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>-1.28</td>
<td>-2.17 – -0.39</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>-1.35</td>
<td>-2.24 – -0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality * SES</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.03 – 0.20</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.03 – 0.20</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness Beliefs of Inequality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.18 – 0.17</td>
</tr>
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<td>Conservatism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>-0.08 – 0.20</td>
<td>0.416</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.07 – 0.21</td>
<td>0.325</td>
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162
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>0.09</th>
<th>-0.04 – 0.21</th>
<th>0.169</th>
<th>0.08</th>
<th>-0.04 – 0.20</th>
<th>0.204</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>-0.05 – 0.19</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>395</th>
<th>395</th>
<th>395</th>
<th>395</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R² / R² adjusted</td>
<td>0.184 / 0.165</td>
<td>0.186 / 0.163</td>
<td>0.173 / 0.154</td>
<td>0.176 / 0.152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, \( M=3.72, SD=1.72 \)). Ethnicity dummy coded, White/Caucasian is the reference group. Perceived inequality, age, unfairness beliefs, conservatism, SES, and social class are standardized.
A.5 Supplementary Results for Chapter 2 Study 2.3b

Pre-registration on the OSF

1. **What’s the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?** To what extent do perceptions of higher inequality increase cheating? Hypothesis: People who perceive more economic inequality say they would cheat more.

2. **Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.** Participants will read the following 10 cheating vignettes (in random order) and have to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale from “Extremely unlikely” to “Extremely likely” how likely they would be to engage in the behavior (adapted from Piff et al., 2012). For the next task, you will read several short descriptions of different situations that you might encounter in everyday life. For each situation, you have to indicate how likely you would be to engage in the behaviors described. Please try to picture yourself in each situation as best as possible. When you are able to imagine that you are in a certain situation, you are also able to predict what you would do and what you would not do if you were in such a situation. 1. You work in a restaurant. It’s against policy to eat food without paying for it. You came straight to your shift from a doctor’s appointment and are therefore hungry. Your supervisor isn’t around, so you make something for yourself and eat it without paying. 2. You work as an office assistant for a large corporation. You’re alone in the office making copies and realize you’re out of copy paper at home. You therefore slip a ream of paper into your bag. 3. You are a university student preparing for the final examination of a ‘Creative Writing’ course. Some of your friends have somehow obtained the writing prompt that will be part of the final exam. You ask them for the prompt and plan your essay out accordingly. 4. You’ve waited in line for 10 minutes to buy a coffee and muffin at a coffee shop. When you’re a couple of blocks away, you realize that the clerk gave you change for $20 rather than for the $10 you gave him. You savor your coffee, muffin and free $10. 5. You have completed a test for a routine safety course at work. When you receive your test results back, you notice that your supervisor has marked correct three answers that you got wrong. Revealing these errors would mean the difference between you passing and you having to study for the test all over again to retake it next month. You say nothing. 6. Your accounting course requires you to purchase a software package that sells for $50. Your friend, who is also in the course, has already bought the software and offers to lend it to you. Even though this is not allowed, you take it and load it onto your computer. 7. Your boss asks you to get confidential information about a competitor’s product. You therefore pose as a researcher doing a study on the competitor’s company and ask for the information. 8. You own a high-quality counterfeit designer wallet that you are trying to sell online. Someone mistakenly thinks that the wallet is actual brand-name and offers you a lot of money for it. After realizing the misunderstanding, you say nothing and allow them to overpay for the wallet. 9. You are checking your bank account balance online and notice that a transfer of $50 to your account had been made a week ago. You do not recall anyone owing you that sum of money but you say nothing to the bank about it. 10. You receive a package at your doorstep from a trendy fashion store one day. You are not expecting any gifts or online orders from this store. You realize that the package was addressed to the previous tenant. Inside the package is a pair of expensive looking pants that fit you perfectly. You keep them for yourself.

3. **How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?** This study is correlational. The predictor variable will be the mean score from the Inequality subscale of the Subjective Inequality Scale (SIS). The SIS consists of 8 questions (2 subscales), responses are
recorded on a 7-point scale from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. A. Inequality subscale of the SIS Almost all of the money that is earned goes to only a few people. Besides those at the very top, no one else has much money at all. Only those at the top own any wealth at all. Real opportunities to succeed in life are only available to the wealthy. B. Unfairness subscale of the SIS It is extremely unfair if the overall amount of economic inequality is very high. It is not fair at all if there are large differences in income between the rich and poor. It is immoral if your income is dependent on where you grew up. It is extremely unjust if children of affluent parents get a better education.

4. Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis. We will conduct a regression with a mean cheating score across all 10 DVs as criterion and the mean of perceived inequality as predictor.

5. Any secondary analyses?

6. How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? The correlation in a first study was $r = .185$, 95% CI = [.09, 28]. We will aim for the lower bound of the CI ($r = .09$). According to Schönbrodt and Perugini (2013), a true correlation of .10 will stabilize (i.e., vary only within the corridor of stability) at a sample size of 470 when the corridor of stability is set to a half-width of .10 at a 95% confidence interval. We will collect data from 550 participants to be above this minimum level after excluding participants who fail to satisfy one or both of the following conditions: 1. They pass 1 attention check question; and 2. They indicate at the end that their data can be analyzed (see below).

7. Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., data exclusions, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?) Participants will read the following attention check question embedded in the cheating vignettes: “You are working at a local bar and really enjoy your job a lot. It gives you a chance to meet new people and the tips aren't bad either. In responding to this statement, pick the answer on the far right/at the bottom.” Anyone who fails to pick the response option on the very right (extremely likely) will be excluded from the analysis. There will further be a question that asks participants whether they think their data should be analyzed. “For any research question to be tested empirically, it is crucial that study participants take a study seriously and answer questions honestly. Please tell us whether you think we should analyze your results. Response Options: 1. My results can be analyzed; 2. You shouldn’t analyze my results.” Only participants who pick the first response option will be included in the analysis.

8. Have any data been collected for this study already? No data has been collected yet for this study.
Table 6 Correlation between all Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th>Perceived Inequality</th>
<th>Unfairness Beliefs of Inequality</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Conservatism</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unfairness Beliefs of Inequality</strong></td>
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<td>0.645</td>
<td>(=&lt;.001) (=&lt;.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(-.230)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(=&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(=&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(=&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(=.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.015</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(=&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(=&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(=.003)</td>
<td>(.386)</td>
<td>(.734)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.028</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(=.012)</td>
<td>(.409)</td>
<td>(.118)</td>
<td>(.509)</td>
<td>(.525)</td>
<td>(.691)</td>
<td>(.531)</td>
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</table>

Computed correlation used Pearson-method with listwise-deletion.

*Note.* Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, \( M=3.65, SD=1.64 \)). Ethnicity dummy coded, White/Caucasian is the reference group.
Table 7 Relationship between 1) economic inequality condition, 2) SES in predicting unethical behaviour with covariates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.18 – 3.48</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.39 – 3.74</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.17 – 0.38</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.02 – 0.35</td>
<td>0.025</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>-0.39</td>
<td>-0.51 – -0.27</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
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<td>0.03</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.61 – 0.18</td>
<td>0.292</td>
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<td>-0.35 – 0.52</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.12 – 1.20</td>
<td>0.017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>0.04 – 0.82</td>
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<td>0.02</td>
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<td>-0.76 – 0.69</td>
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<td>-2.28 – -0.49</td>
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<td>0.930</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.01 – 0.27</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.119 / 0.107</td>
<td>0.167 / 0.148</td>
<td>0.121 / 0.109</td>
<td>0.160 / 0.141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, M=3.65, SD=1.64). Ethnicity dummy coded, White/Caucasian is the reference group. Perceived inequality, age, unfairness beliefs, conservatism, SES, and social class are standardized.
Table 8 Relationship between the interaction between perceived economic inequality and SES in predicting unethical behaviour with covariates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th></th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th></th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th></th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>CI</td>
<td>p</td>
<td></td>
<td>Estimates</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.42 – 3.77</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.42 – 3.77</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.41 – 3.77</td>
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<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.06 – 0.31</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.05 – 0.38</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.04 – 0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.02 – 0.27</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.01 – 0.26</td>
<td>0.029</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>-0.50 – -0.26</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>-0.51 – -0.26</td>
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<td>-0.39</td>
<td>-0.51 – -0.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.22 – 0.25</td>
<td>0.892</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.23 – 0.25</td>
<td>0.934</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.23 – 0.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-0.27 – 0.60</td>
<td>0.455</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-0.26 – 0.60</td>
<td>0.438</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.30 – 0.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.03 – 1.10</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.05 – 1.13</td>
<td>0.033</td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>-0.47 – 0.48</td>
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<td>-0.47 – 0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ethnicity</td>
<td>-1.27</td>
<td>-2.16 – -0.38</td>
<td>0.005</td>
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<td>-2.17 – -0.39</td>
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<td>-1.35</td>
<td>-2.24 – -0.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality * SES</td>
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<td>-0.03 – 0.20</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.03 – 0.20</td>
<td>0.147</td>
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</tr>
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<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>0.06 -0.08 – 0.20 0.416</td>
<td>0.07 -0.07 – 0.21 0.325</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class</td>
<td>0.09 -0.04 – 0.21 0.169</td>
<td>0.08 -0.04 – 0.20 0.204</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality * Social Class</td>
<td>0.07 -0.05 – 0.20 0.239</td>
<td>0.07 -0.05 – 0.19 0.256</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


**R² / R² adjusted**: 0.184 / 0.165 0.186 / 0.163 0.173 / 0.154 0.176 / 0.152

*Note.* Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, $M=3.65$, $SD=1.64$). Ethnicity dummy coded, White/Caucasian is the reference group. Perceived inequality, age, unfairness beliefs, conservatism, SES, and social class are standardized.
A.6 Supplementary Results for Chapter 2 Study 2.4

Pre-registration on the OSF
1. What’s the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study? To what extent do perceptions of higher inequality increase cheating? Direct replication (Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012 Study 3) Hypothesis 1: People of higher SES cheat more. Extension Hypothesis 2 (main hypothesis): People who perceive more economic inequality cheat more. 2. Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured. Participants will read the following 10 cheating vignettes (in random order) and have to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale from “Extremely unlikely” to “Extremely likely” how likely they would be to engage in the behavior (adapted from Piff et al., 2012). For the next task, you will read several short descriptions of different situations that you might encounter in everyday life. For each situation, you have to indicate how likely you would be to engage in the behaviors described. Please try to picture yourself in each situation as best as possible. When you are able to imagine that you are in a certain situation, you are also able to predict what you would do and what you would not do if you were in such a situation. 1. You work in a restaurant. It’s against policy to eat food without paying for it. You came straight to your shift from a doctor’s appointment and are therefore hungry. Your supervisor isn’t around, so you make something for yourself and eat it without paying. 2. You work as an office assistant for a large corporation. You’re alone in the office making copies and realize you’re out of copy paper at home. You therefore slip a ream of paper into your bag. 3. You are a university student preparing for the final examination of a ‘Creative Writing’ course. Some of your friends have somehow obtained the writing prompt that will be part of the final exam. You ask them for the prompt and plan your essay out accordingly. 4. You’ve waited in line for 10 minutes to buy a coffee and muffin at a coffee shop. When you’re a couple of blocks away, you realize that the clerk gave you change for $20 rather than for the $10 you gave him. You savor your coffee, muffin and free $10. 5. You have completed a test for a routine safety course at work. When you receive your test results back, you notice that your supervisor has marked correct three answers that you got wrong. Revealing these errors would mean the difference between you passing and you having to study for the test all over again to retake it next month. You say nothing. 6. Your accounting course requires you to purchase a software package that sells for $50. Your friend, who is also in the course, has already bought the software and offers to lend it to you. Even though this is not allowed, you take it and load it onto your computer. 7. Your boss asks you to get confidential information about a competitor’s product. You therefore pose as a researcher doing a study on the competitor’s company and ask for the information. 8. You own a high-quality counterfeit designer wallet that you are trying to sell online. Someone mistakenly thinks that the wallet is actual brand-name and offers you a lot of money for it. After realizing the misunderstanding, you say nothing and allow them to overpay for the wallet. 9. You are checking your bank account balance online and notice that a transfer of $50 to your account had been made a week ago. You do not recall anyone owing you that sum of money but you say nothing to the bank about it. 10. You receive a package at your doorstep from a trendy fashion store one day. You are not expecting any gifts or online orders from this store. You realize that the package was addressed to the previous tenant. Inside the package is a pair of expensive looking pants that fit you perfectly. You keep them for yourself.
3. How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to? There are two conditions. Participants will be randomly assigned to either an unequal condition or an equal condition. Participants will watch a short video that either describes how inequality has increased (high inequality condition) or how inequality has decreased when the rise in social spending is considered (low inequality condition). To assess people’s subjective socioeconomic status, participants will be asked two questions. 1. Please think of this ladder with 10 rungs as representing people with different levels of income, education, and occupation status in the US. People at the top of the ladder are those who are the best off, have the most money, most education, and best jobs, whereas people at the bottom of the ladder are those who are the worst off, have the least money, least education, and worst jobs or no job. Where would you place yourself on this ladder relative to others in the US? (People have to place themselves on a 10-rung ladder, based on Adler et al., 2000) 2. People talk about social classes such as the poor, the working class, the middle class, the upper-middle class, and the upper class. Which of these classes would you say you belong to?

4. Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis. To test Hypothesis 1, we will conduct a regression with a mean cheating score across all 10 DVs as criterion and people’s self-reported SES as predictor (we will run this analysis twice, once for each of the two SES measures). To test Hypothesis 2, we will conduct a regression with a mean cheating score across all 10 DVs as criterion and condition as predictor. Following the procedure of Piff et al. (2012), we will rerun all analyses listed above including ethnicity, gender, and age as covariates. We will further conduct the analyses described above with perceived unfairness as covariate (calculated as a mean score from participants’ responses to two questions asking to what extent the society they live in is unfair/fair on a 9-point scale from “not at all” to “very much”; the latter question will be reverse-scored so that a higher score means that the society participants live in is considered more unfair). The purpose of this analysis is to test whether the level of inequality people perceive to be in their environment drives cheating behavior after any considerations of the unfairness of inequality are statistically controlled for. Finally, we will also conduct the analyses described above with political orientation as covariate (calculated as a mean score from participants’ political orientation on social and on economic issues on a 7-point scale from “very liberal” to “very conservative”). Since people’s political orientation is associated with the amount of inequality people perceive and how unfair inequality is considered to be (Schmalor & Heine, in prep), we will also test whether the level of inequality people perceive to be in their environment drives cheating behavior after political orientation is statistically controlled for.

5. Any secondary analyses? Hypothesis 3: The relationship between economic inequality and cheating is moderated by people’s subjective socioeconomic status (SES), such that the relationship between inequality and cheating is strongest for people high in SES. To test Hypothesis 3, we will conduct a regression where we test for an interaction between the inequality condition and each of the SES measures in predicting cheating behavior. To strengthen the effect of the manipulation, participants will be given the following prompt after watching the video: “Please reflect on the video you just watched and describe in 1-3 sentences how the society you live in is high/relatively low in inequality.” (Note: participants in the high inequality condition will read the prompt referring to “high inequality” and participants in the low inequality condition will read the prompt referring to “relatively low inequality”.) After this prompt, participants will further be asked the following questions (all on a 9-point scale from
“not at all” to “very much”). To what extent is the society you live in unequal? To what extent is the society you live in equal? To what extent is the society you live in unfair? To what extent is the society you live in fair? We will further conduct the analyses described above (pints 4 and 5) after excluding participants who fail to provide a sensible response to the prompt (i.e., coders blind to hypothesis and condition will code whether the content argues for high inequality, low inequality, or something different, and only participants who provided arguments for high (low) inequality in the high (low) inequality condition will be retained for analysis). As a manipulation check, we will test whether participants in the unequal condition perceived more inequality in their society: We will create a mean score of responses to the questions about the extent to which society is unequal and equal (the latter will be reverse-scored so that a higher score indicates more inequality). We will conduct a regression analysis with condition as predictor and inequality as criterion.

6. How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? Participants will be collected from TurkPrime and must live in the US. With an estimated effect size of $d = .15$ (based on a previous study), power of 80%, alpha of .05, and a one-tailed test we need a total of about 1100 participants (calculated in GPower). Since we expect that around 30% of participants will be excluded from the analyses due to failing at least one of the two attention check questions (see point 7), we will collect data from 1400 participants.

7. Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., data exclusions, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?) Participants will read the following attention check question embedded in the cheating vignettes: 'You are working at a local bar and really enjoy your job a lot. It gives you a chance to meet new people and the tips aren't bad either. In responding to this statement, pick the answer on the far right.' Anyone who fails to pick the response option on the very right (extremely likely) will be excluded from the analyses. There will further be a question that asks participants whether they think their data should be analyzed. 'For any research question to be tested empirically, it is crucial that study participants take a study seriously and answer questions honestly. Please tell us whether you think we should analyze your results.' Response Options: 1. My results can be analyzed; 2. You shouldn’t analyze my results. Only participants who pick the first response option will be included in the analysis. Furthermore, we will ask participants what they think the study is about. We will exclude anyone who guesses the hypothesis correctly. For the multiple regression analysis, participants who don’t indicate ‘male’ or ‘female’ (or something synonymous) as gender will be excluded (because gender is a covariate and there won’t be enough individuals indicating something different) Finally, if our main hypothesis is not supported by the data, we will explore whether there is an effect for any of the individual cheating vignettes.

8. Have any data been collected for this study already? No data has been collected yet for this study.
### Table 9 Correlation between all Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Everyday Unethical Behaviour</th>
<th>Economic Inequality</th>
<th>Manipulation Check (higher = more inequality)</th>
<th>Unfairness Judgments of Inequality</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Unethical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Inequality</td>
<td>0.037 (0.195)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation Check</td>
<td>0.073 (0.011)</td>
<td>0.394 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(higher = more</td>
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<td>inequality)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness Judgments</td>
<td>0.118 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td>0.200 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td>0.656 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Inequality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-0.032 (0.259)</td>
<td>-0.081 (0.004)</td>
<td>-0.149 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td>-0.194 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class</td>
<td>0.020 (0.480)</td>
<td>-0.083 (0.004)</td>
<td>-0.170 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td>-0.195 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td>0.700 (0.004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.264 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td>-0.037 (0.194)</td>
<td>0.021 (0.462)</td>
<td>-0.056 (0.050)</td>
<td>0.053 (0.065)</td>
<td>0.007 (0.808)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.059 (0.040)</td>
<td>-0.049 (0.029)</td>
<td>-0.045 (0.114)</td>
<td>-0.017 (0.550)</td>
<td>0.043 (0.135)</td>
<td>0.027 (0.341)</td>
<td>-0.081 (0.005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-0.225 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td>-0.035 (0.224)</td>
<td>-0.295 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td>-0.305 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td>0.126 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td>0.155 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td>0.191 (&lt;0.001)</td>
<td>0.049 (0.084)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Computed correlation used pearson-method with listwise-deletion.*

*Note.* Economic Inequality: 0 = low inequality condition, 1 = high inequality condition. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, $M=3.76$, $SD=1.61$). Ethnicity dummy coded, White/Caucasian is the reference group.
Table 10 Relationship between economic inequality condition and unethical behaviour with covariates and after excluding participants who didn’t provide a response in line with the video they watched.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.11–3.35</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.14–3.37</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.13–3.38</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.15–3.43</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Inequality</td>
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<td>-0.06–0.22</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.09–0.18</td>
<td>0.528</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.03–0.29</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>-0.13–0.18</td>
<td>0.742</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>-0.40–0.26</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>-0.35–0.22</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>-0.38–0.22</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>-0.04–0.25</td>
<td>0.169</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.01–0.30</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.03–0.29</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
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<td>0.444</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.24–0.26</td>
<td>0.936</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.37–0.19</td>
<td>0.529</td>
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<td>Asian</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.38–0.19</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.38–0.17</td>
<td>0.451</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.27–0.34</td>
<td>0.820</td>
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<td>-0.14–0.43</td>
<td>0.318</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.27–0.30</td>
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<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.41–0.24</td>
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<td>0.870</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.42–0.26</td>
<td>0.657</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.49–0.24</td>
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<td>-0.29–0.14</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>-0.33–0.16</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unfairness Judgments of Inequality</td>
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<td>-0.00–0.14</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.02–0.14</td>
<td>0.129</td>
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</table>

Observations: 1209 / 1209 / 985 / 976

\(R^2 / R^2\) adjusted: 0.074 / 0.069 / 0.003 / 0.002

\(0.110 / 0.103 / 0.126 / 0.118\)

**Note.** Economic Inequality: 0 = low inequality condition, 1 = high inequality condition. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, \(M=3.76, SD=1.61\)). Ethnicity dummy coded, White/Caucasian is the reference group. Age, unfairness beliefs, and conservatism.
Table 11 Relationship between SES and unethical behaviour with covariates.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estimates</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Estimates</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Estimates</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.18 – 3.37</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3.19 – 3.37</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.18 – 3.37</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.40 – 0.26</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>-0.36 – 0.22</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.40 – 0.26</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>-0.05 – 0.25</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.01 – 0.30</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.05 – 0.24</td>
<td>0.197</td>
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<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.15 – 0.34</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.24 – 0.25</td>
<td>0.978</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.15 – 0.35</td>
<td>0.439</td>
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<td>Asian</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.37 – 0.19</td>
<td>0.532</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.39 – 0.17</td>
<td>0.432</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.38 – 0.18</td>
<td>0.481</td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>-0.14 – 0.43</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.27 – 0.30</td>
<td>0.912</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-0.13 – 0.44</td>
<td>0.286</td>
</tr>
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<td>Other Ethnicity</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.38 – 0.32</td>
<td>0.876</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.42 – 0.26</td>
<td>0.652</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.37 – 0.32</td>
<td>0.895</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-0.29 – 0.14</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-0.30 – 0.15</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unfairness Judgments of Inequality</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.00 – 0.15</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.01 – 0.16</td>
<td>0.022</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.09 – 0.04</td>
<td>0.488</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.06 – 0.08</td>
<td>0.717</td>
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<td>R² / R² adjusted</td>
<td>0.074 / 0.068</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.109 / 0.103</td>
<td>0.074 / 0.069</td>
<td>0.074 / 0.069</td>
<td>0.113 / 0.106</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, M=3.76, SD=1.61). Ethnicity dummy coded, White/Caucasian is the reference group. Age, unfairness beliefs, conservatism, SES, and social class are standardized.
Table 12 Relationship between the interaction of perceived economic inequality and SES in predicting unethical behaviour with covariates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.11 – 3.35</td>
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<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.13 – 3.37</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.11 – 3.35</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.13 – 3.37</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Inequality</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.06 – 0.22</td>
<td>0.272</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.09 – 0.19</td>
<td>0.496</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.05 – 0.22</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.09 – 0.19</td>
<td>0.459</td>
</tr>
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<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-0.39 – -0.25</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>-0.35 – -0.22</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.40 – -0.26</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>-0.35 – -0.21</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>-0.04 – 0.25</td>
<td>0.173</td>
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<td>0.01 – 0.30</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.05 – 0.25</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.01 – 0.30</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
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<td>Black/ African American</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.24 – 0.25</td>
<td>0.960</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.15 – 0.35</td>
<td>0.419</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.23 – 0.26</td>
<td>0.883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.37 – 0.20</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.38 – 0.17</td>
<td>0.452</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.38 – 0.19</td>
<td>0.502</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.39 – 0.16</td>
<td>0.414</td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>-0.14 – 0.44</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.26 – 0.30</td>
<td>0.893</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>-0.13 – 0.44</td>
<td>0.295</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.25 – 0.32</td>
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<td>Other Ethnicity</td>
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<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.43 – 0.26</td>
<td>0.618</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.38 – 0.32</td>
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<td>-0.42 – 0.26</td>
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<td>-0.29 – -0.15</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>-0.30 – -0.15</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unfairness Judgments of Inequality</td>
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<td>-0.01 – 0.14</td>
<td>0.078</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.00 – 0.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES</td>
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<td>-0.08 – 0.13</td>
<td>0.611</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.04 – 0.16</td>
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<td>Social Class</td>
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<td>0.06 – 0.16</td>
<td>0.238</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.00 – 0.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES * Economic Inequality</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.23 – 0.05</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.23 – 0.05</td>
<td>0.207</td>
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<td>Social Class *</td>
<td>Economic Inequality</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.05 -0.19 -0.09</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.468 -0.04 -0.18 -0.09</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Observations 1209 1209 1209 1209

R² / R² adjusted 0.076 / 0.069 0.111 / 0.103 0.075 / 0.069 0.113 / 0.105

Note. Economic Inequality: 0 = low inequality condition, 1 = high inequality condition. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, \(M=3.76, SD=1.61\)). Ethnicity dummy coded, White/Caucasian is the reference group. Age, unfairness beliefs, conservatism, SES, and social class are standardized.
## Appendix B Supplementary Results for Chapter 3

### B.1 Supplementary Results for Chapter 3 Study 3.1a

**Table 13 Correlation between all Between-Subjects Variables.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dominance</th>
<th>Prestige</th>
<th>Economic Inequality</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Conservatism</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Prestige</strong></td>
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<td>(.298)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(.298)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SES</strong></td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
<td>0.765</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.031)</td>
<td>(.001)</td>
<td>(.734)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
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<td><strong>Social Class</strong></td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>0.155</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
<td>0.765</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.039)</td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td>(.790)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
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<td><strong>Conservatism</strong></td>
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<td>-0.117</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.005)</td>
<td>(.335)</td>
<td>(.026)</td>
<td>(.402)</td>
<td>(.761)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<td>0.020</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(.180)</td>
<td>(.004)</td>
<td>(.027)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<td>0.061</td>
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<td>0.145</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.269)</td>
<td>(.246)</td>
<td>(.009)</td>
<td>(.052)</td>
<td>(.006)</td>
<td>(.730)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Computed correlation used pearson-method with listwise-deletion.*

**Notes.** Economic Inequality: 0 = low inequality condition, 1 = high inequality condition. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, \( M=3.38, \ SD=1.50 \)). Dominance and prestige scores are collapsed across SES conditions.
B.2 Supplementary Results for Chapter 3 Study 3.1b

Adapted Items of the Dominance & Prestige Scale (Cheng et al., 2010)

**Dominance Items**

1. “The manager enjoys having control over their employees”
2. “The manager often tries to get their own way regardless of what their employees may want”
3. “The manager is willing to use aggressive tactics to get their way”
4. “The manager tries to control their employees rather than being controlled by them”
5. “The manager does not have a forceful or dominant personality” (reverse-scored)
6. “The manager's employees know it is better to let them have their way”
7. “The manager does not enjoy having authority over their employees”
8. “Some of their employees are afraid of the manager” (reverse-scored)

**Prestige Items**

1. “Their employees respect and admire the manager”
2. “Their employees do not want to be like the manager” (reverse-scored)
3. “Their employees always expect the manager to be successful”
4. “Their employees do not value the manager's opinion” (reverse-scored)
5. “The manager is held in high esteem by their employees”
6. “The manager's unique talents and abilities are recognized by their employees”
7. “The manager is considered an expert on some matters by their employees”
8. “Their employees seek the manager's advice on a variety of matters”
9. “Their employees do not enjoy hanging out with the manager” (reverse-scored)
Table 14 Correlation between All Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dominance</th>
<th>Prestige</th>
<th>Economic Inequality</th>
<th>Manipulation Check</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Conservatism</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prestige</strong></td>
<td>-0.246</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Inequality</strong></td>
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<td>-0.018</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manipulation Check</strong> (higher score = perceived as more unequal)</td>
<td>0.204</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SES</strong></td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>-0.054</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Class</strong></td>
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<td>0.049</td>
<td>-0.122</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>0.719</td>
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<td><strong>Conservatism</strong></td>
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<td>0.108</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>-0.042</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>0.106</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>0.137</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>-0.063</td>
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</table>

Computed correlation used Pearson method with listwise-deletion.

*Note.* Economic Inequality: 0 = low inequality condition, 1 = high inequality condition. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, $M=3.21, SD=1.45$).
### Supplementary Results for Chapter 3 Study 3.2

#### Table 15 Correlation between All Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dominance</th>
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<th>Perceived Inequality</th>
<th>Unfairness Judgments of Inequality</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Conservatism</th>
<th>Age</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
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<td>0.151</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>0.299</td>
<td>0.235</td>
<td>0.215</td>
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<td>(.120)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)&lt;.001</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)&lt;.001</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)&lt;.001</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Gender coded as 1 = male, 0 = female. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, $M=3.84$, $SD=1.74$). Dominance and prestige scores are collapsed across SES conditions.*
Table 16 Relationship between 1) perceived economic inequality, 2) SES and 3) an interaction between inequality and SES in predicting dominance with covariates

<table>
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<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Dominance Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Dominance Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Dominance Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Dominance Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.89 – 3.03</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.89 – 3.03</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.91 – 3.04</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.90 – 3.04</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.24 – 0.38</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.19 – 0.34</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
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<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.18 – 0.32</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.15 – 0.29</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.17 – 0.31</td>
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<td>0.21 – 0.36</td>
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<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.16 – 0.30</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.20 – 0.35</td>
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<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-0.23 – -0.09</td>
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<td>-0.24 – -0.10</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
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<td>Perceived Inequality * SES</td>
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Note. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, M=3.84, SD=1.74). Age, conservatism, perceived inequality, SES, and social class are standardized.
Table 17 Relationship between 1) perceived economic inequality, 2) SES and 3) an interaction between inequality and SES in predicting prestige with covariates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
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<td>CI</td>
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<td>CI</td>
<td>p</td>
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<td>p</td>
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<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>4.74 – 4.86</td>
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<td>4.80</td>
<td>4.74 – 4.86</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.73 – 4.85</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.73 – 4.85</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<td>SES</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.14 – 0.26</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.16 – 0.29</td>
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<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
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<td>-0.17 – -0.04</td>
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<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.16 – -0.03</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.16 – -0.04</td>
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<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.13 – -0.00</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.11 – -0.02</td>
<td>0.146</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.11 – -0.01</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.10 – -0.02</td>
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<td>-0.09 – -0.03</td>
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<td>-0.09 – -0.03</td>
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<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.11 – 0.23</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<td>Perceived Inequality * SES</td>
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<td>-0.08</td>
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<td>Perceived Inequality * Social Class</td>
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<td>962</td>
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<tr>
<td>R² / R² adjusted</td>
<td>0.057 / 0.053</td>
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<td>0.043 / 0.039</td>
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<td>0.064 / 0.059</td>
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<td>0.046 / 0.041</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, M=3.84, SD=1.74). Age, conservatism, perceived inequality, SES, and social class are standardized.
B.4 Supplementary Results for Chapter 3 Study 3.3

Adapted Version of the Dominance & Prestige Scale (Cheng et al., 2010)

Dominance Items

1. “I would enjoy having control over my employees”
2. “I would often try to get my own way regardless of what my employees may want”
3. “I would be willing to use aggressive tactics to get my way”
4. “I would try to control my employees rather than permit them to control me”
5. “I would make sure my employees know it is better to let me have my way”

Prestige Items

1. “I would try to make sure my employees respect and admire me”
2. “I would try to make sure that my employees value my opinion”
3. “I would try to demonstrate my unique talents and abilities to my employees”
4. “I would want my employees to seek my advice on a variety of matters”
5. “I would want my employees to enjoy working with me”
Table 18 Correlation between all Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominance (from Dominance &amp; Prestige Scale)</th>
<th>Dominance (coded open response)</th>
<th>Prestige (from Dominance &amp; Prestige Scale)</th>
<th>Prestige (coded open response)</th>
<th>Economic Inequality</th>
<th>Manipulation Check (higher score = more unequal)</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Conservatism</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dominance (from Dominance &amp; Prestige Scale)</td>
<td>0.365 (&lt;=.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance (coded open response)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige (from Dominance &amp; Prestige Scale)</td>
<td>0.044 (.191)</td>
<td>-0.104 (.002)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige (coded open response)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.149 (.001)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Inequality</td>
<td>0.070 (.036)</td>
<td>0.069 (.039)</td>
<td>0.002 (.936)</td>
<td>-0.062 (.004)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation Check</td>
<td>0.094 (.005)</td>
<td>0.084 (.012)</td>
<td>0.012 (.721)</td>
<td>-0.03 (.013)</td>
<td>0.709 (&lt;=.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maniulatation Check (higher score = perceived to be more unequal)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.148 (.001)</td>
<td>-0.024 (.467)</td>
<td>0.027 (.416)</td>
<td>-0.031 (.348)</td>
<td>-0.013 (.700)</td>
<td>0.014 (.669)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class</td>
<td>0.174 (.001)</td>
<td>-0.044 (.190)</td>
<td>0.025 (.430)</td>
<td>-0.029 (.303)</td>
<td>-0.008 (.801)</td>
<td>-0.001 (.978)</td>
<td>0.744</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>0.284 (.001)</td>
<td>0.112 (.001)</td>
<td>0.026 (.430)</td>
<td>-0.184 (&lt;.001)</td>
<td>-0.037 (.264)</td>
<td>0.023 (.493)</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.011 (.732)</td>
<td>-0.102 (.002)</td>
<td>0.014 (.677)</td>
<td>0.006 (.366)</td>
<td>-0.036 (.278)</td>
<td>-0.001 (.909)</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.307 (.001)</td>
<td>0.166 (.001)</td>
<td>-0.091 (.007)</td>
<td>-0.235 (&lt;.001)</td>
<td>-0.027 (.428)</td>
<td>-0.045 (.186)</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>0.142</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Computed correlation used pearson-method with listwise-deletion.

Note. Economic Inequality: 0 = low inequality condition, 1 = high inequality condition. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (mean score of political orientation on economic and social issues, $M=3.22, SD=1.66$).
Appendix C  Supplementary Results for Chapter 4

C.1  Supplementary Results for Chapter 4 Study 4.1a

Table 19 Correlation between all Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Perceived Inequality</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Unfairness Beliefs</th>
<th>Conservatism</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathic Accuracy</td>
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<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
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<td>(.&lt;.001)</td>
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<td>SES</td>
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<td>0.126</td>
<td>(.&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(.014)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Class</td>
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<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td>(.245)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness Beliefs</td>
<td>-0.202</td>
<td>0.575</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
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<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.234</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>-0.177</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>-0.243</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>-0.147</td>
<td>-0.057</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>0.232</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>0.078</td>
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Computed correlation used pearson-method with listwise-deletion.

Notes. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, M=3.66, SD=1.92).
Table 20 Relationship between 1) perceived economic inequality, 2) SES and 3) an interaction between inequality and SES in predicting empathic accuracy with covariates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
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<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>22.28 21.51 – 23.06 &lt;0.001 24.00 22.91 – 25.08 &lt;0.001 22.28 21.47 – 23.10 &lt;0.001 23.41 22.44 – 24.38 &lt;0.001 22.52 21.84 – 23.21 &lt;0.001 23.52 22.57 – 24.48 &lt;0.001</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-4.61 -5.39 – -3.83 &lt;0.001 -3.52 -4.26 – -2.78 &lt;0.001 -3.20 -3.86 – -2.54 &lt;0.001 -3.47 -4.22 – -2.73 &lt;0.001 -2.77 -3.46 – -2.08 &lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-3.11 -3.84 – -2.39 &lt;0.001 -3.24 -3.90 – -2.58 &lt;0.001 -2.99 -3.65 – -2.32 &lt;0.001</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
<td>-3.01 -4.47 – -1.55 &lt;0.001 -1.96 -3.27 – -0.64 0.004 -1.86 -3.15 – -0.57 0.005</td>
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<td>Perceived</td>
<td>-3.89 -4.71 – -3.07 &lt;0.001 -3.05 -3.83 – -2.27 &lt;0.001 -3.28 -3.97 – -2.59 &lt;0.001 -3.10 -3.87 – -2.34 &lt;0.001</td>
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</table>

Observations 379 379 379 378 379 378
R^2 / adjusted R^2 0.262 / 0.260 0.408 / 0.404 0.187 / 0.185 0.535 / 0.529 0.438 / 0.433 0.551 / 0.543

Note. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, M=3.66, SD=1.92). Conservatism, SES, unfairness beliefs, and perceived inequality are standardized.
Table 21 Relationship between 1) perceived economic inequality, 2) social class, and 3) an interaction between inequality and social class in predicting empathic accuracy with covariates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>22.28 21.45–23.12</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 22.41 23.29–25.54</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 22.28 21.47–23.10</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 23.73 22.72–24.73</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 22.38 21.65–23.11</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 23.78 22.79–24.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class</td>
<td>-3.57 -4.40–2.73</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 -2.64 -3.40–1.89</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 -2.52 -3.19–1.85</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 -2.93 -3.69–2.17</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 -2.23 -2.91–1.55</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-3.41 -4.16–2.67</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 -3.53 -4.21–2.85</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 -3.61 -4.27–2.79</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 -3.36 -3.96–2.36</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-3.73 -5.24–2.23</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 -2.51 -3.86–1.16</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 -2.46 -3.80–1.13</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>-3.89 -4.71–3.07</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 -3.16 -3.97–2.35</td>
<td>&lt;0.001 -3.16 -3.96–2.36</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unfairness Beliefs</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class*Perceived Inequality</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 379

R² / adjusted R²: 0.157 / 0.155 0.352 / 0.347 0.187 / 0.185 0.496 / 0.490 0.355 / 0.349 0.512 / 0.504

Note. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, M=3.66, SD=1.92). Conservatism, social class, unfairness beliefs, and perceived inequality are standardized.
C.3 Supplementary Results for Chapter 4 Study 4.1b

Pre-registration on the OSF (https://osf.io/34zw7)

1. What’s the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study? To what extent do perceptions of inequality predict people’s ability to recognize other people’s emotions in different situations (i.e., empathic accuracy)? Hypothesis 1: People who perceive more economic inequality show lower empathic accuracy. Hypothesis 2: The relationship between people’s subjective socioeconomic status (SES) and empathic accuracy is moderated by perceived economic inequality, such that the difference in empathic accuracy between people of low and high SES is strongest for people who perceive a lot of inequality.

2. Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured. The key dependent variable is participants’ performance on the situational test of emotional understanding (MacCann & Roberts, 2008). Participants will read about 42 different situations in which different people experience different emotions and have to choose which out of 5 emotions the person in each situation is most likely experiencing. The number of correct responses will be added up for each participant. A higher number indicates greater empathic accuracy.

3. How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to? This study is correlational. The predictor variable will be the mean score from the Inequality subscale of the Subjective Inequality Scale (SIS). The SIS consists of 8 questions (2 subscales), responses are recorded on a 7-point scale from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. A. Inequality subscale of the SIS Almost all of the money that is earned goes to only a few people. Besides those at the very top, no one else has much money at all. Only those at the top own any wealth at all. Real opportunities to succeed in life are only available to the wealthy. B. Unfairness subscale of the SIS It is extremely unfair if the overall amount of economic inequality is very high. It is not fair at all if there are large differences in income between the rich and poor. It is immoral if your income is dependent on where you grew up. It is extremely unjust if children of affluent parents get a better education.

4. Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis. Hypothesis 1: We will do a zero-order correlation between the Inequality subscale of the SIS and the empathic accuracy score. We will further conduct a multiple regression where we will include the Inequality subscale of the SIS as predictor and the following covariates: the unfairness subscale of the SIS, subjective socioeconomic status (as indicated on a ladder with 10 rungs representing where one feels themselves to stand in society), political orientation on social issues (measured on a 7-point scale from ‘very liberal’ to ‘very conservative’), and gender.

Hypothesis 2: We will test for the interaction between subjective SES (using the MacArthur ladder) & the Inequality subscale of the SIS in predicting the empathic accuracy score. We will further conduct this interaction with the following covariates included: the unfairness subscale of the SIS, political orientation on social issues (measured on a 7-point scale from ‘very liberal’ to ‘very conservative’), and gender. For the interaction analyses, we will probe for the simple slopes of SES at different levels of perceived inequality.

6. How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? We will collect data through from American residents through TurkPrime. According to Schönbrod and Perugini (2013), a true correlation of .10 will stabilize (i.e., vary only within the corridor of stability) at a sample size of 362 when the corridor of stability is set to a half-width of .10 at a
90% confidence interval. We will collect data from 550 participants to be above this minimum level after excluding participants who fail to satisfy one or both of the following conditions: 1. They pass 1 attention check question; and 2. They indicate at the end that their data can be analyzed (see below).

7. **Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., data exclusions, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)** There will be one attention check question. For this question, please choose the answer on the far left (or at the top). Participants who fail to pick the response indicated by the question will be excluded from the analyses. There will further be a question that asks participants whether they think their data should be analyzed. For any research question to be tested empirically, it is crucial that study participants take a study seriously and answer questions honestly. Please tell us whether you think we should analyze your results. Response Options: 1. My results can be analyzed; 2. You shouldn’t analyze my results. Only participants who pick the first response option will be included in the analysis. Furthermore, for the multiple regression analyses, participants who don’t indicate ‘male’ or ‘female’ (or something synonymous) as gender will be excluded (because gender is a covariate and there won’t be enough individuals indicating something different).

8. **Have any data been collected for this study already?** No data has been collected yet for this study.
Table 22 Correlation between All Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Perceived Inequality</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Social Class</th>
<th>Unfairness Beliefs</th>
<th>Conservatism</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathic Accuracy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>0.064</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(.180)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.194)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Social Class</td>
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<td>-0.062</td>
<td>0.658</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(.194)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness Beliefs</td>
<td>-0.054</td>
<td>0.546</td>
<td>-0.021</td>
<td>-0.051</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.263)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(.654)</td>
<td>(.284)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Conservatism</td>
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<td>-0.022</td>
<td>0.325</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>-0.227</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(.647)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
<td>-0.124</td>
<td>-0.063</td>
<td>0.007</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
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<td>(.216)</td>
<td>(.009)</td>
<td>(.189)</td>
<td>(.878)</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(.149)</td>
<td>(.005)</td>
<td>(.032)</td>
<td>(.138)</td>
<td>(.006)</td>
<td>(.722)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Computed correlation used pearson-method with listwise-deletion.

Note. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, $M=3.74, SD=1.99$).
Table 23 Relationship between 1) perceived economic inequality, 2) SES, and 3) an interaction between inequality and SES in predicting empathic accuracy with covariates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estimates</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Estimates</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>21.80</td>
<td>21.04 – 22.56</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>21.80</td>
<td>21.04 – 22.59</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-3.74</td>
<td>-4.51 – -2.98</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-2.58</td>
<td>-3.33 – -1.84</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-3.21</td>
<td>-3.94 – -2.47</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-3.30</td>
<td>-4.00 – -2.59</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-3.16</td>
<td>-4.58 – -1.73</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-2.76</td>
<td>-4.09 – -1.43</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>-2.99</td>
<td>-3.78 – -2.20</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-2.94</td>
<td>-3.72 – -2.15</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness Beliefs</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>-0.54 – 1.05</td>
<td>0.536</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>-0.36 – 1.21</td>
<td>0.286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES* Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>-1.91</td>
<td>-2.63 – -1.19</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-1.51</td>
<td>-2.19 – -0.83</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


R² / adjusted R²: 0.174 / 0.172 / 0.331 / 0.327 / 0.112 / 0.109 / 0.426 / 0.420 / 0.312 / 0.307 / 0.451 / 0.443

Note. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, M=3.74, SD=1.99). Conservatism, SES, unfairness beliefs, and perceived inequality are standardized.
Table 24 Relationship between 1) perceived economic inequality, 2) social class, and 3) an interaction between inequality and social class in predicting empathic accuracy with covariates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>21.80</td>
<td>21.00 -- 22.60</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>23.78</td>
<td>22.66 -- 24.89</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class</td>
<td>-2.59</td>
<td>-3.39 -- -1.79</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-1.70</td>
<td>-2.44 -- -0.95</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-3.63</td>
<td>-4.37 -- -2.89</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-3.61</td>
<td>-4.31 -- -2.91</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-3.39</td>
<td>-4.86 -- -1.93</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-2.88</td>
<td>-4.23 -- -1.52</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>-2.99</td>
<td>-3.78 -- -2.20</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-3.22</td>
<td>-4.02 -- -2.43</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness Beliefs</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.02 -- 1.04</td>
<td>0.486</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.51 -- 1.10</td>
<td>0.477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Class*</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>-0.29 -- 0.73</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.149</td>
<td>-0.78 -- 0.49</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Observations     | 440      | 435    | 440    | 435    | 440    | 435    |
| R² / adjusted R² | 0.084 / 0.081 | 0.292 / 0.287 | 0.112 / 0.109 | 0.407 / 0.400 | 0.237 / 0.232 | 0.417 / 0.409 |

**Note.** Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, \( M = 3.74, SD = 1.99 \)). Conservatism, social class, unfairness beliefs, and perceived inequality are standardized.
### C.3 Supplementary Results for Chapter 4 Study 4.2a

#### Table 25 Correlation between All Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Perceived Inequality</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Unfairness Beliefs</th>
<th>Conservatism</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathic Accuracy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>-0.306</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-0.369</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(&lt;.791)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness Beliefs</td>
<td>-0.042</td>
<td>0.564</td>
<td>-0.069</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.505)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(.279)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-0.307</td>
<td>-0.065</td>
<td>0.172</td>
<td>-0.316</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(.304)</td>
<td>(.006)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>-0.142</td>
<td>-0.182</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(.024)</td>
<td>(.004)</td>
<td>(.807)</td>
<td>(.925)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>-0.055</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>-0.167</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>-0.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(.385)</td>
<td>(.019)</td>
<td>(.008)</td>
<td>(.128)</td>
<td>(.031)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Computed correlation used pearson-method with listwise-deletion.*

*Note.* Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, \( M=3.68, SD=1.96 \)).
Table 26 Relationship between 1) perceived economic inequality, 2) SES, and 3) an interaction between inequality and SES in predicting empathic accuracy with covariates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy Estimates</th>
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<th>p</th>
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<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
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<th>CI</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy Estimates</th>
<th>CI</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>21.72</td>
<td>20.74 -- 22.69</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>23.50</td>
<td>22.14 -- 24.85</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>21.36</td>
<td>20.41 -- 22.31</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>23.60</td>
<td>22.34 -- 24.86</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>21.69</td>
<td>20.78 -- 22.60</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>23.58</td>
<td>22.34 -- 24.81</td>
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<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-2.54</td>
<td>-3.49 -- -1.59</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-2.55</td>
<td>-3.44 -- -1.67</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-2.81</td>
<td>-3.75 -- -1.87</td>
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<td>-3.12 -- -1.34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-1.88</td>
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<td>-1.96</td>
<td>-2.88 -- -1.03</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-1.84</td>
<td>-2.75 -- -0.92</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>-5.51 -- -2.04</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
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<td>-3.74 -- -1.84</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-2.98</td>
<td>-4.01 -- -1.95</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-2.64</td>
<td>-3.54 -- -1.74</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-3.14</td>
<td>-4.15 -- -2.12</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>-0.77 -- 1.36</td>
<td>0.585</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-0.60 -- 1.51</td>
<td>0.399</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES* Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>-1.26</td>
<td>-2.10 -- -0.42</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>-1.22</td>
<td>-2.01 -- -0.44</td>
<td>0.002</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations 253 252 282 252 253 252
R² / adjusted R² 0.134 / 0.130 0.232 / 0.222 0.106 / 0.103 0.345 / 0.331 0.253 / 0.244 0.359 / 0.353

Note. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, M=3.68, SD=1.96). Conservatism, SES, unfairness beliefs, and perceived inequality are standardized.
### Pre-registration on the OSF (https://osf.io/6yvue)

1. **What’s the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?** To what extent do perceptions of inequality predict people’s ability to read other people’s emotions from their faces (i.e., empathic accuracy)? Hypothesis 1: People who perceive more economic inequality show lower empathic accuracy. Hypothesis 2: The relationship between perceived economic inequality and empathic accuracy is moderated by people’s subjective socioeconomic status (SES), such that the relationship is strongest for people high in SES.

2. **Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.** The key dependent variable is participants’ performance on the Mind in the Eyes task (Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Hill, Raste, & Plumb, 2001). Participants will view 36 pictures that show the expression of different emotions (e.g., nervous, hostile). For each picture they will have to pick the correct emotion out of four options. The number of correct responses will be added up for each participant. A higher number indicates greater empathic accuracy.

3. **How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?** This study is correlational. The predictor variable will be the mean score from the Inequality subscale of the Subjective Inequality Scale (SIS). The SIS consists of 8 questions (2 subscales), responses are recorded on a 7-point scale from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. A. Inequality subscale of the SIS Almost all of the money that is earned goes to only a few people. Besides those at the very top, no one else has much money at all. Only those at the top own any wealth at all. Real opportunities to succeed in life are only available to the wealthy. B. Unfairness subscale of the SIS It is extremely unfair if the overall amount of economic inequality is very high. It is not fair at all if there are large differences in income between the rich and poor. It is immoral if your income is dependent on where you grew up. It is extremely unjust if children of affluent parents get a better education.

4. **Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.** We will do a zero-order correlation between the Inequality subscale of the SIS and the empathic accuracy score. We will further conduct a multiple regression where we will include the Inequality subscale of the SIS as predictor and the following covariates: the unfairness subscale of the SIS, subjective socioeconomic status (as indicated on a ladder with 10 rungs representing where one feels themselves to stand in society), political orientation on social issues (measured on a 7-point scale from ‘very liberal’ to ‘very conservative’), and gender.

5. **Any secondary analyses?** We will test for the multiple regression analysis whether there is an interaction between the Inequality subscale of the SIS and subjective socioeconomic status.

6. **How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size?** We will collect data through a Qualtrics survey on Ipads in a community sample in different locations in Vancouver, Canada (such as malls etc.) We will continue data collection until we have responses from 400 participants who satisfy two conditions: 1. They pass 1 attention check question; and 2. They indicate at the end that their data can be analyzed (see below). According to Schönbrodt and Perugini (2013), a true correlation of .10 will stabilize (i.e., vary only within the corridor of stability) at a sample size of 362 when the corridor of stability is set to a half-width of .10 at a 90% confidence interval. Thus, our planned sample size is above this minimum level.

7. **Anything else you would like to pre-register?** (e.g., data exclusions, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?) There will be one attention check
question. 1. For this question, please choose the answer on the far left. Participants who fail to pick the response indicated by the question will be excluded from the analyses. There will further be a question that asks participants whether they think their data should be analyzed: For any research question to be tested empirically, it is crucial that study participants take a study seriously and answer questions honestly. Please tell us whether you think we should analyze your results. Response Options: 1. My results can be analyzed; 2. You shouldn’t analyze my results. Only participants who pick the first response option will be included in the analysis. Furthermore, for the multiple regression analysis, participants who don’t indicate ‘male’ or ‘female’ (or something synonymous) as gender will be excluded (because gender is a covariate and there won’t be enough individuals indicating something different)

8. Have any data been collected for this study already? No data has been collected yet for this study.

Table 27 Correlation between All Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Perceived Inequality</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Unfairness Beliefs</th>
<th>Conservatism</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathic Accuracy</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>(.504)</td>
<td>(.154)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>-0.081</td>
<td>(.007)</td>
<td>(.111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness Beliefs</td>
<td>-0.188</td>
<td>-0.293</td>
<td>-0.047</td>
<td>-0.346</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>-0.244</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>-0.110</td>
<td>0.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.146</td>
<td>-0.052</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>-0.113</td>
<td>0.08831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>(.004)</td>
<td>(.310)</td>
<td>(.171)</td>
<td>(.027)</td>
<td>(.106)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Computed correlation used pearson-method with listwise-deletion.

Note. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, $M=2.79$, $SD=1.40$).
Table 28 Relationship between 1) perceived economic inequality, 2) SES, and 3) an interaction between inequality and SES in predicting empathic accuracy with covariates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>25.73</td>
<td>25.30 – 26.17</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>26.30</td>
<td>25.71 – 26.88</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>26.26</td>
<td>25.69 – 26.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.25 – 0.62</td>
<td>0.395</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.25 – 0.62</td>
<td>0.399</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.25 – 0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-0.77</td>
<td>-1.20 – 0.34</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.75</td>
<td>-1.21 – 0.29</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.75</td>
<td>-1.21 – 0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-1.18</td>
<td>-2.04 – 0.32</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>-1.12</td>
<td>-1.98 – 0.26</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>-1.12</td>
<td>-1.98 – 0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.56 – 0.31</td>
<td>0.586</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>-1.08 – 0.12</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>-0.61</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness Beliefs</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.05 – 1.05</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.05 – 1.05</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.05 – 1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES* Perceived Inequality</td>
<td>0.002 / -0.001</td>
<td>0.054 / 0.046</td>
<td>0.001 / -0.000</td>
<td>0.072 / 0.060</td>
<td>0.003 / -0.005</td>
<td>0.072 / 0.058</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>406</th>
<th>401</th>
<th>406</th>
<th>401</th>
<th>406</th>
<th>401</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R² / adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.002 / -0.001</td>
<td>0.054 / 0.046</td>
<td>0.001 / -0.002</td>
<td>0.072 / 0.060</td>
<td>0.003 / -0.005</td>
<td>0.072 / 0.058</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, M=2.79, SD=1.40). Conservatism, SES, unfairness beliefs, and perceived inequality are standardized.
C.5 Supplementary Results for Chapter 4 Study 4.3

Pre-registration on the OSF (https://osf.io/p7v9t)

1. What’s the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study? To what extent do perceptions of inequality predict people’s ability to read other people’s emotions from their faces (i.e., empathic accuracy)? Hypothesis 1: People who perceive more economic inequality show lower empathic accuracy. Hypothesis 2: The relationship between perceived economic inequality and empathic accuracy is moderated by people’s subjective socioeconomic status (SES), such that the relationship is strongest for people high in SES.

2. Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured. The key dependent variable is participants’ performance on the Mind in the Eyes task (Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Hill, Raste, & Plumb, 2001). Participants will view 36 pictures that show the expression of different emotions (e.g., nervous, hostile). For each picture they will have to pick the correct emotion out of four options. The number of correct responses will be added up for each participant. A higher number indicates greater empathic accuracy.

3. How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to? There are two conditions. Participants will be randomly assigned to either an unequal condition or an equal condition. Participants will watch a short video that either describes how inequality has increased (high inequality condition) or how inequality has decreased when the rise in social spending is considered (low inequality condition).

4. Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis. We will do a simple regression with condition (high or low inequality) as predictor and the empathic accuracy score as criterion. We will further conduct a multiple regression where we will include the condition as predictor, the empathic accuracy score as criterion, and the following covariates: subjective socioeconomic status (as indicated on a ladder with 10 rungs representing where one feels themselves to stand in society), political orientation on social issues (measured on a 7-point scale from ‘very liberal’ to ‘very conservative’), and gender. We will test for the multiple regression analysis whether there is an interaction between the Inequality subscale of the SIS and subjective socioeconomic status.

5. Any secondary analyses?

6. How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? Participants will be collected from TurkPrime. They must live in the US, have an approval rate of at least 95% on MTurk, must have completed no more than 5000 studies on MTurk, and we only allow one participant per geo location. With an estimated effect size of d = .20, power of 80%, alpha of .05, and a two-tailed test we need a total of about 800 participants (calculated in GPower). Since we expect that around 30% of participants will be excluded from the analyses due to failing the attention check, we will collect data from 1040 participants.

7. Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., data exclusions, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?) To strengthen the effect of the manipulation, participants will be given the following prompt after watching the video: “Please reflect on the video you just watched and describe in 1-3 sentences how the society you live in is high/relatively low in inequality.” (Note: participants in the high inequality condition will read the prompt referring to “high inequality” and participants in the low inequality condition will read the prompt referring to “relatively low inequality”.) After this prompt, participants will further be asked the following questions (all on a 9-point scale from “not at all” to “very much”).
To what extent is the society you live in unequal? To what extent is the society you live in equal?
To what extent is the society you live in unfair? To what extent is the society you live in fair?
We will further explore how excluding participants who a) fail to provide a sensible response to the prompt (i.e., coders blind to hypothesis and condition will code whether the content argues for high inequality, low inequality, or something different, and only participants who provided arguments for high (low) inequality in the high (low) inequality condition will be retained for analysis), and b) indicate that the manipulation hasn’t moved their response much relative to other participants in their condition to the questions about how (un)equal their society is, affect the results of the analyses described above. There will be one attention check question: Alice loves reading books. Fortunately, her aunt owns a bookstore where she can borrow as many books as she likes. However, one day she decides to move to a different state and sells the bookstore, thus making it impossible for her to keep reading as many books. Who moved? Participants who fail to provide the correct answer (e.g., Alice’s aunt, aunt, her aunt) will be excluded from the analyses. There will further be a question that asks participants whether they think their data should be analyzed. For any research question to be tested empirically, it is crucial that study participants take a study seriously and answer questions honestly. Please tell us whether you think we should analyze your results. Response Options: 1. My results can be analyzed; 2. You shouldn’t analyze my results. Only participants who pick the first response option will be included in the analysis. Furthermore, for the multiple regression analysis, participants who don’t indicate ‘male’ or ‘female’ (or something synonymous) as gender will be excluded (because gender is a covariate and there won’t be enough individuals indicating something different).

8. Have any data been collected for this study already? No data has been collected yet for this study.
Table 29 Correlation between All Variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Economic Inequality</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Subjective Inequality</th>
<th>Unfairness Beliefs</th>
<th>Conservatism</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathic Accuracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Inequality</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.792)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.129</td>
<td>-0.048</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.792)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(.137)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Inequality</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.069)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness Beliefs</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>-0.188</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td>0.756</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.099)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.100</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>-0.316</td>
<td>-0.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.002)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.809)</td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(.239)</td>
<td>(.334)</td>
<td>(.170)</td>
<td>(.025)</td>
<td>(.009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.162</td>
<td>-0.060</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>-0.086</td>
<td>-0.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(&lt;.001)</td>
<td>(.061)</td>
<td>(.288)</td>
<td>(.007)</td>
<td>(.001)</td>
<td>(.212)</td>
<td>(.014)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Computed correlation used pearson-method with listwise-deletion.

Note. Economic Inequality: 0 = low inequality condition, 1 = high inequality condition. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, M=3.43,
Table 30 Relationship between 1) perceived economic inequality, 2) SES, and 3) an interaction between inequality and SES in predicting empathic accuracy with covariates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estimates</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>Estimates</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>25.63</td>
<td>25.34 – 25.96</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>25.23</td>
<td>25.85 – 26.61</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
<td>-0.93 – -0.32</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-0.57</td>
<td>-0.88 – -0.27</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>-0.70 – -0.09</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>-0.70 – -0.09</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-1.56</td>
<td>-2.19 – -0.93</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-1.58</td>
<td>-2.21 – -0.95</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Inequality</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.70 – -0.54</td>
<td>0.806</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-0.83 – -0.38</td>
<td>0.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES* Economic Inequality</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
<td>-1.24 – -0.01</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
<td>-1.13 – -0.09</td>
<td>0.094</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 972 965 972 965 972 965
R² / adjusted R²: 0.016 / 0.015 0.047 / 0.044 0.000 / 0.001 0.048 / 0.044 0.020 / 0.017 0.051 / 0.046

Note. Economic Inequality: 0= low inequality condition, 1 = high inequality condition. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, \(M=3.43, SD=1.71\)). Conservatism and SES are standardized.
Table 31 Relationship between 1) perceived economic inequality, 2) SES, and 3) an interaction between inequality and SES in predicting empathic accuracy with covariates and additional exclusion criteria (I).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>26.16</td>
<td>25.84 – 26.48</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>26.73</td>
<td>26.34 – 27.13</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>-0.62 – 0.04</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.57 – 0.09</td>
<td>0.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>-0.62 – 0.03</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>-0.63 – 0.02</td>
<td>0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-1.63</td>
<td>-2.29 – 0.96</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-1.67</td>
<td>-2.33 – 1.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Inequality</td>
<td>-0.66</td>
<td>-1.31 – 0.02</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>-0.83</td>
<td>-1.47 – 0.18</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES* Economic Inequality</td>
<td>-0.82</td>
<td>-1.49 – 0.14</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
<td>-1.37 – 0.03</td>
<td>0.041</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Additional exploratory analysis: Empathic accuracy predicted from SES and inequality manipulation after applying additional exclusion criteria. Economic Inequality: 0= low inequality condition, 1 = high inequality condition. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, $M=3.43, SD=1.71$). Conservatism, and SES are standardized. Participants were asked to describe in 1-3 sentences how the society they live in is relatively low (low inequality condition) or high (high inequality condition). Two research assistants who were blind to the hypothesis and conditions, coded the responses as either describing inequality as low, high, or unclear. Participants who failed to provide a response in line with the video they watched or who stated that they disagreed with the arguments made in the video were excluded.
Table 32 Relationship between 1) perceived economic inequality, 2) SES, and 3) an interaction between inequality and SES in predicting empathic accuracy with covariates and additional exclusion criteria (II).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
<th>Empathic Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>26.16</td>
<td>25.84 – 26.48</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>26.38</td>
<td>25.98 – 26.78</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>-0.62 – 0.04</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
<td>-0.77 – -0.12</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td>-0.76 – -0.10</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td>-0.76 – -0.10</td>
<td>0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-1.59</td>
<td>-2.25 – -0.92</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-1.59</td>
<td>-2.26 – -0.92</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Inequality</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>-0.44 – 0.86</td>
<td>0.523</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.70 – 0.59</td>
<td>0.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES* Economic Inequality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R^2 / adjusted R^2</td>
<td>0.004 / 0.003</td>
<td>0.046 / 0.042</td>
<td>0.000 / -0.001</td>
<td>0.046 / 0.041</td>
<td>0.013 / 0.010</td>
<td>0.047 / 0.042</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Additional exploratory analysis: Empathic accuracy predicted from SES and inequality manipulation after applying additional exclusion criteria. Economic Inequality: 0= low inequality condition, 1 = high inequality condition. Gender: 0 = female, 1 = male. Conservatism: 1= very liberal, 7 = very conservative (score of political orientation on social issues, M=3.43, SD=1.71). Conservatism, and SES are standardized. Participants whose response to the manipulation check questions was much higher (low inequality condition) or much lower (high inequality condition) than that of the majority of participants in their own condition were excluded. I excluded participants whose response was more than 1SD above or below (in the two conditions, respectively) that of their group mean.