Socioeconomic Status, Network Socioeconomic Diversity, and Market Justice Preferences: Longitudinal Evidence from Chile

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# Introduction

Es posible que la diversidad - al ampliar la visión de lo que ocurre en la estructura social - puede ser que globalmente afecte la percepción de las personas sobre la desigualdad y de esa forma también incremente su percepción de injusticia respecto de la capacidad de pago como mecanismo legitimo para acceder al bienestar.

Esperaría que en Chile se alta la justificación del mercado - pero no lo es - desafiando la idea de que los existencial standards pueden dar forma a las actitudes hacia el mercado

My goal in this paper is to explore and establish how individual ‘income experiences’ covary with market justice attitudes (core political values) to shed some light on the puzzle of large cross-sectional and small longitudinal correlations between income (and education) and such attitudes.

Additionally, diversity may be experienced differently depending on an individual’s economic resources, potentially making those in more advantaged positions more critical of the market's role in the distribution of welfare.

Against this backdrop, an open question remains: to what extent do individual changes in network diversity influence changes in support for the market distribution of welfare? In this context, it is important to explore how these shifts in network diversity affect attitudes toward market justice, and whether an individual's market income moderates the impact of diversity on these attitudes.

# Theoretical views on market justice, socioeconomic status and social networks

## Attitudes toward market justice

[Párrafo 1: descripción conceptual]

While redistribution in market societies mainly focuses on the state's capacity to reallocate resources from those in more advantageous positions to those in greater vulnerability, market institutions also play a role in shaping the distribution of economic resources (Koos & Sachweh, 2019; Lindh & McCall, 2020). Hereby, the legitimacy of resource allocation based on market principles has been referred to in the literature as *market justice*. In his seminal work, Lane (1986) defines *market justice* as a system that distributes rewards based on "earned deserts," contrasting it with political justice, which prioritizes equality and need. He argues that individuals perceive market outcomes as fair because they reflect personal effort, fostering a sense of self-determination and responsibility (Lane, 1986). They advocate for efficiency through competition, minimal government intervention, and voluntary transaction exchange. Additionally, market justice underscores the protection of individual rights, particularly property rights, allowing individuals to control resources and benefit from their labor.

[Párrafo 2: descripción conceptual de market justice attitudes]

Theoretically, *market justice* attitudes comprise economic beliefs and norms that legitimize inequality based on individual merit and productivity (Kluegel et al., 1999). In this sense, the market acts as a self-regulating arena, coordinating economic exchanges based on supply and demand, where rewards are distributed according to individual contributions and efforts (Kluegel & Smith, 1981). This idea is grounded in the belief that the market promotes procedural fairness, where everyone has equal opportunities to compete, yet the outcomes are determined by individual capabilities (Lane, 1986). Unlike systems based on political justice, which emphasize equality and need, market justice is seen as a process where justice is achieved through the fair competition of free agents (Lane, 1986). This notion of justice stems from the belief that outcomes are deserved, as they reflect personal effort and productivity, fostering a sense of fairness (Svallfors, 2007). However, achieving perceived fairness in market justice depends on maintaining open and responsive systems, where opportunities are accessible to all (Kluegel et al., 1999). Through this lens, inequalities are accepted—even seen as necessary—because they incentivize innovation and productivity, reinforcing societal prosperity by rewarding individual achievements and self-responsibility (Castillo et al., 2013). Thus, market justice values individual responsibility, linking economic rewards to personal contributions rather than redistributive mechanisms.

[Párrafo 3: descripción empírica del objeto de estudio]

Research in empirical distributive justice has diversly addressed the study of the justification of economic inequality. In this landscape, it is possible to mention the literature on the justification of wage inequality based on occupations (Jasso, 1978; Kelley & Evans, 1993; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006; Wegener, 1987). Additionally, another part of the literature has underscored how the spheres of the market affect other social domains, such as how it is considered legitimate that the mechanisms that generate inequality in the market are transferred to other areas of society, such as access to social welfare such as education, healthcare, or pensions schemes (Castillo et al., 2024; Lindh, 2015). This suggests that social services are considered legitimate objects of commodification, ranging from market-driven to mixed or state-led provision, where services can be traded, evaluated, and priced. (Busemeyer & Iversen, 2020).

There have been several ways in which scholars have conceptualized these attitudes. However, what they do have in common is the empirical measure which generally addressed on the degree to which people support the statement that *“Is it just or unjust – right or wrong – that people with higher incomes can buy better [welfare service] than people with lower incomes?*, which has been included in repeated cross-national studies as the International Social Survey Program. For instance, in studies on attitudes towards healthcare, Knesebeck et al. (2016) and Immergut and Schneider (2020) investigated “perceptions of fairness” in access to healthcare, to assess whether citizens find it fair that wealthier individuals receive better healthcare services. Additionally, for education, Lee and Stacey (2023) assessed Australian citizens support for income-based access to schooling by gauging whether individuals consider it fair that higher-income parents can secure a better education for their children. Similarly, other cross-country comparative studies such as Lindh (2015) and Svallfors (2007) have combined both indicators as a general latent construct. A recent study by Castilo et al. (2024) have scrutinized market justice preferences on student population in Chile in the domains of educational, healthcare and pensions, as well by employing a latent market justice measure. In this paper, I adopted the latter approach to empirically scrutinize market justice preferences.

## Does time matter? The role of (changes in) individual and network socioeconomic status in attitudes towards inequality

### Socioeconomic status and attitudes toward inequality

Most of the studies point out that individual socioeconomic position is an important predicting factor of market justice preferences. This has been explained mainly – but not exclusively by self-interested motivations on the expected desirability of market-based distributions over state-based redistribution among the socioeconomically advantaged groups (Lindh & McCall, 2020). Higher-status individuals, with higher educational credentials in better-paying and secure labor market positions, are less likely to challenge market-based distribution, as they justify to a greater extent that access to welfare should be determined by one's ability to pay, compared to those with disadvantaged labor market positions (Svallfors, 2007). Empirically, it has been consistently demonstrated that those in socioeconomically advantaged positions endorse the idea that those with higher incomes should be able to pay more for better social services in the domains of education (Lee, 2023), healthcare (Immergut & Schneider, 2020; von dem Knesebeck et al., 2016) and old age pensions (Castillo et al., 2024). Similarly, Lindh (2015) argues that upper-class individuals support market-based social service distribution because they benefit from systems that align with their financial independence, without relying on public support. In contrast, working-class individuals, often dependent on public services, prefer equitable access rather than market-driven systems. Hereby, market-based social insurance and services can be appealing to higher-income individuals as an alternative as they involve no redistribution (Busemeyer & Iversen, 2020). Another argument is that higher-income and educated individuals, who often benefit from market-based distributions, are more likely to view income inequality as fair and merit-based (Kluegel et al., 1999; Svallfors, 2007). Also, higher educational credentials are associated with greater acceptance of meritocratic ideals and the belief that the market rewards personal achievement (Castillo et al., 2013, 2024) as well as more financial stability given their highly valuable skills in the labor market (Häusermann et al., 2015). In light of this background, the cross-sectional (between-groups) hypothesis that arises from literature is as follows:

*H1a*: Higher socioeconomic status (income and education) correlates with increased support for market justice.

An important fact is that most of the theoretical approaches in attitudes, including attitudes toward public and private alternatives to social welfare (Lindh & McCall, 2020) and the justification of economic inequality (Janmaat, 2013) have been conceived as theories that aim to explain between-group differences (e.g. income, education) instead of being theories of individual change. It is also true that there are certainly extensions of the self-interest model that have included a dynamic component on preference formation where the consequences of economic prospects and intergenerational mobility on attitudes toward inequality have grasped the possible consequences of *changes* in socioeconomic conditions over time. However, it is essential to note that most theories focus on group-level distinctions rather than on changes at the individual level over time. Indeed, while upward socioeconomic mobility typically results in greater individual well-being, the impact of such intragenerational changes on attitudes toward inequality remains underexplored.

Perspectives such as the prospective upward mobility (POUM) hypothesis posits that support for redistribution among lower-income individuals diminishes if they expect future income gains (Benabou & Ok, 2001). This theory aligns with established income-related hypotheses, such as the "income expectations hypothesis" (Helgason & Rehm, 2023), which together suggest that one’s financial outlook can significantly shape political preferences. Thus, while self-interested inspired theories often predict stronger support for redistribution among lower-income groups, optimism about future income can alter this trend. Furthermore, research by Jaime-Castillo and Marqués-Perales (2019) builds on this by highlighting that mobility experiences shape redistributive attitudes through acculturation, socialization, and status maximization processes. This underscores that, beyond self-interest, individuals’ experiences of social mobility can lead to nuanced and varied political attitudes. However, Helgason and Rehm (2023) recent analysis using panel data reveals only weak correlations between income changes and shifts in redistributive attitudes, suggesting that other, more complex mechanisms might also be at play. Given this gap, longitudinal evidence hints that as individuals experience rising socioeconomic status, particularly through income, they may demand less redistribution, as they benefit more directly from unequal distributions (Helgason & Rehm, 2023; Langsæther et al., 2022). Yet, findings such as Stegmueller (2013), which indicate that income increases diminish redistributive preferences, are primarily based on data from industrialized welfare states. Thus, there is a need for research beyond these contexts to understand how socioeconomic changes influence political attitudes globally.

*H1b*: Greater changes in socioeconomic status (income and education) lead to higher support for market justice.

An example of this is the prospective upward mobility hypothesis (POUM) which argues that the usual higher support for redistribution of lower-income individuals can be undermined under conditions of optimistic income prospects (Benabou & Ok, 2001)

* “permanent income hypothesis (Friedman, 1957)” (Helgason and Rehm, 2023, p. 266)
* “income expectations hypothesis” (Helgason and Rehm, 2023, p. 266)
* “prospect of upward mobility hypothesis” (Helgason and Rehm, 2023, p. 266)

“potentially reside in different social networks, are members of different social classes, are awarded different social statuses, live in different neighbourhoods, have different levels of wealth, make differential use of the welfare state and so on.” (Helgason and Rehm, 2023, p. 269)

“Different ‘income experiences’ can therefore translate into different political attitudes through a range of mechanisms that go beyond simple self-interest accounts” (Helgason and Rehm, 2023, p. 269)

More straightforwardly, a recent study by Jaime-Castillo & Marqués-Perales (2019) on the link between class mobility and redistributive preferences suggest that mobility experience can shape attitudes in three possible

"we propose three main hypotheses: the acculturation hypothesis, the socialization hypothesis and the status maximization hypothesis." (Jaime-Castillo y Marqués-Perales, 2019, p. 140)

“On the other hand, recent evidence – based on panel data – tends to find at most, weak correlations between (changes in) income and (changes in) attitudes” (Helgason and Rehm, 2023, p. 264)

At the same time, studies on intergenerational mobility-attitude link have argued that those who have achieved more socioeconomically advantageous positions hold attitudes according to their class of destination (CITA), but also with some nuances contingent on their class of origin (Paskov).

Despite of the consistent empirical support for the POUM hypothesis (Rueda, Manza & Brooks), I argue that there is limited knowledge on how these theories provide fruitful explanations to how *intragenerational* changes in individual socioeconomic conditions can also explain changes in the attitudinal domain.

These are mainly theories about group-differences but not about individual *change*

Empirically, higher-income individuals in better-paying labor market positions are less likely to challenge market-based distribution, as they justify that access to welfare should be determined by one's ability to pay, compared to those with lower market incomes. Or it is unfair that those with higher incomes can afford to pay more for “better” education for their children, health care, and old age pensions.

"believe that there is a universal right to healthcare, they should object to the cumulative advantage of the more affluent, and be more likely to find it unfair that people privileged by their position in the income distribution can use these resources to purchase “better” healthcare." (Immergut y Schneider, 2020, p. 2)

Socially disadvantaged groups - instead of class or low status groups - “An institutional right to healthcare should be most important for the socially disadvantaged as they may not be able to pay for adequate healthcare out of their own pocket.” (Immergut and Schneider, 2020, p. 3) Esto es una forma diferente de frasearlo porque no es meramente "self-interest"

Cambios ascendentes en la posición socioeconomica generalmente se traducen en un mayor bienestar para los individuos (Papers Movilidad Social).

No obstante, poco sabemos de cómo cambios en la posición socioeconomica pueden afectar las actitudes de las personas hacia la desigualdad. Extendiendo el modelo de interés racional, es esperable que personas que en el tiempo mejoran su posición socioeconómica - principalmente a través de sus ingresos - serían menor propensas a demandar redistribución y a preferir distribuciones más desiguales en la medida que se ven favorecidas de esta.

La cosa es que en general las hipotesis de este tipo están pensadas para comparaciones de diferencias entre grupos (transversal) y no para comparaciones de individuos en el tiempo (longitudinal)

We can talk about intra-generational changes in **socioeconomic circumstances**, such life-course changes in **financial situation** (Helgason & Rehm, 2023, 2024) or **class position** (Langsæther et al., 2022). Also, there is a discussion on the effect strength and direction (positive or null)

Rueda - incremento en el ingreso disminuye las preferencias redistributivas. Nevertheless, this evidence is mainly from industrialized countries with developed welfare states. By contrast, longitudinal studies are scarce in countries beyond the also called industrialized world

### Network structure and attitudes towards economic inequality

Theoretically, a stronger justification of inequality is not solely explained by individual self-interest or normative value-drive explanation (Kulin & Svallfors, 2013; Maldonado et al., 2019). In this regard, the literature has argued that social networks also contribute to attitude formation in different manners. Recently, it has been scrutinized the role of network class profiles – understood as the share of ties toward specific social classes have found that those with higher ties to the upper-middle class hold lower redistributive preferences and connected to working-class positions are associated with higher perceived income inequality (Cobo-Arroyo, 2022) and stronger support for inequality reduction (Lindh & Andersson, 2024). Additionally, other studies have taken a step forward with the single class-profile approach and have shown that being connected *simultaneously* to diverse socioeconomic status positions is associated with more critical views on economic inequality. In particular, socioeconomic diversity in interpersonal networks (*diversity* onwards)— understood as the degree of connectedness to dissimilar socioeconomic positions (e.g., occupations) has been brought into the discussion of how networks contribute to the formation of attitudes toward economic inequality (Otero & Mendoza, 2023). In this sense, networks can shape attitudes and political preferences through social influence implying that individuals adjust their views accordingly based on the diverse information received through their network ties (Lindh et al., 2021). At the same time, dissimilarity within networks refers to cross-cutting social circles that implies to have access to diverse life experiences and broader information to be exposed to (Blau, 1977). In this sense, one argument is network ties act as inferential spaces (Mijs & Roe, 2021), which can leverage the connection between economic inequality and labor market rewards by facilitating cross-class contact and providing information that may foster empathy toward those in economic despair (Sachweh, 2012) or, conversely, legitimize inequality as cross-class contact fades (Vargas Salfate & Stern, 2023).

Empirically, the claim that diversity is associated with more critical views on economic inequality has received empirical support. For instance, Paskov & Weisstanner (2022) found that more diverse networks lead to dis-aligned class-based redistributive preferences, where working-class individuals with parental and partner ties to the upper-middle classes nuance their preferences compared to “pure” working-class connections. By contrast, upper-middle-class individuals with more ties toward the working class are more likely to support redistribution. More straightforwardly, Otero & Mendoza (2023) found that more socioeconomically diverse acquaintance networks are associated with higher perceived inequality, higher economic egalitarianism, and more critical views on the current equality of opportunities and meritocracy. Here I argue that being connected to a diverse range of social positions can significantly broaden exposure to different experiences with market-based inequality. Hereby, individuals with extensive – and possibly cross-cutting social ties are more likely to receive information about labor market processes such as job seeking and wage differences from diverse sources (Contreras et al., 2019; Svallfors, 2006). This can be also linked to the attributed importance of structural or non-meritocratic factors, such as inherited wealth or social connections in the process of getting ahead in life in contexts of rising or (high) economic inequality (McCall et al., 2017). As follows, I expect that network diversity nurtures greater skepticism toward the fairness of market mechanisms (*market skepticism hypothesis*) in distributing resources as well as the legitimacy of market-based distribution of welfare.

H2a: the greater the changes in the diversity of the network, the less support for market justice

At the same time, the inquiry on how cross-sectional (between) and longitudinal (within) differences in individual socioeconomic status can be associated with market justice attitudes, can be extended to the influence of social networks.

H2b: the greater the changes in the diversity of the network, the less support market justice

As it has been previously argued, market inequalities can be seen as legitimate. However, it is also true that even when there are differences in market justice preferences between different socioeconomic groups these differences are also nuanced and can be strong under certain societal circumstances, such as greater private provision of social services (crowded-out) and lower when public services are more spreads (crowded-in).

# Case of Chile: The financing of social services in Chile

Moral economy of market societies

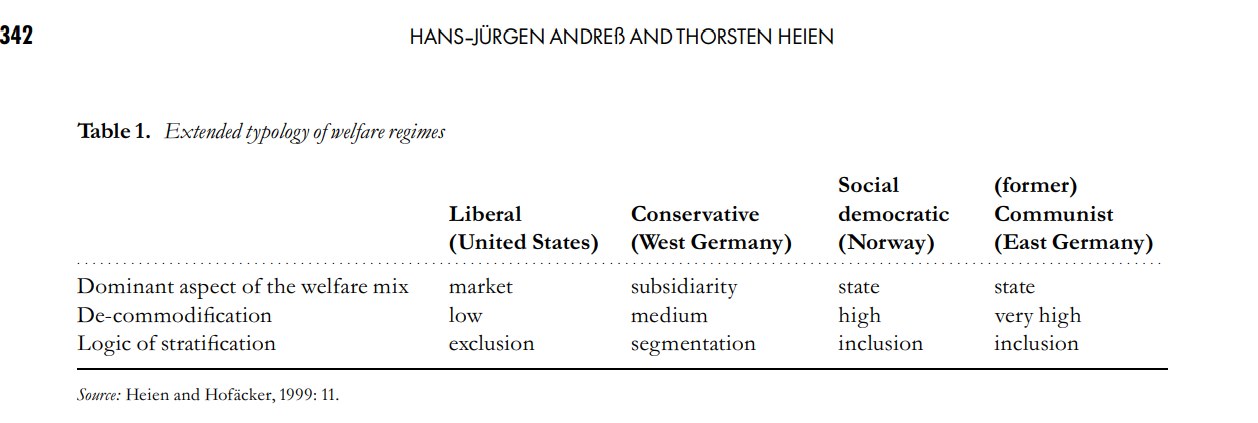
Given the recent availability of long panel data sources, questions about time change in attitudes have been mainly focused on industrialized countries (CITAS). In this context, little is known about the late industrialized countries with high levels of income inequality and lower state capacity. In the OECD context, Chile

“Social class is particularly important in studying fairness perceptions of income-based educational inequality because it is a key theme in the literature on how choice-based education systems operate.” (Lee and Stacey, 2023, p. 4)

“Neoliberalism promotes market-based competition (Mudge, 2008) and emphasises individual responsibility or self-reliance (Amable, 2010).” (Lee and Stacey, 2023, p. 5)

“In the Australian school system, the school choice model has been expanded, and neoliberal policy technologies (e.g., test-based accountability, private sector management practice) have been adopted since the late 1980s (Stacey & Mockler, 2023).” (Lee and Stacey, 2023, p. 5)

"classical analyses by Thompson (1971) or Moore (1978) have highlighted how institutional changes—when seen as representing an illegitimate break with traditional social order—have often triggered moral outrage and feelings of injustice, thereby uncovering the tacit assumptions that constitute a ‘moral economy’" (Koos y Sachweh, 2019, p. 800)



# Data, variables, and method

# Data

Three-time measures that account for six years

# Variables

*Market justice*

The main dependent variable of this study is *market justice preferences*: ‘It is fair that people with higher incomes have better pensions than people with lower incomes’, ‘It is fair that people with higher incomes have access to better education for their children than people with lower incomes’, and ‘It is fair that people with higher incomes can access better healthcare than people with lower incomes’. These items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Completely disagree) to 5 (Completely agree). In all measures, the correlation between items is above 0.8 (Time 3, α=XXX; Time 2, α=XXX). Here, higher values indicate stronger support for market justice principles.

*Household Income*

Abrir el argumento de que income va a ser la principal variable de interés porque en este caso, la justicia de mercado se vincula principalmente a la capacidad de compra.

*Educational level*

*Network socioeconomic diversity*

*Control variables*

También se incluyeron la educación (Hausermann) y el prestigio ocupacional (ISEI scores) para observar por las ventajas en términos de habilidades así como también en términos la posición de mercado en la estructura ocupacional (Lindh, 2015)

"Rehm (2009,2016 ) argues that, while income captures redistribution preferences, occupation characteristics capture risk exposure and insurance motivations." (Rueda y Stegmueller, 2019, p. 39) aquí las ocupaciones capturan - risk exposure- insurance motivations

# Method

Using panel data from the Chilean Longitudinal Social Study (ELSOC, 2022), I estimated longitudinal multilevel linear models (Singer & Willett, 2009) to examine the extent to which income, education, and network diversity variables predict preferences for market justice over time. I analyzed these data using R and the lme4 package (Bates et al., 2015).

In the context of panel data, within-person effects capture how changes in individual-level variables (e.g., income, education, network diversity) between waves are associated with preferences for market justice. By contrast, between-person effects examine differences between individuals, explaining the association between long-term (or average) values of income, education, and network diversity variables and average levels of market justice preferences.

To capture the within-person effects of these factors, we group-mean centered these variables, where the group refers to the individual (i.e., observations are nested within respondents). The between-person effects, in turn, are captured through the individual-level average of each variable based on the longitudinal panel data spanning three waves.

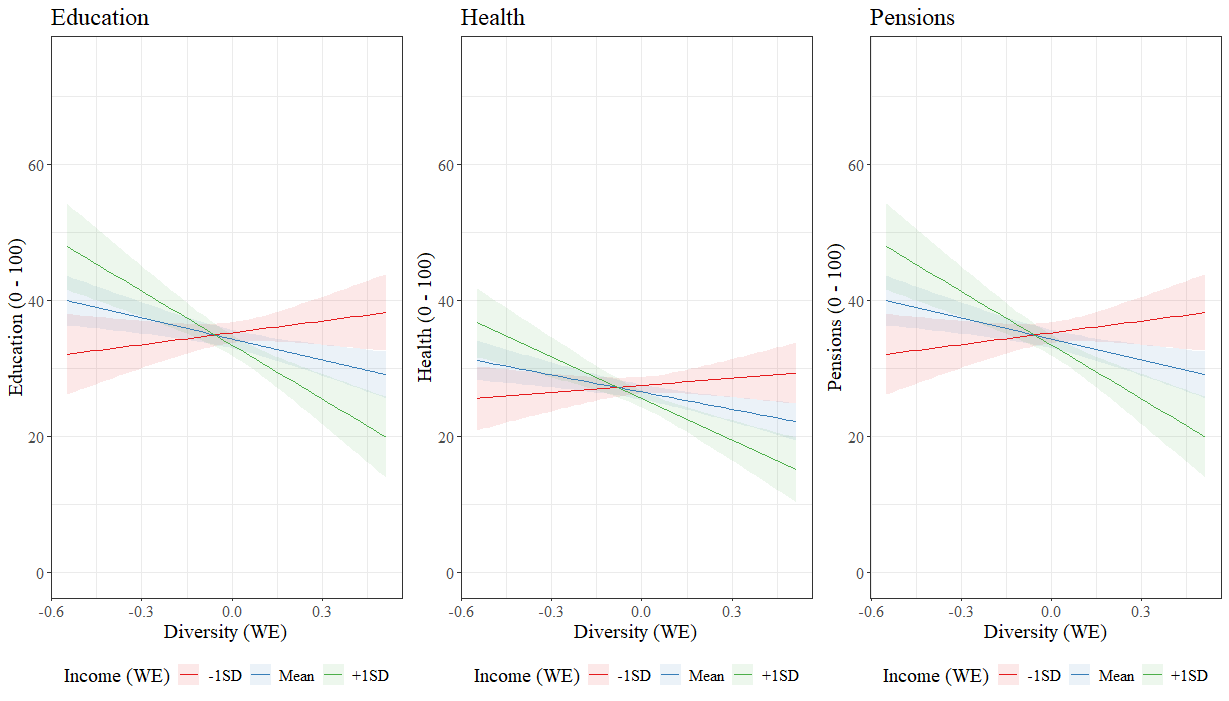
# Descriptive results on network diversity and market justice attitudes

# Longitudinal results on network diversity and market justice attitudes

## Main effects

“rising inequality bring doubts about economic opportunities in society and subsequently, lead to the greater endorsement of policies designed to reduce inequality (McCall et al., 2017).” (Lee and Stacey, 2023, p. 13). This might be a possibility, that people individuals who have increased their socioeconomic conditions (rising educational level and income) also become more concerned about income inequality, this could also nurture lower support for market justice principles.

## Interactions effects



## If β1=0.05\beta\_1 = 0.05β1​=0.05, it means that for each unit increase in an individual’s income (relative to their own mean income), their outcome YYY increases by 0.05 units.

If income is measured in thousands of dollars and happiness on a 10-point scale, a result like this could mean that for each $1,000 increase in an individual’s income relative to their usual income, their happiness increases by 0.05 points.

Within-individual changes in income capture how fluctuations in a person’s income over time (as opposed to differences between people) affect outcomes like well-being, consumption, or health. Interpreting this focuses on the short-term or dynamic effect of income variation within the same person, providing valuable insights into how individuals respond to income shocks or changes, independent of their baseline characteristics or overall wealth.

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