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Identifying hostile versus paternalistic classism profiles: a person-based approach to the study of ambivalent classism

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Abstract

Research on ambivalent classism suggests that individuals can manifest classism not only in a hostile and explicit manner but also in a condescending and paternalistic form. However, researchers have not determined the existence of individual profiles or population subgroups that show this ambivalence pattern. Therefore, to assess the existence of different profiles based on their manifestation of ambivalent classism, we carry out a latent profile analysis with a national representative sample ($N = 1536$). We identify different classist profiles among the population, including a minority of individuals who score low on both dimensions of classism (low generalized classists, 8.65%) and another minority who score high on both hostile and paternalism classism (high generalized classists, 8.13%). Further, we discovered that most of the population adhered to a moderated classism profile, endorsing both dimensions of classism (moderately generalized classist, 40.95%) or to an ambivalent profile, scoring low in hostile classism and high in paternalistic attitudes (paternalistic classists, 42.25%). The likelihood of adhering to the different profiles seems to be related to the individual's level of education and system justification beliefs. Those individuals who score higher on system justification and with lower educational attainment are more willing to be highly generalized classists rather than be part of other profiles. Profiles also differ to an extent regarding concerns about economic inequality and social attitudes, with moderate and highly generalized classists being less concerned about economic inequality and less willing to support poor groups. We discuss the implications for developing targeted interventions aimed to confront classism patterns for each profile.

Keywords Classism · Latent profiles · Hostile · Paternalistic · Person-based approach

Poverty rates are still a major issue in many developed countries, despite government efforts to narrow them (United Nations, 2023). As a strategy to reduce the number of individuals in poverty, governments implement various kinds of policies that aim to alleviate the lives of economically disadvantaged citizens (Cornia, 2020). However, these policy efforts sometimes face opposition from part of society based on their perception of poor people and groups (Bullock, 2017). In such matters, ambivalent classism attitudes, from the hostile to the more condescending ones, have been proven to be related to a lack of support for social and redistribution policies (Jordan et al., 2021; Sainz et al., 2021; Sainz and Jiménez-Moya, 2023). However, research on this matter is scarce. No previous studies have aimed to identify how individuals endorse the different dimensions of ambivalent classism or to determine the extent to which certain attitudinal profiles can be drawn among the general population. Identifying classism-based profiles (Smith et al., 2019) seems to be crucial when designing targeted interventions for specific populations to counterbalance classism attitudes in favour of social change. In this project, we applied the person-based approach previously utilized by Osborne and Sibley (2017) to identify different classism profiles among a nationally representative sample of individuals to provide evidence of the prevalence of certain ambivalent classist groups, as well as to determine the variables that lead individuals to adhere to each profile and the way adhering these profiles shapes individual's understanding of poverty-related issues.

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Ambivalent classism: understanding attitudes toward the poor

Researcher's theoretical understanding of the study of classism attitudes is underdeveloped in the Social Psychology literature when compared with other forms of attitude-based discrimination. The classical or preliminary studies on this matter uniquely analyzed the relationships among interpersonal classism attitudes (Lott, 2012), mainly measured using feeling thermometers or single-factor scales that capture attitudes towards poor people or groups in a single continuous form, from positive to negative ones, with the perceived causes of poverty or to people helping intentions towards the poor (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Tagler & Cozzarelli, 2013). However, as stated by related areas of research such as group-based stereotypes studies (Fiske et al., 2002) or gender-based attitudes studies (Connor et al., 2016), the complexity of social perception models goes beyond a single linear construct and includes a wide range of angles that makes the process need deeper understanding. In the classism literature, this needs to understand the process's complexity has recently led to further developments based on the classical studies that incorporate different types of measures to capture the process (e.g., implicit vs. explicit measures; Fung et al., 2023; Shor et al., 2019) or to differentiate among the targets of classism (e.g., downward vs. upward classism; Colbow et al., 2016; Liu, 2011). In spite of the usefulness of these approaches, one of the more relevant breakthroughs to understanding the complexity of classism attitudes has been the development of ambivalence classism (Jordan et al., 2021; Sainz et al., 2021).

Jordan et al. (2021) applied the attitudinal ambivalence that has been identified in other areas, such as the gender field, where people can hold both hostile and paternalistic attitudes toward women simultaneously (i.e., ambivalent sexism, Connor et al., 2016; Glick and Fiske, 1996), to the study of classism. The authors of this approach theorize that individuals can hold explicit and derogatory negative attitudes (a.k.a., hostile classism) towards poor people and groups. Hostile attitudes lead people to consider the poor as less valuable members of society who cannot be trusted or who have a general tendency to take advantage of others without making an effort to overcome their plight by themselves. This hostile classism dimension has been found to be greatly associated with hierarchy-enhancing ideologies such as social dominance orientation or system justification beliefs (Jordan et al., 2021; Sainz et al., 2021) or with a previously identified tendency to dehumanize poor people and groups (Sainz et al., 2020; Sainz & Jiménez-Moya, 2023). Undoubtedly, this blatant dimension of classism has severe consequences on the way people perceive poverty. Nevertheless, this hostile dimension is seemingly held simultaneously with other condescending and paternalistic attitudes that can be misled as positive or protective attitudes towards the poor. Specifically, we are talking about the benevolence and protective paternalism dimension of classism, which is the belief that the poor require constant help and guidance from others to make adequate decisions in their lives. Paternalism relies on the perception of the poor as incapable, with inadequate traits or a more primitive nature, which is far from a positive perception of or positive attitude toward the group. Due to the patronizing nature of this dimension, paternalism is more likely to be related to the endorsement of certain conditional social policies that provide help based on individuals' performance and supervision (e.g., efforts to seek employment, engaging in rehabilitation programs), rather than to altruistically and unconditionally help the group (Jordan et al., 2021). Finally, the authors proposed that individuals can hold multiple complementary class differentiation attitudes, leading them to perceive poor people as having positive traits, such as being humble or modest, that are not perceived in rich individuals or groups. However, even when this complementary perception was previously analyzed (Kay & Jost, 2003), it was found to be less consistent, predicting poverty-related outcomes to a lesser extent compared with the other dimensions of ambivalence classism (Sainz et al., 2021; Sainz & Jiménez-Moya, 2023).

These hostile and paternalistic attitudes have been crucial to understanding the classism processes, as well as the relationship between these dimensions and the several outcomes related to poverty perception and social-related measures. However, this variable-based approach does not allow researchers to make inferences about the extent to which individuals adhere to the different dimensions of classism or to determine the existence of profiles among the population based on their pattern of classism (Smith et al., 2019; Osborne & Sibley, 2017). What is the prevalence of ambivalent classism among the population? Are individuals more willing to endorse hostile than paternalistic attitudes? We attempted to answer these questions by using a person-based approach that allows individuals to be clustered based on certain variables to identify the prevalence of each group among the population (Collins & Lanza, 2010; Goodman, 2002). This approach that uses the individual as a unit of analysis to identify subgroups among the population allows us to answer research questions that are different to the ones that we usually address when using variable-based approaches. Techniques based on the person-based approach, such as latent profile analyses (LPA), constitute excellent tools for providing empirical evidence about the existence of individuals with different psychological profiles that can be the targets of future interventions to counteract classism within our society (Smith et al., 2019). For

instance, using variable-based approaches previous research highlights the relevance of hostile classism as one of the ambivalent classism dimensions that better predicts several socially related outcomes (Sainz et al., 2021; 2023). However, the capability of prediction of this dimension does not provide information about how many classist individuals we have in our society or how many of the individuals that adhere to classism hold hostile attitudes compared to more paternalistic ones. Although this person-based approach is uncommon in Social Psychology literature, it has been found to be useful in previous research. For instance, authors have used in identifying authoritarian profiles (Sibley et al., 2019), different groups of sexist individuals (Sibley & Becker, 2012; Jiménez-Moya et al., 2022), groups with different perceptions of economic inequality (García-Castro et al., 2022), in distinguishing different types of poverty activists (Thomas & McGarty, 2018) and subpopulations of individuals based on the attributional process people used to determine the causes of poverty (Osborne & Weiner, 2015) which constitute a key starting point for designing practical interventions that aim to defy the existence of certain profiles that contributes to maintenance inequality in its different forms. This is why, as stated before, in our matter of study grouping individuals based on recognition of their specific psychosocial characteristics or knowledge of the size of each group within a determined population constitutes the fundamental preliminary steps to proposing interventions aimed at defying the classism of each group's specific psychosocial profiles.

In our study, profiling ambivalent classism will allow us to understand whether individuals adhere more to hostile or paternalistic classism. This will result in the identification of different psychological profiles depending on the participant's adherence to the dimensions, for example, generalized classist, hostile classist, and paternalistic classist among other possible patterns that might emerge from the analyses. Furthermore, identifying profiles will allow us to deepen our understanding of what psychosocial variables trigger adherence to one profile over another, and how different groups of the population perceive certain poverty-related issues such as supporting social or redistribution policies. On this matter, previous research has benefited from these predictors and outcome analyses showing how, for instance, social dominance predicted membership to sexist profiles (Jiménez-Moya et al., 2022) or that individuals adhering to authoritarian profiles are less willing to support human rights (Sibley et al., 2019). In our matter of study it is possible that certain socio-demographic characteristics such as educational attainment or participants' ideology could predict being or not classism, as well as different classist profiles will have diverse opinions regarding, for instance, the support for social policies. In addition, this analysis with a nationally representative sample could benefit from inferring the size of the population that adheres to each group, allowing us to design attitudinal change interventions for profiles that are more prevalent among the population. In short, person-based analysis of the study of ambivalent classism is a novel approach that can be used to identify information about the existence of ambivalent classism profiles while generating information to design interventions that aim to reduce class-based discrimination in our society.

Overview

In this project, we aim to explore without prior hypotheses, the prevalence of different subtypes of individuals based on the adherence (or lack thereof) to hostile and paternalistic classist attitudes. To do so, we implement a person-based approach to study a nationally representative sample. Following previous research (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014), we employed a three-step approach. First, we identify the different classist profiles performing LPA. Second, we validate the profiles by identifying some variables that predict the individual's likelihood of belonging to each group. Finally, we assess the differences in attitudes in regard to economic inequality and social policies between profiles.

Method

Procedure and participants

In order to carry out the project we accessed an existing data set that contains answers to economic inequality-related questions from a Spaniard sample. Specifically, data came from a panel of participants that were recruited by a survey company in 2022. Participants were asked to volunteer in exchange for being paid for providing their opinion about socially relevant issues (20 min). This data set contains a total of 1536 participants (Sex: women = 746, men = 790; Age: $M = 48.41$; $SD = 17.21$) that were representative of the Spanish population based on sex and region of origin in Spain. Overall, the characteristics of this data set suit the aim of this project as it is a nationally representative sample of participants that allows us to better determine the prevalence of given classism profiles among the population as recommended by Osborne and Sibley (2017). Further, we should mention that the Spanish context has had an increased level of poverty rates and economic inequality in previous years with approximately 27,8% of the population at risk of poverty and social exclusión based on the European Anti-Poverty Network (2022). While also at least twenty agorafobia offences have been brought to justice and established condemnation in the last three years (Ministerio del Interior,

2021), highlighting the threats to social cohesion and confrontation scenarios in which the country is involved. In short, the characteristics of the sample along with the context in which it was recruited constitute an adequate starting point to identify classism profiles.

The nature of the data set led us to carry out the analyses with the existing measures that were originally included in the questionnaire which captures shortened scales of the psychosocial process we are interested in. However, the data set contains enough variables to perform the three-step approach as recommended by previous literature. In this project, we select the following variables:

Ambivalent classism indicators

To extract the classist profiles, we used the existing four items that cover the two main dimensions of ambivalent classism in the data set: hostile classism (two items: "Poor people often lack a competitive drive to get ahead" and "Poor people often do not know how to conduct themselves like contributing members of society"; $r = .575$, $p < .001$), and paternalism classism (two items: "Charitable organizations should give poor people extra assistance in managing their finances wisely" and "Charitable organizations should help poor people use their food stamps wisely"; $r = .746$, $p < .001$). These items were adapted from Sainz et al. (2021) into Spanish. The existing dataset did not contain items capturing the complementary class differentiation dimension of the original ambivalent classism scale. Nevertheless, this dimension of classism has been shown to be the lesser consistent factor compared with the others in previous analyses (Sainz et al., 2021; 2023) and, thus, it might not be suitable for our context of study. Answers ranged from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree).

Socio-demographic antecedents of classism profiles

To capture the measure(s) that predict the likelihood of profile membership, we include a set of socio-demographic variables, ranging from demographic information such as participants' age (0 to 100) and sex (0 = woman; 1 = man), socio-economic indicators such as participants' monthly household income (from 1 = "Up to 600€" to 11 = "More than 8.000€"), and educational level (from 1 = "No primary education" to 8 = "PhD level"). Furthermore, we include an ideological variable such as system justification beliefs (four items, e.g., "In general, Spanish society seems fair to me"; $\alpha = 0.790$; Kay and Jost, 2003). Answers ranged from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree).

Attitudes toward social issues based on the classism profiles

We test the differences among profiles regarding some poverty-related issues, such as individual concerns about economic inequality (one item: "How worried are you about the differences in income between the richest and the poorest people in Spain?"), support for a universal basic income (one item: "The government should maintain minimum vital income"), and support for higher taxation (two items: "The government should impose greater taxes on people with more income" and "The government should impose greater taxes on great inheritances"; $r = .650$, $p < .001$). Answers ranged from 1 (completely disagree/not worried) to 7 (completely agree/worried).

Results

Identification of classism profiles

We conducted LPA using the tidyLPA package (Rosenberg et al., 2018). Specifically, we used the four items along the two dimensions of the ambivalent classism scale as indicators to identify possible profiles of individuals with different combinations of hostile and paternalistic attitudes toward poor groups. To identify the distinct profiles that could capture these possible combinations, we compute solutions that ranged from two to six profiles. Table 1 presents the fit of each model that allows us to determine the appropriate number of profiles. First, the results show that the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) indices decreased as the number of profiles increased until the fifth profile. Indicating that solutions based on

Table 1 Model fit for the different profile's solutions

Number of Profiles	AIC	BIC	BLRT	Entropy	N Min.	N Max.
2	8,480.32	8,517.68	249.63*	0.84	0.11	0.89
3	8,331.61	8,384.98	154.71*	0.73	0.10	0.51
4	8,141.94	8,211.32	194.02*	0.81	0.08	0.42
5	8,069.26	8,154.65	78.68*	0.80	0.06	0.35
6	8,068.82	8,170.22	6.45	0.76	0.06	0.24

Note. AIC = Akaike Information Criterion; BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion; BLRT = Bootstrapped Likelihood Ratio Test; N Min./Max. = Proportion of the sample assigned to the smallest/largest profile; * $p < .001$

multiple profiles suit better our data than solutions based on lesser profiles. The lowest levels of AIC and BIC can be found in the sixth and fifth models, respectively. Compared to the fifth profile, the sixth profile did not lead to a significant reduction in AIC and BIC. Second, the non-significant Bootstrapped Likelihood Ratio Test (BLRT) conducted for the sixth profile indicated the inadequacy of the number of profiles in favor of a lesser number of profiles in the population. Third, the average uncertainty in the assignment of participants to the latent profiles (entropy) seems to be the highest in the second-class solution, followed by the fourth- and fifth-class solutions. Fourth, as expected, indices that estimate the number of participants who fit in a category show that the minimum and the maximum number of participants in each group reduces as the number of profiles increases. This leads us to the conclusion that a solution based on the six profiles should be considered with caution. Overall, we theorize that solutions based not only on too many profiles (six), but also on a reduced number of them (two) are not suitable because they seem to have a worse fit and do not provide meaningful theoretical differences among the identified profiles. Based on our analyses, solutions based on four or five profiles are better. Between these two competing solutions, we opted for the four-profile solution because it has, for instance, almost the same AIC or BIC with slightly better entropy or higher-class size proportion, which contributes to properly identifying relevant classes. Furthermore, a four-profile solution not only balances the model's fit but also facilitates the parsimony that yields interpretable and meaningful classes, as recommended by Collings and Lanza (2010).

The four-profile solution provides interesting information on how to group individuals with the dimensions of ambivalent classism (Table 2). On the extremes of the individual's distribution, the first group we identified scores lower on both dimensions of classism (Group 1: Low generalized classism), whereas the second group scores higher on both dimensions of classism (Group 4: High generalized classists). Both groups account for a small proportion of the sample (less than 10% of each group), leading to the conclusion that among the representative population of the study, only a minority of individuals endorse/lack both dimensions simultaneously. Most of the participants seem to show an ambivalent pattern of attitudes, particularly in Group 3 (Moderately generalized classist) and Group 2 (Paternalistic classists). Moderately generalized classist shows an ambivalent pattern, with individuals scoring moderately high on both dimensions, especially on the paternalistic part of classism. This group accounts for 40.95% of the sample population. In comparison, paternalistic classist shows a unique pattern of attitudes, with individuals highly endorsing paternalistic beliefs, but not hostile classism attitudes. This implies that individuals in this group, which accounts for 42.25% of the whole sample, mainly display paternalistic attitudes, leading to the conclusion that individuals can hold paternalistic attitudes without needing to endorse the more hostile component of classism. We did not identify the opposite pattern (uniquely hostile classist attitudes without benevolence) in this representative sample (Fig. 1).

Socio-demographic antecedents of classism profiles

We compute multinomial logistic regression models to assess differences in the likelihood of profile membership as a function of participants' socio-demographic characteristics (Table 3). This allows us to estimate the probability of latent profile membership being associated with demographic characteristics such as the participant's age and sex, along with some indicators of the participants' socioeconomic status (e.g., income and education) and system justification beliefs, that can account for the profile that the individuals are assigned to. We select the highly generalized classist profile as the reference category for the analysis (the smallest profile) due to its theoretical relevance (results using other reference groups can be found in the Supplementary Materials). The results indicate that individuals' age, sex, or income do not predict or have a minor effect on profile membership in any of the analyses. However, individuals' education plays a significant role in the profiles. Those who are more educated were less likely to be classified as highly generalized classists and more likely to be included in the other profiles. Furthermore, individuals who score higher in system justification beliefs are more likely to be highly generalized classists rather than being categorized as low generalized classists.

Table 2 Descriptive of the identified classism profiles

Profiles	n (%)	Hostil Classism mean *(sd)*	Paternalism Classism mean *(sd)*
1. Low generalized classists	133 *(8.65)*	1.42 *(0.66)*	1.92 *(0.76)*
2. Paternalistic classists	649 *(42.25)*	1.56 *(0.58)*	5.53 *(1.13)*
3. Moderately generalized classist	629 *(40.95)*	3.85 *(0.63)*	5.31 *(1.17)*
4. High generalized classists	125 *(8.13)*	5.92 *(0.69)*	6.31 *(1.15)*

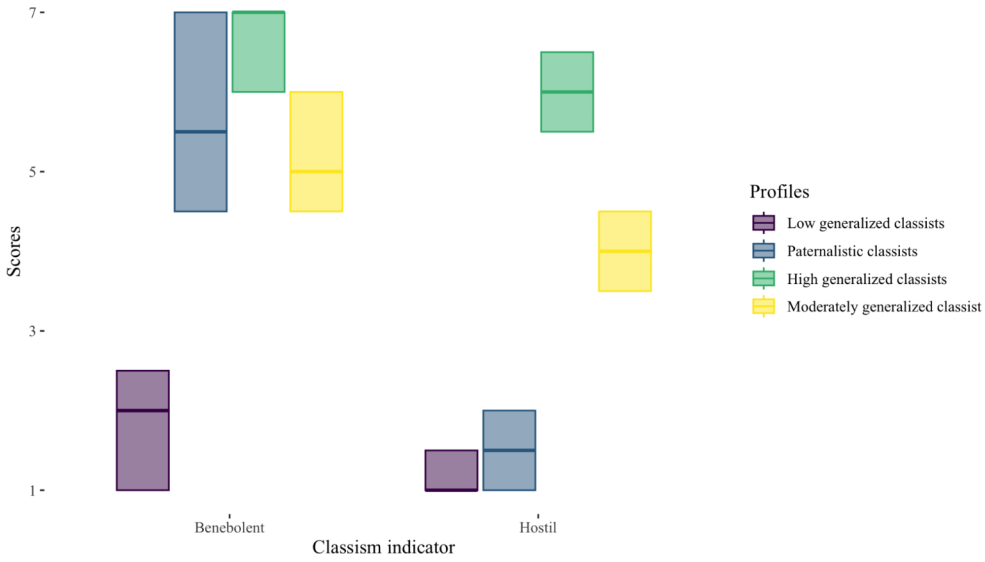

Fig. 1 Boxplots showing the distribution of each of the four classism profiles along the dimensions of ambivalent classism

Table 3 Multinomial logistic regression predicting the likelihood of belonging to the classism profiles using the highly generalized classists as the reference group

	Low generalized classist (vs. high generalized classist)			Paternalistic classist (vs. high generalized classist)			Moderately generalized classist (vs. high generalized classist)		
	B	*SE*	*Risk ratio*	*B*	*SE*	*Risk ratio*	*B*	*SE*	*Risk ratio*
Age	-0.01†	0.01	0.98	**-0.01***	0.01	0.99	-0.01	0.01	0.99
Sex	0.01	0.27	1.00	0.12	0.21	1.13	-0.22	0.21	0.80
Income	-0.05	0.06	0.95	0.01	0.04	1.00	-0.01	0.04	0.98
Education	**0.20***	0.10	1.23	**0.19***	0.08	1.21	**0.25****	0.08	1.28
System Justification	**-0.23***	0.11	0.79	-0.06	0.08	0.94	0.10	0.08	1.11

Note. Gender was dummy-coded (0 = women; 1 = men); *SE* = Standard Errors; bold coefficients are significant; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$; $^{\dagger}p = .06$

Table 4 Mean differences in the attitudes about social issues among the different classist profiles

	Low generalized classists	Paternalistic classists	Moderately generalized classist	High generalized classists
Concerns about economic inequality	5.83 *(1.30)*^{a}	5.53 *(1.28)*^{a}	5.11 *(1.55)*^{b}	5.37 *(1.45)*^{ab}
Support for universal basic income	5.24 *(1.91)*^{a}	5.13 *(1.92)*^{a}	4.54 *(1.86)*^{b}	4.58 *(2.29)*^{b}
Support for higher taxation	5.44 *(1.86)*^{a}	5.06 *(1.80)*^{ab}	4.57 *(1.81)*^{c}	4.70 *(1.98)*^{bc}

Note. Equal superscripts in rows signal non-significant comparisons among profiles at $p < .001$

Attitudes toward social issues based on the classism profiles

We carry out a set of ANOVAs to test the differences in attitudes towards certain social issues among classism profiles (Table 4). Based on these analyses, we identified profile differences in regard to economic inequality ($F(3, 1532) = 14.79$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.028$), support for universal basic income ($F(3, 1532) = 12.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.024$), and support for higher taxation ($F(3, 1532) = 12.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.024$). Simple comparisons showed that individuals who are high/moderately generalized classists are the ones with fewer concerns about the existing level of economic inequality, along with lower support for universal basic income or a lower desire to increase taxes. We did not find differences between low generalized and paternalistic classists or among moderate or high generalized classist profiles with these variables.

Discussion

This project aimed to identify classist profiles in a nationally representative sample using the hostile and paternalistic attitudes included in ambivalent classism (Jordan et al., 2021; Sainz et al., 2021; Sainz and Jiménez-Moya, 2023). To do so, we implement a person-based approach by carrying out LPA (Osborne & Sibley, 2017), which allowed us to identify four different classist profiles (Smith et al., 2019), as well as the variables that predict adherence to each attitudinal

profile and the extent that each group of individuals worried about social inequality and demanded the implementation of redistribution policies.

This project is the first of his kind, providing useful information about the prevalence of ambivalent classism within a population. Specifically, the results highlight that only a minority of individuals showed a generalized pattern of classism by endorsing/rejecting both dimensions altogether. Most of the population showed an ambivalent attitudinal pattern, with higher endorsement of paternalistic rather than hostile classism attitudes. This is the case, to a certain extent, with the moderately generalized classist profile and the paternalistic classist profile, whose scores on hostile attitudes are almost at the lowest point compared with other profiles. These two profiles account for a vast majority of the examined population, showing that benevolence is a far more prevalent attitude than hostility. Interestingly, we did not identify profiles that were based solely on hostile attitudes. Even when hostile classism seems to be a better predictor of some socially relevant outcomes (e.g., redistribution policies, dehumanization tendencies; Sainz et al., 2021; Sainz et al., 2023) the number of individuals that mainly uniquely hold these hostile attributes seems to be an unidentifiable minority at least in our sample. Based on this we can conclude that benevolence can seemingly manifest independently of hostile attitudes, but not the other way around. These findings allowed us to extract two main conclusions regarding the ambivalence of classism. First, the existence of a small number of individuals endorsing both dimensions, with a vast majority showing an ambivalent profile, speaks in favor of the more complex development carried out by Jordan et al. (2021) regarding the study of classism. Second, the lack of hostile profiles (with lower benevolence) might indicate that the conceptualization of both dimensions as same-level factors of the same construct could be inadequate to a certain extent. Why do hostile individuals also endorse supporting social policies with spending control over poor people? Why do they not reject any kind of social support for the group? These questions can be answered by several factors. It is possible that the representative sample did not include enough participants for capturing this mainly hostile psychological profile, and, thus, it cannot be identified in the LPA analyses. It is also possible that social desirability might hinder the expression of hostile attitudes in favor of more paternalistic ones that are not socially condemned, or that the benevolence items are more closely related to the hostile dimension than previously considered (Jordan et al., 2021; Sainz et al., 2021; Sainz and Jiménez-Moya, 2023). Even when this finding speaks in favor of the existence of attitudinal ambivalence, it highlights the need to provide a deeper understanding of the process itself and the distributions of the ambivalent dimensions. On this matter, cross-cultural replications of these findings might be desirable to confirm the existence of similar classism profiles among other populations, especially in countries in which the hostile classism factor of the scale has been identified in the scale factorial structure, such as in the US (Jordan et al., 2021), to confirm the existence or not of hostile classist profiles.

In addition, this project allowed us to identify the extent to which adherence to some of the profiles can be predicted by participants' socio-demographic variables. Results on this matter clearly show that adherence to the hierarchy-enhancing attitudes and the meritocratic myths (Rodriguez-Bailon et al., 2017) that are captured by the system justification beliefs predicts an individual belonging to a high generalized classism profile, which is in line with previous pieces of evidence about the role of this variable on prejudice or dehumanization manifestations (Hodson & Dhont, 2015; Sainz & Jiménez-Moya, 2023). Furthermore, among the socioeconomic indicators that we include, participants' education seems to play a crucial role in predicting profile belonging, leading to the conclusion that educated individuals are less willing to be highly generalized classists but rather to something else. This does not imply that education prevents the appearance of classism attitudes, it uniquely implies that educated individuals are not scoring higher on both dimensions of classism but they can engage in paternalistic or other mild forms of classism (see tables in supplementary information). These results question the protective role that this variable is considered to exert on displays of prejudice (Carvacho et al., 2013; Kuppens et al., 2018). Even when educated individuals are not displaying hostile classism, they engage in paternalistic forms of it thus holding the belief that the poor can not care for themselves and that they should be externally controlled by others in order to overcome their daily difficulties. Future studies should contribute to our understanding of how education promotes class-based discrimination (van Noord et al., 2019). Additionally, other socioeconomic indicators such as the individual's sex, age or income seem to not predict profile adherence. In general terms, previous research has shown that this demographic information does not have a consistent relation with classism dimensions (see for instance Sainz et al., 2021 and 2023). Instead, classism seems to be more closely related to other variables such as participants' educational level or their ideological positionings.

Lastly, the results help us understand the differences in economic-related issues. Specifically, results are showing how profiles are grouped with no differences between less-generalized and paternalistic classists or between high-generalized and moderately generalized classists profiles. This unexpected pattern of results might indicate that the presence (or absence) of hostile attitudes is the key variable that

triggers lesser worry about economic inequality and lesser desire to redistribute income among the profiles. Interestingly, the paternalistic profile did not differ from the non-classist profile in, for instance, the support for social policies. This, to some extent, contradicted previous research from Jordan et al. (2021) on this matter as they have found that paternalistic classism correlated positively with the support for restrictive social policies, but not with the support for progressive social policies similar to the ones we measured in the study (i.e., universal basic income). How it is possible that paternalistic profiles will be willing to support to the same extent progressive policies that provide help without restraining their recipients? On this matter, it is possible that paternalistic profiles are psychologically closer to non-classism profiles rather than more hostile ones. Benevolence leads individuals to provide help to those in need even when this help might mask a devaluated view of those who asked for it. This might have led in our context of study to find non-significant differences between low generalized classism and paternalistic ones: the need for help seems to be present in both cases. However, we should note that non-classist and paternalistic individuals can show similar patterns with certain variables as a consequence of the way these variables capture social reality, even when the attitudinal profiles and the perception of poverty are quite different from each other. For instance, results might have been different if we would have the opportunity of comparing the support for conditional vs. no conditional social programs among both low-classist and paternalistic profiles. Paternalistic profiles are hypothesised to be more willing to provide, for instance, unemployment benefits uniquely if the recipients of this policy will provide proof of being actively looking for a job. Yet, our data set lacks measures that will allow us to capture these specific details and we uniquely have the opportunity to compare broad support for social issues, without enough details, among profiles. Nevertheless, considering the pernicious role of paternalistic attitudes in determining the way people relate with poor individuals and groups and its subtle effect of justifying the status quo (Jordan et al., 2021; Sainz et al., 2021) future studies should provide more evidence about the consequences of paternalistic profiles compared with non-classist ones.

Practical implications arise from these results in the development of public interventions aimed to confront class-based discrimination. Based on the prevalence of paternalistic profiles among the general population, this attitudinal dimension might require the implementation of specific interventions to confront it. Benevolence attitudes rely on the idea that poor people and groups do not have agency, or at least their autonomy leads them to perform worse than the rest of the population. This is a narrative that was previously identified in the dehumanization field, where results indicated that poor groups are considered to be immature and irrational to a higher extent than other socioeconomic groups (Sainz et al., 2019, 2020), which affects the perception of the causes of poverty when it relies on individually driven causes, such as poor people's perceived lack of intelligence (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Sainz et al., 2023). Therefore, these interventions should try to counter this attitudinal dimension by explaining how poor people and groups are frequently victims of their own plight and how the lack of access to resources (e.g., education, health, and social networks) constitutes the main barrier towards their development. In addition, due to the nature of benevolence, effort needs to be put into understanding that this is a form of classism that reflects a depicted perception of the poor rather than a caring perception of those in need. Interventions should keep in mind the danger of paternalistic attitudes in justifying the status quo (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005), and should prioritize recognizing paternalism attitudes as a social problem.

This project has certain limitations regarding the use of the existing data set. First, to perform the LPA, we used four items that the nationally representative survey includes to capture the two main dimensions of ambivalence classism (Jordan et al., 2021). Despite the adequacy of these four items, which were previously used in the Spanish adaptation of the ambivalent classism scale (Sainz et al., 2021; Sainz & Jiménez-Moya, 2023), including more indicators to capture both dimensions of classism would have given us better tools to identify the profiles. Second, in a similar vein, we have a limited set of variables to perform the antecedents and outcomes of the profile adherence, which might have restricted our understanding of the diversity of the profiles. For instance, we did not identify many differences between low-generalized classist and paternalistic classist profiles in the support-for-redistribution variables. Does this mean that both population subgroups are willing to help the poor via redistribution of income to the same extent? Building on previous evidence, we believe that certain individuals are willing to support conditional/restricted social programs, which implies strict governmental control over the performance of poor individuals and groups when receiving social benefits, rather than providing unconditional help (Sainz, Loughnan et al., 2020). This might be the case with paternalistic classics that endorse helping people under certain conditions (Jordan et al., 2021) compared to non-classist individuals who can support poor people and groups in a more altruistic manner. However, our existing dependent variables do not capture this differentiation (i.e., restricted vs. autonomy-oriented help), which limits our understanding of the psychological processes among classism profiles.

Future studies can be drawn from this preliminary project. We acknowledge that there were no previous attempts

to identify ambivalent classist profiles among the population with the intention of developing interventions aimed to reduce each specific psychological profile. Therefore, this study opens the door for future research to increase our understanding of the population's classic profiles. Future studies can overcome the aforementioned limitations by including more indicators to capture the profiles and more specific poverty-related variables to capture subtle differences among profiles that we might not have identified (Cavalhieri et al., 2023). Furthermore, we computed LPA with a cross-sectional sample of individuals. Future studies could improve upon this by incorporating the longitudinal perspective (Abarda et al., 2020; Ryoo et al., 2018) into the study of classist profiles. Do people hold the same classist profile over time? Are there variables that can change their adherence from one profile to another? By performing longitudinal latent profile analyses (LLPA), future studies will be able to answer these questions and identify the potential changes over time (waves of the survey) to understand the stability or malleability of classist profiles. Moreover, we will be able to incorporate measures that capture changes over time, such as the level of economic inequality or society's poverty rates, to see whether these variables predict the perseverance of the profiles over time (Demaray et al., 2021). In short, including variables that capture subtle differences regarding poverty-related issues and performing longitudinal analyses will allow future studies to provide more detailed information about the distinctiveness of each profile, increasing the usefulness of these future pieces of evidence for practical interventions aimed to confront the different classist profiles.

All in all, the existence of different classist profiles, from the paternalistic to the hostile, along with our understanding of the variables that lead individuals to adhere to each profile and the extent to which each subgroup worries about inequality and supports social change policies, constitutes proof of the manifestation of ambivalence classism. It is the first step to developing interventions aimed to confront each attitudinal profile to reduce class-based discrimination within our society.

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Data Availability Data and materials can be found online https://osf.io/dbjge/.

Declarations

Competing Interests The authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

Conflict of interest The authors state that there is no conflict of interest.

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