Article

Voter's Perception of Political Messages Against the Elite Classes in Spain: A Quasi-Experimental Design

Juan Enrique Gonzálvez-Vallés [1],*, José Daniel Barquero-Cabrero [2], and Natalia Enseñat-Bibiloni [2]

[1] Communication Theories and Analysis, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain
[2] Department of Research, ESERP Business & Law School, Spain

* Corresponding author (jegonzalvez@ucm.es)

Abstract
Demonization constitutes the construction of a simplified symbolic reality through the prism of hatred. The elite classes have been framed within the discourse of far-left parties in Spain to make them antagonistic to their target audience. In this area, research tends to use explicit measures, but few have used implicit measures. This article aims to assess both types of voter perceptions of anti-elite class messages in Spain. Eighty Spanish voters belonging to left- and right-wing ideologies participated in this study. Implicit attitudes were measured through the implicit association test. The result shows that demonization is deepening in various layers of society in order to provoke a confrontation with the elite classes. Social networks have emerged as a means of social control, but they are not perceived as such by the subjects but rather as an additional informational or purely propagandistic element. But even among the public who are aware of the latter, the more their perception of the elite classes is limited to demonization, the more extreme their social vision is.

Issue
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1. Introduction

The current development of technologies, as well as their potential, provides great advances and benefits that cannot be ignored in almost any field, including the media (Tuesta-Panduro, 2021). However, the media has been expanding and continues to expand its contact channels to provide information and, especially within the framework of web 2.0, this has led to harmful effects such as the creation and subsequent viralization of fake news and the emergence of hate messages (Rani et al., 2022). Such pernicious information is created by combining typographic and visual elements that accentuate the manipulative intention (Rodríguez Ferrándiz & Sorolla-Romero, 2021).

However, disinformation is not only framed from the point of view of the media; it extends to other areas such as corporate communication, institutional communication, and political communication (Mut Camacho & Rueda Lozano, 2021). What sets a common pattern in all the aforementioned areas is the possibility of building communicative strategies that favor disinformation, boost hate speech, and contribute to the polarization of public opinion (Gidron et al., 2020; López del Castillo Wilderbeek, 2021). Thus, new ecosystems of information manipulation are generated where society is unaware of reality and fixes the framework through pernicious messages (Larrondo-Ureta et al., 2021).

When polarization occurs, the center of the board is usually emptied, and a great deal of stress is put on

the ends. It occurs in any aspect where a communication strategy is developed, but due to its impact on public opinion, it reaches higher levels in political communication (Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2021). Through messages that demonize opponents and hate speech, society becomes fragmented and self-realities are constructed in which only those with the same opinion have a place. The stereotype is transformed into a normative element that is cultural, social, and religious in nature, cornering the political opponent through disqualifications and making them an enemy in all the previously mentioned areas (Baptista et al., 2021).

It is at this point that hate speech emerges. Moreover, it has found social networks an excellent space to become visible and expand exponentially. These two circumstances mean that, in this aspect, web 2.0 stands as a particularly sensitive loudspeaker when it comes to political issues (Urcola Eceiza & Elezgarai Ibañez, 2021). Groups of individuals, sometimes acting in a coordinated fashion, give value to hate messages that include aggressive, violent, and discriminatory terms. The low quality of information on social networks is a complex issue for society as it affects certain groups and weakens democracy (Abdullah et al., 2022).

While there is no universal definition of hate speech, given the moral and legal implications it may have, it refers to expressions that foster prejudice or intolerance and indirectly contribute to a hostile climate that may ultimately foster discrimination or even violent behavior or attack (Civila et al., 2021). These discourses single out a group of individuals based on certain characteristics by attributing to their addressee a set of constitutive qualities that are considered highly undesirable. They tend not necessarily to resort to violence but may also use more refined forms, such as jokes, insinuations, or ambiguous images (Romero Rodríguez et al., 2021).

Spain is the most polarized country in Europe, with high ideological polarization but low emotional polarization. More than two-thirds of citizens believe that traditional political parties and politicians do not care about people like them (Alonso, 2021). In this sense, it has been observed that the degree of polarization of citizens is often associated with belonging to certain social groups and the consumption of political news, which may occur due to contagion effects and polarization of acceptance by political actors (Jaráiz et al., 2021).

Hate speech is also one of the most important discursive tactics used by populist movements to promote their actions and agendas (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2021; Bartha et al., 2020; Olivas Osuna, 2021). As such, elites are at the center of hate speech in far-left parties in Europe (Marcos-Marne, 2021). In the Spanish case, the attack focuses on discrediting the business class as a social agent, attacking its political representatives, which are identified with the right wing or radical right, and denying the violence of the authoritarian and populist states of the far left (Coll, 2021; Fischer,

2020; Iglesias, 2022; Ruiz Coll, 2022). It is also worth noting that Twitter's activity on the issue of caste has had a lot of activity and interactions, as recent studies have shown, helping to link issues such as the alleged link between elite, caste, business, and disenfranchisement (Montessori & Morales-López, 2019; Tierno, 2019).

A theoretical assumption of this study is that frequent contact between voters and people belonging to the elite classes can lead to changes in their beliefs and behaviors. In essence, this model adopts the contact hypothesis, one of the most effective strategies in social psychology for reducing prejudice (Brown & Hewstone, 2005). The contact hypothesis states that contact between members of different groups can generate positive intergroup relations and a noticeable decrease in prejudice and negative stereotypes (Allport, 1954). The literature has shown that the quantity and quality of contact positively affect perceptions when the person with whom contact is maintained is perceived as representative of their outgroup (Brown & Hewstone, 2005).

1.1. Use of the Political Discourse Analysis

As a socio-political phenomenon, social polarization has aroused the interest of a number of social science researchers. In this framework, some research has investigated electoral scenarios: elections in Germany and the US (Barberá, 2015). They have also focused on analyzing political and party divisions, such as those between left and right in Spain (Barberá, 2015; Ben-David & Fernández, 2016). These studies highlight how political, economic, and social conjunctures become a fertile space for the emergence and study of polarization (Banks et al., 2021; Pérez-Escolar & Noguera-Vivo, 2022).

Other studies have investigated voter perceptions from various perspectives. One of these analyzes them through the strategies implemented by political parties (Nasr, 2020). However, other research focuses on the analysis of these perceptions focused on the figure of the party leader and candidate (Fernández-Vázquez & Somer-Topcu, 2019). Recent studies delve into the latter line with new variables such as segmentation by race (Chirco & Buchanan, 2023) and the entry of new leaders into traditional parties that had previously enjoyed stable leadership (Bridgewater, 2023).

Other studies warn of the need to establish the subtle difference between social polarization and society's simple use of ideological stereotypes (such as left or right) to make sense of reality from established referents. That is, not all people who use ideological labels to designate political events are polarised; some only find in these labels a way of signifying experiences from social frameworks (Banks et al., 2021; Schmid et al., 2022). However, when it is indeed polarisation, it is associated with ruptures in the social fabric and naturalized violence in everyday relationships, as suggested by previous research in Spain (Ben-David & Fernández, 2016; Pérez-Escolar & Noguera-Vivo, 2022).

The media are important because they are the means by which the parties involved in the conflict present a positive image of themselves and a devalued image of others. They deploy tactics such as disinformation, propaganda, and explicit social control mechanisms to manipulate information, preventing a diverse range of perspectives on the phenomenon from being explored. Moreover, they can promote mobilizations in favor of or against one of the parties, exacerbate emotions, mold patriotic attitudes and identifications with a group of victims, and be shapers of the construction of subjective reality (Dunmire, 2012).

Other authors argue that the media directs public opinion's attention towards particular issues and objects on the political and social scene, setting public agendas and manipulating the political scene by influencing public behavior to create a certain climate for action (Wang, 2016). In this sense, media influence shifts attention, conversations, and political decisions from a socio-political to a socio-psychological level, where the focus is on citizens' attitudes. Emotions are mobilized, and it is hoped that, based on these emotions, people will support or oppose a political project (Xu & Ballena, 2022).

Other authors do not reach definitive conclusions regarding how the media can influence the configuration of attitudes, beliefs, or narratives regarding political actors (Brown & Klein, 2020). However, other research concludes that, while the media do not make people more polarized, they do increase the rigidity of those who are. Thus, people are drawn closer to information that reinforces their beliefs and affiliation to a political group in a selective exposure that solidifies the polarization of the general public, not only of their television audience, but also in those who receive those messages, both personally, in discussions and conversations, and through their social networks (Shokrollahi et al., 2021).

Moreover, media reports that have taken sides in political situations are not primarily intended to communicate facts but to help people make sense of the world, given particular predispositions that are beyond the possibility of dialogue with divergent arguments. Polarization is built by reaffirming these acquired positions and beliefs through the messages that are broadcast and strengthened in the absence of counterarguments. This pushes people toward ideological extremes and polarises attitudes (Pavlichenko, 2022; Rachman & Yunianti, 2017).

For his part, Manheim (2004) states that the mainstream media, controlled by large economic groups, replicate the ideological alignments of civil society with the elites. This allows for control, homogenization of the narrative, and construction of public events in general, to the detriment of pluralism of information. In the same sense, Fanoulis and Guerra (2021) define them as ideological apparatuses that have the capacity to determine the thinking, behavior, and action of the audience, creating semantics that focuses on a single enemy, causing civil society to take sides. This handling of information influences the construction of citizen attitudes in order to mobilize possible endorsement and legitimization or, on the contrary, rejection and delegitimization. Thus, the media are not just mere informants but active actors that construct realities and, in some cases, have become polarising agents contributing, through their discourses, to the construction of the enemy imaginary (Eroğlu Utku & Köroğlu, 2020).

1.2. Hate Speech and Its Relation to Disinformation Against the Elite Classes

Most of the works that analyze the political identity of far-left parties in Spain through their discourse give it one main characteristic: that it is populist because it is based on the people–elite dichotomy (Barbeito Iglesias & Iglesias Alonso, 2021; Custodi, 2021; Stoehrel, 2016).

Until 2021, the representation at the national level of these formations fell to Podemos. A formation founded in January 2014, with the immediate objective of running in the European elections of May 25th. Unexpectedly, it gained almost 8% of the votes, causing a political commotion (Stobart, 2014). In those elections, the combined vote of the Partido Popular and Partido Socialista did not reach 50% of the votes for the first time. Podemos' discourse, especially in televised debates, went on the offensive, setting the political agenda and introducing new terms in everyday political language, such as caste, to refer to the elites. However, in renewing his message against the elitist classes, Podemos positioned the new-lower democracy in opposition to the old-arrow oligarchy (Brandariz Portela, 2021).

The hate speech is emphasized from the first declarations of the leader of the purple party, Pablo Iglesias, who affirms before the media that corruption makes this system work since it allows the economic elites, "incapable and predatory," to use the political elites for their interests. More than a political system, this order is a regime, a closed system dominated by a caste that excludes the majority (Ivaldi et al., 2017; Podemos València, 2014).

Podemos will associate the homeland with the defense of the people and the welfare state, of what equalizes and unites, opposing the right, which it identifies with divisive symbols: the flag, the Castilian language, or traditions. The right does not defend the public but privatizes, evades taxes, and hoards capital in tax havens (Manetto, 2014). The far-left party proposes an up–down axis that represents the dichotomy between democracy as the government of the people and democracy as competition between elites. The elites and their representatives appear in the discourse as a source of hatred since they are constituted as usufructuaries of institutions for their interests and which are not representative of reality since they are in other locations physically (Europa Press, 2021; Fernández Holgado et al., 2022). This presupposes that these institutions are radically favorable to the elites and conducive to the hijacking of democracy (Jansa & Vilasero, 2015).

The concept of homeland is redefined to pit some Spaniards against others. They construct a narrative where stereotypes about elites in general and the right wing, in particular, are supported by calling them unpatriotic (Fernández Vázquez, 2022). The leaders of the splits within the extreme left amplify their discourse by providing misinformation about who is patriotic and who should not be. In this sense, national identity excludes the elites who decide what happens in Spain without going through the ballot box (Errejón, 2021; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

2. Objectives and Hypotheses

Assuming, therefore, the existence of an increasingly intense bias of hatred towards the elite classes on the part of the extreme-left parties and that it is polarized in the receivers of the messages, who have the possibility of exercising their right to vote, the present research has the following objectives:

- O1: To analyze the implicit bias in the reception of messages emitted by politicians of the Spanish extreme left that demonize the elite classes;
- O2: To make a significant contribution to the study of hate speech as an informational disorder, providing an assessment of the prejudices, stereotypes, and affections perceived by voters about the elite classes.

The three starting hypotheses are:

- H1: Left-wing voters, when receiving messages through heuristics, exhibit more implicit attitudes toward people in the elite classes compared to right-wing voters.
- H2: Left-wing voters will show more negative biases, stereotypes, and affection toward the elite classes compared to their right-wing peers.

- H3: Voters who report more contact, both in quantity and quality, with people belonging to the elite classes will show less explicit negative attitudes toward this group.

3. Materials and Methods

A 2 × 2 quasi-experimental design was used to frame the discourse of extreme left-wing political parties in Spain (left-wing voters vs. right-wing voters) × type of stimulus (photos of messages on Twitter from the elite classes [ingroup] vs. photos of messages on Twitter by extreme left-wing politicians [outgroup]). To make up the sample, a non-probabilistic method was used to count 40 right-wing and 40 left-wing voting subjects. Their ages ranged from 18 to 75 years (A = 44.3), 67.5% being women (n = 54) and 32.5% men (n = 26).

On arrival at the experiment, all participants declared whether they were left- or right-wing voters and this was recorded in the software used. All participants signed an informed consent form at the start of the study. All were informed that the objective was to evaluate voters' perceptions of different social classes and discourses produced about them, assuring them that their responses would be anonymous. After the study, they were thanked for their collaboration.

The research focused on the study of public conversation on the social network Twitter. The most representative terms from previous research (caste, homeland, rich) were used to search the messages of the extreme-left politicians. For the messages of the elite classes, we searched for the messages of corporate events that had the most interaction. The FreeIAT program was used for the design and, to carry out the measurement, each subject was placed in front of a laptop computer. The stimuli were: six photographs of Twitter messages by people from the elite classes, six photographs of Twitter messages by politicians of the extreme left (see Figure 1), seven words related to honesty, and seven

Figure 1. Examples of the Twitter stimuli used in the implicit association test (IAT).

words inciting hatred from the messages or speeches of extreme left-wing politicians.

The subjects of the elite class were chosen through their inclusion in the Merco (2022) ranking and the extreme left-wing politicians as the members with the highest number of followers in social networks of the Podemos and Más País formations since their foundation and who had obtained a seat in the Congress of Deputies. For the choice of words, we used the *Diccionario de Sinónimos y Antónimos María Moliner* (Moliner et al., 2012; see Figure 2). The scheme was structured in seven blocks, with five training blocks (1, 2, 3, 5, and 6) with 20 stimuli each; and two central blocks (3 and 6) composed of 24 stimuli.
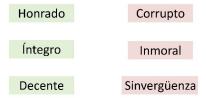
Honrado	Corrupto
Íntegro	Inmoral
Decente	Sinvergüenza

Figure 2. Examples of words used in the IAT. Notes: *Honrado*, *íntegro*, and *decente* translates to honoured, upright, and decent, respectively; *corrupto*, *inmoral*, and s*invergüenza* translates to corrupt, immoral, and shameless, respectively.

In Block 1, the task consisted of discriminating between photos of people belonging to the elite classes and politicians of extreme left-wing parties. In Block 2, words related to honesty and those related to hate were classified. In Block 3, the preceding stimuli were combined as a test. The purpose was to choose between pairs of combined categories: pictures of people belonging to the elite classes and words related to honesty, and pictures of extreme left-wing politicians and words related to hate. The same stimuli were responded to in Block 4, but these responses were taken for the final analysis. In Block 5, the order of presentation of the stimuli from Block 1 was altered, the task consisting in discriminating between photos belonging to people from the elite classes and politicians from extreme left-wing formations. Blocks 6 and 7 again presented combinations of categories, but in inverted order. Block 6 presented photos of extreme left-wing politicians and words related to honesty, and photos of people from the elite classes and words related to hate. Finally, in Block 7, this pattern was repeated, but the responses were considered for the final analysis. In each of the seven blocks, participants responded to test items that were not computed in the final analysis. The interval between the individual's response and the appearance of the next stimulus was 250 ms.

At the culmination of the IAT application, subjects were asked to complete a questionnaire with different self-report scales with items adapted from different instruments. The scales were: prejudice, stereotypes, and affection. A total of 15 statements (five for each scale) from Twitter messages of extreme-left politicians were used, and the response was measured by a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The alpha for prejudice was 0.72, for stereotypes 0.73, and for affection 0.79. To assess the quantity and quality of the scale "contact with people in the elite classes" ($\alpha = 0.71$), five other statements were established and also measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Before proceeding with statistical analyses to determine the presence or absence of implicit bias, a purification of the database obtained by the IAT was performed. Extremely fast or very slow responses were reconverted, and the percentage of erroneous responses was calculated. The response times were subjected to a logarithmic transformation to normalize their distribution. Following the strategy of Greenwald et al. (1998), very fast responses (below 300 ms) appear when the participant presses the key before the stimulus appears on the screen, and very slow responses (above 3,000 ms), that correspond to brief periods of participant distraction, were recategorized (Nosek et al., 2007).

4. Results

Table 1 shows the IAT reaction times of subjects of both political tendencies. To test the hypothesis referring to right-wing voters not evidencing implicit attitudes towards far left-wing politicians compared to left-wing voters, a repeated measures ANOVA was performed. The data allowed us to accept the working hypothesis since one sample showed an implicit bias toward the elite classes ($F = 1.104$; sig. = 0.003). On the other hand, the main effect referred to the political tendency was significant ($F = 1.054$; sig. = 0.004), and also the interaction between the IAT and the persons shown ($F = 1.078$; sig. = 0.03).

Table 1. Average reaction times.

Type of persons	Associations	Incompatible associations	Compatible IAT effect
Elitist class people	873.43 (213.25)	801.11 (132.65)	72.32 (187.84)
Far-left politicians	187.85 (254.47)	160.32 (231.32)	27.53 (175.01)

Notes: $N = 80$, $p < 0.05$; standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

Table 2 shows the results for all the scales used in this study. The results show that the two samples present disparate results. First, it can be seen that left-wing voters were characterized by expressing a great deal of prejudice towards people from the elite classes, while no differences were found, however, in the prejudice shown towards extreme left-wing politicians. Differences were found in the stereotype variable, in which right-wing voters rated far left-wing politicians less strongly in this regard compared to the sample of far left-wing voters regarding people from the elite classes. In the affections towards the outgroup, differences were found in the group of left-wing voters, who expressed less affection towards people from the elite classes compared to right-wing voters.

Table 3 records the correlations between explicit and implicit measures for each sample. First, the correlations between the IAT and the explicit measures were significant. In the sample of left-wing voters, it stands out that affection is negatively associated with stereotypes toward people in the elite classes. Similarly, affection is negatively associated with prejudice toward people in the elite classes. In the sample of right-wing voters, a striking result is observed: a weak correlation of affection with the perception of stereotyping, as well as with a weak attitude of prejudice towards extreme left-wing politicians. It is also interesting to note that stereotypes correlated positively with prejudice.

Multiple regression analyses were performed to assess the impact of contact variables and voters' ideological orientation on implicit (IAT score) and explicit (prejudice, stereotypes, and affection) attitudes toward people in the elite classes. A single index was computed for stereotypes and affection toward people in the elite classes. The hate (stereotypes) and aversion (affection) scores were inverted to align them in a positive direc-tion. Initially, the Durbin-Watson statistic was checked to evaluate the assumption of independence of the errors. In all cases, the values were close to two, verifying the fulfillment of this assumption. Furthermore, it was verified that the explanatory variables had a variance inflation factor of less than three, which ruled out the presence of multicollinearity. The predictors were centered before fitting the regression model.

The data indicated that, on the one hand, voter type, hate, aversion, and prejudice, independently, and, on the other hand, the hate-by-aversion interaction, showed significant effects on some of the criterion variables. Left-wing voters presented greater prejudice ($\beta = 0.34$, $t = 2.00$, $p < 0.05$) and greater hatred ($\beta = 0.75$, $t = 2.93$, $p < 0.05$) toward people in the elite classes. On the other hand, it was observed that participants who reported having hatred toward people in the elite classes expressed more dislike toward members of this group ($\beta = 0.46$, $t = 1.37$, $p < 0.05$). Likewise, left-wing voters who indicated having more prejudice toward people in the elite classes felt more dislike toward these people ($\beta = 0.28$, $t = 1.91$, $p < 0.05$). Finally, voters who reported greater prejudice toward the elite classes attributed greater amounts of hatred toward them ($\beta = 0.65$, $t = 3.45$, $p < 0.05$).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

These findings do not contradict other studies on hate speech and its impact on society (Amores et al., 2021; Correcher Mira, 2021; Montero et al., 2022; Verloo, 2018), but they do complement them from a different point of view. First, the study of perception using neuro-communication tools is innovative and allows us to assess the impact of these discourses on implicit and explicit attitudes toward elite classes. In this way, the framework of the political discourse of extreme left-wing

Table 2. Averages, standard deviations, and ANOVA tests for both types of voters.

Scales	Left-wing voters ($n = 40$)		Right-wing voters ($n = 40$)		F
	Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation	
Prejudice	3.56	0.32	1.22	0.33	15.84
Stereotypes	5.02	0.83	2.35	1.02	9.84
Affections	4.65	1.13	1.89	0.78	65.53

Note: $p < 0.05$.

Table 3. Correlations between the IAT and the scales according to voter type.

	IAT	Prejudice	Stereotypes	Affections
IAT	—	0.521	0.635	0.532
Prejudice	0.560	—	0.621	−0.531
Stereotypes	0.488	0.839	—	−0.403
Affections	0.653	0.137	0.139	—

Notes: Correlations above the diagonal belong to left-wing voters and correlations below the diagonal to right-wing voters ($n = 40$ for each sample, $p < 0.05$).

parties in Spain is constructed, taking into account all the participating agents.

The first hypothesis tested in this research was that left-wing voters when receiving messages through heuristics would present more implicit attitudes towards people from the elite classes compared to right-wing voters. The analyses point to the presence of differences between the groups, so it can be affirmed that the presence of implicit bias is not independent of the group of voters to which one belongs. This finding leads this research towards the question of whether these negative implicit associations had already been internalized by left-wing voters, even before being subjected to the communicational impacts present on Twitter. The literature on implicit social cognition indicates that from an early age and through various sources of socialization, people harbor simplified representations of minority groups (Serrano Villalobos & Cuesta Díaz, 2017). Thus, in the face of implicit experimental techniques such as the IAT, negative associations regarding these groups often emerge (Berberena & Wirzberger, 2021). As several authors point out (Cox & Devine, in press; Huber, 2020), a long time must elapse and profound societal changes must occur for these implicit attitudes to be substantially altered.

As the results at the implicit level show differences, one should not lose sight of the discussion on whether most of the decisions humans make tend to be rational and deliberative (Ross, 1981; Turiel, 2010). Thus, the scrutiny of implicit and explicit attitudes allows us to observe what could be the dangers of hate speech generated toward the elite classes in this attitudinal dimension. In this sense, the hypothesis that left-wing voters would show a more negative implicit and explicit evaluation of people from the elite classes compared to right-wing voters was fully accepted.

In general, left-wing voters obtained high levels of prejudice, stereotypes, and negative affection toward people from the elite classes. These data are not surprising since extreme left-wing parties in Spain have displayed hate-related terms such as privileged caste, corrupt, and unpatriotic among their communicative policies. However, differences were found in two affective variables on which we wish to focus the analysis: hate and aversion. Research shows that hatred is a very important affective variable in the prediction of prejudice (Gonzálvez Vallés, 2013). In general, when members of the majority interact with people who possess some stigma, one of the most notorious affective reactions is usually hatred, which can result in a brake for a positive interaction with people who do not correlate with their ideology (Amores et al., 2021; Rodríguez Terceño et al., 2016). The results reveal that there is a greater presence of hatred among left-wing voters associated with the attribution of more aversion towards people from the elite classes.

In terms of prejudice, it was observed that left-wing voters showed more prejudice towards people belonging to the elite class. This result could appear intu-

itive in the first instance; however, the interpretation changes when weak correlations between prejudice and affection are observed in right-wing voters. This belief would be expressing an ambivalent content of prejudices towards people of the elite classes. In this regard, several authors (Escobar Beltrán, 2016; Gomes Barbosa, 2022) have pointed out that many social groups are described in positive and negative terms at the same time. When interacting with social groups perceived as warm but not competent, people do not usually express openly hostile stereotypes, but rather these appear mixed with attributes linked to pity and compassion. In this sense, the right-wing voters in the study would be attributing these co-religionist stereotypes to people from the elite classes, as compared to their left-wing voting peers, and according to the messages by which they have been impacted. On the other hand, the latter, having a more biased view towards the elites, may judge them as an enemy or adversary.

Finally, the hypothesis that analyzes the contact dimensions (quantity and quality) was also accepted. Left-wing voters have less contact with the elites, and more prejudice and hatred towards these types of subjects were seen. However, it could not be established which aspects of the contact could be causing this hate effect. These data are consistent with other studies conducted in sociological contexts, in which it has been shown that the quantity, first, and then the quality of contact contributes to the generation of attitudes compatible with hatred and aversion (Tropp et al., 2022).

A result that confirms the hypothesis was the inverse relationship between the perception of greater contact with the category and the attribution of stereotypes toward people in the elite class. This data possibly reflects the responses of voters who do not regularly interact with the elite. In general, it has been observed that when there is partial knowledge of individuals in an outgroup, in-group dynamics can contaminate the contact situation by invoking negative reactions (Meleady, 2021). Supporting the above, it is observed that when there is a high quantity of quality contact, it is possible to generalize stereotypes to members of the category as a whole, as posited by Brewer and Gaertner's (2001) contact model.

The limitations of this study include the use of a cross-sectional design, which prevents us from clarifying the causal direction of contact toward attitude change. Also, no data was available to ascertain the previous attitudes of voters toward the elite classes; such data would have allowed us to know the extent to which contact with elites affects intergroup attitudes. The tendency toward social polarization may have affected the data in both samples (Kingzette et al., 2021). However, the more frequent contact with elites among right-wing voters may have generated responses based on a more accurate understanding of this class's characteristics, making them feel that they better understand this class as a whole.

This research is the first to use the IAT to measure implicit attitudes toward the elite classes generated by

the demonizing discourse produced by extreme left-wing parties in Spain. Although these results are framed in the area of intergroup knowledge and are not intended to be generalizable to all voters of both tendencies with very different realities, this research presents useful elements to guide the identification of hate speech coming from the extreme left in Spain.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Juan Enrique Gonzálvez-Vallés holds a PhD in information sciences from the Complutense University of Madrid. He currently belongs to the Department of Theories and Analysis of Communication at the Complutense University of Madrid, where he lectures on research methods in advertising and public relations, psychology of communication, and hypermedia narrative. Previously, he belonged to the Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising at CEU San Pablo University.

José Daniel Barquero-Cabrero obtained five PhDs in the area of economic and social sciences from the International University of Catalonia, the Camilo José Cela University of Madrid, the Autonomous University of Coahuila de México, and the Universities of Malaga, Huelva, Cádiz and Seville (interuniversity program). For his contributions to the academic world, he has been awarded the title of doctor honoris causa by universities in America, Europe, and Asia. He is a professor at Lasalle University and UOC University.

Natalia Enseñat-Bibiloni is the director of marketing and communication at ESERP Business School. She obtained a university degree in business management and a diploma in business sciences. She also completed an official master's degree in marketing management and a postgraduate degree in high specialisation in management techniques at the University of Barcelona. She obtained her doctorate in legal and economic sciences with the qualification of excellent cum laude. She is a member of the European Higher Council of Doctors.