

THE STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS OF AMERICANS' JUSTICE PERCEPTIONS
TOWARD INEQUALITY IN THE U.S.

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In accordance with structural theory and distributive justice theory, this study investigates if Americans' personal encounters with the opportunity structure and their existing reward conditions will influence their perceptions toward distribution outcomes in the U.S. I argue that higher-status individuals possessing various "attributes of structural privilege" will exhibit less support for regulating income inequality in society than lower-status individuals. Upward mobility should also be negatively related to support for restoring greater equality in allocation outcomes. However, the effect of mobility on justice perceptions should vary by class status, since class has been known to be a reliable predictor of these attitudes. The study employed a sample of 438 American adults from the GSS 2000 dataset, and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was applied in the analyses of the data. Two of the three above hypotheses received partial confirmation, that is, there were class, race, and gender differences in distributive justice perceptions. Class also interacted significantly with occupational mobility in altering distributive justice perceptions.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
Purpose of Study

The nature of socioeconomic inequality in the U.S. has been widely documented and established (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Keister & Moller, 2000; McCall & Kenworthy, 2009; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006; Smeeding, 2005). In contrast to all other affluent OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) nations, the U.S. experiences the highest rate of national income inequality (Keister & Moller, 2000; Smeeding, 2005). An emerging number of studies have demonstrated that Americans are not indifferent to the issue of income inequality in their society (Berinsky, 2002; McCall & Kenworthy, 2009; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006). In fact, McCall and Kenworthy (2009) and Osberg and Smeeding (2006) portray signs of consensus among mainstream Americans, who believe that extensive income inequality is an outstanding problem warranting government remediation. Nonetheless, generalization of the above findings to the American population conceals potential variations in the population's response toward income inequality. Osberg and Smeeding (2006) had in their study noted a bifurcation in Americans' views toward income levelling as a means of defusing existing inequalities. However, the authors did not investigate this divergence in opinions, which hints at an unresolved dissensus among Americans toward the management of income inequality. In view of this gap in the literature, this study explores potential patterns of distribution in Americans' attitudes toward income inequality—more specifically, in Americans' justice demands to reinstitute greater parity in income allocation outcomes.

This study marries structural theory with distributive justice theory in accounting for possible heterogeneities in Americans' justice reactions toward income inequality. This integration is achieved by examining the claim that individuals' experiences with the opportunity structure and distribution system will have bearings on their justice perceptions toward income inequality (Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou, Steijn, & Van Aarsen, 1995; Huber & Form, 1973; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Merton, 1938; Miller, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970). To carry out the above purpose of this research, I identify six sociodemographic variables, whose effects on individuals' attitudes toward socioeconomic inequality¹ have been disparately studied in the field (see Alves & Rossi, 1978; Bobo, 1991; Huber & Form, 1973; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Miller, 1992; Piketty, 1995; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Shepalak & Alwin, 1986; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979). These six status markers, namely, social class, gender, race, occupational prestige, income, and education—are collectively labelled as “attributes of structural privilege” in this thesis. In addition to these attributes of structural privilege, I will also diagnose the effects of intergenerational occupational mobility and its interaction with social class, on distributive justice perceptions. Distributive justice perceptions are measured in terms of respondents' tolerance toward current income inequality and their desires for a greater regulation of income inequality in society.

As noted, this study solely focuses on individuals' justice reactions toward current income inequalities (i.e. the outcome) and efforts to remediate these inequalities. There is evidence that individuals may opt for allocation rules (e.g.

¹ Since distributive justice is defined by individuals' subjective fairness interpretations of allocation rules and outcomes (Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; Mikula & Wenzel, 2000; Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007), I treat attitudes toward income inequality in society as analogous to distributive justice perceptions (Alesina & Angeletos, 2005).

equity) and outcomes (e.g. greater income parity) that are not apparently compatible with one another (Miller, 1992; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006; Piketty, 1995). Underlying these incongruent reactions is the complexity of social and economic decisions governing macrosocial allocations (Berinsky, 2002; Deutsch, 1975; Miller, 1992; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006; Sampson, 1975; Tetlock, 1986), and the fact that allocation outcomes are co-determined by other factors such as the availability of opportunities for procuring better rewards (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Bobo, 1991; Giddens, 1980; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Weber, 1946). For these reasons, I differentiate this study from investigations of beliefs about how individuals should be rewarded in society (i.e. their distribution rule preferences) (see d'Anjou et al., 1995; Miller, 1992; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992). While there are overlaps between these two areas of study, such as where desires for greater equality of outcomes may be interpreted as an egalitarian rule preference, the measures are specifically framed with the concrete situation of income inequality in mind (see Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970). Not only does this remind respondents about the presence of income inequality in society or its effects, it also requires them to ponder the political causes of income inequality (Berinsky, 2002; Bobo, 1991; Deutsch, 1975; Form & Rytina, 1969; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Svallfors, 1993).

As suggested in this study's objective, structural theory can complement distributive justice theory in explaining individuals' attitudes toward inequality. What makes structural theory particularly amenable for application in justice psychological studies lies in the notion of "opportunity structures" (Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Giddens, 1980; Huber & Form, 1973; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Merton, 1938; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Weber, 1946). According

to Hegvedt (2006), the anticipated and experienced “availability” of reward outcomes are situational factors that influence different stakeholders’ distributive justice perceptions. Structural theory premises that opportunity structures are functions of stratification systems which mediate the availability of reward outcomes for individuals occupying different stratal positions (Bobo, 1991; d’Anjou et al., 1995; Huber & Form, 1973; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Merton, 1938; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970). An unequal distribution of *opportunities*, amid equity-based allocations lead to differential reward experiences for recipients of stratified capitalist societies (Bobo, 1991; d’Anjou et al., 1995; Form & Rytina, 1969; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Piketty, 1995; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970). When opportunity structures are validated to be “closed” as a result of one’s socioeconomic backgrounds, individuals are also more likely to direct the causes of inequality to political exploitation and maneuvers (Svallfors, 1993). This leads to the main assumption that the experiences and beliefs that follow from one’s social structural position can exert an impact on individuals’ justice perceptions (Svallfors, 1993).

Rationale

As sketched in the introduction, the prime intention of this study is to address the dearth of research that identifies variations in individuals’ distributive justice perceptions. This aim is achieved by an analysis of Americans’ justice reactions toward income inequality and redistribution, in a national survey commissioned by the National Opinion Research Centre (NORC) in the year 2000.

First, studies of public perceptions toward income inequality and redistribution have been credited for their practical benefits in estimating public policy preferences and voting behaviors (McCall & Kenworthy, 2009; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006).

Attitudinal surveys capture a population's perception toward income inequality and redistribution in society. As Osberg and Smeeding (2006) argue, divergent or "polarized" (p. 450) attitudes toward inequality within a population can have major implications for political campaigns, where policy debates are brought to the fore in voting decisions. In spite of this however, existing studies of economic inequality have largely attended to the "average" attitudes of the American population toward income inequality. This says little about potential justice value conflicts that may exist between different segments of society toward unequal distribution outcomes. The reason for probing into possible intra-societal divergences in justice reactions toward inequality of outcomes (income inequality) is justified by structural theory. However, structural theory, which argues that individuals' perceptions toward income inequality are evoked in response to their experiences with the societal distribution system, has been sparsely studied in the U.S., compared to other social contexts (e.g. Britain, Sweden, and the Netherlands) (d'Anjou et al., 1995; Svallfors, 1993). Hence, by evaluating the principles of structural theory, this study verifies if attitudes toward income inequality are systematically distributed throughout American society.

Second, though the conceptualized relationship between structural experiences and distributive justice perceptions is scarcely new (see Alves & Rossi, 1978; Berinsky, 2002; Bobo, 1991; Huber & Form, 1973; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Miller, 1992; Piketty, 1995; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979), distributive justice scholars have not accorded sufficient attention to the "politics" of income distribution in society, which is a defining feature of macrosocial distributions (Deutsch, 1975; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Svallfors, 1993). As Form and Rytina (1969) propound, allocation mechanisms are maintained by agents (or elites) in

power who hold leverage over the distribution of opportunities and rewards in society. Socioeconomic inequalities can be maintained under the pretext of meritocracy (or “equal opportunity”) to conserve the social and economic privileges enjoyed by elites in society (Deutsch, 1975). Moreover, political sociologists have discovered that underprivileged populations which believe that the system of distribution has “failed” them are also more likely to appeal to political explanations for their disenfranchisement. Sensitized to the political causes of inequality, lower status individuals are commensurately more likely to express stronger justice demands for mitigating income inequality (Bobo, 1991; Svallfors, 1993). In light of these issues, structural analyses can clearly offer important sociopolitical perspectives for the study of distributive justice in macrosocial contexts.

Third, research in socioeconomic inequality and social stratification is largely alienated from the field of social psychology. By investigating the effects of structural antecedents on individual justice perceptions, our study initiates a micro-macro theoretical synthesis between the sub-disciplines in the social psychology of justice, and structural inequality (Cook & Hegvedt, 1983). While distributive justice theory informs us about the intricate cognitive evaluation process by which individuals construct justice perceptions (Jasso, 2001), structural theory describes how justice perceptions can arise from individuals’ experiences with the reward distribution mechanisms in stratified meritocratic societies (Marshall & Swift, 1993). As Cook and Hegvedt (1983) substantiate, behavioral reactions resulting from conflictual justice perceptions toward inequality, can also culminate in social movements (Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; Turner, 2007). Feelings of distress from perceived injustices can impel individuals to express emotions and/or behaviors to eliminate these negative arousals (Bobo, 1991; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; Hegvedt, 2006; Mikula & Wenzel,

2000; Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007; Turner, 2007; Yount & Mueller, 2001). This paradigmatic interface can thereby enable us to map important theoretical interconnections between structural experiences, justice perceptions, and their social implications.

Finally, to date, structural theorists have not thoroughly appraised the repertoire of structural experiences that can condition justice perceptions. This study seeks to offers headway in the literature by assessing the independent, collective, and comparative effects of a comprehensive medley of structural variables (social class, race, gender, occupational prestige, income, occupational mobility, and an interaction term) on distributive justice perceptions. The linear regression technique implemented in this research undertaking permits this analysis to be performed. Also, the idea of discovering possible interactions between social class and intergenerational occupational mobility experiences in shaping individuals' justice demands has not been pursued by distributive justice scholars. While mobility's effect on justice perceptions has been canvassed in some research (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992), the question of whether mobility's effect on justice perceptions will vary by class status remains unanswered. This investigation of the interaction between mobility and social class should therefore, offer new insights into whether class influences on justice perceptions will persist in face of upward mobility.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Distributive Justice: The Fairness of Allocation Rules and Outcomes

Allocation Rules

Social psychologists generally conceive of distributive justice as assessments of the fairness of allocation rules (Alves & Rossi, 1978; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Deutsch, 1975; Homans, 1958; Jasso & Rossi, 1977; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Miller, 1992; Rasinski, 1987; Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007; Wendorf, Alexander, & Firestone, 2002; Yount & Mueller, 2001) and its outcomes (Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; Deutsch, 1975; Peterson, 1994; Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007; Turner, 2007). The object of allocation that has been well studied in the literature of macrosocial distributions include economic rewards in the form of acquired incomes (Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970). Three of the conventional rules or values of distribution (Deutsch, 1975; Peterson, 1994; Rasinski, 1987) that are commonly adhered to comprise allocations by (objective) equality, equity, and need (Alves & Rossi, 1978; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Deutsch, 1975; Homans, 1958; Jasso & Rossi, 1977; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Miller, 1992; Rasinski, 1987; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007; Turner, 2007; Wendorf, Alexander, & Firestone, 2002; Yount & Mueller, 2001).

First, equitable (or meritocratic) modes of macrosocial distributions are conventionally described in terms of Homan's proportionality law, where rewards are conferred according to one's demonstrated abilities, worth, contributions or efforts (Adams, 1963; Alves & Rossi, 1978; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Deutsch, 1975; Hegvedt, 2006; Homans, 1958; Jasso & Rossi, 1977; Miller, 1992; Rasinski, 1987; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Yount & Mueller, 2001). Equal or egalitarian

distributions on the other hand, represent another possible mode of distribution. Equal distributions ensure that rewards are uniformly allocated to all individuals, irrespective of their virtues or efforts as opposed to equitable allocations (Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Deutsch, 1975; Miller, 1992; Rasinski, 1987; Robinson & Bell, 1978). Finally, allocations by need tend to judge individuals by particular social standards of deprivation or vulnerability that some individuals may experience (Tyler, 2000). Allocations to the “underprivileged” or “less fortunate” members of society (e.g. the elderly, single parents, or large impoverished families) constitute this variant of distribution (Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; Deutsch, 1975; Miller, 1992; Rasinski, 1987; Wendorf, Alexander, & Firestone, 2002).²

Allocation Outcomes

At the heart of distributive justice studies are the expected outcomes of allocation, which form the fundamental rationale for elected allocation principles (Bobo, 1991; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; Deutsch, 1975; Hegvedt, 2006; Peterson, 1994; Rasinski, 1987; Sampson, 1975; Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007; Turner, 2007). However, individuals' acceptance of a given mode of distribution may or may not concur with the social or economic consequences that they report to expect from it at the societal level. In the U.S., Miller (1992) and Osberg and Smeeding (2006) discovered Americans' preference for equitable income allocations over egalitarian types of distributions. Yet, contrary to expectation, findings concerning Americans' justice reactions toward income inequalities in their society revealed a majority preference for minimizing socioeconomic inequality in society (Bobo, 1991; McCall &

² As Cook and Hegvedt (1983) explain, mild inconsistencies do exist in scholarly conceptualizations of distribution principles and outcomes. For instance, having detected strong correlations between various distribution principles, Rasinski (1987) classifies the allocation values of economic individualism and equity under an umbrella allocation principle known as “proportionality.” Rasinski (1987) distinguishes this from the other core allocation value recognized as “egalitarianism,” which subsumes the precepts of equality and need.

Kenworthy, 2009; Miller, 1992; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006). This is in spite of the fact that inequality of outcomes is often incident to meritocratic systems of distribution (Bobo, 1991; Deutsch, 1975; Giddens, 1998; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006; Sampson, 1975). Expressions of Americans' egalitarian sentiments have been observed in mass support for state redistributive strategies such as income levelling (Alesina & Angeletos, 2005; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Bobo, 1991; McCall & Kenworthy, 2009; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006; Picketty, 1995; Wilensky, 2002) and social investment schemes (e.g. improvements in education and healthcare provisions) (McCall & Kenworthy, 2009). As Osberg and Smeeding (2006, p. 450) remark, these empirical trends debunk the myth of "American exceptionalism" which depicts Americans as tending to uphold meritocratic distributions, even at the expense of highly unequal outcomes in society.

The Paradox of Preferred Allocation Rules and Outcomes Explained Analytical Issues

There are a number of important explanations for the above-mentioned contradiction between Americans' perceptions of a just distribution rule (i.e. desires for equitable distributions) and its outcomes (i.e. desires for a more egalitarian socioeconomic order). This disjunction may be attributed to underlying analytical and empirical issues. As regards to analytical issues, no follow-up studies have continued to track the association between Americans' justice perceptions toward income allocation rules and its outcomes since Miller's (1992) study, which dates back to more than a decade ago. This limits researchers' ability to conclude that preferred modes of distribution will always remain incongruent with desired distributive outcomes, or that Americans' perceptions will be unanimous through time. Recent longitudinal studies in the field of structural inequality have revealed

that attitudes toward inequality are not intractable to change through time (McCall & Kenworthy, 2009; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006). In fact, McCall and Kenworthy's (2009) national time-series inquiry showed currents of rising popular resistance against income inequality in the U.S. They also noted heightened popular expectations for governmental regulation of existing income inequality. Such signs of discontent toward the status quo of distributive outcomes and demands for supplementary modes of distribution (e.g. redistribution by progressive taxation), are clear manifestations of perceived distributive injustices (Bobo, 1991; Peterson, 1994; Rasinski, 1987). In response to this, McCall and Kenworthy (2009) suggest that rising income inequalities could prompt gradual re-evaluations of the effectiveness of the dominant distribution order (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Marshall & Swift, 1993; McCall & Kenworthy, 2009; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006; Peterson, 1994; Rasinski, 1987; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Svallfors, 1993; Taylor-Gooby & Martin, 2010; Turner, 2007).

Another analytical shortfall of attitudinal studies on income inequality is a lack of regard for potential heterogeneities in justice perceptions within societies. As Miller (1992) demonstrate, class variations did emerge in his sample of Americans when respondents were asked about the extent to which existing distributive outcomes were deemed justified. Other studies have observed similar expressions of dissatisfaction among populations of lower socioeconomic statuses toward current income distributions (Alves & Rossi, 1978; Berinsky, 2002; Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Shepalak & Alwin, 1986; Svallfors, 1993). Structural theory, which is of interest in this study, posits that there are comparable variations in justice perceptions between different subpopulations of advanced capitalist societies (Berinsky, 2002; Bobo, 1991;

Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Svallfors, 1993). This occurs as individuals relate to their immediate encounters with a specific distribution regime in their justice evaluations. The nature of these encounters is determined by the share of rewards that an individual has managed to procure, or can expect to procure from societal distribution systems (Berinsky, 2002; Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Robinson & Bell, 1978).

Rytina, Form, and Pease (1970, p. 707) further indicate that researchers need to be mindful of how the phrasing of question indicators measuring attitudes toward inequality, can yield different responses among individuals. Individuals have a greater tendency to rely on their personal structural experiences in responding to situation-specific questions, than they would for more philosophical or “general” question types. In the event of such measurement problems, attitudinal differences toward inequality may not be detected in a given population.

Empirical Issues

The foregoing section has accounted for the possible analytical gaps in studies of macrosocial distributive justice. Apart from analytical problems however, researchers also believe that the inconsistency between individuals' attitudes toward distribution rules and income inequality may be an empirical problem which merits further investigation. Available research in distributive justice and attitudes toward income inequality has indicated that individuals' preferred mode(s) of allocation are confounded by multiple factors (Berinsky, 2002; Bobo, 1991; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Hegvedt, 2006; Miller, 1992; Peterson, 1994; Piketty, 1995; Rafferty & Hasenfeld, 1989; Rasinski, 1987; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Sampson, 1975; Svallfors, 1993; Taylor-Gooby & Martin, 2010; Tetlock, 1986). These may consist of: (1) individual self-interests (Adams, 1963; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; d'Anjou et al.,

1995; Hegvedt, 2006; Jasso, 1980; Lind, Kray, & Thompson, 1998; Miller, 1992; Rafferty & Hasenfeld, 1989; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Sampson, 1975); (2) individuals' sociodemographic and social status characteristics (Alves & Rossi, 1978; Berinsky, 2002; Bobo, 1991; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Fong, 2001; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Miller, 1992; Piketty, 1995; Rafferty & Hasenfeld, 1989; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1975; Sampson, 1975; Shepalak & Alwin, 1986; Svallfors, 1993; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979; Taylor-Gooby & Martin, 2010; Turner, 2007); (3) Situational conditions such as anticipated "availability of outcomes" from reward distributions (Alesina & Angeletos, 2005; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Fong, 2001; Hegvedt, 2006; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1975); (4) the cultural ideology (e.g. the Enlightenment thesis") (Rafferty & Hasenfeld, 1989; Robinson & Bell, 1978) and political or "stratification" ideology (Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1975) legitimating distribution goals and outcomes (Alesina & Angeletos, 2005; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Berger, Zelditch, Anderson, & Cohen, 1972; Berinsky, 2002; Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou, Steijn, and van Aarsen, 1995; Deutsch, 1975; Marshall, Swift, Routh & Burgoyne, 1999; Miller, 1992; Piketty, 1995; Rafferty & Hasenfeld, 1989; Rasinski, 1987; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Sampson, 1975; Svallfors, 1993; Taylor-Gooby & Martin, 2010); (5) one's personal ethics and values (Lane, 1959; Rafferty & Hasenfeld, 1989; Rasinski, 1987; Tetlock, 1986; Weber, 2003); as well as (6) mass media portrayals of distributive injustices (Bobo, 1991; Taylor-Gooby & Martin, 2010). This begs the question of how individuals actually arrive at particular justice perceptions given these multiple sources of influences.

The above literature presents the complexity of distribution processes at the macrosocial level, which clearly distinguish them from micro-level distributions (e.g.

between dyads or groups of individuals) (Cook & Hegvedt, 1983). This perplexing paradox between preferred distribution rules and outcomes stems from the dialectic between social and economic outcomes in macrosocial distributions (Deutsch, 1975; Giddens, 1998; Miller, 1992; Sampson, 1975). Furthermore, where individual and societal interests are mutually dependent on one another, self-serving economic and competitive motivations can incur social costs for other members of meritocratic society (Deutsch, 1975; Sampson, 1975). Sampson (1975) links this controversial condition to the “instrumental” versus “interpersonal” goals of distribution (or the “agency-communion” conundrum) (Deutsch, 1975; Miller, 1992; Sampson, 1975). Deutsch (1975) and Sampson (1975) characterize the U.S. as the prototype of a Western society that cherishes economic productivity, competitive strivings and self-initiative as its primary institutional ideology. This explains the society’s endorsement of an equitable (meritocratic) mode of distribution, rather than needs-based or egalitarian forms of distributions.³

As Hegvedt (2006, p. 53) asserts however, individuals are capable of devising a “hierarchy of preferences,” where they gradate multiple distribution principles based on their subjective motivations in a given allocation context. This reminds scholars of the need to be wary of framing justice rule preferences in “either-or” terms, granting that social and economic dilemmas are inevitable in appraisals of macrosocial distribution outcomes. Tetlock (1986), the founder of value pluralism theory, also argues that individuals may be confronted with a quandary known as an “integrative complexity” (p. 819) in deciding between justice values that bear comparable priorities, albeit mutually opposing outcomes (see also Berinsky, 2002). For instance, individuals with liberal or social democratic political affiliations tend to

³ Needs-based and egalitarian forms of distribution are respectively employed to deliver the outcomes of social solidarity and universal well-being to its members (Deutsch, 1975; Sampson, 1975).

struggle with the competing philosophies of social equality on the one hand, and economic liberty on the other, in guiding their value priorities (Berinsky, 2002; Tetlock, 1986). Value tradeoffs become imminent where individuals are compelled to select from among these allocation principles and their likely outcomes (Rasinski, 1987; Tetlock, 1986). This illustrates how justice evaluations may be a highly contentious process for some individuals, and explains the apparent ambiguity in Americans' preferences for meritocratic principles of allocation and more egalitarian allocation outcomes (Berinsky, 2002; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006). However, notwithstanding the multiple influences surrounding distributive justice decisions, scholars of different traditions contend that certain antecedents of justice perceptions may be more salient than others. Structural theory and status value theory are two such traditions which presuppose that social structural norms and experiences are important "reference points" for molding distributive justice perceptions (Turner, 2007).

Status Value Theory and Structural Theory

Both structural theory (Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Mackenzie, 1973; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1975; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979) and status value theory (Berger et al., 1972) offer competing social structural explanations for individuals' distributive justice perceptions. First, status value theory proposes that the status quo of distributions, however unequal its outcomes, will be maintained as societal members are socialized to accept normative allocation principles and its rationales. This "social contract" thereby convinces individuals that current distributions are legitimate, even if inequalities are to be expected. Justice violations occur when individuals are not

rewarded in line with their respective social placements (Berger et al., 1972; Shepalak & Alwin, 1986; Turner, 2007).

Proponents of structural theory on the other hand, suggest that it deviates from status value theory by claiming that positional self-interests matter in the formulation of justice perceptions (Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Fong, 2001; Lind, Kray, & Thompson, 1998; Mackenzie, 1973; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Rafferty & Hasenfeld, 1989; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979). From this perspective, individuals develop justice standards with reference to their relative reward gains, and the prospects or opportunities for acquiring these rewards. Hence, instead of embracing normative prescriptions for how distributions should proceed, as value-added theory holds, structural theory states that individuals will defer to their experiences with the distribution system in defining the justice of distribution outcomes. Hence, one's encounter with the social structure offers unique meaning to individuals, about the operation of distribution mechanisms (Berinsky, 2002; Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Mackenzie, 1973; Piketty, 1995; Rafferty & Hasenfeld, 1989; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Svallfors, 1993; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979).

Existing research offers support for structural theory's theoretical predictions. Research examining the role of social status (e.g. class, income, occupational prestige) in influencing justice perceptions has demonstrated that less privileged recipients of social rewards frequently yearn for more egalitarian distribution outcomes than more privileged recipients (Berinsky, 2002; Bobo, 1991; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979; Svallfors, 1993). In reviewing their personal experiences with the society's

distribution system, the fact that less privileged individuals are desirous of alternative or complementary distribution practices can be explained by their wish to enhance their reward conditions (Berinsky, 2002; Bobo, 1991; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Svallfors, 1993; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979; Yount & Mueller, 2001).

Elaborations of Structural Theory

One of the key contributions of structural theory in the field of distributive justice lies in the concept of “opportunity structures” that exist in advanced capitalist societies.⁴ Opportunity structures are believed to influence one’s entry into competition with other members of advanced societies for equitably distributed rewards (see Bobo, 1991; Giddens, 1998; Hegvedt, 2006; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970). Scholars have conceptualized the idea of opportunity structures in a variety of ways, describing this condition as an “equality of opportunity” (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Marshall & Swift, 1993; McCall & Kenworthy, 2009; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006), “life chances,” (Bobo, 1991; d’Anjou et al., 1995; Giddens, 1980; Huber & Form, 1973; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Weber, 1946) or mobility prospects (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 2002; Fong, 2001; Marshall & Swift, 1993). Several researchers (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Bobo, 1991; d’Anjou et al., 1995; Form & Rytina, 1969; Huber & Form, 1973; Piketty, 1995; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970) have offered evidence of individuals reaching fairness judgments about income inequality or toward redistribution based on beliefs about the prevalence of opportunities to accrue better rewards.

⁴ The role of opportunities can be interpreted as a situational condition, which Hegvedt (2006) identifies as the “availability of outcomes” in the distributive justice literature.

Individuals' experiences with the opportunity structure are contingent on their respective locations in the social hierarchy (Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Giddens, 1980; Erikson & Goldthorpe, 2002; Form & Rytina, 1969; Huber & Form, 1973; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Piketty, 1995; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970). According to structural theorists (Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Mackenzie, 1973; Piketty, 1995; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979; Weber, 1946), opportunity structures are functions of stratification systems. The stratification system constitutes one of the critical gateways for members to access opportunities and its corresponding rewards in meritocratic, stratified societies (Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Erikson & Goldthorpe, 2002; Huber & Form, 1973; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Merton, 1938; Piketty, 1995; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992). As Marshall and Swift (1993) argue, unaddressed inequality in the distribution of *opportunities* for socioeconomic preferment in stratified societies could compound inequality in *outcomes* resulting from meritocratic income allocations in competitive societies.

Central to the availability of opportunities is the condition of "class-specific inheritance effects" (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 2002, p. 36), which denotes the ability of one generation to transmit a variety of capital (economic, social and cultural) to their offspring (Berinsky, 2002; Bobo, 1991; Bourdieu, 1973; Erikson & Goldthorpe, 2002; Keister & Moller, 2000; Marshall & Swift, 1993). This increases the probability that successive generations are equipped with the necessary qualities (and qualifications) to leverage opportunities that in turn, promise greater socioeconomic prospects. This intergenerational transmission of privilege explains why stratification

systems can reproduce inequality in reward outcomes for individuals from different status positions in the social structure (Bobo, 1991; Bourdieu, 1973; Erikson & Goldthorpe, 2002; Huber & Form, 1973; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Merton, 1938).

Empirical Findings on Stratification Variables

The preceding discussion has documented existing works in structural theory, which argue that justice responses are tied to the social positions that individuals of stratified, meritocratic societies occupy. The “stratification variables” (Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Svallfors, 1993) or “life chance variables” (Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992, p. 756) which have been verified for their robust effects on individuals’ justice commitments include that of social class (Bobo, 1991; Huber & Form, 1973; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992), mobility (Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992), race (Bobo, 1991; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992), education (d’Anjou et al., 1995; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978), occupational prestige (Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978), and income (Alves & Rossi, 1978; Bobo, 1991; d’Anjou et al., 1995; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Shepalak & Alwin, 1986). Empirical findings have demonstrated that social class in particular has substantial explanatory power in accounting for variations in justice perceptions between individuals even across diverse social contexts (Bobo, 1991; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; d’Anjou et al., 1995; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Miller, 1992; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Svallfors, 1993; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979). Class status was an effective predictor of egalitarian distribution preferences among Swedes (Svallfors, 1993) and Americans (Bobo, 1991; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978). d’Anjou and his associates

(1995) also found that Dutch's preferences for particular income distribution values was organized by social class.

However, scholars have yet to address the problem of whether justice perceptions toward existing income inequality may be modified if individuals of lower class statuses get to access structural opportunities and rewards by means of upward mobility. No structural theorist has been found to investigate this aspect. This limitation in the literature restricts our knowledge about the justice perceptions of individuals who have managed to secure opportunities for advancement, despite their disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. In Clifford and Heath (1993) and Hyman's (1953) research, the authors established that occupational mobility can moderate the effects of social class on political attitudes. Such "asymmetrical mobility effects" (Clifford and Heath, 1993, p. 51) occur as individuals tend to idealize the values and beliefs of the comparatively more prestigious social class. The previous studies demonstrate how individuals who have been promoted from the lower class to the middle-class stratum are more likely to abandon their prior class inspired beliefs and to resocialize themselves with "middle-class" systems of belief (Clifford and Heath, 1993; Hyman, 1953). Although these studies were not oriented toward justice perceptions, they convey how occupational mobility has a possible intervening role in altering individuals' perceptions.

The Politics of Distribution in Macrosocial Contexts

Political sociologists have accentuated the need to unmask the subversive agendas that underpin the distribution of opportunities and economic rewards in society (Deutsch, 1975; Form & Rytina, 1969; Svallfors, 1993). After all, as Form and Rytina (1969) argue, "the persistence of any particular allocation of rewards depends on the distribution of power, or the political structure of the society... such

mechanisms predominate in a “traditional” stratification system... politics becomes the means to maintain or change the allocative mechanisms of the society” (p. 20). Social thinkers have long observed that neoliberal or neoconservative societies’ commitments to economic determinism and competition represent a form of political conservatism in disguise (Bauman, 2002; Bourdieu, 1998; Deutsch, 1975; Svallfors, 1993). The locus of domination by conservative regimes lies in perpetuating social inequalities, and economic insecurities among its members, while furthering their own economic interests and power (Bauman, 2002; Bourdieu, 1998; Deutsch, 1975; Svallfors, 1993). From this slant, the adoption of a meritocratic ideology and political inaction in regulating outstanding social inequalities are designed to fulfill the latent motives of conservative elites (Deutsch, 1975).

From this standpoint, Form and Rytina (1969) and Svallfors (1993) note that less privileged individuals are more likely than more privileged individuals to qualify inequality as problematic (or unjust) and to ascribe current distribution outcomes to hegemonic exploitations. Individuals who have been subject to closed opportunity structures and conditions of under-reward are more likely to discern the (political) pitfalls of allocation mechanisms (Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Svallfors, 1993). Such beliefs about the political causes of inequality that are attendant to one’s structural experience explain lower-status individuals’ resolve for both greater equality in distribution outcomes (Svallfors, 1993) and opportunities for socioeconomic advancement (McCall & Kenworthy, 2009; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970). These commitments have been manifested through public requests for increased funding of educational schemes (McCall & Kenworthy, 2009), income leveling (Osberg & Smeeding, 2006) or income redistributions which target the

moderation of existing income inequality (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Bobo, 1991; Piketty, 1995).

Social Justice Evaluations, Perceptions and Implications

Social Justice Evaluations

The scholarship of distributive justice argues that a critical process leads to the development of distributive justice perceptions. Justice evaluation is the phase by which individuals cognitively appraise the fairness of a distributive outcome against particular standards (Berger et al., 1972; Hegvedt, 2006; Markovsky, 1985; Marshall, Swift, Routh, & Burgoyne, 1999; Turner, 2007; Yount & Mueller, 2001). Traditionally, justice evaluation involves the rational calculation of the disparity between one's actual and anticipated reward gains from a given allocation context (Hegvedt, 2006; Jasso, 1980; Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007; Yount & Mueller, 2001). From this perspective, justice evaluations are represented in ratio terms of the actual to just (expected) share of rewards that are consigned to an individual. Scholars have of late enlarged the definition of justice evaluation beyond that of a mere numerical ratio (Hegvedt, 2006; Yount & Mueller, 2001). Justice evaluations from the latter perspective simply denote the process where individuals determine if a given case of distribution is just or otherwise (Hegvedt, 2006; Markovsky, 1985; Yount & Mueller, 2001).

Justice standards or "reference points" (Turner, 2007, p. 293) are critical elements that individuals deploy in the justice evaluation process. Referential points may be existential (Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Shepalak & Alwin, 1986) or normative (Berger et al., 1972) benchmarks that individuals employ in judging the justice of a particular allocation outcome. For instance, individuals may desire different distributive outcomes depending on the norm or value that is espoused (e.g.

equity, universal equality, or need) (Alves & Rossi, 1978; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Deutsch, 1975; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Shepalak & Alwin, 1986; Turner, 2007). Individuals may also compare their receipt of rewards in contrast to generalized others in a population (Turner, 2007), or those belonging to a similar or dissimilar "categoric unit" as oneself (e.g. one's sociodemographic attributes) (Turner, 2007, p. 295). Framed in Turner's (2007) conceptualization of reference points, structural theory does presuppose that individuals measure their reward outcomes against others with particular categorical attributes (e.g. gender, ethnicity or class), if determining predicaments of over-, under-, or fair reward (Hegvedt, 2006; Homans, 1974; Jasso, 2001; Messick & Sentis, 1983; Turner, 2007). Parallel to this, Turner's concept of "categoric units" (2007, p. 295) as reference points which individuals may apply in justice evaluations also emphasizes the importance of structural experiences. This is noticeable in the author's statement on individuals' reference to their "fates" (Turner, 2007, p. 295) and those of others in forming justice evaluations:

A categoric unit is a meso-level social structure which is formed when individuals can be classified and evaluated as a member of a distinct category, such as age, gender, social class, ethnicity, or any "parameter" ...that makes a difference in how people respond to each other... People are thus always comparing their fate with others who are similar and with others who belong to different categoric units that rank higher or lower than those in which the person making the comparison is a member. (Turner, 2007, p. 295)

Social Justice Perceptions

Any assessment of a given distributive outcome therefore rests upon the criteria ("reference points") that individuals identify with in contrasting current and expected distribution outcomes during justice evaluations (Alves & Rossi, 1978;

d'Anjou et al., 1995; Hegvedt, 2006; Shepalak & Alwin, 1986; Turner, 2007; Yount & Mueller, 2001). Justice perceptions are then the products of justice evaluations (Adams, 1963; Jasso, 1980; Markovsky, 1985). However, when there is the impression of under-reward, perceptions of injustice and feelings of dissatisfaction tend to arise (Adams, 1963; Hegvedt, 2006; Jasso, 1980; Markovsky, 1985; Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007) or anger (Hegvedt, 2006; Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007; Turner, 2007) are evoked.

The Implications of Social Justice Perceptions

A growing number of social psychologists have argued that social justice perceptions govern individuals' emotional and behavioral responses (Hegvedt, 2006; Mikula & Wenzel, 2000; Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007; Turner, 2007; Yount & Mueller, 2001). The disjunction that individuals experience between their present and expected reward outcomes (during justice evaluation) has affective and behavioral reverberations (Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; Hegvedt, 2006; Mikula & Wenzel, 2000; Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007; Turner, 2007; Yount & Mueller, 2001). In the first case, emotions induced by social justice perceptions may be positive or negative (Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007).⁵ Turner (2007) and Törnblom and Vermunt (2007) add that the psychological sentiments of fear, pride, gratitude, guilt, (dis)satisfaction, (positive/negative) prejudice, sadness, alienation, resentment, and shame, are aroused under different circumstances of allocation and perceiver attributes.

Emotions can in turn precipitate cognitive and behavioral reactions among individuals. Behavioral responses, as Törnblom and Vermunt (2007) and Turner (2007) describe are attempts by individuals to overcome afflictions of distress due to perceived distributive injustices. These behaviors however differ according to the

⁵ Törnblom & Vermunt (2007) term the sign of the emotional arousal as that of "outcome valences" (p.314).

context of the perceived injustice and the agents held accountable for the experienced injustice. Individuals may resort to different behaviors, in response to their justice evaluations including: adjusting one's inputs or outcomes, reframing one's perception of the situation (believed to influence perceived justice/injustices), removing oneself from the situation of conflict altogether, or intervening by influencing change through others (Hegvedt, 2006; Törnblom & Vermunt, 2007; Turner, 2007; Yount & Mueller, 2001). In Mikula and Wenzel's (2000) analysis of international political conflicts for instance, political leaders who perceived that injustices were inflicted upon them acted by exiting the relationship, organizing redress protests, or entering into peaceful negotiations with the identified party/parties of conflict. When conflicts assume a collective flavor (political consciousness), perceived social injustices can also escalate into collective behaviors. This may be expressed in the form of demonstrations, strikes, riots or social revolutions (Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; Rydina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Turner, 2007). These attempts to lobby for one's political and socioeconomic interests can facilitate and create change to an existing distribution order (Bobo, 1991; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006; Turner, 2007).

Hypotheses

Based on previous research, three sets of expectations may be identified. These hypotheses address the roles of: (1) the six attributes of structural privilege; (2) intergenerational occupational mobility; as well as (3) the interaction between occupational mobility and social class—in influencing individuals' justice perceptions toward income inequality in the U.S. Structural theory argues that individuals from more privileged structural origins, will have a lower likelihood of favoring greater income equality in society, than their less privileged and under-rewarded

counterparts (Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Mackenzie, 1973; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Svallfors, 1993; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979). The former should also be less inclined to debunk and dismiss the proposed political causes of income inequality in society explaining their justice reactions (Svallfors, 1993).

Adapting structural theory's foregoing assumptions (Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Huber & Form, 1973; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Mackenzie, 1973; Piketty, 1995; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Svallfors, 1993; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979), this study posits that the more privileged and better rewarded segments of society: middle-upper class individuals (as opposed to lower-working class individuals), Whites (as opposed to non-Whites), males (as opposed to females), and individuals with higher levels of income, occupational prestige, and education—should perceive current allocation outcomes as just and to indicate less support for restoring greater income parity in society—*ceteris paribus*.

The second hypothesis is aligned with Alesina and La Ferrara (2005) and Ritzman and Tomaskovic-Devey's (1992) reasoning, which contends that individuals who have experienced upward mobility should be more convinced that opportunities for socioeconomic advancements abound in society (see also Clifford and Heath (1993) and Hyman (1953)). They should therefore gear toward favoring the current opportunity structure and distribution order (however unequal its outcomes) which has been, and will remain beneficial for their vested interests. In view of this, upward mobility should be negatively associated with support for the management of income inequality in society, net of all other variables.

Finally, as discussed, knowledge about mobility encounters and its interaction with social class offers an important specification of the structural experience of

individuals and their justice perceptions (Mackenzie, 1973; Piketty, 1995). However, as far as predictions of political attitudes are concerned, evidence of the relationship between class and occupational mobility has been indefinite. While some scholars (Clifford & Heath, 1993; Hyman, 1953) argue that mobility moderates the effects of class on political attitudes, others (Piketty, 1995) have reported contradictory findings. This thesis, which affords a test of whether upward mobility can override the effects of class on distributive justice perceptions provide new directions in this debate. If it is true that upward mobility can moderate class effects on justice perceptions, class differences in justice perceptions should disappear, following encounters of upward mobility. However, considering the literature's consistent support for class effects on justice perceptions (Bobo, 1991; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Huber & Form, 1973; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Mackenzie, 1973; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Svallfors, 1993; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979), I expect to find differences in the justice perceptions of lower-working and middle-upper class respondents, despite these individuals' common encounter of upward mobility (Piketty, 1995). Thus, the effects of occupational mobility on justice perceptions should tend to vary by class, all else being equal.

In sum the three hypotheses that were tested are as follows:

H1: Higher status actors in the respective categories of race, gender and social class will be less likely to indicate less support for more equal distribution outcomes in society than lower-status actors. Similarly, individuals with higher incomes, occupational prestige and education should be less supportive of the idea of more equal distribution outcomes in society.

H2: With upward mobility, individuals will display less support for more equal distribution outcomes in society.

H3: Occupational mobility's effects on justice perceptions should vary across social class status.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND DATA

Data and Sample

This study utilizes secondary weighted⁶ data from the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is a nationally representative sample that polls individuals from the United States, aged between 18 to 89 years old. It also utilizes a multistage, full probability sampling strategy of persons from households. In the first phase of this cluster sampling approach, standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSAs) as well as non-metropolitan counties were the designated primary sampling units. Block groups and enumeration districts formed the sampling units for the subsequent stage of sampling. Quota sampling was then administered at the block level to ensure that the stratification of the sample (by sex, age, and employment status) approximates estimated population demographics. In the same year, data collection was administered via face-to-face interviews by trained interviewers. The response rate achieved by the GSS in the year 2000 was 0.70.

The 2000 and 2008 GSS were two of the most recent years of surveys which also provided the most exhaustive list of questions pertaining to income inequality and redistribution. However, the variable for respondents' occupational mobility experiences was excluded in the year 2008, leaving the 2000 GSS as the only other feasible dataset for this study's purpose. Following a systematic list-wise deletion of missing cases and cases without responses to the five key question indicators of the

⁶ Data from the 2000 GSS dataset was weighted using the WTSSALL variable. This weight variable employs the concept of weighting (WTSS) that was used prior to surveys in 2004. WTSS weights each interview in accordance with the number of respondents from recruited household. This method of weighting also accounts for the sub-sampling of non-respondents.

2000 GSS, a total of 438 respondents remained from the original sample size of 690 cases.

Study's Variables

Dependent Variable

Existing research has relied on different dependent variables for assessing individuals' expectations for income redistribution in their society (see McCall & Kenworthy, 2009; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006; Svallfors, 1993). Part of this inconsistency arises from researchers' choice of different secondary data sources, such as the General Social Survey (GSS) or the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). In addition, question indicators have not been uniformly administered in particular years of GSS surveys to afford viable analyses by researchers. Hence, the incorporation of all five indicators from the 2000 GSS in this study is an attempt to overcome the problem of measurement inconsistency within the field, given that these indicators have been disparately employed by numerous studies of socioeconomic inequality (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Bobo, 1991; Fong, 2001; McCall & Kenworthy, 2009; Osberg & Smeeding, 2006; Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992; Svallfors, 1993). A complete listing of these items is available in Appendix C.

The five selected question items broach the issue of income inequality in American society (Items 1, 3, 4, and 5) and the proposed cause of these inequalities (Item 2). Item 1 (Differences in America are too large) explicitly asks respondents if they find the status quo of income distributions tolerable and therefore, just. Items 3, 4, and 5 on the other hand, poll respondents for their opinions toward different income redistribution practices, including income leveling (Item 3), progressive taxation (Item 4), and social responsibility for the poor in society (Bobo, 1991) (Item

5). These three items measure respondents' reactions to whether they feel that current allocation conditions warrant government regulation. It is also possible to deduce if respondents perceive the status quo of distributive outcomes to be sufficiently "just" and hence, exacting change or otherwise.⁷ Next, Item 2 (Inequality continues to exist because it benefits the rich and powerful) is a unique indicator that evokes respondents' attitude toward a proposed political cause of inequality, viz., ruling elites' political agendas. Some scholars such as Svallfors (1993) have utilized this variable in indexes for measuring attitudes toward income redistribution. Their logic for the use of this variable is that individuals who impute inequality to political manipulation, should commensurately demand a greater equality in distribution outcomes because of perceived political injustices (Svallfors, 1993). This particular item should clarify if respondents' beliefs about allocation inequality are "politicized," particularly if individuals attest that inequality is not merely attributable to one's proven aptitude, effort or contribution. In all, these indicators should capture respondents' justice convictions toward income inequality via their level of satisfaction with current allocation outcomes and support for greater equality in distribution outcomes.

The five indicators representing attitudes toward socioeconomic inequality and redistribution were consolidated into an index and termed the equality of outcome index. This standardized index⁸ yielded a desirable Cronbach's reliability score of 0.732 and is the dependent variable for this study.⁹ As per the GSS 2000,

⁷ As mentioned, Items 3 and 4 may also be conceived as questions about allocation rule preferences (i.e. egalitarian principles).

⁸ The five indicators were standardized prior to construction of the index. Hence, mean scores for the index are expressed in terms of standardized Z scores.

⁹ Exploratory factor analysis (Varimax rotation with principal component analysis) was conducted as a preliminary assessment of the dimensional characteristics of the six initial indicators selected for this study (see Appendix B). The lowest standardized inter-item correlation score among six of the original

each of the five item indicators (see Appendix C) was scored on a 5-point Likert scale. Items 1 through 3 comprised an original scale ranging from 1 for strongly agree to 5 for strongly disagree, while Item 4 had a scale of 1 representing a much larger share (of tax contributions) to 5 representing a much smaller share (of tax contributions). Finally, Item 5 entails a scale of 1 for people to 5 for government, in terms of whether individuals themselves or the government are responsible for improving impoverished Americans' living standards. To facilitate the interpretation of scores, Items 1 through 5 were reverse-coded, such that higher scores indicated greater support for regulating unequal outcomes in society and lower scores, lower support for such outcomes.

Independent and Control Variables

The key independent variable-of-interest in this study is social class. The control variables on the other hand, consist of respondents' education, occupational prestige score, income, gender, race, occupational mobility, as well as the interaction between social class and occupational mobility. Although social class constitutes one of the attributes of structural privilege in this study, it is the assigned independent variable in view of its consistent effects on justice perceptions (Bobo, 1991; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Huber & Form, 1973; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Mackenzie, 1973; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Svallfors, 1993; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979).

Based on the GSS 2000, educational attainment was measured in numerical years, while occupational prestige and income were measured at the interval level.

variables was -0.009 and the highest score being 0.488 (see *Appendix D*). In the first phase of factor analysis, Item six was the single outlier which did not cluster with the remaining five items. This item also generated relatively low correlation score ranging between -0.009 and 0.141 with the five other items. Upon excluding Item 6 from the second phase of analysis, the five component items loaded well into a single factor, with loadings each exceeding a value of 0.40 (see *Appendix B*). This finding suggests the unidimensionality of the five variables constituting the equality of outcome index.

The mode of measurement of both of these control variables will remain unchanged in the analysis. However, for ease of comparing between different categories of individuals, social class, gender, and race, were recoded into dummy variables. The original four-category range of social class status (lower class, working class, middle class, and upper class) provided by the GSS was recoded to avoid sample biases. Such biases could result from the underrepresentation of respondents in the lower class (n= 14) and upper class (n = 16) categories. The recoded dichotomous variable subsumes members of the lower and working classes into the designated category (lower-working class), and middle and upper members into the reference category (middle-upper class).¹⁰

In regard to gender, response categories were recoded such that males were coded 1 and females, 0, while race categories were classified into white (coded 1) and non-White (coded 0). With regard to individuals' mobility experiences, the GSS 2000 measures respondents' occupational status relative to their father's occupational status on a five-point interval scale. The response categories for this variable were also reverse-coded into an ascending order, where an individual's current occupational status may be comparatively: much lower, lower, about equal, higher, or much higher than one's father. Finally, as suggested in the foregoing sections, an interaction term was computed as a product of occupational mobility encounter and class status. This product term forms one of the control variables of this study.

¹⁰ Social class is operationalizable at both the subjective and objective levels of measurement. The latter version is conventionally adapted from Goldthorpe's (1980) class stratification by occupation, whereas subjective class measures leave the choice of class assignment to respondents. The customary approach in distributive justice studies and structural inequality has been toward objective class categorizations. However, as Mackenzie (1973) argues, whichever measurement that is decided on, should ultimately serve the objectives of the inquiry. Furthermore, he observes that there is a good deal of subjectivity when individuals actually nominate their own class status. This means that objective class categorizations may not accurately capture individuals' structural experiences. Therefore, subjective class placements which offer individuals the latitude of referring to their personal structural experiences in relation to others (Mackenzie, 1973) fits with the aims of this study.

Data Analytical Strategy

Descriptive and multivariate analyses were conducted in this inquiry (see Table 1). Frequency and percentage distributions, means, standard deviations, medians, and modes of all dependent and explanatory variables were estimated through a descriptive analysis of the data. As the objective of this inquiry is to predict the independent and combined effects of the explanatory variables (social class, gender, race, education, income, occupational prestige, occupational mobility, and the interaction between social class and occupational mobility) on individuals' justice perceptions, ordinary least squares regression is an ideal technique for this purpose.

Bivariate and Multivariate Regression Analyses

Model 1 of the regression analyses for this study (see Table 3) involves the bivariate regression of indicators constituting the equality of outcomes index, on social class. Model 2 on the other hand, regresses the same index on social class and the five attributes of structural privilege (i.e. gender, race, occupational prestige, income, and education). Finally, regression model 3 presents the full nested model in which the equality of outcomes index is regressed on the same set of predictors used in Model 2, in addition to the interaction variable (occupational mobility X social class). Global *F*-tests were also performed on all three regression models in order to determine the significance of each set of variables on distributive justice perceptions.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

In the year 2000, a total of 690 cases were obtained from the GSS. Following systematic list-wise deletion of all invalid cases, 438 cases remained for analysis. In this final sample (see Table 1), 51% ($n = 222$) were females and 49% ($n = 216$), males. The vast majority of respondents were also White (84%, $n = 365$), leaving 17% of the sample ($n = 74$) constituting non-White respondents. With regard to social class, about half of the sample's respondents (52%, $n = 227$) claimed a lower or working social class identity, while the remaining half (48%, $n = 211$) considered themselves a part of the middle or upper class categories.

With regard to intergenerational occupational mobility, most respondents reported experiencing upward mobility (mode = 4.0). The average respondent of our study attained approximately 14 years of education (mean = 13.8, $SD = 2.53$) and an occupational prestige score of 45 points ($SD = 14.23$) on an ordinal range of 10 to 89 points. He/she is also estimated to earn between \$20,000 to \$24,999 in annual income dollars (mean = 13.2, $SD = 5.49$).

The self-constructed equality of outcomes index of this study has standardized range (in Z scores) of -1.93 to 1.58 and an expected mean score of 0 ($SD = 0.69$). The mean scores for each of five component indicators are as follows: (1) respondents averaged about 3.8 points ($SD = 0.77$), indicating general support for tax rates to be pegged according to one's income; (2) respondents tended to agree that income discrepancies in the U.S. are too extensive (mean = 3.64, $SD = 1.04$), and to (3) hold elites culpable for existing income inequalities in the U.S. (mean = 3.31, $SD = 1.07$); (4) The average respondent also assumes a middle

position when polled on whether the U.S. government's intervention in income redistribution is warranted (mean = 3.0, *SD* = 1.2);

(5) Finally, mean responses (mean = 3.0, *SD* = 1.19) for the last item, suggest general beliefs that both the government and individuals themselves, are responsible for alleviating poverty in society.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of All Variables (Valid Responses: N = 438)

Variable	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum	Range
Income gap too large	3.64	1.04	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.00
Inequality benefits society's elites	3.31	1.07	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.00
Government's responsibility to minimize income disparities	2.86	1.20	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	4.00
The wealthy should pay more in taxes	3.82	0.77	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.00
Government's responsibility to alleviate the condition of poverty	2.96	1.19	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	4.00
"Equality of Outcome"	0.00	0.69	0.12	-0.37	-1.93	1.58	3.51
Male	0.49	0.500	0	0	0	1	1
White	0.83	0.37	1	1	0	1	1

Note: *All scores are rounded to the second decimal point. Source: GSS 2000.

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued).

Variable	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum	Range
Income	13.22	5.49	14.00	16.00	1.00	23.00	22.00
Occupational prestige score	44.63	14.23	44.00	51.00	17.00	86.00	69.00
Education	13.79	2.53	13.00	12.00	6.00	20.00	14.00
Subjective social class	0.48	0.50	0	0	0	1	1
Occupational Mobility	3.27	1.24	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.00
<i>Occupational Mobility X Social Class</i>	11.60	1.89	0	0	0	5.00	5.00

Bivariate Correlations

Bivariate analyses of the correlations between all variables were performed in this study (see Table 2). First, the five indicators constituting the equality of outcome index displayed weak to moderate, albeit significant inter-item correlations with one another.¹¹ This means that the variables are generally relevant and adequate for inclusion in an index. Second, the six attributes of structural privilege revealed significant correlations with one another. Our finding therefore, lends support to Mackenzie (1973) and Robinson and Bell's (1978) reports of the interrelationship between key structural variables. For instance, males had a greater propensity than females to acquire higher levels of income ($r = 0.33, p < 0.01$) and to experience upward occupational mobility ($r = 0.10, p < 0.05$). Middle-upper class individuals also demonstrated a greater likelihood than lower-working class individuals of possessing higher occupational prestige ($r = 0.26, p < 0.01$), better incomes ($r = 0.20, p < 0.01$) and higher education ($r = 0.28, p < 0.01$). These correlations signify that those who have been endowed with certain privileges (e.g. being White, male and of middle-upper class status) are also likely to be in possession of other acquired or ascribed privileges (e.g. higher occupational prestige, educational levels and income).

¹¹ All of these correlations were statistically significant at the 0.01alpha level.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix for Variables Used in the Analysis, U.S. Adults, 2000 (N = 438)

Variable	Income gap too large	Inequality benefits society's elites	Government's responsibility to minimize income disparities	The wealthy should pay more in taxes	Government's responsibility to alleviate the condition of poverty	"Equality of Outcome"
Income gap too large	1	0.442**	0.488**	0.419**	0.297**	0.762**
Inequality benefits society's elites	0.442**	1	0.393**	0.305**	0.220**	0.680**
Government's responsibility to minimize income disparities	0.488**	0.393**	1	0.377**	0.399**	0.763**
The wealthy should pay more in taxes	0.419	0.305	0.377**	1	0.207**	0.664**
Government's responsibility to alleviate the condition of poverty	0.297**	0.220**	0.399**	0.207**	1	0.609**
"Equality of Outcome"	0.762**	0.680**	0.763**	0.664**	0.609**	1

Note. * $p \leq 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ *** $p \leq 0.001$ (two-tailed test)

(table continues)

Table 2 (continued).

Variable	Income gap too large	Inequality benefits society's elites	Government's responsibility to minimize income disparities	The wealthy should pay more in taxes	Government's responsibility to alleviate the condition of poverty	"Equality of Outcome"
Male	-0.043	-0.020	-0.126**	-0.058	0.103*	-0.100*
White	-0.110*	-0.143**	-0.198**	-0.054	-0.103*	-0.175**
Occupational Prestige Score	0.064	-0.070	-0.063	-0.006	-0.055	-0.037
Income	-0.029	-0.078	-0.105*	0.034	-0.103*	-0.080
Education	0.037	0.010	-0.114*	0.020	-0.019	-0.019
Middle-Upper Class	-0.103*	-0.173**	-0.212**	-0.035	-0.143**	-0.192**
Occupational Mobility	0.006	-0.046	-0.059	-0.006	-0.084	-0.054
Occupational Mobility X Social Class	-0.123*	-0.214**	-0.249**	-0.028*	-0.172**	-0.226**

(table continues)

Table 2 (continued).

Variable	Male	White	Occupational Prestige Score	Income	Education	Middle- Upper Class	Occupational Mobility	<i>Occupational Mobility X Social Class</i>
Male	1	0.019	-0.000	0.330**	0.068	0.025	0.096*	0.018
White	0.019	1	0.093	0.024	0.122*	0.151**	-0.035	0.129**
Occupational Prestige Score	0.000	0.093	1	0.321*	0.449**	0.257**	0.132**	0.267**
Income	0.33**	0.024	0.321**	1	0.296**	0.199**	0.226**	0.278**
Education	0.068	0.122*	0.449**	0.296**	1	0.277**	-0.138**	0.187**
Middle-Upper Class	0.025	0.151**	0.257**	0.199**	0.277**	1	0.052	0.884**
Occupational Mobility	0.096*	-0.035	0.132**	0.226**	-0.138**	0.052	1	0.379
<i>Occupational Mobility X Social Class</i>	0.018	0.129**	0.267**	0.278**	0.187**	0.884**	0.379**	1

Multivariate Regressions

Global F-tests for the three regression models explained in the preceding section (see Table 3) reveal that each model is statistically significant. This indicates that at least one of the predictors from all three models has a significant effect on individuals' justice perceptions toward income inequality. As Model 3 yields the highest coefficient of determination score ($R^2 = 0.089$), it is the best-fitting model compared to Models 1 and 2. Specifically, while Model 1 explains only about 4% of the variation in individuals' expectations for income equality, Models 2 and 3 explain between 7 to 9% of the same variation in respondents' justice reactions. In view of the above justifications, Models 2 and 3 are the selected models for interpreting the respective effects of the main effect variables (class and mobility) and all other predictors, on individuals' distributive justice perceptions.

Table 3

OLS Regression Models Predicting Respondents' Expectations for Income Equality in the U.S., U.S. Adults, 2000 (standard errors in parentheses)

Predictor	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	0.118 (0.046)	0.282 (0.223)	0.047 (0.236)
Male		-0.118 (0.070)	-0.148* (0.070)
White		-0.290** (0.090)	-0.280** (0.089)
Occupational Prestige Score		0.001 (0.003)	0.000 (0.003)
Income		-0.003 (0.007)	0.000 (0.007)
Education		0.015 (0.016)	0.013 (0.015)
Middle-Upper Class	-0.266*** (0.066)	-0.246*** (0.070)	0.243 (0.186)
Direction of Occupational Mobility		-0.017 (0.028)	0.057 (0.038)
Occupational Mobility X Class			-0.150** (0.053)
R²	0.037	0.072	0.089
F	16.244***	4.645***	5.129***
N	427	427	427

Note. * $p \leq 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ *** $p \leq 0.001$ (1-tailed test)

Diagnostics

Several preliminary diagnostics for detecting problems of multicollinearity in this study's analysis were conducted (see Appendix F). First, by assessing the correlation scores between variables, no anomalously high correlation scores beyond a Pearson's score of 0.80 were detected (Knocke, Bohrnstedt & Mee, 2002). The highest observed Pearson's r value of 0.884 resulted from the correlation

between the interaction term (the product of occupational mobility X social class) that was created in this study, and its main effect term—social class. Apart from this exceptionally high correlational score which was expectable, there were no other obvious signs of multicollinearity as noted in the correlation matrix. As a further test for multicollinearity in the analysis, tolerance and VIF scores for all predictors were also interpreted. Results indicate that the tolerance and VIF scores for all predictors meet the desirable range by exceeding the minimum tolerance cut-off score of 0.40, and falling under the maximum VIF cut-off score of 1.0 (Allison, 1999). We can therefore conclude that this study's analysis does not experience a problem with multicollinearity.

Attributes of Structural Privilege

First, out of the six attributes of privilege that are of interest in this study, gender, race, and social class produced significant findings which are consistent with the hypotheses. In the case of gender, males were less likely to express a preference for greater income equality in the U.S. as compared to females ($b = -0.15$, $p < 0.05$), controlling for the effects of all other variables. In a similar vein, Whites were also less sympathetic than non-Whites to the cause of establishing greater income equality in society by a difference of about 0.28 points ($p < 0.01$), holding all else constant. Finally, as speculated, middle-upper class individuals were also less disposed to favoring greater equality of outcomes in society, as opposed to lower-working class individuals ($b = -0.246$, $p < 0.001$).

The effects of the three remaining attributes of structural privilege, namely, occupational prestige, income and education, did not produce significant findings on justice perceptions. However, the size of the effects of occupational prestige ($b < 0.001$, $p > 0.05$) and income ($b < 0.001$, $p > 0.05$) on individuals' support for income

equality in the U.S. were also negligible. Counter to expectation, education ($b = 0.013, p > 0.05$) also generated an insignificant, albeit positive influence on individuals' demands for greater income equality.

Occupational Mobility

According to Model 2, occupational mobility also does not appear to have a significant effect on individuals' desires for greater income equality in the U.S. ($b = -0.017, p > 0.05$). Hence, the insignificant effects of occupational mobility status on respondents' attitudes toward inequality do not support this study's hypothesis. Notwithstanding the insignificant effect however the sign characterizing the relationship between mobility and distributive justice perceptions did occur in the predicted (negative) direction.

The Interaction between Occupational Mobility and Social Class

Model 3 provides evidence for the significant interaction between social class and occupational mobility. All else equal, for every point of increase in mobility, middle-upper class individuals are about 0.15 points less likely to favor greater equality in distribution outcomes than lower-working class individuals ($b = -0.15, p < 0.05$). On average, support for restoring greater income equality in society tended to decline by about 0.09 points for every level of upward mobility encountered by middle-upper class respondents. In contrast, endorsement for greater income equality in society rises by about 0.06 points for every level of upward mobility experienced by lower working class respondents—net of all other variables.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The task of this study was to determine if Americans' justice perceptions toward income inequality are conditioned by their unique structural experiences. Here, structural experiences refer to one's personal encounter with the opportunity structure and reward mechanism of society (Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Svallfors, 1993). In this thesis, I have illustrated that structural analyses are necessitated in distributive justice studies of macrosocial allocations: while stratification systems conscribe the opportunities that individuals are entitled to receive (Alves & Rossi, 1978; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Deutsch, 1975; Homans, 1958; Jasso & Rossi, 1977; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Piketty, 1995), sociopolitical forces can govern the availability of opportunities for different individuals through maintaining socioeconomic inequalities (Bobo, 1991; Deutsch, 1975; Svallfors, 1993).

Structural theory offers a useful approach for comprehending justice perceptions toward macrosocial distribution outcomes. It surmises that individuals' expected and acquired opportunities and reward shares, depending on their locations in the social structure, inform them about the nature of society's distribution mechanisms (Alves & Rossi, 1978; Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Deutsch, 1975; Homans, 1958; Jasso & Rossi, 1977; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Miller, 1992; Rasinski, 1987). Individuals' attributions about the political causes of inequality also accompany their experienced reward conditions and social status (Svallfors, 1993). These beliefs contribute to the formation of particular justice perceptions.¹²

¹² It is possible to derive some additional inferences from on the correlation findings (Table 2), on whether lower-status individuals tend to be more critical toward the political causes of inequality than higher-status individuals, as Svallfors (1993) had presumed. Our results point toward evidence for this prognosis, as Whites ($r = -0.143$, $p < 0.01$) and middle-upper class Whites ($r = -0.173$, $p < 0.01$)

My first hypothesis was that individuals' social class, race, gender, income, education, and occupational prestige (the "attributes of structural privilege") would shape their justice perceptions toward income inequality. Specifically, higher-status individuals from each of these social categories (i.e. middle-upper class respondents, males and Whites) will be less likely to demand greater justice in distribution outcomes compared to lower-status individuals (lower-working class respondents, females and non-Whites). In addition, the effects of two other control variables, namely occupational mobility and its interaction with social class, on distributive justice perceptions were also tested. For this second hypothesis, upward mobility was predicted to increase the likelihood of individuals perceiving fairness in the distribution of opportunities and rewards in society, given that upwardly mobile individuals should have experienced access to accruing greater rewards than the preceding generation (Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992). Finally, considering how mobility is intimately connected to one's class situation (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 2002; Huber & Form, 1973; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Piketty, 1995) and since social class has been a stable predictor of justice attitudes (Bobo, 1991; d'Anjou et al., 1995; Huber & Form, 1973; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Mackenzie, 1973; Marshall & Swift, 1993), I expected to locate class-specific differences in the influence of mobility on distributive justice perceptions (Piketty, 1995).

This study relied on a sample of 438 American adult respondents who were surveyed by the National Opinion Research Centre in the year 2000. A self-designed equality of outcome index which forms the dependent variable in this study was regressed on six attributes of structural privilege (race, gender, social class, education, occupational prestige, and income), occupational mobility, as well as an

individuals were respectively more likely than their non-White and lower-working class counterparts, to hold elites responsible for unequal outcomes in society (Item 2).

interaction term (social class X occupational mobility). Ordinary least squares regression was the selected technique for this analysis, as it permits one to infer about the independent, comparative, and net effects of the explanatory variables.

Of the three hypotheses postulated in this study, two received at least partial support. First, out of the six attributes of structural privilege, the hypotheses for social class, race and gender were substantiated. Indeed, the more privileged individuals, namely middle-upper class members (*viz a viz* lower-working class members), Whites (*viz a viz* non-Whites) and males (*viz a viz* females)—were more tolerant toward current allocation outcomes than their counterparts within these categories (i.e. social class, race, and gender), all else being equal. Evidently, more privileged individuals seem to prefer maintaining the status quo of allocation outcomes, probably having been able to vouch for positive experiences with the existing distribution of opportunities and rewards in society. Put differently, these privileged beneficiaries should have encountered less of an “asymmetry” between their expected and acquired encounters with the societal opportunity structure (Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970, p. 704).¹³ From these results, we obtained partial support for structural theory, in regard to class, gender, and racial differences in distributive justice perceptions.

Three other variables, namely income, education, and occupational prestige did not yield significant findings for their respective effects on distributive justice perceptions. One explanation for this may be because individuals have expressed mixed reactions toward the five different items composing the equality of outcome index. This could have produced cumulative scores on the index that did not turn out to be statistically significant. An earlier version of this study had noted that income

¹³ The asymmetry refers to the experienced tension between the “existential” tenet of a society’s stratification ideology (e.g. meritocracy) and its “normative” tenets (Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970).

and education did exert a significant influence on some of the same dependent variables used in this study (Ong, 2012). It is also possible to extrapolate more about the effects of income and education on the individual indicators of inequality, based on their bivariate correlations. The bivariate correlation matrix (see Table 2) shows that an inverse relationship exists between income and support for governmental intervention in: (1) regulating income inequality ($r = -0.105$, $p < 0.05$, Item 3) and (2) enhancing the quality of life among society's poor ($r = -0.103^*$, $p < 0.05$, Item 5). Higher education also tended to be negatively associated with expectations for moderating income inequality in society ($r = -0.114$, $p < 0.05$, Item 5). These correlations point to the proclivity of individuals with more education and higher incomes (proposed status attributes) to veto government action in instituting greater equality in distribution outcomes. These findings for income and education are consistent with the proposed hypotheses of this study.

A further comment however, may be made on the role of education in justice perceptions. Although education may be considered a status variable (see Ritzman & Tomaskovic-Devey, 1992), the literature suggests that education may serve an alternative function in society (d'Anjou et al., 1995; Robinson & Bell, 1978). As mentioned, individuals' justice perceptions may be confounded by multiple factors, one of which is the cultural ideology of a society (d'Anjou et al., 1995; Robinson & Bell, 1978). Robinson and Bell (1978), in their "enlightenment thesis" propose that American educational institutions idealize the doctrine of the Enlightenment. The consistent socialization of individuals to the institutional canons of "equalitarianism" (Robinson & Bell, 1978) through formal educational platforms could influence the value systems of more educated individuals. Hence, it makes sense that better educated individuals display egalitarian orientations toward expected distribution

outcomes. Nonetheless, since education, occupational prestige, and income did not present significant effects on justice perceptions, reliable conclusions regarding the effects of these predictors on justice perceptions cannot be drawn.

Interestingly, although occupational mobility by itself did not register a significant relationship with individuals' justice perceptions toward income inequality, it did interact with social class to predict these perceptions. The experience of upward mobility tended to foster justice perceptions in opposite directions for lower-working class and middle-upper class individuals respectively. While upward mobility engendered stronger support for greater equality of outcomes among lower-working class respondents, it reduced support for such outcomes among middle-upper class respondents. Several conclusions may be drawn from this analysis. First, the findings reinforce the importance of social class as a "baseline" structural attribute that explains divergences in individuals' justice reactions toward inequality. Secondly, the findings offer an explanation for the discrepancy in justice perceptions between individuals of different social classes, despite their upward mobility. Upwardly mobile individuals from lower-working class conditions may not have been able to attain similar levels of achievement as upwardly mobile, middle-upper class individuals. As Breen and Goldthorpe (1999) forward, "children of disadvantaged class origins have to display far more merit [as indicated by educational attainment or by IQ and effort] than do children of more advantaged origins in order to attain similar class positions" (p. 21). The reality that less privileged individuals are unable to "level up" with competitors from more superior social classes may be dispiriting for aspiring lower-working class individuals (Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970). It could also reinforce their sense of injustice toward current allocation outcomes as the findings suggest. Less privileged individuals should correspondingly, endorse more

egalitarian distributions to narrow the unequal gap in reward conditions between the “losers” and “winners” of meritocratic societies (Bobo, 1991; d’Anjou et al., 1995; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Rytina, Form, & Pease, 1970; Svallfors, 1993).

Finally, the findings may be of value to the fields of distributive justice and structural inequality, as distributive justice theory and structural theory are applied in explaining perceptions toward income inequality. Therefore, this inquiry has responded to Cook and Hegvedt (1983) as well as Turner’s (2007) calls for a micro-macro theoretical integration in sociology. Findings on the effects of social class, race and gender on justice perceptions are also encouraging, as they evidence structural theory’s contribution in predicting justice perceptions toward macrosocial allocation outcomes. It also urges us to be wary of generalizations about “public” reactions toward inequality, since differences in justice perceptions are now known to exist between certain subpopulations in a given society.

Limitations

Several limitations confront this study. The first concerns the sample size of this study which is relatively limited for a national sample. Owing to the nature of data collection by the GSS in the year of 2000, different interview schedules were applied on disparate samples of individuals. Consequently, only 438 respondents who had responded to all five question indicators encompassing the index could be factored in for analysis. Larger national samples could have boosted our confidence with the results of this study.

Second, inferences from this cross-sectional study may only be generalized from within a single time frame (in the year 2000) rather than trends across time. McCall and Kenworthy (2009) have observed in their longitudinal inquiry of Americans’ attitudes toward inequality between the 1980s to the year 2000, that

attitudes toward inequality tend to fluctuate according to objective levels of income inequality that prevail in different time periods.¹⁴ Other exogenous factors, such as media sensationalism of income inequality could also stoke perceptions of injustice among individuals (Bobo, 1991; Taylor-Gooby & Martin, 2010).

Third, this research does not specify the path effects of all explanatory variables in their respective relationships with distributive justice perceptions. For instance, d'Anjou et al. (1995) realized that the espoused value of economic libertarianism (the “free market ideology”) can mediate the effects of social class and age, on individuals’ egalitarian allocation preferences. Other related path analysis research on socioeconomic inequality and distributive justice (see also Robinson and Bell (1978)) has also provided fruitful findings that specify the nature of relationships (indirect and direct relationships) between structural variables.

Fourth, this study only explores the effects of a single interaction variable (i.e. between occupational mobility and social class) on justice perceptions toward income inequality. Discovering possible interactions between various structural variables on individuals’ justice perceptions is vital, as it clarifies the bounds to the relationship between variables. This study has allowed us to realize that mobility’s effect on justice perceptions differs according to class status. Ignorance about the significant interactions between occupational mobility and social class would have led to an oversight as to why occupational mobility by itself failed to be a significant predictor of justice commitments.

Fifth, there are constraints on this study’s conclusion about the justice perceptions of upwardly mobile individuals from the lower or working classes. This sample of lower and working class respondents consisted of individuals who were

¹⁴ The Gini Index was the tool for measuring objective inequality by the authors (McCall & Kenworthy , 2009).

unable to transcend their current class situations, despite encountering upward occupational mobility.¹⁵ Hence, inferences for this population do not extend to individuals who have been sufficiently mobile so as to exit their lower or working class situations. The responses of middle and upper class individuals may in fact characterize the responses of those who have ascended into the middle/upper class strata from lower/working class origins; these individuals could have therefore, adopted the perceptions and beliefs that are unique to the middle-upper class strata (Clifford & Heath, 1993; Hyman, 1953).¹⁶

Recommendations

In accordance with the limitations of this study, several recommendations are proposed. First, in regard to the sample size of this study, it is advisable for future studies to secure larger samples of individuals. This verifies if this study's findings on distributive justice perceptions are indeed generalizable to the larger population of American adults. Second, the fact that much of the variance in distributive justice perceptions remains unexplained in this study suggests a need for evaluating other antecedents of these perceptions. A list of these factors has been outlined in an earlier section of this study (see Chapter Two). Longitudinal studies which review trends in justice perceptions over a course of time and can help rule out the effects of extraneous variables on justice perceptions (see McCall and Kenworthy, 2002). This would in turn convey if the existing distribution of justice perceptions by structural attributes (shown in this study) is merely incidental or a truly enduring phenomenon.

¹⁵ We may gather that this population of individuals had originated from the lower-working classes, in view of the fact that individuals identify with the same class, even upon experiencing upward mobility.

¹⁶ Given the nature of the social class variable used in this study, we are unable to differentiate between the justice perceptions of upwardly mobile, middle-upper class individuals of lower-working origins, from those of middle-upper class origins.

Third, future studies could help determine if class origins will make a difference in the justice perceptions of individuals experiencing upward *class* mobility. Class mobility should exert more drastic effects on one's structural experience (and therefore justice perceptions) than occupational mobility, as the latter condition may not involve class transfers. Next, social class is a salient structural indicator of justice perceptions, as instanced in this study and many others (see Bobo, 1991; Huber & Form, 1973; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Miller, 1992; Robinson & Bell, 1978; Tallman & Ihinger-Tallman, 1979). One other proposed use for subjective social class variables in social psychological research is through the construct of "class consciousness" (Marx, 1998). Social identity (Hoggs, 2006) and distributive justice theories may realize important intersections with each other in this respect. According to distributive justice theory, justice perceptions are the germ that motivates individuals to engage in certain behaviors. These behaviors lead to the eradication of distress arising from perceived injustices; participation in social movements constitutes one such behavioral response (Cook & Hegvedt, 1983; Hegvedt, 2006; Jasso, 1980; Turner, 2007). However, conflict theory has argued that there are preconditions for enabling collective action. One of these conditions is known as the collective "consciousness" (Marx, 1998), where political group memberships evolve among actors sharing common experiences of injustice, targets of change, and change goals. Social identity theorists could benefit from a study of how likely class (group) affiliations are to emanate from individuals' class identifications in modern American society. Political group affiliation, as Marx (1998) envisions can command a reckonable force in upending the status quo of power and resource distributions in society.

A final word may be said with regard to the theme of distributive justice perceptions. Although this study touches on individuals' distributive justice perceptions, the suggestion that stratification systems could intervene in meritocratic distributions is amenable to further analysis by procedural justice scholars. As Marshall and Swift (1993) predicate, perceptions of distributive injustice may be spawned by doubts if a given allocation system is procedurally fair in the first place. "Problematic" procedures in this context could refer to the differential access to opportunities for advancement between individuals of different social statuses. For example, if individuals believe that unequal access to these opportunities are instigated and maintained by acts of political expediency (and are procedurally unjust), they are likely to decry the justifiability of existing distribution outcomes. Hence, this area of research could form a basis for the integration of procedural and distributive justice theories in the scope of macrosocial distributions.

APPENDIX A
QUESTION INDICATORS (GSS 2000) AND GSS CODES

Each of the six item indicators, as per the GSS 2000, was scored on a Likert response scale ranging from a value of 1 to 5. Items 1 through 3 comprised of an original scale ranging from 1 for '*Strongly agree*,' to 5 for '*Strongly disagree*'. Item 4 had a scale ranging from 1 representing '*A much larger share (of tax contributions)*,' to 5 representing '*A much smaller share (of tax contributions)*'. Item 5 entails a scale ranging from 1 for '*People*' to 5 for '*Government*' in terms of the party attributed with the responsibility of improving poor Americans' standards of living. To facilitate the interpretation of scores for this study, items 1 through 5 were reverse-coded, such that higher scores indicate greater support for income redistribution across society, and lower scores, less support for income redistribution.

1. Differences in income in America are too large (GSS code: incgap)
2. Inequality continues to exist because it benefits the rich and powerful (GSS code: inequal3)
3. It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes (GSS code: goveqinc)
4. Do you think that people with high incomes should pay a larger share of their income in taxes than those with low incomes, the same share, or a smaller share? (GSS code: taxshare)
5. Some people think that the government in Washington D.C. should do everything possible to improve the standard of living of all poor Americans; they are at Point 5 on this card. Other people think it is not the government's responsibility, and that each person should take care of himself; they are at Point 1. (GSS code: helppoor)
6. Large differences in income are necessary for America's prosperity. (GSS code: inequal5)

APPENDIX B
DIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS TABLES

Table B.1

*Six-item dimensional analysis of expectations for socioeconomic equalities of outcome in America: Rotated factor loadings *100*

Indicators	Factor 1	Factor 2
Government should reduce socioeconomic inequality	78	3.3
Government should help poor	55	13.0
America's income gap too large	77	15.7
Inequality maintained by society's rich and powerful	69	-17.8
The rich should pay higher taxes	66	1.4
Large income differentials necessary for America's prosperity	5.1	98
Eigenvalue	2.41	1.01
Explained variance (%)	40.4	16.9

Note. Factor loadings > 0.40 are shown in bold. Source: GSS 2000

Table B.2

*Five-item dimensional analysis of expectations for socioeconomic equalities of outcome in America: Rotated factor loadings *100*

Indicators	Factor 1
1. Government should reduce socioeconomic inequality	78
2. Government should help poor	56
3. America's income gap too large	77
4. Inequality maintained by society's rich and powerful	68
5. The rich should pay higher taxes	65
Eigenvalue	2.41
Explained variance (%)	48.2

Note. Factor loadings > 0.40 are shown in bold. Source: GSS 2000

APPENDIX C
EQUALITY OF OUTCOME INDEX (GSS 2000)

Each of the six item indicators, as per the GSS 2000, was scored on a Likert response scale ranging from a value of 1 to 5. Items 1 through 3 comprised of an original scale ranging from 1 for '*Strongly agree*,' to 5 for '*Strongly disagree*'. Item 4 had a scale ranging from 1 representing '*A much larger share (of tax contributions)*,' to 5 representing '*A much smaller share (of tax contributions)*'. Item 5 entails a scale ranging from 1 for '*People*' to 5 for '*Government*' in terms of the party attributed with the responsibility of improving poor Americans' standards of living. To facilitate the interpretation of scores for this study, items 1 through 5 were reverse-coded, such that higher scores indicate greater support for income redistribution across society, and lower scores, less support for income redistribution.

1. Differences in income in America are too large. (GSS code: incgap)
2. Inequality continues to exist because it benefits the rich and powerful. (GSS code: inequal3)
3. It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes.(GSS code: goveqinc)
4. Do you think that people with high incomes should pay a larger share of their income in taxes than those with low incomes, the same share, or a smaller share? (GSS code: taxshare)
5. Some people think that the government in Washington D.C. should do everything possible to improve the standard of living of all poor Americans; they are at Point 5 on this card. Other people think it is not the government's responsibility, and that each person should take care of himself; they are at Point 1. (helppoor)

APPENDIX D

INTER-ITEM CORRELATION MATRIX OF STANDARDIZED VARIABLES USED IN
FACTOR ANALYSIS, U.S. ADULTS, 2000 ($N = 690$)

Variable	Government's responsibility to alleviate the condition of poverty	Government's responsibility to alleviate the condition of poverty	Income gap too large	Inequality benefits society's elites	Inequality necessary for society's prosperity	The wealthy should pay more in taxes
Government's responsibility to alleviate the condition of poverty	1.000	.412	.488	.377	.054	.361
Government's responsibility to alleviate the condition of poverty	.412	1.000	.279	.207	.067	.179
Income gap too large	.488	.279	1.000	.420	.141	.411
Inequality benefits society's elites	.377	.207	.420	1.000	-.009	.328
Inequality necessary for society's prosperity	.054	.067	.141	-.009	1.000	.061
The wealthy should pay more in taxes	.361	.179	.411	.328	.061	1.000

APPENDIX E

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF ALL VARIABLES (VALID RESPONSES: $n = 438$)

Variable	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum	Range
Income gap too large	3.64	1.04	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.00
Inequality benefits society's elites	3.31	1.07	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.00
Government's responsibility to minimize income disparities	2.86	1.20	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	4.00
The wealthy should pay more in taxes	3.82	0.77	4.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.00
Government's responsibility to alleviate the condition of poverty	2.96	1.19	3.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	4.00
"Equality of Outcome"	0.00	0.69	0.12	-0.37	-1.93	1.58	3.51
Male	0.49	0.500	0	0	0	1	1
White	0.83	0.37	1	1	0	1	1
Occupational prestige score	44.63	14.23	44.00	51.00	17.00	86.00	69.00
Income	13.22	5.49	14.00	16.00	1.00	23.00	22.00
Education	13.79	2.53	13.00	12.00	6.00	20.00	14.00
Subjective social class	0.48	0.50	0	0	0	1	1
Occupational Mobility	3.27	1.24	3.00	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.00
<i>Occupational Mobility X Social Class</i>	11.60	1.89	0	0	0	5.00	5.00

Source: General Social Survey, 2000. NOTE: *All scores are rounded to the second decimal point

APPENDIX F
CORRELATION MATRIX FOR VARIABLES USED IN THE ANALYSIS, U.S.
ADULTS, 2000 ($N = 438$)

Variable	Income gap too large	Inequality benefits society's elites	Government's responsibility to minimize income disparities	The wealthy should pay more in taxes	Government's responsibility to alleviate the condition of poverty	"Equality of Outcome"
Income gap too large	1	0.442**	0.488**	0.419**	0.297**	0.762**
Inequality benefits society's elites	0.442**	1	0.393**	0.305**	0.220**	0.680**
Government's responsibility to minimize income disparities	0.488**	0.393**	1	0.377**	0.399**	0.763**
The wealthy should pay more in taxes	0.419	0.305	0.377**	1	0.207**	0.664**
Government's responsibility to alleviate the condition of poverty	0.297**	0.220**	0.399**	0.207**	1	0.609**
"Equality of Outcome"	0.762**	0.680**	0.763**	0.664**	0.609**	1
Male	-0.043	-0.020	-0.126**	-0.058	0.103*	-0.100*
White	-0.110*	-0.143**	-0.198**	-0.054	-0.103*	-0.175**
Occupational Prestige Score	0.064	-0.070	-0.063	-0.006	-0.055	-0.037
Income	-0.029	-0.078	-0.105*	0.034	-0.103*	-0.080
Education	0.037	0.010	-0.114*	0.020	-0.019	-0.019
Middle-Upper Class	-0.103*	-0.173**	-0.212**	-0.035	-0.143**	-0.192**
Occupational Mobility	0.006	-0.046	-0.059	-0.006	-0.084	-0.054
Occupational Mobility X Social Class	-0.123*	-0.214**	-0.249**	-0.028*	-0.172**	-0.226**

* $p \leq 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ *** $p \leq 0.001$ (two-tailed test)

Variable	Male	White	Occupational Prestige Score	Income	Education	Middle-Upper Class	Occupational Mobility	Occupational Mobility X Social Class
Male	1	0.019	-0.000	0.330**	0.068	0.025	0.096*	0.018
White	0.019	1	0.093	0.024	0.122*	0.151**	-0.035	0.129**
Occupational Prestige Score	0.000	0.093	1	0.321*	0.449**	0.257**	0.132**	0.267**
Income	0.33**	0.024	0.321**	1	0.296**	0.199**	0.226**	0.278**
Education	0.068	0.122*	0.449**	0.296**	1	0.277**	-0.138**	0.187**
Middle-Upper Class	0.025	0.151**	0.257**	0.199**	0.277**	1	0.052	0.884**
Occupational Mobility	0.096*	-0.035	0.132**	0.226**	-0.138**	0.052	1	0.379
Occupational Mobility X Social Class	0.018	0.129**	0.267**	0.278**	0.187**	0.884**	0.379**	1

* $p \leq 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ *** $p \leq 0.001$ (two-tailed test)

APPENDIX G

OLS REGRESSION MODELS PREDICTING RESPONDENTS' EXPECTATIONS
FOR INCOME EQUALITY IN THE U.S., U.S. ADULTS, 2000
(STANDARD ERRORS IN PARENTHESES)

Predictor	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	0.118 (0.046)	0.282 (0.223)	0.047 (0.236)
Male		-0.118 (0.070)	-0.148* (0.070)
White		-0.290** (0.090)	-0.280** (0.089)
Occupational Prestige Score		0.001 (0.003)	0.000 (0.003)
Income		-0.003 (0.007)	0.000 (0.007)
Education		0.015 (0.016)	0.013 (0.015)
Middle-Upper Class	-0.266*** (0.066)	-0.246*** (0.070)	0.243 (0.186)
Direction of Occupational Mobility		-0.017 (0.028)	0.057 (0.038)
Occupational Mobility X Class			-0.150** (0.053)
R ²	0.037	0.072	0.089
F	16.244***	4.645***	5.129***
N	427	427	427

* $p \leq 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ *** $p \leq 0.001$ (1-tailed test)

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