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**The empirical approach to the study of social justice:
A research agenda for Latin America**

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The empirical approach to the study of social justice: A research agenda for Latin America

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This paper is based on the contributions from empirical social justice research to the study of economic inequality. This perspective can be considered as a complement to traditional studies of inequality that are typically centred on variables such as income, social mobility and poverty, by taking into account what people think about how a just distribution of goods (and bads) in society should look like. The research of perceptions and attitudes in this area opens the possibility of answering questions such as to what extent inequality is legitimized in a society, what are the determinants of these attitudes in the population (individual level), and how societies differ in the degree of inequality legitimation (context level). Given that legitimation of the distributive system is considered a requisite for the stability of democratic systems and for the maintenance of the society as such, the topic acquires relevance especially in contexts of high income inequality as the ones of the Latin American.

it is possible to define two main areas in the study of empirical justice: the *justice of principles*, where the focus is on the analysis of distributive principles that people support and that predominate in a society (for example, the principles of equality, equity or need), whereas the *justice of rewards* is interested in the perception and evaluation of concrete distributions, usually through the evaluation of the earnings in reference to occupations. Both perspectives are analyzed first in international comparison and then in the particular case of Chile, one of the countries with the highest income inequality worldwide. The analysis is based on data of two comparative research projects: the International Social Justice Project (ISJP), and the International Social Survey Program (ISSP).

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1. Introduction.

This paper is based on research on the transmission and legitimation of inequality from the field of *empirical justice research*. This can be considered a complementary perspective to the traditional inequality research, which focuses on variables such as income, social mobility, and poverty. Empirical justice research, on the other hand, takes into account what people think about the distribution of goods (and bads) in society and especially what they think a *just* distribution would look like (Mason & Kluegel, 2000; Miller, 1992; Wegener, 1999). Taking this aspect into consideration is central to understanding the transmission of income inequalities. If people think that an unequal distribution of goods is fair, inequality will be considered legitimate and may remain stable over time (Castillo, 2007; Della Fave, 1980; J Kluegel & Mason, 2000; Lane, 1986; Martin, 1997; Mueller & Landsman, 2004; Wegener, 1987).

The problem of the legitimation of the distributive system is of particular relevance in Latin America, the region with the highest income inequality in the world. At first glance, it seems contradictory that people living in a society with such high income inequality would consider this kind of distribution legitimate. Nevertheless, it could be also argued that inequality is so stable in this region because there is something else mediating between factual inequality and people's perceptions and beliefs about it. Empirical social justice research focuses on precisely this "something," which is the totality of a population's shared conceptions about distributive justice. This requires us first to call into question the normative assumption that people always consider inequality unjust by definition. This allows us, in a second step, to tackle the problem of what type and/or level of economic inequality is considered fair, what its determinants are, and what its possible consequences might be.

Given the importance of these questions for understanding economic inequalities, it may seem surprising that studies on empirical social justice are scarce in Latin America¹. There are several reasons for this apparent lack. First, this perspective is rather new to social science research even in the industrialized world, and it is only recently being taken up in other societies in the interests of international comparative research. Second, this type of research usually requires the implementation of nationally representative face-to-face interviews, a costly investment for research institutions in developing countries. Third, although there is some data available, public opinion research seeks theory-driven causal explanations for which highly specialized academic capacities are required, and these too are still limited in the developing world.

Recently, Chile and Brazil have participated in several comparative empirical research projects on topics of justice and inequalities, which can be seen as a means to bridge this gap and begin exploring the issue of inequality legitimization in Latin America from an empirical point of view. Such research projects include the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), with data available for Chile and Brazil, and the International Social Justice Project (ISJP), the most specialized survey in this line of research, where for the first time a Latin American country (Chile) was included in its fourth wave in 2006. Using data from these two surveys, the paper is intended to introduce this research area, to illustrate how the legitimization of economic inequalities can be studied empirically, and to propose some future work enabling broader application of this perspective to Latin America.

To achieve these objectives, we structure the paper as follows: first, we introduce the general framework of this study, namely, the relationship between the study of social justice and the research on economic inequalities, where the concept of legitimization plays a major role. The second section deals with the two main research areas in empirical social justice research—justice of principles and justice of rewards—and also offers some empirical findings for Latin America: an analysis of the *justice of principles* comparing

¹ There are some national and regional surveys where items about inequality perception appear, but the content of the items as well as the way of analysis is quite different from the approach of empirical justice research, as it will be presented here.

Chile and Brazil with other countries, and an analysis of the *justice of rewards* in Chile. In the last section, we summarize our major results and address potential avenues of future research on Latin America.

2. Economic inequality and empirical social justice research

Economic inequality is a characteristic of all modern societies that has increased dramatically over the last quarter century (Grusky, 2006). This is a fact confirmed by different statistics from international organizations that have commonly relied on income distribution indexes such as the Gini or on the comparison between different income quintiles or deciles. Based on this information, it is possible to observe not only that income inequality has increased between and within countries, but also that countries from the developing world are constantly leading the income distribution rankings. Modernization theories have outlined different kinds of explanations as well as proposals to deal with this economic phenomenon, ranging from dependence theory approaches to others centered on concepts such as human and social capital. But even beyond these perspectives, which conceive economic inequality mainly as a failure of the political and economic system, one also finds sociological and psychological approaches that attempt to explain how economic inequality is maintained and legitimated in a society.

The study of social inequality is associated with the process of social stratification, with how goods and rewards have been distributed throughout human history, and with the rules that govern this distribution. Lenski summarizes stratification research as answering the question of “who gets what and why” (Lenski, 1966), a question that is central to most classical sociological theories, particularly the class theory of Marx (1932), the elite theory of Mosca (1939/1995) and Pareto (1901/1986), as well as to Parsonian functionalism (Parsons, 1951). One of the central issues addressed by these sociological theories is the contradiction between the predominance of egalitarian distributive values since the Enlightenment on the one hand, and the maintenance of inequality even after the dismantling of traditional government structures and emergence of democratic regimes on the other. If income inequality contradicts the modern ideal of justice, why

does inequality keep existing; why does it remain stable or even increase over time as in the case in some Latin American societies? Control and oppression of the disadvantaged majority is a possible answer, but certainly not enough to account for the relative political stability in contexts where authorities are democratically elected. This leads to the search for possible explanations in what people perceive and believe about economic inequality, and to what extent they support the distributive system.

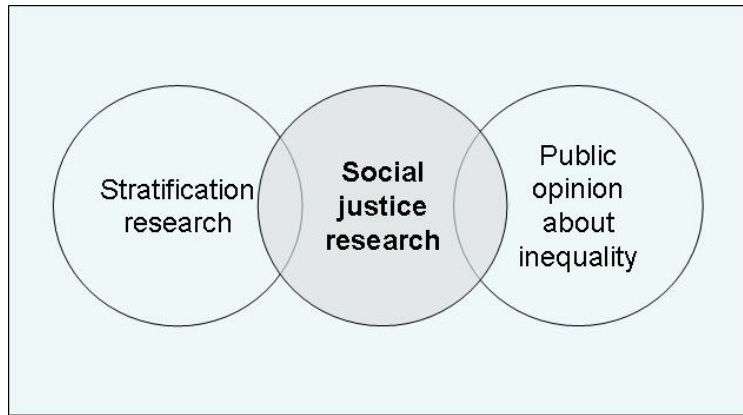
Empirical social justice research is based on this latter perspective². The connotation of *empirical* means that the emphasis is on the use of empirical methods such as public opinion surveys, but it also underlines a basic difference from the traditional normative approach to distributive justice used in political philosophy (Miller, 1992; Page, 2007; Shaw, 2005; Swift, 1999; Swift, Marshall, Burgoyne, & Routh, 1995; Willdt, 2006). This difference lies in the fact that the normative approach deals with philosophical questions of what distributive principles should be considered “just” in a given society, while the empirical approach does not consider what is a “good” or “bad” distribution a priori.

Another characteristic of the sociological branch of empirical justice research distinguishes it from classic public opinion studies on inequality. It is not focused on the *descriptive* aspects of the analysis, but mainly on the *explanation* of perception and beliefs, i.e., their determinants. The relationship of the different fields is illustrated in the following diagram:

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Figure 1. Social justice research, public opinion and stratification

² We restrict ourselves to the field of distributive justice, i.e., the just distribution of material goods and bads in a society.



Social justice research is represented here as a research area that considers public opinion research about inequality as well as stratification variables (such as income, occupation, and education), which are usually incorporated as predictors of public opinion. The origin of this area can actually be traced back to studies based on public opinion surveys that focused on attitudes towards inequality in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States (J. Kluegel & Smith, 1981; J. Kluegel & Smith, 1986; J. R. Kluegel, 1989), and that progressively incorporated stratification variables as possible predictors of variations in public opinion. This perspective is specially represented by the International Social Justice Project (ISJP), a collaborative research study starting in 1991 in which an identical questionnaire focusing on social justice was administered to national representative samples in thirteen countries. The project is characterized by an emphasis on the incorporation of stratification variables, quantitative analysis based on multivariate models, as well as international comparison. The consideration of capitalist and Eastern European post-communist countries offered the possibility of comparing beliefs about distribution in societies with different (and even opposed) economic and political systems. Further replications of the project allowed analysis of the impact of market-oriented reforms on public opinion in Eastern European countries over time, and also of the extent to which the new distributive system was being legitimated in these societies.

Another project carried out in this research period was the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), also a collaborative project that started in 1985 with six western countries. The ISSP is implemented annually but considering different research topics,

where the study of social inequality was surveyed in the years 1987, 1989, and 1999. The questionnaire is more restricted when compared to the ISJP, but it has the advantage that the number of participating countries has grown considerably over the years, reaching more than thirty in the last survey.

Chile and Brazil were included in the ISSP on social inequality in 1999, which offers the possibility of comparing perceptions and beliefs of these two Latin American countries in a broader context, testing, for example, the influence of economic inequality levels on support for the distributive system. Furthermore, in 2006 Chile participated in the ISJP. Thus, the present work is the first attempt to analyze the two datasets focusing on the legitimation and transmission of inequalities in Latin American societies. The analysis will be structured by a basic distinction within social justice research: the justice of principles and the justice of rewards.

3. Justice of principles and justice of rewards: two perspectives for the study of inequality legitimation³

How are justice attitudes organized? Given that justice is a complex concept, it is necessary to distinguish different areas of research that allow us to approach the diversity of meanings that justice can have in public opinion. A basic distinction between different forms of social justice is the one that can be drawn between the justice of principles and the justice of rewards (Wegener, 2001). *Justice of rewards* refers to conceptions about goods distributed to oneself or to other individuals, and is related to judgments such as “it is just that X obtains Y” (where X can be the observer herself or another person). On the other hand, *justice of principles* is related to the rules, practices, and principles by which distributions are made, for instance, “all members of society should receive identical shares,” or “people who work hard deserve to earn more than those who do not.” Both research areas are associated with different theoretical concepts and operationalizations,

³ Justice of principles and justice of rewards are research areas not necessarily restricted to the study of legitimation, but for the objectives of this paper only this aspect is emphasized.

and are therefore described separately in the following, along with an empirical application in each case.

3.1 Justice of principles

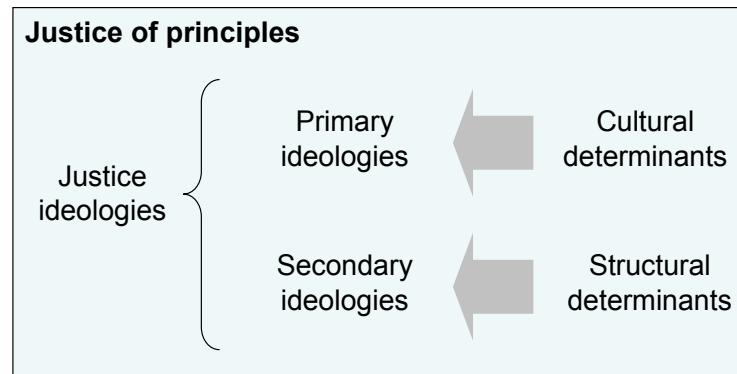
The discussion about what is (or are) the distribution principle(s) that allow a just distribution in society is a longstanding dispute in political philosophy since Aristotle, and that has been characterized as the “equality of what?” debate (Gargarella, 1999; Krebs, 2000; Rawls, 2001; Salvat, 2004; Willdt, 2006). From an empirical point of view, we are not interested in the normative definition of what is the fairest way of distributing goods in society, but in how it is possible to describe public opinion in this regard. Is it possible to identify distributive principles in public opinion? Is there just one distributive principle or are there more? Do groups or societies prefer one principle over the other? And, how can the preferences for different principles be explained? Empirical research over the last twenty years has made possible to address these and other questions based on operationalizations of distributive principles and their posterior analysis in public opinion surveys.

The concept of *justice ideology* is used here to denote the shared ideas about a just distribution in a group or a country. Two of the justice ideologies that frequently appear in the literature are egalitarianism and individualism⁴. For instance, a society could exhibit an egalitarian justice ideology if its members prefer a distribution oriented toward assuring equal shares for all, whereas the justice ideology of individualism is related to an unequal distribution based on individual effort and personal abilities. The existence of different ideologies raises the question of whether societies can be characterized by one or another “dominant” justice ideology, or whether is possible that persons and societies endorse more than one ideology at the same time, referred to as the split consciousness approach (Hochschild, 1981; J. R. Kluegel, 1989; Sennett & Cobb, 1972).

⁴ There are different operationalizations of justice ideologies, as the Grid Group theory that distinguishes four justice ideologies (Douglas, 1982; Liebig & Schlothfeld, 2002; Wegener & Liebig, 1993, 2000; Wegener, Lippl, & Christoph, 2000). As it is not possible to measure all four ideologies with the ISSP we restrict the analysis to the most common two: individualism and egalitarianism.

Empirical evidence has shown that the support of more than one ideology is possible. To explain this, Wegener (1939/1995) proposes the distinction between primary and secondary ideologies (see Fig. 2), where the former are related to cultural factors and are shared by practically all members of society, whereas the latter are supported only by a smaller group of individuals and associated with structural conditions (for instance, people with lower incomes). In this sense, there could be societies where an *individualistic* ideology is the primary one, but also others where an *egalitarian* ideology is the primary ideology.

Figure 2: Primary and secondary justice ideologies



Egalitarianism and individualism are two justice ideologies that have received wide attention in empirical justice research. Given that individualism is an ideology that legitimates inequalities based on personal characteristics viewed as merits or abilities, whereas egalitarianism calls for redistribution, the study of these ideologies appears particularly interesting for the application of justice principles to the Latin American context. The empirical results for Chile and Brazil are presented in the following section.

Justice of principles and legitimation of economic inequality in Chile and Brazil

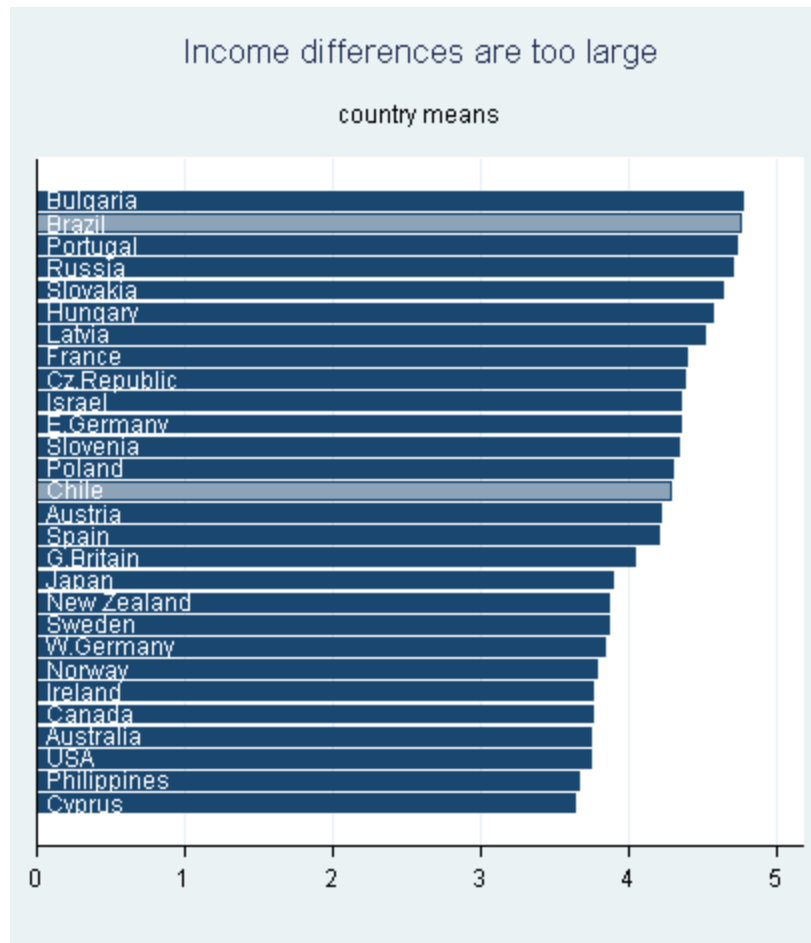
The 1999 International Social Survey Program (ISSP)⁵ focused on public opinion about inequalities, and with this dataset it is possible for the first time to investigate justice

⁵ Data and documentation : www.issp.org

ideologies in Chile and Brazil in a comparative perspective. Given that the justice ideology of individualism legitimates income inequalities, it could be argued that societies with more income inequality would be prone to reject this ideology and to prefer egalitarianism, according to the rational interest of the unprivileged majority. But at the same time, the role of cultural values associated with the market reforms of recent decades in these two Latin American countries can be expected to have an influence on the endorsement of the individualistic justice ideology as well. Legitimation theories argue along precisely these lines, saying that an unequal order relies to a great extent on support from those who are not directly benefiting from the distribution of goods in that society (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost, Blount, Pfeffer, & Hunyady, 2003; Zelditch, 2001a, 2001b).

We start with a descriptive analysis and continue with multivariate regression models. Regarding the descriptive results, we were initially interested in knowing the perceptions and support for income inequality in the ISSP participant countries in order to explore what public opinion in the Latin American countries looks like in comparison. Two questions were asked to explore the perception of inequalities and the support for inequalities. The following graph shows the mean approval to the statement “In [country], income differences are too large”:

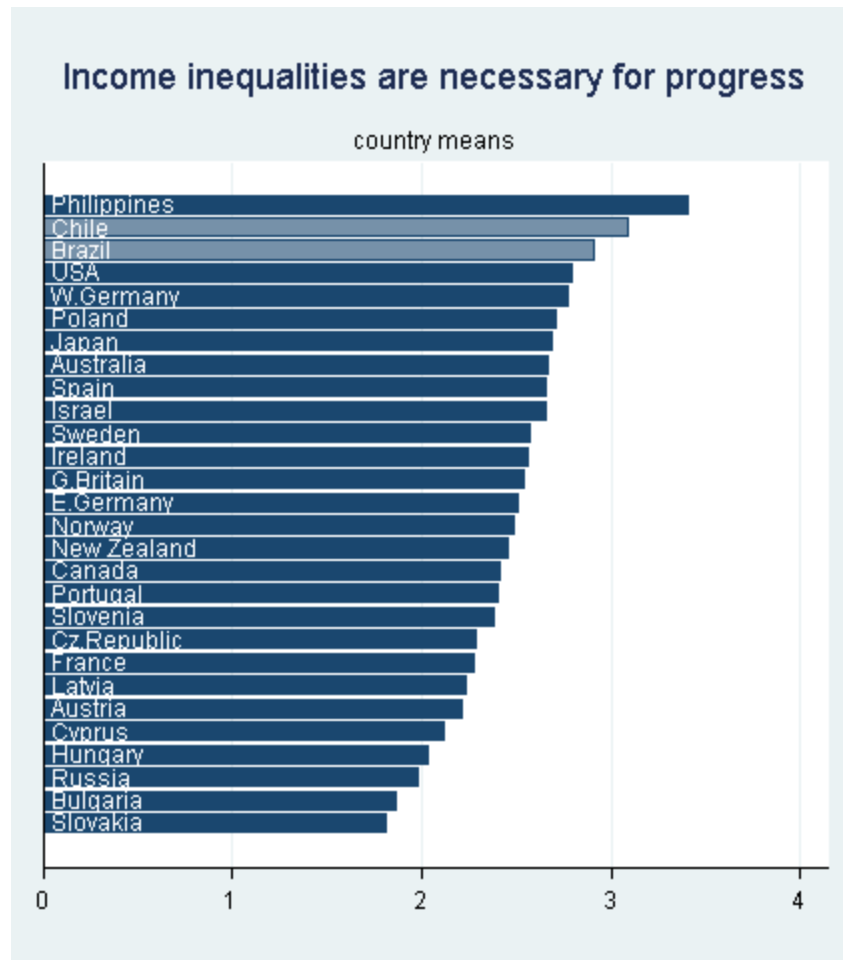
Graph 1 Perceptions of income inequality



Brazilians perceive comparatively high inequality, whereas Chile is close to the group mean. Considering that Brazil and Chile are the two countries in the group with the highest Gini index (see Gini index table in the appendix), it is already possible to see that even though there is a relative high perception of inequalities in these countries, there is not an exact correspondence between the actual level of inequality and the perceptions of the population. This also becomes visible when considering the Philippines and the USA, the two other countries with high inequality indexes that are almost at the bottom of the ranking.

Looking at the support for income inequalities, the country means regarding the statement, “Income inequalities are necessary for [country]’s progress” are presented:

Graph 2: Support of income inequalities.



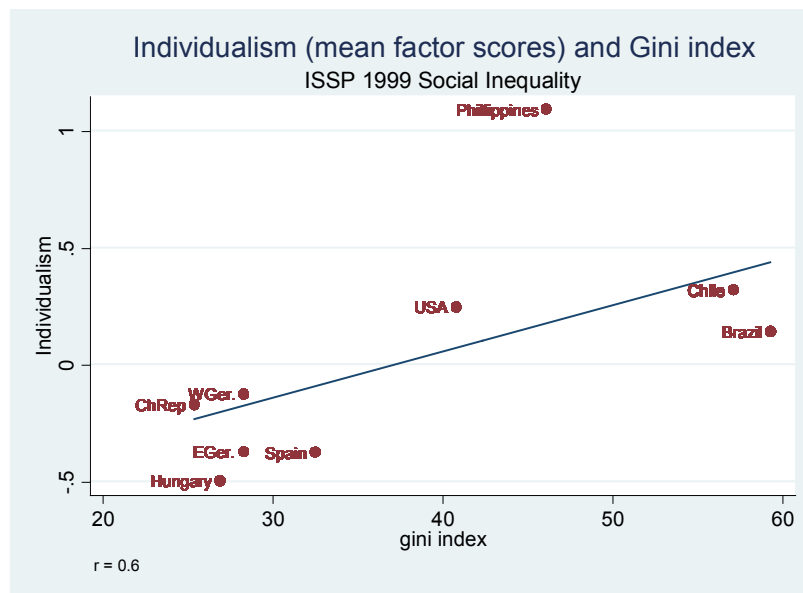
The three developing countries in the analysis (Chile, Brazil, and the Philippines) are actually the ones that most broadly support income inequality. This again alludes to the role of cultural factors in beliefs about inequality, since it is not possible to explain such a result considering only the structural conditions of developing countries. Is this finding rooted in public support for justice ideologies that legitimate inequalities? This question leads us now to a second step in the descriptive analysis that considers the preference for the justice ideologies of individualism and egalitarianism, and its relationship with the income inequality of the countries in question. These two justice ideologies are obtained through a factor analysis⁶ procedure, which is detailed in the appendix.

⁶ From a methodological point of view, the analysis of single items may be flawed by measurement error. In addition it is not possible to measure complex constructs like 'egalitarianism' directly. To circumvent these problems several single items are used to measure the latent construct by means of factor analysis

Along with Chile and Brazil, several specific countries were selected for further comparisons. Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Spain are considered here since they were associated with the ISJP 2006, and this could be related to further analysis comparing the two datasets. The Philippines serve as a benchmark country in the developing world, and finally the USA was also selected as an important point of reference for Latin America as far as market orientation and economic reform is concerned. Some of the main findings are summarized below.⁷

A focus of our analysis is on comparing the countries in support for individualism, the role of income inequality as an explanatory variable, and also the influence of personal income. Initial descriptive results reveal a trend that will be confirmed later by OLS regression analysis with regard to income inequality and support for individualism, as presented in the following graphic:

Graphic 3: Individualism and income inequality

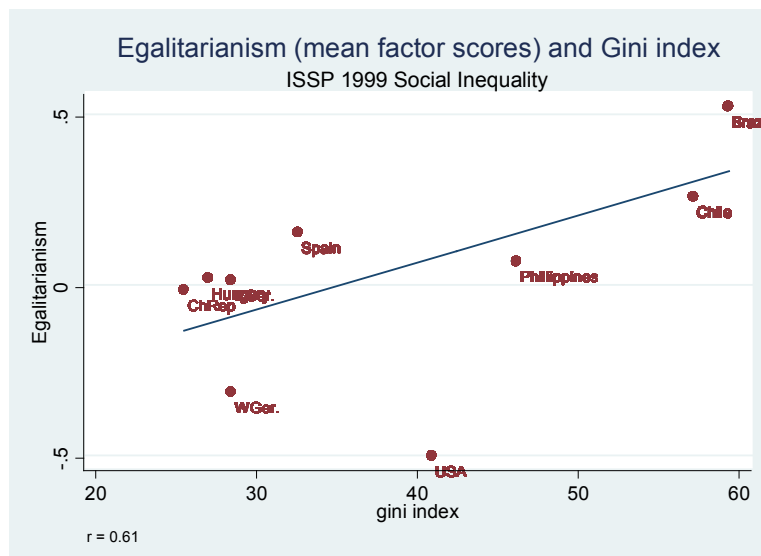


⁷ For a detailed review, see Castillo (2007).

In the graphic, we see a group with low Gini indices and low individualism constituted by the European countries considered in this study. This is consistent with other results in the empirical study on justice ideologies, particularly in comparison with the US, and that is attributed to the role of welfare state regimes in the case of Germany and Spain, and to the cultural effects of the former communist governments in the Eastern European countries (Aalberg, 2003; Gijsberts, 1999). On the other hand, in the US, the state plays a comparatively small role and distributive principles emphasizing individual effort are dominant (Huber & Form, 1973; Lane, 1962). What is actually new in this analysis is the location of the developing countries: the support for individualism in Brazil and Chile is at a similar level as in the US, whereas the Philippines shows the highest support for this ideology. A conclusion would be that as actual income inequalities increase, a comparatively higher level of individualism is found. Given that with the exception of the USA, the countries in this group also have higher poverty indexes, it would be possible to argue in line with previous research that the preference for an individualistic ideology remains relatively unaffected by structural factors such as income inequality.

Looking at the graphic, which shows the results of mean factor scores for egalitarianism and the Gini index, the pattern followed by the developing countries has changed, now bringing them closer to the European nations in this dimension:

Graphic n° 4: Egalitarianism and income inequality.



The extreme value is displayed here by Brazil, which is at the same time the country with the highest economic inequality in the group, followed by Chile. How it is possible that these countries endorse two opposing ideologies? As was mentioned before, people can support diverse ideologies at the same time, given that they are associated with different determinants (cultural and structural). From the structural point of view, it is not surprising that Chile and Brazil show high levels of egalitarianism. At the same time, however, it is important to take into account the role of cultural determinants, which are probably the reason for the counter-intuitive high individualism in these two countries. The term “split consciousness” appears in the literature describing this phenomenon (J. R. Kluegel, 1989; Sennett & Cobb, 1972) where people or societies agree on different and even contradictory principles. In the present analysis, this kind of split consciousness is especially evident in Chile and Brazil.

The second step of the analysis is intended to seek further explanations to the situation presented in the descriptive analysis. We calculated a series of multivariate regression models with individualism and egalitarianism as dependent variables, including income as individual determinant and income inequality as measured by the Gini index as context variable (the details of the measurement of these variables, as well as other control variables included in the model, are presented in the appendix). Two stepwise models are presented for each ideology (table 1): model 1 tests the significance of country differences taking the USA as a reference⁸. A series of structural variables are used in this model, from which personal income is displayed given its meaning as stratification variable at the individual level. Model 2 adds the Gini index to the model, replacing the country dummies as a context variable.

The table shows significant differences regarding the support for individualism as well as egalitarianism. The population in all European countries is less individualistic than in the USA, whereas in Chile and the Philippines they are more individualistic. Brazil does not

⁸ This makes it possible to establish a common pattern of analysis with previous research that typically has considered this country as a reference for individualism

differ significantly from the USA. The people in all countries are significantly more egalitarian than in the US, with Chile and Brazil showing the highest t values, which was within the expected considering the descriptive results. An element to highlight in model 1 is the effect of personal income, which in both cases has a negative significant effect, meaning that people with less income are at the same time more individualistic and more egalitarian – though the effect for egalitarianism is considerably larger. In model 2, income inequality also has an effect with the same direction for both egalitarianism and individualism: the higher the inequality, the higher the individualism and egalitarianism.

Table 1: OLS regression models for the justice ideologies of individualism and egalitarianism.

	Individualism		Egalitarianism	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
USA (ref.)				
West Ger.	-0.32 (6.22)**		0.08 (2.02)*	
East Ger.	-0.62 (8.56)**		0.42 (7.69)**	
Hungary	-0.70 (15.23)**		0.44 (12.71)**	
Czech Rep.	-0.42 (9.86)**		0.41 (12.76)**	
Spain	-0.62 (13.41)**		0.52 (14.98)**	
Phillippines	0.87 (19.55)**		0.46 (14.00)**	
Chile	0.14 (3.02)**		0.58 (17.32)**	
Brasil	-0.07 (1.65)		0.87 (26.21)**	
Income	-0.01 (1.97)*	-0.03 (1.52)	-0.02 (7.01)**	-0.02 (2.91)*
Gini index		0.02 (3.49)**		0.01 (2.65)*
Constant	0.19 (2.68)**	-0.75 (1.80)	-0.18 (3.42)**	0.04 (0.20)
Observations	8173	8173	8173	8173
R-squared	0.24	0.12	0.22	0.15

Unstandarized coefficients Absolute value of t statistics in parentheses - * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

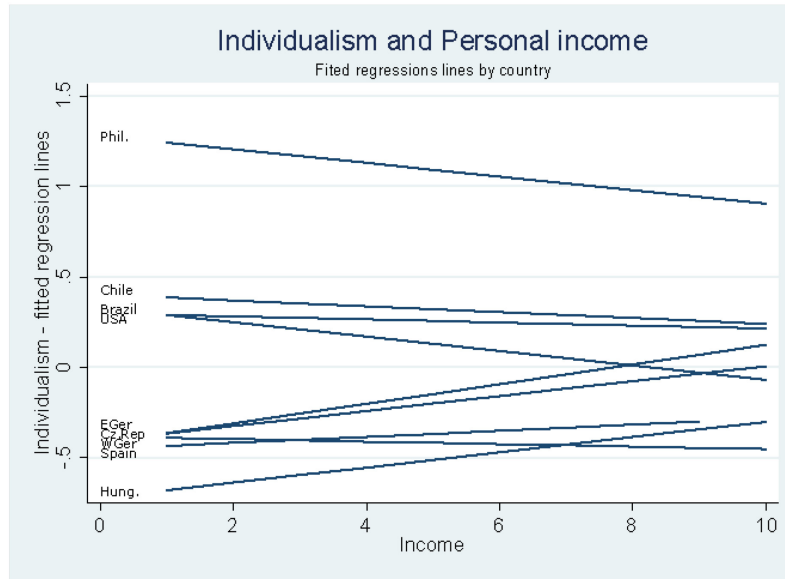
The picture that we have up to now is certainly more complex than the analysis of single items or single dimensions of distributive justice, and shows us that the consideration of

single items or dimensions would not offer a complete representation. This situation is especially intriguing in the case of Chile and Brazil, where the support for two contrasting ideologies is extreme in comparison with other countries in the group. In the case of egalitarianism, the effects can be explained by rational interests associated with structural conditions, which lead people to redistributive demands. Nevertheless, the counter-intuitive effects of individualism require a more detailed analysis, particularly considering that the effect of personal income is not stable in the two models.

Is this effect of income on individualism the same in all the societies considered, or are there particularities that cannot be captured by these models? The question emerges primarily because it is not technically possible to consider both the country variables and the Gini index in an OLS model, given the contextual character of the latter in terms of having one unique value for each country. One possible solution is to calculate a model where the coefficients of the previous models become the dependent variables, and to introduce income inequality as independent variable, which is known as a “slopes as outcomes” model (in the framework of multilevel models)⁹ (Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998). In this case, the justice ideology of individualism is regressed on personal income separately in each society (i.e., the regression coefficients are allowed to vary in each context), and in a second step, the Gini index is incorporated as a predictor of the regression coefficients. The following graph shows the fitted regression lines for each society as a first step of the analysis:

Graphic n°5: Fitted regression lines of individualism on personal income.

⁹ Multilevel Analysis is a technique for the analysis of data where besides an individual level, a “context” level can be distinguished. For instance, in educational research, the individual level of analysis corresponds to the students, and the context level to the schools.



Two groups of countries can be identified in this picture: those with a positive intercept and negative slope, and those with a negative intercept and positive slope¹⁰. Again, the developing countries and the US are members of the same group, characterized by a negative association between personal income and an individualistic ideology, whereas in the second group of European countries, this relationship appears to be exactly the opposite. This result means that for the group composed of societies with high inequality, we find the “legitimation effect” (compliance by those at the bottom of the stratification system), where the lower the income, the higher the support for the individualistic ideology. Secondly, we are going to test the influence of income inequality as predictor of the effect of income on individualism in each context. For this, the two parameters of each regression line (intercept and slope) are regressed on the Gini index, obtaining the following results:

Table 2: Intercepts and slopes regressed on Gini index.

	Individualism on personal income	
	Intercept	Slope
Gini index	0.04 (2.90)**	-0.00 (3.81)**

¹⁰ The only exception is Western Germany, but based on the previous analysis and also given that the value of its slope is close to zero, it will be considered as part of the second group.

Constant	-1.37 (2.77)**	0.09 (3.84)**
Observations	9	9
R-squared	0.54	0.67

Absolute value of t statistics in parentheses - ** significant at 1%

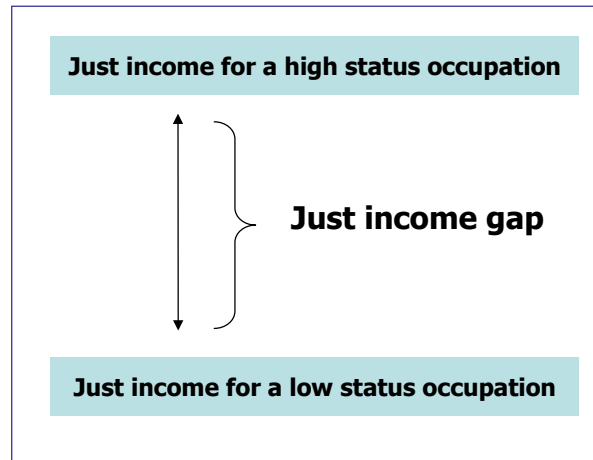
The coefficients show positive and significant effects on the intercept (the more inequality, the greater the differences at the lowest level of personal income), and a significant negative effect on the slope (the higher the economic inequality, the more intense the negative effect of personal income on the justice ideology of individualism). With these last results, it is possible to state that income inequality as context variable has an influence on the legitimization of inequalities, possibly due to cultural elements associated with the countries with high inequality indexes. This result certainly opens up a series of new research questions, such as the influence of the institutional design of the distribution system on public opinion, as well as the extent to which this influence has an impact on cultural values in a particular society. Further analyses are needed to answer these questions, as future comparative studies on justice principles consider more developing countries. Proposals for future studies on this area considering Latin American countries are presented in the last section of this paper. Now we will introduce the second major area of research on empirical justice, namely the justice of rewards.

3.2 Justice of rewards.

How can people's experience of justice/injustice be explored and defined? In contrast to the study of general justice ideologies, the justice of rewards deals with personal perceptions of and experiences with distributive justice in concrete situations. Usually it is thought that what people think about justice is idiosyncratic, meaning that justice experiences are unique to each person—a kind of unexplainable “black box.” Justice of rewards theory argues in the opposite direction, saying that it is possible to formally define people's experience of justice or injustice, and that this definition can be determined or explained. The study of justice of rewards, also called *individual related justice judgments*, is based on the idea that “we make justice judgments in a regular and predetermined way, so that generalizations with regard to these judgments can be formulated in terms of functional relationships” (Wegener & Steinmann, 1995).

In justice of rewards literature, a series of functional relationships have been proposed to determine how people experience injustice with regard to a) their own rewards (reflexive judgments) as well as to b) the rewards of others (non-reflexive judgments). The first perspective has a long tradition in sociology and social psychology, ranging from the equity and exchange perspective (G. Homans, 1961; G. C. Homans, 1976), the status value theory (Berger, Zelditch, Anderson, & Cohen, 1972), to the late developments of the justice evaluation function (Guillermina Jasso, 1978, 1999; G Jasso, 2007; Guillermina Jasso & Wegener, 1997). In the following, we will focus our attention on the second perspective, which deals with justice judgments about others, and more specifically with judgments related to occupational earnings. The consideration of what people think of as a just salary for low-status and high-status occupations allows an empirical approach to the study of the legitimacy of the distributive system, by determining the legitimate amount of income inequality in a society. This research perspective is known as the “justice gap” (Gijsberts, 1999; Lippl, 1999; Verwiebe & Wegener, 2000), and is represented in the following schema:

Fig. 3: Justice gap



The justice gap is considered as the legitimate amount of inequality between high and low-status occupations. This information can be calculated for Chile with data from the ISJP¹¹ survey, which includes questions about the salary that people consider just for two occupations in the extremes of the status continuum: an unskilled worker and a manager of a large company.

Justice of rewards and legitimization of inequality in Chile.

We start with descriptive results, and then turn to multivariate models. In the descriptive results, we calculate the legitimate amount of inequality (justice gap) for Chile, then compare this with the perceived amount of inequality (perceived gap), and furthermore analyze the relationship between both gaps and the income of respondents. The multivariate analysis focuses on the influence of income and the perceived gap on the just gap. In addition we test whether justice ideologies can predict the perceived and the just income gap.

¹¹ Documentation and extensive description: www.isjp.de

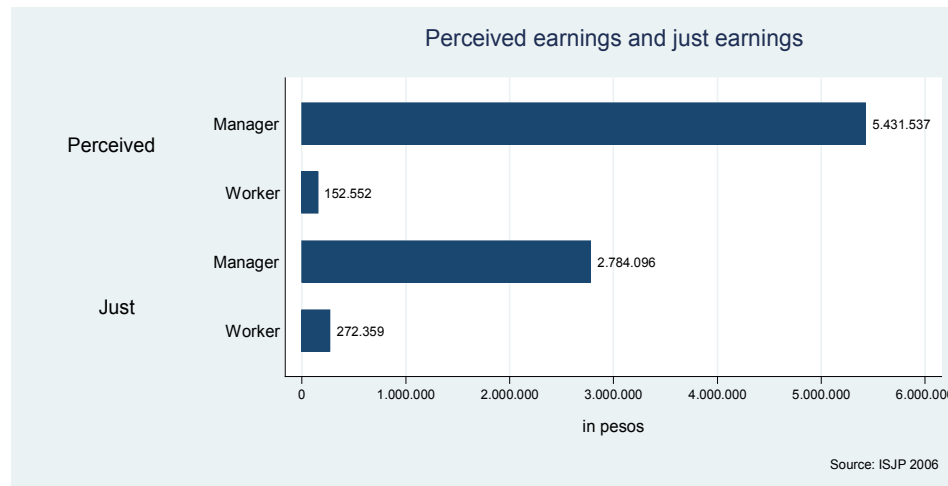
The ISJP questionnaire asks for the actual and the just income of an unskilled worker and manager of a large company. These occupations are used as representations of the upper and the lower ends of the income distribution. The questions are the following:

Table 3: ISJP questions about perceived and just occupational earnings

We would like your estimate of the income that people in some occupations <u>actually</u> earn per month on average. Think about a chairman or managing director of a large corporation and an unskilled manual worker, such as a factory line worker.	
Manager	<p>a) What do you think a chairman or managing director of a large corporation earns per month on average? Your best guess will be fine.</p> <p>b) Now tell me what you think a <u>just and fair</u> average monthly income for a chairman or managing director of a large corporation would be</p>
Worker	<p>a) And how about an unskilled manual worker, such as a factory line worker? What do you think an unskilled manual worker earns per month on average?</p> <p>b) Now tell me what you think a <u>just and fair</u> average monthly income would be for an unskilled worker, such as a factory line worker.</p>

Questions (a) capture the respondents' estimates of the actually earned salaries. The ratio of these items (manager/worker) is conceived as the *perceived gap*. Questions (b) are used to calculate the *just gap* also as an earnings ratio. It reflects the legitimate amount of inequality regarding high and low-status occupations. The following graphic shows the means of the single items:

Graphic 6: Mean perceived and just earnings



Starting off with the comparison of perceived and just salaries, there is a clear “tendency to equalize” the earnings, since the just income gap is considerably smaller than the perceived income gap. Similar results have been found in other empirical studies (Gijssberts, 1999; Kelley & Evans, 1993). Note that the proportions of increase or decrease in the salaries of the manager and the worker are different: while the just salary for a worker is on average 78% higher than the perceived income, in the case of the manager, a just salary should be decreased by 49%. This could mean that there is a greater feeling of injustice regarding the earnings of the low-status occupation. The direct evaluation of both salaries confirms this interpretation as shown in the following table. Almost 42% of those interviewed think that the perceived salary of the manager is what he/she deserves:

Table 4: Evaluation of actual incomes of manager and worker (percentages)

	Much less	Somewhat less	About deserved	Somewhat more	Much more	Total
Manager	3.30	2.73	41.98	13.65	38.34	100.00
Worker	68.18	19.71	11.10	0.68	0.34	100.00

Source: ISJP 2006. Answers to the question regarding perceived earnings: Do you think this is much less than a managing director /worker deserves to earn, somewhat less than deserved, about what is deserved, somewhat more than deserved, or much more than deserved? The original scale ranges from -5 to +5 and it has been recoded here in 5 categories.

Taking a look at the perceived and just earnings ratios, we have the following results:

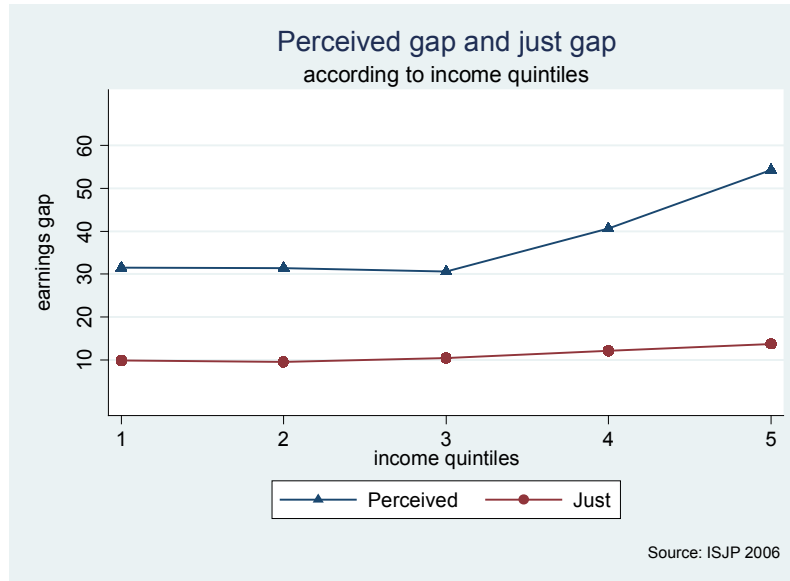
Table 5: Perceived and just ratios

Ratios		
Perceived gap	Manager income / worker income	35.6
Just gap	Manager income / worker income	11.28

On average the perceived actual income of a manager is 35.6 times higher than that of an unskilled worker, whereas the proportion evaluated as just is about 11.3. Though the perceived income inequalities by far exceed the just income inequalities, people in Chile would clearly not support complete equality of earnings.

What is the influence of stratification variables? Do people from different status groups perceive a similar gap and consider it just? From a rational perspective, one would expect that low-status groups would call for a greater reduction of economic inequalities and thus for a smaller justice gap. Taking the income quintiles as a proxy status variable, the following graphic shows a comparison of the perceived gap and the just gap:

Graphic 7: Comparison of perceived and just gap

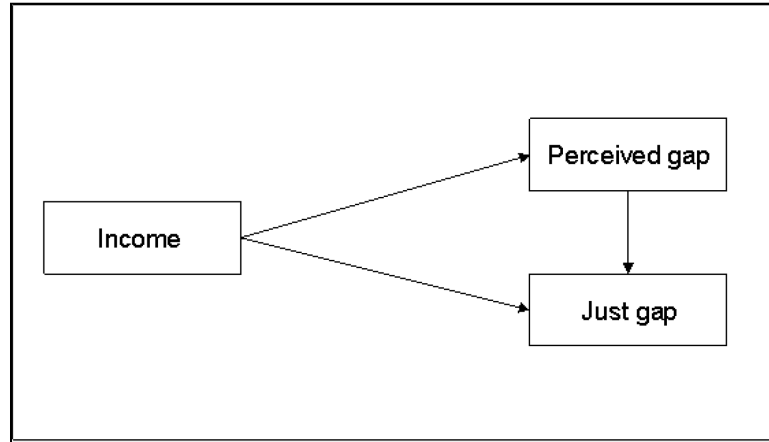


The main differences are found with regard to perceptions. People of higher income groups perceive a clearly wider gap. One explanation is that they have access to more information about high-salaried employees than lower-income respondents, causing them to enlarge the subjectively perceived gap. Another, social-psychological explanation is that people perceive the income distribution in a way that makes them feel better. Members of the lower social strata “shorten the entire social order continuum subjectively” (Wegener, 1987, p.5) whereas members of the higher social strata expand the income distribution, phenomenon described as the “illusion of distributive justice”. Regarding the just gap, there is more consensus among income groups. This result is central for the research on inequality legitimization, since if low status groups share with high status groups the idea of what a just gap should be, then there is an overall consensus in society about distribution of earnings, despite the different structural determinants that affect low-status groups. In the literature, this is referred to as “loyal opposition” (Linz & Stepan, 1978) or compliance among those who do not benefit from the distribution system.

Now we will test whether the differences between status groups regarding the perceived and the just gap are statistically significant. We will test a structural equation model with

income as predictor of the perceived and the just gap, and at the same time with the perceived gap as predictor of the just gap, as is represented in the following figure:

Figure 4: Path Model



Regressing the just gap on the perceived gap allows us to test whether the effect of income on the just gap is mediated by what people perceive about earnings inequalities.

Table 5 shows the results:

Table 6: Path coefficients

	Model 1 Perceived gap	Model 2 Just gap	Model 3 Just gap
Income	0.16** (3.24)	0.12** (2.94)	0.050 (1.419)
Perceived gap			0.455** (16.27)
	0.04	0.04	0.31

Standardized coefficients. ML estimation. N° obs: 660, t-values in parenthesis, *p<.05, **p<.01. Control variables (not presented): age, sex, education, unemployment.

As expected from the descriptive results, income has a significant effect on the perceived as well as on the just gap. The higher the income, the more the perceived inequality (Model 1), and the larger the inequality considered just (Model 2). In Model 3, the perceived gap is included as predictor of the just gap. It has a strong and significant effect and thus mediates the influence of income. We can conclude that beyond the income

differences, individual perceptions are the crucial factor determining what people consider just income inequalities.

As for the justice of principles, our results show the importance of a comprehensive analysis of justice attitudes. Had we only considered income and the just income gap, we would have reached the conclusion that people with lower incomes call for a greater reduction of income inequalities.

Finally, we combined the justice of principles with the justice of rewards approach to investigate the role of value orientations for the justice gap. We expect that individualism is accompanied by a preference for a wider justice gap, whereas egalitarianism leads to disapproval of income inequalities. Individualism and egalitarianism were integrated into the previous model as follows:

Figure5: Structural equation model

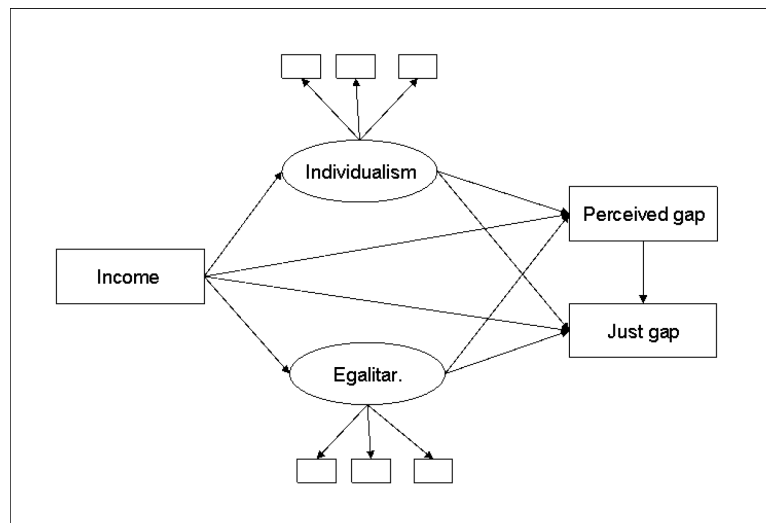


Table 7: Structural equation model

	Egalitarianism	Individualism	Perc. gap	Just gap
Income	-0.15* (-2.45)	-0.09 (-1.46)	0.16** (3.08)	0.04 (1.21)
Egalitarianism			-0.09	-0.15**

			(-1.59)	(-3.81)
Individualism			0.05	0.097**
			(0.90)	(2.78)
Per. gap				0.44 **
				(18.32)
R ²	0.02	0.03	0.05	0.34
Model fit				
X ² : 44.899* df(28), P-Value= 0.02				
CFI: 0.97				
RMSEA: 0.031				

Standardized coefficients. WLSMV estimation. N° obs: 648, t-values in parenthesis,
*p<.05, **p<.01. Control variables (not listed): age, sex, education, unemployment.

The two ideologies are latent constructs that are measured by several single items using a confirmatory factor analysis (see appendix). The results for the structural equation model are presented in Table 6. Individualism and egalitarianism affect the just income gap in the way predicted. We do not find a significant effect on the perceived gap. The coefficients of income and the perceived gap remain stable when compared to the previous models. What people think about a just earnings distribution influences their evaluation of income inequalities. Justice ideologies offer rationales for the legitimation or delegitimation of inequalities. As basic and stable value orientations (Mühleck, 2008; Mühleck & Wegener, 2008), they determine to a certain extent the income inequalities considered as just in a society. Recall that income does not exercise a significant effect on individualism (in contrast to egalitarianism). The former is widely supported by different status groups and seems to be a predominant cultural value in Chile. The relative consensus on income inequalities among Chileans reflects their consensus on individualistic distribution principles.

4. Conclusions and Proposals.

The justice of principles and the justice of rewards are two research perspectives that allow for a more comprehensive picture of the legitimation and transmission of inequalities. As discussed in the introduction, we are interested in something that lies between actual inequalities and their stability and legitimation, and we proposed that this *something* has to do with people's conceptions about the distribution of goods and

rewards in society. Empirical justice research offers concepts like justice ideologies and justice evaluations that can measure these conceptions and are well founded on theoretical and empirical research.

Our analysis of the **justice of principles** in Chile and Brazil leads to similar but seemingly contradictory results for the two countries: a widespread acceptance of inequality and market principles goes hand in hand with the desire and support for government intervention. In both countries, people feel that income differences are too large. At the same time, the Chilean and Brazilian populations show extraordinarily high acceptance for income inequality as necessary for progress. Together with the Philippines and the US, Chile and Brazil show the highest support for individualism—the ideological foundation of a market economy. But egalitarianism, i.e., government intervention to achieve greater equality, is also highly approved of in the latter two countries. We conclude that in both Chile and Brazil, people do support the values underlying market economy and are willing to accept some hardship in the interests of economic development. Nevertheless, they are worried about the flaws of this process and would favor more equality-oriented policies. The inconsistencies of this position remain unconscious. From a social scientific point of view, both perspectives have to be taken into account to obtain a more complete picture of public opinion regarding distributive issues. The relatively widespread individualistic attitudes in Brazil and even more so in Chile are one explanation why the persisting inequality in both countries does not destabilize the current political system. Development policies have to consider people's desire for a more equal distribution as well the shared belief on market principles and individual effort.

The concept of the **justice of rewards** offers the possibility to quantify the amount of inequality considered as just in a society. Regressions of income gaps on the respondent's income have shown the importance of perceptual processes: the lower income groups perceive a considerably lower income gap than the higher income groups. This yields another explanation for the relatively minor consequences of the high inequality in Chile: the lower social strata appear not to be aware *how* badly off they are comparatively. On

the other hand, this points to the necessity of educational measures among these social groups. Regarding the just income gap, a relatively broad consensus among income groups is evidenced. Even though Chileans agree that the actual income gap is too large with regard to social justice, one might conclude that income inequalities are not very likely to be a source of harsh social conflict between the different social strata. Such a conclusion should be drawn with caution: those who are better off may agree on the unfairness of inequalities but may nevertheless be reluctant to support extensive redistribution.

A proposal for future empirical justice research in Latin America is certainly conditioned by the availability of data and the potential for research initiatives associated with it. In our view, the major problem is not the lack of data, however, but the capacities to take advantage of it. This is exemplified by the ISSP of 1999. So far, the research has only scratched the surface of the possibilities that this dataset has to offer for international comparison of Chile and Brazil. Although the survey is no longer up to date, analyses incorporating more context variables such as inequality and poverty indexes can still be conducted. The use of analysis techniques like multi-level models would allow a more precise modeling of these context factors, which can be included as predictors for justice attitudes. Questions to be answered in this regard are, for instance: Do countries with higher income inequalities prefer a larger income gap? Is one particular evaluation of income inequalities characteristic for Latin America as a whole? Do countries differ in the influence of the perceived gap on the just gap? And, does the effect of justice ideologies differ in countries with less inequality?

The results obtained from the ISJP in Chile are not considered representative for Latin America, but they can certainly be considered as a sort of “pilot” study that can be subsequently applied in other countries of the region, hopefully in the framework of an international comparison (such as the inclusion of some ISJP batteries in the Latinobarometro). This would offer the possibility to compare the effects of cultural and structural differences on justice attitudes between countries, for instance, to analyse variations in the support for justice ideologies in different countries and the legitimization

and stability of the economic and the political system as a consequence of this support. Furthermore, there are other topics in empirical social justice research that are still to be analysed with the Chilean ISJP, such as attitudes towards poverty and wealth, income evaluation and satisfaction, and also the consequences of justice attitudes and perceptions of injustice. Current research about these consequences has established a strong link between perceived injustice, regime support, and voting behavior (Mühleck, 2008), an area that directly affects political stability and legitimation.

Finally, it is necessary to strengthen the link to stratification and mobility research on the side of the predictors of justice attitudes. Are, for instance, mobility patterns associated with different justice conceptions? Are the consequences of social mobility the same in different Latin American countries? Or are the interrelations the same as in developed countries and, if not, how can differences be explained? To answer these and other questions, more specific datasets are required that will permit a combination of stratification research and social justice research. This link is an aspect that is just beginning to be explored in social research on Latin America. The present study, however, already suggests that the ongoing consideration of justice conceptions represents a valuable contribution to the study of the legitimation and stability of inequalities.

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Appendix

Country Gini indexes

Gini Index	
USA	0,40
West Ger.	0,28
East Ger.	0,28
Hungary	0,26
Czech Rep.	0,25
Spain	0,32
Philippines	0,46
Chile	0,57
Brazil	0,59

Source UNDP (2001)

ISSP items related to individualism and egalitarianism

Individualism	It is just or unjust – right or wrong – that people with higher income can:
---------------	---

- Buy better health care than people with lower incomes?
- Buy better education for their children than people with lower incomes?

Egalitarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes• People with high incomes should pay a larger share of their income in taxes than those with low incomes• People in wealthy countries should make an additional contribution to help people in poor countries
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Note: all items were recoded to the following scale: 5=strongly agree; 4= agree; 3= neither agree or disagree; 2= disagree; 1=strongly disagree

Independent and control Variables for Justice of Principles study

Income	1 - 10 deciles of personal income
Independent variables	
Income	1 - 10 (low-high) deciles of personal income
Self rated position	10 point scale: 1= low social standing, 10= high social standing
UnemployedSelf rated position	Dummy (Unemployed= 1, ref: other occupational status)10 point scale: 1= low social standing, 10= high social standing.
Gini Index	Economic Inequality Gini Index of each country (UNDP, 2001). See appendix for details).
Control variables	
Age	Respondent's age in years
Sex	Dummy (Women= 1, ref: man)
Age	Respondent's age in years
Univ.	CASMIN 1: reference category
DegreeEducational level	CASMIN 2: dummy CASMIN 3: dummy
Religion	Dummy (1= Catholic, 0= other religions)
Church attendanceUnemployed	Frequency of church attendance 6=once a week; 5= two or three times a month; 4=once a month; 3=several times a year; 2= less frequently; 1= never Dummy (Unemployed= 1)
Political right	Dummy right= 1 (ref 0= other political preferences)

Factor Structure of Individualism and Egalitarianism(Justice of principles, ISSP data)¹²

Variable	Individualism	Egalitarianism	Uniqueness
Egalitarianism: government redistribution	-0.18649	0.57395	0.63580
Egalitarianism: higher taxes	-0.07369	0.43083	0.80895
Egalitarianism: contribution to poor countries	0.06205	0.50838	0.73770
Individualism: buy better health	0.92593	0.00863	0.14258
Individualism: buy better education	0.87294	0.02955	0.23711
Eigenvalue	1.891	1.465	

Maximum likelihood method, varimax rotation

LR test: independent vs. saturated: $\chi^2(10) = 3.8e+04$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.0000$

Measurement model of individualism and egalitarianism (Justice of rewards, ISJP data)

Item	Egalitarianism	Individualism	u2
The government should place an upper limit on the amount of money any one person can make.	0,51	0,12	0,69
The fairest way of distributing wealth and income would be to give everyone equal shares.	0,52	-0,03	0,72
Government should redistribute income from the better-off to those who are less well-off.	0,68	-	0,54
People who work hard deserve to earn more than those who do not.	-	0,45	0,79
The responsibility held by the employee on the job should influence pay	-	0,69	0,52
The employee's individual effort should influence pay	-	0,79	0,37

Model fit

χ^2 : 10.584, df(5), P-Value: .0,0601.

CFI: 0.992

RMSEA: 0.036

CFA, WLSMV estimation. Standardized coefficients. Obs: 864

¹² The factor structures were replicated in each of the countries considered for this analysis and they are relatively stable.