

A Literature review of Chinese people's perceptions of Distributive Fairness

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Abstract: In recent years, with the Chinese society into the transition period, a series of Social group events caused by unfair distribution happened frequently. The Chinese public doubts about the equitable distribution seems to have increased. "The Chinese public feel that the distribution system is fair or not" the issue has aroused widespread concern from all walks of life, including scholars. With the slowdown in China's economic development, the introduction of multiple values of freedom, "What are the sources of Chinese people's perceptions of Distributive Fairness in contemporary China?" This issue has also attracted the attention of academia. This paper aims to make a brief analysis of the Perceptions of Distributive Fairness of Chinese people. Based on the two theories of "Structural Determinism Theory" and "Local Comparative Theory", this paper also makes a brief analysis of the sources of Distributive fairness in China.

Keywords: Perceptions of Distributive Fairness, Structural Determinism Theory, Local Comparative Theory.

I. Introduction

In recent years, the social equity problems frequently sparked heated debate, it is not only a hot issue in the field of social group events, it is also an important guarantee for China to achieve steady flat smooth transition in the social transition period. China is currently in a period of social transition, in the special stage of economic slowdown and social problems are highlighted, especially the violent conflict between social development and individual interests, resulting in the gap between the rich and the poor, the general public has led to a sense of unfair and then triggering a crisis of confidence in the government. Therefore, Chinese public perception of fairness, especially the fairness of income distribution on their own feelings, in the transition period must be paid enough attention today.

II. The Presentation of Fairness, Distributive Fairness and Perception of Distributive Fairness

"Fairness" is the objective fact state of the distribution of interests, and also involves the subjective judgment of the rationality of the distribution of resources. Since Friedman [1] put the fair into the outcome fairness and opportunity fairness, for the individual, "Fairness" can be regarded as the result of individual perception of outcome fairness and procedural fairness, and gradually become the two important criteria to judge whether the society is fair or not.

Based on the theory of social exchange, the outcome fairness is based on the absolute quantity of individual harvest result as the judgment criterion of fair perception. Procedural fairness, however, focuses more on the fairness of the process setting and how much the individual do in the process [2] can.

Distributive fairness aims at studying whether the conditions that affects the welfare of individuals and whether the distribution of goods is fair or not, and the fair distribution of outcome and procedural is two important aspects of it [3].

The perception of distributive fairness, from the perspective of individual subjective cognition, can be defined as the subjective judgment, evaluation and attitude of the individual to the distribution of social resources [4].

From the two dimension of the perception of distributive fairness, it can also be defined as the people's perception of the fairness of the "outcome" and "opportunities" and the degree of fairness in its distribution. Among them, the "the perception of outcome fairness" is aimed at the distribution of income, wealth and other social resources, reflecting the subjective perception of whether the income distribution results are fair or not. And "the perception of opportunities fairness" has a more basic significance, it involves narrowing the gap with others, reflecting

whether the public's subjective perception of upward mobility is a fair one.

III.A Summary of the sources of the perception of distributive fairness in China-----Structural Determinism Theory or Local Comparative Theory?

Structural Determinism Theory

There are two main sources of the perception of distributive fairness: "Structural Determinism Theory" and "Local comparative theory". "Structural determinism theory" means that people's perception of distributive fairness is determined by their objective economic status. The higher objective economic class is more inclined to think that the current income distribution is fair. The class with lower objective economic status is more inclined to believe that the current distribution is unfair and that income and wealth should be transferred from the rich to the poor [5].

"Self-interest theory" also points out that the individual is self-centered; therefore the individual's perception of distributive fairness depends on their income from the current distribution system. The higher economic status of the individual is to benefit in the current distribution, they tend to think that the current income distribution is fair [6].

Chen Yingfang further believes that the personal objective economic status is determined by the institutional arrangement and social structure in the macroscopic level, and if the macro system or the government policies limit the current distribution system, it will lead to personal distribution at a disadvantage[8]. In this aspect, the subjective perception and evaluation of institutional and policy factors, not only affect the individual's perception of distributive fairness, but also influence their political attitude.

Sun Ming [9] believes that in the context of today's market-oriented distribution of income, the social classes with different degree of mercerization also have different views on distributive fairness. The economically dominant social strata tend to adopt the principle of due in the distribution of income, but the lower social strata are more inclined to the "average principle" in the distribution of income.

Local Comparative Theory

"Structural determinism theory" has not been verified in later empirical studies.

Study on Martin King Whyte [10] found that compared to the objective economic low status groups, such as farmers, those groups occupy the advantage in the objective economic status, such as city residents but hold a stronger sense of distributive unfairness. On this basis, the "Local Comparative Theory" believes that the

individual's perception of distributive fairness of, is not decided by the objective economic status, but depends on the subjective social and economic status of the individual.

The individual can perceive the fairness of the distribution by comparing them with their own past life experiences and by comparing them with the reference groups around themselves [11]. Merton's theory of "reference group" reveals that the key factor that determines the individual's distributive sense of fairness is the local comparison of individuals based on their own living environment by analyzing the operating mechanism of relative deprivation.

And the perception of distributive fairness based on deprivation is more prominent in China. Because when the formation of social relations, the public in China relies more on interpersonal closeness of the pattern of difference sequence. That is people's social relationship in China is a circle structure usually based on the "self-centered", blood relationship, geographical relationships and industry relationship. Therefore, this "self relative deprivation" has a stronger effect on the Chinese public's distributive sense of fairness.

According to the two sources of perception of distributive fairness, the academia at present has verified and compared the two theories through extensive empirical research. A series of studies basically denied the applicability of "Structural Determinism Theory" to the distribution of fairness, and generally accepted the mechanism of "Local comparative theory".

Some studies on the distribution sense of migrant workers found that "Structural Determinism Theory" and "Local comparative theory" are not the decisive factors influencing the migrant workers' perception of distributive fairness. The migrant workers' living experience is the key factor affecting their perceptions of distributive fairness [12].

From the reality of China's transitional period, the perception of public distribution is a barometer of the value of social fairness. The perception of individual's distribution fairness not only affects its attitudes and behavior, but also has a close relationship with the public's trust in the government.

IV. The Present Situation and Research Significance of the perception of distributive fairness in China

Fairness, as the demand of economic interests between different stakeholders, is also a criterion of value for individuals [13]. From the point of view of government administration, the United Nations clearly regards "Fairness" as one of the characteristics of

judging whether governments implement "good governance", it shows the "fairness" in the Contemporary Significance. At present, in the transition period, the contradiction between the distribution of individual interests and the macroeconomic development in China, as a whole, is actually a matter of fairness in income distribution. From the direct reflection of the Gini coefficient -- an important coefficient of the fairness of income distribution, according to the national income Gini coefficient in 2013-2015 China published by the National Bureau of statistics, the income Gini coefficient was 0.473,0.469,0.462 respectively, are higher than the internationally recognized warning line 0.4. The fact that China's Gini coefficient has stood high for many years shows that economic development has not brought about a decline in the income distribution gap, but the income distribution gap has continued to rise over the next period of time. The long-term high Gini coefficient, to some extent, shows that the problem of unfairness, especially the unfair distribution of income and the widening gap between the rich and the poor, has become an important factor that restricts the upgrading and transformation of China's society. And fairness as an important factor of political trust, whether the government is fair or not directly affects the public's confidence in the government and the degree of trust in the government. As far as China is concerned, after enjoying the convenience of sustained economic development, the squeal of the rapid economic development has begun to emerge in this special historical stage of the transition period, a series of social problems and mass incidents caused by unfair distribution have begun to impact on the political trust in China for a long time. Research on the trust crisis of local government in, Zoo Yuen emphasized the government trust crisis caused by the unfair system or unjust policy of the government, is one of the main categories of the current local government trust crisis Chinese[14].

Should be more alert, caused by the unfair distribution of the status of people's sense of fairness is very strong on the political trust degree of erosion, even the excellent performance of "Performance based political trust" once proud also began to show signs of fatigue. Some studies have pointed out that economic development itself is not enough to appease people's discontent, but more likely to arouse the rural residents' sense of unfairness and criticism [15]. Another study found even in the area of high per capita GDP in China, individual sense a large gap between rich and poor, to feel its income distribution is not fair, he will tend not to trust the government [16].

Therefore, compared to the regional economic development, the individual perception and judgment of Fairness seems to have a stronger explanatory power of

political trust in China. Li Jun, through empirical research, put forward that the perception of distributive fairness is more urgent than distribution problems in reality on political and social stability in China [16]. Based on this, the public's distributive sense of unfair has become an important factor restricting the further upgrading of Chinese society; the study on the public's perception of distributive fair has become more and more important in the present China.

V. Conclusion

This paper briefly reviews the present situation of distributive fairness and public's perception of distributive fairness in China. In terms of the sources of the perceptions of distributive fairness, the Chinese public's distributive sense of fairness is influenced by both "Structural Determinism Theory" and "Local Comparative Theory". At the same time, compared with the influence of structural factors on individual's perception of distributive fairness, A series of studies generally accepted that "Local comparative theory" has more explanatory power in influencing individual's perception of distributive fairness.

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