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The experience of social mobility and the formation of attitudes toward redistribution

Alexander Schmidt
Research Training Group SOCLIFE
University of Cologne

GK SOCLIFE is a Research Training Group associated to the Cologne Graduate School in Management, Economics and Social Sciences, University of Cologne

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Abstract

The study aims to explain the genesis of attitudes toward redistribution by applying the theory of causal attribution to the phenomenon of subjective social mobility. The paper asks two questions: (1.) Are attitudes toward income redistribution affected by the subjective experience of social mobility, and, (2.) how are these effects moderated by cultural contexts? These questions refer to a potential long-term feedback process between a welfare state's success in providing equal opportunities and individual attitudes toward welfare state actions. The hypotheses are tested with a multilevel design based on 21 countries and three time-points using international survey data from the ISSP (International Social Survey Programme). The results suggest that the experience of downward mobility leads to an increase in the support for redistribution. Furthermore, a negative effect of upward mobility could be identified for the population of men. These effects are independent of the indirect mobility effects that are due to changes in vertical positions within the society. The analysis demonstrates that the individual effect of being upwardly mobile is moderated by the cultural context. In particular, the analysis suggests that the negative effect of upward mobility is amplified in strongly individualistic countries, while it is weakened in collectivistic countries.

Introduction

Previous research demonstrated that beliefs about the causes of *social mobility* are related to attitudes toward income redistribution (Linos and West, 2003; Fong, 2001). In societies where people believe that internal factors are responsible for an individual's success, people tend to be less supportive of income redistribution because they believe in *equality of opportunity* and, thus, favor the *equity principle*. In societies where people believe that external factors are responsible for an individual's success, people tend to be more supportive of income redistribution because they do not believe in *equality of opportunity* and favor the *equality principle*.

The following study contributes to this research through an investigation into the effects of the individual experience of social mobility. The basic idea is that it is not only the general *beliefs about* social mobility but also the *experience of* social mobility that affect an individual's justice beliefs. Individuals are assumed to attribute their own mobility either to internal or to external causes. As a result of these attribution processes, individuals' justice beliefs and, in turn, their attitudes toward redistribution should change.

Social mobility has always been a major theme in social science and is directly linked to the important ethical question of *equality of opportunity*. In the field of comparative welfare state analysis, social mobility has gained relatively little attention. The question of whether the experience of social mobility affects attitudes toward redistribution refers to a potential long-term feedback process between a welfare state's success in providing equal opportunities and the development of policy preferences.

The idea of social mobility as a determinant of (political) attitudes was already formulated during the earliest days of the social sciences (compare Tocqueville, 1835). However, attempts to demonstrate direct effects of social mobility have generally failed. In the end, many researchers concluded that none of the expected consequences of social mobility were existent (Treimann, 1966; Herz, 1976; Turner, 1992; Kelley, 1992; Marshall and Firth, 1999; Paterson, 2008). So, why study social mobility effects, again?

Most theoretical considerations regarding the effects of social mobility implicitly assume that these effects operate through the perception of individuals. In this sense, an effect of social mobility on attitudes might occur only when the individuals are aware of their mobility (Lipset, 1992; Duru-Bellat and Kieffer, 2008; Kelley and Kelley, 2009). Hence, the reason for the nonexistence of social mobility effects in previous research might simply be that the usual measures of social mobility do not reflect the subjective reality of the individuals. As the theoretical model introduced in the next section is explicitly based on the assumption that individuals recognize their mobility, a measurement of *subjective* (intergenerational status) mobility is used in the following analysis.

The measure captures the subjective difference between the respondents' and their fathers' status. About 15 to 30 percent of the population feel that they have a lower status than their fathers. Between 20 to 40 percent of the people do not see a difference

between their own and their fathers' status, and about 30 to 60 percent feel that they have moved upward. On the macro level, this distribution nearly reflects the distribution of objective mobility observed in the sample. However, on the individual level, there is no perfect relationship between subjective and objective mobility. Using objective status mobility as a reference, 20 to 25 percent of the population make significant mistakes when evaluating their own mobility: They may feel upwardly mobile when they really are downwardly mobile or vice versa. It is exactly this difference between subjective and objective reality that makes the argumentation above worth to be tested.

The article makes two contributions. First, it contributes to the field of comparative welfare state research, particularly, to the explanation of attitudes toward redistribution. Second, the article demonstrates that effects of social mobility are present if the individuals are subjectively aware of their mobility. This finding might stimulate a discussion about the construct of social mobility as it is used in social science.

Theoretical Considerations

The literature on welfare state attitudes considers a variety of factors that influence public support for income redistribution. One determinant of attitudes toward redistribution discussed across all disciplines is *self-interest*. The analysis of self-interest as a determining factor of welfare state attitudes relies on a rational-choice approach. The basic assumption underlying this research is that individuals will act in a way that maximizes their utility (for instance, Andress and Heien, 2001; Blekesaune, 2007; Rehm, 2009). Other commonly discussed factors influencing welfare state attitudes are norms, values, and social beliefs (for an overview, see Larsen, 2006). Both factors, economic self-interest and (ideological) value orientations, can be seen as causal determinants of welfare state attitudes (Jæger, 2006).

The welfare state regime theory points out that welfare states are clustered into different "worlds of welfare capitalism" (Esping-Andersen, 1990). These welfare regimes result from the history of class coalitions and are characterized by their institutional settings. The formal institutional settings continuously (re-)produce their own ideological settings. In other words, justice beliefs are to a fairly high degree collective beliefs resulting from the logic of solidarity within a given welfare system (Mau, 2004; Sabbagh and Vanhuysse, 2006).

Social mobility as a determining factor of attitudes toward redistribution has been discussed within the self-interest approach and within classical sociological approaches focusing on values, beliefs, and ideologies. In theory, social mobility is linked to attitudes toward redistribution by different mechanisms. First, mobile individuals change their relative position within the vertical stratification of a society. As pointed out by Meltzer and Richard (1981), this position is directly linked to their self-interest. Consequently, an individual's upward or downward shift is accompanied by an adjustment of his or her

attitudes as they relate to self-interest. This effect, however, might be called an indirect mobility effect, because it results from the change in the vertical position rather than from the movement as such.

Second, the experience of social mobility, as well as general beliefs about mobility chances, might affect the prospectus of future mobility. The expected future mobility of individuals influences their self-interest in an intertemporal sense (Alesina and Ferrara, 2005; Rehm, 2009; Piketty, 1995). In economics, the so-called POUM hypothesis (Prospectus Of Upward Mobility) deals with this particular phenomenon (Benabou and Ok, 2001). The general idea underlying this research is that individuals follow their long-term interest rather than their immediate self-interest. Individuals at the top of the income distribution can favor redistribution to ensure themselves against future losses in income. Conversely, individuals at the bottom of the income distribution do not have to favor income redistribution if they expect a future increase in their income.

Third, effects of social mobility on values and attitudes, in particular political orientations, have been discussed from a classical sociological perspective. Individuals who have experienced (intergenerational) social mobility usually take an intermediate position between the typical ideological orientation of their current class position and the typical orientation of their parents' class (Thompson, 1971; Boy, 1980; Abramson, 1973; Turner, 1992). This phenomenon can be explained through theories of socialization. Again, this effect might be called an indirect effect of social mobility, because it results from an individual's current and former class positions and not from the movement as such.

The evidence from sociological studies clearly demonstrates that individuals are not strictly rational. In contrast, people hold the values that they adapted during their socialization. If individuals were strictly rational, one would expect that the current income position, and expected changes in this position, would be the only determinants of attitudes to redistribution. In fact, self-interest can explain a relatively small proportion of attitudes toward income redistribution, while value orientations can explain a fairly high share of these attitudes (Fong, 2001).

The purpose of this paper is to provide an explanation for a direct effect of social mobility. In contrast to the socialization-oriented approaches, the theoretical model introduced in the next sections claims that subjective social mobility has an effect that is independent of the current and former position. The proposed explanation also relies on a value-oriented approach. The basic idea is that the experience of social mobility, due to causal attribution, affects justice beliefs, which, in turn, influence attitudes toward redistribution. A similar hypothesis was tested by Wegener (1991), who showed that justice judgments about an individual's own income are affected by the experience of job mobility.

The next section () provides an overview of the two concepts of *justice beliefs* and *causal attribution* and describes how these concepts are related to attitudes towards income redistribution. The following section then discusses the effects of *social mobility* on

causal attribution. Finally, section introduces a theoretical model that combines micro- and macro-level approaches. This model is used to deduce the hypotheses for the empirical analysis.

Justice Beliefs and Causal Attribution - A Macro Perspective

Unquestionably, fairness is an important factor in the process of attitude formation. Individuals tend to act and judge according to their justice beliefs (Bolton and Ockenfels, 2000; Guth et al., 2003; Alesina and Angeletos, 2005; Biniossek and Fetchenhauer, 2007). Attitudes toward income redistribution depend on justice beliefs, in particular (for empirical evidence, see Andress and Heien, 2001; Shirazi and Biel, 2005; Sabbagh and Vanhuysse, 2006; Larsen, 2006). Justice, however, is not a universally defined concept; social beliefs about what is just differ between individuals and cultures.

Deutsch (1975) introduced the well-known triad of justice principles: *equality*, *equity*, and *need*. Hochschild (1981) argued that these justice principles can be ordered on a continuum from perfect equality to perfect differentiation. A preference for (perfect) differentiation corresponds with refusing any redistribution and would result in an income distribution that directly reflects the differences in individuals' efforts, abilities, and contributions (equity principle). A preference for (perfect) equality goes along with high support for income redistribution and would result in a perfectly equal income distribution (equality principle).

The saliency of different justice principles, in turn, is closely related to norms of causal attribution (Kluegel and Smith, 1986). Following the justice theory of Rawls (1971), people will perceive economic inequality as fair if they believe that (1.) economic inequality reflects the inequality in individual contributions and that (2.) individuals are responsible for their economic success or failure (internal attribution). On the other hand, people will perceive economic inequality as unfair if they believe that the economic success or failure of an individual is due to factors outside the control of the individuals (Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Gilens, 1999; Fong, 2001). Thus, cultural norms of internal attribution are generally associated with low levels of support for income redistribution, while high levels of support are found in cultures with a norm of external attribution (for empirical evidence see Kreidl, 2000; Sabbagh and Vanhuysse, 2006; Larsen, 2006).

This seems to be true especially for beliefs about the fairness of the stratification process (equality of opportunity). Linos and West (2003) investigated beliefs about the determinants of social mobility. They were able to demonstrate a strong relationship between the degree of internal and external explanations for social mobility and the level of support for redistribution. In particular, Linos and West (2003) showed that the strength of these effects varies between different welfare states. However, the presented statistical relationships are substantially (in their direction) identical. To summarize, the support for income redistribution is a negative function of the perceived responsibility that

individuals can take for their own destiny: The stronger the belief in a direct connection of effort and outcome (internal attribution), the lower the support for income redistribution, and vice versa.

These beliefs vary between different societies due to cultural characteristics. In cross-cultural psychology, the terms *individualism* and *collectivism* are used to describe the end points of a continuum that is one of the basic dimensions of culture. This dimension describes a culture's general perspective of the nature of and the relation between individuals and society. Hofstede (2001: 76) defines individualism and collectivism as follows:

> "*Individualism* pertains to *societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism* as its opposite pertains to *societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty."* (A.S.: Emphasis in the original text)

The degree of individualism in a culture has a number of far-reaching consequences for individuals (Oyserman and Lee, 2008). In particular, attribution norms are affected by a culture's degree of individualism (Carpenter, 2000; Sabbagh and Vanhuysse, 2006). The social belief that individuals are responsible for their economic success is shared in individualistic societies, while the social belief that the society, an external factor, is responsible for an individual's economic success is shared in collectivistic cultures. The prototype of an individualistic country is the United States, where people jointly belief that everybody can rise from "rags to riches." In the following sections, the labels individualistic (internal attribution) and collectivistic (external attribution) will be used to refer to attribution norms as a cultural characteristic.

Social Mobility and Causal Attribution - A Micro Perspective

Now, keeping the former arguments in mind, the potential effects of social mobility will be discussed. The concept of social mobility used in this analysis refers to *intergenerational status mobility*. This means that social mobility is defined by comparing an individual's current social status (*destination*) with the social status of the individual's parents (*origin*). Individuals are upwardly mobile if their occupational status is higher than the occupational status of their parents was, and vice versa.

The theory of *intra*-personal causal attribution is concerned with the question of how individuals explain their *own* success or failure. In contrast to *inter*-personal causal attribution, *intra*-personal attribution results from individual experience and not from social beliefs that are shared among the social environment. The basic theory of intra-personal attribution claims that individuals tend to attribute success to their own dispositions, while they are likely to blame failure on external factors (Kelley, 1967). This phenomenon

is often called the *self-serving bias* (Miller and Ross, 1975). Individuals who have experienced social mobility are expected to attribute their success or failure to either internal or external factors. The general idea is that these individuals will generalize their experience. Applying the theory of intra-personal causal attribution, then, leads to the following general conclusions:

First, upwardly mobile individuals should attribute their success to their own effort (or any other internal disposition). As a result, they should be more supportive of the idea that individuals are, in general, responsible for their own success or failure. Thus, the experience of upward mobility should decrease the support for income redistribution (similar arguments by Wegener and Liebig, 1995; Kluegel and Smith, 1986). Second, downwardly mobile individuals should attribute their failure to external factors (for example, capitalism). Consequently, they should be more supportive of the idea that, in general, individuals cannot be blamed for their economic failure. Hence, the experience of downward mobility should increase support for income redistribution.

These hypotheses have to be modified with respect to gender. First, we generally find differences in the support for redistribution between men and women. Second, empirical research shows that women are less likely to attribute internally. Shirazi and Biel (2005: 100) examined gender and country differences in social beliefs about causes of poverty. They found that women are less likely to attribute poverty to internal factors (to blame the poor for their situation).

The same is true for intra-personal attribution. Women are less likely to attribute their own success to internal dispositions than men are (Deaux and Farris, 1977; Sweeney et al., 1982; Shirazi and Biel, 2005). Durante and Putterman (2009) showed in an experimental study that individuals are less supportive of redistribution if the initial distribution is determined according to task performance. This effect is very strong for men but is less so for women. Because the expected effect of social mobility is due to the attribution mode resulting from the experience of social mobility, this evidence must be taken into account. If women are less likely to attribute their own success to internal dispositions, one would expect a significantly weaker (or nonexistent) effect of upward mobility on the support for income redistribution.

To summarize, the basic idea of this study is that the saliency of a certain attribution mode, which an individual applies to evaluate questions of distributive justice, is affected not only by social norms of attribution but also by the individual's own experience. These two effects are likely to interact with each other. The next section introduces a model that takes the interaction between individual experience and cultural context into account.

A Micro-Macro-Model of Causal Attribution

So far, two forms of causal attribution processes, and their likely effects on the support for income redistribution, have been discussed. Given the two forms of causal attribution, a

3×2 matrix can be used to describe the basic framework of the model (see table 1). The letters *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, *e*, and *f* are used as indicators for the expected effects on the support for income redistribution in each of the cells. The cells *c* and *d* are not of direct interest from the theoretical perspective but are used as reference points. The level of the support for income redistribution is much higher in collectivistic countries than in individualistic countries. Hence, it is expected that in general, $c<d$.

However, the question of interest is whether the effects of social mobility can be expected to be independent of the cultural context. Looking at the cells *a*, *b*, *e*, and *f*, one can see that individuals can be in two fundamentally different situations: Either the attribution mode resulting from the individual's experience is identical to the attribution mode resulting from the cultural context (*a*, *f*), or the two modes of attribution contradict each other (*b*, *e*). The experience of downward mobility in an individualistic country such as the United States, would result in an external explanation, but the social norm of attribution suggests that internal factors are responsible for an individual's fate. In collectivistic cultures, the social norm of attribution suggests that external factors are responsible for economic success and failure; thus, the experience of upward mobility would also result in a situation where individual experience and cultural norms contradict each other.

Table 1: A Two-Level Causal Attribution Model

	Cultural Context	
Individual Experience	Individualistic	Collectivistic
Upward Mobility (internal attribution)	a	b
No Mobility (no attribution)	c	d
Downward Mobility (external attribution)	e	f

Research in the field of cross-cultural psychology as well as sociological research into value orientations can provide helpful evidence on the relationship between intra-personal attribution and cultural characteristics. First, it has been demonstrated that especially in individualistic countries, people are likely to attribute their own economic success to internal dispositions, while they explain their own economic failure externally, regardless of the contrary national ideology (Kreidl, 2000).[1] In a comparison between the United States and Asia, which can be seen as prototypes of an individualistic and collectivistic culture, Yan and Gaier (1994: 154) found that the degree of individualism is strongly associated with the self-serving bias (for further evidence, see Heine and Hamamura, 2007). The tendency to attribute one's own success to internal factors is much weaker in the Asian culture than it is in the United States culture (also see Chandler et al., 1981; Smith et al., 1990).

Second, Kreidl (2000) demonstrated that economic success is associated with a number of negative ascriptions (such as dishonesty) in post-communist countries. Almost all post-

communist countries are located near the collectivistic endpoint of the individualism-collectivism continuum. In these societies, economically successful people are confronted with a strong normative pressure to "share the fruits of their success."

Considering both arguments, one can conclude that the tendency to explain one's own success internally is strengthened in individualistic cultures, while it is weakened in collectivistic cultures. Due to the negative ascriptions associated with wealth in collectivistic cultures, this should be especially true for economic success (upward mobility). Thus, an interaction between the degree of individualism and the effect of upward mobility is hypothesized. In particular, an individualistic context is expected to amplify the upward mobility effect, while a collectivistic context is expected to suppress the upward mobility effect (for a similar argument, compare Kreidl, 2000: 157). The effect of downward mobility should be independent of the cultural context. Formally, the expected pattern can be written as:

$$a<c<e \text{ and } b<d<f \text{ , with } c<d \text{ and } (c-a)>(d-b).$$

Considering cultural and gender differences, the expected effects can be summarized in the following two hypotheses:

H 1. Upwardly mobile individuals should attribute their success to their own effort (or any other internal disposition). As a result, they should be more supportive of the idea that individuals are, in general, responsible for their own success or failure. Thus, upward mobility is expected to decrease the support for income redistribution. The effect is expected to increase according to the degree of individualism. Additionally, this effect is expected to be weaker for women than for men.

H 2. Downwardly mobile individuals should attribute their failure to external factors. Consequently, they should be more supportive of the idea that, in general, individuals cannot be blamed for their economic failure. Hence, downward mobility should increase the support for income redistribution, regardless of gender and cultural contexts.

Data and Methods

The empirical analysis is based on a pooled dataset of the three ISSP waves on "Social Inequality" (1987, 1992, and 1999). The individual observations are nested within time (waves) and within countries. This data structure is very common in social science. Most researchers apply multilevel models with individuals nested in time (waves or years) and time nested in countries. These model specifications implicitly assume that the measurements at a given time point t are independent between countries. This is true only if no global trends affect the dependent variable in all countries simultaneously.

As it seems reasonable to assume that the development of policy preferences depends (to some extent) on global developments, it is probably not completely independent between countries. Simple nested models can yield incorrect inference statistics if the assumption of independent clusters is violated. An alternative to the usually applied nested model with three levels is a so-called cross-classified model, which takes into account that the measurements at a given time point t are not independent between countries (Hox, 2002; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2005). In this section, an appropriate model for cross-classified data will be introduced, and the operationalization of variables will be discussed.

Methods

Cross-classified models allow each unit to belong to potentially any combination of higher-level clusters. In a cross-classified model, the nesting structure is not hierarchical. Instead, the units are nested within two different level-two levels (years and countries). An appropriate model must include a separate random effect for each of the level-two units.

This model has the following form:

$$y_{i(jt)} = \beta_0 + \beta'_k X'_{ki(jt)} + \zeta_{1j} + \zeta_{2t} + \epsilon_{i(jt)}$$

where X' is a vector of k explaining variables with k estimated coefficients (β'_k). Furthermore, i indicates the level-one units (individuals), j indicates the countries, and t indicates the time points. The subscripts j and t are written between parentheses to indicate that they are conceptually at the same level (compare Hox, 2002: 125). Finally, ζ_{1j} denotes the residual variance on the country level, and ζ_{2t} denotes the residual variance on the time level.[2]

The analysis of social mobility effects faces a number of particular methodological problems. To estimate an unbiased effect of social mobility, one has to control for origin and destination. Otherwise, the estimated effect would strongly depend on the omitted variable (Duncan, 1966). This is because origin and destination have substantial effects on their own. The social background of an individual (origin) affects basic values due to the process of socialization. The current living situation, of course, affects an individual's attitudes as well and is, in particular, related to his or her self-interest.

Hence, it is necessary to control for the effects of origin and destination to derive a social mobility effect that captures only the variance that is due to the movement as such. A whole class of specific models was developed to deal with the problem of perfect collinearity that arises with the investigation of social mobility effects (Sobel, 1981, 1985; Yamaguchi, 2002). However, the following analysis is concerned with subjective social mobility and can, therefore, ignore the problem of collinearity. Nevertheless, to derive

unbiased results, it is especially important to include the measure of social mobility and the measurements of origin and destination simultaneously.

Data

All variables used in the analysis have been collected using identical wording in all waves. Table A.1 (in the appendix) shows the number of observations used in the analysis and (in brackets) the total number of observations for each country-time point. Altogether, 28,151 individual observations from 21 countries and 3 time points are available for the multivariate analysis. West and East Germany are treated separately to take the different historical background into account. Individuals who never had a job are not in the sample population because their occupational status cannot be measured. If an individual's father had no job, the observation is excluded from the analysis as well, because it is not possible to compute the social status of the respondent's father.

26 percent of the sample population cannot be used in the analysis because of missing values on single variables. This relatively high number of missing values results primarily from the need to measure occupations - in particular, the respondents' fathers' occupations. On average, 80-90 percent of these missing values result from the difficulties that respondents have in providing detailed information about their own or their fathers' occupations. One can doubt that these missings are missing at random (MAR). Therefore, the results of the analysis can hardly be used to infer population parameters. However, the purpose of this paper is to offer a theoretical model and to empirically test the presence of the hypothesized mechanism. In comparison to other studies, the percentage of missing values lies within an acceptable range.

Microlevel Variables: *Support for income redistribution*, the dependent variable of the analysis, is measured with an index of two items (Cronbach's alpha=.71):

- "It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes"
- "Income differences in [Respondent's country] are too large"

The answer categories for both items are: *Strongly agree*, *agree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. The correlations of these two items indicated a (nearly) identical relationship in all countries. Thus, a one-dimensional index is an adequate operationalization. The index measures support for income redistribution positively (the variable's value increases as the support for income redistribution increases).

Subjective social mobility, the independent variable, is operationalized by an item that was designed to measure the *subjective* experience of *intergenerational status mobility*:

- "Please think of your present job (or your last one if you don't have one now). If you compare this job with the job your father had when you were [14/15/16], would you say that the level or status of your job is (or was)..."
  - "...Much higher than your father's"
  - "...Higher"
  - "...About equal"
  - "...Lower"
  - "...Much lower than your father's"
  - "...I never had a job"
  - "...I don't know what my father did/father never had a job/never knew father/father dead"

As mentioned above, the analysis of social mobility effects must take origin and destination into account to derive unbiased results. As subjective social mobility is measured with respect to intergenerational status mobility, origin and destination should be controlled with a measurement of the *occupational status* of the respondents and their fathers. Therefore, the ISEI score (International Socio-Economic Index) for the respondent's current (or last) occupation and the ISEI score for the respondent's father's occupation at the time the respondent was 14, 15, or 16[3] is used to measure origin and destination (for information on the International Socio-Economic Index, see Ganzeboom et al., 1992; Ganzeboom and Treiman, 1996).[4]

Using the concept of social status instead of a categorical class concept has two methodological advantages. First, the social status concept ensures comparability across countries and across time (Inkeles and Rossi, 1996). Second, the ISEI scale is designed as a continuous and unidimensional variable which results in much more parsimonious models. A third advantage of the ISEI scale is that it reflects the vertical stratification of a society. Because a comparable measure of income is not available in the data, the ISEI score of the respondent's current occupation serves also as a variable controlling for self-interest.

As social mobility is measured with respect to the subjective experience of mobility while origin and destination are measured as "hard" variables, the question of the relation between both measures arises. Figure A.2 (in the appendix) shows the association of the variables *subjective social mobility* and *objective social mobility* (the difference in the respondent's ISEI score and the ISEI score of the respondent's father). Obviously, there is a clear association of subjective and objective social mobility. Most of the respondents are able to assess their mobility correctly. Some respondents, however, are not able to assess their status mobility correctly (about 20 percent make mistakes). It is exactly this fact that bring into play the argument that only people who are aware of their mobility experience social mobility effects.

Education is measured in years. To achieve comparability between the countries, the variable was recoded to a maximum of 18. The *employment status* is measured by

a variable with three categories: *employed*, *not in labor force*, and *unemployed*. The category *employed* includes full-time and part-time employees and self-employed people.

Macrolevel Variables: There are different attempts to measure the theoretical construct of Individualism-Collectivism. One of the most common indicators is the *Individualism Index* (IDV) by Geert Hofstede (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005).[5] The IDV was originally developed in a comparative study of employees' work values and has been used to explain cultural differences in various fields (Schimmack et al., 2005). In the following analysis, the IDV will be used to control for variations in the *level* (intercept) of support for income redistribution. To underline the theoretical argumentation, the *interaction* (slope) between the social norm of attribution and the individual experience of social mobility will be estimated using a direct measurement of the *attribution norm*. This measure was derived from two items of the cumulated World Values Survey (WVS):

- "Now I'd like you to tell me your views on various issues. How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can chose any number in between."
  - "In the long run, hard work usually brings a better life" [1]
  - "Hard work doesn't generally bring success - it's more a matter of luck and connections" [10]
- "Why, in your opinion, are there people in this country who live in need? Here are two opinions: Which comes closest to your view?"
  - "Poor because of laziness and lack of will power"
  - "Poor because of an unfair society"

The index was constructed in two steps. First, the country-means of each item were calculated. Some countries had missing values on one of the items (Austria, Switzerland, Israel, Portugal, and France). To fill these missing values, a conditional mean imputation was performed. Therefore, the means of the items were calculated for different welfare regimes (extended typology, Arts and Gelissen 2002). These (conditional) means were used to impute the missing values. Second, a standardized index of the two values for each country was calculated (Cronbach's alpha=.859). The variable *attribution norm* increases with the degree of internal explanations for economic success. The comparative analysis of welfare state attitudes requires to control for the level of wealth in a country. To ensure comparability across time and across countries, the wealth of a country is controlled by the variable *real GDP per capita* (in US$, PPP). The information was taken from the Human Development Reports of the United Nations (1991, 1995, 2001). To give an indicator of collinearity problems, table A.2 (in the appendix) shows the correlations of all variables used in the multivariate analysis.

Results

Table 2 presents the results of a series of multilevel random effects models. The models are estimated for men and women separately to avoid a three-way interaction effect and to account for general differences in the determinants of attitudes toward redistribution. The estimated models include random intercepts and fixed slopes. The models M_1 and M_5 are ANOVA models. The models M_2 and M_6 include the set of dummy variables for social mobility as well as the necessarily included variables that control for origin (*ISEI father*) and destination (*ISEI*). Next, the models M_3 and M_7 include a series of micro-level control variables. Finally, the models M_4 and M_8 include macro-level variables and cross-level interaction effects.

Table 2: Multi-Level Models of Support for Redistribution (M_1 - M_8)

	Men				Women			
	M_1	M_2	M_3	M_4	M_5	M_6	M_7	M_8
Individual Level Variables								
Subjective Mobility								
Strongly upward		-0.054 **	-0.052 **	-0.048 *		-0.007	0.004	0.005
Upward		-0.020	-0.021	-0.021		-0.006	0.000	0.000
Non mobile		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.		Ref.	Ref.	.Ref.
Downward		0.060 **	0.068 **	0.066 **		0.044 *	0.045 **	0.046 **
Strongly downward		0.140 ***	0.139 ***	0.137 ***		0.084 **	0.087 ***	0.088 ***
ISEI		-0.145 ***	-0.118 ***	-0.119 ***		-0.089 ***	-0.070 ***	-0.071 ***
ISEI father		-0.085 ***	-0.065 ***	-0.064 ***		-0.071 ***	-0.059 ***	-0.059 ***
Employment Status								
Unemployed			0.189 ***	0.189 ***			0.127 ***	0.128 ***
Non working			0.055 **	0.056 **			0.038 *	0.038 *
Working			Ref.	Ref.			Ref.	.Ref.
Education (years)			-0.069 ***	-0.068 ***			-0.041 ***	-0.038 ***
Age			0.040 ***	0.041 ***			0.020 **	0.021 **
Country Level Variables and Cross-Level Interactions								
Attribution norm				-.053				-0.078
*strongly upward				-.047 *				0.001
*upward				-0.013				-0.000
IDV				-0.168 ***				-0.154 ***
Real GDP/C				-0.097				-0.090
Constant	-0.063	-0.067	-0.082	-0.113	0.073	0.064	0.046	0.020
Variance Parameters								
Wave (Var)	0.005 ***	0.006 ***	0.007 ***	0.006 ***	0.006 ***	0.007 ***	0.007 ***	0.007 ***
Country (Var)	0.127 ***	0.100 ***	0.098 ***	0.033 ***	0.099 ***	0.088 ***	0.087 ***	0.027 ***
Individual (Var)	0.737 ***	0.700 ***	0.692 ***	0.692 ***	0.590 ***	0.576 ***	0.573 ***	0.573 ***
N	14309	14309	14309	14309	13842	13842	13842	13842
AIC	36344	35619	35470	35453	32097	31755	31699	31685
BIC	36374	35695	35576	35597	32127	31830	31804	31829

Notes: *p<.02, **p<.01, ***p<.001, (one-sided tests), all continuous variables z-standardized.

Source: ISSP 1987, 1992, 1999, own calculations with STATA (unweighted data).

First, the regression models for the population of men (M_1 to M_4) will be discussed. The intra-class correlation coefficients of the ANOVA model (M_1) are: $\rho_{country}$=.146 and ρ_{wave}=.006. Thus, about 15 percent of the variance in support for income redistribution is accounted for by country differences. The variance component for the different time points is almost zero. All estimated effects in model M_2 have the expected direction. The experience of downward social mobility leads to an increase in the support for income redistribution. The experience of upward social mobility, in contrast, leads to a decrease

in the support for income redistribution. As the ISEI score of the current position is also included in model M_2, these effects are independent of the vertical position and the social background. However, the negative effect of upward mobility is significant only for the group of individuals that feel strongly upwardly mobile.

The variables accounting for the effects of origin and destination have, as well, the expected direction. The higher the social status of the respondent (destination) and the higher the social status of the respondent's father (origin), the lower the support for redistribution. The effects are strongly robust against the inclusion of further control variables in model M_3. The final model for men (M_4) includes the country-level variables *real GDP/C*, *attribution norm*, *IDV*, and a cross-level interaction between *attribution norm* and *upward mobility*. This interaction accounts for the expected difference in the effect of upward mobility between countries that have a norm of internal attribution (individualistic) and countries with a norm of external attribution (collectivistic).

Because the variable *attribution norm* is standardized, the effect of (*strong*) *upward mobility* in model M_4 is the conditional effect for countries with an average attribution norm (neither internal nor external). This effect is significantly negative. The negative interaction effect between the norm of internal attribution and *strong upward mobility* indicates that the negative effect of upward mobility increases with increasing norms of internal attribution. The conditional effect of strong upward mobility in countries that have a norm of internal attribution is -.136. The conditional p-value for this effect is <.001 (*attribution norm* = max [=1.89, value of the USA]). Thus, the stronger the norm of internal attribution in a country, the stronger the negative effect of upward mobility on the support for income redistribution. The conditional effect of strong upward mobility in countries that have a norm of external attribution is -.0001 and not significantly different from zero (*attribution norm* = min [=-1.02, value of East Germany]).

Hence, the expected "counter-effect" of collectivism against the effect of upward mobility is indeed present. The model identifies a significantly negative effect of upward mobility in countries with an average norm of internal attribution. This effect increases with the strength of internal attribution norms. In countries with a norm of external attribution, the effect becomes insignificant. Thus, the model confirms the hypothesis concerning the effect of upward mobility for the population of men. Actually, the negative effect of strong upward mobility can be completely outweighed in collectivistic societies.

The effect of downward mobility does not vary significantly between individualistic and collectivistic societies.[6] Thus, the hypothesis concerning the effect of downward mobility can be confirmed as well. A difference in the mean level of support for redistribution is modeled with the variable *IDV* (Individualism Index). The strongly negative effect reflects the expected lower level in the support for income redistribution in individualistic countries. In comparison to the ANOVA model, the variance component on the country level is reduced by 74.0 percent. The variance component on the individual level is reduced by 6.1 percent.

Table 3: Predicted Support for Redistribution

Individual Experience	**Men**		**Women**	
	Ind.	Coll.	Ind.	Coll.
Upward Mobility (internal attribution)	-.602***	.342	-.354	.471
No Mobility (no attribution)	-.462(Ref.)	.340(Ref.)	-.360(Ref.)	.467(Ref.)
Downward Mobility (external attribution)	-.324***	.477***	-.272***	.555***

Notes: Predictions are based on the models M_4 (for men) and M_8 (for women). Predicted values are calculated for *strongly* upward/downward mobile individuals which are *working*; all other individual level variables are set to their mean. Individualistic countries: Attribution norm = max *and* IDV = max; collectivistic countries: Attribution norm = min *and* IDV = min. The stars indicate the levels of significance for the differences between the values in the cells and the values for no mobility (Ref.); with ***p<.001, (one-sided tests).

Secondly, the models for women (M_5 - M_8) will be discussed and compared to the models for men. The intra-class correlation coefficients of the ANOVA model (M_5) are: $\rho_{country}$=.142 and ρ_{wave}=.008. Model M_6 introduces the variables of interest as well as the variables accounting for the effects of origin and destination. Downward mobility has a significantly positive effect on the support for income redistribution. The effect is weaker, as it is for the population of men, but the relation between the effects of strong downward mobility and downward mobility is similar to the relation of these two effects in the models for the population of men. For both subpopulations, the effect of *strong* downward mobility is twice as large as the effect of downward mobility.

Neither in countries that have a norm of internal attribution nor in countries that have a norm of external attribution is the upward mobility effect significant for women. These results can be seen as support for the hypothesized relationship. The effect of upward mobility is not present at all for the population of women. In light of the theoretical considerations, one can conclude that women, in contrast to men, do not attribute their success to internal dispositions. Upwardly mobile men are less supportive of income redistribution, while upwardly mobile women are not. In comparison to the ANOVA model (M_5) the variance components on the country level are reduced by 72.7 percent. The variance components on the individual level are reduced by 2.9 percent.

Table 3 presents the results of the multivariate analysis in the form of the theoretical framework that was presented in the theoretical section (compare table 1). The predicted effect on the support for income redistribution, which is presented in the cells, is calculated for an "average" working individual (for more details, see notes of table 3). The table allows the hypotheses developed in the theoretical section to be easily proven. Generally, it was expected that the level of support for income redistribution would be lower in collectivistic countries than in individualistic countries. The predicted level of support for income redistribution is indeed much lower in individualistic countries (about .80).

The experience of downward social mobility was expected to have a positive influence

on the support for income redistribution. This effect was hypothesized as being independent of gender and cultural contexts.[7] Obviously, downwardly mobile individuals show significantly higher levels of support for income redistribution than non- or upwardly mobile individuals. This effect is independent of gender and cultural contexts. Thus, the hypothesis of a general positive effect of downward mobility on support for income redistribution can be confirmed.

The hypothesis regarding the effect of upward mobility claimed that men who experienced upward mobility in an individualistic society should show the lowest level of support for income redistribution. The first column of table 3 confirms this hypothesis. Moreover, it was expected that the effect of upward mobility would be weaker in collectivistic countries. The predicted value in the second column (collectivistic) is not significantly different from the value for nonmobile individuals and, thus, the effect of upward mobility is completely suppressed by the norm of external attribution. The last two columns of table 3 indicate that there is no significant difference in the level of support for income redistribution between nonmobile and upwardly mobile women, whether in individualistic or collectivistic cultures. Thus, the effect of a self-serving bias is not present at all for women.

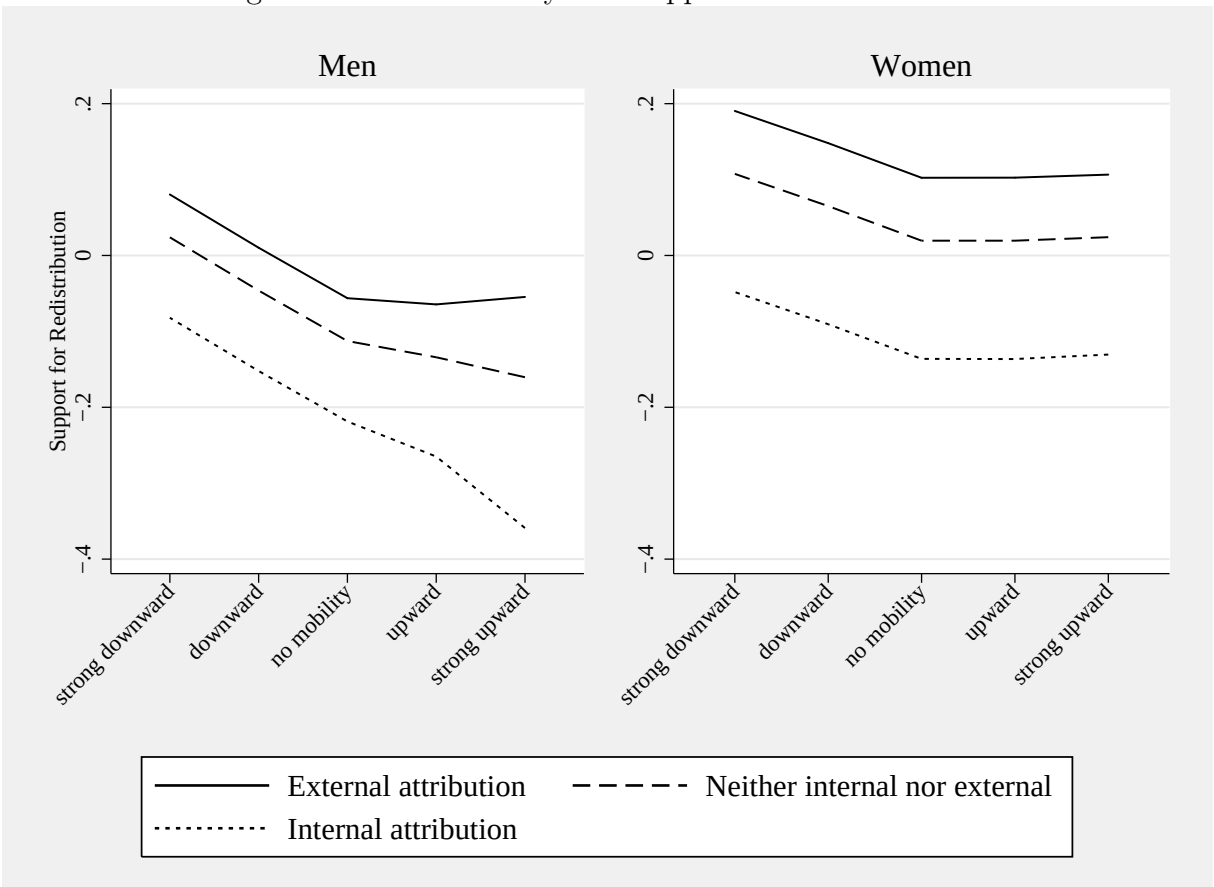
Figure 1 gives a graphical presentation of the effects of subjective social mobility and their interaction with cultural contexts. The three lines indicate the predicted support for income redistribution in different cultural contexts. The solid line depicts the predicted values for cultures with a norm of external attribution (*attribution norm* = min). The dotted line indicates the predicted values for cultures with a norm of internal attribution (*attribution norm* = max). The dashed line depicts the predicted values for cultures with an intermediate attribution norm (neither internal nor external; *attribution norm* = mean).

Discussion

The analysis investigated the effects of subjective social mobility on the support for income redistribution. The hypotheses were derived from the theory of causal attribution. The basic idea concerning the relationship between social mobility and support for income redistribution was that the experience of economic success or failure, due to causal attribution, might influence an individual's belief in self-determination (the ability of individuals to determine their fate).

It is well known from previous research that there is an association between internal and external explanations for poverty and wealth. This study had extended the common approach by including an individual's own mobility experiences into the analysis of attitude formation. The first hypothesis stated that upwardly mobile individuals should be less supportive of income redistribution, because they attribute their success to internal dispositions. Furthermore, it was expected that the degree of individualism mediates

Figure 1: Social Mobility and Support for Redistribution



Notes: Predictions are based on model M_4 (for men) and model M_8 (for women). Predictions are calculated for an average working individual (all variables except working status are set to their mean).

the effect of upward mobility. Both hypotheses could be confirmed for the population of men. Since psychological research has shown that women are much less likely to show a self-serving bias regarding their own success, it was expected that the effect of upward mobility would be weaker for women. However, the analysis could not identify any significant effect of upward mobility for the population of women. The second hypothesis claimed that the experience of downward mobility should lead to an increase in the support for income redistribution, because downwardly mobile individuals should attribute their failure to external factors. This hypothesis could be confirmed for men and women.

The results presented in this paper do not cast doubt on the evidence from previous research, which shows that individuals who experience mobility take intermediate positions between the values typical for their current positions and the values due to their socialization. In the empirical analysis, these effects were simply controlled and not discussed. The presented effects are direct effects of subjective social mobility. A discussion of the total effects (indirect + direct) would have to include the effects of the current social position and the social background. However, the results suggest that the experience of upward mobility can counteract the effect of the social background. This counter effect increases in proportion to the individualistic nature of a country.

It has to be mentioned critically that the estimated effect of social mobility is not controlled for the prospectus of future mobility. Hence, it cannot be controlled for the possibility that the past experience of upward mobility shapes the expected future mobility. In this case, the estimated effect of social mobility would also reflect (perceived) self-interest. Unfortunately, a variable allowing to control for the prospectus of future mobility is not available for the complete sample. However, for the waves from 1987 and 1992, a variable measuring the *perceived chances of improving the living standard* is available. The correlation between this variable and subjective social mobility is .05 in the sample from 1982 and is .17 in the sample from 1992. Hence, only a small proportion of subjective social mobility is related to the future prospectus of social mobility. Consequently, the estimated effect should largely capture the variance that is, indeed, due to past mobility experiences.

In summary, the subjective experience of downward mobility leads to an increase in the support for redistribution, independent of the cultural context. The negative effect is weaker for women than for men. The experience of upward mobility leads to a decrease in men's support for redistribution. The analysis showed that the effect of upward mobility is amplified in individualistic countries and counteracted in collectivistic countries.

Appendix

Notes

1. The split-consciousness theory is concerned with this phenomenon in particular (for example, see Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Kluegel, 1988).

2. The models are estimated with the STATA command `xtmixed`, following Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal (2005: 249ff.). The relevant difference in comparison to a three-level nested model is the number of time clusters. The cross-classified model is based on three clusters on the time-level, while the nested model is based on the assumption that the number of time clusters is much higher (in principal, three time clusters per country cluster). All models have also been estimated as three-level models with individuals nested in time and time nested in countries. These models gave substantially the same but more significant results than the cross-classified models. Hence, the suspicion that the nested model underestimates the standard errors seems to be valid. Therefore, the cross-classified models are presented in the results section.

3. Each country chose an age identical to that used in the question on the subjective experience of social mobility. Thus, the measurements of subjective social mobility and origin refer to exactly the same time point.

4. The ISEI scores for the analysis are derived from the occupation categories included in the ISSP datasets. Unfortunately, the participating countries had not decided to use a common classification scheme during the early waves. Thus, an extensive recoding was necessary to derive the ISEI scores. In all cases, the ISEI scores were derived from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88). The transformation was performed according to the procedure described in the Appendix of Ganzeboom et al. (1992). For the data from 1987 and 1992, the occupational codes from most countries had to be transformed into ISCO-88 codes before they could be transformed into ISEI scores. In 1992, a number of countries used the ISCO-68 classification. The transformation into the ISCO-88 classification was done according to ILO (1990), using the STATA ado `isco`. Sweden conducted the "Nordic Standard Classification of Occupations" (NYK), which was transformed into the ISCO-88 classification with the help of a syntax file provided by the CAMSIS project (download from: `http://www.cf.ac.uk/socsi/CAMSIS/occunits/distribution.html#Sweden`, on November 5, 2009). In 1987, all countries included in the following analysis used the ISCO-68 classification. Again, the transformation into the ISCO-88 classification was performed according to ILO (1990).

5. The Individualism Index (IDV) is available for most countries used in the analysis at the following website: `www.geert-hofstede.com`. Some countries were not listed in this source: (1.) Slovenia: The value for Slovenia was taken from Hofstede (2001). (2.) Germany East: Hofstede lists East and West Germany as a single country. The value for East Germany was imputed using the relative difference in individualism scores between Germany East and West from Diener et al. (2000).

6. The interaction between downward mobility and collectivism/attribution norm was tested as being insignificant.

7. Note: The model used for the predictions in table 3 does not allow a variation of the effect of downward mobility between cultural contexts, but as mentioned in note 6, this variation was tested as being insignificant.

Tables and Figures

Table A.1: Macro- and Micro-Level Sample Size

Country	1987		1992		1999		Total	
Australia			1,453	(2,167)	1,052	(1,642)	2,505	(3,809)
West Germany	561	(1,236)	1,057	(2,234)	346	(450)	1,970	(3,920)
East Germany			582	(1,051)	186	(247)	768	(1,298)
United States			861	(1,246)	763	(933)	1,624	(2,179)
Austria	691	(873)	425	(987)	368	(434)	1,484	(2,294)
Hungary	2,054	(2,494)	945	(1,218)	875	(976)	3,874	(4,688)
Norway			983	(1,517)	882	(1,209)	1,865	(2,726)
Sweden					835	(1,111)	835	(1,111)
Czech Rep			821	(1,075)	1,362	(1,834)	2,183	(2,909)
Slovenia					735	(767)	735	(767)
Poland			1,252	(1,416)	415	(481)	1,667	(1,897)
Russia			977	(1,025)	466	(684)	1,443	(1,709)
New Zealand			635	(704)	628	(1,005)	1,263	(1,709)
Canada					696	(866)	696	(866)
Israel					847	(875)	847	(875)
Spain					801	(913)	801	(913)
Latvia					530	(609)	530	(609)
France					945	(1,027)	945	(1,027)
Portugal					818	(912)	818	(912)
Slovakia					641	(953)	641	(953)
Switzerland	657	(987)					657	(987)
Total	3,969	(5,590)	9,991	(14,640)	14,191	(17,928)	28,151	(38,158)

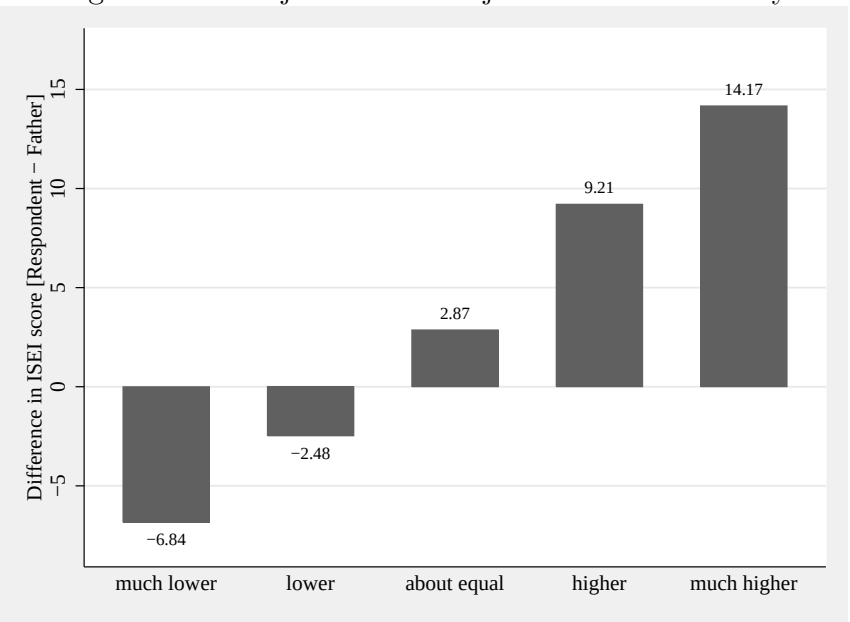
Notes: The table gives the number of cases that can be used for the multivariate analysis (after dropping all observations with at least one missing value). The number in brackets gives the total size of the sample (after dropping individuals who never worked or whose father has never worked and before dropping cases with at least one missing variable).

Table A.2: Correlations of Variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
1. Att.Redis.	1													
2. Strong Upward	-.043	1												
3. Upward	.002	-.296	1											
4. Downward	.010	-.181	-.299	1										
5. Strong Downw.	.021	-.101	-.166	-.102	1									
6. ISEI	-.209	.140	.050	-.034	-.040	1								
7. ISEI father	-.166	-.112	-.133	.190	.153	.320	1							
8. Unemployed	.060	-.030	-.023	.029	.029	-.073	-.023	1						
9. Not working	.054	-.005	.004	-.018	-.002	-.092	-.099	-.103	1					
10. Education	-.177	.079	-.000	.023	.031	.526	.364	-.063	-.255	1				
11. Age	.050	.069	.045	-.082	-.060	-.008	-.144	-.069	.509	-.234	1			
12. IDV	-.272	.077	-.035	.004	.007	.101	.099	-.055	.063	.136	.060	1		
13. Attr.Norm	-.216	.038	-.035	.029	.054	.115	.148	-.001	-.012	.214	.014	.414	1	
14. GDP/C	-.225	-.008	-.023	.021	.022	.113	.147	-.001	-.008	.166	-.003	.305	.478	1

Source: ISSP 1987, 1992, 1999, own calculations with STATA (unweighted data).

Figure A.2: Subjective and Objective Social Mobility



Source: ISSP 1987, 1992, 1999; own calculations (unweighted data).

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