

How Upward Social Mobility affects Wellbeing and Inequality Aversion

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Abstract

The paper aims to provide a full analysis on the role of social mobility in influencing individual wellbeing and political opinion. By using the BHPS data from 1991-2005, we analyse how individual social status and upward mobility relative to own parents affect job and life satisfaction, voting decisions, preferences for redistribution and pro-public sector attitude.

The analysis is led on a set of individual features and on three levels of socio-occupational prestige: individual socio-economic status, parents' socio-economic position and upward social mobility that captures individual socio-occupational improvements relative to own parents. All social prestige variables are measured by the Hope-Goldthorpe Scale.

The paper confirms some previous results and also provides new evidences. We find that own socio-economic position but also parents' background and upward mobility matter on individual wellbeing and political preferences.

Firstly, higher social prestige makes individuals more job satisfied, happier, less favorable to redistributive and interventionist policies and closest to right-wing, relative to individuals with lower socio-occupational level.

Secondly, individuals coming from parents with higher social prestige level are less job satisfied, less happy, less favorable to redistribution and to the State ownership of public services and closest to right-wing.

Finally, improving own social status relative to their parents' - i.e. upward social mobility - makes people more job satisfied and happier, more favorable to redistributive and interventionist policies hence closest to left-wing.

Keywords: Social Mobility, Wellbeing, Redistribution, Inequality.
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