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Subjective Intergenerational Mobility and Support for Welfare State Programmes

Alexi Gugushvili

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Department of Social Policy and Intervention and
Nuffield College
University of Oxford
alexi.gugushvili@spi.ox.ac.uk

Abstract

Previous scholarship suggests that subjective intergenerational mobility plays a more important role than objective intergenerational mobility in affecting attitudes towards social justice, inequality and redistribution. However, virtually no studies attempt to link individuals' perception of experiencing intergenerational mobility and their support for different welfare state programmes. Using data from nationally representative and comparative surveys for 33 Western European mature democracies and post-socialist transition societies, I find that subjective intergenerational mobility is systematically associated with support for certain welfare state programmes. Individuals who perceive themselves being downwardly mobile are less likely to support education and healthcare expenditures and more likely to prefer targeted assistance of the poor; while individuals who perceive themselves being upwardly mobile tend to oppose extra spending on housing and on old-age pensions. The reported associations appear to be stronger in post-socialist societies than in mature Western democracies.

Introduction

This article explores the association between subjective intergenerational mobility and attitudes towards welfare state programmes. Previous studies, using various data sets and research designs, have led to inconclusive findings regarding the link between subjective intergenerational social mobility and support for redistribution. While some scholars suggest that upward mobility is negatively associated with redistribution preferences (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Jaime-Castillo & Mareques-Perales, 2014; Siedler & Sonnenberg, 2012), others have found no, or even positive, associations between the two (Clark & D'Angelo, 2010; Gugushvili, 2016a; Guillaud, 2013).

One reason for this inconsistency in findings can be that redistribution preferences are often treated unidimensionally, without considering attitudes towards specific welfare state programmes. Distinct welfare schemes have different goals, beneficiaries, and administrative and financial structures, and therefore the research on cumulative welfare preferences might conflate the negative and positive effects of intergenerational mobility on redistribution preferences. Existing studies reveal considerable variation in the effects of various individual characteristics on distinct welfare state programmes such as healthcare, pensions, and social assistance (Busemeyer, Goerres, & Weschle, 2009; Gugushvili, 2015b; Kitschelt & Rehm, 2006). In the same token, the intergenerational mobility experience may have different implications for attitudes regarding the separate dimensions of the welfare state. Upwardly mobile individuals may not be against all forms of redistribution, as some of the existing research suggests, while downwardly mobile individuals may support one policy over another (Clark & D'Angelo, 2010; Gugushvili, 2014).

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This study aims to contribute to the social welfare and social stratification literature by exploring the consequences of subjective intergenerational mobility on attitudes towards different welfare state programmes. Unlike objective intergenerational mobility that is measured by the association between parental background and individuals' educational, occupational or class attainment, or their income (Goldthorpe, 2013), subjective approaches to social mobility are based on respondents' perceptions of how well they have done in life in comparison to their parents (Segura, 1989). The recent findings provide some evidence that subjective intergenerational mobility exerts stronger effects on various political and economic attitudes than objective intergenerational mobility (Gugushvili, 2016a, 2016b). Inconsistencies between subjective perceptions of mobility and objective mobility experiences are attributed to people's tendency to consider their own success in broader terms than educational or occupational attainment. Individuals generally think that positive relationships with family and friends, and leisure activities, are just as important as occupational mobility in determining success (Duru-Bellat & Kieffer, 2008). The main difference between the definition of intergenerational social mobility by social scientists and by individuals themselves is that the former work with some objective concept of the social structure while the latter view their relative positions in comparison to their parents from their own particular views of the social world (Merllié, 2008).

In addition to disentangling the links between subjective intergenerational mobility and support for different welfare state programmes, this study is also motivated by the recent findings on cross-national differences in the rates of intergenerational social mobility (Bukodi, Paskov, & Nolan, 2017; Gugushvili, 2015a, 2017a, 2017b; Jackson & Evans, 2017) and also in the support of welfare state programmes

(Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Busemeyer et al., 2009; Gugushvili, 2015b) in Western European mature democracies and post-socialist transition societies. One of the factors why some individuals in these nations are more likely than other individuals to prefer certain welfare programmes could be due to their perception of experiencing (or not experiencing) intergenerational social mobility. Scholars have noted a possible association between intergenerational mobility and attitudes towards specific areas of the welfare state (e.g. Clark & D'Angelo, 2010), but to my knowledge, the implications of subjective intergenerational mobility for specific welfare programmes have not been investigated in cross-national perspective. This study aims to fill this void by using comparative survey data for 33 European welfare democracies and post-socialist transition societies.

In the next section, I start with outlining theoretical considerations based on rational self-interest and social-psychological foundations of support for welfare state programmes with a corresponding hypothesis on the role of upward and downward intergenerational mobility for individuals' preferences. This is followed by a detailed description of the research design, variables, and statistical tools employed. Bivariate and multivariate analyses in the results section suggest that support for certain welfare state programmes among both subjectively upward and subjectively downward mobile individuals is statistically different from the support of non-mobile individuals. The final section summarises the study and briefly outlines the implications of the findings.

Theoretical Considerations

Self-interest and subjective intergenerational mobility

There are several theoretical mechanisms which can potentially explain why intergenerationally mobile individuals are more likely than non-mobile individuals to support or oppose certain welfare state programmes. Extensive research on welfare state attitudes convincingly demonstrates that self-interest is one of the most important mechanisms affecting individuals' preferences (Baslevent & Kirmanoglu, 2011; Mau, 2003; Naumann, 2014). This is evident in relation to specific welfare programmes. A pension system elicits stronger support from the elderly because it targets people who reach a defined retirement threshold (Fernández, 2013). At the other end of an age-defined support for welfare state programmes is public spending on the educational system which mostly directs resources to youth and young adults, leading to support for greater investment among these groups (Busemeyer et al., 2009). Further, if we consider various groups in the socio-economic hierarchy, the strongest supporters of egalitarian redistributive measures such as social housing and targeted social assistance are the main beneficiaries of these policies – disadvantaged and deprived individuals (Pfeifer, 2009).

The main reason why we have to consider individuals' rational self-interest while theorising the links between subjective intergenerational mobility and support for welfare state programmes is that those who perceive themselves as being downwardly mobile are also more likely to be in social need than non-mobile or upwardly mobile individuals. Among other components of the welfare state, programmes directed at dealing with basic human needs such as shelter and food provisions might be prioritised by those who consider that they have done worse in

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life than their parents. On the other hand, individuals experiencing upward social mobility are likely to be in more advantaged socio-economic conditions than non-mobile and downwardly mobile individuals and therefore they would require qualitatively different welfare state provisions. It is known that relatively better off individuals are more likely to be enrolled in various educational institutions and utilise publicly provided services (Bukodi, 2017; Vandycke, 2001). Hence, educational expenditure might be regressive in nature from the perspective of the disadvantaged individuals who believe they experienced intergenerational downward mobility. Furthermore, the existing studies also suggest that socio-economic conditions are positively associated with access and utilisation of healthcare services (Balabanova, McKee, Pomerleau, Rose, & Haerpfer, 2004; Phelan, Link, & Tehranifar, 2010), which might make this area of social provision appear regressive and, consequently, more supported by upwardly rather than downwardly mobile individuals.

Social-psychological foundations of support for welfare state programmes

Even after accounting for individuals' current socio-economic conditions, intergenrationally mobile individuals might have extra reason to support or oppose specific welfare state programmes. The social-psychological foundations of beliefs about inequality are particularly important in this regard (Kaufman, 2009). Various recent studies in social psychology, social policy, and sociology suggest that perceived levels of inequality of opportunity is associated with preferences for redistributive policies (Jaime-Castillo & Mareques-Perales, 2014; Kim, Huh, Choi, & Lee, 2017; Shariff, Wiwad, & Aknin, 2016). The main mechanism underpinning this

link is that when individuals perceive that everyone gets a fair chance to succeed in life then redistributive policies should be limited because a talent- and effort-based meritocracy is an appropriate method of distributing resources (Alesina & Giuliano, 2009; Kluegel & Smith, 1986). If perception of social mobility is an important factor for welfare preference then it is likely that individuals' own social mobility experience would play equally an important role in shaping their attitudes toward welfare state programmes (Steele, 2015).

An important social-psychological concept – the self-serving bias in causal attribution – might be particularly relevant in explaining preferences for certain welfare state programmes among intergenrationally mobile individuals. The self-serving bias implies that individuals are more likely to attribute failures to factors that are beyond their control, or situational factors, and more likely to explain success by pointing to their own merits, abilities and efforts, or dispositional factors (Miller & Ross, 1975) (Semin & Zwier, 1997). I apply this well-established phenomenon in social psychology to subjective perceptions of intergenerational mobility. We can assume that individuals start their adolescence and emerging adulthood with an initial set of attitudes, but over the years these preferences are affected, based on personal experiences of intergenerational mobility (Piketty, 1995) and on an associated perception of the role played by ascribed and attained factors in determining life chances (Schmidt, 2011). Some existing evidence suggests that upwardly mobile tend to overestimate their individual contributions to success and failure, therefore perceiving existing inequalities as just (Gugushvili, 2016b). Downwardly mobile individuals, on the other hand, tend to assign a greater weight to external factors in shaping their life course, and are therefore more likely to think that society as a whole

should be responsible for narrowing the existing gap between rich and poor (Gugushvili, 2016a).

Based on the outlined psychological mechanism of self-serving bias in causal attribution, upward mobility might be related to the perception that individual perseverance, along with skills and talents, are decisive factors for success in life. If the latter is the case then welfare state programmes that intend to help individuals realise their full life potential should be supported by upwardly mobile individuals more than those programmes that intend to simply redistribute resources. The latter corresponds well with increasingly prevalent thinking in social policy literature regarding a developmental welfare state in which the emphasis is placed on "preparing" individuals rather than "repairing" them (Ahn & Kim, 2015; Morel, Palier, & Palme, 2012). This type of "social investment" model of the welfare state puts a primary focus on individual responsibility and the resultant chances for upward social mobility (Pintelon, Cantillon, Van den Bosch, & Whelan, 2013). Among various components of the welfare state, two major programmes that can directly contribute to individuals' human capital formation are education and healthcare (Schultz, 1961). Both education and healthcare spending might be supported by upwardly mobile individuals who are more likely to view equal access to human capital as an instrumental factor for positive life trajectories than non-mobile individuals.

We can also speculate about potential consequences of intergenerational downward mobility. Individuals who perceive that they have experienced downward mobility will be less likely to prioritize educational and healthcare spending. The latter might be the case due to their self-serving bias in causal attribution which is triggered by adverse mobility experience. Downwardly mobile individuals are more likely to

believe in structural explanations of success and failure rather than long-term solutions through human capital formation. As was mentioned above, public spending in education may attract less support among the downwardly mobile because they do not expect to directly benefit as they are more likely to be out of the life stage in which individuals are typically enrolled in educational institutions. Welfare state programmes receiving more support from downwardly mobile individuals are likely to be spending on social housing, poverty assistance, and old-age provisions. This is the case because all of these programmes are designed to alleviate the socio-economic disadvantages of their beneficiaries. To summarise, based on self-interest and social-psychological mechanisms, the main hypothesis to be tested in this article is the following: *Intergenerational upward (downward) mobility positively (negatively) associates with support for welfare programmes which enhance human capital such as education and healthcare and negatively (positively) associates with primarily needs-based and redistributive welfare state programmes such as pensions, assisting the poor, and social housing.*

Data and variables

To test the links between subjective intergenerational mobility and welfare state preferences, I used data from the Life in Transition Survey (LITS) which was conducted by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in 2010. LITS contains representative samples of the adult populations derived from a two-stage sampling method that used census enumeration areas as primary sampling units and households as secondary sampling units. The survey provides data for the five western European societies of France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and

the United Kingdom, while the pool of post-socialist countries is much larger and includes the following 28 transition societies: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The high quality of this data set is affirmed by its wide usage in comparative social, political, and economic research (BenYishay & Grosjean, 2014; Cojocaru, 2014, 2016, Gugushvili, 2010, 2016a, 2016b; Spoor, Tasciotti, & Peleah, 2014). Based on the existing research on intergenerational social mobility which shows that individuals reach a stage of "maturity" in their socio-economic status only around their mid-30s (Gugushvili, Bukodi, & Goldthorpe, 2017), I excluded individuals aged 34 or less from the analysed sample. After list-wise deleting observations with missing data 22,437 individuals remain for multivariate analysis.

Dependent variables

To understand the role of subjective intergenerational mobility for specific welfare state preferences, I used the survey item that asks respondents the following question: "In your opinion, which of these fields should be the first (the second) priority for extra government spending?" The welfare state programmes mentioned in the answer choices are education [23.6% and 21.9% of responses for the first and the second priority in the pooled sample], healthcare [39.8% and 33.8%], housing [6.7% and 10.1%], pensions [16.1% and 19.5%], and "assisting the poor" [13.9% and 14.7%]. 4.1% and 4.5% of respondents did not provide an answer on their first and

second priorities on extra government spending and therefore they are excluded from analysis. The main concern with the employed survey question is that it might not explicitly describe general attitudes towards the welfare state programmes but reflect preferences regarding additional spending for specific welfare policies. However, because this study's main goal is to investigate the welfare preferences between intergenrationally mobile and non-mobile groups within societies, different levels of welfare state development across countries can be tolerated (Gugushvili, 2015b).

Table 1 shows how responses on welfare state preferences are distributed in Western European and post-socialist societies. The comparison across these two sets of countries suggests that extra spending in education is more preferred in Western Europe than in post-socialist societies, while pensions is a more frequently named option in post-socialist societies. The latter can be explained by the salient role old-age pensions played in post-socialist transition in many Central and Eastern European economies (Guardiancich, 2013; Gugushvili, 2009). In both sets of countries, the highest support for extra government spending goes to healthcare, with more than 70% of respondents choosing healthcare as the first or the second priority for government investment; education is the second most supported welfare area. More than one-third of respondents believed that pensions should be the priority for government spending, and a slightly lower share of respondents prioritised assisting the poor. It is also surprising that poverty is not more prioritised in post-socialist societies than in Western European countries which are generally characterised by lower deprivation levels (Alam et al., 2005; Gugushvili, 2011; Whelan, Nolan, & Maître, 2014).

Table 1: Distribution of dependent and independent variables in western European and post-socialist societies

	Dependent variable					Independent variable	
	"Which of these fields should be priority for extra government spending?"					Subjective intergenerational mobility	
	First priority		Second priority				
	Western mature democracies	Post-socialist transition societies	Western mature democracies	Post-socialist transition societies		Western mature democracies	Post-socialist transition societies
Education	26.4	19.1	24.3	18.8	Strongly downward	4.4	7.4
Healthcare	39.3	41.7	35.2	32.4	Downward	18.7	19.7
Housing	5.6	8.8	9.0	11.7	Non-mobile	27.4	21.8
Pensions	14.3	18.0	17.5	22.4	Upward	36.5	40.0
Assisting the poor	15.3	12.5	13.9	14.7	Strongly upward	13.0	11.1
In total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	In total	100.0	100.0

Source: Weights applied. Author's calculations based on data from LITS (EBRD, 2010).

Subjective intergenerational mobility

LITS asked respondents whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: "I have done better in life than my parents." From a 5-point Likert scale respondents could choose from "strongly disagree," to "strongly agree." Respondents were also instructed to compare their parents' position to their own when the former were at the same age as respondents at the time of the interview.   3.6% of respondents did not provide an answer to this question, while the valid answers were transformed into following five categorical variables: strongly disagree = strongly downwardly mobile [6.0% in the pooled sample], disagree = downwardly mobile [19.2%], neither disagree nor agree = non-mobile [24.5%], agree = upwardly mobile [38.3%], and strongly agree = strongly upwardly mobile [12.0%]. This indicator of subjective intergenerational mobility does not necessarily imply intergenerational social mobility in terms of educational, occupational or income mobility. It can also reflect the structural upgrade of the economy, e.g. collective mobility, which refers to overall improvement of socio-economic conditions in a society rather than an individuals' own experience of intergenerational mobility (Marshall, 1996).

The right-hand side of Table 1 depicts the structure of subjective intergenerational mobility in the considered Western European and post-socialistic societies. The descriptive statistics suggest that differences between these two sets of countries are not very large. Nonetheless, individuals in the pooled sample of Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, and the United Kingdom are 4.0 percentage points less likely to report experiencing downward intergenerational mobility than individuals in post-socialist societies. In turn, in the former set of countries respondents are 5.6 percentage points less likely to report experiencing stability in intergenerational mobility when

compared to Western European democracies. The latter might be related to the fundamental economic, political, and social changes experienced by residents of these countries since the beginning of the 1990s (Gugushvili, 2015a).

Other independent variables

In addition to basic socio-demographic variables such as gender (male=1), age of respondents (with age squared) and marital status (married=1), I also employed an array of socio-economic variables that are expected to be associated with welfare state preferences (e.g. Furåker & Blomsterberg, 2003; Gelissen, 2000; Pfeifer, 2009; Van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012; Wong, Wan, & Law, 2009). Type of settlement was accounted for with a dummy variable for urban and rural areas, with metropolitan residency serving as the reference category. The highest level of completed education is based on the 1997 version of International Standard Classification of Education [ISCED], which varies from ISCED 0 [pre-primary education] to ISCED 6 [second stage of tertiary education]. For socio-economic status, respondents were asked to place their households on a ten-step ladder with 1 [bottom of the scale] representing a country's poorest 10% of people, and 10 [top of the scale] representing the richest 10%. To account for short-term change in subjective socio-economic status, I used a LITS question that asks respondents to declare their 2006 household incomes using the ten-step ladder. I subtracted position in time $t_{[2010]}$ with a position in time $t-1_{[2006]}$. This also facilitated controlling for the socio-economic consequences of the 2008-2010 economic crisis (Tóth, 2008).

To control for employment related effects, I created dummy variables for different types of labour market positions. For those individuals who worked for income during

the 12 months prior to their interview, four occupational categories are assigned. In LITS individuals' occupations are classified with the 1958 version of the International Standard Classification of Occupations [ISCO] which I grouped in the following four categories – ISCO: 0-2 [professional, technical, clerical and related workers; administrative, executive and managerial workers]; ISCO: 3 and 9 [sales workers; service, sport and recreation workers]; ISCO: 4-5 [farmers, fishermen, hunters, miners, quarrymen and related workers], and ISCO: 7-8 [craftsmen, production-process workers, and labourers]. Those individuals who were not employed but were looking for a job or were interested in finding one were classified as unemployed. Retired consisted of a group of pensioners who were out of the labour market at the time of interview; individuals with *other* labour market status served as the reference category.

Lastly, to account for the effect of social origin the models controlled for years of parental education, which is the only variable available in LITS about individuals' social background. Since this variable has a high proportion of missing observations [22.0%], I created an ordered variable with missing as a category used in the regressions. The reference category is <=5 years of education. 6-11 years of education is roughly equal to secondary education, while 12=> years of education can be considered as post-secondary/tertiary education. I used the dominance approach which means that if parents had different levels of educational attainment, the higher of the two was assigned to the respondents' parents (Erikson, 1984). The descriptive statistics of all independent variables in the pooled samples for Western mature democracies and post-socialist transition societies are presented in Table a1 in the online Appendix.

Methods

I started the empirical analysis by describing bivariate associations between subjective intergenerational mobility and support for welfare state programmes, without accounting for respondents' socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics. For the multivariate analysis, I separately constructed five binary dependent variables that take a value of 1 if respondents select education, healthcare, housing, pensions, or "assisting the poor" as the first or second priority for extra government spending. For each welfare state programme, I separately fit a linear probability regression model. Coefficients from linear probability regressions come close to the average marginal effects of logistic models (Angrist & Pischke, 2009). I start by presenting results for the pooled sample of countries, which is followed by disaggregated analyses of Western welfare democracies and post-socialist transition societies. The latter results are presented in graphs which show point estimates with corresponding confidence intervals from five separate models (see Kastellec & Leoni, 2007). In order to check the robustness of the findings, I created a categorical variable for attitudes towards different welfare programmes and fitted multinomial logistic regressions. The results using this approach were very similar to those discussed in the main analysis using linear probability models. The cross-national difference in welfare state development was addressed by including country fixed effects in the models which cancels out the variation in the dependent variables which is due to country-specific characteristics (Gugushvili, 2015b).

Results

Bivariate analysis

Figure 1 depicts bivariate associations between subjective intergenerational mobility and preferences for extra spending on education, healthcare, housing, pensions, and assisting the poor in the pooled sample of countries. The major differences across subjectively mobile groups in their welfare state preferences are largely in line with the stated hypothesis. Regarding the first priority in Figure 1.1, upwardly mobile individuals have stronger preferences for extra spending on education [25.6% for strongly upwardly mobile vs. 16.6% for strongly downwardly mobile], while the share of downwardly mobile individuals who name pensions and assisting the poor [18.0% and 17.5% respectively for strongly downward mobile] is higher than the same share in all other mobility groups [13.7% and 11.8% respectively for strongly upwardly mobile individuals]. There are no salient differences in terms of the links between subjective intergenerational mobility and preferences for healthcare and housing. Both of these welfare state programmes are equally supported by people with perceptions of upward mobility, downward mobility, and unchanged intergenerational status. The described variances in associations between subjective intergenerational mobility and welfare state preferences are still present but they are less pronounced when we consider the second priority for extra government spending. Figure 1.2 indicates that strongly downwardly mobile individuals have the lowest support for healthcare, 28.0%, while for non-mobile group of individuals this support is 7.2 percentage points higher. In addition, for the second priority we also see that extra spending on housing is more likely to be preferred by the strongly downwardly mobile

group [12.7%] than by upwardly [10.2%] and strongly upwardly [9.2%] mobile
individuals.

Figure 1: Bivariate associations between subjective social mobility and preferences on extra
governmental spending on various welfare state programmes
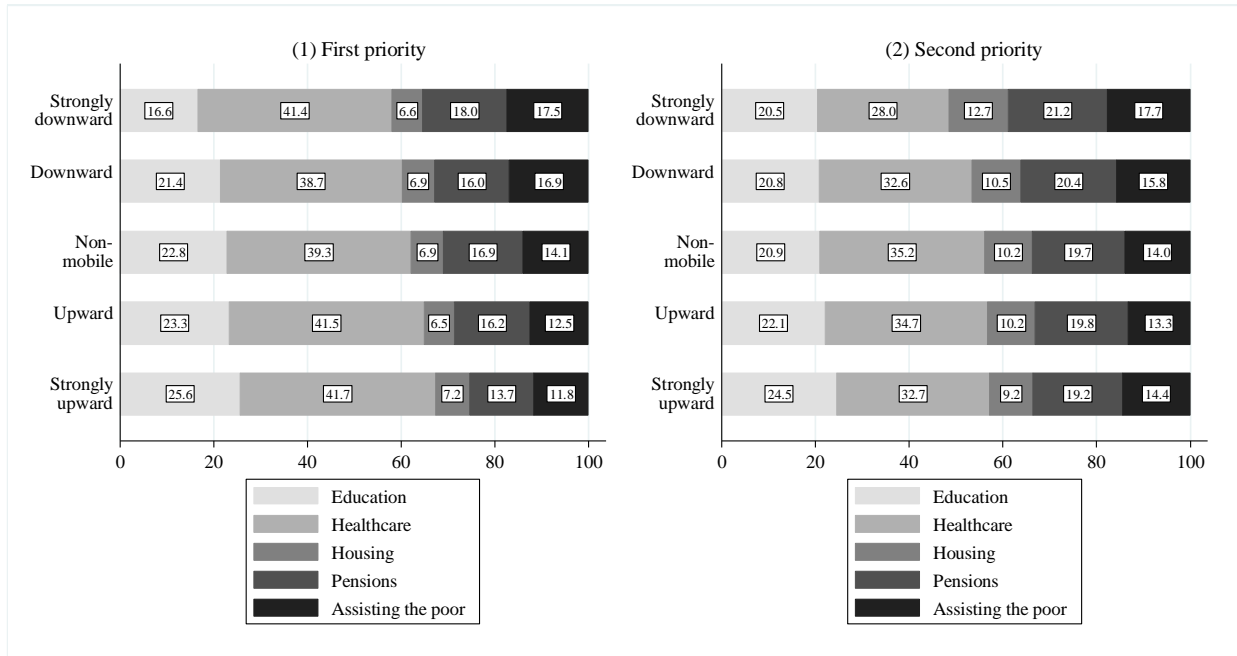
Source: Weights applied. Author's calculations based on data from LITS (EBRD, 2010).

After looking at the bivariate links between intergenerational mobility and support for
separate welfare state programmes, we can also discuss the same associations
separately for Western European mature democracies and post-socialist transition
societies [see Figure a1 in Appendix]. The general associations between subjective
intergenerational mobility and preferred areas of extra government spending
observed for the pooled sample are similar, but there are a few interesting deviations.
Across all mobility groups, extra spending on education is prioritised in Western
European societies. For instance, among strongly upwardly mobile individuals in
these countries, 31.0% of individuals choose education as the first priority, while the
corresponding share in post-socialist countries is only 19.0%. It is also noticeable
that among downwardly mobile groups in Western Europe, support for housing as
the area of extra government spending is stronger than in post-socialist societies.

Extra spending on healthcare is equally preferred in both sets of countries, but upwardly mobile groups exhibit a stronger preference for this welfare state programme only in the Western European sample. The described bivariate analyses serves as the preliminary test of the stated hypothesis and provides tentative evidence on the significant links between intergenerational mobility and support for welfare state programmes.

Multivariate analysis

In this section I test whether the observed bivariate associations are also salient when accounting for individuals' socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics and the specific effects related to countries where they reside. Table 2 depicts the point estimates for covariates of welfare state support that are derived from linear probability models. First, I briefly describe the effects of other independent variables on welfare preferences before proceeding to the associations of subjective intergenerational mobility with the dependent variables.

In line with the previous scholarship, age has negative and positive links, respectively, with preferences for extra spending in education and pensions, but in both cases the effect also appears to be curvilinear. Married individuals are more likely to prefer extra government spending on education and healthcare, but they are less likely to support spending on pensions and on the poor. Rural residents are less concerned with housing but prefer spending directed to the poverty alleviation. Respondents' education and their subjective socio-economic status are both positively associated with extra spending on education and are negatively associated with extra spending on pensions and the poor. The unemployed, when compared

with individuals in the reference category, are significantly more likely to prefer extra government spending on the poor and housing, but they are also less likely to support spending on healthcare and pensions. Those having white-collar jobs represent the only occupational category which is in favour of spending on education. Blue-collar workers, farmers, and those employed in unskilled service occupations are very similar to each other with respect to their welfare preferences. As for social origins, parental education does not exhibit any significant associations with welfare state spending preferences.

Table 2: Subjective social mobility and preferences for government spending on various welfare programmes
(Estimates from linear probability models)

	Which of these fields should be priority for extra government spending?				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Education	Healthcare	Housing	Pensions	On the poor
Intercept	0.610 [0.058]***	0.634 [0.057]***	0.316 [0.056]***	–0.064 [0.074]	0.448 [0.066]***
Subjective mobility					
Strongly downward	–0.032 [0.015]**	–0.043 [0.014]***	–0.004 [0.011]	0.030 [0.018]*	0.056 [0.014]***
Downward	–0.008 [0.009]	–0.013 [0.011]	–0.007 [0.006]	–0.002 [0.009]	0.034 [0.011]***
Upward	0.014 [0.009]	0.003 [0.009]	–0.013 [0.008]*	–0.017 [0.008]*	–0.005 [0.007]
Strongly upward	0.015 [0.016]	0.007 [0.013]	–0.018 [0.008]**	–0.043 [0.013]***	–0.001 [0.015]
Other independent variables					
Demographic variables					
Male	–0.002 [0.009]	–0.031 [0.007]***	0.001 [0.004]	–0.016 [0.010]	0.013 [0.008]
Age	–0.015 [0.002]***	–0.000 [0.002]	–0.003 [0.002]*	0.017 [0.002]***	–0.002 [0.002]
Age squared	0.001 [0.000]***	0.001 [0.001]	0.000 [0.001]	–0.000 [0.000]***	0.000 [0.000]
Married	0.046 [0.009]***	0.024 [0.007]***	–0.008 [0.006]	–0.041 [0.010]***	–0.026 [0.006]***
Residency					
Urban settlement	0.025 [0.018]	0.006 [0.018]	–0.023 [0.015]	–0.021 [0.018]	0.010 [0.016]
Rural settlement	0.010 [0.018]	–0.017 [0.015]	–0.036 [0.014]**	–0.018 [0.017]	0.042 [0.016]**
Socio-economic variables					
Respondents' education	0.048 [0.006]***	–0.002 [0.003]	–0.003 [0.001]**	–0.034 [0.005]***	–0.022 [0.004]***
Ten-step socio-economic ladder	0.016 [0.003]***	0.002 [0.003]	–0.002 [0.002]	–0.012 [0.002]***	–0.013 [0.003***
Change in ladder, 2006-2010	0.002 [0.003]	0.002 [0.004]	0.000 [0.002]	–0.001 [0.003]	–0.001 [0.003]
Labour market positions					
White collar occupation	0.051 [0.017]***	–0.011 [0.011]	0.013 [0.009]	–0.024 [0.013]*	–0.051 [0.015]***
Blue collar occupation	–0.000 [0.015]	–0.009 [0.012]	0.037 [0.009]***	–0.041 [0.013]***	–0.026 [0.012]**
Farmers	–0.013 [0.033]	–0.064 [0.018]***	–0.012 [0.015]	–0.032 [0.018]*	0.026 [0.026]
Unskilled service occupation	0.006 [0.019]	–0.021 [0.018]	0.033 [0.015]**	–0.026 [0.018]	–0.028 [0.016]
Unemployed	0.005 [0.012]	–0.060 [0.013]***	0.024 [0.012]*	–0.032 [0.013]**	0.061 [0.016]***
Retired	–0.007 [0.012]	–0.007 [0.013]	–0.011 [0.011]	0.109 [0.016]***	–0.064 [0.011]***
Parental education					
Parental education: 6-11 years	0.017 [0.010]	0.008 [0.011]	0.006 [0.008]	–0.018 [0.010]*	–0.014 [0.011]
Parental education: 12> years	0.018 [0.014]	–0.008 [0.011]	0.005 [0.008]	–0.018 [0.014]	–0.022 [0.014]
Parental education: missing	0.002 [0.010]	–0.000 [0.013]	0.014 [0.009]	0.007 [0.013]	–0.002 [0.012]
Statistics					
Adjusted R^2	0.111	0.040	0.057	0.148	0.080
Number of observations	22,437	22,437	22,437	22,437	22,437

Notes: ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 0.01, 0.05, and 0.10 levels. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Models control for country fixed effects; weights are also applied. Reference categories include: non-mobile individuals, all other non-married marital statuses, metropolitan residency, all other labour market statuses (including self-employed). *Source:* Author's calculations based on data from LITS (EBRD, 2010).

Now I return to the main research question of this article: how is subjective intergenerational mobility associated with support for welfare state programmes? The point estimates from linear probability models partially confirm the stated hypothesis. Strong downward mobility is negatively associated with preferences for extra spending in education [–3.2%, p<0.05] when compared to non-mobile individuals. Strongly downwardly mobile individuals have a 4.3% [p<0.01] lower likelihood of preferring extra spending on healthcare. Spending on housing is not preferred by survey respondents who report experiencing upward mobility [–1.3%, p<0.1] and strong upward mobility [–1.8%, p<0.05]. A similar effect is observed for support of extra spending on pensions. Both upwardly and strongly upwardly mobile individuals are 1.7% [p<0.1] and 4.3% [p<0.01] less likely than non-mobile individuals to favour further spending on pensions, but the latter welfare state programme is supported by those who experienced strong downward mobility [3.0%, p<0.1]. Finally, individuals who believe that they have experienced downward and strongly downward intergenerational mobility are significantly more likely to support additional spending on the poor [3.4%, p<0.01 and 5.6%, p<0.01, respectively]. The latter effects are strongest among other associations that we have observed for subjective intergenerational mobility. Table a2 in Appendix also show interaction terms for upward and downward mobility with various other covariates. The results do not suggest that there are any systemic and substantive interaction effects between these variables and preferences for the considered welfare state programmes.

In Figure 2, which is based on identical linear probability models as presented in Table 2, I split the pool of Western European mature democracies and post-socialist transition societies by fitting separate regressions in these two sets of countries. The

reference category for each type of mobility experience is the group of non-mobile individuals. The presented regression coefficients are statistically significant when they do not cross the vertical zero reference line. The comparison between Figures 2.1 and 2.2 suggests that the results observed in the pooled model are more vividly manifest among individuals living in post-socialist societies. In both sets of countries, strongly downwardly mobile individuals oppose further spending on healthcare. The scale of this effect is –8% [p<0.1] and –3% [p<0.05] in Western European democracies and post-socialist societies respectively. Strongly downwardly mobile individuals in the pooled sample of Germany, France, Sweden, Italy, and the United Kingdom are, respectively, 7.0% [p<0.1] and 4.3% [p<0.1] more likely to prefer extra spending on housing and pensions. In addition, in post-socialist societies both downward [3.6%, p<0.01] and strongly downward [5.8%, p<0.01] groups are significantly more likely than non-mobile individuals to favour further spending on the poor.

When it comes to the effect of subjective upward mobility on individuals' welfare state preferences, mobile individuals are statistically different from non-mobile individuals only in post-socialist societies. Healthcare is the only welfare state programme for which upward intergenerational mobility does not make a difference. Upwardly mobile individuals support further spending in education. This effect is 2.0% for upwardly and 2.9% for strongly upwardly mobile individuals at the 10% significance level. Further, spending on pensions is a less preferred option among upwardly mobile groups, the point estimates taking the values of –5.8 [p<0.01] for strongly upwardly and –3.6% [0.01] for upwardly mobile individuals. The effect of upward subjective mobility is also manifest in post-socialist societies in opposing spending on the poor and publicly provided housing. In both cases the scale of the association is

about 2% [p<0.05]. The described results largely confirm the stated hypothesis, suggesting that there are statistically significant links between subjective intergenerational mobility and preferred welfare state programmes.

Figure 2: Subjective social mobility and preferences on extra government spending on various welfare state programmes in Western European and post-socialist societies, point estimates from linear probability models
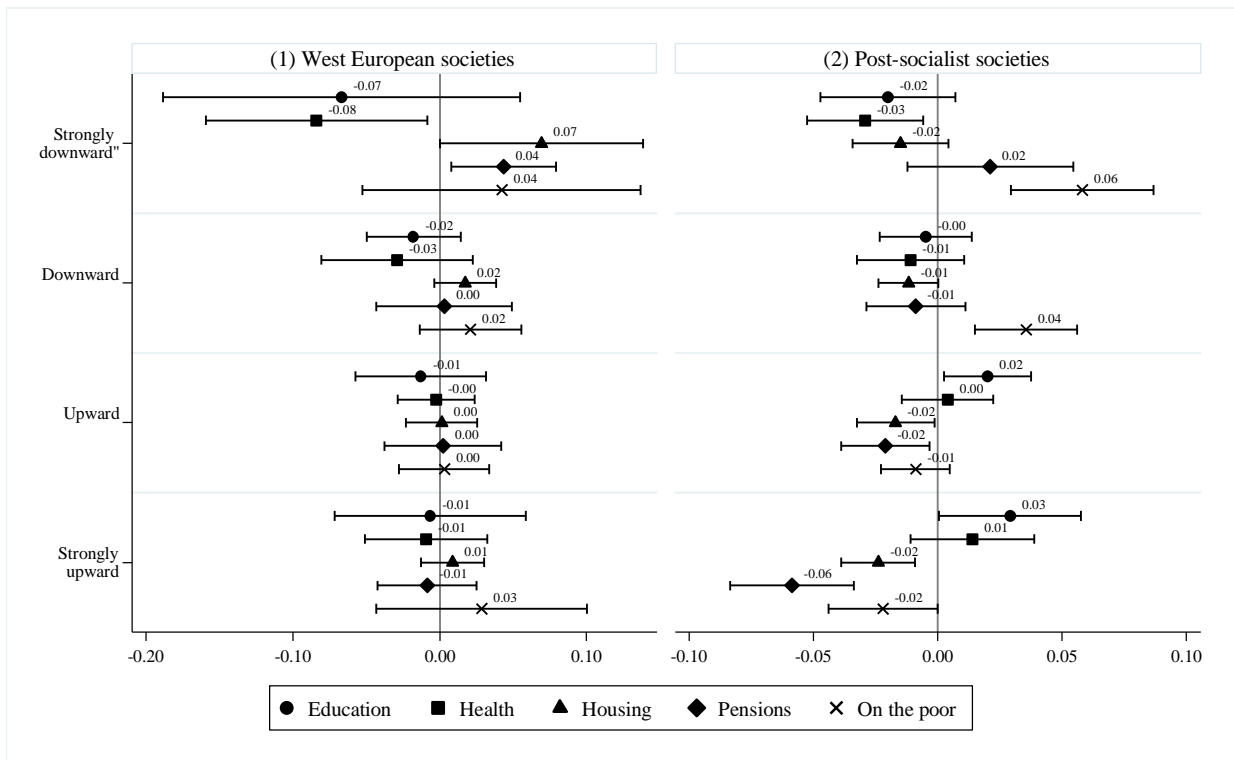
Notes: Bars represent 95% confidence intervals. For each set of countries five separate linear probability models are estimated. Models control for country fixed effects and all variables shown in Table 2, weights applied. *Source:* Author's calculations based on data from LITS (EBRD, 2010).

Discussion and conclusions

The main goal of this study was to identify the association between subjective intergenerational mobility and support for various welfare state programmes. My theoretical reasoning implied that, based on considerations shaped by self-interest, individuals who perceive themselves as being intergenerationally upwardly and

downwardly mobile would have different needs and expectations from certain welfare programmes than those who consider themselves as being intergenerationally non-mobile. The latter is the case because intergenerational mobility is usually, although not always, related to changes in individuals' socio-economic status. More importantly, based on social-psychological theories of beliefs about equality of opportunity and the role of situational and dispositional factors in the intergenerational mobility process, individuals' perceptions of intergenerational upward mobility might be positively related to their beliefs that talent and perseverance are decisive factors for success. For the latter reason, they are more likely to support welfare state programmes which are conducive to human capital formation. On the other hand, individuals who perceive themselves being intergenerationally downwardly mobile are also more likely to believe in a structural explanation of success and failure in life and therefore they would support welfare state programmes with a more redistributive nature, such as spending on housing, pensions, and social assistance for the poor.

Using bivariate and multivariate analysis to test the formulated hypotheses, I find that subjective intergenerational mobility is a statistically significant predictor of support for certain welfare state programmes. The analysis of the pooled sample of 33 European welfare democracies and post-socialist transition societies reveals that, when asked about their preferences for extra government spending, subjectively downwardly mobile individuals on average prefer spending on poverty alleviation and pensions, while they oppose extra spending on education and healthcare. On the other hand, those who perceive themselves being intergernationally upwardly mobile oppose extra spending on housing and pensions. The magnitude of the effect of downward mobility is as high as that observed for most socio-demographic and

socio-economic variables such as gender and labour market status. When the effects of subjective intergenerational mobility are disaggregated by two sets of countries, we see that upward mobility only exerts its effect in post-socialist transition societies. However, unlike the latter set of countries, in European welfare democracies strong downward mobility is associated with support for housing and pensions and it is also related to more stringent opposition to spending on healthcare.

The finding that intergenerational subjective mobility is a more important predictor of individuals' preferences in post-socialist countries than in European welfare democracies is in line with previous results on the effects of intergenerational social mobility on popular explanations of poverty (Gugushvili, 2016b). It has been argued that in a number of post-socialist countries crony capitalism has replaced the previous socialist egalitarian policies (Smith, 2010). The limited role of the state in addressing social hardship could facilitate the prevalence of individualistic explanations among subjectively mobile individuals (Bucca, 2016), which is reflected in their welfare state preferences. Upwardly mobile individuals in post-socialist societies are also in favour of extra spending on the educational system. One of the reasons for the latter finding could be the higher returns to tertiary education in post-socialist countries as compared with European welfare democracies (Brunello, Crivellaro, & Rocco, 2010). Furthermore, our results also suggest that intergenerationally downwardly mobile individuals have strong preferences for extra spending on poverty alleviation only in post-socialist societies. The latter might indicate that downward mobility in transition countries is closely linked to material deprivation.

It is also important to discuss a number of caveats of the described analysis. Probably the most salient problem for the study of attitudinal consequences of mobility is the direction of causality in the findings. The proposed hypothesis argued that the subjective perception of intergenerational mobility causes specific attitudes about welfare state programmes, however, the data and methodology do not allow for the exclusion of the possibility of reverse causation. Upwardly mobile individuals might have similar attitudes even before developing their perception of intergenerational mobility. In fact, individualistic dispositions and redistribution preferences could contribute to their life trajectories. Another limitation of the employed analytical strategy is that LITS does not allow for accounting for important components of the welfare state such as unemployment benefits, assistance to families with children and people with disabilities (van Oorschot, 2006). Furthermore, unlike objective social mobility, variables such as educational and occupational attainment, both the dependent and the main independent variables, are subjective in nature. This inevitably raises concerns about the cross-cultural comparability of the results. Lastly, the welfare programmes which are analysed in the study cannot be singlehandedly described in terms of the meritocratic and redistributive properties of groups. For instance, public old-age pension schemes vary across countries in terms of the degree to which they redistribute resources from the rich to the poor.

Bearing in mind the limitations of this study, it is still worthwhile considering what the potential implications of the derived findings are for comparative social welfare research. First of all, future studies should consider various factors affecting individuals' perceptions of experiencing intergenerational mobility. Relationships between subjective and objective mobility are generally, but not always, positive. Empirical evidence suggests that subjective mobility is correlated with a broader set

of factors such as macro-level development in the countries where individuals reside. For instance, the comparative analysis of 30 nations using International Social Survey Programme's data, which, along with objective social mobility variables, asked respondents to compare their own occupational status with the status of their fathers indicated that objective intergenerational mobility had an important effect on perceptions of subjective mobility, along with two other factors – intergenerational educational gains, and change in GDP per capita from the respondents' childhood to the date of the interview (Kelley & Kelley, 2009). Further research needs to be done to understand how individuals' perceptions of intergenerational mobility change over time and how they are affected by major events such as regime change and economic recession.

Subjective intergenerational mobility might also have significant consequences for welfare state development and reforms as individuals' perceptions are one of the most important aspects which affect the democratic political process and consequently shape the welfare state's goals, beneficiaries, and administrative and financial structures (Breznau, 2016; Petersen, Sznycer, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2012). If certain societies, due to various exogenous shocks such as regime change or a major economic crisis, experience a surge in perceptions of downward mobility this might lead to greater support for welfare state programmes that aim to satisfy basic human needs such as shelter and food provisions at the expense of more elaborate welfare provisions in healthcare and education. On the other hand, due to long-term prosperity in European welfare democracies and overall improvement of socio-economic conditions, the majority of individuals might feel intergenerationally upwardly mobile, thus giving less consideration to those socio-economic groups who

were left behind, disregarding corresponding welfare programmes and the idea of the "European Social Model" (Bilbao-Ubillos, 2016).

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Appendix

Figure a1: Bivariate associations between subjective social mobility and preferences on extra governmental spending in Western European and post-socialist societies
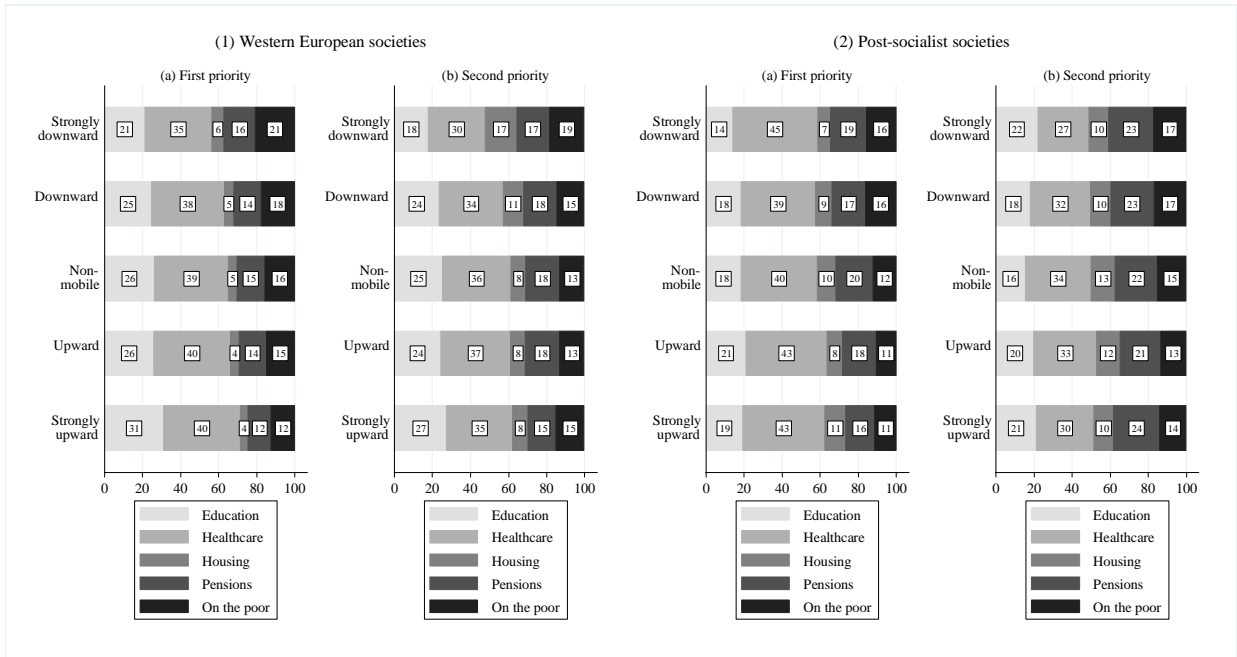
Source: Author's calculations based on data from LITS (EBRD, 2010).

Table a1: Descriptive statistics for independent variables used in analysis

	West European societies				Post-socialist societies			
	Missing, %	Mean	SD	Min-max	Missing, %	Mean	SD	Min-max
Male	0.00	0.44	13.3	0–1	0.00	0.38	0.48	0–1
Age	0.02	55.7	0.47	35–94	0.06	0.48	54.8	35–99
Married	0.23	0.58	0.49	0–1	0.60	0.65	0.48	0–1
Urban settlement	0.00	0.51	0.50	0–1	0.00	0.44	0.50	0–1
Rural settlement	0.00	0.30	0.46	0–1	0.00	0.43	0.49	0–1
Respondents' education	0.02	4.18	1.70	1–7	0.01	4.06	1.45	1–7
Socio-economic ladder	1.15	4.98	1.72	1–10	1.64	4.17	1.67	1–10
Mobility in ladder	0.41	−0.27	1.24	−8–8	0.97	−0.40	1.40	−9–8
White collar occupation	4.00	0.32	0.47	0–1	0.73	0.21	0.41	0–1
Blue collar occupation	4.00	0.13	0.33	0–1	0.73	0.12	0.33	0–1
Farmers	4.00	0.01	0.12	0–1	0.73	0.04	0.20	0–1
Unskilled service occupation	4.00	0.05	0.21	0–1	0.73	0.05	0.22	0–1
Unemployed	4.00	0.06	0.23	0–1	0.73	0.10	0.30	0–1
Retired	4.00	0.33	0.47	0–1	0.73	0.32	0.47	0–1
Parental education: 6-11 years	16.0	0.52	0.50	0–1	23.0	0.37	0.48	0–1
Parental education: 12> years	16.0	0.20	0.40	0–1	23.0	0.21	0.41	0–1

Source: Author's calculations based on data from LITS (EBRD, 2010).

Table a2: Interaction of subjective social mobility and other covariates on welfare preferences, point estimates from linear probability models

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Which of these fields should be priority for extra government spending?
	Education	Healthcare	Housing	Pensions	On the poor
Intercept					
Subjective mobility					
Downward	–0.024	–0.098**	–0.011	–0.024	0.159***
Upward	0.011	0.026	–0.026	–0.059*	0.010
Interaction terms					
Demographic variables					
Males x downward	0.025	0.003	–0.015	–0.026	0.009
Males x upward	0.033*	0.001	0.006	–0.024	–0.024
Married x downward	–0.005	–0.013	0.020	0.016	–0.024
Married x upward	–0.014	0.006	–0.005	0.009	–0.027
Residency					
Rural settlement x downward	–0.005	–0.008	–0.010	–0.002	0.029
Rural settlement x upward	0.013	–0.027	0.012	0.013	–0.005
Socio-economic variables					
Education x downward	0.003	0.011	–0.002	–0.003	–0.009
Education x upward	0.007	–0.007	0.004	–0.001	0.006
Soc. ladder x downward	–0.002	0.010	0.002	0.012**	–0.023***
Soc. ladder x upward	–0.008	0.002	–0.001	0.008	–0.003
Mobility in ladder x downward	–0.003	–0.014	–0.009	0.005	0.012
Mobility in ladder x upward	–0.008	–0.002	–0.002	–0.003	0.007
Labour market variables					
White collar x downward	–0.002	–0.050**	–0.013	0.003	0.017
White collar x upward	–0.008	–0.057**	0.011	0.019	–0.021
Unemployed x downward	–0.068**	–0.016	–0.014	0.026	0.078**
Unemployed x upward	–0.030	0.027	–0.035*	0.082***	–0.021
Social origin					
Par. edu. 12> years x downward	0.036	0.006	0.000	–0.019	0.011
Par. edu. 12> years x upward	0.003	0.004	0.005	–0.009	–0.014
Statistics					
Adjusted R^2	0.111	0.041	0.057	0.148	0.083
Number of observations	22,437	22,437	22,437	22,437	22,437

Notes: ***, **, and * denote statistical significance at the 0.01, 0.05, and 0.10 levels. Robust standard errors are calculated, not shown. Models control for country fixed effects and all other variables shown in Table 2 of the main text, weights applied. *Source:* Author's calculations based on data from LITS (EBRD, 2010).