How Should We Measure Americans' Perceptions of Socio-Economic Mobility Rates?

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Supplementary Materials

[Open Science Framework: https://osf.io/9ya67/]

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Table S1

Demographic characteristics of the total sample (N= 2,174)

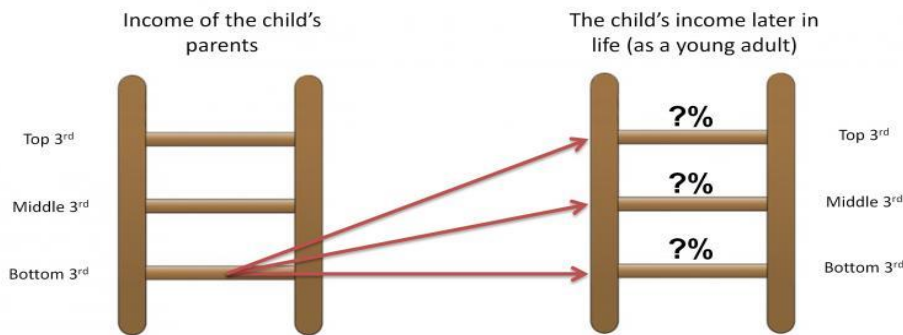| Age:		Political Ideology:	
18-30	54.8%	Strongly liberal	19.5%
31-40	26.3%	Slightly liberal	37.0%
41-50	9.6%	Neutral	25.0%
51-60	7.0%	Slightly conservative	14.0%
Over 60	2.3%	Strongly conservative	4.6%
Gender:		Party Affiliation:	
Male	61.8%	Republican	14.4%
Female	38.2%	Democrat	44.8%
Education Level:		Libertarian	8.5%
Didn't complete high school	0.8%	Green Party	2.8%
High School or GED	10.1%	Other/No party affiliation	29.5%
Some college/college graduate	73.0%	Marital Status:	
Graduate/professional degree	16.1%	Single	62.0%
Household Income (annual):		Married	30.6%
Under $25,000	25.3%	Divorced or separated	6.8%
$25,000 to $50,000	35.1%	Widowed	0.6%
$50,000 to $90,000	27.3%	U.S. region of residence	
Over $90,000	12.3%	West	24.5%
Racial Ethnicity:		South	29.2%
White/European-American	76.5%	Midwest	23.0%
Black/African-American	5.4%	Northeast	23.3%
Asian/Asian-American/Pac. Islander	10.3%		
Hispanic/Latino	5.7%		
Other	2.0%		

Table S2

Distribution of participants' social mobility estimates across conditions.

Estimates Range	Tertiles Conditions % of individuals from the bottom 33%:			Quintiles Conditions % of individuals from the bottom 20%:				
	…remaining in the bottom 33% (actual: 49%)	…moving up to the middle 33% (actual: 33.5%)	…moving up to the top 33% (actual: 17.6%)	…remaining in the bottom 20% (actual: 43%)	…moving up to the next-to-bottom 20% (actual: 27%)	…moving up to the middle 20% (actual: 17%)	…moving up to the next-to-top 20% (actual: 9%)	…moving up to the top 20% (actual: 4%)
0% - 4%	0.3 / 1.6	1.5 / 1.6	16.8 / 26.9	3.2 / 1.5	2.2 / 0.5	3.2 / 2.6	24.9 / 20.5	52.4 / 53.8
5 – 9 %	1.1 / 1	1.5 / 3.1	27 / 23.8	1.1 / 3.6	1.6 / 3.6	9.2 / 9.2	27 / 31.3	22.2 / 26.7
10 – 14%	1.7 / 0	4.1 / 4.7	32.1 / 22.8	6.5 / 5.6	7 / 11.3	14.6 / 24.6	22 / 28.2	15.1 / 11.8
15 – 19%	0.8 / 0.5	7.1 / 5.7	3.1 / 5.2	2.7 / 3.1	2.7 / 7.7	14.6 / 10.3	11.4 / 5.1	1.1 / 2.6
20 – 24%	3.0 / 2.1	10.7 / 14.0	9.7 / 8.3	8.6 / 10.3	23.8 / 26.2	29.7 / 22.6	11.9 /10.8	4.9 / 3.1
25 – 29%	3.0 / 3.6	8.7 / 13	2 /2.1	3.2 / 4.1	20 / 15.9	10.3 / 9.2	1.6 / 2.1	1.6 / 0
30 – 34%	5.7 / 5.7	27 / 19.2	3.1 / 5.7	13.5 / 9.2	25.9 / 21.5	11.4 / 10.8	1.1 / 1	1.1 / 0.5
35 – 39%	1.4 /1.6	8.7 / 8.3	0 / 0.5	7.0 / 2.6	4.9 / 7.2	1.1 / 1	0 / 0	0 / 0.5
40 – 44%	6.6 / 7.8	14.3 / 15.5	1 / 1	16.2 / 11.8	8.6 / 3.6	2.7 / 3.6	0 / 0	0 / 0
45 – 49%	1.1 / 1.6	2 / 3.1	0.5 / 0	5.9 / 4.6	0.5 / 0.5	1.1 / 0.5	0 / 0	0 / 0
50 – 54%	15.0 / 14.5	7.7 / 6.7	2 / 2.1	11.9 / 14.4	2.7 / 1.5	2.2 / 4.6	0 / 0	1.1 / 1
55 – 59%	6.5 / 6.7	0.5 / 1	0 / 0	2.7 / 3.6	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0
60 – 64%	16.1 / 11.9	3.1 / 2.1	1.5 / 0.5	7.0 / 10.8	0 / 0.5	0 / 1	0 / 0	0 / 0
65 – 69%	6.8 / 7.3	2.0 / 0.5	0.5 / 0	1.1 / 3.6	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0
70 – 74%	10.4 / 10.4	0 / 1	0 / 0.5	2.7 / 2.1	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0
75 – 79%	6.2 / 10.4	0.5 / 0	0.5 / 0	1.6 / 3.1	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0
80 – 84%	8.2 / 5.7	0.5 / 0	0 / 0.5	4.3 / 3.1	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0.5 / 0
85 – 89%	2.5 / 2.6	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 1	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0
90 – 94%	1.9 / 3.6	0 / 0.5	0 / 0	0 / 1.5	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0
95% - 100%	1.6 / 1.6	0 / 0	0 / 0	0.5 / 0.5	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0

Note. For the tertiles conditions (columns 2-4), the entries on the left side of the backslash are for the CSH condition; those on the right are for the DG-Tertile condition. For the quintiles conditions (columns 5-9), the entries on the left side of the backslash are for the DG condition; those on the right are for the CSH-Quintile condition.
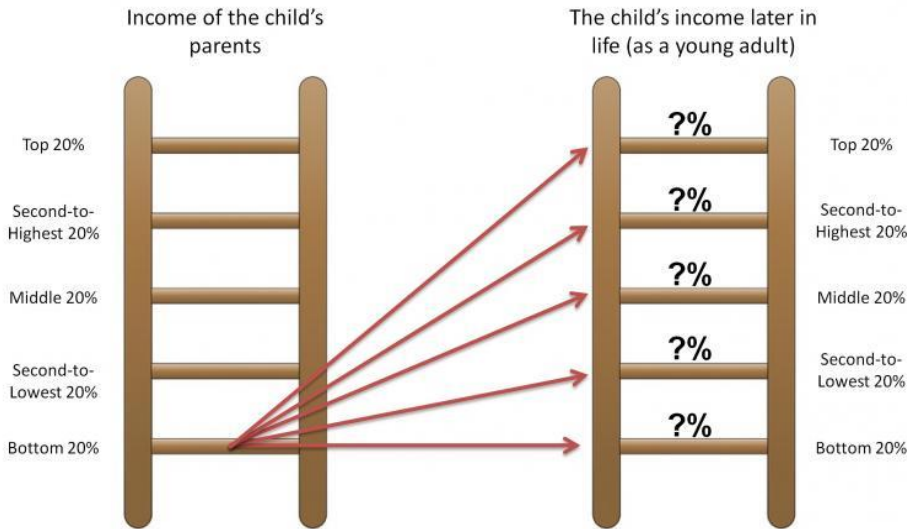
SURVEY ITEMS (MAIN STUDY)

Consider a group of American children (born in the early 1980's) to parents in the BOTTOM 3rd of the income distribution, which represents the lowest rung of the "income ladder." In other words, children of "lower class" parents. By the time those children have grown up to be young adults, in their mid-20's, what percentage of them do you think ended up in each of the following income categories? In other words, what percentage of them do you think stayed in the bottom third of the income distribution (i.e., lower class), like their parents, and what percentage of them moved up to the middle third (i.e., middle class) or to the top third (i.e., upper class)? Please type your estimates for each category in the boxes below. Note: your estimates for the three categories should sum to exactly 100%.
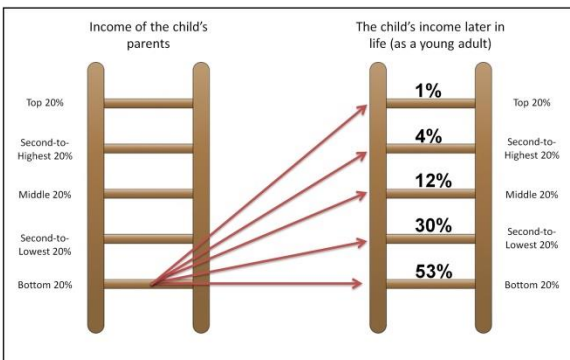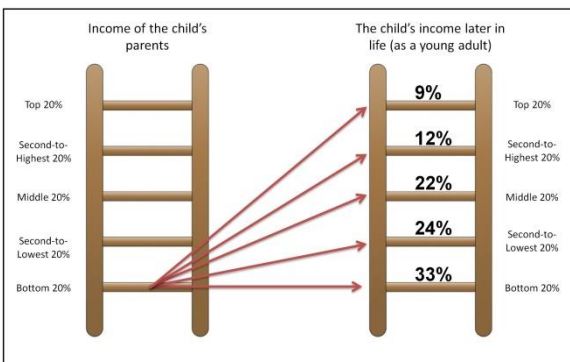
_____ Top third (i.e., upper class) (1)
_____ Middle third (i.e., middle class) (2)
_____ Bottom third (i.e., lower class) (3)

In the question below, we refer to 5 different economic groups of the population. We divide the U.S. population into five groups, each containing 20% of the total population. These groups are: the richest 20% of the population, the second richest 20% of the population, the middle 20%, the second poorest 20% and the poorest 20% of the population. We'd like to ask you a question about social mobility in the United States with respect to income. The question below asks you to estimate the chances that the income of an American picked at random would differ from that of his or her parents'. More specifically, when answering these questions, imagine that we took a person born into a family in the poorest 20% of the population at random. What is the likelihood that such a person would be in each of the following income groups as an adult?[MUST ADD TO 100]

_____ 1. Likelihood of a person born into a family in the poorest 20% rising (as an adult) to the richest 20% (1)
_____ 2. Likelihood of a person born into a family in the poorest 20% rising (as an adult) to the second richest 20% (2)
_____ 3. Likelihood of a person born into a family in the poorest 20% rising (as an adult) to the middle 20% (3)
_____ 4. Likelihood of a person born into a family in the poorest 20% rising (as an adult) to the second poorest 20% (4)
_____ 5. Likelihood of a person born into a family in the poorest 20% remaining (as an adult) in the poorest 20% (5)

Consider a group of American children (born in the early 1980's) to parents in the BOTTOM 20% of the income distribution, which represents the lowest rung of the "income ladder." In other words, children of "lower class" parents. By the time those children have grown up to be young adults, in their mid-20's, what percentage of them do you think ended up in each of the following income categories? In other words, what percentage of them do you think stayed in the bottom 20% of the income distribution (i.e., lower class), like their parents, and what percentage of them moved up to the second-to-lowest 20%, middle 20% (i.e., middle class), second-to-highest 20%, or to the top 20% (i.e., upper class)?Please type your estimates for each category in the boxes below. Note: your estimates for the three categories should sum to exactly 100%.
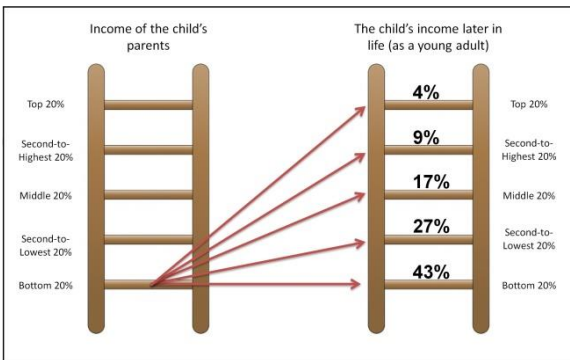
_____ Top 20% (1)
_____ Second-to-Highest 20% (2)
_____ Middle 20% (3)
_____ Second-to-Lowest 20% (4)
_____ Bottom 20% (5)

In the question below, we refer to 3 different economic groups of the population. We divide the U.S. population into three groups, each containing one-third of the total population. These groups are: the richest third of the population, the middle third of the population, and the poorest third of the population. We'd like to ask you a question about social mobility in the United States with respect to income. The question below asks you to estimate the chances that the income of an American picked at random would differ from that of his or her parents'. More specifically, when answering these questions, imagine that we took a person born into a family in the poorest third of the population at random. What is the likelihood that such a person would be in each of the following income groups as an adult?[MUST ADD TO 100]

_____ 1. Likelihood of a person born into a family in the poorest third rising (as an adult) to the richest third (1)
_____ 2. Likelihood of a person born into a family in the poorest third rising (as an adult) to the middle third (2)
_____ 3. Likelihood of a person born into a family in the poorest third remaining (as an adult) in the poorest third (3)
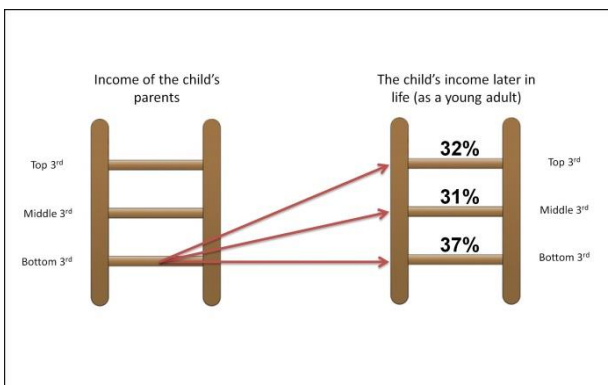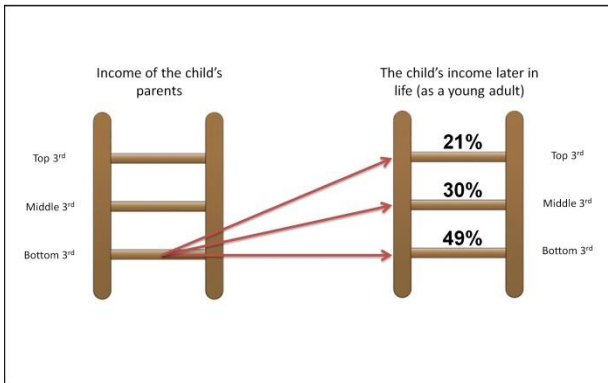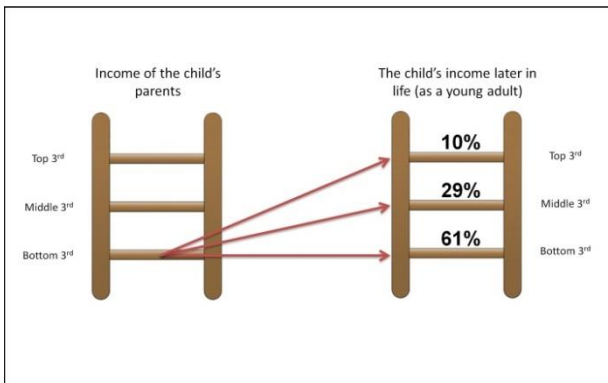
Consider a group of American children (born in the early 1980's) to parents in the BOTTOM 20% of the income distribution, which represents the lowest rung of the "income ladder." In other words, children "lower class"parents. By the time those children have grown up to be young adults, in their mid-20s, what percentage of them do you think ended up in each of the following income categories? In other words, what percentage of them do you think stayed in the bottom 20% of the income distribution (i.e., lower class), like their parents, and what percentage of them moved up to the second-to-lowest 20%, middle 20%, second-to-highest 20%, to the top 20% (i.e., upper class)?

Please select ONE of the three images below that most closely matches your estimates of the actual level of mobility.

Consider a group of American children (born in the early 1980's) to parents in the BOTTOM 3rd of the income distribution, which represents the lowest rung of the "income ladder." In other words, children of "lower class" parents. By the time those children have grown up to be young adults, in their mid-20s, what percentage of them do you think ended up in each of the following income categories? In other words, what percentage of them do you think stayed in the bottom third of the income distribution (i.e., lower class), like their parents, and what percentage of them moved up to the middle third (i.e., middle class) or to the top third (i.e., upper class)

Please select ONE of the three images below that most closely matches your estimates of the actual level of mobility.

Over the past 40 years, do you think the amount of social mobility (i.e., people moving up or down the social class ladder, relative to where they started out in life) in the United States has decreased, increased, or stayed about the same?

○ Greatly decreased (1)
○ Slightly decreased (2)
○ Stayed the same (3)
○ Slightly increased (4)
○ Greatly increased (5)

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Slightly Disagree (2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Slightly Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
In general, you find society to be fair. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
In general, the American political system operates as it should. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
American society needs to be radically restructured. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
The United States is the best country in the world to live in. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Most policies serve the greater good. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Everyone has a fair shot at wealth and happiness. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Our society is getting worse every year. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Society is set up so that people get what they deserve. (8)	○	○	○	○	○

Thank you for participating in my psychology experiment on decision-making. Please read the instructions below: Most modern theories of decision-making recognize the fact that decisions do not take place in a vacuum. Individual preferences and knowledge, along with situational variables can greatly impact the decision process. In order to facilitate our research on decision-making we are interested in knowing certain factors about you, the decision maker. Specifically, we are interested in whether you actually take the time to read the directions; if not, then some of our manipulations that rely on changes in the instructions will be ineffective. So, in order to demonstrate that you have read the instructions, please ignore the sports items below. Instead, simply continue reading after the options. Thank you very much.

- ❍ Basketball (1)
- ❍ Soccer (2)
- ❍ Running (3)
- ❍ Hockey (4)
- ❍ Football (5)
- ❍ Swimming (6)
- ❍ Tennis (7)

What is your age?

○ 18-30 (1)
○ 31-40 (2)
○ 41-50 (3)
○ 51-60 (4)
○ 60+ (5)

What is your gender?

○ Male (1)
○ Female (2)

What is your education level?

○ Didn't complete high school (1)
○ High school or GED (2)
○ Some college or college graduate (3)
○ Graduate or professional degree (4)

What is your household income level (i.e., the total annual income of all members of your household, including your own and any spouse, significant other, or care-giver)?

○ Under $25,000 per year (1)
○ $25,000 to $50,000 per year (2)
○ $50,001 to $90,000 per year (3)
○ Over $90,000 per year (4)

What is your ethnicity?

○ White/European-American (1)
○ Black/African-American (2)
○ Asian/Asian-American/Pacific Islander (3)
○ Hispanic/Latino (4)
○ Other (5)

On a continuum from liberal to conservative, how would you describe your political beliefs?

○ Strongly liberal (1)
○ Slightly liberal (2)
○ Moderate/Middle of the road (3)
○ Slightly conservative (4)
○ Strongly conservative (5)

Which of the following political parties do you identify with most?

○ Republican (1)
○ Democrat (2)
○ Libertarian (3)
○ Green Party (4)
○ Other/No party affiliation (5)

What is your current marital status?

○ Single (1)
○ Married (2)
○ Divorced or separated (3)
○ Widowed (4)

Do you live in the United States?

○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)

Which region of the United States do you live in?

○ West (1)
○ South (2)
○ Midwest (3)
○ Northeast (4)
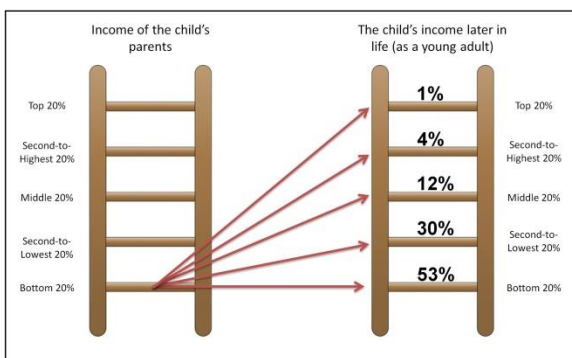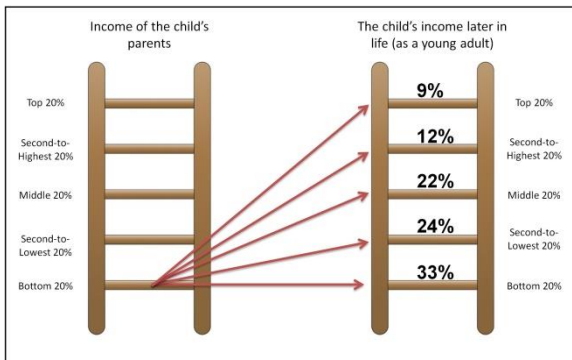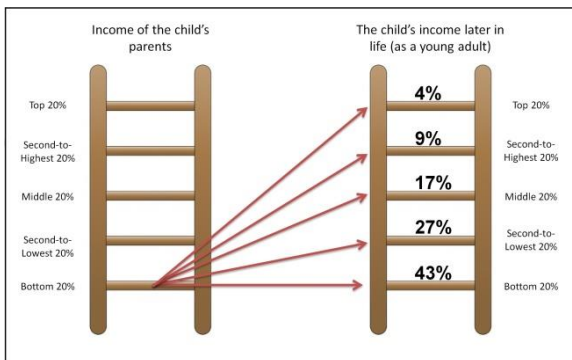
SURVEY ITEMS (FORCED-CHOICE REPLICATION)

Because we used the CSH question wording—which inadvertently may have primed participants for pessimism—to explain the forced-choice tasks to our participants in both (Quintile- and Tertile-Forced Choice) conditions, we subsequently conducted a small ($N = 99$) conceptual replication study of the forced-choice procedure with a streamlined prompt: "Please select the image below that represents your best estimate of the actual level of upward social mobility in the United States" (see our supplemental materials for full methodological details). Again, most participants selected the underestimates option in both the Quintile (68.8%) and Tertile (70.6%) conditions.

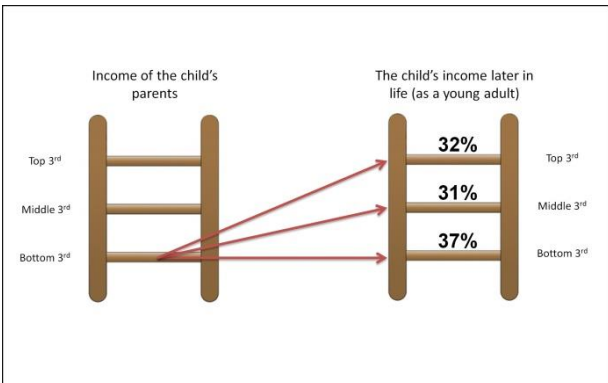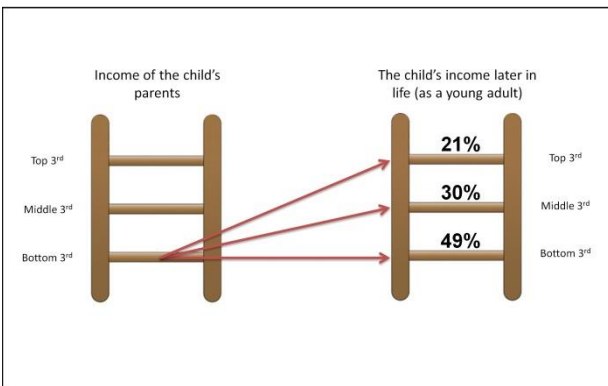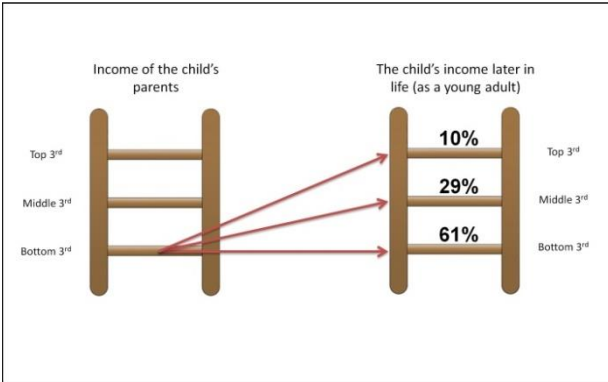 [**Data: https://osf.io/9ya67/:** SMRep_ForcedChoice_streamlinedprompt.sav]

Survey Materials:

QUINTILE CONDITION:

Please select the image below that represents your best estimate of the actual level of upward social mobility in the United States.

TERTILE CONDITION:

Please select the image below that represents your best estimate of the actual level of upward social mobility in the United States.

MTURK HIT LANGUAGE

Title: Social Survey (Vague Title on Purpose): $.50/5mins

Description: Answer survey questions that will help us better understand human psychology

Keywords: survey, answers. research, academic, psychology, opinions

Time allotted per assignment: 1 hour

HIT expires in: 7 days

Require 'Master' Designation? No

Additional Qualifications Workers Must Meet to Work on HIT:

- HIT approval rate for all Requesters' HITs is greater than or equal to 95
- Location is United States

***

Psychology Experiment! 50 Cents

University of Florida Research Study

Welcome! In this study, we will ask you to answer a few non-identifying questions about yourself (e.g., your beliefs and opinions). It should take less than 5 minutes to complete, and your time will make a crucial difference in our ability to answer some important questions. Your responses are strictly anonymous--we never attach any identifying information to your survey answers.

When you've finished the survey, we'll provide simple, detailed instructions for completing the HIT and receiving your reward.

You may only complete this HIT once. Multiple submissions (tracked by worker ID) will be rejected.

[survey link]

Survey verification: _____