

# Who Becomes a Liberal? An Empirical Study of the Choice between Liberalism and Libertarianism

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This paper explores the mechanism that affects the choice between liberalism and libertarianism by analyzing social survey data in Japan. Thanks to neoliberal deregulations in Japan and the increasing globalization of Japanese society, the Japanese are now more likely to support a kind of libertarianism that emphasizes free competition, even though such competition increases income inequality. However, many of the supporters of libertarianism also approve of welfare policies. They could be called liberals. The main research question of this paper is what factors affect the choice between being either a “pure” libertarian or a liberal. My analysis shows that intergenerational educational mobility has a substantive effect on this choice. That is, a person who has a level of educational attainment that is lower than that of their father will tend to be a liberal rather than a libertarian. This is because downward educational mobility makes them consider themselves the underdogs and, therefore, they feel the necessity of welfare policies for protection.

This paper shows that changes over time have an important effect on the formation of a person’s social consciousness. While it is true that such factors as education, income, and class affect social consciousness, the way that these factors change over time and across generations is also a strong explanatory variable, as exemplified by this paper.