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## Social Change, Mobility, and Inequality in Switzerland in the 1990s\*

Manfred Max Bergman\*\*, Dominique Joye\*\*\*, Beat Fux\*\*\*\*

### 1 Introduction

In the social sciences, the complex construct “social mobility” combines implicitly three elements: stratification, i. e. an unequal distribution of resources or positions; mobility, i. e. the degree of change in stratification; and the notion that these two are social in some sense. Accordingly, and in agreement with Sorokin (1927; 1959), we argue that an articulation of the concept of social mobility requires the inclusion of social stratification, the former construct being theoretically and methodologically underpinned by the latter. Consequently, differences in ideological and theoretical positions of social stratification lead to different ways of studying and interpreting social mobility.

Although social mobility can be described most generally as the study of transformations in the distribution of resources or social positions among individuals, families, or groups within a given structure<sup>1</sup>, in practice, it is mostly limited to *intergenerational* and *intragenerational* mobility. Intergenerational mobility usually describes the changes between individuals’ social positions and their parents’, while intragenerational mobility is mostly concerned with changes of individuals’ social positions over a period of time. The most frequently used indicators for the measurement of social mobility are occupational transitions, especially the movement from manual occupations to professional, managerial, technical, and low-level white-collar occupations (e. g. Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992; Goldthorpe, 1987).

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1 Regional or national changes of a given structure need to be differentiated from changes within a given structure.

Until recent studies by Levy et al. (1997) and Lamprecht and Stamm (1999; 2000; 2001), few Swiss research projects examined social stratification, change, and mobility nationwide. Instead, social stratification and mobility have usually been considered in studies that either focus on a particular region (e. g. Gurny et al., 1984; de Rahm et al., 1986; Ries and Kriesi, 1986) or use stratification as an explanandum for other phenomena (e. g. Bassand and Kellerhals, 1975; Lalive d'Epinay et al., 1982; Sidjanski et al., 1975).

In this article, we will analyze data from two surveys in the 1990s that have been specifically dedicated to the study of social inequality: the social inequality study conducted by Levy and his colleagues in 1991, and the 1999 ISSP on social inequality. Even if only eight years separate these two surveys, their comparison is particularly interesting because of the economic crisis in Switzerland during this time period. In 1991, just before the economic crisis, Switzerland enjoyed economic stability and prosperity, and the future economic prospects seemed good (cf. Levy et al., 1997, 507). Official unemployment figures were low at 1,2% for men and 2,5% for women, while underemployment was at 1,7% for men and 9,4% for women. In 1999, toward the end of the economic crisis, the economy re-stabilized, yet unemployment levels remained relatively high – 2,7% for men and 3,5% for women, while women had to bear the brunt of the increase in underemployment – 15,1%, compared to only 2,7% for men. The economic changes have had an impact on modern Swiss society in various ways, and, not surprisingly, brought about many studies on inequality and poverty during the 1990s (cf. Cunha et al., 1998; Levy et al., 1997). Here, we examine the changes occurred in the levels of, and the associations between, social indicators relating to socio-economic stratification. More precisely, we examine, first, the changes in income, education, and social status between 1991 and 1999 and, second, how the relations between the inequality indicators have changed over that period.

Three propositions can be outlined with regard to socio-structural mobility and change: (a) a modernist perspective would suggest the weakening even the disintegration of social structures, and the emergence of an individualistic design on the life trajectories of the population (e. g. Bauman, 1983; 2001; Lee and Turner, 1996); (b) a rational-liberal perspective would suggest that an economic crisis would accentuate a social structure by, for instance, eliminating the lesser skilled from the labor force and by reducing opportunities for those with disadvantaged backgrounds; (c) a structuralist perspective would propose that, due to intergenerational and intragenerational reproduction of social position and inequality, there are only few changes in the inequality structure over a relatively short time period (e. g. Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992; Prandy and Bottero, 2000; Prandy, Lambert and Bottero, 2002; Rytina, 2000a; 2000b; Shavit and Müller, 1998; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), i. e. that very few structural changes have taken place during the 1990s and that the opportunity structures remain fundamentally unchanged.

We subscribe to this third perspective, (c), and hypothesize that no significant changes have taken place in the inequality and opportunity structure in Switzerland, despite the economic crisis. However, we qualify this notion because we expect that the crisis has had a detrimental impact on the most vulnerable to economic fluctuations: the least educated and unskilled workers, who may have been forced out of the labor market. In other words, we do not expect significant social changes in this time period because intergenerational mobility will still play an important role, particularly through educational attainment (cf. Blau and Duncan, 1967), and educational achievement continues to have a significant influence on other forms of resources throughout the 1990s.

## 2 Conceptual- and Operational Definitions

*Social indicators:* If social mobility is a function of changes in social stratification, and if social stratification is constructed from social indicators, our point of departure in defining and describing intergenerational social mobility should be through an analysis of chronological changes in social indicators. A review of the literature on social indicators reveals significant variations in the definition of the concept. In this text, we apply the term to indices, which (a) represent the aggregate position, status, or change of individuals, groups, regions, or institutions, and (b) are central to a study of position, status, or change of the entities under investigation. In order to distinguish between objective and subjective social indicators, we will adopt the definitions proposed by Duncan, Fischhoff, and Turner (1984, 7): “*Subjective phenomena are those that, in principle, can be directly known, if at all, only by persons themselves ... Objective phenomena are those that can be known by evidence that is, in principle, directly accessible to an external observer.*”

Thus, occupational title or highest achieved education level are examples of objective social indicators, while the evaluation of past, current, and future prosperity are classified as subjective<sup>2</sup>.

We will examine five social indicators, of which personal monthly revenue, highest educational level achieved, and present or past membership in associations represent key variables for the measurement of economic, cultural, and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). The fourth is a subjective social indicator, which represents an evaluation of past, current, and future economic prospects. The final indicator will be a social stratification measure. Of interest will be not only changes in the social indicators during the 1990s, but also how their relations have changed during this time period.

2 Objectivity, as used here, does not imply that these indicators are free from subjective evaluation. Obviously, the meanings attributed to objective indicators and their influences are highly subjective.

*Social Stratification:* Stratification refers to the differential distribution of scarce yet desirable resources according to certain rules or criteria. The highest achieved education level of individuals and their parents is made partially responsible for the differentiation in social positions, as are occupation, income, property ownership, type of labor contract, power, prestige, and access to specific social networks. However, across the different stratification schemas, this list may contain either too few or too many elements, depending on the specific theoretical stance (Bergman and Joye, 2002). In addition, some of these elements may be conceptualized as either precursors or consequences of stratification.

Social stratification relates to the relative position of a person or group within a society, to the structuredness of inequality in a particular section of the population within a social hierarchy, and to categorical difference in access to economic, cultural, social and political resources. A measure of social stratification is achieved by mapping relevant indicators onto some form of system. Unfortunately, more questions arise from this statement than are answered by it. This is not the place for a detailed discussion of the theoretical assumptions of mainstream stratification schemas (see Bergman and Joye, 2002). For the purposes of this article, social stratification shall stand for the relative social position of individuals or households, in which scarce resources are both a structuring principle and a consequence of stratification. The reciprocal relationship between position and resources is necessarily multidimensional because the resources themselves are multidimensional. Income or prestige may or may not be easily transformed into power, depending on the context-specificity and the stratified dimension that is salient in a given moment. In this sense, individuals may occupy different social positions, if these are defined as locations within different dimensions of stratification. These dimensions, although strongly interrelated, are likely to encapsulate different classification rules or hierarchies. They may have different distribution characteristics, and they may react differently to temporal shifts. Thus, income, education, affiliations within networks, and occupational groupings may form imperfect relations with each other because neither are these resources distributed to the same degree among individuals, nor does the achievement or occupation of a particular position within one dimension automatically guarantee the achievement or occupation of a corresponding position within another.

As stated earlier, social mobility refers to changes in social positions within a given structure over time. Yet stratification schemas differ substantially with regard to theoretical assumptions and methodological detail, both of which have consequences on the conceptualization and interpretation of social change. In order to explore intergenerational mobility more widely, we have decided to use two different stratification schemas which represent two quite different theoretical points of departure: the Swiss Socio-Professional Categories (CSP) (Joye and

Schuler, 1995; Levy et al., 1997) and the Cambridge Social Interaction and Stratification Scale (CAMSIS) (Stewart et al., 1980; Bergman et al., 2002).

The Swiss Socio-Professional Categories have been developed, first, to improve both the eclecticism and complexity inherent in the construction of other international stratification schemes (notably Erik Olin Wright's and John H. Goldthorpe's class schemas); second, to produce a stratification scheme within the limitations of the data available in Switzerland; and, third, to examine idiosyncratic characteristics of social stratification in Switzerland, which may be lost with a standardized schema. The points of departure for the CSP are stratifying dimensions similar to Wright's class schema with the following adjustments: instead of emphasizing skills, it uses the highest attained education level as one of its components. Second, in addition to the emphasis on ownership of property and the means of production, it incorporates the idea that in modern industrial societies, ownership is transferred into corporate forms (cf. Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992, 40), i. e. most owners are salaried employees in their own corporation. Hence, in terms of social stratification, most owners are in a similar position to executive directors and high-level managers (Joye and Schuler, 1996). More precisely, ownership is often transformed into corporate forms where owners become shareholders, while many salaried executives are often shareholders as well.

The CSP subdivides occupations mainly according to (a) the highest attained level of education and (b) a mixture between authority over subordinates and employment status. The use of information on educational attainment is quite subtle in that it takes into account not only its absolute level, but also its relevance to a specific occupation. For instance, a university degree will have a stronger effect on the classification of an occupation, if advanced formal education is related to the tasks and career trajectory of that specific occupation. The following table illustrates the categories within this schema:

Table 1: CSP Categories

Position	Education			
	University	Technical and professional	Apprenticeship	Compulsory education at most
Top executives	1) top executives			
Self-employed	2) liberal professions	3) self-employed		
Wage-earners	4) intellectuals and managers	5) middle employees	<i>skilled workers:</i> 6) non-manual 7) manual	8) unskilled

In contrast to the CSP, which can be considered a class-based schema in that it distinguishes occupational categories by their level of education, authority, and ownership of property, CAMSIS proposes continuities based on relational access to resources. According to the CAMSIS approach, individuals are embedded in socially moderated networks of relationships within which they engage in social, cultural, political, and economic interactions that are qualitatively and quantitatively different from interactions with persons more distant from these networks. For instance, acquaintances, friends, and marriage partners tend to be chosen as social and economic exchange partners much more frequently from within a given social network than from without<sup>3</sup>. As both a function and a consequence of selective interchanges, a social structure is continuously reproduced. The relational perspective of social, economic, and political structuring proposes a certain regularity and patterning of interactions, as well as an interactive negotiation of relations and their consequences. This central feature of CAMSIS is its most important contribution to stratification theory because the scale goes beyond simple structuralism, as resource distribution is not merely seen as a function of a static structure. Instead, stratification here is conceived of as being constituted in actual and potential relationships within dynamically re-constitutive networks, in the sense that social structure is continually reproduced. An assumption of CAMSIS, shared with virtually all other stratification measures, is that occupational groups are formidable indicators of social stratification because employment still provides the major mechanism by which social and economic rewards are distributed directly or indirectly in modern societies.

The structure of the remaining text is as follows: first, we will explore social change and mobility with regard to social indicators, notably, income, educational achievement, occupational structure and subjective evaluations of past, present, and future prospects. Second, we will examine changes in the structure of the social indicators between 1991 and 1999.

### 3 Social Indicators and Mobility

Because changes in social position encapsulate at least implicitly within most social stratification schemas changes in income, educational achievement, and occupations we will begin our analysis with these. Additionally, we will explore changes in respondents' subjective evaluation of their past, current, and future prospects.

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3 A network's "inside" and "outside" are relative and dependent on the context. Moreover, from a stratification viewpoint, networks are overlapping, i. e. links form a web of networks without clear boundaries, but they nevertheless reveal a hierarchy that structures resource inequalities and interactions. Reciprocally, interactions based on resource inequalities form a hierarchy that gives stability to overlapping networks.

Changes in the income, educational, and professional structure according to our data are not easily explained. First, the questions that were asked in the two surveys were not always exactly the same. Second, the sampling and survey methods, and the weighting of the cases to adjust for sampling bias were slightly different. Third, institutional changes in Switzerland between 1991 and 1999, especially in the educational structure, makes a comparison difficult. Finally, regardless of the quality of a sample, its statistics never reproduce exactly the population parameters. These considerations do not invalidate comparison but, instead, introduce an appreciable level of caution to our analyses. As more waves of the Swiss Household Panel become available, future studies will be able to avoid some of these limitations through cross-sequential and time-sequential research designs.

### 3.1 Income

In 1991, respondents were asked to choose one of 11 income ranges, which corresponded to their total personal income. In 1999, they were asked about their total monthly net income in Swiss Francs, including income from non-work related sources. While, logically, no difference should exist between these questions once we recode the answers from the 1999 format of the question to that of 1991, previous research shows that people are more comfortable with choosing income brackets than with reporting their actual income (Juster and Smith, 1997; Bell, 1984; Moore and Loomis, 2001). Consequently, we would expect some respondents to refuse to answer to this question on the grounds that this information is too sensitive. Alternatively, some may underreport their income in 1999. Sample weighting usually corrects some bias as it attempts to adjust the sample statistics to the parameters of the population as revealed by the national census, for example.

In the following income comparison, only the respondents who work more than 30 hours per week are included. Respondents who claim to have a changeable weekly workload are not present in these figures.

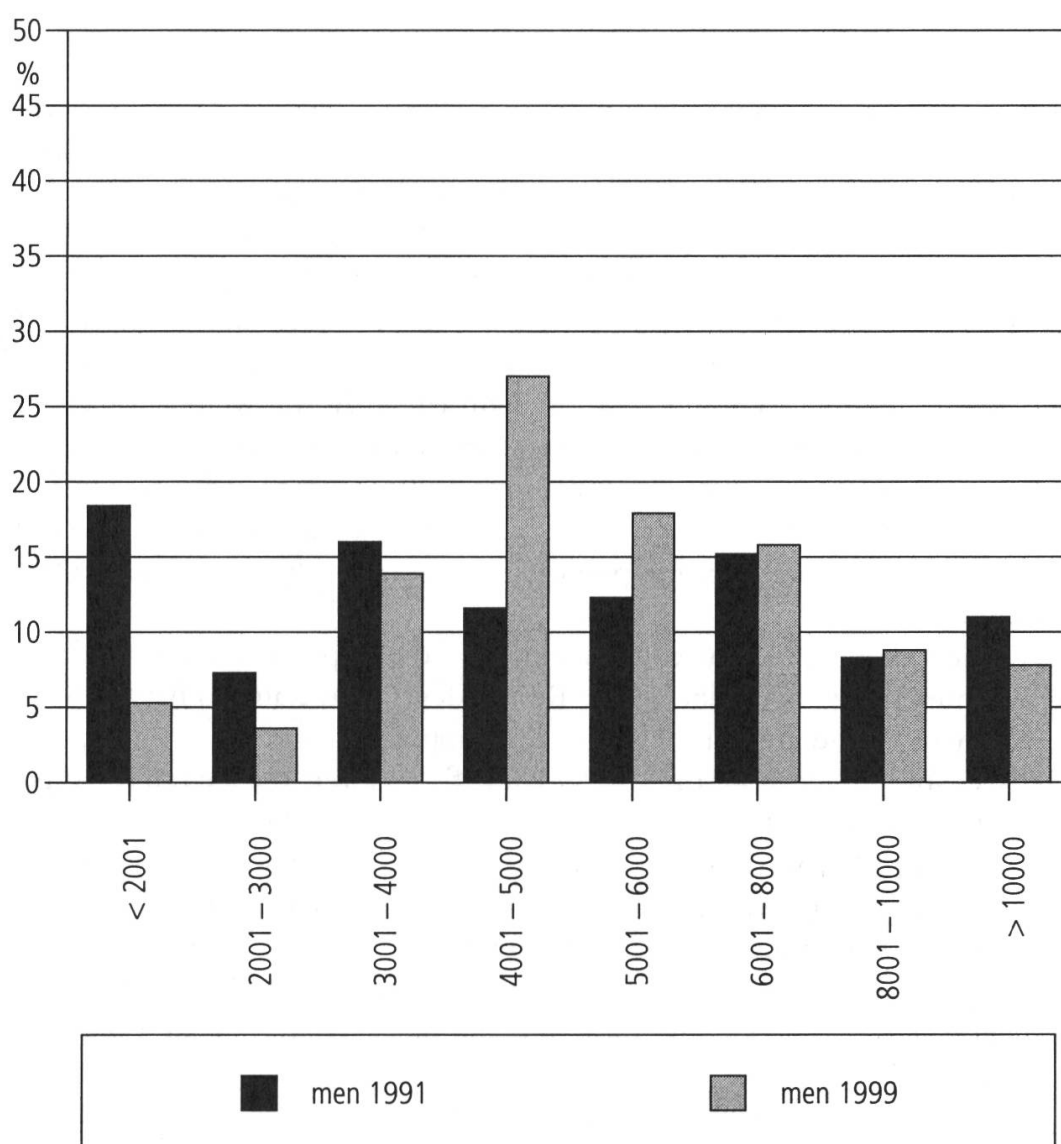
To enable comparison, the 1999 income figures were recoded to correspond to the 1991 coding. Also, due to the low incidence of the lowest and highest income bracket, they were collapsed into their next-lowest and next-highest category. More generally, we should emphasize that these figures are voluntary self-reports and should, thus, not be over-interpreted. They are not suitable for calculating precise means and variances, or making statistical comparisons (cf. Levy et al., 1997, 75). Finally, these income brackets are not adjusted to the inflation, which was more than 25% between 1991 and 1999. Thus, small increases in income between 1991 and 1999 on the graph may actually signify a decrease in income, if we were able to adjust our income brackets to the inflation<sup>4</sup>.

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4 Adjusting to the inflation is difficult because the income presented here is in income brackets and some of these income brackets are rather large. Some individuals, after adjusting their

For men in full-time work, we can observe that the frequency of the lower income brackets decreased while, concurrently, middling income brackets increased. This does not necessarily mean that these men earned more in 1999 than in 1991. Considering the greater unemployment and underemployment rate in 1999 as well as emigration of some of the less educated and qualified foreign workforce in the 1990s, due to improved economic opportunities in their home countries in conjunction with the economic crisis in Switzerland, we are most

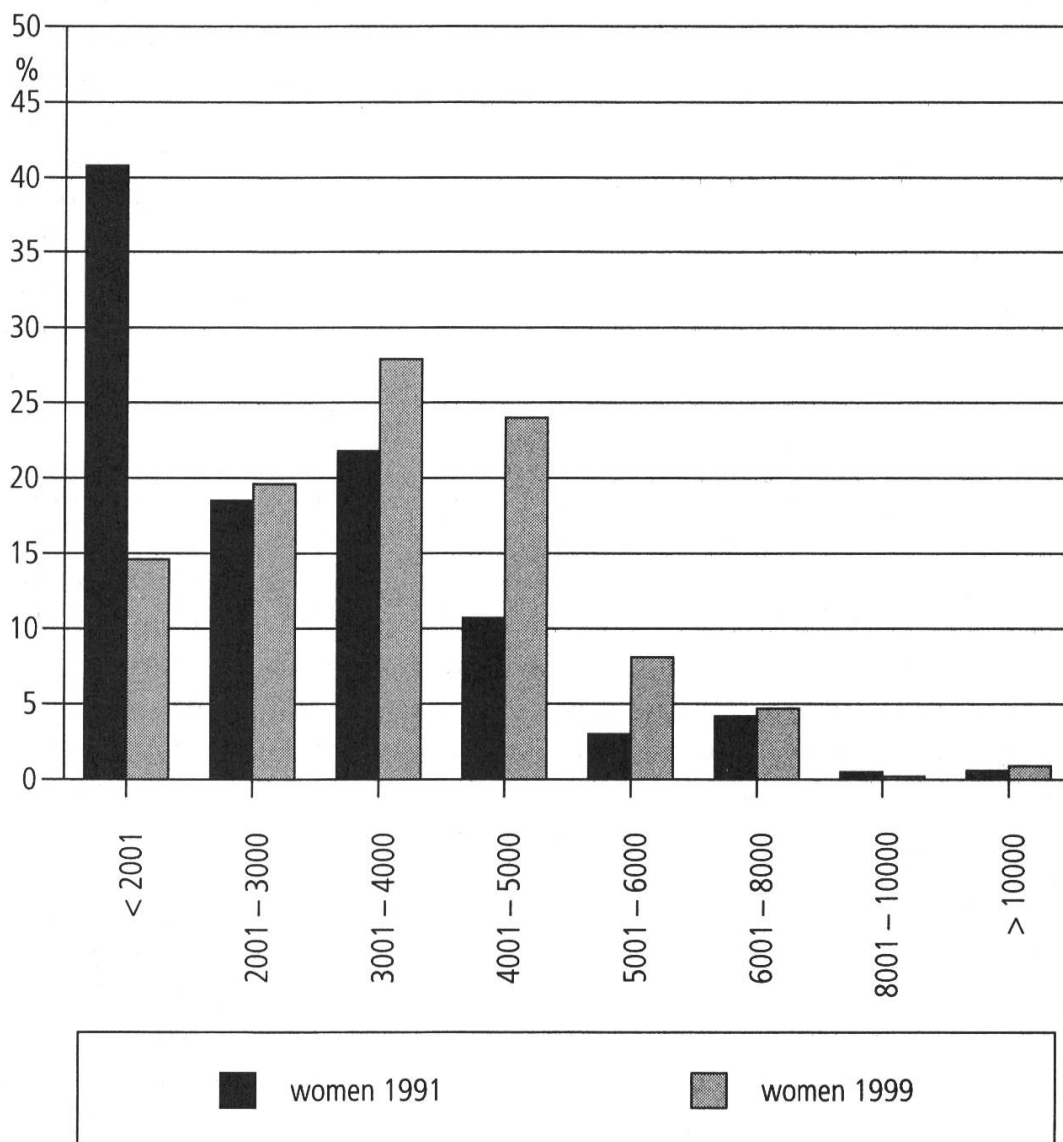
Figure 1: Self-Reported Net Income for Men in Full-Time Employment in 1991 and 1999



income to the inflation, should be transferred to another bracket, but we do not have sufficient information about which individuals should be reclassified.

probably dealing with complex wage and employment dynamics: first, increased educational qualification may have indeed led to improved wages for some, particularly because the retiring subset of the population has lower educational credentials than the incoming workforce. Consequently, at the lower end of the income scale, men with the lowest paid occupations (who tend to be the least educated, professionally credentialled, and qualified) were partially removed from the full-time labor market during the 1990s. Unfortunately, we do not have access to cross-sequential data that would allow us to test these hypotheses in more detail. Overall, we find that the income distribution has “normalized,” i. e.

Figure 2: Self-Reported Net Income for Women in Full-Time Employment in 1991 and 1999



the distribution of monthly personal income for men in 1999 was shaped so that most income was concentrated in the middle brackets and fewer observations can be detected in the highest and lowest income brackets. In other words, tentative evidence suggests that for full-time employed males, i. e. those who managed to hold on to full-time employment and those who entered the employment market during the 1990, income inequality has decreased.

We find similar trends among women. Here as well, a significant drop in the lowest income bracket between 1991 and 1999 suggests that far fewer women are in the lowest paid full-time occupations, while there is an increase in the frequencies of incomes especially in the income bracket of CHF 4'000 to 5'000 per month. However, if we consider the impact of unemployment and underemployment of the 1990s, especially for women, we have to be cautious about this result. Instead, as with men, we believe that the following dynamics explain these changes: first, many women who were in low-paid full-time occupations that required few or no formal professional credentials in 1991 were either forced into under- or unemployment, or are now holding multiple part-time jobs, or have become homemakers. Second, many of the low paying occupations were held by foreign nationals who left during the Swiss economic crisis. Finally, women who retired between 1991 and 1999 have lower educational credentials than the incoming workforce. Countering this trend is the fact that women in the late 1990s are better qualified and are, thus, able to secure better paying jobs, especially if they are engaged in full-time employment. Again, our data does not permit us to pursue these hypotheses further. Nevertheless, we can state more generally that women in full-time employment are no longer as concentrated in the lowest income bracket in 1999 as they were in 1991.

If we compare self-reported income distributions between men and women (figure 1 and 2), we observe a clear income differential: far more women are in the lower income brackets, and far more men are in the higher income brackets. This can be illustrated graphically by scaling the cumulative percentages of income between men and women against each other, as shown in figure 3.

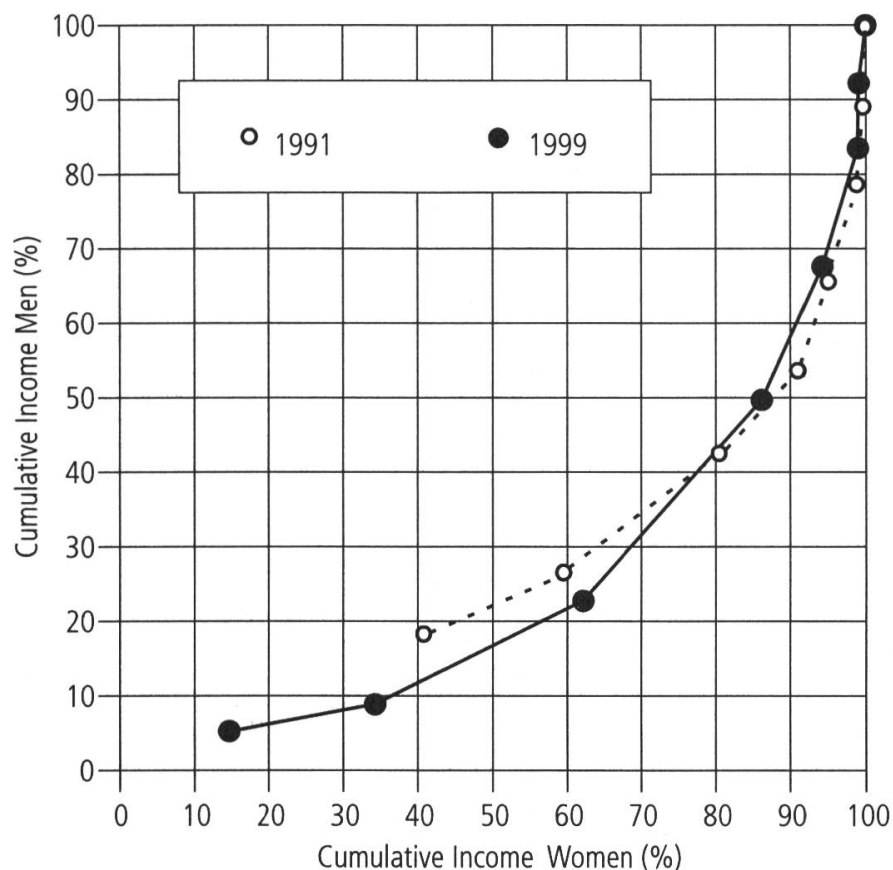
A cumulative income distribution between men and women that would follow a positive diagonal would imply (a) an unequal income distribution within gender groups but (b) an equal income distribution between the genders. If the income were equal both between and within the gender groups, the observations would be centered in the middle of the graph.

Figure 3 clearly shows significant differences in earnings between men and women in full-time employment. Far more women than men are in the lower income brackets. For example, in 1999, 34% of the women earned CHF 3'000.– or less, as compared with only 9% of the men. The endpoint on the lower percentage side of the curve for 1991 signals a high level of low-paying full-time positions for both men and women, compared to the endpoint of 1999, which

implies a significant decrease for both men and women in low-paying full-time work. Concurrently, in the lower half of the figure, the curve for 1999 is somewhat further away from a diagonal, compared to 1991, which suggests that while the lowest paying jobs partially disappeared, especially for women, the inequality between men and women has actually increased within this income bracket. Again, we do not have sufficient detail in our data to test either the significance or the reliability of these suppositions.

From these findings, we can only conclude that women earn significantly less than men, the lowest paid occupations are far less frequent in 1999, compared to 1991 – especially for women, and that there may be a slightly greater inequality in earnings between men and women for low-paying jobs in 1999, compared to 1991. But to explain, rather than merely describe, income levels, we have to look at its correlates, namely educational achievement and occupational titles.

Figure 3: Cumulative Percentages of Income between Men and Women in 1991 and 1999



### 3.2 Education

A comparison of highest education levels achieved between 1991 and 1999 is difficult because of actual institutional reforms and because education was coded differently in the two data sets. Thus, we will limit our examination for the most part to a comparison between educational achievements of men and women<sup>5</sup>. In order to avoid further confusions between the categories, the titles of the educational levels have not been translated into English, but are presented as they appear in the original version<sup>6</sup>.

Table 2: Educational Achievement in 1991

Educational achievement in 1991 (in %)	Gender		Total
	Men	Women	
1 école primaire	10.2	16.7	13.5
2 école secondaire	10.2	17.6	13.9
3 apprentissage	31.5	29.5	30.5
4 école professionnelle	16.3	14.9	15.6
5 gymnase	7.7	12.6	10.2
6 technicum	7.2	0.3	3.7
7 université	17.0	8.3	12.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

These figures clearly show that women have obtained lower educational credentials, compared to men, both in 1991 and 1999. More precisely, not only are they more concentrated in the lower levels, but fewer have a higher education. If we combine the higher technical and university degrees in 1991 and in 1999<sup>7</sup>, we find no reliable differences in the distribution of men and women, respectively, between 1991 and 1999<sup>8</sup>. In contrast, there was a general decrease in the lowest

5 Weighted samples: 1991: n = 2'007; 1999: n = 2'010.

6 It is notoriously difficult to compare educational achievement levels. Here, the difficulty lies in the fact that educational reforms have taken place in the 1990s. In addition, both surveys use different classifications and labels. While an attempt was made to standardize them for our comparison, we will avoid translating the labels because the English terminology is not sufficiently close to either the German or the French labels.

7 For 1991: "technicum" and "université." For 1999: "Technische- and Fachschule," "Fachhochschule," and "Universität."

8 Of all women in our sample in 1991, 8,6% of them had a higher level of education, compared to 6,8% in 1999. Of all men in our sample in 1991, 24,2% had a higher level of education, compared to 21,1% in 1999. The differences within the gender groups are unreliable.

education credentials between 1991 and 1999 for both men and women<sup>9</sup>, although this decrease was most pronounced for women<sup>10</sup>. The greatest change for women occurred in apprenticeships, where in 1999 over half of the female respondents reported to have completed an apprenticeship, compared to only 29,5% in 1991.

Table 3: Educational Achievement in 1999

Educational achievement in 1991 (in %)		Gender		Total
		Men	Women	
0	Keine Ausbildung	1.0	1.4	1.2
1	Obligatorische Ausbildung	10.0	14.4	12.3
2	Anlehre/HH-Lehrjahr	2.0	6.8	4.6
3	Berufslehre 3 J.	27.0	40.3	34.1
4	Berufslehre >3J.	17.1	10.6	13.6
5	Berufsmaturität	2.5	1.5	1.9
6	Diplommittelschule	3.5	4.4	4.0
7	Maturitätsschule	4.6	8.7	6.8
8	Höhere berufliche Ausbildung	11.2	5.4	8.1
9	Technische/Fachschule	2.8	0.5	1.5
10	Fachhochschule	7.1	1.4	4.0
11	Universität, Hochschule	11.2	4.9	7.8
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Overall, women tend to be less well educated than men, both in terms of the highest education levels, where men dominate, and the lowest education levels, where women dominate. Nevertheless, women move out of the lowest education levels more quickly than men do, if we compare the figures for the two time periods. We explore this issue further below because we expect this trend to be more pronounced among professional women; we believe that employed women in 1999 are likely to be better educated still than employed women in 1991.

Differences in educational achievement go some way in explaining income differentials. Obviously, income is not only predicted by how much education individuals have acquired, but what kind of education they have and how it is put to use in the professional world. For the former, we do not have the data, but our attention now turns to the latter – the professional categories.

9 For 1991: “école primaire” and “école secondaire”. For 1999: “keine Ausbildung”, “obligatorische Ausbildung”, “Anlehre/HH-Lehrjahr”, and “Diplommittelschule”.

10 1991: 20,4% of all men and 34,4% of all women vs. 1999: 16,5% of all men and 27,0% of all women.

### 3.3 Occupational Structure

Occupational positions represent the crossroads of educational attainment, income, skills, and power. We will examine the occupational structure from the distributions of Swiss Socio-Professional Categories (CSP)<sup>11</sup>. Put simply, the CSP categorizes occupations according to the degree of authority, ownership, and education levels, as in Table 1. The following two tables, one for each survey, presents a breakdown of CSP according to gender.

Table 4: Socio-Occupational Structure (CSP) in 1991

CSP 1991 (in %)		Gender		Total
		Men	Women	
1 and 2	Executives and liberal professions	2.8	1.5	2.3
3	Self-employed	10.3	8.8	9.7
4	Intellectuals and Managers	11.0	5.3	8.7
5	Intermediary professions	21.4	16.8	19.6
6	Skilled non-manual	17.3	35.8	24.7
7	Skilled manual	16.8	5.5	12.2
8	Unskilled	20.4	26.3	22.8
Total		100	100	100

Table 5: Socio-Occupational Structure (CSP) in 1999

CSP 1999 (in %)		Gender		Total
		Men	Women	
1 and 2	Executives and liberal professions	2.1	2.2	2.6
3	Self-employed	18.5	7.2	12.5
4	Intellectuals and Managers	19.4	6.9	12.8
5	Intermediary professions	20.7	20.5	20.6
6	Skilled non-manual	14.2	40.4	28.0
7	Skilled manual	15.4	4.8	9.8
8	Unskilled	8.6	17.9	13.5
Total		100	100	100

As indicated in the tables, we collapsed the first two categories because of the low number of observations in each category and because these two categories tend to be very similar in educational attainment, income, social position, and professional outlook.

11 Weighted samples: 1991: n = 1185; 1999: n = 1885.

The most striking difference between 1991 and 1999, according to these two tables, is the significant increase in self-employment among men in 1999, and the decrease in unskilled occupations for both men and women.

The higher rate of self-employment can be explained partially by the increase in the un- and underemployment rate in the 1990s. It is likely that men in particular became self-employed, rather than claiming unemployment. This option is far more acceptable in a culture that has not experienced significant unemployment in recent decades and, thus, considers unemployment a shameful state and evidence for personal failure, particularly for men, for whom work is a central source of personal identity and self-expression.

Finally, the drop in unskilled occupations is but a continuing trend since the 1980s, where unskilled labor dropped from 31% in 1980 to just 22% in 1990 (Joye and Schuler, 1996). As with income, we propose that this can be explained in a number of ways, including: forcing unskilled laborers into unemployment; a general social change, where people are acquiring better skills and job-related education, including post-primary, further education and remedial programs; the emigration of many foreign-born unskilled and low-skilled laborers to their home countries; and the exit of low skilled retirees who are less educated and have comparatively lower skills in a technologically advanced society, compared to the entry of relatively higher skilled young adults into the workforce the 1990s. This trend corresponds to the finding that the frequency of the lowest paid jobs decreased substantively in the 1990s for both men and women.

### 3.4 Subjective Assessment of Prospects

So far, we have examined income, education, and occupational categories, but it is not only these objective indicators that are of importance to the well being of a population. The subjective evaluation of one's current position, as well as the subjective evaluation of future prospects has been largely neglected. Yet, a contented population with a positive future outlook is likely to interact with economic, social, and political institutions more positively than a population that is discontented.

In 1991, respondents were asked to position themselves on a "social scale" from 0 (least desirable) to 100 (best possible), as they experience their existence (a) at that moment, (b) five years ago, and (c) in five years. In 1999, they were asked to choose a position between 1 and 10 on a scale that represents how much better or worse their position was in comparison to others, 1 being the lowest value and 10 the highest. This judgement was requested for (a) their current situation, (b) their situation ten years ago, and (c) in ten years. Although these questions differ not only in the wording and the scale of the response, but also in the time spans, we believe that the most important reference points are not the

precise number of years that are part of this question, but rather the subjective and relative aspects.

In figures 4 and 5, we present a comparison of the subjective evaluation of past, present, and future prospects as they occurred before the economic crisis in 1991 and toward the end of it in 1999.

Figure 4: Subjective Evaluation of Past, Current, and Future Standing in 1991

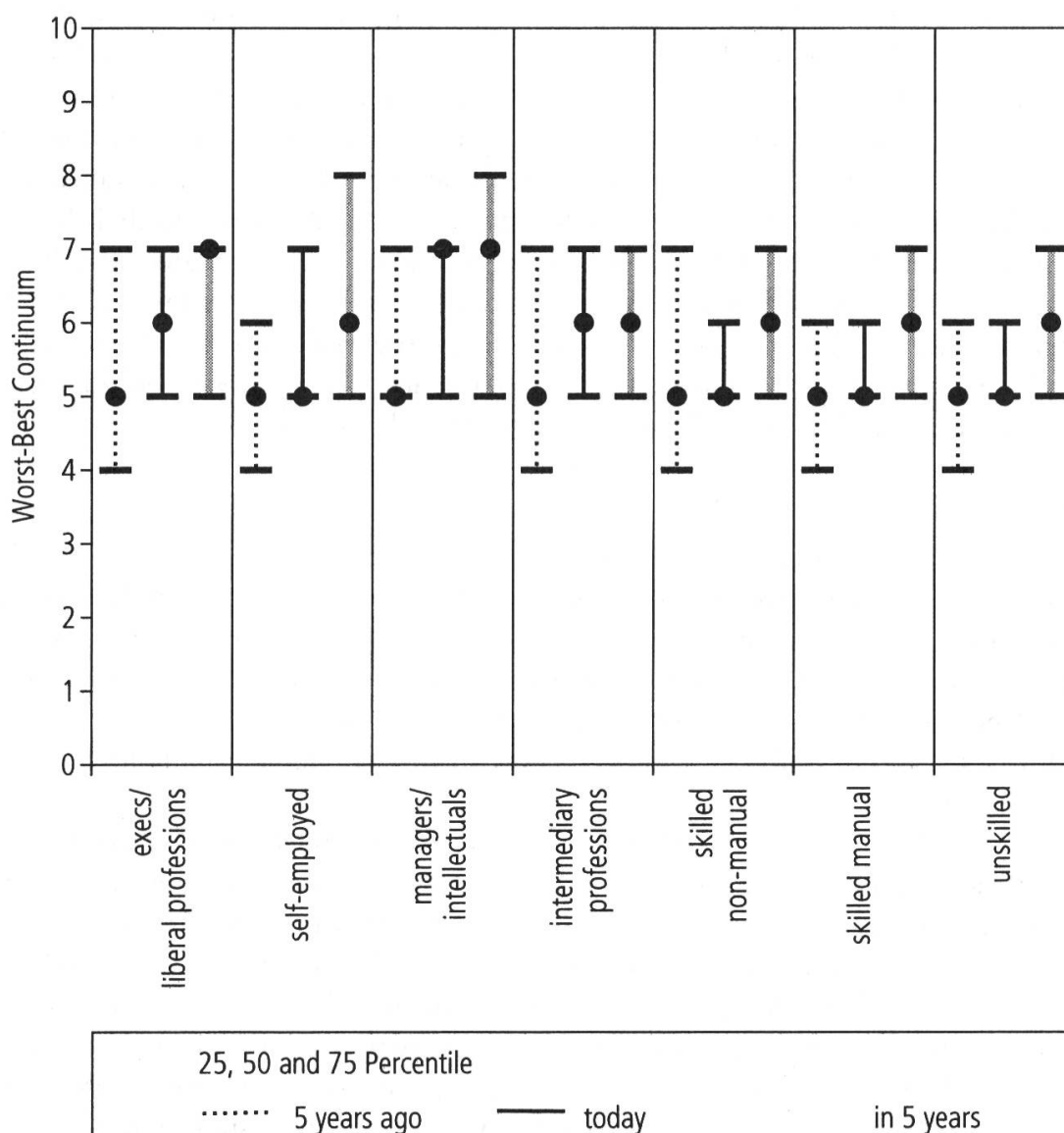
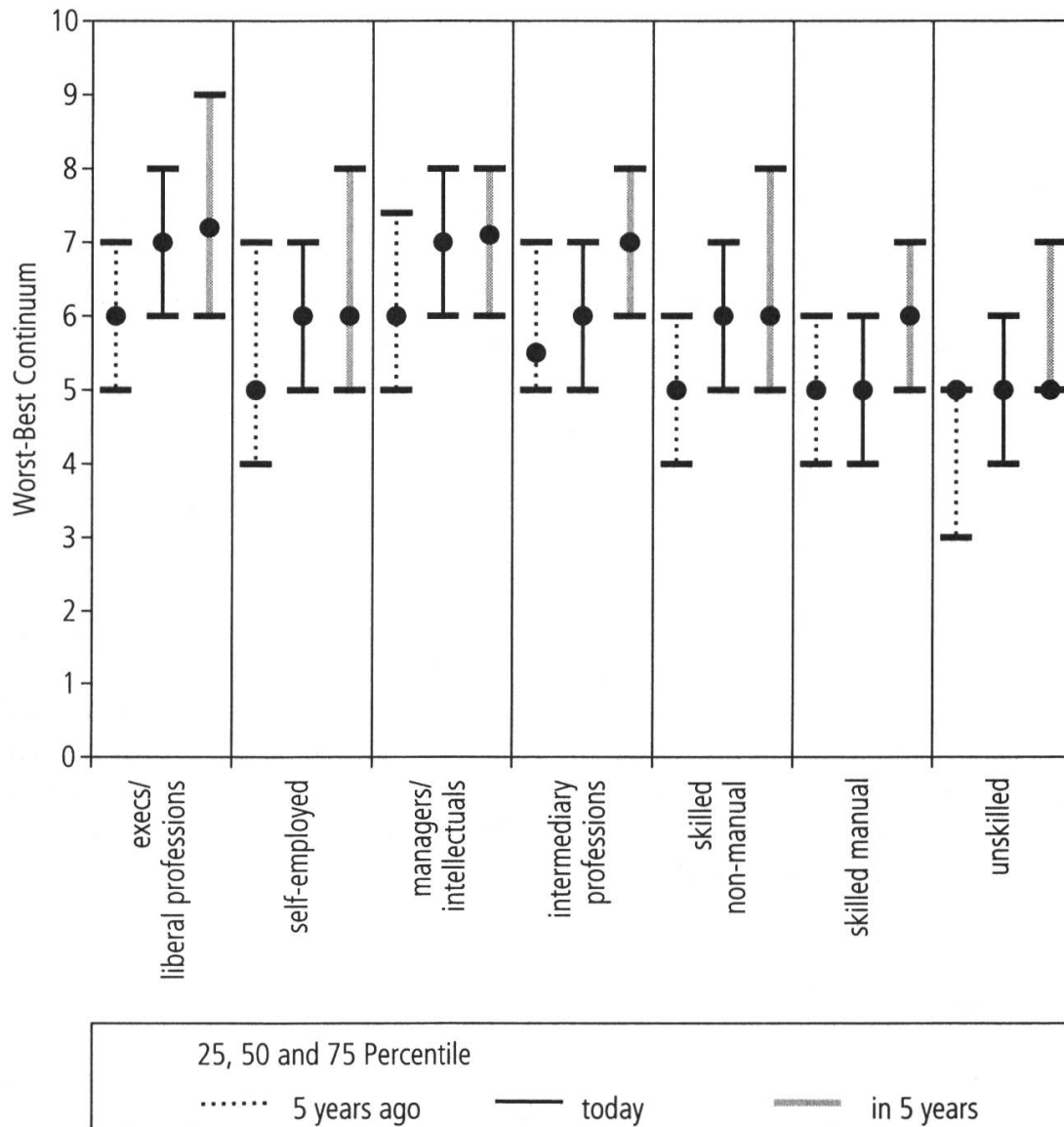


Figure 5: Subjective Evaluation of Past, Current, and Future Standing in 1999



To enable comparison between 1991 and 1999, we adjusted the 1991 data to the scale of the question from 1999, which introduces an imprecision into the figures that does not allow us to statistically describe the differences within and between the two time points. In both surveys, we can observe a general upward trend in the sense that most individuals believe that they are on an upward trend, coming from a lower position and going to a higher position, compared to where they are at the moment.

The most striking change between the two time points is that the past outlook was poorer in 1991 only for executive managers, the liberal professions, and intellectuals. However, this may not necessarily mean that the economic crisis had a positive effect on the evaluation of the past for these professions. Instead, we may hypothesize that many managers and intellectuals had to find work in other professions due to low reserves, terminations of, or insecure, employment contracts. Those who were left by the end of the crisis are the more successful ones, who may have had a positive outlook in 1991 already, or who were promoted into these position during the 1990s, despite an economic crisis which burdened the country.

The subjective evaluation of the present position is also better for the higher occupational categories: executives, liberal professions, managers, and intellectuals evaluated their position in 1999 more positively than they did in 1991. Not only can this be explained again by referring to the subgroup of individuals, who remained in these professions during the crisis, but their satisfaction can also be explained by their comparatively privileged position during a period where others who were less privileged were hit harder. Unskilled professions, as we have shown earlier, were particularly effected by the crisis by, for instance, being driven into under- or unemployment. Their evaluation of their position before the economic crisis in 1991 was indeed more positive than in 1999.

Future prospects are evaluated particularly highly in 1991 for executives and the liberal professions, probably because they are expecting an upturn in their ventures at the end of the crisis, while the unskilled labor force has the lowest future projections because they may indeed recognize their limited chances in a modern and technologically advanced society.

## 4 Social Stratification, Change, and Mobility

In this section, we examine the direct and indirect effects, as well as interactions, between educational achievement, personal monthly revenue, occupational status, social stratification (CAMSIS), membership in associations, age, and gender in 1991 and 1999. For these purposes, we will modify and expand the status attainment model by Blau and Duncan (1967).

### 4.1 Method

#### 4.1.1 Data

Due to the centrality of work as a determinant of social position in modern industrial societies, most social stratification measures use the current occupational title as one of its fundamental components in the assessment of social position of the individual compared to others (Bergman and Joye, 2001). This

means that for the following analysis, only those who are currently employed are included. Consequently, in the following analysis, we can make inferences only about the part of the Swiss population, who were employed at the time of data collection for the surveys.

The following variables will be used for analyses: *highest education level achieved* by ego, ego's father, and ego's mother (educ\_e, educ\_f, educ\_m): the 1999 coding of highest achieved education level was adapted to the 1991 data set; *membership in associations* (assoc): an index of the degree of membership in associations was constructed by calculating the average of all association scores available in both data sets<sup>12</sup>; *social stratification* (CAMSIS): because the CSP uses the highest achieved education level as one of its primary components, it was not suitable for this analysis. Instead, we used CAMSIS, which is based on occupational title and the resulting relationships formed within social networks; *personal monthly income* (revenue): for comparability, we recoded the 1999 data, which contains information on monthly personal income, into the income brackets used in the 1991 survey; *occupational status* (occustat): information about the average weekly hours spent working in the primary occupation was recoded into full- and part-time work, using a 30-hour threshold.

Missing data for the highest education levels and the social position were deleted listwise. Mean replacement was used on all other variables. Sample adjustments to population parameters through weighting produced the following sample sizes:  $n_{\text{women91}} = 649$ ;  $n_{\text{men91}} = 661$ ;  $n_{\text{women99}} = 845$ ; and  $n_{\text{men99}} = 787$ .

#### 4.1.2 Model

We estimated this model as a multi-group model, where year of survey and gender represent the groups, i. e. this model will have four layers: men in 1991, women in 1991, men in 1999, and women in 1999<sup>13</sup>. Based on previous findings, we tested the following hypotheses simultaneously, as labeled in figure 6: educational achievement is a reliable predictor for social position (H1), parental education levels are positively correlated with each other (H2), and educational achievements of parents are positive predictors of the social position of their offspring (H3 and H4) (for a review, see Levy et al., 1997; Lamprecht and Stamm, 1999). Thus, and in conjunction with our hypothesis that the transfer of advantage from parents to their children remained stable in the 1990s, we propose that educational achievement is a function of, first, the educational achievement of the

12 For 1991, association was measured by current or former membership in caritative, folkloric, religious, national, parents, sport, leisure, music, youth, political, professional and philanthropic associations. The 1999 data set included all these and, additionally, unions and tenants/residents associations.

13 Layers allow for the testing of interaction effects. For example, if we would enter gender as an exogenous predictor, we would not be able to study the interaction effect that this variable forms with others.

Figure 6: Conceptual Model of Social Change and Mobility

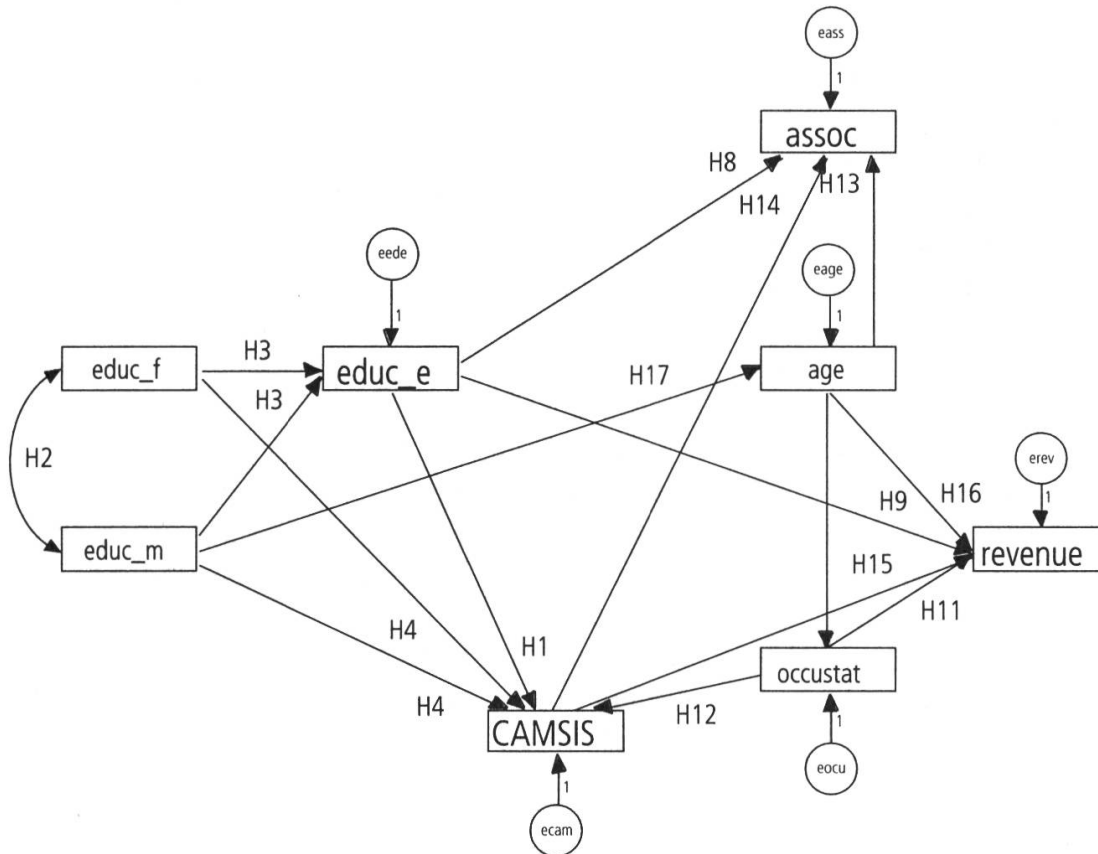


Figure 6 is a graphic representation of our theoretical model

parents and, second, the parents' social position, which affords access to particular networks. Furthermore, we propose that, due to the caretaking role assigned to mothers – especially in the past, their education level will be less influential on the respondents' education level, compared to that of the father (H5). Additionally, we propose that among employed respondents, males have achieved a higher education level than women (H7)<sup>14</sup>. Next, we hypothesize that highest achieved education level reliably predicts membership in associations (H8) and income (H9). Based on prior research and our own research experience, we suspect that we will find reliable differences in income between employed men and women, even if we control for occupational status (H10).

14 Hypotheses relating to gender differences and variations across the two time periods cannot be displayed in this figure, but are an integral part of this analysis.

Occupational status is predicted to have an influence not only on personal revenue (H11), but also on social position (H12) because, first, part-time employment is more likely associated with lower social status than full-time employment and, second, because occupations that rate lower on a social scale are more likely to be part-time jobs. We expect membership in associations to be related with age (H13), social position (H14), and the respondents' education (H8). Personal monthly revenue is predicted by occupational status (H11), social position (H15), age (H16), and the highest education level achieved by the respondent (H9). Because of the increase in educational achievement by women over time, we suspect that younger women have a higher education level, i. e. that the age of the respondents is positively linked with their mothers' educational achievement (H17) and that the educational achievement, especially for the female respondents, is higher in 1999, compared to 1991 (H18).

Formally, the proposed model is a four-group structural equation model, which examines the structure presented in figure 6 for men and women, and for 1991 and 1992, simultaneously. The main advantages of this type of model are: testing the viability of the model; testing a number of hypotheses simultaneously; extrapolating the unique effects, i. e. controlling for the effect of other predictors on an endogenous variable; and testing interaction effects across gender and time by testing the statistical significance of the differences between the relevant path estimates across the four layers.

## 4.2 Results

An examination of various goodness-of-fit indices for the model reveals an excellent fit<sup>15</sup>, i. e. the estimated population parameters can be considered to be unbiased. The results from this analysis are presented in two ways: all relevant parameter estimates and their corresponding significance statistics relating to individual path coefficients and comparisons between means are presented in footnotes in order to avoid breaking the flow of the substantive narrative. Total effects between variables in the model are presented in Table 6<sup>16</sup>.

15 Maximum Likelihood based goodness of fit measure and adjustment for complexity (df): GFI = 0,99 and AGFI = 0,97 (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1984; Tanaka and Huba, 1985; Mulaik et al., 1989); comparison to base-line models: CFI = 0,98 (Bentler, 1990) and NFI = 0,96 (Bentler and Bonett, 1980; Bollen, 1989); alternative fit index that adjusts for bias due to model complexity: RMSEA = 0,02 (PCLOSE\*1) (Browne and Cudeck, 1993) and AIC<sub>default</sub> = 323 (AIC<sub>saturated</sub> = 288; AIC<sub>independent</sub> = 3'568) (Akaike, 1987). According to the Lagrange and Wald tests, four changes would have improved the model fit. However, no post hoc changes were made because (a) no apparent theoretical explanation could be offered for these alterations, (b) the fit of this model is sufficient, (c) no significant improvement would be achieved, as can be demonstrated by a model comparison test, where the  $\chi^2_{\text{difference}}$  is non-significant, and (d) the suggested changes differed across the four layers of the model.

16 All parameters in this table are total estimated effects, i. e. indirect plus direct effects; nota bene: these are not simple correlation matrices, i. e. (a) the coefficients represent standardized

Table 6: Standardized Parameter Estimates (Direct and Indirect)

Standardized Total Effects for Women in 1999						
	educ_m	age	educ_f	occustat	educ_e	CAMSIS
age	-0.14					
occustat	0.04	-0.13				
educ_e	0.15	—	0.29			
CAMSIS	0.06	-0.01	0.24	0.03	0.32	
Revenue	0.02	0.08	0.06	0.16	0.21	0.02
Assoc	0.01	0.03	0.05	0.01	0.11	0.14
Standardized Total Effects for Women in 1991						
	educ_m	age	educ_f	occustat	educ_e	CAMSIS
age	-0.15					
occustat	0.01	-0.03				
educ_e	0.30	—	0.34			
CAMSIS	0.14	-0.00	0.17	0.07	0.40	
Revenue	0.02	0.00	0.02	0.12	0.05	0.09
Assoc	0.09	0.01	0.10	0.01	0.29	0.12
Standardized Total Effects for Men in 1999						
	educ_m	age	educ_f	occustat	educ_e	CAMSIS
age	-0.18					
occustat	0.07	-0.38				
educ_e	0.16	—	0.25			
CAMSIS	0.15	0.04	0.16	-0.09	0.50	
Revenue	0.06	-0.04	0.09	0.26	0.36	0.01
Assoc	0.02	0.10	0.06	-0.01	0.23	0.08
Standardized Total Effects for Men in 1991						
	educ_m	age	educ_f	occustat	educ_e	CAMSIS
age	-0.05					
occustat	-0.01	0.08				
educ_e	0.16	—	0.39			
CAMSIS	0.16	0.00	0.26	0.01	0.46	
Revenue	0.05	0.13	0.12	0.08	0.29	0.08
Assoc	0.06	0.09	0.15	0.00	0.37	0.09

As in previous studies, we found that the education level of the parents of the respondents are reliably and positively correlated (H2)<sup>17</sup>. In other words, the greater the educational achievement of the father, the greater the achievement of the mother. According to our prediction, parents' highest achieved education level is strongly related to that of the respondents (H3)<sup>18</sup>. Also, fathers' educational achievement is indeed a stronger predictor for respondents' educational achievement, compared to that of their mothers (H5)<sup>19</sup>. Interestingly, fathers' educational achievement was a better predictor in 1991, compared to 1999, which can be explained in two ways: first, due to the recoding of the 1999 education variables into the 1991 classification, some categories or individuals may have been misallocated. Alternatively, we could hypothesize that educational achievement is less strongly related to the social background of the respondents in 1999 than it was in 1991. To test these two hypotheses against each other, we examined the degree of association between parental educational achievement and respondents' achievement from the original variables. If the observed trend persists, we have to reject the coding error hypotheses and tentatively suggest a greater access to educational opportunities in 1999. Our analyses indeed revealed a marginal decrease in association between parental and respondents' education level, although the difference is unlikely to be significant<sup>20</sup>.

Assessing the influence of parental educational achievement on the social position of the respondent is more complicated. First, the direct effects are moderate or non-significant. However, if we consider the total effects, i. e. the direct effects and the indirect effects via the ego's education level, the relationship between parental education level and ego's social position are significant (H4)<sup>21</sup>.

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total regression weights, and not Pearson's correlation coefficients, (b) the top triangle in each table does not replicate the information contained in the bottom triangle, (c) parameters associated with "0,0000" do not imply that they have been omitted from the model, nor that they have not been estimated; instead, these parameters have been fixed at zero, i. e. they have been modeled explicitly as unreliable predictors.

- 17  $r_{\text{educfather-educmother}}$  between the four levels ranges between 0,47 and 0,61 at  $p < 0,001$ .
- 18  $r_{\text{educfather-eduego}}$  ranges between 0,25 and 0,39 at  $p < 0,001$ .  $r_{\text{edumother-eduego}}$  ranges between 0,15 and 0,30 at  $p < 0,001$ .
- 19 Critical ratio of the difference between parameters  $r_{\text{educfather-educmother}}$  and  $r_{\text{edumother-eduego}}$  ranges between 2,0 and 3,34.
- 20 If we want to compare the different codings between 1991 and 1999, and if we leave the original categories intact, we can neither use measures of association for ordinal variables, nor the  $\chi^2$  test or its derivatives (e. g. Cramér's V or  $\phi$ ) because their degree of association and its significance relies on the number of cells, i. e. degrees of freedom. Instead, we used Goodman and Kruskal's t, which measures the association between two nominal variables and reflects the proportional reduction in error when values of one variable are used to predict values of another variable (Everitt, 1992). For 1991:  $t_{\text{educfather-eduego}} = 0,07$  at  $p < 0,001$ ;  $t_{\text{edumother-eduego}} = 0,06$  at  $p < 0,001$ . For 1999:  $t_{\text{educfather-eduego}} = 0,05$  at  $p < 0,001$ ;  $t_{\text{edumother-eduego}} = 0,04$  at  $p < 0,001$ ;
- 21 The combined effect of parental education on egos' social position ranges between:  $r_{\text{educfather-eduego}}$ : 0,16 to 0,26;  $r_{\text{edumother-eduego}}$ : 0,06 to 0,16.

In other words, parental education level has the greatest effect on the social position of the respondent through its influence on the educational achievement of their offspring, although the strength of association weakens somewhat from 1991 to 1999.

Among the working population, female respondents have achieved lower levels of education (H7),<sup>22</sup> as has been shown earlier, and fathers' educational achievement is greater than that of mothers (H6)<sup>23</sup>. However, we can observe in four ways that the difference between men's and women's educational achievement is decreasing: first, we can detect that there is a reliable association between mothers' educational achievement and the age of the respondents (H17)<sup>24</sup>. The older the mother of the respondent, the less educated she is, the less her educational achievement is associated with that of the respondent. Second, the differences between the means of educational achievement between the respondents and their mothers are decreasing over time. Third, the differences in educational attainment between men and women in 1991 are greater than the differences in 1999<sup>25</sup>. Fourth, for women, the educational attainment is significantly higher in 1999, compared to 1991, while for men, this increase just misses the statistically significant threshold (H18)<sup>26</sup>.

Educational attainment is a very powerful predictor of social position for both men and women (H1)<sup>27</sup>, even stronger for men. This is particularly interesting in the case of CAMSIS, because education levels are not used in its construction, unlike in other scales. According to the path coefficient, the higher the education level, the higher the social position. The strength of prediction is in part explainable by the educational achievements of the parents, which have an indirect influence on the respondents' educational achievement.

As expected, the highest achieved education level reliably predicts membership in associations (H8)<sup>28</sup> and the personal monthly revenue (H9)<sup>29</sup>: the greater the educational achievement, the more active the respondents are in associations

22 For 1991: Mann-Whitney (Altman, 1991)  $U = 84'041$ ,  $Z = 5,98$ ,  $p < 0,001$ . For 1999: Mann-Whitney  $U = 371'331$ ,  $Z = 10,20$ ,  $p < 0,001$ .

23 The critical ratio of the differences between the fathers' and the mothers' means in educational achievement ranges between 12 and 15, i. e.  $p < 0,001$ .

24  $r_{\text{edumother-ageresp}}$  ranges between  $-0,05$  to  $-0,18$ ; only one of the four coefficients just misses statistical significance. All others are at  $p < 0,001$ .

25 While the critical ratio of the mean difference between men's and women's educational achievement in 1991 was 3,69, it shrank to 2,85, i. e. almost one standard deviation, in 1999.

26 The critical ratio of the difference in intercepts between 1991 and 1999 for women is 3,00; for men, it is non-significant.

27  $r_{\text{eduego-camsis}}$  ranges between 0,32 and 0,50, all at  $p < 0,001$ .

28  $r_{\text{eduego-assoc}}$  ranges between 0,06 to 0,33. Except for data on women in 1999, all associations are significant at  $p < 0,001$ .

29  $r_{\text{eduego-revenue}}$  ranges between 0,20 to 0,36, all at  $p < 0,001$ .

and the greater the personal monthly income. After controlling for the effects of social position, education, and age, personal income is no longer a reliable predictor for membership in associations.

For both part- and full-time work, women earn less than men, as has already been demonstrated above (H10)<sup>30</sup>. The difference is particularly pronounced for full-time work. The occupational status reliably predicts income (H11)<sup>31</sup>, but does not predict social position, when we control for education level (H12). Similarly, neither social position nor age is a reliable predictor for personal monthly revenue among the working population, once we take account of occupational status and education level (H15<sup>32</sup> and H16<sup>33</sup>). As usual, this does not mean that age or social position are unimportant in predicting personal income. Instead, the influence that social position or age have on revenue is already embedded in the occupational status and the highest education level of the respondent; no additional variance in revenue is accounted for by social position, when we control for the effect of all other predictors for revenue. Overall, the best predictor for income remains education level, although it is strongest for men. Additionally, our predictors occupational status, social position, age, and education account for more variation in income among men than women<sup>34</sup>. Because of the differential work histories and trajectories, and because of the socially regulated attachments to work and family across gender, our model accounts comparatively for little variance in income among women.

Another interaction effect can be detected between gender, age and membership in associations: controlling for the effects of education level and social status, older men are more likely to participate in associations than younger men (H13). Among women, no reliable link could be detected between association membership and age<sup>35</sup>. Additionally, no differences in means could be detected between the membership in associations and gender<sup>36</sup>. Thus, men and women are

30 Part-time work: Mann-Whitney  $U = 43'910$ ,  $Z = 4,622$ ,  $p < 0,001$ . Full-time work: Mann-Whitney  $U = 25'978$ ,  $Z = 9,89$ ,  $p < 0,001$ .

31  $r_{\text{occupstat-revenue}}$  ranges between 0,08 and 0,26. Except for women in 1991 ( $p < 0,05$ ), all other path coefficients are at  $p < 0,001$ .

32  $r_{\text{cansis-revenue}}$  ranges between 0,01 and 0,09. Except for women in 1991, where  $p < 0,05$ , all are at  $p = \text{n. s.}$

33  $r_{\text{age-revenue}}$  ranges between 0,01 and 0,13. The critical ratio for men in 1991 and for women in 1999 is 3,49 and 2,96, respectively. For men in 1999 and women in 1991, it is 1,65 and 0,12, respectively.

34 The differences in  $R^2$  for revenue for men and women in 1999 is 0,12 and 0,02, and in 1991, 0,19 and 0,07, respectively.

35 For men in 1991 and 1999:  $r_{\text{age-assoc}} = 0,09$  and  $0,10$ , both at  $p < 0,01$ , respectively. For women in 1991 and 1999:  $r_{\text{age-assoc}} = 0,03$  and  $0,01$ , both at  $p = \text{n. s.}$ , respectively.

36 The critical ratios for the intercepts of association between men and women are non-significant for 1991 and 1999, both at  $CR < 1$ .

as likely to be members of associations, but older men are more likely to participate than younger men.

The strongest predictor of membership in associations is the highest achieved education level (H8). An additional predictor is social position, which forms a fairly weak, yet reliable, link with the likelihood of being or having been a member of an association (H14)<sup>37</sup>. This means that the higher the social position of the respondents, the more likely they are members or past members of an association. An interaction effect with gender, i. e. that this relationship would be more pronounced for women, just misses the significance threshold.

## 5 Discussion and Conclusions

We set out to study social change in Switzerland in the 1990s by examining changes in social indicators between 1991 and 1999, and by studying the relationships between social indicators. Despite the significant increase in focus and concern about the economic stability and structural inequality in Switzerland due to the economic crisis in the 1990s, we were unable to find a confirmation for the predicted changes in our results. This confirms our suspicion of a fairly stable social and opportunity structure in the 1990s, irrespective of the economic crisis. Alternatively, this stability may be due to the indicators that we have chosen to analyze, which may be too insensitive to reveal specific changes. Additionally, other variables related to inequality may have changed more drastically due to the economic crisis, but were not part of this analysis. Also, we may be dealing with a “sleeper-effect,” i. e. the crisis may not have had an immediate effect but may show its effects after a certain period beyond our time frame. Nevertheless, we were able to extrapolate a number of interesting results.

We found no evidence either for a disintegration of social stratification, nor for changes in intergenerational mobility. In fact, the social background of parents is still similar, as can be shown in the strong association between their educational achievements. Especially fathers have a strong influence on the privileged position of their offspring, as implied by the strong relations between their respective educational achievement, and by the links that educational achievement forms with measures of social position, as well as economic and social capital. Despite some gains, women remain comparatively disadvantaged in most spheres, but especially in terms of social positions as well as economic and educational achievements.

37 For women in 1991 and 1999:  $r_{\text{camsis-assoc}} = 0,14$  and  $0,12$  at  $p < 0,001$ , respectively. For men in 1991 and 1999:  $r_{\text{camsis-assoc}} = 0,08$  and  $0,09$  at  $p < 0,05$ , respectively.

Socio-structural stability does not imply that the trajectories of individuals are predestined. At times, our predictions were weak, which means that these relationships are far from perfect. But whatever the structure of inequality and its dynamics are, they did not change significantly in the 1990s.

The most notable exceptions to this conclusion are the decrease in unskilled jobs and low-paying full-time employment, the increase in unemployment and underemployment, especially for women, and the increase in educational achievement and the corresponding gains in other forms of capital among women. Gender inequalities persist not only because of the unequal educational attainment and its correspondence with differential occupational status and social position. A disappearing gender effect when controlling for educational achievement, occupational status, or social position does not lead to the conclusion that gender is no longer a factor for differential resource distribution because social position and status, income, and education are themselves gendered in many ways. For example, societal arrangements are still such that women tend to find themselves in non-scientific disciplines, non-managerial or executive positions, and with comparatively lower levels of education. Due to institutional and social arrangements, the educational choices and achievements associated with gendered disadvantages, lower expectations and sense of agency, as well as maternal leave and childcare arrangements partially veil the gender inequality in social status positions and income.

While the classic social indicators of inequality seem unchanged, the salience and perceptions of present and future economic difficulties in Switzerland may have changed in the population in more subtle ways, which could have a delayed effect on the indicators measured here. It would be interesting to examine how indicators such as subjective assessments of security and risk, lifestyle and consumption behavior changed in the 1990s due to the heightened perception of economic insecurity. In addition, the design of many question and the analytical limitations of multiple cross-sectional data sets can be overcome, once further waves become available from the Swiss Household panel. Nevertheless, within the limits posed by our data and research perspective, we found that the 1990s have not introduced marked changes in the inequality and opportunity structure of Switzerland.

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