

Stratification and Social Mobility: Comparison 1991-1999

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How to Measure Social Position

The measurement of social position is one of the oldest and most central issues in the social sciences. Most researchers in this area agree that occupational titles are the best basis for assessing social position, whether it relates to their prestige, authority, educational attainment, organizational skills, or power associated with these occupations. Due to the varied theoretical and methodological propositions inherent in this field, it is useful to examine advantages and drawbacks associated with each approach. Furthermore, there is a tension between national solutions, adapted to a particular situation and international ones, needed for comparisons.

In Switzerland a classification was proposed by the Swiss Statistical Office after the 1990 census: the "Catégories socio-professionnelles".

For international comparison, the basis is the classification of occupation elaborated by the International Labor Organization (ISCO-88). The scientific community has also worked on classifications for social mobility, like Wright's classes or Goldthorpe's class schema. This project has also developed the CAMSIS scale for Switzerland.

Research Aims

Examine different aspects of inequality, social position, change, and mobility in Switzerland through secondary analysis.

Major Findings

- How to measure social position
- Social Stratification and CAMSIS for Switzerland
- Social Change and Mobility

Forthcoming

- Cross-National Comparison of Social Stratification
- Subjective and Objective Social Indicators of Inequality
- Downloadable SPSS Syntax Files and Documentation for Stratification Scales

Research Aim: This portion of the project focused on changes in economic, cultural, and social capital (as measured by income, educational attainment, and membership in associations) and their association with social stratification in Switzerland in the 1990s.

Data: 1999 ISSP on social inequality, Inequality Study by Levy et al. (1997).

Framework: The first section deals with social inequality across time and gender. In the second section, we examine the changes in the structure of these indicators.

Results: Notable exceptions to the stability in the inequality structure during the 1990s are the increase in under- and unemployment, a decrease in low-paying full-time employment, and a moderate increase in women's educational attainment. Nevertheless, despite the economic crisis in the 1990s, little significant changes took place in the social and opportunity structure in Switzerland.

References:

Bergman, M.M., Joye, D., & Fux, B. (2002). Social Mobility, Inequality, and Change in Switzerland in the 1990s. *Swiss Journal of Sociology*, forthcoming issue.

Social Stratification and CAMSIS for Switzerland

Research Aim: Evaluate the dominant social stratification measures; provide variables and documentation on social stratification scales for the Swiss Household Panel and the ISSP data for Switzerland; calculate and validate CAMSIS for Switzerland; examine the links between social stratification (CSP and CAMSIS) and various social inequality indicators.

Data: 1990 Swiss Population Census, 1999 ISSP on social inequality, Inequality Study by Levy et al. (1997).

Theoretical Framework of CAMSIS:

The Cambridge Social Interaction and Stratification Scale (CAMSIS) rests on the notion that individuals are embedded in social networks within which they engage in social, cultural, political, and economic interactions, and which differ both qualitatively and quantitatively from interactions with people who are distant to these networks. As both a function and consequence of such selective interchanges, a social structure is continuously reconstructed with implications for social and economic resource allocation. Furthermore, such resources assist in positioning individuals and thus pre- and proscribe certain interchanges with others.

Results: Despite some suggestions that modern industrial societies such as Switzerland are no longer socially stratified due to access to education and occupational position, or, we found that clear evidence that social stratification remains central to the social and political sciences because resources are still distributed unequally and non-randomly. The new stratification measure correlates significantly with economic resources, education, political behavior, health indicators, and social values.

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Social Change and Mobility

