Like parent, like child? Evidence on intergenerational transmission of occupations from a survey in Switzerland

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Department of Economics
University of Zurich

Federico Crivelli

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Anne Ardila Brenøe

Course of Studies:	Economics
Student ID:	21-710-033
Address:	Via Stazione 9, 6963 Pregassona
E-Mail:	federico.crivelli@uzh.ch
Date:	July 7, 2024

University of Zurich[UZH]

Department for Economics

University of Zurich
www.econ.uzh.ch

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Name:	Crivelli	First Name:	Federico
Matriculation number:	21-710-033	Date:	06/07/2024

Signature:

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Abstract

This thesis examines the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission of occupations. I employ descriptive and quantitative methods to identify behavioral patterns from the responses to a survey on occupational choice targeting secondary school students in the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland. The study reveals that between 10 and 15% of children choose the same occupation as one of their parents, while almost half of the respondents remain in the same field or type of occupation. For all the occupations and sectors observed, parents seem to increase the likelihood of children choosing that specific profession if they themselves exercise that job. Furthermore, a relation between occupational mobility and intergenerational income persistence is established, suggesting that occupational movers are more socially mobile than occupational followers. Finally, concerning occupational persistence, children appear to show a significant preference for the same-sex parent over the other.

1 Introduction

In February 2024, Prof. Anne Brenøe and her team at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Zurich launched a project to investigate the role that parents' perceptions of fit play in children's occupational choices. The survey was circulated primarily among German-speaking secondary school students, targeting those teenagers who were precisely in the middle of their vocational

discernment process. If, by a strange coincidence, this same survey had been distributed among the members of my family, the results would have provided fertile ground to explore some pivotal aspects for the development of this thesis. Besides my parents (henceforth Father and Mother), my household comprises four children: Daughter 1, Son 2, Son 3 (me), and Son 4. While Father works as an economist and professor, Mother devoted most of her years to the upbringing of the children and only recently started a new educational path, through which she graduated as a social worker. The children's trajectories may seem, at first sight, extremely divergent: Daughter 1 is currently pursuing a PhD in Latin American literature, Son 2 is working as a Swiss Guard in the Vatican, Son 3 is completing a Bachelor in Economics, and Son 4, after finishing secondary school, is about to start his apprenticeship as a logistics operator.

If we were to estimate the intergenerational transmission of occupations[1] solely relying on this small sample, a narrow reading of the data suggests that 25% of the children follow their parents' steps: specifically, only Son 3 is poised to work in the same field as Father. However, if we open the scope of this reading, this estimate must be reconsidered because also Daughter 1's career aligns with Father's professional environment. Although she does not focus on the same discipline, she is considering a comparable academic career, making her an occupational follower[2] in a broader sense. The intergenerational transmission of occupations in my family is estimated, according to this wider view, to be 50%. That said, an even broader reading of the family situation provides an even more nuanced scenario: even though Son 2's profession does not seem to fit into the parent's occupational framework, this is related to the broader family landscape[3]. After these considerations, occupational mobility involves between 25% and 50% of the sample—Son 4 and, arguably, Son 2.

These observations pave the way for the questions that I will seek to answer within this thesis: to what extent are children's occupational choices related to those of their parents? That is, how common is intergenerational transmission of occupations? Is occupational inheritance influenced by exogenous factors

[1]From now on this term will be alternated with occupational inheritance and occupational persistence, all expressions found in the literature to define the same concept.

[2]Term used by Lo Bello and Morchio (2022) to describe children who choose the same occupation as one of their parents, thus "following" their occupational path. Those who instead pick another profession are described as "occupational movers".

[3]While Father only completed the mandatory military service, multiple other members of Father's family pursued a professional military career.

such as gender, parental proximity and attitudes? And finally, what is the relation between occupational persistence and social mobility? To answer the above questions, this thesis aims to study the dynamics underlying the transmission of occupations based on the data collected through Prof. Brenøe's survey, especially exploring the possible relation between teenagers' vocational choices and their parents' professions. Indeed, it has been demonstrated on multiple occasions that the economic outcomes of parents and children might be associated. This correlation significantly restricts the principle of equality of opportunity. If the parents' economic conditions exert a significant influence on those of their children, this aspect limits the prospects of social mobility (Corak, 2013). In this scenario, the promise of fairness and meritocracy would constitute a mere illusion, exposing the heterogeneous forms of inequality that already characterize society and the possibility of actually determining one's achievements.

As Chuard and Schmiedgen-Grassi (2020) illustrate, while educational mobility in Switzerland appears to be low—which indicates a clear link between parents and children's educational paths—income mobility seems to be one of the highest among the countries for which estimates are available, outdoing even the Nordic countries. In the Swiss landscape, this discrepancy can be attributed to the importance of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system, which provides individuals with the opportunity to advance their careers through specializations and further education, thus offering an alternative path to climb the social ladder. Drawing upon the methodologies and estimates developed by Chetty et al. (2014) to investigate intergenerational mobility throughout the United States, Chuard and Schmiedgen-Grassi (2020) focus on the transmission of earnings and education in Switzerland between 1982 and 2017. In their study, however, they do not address occupational persistence and mobility, an aspect that I intend to examine in this thesis. Particularly, I am interested in exploring how occupational inheritance—as an alternative mechanism to educational persistence—might lead to a more static society.

While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide an exhaustive quantitative analysis of contemporary occupational inheritance in Switzerland, this research delves into the possibility of computing relevant estimates and identifying behavioral patterns that might provide valuable insights to understand and discuss the transmission of occupation as a crucial social phenomenon. It is important to mention that such an inquiry relies on a nuanced approximation of the

concept of transmission of occupation, which extends from the inheritance of the same job as the parents to the pursuit of a career in the same field. Based on the dataset examined in this thesis, I observe that occupational persistence concerns between 11 and 46% of the participants in the survey, depending on the degree of detail in the job classification. This reveals how a significant portion of the population decides to undertake the same or at least a similar path to one of their parents. Through a detailed analysis of Likelihood Ratios, I demonstrate how the belonging of (at least) one parent to one occupational group significantly increases the probability of a child pursuing a similar career. Furthermore, the considered data unveils a significant relationship between occupational transmission and the transmission of earnings. Specifically, occupational followers exhibit higher intergenerational income elasticity (0.30 and 0.22, depending on the observation level) than occupational movers (whose values span between 0.02 and -0.08). According to these results, occupational mobility appears to be related to earnings persistence and social mobility in general. Finally, an intersectional approach to occupational inheritance, which in this case focuses on gender differences, reveals how children are significantly more prone to follow their same-sex parent's steps.

The rest of my thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 is devoted to a discussion of existing evidence regarding the intergenerational correlation of economic outcomes and provides some insight into the transmission of occupations. Secondly, Chapter 3 draws a brief portrayal of the Swiss institutional and educational framework, offering useful information into the context of the subject matter at the heart of this thesis. In Chapter 4, I present the data collected from the survey and from external sources, not only detailing the examined dataset but also critically discussing its potential and limitations. I dedicate Chapter 5 to the discussion of the different methodologies used in this thesis, both throughout the cleaning procedure of the data and their subsequent analysis. Finally, in Chapter 6 I offer a thorough discussion of the obtained results, exploring the magnitude of intergenerational occupational persistence and the possible mechanisms underlying occupational and social (im)mobility. The results of the analysis will be brought together in the conclusions—Chapter 7—where I address the value of my investigation while also critically discussing its intrinsic limitations and possible further developments.

2 The Intergenerational Transmission of Outcomes and Occupations

Occupational choice is a crucial factor in determining an individual's economic outcomes and, on a broader scale, in shaping the economic and social dynamics of our society. Various mechanisms influence a person's occupational choice, such as individual preferences and priorities—for example discount rates and time preferences in the process of human capital accumulation (Becker, 1994)—the education system, the labor market's institutional background and conditions, employer attitudes, and social norms (Eberharter, 2013).

Additionally, parents and familial background also play a significant role for children, both in their occupational choices and economic outcomes. The influence of parents is a very complex topic, since they play multiple key roles in the development of their children, for instance by determining their genetic endowment, shaping their skills, values, and preferences, providing for them, and serving themselves as role models (Eberharter, 2013). The impact of parents and their economic outcomes on their children's professional lives and labor market outcomes is a topic that has often been tackled in economic research, as well as in sociology and policy discussion. This is due to the important implications of this phenomenon on social mobility and on the concept of inequality of opportunity, and thus on inequalities in general (Corak, 2013).

An important stream of research has dealt with the intergenerational transmission of earnings. It has been made clear by multiple studies—many of which were focused on the estimate of the intergenerational income elasticity (IGE), an indicator I will also resort to in the following chapters—that, even if with considerable differences across countries, the earnings of the parents are to some extent positively correlated with those of their children (Solon, 1999). Chetty et al. (2014), also studied income mobility and the related intergenerational transmission of income in the USA. They identified, among other indicators, the rank-rank slope, a measure of the association between the position of a child in the income distribution and that of the parent. It was estimated that the rank-rank slope overall in the USA corresponds to 0.34 (which means that the difference in expected position between somebody whose parents were at the top of the income distribution and somebody whose parents were at the bottom is of around 34 ranks out of 100), while in Sweden a rank-rank slope of 0.197 was

measured (Heidrich, 2017) and in Italy the same indicator was calculated to be 0.22 (Acciari et al., 2022). These different levels of relative mobility suggest different degrees to which a child's income is influenced by his parents' income depending on the country, showing that the significance of the intergenerational transmission of income is not the same everywhere. That said, the parents' income always has, to some extent, some predictive power and influence over the child's income, demonstrating the crucial role of parents in the outcomes of their children.

Another topic handled often in the economic literature is the correlation between the educational attainment of parents and their children. Extensive empirical evidence shows that children's education tends to be higher when that of the parents is higher as well (Black et al., 2005; Hertz et al., 2008). Education is intuitively related to socioeconomic status and earnings, and thus, educational persistence across generations can explain a significant portion of income transmission (Hertz et al., 2008). Even though trends seem to show that the intergenerational persistence of educational inequality has decreased, the causal link from educational transmission to economic outcomes seems not to be weakened. Thus, we still have to consider the transmission of education as a determining channel of parental influence.

The exact channels that drive these intergenerational correlations are hard to determine. Many different hypotheses have been developed, underlining, for example, the importance of transmission of skills, interests, and preferences or the role played by parental networks. For instance, Galassi et al. (2019) argue that "willingness to work" is a transmissible attitude, showing that, on average, a 1-year increase in mothers' employment is associated with a 6-week increase in children's employment status. Lindquist et al. (2015), instead, highlight the fact that children of entrepreneurs are 30 to 200% more likely than other children to become entrepreneurs, as well as the fact that nurture is a stronger driver of this mechanism than nature. These examples bring proof of how preferences and attitudes can cross generations and have an impact on outcomes. On the other hand, Corak and Piraino (2011) find that around 40% of a cohort of young Canadian men worked, at least at a certain point in their lives, under an employer that had previously employed their father. They also demonstrate that the intergenerational transmission of employers raised the average intergenerational earning elasticity, proving the crucial role that familial background, nepotism,

and parental networks can play in the outcomes of children. The truth is that, probably, multiple different mechanisms interact and play a significant role in the intergenerational transmission of income.

One of the hypotheses I want to test throughout this thesis regards occupational persistence. I argue that intergenerational transmission of occupations could be a further channel that drives the transmission of income. Overall, a significant link between the occupational choices of the children and the professions of the parents has already been demonstrated (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Long & Ferrie, 2013). Furthermore, empirical research has shown that children whose parents work in a specific occupation are much more likely to work in that job than other children whose parents are not employed in that profession (Haeck & Laliberté, 2023; Lo Bello & Morchio, 2022)—a phenomenon I will address and explore for my sample in Section 5.2. However, a topic I have not found much evidence about, despite extensive literature about intergenerational transmission of income and occupational inheritance (particularly in sociology), is the interaction between these two phenomena. An exception is represented by Haeck and Laliberté (2023), which, analyzing the Canadian case, investigate the link between occupational inheritance and social mobility. First, they establish that occupations can explain only one third of the intergenerational transmission of income, given that parental income still has significant predictive power even between workers employed in the same jobs. Furthermore, they conclude that overall intergenerational transmission of occupations only weakly contributes to social immobility. Since this complex and nuanced matter is still understudied, I try with this thesis to bring into the discussion further evidence.

3 The Swiss Educational System and the VET

Every country is unique and shows distinctive characteristics in terms of different institutions, policies, cultural norms, and educational systems. Among other things, Switzerland's educational system stands out for some of its unique features, providing an intriguing and unusual setting in terms of occupational choices.

Despite some differences across the country due to the wiggle room left to the individual cantons by the federal constitution, it is essential to highlight the importance of the Vocational Education and Training System (VET). After sec-

ondary school, many Swiss adolescents are introduced into the labor market by the VET through a combination of apprenticeship and part-time school education, typically working four days and receiving vocational education for one day per week. This system aims to prepare students for a profession and has been reported to be really successful in providing valuable general and occupation-specific skills. The VET has proven to be efficient both in terms of career development and in triggering innovation, benefiting from the high-level skills it imparts (Backes-Gellner & Lehnert, 2021).

In 2022-2023, 58% of Swiss students attending an upper secondary level course were part of a VET, while another 30% pursued general education, especially in Baccalaureate schools (Federal Statistical Office, 2024c). This means that overall more than half of the youth residing in Switzerland are called to choose their occupation even before reaching their eighteenth birthday. This dual education system challenges the traditional model proposed by Becker and Tomes (1994), which links income inequality and its persistence to the financial constraints that limit parental investments in education. A system like the VET, which requires minimal financial investments from parents and even provides a first salary to the children, could attenuate this mechanism, potentially blurring the influence of parental economic conditions on children's prospects and impacting social structure and inequalities.

This is supported by the findings of Chuard and Schmiedgen-Grassi (2020), which suggest that the VET is a crucial factor behind high income mobility in Switzerland (with an impressive 0.14 rank-rank slope) despite severe educational persistence. In this stimulating context, I aim to explore the prevalence of occupational persistence and the relation between occupational transmission and social mobility.

4 Data

The data employed in this thesis were collected as part of a study conducted by Professor Brenøe at the Department of Economics of the University of Zurich. This is a randomized controlled trial (RCT), whose objective is to analyze the role played by parents' perceptions of fit in children's occupational choices. Data were collected through a voluntary baseline survey and a two-week follow-up survey.

The study's target were adolescents who attended the final two years of secondary school and were thus embarking on the process of choosing a career. The recruitment of participants was carried out through two different channels: firstly, the survey was distributed by Yousty.ch—one of the largest vocational training portals in Switzerland—whereby suitable visitors to the site had access to the study. Additionally, the survey was sent to several schools in different cantons, which were asked to circulate it among their students. Around 55.7% of the final baseline sample was recruited through Yousty, while the remaining 44.3% were recruited through 69 different schools. In both cases, the observations were collected between the 7th of February and the 25th of April 2024, with the majority of the responses coming in February and March.

The final sample used in this thesis, which for reasons discussed later doesn't comprehend all the participants to the survey, consists of 2938 observations, 1148 of which also completed the two-week follow-up. It includes observations from the 21 cantons where German is an official or co-official language, with the most represented cantons being Zurich (22.63% of the sample), St. Gallen (19.84%) and Bern (13.55%). It should be noted that attrition does not represent a significant concern, as all the main variables of interest were collected during the baseline survey—the only exceptions being information regarding whether the children and their parents were born in Switzerland or not.

In addition to demographic characteristics and other basic information about the participants and their families, the survey addressed the students' future plans, the occupations they were considering, and the factors influencing their choices. For the purposes of the subsequent analysis, however, I narrow the scope of the focus to the questions regarding the participants' two favorite occupations and their parents' occupations. This information was further complemented by data on gender, age, canton of residence, family situation (whether the child lives with both parents, only with one, or alternates between the two), and parents' educational background (in particular whether they obtained a university degree). Furthermore, also some attempts to measure and capture the participants' attitudes and tendencies towards their parents were taken into consideration.

Most of the subsequent identification was conducted through the observation and analysis of the data obtained from the survey, and the exclusive external data source was the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (BFS). On the one hand,

for analyses internal to the RCT, estimates of expected earnings for the apprenticeship occupations were constructed relying on data from the Swiss labor force survey. Moreover, useful data about the apprenticeships' gender-share of the apprenticeships were obtained from the *Längsschnittanalysen im Bildungsbereich* (LABB)—a panel dataset that follows all individuals in the Swiss educational system. On the other, since the aforementioned estimates of earnings did not encompass all occupations, and since there was no estimate for all parental occupations, I included also data from the Swiss Earnings Structure Survey (ESS) (Federal Statistical Office, 2024b). The available dataset provided information about the average gross monthly wage in Switzerland for different occupational categories in 2022. It was essential to resort to these external sources in order to make some tentative statements on social mobility (or non-social mobility) in relation to the intergenerational transmission of occupations, as the survey did not include questions on family wealth or income. These statistical data were matched to the responses to the survey and used for the estimates I will illustrate in Chapter 5.3. While these data might not allow for precise analyses—due to the fact that they are "mere" averages—they enable an exploration of the potential relation between occupational inheritance and income transmission.

Before addressing my methodological apparatus, I wish to underscore the importance of exercising caution when generalizing the results of the analysis presented in this paper, because the sample may not be perfectly balanced, particularly in relation to the actual Swiss population statistics. For instance, over 90% of my sample represents students who intend to undertake the vocational and educational training (VET) pathway, while actually only around 58% of Swiss adolescents follow this direction (Federal Statistical Office, 2024c). The data clearly underrepresents the path of general education, which consists of academic Baccalaureates, upper secondary specialized school certificates and specialized Baccalaureates. This path should correspond to 30% of the sample, but instead represents less than 10% of the answers. That said, despite the limitations of the sample, this analysis allows for the formulation of valuable approximations regarding the examined phenomenon and its characteristics, which I will discuss in the following chapters.

Table 1 provides an overview of some summary statistics, which offer fruitful insight into the structure of the sample according to some of the main variables.

Table 1: Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Characteristics		
Age		
13-14	0.72	0.45
15-16	0.27	0.44
17-18	0.02	0.14
Female	0.50	0.50
Born in Switzerland	0.86	0.34
Living Situation		
Both Parents	0.77	0.42
Only Mother	0.12	0.33
Only Father	0.02	0.14
Alternated Parents	0.08	0.27
Parental Characteristics		
Mother born in Switzerland	0.60	0.49
Father born in Switzerland	0.63	0.48
Mother with College Degree	0.35	0.48
Father with College Degree	0.34	0.47
Cantonal Distribution		
Aargau	0.055	0.23
Appenzell Ausserrhoden	0.006	0.08
Appenzell Innerrhoden	0.001	0.02
Basel-Landschaft	0.022	0.15
Basel-Stadt	0.006	0.08
Bern	0.135	0.34
Freiburg	0.003	0.06
Glarus	0.025	0.16
Graubünden	0.008	0.09
Luzern	0.031	0.17
Nidwalden	0.001	0.04
Obwalden	0.002	0.04
Schaffausen	0.004	0.06
Schwyz	0.032	0.18
Solothurn	0.049	0.22
St. Gallen	0.198	0.40
Thurgau	0.096	0.29
Uri	0.019	0.14
Wallis	0.045	0.21
Zug	0.034	0.18
Zürich	0.226	0.42
Observations	2938	

Notes. Answers about being born in Switzerland or not, both for parents and children, were recorded only in the follow-up survey, and thus rely only on 1148 obs.

5 Methodology

5.1 Cleaning Procedure and Classification System

The initial step in the processing of the dataset was the translation of the survey results into a format suitable for analysis. For instance, parental occupations were collected through open text boxes, which required the implementation of a cleaning process. Additionally, text boxes were also used to collect the occupations that students listed as their favorites and that were not included in the provided list, which instead covered those that could be achieved through Vocational and Educational Training. Consequently, a similar process was required for the cleaning of these. In the initial phase, I assigned to all occupations under VET a "Labb" code—a classification code utilized by the Federal Statistical Office for longitudinal analysis in the field of education. Following this, the most crucial step was to assign a CH-ISCO-19 code to each response, regardless of whether it pertained to the occupation of the mother, of the father, or the students' preferred occupations.

The CH-ISCO-19 is a version of the ISCO-08 (International Standard Classification of Occupations), which has been slightly adapted to better fit the Swiss labor market characteristics (Federal Statistical Office, 2022). The classification comprises the first four levels of the ISCO-08, which range from one to four digits, from the least specific to the most detailed. A fifth and even more specific level has then been added to better differentiate the occupations. The first level of classification divides occupations into ten broad major groups (from 0 to 9), which are then subdivided into 52 subgroups and so on. With each change in level, a new cipher is introduced.

The initial sample consisted of 3441 observations. However, in some cases, they were excluded even before starting the cleaning procedure—for instance when both answers for either parental occupations or for the participant's occupational preferences were empty. Indeed, without information about the parental occupations or about the participant's occupational preferences, it would have been impossible to identify a transmission of occupation, and thus these observations would have been useless for the analysis. 409 observations did not satisfy these first basic criteria and thus had to be discarded. Of the 3026 remaining filled boxes for the occupations of the mothers, 312 were excluded from further

consideration. This exclusion occurred for a variety of reasons. Some responses lacked any useful detail or were too ambiguous—for example when they were merely listing a generic term that could be assigned to numerous categories, or when they provided only the name of the firm (which in some cases did not permit the category to be identified without resorting to extensive speculation). In other instances, the description of the occupation was so hard to understand that it was impossible to match it to a code. Consequently, I can state that the classification process was successful in 89.69% of cases, and that the final sample of maternal occupations consists of 2714 usable observations. Instead, with regard to fathers' occupations, of the 3022 answers to the question in the survey 273 had to be discarded for the aforementioned reasons. This means that 2749 observations were successfully matched to a 5-digit level ISCO code, resulting in a classification success rate of 90.97%.

It is worth mentioning that, in certain cases, multiple professions were listed as the occupation of one of the parents. In such cases, multiple codes (up to four) were assigned and retained, and they were all considered for most of the upcoming analyses. It is also interesting to observe that I was able to provide a Labb code for 1768 answers regarding maternal occupations (65% of the matched answers) and 1815 answers concerning paternal occupations (63.23%). This indicates that these professions could be achieved through an apprenticeship (and thus a VET). In the context of my analysis, the Labb codification will barely be of use, since it only covers a part of the sample. Nevertheless, I have included it because it proves helpful for some more detailed regressions and identifications, in particular regarding gender-shares.

I conducted the same procedure for the participants' preferred occupations. However, in this case, the process was simpler, as most responses were not recorded in text boxes. Furthermore, this process was also more successful: out of 3022 answers, 2974 observations for the favorite occupation and 2996 observations for the second favorite occupations were matched to an ISCO code—that is, the 98.09% and 98.81% respectively.

Once all the variables had been cleaned successfully, I selected the final sample. All observations with at least one cleaned parental profession and one cleaned participant's favorite occupation were maintained, resulting in a total of 2938 observations. Consequently, after the initial sample restriction had excluded 409 observations irrelevant for the analysis, an additional 94 observations

were lost due to an unsuccessful matching process (representing 3.1% of the total). Only once all observations were classified with the appropriate codes, I delved into the data analysis at the heart of this thesis. That said, given that each text response was manually attributed to a code on an individual basis, there is a possibility of classification errors, whether random or due to a misinterpretation of the responses. However, I consider it unlikely that any systematic error has occurred, and therefore it is reasonable to assume that biases resulting from classification mistakes are insignificant.

5.2 The Analysis Procedure and Methodology

The analysis conducted in this thesis takes different forms in order to estimate and identify the magnitude of the intergenerational transmission of occupation and to capture how the occupational inheritance might differ for different groups, depending on the type of occupation or reacting to some other mechanism. In the following paragraphs, I present and discuss my methodological apparatus, on which my analysis relies.

The first step of the analysis was a descriptive look at how many adolescents had as one of their two favorite occupations the profession of at least one of their parents. This was applied to every level of the CH-ISCO-19 code, since they all provide slightly different information: at the 5-digit level, it signifies how many children want to exercise the exact same occupation as their parents; at the 1-digit level, instead, it indicated how many children stay in the same wide category ("Intellectual and Scientific Occupations", "Craft and related professions" or "Service professions and salespeople", for example) as one of their parents. Between these two poles, lie different levels of specification. These preliminary estimates are interesting to get a glimpse of how widespread and common it is to lean towards the occupation or the occupation type of one of the parents, and it is useful as a starting point for the discussion.

The following step of the analysis relies on a strategy employed for instance by Lo Bello and Morchio (2022). In order to further investigate the intergenerational persistence of occupation and see how this might change across types of occupation, I replicated their approach of estimating Likelihood Ratios. Also in this case the likelihood ratio has to be interpreted as "the ratio between the probability of working in occupation j conditional on the parent also working

in it, and the unconditional probability of working in occupation j" (Lo Bello & Morchio, 2022, p. 635), and is thus calculated through the equation:

$$\mathcal{P}_j = \frac{P(o = j \mid o^P = j)}{P(o = j)} \tag{1}$$

The likelihood ratios are quite simple to interpret: a value of 1 means that the probability of a teenager choosing a determined occupation is the same if having a parent exercising such an occupation or not. A value smaller than one means that they are less likely to choose a certain occupation if one of their parents is employed in that occupation. Finally, a likelihood ratio higher than one means that the probability of choosing a certain occupation increases if one of the parents exercises that occupation. For example, if a likelihood ratio corresponds to 1.38, that means that the student is 38% more likely to choose a certain occupation if a parent works in that occupation.

Since the sample I use is not that large, estimating the likelihood ratios for the single occupations might be inaccurate, especially if the number of observations per occupation is considerably small. Thus, instead of focusing on specific occupations, at first I measured the likelihood ratios for the occupational groups of the 1-digit CH-ISCO-19. I excluded the groups 0 (Members of the regular armed forces), 1 (Managers) and 9 (Auxiliary workers) due to a shortage of observations for the children in these groups—which should not come as a surprise, since it is unusual for an adolescent to aspire this kind of occupation at such an early stage of the process (and because these occupations do not have a direct professional path). For every occupational group, I estimated the likelihood ratios for the cases in which the father, the mother, or any of them belong to that group. I estimated the likelihood ratios for the whole sample, and then separately for the boys and the girls to identify a gender-differentiated reaction (maybe in relation to a specific parent).

On a second moment, I estimated the likelihood ratios for some other units, such as some specific occupations for which I have a sufficient number of observations, two specific fields (health and informatics) and other characteristics of the occupations, like gender composition. These units provide valuable insight to understand if an adolescent is more likely to choose a specific occupation, a field or an occupation with certain characteristics when one of the parents holds that same occupation. Therefore, this enables the identification of the dynam-

ics of intergenerational occupational persistence, and specifically whether the propensity to challenge gender norms is a transmissible attitude.

Since one of the objectives of this thesis is to contextualize the intergenerational transmission of occupations within the broader discussion of parental transmission of outcomes, I estimated the intergenerational income elasticity (IGE) for my sample, examining how this differs across different groups. Specifically, I have considered how elastic the incomes of both the 'occupational followers' and the 'occupational movers' are in relation to those of their parents. The IGE can be obtained by regressing the logarithm of the income of the children (Y^C) on the logarithm of the income of the parents (Y^P), therefore running the following regression:

$$\log Y^C = \alpha + \beta \log Y^P + u_i. \tag{2}$$

β is the outcome of interest, and it can be interpreted as follows: an IGE of 0.18 signifies that an increase of 1% in the parental income is related to an increase of 0.18% in the income of the child. Consequently, a higher value of the income elasticity is indicative of a lower degree of social mobility, as inequality appears to be transmitted more effectively across generations.

As previously stated, I have estimated the IGE for the entire sample by regressing the logarithm of the expected earnings of the children—a variable constructed using data from the Swiss labor force survey and completed with additional data from the Swiss Earnings Structure Survey (ESS)—on the logarithm of the estimates of parental income, which were deducted from the average income by occupational subgroup (2-digits CH-ISCO-19 code) measured by the ESS. Initially, I estimated the IGE by averaging the mother's and father's income. Subsequently, I repeated the same procedure, including the mother's and father's income separately. Finally, I estimated the income elasticity for different subsamples. Initially, the sample was divided between occupational followers (those who wished to pursue the same profession as one of their parents) and occupational movers, and then it was split between those who remained in the same 1-digit CH-ISCO-19 occupational group and those who did not. This process provided a concrete indication of the potential relation between occupational inheritance and social mobility.

To further investigate the possibility of a gender-differentiated reaction to

parents and their occupation, and to identify other eventual variables that correlate and possibly impact the intergenerational transmission of occupations, I conducted multiple regressions with different dependent and independent variables. It is important to remember that the objective of this study is not to identify causal mechanisms—especially because it is not possible to implement an identification strategy that might confirm such a statement. Rather, the findings of this study enable a more nuanced understanding of the intergenerational transmission of occupations, even if only in a correlational manner.

First, I employed OLS to analyze the relation between the occupational transmission and a range of independent and control variables, which included in particular gender, but also age, home situation, parental college attainment, place of birth for children and parents and canton of residence. I conducted the regressions on three different dependent dummy variables, which took the value of 1 if the child was (i) following the occupation of any one of the parents, (ii) following the occupation of the mother, and (iii) following the occupation of the father, and 0 otherwise. These dummy variables were employed to examine occupational inheritance at multiple levels of the CH-ISCO-19 code. This approach allowed for the consideration of transmission beyond the mere persistence of the exact occupation. For instance, I also investigated the persistence of the type of occupation or of the occupational field. For this purpose, I particularly focused on the 5-digit level (which refers to the exact same occupation), the 2-digit level (a subgroup that encompasses a wide range of occupations, while still accounting for different fields), and the 1-digit level (which, as previously mentioned, are simply quite broad categories). The 4-digit and 3-digit levels were excluded from the analysis as they did not contribute significantly to the understanding of the data and did not offer a substantial variation in comparison to the other groups. However, I found the results for these two levels to be extremely similar to those collected for the others. The generic equation for the regression, to which I applied the required changes to the independent variable—be it for the focus on both parents or only the mother or the father, or for the level of specification under ISCO—or the control variables included, had the following structure, where $Transm_i$ is the dummy variable for the presence of occupational transmission and X_i is a vector of controls:

$$Transm_i = \alpha + \beta female + \gamma X_i + u_i. \tag{3}$$

In addition to the aforementioned OLS regressions, I conducted supplementary analyses to shed new light on other potential factors that may influence the direction of the occupational choice of the children towards either parent. Specifically, I included as independent variables a measure of the perceived importance of the opinions of the parents according to children (on a scale from ”very unimportant” to ”very important”), as well as a variable indicating with which of the parents they discussed their occupational future most frequently (whether the mother, the father, or both equally).

6 Results

In this chapter, I will present and discuss the results of my analysis. Firstly, I offer an estimate of the magnitude of the intergenerational transmission of occupations, which I obtained by comparing the participants' favorite occupations with their parents' professions. Secondly, I focus on likelihood ratios and on the intergenerational income elasticities that emerged from my estimations, investigating their implications for social mobility. Finally, I provide an overview of the OLS regressions, exploring the fruitful insights they offer regarding the selection of the parent to follow.

6.1 Descriptive Size of Occupational Inheritance

Table 2 presents the number of occurrences in which the child's favorite occupation corresponds to one of the parents' occupations for different levels of specification, as well as the proportion of this phenomenon in respect to the whole sample. These results indicate that approximately 11% of children tend to pursue the same occupation as their parents. A more detailed analysis reveals that the most frequently transmitted occupations are office and secretarial staff, sellers in retail shops, specialists in IT, farmers, intermediate-level health professionals, home and family carers, and teachers. Approximately 47% of children, then, remain within the same occupational major groups at the one-digit level. The fact that almost half of the sample persists in the same major occupational group as one of their parents provides evidence of a quite limited occupational mobility. While there is some variation in income across occupations within these groups, there are significantly greater differences between

them. If there is a disparity in the occupational prospects of children, this will result in a similar corresponding discrepancy in earnings, which in turn restricts social mobility. I will discuss this argument more in depth in Section 6.3.

Table 2: Descriptive Look at the magnitude of Occupational Inheritance

Level of Comparison	**Freq (out of 2938 Obs.)**	**Percent**
Labb-Code		
Any Parent	385	13.10%
Mother	212	7.22%
Father	223	7.59%
ISCO5		
Any Parent	331	11.27%
Mother	187	6.36%
Father	185	6.30%
ISCO4		
Any Parent	343	11.67%
Mother	190	6.47%
Father	196	6.67%
ISCO3		
Any Parent	393	13.38%
Mother	205	6.98%
Father	235	8.00%
ISCO2		
Any Parent	582	19.81%
Mother	305	10.38%
Father	350	11.91%
ISCO1		
Any Parent	1439	47.11%
Mother	865	29.44%
Father	885	30.12%

It is challenging to make a definitive assertion regarding the significance of this phenomenon based on a single percentage. It is therefore beneficial to compare the magnitude of this phenomenon to the estimates obtained in other contexts and with other approaches. For instance, Lo Bello and Morchio (2022) estimate that 18% of sons work in the same occupational group (1-digit level of the Standard Occupational Classification) as their fathers, utilizing data from the UK. To obtain their estimate, the researchers employed a considerably larger

sample, which resulted in a more precise identification than the one employed in this study. Furthermore, their sample is to be considered more representative of the population than ours. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that their study only considered the inheritance from fathers to sons—probably because of the data available—and thus did not take into account mothers and daughters, or the possibility that children may follow the occupational path of the parent of the opposite sex.

The magnitude of occupational inheritance differs significantly between mine and their estimate. This discrepancy may be attributed, as mentioned, to a relatively biased estimate in the present study, and to a slightly different methodological approach. In any case, it can be concluded that, at least based on the sample used, occupational persistence appears to be quite consistent in Switzerland.

6.2 Likelihood Ratios

I examine now the likelihood ratios and the different probability of choosing an occupation in the case parents exercise that same occupation. Table 3 presents the likelihood ratios for the CH-ISCO-19 1-digit groups of the entire sample. The three columns of Table 3 display, respectively, the cases in which the father (first column), the mother (second column), or any of the two (third column) belong to said group. Most coefficients fall within an interval between 1.06 and 1.54. This indicates that for the majority of the groups, the probability of a child working in a specific group is between 6% and 54% higher as a result of one of the parents working in said group[4]. Two outliers are evident in this analysis: group 8 and group 6. In the case of group 8 (plant and machine operators and assembly occupations), the likelihood ratios are high—close to 2. This is probably due to the fact that category 8 is the least favorite among children, with less than 1% actually listing an occupation inside it as their favorite, and thus the sample provides an insufficient number of observations which may lead to an unreliable assessment. In the case of group 6 (specialists in agriculture, forestry and fisheries), the likelihood ratios take values between 7.4 and 9.6. These extremely high likelihood ratios for the agricultural sector consistently

[4]Some of these, however, appear not to be statistically significant. This means that I can not exclude that in some specific cases, the difference might actually be equal to 0.

appear in any subsequent subsampling. Furthermore, the high likelihood ratios observed in this case may also be attributed to the relatively small proportion of parents and children belonging to this category. However, it is more probable that these results are, in fact, due to another mechanism: it has already been demonstrated that occupational inheritance among farmers and other agricultural workers is significantly higher than for any other field or type of occupation (Laband & Lentz, 1983). Family farms are typically transmitted from parents to children, thereby remaining within families across multiple generations. The results of my analysis mirror the trend illustrated by Lo Bello and Morchio (2022), who also identify a higher likelihood ratio for agriculture than for other groups. Therefore, these results align with similar estimates and predictions elaborated in other contexts, and thus seem to be reliable and significant.

Table 3: Likelihood Ratios for Whole Sample

	CH-ISCO-19 Group	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^F = j)$	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^M = j)$	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^P = j)$
2	Intellectual and Scientific Occupations	1.247^{***}	1.175^{***}	1.194^{***}
3	Technicians and equivalent non-technical professions	1.225^{**}	1.099	1.103^{*}
4	Office workers and related professions	1.546^{***}	1.114	1.218^{***}
5	Service professions and salespeople	1.069	1.185^{**}	1.170^{**}
6	Specialists in agriculture, forestry and fisheries	9.554^{***}	8.126^{***}	7.477^{***}
7	Crafts and related professions	1.265^{***}	1.149	1.271^{***}
8	Plant and machine operators and assembly occupations	2.604	1.883	2.111

Notes. Results of equation (1) for different CH-ISCO-19 1-digit groups. Asterisks indicate cases where the probability of being in a certain group is significantly different for children having a parent in said group than for other children at the following levels:***p $<$.01, **p $<$.05, *p $<$.1, respectively. Table 7 in the Appendix shows the separate results for boys and girls.

Upon separating the sample into boys and girls (Appendix, Table 7), it is possible to discern some differential patterns in parental preferences. The probability of sons entering an occupational group if their fathers belonged to that same group increases significantly, ranging from +17% for intellectual and sci-

entific occupations to +87% for technicians and equivalent non-technical professions (again, specialists in agriculture and machine operators stand out for higher values). In contrast, the results in relation to the maternal occupation are moderate, ranging from an increase of 4% to one of 20%. This indicates that, although occupational transmission across generations is not entirely gender-specific, sons are more likely to react to the occupational type of their fathers. The evidence for girls is somewhat more complex. The probability of choosing an occupational group if the mother is employed in a similar profession increases by 10% to 53%, indicating a positive effect, but of variable magnitude depending on the occupational group. In contrast, when considering the inheritance between fathers and daughters, we observe some likelihood ratios below 1, which constitute a rare case in my analysis. This suggests that, for some groups, having a father working in a certain field decreases the probability of a daughter choosing that same field. This phenomenon is observed in the case of technicians and equivalent non-technical professions (group 3) and service professions and salespeople (group 5). In the remaining occupational groups, the likelihood ratios range from 1.27 to 1.37, indicating again a significant increase in the probability of choosing an occupational field, if similar to the father's. Once again, category 8 stands out for the female sample, this time for the fact that—probably due to the small sample size—only 3 girls chose it. Of these participants, none of them had a parent working in that group, and thus I cannot estimate a likelihood ratio. Nevertheless, the daughter's preference for the same-sex parent profession appears to be somewhat less pronounced than what I have observed in boys—even if, again, evidence is mixed for different occupation groups.

The majority of the estimated coefficients appear to be consistent with those reported by Lo Bello and Morchio (2022), who also identify an increase in probability for each occupational group—although their values are often larger than the ones estimated here. Another aspect discussed by Lo Bello and Morchio (2022) which is also reflected by my results is that occupational inheritance appears to be more prevalent at a more detailed and specific level—that is, examining specific occupations or fields reveals generally higher likelihood ratios. In the context of my analysis, I have estimated the probability of inheritance for some individual occupations, which result in the following values: the likelihood ratio for the occupation of bakers is 2.51, for teachers it is 3.28, and for

salespersons it is 1.89. These values corroborate the hypothesis that the transmission of occupations is more likely at the specific-occupation level. However, there are exceptions to this trend, for instance the case of IT specialists, which have a likelihood ratio of only 1.14. This demonstrates that not everywhere occupational transmission is the same, and not in every occupation transmission gets stronger if we look at a specific level. Nevertheless, both for large occupational groups and even more for specific occupations, I can conclude that parents seem to have a positive effect on the probability of children choosing their same occupations.

In order to ascertain whether the presence of a parent who is employed in a profession that is predominantly occupied by individuals of the opposite sex (for instance, a mother working in a traditionally male-dominated field or a father employed in a female-dominated profession) increases the likelihood of their child to defy gender-segregation, I sorted the apprenticeship professions by female representation. I defined a profession as male-dominated if the percentage of women is 33.3% or lower, and female-dominated if the percentage of women is 66.7% or higher. Only apprenticeship professions are considered in this context because of the data available. Having defined these categories, I estimated the likelihood ratio for sons to work in a female-dominated profession and for women to work in male-dominated professions, if the parent of their respective sex also worked in an occupation dominated by the opposite gender. It is noteworthy that both likelihood ratios are relatively close to 1, with respective values of 0.99 and 1.08 respectively, which are not statistically significant. This indicates that there is no discernible effect on the overall probability of defying gender segregation. However, it is important to notice that the results of this study might be influenced by the limited sample size and the lack of comprehensive data on gender segregation.

In light of these considerations, an alternative identification has been implemented to confirm whether defiance of gender norms is transmissible. I have focused on specific opposite-gender segregated fields, estimating the likelihood ratios for fields that are well-known for being dominated by one of the two genders. These include the field of healthcare, which is imbalanced with a majority of women employed in it [5], and informatics, which is instead famously

[5]While for other health-related professions this difference has been present for a long time, it is only relatively recent for medical students.

male-dominated and one of the few fields of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) achievable also through VET. It would be of interest to ascertain whether the presence of a father employed in healthcare influences the likelihood of a son pursuing a career in that same field, and a similar question might be raised in relation to mothers and daughters in informatics. The estimated probability of a son working in healthcare increases by 48% when a father is employed in that field, while for girls in informatics it increases by 101%—it more than doubles—when their mother also works in said field. This suggests, in conjunction with the findings illustrated in the preceding paragraph, that gender-norm defiance may not be transmitted in a general manner, but rather emerges at the specific-field level. That is, having a male parent employed in a female-dominated field will not necessarily increase the probability of a male child pursuing a career in any female-dominated field. However, it will increase the probability to pursue a career in the exact female-dominated field in which the father is employed. A similar phenomenon can be observed for girls and mothers in male-dominated fields. It can therefore be concluded that the presence of a close role model in an occupation that is dominated by workers of the opposite sex can significantly influence children to defy gender segregation in the labor market, although this may be limited within the boundaries of the specific fields.

6.3 Intergenerational Income Elasticity and Social Mobility

One of the goals of this thesis, which I consider to be crucial to really grasp the meaning of occupational inheritance, is to examine how occupational persistence ties with intergenerational transmission of earnings, and thus with social mobility. It is reasonable to posit that if children choose the same occupation as their parents, their earnings or incomes will be in some way related or comparable. It is evident that a multitude of variables may influence the precise income levels attained. Nevertheless, it is also possible to assert that, generally, the income of a plumber's child will be more akin to that of his father if he chooses to become a plumber, as opposed to, say, a teacher. Consequently, I suggest that the intergenerational income elasticity is greater for occupational followers than for occupational movers. I estimated the intergenerational income elasticity for my dataset, initially for the entire sample and subsequently for occupational fol-

lowers and occupational movers at the 5-digit ISCO code and at the 1-digit level separately. The results are presented in Table 4, which provides fertile ground to discuss the examined aspects.

Because of the limits inherent in my dataset (already mentioned in Chapter 3), the results of my analysis differ from those emerging in similar studies, such as the research pursued by Chuard and Schmiedgen-Grassi (2020). In their study, the estimated intergenerational income elasticity is 0.22, a value that appears considerably higher than the one emerging from my estimates, where the value of intergenerational income elasticity is 0.04. I trace this incongruous result to the employment of estimates for both parental earnings, as well as for the children's prospect of income. While my results cannot be considered representative and externally valid, they unveil some noteworthy dynamics that I will examine in more detail. In the first regression (Panel A), I estimated the intergenerational income elasticity using the mean of the maternal and paternal income. The results in Panel B suggest that, while an increase in the father's income is related to higher increases in the child's income (0.03) compared to changes in the mother's income (0.01)—probably due to a partial correlation between the two—the sum of the two (0.04) is equal to the coefficient obtained for the mean of the two separate incomes (0.04). Therefore, for the following estimates, I resort to the average of the parental incomes, instead of separating them. These small values, which are extremely close to 0, suggest that in my sample the prospects of the children's earnings are quite unrelated from the estimated parental earnings, revealing how social mobility might be higher than expected.

However, by splitting the main sample into two groups—occupational followers and occupational movers—it is evident that the two groups exhibit markedly different IGEs (Panel C and D). For those who reported the occupation of one of their parents as one of their favorite occupations, I estimated an income elasticity between 0.30 and 0.33. In contrast, for the remaining sample, the IGE appears to be really close to zero (0.02). This suggests that, despite the aforementioned limitations of my dataset and methodological approach, the earnings of occupational followers are, to some extent, influenced by those of their parents. On the contrary, the prospects of occupational movers appear to be unrelated to those of their parents, with an increase of 1 CHF in the income of the parent resulting in only a 2-cents increase in the child's income.

Table 4: Estimation of IGE

Panel A: Intergenerational Income Elasticity, mean parental Income		
IGE	0.042***	0.040***
	(0.009)	(0.010)
Control Variables	NO	YES
Observations	2935	2935
Panel B: IGE, separate incomes for mothers and fathers		
IGE relative to mother	0.011	0.011
	(0.008)	(0.009)
IGE relative to father	0.030***	0.029***
	(0.009)	(0.010)
Control Variables	NO	YES
Observations	2488	2488

Panel C: IGE for occupational followers and movers, 5-digits level				
	Occupational Followers		Occupational Movers	
IGE	0.325***	0.304***	0.018*	0.017*
	(0.029)	(0.033)	(0.009)	(0.014)
Control Variables	NO	YES	NO	YES
Observations	331	331	2604	2604

Panel D: IGE for occupational followers and movers, 1-digits level				
	Occupational Followers		Occupational Movers	
IGE	0.230***	0.221***	-0.086***	-0.075***
	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Control Variables	NO	YES	NO	YES
Observations	1382	1382	1553	1553

Notes. Coefficients for regression (2) measures of income and subsamples. Control variables include age, gender, home situation, parental college attendance and being born in Switzerland for children and parents. The number of observations in Panel B differs because of missing answers to parental occupations, which hinders the construction of income estimates. ***p $<$.01, **p $<$.05, *p $<$.1, respectively.

A further division of the sample into those belonging to the same 1-digit ISCO major group as one of the parents and those not belonging to the same group produces even more pronounced results. For the first group, the estimated IGE is close to 0.22, while for the second group, a negative elasticity is estimated (-0.08). This result is somewhat unexpected, as a negative intergenerational income elasticity is commonly not observed in society. My results indicate that a one-franc increase in parental income is associated with an eight-cents decrease in child income for occupational movers. However, it is unlikely that these values accurately mirror the relation between parental and child income. What I

can conclude is that occupational movers tend to move in the income distribution as well, with those at the bottom rising and those at the top falling. While not providing statistically reliable values, my results draw a general trend, whereby occupational inheritance is indeed related to the intergenerational transmission of earnings. This can be thus considered as one of the mechanisms that favor social immobility.

6.4 Different tendencies towards parents

In order to gain further insight into the different propensities towards parents' occupations, I constructed and performed a series of OLS regressions, the results of which are highlighted throughout this section[6]. Table 5 presents the results of the regressions on a dummy variable for the presence of intergenerational transmission at multiple levels of the CH-ISCO-19 code for multiple independent and control variables. My purpose was to identify possible mechanisms that might alter and influence the magnitude of occupational inheritance. In particular, whether girls inherit parental occupations in the same proportion as boys, or whether children born in Switzerland and outside Switzerland differ in this regard. The results of these regressions indicate that almost none of the included possible explanatory variables appear to affect the results to a significant extent, as the majority of the coefficients are not statistically significant. The only possible conclusion that I can draw from this analysis is that, at a more specific level, the likelihood of transmission is lower when the mother has a college degree, while it seems to be higher, at a wider level, when a father has a college degree. I consider this tendency quite hard to explain, and I suggest that it might be random, due to some measurement error or to a sample size that is insufficient for detecting the real relation. Furthermore, female subjects exhibited slightly smaller patterns of intergenerational transmission of occupation, even though these are not statistically significant and thus this precludes the drawing of any robust conclusions.

In contrast, the regressions yield more intriguing results when the independent variables are dummy variables representing the presence of maternal occupational inheritance and paternal following. The results are presented in Table

[6]A logit model was at first considered, but because of an easier interpretation of the results through OLS and the similarity of the results between the two systems, it was finally discarded.

Table 5: Regressions on Transmission of Occupations

	Transm ISCO5		Transm ISCO2		Transm ISCO1	
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Female	-0.018	-0.020	-0.008	-0.011	-0.024	-0.025
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.019)
Mother College		-0.033**		-0.048**		-0.018
		(0.013)		(0.016)		(0.021)
Father College		0.012		0.023		0.037*
		(0.013)		(0.017)		(0.021)
Born in Switzerland		-0.013		0.001		0.040
		(0.030)		(0.038)		(0.048)
Mother born in Switzerland		0.044*		0.034		-0.014
		(0.024)		(0.030)		(0.037)
Father born in Switzerland		0.001		0.007		0.058
		(0.024)		(0.031)		(0.038)
Home Situation		YES		YES		YES
Age		YES		YES		YES
Canton		YES		YES		YES
Constant	0.122	0.108	0.202	0.180	0.483	0.471
	(0.018)	(0.037)	(0.010)	(0.046)	(0.013)	(0.058)
Observations	2938	2938	2938	2938	2938	2938

Notes. Coefficients for regression (3) for different ISCO levels of occupational inheritance. Table 10 in the Appendix shows more complete and detailed results for the same regressions. ***p <.01, **p <.05, *p <.1, respectively.

6, Panel A and Panel B respectively.

Firstly, it can be observed that there is a higher probability for girls than boys to follow the maternal occupation. This phenomenon might be attributed to a number of factors. One potential explanation is that the professions typically undertaken by mothers are often gender-stereotypical, which may result in girls exhibiting a higher propensity to follow their mothers' occupations than boys. Alternatively, among other underlying reasons, it can be postulated a higher level of closeness or more shared interests between mother and daughters, especially in comparison to canonical mother-son relationships, and other similar patterns. The size of the observed difference varies depending on the level of observation. When considering the 5-digit ISCO codes, girls are, keeping all the other variables constant, around 2 percentage points more likely than boys

Table 6: Regressions on Maternal and Paternal Transmission of Occupations

Panel A: Maternal Transmission of Occupations				
	Transm ISCO5		Transm ISCO1	
Female	0.021**	0.019**	0.059***	0.062**
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Mother College		-0.022**		0.009
		(0.010)		(0.019)
Father College		0.007		0.067***
		(0.010)		(0.019)
Mother born in CH		0.037**		0.003
		(0.018)		(0.034)
Other Controls		YES		YES
Constant	0.053	0.076	0.265	0.226
	(0.006)	(0.028)	(0.017)	(0.052)
Observations	2938	2938	2938	2938
Panel B: Paternal Transmission of Occupations				
	Transm ISCO5		Transm ISCO1	
Female	-0.048***	-0.048***	-0.091***	-0.091***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Mother College		-0.016*		0.011
		(0.010)		(0.019)
Living only with Mother		-0.032**		-0.035
		(0.014)		(0.026)
Living only with Father		-0.022		0.049
		(0.032)		(0.059)
Alternated Parents		-0.017		0.019
		(0.017)		(0.031)
Other Controls		YES		YES
Constant	0.087	0.056	0.346	0.311
	(0.006)	(0.028)	(0.012)	(0.053)
Observations	2938	2938	2938	2938

Notes. Coefficients for regression (3) for different ISCO levels of occupational inheritance. In Panel A other controls refers to Home Situation, being born in Switzerland for the child and the father, Age and Canton, while in Panel B to Father's attendance to college, living alternately with the parents, being born in Switzerland for children and parents, Age and Canton. Table 11 and 12 in the Appendix show more complete and detailed results for the same regressions. $^{***}p < .01$, $^{**}p < .05$, $^{*}p < .1$, respectively.

to inherit the occupation of the mother. Conversely, when examining the 2- and 1-digit codes, this difference increases to around 6 percentage points, which is a considerable difference, considering that maternal occupational inheritance at

these levels amounts respectively to 10 and 29%. These differences are significant, and even if the precise reasons for these trends remain elusive, they are worthy of identification and consideration.

A comparable pattern is evident when considering the transmission of paternal occupations. Boys are more likely than girls to follow their fathers into the labor market, both in terms of their chosen profession or occupational subgroup and group. These values are even larger and more statistically significant than those observed for mothers' occupations, amounting to 5, 7 and 9 percentage points respectively. Consequently, it can be concluded that, on average and within the scope of my sample, boys exhibit a greater propensity to follow their fathers, while girls display a greater willingness to follow their mothers. That said, it is important to note that both genders exhibit a significant inclination to follow the different-sex parent as well, and specifically it appears that boys are on average slightly more likely to emulate their mothers than girls are to emulate their fathers. Although this phenomenon is particularly intriguing, as it could be attributed to the nature of the different occupations or instead to other factors, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to pursue this point further.

Other facts emerging from my regression analysis are worth considering. For instance, there is a relation between parental college attendance and maternal occupational inheritance, negative for mothers at the specific level and positive for fathers at a more aggregate level. This is an anomalous and counterintuitive fact, also because this does not happen for paternal transmission of occupations. Therefore, I argue that we cannot trust these results as they seem to be rather inconclusive. A result that confirms previous intuition but is nevertheless worth mentioning is the fact that paternal following seems less likely if the child only lives with the mother: keeping all the other variables constant, the value is 3 percentage points lower with respect to when the child lives with both parents. Interestingly, these patterns do not seem to be present in other cases, whereby children do not tend to inherit the paternal occupation more frequently if they only live with the father, and neither they seem to inherit with less frequency the maternal occupation. These values might be due to the fact that this is a relatively rare occurrence in my sample, whose size may not be sufficient to detect a substantial difference. Once more, these results are to some extent expected, since it is quite reasonable that without a present father-figure, a child might not choose his occupation. That said, the evidence on the presence of

parental role models does not seem to be substantial in other cases.

Finally, it is worth underlining that in the majority of studies dedicated to the transmission of outcomes, the sole or main source of data is administrative. The survey considered in this thesis, however, allows for the investigation of additional mechanisms that are otherwise impossible to identify. For example, the availability of data about the degree of importance children confer to the parents' opinion and about which parent they talk the most with unveils a more nuanced picture of the participants' differential tendencies towards their parents. These, indeed, appear to be somehow involved in the transmission of occupation (Appendix, Tables 13 and 14). Paternal inheritance is significantly higher among those who consider the father's opinion to be of greater importance. In contrast, the coefficients for maternal inheritance are not statistically significant, although the direction of the effect appears to be similar. A similar pattern emerges when I use as independent variables dummies indicating with which parent the participants are talking the most about their occupational choice. Children who communicate with their fathers the most exhibit higher paternal transmission than those who speak the most with their mothers. Conversely, mothers' occupations are transmitted to children in equal proportions when they speak most with their mothers or with both parents equally, whereas children who speak most with fathers inherit the occupation of the mother to a significantly lesser extent.

The precise reasons behind the displayed relations remain unclear. It is plausible that when the opinion of the parent is considered important, the child might feel an urge to satisfy his/her expectations by choosing the same occupation. Otherwise, it is also possible that, since the child speaks with one specific parent more than with the other, the former is the one with whom he/she shares common interests and opinions: according to this perspective, behind the child's choice there is no case of "manipulation", as the transmission of occupation is due to the shared interests fostered through a reinforced bond. An extensive exploration of the reasons behind these associations exceeds the focus of this thesis, especially because the reduced dataset does not allow for a clear identification of the specific mechanisms at play. That said, the hypothesis I shall formulate as a result of the analysis presented in this section is that children inherit to different extents the maternal and paternal occupations, and this transmission depends on a series of different factors among which the participant's

gender is one of the most crucial.

7 Conclusions

In this thesis, I studied the phenomenon of occupational inheritance and its relation with social mobility, examining the data provided by a recent survey conducted by Prof. Brenøe and her team at the University of Zurich. Through a quantitative analysis of the answers provided by Swiss German-speaking teenagers, I explored how parents' occupations might affect the professional careers of their children, and how this tendency might contribute to the exacerbation of social inertia.

Firstly, an initial analysis of the dataset allowed me to draw a preliminary estimate of the magnitude of intergenerational occupational persistence. Specifically, between 10 and 15% of the participants in the survey listed the profession of one of their parents as one of their two favorite occupations. Similarly, almost half of them expressed their intention to stay in the same 1-digit CH-ISCO-19 occupational group as one of the parents. In all these cases, with slightly different propensities, participants can be described as occupational followers. Since different professions and occupational groups significantly differ in terms of income, such a preponderance of occupational inheritance is expected to have direct implications on social mobility. Indeed, the different intergenerational income elasticities (IGE) estimated in Section 5.3 demonstrate that occupational movers are significantly more socially mobile than occupational followers. Therefore, the data collected in the survey allowed me to establish a clear, even if not perfect, relation between these two phenomena. Because of the reduced size of my sample, a statistically representative analysis of this tendency exceeds the scope of this thesis. However, I consider it to be worth exploring further, especially to better grasp the possible policy implications this correlation might have.

Secondly, the analysis of the survey's answers demonstrates that parents play—voluntarily or not—a remarkable role in shaping and influencing the occupational choices of their children. The likelihood ratios presented in Section 5.2 confirm this tendency for almost every profession and occupational group observed, signaling that having a parent exercising a profession increases the probability of the child choosing the same job. Furthermore, the intersectional

analysis conducted in Section 5.4 evidenced that, while occupational transmission is relevant across most baseline characteristics, there is a higher tendency to follow the same-sex parent's steps, as daughters are more likely to emulate the mother than boys, and sons tend to inherit the paternal occupation more than girls.

It is important to underline that this thesis constitutes only a preliminary study, in which it was not possible to exhaustively and in due depth encompass the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission of occupation in Switzerland. Particularly, I am aware that my analysis presents some limitations that might curb the external validity of its results. On the one hand, as already mentioned above, a certain degree of speculation was necessary to interpret some of the free text describing parental occupation and to attribute the CH-ISCO-19 codes. I recognize that this manual process might have led to some unexpected errors, which nonetheless should not systematically bias the investigation's results. On the other hand, the reduced size of the sample and the reliance on constructed estimates—especially regarding the earnings—might have resulted in a series of values not exempt from bias. Additionally, because of the way in which the survey has been circulated, only a small minority of the participants intended to attend high school and afterwards pursue a university degree. The scenario emerging from the sample does not mirror the actual composition of the population, as almost one-third of Swiss teenagers continue their general education. I suggest that this discrepancy might lead to inexact estimates and downward bias, especially because some of the occupations that can be pursued along this path also present a significant occupational inheritance rate—renowned are, for example, the cases of extremely high rates of occupational inheritance across doctors (Laband & Lentz, 1989) and between lawyers (Laband & Lentz, 1992). Considering also the fact that high-paying occupations appear to be more segregated along parental income than low-paying ones (Haeck & Laliberté, 2023), I argue that with a more representative sample, estimates would possibly be higher. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the answers recorded in the survey are not binding, rather they only capture the attitudes and the aspirations of the participants. Since they are collected before they embark on their occupational path, it is hard (if not impossible) to judge whether participants will end up doing what they expressed here. Thus, my results capture not the factual occupational inheritance, but the intention to inherit the parental occupation, that is,

the potential transmission of occupations rather than the actual one.

That said, this thesis also offers valuable insights into occupational transmission and inheritance as well. Building on the findings of this study, future research might focus on obtaining more precise estimates of the different IGEs for the occupational movers and followers. Specifically, it would be extremely beneficial to access administrative data, which would contribute to a better understanding of how occupational persistence and social mobility interact at a more general level. This approach might also contribute to the identification of which portion of social immobility can be explained by occupational persistence. Furthermore, it could also be fruitful to investigate the exact mechanisms that lead children to follow their parents—whether interests, skills, familiarity with the field, parental networks, intention to overtake the family business, or something else— and what are the exact reasons behind the different choice of the parent to follow by gender.

Finally, I consider it to be crucial to study how this phenomenon adapts to an ever-changing society, whose structure is becoming more complex and nuanced. Also because of the very form in which the survey has been formulated, this thesis has focused on traditional, nuclear representations of the family, disregarding other forms of household even though they hold a significant position in contemporary society. Although, in most cases, "home situation" was considered and included in the regressions, accounting thus for consideration of divorce and mono-parental families, many other elements were not taken into consideration. Particularly, I find it compelling to expand the definition of family, accounting for contemporary phenomena that constantly shape families and households. For instance, due to the increase in female labor force participation, often the parents are not the ones taking care of the children during the day. Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC), a survey conducted by the Federal Statistical Office, reports that in 2022 almost two-thirds of Swiss children benefited from out-of-home childcare—a significant part of which is constituted by grandparents—a fact I consider highly significant in an analysis of occupational inheritance (Federal Statistical Office, 2024a). I suggest that further studies could include the role that grandparents and other family members might play in the upbringing and subsequent vocational choice of Swiss children, investigating whether intergenerational transmission of occupation might not only lead children to follow the steps of parents, but even stimulate kids and adolescents

to emulate other close relatives. Similarly, further discussions of occupational inheritance could also include a more nuanced approach to sexual and gender identity, taking into consideration the social changes resulting from the recognition of the LGBTQ+ community and a blurring of gender norms. This wider perspective is fundamental to account for the dynamics inherent to same-sex parenting, as well as recognizing identities that do not align with a binary gender.

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A Appendix

Table 7: Likelihood Ratios for Divided Sample

Panel A: Likelihood Ratios for Boys				
	CH-ISCO-19 Group	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^F = j)$	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^M = j)$	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^P = j)$
2	Intellectual and Scientific Occupations	1.176*	1.199**	1.141**
3	Technicians and equivalent non-technical professions	1.878***	1.038	1.340***
4	Office workers and related professions	1.823***	1.123	1.301***
5	Service professions and salespeople	1.351	1.095	1.156
6	Specialists in agriculture, forestry and fisheries	8.494***	10.921***	7.841***
7	Crafts and related professions	1.285***	1.128	1.274***
8	Plant and machine operators and assembly occupations	1.973	3.519	2.308*
Panel B: Likelihood Ratios for Girls				
	CH-ISCO-19 Group	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^F = j)$	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^M = j)$	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^P = j)$
2	Intellectual and Scientific Occupations	1.374**	1.173	1.301***
3	Technicians and equivalent non-technical professions	0.926	1.118	0.987
4	Office workers and related professions	1.277*	1.109	1.145
5	Service professions and salespeople	0.939	1.233***	1.176**
6	Specialists in agriculture, forestry and fisheries	8.848***	7.604**	7.725***
7	Crafts and related professions	1.322**	1.530	1.377**
8	Plant and machine operators and assembly occupations	0	0	0

Notes. Results of equation (1) for different CH-ISCO-19 1-digit groups for boys and girls in the sample separately. Asterisks indicate cases where the probability of being in a certain group is significantly different for children having a parent in said group than for other children at the following levels:***p $<$.01, **p $<$.05, *p $<$.1, respectively.

Table 8: Other Likelihood Ratios for specific Occupations

Occupation	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^F = j)$	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^M = j)$	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^P = j)$
Baker	4.260	0	2.505
Salesperson	2.070^{***}	1.968^{**}	1.887^{***}
Teacher	2.179	3.516^{***}	3.277^{***}
IT Specialist	1.171	2.001	1.143

Notes. Results of equation (1) for different Occupations. Asterisks indicate cases where the probability of being in a certain group is significantly different for children having a parent in said group than for other children at the following levels:***p $<.01$, **p $<.05$, *p $<.1$, respectively.

Table 9: Other Likelihood Ratios for gender-segregated fields

Occupation	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^F = j)$	$\mathcal{P}_j(o^M = j)$
Health, boys	1.478	
IT, girls		2.005
Female-dominated Occupations, boys	0.997	
Male-dominated Occupations, girls		1.075

Notes. Results of equation (1) for different fields.

Table 10: Regressions on Transmission of Occupations

	Transm ISCO5			Transm ISCO2			Transm ISCO1		
Female	-0.018	-0.018	-0.020*	-0.008	-0.008	-0.011	-0.024	-0.024	-0.025
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)
Mother College		-0.033***	-0.033**		-0.048***	-0.049***		-0.016	-0.018
		(0.013)	(0.013)		(0.016)	(0.016)		(0.021)	(0.021)
Father College		0.011	0.012		0.019	0.023		0.037*	0.037*
		(0.013)	(0.013)		(0.016)	(0.017)		(0.021)	(0.021)
Living only with Mother		-0.020	-0.023		-0.026	-0.027		-0.007	-0.006
		(0.018)	(0.018)		(0.023)	(0.023)		(0.028)	(0.029)
Living only with Father		0.013	0.013		0.025	0.030		0.041	0.028
		(0.041)	(0.041)		(0.052)	(0.052)		(0.065)	(0.065)
Alternately with Mother and Father		-0.022	-0.026		-0.030	-0.032		0.007	0.007
		(0.022)	(0.027)		(0.016)	(0.027)		(0.034)	(0.034)
Born in Switzerland		-0.017	-0.013		-0.005	0.001		0.037	0.040
		(0.030)	(0.024)		(0.038)	(0.038)		(0.047)	(0.048)
Mother born in Switzerland		0.044*	0.044*		0.038	0.034		-0.010	-0.014
		(0.024)	(0.024)		(0.030)	(0.030)		(0.037)	(0.038)
Father born in Switzerland		0.005	0.001		0.014	0.007		0.064	0.058
		(0.024)	(0.024)		(0.030)	(0.031)		(0.038)	(0.038)
Age			YES			YES			YES
Canton			YES			YES			YES
Constant	0.122	0.110	0.108	0.202	0.172	0.180	0.483	0.398	0.471
	(0.008)	(0.027)	(0.037)	(0.010)	(0.034)	(0.046)	(0.013)	(0.043)	(0.058)
Observations	2938	2938	2938	2938	2938	2938	2938	2938	2938

Notes. Coefficients for regression (3) for different ISCO levels of occupational inheritance. ***p <.01, **p <.05, *p <.1, respectively.

Table 11: Regressions on Maternal Transmission of Occupations

	Transm ISCO5		Transm ISCO2		Transm ISCO1	
Female	0.021**	0.019**	0.060***	0.060***	0.059***	0.062**
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Mother College		-0.022**		-0.041***		0.009
		(0.010)		(0.013)		(0.019)
Father College		0.007		0.025**		0.067***
		(0.010)		(0.013)		(0.019)
Living only with Mother		0.003		-0.001		0.014
		(0.013)		(0.017)		(0.026)
Living only with Father		0.021		0.017		0.044
		(0.032)		(0.040)		(0.060)
Alternately with Mother and Father		-0.023		-0.023		-0.002
		(0.017)		(0.021)		(0.031)
Born in Switzerland		-0.019		-0.022		0.019
		(0.023)		(0.029)		(0.043)
Mother born in Switzerland		0.037**		0.030		0.003
		(0.018)		(0.023)		(0.034)
Father born in Switzerland		-0.015		-0.010		0.031
		(0.019)		(0.023)		(0.035)
Age		YES		YES		YES
Canton		YES		YES		YES
Constant	0.053	0.076	0.074	0.064	0.265	0.226
	(0.006)	(0.028)	(0.008)	(0.035)	(0.017)	(0.052)
Observations	2938	2938	2938	2938	2938	2938

Notes. Coefficients for regression (3) for different ISCO levels of maternal occupational inheritance. ***p <.01, **p <.05, *p <.1, respectively.

Table 12: Regressions on Paternal Transmission of Occupations

	Transm ISCO5		Transm ISCO2		Transm ISCO1	
Female	-0.048***	-0.048***	-0.068***	-0.069***	-0.091***	-0.091***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Mother College		-0.016*		-0.013		0.011
		(0.010)		(0.013)		(0.019)
Father College		0.004		0.001		0.022
		(0.010)		(0.013)		(0.019)
Living only with Mother		-0.032**		-0.029		-0.035
		(0.014)		(0.018)		(0.026)
Living only with Father		-0.022		-0.011		0.049
		(0.032)		(0.042)		(0.059)
Alternately with Mother and Father		-0.017		-0.017		0.019
		(0.017)		(0.022)		(0.031)
Born in Switzerland		-0.013		-0.004		0.021
		(0.023)		(0.031)		(0.044)
Mother born in Switzerland		0.019		0.006		-0.016
		(0.018)		(0.024)		(0.034)
Father born in Switzerland		0.019		0.026		0.049
		(0.019)		(0.025)		(0.035)
Age		YES		YES		YES
Canton		YES		YES		YES
Constant	0.087	0.056	0.153	0.141	0.346	0.311
	(0.006)	(0.028)	(0.008)	(0.038)	(0.012)	(0.053)
Observations	2938	2938	2938	2938	2938	2938

Notes. Coefficients for regression (3) for different ISCO levels of paternal occupational inheritance. ***p <.01, **p <.05, *p <.1, respectively.

Table 13: Regressions Transm. of Occupations with importance of opinion

Panel A: Transmission of maternal occupation				
	Transm ISCO5		Transm ISCO1	
Importance of mother's opinion				
Quite unimportant	0.050	0.054	-0.002	0.031
	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.073)	(0.074)
Quite important	0.016	0.018	0.013	0.044
	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.064)	(0.066)
Very important	0.019	0.020	0.040	0.076
	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.064)	(0.067)
Importance of father's opinion				
Quite unimportant	-0.022	-0.020	-0.068	-0.084
	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.053)	(0.055)
Quite important	0.002	0.003	-0.020	-0.039
	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.045)	(0.048)
Very important	0.006	0.010	-0.064	-0.083
	(0.024)	(0.027)	(0.044)	(0.050)
Controls		YES		YES
Constant	0.049	0.036	0.312	0.182
	(0.030)	(0.037)	(0.056)	(0.069)
Observations	2938	2938	2938	2938
Panel B: Transmission of paternal occupation				
	Transm ISCO5		Transm ISCO1	
Importance of father's opinion				
Quite unimportant	-0.001	-0.004	0.123**	0.119**
	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.053)	(0.064)
Quite important	0.024	0.016	0.119***	0.108**
	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.045)	(0.045)
Very important	0.067***	0.052*	0.176***	0.150***
	(0.024)	(0.027)	(0.045)	(0.051)
Importance of mother's opinion				
Quite unimportant	0.017	0.010	-0.081	-0.078
	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.074)	(0.075)
Quite important	-0.019	-0.023	-0.080	-0.077
	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Very important	-0.035	-0.033	-0.096	-0.081
	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.064)	(0.067)
Controls		YES		YES
Constant	0.047	0.070	0.246	0.0247
	(0.030)	(0.037)	(0.056)	(0.069)
Observations	2938	2938	2938	2938

Notes. Coefficients for regression (3) for different ISCO levels of occupational inheritance. The coeffiecients for "Quite unimportant", "Quite important" and "Very important" are calculated using as a baseline the answer "Very unimportant". The control variables included correspond to gender, age, home situation, parental college attendance and being born in Switzerland (for children and parents).***p $<.01$, **p $<.05$, *p $<.1$, respectively.

Table 14: Regressions Transm. of Occupations with parents children talk with

Panel A: Transmission of maternal occupation				
	Transm ISCO5		Transm ISCO1	
Parent with whom child talks the most				
Mother	-0.002	-0.003	0.001	0.003
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.018)	(0.019)
Father	-0.027*	-0.028*	-0.066**	-0.074***
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.026)	(0.028)
Controls		YES		YES
Constant	0.068	0.066	0.302	0.189
	(0.006)	(0.022)	(0.012)	(0.041)
Observations	2938	2938	2938	2938
Panel B: Transmission of paternal occupation				
	Transm ISCO5		Transm ISCO1	
Parent with whom child talks the most				
Mother	-0.028***	-0.018*	-0.037***	-0.020
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.018)	(0.019)
Father	0.004	0.001	0.033	0.018
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.027)	(0.028)
Controls		YES		YES
Constant	0.072	0.081	0.210	0.300
	(0.006)	(0.022)	(0.012)	(0.042)
Observations	2938	2938	2938	2938

Notes. Coefficients for regression (3) for different ISCO levels of occupational inheritance. The coeffiecients for "Mother" and "Father" are calculated using as a baseline the answer "Both parents equally". The control variables included correspond to gender, age, home situation, parental college attendance and being born in Switzerland (for children and parents).***p <.01, **p <.05, *p <.1, respectively.