

Gender and Well-Being

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The aim of this series is to enhance our understanding of the relationship between gender and well-being by addressing the following questions:

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- Is it possible to develop new indicators which reflect a fuller understanding of the nature of well-being in the twenty-first century?
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Gender Inequalities, Households and the Production of Well-Being in Modern Europe

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Chapter 12

Institutional Constraints and Intra-Family Inequalities in Access to Education: Swiss Federalism and the Gendered Well-Being of Siblings, 1880–1930

Anne-Françoise Praz

Introduction

The inclusion of gender in models of family history has helped challenge the assumption that families are harmonious units which can be treated as aggregates (Sarasúa 1998: 174, Praz 2007; see also Chapter 11). The household economic approach to the family (Anderson 1996) – inspired by models of neo-institutional economics (Pollack 1985) – has shown how property rights and social norms shape the distribution of resources, and hence the bargaining power and decision-making processes of family members. As Moch and colleagues (1987) have pointed out, intra-family inequalities are not only determined by market processes; legal and cultural frameworks play a significant role, as the status of an individual in the family is related to the position of their social category in contemporary society. Since social categorization by sex is historically the most pervasive, we should posit gender as a central force shaping the unequal access to family resources, and the ensuing unequal allocation of well-being among family members. Focusing on each member, and not on the family as an aggregate, also fits with the methodological stance of Sen's capability approach (Sen 1985). It is each person's capabilities – their opportunities and freedom to achieve well-being and agency – that must be considered, and not those of families, groups, states, or other corporate bodies (Nussbaum 2000; see also Chapter 2).

This chapter focuses on a particular type of intra-family inequality: the respective position of male and female siblings in the trade-off between family work and schooling. Access to education is an increasingly important element of well-being when it is understood, according to Sen, not only as the possession of material goods but also as a constant expansion of people's potential to choose a life they value. Following Robeyns (2003), we interpret the terms 'capability' and 'functioning' as analogous to 'opportunity' and 'result', defined as the opportunity to be educated and the level of education attained. In turn, a certain level of education enlarges the individual's 'opportunity space' in other domains

and provides access to other functionings, such as a better-remunerated job or greater social respectability, beside its value as consumption capital. Therefore, to be educated has universally been deemed an important component of well-being. For some transition periods and in certain places, however, education was more decisive in allowing individuals to attain valuable functionings. This was the case during time period and in the location studied here: Switzerland, 1880–1930.

Switzerland at this time was experiencing the Second Economic Revolution, described by Douglass North as ‘a fundamental change in the productive potential of society – a consequence of a basic change in the stock of knowledge and of a consequent, equally basic, change in organization – which helped realize this productive potential’ (North 1981: 171). A more skilled workforce even at the low ranks of the labour market hierarchy became crucial for economic development. It was not only classical skills (such as the ability to read, write and calculate) that needed to be instilled; much of the educational system was ‘obviously directed at inculcating a set of values’ (North 1981: 54), to reduce the costs of enforcing laws and property rights. Awareness of the importance of education and the inculcation of civic values for both economic development and the smooth functioning of the political system led governments to implement compulsory schooling and to increase public expenditure in educational structures. Nussbaum (2000: 90) argues that the state has a compelling interest in ‘any treatment of children that has a long-term impact on their capabilities’, ensuring their functioning as future citizens and producers. However, she also adds that education is a contested arena that has the potential to reproduce ideologies based on hierarchy and prejudice.

Given the new importance of a minimum level of education for job opportunities and participation in public life, it is particularly relevant to study gender and access to education during this period. Compulsory schooling was established in 1874 in Switzerland, but its implementation varied greatly according to provinces (cantons). To undertake a comparative analysis of the historical processes that generated individual opportunities or capabilities in relation to education, we propose a three-stage model.

First, opportunities in education depend on institutions. The term ‘institutions’ here includes the system of rights and duties attributed to individuals on the basis of diverse categorizations (see North 1981), and we will focus especially on the categorization of sex. These institutions, strongly influenced by political and religious culture, translate representations of sex differences into effective constraints that shape the opportunity space and the bargaining power of men and women. During the period under study, state policies became a growing force able to translate political ideologies and cultural representations into ‘a set of institutionalized constraints real enough to influence the “voluntary” behaviour of the majority’ (Johansson 1991: 384). State policies shape capabilities in education in two ways. School legislation and its implementation can more or less restrict access to education according to sex; the values inculcated by school, as Nussbaum (2000) highlights, can either promote the relevance of education of women or instil gender prejudices that will influence both parental decisions and children’s

motivations. The first stage of our analysis examines the institutional frame of educational legislation and policies in the areas we studied, examining to what extent school policies represented real constraints for families. This question is crucial for modifying family strategies that are founded upon a trade-off between increasing household labour and providing schooling for children. John Caldwell (1980) explains that mass education reduces a child’s potential for family work, increases the cost of having children, and speeds up changes in norms and values regarding the child as a future rather than a present producer.

Opportunities in education are also influenced by non-institutional factors, especially economic ones that can reduce a child’s chance of attending school instead of working. The weight of such factors depends on the elasticity of the institutional constraints, which delimits parents’ autonomy in deciding on the investment in education for their daughters and sons. Handwerker (1986: 402) has emphasized how mass education is not a sufficient incentive for changing parental attitudes, if there is no relationship to ‘changes in [the] opportunity structure that increasingly reward educationally-acquired skills and perspectives’. This points to the importance of the local labour market and we suggest that a gender perspective will enhance the explanatory power of this model; moreover, the demand for child labour may strengthen or weaken gender differences already established by the school structures. Changes in the local labour market also modify the organization of family economics, especially the allocation of remunerated and non-remunerated activities, an important source of unequal access to well-being within the family (see also Chapter 3). The second stage of our analysis examines these non-institutional factors that modify the trade-off between school and work for the children in our sample.

In the third stage, we ask to what extent capabilities (the opportunity to be educated) were translated into functionings (the level of education attained). The capability approach helps to identify some ‘conversion factors’ that generate capabilities, but does not provide a model explaining how this translation works; the ‘conversion factors’ can be equated to a set of constraints, not to mechanisms which explain how it works (Robeyns 2003, 2007a and Chapter 2). Moreover, one of the most important mechanisms generating gender inequalities in this interpretation – namely the bargaining processes occurring inside the household – remains beyond the scope of this analysis. In the last section of this chapter, using a database of about 2,300 children’s reconstructed school lives, we measure the impact of diverse variables on the level of education attained by boys and girls. This statistical analysis allows us to consider the factors that influenced parental decisions determining the move from capabilities to functionings. Though we hope to shed light on the ‘black box’ of the family by differentiating between brothers and sisters and by identifying potential conflicts between parents and children, we do not crack open the black box when it comes to exposing the bargaining process – possibly conflicting – between father and mother.

Table 12.1 Changing socio-economic structure based on men's occupation at marriage

	Farmer and/or fisher (land owner)	Day- labourer, unskilled, fisherman without land	Factory worker	Shopkeeper- craftsman	Skilled factory worker, civil servant		
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Chevroux/VD							
1860-98 (125/151)	47.4	12.7	1.3	22.8	12.3	3.1	
1899-1930 (584/588)	50.0	16.8	2.4	15.0	12.0	3.6	
Portalban-Delley/FR							
1860-98 (142/168)	66.1	12.6	0.0	15.4	4.2	1.4	
1899-1930 (195/199)	57.4	11.7	1.0	14.8	9.7	5.1	
Chavornay/VD							
1860-98 (286/362)	59.9	10.8	0.6	17.1	9.0	3.1	
1899-1930 (447/463)	29.8	7.1	18.8	17.9	20.6	5.8	
Broc/FR							
1860-98 (125/151)	50.4	18.4	1.6	20.8	6.4	2.4	
1899-1930 (584/588)	13.9	14.9	28.8	18.2	18.2	6.2	

Note: The figures in parentheses that appear after the date ranges record the number of marriages for which men's occupations are known, followed by the total number of marriages during the period.

Source: Civil Registers of the corresponding villages.

Studying Intra-family Inequalities in Two Swiss Cantons: Sample and Data

Switzerland actually figures as a miniature laboratory for studying the institutional and economic factors shaping gender inequalities. Besides the regional disparities in patterns of economic development, the country also illustrates significant cultural, political and religious diversity. A strong level of federalism results in institutional settings with marked differences. Therefore, we selected two French-speaking cantons that differ in this respect.

The Protestant canton of Vaud (VD) was led by a progressive government which marginalized liberal-conservative tendencies, mostly associated with the Church establishment. However, religious ideologies did not simply vanish; analysis of the political discourse shows that the government adopted Protestant values. For example, there was a belief in human co-responsibility in God's creation. This led in particular to an assumption that parental responsibility for childcare and education should be a civic obligation (Perrenoud 1974: 983-7). In the canton of Fribourg (FR), the conservative government based its political strategy on a tight collaboration with the Catholic Church. For this purpose, it was crucial to cooperate closely with the Catholic Church, using a network of parishes and religious associations.

In order to isolate the impact of these cultural variables, two villages were selected in each canton with respect to socio-economic factors. The first pair (Chevroux/VD and Portalban-Delley/FR) – two neighbouring communities located on the shores of the same lake – maintained an economic structure based on fishing and on agriculture. The modernization of agriculture met with many obstacles; new job opportunities were lacking, leading to the major seasonal and periodic emigration of young people, as well as of entire families. Consequently, the population decreased from 402 to 348 inhabitants in Chevroux and stagnated, increasing only slightly from 462 to 487 in Portalban/Delley during the period 1888-1930.

The second pair (Chavornay/VD and Broc/FR) experienced a significant increase in population during the same period (from 764 to 1,221 inhabitants in Chavornay and from 438 to 1,784 in Broc). Before 1900, both villages had given up the production of cereals because of the fierce competition from imported products, and specialized in dairy farming. Around 1900, a chocolate factory was set up in each village. The proportion of the agricultural workforce dropped dramatically (see Table 12.1) and the remainder of the agricultural sector supplied milk to the factories. A significant proportion of the workforce turned to the industrial and the tertiary sectors.

We relied on a range of sources. For the comparative examination of the institutional and cultural frame, we gathered for each canton a selection of qualitative material such as political discourse, educational periodicals and school-books. In the analysis of this material, we were attentive to the kinds of values the schools were inculcating, the influence of political and religious culture on cantonal school policies, and especially how gender differences were expressed in discourses and

used to legitimize unequal access to education. A variety of administrative sources provide information on the degree to which these state policies were effectively enacted and implemented at the local level (including governmental directives, legislation, correspondence between cantonal and local authorities, and minutes of the local school commissions).

The information is more scattered concerning non-institutional factors likely to influence the gendered access to education. Cantonal and local administrative sources (such as annual reports of the cantonal governments and of the district administrators, and minutes of the local councils) contain details of the local economic conditions and the family strategies regarding child labour. Besides the civil registers, offering details of men's occupations at marriage and death (but very irregularly those of women), the factory archives provide information too – lists of functions and salaries detailed by sex, as well as descriptions of the production process. Lists of workers exist, but unfortunately they are limited to the period of the opening of the factory in Broc (1898–1904). Later on, only aggregate indications of the workforce are available for both factories, and not always segregated by sex. Oral history has also been used to complement and critically examine our description of everyday life and working conditions, and to document the children's experience of work and school.¹

Finally, in order to measure the level of education attained and the school-leaving age for individual children, we used our demographic database. As the initial research aim was focused on fertility decline, we compiled data in parochial and civil registers and carried out a family reconstitution for marriages contracted between 1860 and 1930 that resulted in 5,381 legitimate children. To create a database of the school life of these children, we consulted administrative sources on the cantonal and local levels (including pupil listings, school attendance statistics and correspondence from the school authorities), adding information inferred from the subsequent occupations of these children at their marriage or death – given that for many occupations a specific level of schooling was required. For the 5,042 legitimate children who survived after age 15, we managed to reconstitute the school life of 2,353 of them (1,333 boys and 1,020 girls).

The originality of this material for the study of gendered well-being lies in the bridging of qualitative and quantitative data. Gender historians often rely on content analysis of normative discourse; however, the challenge is to specify by which mechanisms these norms operate and to examine if corresponding individual behaviours effectively change. Individual-level quantitative data permit us to create an experimental design in order to test the impact of gender norms on parental investment in their children's education through statistical analysis.

¹ A dozen witnesses, born between 1901 and 1920, were interviewed in Broc/FR and Chevroux/VD on their early childhood, family history and life course – especially work and school experiences. The purpose was only heuristic, to gather information not available in written sources on everyday life, and to refine our research questions.

The Impact of the Institutional Framework on Gendered Intra-family Inequalities

The importance of education in general and its relevance for women in particular was viewed very differently in the two cantons. In the Protestant and progressive culture of Vaud, both men and women were supposed to develop the intellectual capacities God had given them, for their own spiritual enlightenment and for the improvement of civic virtues. In Protestant educational periodicals, learning was considered important for women, the mothers of future citizens. The fact that women had no political rights and that their future social role would keep them bound to the home was not judged reason enough for limiting their curriculum. The first aim of girls' education was not their insertion into the labour market, it was the development of the intellectual capacities of the future mother, to enable her to transmit moral values and to ensure a good 'rate of return' from state investment in school structures. Accordingly, the school reading books present the mother as playing an important role in children's schooling: she is depicted checking their homework and exercise books.

According to Catholic educational periodicals, girls' education had to prepare pious housekeepers, and to inculcate the moral values of obedience, innocence and purity. The texts contrasted this ideal with two discredited feminine figures, absolutely to be avoided: the coquettish woman and the learned woman. In the school reading books, the exemplary mother never worries about school and homework, but teaches her children to pray and only recommends that they obey their teacher, who is God's representative. The girls' school programme, in line with social expectation, stipulated that a large place in the curriculum should be made for housekeeping and needlework, with the study of other disciplines limited to the most basic skills: the ability to read, to write and to calculate (in order to keep the household accounts), as well as some botany for gardening. Some disciplines were judged superfluous for girls, such as geometry, natural sciences, world history and geography. The stipulations outlined in these educational periodicals were indeed applied to the school programmes, contrasting with the situation in the canton of Vaud, where there were only slight differences in curricula according to sex; Vaud girls were taught algebra, geometry and natural sciences.

These respective discourses and ideologies shaped school policies. The Protestant canton implemented compulsory schooling very efficiently. School attendance was regularly checked and absenteeism severely punished. Parents could not take their children out of school to use them as workers before they had reached the age of 16 – whatever their sex – and exceptions were extremely rare. Co-education was the rule until the age of 16, which limited gender differences in access to disciplines and programmes. Post-primary education for girls and boys was recommended and fostered by the decentralization of secondary and professional schools, and girls' educational institutes for post-primary education received public support.

In the Catholic canton, school policies were sharply gender biased. The control and punishment of school absenteeism was relatively haphazard, particularly for girls. School structures were mostly segregated by sex, thus permitting the engagement of nuns as teachers in girls' primary schools, a guarantee both of morality and of lower staff expenses.² The cantonal authorities provided post-primary public – and free – schools for boys only, leaving girls' post-primary education to religious and private educational institutes that only rich families could afford. Boys had to attend school until the age of 16, whereas girls were allowed to leave school at 15. Above all, the school system permitted many exceptions in school attendance for teenagers, especially for girls, whose parents often took them out of school before the legal age.

School policy generated many conflicts between authorities and parents, as regular school attendance frequently stood in the way of the family economy. A detailed analysis of such conflicts shows that compromises were regularly made at the expense of girls' education. In Fribourg, conflicts with parents or parental requests for school leave were treated individually by the cantonal inspector and the school commission; these instances were systematically more severe with requests for boys. Girls' discrimination was much less pronounced in the canton of Vaud, and school conflicts were not dealt with individually, but on principles that were uniformly applied to the whole local community. Having been granted legal autonomy in administrative tasks, every year the local authorities were able to decide whether the children should be relieved from compulsory school at 15 or 16. But this decision had to apply to all children of the village – girls *and* boys.³

The Impact of Non-institutional Factors on Gendered Access to Education

The above analysis shows how institutional factors gave a first shape to the capability set regarding education for boys and girls. To what extent would the opportunities offered by the institutional setting result in valuable functionings for the children of our villages? To answer this question we must take into account non-institutional factors likely to influence parental decision in the trade-off between

² The engagement of nuns in primary schools also blocked the access to teaching occupations for lay women, whereas teaching was an interesting working opportunity for educated women in the canton of Vaud.

³ In 1906, to solve a thorny conflict between cantonal and communal authorities, the latter were allowed to distinguish between the sexes, liberating all the girls at age 15 and all the boys at 16, to satisfy recurrent parental requests. Despite violating the co-education principle, the cantonal parliament approved the proposal, indicating that compromises on girls' education were considered acceptable. However, the number of villages who applied this discrimination remained low (always less than 10 per cent of the 388 communes of the canton between 1906 and 1930); and this reform was never introduced in the Protestant villages of our sample.

work and schooling. Among these factors, local economic conditions constituted further reasons to strengthen or lessen gender discrimination between siblings.

Handwerker's model (1986) asks us to examine the emergence of skilled (adult) job opportunities that encourage parents to invest in children's education; this encouragement would be gendered when skilled jobs were mostly male jobs. Secondly, we assume that the persistence of non-skilled jobs for children and teenagers (which did not perhaps concern boys and girls to the same extent), constitutes an incentive to take children out of school and send them to work. Finally, it is not only the labour market that should be considered, as the family economy combines remunerated with non-remunerated labour to generate well-being. The allocation of non-remunerated labour depends on the family life cycle and composition, and on labour-market opportunities. For example, the allocation of household tasks to children permitted a reallocation of time within the household, helping older family members to enter the labour market (Humphries 2003, 2007).

Local Economic Conditions and the Emergence of Skilled Jobs

To capture the changes in the local labour market of our villages, particularly the emergence of skilled jobs, we first rely on statistics showing men's occupation at marriage, gained from civil registers (see Table 12.1, above). Unfortunately, similarly reliable statistics are not available for women, as these registers indicate women's occupation in a non-systematic way.

In the non-industrialized villages (Chevroux/VD and Portalban-Delley/FR), the composition of the occupational structure shows no significant change between the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth (see Table 12.1). This contrasts with the two industrialized villages, in which the second period corresponds with the setting up of the two factories (1898 in Broc/FR; 1901 in Chavornay/VD). The size of the agricultural labour force dropped as the industrial and tertiary sectors grew. The changes in the two last columns of Table 12.1 are particularly interesting, as these categories comprise occupations requiring a higher level of education.

To explore further the changes in the occupational structure likely to reward educationally acquired skills, we turned to the factory archives. The annual number of workers by sex, the list of occupations offered to both sexes, and pay scales, are only available for Broc. This, however, is only a partial drawback; we have very good reason to assume that occupations and pay scales were very similar, as both factories (in Broc and Chavornay) were owned by the same company and specialized in the same production.⁴ Moreover, the study of local economic factors likely to enhance gendered access to education is of much greater relevance in

⁴ Despite some missing data in factory archives for Chavornay, we can assume similar pay-scales in the two villages through information given in 1907 by the local press, as the workers of chocolate factories in the canton of Vaud went out on strike in order to

the canton of Fribourg, where institutional constraints were weaker; economic factors thus were more important in informing family strategies. And the impact of the local labour market on girls' access to education is even more reduced in the Protestant sample, given this was mainly aimed at developing the intellectual capacities of the future mother.

In Broc, statistics of the factory workforce attest to the growing demand for workers, especially women, between 1898 and 1920, during the start-up of the factory. But what kinds of jobs were available for women and men? Information on job hierarchies and on sex segregation, given by the factory pay-scale, is clear. Following the 1911 scale, women were offered two types of non-skilled jobs only (in cardboard packaging and wrapping of chocolate products) and were paid between 20 and 40 centimes per hour – the higher salary of 40 centimes being attained only after 12 years in the job.⁵ At the end of the first year, women could ask to do piecework and thus earn a little more than the going rate; but piecework was suspended whenever there was a drop in sales. Although these salaries were low, they were clearly more attractive than the remuneration offered in domestic service or agriculture. Above all, the factory provided the advantage of privacy and fixed working hours. The only 'skilled' female job was that of shop supervisor, obtained by internal promotion – no specific educational qualification was required – although the opportunity for such positions was limited, according to oral testimonies, with only one supervisor for about 20–25 non-skilled female workers. Consequently, acquiring skills in the factory permitted women to improve their earnings, especially when they did piecework, but did not give access to a more skilled and better-paid job (with the exception of a dozen secretarial jobs). However, as the administrative section of the factory was removed in 1908 to the head office in Vevey (VD), women's opportunities to work as typists or to begin professional training in office work – a job requiring at least primary or even post-primary school education, and which should have been an incentive for parents to invest in a girl's education – were reduced.

Male jobs were more diversified and better remunerated. The same pay-scale enumerates 25 non-skilled jobs, which paid between 20 and 40 centimes per hour, and 15 skilled jobs, which paid between 40 and 75 centimes.⁶ For the men too, the lower salaries were still more attractive than the remuneration offered by domesticity and agriculture. The factory was especially attractive for boys as it hired teenagers as apprentices, offering them professional training for some skilled jobs that offered higher pay in the factory and that could also be practised outside

obtain better salaries and work conditions. This strike was severely repressed and workers did not obtain a pay rise.

5 For the same year, one kilo of bread cost 32 centimes; one litre of milk, 22 centimes.

6 According to later pay-scales, the segregated structure of the job offer and wage discrimination persisted. In the 1926 pay-scale, female jobs were paid between 48 and 84 centimes per hour, male jobs between 63 and 135 centimes.

of it – for example, mechanics, locksmiths, electricians, and lathe operators. For these, a primary school education with good results was required. We have no knowledge of the exact number of workers in each type of job, but given men's occupation at marriage we can estimate that between 30 and 40 per cent occupied skilled jobs; if we include non-married (and younger) men, this figure is likely to be lower. This estimation, and our understanding of the successive pay-scales available, allows us to conclude that the factory offered skilled jobs requiring a formal education to men only, thus creating a powerful incentive for parents to invest much more in boys' education.

Local Economic Conditions and the Remunerated Labour of Teenagers

In Chevroux/VD and Portalban-Delley/FR, the economy remained reliant on agriculture and fishing throughout the period 1860–1930, and the relative stagnation of the local economy forced many inhabitants to migrate (seasonally or completely) in search of job opportunities. Did this emigration include teenagers too and impede schooling? Did these economic conditions solicit even more child labour?

Over the whole period under study, the local authorities of Chevroux/VD fixed the end of compulsory school at 16 and never differentiated between the sexes. Because of a strict application of school legislation which limited parental autonomy, the economic incentives for child labour were not effective. According to the school archives, the parochial bulletin and oral testimonies, the out-migration of teenagers existed, but within certain limits. Boys as well as girls were permitted to leave school at 15 in order to spend a year as a domestic or as an assistant in a German-speaking canton, to learn the language. The aim of this placing was first of all economic – the young person received a small salary and was supported by another household – and secondly, educational, and this explains why it never appears in school policies as a contentious practice.

The picture is very different for Portalban-Delley/FR, as many sources point to the fact that several families exploited to the limit the laxity of the school system. In Fribourg, parents could submit a request for taking a child out of school before the legal age. The correspondence between local teachers and cantonal authorities regularly deplores the fact that girls were taken out of school and sent away as servants, even without submitting a request; we also learn from these documents that girls were mostly sent to France, even to Paris, where school was compulsory up to 12 years of age only. A similar emigration of boys is never mentioned and we have to assume that families preferred to keep the boys in the village, their labour being more useful in farming and fishing activities. While staying in the village, boys could combine family work and more or less regular school attendance, as farm and fishing work could be done before or after school and the school schedule was adapted to the seasonality of agricultural activities.

The industrialized villages show similar disparities between Vaud and Fribourg regarding the remunerated labour of teenagers, especially of girls. As

the federal Factory Act (1874) permitted child labour in factories at the age of 14 and as children were supposed to attend school until 15 or 16, child labour in the factory could conflict with school attendance. In the canton of Vaud however, the correspondence between cantonal and local authorities shows that the achievement of compulsory school was given priority. Children were not allowed to finish school early; exceptional requests had to be addressed directly to the cantonal government. During the period under study, we found only two requests for Chavornay/VD in this correspondence. One of these concerned a girl whose mother wanted to take her out of school in order to send her to a factory. The government refused categorically such an exception. Moreover, it advised the local school commission to be extremely attentive to the schooling of this girl; her mother's economic situation – she was a poor widow – did nothing to alter this attitude.

As the institutional constraints were notably weaker in the canton of Fribourg, cutting short schooling in order to work in a factory was a real risk for children. In order for us to make such an argument, we couldn't look to the annual compilation of the workforce in factory records, because these were segregated by sex but not age. These statistics are of little use anyhow, as only a nominal listing would ensure that a child did indeed live in the village. We therefore turned to the minutes of the school commission. These provide 124 parental requests for children to leave school before the legal age, during the years 1911 and 1930. The commission discussed every case and wrote an assessment providing the basis for a final decision by the cantonal inspector. As illustrated in Table 12.2, parents submitted the same number of requests for both girls and boys, but these requests were clearly dealt with differently according to sex. Whereas demands for boys were carefully examined, those for girls did not have to meet such requirements and were dealt with expediently.

These minutes attest to the fact that entering the factory was considered a legitimate reason to allow children of poor families to leave school before the legal age, in contrast with a categorical rejection of similar requests in the canton of Vaud. When parents requested permission to take a girl out of school, it was either in order to use her for family tasks (see next section), or for placing her as a domestic servant or as a worker in the factory. When the request concerned a boy, it was generally meant for him to help on the family farm, to become a farm hand, or to work as a shepherd on the mountain pastures, the latter occupation implying

Table 12.2 Handling of parental requests for early school leaving in Broc/FR, 1911–1930

	Boys	Girls
Absolute number of requests	63	61
Percentage of requests admitted	42	59

Source: Broc/FR, local archives, Minutes of the School Commission.

only a three or four-month period of leave rather than for an indefinite time. We found only one case of a boy who was allowed to leave school in order to work in the factory. This might mean that parents did not seek non-skilled factory work for young boys, or that the factory itself was reluctant to hire them. We can also conclude that parents, more motivated to invest in boys' education, in turn used girls' labour at home or outside of it to support this investment.

Our oral testimonies also attest to cases of girls leaving school early in order to work in the factory. One example is 'Judith R', who was born in 1909, the youngest of four daughters, whose father died when the eldest girl was still at school. She explains:

My sisters have been working in the factory from the age of 14 or 14 ½. The eldest was allowed to leave school earlier as she was, so to speak, head of the family ... They [the inspector and the school commission] hesitated because she was a good student. But ultimately, what can you do? They allowed it.

Local Economic Conditions and the Allocation of Non-remunerated Labour

Regular school attendance was not only disrupted by children's employment in the labour market, but also by the use of a children's 'workforce' for non-remunerated family work. Once again, the institutional treatment of such family needs was strikingly different in the two cantons. The authorities in Fribourg were very accommodating; in contrast to those in Vaud, helping in the household or on the family farm was considered no reason to miss school. Most of the exceptional requests for leaving school addressed to the cantonal government in Vaud – on the grounds of being a poor family, having a sick father or mother unable to work, and so on – were regularly refused. These same requests would have been accepted without difficulty in Fribourg. Consequently, for our two Vaud villages, we found no evidence whatsoever to prove that the use of children in household or agricultural tasks was to the detriment of their schooling. In Chevroux/VD, for example, if daughters and sons of fishermen spent long hours repairing fishing nets, this was not done during school time but on Sundays – even during a church service, as the minister lamented in his parochial reports.

Therefore, in examining to what extent local economic conditions and their impact on the allocation of non-remunerated labour strengthened the gendered access to education, it makes sense to concentrate the analysis on the Catholic villages, where parents were given some autonomy. We will focus on the industrialized village of Broc/FR, in order to explore the impact of the historically important transition from traditional family economy to family wage economy on the allocation of non-remunerated labour within the household (for more on this theme, see Chapter 3).

Our oral testimonies confirm the gendered allocation of family tasks promoted in prescriptive literature. Household tasks were generally allocated to girls in the traditional family economy, whereas boys were in charge of cattle keeping,

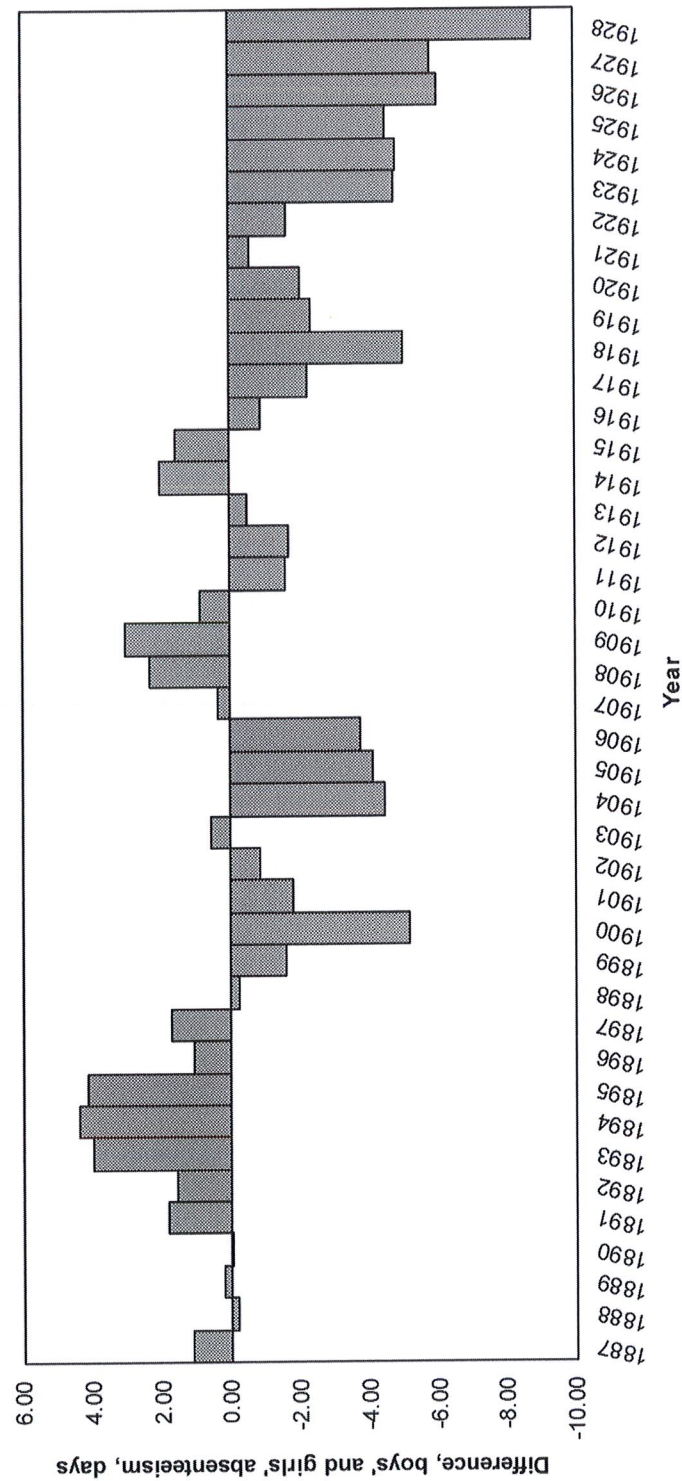


Figure 12.1 Difference in the average number of days of pupil absenteeism according to sex in Broc/FR, 1887–1928

Note: In years where the average number of days is positive, boys' absenteeism exceeds girls'; in years where the average number of days is negative, girls' absenteeism exceeds boys'.

Source: Fribourg, Annual Reports of the Cantonal Government 1888–1930.

firewood and water supplies. The transition to a family wage economy reduced the tasks falling to boys: the number of families living off agriculture shrank; also, running water was installed in 1907 in the village. But household tasks attributed to girls remained burdensome and time-consuming.

An indirect indicator of the increasing economic use of girls during this transition period is given by official school attendance statistics. Since 1888, exhaustive statistics of school absenteeism have been available, by village and school class, and consequently by sex, as classes were sex-segregated. On the basis of this source, we were able to calculate, for each year, the average number of daily absences by pupil and, therefore, the difference between the average number of absences for girls and boys.

The results, illustrated in Figure 12.1, are striking. Before 1898, the date of the factory opening, boys missed school more often than girls, and this indicates regular employment in agriculture. After 1898, the process is not only reversed but differences in the average number of absences by sex increase, confirming a growing utilization of girls for family tasks. These girls did not miss school because of factory work (which was not permitted before the age of 14, and not possible in an intermittent way), but because they stayed at home, carrying out household tasks and childcare, in order to permit the mother to earn a salary at the factory and to avoid the cost of childcare.

This trend is broken by two exceptions, in 1907–1910 and in 1914–1915. The latter is easily attributed to the mobilization of fathers and elder sons during the First World War. The former is the result of a regional crisis in agriculture that created a steep rise in wages for agricultural workers, thus constituting a greater enticement for boys.

When girls in worker families were approaching the end of the period of compulsory schooling, the disruption caused by pronounced absenteeism turned into a risk of leaving school permanently. In the minutes of the local school commission, the need to carry out household tasks and to undertake the care of family dependants were arguments most often used for taking girls out of school; such requests were often justified by the mother's employment in the factory:

This girl is the elder daughter of a family of six children. Both father and mother work in the factory and the last three children are in day care, which is very expensive at the moment. The parents, facing material difficulties, request early school release of their eldest daughter, to keep her at home for housework and for looking after the youngest.⁷

To what extent did families prefer to have the mother work in the factory rather than the daughter? The trade-off between mother's and daughter's employment concerned only families with young children. In these cases, as the job ladder for

⁷ Taken from Broc/FR, local archives, Minutes of the School Commission, 16 September 1920.

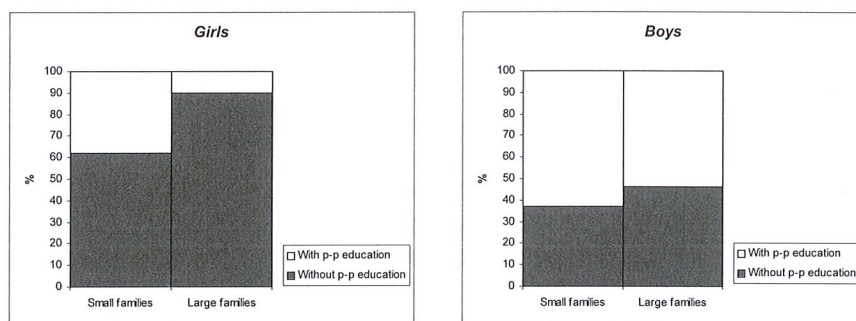


Figure 12.2 Percentage of children without post-primary education according to sex and family size among families of factory workers in Broc/FR where parents were married between 1898 and 1920

Source: See text.

women depended on the number of years of employment and on skills in piecework, it was more advantageous for the family to rely on the mother's earnings and to avoid the costs of childcare by keeping the eldest daughter at home. For the 1920s, we were able to calculate that for families with over three children, the price of childcare became greater than the average female factory salary. This highlights the fact that the risk of disturbed schooling for daughters also depended on their birth order and on the size of the family. As fertility decline occurred later in the Catholic than in the Protestant villages, this risk of discrimination between siblings was higher.⁸

We can show evidence for this combined effect of sex and family size for Broc via a rough analysis conducted on a reduced sample of children, born to parents married between 1898 and 1920, during the start-up of the factory. Children have been categorized by education level (post-primary school or not), sex, father's occupation and family size (small families with one to four children and large families with five and more children). In families of factory workers, gender differences in access to post-primary school are greater than in other families, and this difference increases as family size increases.⁹ The proportion of girls without post-primary education increased from 62 per cent in small worker families to 90

⁸ The correlation between fertility decline and levels of child education – and not the level of mother education generally studied – has been asserted in recent studies (Gauvreau and Gossage 2001), but without integrating a gender perspective.

⁹ Families of factory workers are those in which the father, mother, or both parents are employed in the factory.

Table 12.3 The relative probability of attending post-primary school for all villages, 1880–1930

	For all children (FR and VD) n=2353 Prob > chi2=0		Catholic children only (FR) n= 1193 Prob > chi2=0		Protestant children only (VD) n=1160 Prob > chi2=0	
	Relative probability	P> z	Relative probability	P> z	Relative probability	P> z
Sex male (reference: female)	3.29 1.00	0.00 ref.	4.75 1.00	0.00 ref.	2.45 1.00	0.00 ref.
Religion Catholic (reference: Protestant)	0.76 1.00	0.01 ref.				
Father's occupation (ref. farmer – land owner)						
day-labourer, non-skilled worker	1.17	0.33	1.47	0.06	0.84	0.51
factory worker	1.95	0.00	2.37	0.00	1.43	0.24
trade-craftsman, civil servant	2.80	0.00	2.75	0.00	2.82	0.00
highly skilled occupation	12.30	0.00	20.68	0.00	7.95	0.00
occupation unknown	1.51	0.20	0.50	0.52	1.72	0.12
birth order						
eldest of 4 children or more	0.77	0.06	0.76	0.17	0.78	0.17
death of one parent	1.08	0.55	1.21	0.37	1.01	0.95

Note: Bold figures are significant at a minimum of 90 per cent.

per cent in large families, contrasting with a smaller variation in the same ratio for boys, from 37 to 46 per cent (see Figure 12.2).¹⁰

From Capabilities to Functionings

We will now try to measure the attainment of valuable functionings regarding education for all boys and girls in our historical sample, utilizing two databases of children's school lives that encompass all the villages.

As a first indicator of functionings, we use the level of education attained. According to Caldwell's model (Caldwell 1980), this indicator corresponds to the monetary costs of education, which vary in proportion to the level attained. Primary school was free in all the villages, fees and school material being paid

¹⁰ This gender gap also exists in other socio-economic categories, but is less pronounced.

Table 12.4 The relative probability of leaving school earlier for all villages, 1880–1930

	For all children (FR and VD) n=6940 Prob > chi2=0		Catholic children only (FR) n=3156 Prob > chi2=0.01		Protestant children only (VD) n=3784 Prob > chi2=0	
	Relative probability	P> z	Relative probability	P> z	Relative probability	P> z
Sex male (reference: female)	0.51 1.00	0.00 ref.	0.38 1.00	0.00 ref.	0.84 1.00	0.01 ref.
Religion Catholic (reference: Protestant)	1.67 1.00	0.00 ref.				
Father's occupation (ref. farmer - land owner)	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
day-labourer, non-skilled worker	0.93	0.27	0.89	0.13	1.02	0.87
factory worker	0.93	0.35	0.94	0.49	0.94	0.66
shopkeeper, craftsman, civil servant	0.84	0.00	0.84	0.05	0.81	0.01
highly skilled occupation	0.61	0.00	0.63	0.05	0.66	0.07
occupation unknown	0.92	0.58	1.15	0.66	0.89	0.46
birth order						
eldest of 4 children or more	1.10	0.07	1.12	0.11	1.04	0.61
death of one parent	1.02	0.68	1.02	0.83	1.01	0.85

Note: Bold figures are significant at a minimum of 90 per cent.

for by the state. But if the child attended a post-primary school, parents' expenses increased dramatically because of fees, books, travels, meals outside the home, and sometimes boarding expenses. The first data file includes the 2,353 children whose school life has been reconstructed.¹¹ Using a logistic regression, the model measures a child's chance of attending a post-primary school (the dependent variable), integrating five independent variables: *sex*, *religion*, *father's occupation* (as an indicator of the socio-economic status of the family), *birth order* (a dummy variable, set to one when the child is the eldest of four children or more) and *death of one parent* (before the age of 13).¹²

11 We managed to ascertain for 576 children attendance at the following post-primary schools: 'apprentissages' (professional training for which a course of study with classes and exams existed in the cantons during the period), secondary school, 'école normale' (teacher training college), 'collège' or 'lycée' (high school).

12 We use in Table 12.3 a logistic regression because the dependent variable is a dichotomic one (post-primary school attended or not). We use in Table 12.4 a Cox

The results show that for the whole sample, boys see their chance of attending post-primary school multiplied by 3.29, compared to girls (Table 12.3). But when we divide the sample into two sub-categories determined by religion, the variable *sex male* multiplies this chance 'only' by 2.45 in the Protestant canton of Vaud, compared with 4.75 in the Catholic canton of Fribourg. Another interesting point is the comparative impact of the variable *father's occupation*. A child's chance of attending post-primary school increases as the position of their family on the social scale rises, compared to the reference category of farmers, but social differences are more pronounced on the Catholic side.

The second indicator of functionings is the age of leaving school. This indicator corresponds to the opportunity costs of education in Caldwell's (1980) model, as education reduces the child's availability for work, and this affects above all teenagers whose parents wished to remove from school. Here, our data are comprised of time-sequences of children's school life between 13 (the earliest possible age of leaving school) and 18 (the age beyond which very few children pursued their studies).¹³ Table 12.4 presents a Cox regression of the risk of leaving school. The dependent variable is the length of the school life between ages 13 and 18, and the model includes the same independent variables as previously.

Which factors modify the risk of leaving school earlier? When we apply the model to the whole sample, the variable *male sex* reduces this risk by 49 per cent. The variable *Catholic religion* increases it by 67 per cent. When we observe gender discrimination by religious group, we see that the impact of the variable *male sex* is much stronger in the Catholic sample. For Catholic boys, the risk of leaving school earlier is reduced by 62 per cent, compared to Catholic girls; among all variables, sex is the most important. For Protestant children, the difference in relative risk between girls and boys goes down to 16 per cent.

These two regressions show that institutional constraints in the Protestant canton of Vaud were more important for motivating parents to provide children with education. The immediate needs of families became less important as mass education was enforced by cultural discourse and strict school policy, and as post-primary education structures were made more accessible; however, where this institutional framework was weaker – as in the Catholic canton – many parents

regression, as the dependent variable is a duration variable: the length of school attendance; the coefficients are measuring the risk of an earlier leaving of school.

13 The starting-point is the beginning of the school year for the year in which the child reaches the age of 13; school began in spring in both cantons, and 1 April has always been chosen arbitrarily. Children could either leave school just before the summer holidays or at the end of the school year; according to the date of this event, the end of the time sequence is 30 June or 30 March of the following year. After this date, children could attend school for an additional year; in that case, a new time-sequence is added, ending three or 12 months later according to the date of leaving school. The date of the final school leaving is the ending point. For the 2,353 children under observation, this second file includes 6,940 time sequences.

Table 12.5 The relative probability of Catholic children attending a post-primary school, 1880–1930

	Catholic girls (FR) n=581 chi ² (8)=23.15 Prob > chi ² =0.0032		Catholic boys (FR) n=623 chi ² (8)=73.8 Prob > chi ² =0.00	
	Relative probability	P> z	Relative probability	P> z
Village non industrialized (reference village industrialized)	0.35 1.00	0.00 ref.	0.67 1.00	0.06 ref.
Mother factory worker	0.27	0.09	1.42	0.25
Father's occupation (reference farmer land-owner)	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
day-labourer, fisher, non-skilled worker	1.96	0.07	1.42	0.17
factory worker	1.23	0.69	1.90	0.03
shopkeeper, craftsman, civil servant	1.16	0.75	3.39	0.00
highly skilled occupation	4.05	0.13	*	
occupation unknown	0.00	0.94	0.79	0.83
Eldest of 4 children or more	0.45	0.06	0.96	0.87

Note: Bold printed figures are significant at a minimum of 90 per cent. * Predicts success perfectly; 14 observations not used.

made the most of the lack of constraints, according to their economic needs. As the system was more lax with girls' education, discriminating against girls was encouraged.¹⁴

To explore this discrimination further, we conducted an additional analysis of the two Catholic villages. The impact of local economic conditions on the trade-off between family work and schooling is measured by a logistic regression comparing boys' and girls' chances of attending a post-primary school in a Catholic area (Table 12.5).

The results show the differing impact of family and economic variables according to sex. Living in the *non-industrialized village* reduces significantly the chance of education for both sexes, but the effect is more pronounced for girls due to the widespread family routine of sending girls away as servants before the end of compulsory schooling in Portalban-Delley. The variable *mother factory worker* is significant for girls only and reduces their chance of attending post-primary school, confirming the strategy identified for the workers' families in the

14 These growing costs of children for Protestant families, caused by the obligation of schooling both boys and girls, also constituted an important incentive to reduce the number of children and helps explain why Protestants controlled their fertility earlier than Catholics (Praz 2006: 160–68).

industrialized village of Broc. For the boys, the results of the variable *fathers' occupation* correspond to expectations. The chance of attending post-primary school increases as the social scale rises; the farmer land-owners (the reference category) have less motivation for schooling their boys as professional training was performed at home. For the girls, the coefficients go in the right direction, but only those for the daughters of day-labourers and fishermen are significant.¹⁵ The results obtained by the variable *eldest of four children or more*, significant for girls only, prove that large families relied more easily on the work of elder girls than on boys' help. Thus the extent to which this strategy was used depended on the number of large families, namely on the speed of fertility decline. This strategy itself however slowed down the decline as it reduced the need for practising birth control; in particular, the fact that elder girls contributed early on to the family economy lessened the motivation for averting later births (Alter 1988: 171).

Conclusion

During the period 1880–1930, Swiss families faced new constraints and were encouraged to improve the capability set of children, especially by permitting them to spend more time in school, instead of being put to work. However, the result of this trade-off between school and work was not the same for all siblings, as gender played a decisive role in shaping this intra-family allocation. Daughters were discriminated against in all the villages of our sample, albeit their situation was strikingly different between the Catholic and the Protestant cantons.

Our study highlights the power of institutional constraints in shaping the capability set of children, namely through the gendered access to education by specific school policies. When institutional constraints are weaker, family strategies are given more leeway to adapt their short-term economic needs to the features of the local labour market. This mechanism strengthened gender inequalities. In the traditional family economy based on agriculture, economic stress weighed less on boys than on girls, who were often sent away as servants instead of completing compulsory schooling. Although industrialization and the transition to the family wage economy favoured investment in human capital, the relative difference between girls and boys remained: girls entered the factory earlier or replaced the mother at home, to the detriment of their schooling. In each situation, girls acted as a buffer, attenuating the stress of economic change and uncertainty; they often had to trade off their own long-term interests for the short-term interests of the other members of the family. As a result, girls were deprived of a significant capability in the new economic context, as well as of an important leverage in their quest for emancipation.

15 We attribute this result to the long temporary out-migration of fishers' families to the Protestant canton of Vaud, where schooling of girls was severely controlled and post-primary education partly free.