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Occupation, Gender and Social Status. Questioning the Gender-neutrality of Status Scales in Contemporary France

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RESUME

Selon la définition weberienne, des échelles de statut social peuvent être construites à partir des relations sociales entre individus comme le mariage ou l'amitié. En analysant la matrice des relations d'amitié par multidimensional scaling, Goldthorpe et Chan (2004) affirment que la hiérarchie sociale est sexuellement neutre. A partir de la tendance à l'homogamie, il s'agit de vérifier la « gender-neutrality » de la hiérarchie sociale quand les caractéristiques féminines sont mieux prises en compte : inactivité, temps partiel, concentration professionnelle, vie en couple moins fréquente pour les femmes cadres… Les données proviennent de l'Echantillon Démographique Permanent (INSEE). L'analyse porte sur les individus âgés de 30 à 59 ans au recensement de 1999 (N = 250700). Le tableau des affinités entre catégories socioprofessionnelles (CS) est analysé par multidimensional scaling, méthode qui représente une matrice de proximités entre objets sous la forme de distances entre points d'un espace multidimensionnel. Sur la première dimension, les hiérarchies masculine et féminine sont effectivement similaires, même si certaines catégories donnent lieu à de nettes différences de scores. La prise en compte du temps de travail chez les femmes révèle une valorisation des CS supérieures et intermédiaires à temps partiel par rapport à leurs homologues à temps complet. Ce résultat va dans le sens d'une combinaison du professionnel et du familial dans le statut social des femmes.

MOTS-CLES : Homme, Femme, Catégorie socioprofessionnelle, Analyse des données, Hiérarchie sociale, Temps partiel

ABSTRACT

Social distance scales can be defined in contemporary Western societies, based on the Weberian assertion that "social status" could be observed through close relationships between individuals, like marriage or friendship (see T.W. Chan, J. Goldthorpe, 2004). Here, we will consider scales built in France on the basis of the homogamy tendency. Our main concern will be on the gender neutrality of these scales. Indeed, whereas Goldthorpe and Chan assert that the status hierarchy is gender-neutral, they underline, using a multidimensional scaling analysis of the British matrix of friendship, that a second dimension expresses the degree of sex segregation of occupational categories. The aim of this paper is to assess this result when gender differences are more accurately taken into account than they are in previous analysis. That's why we include non-working population, people without partners and part-time work for women. When taking into account all these elements, can we still assert that men and women in a same occupational category always have an equivalent status? More theoretically, is occupation sufficient to define social status ? The data come from the *Echantillon Démographique Permanent* (permanent demographic sample). The analysis will cover only 30-59 years old men and women in 1999. The method used is Multidimensional scaling. Hierarchy of status is actually similar for both genders, even if clear differences in scores appear for some categories. However, second dimensions are not correlated, thus revealing distinct overall structure by gender. When full-time/part-time work status is introduced among women's occupational categories, it reveals the valuation of higher and intermediate categories working part-time compared to their counterparts working full-time. Finally, these findings question the meaning of social distance scales based on occupation only, and advocate taking into account the combination of family and occupational roles for a better appraisal of gender differences in social status.

KEYWORDS : Men, Women, Occupational category, Data analysis, Social hierarchy, Part-time work

I wish to thank John Goldthorpe and my French colleagues at CREST-Quantitative sociology laboratory for their comments and advice.

Analysing friendship relations, a recent study conclude that social hierarchy is gender-neutral in Great-Britain (Chan and Goldthorpe 2004) This result was highlighted several times by different approaches which attempt to determine a hierarchy between individuals as a function of the social position they occupy. Yet inequalities on the job market between men and women are widely known. This apparent contradiction means that further research is required into the question of the gender-neutrality of the social hierarchy since gender differences were often neglected by former studies. Using Chan and Goldthorpe's methodology, but measuring proximities through the homogamy tendency, this paper intends to verify the neutrality of the social hierarchy when gender differences are better accounted for than in the British study.

We consider couples as a privileged place to observe inequalities between men and women on the labour market. Indeed married men and women have very different career pattern. In general marriage affect negatively female careers, contrary to male careers. Many married women drop out from the labour force or work part-time after childbirth. The main research question of this paper is : which results on male and female social status do we obtain when we are not concerned with getting a measure of status, and only of status, regardless of other elements, but when we want to take into account the influence of other elements such as gender differences in career development, gender inequalities on labour market or gender differences on marriage market. In other words, two positions can be distinguished. The first one is to consider social status conceptually separate from other elements (gender, ethnicity, age…). The second one, which should be indeed our point of view, is to consider that the social status linked to an occupation depends also on the characteristics of the occupant. It seems to have some validity compared with factual elements. For instance, if women are less paid than men for an equivalent work, it displays that men and women do not have the same status from an employer's point of view.

In its first phase the field of the study was extended to cover all individuals by considering housewives as a social position and by including people living alone, pointing out the lesser desirability of highly qualified women. What observations can be made when gender is taken into consideration? The order of the categories may be similar even if the scores for men and women are not the same. In other words, does the same socio-occupational category correspond to the same status for a man as for a woman? Do male and female workers occupy the same position on the social distance scale? The aim of this study is to identify the categories for which the male score is higher than the female score, and also, on the contrary, to see to what extent these variations could be linked to the gender makeup of the categories. In the second phase of the study the definition of the socio-occupational category of women was further enhanced by taking into account their full-time/part-time work status. To what extent does the introduction of this dimension modify the previous hierarchy for women? To what extent does the inclusion of work status improve our understanding of the concept measured by the scales? So more theoretically, our aim is to assess the extent to which the social hierarchy could be accompanied by a gender-specific hierarchy. Is occupation enough to define the status of an individual? Or does a gender gap force us to accept a more complex definition than the purely occupational definition of status?

HIERARCHIES AND INEQUALITIES : AN APPARENT CONTRADICTION

There are three approaches which can be used to reveal occupational hierarchies. The prestige scale is a subjective measurement of the "social status" which individuals recognise in each other. It is constructed on the bases of prestige scores attributed by respondents to different occupations. Treiman (1977) showed that these scales were constant in time and space, a result which is considered as the most significant of all the work done in the RC28 (Hout and DiPrete 2006). The composite measures of occupational socioeconomic standing, initially developed by Duncan (1961) then by Nam and Powers (1983) and by Ganzeboom, De Graaf and Treiman (1992), determine the position of an occupation on the scale as the combination of the level of qualification and the income level of its occupants. A final approach is based on the principle that social structure can be observed through close relationships, such as marriage or friendship. Social interactions can reveal the underlying hierarchy by teasing out the interplay of affinities, expressing superiority, equality or inferiority. These social distance scales were introduced by Laumann (1966) and are the foundation for the construction of the Cambridge scale (Stewart et al. 1973, Prandy 1990)

Chan and Goldhorpe belong to this third approach, even if they don't share the theoretical interpretation of social distances as general and unique measure of the "social ordering of generalized advantage" including both economic and cultural factors (Bottero and Prandy 2003). Indeed, they interpret hierarchy as "social status" in the Weberian meaning of the term, in other words as distinct from the concept of "social class" (Chan and Goldthorpe 2004). But an other result interested us. Analysing the British matrix of friendship relations by *multidimensional scaling*, Chan and Goldthorpe assert that social hierarchy, which is considered along a first dimension, is gender-neutral. But they stress that a second dimension expresses the degree to which occupational categories are characterized by sex-segregation. They justify this by a better quality of representation for both sexes taken together and by a strong correlation between the first dimensions for men and women. This result is strengthened by former comparisons of men and women scales.

Initially based on the male population, this principle of construction was increasingly challenged in the 1970s with the development of female wage-earning work (Powers and Holmberg 1978). Comparing male and female hierarchies brought to light an often-noted contradiction (England 1979, Acker 1973 1980, Warren et al. 1998). Even if some publications did identify differences in the scores for men and women (Powers and Holmberg 1978, Bose and Rossi 1983, Xu and Leffler 1992), researchers generally concluded that there were only slight differences between the two hierarchies, whatever the measure adopted: prestige (Treiman and Terrell 1975, England 1979, Nakao and Trears 1994), composite measures of occupational socio-economic standing (Tyree and Treas 1974, McClendon 1976, Featherman and Hauser 1976) or social distances in interactions (Prandy and Lambert 2003, Chan and Goldthorpe 2004). The gender-neutrality of social hierarchy is yet in contradiction with well-known inequalities on the labour market between men and women. (England 1979 1992, Acker 1973 1980, Warren et al. 1998) Women are mainly concentrated in relatively unskilled occupations (as white-collar workers), are less likely to reach management positions, are paid less than men for equivalent work and marriage puts them at a disadvantage by comparison with men.

While men's occupations are very diverse, there is a concentration of women in certain occupations, a phenomenon often referred to as "horizontal segregation". Almost half of women in employment are white-collar workers[2]. In terms of occupational categories, this segregation appears even more clearly as the six most "feminized" categories alone ("elementary school teachers", "intermediate social and healthcare workers", "civil service workers", "office workers", "shop assistants" and "household help workers") account for 60% of women in employment (Ferrand 2004). So women are strongly concentrated in the employee occupations. While 13% of active men are self-employed[3], the figure for women is only 6.3%. There is also a form of "vertical segregation" operating in employee occupations. Women, whose early careers are generally similar to men's, are less likely later to get jobs in top management because of the "glass ceiling" (Leminez and Roux 2002). This is reflected in the statistics: 13.5% of active men are managers in the public or private sector[4], against 7.9% of women in active employment. Even the apparent equality among "secondary/university teachers, scientists" hides, in reality, an internal segregation among teachers, with university teaching dominated by men. Moreover women were paid less than men for equivalent work. In France, the income gap is estimated to be 27% in favour of men. Two-fifths of the gap can be explained by different working hours, a further two fifths by structural differences, with the final fifth remaining "unexplained". If only full-time work is taken into account, half of the income gap is due to discrimination (Meurs and Ponthieux 2000). Lastly, marriage seemed to have a beneficial effect for men, but a cost in terms of their occupational career for women. Belonging traditionally to women, domestic work and children education require less commitment to occupational role and limit their participation in the labour force. (De Singly 2004). It has been established that these scales are correlated (to a varying degree) with levels of qualification and income. How is that they do not account for these inequalities between men and women on the labour market? For instance, why are these scales not able to highlight the income gap ?

For some observers (and more particularly women) this contradiction shows the inability of these scales to explain gender inequalities and thus raises fundamental doubts about the hierarchies of prestige or status (England 1979, Acker 1980) "The fact that status is not related to income or authority in the same way for women and men […] indicates that unidimensionality is suspect" (Acker 1980, p. 29). While stressing that a valid scale should account for these inequalities between the sexes, it is possible to adopt a position less radical than complete rejection of these hierarchies which have been validated both with respect to time and to geographical distribution thanks to a better knowledge of these scales and a reformulation of the question of research. Prestige scales are less strongly correlated to education and income, criteria which should logically be associated to the concept measured (Hauser and Warren 1997). At the same time it has been demonstrated that composite measures of occupational socioeconomic standing are not adequate to study differences between the sexes. Indexes which privilege education favour women, whereas those which give more weight to income favour men. It is therefore recommended to use measures of "occupational standing" other than composite indexes (Warren et al. 1998). And we also believe that, "we should attempt to understand how the mixture of advantage and disadvantage has come about, and how advantage, parity, and disadvantage coexist in the working lives of women." (Warren et al.1998, p. 67)

[2] This phenomenon is certainly accentuated by the measurement instrument, the nomenclature of socio-occupational categories published by the INSEE in 1954, i.e. before the development of female employment. The 1982 update did not fundamentally challenge the general architecture.

[3] "farmholders", "craftspeople", "shopkeepers", "business owners with more than 10 employees"

[4] "civil service officers", "secondary/university teachers, scientists", "sales administrative managers", "engineers and technical managers"

We have chosen the third approach based on social interactions which has the advantage of involving no prior hypothesis and of being interpretable simply as a measure of the social distances between socio-occupational categories. Furthermore the choice of this third approach can be explained by the fact that we already adopted this methodology to construct a French status scale (Cousteaux and Lemel 2004). We measure social proximities through the homogamy tendency. According to the work done on the Cambridge scale, it would seem that the two types of association, marriage and friendship, ultimately yield similar results (Prandy and Lambert 2003).

Three important differences between men and women on labour and marriage markets are yet not easy to neglect: housewives, part-time work and the reversal of desirability for men and women since marital life is less frequent for women in the higher categories.

Firstly, while employment is the norm for men, although the majority of women are also in employment there are still a number of housewives. 23% of women between 30 and 59 years of age in 1999 were not in employment, compared with only 7.2% of men (Table 1). In doing analysis of this kind, it would be problematic to restrict the study to the active population in employment, in other words to couples where both partners are in employment, as this would probably introduce a bias in the selection. Furthermore, housewives have the particularity to be the most dependent on their husband. For these reasons, as suggested by Acker (1973), we consider that non-working is a position which should be classified in the status scale.

Secondly, apart from the fact that this would rule out a quarter of the observations[5], restricting the study to couples[6], that is excluding all people who are characterized by the lack of intimate association, is perhaps questionable. In our perspective, this choice would be all the more questionable as living without a partner (as single, separated, divorced or widowed) is not gender-neutral. Men are more likely to live alone if they are white-collar workers or unskilled blue-collar workers, but above all if they are not in active employment (42% of men outside the labour market live alone). So masculine desirability is connected with the traditional identity as the breadwinner. The gradient for women is exactly the opposite. Women are less likely to live in a couple when they have higher or intermediate occupations (31% of “higher managers and intellectual occupations” and 28% of “intermediate professions” don’t live in a couple). On the other hand, 17% of housewives are unmarried. (Figure 1) For women the reversal of the gradient relates in part to a lesser desirability of highly qualified women, connected with the stereotype that a man, in his role as the “breadwinner”, should have a higher status than his wife, but also to the capacity of women to cope financially with unmarried life or divorce; dependency on the husband being highest for housewives.

[5] 23% of men and 24% of women live alone.

[6] Marriage would have been in our view a fairly traditional definition of living together . We preferred to consider married and cohabiting couples.

Table 1 – Distribution by socio-occupational category according to gender

	Men	**Women**
1. FARMHOLDERS		
10. Farmholders	3.3	1.4
2. CRAFTSPEOPLE, SHOPKEEPERS, BUSINESS OWNERS		
21. Craftspeople	4.4	1.2
22. Shopkeepers and related	3.3	2.0
23. Business owners with 10 employees or more	1.1	0.2
3. HIGHER MANAGERS, INTELLECTUAL OCCUPATIONS		
31. Liberal professions	1.7	0.9
33. Civil service officers	1.8	0.9
34. Secondary/university teachers, scientists	2.2	2.4
35. Media and entertainment	0.8	0.6
37. Sales and administrative managers	4.0	2.1
38. Engineers and technical managers	4.3	0.7
4. INTERMEDIATE OCCUPATIONS		
42. Elementary school teachers and related	2.0	3.6
43. Social and healthcare workers	1.6	5.1
45. Civil service middle managers	1.5	1.9
46. Sales and administrative middle managers	5.9	6.1
47. Technicians	5.3	0.8
48. Foremen and labour supervisors	4.2	0.4
5. WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS		
51. Civil service workers and police, military	6.4	12.6
54. Office workers	2.1	12.0
55. Shop assistants	1.1	4.4
56. Household help	1.2	8,6
6. BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS		
62. Skilled factory workers	9.1	1.5
63. Skilled crafts workers	8.9	1.0
64. Drivers and transport, warehousing, maintenance workers	6.7	0.4
67. Unskilled factory workers	6.0	4.2
68. Unskilled crafts workers	2.9	1.7
69. Farm workers	1.1	0.5
8. NON-WORKING POPULATION		
80. Non-working population	7.2	23.0
SUM	*100*	*100*
TOTAL NUMBER	123431	127272

Source : EDP, 1999 census
Field: individuals aged 30 to 59 in 1999

Thirdly, identifying an individual solely on the basis of his or her socio-occupational category would be to reason as if all individuals were full-time workers, in other words it would mean forgetting a major characteristic of female work and a fundamental difference between men and women: full-time/part-time work status. “If someone talks about ‘part time work’ they think ‘women’” (Maruani 2003, p. 79). And yet this characteristic has rarely been taken into account in stratificationist approaches, particularly in composite measures of occupational socio-economic standing, despite the fact that income is directly related to working hours (Hauser and Warren 1997, Warren et al. 1998). Part-time work was developed in France from the 1980s as one of the solutions to the increase in unemployment, and concerned 32% of active women and 4% of active men aged 30 to 59 in 1999. To justify this very strong feminisation, the political argument put forward is that there is a better match between working life and family life. This tends to stress voluntary part-time work, disguising the fact that in one out of every two cases the part-time work was imposed by the employer and so not chosen by the worker (DARES, 2002). Moreover, following on from the earlier results on desirability on marriage market it becomes clear that if work status is included the reversal of the gradient observed in female employees is accentuated. Whatever the socio-occupational category, a woman working full-time is more likely to live alone than a woman working part-time. With the exception of the category “media and entertainment” (35) which has very specific characteristics, and “foremen and labour supervisors” (48) which are very rarely women, the proportion of women living alone in the higher and intermediate categories is generally greater than 30% for women working full-time, while it varies between 10 and 20% for women working part-time (Figure 2). This is a further argument for including people living alone in the analysis, since otherwise women working full-time would be under-represented in the sample.

Figure 1 - Proportion of individuals living alone by socio-occupational category according to gender

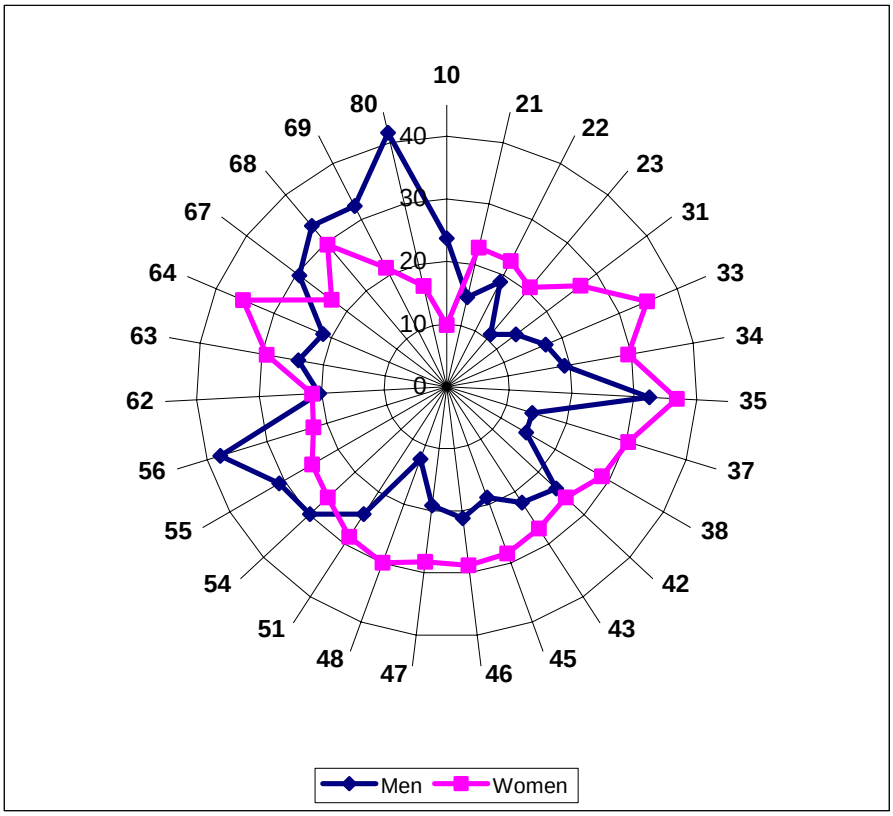
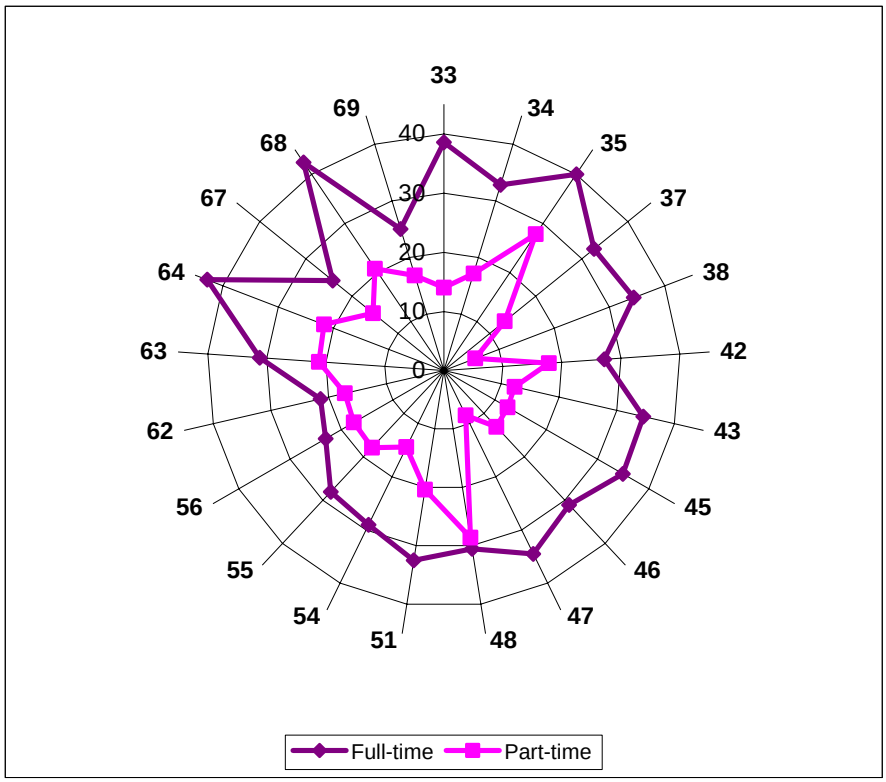


Figure 2 - Proportion of women living alone by socio-occupational category according to working hours



Source : EDP, 1999 census
Field: individuals aged 30 to 59 in 1999
For the category codes see table 1

DATA AND METHODS

The data come from the *échantillon démographique permanent* (EDP). Set up in 1984, the objective was to collect socio-demographic data year after year for a 1% sample of the French population modified every year as a function of births, deaths and migratory movements. For each individual on the demographic panel individual census returns (1968, 1975, 1982, 1990, 1999), certificates of birth, marriage and death and recognition of children and, since 1990, information on the all the members of their household are conserved. The 1999 census in particular supplies information on the EDP individual concerning his matrimonial status, his level of qualification, his place of residence and his occupation, and his family (in particular the socio-demographic description of the spouse).

As individuals are characterised by their socio-occupational category, it is important to take into consideration only individuals of working age and for who are likely to have a relatively stable job situation. That is why we have restricted our study to individuals between 30 and 59 years of age at the 1999 census. The unemployed are coded according to their last occupation but the housewives are in the "non-working" category. With respect to the INSEE socio-occupational classification, certain categories have been grouped together in order to reach sufficient numbers. This is the case for "farmholders" who have not been classified by size of farmholding, "police and military", which are almost exclusively male occupations, and have been added to "civil service workers" and finally "drivers" have been added to "transport, warehousing and maintenance workers". Only the category "clergy and religious" was removed. In this way, the sample contains 250,703 individuals.

Two methods are generally used to build status scales on the basis of the contingency table which contains affinities between socio-occupational categories. Goodman's RC(M) model can be used to allocate scores to the categories and measure the intervals between them, without involving any prior hypothesis on the order of the categories. It has the advantage of enabling statistical tests between the models and adjusting of the diagonal of the contingency table (Prandy and Lambert 2003). However, as the model seeks by construction to maximize correlation between the scores obtained, it tends in reality to increase the resemblance between male and female scales. We chose a second method, *multidimensional scaling*, which is also the method used by Chan and Goldthorpe (2004). It is more intuitive to understand and interpretation is facilitated by the graphical representation. Indeed, MDS is a technique for the analysis of similarity or dissimilarity data on a set of objects and attempts to model such data as distances among points in a multidimensional space (Borg Groenen 1997). This method seeks to achieve the best possible match of proximities between objects and distances between points. Starting with an initial configuration, it proceeds by iteration, moving points successively, to achieve the best possible match. It seeks to minimize the Stress, which is a measure of the badness of fit:

$$\frac{\sum_i \sum_j \left(f(\delta_{ij}) - d_{ij}(X) \right)}{\sum_i \sum_j (d_{ij}^2)}$$

where: $f(\delta_{ij})$ is the function of representation of dissimilarities δ_{ij}

$d_{ij}(X)$ is the corresponding distance between i and j in a space X

On the basis of the table comparing the category of an EDP individual with that of his or her partner, the dissimilarity between two categories is calculated according to the Manhattan distance as follows:

$$\delta_{ij} = \sum_{k=1}^{K} \left| p_{ik} - p_{jk} \right|$$

where: δ_{ij} is the distance between i and j, any two rows of the contingency table; the diagonal cells are null and correspond to maximum proximity

p_{ik} is the row percentage of the cell ik of the contingency table

k designates the columns of the contingency table

The number of dimensions selected is determined as a function of the Stress value which must be less than or equal to 0.20 (Kruskal, 1978) or 0.15 (Guttman, 1974) provided the number of points N is substantially greater than the number of dimensions R (generally if N>4R). A rule of thumb is thus to choose a solution for which an extra dimension does not reduce the Stress significantly.

RESULTS

1. Different social affinities …

By studying the three contingency tables in row percentages for men, women and all the individuals, it is observed that the rows "All" have a situation which is the average of affinities for men and affinities for women. Now the strength of association does not have the same intensity according to gender, particularly in the case of homogamy (with the exception of couples of "intermediate professions"). We can illustrate this with reference to a simple case with 7 socio-occupational groups (Table 2). For example, 38% of farmholders have a partner who is also a farmholder. Introducing a gender distinction, this percentage can be broken down in reality into 62% of female farmholder have a farmholder husband, whereas 28% of male farmholder have a wife with the same occupation. This is why we took into account, in the first instance, the sexe of the occupant in the definition of socio-occupational category. We therefore plotted the socio-occupational category (SC) of a given individual characterized by gender and the SC of the partner, adding a column for individuals "with no spouse" which gives a table of the following size: (27*2)*(27+1) = 54*28.

Table 2 – Comparison of social affinities of men, women and the population as a whole ("all")

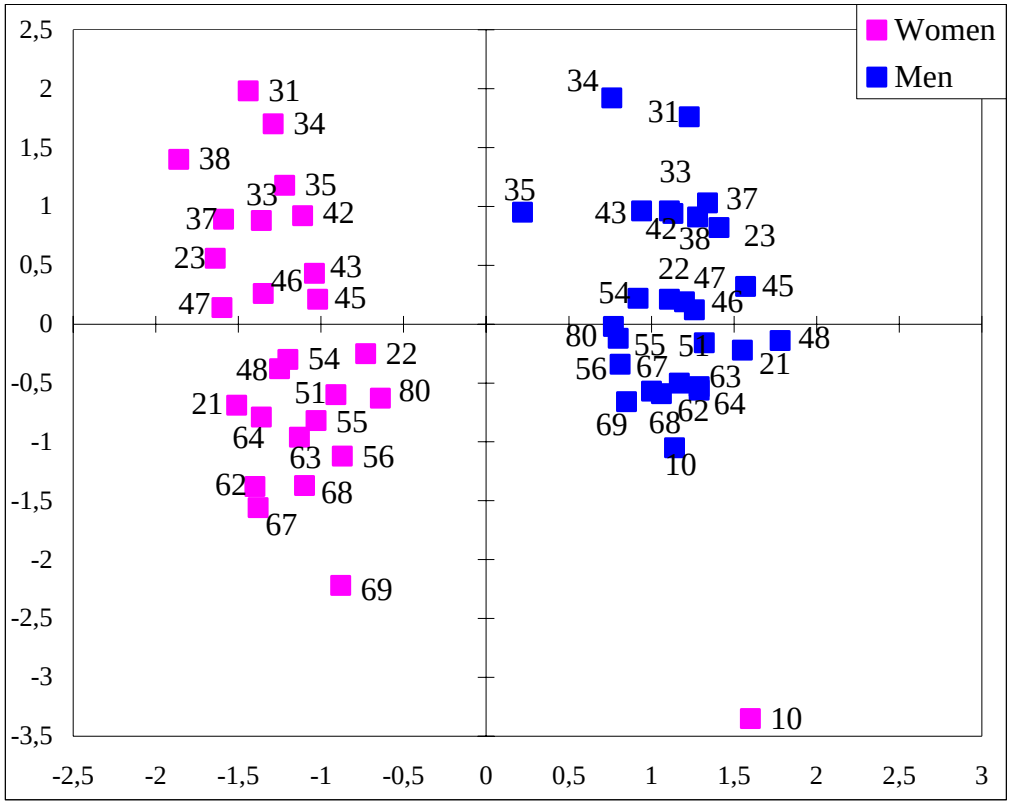
		Farm holders	Craftspeople, shopkeepers, business owners	Managers, secondary/ university teachers	Intermediate professions	White-collar workers	Blue-collar workers	Non-working	No spouse	Sum
Farm holders	All	38	2	2	7	12	6	14	19	100
	Women	62	2	1	2	1	8	14	10	100
	Men	28	2	2	9	16	6	14	24	100
Craftspeople,	All	1	19	6	12	22	7	17	18	100
shopkeepers,	Women	2	34	8	11	5	11	8	22	100
business owners	Men	0	13	5	12	28	5	20	16	100
Managers,	All	0	3	26	19	12	2	15	21	100
secondary/	Women	1	6	39	12	3	5	4	31	100
university teachers	Men	0	2	20	23	17	1	20	16	100
Intermediate	All	1	4	11	23	20	8	10	23	100
professions	Women	2	6	18	24	6	12	5	28	100
	Men	0	2	5	22	32	5	15	19	100
White-collar	All	1	5	5	15	16	23	8	26	100
workers	Women	1	6	6	16	10	28	7	26	100
	Men	0	2	2	11	37	6	15	28	100
Blue-collar workers	All	1	2	1	8	28	20	16	25	100
	Women	2	4	2	10	6	44	7	25	100
	Men	0	1	1	7	34	13	19	25	100
Non-working	All	2	6	11	11	8	20	21	22	100
	Women	2	7	13	12	6	25	18	16	100
	Men	1	2	2	6	16	4	28	42	100

Source : EDP, 1999 census
Field : individuals between 30 and 59 years old in 1999

It would have been possible to create two tables as Chan and Goldthorpe did, and as we will do in the rest of this paper: one for men and one for women. But if men and women are treated separately, the logical outcome is two multidimensional spaces. While it is then possible to assess the distance between categories for men on the one hand, and for women on the other, and compare the two tables obtained, it is however not possible to get an idea of the distance between men and women within the same category. This choice might seem contradictory in so far as the gender distinction is only introduced for the individual. This amounts to advancing the hypothesis that there is a difference between men and women along the rows but not within the columns. The underlying idea is this: if this gender distinction is irrelevant then the same categories should be more or less superimposable. By analysing this contingency table, we hope to be able to verify whether men and women belong to the same status scale. Are socio-occupational scales superimposed? Is the male category located above its female counterpart?

What does appear clearly even before the status order is assessed by gender, is that male and female scales are not superimposed (Figure 3). This lack of overlap is not simply an artefact linked to the building of the contingency table as we will see below when studying women in part-time work. So the existence of two spaces, one male and one female, poses problems of comparison between men and women of the same category. The distance between "liberal professions" points for men and women is for example greater than the distance between "liberal professions" and the middle of the scale for each gender. For that reason it is not possible to assert, on the basis of the score on the second dimension, that male "liberal professionals" have a higher status than their female counterparts. Consequently a given category may not have the same significance depending on whether it characterizes a man or a woman.

Figure 3 - Space of affinities of men and women



MDS plan 1-2, 3-dimensional solution with Stress = 0.08 and proximities/distances correlation = 0.98
Field: individuals between 30 and 59 in 1999.

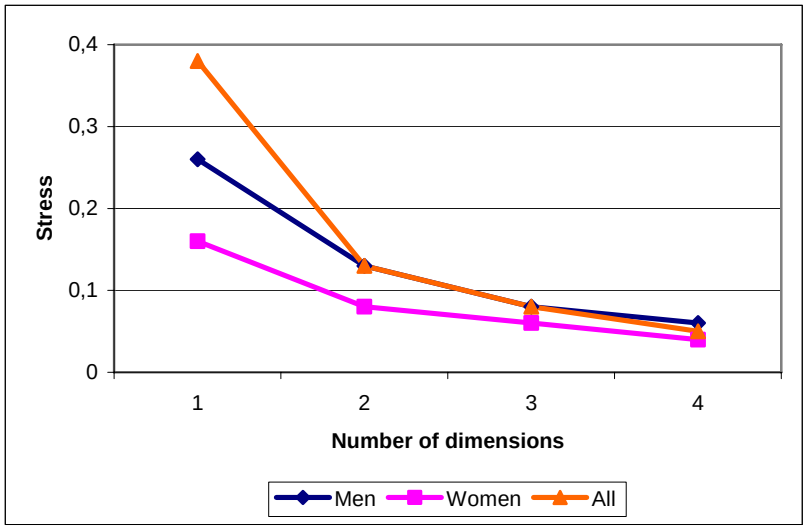
Visually, the scale for women appears more elongated because of a greater variety of possible social affinities which can be explained by the structure of male professions. Conversely, the bottom of the scale for men is tightly grouped together, as women they marry are concentrated in the categories “white-collar workers” and “not working”. We are fully aware that this result depends entirely on different male and female occupational structures which determine the structure of possible choices. Multidimensional scaling is a purely descriptive and geometric method. Our goal is simply to describe the social hierarchies of men and women when we take account of differences of situation depending on gender, the first of which is the occupational distribution of men and women.

2. …Producing a similar status order

We are now working with contingency tables obtained for men and women separately. The SC of an individual is compared with that of his or her spouse, with a column provided for individuals “with no spouse”.

One of the arguments put forward by Chan and Goldthorpe in favour of a scale built from the total group of individuals is that this yields a better quality of representation. In their study, the Stress value is lower if men and women are grouped together than if they are treated separately. We do not confirm this result, no doubt because of the size of our sample (N = 250 700) compared to Chan and Goldthorpe's (N = 9160). With regard to Stress values, there is no reason to choose all the population rather than men and women separately (Figure 4). We opted for the three-dimensional solution for each gender in order to have male and female spaces of comparable size, with an almost equivalent quality of representation.

Figure 4 – Stress values of multidimensional scaling, using data for all, and for male and female respondents separately



Source: EDP, 1999 census
Field: individuals between 30 and 59 in 1999

On the first dimension, female “farmholders” (10) are very clearly distinguished with a score of – 4.25 when all the other categories lie within the range – 1.80 and + 2.20. Their position can be explained by the very strong homogamy since 62% of female farmholders have a husband with the same profession. Among men, for whom homogamy is less pronounced (28%), the distinction of the farming world appears less marked, and only on the second dimension. The specific characteristics of farmers and the difficulty involved in

including them in the status scale was one of the major results of our earlier study on socio-occupational homophily (Cousteaux and Lemel 2004). In the case of marital associations it is apparent that this characteristic is more pronounced among women. That is why we decided to remove “farmers” from the following analysis.

As Chan and Goldthorpe assert, the first dimensions of men and women are ranked in a similar order of categories, going from “liberal professions” (31) to “farm workers” (69) once the “farmholders” have been excluded (Figure 6 and 7). The resemblance between the two hierarchies is confirmed by the highly Spearman correlation of 0.96 significant at 0.01. Even if the male and female scales are strongly correlated, substantial differences can be observed for specific socio-occupational categories by comparing the scores for men and women, taken for the first dimensions. The scores were standardized in order to have variables comparable in magnitude and dispersion.

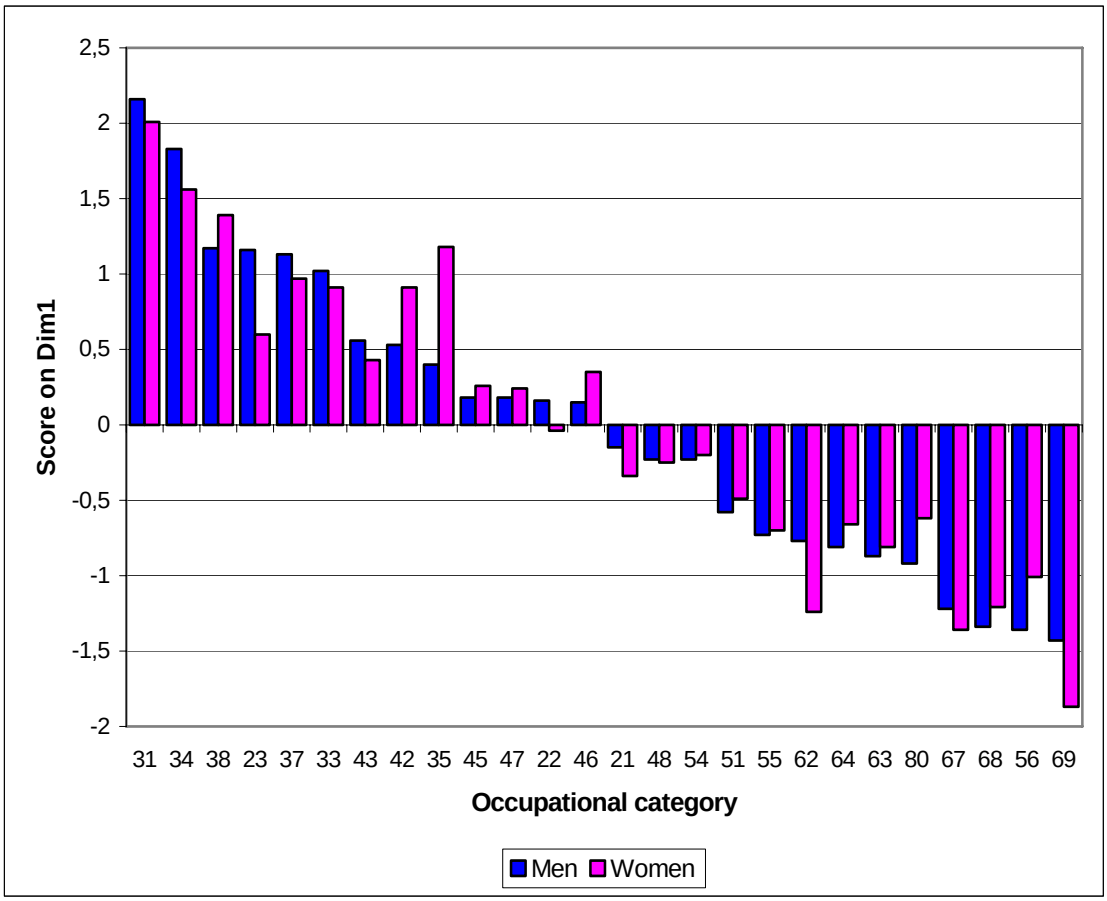
At the top of the scale, the most pronounced difference in favour of men is observed for “secondary/university teachers, scientists” (34) which is also the largely female occupation among higher categories with 53% women. On the other hand, female engineers (38) have a status slightly higher than their male counterparts. This might be explained by the particularly severe selection for women in what is largely a male-dominated occupation. Despite a “respectful revolution”, they still only represent 14% of “engineers and technical managers” in 1999 while all the other categories of “higher managers and intellectual occupations” comprise at least 1/3 women (Marry 2004). Similarly, “media and entertainment” occupations give a much higher score for women. This category, which figures on the fourth rank of the scale, counts among the most valued for women, while it seems to be undervalued for men in ninth place after two “intermediate” categories. In our study on socio-occupational homophily we established that the “media and entertainment occupations” still appeared as the least valued of all the higher categories (Cousteaux and Lemel 2004). This conclusion would thus appear to be more valid for men than for women. This undervaluing should perhaps be linked to the high proportion of men without partners in these professions (32%), as against 15 to 20 % in the other higher occupations.

There is a major difference for “business owners with ten employees or more” (23). For men, this category which ranks fourth is part of the top level of the scale with a status equivalent to that of company management (37, 38). Its much lower score for women places it eighth on the female scale, after all the “higher managers and intellectual occupations” and “elementary school teachers” (42). To a lesser extent, this undervaluing of women can also be noted for “craftspeople” (21) and “shopkeepers” (22). More generally, women do not therefore seem to enjoy the same status as men in the self-employed categories.

Among the “intermediate professions” and “white-collar workers”, the categories have broadly similar scores for men and women. Two categories are an exception to this rule. Women “elementary school teachers” (42) have a higher status than their male counterparts. Their score brings them much closer to “civil service officers” (33) and “sales and administrative managers” (37) than to other “intermediate professions”, contrary to the situation for men, for whom “elementary school teachers” appear as an average category among others. Similarly, male “household help”(56) are more strongly undervalued than their female counterparts. This low qualification and highly “feminized” category is even last but one on the male scale.

At the bottom of the scale among the "blue-collar workers", the main differences between the scores are unfavourable to women among "skilled factory workers" (62) and "farm workers" (69). Finally "non working" (80) corresponds to a lower prestige for men (22nd on the scale) than for women (18th rank).

Figure 5 – Scores for men and women on the first dimension (standardized)



Field: individuals between 30 and 59 in 1999, excluding "farmholders"

Although the statistical tests of the Goodman RC model are not significant to conserve separate male/female scores, Prandy and Lambert (2003) estimate that they should be preferred because of a better "*predictive validity*", that is a better ability to explain social mobility, mortality and party identification. On the basis of the correlation coefficient of male and female hierarchies, we are prepared to accept that this refinement is no doubt superfluous. However, our comparison between scores for men and women show that there are significant differences for a few specific categories. With the exception of the world of education and the arts, and for "farm workers", for which the female score depends more to the specific nature of the farming world which we pointed to above, the other categories share the common feature of being highly sex-segregated. Chan and Goldthorpe (2004) also observed that the largest differences between the scores for men and for women are seen where categories are strongly sex-segregated: "secretaries and receptionists" and "skilled and related manual workers in construction and maintenance". Nonetheless this factor does not explain everything since a good number of categories are just as segregated, if not more, like "technicians", "foremen" other "white-collar workers" or, finally, "skilled crafts workers" do not result in such differences between the scores for men and women. The conclusion is then that the status order obtained from marital associations is overall similar for men and women and an only scale could be generally used, but researchers have to know that the interpretation

of the position of certain categories, particularly when they are highly segregated, requires a relative prudence. In fact what emerges from the analysis is that the main differences between men and women occur not on the first dimension of the status order but on the second one.

3. …Within a distinct social structure

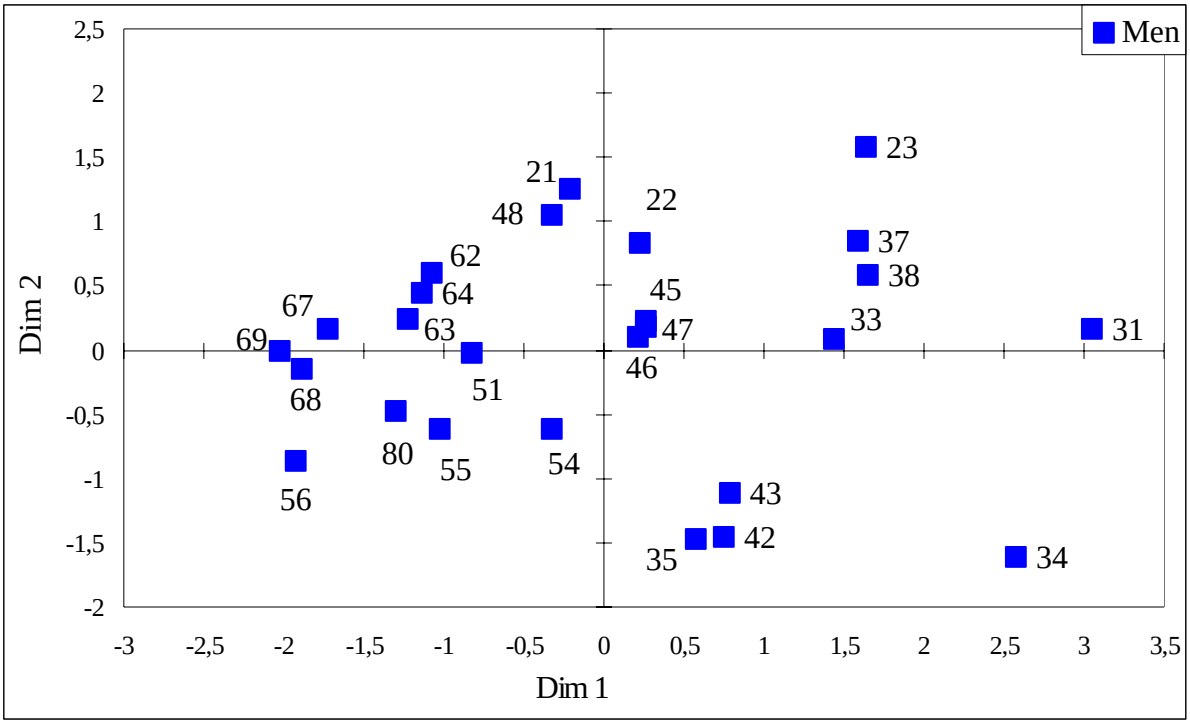
Previous studies have often been restricted to male/female comparisons on the first dimension, identified as that of social hierarchy, all the more so as interpretation of the second dimension is not clearly defined (Bottero and Prandy 2003, Chan and Goldthorpe 2004). Yet according to the Stress values (Figure 3), the structures are not unidimensional. Contrary to the first dimensions, the second dimensions of men and women are not correlated.[7] The Spearman coefficient of 0.18 is not significant.

For men, the structuring of the second dimension is achieved above all at the top of the scale along a continuum going from the self-employed categories (21, 22, 23) to private sector management (37, 38), liberal professions (31), public sector management (33) and finally the education (34, 32), arts (35) and health (43) occupations, expressing an economic/cultural distinction as well as sex-segregation. At the bottom of the scale the categories are less spread out along the second dimension, but seem to be distinguished solely according to sex-segregation: on the one hand the "blue-collar workers", which are male categories and on the other the "white-collar workers" and "non-working" categories, which are female categories (Figure 6). Thus the social structure for men clearly recalls the space of social positions defined by Bourdieu. With respect to axis 1, corresponding to the global volume of capital, axis 2 corresponds to the economic and cultural composition of this capital, introducing a greater distinction among the upper classes than the lower classes (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 140-141).

For women, this second dimension only reveals the specific nature of the self-employed: "craftspeople" (21), "shopkeepers" (22) and "business owners with ten or more employees" (23) which are located almost diametrically opposite to employees ordered along dimension 1 (Figure 7). The second dimension is built on employment status, the first criterion in the definition of social class. Examining this result alongside the particular nature of female farmholders observed earlier it can be suggested that the distinction between self-employed and employee status seems more relevant for women than for men. As regards social affinities, self-employed women generally have a husband who is himself self-employed, but this is less true the other way round and creates proximities between self-employed workers and certain categories of employees. To use one of the hypotheses formulated in an investigation into social grading of occupations in men and women on the basis of the Registrar General's Social Classes, "employment status (employer, employee, etc.) has a significant qualifying effect on SC grouping for both women's and men's occupations, but is perhaps still more significant for women than it is for men." (Murgatryod 1984, p. 492)

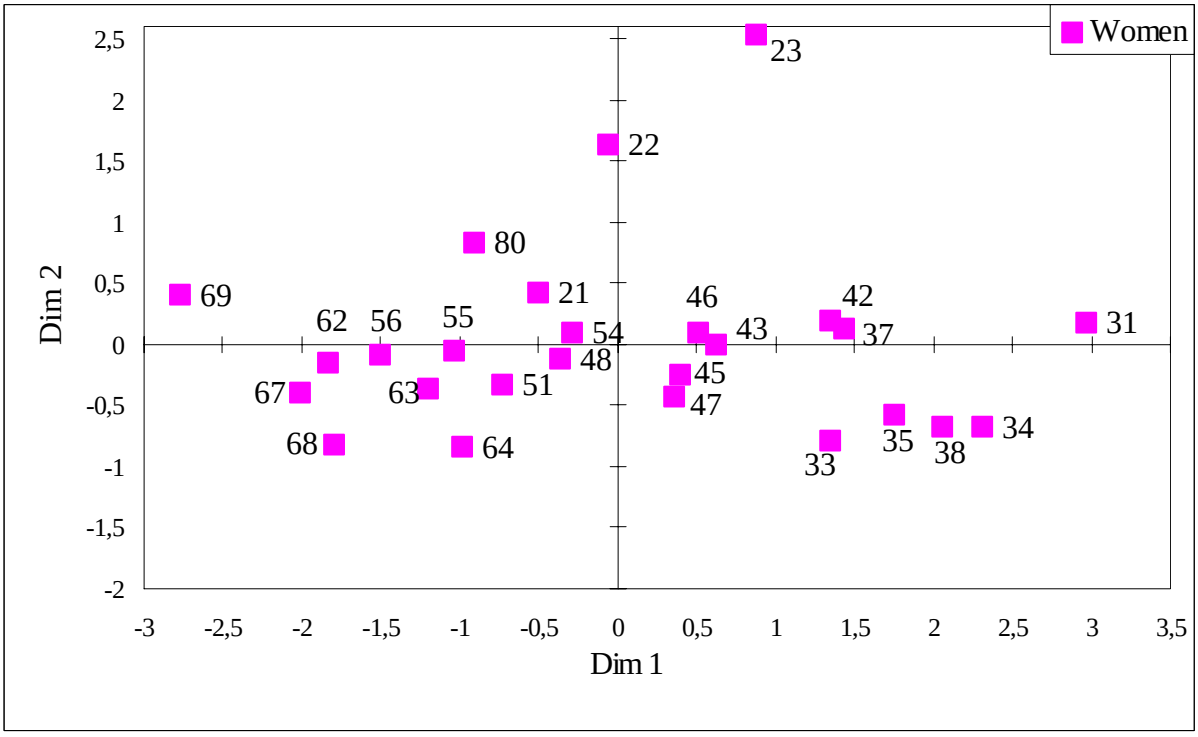
[7] Here, we are still using previous contingency tables obtained for men and women separately, where "farmholders" are excluded.

Figure 6 – Social structure for men



MDS plan 1-2, 3-dimensional solution with Stress = 0.08 and proximities/distances correlation = 0.98
Field: men between 30 and 59 in 1999, excluding "farmholders"

Figure 7 – Social structure for women



MDS plan 1-2, 3-dimensional solution with Stress = 0.07 and proximities/distances correlation = 0.99
Field: women between 30 and 59 in 1999, excluding "farmholders"

This second dimension has given rise to substantial variations in the way it is interpreted: “private / public”, “rural / urban”, “entrepreneurial / bureaucratic”, sex-segregation… We believe that one of the reasons for this instability is precisely the fact that same interpretations are not valid for both sexes. For men, there is above all a “private / public” distinction, and the effect of gender segregation, while for women the “rural / urban” and “entrepreneurial / bureaucratic” distinctions appear to be more relevant.[8]

The absence of a distinction between the economic and the cultural at the top of the female scale might suggest that the employee categories have a relatively unidimensional structure for women. More exactly, as we will see now, female employees are not differentiated as a function of the composition of their capital, to use Bourdieu's terminology, but much more as a function of their full-time/part-time work status.

4. Higher value attached to higher and intermediate part-time categories

The introduction of full-time/part-time work status into the definition of the occupational status of a woman brings to light an unexpected result. If the socio-occupational category of an employed woman whose work status is included in the definition of the category is plotted against the SC of her husband – the category “with no spouse” being provided to account for single women – the contingency table is of size (21*2)*(27+1) = 42*28 and includes 72,222 women. On a social status scale, one would logically expect to see part-time work less valued than the equivalent full-time work, in so far as part-time work often corresponds to less skilled work and work that is always less well paid: “part-time work does not only mean work time which is less than the normal working hours: it also generally defines a status inferior to that of full-time work. Part-time workers generally have less favourable working conditions in many respects” (OCDE, 1991, p. 26). The lower status of women working part-time has also been confirmed by composite measures of occupational socioeconomic standing (McClendon 1976). Yet if the SC of a woman is matched against the SC of her husband, the lower value is only observed for three categories (Figure 8). Women “household helps” (56), “drivers and transport, warehousing, maintenance workers” (64) and “unskilled crafts workers” (68) working part-time have a lower score than their full-time counterparts on dimension 1. So, in terms of marital association, female part-time work does not generally go hand in hand with lower status.

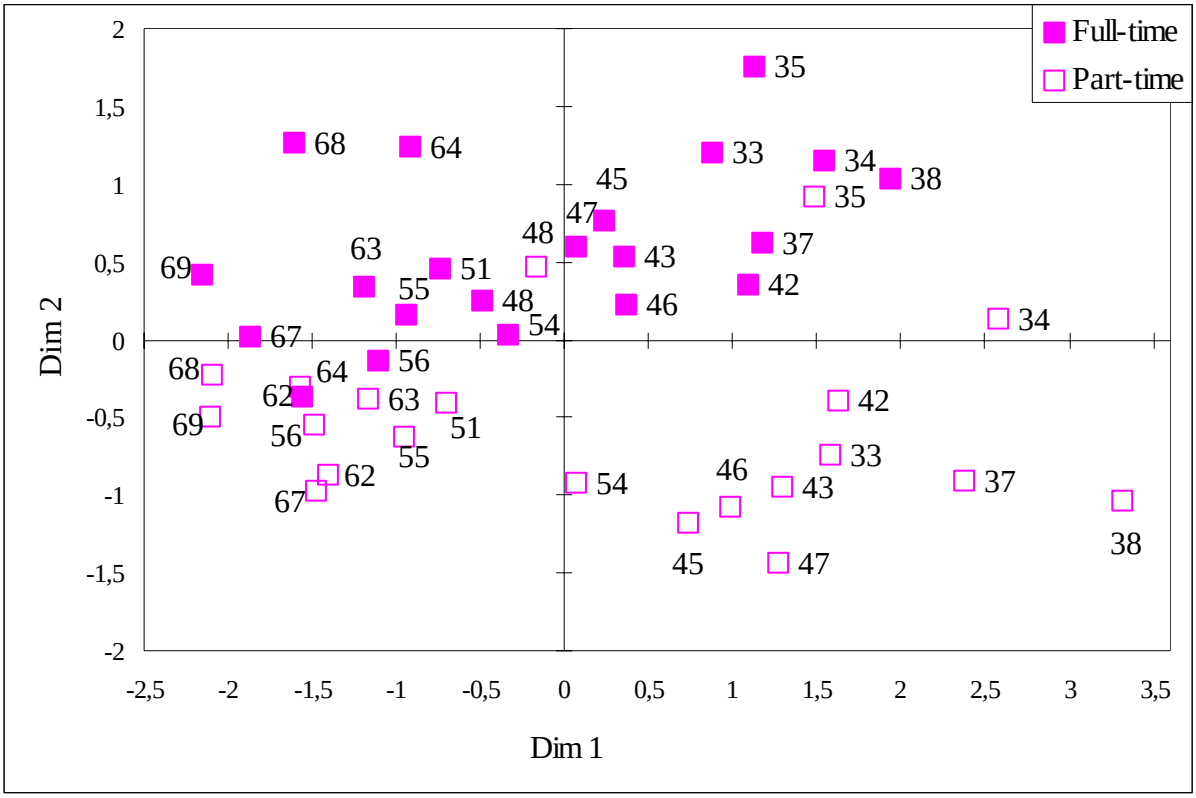
The most surprising result is the positive impact of part-time work observed for certain socio-occupational categories. The top of the female scale on dimension 1 is made up of part-time “engineers and technical managers” (38), part-time “secondary/university teachers” (34) and “sales and administrative managers” (37) also working part-time. According to the score on this dimension, part-time female “elementary school teachers”(42) have a social status equivalent to that of “secondary/university teachers” (34) working full-time. More generally this greater value attributed to part-time work for women is observed for all the “higher managers and intellectual occupations” (33, 34, 35, 37, 38), and for all the “intermediate professions” (42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48), for “office workers” (54) and to a lesser extent for “skilled or unskilled factory workers” (62, 67). For the remaining categories, all located in the bottom half of the scale, i.e. for “civil service workers” (51), “shop assistants” (55), “skilled

[8] The significance of the third dimension is however less clear. For men there is on the one hand the axis of “shopkeepers” (22), “media and entertainment” and “not working” (80) and on the other “civil service officers” (33), “intermediate social and healthcare workers” (43) and “civil service middle managers” (45). For women, the extremities of dimension 3 are on the one hand “craftspeople” (21), “shopkeepers” (22) and on the other hand “engineers and technical managers” (38) and “business owners” (23)

crafts workers" (63) and "farm workers" (69), part-time work has little effect on the score of the category measured along dimension 1.

This difference between higher and intermediate categories on the one hand, and between female white-collar workers and female workers on the other hand appears in amplified form on dimension 2 structured according to the proportion of women living alone in the category. This is confirmed by a Pearson correlation of 0.94. The proportion of women living alone corresponds to a substantial extent to work status: women working part-time are more often living with a partner than full-time workers. And this difference is more pronounced at the top of the status scale.

Figure 8 – Status of women according to socio-occupational category and full-time/part-time work status



MDS plan 1-2, 3-dimensional solution with Stress = 0.07 and proximities/distances correlation = 0.99
Field : female employees between 30 and 59 in 1999

In order to gain a better understanding of this result on the positive effect of part-time work on higher and intermediate management staff, let us recall the principle behind the construction of the scale by multidimensional scaling. Being above means that the affinities of women working part-time are more often with men of high occupational status. For example the main affinities of female "sales and administrative managers" (37) working part-time are 18% with a husband who is also a "sales and administrative manager", 15% with a husband who is an "engineer and technical manager" and 10% with a husband in the "liberal professions", as against 12%, 9% and 2% respectively for their full-time counterparts. This comes essentially from the difference in the proportion "with no spouse": 13% of female "sales and administrative managers" live alone when they work part-time, as against 33% when they work full-time. On the other hand the negative effect of part-time work for women observed in particular in women "household helps" can to a large extent be explained by the

more frequent affinities with " blue-collar workers" (at the bottom of the male scale) when they are working part-time (42%) rather than full-time (33%).

5. The hypothesis of two female populations

The status order obtained when female work status is taken into account suggests the hypothesis that there are two different female populations. On the one hand women in the higher and intermediate categories seem to be able to adjust their working hours to suit their husbands' situation, and they are most likely to work part-time when their husband has a high social level, and in this case full-time work represents a kind of compensation for the "shortcomings" of the husband, especially when there is no spouse. On the other hand female white-collar workers or blue-collar workers do not appear to have the same room for manoeuvre. The representation of part-time work as a way of reconciling occupational and family life suggest logically a situation in which women are "free to choose"[9] this option. However part-time work covers in fact two very different situations: it can be "chosen" or it can be imposed. In one of every two cases it is imposed on female workers when they are taken on. As the data do not tell whether part-time work was "chosen" or not, we approached this dimension by analysing the type of work contract, positing that part-time work on a temporary contract (with respect to a stable job with a permanent contract or a job with tenure in the civil service) may be considered as having been imposed on the employees.[10] With the exception of the entertainment occupations who have a very specific relation to work, temporary work contracts (fixed-term contract, temping …) affect above all the white-collar and blue-collar categories.

The hypothesis that there are two female populations can be partly verified by using a multinomial logistic model estimating the probability that an employee woman will be on part-time with a stable work contract or with a temporary contract rather than full-time work (Table 3). Using two types of part-time work according to the type of contract could be justified by the fact that in a simple logistic model estimating the probability that an employee woman will be on part-time rather than full-time work, all explicative variables (age, socio-occupational category, spouse's status and number of children) have a significant interaction effect with the type of work contract, expressing the heterogeneity of women in part-time work.

If all other characteristics are fixed, with respect to the reference category as a female "office worker", the probability of working part-time is generally lower in the upper and intermediate categories, with a stable[11] or a temporary[12] work contract. Conversely, the probability is higher among white-collar workers and blue-collar workers with the notable exception of "skilled or unskilled factory workers" (62, 67). So part time work is above all developed in unskilled and highly "feminized" jobs. Moreover differences between socio-occupational categories are larger when the work contract is temporary. If this result is compared with that obtained above by MDS, it can be deduced that the value given to part-

[9] "Free to choose" mean that part-time work is not imposed by the employer. This doesn't mean that the choice is totally independent of other constraints, particularly family responsibilities.

[10] We certainly underestimate differences between women with this approximation by the type of work contract. In 2002, two third of part-time work were chosen by the employees when they had a stable contract. Conversely, two third of part-time work were not chosen by the employees when they had a temporary contract.

[11] Except "social and healthcare workers"(43)

[12] Except "media and entertainment" occupations (35) and "elementary school teachers" (42)

time work corresponds in fact to the categories for which this kind of work, especially in its imposed form, is the least widespread.

The spouse's effect on the probability of working part-time is clearly differentiated according to the type of work contract. The economic theory of adjustment of full-time/part-time work status to fit in with the husband's occupational status is only really confirmed with stable work contracts. With respect to the reference situation of a spouse of average status (group 4)[13], women whose husbands enjoy a high level of social status (groups 1 and 2) have a higher chance of working part-time. The difference is not significant for women with husbands of average status (groups 3 and 5). In all the other situations, with the exception of a non working spouse (not significant), a spouse with a low status (groups 6 and 7), an unemployed spouse and above all no spouse at all does give rise to a compensation, as the wife is less likely to be on part-time work.

However the pattern does not work when the work contract is temporary, confirming the measure of a certain constraint with our approximation by the type of contract.[14] While it does seem that there is a kind of adjustment when the spouse has a high status (groups 1, 2 and 3), compensating for the low status of spouse (groups 6 and 7) by an increase in working hours seems logically to be more difficult. But above all, unlike the situation for women on stable contracts, women on temporary contracts are unable to make up for the unemployment, non-employment or absence of the spouse and find themselves in these situations with a higher probability of working part-time. These elements therefore tend to highlight the worsening of an already difficult situation for single women. We could linked this result to couple effects on unemployment and non-employment already observed. Women whose husbands are unemployed have themselves a greater risk of unemployment. The same is seen concerning housewives married to a non working man. These couple effects persist even if education, age and region are taken into account (Ultee et al. 1988). To summarize, the development of two types of part-time work ("chosen" or imposed) combined to the homogamy tendency may lead to a situation in which the inequalities between women might increase. Heterogamy brings social groups together while homogamy keeps them substantially apart, as similarity of spouses may tend to strengthen already favoured (or unfavoured) situations at an individual level.

[13] Seven spouse's status groups were defined on the basis of male scores on the first dimension (Figure 6) See table 3 for details. And we added "unemployed", "non working" and "no spouse"

[14] Part-time work imposed by the employer is not necessarily felt by the employee as a constraint. But the fact that it is imposed prevent these women from fitting their work status to the partner's status.

Table 3 – Results of multinomial logistic model

	Part-time work on stable contract vs. full-time work	**Part-time work on temporarycontract vs. full-time work**
Intercept	-0.37**	-2.81**
Age		
30-34	-0.08**	0.16**
35-39	*Ref*	*Ref*
40-44	-0.14**	-0.20**
45-49	-0.21**	-0.33**
50-54	-0.09**	-0.24**
55-59	0.41**	-0.19*
Occupational category		
33. Civil service officers	-0.65**	-0.90**
34. Secondary/university teachers, scientists	-0.74**	-0.50**
35. Media and entertainment	-0.11	1.76**
37. Sales and administrative managers	-1.11**	-1.91**
38. Engineers and technical managers	-0.85**	-1.41**
42. Elementary school teachers and related	-0.90**	0.31**
43. Social and healthcare workers	0.21**	0.12
45. Civil service middle managers	0.04	-0.69**
46. Sales and administrative middle managers	-0.67**	-0.77**
47. Technicians	-0.37**	-0.46*
48. Foremen and labour supervisors	-1.58**	-1.09*
51. Civil service workers and police, military	0.15**	1.10**
54. Office workers	*Ref*	*Ref*
55. Shop assistants	0.88**	0.84**
56. Household help	0.96**	1.57**
62. Skilled factory workers	-1.18**	-1.46**
63. Skilled crafts workers	0.19	1.07**
64. Drivers and transport, warehousing, maintenance workers	0.59**	0.34
67. Unskilled factory workers	-1.27**	-0.31**
68. Unskilled crafts workers	1.46**	1.63**
69. Farm workers	0.54**	2.40**
Number of children		
None	-0.86**	-0.53**
One	-0.51**	-0.23**
Two	*Ref*	*Ref*
Three and more	0.34**	0.48**
Spouse's status		
Group 1 (31, 34)	0.50**	0.26*
Group 2 (23, 33, 37, 38)	0.42**	0.33**
Group 3 (35, 42, 43)	0.01	0.12
Group 4 (22, 45, 46, 47)	*Ref*	*Ref*
Group 5 (21, 48, 54)	0.06	0.05
Group 6 (10, 51, 55, 62, 63, 64)	-0.18**	0.00
Group 7 (56, 67, 68, 69)	-0.22**	0.03
Unemployed	-0.38**	0.44**
Non-working	-0.07	0.36**
No spouse	-0.78**	0.15*

Field : female employees for whom information regarding work status and type of contract is known
N = 70,500 with 47,794 in full-time work, 18,609 in part-time work and in stable contract, 4,097 in part-time work and temporary contract
** : significant at 0.01, * : significant at 0.05

CONCLUSION

Starting out from the apparent contradiction between the similar male and female hierarchies and the gender inequalities on the labour market, our aim was to take further the study carried out by Chan and Goldthorpe which identifies the gender-neutrality of the social hierarchy. We believed in the usefulness of a "more complex and thoughtful analysis of gender differences in occupational standing" (Warren et al. 1998, p. 13), and so it seemed important to integrate the main gender differences into the analysis, i.e. housewives, people without partner and full-time/part-time work status. To begin with, when men and women are represented in the same multi-dimensional space, their status scales do not overlap because of gender-differentiated social affinities. This made comparison between men and women problematic and raised the question of a meaning for the categories which might be different according to the gender of the people within them. The separated scales for men and women then did indeed present a very strong correlation. However major differences in the scores appeared in the detail, in particular for certain highly sex-segregated categories, which should prompt researchers to exercise a certain prudence. However the social structures are distinct, in so far as the second dimensions for men and women are not correlated. Bourdieu's representation of social space distinguishing cultural or economic composition from capital applied well to men, whereas the opposition between self-employed and employee, connected with the concept of social class, seemed more relevant for women. Within the employee categories women were essentially differentiated according to their work status. Unexpectedly, the higher and intermediate categories enjoyed higher status when they involved part-time work, while work status introduced little difference among female white-collar and blue-collar workers. This result leads us to put forward the hypothesis that there are two feminine populations which exist side by side. One is qualified and protected, and may be able to adjust full-time/part-time work status to suit the family situation. The other, semi-skilled or unskilled, which enjoys little protection, and on which part-time work is more often imposed by the employer, has less room for manoeuvre and can even suffer from a worsening of its occupational situation in case of unemployment, non-employment or absence of the spouse.

The introduction of female work status enables us to move forward in our understanding of what is measured by social distance scales. Because of the higher value attached to part-time higher and intermediate categories these scales measure neither prestige nor the socioeconomic status, since the few studies which have used this dimension showed a lower score for part-time women (McClendon 1976, Roberts and Barker 1989). Without going into the theoretical debate on interpretation as "social ordering of generalized advantage" (Bottero and Prandy 2003) or as "social status" in the Weberian sense (Chan and Goldthorpe 2004), it is certain that the scales built here measure social affinities which reflect a degree of desirability of men and women on the marriage market. We insist on the fact that the result obtained with part-time work can be explained in the context of marital associations. There was no certainty that this would emerge in the same way for friendly relations. Some will no doubt grasp this argument to declare their preference for friendship. But why give one's preference to a relationship which is less close? Why reject married life simply because it brings other elements into play, as well as other interests, especially within the family, on top of simple matching of occupations? Why deny that the family role traditionally attributed to women bears heavily in the development of their occupational career, unlike for men? We think it could be arguments in favour of using marital associations since they offer the possibility of showing one of the main reasons for the inequalities between men and women on the labour market.

What these marital associations show is precisely that a woman working part-time, and even a woman not working can be desirable positions from a male point of view. It is amusing to note that housewives obtain a relatively high rank on the prestige scales, all the more so if the respondent is a man rather than a woman (Bose 1973, Burzotta Nilson 1978). The problem with earlier works attempting to analyse and compare male and female hierarchies is that they have transposed the model for men according to which occupation is a sufficient character to define prestige or status, without having asked whether this criteria also applied to women. Although the study is of course non-representative, a study carried out on approximately forty people consisted in observing the way in which respondents attributed in reality a prestige score to certain occupations. The authors stress that the information useful to classify male occupations does not seem adequate to the respondents to classify women (Robert and Barker 1989). Our results on part-time work suggest that the status of a woman is not only defined by her occupation. That was one of the hypotheses put forward by Acker to explain the observation of similar hierarchies despite the gender inequalities on the labour market (Acker 1980). About occupational and domestic works, F. de Singly wrote : “If men and women often have an identity based on these two dimensions of work, men build it with an occupational dominant and women with a family dominant or a ‘dual model.’” (De Singly 2004, p. 207) So the status of a women would rather be a combination of occupational and family concerns.

To conclude we think that future research into the comparison of social hierarchies by gender would benefit from reformulating the initial question, as M. Haller suggested. They should rather ask “not what determines the status of women themselves, but '*what determines their access to men of different status* [15]”. (Haller 1981, p. 784) Because access of women to men is not only done through the occupation they exercise. Otherwise, how could one explain the disadvantage faced by the most qualified women and the advantage in favour of women working part time on the marriage market? These two examples should be enough to challenge the hypothesis put forward by the stratificationist approaches according to which the status of women would be defined solely on the basis of occupational features. In other words, if one observes gender-neutral hierarchies it is perhaps because the approaches adopted a gender-neutral conception of status right from the start.

[15] Quotation from : R.M. Pavalko, N. Nager, “Contingencies of marriage to high-status men.”, *Social Forces*, vol. 46, n°4, 1968, p. 523-31

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