

# Young women and access to and progression in managerial positions: a European comparison

## 1. PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH TEAM

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### 1.1 Coordinating research institute: Laboratoire d'économie et de sociologie du travail (LEST) - Aix Marseille Université, CNRS, UMR 7317

For more than 40 years, LEST, a joint CNRS/University of Aix-Marseille research institute, has been contributing to the development of social science research on work, employment, training and innovation. It has built its reputation on international comparisons, and in particular on the societal effect approach.

Its research is organised around two programmes, one of which is entitled 'Labour markets, occupations and trajectories'. This programme is concerned with the dynamics of labour market segmentation, social categories and occupational groups, with a particular focus on the interfaces between individual trajectories and social change. The researchers involved in the programme are exploring various aspects of segmentation in the world of work, with an emphasis on a dynamic perspective and a multidimensional approach. Issues around inequalities play a central role, whether in education, employment, the various forms of labour market integration or working and employment conditions. Within this general framework, there is a particular focus on analysis of the trajectories of young people making the transition from education/training into employment in the light, firstly, of the educational paths they have trodden and, secondly, of the employment conditions they find reserved for them. Analyses of the gender dimension of labour market trajectories, of occupational segregation and of wage discrimination against women have also appeared in many academic publications.

Furthermore, LEST has also won renown over many years for its analyses of changes in the *cadre*<sup>1</sup> class, notably through the work of Paul Bouffartigue, founder of the CNRS research group « CADRES » (GdR 2334) (cf. in particular Bouffartigue et al. 2011).

Finally, LEST's research is based to a large extent on international comparisons and the insights they provide, which put the realities of different countries into perspective. LEST has built up many productive partnerships with European universities and team, among others. These partnerships have facilitated its research based on international comparisons.

### 1.2 The research team (France)

The team is made up of Vanessa di Paola and Stéphanie Moullet, both lecturers/researchers at LEST and both economists. Their research has been concerned over many years with young people's transition from education to work and the risk of 'downgrading' or a drop in status at the beginning of the working life. The other members of the team are Arnaud Dupray, economist and senior research officer at the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Qualifications (Céreq) and a research associate at LEST, and

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<sup>1</sup> Translator's note: The term *cadre* has no readily identifiable equivalent in English. It denotes the technocratic managerial class, members of which may be employed in the public or private sector. They have typically been educated in the élite *grandes écoles* and usually have a significant amount of managerial responsibility.

Dominique Epiphane, sociologist and also a senior research officer at Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Qualifications (Céreq). Arnaud Dupray's research interests include occupational mobility and the use of initial and continuing training in the construction of careers, as well as pay inequality between men and women. Finally, Dominique Epiphane's research has been focused for many years on social relations between the genders, educational segregation and occupational segregation between men and women.

### 1.3 The European partners

Our intention is to approach teams of European colleagues working on gender issues in skilled professions from one of the prospective countries: Sweden, Germany, Portugal, the UK, Italy, the Netherlands, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

## 2- PROJECT OUTLINE

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### The principal focus of the research

#### **Joining the managerial class: same struggle for men and women?**

Since the end of the Second World War, women have entered the labour market in ever increasing numbers. Similarly, the share of women in senior management and among company directors has also increased in recent decades. Twenty years ago, women accounted for 23% of *cadres* in France; the figure today is 34% (APEC, 2011). Nevertheless, even this share remains low compared with women's rate of access to higher education and their labour market participation rate, not only in France but more widely across the European Union. In 2006, women accounted for almost 44% of the economically active population but held only 33% of executive positions in businesses and public bodies. And this is despite the considerable importance the EU attaches to promoting women's access to positions of responsibility<sup>2</sup> (Blanchard et al., 2009).

Against this background, our project seeks to investigate young women's access to the *cadre* category from a European comparative perspective. Such an investigation would enable us to clarify and position the French situation relative to other institutional and societal environments. Thus it might be asked whether any possible obstacles to access to the category are due more to the internal functioning of the labour market (reluctance on the part of professions, barriers to entry etc.) and the gendered composition of occupations (horizontal segregation) or are linked primarily to public policy and social protection measures for the reconciliation of paid work and family life.

#### **Young men, young women**

This gendered analysis will be focused on young people for several reasons. The first is linked to the fact that the conditions under which young people enter the labour market have been difficult for more than two decades because of a structural shortage of jobs and the imbalance between the explosive rise in levels of educational qualification, which in turn has produced ever rising career aspirations, and the slower pace of progression in the structure of the skills required in the labour market. The result is frequent underemployment and a failure by many individuals to obtain a job that matches their qualifications. It would be useful, therefore, to revisit the ways in which young people access managerial

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<sup>2</sup> 'A roadmap for equality between men and women', published by the European Commission in 2006, with the aim of 'promoting equal participation of men and women in decision-making', by the year 2011.

positions at the beginning of their careers. APEC's recurrent surveys on the education-to-work transitions of young graduates (APEC, 2013), Céreq's *Génération*s surveys (Barret, Ryk, Volle, 2014) and studies based on the FQP surveys (Môbus, 2011) provide some initial pointers.

The second is the focus on the gender dimension. We wish to emphasise gender and societal differences rather than the already familiar differences in modes of access to managerial positions. By focusing on young people, we will limit the biases caused by recent changes in levels of qualification and career development between men and women. After all, men and women currently in the second half of their careers differ more in respect, for example, of continuity of previous work experience and the acquisition of new skills in the course of that more or less fragmented experience (see APEC, 2007). Moreover, studies have highlighted the relevance of a gender-based approach for investigating career development (Pochic, 2005). Qualification, area of specialisation in education or training, job category and sector of activity are all factors that combine in different ways for men and women to explain the diversity of routes leading to managerial status (Epiphane, 2002; Eckert and Epiphane, 2003).

### **European comparison**

Furthermore, we aim to examine these gender differences from a European comparative perspective in order to view the French situation in the light of that in countries that are economically similar but differ to a greater or lesser extent in terms of the social relations between the genders and their institutional configurations.

After all, the links between employment, social and family policies and the division of domestic and parental duties within the family differ from country to country. They are also crucial factors in the construction of models of female labour market participation and thus shape women's access and commitment to positions of responsibility. Educational, sectoral and occupational segregation mechanisms, which may vary from country to country, also play a part and can be deployed to explain differences between men and women in the labour market (cf. for example, Rubery and Rafferty, 2013, on the effects of the crisis).

### **The various categories of *cadre***

Although young women in France tend to be more highly qualified than young men, they are less likely to join the ranks of the *cadres*, as studies of the 'glass ceiling' show (Buscatto and Marry, 2009; Pochic et al., 2011). It is also the heterogeneity of the *cadre* category that is at issue here. After all, promotion patterns differ depending on the category of *cadre* in question. However, men and women are not evenly distributed among the various categories: educational (Couppié and Epiphane, 2006, 2009) and occupational (Couppié, Dupray and Moullet, 2012) segregation mechanisms can give rise to vertical segregation and significant pay differentials right from the start of the working life (Dupray and Moullet, 2004). In France, the manufacturing labour force is overwhelmingly male and there are many opportunities for young technicians to become engineers or *cadres techniques* (Marry, 2010). Men also occupy administrative and sales posts, where they can be promoted to the *cadre* category having previously been employed in an intermediate profession. Young women, who are employed in far fewer numbers in the manufacturing sector, are unable to take advantage of this promotion path (only 25% of *cadres* in French manufacturing industry are women). Access to *cadre* status is also possible in the administrative and business sectors, where slightly fewer women than men accede to that category. Women are also more likely to be employed as specialist professionals than in management functions (Pochic, 2005).

Clearly, therefore, the *cadre* category is a heterogeneous one, which makes it necessary to examine in some detail what it encompasses, particularly since the very notion of *cadre* as a category that confers a particular status and set of rights is fairly specific to France. The equivalents in the English-speaking world can be identified by their management or budgetary responsibilities or as 'professionals' with expertise in a complex area in which they might be responsible for organising a team or coordinating its activities. Thus ISEC-2008 (International Socio-Economic Classes) distinguishes 'managers' from 'professionals' and, among them, further identifies two categories, namely 'high level' and 'low level'.

Depending on the country in question, men and women have unequal opportunities to access these various categories of *cadre* broadly defined (in the French sense of the term). Blanchard et al. (2009) note that the under-representation of women in Europe is even more pronounced at the top of the professional hierarchy in large firms, where 90% of the board members of listed companies are men, although there are significant differences between countries. Thus it seems absolutely appropriate to compile an account of how male and female *cadres* differ from country to country.

**Our aim is to put together a statistical panorama by gender for recent cohorts of graduates and the conditions under which they access and progress within the *cadre* category in various European countries.**

The objective is to highlight the diversity of these trajectories and to gain an understanding of the mechanisms that govern them, both those that obstruct and those that facilitate. To that end, the focus of our first area of inquiry will be the *cadre* category in France and in Europe. Our second area of inquiry will be the societal and institutional contexts that facilitate or restrict women's access to this category. In our third and final area of inquiry, the aim will be to characterise statistically the situations of men and women employed as *cadres* in each country (role of initial education and qualifications, type of occupations (professional/specialist vs. management), sector of employment and type of company, early career advancement, pay etc.). We intend to draw mainly on EU-LFS data and possibly, for certain aspects, on EU-SILC.

### 1st area of inquiry: Investigation of the *cadre* category in France and in Europe

The focus here is primarily on methodology, with the main issue at stake being the possibility of comparing a fairly heterogeneous category of professionals whose composition is likely to vary from country to country depending on the existing skill and job structures.

The International Standard Classification of Occupations, which was updated in 2008 (ISCO-2008), provides the basis for an initial approach to the spectrum of occupations. It offers four levels of aggregation, from the most abbreviated with just ten groups to the most detailed with 436 items or basic groups. Classification is based on the tasks performed in pursuing an occupation; thus the starting point for allocating occupations to a particular group is the work activity itself and the skills required to occupy a particular post. In this regard, it is closer in its organising principle to the operational list of occupations than to the socio-occupational classification, which hierarchises occupations. The skills required are defined on the basis of criteria relating to the breadth of knowledge required, the tools and machinery used and the type of goods or services produced.

At the most highly aggregated level, and with the exception of major group 0, Armed Forces, a relation can be established between the occupational groups and the educational levels required to access them. Thus in an initial approach, *cadres* can be identified by 'major groups' 1 and 2 - 'Managers' and 'Professionals' respectively - of the classification associated with levels 5 and 6 of the standard international classification of educational levels (ISCED-97), which equate to the first stage of tertiary education or higher. This classification has the advantage of being available in the data we wish to use. Subsequent use of a more detailed level of aggregation will enable us to refine our analysis, for example by discarding managers of small businesses etc. However, this classification poses problems if it is to be compared with the French classification of occupations and socio-occupational categories (PCS 2003). For example, as Brousse (2008) notes, the French classification (known as the PCS) has more sub-categories for *cadres* and engineers than the ISCO, whereas the latter makes a more detailed distinction between the various specialist medical practitioners than the PCS. More importantly, the distinction between waged and non-waged workers does not exist in the ISCO and the difference between the public and private sectors is less of a structuring element.

Other classifications are used to identify the hierarchy of occupations. Initiated by the English academics Rose and Harrison, a draft European socio-occupational classification, the European Socio-Economic Classification or ESeC, has seen the light of day. However, this classification has already attracted

criticism from various European experts (Brousse, 2008b). In particular, the classification is said to be not really appropriate for the Southern European countries and the new member states, where a substantial part of the working population is made up of self-employed workers or employees in small firms. A review by Insee, published in a study by Filhon et al. (2013), also points to the gap between the scholarly designations and the reception accorded them by lay persons in different socio-economic contexts.

The Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale, developed originally by Treiman, is the result of a survey on the classification of occupations by prestige carried out among individuals in 60 countries. The scores were subsequently averaged in order to produce a general classification. It has been adapted to the new international classification of occupations.

Although it is widely used by researchers carrying out international comparative studies, it fails to fully reflect the social advancement that access to a particular occupation represents. In this respect, it compares badly with other classifications, such as the ISEI (International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status), in which occupational status results from a conversion of educational resources into income. In other words, for a given qualification, the occupation in which earnings are highest scores more highly than one in which earnings are lower<sup>3</sup>. And the ISEC-08 (International Socio-Economic Classes 2008) has the virtue of distinguishing 'professionals' from 'managers'. It would seem that this last classification is the one that most closely corresponds to the ISCO (ISCO) (Ganzeboom, Treiman, 2010). Its categorisation at the most highly aggregated level is given below.

- I-a Higher level professionals
- I-b Higher level managers and entrepreneurs
- II-a Lower level professionals
- II-b Lower level managers
- III-a Clerical Routine Non-manual Workers
- III-b Sales and Service Routine Non-manual Workers
- IV-a Small Self-employed with employees
- IV-b Small Self-employed without employers
- IV-c Small Self-employed in agriculture
- V Manual Supervisors
- VI Skilled Manual Workers
- VII-a Semi- and Unskilled Manual Workers
- VII-b Agricultural Labourers

Besides these statistical categorisations, we will also have to draw on national expert reports in order to identify how 'managerial' occupations are actually identified in each country, both by academic researchers and institutions.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> area of inquiry: The determinants of access to managerial positions in the different national configurations

Once a common denominator for establishing the boundaries of the *cadre* category - our object of comparison - has been defined, the objective then will be to investigate more closely the determinants of access to the various types of managerial position in the different countries.

At first sight, there are three sets of determinants. The first includes those related to the structure of the labour supply, that is the distribution of qualifications among the youthful labour force in terms both of level and area of specialisation, and to the distribution of that structure by gender. The second set, conversely, contains those related to the job structure, including the relative shares of the different skill

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<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Rose (2005) explains that this index (ISEI) was calculated for men in full-time employment, even for highly feminised occupations where they account for only a very small share of employees. This may distort some of the rankings of occupations.

levels in firms and the economy as a whole (observation of such differences was the starting point for societal analysis, which was based initially on a comparison of French and German firms cf. Maurice et al., 1982), the place of the public sector and of self-employment and the relative share of part-time jobs. The third and final set includes those related to the institutional and social policy measures put in place in order to encourage the reconciliation of paid work and family work and which, in most countries, have a direct impact on the female labour supply's relationship to employment and the continuity of their careers.

After all, many recent studies have shown that in France an increase in family size is usually accompanied by increased investment on the part of men in their professional lives to the detriment of their partners' careers (Pailhé and Solaz, 2009; Régnier-Loilier and Hiron, 2010). Moreover, the fact that women tend to 'marry up' rather than 'marry down' (Guichard-Claudic et al., 2009) leads them to make trade-offs in which greater importance is attached to their partners' careers, particularly when it comes to decisions on relocation (Bertaux-Wiame, 2006).

Our aim will be to highlight the gendered dimension of the trajectories that determine access to the *cadre* category and to analyse through the prism of gender the mechanisms governing them, whether they obstruct or facilitate access.

The idea is to ascertain whether the obstacles observed in France and the occupational spaces identified as being more favourable are the same abroad, taking into account the economic environment, the job structure, the gender distribution of educational opportunity and the institutional and societal context. It has to be noted, after all, that the trade-offs people make in their careers and hence in their access to and advancement in managerial positions not only depend on their career trajectories and areas of specialisation and on the industries and occupations in which they seek to work but are also framed and influenced by an institutional context and by social and family policies that may support their aspirations, to varying degrees depending on the country in question.

We will be concerned, on the one hand, with the existence and nature of measures at the macrosocial level that, to a greater or lesser degree, facilitate the reconciliation of paid work and family life and, on the other, with the extent to which every citizen enjoys equal access to desirable jobs. That equality of access may be enshrined in legislation and supported by the public authorities but it also arises out of the support within the population at large for a more or less egalitarian approach to gender roles. For example, the existence of a familialist tradition such as that in Japan works in favour of a clear division of activities between men and women within couples and acts as an obstacle to women's careers (Abe et al., 2003).

Notions such as the 'social contracts between the sexes'<sup>4</sup> (Fouquet et al. 1998), 'sex segregation regimes' Chang (2000), and 'cultural models of the family' (Pfau-Effinger, 2010) and approaches that link family models and the welfare state (Lewis, 1992; Esping-Andersen, 1999) or family policies and career opportunities for the two sexes (Korpi et al., 2013) will facilitate the process of choosing the countries best suited to comparison depending on the forms taken by the gender division of labour and the support provided by social and family policies.

Thus, drawing on Chang's typology, we will seek to choose countries characterised by different forms of stratification. One, such as Sweden for example, will have a 'substantive egalitarian' system of stratification, another, such as the UK, will have a 'formal egalitarian' system, while yet others, such as Italy and Spain, will have 'traditional family-centred' models. In terms of the issues at stake in achieving a work-life balance, countries such as Germany or the UK are notable for the weakness of social policies intended to support working mothers, which in turn is reflected in the disadvantages women suffer in respect of career progression (Gash, 2009). Thus Marry (2013) notes the pronounced level of underemployment among married women and women with children in Germany and the high female part-time rate compared with that in France. Furthermore, Germany's low birth rate results from the trade-off many women have to grapple with between starting a family and withdrawing from the labour

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<sup>4</sup> The notion of a social contract between the sexes concerns the way in which family responsibilities and paid work are divided between men and women. It depends on the position the family occupies in the systems of economic and social solidarity in the various European countries.

market, on the one hand, and, on the other, retaining the independence required to pursue a career. In fact, the higher their level of education, the less likely women are to have children. However, Germany is an interesting case also because of recent policy developments designed to encourage women's employment (Mechthild, 2010) and to modify the 'gender regime', i.e. the place of women in civil society and in economic life (Giraud, Lucas, 2009).

As far as the job structure is concerned, we will take account of the composition of jobs as shaped by horizontal occupational segregation by examining the link between the degree of occupational segregation in an economy and the opportunities for women to access managerial positions. It might be instructive in this regard to include a Scandinavian country in the sample, given the tendency towards a decline in occupational segregation, which was regarded as high in these countries until the beginning of the 1990s (Ellingsaeter, 2013).

### 3rd area of inquiry: statistical characterisation of men and women in managerial positions in 8 European countries

This approach, the aim of which is to establish statistically the conditions under which young women might access managerial positions and the opportunities available to them to do so, will be supplemented by an analysis of the differences in employment and working conditions between men and women in this category. Several research studies have highlighted the existence of significant differences between men and women in terms of pay, occupational trajectories and careers (Laufer, Fouquet, 2001; Epiphane, 2002; Belghiti, 2004; Marry, 2004; Laufer, Pochic, 2004). Besides the differences in pay that can be observed, male and female managers do not occupy the same positions, with women having a noticeably lower level of responsibility than men. Only 11% of female managers hold high responsibility jobs, compared with 23% of their male counterparts (APEC, 2011).

The originality of our approach will lie in comparing these analyses and results with experts from the countries in our sample in such a way as to produce interpretations illuminated by the various observations and results obtained.

We will endeavour in particular to investigate certain managerial positions, including those involving supervision. The comparative dimension will enable us to gauge the extent to which the share of women in these functions varies in the different sectors in each country investigated. We will attempt to understand, in partnership with the national research teams, the ideologies that encourage the feminisation of these occupations.

Recent studies in France have shown that the reasons given by recruiters and company directors for promoting the feminisation of supervisory and managerial occupations have little to do with an ungendered approach to such functions. On the contrary, they are combined most of the time with a discourse tinged with sexist assumptions, in which the recruitment of women to managerial positions is justified by 'their particular aptitudes' (Chaintreuil and Epiphane, 2013). While this is not a new phenomenon, it has undergone something of a revival in recent years. The feminisation of managerial and supervisory positions has been supported by a rhetoric that sets great store by the differences between men and women and in which it is assumed – often without question and implicitly rather than explicitly – that these differences can be explained by a natural biological order. In many cases, 'feminine skills' are even seen as a beneficial means of raising company performance. After all, their supposedly 'natural' talents for organisation, negotiation, management etc. are presented as so many assets that women can now invest in the productive sphere by being appointed to these positions (Jonas and Séhili, 2007).

In this connection, our aim will be to examine, in the course of a knowledge exchange seminar that we will organise with European researchers and experts, the attitudes of firm-level actors and to attempt to identify the ideologies and assumptions underlying those attitudes in order to assist interpretation of the statistical results.

## Statistical sources

The main sources of individual data that are comparable between countries and are relevant to the research questions outlined in the present proposal are the **EU-LFS (Labour Force Survey)** and the **EU-SILC (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions)**. It is always possible also to use national data sources, although this obviously makes comparability more difficult. However, they can be useful for revealing long-term trends.

### EU-LFS

The EU-LFS or European Union Labour Force Survey is the largest sample survey conducted among European households. It provides quarterly and annual data on the labour market participation of individuals aged 15 and over. Information is provided on the standard socio-demographic variables, but the descriptions of labour market situations are particularly detailed. The EU-LFS currently covers 33 countries, which transmit the data from national employment surveys to Eurostat.

### EU-SILC

The EU-SILC, or European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, is the standard European source for comparative statistics on the distribution of income and social inclusion at the European level. It comprises both cross-sectional data, which provide a snapshot at a given moment or period of time of variables relating to income, poverty, social exclusion and other living conditions, and longitudinal data on changes over time at the individual level, which are observed at regular intervals over a four-year period.

The EU-SILC is based on the idea of a common 'framework' and not a common 'survey'. The common framework sets out the harmonised lists of primary (annual) and secondary (every four months or less) target variables to be transmitted to Eurostat, common guidelines and procedures, common concepts (household and income) and classifications that seek to ensure that the data produced is as comparable as possible. Furthermore, the minimum size of the sample of the total population that is surveyed each year is large enough to serve as a basis for longitudinal analyses of the major occupational categories in the European countries in the database.

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