



HAL
open science

Effect of Gender on French High School Students' Dream Jobs and Professional Ambition

Laurent Cordonier, Florian Cafiero, Nicolas Walzer, Gérald Bronner

► **To cite this version:**

Laurent Cordonier, Florian Cafiero, Nicolas Walzer, Gérald Bronner. Effect of Gender on French High School Students' Dream Jobs and Professional Ambition. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 2023, Data Visualization, 9, pp.1-3. 10.1177/23780231231181898 . hal-04128083

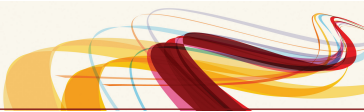
HAL Id: hal-04128083

<https://hal.science/hal-04128083v1>

Submitted on 14 Jun 2023

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Effect of Gender on French High School Students' Dream Jobs and Professional Ambition

Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World
 Volume 9: 1–3
 © The Author(s) 2023
 Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
 DOI: 10.1177/23780231231181898
srd.sagepub.com



Laurent Cordonier¹ , Florian Cafiero¹ , Nicolas Walzer², and Gérald Bronner¹

Abstract

In France, women and men often do not engage in the same occupations, with “feminine” occupations being on average paid less than “masculine” ones. It has been shown that this gender-based occupational segregation is not explained by a difference in professional ambition between female and male students at high school age. In contrast, studies have shown that in France, as well as in many other countries, students’ occupational aspirations are highly gendered. In this visualization, the authors replicate these findings about high school students’ professional ambition and aspirations with new data and indicators, introducing a distinction between their *dream jobs* and their *expected jobs*. This research confirms that the persistence of the gender-based occupational segregation has more to do with students’ gender stereotypes than with a difference in ambition between girls and boys.

Keywords

high school, dream jobs, occupational aspirations, professional ambition, gender stereotypes

In France, gender-based occupational segregation is quite marked, although it has been decreasing since the late 1990s (Minni 2015). Women are still largely overrepresented in some occupations, such as nursing and midwifery, and in the minority in others, such as engineering. As “feminine” occupations are on average paid less than “masculine” ones, this segregation contributes to the wage inequality between genders (Georges-Kot 2020).

It has been shown that in France, gender-based occupational segregation is not explained by a difference in professional ambition between female and male students at high school age, as they are equally ambitious (Dupont et al. 2012). In contrast, studies have shown that in France, as well as in many other countries, students’ occupational aspirations are highly gendered (e.g., Stoet and Geary 2022). In this visualization, we replicate these findings about high school students’ professional ambition and aspirations with new data and indicators, introducing a distinction between their *dream jobs* and their *expected jobs*.

Visualization

We asked 2,114 students in the first year (10th grade) and final year (12th grade) of high school about their dream

jobs (“What job would you dream of doing later?”) and their expected jobs (“What job do you think you’ll really do later? The same job as the one you dream of doing? Another one?”). The schools of these students were selected to be nationally representative in terms of gender, academic level, and proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The responses of 2,017 students (1,090 10th graders [596 girls] and 927 12th graders [512 girls]) were available for analysis.

We defined a dream job or an expected job as ambitious if it belongs to the professional category “management or higher intellectual profession” (the category that requires the highest level of education and corresponds to the best salaries but with significant variations across professions). We conducted multiple binomial logistic regression analyses to

¹Sorbonne Université – CNRS, GEMASS Laboratory (UMR 8598), Paris, France

²Université de La Réunion, LCF Laboratory, Saint-Denis, Réunion

Corresponding Author:

Laurent Cordonier, Sorbonne Université – CNRS, GEMASS Laboratory (UMR 8598), Maison de la Recherche, 28 rue Serpente, 75006 Paris, France.

Email: laurent.cordonier@gmail.com



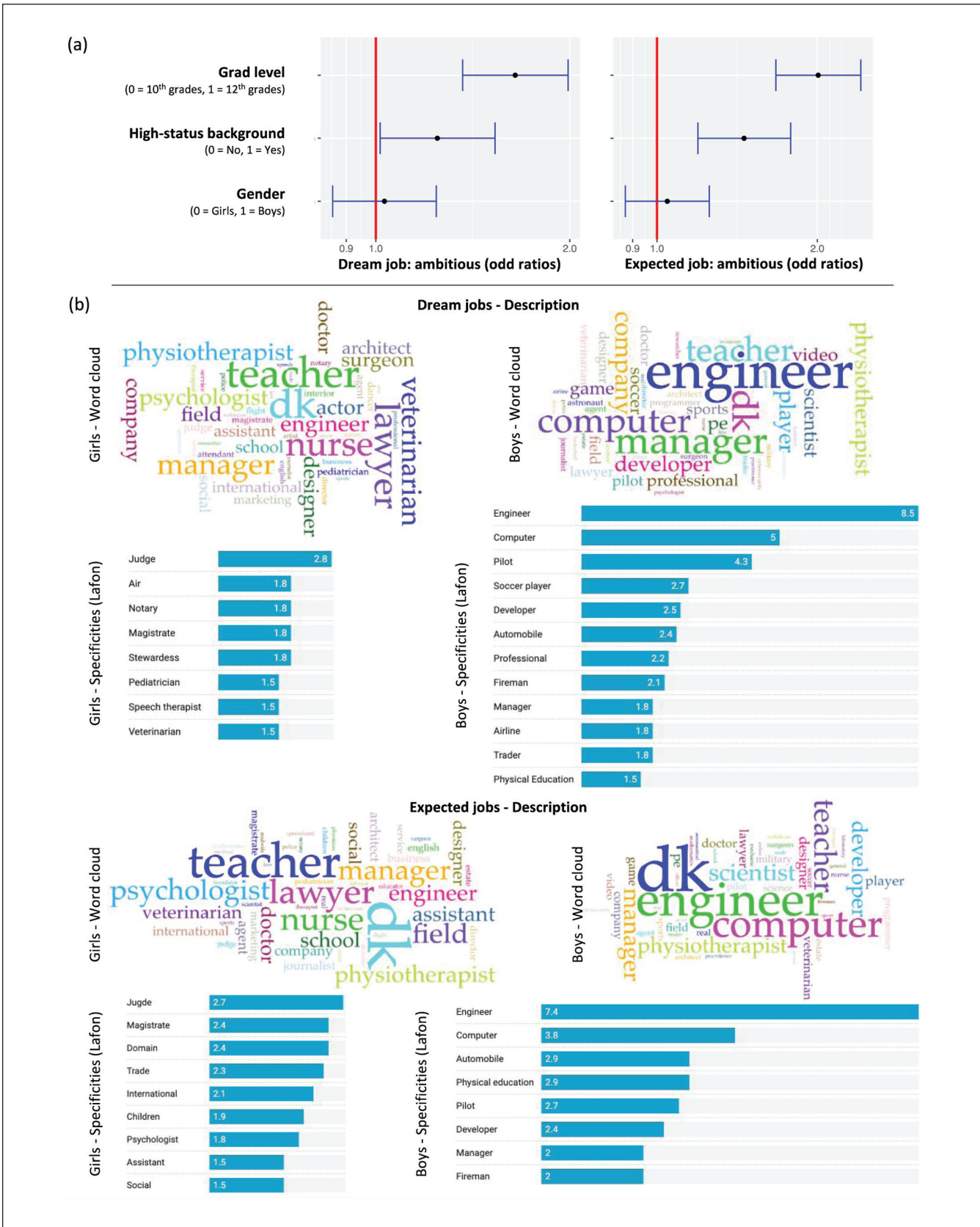


Figure 1. (continued)

Figure 1. Impact of gender on high school students' (a) professional ambition and (b) nature of dream jobs and expected jobs. (a) Multiple binomial logistic regressions explaining the choice of ambitious dream or expected jobs (i.e., jobs belonging to the “management or higher intellectual profession” category; 0=no, 1=yes) as a function of students' gender (0=girls, 1=boys), grade level (0=10th grade, 1=12th grade), and social status background (having at least one parent whose job category is “management or higher intellectual profession” as a proxy for high-status background; 0=no, 1=yes). Note that the x-axis scale (odds ratio) differs between dream and expected jobs plots. (b) The words used by students to describe their dream and expected jobs: in the word clouds, the size of a word is proportional to the frequency of its occurrence; Lafon's (1980) analyses of specificity indicate the words that are significantly (conventional threshold ≥ 1.5) more used by one gender compared with the other. In conclusion, students' gender has no significant impact on their professional ambition (a), but girls and boys differ greatly in the nature of the jobs they dream of doing or expect to do (b).

examine whether gender influences students' professional ambition, controlling for their grade level (10th or 12th grade) and for having at least one parent in that higher professional category, as a proxy for high-status background. Figure 1a shows that gender has no significant effect on the ambition of the dream or expected job, while family social status has a weak significant effect: students from high social backgrounds are slightly more ambitious than others.

In contrast, girls and boys differ in the nature of the jobs they dream of doing or expect to do. As shown in Figure 1b, the terms used by girls to describe their dream or expected jobs correspond more to people-oriented occupations, whereas those used by boys correspond more to things-oriented occupations related to the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This result is in line with the existing literature, which consistently reveals across countries such a gender discrepancy in occupational aspirations (e.g., Stoet and Geary 2022). The persistence of gender-based occupational segregation in France therefore seems to have more to do with students' gender stereotypes than with a difference in professional ambition between girls and boys.

Acknowledgments

We are thankful to the Scientific Council of the French Ministry of National Education for its cooperation on this project, especially to Stanislas Dehaene, Pascal Huguet, Christine Morin-Messabel, and Isabelle Regner for their precious help. Errors remain our own.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The Geometry of Public Issues project of Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR-19-CE38-0006) supported Florian Cafiero's research.

ORCID iDs

Laurent Cordonier  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4286-5152>
Florian Cafiero  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1951-6942>

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

References

- Dupont, Virginie, Christian Monseur, Dominique Lafontaine, and Annick Fagnant. 2012. “L'Impact de la Motivation et des Émotions sur les Aspirations Professionnelles des Jeunes de 15 Ans” [“The Impact of Motivation and Emotions on the Professional Aspirations of 15-Year-Olds”]. *Revue Française de Pédagogie* 181:55–70.
- Georges-Kot, Simon. 2020. “Écarts de Rémunération Femmes-Hommes: Surtout l'Effet du Temps de Travail et de l'Emploi Occupé” [“Gender Pay Gap: The Effect of Working Time and a Busy Job”]. *INSEE Première* 1803. Retrieved June 3, 2023. <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/4514861>.
- Lafon, Pierre. 1980. “Sur la Variabilité de la Fréquence des Formes Dans un Corpus” [“On the Variability of the Frequency of Forms in a Corpus”]. *Mots* 1:127–65.
- Minni, Claude. 2015. “Femmes et Hommes sur le Marché du Travail. Les Disparités se Réduisent Mais les Emplois Occupés Restent Très Différents” [“Women and Men in the Labor Market: Disparities Are Reducing but Jobs Are Still Very Different”]. *Dares Analyses* 17. Retrieved June 3, 2023. <https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/pdf/2015-017.pdf>.
- Stoet, Gijsbert, and David C. Geary. 2022. “Sex Differences in Adolescents' Occupational Aspirations: Variations across Time and Place.” *PLoS ONE* 17(1):e0261438.

Author Biographies

Laurent Cordonier earned a PhD in social sciences from Université de Lausanne in Switzerland. He is an associate researcher at Sorbonne Université – CNRS (GEMASS, UMR 8598) and a research director at Fondation Descartes in Paris (a citizen-based, nonpartisan, and independent foundation dedicated to issues of information and disinformation).

Florian Cafiero is a research engineer in computational social science at Sciences Po Paris and a lecturer in digital humanities at École Nationale des Chartes – Paris Sciences et Lettres Université.

Nicolas Walzer earned a PhD in social sciences from Université Paris Descartes (Paris V). He is a lecturer in anthropology and sociology in the Department of Social Sciences at Université de la Réunion and is a researcher in the LCF Laboratory and an associate member of the DIRE Laboratory at the same university.

Gérald Bronner is a full professor of sociology at Sorbonne Université. He is also member of the French Académie des Technologies and a correspondent of the National Academy of Medicine.