

# Leisure, Work and Gender

## A sociological study of women's time in France

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**ABSTRACT.** In this article, I address the question of the relationship between women's labour market position and their 'objective' and 'subjective' experience of leisure. With reference to a small-scale empirical study of the social time use of mothers in France, I argue that it is misleading to consider women's leisure experience as being determined by their labour market position. I attempt to show that it could prove more fruitful to examine the complex relationship between women's class and gender identities and their simultaneous experience of work, family *and* leisure. **KEY WORDS** ● France ● gender ● leisure ● social time

### Introduction

Although there is a well established sociological research tradition concerning the work–leisure relationship within capitalist and non-capitalist societies, the last decade has witnessed severe criticism regarding the androcentric bias of much of this previous work. This criticism has encouraged, in turn, a steady development of research projects on the leisure–work experience of women in many different national contexts.

After briefly presenting the main findings from research on the work–leisure relationship in a number of national contexts, this paper refers to data from a small-scale qualitative research project on the work–leisure experiences of a small sample of women with children in France. In the process of conducting this research, I was led to adopt a slightly different

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approach to the work–leisure interface and to pay particular attention to the role of class and gender identities in the work–family–leisure experience of French women. This perspective raises a certain number of conceptual problems which are related, on the one hand, to an increasing recognition of ‘the complexity of mutually implicating and interpenetrating times’ (Adam, 1993: 163) and, secondly, to the need to question the logic of linear causality between the employment and leisure experiences of women that has been characteristic of much sociological research on the work–leisure interface to date.

### **Leisure, Work and Gender: A Brief Examination of the Research**

Much of the recent research on gender, work and leisure has been produced within what is generally called a ‘feminist perspective’, although the precise definition of the specific characteristics of such a perspective is open to debate. A glance at some of the work produced over this period would seem to suggest that Eichler’s definition of feminist research would be acceptable to the majority of feminist researchers in this field. According to Eichler (1980), feminist research serves three main functions: a ‘critical’ function in the face of the structures and social relations of domination (in which one would undoubtedly include a critique of the structures and social relations of academic social science research); a ‘corrective’ function established through the systematic presentation of another point of view; and, finally, a ‘transformative’ function achieved via the identification and promotion of the means to change those same structures and social relations of domination.

Research on the gender dimensions of the work–leisure relationship draws on a variety of feminist perspectives. A number of authors (Deem, 1992; Wearing, 1992) have examined the developments that have characterized research on the work–leisure relationship or, more specifically, on gender, work and leisure, over the last fifteen years. Within the British context, the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies is often cited as the first instance of academic feminist concern with the non-work sphere (although one of the most interesting results of this work is to show just how much of young working-class women’s ‘leisure’ time is devoted to the very real work of securing the relationship on which they will be socially and economically dependent in their adult life – cf. McRobbie, 1976). Within this cultural studies paradigm, the question of patriarchal power relations and male hegemony has been central to the analysis of gender stereotyping (the ‘construction of femininity’), the sexual division of domestic work and childcare, and the social control

of women's time, space and bodies with regard to women's experiences of leisure and particularly sport (Hargreaves, 1989).

Much of the rest of the British research on women's leisure experiences may be defined as coming from a socialist feminist perspective. Here women are shown generally to have less time and space for leisure than their male counterparts, less access to material resources and thereby to leisure facilities. The emphasis here has usually been on the material and ideological constraints that women have to face in their quest for leisure (Deem, 1986; Wimbush, 1988; Wimbush and Talbot, 1988; Green et al., 1990). Much of this work has paid special attention to the question of the work-leisure interface in women's lives, and thus I shall return to the relevant conclusions in a later section.

A third approach to the analysis of women's leisure experiences is more common in American, Canadian and Australian studies than in British research. Here, authors stress the value of a poststructuralist feminist approach to leisure. Accounts on a microsocial level, which focus on actors, meaning, subjectivity, interaction and resistance, are used to stress the importance of the relational aspects of leisure (as opposed to leisure as merely an activity or achievement). Such an approach to leisure implies that actors' meanings in the leisure experience should be placed at the centre of research design (Wearing and Wearing, 1988; Henderson et al., 1989; Freysinger and Flannery, 1992). The research carried out within this post-structuralist feminist framework has led to pertinent research conclusions on women's leisure. As Betsy Wearing has stressed,

In much of this literature, there is overt recognition and discussion of the balance between constraint and freedom in women's leisure, with macro-social perspectives tending to come down on the side of constraint and micro-social perspectives on the side of liberation through leisure. (1992: 324)

It is interesting to note that much the same conclusion could be drawn from a survey of the far more voluminous corpus of feminist research on women's labour market experiences. Here, too, research can be divided between analyses which stress the specific constraints that women face in the sphere of paid work (notably in relation to the gender division of non-paid domestic labour, childcare and care for elderly relatives) and research which tends to stress the liberating potential of economic activity for women in advanced industrialized societies. Although many of the leisure research authors cited above have attempted to analyse the influence of women's labour market position on their material and symbolic leisure experiences, few have questioned the logic of linear

causality inherent in such an approach. Moreover, still fewer have attempted to study the potential influence of women's leisure experiences on their labour market position.

Despite much innovative theoretical and empirical research on the interface between the sphere of paid work and the domestic-family sphere (see *Le sexe du travail*, 1984), French sociologists have rarely considered the relationship between work and leisure from a feminist perspective (for an attempt to understand this omission, see Le Feuvre, 1990). In fact, with the exception of the classic but now rather dated 1966 study of women's leisure and free time in French-speaking Belgium by Govaerts, the temporal dimension of gender relations in general is an area that has received surprisingly little research attention in France. Langevin (1984) is one of the few French feminist sociologists who has attempted to analyse the 'gendered nature of social time', in this case with particular reference to the temporal norms of the domestic and economic spheres at different stages in women's lives. Contrary to popular belief, her research has stressed that women are not faced with an alternative between the temporal norms of the domestic sphere and those of economic activity. They do not have the option to switch between the two at various stages in their lives. The increasingly continuous nature of women's economic activity in France<sup>1</sup> means that they are faced with the task of managing the most demanding temporal constraints of the domestic sphere (those associated with the presence of young children) during precisely the same temporal life-sequence as they have to manage the most demanding temporal constraints of the economic sphere (those associated with laying the foundations of a future career). Rather than the chronological succession of periods characterized by different temporal norms and boundaries, women's material, symbolic and subjective experiences of time are tightly bound to the concomitant nature of these contradictory temporal forces (the nature of which is itself tightly bound up with societal level gender power relations). Unlike the social time of men, therefore, women's temporal experiences hinge on the socially imposed necessity to 'unify conflicting temporalities' (cf. Gurvitch, 1963). Langevin's preoccupation with the dialectic relationship between the domestic and the economic sphere leaves little room for the conceptualization of the relation between these spheres and a 'time for leisure'. In a brief reference to women's leisure, she adopts a classical 'residual' definition of 'free time' and concludes that, given the temporal constraints they face, it is unlikely that women find the time or space for 'leisure' in their daily lives (Langevin, 1984: 82).

Another French feminist sociologist, Monique Haicault, offers an alternative approach to the temporal aspects of gender relations, but

again without particular reference to the work–leisure interface. In an attempt to illustrate the very real work involved in socializing young children, Haicault (1992) carried out a small-scale qualitative study of the morning pre-school routine of a number of families (with at least one child under the age of 7) from different social backgrounds in France. She aimed to show that mothers are not only involved in the management and synchronization of complex and often contradictory temporal constraints, both for themselves and for the other members of their household unit (cf. Langevin), but also that they are the main agents of the socialization of their children and that time-management constitutes one of the major elements of this socialization process. Thus, not only do women as mothers have the final responsibility for the temporal and spatial organization of their offspring (getting them up, washed, dressed, fed and off to school on time in the morning, for example), but they are also involved to a far greater extent than fathers in cultivating an awareness of social time in their children. Haicault argues that a child's autonomy and independence is directly related to the development of such 'time awareness' and that much of the time mothers spend with their children is characterized by the work involved in preparing them to face the specific socially imposed temporal imperatives and constraints. In fact, every task a child learns to perform has a temporal dimension that he/she must be taught, although this time awareness often involves a more painstaking investment on the mother's part than the simple transmission of information necessary to complete a given task.

A more systemic approach to the study of women's experience of time is adopted by Nicole Samuel in the course of her numerous studies of the role of leisure in modern societies (1986, 1992). According to Samuel, 'women's leisure time is a social time in the strongest sense of the term, that is to say a time that creates new social relations (particularly within the family) and thus acts as a source of new social values' (1992: 347). Thus, her central thesis concerns the relationship between 'family' and 'autonomous' leisure. She claims that women (and particularly mothers) are increasingly turning to autonomous leisure activities as a means of attaining and defending 'a certain form of identity' (1992: 349) which is independent of the identities related to their 'traditional social roles' of wives and mothers. However, the relationship between identity, paid work, domestic labour, family and autonomous leisure is not a focal point in Samuel's research.

Contrary to the situation in France, the work–leisure interface has been central to many of the English-language based studies of women's experience of time over the past fifteen years. Rosemary Deem (1986, 1992) was one of the first feminist researchers to draw attention to

the apparently contradictory relationship between women's economic activities in the sphere of paid work, their domestic and family responsibilities and their access to autonomous leisure time, space and activities in the non-work sphere. Although time-budget research suggests that women who are not in the labour market have more daily free time than economically active men and women, Deem's research (along with that of Green et al., 1990) clearly shows that full-time housewives' greater quantity of free time does not translate easily or automatically into a greater quantity or diversity of autonomous leisure activities.

Deem argues that, despite their tighter time schedules, women in paid employment find it easier to operate a more clear-cut objective and subjective 'compartmentalization' between their various time-space experiences than their non-employed counterparts. This compartmentalization not only concerns their economic activity and their leisure experiences (the traditional dichotomy of leisure research, cf. Parker, 1983), but also affects the relationship between their family and domestic responsibilities and their leisure activities. Thus, the time experience of full-time housewives appears to be more fluid, discontinuous and inclusive (Mercuré and Wallemacq, 1987) than either that of women in paid employment or that of all social categories of men. Research of this kind has led to the conclusion that these characteristics, combined with the absence of the legitimacy that paid work seems to confer to autonomous leisure activities and a lack of personal resources (income, but also access to personal transport, for example), means that full-time housewives (especially those with responsibility for young children) are less likely to experience autonomous leisure than women (and particularly mothers) in paid employment.

These research results illustrate the complexities associated with the transfer of time-use between various spheres of human activity. Still, more recent research has questioned the tendency to analyse the work-leisure relationship of women in terms of such linear causality (where the position in the labour market serves to explain the non-work sphere experiences of women). In a recent study of women's access to sports activities in Quebec, Suzanne Laberge (1992) concludes that women's labour market situation alone does not seem to be a pertinent variable for explaining their different levels and types of sports participation. In line with the results of similar research in other societies (see, for example, Shaw, 1985, for the USA; Bouillin-Darteville, 1992, for Belgium; Cyba, 1992, for Austria), she found no clear statistical relationship between women's labour market participation and their non-work activities. Although the sports participation of full-time housewives can be shown to be statistically related to their 'material dependency',

whereas the sports participation of women in paid employment is determined by what Laberge calls their 'relational dependency' on spouse and children, she concludes with the observation that 'gender relations are experienced differently according to the complex interaction of diverse factors including social class, labour market situation and age (indicative of the evolution of attitudes towards women's participation in sports activities) (Laberge, 1992: 263).

### **Gender and the Work–Leisure Time Experience of Men and Women in France**

My own research on the domestic–employment–leisure experiences of a small sample of mothers in France has led to similar conclusions. The original aim of this research was simply to compare the conclusions drawn from the British research on women's work and leisure experiences with the situation in France. The very different structure of women's employment patterns in France and Britain offers an interesting test-case for comparative research of this kind (see Hantrais, 1990). Although the economic activity rates of French women are almost identical to those of British women (68 percent in France and 63 percent in Britain), and although the labour force is feminized to the same extent in both countries (women represent 40.9 percent of the labour force in Britain and 42.1 percent in France), French women are more likely than their British counterparts to have continuous career profiles (32 percent of French female graduates with children have a continuous employment profile, as against just 3 percent of the equivalent category of British mothers). French women also tend to work full-time, even when they have young children (21 percent of French women work part-time and their rates of part-time employment do not depend on the presence of young children – see Gregory, 1987), whereas 44 percent of British women work part-time and this form of employment is particularly prevalent during their child-rearing years (71 percent of British mothers work part-time and 75 percent of mothers with a child aged between 5 and 10 years). However, British women actually spend, on average, more of their lives in paid employment than their French counterparts. Whereas 57 percent of British mothers spend at least 50 percent of their working lives in paid employment, this is the case for just 20 percent of French mothers (Dex and Walters, 1992).

French women would thus seem to experience a greater diversity of labour market situations. If many women (especially those with high levels of qualifications) come close to a more typically male full-time,

continuous employment career, others are closer to the 'traditional' female full-time, continuous housewife role than their British counterparts. Given these differences, my aim was first to study the relationship between women's paid employment, domestic and leisure experiences in France in order to establish whether the relatively 'beneficial' effects of paid employment on women's access to autonomous leisure time that had been identified in the British research (Deem, 1986; Green et al., 1990) could also be found in France. Before turning to the results of this study, I shall present some of the recent data on the gendered characteristics of time use in France.

### **The gendered characteristics of time-use in France**

The relative lack of theoretical analysis of the work-leisure interface in France is all the more surprising given the wealth of statistical data available on the quantitative differences in the use of time according to sex and labour market situation, notably from the two INSEE *emplois du temps* surveys published in 1975 and 1985.

The data from the 1985 survey show (see Table 1) that the influence of paid employment on women's use of time is similar to that identified in other industrialized societies, including Britain. Women in paid employment spend an average of 12 percent of their week on non-work activities (9 percent or 2¼ hours a day during the week, 14 percent or 3¼ hours on Saturdays and 18 percent or 4½ hours on Sundays). Men in paid employment have slightly more free time than their female counterparts (15 percent), especially at the weekend (12 percent or 2 hours and 50 minutes a day during the week, 18 percent or 4½ hours on Saturdays and 25 percent or 6 hours on Sundays). Although full-time housewives spend a total of 18 percent of their week on non-work activities, they only have more free time than men in paid employment during the week (4 hours a day on weekdays, 4½ hours on Saturdays and 5 hours and 20 minutes on Sundays) (Roy, 1989: 7-10).

The data from the INSEE survey (see Table 2) also show that the greater time spent on domestic labour by full-time housewives in comparison to their employed counterparts is not simply explained by the fact that women in this category tend, on average, to have more children than their employed counterparts. On a purely quantitative level, we can see that women's employment outside the home (particularly full-time employment) serves to reduce the frequency and regularity of certain domestic tasks. This is particularly clear for the time spent preparing meals and cleaning, but the differences between the two categories of women are greatest in the childcare category. The very existence of



TABLE 1  
Time Use on an Average Week According to Sex and Labour Market Situation  
(Hours and Minutes)

| Category/activity          | Monday–Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|----------------------------|---------------|----------|--------|
| <i>Employed Male</i>       |               |          |        |
| Physiological time         | 10h45'        | 11h55'   | 13h20' |
| Employment + study         | 8h15'         | 3h15'    | 1h05'  |
| Domestic labour            | 2h10'         | 4h25'    | 3h35'  |
| Free time                  | 2h50'         | 4h25'    | 6h00'  |
| <i>Non-employed male</i>   |               |          |        |
| Physiological time         | 12h40'        | 12h55'   | 13h20' |
| Employment + study         | 2h05'         | 1h05'    | 0h35'  |
| Domestic labour            | 4h05'         | 4h05'    | 3h10'  |
| Free time                  | 5h10'         | 5h55'    | 6h55'  |
| <i>Employed female</i>     |               |          |        |
| Physiological time         | 10h55'        | 12h05'   | 13h15' |
| Employment + study         | 6h35'         | 2h30'    | 0h45'  |
| Domestic labour            | 4h15'         | 6h10'    | 5h30'  |
| Free time                  | 2h15'         | 3h15'    | 4h30'  |
| <i>Non-employed female</i> |               |          |        |
| Physiological time         | 12h30'        | 12h30'   | 13h30' |
| Employment + study         | 1h05'         | 0h25'    | 0h20'  |
| Domestic labour            | 6h20'         | 6h30'    | 5h00'  |
| Free time                  | 4h05'         | 4h35'    | 5h20'  |

Source: INSEE, *emplois du temps* survey 1985–6, quoted in Roy (1989: 7).

women's paid employment implies the organization of alternative child-care arrangements and a greater tendency to use school and workplace canteen facilities at lunchtime for children and adults. The other domestic tasks such as washing, ironing and shopping show less significant differences according to labour market situation between women in similar family structures, but the data would nevertheless seem to suggest that full-time housewives adhere to slightly different domestic norms from their employed counterparts. In my own research, I hypothesized that this subjective relationship to family and domestic labour would have significant implications for mothers' experience of non-work time in France. It is clear that the differences between the two groups are not explained by the increased domestic participation of the partners of

TABLE 2  
Daily Time Use of Mothers in France (Hours and Minutes)\*

| Type of activity                             | Mothers in paid employment |        |         | Full-time housewives |        |         |
|--|----------------------------|--------|---------|----------------------|--------|---------|
|  | Number of children         |        |         | Number of children   |        |         |
|  | 1                          | 2      | 3 and + | 1                    | 2      | 3 and + |
| <i>Paid employment</i><br>(including travel) | 5h15'                      | 4h52'  | 4h02'   | 0h11'                | 0h12'  | 0h07'   |
| <i>Domestic labour</i><br>of which:          | 5h05'                      | 5h24'  | 5h57'   | 7h58'                | 8h44'  | 9h13'   |
| Cooking,<br>washing-up                       | 1h24'                      | 1h32'  | 1h49'   | 2h07'                | 2h18'  | 2h36'   |
| Cleaning                                     | 0h39'                      | 0h44'  | 0h50'   | 0h58'                | 1h13'  | 1h22'   |
| Washing,<br>ironing                          | 0h26'                      | 0h28'  | 0h33'   | 0h36'                | 0h38'  | 0h51'   |
| Sewing, DIY,<br>shopping                     | 0h59'                      | 1h04'  | 1h05'   | 1h14'                | 1h28'  | 1h26'   |
| Childcare                                    | 0h55'                      | 0h56'  | 0h57'   | 2h08'                | 2h01'  | 2h03'   |
| <i>Total constraints</i>                     | 10h20'                     | 10h16' | 9h59'   | 8h09'                | 8h56'  | 9h20'   |
| <i>Physiological needs</i><br>of which:      | 11h16'                     | 11h16' | 11h30'  | 12h06'               | 11h37' | 11h26'  |
| Sleep  | 8h32'                      | 8h29'  | 8h15'   | 9h13'                | 8h46'  | 8h40'   |
| <i>Free time</i><br>of which:                | 2h24'                      | 2h28'  | 2h31'   | 3h42'                | 3h27'  | 3h14'   |
| Television                                   | 1h05'                      | 1h04'  | 0h57'   | 1h43'                | 1h30'  | 1h33'   |

\* The data refer to households composed of a couple with at least one child under 25 years old and with a father under 45 years old.

Source: INSEE, *emplois du temps* survey 1985–6, quoted in Roy (1989: 9).

women in paid employment, since the domestic time of French men hardly shows any variation according to their marital situation, the number or age of children, or the labour market situation of their spouse (Roy, 1989: 7)

It is also clear from the data that the daily and weekly distribution of work and non-work time is affected by gender and by the labour market situation. I have already noted that full-time housewives have more free time than employed men during the week, but that this tendency is reversed at the weekend (and particularly on Sundays). Women in paid employment have the smallest amount of free time both during the week

and at the weekend, but they are at a particular (relative) disadvantage in relation to employed men and full-time housewives on Sundays. In fact, they do not experience a single day when their free time exceeds the time they spend on domestic tasks.

Although this type of statistical data on gender and time use at a national level is of some interest, the experience of past research has shown the limits of a purely quantitative approach to study of the work–leisure interface. Wimbush (1988), amongst others, has drawn attention to the importance of the distribution of free time as against the total amount of such time. It is now a well established fact that the time organization of full-time housewives is dictated to a large extent by the rhythms of larger social institutions (partners' paid work and children's school hours, but also opening hours of shops, doctors' surgeries and administrations). Despite the total amount of free time they appear to have, it is rare for full-time housewives to be able to identify anything but short sequences of 'time for a breather' interspersed with time that is largely constrained by the requirements of other household members. Such short bursts of free time are notoriously unsuited to the organization of autonomous leisure activities and serve to explain the difficulties of compartmentalization of a specific 'time for leisure' that Deem (1986, 1992) identified amongst British housewives.

It was with these qualitative research concerns on gender and time in mind that I set out to study the work–domestic–leisure interface of mothers in France. After briefly presenting the research project and some of the findings, I shall go on to consider the theoretical and conceptual implications of the research as far as analysis of gender relations and the work–leisure interface in European societies is concerned.

## **A Small-Scale Study of the Leisure–Work Interface of Women in France**

### **Research methods and objectives**

In order to study the employment–family–leisure experience of French mothers, two complementary methodological approaches were adopted. First, a detailed questionnaire was distributed to a non-representative sample of 157 French mothers with at least one child under 16 years old. About one-third of the women were contacted through two local primary schools in a medium-sized town in the south of France, but the majority were women from all over France staying in a family holiday village (VVF) in the same town. The questionnaire covered a wide range of topics, from women's educational and employment situations and histor-

ies, to their domestic and childcare arrangements, and included questions on their non-work activities (frequency and social context) both outside and within the home. The current employment situation of the women was not used as a criterion for selecting respondents.

The questionnaire stage of the research was followed by a series of intensive semi-directive interviews lasting between an hour and two hours with about thirty of the questionnaire respondents. The interviews centred on the women's subjective experience of time, with particular reference to their non-work time. The interviewees were asked to describe their daily routines and to talk about how they had changed over the period of their adult life (from adolescence to the present day). They were asked to define what leisure meant to them and to talk about their current and past leisure experiences and the ways in which they had changed/remained the same over their adult life. Finally, they were asked to imagine a 'totally free day', where all their usual domestic, family and employment constraints were taken care of and where they could use the available time as they wished. For the women interviewed, the questionnaire data could be matched and compared with the interview narratives.

Since the aim of the research was to compare and analyse the work-leisure interface of women according to their labour market position at the time of the research, the respondents were divided into two groups (employed and non-employed at the time of the project), each being subdivided on the basis of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1979). The latter was defined either by the women's own occupational category at the time of the research, by the last occupational category for those no longer in employment or by the highest educational achievement for those who had never been in paid work. Further analysis revealed that the women's own level of educational achievement provided a fairly accurate measure of current class position and this variable was retained as an indication of cultural capital during the final stage of the research project.

As the research progressed, it became clear that the distinction between women in paid employment and full-time housewives was not as pertinent as the British research had led me to expect. On the one hand, I was forced to recognize that a static definition of these categories failed to account for the fact that many of the women interviewed would have been classed in the other category had I carried out the research 3 months, 12 months or 2 years earlier (or later). As Nicole Gadrey-Turpin has stressed, it is vital to recognize that 'the same women may belong to these two groups at different moments in their lives' (1982: 57). I began to suspect that a woman's work history would give a clearer indication

of her objective and subjective experience of both domestic and leisure time than her position in the labour market at a given time in her life history. Almost by chance, my research design enabled me to overcome this difficulty in part. Over 70 percent of the women I interviewed had at least one child under 7 years old and 80 percent of them were aged between 23 and 39 years. It was therefore very likely that the women who were in paid employment at the time of the project (68.2 percent of my sample) had had an almost continuous employment record. The non-employed women category was, however, more heterogeneous, including women who had never been in paid employment, those who had left the labour market several years before the project with no intention of returning to paid work in the near future and those who had only recently left the labour market and were about to start a new job.

Thinking about the problems involved in trying to analyse women's experience of time in relation to their changing labour market situation led me to realize the extent to which existing feminist studies of women's leisure experiences had 'taken as given' women's position with regard to paid employment. Just as the traditional research on the work-leisure interface (Parker, 1971, 1983 and, to some extent, Dumazedier, 1962, 1974) had focused on the influence of particular kinds of paid and unpaid work on the objective and subjective leisure experience of social groups, so too did the majority of the feminist analyses of gender and leisure tend to adopt the same kind of linear causality in relation to women's position in the labour market. Little attention was paid to what made women in given social and family circumstances 'choose' to work outside the home and, when this question was raised, the non-work time experiences of women have never (to my knowledge) been considered pertinent. Although it may seem logical that such issues were never raised in research which focused almost solely on the masculine norm of full-time continuous employment and placed leisure at the opposite end of the work-leisure spectrum (with domestic labour coming somewhere in the middle as, according to Parker, something equivalent to 'semi-leisure'), the absence of a dialectical approach to the work-leisure interface is quite surprising in the case of the recent body of critical research which has aimed to shake the androcentric bedrock of such traditional systemic research.

In an attempt to understand the role of the employment-domestic-leisure interface in the process of constructing class and gender identities, I would like to put forward some tentative hypotheses on this question. Before doing so, however, I feel that it is necessary to present some of the research findings that brought me to place the 'identity question' at the centre of my research.

TABLE 3  
The Regular Non-Work Activities of Mothers According to Education Level and Labour Market Situation

| Activity          | Total    |      | Education level and labour market situation (%) |      |                          |      | University graduates |      |
|-------------------|----------|------|---|------|--------------------------|------|----------------------|------|
|                   | Employed | Home | Below baccalauréat<br>Employed                  | Home | Baccalauréat<br>Employed | Home | Employed             | Home |
| Gymnastics        | 28       | 22   | 21  | 26   | 39                       | 8    | 27                   | 27   |
| Swimming          | 13       | 10   | 14  | 4    | 15                       | 25   | 10                   | 9    |
| Cinema            | 16       | 10   | 7   | 4    | 18                       | 17   | 27                   | 27   |
| Shows*            | 40       | 26   | 25  | 15   | 42                       | 18   | 57                   | 46   |
| Town walks        | 37       | 50   | 27  | 56   | 52                       | 33   | 37                   | 55   |
| Country walks     | 33       | 50   | 32  | 56   | 34                       | 34   | 33                   | 55   |
| Trips to seaside  | 34       | 48   | 34  | 59   | 24                       | 25   | 43                   | 46   |
| Window shopping   | 33       | 28   | 30  | 37   | 33                       | 17   | 38                   | 18   |
| PTA               | 18       | 24   | 18  | 15   | 9                        | 33   | 27                   | 36   |
| Eating out        | 15       | 16   | 9   | 22   | 18                       | 8    | 20                   | 9    |
| Meal with friends | 49       | 50   | 52  | 52   | 42                       | 50   | 53                   | 46   |
| Meal with family  | 51       | 48   | 52  | 44   | 52                       | 58   | 50                   | 46   |

\* Occasional/irregular activity.

Source: Le Feuvre (1990: 280-1).

### **The work–family–leisure interface: some empirical findings**

I shall limit the presentation of my research results to those findings that concern the non-work activities taking place outside the home. Past research has shown that these activities are the least likely to overlap with women's domestic and family responsibilities (although, as we shall see, this is not always the case) and that the majority of what could be called women's 'autonomous leisure' takes place in a non-domestic environment. In the course of the questionnaire, the respondents were presented with a list of twenty-six activities which are generally defined as 'leisure' in large-scale quantitative surveys and for which women's participation is known to be relatively significant (Ministère de la Culture, 1983).<sup>2</sup> For each of these activities, the women were asked to specify whether or not they took part in each activity and the frequency of their participation (never, rarely, regularly, only when on holiday). For each of the activities in which they took part on a regular basis, they were then asked to specify with whom they usually shared this activity (alone, with spouse, with children, with spouse and children together, with another member of the family, with a friend, with colleagues).

It should be stressed that this research did not aim to gain a representative picture of women's non-work time activities in France. The analysis of the cross-tabulations of variables from the questionnaire was undertaken to help me identify issues and questions that could be followed up in the interview stage of the research (particularly those that had not appeared in the British studies of women's work–leisure interface available at the time of the project). This can be illustrated with the example of a detailed study of the social context of some of the women's most popular non-work activities. Much of the British research had already drawn attention to the influence of the social context of a given activity on women's experiences of that activity. Green et al. (1990) use the example of a trip to the local swimming baths to illustrate the very different experience of this activity for women who go alone or with other adults to swim and chat and women who accompany their children and spend their time watching over their safety and/or performances.

One of the most striking results of the project concerns the apparent lack of influence of paid work on women's non-work activities. If we take the twelve most popular activities from the list, the regular participation of women in paid employment is almost identical to that of full-time 'housewives'. However, if we then control for the women's social class and cultural capital (using the academic qualifications variable), the situation becomes far more complex (see Table 3).

If we take the example of eating meals outside the household, women

TABLE 4  
The Social Context of the Non-Work Activities of Mothers According to Education Level and Labour Market Situation

| Activity          | Education level and labour market situation (%) |                       |                      |                         |                      |                        |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
|                   | Below baccalauréat                              |                       | Baccalauréat         |                         | University graduates |                        |
|                   | Employed  | Home                  | Employed             | Home                    | Employed             | Home                   |
| Gymnastics        | Alone<br>(42)                                   | Alone/friend<br>(44)  | Alone<br>(64)        | Alone<br>(37)           | Alone<br>(50)        | Alone/friend<br>(50)   |
| Swimming          | Family<br>(35)                                  | Family<br>(57)        | Alone/family<br>(25) | Children<br>(50)        | Family<br>(63)       | Alone/children<br>(40) |
| Cinema            | Family<br>(43)                                  | Spouse/family<br>(36) | Spouse<br>(53)       | Children<br>(50)        | Spouse<br>(48)       | Spouse<br>(56)         |
| Shows             | Family<br>(75)                                  | Family<br>(40)        | Spouse<br>(38)       | Spouse/children<br>(50) | Spouse<br>(54)       | Spouse<br>(43)         |
| Town walks        | Family<br>(39)                                  | Family<br>(59)        | Family<br>(39)       | Family<br>(83)          | Alone<br>(35)        | Alone<br>(50)          |
| Country walks     | Family<br>(68)                                  | Family<br>(50)        | Family<br>(71)       | Family<br>(89)          | Family<br>(55)       | Family<br>(67)         |
| Trips to seaside  | Family<br>(68)                                  | Family<br>(57)        | Family<br>(41)       | Family<br>(86)          | Family<br>(67)       | Family<br>(72)         |
| Window shopping   | Alone<br>(48)                                   | Children<br>(37)      | Alone<br>(46)        | Alone<br>(50)           | Alone<br>(36)        | Alone/children<br>(20) |
| PTA               | Alone<br>(54)                                   | Alone<br>(72)         | Spouse<br>(50)       | Alone<br>(83)           | Alone<br>(73)        | Alone<br>(100)         |
| Eating out        | Family<br>(43)                                  | Family<br>(53)        | Spouse<br>(52)       | Spouse/family<br>(43)   | Family<br>(42)       | Spouse<br>(57)         |
| Meal with friends | Family<br>(54)                                  | Family<br>(83)        | Family<br>(57)       | Family<br>(56)          | Family<br>(57)       | Spouse<br>(56)         |
| Meal with family  | Family<br>(64)                                  | Family<br>(68)        | Family<br>(70)       | Family<br>(63)          | Family<br>(70)       | Family<br>(56)         |

Source: Le Feuvre (1990: 293-300)



in paid employment and full-time 'housewives' have almost identical levels of regular participation in this activity. However, women with qualifications below the baccalauréat are three times as likely to eat out regularly when they are full-time 'housewives' than when they are in paid employment (22 percent as compared to 9 percent). For women with qualifications equal to or above the baccalauréat, however, the relation is inverted: 18–20 percent of these women in paid employment eat out regularly as against 8–9 percent of the full-time housewives in these categories. The rates of regular trips to the cinema, on the other hand, vary considerably according to the women's social status (under 10 percent of women with qualifications below the baccalauréat, between 15 and 20 percent of women with the baccalauréat and between 25 and 30 percent of women graduates attend the cinema on a regular basis), but the rates of attendance are almost identical for women in paid employment and full-time housewives in each of these categories.

These rather contradictory results led me to take a closer look at the social context of women's non-work activities (see Table 4). A study of the data shows that in some cases the social context of an activity is largely determined by the nature of the activity itself, whereas for other activities this context varies according to the women's level of 'cultural capital' and/or according to her labour market situation.

Thus, for country walks, trips to the seaside and meals with the extended family the vast majority of the women who regularly take part in these activities do so in the company of their spouse and their children. Likewise, gym classes are attended alone or in the company of other adults (friends/colleagues) by the majority of the regular attenders. For the remaining activities, however, the context varies according to the women's cultural capital and/or her labour market situation. If we take the example of eating out, we have already seen that working-class housewives are more likely to eat out on a regular basis than any other group of mothers. However, almost 60 percent of the women in this category who eat out on a regular basis do so in the company of their children (this is also the case for 54 percent of the working-class women in paid employment). If we compare these women with the university graduates, we can see that although the full-time 'housewives' in this category are less likely to eat out on a regular basis than the working-class women (9 percent compared with 22 percent), almost 60 percent of those who eat out on a regular basis do so without the presence of their children, that is, in the sole company of their spouse. Although the women graduates in paid employment eat out more frequently than the full-time graduate 'housewives' (20 percent compared to 9 percent), they

are far more likely to do this in the company of their children than the non-employed graduates (46 percent compared to 29 percent).

Such results would seem to confirm the idea that the social (and sociological) meaning of a particular activity may vary considerably according to the sociographic characteristics of the actors involved. They would also seem to suggest that the subjective meanings attached to a given activity in a given sphere can not be grasped and understood without reference to the underlying structures and values that link them to the individual's experience in the other spheres of his/her life. As Daniel Mercure (1987) has stressed, an individual's experience of time relates to the multiple and complex relationships between his/her subjective representations of time to his/her modes of activity in time. In order to analyse the time experience of women it is thus necessary to adopt a theoretical framework that enables us to grasp the dialectical relationship between objective social structures and subjective values and representations.

### **The work–leisure interface and the reproduction of gender identities**

Rather than starting from the hypothesis that a woman's experience of time and the subjective meanings she attributes to specific time sequences (and especially non-work time) are causally determined by her objective experience of time (or, to the contrary, that her values and representations determine her objective social conditions), I have attempted to adopt the more complex approach to social reproduction presented by Maurice Godelier (1984). Although Godelier is concerned with class rather than gender relations, his work opens up some interesting paths for thinking about the time experience of women in a gender perspective. First, Godelier argues that all social relations are composed of a material and a subjective dimension and that their subjective dimension should be seen as an integral part of the relation (and not as an immaterial superstructure which reflects to a more or less distorted extent the objective, material components of social reality). Second, Godelier argues that all forms of behaviour (actions, thoughts) can be shown to articulate several types of social relations. Thus, there can be no such thing as a 'pure' gender relation which can be isolated from the class, ethnic, or generational relations which cut across every experience of gender (just as there can be no 'pure' class relations). The reproduction of social structures and subjective identities can therefore only be understood when one is sensitive to the dialectical relationship between the material and the immaterial dimensions of social relations and to the complex interaction of these dimensions across different types of social relations.

I shall attempt to illustrate the importance of this approach as far as the analysis of gender identities and the work–leisure interface is concerned.

In the conclusion to her study of the work–leisure interface of employed women in Belgium, Bouillin-Dartevelle states that ‘despite the cultural and socioeconomic differences (between women), despite inequalities in terms of experience and social networks, it is clear that paid employment stimulates the need for autonomy and self-improvement’ (1992: 299). On the basis of my own research, I would be tempted to argue that there is little evidence to support the logic of linear causality evident in this statement and that it could be just as justifiable to argue that, at least for women in certain cultural and socioeconomic groups, the need for autonomy and self-improvement stimulates the adoption of paid employment. That is to say that, rather than taking women’s experience of leisure as a dependent ‘end product’ of their labour market status, it would be more useful to consider their leisure experience as one of the dimensions that shapes their labour market (but also their domestic and family) status. In order to do this, it is necessary to consider the dimensions of the leisure experience in relation to the experience of paid work *and* in relation to the experience of marriage and motherhood.

At the beginning of the research project, I had hypothesized that a woman’s access to autonomous leisure would depend as much on her social class as on her labour market status. I had thought that the more ‘cultural capital’ a woman had at her disposal, the more likely she was to have regular access to autonomous leisure and that paid work would only have the facilitating effect noted in the British research for women in intermediary class positions. This hypothesis was related to the idea that there are class-specific gender norms and identities and that these would have a determining effect on women’s experience of the work–leisure interface. This hypothesis was only confirmed in part and I would now like to present some of the findings that enabled me to refine and redefine my research framework.

If we take the case of the working-class women interviewed, i.e. those with qualifications below the baccalauréat, it appears that the women in paid employment at the time of the research have an ambiguous attitude towards their jobs and to paid work in general. Although the majority of the employed women in this category expressed the desire to work part-time, this wish does not seem to be related to an aspiration for more autonomous leisure. The gender identity of these women is centered on what Daune-Richard and Haicault (1985) have called ‘a very traditional wife–mother core’. Their subjective experience of paid work is directly related to this identity. Although all the working-class women recognize the financial importance of women’s paid work, both as a source of

'extras' for their children and as a form of insurance against the risks of family life (husband's unemployment, illness, divorce, etc.), it is unanimously presented as a barrier to the expression of their dominant core identity as wives and mothers. This barrier is particularly important in the leisure sphere. The 'extras' that these women offer their family through their paid work are usually related to their children's leisure activities. The benefits of these activities to their children are, however, weighed against the fact that the women's paid employment takes place during the same temporal sequences as the children's extra-curricular leisure activities that it serves to finance and that they cannot therefore be there to share. As soon as their husband's income permits, the majority of the women in this group are eager to abandon their paid employment (or to reduce their hours) in order to spend more time with their families.

It should be stressed that this ambiguous relationship to paid work is exacerbated by the domestic chores for which they consider themselves to be solely responsible. Rather than opposing their paid and unpaid work to the autonomous leisure activities that they do not have the time (or energy) to do on a regular basis, these women see paid employment *and* autonomous leisure as the main barrier to the expression of their subjective identities. They regret the fact that their employment occupies time that they would rather spend with their children and spouse. The full-time 'housewives' in this class see themselves as being in a privileged position in comparison to women in paid employment. Access to autonomous leisure is not, however, one of the dimensions of this privilege. These women's definition of 'freedom' is tightly bound up with the notion of 'the freedom to be a good wife and mother'. Thus, the women in paid employment tend to compare the material constraints of their paid work not with the freedom of autonomous leisure but with the satisfaction that they get from having the time to extend their domestic tasks (baking cakes, taking children out for walks, spring-cleaning, etc.), activities they often define as 'family leisure'.

Although some of the working-class full-time housewives do talk about the never-ending spiral of domestic labour, they do not use this characteristic to explain their lack of autonomous leisure but rather to explain the constraints they face in the organization of 'family outings'. When asked to explain why they decided to give up their paid employment, these women do not mention autonomous leisure at all. They feel that their physical presence at home outweighs the financial benefits of their paid work. Indeed, whatever their labour market status, the women interviewed in this class adhere to very strict and traditional domestic norms

and insist on the importance of a mother's presence at home when children are young.

This ambivalent attitude towards paid employment and autonomous leisure can be illustrated with data from the interviews. When working-class women were asked to imagine a 'totally free day' when all domestic, family and professional constraints were taken care of, they were the only group of women to express the desire to spend the day with their spouse and children. In fact, they found it difficult to imagine something they would like to do that was not in some way linked to the domestic/family sphere. Analysis of the data led me to believe that for these women autonomous leisure is seen as being largely *equivalent* to paid employment outside the home. There are several reasons for this. Like paid employment, the organization of autonomous leisure requires the investment of a certain amount of time – alternative childcare arrangements have to be made, family meals are prepared in advance and housework has to be rushed or put off until another day. Moreover, women who see themselves first and foremost as wives and mothers, and who gain most satisfaction from the expression of these social identities, experience the same sort of feelings of guilt towards autonomous leisure as they experience towards paid work. Both serve to deprive their family of their presence. Rather than a means to attain and defend 'a certain form of identity' (Samuel, 1992: 349), autonomous leisure (like paid work) is seen as a barrier to the expression of what could be called these women's 'central identity core'.

If we compare the interview data with the results of the questionnaire survey, it becomes easier to understand not only why the working-class women have high rates of participation in the non-work activities that always take place within a family context (country walks, trips to the seaside and meals with the extended family), but also why they tend to carry out all their non-work activities in the company of their spouse, their children or more often their spouse and children together (see Table 4). The labour market status of the women in this category has little influence on their rate of participation or on the social context of their non-work activities. I do not wish to deny the importance of the social, ideological and material pressures that lead women in this category to abandon almost all forms of autonomous leisure during their child-rearing years (Deem, 1986), but it does seem important to recognize the parallels that these women themselves draw between paid work and autonomous leisure and to stress the role of what Samuel (1992) calls 'family leisure' and 'autonomous leisure' in the (re)production of women's identities.

The relationship between these phenomena is complex and dialectic.

Identities do not pre-exist women's experiences; they are constructed and reconstructed through the gender and class norms of a particular society at a particular moment in time. All that I wish to stress is that women's leisure experiences cannot be explained by their labour market and/or family status since this approach simply serves to occlude the processes through which a woman's labour market status at a given moment in time (at a given point in her family life history) is related to her experience and aspirations in other social spheres, including that of leisure.

I shall try to illustrate this point by comparing the work–family–leisure experience of the working-class women with that of the university graduates in my sample. I have taken an extreme point of comparison because the graduate women have very different subjective representations of paid work and of autonomous leisure to the women in the previous category, but there are of course women between these extremes for whom the phenomena I am studying are more blurred. The first point to note is that these representations of paid work are common to almost all the women in this class, irrespective of their labour market status at the time of the research. The interview data show a distinct attitude towards the women's status of wife and mother. Unlike the working-class women, the graduates illustrate what Daune-Richard and Haicault (1985) have called 'a decomposition of the wife–mother core'. First, whatever their labour market status, these women distance themselves from the material daily domestic tasks. Whereas the working-class women identify strongly with such tasks (they talk of *my* washing, *my* ironing, *my* cleaning and claim that, even if they could afford it, they would not want to pay 'a stranger' to keep their home in order), the women graduates tend to consider these tasks as something to be got out of the way as quickly as possible, ideally with the help of someone who is paid to do the job in their place. Some of the graduates interviewed even criticized the questionnaire for presuming that the women had sole responsibility for domestic tasks and stressing that they did not see themselves as being in such a position.

The university graduates who were full-time 'housewives' at the time of the study stress that they have only temporarily abandoned employment, the majority intending to return to a full-time job as soon as their youngest child is of school age. These women have large families (three or more children) and explain that the difficulties associated with organizing reliable childcare arrangements mean that they have decided to give up their jobs as they would not have been able to perform to the expected standards had they simply reduced their working hours. However, despite the fact that they have given up work 'for the sake of the

children', they do not share the conviction that a young child is by definition happier and healthier in his/her mother's company. These views about housework and maternal dependency are taken as an indication of the 'decomposition of the wife-mother core' that is at the heart of these women's identity and that can be further illustrated with the example of the work-family-leisure interface.

Contrary to my original hypothesis, the labour market status of the university graduates at the time of the project did seem overly to influence their access to autonomous leisure, but the direction of this influence was quite surprising. Although the women in paid employment did have slightly higher rates of participation in five of the non-work activities studied in detail (Table 3), as against four activities where their rates were identical to those of the full-time housewives and three where they participated less than the latter, I was surprised to note that the full-time housewives in this category were *less* likely than their employed counterparts to share their leisure activities with their children. A traditional interpretation of these results would be to show that women in employment have a 'relational dependency' (Laberge, 1992: 263) on their spouse and children and attempt to 'compensate' for their absence due to paid work by spending as much of their non-work time as possible with their family. However, several elements from my interview data were not consistent with such an interpretation.

For the full-time graduate 'housewives', the logic behind their work-leisure experience was not, as is often suggested in the literature, one whereby, once 'freed' from the constraints of paid employment, they could express their true identity through autonomous leisure. The women in this category presented their autonomous leisure activities as being necessary to them *because* they had momentarily abandoned their main source of personal identity and satisfaction – their work. Put another way, the graduates in full-time employment explained that they did not feel the need for autonomous leisure, not because they were wary of neglecting their family during their non-work time (as the employed working-class women were), but because they gained all the autonomy and self-realization that they desired through their paid work. In this case, autonomous leisure is not experienced in opposition to paid work, but as an *equivalent* to paid work (or as a *compensation* for the lack of paid work) in opposition to the family and domestic responsibilities of these women. Thus, the full-time graduate housewives were the only group to define their family leisure activities as part of their 'housework' and to define their leisure as solely the activities they did without their children (and sometimes without their spouse). This was not the case for the university graduates in full-time employment.

Contrary to the case of working-class women, the full-time graduate 'housewives' had no qualms about organizing alternative childcare arrangements during the day or in the evening so that they could get out of the house and do something away from the family. The autonomous leisure of the employed graduates, however, usually took place in time sequences where alternative childcare arrangements had already been made due to their professional activity (playing sports during the lunch-break or going for a drink with colleagues after work). It is almost as if these women had sought their autonomy and independence through paid work and had gained access to autonomous leisure almost 'by accident' on the basis of the time organization required for their paid employment. It was not so much their paid employment in itself that gave them access to autonomous leisure (the full-time graduate 'housewives' had access to the material resources necessary for their autonomous leisure activities and saw this as a necessary condition for agreeing to give up paid work) but rather their *attitude* to paid employment and to their social role of wife and mother. This attitude, which I would claim is determined by class-specific gender norms and identities, not only shapes their autonomous leisure experience, but also the labour market and family status with which this experience is dialectically entwined.

### Conclusions

To conclude briefly, I would like to stress the aims and objectives of the research I have presented. My original aim was simply to analyse the influence of paid employment on the leisure experiences of women with young children from a variety of social backgrounds in France. Having studied the existing British research on the subject, I was sceptical about the universally 'beneficial' effects of paid employment on women's access to autonomous (non-family) leisure and wished to examine the influence of women's cultural capital on their work-family-leisure experiences.

As the project progressed, I became increasingly dissatisfied with the question I had set out to answer. First, it was impossible to identify and to quantify access to 'autonomous leisure'. Any given leisure activity may be carried out in a diversity of social contexts and, even without the presence of children, social norms (and notably gender norms) imply at best a form of 'relative autonomy'. An 'activity approach' to women's leisure is thus difficult without some consideration of the social context within which the activity takes place. But here again interpretation is difficult. Is a woman who goes to a parent-teacher association meeting



by herself more or less 'autonomous' than a woman who goes with her spouse and children?

Second, I began to question whether it was really legitimate to explain women's leisure experiences as being determined by their labour market situation. Most of the feminist studies of women's leisure I had access to seemed to take women's labour market status as given, as something that should fall outside the remit of a sociological study of the work-leisure interface. And yet, comparative cross-national studies of women's employment trajectories illustrate the complex social forces that shape the pattern of women's work histories in different national contexts (see, for example, Hantrais, 1990). Unlike men, women in western capitalist societies are still seen to be able to 'choose' between economic activity and inactivity at strategic points in their lives, but the gender norms that regulate the rate and type of economic activity vary significantly from country to country and across class (and, of course, ethnic) boundaries within a given society at a particular moment in time.

This observation led me to question the conclusions of much of the gender research on work and leisure. Are these studies really measuring the influence of paid work on leisure or are they in fact measuring the effect of something else that is, in turn, influencing women's simultaneous experience in the spheres of employment, family and leisure? The data that I have presented briefly here has led me to conclude that we need to adopt a more complex approach to the analysis of women's experience of the work-leisure interface. Paid work (or the absence of paid work) does not seem to be a satisfactory variable to explain women's leisure experience, since this begs the fundamental question of the different patterns of economic activity amongst women in contemporary European societies. It is a well established fact that academic qualifications are one of the main influences on women's work histories in France. The higher a woman's qualification, the more likely it is that she will have a continuous full-time employment profile. It was for this reason that I chose to use the 'cultural capital' variable to study women's experience of the work-leisure interface in France.

This study has led me to conclude that it is a woman's class and gender identity (or important elements of *habitus*, to use Bourdieu's expression) that explains her objective and symbolic relationship to the labour market and that explains her experience of leisure. Rather than determining women's leisure experience, I would argue that the experience of paid work is shaped by the same complex and dialectical forces that shape the experience of leisure. This is not to say that there is linear causality between a pre-defined, a-historical class-specific gender identity and women's experience of time in a variety of social spheres. The experience

of employment, marriage, maternity and leisure shapes an individual's core identity and this, in turn, shapes their experience of employment, marriage, maternity and leisure. The process is complex, on-going and dialectical.

It is clear that this research raises more questions than it provides answers, so I would like to end by stressing the need for more research on the production and reproduction of gender identities through the work-leisure interface.

### Notes

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1. Although the economic activity rates of French women are almost identical to those of British women (women represent 40.9 percent of the labour force in Britain and 42.1 percent in France), French women are more likely than their British counterparts to have continuous career profiles (32 percent of French female graduates with children have a continuous employment profile, as against just 3 percent of the equivalent category of British mothers, see Dex and Walters, 1992).
2. The twenty-six 'leisure' activities studied were divided into five groups: (a) *physical activities*: gymnastics, dance classes, yoga, tennis, skiing, swimming, other; (b) *cultural activities*: cinema, theatre, concerts, exhibitions, shows, other; (c) *relaxation*: town walks, country walks, trips to the seaside, country drives, window-shopping, other; (d) *civic/political/religious activities*: PTA, housing association, trade union, political, professional association, religious/church activities, other; (e) *social activities*: eating out, meals with friends/colleagues, meals with the family, discos/night-clubs, other.

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