The indirect effects of social class on family time

Laurent Lesnard

Observatoire sociologique du changement
(Sciences-po & CNRS)

Laboratoire de sociologie quantitative

(Crest - Insee)

Labor participation rates for French women and men aged 25 - 49
100
95
90
85
80
75
70
65
60
55
50
1975
1977
1979
1981
1983
1985
1987
1989
1991
1993
1995
1997
1999
2001
2003
Women
Men
Source : Insee, labor surveys and census.

Dual-earner couples and synchronicity

- General increase in the female labor force participation rate

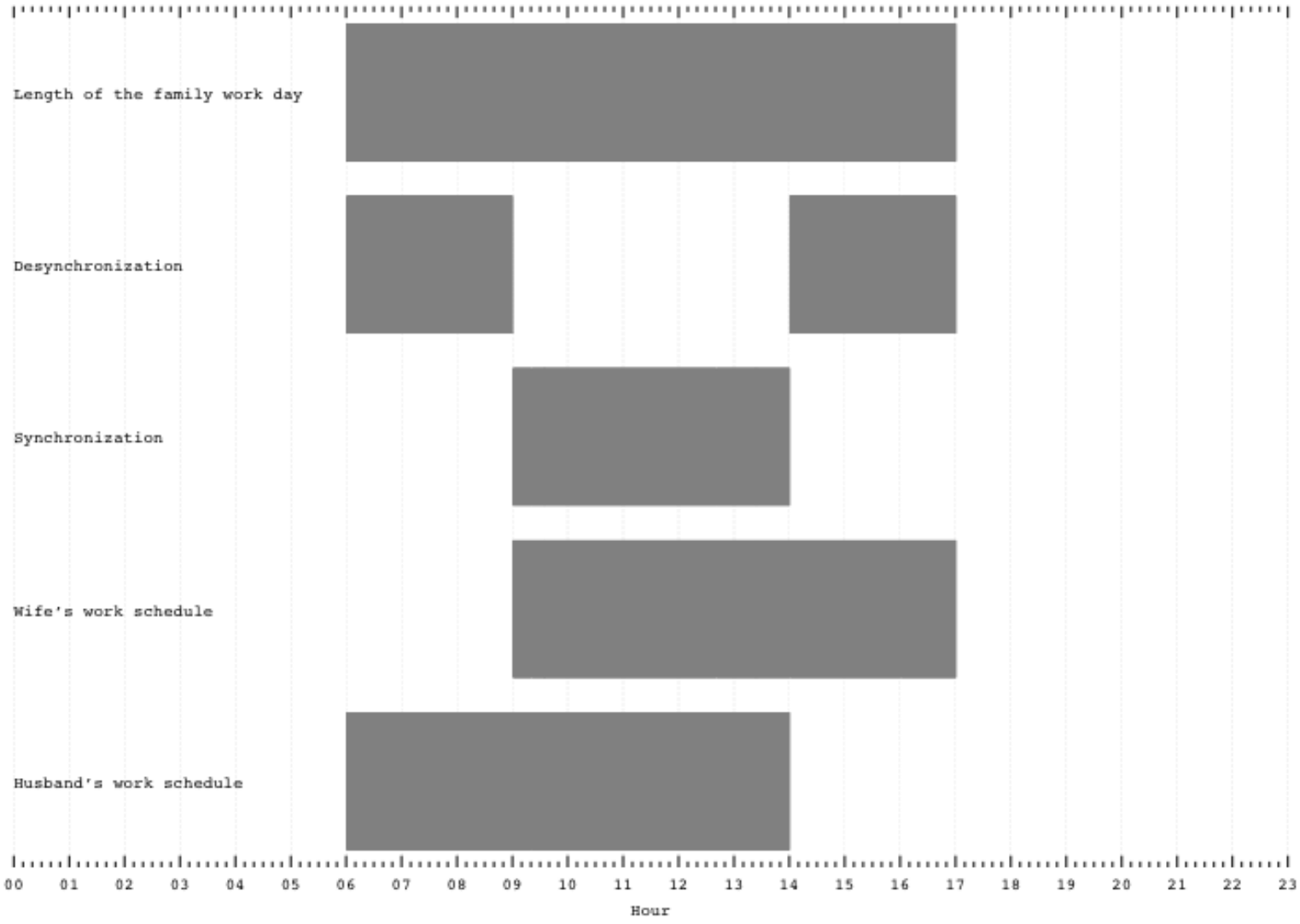
  80% in 2003 in France (25-49)

- Dual-earner couples

  70% of couples in 2002 in France

- Dual-earner couples' work schedules can be desynchronized

Dual-Earner Couples' Daily Temporal Equation



Research questions

- What is the extent of desynchronization?
- Is desynchronization a choice?
- What are the effects of desynchronization on family time?

Transversal research question

How social position is related to desynchronization and to family time?

Work schedule literature

- What we want to do
  - Take into account both the number of hours worked and their scheduling
  - *Family* work day: the combined durations and scheduling and their possible non-overlap must be analyzed
- Main references in this field
  - Presser (1984, 1987)
  - Nock & Kingston (1984)
  - Hamermesh (2002)
- Problems
  - Data issue: lack of appropriate data (in the US) on the scheduling of work (observed vs. “usual” work schedules)
  - Measurement issue: work time is reduced either to durations (time-budgets) or to *a priori* categories (night work, Sunday work, etc.)

Family time literature

- What we want to do
  - Measure the different sorts of family time: conjugal time, father- and mother-child time, parents-child time
  - Capture the full range of family activities (e.g. family diner)
- Main references in this field
  - Stone (in Szalai, 1972), Robinson (1977)
  - Kingston & Nock (1987)
  - Hamermesh (2002)
  - Sayer, Bianchi, and Robinson (2004)
  - Folbre and Bittman (eds) (2004)
- Problems
  - Concept issue: Family time restricted to primary activities i.e. to direct care activities
  - Data issue: information from both spouses is needed

Data and method (1)

- French time use surveys of 1985-86 and 1998-99
- Diary for both spouses
- Response rates: 64% and 80%

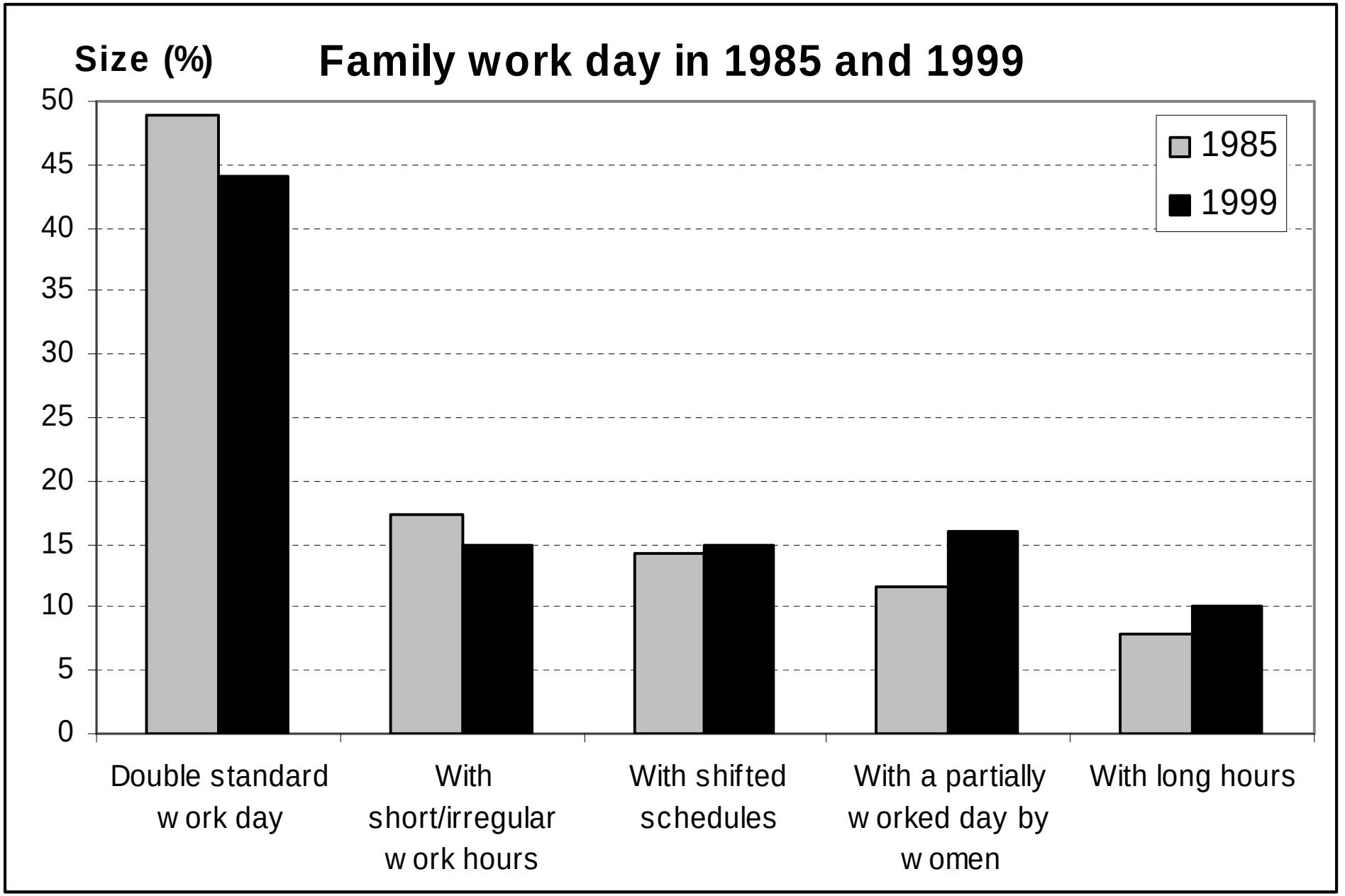
Type of dual-earner couple	1985-86	1998-99
Childless	425	330
With children	1,038	781
Sub-total	1,463	1,111
Total	2,574	

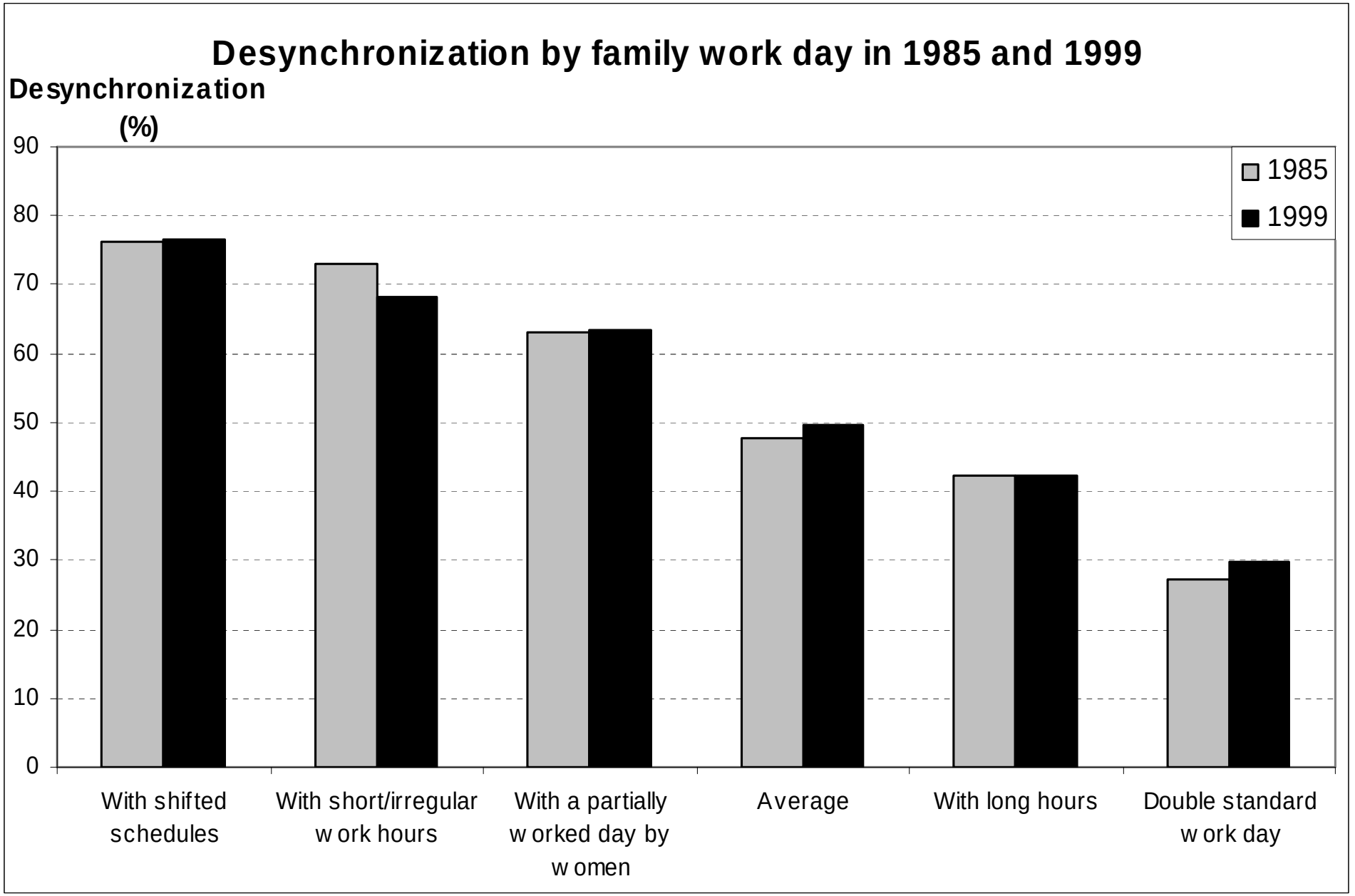
Data and method (2)

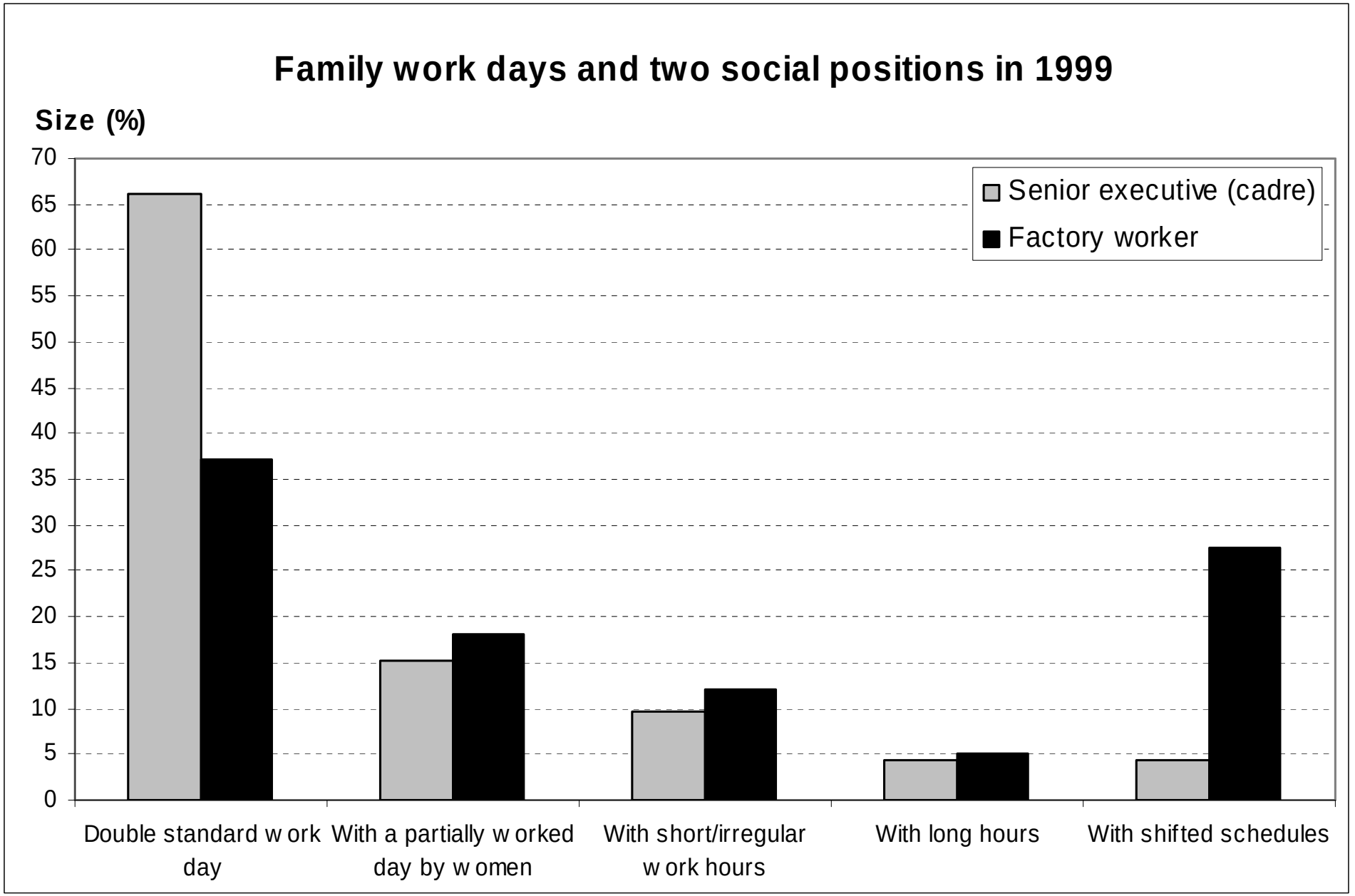
- Family work days as sequences in a 4-state space:
  - Neither spouses work
  - Only the husband works
  - Only the wife works
  - Both spouses work
- A variant of Optimal Matching is used to build a typology of family work days (method available as a Stata plugin)
- Distance matrix reduced with cluster analysis (WPGMA)

Data and method (3)

- ‘With whom’ information used to measure family time
- Three categories of family time :
    1. Conjugal time: each spouse declares to be with the other
    2. Parents-child time: each spouse says to be with the other and with at least one child
    3. Parent-child time, which is composed of father- and mother-child time: each spouse claims to be alone with at least one child
- Less details in 1998-99

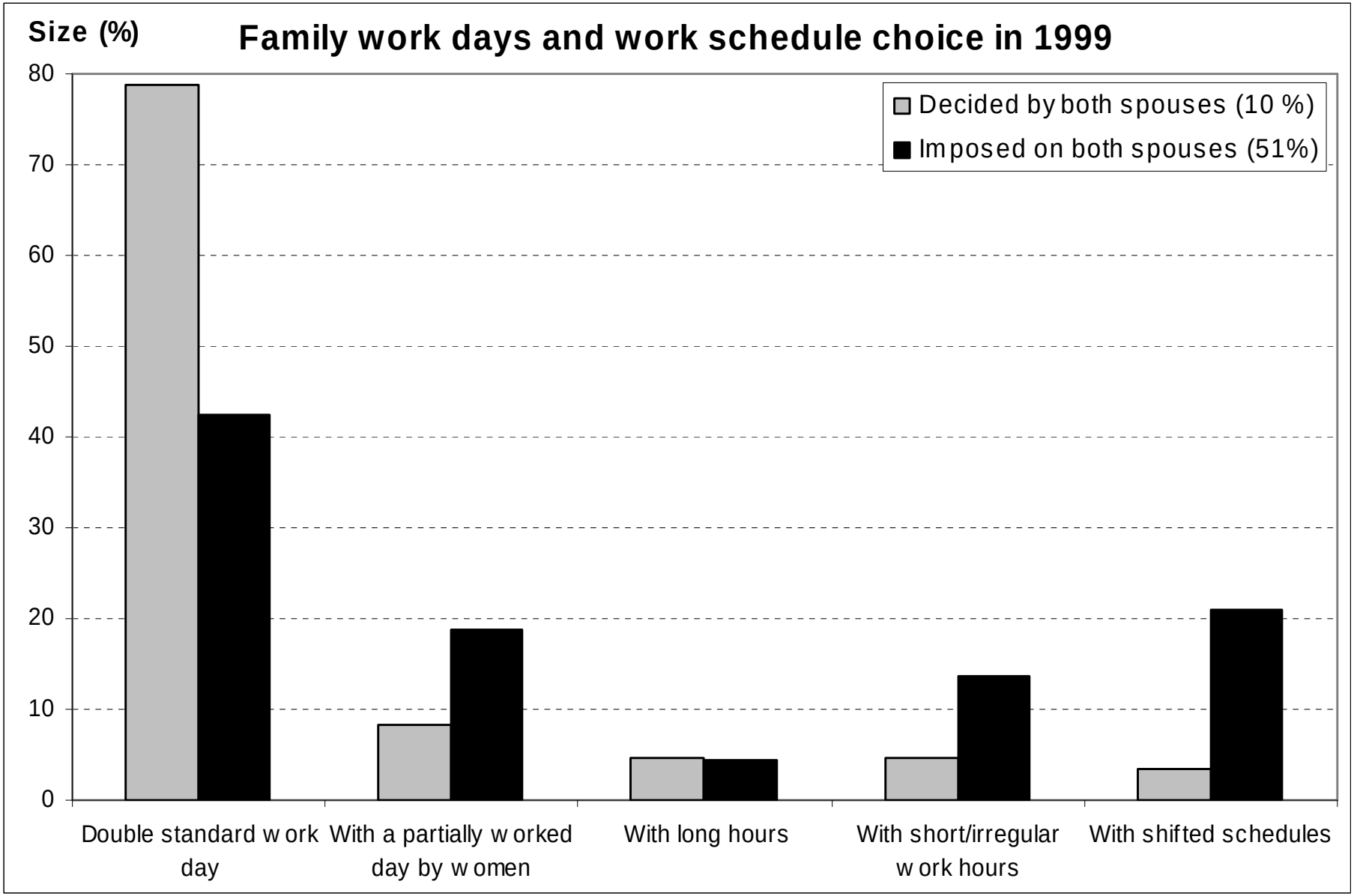

Size (%)
Family work day in 1985 and 1999
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
1985
1999
Double standard work day
With short/irregular work hours
With shifted schedules
With a partially worked day by women
With long hours


Desynchronization by family work day in 1985 and 1999
Desynchronization (%)
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
1985
1999
With shifted schedules
With short/irregular work hours
With a partially worked day by women
Average
With long hours
Double standard work day


Family work days and two social positions in 1999
Size (%)
70
65
60
55
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
Senior executive (cadre)
Factory worker
Double standard w ork day
With a partially w orked day by w omen
With short/irregular w ork hours
With long hours
With shifted schedules

Family work days and social position (men)

Type of family work day		Social position of the husband								Total
		Self-employed	Executives	Media and culture positions	Head clerks	Salesmen and domestic service occupations	Clerks	Health, social workers, drivers, police officers	Factory workers	
Standard	Double standard work day	34	66	43	55	43	65	34	37	46
Atypical	With long hours	27	4	1	7	24	0	14	5	10
	With shifted schedules	8	4	7	12	0	20	28	28	15
	With a partially worked day by women	16	15	13	15	19	15	11	18	16
	With short/irregular work hours	16	10	34	11	14	0	13	12	14
Total		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100


Size (%)
Family work days and work schedule choice in 1999
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Decided by both spouses (10 %)
Imposed on both spouses (51%)
Double standard work day
With a partially worked day by women
With long hours
With short/irregular work hours
With shifted schedules

Family work days and choice

Type of family work day		Determination of each spouse's work day				Total
		Imposed on both spouses (51%)	Imposed on one spouse (27%)	Decided by both spouses (10 %)	Other (12%)	
	Double standard work day	43	51	79	38	48
	With long hours	4	7	5	9	6
	With shifted schedules	21	16	4	12	17
	With a partially worked day by women	19	15	8	18	17
	With short/irregular work hours	14	11	5	22	13
Total		100	100	100	100	100

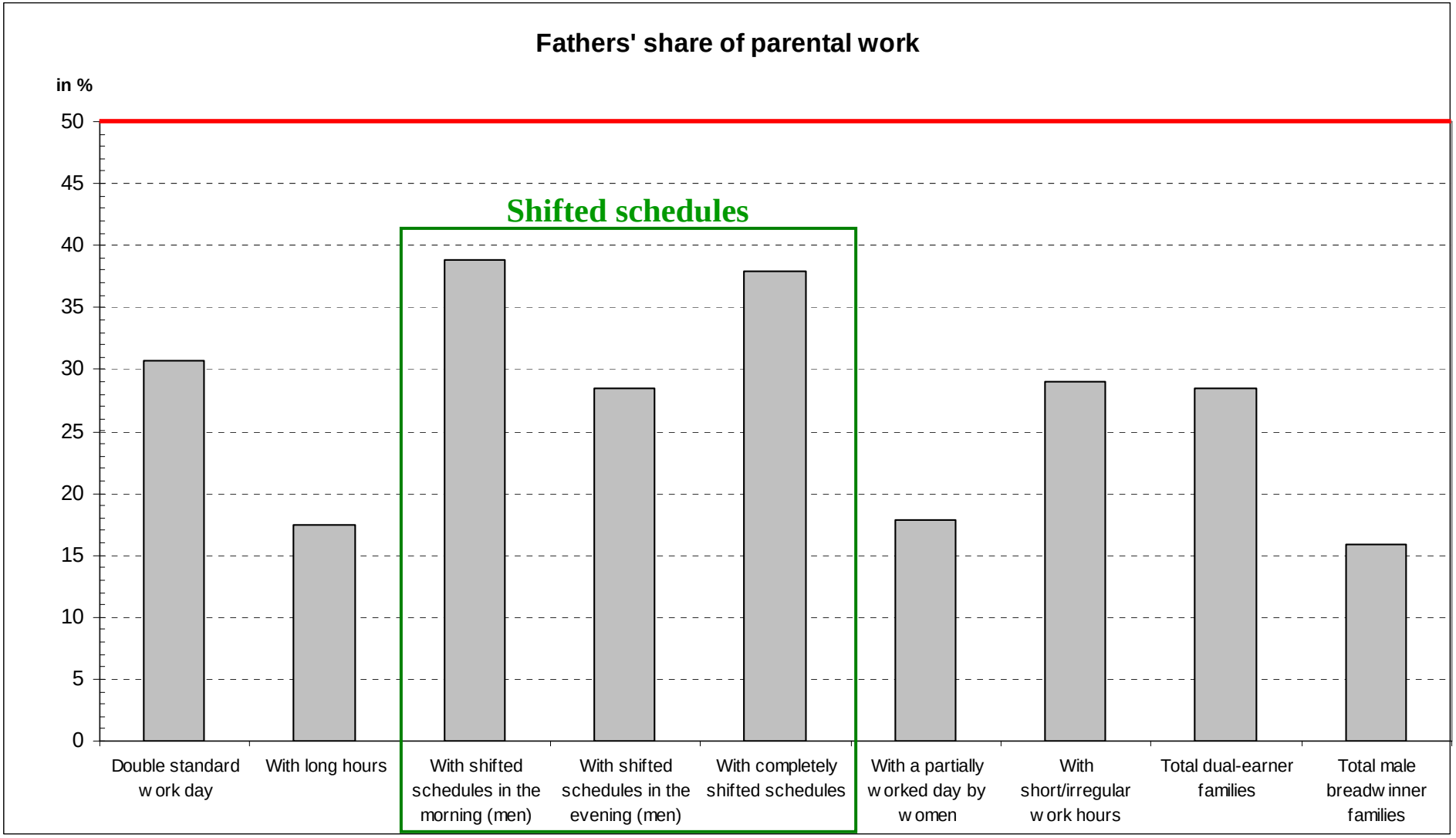
The effects of the family work days (hence of social class) on…

- Conjugal time: Desynchronization decreases couples' time together, especially in the evening
- Parents-child time
  - Increased by desynchronization when men have shifted schedules in the morning
  - Decreased by desynchronization when men have shifted schedules in the evening

The effects of the family work days (hence of social class) on…

- Father-child time:
  - Greatly increased by desynchronization when men have shifted schedules in the morning
  - Increased by desynchronization when men have shifted schedules in the evening
- Mother-child time: almost inelastic to desynchronization…

The effects of the family work days (hence of social class) on…



Summing up

- Family work day
  - Standard family work day in decline
  - Work schedules are highly correlated with the position within the economic field (social hierarchy + economic sector + nature of work +…)
  - When couples can decide, they prefer to be synchronized
  - =>Huge social inequalities
- Effects on family time
  - Desynchronization reduces conjugal time whatever its scheduling
  - Desynchronization increases parents-child time when scheduled in the morning and it reduces it otherwise
  - Desynchronization increases father-child time all the more that fathers have morning shifts
  - Desynchronization increases fathers' share of parental work (asymmetrical family time) only when fathers have morning or completely desynchronized shifts
  - Mother-child time is quite inelastic to desynchronization

Conclusion (1)

- Dual earner work schedules' degree of synchronicity is highly correlated with social class
- Social class, through synchronicity, has huge consequences on families' daily life
- Parental work is shared more equally in dual-earner families than in male breadwinner families
- But the 'new father', if he is ever to be found, is not in the well-off families but rather in the subordinate ones as a result of desynchronization: inequalities in the economic field counterbalance gender inequalities in the family

But

- Father time is mainly a recreational time (TV)
- Mother- and father-child time are gendered and not perfectly substitutable
- Lower class fathers are more egalitarian because they are forced to

Conclusion (2)

- Desynchronization is typically an *externality*:
  - *Positive* for the division of parental time (but gender issue)
  - *Negative* for symmetrical family time (conjugal and parents-child time)
- Instantaneous effect of desynchronization on parental time: what about long term effects?
  - Parents' gender *dispositions*
  - Children's gender *dispositions* (see Chodorow, 1978)

Contact:

laurent.lesnard@sciences-po.fr

Paper and Stata plugin:

http://laurent.lesnard.free.fr

Appendices

Optimal Matching
Family time
Individual work days

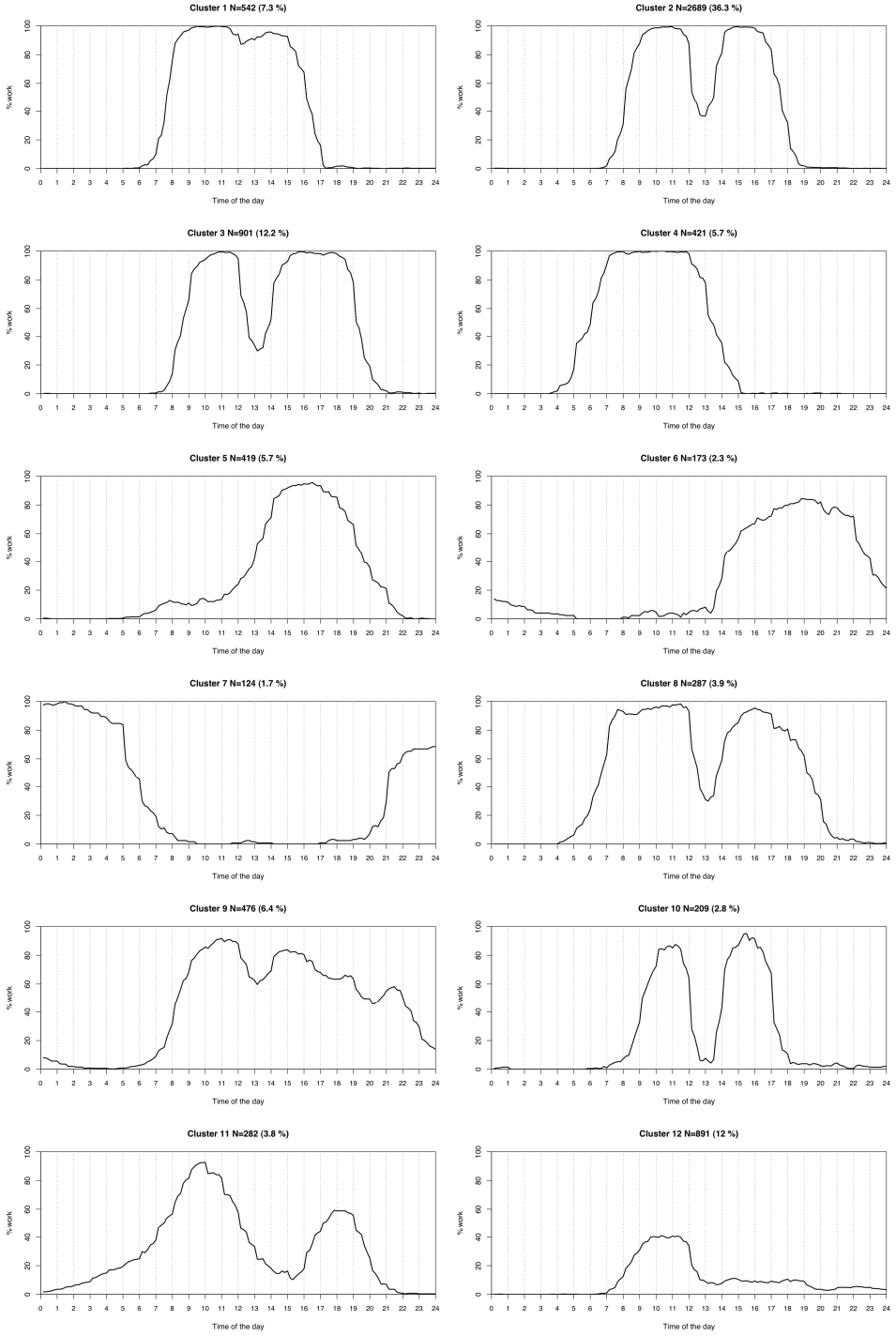
Methodological Appendix

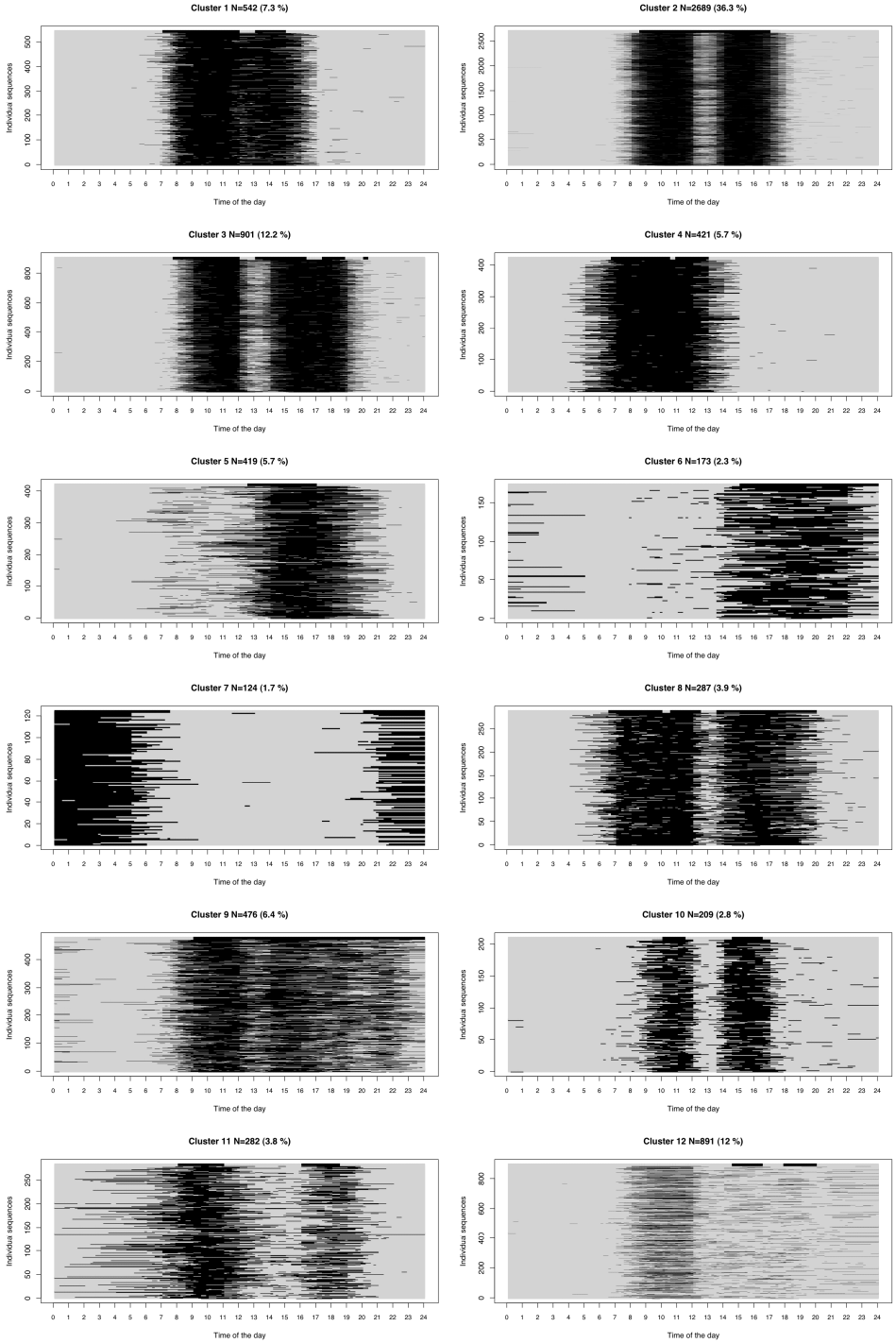
Optimal Matching

- Aim: measure sequence similarity
- In OM, sequence similarity is the minimal number of transformations required to match sequences two by two
- Origin: computer science
- OM imported into social sciences by Andrew Abbott (thru biology)

OM and social sciences

- Certain transformation operations distort sequences time scale
- Problematic when timing is crucial as it is often the case in social sciences
- Non-optimal “matching” based on transition matrices


Cluster 1 N=542 (7.3 %)
Cluster 2 N=2689 (36.3 %)
Cluster 3 N=901 (12.2 %)
Cluster 4 N=421 (5.7 %)
Cluster 5 N=419 (5.7 %)
Cluster 6 N=173 (2.3 %)
Cluster 7 N=124 (1.7 %)
Cluster 8 N=287 (3.9 %)
Cluster 9 N=476 (6.4 %)
Cluster 10 N=209 (2.8 %)
Cluster 11 N=282 (3.8 %)
Cluster 12 N=891 (12 %)
% work
Time of the day


Cluster 1 N=542 (7.3 %)
Cluster 2 N=2689 (36.3 %)
Cluster 3 N=901 (12.2 %)
Cluster 4 N=421 (5.7 %)
Cluster 5 N=419 (5.7 %)
Cluster 6 N=173 (2.3 %)
Cluster 7 N=124 (1.7 %)
Cluster 8 N=287 (3.9 %)
Cluster 9 N=476 (6.4 %)
Cluster 10 N=209 (2.8 %)
Cluster 11 N=282 (3.8 %)
Cluster 12 N=891 (12 %)
Individua sequences
Time of the day

Family time appendix

Families without children

- 1985
  - Conjugal time = 3:23
  - Three main activities:
    - Meals (55 min)
    - TV (54 min)
    - Other leisure (44 min)
- 1998
  - Conjugal time = 4:11
  - Three main activities:
    - Meals (1:09)
    - TV (1:16)
    - Other leisure (59 min)

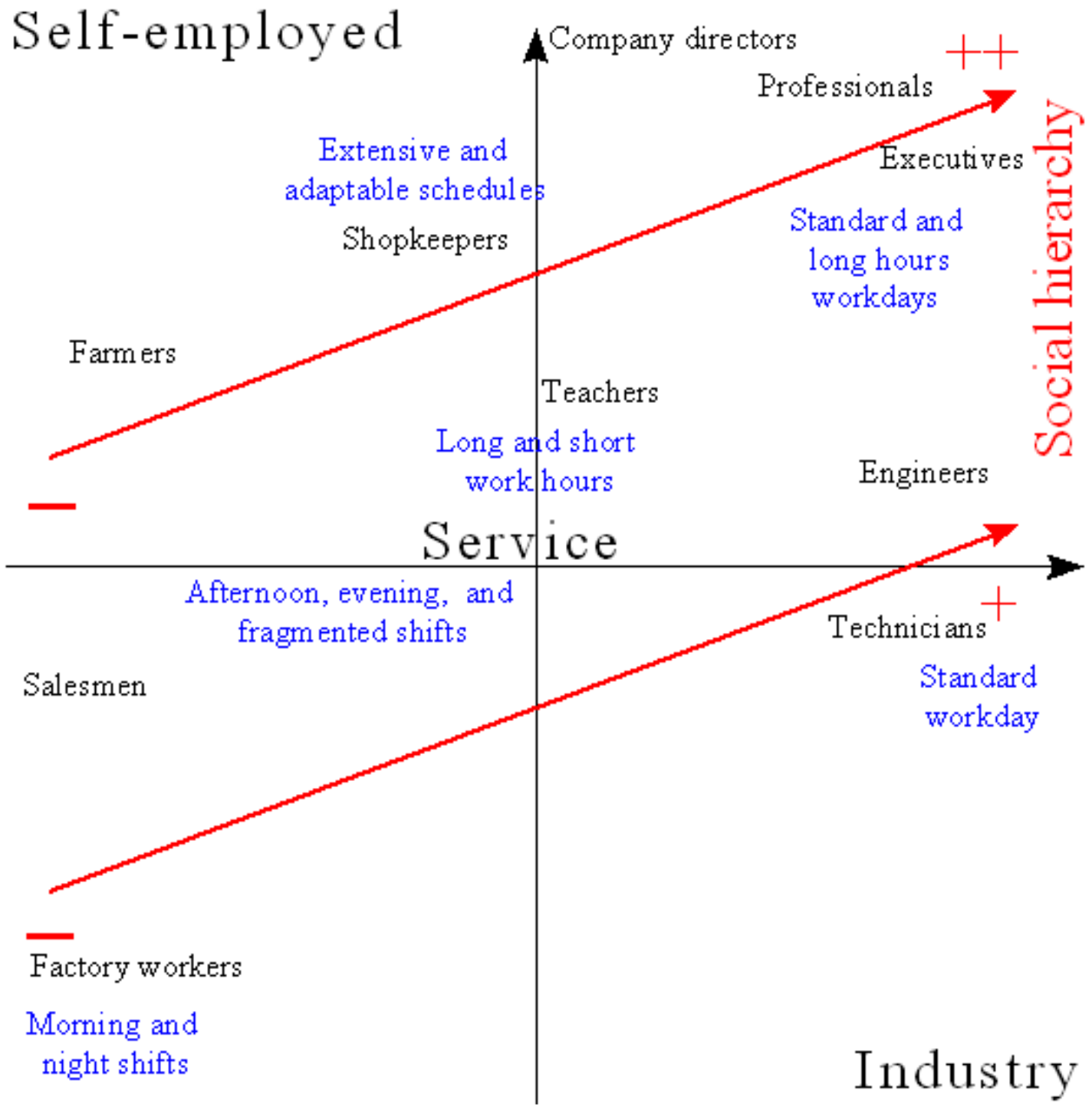
Families with children (1985)

- Conjugal time = 44 min (mainly TV)
- Parents and children = 1:06
  - Meals (27 min)
  - Leisure (15 min) and TV (12 min)
- Mothers alone with children = 1:57
  - Unpaid work (37 min)
  - Care (35 min)
- Fathers alone with children = 29 min
  - TV (6 min) and other leisure (5 min)
  - Care (6 min)

Families with children (1998)

- Conjugal time and parents and children time = 3:04
- Mothers alone with children = 3:04
  - Unpaid work (53 min)
  - Care (40 min)
- Fathers alone with children = 1:26 min
  - TV (20 min) and other leisure (14 min)
  - Care (10 min)

Individual work days


Self-employed
Company directors
++
Professionals
Extensive and
adaptable schedules
Executives
Shopkeepers
Standard and
long hours
workdays
Social hierarchy
Farmers
Teachers
Long and short
work hours
Engineers
—
Service
Afternoon, evening, and
fragmented shifts
+
Technicians
Salesmen
Standard
workday
—
Factory workers
Morning and
night shifts
Industry