

Snobs and *quétaines*: prestige and boundaries in popular music in Quebec

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Abstract

This paper is a study of prestige and boundaries in Quebec French-language popular music. Based on interviews with artists, producers and critics conducted in the early 1990s, I argue that popular music in Quebec at that time remained divided along a symbolic boundary established in the 1960s between a highly prestigious group of songwriters/rock artists, who wrote and sang their own material, and a less prestigious group of interpreters/artistes populaires, who sang light pop songs or songs written by others. As predicted by Bourdieu, I show that artists in the most prestigious category were associated with privileged social groups and gained material and symbolic advantages from their prestige. They are more likely to receive honorific awards, to be invited to perform at special cultural events, to see their work recognised as 'important', and to persist over time. In opposition to Bourdieu, however, I argue that in the context of emerging nationalism, their songs were also perceived as providing collective benefits over and beyond class and gender divisions.

This paper is a study of prestige and boundaries in Quebec popular music. Based on interviews conducted in the early 1990s, I examine how artists, producers, and critics involved in Quebec's popular music industry, and more precisely in the production of French-language vocal music, classify artists into groups and evaluate their work.¹ My main objective is to examine how prestige is granted, for what reasons, and with what consequences on artistic careers. When I started interviewing for this research, a producer I had approached was very reluctant to meet with me. He was convinced that nothing much would come out of my research. 'What you'll find', he told me, 'is already known: there are snobs and there are *quétaines*'.² Who are the snobs and who are *quétaine* – or whether such a distinction still had any relevance at all when the interviews were conducted, is the topic of this paper.

My research was originally conducted within a Bourdieusian theoretical framework. In his work on the production of symbolic goods, Bourdieu (1983) argues that artistic fields, similarly to social classes, are often structured according to the ubiquitous opposition between cultural and economic capital, which gives rise to competing principles of legitimation. Social agents whose main resource is cultural capital are likely to favour evaluative standards based on artistic merit. Those less well endowed in cultural capital will tend to rely more heavily on the criteria of commercial success as a measure of artistic achievement. In a neo-Weberian conflict theory of prestige, Bourdieu argues that dominant groups impose their own evaluative standards as legitimate and use these standards to gain exclusive access to opportunities and rewards. As this article will show, my research found support for

many of Bourdieu's theses. In the 1990s, the field of popular music remained structured by the competing principles of artistic merit and commercial success. Artists whose work was most respected tended to come from privileged groups and their high prestige did allow them to gain exclusive access to opportunities and rewards. Interviews, however, also produced disturbing findings. Most startling to me was the reverence and affection expressed by nearly all respondents, regardless of their own prestige, musical genre, or position in the music industry, for artists such as Félix Leclerc, whose success in France as a songwriter-interpreter in the 1950s contributed to the emergence both of a new style of popular music and of a strong nationalist movement in Quebec. As will become clear further on, Félix Leclerc was located within the dominant section of the field of French-language popular music in Quebec, in which legitimation was based primarily on artistic merit and secondarily on commercial success. Consequently, universal admiration for Félix Leclerc could be considered as successful imposition of symbolic violence by the dominant class, as argued by Bourdieu (1977). However, the intense and genuine feelings expressed by respondents made such an explanation appear far-fetched.

I was faced with the dilemma of either considering my respondents as alienated victims of a dominant ideology or of taking seriously their feelings of admiration. Accepting their viewpoint led me to question Bourdieu's exclusive emphasis on prestige as domination. As argued by Bourdieu, my study clearly shows that in stratified societies, dominant groups are more likely to see their evaluative schemes recognised as legitimate and to use these schemes as a means of monopolising access to opportunities and rewards. However, as documented by numerous studies of popular music in Quebec in the 1960s and 1970s (Aubé 1990; Jones 2000), the songs of unanimously respected popular music artists played a major role in articulating a new sense of national identity. In opposition to Bourdieu, my results suggest that while singers whose audience included dominant cultural classes had a greater chance of seeing their work consecrated as culturally and socially 'important', their songs were also perceived as providing collective benefits, namely a sense of purpose and identity, which transcended class divisions.

After presenting a short historical overview of the emergence, in the 1960s, of a strong boundary in Quebec's popular music between songwriters, who write and sing their own material, and interpreters, who sing songs written by others, I use multi-dimensional scaling to map out the contemporary structure of the field of French vocal popular music in Quebec. I then analyse how prestige is granted to artists, focusing, firstly, on respondents' comments during the interviews and, secondly, on factors related to artists' careers, their socio-demographic characteristics, and their location in the field. Finally, I examine whether artists differently located in the field of popular music benefit from their high prestige by analysing the opportunities and rewards which are available to them. Overall, I show that whereas in the 1990s the symbolic and organisational boundary between songwriters and interpreters had weakened considerably, it nevertheless continued to shape the career of artists, namely how their work is evaluated, promoted and rewarded.

Chansonniers and artistes populaires: mapping out boundaries in Quebec popular music

Up until the beginning of the twentieth century, popular music in Quebec consisted almost entirely of traditional folk music. From the 1920s to the early 1950s, the advent

of massive industrialisation and migration from rural to urban areas, combined with the growing popularity of the radio and the phonograph, contributed to the emergence of a new brand of commercial popular culture imported from abroad. During this period, French light songs, known as *chansonnettes*, and translations of American songs dominated the airwaves as well as record production. A handful of transnational companies controlled 95% of record production and singers who were recorded overwhelmingly performed versions of American or French hits of the day. As noted by a popular singer of the 1950s, 'At the time, no singer would have thought to sing a new song. We sang songs which were already known' (quoted in Roy 1977, p. 3). In the 1950s, things slowly began to change. Radio stations started broadcasting songs by local artists and awarding special prizes for original songs, while the arrival of television opened up new possibilities for local talent. The most famous artist of the new generation, Félix Leclerc, experienced a phenomenal success in France. His success abroad gave new legitimacy to local artists and paved the way for the development of a new genre of popular music artists, who became known as the *chansonniers*.

As opposed to most of their predecessors, the *chansonniers* wrote their own music and lyrics, with an emphasis on the message conveyed by their songs. In the 1990s, this indigenous style of popular music came to be seen as emblematic of the struggle of French Québécoises to articulate a new identity, to improve their social and economic situation, and to regain control over the economy (Grenier 1997). Popular songs celebrating the country, its traditions, landscape and daily life were seen as the 'natural path towards Quebec's collective identity' (quoted in Roy 1983, pp. 163–4). The more commercial genre of popular music, often simply called *musique populaire*, did not disappear as a result.³ During the 1960s, many *artistes populaires* continued the practice of borrowing and translating songs which were already known. A younger generation of *populaire* singers and bands, inspired by the growing influence of Anglo-Saxon pop songs and known as the *Yé-Yé* movement, became extremely popular and provided music for young people in dance halls throughout the province.

In the 1960s, the relation between *chansonniers* and *artistes populaires* evolved into what was described as a 'cold war' between opposing clans (L'Herbier 1974). The *chansonniers* drew their inspiration from France's literary tradition, but they wrote original songs rooted in what was perceived as Quebec's traditional history and identity. They appealed to students in the traditional humanities colleges; they released long-play records of their own compositions; and they toured the province's growing number of small concert halls known as *boîtes à chansons*, stepping out on a bare stage with their guitars while avoiding commercial hoopla. Many *artistes populaires*, by contrast, continued to translate foreign pop songs; they released mostly single records, performed in the more traditional cabarets, were widely heard on commercial radio, and they fully participated in the emerging star system. They accused the *chansonniers* of being intellectual snobs bawling endlessly over their guitars, whereas the *artistes populaires* were accused of offering poor translations of low-grade commercial entertainment (L'Herbier 1974). In the context of emerging nationalism, translation of foreign pop songs was perceived, at least by art critics and other cultural authorities, as a manifestation of the subservience of local artists to outside cultural models.

The opposition between the two groups considerably diminished in the 1970s under the joint influence of rising levels of education, increasing cross-over between

genres, and professionalisation of the music industry (Grenier 1993). In 1988, in a complete reversal of the 1950s situation, companies owned by Canadians released 90% of albums in French in Canada, while transnational subsidiaries released the remaining 10% (ADISQ 1989). With the rise of a powerful group of French-speaking cultural entrepreneurs, artists, and producers realised that they could not afford to alienate large portions of their audience if they were to make a living in a small market (L'Herbier 1974). As nationalism gathered momentum, the *Yé-Yé* practice of translating foreign songs gradually disappeared, while a younger and better educated generation caught on to the idea of an indigenous popular music which combined Anglo-Saxon rock rhythms with meaningful lyrics (Aubé 1990).

In order to determine whether the boundary between *chansonniers* and *artistes populaires* remained influential in Quebec's popular music industry, I conducted interviews with fifty-three respondents between March and September 1992. I asked respondents to sort into piles cards bearing the names of ninety-four Canadian popular music artists who had recorded at least two albums (including re-issues) of French vocal music between 1985 and 1991.⁴ I instructed them to sort artists into piles in any way which felt most natural to them. I also asked them to rate artists on a prestige scale from 1 to 10 according to the respect they *personally* felt for their work. The question specified that their ratings could differ from their personal preferences, since they could consider that some artists deserved admiration without personally appreciating their musical style. In open-ended interviews, I then asked respondents to explain how they had sorted artists into piles and which criteria they had in mind when rating artists on the prestige scale. Data were also collected from secondary sources on various aspects of the careers of artists, including gender, age, levels of education, career lengths, record companies, record sales, means of promotion, honorific awards, and participation in cultural events.

Respondents included twenty-one artists, twenty-six music producers, and six art critics. Artists who were interviewed were selected from the list of ninety-four Canadian artists to be sorted. Letters were sent and phone calls were made to all artists for whom an address was found in the most recent edition of *Le Bottin de l'industrie de la musique au Québec* (Radio-Activité 1991) or through personal contacts. A few artists could not be reached, either because they were deceased, permanently living outside of the country, or because they were not currently active in the music industry. After repeated phone calls to agents and managers, twenty-one artists agreed to be interviewed between the months of March and September 1992. Producers were selected from the *Bottin de l'industrie de la musique au Québec* (Radio-Activité 1991), in three sections listing record producers, concert promoters, and record distributors. In order to eliminate the smallest companies, only those working with one of the ninety-four artists to be sorted and rated were included. Repeated phone calls were made and letters were sent to all producers on the list, resulting in twenty-six interviews with presidents and executive directors of companies involved in record production, concert promotion, and record distribution. The six critics worked for the three major newspapers of the province and one weekly magazine.⁵

Data from the free-sorting task were analysed by multidimensional scaling (MDS) and property fitting (PROFIT) using the Minissa procedure (Coxon 1982; Ollivier 1997). Results are presented in Figure 1. Visual examination of the configuration readily shows to anyone familiar with French vocal popular music in Quebec that songwriters, who write and sing their own songs, tend to cluster on the left hand side of the configuration, while interpreters, who sing material written by

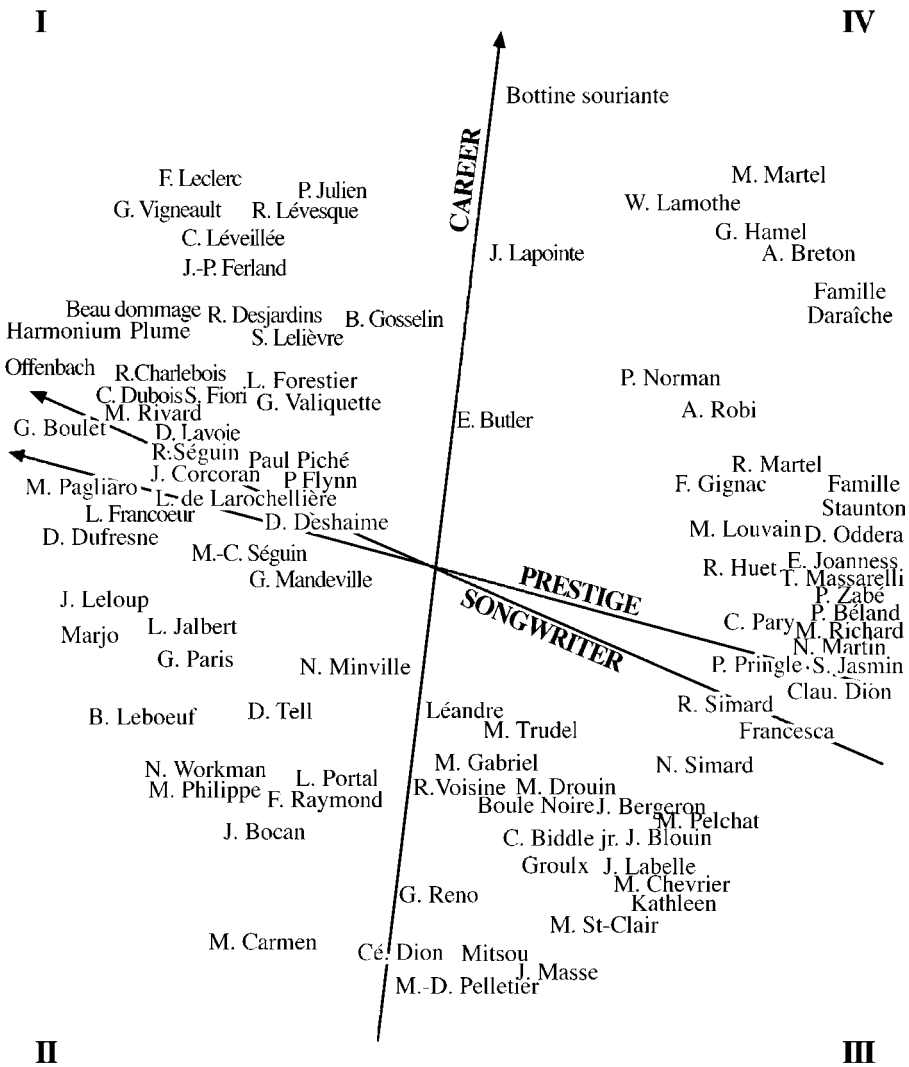


Figure 1. PROFIT analysis results.

others, tend to be on the right hand side; older artists tend to be located at the top of the configuration while younger ones are at the bottom. This interpretation is confirmed by PROFIT analysis, whose most salient axes are displayed in Figure 1.⁶ The vertical axis represents career length. The first horizontal axis corresponds to whether artists are songwriters or interpreters and the second one represents the average prestige ratings obtained from respondents for each artist.

Partitioning the configuration along the vertical and horizontal axes yields four quadrants labelled I to IV counterclockwise.⁷ Artists are fairly well distributed among the four quadrants: there are 25, 20, 23 and 24 artists in quadrants I to IV, respectively. Among artists in quadrants I and II, 96% and 90% are songwriters, respectively; the proportion is only 34.8% in quadrant III and 29.2% in quadrant IV. Mean career length is 20–24 years in the top quadrants I and IV and 10–14 years in the bottom quadrants

II and III. Women are greatly under-represented in quadrant I, where they account for only 8% of the artists, compared to 60% in quadrant II, 56.5% in quadrant III and 37.5% in quadrant IV.

The configuration may also be interpreted in terms of musical genres. Data on the main categories of music awards given by the *Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo* (ADISQ) from 1979 to 1991 show that artists on the left-hand side of the configuration are more likely to be associated with rock and pop-rock music, while those on the right hand side are more likely to be associated with *populaire* and country music. All artists (100%) who received awards for best rock albums and most of those (75%) who won awards for best pop-rock albums are in quadrants I and II. All artists (100%) who received awards for best country & western albums are in quadrant IV and most artists (57%) who won awards in the *populaire* category are in quadrant III.⁸

Furthermore, the distinction between songwriters and interpreters in the two halves of the configuration is not neutral with regard to prestige. Prestige decreases steadily as one moves counter-clockwise in the configuration, from 7.14 and 6.66 for songwriters in quadrants I and II to 4.52 and 3.54 for interpreters in quadrants III and IV. The existence of a prestige hierarchy in the configuration was readily acknowledged by respondents. When asked whether there was a complete or partial prestige hierarchy in their sorting, almost all (90%) agreed that this was the case. Among the most prestigious pile names, the three most frequently mentioned were songwriters (58%), popular music classics (34%), and rock artists (27%), terms which most often referred to artists in quadrants I and II.

The classification of artists into quadrants corresponds to what Mary Douglas (1982) refers to as a polythetic method of classification, whereby units are grouped into classes in a way which does not require 'any one of the defining features to be present in all members of a class'. While I emphasise a number of primary characteristics possessed by most artists in each quadrant, it is clear that classifying artists into groups involved, for each respondent, a complex weighing of primary and secondary characteristics. For example, a number of artists in quadrants I and II are not songwriters according to the criteria used in this study. These artists may have been placed there by respondents for a number of reasons: they may write the lyrics or music of some of their songs, sing the songs of famous songwriters, be associated with rock music rather than with the less prestigious *populaire* or pop genres, work with the same record companies, or reach the same public as songwriters. Similarly, most country artists (63%) in quadrant IV write the music or the lyrics of their songs, but they were not sorted with songwriters in quadrant I. As will be shown below, they share with *artistes populaires* a number of secondary characteristics such as lower educational attainment, performing in a less valued genre, and reaching an older, less educated audience.

Overall, these results indicate that the most salient criteria used to classify artists into groups are whether they are songwriters or interpreters, their career length, and musical genres. This interpretation is consistent with pile names used by respondents during the interviews. The most frequently mentioned pile names were musical genres (mentioned by 75% of respondents), criteria related to age or generation (mentioned by 71%), and songwriters (mentioned by 69%). The MDS configuration, I argue, presents a reasonable approximation of the mental picture drawn by respondents in the early 1990s, in the artificial situation of the interview and on the basis of the semantic domain delimited by the ninety-four names of artists presented to them.⁹

The general pattern is immediately interpretable and it remained remarkably stable across various scaling and clustering techniques (Ollivier 1997).

While popular music artists are no longer divided into antagonistic factions, the distinction between songwriters, rock, and pop-rock artists on the left hand side of the configuration and interpreters, *artistes populaires*, and country artists on the right hand side continues to delineate a symbolic boundary in Quebec's popular music industry. This boundary, however, is much weaker in the lower half of the configuration. Different methods of clustering not presented here produced identical results in the upper half of the configuration but slightly different ones among younger artists in the lower half. In addition, examination of the record companies working with artists in different quadrants shows that *not a single* record company works with artists in quadrant I and IV simultaneously, while several companies work with artists in quadrants II and III (Ollivier 1997). This weaker boundary among younger artists in the lower half of the configuration compared to older artists in the upper half is not surprising, given that the conflict between *chansonniers* and *artistes populaires* peaked in the 1960s and declined afterwards. What is also clear, however, is that the distinction between the two groups has not entirely disappeared, as evidenced by differences in professional roles, musical styles, and prestige which continue to structure the field.

Why do songwriters, rock, and pop-rock artists in quadrants I and II have more prestige than interpreters, *artistes populaires* and country artists in quadrants III and IV? The following section examines several possible answers to this question. I first discuss respondents' comments to see which criteria they consciously put forward to justify the respect and admiration they feel for the work of artists. I then examine various factors which, although not necessarily mentioned by respondents, have been shown to influence prestige in the arts (Bourdieu 1983; Greenfeld 1989). These factors include commercial success, location in the field, means of promotion, and location with regard to class and gender inequality.

Who has more prestige and why?

Authenticity, influence, and persistence over time

When I asked respondents to explain why some artists had more prestige than others, their answers most often fell into three main categories. The first theme refers to the influence of artists on culture and society. Artists were perceived as influential for many reasons, including their contribution to the development of popular music, their influence on collective identity, the intrinsic quality of their songs, the magnitude of their success, or their personal charisma. Several respondents contrasted songs which are 'meaningful', that is, innovative, aesthetically worthy, or socially engaged, to those which they defined as easy or insipid. They described artists with low prestige as 'useless', arguing that they 'could have never existed and it would not have changed anything about anything'. The second theme concerns the persistence of artists over time. It is contrasted with quick success, temporary fads, throw-away commodities, and cultural fast-food. Over and over, artists, critics, and producers expressed contempt for quick and temporary success. This theme is closely related to the perceived influence of artists, since persistence over time is often associated with quality, talent, hard work, and, as we will see below, with artistic integrity.

The third theme refers to whether artists are perceived as authentic or not. Respondents described authentic artists as those who show courage, emotion,

integrity, and honesty in pursuing their careers. Authentic artists are seen as talented, creative, and not overly concerned with short-term success, obtained by any means and at any cost. They are perceived as driven by artistic motives rather than by commercial ones. Terms such as courage, audacity, creativity, integrity, emotion, artistic intention, and content were opposed to the desire to please at any cost, following fads, conformity, money-making machine, commercial orientation, false emotions, as well as to a concern with image and packaging. Variations on this theme were expressed by all respondents, but overwhelmingly by artists, most of whom considered themselves authentic. Many recounted 'war stories' about the difficulties of remaining true to oneself when confronted with commercial success and pressures from producers (Faulkner 1987).

When prompted on how they know who is true and honest, respondents offered several types of answers. One is: 'you just *know*'. Another is that authenticity may not be only a question of personal honesty and integrity on the part of artists, but also a function of musical genres, organisational support, and marketing strategies. For many respondents, the very act of writing music and lyrics is inherently more creative, and therefore more authentic, than singing songs written by others. This notion of authenticity is undoubtedly rooted in the historical context of the emergence of a national style of popular music in Quebec, when writing original songs in French was perceived as a radical break with the colonial practice of adopting foreign cultural models. For a few other respondents, it was not the act of writing songs which guaranteed authenticity, but the perceived quality of the songs. For them, the contrast between interpreters/*artistes populaires* and songwriters was an opposition between light entertainment on the one hand and songs conveying more profound aesthetic, social, or political content on the other. However, contrary to the 1960s, these respondents did not contrast songs expressing local as opposed to foreign preoccupations. By the 1990s, interpreters and *artistes populaires* had long ceased the practice of translating foreign hits and they most often sang songs written by Quebec songwriters.

It is interesting to note that commercial success *per se* was rarely mentioned by respondents as a factor in their ratings. Only three respondents out of fifty-two, all of them producers working with artists in quadrants III and IV, directly linked prestige to commercial success and the star system. They associated prestige with artists who were 'real stars', who were recognised on the street, who were talked about. Most respondents, however, defined real prestige in opposition to quick success, glamour and glitz. When they mentioned success, it was usually in relation to artists' influence on culture and society. Several artists stressed that commercial success should not be an end in itself, but only a means to an end. In order to have any cultural or social impact, popular music artists by definition need to be at least moderately successful, but the quest for success should be secondary to the pursuit of artistic goals. Similarly, one producer commented that it is difficult to have any respect for artists who appear to be 'puppets in the hands of others'.

These comments suggest that like in other art forms, the distinction between artistic and commercial orientations constitutes a major criterion for classifying and evaluating artists in Quebec's popular music industry (Bourdieu 1983). Artists whose work is most admired are those who are perceived as having made a genuine and disinterested contribution to culture, society, or individual well-being. The language used by respondents in this respect is reminiscent of the terms developed by sociologists to describe gift-giving or social exchange (Blau 1967; Caillé 2000). Just as genuine gifts are offered without expectation of immediate return, authentic artists are those

whose work is perceived as being in large part disinterested. Just as genuine gifts create networks of obligations which bind people together, the songs and performances of prestigious artists are seen as making important and long-lasting contributions to personal and collective identities. In the next section, I show how some producers actively cultivate an image of disinterestedness about their artists by adopting specific promotional strategies, namely by avoiding exposure in media perceived as too commercial.

Means of promotion: fabricating authenticity

During the interviews, several respondents insisted that organisational resources and means of promotion have a strong impact on how artists are perceived within the music industry. For example, one producer argued that 75% of the prestige of artists comes from the organisations which support them, while only 25% reflects their own abilities. Others suggested that whether artists are considered authentic or not is in part based on the image created by managers and producers through specific marketing strategies. A producer working with young interpreters in quadrant III strongly reacted to the idea, expressed by many respondents, that artists in quadrants I and II were concerned with 'content' while those in quadrant III emphasised their 'image'. He forcefully argued that the most prestigious songwriters, while ostensibly more concerned with artistic content than with commercial packaging, were supported by the 'biggest image-making machine in the industry'. Similarly, the manager of prominent songwriters in quadrants I and II, in an apparent effort to shock or confuse me, spent part of the interview explaining how cynical so and so could be in planning every step of their careers so as to maximise exposure and commercial success.

In order to explore the promotional strategies of artists in different quadrants, I examined the cover pages of three cultural magazines and counted the number of times the names or photographs of the ninety-four artists were featured in each of them. Data were collected from 1 January 1991, to 31 March 1992. The three magazines are *Voir*, a cultural weekly covering artistic activity in Montreal; *7jours*, aimed at a wide public and the highest circulation weekly in Quebec at the time; and *Échos-Vedettes*, a sensationalist tabloid which reports on the lives of pop stars. These magazines were selected because each reaches a wide audience and each represents a different perspective on the life and career of artists. *Voir* is trendy and culturally oriented, *Échos-Vedettes* contains mostly gossip articles about popular music and television artists, and *7jours* is a widely distributed entertainment magazine.

Voir reports primarily on artists in quadrants I and II: 52% of artists in quadrant I and 35% of artists in quadrant II were mentioned at least once on the cover page of *Voir* from January 1991 to March 1992, as opposed to only 13% of artists in quadrant III and 4.2% of artists in quadrant IV. *Échos-Vedettes*, by contrast, reports primarily on artists in quadrants III and IV: 73.9% of artists in quadrant III and 54.1% of artists in quadrant IV were mentioned at least once on its cover page, compared to 20% in quadrant I and 25% in quadrant II. *7jours* is less polarised, although it more often features artists in quadrant III: 47.8% of artists in quadrant III were mentioned at least once on its cover page, compared to 30% in quadrant II, 20% in quadrant I, and 16.7% in quadrant IV.

While there was no systematic investigation of the motives of producers during the interviews, at least two producers, who worked exclusively with songwriters in quadrants I and II, commented that they deliberately avoided over-exposing their

Table 1. OLS regression of individual attributes of artists on prestige scores.

	Total Sample (N=94)		Career <20 years (N=46)	
	Variable	b	β	β
Songwriters	1.70259***	0.45584	1.7414***	0.5042
Record sales	0.04098***	0.30885	0.0496***	0.4380
Career length	0.25459***	0.29166	-0.0682	
Radio success	0.01347*	0.19102	0.0149*	0.2389
Sex	0.03948		0.0617	
Constant	2.4824***	0.40138		2.9215***
R Square	0.48238		0.5693	
Adjusted	0.45912		0.5385	
S.E.	1.33507		1.1760	

*** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.05$

artists on television talk shows to protect their image. Combined with the data presented here, these comments suggest that the process through which artists come to be perceived as authentic is not linked *only* to their personal charisma, but also to the means of promotion through which they advance their careers. This is a rejoinder to Peterson's thesis that authenticity is not a property of the object defined as authentic. Rather, it is socially constructed by artists and producers through continuous 'authenticity work' (Peterson 1997).

Commercial success and location in the field

While commercial success was rarely mentioned by respondents, this factor cannot be ruled out as a possible explanation for why artists in quadrants I and II have higher prestige than those in quadrants III and IV. In order to examine this issue, I used multiple regression with mean prestige as the dependent variable and variables measuring individual attributes of artists as independent. Selected variables include whether artists are songwriters or interpreters, their career length, radio success, record sales, and gender. The results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that the most important factor affecting the distribution of prestige is whether artists are songwriters or interpreters. Compared to interpreters, songwriters generally score 1.70 point higher on the prestige scale, even when success and career length are controlled for. Career length and commercial success also have a positive effect on prestige scores, but less so. However, commercial success as measured by record sales may not be an adequate indicator of overall success, because the variable used here only takes into account record sales since 1976, when the Canadian Record Industry Association started awarding certifications for record sales in Canada. The career of some of the older artists peaked long before that time. As a result, the regression equation may underestimate the relationship between success and prestige among older artists. In order to account for this possibility, another regression was computed including only artists whose career spans less than twenty years. Table 1 shows that even among younger artists, the most important factor influencing the distribution of prestige is whether artists are songwriters or interpreters. Songwriters score 1.74 points higher on the prestige scale compared to interpreters. Success and career length also have an effect, but much less so.

Table 2. OLS regression of individual attributes and measures of social location on prestige scores.

Variable	b	β
Songwriter vs interpreter	0.0958	
Record sales	0.0434***	0.3274
Career length	0.2469***	0.2829
Q1	3.0977***	0.7763
Q2	2.6753***	0.5830
Q3	1.1553***	0.2665
R Square	0.7297	
S.E.	0.9699	

*** $p < 0.001$

In order to test the effect of group membership, as opposed to individual attributes, on prestige scores, another equation was computed with variables measuring the location of artists in the configuration. The results are displayed in Table 2. Q1, Q2 and Q3 are dummy variables measuring membership in quadrants I, II, and III of the configuration, with quadrant IV as the omitted category. Results indicate that group membership has by far the strongest effect on prestige. When career length and success are controlled for, mean prestige increases by 3.09 points for artists in quadrant I and 2.67 points for artists in quadrant II. The increase is comparatively lower for artists in quadrant III with 1.15 points. R square increases from 48% to close to 73% of variance explained. Being a songwriter as opposed to an interpreter becomes insignificant while the effects of commercial success and career length remain unchanged.

Whereas these analyses are based on a very imperfect measure of success and need to be taken with caution, they indicate, first, that commercial success is not the main criterion explaining how prestige is granted in Quebec's popular music industry and, second, that prestige is above all related to where artists are located in the field of popular music. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the three artists in quadrant III, who have markedly higher prestige than most artists in this quadrant (with a mean prestige score of 7.29 compared to an overall mean of 4.10), are those who have achieved unprecedented levels of success in Quebec and worldwide: Céline Dion is the first Quebec artist to succeed on a large scale in the US, Roch Voisine has been widely successful in Europe, and Ginette Reno is one among very few Quebec artists to have earned a triple platinum record in Canada. It is also interesting to note that the three respondents who defined prestige in relation to success and glamour are producers working with *artistes populaires* in quadrant III.

These results further support the idea that like other art fields, popular music in Quebec is structured around two competing principles of evaluation – commercial success and artistic merit. For artists in quadrant III, prestige is more likely to be associated with commercial success compared to artists in quadrants I and II, who have access to other, non-economic means of legitimating their work. Because they were once seen as expressing 'the soul of the people' (Roy 1977), the songs of artists in quadrant I and, to a lesser extent, of those in quadrant II were defined as collective goods with a value over and above commercial success. These artists thus gained

some measure of autonomy from profit-making (Lamont 1986), in a way which was not available to interpreters, *artistes populaires*, and country artists in quadrants III and IV, and probably not to most popular music artists in other markets. To the extent that the respondents interviewed in this research represent an adequate sample of the music industry, their prestige scores and comments indicate that artistic merit, as opposed to commercial success, was at the time of the interviews the dominant principle of hierarchisation in the field.¹⁰

Consensus and dissensus on prestige scores

While the main purpose of this research was not to study variation among respondents, the standard deviations of mean prestige provide a rough indication of the degree of consensus among respondents regarding the prestige of artists. Standard deviations range from 1.29 for songwriter Félix Leclerc in quadrant I, who scores highest on the prestige scale (9.21), to 2.72 for René Simard, an interpreter in quadrant III who was highly successful as a child performer but whose career dwindled afterwards. Not surprisingly, there is more consensus about artists at both extremes of the scale than about those in the middle. Artists whose prestige scores exhibit low standard deviations (below 1.5), and therefore the highest degree of consensus, are either highly respected and mostly male songwriters in quadrant I or low-prestige interpreters in quadrant IV.¹¹ Most interesting, however, is the list of artists whose prestige scores exhibit high standard deviations (above 2.5) and for whom disagreement is highest. All of them are artists in quadrants III and IV and most of them were highly successful at some point in their career. They include *artistes populaires* Alys Robi, Danielle Oddera, Fernand Gignac, Michel Louvain, and René Simard, as well as country artists Marcel Martel, Renée Martel, and Willy Lamothe. Because they are interpreters and/or associated with the less valued *populaire* and country genres, their contribution to Quebec popular music and culture has always been hotly contested, especially by entertainment tabloids featuring mostly artists in quadrants III and IV (ADISQ 1988). Over the past ten years, however, their work has been more widely recognised by cultural institutions as truly *Québécois* (Grenier 1997).¹²

Class and gender hierarchies

Do artistic hierarchies, as argued by Bourdieu in *Distinction* (1984), closely mirror social ones? Do artists whose work is most respected come from, and appeal to, privileged social groups? While factors related to class or education were *never* mentioned by respondents as explicit criteria for classifying and rating artists, data on the educational attainment of artists show that older songwriters in quadrant I are on average much more educated than *artistes populaires* in quadrant IV: 45% of artists in quadrant I attended university (with or without obtaining a degree) compared to *none* in quadrant IV. Differences are much smaller among younger artists, since 33.3% in of those quadrant II and 27.8% in quadrant III attended university.¹³ Although limited, these data support Bourdieu's argument that cultural hierarchies mirror social ones. Artists who belong to groups privileged in terms of education are also those whose professional role is most highly valued (songwriters as opposed to interpreters), whose work is more likely to be perceived as authentic, whose songs are considered as significant contributions to popular music and national identity, and who depend less exclusively on commercial success to persist over time. Again, differences are much

Table 3. Mean prestige of songwriters and interpreters by sex and career length.

	Career length							
	Less than 20 years				20 years and more			
	Women		Men		Women		Men	
	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N
Interpreters	4.09	13	3.19	7	5.08	9	3.81	6
Songwriters	5.50	10	5.50	16	5.47	5	6.59	28
Total	4.70	23	4.79	23	5.22	14	6.10	34

more striking among older artists than among younger ones, although younger songwriters in quadrant II continue to derive prestige from their association with the older generation of songwriters.

Whereas gender is often under-emphasised in studies of the arts, it is a major determinant of social location and should be expected to have an effect on how artists are classified and evaluated. At first glance, it appears to play only a minor role in these processes. Only a small percentage of respondents (19%) mentioned gender as a criterion in classifying artists into piles, gender has no significant effect on prestige scores, and it was *never* mentioned by respondents as a criterion for rating artists on the prestige scale. More careful analysis, however, shows that gender has a subtle effect on boundaries and prestige in a way that was not explicitly acknowledged by respondents.

Like other occupational sectors, popular music in Quebec is characterised by a fairly high degree of segregation of women and men into different roles. Women are over-represented among interpreters, who on average enjoy lower prestige, and under-represented among the most prestigious group of songwriters. In the sample of ninety-four artists, a majority of women (60%) are interpreters while most men (77%) are songwriters. More importantly, there is evidence that women and men in sex-atypical roles suffer a prestige penalty. Women interpreters have higher prestige than their male counterparts, while women songwriters have lower prestige than men in the same role (see Table 3). Differences are weaker among younger artists but they do not entirely disappear.¹⁴ These results indicate that Quebec popular music, like many other cultural domains, remains structured around highly gendered classification schemes; these schemes are built on a series of binary oppositions in which women are overwhelmingly associated with the devalued term (Bourdieu 1998).

To summarise, songwriters generally have more prestige than interpreters, but prestige is above all a function of where artists are located in the field. Popular music continues to be structured, albeit in a much weaker way, around the competing principles of artistic merit and commercial success, which in turn are shaped by class and gender inequality. Artists in quadrant I are those who have made it to the top of the artistic hierarchy. They are perceived as authentic, that is, as not primarily concerned with commercial success and as having made a major contribution to Quebec culture and society. They are mostly songwriters, male, educated, and associated with the more valued rock and pop-rock genres. Artists in quadrant II, by contrast, have not really made it to the top, either because they are young, female (8% of artists in quadrant I are women compared to 60% in quadrant II), or not very

successful. This interpretation was suggested by several respondents during interviews, who commented that some artists in quadrant II could eventually 'make it' to quadrant I. Artists in quadrant II thus benefited from the high prestige traditionally granted to songwriters in quadrant I, and there is indication that producers actively sought to maintain this image by adopting specific strategies of promotion.

Artists in quadrants III and IV are mostly interpreters performing in the less valued *populaire* and country genres. They are perceived as more concerned with quick success than with art *per se*, and they are less likely to see their work recognised as a contribution to Quebec culture and society. Among artists in these quadrants, only those having achieved exceptional levels of commercial success attain levels of prestige comparable to those of songwriters in quadrants I and II. The older generation of *artistes populaires*, in quadrant IV, have the least prestige, their work being perceived by many as insignificant. Some respondents commented that artists in quadrant III could eventually 'fall down' to quadrant IV. In the following section, I examine whether, as argued by Weber (1978, p. 935), prestige indeed 'goes hand in hand with the monopolisation of ideal and material goods and opportunities', that is, whether popular music artists derive concrete advantages from their classification in high prestige groups.

Prestige and social closure: monopolising opportunities and rewards

Artistic careers offer two main types of rewards. One is commercial success and the other is recognition of excellence by specific groups or institutions (Bourdieu 1983). Recognition of excellence consists primarily in honorific awards, but also in being invited to participate in special events. Awards are important because of the prestige which is attached to them, but also because of their effect on the careers of artists. Honorific awards often result in increased record sales as well as in greater opportunities, most importantly participation in special cultural events and access to foreign markets (ADISQ 1988).

A list of the most important honorific awards given to popular music artists in Quebec was drawn and data were collected from various sources. Awards are grouped into four categories. The first includes awards given by private or government agencies with the purpose of rewarding artists for life-time achievements and for their overall contribution to culture and society. They include the *Médaille Jacques-Blanchet* awarded by a private foundation, the *Prix Calixa-Lavallée* awarded by a private association dedicated to the defense of French culture in Quebec, and the *Prix Denise-Pelletier* awarded by the Quebec government to artists in different fields. The second category includes awards given by special groups to reward excellence but not lifetime achievements. These include the awards given during Quebec City's Summer Festival and the *Prix Ciel-Raymond-Lévesque*, awarded to songwriters by a Montreal radio station for 'outstanding contribution to Quebec's culture'.

The third and fourth categories include the *Félix* awarded by the ADISQ from 1979 to 1991. These are the most important awards given within the Quebec market by members of the music industry. The *Félix* are divided into two distinct categories: those awarded following a vote of professional members of the association and those awarded by the general public, including top-selling album and top-selling single. Two distinct categories were created because the awards attributed by popular vote generally reflect popularity or commercial success, while this is not always the case for the awards attributed by members of the ADISQ.¹⁵

Overall, artists in quadrants I and II have received more honorific awards compared to those in quadrants III and IV. Artists in quadrant I have received more honorific awards for their life achievements than artists in any other quadrant: 44% of artists in quadrant I have received at least one honorific award for their life work; only one artist in quadrant IV has received such an award and artists in quadrants II and III have received none. Artists in quadrants I and II have also received more honorific awards from specialised groups: 20% of artists in quadrant I and 20% of artists in quadrant II received at least one award during Quebec City's Summer Festival, compared to none in quadrants III and IV. The *Prix Ciel-Raymond-Lévesque* was also awarded exclusively to artists in quadrants I and II.

There are no significant differences between the four quadrants concerning the *Félix* awarded by the members of the ADISQ, although it should be noted that among artists in quadrant IV, none of the older *artistes populaires* ever received one of these awards while most country artists received at least one for best country album. With regard to the *Félix* awarded by popular vote, artists in quadrant III have received a disproportionate amount: 43.5% received at least one award compared to 20% in quadrant I, 25% in quadrant II and 8.4% in quadrant IV, with a mean of 0.32, 0.35, 1.26 and 0.17 awards in quadrants I to IV, respectively. The fact that artists in quadrant III have received more awards from the general public than artists in other quadrants is not surprising, given that these awards were specifically created as a way to reward successful *artistes populaires* who might otherwise have been ignored.

A concrete advantage associated with honorific awards is that they open up opportunities for artists who receive them. Among these opportunities are invitations to participate in special cultural events. These events provide highly visible opportunities for artists, who may not be very successful commercially, to perform for large audiences. These special cultural events feature free concerts, most of which are subsidised with public funds. Three major festivals and special events were held every year in Quebec when this study was conducted. The first is the St-Jean-Baptiste celebrations held throughout the province on 24 June to mark Quebec's national holiday. Starting in the 1970s, most St-Jean celebrations in Montreal included a free outdoor concert featuring popular music artists. The second special event is Quebec City's international summer festival. Held each year since 1967, the summer festival presents numerous free outdoor performances by artists from Quebec and around the world. The third event, known as *FrancoFolies* and held in Montreal each Fall since 1989, features artists from French-speaking countries around the world. The *FrancoFolies* are the Montreal equivalent of a similar event held each year in France. This is an important point, since artists who perform in Montreal may also be invited to the French festival, opening a door to the larger French market. Access to larger foreign markets is consequential for French-speaking artists whose careers are limited by the small size of the Quebec market.

Data on these festivals indicate that artists in quadrants I and II performed more often in all festivals than artists in quadrants III and IV. With regard to the St-Jean celebrations, 80% of artists in quadrant I and 75% of artists in quadrant II performed at least once during the celebrations held in Montreal from 1970 to 1991, compared to only 26% in quadrant III and 29.2% in quadrant IV. As for Quebec City's Summer Festival, 60% of artists in quadrant I and 60% of artists in quadrant II participated at least once from 1985 to 1991, compared to only 17.4% of artists in quadrant III and 4.2% of artists in quadrant IV. Concerning the *FrancoFolies*, 56% of artists in quadrant I and

60% of artists in quadrant II performed at them at least once, compared to 21.7% in quadrant III and 21.7% in quadrant IV.

Artists in quadrants I and II derived concrete benefits from their high prestige in so far as they had access to rewards and opportunities which were not available to artists in quadrants III and IV. They received more honorific awards and were more likely to participate in special cultural events. Because these televised events provided highly visible opportunities for artists to reach large audiences, this may have been one of the most important concrete advantage received by artists in positively privileged quadrants I and II. The Saint-Jean celebrations have a particularly powerful symbolic significance in Quebec, since they represent an opportunity to publicly celebrate Quebec's national identity. Being associated with this event provides strong legitimation for artists seeking recognition beyond commercial success. It increases the likelihood that their work will be considered as a major contribution to Quebec culture and, as a result, their ability to persist over time even if they are only moderately successful. For artists performing in less valued genres and styles, outstanding commercial success remains the only path towards wide social recognition. As such, the Saint-Jean celebrations, along with the other festivals and award ceremonies, constitute building blocks in the process through which authenticity, quality, and *Québécois* identity are mutually reinforced.

Conclusion

The main findings of this research clearly support Bourdieu's view of artistic fields as spaces of struggle among agents whose strategies are shaped by their access to material and symbolic resources. In the early 1990s, popular music in Quebec remained structured around the competing principles of artistic merit and commercial success. These principles were grounded in symbolic and organisational boundaries, which in turn were shaped by class and gender inequality. Songwriters, rock, and pop-rock artists in quadrants I and II had much higher prestige on average compared to interpreters, *artistes populaires*, and country artists in quadrants III and IV. Their work was more likely to be considered as authentic and as an important contribution to Quebec culture and society. As a result, they had greater access to opportunities and rewards, namely honorific awards and invitations to participate in special cultural events. Access to these events and awards, in turn, contributed to branding them as truly *Québécois*. Along with less commercially oriented strategies of promotion, these rewards helped construct an image of disinterested and authentic artists, driven primarily by aesthetic rather than commercial intentions. Interpreters, country artists and *artistes populaires* in quadrants III and IV, by contrast, had much lower prestige, in part because their work was defined as less valuable. Among artists in quadrant III, only those who had achieved unprecedented levels of commercial success in Quebec and internationally had prestige scores comparable to those of the most prestigious artists in quadrants I and II.

There is also clear evidence that by the 1990s, the polarisation between the two groups had lost much of its potency. Differences in musical styles and organisational support were much less pronounced in the lower half of the configuration than in the upper section, and the striking difference in levels of education among older artists in quadrants I and IV had no equivalent among the younger generation in quadrants II and III. Today, the contribution of devalued genres such as *Yé-Yé*, *populaire*, and country music to the emergence of an indigenous popular music and of a strong

national identity is more widely recognised, as exemplified by a recent exhibition on popular music and identity at the Quebec Museum of Civilisation (Grenier 1997). The 'Québécois mainstream pop scene' is now characterised by the coexistence of a plurality of styles within an integrated music industry (Grenier and Guilbault 1997).

However, it should be stressed that at least until the early 1990s, artists in quadrant II continued to share structural affinities with the older generation of songwriters in quadrant I. They enjoyed similar benefits such as high prestige, honorific awards, and opportunities to perform at special cultural events, and used similar strategies for promoting their careers. These results should caution against any rushed conclusion that status distinctions and collective forms of exclusion have disappeared from contemporary social life (Pakulski and Waters 1996). In the 1990s, class-based distinctions were no longer as salient among younger artists as they had been among the older generation, but French vocal music continued to be shaped by symbolic as well as organisational structures of inequality. Gender differences, in particular, had proved remarkably resilient to change.

Finally, the high levels of consensus regarding some of the songwriters in quadrants I and II raise the issue of why artists and producers located in less prestigious quadrants support evaluative schemes which devalue their own work. Part of the answer is that some artists misperceive their own position in the music industry. Two female interpreters interviewed for this research, for example, classified artists along lines which were similar to those presented here, but they placed themselves among the most prestigious artists in quadrants I or II while most others placed them in quadrant III. Aside from these few cases, high consensus on iconic figures of popular music may also result from symbolic violence, whereas members of dominated groups internalise dominant ideologies and accept as natural their own inferiority (Bourdieu 1977). I do not deny that symbolic and physical violence often play a major role in imposing as legitimate dominant schemes of evaluation. In fact, while researching this paper, I noticed with great interest that during a highly popular end-of-year comedy show on French-language public television, only artists in quadrant III were ridiculed.

My argument, however, is that the symbolic violence explanation is not sufficient in the present context. What Bourdieu fails to take into account is the central insight of order theories of prestige (Wegener 1992). Unlike contestants in the *Survivor* reality TV series broadcast on American television in the year 2000, social actors have an interest in, and benefit from, maintaining long-term social ties with others. The exchange of material and symbolic gifts is a central mechanism for maintaining solidarity and collective identities, not only as a means to an end but as an end in itself (Caillé 2000). Social divisions exist within communities bounded by shared cultural representations which give social agents the means to make sense of their lives.

In Quebec in the 1960s and early 1970s, class antagonism and gender inequality coexisted with an emerging and strong sense of national identity. The evaluation of popular music artists was shaped by these two conflicting forces. The prestige enjoyed by songwriters in quadrants I and II was widely accepted as legitimate, but the exclusion of interpreters, *artistes populaires*, and country artists was more hotly contested, as exemplified by public debates surrounding the ADISQ music awards (1988), by high levels of disagreement among respondents in this study, as well as by sustained efforts over the years to rehabilitate their work. Undoubtedly, artists whose audiences included cultural elites were more likely to see their work recognised as making a major contribution to culture and society, to be invited to perform at special

events, to be branded as *Québécois*, and thus to persist over time. However, their influence on society and culture was not confined to the restricted social circles which gave them legitimacy. Beyond gender and class divisions, consensus on the prestige of iconic figures of pop music reflected what was widely perceived as a genuine contribution to national identity. The emergence of a strong nationalist movement in Quebec in the 1960s and 1970s thus provided exceptional circumstances allowing some popular music artists to gain autonomy from profit-making, and to present their work as having social value over and above entertainment and commercial success. The work of these artists was constructed and perceived as a gift, that is, as a disinterested and valued contribution to collective life.

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Endnotes

1. The expression 'French-language vocal music' is commonly used in the Canadian music industry to refer to popular songs in French. The term was coined in the context of Canadian policies that imposed quotas on the proportion of songs in French played on French radio stations in Canada.
2. *Quétaïne* is a derogatory term whose meaning varies in different contexts. It generally refers to people or things which are 'out of it' one way or another, e.g. in bad taste, garish, outdated, etc.
3. In this specific context, the term *populaire* refers to popular songs which are aimed at a wide audience and which do not seek to convey a profound message.
4. Because the study focused on French vocal music recorded in Quebec by Canadian artists, the list excluded jazz, classical, and other instrumental music, English vocal music, film scores, music for children, and French music not classified as Canadian according to government regulations. For more details on the criteria used to select artists, see Ollivier (1997).
5. While this is not a random sample, an effort was made to select people associated with a diversity of musical styles and organisations. Among the thirty-four artists and producers whose position in the field of popular music could easily be determined, 13 (28%) are in quadrant I, 5 (11%) are in quadrant II, 13 (28%) are in quadrant III and 6 (13%) are in quadrant IV (see Figure 1). As will become clear later, this means that artists and producers located in lower prestige groups were more reluctant to be interviewed. They are under-represented in the final sample and this may slightly bias results in favor of high prestige groups.
6. Five variables, selected because they were frequently mentioned by respondents during the interviews, were regressed on the coordinates of the configuration. These variables are whether artists are songwriters or interpreters, gender, career length, an index of commercial success based on record sales, and mean prestige scores for each artist. Figure 1 displays only the most salient dimensions. Artists who wrote more than 40% of the lyrics or music on their latest album were classified as songwriters while those who wrote less than 40% were considered interpreters. Information on artists' careers was obtained directly from artists during interviews, from managers in phone conversations, and from secondary sources such as music dictionaries, trade catalogues, newspapers and magazines. Information on record sales was computed from a list of all certifications awarded between January 1975 and April 1992 by the Canadian Recording Industry Association.
7. Partitioning the configuration in this way seems entirely arbitrary, but very similar results were obtained with other techniques (see Ollivier 1997 for details).
8. Rock, pop-rock, *populaire* and country, along with songwriter and interpreter of the year, were the main categories used by the ADISQ when the study was conducted. The Association now gives awards in a wider spectrum of genres including hip-hop, alternative, and world music.
9. It should be noted that MDS usually provides a good representation of the general distribution of points but a poor representation of the positions of individual objects. Small changes in procedures will usually yield the same overall picture, but local arrangements of individual

- points can undergo drastic changes. As a result, more attention should be paid to the general layout of the configuration than to the position of individual artists.
10. The existence of two competing principles of hierarchisation is strongly supported by the data presented here. However, because respondents from quadrant IV are under-represented in the final sample, these results may underestimate the strength of the commercial orientation.
 11. The former include songwriters Beau Dommage, Claude Dubois, Daniel Lavoie, Félix Leclerc, Gilles Vignault, Laurence Jalbert, Luc de Larochelière, Marie Philippe, Michel Rivard, Offenbach, Paul Piché, Richard Séguin, and Robert Charlebois. The latter include *artistes populaires* Claudette Dion, Evan Joanness, Famille Staunton, Francesca, and Sylvie Jasmin.
 12. Some scholars argued that several *artistes populaires* and country singers produced original songs, but that their contribution was deliberately ignored by intellectual elites. 'The *chansonniers québécois* are not more *Québécois* than western singers. They only have the privilege of being more educated' (Côté 1983, p. 5, my translation).
 13. Data on education were collected during the interviews as well as from managers, record companies, and secondary sources. Despite considerable effort, data on education proved more difficult to collect than information on other aspects of artists' careers: no information on education was found for seventeen of the ninety-four artists in the sample. It is interesting to note that missing values are not evenly distributed among the four quadrants. The number of missing values per quadrant increases as prestige decreases: 60% of missing values for education are in quadrant IV, while 27.8% are in quadrant III, 11.1% in quadrant II and 4.2% in quadrant I. Information on the career of artists in less prestigious quadrants was not as readily available from secondary sources such as music dictionaries and many artists in quadrant IV were no longer under contract with a record company.
 14. Change is surprisingly slow to occur in this area. Data on artists who participated in the *Festival international de la chanson de Granby* held each year in Quebec and featuring young emerging artists show the same disturbing pattern. In 2001, 78% of all men who participated in the contest registered as songwriters while 61% of women participated as interpreters.
 15. Awards attributed by popular vote were introduced in 1984 as a response to continued criticism from the press and some members of the ADISQ. A few years later, only entertainment tabloids still harshly criticised the ADISQ for its exclusionary practices (ADISQ 1988). Such criticism was not totally unfounded, since none of the *artistes populaires* in quadrant IV ever won a *Félix* awarded by members of the ADISQ between 1979 and 1991. The only artists in this quadrant IV to ever do so were country singers who received awards for best country album.

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