

The socio-political education cleavage in France

Are the lower educated structurally
underrepresented in French democracy?

Master Thesis

Public administration

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*Il n'y a sans doute pas de pays dans le monde où les diplômes soient mieux respectés, et leur validité aussi persistante. [...] En France, le diplôme est une fusée à longue portée qui, sauf accident, vous propulse jusqu'à la retraite.*¹

Alain Peyrefitte

*La démocratie n'atteint pas ses buts quand les moins instruits sont les plus distants à l'égard de l'action politique.*²

Jérôme Jaffré

¹ Peyrefitte, A. *Le Mal Français*, Fayard, 2006, p. 347 (Plon, 1976)

² Jaffré, J., Le gouvernement des instruits, In: Duhamel, O. & Jaffré, J (dir.) *L'état de l'opinion*, 1991, Éditions de Seuil, 1991, p.146

Summary

By coining the notion “diploma democracy” and developing its accompanying theory, Bovens and Wille launched a debate among political scientists in the Netherlands a few years ago. According to the two authors, the lower educated citizens would have been ousted from practically every Dutch political arena during the last decades. From Parliament to government as well as in civil society – all these domains would nowadays be ruled by those with the highest diplomas. In addition to this increasing democratic underrepresentation, the lower educated would socially be more and more separated from their higher educated fellow citizens, thereby holding increasingly diverging political convictions. These preferences, mainly concerning European integration, immigration and law and order, are electorally exploited by the populist parties on the extreme sides of the political spectrum.

In this thesis, the diploma democracy debate is transported to France – not only to understand how far concepts can travel, but also to obtain a better view on the contemporary French socio-political landscape. Hereby the following question is central: to what extent is there a socio-political cleavage between the higher and lower educated in France and how has this changed over time? In order to give an adequate answer to this question, the general cleavage is longitudinally analyzed from three perspectives. The first of these domains concerns socio-demographic representation, the second political participation and thirdly policy representation is analyzed along educational lines.

What are the findings? In the first place, the different contextual factors create different points of departure between the Dutch and the French case (constitutionally for instance, socio-demographically and historically). Nonetheless, as in the Netherlands, also in France we observe an increasing dominance of the higher educated: in Parliament, in governments as well as in unions and in (especially leftist) political parties. Concerning political participation this increase is less pregnant, but still significant. Finally the educational cleavage in the domain of policy preferences not only became wider, but the dividing political themes also became more and more important during the last decades.

Most importantly, from being a practically unnoticed and marginally relevant factor until the 1980s, education level has become one the most, perhaps *the most* important socio-political cleavage in contemporary French democracy. At the same time, because data was lacking in certain domains (recent information concerning the education level of political

party officials for example, political participation at subnational elections and electoral surveys after 2007), further research is necessary to learn us more about this potentially subversive socio-political fracture.

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1. Introduction

1.1 *La présidente des oubliés?*

In 2000, the American journalist David Brooks published a book about the ‘new upper class’: people who “have combined the countercultural sixties and the achieving eighties into one social ethos.”³ Their name is a result of this paradoxical marriage: bourgeois bohemians, or briefly bobos. “These are the highly educated folk who have one foot in the bohemian world of creativity and another foot in the bourgeois realm of ambition and worldly success.”⁴ Nonetheless, the bourgeois side dominates in a certain way, because capitalism and careers triumphed: Bobos generally have an achievement ethos. More than that, they are “a meritocratic group of people”, Brooks once explained during an hour-long television interview⁵: “Their ethos is based in the university and they turn everything into graduate school.” In other words: a high education level is “the essence of the Bobo.”⁶

In France, the notion ‘Bobo’ is widely used. The French singer Renaud even wrote a song called *Les Bobos*⁷ a few years after Brooks coined the term. He describes them as follows: *Sont un peu artistes c'est déjà ça / Mais leur passion c'est leur boulot (...) / Ils vivent dans les beaux quartiers (...) / Ont des enfants bien élevés, qui ont lu le Petit Prince à six ans / Qui vont dans des écoles privées / Privées de racaille.* And, as Renaud emphasizes another important feature of this “nouvelle classe” : *Ils aiment Jack Lang et Sarkozy, mais votent toujours Écolo.*⁸

Highly educated, with their children on private schools and always voting for the greens... Bobos are not the most typical Front National (FN) electorate. At the kickoff of her campaign for the presidential elections of 2012, Marine Le Pen, even opposed herself to what

³ Brooks, D. *Bobos in Paradise. The New Upper Class and How They Got There.* Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000, p.10

⁴ Ibid., p.10-11

⁵ In: *Booknotes*, C-spam, 30.07.2000. <http://www.booknotes.org/Watch/157392-1/David+Brooks.aspx>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Renaud, *Les Bobos.* Album: Rouge Sang, Virgin records, 2006

⁸ As Renaud already depicts in his song, the French bobos are rather *bohemian* than *bourgeois*. This was also the conclusion of a research concerning the Parisian bobos by Éric Agrikoliansky, professor in political science at the Université Paris-Dauphine (2008): “ces « bobos » sont peut-être bohèmes mais bien peu bourgeois.” Agrikoliansky also points out that bobos are not so much a group, but “un agrégat de status et de positions très hétérogènes.” See: <http://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/sociologie-politique-des-elections/article/010412/recherche-bobos-deseseprement?onglet=commentaires> (seen on May 6, 2012)

she called “la gauche bobôisée”⁹ – the left that, in the eyes of the new FN leader, forgot increasingly: “de soutenir les plus faibles, défendre ceux qui travaillent, qui peinent”¹⁰. An interesting question that arises here is to know whether Le Pen is right. Is she *la présidente des oubliés*?

Of course, few parties in Western Europe have been analyzed so frequently and intensively as Le Pen’s Front National. Not in the last place because the FN – founded by her father in 1972 – was one of the first modern populist parties to appear on the political scene. Generating much attention since the late 1980s, when it became a constant and important factor in the French elections – and the (inter)national debate –, the FN, as well as its electorate, is followed closely, also in the academic world.

Over time, more and more analyses concerning the Le Pen electorate have been published, as well as possible explanations for the ‘droitisation’ of the former, largely leftist, French working class.¹¹ Yet, during all these years, one perspective still has not been examined. It is a broader perspective that gave rise to a debate among Dutch political scientists – and that will be worked out for the French case in this thesis: which role do representational and participatory differences along educational lines play in contemporary democracy?

1.2 The Dutch “diploma democracy” debate

According to Mark Bovens and Ancht Wille, the highly educated have – over the past decades – entirely ousted the lower and middle educated citizens from almost every Dutch political arena. From parliament to government, as well as in civil society; all domains nowadays are ruled by those with the highest diploma.¹² To use the term of these two scientists: the Netherlands have become a ‘diploma democracy’, a democracy in which the lower educated – because of their exclusion – have lost an important source of recognition

⁹ Pen, M., Le : Meeting du Front National à Metz, December 11, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmqN5LMUCXE>

¹⁰ Ibid. Original text: “soutenir les plus faibles, défendre ceux qui travaillent, qui peinent”

¹¹ Mayer, N. *Ces Français qui votent Le Pen*, Flammarion 2002 / Schweisguth, Etienne, *Le trompe-l’œil de la droitisation*. In *Revue française de science politique* (2007-06/08) vol.57: n°3-4, p.393-410 / *Une droitisation de la classe ouvrière en Europe ?* / sous la direction de Jean-Michel De Waele, Mathieu Vieira *Économica*, impr. 2011 / Michelat, G., Simon, M., *Le vote des ouvriers, de l’alignement à gauche à une « droitisation » ?*, Sciences Po, CEVIPOF CNRS, Les électors sociologiques 2012, No 10, janvier 2012, p.3

¹² Bovens, M. & Wille, A. *Diploma Democracy, On the Tensions between Meritocracy and Democracy*. Verkenning for the NWO programme Contested Democracies, Utrecht/ Leiden, April 2009

and self-respect. Little by little they became politically *oubliés*, forming an underclass that does not really count any longer.

This growing cleavage between the higher educated political elites and the lower educated citizens however, is not the only development that is said to have contributed to the rise of the ‘diploma democracy’. For the lower educated also participate less and less in politics and social life and have continuously diverging policy preferences from the higher educated. Education level, as the authors claim, has become the new ‘compartmentalization’ of Dutch society – filling the vacancy once held by religion – with political parties on the extreme left and extreme right mainly representing the citizens with the lowest diploma degrees.

Yet, this has been challenged by Hakhverdian, Van der Brug and De Vries. Based on electoral research (Dutch National Electoral Research, from 1971 to 2010), they claim that the cleavage between higher and lower educated has actually become smaller.¹³ Concerning political participation in the electoral and extra-parliamentary domain, for example, the differences between the two have remained stable or even decreased over the past forty years, they say. Furthermore the electoral attendance, membership of political parties, participation in political or social organizations, political cynicism and sentiments of political powerlessness would be stable. Finally, they argue that the difference between political interests among higher and lower educated even decreased over time.

1.3 The central question of this thesis

The following thesis, however, will not search for an answer in the Dutch ‘diploma democracy’ debate. Its focus is set on France, where a similar perspective has not yet researched. By doing that we have to go beyond the critique of Hakhverdian c.s. that mainly concerns political participation, trust and interest. This certainly is important, but the claim of Bovens and Wille is more fundamental; it touches the heart of our society and democracy – a heart that might be broken along educational lines. The central question in thesis therefore is: *to what extent is there a socio-political cleavage between the higher and lower educated in France and how has this changed over time?*

¹³ Hakhverdian, A., van der Brug, W. & de Vries C.E. *The Emergence of a 'Diploma Democracy'? The Political Education Gap in the Netherlands, 1971-2010*. Acta Politica, 2012. Results also published on: <http://www.socialevraagstukken.nl/site/2011/02/10/de-%E2%80%98opleidingskloof%E2%80%99-is-eerder-geslonken-dan-gegroeid/>

Of course, one single socio-cultural element can never entirely explain the infinite complexity of human social and political life. As André Siegfried, one of the founding fathers of electoral sociology, wrote almost a century ago in his famous *Tableau politique de la France de l'ouest sous la Troisième République*: “je me suis volontairement méfié de l’explication unique, de la clef qui prétend ouvrir toutes les serrures.”¹⁴ Unfortunately, however, interesting explanations that are worthy of further research are not exhaustively taken into account in this thesis – geographical influence for example (urban vs. rural) or the role of mass media. Yet, as we will observe, the role of education level appears to be a primary one: it has become the strongest socio-structural determinant in French society.

1.4 Social and scientific relevance

The main question here is to know whether this cleavage also has its counterpart in the functioning of French democracy – something that, at first sight, seems to be affirmed, when looking at the following data. The percentage, for example, of French voters with a primary diploma as their highest diploma finding that their democracy functions ‘not good at all’ almost doubled between 1988 and 2007 (from about 10 to 20 percent), while this opinion stayed quite stable among their higher educated fellow citizens (around 4 percent).¹⁵ Meanwhile the percentage of those thinking that politicians ‘do not think at all’ of people like us, also shows a remarkable increase among lower educated French citizens over the same time span (from less than 25 to more than 40 percent among the primary educated), while staying below 15 percent among the higher educated.¹⁶

On the other hand, virtually no differences exist among higher and lower educated citizens concerning the conviction that democracy is the best political system. They both have a score higher than 90 percent.¹⁷ In other words, if there is a democratic problem in France, this presumably is not so much a problem *of* democracy, but rather a problem *in* democracy. The intent of this thesis is to obtain a better understanding of this democratic problem. Furthermore, by putting the scope of the diploma democracy debate in a broader, more

¹⁴ Siegfried, A, *Tableau politique de la France de l'ouest*, Imprimerie nationale, 1995 (1913), p.57

¹⁵ Enquête post-électorale française 1988, Centre d'Etude de la Vie Politique Française (Cevipof), Panel Electoral Français (2007) CEVIPOF-Ministère de l'Intérieur

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ EVS (2011): European Values Study 2008: Integrated Dataset (EVS 2008). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA4800 Data file Version 3.0.0

international context, it also forms an interesting approach for a better view on the contemporary French socio-political landscape in general.

To arrive at this new view, the potential cleavage will be analyzed in three domains. First of all, we need to know whether the lower educated are structurally underrepresented from a socio-demographic point of view. Second the question rises whether this also is the case for political participation. And finally we will examine whether higher and lower educated citizens are increasingly divided in terms of policy preferences. A possible educational cleavage in these three domains is inextricably bound up with the eventual political and democratic consequences, as with the question: *should we bother?*

1.5 How to read this thesis?

The *should we bother* question, however, will not be treated before the last chapter of this thesis concerning ‘Conclusions and discussion’. In between, many data are involved, which makes that this thesis is rather lengthy. For readers who do not have that much time, it is therefore recommended to read only the last section. For those who have a little more time it is possible to concentrate on one or several selected part(s) of this thesis:

- Those who are especially interested in the socio-historical, political and philosophical context are recommended to read the second chapter.
- Those who are especially interested in the data and indicators that are used in this thesis are the first parts of the chapters four, five and six, respectively treating the three different domains.
- Those who are especially interested in the education system in France and/or in the way the notions “higher” and “lower” educated can be understood in the French context are recommended to read the fourth chapter.
- Those who are especially interested in the observations in the three domains are recommended to read the second part of the fourth, fifth and sixth chapter.

Finally, an appendix concerning the French education levels can be found after the chapter concerning conclusions and discussion as well as a list of the literature used in this thesis.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 *Democracy and the trouble with representation*

In the days of Plato, Athens was a place where practically every free male citizen could participate in politics, for example during the *ecclesia*, the public meeting.¹⁸ In the great modern states however, Weber argued a century ago, it is sociologically inconceivable that the people could wield power.¹⁹ And indeed, today, in the twenty-first century it is simply impossible for 65 million French citizens to govern all at once, as the Greek did in their popular assemblies. In other words: a certain amount of *gouvernement pour le peuple* is necessary; a form of representative democracy. The French constitution recognizes this. It even constitutes ‘the principle of the Republic’: “gouvernement du peuple, par le peuple et pour le peuple”, as the second article states.²⁰

Yet, in a representative democracy, with its *gouvernement pour le peuple*, influence is never distributed equally. According to the ‘classic’ writers of elite theory there is always a minority of the population that takes the major decisions. Gaetona Mosca, one of the main theorists of this school, once famously remarked that:

Among the constant facts and tendencies that are to be found in all political organisms, one is so obvious that it is apparent to the casual eye. In all societies [...] two classes of people appear – a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The first class, always the less numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class, is directed and controlled by the first, in a manner that is more or less legal, now more or less arbitrary and violent and supplies the first, in appearance at least, with material means of subsistence and with the instrumentalities that are essential to the vitality of the political organism.²¹

¹⁸ Bovens, M. & Wille, A., *Diplomademocratie, over de spanning tussen meritocratie en democratie*. Bert Bakker, 2011, p.16-7

¹⁹ Sintomer, Y., *La démocratie impossible? Politique et modernité chez Weber et Habermas*, La Découverte, 1999, p.11

²⁰ For the official French constitution see: http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/root/bank_mm/constitution/constitution.pdf (seen: March 9, 2012)

²¹ Mosca, G., *The Ruling Class*, McGraw-Hill, 1939, p.50

Besides the fact that this ruling class is not always selected democratically – due to the possible interference of revolutions or a coup d'état –, the whole appearance of democratic control is deceptive, Mosca claims. For the minority in power is always in a position to manipulate the electoral process and thus the majority. For example by selecting the candidates, political programs etc. Therefore new leaders and their policies, 'chosen' by the sovereign electorate, are always acceptable for the incumbent elite.²²

Like Mosca, his disciple, the German-Italian sociologist Robert Michels, also studied political elites from an organizational perspective. Perhaps the most 'scientific' among the three members of the Italian elitist school (the third is Vilfredo Pareto), Michels developed a hypothetical law that governs all organizations: the famous 'law of oligarchy'. And while he never gave an exact definition, its meaning is clear: for the sake of survival and success of any organization, Michels claimed, a minimum of leadership becomes necessary. This leadership implies hierarchy of those who govern and those who are governed. And that subordination of the mass to a group of leaders is called *oligarchy*. Or as Michels briefly put it: "Who says organization, says oligarchy."²³

Applicable to the functioning of all organizations, 'the iron law of oligarchy' can also be projected to the functioning of the state. Democratic and public organizations are governed by a small participatory group too: oligarchies, constituted by differences in time, money, interests, networks and connections. But whereas in agricultural and industrial times, estate, landed properties, capital and origin made up an important part of this influence²⁴, our time in history – frequently called the *information age*²⁵ – seems to demand one characteristic more than anything else: *brain power*. And indeed, not only in French society, but also in French politics and its public sector, education level seems to play a more and more decisive role – not in the last place for the formation of elites.²⁶

In 1989, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu stated that the new governing elite doesn't protect its privileges any longer by blood, but by diplomas. "L'institution scolaire [...] est devenue un enjeu central des luttes pour le monopole des positions dominantes."²⁷ Under the

²² See for a broader analysis : Parry, G., *Political elites*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1969

²³ Michels, R., *Political parties, A sociological study of the oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy*, Free Press, 1958 (trad.), p.418, in: Parry, G., *Op cit.*, p.42

²⁴ Bovens, M., & Wille, A., *Op cit.*, p.13

²⁵ See for example the trilogy of Manuel Castells: *The Information Age. Economy, Society and Culture*. Oxford; Malden, MA: Blackwell, First edition 1996-1998

²⁶ Bourdieu, P., *La noblesse d'État, grande écoles et esprit de corps* Les Éditions de Minuit, 1989

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.13

banner of democratization, meritocracy and the equality of chances, an oligarchy of higher educated is formed. This *noblesse d'État* may be more accessible for new talent, but at the same time it defends its powerful position via the quasi-genetic way of what Bourdieu called *capital culturel* – the ensemble of intellectual qualifications produced by one's social milieu (mainly family) and the education system one goes through.

More than that, it is precisely because of this democratization that the number of competitors has augmented: survival in the educational struggle therefore is getting harder and harder, and cultural baggage becomes increasingly important – especially in France where this kind of knowledge forms a significant part of the *concours* at the entrance of its most prestigious universities – also known as *grandes écoles*. The point of Bourdieu is that this cultural capital is largely inherited by familial ways, creating the situation in which not only the number of students is continuously rising, but also the importance of their social origin. As Bourdieu put it: “Si l'étudiant modal d'Ulm-lettres [faculty of humanities of the Ecole Normale Supérieure; one of the most prestigious *grandes écoles* in France, KD] était dans les années 50 fils d'instituteur, il est aujourd'hui fils de professeur et peut-être même de professeur de l'enseignement supérieur.”²⁸ And indeed, the proportion of students inscribed on four of France's most prestigious *grandes écoles*²⁹, having a “popular” origin (their father being a farmer, a blue-collar worker, an employee or an artisan) decreased from 29 percent in the early 1950s to 9 percent in the last decade of the twentieth century.³⁰

Founded just after the Second World War by Michel Debré and Charles de Gaulle, in order to ‘democratize’ the instruction of the future French governing elite, the École Normale d'Administration, or briefly ENA, probably is the most famous – and the most prestigious – of all these *grandes écoles*.³¹ Each year, a small group of future top diplomats, CEO's and administrators leaves this school. Not to think of influential politicians like Alain Juppé, Édouard Balladur, Laurent Fabius, etc. Already the “promotion Voltaire”, in 1980, provided presidential runner-up Ségolène Royal and future French president François Hollande (both: Parti Socialiste) as well as their political enemy Dominique de Villepin.³² In addition, during

²⁸ Bourdieu, P., in : *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 09.03.1989, p.80-82

²⁹ Ecole National d'Administration, Ecole Nationale Supérieure, Hautes Etudes Commerciales and École Polytechnique

³⁰ Euriat, M. & Thélot, C., *Le recrutement social de l'élite scolaire en France. Évolution des inégalités de 1950 à 1990*. Revue française de sociologie, XXVI, 1995, p.403-438

³¹ Bernard, M., *La méritocratie française, les élites en France*, L'Harmattan, 2010, p.18

³² Ibid. N.B. Besides these famous politicians, the “Promotion Voltaire” delivered multiple other ministers and state secretaries, such as Renaud Donnedieu, Jean-Pierre Jouyet and Frédérique Brédin.

the presidential elections in 2002, both the left-wing and the right-wing candidate, Lionel Jospin and his opponent Jacques Chirac, were alumni of the elitist government school.

At the same time, the ENA stays extremely closed for students with a lower educated social background. The parents for example, of the 81 ENA-students in the recent Promotion 2009-2011, only represented 2,9 per cent blue-collars and 9,4 per cent employees (these two professional categories cover more than half of all the jobs in France).³³ Such disproportionalities raise the question whether the French *noblesse d'État* constitutes a democratic problem. The answer? At least it could. In the build-up to the same 2002 elections, Jean-Marie Le Pen already promised to roll up the ENA if he were to become president. For, in his eyes, the new elite had lost all connection with the French people.³⁴ It echoes the observation of a former French minister and prime-minister, Antoine Pinay, a few decades before: “Les jeunes gens qui sortent de l'École d'administration croient tout savoir. Parce qu'ils ont beaucoup travaillé dans les livres. En réalité, ils ne savent rien. Car ils n'ont pas vécu. Ils ignorent les Français.”³⁵

Nonetheless, in an ever more globalizing and intertwined world, where ever more complex interests, structures and coalitions create ever more complex decisions to be made, one may ask whether the people's representatives shouldn't be graduated from the best schools. Should they not be equipped with a minimum of comprehension and intelligence? Or, in other words: would it really be that bad if the state is ruled by the best and the brightest, would it really be a problem when political arenas are dominated by the higher educated?

Generally, there are three possible answers to this form of unequal representation: first of all an answer from a liberal-aristocratic point of view. Second, a socio-demographical one and third an answer concerning policy representation.

2.1.1 Liberal-aristocratic form of representation

Since Plato – who, in *The Republic*, already stated that the ideal type of constitution is an aristocratic one (“the government of the best” as he called it³⁶) – the elitist approach of politics never left political thought and practice. Montesquieu, for example, famously noted

³³ Observatoire des inégalités. *Pas de diversité sociale à l'ENA*, January 5, 2010, http://www.inegalites.fr/spip.php?article1030&id_mot=83 (seen: June 4, 2012) N.B. 23 of the 162 parental categories were not classified and thus not taken into account, which makes the data a bit fragile.

³⁴ Weill, N., *La VIe République que M. Le Pen appelle de ses vœux*, Le Monde, 29.04.2002

³⁵ Peyrefitte, A. *Op. cit.*, p. 347

³⁶ Plato, *The Republic* (Translated by Benjamin Jowett), The Heritage Press, 1944, p.422

that: “Le peuple qui a la souveraine puissance doit faire par lui-même tout ce qu’il peut bien faire ; et ce qu’il ne peut pas bien faire, il faut qu’il le fasse par ses ministres.”³⁷ In 1790, the French revolutionaries interdicted ordinary citizens to enter parliament.³⁸ And in his book *Representative Government* (1861), John Stuart Mill even claimed that a low-grade intelligence of the representative body, controlled by popular opinion constitutes one of the greatest dangers for representative democracy.³⁹

It shows that, also among democratic thinkers, the overrepresentation of higher educated in political arenas does not necessarily conflict with the principles of democracy. More than that, a ‘nobility of the spirit’ as Rob Riemen recently called it⁴⁰ – a superior elite with the highest intellectual and moral standard – even forms an improvement for the quality of the political debate and decision making. For in this vision of democratic representation, representatives not only represent the people, they also take the initiative, define the political problems, guard the *res publica*, the nation’s long time interests – and they ask the people, the *demos*, for its approval. From that point of view a rise of higher educated in the political arenas would merely be a ‘pleonasm’⁴¹ instead of a threat for democracy.

2.1.2 A socio-demographic form of representation

A form of direct democracy, as was the case in Athens, probably has become problematic in contemporary society, but at least, one might argue, the representatives may resemble the people in a socio-demographical way. For this too was the case in Ancient Greece, where members of the *boule*, the executive power, originated from the bourgeoisie and were chosen monthly by lot.⁴² Furthermore, the original ideal of *demos kratia*, “rule of the people”, implies that power lies in the hand of all citizens and not of a small group – an academic elite for example.

Furthermore, representation, etymologically means *re – presentation*, ‘a making present again’, as Hanna Pitkin described in her book *The concept of representation*. “In

³⁷ Montesquieu, *De l’esprit des lois*, Tome 1 & 2 Gallimard, Folio/Essais, 1995, p.99 (1758)

³⁸ Fromentin, T. & Wojcik, S., Préambule – Sacré et profane, figures intangibles de la représentation politique ? In: *Le profane en politique. Compétences et engagement du citoyen*, Fromentin, T. & Wojcik, S. (dir.), L’Harmattan. Collection Logiques politiques, 2008, p.27

³⁹ Beyme, K. von, Representative democracy and the populist temptation, in: Alonso, S., Keane, J., Merkel, W., *The future of representative democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p.52

⁴⁰ Riemen, R., *Adel van de geest, een vergeten ideaal*. Atlas, 2009

⁴¹ Bovens, M. & Wille, A., *Op cit.*, p.19

⁴² Idem., p.17-8

representation something not literally present is considered as present in a nonliteral sense.”⁴³ Representatives therefore should mirror society as much as possible. This idea exactly formed the message proclaimed by Mirabeau in his *Discours devant les états de Provence* in January 1789. Mirabeau stated that the right composition of the Assemblée nationale should be “pour la nation ce qu’est une carte réduite pour son étendue physique ; soit en partie, soit en grand, la copie doit toujours avoir les mêmes proportions que l’original.”⁴⁴ It is a point of view that, later on, would become known under the name “microcosmic representation”⁴⁵; a Parliament should reflect the entire anatomy of the society.

The problem however, lies in the criteria one uses. A society of equal individual voters – citizens – can, after all, be interpreted along many possible dividing lines: religion, age, education level, income, sex, origin, etc. For that reason, it is hard to clarify *what* exactly should be reflected, made present again. Also, with a limited number of parliamentary seats (577 in the French Assemblée), a precise socio-demographic representation in democratic institutions necessarily has its limits. Nonetheless, to quote Pitkin again, representatives can “act in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them.”⁴⁶

2.1.3 Policy representation

If the English word ‘trustee’ corresponds to the first form of democratic representation, where trust is given to a representative in order to act according to what *he* or *she* thinks is in the “best interest” of the constituency – regardless of what the constituency wants⁴⁷, then the German word ‘Stellvertreter’ corresponds to the second, where a personal socio-demographic absence is ‘vertreten’ (i.e. ‘made present’ again). The third form of democratic representation, however, constitutes the policy-oriented counterpart of the latter. It is about, what I will call, ‘policy representation’: the representation of the citizen’s perception on political issues, institutions and debates.

This is an important form of representation, because even if the cleavage between higher and lower educated would increase in a socio-demographical sense, this does not

⁴³ Pitkin, H., *The concept of representation*. University of California Press, 1967, p.8

⁴⁴ Mirabeau, *Discours devant les états de Provence*, 30.01.1789. In : Rosanvallon, P. *Le peuple introuvable. Histoire de la représentation démocratique en France*, Folio, Éditions de Poche, 2002, p. 22 (Gallimard, 1998)

⁴⁵ See: Pitkin, H. *Op cit.*, Chapter 4.

⁴⁶ Pitkin : in Bovens, M. & Wille, A., *Op cit.*, p.20

⁴⁷ Eulau, H. & Karpis, P.D., *The Puzzle of Representation: Specifying Components of Responsiveness*, Legislative Studies Quarterly, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Aug., 1977), p. 233-254

directly imply that lower educated are increasingly underrepresented in the defense of their political interests. Highly educated politicians may be dominant in democratic arena's, but that does not exclude the fact that they can also be the spokesman for the worries of lower educated citizens. In the Netherlands, for example, Pim Fortuyn (a flamboyant ex-university professor) and Frits Bolkestein (two academic studies) attracted many lower educated voters. Likewise Marine Le Pen – as well as her father – went to university.⁴⁸ Could their electoral attraction reside in the identification with policy preferences, such as their stance on immigration, European integration and globalization, instead of socio-demographical aspects?

Furthermore, one might argue that in France, where the word 'intellectual' was invented – and still is not an insult⁴⁹ –, politics have always been dominated by highly educated elites. From the pre-revolutionary salons where rulers philosophized with writers and prominent intellectuals to Fifth Republic presidents who wrote books on the anthology of French poetry (Georges Pompidou) or became member of the *Académie Française* (Valéry Giscard d'Estaing). Or as former UMP minister and state secretary André Santini once confided to *The New York Times*: “You have to understand that France is still a sort of elected monarchy”⁵⁰. And indeed, the French may have guillotined their king, but l'État – written with a capital E of course – still holds a royal aura. Charles de Gaulle, in the 1960s, even told his minister Alain Peyrefitte : “Ce que j'ai essayé de faire, c'est d'opérer la synthèse entre la monarchie et la République”. “Une République monarchique?” asked Peyrefitte. De Gaulle: “Si vous voulez. Plutôt, une Monarchie républicaine.”⁵¹

And while bourgeois living left-wing intellectuals such as Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Zola, Jaurès, Blum and Clemenceau, always eulogized the people, one might ask whether the government of the civil society in this *dirigiste* country is not simply a domain of an administrative elite who all graduated from university or another elitist school. To put it briefly: are the French – in this perspective – not just used to a certain distance between the lower educated people and the higher educated political elites, and should we therefore not put the focus mainly on the policy preferences instead of a sheer educational correspondence between elected and electorate?

⁴⁸ Who's who in France, 2011

⁴⁹ As for example shows the book of the Canadian philosopher and journalist Francois Gauvin, who recently interviewed fifteen presidential candidates concerning their philosophical convictions: Gauvin, F., *Bayrou, Hollande, Joly, Mélançon, Marine Le Pen, Sarkozy, leur philosophie*, Germina, 2012

⁵⁰ In: Sciolino, E. *French Cabinet Position Not Enough? Then Try Mayor*, The New York Times, January 13, 2008

⁵¹ Peyrefitte, A. *Op. cit.*, p.88

2.2 First domain: socio-demographic representation

Yet, very little research has been done on the education level of statesmen, MPs, ministers, senators, let alone a comprehensive, empirical study also including union and political party leaders, members and officials. Such a study might be even more interesting if we take into account the growing awareness among lower educated citizens of not being ruled by “des gens comme nous”⁵². In an article in *Le Monde* – called *La gauche à la reconquête des "oubliés"*⁵³ – Vincent Eblé, Parti Socialiste Senator and president of the general council of the department Seine and Marne, even called it the biggest problem of his party: ‘la surreprésentation des couches moyennes supérieures au sein du PS’. In his view, the first demand therefore is ‘de gagner en représentativité identitaire’. For what, Eblé stated, could ‘un ouvrier verrier, l’anti-énarque par excellence’ have in common with a party dominated by exactly these énarques – as well as numerous other highly educated party officials and ditto representatives – its MPs and Senators?

In the first part of this thesis, the socio-demographic representation will therefore be analyzed: *to what extent are the French political arena’s dominated by the higher educated, and how has this changed over time?* The answer to this question might give us an empirical hold for the idea that politics in France is increasingly dominated by higher educated citizens, while the lower educated were increasingly ousted from the political arenas, supporting the idea of the existence of a diploma democracy in France. Furthermore, this part might sustain the hypothesis that especially leftist parties obtained an intellectual image – seductive for the higher educated (and the bobo’s), but possibly less attractive for the lower educated electorate.⁵⁴ The latter, as a result, may be less and less capable of identifying themselves with its representatives – something that could be applicable for the unions too.

This is even more interesting because “les diplômés votent de plus en plus à gauche et les non-diplômés à droite”, as the French political scientist Nonna Mayer wrote in her recent book *Sociologie des comportements politiques*: “Quelle que soit l’élection, les modèles explicatifs du vote Le Pen montrent qu’il ne dépend ni de la classe ni de la religion, mais du diplôme, suivi du genre”⁵⁵ (this is confirmed in figure 2.1 and 2.2). Perhaps, while

⁵² Michelat, G., Simon, M., *Op. cit.*, p.3

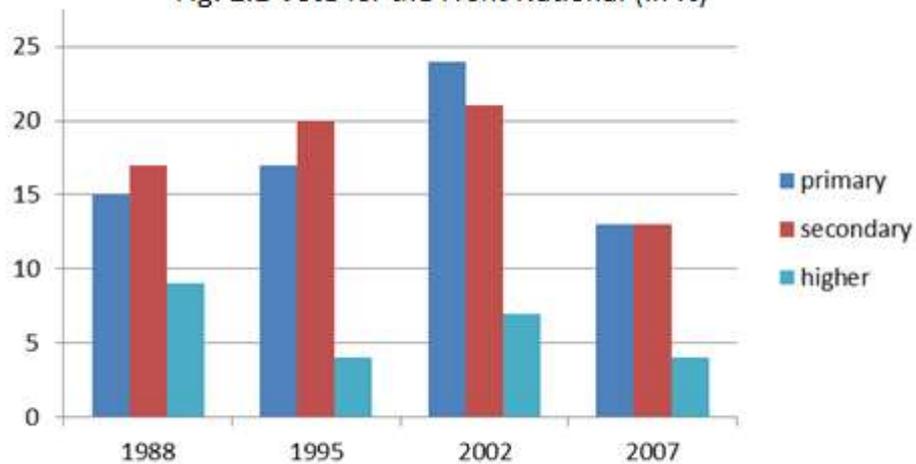
⁵³ *Le Monde*. *La gauche à la reconquête des "oubliés"*. 22.01.2012

⁵⁴ Yet the share of blue collars on the right side of the political spectrum has always been important! In 1962 for example 43 per cent of the *ouvriers* voted for a leftist party (25 per cent for the Parti Communiste) and 31 per cent for a right-winged party (21 per cent for the gaullists). In the 1970s the leftist blue collar vote became more important, while it slightly disappeared in the 1980s and 1990s. See: Michelat, G. & Simon, M., *Op. cit.*

⁵⁵ Mayer, N., *Sociologie des comportements politiques*, Armand Colin, 2010, p.129

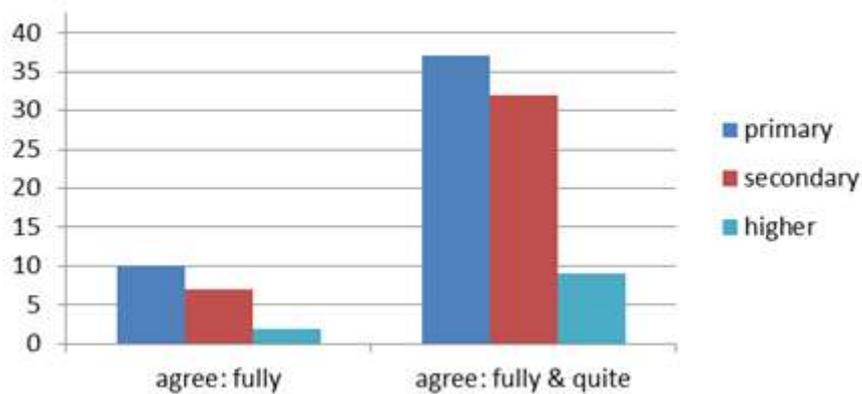
progressively attracting the vote of the lower educated, Marine Le Pen may be right by stating that *la gauche* has become *boboisée*: an elitist bastion of merely higher educated.

Fig. 2.1 Vote for the Front National (in %)



Source: Cevipof

Fig. 2.2 The approval of Jean-Marie Le Pen's ideas (in %)



Source: Cevipof 2007

2.3 Second domain: political participation

The way higher and lower educated citizens vote may have changed, but does this also apply to their electoral participation and their political participation in general? In Verba and Nie's seminal work on this subject⁵⁶, political participation is defined as "the means by which the interests, desires and demands of the ordinary citizens are communicated."⁵⁷ This refers to

⁵⁶ Verba, S. & Nie, N., *The Modes of Democratic Participation: A Cross-National Comparison*. Sage Publications, 1971

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.9

“all those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the decisions that they make.”⁵⁸

In France, the communication of ordinary citizen's desires and demands has a particular background – an *exception française* – mainly due to the French conception of the public interest. Like the Republic itself, this *intérêt* is ‘une et indivisible’⁵⁹ and refuses the manifestation of particular interests – something that also explains the problematic French relationship with communitarianism.⁶⁰ Referring to the abstract entity of the *nation*, the public interest cannot stem from particular interests, but – and this is where France really becomes exceptional compared to other democracies – it has got to be expressed *as such* and *from above*, in an elitist and technocratic process, assuring its collective character.⁶¹

Historically that conception had far-reaching implications for political participation. In name of the necessity to avoid every obstacle between the electorate and the elected, the *corps intermédiaires*, such as parties, corporations and associations, were banished during the French revolution⁶² – creating a gap between political institutions and civil society that was reinforced over time, especially during the Third Republic when universal suffrage was proclaimed at the expense of direct forms and expressions of democracy such as billposting or manifestations. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century, for example, that unions were allowed, with the “Loi Le Chapelier” in 1884, and political parties arose (Parti Radical in 1901 and the SFIO in 1905).⁶³ Until this day, interests groups form a taboo in French political arenas⁶⁴, while unions and political parties are still fragile – especially compared to their confrères in neighboring countries.

The most conventional form of political participation – the direct relation between the electorate and the elected – concerns voting. In this thesis, that conventional part will be treated first: *is there a growing cleavage between higher and lower educated concerning*

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.9

⁵⁹ This indivisibilité is still stated in the first article of the French constitution.

⁶⁰ One thinks of Nicolas Sarkozy for example, during his campaign kick-off (11.03.2012): "Je serai celui qui refusera en France toute dérive communautariste." <http://www.rue89.com/rue89-presidentielle/2012/03/11/pour-rebondir-sarkozy-se-pose-en-chef-de-leurope-230097>

⁶¹ Costa, O. & Kerrouche, É., *Op. cit.*, p.32

⁶² As shows the decree carried by vote in the Assemblée nationale on September 30, 1791 : « Nulle société, club, association de citoyen ne peuvent avoir, sous aucune forme, une existence politique. » In: Rosanvallon, P., *Op. cit.*, p.229.

⁶³ Costa, O. & Kerrouche, É., *Op. cit.*, p.32

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.33. See also two other works of Pierre Rosanvallon, besides the one cited earlier on: *Le sacre du citoyen. Histoire du suffrage universel en France*, Gallimard 1992 and *La Démocratie inachevée. Histoire de la souveraineté du peuple en France*. Gallimard, 2000

electoral attendance? Do the latter, for example, increasingly stay at home, which might be a possible sign of democratic distrust? Or, in contrast, do they increasingly make the trip to the ballot box, e.g. to make a protest voice heard? Changes in electoral attendance constitute an important indicator concerning the supposed socio-political cleavage between higher and lower educated citizens – especially in France where the mass of democracy really seems to be sacred. It is no coincidence that the elections are always held on the Lord’s day.⁶⁵

Yet of course, elections are not the only form of political participation. Over time, also (or, precisely) in France, political parties and unions appeared, forming public platforms for particular interests. From a representational perspective, as we saw before, these institutions will be examined together with the other democratic institutions, but they also have a participatory side; membership for example, voluntary work or the donation of money. In that way, the analysis of this form of political participation – i.e. through voluntary associations – directly contributes to the central question in this domain: Next to ‘conventional’ participation and participation through voluntary associations, a third form of political participation will be distinguished: the so-called ‘unconventional participation’.

Verba and Nie found, already in 1971 and against the convictions at the time, that political participation is not one-dimensional and cumulative, but multidimensional and non-cumulative; it is fragmented and specialized. First and foremost because most people, instead of accumulating different activities, tend to choose one form of engagement and stick to it.⁶⁶ This also holds for the ‘unconventional’ forms of political participation; the signing of petitions, for example, the boycott of certain products or the participation in public demonstrations. One can also think of digital implications: blogs, participative journalism, online forums as well as other forms of virtual engagement, that will probably play an ever more important role in the future of political participation. Yet, the fragmented and specialized nature of political participation seems to especially underline what the French call “le nouveau militantisme”⁶⁷: a form of activism suspicious of ideologies and hierarchies,

⁶⁵ However its symbolic importance is in decline, Sunday was chosen as the election day in order to install “une forme de communion civique au cours de laquelle l’universalité des citoyens d’un même lieu se retrouveraient pour exprimer, ensemble, leur volonté commune et leur inscription dans la collectivité républicaine.” Miquet-Marty, F., *Les oubliés de la démocratie*, Éd. Michalon, 2011, p.247, See also : Schnapper, D., *La démocratie providentielle. Essai sur l’égalité contemporaine*, Gallimard, 2002

⁶⁶ Id. p.51. See also: Newton, K. & Giebler, H., *Patterns of Participation: Political and Social Participation in 22 Nations*, Discussion Paper SP IV 2008-201. Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), 2008

⁶⁷ See for example : Losson, C. & Quinio, P., *Génération Seattle*, Grasset, 2002. Or, more recently: Benasayag, M., Jeanneau, L., Lernould, S., Weck P.-E., *Les nouveaux militants*, Les Petits matins, 2008.

while keeping a strong emphasis on individual autonomy,⁶⁸ a form of activism, more importantly, that is not forcibly new, but illustrative for this potential cleavage.

Essentially mediagenic, spectacular and frequently organized as a happening, *le nouveau militantisme* opposes itself to the routine and repertoire of the ‘traditional’ voluntary associations, especially the unions. Instead of keeping a demonstration on the worn path ‘République – Bastille – Nation’, the ‘new’ activists generally opt for more humorous, spontaneous and theatrical forms of protest. By draping a gigantic condom, for example, over the obelisk on the Parisian Place de la Concorde (to ask attention for the aids problem), or by keeping pick-nicks in supermarkets (against the opening on Sundays as well as to protest against their exorbitant profit margins).⁶⁹

There are many other examples (Brigades d’action clownesque, Jeudi Noir, Front Homosexuel d’action révolutionnaire, etc., etc.) in which ludic forms of protest go hand in hand with a high educational background. As Lilian Mathieu stated: “Ce qui ressemble en effet les différentes expressions du supposé « nouveau militantisme » n’est pas leur succession sur un axe temporel mais leur recrutement social, relativement privilégié sur le plan culturel”⁷⁰. And although it still forms a relatively small minority, the celebration of the “new” activism creates a negative image of what it is opposed to: “traditional” activism – mainly associated with political parties, but mostly with the unions.⁷¹ As a result, an opposition appears between the – supposedly – inefficient, conservative and ponderous protest of the lower educated blue-collars vis-à-vis the innovative, creative and cultivated protest of the highly educated, bourgeois, but rather bohemian ‘new upper class’.

The second part of this thesis will examine the possible existence of a similar cleavage in the three different manifestations of political participation and show how this has changed over time.

2.4 Third domain: policy representation

With the existence of multiple forms of democratic representation, not only the possible dominance of the highly educated in the French political arena’s has to be taken into account

⁶⁸ Mathieu, L. *La démocratie protestataire : mouvements sociaux et politiques en France aujourd’hui*, Presses de Sciences Po, 2011., p.46

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.47

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.50

⁷¹ See also: Collovald, A. Pour une sociologie morale. In : *L’Humanitaire ou le management des dévouements* (Annie Collovald dir, p.177-229), p.183

(intra- as well as extra-parliamentary, including political participation), but also that of policy representation: *is there a growing cleavage concerning policy preferences along educational lines?* At least, there are some social tendencies that might reinforce differing political perceptions of higher and lower educated citizens.

First of all, not only the *noblesse d'État* rests upon certificates and diplomas; in the *information age* one's personal level of brain power – often expressed in school diplomas – increasingly determines one's social position. In France, education level even has become the “strongest divide in social structural terms”⁷² – more important than religion for example.⁷³ At the same time, the lower educated live fewer years in good health and die earlier compared to their higher educated fellow citizens.⁷⁴ On top of that, lower educated are generally paid less while being relatively – and absolutely – more often unemployed.

In 1978, for example, the level of lower educated French citizens who were (still) unemployed after they had left their initial education since eleven years or more, was 1,76 times as high as the level of higher educated in the same situation (3,7 vs. 2,1 percent). In 2010 this ratio had risen to almost *three* (12,0 vs. 4,1 per cent).⁷⁵ These statistics are in line with the observations of Éric Maurin, who calculated that the unemployment gap between those without a diploma and those with a diploma from higher education rose from 10 to 40 points between the mid-1970s and the mid-2000s.⁷⁶ All these factors (social stratification, health, unemployment, etc.) might make the lower educated increasingly attached to the conservation of the welfare state.

Surprisingly, the French socio-electoral literature largely seems to overlook this growing political importance of educational level in France. Among the first (and still rare) analyses that *does* attach importance to diplomas in relation to policy preferences, we find an article by Jérôme Jaffré dating from 1991, which states: “Parmi les grands clivages sociologiques qui structurent l'opinion publique, plusieurs comme le sexe, l'âge, la profession

⁷² Kriesi, H. *et al*, *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.97

⁷³ The “pratique religieuse mensuelle” in France decreased from 18 per cent in 1978 to 9 percent in 2006, Schweisguth, E., *Le libéralisme culturel aujourd'hui*, Cevipof, 2007, p.2

⁷⁴ INSEE: *Mortalité aux grands âges : encore des écarts selon le diplôme et la catégorie sociale*, <http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/ipweb/ip1122/ip1122.pdf>

⁷⁵ INSEE enquêtes Emploi: <http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/figure/NATnon03314.xls>. For those *sortis depuis 1 à 4 ans de formation* the situation is even more extreme: the lower educated unemployment figure in 2010 was 44,3 per cent vs. 10,7 among the higher educated. Yet the biggest difference between higher and lower educated concerns those *sortis depuis 5 à 10 ans de formation*: 31,3 vs. only 5,0 per cent.

⁷⁶ Maurin, E., *La peur du déclassement. Une sociologie des récessions*, Éditions de Seuil et la République des idées, 2009, p.52

ou la religion se sont atténués au cours de la décennie écoulée. En revanche, le niveau d’instruction a pris une importante croissance. Il fait apparaître des différences importantes sur la plupart des grands problèmes”⁷⁷.

Apparently, in the 1980s, some issues – or “grands problèmes” – appeared on the political agenda that are potentially interpreted in different ways by higher and lower educated citizens. And indeed – besides the increasing unemployment rate –, immigration, law and order, multiculturalism, European integration and globalization, to name a few, are all phenomena that rose to political prominence in the 1980s. More than that, they still determine the political debate.

To begin with the latter: globalization – a development that, paradoxically, seems to manifests itself at the national level.⁷⁸ For even if the European Union is taking over more and more responsibilities, political inclusion and mobilization merely remains a matter of national proportions. At the same time, we seem to witness a new structural conflict between precisely these two worlds⁷⁹ – between the ‘cosmopolitans’ and the ‘nationalists’⁸⁰, between the ‘winners’ and the ‘losers’ of globalization, or more precisely: between the higher educated – whose room to maneuver for personal development is enhanced by open borders – and the lower educated – whose life chances and economic situation were traditionally protected by national boundaries and who often perceive the opened borders and ditto economy (generally imposed by the European Union) as a threat for their social status and security.⁸¹

Among these ‘losers’ of globalization we find the blue collar class, once relatively uniform and unified. It is a class that, in the twenty-first century mostly resembles an archipelago of employees and their scattered small jobs. It is a group in decline, consisting of unorganized truck drivers, warehousemen, cleaners and their uncertain prospects. They largely represent the ‘new poor’, whose numbers grew exponentially during the 1980s and 1990s, together with social inequalities.⁸²

Meanwhile, many other lower educated citizens, like artisans and small businessmen, fear for social descent. By 2007, a year before the actual economic crisis broke out, almost a

⁷⁷ Jaffré, J., *Op. cit.*, p.146

⁷⁸ One can also think here of another paradoxical effect of globalization: the more we globalize, the more we localize. See also: Giddens, A., *The Consequences of modernity*, Stanford University Press, 1991

⁷⁹ This new conflict constitutes the essence of *Kriesi et al’s* vision on West European politics.

⁸⁰ Cuperus, R., *De wereldburger bestaat niet. Waarom de opstand der elites de samenleving ondermijnt*, Bert Bakker, 2009

⁸¹ Kriesi et al. *Op cit.* p.4

⁸² Shields, J.G., *Political Representation in France: A Crisis of Democracy?*, Parliamentary Affairs Vol. 59 No. 1, 2006, p.132

quarter of all the lower educated French citizens thought that their economic situation would degrade in the next twelve months, while the risk of losing their job in the upcoming months was felt by half of them. Almost one in five lower educated respondents indicated that this risk was high⁸³ – a conviction that might explain a possible socio-political focus on the past (instead of the frightening future), as well as a feeling of bitterness and powerlessness concerning the present. As the French sociologist Robert Castel put it: “Le désarroi de ne plus avoir d’avenir est sans doute éprouvé individuellement par chacun des membres de ces catégories sociales, mais leur réaction est collective. Elle est marquée du sceau du *ressentiment*.”⁸⁴

Moreover, the lower educated are confronted unequally with the negative consequences of another phenomenon that has risen on the political agenda since the 1980s: immigration. Most of the children from lower educated parents do not go to “*une école privée, privée de racaille*” as sung Renaud about the Bobos, but to *une école publique*. They do not live in the *beaux quartiers*, but rather on the countryside, or in the *banlieues*. In the latter, furthermore, the rate of delinquency and violence is higher as well, something that might harden the political stance towards law and order.

Yet, at the same time, one might ask whether the influence of education could not play a more direct role in the perception of relatively new political issues such as immigration, multiculturalism and law and order. Already in 1959 the American sociologist Seymour M. Lipset published an article about “working-class authoritarianism”, something that mainly meant an “authoritarianism of the poorly educated”.⁸⁵ And indeed, over time, in line with the key message of the article, countless scientific studies have proven that lower educated generally are more xenophobic, less tolerant of nonconformity, while holding points of view that are more simplistic and monistic.⁸⁶ In the expanded and updated edition of his book

⁸³ Panel Electoral Français (2007) CEVIPOF-Ministère de l'Intérieur

⁸⁴ Castel, R., *L'insécurité sociale, Qu'est-ce qu'être protégé?*, Éditions de Seuil et la République des idées, 2003, p.47

⁸⁵ The article “Working-Class Authoritarianism” (1959) has been included as Chapter IV in Lipset’s book : *The political man and social bases of politics*, Doubleday, 1960

⁸⁶ See for example: Gabennesch, H., *Authoritarianism as World View*, American Journal of Sociology, 1972, 77:857–875 ; Middendorp, C. P. & Meloen. J.D., *The Authoritarianism of the Working Class Revisited.*, European Journal of Political Research, 1990, 18:257–267; Grunberg, G. & Schweisguth, E., ‘Libéralisme culturel et libéralisme économique’, in *L'électeur français en question*, edited by Cevipof, Presses de Sciences Po, 1990, p.45-69 ; Quillian, L., *Prejudice as a Response to Perceived Group Threat: Population, Composition and Anti-Immigrant and Racial Prejudice in Europe*, The American Sociological Review, 1995, 60 (4), p. 169-78 ; Grunberg, G. & Schweisguth, E., ‘Recompositions idéologiques’ in : *L'électeur a ses raisons*, edited by

Political Man, Lipset himself noted that: “a consistent and continuing research literature has documented relationships between low levels of education and racial and religious prejudice, opposition to equal rights for women, and with support of, and involvement in, fundamentalist religious groups.”⁸⁷

Well-educated people, on the other hand, invariably turn out to be less authoritarian, more tolerant of nonconformists, and less racially prejudiced than lower educated people.⁸⁸ Furthermore a high education level has a ‘liberalizing’ effect. More language skills, for example, give people access to other cultures.⁸⁹ And an increase of social and cultural capital – generally rising with one’s education level – often leads to a higher recognition of individual freedom, cultural tolerance and ‘postmaterial values’ such as self-expression and quality of life.⁹⁰

In France, these values are known under the name *libéralisme culturel*, a term coined in the early 1980s by the political scientists Gérard Grunberg and Étienne Schweisguth, in order to describe an ensemble of hedonistic and anti-authoritarian attitudes.⁹¹ After the *trentes glorieuses* – the three prosperous decades following the Second World War that also witnessed an increasing standard of life, education level, number of audiovisual media, urbanization and openness to the world – traditional values of the rural, small communities disappeared in favor of the individual and its self-fulfillment. Instead of an unconditional respect for authority, customs and traditions, cultural liberalism praises individual autonomy, equality of men and women as well as the acceptance of homosexuality, contraception and abortion. Concerning public security, comprehension and prevention are valued higher than

Danny Boy and Nonna Mayer, Presses de Sciences Po, 1997, p.130-78 ; Sniderman et al. *The Outsider: Prejudice and Politics in Italy*, Princeton University Press 2000 ; Mayer, N., *Op cit.*, 2002

⁸⁷ Lipset, *Political Man, The social bases of politics*, The John Hopkins University Press, 1981, p.478 (Double Day & Company, 1960)

⁸⁸ Houtman, D., *Lipset and “Working-Class” Authoritarianism*, American Sociologist, special issue in honor of Seymour Martin Lipset, vol. 34, Spring/Summer 2003, pp. 86-105

⁸⁹ Kriesi *et al*, *Op cit.*, p.7

⁹⁰ Houtman, D., Achterberg, P., & Derks, A., *Farewell to the leftist working class*, Transaction Publishers, 2008; Inglehart, R., *Modernization and postmodernization, cultural, economic and political change in 43 societies*, Princeton University Press, 1997, p.4 N.B. We should not forget the way one’s Weltanschauung is potentially influenced by merely attending primary school (and lower education in general). As Laurent Joffrin noted, “Le peuple [...] élevé qu’il fut à l’école communale, en a gardé les idées naïvement républicaines et patriotiques.” In: Joffrin, L., *Histoire de la gauche caviar*, Éditions Robert Laffont, S.A., 2006, p.177

⁹¹ Schweisguth, É., *Le libéralisme culturel aujourd’hui*, Cevipof, 2007, http://www.cevipof.com/bpf/barometre/vague1/synthese/BPF-V1_R06_ES.pdf

repression, law and order, while personal development and universal values are preferred to nationalism and patriotism.⁹²

Meanwhile these cultural issues – such as national identity, immigration, European integration, law and order, etc. – are gradually mixing with, if not prevailing over classically economic ‘bread and butter’ issues like (un)employment, wages or redistribution. As the Dutch sociologists Achterberg, Houtman and Van Der Waal concluded in their provocative article *Class is not dead! It has been buried alive*: “We may not so much have been witnessing a decline in class voting since World War II, as typically maintained, but rather an increase in cultural voting.”⁹³ This tendency might be reinforced by the ongoing economic crisis.⁹⁴

One of the most interesting questions that rises in this part of the thesis is to know to what extent the increasing conflict related to cultural issues reflects the supposed cleavage between higher and lower educated citizens. Is this there a correlation between education level and policy preferences pertaining to individual liberty and social order? And how is this represented by the different political parties?

In order to answer that last question, let’s begin with cultural liberalism. In the 1970s, the two main parties on the left side of the political spectrum, the Parti Socialiste and the Parti Communiste were divided in this matter; with the socialist New Left (PS) on the one side, and the communist Old left on the other – the latter defending a more conservative position. In the 1980s however, this difference gradually disappeared when the PCF adopted standpoints that were increasingly liberal concerning cultural themes.⁹⁵ The same goes for the right-winged RPR (later UMP). Being an oppositional party in the late 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, they radicalized their stance on immigration and law and order, in order to distinguish themselves from the centrist UDF – a party that also shifted to the right in a cultural way when the socialists came into power.

Yet exactly due to this radicalization, the RPR and the UDF would rapidly foster the fertile soil on which the Front National could grow electorally. Especially when these parties started to rally behind cultural liberalism, in the course of the 1980s, the FN, that now

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Achterberg Peter H.J., Houtman Dick., Van der Waal Jeroen , *Class Is Not Dead! It Has Been Buried Alive*, Politics and Society, 2008, p. 403-426.

⁹⁴ Mayer, N., *The Political Impact of the Crisis on the French « Working Class » : More to the Right ?*, Popular Reactions to the Great Recession, Clay Room, Nuffield College, Oxford University, June 24-26, 2011

⁹⁵ Kriesi et.al., *Op. Cit.*, p.100-1

founded its ideas legitimized, was the only player on this side of the political field – a position that they would exploit by radicalizing their own discourse.⁹⁶

A similar tendency took place in France concerning the different stances towards European integration. Here too, the left was traditionally divided between Europhiles (PS) and Europhobes (PCF), with the latter remaining critical towards more European influence. Meanwhile in the early 1980s, the RPR abandoned its nationalist tone, leaving a political space open for the Front National (a party originally favorable to European integration), that increasingly capitalized Eurosceptic sentiments and denounced the European project. Furthermore, the FN, from an almost neoliberal stance in the 1980s, started to embrace a more moderated view in the socio-economic domain during the 1990s and 2000s, becoming increasingly protectionist and opposed to globalization and its open border trade.⁹⁷

Combining anti-immigrant, law and order, cultural as well as economic protectionist standpoints, the contemporary FN occupies a very distinct position in the French political landscape. Mainstream parties however – the UMP in front – have a hard time drawing their political profile vis-à-vis this ghost that they helped to bring fourth themselves. Nowadays they are especially haunted when it comes to immigration and nationalist standpoints, standpoints monopolized by the FN. In contrast to the PS (and MoDem – let aside the Greens), the UMP thereby increasingly gives up its adversarial attitude with respect to the party led by Marine Le Pen.⁹⁸

From this point of view, the party most strongly opposing the right-wing Front National is not so much the (extreme) left-wing Party Communiste, but rather the social-liberal parties, such as the ecologist EELV. Not only concerning nationalism and European integration, but also concerning cultural liberalism, these parties defend diametrically opposed standpoints compared to the FN (also their names *Front National* versus *Europe Écologie Les Verts* indicate this tense relation).

The existence of multiple oppositional aspects however, suggests that a mere nation-cosmopolite cleavage does not suffice to explain the contemporary political spectrum in France. Could the supposed cleavage along educational lines not contribute to a better understanding of this issue? But what then does the notion “cleavage” stand for? And how should we use it?

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p.99-104

⁹⁷ Bréchon, P., *La France aux urnes. Soixante ans d'histoire électorale*, La documentation française, édition 2009, p.68

⁹⁸ Kriesi et.al., *Op. cit.*, p.104-5

When hearing the word “cleavage”, one might intuitively think of a deep and structural divide between two social groups, caused by some sort of conflict. Yet, since its introduction by Lipset and Rokkan in the 1960s⁹⁹, the concept has been subject of a long-standing scientific debate. Probably one of the most famous definitions in this debate is proposed by Bartolini and Mair in 1990¹⁰⁰. These two authors stated that three elements are needed before a political conflict or situation can be called a cleavage. First, a social-structural element. This can be religion, class or education. Second, a collective identity of social groups. Third, Bartolini and Mair demand an element of organizational manifestation – a form of collective and durable socio-political action. A cleavage, in this view, necessarily is a “compounded divide”¹⁰¹ containing shared political preferences, interests and a strong organization.

How does that apply to a possible divide between higher and lower educated? In 1968, Allardt already suggested that the “educational revolution” (the enormous increase of people going to university in the 1960s and 1970s) could produce new cleavages.¹⁰² And more recently, in 2009, Stubager found evidence in Denmark for education-based group identity and consciousness.¹⁰³ In France however, this shared consciousness (the second element of Bartolini and Mair’s cleavage definition) probably is more complicated. Already because the French language does not provide a clear equivalent for the term *higher educated*, neither for its antonym: *lower educated*.¹⁰⁴ The (rare) term that probably comes closest is *diplômés* – as opposed to the *sous-* or *moins-diplômés*.

This linguistic complication and the socio-cultural absence of a similar distinction also apply to the third element put forward by Bartolini and Mair: organizational manifestation, i.e. collective forms of political engagement along educational lines. This thesis, analyzing the

⁹⁹ Lipset, S. M., & Rokkan, S. Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction. In S. M. Lipset & S. Rokkan (Eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, The Free Press-Collier-Macmillan, 1967, p. 1-64

¹⁰⁰ Bartolini, S., & Mair, P., *Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability: The Stability of European Electorates, 1885-1985*, Cambridge University Press, 1990

¹⁰¹ Bornschier, S., *Cleavage politics in old and new democracies*, Living Reviews in Democracy, Volume 1, 2009, <http://democracy.livingreviews.org/index.php/lrd/article/view/lrd-2009-6/18>

¹⁰² Allardt, E., Past and Emerging Political Cleavages. In O. Stammer (Ed.), *Party Systems, Party Organizations, and the Politics of New Masses, Beiträge zur 3. Internationalen Konferenz über Vergleichende Politische Soziologie, Berlin, 15.- 20. Januar 1968* (p. 66-76). Institut für politische Wissenschaft an der Freien Universität Berlin.

¹⁰³ Stubager, R., *Education-based group identity and consciousness in the authoritarian-libertarian value conflict*, European Journal of Political Research, 48 (2), 2009, p. 204-233

¹⁰⁴ The absence of this clear distinction – higher vs. lower educated – seems to reflect the limited amount of French sociological and electoral research that has been done on politics from an educational perspective; this is rather done in terms of social classes concerning income, professional groups, age, sex etc.

changing French socio-political landscape, therefore requires a different, broader definition of the notion “cleavage”, mainly focusing on the first criteria Bartolini and Mair used. A cleavage is thus understood as *the division between higher and lower educated citizens in terms of political attitudes, interests and influence*. By using this definition, one of the great advantages of the notion cleavage stays intact: the ability to combine individual political behavior with macro-historical transformations. Moreover, the essence of this thesis is not to know whether we can speak of a new cleavage in the strictest (Bartolinian and Mairian) sense of the word, but rather to understand whether changes in the three domains analyzed in this chapter, have led to an increasing importance of education level as an explicative factor in the functioning of, and disaffection within, French democracy.

This directly leads us to another important question: what do education levels actually mean in France?

3. Education in France

3.1 *The education level rises, but the gap is getting wider*

In 2009, the two French sociologists Christian Baudelot and Roger Establet were able to repeat a message they already propounded twenty years earlier: “Le niveau monte, mais les écarts se creusent.”¹⁰⁵ In fact, it seems to be a rather chronic problem in the French education system: “Depuis l’origine, l’école française s’acquitte en effet dans des conditions satisfaisantes de la formation des élites, mais elle échoue à donner à tous une formation solide. L’élévation du plafond n’entraîne pas automatiquement le relèvement du plancher.”

This does not mean that the *plancher* cannot rise. At the end of 1980s 30 to 40 per cent of the students left school without a diploma, while today this figure dropped to less than 10 percent. According to the OECD, in the same year, 2009, just 12 per cent of the adult French population had maximally followed pre-primary or primary education.¹⁰⁶ The difference however, is that back then it was much easier to find a job than it is in these days. In other words: “Ce n’est pas tant l’école qui aurait « démissionné » que le marché du travail qui est devenu plus exigeant.”¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile, for the unqualified, the absence of a diploma has become “un handicap de plus en plus incontournable”.¹⁰⁸ The contemporary French youth even seems to be divided into “deux jeunesses”: those with and those without a diploma.¹⁰⁹ Not in the last place because the education level on the top increases too. In about twenty years, the number of students obtaining a higher education diploma has more than doubled – as shows figure 4.1. Furthermore, the number of adults possessing a secondary education level diploma increased significantly since the 1980s (see figure 4.3). Younger generations contain more and more graduates who benefited of the opening of secondary and tertiary education in the 1980s

¹⁰⁵ Baudelot, C. & Establet, R., *Le niveau monte*, Seuil, 1989 ; *L’élitisme républicain, L’école française à l’épreuve des comparaisons internationales*, Éditions de Seuil et La République des Idées, 2009, p.30 (More than 40 years before, Pierre Bourdieu already observed that : « L’école favorise les favorisés et défavorise les défavorisés », it still is a truism in France)

¹⁰⁶ Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, *Education at a glance*. 2011, see: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/47/48630299.pdf>, p.38

¹⁰⁷ Baudelot, C. & Establet, R (2009), *Op cit.*, p.31

¹⁰⁸ Cahuc, P., Carcillo, S., Galland, O. & Zylberberg, A., *La Machine à trier : Comment la France divise sa jeunesse*, Eyrolles, 2011, p.7

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

and 1990s.¹¹⁰ Interestingly, this strong increase of graduated people on the French labor market did not lead to a devaluation of their diploma, but rather to a reinforcement of the statutory advantages their diplomas give access to. This leads to a very paradoxical evolution: while the education system democratized, the educational statuses became more and more unequal.¹¹¹

At the same time however, the educational system stayed fixed on the classical culture favorable to children stemming from highly educated social classes – an educational system dominated by its abstract, theoretical and academic character, with many lessons and ditto examinations. Together with the ever increasing “lutte des places” for the best French schools, this makes that social hierarchies are reproduced easily in France via educational ways. Pisa research in 2009 shows the same image: there are only a few countries in the western world where the diploma is more important for social success than in France.¹¹²

Still we did not answer one essential question: what are the actual relations between French diplomas? What does secondary, tertiary, higher or lower education actually mean in the country with its *École Républicaine*?

3.2 Education levels

Often, education levels are divided into three categories: tertiary, secondary and primary, for example, or high, medium and low. In their annual rapport on education, however, the OECD uses the international ISCED-based partition of education levels. Figure 4.1 shows the results among French adults in 2009:¹¹³

Table 3.1 Education level in France

	Pre-primary and primary education	Lower education	Upper secondary education	Tertiary education Type B (practical)	Tertiary education Type A (theoretical)	Advanced research programs
France	12	18	41	17	12	1

¹¹⁰ INSEE: http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=NATTEF07232

¹¹¹ See also: Maurin, E., *Op. cit.*, p.57-8

¹¹² Martin, L., *Une société de classement*, Published on the website of the Observatoire des inégalités, May 15, 2011, http://www.inegalites.fr/spip.php?article1440&id_mot=28#nh5 (seen: May 8, 2012)

¹¹³ Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, *Op. cit.* p.38

Projecting these numbers on a tripartite perspective, 30 percent of the French adults is ‘below upper secondary education’, 41 percent ‘upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary’ and 29 percent ‘tertiary’ – or in other terms: higher educated.

In French, as we saw before, there does not exist a clear equivalent for the term *higher educated*, neither for *lower educated*. Luckily the OECD division of education levels largely corresponds with most French research – for example the recent Cevipof post-electoral analyses – whereby a pentamerous degree distinction is used. Based on this and the European Social Survey (October 2011)¹¹⁴, which distinguishes 26 French education levels, it was possible to create a quintuple education level set in which OECD data, French political research as well as ESS data are comparable (see also: Appendix I)

Table 3.2 Quintuple education level set

1.	Primary education
2.	Secondary education
3.	Baccalaureate or equivalent
4.	Baccalaureate + 2 years of higher education
5.	Higher education

Following this distinction, higher educated in France obtained at least a university bachelor diploma – *la licence* – while lower educated (i.e. primary and secondary education) maximally have a so-called *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* (CAP) or a *brevet d'études professionnelles* (BEP). With this information it now becomes even clearer how strong the rise of the education level has been over the last decades.

Table 3.3 Evolution of education level in France

	55-64 years		35-44 years		25-34 years	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Primary	50,6	41,9	15,6	15,1	15,5	18,3
Secondary	21,7	29,2	25,8	33,2	15,4	21,7
Baccalaureate	12,1	11,2	17,2	14,5	23,0	23,3
Bac + 2	7,9	5,7	15,5	12,3	21,4	16,5
Higher educated	7,7	11,9	15,8	15,0	24,8	20,3
	100	100	100	100	100	100

¹¹⁴ ESS Round 5: European Social Survey Round 5 Data (2010). Data file edition 1.0. Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data.

Meanwhile, the higher educated still form a minority, a growing minority perhaps, but nonetheless a minority. Even more if we take into account the French educational *crème de la crème*, those graduated from the grandes écoles – especially the graduates of the ENA, HEC, Polytechnique, ENS and Sciences Po form a very small, but very influential group. In the mid-seventies only one on the 1000 French young people entered the principle grandes écoles, a number that did not significantly change over the following decades. Yet the disproportion with the other students, 1 million in 1980, 2 million in 1995, only got worse.¹¹⁵ In other words: “La plupart des élèves des grandes écoles y apprennent surtout que, pour avoir franchi à vingt ans la port sacrée, ils sont destinés à s’installer tout en haut de la pyramide sociale.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.384

¹¹⁶ Peyrefite, A., *Op cit.*, p.384

4. First domain: Socio-demographic representation

4.1 Methods & Data

It is time to analyze how the educational differences that we observed in the precedent chapter turn out in a socio-political perspective. Yet, to obtain a better understanding of the central issue treated in this thesis (captured in its central question: *to what extent is there a socio-political cleavage between the higher and lower educated in France and how has this changed over time?*), we need to descend from the abstract notions of democracy, participation and representation to more concrete indicators which correspond to the three following sub-questions:

1. *To what extent are the French political arena's dominated by the higher educated, and how has this changed over time?*
2. *To what extent is there a cleavage in socio-political participation among higher and lower educated citizens, and how has this changed over time?*
3. *To what extent is there a cleavage concerning policy preferences along educational lines, and how has this changed over time?*

Taken together, the answers to these three sub questions might support the hypothesis that the less educated are underrepresented in French democracy. Such an underrepresentation, however, can only be called structural, if we can observe an increasing dominance of higher educated citizens in all of the three indicated domains. Precisely this broader, ternary perspective shows that this thesis is not about getting a detailed image of one single trend or phenomenon (as would be the case in a more qualitative approach), but rather about putting many notions and trends together in one comprehensive overview. As we saw before, the concept “diploma democracy” is vast and contains multiple aspects, as does the socio-political context in France. For this reason we have opted for a quantitative approach.

This chapter seeks an answer to the first sub question: *To what extent are the French political arena's dominated by the higher educated, and how has this changed over time?* In order to answer this question, the table 4.1 (see next page) shows the data and indicators that will be used. After having discussed these indicators and having put the available data in its context, a conclusion will provide an answer to the central question of this chapter.

Table 4.1 Indicators

Domain	Indicators	Time span	Source
Socio-demographic representation	- Presidents	1958 – 2012	Who's who in France? ¹¹⁷ (WIWIF)
	- Government members	1960 – 2010	<i>Ibidem</i>
	- Members of Parliament	1848 – 2006	Best, H. & Gaxie, D. ¹¹⁸
	- Political party leadership		
	▪ Parti communiste	1947 – 2007	Maïtron ¹¹⁹ /WIWIF
	▪ Parti socialiste	1969 – 2009	WIWIF
	▪ UMP	1988 – 2010	<i>Ibidem</i>
	▪ Front National	2011	<i>Ibidem</i>
	- Political party officials		
	▪ Front National	1978 – 1990	Sofres ¹²⁰
	▪ PC, PS, ME, RPR	1990	Sofres
	- Union leadership		
▪ CGT	1967 – 2012	Maïtron/WIWIF	
▪ FO	1948 – 2012	<i>Ibidem</i>	
▪ CFTD	1961 – 2012	<i>Ibidem</i>	

4.1.1 Presidency

Why are some political arenas included in this table while others are not? Concerning the first category, the presidency, this choice seems to be rather obvious. The French Fifth Republic (founded in 1958), after all, is characterized by a presidential style of politics, personal leadership and a diminished power of the National Assembly, compared to its predecessor: the Fourth Republic. Even more so after the Algerian war, in 1962 when Charles de Gaulle – in a highly controversial move – introduced the direct election of the president.¹²¹ The president of the Fifth Republic, since that time, possesses far-reaching power in period of crisis, is able to dissolve the National Assembly when he thinks necessary, nominates the First minister, and obtains the possibility to call referenda. And even though the presidential mandate has been reduced from seven to five years – with the support of Jacques Chirac in

¹¹⁷ *Who's who in France?*, Editions Lafitte-Hébrard, Editions used in this thesis: 1953-2012

¹¹⁸ Best, H. & Gaxie, D., *Detours to Modernity: Long-Term Trends of Parliamentary Recruitment in Republican France 1848-1999*, in Best, H. & Cotta, M., *Parliamentary representatives in Europe 1848 - 2000, Legislative recruitment and careers in eleven European countries*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.88-137

¹¹⁹ *Le Maitron : Dictionnaire biographique mouvement ouvrier, mouvement social de 1940 à mai 68*, Volume 1 – 6, Les éditions de l'Atelier, 2006 - 2010

¹²⁰ Duhamel, O. & Jaffré, J (dir.) *L'état de l'opinion*, 1991, Éditions de Seuil, 1991 & Duhamel, O. & Jaffré, J (dir.) *L'état de l'opinion*, 1992, Éditions de Seuil, 1992

¹²¹ Brouard, S., Appleton, A. and Mazur, A.G., *The French Fifth Republic at Fifty, Beyond Stereotypes*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009

2000 –, the most important political power in France still lies in the hands of the *chef de l'État*.

4.1.2 Government members

Maurice Duverger was the first political scientist to coin an adequate term for the functioning of the Fifth Republic: *semi-présidentiel* was the notion that would form the basis for his influential concept.¹²² Besides the two features described earlier – election by universal suffrage, and the disposal of considerable powers – the third important characteristic of the so-called ‘semi-presidential government’ is that the President has “opposite him a prime minister who possesses executive and governmental powers and can stay in office only if parliament does not express its opposition to him.”¹²³

In general, the President is responsible for the main lines of national policy, in particular defense policy and foreign affairs, while the First minister takes care of the day to day economy.¹²⁴ He and his government members – appointed by the President – thereby have the following task, described in article XX of the constitution: “Le Gouvernement détermine et conduit la politique de la nation.” Translated into practical reality, this definition of governmental objectives mainly means the creation of laws – *les projets de lois* – as well as the decrees.

Yet, how important and mediagenic this work may be – French government members, led by the First minister are the essential connection between the Parliament and the President – in the end they mainly represent the Latin (and Old-French) meaning of the word minister: a *servant* – a function description, by the way, that Charles De Gaulle liked to remind to his ministers.¹²⁵ Skillfully using the *presidential bias* not only he, but all French presidents after him regularly reshuffled their cabinets in order to restore personal popularity or to respond to critique.¹²⁶

¹²² See: Duverger, M. *Institutions politiques et Droit constitutionnel*. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1970. *Échec au roi*, 1978. Duverger M. *A new political system model– semi-presidential government*, European Journal of Political Research, Number 8, 1980: 165–187.

¹²³ Bahro, H., Bayerlein, B.H., Veser, E., *Duverger's concept: Semi-presidential government revisited*. European Journal of Political Research. Volume 34, Number 2 / October, 1998. p.1

¹²⁴ Brouard, S., Appleton, A. and Mazur, A.G., *Op cit.*, p.4

¹²⁵ Chavannes, M., *Frankrijk achter de schermen. De stille revolutie van een trotse natie*, Prometheus/NRC Handelsblad, 2004. p.149

¹²⁶ Grossman, E., *The President's Choice? Government and Cabinet Turnover under the Fifth Republic*, in: West European Politics, 2009, volume 32, N.2, p.268-286

This regular change of government members makes it harder to analyze the education level of different cabinets over time. Therefore, and because of the enormous amount of government members since the foundation of the Fifth Republic, governments will be examined every five years, from 1960 till 2010, on the first of January. In that way, we can schematically follow the educational developments of French Government Ministers over time.

4.1.3 Parliament

As we saw before, the National Assembly lost much of its power with the adoption of the new constitution in 1958. Ten years later, Philip M. Williams pessimistically observed that “the Parliament of France, once among the most powerful, became one of the weakest.”¹²⁷ Instead of maximum democratic representation, De Gaulle, in the early days of the Fifth Republic, strived for a solid parliamentary support. Or as he once explained his vision on democracy: “La démocratie ne consiste pas à exprimer des contradictions, mais à indiquer une direction.”¹²⁸ For that reason, the proportional system, as in the Fourth Republic, was exchanged for a majoritarian one – especially the MPs of the ruling party would become an oversized block of yes-men.

Nonetheless, with the centrality of the State and its institutions being weakened by European integration on the one side and decentralization on the other, the National assembly represents the most important place for political debate in France.¹²⁹ As Olivier Costa and Éric Kerrouche stated in their book on the French Members of Parliament: “L’Assemblée nationale reste l’arène centrale de la confrontation des partis et le lieu privilégié de formation et de sélection des élites politiques. Les députés sont également les animateurs les plus en vue de la vie politique, que ce soit à l’échelle nationale ou locale”.¹³⁰ On a symbolic level too, the Parliament has a great democratic importance: this is the place where the *volonté du peuple* is divided, where the representatives of the people make the laws, *la proposition de loi*, and vote for them. Moreover, as the two authors argue, the legislative elections still give rise to a large participation and a strong political competition.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Williams, P., *The French Parliament: 1958-1967*, George Allen & Unwin, 1968, p.120

¹²⁸ Peyrefitte, A., *Op. cit.*, p.99

¹²⁹ Costa, O. & Kerrouche, E. *Op. Cit.*, p.10-11

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Costa, O. & Kerrouche, E., *Op. cit.*, p.9

While Costa and Kerrouche's book gives good insights in the actual state of the Assemblée, the political scientists Heinrich Best and Daniel Gaxie – in the standard work *Parliamentary representatives in Europe 1848 - 2000*¹³² – provide the possibility to dive deeper into democratic history, while following the educational traces of parliamentary representation – not only for France compared to other European countries, but also for (French) political parties in particular.

4.1.4 The Senate

Although the Senate certainly has its powers¹³³, of all the French political arenas it presumably forms the least researched one – even less than the national assembly.¹³⁴ This may be due to its rather withdrawn existence; or maybe the result of its – apparently – modest importance in the semi-presidential system. Anyhow, data are extremely hard to find; there has not been any research concerning the education level of Senators in France. Furthermore, the production of a data set containing such information is complicated because of the shifting mandates – one third of the seats are replaced every three year. Together with the quantity of work and obstructions with measuring, the most important argument however, not to involve the Senate in this thesis – nor institutions like the *Conseil d'État* or the *Conseil Constitutionnel* – is that they are not founded by direct representation. This fact does not only alienate them from the people and their political perception, but also from my central research question.

¹³² Best, H. & Gaxie, D., *Detours to Modernity: Long-Term Trends of Parliamentary Recruitment in Republican France 1848-1999*, in Best, H. & Cotta, M., *Parliamentary representatives in Europe 1848 - 2000, Legislative recruitment and careers in eleven European countries*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.88-137

¹³³ As political commentator Alain Duhamel sharply compared the one House of Representatives to the other (*Sénat, le triomphe de l'anomalie*, Libération, September 25, 2008): “le Sénat n'est pas, au sein de la République, un figurant de second rang. Son président assure l'intérim en cas d'empêchement du chef de l'Etat. Il détient des pouvoirs de nomination équivalents à ceux du président de l'Assemblée nationale. Dans le processus législatif, le Palais-Bourbon [where the National assembly resides, KD] possède certes le dernier mot mais le palais du Luxembourg [home of the French Senate, KD], moins pressé, moins dépendant, souvent plus compétent, infléchit fréquemment les textes. Le gouvernement n'est pas responsable devant lui mais ne peut pas le dissoudre. En matière constitutionnelle, le Sénat possède les mêmes prérogatives que l'Assemblée nationale. On ne peut passer outre son obstruction. Son régime électoral ne peut être modifié qu'avec son consentement. Dans l'immense domaine européen, il n'a cessé de grignoter des pouvoirs supplémentaires. Le Sénat travaille bien sur les textes législatifs mais possède les moyens de bloquer les réformes essentielles. Il ne s'en fait pas faute, il l'a prouvé dix fois. Avec son collège électoral, il demeure l'éternel frein à main de la République.”

¹³⁴ Costa, O. & Kerrouche, E., *Op. cit.* p.16

4.1.5 Political parties

Although Charles de Gaulle predicted the end of the “régime des partis” almost half a century ago,¹³⁵ its influence would only grow. More than that, French political appeared to become “the designated vehicle” for political representation in the Fifth Republic; “the central collective entity which dictates a program of policy preferences to be supported in legislature.”¹³⁶ But which political parties actually matter in the context of this thesis?

At first sight, France mostly resembles a political Mesopotamia. Or as Grunberg and Haegel stated: ‘a quasi two-party system with one government’¹³⁷ – just as in the United States, the president of the Fifth Republic has always originated from the Gaullist or the Socialist Party. Yet, the appearance of two tranquilly flowing currents through the French political landscape is rather deceptive. In the country where the conceptual distinction between left and right was born – during the French revolution –, both sides of the political spectrum are represented in more than one way.

Actually, the Fifth Republic too has longtime been dominated by four political parties (from left to right): the communist party (PCF), the socialist party (PS), the center-right UDF the right-winged RPR. In 1974, with the presidential elections, these parties – and their satellites – obtained more than nine out of ten votes. On the threshold of the third millennium, 28 years later, this figure dropped to just 50,3 per cent (in Parliament a similar development is observable: in 1981 the four parties obtained 93,6 per cent of the votes vs. 67,1 per cent in 2002). In the meantime, especially the PCF experienced a long-term decline, while issue-specific parties like the greens (EELV) and the National Front (FN) entered on the political scene – and in the foreseeable future, they do not seem to leave.

In this thesis, these six parties will be examined. This number is not only the result of historical reasons and political importance, but also one of a rather practical consideration: the numerous small parties that have appeared (and disappeared) over the last decades are often ephemeral and particularly unsuitable for a structural, longitudinal analysis.¹³⁸ Thereby we would also face a lack of data that would further complicate a similar approach. The six

¹³⁵Shields, J.G., *Political Representation in France: A Crisis of Democracy?*, Parliamentary Affairs Vol. 59 No. 1, 2006, 118–137

¹³⁶ Converse, P.E. & Pierce, R., *Political Representation in France*, Harvard University Press, 1986, p.708

¹³⁷ Cited in: Grossman, E. & Sauger, N., *The End of Ambiguity? Presidents versus Parties or the Four Phases of the Fifth Republic*. In: *West European Politics, special issue: The institutions of the French 5th Republic at 50*, WEP No2, 2007, p.246

¹³⁸ One thinks of the *Mouvement cléocratique de France* or the *Parti du plaisir* – both were hopelessly running for presidency during the elections in 2012.

parties in this thesis by contrast, have all participated in the legislative and presidential elections since – at least halfway – the 1970s – and thereby they all reached – at least once – more than 7,5 percent of the votes.

Using several editions of the *Who's who in France*, the education level of presidential candidates as well as that of party leaders, being the two most important and influential functions within French political parties will be analyzed. Furthermore, the national secretaries will be examined (also called 'bureau politique' within the PCF) – by making use of the same sources. Together with this and thanks to a sociological inquiry by *Sofres* and *Le Monde* concerning the party officials in France in 1990, we will have an insight not only in the supposed dominance of higher educated in the PS but also in that of other parties.

4.1.6 Unions

Just after the Second World War, the French unions, taken together, had more than 35 million members. Yet, in the following decades they would experience, slowly but surely, a severe drop in their membership files, falling under the bar of ten million already before the end of the century – even despite the unionist revival in the 1970s.¹³⁹ Today, with only 8.2% of its labor force registered as a union member, France finds itself at the bottom of the list in comparison to other European countries.¹⁴⁰

Still, the unions form an important link in the French political decision making, between laborers and the politicians who shape the labor policy. They are therefore, just like the political parties, examined from two perspectives – in terms of socio-demographic representation on the one hand, and its participatory counterpart on the other. In this part the focus is put on the first perspective, on the examination of a prophecy proclaimed more than half a century ago.

In his essay *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, published in 1958, the eccentric English sociologist Michael Young stated about the future of the union executive: “To sustain top management they had to recruit cadets from higher education, even if it meant incurring hostility of the trade unions to introducing outsiders, particularly well-educated outsiders. The union leaders claimed, in the interest of their own members, that a man who had ‘come up the hard way’ by working his passage upwards was inherently superior to others of purely academic education. But that was before education came to be held in the high respect it later

¹³⁹ Andolfatto, D. & Labbé, D., *Histoire des syndicats : 1906 - 2006*. Éditions de Seuil, p.313

¹⁴⁰ Mathieu, L. *Op. cit.*, p.31

enjoyed. The view was obvious nonsense – there was no harder way of coming up than the grammar school.”¹⁴¹

At least on one point Young was right: education came to be held in high respect. But does this also go for the unions – ancient bastions of lower educated blue collars who did come up the traditional hard way? The answer might be interesting, not so much from an explicative view on the supposed domination of higher educated – something that would go beyond the possible ambitions of this master thesis –, but merely in relation to socio-demographical identification.

The central question in that respect, *to what extent are the unions dominated by higher educated and how has this changed over time*, will therefore be answered by analyzing the education level of the leaders and the executives of the three most important unions in France: la Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), la Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT) and Force Ouvrière (FO). Besides their historical and membership related dominance, another reason for this selection is that the top management of the third and fourth largest union in France, respectively the CFTC and the CFE-CGC – unlike that of the three largest unions – does not appear in the French political reference book *Personnel politique français* by Pierre Avril¹⁴² (mentioning the composition of the unions top management), nor in the *Who's who in France*. Finally and regrettably, the education level of lower officials in all unions, were untraceable too.

4.2 Putting data into context

In this part, the indicators and data that have just been discussed will be put in their respective context. Hereby the same order is preserved. Afterwards the conclusion will analyze whether we can speak of an increasing dominance of the higher educated in the most important French political arena's.

4.2.1 Presidents

Among the French presidents in the Fifth republic, not only the importance of their function, but also the level of their diploma shows a continuance. As we can observe in table 4.2, all the seven inhabitants of the Élysée since 1958 went to university, or, in most cases, to a *grande*

¹⁴¹ Young, M., *The rise of the meritocracy*, Transaction Publishers, 1994, p.73 (Thames & Hudson, 1958)

¹⁴² Avril, P., *Personnel politique français 1870 - 1988*. Presses universitaires France, 1989

école – and often frequented several of them. The only exception is Nicolas Sarkozy, who finished his studies in law at the university Paris X – Nanterre, but failed to obtain a diploma at the prestigious Parisian administration school Sciences Po.¹⁴³

Table 4.2 Presidential education level in France

Period in office	Name	Education level	Attended institution of education
1958 – 1968	Charles de Gaulle	Higher	École spéciale militaire de Saint-Cyr
1968 – 1974	Georges Pompidou	Higher	Sciences Po, Ecole Nationale Supérieure
1974 – 1981	Valéry Giscard d’Estaing	Higher	École Polytechnique, ENA
1981 - 1995	François Mitterrand	Higher	Université de Paris Sorbonne, Sciences Po
1995 – 2007	Jacques Chirac	Higher	Sciences Po, ENA
2007 – 2012	Nicolas Sarkozy	Higher	Université Paris X Nanterre
2012 – ...	François Hollande	Higher	Sciences Po, HEC, ENA

4.2.2 Government members

While French cabinets during the Fifth republic were frequently changed, the education level of its members stayed relatively unchanged; that is to say relatively high. Jean Blondel and Jean-Louis Thiébault, in their book about the background of government ministers in Western Europe (published in 1991), show, that among all the fifteen observed countries, post-war France finds itself in the top region of countries that had delivered the highest proportion of graduates among their ministers:¹⁴⁴

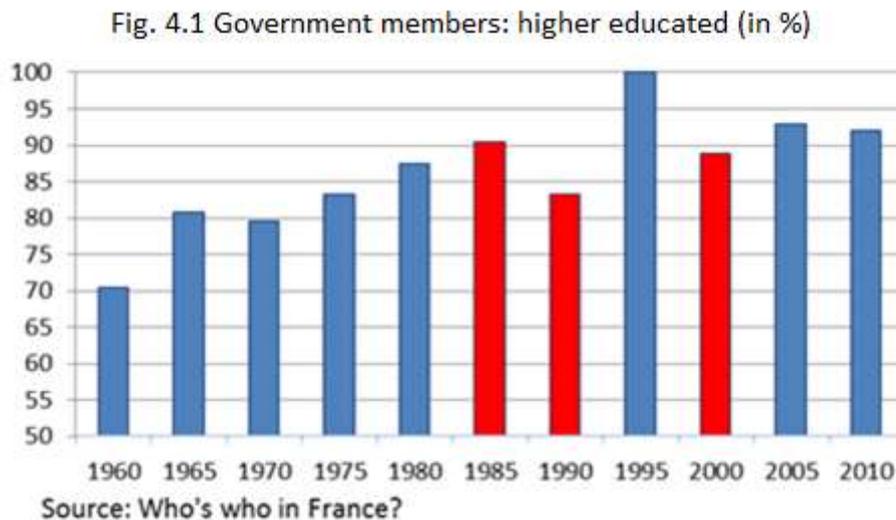
Table 4.3 French Ministers

Country	higher educated Ministers (in %)
Italy	94,9
Netherlands	90,1
Belgium	85,4
Luxembourg	84,2
France	82,6

¹⁴³ Source: Who’s who in France, 1958, 1972, 2011

¹⁴⁴ Blondel & Thiébault, *The Profession of Government Minister in Western Europe*, MacMillan, 1991, p.26 (data concerning the period 1945 – 1984)

Moreover, in the two decades after Blondel and Thiébault published their book, the education level of French government members did not decline. On the contrary; it continuously exceeded 82,6%.¹⁴⁵ Also, the most recent French governments, Fillon III (November 2010 – May 2012) and Ayrault (inaugurated on May 16 2012), contain 100% and 97,1% of higher educated members respectively.



Meanwhile, the share of *énarques* among the French government members shows an interesting tendency, already observed by former minister (and *énarque*) Alain Peyrefitte. Since 1958, he stated in 1976, “une nouvelle symbiose” was created between technicians and ministers: “Les deux milieux se sont rapprochés l’un de l’autre. Pendant que des élus se « technicisaient » des techniciens se faisaient élire.”¹⁴⁶ Administration and politics in that sense converged at the top of the French state, with more and more high-ranking officials – mostly graduated from the ENA or Sciences Po – becoming minister or state secretary. At the beginning of the 21st century, in the government of Lionel Jospin, 80% of the ministers originated from the civil service.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ The socialist governments are marked red, respectively Fabius (1984 - 1986), Rocard II (1988 - 1991) and Jospin (1997 - 2002). Furthermore, all governments in office during the selected years are analyzed on the first of January, because of the frequent changes in French governments. Finally because no educational information was available concerning Jacques Mellinck (1990) and Roger Romani (1995), 27 instead of 28 government members were taken into account. Bernard Vaillaint (2000) was a “technician-biologist”, but it is unclear whether he went to university or not. Therefore he is not taken into account here. In the following graphics, however, the whole government counts for Mr. Vaillaint surely did not attend the ENA neither Sciences Po.

¹⁴⁶ Peyrefitte, A., *Op. cit.*, p.355-6

¹⁴⁷ Algalarrondo, H., *Sécurité : la gauche contre le peuple*, Éditions Robert Laffont S.A., 2002, p.137

In any case, though, the government of the socialist ENA alumnus Lionel Jospin was extremely high educated, as show the figures 4.2 and 4.3. Moreover, these figures also point out that the dominance of higher educate applies to left-wing as well as right-wing governments. In 1986, for example, the percentage of énarques in the government Chirac II was 45. This number was only surpassed by Jospins government in which nine ministers (74 percent) were former students of the ENA.¹⁴⁸ This also gets clear when observing figure 4.2 and 4.3.

Fig. 4.2 Government members: énarques (in %)

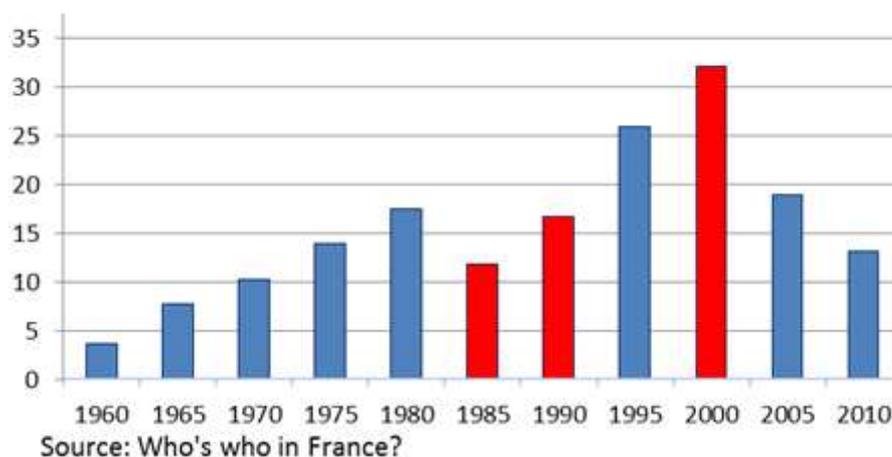
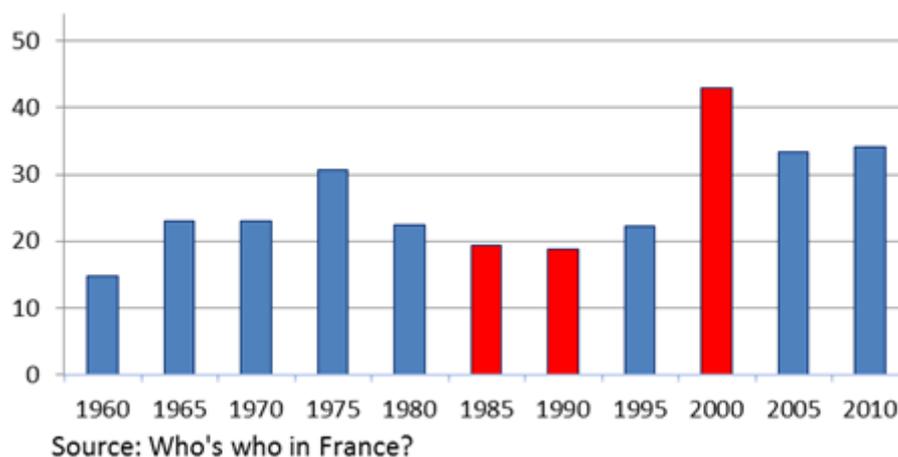


Fig. 4.3 Government members: alumni Sciences Po / École libre des Sciences Politiques

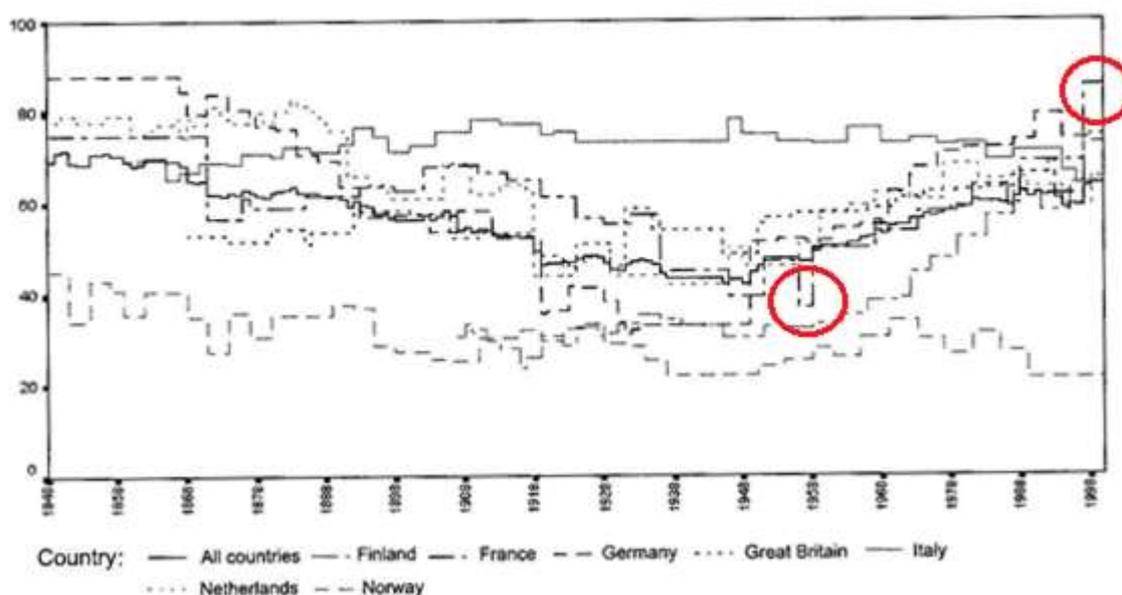


¹⁴⁸ Garrigou, A., *Les élites contre la République. Sciences Po et l'ENA*, Éditions de la découverte, 2001, p.73

4.2.3 Members of Parliament

From 1848 to the end of the twentieth century, in France, as in many other European countries, one can distinguish a clear ‘u-curve’ in the number of academically educated members of parliament. Among French MP’s this tendency is even stronger than that of most other European countries – reaching a relatively low point in the 1940s while providing the highest educated MP’s of whole Western Europe at the end of the twentieth century.¹⁴⁹

Fig. 4.4 European Parliaments 1848 -1999: university degree



In 2002, 82 per cent of all French MPs possessed a diploma superior to the baccalaureate; i.e. bac +2 or a university diploma. Their average number of study years after the baccalaureate was five, not in the last place because 14,5 per cent of the MPs in 2002 had written a PhD. Finally, 14,5 per cent of French parliament members were graduated from the prestigious institute of Sciences Po Paris (in 2006 the 53.000 Sciences Po alumni only represented 0,08 of the French population)¹⁵⁰; 6 per cent came from the ENA and 4,5 per cent from another *grande école*.

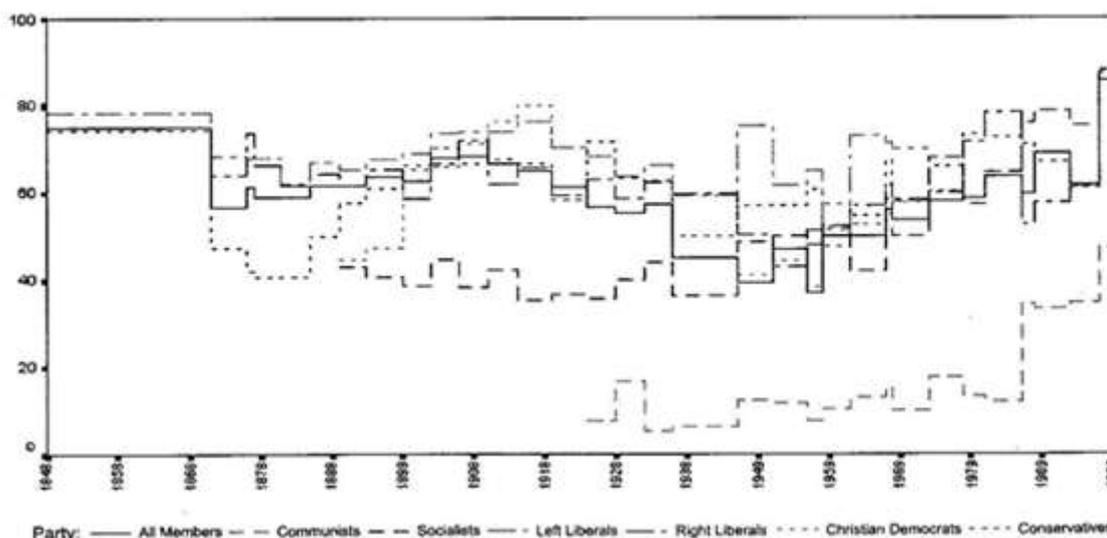
Yet, while the education level in the French national Assembly may largely surpass the French national average, its share of *énarques* stays relatively small compared to their presence in governmental positions. Fifty years ago they were only seven in Parliament, a number slowly climbing till 33 just before the elections of 1981 – representing 5,7 percent of

¹⁴⁹ Best, H. & Gaxie, D., *Op. cit.*, p.96

¹⁵⁰ Costa, O. & Kerrouche, E. *Op. Cit.*, p.43

the MPs. After “la vague rose”, as the socialist take-over in the same year is often called, it dropped to 5 percent, before stabilizing around 6 percent. Apparently a career in business or in government seems to be more attractive for the high classed alumni of the ENA.¹⁵¹ At the same time, the Parti Communiste, one of the rare French political parties without énarques in their parliamentary ranks, was the only party providing MPs with a relatively lower diploma than their political competitors.¹⁵² Nonetheless, also among the communist representatives, the academic level rose sharply rising during the last twenty years:

Fig. 4.5 French Parliament 1848-1999: university degree



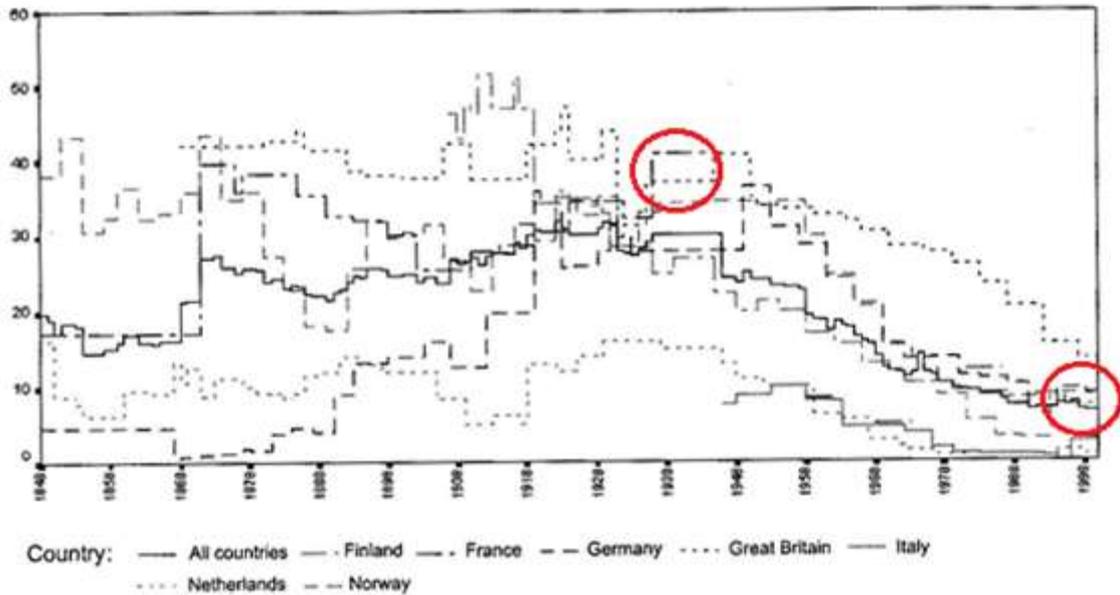
As the following graphic shows, the U-form of university degree among French MPs is inversely proportional to the basic education level of the members of the *Assemblée nationale*. Moreover we find – inversely – that France, halfway the twentieth century (especially in the heyday of the Front Populaire), had a relatively high level of *députés* with basic education as their highest education level. Yet, the share of deputies with lower education only dropped rapidly in the three decades following the Second World War. On the verge of the century almost nothing of it was left.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Lacam, J.-P., *La France, une République de mandarins ? Les hauts fonctionnaires et la politique*, Éditions complexe, 2000, p.126

¹⁵² Costa, O. & Kerrouche, E. *Op. cit.*, p.27.

¹⁵³ Best, H. & Cotta, M., *Op. cit.* p.497

Fig. 4.6 European Parliaments 1848-1999: basic education



Historically right-wing MPs originate more often from upper-class families with links to the traditional and economic bourgeoisie. They tend to have religious education, often in private denominational schools. Socialist and Communist MPs, on the contrary, have traditionally been educated in atheist families and in secular primary and secondary public schools. These differences in the socialization process help to understand why the state-church cleavage manifested itself as a left-right opposition.¹⁵⁴ Socialists and communist have a relatively lower origin in common. Yet, this educational left-right distinction does not hold anymore, for even among the communist members of the Assemblée a blue-collar profession has become an exception.¹⁵⁵

Figure 4.7 underlines the observation that blue-collar workers are almost not represented any longer socio-demographically, even among the leftist parties. Of course, their number decreased as well over the last decades: from 34 % of the population in 1958 to 22,8 % in 2006, while the number of white-collar workers reached 29,5 % in 2006.¹⁵⁶ Yet, the most important point is that, (partially) because of the increasing educational level among their representatives, “socialist and even Communist Parties are now more likely to be

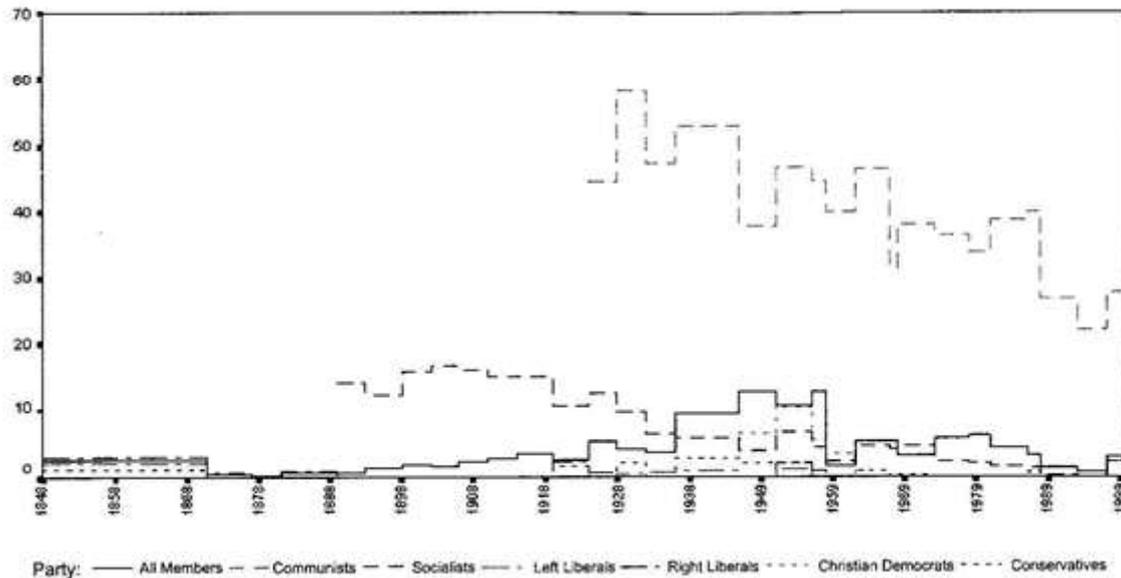
¹⁵⁴ Interestingly one might argue that in the hierarchical and centralized French society, the communist party (PCF) implanted itself as a secular, inversed substitute of the Catholic Church; with its international organization and universalist orientation (“Proletarians of all countries, unite!”), its discipline and dogmatic approach that does measures up for its Catholic counterpart.

¹⁵⁵ Costa, O. & Kerrouche, É., *Op. cit.* p.55

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.56

described as intellectual and public sector parties rather than working-class or even popular class parties.”¹⁵⁷

Fig. 4.7 France 1848-1999: blue collar workers



4.2.4 Political parties

Let us zoom in a bit on this crucial transformation of the left-wing parties. In the evening of 10 May 1981, it becomes clear that a new political wind will blow over the French political landscape in the years to come. With 51.8 percent of the votes in general, and 74% of the blue-collars¹⁵⁸, Francois Mitterrand has just been elected as the next president of France; the first socialist politician ever to enter the Elysée in the history of the Fifth Republic. Finally, the “virage à gauche” could be realized – a sociological curve that referred, on the one hand, to the leftist political strategy of the P.S., and on the other to its conception of French society in terms of a “front de classe”¹⁵⁹ – with one of its most important points: the voice of the lower educated popular classes had to be made ‘present again’ more equally.

¹⁵⁷ Best, H. & Gaxie, D., *Op. cit.*, p.135

¹⁵⁸ Pascal Perrineau, *Le parti socialiste à la recherche du vote populaire*, *Le Figaro*, 07.02.12, p.33

¹⁵⁹ Coined in 1971, the notion Front de Classe means that “autour des ouvriers, que le PS représente non exclusivement mais largement, se regroupent les éléments les plus nombreux et les plus exploités de la paysannerie, certaines couches de la petite bourgeoisie, victimes des monopoles et les représentants du secteur tertiaire (employés, ingénieurs, cadres et techniciens), eux aussi subissant des conditions insupportables de domination et d’exploitation.” « Guide du nouvel adhérent », *Le Poing et la Rose*, supplément au No. 69, juillet 1977, p.33. In Sofres, 1991, *Op. cit.*, p.223

Mitterrand, who, like many fellow party members at the time, frequently underlined his popular roots (in his case: a “fils de cheminot”¹⁶⁰), initially seemed to follow that representational ideal. For example by introducing four communist ministers – among whom two were lower educated. But the “virage à gauche” would quickly take another turn. In 1985, when not a single communist minister was left, 16,7% of the government members were former university professors, while both the education level and the number of énarques in the government were rising.

This development continued when the socialist government of (the énarque) Michel Rocard came into power after the two-year *cohabitation* between the left-wing president Mitterrand and right-wing Prime Minister Jacques Chirac. As the political analyst Jérôme Jaffré remarked afterwards: “Le gouvernement Rocard s’appuie sur les élites tout comme le faisait le Gouvernement Chirac. Certes, il ne s’agit pas des mêmes : économiques pour l’UDF et le RPR, culturelles pour les socialistes. Mais ce sont toujours des élites.”¹⁶¹ The leftist apogee of an elitist government, however, still took a few years in coming. As we saw before, it was the extremely high educated government of Lionel Jospin (1997-2002) that contained more énarques and Sciences Po alumni (33,3 and 42,9% respectively) than whatever government before.

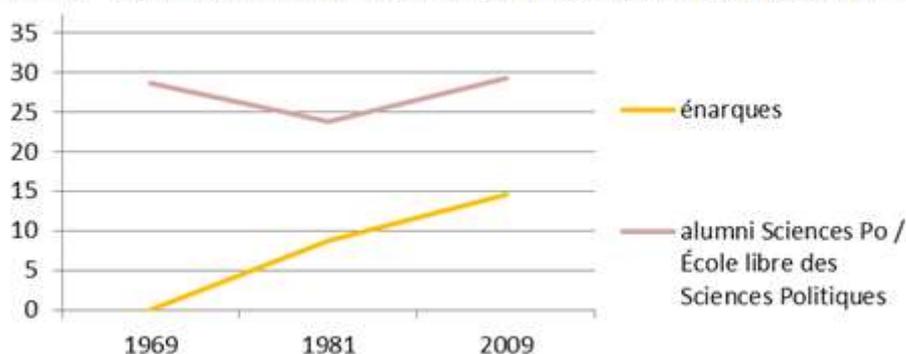
More important for the present part of the thesis, however, is the fact that this “énarchie” did not limit itself to ministerial positions but started to dominate the heart of the socialist elite. Lionel Jospin (1981-1988 and 1995-1997), for example, Laurent Fabius (1992-1993), Francois Hollande (1997-2008) and Martine Aubry (2008-present) are four *premiers secrétaires*, four alumni of the ENA, who, taken together, cover (almost entirely) the last three decades of chairmanship of the Parti Socialiste. Not only the party leader and the socialist presidential candidates – Jospin 1995, 2002; Royal, 2007 and Hollande 2012 –, but also the national party executive of the P.S. increasingly consists of énarques. More than that, in the actual fifty-five-headed party executive, there is not a single member with an education level lower than bac+2.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Lefebvre, R. & Sawicki, F., *La Société des socialistes*, Éditions de Croquant, 2006, p. 71

¹⁶¹ Jaffré, J., *Op. cit.*, p.147

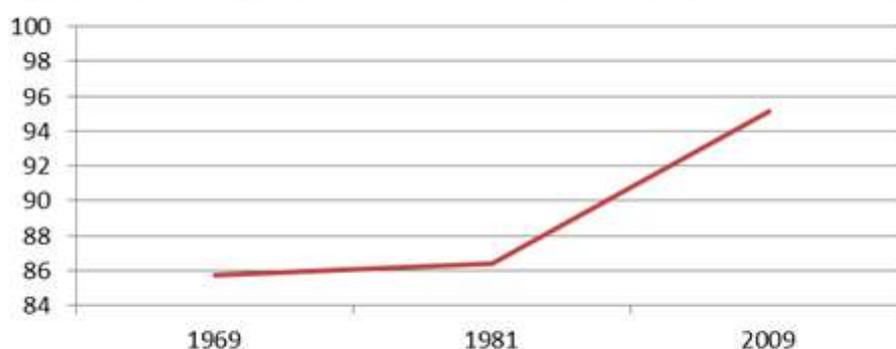
¹⁶² In the decades following the Second World War, the central party executive of the Section française de l’Internationale ouvrière (S.F.I.O.), the PS’s predecessor, generally consisted of five or six members and always had a percentage of higher educated fluctuating around 50%. This last element radically changed in 1969, when the modern Parti Socialiste was founded. Continuing the level of zero énarques, the presence of higher educated and Sciences Po/Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques alumni suddenly raised, as shows the graphic here-above.
. Source: Who’s who in France? And: Maitron, 1940-1968.

Fig. 4.8 Composition of the national party executive: Parti socialiste (in %)



Source: Who's who in France?

Fig. 4.9 National party executive Parti socialiste: higher educated (in %)



Source: Who's who in France?

Meanwhile, the 1980s witnessed another important transformation within the PS: the political trajectory of its top officials. Unlike the contemporary socialist honchos – mostly recruited in the era of Mitterrand’s presidency –, the first generation of énarques joined the PS during the 1960s and 1970s after a long road of socio-political activism. Still small in number by then, Pierre Joxe, Didier Motchane, Jean-Pierre Chévènement, Michel Rocard and Lionel Jospin are famous examples of these “élites militantes”¹⁶³. Yet, at the end of the 1980s, a change takes place characterized by “une fermeture des positions partisanes dominantes aux militants de base, au profit de professionnels mieux dotés en capitaux (scolaires et acquis au sein d’écoles de pouvoir comme Sciences Po et l’ENA) désormais promus en critères de l’excellence politique.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Lebevre, R. & Sawicki, F., *Op. cit.*, p.79

¹⁶⁴ Mathieu, L., *Op. Cit.*, p.121

In other words, instead of the “élites militantes”, the parti socialiste attracted more and more “élites expertes”¹⁶⁵; of whom Laurent Fabius was the first. In the wake of this “premier météore socialiste”, a new type of PS members, slowly but surely appeared on the political scene – entering the top functions within the party almost directly after graduating from a *grande école*:

- Élisabeth Guigou, énarque and minister at the age of 36 in 1990
- Martine Aubry, énarque and minister at the age of 41 in 1992;
- Frédérique Bredin, énarque, deputy at the age of 32 in 1988 and minister three years later
- Ségolène Royal, énarque and elected as deputy in 1988 also at the age of 35, becoming minister in 1992 at the age of 39.¹⁶⁶

Probably driven by the responsibility that his office entailed, President Mitterrand increasingly surrounded himself with brain power. And indeed, if one thinks of the many other socialist ‘meteors’ such as Christian Paul and Pierre Moscovici (both énarques), it was brain power that would continue to determine the top echelons of the PS after Mitterrand passed away.

How does this go for the Parti Communiste? Interestingly, the communist party is the only French party that allowed many lower educated at the top of their organization. The RPR (later: UMP), the ecologist movement, the centre-right UDF (later: MoDem), even the Front National and – as we just saw – the Parti Socialiste have always been chaired by (extremely) high educated members – as were their presidential candidates.¹⁶⁷

Yet, even the communist leaders are getting progressively higher educated. From 1930 to 1994, all three chairmen – Maurice Thorez, Waldeck Rochet and Georges Marchais – had no more than primary education, while their successors, possessed ever higher diplomas: Robert Hue (1994-2001) a qualified nurse, Marie-George Buffet (2001-2010) who obtained a *licence* in history and geography in university. And finally Pierre Laurant (2010-present) who has a master degree in economics.¹⁶⁸

Also among the own presidential candidates of the PCF (i.e. the elections in which they did not support another party’s candidates), we observe an increase of the education level.

¹⁶⁵ Lebeuvre, R. & Sawicki, F., *Op. cit.*, p.79

¹⁶⁶ Source : Who’s who in France?

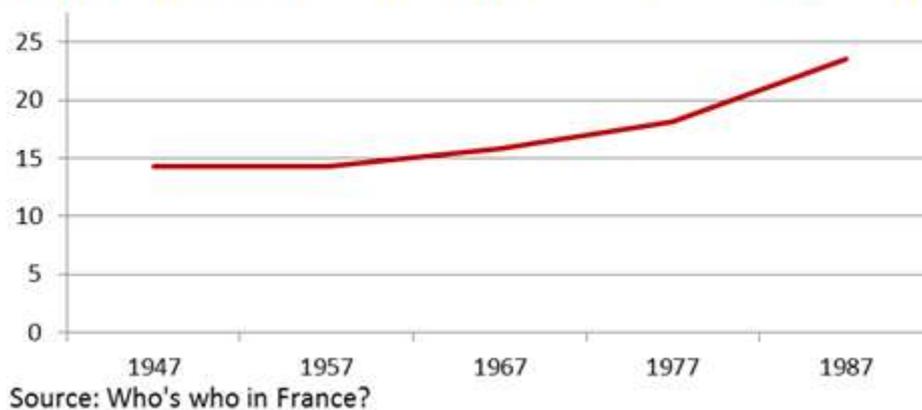
¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Source: Le maître; Who’s who in France?

Georges Marana for example, who led the communists during the elections of 1958, originally was a clockmaker-mechanic. His successor in 1969, Jacques Duclos, was a chef-pâtissier. André Lajoinie, presidential candidate in 1988, was a farmer, while Marie-George Buffet, who ran for president in 2007, as we saw above, studied history and geography at the university.¹⁶⁹

One level below the chairmen and presidential candidates, we find the central party executives. And here too, the communist party appears to be the party with, historically, the lowest education level.

Fig. 4.10 National party executive Parti Communiste: higher educated (in %)



Unfortunately, data after 1987 are lacking, as a result of which we cannot say exactly how this trend continues. Yet, the small amount of traceable information gives a strong indication that the communist party executive has become increasingly higher educated over the last 25 years. Concerning the executive elected in 2007, for example, data are available for three of its sixteen members and these three turn out to be higher educated. Two of them even went to Sciences Po – a novelty compared to the other communist leaders between 1947 and 1987. At the same time, not a single communist executive went to the ENA.¹⁷⁰

A dominance of higher educated in the national party executive, is also the case in all the other French political parties. Europe Écologie Les Verts (former: *Mouvement écologiste*, briefly: ME) for example, counts some 90% higher educated in its most recent party

¹⁶⁹ Source : *Who's who in France*, Maïtrron

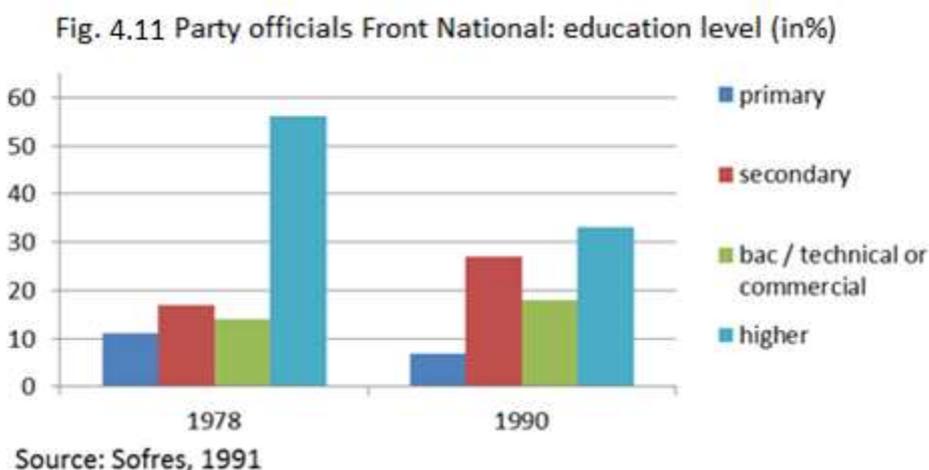
¹⁷⁰ Source: *Who's who in France?*; *Le Maïtron 1940-1968*, *Op. cit.*

Interestingly this tendency of the French communists, who allowed, for many years, many blue-collars in the top of their organization, seems to constitute another “exception française”. As stated political analyst Hervé Algalarrondo in his book *La préférence immigrée* (Éditions Plon, 2011, p.25-26): “Seul parmi les partis communistes occidentaux, le PCF a longtemps promu une majorité d’ouvriers dans ses instances dirigeantes, réduisant ses intellectuels au rang de porteurs de valises.”

executive.¹⁷¹ While the seven-headed executive of the right-winged UMP, installed in 2010, is 100% higher educated – a top of whom two members are énarques and one is an alumnus of Sciences Po. This against 81,8% in 1988, in a eleven-headed executive, of whom three members frequented the ENA, two members Sciences Po and one member both of these prestigious French governing schools.¹⁷²

The party executive of the centrist UDP (later: MoDem), counted 87% higher educated members after the federal congress in June 2011, of whom 17,2% were alumni of Sciences Po. None of them went to the ENA. Finally the FN, in its most recent *bureau exécutif* houses many former law students – among whom Marine and Jean-Marie Le Pen. Taken together, six out of the eight members studied law in university. Yet, none of them went to a *grande école*.¹⁷³ Unfortunately there is little information concerning the FN’s forty-two-headed *bureau politique*, except for the members residing in both *bureaux*.

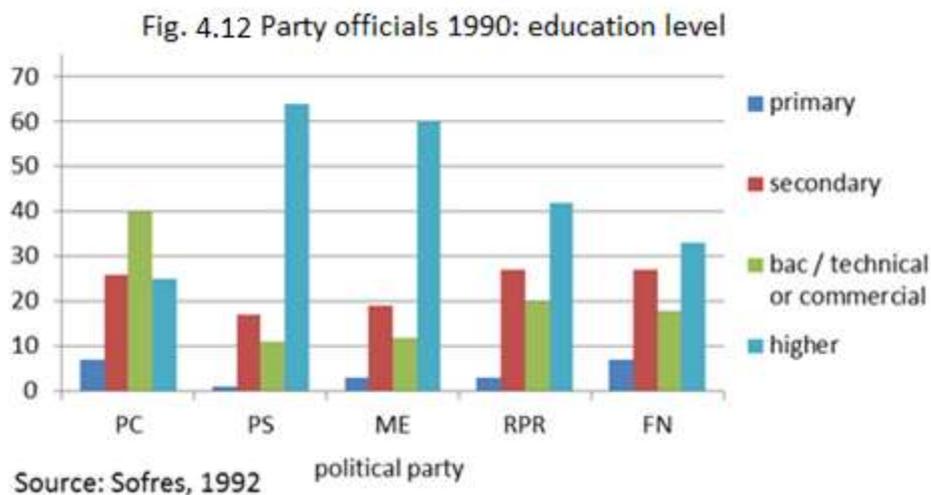
On a lower scale in the party hierarchy however, that of the party officials, the following graphic shows an interesting development in the heart of the nationalist party: between the late 1970s and the early 1990s we see a significant drop in the education level among FN-officials. Comparing the FN to other political parties, only the communists had a comparable level of academic and intellectual capital in the highest ranks of their organization (see also the graphic on the next page). At least as this point, *les extrêmes* – of the political spectrum – *se touchent*.



¹⁷¹ Source: Ibid. Due to limited data availability, 66,67% of the members are taken into account here.

¹⁷² Source: Ibid.

¹⁷³ Source: Ibid. One should note that in 2011 the first énarque entered the top of the Front National: Florian Philippot was the campaign director of Marine Le Pen during the elections of 2012.



Meanwhile the education level among officials of the mainstream political parties appears to be significantly higher, especially within the Parti Socialiste. Interestingly, the presence of lower educated members in the PS dropped to a minimum over the same period.¹⁷⁴ Unlike the ideal of the “front de gauche”, the socialists, already in 1990, not only housed the lowest level of primary educated, but also the highest level of higher educated of all French political parties.

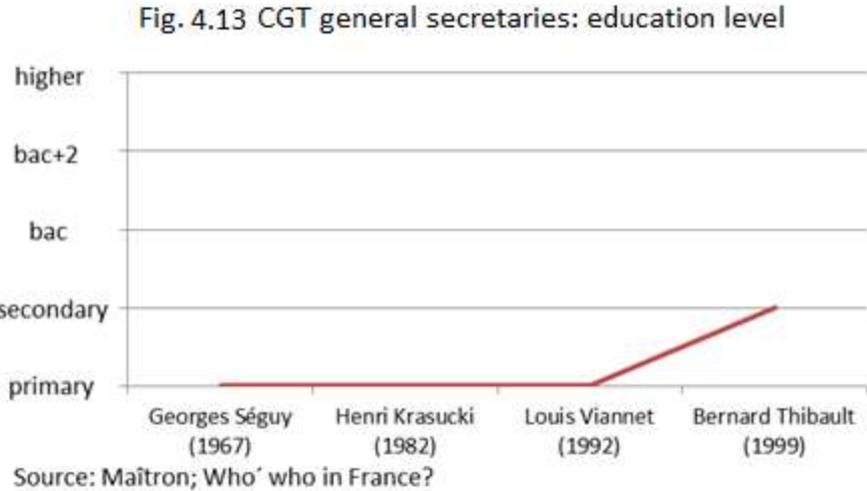
Due to the absence of further surveys concerning party officials after 1991, we regrettably do not know how these tendencies developed. At least, as we will see, the Front National was able to attract an increasing amount of lower educated voters; voters who little by little, left the left side of political spectrum.

5.1.5 Unions

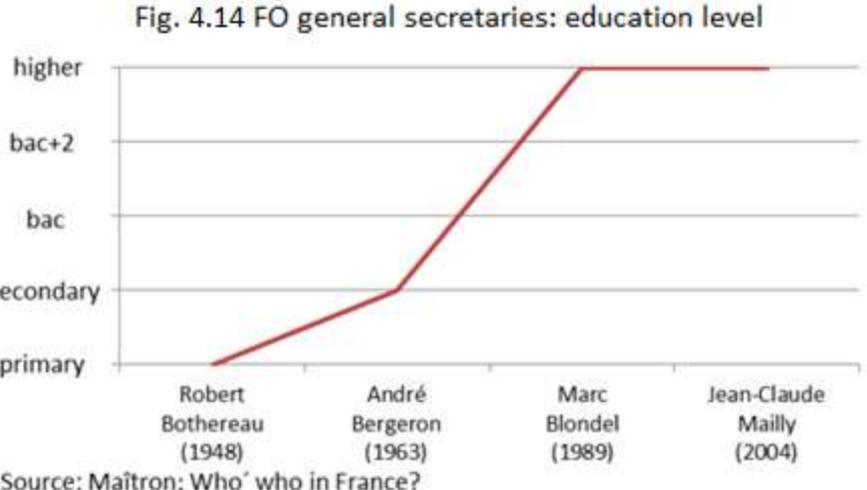
Just like the Communist party, the French unions show an image of an increasing education level among their highest officials. First, the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), probably the most radical among the French unions, and also the one in which the lower educated still dominate the top of the organization. Looking at the general secretaries, although it is not sure yet who will succeed the actual leader, Bernard Thibault, all of his predecessors maximally possessed a primary education diploma.

¹⁷⁴ During the national Parti Socialiste congress of Rennes in 1990, only 5% of the more than thousand party officials belonged to the lower educated working class or was an employee. Meanwhile the presence of the mainly higher educated “cadres supérieures”, increased from 36 percent in 1979 to 53 percent in 1990. Source : Sofres, *L'état de l'opinion*, 1991, *Op. cit.*, p.223

Concerning the *bureau fédéral* of the CGT – especially in its actual composition – there is, unfortunately, only a small amount of data available. However, an overwhelming majority of primary educated shows up. The only exceptions, Pierre Le Brun and Alain Obadia for example, national officials in 1969 and in 1985, who even went to the Ecole libre des sciences politiques (Le Brun) and Sciences Po (Obadia), are not sufficient to indicate a clear increase (or decrease) of the rare higher educated.



In another important French union however, Force Ouvrière, the tendency of an increasing dominance of higher educated is more evident. More than that, out of the three analyzed unions, it is mainly here that the statement of Michael Young finds its echo: “To sustain top management they had to recruit cadets from higher education”¹⁷⁵, as figure 5.17 clearly indicates.

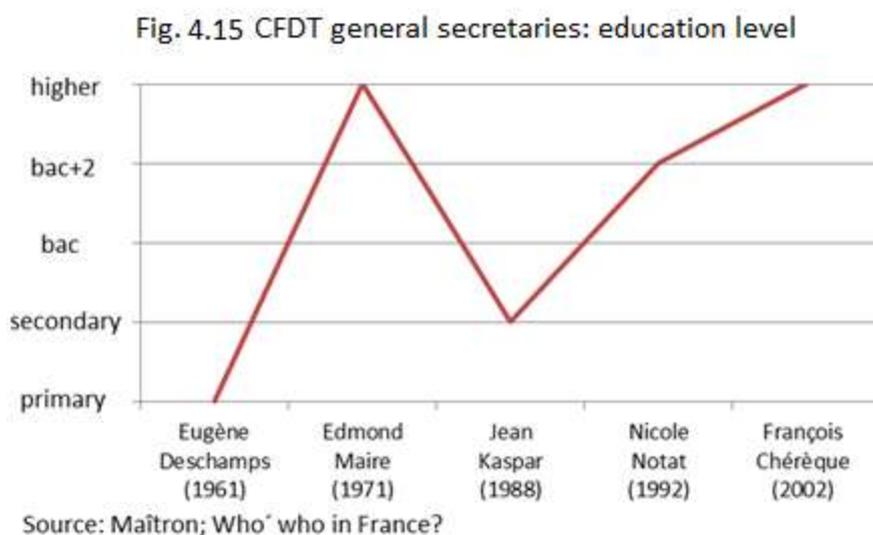


¹⁷⁵ Young, M., *Op. cit.*, p.73

What is not visible is that even from Marc Blondel to Jean-Claude Mailly, the two latest – and the only higher educated – general secretaries, there is an increase of education level, with Blondel possessing an academic licence and Mailly a master diploma.¹⁷⁶ Despite the limited amount of information, one can observe a similar development in the educational composition of the *bureau confédéral* of the Force Ouvrière. In the 1960s for example, none of traceable members (44.4%), was higher educated, while within its most recent successor, *all* of the traceable members (30.8%), were higher educated.

The last of the three most important French unions, the CFDT, shows an image quite similar to that of the FO. A remarkable difference though, is that halfway the 1960s, the *bureau confédéral* of the first union already housed a rather substantial amount of higher educated members; almost a quarter; while in 1971 the highly educated Edmond Maire (diploma at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers) was appointed as general secretary (see figure 5.18).

The similarities between the CFDT and the increasingly higher educated FO mainly appear, when comparing the most recent composition of the CFDT’s national secretary with their *bureau confédéral* in 1965. It is interesting to see, that the number of higher educated has risen significantly. Among all the executives of whom the education level was traceable (55.6%), 80% was higher educated, at least *three times* as much as 45 years ago.



¹⁷⁶ Source: Who's who in France?

4.3 Conclusions

When François Mitterrand entered the Élysée, in 1981, he continued a tradition of highly educated presidents – a tradition that would be followed by his successors. In addition, the ministers in French governments were traditionally higher educated. But, while this dominance rose since the first days of the Fifth Republic, the French ministerial teams consisted more and more of alumni coming from elite governing schools such as Sciences Po and the ENA – a tendency that reached a particularly high peak in the government Lionel Jospin (1997-2002). Interestingly, this extremely high educated government also preceded the electoral breakthrough of Jean-Marie Le Pen into the second round of the *Présidentielles*, on April 21, 2002.

Meanwhile, the left-wing political parties, little by little, lost their socio-demographic ties with the lower educated citizens. The communist party rapidly lost its political influence during the 1980s, but what was left of it, became increasingly higher educated. After the legislative elections of 1986, the percentage of communist deputies possessing a university degree more than doubled to almost 40 per cent. The French national assembly, at the same time, witnessed an exodus of blue-collars and other lower educated MPs, often with a communist (and, to a lesser extent, socialist) background.

Another important transformation took place in the heart of the Parti Socialiste: the transition of the “élites militantes” to “élites expertes”. From the early 1980s on, a growing number of ENA and Sciences Po graduates almost directly obtained high functions within the PS, without having a personal background of activism and engagement – like the older generations of socialist elites. These ‘meteors’ seem to underline three tendencies.

First, the elite of the socialist party increasingly consists of extremely high educated members, leading to an ever more selective and narrow access to key political positions – with scholarly capital as the foremost criterion. Second, the socialists did not manage to change the crooked socio-demographical representation in French democracy (ministers, deputies etc.) that already existed to a lesser extent before François Mitterrand came into power. They actually worsened it. Third they confirm the observation that the socialist party is now more likely to be described as an intellectual and public sector party than as a working-class or even popular class party (the same goes for the Parti Communiste!). Nowadays, the high PS officials socially stem, for a large part, from a bobo origin.

It is noteworthy that, in the same period in which the left-wing parties progressively lost their connection with the lower educated citizens, they also lost the domination over (let

aside the monopoly of) a theme that, for almost two hundred years, had formed the essence of their political activism: *labor*. Meanwhile, right-wing parties willingly incorporated this theme in their party program. Already in 1996, the Front National introduced the campaign slogan “Le social c’est le Front national”¹⁷⁷, while Nicolas Sarkozy, about ten years later, lucidly recognized the electoral potential of a strong work ethic and presented himself as the president of “la France qui se lève tôt”.¹⁷⁸

Socio-demographically, this tendency is accompanied by two other evolutions. First, in the 1980s, the officials of the Front National showed a remarkable decrease with respect to their education level. Together with the communists they housed the highest number of lower educated within their ranks by the beginning of the 1990s.¹⁷⁹ Second, the top echelons of the unions were increasingly inhabited by higher educated members. Especially the Front Ouvrière and the CFDT depict such an image. The CGT, as far as the data allow insight into these tendencies, remains the union with largest amount of less educated within the top of their organization.

All in all, the dominance of highly educated in France’s most important political arena’s – even if this phenomenon already existed when the Fifth Republic was founded – has broadened significantly over time. In parliament we observe an enormous and continuing increase of higher educated MPs from the early 1960s till the end of the century. Concerning the education level of government members, reaching almost 100 per cent higher educated in the last decade (Montesquieu would have been satisfied these days). And also within the high ranks of both political parties and unions, the dominance of higher educated grew over the last decades.

¹⁷⁷ Perrineau, P., *Le symptôme Le Pen. Radiographie des électeurs du Front National*, Fayard, 1997, p.84

¹⁷⁸ One thinks of the Sarkozy’s campaign slogan: “Travailler plus pour gagner plus”

¹⁷⁹ The party executives of all other political parties show a relatively stable, high education level among their members.

5. Second domain: Political participation

5.1 Methods & Data

After having analyzed the changes in socio-demographical representation, we will now investigate whether the educational composition of, for example, electoral participation and party or union membership has changed over the last decades. *To what extent can we observe an increasing cleavage between higher and lower educated in the domain of political participation, and how has this changed over time?* To answer this question, table 5.1 shows the indicators that will be used. Afterwards, they will be discussed and put into context. The conclusion will finally give an answer to the central question in this chapter.

Table 5.1 Indicators

Domain	Indicators	Time span	Source
Political participation	<i>Conventional participation</i>		
	- General attendance at elections	2007	Cevipof, 2007 ¹⁸⁰
	- Abstention at legislative elections	1986 – 2007	<i>Ibidem</i>
	- European referenda	1992 – 2005	Cevipof 1995 ¹⁸¹ / Ipsos 2005 ¹⁸²
	- Interested in politics	1988 – 2007	Cevipof ¹⁸³
	- Talking about political campaign	2007	<i>Ibidem</i>
	- Try to convince people like you	2007	<i>Ibidem</i>
	<i>Voluntary associations</i>		
	- Membership unions	1978 – 2002	Cevipof 1978 ¹⁸⁴ / ESS 2002
	- Participation, voluntary work, donation unions	2002	ESS 2002
	- Membership political party	2002 – 2010	ESS 2002-2010
	- Worked for political party or action group	2002 – 2010	<i>Ibidem</i>
	- Attendance at political reunions, debates or meeting	2007	Cevipof 2007
	- Member, participation, donation, voluntary	2002	ESS 2002

¹⁸⁰ Panel Electoral Français (2007) CEVIPOF-Ministère de l'Intérieur

¹⁸¹ Enquete Post-Electorale du CEVIPOF 1995, Nonna Mayer et Daniel Boy du CEVIPOF Centre d'Etude de la Vie Politique Française, Michael Lewis-Beck Professeur a l'Universite d'Iowa.

¹⁸² Ipsos, *Référendum 29 Mai 2005 : Le sondage sorti des urnes, Comparatif 29 mai 2005 / 20 septembre 1992*, May 30, 2005, <http://www.ipsos.fr/ipsos-public-affairs/sondages/referendum-29-mai-2005-sondage-sorti-urnes> (seen: March 14, 2012)

¹⁸³ Enquête post-électorale française 1988, Centre d'Etude de la Vie Politique Française ; Enquête post-électorale française 1997 Centre d'Etude de la Vie Politique Française

¹⁸⁴ Enquête post-électorale française 1978, Centre d'Etude de la Vie Politique Française

work environmental/peace/animal organization		
<i>Unconventional participation</i>		
- Taken part in lawful demonstrations	2002 – 2010	ESS, 2002-2010 ¹⁸⁵
- Signed petitions	2002 – 2010	<i>Ibidem</i>
- Boycotted certain products	2002 – 2010	<i>Ibidem</i>
- Worn/displayed campaign batch/sticker	2002 – 2010	<i>Ibidem</i>
- Contacted politician or government official	2002 – 2010	<i>Ibidem</i>

5.1.1 Conventional participation

The foremost form of this conventional participation consists of the act of voting. An act, forming the direct relation between the electorate and the elected, is not only one of the easiest forms of political participation, but also the most egalitarian one. Every citizen, with every election obtains one single ballot, regardless of age, sex or education level. Therefore the general attendance at elections will first be analyzed, together with its counterpart: electoral abstention. This is measured at legislative elections and the two European referenda (in 1992 and in 2005). Data concerning electoral participation along educational lines however, are extremely hard to find for the French case, and even appears to be inexistent on a municipal and regional level.¹⁸⁶

At the same time, if one had to draw a pyramid of political participation, the ground floor does not only consist of voting, but also of other ‘spectator activities’¹⁸⁷, as Milbrath famously called it. Talking about politics with friends, family and colleagues for example, try to convince other people like you and political interest in general. With regard to the latter there is longitudinal Cevipof-data available from 1988 to 2007. Data concerning the other two forms of political participation in this conventional perspective, unfortunately, are only available for 2007. Nevertheless, for elements were we encounter similar data scarcity, (recent) snapshots can also give us an insight in the (actual) stratification of French higher and lower educated citizens in conventional political participation.

¹⁸⁵ ESS Round 1: European Social Survey (2011): ESS-1 2002 Documentation Report. Edition 6.2. Bergen, European Social Survey Data Archive, Norwegian Social Science Data Services. & ESS Round 5: European Social Survey (2012): ESS-5 2010 Documentation Report. Edition 2.0. Bergen, European Social Survey Data Archive, Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

¹⁸⁶ The rare information that does exist, suggests a significant electoral underrepresentation of lower educated citizens. See: Clanché, F., *La participation électorale au printemps 2002. De plus en plus de votants intermittents*, Insée Première, January 2003, http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/docs_ffc/ip877.pdf

¹⁸⁷ Milbrath, L., *Political participation. How And Why Do People Get Involved In Politics?*, Rand McNally, 1965, p.18

5.1.2 Voluntary associations

One step higher in the political participation pyramid, we find the so-called ‘transitional activities’¹⁸⁸, often through voluntary associations. These activities are interesting forms of political participation because they may tell us something about the development of collective entities in French democracy. Furthermore, because political activities also become increasingly demanding while climbing the participation pyramid (in terms of time, effort, skills and knowledge), it is interesting to see whether the differences among higher and lower educated will diverge here, compared to more conventional and less demanding forms of participation – especially in a longitudinal context.

Unfortunately however, longitudinal data are scarce. The ESS only measured membership, participation, donation and voluntary work concerning unions and ‘environmental/peace/animal organizations’ in 2002, membership of political parties in 2002 and 2010 as well as those who worked for political or action groups in the last twelve months in 2002 and in 2010. Together with additional Cevipof data, however, – membership of unions in 1978, and the attendance at political reunions, debates or meetings in 2007 –, we might still obtain an insight into the differences among higher and lower educated concerning participation through voluntary associations.

5.1.3 Unconventional participation

On the highest floor of the participation pyramid we find the ‘gladiator activities’¹⁸⁹, with those holding an office at the absolute summit. These gladiators in office however, are already analyzed in the precedent chapter. This part of the thesis therefore wants to focus on more unconventional forms of political participation. Using European Social Survey (ESS) data, we will have insight into the relative participation with respect to lawful demonstrations, the signing of petitions, the boycotting of products, wearing or displaying campaign batches or stickers and contacting politicians or government officials during the last twelve months – in 2002 as well as in 2010. Cevipof-data even give information concerning even more ‘unconventional’ forms of political participation. Regrettably there is no information concerning educational differences in more recent forms political participation – digitally for example.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p.18

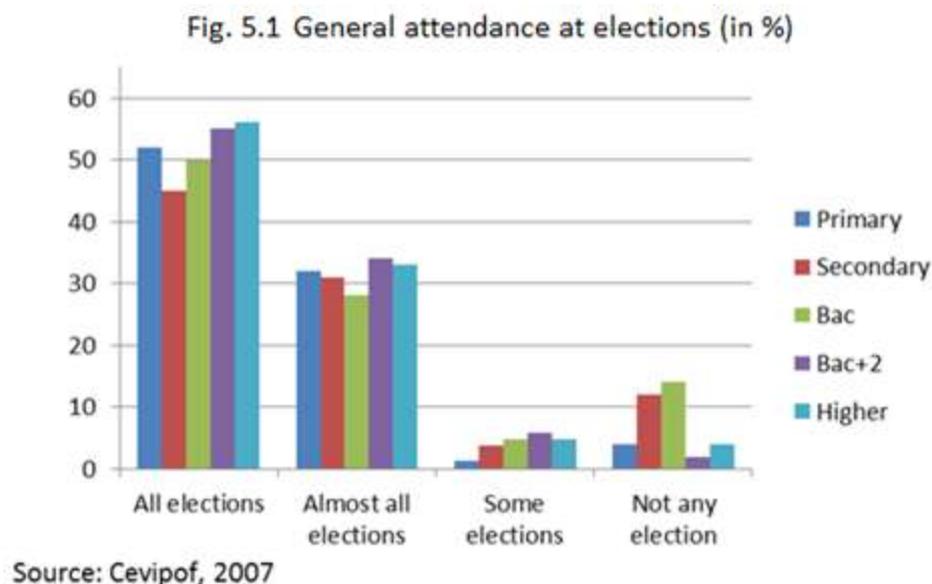
¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p.18

5.2 Putting data into context

As we saw earlier on in this chapter, it is complicated to find data concerning the different indicators older than 2002. Moreover, with regard to electoral participation, for example, data on municipal and regional level do not even exist. Nevertheless, by combining the available data, a clearer view will appear on modern day political participation along educational lines. The conclusion, at the end of this chapter will provide an answer how this view can be interpreted.

5.2.1 Conventional participation

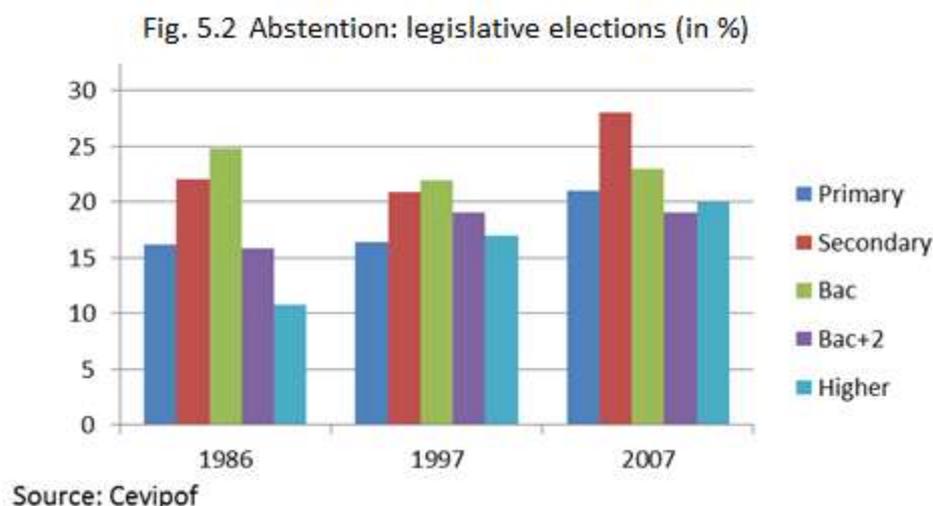
The most striking element when observing the general participation at elections is the fact that there are hardly any differences along educational lines. About half of all the higher and all the lower educated says they vote at every election; a third of them say to vote at almost all of the election dates; and a small minority goes to some or none of the elections. An important remark, however, is that these statistics are self-reported statistics; they do not concern the factual attendance –an inevitable obstacle when working with surveys.



The finding that electoral participation along educational lines is quite equal in France has a longer history. In 1993 Subileau and Toinet already reached a similar conclusion by comparing the French electoral abstention to its American counterpart: “En fait, le niveau d’instruction semble n’avoir que peu d’influence dans la détermination des comportements

d'abstention-participation en France, they stated. Même le taux de non-inscription ne varie pas avec les diplômes obtenus, sauf chez les moins de 21 ans.¹⁹⁰

The continuity of these observations also becomes clear in Figure 5.2, where the abstention at legislative elections is depicted. Interestingly, we can see an increase of stay-at-home voters not only among the lower educated, but even more among the higher educated citizens.



On the other hand, Insee-data from 2002 depicts a rather profound division between higher and lower educated concerning systematic abstinence: only 5 per cent of the higher educated forms a part of this category, while those without a diploma are represented in the proportion of *one to five*. Furthermore, those with a lower education diploma (primary or brevet) consequently show up to a lesser degree than their higher educated fellow citizens; by a factor of three (primary) and two (brevet) respectively.¹⁹¹

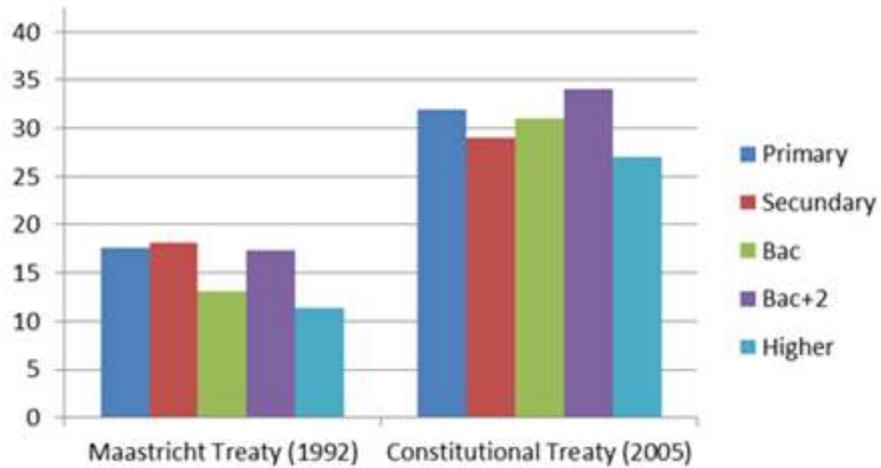
The referendum on the European constitutional treaty in May 2005 seems to underline these data (to a lesser extent however), with lower educated voters being underrepresented 5 to 6 per cent compared to the higher educated voters. Still, this difference in electoral participation – as we will see – is relatively small compared to the policy preferences these two groups expressed during the two European referenda.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Subileau, F. & Toinet, M.-F., *Les chemins de l'abstention. Une comparaison franco-américaine*, Éditions de la découverte, 1993, p.116

¹⁹¹ Clanché, F., *Op. cit.*

¹⁹² Concerning the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty there is a broad difference between the declared abstention – measured in the spring of 1995 – and the actual level of voters who stayed at home in September 1992: 16,3 versus 30,3 per cent. See also: Bréchon, P., *La France aux urnes*, La documentation française, 2009

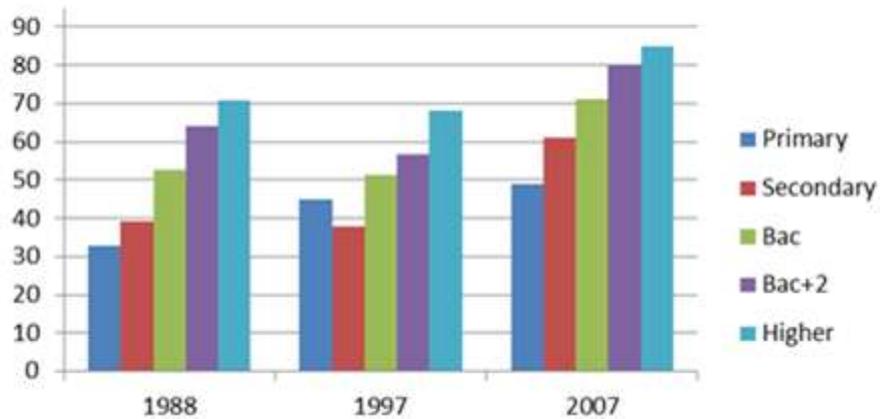
Fig. 5.3 Abstention: European referenda



Source: Cevifof, 1995; Ipsos, 2005

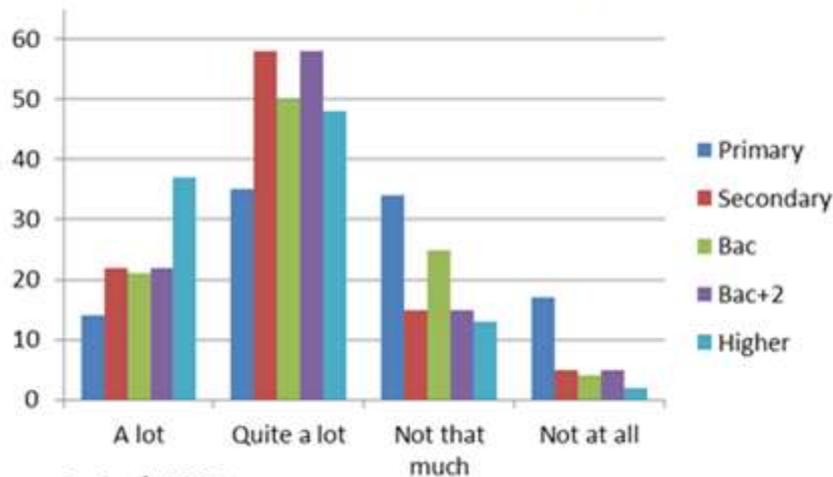
As with the abstention in legislative elections, we also find a small decrease of the *relative* distance between the two groups when it comes to the level of political interest. Nonetheless, the differences between higher and lower educated are very significant. Even more so when zooming in on those who are ‘interested a lot’ in politics. Higher educated, from that view, score almost twice as high as the average of the four other educational categories taken *together*. Citizens, finally, who are ‘not that interested’ in politics or ‘not interested at all’, appear to be largely primary educated.

Fig. 5.4 Political interest: a lot / quite a lot (in %)



Source: Cevipof

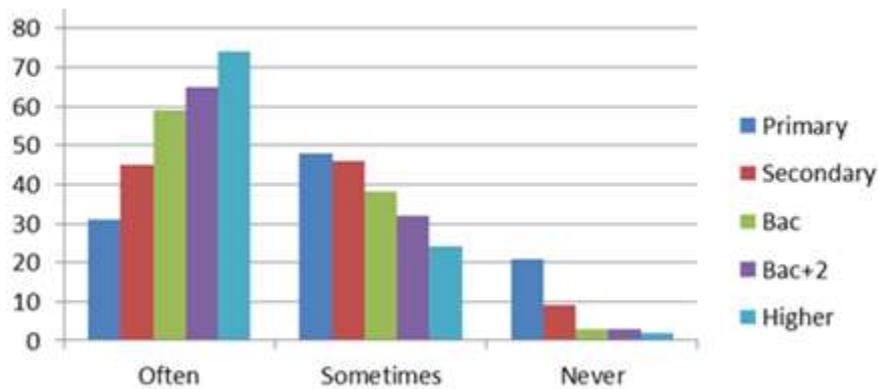
Fig. 5.5 Political interest (in %)



Source: Cevipof, 2007

Another form of conventional participation finds itself in a more domestic and amicable setting. And also here the differences between higher and lower educated appear to be quite obvious. As with political interest, the latter tend to talk far less about politics than the first, with their family, friends and colleagues. Unfortunately, there are no longitudinal data available to analyze whether the relative differences between the two groups have increased or decreased over the last decades.

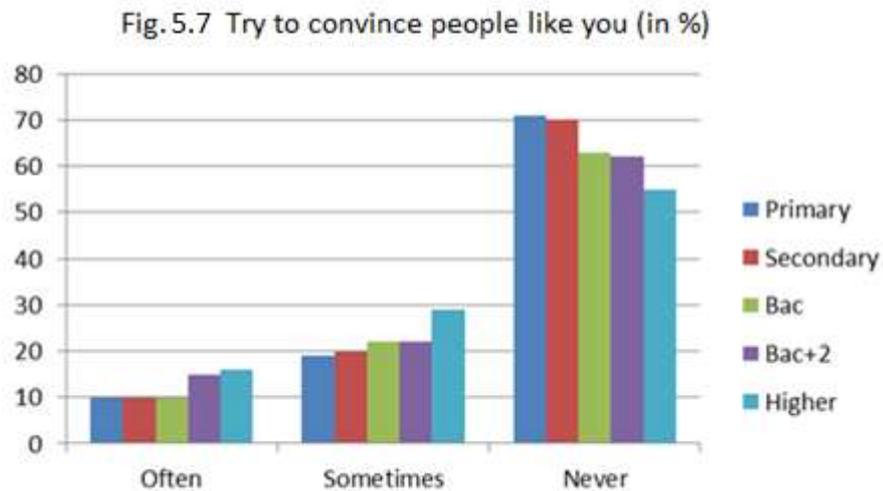
Fig. 5.6 Talking about the political campaign with family, friends or colleagues (in %)



Source: Cevipof, 2007

The same absence of longitudinal data goes for the question whether there is a growing difference between higher and lower educated in the act of trying to convince other people like you – in this case: concerning political matters. The data stemming from 2007, however,

shows a rather clear difference, with, again, the higher educated being more politically active. The percentage, for example, of those who never try to convince other people is more than 70 among lower educated citizens vis-à-vis 55 among the higher educated.

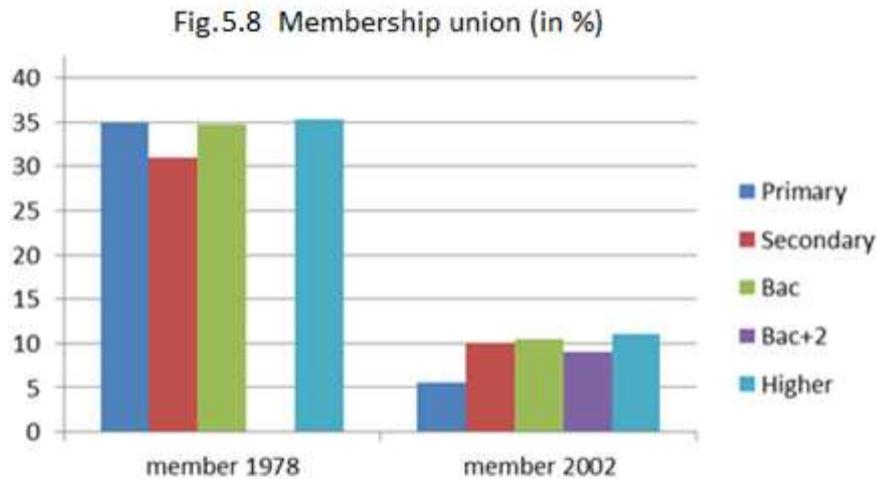


Source: Cevipof, 2007

5.2.2 Voluntary associations

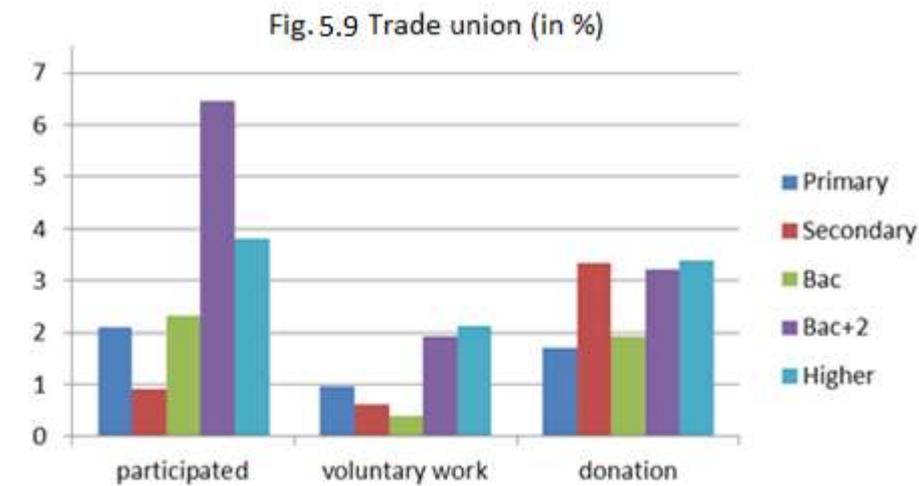
One step higher in the pyramidal hierarchy of political participation, the differences between higher and lower educated become more and more significant. A first indication for this tendency is found when observing the membership of unions. Although its heavy decline (something clearly visible when comparing Cevipof post-electoral data from 1978 and ESS-data from 2002, see figure 5.8), the proportion of higher and lower educated, at first sight seems to stay quite similar over time, with the lower educated being slightly underrepresented. However, when looking more closely to the primary and higher educated members, a significant difference appears: nowadays, the latter are twice as much the owner of union membership than the first.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ Unfortunately there was no information about the Bac+2 education level in the 1970s.



Source: Cevipof 1978; ESS 2002

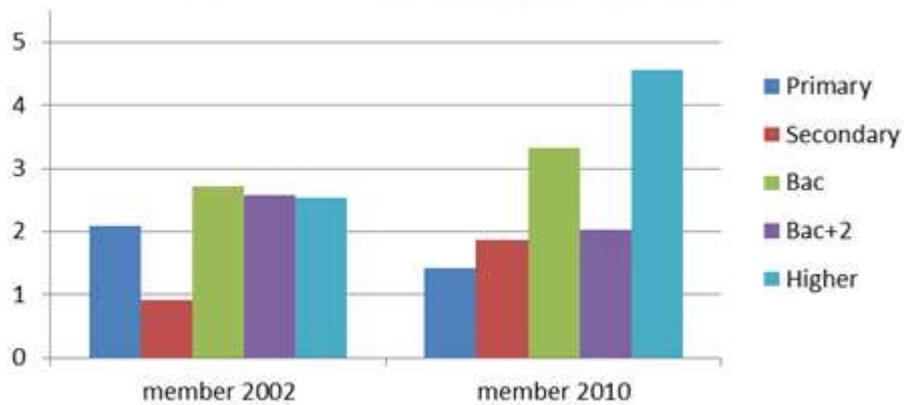
When it comes to participation, voluntary work and donations concerning trade unions, we also see some significant differences between higher and lower educated citizens. The latter are less represented in almost every aspect, compared to the first, as shows figure 5.9.



Source: ESS 2002

In 2002, the membership of political parties in France was quite equal from an educational perspective; a situation that would drastically change when approaching the end of the same decade. In 2010, higher educated were member of a political party almost three times more often than their lower educated fellow citizens. Unfortunately there are no similar data for the unions. It would have interesting to know whether the changes concerning membership of political parties in the last decade also apply to this type of voluntary organizations.

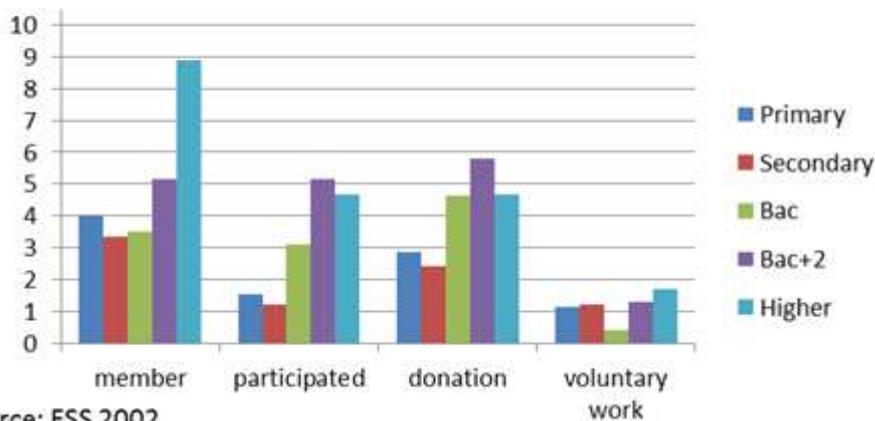
Fig. 5.10 Membership political party (in %)



Source: ESS 2002. 2010

For environmental, peace and animal organizations, the last of the voluntary associations treated in this thesis, too, there is merely data for the year 2002. These data show a similar image. Especially with respect to the membership of these organizations, higher educated citizens are clearly overrepresented, with almost 9 per cent versus 3 to 4 per cent among the lower educated.

Fig. 5.11 Environmental / peace / animal organization (in %)

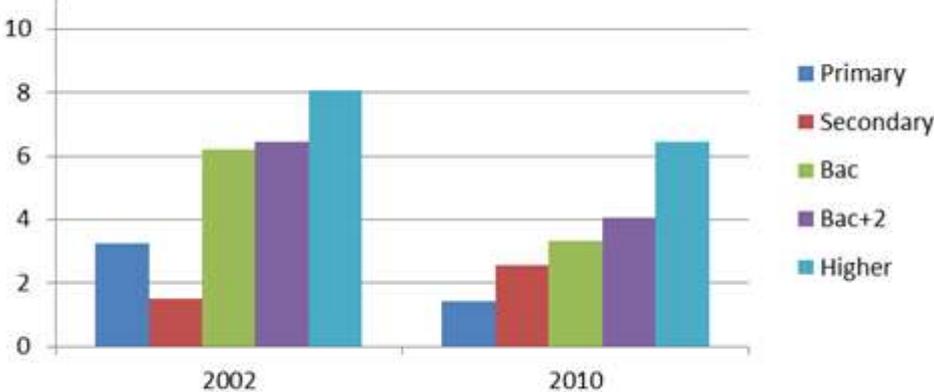


Source: ESS 2002

When nearing the top of the political participation pyramid, the differences among higher and lower educated citizens only became more significant. For those who actually *work* for a political party or an action group (in Milbrath's terms one should call them gladiators), as for those who attend at political reunions, meetings and debates, we see a clear difference that seems to underline the central hypothesis of this thesis: the higher educated are significantly

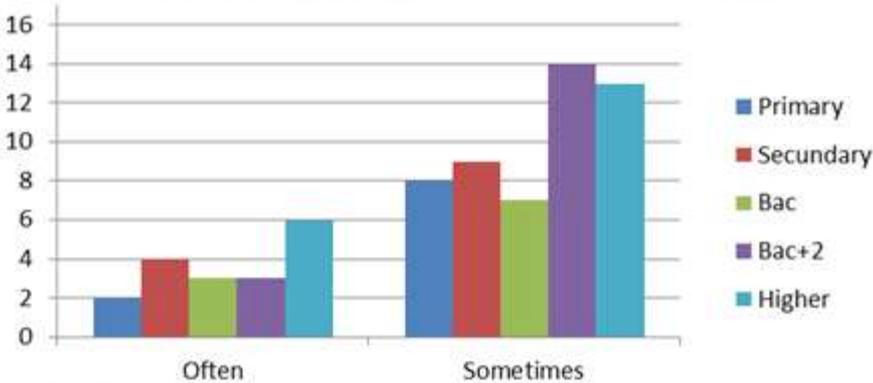
more represented in political organizations than the lower educated, thereby having more possibilities to defend and realize the social and political goals they are striving for.

Fig. 5.12 Worked for political party or action group in last 12 months (in %)



Source: ESS 2002, 2010

Fig. 5.13 Attendance: political reunion, debate or meeting (in %)



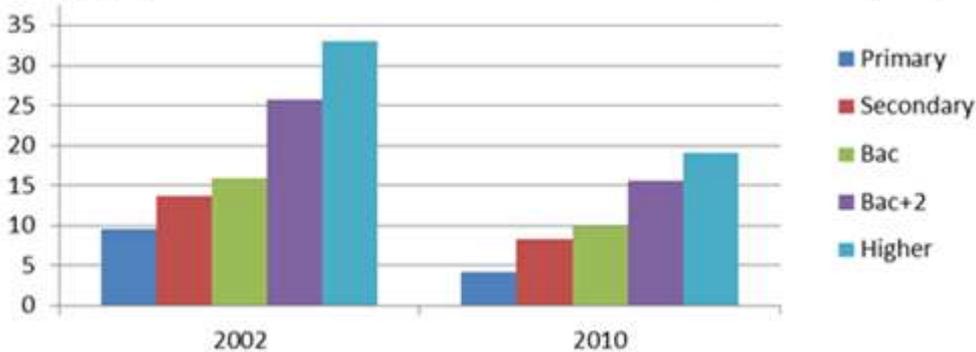
Source: Cevifof. 2007

5.2.3 Unconventional participation

When observing the ‘unconventional forms’ of political participation, it is not the participatory equality or inequality between higher and lower educated that strikes the most, but mainly the relative decrease of participation in general between 2002 and 2010 among *all* education levels. Participation in lawful demonstrations, signing of petitions, boycotting certain products, wearing political batches or stickers, or contacting politicians, in all of these domains, the activity dropped during the last decade. This might be an indication that new forms of political participation become more important (“le nouveau militantisme” or digital activism for example), for paradoxically, as we saw before, the *interest* in politics actually

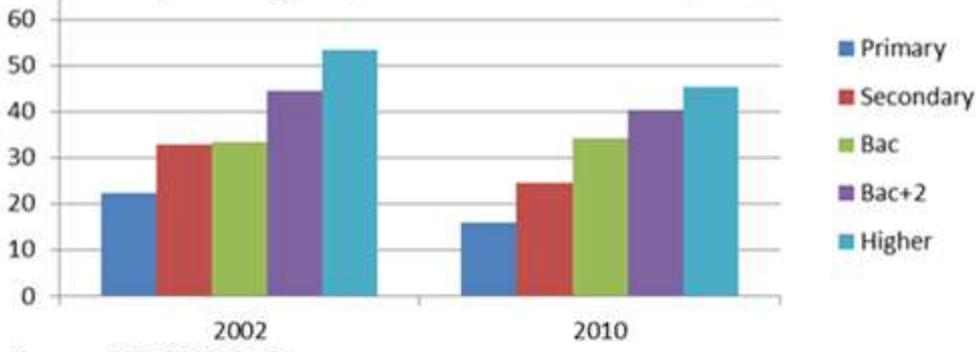
increased during the last decade. Nevertheless, the dominance of higher educated citizens, stays significant in every single form of unconventional participation, as show for example figure 5.14, figure 5.15 and figure 5.16.

Fig. 5.14 Taken part in lawful demonstration in last 12 months (in %)



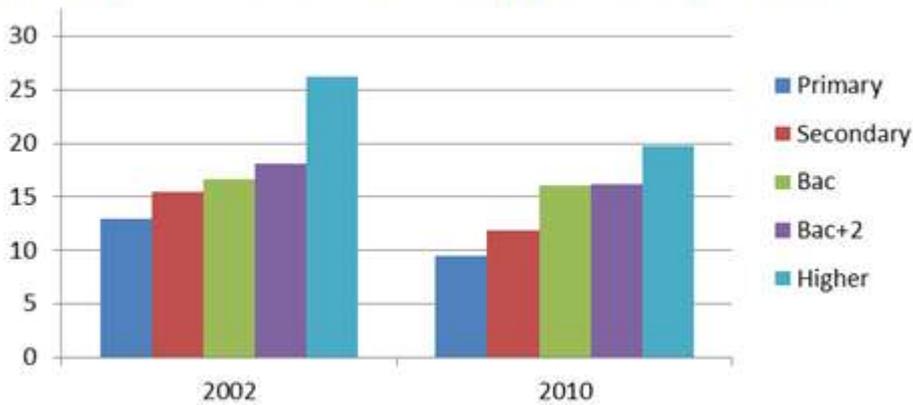
Source: ESS 2002, 2010

Fig.5.15 Signed petition in last 12 months (in %)



Source: ESS 2002, 2010

Fig. 5.16 Contacted politician or government official in last 12 months (in %)



Source: ESS 2002, 2010

5.3 Conclusions

After having seen these facts and figures, what answer can we give to the central question of this chapter: to what extent can we observe an increasing cleavage between higher and lower educated in the domain of political participation, and how has this changed over time?

Unfortunately, the lack of longitudinal data makes it hard to adequately answer the last part of this question. In fact, it is almost impossible to indicate a clear increase or decrease in political participation along educational lines. Yet, when focusing on the available information we can nonetheless distinguish a very clear tendency. This tendency is that the higher a political activity stands in the participatory pyramid, the more we find higher educated citizens involved. Besides, even on the lowest and least demanding steps we already find significant differences, whereby the higher educated are largely overrepresented.

More than that, they are nowadays three times more likely to be a political party member than their lower educated fellow citizens. The membership of environmental, peace and other voluntary organizations is twice as high among higher educated than among citizens of all other education levels. And finally the overwhelming dominance of higher educated in political and action groups, their attendance at political reunions, debates and meetings as well as the rise of the so-called “nouveau militantisme” seem to justify the statement that in the domain of political participation there exists a significant cleavage between higher and lower educated citizens.

6. Third domain: Policy representation

6.1 Methods & Data

The final domain investigated in this thesis concerns policy preferences. The central question hereby forms: *to what extent is there a cleavage concerning policy preferences along educational lines, and how has this changed over time?* Table 6.1 shows the different indicators used in this domain. Afterwards, they will be discussed and put into context. Finally the conclusion will give an answer to the central question of this chapter.

Table 6.1 Indicators

Domain	Indicators	Time span	Source
Policy representation	<i>Globalization and European integration</i>		
	- European referenda, voted yes	1992 – 2005	Cevipof 1995/Ipsos 2005
	- European integration	2007	Cevipof 2007
	- Increasing mobility of workers in the EU	2007	<i>Ibidem</i>
	- The perception of globalization as a chance or as a threat for France	2007	<i>Ibidem</i>
	- The globalization of economic trade	2007	<i>Ibidem</i>
	- The wish for a France opening or protecting itself with regard to the world of today	2007	<i>Ibidem</i>
	<i>Immigration and ethnocentrism</i>		
	- One does not feel at home as before	1988 – 2007	Cevipof 1988-2007
	- There are too many immigrants in France	1988 – 2007	<i>Ibidem</i>
	- Proud to be French	1988 – 2007	<i>Ibidem</i>
	<i>Authority and security</i>		
	- The death penalty should be reintroduced	1988 – 2007	<i>Ibidem</i>
	- Homosexuality is acceptable	1995 – 2007	<i>Ibidem</i>
- The wish for a strong leader	2008	EVS 2008 ¹⁹⁴	

6.1.1 Globalization and European integration

Cultural issues – such as national identity, immigration, European integration, law and order, etc. – are gradually mixing with, if not prevailing over classical economic ‘bread and butter’ issues such as (un)employment, wages or redistribution. In other words: cultural voting has become increasingly important in French and Western European politics. In this part of the

¹⁹⁴ EVS (2011): European Values Study 2008: Integrated Dataset (EVS 2008). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA4800 Data file Version 3.0.0

thesis, the above-mentioned issues will be put in the context of a possible cleavage between higher and lower educated. And although these indicated policy issues all seem to be linked together, they can be subdivided into three different subcategories.

The first subcategory concerns globalization and European integration. Yet, for France, as well as for other Western European countries, globalization *means* first of all: European integration.¹⁹⁵ There are several indicators, from 1988 to 2007, that give an insight in the citizen's perception of the desirability of this tendency. For example the referenda held in 1992, on the Maastricht treaty, and in 2005, on the ratification of the European Constitutional Treaty. Furthermore, Cevipof data stemming from 2007 give insight in the desirability of the following propositions along educational lines: European integration; increasing mobility of workers in the EU; the perception of globalization as a chance or as a threat for France; the globalization of economic trade and the wish for a France opening or protecting itself with regard to the world of today.

6.1.2 Immigration and ethnocentrism

Concerning immigration and ethnocentrism – two phenomena that arose on the political agenda in the 1980s and whose impact grew and probably will continue to grow under the influence of globalization – we find data that stems mostly from 1988 to 2007. These surveys contain the following indicators: there are too many immigrants in France; one does not feel at home as before and the pride to be French. Taken all together, the data over this time span might give us a clearer view on the possible changes in policy perceptions among higher and lower educated citizens in France.

6.1.3 Authority & security

The final sub category concerns authority and security. Even if there are no data before 1988, for many issues this does not really matter, because of their relatively recent appearance in the political debate. This applies to the acceptance of homosexuality for example, a socio-political theme that can also tell us something about the importance of religious convictions among higher and lower educated citizens in general and the Le Pen electorate in particular. Another debate, the reintroduction of the death penalty (abolished under the presidency of François Mitterrand in 1981), was going on since many years, but was first measured in 1988.

¹⁹⁵ Kriesi et. al. *Op. cit.* p.3

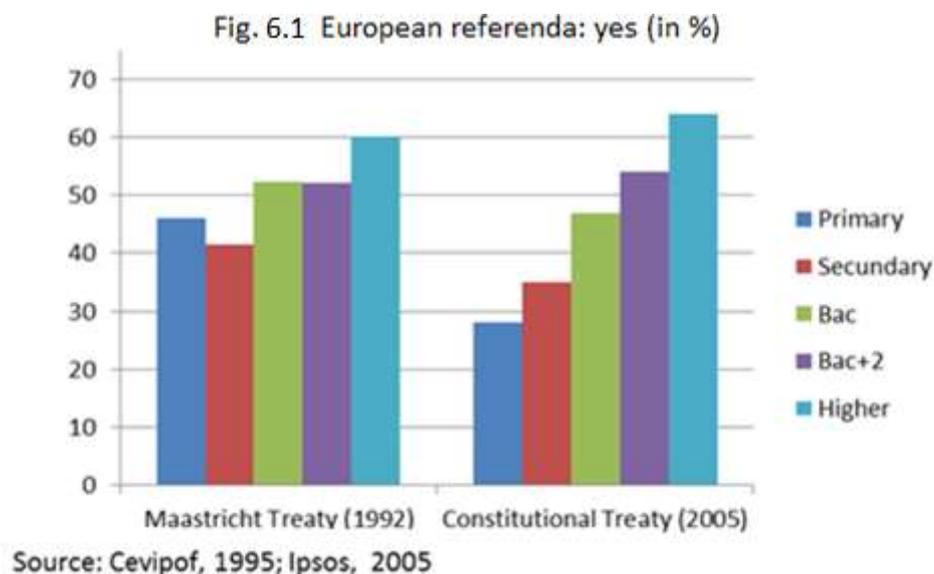
Finally the European Values Study provides information concerning higher and lower educated wishes for a strong leader.

6.2 Putting data into context

As with the participatory domain, also in the context of policy preferences, one would prefer to dispose of more and more longitudinal information. Yet, by combining the available data, a clearer view will appear on policy preferences along educational lines concerning the three indicated subcategories. The conclusion, at the end of this chapter will provide an answer how this view can be interpreted.

6.2.1 Globalization and European integration

A good indicator for the development in stance towards European integration are the two referenda held in 1992 and 2005. The first concerning the ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht, and the latter concerning the European Constitutional Treaty.¹⁹⁶ Both referenda show very clearly that the lower one's education level, the higher one's negative attitude with respect to European integration.¹⁹⁷ Another remarkable observation is that the difference along educational lines even increased significantly between 1992 and 2005, see figure 6.1.

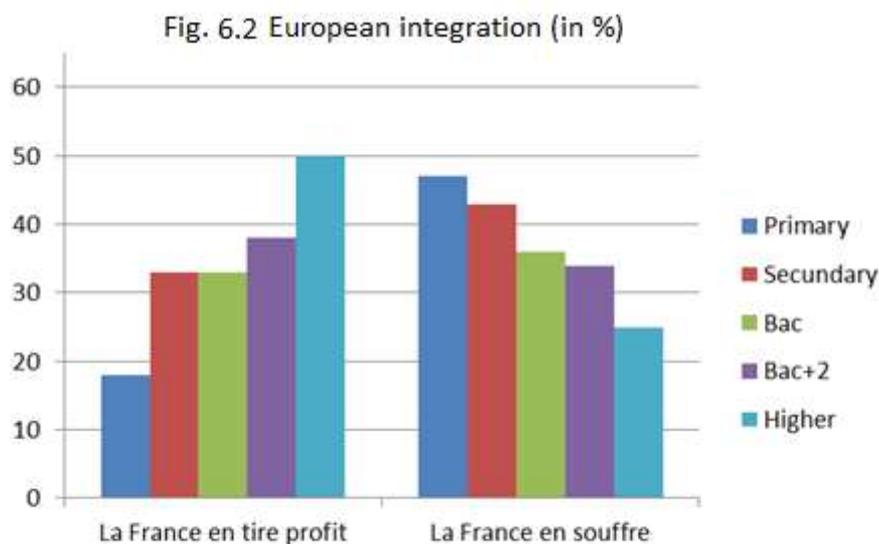


¹⁹⁶ Data concerning the constitutional treaty: Ipsos, national sample survey, <http://www.ipsos.fr/ipsos-public-affairs/sondages/referendum-29-mai-2005-sondage-sorti-urnes>.

¹⁹⁷ Laurent, A., Sauger, N. (dir.), *Le référendum de ratification du Traité constitutionnel européen du 29 mai 2005 : comprendre le « Non » français*, Cahier du CEVIPOF, 2005, p.152, http://www.cevipof.com/fichier/publication/428/publication_pdf_cahier.42.pdf

Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that this was first of all determined not by the traditional opposition between left and right, but by education level. “En 1992, le clivage était essentiellement entre les non diplômés et les autres, en 2005 le clivage s’est déplacé et se situe davantage entre les très diplômés et les autres” concluded Roux and Maurin.¹⁹⁸ Hereby: “Le basculement d’une partie des diplômés intermédiaires vers le non reflète sans doute la déception de ceux dont les efforts à l’école ne s’accompagnent pas d’une élévation dans la hiérarchie sociale.”¹⁹⁹

Cevipof data from 2007 show a similar image: the higher one’s education level, the higher one’s consent towards further European integration. The lower one’s education level, the lower one’s support to further denationalization. This also goes for the attitude towards the increasing mobility of laborers in the European Union, as well as the political perception of globalization and France’s openness towards the world.

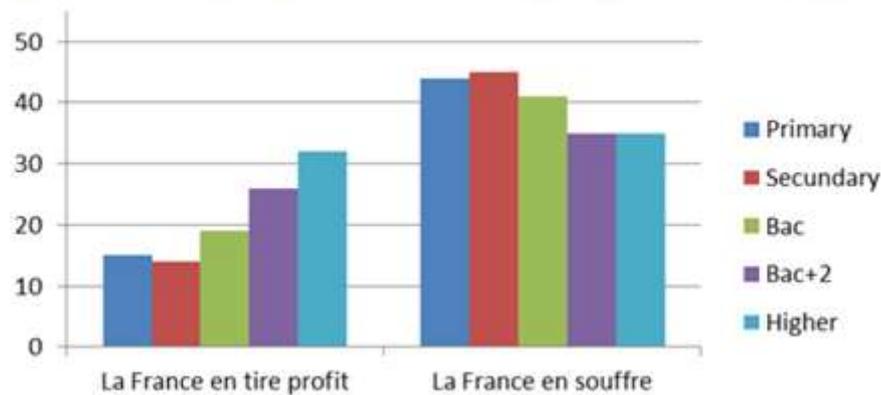


Source: Cevipof, 2007

¹⁹⁸ Roux, D. & Maurin, É., 1992-2005 : la décomposition du oui, ENS, 2006, <http://www.cepremap.ens.fr/depot/docweb/docweb0507.pdf>

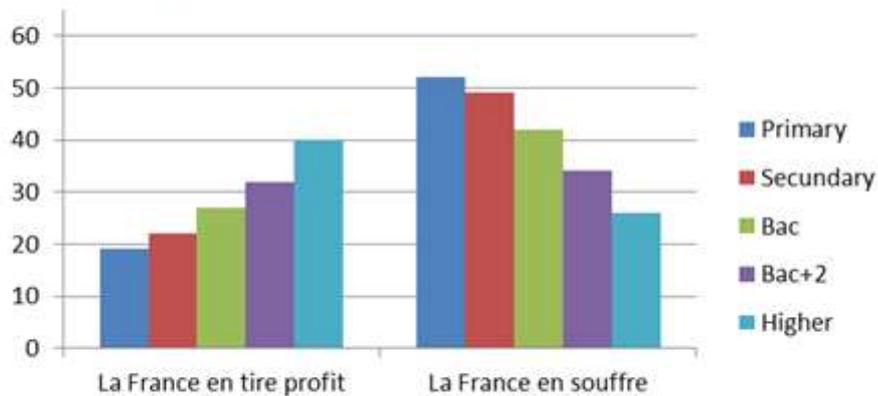
¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Fig. 6.3 Increasing labor mobility within the European Union (in %)



Source: Cevipof, 2007

Fig. 6.4 Perception of globalization as an opportunity or a threat for France (in %)

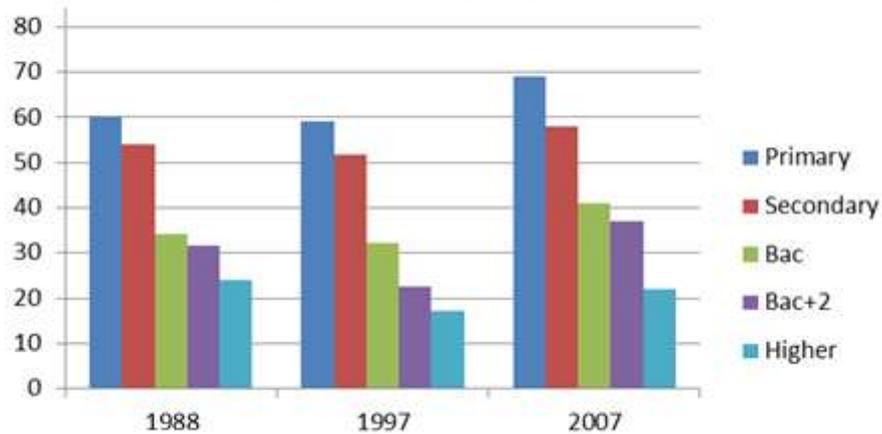


Source: Cevifof, 2007

6.2.2 Immigration and ethnocentrism

Not only with respect to European integration and globalization, but also concerning immigration and ethnocentrism there are several indications that suggest a significant difference in the policy preferences between higher and lower educated citizens. In most cases this cleavage appears to be increasing, as for example with the proposition: “one does not feel at home as before” (figure 6.5). In 1988, almost 60 per cent of the lower educated French citizens thought so, a number that would increase to almost 70 percent among the primary educated in 2007. Meanwhile, among the highly educated this percentage stayed steadily around 20 per cent.

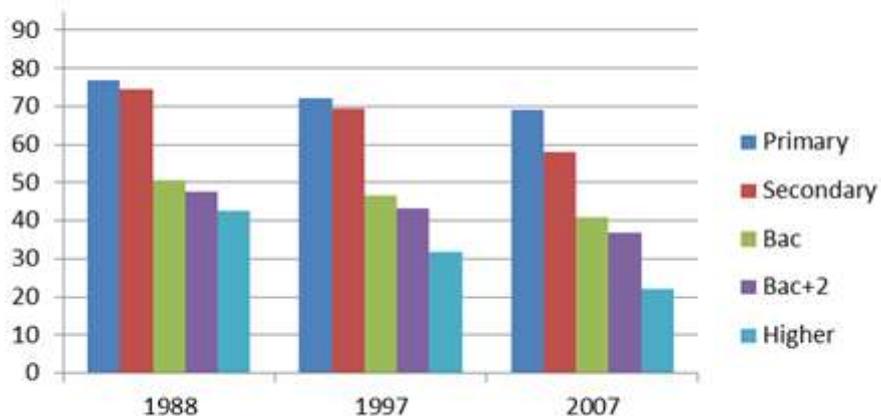
Fig. 6.5 One does not feel at home as before (in %)



Source: Cevipof

The same goes for the conviction that “there are too many immigrants in France”. Among higher educated French citizens this idea decreased with almost 50 percent from 1988 to 2007, dropping towards 20 percent, while among the lower educated French citizens this opinion still finds a large majority.

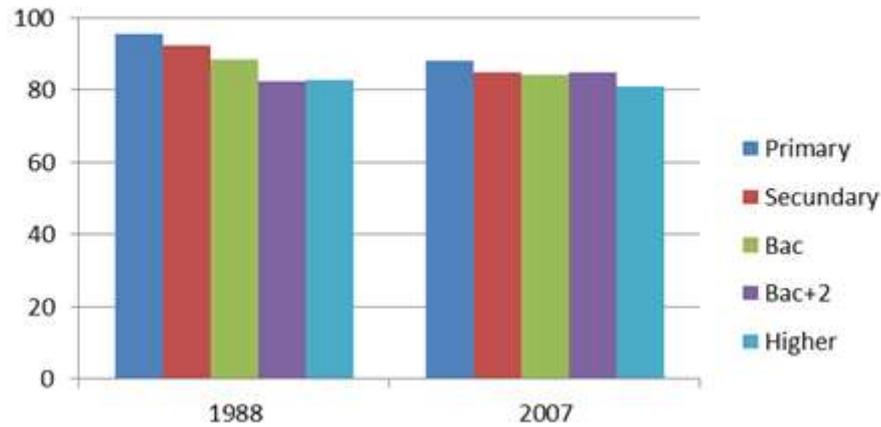
Fig. 6.6 There are too many immigrants in France (in %)



Source: Cevipof

Concerning the pride of being French, however, we observe a small decrease among the lower educated (seven per cent), while this sentiment practically stayed the same among the higher educated.

Fig.6.7 Proud to be French (in %)

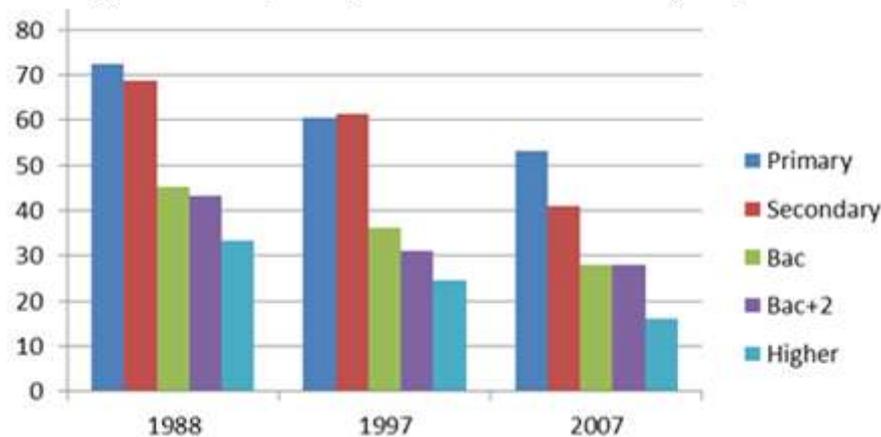


Source: Cevipof

6.2.3 Authority & security

One of the principles that tends to dominate in contemporary France – and presumably in most of the Western countries –, can be resumed by the following formula: “liberté privée et ordre public.”²⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the number of those advocating the capital punishment is steadily decreasing since the 1980s – a decrease, however, that is relatively stronger among the higher educated, than among the French citizens with a primary education.

Fig. 6.8 Death penalty should be reintroduced (in %)



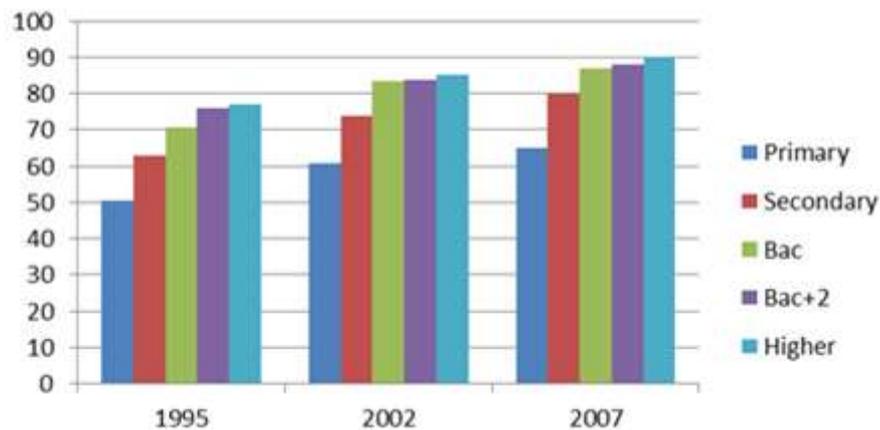
Source: Cevipof

Meanwhile, the acceptance of homosexuality shows a small but remarkable convergence. This, however, is mainly due to the differences in age: the younger generation is more likely to accept homosexuality. More specifically for the Front National vote, these numbers also

²⁰⁰ Schweisguth, É., *Op. Cit.* p.18

show that “les électeurs lepénistes ne sont pas principalement des gens particulièrement religieux ou traditionalistes. L’attachement à la tradition religieuse se manifeste en revanche chez les partisans de Philippe de Villiers qui ne sont que 22% à juger l’homosexualité acceptable.”²⁰¹ This is in line with the observation that education level has become the most important determinant concerning the Front National vote.

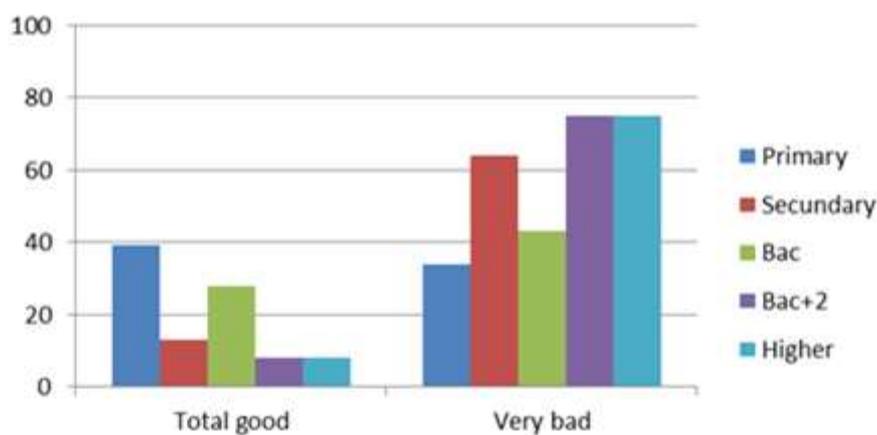
Fig. 6.9 Homosexuality is acceptable



Source: Cevipof

Finally, concerning the wish for a strong leader, the cleavage between higher and lower educated becomes clearly visible again. Together with the lower educated stance on reintroduction of the final punishment, this also seems to endorse the theory of Lipset concerning the “authoritarian working class” for the French case.

Fig. 6.10 Wish for a strong leader (in %)



Source: EVS 2008: France

²⁰¹ Schweisguth, É., *Op. Cit.* p.5

6.3 Conclusions

After having observed the different policy preferences in the three indicated subcategories, what does this tell us about the central question of this chapter? To what extent is there a cleavage concerning policy preferences along educational lines, and how has this changed over time? To begin with the last part, all of the analyzed political themes arose on the political agenda in the 1980s and gained importance ever since. Most data too go back to that decade. A consequence however, of the relative newness of these themes, is that they are not (yet) rooted in deeper oppositional socio-political structures. The redistribution issue forms a good counter-example here; being a classic left-right topic in which the positions and standpoints are perfectly clear. Concerning European integration and immigration it is much harder to put them on a left-right scale.

This chapter shows that instead of following a classic left-right distinction many cultural issues are particularly divided along educational lines. Not only European integration, but also immigration and ethnocentrism, and authority and security are themes that are differently interpreted by higher and lower educated French citizens. Most important however, is the observation that on all of these (increasingly important) subjects – except for the reintroduction of the death penalty and the acceptance of homosexuality (where the differences are still very significant) – education level turns out to be an increasingly important dividing element.

7. Conclusions & discussion

7.1 Conclusions

Are the lower educated structurally underrepresented in French democracy? This is the question figuring on the title page of this thesis. But can we also give the answer *oui*? In the fourth chapter, the condition was discussed in order to do so: an underrepresentation of the lower educated can only be called structural, if we can observe an increasing dominance of higher educated citizens in *all* of the three indicated domains.

Concerning the first domain, in which the socio-demographic representation was analyzed, we saw an enormous and continuing increase of highly educated MPs from the early 1960s until the end of the century. Furthermore, the education level of government members rose, reaching almost 100 per cent higher educated in the last decade. And also within the high ranks of both political parties and unions, the dominance of higher educated grew over the last decades.

With respect to political participation, longitudinal data, unfortunately, were lacking, so it cannot be argued whether we can speak of an *increasing* dominance of the higher educated citizens in this domain. Yet, the (relatively recent) information that was available, suggests that the more political participation demands more time, effort, skills, etc. the more the higher educated are involved. At the same time, this overrepresentation of higher educated citizens is already observable in the most conventional forms of participation, such as voting or political interest.

Concerning the third domain, as we saw on the precedent page, the most important political issues on the contemporary political agenda mainly came up in the 1980s. Interestingly they also appear to be the political issues that increasingly divide the higher and lower educated. Yet, most importantly, this interpretation along educational lines might help to explain why in the contemporary French political landscape the oppositional party vis-à-vis the right-wing Front National is not so much the (extreme) left-wing Parti Communiste, but rather the socialist and social liberal parties.

In fact, not only the socialists of the Parti Socialiste, but also “les écologistes mobilisent surtout parmi les étudiants et dans les classes moyennes et supérieures, à haut

niveau de diplôme.”²⁰² And exactly these parties, with their “électorat très diplômé”²⁰³, represent the universalistic and emancipatory values that can be summarized under the name *libéralisme culturel*. Besides, this cultural liberalism was (in large measure) spurred by the “educational revolution” that started in 1960s, provoking a communitarian counter-reaction by extreme-right parties in the 1980’s, when the libertarian left gained momentum.²⁰⁴

In France, by that time, the Left was in power, which leads us to another important conclusion of this thesis. For especially the leftist political parties, from the 1980s on, became more and more dominated by extremely high educated and ‘boboish’ officials (directly coming from the most prestigious governing schools instead of being a former ‘militant de base’), hereby propagating standpoints that alienated them progressively from their lower educated electorate. In 1981 for example, the Left obtained 74 percent of the lower educated blue-collar votes, a percentage that dropped under 50 by 1995, and was divided by two in 2007.²⁰⁵

European integration is a good example of this policy alienation. A few years before being inaugurated as the new French president, François Mitterrand stated: “Nous voulons l'Europe des travailleurs, contre l'Europe marchande, l'Europe des profits, l'Europe des grandes affaires.”²⁰⁶ Yet it was the same François Mitterrand, who, in the 1980s, together with Helmut Kohl, would become the driving force behind the single European market and further European integration – crowned in 1992 by signing the Maastricht Treaty. Other prominent socialists such as Jacques Delors, his daughter Martine Aubry and François Hollande (both énarques) always traveled the same path concerning European policy. The latter, just as the soon to be president Sarkozy, even campaigned in favor of the European treaty in the spring of 2005²⁰⁷, when only 30 percent of the French lower educated citizens voted *oui* (versus almost two thirds of the higher educated).

With an increasing European integration, also the mobility of labor across the Union rose – and the fear for the “plombier polonais” in its trail. In that perspective, criticism concerning European integration appeared to be easily combinable with anti-immigration and

²⁰² Bréchon, P., *Op. cit.*, p. 295

²⁰³ Ibid, p. 297

²⁰⁴ Bornschier, S., *National Dimensions of Political Conflict and the Mobilization of Euroscepticism by the Extreme Left and Right*, Paper prepared for workshop 15-21 “Euroscepticism”, 2010 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 2-5, Washington, DC, http://www.mwpweb.eu/1/23/resources/publication_780_1.pdf

²⁰⁵ Perrineau, P., *Op cit* (2012), p.33

²⁰⁶ Ruffin, F., *Jacques Delors : l'homme des firmes*, Fakir, No 40, March.2009

²⁰⁷ Le Monde, *Sarkozy-Hollande : ce qu'ils disent l'un de l'autre*, December 4, 2011, p.7

nationalist standpoints – another theme where leftist parties became estranged from the lower educated voters. For in name of the *droits de l'homme* – they consequently choose the side of the foreign workers and the *sans-papiers*, at the expense of the ‘autochthon’ proletariat. It is a phenomenon that, since one year, even has a word in French language: “prolophobie”²⁰⁸. Or as *Nouvel Observateur* journalist Hervé Algalarrondo summarized it in title of his most recent book: *La gauche et la préférence immigrée*.²⁰⁹

Almost ten years before, the same Algalarrondo had written a book in which he depicted another policy cleavage between leftist parties and the (lower educated) electorate: *Sécurité: la gauche contre le peuple*.²¹⁰ He states that, whereas the lower educated working class once formed the key to the leftist revolution, it is nowadays suspected of being the womb of all fascist thoughts. In other words: “Le « prolo » s’est métamorphosé en « beauf ».”²¹¹ It forms an illustration of the gap that has appeared in the last decades between ever higher educated politicians on the one hand and the lower educated electorate on the other – an electorate increasingly touched by unemployment and the threat of social descent.

But if this alienation between *la gauche* and *le peuple* is rather cultural (mainly as a result of socio-educational differences), the cleavage between right-wing political elites and the French people has a rather economic character. Therefore, in the light of the actual European and economic crisis, as well as the problems linked to immigration and security, the sentiment of not being ruled by “des gens comme nous”, easily finds a breeding ground on both sides of the political spectrum.

7.2 Discussion

Does this make France a diploma democracy? According to the definition of Bovens and Wille (“A diploma democracy is a democracy in which citizens have more tangible political influence the higher their level of educational attainment, as measured by their formal qualifications. In less academic terms: a diploma democracy is ruled by the citizens with the highest degrees”²¹²), the answer for the French case would definitely be yes. At the same time, just as in the Netherlands, France has a tradition of being ruled by its most highly

²⁰⁸ Coined by the right-winged campaign strategist of Nicolas Sarkozy: Patrick Buisson in *Paris Match*, March 31, 2011

²⁰⁹ Algalarrondo, H., *La gauche et la préférence immigrée*, Éditions de Plon, 2011

²¹⁰ Algalarrondo, H., *Sécurité: la gauche contre le peuple*, Éditions Robert Laffont S.A., 2002

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Bovens, M. & Wille, A. *Op. cit.*(2009), p.2

educated citizens; something that did not cause much trouble as long as the low educated had the idea that their political interests and attitudes were democratically represented; as long as their vision on how good life looks like found a democratic *input*, as long as they were not *oubliés* by the governing elites.

The main problem with the diploma democracy, however, is that the voices of the higher educated sound more loudly than those of other participants in democracy.²¹³ Thereby, as we observed in the third domain of this thesis, the higher educated, compared to their lower educated fellow citizens, have increasingly diverging attitudes towards increasingly important political issues, while possessing more authority and influence to turn these preferences into reality – something that might explain why the percentage of French voters with a primary diploma as their highest diploma finding that their democracy functions ‘not good at all’ almost doubled between 1988 and 2007 (from about 10 to 20 percent), while this opinion stayed quite stable among their higher educated fellow citizens (around 4 percent).²¹⁴ Meanwhile the percentage of those thinking that politicians ‘do not think at all’ of people like us, also showed a remarkable increase among lower educated French citizens over the same time span (from less than 25 to more than 40 percent among the primary educated), while staying below 15 percent among the higher educated.²¹⁵ In other words, the number of lower educated French citizens may relatively have become smaller, their call to be democratically heard is all the greater. Furthermore, from the perspective of the three analyzed domains, these statistics underline that, from being a practically unnoticed and marginally relevant factor until the 1980s, education level has become one the most, perhaps *the most* important socio-political cleavage in contemporary French democracy – an observation that raises the inevitable question: should we bother?

7.3 *Should we bother?*

Just before the announcement that ‘the author of this essay was himself killed at Peterloo’²¹⁶ – on the final page of Michael Young’s sociological satire *The Rise of the Meritocracy* – one reads about the reasons of this bloody Peterloo riot. “For more than half a century, the lower classes have been harbouring resentments that they could not make articulate, until the present

²¹³ Bovens, M. & Wille, A. *Op. Cit.*(2011), p.119

²¹⁴ Enquête post-électorale française 1988, Centre d’Etude de la Vie Politique Française (Cevipof), Panel Electoral Français (2007) CEVIPOF-Ministère de l’Intérieur

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Young, M., *Op. cit.*, p.180

day.”²¹⁷ This present day was in the month of May 2034, when England progressively had become a full meritocracy and the class of lower educated citizens finally revolted against the ruling oligarchy that chose its highly educated members via ever more selective procedures, while socially and politically ignoring the lower educated voice.

It is hard to say whether a similar riot will ever take place²¹⁸ – even in France, where “l’*émeute est un sport national*”²¹⁹; – something that does not mean, however, that the dystopian visions depicted by Michael Young could not become an ever dominating part of everyday political life. On the contrary: whether it comes to social-demographic representation, political participation, policy representation, or the feeling of not being ruled by “people like us”, France resembles more and more the England of Michael Young during the early 2030s. Even more so because the French road to the educational top is relatively barricaded – the social milieu heavily determines one’s school level in general and the access to the *grandes écoles* in particular.

Still, the fact that nine out of ten French citizens think that democracy is the best political system (also the lower educated), seems to point out the general legitimacy of this polity. It shows, as we noticed earlier on, that the problem treated in this thesis is not so much a problem *of* democracy, but rather a problem *in* democracy. For the future political elites, it will therefore be important to listen more closely to the lower educated voice, if only because one should not widen and deepen a social cleavage that is already profoundly dividing French society. Moreover democracy does not reach its goals when the lower educated part of the population is structurally underrepresented with respect to political action and policy preferences.

7.4 Further research

The aim of this thesis was to give a better understanding of a representative problem *in* French democracy. Yet, under the influence of an iron law – not of oligarchy, but of knowledge – every attempt at contributing to such an understanding is destined to raise more questions than it provides answers. Also at the end of this thesis there are potential points for further research. For example, we analyzed the education level of French politicians, but it

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.178

²¹⁸ In a certain way, however, the riots in the Parisian banlieues (2005) as well as those in London (2011) can be explained from this meritocratic perspective. See also: Pels, D., *De economie van de eer. Een nieuwe visie op verdienste en beloning*, Ambo, 2007

²¹⁹ Peyrefitte, A., *Op. cit.*, p.495

would also be really interesting to take into account the diplomas of their parents. A similar research would not only tell us a lot about the functioning of meritocracy in France, but also give a better insight into the links between politicians and the people. From which social milieu do they stem? And how does this relate to their political convictions? Their political engagement? And how did these trends change over time?

Another interesting research resides in the continuation of the surveys held by Sofres/Le Monde. In 1990 they questioned participants at congresses of the most important French political parties. Redoing similar surveys on a similar scale would give a great insight in the development of the education level in the heart of political parties in France – something that is even more interesting because data concerning party officials turned out to be really hard to find. Moreover, by doing so, the correlation between education level and several policy preferences could be put in a longitudinal perspective.

Moreover, a similar analysis may contribute to another unanswered question: to what extent did the increase of the number of lower educated officials, during the 1980s, change the political course of the Front National (towards more protectionist stances)? Or, inversely, did the lower educated electorate rather come towards the FN, after which they gradually changed their standpoints in favor of the lower educated policy preferences? Of course it would also be very clarifying to analyze this more profoundly with respect to other (especially Leftist) political parties.

Finally, and in line with a continuing research concerning policy preferences, it is interesting to see how the developments in this thesis will continue in 2012. Not in the last place because, socio-politically, a lot has happened since 2007. One thinks of the financial crisis, the Eurocrisis or the score of Marine Le Pen and her Front National during the last presidential elections (almost 6.5 million votes on a total of 36 million²²⁰). Unfortunately the official Cevipof data are still under embargo. It could have told us a lot about the actual political trust and the way that socio-political differences are balanced along educational lines.

Hopefully it will form the point of departure for a future research on the state of the French socio-political education cleavage.

²²⁰ Conseil constitutionnel, *Communiqué de presse*, May 5, 2012, <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/root/bank/pdf/conseil-constitutionnel-108522.pdf> (seen: June 6, 2012)

Appendix I

A quintuple degree distinction concerning education level in France

<p>1. Primary education (corresponds with preprimary and primary education)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non scolarisé ou école primaire non achevée ▪ Ecole primaire uniquement ▪ Certificat d'études primaires ▪ Scolarité suivie de la 6ème à la 3ème ▪ Brevet élémentaire, Brevet d'étude du premier cycle ▪ Scolarité suivie de la 2nde à la Terminale
<p>2. Secondary education (corresponds with lower education)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diplôme d'aide-soignante, auxiliaire de puériculture, etc. ▪ CAP, BEP, examen de fin d'apprentissage artisanal
<p>3. Baccalaureate (or: high school diploma, equals Upper secondary education)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Baccalauréat professionnel, Brevet de technicien ▪ Baccalauréat technologique, Baccalauréat de technicien etc. ▪ Baccalauréat général, Brevet supérieur ▪ Diplôme de la capacité en droit, Diplôme d'accès aux études supérieures ▪ Diplôme de moniteur-éducateur, Educateur technique spécialiste
<p>4. Baccalaureate + two years of higher education (corresponds with Tertiary education Type B: also having a minimum duration of two years full-time equivalent at the tertiary level.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diplôme universitaire du premier cycle (DEUG), Classes préparatoires ▪ Diplôme universitaire de technologie (DUT), Brevet de technologie ▪ Certificat d'aptitude pédagogique (instituteur)
<p>5. Higher education. (including Tertiary education Type A and Advanced research programmes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Licence professionnelle ▪ Licence ▪ Diplôme d'école d'ingénieur ▪ DESS, Master deuxième année professionnel ▪ Diplômes professionnels supérieurs divers (notaire, architecte) ▪ Diplôme des grandes écoles ▪ Maîtrise, CAPES, CRPE (professeur des écoles) ▪ DEA, DES, Master deuxième année recherche, Agrégation ▪ Doctorat en médecine ou équivalents (Médecine, Dentaire, etc) ▪ Doctorat

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