

« Parity is not a quota »

Women's political representation A case study of France

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Table of contents

Introduction.....	2
Theoretical Framework.....	6
Format of the analysis.....	28
Women in French politics explained.....	32
Conclusion.....	62
References.....	64

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Introduction

Considerable progress has been achieved in the world toward gender equality as well as women's rights, following the United Nations' 2015 millennium development goals. Next to the guaranty of human rights, promotion of education or protection against violence, UN's fifth goal also included the provision of political representation of women and access to decision-making processes [CITATION Uni15 \l 1036]. In 2015, in 46 countries out of 195, women held more than 30% of seats in the second chamber of national Parliaments. But, there is still a long way left to go in order to ensure equal representation of men and women, as women only represent 23.4% of representatives in national parliaments across the world [CITATION Uni15 \l 1036].

The European continent is not escaping the gender equality issue as, in 2018, among the 28 European Union member-states, only Spain, Sweden and Finland had more than 40% of female members and presidents of national parliaments [CITATION Eur18 \l 1036]The implementation of new legal frameworks nevertheless improved women's representation since between 2003 and 2015, the European countries' average number of women in decision-making in their national parliaments increased from 22% to 29% [CITATION Eur18 \l 1036]Gender representation is not solely a matter of national politics, but also a regional or local issue: Even if the European Parliament is the institution that presents the highest share of female members, with 50% of women MPs, regional parliaments only present 33% of female members while local assemblies present 35% [CITATION Eur18 \l 1036]National governments are the least egalitarian institutions in terms of gender balance with 27% of female members, slightly higher than the world's average[CITATION Eur18 \l 1036]. This is evidence for the improvement of women's representation in decision-making bodies but this also shows that some inequalities remain.

Questions of inequality reduction are undeniably the subject of public policies. Indeed, some countries have tackled the gender issue by implementing legislated candidate quotas, like Poland, Belgium, Spain or France; while in some other countries only voluntary party quotas are present, such as in Romania, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands or Sweden[CITATION Eur18 \l 1036]. Quotas can take several forms, either as reserved seats, legal candidate

quotas or political party quotas [CITATION Dru09 \t \l 1036]. These are implemented in order to improve women's political representation, first in terms of descriptive representation. As Pitkin theorized, representation can be divided between formalistic, symbolic, descriptive and substantive [CITATION Pit67 \l 1036]. Several examples indicate that the introduction of quotas is a way to increase women's numerical representation: 17 countries out of the top-20 ranked countries in terms of female representation in government are using some kind of quota [CITATION Dru09 \t \l 1036]. Gender quotas touch upon the descriptive side of representation as it aims to tighten the gap between the composition of the population and their representatives by including more women, who usually constitute half of the population. The logic of quotas follows the idea that once women are numerically represented in politics, they can implement policies in favor of women, trigger further female involvement in decision-making and be held accountable in the same way as men politicians are. The presence of women therefore is expected to encourage other forms of representation and progress for women's conditions in politics but also within society as a whole.

Even if gender quotas seem to be quite popular across the world, there is great debate around their implementation and results. Dahlerup and Freidenvall [CITATION Dru05 \n \t \l 1036] argue that quotas are a "fast track" to equal representation for women, as it breaks the liberal concept of equal opportunity by favoring women's opportunities in order to obtain equality in results. It is argued that quotas are needed because of the structural inequalities between men and women mentioned in the theory of patriarchy, stating that the male dominated society constantly reproduces itself and therefore leaves no place for women [CITATION Dru13 \t \l 1036]. The implementation of quotas can help reaching a "critical mass" that is usually established at 30% of women, who would then be able to make a substantial difference in politics [CITATION Dru06 \t \l 1036]. The critical mass theory is nevertheless criticized, especially for its focus on numerical representation and the fact that female politicians elected are expected to represent women collectively [CITATION Sus08 \l 1036].

On the other hand, gender quotas are controversial and encounter resistance among both politicians and the populations. The inclusion of more women in politics would hinder male politicians' positions, leading them to develop survival strategies to remain in position

[CITATION Mon16 \l 1036]. There are also partisans of the time-lag theory, according to which women's representation is only a matter of time: Quotas are not necessarily needed because equal representation will be achieved gradually [CITATION Dru13 \t \l 1036].

The implementation of gender quotas across the world necessarily raises the question of empirical research and the efficiency of the measure. Gender quotas are designed to foster an immediate equal representation and we would therefore expect to see quick results in the countries having implemented some. Research indicates that quotas can be considered to be a "fast track" toward better women's representation, as it rejects the idea of gradual progress and sees underrepresentation as a real problem [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036].

France is a good example to illustrate the fast-track in Europe: Since June 2000, France has added gender equality in its constitution and implemented its "parity laws", obligating political parties to present an equal number of male and female candidates for list-based elections. Financial penalties also have to be paid for parties that do not respect parity at legislative elections. France was the first country to implement a 50-50 gender quota in the world. However, in 2002, about two years after the implementation of the parity law, only 12.3% of women were elected in the *Assemblée Nationale* and 5.9% in the Senate [CITATION Int19 \l 1036]. Ten years after the implementation of this law, in 2010, the number of women in Parliament still did not reach the significant threshold of 30% as the lower chamber counted 18.9% of women and 21.9% in the Senate [CITATION Int19 \l 1036]. The biggest improvements appeared in the last two legislative elections, as in 2010 the lower chamber counted 26.9% of female representatives, and 39.7% after the 2017 elections placing the country in the top-20 countries in the world in terms of parliamentary representation of women. Despite the recent improvement, this example seems to contradict the fact that the implementation of quotas leads to a direct effect in terms of representation, as it took more than 15 years for the country to reach almost 40% of women in the lower chamber. Nevertheless, gender inequalities still remain at the local and regional levels, as well as at the head of the state.

This thesis aims to add to the current literature in several ways. First, it aims to show that the sole implementation of gender quotas is not a magic solution to the problem of unequal representation of women. It also aims to show the paradox within the literature claiming

that developed countries with gender quotas are on a fast-track toward gender equal representation and the empirical evidence. The case of France is also a crucial case as it is the first country to implement a 50-50 gender quota. This research also aims at showing that a combination of different factors can explain the relative success or failure of quotas, such as electoral reforms, societal attitudes toward women or political parties' reticence. It aims to uncover the different sets of explanations for the recent progress of France in terms of gendered representation through a time analysis.

Given these recent improvements, the research of alternative explanations of women's representation next to the implementation of quotas could help for further policy-making on the matter. By looking at the country, political parties, individuals as well as society, the aim is to uncover the mechanisms leading to gender equality on all the different levels of the French society. The identification of these mechanisms is useful for improving what seems to slow gender equality down, despite the efforts made within legal frameworks.

This thesis is interested in explaining the paradox between the implementation of gender quotas in politics as a quick solution of women's underrepresentation in the political arena and its non-immediate effect in some countries, such as France. The research question therefore is:

How can we explain that France still lags behind other countries in terms of gender equality in politics, despite the introduction of a 50-50 gender quota law in 2000?

In order to answer this question, this thesis will first provide a theoretical framework in which the question of political representation, the factors possibly leading to gender inequality in politics as well as the gender quotas will be discussed. The third chapter will present a three level qualitative model to identify factors leading to women's underrepresentation in French politics. The fourth chapter will compare the 2000's period, right after the implementation of the quota, and our current period, 15 years after the quota's implementation. This analytical chapter will make use of the model introduced in the third chapter, in order to identify the changes, failures and improvements in French politics. The final chapter will conclude this research and provide policy recommendations.

Theoretical Framework

This chapter will discuss the concepts of representation and underrepresentation especially of women. The underrepresentation of women is noticeable according to different contextual factors which can be divided into several levels: Society, systemic and institutional rules, and actors such as political parties. As gender quotas are presented as a solution to underrepresentation, these quota laws will be further explained alongside the fast track and incremental change theories. The different types of quotas that exist will also be discussed. Finally the literature on political actors' attitude toward gender quotas will be explored.

The concept of representation

To begin with, the idea of representation has to be discussed as it is at the heart of the topic. Even if this thesis deals with political representation of women in relation with gender quota laws, it is necessary to not limit the scope only to *political representation*, but see it as a larger issue touching upon society as a whole.

Pitkin in *The concept of representation* [CITATION Pit67 \n \t \l 1036] distinguishes four types of representation based on the word's use in language and also provides standards to evaluate representatives. The first conception is **formalistic representation**, which symbolizes the institutional arrangements before and triggering representation [CITATION Pit67 \l 1036]. This type of representation is divided in two branches: authorization and accountability. The first one refers to the means through which the representative got to his or her position, from which we can only assess whether or not it is legitimately obtained and used [CITATION Pit67 \l 1036]. The second branch is accountability: The ability that citizens have to punish their representatives if they do not follow their electorate's preferences, as well as how responsive they are to them [CITATION Pit67 \l 1036].

As second type of representation highlighted by Pitkin is **symbolic representation**, the way a representative stands for the represented or what it means for the represented to have such a representative [CITATION Pit67 \l 1036]. It is evaluated through the degree of acceptance that the electorate has toward the representative.

Descriptive representation is the third kind distinguished by Pitkin and stands for the extent to which a representative resembles the electorate more or less accurately, according to politically relevant criteria such as occupation, ethnicity, gender or geographical area [CITATION Pit67 \l 1036]. This conception is dominant when analyzing gender quotas alongside representation in politics as it is more about how many women are elected compared to the number of women in the overall population. Several scholars such as Lovenduski and Norris [CITATION Jon03 \n \t \l 1036] have shown that the presence of a critical number of women can influence the general policy making in favor of women, therefore descriptive representation is influencing further substantive representation.

The last type of representation is **substantive**, and highlights the actions taken by representatives for the represented –who mostly are only groups of represented [CITATION Pit67 \l 1036]. It can be assessed by analyzing the extent to which the representatives’ policies are in line with the constituents’ best interests [CITATION Pit67 \l 1036]. This last type of representation is the one presented in the *critical mass theory* as a second step toward gender equality, in which the critical mass of female representatives will implement policies in favor of the female electorate. Pitkin [CITATION Pit67 \n \t \l 1036] also highlights the tension between those different types of representation, especially between descriptive representation and accountability: Indeed, politicians’ responsiveness to an electorate that they do not look like, do not experience the same daily life and struggles will be low compared to politicians that accurately descriptively represent their electorate. In the case of gender descriptive representation, as women are less present in the political arena we would expect that their interests are served less well by the majority of male representatives. This view nonetheless entails that all women have the same interests and therefore need a collective representation.

Moreover, according to Iris Marion Young [CITATION Iri02 \n \t \l 1036], in order to reach the most inclusive form of democracy -that goes beyond formal equality between citizens-, it is needed to take special measures to compensate for socio-economic inequalities that derive from unjust social structures. Among those measures, some kind of group representation – such as gender quotas- might be required in order for certain groups to gain voice and give their particular social perspectives. She nevertheless stresses that there is a need to rethink *descriptive* representation and highlights that the inclusion of more voices in the political

arena also means that some other voices can be suppressed [CITATION Iri02 \l 1036]. Indeed, there will be a trade-off between the descriptive aspects that are chosen to be highlighted by those special measures, for example if we decide to implement gender quotas, the ethnicities of the representatives might end up being left on the side, which means a better representation of women but not necessarily of the electorate's variety of ethnicities.

1. What influences the political representation of women?

Structural factors

It is not ground breaking to say that statistically women have been underrepresented in worldwide politics, even if some progress has been made in the past decade. Scholars have been studying the underrepresentation of female politicians at different levels and especially in terms of political system and institutions.

In 1994, Wilma Rule studied the variation in female parliamentary representation within democracies such as Japan, the USA, Finland or France. The two main explanations for the phenomena are primarily the **electoral arrangements** through which legislators are chosen and secondary, the **economic and social context**[CITATION Wil94 \l 1036]. Indeed, some electoral systems are more favorable to women's election and representation. Countries with majoritarian systems seem to be the worse for women's representation especially when they elect a single member in office[CITATION Eri16 \l 1036]. Rule shows that among the 27 studied democracies, the best ranked countries in terms of women in parliament have a proportional system *-proportional representation-* in which seats are obtained thanks to an approximate proportion of votes that political parties gained[CITATION Wil94 \l 1036]. Among those countries, the leaders in proportion of women in parliament present large numbers of representatives in districts, while single-member districts countries are the ones lagging behind. The author explains those differences by the need to have a broad appeal in proportional representation systems; this incentive leads to include women on the lists[CITATION Wil94 \l 1036]. On the other hand, because only one person is elected within single-member districts there is a disincentive to have a female candidate[CITATION Wil94 \l 1036]. Scholars have established that in proportional systems, parties include women on their lists to appeal to a broader electorate; while in single-member districts only one person represents the party and it usually is a man supposed to appeal to a larger electorate than a

woman[CITATION Ric96 \l 1036]. Electoral systems seem to also play a big role on the contagion effect, which is when a smaller party induces other bigger parties to nominate more women [CITATION Ric96 \l 1036].

In Rule's study, France is ranked 24 out of the 27 states and presents a single-member district system in which a majority is required to be elected, making it a very restrictive system[CITATION Wil94 \l 1036]. Rule [CITATION Wil94 \n \t \l 1036]also shows that multi-member districts are more likely to elect a larger number of women in office than single-member districts and when a system change happens from the first to the second, women's representation decreases. In multi-member districts women and ethnic minorities are better represented, but other minorities are not as likely to be elected[CITATION Wil94 \l 1036].

Rule [CITATION Wil94 \n \t \l 1036] further explains that favorable societal conditions for women do not out balance the effects of unfavorable electoral systems in terms of representation in parliaments, as well as at the local level. On the other hand, she shows that unfavorable contextual factors, among which are cultural biases and discrimination, can largely be overcome thanks to alternative electoral systems[CITATION Wil94 \l 1036]. The main point of the study is to show that electoral arrangements are not neutral and are means that enable to include some citizens while excluding others: In the example of the United States it concerns women, African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans, but this case is easily generalizable to other Western countries and their contextual minorities[CITATION Wil94 \l 1036]. Consequently, changing electoral rules can be a way to overcome the slowness with which societies evolve toward better opportunities and representation for women.

The institutional setting can also play a role in women's representation to elected mandates as it is shown by Squire [CITATION Pev92 \n \t \l 1036] in the United States: The fact that legislatures are more or less professionalized would improve the representation of minority groups such as women or African Americans. The term of professionalization implies that a person elected in office gets a respectable pay scale, is provided with independent staff services as well as increasing time dedicated for legislatures to sit. The author shows that among all the American state legislatures, the more professionalized ones are the ones in which black people are more represented but the relationship is reversed for women: the

more professionalized legislatures are, the lesser women there are [CITATION Pev92 \l 1036]. **Professionalization of a legislature** implies that the political value of the seat increases and the level of the competition of it as well[CITATION Pev92 \l 1036]. The author explains this difference with the importance black people's geographic concentration that can help getting a black candidate into office, while women do not enjoy this different territorial dispersion. Even if the competition might in the first place be to the disadvantage of minority groups, on the long run this might be to the advantage of people of color but not in the interest of women[CITATION Pev92 \l 1036]. Membership diversity is improving with professionalization but not in terms of gender.

This leads us to women's representation or underrepresentation in terms of political parties, in this case the importance of party ideology. The link between political parties' organization and women's representation will be further discussed in the next sub-section.

Political parties

After reviewing structural explanations to women's underrepresentation in politics, we must take a look at political actors themselves and especially political parties as they are the main representative actors in electoral politics. These actors have a responsibility in encouraging or not female candidates and their access to elected mandates.

Party structures and gender

Miki Caul describes the role of political parties in women's representation in parliament. She gives four main characteristics that directly or indirectly affect political parties' women representation in 12 advanced industrial nations: the party's organizational structure; the ideology; the presence of women activists and gender-related candidate rules. The last two characteristics are the ones that influence female representation the most directly [CITATION Mik98 \l 1036].

In terms of party organization, three components are highlighted: Centralization, institutionalization and the candidate's nomination location[CITATION Mik98 \l 1036]. **Centralization** relates to the distribution of control over decision-making in the party's hierarchy. In a party that is highly centralized, leaders are more pressured to respond to broaden representation claims and therefore can make the effort to integrate more women

via party policies[CITATION Mik98 \l 1036]. With ***institutionalization***, the nature of the MPs recruitment process is determined. A highly institutionalized party allows for a more rule-oriented process, which enables everyone to understand the selection process clearly[CITATION Mik98 \l 1036]. Therefore, outsiders can anticipate as much as insiders the criteria on which they are going to be evaluated on. If rules aren't overly biased against women, they will have a better chance in a highly institutionalized party as the rules are explicit[CITATION Mik98 \l 1036]. In a much institutionalized context, party leaders will also have less power to favor certain candidates to the detriment of others; while weakly institutionalized parties tend to bias candidate selection in favor of candidates with higher *personal political capita*[CITATION Mik98 \l 1036]. As outsiders, women may have fewer of those resources and have difficulties to challenge established men[CITATION Mik98 \l 1036]. The ***level of nomination***, or whether a candidate was nominated locally or nationally, can also determine women's engagement in politics. Indeed, a local nomination can be more hospitable for female candidates as they would already work in the community before building their way up to the national level[CITATION Mik98 \l 1036]. On the other hand, a centralized nomination would rather provide an internal career within the party bureaucracy, for which women can be repaid with a party office[CITATION Mik98 \l 1036].

Party ideology and gender

Political parties also differ from one another in terms of ideology, this parameter also influences whether or not parties will present women. Indeed, scholars show that **left-wing** parties tend to support women's candidacies more than right-wing parties because of their egalitarian ideology. In addition, **women's movements** also have been linked with left political parties. Caul [CITATION Mik98 \l 1036] nevertheless highlights the need to re-examine the traditional left-right dimension with the evolution of politics as it may nowadays be too simplistic to account for party differences in terms of gender representation. She claims that a new dimension should be added –the “New politics”- which adds new sets of issues such as environment, alternative lifestyles, minority rights, democratic participation and social equality[CITATION Mik98 \l 1036]. Indeed, “new left” values –or post-material values- combined with a high presence of women activists enhance the likelihood of parties to implement gender-related candidate rules[CITATION Mik98 \l 1036].

In a more recent study of 14 European countries including France, Erzeel and Celis [CITATION Sil16 \n \t \l 1036] reassess how party ideology can affect women's *substantive* representation and is still a relevant explanation for it, even if the inclusion of women is now widespread across the political spectrum. First, they state that the link between ideology and its impact on the presence and activity of female representatives has to be seen as more complex than straightforward [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. Even if left-wing parties do, on average, speak more frequently on behalf of women in their parliamentary groups [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036], there is also intra-block variations. The authors consequently argue in favor of a distinction between socio-economic issues, post-materialist and ethical issues divisions in the conceptualization of ideology [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. Indeed, it will allow for a better variation between different political parties and consequently will unlink certain party labels to a certain left or right ideology [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. The authors find that **post-material left ideologies** –especially in Green parties- are more likely to engage with women's substantive representation, compared to right wing post-materialist and right-wing parties [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. Within the right block, liberal and far-right parties are more active toward women's interests than Christian democratic and conservative parties [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036].

There is also a difference to be made when defining what *substantive claims* for women are, for which the authors make two categories: **feminist interests** and **gendered claims** [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. The first interests aim at transforming gender roles to tend to gender equality and include all feminist claims from liberal ones to conservative point of view, as reflect the different women's movements in Europe [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. The gendered claims touch upon women and their concerns but are not part of a feminist agenda and can be more material interests [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. In light with this distinction, the authors find that parties will mobilize one of those two kind of interest according to their ideology: Left parties and especially post-material ones will tackle feminist issues in their quest for social justice and equality, while right and conservative parties are more likely to frame issues in a non-feminist way but those will still be gendered issues [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. The support for affirmation action as a remedy to women's under-representation is mostly shared by green and socialist politicians and they consequently are more likely to support the feminist agenda compared to parties in the right

block[CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. Right-wing parties are more supportive of slow track solutions and individual efforts to fight against gender inequalities[CITATION Sil16 \l 1036].

Finally, the authors show that the impact of ideology on women's substantive representation needs to be seen not only as direct, as previous studies might have shown [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. It must also be considered as mediated effect because ideology is not the only parameter at stake [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. They first assume that substantive representation depends on the party's level of descriptive representation of women [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036], in other words whether women are present and their numbers. This relates to the theory of the *politics of presence* mentioned by Lovenduski and Norris [CITATION Jon03 \n \t \l 1036]: In their study of parliamentarians in the UK they show that the entrance of more women in parliament did not bring a revolution in Westminster's culture but still bring different values in when discussing gender equality issues. These might at some point influence the content of party manifestos, political debates and policy making [CITATION Jon03 \l 1036]. Therefore descriptive representation can on the long term affect substantive representation and is not merely symbolic.

It is also important to know if those women have **feminist or gender expertise** [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036], and can consequently push those issues on the party's agenda. Their analysis shows that indeed the higher number of women in a political party group, the more they speak for women and especially of feminist issues within the parliamentary group [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. But, there does not seem to be a difference between parties with and without a women's group in terms of substantive representation [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036]. When ideology is combined with other factors such as gender of the politician, they find that ideology has a negative impact on speaking for women but *only* for female right-wing representatives. Ideology remains a strong determining factor even when different variables are included [CITATION Sil16 \l 1036], whether they concern the party itself, the electoral system or the representatives.

Party recruitment and gender – Demand side

Within political parties, individuals or groups of actors are in charge of recruiting candidates within or outside the party members and therefore also have the responsibility of which gender the selected candidates are going to have. The recruitment process is often named as another reason for women's underrepresentation in politics.

Firstly, even if the institutions seem to be less and less biased against women, Lawless and Fox[CITATION Jen05 \n \t \l 1036] mention that an *institutional inertia* still exists. Indeed, male politicians have an **incumbency advantage** [CITATION Jen05 \p 25 \t \l 1036]: They are candidates to their re-election in more than 75% of the cases in the USA, and have a reelection rate above 90%. The political personnel is therefore not renewed by choosing new candidates and is still composed mainly of men[CITATION Jen05 \t \l 1036].

Furthermore, Fox and Lawless[CITATION Ric10 \n \t \l 1036] analyze the interaction of gender with political recruitment in a pool of 2000 potential candidates for the 2008's election through the USA national survey measuring citizens' political ambition. They establish that women are less likely to be recruited to run for office than men because of **party gatekeepers**[CITATION Ric10 \l 1036]. This evidence is not hindered by the position of the recruiter or gatekeeper – whether they are a party leader, an elected official or a political activist[CITATION Ric10 \l 1036]. In terms of breadth and frequency of recruitment women are disadvantaged: Among both Democratic and Republican parties, women suffer from stereotypical conceptions of candidates. They nevertheless find that Democrats have more will to make a conscious effort to recruit more women compared to Republicans: There are a lot less women in the pool of eligible candidates[CITATION Ric10 \l 1036]. One important pattern to be noticed is the influence of **women's organization**, as one out of four female candidates has been in contact with such organizations before and during the recruitment process[CITATION Ric10 \l 1036]. Those organizations can help bringing more women in even if the recruitment is biased, as they offer support and resources to female candidates.

Because gender is a factor in the recruitment process that negatively affects women's chances to be selected as candidates, their full inclusion in the electoral process is hindered. But on a more egalitarian point, women do not seem to be disadvantaged in terms of levels of political ambition and therefore do not require more efforts to be convinced than men[CITATION Ric10 \l 1036]. When they perceive that they have been encouraged to run for office, both genders express high levels of ambition[CITATION Ric10 \l 1036]. The second positive point for women's representation is that they are less likely than men to be dissuaded from running, which can be explained by the fact that they interact with lesser recruiters than their male counterparts[CITATION Ric10 \l 1036].

Societal attitudes toward women

Political parties and actors are all embedded within a specific context. Context specific norms and values shape individuals' perceptions of political life and of their representatives as decades of sociological studies have shown. These consequently also influence their perception of gender representation in politics.

Informal structures: The Gender Division of Labor

Social structures can prevent women from accessing political mandates such as the composition of the labor force. Indeed, in many democracies, most of the politicians that did not make a career directly within a party, have first exercised another profession. The typical branches in which those previous occupations are located are often the same ones: law, business and education [CITATION Jen05 \t \l 1036], this regardless of sex. But in those “**pipeline**” professions men are overrepresented and there women therefore do not reach the higher socioeconomic classes that constitute the eligibility pool of political candidates. This implies that not all sectors of the labor market are equally divided between genders and some scholars even talk about it as a global phenomenon: the sexual division of labor.

According to Gary S. Becker [CITATION Gar85 \n \t \l 1036] the **sexual division of labor** is the fact that work tasks are allocated on the basis of the sex of the person, which can happen in the global economy or within a household. This division is related to stereotyping and all societies have such a sexual division [CITATION Gar85 \l 1036]. It is generally believed to be some kind of societal order in which women care more about the household and have jobs in care sectors while men have jobs requiring more physical force [CITATION Gar85 \l 1036]. The sexual division of labor is not based on an inherent suitability of one sex to perform better a specific activity, but rather is derived from cultural practices [CITATION Gar85 \l 1036]. It seems that such a division has largely changed in the last decades, especially regarding who does what in the household [CITATION Gar85 \l 1036]. Hakim [CITATION Cat96 \n \t \l 1036] claims that traditional views such as men bringing food to the family and women cooking for the family are obsolete. But some tendencies were observable among all European countries: In 1995, more than half of EU's women were working in only five sectors: health and social services (16%), trade (13%), education (10.5%), public administration (7.5%) and services to companies [CITATION Mar17 \l 1036].

But, as more women occupy the different professional branches that lead to political careers, we can expect that more and more of them will be able to access the political arena[CITATION Jen05 \t \l 1036]. Alongside this progression, inequality nevertheless persists in business top ranks as very few women are CEOs[CITATION Jen05 \t \l 1036]. For instance, in 2005 in the USA's Dow Jones Industrial Average there were no women CEO[CITATION Jen05 \t \l 1036]; while there are only 5% today, representing 25 women on a total of 500 companies[CITATION Cat19 \l 1036]. Following this, on top of a *horizontal* segregation, a **vertical segregation** –commonly called the *glass ceiling*- also is in place in which women's ability to reach the highest jobs in the hierarchy is limited[CITATION Cat05 \l 1036]. With an equal status and level of diploma, women are hitting an invisible wall which prevents them from reaching the top of the hierarchy[CITATION Cat05 \l 1036]. This was already identified within political parties by Putnam and his “law of increasing disproportion”, claiming that the percentage of women holding party positions declines as the positions' importance increases[CITATION Dru13 \t \l 1036].

Becker's sexual division of labor [CITATION Gar85 \n \t \l 1036] also implies another kind of labor division within the household, mainly done by women. Indeed, he also claims that because child care and other household activities are taking up more time, women are rather occupying positions mobilizing the same abilities than housework and will accept jobs with lesser working hours than men. Women will therefore also earn less than their male partners (Becker, 1985). These sectors firstly do not include politics, but also are not among the pipeline sectors leading to politics.

Nevertheless, almost all professions have been feminized since the 1960's and especially in companies, higher medical professions, justice and media[CITATION Cat05 \l 1036]. These sectors also traditionally constitute the pool of political recruits[CITATION Cat05 \l 1036]. On the other hand, the first women to enter traditionally male sectors -such as engineering or magistrate, as well as other white collar professions- have been adopting a “conformist” attitude aimed at erasing their femininity and maintained their status by having higher diplomas and social origins than their male colleagues[CITATION Cat05 \l 1036].

Societal attitudes toward women

Furthermore, Norris and Inglehart [CITATION Pip01 \n \t \l 1036] study women's representation in politics in relation with social institutions through two modernization phases: In the first one –industrialization, women join the work forces and the fertility rate decreases, their education level increases and women begin to participate in representation. They nevertheless still have less power than men. In a second post-industrial phase, women access higher economic statuses and gain political influence, therefore presenting a shift toward more gender equality[CITATION Pip01 \l 1036]. The authors claim that most advanced industrial countries are still processing in the second phase, gender equality is therefore not achieved yet[CITATION Pip01 \l 1036]. Yet, statistics show that poorer societies –such as Mozambique or Rwanda- have a better gender representation in parliament than those industrialized countries –like France or Japan[CITATION Pip01 \l 1036]. Their alternative explanation therefore lays in the importance of **political cultures** on women's representation. In other words they claim that there are “traditional anti-egalitarian attitudes toward gender slowing down the political advancement of women” [CITATION Pip01 \p 131 \l 1036].

The fact that women do not want to run for electoral offices and that party gatekeepers are reluctant to recruit women as candidates are influenced by egalitarian or traditional attitudes toward women in both the public or private spheres[CITATION Pip01 \l 1036]. General attitudes toward women's political participation can also influence their effective participation[CITATION Pip01 \l 1036]. The evidence of Scandinavian countries' leadership in terms of gender equality, in contrast with institutionally and socially similar countries such as Belgium or Italy, point toward non-structural explanations such as political culture.

Among other social attitudes, the voters' personal attitude also seems to be an important explanation for representation. **Personal vote** refers to a candidate's electoral support that comes from his or her personal attributes (qualities, qualifications, activities) and not from other external factors such as the party or the ideology [CITATION Mel13 \l 1036]. It therefore relates to the descriptive aspects of the future representative as voters are going to evaluate not only their political proximity with the candidate but also what they represent to their eyes. Especially within a candidate-focused electoral system, personal vote means that the person running indeed matters, on top of the party he or she represents[CITATION Mel13 \l

1036]. There is therefore, according to some scholars a more personal and particular relation between the represented and representative [CITATION Mel13 \l 1036].

Valdini argues that even if all the studied democracies have a bias against women, this bias is not consistent across the different political cultures, and therefore will not have the same effects on legislatures[CITATION Mel13 \l 1036]. Indeed, if people are accustomed to see women in power positions like in Sweden, voters will see women as more equally able to hold a political office, compared to a country like the USA[CITATION Mel13 \l 1036].

The author claims that –given the electoral system- a high awareness on the candidate might have negative effects on the diversity of elected representatives as traits like gender, race, ethnicity or religion can trigger strong reactions in the voters’ minds[CITATION Mel13 \l 1036]. The focus on those traits due to the electoral system can trigger the voters’ bias toward those characteristics which will manifest as a lower support for such candidates[CITATION Mel13 \l 1036]. This article especially studies the impact of voters’ bias against the different genders: It find that the personalized electoral system interacts with the existence of such bias against female candidates[CITATION Mel13 \l 1036]. This will have an impact on the overall representativeness of the elected candidates toward the population.

Gender can also interacts with representation in the way that the **voters’ gender** influences the parties they will vote for, as do education, social background or income. Indeed, populist radical right parties often talk about Islam, immigration, conservatism and traditions in relation with equality between men and women[CITATION Nie15 \l 1036]. Spiering, Zaslove, Mügge and de Lange[CITATION Nie15 \n \t \l 1036] have studied the gender link in relation with populist parties, especially with radical right parties. Some studies claim that there is a “gender gap”: Women are less likely to vote for populist radical right parties compared to men[CITATION Nie15 \l 1036]. Most explanations evoke the socio-economic position and programmatic attitudes but it does not exactly grasp the influence of gender. Women are less likely to be employed in sectors threatened by de-industrialization and therefore would be less attracted to populist radical right parties[CITATION Nie17 \t \l 1036]. But this factor only partially explains the link between gender and populist votes. Women also seem to consider immigration as a lesser threat than men and consequently hold less anti-

immigration feelings such as the ones promoted by radical right populists [CITATION Nie17 \t \l 1036]. Although it might be the case that less competition exists between women and immigrants, studies have shown that there is no significant difference between men and women in terms of anti-immigration attitudes [CITATION Nie17 \l 1036].

In another study, Spierings and Zaslove [CITATION Nie17 \n \t \l 1036] elaborate on the link between gender and votes for populist radical left and radical right parties by focusing on a third explanation: the **populist nature** of the parties. According to the authors, the thin-centered aspect of the populist ideology appeals to voters with certain political attitudes [CITATION Nie17 \t \l 1036]. Because of different political socialization processes these are more present among the male population, other things held constant. Shortly, women seem to prefer consensus-seeking and are more tolerant than men, while men are rather oriented toward conflictual politics [CITATION Nie17 \t \l 1036]. These behaviors are also rewarded socially and therefore repeated. The authors indeed find that women are less populist than men and that the gender-gap is only partly explained by explanations that are not related to populist attitudes [CITATION Nie17 \t \l 1036].

2. Gender quotas in Politics

To counter-balance the underrepresentation of women in politics, gender quotas have been implemented by many countries in the world but the topic is far from being settled and much debate is still going on about this kind of measure. Given that women's underrepresentation appears at many levels, the implementation of gender quotas is sometimes criticized as it does not provide a global solution to the issue. Some also claim that legal enforcements such as quotas will affect other levels and therefore increase women's overall representation.

The rapid diffusion of gender quota laws in the world has been labeled as the "fast track" to equal representation by Drude Dahlerup [CITATION Dru05 \n \t \l 1036], as opposed to the "incremental change" theory that claims that the problem will fix itself through time. Even if both tracks advocate for gender equality, they present different perceptions of what are the causes and responses to the underrepresentation of women. The first one is associated with the liberal notion of "equality of opportunity" while the track associated with quotas represents a shift toward "equality of results" [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036].

Equality between men and women has been argued to be possible through small and gradual improvements of women's positions in the labor force or in politics [CITATION Ros05 \l 1036]. These steps are argued to constitute the **incremental change** theory – or incremental track- toward gender equality [CITATION Ros05 \l 1036]. The ideal type of incremental track is based on the idea that achieving equal representation might take decade but that it will eventually happen as a country develops [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036]. The sources of women's underrepresentation are believed to be women's lack of resources and public commitment, as well as attitudes and ingrained prejudices limiting them [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036]. The consequent ideal strategy to answer these issues is based on increasing women's commitment and resources through education, through a better participation in the labor force and by providing social welfare [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036]. It also comprises efforts within political parties such as active recruitment of women, capacity-building for them through education, mentor programs and provisions to help women family, work and politics –for instance babysitting facilities [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036]. Finally, this conception of equal representation implies a strong resistance to gender quotas as it is considered discriminatory against men [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036].

Based on the example of the United Kingdom, Cambell and Lovenduski [CITATION Ros05 \n \t \l 1036] established that small steps toward equality were made after the 2001 campaign to balance the representation in favor of women in the House of Commons between. This later affected the recruitment of political candidates by parties, the manifestos targeting more the female population and political campaigns [CITATION Ros05 \l 1036]. The parties' efforts toward recruitment nevertheless differ between parties as the Labour is the only one to have made considerable improvements; this contributes to explain the only small overall increase and a slow changing process [CITATION Ros05 \l 1036]. These small changes are impacting the media coverage as well as female voters and the inclusion of female representatives also gradually affected the political agenda. If overall political parties show a more feminized image, not all of them are actually translating the façade efforts into deeper changes. The fact that the UK remains on the incremental track –at least until 2005- is due to male resistance slowing down the process [CITATION Ros05 \l 1036]. The efforts of some parties to present more female candidates nevertheless triggered some policies on issues

that are known to be priorities to women's eyes [CITATION Ros05 \l 1036], and therefore could link women's substantive representation with the politics of presence.

Dahlerup and Freidenvall [CITATION Dru05 \n \t \l 1036] argue that the incremental track is no longer the model used in order to improve women's representation. The alternative **fast track strategy** does not consider that women's representation will increase by historical necessity but even considers that a backlash is possible [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036]. Historical leaps in favor of women's representation are possible and necessary. This theory differs from the incremental one because it considers that the problem lies in the formal and informal discrimination that women –alongside other groups- are the victims of in politics, especially through exclusion processes and glass ceilings [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036]. The strategy to address the issues consequently also differs and rather focuses on the implementation of active measures; For instance targets or quotas that will force political parties to be more active in women's recruitment [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036]. Quotas are seen not as discrimination, but on the contrary as a compensation for the structural barriers keeping women away from power [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036]. Carol Bacchi warns about the use of the expression “preferential treatment” when talking about quotas or other measures, as it implies that the social rules in place would be fair [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036].

Quotas were introduced in countries in which women still constituted a small minority of the elected representatives at the time; but we are now witnessing a consequent increase in women's representation [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036]. As the introduction of quotas did not result in a uniformed increase of female representatives all around the world, quotas might not always be the trigger. Indeed, it took twenty years for Denmark to reach 38% of female MPs, while in Costa Rica the number of women jumped from 19% to 35% with the implementation of a gender quota law [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036].

Most of the opposition or support to gender quotas relies on predictions of the quotas' supposed outcomes such as the election of unqualified women or that quotas will create a larger pool of qualified candidates [CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036]. In order to move away from speculations, three dimensions of representation have been studied in relation with the quota debate, according to Dahlerup and Freidenvall [CITATION Dru05 \n \t \l 1036]: descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation. Quotas can affect the numbers of

women and the backgrounds of candidates –descriptive representation; can affect the policies and agenda set by female politicians as well as their effectiveness and performance –substantive representation; and can also impact legitimacy as a whole as well as relations between politicians and voters[CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036]. The authors explore the empirics of quota’s effects in order to formulate predictions that will facilitate empirical research on gender quotas’ effects, which suits our research.

First, it is important to distinguish the **different types of quotas** that exist in the world, in order to make proper comparisons and determine their effects. Different sorts of quotas will not produce the same effects, and are therefore not necessarily comparable to each other and some maladjusted quotas can have little to no effect at all[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036]. The usual quotas distinction is made around reserved seats, legislative quotas and voluntary party quotas which encompass the most commonly used ones, but it fails to indicate a broader range of quotas[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036].

Dahlerup and Freidenvall [CITATION DDa09 \n \t \l 1036] propose an alternative taxonomy by first saying that quotas vary in terms of *level to which they were mandated*: Quotas can be constitutional or included in the electoral law and therefore will be binding for political parties. Those quotas most likely involve a sanction if the actors do not respect it. Sometimes, quotas can be voluntarily implemented by a party in its manifesto or statutes, and will consequently only be adopted on the party’s lists and own candidate selection[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036]. These quotas are only binding for the parties that decide to adopt it and its local branches.

Quotas also vary on another dimension being the *stage of the electoral process* that they target[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036]. Indeed, quotas can be implemented on the first level, during the *selection process*. The regulation is then directed at a pool of candidates during primaries or in shortlists, among which the selecting actors will be able to choose between both male and female candidates[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036]. It is mostly used in first-past-the-post systems in which only one candidate is running for an electoral legislature. On the second level, quotas are applied to the *nomination of candidates* with rules requiring a certain percentage of women to be on the candidates list[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036]. On the last level the regulation is applied directly to the *representatives in office*, under the form of reserved

seats for instance[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036]. It requires a certain number of women to be elected and not just to be running as candidates; this is why in some constituencies we find women-only elections[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036].

By classifying quotas around these two dimensions, it enables us to encompass six types of quotas that exist empirically around the world. This includes *legal aspirant quotas*, for which a law requires a percentage of women in the primaries; *Voluntary aspirant quotas* as implemented by the Labour party in the UK are all-women short lists, that fit the single-member district system[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036]. *Legal candidate quotas* require that political parties respect the law constraining to a certain gender composition of nominated candidates[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036]. The most widespread type of quota in the West and on the African continent is the *Voluntary candidate quotas*, for which political parties choose to have a certain percentage of female candidates such as the 50-50 policy within the Swedish Democratic Party[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036]. *Legal reserved seat quotas* is mostly used within the Arab world, South Asia and central Africa and requires that a certain amount of seats is directly reserved to female politicians[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036]. The last type of quota is the *voluntary reserved seat quotas* which the authors say are practically unfeasible as reserved seats are normally regulated by law. But it has been implemented in Morocco by political parties who agreed to reserve seats to women candidates with voluntary women-only elections[CITATION DDa09 \l 1036].

The sole implementation of quotas is nevertheless nor a guarantee of equal representation between men and women. Indeed, quotas can remain symbolic if the implementation is not regulated and no sanctions follow acts of non-compliance. Two factors are crucial when discussing quotas' efficiency: First, the specification of the quota provisions, with rank order; and second, the binding aspect of the quota with the (non-)implementation of sanctions[CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036].

Regarding quotas it is also important to specify whether they are **gender neutral** or **for women**[CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036]. By wording a gender-neutral quota, a maximum of representation is set for both sexes; while by setting a minimum requirement up for women it implies a maximum for men. By definition 50-50 gender quotas are gender neutral. A “zipper system” in the model chosen by the Swedish social democratic party exists for list

systems: two separate lists are made for men and women, which are then combined in a way that a woman is followed by a man (or the other way around)[CITATION Dru05 \t \l 1036].

3. Summary

To sum up, the literature mainly explains women's underrepresentation in politics with causes touching upon three levels: the country, the political parties and the societal level.

Regarding the first **country-level**, what matters most is the electoral system and its rules. It is first important to know if the country has implemented a gender quota and what kind of quota. Secondly, the electoral system might be majoritarian or proportional and it might have single-member districts or multi-member districts. Those factors seem to be highly influential concerning women's representation[CITATION Ric96 \l 1036], this is why it is important to study their effects. On the country level, favorable conditions for women in politics need to be present, which includes conditions in which primary elections are held as well as qualities of the legislatures.

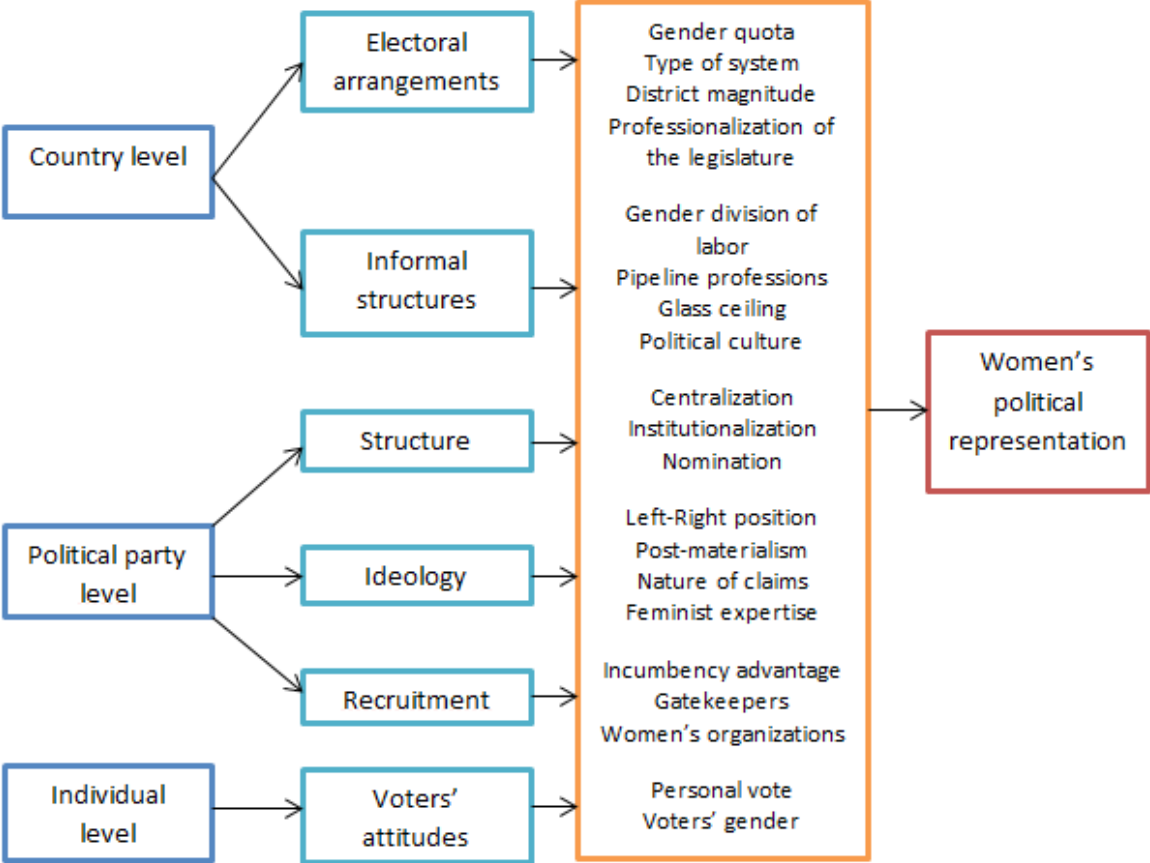
On the second level, being the **political parties**, it is important to study the structure of these actors. Indeed, levels of centralization and institutionalization as well as the level of the candidates' nomination are important to determine whether there are good conditions for women's representation within a given party. On the other hand, the ideology of parties seems to explain the presence of female candidates as well as policies in favor of women in general. The (non-)presence of women's organization and their ties to political parties also play a role in women's representation. Finally, party recruitment seems to be the crucial step to analyze within party structures, especially with regard to incumbency advantages and the (non-)presence of gatekeepers.

The third and last level concerns **society** as a whole, and especially biases of voters and informal structures. Some professions seem to more easily lead to politics than others, and given the gendered distribution of these, the division of labor is a particularly important element concerning women's political representation. The vertical segregation that can be in place can also slow women down in their accession to top positions in politics. Moreover, the cultural aspect is important regarding women's roles in society. This is related to possible

gender biases that the electorate might have which can influence their vote for either a male or a female candidate. Finally, it seems like the gender of the voters also matter in terms of voting which can also explain the presence of women in politics.

The causal links summarized above are represented in the following conceptual model, which will be identically applied to two time periods.

Figure 1: Conceptual model – What influences women’s political representation?



4. Hypotheses

On the basis on the literature review and the structure summarized above, we can derive a few hypotheses to explain women's underrepresentation in politics in France, despite the presence of a gender quota law.

The French electoral system did not change between 2000 and 2019; therefore one important barrier to women's representation is still present. Another country-specific variable to take into account is the political culture.

- **H1:** Electoral barriers for women politicians such as single member districts and majority rule are slowing down the access of more women to elected mandates, in both time periods, despite the gender quota in place.
- **H2:** Gender Equality laws have a bigger impact on female representation for list-based elections, but less for national-scale elections.
- **H3:** The higher the level of professionalization of legislatures, the lower women's representation is.
- **H4:** In general, gender quota laws have a positive impact on political conditions leading to women's representation.
- **H5:** The more gender divided the labor field is, the fewer women are to be found in politics.
- **H6:** The more traditional the political culture is the less women are represented in politics.

Some evolution nevertheless happened between the parties in power, which might explain the increase in women's representation in the latter two presidential mandates, as we moved from a conservative majority to a more progressive one. This also implies that the parties in the opposition have changed, and their members also influence women's political representation.

- **H7:** The more left-wing a party is the better women's political representation will be.
- **H8:** Political parties' structures, through their levels of centralization, institutionalization and nominations, determine women's representation within both parties and electoral offices

- **H9:** Political recruitment is a strong determinant of the presence of female candidates in politics: The presence of gatekeepers and incumbents in the recruitment will affect it negatively, while the presence of women's organizations will affect it positively.

In terms of societal attitudes, several factors have been taken into account for the hypotheses, especially touching upon voters' personal attitudes:

- **H11:** Gender is considered as an important variable in personal vote and therefore has a negative impact on women's descriptive representation in politics.
- **H12:** As women are less likely to support populist right parties, the presence of a radical right party in the electoral system can influence positively women's representation in opposing parties.

Format of the analysis

As this study aims to highlight the evolution of women's presence and actions in politics alongside the introduction of a gender quota law, the case of France seems to fit perfectly. Indeed, France is the first country in the world to have implemented a compulsory 50-50 gender quota in its constitution in 1999 and by law in 2000. The country has now legislated quotas for both the upper chamber and the lower chamber, as well as sub-national level elections, and the Socialist Party has implemented voluntary party quotas on their lists since 1990 [CITATION Int191 \l 1036]. It is therefore a crucial case to study women's representation because of all the quota laws at different levels, given that the country seemed to have taken the incremental path by legally forbidding any kind of quota and having a very low percentage of female representatives before 2000 [CITATION Rai12 \l 1036]. It is also an interesting case as France has a majoritarian system with single-member district elections [CITATION Int191 \l 1036], which seem to be the less favorable electoral conditions for diverse representation (see section on Electoral arrangements). As France presents both unfavorable electoral conditions, but has decided to implement a gender quota, it is necessary to study both alongside other factors to evaluate the impact of the quota and the evolution of equality in politics.

As any studied events and actors are grounded in a historical and political context [CITATION Mar98 \l 1036], this research aims at studying **two time periods** in order to show the evolution and the differences between these, based on a **descriptive qualitative model**. It is especially relevant when focusing on gender equality, as this phenomenon evolves through time and can be altered by major political events such as women getting the right to vote as well as smaller events like electoral reforms.

In the case of France, even if the implementation of a gender quota law was done in 2000, the percentage of women in parliament and in other elected bodies did not surprisingly increase. The number of women elected in the Senate remains low: 31.6% of seats are occupied by women. In the National Assembly the number of female MPs only slowly increased to reach 26.9% in 2012 and 38.82% in 2017, the highest percentage of women ever elected in this body [CITATION Obs18 \l 1036]. This is surprising as twenty year ago the percentage of women in the lower chamber was only 11%, for 6% in the Senate [CITATION

Obs18 \l 1036]. This research therefore aims to explain what accounts for the sudden increase in female representatives, placing France among the leading countries in terms of women's representation, almost twenty years after the quota was set up. Indeed, as gender quota laws are presented to be a fast track toward gender equality, it seems like France is a counter example to this theory. Consequently, it is important to understand why the laws failed to provide results in terms of female presence in politics in the early years, as well as the recent leap in women's representation in French politics. It is also crucial to understand what is holding back women's representation, even if it recently progressed in most institutions, as sole descriptive representation is not enough.

For this reason, the analysis will study two different time periods, the first one being the early stage of the quota law between 2000 and 2004, and the second one addressing the recent evolution between 2015 and 2018. Studying two time periods will also enable us to take into account the additions to the 2000's laws, especially those made in 2013. The impact of other electoral reforms such as the 2003 redefinition of districts can also impact the electoral setting and therefore women's representation.

The division in two time periods implies that we will mainly focus on the parties in power at the time, namely the RPR (renamed UMP and today called *Les Républicains*) for the 2000's and *La République en Marche* (LREM) for the 2017-2019 period. We will necessarily mention the *Parti Socialiste* (PS, Socialist party), as the party was in power in the beginning of our second period of analysis, between 2015 and 2017. Even if government parties are the most important ones given the French system, other parties also participate into politics. This is why several other parties will be mentioned all along the analysis, when dealing with the evolution of the different political forces to see how these also affect women's representation.

In order to account for all the levels to which women are underrepresented as well as the specificities of all factors, this study will design a qualitative model (see conceptual model in the Hypotheses section) of the causal factors of women's underrepresentation in politics. This model will be applied to both time periods which will be compared to see the evolution of the studied parameters. The details and evolution of the gender quota legislation will also be studied in those two time periods, in order to account for possible changes in gender

equality conditions and context. The choice of a qualitative model suits better the informal and implicit aspects of some factors such as specificities of the electoral system or societal attitudes, which are not always quantifiable.

Data will be used to prove every factor at each level of the causal model. Most of the data will be provided by primary sources such as indexes, data bases, opinion polls, official documents from political parties and French laws, as well as secondary sources when the primary data was impossible to find.

In order to assess the representation of women in the French electoral system, the main data sources will be the *Gender Quotas Database* designed by the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in collaboration with Stockholm University and the Inter-Parliamentary Union[CITATION Int191 \l 1036]. Reports of the State Secretariat dedicated to gender equality will also be used. We will use the detailed page on the French system and the implementation of gender quotas throughout time and at every election level. This will further be described with the help of official constitutional and law documents provided by official websites of the French government.

For the first level of the model being the French structural arrangements such as electoral system and its rules, the data will be taken from the *Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, especially the Chapter untitled *Electoral systems in context: France* as it describes the fifth republic's electoral system by focusing on the rules, the party systems and the actors within it[CITATION Ver18 \l 1036]. This chapter also studies different levels of elections –national and locally- and the evolution of electoral rules, which is particularly relevant for our topic. This source will be used alongside official constitutional and law sources for more accuracy, for instance with the Constitution of October 4th 1958[CITATION Rép19 \l 1036], which is the one used in France at the moment; or the electoral code up to date.

Literature about party recruitment and internal functioning will be used as main sources of information on political parties' recruitment strategies toward women. We will mostly use sources from researchers of the CEVIPOF, which is the research center of Sciences Po Paris in collaboration with the CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research). This institute is useful for any information on French political life and in particular parties, as they digitalized any official party documents since the beginning of the fifth Republic and provide analytical

articles about electoral and political sociology. Primary sources are hard to find, especially for parties that have been renamed such as the RPR (renamed *les Républicains*) in the 2000's, or for LREM that is a very young party. Empirical research will be used as secondary data sources, as they directly studied political parties in relation with their organization, ideology, and candidates.

For the last part dealing with societal attitudes, several opinion polls will be combined to draw a broad overview of the perception of women in the French society in both studied time periods. These are the most direct sources to assess the electorate's opinion and values. They provide an idea of the population's opinion on certain topics linked with women, for instance with the positions on statements such as "On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do" or "When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women"[CITATION Rin14 \l 1036]. This gives us an idea of a broader social context that is reflected in the rest of the society and that affects all political actors.

As the political context is very important to assess to fully understand the analysis, the research is providing two introductory sections in the next chapter: The first one about the political context of France and the second one explaining the evolution of the legislation in terms of gender equality.

Women in French politics explained

This analytical chapter will be divided in four sections: First, it will set up what the French political context is in order to better understand the time comparison. Secondly, we will provide an overview of the evolution of women's political representation over time for both first and second degree elections, from 2000 until 2019. The first two sections should help the reader understand the context and what is at stake in France, concerning women in politics. In a third part, we will apply the previous drawn conceptual model to both time periods and we will then explain what are the similarities as well as the changes between these. Finally, we will provide an overview of the results structured according to the hypotheses presented.

1. The French political context

The French regime of the 5th Republic is a semi-presidential government set up in order to redistribute powers to prevent from instability and polarization [CITATION Ver18 \l 1036]. In this regime, the president is elected through universal suffrage and possesses considerable powers, but in which there is also a prime minister and ministers having executive and governmental power [CITATION Mau80 \l 1036]. They can stay in power as long as the Parliament is not opposed to them [CITATION Mau80 \l 1036]. Even if the constitutional powers of the president are mainly arbitration powers, but since De Gaulle's first presidency, the head of state has in practice a lot of power [CITATION Mau80 \l 1036]. He or she is elected directly by the citizens through universal suffrage since 1962 [CITATION Mau80 \l 1036] just as the national Assembly (lower chamber), which makes both repositories of national sovereignty [CITATION Mau80 \l 1036]. The universal suffrage has been extended to women and the military in 1945 [CITATION Car15 \l 1036].

Several voting systems are in use in France, depending on the level of the election. These have largely been and are still influenced by political history, the need for representation and political parties' preferences. The electoral system is not written in the constitution [CITATION Ver18 \l 1036] and can therefore change. The two rounds system is used for presidential and legislative elections in France, and it is combined with a majoritarian rule: It elects a single winner -the president or the deputy of the constituency-

at the first round if they get an absolute majority of the votes[CITATION Ver18 \l 1036]. Most of the times two rounds are needed, and the person winning is the one with the highest score in the second round and therefore gets the single seat[CITATION Ver18 \l 1036]. There was nevertheless one exception during the 1986's elections that used proportional representation with lists for each department[CITATION Ver18 \l 1036]. The majoritarian rule favors a single party to govern in order to safeguard the stability of the regime, but this consequently hinders pluralism of representation and consensus-building[CITATION Ver18 \l 1036].

As the party in power usually gets a majority in the parliament, the role of the prime minister is secondary, except in times of "cohabitation" in which the parliamentary majority is opposed to the president. The legislative majority therefore determines who, between the president and the prime minister, the determinant agent is in the dual executive system. Since the referendum on the presidential mandate in 2000, which was motivated by the fear of cohabitation[CITATION Ver18 \l 1036], the president stays in power for five years instead of seven and the legislative elections follow the presidential ones since 2001[CITATION Ass01 \l 1036].

The legislative elections are the only ones in Europe to be conducted in two rounds. There are 577 single member-districts using majority rule[CITATION Ver18 \l 1036]. Candidates are elected for five years and must reach the threshold of 12.5% to be able to qualify for the next round, which usually limits the number of parties to two or three in this second round[CITATION Ver18 \l 1036]. This leads to certain bipolarity in the system, which happened mainly between the Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste, abbreviated PS) and the Republican Party (Ex-UMP and RPR, abbreviated LR) until recently. This domination of the two mainstream parties has been challenged by the rise of the populist radical right party Front National now called Rassemblement National (abbreviated RN)[CITATION Iva03 \l 1036].

The Senate's elections are held through indirect universal suffrage, as the senators are elected by members of the Electoral College from territorial constituencies[CITATION Ver18 \l 1036]. Senators are elected for 6 years, and since 2011, half of the Senate is renewable every 3 years[CITATION Ver18 \l 1036].

In municipal elections voters directly elect the municipal counselors, who then elect the mayor for six years. There are different rules depending on the size of the municipality: Since 2013 cities with a population over 1000 inhabitants apply a two-rounds proportional list system (previously cities with over 3500 inhabitants [CITATION Dir16 \l 1036]); while cities with less than 1000 inhabitants use a two-round majority plurality system [CITATION Ver18 \l 1036].

Regions have been reduced from 22 to 13 in 2015 with the territorial reform [CITATION Gou17 \l 1036] and elections are conducted with a direct universal suffrage and a two-round proportional list based system with a majority bonus. Lists under 5% may join the second round if they join forces, and all lists must respect gender parity rules. Regional counselors are elected for 6 years.

The European elections are held with closed party lists and proportional representation, through direct universal suffrage [CITATION Ver18 \l 1036]. Since 2003 France was divided in eight interregional constituencies [CITATION Ver18 \l 1036], but in 2019 the unique national constituency has been reestablished [CITATION Dir19 \l 1036]. Each party needs to provide as many candidates as seats that respect parity by alternating male and female candidates [CITATION Dir19 \l 1036]. In order to get a seat in the European Parliament, lists must reach the threshold of 5% since 2019 [CITATION Dir19 \l 1036].

Elections in France are always held on Sundays, in order to maximize participation and the campaigns are much regulated especially regarding polling and media attention to protect impartiality and pluralism [CITATION Con12 \l 1036].

As mentioned ahead, one of the bigger events in the 5th Republic was the change from a seven years long presidential mandate with legislative elections intervening every 5 years in the middle of the mandate, to a five years mandate followed by legislative elections a month later. This set up of the electoral calendar enabled every president since 2003 to have a large majority in the National Assembly and be able to govern without much opposition. The majority therefore has been alternating mainly between the two parties PS and RPR/UMP, until the 2002 second round of the presidential election in which Jean-Marie Le Pen arrived second after the Jacques Chirac [CITATION Ali03 \l 1036].

Because of this tendency, France is usually qualified as a bipolar multiparty system [CITATION Pet06 \l 1036] [CITATION SBo09 \l 1036]. The main political forces are then distributed around the classic Left-Right cleavage gathered around the two big parties -the Socialist party on the left and the UMP on the right [CITATION SBo09 \l 1036]. Smaller parties consequently block with the big party on their side in the second rounds of elections in order to support their respective sides, for instance the Communist Party (PCF) often sides with the PS while the UDF (Democrats) sides with the RPR, therefore contributing to the bipolar pattern [CITATION SBo09 \l 1036]. The left-right cleavage corresponds to the voters' social classes and religiosity, which also explains the stability of the pattern of bipolar multipartism at the time, because the class and religious cleavages were salient [CITATION SBo09 \l 1036].

In the 1980's, a new political force, the Front National rose as an increasingly important political force. At the same period, a fragmentation of the political space started with the multiplication of presidential candidates as well as the strengthening of the radical left and the Greens [CITATION SBo09 \l 1036]. The fact that the same alternation pattern remained created both incentives for strategic voting and preserves the multiplicity of candidates in the first round [CITATION SBo09 \l 1036]. But it remained hard for the smaller parties such as the FN to be able to grow politically because of the majority rule [CITATION SBo09 \l 1036].

Other electoral changes happened within the electoral system such as the introduction of party primaries for major parties in order to select candidates [CITATION Ver18 \l 1036]. Primaries reserved to party members started to be used in 2006 by the PS, which brought a lot of media and citizens' attention, and the primaries were later enlarged to every citizen [CITATION Ver18 \l 1036]. The UMP therefore followed the idea for its 2017 presidential candidate's primaries [CITATION Ver18 \l 1036].

The 2017's presidential election marks an even greater turning point as it sees none of the two mainstream parties qualified for the second round. Indeed, the newly formed party of Emmanuel Macron, La République en Marche (LREM) arrived first, followed by the Front National led by Marine Le Pen [CITATION Flo17 \l 1036]. During this election, four different

parties with distinct policies arrived neck and neck in the first round, namely Emmanuel Macron for LREM with 24.01%, followed by the FN's candidate Marine Le Pen with 21.30%, François Fillon for the Republicans with 20.01% and Jean-Luc Mélenchon for the France Insoumise (FI, radical left) with 19.58% [CITATION LeM17 \l 1036]. This reflects the evolution of the previous left-right cleavage into two dimensions: the first dominant one being the anti-immigration and authoritarian pole opposed to the pro-immigration and libertarian pole [CITATION Flo17 \l 1036]. The second one is the ecologist and interventionist pole against the productivist and neo-liberal one [CITATION Flo17 \l 1036].

2. *Parity laws and women in politics*

In 1982, the constitutional council opposes a law that aimed to establish a quota of 25% of women on parties' lists for municipal elections, believing that according to the principle of equality there should be no categorical division of the electorate or the eligible [CITATION Dir11 \l 1036]. From this period on, no other law will be presented in order to push legally for gender equality in politics, because of political actors' fear of censorship [CITATION Dir11 \l 1036]. After the 1995' presidential campaign, the *Observatoire de la Parité* (Parity's Observatory) is created [CITATION Dir11 \l 1036].

Under the government of Lionel Jospin (PS), the constitutional reform of 1999 modifies Articles 4 and 5 to include "The law favors equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elected offices" [CITATION Sén08 \l 1036]. Political parties are recognized to be the actors in charge of upholding and promoting the principle of equal access to these positions [CITATION Sén08 \l 1036]. The electoral law designates the political parties as the actors who must enforce this parity [CITATION Sén08 \l 1036]. Equality is therefore obligatory for all list-based elections, and an alternation between both genders on those lists [CITATION Dir11 \l 1036]. For legislative elections, the 2000's law provides an optional equality: Parties that do not present 50% of candidates of both sexes need to pay a fine, that in fact is a deduction of public funding [CITATION Dir11 \l 1036]. This law is still flawed as it does not enforce parity on municipal elections in cities that have less than 3500 inhabitants, and also does not enforce it on departmental elections and senatorial elections in departments that elect less than three senators [CITATION Dir11 \l 1036].

In 2007, in order to address these issues, a new law is voted that intends to first feminize the local executives by applying parity to the election of deputy-mayors, to the members of the permanent commission and the vice-presidents of the regional councils[CITATION Dir11 \l 1036]. Now candidates to departmental elections need to have alternates of the opposite sex[CITATION Dir11 \l 1036]. This nevertheless has a small impact on women's representation: Indeed, most incumbent counselors are men therefore women are often alternates when those men are candidates to their own re-election. For legislative elections, the fine becomes more important in the 2007's law but remains non deterrent[CITATION Dir11 \l 1036]. Other propositions made by the delegate minister to women's rights, such as non-accumulation of electoral mandates and extension of parity rules to inter-communal structures, were not adopted[CITATION Dir11 \l 1036].

In 2008, the first article of the constitution is modified and now states that "The law favors equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elected offices *as well as to professional and social responsibilities*"[CITATION Sec14 \l 1036], which extends gender equality to the societal and labor fields.

Since 2012, financial penalties have been implemented and parties have lost to parties nearly 28 million euros of public endowment because they did not respect the 50% quota. That is about 3.5 million a year for LR (about a quarter of candidates), and 1.2 million for the PS [CITATION Car15 \l 1036]. In accordance with the 2014's law which doubles these penalties when the difference between the number of candidates of each sex exceeds 2% of the total number of candidates, the amount of the aid public is reduced[CITATION Car15 \l 1036].

In 2013, the parity laws are extended by implementing a bi-nominal ballot with both a man and a woman is introduced for the departmental elections[CITATION Sec14 \l 1036]. The ballots for municipal and inter-communal elections are modified too: Strict alternation between male and female candidates on lists is applied to every municipality that has more than 1000 inhabitants, for 3500 before[CITATION Sec14 \l 1036].

Following this, we can establish that France has a 50-50 gender quota that is gender neutral, written both in the constitution and the law. This quota is therefore binding for political actors, but not for every type of elections. It touches on the second level of the electoral process as it consists in a reserved percentage of women on lists, impacting the nomination

of candidates. The French “parité” corresponds to the type of quota that Dahlerup and Freidenvall [CITATION DDa09 \n \t \l 1036] named legal candidate quotas.

Even if it is the first gender neutral quota ever implemented, the effects of those different parity laws were nevertheless contrasted, as testifies the following table. In addition to it, we must mention that there has been no female president in France until then and only one woman prime minister in May 1991, who stayed in office for eleven months[CITATION Gou19 \l 1036]. The presence of women in the government has increased since 2007 and all governments since 2012 have respected parity by nominating as many women as men to ministries or state secretariats [CITATION Ch12 \l 1036]. Even if in terms of descriptive representation parity is respected, an inequality remains in terms of hierarchy: Indeed, more ministries have been attributed to men while more women are secretary of state[CITATION Ch12 \l 1036]. In addition, most ministries touching to sovereign powers such as justice, internal affairs, military, foreign affairs and economy are occupied by men[CITATION Ch12 \l 1036].

Table 1: Women’s descriptive representation in first and second order elections, before and after the “parity laws” of 2000

	Legislative elections	Senatorial elections	European elections	Regional elections		Departmental elections		Municipal elections		
				Presidents	Counselors	Presidents	Counselors	Mayors	Counselors in cities >3500 inhabitants	Counselors in cities <3500 inhabitants
Last elections before 2000	10,9% (1997)	5,9% (1998)	30% (1999)	11,5% (1998)	27,5% (1998)	4% (1998)	8,6% (1998)	7,5% (1995)	21,7% (1995)	21% (1995)
2000-2004	12,3% (2002)	10,9% (2001)	43,6% (2004)	4% (2004)	47,5% (2004)	9,9% (2004)	10,9% (2004)	10,9 % (2001)	47,5% (2001)	17% (2004)
2012-2016	26,9% (2012)	25% (2014)	43,2% (2014)	7,7% (2010)	47,9% (2015)	9,9% (2015)	50,1% (2015)	16% (2014)	48,2% (2014)	34,5% (2014)
2017-2019	38,7% (2017)	31,6% (2017)	50% (2019)	16,7 % (2017)	47,9% (2015)	9,9% (2015)	50,1% (2015)	16% (2014)	48,1% (2014)	34,5% (2014)

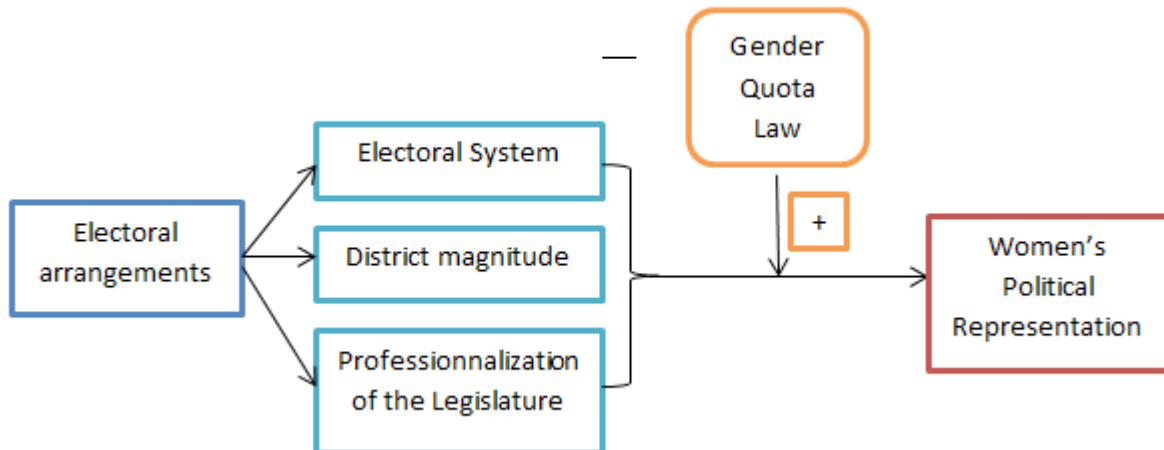
Sources: Haut Conseil à l'Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes (2015) & Inter-Parliamentary Union (2019).

3. Women's underrepresentation in politics between 2000 and today

A. Country level

It has been shown by previous studies that the electoral system is the most important variable affecting women's representation in legislative institutions, especially the difference between party list proportional representation and single member districts with majority rule (Matland & Studlar, 1996). The professionalization of the legislature also has to be taken into account as it seems to also affect women's presence in some elected legislatures. But these three variables can also be influenced by the implementation of a gender quota law that will outbalance some of their negative effects leading to an underrepresentation of women in politics.

Causal mechanism n°1:



a. *Electoral arrangements*

Electoral system & district magnitude

Since 2000, the electoral system in France has experienced a few reforms such as the introduction of the parity laws or a brief trial of proportionality for the 1986's legislative elections, but none touching upon the majoritarian rule and districts magnitude. As we have previously established that France only uses strictly proportional representation for European elections. All elections use the majority rule with two-rounds, and most districts

are single-members or have a very small magnitude [CITATION Ver18 \l 1036], meaning a small amount of seats. In addition to this low magnitude, the gender quota law does not enforce any strict legal constrain on those districts. Even if it applies to regional or municipal councils, parity laws do not regulate women's presence to top positions such as the presidency of the republic, the presidency of both parliamentary chambers and different local councils[CITATION Car15 \l 1036].

When looking at women's descriptive representation (see Table 1), we can see that where the gender quota was applied it had a positive effect, namely for regional counselors and municipal counselors. Between 1995 and 2001, the share of female municipal counselors has increased of almost 26 points, as the law imposed paritarian party lists for these elections, while the number of female mayors has only increased of 3 points. As a comparison, the number of female MPs at the National Assembly did not evolved much, from 10.9% before the law to 12.3% after 2000 (see Table 1). As the statistics show, the parity laws are still having a positive effect on elections held with majority rule and with a small district magnitude nowadays; as the last municipal elections show 48.1% of women elected and 47.9% for regional elections (see Table 1).

The gender quota law is only applied to elections that are held with proportional representation, two-rounds and a majority rule. That means that seats are attributed in the first round if at least one of the lists gets a majority of the votes, if not then the distribution is done at the second round[CITATION Ass03 \l 1036]. In order to qualify for the second round, lists must reach the threshold of 10% of votes[CITATION Ass03 \l 1036]. This system is therefore quite far from pure proportional representation as the threshold is quite high and that, given the French party system, only a few parties can access to the second round. As the parity law was implemented, it forced every party to present 50% of women on their lists in order to be able to run for the election. Any lists that did not respect this strict quota would have been unable to candidate for the local elections[CITATION Ass03 \l 1036]. This means that all the parties in the second round had the same amount of men and women on their lists and therefore female candidates could be elected in the local councils. We see here that a binding gender neutral quota can clearly help getting more women elected even in an electoral system that is not in their favor. This still has an effect today as the proportion of women in regional councils is 47.9% and 48.1% in municipal councils.

Furthermore, the 2013's electoral law enlarged the number of districts having to use proportional representation to two-thirds of the Senate. Parity rules applying to list-based elections therefore touch upon a greater amount of seats[CITATION Car15 \l 1036]. We could consequently expect to see the share of female senator increase after 2013. But in some districts, the incumbent senators decided to run on an independent list in order to ensure their lead candidates' position on those lists, instead of being placed after a woman[CITATION Car15 \l 1036]. This consequently led to the under-representation of women to senatorial positions, as they represent 31.6% of senators in 2017. This illustrates the fact that gender quota laws can still be bypassed if they are not strict enough. It also shows that a law aiming to create better conditions for women can still be impacted by parties' reluctances to gender equality.

Professionalization of the legislature

The phenomenon of professionalization is not new as Weber was already telling about it in the 1960's and it is not specific to France, but rather is a general tendency around the world[CITATION GSa90 \l 1036]. Professionalization implies that an elected office gets a respectable pay scale, provides for independent staff services as well as increasing time dedicated for legislatures to sit[CITATION Pev92 \l 1036]. But it also implies that people can start and build a career solely within politics[CITATION Jul17 \l 1036]. This professionalization has been recognized by scholars as well as the political actors themselves, that creates intellectual and social elites [CITATION GSa90 \l 1036]. In France, professionalization undeniably happened at the top of the political hierarchy, especially for parliamentary offices and ministries. This phenomenon has been going on since the 1980's and has been increasingly present since then; the 2000's being no exception. It was estimated that in 2012, 18 years of previous experience in politics was needed in order access a parliamentary office, while it was ten years of experience needed in 1970[CITATION Jul17 \l 1036]. But this seems to have changed since the presidency of Emmanuel Macron, as 30% of elected MPs have no previous experience in politics, for only 5% before the 2017's elections[CITATION Eti18 \l 1036]. Nevertheless, the level of professionalization based on Squire's criteria is still very present.

Indeed, in 2019, the monthly salary of French **parliamentarians** (for both chambers) is over 7 200€ a month, before taxes[CITATION Ass19 \l 1036]. Considering that the average income of French citizens is 1500€[CITATION Obs19 \l 1036], MPs salary represents almost five times

this average income. We can consider that it is not needed for parliamentarians to have a secondary job in order to fulfill their needs and that they indeed have a decent pay scale and financial autonomy. Furthermore, MPs that exercise special functions, such as president and vice-presidents of the Assembly or the Senate, receive a bonus on their salary.

The important financial compensation, as well as the numerous facilities and logistical advantages that MPs can dispose of, are aimed to ensure that every citizen can access the function of parliamentarian and to guarantee the independent exercise of this function [CITATION Ass19 \l 1036]. All these working conditions demonstrate the increasing professionalization of parliamentary mandates. Furthermore, MPs also are able to employ up to five collaborators in order to help them in their office[CITATION Ass19 \l 1036]. The MP is able to employ, fire, and decide of the working conditions and salary of his or her collaborators[CITATION Ass19 \l 1036]. This contributes to the professionalization of the parliamentary offices as the elected candidate can set up his or her own staff. This also contributes to make a job out of politics, with the option to make a career in it[CITATION Jul17 \l 1036].

Indeed, the professionalization of such elected offices also appears through the increasing number of MPs that have had a political career: Many MPs have been employed by political parties since they were young, and it is almost mandatory to have spent your career in politics before being elected to a national mandate today[CITATION Jul17 \l 1036]. Even if since 2017, 30% of MPs had no previous political experience, this means that the large majority of the Parliament had a political career before being elected.

The large professionalization of the parliamentary offices can be a good explanation of the weak representation of women in the 2000's until recently. Indeed, the latest legislative elections have seen a record in terms of women's representation as almost 39% of the National Assembly's seats are occupied by female candidates. This can be due to the large renewal of the elected politicians with 72% of new MPs, including 28% that have never been employed in politics[CITATION Eti18 \l 1036]. This is due to LREM's communication strategy based on political change, but also to the good performance of other parties such as *La France Insoumise* (LFI), that sends a lot of newcomers to the Assembly[CITATION Eti18 \l 1036]. Both parties are the ones who sent the most women in proportion of their elected

MPs, with 47% of women out of LREM's 308 MPs, and for 41% for LFI's 31 MPs [CITATION LeM171 \l 1036]. The new parliament therefore does not resemble the previous one, both in terms of political careers and in terms of gender.

At the **regional level**, the income of regional counselors depends on the population of the region they represent. Their income can go from 1500€ a month for regions counting less than a million inhabitants, to 2700€ for regions over three million inhabitants [CITATION Col19 \l 1036]. The statute within the regional councils also give right to a bonus, and can go up to 5600€ [CITATION Col19 \l 1036]. The same regime applies to departmental counselors, whose salary varies between 1500€/month for departments under 250 000 inhabitants, to 2700€ for departments over 1.25 million inhabitants [CITATION Col19 \l 1036]. Regional counselors are therefore financially autonomous and dispose of a clear pay scale. Regional counselors can be considered as having a unique profession, even if usually they combine several ones.

In 2019, at the level of the **municipality**, mayor's monthly salaries go from 650€ for a municipality of under 500 inhabitants, up to 5500€ for a municipality that has over 100 000 inhabitants [CITATION Col19 \l 1036]. There are bonuses if the city is classified as a touristic site, is the capital of the department and/or the region [CITATION Col19 \l 1036], participating to the professionalization of mayors of attractive municipalities. The members of the municipal councils also receive a financial compensation of 230€/month, independently of the size of the population [CITATION Col19 \l 1036] which shows evidence for municipal counselors' non-professionalization. As women are more represented within the councils than as mayors, we can therefore say that women's representation is damaged by the professionalization of top positions (only 16% of women) to the detriment of non-professionalization of municipal councils (48.1% of women).

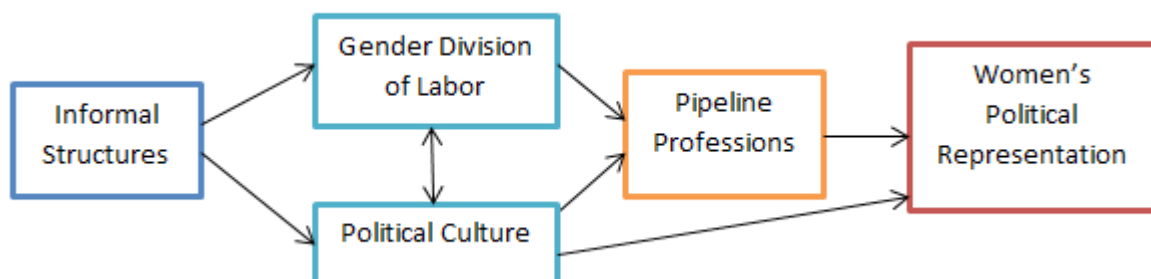
Overall it does not seem like the electoral mandates have become less professionalized, even if more inexperienced politicians have been elected in the recent legislative elections. In the same time, the number of women elected in those offices still has increased. This means that our third hypothesis about the increase in women's substantive representation being due to a decrease in legislatures' professionalization cannot be confirmed. It has rather increased since the 1970's, and even if the movement of Emmanuel Macron has

shown some political renewal among ministers and parliamentarians, a large share of these representatives have been political collaborators before[CITATION Jul17 \l 1036].

B. Informal structures

Some of the country-specific indicators that matter for women’s political representation also are related to the social and economic context of the country. The World Economic Forum created an Index that ranks countries according to their aggregated performances of gender equality on four different indicators measured on a scale from 0 (absolute inequality) to 1 (absolute equality)[CITATION Wor18 \l 1036]. These are the economic participation and opportunity, the educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. In 2018, France is on the 12th position out of the 149 countries studied, with absolute equality between genders for the level of educational attainment and a score of 0.974 for health and survival[CITATION Wor18 \l 1036]. On the other hand, France has a score of 0.685 for economic participation and opportunity, ranking at the 63rd place[CITATION Wor18 \l 1036]. This shows that men and women are still far from being equal in terms of labor participation, control of financial assets, or unpaid tasks[CITATION Wor18 \l 1036]. France’s worst score nonetheless is in terms of political empowerment with 0.458; even if it ranks France at the 10th place among the 149 other countries[CITATION Wor18 \l 1036]. As it has been established in the theoretical chapter, women’s presence and power in the labor force can also influence their participation in the political arena. There has surely been an evolution in terms of women’s participation in politics since the 2000’s, but it is needed to establish whether this is correlated to a change in women’s place and participation in the labor force which would have impacted the typical professions leading to politics.

Causal mechanism n°2:



Gender Division of Labour and pipeline professions

Many authors claimed that gendered representations within society are detrimental to women accessing power and being in office. Today, there still seems to be a gendered division of labor in societies as well as for political offices that have been constructed in the minds as a “male jobs” even if more women have access to it (Achin, 2005). We will therefore see the evolution of the gender division of labor in combination with pipeline professions between the 2000’s and today.

In 2004, the French society was still divided into labor gender roles, even if the active population is largely feminized: Indeed, there is a gender cleavage as most of the employees are women to the exception of police and military sectors that are dominated by men (Achin, 2005). Intermediary professions also have a larger share of men, with women mostly occupying jobs in the medical sectors (Achin, 2005). Finally, the working class, farmers and intellectual professions are also mostly male sectors. On the other hand, women mostly work in branches such a care work, administration, education and services (Achin, 2005). This confirms Becker’s theory (1985) that claimed that because child care and household activities taking up more time, women are rather occupying positions mobilizing the same abilities than housework and will accept jobs with lesser working hours than men. Women will therefore also earn less than their male partners (Becker, 1985). This has consequences on women’s share in the labor market, what kind of job they are going to have which consequently has an impact on their political involvement.

Before 1945, the fact that French women couldn’t vote was an argument to exclude them from higher public offices or politics (Achin, 2005). Furthermore, certain traditional stereotypes about women’s “nature”, such as fragility, weakness or sensitivity, were for a long time perceived as the opposite of the good politician’s attributes that must be rigorous, impartial and authoritarian[CITATION Cat05 \l 1036]. Even if those gendered stereotypes seem to fade away with time, such social constructions are still deeply rooted in history and in people’s perceptions (Achin, 2005). Today, women’s level of education and employment has largely progressed but there is still a constant political underrepresentation (Achin, 2005) which shows that gender roles are still present.

The political arena is not a neutral one, and even if legally anybody could access it, it necessitates a lot of resources. Indeed, people with inherited or professional legitimacy or with capital acquired through a labor organization or a political party are resources that facilitate the access to politics (Achin, 2005). Since 1945, in France, the different pathway leading to politics seem to be the same for men and women, the main difference being due to an ideological cleavage. Most politicians come from the same professions without any gender differences [CITATION Cat05 \l 1036]: White collars remain the biggest proportion (50%), followed by intermediate occupations (20%). Professions requiring a higher level of education are overrepresented among parliamentarians, for both men and women. The more left-wing parties nevertheless present a higher proportion of working-class origins: The recruitment gives less importance to the professional background of women but more to activist and intra-party evolution (Achin, 2005). In addition, the category of unemployed is only present among female parliamentarians, while almost totally absent among male MPs (Achin, 2005). Professions such as nurses, secretaries, teachers and social workers are also underrepresented among the male MPs while constituting a large part of their female counter-parts (Achin, 2005).

In 2000, the difference of unemployment between men's rate (8.4%) and women's rate (11.9%) was of 3.5 points [CITATION OECD \l 1036]. This was entirely reduced in seven-teen years, as the difference between men's unemployment (9.2%) and women's (9%) is now of 0.2 points to the disadvantage of men [CITATION OECD \l 1036].

Differences between the employment sectors are still persisting since the 2000's, as in 2017, the share of employed women working in services was of 87.5%, against 65.2% for men [CITATION OECD \l 1036]. The same gap can be observed in agriculture, with 3.5% of men and 1.6% of women; and in the industrial sector in which 29.9% of employed men work for 9.9% of employed women [CITATION OECD \l 1036]. Women still overwhelmingly work in the service sectors compared to the agricultural and industrial sectors and their situations are more precarious. This means that more women also have less time and opportunity to engage in a political career.

The place that women occupy in the labor hierarchy is also important to assess not only their participation but also their status and responsibilities, which testify of **glass ceiling effect** or

not. The share of women's seats on boards of the largest publicly listed companies (representing the 465 companies listed on the stock exchange) has also increased a lot since 2010, going from 12.3% to 43.4% in 2017, which seems to indicate that the glass ceiling is less and less present at the top of big companies [CITATION OECD \l 1036]. On the other hand, since 2011, there has been an increasing gap between employed men and women, in their respective shares of managers' positions: In 2011, there were 8.6% of employed men who had a manager position, while it was 6.1% for women. In 2017, men's share of managers was 9.2% for 5% for women [CITATION OECD \l 1036]. This shows that the glass ceiling is still present, as on a six years period, more men occupy the rank of manager, while fewer women do. This is especially interesting because managerial positions are more accessible than CEO's positions of the top 465 companies on the stock exchange.

The gender gap in the labor force is linked to women's underrepresentation in politics as it relates to who gets in the "pipeline professions" leading to politics. The fact that three fourth of new MPs are sitting in the Assembly shows that a renewal of the political personnel has indeed happened alongside an increase in women's presence. In the Assembly, 17% of the MPs were private sector white collars; around 14% were civil servants (excluding education); around 12% were previously in politics as elected representatives or other and 12% were working in the education [CITATION Cl 17 \l 1036]. Furthermore, almost 9% of MPs were CEO's of companies; 7.5% were lawyers and the same share was in the medical field [CITATION Cl 17 \l 1036]. On the least represented professions we find: 4% of white collars from the public sector, as well as 4% of entrepreneurs, 3% of engineers and 3% of farmers [CITATION Cl 17 \l 1036].

But what is interesting to see is which social categories are represented in each party, as the Assembly changed quite a lot in its political colors. Statistics show that the MPs sent by LREM & the MoDem represent more than 76% of the private sector's white collars [CITATION Cl 17 \l 1036]. This socio-professional category represents 20% of the elected MPs of the parliamentary group [CITATION Cl 17 \l 1036]. On the other hand, the socialist group is dominated by civil servants that represent 28% of their MPs, and the radical left group is dominated by MPs working in education [CITATION Cl 17 \l 1036]. The Republican group is the one who counts the most people with a career in politics as 25% of them used to work in this field before their (re)election in 2017 [CITATION Cl 17 \l 1036].

More than 50 elected MPs are category A civil servants, this means that they needed to have at least a bachelor diploma or higher [CITATION Clé17 \l 1036]. The two most exercised professions are lawyer and doctor. More than 17% of MPs are exercising in one of the three professions mentioned before. These are typical pipeline profession to enter and continue a career in politics, which is a tendency that still remains even with a large renewal of MPs and the emergence of a new political force. The renewal of the political personnel is also not as striking when we see that at least 223 MPs (out of the 327 that already occupied another mandate) will have to quit their mandate because of the law on non-accumulation of electoral mandates. This represents 38.6% of the seats.

Political culture

Some country specific variables that are linked with gender differences in society are the way people perceive the role of women in society which has an impact on their perception of women in politics. Some conservatism remains in the matter and this is also linked with the overall gender differences in society, including the labor field mentioned above.

The part of traditional values is still important but is lower than in other members of the European Union. Indeed, in 2017, 72% of the French population disagreed with the fact that “the most important role of a women is to take care of her home and family”, while 27% agree with it [CITATION Eur181 \l 1036]. As a comparison, the European Union’s average is 54% of disagreement with this statement and 44% of agreement, with Sweden being the most progressive country on the matter with 87% of people disagreeing with the given statement [CITATION Eur181 \l 1036]. If women’s most important tasks must be to take care of the household, there consequently is less space for them to enter politics and pursue a career in a field that is very much time consuming.

On another matter, French universalism also has had an impact over politics and especially the conception of what universalism is [CITATION Rai12 \l 1036]. For a long time “universal” meant “men”: Universalism’s conception was a barrier to gender equality, as it considered quotas to be illegitimate as they would go against an equality of opportunities, that surely was not here [CITATION Rai12 \l 1036]. The emphasis on personal characteristics such as gender was considered a threat to the neutrality of universalism. A good illustration of it is the use of “universal suffrage” between 1848 and 1944, while women were actually

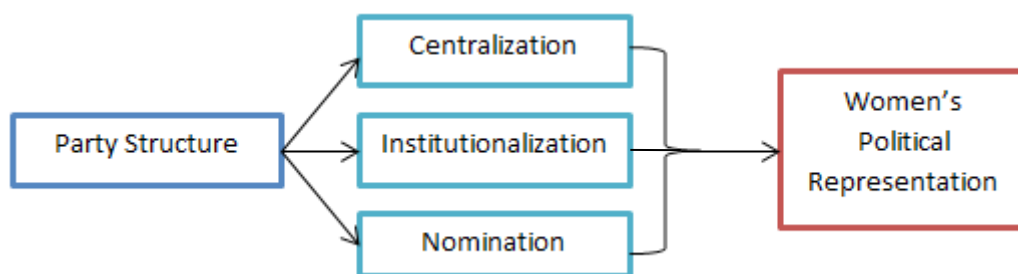
excluded from the act of voting[CITATION Rai12 \l 1036]. Therefore, legislations on equality were always applying the concept of universalism without taking into account the historical inequality behind the expression[CITATION Rai12 \l 1036]. On the other hand, the French universalism also paradoxically led to the implementation of parity by putting into the law an equal representation between men and women.

B. Political parties

Party Structure

Party structures are influencing women's representation as it impacts on the hierarchy of the candidate selection, on the process of selection and whether it is biased toward a certain group, as well as the level of the nomination. A comparison on those three points is needed between parties in power in 2000 namely the UMP and since 2017 with LREM.

Causal mechanism n°3:



Candidate selection was for a long time considered as the matter of only a small group of party-members but it has been more and more democratized in every party since the late 1990's [CITATION Squ17 \l 1036]. Since then political parties have expanded their internal democracy by enlarging the selection process through direct participation of candidates[CITATION Squ17 \l 1036]. The internal party rules are nevertheless still very important, for instance within the UMP –that was in power in the early 2000's- a national commission for nomination (*Commission Nationale d'Investiture*) is designated by the political bureau before every election, may they be national or local[CITATION Squ17 \l 1036]. Every candidates needs to be validated by this commission. The **level of the investiture** is therefore national, and leaves very little room to manoeuver at the local level, that is almost totally absent in the party's regulations[CITATION Squ17 \l 1036].

In France, a dominant tendency of political recruitment was to choose candidates that are already known by the population and parties who fill-in the traditional candidate profile [CITATION Squ17 \l 1036]. This is also the case within the mainstream parties such as UMP [CITATION Squ17 \l 1036]. This presupposes that the nature of the recruitment process of these parties is fitting what Caul [CITATION Mik98 \l 1036] describes as **highly institutionalized** parties but in which the rules are biased against women. Indeed, the fact that such a small assembly of high rank party members validates every national or local candidate it favors candidates with high personal capital, which are most of the time men [CITATION Mik98 \l 1036]. The UMP party regulation is less strict than the PS' one for example: Rules are formulated in a vague way and leave more room for action and interpretation [CITATION Squ17 \l 1036]. The UMP is an organization characterized by the patch-up of official statutes profiting to leaders and to internal power struggles [CITATION Squ17 \l 1036]. On the other hand, the PS, that was the main opponent of the UMP in the bipolar system, and also was the last party in power before Macron, combined centralization with democratization but also very clear candidature rules such as parity, eligibility criteria, or non-accumulation of electoral mandates [CITATION Squ17 \l 1036], which is more appealing to women.

UMP's statutes also keep a broader consultation of party members as optional and leave the final decision to the party's hierarchy [CITATION Squ17 \l 1036]. This control of decision-making in the national commission also testifies of the **high centralization** of the party. But it goes against Caul's theory of responsiveness: Indeed, as the party members are not invited to participate in the final candidates' selection, their ability to pressure the hierarchy for broader representation and the integration of more female candidates is limited.

In 2017, Macron's party came in power with a main claim of political renewal as well as more gender equality. As many other contemporary political actors such as the 5 Star Movement in Italy or Podemos in Spain, LREM started as a movement before being established as a party. We would therefore expect that it will also differ from the previous parties in power in terms of structure. The movement has proclaimed gender equality and political renewal as their main objectives [CITATION Fab17 \l 1036]. Emmanuel Macron also mentioned that the party will take action to limit the mandates of its members in order to keep renewing the political actors and give equal access to men and women. As the number of female

candidates and the party's election results testify[CITATION LeM171 \l 1036], the party does not seem to set barriers up for women and is rather encouraging them to run as candidates. On its internal rules, the party is **not as institutionalized** as other parties given its recent creation. We can nevertheless see that the party's statutes are not very strict as it allows its members to be part of several parties,

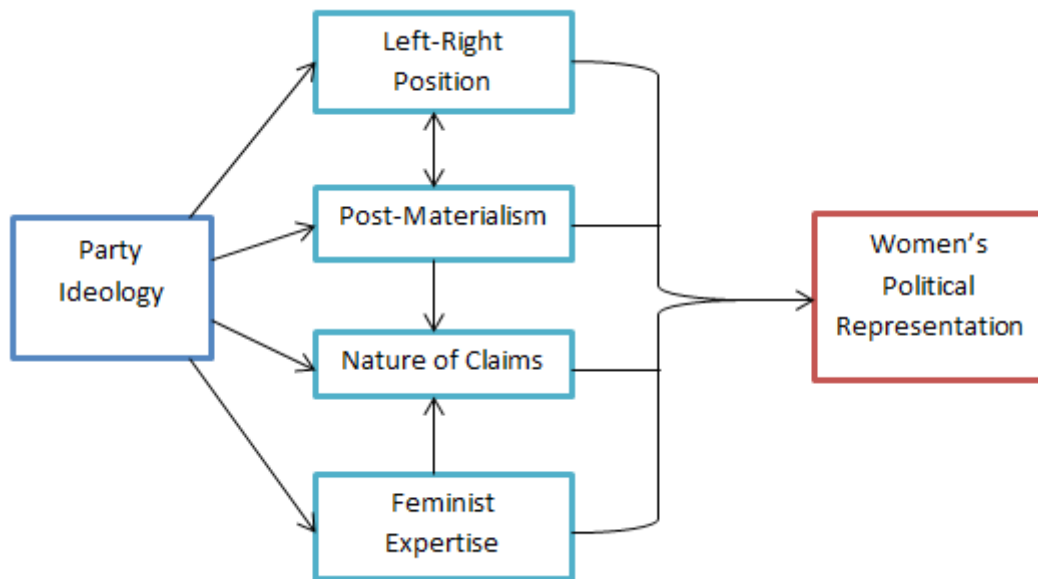
But since the party has officially published its statutes we can see that it is in line with right-wing parties in terms of how it works and how it selects candidates: Decisions come from the top of the hierarchy and there is a nomination commission that does not require party activists to vote [CITATION Fab17 \l 1036]. The party does not mention any internal elections in terms of policy or recruitment, which means that the power is concentrated at the top, even if it claimed to be more favorable to horizontality and autonomous initiatives as a movement[CITATION Fab17 \l 1036]. There is a tension between LREM's proclaimed horizontality and factual verticality. As LREM only participated to first-order elections until today, we are not able to entirely grasp the possible differences between national and local elections. The elements that we dispose still are hinting toward a **highly centralized party**, in which nominations are validated at the national level by a commission that is nominated by the head of the party itself[CITATION Eti17 \l 1036]. The party's nominations are therefore relying on the national hierarchy even if the recruitment is done locally[CITATION Fab17 \l 1036].

We must not limit the analysis to parties in power and also acknowledge the progression of other parties in the later years, such as the Greens (EELV) or eco-socialists such as LFI. Indeed, since the 1970's in France, the Greens made of parity one of their core values and has been applying it de-facto to its internal organization and elections[CITATION Fra15 \l 1036]. The party also has a hierarchy distinct from mainstream parties, in the way that legitimacy within the party does not derive from the member's hierarchical position but rather from his or her competencies and knowledge[CITATION Gui13 \l 1036].

Party Ideology

The parity laws were adopted in 2000 within an ideological context that seems far from today's political and ideological context. This influences several factors, including the kind of claims that political actors are going to make and their links with external organization related to women's rights. All these elements can affect positively or negatively women's political representation.

Causal mechanism n°4:



In 2000, the topic of parity in politics sparked the controversy and divided political actors in six distinct ideological branches [CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. We will here only highlight the most important ones. Within the RPR (then UMP), there was a strong ant-paritarian branch, whose members argued that politics must transcend the social [CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. According to them, conditioning political representation on biological criteria could only represent a serious regression [CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. They adopted a right-wing conservative position based on universalism that distinguishes republican principles from their realization [CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. This important branch in the political arena struggled to find an echo in the broader population at the time and is now a minority [CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. This group strategically allied with neo-Marxist feminist groups despite their almost absolute ideological opposition: For this group of feminists the parity laws through an essentialist conception of identity is recreating social categories that oppress individual [CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. Even if this movement was important among

feminists, it was almost absent from the political class. It nevertheless gained legitimacy given the small immediate results of the parity laws.

On the other hand, among the groups in favor of the 2000's law, another group of feminists are to be found: Their ideology is based on the fact that men and women indeed have different experiences, values and behaviors that contribute to the global plurality of humanity[CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. By excluding women from politics, male politicians are depriving themselves from their experiences and their knowledge on different topics that would contribute to a better public space[CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. This ideology only concerned a small amount of feminists but their arguments in favor of women's contribution to society were quite present in public debates[CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. The group of republicans in favor of parity was the group that had the most influence on the parity laws. Their ideology relies on universalism but manages to articulate it with parity: In their eyes, the inscription of parity in the law does not put universalism into question as humans are men and women, and women do not constitute a category or a minority[CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. They do not consider that this law represents a quota as women represent 50% of the population. From the 1990's on, this ideology progressed a lot among politicians as well as feminist organizations and within the general population[CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. This reformulation of republicanism, usually more conservative, contributed to see the law voted with 94% of parliamentarians in favor of it[CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. But since 2000, this ideological strain is less present in the public debate especially with the mandate of Nicolas Sarkozy (UMP) and the increasing importance of topics such as security and immigration in public debates that accompany the progression of a new political cleavage.

Lastly, the pragmatic egalitarian group that considered that parity was a mean of transition toward a more equalitarian order. They disagree with the second group of feminists in the way that women indeed would bring something to politics with their participation, but that this is not based on nature rather on women's construction as a dominated group[CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. According to them, the affirmative action in favor of gender equality must always be combined with a fight against other types of discriminations. This movement was largely majoritarian among feminists and scholars, and has an influence on the public opinion but lesser on institutional politics[CITATION Yve07 \l 1036].

The particularity of the French ideological context was that almost no political actor mobilized a liberal argumentation that would either mention the electorate's freedom of choice as an argument against the law; or that would mobilize the right to see women's interests represented in politics as an argument in favor of the law [CITATION Yve07 \l 1036].

In France, women's commissions within parties were -and still are- very rare and usually do not have a lot of influence on parties, which also can explain the relative failure of parity measures in political parties in the 2000's [CITATION Cat04 \t \l 1036]. Important feminist movements such as the MLF (Women's Liberation Movement) have since the 1970's receded from traditional institutional politics, and there is still little porosity between the two fields later [CITATION Cat04 \t \l 1036]. This did not increase female activists' willingness to participate in politics. The results of the 2002 legislative elections confirm the autonomy of the political arena [CITATION Cat04 \t \l 1036].

The ideological context evolved when the socialist candidate François Hollande arrived in power in 2012, and this tendency was confirmed with the election of Emmanuel Macron in 2017. Both candidates' parties are in favor of affirmative actions in favor of women's representation and both present left-wing ideology on the matter. LREM is often qualified as a catch-all party whose ideology goes from center-left to center-right: Liberal, pro-EU, based on the idea of progress [CITATION Dia18 \l 1036]. Emmanuel Macron has himself declared that gender equality would be at the center of his presidential mandate, which is confirmed in his party's statutes: Equality in the private sphere, at work and the fight against sexual harassment are part of the party's policies [CITATION Lin17 \l 1036]. LREM is therefore taking some claims of the feminist agenda in its party manifesto, and this is articulated with their post-material stances and their position on the center-right of the political spectrum.

Despite the fact that little data is available on the different LREM candidates' profile and their feminist expertise, some publicized actors such as, Marlène Schiappa, the current secretary of state to gender equality and against discriminations, give us indications on these actors. She is for example an activist for women's rights in terms of access to the labor force, especially for the combination of maternity and career [CITATION AFP17 \l 1036].

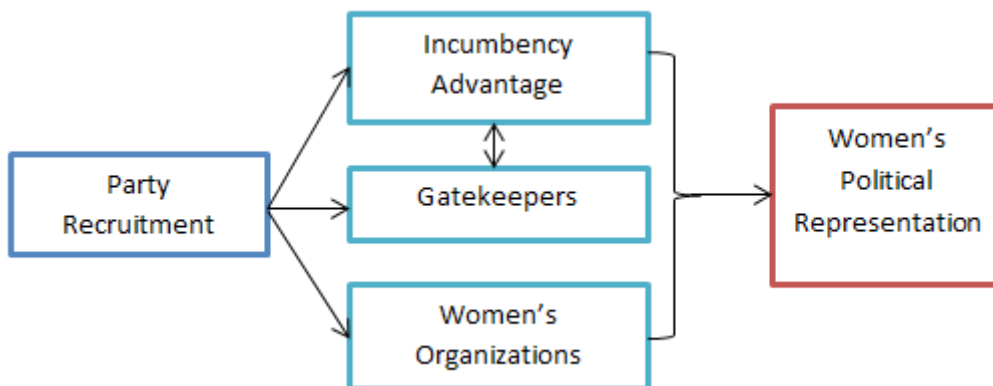
Ideologically speaking, the political arena seems to have moved to a consensus in favor of affirmative actions for women's political representation. The new political cleavages have

brought more post-material parties on the front stage, and their claims are more and more progressive concerning women. More feminist claims have been integrated into political agendas in the recent years, especially with the #MeToo movement. All these elements have a positive influence for both descriptive and substantive representation of women.

Party recruitment

The recruitment of candidates undeniably influences women's representation and scientific literature has shown that a candidate selection biased against women was often in place. Indeed there can be an advantage given to incumbent candidates as well as gatekeepers that secure the men's positions within the party. But the recruitment can also be impacted by female candidates' links with women's organizations that will support them.

Causal mechanism n°5:



The incumbency advantage in France is often legitimized by parties as a way to stay in power: They often blamed the electoral system that would force them to present such candidates, in order to perform electorally. In France, the accumulation of electoral mandates is also allowed to a certain extent and contributes to a double incumbency advantage in time and in mandates: the most common situation is the combination of a mayor mandate with the legislative one [CITATION Mar08 \l 1036]. When this practice is coupled with the majority rule and the fact that we elect a single representative, it is hard for women to access the electoral arena: It gives an advantage to insiders, that have more resources and know the terrain better, to the detriment of outsiders, who mostly are women [CITATION Mar08 \l 1036].

As we have mentioned earlier (see Professionalization section), many years of experience in politics are the norm to be elected, and some candidates are staying in office for several mandates. Although no statistics exist about the average political longevity of representatives, the non-renewal of the parliament shows that a lot of the incumbent MPs are always running for their reelection. The main issue is the combination of reelection with the accumulation of other mandates. Before the Second World War it was a very common practice that decreased after 1945, to again increase in the 1970's: About 75% of the MPs also exercised a local mandate [CITATION Lau12 \l 1036]. It has been highlighted that incumbency is gendered: Male politicians are living from their political profession and have a career within politics, while women have more of an activist engagement [CITATION Car15 \l 1036].

This accumulation is possible because no electoral mandate besides the presidential one is limited in time [CITATION Rép19 \l 1036]. Since 1985, the combination of a MP, mayor and regional counselor was forbidden by law [CITATION Lau12 \l 1036]. This had limited effects as in 2010 the share of MPs cumulating several mandates remained high, with 70% [CITATION Lau12 \l 1036]. It was the subject of the 2008's law on the non-accumulation of mandates that was only presented in 2018 and will only apply to the local level [CITATION Bas19 \l 1036].

Since the legislative elections of 2017, the parliamentary population has largely been renewed but the incumbency problem in French politics remains: It has been highlighted by the NGO Transparency International that the accumulation of mandates touches about 14% of MPs in 2018 [CITATION Tra18 \l 1036]. This phenomenon has been slowed down by the 2014's law passed during Hollande's mandate, that limits the practice [CITATION Tra18 \l 1036]. It therefore seems like the incumbency advantage has largely been reduced lately, which has been correlated with a renewal of elected MPs and a strong increase in women's presence at the National Assembly (see Table 1).

The party gatekeepers are also present in France even if they have been constrained to recruit more women since the parity laws. Their influence was especially manifested in the locations in which women candidates were placed: More women were recruited but their placement in hardly winnable constituencies affected their overall numbers [CITATION Rai11 \l

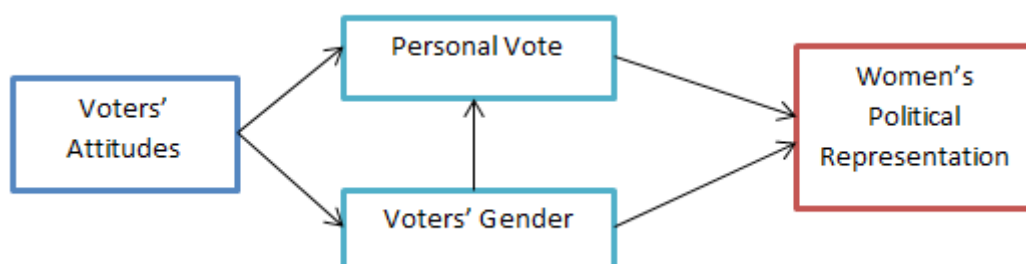
1036]. By placing women in unwinnable districts in the beginnings of parity laws, political parties favored incumbent candidates in the constituencies favorable to their parties resulting in the loss of the opposing female candidates. This gave arguments to the opponents of the laws who saw these losses as a way to prove that women could not win elections. This nevertheless has changed since the arrival of Macron and the large renewal of MPs in Parliament with 169 MPs out of 305 that never had a political mandate[CITATION Pau17 \l 1036]. But this effect should not be overestimated as among LREM's party members were 126 ex-Socialist MPs and 48 ex-Republican members[CITATION Pau17 \l 1036]. We can consequently say that today, there still is a combination of incumbency advantages of old MPs, even if the political landscape has changed. This is nevertheless not always possible especially in local elections because of the parity laws.

Women's organizations and associations are numerous in France but remain quite distant from political parties[CITATION Yve07 \l 1036]. Data describing links between candidates and these organizations is hard to find and only candidate-specific data can be found. We therefore cannot infirm nor confirm any hypothesis concerning the influence of women's organizations on political parties' recruitment and its links with women's political representation. Women's organization are nevertheless influent in the media and therefore on the broader population: Feminist organizations are especially more and more present since 2000[CITATION Gré05 \l 1036].

C. Individual Level

Candidates' personal attributes as well as voters' gender can influence the votes for female political candidates, and therefore affect their broader representation.

Causal Mechanism n°6:



Gender and personal vote

The importance of candidates' personal characteristics in the voters' eyes are especially present in non-list systems in which the person up for election matters not just as a party's candidate [CITATION Mel13 \l 1036]. As France uses a two-round majority system, the impact of personal vote is particularly interesting to study, especially because major elections are highly candidate centered.

In the 2000's, women's underrepresentation in politics could be explained by the dominance of two types of social representations: The first ones linked with gender roles in which women should prioritize their families and households, and the second one concerns the political arena being thought as a manly environment [CITATION Gré05 \l 1036]. Voters therefore unconsciously applied those representations to their own votes, which resulted in the domination of male politicians. Since the parity laws of 2000, women are more valued in the media and society. This nevertheless relies on a general idea that they would bring a "feminine touch" and express sensitivity toward the electorate [CITATION Gré05 \l 1036]. Women are therefore more admitted in politics but are still portrayed according to their supposed natural qualities as women and their femininity is emphasized [CITATION Gré05 \l 1036]. Women are therefore seen in a particular way in politics, as if they were not the same kind of politicians than their male counterparts. Indeed, a poll realized in 2000 showed that 63% of the representative sample of the French population thought that the parity laws will improve the functioning of democracy [CITATION Cat01 \l 1036].

Politics are also seen as a male world: In 2002, 48% of a poll's respondents said that "the ideal candidate for the presidential election" should rather be a man [CITATION Gré05 \l 1036]. Among this sample of French citizens, most of them also did not consider women as potential candidates for prestigious electoral mandates, such as the presidency, but mention women for second-order elections and the least prestigious jobs such as municipal counselor or assistants [CITATION Gré05 \l 1036]. The consequence of such representations also affect political parties, who took into consideration this voters' bias, and therefore recruited more men as they thought it would improve their electoral chances and would fit the electorate's representations [CITATION Rai11 \l 1036].

In more recent years, it seems like the gender bias in personal vote has almost disappeared but has been replaced by an elite bias: Voters do not prefer women, but rather vote for incumbent candidates that can be men or women, who are perceived as more suitable for the job, more able to secure a seat and respond to electoral swings [CITATION Rai11 \l 1036]. In addition, the most recent poll on French citizens' perception of men and women in politics shows that the gender gap in politics has decreased [CITATION Har15 \l 1036]: More than two thirds of them thought that gender has no influence on a politicians' ability to implement policies (65%), be efficient (71%) and represent the country abroad (77%). Even if an absolute majority of respondents said that the biological sex of political representatives has no impact on their abilities, women are still seen as somehow distinct from male politicians on certain tasks[CITATION Har15 \l 1036]. For instance women would be better than men to be attentive according to 55% of respondents, while 43% think men and women are equal on the matter, and 2% attribute this quality to men[CITATION Har15 \l 1036]. Women would also be better at reflecting before taking a decision, be courageous, be outspoken, be understanding of citizens' struggles as well as hold to their promises[CITATION Har15 \l 1036]. On the other hand, the only quality that seems to be more attributed to men is authority[CITATION Har15 \l 1036].

The gender division is also still present in citizens' minds in terms of political fields: Women are seen as being better suited for branches which they already have great access to such as health, environment, communication and culture[CITATION Har15 \l 1036]. Voters' opinions are more contrasted on domains such as economy and employment, while some others are seen as more suited for men, for instance security and foreign affairs[CITATION Har15 \l 1036]. In principle, respondents expressed positive judgments on the idea that women can have political responsibilities, and even attributed them qualities inherently superior to those of men, even if the majority did not often give importance to biological sex[CITATION Har15 \l 1036]. In hypothetical ways, French citizens declared themselves unanimously ready to vote for a woman for the presidential elections[CITATION Har15 \l 1036]. In practice, however, visible female politicians are viewed just as harshly as their male counterparts[CITATION Har15 \l 1036], probably because beyond their female gender, they embody certain political ideas with their supports and opponents. The relative superiority attributed to women politicians in the framework of this survey probably reflects a broader

underlying expectation: the renewal of a still predominantly male political staff, whose female figures do not really succeed today in convincing more than male politicians in 2015. This renewal might have happened with the election of Emmanuel Macron and a large majority of MPs in 2017. It must be noted that, overall, women are especially supportive of female politicians[CITATION Har15 \l 1036], which means that descriptive representation shows in results in terms of political support.

Voters' gender and populist parties

The radical right gender gap verifies in France between the end of the 1980's and 2002, when for the first time a radical right candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen qualified in the second round of the presidential elections[CITATION Chr18 \l 1036]. There was a seven-point gap between men and women's FN vote in the 1988's presidential election, which has been reduced to six points in 2002. It continued to evolve and was reduced to three points in 2007 and one point in 2012[CITATION Chr18 \l 1036]. Today the gender gap in terms of votes for the radical right seems to have disappeared as gender did not have a statistically significant electoral impact: As many men and women voted for Le Pen, when we control for age, profession, diploma, religiosity and equal ideological orientation[CITATION Chr18 \l 1036]. This effect was significant in 2002[CITATION Chr18 \l 1036]. This testifies of the rise in support for radical right parties among the whole population, despite gender differences.

It is nevertheless necessary to compare it to the gender differences in votes for Macron, as they were main opponents in the second round of the 2017 presidential elections. The homogenization of votes is also present here, with no significant gender difference in support for Macron [CITATION Chr18 \l 1036]. Women nevertheless voted slightly less for the LREM candidate than men did, as he was supported by 22% of female voters and 26% of male voters.[CITATION Chr18 \l 1036].

The statistics nevertheless show a different gender gap than the one that was expected: a generation gap. Indeed, women above 60 years old seem to vote less for the radical right candidates than the other age categories[CITATION Chr18 \l 1036]. This can either be translated by a stronger reluctance to vote for such parties among the older generation compared to the younger ones, or it can also mean that this generation hardly admits its FN vote, because of the stigma it used to be associated with[CITATION Chr18 \l 1036].

Table 2: Summary of the findings by hypothesis

Hypotheses	Results by time period	
	2000-2004	2015-2019
H1: : Electoral barriers for women politicians such as single member districts and majority rule are slowing down the access of more women to elected mandates, in both time periods, despite the gender quota in place.	✓	✓
H2: Gender Equality laws have a bigger impact on female representation for list-based elections, but less for national-scale elections	✓	✓
H3: The higher the level of professionalization of legislatures, the lower women’s representation is.	✓	✗
H4: In general, gender quota laws have a positive impact on political conditions leading to women’s representation.	✓	✓
H5: The more gender divided the labor field is, the fewer women are to be found in politics.	✓	✗
H6: The more traditional the political culture is the lesser women are represented in politics.	✓	✓
H7: The more left-wing a party is the better women’s political representation is.	✓	✓
H8: Political parties’ structures, through their levels of centralization, institutionalization and nominations, determine women’s representation within both parties and elected offices.	✓	✗
H9: Political recruitment is a strong determinant of the presence of female candidates in politics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presence of gatekeepers and incumbents in the recruitment process will affect it negatively. • The presence of women’s organizations will affect it positively. 	✓ ✗	✗ ✗
H11: Gender is considered as an important variable in personal vote and therefore has a negative impact on women’s descriptive representation in politics.	✓	✗
H12: As women are less likely to vote for populist right parties, the presence of a radical right party in the electoral system can influence women’s representation positively in opposing parties.	✓	✗
✓: Hypothesis can be confirmed ✗: Hypothesis cannot be confirmed		

Conclusion

This research aimed at explaining the factors leading to women's underrepresentation in politics in France today, despite the introduction of a gender quota nearly twenty years ago. In order to do so, a conceptual model divided in three levels was drawn, based on the literature, and applied to two different time periods: the first one taking place just after the introduction of the quota (2000-2004) and the second covering a more recent period (2015-2019).

The analysis shows that most factors hindering women's representation were still present in the first period of analysis. As the gender quota's hardest restrictions, namely the impossibility to run if the party did not respect parity, were only applied to local elections, its impact remained small. At the national level most political parties made the choice to pay the fines rather than present more female candidates, resulting in only a small increase in women's numbers in parliament. The influence of party gatekeepers was still very important. Furthermore, as the law did not apply to higher electoral offices such as mayors or presidents of local councils, women were still confronted to a glass ceiling. Legislatures seemed hard to obtain for women, given their high professionalization combined with incumbents' advantages and the negative stereotypes that women were the victims of.

In the more recent period going from the end of François Hollande's mandate until half of Emmanuel Macron's presidency, some changes have been noticed. Indeed, even if the electoral system did not change, the parity laws were broadened: for instance, since 2013, for departmental elections, parties must now present a gender equal pair of candidates. The municipal elections' rule of alternation between male and female candidates has also been modified and the threshold of inhabitants was lowered from cities with 3500 inhabitants to 1000. The fines paid by parties to national elections have also been increased in 2007 and doubled in 2017. Left-wing parties are still the more paritarian overall, even if the huge majority of LREM in the National Assembly makes it hard to compare in terms of seats. In 2017, the Republican Party was the political organization that paid the biggest fines for not respecting parity, followed by the Front National [CITATION Gaë17 \l 1036], which confirms the distinction between left and right.

The gender gap in terms of division of labor seems to have decreased in recent years, as well as bias against female candidates, which seem to be a good sign for female politicians. The incumbency advantage seems to have largely decreased as well, but this is probably due to the party system change that occurred in the latest presidential and legislative elections. As none of the mainstream parties obtained a majority, a lot of new politicians entered the arena. The renewal claimed by Emmanuel Macron is confirmed in many ways, but it has also been carried by other smaller parties, especially on the left with the Greens or the Radical left.

France and its parity laws provide a good example to counter the argument that quotas are merely symbolic. This is reinforced by the fact that half of countries that implemented gender quotas have experienced a substantive increase in women's representation the election after the adoption [CITATION Nor15 \t \l 1036]. The case of France shows that it is indeed possible to overcome a negative political environment with a quota law, even when the country has a majoritarian system, believed to be the worst for women's representation. This is an interesting finding for other countries that also have a majoritarian system or single-members districts.

Besides its good effects combined with an undeniable evolution of society, the French parity law is incomplete and therefore had unexpected consequences. One of those applies especially to 50-50 gender quota for which parties can also be sanctioned if they go over 51% of female candidates, which was the case for two small parties in 2017[CITATION Gaë17 \l 1036]. The parties are sanctioned to have presented too many candidates of the feminine gender. The law also lacks binding measures, which are only enforced for local elections and that have the best results, as testify the increase in women's representation in municipal and regional councils (see Table 1). The law could be extended to first order elections such as the legislatives that are less personalized than the presidential election. A more efficient application of the law in all elections nevertheless would imply to also change the electoral system in order to have a durable effect, going from uninominal ballot to a list-based proportional system. This is reinforced by the fact that countries using proportional representation have grown way quicker than those using a majority rule: even if the representation gap was almost equivalent until the 1970's, PR systems have had better

results in terms of women's descriptive representation with their contagion effect [CITATION Ric96 \l 1036].

Parity laws' effects can also be hindered by other political reforms. For instance, in France the 2003's decentralization reform redesigned the districts which might have had an impact on local elections by diminishing the number of seats available in a constituency, and therefore indirectly hindering women's representation.

Now that women represent almost 40% of the National Assembly and a large part of local councils, matters of further inclusion concerning underrepresented minorities or social classes. Indeed, workers and employees represent about half of the labor force but there are only 5% of employees among elected MPs and no representative from the working class[CITATION Obs181 \l 1036]. On the other hand, white collars represent 76% of MPs, while their share in the general population is of 4.4%[CITATION Obs181 \l 1036]. The question of inclusion in a broader sense therefore remains, as well as its combination with gender quotas.

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