

# Qualitative or Quantitative? The Case for Methodological Eclecticism



**Nonna Mayer**

Centre d'études européennes et de politique comparée, Sciences Po  
27 rue Saint-Guillaume, 75337 Paris Cedex 07.

[nonna.mayer@sciencespo.fr](mailto:nonna.mayer@sciencespo.fr)

*N.B.* This paper is the translated version of the article "Qualitatif ou quantitatif ? Plaidoyer pour l'éclectisme méthodologique" published in the issue 139 of the BMS (July 2018, 7–33). DOI: 10.1177/0759106318778821. It is made freely available by the publisher.

## **Abstract**

In tracing Nonna Mayer's career back to its beginnings at CEVIPOF over 40 years ago, this article presents a defence of methodological eclecticism. Based on examples from her research on electoral behaviour, racism and social inequalities, the author demonstrates the artificial nature of the opposition between qualitative and quantitative approaches, both in terms of data collection and analysis. Interviews and surveys, open and closed questions, participant observation and experimentation – all of these techniques shed light on different aspects of the research object. Only through combining and connecting them can we understand it in its totality.

## **Keywords**

Interview, Experimentation, Gender, Qualitative Methods, Quantitative Methods, Social Precariousness, Racism, Survey, Electoral Sociology, Le Pen vote

\*\*\*\*\*

## Introduction

Eclecticism undoubtedly best describes the methodological choices I have made throughout my career. It results from an early socialization with research that began well before the CNRS hired me, among researchers at the Center for the Study of French Political Life (Cevipof) (Mayer, 2015b).<sup>1</sup> To show how this eclecticism took root over the years, I will provide a quick overview of my research and then describe how I mixed qualitative and quantitative approaches in three areas: racist prejudices, voting behavior, and social inequalities.

In the 1970s, Cevipof was at the nexus of several disciplines and research traditions: lexicometric experts worked alongside psychologists, sociologists, and political scientists, followers of electoral geography who admired André Siegfried and swore by aggregate data, and survey experts. IFOP founder Jean Stoetzel introduced this technique to Sciences Po, where he was teaching. IFOP conducted the first electoral study for the FNSP using surveys after the elections of 2 January 1956, in the first district of the Seine, with a small representative sample of 504 people. Very quickly, by showing its willingness to break with traditional political science's focus on law and political theory, Cevipof became a cutting-edge laboratory for electoral analysis, modeled after American survey research. The pioneering book *Classe, religion et comportement politique* [Class, religion, and political behavior] (Michelat and Simon, 1977) drew on research by Paul Lazarsfeld and the Columbia school. Meanwhile, Annick Percheron developed a political socialization approach in the United States, working with David Easton and Kent Jennings (Mayer, 1993; Mayer, Muxel, 1993). The laboratory was a mandatory stop for foreign researchers in Paris. This environment was conducive to exchanges, to a confrontation between methods and their underlying theories, and to all kinds of experimentation.

The research project I presented when I applied to CNRS in 1974 covered the relationship to politics of a social category then in full revolt against economic modernization: small shopkeepers (Grunberg, Lavau, Mayer, 1983; Mayer, 1986a). This research area sparked my interest in electoral sociology and the major cleavages shaping partisan choices, starting with the “heavy” variables: social class and religion. Hence my interest in the National Front (FN) (Mayer and Perrineau, 1989), which electorally emerged in 1983-1984 ; small shopkeepers were considered to be its “typical voters” (box 1). Wrongly so, since during the EU elections of 1984, a bourgeoisie exasperated by the victory of “social-communists” in May 1981 handed Jean-Marie Le Pen his highest tallies (Mayer, 1987), and his support among shopkeepers increased with the size of their business. The bourgeoisie went back to voting for the right during the 1986 legislative elections. Only then did the FN electorally break through to small business owners.

---

<sup>1</sup> My warm thanks to Carolyn Amon who translated the French text.

**Box 1. The myth of the “typical voter”**

“The first is a man around the age of fifty who is a small shopkeeper in Paris or in a major city in the province (...) His two obsessions, which are one and the same to him, are insecurity and immigration. No need to continue – you know who this is: the “Beauf” of Cabu, the Dupont-Lajoie of families, the typical Jean-Marie le Pen voter.” (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 22 June 1984).

“He is a man around forty. A business owner, he lives in a city with 150,000 residents in the Mediterranean Midi. He voted for Chirac en 1981. Immigrants scare him and he cannot stop complaining about insecurity. This man is no other than the National Front’s typical voter. He voted for Le Pen during the European elections, and he may relapse next Sunday [during the cantonal elections] by voting for far-right candidates.” (*Libération*, 8 March 1985).

(Mayer, 1986a: 304-305).

A study of far-right activists in France and in Europe completed that of the voters (Klandermans and Mayer, 2005). Studying the FN – the “national preference” party – naturally led me to study the relationship to immigrants and strangers, and racism in all its forms (Mayer, 1990). It also opened my eyes to the importance of gender, as I sought to understand why women were more loath to vote for this party than men. The protests that followed the desecration of the Jewish cemetery in Carpentras in 1990 encouraged me to study social movements and collective action, especially mobilizations against racism, anti-Semitism, and the FN (Mayer 1991 and 1994). Finally, the 2008 crisis pushed me to explore the political consequences of the social inequalities and precariousness. Regardless of the research problem, I always emphasized the methodology, be it based on an interview, survey, or experiment.

**The school of non-directive interviews**

Between 1971 and 1973, I completed a 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of political studies at Sciences Po – the equivalent of a Masters today. The social psychologist Guy Michelat led a seminar on non-directive interviews that drew on the method developed by American psychologist Carl Rogers, based on empathy. The idea is to let the person freely talk about a given topic without redirecting in any way other than reflecting her words (Michelat, 1975). Following an introductory training session we went into the field, recorder in hand, and conducted interviews that we then discussed with the group. The goal was to interview people we didn’t know on what appeared to be anodyne topics – wine, chocolate, perfume, fur – with a minimalist initial prompt (I would like to talk about your thoughts on...); these topics ultimately proved to be very revealing of political attitudes. This is when I discovered the excitement of the “field”. The experience allowed me to work as a researcher for the “quali” section of Sofres, and to do fieldwork for Cevipof researchers on a very broad range of topics and populations (the perception of their work for the employees of the car manufacturer Berliet, of modernization for female farmers in Cantal, of politics for residents in the Northern town of Maubeuge, and of the Parliament for small Parisian shopkeepers (Mayer, 1972). That is what sparked my interest in doing research, and starting a PhD thesis on the political world of small business owners. Naturally, non-directive interviews in the Michelat’s style were the

method I selected to approach a demoralized population permeated by the general feeling that it was doomed to disappear (box 2). These interviews allowed me, beyond the individual stories, to piece together the worldview of a socio-professional category structured by its middle-class position: its members were antagonistic to both labor, as self-employed people, and to big business, as small employers.

### **Box 2. The demoralization of a social group**

“Our problem is that we’re screwed. We’re going to disappear. Let me explain: the small business owner, if you were looking at animals, you would say, huh, that species is going to disappear. Well, that’s us: we’re like a rare animal species that is set to disappear. We’re hanging on, hanging on, but in a few years we’ll be gone (Man, cheesemonger, in Mayer, 1986a: 153).

Since then, I have tried other types of interviews (semi-directed, life stories, focus groups, filmed interviews) with a wide range of populations (anti-FN activists, former FN leaders, people in highly precarious situations, volunteers and employees of charities and refugee aid groups). But my initial training in non-directive interviews taught me to listen, to not be afraid of silence, to walk in another’s shoes, and to help people explore their thoughts without influencing them, and without imposing my own thoughts. It is a way of conducting interviews that is antithetical to the “ordinary conversation” that Pierre Bourdieu called for in *La misère du monde* [The misery of the world] (Mayer, 1995) (box 3).

## **New approaches to public opinion**

Guy Michelat also introduced quantitative methods, surveys, and statistical data processing to Cevipof.<sup>2</sup> Today, a regression or factor analysis takes one click, but back then it was much more complicated. Researchers had to use CIRCE, the CNRS’ electronic calculation center in Orsay. The information was entered on perforated cards, as was the program and the parameters of the analysis. The output was tons of listings continuously pouring out of a big printer. It took 24 hours for the tests and cross-tabulations requested the day before to become available. As for the hierarchical attitude scales, Michelat developed them by hand, using a scalogram, until he created an adapted computer program with Pierre-Olivier Flavigny. But “getting my hands dirty” was formative. I continue to enjoy playing with the data and testing statistical models. I also retained the sense that qualitative and quantitative methods do not oppose, but rather complement, one another. We were using “mixed methods” before their time. Following the example of Guy Michelat and Michel Simon, who mixed interview data and survey data to understand the relationship of Catholic and non-religious people to politics (Michelat, Simon, 1977), the second part of my thesis drew on electoral surveys to explain the political behavior of small business owners.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sciencespo.fr/fresque-pprd/#!/fr/frise/72/creation-du-cevipof/>.

**Box 3. The interview according to Pierre Bourdieu**

“Given their frequency (they take up close to a third of the interview) and their interrogative aspect (two thirds of the prompts), his interventions [those of the researcher, here, Pierre Bourdieu] break the rhythm of the interview and encourage the interviewees to be passive, as they await the next question. Their content is clearly biased, systematically taking the side of the youth against the police, justice, and authority. Thus, the researcher systematically minimizes importance of their thefts: “Yes, but it’s partly in jest” or “Yes but that’s also something you do when you’re bored...” (p. 91). It downplays their label as breakers: “But that’s weird because neither of you seems to be so bad” (p. 93) and excuses the oldest who take alcohol and drugs: “Yes, and when there’s nothing else to do, that’s understandable” (p. 89). He compliments their physical strength: “You haven’t thought of doing sports, because, you know, you’re strong” (p. 89), and shows great concern when he learns that one of their friends lost his father: “Oh my, the poor boy!” (p. 99). Furthermore, several times his interventions introduce foreign elements into the discourse of the two young men. Bourdieu suggests that there is no sports field, but when he learns that there is one, he insists that there is only one for the two neighborhoods, after suggesting that they don’t have access to their facility: “Yes, and they don’t let you use it?” (p. 87), and calls the training program for young people “phony”, underscores their unfair treatment by employers: “Yes ok, but they let him through and stop you”. He is also indignant: “that’s disgusting, they don’t have the right. [...] It’s revolting”, while the young person involved simply responds: “yes, that gets annoying after a while” (p. 89). (Mayer, 1995: 363-364). The pages in parentheses refer to *La misère du monde* [The weight of the world] (Bourdieu, 1993).

Another researcher who played a key role in my research career was Frédéric Bon. In 1973 he was looking for contractors to urgently finish a book ordered by Calmann-Lévy on opinion polls – a request initially made to Guy Michelat, who did not have time to do it. Bon had only written the chapter on “electoral estimate” operations (Bon, 1985). He had the detailed outline for the book and other chapters, and the attendant references and data. All that remained was to write it. That became my job, and Michel-Antoine Burnier gave it all a uniform and sprightly style. The book was finished in three months and came out in April 1974 with the title *Les sondages peuvent-ils se tromper?* [Can surveys be wrong?] (Bon, Burnier and Mayer, 1974). It has withstood the test of time. The experience accelerated my learning with respect to opinion surveys, their potential, and their traps, across all stages of their development and analysis. At Sciences Po, Alain Lancelot had already made us read Pierre Bourdieu’s warning that “Public opinion does not exist” in its first version, published by Bulletin Noroit in 1971. Meanwhile, Frédéric Bon showed that the instrument was fallible, but could be improved and used for research purposes. The lesson stayed with me.

The new line of research on public opinion, which developed in the United States in the 1980s, in connection with the rise of cognitive approaches and neuroscience, immediately fascinated me. Authors like Philippe Converse in the United States, and Pierre Bourdieu in France, believed that most of the public did not have stable and coherent opinions, especially in politics. In contrast with this “minimalist” paradigm, a new line of research provided a constructionist paradigm emphasizing the dynamic of opinions, their ambivalence, and their sensitivity to context (Sniderman, 1993). Computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI)

facilitated the development of experimental measures to test the effect of questions' formulation on the opinion of respondents. Unlike classical surveys, they tried to bring the interview closer to real life, by making the researcher intercede with arguments, counter-arguments, interruptions (*stop and think*), and a facilitating attitude. The experimental surveys that we organized during three street demonstrations, interviewing participants *in situ* (Favre, Fillieule, Mayer, 1997), fell under this rubric. The same applies to the filmed deliberative surveys developed by James Fishkin and his colleagues (Mayer, 1997b). They took a representative sample of the country's population, asked them about a current issue, isolated them for two days, confronted them with the opinions of experts and politicians, made them debate in small groups, and re-questioned them to see what changed, while filming everything to turn it into a pedagogical tool. The films of his experiments in England and the United States became a core part of my courses on public opinion at the IEP. But it is especially the discovery of research by Paul Sniderman, one of the main leaders of this research area, and the fact that he agreed to come teach a semester at Sciences Po, that changed my way of seeing survey-based research. In partnership with Stanford University, we jointly led an experimental survey on the relationship to democracy, resulting in the book *La démocratie à l'épreuve* [Democracy put to the test] (Grunberg, Mayer and Sniderman, 2002). In addition to the regular questions, the survey included around twenty experiments, inspired by those of Paul Sniderman, meant to test opinions on democracy. The questions were asked in the form of cases (a mayor proposes to ban panhandling in his town; young Muslim girls would like to keep their veil in class; is it effective to eliminate family allocations for families with delinquent minors?) and presented in several different versions, randomly selected, using split sampling in order to identify the parameters that make the answers vary.

#### **Box 4. The “soft-soap” experiment**

The experiment drew on the so-called “friendly interviewer experiment” (Hagendoorn, Sniderman, 2001). The survey's two last questions covered the perceived level of freedom and democracy in France. The sampling was randomly divided into four equally sized groups who were given slightly different versions of a same question. The two first ones simply asked: “We are at the end of the interview. I wanted to ask you a last question. Do you think there is too much freedom (or ‘too much democracy’) in France?”. The two others were asked with “soft-soap”, that is, the researcher appeared to be understanding and encouraged people to say what they really felt: “We’re getting to the end. I wanted to tell you that I appreciated this interview and your answers, which we find very useful. Don’t you ultimately think, contrary to what we often hear, that the real problem in France it that there is too much freedom (or “too much democracy”)?”. This preamble made the share of respondents who believe there is too much freedom in France jump by 12 points (from 28% to 40%), and those who believe there is too much democracy, by 15 points (from 16% to 31%). But the intervention did not make them change their opinion – the intervention aligned with their convictions and made them say what they dared not say. The “soft-soap” effect is all the stronger that respondents attested, through responses to other survey questions, that they had a high level of authoritarianism and a weak attachment to democratic values. (Grunberg, Mayer, and Sniderman, 2002, 38-49).

Sometimes the researcher interceded to try to change the respondent's opinion, or to propose an argument contrary to the generally accepted opinion, or on the contrary to show empathy to facilitate the expression of opinions contravening democratic norms (Box 4). In total, twenty small experiments conducted for the first time in a political survey undermined the thesis that "public opinion doesn't exist" and is an artifact of the survey situation. On most of the issues raised, "ordinary" citizens had stable and coherent opinions, even if they were not highly educated. Our experiments did not change their minds, but rather made them say what they thought, in line with their preexisting attitudes (Mayer, 2007).

## **Better measuring prejudices**

These experiments were particularly useful in measuring a racism that is now expressed in euphemized forms that are more acceptable in a democracy but more difficult to detect. The annual survey conducted for the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) on racism and xenophobia in France, which I have helped prepare since 1999 with Guy Michelat, Vincent Tiberj, and Tommaso Vitale, provided us with an ideal field of experimentation to detect "social desirability" biases. In front of the researcher, respondents might seek to appear in a favorable light, and hesitate to state opinions contrary to social norms, especially racist or xenophobic opinions.

This would especially be the case for the most educated people, who know what the "right" answer is. To test this, Sniderman and his colleagues (Sniderman and Carmines, 1997) developed the "list" experiment, which helps overcome the "politically correct" cloak in the expression of racism against Blacks in the United States, especially among the educated middle classes. People in the control sample must indicate how many of the listed topics (pollution, car traffic, tax increases) really anger them, without identifying which ones are involved. The second sample is given a list featuring an additional item, like "affirmative action"; the number of topics eliciting anger dramatically increases in this group, as people who do not usually dare express their rejection of affirmative action let loose, since the researcher won't know what the angering topics were. We reused the method to measure self-censorship phenomena on sensitive subjects like immigration (Mayer, 2015c) and Islam (Michelat, Mayer, Tiberj, and Vitale, 2016, 2017). In 2016, the sample was divided into three groups. The question for the control group was worded as follows: "On how many topics on this list do you feel you cannot freely express your opinion? Do not tell me which ones – just how many: tax increases / food waste / the salaries of top executives". In the second group, the additional item was Islam, and in the third, politics. Regardless of level of education, age, gender, religious practice, political orientation, and level of ethnocentrism, the introduction of Islam on the provided list strengthened the feeling of not being able to talk freely, while the introduction of "politics" had no effect. Islam was therefore a subject on which we might suspect that respondents will not necessarily say what they think. However, the profile of these respondents contradicted the initial hypothesis. People who felt censored by the tyranny of the politically correct and believed they could not express what they really thought, regardless of the topic, were those with the fewest resources, who considered themselves to be in a position of social and cultural inferiority. They were also the most ethnocentric in their

responses to the other questions on the survey, and all things being equal, ethnocentrism was the most predictive variable of this state of mind.

Another factor likely to introduce bias in responses to survey questions is the way in which the opinions are collected. Since 1990, the CNCDDH survey has been administered face to face. Thanks to support from the Government Information Services (SIG), the in-person survey has since 2016 been duplicated by an online survey, via an access panel, that presents most of the same questions in the same order. The idea is that respondents alone on their computers should have freer speech than respondents facing an interviewer. The comparison of answers from the two samples over the two considered years (Mayer, Michelat, Tiberj, and Vitale, 2017 and 2018) brings to light three differences. The response rate of people questioned online is higher than it is in person. To go faster, they are more likely to select intermediate responses (somewhat agree/disagree) than clear-cut ones (absolutely yes/not at all), but paradoxically, their answers are generally much more intolerant than those of in-person respondents. With respect to the feeling that there are too many immigrants in France, that people no longer feel like they are at home in France, that the death penalty should be reinstated, that the Muslim religion evokes something negative, and that foreigners should not be given the right to vote, the gaps are over 20 percentage points. Intolerance is assumed in the online panel, the majority of which self-identify as racist to some extent (somewhat, a little, not very), while the majority of the in-person sample self-identifies as “not at all racist”.

Is it just the fact of being alone in front of one’s screen, without having to worry about one’s image in front of the interviewer, that is conducive to the expression of racist and authoritarian opinions? It is also important to take into account the characteristics of the two initial samples. People who agree to be questioned online are not the same as those who agree to be questioned in person. People who open their door to an interviewer are more trustful, and trust is more widespread on the left than on the right. A logistic regression analysis on the cumulative results from the two surveys – online and face to face – helps measure, all things equal with regard to age, gender, degree, religion, origin, trust in others, openness to the world (travels and stays abroad) and political orientation, the effect of the method used to administer the questionnaire on the expression of anti-immigrant sentiment (agreement with the idea that there are too many immigrants in France). All the tested control variables, without any exception, had a statistically significant impact on this sentiment, all things being otherwise equal, especially low levels of education. And in all cases the way opinions are collected had a significant effect that withstood all the controls and compounded the effects of the other variables. Online questioning increases the probability of an intolerant response, and in-person questioning decreases it. Each of these methods therefore has specific advantages and biases. Several surveys, like the European Social Survey, are experimenting with mixed collection methods combining face to face interviews with a telephone or online element.<sup>3</sup> Such approaches are becoming more imperative as online surveys, which are less costly, gradually replace in-person surveys.

Finally, my many exchanges with George Marcus, a psychologist specializing in neuroscience and emotions (Marcus, Neumann, and McKuen, 2000), raised my awareness of

---

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/methodology/Mixed-modes-in-the-ESS-6-experiments\\_in-Breen-et-al-2017.pdf](https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/methodology/Mixed-modes-in-the-ESS-6-experiments_in-Breen-et-al-2017.pdf).



the need to integrate the latter in my approach to racism. In 2015, we were able to produce a short experimental online survey as part of the annual CNCDH survey (Mayer, Michelat, Tiberj, and Vitale, 2016: 80-87). To get past respondents' guard and loosen their speech, the survey asked for reactions to photos and a verbalization of experienced emotions (box 5). I was familiar with this technique because I had already used it with Guy Michelat at Cevipof. I had also used it in a survey I conducted on far-right activists in Europe (Klandermans and Mayer, 2005). However, in 2015 photos were at the heart of the experimental apparatus. The online survey made it easy to randomly change the photos, and to generalize the results, because it covered a nationally representative sample of the adult metropolitan population (N=850). The experiment also aligned with research on "implicit" racism, of which people are not necessarily aware, but which is revealed by online tests of associations between words and response speed. The idea was to show photos or images that operated like projective tests. Personality and history shaped what respondents saw. After a pre-test of around twenty pictures with a sample of students, six were selected: religious women in ecclesiastic clothing at the seaside, a dinghy full of refugees, a WWI cemetery featuring a tomb with star of David amid the crosses,<sup>4</sup> and the same with Muslim tombs, a montage with symbols from the three religions of the Book, and an inscription that can be read as "I am Charlie" or "I am not Charlie". The two first ones were presented to the whole sample, and the last four alternately (Jewish or Muslim tomb, symbols or Charlie). The questionnaire also included a question about emotions associated with terrorist attacks, without a picture: "When you think about the terrorist attacks that have occurred in France over the past year, can you tell me what you feel?", with the same list of emotions as for the photos, and the same scale measuring their intensity from 1 to 10 (box 5). At the very end of the questionnaire, a list of words was provided, and the respondent needed to say whether they elicited something positive (very, somewhat), negative (somewhat, very), or neither.

The qualitative material was particularly revealing and highly complemented the quantitative data. Thus the dinghy full of migrants elicited particularly strong emotions – primarily anger, but also fear, and even disgust and hatred. However, upon closer examination, anger was strongest at the two ends of the political spectrum – the far left and far right – for opposite reasons. For self-declared supporters of the radical left (Trotskyist parties, Left front), the share of respondents claiming to feel "a lot" of anger (10) was 32%; they also recorded the highest level of sympathy towards refugees (5.6 on average, versus 4.1 in the sample). Among FN sympathizers the share of very angry respondents was over a third, but their anger more frequently paired with negative emotions like disgust and hatred, and they had the lowest level of sympathy towards refugees (2.1 average). The open questions confirmed these contrasted reactions, with some seeing refugees as "people who escape their countries", are "abused by smugglers", and "risk their lives", while others saw "a migration invasion", "problem populations", and "jihadist infiltrators".

---

<sup>4</sup> The same as that used by Guy Michelat in the 1970s.

**Box 5. Questions on projected photos.****Q2. Can you tell me what you felt when you look at this photo? Do you feel...***(Random rotation of items)***1. Fear**

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 A lot

**2. Enthusiasm**

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 A lot

**3. Sympathy**

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 A lot

**4. Anger**

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 A lot

**5. Hatred**

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 A lot

**6. Disgust**

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 A lot

**7. Indifference**

Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 A lot

**Q3. Now in a few words can you tell me why you chose these answers and explain what you feel in relation to this photo? *(reshown)***

Source: IFOP/CNCDH survey on “Emotions”, December 2016.

**Vote explanations**

Another area of research where the method conditions the results is that of voting behavior. I paid special attention, in line with the Michelat school, to the “heavy variables” (Mayer, 1986b) that are religion and social class, and to the debate around the foretold death of class voting. This was premature, because results varied entirely depending on whether one used Alford’s rudimentary index, which just subtracts the share of workers voting for the left from that of non-workers, or odds ratios taking into account more detailed class indicators, and all voting options, including abstention, and measuring the impact of social class, all else being equal, like the “total class vote” index of Michael Hout, Clem Brooks, and Jeff Manza (Mayer 2007; Cautrès, and Mayer, 2010; Gougou and Mayer, 2012 and 2017). I tirelessly sought to show that the cleavage did not disappear, but rather transformed. Blue-collar workers’ misalignment was met with a leftward turn by middle-class, white-collar workers. Other

divides were also apparent, like the rightward anchoring of the self-employed versus white-collar workers (Mayer, 2000), and the leftward turn of the public sector versus the private sector (Boy and Mayer, 1997). But at the turn of the 1980s, a new divide formed between extreme and moderate parties, cutting across the left-right divide, linked to the acceleration of economic globalization. As globalization increased competition economically (with the opening of borders), culturally (with immigration and ethnic diversification), and politically (with new actors constraining the sovereignty of nation states), it generated winners – employers and skilled employees who are mobile and internationally oriented – and losers – unskilled workers in hitherto protected sectors. Radical populist rightwing parties, starting with the FN, seized this opening by defending the “losers” against the existing elites.

Methodological issues are even greater when studying votes for these radical rightwing parties on the basis of survey data (Mayer, 2020). Samples typically underrepresent socially and culturally disadvantaged categories – the ones that are precisely most likely to support these parties. Independent of socioeconomic status, this vote remains difficult to given the moral and social reprobation surrounding it. Votes for Le Pen in the electoral surveys of Cevipof and of the CEE are undeclared by a 4 to 10 point margin compared to actual votes. In France, the FN strategy pursued since 2011 to “de-demonize” Marine Le Pen appears to have had an impact: in the 2017 *French Election Study* survey, 20.6% of the sample claimed to have voted for her in the first round of the last presidential election, while her score was around 21.3, translating into a gap of less than one point. But in the second round, once again, the gap was 5 points (28.9% instead of 33.9%), reflecting the deterioration of her image after her inter-round debate with Emmanuel Macron. The situation is worse in major international surveys (*European Values Study*, *European Social Survey*, *World Values Survey*, *Eurobarometer*) that are disconnected from national ballots and ask respondents to reconstruct past votes, or declare future voting intentions, on small national samples (1,000 at best). Thus, voters of radical rightwing parties are particularly poorly represented, especially for elections with low turnouts, like EU elections, from which over half the electorate abstains. In France, the 2014 *European Elections Study* only counted 58 declared FN supporters, i.e. 16% of expressed votes, although the FN actually beat all the parties, with a share close to 25%. Even the methodologically solid European Social Survey (ESS) has been criticized, in a caustic article by Marc Hooghe and Tim Reeskens (2007) that systematically recorded multiple biases affecting vote estimates for far-right parties in Europe when based on this data. Yet most researchers continue to use the data to compare the electoral bases of European far-right parties!

To study the FN vote I therefore focused on national surveys conducted right after the election – those of Cevipof and of the Center for European Studies (CEE), on large national samples (from 2,000 to over 4,000) representative of registered metropolitan voters (available at <http://cdsp.sciences-po.fr/>). Despite the under-declaration of votes for the FN, which is still largely classified as far-right and perceived as “racist” in public opinion, the samples of these surveys include several hundred men and women who state they voted for Jean-Marie or Marine Le Pen, who are like a magnifying mirror of the pro-FN share of the electorate. They allowed me to follow the changes and continuities in voting for Le Pen over the last six presidential elections (1988 -2017).

The notion of “electorate” is misleading, suggesting illusory continuity over time. Due to demographic renewal, voter (de-)registrations, and fluctuations in electoral participation, the cohort of voting individuals is never exactly the same from one election to the next. The turnover among registered voters likely to vote in the 2017 elections was considerable in a year, since INSEE recorded 1.4 million “exits” and 3.1 million “entrants” (Buisson, Penan, 2017). And of the registered voters, 35% voted in the four rounds of the presidential and legislative elections, a majority (51%) voted intermittently, and 14% systematically abstained (Villette and Hervy 2017). I therefore reversed the perspective: rather than describe the electorates, I reasoned in terms of voting probabilities and predictive variables, all else being equal. Le Pen’s electorate is constantly renewing, but the structures of this vote endure.

Thirty years of Cevipof/CEE surveys enabled the identification of constants in the Le Pen vote during the election with the highest turnout in France: the presidential election (Mayer, 2002 and 2018). The first factor is one’s position on the political spectrum. People vote Le Pen more frequently the farther they are to the right on the left-right scale, reaching records at the far right. There are also “leftwing-lepenists” (Perrineau, 2017), who locate themselves on the left of the scale while voting for Le Pen, but they are a minority. In the first round of the 2017 presidential election, Marine Le Pen’s score increased from 9% at the far left to 85% at the far right. This position is no accident. Rather, it reflects values and a worldview. The farther people are to the right, the more their vision is ethnocentric, distrustful of immigrants and foreigners, authoritarian, and repressive – and the greater their temptation to vote for the FN. Immigration, which is simultaneously considered as an economic, identity, and security threat, is more important than all the others. Neither liberal mores nor economic liberalism have a significant impact after controlling for the effect of other variables.

These ethnocentric and authoritarian attitudes are in turn closely linked to the level of education. Higher studies open people to the world and other cultures, develop critical thinking, and form a bastion against prejudice. *A contrario*, in a society where the stated objective is for 80% of an age cohort to pass the baccalaureate, failing this exam, or being directed to shorter paths seen as lesser ones, dooms people to odd jobs or unemployment and generates resentment, for which immigrants become scapegoats. In all the elections except for 1984, the level of education and vote for Le Pen were negatively correlated. The likelihood of such a vote is three to four times higher among voters with short technical education (CAP, brevet) than those with a higher education. And because the level of education is strongly associated with social class, the FN does better in the more working-class parts of the electorate with the least cultural capital, starting with blue-collar workers. A logistical regression model, seeking to predict the Marine Le Pen vote in the second round of the 2017 election with the explanatory variables of age, degree, gender, position on the left-right spectrum, level of ethnocentrism, and level of authoritarianism, showed that these variables together account for 58% of the variance, and that they all have a statistically significant impact, except one – sex – the reason for which will be explored below.

## Sex and gender

While studying the FN vote I became aware of the political impact of gender, which is barely considered in electoral studies outside of a question on the respondent's sex, as a control variable (Mayer, 2002). In Jean-Marie Le Pen's time, sex made a difference in the vote – more so than profession, age, religious practice, and degree (Mayer, 2002: 220). All things being equal, female voters were less likely to vote for him than male voters. This phenomenon, which is apparent across Europe, has been labeled the “Radical Right Gender Gap” (RRGG) by the US researcher Terri Givens (2004). Four major types of explanations have been proposed. The first one refers to the gender division of labor. Rightwing parties do best among blue-collar workers, that is, manual and mostly male workers, who are disproportionately exposed to unemployment and precariousness, and among whom the share of immigrant workers is largest. Women are more likely to have non-manual jobs as employees in trades or services, or in public service. They therefore have less contact with immigrants and are less sensitive to xenophobic themes. The second explanation emphasizes the role of religion, with Christian values seen as a bulwark against the anti-universalist ideology of these rightwing parties. Women, especially older ones, are on average more religiously observant than men, and are *a priori* more receptive to the Church's orders. A third proposed factor is the dissemination of feminist values in society. Feminism's emancipatory goal is difficult to square with the traditional vision of the family and of mores offered by these rightwing parties, especially among younger women, while some men would conversely experience feminism as a threat. *A contrario*, despite the growth in feminism, we note the persistence of gender stereotypes. The education of girls values submission to norms and discourages aggressiveness and self-assertion. The image of extremism and violence associated with radical rightwing parties and their outsider and atypical aspect turns off the female electorate.

This polarization over the RRGG very quickly struck me as counterproductive, as it obscured other developments. Women's reluctance to vote for the radical right is not apparent in all countries and in all elections, and can even disappear, as I showed with regard to the French presidential elections of 2012 and 2017. The problem must be inverted to ask why. The tertiarization of blue-collar jobs and the proletarianization of white-collar jobs have given rise to a fuzzy-bordered group of “unskilled workers”, including as many women with poorly compensated positions as men. Supermarket cashiers, saleswomen, kindergarten assistants, and cleaning ladies constitute a services proletariat that is underrepresented, under-recognized, and underpaid, and whose precarious conditions are akin to that of blue-collar male workers. Beginning in 2012, Marine Le Pen's scores became higher among the former than the latter. The religious bulwark crumbled. The increased visibility of Islam in public spaces, the debates around the veil and the burka, and the progression of Muslim fundamentalism, sparked an identity awakening and ethnocentric tension among French Catholics (Mayer and Michelat, 2007). In 2012 and 2017, integration in the Catholic community had no protective effect. The only religious trait that – negatively – influenced

voting for the FN candidate was not being Catholic, not to mention being Muslim. Meanwhile, the FN's image changed, as Marine Le Pen's strategy to "de-demonize" it bore fruit. A systematic analysis of the effect of gender on the vote for Le Pen in all the presidential elections since 1988 showed that if one controls for the effect of socio-demographic and attitudinal variables likely to influence it, gender actually had a specific and statistically significant effect in all the elections where Jean-Marie Le Pen was a candidate: less women than men voted for him. However, since his daughter has replaced him at the head of the party, gender has ceased to play any role. Moreover, among new cohorts reaching voting age, who have only known the FN under its new female head, the male-female differential has reversed (Mayer, 2015; Amengay, Durovic and Mayer, 2018). In 2017, Marine Le Pen garnered the votes of a third of female voters under 26, which was 7 points higher than the number of under-26 male votes. In this female age group, support for the FN has quadrupled since 1988, while male support has only doubled. The FN head's strategy to capture the female electorate, particularly apparent in 2017, has paid dividends.

But once again, the phenomenon is not consistent. It depends on the nature of the election. Presidential elections in France are the most mobilizing and personalized, and the Marine Le Pen effect takes full hold in these. Contrariwise, in all the other elections between the 2012 and 2017 presidential elections, the gender gap reappeared, with women recording a higher abstention rate than men. It is likely to reappear in the next European, municipal, and regional elections. The FN's image also varies. Marine Le Pen's poor performance during the inter-round debate with Emmanuel Macron, where she came off as both aggressive and incompetent, damaged her image, as the following Barometer of the FN's image showed. The RRGG did not reappear in the second round, but the female surplus vote for Marine Le Pen disappeared. Finally, RRGG polarization is simplistic. It overlooks the internal unevenness of the female and male electorates, as well as other existing gender gaps (more conservative votes among older female voters, or the *traditional gender gap*, and more frequent leftwing votes among the youth, or the *modern gender gap*), and the complexity of gender and sex relationships, which obviously do not simply boil down to a simple male/female opposition (Durand and Mayer, 2017).

New research paths to pursue include ones considering sexual minorities and the LGBT vote, which raises thorny methodological issues (Durand and Mayer, 2017: 282-288). Another response option might be added to the classic gender question: "man", "woman", or "other", as Janine Mossuz-Lavau and Réjane Sénac (2016) did in Cevipof's electoral Barometer series, with an open question that asked people classifying themselves as "other" to specify. Finally, further reflection is needed on notions of masculinity and femininity. The field of psychology has developed tools to assess social stereotypes of female and male roles, and the way individuals appropriate them. One of the most renowned ones is the *Bem Sex Role Inventory* developed by psychologist Sandra L. Bem to detect androgyny on the basis of socially constructed stereotypes of male and female roles. According to Bem, masculinity and femininity do not form a continuum, but rather two independent dimensions that exist in each individual in variable proportions. Her indicator includes supposedly "masculine" and "feminine" character traits. The initial scale had 200 items that were reduced to 60, and then 40 items. Respondents must specify to what extent these traits apply to them by scoring them from 1 (never) to 7 (always). Having male personality traits has proven to be a very good

predictor of support for Geert Wilders' party in the Netherlands, regardless of biological gender (Coffé, 2018) – an indicator that I would like to soon use in a French survey.

## **Social exclusion and political exclusion**

Another area of research where methodological issues play a key role is social exclusion. I became aware of this during a conference co-organized with ATD Fourth World at Sciences Po in 2008 on the subject of “Democracy tested by exclusion”. In 2009, amid the economic crisis and growing inequalities, Louis Chauvel and I launched the POLINE/Politics of Inequalities research network at Sciences Po, in association with an international seminar. In partnership with researchers at Oxford, Harvard, and Princeton, we studied the impact of social inequalities on political preferences and behavior, and on public policies implemented in response to them. I focused on the relationship to politics and votes of the very poor, who are never considered in electoral surveys. In the United States, an APSA taskforce report on inequalities (2004) presciently highlighted the political exclusion of the poor, who are absent from both the electoral scene and social movements, and are unable to make their voices heard: *“Citizens with lower or moderate incomes speak with a whisper that is lost on the ears of inattentive government officials, while the advantaged roar with a clarity and consistency that policy-makers readily hear and routinely follow”* (APSA, 2004: 2). This became the starting point of an ANR (National Agency for Research) project called CELINES (electoral consequences of economic inequalities) that proposed to study the political effects of the economic crisis during the 2012 presidential election by combining a national survey with in-depth interviews. The project was not selected, but thanks to joint funding from Sciences Po's research board and EDF (Electricity of France), I was able to pursue a smaller project – *Votpauvre* – in association with Céline Braconnier. Beyond monetary poverty, the increasing precariousness struck us, what Robert Castel called social insecurity, defined as decreasing protections, *“being at the mercy of any vagary of existence, such as an illness, accident, or work interruption that breaks the course of ordinary life and risks pushing you onto the dole, or even social decay”* (Castel, 2005<sup>5</sup>).

The study included a qualitative dimension based on semi-directed interviews conducted in the month preceding the first round, with people in precarious conditions in the agglomerations of Paris, Grenoble, and Bordeaux, and a quantitative aspect based on a post-electoral survey on a sample representative of registered voters, conducted in the month following the second round. We did the qualitative research ourselves with a team of PhD students. All of us were involved in discussing the project's steps, from its conception to the analysis of the interviews and the drafting of the book. Based on the model of INSEE's studies on the homeless, we worked with charities selected after a long process of identifying the right ones in the field and meeting with their officials and volunteers. The people they help, who live off welfare, were approached in food and clothing distribution centers, in low-income housing, and in day care centers. They did not put up any resistance to answering our questions, as they were so happy to be asked about their opinions on politics, and to have their opinions considered. The resulting research material is an extraordinary trove of close to three

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.politique-autrement.org/Lettre-no-37-Quelle-insecurite-sociale>.

thousand pages of interview transcriptions and field notes, which were extensively quoted in our book, *Les inaudibles* [The inaudible] (Braconnier and Mayer, 2015). They show that, contrary to popular thinking, even the most vulnerable individuals are interested in politics, follow campaigns, know the main candidates, and have party preferences. And they have a lot to say to the candidates (box 6).

#### **Box 6. The image of candidates**

“You’d have to... I don’t know... I don’t know... Make a poor person president, because that person would know exactly what people need! They have their money. They have food everyday. They can even eat caviar if they want! They have... financially, I don’t see what concerns they have! So... they have their own money, they have food everyday. They don’t have to worry about what will happen the next day. They are in suits and ties. We’re walking around in 5€ pants from the market that start coming apart after four or five washings. Our children can’t... they can’t... there you go, you have to be logical! My children are children who don’t have any allowance because we can’t” (Woman, 31 years old, Grenoble).

“But... all ten candidates, however many there are, and whatever party, they should really immerse themselves... immerse themselves in all the areas. They should come with me on my job search, because they’ll see what it’s like, and I’ll tell them “here you go, I’m giving you 2€, and now go across Isère to look for work, go, figure it out Mister Hollande or Mister Dupont whatever, or Mister Sarkozy, yeah come with me”, you see what I mean? Really throw them into the situation. (...) And I think that would shake things up, because they don’t realize, they’re... because they’re all in a pretty good situation, from what I understand, the ten candidates, so they can’t put themselves in the shoes of the little worker toiling for something” (Woman, 54 years old, Grenoble).

In Braconnier and Mayer, 2015: 218-220.

But these citizens are not exactly like the others. Material difficulties, isolation, and demoralization are conducive to withdrawal and abstention; the vulnerable are four times more likely to be unregistered voters than the national average. They are – as the title we chose for our book states, “inaudible”.

Meanwhile, the quantitative aspect drew on data from a post-electoral survey: the *French Election Study* (FES 2012), focused on “The political economy of voting”, led by Nicolas Sauger at the Centre for European Studies (CEE). Conducted from 9 May to 9 June 2012 with 2014 individuals representative of the French registered voters on the mainland, it provided two methodological advantages. It is a probabilistic sample, modeled after international surveys, allowing for a more specific calculation of statistical margins of error, as opposed to French surveys that use the quota method. And the survey was administered in person, allowing for a longer questionnaire and the researcher’s assistance if needed. But the main innovative feature was the introduction for the first time in a national electoral survey of an indicator of social precariousness: the EPICES score (*Evaluation of the precariousness and*



*health inequalities for healthcare centers*).<sup>6</sup> Philippe Warin introduced us to it, having used it in his surveys on access to social rights as part of ODENORE (Observatory on Non-Take Up of Social Rights and Public Services). The indicator was initially developed to detect at-risk populations who were socially isolated and economically vulnerable, among people covered by social security or entitled to coverage under the general social security system. It includes 11 simple questions that are well received, judging from the fact that virtually nobody refuses to answer them. The questions consider both material difficulties and the level of social and cultural isolation, access to care, etc. (Box 7). The indicator enables a classification of the population on a precariousness scale ranging from 0 (total absence of precariousness) to 100 (highest level of precariousness). Our results challenged many preconceptions about precariousness.

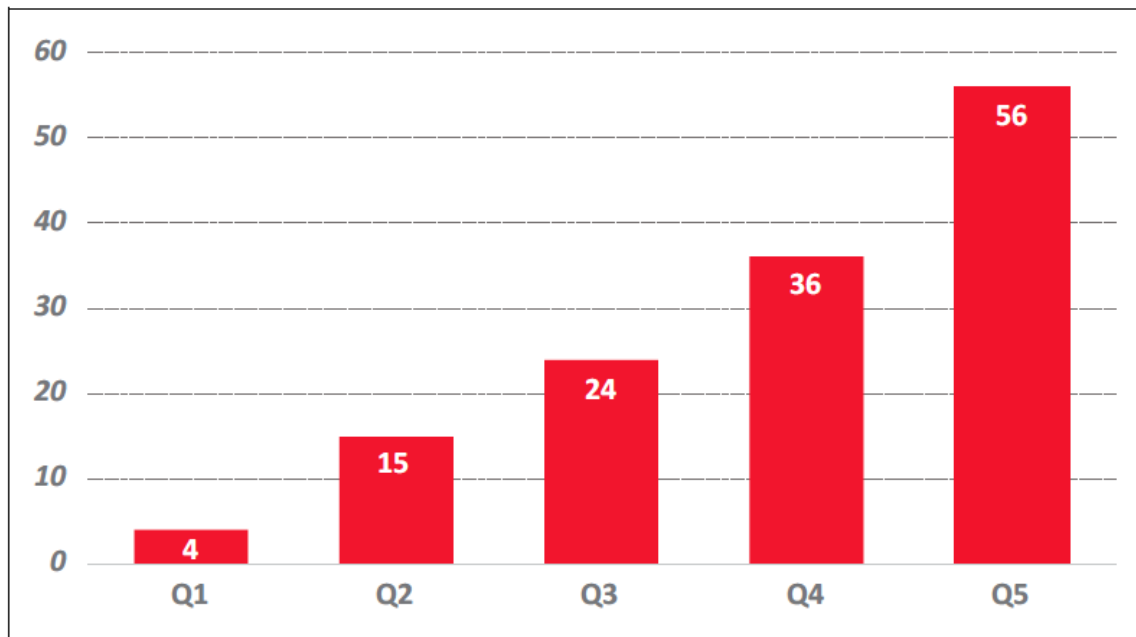
**Box 7. The EPICES score**

- Do you sometimes meet with a social worker?
- Do you have additional health insurance?
- Do you live in a couple?
- Do you own your home?
- Are there times in the month when you encounter real financial difficulties in meeting your needs (food, rent, electricity, etc.)?
- Have you exercised over the past twelve months?
- Have you seen a show over the past twelve months?
- Have you gone on vacation over the past twelve months?
- Over the past six months, have you had contact with family members other than your parents and children?
- In the event of hardship, are there people in your circle you can count on to house you for a few days if needed?
- In the event of hardship, are there people in your circle you can count on to provide material assistance?

Precariousness is a more widespread phenomenon than one might think. By convention, a person is considered precarious starting with a score of 30/100 on the EPICES indicator. This was the case for 39% of the sample in our 2017 post-electoral survey – a sample that was representative of registered voters in France. If we instead classify individuals into 5 equal groups, or “quintiles” of increasing levels of precariousness, the contrast is striking between the first quintile, where the average EPICES score did not pass 4, and the last, where it rose to 56 (figure 1).

---

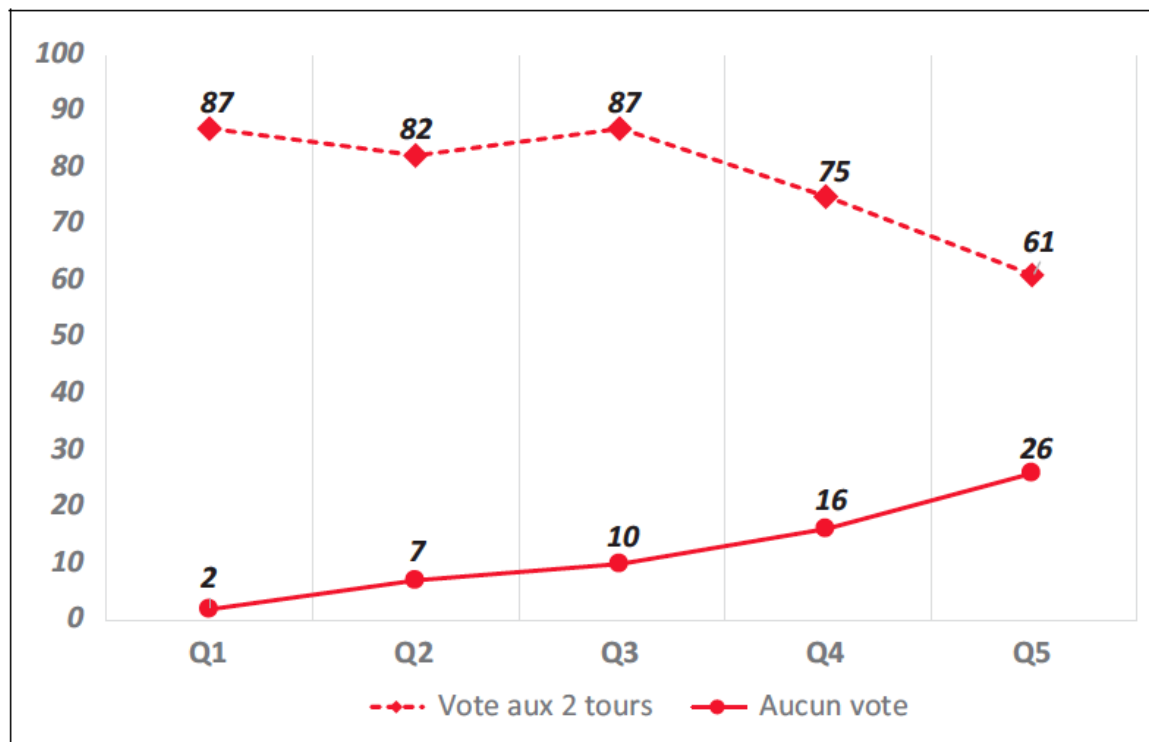
<sup>6</sup> After first testing it in two online surveys as part of the Dynamob panel (“Mobilization dynamics”) led by Vincent Tiberj ([http://blogs.sciences-po.fr/recherche-dynamob/2014/03/19/municipales-2014-une-enquete-de-long-terme/?\\_ga=2.97905948.2086654798.1521445873-735726065.1505309156](http://blogs.sciences-po.fr/recherche-dynamob/2014/03/19/municipales-2014-une-enquete-de-long-terme/?_ga=2.97905948.2086654798.1521445873-735726065.1505309156)).



**Figure 1.** Average EPICES scores by quintile in 2017

Precariousness is a diffuse phenomenon that is not limited to the working classes. It is certainly much more frequent among blue- and white-collar workers, respectively 53% and 44% of whom fall into the last two quintiles of the EPICES score (Q4 and Q5 in figure 2), that is, the most vulnerable people. But it also affects a third of the self-employed (small business owners and farmers), 30% of intermediate professions, and 16% of senior management.

Regardless of the election, the first effect of precariousness was alienation from the polls. Thus, the share of registered voters who claimed not to have voted in either of the two rounds of the last presidential election climbed from 2% in the first quintile to over a fourth in the last one (figure 2), while that of people claiming to have voted in both rounds went from 87% to 61%. The social precariousness effect remained after controlling for the effect of other explanatory variables in electoral participation: age, education, gender, and religious practice. The connection with politics was not broken, however: the vast majority of highly vulnerable people are positioned on the left-right spectrum, declare partisan proximity, and follow campaign discussions at least sometimes. But their preferences less frequently translate into votes.



**Figure 2.** Participation in the 2017 presidential election by increasing level of precariousness

Next, when vulnerable people voted, they showed the same divides as the rest of the electorate, but amplified them. The vulnerable are an uneven group (Fuchs, Mayer, 2015). They are far from forming a social class and having a shared identity of deprivation, contrary to what Guy Standing suggests in his book on the precariat, labeled as the “dangerous class” (2014). They do not necessarily vote for the left. In 2012, the vote for François Hollande effectively increased with the level of precariousness, while the vote for Sarkozy, the “president of the rich”, decreased. And this effect resisted all control variables, coming into play regardless of gender, age, education, religious practice, and profession. But in 2017, the left no longer appeared as a recourse. Rather, the vote for Marine Le Pen increased with the level of precariousness (table 1). This phenomenon was already apparent in the 2015 regional elections (Mayer, 2017), which again withstood all control variables. In the second round, over half of the highly vulnerable preferred the FN candidate to Macron, who received four out of five votes among the most affluent.

**Table 1.** Votes in the two rounds of the 2017 presidential election by increasing level of precariousness (%)

| Quintiles | 1er tour présidentiel |        |        |        | 2ème tour |        |
|-----------|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|--------|
|           | Mélenchon             | Macron | Fillon | Le Pen | Macron    | Le Pen |
| Q1 - -    | 16                    | 30     | 28,5   | 11     | 81        | 19     |
| Q2 -      | 20                    | 30     | 24     | 12     | 78        | 22     |
| Q3 =      | 18                    | 20     | 21,5   | 24     | 62,5      | 37,5   |
| Q4 +      | 23                    | 18     | 12     | 31     | 52,5      | 47,5   |
| Q5 ++     | 24                    | 18     | 9      | 35     | 47        | 53     |

Finally, when crossed with socio-professional identity, this precariousness indicator enables differentiation among blue-collar workers, who are not all socially vulnerable. In 2012, there was no statistically significant link between voting for Le Pen and precariousness, and the workers most likely to vote for him were just above the threshold of precariousness and feared “falling” into it. In 2017 the relationship between precariousness and voting for Le Pen became positive and statistically significant. In the first round, the vote for Le Pen rose from 28% among non-vulnerable blue-collar workers, to 38% among vulnerable voters, and from 42% to 57% in the second round.

## Conclusion

Qualitative and quantitative approaches are often presented as two irreducible cultures (Goertz and Mahoney, 2012).<sup>7</sup> I have never seen things this way and believe that the opposition is largely artificial. They share the same subject: individuals in society, carrying the subcultures of the various groups they belong to. Our most intimate choices – a romantic relationship, naming a child, interior design, even and e – all have a social dynamic. When Guy Michelat trained us in non-directed interviews he quoted the anthropologist Edward Sapir: “*It is not to be doubted that our breathing habits are largely conditioned by factors conventionally classified as social. There are polite and impolite ways of breathing [...] Ordinarily the characteristic rhythm of breathing of a given individual is looked upon as a matter for strictly individual definition. But if, for one reason or another, the emphasis shifts to the consideration of a certain manner of breathing as due to good form or social tradition or some other principle that is usually given a social context, then the whole subject of breathing at once ceases to be a merely individual concern and takes on the appearance of a social pattern*” (Sapir, 1963: 546). Whether we are doing a short survey interview, pre-structured by a survey questionnaire, or a long non-directed interview with barely any interventions, the interview is based on the interaction of two individuals, one of whom is likely, consciously or not, to impart biases to the gathered speech and impose views on the other, while the other resists the questioning. This became clearly apparent when I went

<sup>7</sup> See the debates during a roundtable that I organized at the 9<sup>th</sup> AFSP conference (5-7 September 2007 on “Methods in political science on both sides of the Atlantic”: <https://f-origin.hypotheses.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/42/files/2007/10/bilancongres2007.pdf>) and Mayer, 2008.

through two boxes of telephone interviews that I fully recorded during the experimental debate survey on democracy (Grunberg, Sniderman and Mayer, 2002), and then during a comparative survey on racism in Europe, “Group Focused Enmity” (Küpper and Zick, 2014), for which I coordinated the French edition. Listening to them drove home the uniqueness of each interview, and the particular relationship that forms between the interviewer and the interviewee despite the briefness of the situation and the standardization of the questionnaire, with its rhythm and punctuations – laughs, sighs, silence, reformulations, interruptions. It led me to wonder about the influence of these interactions on expressed opinions. What to make, *a fortiori*, in an in-person interview lasting several hours, face to face, be it minimally directed, of the many non-verbal signals communicated – head nods, smiles, eyebrow lifts, and signs of attention or encouragement? As rich as the gathered material might be, it would still need to be analyzed and interpreted, and related to the spatial and temporal context, and to the social and cultural characteristics of their authors; underlying rationales would need to be identified. And interviews can be analyzed with quantitative methods (lexicometrics), just as much as surveys, especially the way the questions are understood, can be analyzed in a qualitative way (*cognitive interviewing*).

I have personally always intermixed qualitative and quantitative approaches, either sequentially, as I did in my thesis on small business owners (Mayer, 1986) and in the survey on social precariousness (Braconnier and Mayer, 2015), or simultaneously, as in the CNCDH’s annual surveys on racism. In the 2000 survey, we paired the usual closed questions with several open questions, including one that asked: “What do you think it means to be a racist?” We had doubts about a question drawn from Eurobarometers asking about respondents’ self-definition as a racist: “Would you say that you are personally quite racist, a bit racist, not very racist, or not at all racist?” We saw the method as imprecise, with potentially significant social desirability biases. At the time, 12% of the sample defined itself as “quite racist”, 31% as “a bit”, 26% as “not very”, and 28% as “not at all”. Yet the crossing of these answers with those to the open question actually showed great congruence. Most of the sample described what it means to be “racist” factually, by referring to behaviors and attitudes of rejection. A minority (14%) added comments justifying this rejection, but this share doubled among people who described themselves as “quite” or “a bit” racist (28 and 30%). These people also distinguished themselves by their negative comments towards strangers and immigrants. Meanwhile, people describing themselves as “not very” and “not at all” racist condemned these behaviors for moral reasons. With the help of a dozen of questions on the perception of immigrants and foreigners, we were also able to build an attitude scale with scores ranging from 0 to 9 according to the intensity of rejection of the Other. Contrary to the “subjective” racism measured by the question about self-perception, this attitude scale measured an “objective” racism because it was an indirect measure based on the correlation between answers to questions that, taken individually, do not necessarily denote racism. The two forms of racism were closely correlated, since 3 out of 4 respondents were racist or not racist on both indicators, which can be explained by the same variables (age, degree, political orientation). The remaining quarter is particularly interesting. 10% of respondents considered themselves a little racist, while their scores on the racism scale suggested the opposite. This share more than doubled among practicing Catholics and Communist sympathizers. These are “scrupulous” people who strongly espouse egalitarian

and universal values, and whose sociocultural profile is comparable to that of antiracists. Conversely, 14% of the sample considered itself not to be racist, despite high scores on our scale. This share was highest among women, people over 65, and supporters of the moderate right, with a conservative vision of society. This profile illustrates the so-called “subtle” or “symbolic” forms of racism that have developed in democracies since World War II. Antiracism has become the norm, and these people have interiorized it. Their answers to other survey questions show that they do not consider themselves as racist. What is more, they condemn racism and believe that a “vigorous fight” against it is needed. But they consider immigrants to be too different and insufficiently respectful of “our” values. Comparing the responses to closed and open questions helped make sense of seemingly contradictory answers. Eclecticism has its merits.

## References

- Amengay K, Durovic A, Mayer N (2018) “L’impact du genre sur le vote Marine Le Pen”, *Revue française de science politique*, 67(6), December 2017: 1087-2017.
- American Political Science Association Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy (2004) *American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality*, Washington: APSA (<http://www.apsanet.org/portals/54/Files/Task%20Force%20Reports/taskforcereport.pdf>).
- Bon F, Burnier MA, Mayer N (1974) *Les Sondages peuvent-ils se tromper?* Paris: Calmann-Lévy.
- Boy D et Mayer N (1997) “Secteur public, secteur privé: un nouveau conflit de classe”, in Nonna Mayer (ed.), *Les Modèles explicatifs du vote*, Paris, L’Harmattan: 111-131.
- Braconnier C et Mayer N (ed.) (2015) *Les inaudibles. Sociologie politique des précaires*, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.
- Buisson G et Penan S (2017) “Élections présidentielles et législatives de 2002 à 2017: une participation atypique en 2017”, *Insee Première*, 1671.
- Castel R (2005) “Quelle insécurité sociale?”, *Politique Autrement*, 37 (<http://www.politique-autrement.org/Lettre-no-37-Quelle-insecurite-sociale> ).
- Cautrès B, Mayer N (2010) “Analyse multidimensionnelle de la classe sociale et de ses effets politiques”, In Boy D, Cautrès B, Sauger N (ed.), *Les Français, des Européens comme les autres ?*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po: 153-179 .
- Coffé H (2018) “Gender, gendered personality traits and radical right populist voting”, *Politics* (Article first published online: January 19, 2018: <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0263395717745476>).
- Durand M, Mayer N (2018) “Genre, sexualité et vote”, in: Déloye Y, Mayer N (ed.), *Analyses électorales*, Brussels, Editions Bruylant (collection Traités de Science Politique), 2017: 265-317.
- Favre P, Fillieule O, Mayer N (1997) “La fin d’une étrange lacune de la sociologie des mobilisations. L’étude par sondage des manifestants: fondements théoriques et solutions techniques”, *Revue française de science politique*, 1: 3-27.
- Fuchs N, Mayer N (2015) Un monde peu solidaire, in: Braconnier C, Mayer N (ed.) (2015) *Les inaudibles. Sociologie politique des précaires*, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po: 111-136.

- Givens T (2004) "The Radical Right Gender Gap", *Comparative Political Studies*, 37 (1): 30-54.
- Goertz G, Mahoney J (2012) *A Tale of Two Cultures. Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gougou F, Mayer N (2012) "The class basis of extreme right voting in France: generational replacement and the rise of new cultural issues (1984-2007)", In Rydgren J (ed.), *Class Politics and the Radical Right*, Oxon: Routledge: 156-172.
- Gougou F, Mayer N, "Classe religion et vote" in Déloye Y, Mayer N (ed.), *Analyses électorales*, Bruxelles: Editions Bruylant (collection Traités de Science Politique): 175-219.
- Grunberg G, Lavau G, Mayer N (1983), *L'univers politique des classes moyennes*, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.
- Grunberg G, Mayer N, Sniderman PM (2002) *La démocratie à l'épreuve. Nouvelle approche de l'opinion des Français*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po.
- Hagendoorn L, Sniderman PM (2001), "Experimenting with a National Sample: a Dutch Survey of Prejudice", *Patterns of Prejudice*, 35(4): 19-31.
- Harteveld E, Ivarsflaten E "Why Women Avoid the Radical Right: Internalized Norms and Party Reputations", *British Journal of Political Science*, 2016: 1-16.
- Hooghe M, Reeskens T (2007) "Are cross-national surveys the best way to study the extreme-right vote in Europe?", *Patterns of Prejudice*, 41(2): 177-196.
- Klandermans B, Mayer N (ed.) (2005) *Extreme Right Activists in Europe: through the Magnifying Glass*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Küpper B, Zick A (2015) "Group-Focused Enmity: Prevalence, Correlations and Causes of Prejudices in Europe", in: Nesbitt-Larking P, Kinnvall C, Capelos T, Dekker H (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Political Psychology*: 242-262.
- Marcus GE, Neuman WR et McKuen M (2000), *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mayer N (1972) "Les enquêtes de motivation" *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 10 July.
- Mayer N (1984) "Ferrarotti Franco, Histoire et histoires de vie, la méthode biographique dans les sciences sociales. Catani Maurizio, Mazé Suzanne, Tante Suzanne. Une histoire de vie sociale. [compte-rendu]", *Revue française de sociologie*, 25(3): 504-509.
- Mayer N (1986a) *La Boutique contre la gauche*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.
- Mayer N (1986b) "Pas de chrysanthème pour les variables sociologiques", in: Dupoirier É and Grunberg G. (ed.), *Mars 1986: la drôle de défaite de la gauche*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France: 149-165.
- Mayer N (1987) "De Passy à Barbès: deux visages du vote Le Pen à Paris", *Revue française de science politique*, 37 (6): 891-905.
- Mayer N (1990) "Ethnocentrisme, racisme, intolérance", in Daniel Boy and Nonna Mayer (ed.), *L'Électeur français en questions*, Paris Presses de Sciences Po: 17-43.
- Mayer N (1991) "L'affaire Carpentras", *L'Histoire*, 148: 9-14.
- Mayer N (1993) "L'apport d'Annick Percheron à la sociologie", *Revue française de sociologie*, 34 (1): 125-133.

- Mayer N (1994) “La mobilisation anti-Front national”, Pascal Perrineau (ed.), *L’Engagement politique: déclin ou mutation?*, Paris, Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques: 335-358.
- Mayer N (1995) “L’entretien selon Pierre Bourdieu, analyse critique de *La misère du monde*”, *Revue française de sociologie*, 36 (2) : 355-370.
- Mayer N (1997a) “Le sondage délibératif au secours de la démocratie”, *Le Débat*, 96: 67-72.
- Mayer N (ed.) (1997b) *Les Modèles explicatifs du vote*, Paris: L’Harmattan.
- Mayer N (2000) “Indépendance, salariat et culture politique”, in: Bréchon P, Laurent A and Perrineau P (ed.), *Les Cultures politiques des Français*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2000: 357-375.
- Mayer N (2002) *Ces Français qui votent Le Pen*, Paris: Flammarion.
- Mayer N (2007) “Que reste-t-il du vote de classe?”, Perrineau P et Rouban L (ed.), *La Politique en France et en Europe*, Paris Presses de Sciences Po: 187-310.
- Mayer N (2008) Reflection on the Methods of Political Science on Both Sides of the Atlantic, *The Political Methodologist*, 15(2): 5-7.
- Mayer N (2015a) “Le plafond de verre électoral entamé, mais pas brisé”, in: Dézé A, Crépon S, Mayer N (ed.), *Les faux semblants du Front national. Sociologie d’un parti politique*, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po: 299-321.
- Mayer N (2015b) “La sociologie électorale en France: bilan (auto) critique de 40 ans d’évolution”, in : Paradeise C., Lorrain D., Demazière D. (ed.), *Les sociologies françaises. Héritages et perspectives. 1960-2010*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes: 343-353.
- Mayer N (2015c) “Comment questionner sur des sujets sensibles: l’apport des expérimentations”, communication au Congrès de l’AFSP, Aix en Provence, 22-24 June.
- Mayer N (2017) “Les électeurs du Front national”; in: Gougou F, Tiberj V (ed.), *La déconnexion électorale. Un état des lieux de la démocratie française*, Paris: Fondation Jean Jaurès: 69-76.
- Mayer N (2020) “How political science approaches the far right”, in: Winter A (ed.), *Researching the Far Right: Theory, Method and Practice*, Londres, Routledge (forthcoming).
- Percheron A (1993) *La Socialisation politique*, (texts collected by Nonna Mayer and Anne Muxel), Paris, Armand Colin.
- Mayer N et Perrineau P (ed.) (1989), *Le Front national à découvert*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po.
- Mayer N and Michelat G (2001) “Subjective racism, objective racism: The French case”, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 35(4): 6-18.
- Mayer N et Michelat G (2007) “Les transformations du rapport à l’autre: le rôle des identités politiques et religieuses”, in *Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme. La Lutte contre le racisme et la xénophobie*, Paris, La Documentation française:122-138.
- Mayer N, Michelat G, Tiberj V and Vitale T (2016) “Questions de méthode”, in CNCDH, *La lutte contre le racisme, l’antisémitisme et la xénophobie. Année 2015*, Paris, La Documentation française.



- Mayer N, Michelat G, Tiberj V and Vitale T (2017) “Questions de méthode”, in CNCDH, *La lutte contre le racisme, l’antisémitisme et la xénophobie. Année 2016*, Paris, La Documentation Française: 64-87.
- Mayer N, Michelat G, Tiberj V and Vitale T (2018) “Questions de méthode”, In CNCDH, *La lutte contre le racisme, l’antisémitisme et la xénophobie. Année 2017*, Paris, La documentation Française.
- Michelat G (1975) “Sur l'utilisation de l'entretien non-directif en sociologie” *Revue française de sociologie* 16(2): 229-247.
- Mossuz-Lavau J, Sénac R (2016) 'Homme/Femme/Autre' face à l'élection présidentielle. [Rapport de recherche] Centre de recherches politiques de Sciences Po.
- Sapir E (1963) *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture and Personality*, edited by David G. Mandelbaum, Berkeley (Ca.): University of California Press, (1st edition English 1921).
- Sniderman PM (1993) “The New Look in Public Opinion Research”, in A. Finifter (ed.), *The State of The Discipline II*, Washington, D.C.: The American Political Science Association.
- Sniderman PM and Carmines EG (1997) *Reaching beyond race*, Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press.
- Standing G (2014) *The precariat. The new dangerous class*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Villette, C, Hervy, C. (2017) “Des échéances électorales légèrement moins mobilisatrices qu'en 2012”, *Insee Focus*, 79.