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Social Cohesion as a Gateway: Examining France's Efforts in Building Equitable Education Access for Marginalized Immigrants

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SOCIAL COHESION AS A GATEWAY: EXAMINING FRANCE'S EFFORTS IN BUILDING EQUITABLE EDUCATION ACCESS FOR MARGINALIZED IMMIGRANTS

by

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I. Introduction

"*Liberté, égalité, fraternité,*" the French motto, has remained interwoven through the fabric of France's society since it was first expressed by Maximilien Robespierre.[1] This motto quickly developed into a dominant schema of republican ideology, and what it means to be a French citizen. In the context of education, Republican pedagogy exists in France as a "conception of teaching and learning devoted to cultivating the student's skills of independent, empirical observation leading ultimately to intellectual autonomy."[2] The greater Republican ideology disseminated through the Enlightenment, the Revolution, the first republicans of 1792, and finally under the Third Republic regime in 1870; it ultimately builds a democratic and egalitarian society.[3] Republican ideology is intrinsic to the French Ministry of Education's centralized system, which regards every student as an equal. However, trends reveal that students of immigrant origin, who face the heaviest inequities and are the most marginalized in French society, lack access to education at the same level of their French-origin classmates. This paper will examine the following research question: To what degree do the French education social cohesion programs, such as *Zones d'Éducation Prioritaire* (ZEP) and Acsé (*Agence de Cohesion Sociale et L'égalité des chances*), increase access to education for descendants of working-class immigrants?

The idea of a French citizen, a complexity proven challenging to decompose, bides contested in light of the immigration patterns to France in the late 20th and 21st century. French public institutions have asserted that "immigrants will conform to French cultural and legal

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[1] Maximilien de Robespierre, *Oeuvres De Maximilien Robespierre* (Paris: Laponneraye, 1867)
[2] Leon Sachs, The Pedagogical Imagination : The Republican Legacy in Twenty-First-Century French Literature and Film (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).
[3] Ibid.

norms, and that here is an acceptance of a common public space that is separate from religious faith and expression."[4] Immigrants are expected to assimilate into French society; however, due to rising tensions between the state and immigrants after failed integration efforts, the 2005 riots erupted in the suburbs of France, known as the *banlieue*. The suburbs, referred to as the *banlieue* and are often comprised of large immigrant communities, became the target of social cohesion policies, namely though education. These policies were necessary primarily because education plays a role as a great equalizer in French society; however, the centralized governmental structure and educational policies are perpetrators of inequity. According to Langan (2011), Jules Ferry education laws of 1881-1884 guarantee free, compulsory, and secular primary education for all French citizens, morphing republicanism and secularization into an institution. Ferry wanted all primary education to be free for all citizens, but not necessarily centralized.

In order to examine the effects that educational social cohesion policies have on descendants of working-class immigrants, this paper will delve into details about the French education system, the identity politics of being French citizen of immigrant origin, and provide a qualitative and quantitative analysis regarding access to education. Note that the term "descendants of immigrants" will be referred to often; these are youth born and raised in France with one or two immigrant parents. The term first-generation immigrant will often be utilized as well–this term is for individuals who migrated to France.

Chapter one will outline the formation of ZEP schools, as well as the Acsé program, underlining how they utilize an area-based approach to allocate their resources to schools. Chapter two will provide descriptive and inferential statistics of access to education for working-

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[4] Elise Langan, "The Normative Effects of Higher Education Policy in France," *International Journal of Educational Research* (Jan 12, 2012), 33. doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2011.12.005.

class immigrants. Trends will show that second-generation immigrants from Algeria, Turkey, and Sahelian Africa come from working class backgrounds and struggle the most to attain equitable educational levels. They are in need of the most support and are most affected by systemic inequity perpetuated by centralized education, mistargeted resources, etc. Despite these trends, the French Ministry of Education deliberately opts out of utilizing positive discrimination to target the most marginalized students, thus revealing how ethnoracial discrimination is developed by way of public policy. Chapter three will center around policy recommendations, addressing the question: what does it mean to build a cohesive educational structure that supports all parties effectively, while accounting for exterior forces that form ethnoracial discrimination? In this, I will highlight how political representation should be reconsidered. In one realm, political representation must reflect a concern and cognizance for the issues in education; more people should be appointed from working-class immigrant backgrounds due to their (theoretical) comprehension of nuances in education policies that lead to systemic disenfranchisement. Furthermore, the top-down centralized approach to education should be deconstructed and move toward building more community-based policy implementation from the ground up. Secondly, as programs, ZEP and Acsé, should more intentionally target their resources under the notion of community-based policy. With a heightened cognizance of who needs resources, these implementers can divert these monetary funds to developing sustainable and preventative (rather than remedial) programs that encourage equity and work in tandem with the school system. Lastly, the active practice of a meritocracy can be debunked through implementing sustainable positive discrimination and affirmative action programs. In this paper, the extent to which France is marginalizing its immigrant population through education and its reluctance to adopt a positive

discrimination approach will crystallize, underlining how fundamental education reform has become.

II.   Literature Review

To facilitate a widened comprehension of the French educational system, this literature review will present an overview of the role of education in French society, as well as the country's centralized education policy.

Function of education in French society – reproduction of the elite

Over the course of French history, it has remained widely maintained that education is a significant factor in individual and societal development. The state, which holds the primary responsibility for education, strives to address civic and economic concerns through the educational system. They wish to educate citizens to participate as productive, assimilative members of society and equip students with the means to succeed in the workplace.[5] Duru-Bellat (2003) frames education as the primary ideological means to justify persisting inequalities in democratic societies where individuals are "equal" and education-based meritocracy is the standard.[6] This, in turn, increases the weight of the French diploma as a gateway to success in the labor market. This happens most often at the tertiary level, perpetuating exclusivity with a top-down centralized approach.

Furthermore, a two-way relationship exists between the state and the reproduction of the elite through education. The elite, according to Bourdieu's model of social space, are considered the dominant social classes "who have managed to secure high volumes of the valued capitals in

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[6] Ibid.

a given society and at a given period" and work to reproduce their social position.[7] Under this

notion, the state engineers the social transformation of the elite; thus, the state and the elite

mutually entrench each other's societal roles, further developing systemic inequity. This

production of the elite, with the state as a primary instrument, dates back to the last quarter of the

18th century. The monarchy initiated the creation of institutions with the intent of training

professionals to lead the army, civil engineering projects, and agricultural development. Every

following regime perpetuated this trend of producing professionals to increase the state's

authority and control, further anchoring this authority.[8] In literature, it appears fundamental to

underline that the individuals who emerged from these special training programs, known as the

grandes écoles system, which included schools like *Ecole Nationale d'Administration, Ecole*

Normale Superieure, Sciences Po, exist to produce professionals that most closely align with the

ideologies of the French government. As Van Zanten and Maxwell explain, this also emerged as

a form of political resistance and mistrust of the public university systems: institutions that not

necessarily deeply tied to the state's ideologies.[9] While knowledge is more generalized in the

grandes écoles system (as opposed to the pointed expertise present in more vocational roles), the

"legitimacy of the creation of elite tracks has been strongly supported by the so-called

meritocratic *concours,* which seeks to recruit 'the best of the best'and create a closed elite system

based on the exclusive interactions between the *classes préperatoires*[10] and the *grandes écoles*. [11]

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[7] Agnès van Zanten and Claire Maxwell, "Elite Education and the State in France: Durable Ties and New Challenges," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 36, no. 1 (Jan 2, 2015), 72. doi:10.1080/01425692.2014.968245.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid, 74.
[10] *Classes préparatoires,* commonly known as *prépas*, are part of the French post-secondary education system. *Prépas* consist of two intensive years of preparation for the competitive national exam required for enrollment in the *grandes écoles,*
[11] Ibid.

Social reproduction also occurs at the *baccalauréat* level, given the different tracks of the exam. Trends in gaining a *baccalauréat* are widely regarded; Brinbaum and Kieffer (2009) assert that this has become the norm for all families in France and parents aspire for their children to gain the general *baccaleuréat* exam due to a wider breadth of educational opportunities, such as access to technology institutes, universities, and *grandes écoles*.[12] Duru-Bellat explicates that while there was a sharp increase in exam takers (approximately 5% in 1950 to 63% in 2005), this has transpired as a result of diversified types of the *baccaleuréat*, including the '*baccalauréat professionnel'* which funnels students–primarily second-generation immigrants– toward vocational tracks.[13]

Centralization of France's education policy

Baumgartner (1989) underlines the complexity of policymaking in France in explicating that it has been described as "neocorporatist, pluralist, crisis-ridden, heroic, statist, and protest-driven." Despite that neocorporatism does not necessarily attribute to all arenas of French policy making, no alternative model has been agreed upon by experts. Schmitter (1974) defines neocorporatism as a system that is largely dominated by the government and a voluntary agreement between the government and business interests in all sectors."[14] Opponents to the neocorporatist model cite weaknesses among interest groups and divisions in social issues, and maintain the stance that French policymakers are more reactionary to issues in a remedial sense

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[12] Yaël Brinbaum and Annick Kieffer, "Trajectories of Immigrants' Children in Secondary Education in France: Differentiation and Polarization," *Population (English Edition)* 64, no. 3 (2009), 507. doi:10.3917/pope.903.0507.

[13] Marie Duru-Bellat, "Recent Trends in Social Reproduction in France: Should the Political Promises of Education be Revisited?" *Journal of Education Policy* 23, no. 1 (Jan 1, 2008), 83. doi:10.1080/02680930701754104.

[14] Frank R. Baumgartner, *Conflict and Rhetoric in French Policymaking* (Pittsburgh, PA: Univ. of Pittsburgh Pr, 1989).

and galvanized by crises. The Ministry of National Education oversees virtually every school in France, including postgraduate institutions; the school system also touts the ability to exercise wide control due to its centralized and standardized curricula.

III.   Background Information on Racial Identity

Racial identity in France

Racial identity politics in France is complex, as France holds a complicated stance on what it means to be a French citizen. This paper will focus on citizens in Metropolitan France. Not all French-origin populations are white, as the French overseas departments (*Départements et regions d'outre-mer)* known as DOMs are in French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, and Réunion. Moreover, it is necessary to make the distinction among categories of immigrants in Metropolitan France and note that not all immigrants are non-white; approximately 50% of France's immigrants have arrived from European regions.[15] In a similar vein, some of these immigrant populations may be considered racially white, but are still considered ethnically, culturally, and religiously different within France.

      The French Republic's model functions under "universalist conceit according to which all individuals have inherently equal potential and race is repudiated as a meaningless basis for social classification, much less hierarchical distinction," seemingly rendering all citizens equal, regardless of immigrant status.[16] However, France's model is combatted by the rising framework of *communautarisme* ('communalism'), which is broadly defined by a group's primary identification with a particular group due to shared personal connections (common foreign ancestry, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, etc.) before identifying with the nation.[17] *Communautarisme* is perceived to be "a destructive force in France, because it is seen as

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[15] Chantal Brutel, "*Les Immigrés Récemment Arrivés En France*," (Nov 28, 2014).

[16] J. P. Murphy, "Baguettes, Berets and Burning Cars: The 2005 Riots and the Question of Race in Contemporary France," *French Cultural Studies* 22, no. 1 (Feb 1, 2011), 33. doi:10.1177/0957155810386678.

[17] Ibid.

undermining dominant conceptions of how society ought to function, beginning with the rights, responsibilities, and attitudes of each individual in relation to the collectivity."[18] Fundamentally, *communautarisme* is antithetical to republicanism; Immigrant integration is forcibly even more difficult due to this disparity. Since 1990, ambiguity between 'immigrants' and 'foreigners' has been dispelled; there are now two categories of immigrants within the census. The first category of French immigrants kept their foreign citizenship, while the second category immigrated to France as foreigners and obtained French citizenship later as a result of their time in the country. Children of these groups are not considered immigrants, and are automatically French citizens under law of *jus soli* – these children are "statistically invisible" due to the French census' lack of data on ethnic origin or religious beliefs.[19] This practice is an appendage of the civic and assimilationist model adopted by the French Republic, meaning that "citizens voluntarily and politically identify with the egalitarian values of the nation; on the contrary, cultural and religious differences have no political legitimacy in the public sphere and are thus banished to the private sphere. Assimilationist means that, in practice, this model is accompanied by a strong assimilation to dominant French values which claim to be universal."[20] The French-origin population primarily frames these traditional French values. Note that within this paper, the label 'French-origin' will be used as a synonym for "white" in reference to non-immigrants. Those of immigrant descent use this label to "highlight racial difference, [and] distinguish white people from everyone else." This is an important distinction to make, as this dichotomy in racial identity is at the crux of inequity in the *banlieue,* which will be discussed in the following section.

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Jacques Barou, "Integration of Immigrants in France: A Historical Perspective," *Identities* 21, no. 6 (Nov 2, 2014), 642-657. doi:10.1080/1070289X.2014.882840.

[20] Ibid.

Segregation and marginalization in the banlieue

Comprised primarily of immigrants, largely non-European, the *banlieue* provides a sharp contrast to many of their large-city counterparts; while these larger cities are diverse in their own manner, the commonalities of their identity revolve around French-origin ideals. The concentration of immigrants in the *banlieue* leads to a differing political climate – it is argued that this large conglomeration of immigrants "in small areas that are socially and economically disadvantaged gives strong visibility to segregated neighborhoods and feeds resentment against immigration."[21] Furthermore, various groups, such as these de-facto segregated residents, the media, and advocacy groups use the analogy of the 'ghetto' in their discussion of the *banlieue.* They assert that French neighborhoods "that concentrate both socioeconomic disadvantage and growing numbers of postcolonial immigrants are expanding and subject to "white flight;" these "ghettos," comparable to African-American ghettos in the United States, also grapple with issues of equality of opportunity and upward mobility.[22] As a result of these phenomena, xenophobia is interwoven in much of the discourse surrounding the *banlieue*, along with disconnected senses of individual, social, and national identities. Specifically among the *jeunes des banlieue* (youth of the banlieue), the segregation of their relative neighborhoods exacerbates feelings of insecurity, civic engagement, and education inequity. This term, *jeunes des banlieue,* is a device that can "appear as racial subtext to stigmatize immigrant youth or as a euphemism to avoid naming young Arab or African French people.[23] In a 2014 case study, two *jeunes des banlieue* associated their neighborhoods' segregation directly with "problems," and attribute the lack of

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[21] Frédérick Douzet and Jérémy Robine, ""Les Jeunes Des Banlieues": Neighborhood Effects on the Immigrant Youth Experience in France," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 32, no. 1 (Jan 2, 2015), 40. doi:10.1080/08873631.2015.1004854.
[22] Ibid, 41.
[23] Ibid, 51.

socioeconomic diversity to the absence of mobility.[24] Feelings of insecurity are reinforced by

perceived youth delinquency and lack of trust in apathetic police. The media plays a large role in

the perception of these youth in France, as it is perceived to fuel discrimination and lead to the

youths' sentiments of feeling "trapped–in their identity, social condition, neighborhood–isolated

and somewhat denied the right to be considered fully French by other French nationals."[25]

Moreover, education in France is centralized and geographically based, leading to high spatial

concentration among schools in the *banlieue.* Consisting of disadvantaged students facing similar

difficulties and backgrounds, this factor impedes success in a certain capacity -– students are not

integrated, are accustomed to underachievement, and predict a lack of mobility.[26] Taking the

literature into account regarding the racial politics and segregation of the *banlieue*, it is possible

to get a more inclusive idea of the inequities these descendants of immigrants face.

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[24] Ibid, 61.
[25] Ibid, 44.
[26] Ibid, 49.

IV.   Overview of Social Cohesion Programs

This chapter will underline the functionalities of ZEP schools in tandem with Acsé, in order to carefully understand how their policies have affected education access for working-class immigrant populations at the primary and secondary school level. The intersection of both of these initiatives, in theory, have contributed to increased education access.

Zones d'éducation prioritaire (ZEP schools)

In 1982, the Priority Education Zones ("*Zones d'Education Prioritaire")* program, henceforth referred to as ZEP, was one of the first initiatives launched by Alain Savery, a then socialist Minister for Education. It was intended to sustainably increase access to education. Following the rise of teacher unions in 1970, the idea of priority zones became the crux of the Socialist Party's platform, who came to power in 1981. The policy actively worked to eradicate France's firmly entrenched sociopolitical inequalities from the ground up and partake in positive discrimination:

> "the ZEP policy came into force at a time when completion of the implementation of unselective secondary schools and access to secondary education for all, far from making social inequalities disappear from schooling, reconfigured them by transforming the methods by which they were produced, making their most visible manifestations appear both later in schooling and socially more unacceptable."[27]

ZEP policy was the first attempt at transforming the educational system in light of ubiquitous social inequalities; though these inequalities were a product of societal forces outside of the education system, it was a positive and substantial shift to underscore their nuances within education.

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[27] Marc Demeuse, *Educational Policies and Inequalities in Europe* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 93.

Selected schools under the ZEP received increased funds and teacher hours. Though ZEP

was initially intended to be a temporary 4-year program, it disseminated throughout France in

waves in 1989, 1990, 1994, and 1999; ultimately, the program's goal was to "foster new

education projects and partnerships with local actors that would help improve academic

achievement."[28] Controversy surrounds ZEP schools, given that there is no specification

regarding how priority status is determined, nor the magnitude or frequency of additional

resources granted.[29] The concept of targeting areas rather than granting monetary stipends to

low-income students is considered "positive discrimination." Positive discrimination is "positive

action' favorable to groups whose chances are comprised by racist or sexist practices or

socioeconomic inequalities."[30] Through its aim to counteract inequalities, it "creates

discrimination that paradoxically redistributes equality" by using two methods of positive

discrimination:

> "The reduction of racist or sexist practices leads to the identification of a 'target
> population' based on innate characteristics, constitutive of the identity of the individual,
> such as sex or race. In contrast, the reduction of socioeconomic equalities requires that
> beneficiaries be identified on the basis of criteria related to their socioeconomic
> situation."[31]

Therefore, specifically targeting low-income students would be considered favorable action to a

certain group affected my socioeconomic inequalities. Positive discrimination contradicts

France's republican ideology because "notions of community and minority go against republic

sentiments"[32] and "the French republic recognizes no minorities or disadvantaged groups; it only

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[28] Roland Bénabou, Francis Kramarz and Corinne Prost, "The French Zones D'Éducation
Prioritaire: Much Ado about Nothing?" *Economics of Education Review* 28, no. 3 (2009), 1.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Anne Levade, "Discrimination Positive Et Principe D'Égalité En Droit Français," Pouvoirs
111, no. 4 (2004), 55-71. doi:10.3917/pouv.111.0055.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

recognizes citizens, equal in their direction relationship with the state."[33]

ZEP schools fundamentally target primary (1st through 5th grade) and junior-high (6th through 9th grade) schools, with a small emphasis on high schools (10th through 12th grades). Ultimately the program's goal is to "provide additional resources to schools in the most disadvantaged zones and allow them to develop specific initiatives and education methods tailored to their students' needs."[34] Considering the centralized nature of the French education system, this allows a reasonable shift in agency for local actors, as they are granted increased control over the direction of the school. In recent years, the heads of the Ministry of Education ("*recteurs*") are given discretion in making pertinent decisions based on the context of the residents in their region. The most pertinent trends considered are "parents of blue-collar workers, unemployed wires and high school dropouts, the fraction of families with at least one non-European member, and 3rd grade test scores in a national student evaluation."[35]

At the crux of the ZEP program rests the intention to counteract socioeconomic inequality – the program focuses its attention on who exactly is being served and how is poverty being combatted. One of the primary indicators of poverty is how many students are not enrolled in the school's cafeteria plan; despite that lunches are subsidized for everyone, most of the students who do not consume lunch at school instead do so at home because their families cannot afford to pay for the school's meals. In priority zones, 69% of students fall into this category, whereas outside of priority zones, only 40% of students are similarly affected. In ZEP schools located in urban centers, the fraction is much larger at 80%.[36] Many ZEP schools are in urban

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Bénabou et. al, "The French Zones D'Éducation Prioritaire," 346.
[35] Ibid, 347.
[36] Ibid.

areas, highlighting the proportion of working-class students in the program; due to social and

residential segregation, immigrant-origin students typically attend ZEP schools. North African

students are 5 times more numerous (37%) in these schools than French-origin students (7%).[37]

This sort of poverty is addressed by additional monetary resources being granted to ZEP schools,

as well as additional hours of instruction and bonuses for teachers and faculty. Despite this

discretion of resources being granted by centralized actors to relevant regional authorities,

information regarding these additional resources is not collected at the centralized level. This

disparity in the state versus local level reframes the autonomy within education policy:

> Thus in France the ZEP policy validates the local in a way that is new in French
> education, but it represents a reworking rather than a displacement of centralized state
> control: 'the [decentralization] *territorialisation* of education policy is not a conquest by
> the local, but the result of a national policy: it has been willed, defined, organized and put
> into place by the state.' ZEPs are subject to government control in two ways: by virtue of
> their structural position within the education administration, and through a specific set of
> contractual mechanisms.[38]

This "reworking" of centralized state control is embodied by the area-based allocation of

resources; a "displacement" would be if policies utilized positive discrimination approaches and

intentionally targeted students with their efforts. ZEP schools remain under the control of the

thirty *academies* in France*,* which are a regional-based administrative structure. Decentralization

occurs as a "reallocation of certain powers *within* the state apparatus, from the national to the

regional level."[39] Despite that the program was initially implemented in 1981, it has undergone

dormant phases and revivals contingent upon the political climate. Studies showed that extension

of ZEP schools across the country would lessen their effectiveness, and thus, the number of

students enrolled should indubitably never increase. Regardless, as of 2008 following the

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[37] Brimbaum and Kieffer, "Trajectories of Immigrants' children in secondary education," 515.
[38] Richard Hatcher and Dominique Leblond, "Education Action Zones and Zones d'Education Prioritaires," 3.
[39] ibid.

program's third revival under a right-wing government, the number of ZEP schools surpassed 800. There is a lack of information at the centralized level regarding how much ZEP allocated to schools; the last available budgetary information was available for the 1998-1999 school year, where the Ministry of Education allocated 400 million euro.[40]

Agence Nationale pour la cohésion sociale et l'égalité des chances (Acsé)

The *Agence Nationale pour la Cohésion Sociale et L'égalité des chances,* henceforth referred to as Acsé, is an agency for social cohesion and equal opportunity within the City Ministry (*Ministere Delegué à la Ville)* in France. This centralized agency operates specifically under the City Ministry and implements city policy. This sort of policy functions locally as it targets disadvantaged areas through increased allocation of means. Policy makers often grapple with how to target immigrant populations, as positive action toward a certain group rejects France's republican ideology of equal treatment independent of race; however, by way of focusing on various geographic areas, Acsé is able to tangibly affect immigrant youth. The largest point of contention is in what capacity this area-based approach manages to tackle issues specific to immigrant youth.

Acsé stems from a funding initiative called *Fonds d'action Sociale* (Social Action Fund), known as FAS, that existed from 1958 to 2001.[41] From 2001 to 2005, the institution was relabeled the Social Action Fund for Integration and Anti-Discrimination (Fonds d'action sociale pour l'intégration et la lutte contre les discriminations), known as FASILD, which later molded into Acsé in 2005. At this juncture, Acsé focuses its efforts on particular neighborhoods in order

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[40] Angeline Escafre-Dublet, *Mainstreaming Immigrant Integration Policy in France: Education, Employment, and Social Cohesion Initiatives,* Migration Policy Institute, [2014].
[41] Ibid, 4.

to combat geographic inequality that became particularly visible following the 2005 riots in the French *banlieue.* Select disadvantaged neighborhoods are at the crux of Acsé's efforts; these 2500 "priority neighborhoods" are where Acsé focuses its efforts. Acsé's work complements hat of the *Direction de l'acceuil, de l'integration, et de la cityonenneté* (DAIC), an Interior Ministry organization focused on integration of immigrants who have arrived in France within the past 5 years. In tandem, both institutions address inequality amongst low income and immigrant populations.

Acsé's budget is allocated to nonprofit organizations – this includes a number of large nongovernmental organizations as well as local community initiatives. As of 2013, Acsé's total budget was 319 million euros, and 90% was spent at the local level, specifically through regional or departmental prefects.[42] Acsé's budget was cut in 2007, hindering them from maintaining leverage in providing for such an underrepresented population. Acsé's efforts are concentrated on approximately 1300 priority neighborhoods, with previous criteria including unemployment data, proportion of social housing, income, and number of youth; however, the organization has shifted to solely focusing on income levels to more effectively target highly disadvantaged areas, which additionally includes rural areas. This shift in criteria "promises to exclude many immigrants and their descendants, concentrated as they are in particular urban neighborhoods."[43]

Educational Achievement Programs are at the crux of Acsé's initiatives; these *Programmes de réussite éducative* programs are henceforth referred to as PREs. PREs respond to social inequality on an individualized plane, focusing their efforts on specific students. Juxtaposed with ZEP schools, PREs are more so remedial in their efforts, while ZEP is more preventative by granting increased resources. By identifying students who are experiencing

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[42] Ibid, 5.
[43] Ibid.

difficulties in school, PREs are able to provide support tailored to their specific needs. The

officers of PREs are typically in charge of educational policy at the city ministry level and work

closely with school administrators. The school administrators contact the respective officer for

their local jurisdiction and identify a struggling student. The remedial nature of the program is

prevalent in that the PRE officer can intervene only when all other general programs have failed

to support this specific student.[44] PRE schools are embodied by *ad hoc* policy, and are

specifically not to counteract prior existing education policy.

PREs' central efforts engage the realm outside of the classroom, such as culture, health,

sports, etc.[45] It encourages increased dialogue between the student, the family, and the school to

identify the source of the student's problem and how it can be rectified. The program may also

direct the students' afterschool programs, such as sports or group activities to provide an

extracurricular or co-curricular outlet. In necessary circumstances, the respective city's health

services may be contacted in regards to the student. Ultimately, PREs services require an

extreme catalyzing circumstance and are invoked when social relief services are too occupied to

address the issue at hand.[46]

PREs are only made available in priority neighborhoods. 741 of these neighborhoods are

in sensitive urban areas (*zones urbaines sensibles*); these neighborhoods have been labeled as

sensitive due to their degraded housing conditions, ubiquitous housing projects, and high

unemployment rates. The priority neighborhoods located outside of sensitive areas are ranked by

social inequality in the area, where the primary indicators are income level, number of social

housing units, and employment rate. These neighborhoods are contractually bound to

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[44] Ibid, 9.
[45] Ibid.
[46] ibid.

implementing policies that actively combat levels of social and special inequality – this is known as an urban contract for social cohesion (*contrat urbains de cohésion sociale*).[47] Though these cities are bound to a CUCS contract, it is of the mayor's discretion and responsibility to manage budget and project implementation and delegate city staff to identify the appropriate partners. According to the Acsé Director for education, the success of a PRE is greatly determined by how much attention the local government (the mayor of the city) focuses on the priority neighborhood. To be optimally successful, it is imperative to appoint an administrator to facilitate and coordinate various programs.

On a budgetary note, PRE constitutes 80% (80 million euro) of Acsé's educational 100 million euro budget, which is primarily spent at the local level. Acsé's total budget is approximately 300 million euros. The remainder of the education budget is dedicated to improving access to prestigious institutions of higher education through scholarships and project grants, access to leading boarding schools (*internats d'excellence*), as well as establishing parent-teacher dialogues.

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[47] ibid.

V. ANALYSIS OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION

As France's social cohesion policies grew gradually more interwoven into society, increased access to education became more tangible for working-class populations. Bridging that gap became a conscientious effort at both the state and local level, as government actors enacted these policies for the benefit of disadvantaged communities. This chapter will examine trends in access to education for second-generation immigrants, dissected by country of origin. The educational achievement of second-generation immigrants is widely discussed but not in the context of societal inequalities; this lack of discourse is pertinent as these inequalities are forged in primary school. Longitudinal data will be drawn from two sources: A study titled Trajectories of Immigrants' Children in Secondary Education in France and a survey titled Trajectories and Origins: Survey of Diversity of Populations in France (*Trajectoires et Origines: Enquete sur la diversité des populations en France*). The latter source gathered its data from INSEE, the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (*Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques)*.

Context of France's population

To best contextualize the constituents affected by France's educational cohesion policies, it is necessary to examine the populations residing in metropolitan France. It's imperative to note the disparity between populations with and without migration ancestry. This quantitative analysis will focus on second-generation immigrants, because they are the children of immigrants; the social cohesion policies discussed within this paper are targeted to build equity for children of immigrants who are not new arrivals in France. The average targeted age group is 18-25 years old. Of the 18-50 year-old population residing in Metropolitan France, approximately 6% of the population descends from two immigrant parents, and another 6% descends from one immigrant

parent.[48] Collectively, these two categories comprise 12% of inhabitants aged 18-50 in France: 3,079,000 people.[49] On average, these descendants of immigrants are younger than the majority population – by definition, these descendants of immigrants were born in France after their parents were settled there. The majority population is defined as non-immigrant, French-origin citizens. As seen in figure 1, in recent years, there has been an influx of second-generation immigrants from Turkey, with 68% (303,960 people) of those migrants (approximately 447,000) falling in the 18-25 age group. Other prominent regions with large populations of 18-25 second generation immigrants include South East Asia (309,000), Sahelian Africa (297,000), Morocco and Tunisia (504,900), and Algeria (378,740).[50]
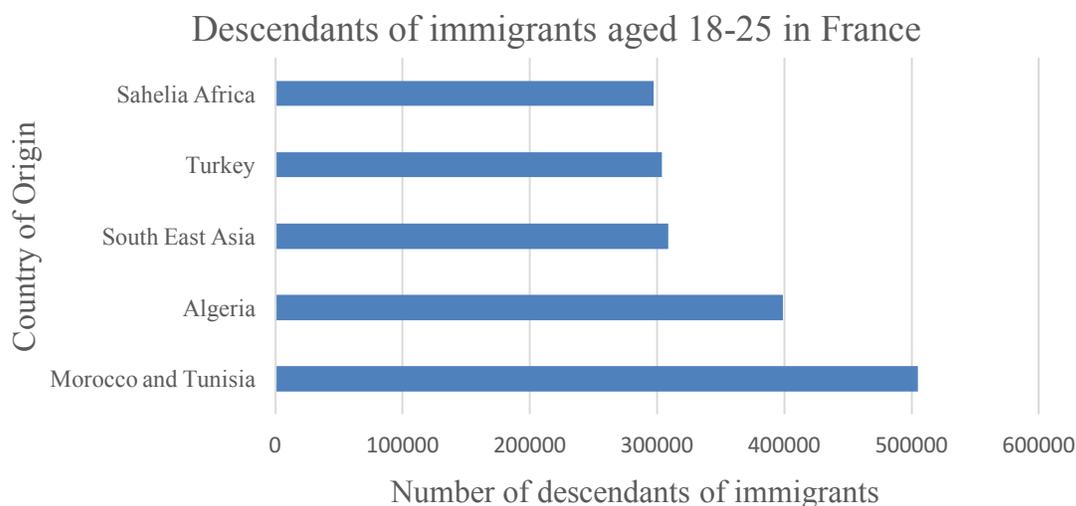

Fig. 1. Descendants of immigrants aged 18-25 in France (Graph by author. Data by INSEE).

Levels of education among immigrants

Slightly over 4 in 10 immigrants resides in the Paris region, with a very high concentration of sub-Saharan African immigrants (approximately 60%) residing in the Île-de-

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[48] Anne-Laure Zwilling, "Trajectoires Et Origines: Diversité Des Populations En France," (Oct 24, 2010).
[49] Ibid, 13.
[50] Ibid.

France. Transnational lifestyles of French immigrants are increasingly prevalent in context of

increased globalization. Transnationalism is pertinent within the educational realm as more

people are pursuing education in nations other than their country of citizenship. This increasingly

transnational educational experience grants them more favorable integration in the labor market,

due to their experiences with other cultures, practices, and languages. There is a gender

imbalance in who partakes in these transnational practices, with men developing these ties at a

higher rate than women. In a similar vein, there is strong levels of heterogeneity within the realm

of education; regarding second-generation immigrants from Algeria, Morocco or Tunisia, and

Turkey, men without a diploma or low-level degree is almost twice higher than in the majority

population.[51]

Classifications of education levels are separated into non-degree individuals (including

individuals who have never attended school), less qualified individuals (those who obtain a

certificate of primary education or the BEPC), individuals with a professional degree like CAP-

BEP, and those with bachelor's degrees and lastly, higher education degrees. As seen in Figure

2, immigrant individuals without qualifications and who are poorly educated averages at 39%.[52]

There are disparities in the ethnic origin of these immigrants, with 65% of this category

originating from Sahelian Africa, while 43% are from Algeria.[53]

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[51] Ibid, 39.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

Poorly educated immigrant subgroups
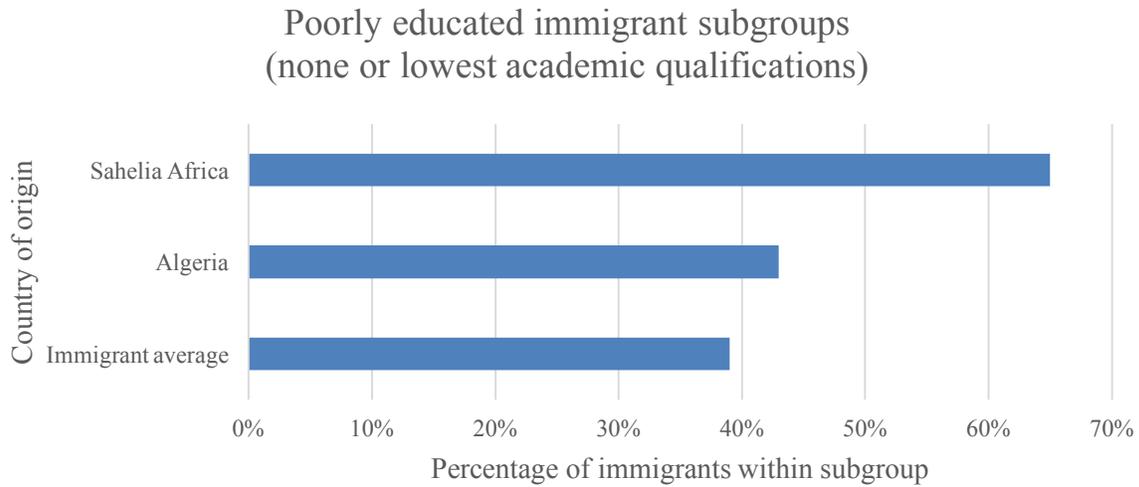## (none or lowest academic qualifications)

Fig. 2. Poorly educated immigrant subgroups (none or lowest academic qualifications). (Graph by author. Data by INSEE).

Despite that immigrants from Sahelian Africa are among the most poorly educated subset of immigrants to France, there is a large disparity in the education levels between men and women; men are far more likely to receive a diploma.

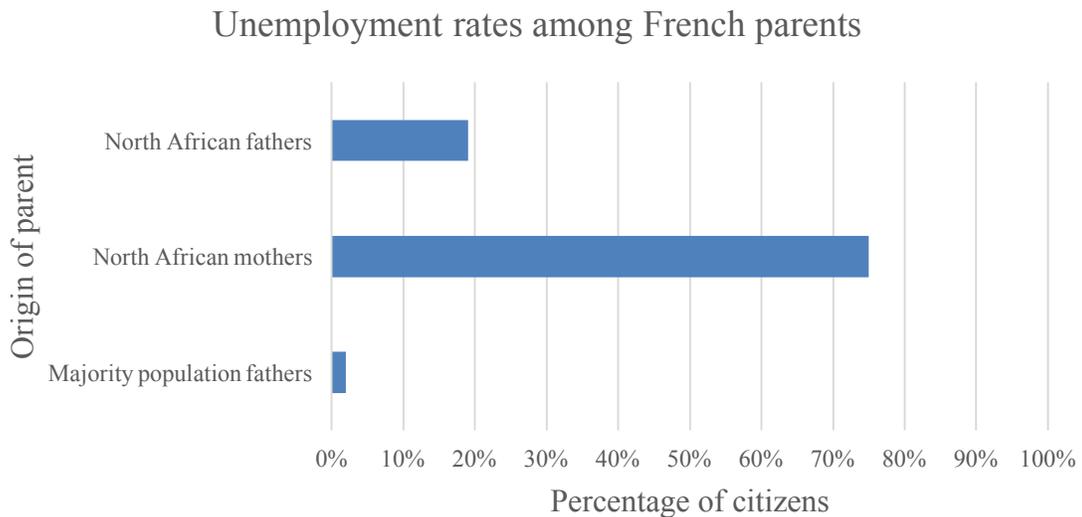## Unemployment rates among French parents

Fig. 3. Unemployment rates among French parents (Graph by author. Data by INSEE).

Overall, working-class descendants of immigrants are raised in families where the parents have low educational levels; as seen in figure 4, many North African mothers (44%) and fathers (38%) have not attended school at all, especially those who arrived in France as adults.[54]

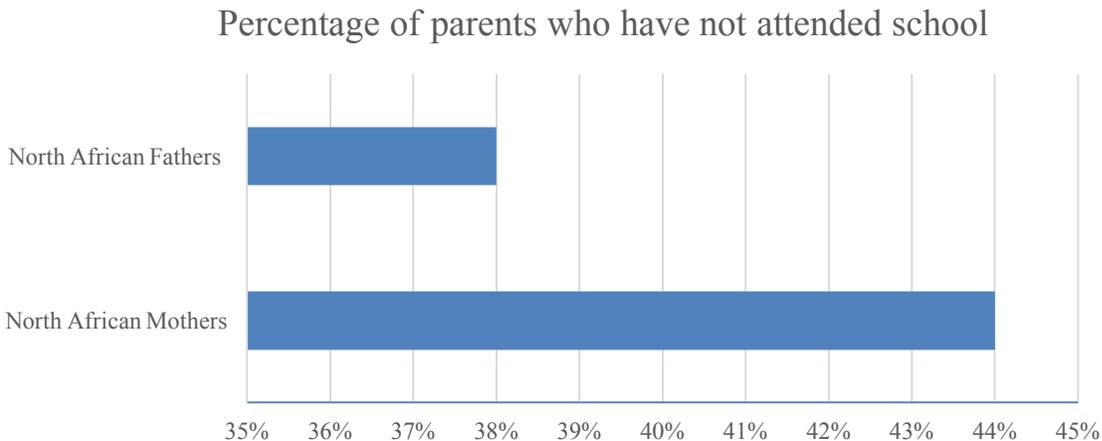Percentage of parents who have not attended school

Fig. 4. Percentage of parents who have not attended school (Graph by author. Data by INSEE).

Moreover, in 1974, France enacted immigration laws to support family reunification, leading to an influx of immigration. While 44% of individuals prior to 1974 did not have diplomas, in 1998 or later years, 25% did not hold a diploma. Not only is the demographic of people arriving in France growing exponentially more educated, 84% of immigrants who arrive as students are prior university graduates.[55] This sizable increase is endemic to 1974's family reunification law, known as *regroupement familial*.[56] Families often comprised of unskilled workers were immigrating to France leading to lower rates. After the law was passed, the percentage of immigrants without a diploma gradually decreased, in tandem with the increase of higher diplomas. Nearly a third of immigrants have degrees, though this subset of immigrants is

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[54] Brinbaum and Kieffer, "Trajectories of Immigrants' Children," 514.
[55] Zwilling, "Trajectoires et Origines," 42.
[56] Katharine Charsley, *Transnational Marriage* (GB: Routledge Ltd, 2013).

mostly strongly represented from northern European, southeast Asian and Central African countries[57], indicating that these are not immigrants from working class backgrounds, their countries of origin may have better education systems as well generally increased access to education in France. Gender disparities are most prevalent among Saharan Africa, North African countries, and Turkey.

However, in the 1990s, trends shift when accounting for populations of descendants of immigrants; in all groups, aside from Turkey, men are less educated than women. Descendants of male immigrants who do not possess a diploma or possess a low-level diploma from Algeria, Morocco or Tunisia, and Turkey comprise almost half of the majority population. University graduates are poorly represented among the descendants of immigrants from Algeria and Turkey, as they comprise 20% less compared to the majority population, which averages at greater than 30%.[58] At this point, trends reveal that immigrants North African (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), Turkish, and Sahelian African immigrants are the primary subset of working-class immigrants who are most affected by disparities in education inequality.

Socio-occupational trends

In deconstructing trends of high school and university experiences, the senses of injustice and discrimination grow incrementally more evident. While focusing on the school careers of diverse backgrounds of immigrants aged 18 to 35 in the 2000s, scrutinizing patterns of those who spent their schooling in France reveal how these students are effectively categorized by the school system's democratization and massification. This leads to less agency for the student. Certain groups are subjects of discrimination with relation to their country of origin, known as

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[57] Zwilling, "Trajectoires et Origines," 43.
[58] Ibid, 44.

ethnoracial discrimination. There is a link between aspects of urban segregation in schools (e.g. a high concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged students) and deliberately discriminatory treatment that develops ethnoracial discrimination.[59] This unequal access to resources and deliberate perpetuation can have perverse long-term systemic effects on students, such as impacted access to the labor market.[60] This section will highlight the effects, or lack thereof despite the attempts, that programs like ZEP and Acsé forged in increasing access to education in varying degrees for descendants of working-class immigrants.

Longitudinal analysis provides several conclusions regarding the French school system, most prevalently that the children of immigrants are among the students who are most susceptible to academic difficulties, failing school, or dropping out.[61] This is a product of the socio-economic and cultural resources of the family environment that ultimately comprise of the first determinants of students' success in school. These programs are ultimately framed to mitigate these trends. As previously mentioned, the absence or weakness of parental education–especially due to a deficient educational system the country of origin–has the propensity to heavily affect the academic success of the child. When controlling for social class and family background, studies have shown that children of immigrants outperform their majority population counterparts, which is a function of the perception that education is a conduit to social mobility; working class immigrant parents have higher aspirations for their children than non-

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[59] Marco Oberti, "The French Republican Model of Integration: The Theory of Cohesion and the Practice of Exclusion," New Directions for Youth Development 2008, no. 119 (2008), 67. doi:10.1002/yd.273.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Louis-André Vallet and Jean-Paul Caille, "La Scolarité Des Enfants D'Immigrés. https://web.ac-reims.fr/casnav/enfants_nouv_arrives/formation/parcours.pdf.

working class parents.[62]

After moving to France, these educational inequities become more entrenched, and as a result, more institutionalized. Socio-occupational status is defined by INSEE in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Brinbaum & Kieffer, Trajectories of Children of Immigrants.

INSEE classification and socio-occupational status	
INSEE classification of socio-occupational categories in France (SOC)	**Socio-occupational status based on the higher of the parents' SOCs**
Farmer	Higher-level: at least one higher-level occupation or business owner with more than 10 employees
Self-employed: business, trade and crafts	Self-employed: at least one self-employed parent (farmer, crafts, trade)
Managers, professionals and higher-level intellectual occupations	Intermediate: at least one parent employed in an intermediate occupation
Intermediate occupations	Two skilled manual, clerical or sales workers
Clerical and sales workers	Mixed manual or clerical: at most one skilled manual worker or one skilled clerical or sales worker
Manual workers	At least one unskilled manual worker or one unskilled clerical or sales worker OR two unemployed or two inactive parents

Working-class occupations are specifically the manual, clerical, and sales occupation most immigrants work within these domains, namely 88% of North African immigrants, juxtaposed with 43% of the majority population, as seen in figure 5.[63]

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[62] Laure Moguérou and Emmanuelle Santelli, "The Educational Supports of Parents and Siblings in Immigrant Families," *Comparative Migration Studies* 3, no. 1 (Dec, 2015), 2. doi:10.1186/s40878-015-0012-9.

[63] Brinbaum and Kieffer, "Trajectories of Immigrants' Children," 514.
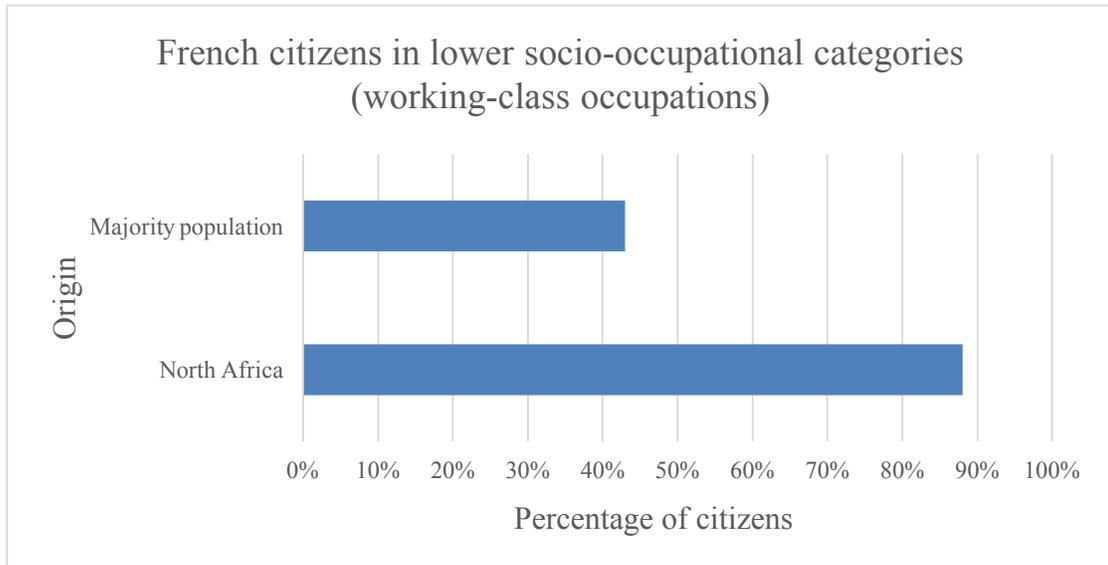
Fig. 5. French citizens in lower socio-occupational categories (Graph by author. Data by INSEE).

In fact, immigrants rarely belong to the higher socio-occupational categories, not even comprising 1% compared to 22% of the majority population who hold occupations in those sectors.[64]
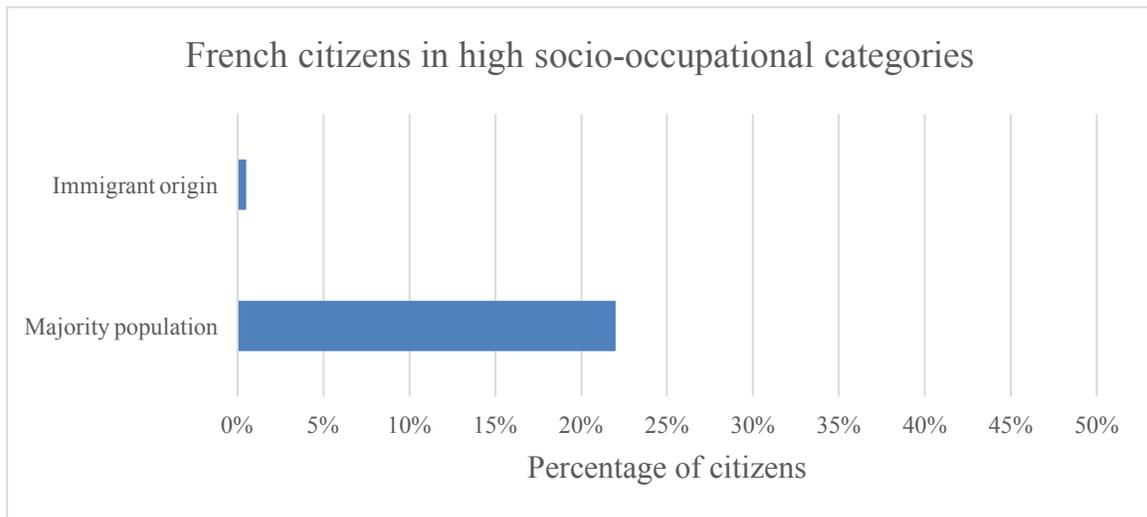

Fig. 6. French citizens in high socio-occupational categories (Graph by author. Data by INSEE).

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[64] Ibid.

Educational trends of descendants of immigrants in the 2000s

Rates of general access to higher education are also equally compelling and relevant as the previous trends are reaffirmed. Immigrants from Turkey continue to struggle the most in accessing higher education, with a 25% access rate. Other countries such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Algeria have 44% and 41% access rates respectively; while these rates are lower than that of the majority population's access rate, 53%, these countries' access to higher education doesn't forge as much of a disparity.
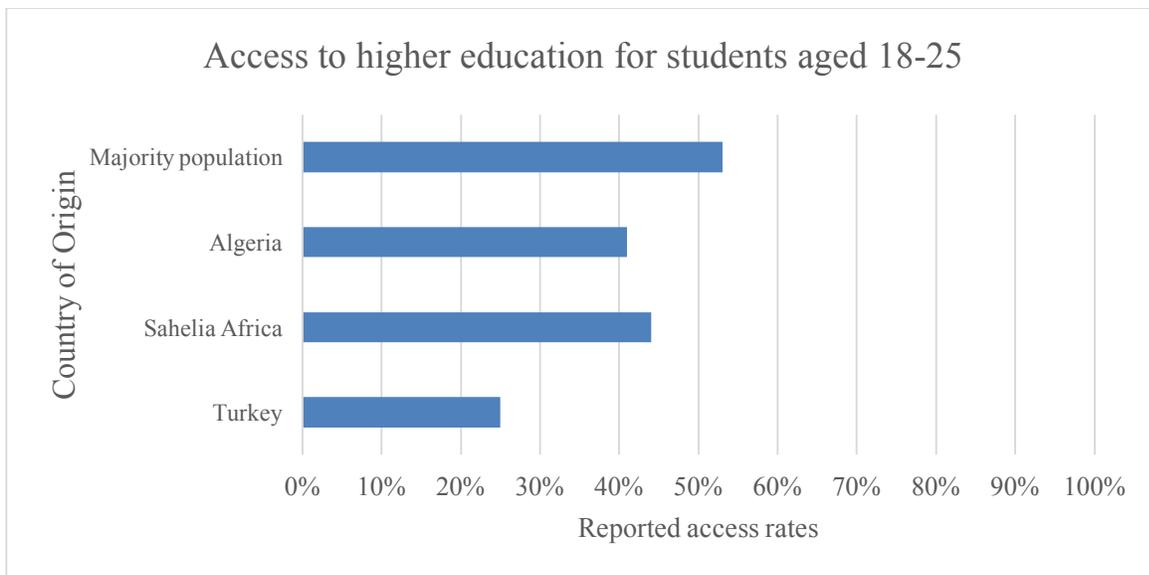

Fig. 7. Access to higher education for students 18-25 (Graph by author. Data by INSEE).

These differences stem from "guidance differentiations in secondary school" as well as differences in social backgrounds between these various immigrant subgroups.[65] These social background differences further manifest themselves in the transitional experiences of these children of immigrants. France's nuanced color line becomes increasingly clear in how this sense of injustice permeates the educational setting. On average, 14% of immigrants attest to "have

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[65] Zwilling, "Trajectoires et Origines," 51.

been treated worse" during the time of policy decisions following the 2005 riots–this is a stark contrast to the 5% of the majority population who made the same assertion.[66] Children of immigrants from the Maghreb and African regions are the primary targets of such discrimination, citing origin and skin color as the primary reasons. Given that this is demonstrated in within the academic setting, it morphs into ethno-racial discrimination, forcibly as the "impartiality of the school" can counteract and delegitimize the cohesion efforts of the education system prior established by programs like ZEP and Acsé. Mobility and access can also be analyzed through which schools children of immigrants attend; if children attend the school in their area, it suggests that it is a school with highly concentrated immigrants by way of residential segregation. Turkish and African immigrants most often remain within their neighborhood for schooling, revealing that they may be caught in the cycle of institutional ethno-racial discrimination. This shows how the area-based approach adopted by the Ministry of Education proves to be ineffective. The lack of positive discriminatory methods are not necessarily productive and instead continually build inequity.

There are particular trends in trajectories among immigrant children that are universal regardless of origin, such as pursuing high school studies following middle school ("*collége"*). The largest disparity in continuation of education is among female descendants of immigrants from Turkey and male descendants of immigrants from Algeria. With 11% and 9% of these respective populations ceasing their studies early compared to 3% of the majority population, this may be a result of the lack of emphasis of education or poor education system in Turkey and Algeria in tandem with a working-class background. [67]

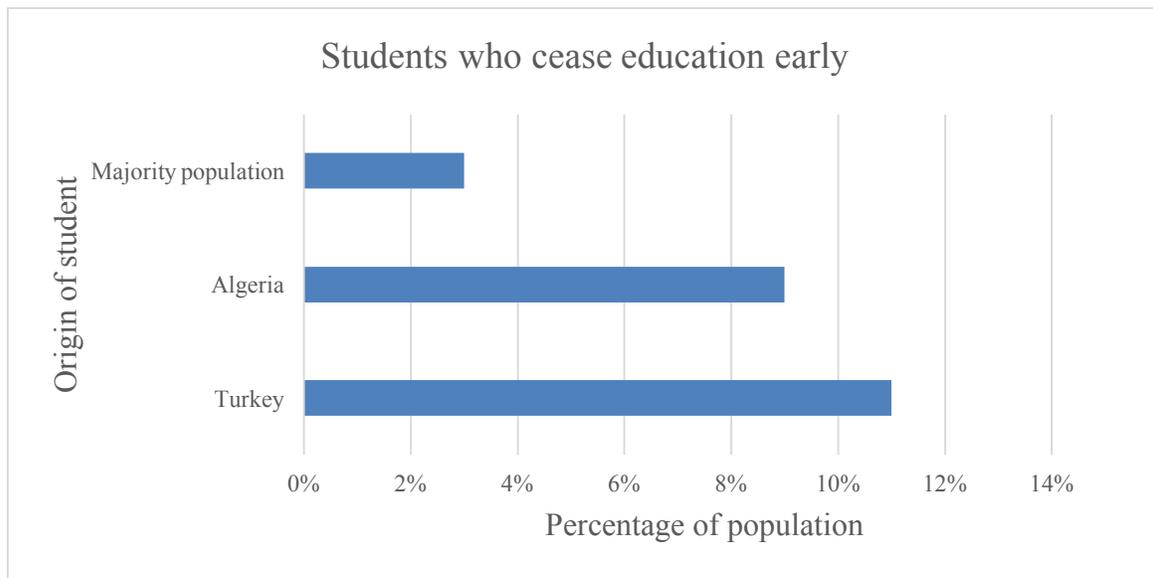[66] Zwilling, "Trajectoires et Origines," 52.
[67] Ibid.

Fig. 8. Students who cease education early (Graph by author. Data by INSEE).

Descendants of immigrants frequently repeat primary school years, making 36% of these children older when they arrive to collège. As a function of social and urban segregation, descendants of immigrants are also far more numerous in ZEP *collèges*, rendering these schools more socially homogenous; there is "less emulation and progress is slower."[68] Academic achievement varies, contingent on levels of parental education and country of origin. Students score lowest when one of the parents is in a low socio-occupational status (unskilled manual, clerical, or sales worker), either parent never attended school, or the father is unemployed; students of North-African origin are overrepresented in this latter category.[69] However, in year 9 of schooling, when controlling for family socio-occupational status and education levels, there is less of a disparity between working-class immigrants and the majority population.[70] This reveals that these trends in lower academic achievement are a function of challenges in primary school, and are already fully formed by the time the student reaches *collège;* however, the lessened disparity means that they have potentially bridged that performance gap by the end of *collège*.

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[68] Brinbaum and Kieffer, "Trajectories of Immigrants' Children," 516.
[69] Ibid, 517.
[70] Ibid, 520.

This perhaps suggests that ZEP and Acsé are fulfilling their missions in a certain capacity, yet the low-educated working-class parents have difficulty supporting their children academically due to a disconnect with the French education system. Families have cited issues such as a less comprehensive understanding of the French school system and its logistics, low income, limited education, and poor French language acquisition as issues that bar them from fully supporting their children.[71] Many students speak a language other than French at home; thus, navigating school becomes an even larger feat. ZEP schools, by being allocated an increased amount of resources, should theoretically be a conduit to ameliorated student successes. However, the resources per student are only 10% higher in each ZEP school, despite the program being granted 1.2% of France's spending on compulsory education. The policy's shortcomings are clear through empirical evaluations of the program. Controlling for family characteristics like social background and initial achievement, progress is less within ZEP schools, and the ZEP status has no significant effect on the student achievement.[72]

Role of the Baccalauréat

In examining the role of higher education, it is prevalent to contextualize the tracks that children of immigrants follow when pursuing education. The three pertinent tracks are general *bac*, technological *bac*, and vocational *bac*. To contextualize, in the majority population, 50% women are more likely to follow general courses rather than a vocational or technological track. On the contrary, men veer primarily toward general courses (36%) or a vocational track (35%).[73]

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[71] Ibid, 514-515.
[72] Laure Moguérou and Emmanuelle Santelli, "The Educational Supports of Parents and Siblings in Immigrant Families," *Comparative Migration Studies* 3, no. 1 (Dec, 2015), 301. doi:10.1186/s40878-015-0012-9.
[73] Zwilling, "Trajectoires et Origines," 40.

Most noteworthy is the population who follows a vocational track at a higher frequency than the majority population. Looking to Algeria, Sahelian Africa, Turkey, and Portugal, on average, these countries follow a vocational track at a 130% increased rate, showing that often male children of immigrants are funneled into a vocational track. The *baccaleuréat* intrinsically stratifies class differences, as the academic and selective science centered *bac* is still most inaccessible. Descriptive statistics have revealed that higher-income and majority population students are more likely than working-class students to pass a prestigious sub-type of *bac*.[74] While there are different tracks of the *bac* with varying levels of prestige, this "does not abolish inequality but transforms it: children from working-class families are concentrated in lower-status tracks, usually vocational in nature."[75] Once again, familial factors such as low-educated or poorly qualified parents and repeating years in primary school increase the probability of a student's entrance to a vocational track, and generally speaking, descendants of immigrants are advised not to even pursue a general *bac*. Only 20% of North-African descendants of immigrants obtain a general *bac*.[76] Meanwhile, studies reveal that attendance at a ZEP school is virtually an instant disqualifier in joining a general *bac*. Regardless, descendants of immigrant students have access to other *bac* exams, even if not the general exam.

Highest degree obtained by young descendants of immigrants

The largest population without a degree is descendants of immigrants from Turkey, comprising of 27% of the population. The country of origin remains prevalent across the

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[74] Mathieu Ichou and Louis-André Vallet, "Do all Roads Lead to Inequality? Trends in French Upper Secondary School Analysed with Four Longitudinal Surveys," *Oxford Review of Education* 37, no. 2 (Apr 1, 2011), 186. doi:10.1080/03054985.2011.559350.

[75] Brinbaum and Kieffer, "Trajectories of Immigrants' Children," 508.
[76] Ibid, 528.

Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa countries, as roughly 17% of these respective populations never earned degrees. Juxtaposed against countries like Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Southeast Asia, where only 11% of descendants of immigrants haven't earned degrees–which is closer to the statistic of majority population–this better informs how those from other countries of origin (some wealthier) have much different institutional experiences in education.
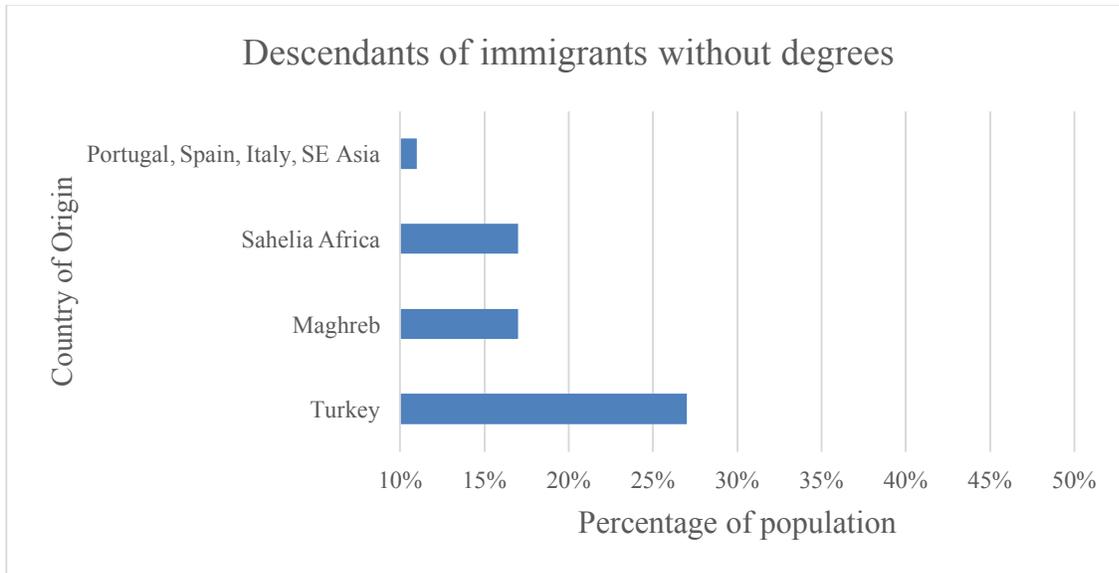

Fig. 9. Descendants of immigrants without degrees (Graph by author. Data by INSEE).

Further, it grows increasingly clear that some of these descendants of immigrants, depending on the country, remain entrenched in their working-class background. By examining the discrepancies in the highest diplomas achieved, statistics reveal that there are gaps in both the levels and type of education pursued by children of immigrants and the youth in the majority population.

There are three methods in which a student can end secondary school: early exit (dropping out), failing an exam (forced exit), or passing an exam (successful exit). Both early and forced exists are more ubiquitous among students of immigrant backgrounds–leaving with no qualification is 2.5 times more likely for working-class immigrant children, with forced exit

even more common than early exit.[77]. At this point in their education, institutionalized forces have attempted to systematically funnel working-class immigrant students toward a vocational track that it becomes disheartening to continue fighting the system, so they opt out of continuing the educational system altogether. Among other societal factors, this highlights the lack of institutional support for these students.

Descendants of immigrants from Turkey and Portugal are more likely to acquire a shorter professional diploma (CAP-BEP). Over 38% of students from those countries obtain this diploma, lending a stark contrast to the 25% of the majority population or 31% of Sahelian African and Algerian descendants of immigrants who obtain the same diploma.[78]
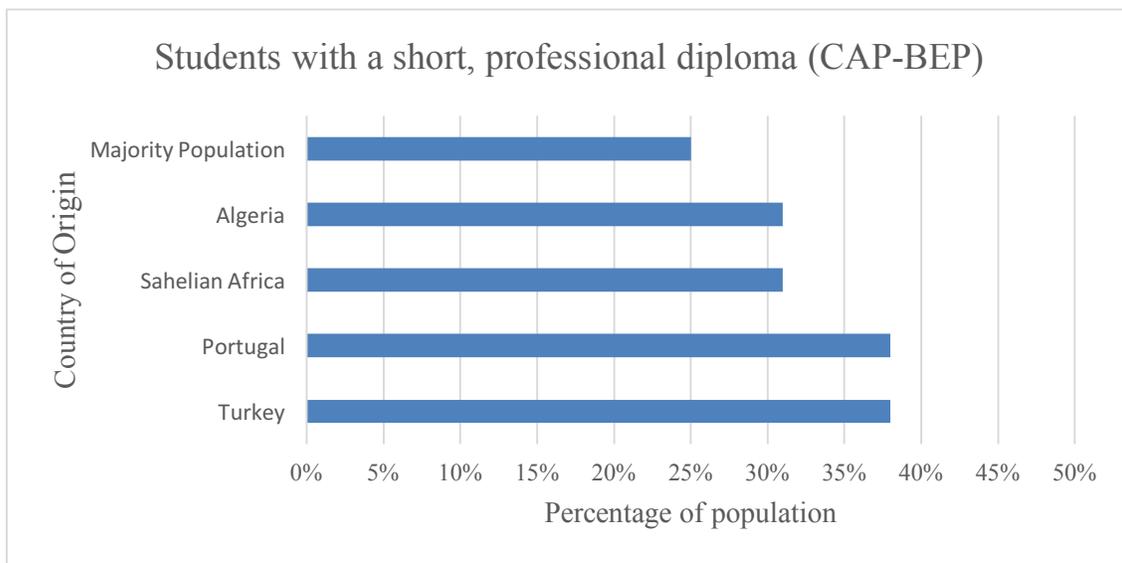

Fig. 10. Students with a short, professional diploma (Graph by author. Data by INSEE).

This short-term obtained diploma is indicative of a migration to France for economic opportunity and potentially manual labor–a trend that is passed down from generation to generation. Male descendants of immigrants follow in this path, rather than the daughters of these families. 65% of

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[77] Brinbaum and Kieffer, "Trajectories of Immigrants' Children," 531.
[78] Zwilling, "Trajectoires et Origines," 57.

descendants of immigrants belong to working-class families, primarily by way of their fathers, compared to 41% of youth in the majority population.[79] Therefore, in certain instances, descendants of immigrants uphold these working-class origins developed by social and family backgrounds despite education integration efforts.

Implications for labor market

Though descendants of immigrants have been targeted by programs to increase their access to education, an equally effective metric to measure success of these programs is to track patterns within the labor market.

Language acquisition remains an additional contributing factor to levels of social mobility for descendants of immigrants. Under the notion that their immigrant parents arriving from non-Francophone countries may not have mastered French before arriving, the children may not speak the language at home. However, the student will develop their language skills in a school setting. This creates a ethnoracial dynamic in the educational system, as those with working-class non-Francophone backgrounds fall behind. Turkey particularly struggles in this realm, as 27% of children are primarily spoken to in French by their parents, while Francophone regions like Sahelian Africa have 60% of parents who speak French at home with their children.[80]
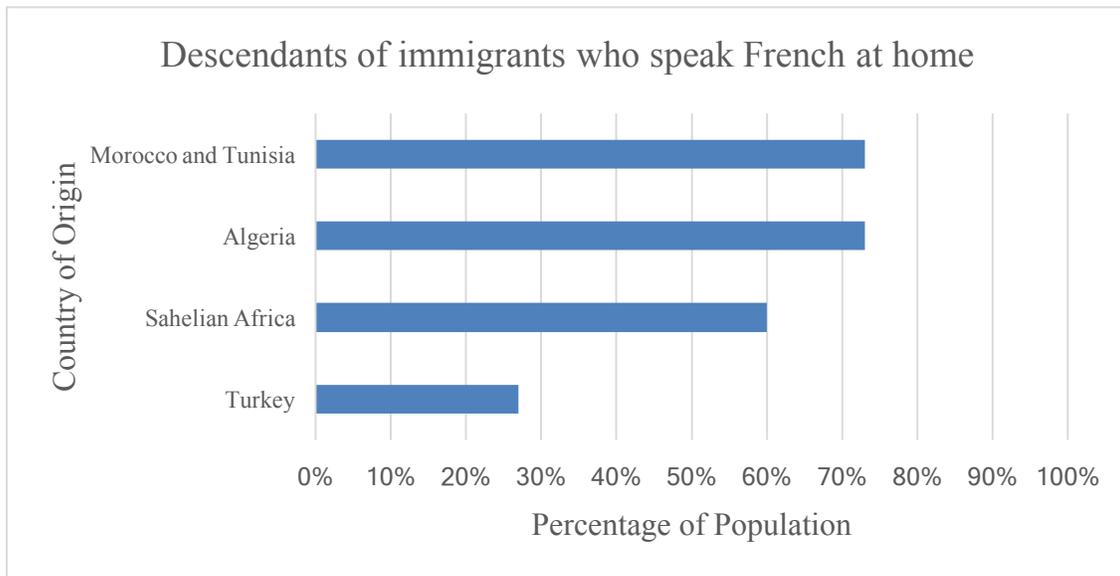
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[79] Ibid, 49.
[80] Ibid, 35.

Fig. 11. Descendants of immigrants who speak French at home (Graph by author. Data by INSEE).

In instances where language acquisition doesn't improve, this can affect social mobility for children of immigrants as they may not succeed at equal rates of their counterparts; thus, in the long-term, it will hinder the echelon of jobs accessible to these children.

Descendants of Turkish immigrants have a 160% higher risk of being unemployed than that of the majority group, as well as the highest unemployment rate (34%)[81], further entrenching how they, as an immigrant subgroup, struggle to gain traction in their education and careers within French society.

Ethnoracial discrimination is further substantiated within the labor market, proving its incessantly challenging presence for immigrants. Descendants of immigrants from the Maghreb and Africa most often feel that they've been discriminated against by unfairly been denied employment, and statistically are most at risk for this type of discrimination.[82] All subgroups of immigrants reported an unfair denial of employment rate higher than that of the majority

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[81] Ibid, 58.
[82] Ibid, 62.

population.[83] Not only does this reveal discriminatory aspects of the society these immigrants live in, it equally underlines this population's lack of access and social mobility.

Social mobility must be investigated in an intergenerational context of family occupation as well as geographical origin. Given that working-class male immigrants arrive and continue their jobs in certain low-skilled occupations, this emphasis on working-class labor is passed down through the sons of immigrants. Levels of training have evolved, and patterns have shown a decline of low or unskilled labor, elevating these sons of working-class immigrants to more managerial positions.[84] Meanwhile, daughters of immigrants are in more middle management positions.[85] These two trends reveal that education certainly allows for mobility within the labor market, especially for daughters of immigrants. Professional mobility of daughters of working-class immigrants is lower than that of sons, but is more in line with their majority population counterparts–professional categories have generally grown and become more accessible to individuals from various social backgrounds.[86]

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid, 63.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid, 64.

VI. Redesigning French education policy approaches

ZEP and Acsé were two programs that were emphasized as remedial measures; though they were an effort, they did not deliver services effectively and build a sense of equity among the majority population and working-class immigrants. While these programs may have helped with establishing some sense of equilibrium by way of education in the *banlieue* following the 2005 riots, the social cohesion policies that France implemented must be reconstructed. The attempt at cohesion falls short, as it doesn't account for specifically how inequality is developed by exterior forces and continues to shy away from positive discrimination approaches. In order to properly frame recommendations for France's social cohesion policies, specifically regarding education, I will use Marco Oberti's model (see Table 2) regarding urban segregation; this model will underline the impact of de-facto segregation on inequalities and discrimination, as well as how ethnoracial discrimination is formed.

Table 2. Model of Urban Segregation (Table by Marco Oberti, The French republican model of integration/cohesion and exclusion).
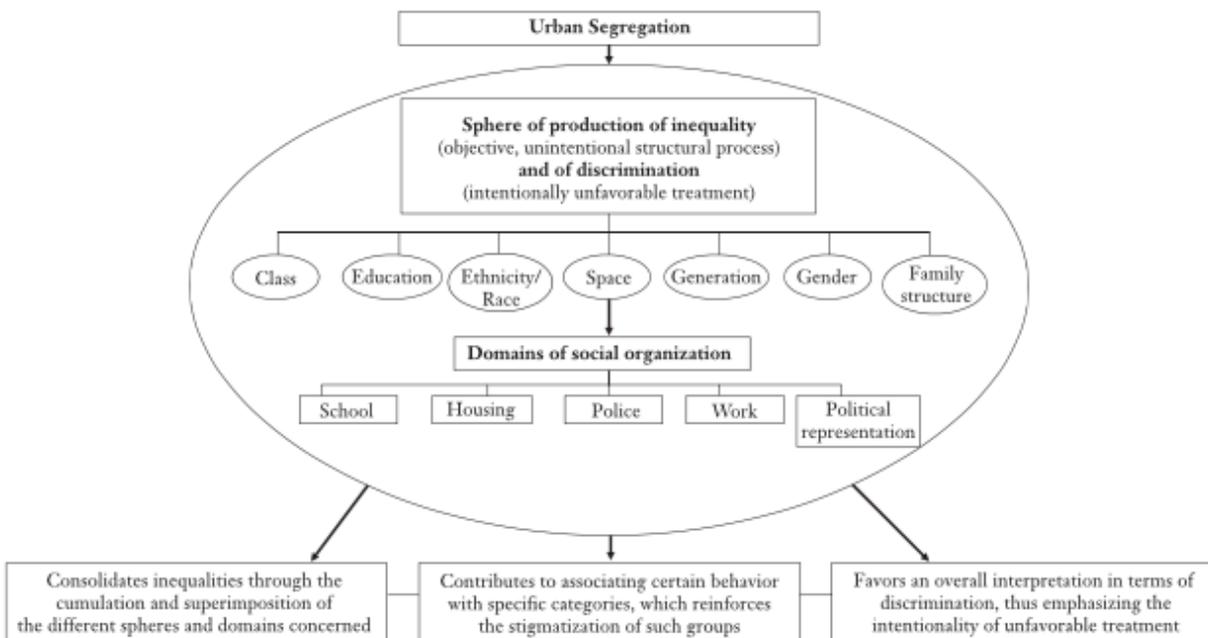
The idea of segregation is widely prevalent in this domain due to France's area-based approach to ameliorating levels of equity; ethnoracial discrimination is laced into France's educational system in light of previously discussed trends. It is imperative to note that depending on the category in question, each of these facets will affect levels of ethnoracial discrimination in varying capacities, some more implicitly than explicitly. More importantly, none of these recommendations exist in a vacuum, and each is fundamental and intrinsic to the next, in order to build a cohesive society that best reflects the needs of all constituents. How policy decisions are being made "must be explained by factors dealing with the content of the policies, the institutional contexts in which they are made, and the strategies of those involved."[87]

Change in policy implementers/action taken

On a rudimentary level, in order to effectively deconstruct how these policies could be improved, it is necessary to examine the domains of social organization that contribute to perpetuation of inequality. One of the primary forces that contributes to the systemic inequity within the educational system is political representation–more specifically, the lack of political actors who have a full cognizance of the institutionalized issues within the French education system. The first step in reconstructing political representation is: It is fundamental to elect and appoint more people of color from these working-class immigrant backgrounds to policy-making and implementing governmental acting positions. As a result of their lived experiences, they would, theoretically understand the nuances behind education policies and how they are systemically disenfranchising. Without increased representation in people who are in tune with these systemic forces, it is not possible to move education policy forward in French society; policy will instead reflect the exclusionary principles of republicanism and continue to

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[87] Baumgartner, *Conflict and Rhetoric in French Policymaking,* 21.

disenfranchise a large group of French citizens. There is a widespread belief amongst French

citizens that discrimination is most heavily perpetuated by parents, schools and universities, and

the French government. The majority of French citizens agreed that due to economic downturn,

it was necessary to reduce the promotion of diversity and equality and less funding should be

funneled toward these causes.[88] This ideology was existent amongst policymakers and was

supported by French citizens In 2009, a committee for Measurement and Evaluation of Diversity

and Discrimination was implemented as a means of establishing a plan of action to increase

acceptance of France's ethnically diverse population; the tools for establishing this acceptance

were through implementing more people of color in political parties, elite schools, and high-

ranking jobs in government. However, it remains futile if the general climate amongst political

actors maintains an unremoved attitude from the matter at hand:

> "Especially in the communities that were most affected by the riots, political
> representatives on both the right and the left were heavily involved, often supported by
> networks of associations and spontaneous local demonstrations. At the national level, in
> addition to the police response by the minister of the interior, the engagement of the
> political parties and trades union remained moderate in relation to the scope and duration
> of the riots. Few overall interpretations proposed by major politicians have sought to
> make political sense of the riots or to interpret differently the revolt of the
> underprivileged youth who live in areas of exclusion. In this sense, the political response
> to the riots was mostly repressive and penal."

Following the riots, the Minister of the Interior implemented a position called the Minister of

Equal Opportunity; Azouz Begag was appointed. This was poignant considering that Begag was

the first French cabinet member of North-African immigrant origin. Despite holding such a

prominent position, he was constantly reminded by critics of his lack of "Frenchness," given that

his role in society was prescribed for him due to his immigrant origin. Without more

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[88] Bozic, Bojana, "Policy Approaches to Reduce Discrimination Against Minorities in Europe"
(2013). *CMC Senior Theses*. 17.

policymakers like Begag, it will become de-facto impossible for the plight of immigrants to gain traction among the majority population and shine light on the perpetuation of republican ideology through policy. These issues don't align with those of the majority population because they don't identify with them personally–this proves problematic in that virtually all policy-makers are of the majority population. Baumgartner asserted that "Politicians are attracted by salience, repelled by complexity," highlighting why policymakers shy away from sustainably forging equity. Since Azouz Begag, France has made progress in increasing diverse political representation, but there is remains substantial progress to be made in this regard. Indubitably, this issue of inequity in education for working-class immigrants remains multi-dimensional, but there must be policymakers who are willing to intentionally tackle the issue.

Rethinking ZEP and Acsé: Reformulating the area-based approach

Furthermore, education policy making is too compartmentalized in France. There is too much of a divide between levels of implementation. The apex of the policymaking hierarchy remains at the national level–the Minister of Education oversees effectively every aspect of education in France, which is why policies are not as intentional as they have the propensity to be. There are ultraspecialized policymakers on the ground, who tend to remain in close contact with each other, yet their efforts and interests are rarely publicized to the population, resulting in a lack of cognizance. The Ministry of Education, given its top down approach, is a generalist: "Specialized actors are involved in virtually all aspects of educational policy, whereas generalists become involved only sporadically."[89] To be more effective in implementing education policy, there should be a regional specialist implementer in charge of each school zone in France, known

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[89] Baumgartner, *Conflict and Rhetoric in French Policymaking,* 53.

as an *académie.* In doing so, France can maintain its area-based approach in targeting, but it will be modified. By implementing community-based policy, these representatives would have a heightened cognizance of the issues in their school region. Space is an important aspect of the makeup of France, given that there are distinctly different urban and rural regions; not every school environment is uniform regardless of the centralization. Therefore, there will be a shift– implementers could allocate resources more appropriately and intentionally. The area-based approach is most often utilized in the ZEP program. While the priority neighborhoods deeply need resources, there should be more localized allocation of resources. In acknowledging which schools have schools that are struggling more than others, they can allocate funding in additional per-capita funding. The localized implementers can adopt an increasingly preventative approach, rather than remedial in the programs it builds to counteract educational inequities. Specifically, programs like Acsé have the propensity to be powerful if aligned more closely with the schools. Acsé could be redesigned as a network, with a number of sites in each *académie,* most ideally at every school. In working closely with the school, it would be more proactive in building equity sooner, rather than reactionary role after a student has been identified low-achieving. Acsé could address each of the issues that have proven challenging: school readiness and navigation, language acquisition, and parental involvement. First and foremost, these programs can help students who fall behind and/or who have fallen behind in primary school, so this doesn't permeate their academic success in *collège*. Furthermore, many students don't speak French at home with their parents and it may not be their first language, so it is imperative to build a sustainable program to aid with having a better command of the French language. Lastly, parental involvement is significant in counteracting societal forces that render working-class immigrants most disenfranchised in society. By way of integrating parents in the school system,

increasing their familiarity, and highlighting the logistics, they will not feel like their child is hindered by their lower levels of education, and can succeed regardless. Though France is reluctant and philosophically opposed to adopting an approach of positive discrimination, this is a more intentional area-based approach that could aid in reducing inequities at the primary and secondary school levels. In theory, Republicanism is universalist and is intended to provide unilateral education access–in order to truly have universal education, the system must account for all systemic disadvantages in education and work to build equity.

Debunking the idea of a meritocracy through sustainable affirmative action
Considering that the meritocracy is intrinsically tied to French society as a result of democratization, deconstructing this is perhaps the most difficult. It remains a paradox that the country's meritocracy places education as the ultimate conduit to success, yet it incessantly disenfranchises such a large population of its citizens. This failure to provide efficient and universal education access is a conundrum, but at the higher education level, it is necessary to implement a sustainable method of affirmative action. The fear of even slightly shifting away from republican ideology and adopting a positive discrimination approach has crystallized over the course of time; however, there needs to be an intentional shift to debunk the meritocracy to allow working-class descendants of immigrants to succeed. Accessibility is currently lacking, and the reproduction of the elite through the *baccaleuréat* exam remains problematic as well– both of these systems continually attribute the systemic inequity. *Institut d'études politiques*, one of the *grandes écoles* known as *Sciences Po*, implemented a controversial affirmative action program in 2001; it allowed minority students to be accepted in a separate admissions process. Typically, admissions involve a *concours* exam, and weeds out students who are underprepared.

There has never been a deviation in recruitment for the *grande école* system, as they perpetually strive to recruit the best students. In an attempt to "alter its white, male homogeneity," the director of *Sciences Po*, admitted 18 ZEP students without requiring them to sit for the *concours*; the admissions process was instead holistic and consisted of a number of exams and interviews. These students finished at comparable rates to traditional students, and since the program's inception in 2001, it has grown 30% each year.[90] While this is a step in the right direction, it is only one isolated institution with willingness to evaluate holistically. To make elite institutions more accessible, most or all of the *grandes écoles* should adopt the same model. Otherwise, the politics of immigration, assimilation, and integration will bar descendants of immigrants from entering these elite institutions.

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[90] Elise Langan, "The Normative Effects of Higher Education Policy in France," 35.

VII.   Conclusion

This research explored how France's social cohesion policies affected access to education for working-class immigrants, and how educational policies can be revamped. The French education system is multi-faceted, as is France's culture. In its preservation of republican ideology, France maintains a threshold of exclusivity that intrinsically reproduces the elite and most adversely affects their immigrant-origin population. Regarding social cohesion efforts in education, the most confounding issue is how to counteract inequity that descendants of immigrants face.

Education plays an active role in French society as a great equalizer and a conduit to success. However, in this paper, it became increasingly clear that education is affected by societal factors, such as urban segregation, socioeconomic disadvantage, and ethnoracial discrimination. The Ministry of Education attempts to counteract these external forces that perpetuate marginalization of its immigrant-origin population via social cohesion policies. However, the reluctance to utilize positive discrimination approaches will hinder the legitimacy and longevity of these policies. At this juncture, access to education has ameliorated, but a sustainable method to counteract inequities has yet to be built.

The biggest challenge in constructing a sustainable positive discrimination and affirmative action model is maintaining republican ideology, which lies at the crux of French society. Further discourse can encourage policy makers and implementers to strategize on how they can synthesize these two facets to most effectively rebuild education policy. In the future, by understanding the universalist nature of republicanism and its desire to establish national equality, hopefully equity for France's most marginalized citizens can be constructed through intentional action.

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