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Mathieu Ichou, Agnès van Zanten

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# France

Mathieu Ichou and Agnès van Zanten

## 12.1 Introduction

Racial and ethnic inequalities remain an underdeveloped area of research in France. This situation can mainly be attributed to the fact that researchers have been strongly influenced, on the one hand, by a political model of integra-tion (presented in more detail in Section 12.3.3) that has led France 'to ignore itself as a country of immigration' (Noiriel, 1988) and encouraged a color-blind approach to social reality (Lorcerie, 1994a) and, on the other hand, by Marxist political and scientific perspectives giving central importance to class in the study of society. However, since the 1980s, due to important changes in the immi-grant population and in policy towards immigrants, as well as to the arrival of a new generation of researchers and the growing internationalization of French research, the number of studies in this domain has increased and diversified. There are however very few reviews of the existing scientific literature (Lorcerie, 1995, 2003; Payet, 2003; Payet and van Zanten, 1996; van Zanten, 1997b) and only one in English (van Zanten, 1997a). Therefore, the following critical survey, based on a systematic sampling of the literature and covering 30 years of research, including very recent studies, should prove useful to various, and especially anglophone, audiences.

## 12.2 National context

This section presents a brief overview of the French educational system, the history and current state of immigration in France, and developments in policy models that directly or indirectly affect ethnic inequalities in education.

### 12.2.1 The French educational system

Since 1959 education in France has been compulsory for children aged six to 16, although virtually all children begin preschool at age three (Ministère de

l'Education nationale, 2011, p. 81). Primary school is common to all pupils and lasts five years, unless pupils are required to repeat one or more years as can happen in both primary and secondary schools. At age 11, on average, pupils enter a comprehensive four-year lower secondary school called *collège*. By default, pupils are assigned to the local *collège* but under certain conditions parents can choose another school (see Section 12.4.4). At the end of lower secondary school, pupils aged about 15 are assigned to different types of upper secondary school tracks based on their level of academic achievement, and their own preferences and that of their families. Higher achievers usually enter the academic or technological track of upper secondary school (*lycée*), while lower achievers usually enter a vocational *lycée* or an apprenticeship (Figure 12.1).

After three years of upper secondary school, pupils can take an exam called the *baccalauréat*, which serves both as a certificate of completion and as an entry permit to higher education. Depending on their chosen track, pupils will take the academic baccalaureate (*baccalauréat général*), the technological baccalaureate (*baccalauréat technologique*) or the vocational baccalaureate (*baccalauréat professionnel*), the latter created in 1985. Each year, around 65% of the cohort obtains a *baccalauréat* (Ministère de l'Education nationale, 2011, p. 241). Although all three types of *baccalauréat* officially grant access to higher education, they are actually strongly stratified both academically and socially (Ichou and Vallet, 2011): academic *baccalauréat* holders disproportionately come from upper- or middle-class backgrounds and usually enter university or take preparatory classes leading to the *Grandes Ecoles*; technological *baccalauréat* holders, often from lower-middle-class origins, most frequently pursue short vocational tracks in higher education, while pupils who hold a vocational *baccalauréat* generally enter the labor market directly after completion. At both primary and secondary school level, the private sector caters for a significant share of the student body. In 2010, 13.4% of primary school pupils and 21.3%

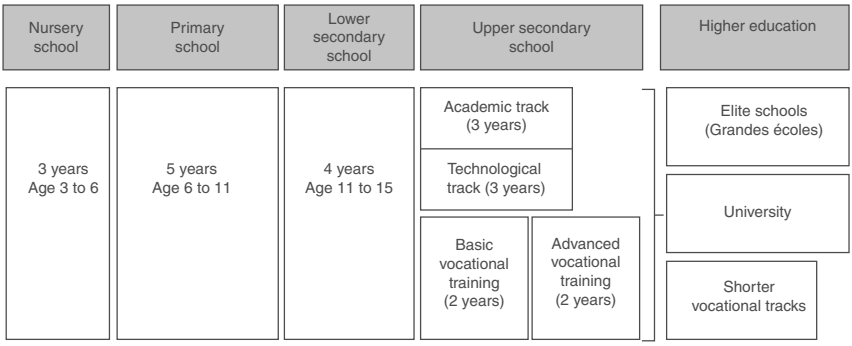


*Figure 12.1* The French educational system

of secondary school pupils were schooled in the private sector (Ministère de l'Education nationale, 2011, pp. 75, 95). The public comparison of schools, through league tables, is much less developed than in other countries such as the UK, but a few magazines publish yearly upper secondary schools rankings.

### 12.2.2 Immigration in France

France has long been a country of immigration. The earliest waves of immigration started long before World War II and came from Eastern and Southern Europe. After the war, the dramatic need for manual workers drove a rise in labor migration. Until the mid-1970s, most immigrants to France were men from Southern Europe (Italy, Portugal, Spain) and North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia). After the mid-1970s, family reunification and, to a lesser extent, political and labor migration have been the main reasons for immigration from Southern Europe and North Africa, as well as Turkey, sub-Saharan Africa (Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, etc.), Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam), and China. Immigrants from Northern Africa, most sub-Saharan African countries and Southeast Asia come from former French colonies. A recent survey shows that, among all adult residents in France, 10% are immigrants and 12% are children of one or two immigrant parents (Lhommeau and Simon, 2010, p. 13). Table 12.1 shows the proportion of first-year primary school students (*cours préparatoire*) in 1997 who were children of immigrants, by their parents' country of birth.

### 12.2.3 Integration models and policies

Since the 19th century, European countries have embraced ideological models of integration based on the belief of the nation-state as an organic entity, which alone can hold together the diversity of people, including different ethnic

*Table 12.1* Proportion of children of immigrants in the first year of primary school in 1997, by their parents' country of birth

| Pupils' parents' country of birth | % of all pupils | % of children of immigrant(s) |
|---|---|---|
| **Native parents** | **75.7** | |
| **Immigrant parents** | **24.3** | **100.0** |
| Mixed (one native parent) | 14.8 | 60.7 |
| Portugal | 1.0 | 4.1 |
| Algeria | 1.2 | 5.1 |
| Morocco | 1.6 | 6.7 |
| Tunisia | 0.6 | 2.3 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 1.3 | 5.3 |
| Turkey | 0.9 | 3.8 |
| Southeast Asia & China | 0.5 | 2.0 |
| Other immigrants | 2.4 | 9.9 |

*Source*: 1997–2004 primary school panel, Ministry of Education; own calculations.

groups, sharing the same territory. Each country has nevertheless adapted these models to specific political, social, and cultural configurations. France has introduced and maintained relatively unchanged what is known as the 'Republican model of integration' (Lapeyronnie, 1993; Favell, 2001, 2003; Browne, 2009). This model is characterized by the importance given to individual rather than collective participation, by the central role attributed to rational allegiance and political membership, as opposed to blood and group membership, and by an emphasis on universalism rather than cultural differences (Schnapper, 1991). As discussed below, this model, which gives a central role to the integrative function of institutions, and particularly schools, has profoundly influenced educational policies until today (Raveaud, 2008; Lorcerie, 2010).

Authors such as van Zanten (1997a) have pointed out that this model has persisted despite its inability to take into account important changes in French society and in immigration patterns after the 1970s. The Republican model was conceived to integrate regional groups and immigrants who came mainly from Europe or from the French colonies, that is from countries where the national culture was either relatively close to French culture or still partly dominated by it. Today the immigrant population is composed of a large number of immigrants from non-EU countries. In addition, the form of assimilation promoted by the Republican model was made possible by the fact that even though immigrants occupied lower-status jobs in the industrial and construction sectors, they were integrated into an expanding economy of full employment and, a significant proportion of them, into workers' trade unions and associations as well (Dubet, 1989; Tripier, 1990; Body-Gendrot, 1995). The situation is entirely different in a period of economic recession and growing unemployment. Still another change concerns ethnic segregation. Since the late 1970s, the departure of the white middle classes and, later, the white working classes from social housing areas in urban peripheries has contributed to the increase of urban segregation.

This situation has generated more complex patterns of immigrant integration. Two studies, one based on the examination of existing statistical data and studies by Dubet (1989) and a second, based on an original research by Tribalat (1995), found a large degree of cultural assimilation among most immigrant groups with respect to cultural practices and a relatively high level of political participation among second-generation immigrants, especially among Algerian youngsters, but limited social mobility and access to the job market for most groups. Working from a perspective inspired by the work of Alejandro Portes and his colleagues (Portes and Zhou, 1993) in the United States, Safi (2006) has shown the existence of three distinctive patterns of integration in French society: (1) upward assimilation characterizes the situation of Spaniards who show great levels of cultural assimilation, socio-economic mobility and social mix; (2) downward assimilation characterizes that of Africans and, to a lesser extent, of individuals from Maghreb, who show high levels of cultural assimilation but low levels of socio-economic mobility; and (3) cultural pluralism

characterizes the situation of Asian and, to a lesser extent, of Turkish immigrants. This third pattern is the most conflicting with the premises of the Republican model of integration both because socio-economic integration and upward mobility are accompanied by the preservation of group-specific cultural traits and because community networks and resources seem to play a more important role than state institutions, including schools.

## 12.3 Methodology

We have systematically sampled all the sociologically relevant peer-reviewed articles, books, edited books, and official reports on the subject of ethnic or racial inequalities in French secondary education from 1980 to 2010. We also adopted a flexible approach when appropriate. This flexibility proved especially important in two instances. First, while focusing on the secondary school level, we also included relevant research on primary school when we considered it particularly noteworthy or necessary to the understanding of pupils' situations in secondary school. Secondly, we sometimes included articles from non-peer-reviewed journals when they met high scientific standards and significantly contributed to the understanding of the subject matter.

In line with Stevens (2007) and Stevens et al. (2011), our sampling procedure consisted of three main stages. First, using systematic queries, we searched bibliographical databases, including two that are international (ERIC and Sociological Abstracts) and two that are French (CAIRN and Persée).[1] The second step consisted in identifying a relevant sample of French scientific journals from 1980 to 2010 and systematically examining their tables of contents for relevant articles. We considered three types of journals: high profile general sociological journals, journals focused on the sociology of education, and journals focused on the sociology of migration and ethnicity.[2] Third, we inspected the bibliographic references contained in the articles found in the two previous steps to identify even more relevant works for review.

This sampling approach resulted in identifying a large body of research, which can be categorized into five research traditions: (1) structures, curriculum, and policies for minority students (SCPM); (2) family background and ethnic inequalities in education (FBEI); (3) limited educational resources of ethnic minority families (LEREM); (4) ethnic school segregation and educational inequalities (ESSEI); and (5) ethnic relations in classrooms and schools (ERCS).

## 12.4 Ethnicity and educational inequality in France

### 12.4.1 Structures, curriculum, and policies for minority students

In this section we present research studies that have analyzed how the language, culture, religion, and educational problems of ethnic minority pupils

have been integrated in the policies, curricula, and social order of schools. We analyze to what extent these policies reflect the Republican model of 'indifference to (ethnic) differences' and examine their intended and unintended consequences.

#### *12.4.1.1 Language and culture*

A prime example of the limited recognition of cultural differences by the French system is the way in which the linguistic and cultural problems of immigrant children have been addressed. The existence of linguistic 'initiation' and 'adaptation' classes was officialized in 1970. However, because the creation of these classes was seen as a breach of the Republican model and because policymakers feared that they might have negative effects on the school trajectories of immigrant children, they were treated as temporary structures both within the system and for children themselves. Until 1995, when new programs and methods on French as a second language were developed, these classes used and adapted syllabi designed for teaching French as a foreign language even though the linguistic problems of immigrant children were frequently very different in nature (Cortier, 2007). Unsurprisingly, the intercultural materials and activities that they produced and used were also quite poor and regarded with suspicion (Berque, 1985; Lorcerie, 1995). As a result, these structures have occupied a marginalized place in the system and contributed in turn to marginalize ethnic minority children (Berque, 1985; Lazaridis, 2001).

In 1973, ELCO (*Enseignement des langues et des cultures d'origine*) classes were also created that offered linguistic and cultural courses in the children's native tongue taught by teachers from their native countries and funded by foreign governments. However, the initial aim of these classes was not to promote cultural differences but to prepare for immigrants' return to their home country. After they were requalified as structures aiming to promote immigrant students' integration in French society, they have been accused of having been used by Muslim countries to transmit the religious principles of Islam and to foster anti-French sentiment among Muslim pupils. Researchers have nevertheless shown that although there are strong variations in the types of courses provided, due to differences between countries in the political role and interpretation of Islam and little administrative control over teachers and their pedagogical practices, the existence of indoctrination mechanisms has been greatly exaggerated (Barou, 1995; Lorcerie, 1994b, 2010).

As concerns the presence of elements of the culture of origin of ethnic minority children in national mainstream curricula, researchers have pointed out the limited space provided for the presentation of Arab-Islamic civilizations and for the history of immigration in history programs and textbooks, the slightly more accurate representation of migration processes in the curricula of geography, economic and social sciences (a subject only taught in one

upper secondary school track), and civic education, and the strong reluctance to teach Islam as a contemporary subject (Lorcerie, 1998, 2010; Falaize, 2007).

Researchers have also shown that immigrants are generally presented in a positive but instrumental perspective, as an economic asset for France, in history, geography, and civic education textbooks, and that racism is analyzed as a phenomena belonging to colonial history or to other countries such as South Africa. They also point out that in textbook images immigrants are presented in ways that tend to degrade them, are associated with poverty, suffering, persecution and war, or are just 'invisible' (i.e. presented in the dark or represented by a symbol) (Roussier-Fusco, 2007; Lavin, 2007). Although little is known about the effects of curricula and textbooks on students' knowledge and representations of immigrants, Baccaïni and Gani (1999) found that 54% of secondary school students, including a significant (39%) proportion of ethnic minority students, of lower-class students in technological tracks and of students in private schools, think that immigrants contribute to unemployment among the native population.

#### *12.4.1.2 Religion and the wearing of hijabs in schools*

The recognition of non-Christian religions in French schools has attracted a great deal of attention. What is known as the 'hijabs' or 'headscarves' affair started in 1989 and has undergone three phases (de Galembert, 2009). The first controversy started in 1989 following the exclusion of three veiled Muslim girls from a *lycée*. It ended after the *Conseil d'Etat* rendered a judgment reminding the French public that civil servants must remain neutral in all their official responsibilities but not the clients – in this case, the students – followed by a decree from the minister of education reaffirming the secular nature of the school system but advising discussion and consultation with students and their families to find a negotiated solution (Wayland, 1997; Limage, 2000).

Local conflicts continued to occur but the second controversy only started in 1994 when a new minister of education issued a decree stating that 'ostentatious symbols' of religion should be banned from schools. This decree was followed by a limited number of exclusions, some of which were declared void by administrative judges. The third and currently last controversy started in 2003 when a law was passed allowing head teachers to exclude students wearing a headscarf if that symbol was perceived as disrupting the normal functioning of the school. Although this law has not given way to a significant number of exclusions, it has encouraged some immigrant parents to plead discrimination before the HALDE (Haute Autorité contre les discriminations et pour l'égalité), an independent administrative authority created in 2005 and disbanded in 2011.

Analyses of the positions of the different actors involved in these controversies show that the majority of intellectuals, policy-makers, and institutional

actors are opposed to headscarves on the basis of three types of arguments: respecting the religious neutrality of schools, limiting the impact of a patriarchal social order on Muslim women, and fighting increasing religious fanaticism (Gaspard and Khosrokhavar, 1995; de Galembert, 2009; Limage, 2000). An additional argument is that publicly showing their Islamic beliefs may reduce girls' chances of social and professional integration (Chérifi, 2001).

However, as pointed out by Lorcerie (1996) and, in an ethnographic study, by Chazal and Normand (2007), whether wearing the hijab becomes an issue or not at the local level depends on the underlying causes and connections that school agents identify in the girls' attitudes, i.e. whether they are seen as constrained or voluntary and, if voluntary, on the factors that motivate them. The latter are frequently religious but can also be psychological and social (a reaction to stigmatization or a sign of rebellion) as well as strategic: complying with the pressures of their parents and brothers by wearing a hijab can also allow girls to gain more autonomy from their families. Kakpo (2005) also underscores the need to understand young men's attraction to Islam, which she associates with attempts to improve their self-esteem and status position when confronted with academic underachievement, unemployment, and rejection by successful Muslim women.

#### *12.4.1.3 Positive discrimination*

A limited departure from the Republican model in educational policy was also prompted by teachers' work in segregated schools and by research findings showing the failure of the model to ensure ethnic and class equality in education (see the FBEI tradition). These processes led to the creation in 1981 of Educational Priority Zones (ZEP), a compensatory program modeled after the British Educational Priority Areas, which represented the first explicit acknowledgment of the existence of socio-geographic educational inequalities (Henriot-van Zanten, 1990). In accordance with the principles of the French model of integration, the beneficiaries of this policy were not selected on the basis of personal but of territorial criteria, i.e. the degree of social and educational disadvantage in a given area. However, both because of the geographical concentration of immigrants in poor areas and because the percentage of children of immigrants at school was used as one of the main criteria of social disadvantage, the latter became a main target of this policy (Morel, 2002; Calvès, 2004; Doytcheva, 2007; Robert, 2009). In addition to that, the analysis of teachers' discourses reveals a pervasive tendency to assimilate academic underachievement and the presence of children from immigrants groups in the schools (Varro, 1997, 1999; Kherroubi and Rochex, 2002).

The ZEP, which came to be seen as the major French policy to reduce educational inequalities, proved extremely resistant to political changes throughout

the 1980s and 1990s. Since the mid-1990s, they have nevertheless become the target of growing criticism because of their lack of effectiveness in improving the educational achievement of students from low socio-economic and immigrant backgrounds, even though these students' school trajectories appear slightly better than those of similar students in non-ZEP schools (Meuret, 1994; Rochex, 2008; Benabou et al., 2009).

In this context, prestigious higher education institutions such as Sciences Po and ESSEC, a renowned management school, launched new programs in 2001 and 2002, replicated later by many other *grandes écoles,* targeting disadvantaged students. These programs were a response to research studies showing a decrease in the percentage of lower-class students in elite institutions and to pressures from businessmen and politicians of immigrant backgrounds, who had started to denounce the ethnic and racial barriers to accessing these institutions. However, although they maintained the territorial dimension through the development of partnerships with disadvantaged *lycées*, these programs represent an important shift from place-based to people/place-based policies because they select a limited number of good and motivated students within each school for preferential treatment (Sabbagh, 2006; Buisson-Fenet and Landrier, 2008; van Zanten, 2009c). They target not only socially disadvantaged students but also a large proportion of ethnic minority students as well without officially acknowledging it (van Zanten, 2010).

In sum, this research tradition has revealed three important phenomena. The first is the tendency of the French educational system to create structures for ethnic minority students that are not given strong official recognition and financial support, and are therefore marginalized in the educational system and marginalize the students that they are supposed to help. The second concerns the gap between official policies and their implementation at the school level, which depends on interpretations of local situations. Finally, the last phenomenon has to do with the use of territorial and social criteria as a proxy for targeting, without officially acknowledging it, ethnic minority pupils.

### 12.4.2 Family background and ethnic inequalities in education

#### *12.4.2.1 Public data, French Republican ideology, and difficulties in measuring ethnic inequalities*

As in other quantitative subfields of French sociology, researchers who belong to the family background and ethnic inequalities in education (FBEI) research tradition have largely depended on data collected by public institutions, especially the Ministry of Education, the National Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) and the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE).[3] Funded and administered by the state, these public institutes have also logically followed what has been called the 'color-blind Republican

ideology', which lies at the heart of traditional French integration policies and official discourse, i.e. it is still legally prohibited in France to record people's self-described race or ethnicity. This ideology of color-blindness has long made it impossible to quantitatively study ethnic inequalities in education.

The FBEI research tradition has nevertheless made substantial progress since the early 1980s, both thanks to the development of data of increasing quality, especially in terms of the still indirect measure of ethnicity, and the use of more refined statistical methods. Methodological advances were fostered by the growing realization that ethnicity should not be studied in isolation, given that it is so closely intertwined with class background and family structure. In order to consider these multiple variables, older studies frequently used two- or three-way cross-tabulations, while more recent works make use of multivariate linear and logistic regression techniques.

In addition to that, researchers have in the past often been forced to use remote proxies to measure ethnicity. From the 1960s, with the seminal work of Paul Clerc (1964), until the early 1990s, ethnicity was overwhelmingly studied by taking into account pupils' nationality, very frequently reduced to a dichotomy between French citizens, supposedly representing the majority group, and foreign citizens, supposedly representing ethnic minority pupils. It soon became evident that citizenship alone was a very weak measure for ethnicity, as most ethnic minority pupils were children of immigrants and French citizens.[4] With the passage of time and the increased salience of immigration as a political, social, and sociological issue, data on pupils' parents' country of birth were collected (see footnote 3), in order to assess second-generation immigrants' educational '*intégration*'. The country of birth of pupils' parents, sometimes combined with the language spoken at home, is now *the* main proxy used by French sociologists to measure ethnicity in the context of this quantitative research tradition.

The remainder of this section critically describes the main findings within the FBEI research tradition, by successively reviewing: (1) works that compare the educational achievement of ethnic minority pupils with that of the majority group; (2) works that study the differences between academic progress made by ethnic minority pupils and their peers in primary and secondary schools; (3) recent works that use more relevant data and adopt more nuanced approaches to study educational differences between ethnic minorities, their positions within a highly differentiated secondary education system, and interactions between ethnicity and gender.

#### *12.4.2.2 Differences in academic achievement between children of immigrants and children of natives*

Based on the first large-scale survey focusing on education, the INED 1962–1972 panel, Clerc (1964) analyzed the academic achievement of foreign pupils and

their transition rate from primary to lower secondary school. His conclusion set a precedent for future investigations of ethnic inequalities in education:

> Foreign pupils are, on average, slightly disadvantaged compared to their French peers. *However, this handicap is mainly due to the occupational structure of this population, in which 70% are the children of manual workers*. A working-class child of foreign nationality is no more [academically] disadvantaged than a French pupil from the same class background.[5] (Clerc 1964, p. 871, emphasis in the original)

In the 1980s, other studies focused on the academic achievement of foreign pupils and made clear that the main factors of their raw underachievement were to be found in their lower-class origin and, to a lesser extent, their family structure (Marangé and Lebon, 1982; Bastide, 1982; Gibert, 1989; Boulot and Boyzon-Fradet, 1984, 1988b; Boyzon-Fradet and Boulot, 1991).

However, it was not until the mid-1990s that the influence of family background on ethnic inequalities in secondary education was analyzed comprehensively by Louis-André Vallet and Jean-Paul Caille (Vallet and Caille, 1996a; see also Vallet and Caille, 1995; Vallet, 1996; Vallet and Caille, 1996b). Based on the 1989 panel study of the French Ministry of Education (see note 3), Vallet and Caille's study improves on previous literature through the use of advanced multivariate regression models and the consideration of a wide range of educational outcomes that occur along pupils' educational trajectories.[6] They show that the number of siblings, class background, and especially parental level of education explain most, if not all, of ethnic minority children's underachievement for all educational outcomes analyzed. The authors further demonstrate that, all things being equal, ethnic minority pupils are actually *more likely* than the majority group to be channeled into the academic track in the middle and end of lower secondary school. Using a later wave from the 1989 panel, Vallet and Caille (2000) showed that being a child of immigrants also has a significant and positive net effect at the end of upper secondary school on the likelihood of passing the *baccalauréat*.

#### *12.4.2.3 Ethnic differences in academic progress*

Other studies have specifically investigated the differences in academic progress made by ethnic minority children compared with pupils from the majority group and provided a convergent result: ethnic minority pupils begin primary school with a net academic disadvantage compared with children from the majority group, but progress faster in the following years (Le Guen, 1991; DEP, 1993; Mingat, 1984; Matéo, 1992; Bressoux and Desclaux, 1991; Mingat, 1987; Bressoux, 1994; Caille, 2008). In any case, a strong claim can be made that primary school does not contribute to widening ethnic inequalities in

education; if anything, it would tend to reduce these inequalities, though not enough for second-generation immigrants to fully catch up with children of natives by the beginning of lower secondary school (Caille and Rosenwald, 2006).

The picture appears similar in lower secondary school. Most studies show that ethnic minority students progress more than their French peers throughout lower secondary school, when socio-economic and family background is controlled for (Mondon, 1984; Caille and O'Prey, 2002; Caille, 2008). To date, the best attempt to analyze the comparative progress in both French and mathematics of children of immigrants and children of natives from the first year of lower secondary school (age 11) to their fourth and final year (age 15) can be credited to Héctor Cebolla Boado (2008b). Based on the 1995 panel survey (see footnote 3), he shows that children of immigrants do progress faster in both subjects, but that 'their faster progress seems to stem from the fact that it is easier to improve one's marks when their initial level is low than it is when their initial level is high' (Cebolla Boado, 2008b, p. 760).

#### *12.4.2.4 Differences between and within ethnic groups*

The remainder of this section is devoted to reviewing mostly recent studies that aim to give a more complex and realistic picture of ethnic inequalities in education in France, mainly by analyzing educational differences between first- and second-generation immigrants, between ethnic minorities and between educational outcomes (especially between performance and tracking).

As a whole, these research studies clearly show that children of immigrants are more educated than their parents (Moguérou et al., 2010) and that, among immigrant children, the younger a child is when he or she arrived in France, the better his or her educational achievement and attainment (Tribalat, 1997; Vallet and Caille, 1996a). Even if immigrant status (i.e. being first or second generation) does matter more than ethnicity *per se* (Cebolla Boado, 2008a), one cannot deny that differences in the parents' country of birth, whether interpreted as ethnic, cultural, or economic (see Section 12.2), are associated with educational differences among ethnic minorities.

The two largest second-generation immigrant groups in France, i.e. those from North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia) and Southern Europe (Portugal, Spain, Italy) have been the focus of many studies (Brinbaum and Kieffer, 2005, 2009; Brinbaum and Cebolla Boado, 2007; Cebolla Boado, 2006, 2008a). The general conclusion is that, all things being equal, neither group has a significantly lower performance than the majority group, although, in certain models, North African children do seem to fare worse than children of natives. Due to small sample sizes, few studies have actually managed to analyze the situation of smaller ethnic groups. However, Ichou (2013) has recently shown that the smallest and least often studied groups of children of immigrants are also those who differ the most academically from children of natives from similar social backgrounds.

The lowest performing groups are children of immigrants from Turkey and the Sahel, while children of Southeast Asian immigrants have the highest average level of academic achievement, often outperforming children of natives.

Besides academic performance, tracking has been shown to be a key influence on (ethnic minority) pupils' academic trajectories. In descriptive terms, ethnic minority pupils tend more often than the majority group to be: in special education classes[7] in primary, but especially secondary school (Lacerda and Ameline, 2001; Boulot and Boyzon-Fradet, 1992); in low-prestige short vocational tracks in upper secondary school (Lacerda and Ameline, 2001; Alba and Silberman, 2009; Palheta, 2012); and, at the *baccalauréat* level, in less 'noble' technological tracks rather than in the most prestigious scientific track (Laacher and Lenfant, 1991, 1997; Brinbaum and Kieffer, 2009). In fact, the proportion of ethnic minority pupils schooled in a specific track can be said to be inversely related to the track's social and academic prestige (Mullet, 1980).

When ethnic differences in academic performance and tracking are analyzed together, an interesting and seemingly paradoxical result emerges. In descriptive terms (i.e. without controls for socio-economic backgrounds), ethnic minority pupils perform noticeably worse than the majority group. Yet, when prior academic performance is controlled for, they tend to be *more* likely than children of natives to proceed towards the academic track of upper secondary school (Brinbaum and Cebolla Boado, 2007; Brinbaum and Kieffer, 2009; Ichou and Vallet, 2013). As is often the case in the study of ethnic inequalities in education, works that rely on descriptive bivariate analyses and those that use multivariate methods reach different and indeed opposite conclusions.

In sum, this research tradition that focuses on the quantitative descriptive study of ethnic inequalities in education has improved over the years in both the quality and accuracy of its results through the development of better data and measures of ethnicity, and the use of more advanced multivariate methods. Contrary to common wisdom, but in line with the conclusions of the international literature on the subject, the central finding in these studies is that if their class background and family structure are taken into account, ethnic minority pupils do not appear to perform less well academically than members of the majority group. However, it remains unclear how research findings are affected by the different ways 'achievement' is measured between studies, from standardized test scores to grade point averages to teachers' subjective assessments. In addition, due to limited sample sizes, both smaller ethnic minorities and differences within each ethnic group should be analyzed further by future research.

### 12.4.3 Limited educational resources of ethnic minority families (LEREM)

This section reviews research works focused on the description and explanation of the resources of ethnic minority families towards schooling. A wide range

of educational attitudes and practices have been studied. They can broadly be structured into the following categories: educational aspirations, which is the most widely studied topic, interactions with and knowledge about school, and help from extended family and the community. To account for the specificity of the resources of ethnic minority families, some researchers point to the influence of cultural differences, while others insist on socio-economic pre-migration characteristics.

#### *12.4.3.1 High aspirations, social distance from school, and help from the community*

There is a large consensus among sociologists in describing the educational aspirations of ethnic minority families as higher than that of the majority group. This is the case for immigrant parents when compared with socio-economically similar native parents (Vallet and Caille, 1996a; Brinbaum and Kieffer, 2005; Caille and O'Prey, 2002; Caille, 2005, 2008; Ichou, 2010). This 'ambitious' and hopeful attitude is associated with a general trust from immigrant parents towards schools and teachers who embody knowledge (Henriot-van Zanten, 1990). These attitudes seem, by and large, to be passed on to the children's generation in the form of high aspirations and 'academic goodwill' (Caille, 2005; Cibois, 2002), especially for children of North African immigrants (Rochex, 1992; Brinbaum and Kieffer, 2005; Stuart Lambert and Peignard, 2002). The educational aspirations of second-generation immigrants compared with that of children of natives tend to be less dependent on their actual educational position and academic achievement (Caille, 2005; Brinbaum and Kieffer, 2005): even after being channeled into short vocational tracks in upper secondary school, these pupils still seem to show relatively unaltered ambitions (Caille, 2007; Palheta, 2012). The high aspirations of immigrant parents and children have been shown to be associated with higher academic achievement (Zeroulou, 1988; Zeroulou, 1985) and are therefore considered to be the most likely cause of the higher educational position of most second-generation immigrants, all things being equal (Vallet and Caille, 1996a).

These ambitious and hopeful attitudes of immigrant families cannot be understood independently of their demonstrated lack of knowledge about the school system, their difficulty in helping their children with homework, and their symbolic distance from schools and teachers. Because they were not schooled in France, immigrant parents often lack accurate knowledge about the French school system and its procedures, language, and norms (Henriot-van Zanten, 1990; Zehraoui, 1998; Dubreuil, 2001; Caille and O'Prey, 2002; Caille, 2008).

However, educational resources, often absent in the nuclear family of immigrant children, are frequently found elsewhere in the larger community. Significantly more than children of natives, ethnic minority pupils find support

among elder siblings who went to school in France, or from other relatives and educated members of their ethnic or neighborhood community (Zeroulou, 1988; Laacher, 1990; Henriot-van Zanten, 1990; Lahire, 1995; Zehraoui, 1998; Santelli, 2001; Dubreuil, 2001).

#### *12.4.3.2 Cultural differences and pre-migration social position*

Although culturalist approaches to ethnic differences in education are not dominant in French sociology, some researchers have adopted them to explain the specific resources and difficulties of ethnic minority families towards education and schooling. In addition to or in place of traditional socio-economic interpretations, these authors maintain that each culture is associated with specific educational practices and representations (Carayon, 1992; Lagrange, 2010). For example, Vasquez (Vasquez, 1980, 1982) focused on cultural differences in time management norms to explain educational practices leading to the academic underachievement of recently immigrated children of Spanish and Portuguese families.

In a recent book entitled *Le Déni des cultures* ('The Denial of Cultures'), Hugues Lagrange (2010) uses a kinship structure-oriented culturalist framework to interpret secondary school underachievement among the children of immigrants from the Sahel region (i.e. Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania). He holds that the clash of immigrants' culture of origin and dominant French culture, in a context of urban segregation and economic inequalities, produces a subculture that impedes second-generation academic achievement. Although Lagrange's work does insist on the historical and contextual character of the group culture, culturalist approaches have been criticized on the grounds that they tend to overemphasize group homogeneity and overlook contextual and historical variation, thus presenting an essentialist view of culture (Charlot, 1990; Chauveau and Rogovas-Chauveau, 1990; Guénif-Souilamas, 1994; Payet, 1995b; Fassin, 2011).

Recognizing both the need to take into account the pre-migration experiences of immigrants and the heterogeneity of these experiences, some researchers have followed a promising path that looks at pre-migration socio-economic and educational characteristics of migrants as a determining factor of their situation in France, their attitudes towards education, and the attitudes of their children. These researchers have been influenced by a key French immigration sociologist, Abdelmalek Sayad, according to whom, 'Any study of migratory phenomena that overlooks the emigrants' conditions of origin is bound only to give a view that is at once *partial* and *ethnocentric*'. (Sayad, 2004, p. 29, emphasis in the original). Research has found that children of immigrants who succeed in school usually have parents, and even grandparents, aunts, and uncles, who were more educated, more urban, and had more economic resources than average in their country of birth (Zeroulou, 1985; Zeroulou, 1988; Laacher, 1990, 2005; Gouirir, 1998; Santelli, 2001; Ichou, 2013).

The roots of immigrant families' higher aspirations towards school can be traced back to the pre-migration status and intentions of future migrants. Upward social mobility is often a central goal of migration, but not easily attainable by first-generation migrants. Parents consequently push their children to fulfill the 'migration project' that they formulated (Charlot, 1999; Zehraoui, 1998, 1996). The academic and professional success of their children is, for the parents, an achievement by proxy, which would legitimize their migration altogether (Zehraoui, 1998; Laurens, 1995).

In sum, the research tradition focusing on the limited resources of ethnic minority families towards schooling is not a very coherent and integrated one. However, a somewhat consistent picture emerges depicting ethnic minority families, most often immigrant families, as having high educational aspirations, being less knowledgeable in school matters and participating less in schools than natives, and as resorting more to elder siblings, relatives, and the community for school help. To explain these specific educational attitudes and practices researchers in this field have alternatively focused on cultural differences and on pre-migration socio-economic characteristics. The main limitation of this strand of research is the absence of any systematic assessment of the effect, either positive or negative, of these specific resources on the academic achievement of ethnic minority students.

### 12.4.4 Ethnic school segregation and educational inequalities (ESSEI)

Both social and policy changes, on the one hand, and evolutions inside the field of sociology, on the other, have fostered the development of a research tradition focusing on ethnic segregation at school. As mentioned in the section on context, from the 1960s onwards the French educational system has undergone a dramatic process of both comprehensivisation and massification. The progressive disappearance of formal tracking in lower secondary school has in fact led to the development of subtler forms of differentiations in pupils' trajectories, depending on differences in languages studied, options chosen, schools attended, etc. (Henriot-van Zanten, 1990; van Zanten, 2001; Payet, 1995a; Bourdieu and Champagne, 1992). At the same time, as part of a general pattern of political devolution, the administrative autonomy of secondary schools has increased (van Zanten, 2011). This twofold process of increasing school differentiation and autonomy has contributed to make ethnic school segregation both desirable to some families and socially and sociologically more visible. However, the focus on school segregation is also due to efforts by sociologists of education from the 1980s onwards to challenge and refine the dominant 'reproduction paradigm' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970), by focusing on local educational processes (Duru-Bellat and van Zanten, 2012).

Researchers in the ESSEI research tradition agree that the expression 'ethnic school segregation' should only be used if three conditions are present (van

Zanten, 1996; Barthon, 1998): (1) one should be able to observe that pupils belonging to different ethnic groups are unevenly distributed between schools and within schools, over and above class-based segregation; (2) there should be specific school-related mechanisms and behaviors that shape the distribution of pupils between and within schools, over and above the spatial distribution of pupils in the neighborhood; and (3) this uneven distribution of pupils between and within schools based on their ethnicity should be shown to have negative consequences for individuals' educational achievement. This section will review how researchers have addressed these three types of issues.

#### *12.4.4.1 The existence of ethnic segregation at school*

Following the pioneering and oft-cited book by Léger and Tripier (1986), researchers have used ethnographic methods to study the social and ethnic composition of local schools in ethnically mixed neighborhoods and have observed a clear pattern of ethnic concentration, especially in lower secondary school (Henriot-van Zanten, 1990; Henriot-van Zanten et al., 1994; van Zanten, 2001; Payet, 1995a, 1998, 1999). Payet (1995a, 1998, 1999), amongst others, insists on one key point: ethnic segregation should not be reduced to the most visible *between*-schools disparity but should also be investigated as differences *within* school and *between* classes.

In the past 15 years, researchers have begun using statistical data to quantify ethnic school segregation and have confirmed its high level. They have shown that ethnic school segregation in lower secondary schools was both high and on the increase during the 1990s (Trancart, 1998; Barthon, 1998; Louis-Etxeto, 1998). In this field, a key innovative study was carried out by Felouzis and his colleagues (Felouzis, 2003; Felouzis et al., 2005; Felouzis and Perroton, 2009). Based on data on all 144,725 pupils from all 333 middle schools in the Bordeaux education authority, they used pupils' first names (instead of nationality unlike previous studies) to classify each of them according to their ethnicity, or as they prefer to say, their 'cultural origin'. Thanks to this creative measurement method, the authors showed that, within this education authority, 10% of the middle schools were concentrating 40% of pupils of African and Turkish cultural origins. Indeed, 'such an uneven distribution would be inconceivable according to other variables, such as pupils' class background or academic performance' (Felouzis, 2003, p. 427). The major weakness of this research lies in its geographical limitation to only one education authority around Bordeaux making it impossible to generalize its results at the national level.

#### *12.4.4.2 Causes of ethnic segregation at school*

Three broad factors are involved in the uneven distribution of ethnic minority pupils between and within schools: (1) urban segregation and school district

zoning; (2) families' strategies of school flight; and (3) school policies and in-school practices.

Urban sociologists and geographers have shown that ethnic minorities are by no means evenly distributed between neighborhoods (Desplanques and Tabard, 1991; Rhein, 1997; Préteceille, 2009). Because pupils are normally educated in their local school at the primary and secondary level residential segregation alone can explain *part* of the uneven distribution of ethnic minorities between schools. White upper-class parents with significant economic resources frequently choose to move or already live (Préteceille, 2006; Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot, 1994) in areas with high real estate prices next to prestigious lower and upper secondary schools (van Zanten, 2001; Oberti, 2007a). Although most costly economically, this strategy is probably the most efficient and least visible among the many strategies that families use to avoid schools with a significant concentration of pupils from immigrant backgrounds (van Zanten, 2006b; Oberti, 2007a). Aggravating the effects of residential segregation on school segregation, school district zoning often tends to group social housing areas together in a single district, thus increasing the concentration of poor ethnic minorities in specific schools (van Zanten and Obin, 2010; Barthon, 1996). Because residential segregation is higher when smaller spatial units are considered, the size of the school districts also matters: the smaller they are, the stronger the effects on segregation (Payet, 1998, 1999). Residential segregation, combined with school district zoning, has a decidedly substantial impact on ethnic school segregation. However, researchers show that school segregation is almost always higher than residential segregation (Henriot-van Zanten et al., 1994; Felouzis et al., 2005; Barthon, 1998; Léger and Tripier, 1986).

This phenomenon points to other segregation mechanisms related to family strategies of 'school flight'. Even though according to school choice regulations called '*carte scolaire*' ('school map') pupils should normally attend their district school, parents have been given increasing leeway in requesting an out-of-district public secondary school, provided they give admissible arguments (van Zanten and Obin, 2010). These arguments can range from having an elder sibling schooled in the requested out-of-district school, wishing to study a rare foreign language only offered there, being geographically closer to this school because of odd district zoning, etc. Not surprisingly, this opportunity to choose an out-of-district secondary school by using specific arguments is not used by all families equally. These 'choosers' – especially the successful ones – are overwhelmingly from the middle and upper classes (Ballion, 1986; Henriot-van Zanten et al., 1994; Payet, 1999; Broccolichi and van Zanten, 1997; van Zanten, 2009a, 2009b; Raveaud and van Zanten, 2007) and disproportionately white (Barthon, 1998).

These strategies of school flight reinforce ethnic segregation at school, first, because they are carried out mostly by white parents and, second, because a key

reason for withdrawing one's child from the local public school is the perceived high proportion of ethnic minorities among its pupils. This 'ethnic proportion' is considered by many parents to be a proxy of school quality, both in terms of academic performance and overall 'climate': the more visible minorities, the lower the perceived school quality (Barrère and Martucelli, 1996; Broccolichi and van Zanten, 1997; van Zanten, 2006b, 2009b). Besides requesting an out-of-district public school, another form of school flight, which also increases ethnic segregation, consists in opting for a private secondary school. In this case, there is overwhelming evidence that white native families use private schools far more than ethnic minorities (Boulot and Boyzon-Fradet, 1988a; Boyzon-Fradet and Boulot, 1991; Héran, 1996; Brinbaum et al., 2010; Louis-Etxeto, 1998).

Yet another type of strategy pursued by middle-class families consists in keeping their children in the local public lower secondary school, while closely monitoring its functioning (Barthon and Oberti, 2000) and relying on in-school practices to produce internal segregation that would keep their children from associating with too many ethnic minority pupils. This set of behaviors characterizes 'cultural capital-rich' and 'economic capital-poor' middle-class families and corresponds to what Agnès van Zanten (2001) has termed the 'colonization' of the local school.

One should not overestimate the responsibility of parents and their strategies in creating ethnic school segregation. Indeed, in a context of local school competition, these strategies constantly interact with school policies and in-school practices aimed at enhancing the school's image in order to retain white middle-class pupils (Payet, 1995a; van Zanten, 2006a; Barthon and Monfroy, 2005, 2006). A common practice is therefore to adapt the general school policy to the perceived demands of white middle-class families, with a special focus on security and safety issues (Broccolichi and van Zanten, 1997; van Zanten, 2001, 2000). However, the main tool used by head teachers is to create academically, and therefore socially and ethnically, homogeneous classes where better-achieving white middle-class pupils are grouped together, leaving working-class ethnic minority pupils in 'bad' classes (Payet, 1995a; Barthon, 1998; Visier and Zoïa, 2010; Broccolichi and van Zanten, 1997; van Zanten, 2001, 2000).

#### *12.4.4.3 Consequences of ethnic segregation at school*

Research in this field shows that ethnic segregation generates unequal access to educational resources.[8] This concretely means that lower and upper secondary schools with high concentrations of ethnic minority pupils tend to offer less diverse and less prestigious academic options and tracks (Chauveau and Rogovas-Chauveau, 1990; Barthon, 1998; Trancart, 1998; Oberti, 2005, 2007a, 2007b). Alongside white middle-class parents' flight from schools situated in ethnically diverse neighborhoods, there is a similar trend on the part of the more experienced and senior teachers. This leaves ethnically concentrated

schools with both less-experienced teachers and a high overall rate of teacher turnover (Léger and Tripier, 1986; Barthon, 1998; Trancart, 1998; Payet, 1998; Mathey-Pierre and Larguèze, 2010).

However, due to the lack of appropriate quantitative data, studies that actually analyze the effects of ethnic concentration on pupils' achievement are rather scarce. Moreover, most existing works provide only indirect evidence (see, for example, Broccolichi, 2009; Broccolichi and Trancart, 2010). Among the few more direct sociological investigations, findings do not perfectly match. Some researchers found no effect of the proportion of pupils on the average progress made by pupils during either the third year of primary school (Bressoux, 1994) or in secondary school (Cebolla Boado, 2007). In their study in the Bordeaux education authority, Felouzis and his colleagues (Felouzis, 2003; Felouzis et al., 2005) find two seemingly contradictory consequences of ethnic segregation in secondary schools: on average and all things being equal, in the most ethnically concentrated schools, standardized academic performance is lower, but access to academic upper secondary school is higher. Considering these conflicting results, no firm conclusion should be drawn on the consequences of the concentration of ethnic minorities in certain tracks or schools on average achievement.

In sum, the research tradition focusing of ethnic school segregation is one that has brought out a set of particularly consensual and robust results. The extent of ethnic school segregation has been shown to be high and is not the mere reflection of ethnic segregation at the neighborhood level. According to families' socially differentiated resources and constraints, family strategies, in interaction with school policies, partly produce this high level of ethnic segregation both between and within schools. The main weakness of this research area is the lack of robust results on the exact extent of the consequences of ethnic segregation at school on students' academic trajectories and on the overall level of educational inequalities.

### 12.4.5 Ethnic relations in classrooms and schools (ERCS)

In this section, we look at ethnographic studies conducted in schools and classrooms that analyze the salience of ethnicity in school professionals' views and practices. We also explore ethnic minority students' classroom behavior, feelings concerning discrimination, and social networks.

#### *12.4.5.1 The salience of ethnicity in school professionals' views and practices*

Research studies in this area have shown that although the Republican model encourages teachers to adopt color-blind attitudes, many of them resort to negative stereotypes concerning the impact of economic deprivation or of outdated and inappropriate cultural traditions to explain the attitudes and behavior of immigrants and their children (Anderson-Levitt, 1989; van Zanten,

1990). These stereotypes concern students' hygiene, beauty, dress, and politeness, as well as their intellectual potential (Zimmerman, 1980; Vasquez, 1982) and parents' inadequate socialization at home.

Ethnographic studies of primary schools have also documented the salience of ethnicity in teacher–pupil interactions. However, while a study comparing French and British teachers concludes on a clear separation in French schools between formal activities where the principle of 'indifference to differences' still applies and informal activities where ethnic minority pupils are asked to share aspects of their culture with the teacher and other children (Raveaud, 2003, 2006), another one shows that ethnicity can be salient in formal interactions, although with great variations between teachers (Roussier-Fusco, 2003). Three models seemed at work: (1) 'indifference to ethnic differences', associated with a good classroom climate but high levels of ethnic conflicts between children in the playground; (2) 'negative emphasis on children's ethnicity', associated with high levels of conflict within and outside the classroom; and (3) 'critical view of French treatment of immigrants', that generated high levels of politicization of children's discourses and relationships.

Studies on secondary school teachers have also shown considerable variation concerning the importance attributed to students' ethnicity in daily interactions (Payet, 1995; Perroton, 2000a; van Zanten, 2001). Differences between teachers are related (1) to the proportion of students from immigrant backgrounds in their classrooms, but also to (2) their age, younger teachers take ethnic differences more explicitly into account; (3) their social class, teachers from upper-class backgrounds tend to equate 'integration' with 'assimilation', while those from middle-class and working-class backgrounds appear more open to cultural differences (Légendre, 2002; Rayou and van Zanten, 2004; Sanselme, 2009); but (4) apparently not to teachers' ethnicity. According to Charles and Légendre (2006), teachers from immigrant backgrounds, who constitute a small group, are more likely to start their careers in multicultural schools but their professional *habitus* appears very similar to that of teachers from native family backgrounds.

Still other ethnographic studies point out the tendency of other school professionals, involved in enforcing discipline or in liaising with parents, to refer to their own or to students' ethnic background (Payet, 1997). These professionals have in recent years been recruited on the basis of their ethnic and local origin and implicitly encouraged to use inside knowledge of students' cultures and neighborhoods in the accomplishment of their tasks (Rinaudo, 1998; Perroton, 2000b; Charlot, Emin and de Peretti, 2002).

#### *12.4.5.2 Discrimination in punishment, grading, and tracking*

Evidence on teachers' discrimination of ethnic minority students is scarce. In line with John Ogbu's research in the United States (Anderson-Levitt and

van Zanten, 1992), some researchers have pointed out that misunderstandings between teachers and ethnic minority students arise not only because of 'primary' cultural differences, but because of 'secondary' differences, that is attitudes that these students develop in reaction to their subordinate position in society and in anticipation of discriminatory attitudes from institutional agents. For example, Payet (1985) showed that teachers tend to perceive students from Algerian families as 'insolent', 'sly', and 'aggressive' both because of cultural differences in interactive styles and of these students' tendency to contest teachers' judgments and sanctions (Payet and Sicot, 1997; Debarbieux and Tichit, 1997).

Other studies have shown that, when making decisions about grades, assignation to different classes, and allocation to future tracks, teachers pay greater attention to the behavior of ethnic minority students, especially of boys from Maghreb and Africa, than to that of students from native backgrounds (Zirotti, 1980; Payet, 1997). These practices contribute in turn both to ethnic minority students' bad behavior and to their perception of being treated unfairly. In her ethnographic research on two 'bad classes', van Zanten (2001) showed that a significant proportion of minority students – allocated to these classes because of their behavior and not of their achievement level – felt not only rejected but bored by the low-level activities proposed by teachers, which led them to engage in disruptive behaviors and thus to be frequently sanctioned.

Tracking decisions are perceived by ethnic minority students as the most discriminatory dimension of their school experience (Akers-Porrini and Zirotti, 1992; Favre and Manigand, 2000; Brinbaum and Kieffer, 2005; Caille, 2007; Palheta, 2012), although quantitative studies (Bastide, 1982), including two using multivariate analyses (Vallet and Caille, 1996a; Caille 2008), have shown that there are no conspicuous signs of the influence of ethnicity on these decisions once other significant factors are taken into account. However, what students from ethnic backgrounds perceive is that a large proportion of them are forced, because of their grades, to take courses and tracks, especially vocational tracks, that they did not ask for (Santelli, 2001, 2007; Palheta, 2012). Brinbaum and Guégnard (2010) found that this was the case at the end of *collège* for 25% of second-generation students from Maghreb, Africa, and Turkey as opposed to 12% of second-generation students from Portugal and Asia, and 8% of pupils with French parents.

Many ethnic minority students therefore describe unsatisfactory personal experiences at school (Bouamama, 2000) as well as in higher education where many of them, especially those who come from vocational and technological tracks, fail at academic evaluations and, later, at competitive examinations for access to occupations in the public sector, including teaching (Beaud, 2002). Although these negative perceptions are not always framed in the language of discrimination a significant proportion of students mention some form of

institutional racism at school (Zirotti, 1980; Akers-Porrini and Zirotti, 1992; Oberti, Sanselme and Voisin, 2009; Cortéséro, 2010).

#### *12.4.5.3 Peer relations, violence, and delinquency*

Qualitative studies have provided evidence on the existence of interracial and interethnic friendships in urban primary schools, but also on the ways in which they are influenced by children's gender and academic status (Xavier de Brito and Vasquez, 1994; Perroton, 2000a; van Zanten, 2000b; Fouquet-Chauprade, 2011). Roussier-Fusco (2007) has shown that the influence of these various factors leads to the formation of small groups of white girls that may include girls from ethnic minority groups if they are high achievers, and larger groups of boys from ethnic minorities that may include boys with native parents if they are underachievers.

In multicultural *collèges*, interracial and interethnic friendships are more common because of greater ethnic mix as well as higher adolescent autonomy from parents and teachers (Herpin, 1996; Xavier de Brito and Vasquez, 1996). However, the influence of academic position still remains (van Zanten, 2000b, 2005). Using data from 1300 questionnaires distributed in six *collèges* characterized by high concentrations of ethnic minority pupils and an ethnic score obtained by adding eight characteristics (students' first and last name, place of birth, school trajectory abroad, date of arrival of parents, language spoken at home, and nationality of the students and his or her parents), Fouquet-Chauprade (2011) found that a high ethnic score was associated with weak academic integration but strong social integration and a preference for friends from ethnic minority groups.

Ethnographic studies have also shown that in segregated school contexts students frequently use ethnic and racial categories to identify themselves and others but also that these categories are not necessarily used and perceived as insults (Achard et al., 1992). They are part of verbal interaction rituals whose purpose is to jibe and laugh at each other and, through that process, to cancel the stigma associated to those terms (Lepoutre, 1997). These rituals can nevertheless lead to conflicts if these categories are used to make unfavorable comparisons or establish social and moral boundaries between students with different academic statuses or from different school tracks (Payet, 1995a; Debarbieux, 1997, 1999; Debarbieux and Tichit 1997; Perroton, 2000a; van Zanten, 2001).

Other studies have established a correlation between the proportion of ethnic minority students and the perception of school climate. Debarbieux (1988) found that when children of immigrants represented only 5% or less of the school intake, only 8% of pupils thought there was violence in their school. However, in schools with 30% of children of immigrants or more, the proportion of those who thought there was a bad climate was also 30% or more (for similar results, see also Fouquet-Chapraude, 2011). Schools with large

proportion of ethnic minority students do seem to be characterized by higher levels of what some authors call 'incivilities', which include insults and verbal aggressions, damages to school furniture or premises, small acts of delinquency, and bullying and fights between students (Debarbieux, 1998; Debarbieux and Tichit, 1997; Tichit, 2001). However, this does not mean that ethnic minority students are more involved than their native classmates in these acts.

Some researchers point out that school violence can be analyzed as a subtype of urban violence as schools with large proportions of children of immigrants are often located in poor areas where delinquency and violence are part of everyday life (Dubet, 1987). Others emphasize the impact of social and ethnic segregation as well as of the disorganization of these schools on the emergence of a culture of drift, deviance, and delinquency, and on the formation of gangs characterized by deviant behavior and a confrontational relationship with their immediate environment (Debarbieux, 1997; van Zanten, 2000; Moignard, 2008; Mohamed, 2011). This is not inevitable however and other studies have shown that collective and sustained efforts to enforce norms significantly reduce the number of incivilities, transgressions, and micro-violences (Débarbieux and Blaya, 2001).

In sum, research studies belonging to this last tradition show that, to varying degrees, teachers and other school agents use ethnicity as a resource to explain existing problems. Although there is little evidence of widespread ethnic discrimination, teachers do seem to focus on different dimensions when they evaluate children of immigrants and children of natives, while many ethnic minority students feel, rightly or wrongly, that they have experienced rejection and discrimination. Peer relationships in multicultural schools appear two-sided: interethnic friendships and conflicts coexist. It is difficult however to generalize the results of these, mostly ethnographic, studies because of the contextual embeddedness of the data and interpretations, and the limited number of comparisons of the processes at work within different types of schools.

## 12.6 Conclusion and discussion

Research on ethnicity and educational inequality in France encompasses five major research traditions. These traditions have revealed a number of consensual and robust findings.

Research in the first tradition has been conducted by political scientists and sociologists and has concentrated on policy decisions concerning educational structures, curriculum and religion. Its most important findings concern the lack of a strong political will, irrespective of the political orientation of governments, to develop ambitious educational policies for ethnic minorities, but also the existence of a growing number of policies and schemes that use area or class as a proxy for ethnicity.

Another group of studies has used statistical methods to analyze ethnic inequalities in educational achievement and attainment. Despite the scarcity of relevant data, a coherent tradition has developed from cumulative results in this field. The principal finding is that ethnic inequalities in education are, above all, class inequalities: the academic disadvantages of children of immigrants can be mostly explained by their parents' economic poverty and low levels of education.

Research in the third tradition focuses on the study of the limited resources of ethnic minorities at schools. This tradition is more fragmented and less coherent than the previous two. Researchers who have tried to identify the specific attitudes of immigrant families tend to show that these families have higher academic aspirations than those of native families but are less involved in school activities.

The fourth research tradition has focused on ethnic segregation in schools. As in the first tradition, cumulative research has resulted in particularly strong results. Ethnic segregation in schools appears to be high, even higher than ethnic residential segregation or class-based segregation in schools. The causes of this segregation can be found at the conjunction between the interests of white middle-class parents and of school agents. Its consequences are important as students educated in schools with high concentrations of ethnic minorities enjoy fewer educational resources.

Finally, the fifth research tradition is quite coherent because researchers have addressed similar questions with comparable ethnographic methods. The main findings concern the contrast between official indifference to ethnicity and its salience in the everyday activities and interactions of school agents and students in multiethnic school contexts as well as ethnic minority students' perceptions of the existence of discrimination processes in punishment, grading and, especially, tracking.

Despite this consistent body of research, several research areas remain understudied or altogether unexplored. First, more attention should be paid to differences between ethnic minority groups. Categories such as 'second-generation immigrants' should be further deconstructed and decomposed. Second, better quantitative and qualitative data on the characteristics of neighborhood and school environments are needed to refine the study of the effects of ethnic segregation in education. In particular, more detailed analyses of official and unofficial tracking processes within schools and how they affect students from immigrant and ethnic backgrounds should be conducted. Third, a promising path for future research lies in the study of the influence of pre-migration experiences and characteristics on second-generation immigrants' school behavior and academic achievement. Fourth, more research is needed to explore why and how ethnic minority students come to feel discriminated against in schools and whether this perception is related to the objective attitudes

of teachers, misunderstandings between teachers and students in everyday interactions or, more generally, students' perceptions of exclusion from French society. Last, to unveil the full extent of ethnic inequality, researchers must further analyze the interaction between ethnic inequalities at school and in the labor market especially considering the fact that the latter have been shown to be high in absolute terms (Silberman and Fournier, 2006; Lefranc, 2010) and relative compared to rates in other countries, especially Germany (Tucci, 2010).

The development of these research areas and, more generally, of research on ethnic inequalities in education in the French context is nevertheless strongly dependent on changes in social policy and in intellectual thought. Despite a growing political consciousness of the problems faced by ethnic minority students at school, political and administrative discourses and choices tend to ignore ethnic and racial inequalities. This continued 'veil of ignorance' makes it difficult to obtain official statistical or documentary data to assess the extent of these inequalities and to obtain funding to conduct original quantitative and qualitative studies to further explore their different expressions, causes, and consequences. In the same way, researchers' perspectives, resulting from socialization into the French model of integration but also into research paradigms focusing on class rather than ethnicity and giving preeminence to macro-structural factors rather than to cultural and interactional dynamics has limited research on educational processes involving ethnicity. However, changes in this area are taking place more rapidly among sociologists than among educational policy-makers given the former's professional interest in objective facts and the diversification of theories and approaches brought about by their increasing integration into international research networks.

## Notes

1. The queries were made using the Boolean logic allowed by the searchable databases. French and English keywords were successively used as follows: in French, (race OR racial* OR ethni* OR *migr*) AND (inégalité*) AND (éducation OR école OR collège OR lycée) AND (France OR français*); in English, (race OR racial* OR ethni* OR *migr*) AND (inequal*) AND (education OR school OR college) AND (France OR French). The asterisk (*) means 'any character.' The CAIRN and Persée databases do not allow as much flexibility and complexity in the query structure. Multiple queries using combinations of the above keywords were therefore carried out in the latter databases.
2. In total, we included 12 journals. The general sociology journals are the *Revue française de sociologie*, *Actes de la recherche en Sciences sociales*, *Sociétés contemporaines*, *L'Année sociologique*, *Sociologie*, *Ethnologie française*, *Population*, and *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*. The sociology of education journals are *Revue française de pédagogie* and *Education et sociétés*. The *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* focuses on the sociology of migration and ethnicity, while *Ville-Ecole-Intégration Diversité* (whose name has changed several times, with the first and longest lasting one being *Migrants*

*Formation*) is at the crossroads of migration and education studies. The latter journal is the only non-peer-reviewed journal in our literature review, included because it contains numerous relevant articles.

3. Four main surveys have been used to study the academic trajectories of children of immigrants. The first two are the 1989 and 1995 panel surveys, carried out by the French Ministry of Education, in collaboration with INSEE. These two longitudinal studies followed for at least 10 years a nationally representative sample of pupils who entered secondary school in 1989 ($n$ = 21,479) and 1995 ($n$ = 17,830), respectively. Both surveys contain detailed information on pupils' academic trajectories, including standardized test scores, and family background. As proxies for ethnicity, the 1989 panel survey contains information on the nationality of pupils and their parents, whether pupils were born or schooled abroad, whether parents have always lived in France and the language(s) spoken at home. In addition to this information, the 1995 panel survey includes precise data on the country of birth of pupils and their parents. The last two surveys are the 1992 Geographical Mobility and Social Insertion survey (MGIS, $n$ = 12,325) and the 2008 Trajectories and Origins survey (TeO, $n$ = 21,761). Both are cross-sectional surveys run by INED in collaboration with INSEE. They both focus on and oversample immigrants and children of immigrants in France. The two surveys contain information on the educational and socioeconomic characteristics of immigrants and their children, as well as data on their residential, academic, religious, marital, and linguistic practices. As proxies for ethnicity, MGIS and TeO contain detailed information on the country of birth, nationality, and migration trajectories of immigrants and children of immigrants.
4. A recent publication demonstrated that as many as 95% of children of two immigrant parents were French citizens (Borrel and Lhommeau, 2010).
5. Our translation from French. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations included in this text have been translated by us.
6. These outcomes are: the number of years repeated in primary school, whether pupils are channeled into mainstream or special education tracks at the beginning of lower secondary school, French and mathematics test scores at this time, whether they are channeled into the academic track at the end of the second year of lower secondary school, and finally whether they are channeled at the end of the fourth and final year of lower secondary school.
7. Historically conceived for children considered as mentally deficient, these classes now target underachieving children considered to have cognitive difficulties.
8. Research that specifically deals with the effects of the concentration of ethnic minority pupils in schools on ethnic relations and in-school violence is discussed as part of the ERCS research tradition.

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