Migrants & Minorities into Citizens: Education & Membership Regimes Since the Early Modern Period

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Schools are one of the institutions that determine the possibilities to participate in society. Therefore, access to education is crucial to the settlement process of immigrants, minorities, and their offspring. Newcomers who join a community have always faced different membership regimes, long before the emergence of the nation-state in the nineteenth century. Such regimes determine whether, to what extent, and under what conditions children of migrants and minorities have access to schools. They also determine whether schools are segregated along religious, racial, or socioeconomic lines. These conditions are not limited to international migrants, but may also apply to internal migrants, such as low-income Chinese people who have moved from the countryside to large cities since the early 1980s and have limited access to (more expensive) urban schools. In this essay, I compare different parts of the world over the past five centuries to understand how polities allow or restrict access to education, and to what extent schools function as gateways to full participation in societies for children of migrants and minorities.

How children of immigrants and minorities (either Native peoples or descendants of erstwhile migrants) fare in the educational system is a much researched and debated topic. But most studies and observations are limited to specific case studies, mostly contemporary, and lack a comparative perspective in terms of both time and space.[1] To attain a deeper insight into the mechanisms that cause inclusion and exclusion, a global historical overview that compares different parts of the world over the past five centuries is useful. I attempt to map this huge field to identify the conditions very different polities and their membership regimes require to allow open access to education. I also describe the extent to which schools function as gateways to full participation in societies for children of migrants and minorities. I start with a brief overview of the early modern period, and then concentrate on the era of the nation-state in the last two centuries.

To better understand the relation between human capital building and immigration, the Middle Ages are a good point to start. In territorial states, city-states,

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empires and their colonial conquests, through churches, monasteries, and guilds, many kinds of educational and training possibilities were offered to children and adults, which often included but were not limited to literacy. The invention of printing techniques with single letters in China and Korea in the eleventh century and in Europe (Gutenberg) four hundred years later was a revolutionary breakthrough that enabled the wide distribution of books (in Europe, the Bible), illustrations, and maps. Economic historians have shown that book consumption in Europe increased more than tenfold in the early modern period. In England and the Dutch Republic, both economic front-runners in the early modern period, literacy and numeracy rates among males increased from 10 percent of the population to 60 percent between 1500 and 1800.[2]

In England, this development was driven by the fast expansion of grammar schools during what has been identified as the second phase of the "educational revolution," which began around the middle of the seventeenth century. This expansion was most probably caused by the demand for literate employees in the service sector (especially trade and finances) in port cities like London, Liverpool, and Amsterdam. Yet it was not a linear process. In Great Britain around 1850, when manufacturing eclipsed the service sector at the height of the Industrial Revolution, the massive demand for unskilled manual labor (including ten thousand Irish labor migrants) led to a decline in the demand for formal education, which explains why only 50 percent of the male population aged five to fourteen was enrolled in schools at that time. This was much higher than in contemporary China (20 percent to 25 percent) but considerably lower than Prussia (73 percent) and the Netherlands (around 80 percent).[3]

In Western Europe during the early modern period, building human capital through guilds and schools did not discriminate between children of migrants and natives (those with parents born in the receiving country), although the farther east one got from the Dutch North Sea, coast institutions like guilds tended to become more restrictive.[4] Due to the high urban death rates, immigration to cities, from whatever origin, was a ubiquitous and necessary phenomenon, and as far as migrants (especially Jews) were discriminated against, it was on the basis of religion, not so much ethnicity.[5]

In overseas colonies, the relations between European (invading) immigrants and Native groups were often reversed. The Americas, where the Native population was decimated by diseases brought and spread by European invaders and by structural violence caused by divide-and-rule tactics, were considered by settlers as an ideal *terra nullius* for the mass production of sugar, tobacco, coffee, rice, indigo, and later cotton, concentrated on large plantations, by enslaved workers taken forcibly from Africa.[6] Only in the nineteenth century, when the Americas became destinations for mass European settlement, did African migrants become outnumbered by European settlers.

Native populations who survived the contagious diseases and lethal violence of the Europeans, and who partly mixed with immigrants from both Asia and Africa, were largely marginalized, enslaved, and, in Spanish America, exploited through the *encomienda* (forced labor) system. They were not entirely excluded from education, however. In Spanish-occupied Mexico, the conquistadores, apart from plundering the country's silver and other riches, tried to impose Catholicism alongside their Spanish culture, which they considered superior. After the fall of the city-state Tenochtitlan in modern-day Mexico in 1528, King Carlos I immediately ordered that the sons of the Native elite be put under the direct supervision of Spanish priests, whose task was to Christianize them through formal education, hoping that when they returned to their communities, they would spread Catholicism and core Spanish values. This forced attempt at cultural transformation by Franciscans and Jesuits in their urban schools (*colegios*), who were also active in other parts of the world (especially Asia), would remain the official "civilization" policy for centuries.

However, many former students identified with the cause of their own marginalized and discriminated ethnic group, and embraced the *colegios* as centers for a countercolonial opposition, which is distantly reminiscent of the role universities in Paris and London played in furthering anticolonial opposition among students from colonies in Asia and Africa during the interbella period.[7]

The aim of King Carlos I to culturally homogenize the populations of his overseas conquests was inseparable from the forced conversion and expulsion of Jews and Muslims at home and the obsession with pure pedigrees (*limpieza de sangre*). This legislation, enacted at the end of the fifteenth century (immediately after the end of the Reconquista) and aimed at excluding people who descended from Jews or Muslims, was then applied to Indigenous populations in the Americas through the creation of a caste system.[8] This fear of hybridity and urge for ethnic and religious homogeneity foreshadow the assimilatory and ethnocentric nature of the nation-state, with a central role for schools and education.

Historian Eugen Weber captures this transition well in his seminal book *Peasants into Frenchmen*, in which he describes how the French centralized nation-state that emerged during the French Revolution used education to forge linguistic, cultural, and political uniformity in a country that was characterized by a great variety of local and regional differences well into the nineteenth century.[9] Schools, alongside garrisons, were a crucial institution to instill the idea of a common uniform nation, whose citizens spoke the same language, adhered to the same political system and constitution, and identified with the nation through symbols like the national flag and the anthem.[10]

Apart from institutions like the army and the labor market, schools are key because children learn the national language, culture, and history at school, on

which their identification with the nation-state where they were born is forged. The same is true for children of (international and internal) migrants and minorities, whose different languages and cultures are often regarded as a barrier or a threat to the desired cultural and ethnic homogeneity of the country where they and their parents live.

As in sixteenth-century Mexico, from the nineteenth century onward, a number of nation-states and multiethnic empires applied this assimilationist ideal not only to immigrants but also to minorities. Examples include the internal colonizations of frontier areas in multiethnic empires such as China and Russia.[11] Other multicultural empires like the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires were much more tolerant and accepted and accommodated linguistic and religious differences. At the end of the nineteenth century and immediately after World War I, they dissolved into nation-states and embraced the ideal of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, which led to population exchanges, widespread ethnic cleansing, and even genocide (such as the Armenian genocide).[12]

An extreme example of forced homogenization of minorities is the current Chinese policy toward the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, who are not only forced to assimilate linguistically, but also politically, culturally, and religiously. Apart from language and dietary customs, forsaking Islam is regarded as a necessary step to fully becoming Chinese. Although the mistreatment of Uyghurs by the Chinese state is extreme, it is part of a more general policy to eradicate minority cultures that deviate from the Han majority (93 percent). Not surprisingly, this is a central goal of the education system. For example, ethnic Korean schools in the autonomous Korean prefecture Yanbian, which offered bilingual education since the 1960s, have recently come under increasing pressure to assimilate to monolingual instruction in Chinese, stimulated by fears purported to be about national security.[13] In November 2022, the National People's Congress called for Mandarin-promotion aimed at "managing ethnic affairs, enhancing national unity and safeguarding national security."[14]

This programmatic assimilation was accompanied by the simultaneous pressure caused by the mass internal rural-urban migration since the 1980s to the rapidly growing cities in East and Central China, which included all kinds of minorities.[15] The era when Chairman Mao declared that "we must sincerely and actively help the minority nationalities to develop their economy and culture" is by now a distant memory.[16] Loyalty of minority groups, like the Koreans, is no longer sufficient; becoming Chinese has become the new dogma. This fixation with cultural homogeneity is a much wider phenomenon, as the policies toward Romanian speakers in Hungary, Muslims in India, and Rohingya in Myanmar strikingly indicate.

Education as an assimilationist instrument in (former) settler colonies of European states (Western offshoots), especially in the Americas, can be considered

a combination of the two variants described above. Both the Indigenous populations and immigrants beyond the dominant groups (English, Spanish, Portuguese – heroically portrayed as the original settler colonists) became objects of assimilatory policies in which education in the majority language of the original European settlers was considered crucial for the viability of the new state.

Alongside the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century, schools developed as key institutions for integrating both migrants and the native born into the majority language and culture.[17] In most nations, this left little room for bilingual education, except for a few countries like Canada, where the Francophone minority were allowed to retain the French language. In most other countries, the regional, linguistic, and cultural minorities were forced to conform to the majority culture (for example, inhabitants of peripheral areas of Japan like Okinawa and the Ryukyu islands had to assimilate the dominant behavior in more populous areas).[18] Such policies were often rooted in racist superiority within majority groups, ranging from descendants of Northwest Europeans in the United States to Turkic-speaking Muslims in Türkiye and the Han in China.

When we limit ourselves to immigrants in nation-states since the nineteenth century, we see that it took quite a while before the nation-state developed in such a way that it could successfully implement assimilationist education policies.[19] A good example is German immigrants in the United States. Until World War I, instruction in German (and also Scandinavian languages) was part of the curriculum in the Midwest, especially in cities with substantial foreign populations, such as Cincinnati and Milwaukee. Germans and Scandinavians settled in the northern part of the Midwest in great numbers in the 1850s, where Germans had already established their own public schools in 1837 (followed by Ohio two years later).[20] Although divided along class, political, and religious lines, bilingual education was preferred by most German migrants. In 1855, in Cincinnati, five thousand children were taught bilingually: "the two most beautiful languages are brought together; the mother, the German, and the daughter."[21] German public schools were meant to smooth the transition into American society for German students, but were also preferred by German parents who considered German education superior. The prevailing idea was, as the superintendent in Marathon County expressed around 1850, "children would first learn to express their thoughts in their mother tongue."[22] In many Midwest German schools, even American history was taught in the German language. At the height of German schooling in the 1880s, there were more than three hundred German-English schools in the Midwest.[23]

At the end of the century, a more nativist climate marked the beginning of the end of bilingual education. With the ongoing integration of second- and third-generation German Americans, the demand for German schools gradually declined. Moreover, it is important to note that the declining interest among de-

scendants of immigrants in the original language of their ancestors is a general phenomenon in societies that provide (relative) open access to their educational systems.

As German language education withered in the United States, Japanese schools in Brazil, Peru, and Mexico were on the rise. The main reason was the strong support of the Japanese state to establish schools for the children of the two hundred thousand Japanese migrant workers who settled there from the end of the nineteenth century onward, and which reached its zenith between 1925 and 1937. Although meant as temporary agricultural workers for coffee plantations and sugarcane fields, it soon became clear that the overwhelming majority of these *Nikkeijin* (or Japanese emigrants, of whom around one hundred seventy-five thousand settled in Brazil) were there to stay. From the 1920s onward, dozens of Japanese schools were established. The Japanese state advised their emigrants to assimilate, but at the same time encouraged them to foster ethnic solidarity and join Japanese associations. It was these locally rooted migrant organizations that established a large number of Japanese schools, with instructors hired in Japan.[24] One of the first was the primary school that opened in Lima in 1920. By the 1930s, the school had about one thousand students who were taught in both Spanish and Japanese. Conversely, the more than one hundred thousand male Chinese coolies who worked mostly at coastal cotton and sugar plantations and dug guano in Peru between 1849 and 1874, many of whom intermarried and partly integrated into the Spanish-speaking environment, experienced no interference from the Chinese state in the realm of schooling.[25]

This colony model – in which migrants were granted a fair degree of autonomy within nation-states that allowed them to establish their own villages and strengthen ethnic bonds – did not apply to Japanese immigrants. Especially in agricultural areas, this settlement mode was quite common in Latin American countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, and Paraguay, where Germans, Swiss, Dutch, and Italians also followed this path and created their own institutions, including schools.[26]

Apart from this specific opportunity structure in Latin American nation-states, during the first half of the twentieth century, states also stimulated the strengthening of ethnic bonds by considering emigrants as their own citizens. This expansionist nationalism reached a climax after World War I, as many countries such as Japan and Italy embraced fascism.[27]

Whereas most Italian migrants in Argentina (1.8 million in 1922) rejected Mussolini's "nation outside of the nation" politics and developed a counternarrative, others were lured by the fascist ideology and supported Italian elementary schools meant to instill Italian identity in the next generation.[28] At the same time, Italian schools had to be careful not to offend Argentine authorities. In the end, the project was not very successful and only reached a very small portion of children of

Italian immigrants. Although a much larger percentage of Japanese children went to Japanese schools, the rising nationalism in Brazil and Peru in the 1930s crushed these initiatives. In Brazil, where many Japanese people lived, the ultranationalist Estado Novo regime of Getúlio Vargas (1937–1945) in 1938 ordered all 476 Japanese schools (294 of which were elementary schools) to close their doors.[29]

In Japan, similar nationalist-assimilationist policies made it very difficult for the Korean minority (approximately three hundred thousand in 1930) to be taught their own language at elementary and high schools. In regions with many Korean children, the state created a segregated system with lower-quality schools for Koreans and only allowed bilingual education through private Korean schools. After the war, this assimilationist approach prevailed, and in 1955, a compromise was reached that allowed the General Association of Koreans in Japan (*Chongryon*) to establish their own schools, but without any financing by the Japanese nation-state.[30]

Before World War I, with large numbers of Italian immigrants in France, Polish-speaking Germans from Silesia in the Ruhr area and France, and Irish in Great Britain, the movement for bilingual schools was much weaker in Western Europe than in the Americas. And those migrants who tried to retain their language and culture, like the Polish minority in western parts of Germany and in French industrial areas, were confronted with strong pressure to assimilate. Local initiatives were nipped in the bud by the rigid Germanization policies under Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* against the Catholic minority in the German Reich, which included the Polish-speaking minority within its borders. The School Supervision Law of 1872, which curtailed the influence of the clergy in the classroom, frustrated the instruction of Polish-speaking children.[31] The following year, a decree made German the exclusive language in schools. Massive protests against these language politics by Polish parents in the Ruhr area in 1906–1907 did not change things. Moreover, Polish private schools lost their accreditation, and classes with too many Polish speakers in state schools were split up.[32] In France, whose officials were dedicated to a French-only and highly centralized Republican ideal, foreign languages were completely banned from elementary schools. This policy underlined the militant secularist and assimilationist French ideal. As a result, thousands of Italian and Polish children were immediately immersed in the French language and political culture.[33]

After World War II, assimilationist nationalism remained the core ideology guiding the education of migrant children in Europe, the Americas, Oceania, and in most other parts of the world. Thus, leaders in the Dutch government in the 1950s – convinced that the country was overpopulated – encouraged thousands of Dutch to emigrate to countries such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada, where they were immediately immersed in English, a

policy that many of them endorsed. Ethnically mixed postcolonial immigrants who migrated to the colonial "metropole" during the 1950s were subjected to rigid standards of assimilation as well.[34]

At the same time, there was a multicultural undercurrent that would challenge the dominance of assimilationist policies. With the establishment of the United Nations and UNESCO in 1945, the seeds of a global human rights revolution were planted. Within two decades, they created a new opportunity structure for minority rights, including bilingual education for internal minorities and immigrants. The rapid process of decolonization after World War II produced a fundamental critique of European superiority characterized by racism and political and economic domination. The Asian-African Bandung conference in 1955, where leaders of newly independent nations gathered as a counterweight against Europe and its offshoots in the Americas, Oceania, and South Africa, played a pivotal role.[35] With the domino-like wave of decolonization in Africa and the Caribbean around 1960, this antiracist and anti-imperialist critique became an important current in the United Nations, where representatives from formerly colonized countries raised their now independent voices.[36] The globalization of human rights also influenced ideas about the bilingual instruction of the children of immigrants while developing a fundamental critique of the dominant practices that endorsed assimilation.

Although European countries experienced substantial immigration and ethnic diversity before World War II, the acknowledgment of this multicultural reality developed slowly, as demonstrated by the assimilationist policies affecting postwar migrants from former colonies and labor migrants from Southern Europe and the fringes of the continent (Türkiye and North Africa).[37] At first, bilingual education was developed for the purpose of immigrants' eventual return to their countries of origin. In the Netherlands, this started with separate language classes in the mother tongue for Moluccan soldiers and their families who entered the country in 1951 and were expected to return to the Maluku Islands. This policy continued with children of Moroccan and Turkish guest workers in the 1970s and early 1980s. With the realization that most former guest workers would settle in the country, the "education in one's own language" (mostly limited to four hours per week) was not abolished, only changed, as psychologists and linguists argued that learning a new language through the mother tongue worked much better cognitively and created a positive self-image.[38]

The Council for the European Communities passed an important directive in July 1977 that the education of children of migrant workers within the European Economic Community (EEC) "take appropriate measures to promote, in coordination with normal education, teaching of the mother tongue and culture of the country of origin."[39] This idea was based on the famous 1953 UNESCO report on the use of vernacular language in education, which stated that "it is axiomatic that

the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue."[40] Although frequently contested, it developed into a "linguistic human right" and influenced the education of migrant children in many parts of the world.[41]

The 1977 EEC directive was not legally binding. But several countries in Northern Europe, such as Sweden and the Netherlands, partially implemented it. There were, however, major problems. Apart from finances, and countries like France who held on to their Republican Francophone ideals, it was not always clear what "mother language" meant. For example, Moroccan children in the Netherlands and Belgium were taught in Arabic, although most came from the mountainous Rif region where Tamazight was spoken. Furthermore, to really learn one's mother language, a few hours of instruction each week was not sufficient. And finally, devoting time in the curriculum to the language of one's parents, especially from lower-class backgrounds, could put children at a disadvantage by isolating them and consigning them to an "underclass" status.[42] The result was that such policies for language instruction were mostly symbolic. In the 1990s, they were largely abolished.

In the United States between the 1960s and 1980s, the heydays of optimism about multiculturalism went along with a shift to cultural pluralism marked by the publication of sociologist Nathan Glazer and politician Daniel P. Moynihan's landmark book *Beyond the Melting Pot*.[43] That work celebrated ethnic diversity and critiqued the homogenizing force of programmatic assimilationism. Its focus on diversity and multiculturalism dovetailed nicely with the radical position and demands of Black activists who favored strategic essentialism that provided people in Black communities with connections to Indigenous African communities, as well as strength in numbers among African people who live in the diaspora. This strategy rejected the socialization of Black children to white middle-class values. This "federalist inflection," as historian Rita Chin labeled it, opposed the ideal of integration, and favored bilingual education, with the languages of migrants not being inferior to English.[44]

This federalist approach did not really take root in Western Europe. From the 1990s onward, the discussion about immigrants at schools in Western Europe shifted from the mother tongue to broader contexts of integration, such as the quality of schools, the spatial concentration of immigrant children across neighborhoods, neighborhood effects, and the impact of differences in vocational and academic tracking systems. Especially in countries where the choice for secondary education is made when the child is older, this appears to benefit migrant children, as well as native-born children from lower-class backgrounds. By contrast, systems that force families to choose secondary schools earlier tend to streamline migrant children into lower educational tracks.[45]

But in general, wider access to the postwar educational system and the norm of nondiscrimination – especially in Western Europe, North America, and Oceania –

has benefited children of migrants. Although their parents have lower human capital on average, many of these migrants are more ambitious and stimulate their children to reach higher. This explains why, for example, children of low-skilled "guest workers" from Türkiye and Morocco who live in the Netherlands (but also elsewhere) seem to do better at school when compared to their native-born peers with similar socioeconomic backgrounds – especially girls, underlining the importance of gendered patterns.[46]

At the same time, there are barriers caused by deeply rooted institutional racism, especially toward African Americans, Romani in Eastern Europe, and (tribal) Adivasis in India, many of whom are heavily segregated. Furthermore, institutional racism also affects Algerian children in France and Black children in the United Kingdom.[47] It is therefore not surprising that the focus on the nature of neighborhoods and the quality of public schools has a longer tradition in North America, which affects especially African Americans, many of whose ancestors migrated from the deep South to urban centers in the North and the West during the Great Migration that started during World War I and accelerated after World War II.[48] In cities such as Chicago and New York, many African Americans ended up in segregated neighborhoods, where they were confronted with systemic racism and inequality.[49] This racist-driven practice of segregation also put Irish, Chinese, Japanese, and Indian, among others, at a disadvantage starting in the 1850s, and even earlier for Mexican and Native American children.[50] In the end, however, the discrimination of immigrants and non-white Americans was different than the "internal colonialism" that stemmed from chattel slavery, which still haunts the descendants of once-enslaved Africans in the United States, despite the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the emergence of a growing Black middle-class.[51]

Without underestimating the importance of the multicultural turn, this has only partly changed the process of intergenerational integration during which descendants of migrants are becoming similar. Beyond its programmatic aspects, the history of migration and integration in many receiving countries is an asymmetrical *and* interactive process of constantly remaking the mainstream, albeit with a central role for the dominant language of receiving countries.[52] Although a number of (new) sending countries like Türkiye and Morocco followed the example of Japan and Italy before World War II, trying to hold on to emigrants as "their" citizens abroad for nationalist and financial reasons, this practice will not prevent ongoing efforts in receiving countries to claim the newcomers through assimilation.

If we want to understand how the education systems of receiving countries provide access to the children (and oftentimes grandchildren) of immigrants, the mistreatment of disadvantaged nonmigrant groups, based on ethnicity and/or class, needs to be addressed as well. This regards first the Native populations in various continents that were confronted from the late fifteenth century

onward with European migrants from Spain and Portugal to Great Britain. Those who survived the germs, viruses, and violence that traveled along with these invaders, especially in the Americas and Oceania, were often excluded from mainstream society, including educational systems that were created for settlers from countries like Portugal, Spain, Great Britain, and France, to mention the most important. A second category hit by the curse of exclusion and segregation was the more than ten million enslaved Africans and their offspring in the Americas. As far as they were allowed to enter the educational system after the abolition of slavery, they had to make do with heavily underfinanced schools and limited access to higher education. Moreover, most schools were in poor and isolated neighborhoods, with favelas in countries such as Brazil as eye-catching examples.[53]

In Europe, somewhat similar exclusionary mechanisms blocked the social mobility of impoverished Jewish minorities (often Ashkenazim) in isolated ghettos and "shtetls" before World War II, as well as Romani people, especially in Eastern Europe, even now. Poor and segregated Yiddish Jews in nineteenth-century Russia did better, but we should realize that the educational levels of Jews in Eastern Europe were far lower than in contemporary Western Europe, and that the gap closed very slowly before World War II. This calls into question genetic and traditional cultural explanations (reverence for reading books and studying the Talmud) for Jewish educational achievement.[54] Much more important was their low social position and the intensity of antisemitism and limited institutional access, especially to mainstream schools in Eastern Europe.

Moreover, literacy among Russian Jews was much less universal than many have long assumed. The older cohorts in the 1897 Russian census reported rates below 50 percent, and the great majority of women over thirty years of age were illiterate. Literacy rates were even lower in the Polish parts of the Russian Empire. Only from the closing decades of the nineteenth century was there a marked increase.[55] This toning down reassessment of Jewish literacy does not alter the fact that the situation for children from Romani families, especially in Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, the current Czech Republic, and Slovakia, was – and still is – much worse.[56] In Romanian Wallachia and Moldavia, where most Romani people live (approximately 2.5 million currently), *ţiganii*, as they were called, had a slave status until the 1850s; after the abolition of slavery in 1856, their status only gradually improved.[57]

As with African Americans in the United States, Romani people in Eastern European countries suffered from discrimination, social marginalization, and segregation. Although the postwar communist states gave them limited possibilities for social mobility, their position after the fall of the Iron Curtain has not improved. Unlike the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, the Roma rights movement in Eastern Europe has experienced limited achievements, despite pressure from international NGOs and the European Union.[58] As a result, the education for

most Roma children today is segregated, with Roma schools in dilapidated ghettos or in separate classes in mainstream schools. Moreover, many of their parents do not trust schools, which they regard as state institutions that transmit values that conflict with those of their family. What they learn in school would have little relevance for their communities, and they fear for the loss of their own culture. Finally, traditional gender patterns in Roma families frustrate the chances of girls to undergo further education and training.[59]

Blocked access to education is not limited to stigmatized ethnic, religious, or racial minorities in American or Eastern European ghettos and Latin American favelas or South African townships, which still suffer from the effects of the apartheid-driven Bantu Education Act of 1953.[60] Class background also matters a great deal. In Europe, there is ample evidence that one's occupation and earning capacity are linked to residential segregation. Working-class neighborhoods in European countries and elsewhere had to make do with overcrowding (and still are), less funding, and problems with attracting good teachers to their public schools, especially in countries with large income and wealth inequalities.[61] As sociologist Paul Willis has argued, there is also a clear ideological dimension, as many schools in working-class areas function as channels to unskilled and lower-skilled occupations in the labor market.[62]

Apart from class distinctions, cultural and religious stigmas did not disappear overnight. Jews who emigrated to the United States experienced discrimination, and were confronted with admission quotas that limited entry long after the Holocaust, which reduced their entrance into elite American and Canadian universities such as Yale, Princeton, Harvard, and McGill until the early 1960s.[63]

Finally, colonial education remains a broad field that still needs to be explored more systematically and comparatively, particularly the education structures that privileged European (and Japanese) colonizers over the Native populations. These systems applied a mix of "race," religion, and class distinctions to legitimize educational segregation.[64] At the same time, they left room for private initiatives of relatively well-to-do Asian immigrants, especially those from China, to set up their own elite schools (the first one in Batavia in 1901), which not only gave access to high-quality education but also strengthened Chinese ethnicity and ties to national identity.[65]

This global historical overview of the relation between migration and educational systems shows that schools have functioned as key socializing institutions, and still do, in very different ways for children and young adults.[66] When nation-states developed public school systems for their populations in the nineteenth century, it took a while before compulsory education was generally imposed. This allowed most children of migrants and minorities to take part, but also limited access for some and channeled many into low-quality vo-

cational tracks. During the twentieth century, especially in welfare states after World War II (such as European nations, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, China, Soviet Russia), the idea of equality made it possible that lower-class people from whatever origin could enter higher education and experience upward social mobility. In nation-states where this ideal was less dominant or not implemented (such as South Africa, India, Brazil, partly the United States), access to higher education was much more restricted. Schools mirrored the prevailing membership regimes that reproduced the social, economic, and racial inequalities of the time.

A second important thread concerns the assimilationist ideology that constitutes the ideational and programmatic core of nation-states throughout the world in the last two centuries. Schools were considered the most important institutions to homogenize the population in terms of language and culture. This explains state officials' aversion to bilingual education in countries like Japan, Brazil, the United States, and France. Even ideological shifts, such as the multicultural turn after World War II (which allowed, for example, exams in heritage languages such as Urdu or Bengali in England and some mother tongue education in other European countries), did not fundamentally change this emphasis on linguistic conformity.[67] It should be stressed, though, that the prevalence of national language instruction was and is supported by the Native and native-born population. Whether it concerns Indigenous elites at the colegios in sixteenth-century Mexico, or postcolonial students at universities in Paris and London in the twentieth century, minorities and immigrants valued these institutions as a channel for upward social mobility and a means to further political (anticolonial) awareness. Even now, many immigrant (or minority) parents want their children to learn the majority language because it gives their children more chances in the societies where they settled. These parents do not reject bilingual education per se, but stress that it should be a vehicle for becoming part of the mainstream.

I have shown that when it comes to migrants and education, we should take a broad, crosscultural, international, and intersectional view. By *broad*, I mean we should throw our comparative net, in the spirit of sociologist Charles Tilly, as wide as possible in terms of geography and polities; and by *intersectional*, I mean we must consider systemic similarities within marginalized groups, whether it concerns internal aspects of marginalized identities (such as religious bias) or more overt material aspects (such as being a member of the working class). Only then can we identify and understand more general underlying mechanisms that explain how and why schools can allow or block upward social mobility and equality.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Comparative data are available only for the very recent period. See Mario Piacentini, *PISA Data on Students with an Immigrant Background* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020), https://web.archive.org/web/20240525024351/https://www.oecd.org/education/school/1A-Piacentini.pdf.

[2] Alexandra de Pleijt, "A Tale of Two 'Educational Revolutions': Human Capital Formation in England in the Long Term," *Revue d'Économie Politique* 130 (1) (2020): 107–130, esp. 108.

[3] For the data on China, see Cynthia J. Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods* (Harvard University Press, 2007), 564. See also Li Yu, *A History of Reading in Late Imperial China, 1000–1800* (Ohio State University Press, 2003), which deals extensively with female literacy and the spread of village schools in the last millennium. For the data on Prussia and the Netherlands, see de Pleijt, "A Tale of Two 'Educational Revolutions,'" 114.

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