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978-0-521-00953-9 - Race Politics in Britain and France: Ideas and Policymaking since the 1960s

Erik Bleich

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Race Politics in Britain and France

Ideas and Policymaking since the 1960s

Since the 1960s, Britain and France have developed substantially different policies to manage racial tensions, in spite of having similar numbers of postwar ethnic minority immigrants. This book provides the first detailed historical exploration of race policy development in these two countries, tracing the sources of Britain's race relations structures and France's antiracism approach. In this path-breaking work, Erik Bleich argues against common wisdom that attributes policy outcomes to the role of powerful interest groups or to the constraints of existing institutions, instead emphasizing the importance of frames – widely held ideas that propelled policymaking in different directions. British policymakers' framing of race and racism principally in North American terms of color discrimination encouraged them to import many policies from across the Atlantic. For decades after World War II, by contrast, French policy leaders' race frames revolved around anti-Semitism, hate speech, and race blindness, guiding French policies down a significantly different path from that taken in Britain.

Erik Bleich is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Middlebury College, where he was appointed Director of European Studies in 2001. He has written on issues of multiculturalism, race, and the role of ideas in policymaking for journals such as *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, and *French Politics, Culture and Society*, as well as for popular media such as the British newspaper *The Guardian*.

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Contents

<i>Preface and Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>Abbreviations and Acronyms</i>	xi
<i>Introduction</i>	I
1 Perspectives on Comparative Public Policymaking: The Place of Frames	17
2 The Birth of British Race Institutions: 1945 to the 1965 Race Relations Act	35
3 Round Two: 1965 to the 1968 Race Relations Act	63
4 From 1968 to the 1976 Race Relations Act and Beyond	88
5 The Origins of French Antiracism Institutions: 1945 to the 1972 Law	114
6 The Struggle Continued: Antiracism from 1972 to the 1990 Gayssot Law and Beyond	142
7 Race Frames and Race Policymaking in Britain and France	168
8 Race, Racism, and Integration in Europe: Recent Developments, Options, and Trade-offs	196
<i>References</i>	209
<i>Index</i>	227

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[More information](#)

Preface and Acknowledgments

Writing on race is no easy task because the term has no clear meaning. What are, for example, the boundaries that distinguish one “race” from another? Given that there are no biological bases for deciding whether there is such a thing as the “Irish race,” the “Jewish race,” or the “black race,” perhaps it is better to avoid such a loaded term altogether. And if the word is so ambiguous, controversial, or counterproductive, what purpose is served by devoting a book to the subject of “race politics” and “race policies”?

The topic of race arrived brusquely on my agenda when I was wrongfully arrested in December 1995 in Brixton, South London, during what was characterized by some as a race riot. My one phone call after a long night in jail was to a friend who, instead of recommending a lawyer, put me in touch with a journalist. Very early in our discussion, the reporter said that she hated to ask this, but was I by any chance black? One year later, while conducting interviews in Paris, a learned scholar stopped me short upon entering her office: What ethnicity was I, that I was writing a book on race?

Race is certainly an ambiguous word. It is a problematic concept that must be investigated rather than simply accepted. Yet, it remains incredibly meaningful. The term is used – or consciously avoided – because of its power to describe, to stigmatize, or to imply things about the world in which we live. “Race politics” and “race policy” are therefore employed in this book to describe the politics and policies surrounding issues of “race” as the term is widely understood by the general public. The goal is to shed light on how ideas about race, racism, and antiracism translate into politics and policymaking in two important European states.

vii

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

Preface and Acknowledgments

Although they have managed these issues in substantially different ways, Britain and France have developed strategies for dealing with race that affect their millions of citizens and that serve as potential models for countries around the world. For this reason alone, not only is it possible to write about race, it is imperative.

Over the course of this book's seven-year trajectory, I have accumulated far more debts than I can acknowledge or repay. Financially, I have drawn sustenance from the National Science Foundation, the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Krupp Foundation, and the Mellon Foundation. I have also benefited from the institutional support of the Department of Government, the Graduate Student Council and the Center for European Studies at Harvard University, and Middlebury College. I owe particular thanks to the Center for European Studies at Harvard University and to Middlebury College, institutional homes that enabled me to develop my ideas and to complete my writing. I also gratefully acknowledge the journals *Comparative Political Studies* and *French Politics, Culture and Society* for allowing me to use materials published in their pages in portions of the Introduction and in parts of Chapters 1, 5, 6, and 7 of this book.

More than to any institution, however, I am thankful to certain individuals. I had the privilege of working with five mentors, each of whom nurtured my curiosity and helped me translate it into this book. Stanley Hoffmann's wisdom and wit inspired me to pursue the study of politics when I was an undergraduate, and his vast knowledge and skeptical eye tempered my occasional tendency to reach conclusions where further reflection was required. Daniel Goldhagen pressed me always to think about the bigger picture; and his sage advice led me away from studying narrow subject matter and ultimately toward issues of race and ethnicity. Paul Pierson offered friendly yet pinpoint feedback on how to deal with the thorny problems of studying policymaking from a theoretical angle. Patrick Weil has supported my interests in politics since we first met in his classroom at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in the fall of 1989; in Paris during 1996 and 1997 he provided me with an intellectual home in the Centre d'Etude des Politiques d'Immigration, d'Intégration et de Citoyenneté (CEPIC) as well as with contacts in the world of the French policy elite. Finally, no young scholar could hope for a better mentor than Peter Hall, who read countless drafts of this book and examined, questioned, and criticized virtually every thought within it. Although none of

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Preface and Acknowledgments*

ix

these individuals is responsible for the content of this book, it would not exist today were it not for them.

Numerous other scholars have also had an immeasurable impact on this book through their careful readings and thoughtful comments. For taking the time to read and comment on the entire manuscript, I would especially like to thank Sheri Berman, Gary Freeman, Randall Hansen, James Hollifield, Ira Katznelson, Anthony Messina, and Abigail Saguy. For discussing portions of the project in its various incarnations and for influencing my thinking, I am also grateful to Karen Alter, Jeff Checkel, Pepper Culpepper, Matthew Dickinson, Adrian Favell, Andrew Geddes, Virginie Guiraudon, Brian Hanson, Stephen Hanson, Lauren Kiefer, Desmond King, Michèle Lamont, Judith Layzer, Robert Lieberman, Jill Parsons, Robert Pekkanen, Saadia Pekkanen, Shamit Saggar, Ted Sasson, Martin Schain, John Skrentny, Yasemin Soysal, Allison Stanger, Pierre-André Taguieff, Steven Teles, Elaine Thomas, Emmanuel Todd, Michèle Tribalat, Gunnar Trumbull, Maurits van der Veen, and Michel Wieviorka. Many thanks in addition to all those I interviewed in Britain and France and to the librarians and archivists who enabled me to access documents that proved crucial to forming my arguments in this book.

Finally, to my family – my large, far-flung, multinational family – and to my friends. You have helped to make me the person I am today. Without your love, this book would not have been possible. And to my wife, Jennifer Oster Bleich. Thank you for reading every word of this book (twice), for inspiring me to song, and for bringing me bundles of joy. You make it all worthwhile.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACE	Archives of the French Council of State (Conseil d’Etat)
AN	Assemblée Nationale (French National Assembly), followed by the number of the legislature (of the French Fifth Republic, unless otherwise noted) and the document reference and page number(s), or by the date of publication of the parliamentary debate in the Journal Officiel and page number(s)
ANF	Archives Nationales, Fontainebleau
APM	Archives of the Prime Minister’s Office (Matignon), France
CARD	Campaign Against Racial Discrimination
CFDT	Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail
CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail
CIAC	Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council
CNCDH	Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l’Homme
CRIF	Conseil Représentatif des Juifs de France
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
FAS	Fonds d’Action Sociale (pour les Travailleurs Immigrés et leurs Familles)
Hansard	British Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons unless otherwise noted), followed by the volume number and the column number(s)
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, United Nations

JODP	Journal Officiel (de la République Française) Débats Parlementaires
JOLD	Journal Officiel (de la République Française: Edition des) Lois et Décrets, followed by the date of publication and the number of the law
LICA	Ligue Internationale Contre l'Antisémitisme. Became LICRA in 1979
LICRA	Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme
LPA	Labour Party Archives
MJA I	Ministry of Justice Archives (France). No. 1513-1-A Tome I: Ministère de la Justice; Service Legislatif; Discriminations Raciales, Projet de loi et Prop de loi. Located in the ANF
MJA II	Ministry of Justice Archives (France). No. 1513-1-A Tome II: Ministère de la Justice; Service Legislatif; Discriminations Raciales, Props de loi. Located in the ANF
MJA III	Ministry of Justice Archives (France). No. 1513-1-A Tome III: Racisme; Ministère de la Justice; Direction des affaires criminelles et des grâces; sous-direction de la législation criminelle; Loi du 1er juillet 1972 relative à la lutte contre le racisme. Located in the Ministry of Justice
MRAP	Mouvement contre le Racisme et pour l'Amitié entre les Peuples, 1977–present; Mouvement contre le Racisme, l'Antisémitisme et pour la Paix, 1949–77
MRP	Mouvement Républicain Populaire
NCCI	National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants
PCF	Parti Communiste Française
PRO	Public Record Office, UK
PS	Parti Socialiste
RPR	Rassemblement Pour la République
S	Senate of the French Fifth Republic, followed by the session number, year, document number and page number(s), or by the date of publication of the parliamentary debate in the Journal Officiel and page number(s)
UDF	Union pour la Démocratie Française
UDR	Union pour la Défense de la République
UNR	Union pour la Nouvelle République