From International Ideas to Domestic Policies

Educational Multiculturalism in England and France

Erik Bleich

Political scientists are increasingly interested in the interaction between ideas and policies. Some research has used ideas as independent variables to demonstrate how a change in ideas has determined a policy outcome. Other studies have looked at how different national institutions funnel, shape, and adopt similar international ideas. This study follows in the second tradition by focusing on the application of the idea of multiculturalism to education policy in England and France. Multiculturalism first appeared on the education policy agenda in the 1960s, and it remains a hotly debated and much discussed topic today. Whereas multiculturalism blossomed in the ethnically diverse United States, it was often contested and fell on sometimes fertile, sometimes rocky soil in the more historically homogeneous western European nations.

England and France reacted to multiculturalism in particularly different manners. English education policy took on board many of the common changes advocated by supporters of multiculturalism, and multiculturalism is now generally accepted in many English educational institutions. In contrast, France has only grudgingly accepted very small pieces of the multicultural agenda, preferring to maintain education as a sphere for assimilating immigrants.

This divergence is curious given the similarities of the two countries. Each experienced relatively large-scale ethnic minority immigration in the decades following World War II, and policymakers in each country were exposed to educational multiculturalism through participation in international educational networks. Why have England and France responded so differently to the idea of multicultural education?

The key to this puzzle lies in the interaction between two variables: the different structure of gatekeepers controlling the access of ideas into the policy process and the different priors of gatekeepers in each country. Institutionally, England has a much more decentralized educational system than does France. Decentralization increases the number of decision-making gatekeepers who control the access of new ideas into the policy system. Counterintuitively, a greater number of gatekeepers may lead to an increased likelihood of policy change.

Yet the number of gatekeepers alone does not explain the divergence between England and France. Policy gatekeepers must also have the inclination to adopt new ideas. Policymakers are not blank slates on which actors try to write new ideas into
policies. Rather, these gatekeepers have a host of ideational assumptions which affect their attitudes to change.4 When a new idea runs contrary to these gatekeepers’ priors, it is unlikely to be implemented. Understanding the interaction between international ideas and domestic gatekeepers and their priors provides fresh insights into the theoretical queries of political scientists.

In education policies, England’s decentralized system—and therefore its greater number of gatekeepers—and its particular distribution of “liberal” priors contributed to the rise of multiculturalism in English education policy between the mid 1960s and the late 1980s. France, in contrast, has a centralized educational system with few policy gatekeepers. These gatekeepers’ republican and laïque priors made them hostile to the philosophy of multicultural education, strictly limiting the impact of this international idea in France.5

**Multiculturalism and Education Policy**

Multicultural education has moved on and off international agendas since its ideational inception in America in the late 1960s.6 It rose during a period of civil rights advances for minorities and has since spread to other industrialized countries. By the mid 1980s a leading author on the topic could say that “across the OECD countries there is a growing willingness to adapt educational systems to take into account differing cultures.”7 The OECD itself sponsored a conference on multicultural education in 1985, and the European Commission recently published a booklet detailing its policies and expenditures on multicultural education.8

Multiculturalism exists, but to define it is no easy task.9 This problem is not unusual for a political idea. Even when such ideas arise from the texts of one primary author, they are frequently debated, contested, and understood differently both within and across countries. There is no original body of writings outlining a doctrine of multiculturalism, adding flexibility to the interpretation of its meanings or prescriptions. In practice, the term multiculturalism has covered a wide range of policies.

For the purposes of this paper there are two key elements to the definition of multicultural education policies. The first is a focus on diversity. Diversity policies are any policies which take ethnic, racial, or cultural diversity into account in their formulation or implementation. This broad definition is useful in developing a relatively objective measure for classifying policies. Yet it is insensitive to the second important element of multiculturalism: the intent of the policy. It is therefore necessary to subdivide diversity policies into four categories along the lines of intent (see Figure 1).

Nonmulticultural policies include assimilationist policies, which are aimed at minorities with the goal of erasing cultural differences and promoting cultural homogeneity, and preparationist policies, which foster cultural differences with the intent of preparing for the expulsion or departure of cultural minorities. In contrast, multicultural-
Multicultural and Nonmulticultural Diversity Policies

Figure 1 Multicultural and Nonmulticultural Diversity Policies

Diversity Policies

Non-Multicultural

assimilationist

preparationist

Multicultural

passive multicultural

active multicultural

al diversity policies accept other cultures as fully legitimate within the nation. Passive multiculturalism is an attempt to allow for a measure of cultural diversity by making certain exceptions for minorities while limiting the effect of changes on the majority. Active multiculturalist policies go further by attempting to create a new national culture which encompasses minority as well as majority cultures and perspectives.10

Though these policies are mixed and matched in practice, this study is concerned primarily with the rise and extent of policies in the latter two categories, passive and active multiculturalism. Nevertheless, understanding the variations in diversity policies helps to place multiculturalism in context and makes it possible to chart general trends and changes within and across countries. England has gone relatively far in implementing both passive and active multiculturalism, whereas France has focused primarily on assimilationist policies and has even flirted with preparationist measures.

Education Policy in England

Education policies towards ethnic and racial minorities in England have shifted substantially since 1945. In the early postwar period schools either had no diversity policies at all, or they tried to assimilate immigrants into the national culture. This initial period of assimilationism began to give way in the mid 1960s to passive multiculturalist policy initiatives. From the late 1970s through the late 1980s many English educational policymakers engaged in active multiculturalism. In the 1990s, however, the momentum of active multiculturalism has been largely lost. Nevertheless, there is still a significant level of multiculturalism present in local education policies, especially in ethnically mixed areas.

1945 to the Mid 1970s: From Assimilation to Passive Multiculturalism

Until the mid 1960s there were few initiatives designed to meet the particular needs of immigrants and their children in English educational institutions.11 The actions and reports of policymakers and politicians during this period emphasized an English culture to which immigrants were expected to adapt.12 In religious education, for
example, the city of Birmingham’s 1962 syllabus on religious education specified: “We speak of religious education, but we mean Christian education...the aim of Christian education in its full and proper sense is quite simply to confront our children with Jesus Christ.”

In the early 1960s the government also produced documents such as the Second Report of the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Committee, which was concerned with “the role of the education system in bringing about the cultural assimilation of immigrant children into ‘British life.’” Furthermore, the minister of education stated that some schools were “irretrievably immigrant” and that a cap of 30 percent immigrants should be imposed in the future. And in 1965 even a Labour spokesman suggested that “only immigrants most likely to be assimilated into our national life’ should be permitted to stay in Britain.”

Yet these assimilationist attitudes and policies began to change in the mid 1960s and have continued to fade since then. Though the transition was not immediate and was not effected through a discrete series of events, the trends in political rhetoric and in concrete policies show a clear long-term shift in educational policy. In 1966 home secretary Roy Jenkins proclaimed that integration was defined “not as a flattening process of assimilation but equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance.” This statement signaled a break from assimilationism and a move toward multicultural policies.

The majority of policy changes from 1965 to 1975 was aimed at minority children and designed to accommodate cultural differences while minimizing changes in the education of white Britons. In this decade minority religions became acceptable in English schools. Starting in the 1970s, issues of Muslim dress and food were raised and overcome through compromises, for example, ensuring that religious clothing conformed to the colors of the school uniform and providing vegetarian or halal lunches. Finally, in 1971 the Schools Council in its Working Paper 36, “Religious Education in Secondary Schools,” announced a shift to an “undogmatic” approach which “does not seek to promote any one religious viewpoint.”

During this era educational policymakers also developed policies favorable to linguistic pluralism. The Bullock Committee stated in 1975 that schools “should help maintain and deepen knowledge of their mother-tongue,” two years before the EEC mandated mother-tongue instruction in 1977. In sum, policies and attitudes towards ethnic minorities were evolving; they were becoming more tolerant of diversity within English educational institutions, without requiring widespread changes associated with active multiculturalism.

The Mid 1970s to the Present Day: From Passive to Active Multiculturalism and Back Again? Beginning in the mid 1970s, research organizations, both government-affiliated and independent, increasingly described Britain as a multicultural or multiracial society. This characterization started a broad shift in thinking which led
to policies aimed at the attitudes and activities of more than just ethnic minority children. The active multiculturalism of this stage was meant to bring about changes in the education of “native” English children as well as “immigrants.”

Between 1975 and 1988 significant rhetoric and policy initiatives at both the local and national levels moved in the direction of active multiculturalism. Antiracism gathered momentum as a challenge to passive multiculturalism and to “white” Britons and their views on race. By 1981 about twenty-five local education authorities appointed an advisor for multicultural education, and a few produced policy documents on multiculturalism. By 1989 at least fifty-four of the 108 local education authorities had multicultural, antiracist, or equal opportunity policies, and a further twenty had such policies under review or in preparation.

The major announcement of active multiculturalism in this era, however, came with the publication of the Swann Report, Education for All, in 1985. In it, the government committee stated that “it is essential to change fundamentally the terms of the debate about the educational response to today’s multiracial society and to look ahead to educating all children, from whatever ethnic group, to an understanding of the shared values of our society as a whole as well as to an appreciation of the diversity of lifestyles and cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds which make up this society and the wider world.” In the conclusions and recommendations, the report talks about combating racism and inherited stereotypes and ensuring that multiculturalism permeates all aspects of a school’s work.

Furthermore, the government supported the findings of the Swann Report with a small amount of money. All told, some £3 million was funneled through the “Educational Needs in a Multi-Ethnic Society” program between 1985 and 1989 to cover the costs of 119 projects. They ranged over many English regions, including “all-white” districts, and from 1988 on “projects were to be more firmly and openly directed towards changing the attitudes and behavior of white pupils.” Though funding was modest and the program’s duration limited, the department of education and science took a concrete step towards active multiculturalism.

Yet even as active multiculturalism rose in the 1970s and 1980s, there existed countercurrents which eventually halted its momentum. In the early 1980s both Thatcher and her education secretary, Keith Joseph, made statements to the effect that Britain’s schools were meant to express a certain culture and that there were elements of sense in monoculturalism. Vocal and vehement attacks on multiculturalism came from right-wing groups such as the Monday Club and academic think-tanks like the Salisbury group which played up prominent cases of parent or teacher discontent with multiculturalism.

In spite of these efforts, however, there were few attempts to roll back the tangible changes of earlier decades. Although there have been few government references to multiculturalism since 1988, ethnic minority clothing and food continue to be present in many schools. Moreover in 1991 95 percent of surveyed local education
authorities had multicultural, antiracist, or equal opportunity policies in existence, under review, or in preparation, up from 80 percent in 1989. Finally, localities with high percentages of ethnic minorities continue to regard the fact of diversity as socially and politically important within their districts.

In sum, the birthing of policies which articulate England as a multicultural and multiracial society has faded in the late 1980s and 1990s. The production of new active multicultural messages has subsided nationally and locally in “all-white” areas. Nevertheless, a legacy of both passive and active multiculturalism has been left both nationally and especially in localities with ethnically diverse populations. Although voices are occasionally raised in favor of assimilation of ethnic minorities, the majority of education policymakers and practitioners are convinced that assimilation is not an appropriate method for dealing with cultural diversity. Therefore, English students—at least a significant portion of them—continue to learn about England as a multiethnic society through a combination of passive and active multiculturalism.

**Education Policy in France**

From 1945 until the early 1970s French schools dealt with ethnic minorities as they had always done with their own citizens. From the early 1970s to the early 1980s limited measures were designed around immigrant children either to integrate them better into French society (assimilation) or to prepare them to return to their “home countries” (preparationism). In the early 1980s there was a brief, weak push towards active multiculturalism that quickly gave way to the more assimilationist rhetoric and policies of earlier eras.

**Through the End of the 1970s: Assimilation and Preparation** Educational institutions have had pride of place in turning immigrants into Frenchmen. As Noiriel notes, “the school was a powerful factor in the abandonment by the children of immigrants of their culture of origin; for their generation this stigmatisation was a fundamental psychological incentive which filled them with a fierce determination to integrate within the French society by ridding themselves of the slightest trace of any difference.” Teaching the national language and literature has always helped to diffuse the national idea and develop attachments to France, and this tendency was particularly strong up to the late 1960s. Facing increasing numbers of immigrants in its schools, French educational policy either ignored diversity or developed policies designed to assimilate culturally different pupils.

Beginning in the early and mid 1970s, politicians and educational policymakers introduced initiatives aimed at immigrant pupils. Special classes to ease foreign students’ transition to French schools were established at the primary and secondary level. Mother-tongue teaching agreements, negotiated bilaterally with eight foreign
states, followed between 1973 and 1987.\textsuperscript{36} Additionally, special centers were created to train teachers of immigrant children.

Boyzon-Frader notes, however, that in 1989–90 only 17.3 percent (60,000) of eligible students took part in the mother-tongue teaching program.\textsuperscript{37} Weil states that a mere 1 percent of foreign students take part in the transition classes.\textsuperscript{38} And according to Seksig, the training centers have been largely ignored both by policymakers and teachers.\textsuperscript{39} These kinds of policies were very limited in scope, particularly when compared with Britain.

Furthermore, what few policy adjustments were made certainly did not aim to promote the notion of France as a culturally diverse nation. They were designed primarily to facilitate immigrants’ integration into French society or to maintain the possibility of their return to their “home country.”\textsuperscript{40} The bilateral texts on teaching languages and cultures of origin, for example, state that “the maintenance of the knowledge of their culture of children living in France constitutes...an important means of facilitating their eventual insertion in their societies of origin,” reflecting threads of preparationism within the dominant assimilationist paradigm.\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{The 1980s and 1990s: From Assimilation to Assimilation via Tentative Active Multiculturalism} From the very end of the 1970s until approximately 1985 there were limited moves away from pure assimilation in education policy towards a more pluralistic view of French society. Writing in 1983, Henry-Lorcerie noted the strong increase in the use of the term “intercultural” in the education sphere.\textsuperscript{42} As she explains, interculturalism as a philosophy was meant by some thinkers and actors to contravene society’s “denial” of minorities as groups, and perhaps also as individuals.\textsuperscript{43}

Paralleling developments in England, France also produced a document in 1985 on education and cultural pluralism. By this time, however, it was clear that the extent of multiculturalism (either active or passive) in France would be limited. In contrast to the Swann Report, “Education For All,” the \textit{Rapport Berque} was entitled “Immigration in the Schools of the Republic,” already signifying that the dominant paradigm of France continued to juxtapose “natives” to “immigrants.”\textsuperscript{44} The \textit{Rapport Berque} can be seen as advocating a halfway house between a France with a “historic French cultural identity” and one where there is a “new concept of unity, respecting and taking into account heterogeneity, which the problem of immigrants’ children raises.”\textsuperscript{45}

Since 1985 rhetoric and policy have tended markedly towards a renewed assimilationist model of dealing with ethnic pluralism in educational institutions. French public discourse, government documents, and policies have by and large stressed the value of the French system of integrating foreigners into the established fabric of society.\textsuperscript{46} Schnapper notes that the Commission on Nationality emphasizes the role of education and socialization in determining Frenchness.\textsuperscript{47} This position is much more in line with traditional notions of \textit{le creuset français} (the French melting pot) than with a reconceptualized pluricultural community as advocated by active multi-
culturalism.\textsuperscript{48} Also, though the government-established High Council on Integration (\textit{Haut Conseil à l'Intégration}) accepts that cultural diversity can enrich the nation, it does not advocate any major changes in French institutions, particularly educational institutions, as a result of it. Rather, it states that “integration policy increases [\textit{valorise}] solidarity, stresses similarities and convergences.”\textsuperscript{49}

In sum, a limited number of French policy changes since the early 1970s have directly addressed the issues of ethnic and cultural diversity. With the exception of policies in the early 1980s, however, most have had the explicit or implicit goal of turning immigrants into Frenchmen. France tinkered twice with its dominant mode of assimilationism, once in the late 1970s with limited moves toward preparationism and once in the early 1980s with weak and abortive steps toward active multiculturalism. In historical perspective, few French educational policies or public statements have been directed at French society as a whole with the aim of fostering active multiculturalism. This observation is even more true today than it was ten to fifteen years ago. France has thus reacted to multicultural ideas in a very different way from its cross-channel neighbor.

\textbf{Explaining Cross-National Variation in the Impact of Multiculturalism on Education Policies}

Why did England embrace multiculturalism in its education policies when France did not? This divergence can be accounted for by examining the interaction between the different institutional structures and the different preexisting ideas in the two countries. Specifically, the different number and structure of gatekeepers and the different priors about the role of culture in education policy play key roles in explaining cross-national variation in the impact of multiculturalism. In contrast, the divergent policies have less to do with immigration and citizenship policies, colonial legacies, and the rise of far-right movements than might be assumed.

\textbf{Insufficient Explanations: Immigration and Citizenship, Colonialism, and Far-Right Politics} Although ethnic minority immigrants settled in England and France in the postwar era in large numbers at approximately the same time, immigration came on the political agenda in Britain a decade earlier than it did in France.\textsuperscript{50} Because of differences in citizenship laws, Commonwealth immigrants in England enjoyed the full rights of citizens immediately upon arrival (at least until 1971), while French minorities became citizens over a longer time period, principally through naturalization or birth on French soil.\textsuperscript{51} These differences may explain why ethnic and cultural issues came on to the education policy agenda in England in the 1960s but in France only in the 1970s. Yet even in the 1990s, with ever-climbing numbers of ethnic minorities, multiculturalism is still not evident in French educa-
tion policy.\textsuperscript{52} If anything, France has reaffirmed its commitment to assimilation in the face of growing numbers of minority immigrants and citizens.

The argument in favor of colonial legacies asserts that, whereas Britain managed "the natives" and never tried to make them British, the French set out to create culturally French, well assimilated subjects.\textsuperscript{53} Modern education policies are thought to reflect this difference in that England tolerates cultural diversity at home, whereas France still tries to assimilate minorities into the national culture. This argument is not wholly without merit. Ultimately though, it can not cope with tensions and variations in policy outcomes within each country. For example, it can not account for English efforts in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s to assimilate immigrants. Even today, important strands of the British educational policy establishment believe that "children should be taught to be British."\textsuperscript{54} As Lapeyronnie notes in his study of integration policies in Britain and France, "the explanation of current policies by the mode of colonization...seems a little heavy and too general to be directly useful."\textsuperscript{55}

Finally, the timing of the rise of far-right movements may be a key factor in stunting multicultural education policies that differs across nations. But while Le Pen and the Front National were an important nail in the coffin of education policy changes in France in the early 1980s, the Powells of the late 1960s in Britain did not have the same effect on English policy. Though the government of the right in Britain undertook no major national multicultural initiatives in the early 1970s, local policies continued to become more oriented toward diversity, and the next government of the left picked up the multicultural themes. France has not followed this pattern. The 1988–1993 government of the left showed no further interest in promoting an image of France as a pluricultural society.

In sum, immigration and citizenship policies, colonial legacies, and far-right politics undoubtedly play some role in explaining elements of the different educational policy paths taken by England and France. Nevertheless, in and of themselves they are insufficient to account for the presence of multiculturalism in England and its near absence in France.

\textbf{Towards an Institutional and Ideational Explanation: Gatekeepers and Priors}

England and France differ in two central respects in the field of education policy which have greatly affected the take-up of multicultural doctrines. First, England’s decentralized policy system provides a greater number of gatekeepers than France’s centralized structure. Teachers, school principals, and regional education authorities have had less national oversight in England than in France. Second, a large number of France’s educationalists is imbued with the idea that cultural pluralism is anathema to the laïque republican values they cherish. They have thus been unresponsive to the internationally popular philosophy of multiculturalism. In contrast, American-style liberals concentrated in several important areas of English educational policy have proven particularly willing to implement multicultural doctrines and practices.
that originated in U.S. society in the 1960s.

The interaction of decentralized gatekeepers and liberal priors in Britain has thus provided a warm reception for educational multiculturalism. In contrast, the combination of centralized gatekeepers and laïque republican priors has frozen out multiculturalism in France.56

**Gatekeepers** A policy gatekeeper is an individual or a group that has power to make or block a policy decision. The number and location of gatekeepers are determined by the formal institutional rules governing a policy sphere. Gatekeepers typically screen out unwelcome newcomers or intruders and can perform this function when actors with new ideas come knocking on policy doors. Yet gatekeepers also provide access to the inner sanctum and can prepare the path from idea to implemented policy.

Both the number and arrangement of policy gatekeepers will have a critical effect on the likelihood that a new international idea will become a domestic policy. Gatekeepers can be distributed either sequentially or spatially: sequential gatekeepers are arranged so that an initiative must pass through first one, then another gatekeeper before it becomes policy, whereas spatial gatekeepers control separate and geographically organized policy domains within the national system.

Immergut in her study of health policymaking argues that sequential gatekeepers constitute “veto points.” Thus, gatekeepers indeed act as potential brakes on policies. According to Immergut: “Political decisions are not single decisions made at one point in time. Rather, they are composed of sequences of decisions made by different actors at different institutional locations. Simply put, enacting a law requires successive affirmative votes at all decision points.”57 This type of institutional arrangement is represented in Figure 2a. In this scenario, before a new policy can be enacted, it must pass through all five gates and can be vetoed by any of the five gatekeepers. The greater the number of gatekeepers who stand between the outside world and the policy system, the more difficult it will be to transform an idea into policy.

However, not all policy decisions are as systematically sequential as those examined by Immergut. In the case of education policy (as in any policy area) there is undoubtedly a sequential element to decision making. But because the decisions taken in these cases have generally been lower profile policy choices rather than high profile legislative decisions (as in Immergut’s study) the fundamental dynamic of educational multiculturalism can be captured without the complication of sequential decision making.

Instead, the important difference is the role of spatial gatekeepers. Whereas the centralized system has only one policy gatekeeper, the decentralized system has many. In the case represented by Figure 2b, the gatekeeper is the central government. In Figure 2c, gatekeepers are spatially distributed throughout the country at the regional and central government levels. Furthermore, once an idea has passed
Figure 2 Gatekeepers and the Spread of Ideas

![Diagram of gatekeepers and policy change]

- Multiple sequential gatekeepers
  - 5 gatekeepers; all or nothing; centralized system
- Single gatekeeper
  - 1 gatekeeper; all or nothing; centralized system
- Multiple spatial gatekeepers
  - 5 gatekeepers; partial gains and cross-learning; regionalized system

NpΔ = national policy change
RpΔ = regional policy change

through a gatekeeper and into a region (RpΔ), there is a strong potential for cross-learning by other regions (RpΔ) and the central government (NpΔ).58

A greater number of gatekeepers can thus paradoxically increase the likelihood that an idea will be adopted domestically, *ceteris paribus*, provided that gatekeepers are arranged spatially and not sequentially. More gatekeepers provide more possible destinations for the traveling idea salesman to attempt to hawk his wares. If he knocks on one door and is turned away, he can try the next house in a decentralized system, but he must pack up and go home in the centralized one. And once he has sold his product to one buyer, he can use her as an example of a satisfied customer or rely on word of mouth advertising to encourage others to take up the merchandise.59

Applied to the empirical cases at hand, Figures 2b and 2c represent the difference between the French and the English educational policy systems, respectively. Whereas the British educational system is highly decentralized, the French system is highly centralized. The educational system in Britain actually consists of three educational systems, governing England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.60 Within England and Wales over one hundred local education authorities composed of elected politicians each has a substantial regional bureaucracy designed to oversee and coordinate the activities of primary and secondary schools within its jurisdiction. In addition, before the changes brought about by the 1988 Education Reform Act, decisions on curriculum were often taken at the school level.

Such a spatial distribution of gatekeepers made it easier for multiculturalism to enter into policymaking in England, because regions, schools, and teachers could develop their own policies. Because decisions on multiculturalism could be taken at
local levels, more gatekeepers allowed more possible paths for multiculturalism to enter into education policy. Multicultural policies and ideas spread as localities and national policymakers learned from one another about new techniques or ideas for running multiethnic schools or regions.\textsuperscript{61}

Because of the decentralized nature of British education policy, it was never likely that all schools would partake in the trend toward multiculturalism, and, indeed, not all have. But the structure of institutions in England has allowed multiculturalism to pivot back and forth between national, local, and school level policies and rhetoric. Crucially, the lead was most often taken by the regions.\textsuperscript{62} Had policies come only from London, it is doubtful that England would have a substantial multicultural component to its national education policy, and it is even more doubtful that these policies would have survived the antimulticulturalist tendencies of the Thatcher period.

France’s education system, by contrast, is highly centralized.\textsuperscript{63} The bureaucracy in Paris sets educational policy, giving substantial consistency to schooling across the nation. Regional supervisors are politically appointed from the center and change as the national government changes. This system ensures a uniformity of educational perspective, strictly limiting the number of independent gatekeepers who can make choices about issues such as teaching methods and curriculum materials. Moreover, the costs of changing policy become prohibitively high for small interest groups (responsible for many multicultural activities in England), which in France must work at the national rather than the local level. With the exception of a few virtually unnoticed projects on immigrant cultures, there is little evidence of local multicultural initiatives.

It is thus much more difficult for nongovernmental actors to insert multicultural policies into the national system. If educational multiculturalism were to arrive in France, it would have to come from the top down through the central gatekeeper. In a country where less than five percent of the population are ethnic minority citizens, it is less clear that multiculturalism is an appropriate policy for the whole nation than it is for localities with higher proportions of ethnic minority residents. The greater number of gatekeepers has thus made it easier for multiculturalism to work its way into the English system than into the French. Decentralization provided greater structural potential for significant educational innovation, whereas centralization impeded change.\textsuperscript{64} Multiculturalism entered England primarily through the regions and then spread over time, whereas in France it never passed through the central gateway.

**Priors** Although a single gatekeeper is better than multiple sequential gatekeepers for entrepreneurs wishing to turn their ideas into policies, multiple spatial gatekeepers are preferable to one gatekeeper if she is hostile to change. To fully understand the transformation of international ideas into domestic policies, it is critical to examine factors affecting the attitudes of gatekeepers to new ideas. Arguments about the number and type of gatekeepers (sequential or spatial) are necessarily only part of
the equation. The level of centralization is a critical variable in explaining the adoption of new policies, but whether centralization facilitates or blocks innovation is not predetermined.65

A gatekeeper’s priors are central to her receptiveness to an international movement such as multiculturalism. When a new idea is presented to a policymaker it will have a certain “fit” with that individual’s preconceptions which may cause it to be enthusiastically endorsed or rejected out of hand.66 Hall makes a similar point with reference to “the structure of political discourse,” asserting that it can “work to the advantage or disadvantage of new policy proposals.” For Hall, the “prevailing set of political ideas”

include[s] shared conceptions about the nature of society..., various ideas about the appropriate role of government, a number of common political ideals, and collective memory of past policy experiences. Together, such ideas constitute the political discourse of a nation. They provide a language in which policy can be described within the political arena and the terms in which policies are judged there.67

Priors, by comparison, are less universal than the “shared conceptions” of Hall’s political discourse. Although priors may be national in scope (as are Hall’s prevailing ideas), they can also be contested across segments of society. They therefore more closely approximate Baumgartner and Jones’ discussion of “policy images,” which involve a definition of how the policy issue is understood and discussed and which can diverge within countries or even within policy networks.68 In contrast to policy images, however, priors are not merely rhetorical tools used by policy entrepreneurs; rather, they are the product of the gatekeeper’s socialization and the prism through which new policy proposals are filtered. The distribution of priors across one or multiple gatekeepers will therefore determine the impact of the international idea. While some gatekeepers may have priors which are hostile to change, others’ priors may make them quite receptive to new initiatives.

Where there is one gatekeeper—as in a centralized system—the impact of an international idea will depend largely on that policymaker’s priors. If the gatekeeper is receptive, the idea will have a strong impact domestically; if she is hostile, the idea will have no impact. In a sense, a centralized system approximates an “all or nothing” gamble for the policy entrepreneur carrying the international idea. In contrast, a system with multiple spatial gatekeepers—a decentralized system—will most likely offer only partial gains. It is probable that gatekeepers will have a mixed bag of priors and that only some will convert the new idea into policy. From the point of view of a policy entrepreneur, the ideal situation is to face a single gatekeeper whose priors make her sympathetic to the proposed changes. Second best is a system with multiple spatial gatekeepers, some of whose priors are likely to fit with the new initiative. Worst of all possibilities are centralized systems with any one gatekeeper hostile to the entrepreneur’s ideas (see Table 1).
Table 1 The Effect of Gatekeepers and Priors on Policy Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>system</th>
<th>number of gatekeepers</th>
<th>arrangement of gatekeepers</th>
<th>priors</th>
<th>outcome</th>
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<td>centralized</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>favorable</td>
<td>much pΔ</td>
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<td>multiple</td>
<td>spatial</td>
<td>mixed</td>
<td>some pΔ</td>
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<td>no pΔ</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>no pΔ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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pΔ = policy change, in this case the adoption of international ideas

Policymakers in Britain and France adopted or rejected educational multiculturalism based largely on their priors. In France, multiculturalism cut strongly against the grain of the nation’s republican and laïque values, inherited from the revolution and from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century struggles over religion in school.69 It has become de rigueur to cite republicanism and laïcité as the primary rationales for rejecting the “Anglo-Saxon model” of multiculturalism.70 Though many foreign critics claim that France’s assimilationist model is monocultural,71 the French argue that their laïque education policy, by not favoring any one religion over another, is neutral and universal. The goal of the system is thus strict equality. This notion of impartiality also extends to racial and ethnic differences and makes French actors resist the kind of multiculturalism that has made inroads in England.

Leading French authors—and even policy entrepreneurs—tend to fear the “community logic” of multiculturalism.72 They argue that any “right to difference” would lead to a “difference of rights,” a situation wholly unacceptable in a state which attempts to maintain a relationship with individual citizens rather than with corporate identity groups.73 These priors are shared by France’s central government policy gatekeepers as well as by many practitioners in the education field. As Hargreaves notes, “few politicians or civil servants are prepared to endorse the concept of multiculturalism.”74 On the particular importance of early twentieth century struggles over laïcité to the attitudes towards multiculturalism, one observer interviewed summarized the general opinion of teachers as: “we’ve won the battle with Catholicism, we don’t want to fight it with the Muslims.”75

The rejection of multiculturalism based upon ideational priors about the values of laïque republicanism has become a national idiom, repeated in the contexts of education, citizenship, and immigration debates. To the extent that this discourse predominates in wider French society, these ideational priors approximate Hall’s notion of a national “shared political discourse.” Although some authors and actors are sympathetic to pluricultural policies and perspectives,76 it is indisputably true that, as a rule, French gatekeepers’ priors make them very reluctant to embrace educational multiculturalism.77
British priors, in contrast, are not as uniform as those in France. Although there is passive acceptance among many that Britain is a multicultural society, numerous individuals on the political right still believe in an "essential" Britishness (or, more accurately, Englishness). Nevertheless, a strong "liberal" group of gatekeepers has opposed this tendency and has encouraged a focus on ethnic minorities as disadvantaged communities. This group has commonly found a natural home in Britain's Labour Party and has had an important impact on many local education authorities, especially in inner-city areas.

Elected and appointed gatekeepers with liberal priors have acted as switchmen, tracking international ideas about multiculturalism into their regional policies. Additionally, Labour Party liberals would occasionally take important national posts—such as Roy Jenkins as home office minister in the late 1960s and Shirley Williams as education minister in the late 1970s—and use their positions to inject multicultural ideas in national policymaking. Even the Conservative Party-appointed Lord Swann succeeded in nudging national policy and rhetoric in a liberal, multicultural direction during the Thatcher years.

Finally, there is evidence that many school principals and teachers themselves have liberal priors. Gillborn examines three schools which have developed sustained antiracist policies. He finds that "the moves towards antiracist change were initiated by a small 'core' group of committed teachers, supported by their headteacher and senior management." When asked why he thought that Britain had more multicultural policies than France, one history teacher replied "it's because we're nicer," reflecting a liberal prior against those who oppose multiculturalism.

Thus, priors are distributed much more evenly for and against multiculturalism in England than in France. In France, the one national gatekeeper has been unsympathetic to change. In England, the national gatekeeper has been (off and on) more sympathetic to multiculturalism. The force of the changes, however, has come regionally, where gatekeepers with liberal priors have dominated politics and policy for long periods of time. In sum, whereas France corresponds to the fourth model in Table 1, a centralized system with one hostile gatekeeper, England corresponds to the second model, a decentralized system with multiple gatekeepers representing a mixture of priors. Accordingly, there has been some policy change in England in the direction of multiculturalism and no policy change in France.

Conclusion

The impact of international ideas on domestic policies depends on a host of factors. Institutional structures and established ideas emerge as two critical elements in explaining cross-national differences. In particular, this paper highlights the important interaction between gatekeepers and priors in translating international ideas into
domestic policies. When there is a single gatekeeper with receptive priors, a new idea is likely to resonate and greatly affect national politics. If gatekeepers are spatially distributed in a decentralized system and have a range of priors, there will most likely be partial internal changes within the country. With sequential gatekeepers or a single gatekeeper, if any one gatekeeper’s priors are hostile to change, an international idea will find little or no toehold in the domestic scene.

Gatekeepers and priors are central in determining the influence of educational multiculturalism in England and France. The English combination of multiple spatial gatekeepers and widespread liberal priors resulted in a significant level of multiculturalism in domestic education policy. In contrast, the mixture of a single, centralized gatekeeper and the prevalence of republican and laïque priors strictly limited the influence of educational multiculturalism in France.

Domestic institutional structures and preformulated priors are likely to be relevant to the reception of international ideas in a wide variety of cases, most often when decisions about the appropriateness of a new movement are taken in the relative shelter of a bureaucracy rather than in the bright lights of public debate. The more decisions are left to gatekeepers, the more their individual priors will take precedence over the collective bargaining process of pluralist decision making, and the more the number, location, and structure of gatekeepers will affect political outcomes.

NOTES

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5. Laique can be translated as “lay,” although in France it is a historically loaded term which approximates America’s “separation of church and state.”
10. Classifying policies based on their intent is sometimes difficult. For example, a preparationist and a multiculturalist (and even some assimilationists) may agree that mother-tongue teaching for minorities is an appropriate policy, but for different reasons. The issue of intent, however, is crucial to common understandings of multiculturalism and must therefore be taken into account.
15. Ibid., p. 17.
16. Ibid., p. 12.
23. See Troyna and Williams; Arnot, ed.
24. There are a few more than one hundred local education authorities in England and Wales; they have substantial powers over education policy in their districts.
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27. Ibid., p. 769.
31. Taylor, p. 11.
32. This judgment is based on interviews with senior educational policy officers in three inner London boroughs.
34. In CERI, ed., p. 25.
40. See Weil, pp. 380–87; and Seksig, pp. 91–95.
41. Cited in Seksig, p. 92.
42. Intercultural is the French equivalent of “multicultural,” the very word multicultural being anathema to many in France. On the rise of interculturalism (and for a strong critique of it), see Seksig, pp. 95–98.
46. For some exceptions, see Boyzon-Frader, p. 159, where she mentions a 1989 ministry of education project to encourage schools to stress the “foreign contributions to French heritage.” See also Seksig, p. 97. On the resurgence of integrationism, see Lorcerie, “Scolarisation des enfants d’immigrés.”
47. Schnapper, p. 351.
50. See Rose; Weil.
51. See Randall Hansen, “The Institution of Citizenship” (thesis, Faculty of Social Studies, Oxford University, 1997); Weil, ch. 10.
52. France does not keep ethnic statistics on its citizen population, so a precise comparison of minority populations is impossible. Nevertheless, as of 1990 there were over two million resident foreigners in France of African or Asian origin, and between 1980 and 1993 approximately 730,000 individuals (of all origins) became naturalized French citizens. See Weil, pp. 559–60, 568.
56. Although political bargaining, interest group power, electoral considerations, and material interests have played a role in some local policy outcomes, they are insufficient to explain the differences in policy outcomes between England and France and are themselves affected by the institutions and ideas discussed in this paper.
60. This paper therefore limits its scope to education policy as it relates to England and Wales, for which the shorthand “English education policy” is used.
61. This learning has taken place primarily through three paths. First, some local education authorities, with their own financial resources, have sponsored studies of multiculturalism by leading academics. See esp. Tomlinson, Multicultural Education. Second, bureaucrats and politicians can be exposed to “internal” policy documents and reports on multiculturalism issued by other local education authorities; finally, bureaucrats can move between local education authorities, applying their knowledge and experiences from one to another.
62. For similar discussions with reference to American federalism, see Baumgartner and Jones, pp. 216–34, and David Osborne, Laboratories of Democracy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).
66. Obviously, preconceived ideas can change over time. When priors shift, the likelihood of accepting an international idea will also change. Explaining when and why priors evolve (and therefore making priors a temporal as well as spatial variable) is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper.
68. Baumgartner and Jones, pp. 25–35.

70. See Emmanuel Todd, Le Destin des Immigrés: Assimilation et Ségrégation dans les Démocraties Occidentales (Paris: Seuil, 1994), for a particularly scathing critique of “differentialism” and a hearty defense of assimilationism.

71. See esp. Rex, “Concept.”


75. This interviewee is himself a Catholic educationalist.

76. See the contributions of Mappa and Grandguillaume in CERI, ed., Multicultural Education.

77. Because many French educationalists’ priors are antimulticulturalist, it is doubtful that decentralization would lead to the levels of multiculturalism found in England. Nevertheless, increasing the number of educational policy gatekeepers in France would almost certainly lead to the transfer of some gatekeeping posts to individuals more sympathetic to multiculturalism.

78. Rex, “Concept.”

79. Here I mean liberal in the American sense, with a sympathy for the rights and well-being of “underprivileged” groups. This view is reflected in Britain not only in education policy, but also in policies toward race and ethnicity in many areas.

80. Liberal here is not simply equated with “left,” since these two politicians broke to the right of the Labour Party in the early 1980s.


82. Comment made to this author in an interview.