

Anxious Identity and the Challenges of Diversity:
Understanding Québec's National Identity Debate

by

Stephen Gnanasihamany
B.A. Hons., University of Alberta, 2016

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“We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional
territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose
historical relationships with the land continue to this day.”

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Abstract

This research seeks to understand how Québec governments have constructed the relation between national identity and cultural diversity from the 1960s' Quiet Revolution to the 2010s by analyzing the discursive and historical dynamics that have shaped Québec identity politics in this period. First, it clarifies how national identity and cultural diversity are symbolically constructed in relation to one another by analyzing three key discursive lenses that have shaped the construction of national identity and cultural diversity in Québec since the Quiet Revolution, namely nationalism, pluralism, and secularism. These lenses offer different interpretations of the identity-diversity problematic, suggesting competing imperatives that social actors must balance against one another when constructing the relation between national identity and cultural diversity. Second, this research examines how state actors in Québec have mobilized these lenses through policy initiatives and discursive strategies and tried to influence how members of their community think about national identity and respond to cultural diversity. Québec governments' approaches to diversity management have shifted significantly in this period, from promoting the French language and intercultural integration in the mid- to late-20th century to focusing on religious difference and rigid secularism in the early 21st century. Contributors to this shift include increasing nationalist anxieties through the 1990s, followed by the reasonable accommodation debate and the Bouchard-Taylor Commission in the 2000s. This analysis highlights the challenges that sub-state nationalists face when constructing the relation between national identity and cultural diversity, including the need to manage the cultural anxieties of the majority group.

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Introduction

Since the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s Québec society has struggled with the issue of defining its national identity¹, negotiating both that identity's internal character and its place within Canadian federalism. The massive societal changes that the Quiet Revolution brought to Québec altered the character of this debate, empowering the Québec state to pursue economic modernization and open the province to increased immigration. In the ensuing decades, demographic change, linguistic pressures and encroachment from the federal government emphasized the need for political elites in Québec to construct and promote a common and inclusive national identity narrative while also defending Québec's francophone character. This challenge highlighted one of the tensions that continues to guide Québec's identity debate, namely the question of how to construct a unified national identity while recognizing and making space for cultural diversity.

In Québec, answering this question means balancing between two imperatives: protecting the cultural integrity of the francophone majority, itself a minority in the broader North American context, and creating space for diverse cultural minorities within the province to pursue their own cultural practices without fear of ostracization or discrimination. In negotiating these imperatives, Québec has engaged in an ongoing debate over the nature of its collective identity, producing various identity narratives. These narratives and imperatives emerge from both Québec's history and the dominant discursive lenses which inform the construction of

¹ By speaking of a Québec 'national identity' as opposed to a 'collective identity', I am drawing on nationalist narratives that view Québec as a unique cultural entity that is distinct from the Canadian nation. I provide a more thorough explanation of what it means to speak of Québec as a nation in chapter one.

Québec identity and its relationship with diversity. Québec's various governments have also played a key role in this process, shaping the identity debate both through explicit policy prescriptions and discursive strategies on identity issues. This tension continues to dominate the identity debate, and in recent years vehement disagreement over defining the identity-diversity relation in Québec has engendered a perception of 'identity crisis', with an accompanying sense of instability and anxiety.

In this context the term 'identity crisis' refers to a breakdown in consensus and prolonged contestation over the defining aspects of a collective identity narrative. Nieguth and Lacassgne describe a collective identity crisis as "increasing tensions about the definition of 'Us'" (2009, 13). In Québec such tensions have manifested in prolonged and divisive debate over whether and to what extent religious minority practices should be accommodated in the province, which have persisted since the mid-2000s. The initial high point of 'crisis' between 2006 and 2007 was sparked by media accounts and public perception that Québec's values, particularly gender equality and secularism, were being threatened by rampant requests for religious accommodation by cultural minorities. In their landmark report related to this issue, which I cover in more depth in chapter two, Charles Taylor and Gérard Bouchard determined that these fears, and the accompanying perception of crisis, stemmed largely from "erroneous or partial perception of practices in the field", because in practice accommodation cases had not dramatically increased in number and were mostly being handled amicably between private entities (ibid).

Even so, this crisis of perception has had real impacts on intercultural relations in Québec, including the increased prominence of exclusionary attitudes towards immigrants and Muslims in particular. Recent history provides evidence of such attitudes. Haroun Bouazzi, a spokesman for Québec's Muslim community, has highlighted increases in "online intimidation

and Islamophobic vandalism” directed at his community in recent years (Hamilton 2017).

Another example came in the run-up to the 2018 provincial elections, when a Muslim woman named Eve Torres, who wears an Islamic headscarf called a *hijab*, decided to run for office with the left-leaning Québec Solidaire. Torres was met with heated criticism for choosing to wear the hijab and was labelled as an “Islamist”, which “carries a strong connotation of fundamentalism and militancy”, despite Torres affirming that she did not hold such views (Valiante 2018).

In a more extreme form, exclusionary attitudes in Québec find voice in far-right groups such as ‘La Meute’. This group is firmly anti-immigrant, varyingly Islamophobic, and defends its positions as integral for preserving “Québécois culture” (Kestler-D’Amours 2017b). Despite their relatively small following, explicitly discriminatory far-right groups have been gaining prominence in Québec. Maxime Fiset, an expert on the far-right in Québec, has warned of an “increased legitimacy of extreme-right discourse” in the province (ibid). These events indicate a disturbing trend of Islamophobia and discrimination in Québec, linked with a conversation about perceived threats to Québec’s culture and identity.

These exclusionary trends in Québec’s public discourse can be linked to political debates on secularism and the role of cultural minorities in the province. The “poisoned atmosphere” established by narratives which single out visible minorities as transgressors against and potential dangers to a fundamentally secular Québec identity have laid the legitimizing discursive groundwork for discrimination (Hamilton 2017).² Québec Premier Phillippe Couillard noted this connection in the wake of a shooting at a mosque in Québec City in 2017, saying that

² An often-unnamed foundation for such rhetoric is the concept of white privilege, which lays the groundwork for exclusionary identity narratives in part by marking white citizens as legitimate authors of collective identity and non-white immigrants as passive subjects within those narratives (see Dhamoon 2009, 71). We can see white privilege at work in the renewed push for secularism in Québec, as I note in the chapter one discussion of the secularism lens.

“words can be knives slashing at people’s consciousness” and calling for an end to “divisive rhetoric” that presents foreigners as a threat to Québec’s collective identity (ibid). As I will explore in the latter half of chapter two, Couillard’s own Parti Libéral du Québec (PLQ) government contributed to such rhetoric through earlier policy statements regarding the need to enforce state secularism.

These examples should not obscure the fact that Québec also has a long history of inclusion and tolerance. Québec “is relatively open, plural and liberal” and for many years its governments’ official policies have “aimed at integration, not assimilation”, the latter term implying the erasure of minority cultural practices from public life (Maclure 2003, 136-7). Various recent examples demonstrate this tradition of inclusivity. In direct response to the rise of far-right groups in the province, more than 160 community organisations supported a “Large Demonstration against Hate and Racism” in Montreal on November 12, 2017 (Kestler-D’Amours 2017a). The same spirit of inclusivity could be seen in Drummondville, Québec, where the Mayor Alexandre Cusson and organizers welcomed a group of immigrants who had recently gained Canadian citizenship with an elaborate jobs fair and town tour (Peritz 2018). Cusson emphasized his town’s inclusive and collaborative approach to immigrants, saying that “we don’t want to just live with them, we want to build with them” (ibid).

Following the logic that “what you want or how you act depends on who you think you are or who you want to be”, I suggest that the actions detailed above are informed in part both by how the groups and individuals involved construct a sense of collective Québec identity, and by how they believe cultural diversity relates to and will impact that identity (Barker 2010, 15). This process of collective identity construction is not an individual pursuit but rather the result of a complex process of political and cultural socialization. Therefore, to understand the motivations

behind these varying exclusive and inclusive responses to ‘identity crisis’, and indeed to understand the perception of such a crisis in the first place, we must first understand the discursive and historical forces driving national identity construction in Québec.

In pursuit of this goal, this research poses two questions. First, how do key discursive identity lenses that have informed national identity construction in post-Quiet Revolution Québec compare to each other and combine in their construction of the relation between national identity and cultural diversity? Second, how have Québec governments’ approaches to diversity management and identity construction evolved since the Quiet Revolution? I answer the first question in chapter one, clarifying how the concepts within and interplay between the nationalism, pluralism, and secularism lenses structure Québec’s identity debate. I answer the second question in chapter two, demonstrating how Québec governments have mobilized these lenses in response to Québec’s changing sociopolitical landscape from the mid- 20th century to the early 21st century through policy initiatives and discursive strategies. I will leave a great deal unsaid regarding the complete socialization process underpinning the construction of national identity and diversity across Québec, despite its importance to understanding Québec’s identity debate, as this process is too complex to be sufficiently explored here. Instead, I will highlight how the discursive lenses of nationalism, pluralism, and secularism have informed the construction of the national identity-diversity relation in Québec since the Quiet Revolution, as well as how Québec governments have attempted to shape this relation in the same period through policy and discourse, culminating in the current tension between intercultural integration and xenophobic assimilation.

I am interested in answering these questions because of their central importance to contemporary sociopolitical dynamics in Québec and elsewhere. Democracies around the world

have been grappling with the problem of constructing unified collective identities in the context of cultural diversity for many years, and these problems have only become more challenging in the context of globalization, mass migration and a backlash against multiculturalism (Cantle 2014). Québec is an interesting case in which to explore these issues, in part because the problem of constructing national identity in the context of cultural diversity has been central to Québec politics at least since the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. Québec's unique majority-minority position in Canada, coupled with its long history of sub-state nationalism³ and anxiety over the precarity of French culture in North America, presents a unique challenge and has opened up a prominent space in public discourse for debates over the nature of collective identity in the province. Additionally, Québec's demographic reality is significantly and undeniably diverse, "composed of a national francophone majority, a national anglophone minority, eleven aboriginal nations, and a multiplicity of Québécois from other backgrounds", each contributing to a society that is "at once multinational, multicultural, and hybrid" (Maclure 2003, 3). This confluence of factors presents a truly complex puzzle from the perspective of diversity management. By developing an understanding of the pressures that Québec has navigated and the challenges it has faced, we can gain insight into the more general challenge of belonging within collective identity, which has emerged as "the central problem of modern societies" (Eder et al. 2002, 1). More specifically, the Québec case provides great insight into the unique challenges that multinational democracies and minority nations face regarding the management of collective identity.

³ The term 'sub-state nation' here refers to regions within larger nations "that claim some degree of linguistic, cultural or national recognition or self-determination" of their own (Barker 2015, 1).

The stakes of addressing this problem in an equitable manner are high. In the context of our changing world, “nationalist xenophobia is [one] manifestation of the general contestation of identity” (ibid, 2). Playing on anxieties and fears about cultural diversity, “rhetoric of exclusion that extols national identity and cultural uniqueness” can serve as a powerful tool for motivating political support, despite the negative consequences for cultural minority groups (ibid). The United States under the administration of President Donald Trump offers the most prominent contemporary examples of such rhetoric and its consequences, highlighting the importance of providing workable alternatives to xenophobic narratives. As Bouchard argues, “we must not abandon the management of identity to the open market of demagogues and opportunists” if we want to live in a more peaceful and inclusive world (2015, 16). Considering such exclusionary responses and their alarming recent popularity in a variety of democratic polities, state actors and civil societies must find ways to construct sustainable visions of solidarity and collective belonging which embrace cultural diversity while also actively responding to the anxieties associated with it.

I choose to begin my discussion from the Quiet Revolution because the sociopolitical changes in this period significantly impacted understandings of both collective identity and cultural diversity in Québec. In this period French Québécois gained a new “awareness of ethnocultural plurality”, and “acknowledged then that their society was not homogenous” (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 116). Reactions to this new awareness were mixed, characterized by both openness and fear. This dual reaction characterizes the primary tension underlying the question of constructing national identity in the context of diversity in Québec to this day, namely the “constant tension between the concern for openness and anxiety for the future of the French-speaking community” (ibid). Furthermore, the Quiet Revolution saw the Québec state

assert itself for the first time and claim the mantle of Québec nationalism from the Catholic Church. By starting my discussion from this period, I can thus track how the Québec state has navigated the tensions within the discursive space of Québec identity politics, while also gaining incite into how that discursive space has shifted under the influence of state action.

Concepts and Methodology

To begin I must first define and discuss some key concepts, the first of which is ‘identity’. Identity, understood here as “an interpretation of the self that establishes what and where [a] person is in both social and psychological terms” and which is continuously constructed “within a system of social relations and representations”, is central to understanding diversity management in Québec and elsewhere (Guibernau 2013, 16). In particular, the social construction of collective identities is central to fostering a sense of belonging for the many diverse members of modern societies. A collective identity “sets limits to individual calculations and defines a frame of reference for acts of social classification as well as for constructions of solidarity and trust” (Eder et al. 2002, 19-20). In this way, collective identities inform the ways in which we relate to and treat one another, operating through the simultaneous construction of belonging and exclusion (Guibernau 2013, 2).

National identity is a form of collective identity with its own unique dynamics. Despite the proliferation of other significant sources for personal and collective identity, the nation “remains for many a fundamental source of identity” (Maclure 2003, 10). National identities are particularly significant because they are central to constituting the ‘nation’ itself. Nations are “systems of cultural representation whereby people come to imagine a shared experience of

identification with an extended community”, and as such are “not simply phantasmagoria of the mind, but are historical and institutional practices through which social difference is invented and performed” (McClintock 1993, 61). Additionally, “national communities are constituted by belief: they exist only when their members recognize each other as belonging to the same community and believe that they share certain characteristics” (Özkırımlı 2005, 17). When this kind of commonly shared national identity develops it gives rise to the notion that “the nation comprises *the people*, who are sovereign and who are the source of legitimacy enjoyed by the state” (Barker 2015, 21; emphasis added). The importance of belief, imagination and recognition as the foundations of the nation highlights that nations are products of social construction, albeit constructions that carry significant material influence.

Following from this constructivist position, I share the view of many authors that identities exist primarily through narration. As Maclure argues, “identity is not an objective, natural condition; it is better understood as a narrative project or a ‘persuasive fiction’. Thus, the definition of an identity (whether individual or collective) cannot be kept separate from its narration, its articulation within narratives of varying degrees of coherence” (2003, 9-10). Henderson echoes this point, adding that “our identity is not a static list of labels but, rather, is linked to self-perception” (2007, 8). In this way, “identities are... interpretations of lived experience, temporalized and structured into narratives that bind and order the past, present and future of a community” (Maclure 2003, 86).

A narrative understanding of identity is useful for a few reasons. Firstly, a narrative approach highlights that identities are contingent and dynamic, shifting over time in accordance with changing sociopolitical circumstances. While collective identities can share similarities across differing contexts, “the particular codes of collective identity... are each unique and may

be fully understood only in historical context” (Eder et al. 2002, 21). Therefore, to understand how identities impact human interactions we must situate those identities historically, studying identity narratives as ongoing, case-specific processes.

Secondly, this approach emphasizes that identity narratives are not natural, but are socially constructed. Although various identity narratives may identify objective markers for delineating membership to a given community, there is nothing *necessary* about any particular identity narrative. The features and boundaries of national identity therefore have “to be learned and internalized through socialization” (Özkırmılı 2005, 33). Identity narratives are subject to constant contestation and must be consistently reproduced in the minds of community members.

Thirdly and finally, the narrative approach to identity illustrates the connection between identity and ‘discourse’, the second major concept in this research. A discourse is understood here as “a particular way of seeing and interpreting the world, a frame of reference that helps us make sense of and structure the reality that surrounds us” (Özkırmılı 2005 30). As narrative fiction, national identities are shaped in reference to conversations about those identities. National identities are therefore “intersubjective”, meaning that “the identities of members are articulated, acquired and supported by citizens from a first-person perspective, and defended, criticized and reformulated over the time of the life of the society... by means of public discussion and debates in the available institutions” (Gagnon and Tully 2001, 20). The renegotiation of identity narratives takes place within “the *universe of political discourse*, a space in which socially-constructed identities emerge in discursive struggle” (Jenson 1989, 238). Furthermore, “discourse... shapes the actual lived experiences of people, and social structures shape discourse”, meaning that “radical social change on the level of discourse effects social change on the material level, and vice versa” (Dhamoon 2009, 13). Identity discourse therefore

both shapes the construction of collective identities and impact the degree to which citizens' experience inclusion or exclusion in a society.

In this research I focus on three main discursive lenses (nationalism, pluralism, and secularism) that feature prominently within Québec identity discourse and which contain different conceptual resources for interpreting the identity-diversity problematic. Although these lenses are important, they *inform* rather than *determine* the construction of national identity and cultural diversity. In other words, these lenses “determine the range within which political goals can be conceived and issues politicized without contesting the overall integrating collective identity” (Eder et al. 2002, 20). The actors who are immersed in identity discourse “are simultaneously *subjects of structures* and *acting subjects* carrying in their practices and meaning systems the possibilities of both social stability and change” (Jenson 1998, 236). Thus, while discursive lenses are “not... completely malleable to the interests of actors”, various social and political actors do play a role in mobilizing those lenses and the concepts they contain, thereby shaping the social construction of identity and diversity (Eder et al. 2002, 20). By exploring these three discursive lenses in Québec identity discourse, we gain an understanding of the concepts that structure identity politics in Québec and which both enable and constrain actors in their interpretation and reshaping of identity narratives.

This brings us to the role of actors in this process. In this research, I focus specifically on the role of the state and of public institutions. While identity narratives are shaped by numerous social actors, “the capacities and imperatives of public institutions, and of the agents who administer them, are vitally important” for “shaping the nature and outcomes of identity politics” (Eisenberg and Kymlicka 2011, 8). Through discursive strategies that promote their preferred identity narrative, state actors seek to monopolize “not only legitimate physical force but also

legitimate symbolic force” (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 15). Although no state can truly monopolize symbolic force, states do have “the material and symbolic resources to impose the categories, classificatory schemes, and modes of social counting and accounting” which shape how identity classifications affect citizens (ibid, 16).

In fact, the politicization of identity groups can be “a highly instrumental and opportunistic vehicle used by self-seeking elites” (Eisenberg and Kymlicka 2011, 4). For example, politicians “can make the public perceive threats to national identity more acutely, creating a situational trigger for anti-immigration sentiments” even among those “who do not routinely support anti-immigration policy” (Sandovici, Jakobsen, and Strabac 2012, 118-9). If those politicians can also position themselves as uniquely responsive to this threat, then this can serve as a powerful, if extremely cynical, electoral strategy.

Beyond their important discursive role, state actors also directly influence the material impacts of identity politics through policy initiatives. In the Canadian context, political actors in Québec and the rest of Canada have materialized their preferred identity narratives through a variety of policies, including “language legislation, initiatives on the part of educational and cultural ministries, and constitutional reform” (Bruner 1997, 44-5). For example, by taking steps to ensure that new immigrants to Québec are educated in French, Québec politicians materialize the centrality of the French language which plays a key role in their preferred national identity narrative.

There are, of course, limits to the state’s ability to shape collective identity. For example, “an inclusive leadership dealing with a population in which hostility and suspicion are common will have little hope of ensuring a consistently inclusive notion of national membership” (Henderson 2007, 13). However, even in such circumstances state actors could promote

inclusivity by developing identity narratives that deconstruct hostility to ‘outsider’ cultural groups. Although its influence is far from absolute, the state remains a strong and highly influential symbolic and material actor. State actors’ discursive strategies and policy initiatives therefore play an important role in socializing citizens towards particular understandings of national identity.

Finally, we can move on to explain the connection between national identity narratives and the construction of cultural diversity. To foster a broadly shared sense of belonging, national identities must encode “a measure of common culture and a civic ideology, a set of common understandings and aspirations, sentiments and ideas, that bind the population together in their homeland” (Smith 1991, 11). Cultural diversity, especially when it stems from immigration, complicates this process. Immigration brings with it the introduction of new cultural and political actors, giving rise to “conflicts with a specifically cultural focus” (Holtug, Lippert-Rasmussen and Lægaard 2009, ix). This shift in the social fabric begins to challenge liberal states’ “self-conception as largely culturally cohesive societies”, forcing a re-examination of national identity (ibid). National identity narratives must make sense of these new cultural actors and articulate where, or if, those actors belong in the national community.

National identity narratives have historically struggled to incorporate, or have specifically resisted incorporating, cultural and racial diversity into their national stories. This is particularly the case where nationalist leaders construct “the idea of a ‘pure’, homogenous nation” as a fiction which attempts to erase the reality of diversity in the name of constructing unity (Özkırıklı 2005, 1). As a result of these narratives, cultural and racial minority members who do not fit into the homogenous national image become symbolically associated with this dangerous ‘outside’, and may be met with ostracization, discrimination, and even violence.

Canada, including Québec, has had a somewhat different experience with cultural diversity that has been informed by the particularities of the country's founding. From its outset, the presence of both French and English settlers within Confederation guaranteed a significant degree of cultural diversity. For this reason, George Étienne Cartier saw Canada as a "political nationality", rather than a cultural or linguistic nationality, arguing then that Confederation could not allow the French cultural and linguistic particularities to be absorbed into and erased by the English majority (Smiley 1967, 9). In this way, "Canada was thus from the first in some sense a bilingual and bicultural community" (ibid). The dualist nature of the Canadian nationality has made constructing unity particularly challenging for Canadian politicians. Dualism has also somewhat constrained appeals to homogeneity in Canada, although homogenizing rhetoric could still be applied to the separate anglophone and francophone nations.

Canada has also adopted a generally welcoming approach to immigrants, although the management of immigrant-produced diversity presents its own challenges for the country. Canada is well known for its multicultural definition of national identity, partly because "immigration to both Canada and Québec has led to a redefinition of nationhood that integrates rather than rejects cultural pluralism" (Blad and Couton 2009. 646). However, even while Canadians "reject aggressive and assimilative national identities, this very rejection cultivates nationalist anxieties, increasing the urge to constitute the Canadian political community" (Kernerman 2005, 8). Paradoxically, the logic of the Canadian conversation on identity leads actors to interpret cultural diversity as "both a source of anxiety and a distinctive basis for the Canadian political identity" (ibid, 14).⁴

⁴ To begin to develop an explanation of this lingering anxiety in the Canadian context, one could explore Canada's relatively recent history of explicitly assimilationist immigration policy and

Across different national contexts, cultural diversity seems to evoke a sense of anxiety. Although clarifying exactly why and how such anxieties come to be associated with cultural diversity would require a separate research agenda, we do know that “the visibility of certain minorities associated with ‘alien’ cultures, traditions and ways of life often fosters fear, a lack of trust and open hostility, and, in some cases, it results in xenophobia and racism against those regarded as different” (Guibernau 2013, 20). Because cultural diversity can evoke such anxieties and lead to discriminatory behaviour, diversity management becomes a priority for the state. In the Canadian example, “the conduct of the Canadian population – as a *diverse* population – is the object of pervasive governmental scrutiny because diversity generates considerable cultural anxiety and thus represents a problem that must be acted upon to ensure cohesion and stability” (Kernerman 2005, 100). National identity narratives and policy initiatives respond to and shape these cultural anxieties by either playing into them, thereby legitimizing xenophobia and fear of the ‘Other’, or by counteracting them and attempting to shift societal perceptions of cultural diversity from representing something harmful to something worth embracing.

The overall problem of balancing national identity and diversity can be summarized as follows. First, “the need to belong has been... seen by social psychologists as one of the core human needs”, and identity plays an important role in constructing the boundaries of belonging (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 71). National identity is particularly important in this regard, given that it dictates the symbolic boundaries of belonging on a large scale and offers a way to create a social bond amongst large populations of individuals, many of whom would otherwise likely have no basis for developing a sense of connection with one another. At its best, a national social

consider the impacts that such policy may have had on the social construction of ‘the immigrant’ in Canadian political discourse (see Mann 2016; Dhamoon 2009).

bond could also be mobilized to mitigate one basis for discrimination and hatred by broadening the scope of national inclusion. Cultural diversity complicates the work of national identity because a shared national identity is in part based on having a shared culture. The following question arises: how can we construct a shared national identity amongst highly diverse populations who may not even share the same cultural experiences? In answering this question, social actors can move to either erase cultural diversity or to creatively incorporate it into new national identity narratives.

This research attempts to make sense of how social actors in Québec address this problem through two methods. First, in chapter one I focus on clarifying how national identity and diversity are symbolically constructed in relation to one another by analyzing three key discursive lenses that have shaped the construction of national identity and diversity in Québec since the Quiet Revolution. These include nationalism, pluralism, and secularism. These lenses overlap with each other, meaning that they suggest different ways of interpreting the same phenomena and problems, thereby leaving room for actors to sort through these overlapping interpretations and determine their own understandings of national identity and cultural diversity. This will help us to understand how national identity can be constructed in relation to cultural diversity, and in turn provide clues as to how anxiety towards diversity can emerge.

Second, in chapter two I focus on how state actors in Québec have mobilized these lenses and tried to influence how members of their national communities think about national identity and respond to cultural diversity. In order to capture both the symbolic and material aspects of Québec governments' approaches to diversity management and identity construction, I focus on both discursive strategies and policy initiatives, although I provide more space to the latter. In part this is because I have found more to work with in the realm of policy, but also because I see

policy initiatives as particularly important given that they carry both material and symbolic weight, and thus are the most important tools state actors have to influence identity construction⁵

The discursive strategies include government reports, speeches, and publications, while the policy initiatives include a variety of policies including language legislation and integration frameworks. By applying these methods to the Québec case, my research sheds light on some of the possible tensions which plague social actors attempting to address the national identity-diversity relation, while also highlighting the various approaches that social actors in Québec have developed through its history. In conclusion, I will review my findings, discuss their implications, and point to some of the limitations of and future possibilities for my research.

⁵ Of course, not all policy initiatives have a meaningful impact on identity construction, and some policy areas have much more potential influence on the construction of identity than others. For example, Dhamoon notes that “immigration practices and policies shape citizenship, belonging, and nation building” (2009, 69). Policy on immigrant integration is particularly relevant in this regard, as the dictated criteria for integration signal the majority group’s core values to immigrants and those familiar with the policy.

Chapter 1: Québec Discursive Identity Lenses and the Identity-Diversity Relation

Introduction

Having established the groundwork for my discussion, in this first chapter I will analyze some of the key discursive lenses that inform the construction of national identity and its relationship to cultural diversity in Québec. I will focus on the lenses of nationalism, pluralism, and secularism. These lenses provide the conceptual resources and connections that have shaped understandings of the relationship between national identity and cultural diversity in Québec since the Quiet Revolution, significantly informing various actors' interpretations of and expectations for Québec's sociopolitical landscape. Each lens highlights different features and tensions within this landscape, each one calling its audience to take different actions when faced with the problems of identity and diversity. While there are alternate discursive lenses that also contribute to understandings of the national identity-diversity relation in Québec, I focus on these three lenses based on their consistent and ongoing influence in Québec's national identity debate since the Quiet Revolution.

Although certain aspects of these three lenses have varied in prominence over Québec's history, they all exist at once in a tangled discursive nexus. Like instruments in an unruly orchestra, these lenses push against each other across history, variously harmonious and discordant, overlapping to jointly inform how the national identity-diversity relation is constructed. Consequently, even the less contemporarily prominent concepts within these lenses continue to "both constrain and stimulate new interpretations" of national identity (Maclure 2003, 15). Various societal actors must 'conduct' this discursive ball of contradictions,

composing identity narratives that suit their needs. In chapter two, I will focus on how the Québec state's 'composition' in this regard has evolved since the Quiet Revolution.

With this chapter I am interested in how each lens constructs the national identity-diversity relation with specific reference to aspects of Québec's shifting sociopolitical landscape. Therefore, in each section I will move between theoretical and historical explanation, demonstrating how discursive logics both emerge from, and suggest particular interpretations of, sociopolitical realities. I will also briefly explore how these lenses overlap, sometimes complementing and other times conflicting with one another. Taken together, nationalism, pluralism and secularism form the conceptual substrate on which the process of national identity construction in Québec takes place, structuring the tensions and competing imperatives that social actors must navigate when constructing the national identity-diversity relation in the province.

The Nationalist Lens in Québec

Nationalism has long been a central and consistent fixture of Québec's collective identity narrative. Its origins can be traced back to the British conquest of New France. In this context, New France's inhabitants endeavoured to maintain their unique collective identity under the assimilative influence of British rule (Gingras and Neviite 1984, 3). Since then nationalism has remained one of the main lenses through which Québec's citizens and governments have constructed both a sense of national identity and the relationship between that identity and cultural diversity.

Québec nationalism, and Québec society in general, shifted significantly in the context of the Quiet Revolution. Although “nationalism has been an enduring feature of Québec politics since pre-Confederation days... the style and form of Québec nationalism has undergone substantial transformation” since then (Gingras and Nevitte 1984, 2). The Quiet Revolution marked a key turning point in this transformation, as rapid economic, social, cultural and political change undermined the foundations of a traditional conservative nationalism and began a process of broad reform and modernization. In this context, understandings of national identity and its relationship with diversity in Québec began to shift substantially, moving from a conservative, clerical conception of national identity to one that was more progressive and secular.

That said, this historical narrative of the Quiet Revolution as a period of sudden and drastic sociopolitical and economic change risks disguising much of the complexity within Québec nationalism. It risks essentializing both pre- and post-Quiet Revolution Québec nationalisms, the former characterized as monolithic in its exclusionary and insular attitudes and the latter characterized as homogenously ‘modern’ and inclusive. Neither assessment captures the complexity and internal contradictions that pervade each historical expression of Québec nationalism. In fact, Québec historiography by Linteau, Durocher, and Robert “challenges the notion of a traditional, Catholic, and monolithic society prior to the Quiet Revolution” (as cited in Abu-Laban and Couture 2014, 157).

For an example of an inclusive strand within pre-Quiet Revolution Québec nationalism, one could look to the “economically conservative but politically reformist” Parti Patriote, a Québec nationalist movement active in the early 19th century (Gingras and Nevitte 1984, 4). In contrast to the more exclusionary tendencies of mainstream Québec nationalism at the time, they

called for “coexistence with people who didn’t necessarily have to speak French but who respected Canadian culture and the rights of the Canadian majority in Lower Canada” (Gougeon 1994, 19).

Regarding post-Quiet Revolution nationalism, despite all the changes in Québec society stemming from this period, a “residue of traditional values remain[ed] lodged in a significant portion of Québec society” and continued to influence Québec nationalism moving forward (Gingras and Nevitte 1984, 3). For example, survey data from 1984 indicated that 47 per cent of Québécois continued “to hold to the traditional view that religious values are an important dimension of Québec’s national identity” (ibid, 12). Thus, while the Quiet Revolution indeed marked a significant turn in Québec nationalism towards greater inclusivity⁶, we should be careful to read this narrative critically and keep in mind what it obscures.

As a discursive identity lens, nationalism is highly varied internally, containing many conceptual resources which can be mobilized for a variety of political projects. While I cannot describe all the aspects of nationalism that might impact perceptions of cultural diversity in Québec, I will highlight a few key concepts within the lens. These include the unity imperative, cultural survival and the accompanying notion of cultural threat, and boundary construction. Each of these concepts inform citizen’s relationship with their national identity, while also encoding understandings of and attitudes towards cultural diversity and its place in Québec society. Collectively, these concepts inform the construction of the national identity-diversity relation, opening space for both inclusive and exclusionary interpretations of collective identity.

The Unity Imperative

⁶ See chapter two for more detail on this point.

The first concept that I will discuss is the unity imperative. In pursuit of constructing a legitimate sense of collective identity that can be reliably mobilized for political projects, nationalism establishes unity as one of its central imperatives. Although this unity can be defined through many different criteria, “all nations require a defining and unifying principle deemed distinct and universal to the nation in question, conformity to which stands as the measure of inclusion or exclusion” (Asari, Halikiopoulou and Mock 2008, 3). Many, if not all, forms of nationalism use culture as the vehicle by which unity might be achieved, operating under the logic that “members of a state should share the same national culture” to foster a common sense of solidarity and belonging (Holtug, Lippert-Rasmussen and Lægaard 2009, xix). Even nationalisms which claim to define national membership through political principles (i.e. French republicanism) are also cultural, in that they pass on those values as a form of “cultural inheritance” (Özkırmılı 2005, 26). Indeed, Özkırmılı argues that “what gives nationalism its power is its ability to bring the cultural and the political together” (ibid, 29). Unity becomes an imperative for national elites who are attempting to bring order to a collection of potentially divided and chaotic groups. If a nation is not sufficiently unified, then its members cannot be effectively mobilized towards projects that are in ‘the national interest’ as defined by the political class.

Nationalist leaders support this notion of unity through their rhetoric. Such rhetoric “presents the nation as a unified, homogenous, seamless whole, without reference to its internal diversity” (Özkırmılı 2005, 168). One common example of such homogenizing rhetoric is the appeal to national authenticity. Claims of authenticity act as “a natural corollary to the project of homogenization”, and “are used to imply that there is a single genuine interpretation of a national

culture, whereas all the others are factitious and invalid” (ibid). Political elites can exploit the authenticity concept by framing “the group’s traditions or culture in such a way as to preserve their own power and authority against potential challenges from inside or outside the group” and by claiming “that they represent the authentic views of the community while dismissing their critics within the group as alien or disloyal” (Eisenberg and Kymlicka 2011, 3). This ‘authentic’ culture is typically grounded in the historical experience of the cultural majority, therefore limiting access to authenticity for newcomers whose ancestors did not share in this history. Appeals to national authenticity, therefore, serve to exclude diverse voices from the national narrative and preserve the homogenous unity of the cultural majority.

We can observe this trend in Québec nationalist discourse, where identity is based on “a socially and culturally constructed ethic of authenticity to which Quebecers of all backgrounds must adhere if they want to be the genuine article” (Maclure 2003, 139). In Québec’s case, some nationalists argue that only those who “can trace their Québec ancestry into the distant past” can be considered authentically Québécois (ibid, 138). This conception of an ‘authentic’ national identity implies that a specific group, in this case francophone Québécois, has a greater claim to national membership than others. As a result, nationalism which emphasizes appeals to ‘authenticity’ “foments exclusion” (ibid).

This rhetoric of course does not erase the material reality of cultural and racial diversity. Consequently, “apparent unity and homogeneity is often constituted by repression”, where “the repressed elements are either silenced or explicitly denigrated and relegated to the margins” (Özkırımlı 2005 168). Repression is of course not the only way for political elites to construct a broadly shared sense of national unity. Alternate approaches that centre the pluralist lens attempt

to construct a sense of unity without erasing, and indeed by embracing, cultural and racial diversity.

Unity and the accompanying image of homogeneity encode potentially negative interpretations of cultural diversity. As Maclure points out, “the creation of homogenous identity necessitates the hypothesis of a radically heterogenous, and therefore threatening, exterior”, thereby coding ‘outsiders’ as inherently dangerous (2003, 123). If one conceives of their national group as homogenous, while also seeing such homogeneity as inherently valuable and worth preserving, then one may view individuals originating outside of this homogenous group as inherently dangerous. Depending on how homogeneity is defined (e.g. through shared ethnicity, language, collective memory, etc.), this fear of outsiders may extend to internal citizens who do not fit the prescribed image of homogenous belonging. In this way, cultural diversity can become coded as a threat to the national population through the language of homogenous unity.

Cultural Survival and Cultural Threat

In the nationalist lens the unity imperative is also closely connected to the goal of cultural survival. This is particularly the case for nationalist elites in sub-state nations, whose precarious statelessness gives rise to “powerful, widespread and deeply rooted sentiments of cultural anxiety” over the notion that their culture will be subsumed under the majority nationalism of the state in which they represent a minority (Burchardt 2016, 600). By emphasizing the need to pursue cultural survival, sub-state nationalism provides its own *raison d’etre*.

Cultural survival operates in tandem with the notion of cultural threat. Cultural threat is “understood as the sense that an out-group is in danger of somehow polluting or obstructing the

expression of defining in-group values, identity or traditions” (Pehrson, Gheorghiu and Ireland 2011, 112). The notion of survival is vacuous without an accompanying threat which might challenge that survival. Therefore, the nationalist narrative’s focus on cultural survival implies the need for constant vigilance in the face of cultural threats. The presence of such cultural threats provides a reason for citizens to take political action and defend their culture.

In Québec, the nationalist emphasis on cultural survival plays on francophone Québécois’ perceptions of cultural vulnerability within North America and Canadian federalism. Although the French culture represents a majority within the borders of Québec, it is a clear minority within the Canadian and North American contexts. Consequently, Québécois of French-Canadian ancestry experience anxieties concerning “the future of their language and culture”, which are understood to be at risk of being overwhelmed and assimilated into the English majority (Banting and Soroka 2012, 158). This risk assessment is based on two main factors: the imbalanced power dynamic between the English and French languages in the context of globalization, as well as the historical negotiation of Québec’s distinct status within the Canadian federal framework. I will explain each in turn.

The first key to understanding perceptions of cultural vulnerability amongst francophone Québécois is understanding the relationship between the English and French languages in Canada. Alain-G Gagnon offers a compelling explanation of this relationship, describing a contentious “‘push and pull’ dynamic” between Canada’s two official languages (2014, 22). The “pull” of the English language derives from “its appeal to immigrant groups as the ostensible means to ensure socio-economic mobility and prestige”, both within Canada and internationally (ibid, 23). This ‘pull’ is resisted by the “societal push for the articulation and affirmation of francophone identity” coming from francophone Québécois (ibid).

In this relationship, English enjoys a natural advantage given its status as the language of globalization, making it a powerful resource in the pursuit of increased socioeconomic status. This dynamic applies both in Québec and in many other contexts around the world. Indeed, “a significant number of nations and ethnic groups share a genuine concern about the eventual disappearance of their cultures and languages and feel anxious regarding the worldwide expansion of English” (Guibernau 2013, 21). Consequently, when the Canadian government adopted its policy of bilingualism in 1969, this did not in fact place the two languages on equal footing. Rather, by failing to legislate specific protections for the French language in Canada, bilingualism actually “reasserted the *de facto* subordinate role of French in the Canadian context” (ibid, 24). The lopsided power dynamic between English and French has made language a consistent site for generating feelings of cultural vulnerability and threat within Québec.

The second main factor to consider regarding the Québécois nationalist sense of vulnerability is “Québec’s problematic status within the Canadian federation” (Maclure 2003, 5). A key feature of the nationalist narration of this history is the development of a “siege mentality” focused on Québec, wherein the Canadian federal government has challenged the very existence of francophone culture in the federation (Cunningham 2002, 192). Nationalists justifiably point to several instances across Canada’s history in which the federal government attempted to undermine Québec’s autonomy and distinct cultural identity. Some examples include “the Metis Rebellions of 1870 and 1885, the hanging of Louis Riel, the illegal and unconstitutional abolition of the use of the French language in Manitoba in 1890, the conscription crises in 1917 and 1942, [and] the constant marginalization of the French language at the federal level until the Official Languages legislation of 1969” (Brodie and Trimble 2003, 34). Each historical grievance contributes to the Québécois nationalist narrative of cultural threat and vulnerability.

In the post-Quiet Revolution context, a key example that bears further explanation is the Pierre Trudeau government's treatment of Québec in negotiations over patriating the Canadian Constitution in the 1980s. To make a long story short, in 1982 "the federal government patriated the constitution without the consent of Québec" (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007, 36)⁷. Québécois nationalists saw this as a "deliberate attempt to substitute Canada for Québec as the primary object of allegiance in Québécois hearts", thereby reaffirming the need to defend a unique Québécois identity (Maclure 2003, 6). Of particular concern for Québec nationalists was the new Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which, by superseding Québec's established Charter of Rights and applying the same human rights framework to all provinces, removed any pretence that Québec held a distinct status in Canada. Laforest argues that "the reform of 1982, in its very principle, is a veritable war machine unleashed on the spirit of political and national duality" (1995, 76). Far from a cause for national celebration, as the 1982 reforms are represented in the rest of Canada, both the resulting legislation and the process itself played neatly into Québec nationalist narratives and contributed to a sense of cultural vulnerability in Québec.

Feelings of cultural precarity and vulnerability, and the accompanying support for cultural survival, can carry negative consequences for the perception of cultural diversity. Negative perceptions regarding immigration and cultural diversification appear to be more likely when groups and individuals are experiencing multiple "states of collective vulnerability", which together contribute to the interpretation of certain groups' cultural differences as being alien and threatening (Pehrson, Gheorghiu and Ireland 2011, 113). On an individual level, for example, personal economic vulnerability can lead to the perception of immigrants as unwanted

⁷ See Gagnon and Iacovino 2007 for an explanation of the full events leading up to Québec being left out of constitutional patriation.

competitors in an already challenging job market (Sandovici, Jakobsen and Strabac 2012, 118). This resentment, founded in economic grievance, can then be readily mapped onto cultural or racial difference. This same dynamic also applies at the societal level. A society whose culture is already seen as vulnerable to attack is more likely to view immigration as a cultural threat.

As we have already seen, Québec's francophone majority is the subject of overlapping states of collective vulnerability. As a cultural minority nation located in an immigrant receiving country, the francophone majority must forge "an identity defined simultaneously in opposition to two groups: the national majority, in relation to whom they form a minority, and immigrants, for whom they constitute the majority receiving society" (Laxer, Carson and Korteweg 2014, 133). Already sensitive towards challenges to its own cultural integrity, the influx of cultural heterogeneity accompanying immigration can be seen as a cultural threat with the potential to further dilute French culture (Turgeon and Bilodeau 2014, 317). From this perspective, minority immigrants pose two potential threats for francophone culture. Not only do they introduce new cultures to compete with the francophone majority, but through their susceptibility to the pull of the English language they also contribute to the sense of "linguistic insecurity in Québec" by opening the door for English to become further entrenched in the province (ibid, 320).

For sovereigntist nationalists in Québec, these tensions are further exacerbated by the finding that visible minorities in Québec tend to feel a greater attachment to Canada than to the province itself (Bilodeau et al 2015, 8). This is especially problematic for those Québécois nationalists who view immigrants as profoundly detached from the "collective memory of repression" that motivates the sovereigntist project against Canadian federalism (Jeram 2014, 225). Following this logic, one could generously interpret francophone Québécois' anxiety towards diversity as not necessarily reflective of an aversion to cultural diversity as such, but

instead as a response to the notion that cultural diversity could further weaken Québec in its defence against the encroachment of hegemonic Canadian identity. Regardless, the effect on immigrant minorities is the same: the logic of cultural survival in Québécois nationalism creates the possibility for interpreting immigrants as threats.

Ultimately, the concept of cultural survival and the related notions of cultural threat in the nationalist lens can be exploited to legitimize assimilationist policies. Assimilation “is the process by which members of ethnic groups are incorporated into the dominant culture of a society” (Satzewich and Lioukakis 2007, 112). As I touched on in the introduction, policies concerning the management of cultural diversity must strike a balance between the responsibility of the state to pursue “cultural accommodation” for minority cultures, and the extent to which minorities should engage in “cultural adaptation” to better fit in to their new society (Holtug, Lippert-Rasmussen and Lægaard 2009, xxi). In balancing pressures for accommodation and adaptation, assimilationist models heavily emphasize the importance of minority adaptation to the majority cultural frame. Assimilation adheres to an expectation for cultural homogeneity, and “to varying degrees... establishes the existence of a single culture” as the societal ideal (Bouchard 2015, 18).

In this way, assimilationist policies express a clear interpretation of the relationship between national identity and diversity, wherein diversity is inherently harmful to a unified national identity. Cultural diversity must therefore be erased from public life at a minimum, and potentially from private life as well. The nationalist lens plays a key role in providing conceptual justifications for such policies. Notions such as the imperative to construct unity, the appeal of homogeneity, and the identification of cultural threats feed the production of cultural anxiety, which in turn helps political elites to justify an assimilationist policy agenda to the citizenry.

Ironically, sub-state nations' fear of being assimilated, which is amplified by notions of cultural threat and the need for cultural survival, establishes the rhetorical avenues for nationalist elites to pursue assimilationist policies of their own.

Boundary Construction

The final key concept within the nationalist lens as it applies to cultural diversity is the practice of boundary construction. One of nationalism's main discursive effects is to divide the world into homogenized conceptions of 'us' and 'them' (Özkırımlı 2005, 32). Nationalism establishes the criteria for differentiating between members of the national community and 'outsiders' by defining the boundary between these two groups, thereby defining the boundaries of national belonging. Moreover, the criteria that different nationalists use to define those boundaries informs the construction of the relation between national identity and cultural diversity. If boundaries are defined by differences in ethnicity or in cultural practices, cultural and racial diversity will have less space within the national community than if boundaries are defined by territory, political values or respect for shared institutions. However, even nationalisms that avoid defining boundaries through outward markers of cultural difference can still foster exclusivity. Seemingly 'neutral' and attainable boundary criteria can still have exclusionary effects.

In literature on nationalism, ethnic and civic nationalisms are typically used as ideal types sitting at opposite poles on the spectrum of nationalist models. These ideal types represent two conflicting interpretations of what constitutes the nation and national membership. 'Ethnic nationalism' views the nation as "a distinct people characterized by common descent and an

accrued shared history that includes a common language and culture”, whereas ‘civic nationalism’ views the nation “in the inclusive sense of the citizenry of a country or a state” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 75). Whereas ethnic nationalism “considers the nation very much as an extension of the ethnic group”, civic nationalism “unites people from various ethnic groups around common values and institutions” (Oakes and Warren 2007, 13-14). According to this dichotomy, ethnic nationalism makes no room for ethnocultural diversity, while civic nationalism, by focusing on political values, makes space for constructing an inclusive relationship between national identity and diversity. Relying on this dichotomy, the common historical narrative of the Quiet Revolution describes the period as a point of transformation wherein national thinking in Québec shifted from a predominantly ‘ethnic nationalism’, based on common descent and whiteness, to a ‘civic nationalism’ based on language and territory (Gougeon 1994, viii).

Despite its theoretical explanatory value and popularity however, the ethnic-civic dichotomy is analytically reductive if one does not look beyond the two ideal types themselves. As Oakes and Warren explain, “it is not the dichotomy *per se* which is outdated, [but] rather the belief that nations can be exclusively ethnic or civic” (2007, 14). Most nations structure the boundaries of national membership through both ethnic *and* civic boundary markers (ibid). With respect to this point Cunningham argues that rather than relying on the ethnic-civic dichotomy in studies of nationalism, researchers should speak in terms of “ethnic and civic *dimensions* of nationalism” (2002, 182) (emphasis added). Using this language of ethnic and civic dimensions can help us to explain the boundary mechanisms of different nationalist frameworks with more accuracy and nuance.

The ethnic-civic dichotomy can also be problematically used as a distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ nationalisms. In this respect the theory tends to “attribute inclusiveness to civic nationalism and exclusiveness to ethnic nationalist claims” (Laxer, Carson and Korteweg 2014, 135). In fact, while ethnic dimensions of nationalism are inherently exclusive because they rely on ascriptive criteria for membership, nationalisms that define membership through civic criteria and political values can be similarly exclusive. For this research, it is important to recognize that while Québec governments may emphasize the ‘civic’ aspects of their national project and distance themselves from the negative connotations associated with ‘ethnic’ criteria, it does not follow that such a project is inherently inclusive of cultural or racial diversity.

If immigrating individuals are willing and able to readily adopt a nation’s shared political values, then civic nationalism is potentially more inclusive than its ethnic counterpart. That said, seemingly neutral political institutions and values “are themselves derivative of particular cultures and may pose more of a challenge to some cultures than to others, thereby excluding selectively” (Asari, Halikiopoulou and Mock 2008, 6). The French republican model, for example, focuses largely on adherence to political values as the boundary of national membership, but in practice has resulted in “highly assimilationist demands in terms of language and cultural mores”, culminating in the requirement that cultural diversity “be contained to the private domain” (ibid, 7). While civic dimensions of nationalism tend to be *more* inclusive than ethnic dimensions, this does not preclude the possibility of an exclusionary civic nationalism.

In practice, a nationalist narrative that focuses purely on civic dimensions without emphasizing the importance of culture may also fail to assuage cultural anxieties. Pierre Trudeau argued for just such a “purely civic nation”, consequently rejecting measures which were meant to preserve specific linguistic and cultural traits in Québec (Maclure 2003, 96). For Trudeau,

“identification with a nation and loyalty to a culture are transitory stages in the development of individuals and peoples, which ultimately lead to an individualistic and universalistic political identity” (ibid, 97). Michel Seymour criticizes such attempts at constructing a purely civic nation, arguing that it leads to a “sterilized political community” which lacks real sociological bonds (quoted in Oakes and Warren 2007, 58). Despite their seemingly noble intentions, purely civic nationalist projects like Trudeau’s ignore the fact that cultural dimensions of nationalism are important to many members of Québec society. These cultural dimensions, and the prospect of their disappearance, are central to the generation of cultural anxiety for these members. Thus, excluding those dimensions from nationalist narratives “risks losing touch with national sentiments altogether” and may inadvertently feed into those anxieties (Cunningham 2007, 193). Rather than rejecting ethnic-cultural dimensions of nationalism outright, some writers like Seymour and Taylor have attempted to articulate models for the Québec nation which seek to reconcile both its ethnic and civic dimensions under one narrative (Oakes and Warren 2007, 59).

In Québec, the French language has been one of the central criteria used to delineate national boundaries and shape understandings of the identity-diversity relation. In this role “language moves along a continuum of inclusion and exclusion within the cultural dimension of Québec’s nationalist discourse” (Laxer, Carson and Korteweg 2014, 144). On the one hand, “a common language provides opportunities for mutual confidence and trust”, allowing for democratic practice and intercultural engagement to take place (Eder et al. 2002, 146). In this respect, support for the French language can promote social inclusion. On the other hand, the French language in Québec has also been used to represent “a shared culture rooted in a particular history”, connecting French with a specific historical community and heritage that is

closed to newcomers (Laxer, Carson and Korteweg, 143). In this way “language functions as a sign of both an open culture and a closed ethnic heritage” (ibid, 144).

Consequently, language can be mobilized to articulate either a closed or open relationship between national identity and cultural diversity. When invoked as a vehicle for expanding democratic participation, language can be used to bring newcomers of varying cultural origins into the fold of Québec society. However, when it is seen as representative of a specific cultural heritage, language can further establish the boundaries between the national majority and members of other cultural groups. As I will explore in detail in chapter two, over the historical development of Québec nationalism, linguistic boundary markers have been mobilized alongside other ethnic and civic dimensions of nationalism to delineate the boundaries of national membership.

The Nationalist Lens and its Impact on Perceptions of Cultural Diversity

Within the nationalist lens, there are many conceptual resources for constructing different visions of the relation between national identity and cultural diversity. Historically nationalist groups have often responded to ethnocultural diversity with violence, thereby reinforcing the expectation of homogeneity and eliminating diversity rather than incorporating cultural minorities into the national narrative and community. Given such violent tendencies, it is not surprising that the promotion of nationalism has been linked to negative attitudes towards immigration (Green et al 2011, 370). However, violence is not nationalism’s *de-facto* response to cultural diversity. While nationalism does strive towards unity within the national community, nationalist elites can choose to define unity minimally and enforce national boundaries with

flexibility to limit their exclusionary potential. For example, Québec governments can make language barriers more permeable by funding French language training for non-francophones and new immigrants. We cannot logically argue that “any form of national identification and resulting national politics is bound to be chauvinistic any more than it follows that an individualistic culture must always promote alienation... just because it sometimes does” (Cunningham 2002, 190).

At the same time however, nationalism establishes the necessary conceptual conditions to make notions of cultural threat possible, thereby laying the groundwork for political actors and citizens alike to develop an antagonistic relationship to cultural diversity. As Norman argues, while nationalism is not inherently illiberal, it “may legitimize a form of rhetoric or political currency that can be more effectively spent by non-liberals in the future” (2006, 15-16). However, nationalism does not operate alone. Some of its potentially violent tendencies can be limited by alternate discursive lenses, including the pluralist lens.

The Pluralist Lens in Québec

Pluralism is the second discursive lens that has been central to the construction of Québec identity since the Quiet Revolution. Pluralism is an ideological position which “advocates tolerance of cultural diversity” (Satzewich and Liodakis 2007, 123). Importantly, as I will explore in detail later, pluralism also “promotes the idea that such diversity is compatible with national goals, especially those of national unity and socio-economic progress” (ibid). In this way, pluralism works to construct a mutually beneficial relationship between national identity and cultural diversity.

As noted in the Introduction, the Quiet Revolution marked a significant shift in Québec nationalism which opened greater space for the recognition of ethnocultural diversity in Québec. While the Lesage government was not focused specifically on ethnic diversity at the time, its liberalizing reforms moved Québec nationalism away from its insular historical character and opened Québec to increased immigration of ethnically diverse populations. More fundamentally, the Quiet Revolution represented “the combining of nationalism with liberalism”, which constrained more explicitly exclusionary aspects of Québec nationalism (McRoberts 1997, 33). This shift was accompanied by the understanding that “the demands of democracy” required a new, pluralist approach to Québec identity which recognized and embraced diversity (Taylor and Bouchard 2008, 116). As Barker explains, this shift in Québec’s approach to cultural diversity was likely also influenced by sub-state nationalist leaders’ desire “to legitimize the sub-state nation and its autonomy project in the eyes of domestic or external audiences” and “counteract any external perceptions that they will espouse an insular and exclusionary nationalism” (2015, 7, 32). Since this period Québec society has debated how to enact a pluralist approach with respect to the precarities of sub-state nationalism.

Much like nationalism, pluralism can be interpreted and enacted in many variations. I limit my discussion here to two closely related approaches to pluralism that are relevant to the Québec case, namely Canadian liberal multiculturalism and Québec interculturalism, which I discuss in that order. I focus first on Canadian liberal multiculturalism to highlight the specifics of the federal multiculturalism policy, the most common critiques of this approach, and how multiculturalism relates to nationalism. Interculturalism was developed initially as a response to Canadian multiculturalism, so many of the features and critiques of multiculturalism also apply to interculturalism. It is important to understand the potential drawbacks of the multicultural

framework to see how interculturalism addresses those challenges. Following this explanation, I focus on Québec interculturalism and specific problems that federal multiculturalism faces in the province. I explore how Québec's political leaders have attempted to address the anxieties that accompany Québécois nationalism by differentiating interculturalism from Canadian multiculturalism and more clearly expressing limits of accommodation that are deemed appropriate for the Québec context.

Examining Liberal Multiculturalism in Canada

Liberal multiculturalism, officially adopted by the Canadian federal government in the 1982 Constitution Act, acts as a reference point against which Québec's approach to pluralism developed (Cunningham 2002, 186). In this approach, cultural diversity takes centre stage as the defining element of Canadian national identity. Multiculturalism offers a narrative of Canadian national identity which does not recognize a favoured ethnocultural majority group. Instead, multiculturalism "decentres [Canada's] traditional ethno-historical identity" as an anglophone nation and "refuses to put any other in its place" (Taylor 2012, 418).

In support of this narrative, the original multiculturalism policy announced by the Trudeau government in 1971 made two important symbolic claims. First, it rejected Canada's history of assimilationism, which required that immigrants assimilate as much as possible into English Canadian culture. Second, it affirmed that immigrants of non-French and non-British descent "had made a vital contribution to Canadian life" and that therefore "their distinctive identities were a defining feature of Canadian society that must be reasonably accommodated" (Kymlicka 1998, 56). These claims entailed a re-allocation of symbolic resources within

Canadian national identity “with a view to generating equality of recognition and status” amongst diverse groups (Paquet 1989, 18). Furthermore, this approach tried to allow ethnic minorities to “participate in mainstream society while maintaining their cultural affiliations and practices without fear of ostracism or discrimination” (Dupré 2012, 232). Whereas the nationalism lens idealizes cultural homogeneity and accepts assimilative cultural policies, liberal multiculturalism takes cultural heterogeneity as its starting point and focuses instead on accommodation and tolerance of difference.

In addition to its symbolic significance, multiculturalism policy commits the government to taking material action to achieve its goals. The 1971 policy committed the government to acting in four different areas: to “assist all Canadian cultural groups that have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada, and [have] a clear need for assistance”; to “assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society”; to “continue to promote creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity”; and to “continue to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada’s official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society” (McRoberts 1997, 125). Together, these policy commitments demonstrate a commitment to accommodating cultural pluralism, while framing that commitment in relation to the priority of strengthening national unity.

As multiculturalism policy in Canada developed, both with its cementing in the 1982 constitution and further articulation in the 1998 Canadian Multiculturalism Act, the term ‘multiculturalism’ has been associated with many different policy areas. These include curriculum reform in public schools, institutional adaptation (e.g. changing work schedules to accommodate religious holidays), cultural development programs, and affirmative action

(Kymlicka 1998, 36). The policy also requires that other departments report annually on “how well their policies and programs conform to the principles of the Multiculturalism Act” (ibid, 48). In this way multiculturalism takes on the character of a guiding principle of sorts, which “instructs us to engage in a systematic exploration of the common institutions into which immigrants are pressured to integrate, to ensure that their rules and symbols do not disadvantage immigrant groups” (ibid, 41). Determining to what extent such systematic exploration has adequately addressed the fairness of integration in Canada would require further research on my part. What is clear is that multiculturalism policy commits Canadian governments to accommodating cultural diversity, both symbolically and materially.

Although multiculturalism attempts to present diversity as an asset, multiculturalism’s general tendency towards acceptance and tolerance garners scepticism from members of society who view cultural diversity as a threat to national unity and who would favour more assimilative approaches to diversity management. From this perspective multiculturalism exacerbates the perceived threat associated with cultural diversity in two ways. First, critics argue that multiculturalism operates under the logic of cultural relativism, thereby tolerating cultural practices that fundamentally oppose liberal and democratic values. Second, critics argue that by refusing to promote a single cultural identity multiculturalism leads to fragmentation, thereby undermining national unity and cohesion. I will discuss each of these critiques in turn, starting with the claim that multiculturalism supports notions of cultural relativism.

Cultural relativism “holds that the evaluative criteria of culture should be drawn from within the culture in question and no external standards are applicable”, meaning that “we should not judge any culture by our dominant norms” (Satzewich and Theodakis 2007, 123). Critics argue that the irony of this approach is that while it comes from a position of absolute tolerance,

it will “encourage and tolerate the promotion of cultures and religions that are decidedly intolerant” (ibid, 138-9). Examples of cultural practices that could be considered challenges to liberal norms include the wearing of the hijab, alternate education practices, and the subordinate status of women (Parekh 2006, 265). Thus, so the argument against cultural relativism goes, by opening the liberal nation to all manner of cultural groups and accepting their cultural practices, we dilute our values and undermine national unity in the process.

The critique of cultural relativism relates to the critique that multiculturalism leads to social fragmentation. This fragmentation is thought to occur because of multicultural policies leading to ethnic self-marginalization and an overemphasis on difference, in conjunction with an emphasis on cultural relativism (Wong 2008, 16). By emphasizing difference “in an already ethnically stratified society”, the fragmentation thesis argues that “multiculturalism reinforces the existing fragmentation by not addressing social inequality” (ibid, 24). Another aspect of this critique is the argument that “pluralism, although imperative for coexistence, does not offer a subsequent vision of the country, does not set national goals, and does not pursue a cause” (Satzewich and Theodakis 2007, 132). By emphasizing difference in place of a shared vision for society, critics argue that multiculturalism encourages cultural minorities to isolate themselves and never pursue integration into the cultural majority. This puts multiculturalism’s promotion of cultural diversity at odds with the unifying aspect of national identity.

We should view these critiques as serious potential flaws with the multicultural approach, but also as somewhat disingenuous in their interpretation of multiculturalism’s actual function in Canada. Contrary to the claim that multiculturalism leads to fragmentation, multiculturalism is specifically designed to make integration easier for immigrants. It does so both by explicitly creating space for immigrants in shared institutions through affirmative action policies, and by

attempting to make immigrants feel more comfortable in those institutions through policies like flexible work schedules and anti-discrimination initiatives (Kymlicka 1998, 43). This reality suggests that while fears of cultural minorities' self-marginalization resulting from multiculturalism are expressed as a fear of those groups putting up cultural walls, they may "really represent a reaction against the extent to which immigrants are entering mainstream society and renegotiating its rules and practices" (ibid, 54). In this interpretation, such arguments appear as attempts by some native-born Canadians to put up cultural walls themselves in a reaction against multiculturalism.

Regarding the potential for accommodation to slide into cultural relativism, liberal multiculturalism functions by establishing limits for which cultural practices may be accommodated and which are unacceptable. Although the Multiculturalism Act does not explicitly articulate such limits, in its preamble it "emphasizes human rights, individual freedom, and sexual equality", and is furthermore subject to the protections elaborated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (ibid, 65). The *exact* nature and location of these limits are constantly up for debate. Such line-drawing exercises play a key role in constituting the boundaries of the national community. Additionally, the articulation of the location of such limits is important for informing the construction of the identity-diversity relation, as well as for countering perceptions of cultural anxiety. In this way "the discourse of the limit acts like a safety net", equipping citizens with the knowledge that "there is a limit to minority behaviours that threaten to move beyond what is deemed acceptable" (Kernerman 2005, 96).

Consequently, however, this discourse of the limit entails a permanent suspicion of minority groups from the perspective of the cultural majority. The "strenuous assertion of the limit implies a latent desire on the part of the minority to behave illiberally", creating an

environment where “if a minority group member behaves illiberally, it is [perceived to be] because he or she is actualizing certain customs or behaviours that define the identity of the group as a whole” (ibid, 96). In the name of easing the anxieties of the majority, the discourse of the limit places minority groups on the defensive, leaving them vulnerable to misrecognition and requiring them to “put their identities on display, to demonstrate their ‘civilized’ behaviour” (ibid, 11).

The mere existence of these limits may also not be enough to quell cultural anxieties. If members of the national community feel as though the limits of multicultural accommodation are poorly defined or enforced, then they may be less likely to embrace cultural diversity. They will feel wary, seeing in multiculturalism the threat of cultural relativism and the erosion of the national identity. This position is reflected in the writing of Neil Bissoondath, who argues that “multiculturalism has made us fearful of defining acceptable boundaries; it has caused us to confuse the establishment of circumspection with a lack of respect” (quoted in Kernerman 2005, 95). If, on the other hand, members believe that the limits have been set and enforced sustainably, then they may be more likely to embrace cultural diversity. Will Kymlicka argues for this position, suggesting that “the limit is in fact already firmly in place” (ibid).

While I am not well equipped to determine which side of this debate is correct in the Canadian case, the key point here is that one’s perception of the limit informs one’s perception of and relationship with cultural diversity. Furthermore, the government and media play important roles in mediating perceptions of how the limits of accommodation are being managed in each society. This is particularly true given that many examples of cultural accommodation in practice are not visible to individual members of society. This dynamic was on full display during the Bouchard-Taylor Commission in 2008, which I will explore in detail in chapter two.

For now, we should note that the degree to which multiculturalism succeeds in constructing a mutually beneficial relation between national identity and cultural diversity depends in large part on how the impacts of multicultural policies are represented to the public.

Before moving on to discuss Québec interculturalism, we can derive some lessons from this analysis as to the relation between nationalism and multiculturalism in Canada. The two frameworks are “often perceived in liberal, antiracist circles as polar opposites”, with multiculturalism acting as the cure to the disease of nationalism (Asari, Halikiopoulou and Mock 2008, 2). In fact, the two concepts can be understood as much more complimentary than this narrative suggests.

Rather than opposing nationalism outright, Canadian multiculturalism can be aligned with a form of liberal nationalism. Liberal nationalists argue that “we should distinguish morally defensible form of nationalism from morally indefensible forms” (Özkırımlı 2005, 96). The liberal nationalist project attempts to construct just such a morally defensible nationalism, one which “celebrates the social and cultural embeddedness of individuals together with their personal autonomy” (ibid, 97). In line with this thinking, liberal forms of multiculturalism “strive to design institutions that would contain nationalism’s worst excesses”, thereby “encouraging a healthy dose of nationalism as a means of warding off the real danger, that it, virulent nationalism” (ibid, 95-6). We can see this in the way that multiculturalism continues to encourage immigrants’ integration into Canadian culture while trying to make the conditions of integration fair for immigrants, thereby appealing to nationalism’s unity imperative without succumbing to assimilationism. Multiculturalism does not pose a serious threat to nationalism in general, but rather encourages a specific conception of nationalism.

Just as multiculturalism does not attempt to erase nationalism, neither does nationalism necessarily erode the possibility of a society embracing multiculturalism. Some authors even suggest that multiculturalism *requires* a strong national identity in order to operate effectively and counter the anxieties that may emerge with the promotion of cultural difference (Asari, Halikiopoulou and Mock 2008, 2). If we promote multiculturalism and uphold tolerance without also emphasising the need to integrate around an inclusive unifying principle, we risk opening rhetorical space for right-wing, anti-immigrant parties to garner support “by means of rhetoric that ironically identifies the mass migration of people from foreign (mostly Muslim) cultures as a threat to the nation’s traditional values of liberalism and tolerance” (ibid, 5). Drawing on the Australian case, Moran argues that multiculturalists are justified in their fear that “when politicians and others emphasize national culture and national identity... it will draw attention to the supposed destabilizing influence of difference, especially among immigrants, and result in the desire and effort to squash multicultural difference” (2011, 2165). Despite this however, “if political leaders and intellectuals vacate the scene by refusing to discuss national identity and issues of national unity and cohesion, another pressing danger is that advocates of more extreme forms of nationalism will take their place” (ibid). Although language that emphasizes national unity may appear to contradict the aims of multiculturalism, it may be necessary to provide the stable groundwork upon which a multicultural society can flourish.

Examining Québec Interculturalism

This brings us to Québec and the development of interculturalism. In order to understand Québec interculturalism, we must first discuss the historical significance of multiculturalism in

Québec. Although the province has a long history of pluralism, its relationship with federal multiculturalism itself is less positive. This has partly to do with the idea that federal multiculturalism represents a betrayal of French-English dualism within Canadian federalism. Dualism in this context is the notion that French culture holds a distinct status over other minority cultures in Canada as one of the country's two founding national cultures. In the 1960s, the Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism conceived of biculturalism as "built upon the established French-Canadian understanding of Canada, rooted in dualism and the distinctiveness of Québec" (McRoberts 1997, xv). For francophones in Québec, this notion of dualism ensured that they would be treated as equal partners in a federal Canada and be protected from assimilation into the majority anglophone Canadian culture.

The federal multiculturalism policy did not reflect this same respect for the notion of cultural dualism in Canada. In opposition to the findings of the Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, the Trudeau government's multiculturalism policy "tried to combine official status for two languages with equal status for an infinite number of cultures" (ibid, 117). This policy was built on the assumption that "Québec, while distinct linguistically, is not culturally distinct from any other ethno-cultural group in Canada" (Blad and Couton 2009, 658). By trying to divorce language from culture in this way, Trudeau sparked the ire of Québécois nationalists. Drawing on Trudeau's longstanding opposition to Québec nationalism, observers in Québec suggested that "Trudeau feared that a bicultural understanding of Canada would sharpen Canadian dualism and encourage Québécois nationalism, so he pursued multiculturalism instead" (Kernerman 2005, 94). Multiculturalism was argued to have "contradicted the notion of equality between the two Confederation peoples" by failing to recognize French culture as any more significant to Canadian identity than any other cultural group (Barker 2010, 26).

Consequently, federal multiculturalism policy further contributed to Québécois' perceptions of cultural threat at the time of its implementation.

In response, the Québec government articulated its opposition to the policy alongside the need to defend Québec's national priorities. In November 1971, Québec Premier Robert Bourassa wrote to Prime Minister Trudeau and "declared that, for its part, the Québec government would not be adopting multiculturalism in its own jurisdictions, given its responsibility to ensure the persistence of the French language and culture in its territory" while also emphasizing that "Québec had been subsidizing ethnic groups and language training for several years" (McRoberts 1997, 129). With this last point of emphasis, Bourassa tried to demonstrate that Québec's opposition was not to pluralism as such, but specifically to the imposition onto Québec of a cultural policy which failed to reflect French culture's distinct status within Canada.

This negative interpretation of the federal multiculturalism policy diminishes its ability to operate in Québec. Even in the present day, "public opinion in Québec about federal multicultural policy ranges from skeptical to openly hostile" (Blad and Couton 2009, 658). If the policy is seen as having ulterior motives, then it may not be able to achieve its goal of constructing a positive relationship between national identity and cultural diversity. However, as Bourassa's comments reflect, the opposition here is to federal multiculturalism specifically and is not reflective of an aversion to pluralism in Québec society more generally. Interculturalism, then, is an important vehicle for pluralistic concepts in Québec for the simple reason that it is not multiculturalism.

Interculturalism itself developed through a series of policy statements from the Québec government in the 1980s. The interculturalism policy was "initially articulated... as an attempt

by the PQ government to reach out to members of cultural communities during a period of strained relations”, and the model “sought to inject the Québec national integration project with a measure of pluralism in the face of widespread perception that it was an inherently ethnic movement unwilling to recognize the contributions of minority cultures in Québec” (Iacovino 2015, 46). In practice, interculturalism reflected many of the same methods as federal multiculturalism. Through the 1980s, Québec governments developed programs that paralleled many of Ottawa’s multicultural initiatives, including measures for subsidizing ‘folklore’ activities of various cultural communities and later refocusing on issues of racism, prejudice and inequality. However, the Québec government specifically distanced those policies from multiculturalism, placing “greater emphasis on the need of immigrants to adapt to the larger community” and assuming “that there is an overarching common culture” (McRoberts 1997, 130). This common culture is conceived of “as a meeting place for diversity” and was meant to develop as its own culture through interactions between the majority francophone and minority cultures (Bouchard 2015, 32-3). As Charles Taylor describes it, interculturalism “starts from the reigning historical identity but sees it evolving in a process in which all citizens, of whatever identity, have a voice, and no-one’s input has a privileged status” (2012, 418). Through these specifications, Québec interculturalism has been articulated as an attempt to strike a balance between cultural accommodation and protection of the national majority culture.

In pursuit of this balance, interculturalism is more explicit than federal multiculturalism about articulating the basic limits to accommodation in Québec. These limits are articulated through the three main tenets of Québec interculturalism: “French as the language of public life; a democratic society, where everyone is expected and encouraged to participate and contribute; and an open, pluralist society that respects democratic values and intercommunitarian exchange”

(Leroux 2010, 107). Of key importance amongst these tenets, and the one which most clearly differentiates interculturalism from multiculturalism, is the unilingual promotion of the French language. By centering the integral role of the French language to Québécois identity, interculturalism attempts to address the “existential anxiety of the minority” that exists in Québec in a way that multiculturalism cannot (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 122). In this way, interculturalism attempts to remain attentive to francophones’ feelings of cultural vulnerability by emphasizing the importance of specifically French cultural traits, while simultaneously trying to avoid the assimilationist tendencies invited by strictly ethnic forms of nationalism.

Although interculturalism appears to fit neatly to Québec’s needs when it comes to providing protections for both the francophone majority and other cultural minorities, the policy has received its own share of criticism. On the one hand, Québec’s pluralist approach has received similar criticisms to federal multiculturalism for being overly accommodating to cultural minorities. Such sentiment was reflected during the accommodation crisis in the early 2000s in Québec, which I will explore in greater detail in chapter two. On the other hand, interculturalism is also criticized for taking “a more assimilationist approach to integration of racial minorities in order to safeguard traditional Québécois culture” (Bakali 2015, 418). Another persistent critique of interculturalism is that its dualist approach to understanding ethnocultural relations, which focuses on the distinction between the French majority and other cultural minorities, serves to reify the differences between these groups instead of promoting unity. Taylor labels this flaw the model’s “Achilles heel”, referring to the ‘us vs. them’ distinction which can still be derived from the intercultural approach (2012, 420). Concerns over this distinction may be well-founded, as “there is evidence that immigrants in Québec [are] not yet

imagined as true Québécois, and large segments have remained outside the Québec community” (Satzewich and Liodakis 2007, 170).

While interculturalism offers an approach to pluralism that is seemingly well-suited to the Québec context, in that it attends to the anxieties of the francophone majority in conjunction with an embrace of culturally diverse minorities, the policy has thus far failed to quell the anxieties of either group. This may partly stem from the fact that interculturalism has never been expressed in an official policy with the same prominence as the Multiculturalism Act, and so many Québec residents may be unaware of the concept and the delicate balance that it articulates between accommodation and integration (Bilodeau et al. 2015, 21; Iacovino 2015, 45). Additionally, in recent years interculturalism has been challenged by another key element of Québec’s identity discourse which has produced significant cultural anxiety and discord. I speak, of course, of secularism.

The Secularist Lens in Québec

The final discursive lens that is central to the construction of Québec identity and its relation to diversity is secularism. Although secularism has played a part in Québec’s identity narrative since the Quiet Revolution, it is “now conceptualised as a cornerstone of the cultural mainstream into which immigrants are being urged to integrate” (Dupré 2012, 238). Particularly in the last decade, secularism has “emerged as another, more contested plank to the national identity that has influenced approaches to integration and diversity” (Baker 2015, 61). Although the Quiet Revolution marked a turn towards secularism, we need to look further back to understand the significance of secularism, as well as religion, in Québec society.

Religion has long held an important place in Québec's identity narrative. Early French settlers in North America brought Catholicism with them, and the religion remains a significant feature of historical francophone identity in Québec. Even so, we can trace the roots of Québec secularism as far back as the early 1800s. In this period, Louis Joseph Papineau, a leader of the nationalist Parti Patriote, was already calling for "a complete separation of Church and state" (Gingras and Nevitte 1984, 4). Contemporary secularists commonly point to the Patriote rebellions in the 1830s as having "initiated republican and secular ideas" in the province (Burchardt 2016, 614). Papineau was not to have his way, however. The Patriote rebellions failed, and in their wake "the Church's ideological coherence and bureaucratic capacity easily translated into political power" (ibid). The prolonged dominance of the clerical elite that followed "helped to fuse French-Canadian religious and national identities" (ibid, 5). Consequently, Catholicism remained a central pillar of Québécois nationalism until at least the mid-20th century.

The Quiet Revolution interrupted clerical dominance and marked a significant acceleration in the move towards secularism. Whereas previously the Catholic Church had been the primary carrier of Québec nationalism, now the revitalized Québec state adopted that role. The secularism movement played a key role in this period, pushing for the separation of church and state. Given the prominence of secularism in this transformative period, representative of a struggle that played out over hundreds of years of clerical repression, "it is no surprise that, having been so hard won, these principles have become in many cases fundamental values" for contemporary Quebecers (Bouchard 2012, 118). This historical experience with religion has not only engendered support for secularism but has also "given rise to a profound discomfort with religion in Québec's public life" (Laxer, Carson and Korteweg 2014, 146).

Despite the societal shift towards secularism that has been maintained and accelerated since the Quiet Revolution, there is still an ongoing attachment to Catholicism in Québec, particularly amongst francophones. This is not necessarily a religious attachment, but rather an attachment based in cultural heritage. Although many Quebecers turned away from Catholicism as a religious practice following the secularization of the 1960s, “wide sections of the Francophone populace also see secularized Catholicism as a legitimate element of nationalism” (Burchardt 2016, 615).

The significance of ‘secularized Catholicism’ is exemplified by debates around the crucifix which hung for many years in the Québec National Assembly in Québec City. Critics have argued that a consistent approach to secularism would require that the crucifix be removed. However, successive former governments in recent years, each of which has supported the advancement of secularism in their policies, have refused to remove the crucifix, arguing that it is “symbolic of Québec’s religious heritage and culture” (ibid). Québec’s new Premier François Legault initially echoed this view, arguing that the crucifix was important as a means “to understand our past” (CBC News 2018). However, Legault recently changed his position on the issue, and the crucifix was removed following a unanimous vote in the National Assembly, potentially indicating the further progression of secularism in Québec (CTV Montreal 2019).

Maintaining the importance of Catholicism in this way influences the construction of the identity-diversity relation in Québec in multiple ways. First, because “framing religion as cultural heritage is a way of preserving certain privileges of historical majority religions and flag it as being hegemonic culture”, this practice has the potential to close cultural space for non-Catholic religious diversity (Burchardt 2016, 615). Other religious traditions are not extended the privilege of existing in a purely ‘secularized’ form. Giving priority to Catholic symbols over

others allows for “some Québécois [to] simultaneously hold onto an understanding of themselves as politically secular and culturally Catholic, in ways that might or might not create openings for other religious expressions” (Laxer, Carson and Korteweg 2014, 147). Secondly, “Catholicism also supports national boundary work vis-à-vis Canada as being historically dominantly Protestant” (Burchardt 2016, 615). In both cases, the maintenance of Catholicism in Québec complements concepts within the nationalist lens, namely the pursuit of unity and the construction of boundaries. By emphasizing the importance of Catholicism over other religious practices, Québec politicians signal both a desire for a homogenous cultural identity as well as a discomfort with religious diversity.

There is also a racial dimension to both the maintenance of Catholicism’s importance in Québec and the broader push for the reassertion of secularism in the province. Catholicism in Québec has historically been closely related to whiteness, stemming from the clerical understanding of Québec national identity as white, rural and Catholic. Whiteness here refers to “a structurally advantaged position (race privilege), a standpoint from which white people view themselves, others and society, and a set of generally unmarked cultural practices” which establish the basis for the “white prerogative to govern others” (Bilge 2013, 166). Consequently, fervent attempts to preserve the cultural privileges of Catholics in Québec in conjunction with initiatives to limit the public expression of non-Catholic religious practices suggest that ‘culture’ and ‘religion’ in this case may be operating as a proxy for race (Dhamoon 2009, 31). In the following discussion of the concepts within the secularist lens, we should be attentive to how the recent emphasis on secularism in Québec identity discourse can be read as a discursive strategy to protect the status and power of whiteness in Québec.

The Challenge of Religious Diversity

We can now move on to discuss the concepts within the secularist lens, starting with the challenge of religious diversity. The difficulties surrounding religious diversity have increasingly taken centre stage in Western democracies' attempts to accommodate cultural diversity. Anxieties over the potential impacts of religious diversity were greatly amplified following the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. Following those attacks, many Western governments responded to the potential "threats that cultural and religious Others posed to the peace and security of their countries" (Satzewich and Theodakis 2007, 138). In this context, Arabs and Muslims, and those who appear Arab or Muslim, have increasingly been coded by state governments and popular media as potential national security threats, making these groups vulnerable to discriminatory treatment (Dhamoon and Abu-Laban 2009, 179). This context has made religious diversity "the cutting edge of contestation over the political accommodation of cultural difference in Western liberal democracies" while also heightening cultural anxieties (Brubaker 2015, 101). All of this has made it more difficult to portray religious diversity, as well as cultural diversity, as positive influences in society.

Beyond potential security threats, religious diversity is particularly challenging from the perspective of balancing national cohesion with the accommodation of cultural diversity. Religious diversity in Western democracies has expanded mainly due to "massive waves of transnational migration, which have dramatically changed the demographic makeup and religious composition of national populations" (Burchardt 2016, 599). These changes further complicate the task of constructing a unifying nationalist identity narrative by introducing new conflicts over acceptable cultural practices. For example, debate and conflict surrounding the

wearing of religious garments, particularly those associated with Islamic traditions, “partly reflects the difficulties of the modern nation-state to define and maintain a distinct national identity in the light of rising ethnic and religious diversity within its borders” (Guibernau 2013, 8). Indeed, “the conflicts arising from religious pluralism tend to be deeper and more intractable” than other cultural conflicts, in part because public religion in particular “often involves an authoritative, binding, and comprehensive set of norms” which “reach into the public realm” (Brubaker 2015, 99). These norms threaten to “challenge the state’s claim to monopolize the regulation of public life”, thereby undermining the state’s ability to construct a unified national identity narrative (ibid, 100). The management of religious diversity is consequently a key priority for state actors.

Religious diversity also compounds the challenges of pluralist accommodation highlighted earlier. As a starting point, “liberal states are committed to a far-reaching accommodation of religious pluralism” (ibid). This puts such states in a difficult position, as they “may be obliged to accommodate forms of religion that promote illiberal ideas or practices, or they may be obliged to act illiberally in restricting religious or other freedoms in the name of other values” (ibid).

In general, secularists and others seem to express more anxiety about the former course of action than the latter. In France for example, “defenders of *laïcité*⁸ and of a strict reading of the values of republicanism criticize multiculturalism... as a slippery slope leading to unacceptable inequality between citizens” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 8). This approach was exemplified by the debate in France over a law that would ban conspicuous religious symbols from being worn in public schools. Ultimately the ban was passed in 2004, with support from a

⁸ *Laïcité* is the French concept for secularism.

large majority in the French National Assembly, on the premise that banning conspicuous religious symbols was “a precondition for the integration and assimilation of Muslims” to French society (Eisenberg and Kymlicka 2011, 192). In this debate, which influenced similar debates taking place in Québec, “the compatibility of a religious practice with *laïcité* [did] not depend on the evaluation of the centrality of this practice to someone’s religious belief but rather on the potential threat that the practice may represent for the society as a whole” (ibid, 199). As I explain in the next section, different conceptions of secularism take varying approaches to negotiating this tension between the need to act liberally and restricting potentially illiberal practices.

Approaches to Secularism: Open vs. Rigid

We can divide approaches to secularism into two categories: open secularism and rigid secularism. Open secularism is a “more liberal and tolerant model”, whereas rigid secularism is stricter, “inspired by the French model put forward by certain participants hostile to religious accommodation” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 87). Each version must strike a balance between four key principles: “freedom of conscience and religion; the right of individuals to religious and moral equality, without discrimination (direct or indirect), based on convictions of conscience or religious convictions; the separation of church and state; [and] state neutrality towards religion” (ibid). In negotiating these principles, “each society implements its own secular regime, that is... intended to be compatible with the history, institutions, and sensibilities of that society, but which also carries traces of its divisions” (Bouchard 2012, 122).

The rigid and open approaches to secularism offer two ways to navigate the “tension or contradiction between the various constituent facets of secularism” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 91). In general, rigid secularism gives “more importance to the principles of neutrality than to freedom of conscience and religion, thus allowing a greater restriction of the practice of religion in the name of neutrality” (ibid). Open secularism is based more on “the protection of freedom of religion, even if it calls for the relativization of the principle of neutrality” (ibid). Each approach informs a different construction of the relation between identity and religious diversity.

Rigid secularism takes a harder approach to religion, viewing displays of religious diversity in the public sphere with suspicion. This approach aims to “carry out the emancipation of individuals with respect to religion” through “the relegation of religious practices to private and community life” (ibid, 88). The goal of this model, then, is to achieve “the absence of faith in public life” (Abu-Laban and Couture 2014, 137). The suspicion driving this approach is “based on a negative opinion of religion which sees religion as incompatible with individual autonomy and rationality” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 88). Because of this suspicion, rigid secularism tends to fit well with more assimilative approaches to integration, whereby religion is removed as a meaningful identity marker which differentiates individuals in public spaces. Rigid secularists view religious diversity as a threat, and therefore as detrimental to the goals of national unity.

The anti-religious sentiments embedded in rigid secularism can be used to mobilize the language of secularism and democracy towards xenophobic political projects that justify discrimination against minority religious groups. For an example of such usage we can look to the rhetoric of Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right Front National party in France. During the 2017 French presidential elections, Le Pen used the language of *laïcité*, which is foundational to

French republicanism, in order to “put a respectable spin on [the Front National’s] anti immigrant platform” (Hamburger 2018). By presenting Arab and African immigrants as fundamentally opposed to secularism given their Muslim background, Le Pen “could enlist French democratic values in the service of xenophobia”, arguing that France could not accept immigrants who opposed key French values (Hamburger 2018). This example demonstrates how the strict language of rigid secularism can be exploited to support an exclusionary and racist form of nationalism.

Open secularism takes a very different approach to managing religious diversity. This approach attempts to “make possible the *peaceful* cohabitation of all religions as well as religious believers and nonbelievers in the same society” (Abu-Laban and Couture 2014, 137). In open secularism “state neutrality towards religion and separation of church and state are not seen as ends in themselves, but as means to achieve the fundamental twofold objective: respect for religious and moral equality, and freedom of conscience and religion” (Adelman and Ancil 2011, 91). This method implies a more accepting approach to religious diversity and is therefore more conducive to practices of religious accommodation than the rigid approach. Consequently, open secularism entails that governments apply greater efforts to pursue accommodation without exacerbating anxieties that citizens may have regarding diverse religious practices. An open secular model may help to ease such anxieties prior to any accommodation struggles however, as it does not present religious diversity as threatening in the first place. Rather than presenting religion as a threat that must be neutralized from public life, open secularism presents religious diversity as a fact that must be managed to ensure the fair and equal treatment of all religions in society.

Secularism and Multiculturalism

Through analyzing these two diverging approaches, we can develop an understanding of the relationship between secularism and multiculturalism. The two frameworks have the potential to conflict with one another, given that multicultural accommodation requires “a kind of recognition of religious minorities and practices that might contradict the separation [between religion and state] required by secularism” (Læggard 2017, 157). However, the extent to which the frameworks might conflict with one another depends in large part on which approach to secularism we adopt. If we interpret the need for state neutrality and separation strictly, as in rigid secularism, then we could not accept the engagement with religion required by multiculturalism. However, open secularism, because it places less emphasis on the need for separation and neutrality, would be much more amenable to instances of religious accommodation. As the open secularism approach demonstrates, there is no *necessary* conflict between secularism and multiculturalism. Rather, potential conflicts between secularism and multiculturalism “only obtain for specific conceptions and in specific respects” (Læggard 2017, 167). Instead of opposing multiculturalism, an open secularism can be understood as being in conversation with multiculturalism, as the two frameworks overlap to inform a normative logic as to how accommodation should be handled and what the limits of accommodation should look like.

Conclusion

Together, the discursive lenses of nationalism, pluralism and secularism overlap to inform the construction of Québec identity and its relationship with cultural diversity. Within the nationalist lens, the unity imperative, cultural survival and the accompanying notion of cultural threat, and boundary construction each open discursive avenues for constructing either an inclusive or exclusive conception of national identity in relation to cultural diversity, while also establishing the discursive foundation to produce cultural anxiety. In the pluralism lens, a much greater emphasis is placed on the state's responsibility to accommodate diverse cultural practices. However, both multiculturalism and interculturalism articulate limits to these accommodation practices to guard against accusations that they will lead to cultural relativism and social fragmentation. In interculturalism, these limits include protecting the centrality of the French language in Québec in order to address the anxieties of the francophone majority. The secularism lens deals similarly with accommodation practices but manifests very differently depending on whether it is interpreted as open secularism or rigid secularism. Each lens emerges from Québec's historical sociopolitical landscape, offering bundles of conceptual resources to inform different interpretations of the identity-diversity relation.

These lenses act as unruly instruments in the orchestra that is Québec's identity discourse, producing an ambiguous and sometimes cacophonous melody. The product of their collaboration is ultimately ambiguous, and it is left to the listener to give precedence to different concepts within the lenses and construct a national identity narrative. Given this inherent interpretive ambiguity, social mediators play a significant role in legitimizing or delegitimizing various interpretations in the eyes of the public. The Québec government has historically been one such mediator and has played a particularly important role given its status as the carrier of Québec nationalism. As I have shown in this chapter, "there are resources within Québec

political culture for a tolerant form of nationalism” (Cunningham 2002, 190). The extent to which Québec society adopts a tolerant national identity narrative, as opposed to one which limits the expression of cultural diversity, is contingent in part on the actions and rhetoric taken by the government of the day, as well as on the accumulated actions of governments gone by.

C2: The History and Evolution of Diversity Management in Québec

Introduction

In this chapter I shift my focus to Québec's history to clarify how Québec governments' approaches to diversity management and identity construction evolved from the Quiet Revolution to today in response to Québec's changing sociopolitical landscape. I do not aim to present an exhaustive historical account of this almost 60-year period of changing diversity management policies. Instead, I focus on highlighting key trends in policy initiatives and discursive strategies in the evolution of Québec governments' construction of national identity and its relation to cultural diversity.

Across this history, Québec governments have responded to changes in Québec society, beginning with the dramatic changes of the Quiet Revolution. From the mid- to late-20th century, rising diversity as a result of immigration led governments to encourage integration and defend Québec's French character, in part by expanding its control over relevant policy areas. However, integration initiatives in this period focused largely on linguistic assimilation, and particularly from the late 1970s onward were framed alongside a commitment to cultural pluralism. In this period we see a relatively balanced tension between nationalist and pluralist imperatives towards integration, which is reflected in the intercultural policy framework from 1990.

The remainder of the 1990s represent the beginning of a potential turning point in Québec's sociopolitical landscape and identity politics, marked by the accumulation of nationalist anxiety and frustration. The failure of the Meech Lake Accord, which would have brought Québec into the constitutional fold and cemented its distinct status in the constitution,

constituted a significant blow to the aspirations of Québec nationalists. Two key government reports from this period, the Allaire Report and the Belanger-Campeau Report, exemplify nationalist frustrations with the failure. Even so, Québec's leaders appeared to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to embracing cultural pluralism. As evidence for this commitment, I turn to a key speech from Premier Lucien Bouchard to an audience of anglophones in 1996, soon after the 'No' result in Québec's 1995 independence referendum.

Despite this apparent commitment to cultural pluralism from the political class, the early 21st century witnessed rising cultural anxieties and tense debates over the reasonable accommodation of religious practices. Here we see the negotiation between the nationalist and pluralist lenses interrupted by the significant rise of secularist lens. The 2008 Bouchard-Taylor Commission represented a key mass discursive exercise in Québec identity politics in this period, and although the Commission Report stated a preference for open secularism and interculturalism, the responses to the Commission and its process were largely negative.

The key policy trend that I highlight in this period is the repeated attempts to enact aspects of rigid secularism into legislation, attempts which were frequently accompanied by exclusionary and assimilationist rhetoric. This trend has culminated in the current Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government adopting a ban on the wearing of religious symbols for state workers. I argue that this policy was enabled in part by prior politicians' promotion of a rigid interpretation of the secularist lens alongside varying exclusionary rhetoric, which opened the discursive space for the CAQ to justify its policy. I support this claim with reference to Premier François Legault's discursive strategy to justify the ban, which frames the ban as more moderate than previous policy initiatives in this area. The new policy has been heavily contested, but its

enacting into law represents a significant turn in Québec identity politics towards cultural assimilation.

Diversity Management in Mid- to Late-20th Century Québec:

Balancing Nationalism and Pluralism

Prior to the Quiet Revolution, the Catholic Church held a controlling role in Québec society and significantly shaped national identity narratives. In the 1800s, clerical elites “played a key role in creating a politically conservative, inward-looking and ethnic understanding of national identity, rooted in traditional Catholic and rural values” (Laxer, Carson and Korteweg 2014, 137). The Church developed the discourse of *la survivance* (survival) as the guiding narrative for this notion of national identity. *Survivance* saw “Québec’s population as made up of rural Catholics who rejected British imperialism, industrialisation and urbanisation” (ibid). This reinforced an image of cultural homogeneity in Québec, thereby establishing the early boundaries for national belonging. Québec was a society of white, rural Catholics, and there was little space for those who did not fit that image.

The *survivance* narrative also developed the notion of cultural survival in Québec. *Survivance* “emphasized an identity as a minority society requiring cultural and linguistic protection” (Barker 2015, 51). It was “premised on the idea that Québec’s national culture faces continual threats and the threats, historically, have been perceived as taking many forms” (Gingras and Nevitte 1984, 5). The reaffirmation of constant threats towards Québec’s collective identity established the need to constantly insulate that identity to ensure its survival.

This defensive sentiment translated into a restrictive approach towards immigration. Economic factors also contributed to this restrictive attitude, as “immigration to Québec was neither necessary to augment economic growth nor desirable in a rural, agrarian economy with a sufficient domestic labour supply” (Blad and Couton 2009, 655). Taken together, these factors encouraged “an ambivalent, even suspicious view of immigration in Québec” in this period (ibid). Under the guidance of the clerical elite, Québec’s national identity narrative articulated a firmly defensive stance towards cultural diversity.

Moving into the early 20th century, the highly repressive and semi-authoritarian *Union Nationale* regime of Maurice Duplessis embodied the conservative and religious nationalism that clerical elites previously established. In this period, we find the root of secularism’s contemporary significance to Québec identity. In the context of economic depression, Duplessis’s governments “repressed civil and political liberties and defended Catholic traditionalism, both in the name of anti-communism”, in a period that would be referred to by critics in the 1950s and early 1960s as the *grande noirceur* (great darkness) (Burchardt 2016, 609). The association between the oppressive Duplessis regime and the Catholic Church fed into “accusations against the Catholic Church and Catholic culture as chiefly responsible for Québeckers’ repression” (ibid). Responding to this narrative, reformers saw secularization and national independence as the pathways to liberation, thereby setting “Québec on a pathway of secular progressivism” (ibid, 610). When Duplessis died in office in 1959, the stage was set for a dramatic shift in Québec society.

The Quiet Revolution

The desire for change in Québec society coming out of this long period of religious dominance and political suppression began to boil over by the mid-20th century. Following the election of Jean Lesage and the PLQ as the Québec provincial government in 1960, the Quiet Revolution began. During this tumultuous period the “discourse of *survivance* was overtaken by that of *rattrapage* (catching up), which portrayed the state as a vehicle for achieving nationalist goals and reimagining Québec as a secular, urban and industrialised nation” (Laxer, Carson and Korteweg 2014, 138). The province underwent a period of intensive modernisation, industrialisation, and secularisation, completely changing many aspects of a society which had previously been shaped and controlled by the conservative-clerical elite (Blad and Couton 2009, 655).

Despite the shift away from the *survivance* discourse and its emphasis on cultural threat, the Lesage governments’ discourse maintained a distinctly nationalist character. This nationalism was reflected in one of Lesage’s slogans in this period, which called for the Québécois to become “ ‘maitres chez nous’ – ‘masters in our own house’ ” (McRoberts 1997, 33). Underpinning this slogan was the drive towards the economic liberation of the Québécois, which would counter the dominance of anglophones at the upper levels of the Québec economy in this period. The Lesage administration asserted that French-Canadian society’s best interests could only be pursued “through the sophisticated and aggressive exercise of the powers of the Quebec government in respect to almost every significant aspect of life” (Smiley 1967, 60). In this discourse we can see a shift away from a defensive nationalism and towards a more assertive nationalism in Québec.

As a result of the Lesage administration’s reforms, the provincial population became “increasingly urban, secular and educated” (Blad and Couton 2009, 655). As in many other

societies experiencing similar demographic trends, these changes were accompanied by a lowering of birth rates and an increasing reliance on imported labour to drive modernisation and industrialisation (ibid, 656). Increases in immigration in turn meant the arrival of new cultural actors in Québec, disrupting homogenous identity narratives of the pre-Quiet Revolution era.

This influx of cultural diversity posed a challenge for the government. On the one hand, with their commitment to liberal economic reform the political leaders of the Quiet Revolution saw that immigration would be needed to provide the necessary labour force to power the province's new modern economy. On the other hand, nationalist concerns regarding the precarity of Québec's French character required that the state manage the cultural diversity that accompanied this migration, particularly regarding language (ibid). Premier Jean Lesage, as well as Québec's political class more generally, were clearly aware and wary of the potential impacts that immigration could have on Québec's cultural identity. Both Lesage and René Lévesque, leader of the Parti Québécois (PQ) and a former minister in the Lesage government, expressed concerns about the impact that immigration would have on the province's demographics. They were particularly "focused on preserving the Francophone character of Québec", which immigrants threatened "insofar as new migrants were likely to integrate primarily into Anglophone society" (Barker 2010, 20). This challenge forced the government to confront the reality of rising cultural diversity and develop a response to it.

A key aspect of this response was a push for further fiscal and administrative autonomy for the provincial government, which also served the broader effort to increase the scope of the Québec state's control over its own affairs. As a first step in this endeavour the PLQ created the Québec Ministry of Immigration in 1968 to take control over the changes that were shaking Québec society (Barker 2015, 66). The Ministry was tasked with encouraging settlement,

integration, and “the preservation of immigrants’ ethnic customs” (Barker 2010, 20). This third function suggests that Lesage and the PLQ, while clearly concerned with the linguistic and ethnic makeup in the province, also wanted to avoid fully assimilationist policies. Thus, even in this early period of transition, we can observe the PLQ balancing nationalist imperatives to integrate with pluralism’s aversion to assimilation. From this point forward, “immigration policy became a nation-building and state-building measure”, used both to assert Québec’s control over its own affairs and to shape its national character (ibid).

The Development of Intercultural Integration

Moving into the 1970s, citizens and politicians were slowly adjusting to the reality of increased diversity in Québec society. However, many citizens continued to express “anxiety for the future of the French-speaking community” in the face of both immigration and Anglicization (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 116). Responding to this linguistic anxiety and the disadvantaged position of francophones in the workplace, Québec governments enacted a series of policies designed to protect the French language in the province.

Perhaps the most significant of these came in 1977 when the PQ passed Bill 101, otherwise known as the Charter of the French Language, which “declared French the sole official language of Québec, including in its courts and legislature” (Barker 2015, 56). The Bill was criticized for discriminating against anglophones and continues to court controversy today. At the same time, it served two key purposes for Québec nationalism.

First, by establishing French as the common public language in the province, the government was “staking a claim on the boundaries of citizenship through a clear and unilateral

exercise of internal self-determination” (Iacovino 2015, 45). This was partially a response to Canadian multiculturalism, which many francophones saw as betraying the Confederation promise of dualism in Canada by reducing French culture’s status from one of Canada’s founding cultures to one culture amongst many. By protecting the French language, the Québec government asserted its status as a distinct nation within the Canadian federation.

Second, the Bill satisfied the objective of increased inclusivity and pluralism by de-ethnicising the French language. By emphasising knowledge of the French language as the central identity marker of the Québec nation, rather than emphasizing “ethnocultural allegiance based on Catholicism and French ancestry”, the government was saying that “all within these [territorial] boundaries who adopt French as the common public language would be included in the Québec nation” (Dupré 2012, 236). This move also carried the potential to defuse tensions between francophones and allophones to some extent, as under the new law the latter group was more likely to integrate into French rather than English, thus making them less of a potential treat to Québec nationalism. Through Bill 101, the government attempted to protect its linguistic identity claim while also expanding the boundaries of Québec identity to include culturally diverse actors and making the French language the basis for public culture in Québec.

The government also began to expand its influence over immigration in this period. One year after passing Bill 101 the Québec and Ottawa governments negotiated the Cullen-Couture Agreement, which provided the legal basis for giving Québec “*de facto* powers over most aspects of immigrant selection” (ibid). With these new powers Québec prioritized knowledge of French for prospective immigrants, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. The government also pursued its own explicit integration measures for the first time, including language programmes for adult immigrants. These were notable in that “they were voluntary

[and] did not seek cultural assimilation” (Barker 2015, 58). Together these programs worked to cement the central importance of maintaining and protecting the French language in Québec culture.

Other policies complemented these linguistically focused programs by emphasizing the importance of pluralism in Québec society. The first such policy was the 1975 Québec Charter. The Charter opened the collective imagination to “perspectives of mobility and the mixing of cultures” by recognizing “the right of members of the ethnic minorities to maintain and advance their own cultural life with the other members of their group” (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 116). This was followed in 1978 by the Cultural Development Policy, which established the foundations for later conceptions of interculturalism by articulating a traditionally French “culture of convergence”, encompassing both the francophone majority and the three minority cultures of English Québécois, indigenous peoples, and immigrants (Fontaine 1995, 1044). Together, these policies continued the shift from a homogenous identity narrative focused on ethnic dimensions of belonging to a more inclusive identity narrative which, while grounded in the need for linguistic conformity in the public sphere, was open to cultural diversity.

This trend continued into the 1980s with the passage of a key policy statement in 1981, *Autant de façons d’être Québécois* (So Many Ways to Be Québécois). The policy “provided an overview of provincial cultural integration without reverting to the assimilationist patterns of past Canadian efforts at national construction”, emphasizing the convergence and mixing of culture and community (Blad and Couton 2009, 659-60). The notion of ‘cultural convergence’ narrated an image of Québec’s future, “whereby all cultures present in Québec would come together and form a dynamic society” (Dupré 2012, 236). It also remained in line with the linguistic protectionist policies of the 1970s, acknowledging Québec’s cultural diversity and its

diverse immigrant population while also emphasizing French as the common language (Barker 2015, 63).

In 1990 the PLQ government, led by Robert Bourassa, finally solidified the foundations of an intercultural approach to integration in a key policy document: *Au Québec pour bâtir ensemble: énoncé de politique en matière d'immigration et d'intégration* (Let's Build Québec Together: A Policy Statement on Immigration and Integration). The document articulated a 'moral contract' around integration, bringing together the main trends in Québec identity politics that had been developing since the Quiet Revolution. It outlined "three parameters of integration into Québec society: French as the language of public life; the engagement of all citizens in the democratic process; and intercommunity exchange" (Laxer, Carson and Korteweg 2014, 139). Importantly, the moral contract also treated integration as a reciprocal endeavour, placing "the onus of responsibility for integration on both newcomers and the host society- the former expected to participate and accept the terms of belonging in Québec society (most notably French as the official language) and the latter ensuring that support and resources are made available for those ends" (Iacovino 2015, 46). Finally, "the policy statement also presented cultural diversity as an asset and encouraged intercultural relations" (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 117).

Through this combination of measures, the policy represented a balance between nationalist and pluralist imperatives in relation to integration. By promoting the French language as the basis for integration the policy aimed to ease cultural anxieties amongst francophones without resorting to assimilative practices, instead framing integration as both reciprocal and mutually beneficial for minorities and the majority. In this way, the policy explicitly "marked the

beginning of an openly pluralist envisioning of the Québécois community”, at least in the realm of public policy (Dupré 2012, 237).

Such thinking was reflected in the final policy that I will touch on from this period, namely the 1991 Canada-Québec Accord. The Accord came on the heels of the failed 1987 Meech Lake Accord’s proposed constitutional reforms and responded to the desires of both federalist and sovereigntist factions in Québec to give the provincial government more meaningful immigration powers (Barker 2010, 23). Building on past agreements like the 1978 Couture-Cullen Agreement, the Canada-Québec Accord gave Québec the exclusive right to select which immigrants would come to the province, allowing the province to “opt out of federal settlement programs and develop its own integration and settlement services” (Barker 2015, 14). The agreement gave Québec control over the points-based immigration system, allowing more points to be allocated for knowledge of the French language in order to facilitate more francophone immigration (Barker 2015, 49). Immigration was once again reinforced as a key area for the Québec government to pursue nation-building strategies that would protect the French culture in the province

This policy change had significant consequences for the demographic makeup of Québec’s immigrant population. Specifically, immigrants from French speaking regions in Africa and the Middle East began to make up a much greater percentage of immigrants coming to the province. From 1990 to 2004, the percentage of immigrants to Québec originating from those regions increased from 11.75% to 31.83% (Blad and Couton 2009, 655). Therefore, while aiming to develop the common basis for Québec identity around the French language, this policy also resulted in further increases to the level of cultural and racial diversity in the province. This

reflected the priorities of interculturalism: while Québec would embrace cultural diversity, it would do so within a framework designed to safeguard the integrity of the cultural majority.

Through this period stretching from the Quiet Revolution to the early 1990s, Québec's governments largely succeeded in materializing an inclusive national identity narrative through policy initiatives which balanced between nationalist and pluralist imperatives. This new identity "was defined territorially and linguistically, and... was built around the idea of inclusiveness, openness and an emphasis on the state" (Nieguth and Lacassagne 2009, 8). By ensuring protections for the French language and provincial immigration controls, these governments addressed nationalist anxieties without abandoning openness to cultural pluralism.

Québec Nationalism in the 1990s:

The Meech Lake Failure and Nationalist Frustrations

While Québec governments were managing the provinces internal identity dynamics fairly well, they were dramatically less successful at securing gains in constitutional negotiations. As the 1990s continued, Québec nationalists were increasingly frustrated by failures in this area. The failure of the Meech Lake Accord represented a high point in this regard.

When it was first passed in 1987, the Meech Lake Accord was seen an incredible victory by Québec nationalists. In a speech to the National Assembly, Premier Bourassa did not withhold his enthusiasm for what Québec had achieved with this Accord. He explained that "the Constitution will give Québec the means to preserve and promote our distinct identity and it will provide a constitutional foundation for the French fact in Québec", which would "guarantee Québec the security it needs to develop within the federation" (Bourassa 1987, 20). For

Bourassa, the Accord represented “the most splendid and powerful demonstration of enlightened patriotism” since the creation of the National Assembly (ibid, 21).

Québec nationalists were subjected to a cruel reversal of fortunes a few years later, as the Accord failed to be ratified in 1990. The ensuing frustration and anger stemming from this failure was expressed in two key government reports: the Allaire Report, or *A Québec Free to Choose*, and the Belanger-Campeau Report, or *The Political and Constitutional Future of Québec*, both published in 1991. Both Reports agreed “that the Canadian dream of the Québécois was dualism but that, for many Quebecois, the dream crumbled with the failure of the Meech Lake Accord” (Laforest 1995, 151). Each Report also specifically criticized Canadian multiculturalism, with the Belanger-Campeau Report arguing that “the principle of maintaining and developing Canadians’ multicultural heritage redefined the country without any consideration for duality and the specificity of Quebec” (ibid, 155). These Reports expressed Québec nationalists’ profound frustrations coming out of the Meech Lake saga, which brought them “from the heights of joy to the deepest despair that could be experienced in politics” (ibid).

Another more infamous expression of nationalist frustration in the 1990s came in the aftermath of the failed 1995 referendum on Québec independence, where the ‘No’ side narrowly won out. Following this defeat, PQ leader and Premier Jacques Parizeau attributed the ‘Yes’ side’s defeat to “money and ethnic votes”, while also using the word *nous* (us) to refer “solely to Franco-Québécois” (Dupré 2012, 237). In this moment of frustration Parizeau seemed to express an insular sentiment whereby only francophones were truly members of Québec. Although Parizeau was widely criticized at the time, the subsequent increase in expressions of cultural anxiety from francophone Québécois in the mid-2000s seem to indicate that the frustrations he expressed were more widely shared than the initial backlash suggested.

In the aftermath of this result however, Parizeau's replacement as leader of the PQ, Lucien Bouchard, expressed a vision of Québec identity that reiterated aspects of interculturalism. Speaking to an audience of anglophones one year after the referendum results, Bouchard highlighted values shared by Quebecers of all linguistic backgrounds, including "parliamentary democracy, equality, freedom of expression, [and] pluralism" (1996). He also expressed an inclusive identity narrative, proposing that "the Quebec nationalism that we are building no longer defines itself as that of French-Canadians, but as that of all Quebecers; it no longer seeks homogeneity but it embraces diversity and pluralism" (ibid). In this speech Bouchard seemed to try to move Québec beyond the frustrations and failures of the 1990s. It is not clear how successful he was in this endeavour.

Diversity Management in 21st Century Québec:

Reasonable Accommodation Crisis and the Rise of Secularism

Beginning in the early 2000s, Québec's trends toward national inclusivity and an intercultural approach to integration were increasingly contested, as secularism became increasingly central to Québec identity politics. In a relatively short period of time, both public discourse and government policy dramatically shifted to feature more assimilative and exclusive notions of national identity. The debate on issues of belonging have taken a turn "characterized by greater partisan and social polarization on the issue, widespread hysteria, [and] disjointed and seemingly *ad hoc* responses by the main political parties" (Iacovino 2015, 47). Alongside this polarization, many political and media actors have employed xenophobic and at times racist

notions of the ‘Other’, articulating identity narratives featuring ethnic dimensions of belonging that had characterized the pre-Quiet Revolution era.

Reasonable Accommodation and Expressions of Cultural Anxiety

In this contemporary period, spanning from the early 2000s to the time of writing, the Québec identity debate has revolved largely around the idea of reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodation is “a legal concept in Canada that outlines room for the manoeuvring of public institutions faced with requests from religious and other under-represented groups for the adaptation of specific contexts to minority norms and practices” (Potvin 2014, 138). When applying the concept, practitioners are meant to employ “compromise and goodwill to negotiate a position that is respectful of the cultural and religious sensitivities of all involved” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 7). The first judgements from Canadian courts that involved reasonable accommodation came down in 1985, affirming the need for employers to respect religious holidays like the Sabbath, and were received “without any striking controversy arising over the validity of accommodation practices” (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 48). By the early 2000s however, the practice increasingly became a site for anxiety and contestation in Québec.

The fears about reasonable accommodation in Québec reflect the perception of vulnerability and fears of cultural erasure that stem from nationalist lens. The concept “was intended to be a legal tool used in Québec to manage, in a civilized manner, the conflicts that inevitably occur with the growing diversity of society” (Herrera and Lachapelle 2010, 88). However, those opposed to the concept saw it as symbolic of “how francophone Québec was

giving up too much ground to religious minorities and abandoning the basic principles of its majority culture” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 7). Such arguments played on the sense that Québec’s identity was vulnerable and in danger of being overtaken by cultural ‘Others’. They contributed to the notion that cultural diversity was not an asset, but rather a threat to Québec society. Notably, the debates over reasonable accommodation marked a shift in the focus of Québec’s nationalist anxieties from the issue of language to that of religion. From this point forward, religious difference and issues of secularism dominated discussions of national identity in Québec, although language issues remain at the core of Québec nationalism.

One early event that set off the debates on reasonable accommodation came in November 2006, when a group of Hassidic Jews in Montreal asked a neighbouring YMCA to cover one of their windows so that worshippers would not see the people exercising inside. The YMCA obliged their request by installing frosted windows (Herrera and Lachapelle 2010, 94). Although this was not an actual example of reasonable accommodation in the legal sense, given that it was an informal agreement between two private entities, opponents of religious accommodation saw this as a prime example of Québec society caving into the demands of religious minorities. Around this time the salience of the reasonable accommodation issue in Québec media increased dramatically: from 2005 to 2006, the number of articles on reasonable accommodation written in Québec increased from 15 to 206 (ibid, 93). With this increased salience came increased politicisation, marking the onset of the reasonable accommodation crisis.

One of the early events in this crisis involved the small rural town of Herouville. In January 2007, the municipal council of Herouville “unilaterally passed a code of conduct directed at future immigrants which specified that no adjustments would be made for religious minorities” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 6). Amongst a variety of demands, the code of conduct

forbade “behaviours deemed incompatible with Québécois culture, including the public beating or stoning of women, the use of face-covering and any accommodation of religious requirements in public institutions” (Laxer, Carson and Korteweg 2014, 134). One Herouville municipal councillor, André Drouin, proclaimed in a televised interview that he wanted all reasonable accommodation to be “revoked retroactively and that the Premier should declare a state of emergency to respond to an attack on Québec’s culture” (Herrera and Lachapelle 2010, 95). Despite the urgent tone of this decision, Herouville hosted only one immigrant family (ibid).

The code of conduct was condemned broadly in public discourse, but it remains an important document to consider when exploring changes in Québec’s identity discourse in the 21st century. The document exemplifies a nascent anxiety over cultural diversity in Québec, as well as an implicit anxiety over racial diversity, and presents themes that can be found in subsequent exclusionary conceptions of the nation. For example, the document “collapsed the heterogenous category of immigrants into a uniformly problematic and exoticized group”, suggesting that this group “was marked by discrimination against women, violence against children, and an emphasis on religious norms and beliefs” (Nieguth and Lacassagne 2009, 1). Many of the “problematic qualities of the immigrant ‘Other’” present in the document “are reflective of the image of extremist, radical, and violent Muslims disseminated by many Western media, especially in the post-9/11 era” (ibid, 2). In this way, the Herouville document juxtaposes “a secular ‘Us’ with a religious ‘Them’”, highlighting a theme that would persist through the accommodation crisis and into present day Québec identity discourse (ibid, 4).

One key point in this drama deserves further recognition, namely the fact that there were almost no actual immigrants in Herouville when the declaration was announced. Whatever threat the councillors in Herouville perceived seemed to exist more in the narrative of identity

crisis than in the material reality of their town. This highlights that the rancour over reasonable accommodation in Québec stems from an issue with beliefs, not practices (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 104). As to where such beliefs came from, we can look to Québec's French media establishment.

In the run-up to a provincial election in 2007, the province's French media "exploited the cultural insecurity of many French Canadians by exposing and providing biased interpretations for a series of cases of religious accommodation, thereby blowing the issue out of proportion" (Dupré 2012, 229). These outlets fed into anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish biases by focusing on accommodations made for Muslim and Orthodox Jewish practices, even though "the vast majority of religious accommodation requests in the years leading up to the [reasonable accommodation] debates were from Protestants and Jehovah's Witnesses" (Bakali 2015, 419). Many members and observers of the media later admitted that competition between media outlets at the time "fostered a trivialization of diverse forms of racist discourse, dedicating greater space for their expression" (Potvin 2015, 138). In this way, French media outlets contributed to an atmosphere of misinformation regarding reasonable accommodation practices in Québec.

The political impact of the media's actions was reflected in political parties' agendas during the 2007 election. By over-representing the challenges of reasonable accommodation and stoking fears in the voting public, these media narratives opened discursive space for more exclusionary and xenophobic rhetoric on identity and immigration in electoral politics. This tendency was reflected particularly strongly in the rhetoric of Mario Dumont and his party the Action Démocratique de Québec (ADQ). Following the YMCA incident mentioned earlier, Dumont "legitimized the intense media discussion of religious accommodation by expressing to

journalists his discontent with certain allowances made for ethnic minorities” (Herrera and Lachapelle 2010, 96). In a widely reported letter released in January 2007, the same month as the Herouxville declaration, Dumont “denounced the Québécois’ surrender to minorities” and presented reasonable accommodation as a harmful concept (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 45). The ADQ’s 2007 electoral platform itself was arguably “among the most anti-immigrant and pro-assimilationist party platform witnessed in post-1960 Canadian politics” (Bilge 2013, 168). Ultimately the ADQ won 31% of the popular vote in the 2007 election and formed the official opposition in Québec’s National Assembly, in part by capitalising on the issue of immigration (Dupré 2012, 229).

Although the ADQ’s political success did not last (the party’s support collapsed in a snap election less than a year later), the success that they won on the back of their divisive agenda had a lasting impact on nationalist framing in Québec going forward. The ADQ’s success accompanied a stunning loss for the PQ, leading that PQ leadership to believe that the party had to engage similarly in the wedge-issue of exclusionary identity politics if it wanted to “win back the unquestioned label of defender of Québec identity” (Mathieu and Laforest 2016, 390). This motivation was reflected in the PQ’s later policies under new leader Pauline Marois, particularly the Québec Charter of Values.

Additionally, Bilge argues that Dumont “durably changed [the] Québec political landscape by restoring the respectability of a racialized ‘Us-talk’ which had disappeared from mainstream politics in the wake of the infamous comments of Jacques Parizeau” (2013, 165). While Dumont did not speak explicitly in terms of race, his concern for “the dissolution of *le genie national*, the national character,” used language, religion and culture “as a proxy for race” (ibid, 172). As with Parizeau’s comments in 1995, the ‘us’ in this case referred to white, Catholic

francophones. However, unlike the derision that met Parizeau, Dumont and his party received considerable political success. This success proved that there was an appetite for assimilationist and exclusionary rhetoric around amongst roughly one third of the voters in 2007. While the extent of the ADQ's exclusionary approach clearly limited their appeal, Québec politicians moving forward adopted aspects of this approach in pursuit of electoral gains. While the PQ under Pauline Marois failed to do so, the CAQ fared much better.

The Bouchard-Taylor Commission and Responses

As the reasonable accommodation debate continued to escalate in 2007, with the Herouxville declaration receiving global coverage, Premier Jean Charest decided that the public debate needed expert guidance. To achieve this, he established the "Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Difference", better known as the Bouchard-Taylor Commission after the names of its lead commissioners, Charles Taylor and Gerard Bouchard (Herrera and Lachapelle 2010, 95). The Commission, which included broad public consultation, became the centerpiece of the reasonable accommodation crisis. While the Commission was created with a mandate to focus on the issue of reasonable accommodation, it "quickly became a symbolic site for defining the discursive parameters of nationhood" (Laxer, Carson and Korteweg 2014, 150). The Commissioners saw the reasonable accommodation crisis as a symptom of the larger challenges with defining Québec identity, and proceeded with this broad focus in mind.

From the outset, the Commission recognized the unique problem of Québec identity and the anxieties that accompanied French Québécois' minority status. The Commission "declared

that an identity-related malaise was gnawing at the francophone majority with regard to cultural and religious pluralism” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 32). In their final report they noted that as “a cultural minority in the Americas, Québec as a French-speaking society needs a strong identity to allay its anxieties and behave like a self-assured majority” (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 188). To articulate such an identity frame, the Commission sought to “find a common ground between nationalism and a hybrid liberal/welfarist/pluralist citizenship model” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 76). This ultimately led the Commission to support an intercultural approach to integration, which they saw as well-suited to meeting Québec’s unique identity challenges.

In the Commission’s final report, Bouchard and Taylor provided the Québec public with the most comprehensive explanation of Québec interculturalism to date. Responding to public opinion that remained skeptical of Canadian multiculturalism, the Commission articulated interculturalism as a workable alternative that provided greater assurances for the cultural majority⁹. They emphasized that “the integrative dimension is a key component of Québec interculturalism”, in that it “seeks to reconcile ethnocultural diversity with the continuity of the French-speaking core and the preservation of the social link” (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 19). The Commission report even “went out of the way to contrast interculturalism as a higher plane of tolerance and understanding versus multiculturalism” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 52).

Ultimately the report summarized the key components of the concept:

Québec interculturalism a) institutes French as the common language of intercultural relations; b) cultivates a pluralistic orientation that is concerned with the protection of

⁹ This focus on the majority is central to what Boucher and Maclure describe as “Bouchard’s majoritarian interculturalism”, along with focus on state-driven identity policy (2018, 3). See Boucher and Maclure’s article for an introduction to the broader academic debate around different approaches to interculturalism and how it compares to multiculturalism.

rights; c) preserves the necessary creative tension between diversity, on the one hand, and the continuity of the French speaking core and the social link, on the other hand; d) places special emphasis on integration and participation; and e) advocates interaction (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 121).

The Commission report also explored the significance of secularism in Québec and its role in the accommodation crisis. The report suggested that “much of the criticism leveled against recent accommodation practices stems from a fear that they may endanger Québec’s hard-fought for secular nature” (Nieguth and Lacassagne 2009, 12). The historical legacy of the Quiet Revolution and the fight for a secular Québec free from clerical constraint contributed to a suspicious attitude towards religion in Québec. As media narratives portrayed a rapid increase in the frequency of religious accommodations, they fuelled support for a more rigid approach to secularism.

The arguments in favour of a more rigid secularism tended to single out practitioners of Islam. For example, supporters of rigid secularism highlighted the practice of Muslim women wearing the hijab, criticizing the practice for eroding gender equality, acting as a barrier to integration, and endangering Québec’s secular tradition¹⁰. Contrary to these fears, the Commission found that “Muslims, consisting of only 2% of the population in 2007, overwhelmingly support gender equality, secularism, non-violence and broadly, the value of integration” (Iacovino 2015, 48). Additionally, the Commission identified “Islamophobia as a key problem” inhibiting Muslim citizens’ integration into mainstream Québec society, noting that “for Muslims to integrate, a number of key fears (i.e. Islamophobic attitudes) must be

¹⁰ Bakali (2015) makes the important observation that while the hijab “has become synonymous with misogyny and oppression” in Western societies, discussions over the oppressive nature of the hijab frequently leave out “the voices of the women whom were supposedly oppressed” (423). In this way, these discussions ironically marginalise the women that they seek to liberate.

overcome” (Sharify-Funk 2010, 541). This argument recalls the reciprocal notion of integration that was a part of the 1990 policy statement on Québec interculturalism.

Regarding the practice of secularism in Québec, Muslim groups who participated in the proceedings of the Commission argued that “freedom of religion is an inherent aspect of secularism, and that relegating religion to the home or disallowing certain religious expressions was undemocratic and in violation of basic human rights” (ibid, 543). The Commission’s final report followed this logic, recommending that Québec should explicitly adopt a *laïcité ouverte* (open secularism) model (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 271). The object of this approach was to ensure equality in religious expression, rather than trying to remove religious expression from public space.

Finally, the report offered an assessment of the climate of crisis that had developed around the notion of reasonable accommodation in Québec. Looking at Québec’s history, the report highlighted a tradition of tolerance and reasonableness in the province. They argued that “while accommodation was perceived widely as a surrender of the French tradition in Québec to the threats of different cultures, ordinary Québécois adopted the very opposite meaning of accommodation, adjusting easily to circumstances and to ‘Others’” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 51). Consequently, Québec did not need to revolutionize the foundations of its identity or its approach to accommodation. Instead, the Commission attempted to clarify the reality and stability of “the foundations of collective life in Québec” (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 18).

The Commission accomplished a great deal both through the process of public consultation and in its final report, firstly providing an unprecedented public forum for the discussion of national identity and secondly clarifying key concepts relating to Québec identity.

However, the Commission received considerable criticism on both fronts once the process was ended and the final report published.

The Commission's final report received a largely negative reaction, particularly regarding its recommendations on open secularism and interculturalism. The open secularism approach was meant to acknowledge "the influence of Catholicism on Québécois history and culture while seeking to ensure equality in the expression of religious belief", but "newspaper reports resoundingly rejected *laïcité ouverte*, arguing that it failed to offer guidelines for managing the relationship between church and state and, in so doing, permitted the infiltration of religion into public life" (Laxer, Carson and Korteweg 2014, 145). These reports commonly argued that open secularism "threatens to undo the progress achieved during and since the Quiet Revolution" (ibid, 146). Open secularism also received similar criticism from mainstream feminists on the ground that it "would be too tolerant vis-à-vis religions inherently oppressive to women" (Bilge 2012, 309). These reactions demonstrated the difficulties of promoting an open secular model amidst a public mood more favourable to restricting religious expression.

The report's interculturalism proposal also received strong criticism. Many newspapers "rejected the suggestion that Québécois culture can be adopted", thereby framing Québécois identity as an object of cultural inheritance only truly available to the descendants of the historic francophone majority (Laxer, Caron and Korteweg 2014, 148). Other critics argued that interculturalism "has been making schizophrenics of Québécois, asking them to combine in equal measure respect for diversity and the imperative of integration, two objectives that are mutually exclusive and thus cancel each other out, leaving Québécois immobilized, confused, doomed to fail as a society" (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 80). Each of these arguments recalls

concepts within the nationalism lens, specifically appeals to national authenticity and notions of cultural vulnerability.

The Commission's consultation process itself also received considerable criticism, although of a different variety. These critics argued that the Commission hearings' approach to public dialogue "reinforced a discourse of intolerance by sanctioning spaces in which ethnic and religious minorities are cast as outsiders, troublesome to Québec society" (DesRoches 2014, 357). The public forum, rather than "eliciting moments of mutual understanding and respect" that intercultural theory hypothesizes should result from cultural contact, instead "provided a space for vitriolic displays of xenophobia against minorities in the province" (ibid, 360). Muslims were especially shocked by the hearings, which for many were "at least moderately traumatic" because of "the pervasiveness of prejudice against Muslims" that they revealed (Sharify-Funk 2010, 548). While the hearings were by no means completely negative, featuring "a significant number of articulate and well-thought-out beliefs", they clearly left many participants with serious concerns (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 113). By providing a platform for unchallenged xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes, the hearings may have inadvertently amplified intolerance in their pursuit of promoting openness.

These critiques highlight that the Commission failed to take questions of power and status into account in administering its public hearings.¹¹ In particular, the process failed to consider that "the very question of the extent to which religious practices should be accommodated in Québec's public sphere is shaped by racialized power relations" characterized by whiteness (Bilge 2013, 166). In this case, the hearings elevated the concerns of white French

¹¹ Some intercultural theory anticipates this issue of power imbalances in attempts to facilitate intercultural contact. Boucher and Maclure note that "contact, to work, presupposes equality of status" between participants (2018, 5).

Québécois and put immigrant groups on the defensive. Consequentially, “instead of alleviating misguided fears and paranoia of the threatening ‘Other’, the consultation process served as a platform to reify positions of privilege and dominance by bringing to the surface the fact that certain members of Québec society were able to define who did and did not belong” (Bakali 2015, 422). In this way the hearings, and the reasonable accommodation debate in general, exemplified “a *ritualized enactment of national belonging* through which legitimate subjects of the nation reassure themselves about their power and assert their right to conduct the conduct of others” (Bilge 2013, 164).

It is ultimately difficult to determine the net effect that the Bouchard-Taylor Commission had on understandings of identity and accommodation amongst the Québec public. One indicator of “the trend line of anxiety and resistance to incorporating other cultures” coming out of the Commission was a survey indicating that “40 per cent of francophones viewed non-Christian immigrants as a threat to Québec society, compared with 32 per cent in 2007” (Adelman and Anctil 2011, 100). This would seem to indicate that, at least in the short term, the Commission failed to ease Québécois’ anxieties regarding cultural difference. However, the Commission certainly succeeded in describing Québec’s identity problems. Through its hearing and briefs, the Commission described “a citizenry in the throes of an existential-identarian dilemma which manifests itself symptomatically in expressions of anxiety about the Other” (ibid, 72). While it certainly did not solve Québec’s identity issues, the Commission clearly framed a serious problem and provided important conceptual resources for public representatives to respond to that problem.

Despite the Bouchard-Taylor Commission's success in describing the problems posed by rising cultural anxiety in Québec, the trend in Québec's diversity management policies of legislating in favour of rigid secularism continued. In particular, the PQ's proposed Québec Charter of Values promoted cultural conformity and reinforced a cultural hierarchy wherein francophone Québécois maintain a dominant cultural position in society by virtue of their cultural heritage. Although the proposal was critiqued broadly both in the National Assembly and in public opinion, its assimilative themes were expressed in a less extreme form in subsequent PLQ policy, and were picked up again by the CAQ with Bill 21. The continuation of this trend suggests two findings. First, it demonstrates the lasting influence and importance of the secularist lens in Québec identity politics. Second, the CAQ's success in implementing a rigid secularism law demonstrates a turn towards xenophobic cultural assimilation in Québec identity discourse.

The first sign that the trend of policy initiatives on rigid secularism would continue in Québec's identity discourse post-Commission was the response, or lack thereof, from the PLQ government. Following the publication of the Commission's report, Premier Charest "did little to implement the suggestions made by the co-chairs" (ibid, 13). The policies that the government did implement suggested an increased support for cultural conformity rather than an embrace of diversity and tolerance. In 2008 the Charest Government emphasized that "one of the primary goals of its new immigrant integration policy was to educate potential overseas immigrants about shared Québec values" by stipulating that "upon entry into Québec every potential immigrant must sign an agreement affirming respect for Québec values" (Leroux 2010, 120). Contrary to the ideals of intercultural integration, "this initiative veered towards a hegemonic conception of

belonging in which integration is taken as a one-way street by the dictates of the majority” (Iacovino 2015, 51). In 2010 the PLQ “introduced Bill 94 to define the terms of reasonable accommodation”, noting that equality rights would take precedence over religious rights and stating that “a bare face had to be shown when giving or receiving services in public institutions” (Barker 2015, 79). This latter stipulation appeared to disproportionately target Muslim women wearing Islamic face-coverings, who represent a tiny minority in Québec society. Each of these policies reinforced an exclusionary approach to cultural diversity in Québec, highlighting the ‘Otherness’ of minority immigrants to the province.

This trend continued when the PQ, led by Pauline Marois, took office and proposed the highly controversial Québec Charter of Values in 2013. The proposed charter “had three components: first, an official definition of the principles of a secular regime for Québec (e.g., separation of state and religion); second, changes in the practice of religious and cultural accommodations; and third, a requirement that government employees (including those in government-run agencies) no longer wear religious symbols at work” (Bouchard 2015, 149).

The third principle received the most criticism due to its highly restrictive approach to public religiosity. Among the religious symbols that the Charter prohibited were “religious garments that did not hinder communication or identification, including the hijab, large crosses, kippa and turbans” (Barker 2015, 80). As justification for the necessity of this ban, the government argued the principle of state religious neutrality demanded that state employees maintain an appearance of religious neutrality. Following this logic, the government argued that “allowing public-sector workers to wear conspicuous religious symbols could lead some Québec citizens or recipients of public services to fear that they would not be treated fairly for religious reasons” (Lampron 2017, 346). Notably, there was little evidence of litigation or court cases

where a recipient of public services expressed such fears, leading to “a widespread belief that the government’s only goal in imposing such restrictions on the individual rights of public-sector workers was purely ideological” (ibid, 347).

The proposed Charter received widespread condemnation, viewed as going too far to limit religious freedoms and freedom of expression in the pursuit of rigid secularism. Every opposition party in Québec’s National Assembly as well as “close to half of Québécois” opposed the proposal (Bouchard 2015, 153). Some opponents argued that the “proposed charter would discriminate against certain groups of citizens, especially Muslim women, possibly forcing some of them to give up their jobs” (ibid, 150). The Charter’s rigid secularism, requiring the policing of public spaces to eliminate undesirable religious expression, would limit inclusivity “by restricting the extent to which practicing members of minority religions would identify and be accepted as members of the Québécois nation” (Dupré 2012, 238). Bouchard also argued that “not only did the proposed charter do damage to Québec society” by reigniting the bitter and divisive debate around reasonable accommodation, it was also “not needed to preserve Québec culture or values” given that “institutions have experienced no serious difficulties and the practice of accommodations is under control” (2015, 153). The Charter appeared to follow in the example of media during the reasonable accommodation crisis, responding to a problem that did not exist in material interactions and appealing to the French majority’s cultural anxieties by promoting cultural assimilation.

Ultimately the PQ were voted out of office in 2014 before the Charter could become law. Regardless, the Charter remains important because it marked a significant shift in government discourse on cultural diversity in Québec. As Iacovino argues, the Charter represented “a new normative framework that seeks to more carefully limit the sorts of accommodation practices

that are available to citizens, restrict the equal public recognition of minority cultures in relation to the majority, and introduce an unprecedented scope of regulation in matters pertaining to freedom of expression in the name of state secularism” (2015, 47). The Charter represented the first time that a sitting Québec government promoted such a restrictive framework.

The trend towards religious restriction continued, although in a slightly subdued form, when the PLQ replaced the PQ as Québec’s government. Following the PLQ’s return, this time led by Phillipe Couillard, the party passed Bill 62, which also called for “people offering and receiving public services to do so with faces uncovered” (Solyom 2015). In contrast to the Charter of Values, Bill 62 allowed for exceptions to be made on a case-to-case basis (ibid). While Couillard “defended the legislation as necessary for reasons related to communication, identification and security”, Muslim advocates countered that the Bill “targets Muslim women and violates their fundamental right to express their religion as they see fit” (Valiante 2017). Amira Elghawaby, Human Rights Coordinator at the National Council of Canadian Muslims, argued that the Bill would “reinforce negative stereotypes about Muslims” and reinforce “the notion that Muslims are alien to this culture” (Solyom 2015).

Ultimately this trend has culminated with the CAQ in 2019, which at the time of writing has enacted Bill 21, a ban on the wearing of religious symbols by public servants. The affected positions include “judges, police officers, government lawyers and public elementary and high school teachers” and applies to religious symbols “such as a hijab, turban, crucifix or kippah” (Authier 2019). Bill 21 borrows aspects from each of the previous attempts to legislate rigid secularism into reality, including Bill 62’s ban on face coverings when receiving a state service (Canadian Press 2019). Consequently, Bill 21 is subject to the same criticisms applied to the

previous pieces of legislation, and seems likely to cause tangible social, economic, and psychological harms to visibly religious minorities in Québec.

Premier Legault's discursive strategy to justify the new law is notable.. First, Legault suggests that "Québec needs such a bill to fight extremism", arguing that without appealing to citizens concerns about religious symbols, Québec could end up with an extremist leader like Marine Le Pen in France (Authier 2019). Second, Legault suggests that the legislation represents a moderate approach to the issue of secularism, arguing that "we could have gone further" and making direct reference to the PQ's Charter of Values, which went further by proposing to apply the ban to the health sector (ibid).

Both strategies attempt to contrast Bill 21 with even more exclusionary approaches to identity politics, thereby attempting to legitimize an already highly exclusionary and assimilationist policy. The justification by reference to the PQ's failed policy lends support to the theory that past attempts at enforcing rigid secularism have made it possible for the current ban to be enacted. Whereas in 2012 the PQ campaigned on a proposed ban on religious symbols for public workers and was widely derided, in 2018 the CAQ campaigned on a relatively similar ban and was elected to a strong majority. This suggests that prolonged discursive struggle over the issue of rigid secularism in Québec has shifted citizens' expectations of what constitutes acceptable policy in this area, such that policies that encourage cultural assimilation for minority groups can be adopted successfully.

Conclusion

Québec governments' approaches to diversity management and identity construction have shifted significantly from the Quiet Revolution to today. In large part this shift occurred in tandem with a shift in the focus of nationalist anxieties. From the Quiet Revolution to the late-20th century, Québec governments addressed cultural anxieties stemming from increases in immigration and accompanying increases in the recognition and presence of cultural diversity. In this period, the 'threat perception' regarding immigrants had to do with their propensity to integrate into English rather than French society. Consequently, Québec governments were able to respond by expanding their control over immigration and integration policies, and through legislation that protected the French language and protected its status as the language of public culture in Québec. Governments accompanied these moves with policies that promoted pluralism and the value of cultural diversity. In this way, Québec was able to balance the imperatives of nationalist and pluralist lenses.

From the 1990s onward, the arithmetic of Québec identity politics began to shift in two significant ways. First, constitutional setbacks over the course of the 1990s contributed to an accumulation of frustration and anxiety amongst Québec nationalists. They were now faced with their inescapable minority status within a federation that had historically neglected to respect their national interests, or even recognize their status as a nation. Second, nationalist anxieties shifted from focusing on language to include issues of religious difference, which proved more difficult to manage. It is difficult to determine what accounted for this shift, but it was certainly influenced by the increased prominence of religious accommodation requests in Québec, as well as the broader anti-Muslim backlash of the post-9/11 period.

Beginning in the mid-2000s, secularism emerged as a prominent lens within Québec identity discourse and anxieties over religious diversity abounded. In addition, sensational media

accounts of uncontrolled and excessive reasonable accommodation practices which misrepresented the reality in Québec society stoked cultural anxieties to new levels. In response, Québec politicians began to adopt more assimilative policy initiatives, focusing particularly on attempting to implement rigid secularism. Fringe political actors like Mario Dumont espoused a racialized conception of national belonging in Québec and gained electoral support, while efforts to reinforce interculturalism, namely the Bouchard-Taylor Commission Report, struggled to shift public opinion. This culminated in the CAQ and Bill 21, which threatens to push religious minorities, and particularly Muslim women who wear the veil, out of shared public institutions. If this policy persists, it could do lasting damage to the prospects of social cohesion in the province.

Conclusion

In this research I considered two questions. First, how do key discursive lenses that have informed national identity construction in post-Quiet Revolution Québec compare to each other and combine in their construction of the relation between national identity and cultural diversity? Second, how have Québec governments' approaches to diversity management and identity construction evolved since the Quiet Revolution? Through pursuing these research questions, we can derive several insights into the relation between national identity and cultural diversity.

First, Québec's experience offers insight into the logic behind the transformation of identity politics in response to immigration and growing cultural diversity. When national actors are faced with increased cultural diversity, they can approach it by either incorporating that diversity into their national identity or by attempting to erase that diversity either through assimilation or exclusion. When new forms of cultural diversity came to Québec through immigration during the Quiet Revolution, nationalist actors chose to pursue the integration of cultural diversity without pursuing outright assimilation. Their decision was structured by a few key factors, which demonstrate the particularities of the Québec case.

In one sense these actors were influenced by the historical foundations of the Canadian federation. Because the Canadian Confederation was binational from its outset, the idea of cultural diversity in the sense of anglophone-francophone diversity was always part of the social fabric of the country. For this reason, Québec may have been more amenable to pursuing integration, whereas other national minorities without a history of significant cultural diversity may be more likely to opt for assimilation or outright exclusion.

Québec state actors were also influenced by competition with Canada to attract immigrants to power economic growth. Given the federal Canadian government's multicultural policies, which embraced cultural diversity enthusiastically, Québec was also influenced to demonstrate its openness to cultural diversity so that immigrants would not simply pass Québec by in favour of Canada. Indeed, we should recall that Québec began to develop the foundations of interculturalism partly in response to Canadian multiculturalism, and partly to counter perceptions that Québec nationalism was intolerant towards immigrants.

Québec state actors' responses to diversity were also influenced by the *type* of cultural diversity that they experienced. Through the 20th-century, cultural diversity in Québec was addressed mainly as linguistic diversity. In this context, immigrants constituted a potential threat to Québec's national identity because of their propensity to integrate into English instead of French. Were this trend to continue, it would be difficult to reconcile Québec national identity with cultural diversity because of the French language's precarious status as a minority language in predominantly English-speaking North America. However, this proved to be a manageable form of diversity. By expanding their control over language laws and integration criteria, Québec state actors were able to ensure that immigrants integrated into the French language, and thus were also able to accept their other diverse cultural practices. In this way, Québec was able to balance the imperatives of nationalism (e.g. the survival of the national community) alongside the imperatives of pluralism (e.g. embracing cultural diversity as an asset rather than a threat).

However, once immigrants were characterized by *religious* diversity in addition to linguistic diversity, it became much more difficult for state actors to negotiate the tensions between nationalism and pluralism. In part this was because the increase in religious diversity also provoked the elevation of the secular lens in Québec identity discourse. When combined

with notions of cultural threat derived from the nationalist lens and anxieties regarding limitless accommodation associated with the pluralist lens, secularism in Québec was often expressed as rigid secularism which was hostile towards religious accommodation and public displays of religious diversity. While some actors attempted to shift this narrative and promote an open secularism, including the Bouchard Taylor Commission, it proved very difficult to overcome widespread perceptions that religious diversity and rampant accommodation claims were undermining Québec's core values. In this case, Bouchard and Taylor could not overcome the accumulated anxieties over religious and racial diversity that had developed over the course of the accommodation crisis of the previous few years.

Québec's case also demonstrates that multiple, compounding sources of cultural anxiety can plague minority nationalist groups and make it difficult to overcome perceptions of cultural diversity as threatening, particularly if those anxieties are left unaddressed or are even exacerbated. In Québec, cultural anxieties have emerged in relation to Québec's historical misrecognition within Canadian federalism, in relation to the precarity of the French language, and from Québec's history of repression under religious rule. When minority nationalists are subjected to multiple states of vulnerability in this way, it compounds the possibility that cultural diversity will be interpreted as threatening, thus making it very difficult to pursue the construction of a unified national identity alongside significant cultural diversity. Furthermore, in periods where cultural anxieties are heightened, such as in Québec during the accommodation crisis, nationalist framing appears to be more rigid and less amenable to collaboration with pluralist or open secular lenses.

Despite all these difficulties, Québec interculturalism stands out as a potentially promising approach to managing integration on terms that might allow minority nationalisms to

reconcile their national identity with a significant degree of cultural diversity. By placing protections for the majority national group at the centre of the integration model, which in Québec's case involved French language protections and commitments to democratic practices, interculturalism addresses the national majority's anxieties in order to facilitate an openness to cultural pluralism. Although in Québec's case interculturalism has somewhat fallen out of favour, this can be attributed to an exceptional and extended period of heightened cultural anxiety, in addition to the fact that interculturalism has never been expressed as an official policy of the Québec state. If Québec citizens were to adopt interculturalism in the same way that Canadians have adopted multiculturalism, it could have promising results for the development of a stable balance between nationalism and pluralism in the province. This being said, the success of interculturalism seems unlikely until Québec reckons with the caustic effects that white privilege and Islamophobia are inflicting on social relations in the province.

On the point of interculturalism, it is also worth noting that some of the difficulties the policy has faced in Québec may have less to do with the substance of the policy and more to do with their implementation. For example, in Québec the government has tried to pursue intercultural relations largely through dialogue, as exemplified best by the proceedings of the Bouchard Taylor Commission. Firstly, this approach was undermined in that case by the unequal power status between the participants. The state can play a role in promoting the equal status of all citizens when it "avoids symbolically representing some citizens as inferior, adopts anti-discrimination laws and redistributes wealth more equally" (Boucher and Maclure 2018, 6). Furthermore, in addition to dialogue, interculturalism can also be pursued by facilitating everyday contact between citizens of different backgrounds. State actors can enable such interactions "by creating contact zones and shared spaces of face-to-face interactions:

‘community gardens, libraries, public amenities, festivals, and neighbourhood spaces’” (ibid). Interculturalism should not be abandoned before it has been truly attempted.

This research also helps us to interpret the contemporary state of Québec identity politics, alerting us to the importance of both discursive lenses and the actors who mobilize them. It is clear that “Québec still grapples with ethnicization and racialization, as reported by many members of racialized minorities themselves” (Blad and Couton 2009, 661). While these issues are exacerbated by concepts within the nationalist lens, those concepts have been exploited by various political actors to generate fear and pursue electoral gains. Policy initiatives and discursive strategies that contribute to perceptions of cultural diversity as threatening to a shared Québec identity will only exacerbate these struggles and keep Québec’s identity from stabilizing around an inclusive consensus. As Medeiros argues, “governments that seek serene relations with minorities need to address – or avoid the development of – cultural fears amongst their constituent groups”, and the exclusionary framing that has characterized much of Québec identity politics over the last decade achieves the opposite effect (2017, 385). While support for an intercultural approach to pluralism and integration can still be found in recent government policy¹², any attempt to enact such an approach will need to be accompanied by a serious plan to mitigate anxieties amongst the francophone majority and restore the perception of racialized minorities as both beneficial to and equal partners in Québec culture.

Finally, recalling my reference to the far-right group ‘La Meute’ from the Introduction, we can discuss to what extent the recent exclusionary turn in Québec identity politics is similar to the growth of right-wing, populist, anti-immigrant movements that is currently taking place in

¹² In 2016 “the Couillard government published its new official policy on immigration, diversity, and inclusion” and “affirmed interculturalism as being Québec’s model of pluralism” (Mathieu and Laforest 2016, 394).

many European countries as well as the United States. While I am not an expert in such movements, I see concerning parallels between the CAQ and more extreme right-wing populists elsewhere. As I noted in the Introduction, experts on far-right in Québec have noted the increasing legitimacy of far-right discourse in the province (Kestler-D'Amours 2017b). The CAQ contributes to such legitimization by enacting highly exclusionary and xenophobic policies which will likely cause tangible socioeconomic and psychological harms to minority communities in Québec through institutionalized discrimination. The CAQ's embrace of cultural assimilation does not yet match the violent racism of right-wing, anti-immigrant populism that we have seen elsewhere in the world in recent years, but it puts Québec on a political trajectory where such violence could become the norm if the trend of xenophobia and exclusion continues.

In closing, I will highlight a few key limitations to this research which also suggest opportunities for future work. First, although I have focused largely on the symbolic and discursive aspects of the problems of identity, diversity and cultural anxiety, there is no doubt that material considerations also structure how we think about and respond to issues of identity. For example, economic insecurity stemming from "fierce competition for jobs [and] the restructuring of welfare systems" contributes to the same pool of anxieties fueled by perceived cultural threats, jointly undermining solidarity and fomenting defensive xenophobia (Guibernau 2013, 21). One significant area for future research in this respect would be to analyze the class implications of various governments' national identity narratives, examining how a government's preferred identity narrative relates to its socioeconomic goals.

Second, I have limited my analysis to a top-down view of the construction of identity narratives in Québec society, focusing on conceptual explanations and government responses. Having established a workable conceptual framework for understanding the dynamic interplay

between Québec's main discursive identity lenses, one could shift the level of analysis in order to view the problem from the bottom-up. Through discourse analysis, survey data, interviews, and other ethnographic techniques, one could gain an understanding of the experiential realities of Québec identity discourse, analyzing how and to what extent Québec citizens internalize government identity narratives. Furthermore, one could delve deeper into the broader identity socialization process, analyzing for example the role of curriculums or cultural events on identity construction and perceptions of cultural diversity. A bottom-up approach could also account for several perspectives which were absent in this paper, including those of non-Muslim, racialized minority groups in Québec, anglophone Québécois, and Indigenous peoples living in Québec's territorial boundaries.

This research focuses on the specifics of the Québec case, therefore making it difficult to generalize these findings to other case studies. However, as I previously laid out, the analysis also offers lessons and hints for understanding other cases where minority national identity narratives are destabilized in the face of rising cultural diversity, pointing to some of the persistent challenges that come with trying to address the identity-diversity problematic. The Québec case provides a rich conceptual and empirical springboard from which to launch into questions concerning the construction of identity narratives and the development of innovative diversity management policy in cases across the democratic world. Keeping in mind that "the world we live in is neither the best of all possible worlds nor a historical inevitability", I hope that by building on my insights here my future work in this area can help in some small way to address the challenges we currently face in these important areas of political struggle (Özkırmılı, 2005, 199).

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