Québec as Refuge?
From Exclusion to Integration:
Civic Nationalism, Interculturalism and the Creation of a Host Society in Québec

This paper analyses the dynamics between nationalism and immigration in Québec, suggesting that immigration played a central role in the creation of a common Québécois civic identity. It contrasts the province's *intercultural* model to its federal *multicultural* counterpart and assesses the recent, highly mediatised polemic surrounding immigrant integration in Québec. More specifically, the paper considers the implications of Québec's commitment to the secularisation of the public space and principles of gender equality, sometimes to the detriment of individual rights and freedom of religion. It thus highlights the present and future challenges of the province as a distinct host society in the Canadian context.

INTRODUCTION

Taking control over immigration has been one of the main concerns and aspirations of the Québec government. In the 1960s and 1970s, Québec was facing what it considered "problems" of immigrant Anglicisation which, coupled with a decreasing birth rate, would ultimately reduce the political weight of Franco-Quebecers within the Canadian federation. This prompted the provincial government to assume greater powers on immigrant selection, resulting in the creation of a Ministry of Immigration in 1968; it also greatly influenced the elaboration of Québec's own intercultural immigrant integration model and the recognition of pluralism, based on French as a public language. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, it seemed Québec was heading towards a truly multicultural society.

However, the debate over immigrant integration unexpectedly resurfaced at the turn of the 21st Century, reaching a peak during the last Québec elections in March 2007. The polemic prompted Québec's Premier Jean Charest (PLQ[1]) to launch a public commission on the subject[2]. Unexpected to some, this growing concern of the Franco-Québécois population with immigrant integration coincided with the demise of the sovereignist and nationalist Parti Québécois as official opposition party, who, having gathered only 28% of the popular vote, subsequently decided to remove separatism from its agenda[3]. Even more surprising was the rise of the hitherto marginal populist and centre-right ADQ[4] ; this party capitalised on the issue of immigration and managed to

[1] Parti Libéral du Québec (Québec Liberal Party)
[2] The *Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences*, headed by Québec scholars Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, was announced on 8 February 2007.
[3] The two main reasons for the demise of the PQ at the last elections are their promise to hold a third referendum on Québec independence, an option which is increasingly unpopular in the province, and the failure of the formation's leader to take a strong stance on the issue of immigrant integration.
[4] Action Démocratique du Québec (Québec's Democratic Action)

form the official opposition in Québec's National Assembly, gathering 31% of the popular vote. One year after the 2007 elections, the PLQ, having collected a mere 33% of all votes, still forms a rather unstable minority government in a province unaccustomed to tripartite political dynamics[5].

A common assumption is that nationalism, and to an even greater extent *minority nationalism*, is essentially ethnic in nature, and therefore prone to xenophobia, if not outright racism. This, it is often expected, would make sub-state nationalist polities incompatible with large-scale immigration and the ideals of multicultural citizenship supported by their central governments. Is Québec nationalism inherently ethnic and xenophobic? Many scholars writing in the 1990s and early 2000s considered that, compared with many modern nation-states, Québec showed unanticipated levels of tolerance and understanding in its implementation of integration policies (Kymlicka 2001, Carens 1995). On this basis, scholars proposed a reassessment of the nature of identity in Québec's neo-nationalist project. However, in light of the recent voting trends described above, does their analysis still stand?

This paper explores developments in Québécois nationalism, national identity formation and state-building processes. From the perspective of the province's public discourses and policies on immigrant integration, it assesses the place of immigration in Québec's nationalist project. The essay begins with a historical overview of nationalist thought and reactions to immigration in Francophone Québec, suggesting three broad phases, namely 1) ethnic nationalism and exclusion, 2) civic nationalism, language and inclusion, and 3) civic nationalism and cultural exclusion. The first phase, starting with mass-British immigration in the mid-19th century up to the 1950s, is characterised by an attachment to French-Canadian ethnicity and the exclusion of "others". The second phase begins with the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, coinciding with the rise of secessionist nationalism and the redefinition Franco-Québécois identity along territorial rather than ethnic lines through the furtherance of a citizenship-based societal project. This period ends with the 1995 "failed" Referendum on the independence of Québec and Premier's Jacques Parizeau's imputation of the results to "ethnic votes". The third phase traces more recent developments with a particular focus on the recent polemic on "Reasonable Accommodation", suggesting a strengthening of civic values to the detriment of either inter- or multi-culturalism. In fact, recent developments stressing the laicisation of Québec public space indicates that language is not the only defining criterion of Québécois identity. The paper concludes with an assessment of Québec's place as a host society within the Canadian multicultural framework.

[5] Recent Québec history has been marked by a strong political bipolarisation where two main parties (for the past 30 years the PQ and the PLQ) have gained strong majorities and alternated over periods of roughly two mandates.

PHASE 1: ETHNIC NATIONALISM AND EXCLUSION OF *OTHERS*

The first broad phase of reactions to immigration amongst Franco-Canadians corresponds to a purely ethnic vision of nationalism, rooted in ethnic loyalty to an illusory French-Canadian "race". French-Canadian nationalism in most of the pre-1960 period was in fact a Pan-Canadian form of ethnicism based on a vision of the French-Canadian race, the French language, Catholicism and the traditional French-Canadian way of life based on rural life. The fact that the vast majority of Franco-Canadians lived on Québec's territory, as were the near totality of French-Canadian nationalists, makes this vision one of the fundaments of modern Québec nationalism.

In terms of actual responses to immigration, the first phase of French-Canadian nationalism was characterised by a general distrust of British settlers and, at a later stage, settlers of diverse origins. During this period, there were two migration patterns of concern for French-Canadian elites: Anglophone immigration and Francophone emigration. Behiels (1991: 3) mentions the elaboration of a veritable colonisation scheme in response to Irish immigration in Lower Canada (roughly corresponding to post-1867 Québec); this immigration wave increased through the late 1820s, to reach its peak during the Great Irish Famine of 1845-52. Under this scheme, Francophones were encouraged to settle *en masse* to the hitherto predominantly English-speaking Eastern Townships and Laurentian regions, both of which have become overwhelmingly French-speaking parts of the Québec territory today. From the second part of the 19th century to the Second World War, nearly one million French-Canadians emigrated to New England or Canada's Western territories, while many more settlers of British origins settled on Canadian territory (*ibid*: 3-4). Although Francophone elites expressed considerable concern for the demographic maintenance of French settlers in Western Canada in that period, as demonstrated by the late-19th century events in Manitoba, their primary focus was preventing Francophone emigration away from the Québec territory, where they already constituted a vast majority. The failure of French-speaking communities to survive outside of Québec was to have a strong influence on the development of a Québec-centered allegiance amongst Québécois nationalists (Martel 1998: 3).

In the early 20th century, reactions to immigration in Québec were mitigated. Liberals were generally favourable to immigration, seeing immigrant-sustained industrialisation as the only long-term remedy to a French-Canadian exodus to the United-States (Behiels 1991: 5). On the other hand, Church and Conservative elites stood firmly against immigration to Canada, which in their view "threatened the very fabric of the traditional rural and Catholic French-Canadian society as well as the ability of the francophone professional middle class and clerical leaders to retain effective control over that society" (*ibid*: 6). French-Canadian nationalists also suspected the federal government of resorting to immigration to "swamp" Francophones; while French-Canadians accounted for roughly one third of the Canadian population at the time of Confederation in 1867, their proportion had decreased to less than 28% in 1921 (*ibid*). The situation would be remedied by an intense yet non-official natalist programme that came to be known as the "Revenge of the Cradle". Here, French-Canadian women in

Québec's countryside were encouraged to maintain phenomenal fecundity rates, bringing the Francophone proportion back to 30.3% in 1941 (*ibid*). Natalist policies in Québec's rural areas insured the demographic dominance of French-speaking Canadians in the province, while in Montréal exclusionary policies led to a majority of immigrants assimilating into the Anglophone minority. These exclusionary policies are best illustrated by the Franco-Catholic school board's refusal to admit students of non-Francophone and non-Catholic origins by fear of French-Canadian acculturation.

As mentioned above, French-Canadian nationalism through the 20th century was almost invariably understood as a pan-Canadian ethnicist movement, albeit concentrated in Québec. However, in the interwar period prominent Québec intellectuals and politicians, aware of the futility of any attempt to restore Francophone vitality in other provinces, began to show greater conceptual attachment to the province of Québec as the "French-Canadian homeland". Debates over immigration were especially virulent in Québec in the post World War Two period. However, these debates were generally left out of the political arena and relegated to segments of civil society and Québec's intelligentsia (Pâquet 1997: 6). In the 1950s, a number of events were to have a decisive impact on the attitude of Québec's intelligentsia towards immigration. First came the establishment by the papacy of a "Commission Internationale Catholique pour les Migrations", under which clerical authorities worldwide were encouraged to welcome catholic refugees from Eastern Europe fleeing Communism (Behiels 1991: 11, Pâquet 1997: 8). Behiels also refers to studies by Dumareau demonstrating that only "well-coordinated political and cultural policies" could ensure the maintenance of Québec's demographic weight within the Canadian Federation (*ibid*). Also influential were writer and journalist Jean-Marc Léger's attacks on traditional nationalists and his support for immigrant integration (*ibid;* Pâquet 1997: 8-9). Many scholars followed Léger in his attribution of immigrant Anglicisation to Québecers' exclusionary attitude and his dismissal of Canadian immigration as a federal plot to outnumber, swamp and assimilate French-Canadians (Pâquet *ibid*). The pace was set for a conceptual shift of allegiance from a French-Canadian ethnicity to the Québec state. But this new identity could only be strengthened and diffused after concrete political changes shaping the symbolic boundaries of that state were implemented.

PHASE 2: CIVIC NATIONALISM, PUBLIC LANGUAGE AND INCLUSION

The *Quiet Revolution* that took place in early 1960s Québec can be credited with bringing the province into the modern national world. The election of Jean Lesage's Liberal government in 1960 coincided with and in many ways set the pace for rapid secularisation and urbanisation of French-Canadian society (Graefe 2003). As the Québec government gradually began to assert power over welfare services and education, its population seemingly shifted allegiance from the Catholic Church to the Québec state. It is with the development of this form of modern, territorially-based nationalism that emerged and got diffused the idea Québec as a *society*. And, at least in theory and rhetoric, this state was to be progressive, liberal, and pluralist.

The main source of nationalist resentment in the mid-20th century was ushered in by a growing professional Franco-Québécois elite trying to access Montréal's predominantly Anglophone market. The aim of this elite was to displace the English-speaking business class and replace it with a French-speaking one. A symbolic move was made in 1963 with the finalisation of the hydro-electricity nationalisation process. In order to promote Francophone interests in the Québec market, a new corporatist model, known as "Québec, Inc", was implemented. In the 1970s, a series of language laws were passed, the most famous being *Bill 101* or the Charter of the French Language, adopted in 1977, and making French the only official language of Québec. After a series of amendments, the Charter effectively enforced the *francisation* of businesses and enterprises, restricted the use of public signage in languages other than French, and denied public schooling in English to children of non-Anglo-Canadian parents. These policies are still in place today.

Although these measures reflect old grievances between long established French and English speaking Canadians, they were mainly aimed at enhancing the prestige of the French language in order to curb immigrants' assimilation into Québec's English minority. In fact, they were partly based on recommendations put forward in a Québec Inter-ministerial Committee Report issued under the Union Nationale government in 1967 and "that provided the bureaucratic rationale for immediate, extensive and permanent state intervention in the areas of immigration and language legislation" (Behiels 1991: 18). The following year, the same government created a fully-fledged Ministry of Immigration[6] that was to play a central role in the negotiation and transfer of powers on immigration from Ottawa to Québec (*ibid*: 19). One year after the adoption of Bill 101, Québec and Ottawa signed the Cullen-Couture Agreement, which, after a number of adjustments, was to give Québec de facto powers over most aspects of immigration. The 1991 Canada-Québec Accord Relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens guarantees Québec a share of the total number of immigrants at least equal to its share of the Canadian population (Carens 1995: 25).

Devolved powers and policies on immigration in this period were used as tools for state-building. In the words of Arendt, "sovereignty is nowhere more absolute than in matters of emigration, naturalization, nationality, and expulsion" (1973: 278); in fact, control over immigration was both a way to enhance Québec's demographics and to assert the province's sovereignty. Transferred powers over immigration also provided further incentive for the establishment of Québec delegations and immigration bureaus abroad (Bélanger, Gosselin and Thérien 1994: 272; Balthazar 2003: 532). Now that Québec had the capacity to set its own immigration policies, it also began developing its own integration criteria. As the main identity markers among the province's Francophone population went from an ethno-religious allegiance based on Catholicism and French ancestry to one based on shared public language and residence in Québec, there was a sustained attempt to turn Québec into a pluralist society.

[6] The name of that Ministry was to change in a number of instances in apparent attempts to reflect governmental policies on cultural pluralism. In 1981 (under the PQ) it became the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and Immigration, and it is now called the Ministry of Immigration and Cultural Communities.

To that effect, the government elaborated an integration model based on intercultural dialogue. First articulated in *Autant de façons d'être Québécois* (1981), Québec interculturalism, in theory as well as in practice, shares many features with the idea of the American Melting-Pot. Under this model, French as a public language was to act as an element of socialisation for Québécois of all origins, who would at the same time be encouraged to preserve their ethnic or religious identity. Not all scholars agree on this comparison, however. Gagnon and Iacovino reject the parallel between Québec's interculturalism and the American melting-pot on the basis that "the French language is not meant to define a static culture into which immigrants and cultural communities are expected to melt. Rather, French is the conduit through which the disagreements, contentions, and conflicts inherent in a culturally diverse society can be aired in a situation of normal politics" (2007: 112-113). But in practice, although Québec officially endorsed a policy of convergence whereby all cultures present in Québec would come together and form a dynamic society, the underlying assumption was probably that most immigrants would ultimately integrate, or assimilate, into the majority Francophone culture. Nonetheless, evidence from the perspective of education shows that much has been done since the 1970s to help children of ethnocultural communities preserve their culture. For example, in 1978 Québec implemented a Programme d'Enseignement des Langues d'Origine (PELO), in which over 1847 students were enrolled in 2000 (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007: 102).

Handler is probably being overly cynical in his assessment of Québec interculturalism as a disingenuous machination "ensuring that the children of Quebec's non-francophone 'minorities' would learn French, [but...] without assimilating them—that is, without destroying their presence *as minorities* whose existence would testify to the presence of a 'majority'" (1988: 175). Or, if his analysis is accurate, then it must be extrapolated and applied to all immigrant societies, multicultural Canada being no exception. However, there is a clear link in Québec between openness to immigration and recognition of polyethnicity, in other words, between "the quest for recognition as a host society in its own right – its affirmation as a global society" (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007: 92) and the envisioning of the province as a *distinct society* within the Canadian framework. The transformation of a Francophone national minority into a majority within a host society has been especially significant for the creation of modern, territorial (as opposed to purely ethnic) nationalism in Québec: "Quebec constitutes a distinct political community with a well-defined collective societal project that includes the integration of immigrants" (Gagnon and Iacovino: 106).

Language laws incarnated by Bill 101, together with Québec's immigration criteria, have been and remain a source of controversy today. However, they also denote a strategic, yet arguably liberal identity shift on the part of Québec's elites. For instance, Kymlicka observes that "in reality, these policies have been adopted, at least in part, precisely in order to shift Québécois nationalism from an ethnic to a post-ethnic form of nationalism" (Kymlicka 2001: 286). In other words, Québec elites tried to reconcile their identity claims based on the French language with the standards imposed by modern liberal principles. This they achieved by focussing on the survival of French as a *public*

language in Québec, regardless of the ethnic origins (emanating from a strictly *private* sphere) of Quebecers.

Like the 1980s, the 1990s opened on a promising note for cultural diversity with the publication of *Let's build Québec together: Vision: A Policy Statement on Immigration and Integration*, stressing the need for Québec to increase immigration to "meet the major demographic, economic, linguistic and cultural challenges of our society" (in Carens 1995: 8). 1982's repatriation of the Canadian Constitution and the failed Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords in the late 80s and early 90s seemed to reanimate old Anglo-Franco sentiment, and by extension Canada-Québec feuds, perhaps diverting public attention away from issues relating to ethnocultural minorities in Québec, or giving a greater impetus to their integration into Québec society. For a time it seemed Québec was on its way to become a truly pluralistic society.

Kymlicka considers the transition from ethnic to post-ethnic identity in 1990s Québec successful on the grounds that the province now receives a per-capita immigration rate comparable to that of the United States (2001.: 280) and that "The level of acceptance of interracial marriage is considerably higher in Québec than in the United States" (*ibid*: 281). Intermarriage rates also constitute the ultimate test in Hall's civic model, as they demonstrate that "one can belong [to the nation] whatever one's background" (2003: 28).The province's immigration criteria, which have privileged the recruitment of French-speaking economic migrants, first from Indochina and Haiti in the 1960s and 70s, and then from North African Muslim and other countries, shows that the French language has played an inclusionary role in Québec. In fact, it demonstrates that Québec has privileged language conformity over other aspects of ethnicity, such as religious/cultural practices or skin pigmentation.

However, Québec's official position on immigrant integration and any flirting with multiculturalism came to a halt with PQ Premier Jacques Parizeau's infamous speech following the independence option's close defeat by referendum in 1995. His attribution of the defeat to "money and ethnic votes", and his public and deliberate repositioning of the *nous* (us) as referring solely to ethnic Franco-Québécois is now a resounding statement in Québec politics. Parizeau was severely criticised by all sides of the political spectrum for his remarks. Nonetheless, the Parti Québécois, headed by Lucien Bouchard after Parizeau's resignation, was re-elected in 1996. In the aftermath of the referendum, there seemed to be a conscious effort on the part of Québec political parties, especially the PQ, to reconcile Québec's Francophone majority with its ethnic minorities. Notably, Weinstock (2007: 22) mentions the creation in 1996 of the *Groupe de travail sur la place de la religion à l'école publique* (Taskforce on the place of religion in public schools), which led to the abolition of religious school boards and restructuring of the Québec education system along linguistic lines in 1998. Weinstock sees the move as an attempt to render Québec's public institutions more open to religious pluralism by refraining from enforcing the religion of the majority. However, moves towards greater secularisation of the public space, implemented under a rhetoric of greater representativeness of the multicultural fabric of Québec society, were to create a momentum towards secular conformity. This move was in accordance with civic values,

but created a new impediment for the symbolic inclusion of polyethnic minorities into Québec society.

PHASE 3: CIVIC NATIONALISM AND *CULTURAL* EXCLUSION

Weinstock (2007: 22) sees two events that reinforced this conformist shift and impaired the development of multiculturalism in Québec in the post-referendum years. One is 9/11, which arose suspicion of Muslims (especially those of Middle-Eastern and Arab origins), and subsequently of other ethno-religious communities as well. This response was seen worldwide and is not particular to Québec. But perhaps more significant to the reinforcement of civic nationalism in Québec is the Stasi Report in France and the adoption of the *French law on secularity and conspicuous religious symbols in schools* in 2003. Weinstock (2007: 23) attributes the recent focus on religious pluralism in discourses on multiculturalism to the post-9/11 period, but the above-mentioned amendments to Québec's education system away from confessional affiliation can be seen as precursor element in the debate.

Recent polemics surrounding religious accommodation in Québec have stressed two main core values: the secularisation of the public space (*laïcité*) and gender equality, both of which are interrelated in the civic-republican rhetoric. The first principle can best be analysed through the *Multani v. Commission Scolaire* case, which was arguably the triggering factor in the current polemic on reasonable accommodation. In the Multani case, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour a Sikh schoolboy carrying a kirpan, a ceremonial dagger, under certain security conditions at his Montreal public school. The issue was quickly exploited by Québec's media as a ruling granting special community rights to members of religious minorities, i.e. endorsing the carrying of knifes in public spaces for members of the Sikh community. However, the judgment was presented very differently by the Supreme Court. In fact, the decision was grounded in individual freedom of religion, i.e. on an individual interpretation of religious requirements; there was also a clear concern to depict the kirpan as a religious symbol rather than as a knife: "G believes that his religion requires him to wear a kirpan at all times; a kirpan is a religious object that resembles a dagger and must be made of metal" (Supreme Court of Canada 2006). However, many in Québec protested that the ruling created a precedent whereby all members of the Sikh community were entitled to wearing the kirpan, and from that perspective became a de facto communitarian right (Bégin 9: 160).

The Multani case was a genuine example of Reasonable Accommodation as prescribed by both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. The Bouchard-Taylor Commission defines reasonable accommodation as "An arrangement that falls under the legal sphere, more specifically case law, aimed at relaxing the application of a standard in favour of an individual threatened with discrimination because of personal traits protected by law" (Consultation Commission 2007). The Commission also mentions an "obligation to accommodate", a "duty, which, under law, makes it the responsibility of the managers of public and private institutions to avoid discrimination by adopting relaxation or harmonization measures in

the administration of certain statutes or regulations" (*ibid*). Once again, many in Québec protested against this legal framework, judging that Québec interculturalism was based on inter-cultural dialogue and compromise; this implies in this case that the Sikh schoolboy's demand was unreasonable and that he, after due deliberation, should have conformed to the "democratic" will of Québec's majority. However, not all remonstrations were aimed at this democratic (if disingenuous) vision, commonly referred to in discourses on (or against) multiculturalism, of appointed judges ruling on top of elected representatives. If fact, many, if not most, of the key debates on reasonable accommodation in Québec were centered on cases of mere "adjustments" (McAndrews 2007: 157), emanating strictly from the private sphere[7].

Weinstock identifies three archetypal nationalist streams in modern Québec: conservative, progressist, and civic. The conservative stream is closer to ethnic nationalism and is much more exclusionary:

> In Québec, this group goes beyond the characteristic insistence of civic nationalists on the maintenance of French as a common public language. It sees the social fibre wear away in an unacceptable manner, even when linguistic stability is achieved, by the arrival of individuals and communities of different cultural practices and creeds seeking to obtain, in order to better integrate into society, accommodations allowing them to act as full members of society while maintaining certain traits of their original culture
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> 2007: 25

This stream was best represented by the ADQ's stance on immigration and reasonable accommodation during the last election campaign, calling for a freezing of immigration rates (the PLQ was planning to raise the annual number of immigrants admitted in Québec from 46,000 to 49,000) and referring to many of the above-mentioned cases of accommodation and adjustments as "unreasonable". As Larouche points out: "The party and its leader managed to channel the frustration fed by debates on reasonable accommodation and translate it in terms of identity affirmation" (2007: 132). Their unexpected rise at the last elections can in great part be attributed to their magnification

[7] A good example of that is the tinting of windows at a Montréal YMCA on Du Parc Street in late-2006, following requests by members of the neighbouring Hassidic Jew community who resented the view of women training in workout wear. The glazing was paid for by the Jewish community, and emanated from pure cooperation between the community and the centre's administration, and as such had nothing to do with a legal interpretation of minority rights creating any sort of communitarian precedent. Some other cases to feed media debates around that period included denying Muslim students access to praying rooms and forbidding foot-washing in sinks at Montréal's ETS (École de Technologie Supérieure), sending Muslim girls out of soccer and Tae Known Do tournaments for wearing the headscarf, etc. The polemic reached a peak after a group of Muslim schoolchildren eager to learn about Québec's culture we publically reprimanded for eating porc-free pea soup and praying in a rural sugar shack during the election campaign in March 2007. The polemic, much of which centred on events that occurred in Montréal, was especially felt in Québec's countryside. In January 2007, the town of Hérouxville in rural Québec received international attention after passing a code of behaviour for immigrants. Among others, the code outlaws practices such as public stoning, widow immolation, and female excision. What is interesting about that code is that it forbids "cultural" practices from which individuals are protected by both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom and its provincial counterpart. Town counsellor André Drouin went as far as calling for "State-Emergency" in order to protect the culture of Québec's majority.

and manipulation of the immigration issue, which testifies the position of a large segment of Québec's electorate.

The civic view is inclusive but assimilationist, aiming at suppressing all signs of cultural or religious identity from the public space, to the advantage of a majority which, by its very demographic dominance, needs not have its own identity institutionalised for communitarian survival. Civic nationalists see the promulgation of a single common language, and, in the current debate, the principle of *laicity*—the separation of Church and State—as an end it itself. The civic stream can best be exemplified by the PQ's current position. In fact, "developments during the last Parti Québécois (1998-2003) have moved the [civic] model somewhat closer to republicanism" (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007: 119). This shift was interrupted by a brief interlude in early 2007, when young and progressist MNA[8] André Boisclair assumed the PQ's direction. Many attribute the PQ's failure to maintain its role as official opposition in Québec's National Assembly at the last elections to Boisclair's unwillingness to position himself on the question of reasonable accommodation. During the election campaign, Boisclair was especially critical of Dumont's attempt at capitalising on the immigration issue: "by presenting this debate as one in defence of Québécois identity, not only does Mr Dumont contribute to divide us between *we* on one side and *them* on the other, but he also obscures the veritable *raison d'être* of reasonable accommodation, which is to allow for the most of us to participate in the development of our society" (in Larouche 2007: 132) However, this pluralist vision within the PQ died out after Boisclair's resignation, partly motivated by criticism from within the party of his opening to diversiy in Québec. After Pauline Marois' ascension to the head of the PQ last summer, the party reintroduced proposals for the creation of a Québec Constitution and the establishment of a Québec Citizenship. Among others, this project (Bill 195) would make proof of French proficiency and knowledge of Québec culture mandatory for the obtainment of a citizenship card granting full citizenship rights, such as voting privileges and entitlement to stand for election.

The progressist stream, according to Weinstock, has gradually converged towards the civic position, while "hiding itself behind a 'democratic' discourse" (2007: 24). Rather than calling for outright assimilation, progressists prefer the term integration, without however clarifying their use of the term. The progressists' convergence towards civic nationalism is such that it can merely be described as one of its aspects: "The real tension lies in the civic camp. The past ten years have seen alternating conceptions that lie somewhere in the middle of integrationism and republicanism" (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007: 119). Progressits officially endorse a leftist (though not quite "multiculturalist") discourse favourable to minority rights but employ a rhetoric of individual right to deny these minorities cultural or religious freedoms. The progressist position is based on the assumption that "when minority groups request adjustments, it is most of the time in order to short-circuit the rights of their internal 'minorities', notably their women and children' (Weinstock 2007: 23). In other words, multiculturalism is deemed to serve retrograde interests, the recognition and acceptation of cultural diversity leading to abuses. Integration, if not assimilation, is encouraged in order to protect all citizens. An example of progressist discourse is the Québec Council on the Status of Women's plea for Charter

[8] Member of (Québec's) National Assembly

Amendment and proposal for Bill 63, now being examined by the provincial government. The proposal suggests the insertion of a clause insuring the primacy of equality between men and women over freedom of religion in the preface to the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. The Council believes that Bill 63 would "prevent heinous propaganda against either men or women" and "justify the refusal of certain requests for accommodation" (Conseil 2007). The aim of that law is therefore to render futile any appeal for accommodation on religious grounds. It is that sort of progressist discourse that has been heard in the recent debates on headscarf wearing at school or in championships: the headscarf is here conceptualised as a symbol differentiating women from men, relegating the former to an inferior position.

As this survey of recent debates on immigrant integration suggests, Québec society and political elites have for the most part adopted an uncompromising stance on ethnic and religious pluralism. In the current system, members of ethnic minorities are expected to assimilate, or face the risk of being excluded. This exclusion is of course symbolic—the Supreme Court of Canada's rulings are as valid in Québec as in any other province—but creates a dynamic in which "Canadian citizenship provides a formal opting-out clause for citizens that wish not to participate in Quebec's public life" (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007: 122). These competing provincial-federal views on citizenship and national belonging will be analysed briefly in the next section.

QUÉBEC NATIONALISM AND CANADIAN MULTICULTURALISM

There is presently a debate on the validity of the civic/ethnic dichotomy in Québec. Moreover, the very concept has been questioned by a number of theorists. For instance, Hall considers that France, which has traditionally been considered paradigmatic of civic nationalism, displays both ethnic and civic components, as "one is allowed in as long as one absorbs the culture of the dominant ethnic group" (2003: 28). Kymlicka (2001) also challenges the pertinence of the dichotomy by pointing to the underlying cultural constituents of both civic and ethnic nationalisms, making them inherently 'cultural' types of nationalism. Yack adopts this position as well, saying that "It may be reasonable to contrast nations whose distinctive cultural inheritance centers on political symbols and political stories with nations whose cultural inheritance centers on language and stories about ethnic origins" (1996: 106). But what of Québec? Does Québec identity centre on political or ethnic inheritance? Karmis considers that "for the past 40 years nationalism in Québec has not been dominated by either ethnic or purely civic nationalism" (2003: 116).

As discussed above, modern Québec nationalism centres on two political civic-republican tenets: French as a public language, and laicity. Assessing the place of language in nationalism poses a number of methodological difficulties. In fact, while being a defining component of ethnicity, language also constitutes a public asset; a common public language is often seen as a precondition for participatory democracy, and the great majority of modern states operate in an official language. Therefore, it seems that language cannot be separated from nationalism, whether considered 'civic' or

‘ethnic’. It even seems to be tied to the tenets of multiculturalism, as Canada recognises only the two languages of its linguistic majorities. While language-based nationalism displays strong ethnic biases, it can also be used for inclusive means, Québec being a case in point. This is due to the fact that language comprises both private and public, and by extension ethnic and civic, components.

It seems that the legitimacy of a common public language as a base for common national identity, regardless of the ethnic origins or religious affiliation of those who compose this nation, is a defensible tenet. Outside of Québec, even multicultural Canada in practice promotes English as a common language through its education system, despite officially promoting bilingualism. Language and religion seem to have very different statuses within the Canadian multicultural model. For example, Muslim women and Sikh men are allowed to wear the hijab or turban at their workplaces, provided it does not interfere with safety rules. Similarly, they are also allowed to hold private conversations in the language they want. But, even assuming that they are recent immigrants of different linguistic background, could they request the right to operate, at work, in their native language or dialect, even if their co-workers cannot understand it? This would be much more controversial. The legal apparatus protecting minorities implies that the state is committed to remain neutral on issues that are deemed to belong to the private sphere, such as religion. However, the issue is more complicated when it comes to language, as language is also a public asset serving as a determinant to equal citizenship.

Like public language, the principle of laicity is anchored in liberal republican thought. Kymlicka observes that in Europe conflicts between Catholics and Protestants “were finally resolved, not by granting special rights to particular religious minorities, but by separating church and state, and entrenching each's individual freedom of religion” (1995: 3). In short, laicity offers a conception of religious neutrality in which the state ought to represent no creed at all. Larouche (2006: 10) notes that this “conception of religious freedom emerged in Occident in a context of separation between the religious and political domains, which in itself was accompanied by another separation, that between culture and society”. However, in its recent attempt to deal with religious diversity, the civic-republican model has taken the form of a genuine national culture. The following except from the Stasi Report is quite revealing:

> The State allows for the consolidation of the common values that maintain social values in our country. Amongst these values, equality between men and women, although being a recent achievement, has nonetheless taken an important place in our legal system. It constitutes an element of today’s Republican Pact. The State could not remain passive in the face of any attempt to infringe on this principle. This way, laicity isn’t a substitute to other types of spiritual or religious requirements. It only reiterates that the State defends the common values of the society from which it emerges
>
> Stasi 2003: 15, in Côté 2006: 32

Such rhetoric gave the impetus for the outright banning of the headscarf in French public schools, as the religious symbol, the Stasi Report (63) claims, “undermines principles and values taught at school, notably, equality between men and women” (in Côté 2006: 33).

As in the French case, laicity in the Québécois context cannot be disentangled from the cultural background of the majority. Post-1960s Québec nationalism implies a passage from a pre-modern allegiance to Catholic principles to an allegiance to the modern State. The current debates on religious accommodation can best be understood against the anti-clerical background of Québec society: "In debates on reasonable accommodation often recurred the argument that it is incongruous for a society that had been secularised [...] to see [religion] come back in the name of multiculturalism. The religion of others had to have the same status as that of the majority, that is, to be reduced to folklore, or at most, to a historical identity landmark" (Larouche 2007: 138). From this perspective, one would be inclined to put into question the above-mentioned statement from the Stasi report that "laicity isn't a substitute to other types of spiritual or religious requirements". In fact, what both French and Quebecers aim for is "secular conformity". Québec's insistence on laicity, although in theory based on civic rather than ethnic values, limits its inclusiveness by limiting the extent to which practicing minority religious members would identify and be accepted as members of the Québécois nation. More importantly, it highlights a general intolerance of polyethnicity that goes beyond the religious realm: "it is first of all towards religious groups that intolerance and xenophobic comportments seem to develop. [...I]f it aims at religion first, it is only to better reach the whole of identity landmarks" (Leroux 2007: 140).

This civic view stands in direct contrast to multiculturalism whereby members of ethnic minorities are entitled to equal opportunity rights allowing them to participate in mainstream society while maintaining their religious affiliations without fear of discrimination. Whereas the civic-republican State claims to be religiously neutral by representing no religion, the multicultural State, while remaining impartial, gives the possibility for the representation of all creeds. The Boyd Report, which confirmed the legitimacy of referring to some aspects of the Sharia Law in Ontario's court ruling, offers an interesting critique of the civic model:

> The secular absolutist approach is based on the assumption that secular laws treat everyone equally. A primary shortcoming of the secular absolutist position is that it fails to acknowledge that some people live their lives in a manner more closely aligned to their faiths than others, so that the secularism is experienced as a constraint. This sense of constraint applies equally to people of all religious
>
> Boyd 90, in Côté 2006: 40

The Québec-Canada dynamics can best be described as an "opposition between a strictly "communitarian vision of the Law" and a "liberal vision of the Law where norms must [...] insure the protection of minorities" (Larouche 2007: 134).

This suggests that Québec nationalism might more accurately be described as a civic reaction to a purely *civil* outlook on national belonging. This idea of civil nationalism is defined by Hall as "cultural diversity within a shared commitment to minimal liberal political norms" (Hall 2003:30). Hall equates civil nationalism to the ideal of multiculturalism, where "Difference is acceptable only so long as group identities are voluntary; that is, insofar as identities can be changed according to individual desire" (*ibid*: 29). Multiculturalism thus understood provides a legal apparatus ensuring that

individuals are not discriminated against on the basis of their culture, but it does not institutionalise or protect these cultures. Canadian multiculturalism as implemented from the 1970s onwards has promoted official bilingualism across Canada, but refused to move towards an official multinational setting, thus denying any special status for Québec. In the eyes of Québec nationalists, pan-Canadian multiculturalism has meant that in the long run Franco-Quebecers would be treated on equal footing with immigrants in their very 'homeland'. Québec nationalists regard Canadian multiculturalism as an illegitimate state building tool, associating Canada to an Anglophone cultural entity trying to absorb the Francophone Québec nation. According to Québec nationalists, the minimal commitment to the preservation of cultures multiculturalism upholds puts at risk the societal projects of Québec as a distinct society and, in the long run, its cultural survival. The failure of Canadian-style multiculturalism in Québec is therefore unsurprising.

Thus, Québec's position on pluralism and immigrant integration has to be assessed from the perspective of its national project for recognition as a distinct society (or for some, outright independence) and status as a province within the Canadian federation. This conflicting dynamic has important implication for the province. As Gagnon and Iacovino put it: "In the end, Quebec [...] must navigate through the question of diversity while justifying its very existence as a nation in a larger socio-political setting that does not formally recognize this fact, and tends instead to undermine it" (2007: 121). They come to the conclusion that "postnational belonging comes after national belonging is taken for granted: Quebec cannot simply skip this step" (*ibid*).

CONCLUSION

On the whole, this paper has argued that large scale immigration changed the face of Québec nationalism. The transformation of Québec, home to Canada's largest Francophone community, into a host society has been especially significant for the creation of modern, territorial national identity, as opposed to merely ethnic identity. Up to the 1960s, the bulk of Franco-Québécois identified primarily with being catholic and of French-Canadian descent, and resisted any "intrusion" by "foreigners", which partly explains the decision of many immigrants to integrate into the Anglophone community rather than the Francophone majority. From the 1960s onwards, this form ethnic nationalism made way for one of greater integration and inclusion of ethnic minorities along the ideals of interculturalism. Under Quebec's "inter-cultural" model of integration, combining coercive laws restricting access to the English public education sector to new immigrants and persuasive French immersion programmes, Québécois identity came to be based mainly on the criterion of residence in Québec. The French language would act as a focal point bringing together the long-established Franco-Québécois majority together with Anglo-Québécois, Aboriginal-Québécois and Néo-Québécois of all cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. At least in theory, all were invited to contribute to the development of Québec society, thus insuring the consolidation and survival of French as a public language in North America. However, it is now this civic identity, with its emphasis on laicity and by extension its "secular conformity" that inhibits the

development of a multicultural stance in Québec, and thus the capacity for Québec to truly act as a refuge.

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