

Competing Visions and Current Debates in Interculturalism in Québec

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Thematic Issue **New Work on Immigration and Identity in Contemporary France, Québec, and Ireland**
Ed. **Dervila Cooke**

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Abstract: In her article "Competing Visions and Current Debates in Interculturalism in Québec" Marie McAndrew posits that interculturalism is the quest for a middle path between Canadian multiculturalism (criticized for essentializing and isolating cultures) and French Jacobinism (which relegates diversity to the private sphere). The theoretical underpinnings of the three approaches are first compared using major works in political philosophy, sociology of ethnic relations, and social psychology. The polysemic nature of actual policies is then explored through the example of Québec's immigration society where two versions of interculturalism developed since the late 1970s and are still competing. McAndrew analyzes four recent controversies regarding diversity management in Québec to illustrate these two conceptions of interculturalism and to demonstrate the continuing popularity of multiculturalism and Jacobinism in Québec where religious diversity has increased significantly.

Marie McANDREW

Competing Visions and Current Debates in Interculturalism in Québec

In the 1980s, in many immigration societies politicians, decision-makers, and people involved in the reception and integration of immigrants started to question the relevance of the two traditional and competing models for the management of diversity, multiculturalism, and Jacobinism (the latter is often also referred to as Republicanism, a term I do not use here given its different and rather loaded meaning in Ireland). This has especially been the case in Québec, owing to the influence exerted both by France, where Jacobinism first arose, and by the rest of Canada, an early proponent of multiculturalism along with the United Kingdom. Multiculturalism has been criticized for its potentially ghettoizing nature and anti-democratic stands on the legitimacy of some cultural practices, while Jacobinism, owing to its relegation of pluralism to the private sphere was deemed too rigid to fully reflect the complex nature of identities and allegiances in pluralistic societies. Over the last three decades, the term and concept of "interculturalism" have been more and more used (and not only in Québec) to identify a new normative framework that would respond to the assumed limits and negative effects of the two other competing ideologies (see Conseil de l'Europe; Lomomba and White).

In the first part of my study I present in a synthetic manner the state of reflections in political philosophy about the three ideologies outlined above, which are linked to—but yet distinct from—the policies with the same name in specific national contexts. Indeed, the main limit of exclusively theoretical approaches, which tend to emphasize the differences between ideal-type ideological models, is that in everyday life, decision-makers and people involved in the field of diversity management often choose one word or another for reasons of social acceptability. This creates a host of contradictions between clear-cut theory and actual policies and practices. For example, it has been widely documented that in the last 50 years, regardless of what they actually do, political and social actors in the Anglo-Saxon world generally speak of multiculturalism or multicultural programs (and in some instances, anti-racism or anti-racist programs) while people in the French-speaking world generally describe the same realities as intercultural. More, in the same national context one often encounters many versions of what is meant by any normative framework. This second issue, the polysemic nature of actual policy design, I explore in the second part using the case of Québec where two versions of interculturalism can currently be encountered. And in the third part of the article, I examine recent controversies in Québec about the taking into account of diversity and its limits. The aim here is to illustrate how these controversies reflect the battle between contradictory versions of interculturalism and the hidden popularity of the two other frameworks, multiculturalism and Jacobinism.

Three questions have tended to dominate recent debates in political philosophy about various models of citizenship and the management of ethno-cultural diversity in an increasingly pluralistic context. These concern the extent to which cultural and religious diversity should be recognized in the public sphere, the legitimacy of ethnic communities as intermediaries between the State and individuals, and the nature of the common culture that can be promoted by the State (see, e.g., Bauberot; Kahane, Weinstock, Leydet, Williams; Kymlicka; Taylor; Taylor and Maclure for syntheses of how different normative stances react to the issues discussed here, as well as more exhaustive analysis of some of them). In a Jacobinist model, although cultural and religious diversity should be respected in civil society, an absolute neutrality of the State, as well as of its institutions and of its representatives, is considered a necessary condition to ensure the formal equality of individuals. Thus, most policies and programs, with a few exceptions, aiming for example at teaching the language to newcomers, should be of the "one size fits all" type and no accommodation should be granted to members of minorities claiming cultural or religious distinctiveness. Moreover, although the fact that members of such groups may create specific organizations to further their interests is acknowledged, no legitimacy is given to these "communities" (a term that pure Jacobinist thinkers would not use) as intermediaries between the State and the individuals. Doing so would be considered as jeopardizing individual liberty to adhere or not to such groups, and contrary to the pursuit of the common good, as it would encourage what critics of multiculturalism call "identity politics." For Jacobinists, the State must also be involved in promoting a substantive civic culture, which Kymlicka has deemed a "thick" common culture (*Multicultural*). This substantive or thick common culture gives priority to the history and the ethos of the group at the core of the nation, and for this reason, some version of Jacobinism have been criticized as actually flirting with ethnic nationalism (see Touraine). However, at least in theory, this substantive civic culture is understood as being distinct from the majority ethnic heritage (in many instances, such as the promotion of gender or sexual orientation equity, it developed historically against what was the majority culture of the time) and as incorporating the successive contributions of other groups. Yet

critics would say it does so only at the margins and that the heritage of the core ethnic group is given clear priority.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the multicultural or communitarian model displays a very strong commitment in favor of the recognition of cultural and religious diversity in the public sphere, as it sees it as the main strategy for ensuring, in the short term, the equality of groups, and, in the long run, the preservation of their cultures. There are in theory no limits to this recognition, at least rhetorically, as most countries that adopt such an ideology follow a "rule of law" system, which would render some practices illegal. For proponents of multiculturalism, policies and programs should be tailored to the needs of various sub-groups, even if such a commitment may mean, at least in the eyes of their critics, that the "right to differences" leads to "differences in rights" (see Kepel). For example, minority women or children might not be protected (by social services agencies or even by courts) at the same level as their majority counterparts, on the basis of their religious or cultural belonging. Ethnic community organizations play an important role in helping to clarify these needs, as representatives of their members. Such an approach is often criticized as undemocratic as the belonging of individuals to such groups is assumed uncritically, based on their ethnic origin. On the cultural front, in the multiculturalist model, the role of the State is not to promote one common culture, but to support equally the development of all ethnic cultures, whether majority or minority. Nevertheless, it should also be involved in the promotion of attitudes of tolerance among the general population.

An interculturalist model, often called renewed liberalism, seeks to build an intermediary model of diversity management, responding to the limits of the two other competing ideologies (We should remember here that actual policies are composite and evolving, regardless of the title originally given to them by the government who established them. Thus for example the Canadian Multiculturalism Policy is actually often closer to the ideal type of interculturalism than to that of pure multiculturalism or communitarianism, see, e.g., Kymlicka). Proponents of an interculturalist approach recognize the necessity of taking into account cultural and religious diversity in the public sphere, stating the failure of Jacobinism to actually provide equality to individuals belonging to minorities. But unlike communitarianism, interculturalism values such recognition not as a group right or within a larger commitment to the maintenance of ethnic cultures over time, but as a tool for ensuring individual equity and the fight against indirect discrimination, citing for example the fact that neutral policy can affect some groups more than others. An example here would be the case where cultural and religious minorities benefit from the same public, yet Christian-derived, holidays but have to work on their own religious holidays. Accommodation of diversity must take into account democratic values and consists of a dual act of balancing cultural and religious rights with various other rights as well as with the public interest. Organizations linked to ethnic communities are also recognized but only as much as other pressure groups encountered within civil society, to which individual of various ethnic background may wish or not to associate themselves. Moreover ethnic community leaders can only claim to represent people who are actually active in their specific organizations. Finally, in opposition to multiculturalism, interculturalism stresses the need for the sharing of a common culture, but unlike Jacobinism, adopts a rather "thin" version of it (see Kymlicka, *Multicultural*). This common culture consists of two elements. The first one is civic culture, in other words the main democratic values that render possible the thriving of diversity and sets the rules for balancing competing claims. The second one (what Kymlicka terms "societal culture") is the manner in which such values (now common to most modern societies) have been translated in a specific national context and implemented in political and social institutions, which are the product of a complex historical interplay of many factors and influences. The State also plays a role in the promotion of a pluralist heritage.

Another important question concerns the nature of identities, allegiances, and cultures linked to migratory processes, a central issue in many literary and artistic works discussed in this volume. It is also addressed in the current literature on citizenship models and their relationship to diversity, although in a less systematic manner in political philosophy and often from the perspectives of other disciplines, such as social psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Barth; Camilleri; Juteau; Tajfel). Multiculturalism has been criticized as promoting a permanent, static conception of these phenomena, and of actually contributing to the reinforcement of ethnic boundaries through the type of policies and programs it supports. By contrast, Jacobinism would see them as mainly transitory until genuine integration occurs or, as voiced in many European contexts, because genuine integration did not occur. Interculturalism is less clear cut than either of the other models, as it stresses that identities, allegiances, and cultures are multiple and shifting and that there are many configurations in this regard. As bearers of culture(s), individuals belonging to minorities are central actors in choosing their "identity formula" but they do so amid different circumstances and structural obstacles (McAndrew, "School Spaces"). Thus, some may need a stronger recognition of their culture and religion within policies and

programs than others, as it is more central to their integration process, while, at the same time, ethnic identity should not be imposed on those who adhere to other types of allegiance.

The composite and polysemic nature of actual policies referred to above also needs to be considered in the case of Québec interculturalism(s). Although interculturalism is often referred to as *the* Québec model for managing diversity, unlike Canadian multiculturalism, the approach lacks official but most of all legal recognition. It has been defined within policies set in a larger framework as issued by the Gouvernement du Québec and within its sectoral policies. The impetus for the adoption of an intercultural model and the ideology against which Québec interculturalism seeks to define itself follows the Canadian government's multiculturalism policy (see Helly; Juteau, McAndrew, Pietrantonio), which has been regularly denounced since its adoption in 1970 for its potentially ghettoizing nature and cultural relativism (see Sarra-Bournet). Even nowadays, politicians in Québec often claim that Québec alone practices genuine integration, claiming that the rest of Canada promotes isolation and identity politics. However, this claim is not substantiated by research on the evolution of both policies and on their results, which actually show many more similarities than differences regarding both their benefits and shortcomings (McAndrew, "Québec's"; McAndrew, Helly, Tessier, Young).

While it is probably more socially desirable to denounce multiculturalism for its impact on ethnic minorities themselves, the main source of discontent towards it in the Québec polity as well as in public opinion is linked to multiculturalism's lack of recognition of the Québec societal culture (which most politicians and opinion-makers argue should not be viewed as just another ethnic culture), and its unwillingness to recognize Québec's role as a host society for immigrant groups. This lack of recognition is a consequence of the compromise made by the Federal Government between the two objectives of the Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, whose 1969 final report received a mixed reception (Helly, "The Canadian"), especially from ethnic minorities, at the time mostly Ukrainians and Germans from the Western provinces. Represented by one commissioner who published a minority dissenting report, they were opposed to the concept of two founding nations, arguing that they had in fact contributed more to the building of that part of Canada than French and English Canadians. An approach of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework was adopted, whereby French and English would become important symbols of Canadian identity, with individuals having the choice to use either language in federal services across the country but Canada would not have any "official" culture(s) (Government of Canada).

Nevertheless there would have been very little reason for Québec to adopt a discourse on cultural diversity without the significant developments in the 1970s regarding the selection and the integration of immigrants. On the one hand, fearing both the democratic consequences of a falling birth rate among Francophones and the assimilation of immigrants into the Anglophone community, the Québec government started to involve itself in the selection of immigrants through the signing of various accords with the Federal Government. By the end of the 1970s, this gave it a preponderant role in the choosing of economic migrants. Thus, instead of opposing immigration as a threat to the status of the Francophone community in Canada as well as to its homogeneity, as they did in the past, policy-makers decided to use it as a tool to build the new modern Québec (Helly, *Le Québec*). On the other hand, linguistic laws, and especially Bill 101 (the Charter of the French Language adopted in 1977), which aimed at ensuring that French would be the main language of public administration, education, and business, were largely directed at changing the traditional pattern of integration to the Anglophone community of the majority of immigrants who settled in the bilingual city of Montréal (see Levine).

The task of defining the model of diversity management to be pursued in this new context first fell to the Parti Québécois, in power from 1976 to 1985. The main position paper in this regard is the *Cultural Development Policy* (Gouvernement du Québec, 1978), and the subsequent plan of action, *Quebecers, Each and Everyone* (Gouvernement du Québec, 1981). Both documents can be considered as initial steps on an as yet unfinished path to transform Québec nationalism from ethnic to civic through the development of a pluralistic Québec culture based on a modern Francophone identity enriched by linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity. An important element was the recognition of the legacy of inter-group isolation and mistrust that still marked Québec (these factors had in fact increased due to the adoption of the Charter of the French language), and of mutual responsibilities in this regard. Immigrants were not blamed for not having integrated into the Francophone community in the past, a trend which was explained by its previously low status and its lack of leadership in welcoming newcomers. However, both documents made it clear that this situation was expected to change. Québec French heritage and the more recent evolution of its modern culture would constitute the *culture of convergence* for all groups, but there was also a significant commitment—on par with the federal multiculturalism policy, as research on actual implementation confirms (see Helly, *Le Québec*; Juteau,

McAndrew, Pietrantonio)—to support minorities, individuals and groups wishing to maintain and develop their cultural heritage. On the question of language, interculturalism in Québec stressed, and still stresses, the sharing of the French language as a necessary condition for the thriving of diversity. This is in opposition to federal multiculturalism which was set in a bilingual framework. However, the difference is essentially normative, given the actual status of French and English in Canada. Québec is normatively unilingual, but largely de facto bilingual, whereas the rest of Canada is normatively bilingual, but largely de facto unilingual (see Statistics Canada).

Two elements of the 1978-1981 discourse have been criticized for not being compatible with the intercultural model described in the first part of this article (see McAndrew "Pour une politique"). First, while intercultural rapprochement is promoted, it is mostly between cultural communities whose existence is never critically discussed or between individuals whose membership in clearly distinct groups is taken for granted. A more dynamic and complex approach to groups and individuals identities is clearly needed in the ideal-type model outlined above. The rather static vision of culture inherent in the 1978-1981 discourse, as well as its communitarian approach to allegiance would seem to make it more in tune with a multicultural paradigm. Second, to describe the new dynamic of ethnic relations to be developed in Québec, the 1978 Policy used the metaphor of a tree. The roots were aboriginal, the main trunk French, and an important secondary branch was English, with smaller branches representing various ethnic cultures. This is closer to the Jacobinist vision of civic culture, where the group at the core of the nation is central, and the contribution of other groups at the margins. Some see this as having given an unequal legitimacy to what were perceived as real Quebecers (*Us*) versus *Them*, the *Others*, in terms of active involvement in the definition of what Québec future should be (Juteau, "The Production"). By the 1990s, the Liberal Party had been in power for five years, and many developments had occurred in the constitutional arena, especially the failure of the Meech Lake Accord in 1989, which sought to convince Québec to sign the Canadian Constitution it had rejected in 1982. There followed an attempt to salvage at least some content of this failed political agreement between provinces through bilateral administrative accords between the Federal and the Québec Government. In immigration and integration, this was done through the Gagnon-Tremblay-McDougall Accord (Gouvernement du Québec, 1991) which gave Québec exclusive responsibility for the selection of immigrants of the economic class (humanitarian and family classes are still under the Federal Government) as well as of their linguistic, economic, and social integration).

In this context, the 1990 *Let's Build Québec Together* Immigration and Integration Policy Statement addressed issues much wider than the mere taking into account of diversity (e.g. the competing criteria for selecting immigrants, specific issues facing refugees, and linguistic and socio-economic integration programs). But it did offer substantive reflection on a renewed definition of interculturalism and intercultural relations, closer to the model described in the first part of this article. This version dominated Québec public discourse and various policy documents for many years, regardless of whether a federalist or a separatist political party was in power (see in this regard, MEQ, adopted under the Parti Québécois). In 2007-2008, the *Reasonable Accommodation* controversy, discussed in the last section of this article, threw matters into disarray, causing both interculturalism and Québec's view of its pluralist nature to be questioned. In the 1990 document, pluralism was not considered as an external reality opposed to a homogenous Francophone core, but as a fundamental aspect of Québec history and society, which concerned both majorities and minorities. Although inter-group isolation at some historical moments was recognized, the document stressed that, from the moment the French settlers met the native people and throughout subsequent migratory waves, Québec culture had always been evolving through the influence of various groups and had never been homogenous. It insisted that identities, cultures, and groups were dynamic, rejecting any cultural essentialism that would closely link ethnic origin with community allegiance.

A moral contract exposed the content of the civic culture that should bound all Quebecers, as well as the balancing of rights and responsibilities between newcomers and longer-established citizens. It first defined modern Québec as "a society in which French is the common language of public life" (MCC, 1990 15). It stressed the fact that the knowledge of French is not a condition but a tool for membership, and that its use is complementary to that of immigrant languages, which also started to be offered as after school programs during this period. The second principle characterized Québec as "a democratic society where everyone is expected and encouraged both to participate and contribute" (MCC, 1990 15). In this regard, the 1990 document recalls that the sense of belonging to a new society is developed through social interaction and involvement and that obstacles often stem from the receiving society, not from newcomers themselves. Finally, the last and most innovative statement is that Québec is a "pluralist society that is open to multiple influences, within the limits imposed by the respect for fundamental democratic values and the need for intergroup exchanges" (15). From a theo-

retical point of view, this is the core of what distinguishes interculturalism from multiculturalism, although the actual Canadian Multiculturalism Policy had engaged in a similar evolution by the mid-1980s and continued to do so, most especially after 9/11/2001 (McAndrew, Helly, Tessier, Young). Also in line with the intercultural model outline above, the 1990 document made a clear distinction between civic culture and Québec societal culture. Civic culture included democratic values, equality of women, rights of children, non-violence, rule of law, and strictly bound all Quebecers regardless of their identity. Québec societal culture was represented as having been influenced by its French majority but also by its First Nations roots and the contribution of British settlers and successive waves of immigrants. Newcomers needed to develop their knowledge and their comprehension of the later, but adherence to specific elements of this collective memory was not required.

Although it presented a complex reflection on inter-group relations, the 1990 document and its specific implementation in the 1998 *Intercultural Education Policy* were the object of some criticism. For example, some observers (see Harvey; Sarra-Bournet) argued that the civic culture outlined in the document was not sufficient to generate a sense of belonging to the specific trajectory of Québec and that a stronger definition of what constituted its specific societal culture was needed (the term "public common culture" was often used by these critics). Thus, in the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s many attempts were made through public consultation to identify consensual elements with which diverse groups could identify. It was hoped to find elements that would go further than primary democratic values. All of these attempts failed, however, in part because even with statements such as "Québec values solidarity or social programs, etc." counter-examples can always be found (see McAndrew, *Immigration*).

Another criticism that has been levelled at the 1990 document is that although it was well received by minority groups, its treatment of racism and of the persistence of inter-ethnic inequalities in Québec society was rather limited (Bataille, McAndrew, Potvin; McAndrew "Québec's"). This was not fully corrected in the 1998 *Intercultural Education Policy* which recognized the existence of individual prejudices among teachers but not of systemic discrimination. This limitation reflects Québec society's reluctance to acknowledge the existence of racism, which is often discussed in a defensively comparative perspective with the rest of Canada. Even recently, when the government finally decided to draft an anti-racist policy, at the last moment, it changed its title for one deemed more acceptable to public opinion *Diversity: An Added Value* (see MICC). As illustrated above, there are at least two versions of interculturalism promoted and shared by various stakeholders in Québec and although in 2016 the government launched a new immigration policy (see MIDI) which brought major changes in the way immigrants would be selected, it remained largely in line with the principles set forth in the 1990 Policy regarding interculturalism and intercultural relations. In the last 30 years, and especially recently, the main issues of contention have been the degree of centrality of the Francophone community's collective memory and identity in the blueprint of the new pluralist Québec, as well as the homogeneous/static versus shifting/pluralist nature of majority and minority identities and cultures. As argued above, the first issue shows that some proponents of interculturalism flirt with a thick Jacobinist common culture, while the second reveals the persistence of a communitarian approach to allegiance that brings it closer to the multicultural model. In this last section, I will document these assertions and more generally the battlefield surrounding the taking into account of diversity in Québec, through the analysis of recent controversies that have been widely discussed in the media and in society.

Chronologically, the first controversy and the origin of the resurgence of the debate on models of diversity management was the crisis over the issue of Reasonable Accommodation that raged from 2007 to 2009 (see Bouchard and Taylor; Potvin). It was started by a judgment by the Supreme Court of Canada allowing the wearing of the kirpan (a religious dagger) by a Sikh student in a Montreal school, within the limits of Canadian courts' rulings on reasonable accommodation (e.g. in a manner that did not compromise the safety of other students, while also respecting the religious rights of the student and the family). But it soon widened to many issues of reasonable/unreasonable accommodation, for example a request by Hassidic men not to take their driving test with a female inspector, or the access to a Halal menu and a prayer room for Muslims visiting a traditional Québec *cabane à sucre*. This was a largely media-induced crisis that nonetheless generated an important collective debate on the limits of the taking into account on diversity in public institutions and the balancing of rights.

There were clearly three camps, and not two, in this regard (see Maclure, "Le Malaise"): pluralists argued that the elements identified in the various documents describing interculturalism as well as by the federal courts, were sufficient to set clear guidelines on what was reasonable or not, and that there was actually no crisis at all. Strict secularists, strongly influenced by the French Jacobinist model, advocated a redefinition of the Québec model, to strengthen the neutrality of State and State institutions and in some instances to extend it to individuals who use public services. Finally, the crisis

revealed the persistence of traditionalists, who had until then been rather invisible, advocating that a majority supremacist model should be paramount. I did not develop this position in the first section of the paper, because as it is based on unequal status for different groups, it cannot claim to be a legitimate citizenship model in a pluralist democratic society, regardless of its popularity among populist politicians and public opinion. For traditionalists, the role played by the Catholic tradition in the specific trajectory of Québec means that its religious claims should be given priority over those of religious minorities, although the latter can be recognized to a lesser extent.

The crisis subsided but did not entirely abate, due to the publication of the report of a commission created in 2007 by the Liberal Government to dampen the fires of a debate that was getting out of control. The document known by the names of the two commissioners as the Bouchard-Taylor Report (2008) clearly favored the pluralist position: a Québec intercultural model which was deemed generally sufficient to respond to a largely artificial crisis. However, the report did recommend that interculturalism should be given legal and official status such as it is the case for multiculturalism in Canada. The controversy reveals two important aspects of Québec society (Maclure, "Le Malaise"; McAndrew, "The Reasonable"). The first aspect is the unfinished nature of its pluralist transformation as exemplified by the divide between multi-ethnic Montreal, which tended to favor the pluralist position and in some instances, a strict secularism position, and homogenous outlying regions where the traditional model of unequal relationship between a would-be dominant Catholic heritage and religious minority accommodation was more popular. The second aspect is that, regardless of whether guidelines for the taking into account of diversity are clear enough to respond to the current needs of public institutions, religious diversity is proving much more difficult to accommodate than the mostly linguistic and cultural diversity of the past (this limit is also identified by analysts of the current challenges faced by the federal multiculturalism policy). Indeed, mutual accommodation and identity moderation are more difficult to achieve when faced with the absolute nature of religious beliefs, whether from majorities or minorities (see Lefebvre, "Les Dimensions").

The issue of religious accommodation was also to the forefront of the Parti Québécois short-lived *Charter of Values*, widely discussed in 2013-2014 before the party lost the elections (Gouvernement du Québec, *Projet*). While in opposition, the party had contended that not enough implementation was given to some of the Bouchard-Taylor recommendations by the Liberal Government, for example to provide clearer guidelines for what constitutes reasonable accommodation and the need to better train and support decision makers and front-line staff in their decision to grant it or not. Yet it also argued that regarding the neutrality of the State, the Report did not go far enough. When it returned to power, it proposed its own version of what it skillfully (politically speaking) referred to, depending on the context and the audience, as a *Charter of Québec Values* or a *Charter of Secularism*. Two elements of this *Charter*, also proposed in the Bouchard-Taylor Report, did not raise much controversy, proclaiming the secular nature of the Québec State and developing more guidelines regarding religious accommodation within public institutions. But the issue in the *Charter* that sparked strong opposition was the aim to extend the neutrality of the State to civil servants by outlawing the wearing of religious symbols by anybody working in public or publicly funded institutions—with some exceptions and/or delayed implementation for universities and municipalities.

Québec society was divided on that issue, probably even more than during the crisis around Reasonable Accommodation (see L'Heureux-Dubé; Maclure, "Charte"). Proponents of the pluralist model and religious minorities saw it as a frontal attack on interculturalism, and in the case of the latter against their already difficult socio-economic integration, especially that of Muslim women. But people supporting the *Charter* contended that if it could not be adopted, political correctness would win, and this would prove that interculturalism, though purporting to be secularist, was multiculturalism in disguise. Although the Charter was not adopted, the debate that raged for almost a year revealed interesting trends. First, it confirmed the emergence of traditionalists noticed during the crisis around Reasonable Accommodation and showed that many people have not adopted either a Jacobinist, intercultural or multicultural model, but have remained strongly attached to a homogenous and ethnocentric definition of Québec identity. The fact that Parti Québécois strategists thought they would gain votes in outlying regions by constantly blurring the differences between Québec values and secularism (although no serious analyst can argue that secularism is a deeply rooted part of Québec heritage) is a clear illustration of this trend. The second fact, here again in line with the Reasonable Accommodation debate of 2007-2009, is that many people who support interculturalism as a general model for taking diversity into account within public institutions, nevertheless favor a strictly secularist model insisting that religion should be kept in the private sphere when dealing with religious diversity (this echoes the Jacobinist paradigm). The degree to which the French experience is idealized in such sectors of society is striking, although its limits are increasingly discussed in various forums (see Bauberot).

Debates around the socialization function of schooling have also been significant since Québec's 1998 *School, Integration and Intercultural Education Policy* introduced more pluralistic school programs (see McAndrew, *Fragile*). The discussion has centered on two subjects: History and Citizenship Education, especially "national" (Québec) History teaching at the secondary level, and the Ethics and Religious Culture course, which in 2005 replaced the denominational teaching of Catholicism and Protestantism. In the first case, the new History Program has been criticized for being *too* inclusive (giving too much space to native, Anglophone, and immigrant communities) and mostly for overlooking main elements of the collective memory of French Canadians due to its focus on thematic social trends at the expense of political history (see Ethier, Lantheaume, Lefrançois, Zanazanian; Zanazanian). For example, the Conquest of 1763 and the Rebellion of 1837-1838, were presented under the general theme of "the extension of democratic rights in Canada." The priority placed on the development of historical competencies by students and not on their sharing of a collective memory was also criticized by some historians and history teacher associations as a multicultural plot. Yet others contended that the program still gave the lion's share to the Francophone experience in North-America even if there was a greater and better treatment of the contribution of other groups, and saw opposition as an attempt to re-establish the dominance of the traditional Franco-centered definition of Québec heritage. After 2014, the issue lost its visibility as a new program was being drafted by the Parti Québécois but was then redrafted by the Liberal Party after it came back to power that year. In its latest version, still preliminary and currently being tested, there is a stronger emphasis on historical events and knowledge, but the pluralism of Québec history is still widely recognized. Secondly, while the Ethic and Religious Culture Course (ERC), enjoys wide support in Québec, it is currently raising interesting debate about the nature of interculturalism and the extent to which it is implemented. The program itself can be considered a flagship of such an approach (see Estivalèzes; MELS) as it gives priority (in a sophisticated manner) to the religions that shaped Québec history (Catholicism, aboriginal, and Judeo-Christian traditions in general) while also covering the main others that are now part of the Québec picture (Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.). It is also set within an open secularist framework as recommended by the Bouchard-Taylor Report of 2008, recognizing that students may or may not be religious believers of their family traditions or other traditions, that they have the right to express their religious beliefs in actual symbols and practices, and that respect for other traditions and inter-religious dialogue should be one the aims of the school system.

One of the criticisms levelled at the ERC program is whether the concept of teaching religious cultures (which does not mean faith-based religious instruction) meets the requirement of the neutrality of the State as variously understood by different sectors of society (Estivalèzes, and Lefebvre). Proponents of strict secularism contend that it is actually bringing back religion by the back door while religious practicing parents, especially Catholics, argue that young children cannot differentiate between being told about other religions and being asked to believe that these religions are as valuable as the one their parents want them to adhere to. In this regard, the Supreme Court of Canada has supported the legitimacy of the program. Based on the fact that the multicultural character of Canada is one of the interpretative clauses of the Canadian Constitution, judges argued that the responsibility of schools (as the major institution of socialization in democratic societies), to develop religious tolerance among students had priority over the limited infringement that the course could have on the religious rights of some parents. This ruling shows that a program designed to meet intercultural requirements can be largely compatible with the Canadian multicultural ideology, at least as interpreted by the Court in a balancing act with other democratic principles (which is not always the case in political rhetoric).

Another issue proved more divisive, namely the obligation of private religious schools to teach the ERC course. Until recently, the compromise was that those schools (mostly Catholic and Jewish and partly publicly funded in Québec) could offer their own denominational religious teaching as an "add on," but that they had to teach the regular program including ERC during mainstream school hours. Yet, recently the Supreme Court did rule that a Catholic school that was contesting this arrangement could instead develop its own version of the course, which would place more emphasis on Catholicism and much less on other religions, as long as it carried similar objectives (De Grandpré). The main argument of the Court was the need to accommodate the concerns of religious schools and the fact that the right of parents to choose alternative schooling would be compromised if all mainstream programs applied fully to such institutions. As expected, many segments of Québec society, whether from nationalist or pluralist circles (Maclure, "L'Erreur") saw the judgment as a communitarian attack on Québec interculturalism, and one that indicated that Supreme Court judges are leaning towards multiculturalism and do not have proper understanding of Québec specificity. But the fact that the initial ruling on the obligation of private schools to teach the ERC course was later nuanced also shows that the line

between interculturalism and multiculturalism is rather thin, especially in relation to the accommodation of religious diversity.

As we can see from this overview of the development of interculturalism in Québec and of some of the controversies it has generated, the concept as well as its implementation are contested sites with competing definitions and paradigms. The place of the longer-established Francophone heritage and culture in the new pluralist blueprint of the province is particularly at stake. Should it be central such as in the 1978 Tree Metaphor? Should it be limited to its impact on the societal culture as proposed in the 1990 Policy, or even reduced in favor of a purely civic culture binding Quebecers of all origin as proposed in some versions of multiculturalism? Questions are also raised as to the nature of collective and individual identities and the relationships between them, and to the extent to which belonging to specific groups (whether majority or minority) is a static or a dynamic phenomenon. A final issue is whether various models developed for the management of cultural diversity are adapted to contexts where religious diversity, and its construction as a social problem, is increasing both locally and globally. Whether the Québec case is more complex than others, due to its specific fragility in North America, is open to debate. Nevertheless, many tensions discussed in this article are also found in more clearly dominant societies including in the rest of Canada where similar issues have arisen. The accommodation of cultural—and especially religious—diversity is an issue shared by many immigration societies and one which is here to stay. As such, more comparative analysis of models and of their implementation in various national contexts is needed, as well as further examination of their limits and of the debates they generate.

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