Contesting the Nation: Reasonable Accommodation in Rural Quebec

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Abstract

In 2007, the village of Hérouxville attracted a significant amount of media attention after adopting a controversial code of conduct for living in this municipality. This code of conduct, commonly referred to as the Hérouxville Standards, constructed the community's collective identity in ways that were positioned against several "Others," including women, children and (most notably) immigrants. The construction of "Us" and "Them" evident in the Standards points to ongoing contestations over the definition of nationhood in Quebec. In particular, the Standards reflect a reassertion of exclusive concepts of the nation. As such, the Standards must be read, not as an isolated case, but as part of a larger debate about national identity, immigration and multiculturalism in Quebec.

Introduction

The village of Hérouxville made Canadian headlines in early 2007 after adopting a set of controversial standards outlining appropriate ways of living in this municipality (Municipalité Hérouxville, 2007a; Municipalité Hérouxville, 2007b). These Standards sought to stabilize a uniform (and unproblematic) notion of "Us" that implicitly revolved around a white, male, adult, and secular identity and was positioned against several "Others," including women, children, and - most notably - immigrants. In doing so, the Hérouxville document collapsed the heterogeneous category of immigrants into a uniformly problematic and exoticized group. The document suggested that this group was marked by discrimination against women, violence against children, and an emphasis on religious norms and beliefs.

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The strategy of identity production evident in the Standards was complicated by the existence of overlapping identities in Hérouxville (Canadian, Québécois, local and regional) and must be read in the context of recent debates about national identity, multiculturalism and "reasonable accommodation" in Quebec. Shortly after their adoption, the Hérouxville Standards were roundly condemned by a number of leading politicians in Quebec. However, a provincial election held a few months later resulted in a significant breakthrough for the *Action Démocratique du Québec*, a conservative, nationalist and populist party which some critics have described as anti-immigrant. The ADQ's success can, in part, be attributed to the prevalence of anti-immigrant and pro-ADQ discourses in Quebec's private radio and print-media. This raises the question whether the strategies of identity production that played out in the Hérouxville Standards do resonate more strongly with the public in Quebec than the initial protests would seem to suggest.

Some observers have dismissed the adoption of the Hérouxville Standards as inexplicable. Writing several months after the Hérouxville affair, for instance, Janet Bagnall summed up events as follows: "For reasons that remain unfathomable, tiny, immigrant-free Hérouxville passed a code of conduct denouncing the stoning of women, among other things. It was an act of provocation and the Charest government took the bait" (2007: A10). This paper will argue that the Hérouxville Standards and the debates that followed their passage can, in fact, be explained as part of a continuing contest over the definition of the nation in Quebec. In particular, they illustrate that exclusionary conceptions of the nation continue to coexist and conflict with inclusive, state-oriented models. In order to support this claim, the paper will begin by examining the Hérouxville Standards for ways in which they construct an "Us" and "Them." It will then locate these constructions of collective identity in the social and political contexts of populism and contested nationalism in Quebec, as well as ongoing societal changes in the province (including, for example, the demographic profile of Quebec's immigrant population).

The Standards: Constructing "Us" and "Them"

Hérouxville is a small village of about 1,300 inhabitants located in Mauricie, an agricultural region between Montreal and Quebec City. This region was the strongest support base of the nationalist, conservative, clerical *Union Nationale* that dominated Quebec for much of the first half of the twentieth century. The village is ethnically relatively homogeneous; there are few non-white residents, and equally few immigrants. In fact, there is only a single immigrant family (Patriquin, 2007). Demographically, Hérouxville is therefore not representative of the majority of Quebec society. However, it is representative of much of the province outside the three major urban centres (Montreal, Quebec City and Gatineau) and smaller urban centres. According to the 2001 census, roughly 20 percent of Quebec's population currently live in rural areas (Canada: Statistics Canada, 2005). In addition, to the extent that the Hérouxville Standards construct a collective identity in contexts of immigration, cultural difference and ethnic diversity, these contexts reflect broader provincial, national and global realities.

As regards the Standards themselves, it should be noted that they exist in French and English versions. These versions differ significantly. Furthermore, there have been two iterations of the Standards. The Standards were initially adopted by the municipal council of Hérouxville in January 2007. In response to

a negative public response, the council decided on February 5 to amend the Standards, eliminating passages they now considered ill-conceived. The analysis presented in this paper is based on the English version of the original Standards, and the French version of the revised Standards, since these are the texts available on the official website of the municipality of Hérouxville.

The Standards are a document purportedly aimed at informing immigrants to Hérouxville of societal norms that guide life in the community. In fulfilling this purpose, they accomplish five things: Firstly, they single out immigrants as a category that is profoundly different from the current inhabitants of the area. Secondly, they treat both immigrants and current residents as undifferentiated categories. Thirdly, they invest immigrants with traits perceived as problematical, and current residents with traits perceived as unproblematical. Fourthly, difference is externalized: Cultural and religious practices that are typically associated with groups that have long been an integral part of Quebec society, such as Jews, are described as immigrant practices. Finally, the Standards describe integration as a unilateral process: Immigrants coming to Hérouxville are expected to abide by the supposedly dominant norms laid out in the Standards. The stated objective of the Standards is "to help them [immigrants] make a clear decision to integrate into our area" (Municipalité Hérouxville, 2007a: 1). There is no indication that the norms of the "host" society may be subject to change in response to changing cultural and demographic facts.

Among the problematical qualities of the immigrant "Other," the Standards count the following:

- Lack of democratic traditions or practices
- Unequal treatment and segregation of men and women
- Violence against women
- Patriarchal gender relations
- Violence against children
- Hostility towards education
- Opposition to the performing arts
- Abstinence
- Lack of knowledge about Christian traditions
- Interest in religious schools
- Unwillingness to integrate into the host society.

Many of these qualities are reflective of the image of extremist, radical, and violent Muslims disseminated by many Western media, especially in the post-9/11 era (for Canada, see Helly, 2004: 36-37; Mahtani, 2001, 106). Immigrants are seen as potential threats to the way of life in Hérouxville, as unwilling to accept the dominant norms of Hérouxville's inhabitants, and as insistent on public recognition of their own way of life.

To examine the first problematical quality ascribed to immigrants more closely: The Standards heavily emphasize the democratic nature of the Self. "Democracy" and its derivatives are used liberally in the description of communal norms in Hérouxville. Thus, the English version of the standards mentions democracy no fewer than ten times in the space of five pages. The preamble to that version references democracy on three occasions, claiming that the Standards themselves "come from our municipal laws

being Federal or Provincial, and all voted democratically" (Municipalité Hérouxville, 2007a: 1). The Standards invest considerable effort in insisting that the municipality of Hérouxville is steeped in democratic traditions, and, in doing so, suggest an underlying assumption that the purported addressees of the Standards – the immigrant "Other" – come from cultural backgrounds where democratic traditions are not taken for granted, not dominant, or altogether alien.

Similarly, the Standards emphasize that "we consider that killing women in public beatings, or burning them alive are not part of our standards of life" (Municipalité Hérouxville, 2007a: 2). These statements speak to widespread notions about gender inequality and the suppression of women in Islam and Hinduism (Bullock and Jafri, 2001). The Standards dedicate a fair amount of space to discussing the equality of men and women. They also emphasize the fact that there is no gender segregation in Hérouxville. The fact that the Standards underline these issues seems to suggest a reading of immigrant communities as hostile to women and gender equality. It is interesting, if unsurprising, to note that this juxtaposition of "Us" and "Them" is fraught with difficulties. As recently as fifty years ago, few schools in Quebec were co-educational; there were no female police officers, and many hospitals were run by the clergy and therefore gender-segregated. Perhaps more importantly, violence against women is a much greater problem in contemporary Canada and Quebec than the Standards allow. A 1993 survey of Canadian women found that 51 percent of respondents had been the victim of physical or sexual violence on one or more occasions since turning 16 (Thurston, Patten and Lagendyk, 2006: 260). The results of a 2004 survey indicate that the incidence of one particular form of violence against women - partner violence - is declining in Canadian society; nonetheless, "7% of women were victims of partner violence in the previous five years and 3% were victimized in the previous year" (Johnson, 2005: 232). In addition, it is interesting to note that the Standards use expressions such as "our women," which suggests both that women are an object, and that they are external to the Self. The "Us" emerging from the Standards is, in consequence, not simply defined in ethnic terms, but also in gendered terms.

Like women, children are perceived as external objects belonging to an "Us" that is therefore not only defined as male, but also as adult. The Standards underline that in Hérouxville, "[a]ny form of violence towards children is not accepted" (Municipalité Hérouxville, 2007a: 2). This implies that immigrants come from cultures that are prone to violence against children. It is also an abbreviated reading of Canadian realities. For example, article 43 of the Canadian criminal code states that "[e]very schoolteacher, parent or person standing in the place of a parent is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances" (*Criminal Code*). This article was upheld by a 2004 Supreme Court decision specifying what type of force was considered reasonable or not. More to the point, violence against children is no rarity in Canadian and Quebec society: according to a recent study, 37 percent of adults in Quebec have experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence during childhood (Tourigny et al., 2008).

Finally, the Standards juxtapose a secular "Us" with a religious "Them." For example, they explain that the crosses dotting the Quebec landscape should properly be seen as cultural artefacts, rather than as religious ones. Similarly, the Standards inform their supposed target audience that Christmas is a part of Quebec's "national heritage and not necessarily a religious holiday" (Municipalité Hérouxville, 2007a: 2). Since the Standards devote considerable space to the meaning of Christmas, this suggests that their

authors perceive the "Other" as non-Christian. Thus, "We" live in a society that is Christian in origin but now supposedly secularized, while the "Other" comes from a religious, non-Christian society.

A recent interview with Hérouxville city councilor Drouin illustrates the conflation of religion and foreign origin in the conception of the "Other" that underpins the Standards. Among other things, Mr. Drouin stated: "Me, I am not afraid of immigrants. My best friends are people from other countries, some Muslims, even [*sic*] Jews" (quoted in Cristea and Mini-Mini, 2007: 15, our translation). Despite the fact that the Jewish community and other religious minorities have had a longstanding presence in the province of Quebec (see, *inter alia*, Dickinson and Young, 2003; Langlais and Langlais, 1991; Medres, 2000), this quote suggests that to be Jewish or Muslim is necessarily to be non-Canadian. This indicates that the definition of "Us" is, in many ways, similar to the traditional definition of *pure laine* French Canadians – that is, white, Catholic individuals of "pure" French Canadian ancestry.

On this note, it is instructive to consider the conclusions of the so-called Bouchard-Taylor commission, which was appointed shortly after the Herouxville affair by Quebec's provincial government to examine the state of inter-cultural relations in Quebec. The commission filed its report in May 2008; while a comprehensive analysis of this report is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that the commissioners suggested that "Muslims and, in particular, Arab Muslims, are, with Blacks, the group most affected by various forms of discrimination." In addition, the commissioners singled out the "recent increase in anti-Semitic incidents in Québec" as a cause for concern (Quebec: CCPA, 2008: 84).

Hérouxville: Isolated case or part of a larger trend?

These constructions of "Us" and "Them" create a number of problems for the narratives of inclusion, tolerance and diversity that inform contemporary Canadian and Quebecois identity. It is therefore not surprising that the proclamation of the Standards created a major outcry in Quebec. The two main parties (the governing Liberal Party and the nationalist *Parti Québécois*) were quick to insist that the Hérouxville Standards were an isolated case and were not reflective of societal norms in the province. Yet, far from being an isolated case, the discourses of "Self" and "Other" that played out in the Standards arguably illustrate the existence of a populist and exclusive strand of nationalism in Quebec. This, of course, is not a new phenomenon: exclusionary concepts of the nation have a longstanding history in Quebec and the rest of Canada. The racist and anti-semitic character of certain forms of nationalism in early and mid-twentieth century Canada and Quebec may serve as one example to illustrate this history (see, *inter alia*, Abella and Troper, 1991; Robin, 1992; Trofimenkoff, 1973).

This second interpretation - that the Hérouxville Standards were not simply an exception or aberration - gains some purchase if one considers the ADQ's success in the March 2007 provincial election. That election took place only a few weeks after the adoption of the Standards. In this election, the ADQ (founded in1994 after a schism within the Liberal Party) won 30 percent of the popular vote and 41 seats. It managed to attract substantial support in seven of Quebec's 17 administrative regions. While the ADQ made significant inroads among urban voters (Bélanger, 2008: 75), most of these seven regions were located in rural Quebec. Thus, examining the type of national discourse produced in Hérouxville

and similar communities, besides being important in and of itself, is also critical for understanding current changes in Quebec's party system. The ADQ's electoral success propelled it to the status of official opposition and reduced the *Parti Québécois* to third party status. Since the election left the Liberal Party with a minority government, the ADQ may play an important role in shaping provincial policy during the Liberal mandate.

What explains the ADQ's success? While a full analysis of electoral behavior in the 2007 election is beyond the scope of this article, it should be emphasized that voters in different regions of Quebec had different reasons for supporting the ADQ (Bélanger, 2008: 75-76). However, significant segments of Quebec's population felt alienated from the two established major parties. The ADQ provided an outlet for these frustrations. In addition, and tying in with this observation, part of the ADQ's success may have been due to the fact that it has received support from popular radio hosts, such as Jeff Fillion. Fillion encouraged listeners to vote for the ADQ candidate in a 2006 provincial by-election after Canadian authorities had decided not to renew the license of CHOI-FM, Fillion's employer; the ADQ won this by-election (see Dougherty, 2007b; Hamilton, 2006; Morton, 2007). While this does not provide sufficient evidence for a causal relationship, it is nonetheless interesting to note that the areas with the highest rates of CHOI-FM listeners coincide closely with those areas that posted electoral gains for the ADQ in 2007.

More broadly, radio stations such as CHOI-FM as well as the ADQ tapped into a vein of populist and exclusive nationalist sentiment in Quebec. In fact, contrary to the two other major political parties, the ADQ did not denounce the Hérouxville Standards, but instead used them to fuel a populist discourse around the "reasonable accommodation" of cultural difference (an issue this paper will return to in a later section) which ultimately benefited their electoral fortunes. According to Bélanger, the ADQ's electoral success was

> impressive given that the reasonable accommodations issue played no direct part in the campaign. It must probably be concluded that this issue helped the ADQ before the campaign started, by giving the party the visibility and the impulse it needed to rival the two major parties. (2008: 75)

Much of this populist discourse revolved around public discomfort with diversity and a politics of recognition. Thus, the English-language version of the ADQ's programme explicitly "recognize[d] the Quebec majority and defend[ed] its principles and common values"; it further exhorted Québécois to "be proud of our identity and find ways to reinforce it for the sake of the future and the continuance of our society" (ADQ, 2007a: 4). The French-language version of the party program likewise emphasized themes of identity and common values (ADQ, 2007b).

This emphasis did, of course, not fundamentally differentiate the ADQ from either the Liberals or the PQ, both of which stressed similar themes. However, the ADQ tied these themes to a populist, anti-elite project. Thus, Mario Dumont, the party's young and charismatic leader, vocally denounced the idea of reasonable accommodation and claimed that the other parties were too laissez-faire in protecting fundamental values such as gender equality. In Dumont's view, this was bound to create serious

problems: "When the government backs off on those issues, when a government in its public services is incapable of defending the common values of Quebec, that creates division in society" (quoted in Dougherty, 2007a: A5; see also MacPherson, 2007a; and Yakabuski, 2007). This type of discourse conveys the notion that Quebec's cultural heritage is under threat from an "Other" that is unwilling to accommodate the traditions of the majority, while demanding accommodation for its own traditions.

Dumont effectively diagnosed Quebec society with a case of identity crisis: "When elected representatives start to wonder, in the name of political correctness, whether or not we can wish merry Christmas to the population without shocking Muslims and Hindus, people say that doesn't make any sense!" (quoted in Audibert, 2007: p.46, our translation). This sheds some doubts on Dumont's claim that ADQ policy statements were not driven by populism or intolerance (Audibert, 2007). Similarly, Dumont's preface to the French-language version of the ADQ's party program struck a populist chord:

> For several years now, Quebec political discourse has been sounding a wrong note. The words are vague, the slogans empty, the promises broken, it is cant. If the other parties had the courage and the vision to propose true solutions, they would be straightforward. But as this is not the case, they hide behind a smokescreen and hope to save themselves. The ADQ is different: we call a spade a spade. (ADQ, 2007b: 2, our translation)

This anti-elitism and the appeal to common sense that characterizes ADQ rhetoric are reminiscent of developments elsewhere. In fact, the ADQ's success is perhaps less surprising if one looks at other Western countries - or, indeed, at the rise of the erstwhile Reform Party in the rest of Canada, now restyled the Conservative Party and in power at the federal level since 2006. The rise of populist movements can likewise be seen in France with the election of Nicolas Sarkozy; the continued electoral success of Berlusconi in Italy; or the success of *List Pim Fortuyn* in the Netherlands. In many cases, support for these populist movements is due in part to the perception (accurate or not) that globalization is not only a new development, but one that fundamentally challenges established patterns of political authority and entrenched collective identities. This sense of a global threat to national identity, along with the older trope of *la survivance*, provides a linkage between globalization, populism and the re-affirmation of exclusionary concepts of the nation in Quebec.

Why was the ADQ able to mobilize populist and exclusive nationalist rhetoric so effectively, while its main competitors failed to do so? For one thing, the other political parties were thrown by public criticisms of multiculturalism and reasonable accommodation. Both the Liberals and the *Péquistes* were strategically unable to mobilize these criticisms for their own purposes. The Liberals, because they could not afford to lose the support of ethnic minorities, who tend to vote Liberal. The *Parti Québécois*, because it was caught in a dilemma. On one hand, it feared appearing racist. After the separatists had narrowly lost the referendum on Quebec secession in 1995, then-PQ leader Jacques Parizeau blamed the defeat on money and "the ethnic vote." This resulted in widespread accusations that the PQ was a racist party. Since then, it has made tremendous efforts to change its image; in particular, most of the party's leadership has emphasized civic conceptions of the nation rather than ethnic ones over the past

decade. On the other hand, the *Péquistes* could not let the ADQ take on the mantle of sole defender of the francophone majority, since this would have cut to the very *raison d'être* for the PQ's own existence. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then-PQ leader André Boisclair chose to resolve this conundrum by downplaying the significance of the Hérouxville affair, a strategy similar to that pursued by Liberal leader Jean Charest (Hamilton, 2007).

Since 2007, the electoral fortunes of the ADQ have, of course, undergone a rather dramatic reversal. In the December 2008 provincial election, the party's share of the popular vote dropped to roughly 16 percent, and its share of seats declined to less than 6 percent. This, of course, does not mean that exclusionary concepts of nationhood experienced a similar reversal. Exclusionary concepts of nationhood were not in the past, and are not now, limited to the supporters of the ADQ, but are spread more widely through Quebec society. Once again, the findings of the Bouchard-Taylor commission are instructive in this regard. As the commission noted, "the key signs of dissatisfaction [with the accommodation of ethnic and cultural diversity] came from Quebecers of French-Canadian origin. It is difficult to precisely quantify within this group the opponents and proponents of accommodation, but it does appear that the former were more numerous than the latter" (Quebec: CCPA, 2008: 21).

Quebec, nationalism and collective identity

While the ADQ's electoral success was due to a combination factors (including widespread dissatisfaction with both the Liberals and the PQ), it was arguably rooted in part in the unsettlement of French Canadian identity discourses during the 1950s and 1960s. During the earlier part of the twentieth century, French Canadian identity had been inextricably linked to ethnicity and religion (for an overview of the development and continuing transformation of nationalisms in Quebec see, *inter alia*, Balthazar, 1993; Behiels, 1985; Cook, 1995; Mann, 2002; Monière, 2001; Oliver, 1991; Rocher, 2002; Sarra-Bournet, 2001). French Canada extended throughout the territory of Canada and, in many ways, was predominantly conceived in rural terms. In the middle of the century, Quebec society underwent a profound rupture: the province turned to secularism and embraced modernization. A new articulation of national identity emerged that was defined territorially and linguistically, and focused specifically on Quebec. That national identity was built around the idea of inclusiveness, openness and an emphasis on the state. This new "imagined community" (to borrow Benedict Anderson's much-quoted phrase) was constructed in opposition to definitions of national identity which were based on the idea of a French-Canadian "race" that was Catholic, French, and white.

Incidents such as the publication of the Hérouxville Standards or the ADQ's electoral success suggest that the inclusive, state-oriented discourse of national identity has at best achieved incomplete hegemony. In fact, while observers such as Raymond Breton (1988) saw Quebec on the road towards civic nationalism two decades ago, it is fair to say that nationalism in Quebec (as elsewhere) remains heavily contested (see, *inter alia*, Beauchemin, 2004; Karmis, 2004). In Eliasian terms, the inclusive, state-centred national *habitus* has never been shared by all of Quebec's population (Elias, 2000). A 2006 survey of Canadian attitudes towards religious communities found that 82 percent of respondents in Quebec felt somewhat or very positively about Christians and 74 felt similarly about Jews; in contrast,

only 53 percent felt positively inclined towards Muslims. The rates for Canada as a whole were 81 percent, 79 percent, and 63 percent, respectively (Jedwab, 2006: 2). According to a poll conducted by Léger Marketing in December 2006 and January 2007, 50 percent of Quebecois harboured negative feelings towards the Arab community, and 36 percent of respondents indicated that they felt negatively about the Jewish community (2007: 5). More generally, 43 percent of respondents self-identified as slightly racist, 15 percent as fairly racist, and 1 percent as strongly racist; a minority of respondents (39 percent) indicated that they did not consider themselves racist at all (2007: 7).

Arguably, then, what occurred in Hérouxville was the assertion of a national *habitus* that is premised on exclusionary conceptions of the nation (see, *inter alia*, MacPherson, 2007b: A21). As the above data indicates, this *habitus* is shared by a significant segment of Quebec society. While this exclusionary *habitus* overlaps in some ways with the exclusionary national *habitus* that dominated Quebec before the Quiet Revolution, the two are by no means identical. Consequently, we do not intend to suggest that Hérouxville simply points to the re-activation of a fundamentally unchanged "older" national *habitus*. Compared to the Duplessis era, for example, today's Quebec is a deeply secular society, which has profound implications for contemporary articulations of nationalism in the province. Any *habitus* in the Eliasian sense of the term is dynamic, malleable, historically contingent and subject to constant contestation. Present contests over Quebec's collective identity are, in fact, intimately linked to a number of other socio-political questions, which this paper will examine in turn. Firstly, they are linked to the recent arrival of immigrant groups who do not share some common features with the majority group. Secondly, recent court decisions on reasonable accommodation have heated up the debate about multiculturalism and underlined the existence of deep fissures in current debates about the boundaries of the nation.

New immigrants

Earlier immigrant groups (such as European Jews, Italians, Portuguese, or Poles) differ in several respects from more recent immigrants to Quebec. Ashkenazi Jews, for example, predominantly adopted English rather than French after immigrating to Quebec. Many French Québécois therefore perceive them as having been assimilated to the Anglophone rather than the Francophone population. In addition, and as noted earlier, anti-semitism was widespread in Quebec throughout much of the province's history (the same can be said of the rest of Canada). Consequently, Ashkenazi Jews were marked as part of the "Other" for much of that history. As mentioned above, at least some of the authors of the Hérouxville Standards still consider Jews immigrants today. In fact, some of the passages in the Standards are clear references to concrete cases in debates about reasonable accommodation that involve Orthodox Jews - hence the insistence in the Standards that policewoman can arrest men, and that there are places where people can exercise and look outside trough the windows (Municipalité Hérouxville, 2007b : 4, 5). Relations between French Canadians and Italians were similarly difficult. For instance, French Catholics refused to allow Italians to attend mass in their churches. In consequence, the Italian community became Anglophone rather than Francophone and did not integrate into Quebec's collective identity.

Nonetheless, Ashkenazi Jews and Italians, as well as other immigrant groups such as the Portuguese and Poles, shared two characteristics with the French Canadian community: they were European in origin and Judaeo-Christian. Since the 1970s, the face of immigration to Quebec - and Canada as a whole - has changed considerably (Table 1). Over the past three decades, immigrants were not necessarily white or Catholic. Many of them were, however, French speakers (see Table 2 for the period 2002 to 2006). In this context, it should be noted that the province of Quebec has exercised a lot of influence over the selection of its immigrants for the past fifteen years. In exercising this power, Quebec has given priority to immigration from the Maghreb in order to favour French speakers. Today, roughly 20 percent of immigrants to Quebec arrive from the Maghreb (Quebec: MICC, 2007).

Table 1. Immigrants to Quebec, ten largest countries of birth, 2002-2006

Rank	Country of origin	Number	Percentage of immigrants
1	Algeria	17 344	8.3
2	China	17 226	8.2
3	France	16 397	7.8
4	Morocco	16 034	7.7
5	Romania	13 178	6.3
6	Colombia	9 362	4.5
7	Lebanon	7 658	3.7
8	Haiti	7 572	3.6
9	India	5 692	2.7
10	Pakistan	5 326	2.5

Source: Quebec: DRAP, 2007b.

This observation points to some of the complexities inherent in current negotiations about Quebec's national identity. On one hand, language serves as cement for a common identity. However, its importance as a boundary marker between "Us" and "Them" depends on its interaction with other circumstances. Thus, there is a significant degree of anti-Muslim prejudice in Quebec (as in other parts of Canada and the West more generally). According to a poll released in 2006, 40 percent of Quebec respondents harboured anti-Muslim views (Montgomery, 2006: A10). Fears of the Muslim "Other" have certainly played a role in the assertion of a national *habitus* that distinguishes between "Us" and "Them" primarily on the basis of religious affiliation and secondarily on the basis of language (whereas the post-1960s national *habitus* gave pride of place to the linguistic criterion). Fears of the "Other" play into the notion of a "Self" whose very identity is under threat and therefore needs to be protected all the more vigorously. These fears are well summarized in a quote from Solange Fernet-Gervais, Hérouxville's oldest citizen: "In Quebec, we didn't resist the English and fight throughout our history to defend our identity, just to have Muslims dictate to us now how we ought to live!" (quoted in Audibert, 2007: 42, our translation).

Table 2. Knowledge of English and French among immigrants to Quebec, 2002-2006

Year	Knowledge of French (%)	Knowledge of English only (%)	Knowledge of neither French nor English (%)
2002	49.1	15.8	35.1
2006	57.7	19.7	22.6
2002-2006	54.3	17.8	27.9

Source: Quebec: DRAP, 2007a.

This picture is complicated by the existence of a spatial divide between Montreal and "the regions," that is, rural Quebec. Examining this divide is important for a fuller understanding of the debate about immigration. Montreal welcomes the vast majority of immigrants to Quebec; this concentration has prompted the provincial government to favor immigration to other areas of the province (Quebec: DRAP, 2007c: 34-35). Some residents of rural Quebec see this as a threat to their identity and as a measure imposed from above. André Drouin can once again serve to illustrate this point. According to the Hérouxville councilor, "there is no demand [for immigrants to settle in Hérouxville]. Yet, the ministry wants to regionalize immigration. There is no more room in cities" (quoted in Cristea and Mini-Mini, 2007: 15, our translation). Contrary to these claims, the findings of the Bouchard-Taylor commission seem to indicate that Quebec's regions are actively trying to attract immigrants for a variety of demographic and economic reasons (Quebec: CCPA, 2008: 79-80).

Reasonable accommodation and the challenges of multiculturalism

The fears of the "Other" outlined above tie in with broader misgivings about the ways Quebec and Canada have dealt with diversity over the last few decades. Specifically, they resonate with current debates about reasonable accommodation, which in turn tie in with criticisms of multiculturalism. Thus, the Hérouxville city councillors presented the publication of the Standards as a way to open a debate on reasonable accommodation. André Drouin, the main author of the Standards, explained that "my source of inspiration was what is called reasonable accommodation" (quoted in Cristea and Mini-Mini, 2007: 15, our translation). In this regard, they were partly successful, as the hearings held by the Bouchard-Taylor commission later in 2007 demonstrated.

The concept of reasonable accommodation originated as a legal notion, stemming from a decision of the Canadian Supreme Court in 1985 (*Ontario Human Rights Commission* v. *Simpsons-Sears*). The idea was to establish a dialogue between employers and employees who felt discriminated against in order to find a reasonable accommodation for particular cases that do not create excessive constraints. Differential treatment of employees is made necessary by the exigencies of equality; thus, the legal principle of reasonable accommodation is based on a conception of equality that centers on outcomes,

rather than sameness of treatment (Bosset, 2007: 5). At the same time, the latter conception of equality is arguably the dominant one in the general Canadian public.

In the last few years, the notion of reasonable accommodation has expanded significantly. There has been an increase in the number of reasonable accommodation cases based on religious factors, which today enjoy a status in Quebec jurisprudence similar to disability (Bosset, 2007: 13). Several of these decisions have been fraught with controversy, such as a recent Supreme Court decision that permitted a Quebec student of the Sikh faith to wear a *kirpan* in school (*Multani v. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*). Gérard Bouchard, one of the chairs of the Bouchard-Taylor commission, has previously gone on record suggesting that "there have been decisions that, very obviously, were a bit excessive" (quoted in "Gérard Bouchard croit qu'on est allé trop loin," 2007, our translation). On a related note, the report of the Bouchard-Taylor commission suggested that much of the criticism leveled against recent accommodation practices stems from a fear that they may endanger Quebec's hard-fought for secular nature, and that this fear has resulted in "an identity counter-reaction movement that has expressed itself by the rejection of harmonization practices" (Quebec: CCPA, 2008: 74).

The Hérouxville Standards illustrate some of the criticisms of reasonable accommodation in Quebec. For instance, the preamble to the second version of the Standards asserts that, while "multiculturalism is an asset to a country, a province, a region" (Municipalité Hérouxville, 2007b: 1, our translation), it has also created lots of problems. In particular, it is supposed to have led to a culture clash between the host culture and *certain* immigrant cultures. Judging from the textual evidence, Hérouxville's city councillors clearly felt threatened by a number of recent legal decisions under the umbrella of reasonable accommodation. Thus, the Standards emphasized that the community should "not have to renounce our values" (Municipalité Hérouxville, 2007b: 1, our translation). They further stated that

> Quebec is a province where it is nice to live (peace, equality, liberty) and we want this to continue. The federal and provincial governments have to sit down and find solutions to the problem of unreasonable accommodation. If necessary, they will have to modify the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in order to establish limits which will allow courts and administrations to be fairer towards the welcoming culture, the culture of all citizens of Quebec and Canada who value their identity. (Municipalité Hérouxville, 2007b: 1, our translation)

The Standards convey a sense that Quebec's majority culture (which appears to be internally homogeneous) has been unfairly discriminated against, and that recent court and administrative decisions on reasonable accommodation were, in fact, not reasonable at all, but unfair and a challenge to Quebec and Canadian identity. In a nutshell, multiculturalism has gone too far. Hérouxville's city councillors instead prefer a more assimilationist stance, declaring that "[w]e would especially like to inform the new arrivals that the lifestyle that they left behind in their birth country cannot be brought here with them and they would have to adapt to their new social identity" (Municipalité Hérouxville, 2007a: 1).

Considering that multiculturalism and the notion of reasonable accommodation raise fundamental questions about "the balance between the rights of the majority and minority rights, as well as the co-existence of individual rights and collective interests" (Jézéquel, 2007: x, our translation), it is perhaps not surprising that it has fostered resentment. This is especially true considering that Quebec nationalism was, until recently, very much concerned with the survival of a distinct Quebec identity in the face of assimilative pressures from Anglophone societies dominating the continent (see, *inter alia*, Bouchard, 1999; Cantin, 2000; Cook, 2005). This emphasis on *la survivance* put a premium on preserving the French character of Quebec. Debates about multiculturalism in Quebec are further complicated by the fact that many Quebecois (with some reason) view the federal multiculturalism policy, pioneered by Trudeau in 1971, at least in part as an attempt to reduce the Quebecois nation to one among many other ethnic and cultural groups and to deny its distinctive status. As McRoberts points out, "[i]n Quebec, Canadian multiculturalism continues to be firmly associated with a notion of Canada that excludes any national recognition of Quebec" (2001: 706; see also McRoberts, 1997). In this light, multiculturalism can easily be construed as a challenge to the promotion of Quebec as a distinct national community.

Conclusion

Quebec Cabinet Minister Benoît Pelletier recently observed that "we believed that the identity debate was closed and that the concept of 'Québécois' settled the issues at stake all by itself, but we were wrong" (quoted in Audibert, 2007: 46, our translation). It is no exaggeration, then, to say that Quebec once again faces a collective identity crisis. To be more specific, we should say that there are increasing tensions about the definition of "Us." These tensions emerge from a very complex context. As elsewhere, Quebeckers share overlapping spatial identities (Québécois, Canadian, local/regional). The numerous references in the Standards to different levels of government illustrate this dynamic of intersecting identities. Similarly, Quebec society is marked by contestations between other collective identities such as class and gender. In consequence, the definition of a Québécois "Us" is part of a complex process of articulation with the definition of other "Selves." In addition, two successive failures in provincial referenda on independence have changed the rules of the game and necessitated a rethinking of Quebec's relationship with the rest of Canada. For much of Quebec society, the goal, now as in the past, is to survive as a cultural and linguistic minority within Canada and North America. To achieve that, immigrants to Quebec must be integrated into Francophone society.

The publication of the Standards by the city councillors of Hérouxville reflect these persistent tensions surrounding the definition of a Quebec "We"-identity. The new national *habitus* that emerged during the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s - based on language and centred on the province of Quebec - has failed to achieve dominance in some regions, especially where inhabitants did not really benefit from the development of the provincial welfare state to the same extent as they did in big cities like Montreal and Quebec City. The debate about Hérouxville can be read as an episode in the ongoing contest between different national *habitus*. In contrast to the civic, state-oriented, and inclusionary *habitus* that predominates in elite discourses about Quebec's national identity, a rival *habitus* is positioned against a multiform "Other," especially immigrants and non-Christians. While this rival *habitus* cannot be

exclusively identified with any one political party, the ADQ's electoral success in 2007 suggests that the contest over Quebec's national identity will remain highly visible for some time to come. This is especially true in light of the fact that other developments (such as a re-emergence of populism in the West, new faces of immigration, increasing worldwide religious tensions, and the re-affirmation of local/regional identities in a globalized context) fuelling this contestation show no sign of abating.

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