

Between curiosity and traditional divides

Discourses in ROC's media regarding immigration and integration issues in Québec

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Introduction

Over the last few years, mainstream English Canadian newspapers have produced an impressive number of articles on Québec's dealing with immigration and integration issues. Journalistic interest was triggered by the now infamous *Code of conduct* adopted by the small town of Herouxville in January 2007, which was discussed by the media around the world, followed by the Bouchard-Taylor Commission (B&T Commission) that held a series of consultation around the province in 2007 that was also largely publicized. In the meantime, a series of governmental decisions and policy proposals related to these issues were also the topic of an intense coverage in the Rest of Canada's media (ROC's media). In this paper, I analyzed a corpus of 147 articles (editorials, comments, opinions and letters to the editor) found in the *Globe and Mail* (GM), the *Toronto Star* (TS), and the *National Post* (NP) between January 1st, 2007 and December 31st, 2009, in order to see if the debate was considered legitimate, worth it, inevitable, a “good thing” – or not – and on what basis. My objective is twofold 1) analyzing the state of the “English Canadian majority discourse” of the GM and the TS (Winter 2009) regarding Québec's paths and choices, and 2) to see if there is another discourse that can be found in the NP. What I refer to as the “debate”, is the general construction that is used ROC's media : the “debate on reasonable accommodation”, which includes the Herouxville episode, the B&T Commission's hearings and recommendations, a series of (minor) incidents that made the headlines in Québec, and a number of decisions and policy proposals.

The idea and the orientation for this paper come from a recent account of the “Two Solitudes” problem by François Rocher in the *Canadian Journal of Political Science* (Rocher 2007), in which he provides interesting insights. Analyzing the relative of absence of French-speaking scholars' work in the Canadian politics literature – whether written in French or in English – he concludes that: “The production of knowledge about Canada is both limited and bias. The dominant discursive universe reinforces itself...it shows itself to be minimally open, sensitive, or conscious of the presence of a significant body of literature” (Rocher 2007: 850). Although the two objects are different – academic

literature vs media coverage – Rocher's argument remains an interesting conceptual starting point. More specifically, I borrow from Rocher the idea that in spite of the historical lack communication between the Francophones and Anglophones, "...it is still necessary to be conscious of the presence of the "other", or to have simultaneous interest in and intellectual curiosity towards what the other has to offer" (idem: 835). That gave me the idea of exploring the "journalistic curiosity" in the ROC's media regarding the handling of immigration and integration issues in Québec. In other words, do ROC's media show some kind of "curiosity" when they discuss how Québec tries to deal with immigration and integration issues? On which kind of comparisons do they rely on when they write about it? Do they acknowledge the fact that these issues are discussed in a large number of Western countries? Do they relate to the Canadian experience with immigration and integration? Or do they see the Québec debate exclusively through the traditional divides of Canadian politics? These are the questions I wish to answer.

Why studying ROC's media coverage of those issues? First, mainstream ROC's media remain one the main connections between what happens in Québec and the rest of Canada. Their (cumulative) presentations and interpretations of Québec's social and political phenomena certainly have an impact on how the Québécois are (re)presented to the Canadian *auditoire*. As Karim (2008: 58) argues: "...due to the place that they have in the public sphere, newspaper materials contain among the most prominent set of expressions in a given society". Although not the sole influence on the relationship between Québec and the ROC, media discourses serve as an important vehicle of social representations.

Second, immigration and integration can now be seen as one of the defining issues in Canadian politics. With the relative absence of constitutional debate on the political agenda and the presence of a federalist party that governs in Québec since 2003, one might say that Francophones and Anglophones ought to disagree on "something"; immigration and integration issues are one easy target that could serve this purpose. Indeed, these issues carry very controversial potential as they touched upon questions of identity, citizenship, nationalism, multiculturalism, dualism, and public policy (Gagnon and Iacovino 2007). It thus seems as a fructuous topic to explore one aspect of the Two Solitudes problem.

Finally, I need to point out that I am not a specialist of the media *per se*. I use the media coverage in written newspapers as material to study Canadian politics. It is not my intention to "explain" the dynamics of the coverage or to expose the constraints – structural or otherwise. I also do not pretend to cover all ROC's media discourses as my focus is on three newspapers.

I proceed in three steps. First, I address the literature that studies the relationship between ROC's media and Québec to identify some expectations regarding the coverage. Second, I present the methodology. I then proceed with the analysis and draw some conclusions.

ROC's Media and Québec

What can we expect from the coverage in ROC's written media of recent immigration and integration issues in Québec? On sensitive issues like those at hand, the literature suggests two main findings: the use of Québec's social and political characteristics to construct and perpetuate the Canadian multicultural identity, and the presence of misrepresentations and lack of tolerance regarding Québec's paths and choices.

On the first account, Winter (2007, 2008, 2009) has shown how discourses in ROC's media (GM and TS) have often been used to construct the "Otherness" of the Québec nation in an attempt to reinforce the Canadian multicultural identity. Winter suggests that both Québec and the United-States serve as the comparison on which it is possible to construct the multicultural narrative: "Québec is attributed a double function: while it is sometimes situated at the heart of positively connoted ethnic diversity [for a positive comparison with the US], it is as often portrayed as the source for the proliferation of ethnic difference and the failure to have constructed a unified Canadian nation" (Winter 2007: 493). Inscribed in a "universalist" project, the multicultural identity can thus be contrasted with Québec's "ethnic nationalism". In such a pattern, "the contrasting image of an ethnocentric francophone enclave is constructed in comparison to which the treatment of immigrants...in English Canada appears as exemplary and morally superior" (Winter 2009: 6).

He also showed that there is a relationship between Québec nationalism – more specifically the 1995 referendum – and a more aggressive promotion of multiculturalism and its impact on the representations of immigrant communities: « ...les enjeux multinationaux et multiculturels de cette époque sont mieux décrits par l'hypothèse selon laquelle le conflit sur le multinationnalisme dans les représentations publiques de « qui nous sommes » a facilité la reconnaissance des immigrants et de leurs enfants comme membres de la société majoritaire » (Winter 2008 : 25).

Karim (2002) also reached this conclusion in his analysis of the evolution of the treatment of multiculturalism in English Canadian newspapers. He observed that the representation of multiculturalism was either absent or negatively connotated prior to the 1990s. It took, among other things, the 1995 referendum to reinsert multiculturalism as a powerful expression of the Canadian identity. In a recent article that analyzes the state of multiculturalism in the year 2006 in 8 Canadian newspapers, Karim (2008: 77) concludes that: "Judging from this examination of the coverage of multiculturalism in 2006, there were fewer calls for the dismantling of the policy in comparison to the 1980s..."

On the second account, Lacambre (2007) has shown how Québec's sovereignty, then years after the referendum, is still represented as an illegitimate political project founded on reactionary and racist tendencies, along with resentment. Analyzing a one year-period between April 2005 and February 2006 in the GM, she found that while the positions did not really change, its format has hardened. Without going as far as talking about forms of racism, she nonetheless observed a more generalized "intolerance" and "impatience" not only *vis-à-vis* the sovereignty movement, but also *vis-à-vis* the federalist Liberal party,

which is seen as carrying similar demands than a nationalist party, and also the Québécois more generally (Lacombe: 2007: 27-9).

At the most extreme end of the continuum, Potvin (1999, 2000) has identified that it is possible to observe on certain issues some “racist slippages” in ROC’s media when covering not only the sovereignty issue, but also individual cases, such as the appointment of David Levine as director of the Royal Ottawa Hospital by the Board Governors at the end of the 1990s. The fact that he was candidate for the Parti Québécois in 1979 led to an intense controversy which included, among other things, allusions to Nazis in The Ottawa Citizens: “One can claim that political beliefs should have nothing to do with one’s job. But if you hire someone with outrageous beliefs, you outrage the community...How many Levine supporters think it would be OK if he was a Nazi?...” (quoted in Potvin 2000: 15). For Potvin, these “slips” are important because of their process: “Marginal discourses have...given way to more systematic racist opinions in the “rest of Canada”, and to a form of verbal violence which is repetitive enough that the problem can no longer be considered secondary” (Potvin 2000: 3). Similar to Winter’s conclusions, she also observes the “use of universalist arguments (drawn from the Canadian national conception) to de-legitimate the Other” (idem: 18).

In sum, these analyses draw a fairly pessimistic picture of the relationship between ROC’s media and Québec. This suggests a very little inclination for curiosity as ROC’s media discourses should follow *traditional divides*: Us (Canadians) and Them (Québécois) – or, in the case of Québec, Us (Québécois) and Them (immigrants) -, ethnic nationalism (Québec) vs open and tolerant multiculturalism (Canada), and the promotion of an implicit “majority nationalism” (Rocher 2007, Lecours and Nootens 2007). Why would it be reasonable to expect “journalistic curiosity”? It might be because: the rest of Canada is also experiencing increasing challenges and look for some ideas and solutions; a large number of other Western countries are facing similar issues and, like Québec, are very vocal about it; that there are some similarities between the situation in Québec and the ROC. Put differently, curiosity would mean: questioning instead of judging; trying to make sense of a complex situation; trying to understand the Québec debate in relation to the Canadian experience with immigration and integration; and/or drawing comparisons with other countries. In introducing the idea of curiosity, that leaves us with the possibility of two broad discourses: *traditional divides* and *journalistic curiosity*.

Methodology

I define the “debate” broadly, which includes the Herouxville episode, the B&T Commission’s hearings and recommendations, a series of (minor) incidents that made the headlines in Québec and abroad, and some decisions and policy proposals. This broad approach is not a matter of convenience or simplification, but a reflection of the broad ROC’s media own construction of the debate. For example, a number of articles in my preliminary analysis indistinctively discuss the hearings, some decisions or proposals, and Herouxville as all these elements are presented as the “debate on reasonable

accommodation”. Nonetheless, I am attentive to specific periods, like the Herouxville episode, the 2007 election in which reasonable accommodation was a major aspect of the electoral competition.

The articles were collected using four key words: reasonable accommodation, Bouchard-Taylor Commission, interculturalism, and Herouxville. Each newspaper was searched individually in electronic indexes between January 1st, 2007 and December 31st, 2009. This time span represents the period just prior to the beginning of the debate and covers it until the end of 2009. This search resulted in 92 articles in the GM, 104 in the TS, and 117 in the NP. Of those, 146 are editorials, columns, comments, and letters to the editor (GM: 48, TS: 56, NP: 42); these numbers are similar to those used by Karim (2008) and Winter (2007, 2009) for similar analyses. In including the NP in the sample, I also wish to see if there is significant contrast between the “English Canadian majority discourse”, associated with the GM and the TS (Winter 2007), and another discourse to be found in the NP.

In analyzing editorials, columns, opinions, and letters to the editor, I use discourse analysis that focuses on “extracting the argumentative strands present in the media text” (Winter 2009: 8). The argumentative strands help to answer my broad empirical question: was the debate considered legitimate, worth it, inevitable, a “good thing” – or not – and *on what basis*. The methodology and the overall framework were not constructed in the abstract, i.e. following a purely deductive scheme, but was developed in a “dialectical interaction” (Winter 2007: 484) between the literature and the collected corpus. I do not pretend to cover all ROC’s media discourses as the sample cannot account for all regional differences. I classified, analyzed and coded the articles according to the two possible discourses that were presented in the last section: *curiosity* and *traditional divides*. I refer to the articles by the first two the first letters of the newspaper, the day, month and year: (GM-121207) for December 12 2007.

I first present the GM and the TS’s discourses. The NP is presented in a separate section. It also has to be noted that the sample of editorials, columns, comments and letters for the NP is relatively small (42) so that what is presented is not conclusive. Still, it shows some interesting contrasts with the GM and the TS.

Discourses in the GM and the TS: curiosity and traditional divisions

Curiosity in ROC’s media

I found more instances of curiosity in the GM and the TS than the literature would suggest. Indeed, a large number of articles refer to other countries and to Canada’s own experience with immigration and integration and there are numerous attempts to provide a comprehensive picture of Québec.

Some argue that, for example, this debate will or should spread to the rest of the country, because “this debate is neither new nor unusual...Quebec is by no means the only

jurisdiction in Canada that is confronted with challenges related to newcomer settlement and fostering harmony in a diverse society.” (GM-081207). And what is happening in Québec is also observable in “much of Western Europe, the U.S. and Australia...[and is]...a prelude to a wider, national debate across Canada” (TS-171007). And “[i]n many regards, that is a good thing. As evidenced by the ghettoizing of ethnic minorities and ensuing racial tensions throughout much of Europe, there are hazards in mouthing platitudes about the benefits of immigration without pausing to consider how well it is working” (GM-160807). That seems more like “a portrait framed by cultural anxiety...that touches all liberal democracies now struggling to cope with the resurrection of religion in the public sphere” (GM-310307). In the end, “...because debates about cultural identity unfold with particular passion in this francophone island in the anglo sea of North America - it is Quebec's debate that the rest of us find ourselves observing.” (GM-081207)

Instead of being a Québec's specificity, it could relate to divides that are present in all societies; and maybe that Quebecers are not really different than other Canadians. In fact, the Québec debate might reflect the rural-urban divide more than a Québec's specificity. Using a poll showing that that 53% of Canadians and 77% of Quebecers think that immigrants “should fully adapt” to the Canadian way of life, one asks:

“Are all these Canadians racist? I don't think so.... . . .there's no way we can escape the debates about immigration and identity that have engulfed Europeans...Ours won't be so violent or so bitter. But they're bound to be emotional. And the emotions on display in Quebec and Ontario are a taste of things to come.” (GM-111007)

Although negative comments have been heard in the hearings, “[p]eople in Quebec's regions, like their counterparts in rural and Northern Ontario, are liable to feel excluded from the centre of power.” (TS-091007). And while “Quebeckers, by a wide margin, oppose virtually all cultural or religious accommodation...it is highly unlikely that similar sentiments are not felt, to a greater or lesser extent, in Ontario...” (TS-151007). One as to remember that “[t]he demographic stasis that produces Herouxville-style racism is present wherever Tim Hortons sells doughnuts and Don Cherry rants.” (TS-031107). Moreover, if one considers “a few of the dividing lines” it becomes more complex: “The young (more ready to accept newcomers) vs. the middle-aged and old. French-speakers (more preoccupied with their cultural survival) vs. English-speakers. The rural (more nervous about immigrant customs) vs. the urban. The secular (more certain that religious belief has no place in contemporary Quebec) vs. the faithful” (TS-030108).

This kind of thinking can also lead to counter-intuitions as “[m]ost commentators...have tended to look at the split in attitudes between Montreal, where the vast majority of Quebec's immigrants settle, and the rest of the province...[but] [s]cratch beneath the surface, and you discover a generational split as well”. According to a Leger poll, “only 15 per cent of Quebec's youngest voters - and just 24 per cent of pensioners - believe the province accepts too many immigrants. But that belief is held by more than a third of 45-

to 54-year-olds. Likewise, a mere 27 per cent of young voters feel that "Quebec is threatened by the influx of non-Christian immigrants.""(TS-250907)

The comparisons with the Canadian experience generally relates to specific cases in Ontario, such as the Conservatives propositions in 2007 elections to finance faith-based schools and the controversy surrounding sharia Law. Indeed, although:

"Ontario has not grappled with as heated a debate than the one in Québec...the visceral reaction to the expansion of religious education spoke volumes about an increasingly secular society... Ontarians favour diversity, but they clearly define it as a multitude of cultures interacting with and learning from one another - not the isolation of those cultures in order to preserve them" (GM-02007)

In fact, "[i]n both Ontario and Quebec we see attachment to the forms of Christianity and continued acceptance of old compromises, but little public willingness for new ones" (TS-051007). Thus, "any allegations of simple intolerance reflect a flawed understanding of contemporary Quebec society. (GM-310307).

Given all this complexity "...it's hard to imagine how [Bouchard and Taylor] could forge any kind of consensus, for the issues at stake have aroused severe disagreements (TS-030108). But in the end, the B&T Commission might have been a good thing and some lessons can be relevant for the ROC:

We may agree or disagree with what will be said today in the report of the Quebec commission on reasonable accommodation...[but] read it we must...Addressed to Quebecers, the Bouchard-Taylor message is relevant to all Canadians - Ontarians, in particular, given our divisive debates on sharia law, funding for religious schools and now the Lord's Prayer at the Legislature" (TS-220508).

"...the result of these uncomfortable deliberations...warrants our attention. For while the report reflects the minority position of Quebec's francophone population within Canada, it also contains some valuable messages for the rest of the country...On the substantive side...these ideas are as applicable to Toronto as to Montreal...Bouchard and Taylor don't have all the answers. But they have provided some good ideas for further discussion. As immigrants continue to arrive at Canada's doors, it is a debate in which we all need to engage" (TS-240508)

Finally, one as to remember that "Quebec is an existential kind of place; always has been, always will be. Issues get debated there differently than elsewhere in Canada - not better or worse, necessarily, just differently". The B&T Commision "was a very...French or Cartesian gesture...since in the existential world of Quebec, digging down to first

principles and then debating them is the preferred course of action, as opposed to the case-by-case incrementalism of the Anglo-Saxon tradition” (GM-240508).

“In the end, this debate over the limits of reasonable accommodation is a non-violent conversation with and about “the other”...The challenge for Canadians, new and old, will be to debate the matter with as much empathy and imagination as we can muster. And we should take heart: This debate over difference is neither new nor unusual; it is the Canadian conversation, which began the day after Generals Wolfe and Montcalm left the Plains of Abraham for another utopia in the sky.” (GM -270307)

One of the lessons is that “the rest of Canada, ensconced in a glass house, has no call to throw stones. It is important to examine first what is special to Quebec about this new chapter of multiculturalism in Canada and then look at what is generic to the country as a whole.” (GM-310307). And, by the way, “[t]here's another question, too. In a multicultural world, what happens to Canada's identity as two founding peoples? (GM-111007)

We see in this discourse that Québec is considered not so differently than the ROC. It is not the only jurisdiction that has to deal with these issues, as exemplified by recent cases in Ontario, and maybe that the rest of the country will soon be facing the same situation. Issues are dealt with differently, but not necessarily in a negative way. Finally, Québécois and Canadians might not be so different; there are divides that are present in all societies, and the debate in Québec might reflect these divides more than Québec's intrinsic characteristics.

GM and TS: Traditional divisions

Although a discourse of curiosity is clearly present, there is another discourse that reflects traditional divides. As the literature suggests, this discourse emphasizes the negatively connoted Québec's characteristics to explain the debate such as nationalism and ethnocentrism; the use of comparisons to construct the “Otherness” of Québec and the Québécois; the reinforcement of the Canadian multicultural identity and the promotion of and implicit “majority nationalism”. Terms such as xenophobic, racism, intolerance, fear mongering, toxic etc. are widely used not only to describe Herouxville's councilors or Mario Dumont and its ADQ, but as a reference to the “debate on reasonable accommodation” generally. In the end, this discourse leaves the general impression of a *bad society*.

The negatively connoted Québec nationalism can be used in different situations. For example, discussing, the 2007 Election in which reasonable accommodation was one of the major issues:

“But it turned on something else [than accommodation], as Quebec elections always do: nationalism. Issues come and go,

but French-speaking Quebecers' sense of self-identity -- and how to promote it politically -- remains at the centre of the province's politics. As a result, Quebec elections always have a strong existential element that exists nowhere else in Canada" (GM-280307).

And this can be explained: "Because Quebec is a nationalist society, and because the oxygen of nationalism is suspicion of the Other, this sort of thing plays well, especially in the old-stock communities outside Montreal." (GM-270307). One has also to be aware that "Quebec, of course, differs from the rest of Canada in that francophones ...the Us-Them model - you must adapt to our way of life - will never work in English Canada. Who would the "Us" be, anyway?" (GM-081207).

Other Québec negatively connoted characteristics are also used as a way to defend the Canadian multicultural identity. This is particularly present when discussing the hearings:

"two-man commission looking into the "reasonable accommodation" of minorities is finding stark evidence of racism and xenophobia...[and]...some ugly, anti-Muslim sentiments have bubbled up in the hearings held by Quebec's Commission...But to claim, as many pundits are doing, that this is a microcosm of Canadian attitudes is unfair...At least two generations of Torontonians and Vancouverites would find life in the predominantly white, rigidly conformist Canada of yesteryear stifling and parochial" (TS-261007)

It also has to be emphasized that "[c]oncerns about growing xenophobia in Canada are writ large in La Belle Province... Quebec's anxiety about newcomers and minority groups, so extensively publicized during the recent hearings on "reasonable accommodation." (TS -101107). It is also important to remember that "the notion of "*reasonable accommodation*" might mean different things to different people, and that gap in understanding is being used to polarize Canadians into "us" and "them."... For those Canadians, it must be disheartening to see strains of their native lands' assimilationist policies arising in Canada under the cover of a debate on "reasonable accommodation.]" (TS-071107). Thus, it does not seem appropriate to compare what happens in Québec with the ROC. In fact, this whole debate could dishonor Canada:

"Across Canada, people of goodwill are cringing as Quebec's identity debate turns toxic...and things are getting worse [as] Charest [has] invited a spasm of anti-immigrant fear mongering by naming two academics to tour the province sounding people out on just how far Quebec should go to make minorities feel welcome. The answer for many Quebecers is, not very far...At public hearings, commissioners Gerard Bouchard and Charles

Taylor have presided over a festival of fear, bigotry and ignorance." (TS-031107)

And it is time for political leadership. The federal Liberal Party has to "weigh in" because:

"A nasty debate over "reasonable accommodation" toward immigrants has erupted in Quebec over the past year...Since some of the hearings were televised, these nativist nightmares were broadcast to the world...Fear of the "other" is a pillar of ethnic nationalism; it is one of the most prevalent prejudices in the world...Trudeau opened Canada to the world. Ignatieff and his Liberal colleagues must ensure that no one is allowed to slam the door shut. (TS-021207)

At the provincial level, Charest and the Liberals, "[r]ather than be dragged into this toxic debate... should expose it for what it is: Odious fear mongering. It has no place in Quebec's success story. It has no place anywhere." (TS-111207). It is not only the role of political parties as other Canadians might have a role to play too. After the rally in Montréal prior to the 1995 referendum, it is now:

"...the time for another diplomatic mission - to condemn our beloved neighbors for the disgrace of their "reasonable accommodation" horror show... Somebody has to say it: "Reasonable accommodation" is nothing more than "acceptable bigotry." The very premise of the Quebec hearings is grotesque. As Torontonians, we have a civic duty to help strangle this infant in its cradle. Is there a single person in this city who could even imagine government hearings into what kind of headgear citizens are entitled to wear?... If it was just a Quebec thing, "reasonable accommodation" would be a mere embarrassment. But they're making it ours - and it has become a direct threat to the comity of urban Canada. (GM-031107)

And the fact is that "[i]f it was just a Quebec thing, "reasonable accommodation" would be a mere embarrassment. But they make it ours- and it has become a direct threat to the comity of urban Canada" (TS-031107). Some comparisons are also particularly intriguing as they link the "debate" with events that seem to be of a different order:

Mob violence against 'foreigners' in South Africa. Questions about 'reasonable accommodation' in Quebec. Why can't we all just get along? The recent mob violence in South Africa targeting immigrants is consistently described in the press as an instance of rampant xenophobia - a deep fear or hatred of what is foreign or perceived as

such... The release of the Bouchard-Taylor report in Canada last week reminds us xenophobia isn't just a pathology of the poor. Fear of difference is manifestly present in this prosperous nation that claims to cherish multicultural tolerance. (GM-310508)

In Ontario, an inquiry is looking into reports that Asian Canadian fishermen were assaulted and pushed into Lake Simcoe near the town of Georgina. And Quebec is in the midst of a royal commission on "reasonable accommodation" gauging Quebecers' feelings toward immigrants and how far the province should go to welcome newcomers. (TS-120507)

There are also arguments about the detrimental effect that this debate could have on Québec's economy as it could not be perceived as a welcoming society. Indeed, it could be expected that "[a]fter hearing weeks of angry talk before the Bouchard-Taylor commission, newcomers to Québec might suspect that they made a poor choice" (TS-011107). And "[t]he new citizens Québec needs as a result of a worker shortage and a depleted tax base will not thrive until its government and citizens fully support their arrival and celebrate their contribution..." (GM-290108). And one as to note that "[b]ased on the pretty solid assumption that there's not much oil there, Quebec likely needs many more immigrants if its economy is to prosper in the coming decades. Will its current political leaders come to the same conclusion?" The answer "will hinge on whether or not a public commission struck by the government to defuse the issue of "reasonable accommodation" of ethnic and religious minorities deteriorates into a xenophobic backlash against "them" or reveals Quebecers in their true, tolerant guise. (GM-060907). Thus, the lesson is: "Immigrants are good for Quebec. They are more educated than you. Stop discriminating against them, especially in the workplace" (TS-250508).

The outcomes of the B&T commission are also mixed. While the diagnosis made by the commissioners seems appropriate - "For their beautiful elucidation of Quebec culture and its problems in accommodating diversity, give...[them] an A-plus-plus" – their recommendations pose several problems: "for their practical ideas on what to do about those problems, give them a D-minus. They thought they could perfect Quebec society, resolve all tensions and contradictions. They overreached. (GM-230508). The recommendations do not seem appropriate as they do not fit with the Canadian policy of multiculturalism.

In analyzing the recommendations regarding religious signs in the public service, it seems that "...inwardness is bad for minorities but good for the majority. Such contortions were inevitable, given Quebec's refusal to accept the central Canadian reality that all citizens, and cultures, are equal...[and as] they refuse to give up their quasi-religious tribalism and its dogma of making others subservient to it". Because one has to

know that “[t]he debate over ‘Who’s a Canadian’ has long been resolved. A Canadian is one who lives legally in Canada, period” (TS-250508)

And these recommendations contradict the Canadian multiculturalism policy:

“One would have expected the commissioners to abide by the wise saying that "if it doesn't itch, don't scratch it."... But instead of closing the book and leaving the matter to rest... couldn't resist the temptation to rewrite the landscape. They call for a wide array of new measures, including a law on "interculturalism," a code of secularism, an "office of intercultural harmonization," a host of committees and even more research on immigration and "interculturalism." (GM-260508).

In that sense, “[t]hey follow Quebec orthodoxy in preferring "interculturalism" to multiculturalism” (GM-210508). Another mistake that they made is:

“to urge the state to engage in a massive buildup of the supposed tools of tolerance - more money and powers for the human rights commission, "exceptional measures" to combat discrimination, white papers on this, research on that. All this expensive tolerance-mongering from the state seems unlikely to take deep root. It may, though, prolong a storm that probably would pass on its own. (GM-230508)

And it also has to be noted that “[t]heir report was widely criticized in Quebec because it insisted that members of the francophone majority must accept that their culture will be transformed, sooner or later, through interaction with ethno-cultural minorities.” (GM-220908).

In spite of all these problems with the process and the recommendations, there is some hope in that “the bizarre spectacle that the Québec’s Bouchard-Taylor commission on “reasonable accommodation” could have some beneficial effects: “The more that Quebecers and other Canadians are exposed to the ignorance that has helped fuel the “reasonable accommodation” debate, the more likely they will be to reject a dramatic shift away from the country's tolerant approach toward newcomers.” (GM-031107). And “[m]aybe, as fall turns into winter, the debris from all this mess will be cleared up. Maybe...” (TS-061107)

Finally, someone had the idea of comparing the debate on “reasonable accommodation in Quebec” with the lyrics of a song: “*You've got to be taught, before it's too late/ Before you are six, or seven or eight/ To hate all the people your relatives hate/ You've got to be carefully taught*”

What can be observed from this discourse is that the very negative opinions are expressed when the debate is inscribed in the negatively connoted Québec’s specificity. When it is

linked to nationalism or ethnocentrism, Québec's paths and choices, such as "interculturalisme" as defended by Bouchard and Taylor, are not considered as legitimate as they contradict the policy of multiculturalism.

National Post and Québec: In defense of Herouxville but not governmental interventions

It is first important to note that the sample for the NP is relatively small (42 articles), so that what is presented in this section is limited. This small sample could explain why it is hard to identify clearly distinctive discourses. Thus I will only draw the two general lines of arguments that I found so far and contrast them with the two other newspapers: one sees the whole debate as worth it and, more importantly, largely favorable to Herouxville's *Code of conduct*; another that takes a very critical stance when it involves government interventions.

For the first, it seems fairly clear that letters to editor, editorials, and some columns/opinions are, contrary to the TS and GM, largely favorable to Herouxville's code of conduct. This positive stance seems to relate to the concrete critique of multiculturalism that they offer. All the letters but two follow the argument that Herouxville "may have finally broken through the public barriers of political correctness that have stifled open and honest debate about the "merits" of legislated multiculturalism" (NP-310107). A similar stance is also found in editorial Following Mario Dumont's ascension to Opposition Leader after the 2007 election:

"Many bien-pensant types scorned the village council of Herouxville...with its grandiose "Publication of Standards"...But now, Herouxville has had its revenge. Perhaps Anglo critics and even some Quebec liberals were too busy imputing unhealthy psychological motives to remember that Quebec voters think instinctively about cultural survivance on a historical scale of centuries -- a motivation entirely distinct from intolerance, much less racism (NP-280307).

Some comments also support this line of argument emphasizing that "[t]he idea that "Herouxville is old Quebec, old Canada" -- which appeared in a Globe and Mail editorial last week--is not only wrong: It is the exact opposite of the truth" (NP-301007). For another, although:

"[p]hrased awkwardly, in places offensively, the code gave expression to a fear felt elsewhere in Canada, and throughout much of the Western world: Have our societies gone too far in accommodating alien religious and cultural practices, to the point where our own values -- and perhaps our security -- are undermined? (NP-311207)

This kind of arguments clearly departs from the discourses found in the GM and the TS. The second tendency is to criticize any kind of governmental interventions that tries to

“engineer” the society. For example,

“The undercurrent of the both the recent Quebec and Ontario elections was that Canadians are increasingly fed up with government- mandated acquiescence to new cultures in our midst. The debates in Quebec over "reasonable accommodation" and Ontario over faith-based schools were evidence of a growing popular backlash against government attempts to engineer an elite view of the ideal society rather than trusting in the good nature of Canadians to reach compromises that make sense at the local and regional level. (NP-221007)

Another argues that: “The policies of social and political engineering, introduced in this country in 1988, have of late become the object of much more candid and critical scrutiny in countries such as Britain, Holland, Germany and Australia, where now they are beginning to be openly recognized as failures. (NP310107)

This is also reflected in the positions regarding the B&T Commission:

the essential problem with "reasonable accommodation," multiculturalism, "interculturalism" -- and the larger theory of group rights of which they are subsets [is]: Once the tolerance police achieve their original objectives, they move the goalposts. The Bouchard-Taylor report too easily buys into the notion that government can -- with some prodding of the populace and a whole lot of cultural grants -- re-engineer a tolerant society. Such policies delay the accommodation that both longtime residents and newcomers would have made if their interactions with one another had been based on each other's economic self-interests rather than the political goals of the government of the day. Until political interference stops -- and that includes meddling commissions full of academics -- there will be no natural accommodation, reasonable or otherwise. (NP-240508)

In sum, there are indications that the debate and Herouxville found more support in the NP than in the TS and GM. But when it involves government interventions, the tone becomes more negative.

Conclusion

The main objective of this paper was to see if there were some instances of curiosity in ROC’s media regarding immigration and integration issues in Québec. The *curiosity discourse* would depart from traditional divides that are deeply entrenched in Canadian politics. In the end, this discourse was far more present than expected. It tries to reflect more deeply into the Québec situation and relate to the Canadian experience with immigration and integration. It recognizes that Québec is not only the place where these

issues arise, and that the Québécois are maybe not so different than other Canadians. The rural-urban divide and the generational split are also taken into account to understand the debate, as well as the general tendency to search for “general principles” instead of relying on a pragmatic, case-by-case approach. This provides for a more complex picture of Québec and the Québécois.

For the discourse reflecting the traditional divides, it is still present in ROC’s media. What is striking with this discourse is the mixing of very disparate elements under the umbrella of “the debate on reasonable accommodation”. In this perspective, the explanation for the “whole” debate has to be found in Québec’s nationalism and ethnocentrism.

For the National Post, there seem to be different discourses than the ones found in the GM and the TS. The general support for Herouxville is a clear distinction with the other newspapers. One might say that this is not very surprising, but it shows how the NP and Québec can make for “strange bedfellows”: praising Herouxville while criticizing governmental interventions...

Finally, the *curiosity discourse* that has been found in the GM and the TS seem like as good news for the Two Solitudes problem. Along the way, it was interesting to see that in his search for The Globe and Mail Nation Builder of the year, the editor in chief, Edward Greenspon, named Bouchard and Taylor as possible candidates as the two men “whose educative and salutary report contributed greatly to relieving the earlier tensions”.

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