

The Muslim “Problem”: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Charter of Values Hearings

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Abstract

This research examines the discourse held by ordinary citizens on both Muslims and Quebec society during the hearings on the Charter of values (2014). While the public debates appeared to support the existence of a Muslim “problem”, the literature highlights instead an ongoing identity definition process in Quebec where multiple views compete to defining the national identity and the place of ethno-cultural and religious pluralism within it. Following a critical discourse analysis, this research investigates the dominant narratives regarding the relation between Muslims and Quebec society as well as the rhetorical strategies used to support them. The analysis exposes the way discourses are used by participants to represent both French-Quebecois and Muslim Quebecois as conflicting groups. The findings suggest that the dominant representations of both groups serve to reinforce competing definitions of Quebec society in the way they present majority-minority relations.

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1. Introduction

This research examines the discourse surrounding Muslims in Quebec and more precisely how their relationships with Quebec society were portrayed during the public hearings on Bill 60 (2013) more commonly referred to as the *Charter of Quebecois values*. Introduced in November 2013 by the nationalist Parti Quebecois government to the National Assembly of Quebec, the draft law aimed to reaffirm the laic character of the state of Quebec as well as to define a framework for demands of religious accommodation (Government of Quebec 2013). However, by its banishing of conspicuous symbols among the public servants and publicly funded organizations, many have argued that the measures it proposed mainly affected members of religious minority groups and particularly Muslim women wearing the veil (Tahon 2014).

The present research investigates the discourses that have surrounded the Charter during the public hearings held by the government in January and February 2014. Its analysis sheds light on the ways rhetorics and representations constructed by the participants contribute to framing French-Quebecois¹ and Muslims as conflicting groups, but also reflect various visions of Quebec society. The main questions investigated in this research project are: *Did the public hearings on Bill 60 contribute to portraying Muslims as a “problem” for Quebec society and its values? And if so, what form did it take in the discourse on the Charter? What are the main representations of the relationships between Quebec society and Muslims that emerged during the hearings? How are these representations expressed rhetorically?* Guided by these questions,

¹ The expression “French-Quebecois” will be used here to refer to Quebecois whose ancestors migrated from France before the British conquest (Juteau 2015). Consequently, other terms used to refer to French-Quebecois such as “old-stock” or “de souche” are here rejected as they imply a hierarchical order among ethno-cultural groups in Quebec (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 202). It is nevertheless important to specify that the term, despite its apparent reference to a linguistic group, excludes French-speaking Quebecois who belong to other ethno-cultural groups. The latter are usually gathered under or given the label of “allophones” which refers to an ethno-linguistic category that is neither English nor French, even when the mother tongue is for instance French (Gueye 2005).

the rhetorical analysis of the discourses following a CDA approach highlights how, rather than a question of faith, the Muslim “problem” embodies points of contention between conflicting definitions of Quebec society. Hearings’ participants adhered largely to a “republican” vision of Quebec society (involving a strong regulation of religion and enforcement of neutrality in the public sphere (Lamy 2015)) in which minority groups are asked to integrate to the norm often incarnated by the French-Quebecois majority group. Moreover, the analysis reveals how power relations were maintained between the French-Quebecois majority and Muslim Quebecois by defining the national identity as either universal or unified² but rarely as pluralistic. Conversely, Muslims were presented as problematic because of their particular characteristics perceived as incompatible with non-pluralistic visions.

What is particularly relevant about the case of the Charter of values is that although the project was never enacted (as it was abandoned in April 2014 after the electoral defeat of the Parti Quebecois), the idea of reaffirming laicity and Quebecois values nevertheless rallied an important support among Quebec’s population. A survey conducted between September 2013 and January 2014 suggested that more than half of the Quebecois agreed with the proposed measures (*La Presse* 2014). It also revealed a particularly strong support among Francophones (68% were in favour compared to only 21% of allophones) (*La Presse* 2014). As soon as the bill was announced in the fall of 2013, debates on the place of religion in a laic³ society and on the

² The expression universal is here based on Guillaumin’s (2002) theory of majority-minority relations where it is argued that the characteristics of the majority tend to be seen as universal and used presented as the norm while those of the minorities are in contrast perceived as particular and often problematic. For its part, the expression “unified” refers to a monist approach to Quebec society and to its relation to religion in which French-Quebecois culture and identity are understood as central to the national identity. The approach is thus opposed to a pluralistic vision which views pluralism as both a component and as a desired outcome for Quebec society (Juteau 2015, 151). These concepts will be explained in greater length in the literature review.

³ The term laicity is here used as the English equivalent of the French term “laïcité”. Although it is often translated to “secularism” in English literature, French authors attribute to both terms different meanings (Baubérot 2013). In this context, secularism corresponds to a “paradigm” centred around the idea of a “decline of religion’s social and cultural relevance” in modern societies since the Enlightenment (Baubérot 2013; Milot 2002, 32). “Laïcité”, on the

integration of immigrants spread throughout the province (Haince 2014, 31). Islam and Islamic practices and beliefs were quickly singled out and presented by some as incompatible with, and even as a threat to Quebec's values, such as laicity and gender equality (*Ibid.* 2014, 31).

The social tensions created by the Charter were not only perceptible in the media discourse, but also in the speeches held during the public consultations on Bill 60 where citizens and associations were invited to present their opinions on laicity, gender equality and religious accommodations. Some presentations have even stood out for their negative and sometimes pejorative depiction of Muslims and Islam (Laliberté 2014).

In the following sections, I first present the larger social and historical context in which Bill 60 took place while paying particular attention to the way transformations in the relations between Quebec's ethno-cultural majority and its minority groups led to the Charter of values episode. Then, I address the literature on two central dimensions of the debate: the competing conceptions of Quebec identity as well as the various models of laicity proposed (including their approach to the gender equality question). These two aspects of the debate inform us of the complex and sometimes problematic relationship developed between the Quebec ethno-linguistic majority and Muslims minorities. In sections four and five, I outline the theoretical and methodological frameworks proposed to analyze the discourse of the hearings' participants based on a Critical Discourse Analysis approach and Guillaumin's minority-majority relation theory. Both allow me to bring to light the implicit use of language and rhetorical strategies that expressed the power relations between Muslims and the majority of French-Quebecois (Van Dijk

other hand, is used to refer to a historical process of dissociation or "autonomization" of the state and religious institutions "où la liberté de conscience se trouve, conformément à une volonté d'égalité pour tous, garantie juridiquement par un État neutre » (*Ibid* 2002, 34). As Quebec society has historically experienced the process of laicization and as "laïcité" has become an important identity marker, I will here use the term *laicity* to refer to the specific model developed in the province (Milot 2002, 2013). The particularities of Quebec's laicity, compared to both French *laïcité* and Anglo-Saxon secularism will be presented further below in the literature review on laicity.

1993). The results of this analysis are then presented and followed by a discussion the implication of such findings including the strengths and limits of the study as well as suggestions of further research.

2. Context and Problematique

First, it is important to begin here by introducing the larger historical and societal context in which Bill 60 came to be. This bill was not only influenced by recent debates on ethno-cultural and religious diversity in Quebec, but also by the province's larger history as a linguistic and religious minority within English Canada. In the following section, I present a quick overview of Quebec historical context insisting on the specific moments that have shaped the contemporary form of its society, as well as how the "Muslim question" came into play. I insist more specifically on its history since the Conquest of 1763, but also on more recent events that have shaped the debate on Islam and religious minorities in Quebec. This section ends with a brief presentation of the *Charter of values* itself in order to highlight its main components and the sections of the bill that appeared problematic to many scholars regarding the treatment of religious minorities and Muslims.

2.1. From French Canadians to Quebecois

In order to understand the variety of contemporary discourses on Quebec society and on the management of its ethno-cultural and religious diversity, it is necessary to revisit the context of emergence of the Quebecois nation including that of the French-Canadian which laid its foundations. If many associate the Quebecois nation with the Quiet Revolution, others like Thériault (2007, 224–25) argue that its contemporary form cannot be understood without reference to the complexity of its French-Canadian past. As we will later see in the literature

review, the interpretations of this history play an important role both in defining Quebec society and in recognizing the place of its internal diversity.

The Conquest of 1763

For many scholars, the Conquest represents a turning point in the building process of the French Canadian national community as the social structures of the French colony underwent important transformations. On the one hand, the Conquest led to the departure of New France's elite who returns to the French metropole and its replacement by a British colonial administration. As a result, "Canadiens" (designating at the time French settlers by opposition to British subjects) find themselves excluded from influential positions within the colony's political and economic institutions and gradually lose control over the territory's resources (Monière 2001, 79). According to Bourque and Légaré (2004), these structural changes confine "Canadiens" to economic and social spaces distinct from those of the British population. While the British settlers invest cities and markets, Canadiens turn themselves towards a rural life centred on autarchic agriculture as well as other primary sectors (Juteau 1993, 84; Monière 2001, 79).

Although linguistic and religious rights and a certain form of government are maintained in the province of Quebec, its population composed largely of French-speaking Canadiens is not granted a representative system of government like it is the case in other British colonies. The demands by the French-Canadian bourgeois elite for the establishment of a democratic and laic republic, and its constant rejection by the British government led to both the repression of the 1837-38 rebellions as well as the exile of their leaders (Monière 2001). It is only in 1846, through the Union Act that representative government was granted in a context where the English population of the Upper Canada outnumbers that of the French-speaking Lower Canada (Monière 2001, 80).

During this period, the removal of the French elite through exile brought the Catholic Church to invest social institutions and occupy functions equivalent to those of the state. This new role became here central to the identity cohesion of French Canada (Monière 2001, 96). The Church put in place a new form of nationalism based on the belonging to a Catholic civilization (Laniel 2015, 20). While Canadian identity was gradually redefined along Anglo-Saxon lines, the French-Canadian community was re-centred on the sharing of a common religious, cultural and linguistic heritage. According to Juteau (2002, 443), ethnicity also represented at the time an important boundary distinguishing the two linguistic communities. The impermeability of these boundaries contributed to the consolidation of what Monière (2001) calls a nationalism of self-preservation (*nationalisme de conservation*) characterized by a conservative discourse of “survivance” among French Canadians.

The Quiet Emergence of the Quebecois Nation

According to many intellectuals like Juteau (1993), Monière (2001) and Bourque & Légaré (2004), the industrialization, urbanization and modernization of Quebec society in the early 20th century marked the slow dissolution of the French Canadian nation and the emergence of the Quebecois one alongside new French-speaking communities such as Franco-Ontarian, Franco-Manitoban and Fransaskois (Juteau 1993, 82). In the province of Quebec, the industrial modernization brought important societal changes while also exacerbating ethnic inequalities between French and English Canadians. These inequalities were rendered visible by the dominant position occupied by the English-speaking minority in the province which controlled important part of the economy. Since English represented the language of the workplace and of commerce, the mobility of French Canadians was limited by their difficult access to leading positions due to linguistic barriers (Juteau 2004, 76). In response to this situation, the 1960s were characterized by

the mobilization of French Canadian elites demanding social, political and economic reforms. These reforms, including a greater independence from the federal government as well as greater control over the province's affairs, came to be called the "Quiet Revolution" (Juteau 2004, 78).

The Quiet Revolution also marked the emergence of the Quebecois nation alongside a sovereigntist movement. French Canadian identity, perceived as "traditional" and "anti-modern" was increasingly rejected while attempts were made to define the emerging national community in new terms compatible with modernity. The process of laicization transformed the state's institutions and gradually removed the Church from the privileged positions it had occupied so far. It was also a period of important economic and social changes which facilitated the social mobility of Francophones, with for instance the adoption of Bill 101 and the Charter of French language, an important promotion of the French culture across the province (Monière 2001; Bourque and Legaré 2004) as well as increased efforts to promote women's equality and their presence in the public and political sphere (Dobrowolsky 2017, 519). The consolidation of the state of Quebec also contributed to the territorialisation of the Quebecois national community as well as to the emergence of political movements seeking greater autonomy from Canada. These transformations resulted in a reversal of the power structure within the province where the Anglophone population found itself in a minority position (Juteau 1996, 95).

If, however, this new nationalism was a rejection of the French Canadian identity as a component of the nation, it nevertheless maintained a homogenous definition of the nation as ethnically French Canadian, dismissing the internal diversity of the province (aboriginal and anglophone communities, as well as other ethno-cultural minorities) (Juteau 1996, 47).

According to Juteau (2004), the Quiet Revolution marked, more than the creation of a civic

nation, the passage of the French-Quebecois from a minority status to one of a “dominant” majority within the border of the province.

Responses to the Quebecois Nationalist Project

Meanwhile, the rise of nationalism in Quebec also brought a response from the federal government taking the form of a redefinition of the Canadian nation in more inclusive terms meant to counteract the sovereigntist project. According to Kymlicka, the adoption of multiculturalism was meant to “to re-emphasize Canada’s “duality”—i.e., to re-emphasize the equal status of British and French as “founding nations”” but also the recognition of other minority ethnic groups marginalized by biculturalism policies (Kymlicka 2015, 18). However, from the Quebecois point of view, multiculturalism was instead perceived as the negation of the distinctive character of Quebec society within Canada as well as its reduction to one ethnic group among others (Boismenu 2011; Juteau 2004, 80). The plurality of forms of belonging promoted by the policy of multiculturalism was seen as a challenge to Quebecois nationalism, especially following the failure of the 1980 referendum. Since then, rallying ethno-cultural minorities to the nationalist project has been an important component of the redefinition of the Quebecois nation.

While Canada formalized its “differentialist” vision of the Canadian nation through the 1988 Multiculturalism Act, Quebec adopted a “common public culture” in the early 1990s. This public culture, along an alternative model of integration called “interculturalism” came to define the specific ways of belonging to Quebec society (Juteau 2002, 445). These new approaches also gave Quebecois culture and French language the status of markers of belonging to the national community.

However, these measures were not sufficient for ethnocultural and linguistic minorities to identify with the nationalist discourse. According to authors like Salée (1995) the Quebecois identity promoted by Quebec sovereigntists tended to delegitimize the complex forms of belongings experienced by minorities, as well as their attachment to a multicultural Canada. This can be observed for instance during the second referendum on sovereignty (1995) where 95% of non-French-Quebecois voted “no” while 60% of French-Quebecois voted “yes” (Juteau 2002, 446). Following the failure of the referendum, the discourse on sovereignty disappeared and the provincial government focused its efforts on developing more inclusive definition of Quebec society. After a short experimentation with a “Quebecois citizenship”, Quebec returned in the mid-2000s to the idea of a common public culture and the establishment of a social contract with new immigrants. This civic approach insists for instance on the sharing of values such as democracy, laicity, pluralism, gender equality and French language (Labelle 2008, 31). Moreover, while recognizing the centrality of Quebec’s cultural heritage, this public culture acknowledges a diversity of forms of belonging, including allegiances to both Quebec and Canada. However, as we will see below, this return to shared values did not prevent the challenges brought by a growing immigration and the influence of the post-9/11 context in creating a cohesive Quebecois nation.

2.2. The Contemporary Challenges of Diversity

This overview of Quebec historical context leads us to the more recent public debates on ethno-cultural and religious diversity that have led to the creation of the Charter of Quebecois values. I will here pay particular attention to the period following September 11, 2001, but it appears nevertheless important to stress that the difficult relationships between Quebec’s ethnic majority and Muslim minorities go back to the past thirty years.

The first incident involving Islam takes place in 1988 with the request of some parents to integrate Arabic language to their school curriculum. This conflict mainly concerned the association of Arabic language with Islamic teachings and other Muslim stereotypes as most of the parents involved were of Christian background (McAndrew 2010, 46). It was followed in 1995 by the case of the hijab in public schools which revolved around the question of the place of religion in public spaces and the extent to which the institution that is school should respect religious beliefs (McAndrew 2010, 48, 2002).

It is also important to note that these events were in part influenced by similar debates in France during the same period and contributed to the framing of the problem in Quebec. According to Benhadjoudja (2014, 117), the “circularity of discourses and debates” between the French and Quebecois contexts is an important factor to consider when it comes to issues involving Islam. Despite their socio-historical and cultural specificities regarding their relationship to Muslims and Islam, both shared similar concerns and points of view on extremism, women’s rights, immigration, and later on *laïcité* (*Ibid.* 2014, 118). This influence is especially important in understanding certain framing of the debate as well as positions taken in more recent events, such as the Charter of values.

The Muslim population of Quebec nevertheless differs from that of France, and to a certain extent, that of English Canada. Compared to the French context, Quebecois Muslims are very few in number, mainly first-generation immigrants and largely composed of highly skilled workers (as opposed to asylum seekers and those arriving through family reunion programs in France). In 2013, the Muslim population in the province was of about 250,000 and among them nearly 70% were immigrants. Moreover, although the latter represents around 25% of the total number of immigrants in Quebec, Muslims compose only 3.1% of the province’s overall population

(Government of Canada 2013). In addition, as a result of Canada's immigration point-system, Quebecois Muslims of immigrant background not only have a certain level of French literacy (varying among ethno-cultural groups), but also a higher post-secondary education rate than the provincial (as well as of the country's) average (McAndrew and Bakhshaei 2012).

Yet, as McAndrew & Bakhshaei (2012) point out, this apparent "positive" portrait contrasts with the dominant public depiction of Muslim Quebecois and their difficult socio-economic integration. Many scholars have noted that the persistence of stereotypes such as religious proselytism, religious extremism or terrorism still contribute to their social and economic marginalization (Oueslati, Antonius, and Labelle 2006; Lenoir-Achdjian et al. 2009; Eid 2007). For instance, according to Labelle, Rocher & Antonius (2009), since 2001, many changes established by the Federal Canadian government regarding security have contributed to the negative portrayal and stigmatization of Muslims.

Although Quebec's approach to diversity management is less influenced by security measures which are a federal jurisdiction, the threat associated with religious and Islamic extremism has led to the enactment of a series of measures carried by the provincial government as well as local ones. For instance, in 2005, following the decision of the Ontario government to ban the practice of religious arbitration, the National Assembly of Quebec passed a preventive motion against the establishment of Islamic courts in the province despite the absence of any legal structure for such practices. Two years later, the small town of Hérouxville, located in a rural area of Northern Quebec, produced a highly mediatised "code of conduct" directed towards new immigrants. Among other things, the code insisted on the banning of certain practices such as face-veiling and violence and mutilation of women and children while listing the practices acceptable to the population. According to Côté-Boucher & Hadj-Moussa (2008), these events

highlight the ongoing tensions between Quebec's French-Quebecois majority and ethno-cultural and religious minorities, especially regarding the inclusion of the latter in the national imagination.

It is, however, the Multani case of 2006 where the Supreme Court of Canada overturned the verdict of the Court of Appeal of Quebec on the interdiction of the wearing of a kirpan (Sikh ritual knife) in public schools that launched province-wide debates about laicity, diversity management and integration of immigrants (Karmis 2008, 257). This episode was followed by a "crisis" generated by Quebec media over the accommodation of religious minorities in the province (Potvin 2014). Reasonable accommodations (RA) were, in this context, presented in public discourse as a tool to impose multiculturalism on Quebec (Bouchard and Taylor 2008). For instance, some argued that these accommodations, by granting "privileges" to religious minorities, allowed minority groups to reject Quebec's culture and thus integration to its society (*Ibid* 2008, 67–68). It is worth mentioning that these debates, although denouncing all types of accommodations (e.g. also for Sikhs, Jews), mainly focused on the accommodations of a small number of Muslim Quebecois.

The crisis led to the establishment of the *Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences* in 2007 which published its report the following year. Concluding that the crisis was the result of misperceptions of minorities by the French-Quebecois majority, the document suggested among other measures the reaffirmation of both interculturalism and laicity as they were not well known by the population. But more importantly, the discourses that have surrounded the RA crisis as well as the hearings of the Commission have largely shaped the framing of issues on diversity management and integration of immigrants in Quebec. Haince (2014) even argues that the Charter of values is part of the same on-going

discussion on collective identity and the management of ethno-cultural diversity. In both events, public opinions shared important similarities. There was a strong emphasis on the protection and reaffirmation of “Quebecois values” (French language, equality between women and men, separation between the State and religions), a demand for a better integration of immigrants and ethno-cultural minorities, as well as an important focus on Muslims and Islamic beliefs and practices (Haince 2014, 31).

Lastly, the most recent context in which the Charter emerged was also marked by conflicts involving both the presence of the full-face veil in the public sphere and cases of religious extremism and radicalization. In 2010, the government of Quebec proposed Bill 94 as a solution to reasonable accommodations which would have, among other things, banned women wearing a face veil from receiving public services. Although the bill did not pass, it nevertheless raised many questions about the perception of Muslim women as well as about secularism in Quebec society (Conway 2012; Fournier and See 2012). In addition, cases of radicalization and religious extremism among young Muslims and religious leaders in Quebec occupied the forefront of the discussion, especially in the media. For instance, in the few months preceding the announcement of the Charter of values, relationships between radicalized imams and convicted terrorists as well as declarations of a Quebecois imam encouraging armed Jihad brought the question of religious fundamentalism into the debate (Pierrebourg 2013). The fight against extremism even became a key issue among the pro-charters. The Minister Bernard Drainville, who introduced Bill 60 even declared in an interview to *La Presse* newspaper that one “cannot fight extremism and be against the Charter” (Journet 2014).

2.3. Bill 60 — “The Charter of Quebecois Values”

Before concluding this section, I propose a quick overview of Bill 60 as it was presented to the National Assembly of Quebec in November of 2013 in order to highlight the aspects of the project that were deemed problematic, especially regarding Muslim women. The Charter was introduced by the government as a solution to challenges concerning diversity management and the protection of “common shared values” in the province. The bill had four main objectives, namely reaffirming the religious neutrality of the state and of its public bodies, banning the wearing of religious symbols by its personal as well as by employees of publicly funded or contracted organizations, ensuring that services are offered and received with uncovered faces and finally, that religious accommodations comply with the limits set by the Charter, with respect to gender equality and to the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. In addition, the document presents information about the implementation of these measures, including the roles and duties of the government and partner organizations.

Although receiving a strong support especially among French Quebecois, many aspects of the Charter have been considered problematic. For instance, while Quebec state bodies are to remain religiously neutral, the bill establishes an exception for markers of “Quebec’s cultural heritage”, referring here mainly to elements of its catholic legacy. By doing so, it allows catholic symbols such as the crucifix above the speaker’s throne in the National Assembly, saint-related toponyms and Catholic monuments to remain as symbols of Quebec history. Symbols of other religions, in contrast, would not be allowed to be displayed in the public sphere. While some praised the measures for the protection it gave to Quebec’s heritage, others criticized the double standard it creates and its inconsistency with the idea of religious neutrality (Lamy 2015).

A second problematic aspect highlighted is its insistence on the embodiment of neutrality by the personnel through the banning of religious symbols such as headgear, clothing or jewelry. As many have argued, this requirement would have mainly affected religious minorities (especially none Christians) whose religious symbols like the veil, the kirpan or the kippah are not only visible, but are sometimes religious obligations (Maclure 2013, 163). The text of the Charter itself associates such practices with proselytism and insists on the importance of performing one's tasks "with all due objectivity, regardless of their religious opinions and beliefs" (Government of Quebec 2013, 9). However, as Maclure (2013) points out, the insistence on religious symbols does not guaranty the neutrality of one's behaviour.

One last important critique of the bill was that it implicitly targeted the wearing of the veil in sectors with a high concentration of female Muslim workers such as health care and childcare. For instance, in the implementation section of the document, the bill dedicates a whole chapter to the educational childcare services sector, the only sector to receive such treatment. This section specifically emphasizes that personnel members are required "to have one's face uncovered", as well as to avoid the teaching of religious beliefs, dogmas, or practice including "a repeated activity or practice stemming from a religious precept, in particular with regard to dietary matters" (Government of Quebec 2013, 10–11). This insistence on educational childcare services, where many Muslim women find employment in the face of a difficult access to skilled jobs shows, according to Tahon (2014), an implicit targeting of Muslims women. In addition, Tahon suggests that the bill promotes a certain vision of equality between women and men by expecting veiled women to liberate themselves through "les voies d'émancipation qu'empruntèrent les Canadiennes françaises dans les années 1960" regarding the Catholic Church (Tahon 2014, 81).

What is particularly interesting about this bill, as points out Helly, is that Quebec's public service is only composed of 2% servants from ethnic minorities (2014, 22). Thus, the majority of employees are French-Quebecois among which the wearing of conspicuous religious tends to be marginal. In other words, as the author suggests, the bill, rather than addressing an existent problem of diversity management, only reinforces an already difficult access to these positions by members of minority groups.

2.4. Conclusion

In sum, in this section I attempted to contextualize the Charter in its larger socio-historical context, highlighting the complex relationship between Quebec society and its own internal diversity with a particular attention to the question of Islam. First I emphasized the complex historical construction of the Quebecois nation in the context of both its minority status within Canada as well as its struggle with its own internal diversity. Then, I highlighted the contemporary events that have contributed to shaping the discussions on Islam as incompatible and to a certain extent as a threat to Quebec society. Finally, this led me to examine how Bill 60, despite aiming to solve certain issues regarding the management of religious diversity through its reaffirmation of religious neutrality and gender equality nevertheless implicitly targeted veiled women.

Thus, the problematic that arises from this context is two-folded. On the one hand, according to many scholars, Quebec society still struggles today to rethink itself in ways that are inclusive to its ethno-cultural and religious minorities while carrying the legacy of a historical minority within its own border as well as within Canada. On the other hand, the centrality of Islam and Muslims as well as the various attitudes toward this "problem" reflect Quebec's complex relation to diversity and religion established throughout history. As it was also highlighted, these recent

events—including the Charter, are seen by some as multiple examples of the malaise of Quebec’s ethnolinguistic majority of French-Quebecois especially in spaces like the media and the context of public consultations. Haince (2014) even suggests that the main issue of the debate on laicity was in fact the definition of Quebec’s collective identity in the context of a growing ethno-cultural diversity. As no study has yet focused specifically on the discourse used in the Charter’s hearings to talk about both Islam and Quebec society, the present research examines how the relationship between the two was framed during the public hearings as well as the ways in which the participants have constructed the “Muslim problem”.

3. Literature Review

In order to understand the variety of discourses on both Quebec society and Islam during the Charter’s public hearing, I propose to explore here the literature addressing two central aspects of the debate, namely the national identity question, and laicity (with a particular attention to attitudes towards gender equality). These two dimensions represent important points of dissension among Quebecois—scholars and population alike, but are also central to the discussion on the place of Islam within Quebec society. First, the identity question deals with different conceptions of Quebec society and the place that should be granted to ethno-cultural diversity. The literature on laicity in turn, focuses on the place given to religion within a secular society as well as the model of religious management favoured (mainly republican VS open laicity). This stream of literature also addresses the debate on women’s rights and gender equality in relation to religious practices, especially veiling. The objective of this literature review is to highlight how the question of national identity and the “Muslims problem” became central to a conversation on a policy meant to reaffirm laicity and state neutrality.

3.1. The Identity Question and the Challenge of Ethnocultural Pluralism

The various definitions of Quebec society and how they define the relationships between the French-Quebecois and ethno-cultural minorities have played an important role in framing the debates over Bill 60. On the one hand, these definitions pay particular attention to the ways minority groups and immigrants are to be “integrated” or “included” into Quebec society and how “pluralism” is to be recognized. On the other hand, they also address the place that should be given to Quebec’s ethno-linguistic majority in a society that is more and more diverse. I will here present three main approaches that have emerged in the Quebecois literature. The first position favours a “unified” definition of Quebec society where the majority represents the core of its identity. The second insists instead on reaffirming the pluralist character of the society, while the third criticizes any attempts to preserve a hierarchy where the French-Quebecois represent the dominant group.

3.1.1 Quebec as a Unified Society

The first approach insists on the importance of recognizing Quebec history but also the centrality of the French-Quebecois identity in order to fully understand the society’s contemporary and future challenges (especially concerning its future as a nation). From this perspective, the growing influence of a multicultural-like approach among political elites and the recognition of pluralism it promotes endanger Quebec society. As a result, the rejection of pluralism and the desire to reaffirm an understanding of Quebec identity based on the French-Quebecois majority adopted by some on the discussion on the Charter of values is perceived here as part of a legitimate and democratic process (Salée 2016, 258).

For scholars such as Beauchemin and Bock-Côté, the unique characteristics of the Quebecois nation and of its sovereigntist project only find their full meaning in the French-

Canadian historical conscience. Beauchemin for instance traces what he calls the “Quebecois difference” back to the 18th century. This “difference” is, according to him, the core of the ideology of “survival” characterizing the French-Canadian society up to the Quiet Revolution. The purpose behind the “survival” was the protection of the particular characteristics of this community’s identity. However, the attempts to break-free from this “conservative” approach to Quebec identity since the 1960s is, according to Beauchemin, at the root of the “identity crisis” experienced by contemporary Quebec society (Beauchemin 2009, 28). The decentralization of the “historic memory” of Quebec’s French-Quebecois majority as well as the recent emphasis on the recognition of fundamental rights of minorities are at the core of the issue. This emphasis on rights appears to invalidate the collective choices made the majority when they should be central to Quebec’s society project and national identity (Beauchemin 2009, 31).

Like Beauchemin, Bock-Côté associates the political and social “malaise” in Quebec to the marginalization of the history of the French-Quebecois majority, its cultural particularities and its identity by political elites and intellectuals who wish to rethink society in an inclusive way (Bock-Côté 2013, 128). He qualifies this approach of “dénationalisation tranquille de la conscience historique” (Bock-Côté 2007, 119). This process involves for instance reinterpretations of Quebec history that disconnect the French-Quebecois memory from the nation by emphasizing a multicultural form of belonging based on fundamental rights and freedoms rather than a shared identity (Bock-Côté 2009, 354).

Moreover, the decentralization of the Quebecois identity resulting from the endorsement of a multicultural approach has recently led to the emergence of a conservative nationalism among French-Quebecois seeking to reconnect with the historic foundations of the national community. From Bock-Côté’s perspective, the importance given to laicity, gender equality as well as to the

Catholic heritage of Quebec during the Charter of values episode embodies a desire from both the Parti Québécois and a part of the population to reconnect with the French-Canadian past and to protect particular elements of the Québécois culture (Bock-Côté 2016, 410–12). Thus, the author sees the openness of the Parti Québécois to this conservative nationalism as a form of awakening to the idea that “un nationalisme qui n’est pas au moins partiellement conservateur rate sa cible et se condamne à l’assèchement existentiel” (*Ibid.* 2016, 416).

Thus, the core of the argument lies here on two central points. On the one hand, the conception of the nation takes the existence of a French-Québécois core as its starting point. This core is not reducible to the French language or a specific set of values (Bock-Côté 2007), and is rather a historical memory that should remain central to the national project based on this identity. On the other hand, the “malaise” which have recently affected Quebec society is due to the attempts by Quebec’s “intelligentsia” to rethink the nation in pluralistic or “multicultural” terms that threaten the survival of the French-Québécois memory. During the Charter episode, this “unified” view of Quebec society has been adopted by a certain number of Québécois that have voiced their concerns regarding the protection of “our values” but also the consequences of negating “who we are” historically as a society (Lamy 2015, 100).

3.1.2 Normative Pluralism

Other scholars, however, consider that the relation to pluralism, despite the challenges it creates, should not be seen as problematic but should instead be given a central place in the way we think Quebec society. From this perspective, pluralism leads to social equality by the recognition it gives to differences. On the contrary, its rejection creates inequalities by the imposition of either universalism or assimilation.

According to Juteau (2015), Western societies—including Quebec are characterized by two conflicting approaches to diversity. The first is a monist vision in which “l’unité représente ce qui est normal et les antagonismes, un état pathologique”, while the second—the pluralist vision, sees instead differences and conflicts as constitutive of societies (2015, 151). Thus, “normative pluralism” represents here an alternative position to that of a unified vision of Quebec society. Here pluralism is not only a constituent element of the society, but also a desired outcome. According to Salée (2016), supporters of this position did not hesitate during the Charter episode to denounce the lack of acceptance of pluralism among Quebec’s population as well as the need to reaffirm its place.

One of the major thinkers of this normative approach in Quebec is Gérard Bouchard whose position was made mainstreamed through the publication of the Bouchard & Taylor Commission report in 2008. According to Bouchard’s work, the societal transformations that have taken place since the 1960s and the entry of Quebec society into the global arena have brought a need for revisiting the narrative of the Quebecois nation and its relationship to diversity.

In the face of contemporary challenges regarding pluralism, Bouchard insists on the importance of revisiting two influent national myths in order to actualize the way Quebec society is being thought. First, he rejects conceptions of the Quebecois nation as a constant throughout history. According to the scholar, one must instead recognize the various, divers, and sometimes conflicting paradigms through which the nation has always been thought (Bouchard 1996, 161, 2005). Secondly, he also dismisses more “radical” approaches that consider the Quiet Revolution as a “rupture” with the French-Canadian past presented as traditional, ethnic, and oppressed by religion as well as embodying the modernization of Quebec society (Bouchard 2005). Bouchard suggests instead to redefine the paradigm of “survivance” by that of “emergence”—the

emergence of Quebec as an international player but also as a society that has historically been pluralistic (Bouchard 1996, 163–64, 2005, 411). He argues that, in this globalized era, it is now necessary to think the nation “au pluriel” and to redefine it in terms that recognize diversity while also preserving the collective memory French-Quebécois.

This need to transform the dominant understanding of Quebec society was also an important conclusion of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission report (2008). Both commissioners stressed the importance for the government of Quebec to reaffirm the principles of interculturalism that were not, according to them, well understood by the population (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 257). Despite its adoption in the 1990s, many French-Quebécois shared misconceptions about minorities (especially regarding their desire to integrate) and feared for the survival of their culture and values (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 214). However, from this perspective, interculturalism implies a collective adherence to a common culture, built on the legacy of the majority group but to which minority identities and cultures contribute to transforming into a common culture (Bouchard 2011). This approach thus recognizes both the French-speaking core of the society (including its values and traditions) and the ethno-cultural diversity and should be endorsed by Quebec population.

Although this pluralist approach found an important adherence among Quebec’s elite during the Charter of values episode, Salée (2016) nevertheless observes an important decline in its popular support. While other scholars attribute this situation to the media discourse, the post-9/11 context and the anxiety of the majority, he considers instead that it is both the liberal and individualistic regime of Quebec society and the centrality of the majority in its collective imagination that led to the rejection of the pluralist option. Consequently, Salée argues that a strong pluralism in Quebec is only possible through profound structural changes based on the

acceptance of differences as well as the decentralization of the French-Quebecois majority from Quebec's culture and identity (*Ibid.* 2016, 278–79).

3.1.3 Ethnic Boundaries and Racial Tensions

Salée's comment thus leads us to address a third approach on the discussion of identity and pluralism in Quebec that insists on the role ethnic boundaries still play today in Quebecois nationalism despite the contemporary attempts to create a more civic nation based on a common culture. This literature highlights how the recent transformation of the French-Canadian collectivity from a sociological minority to a majority still influences today the relationships that French-Quebecois have with ethno-cultural minority groups and immigrants.

The work of Juteau for instance has highlighted how the Quebecois nation was built upon the French-Canadian community which was itself defined along ethnic lines. Juteau, like the previous authors, agrees that the Quebecois nation is indeed rooted in a particular history, but insists on the role of industrialization and urbanization of Quebec society in the 1960s on its edification (1993, 85). In the face of a growing diversity largely of immigration background, as well as in light of the failed referendums on national sovereignty, Quebec governments have tried, in the past decades, to rethink the nation in more pluralist and civic terms. However, according to the author, despite the efforts to decentralize the majority, "the new modern and secular Québécois nationalism remains ethnic after all, as it refers to a bounded collectivity that continues to be defined in terms of shared ancestry and common historical trajectory" (Juteau 2004, 79).

With regards to the RA "crisis" and the Charter episode, many scholars from feminist and anti-racist approaches have also highlighted how power relations between the majority and

minorities persist in the definition of the national identity and related policies in Quebec. According to authors such as Helly (2014) and Côté-Boucher & Hadj-Moussa (2008), events such as the RA “crisis” and the Charter of values, as well as other political measures like the code of conduct of Hérouxville (2007) or the motion on Islamic courts (2005) are signs of a “malaise” among the French-Quebecois majority regarding the place to be granted to ethno-cultural and religious minorities in Quebec. For these scholars, this reflects a refusal to rethink the national identity in inclusive terms. As the society fails to address the issues, conflicts regarding “false problems” (Haince 2014) or false enemies (Helly 2014, 27) emerge. Accordingly, Haince (2014) sees in the conflicts surrounding the Charter of values a “malaise” experienced by the majority towards the “Other” perceived as a threat to its fragile minority status, especially when the latter demands accommodation rather than opting for integration. Haince also considers Bill 60 as well as other similar policies as attempts to legally define a certain vision of Quebec identity where the majority takes precedence over minorities (2014, 34). In similar ways, Bakali (2015) argues that the anti-Islam sentiment in Quebec that emerged in the past thirty years find its roots in the relationship to the Other constructed since the Quiet Revolution. According to him, Quebec continues to develop diversity management policies—whether it be interculturalism or laicity, that serve to preserve the culture of the white French majority (Bakali 2015, 426). Consequently, the roots of a hostile discourse towards Islam call back to the “racial tensions” underlying the definition of the nation since the 1960s.

The various positions explored above enlighten us on different views as well as points of contention that coexist in Quebec when it comes to defining “us” as a society and how to integrate minorities and immigrants. Some approaches give a greater importance to the ethno-cultural majority, while others insist on the recognition of pluralism and others again are critical

of any attempts by the majority to maintain a privileged position. This literature, however, tends to focus mainly on ethno-cultural diversity and to attribute to religion a more marginalized role. Since religious diversity and more particularly the place of Muslim minorities in a laic society was at the heart of the controversy surrounding the Charter of values, it is also necessary to address scholarship on laicity and secularism in Quebec.

3.2. Religion, Laicity and Secularism in Quebec

The second stream of literature that has constituted an important part of the discussion on Bill 60 is that of laicity and the model of religious management to adopt in a secular society. In this context, exploring the presence of a “Muslim problem” requires addressing the various interpretations of the relationship Quebec has historically developed with religion. This involves paying particular attention to the place they grant religion in the public sphere but also how its influence on the population is defined, especially regarding the question of gender equality.

In this section of the literature review, I explore the main positions that emerged from the literature on laicity and secularism in Quebec and how they relate to the Muslim question. These positions can be divided into three main categories: those supporting an open and “liberal” laicity model while generally opposing the Charter, those supporting a republican laicity implemented by the state and finally, those supporting a more “conservative” form of republican laicity insisting on the protection of the French-Quebecois religious heritage and identity. I also suggest exploring a forth approach that specifically focuses on the relation between laicity, secularism and the attitude towards the Islamic veil in Quebec.

3.2.1. Open Laicity

The first approach to laicity is considered to be a “liberal” position that views the Quebecois model of religious management as having gradually imposed itself in the province through the influence of both the Canadian and French models. This combination resulted in an open attitude towards religious pluralism while also emphasizing the neutral character of the state and its separation from religion. Thus, those who adhere to the liberal approach tend to insist on the necessity to continue on the particular course Quebec has historically developed and to oppose political or legal measures meant to restrict freedom of religion.

Rather than conceptualizing laicity as a legal framework that has to be implemented by the state, those who subscribe to a “liberal” vision of laicity in Quebec suggest that this model is rooted in a particular historical context influenced by tolerance of religious pluralism. Lefebvre argues that Quebec laicity is influenced by both the Anglo-Saxon and French conceptions of religious diversity management. First, she agrees with Martin’s (2000) work suggesting that Quebec as a Catholic minority in a Protestant context has historically developed a greater cohesion and territorial anchorage and stronger attachment to religion as an identity marker. However, according to her, Quebec is also located historically midway between an openness to diversity influenced by a “liberal” Canadian secularism and a French republican laicity where the religious and the secular are in strong opposition (Lefebvre 2008, 174). The former is more tolerant towards religions and religious expression in the public sphere while the latter tends to be more suspicious of it (Lefebvre 2016a, 231). Thus, it is between these two different conceptions of the place of religion in society that Quebec has come to develop a flexible approach to religious management.

For her part, Micheline Milot suggests that the Quebecois model has been established gradually through different policies of diversity management since the 18th century. Considering the gradual and contextualized approach of this model, she qualifies the type of laicity that was developed in Quebec as “silencieuse” and “tacite” (Milot 2004, 35). According to her, the laicization process in Quebec did not begin with the Quiet Revolution but was instead accelerated during this period without ever being fully achieved through a legal framework (Milot 2002, 109, 2009). Her work highlights how implicit laicity regulating religions in Quebec has historically been defined by its relation to the Canadian secular approach, differing from both that of France and the United States.

Milot’s approach on laicity also inspired the model developed by Bouchard and Taylor (2008) in their final report of Commission on reasonable accommodations. The report popularized this “liberal” approach with the concept of “open laicity”. Like other liberal thinkers, the commissioners insisted that an adequate model of laicity for Quebec society should emphasize both its pluralist approach to religion as well as the particular character of its historical context. The commissioners rejected a normative legal framework that would regulate religion in the public sphere and insisted instead on the role of citizens’ initiatives in developing “harmonization practices” (or reasonable accommodations) (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 167).

This open laicity, complementing their intercultural model, is seen by the commissioners as typically Quebecois as its objective is a progressive integration of ethno-religious minorities to Quebec common culture and differentiates itself from both the Canadian and French models. Their choice is based on the idea that the model of diversity management should reflect the pluralist and liberal character of Quebec society (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 140–41). According to the commissioners, an open laicity allows for both the respect of individual freedoms and the

separation of the state of religion without imposing a normative approach of “living together” that would on the contrary erase differences (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 148).

Consequently, with regard to the Charter of values, those supporting an “open laicity” model tended to oppose the bill considering that it went against the approach that has been historically developed in the province. Moreover, not only would it have limited religious freedoms and the expression of religion in the public sphere, but would also discriminate against certain minority groups and impact negatively their social and economic integration to Quebec society (Lamy 2015).

3.2.2. The Top-down Approach of Republican Laicity

A second approach to religious management is that of a “strict” or “republican” laicity regime inspired by the French republican model. In Quebec, this model is defined in opposition to open laicity as it favours a strong regulation of religion in the public sphere as well as the subordination of religious freedoms to other rights such as gender equality. It also sees the religious neutrality of the public sphere as an essential condition to social cohesion and equality between citizens. Consequently, it is opposed to any accommodations, even when it comes to the cultural heritage of Quebec ethno-linguistic majority. With regards to the Charter of values, supporters of a republican approach although agreeing with some measures it proposed, saw the government’s desire to protect the Catholic heritage of Quebec as contradictory with the project of an achieved laicity (Lamy 2015, 70).

While supporters of a liberal laicity focus on the historical continuity of the Quebec approach, the republicans subscribe to a more “modernist” vision of Quebec’s history (Lefebvre 2016b, 478). Here, the Quiet Revolution marks the emergence of Quebec society into modernity

by its rupture with the “Grande noirceur” era and the end of the Catholic Church’s rule. The Quiet Revolution is in this context seen as a “sortie de la religion” through the laicization of Quebec society and of its institutions (Lefebvre 2016b; Rocher 2013, 33; Beauchamp 2013, 43). However, the supporters of a strict laicity consider that the rupture undertaken in the 1960s has not been achieved. Thus, they endorse a stronger laicity that would legally regulate religious expressions and freedoms in the public sphere, as well as the separation between religions and the state.

According to its supporters, only a strict laicity can allow a “real” social cohesion as well as a real pluralism because it requires a common adherence to the principles of laicity (Beauchamp 2013, 43). By universally enforcing neutrality, it sets the necessary conditions for social peace and the just and equal treatment of all citizens. On the one hand, it protects the collective choices made by Quebec society over individual rights claims, and on the other, it protects society from the influence of conservative groups and religious fundamentalist individuals (Baril and Lamonde 2013, 8). It also favours a better inclusion of immigrants than under open laicity as it establishes a clear and defined context of integration-especially regarding its values (Rocher 2013, 38).

This republican model is also considered by its supporters to be a fundamental condition to gender equality. Francine Descarries (2013) for instance argues that only a strict laicity can allow women to progress and thrive by liberating them from the oppression religions impose on them. Moreover, she insists on the importance of learning from Quebec’s past regarding the Catholic Church and how the laicization of the society has contributed to the liberation of Quebecois women. Here, only a neutral and laic society can act as a “garde-fou contre l’empiètement par le religieux” in social, political and ideological spheres (Descarries 2013, 100).

Investigating the various feminist discourses on laicity in Quebec, Pascale Fournier (2014) qualifies this approach as “identity feminism”. According to her, a republican feminist approach insists on protecting the heritage of the Quiet Revolution regarding the women’s liberation movement and gender equality. Laicity is seen as a way to protect historical achievement concerning women’s rights by giving them precedence over freedom of religion. Fournier, however, warns that such approach also tends to endorse a “paternalistic” vision of religious women, often defined, according to Beaman and Smith (2016), as oppressed or conditioned by religion.

Other critics of the republican approach to laicity, also qualify this model as “normative” as it implicitly involved a top-down secularization of Quebec society (Bistolfi 2014, 189; Benhadjoudja 2014). Maclure and Taylor for instance warn about “the temptation to make secularism the equivalent of religion” and thus to confuse “political secularization (laicization) and social secularization” (Maclure and Taylor 2011, 14). In this case, laicity would serve to forcefully secularize a society by emancipating its citizens from the religious, thus going beyond the strict separation between religion and the state. In addition, Bouchard and Taylor have also argued that the emancipatory project associated with a strict laicity, as well as the civic integration that it proposes leads instead to the erasure of differences rather than their recognition (2008, 138).

3.2.3. Laicity and the Catholic Heritage

This dichotomy between an open and a strict laicity, however, fails to encompass another important aspect of the debate on laicity which is the insistence on the Catholic component of Quebec’s national identity. In the context of the Charter, as well as during the RA episode, the attachment to the Catholic identity and heritage was used to reject both the accommodation of

religious minorities and a complete laicization of Quebec society. According to Lamy (2015) the Charter of values subscribes to this approach that he qualifies as “conservative republican” as it supports the regulation of religion in the public sphere, while insisting on the protection of the French-Quebecois cultural heritage.

Authors like Rousseau (2005) and Durand (2011) consider that the contemporary Quebec nation still carries today Catholicism as an identity marker as it is constructed upon the French-Canadian nation. According to Durand, contemporary Quebec society bears “la marque du christianisme: institutions, valeurs, architecture, arts, typonymie, rythme du temps” and thus, its future cannot be disconnected from this heritage without “losing its identity” (2011, 19). This approach is also closely linked to a “unified” view of Quebec society as it emphasizes how the protection of this heritage is strongly linked to the survival of Quebec society. Here, banning catholic symbol would not only jeopardize the existence of Quebec as a part of a larger Christian civilization, but also “[renier] la grande majorité des citoyens qui se dissent encore chrétiens” (*Ibid.* 2011, 21).

According to Meunier (2011), rather than a faith and an organized religion, it is in the form of a cultural religion that Quebec’s relationship to Catholicism has persisted until today. He suggests that despite the decline of the Catholic influence on the Quebecois institutions, Catholicism has nevertheless continued to play an important role in Quebec identity and culture (*Ibid.* 2011, 674). This persistence explains partly why a certain part of the population continues to see Catholicism as an identity marker.

Although the identification to Catholicism has remained fairly high since the Quiet Revolution, the recent decades have seen an important decline among younger generations

(Meunier, Laniel, and Demers 2010, 124; Meunier and Wilkins-Laflamme 2011, 694). The “malaise” that affects Quebec today is not, according to Meunier, only due to the challenges of religious diversity, but also to the “effritement de la culture commune maintenue en partie par la religion culturelle” (Meunier 2011, 675). In addition, Laniel (2016) suggests that the debates on laicity are actually the result of the decline of this cultural religion. According to him, Quebec society enters a new paradigm of laicization that, as opposed to the one in place since the Quiet Revolution, does not recognize Catholicism as a component of the national identity anymore.

3.2.4. Secularism, Feminism and the Veil

One last dimension of the discussion on laicity and secularism in Quebec needs to be addressed in order to understand how the Islam became one of the central components of the debates surrounding the Charter of Quebecois values. As it was highlighted previously, disagreements on Bill 60 were not only on the model of laicity that should be adopted, but also on whether or not the veil should be permitted in Quebec society and its relation to gender equality.

In order to understand the targeting of Islam in the debates, it is necessary to first acknowledge the larger post-9/11 context in which they take place. Here the narrative of a “clash of civilizations” dominates public and political discourse (Cesari 2009). This clash between Western societies and the Islamic world implies not only the incompatibility between the two cultures, but also the capacity of Islam, constructed as a monolithic entity, to jeopardize the stability of Western democracies (Cesari 2009). This context has also contributed to shaping the dominant representation of Muslims often reduced to specific characteristics. According to Razack, the essentialisation of Muslims results in the representation of Muslim men as violent and oppressive, while Muslim women are seen as “in need of rescue” from their patriarchal society (2008, 17). This essentialisation also contributes to the association between the violence

done by certain groups to the whole Muslim population (*Ibid.* 2008, 49) which are increasingly associated with religious extremism.

In this narrative of “us” Western societies and “them” Muslims, secularism⁴ (including laicity) plays an important role. Secularism is often presented as a characteristic of “modernity” that distinguishes civilized Western societies from uncivilized ones. This polarization also contributes to defining religion, but also believers as traditional and anti-modern, and to a certain extent, as irrational (Casanova 2010, 67). According to authors like Göle (2010), reaffirming the secular character of the State, and sometimes of society, serves to protect its modern character as well as its legacy in the face of a growing “uncivilized” religious pluralism. This rhetoric is also used to shape the religious as the “other” by redefining social norms regarding for instance sexuality as well as the distinction between private-public spaces (*Ibid.* 2010, 244). Moreover, Göle particularly criticizes how such position on secularism dismisses the “civilizing mission” implied by the secularist discourse.

In the Quebec context, the incompatibility between secular and religious tend to take two main forms. The first refers to a modern and laic “us” opposed to the Catholic and traditional self of the past. This position is based on the idea that the Catholic Church has oppressed Quebec society—especially women until the Quiet revolution which brought the women’s liberation. According to Beaman and Smith (2016, 481), despite evidence of the presence of progressive movements within the Church as well as the plurality of social oppression women experience within Quebec society, this representation of religion was very influential both during the Reasonable Accommodations and the Charter of values episodes.

⁴ Following Milot (2002) and Baubérot (2013), secularism refers here to the decline of social relevance of religion in modern societies, whereas laicity refers specifically to the process of dissociation between religious and state institutions.

The second form taken by the narrative opposing religion to modernity is that of a religious and premodern “other” (referring mainly to minority groups) incompatible with the values of a modern Quebec society (Bilge 2012, 311). The “other” is here constructed as belonging to another inferior “stage of evolution” in which societies are still governed by religion and the population—especially women and sexual minorities are oppressed (*Ibid.* 2012, 306–7).

In this context, many feminist authors have highlighted how the questions of gender equality and women’s liberation have become closely linked to those of laicity and laicization in Quebec. Using the term “sexularism”, Bilge has noted for instance how the civilizing-secular argument is used to reinforce a narrative of secularism as central to the achievement of gender equality and sexual liberation of oppressed minorities. She shows how it constructs the religious as inherently “oppressive to women and non-heteronormative sexualities” by mobilizing narrative of the nation as in need of legal protection against growing attacks on the value of gender equality (Bilge 2012, 308). In this context, religious practices such as veiling are presented as incompatible with the modernity of the Quebec society. Reinforcing laicity within the state institution as well as the public sphere is perceived as a way to liberate women socially and sexually (Selby 2014).

Benhadjoudja (2014) also points out a tendency when it comes to gender equality and women’s liberation to confound laicity as the separation between the state and religion with secularism as the decline of the social relevance of religion in society. This leads among other things to associate laicity and a duty for the state to forcefully secularize society. This argument can for instance be found in the strict laicity discourse demanding the legal reinforcement of women’s rights in order to transform social relation regarding genders (Benhadjoudja 2014, 116). Benhadjoudja (2014) argues, however, that these arguments about women’s liberation tend to

ignore the social and economic discrimination faced by veiled women as measures meant to protect them against religious oppression often ignore the negative impacts on their participation to public life and access to public services (Fournier and See 2012; Fournier 2014).

3.3. Conclusions

The various positions and debates outlined in the above sections are, in the context of this research, central to interpreting the discourses held during the public hearings on Bill 60. They highlight challenges to the identity definition process in a minority society facing its own growing diversity. The management of both ethno-cultural and religious diversity defines the relations between each group as well as the way they are perceived which itself informs their position within Quebec society.

On the one hand, literature on the “identity question” shows the coexistence of various views on how Quebec society should be defined and the types of challenges pluralism bring along. Some advocate for the prevalence of French-Quebecois culture in Quebec which should serve as a common culture to be adopted by minority groups, thus favouring a more unifying approach to pluralism. Others favour instead a more reciprocal form of integration where pluralism and the recognition of differences are at the core of a Quebecois culture. Others, again, emphasize that Quebec’s present model gives intrinsically a privileged position to French-Quebecois and that the recent events such as the Reasonable Accommodation “crisis” and the Charter of values episode have contributed to its reinforcement (Haince 2014; Bakali 2015).

On the other hand, the literature on laicity and secularism shows that there is a strong polarization in opinions on the extent to which the state should regulate religion in the public sphere as well as individual liberties and religious freedoms. This literature highlights how the

complex relation to religion is rooted in particular understanding of Quebec history. Liberals consider interpret it as inherently pluralist and support maintaining a liberal approach to religion. Conservatives in turn see in Quebec history the continuity of a particular Catholic identity and culture that should be protected while other religions should be regulated. Republicans for their part see in the present debate an opportunity to achieve the laicization underwent during the Quiet Revolution by the adoption of a strict separation of between religious and secular spaces. Finally, others see in these debates on religion the implicit attempt to impose a normative approach to secularism that targets religious minorities and especially women. Thus, the Muslim “problem” in Quebec is seen as not only rooted in a larger post 9/11 context in which Islam is now constructed as a threat to the West but also where secularism and laicity are used as tools to protect Western values.

Overall, this literature review highlights how, more than a question of faith, the Muslim problem in Quebec is part of a larger identity redefinition process where various views compete. Each position proposes a certain understanding of the challenges of pluralism and the approach that should be adopted. In light of all these elements, I propose to explore how the discourse surrounding Muslims informs us of the dominant representations of Quebec society and how the various themes identified in the literature review might play a role in constructing both Muslims and the French-Quebecois. In order to do so, I will analyze the speeches held by the public hearings participants on Bill 60 and the ways in which they represented Muslims as well as Quebec society. Consequently, I propose to formulate my research questions as follows:

Was there indeed a “Muslim problem” constructed during the public hearings on Bill 60? And if so, how was it presented in the participants’ discourse? In order to answer this question, I will also investigate the two following sub-questions:

- *What are the main representations of the relationships between Quebec society and Muslims that emerged during the hearings?*
- *How are these representations expressed rhetorically?*

4. Theoretical Framework

The question of the power relations between the majority of French-Quebecois and Muslim Quebecois involved in the definition of Quebec society leads me to engage in a critical discourse analysis (CDA). I suggest that the CDA approach to the study of discourse—and more precisely here the discourses held in the context of the Charter’s hearings, will allow me to shed light on the various representations of Quebec society and the place given to ethno-cultural and religious pluralism. Consequently, this section outlines the theoretical framework based on CDA used in this research.

4.1. Principal Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an approach to text, talk and other communication contexts that aims to bring to light the various forms of unequal relations that discourse creates. More precisely, CDA is used to highlight the structures and strategies that produce and reproduce dominance and power relations between dominant and dominated groups⁵ (Van Dijk 1993, 250). Thus, analyses using this approach are usually guided by the ultimate goal of social justice. In general, critical discourse analysts side with and stand for groups suffering from social discrimination (Meyer 2001).

⁵ According to Van Dijk (1993), societies are characterized by the dominance of certain groups over others by their “privileged access to socially valued resources” including position, social status, political power, etc. (254). This dominance often results in inequalities that are at the disadvantage of the “dominated” groups. These inequalities can take many forms from socio-economic to racial and gender ones.

Consequently, the debate surrounding the Bill 60 appears to be an appropriate context to study the portrayal of Muslim Quebecois during the Charter of value episode. Moreover, CDA will allow me to investigate not only the discourse on Muslims and Islam, but also the diverse forms of inequalities implicitly constructed by diverging positions on the project of the Charter. As shown in the literature review, the various perspectives on both Quebec identity and approaches to religious management present different distributions of power between the majority of French-Quebecois and other ethno-cultural and religious minority groups.

What makes CDA even more appealing compared to other discourse analysis approaches is that it goes further than the study of linguistic strategies. Critical discourse analysts consider that “all discourses can only be understood with reference to their context” and this requires taking into account dimensions such as culture, society and ideology (Meyer 2001, 15). In CDA, language is considered a social practice that participates in the construction of the social world (Wodak 2001). Here, all forms of discourse impact society, either implicitly or explicitly. However, it is emphasized that “language is not powerful on its own—it gains power by the use powerful people make of it” (Wodak 2001, 10). As a result, texts, and other forms of discourses “are often sites of struggles” to express, reinforce or challenge power (*Ibid.* 2001, 11).

4.2 Social Cognition and Power Relations

In order to understand how the study of the participants’ discourse in the context of the public hearings can allow us to explore the constructions of both Muslims and Quebec society, as well as their role in power relations, this research relies on Van Dijk’s theory of social cognition. As CDA investigates the impact of discourse on society, Van Dijk suggests that social cognition allows us to link what is produced within a text to the larger macro-societal structure where power and control are applied. To him, social cognitions, defined as “shared mental strategies and

representations”, are what allow some groups to gain power (Van Dijk 1994, 108). These socially shared patterns are used to persuade and manipulate the minds of others (Van Dijk 1993). More precisely, they can “change the mind of others in one’s own interests” and they do so by controlling the way information is shared and received (Van Dijk 1993, 254).

Consequently, the analysis of language and rhetoric used within a text allows us to understand how they are transformed into common sense assumptions. In the context of this research, the social cognitive approach brings to light what are the shared representations of Muslims and how they are used to reinforce definitions of Quebec society where groups are unequally distributed. Thus, CDA is here applied to the discourse held by citizens during the hearing process to capture how the language and rhetorical strategies used to shape representations of both Muslims and Quebec society.

The particular context of Quebec, however, requires me to develop another essential point to my theoretical framework. The presence of a sociological majority that is also an ethno-cultural minority within Canada necessitates a more precise definition of the relations between majority and minority groups. In order to do so, I draw my understanding of minority and majority relations from Guillaumin’s (2002) definitions inspired by racial theories.

Guillaumin argues that majorities and minorities are interconnected and interdependent constructions in the context of a racist system. They both exist only in relation to the other. In other words, majorities are majorities because they are constructed in opposition to minorities and vice-versa. What is relevant here is that minorities are characterized by their particularities, whereas majorities are usually considered as “generic” or presented in general terms (Guillaumin 2002, 120). The minorities’ particularities are not only assigned by the majority, but are also

defined by it. Thus minorities themselves have little to say on the way they are constructed. By contrast, the majority is the implicit unit reference, the norm that is used to determine differences. In a racial system, the majority is the one that racializes other groups and is itself exempt of any racial characteristics (*Ibid.* 2002).

In the case of Quebec, the majority would here be formed by the French-Quebecois presented as the unit of reference, a majority that holds the power to define minority groups and to attribute them specific characteristics, as I suggest it is the case for Muslim Quebecois. Majorities can, however, also be minorities in relationships established at other levels. As a result, the majority in Quebec is also a minority when compared for instance to English Canada. In this case, Quebec is presented as possessing particularities that distinguish it from the rest of Canada whereas in its relation to other ethno-cultural and religious minorities it is presented as an inclusive and undefined “us”. Thus, these two notions inform our understanding of the relations between French-Quebecois and Muslim Quebecois in the analysis.

Overall, drawing from the CDA approach and the social cognition theory of Van Dijk, this research assumes that the discourse on Islam and Muslim Quebecois reproduces power relations taking place between ethno-cultural groups in Quebec. These power relations also take the form of majority-minority relations and are influenced by shared social representations of both. In the section below, I explain in more details how these assumptions will be investigated in the analysis.

5. Methodology

The purpose of this section is to define more explicitly the methodological approach of CDA and how it is applied in the context of this study. I present here the outlines of the methods

used to analyze the data as well as the grid of analysis. Additionally, I expose how the documents forming the corpus were selected as well as how the data set on which is based the analysis was formed.

5.1. Critical Discourse Analysis Framework

As the primary objective of this research is to understand how power relations between majority and minorities play a role in constructing representations of Muslims and Quebec society, the data analysis relies here on a framework inspired by CDA's social cognitive approach. More precisely, I examine how the relationships between Quebec society and Muslims are expressed in the discourses and how they might be constructed as incompatible. In order to do so, I will investigate the discursive mechanisms used by participants to present both groups and the larger narratives it creates.

5.1.1. Rhetorical Devices Used to Talk About “Us” and “Them”

To help me identify the various representations created in the discourse, I applied two grids of different rhetorics that highlight power relations between Quebec's majority group and Muslim minorities. This was done first by borrowing and then expanding on a grid developed by Potvin (2014) in her analysis of racial rhetorical devices used in social discourse by Quebec's media. This grid allowed me to identify more easily how, during the hearings, both Muslim and French-Quebecois were constructed as conflicting groups. This framework is of particular interest as it has already identified eight different social cognitive “mechanisms” that “act as different ‘levels’ of racist expression” (Potvin 2014, 143). The list goes as followed:

- 1) Opposition between “us” and “them”;
- 2) Generalization of certain behaviours to the whole group;

- 3) "Inferiorization";
- 4) "We" as the victim of their behaviour;
- 5) "Catastrophism";
- 6) "Demonization";
- 7) "Desire to extradite them";
- 8) Demand for institutional discrimination towards them.

(Potvin 2014, 143)

Here, rhetorics are combined with one another to "produce a crescendo effect" resulting in stronger polarizations between Muslims and Quebec society (Potvin 2014, 143). However, since this grid is applied in a context where participants were asked to present their opinion on the proposed legislation in a more formal context rather than opinion letters as it was the case in Potvin's research, some rhetorical mechanisms have been more relevant than others. For instance, the findings of this study involved no use of the "desire to extradite Muslims" rhetoric. In addition, participants tended to associate Muslims with barbaric practices rather than "demonizing" them, and to use "alarmist" discourses rather than "catastrophist" ones involving here a "preventive reasoning"-or need to adopt preventing measures (Côté-Boucher and Hadj-Moussa 2008, 76). In addition, instead of "demanding for institutional discrimination" towards Muslims, participants tended to "justify institutional discrimination" by blaming the individual choices made by Muslims themselves. The category of "instant contamination" (Côté-Boucher and Hadj-Moussa 2008, 75) referring to the strategic association of Islam with values and practices creating a negative representation of Muslims or Islam was also added.

5.1.2. Van Dijk's Ideological Square

Although Potvin's grid is useful in highlighting the discourses on Muslims, it offers limited understanding of how participants articulate this "other" with a certain definition of Quebec society. As we have shown in the literature review, there are various definitions of the Quebecois nation that influence the position given to minority groups and various attitudes towards religious minorities and religion in general. Thus, to allow a systemic evaluation of how Muslims and Quebec society are defined in relation to each other, I complemented Potvin's grid with the "ideological square" approach developed by Van Dijk (1995). This method emphasizes the "strategy of polarization" used in discourses to define simultaneously one's in-group and out-group where the in-group is usually defined as the good one and where the negative characteristics of the out-group are emphasized. Van Dijk presents four different "functional moves" that constitute this square. First, there is an emphasis on the good character of "our" group and "our" action, while emphasizing in a second time how bad "their" group and actions are. Thirdly, there is mitigation of "our bad properties/actions" combined with mitigation of their good properties and actions (Van Dijk 1995, 33). This approach is particularly interesting for our case study as it highlights how each group constructs the other as well as which elements are emphasized to show (in)compatibility between them.

Moreover, the ideological square approach is completed by other discursive strategies also identified by Van Dijk that highlight, in our analysis, the variety of discourses on both Muslim Quebecois and Quebec society. Van Dijk suggests that discursive strategies allow us to "witness at the surface some of the underlying trajectory that relates ideologies to discourse" and to identify how they express the views of a group and group members (1995, 61). He suggests the following list that was used in the analysis in addition to the eight strategies identified by Potvin

(2014): polarization, opinion coherence, attributions of action, descriptions of groups, evaluation of action based on “our interest”, implicitness, meta-opinions, stylistic and rhetorical expressions of opinions, unmentionables, arguments, use of history (1995, 57–61). By using these additional strategies, I was able to analyze with greater nuance not only how the citizens talked about Muslims but also how they perceived Quebec society and the relations binding the two together.

5.2. Methods

5.2.1 Sampling

As this research investigates the social cognitions—or representations expressed by the hearing participants, only independent citizens presenting their brief to the commission were included in the corpus. The public hearing on Bill 60 attracted not only citizens, but also groups of citizens, organizations, unions, school boards, etc. However, as the objective is here to understand the relation between social cognitions of individuals and the dominant representations of Islam and Quebec society (Van Dijk 1994), only individual presentations were selected to form the corpus.

There were a total of 29 citizens who took part in the public commission with among them 6 women and 5 non-French-Quebecois (1 female and 5 males). Although they were initially all included in the corpus, only those who discussed the question of Muslims or Islam were included in the data set for further analysis which represented 17 out of 29 (59%). The reference to certain terms were used to identify the relevant segments to be included in the data set, for instance “Islam” (53 mentions) and “Muslims” (45 mentions), “veil” (64), “extremism” (34), “niqab” and “hijab” (16). The remaining twelve presentations did not explicitly discuss the place of Islam or Muslims within Quebec society. Some addressed the questions of religions and religious symbols

in more general terms, tackled the issues of religious accommodations or debated the fate of popular democracy. As a result, despite the fact that these contributions presented relevant information on the various definitions of Quebec society, they were not included in the data set as they did not provide useful information about the place of Islam and Quebecois Muslims.

5.2.2 Text Sources

The documents selected for this study were collected on the virtual archives of the National Assembly of Quebec website. These transcripts are the written version of the participants' oral presentation to the National Assembly's committee on Bill 60. Each presentation is followed by a question period where the Minister responsible for the Charter as well as a representative of each political party are invited to ask further clarifications. As the length of these documents is quite important and involves many political discursive strategies, only the first part of the interview where each participant presents their brief to the committee was sampled (their presentations were of a maximum of ten minutes rendered into 3 to 5 pages once transcribed).

This approach unfortunately limits our understanding of the participant's opinions and arguments as additional information is provided further into the document. However, taking every part of the text into consideration would require a conversational analysis approach as well as a particular approach to political discourse as many political views are involved (Fairclough and Fairclough 2013, 17). This approach would also involve a workload beyond the scope and time frame available for this research. I believe that limiting the analysis to the participants' prepared statements provided for sufficient insights into understanding the shared representations of Muslims as well as of Quebec society. In the conclusions of our analysis, I will nevertheless present some avenues that could be further scrutinized in future studies.

5.2.3 Data Analysis Procedure

Despite the absence of a standard methodology to apply CDA, the analysis was conducted in three different steps, with regards to the retroactive flexibility required for this type of discourse analysis. First, all contributions made by the hearings' participants were analyzed to identify the sections about Islam and Muslims in order to construct the data set. Limiting the analysis to these segments allowed me to better exemplify how Muslims and Quebec society were constructed in relation to each other since many other topics were discussed during the hearings. In a second time, I identified what these segments revealed about Quebec society, using the different views identified in the literature regarding both the identity question (unified society, normative pluralism, critical approach, views on Quebecois identity and history) and the place of religion granted by the participants (open or strict laicity, cultural religion, normative secularism, attitudes towards gender equality). The quotes were then grouped under specific themes according to how they represent the relation between Quebec society and Muslims.

In the third step, these quotes were analyzed in terms of the rhetorical strategies used to construct both Muslims and Quebec society using Potvin's grid as well as the strategies identified by Van Dijk (1993). Both grids were used in a retroactive fashion; they served to guide the analysis while being gradually redefined by the addition of new strategies as deviant cases and cases that did not fit the framework appeared. I attempted to analyze the rhetorics in a transversal manner, regrouping similar strategies together, but as no trends emerged to organize the various ways in which Muslims and Quebec society were constructed, I decided to limit the rhetorical analysis to the specific representations identified in the second stage.

I also followed what Silverman (2013) calls "lateral thinking" in the analysis process. I engaged with the material "pursuing a counter-intuitive idea [and] noting additional features little

addressed in the literature” (Silverman 2013, 247). By doing so, I analyzed the texts paying particular attention to the themes used to talk about Muslims and Quebec society as well as the choice of rhetorical devices. These elements were manually labelled to indicate where references were made but also to highlight other themes or rhetoric that were not included in the grids. Barbour (2013) refers to this stage as an early “indexing” to “signal interesting data” (246). It was followed by the development of a more thorough “coding frame” by gathering similar data under groups and developing themes and names that reflect their content (*Ibid* 2013). This coding process allowed me to identify pertinent information regarding first, how Quebec society was represented in the discourse on Islam and then, how the relationships between the two were built rhetorically. This then allowed me to carry a deeper interpretation of the data in light of the theoretical framework regarding power relations between majority and minorities.

6. Analysis of the Charter’s Public Hearings

In this section, I present the results of the discourse analysis highlighting how both Quebec’s French-Quebecois majority and Muslim minorities were presented in relation to each other. I focus here on the dominant representations found in the discourse as well as the way they construct larger narratives of Quebec and of Muslims by the use of the rhetorical strategies among participants. More precisely, the discourse analysis has led me to identify four main representations of the relationship between Islam and Quebec society. The first category represents Quebec as a host society and Muslim as immigrants. The second category of representations involves opposition between religious neutrality and religious expressions. The third type of representation deals with the value of gender equality and the veil, while the last category relies on the West VS Islam frame.

Quebec as a Host Society

The first category of representations that emerged from the analysis is one where the relationship between Muslims and Quebec society is presented as happening between a host society and its immigrants. The distinction established between the two groups involves mainly references to diverging values and characteristics. On the one hand, Quebec society is defined by so-called “universal” values such as democracy, freedom, equality between women and men, as well as opportunities for immigrants to reach their full potential and to live in dignity. On the other hand, Muslims are presented as immigrants who are defined by their “particularities”—referring mainly here to their religious affiliation and practices which are seen as conflicting with the values of their host society.

The opposition between “us” and “them” is reinforced by a depiction of Quebec society as inclusive and welcoming which contrasts with the inadequacy of certain attitudes and values attributed to Quebecois Muslims. This inadequacy is emphasized by the need for them to integrate to “our way of life” and to set aside their religious beliefs. The two following extracts illustrate how the majority of the contributions, adopting a more “republican” approach to Quebec society, present the relation between the latter and Muslims.

Extrait 1

L’immigrant qui arrive au Québec avec la Bible, le Coran ou le Talmud à la main ne pourra pas imposer ses croyances religieuses aux autres, mais, par contre, il est libre de pratiquer ses rituels religieux à sa guise, toujours dans le respect des autres, sans espérer de privilèges ou d’accommodements pour motif religieux. En contrepartie, les immigrants qui arrivent au Québec n’y perdent pas au change, loin de là. Le Québec leur offre une qualité de vie dans la dignité, l’égalité entre les personnes, les opportunités d’emploi, un service de santé de qualité gratuit, l’un des meilleurs services d’éducation au monde, etc., y compris la liberté de pratiquer la religion de leur choix.
(National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [Richard Rousseau, Vol.143, N°116])

In this example, Quebec is presented as a welcoming society offering a certain quality of life to new comers. Immigrants, on the other hand, are defined by the strong value they attribute to religion and religious practices which is emphasized by the participant insisting that “they should not hope for accommodation” nor try to impose their beliefs. This strategy reflects what Côté-Boucher and Hadj-Moussa qualifies as “instant contamination” (2008, 76). Islam is here implicitly associated with negative practices and characteristics that come to define it as a whole. Examples of such strategy found in the analysis involve for instance attributions of certain attitudes or practices such as “imposing their beliefs” as well as associations with fundamentalism or extremism. This is also exemplified in the following quote:

Extrait 2

Selon certains journalistes, plusieurs personnes ont exprimé leur obligation de démissionner si la loi était appliquée. De toute évidence, plusieurs de ces personnes, je pense, n’aiment pas leur travail. Dans quelle société vivons-nous si la religion a préséance sur le travail ? Tout immigrant qui décide de s’installer au Québec, c’est pour y travailler, améliorer ses conditions de vie, et non pas pour jouir de vacances permanentes. Il doit donc s’adapter à la société d’accueil, et non l’inverse. Si cet immigrant veut imposer ses convictions religieuses, c’est quand même curieux qu’il ait choisi le Québec plutôt que l’Arabie saoudite, le gardien de l’islam.

(National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [René Tinawi, Vol.143, N°110])

This extract exemplifies more clearly how the instant contamination created by the reference to Saudi Arabia reinforces the opposition between both groups. Here, not only is the root of the problem the refusal of certain immigrants to adopt the values of Quebec society, but “they” are also associated with the extreme opposite. Quebec is implicitly defined by its good living conditions while “they”—Muslim immigrants, favour religion over welcoming these conditions. This opposition is also reinforced by the idea that “they” should integrate otherwise they should have chosen to Saudi Arabia.

Despite some scholars arguing for a unified vision of Quebec society, fewer participants adopted a discourse centred on the French-Quebecois identity. This could partly be explained by Guillaumin's argument that the characteristics of the majority are often taken for granted and act as the norm. Those who adopted this approach nevertheless differed slightly from the republican and universal definition of "us" by insisting more on the centrality of Quebec's culture and history. This type of discourse tends here to rely on more "alarmist" rhetorics and using what Côté-Boucher and Hadj-Moussa refer to a "preventive reasoning" (2008, 76). Here, the threatening character of minorities brings the need to adopt measures protecting "our" society and "our" culture. The following extract highlights not only how Muslims are associated with immigration, but how their presence also requires "action" from Quebec's elite.

Extrait 3

L'accroissement récent de l'immigration, provenant de la région du Maghreb notamment, à très forte majorité musulmane, a cependant changé la donne. Plusieurs femmes portant le hidjab ou d'autres déclinaisons des symboles vestimentaires religieux se sont jointes à la fonction publique et parapublique. [...] Ce nouveau contexte commande à nos représentants à l'Assemblée nationale d'agir.

Il ne faut pas craindre de protéger nos acquis et de faire connaître aux nouveaux arrivants les règles qui prévalent au Québec et l'histoire qui les a portées jusqu'à nous. Être ouverts aux nouveaux arrivants, être accueillants, être inclusifs, ce n'est pas de mettre de côté nos valeurs, c'est plutôt d'en faire la promotion et de les protéger dans une charte. Tous les futurs immigrants pourront ainsi être bien informés au sujet de leur société d'accueil, tous et toutes s'en trouveront mieux servis.

(National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [Michel Gauthier, Vol.143, N°112])

Here the participant emphasizes the particular character of Quebec society which serves to distinguish it from immigrants whose only presence is seen as a threat. As one can see, the participant considers Muslims and immigrants to be one and the same and ignores the possibility of them being native Quebecois. While the participant stresses "our" openness to immigration, they also clarify that "they" (Muslims) nevertheless need to be informed of "our values". The shared character of these values with immigrants and North African societies are ignored and it is

rather implied that “they” do not know them. Another interesting element of this citizen’s argument also shared by other participants is the insistence on the role of the state in reaffirming Quebec values and “forcing” to a certain extent the new comers to adopt them. In this context, participants often rationalize the institutional discrimination against Muslims that would involve Bill 60 as a way to protect the society’s values.

Overall, the representation of Quebec society as a host society and of Muslims as immigrants illustrates the opposition and even incompatibility perceived between the two. As highlighted by Guillaumin (2002), the relations between minority and majority are characterized by the majority often taking the form of the norm, generalized and normalized, while minorities are attributed particular characteristics which construct them as differing from the norm. In all the examples presented here, the participants attributed “universal” values to Quebec society, or defined a certain culture and history as the “norm” while emphasizing the problematic characteristic of immigrants, especially religion. Even when it is stated that “our society” is inclusive, it is nevertheless associated with the need for immigrants to integrate to “our” values rather than a reciprocal process.

Neutrality VS Religious Expression

The second representation of the relation between Islam and Quebec society involves the opposition of two positions regarding religious management. The first approach regroups participants who insist on the necessity of adopting strict religious neutrality to protect Quebec society prevents social inequalities resulting from granted privileges but also from religious proselytism and extremism. The second group, smaller in number, supports religious expression in the public sphere and advocates for the recognition of the diversity of relations to religion.

In this context, Quebec society is often defined by its social norms and values such as laicity, equality, neutrality. Among participants adopting strong polarized stances, Muslims are generally reduced to “extremists” or “fundamentalists” whose values and behaviours conflict with those of a secular society. More nuanced positions, on the other hand, tend to insist instead on the issues of privileges and proselytism.

The vast majority of participants framing the discussion on neutrality VS religious expression subscribe to a republican approach to the management of religion in Quebec. They emphasize the presence of core values defining the relation to religion, as well as the problematic aspect of religious accommodations. The following quote shows how this relation was expressed in one of the citizens’ presentation:

Extrait 4

Les subventions aux écoles religieuses devraient être nulles. [...] Tout le système scolaire doit affirmer les valeurs québécoises de laïcité et d’égalité. Les privilèges accordés aux enseignantes et enseignants musulmans concernant les congés payés supplémentaires pour des fêtes religieuses devront être abolis. Aucune démonstration d’appartenance religieuse ne doit être tolérée dans les établissements scolaires. Les locaux de prière de toutes sortes n’ont pas lieu d’exister.
(National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [Carole Dionne, Vol.143, N°115])

This quote illustrates the opposition that many participants construct between Quebec as a laic society and the problematic aspect of religious pluralism. But what is relevant in this extract is how the structure of the argument highlights the implicit opposition between Quebec society and Islam. As the participant lists the general components of the laicity model Quebec should adopt, their reference to Muslims is not internally coherent. This easy association between privileges and teachers of Islamic faith serves to reinforce the validity of the claim against religious accommodations by “instantly contaminating” such practices by associating them with negative depictions of Muslims.

Such polarization echoes the positions taken by most of the participants who have used the neutrality/religious expression framework. Some participants relied on even stronger polarizing elements to reinforce the opposition between Quebec society and “them” as exemplified by the following quote.

Extrait 5

Quant aux personnes qui sont prêtes à perdre [...] leur emploi plutôt que de renoncer à leurs signes religieux, c’est tout simplement de l’intégrisme religieux. Ces employés de l’État, hommes ou femmes, utilisent la vitrine gouvernementale pour faire la promotion de leurs convictions religieuses, ce n’est pas la place. Le gouvernement les paie pour offrir un service à la population, pas pour faire du prosélytisme religieux. Ce fanatisme religieux ne doit pas être toléré, il faut le dénoncer. Des personnes qui renoncent à leur emploi pour une conviction strictement personnelle et de leur religion s’excluent elles-mêmes et elles doivent en subir les conséquences.
(National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [Richard Rousseau, Vol.143, N°116])

The opposition between a neutral society and religious individuals is highlighted by the way the participant justifies the institutional discrimination that would result from the banning of religious symbols. According to them, it is the refusal to “abandon their religious symbols” that is the source of their unequal treatment. Thus, “their” attitude is defined as problematic when associated with the “norm” that is neutrality. Such rhetorical strategy was particularly common among the participants subscribing to a republican discourse. Without necessarily adopting an “alarmist” stance, the association between extremism and blaming Muslims reinforces the necessity of establishing strict neutrality in Quebec.

Very few contributions adopted a pluralist approach that argues for the acceptance of religious pluralism and its expression in the public sphere. This position insists on a liberal form of religious management that recognizes the various possible relations to religion. This openness to differences, however, does not entirely erase the polarization between Muslims and Quebec

society. Even among those rejecting the Charter's approach to religious management an implicit opposition between the two remains. The following extract highlights this tension:

Extrait 6

Je veux, cet après-midi, apporter ma contribution pour tenter d'améliorer le modèle proposé, car il suggère de faire apparaître la neutralité de l'État en faisant disparaître les signes religieux ostentatoires, mais il se pourrait que, dans cette opération, disparaissent également des personnes de leur milieu de travail. C'est un risque qu'il faut prévenir, car les Québécois n'accepteront pas ces conséquences. Je pense que maintenant, selon les sondages, c'est autour de 45 % qui n'accepteraient pas ces conséquences. Dire, comme on l'a vu sur des affiches : « C'est mon voile ou le BS » est une forme de fanatisme aux yeux des Québécois. Dire : « Eh bien, ce sera son choix », c'est cautionner ce fanatisme, ce qui n'est guère mieux.

(National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [Denis Forcier, Vol.143, N°116])

As we can see, although this participant does not agree with a measure that would have the effect of some individuals losing their employment, they nevertheless implicitly associate the practice of veiling with the expression “fanatisme”. Despite the attempt to value religious pluralism, this association reinforces the negative character of this practice. Even when the participant highlights how blaming Muslim women is wrong, they nevertheless do not refute the claim.

Overall, when it comes to religious management, the dominant representation of the relation between Quebec society and Muslims is one where religious expression in the public sphere is considered incompatible with the approach that should be adopted by Quebec. Most participants argued for a strong and strict religious neutrality, while few others supported a pluralist approach. Interestingly, no contribution discussing the relation of Quebec society and Muslims in this context adopted a “conservative republican” approach supporting the protection of Quebec Catholic heritage.

A Society of Gender Equality

Another prominent representation of Quebec society is one that opposes gender equality to religious practices that oppress women. The point of contention between Quebec society and Muslims revolves mainly here around on the question of the veil and how it embodies values incompatible with those of Quebec. The analysis reveals here a strong coherence in the way the various participants represented the relation between Quebec society and veiled women. The former is mainly defined by the principles of equality between women and men and of achieved women's liberation. The Muslim women, on the other hand, are often associated with oppression, inferiority or portrayed as in need of education about not only the implicit meaning of their veil but also about the notion of gender equality itself.

The discussion surrounding the Muslim veil and its place in Quebec society also involved strong polarizations by drawing into the debate many sensitive topics such as integration, extremism, and violence. The vast majority of the participants framing the discussion on Muslims through the question of the veil tended to rely on this type of argument. The following quote illustrates well how this took form in many discourses.

Extrait 7

[Le voile,] c'est le refus de notre style de vie, c'est le refus catégorique de s'intégrer à notre société. C'est le rejet de la société d'accueil. N'oublions surtout pas que des femmes dans le monde sont obligées de les porter pour sauver leur propre vie. Si nous n'interdisons pas cela ici, dans un pays libre, évolué et démocratique, c'est que nous cautionnons ces dérapages contre les femmes.

Le voile est un symbole de l'intégrisme. Les femmes voilées sont des alliées, des complices des intégristes. La première action des intégristes, c'est le voilement des femmes. On utilise les femmes et leurs voiles pour promouvoir une idéologie sexiste et pour manifester une présence musulmane. Cacher sa chevelure et son cou pour ne pas exciter les hommes est une coutume absolument en désaccord avec une société égalitaire. De plus, le voile n'arrive pas seul, c'est un forfait comprenant la charia, la ségrégation des sexes, la polygamie, les mariages arrangés, les mariages forcés, la répudiation, le crime d'honneur, les mutilations génitales féminines, l'hyméoplastie, le certificat de virginité,

l'avortement sélectif des filles.
(National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [Carole Dionne, Vol.143, N°115])

This example illustrates a clear opposition between Quebec society and Muslims through expressions such as “a free, evolved and democratic country”, “our lifestyle”, “our society” and on the other hand, association between the veil and extremism, sexism, polygamy, forced marriage, etc. This reliance on practices often described as “barbaric” also emphasizes the problematic aspects of veiling. This strategy involves an *instant contamination* of Islam with negative practices (Côté-Boucher and Hadj-Moussa 2008, 76) which serves here to polarize “us” and “them”. The former is implicitly defined as a civilized society, while the latter as part of a repressive system. But more importantly, the position taken by the citizen cited above tends to subscribe to what Fournier calls a “paternalistic attitude” towards Muslims which sees religious women as having little to no autonomy or capacity to act (2014, 145). The association of Muslims and Islam with negative practices as well as with extremism reinforces the idea that Muslims women are in need of protection, but also that “we” also need protection from such practices (Beaman and Smith 2016, 477).

The following extract of a participant’s presentation illustrates how, even those who recognize the capacity of Muslim women to choose to wear the veil often use it as an example to justify the marginalization that would result from adopting the Charter of values.

Extrait 8

On dit souvent, et ça, c’est important [...] que cela porte atteinte à la liberté d’expression et aux libertés individuelles, d’interdire, par exemple, le voile. Mais qu’en est-il de l’atteinte au droit fondamental de ne pas être exposé à des signes représentatifs de religions qui infériorisent les femmes, qui tolèrent, et là, je ne vous énumérerai pas ma liste, parce qu’elle est longue, mais qui tolèrent, bon, agressions sexuelles, mutilations génitales, qui criminalisent les minorités sexuelles, etc. ?
(National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [Jocelyne Robert, Vol.143, N°115])

In this extract, the participant appeals to the right to not being exposed to religious symbols and emphasizes the problematic character of the veiling by associating it with other practices considered “barbaric”. They rely on the argument of an individual choice to wear the veil to justifying institutional discrimination towards Muslim women. This rhetorical strategy was also used by other participants to implicitly exclude veiled women from belonging to Quebec society. Even the few presentations that have attempted to include them in a pluralistic fashion by recognizing the validity of their relationship to religion relied on a similar reasoning. For instance, another participant declared: “Ne combattons pas l’imposition du voile [par les intégristes] par l’interdit du port du voile, laissons aux femmes le soin de décider [...] La très vaste majorité des femmes qui portent le voile ne sont pas intégristes” (National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [Michel Seymour, Vol.143, N°111]). Thus, even the liberal approach contributed to the opposition between “us” and “them” and reinforced the dominant narrative of incompatibility.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that although it was not the case in the extracts presented in this section, many citizens nevertheless expressed an attachment to the legacy of the Quiet Revolution concerning women’s rights. This was reinforced for instance by expressions implying the threat of losing certain social achievement such as “le renvoi des femmes sous leurs voiles et à leurs chaudrons ” or “de nombreux indices de retour en arrière”. These rhetorics subscribed to a republican approach to religion by highlighting the importance of the rupture with the “Grande noirceur” era.

The West VS Islam

The last representation of the relationship between Islam and Quebec society emphasizes the importance of Quebec to draw lessons from other parts of the world or from specific historical moments about the way they dealt with Islam. This representation does not deal with

the place of Muslims within Quebec society, but rather with Islam as a threatening entity. This logic echoes on the idea of a “clash of civilizations” at the international level and is not particularly concerned with internal policies of laicity or gender equality. It involves instead a need to learn from what Islam has done elsewhere in order to prevent the same “turmoil” from happening in Quebec. Thus, the traditional division between “conservative”, “republican” and “liberal” does not apply to this representation of the relationship between Muslims and Quebec.

Here, Quebec is implicitly associated with other Western countries (especially European ones) and is presented in opposition to Muslim-majority countries (mainly Arab countries including Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt but also Turkey and Pakistan). The West is more generally associated with democracy, freedom and peace. The “Islamic world” by contrast is principally described as a monolithic religious entity. The Islamic faith is never presented as diverse and complex and Muslims are also often reduced to extremists or as conditioned by Islamists. There is also an absence of reference to geographic, linguistic, cultural or ethnic differences among them. The following extract illustrates this polarization.

Extrait 9

[...] on m'a aussi offert de parfaire ma connaissance au Pakistan, car on croyait que la France serait islamique dans 20 ans, et l'Europe, en 30. Ce qui se déroule en Europe se passe aussi dans d'autres pays d'Afrique et d'Asie. Pourquoi serions-nous différents des autres continents ? L'islam tient son pouvoir au nombre et doit démontrer sa force par l'apparence du corps ou avec ses martyrs. Presque tous les mouvements d'islamisation sont appuyés par la très riche Arabie Saoudite.
(National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [Jean Simoneau, Vol.143, N°114])

This quote presents Islam as a “unified whole”, ignoring the particularities of this faith and culture in the various regions mentioned and insisting instead on a uniformed “Islamization” happening across the world. This echoes what Cesari calls the “essentialist bias” in which societies, culture, epochs are homogenized by their association with Islam (2009, 158). The

participant also subscribes to a vision of Islam as a “risk factor” which is especially emphasized by the lexical field used: “power, martyrs, Islamization, Saudi Arabia”. This type of *instant contamination* is also very present in most of the contribution using the West VS Islam frame. For instance, another participant discussing the growing presence of the veil in Quebec suggests: “C'est l'influence de la confrérie des Frères musulmans pour propager l'islam politique, l'islam intégriste, l'islam fanatique avec, bien sûr, des liens avec des organismes terroristes” (National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [René Tinawi, Vol.143, N°110]).

Moreover, both of these quotes illustrate the contradicting character of Islam with Quebec by implying not only a division between “us” and “them”, but also a division “between the civilized and the uncivilized” (Razack 2008, 10). Like most of the presentations, they emphasize the negative character of Islam which tends to implicitly give Quebec a better portrayal. They also minimize or ignore any negative aspect of Quebec society or of the West in general.

Another important strategy used to support this representation was that of the “alarmist” discourse. For instance, the question asked by the previous participant “Pourquoi serions-nous différents des autres continents?” reinforces the threat to Quebec that is represented by Islam. Many participants also used this strategy in conjunction with a reference to personal experiences to support their argument. This technique is particularly frequent among citizens who emigrated from Muslim-majority countries and who now fear for the future of Quebec society. The two following examples illustrate this approach:

Extrait 10

J'ai vécu dans quatre pays différents, dont trois où j'ai vu moi-même l'islamisme naître, et pousser, et grandir dans ces pays-là, qui sont la Tunisie, l'Égypte et la France. J'ai vécu en Arabie saoudite où il était déjà installé et que l'intégrisme islamiste battait son plein et le bat toujours. [...]Et actuellement je suis au Québec, où je suis très inquiète pour l'avenir et

le futur du Québec.
(National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [Rakia Fourati, Vol.143, N°114])

Extrait 11

Si l'Algérie avait été un État laïque, le génocide des années 90, qui a fait plus de 200 000 morts, n'aurait jamais eu lieu. L'élite algérienne en grande partie a failli, et l'histoire l'a déjà condamnée. Si l'élite québécoise rate son rendez-vous historique avec la laïcité, elle aussi, elle sera jugée sans pitié.
(National Assembly of Quebec 2014 [Karim Akouche, Vol.143, N°129])

Their personal experiences give legitimacy to their claim while reinforcing the opposition between, on the one hand, the “West” to which Quebec is associated, and on the other, “Islamism” and the threat it represents. Moreover, despite the little information they give about Quebec society, the contrast they establish with these other societies without highlighting the differences among them contributes to the polarization between the West and Islam.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

In order to make sense of this analysis in the context of the Charter of values and the “problem” associated with Islam and Muslims, I return to my research questions: *Was there indeed a “Muslim problem” constructed during the public hearings on Bill 60? And if so, how was it presented in the participants’ discourse?*

- *What are the main representations of the relationships between Quebec society and Muslims that emerged during the hearings?*
- *How are these representations expressed rhetorically?*

In light of the dominant representations found in the analysis and the rhetorics supporting them, the question of Islam and the place that should be given to Muslims within Quebec society appear indeed to be seen as problematic. However, the Muslim “problem” does not refer here to the Islamic faith in itself, but embodies instead many points of contention between different ways

of defining Quebec society. The analysis reveals how these representations serve to reinforce specific visions of Quebec society, whether it is republican, pluralist or conservative. In the discourse, Islam and Muslims embody an obstacle to the achievement of these visions. For instance, they do not conform to the republican “norm” of neutrality or gender equality as understood by the majority. From a unified perspective, their recognition would imply a de-centring of the majority that endangers Quebec’s identity.

Consequently, the findings echo what many scholars argued concerning the “malaise” of Quebec’s ethno-linguistic majority towards ethno-cultural minorities (see Haince (2014) and Bakali (2015)). The various attitudes towards Islam illustrate here the tensions regarding the definition of Quebec’s identity as some supported a strong normative core based on universal values, while others insisted on the protection of Quebec’s history, culture and identity, and very few argued for a pluralist approach. Although the cultural heritage of French-Quebecois was not widely referenced, the participants nevertheless drew a clear distinction between “us” as a democratic and free society of achieved gender equality, and “them” as religious and “backward”.

As shown in the analysis, the dominant discourse on Quebec society relied on a republican approach and favoured a civic vision of Quebec that was not explicitly centred on the French-Quebecois majority but still carried its features. The association of Quebec with the West and modernity contributed to emphasizing the difference with minorities which were not perceived as possessing the same characteristics. Moreover, most of the participants did not adopt the position valued by the Bouchard & Taylor report (2008) which suggested rethinking Quebec society in pluralist terms. Rather than denouncing the absence of a pluralistic approach in the debate and arguing for greater inclusion, most of the participants tended to reject this option (Salée 2016).

Additionally, very few participants subscribed to a “conservative” approach to Quebec heritage, at least in the context of a discussion on Islam and Muslims.

When it comes to the question of laicity and secularism, the analysis highlights two main dimensions. Firstly, the discussion on gender equality and the veil echoes what some qualifies as “normative secularism” (Maclure and Taylor 2011; Benhadjoudja 2014). As Benhadjoudja (2014) suggests, the majority of the hearings’ participants have adopted a normative attitude towards the concept of laicity which they see as a way of transforming the gender relations within Quebec society (2014, 116). Most of them saw, in the Charter of values, an opportunity to “educate” Muslim women on the Quebec values as well as to prevent religious extremism by the act of banning the veil. Secondly, although the findings cannot be generalized to a larger social trend, the marginal reference to Quebec’s Catholic heritage tends to support Laniel’s (2016) claim that the role of cultural religion in Quebec’s national identity is declining. As Laniel suggests : “l’opposition entre laïcistes et partisans de la confessionnalité devient désormais un débat entre laïcistes ouverts et laïcistes stricts” (*Ibid.* 2016, 460). This was at least confirmed by the opposition between pluralists and republicans on religious expressions in the public sphere in which concerns about the historical relations to the Catholic religion played no role.

With regards to my research questions on the dominant representations of the relationship between Quebec society and Quebecois Muslims, the analysis reveals, following Van Dijk’s (1994) theory of power relations, that the citizens’ social cognitions reflect larger narratives of the society. The rhetorical strategies employed by citizens reinforce the polarization between Quebecois Muslims and French-Quebecois by defining the former as deviant and problematic. They also expose how the dominant group defines itself through its discourse on the Muslim Other by emphasizing how “they” are incompatible with “our” values. However, the CDA

approach used here nuances this polarization as well as to Guillaumin's (2002) majority-minority theory. In the context of this analysis, the opposition between the two groups did indeed follow Guillaumin's theory in which the majority tends to be defined in generic terms and to take the form of the "norm", while minorities are reduced to their particular characteristics (in this case, religion, extremism, veil, etc.). However, as Wodak (2001) argues, discourses are also the site of struggles over power. The analysis reveals here that many definitions of the majority were competing to represent the norm. Thus, the plurality of positions resulted in the construction of different imagined social worlds where power is distributed differently between the majority and minorities.

Finally, the findings also highlight how the social context in which the hearings took place influenced the discourse held by the participants. As Meyer (2001) argues, the dimensions of culture, history and ideologies particular to the context of Quebec provide important tools to understanding the variety of positions on both Quebec identity and pluralism. The perspectives presented here such as the republican, pluralist or unified approaches to Quebec society as well as to pluralism all serve to construct diverse shared mental representations of "us" and "them". It is also important to mention that the analysis also highlighted how the post-9/11 context is particularly influential on those representations. The strong coherence of the veil narrative as well as the West VS Islam frame are good illustrations of how the larger international context also contributes to shaping the discourse in Quebec.

7.1. Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

Overall, this study has allowed me to uncover the dominant narratives and representations of Quebec society and the place of Muslims within it. However, the approach taken here also

involves some limitations that I suggest exposing here along some avenues that could further the discussion.

The focus put on discourse analysis and the use of racializing rhetorics (Potvin 2014) used to talk about Muslims, although highlighting the process of polarization between Muslims and Quebec society, nevertheless limits our understanding of the larger dynamics at play within. As the analysis focuses on the relationship to Islam, other important aspects raised by participants were not included in the analysis. Just as shown in the literature review, the minority status of Quebec society in Canada has contributed to shaping its relation to ethno-cultural and religious diversity (Beauchemin 2009; Bouchard 1995; Juteau 1996). Many participants raised concerns about this minority status in the Canadian context regarding for instance the impacts of multiculturalism as well as of Canada's Common law regime on the province. However, the framing on Islam does not reflect this other point of contention like this one. The discussion on the definition of laicity and State neutrality in the province was also more complex than what the discourses on Islam revealed. For instance, preliminary analysis found that the conservative and pluralist approaches were more frequently adopted on other topics not related to Islam. Thus, focussing on the discourse about Islam and Muslims inevitably limited our capacity to take into consideration the full variety of discourses on Quebec society and religion.

Moreover, as the analysis is here limited to independent citizens, it did not take into consideration other types of discourses that have also contributed to shaping the dominant narratives of Quebec society. Including for instance media discourse or organizations that would have been impacted by the Charter measures such as unions, federations of women, school boards, etc. could have created a more nuanced portrait of the different positions. Consequently,

opening the analysis to both more dimensions of the debate and to a larger sample would allow a better representation of the dynamics at play.

Finally, a greater understanding of the discourse on Islam would benefit from a stronger link to research on Islam in the West and how it is conceptualized. More precisely, the present study highlights how the issues of extremism and fundamentalism played an important role in how Quebecois perceive Islam. However, these elements are often neglected in the recent academic literature on questions of ethno-cultural and religious diversity management in Quebec. The public hearings' participants largely associated Muslim with, not only barbaric practices, but also with fear of invasion, domination and violence by religious extremists. The role of the recent events concerning radicalization among young Quebecois and the rise of acts qualified as "terrorist" performed by young converts appear to have played an important role in constructing the imaginary *Other*, but also the imaginary "self". Thus, this dimension would benefit from further investigation in order to better understanding how Muslims and Quebec society are defined in opposition.

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