Analyzing Online Discourses of Canadian Citizenship: O Canada! True North, Strong, and Free?

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ABSTRACT

Analyzing Online Discourses of Canadian Citizenship: O Canada! True North, Strong, and Free?

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This dissertation reports on findings from a research study that sought to trace how discourses of Canadian citizenship and the resultant social relations that they produce evolved alongside online discussions of Quebec's proposed *Charter of Values*. The presentation of *The Charter* spurred much debate amongst citizens living not only within Quebec, but across Canada, as well. In response, Canadian citizens took to the Internet, among many outlets, to exercise their personal and political agency in order to engage in at times, antagonistic conversations about this controversial socio-political topic. As citizens debated the relative merits of *The Charter* and voiced their agreement or disagreement with the Quebec government's proposition, they began to define for themselves what it means to be a citizen.

This inquiry used corpus-assisted (critical) discourse analysis to examine 34 online discussions concerning *The Charter* appearing within one online environment (reddit). It aimed at three interrelated objectives: 1) to trace how citizens' conceptualizations of citizenship and the social relations that they produce evolved alongside online discussions of Quebec's proposed *Charter of Values*, 2) to analyze these conceptualizations in order to determine where these articulations converge and/or diverge from existing discourses of citizenship, and 3) to assess the possibility for Canada to constitute a site of both radical and plural democracy.

Findings from this research reveal that online discussion were framed primarily by discourses of liberal democracy, nationalism, and the current Western security environment, which are deeply in tension with respect to themselves and to one another. Despite these tensions, however, findings reveal that groups who are perceived as occupying majority positions within society often attempt to delegitimize overt counter-discourses that challenge dominant conceptions of Canadian citizenship. Regrettably, this forecloses the possibility of transforming conflicts arising from difference into sites of socio-political flourishing.

This research highlights the need for citizenship educators to engage with pedagogical strategies that open up spaces for contestation and conflict surrounding issues of privilege,

belonging, and cultural difference. Moreover, it forwards potential strategies to converge the on- and offline worlds in favour of citizenship for and within radically democratic and plural societies.

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All relationship should be a mutual education - J. Krishnamurti

The ideas discussed in this text are, as always, but a partial reflection of all that I have learned in the many relationships that I have experienced in this life. Importantly, however, my relationships with the following individuals have afforded me significant learning with respect to this work:

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Dedication

To the memory of Robert Thomas.

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Glossary

Collocation: a sequence of words (word pairs) that co-occur more often than would be expected by chance.

Lemma: the stemmed form of a word – e.g., 'limit' is the lemma of 'limits'.

Lexical set: the different forms of the same base word (lemma).

Prosody: the meaning that is established through the proximity of a consistent series of collocates that conveys the attitude of the speaker – e.g., 'immigrants' consistently appears with words linked to natural disaster metaphors, e.g., 'flood' (Baker, 2006).

Semantic preference: the relation between a lemma and a set of semantically related words – e.g., 'immigrant' with semantic sets that have a preference for quantification, e.g., 'many', 'few' (Baker et al., 2008).

Token: the total number of words within a corpus.

Type: the number of unique (distinct) words within a corpus.

Chapter 1

Problem Statement

Current research suggests that citizens in post-industrial democracies are becoming increasingly disengaged from thinking critically about political issues and, more broadly from participation in civic activities (Chareka & Sears, 2006; Flanagan, Syversten, & Stout, 2009). While this may be true when it comes to traditional political involvement, many citizens – notably the younger generation of citizens – engage with social and political issues through social media (Bennett, 2008). For example, through the use of online communication platforms such as social network sites and forums, many young people educate themselves and mobilize others around issues that are directly relevant to them (Bennett, Wells, & Rank, 2009; Bers, 2008). Additionally, scholars interested in Internet-democracy have recently begun to explore the Internet's potential for radical democracy (Laclau & Mouffe, [1985] 2001). Seeking to subvert models of democracy that support online practices that reproduce existing power structures, radical theorists forward a vision of "cyberspace as a site of struggle, supporting both the reproduction of dominant social relations and their contestation by excluded groups" (Dahlberg, 2007a, p. 48). Despite this, and the suggestion that citizens' use of the Internet is disrupting traditional social paradigms (Bennett et al., 2009), little empirical work exists that explores how the processes of and outcomes from citizens' participation in online environments is impacting citizens' notions of citizenship or what implications this online participation has for citizenship education.

Existing Research

Over the past two decades, the effects of globalization have caused an increase in the number of studies dealing with citizenship education as well as a renewed interest in the processes and outcomes of this curriculum (Banks et al., 2005; Merryfield & Duty, 2008). For instance, scholars have sustained efforts to explore the links between the Internet and citizenship in terms of how it affords spaces for traditional political involvement – i.e. accessing governmental information, organizing political campaigns (Bachen, Raphael, Lynn, McKee, & Philippi, 2008; de Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012; de Zúñiga, Veenstra, Vraga, & Shah, 2010; Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2013; Rainie, Smith, Lehman Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2012; van

Hamel, 2011). Additionally, there exists a body of literature that explores how younger generations of citizens use the Internet in order to become more personally-expressive and self-actualizing (Bennett, 2008; Bennett et al., 2009; Bers, 2008; Buckingham, 2008; Stern, 2008). There is, however, a dearth of literature that explores if and how citizens' use of the Internet for self-actualizing activities impacts traditional notions of citizenship and political involvement. Furthermore, there is a lack of literature that deals with how citizens' use of the Internet for socio-political participation can potentially factor into citizenship education.

Research Context

On September 10th, 2013, the Quebec provincial government proposed to introduce *Bill 60: Charter Affirming the Values of State Secularism and Religious Neutrality and of Equality Between Women and Men, and Providing a Framework for Accommodation Request*.[1] This proposed charter attempted to "construire une identité québécoise forte, qu'on soit né [en Québec] ou ailleurs" [*build a strong Quebec identity, whether one was born [in Quebec] or elsewhere*] (Gouvernement du Québec, 2013), to define the values of Quebec society, and to constitute a form of social contract. Each of these aims is intimately tied to notions of citizenship; however, little public consultation took place before outlining a collective social identity. Moreover, in pursuit of these aims, *The Charter* attempted to affirm the religious neutrality of the State and its employees by requiring that: "In the exercise of their functions, personnel members of public bodies must not wear objects such as headgear, clothing, jewelry or other adornments which, by their conspicuous nature, overtly indicate a religious affiliation" (Québec, Bill 60: Chapter II, Division II, 5).

The proposed restriction on wearing religious symbols while representing a public body spurred much debate amongst citizens living not only within Quebec, but across Canada, as well. In response, Canadian citizens took to the Internet to exercise their personal and political agency in order to engage in at times antagonistic conversations about this controversial socio-political topic. As citizens debated the relative merits of *The Charter* and voiced their agreement or disagreement with the government's proposition, they defined for themselves what it means to be a citizen.

[1] Hereafter referred to as the *Charter of Values* or *The Charter*.

Purpose Statement

This dissertation reports on a research study that aimed at three interrelated objectives: 1) to trace how citizens' conceptualizations of citizenship and the social relations that they produce evolved alongside online discussions of Quebec's proposed *Charter of Values*, 2) to analyze these conceptualizations in order to determine where these articulations converge and/or diverge from existing discourses of citizenship, and 3) to assess the possibility for Canada to constitute a site of both radical and plural democracy (Laclau & Mouffe, [1985] 2001).

Research Questions

In order to address the aforementioned aims, the research question that guided this inquiry was: How do online discourses of citizenship reproduce or challenge existing discourses of (Canadian) citizenship?

Significance

Now well into the second decade of the 21st century, the Internet can be understood not only as a means to obtain political information but also as a space where learning, engagement, organization, and political interaction already occur. As such, much was learned from an examination of both the processes and outcomes of the online debates surrounding *The Charter*. First, such an examination sheds light on how Canadians understand and articulate notions of citizenship and what power relations these articulations signify. Second, analysis of the processes through which Canadians discussed this contentious socio-political issue illuminates how citizens currently enact their citizenship online and how online environments might ultimately support the articulation of powerful counter-discourses, capable of challenging prevailing hegemonic configurations. Third, findings of this investigation point to potential ways to converge the on- and offline worlds in favour of citizenship for and within radically democratic and plural societies.

Dissertation Format

The presentation of this dissertation proceeds as follows: Chapter Two outlines foundational knowledge for this inquiry by reviewing the literature connected to contemporary conceptualizations of citizenship, Canadian citizenship education, and online discourses of citizenship. Chapter Three articulates the theoretical framework – radical democracy (Laclau & Mouffe, [1985] 2001) – in which this research is situated. Chapter Four provides the methodological foundation of this work, including a discussion of six key areas of procedural consideration: research methodology, research techniques, study limitations, ethical considerations, research site, and data corpus. Chapter Five presents data analysis. Chapter Six provides a discussion and interpretation of the research data. Chapter Seven offers educational implications and recommendations. Chapter Eight offers my final reflections.

Chapter 2

The research question relating to this inquiry can be situated within three broad bodies of literature: contemporary conceptualizations of citizenship, Canadian citizenship education, and online discourses of citizenship. In what follows, I begin by tracing the historical development of dominant conceptualizations of citizenship. I then provide an overview of the foci of contemporary citizenship education, both within liberal democratic communities, broadly, and within the Canadian context, specifically. Finally, I discuss how the Internet can be viewed as both a tool for the creation of socio-political identities and communities, as well as a space for the proliferation of socio-political discussion.

What is Citizenship?

In his influential essay, *Citizenship and Social Class,* T. H. Marshall (1950) conceives of citizenship as a "status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (pp. 28-29). Speaking to historical developments at the end of the nineteenth century during which a substantial body of social rights was established, Marshall's writing defines citizenship chiefly as a set of constitutional rights. Further, he links the establishment of compulsory elementary education at the turn of the twentieth century with the aims of citizenship. Marshall explains that since it was believed that citizens held a personal right to education, as well as "a public duty to exercise the right … the duty to improve and civilize oneself [was] therefore a social duty, and not merely a personal one, because the social health of a society depends upon the civilization of its members" (p. 26). Consequently, he maintains that helping to ensure the creation of an educated electorate required for vibrant political democracy is one of the chief roles of education. Despite Marshall's pronouncements, this conceptualization of citizenship has since been challenged from a definitional standpoint.

In the years since the publication of Marshall's text, the notion of citizenship has become widely regarded as an essentially contextualized, contested, and multidimensional concept (Fischman & Haas, 2012; Hughes, Print, & Sears, 2010; Lister, 2003; Schugurensky, 2006). Countless citizenship debates have arisen which have attempted to define what the notion of citizenship rightfully entails (Fischman & Haas, 2012). Notably, feminist scholar Ruth Lister

(2003) critiques Marshall's view of citizenship on the account that it lacks an acknowledgement of social struggle as its central mechanism. She asserts that citizenship has two fundamental applications: as a status, where it "represents an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined" (p. 37), and as a practice, where it "enables people to act as agents" (p. 37). Barney (2007) echoes this perspective and explains that "to *be* a citizen is to bear the rights and obligations attached to membership in a given political community" (p. 40, emphasis added), whereas "to be *as* a citizen is to engage in judgment about common things in relation to and with others" (p. 40, emphasis in original).

Schugurensky (2006) adds to these definitions and proposes a multidimensional definition of citizenship, one that includes status, identity, civic virtue, and agency. Like Marshall, Schugurensky conceives of citizenship *as status* as membership in a given nation state and explains that this dimension affords citizens such rights as the right to hold a passport and the right to vote and be elected. Citizenship *as identity* refers to issues of citizens' sense of belonging and meaning. As Schugurensky explains: "identity is rooted in factors like a common history, language, religion, values, traditions and culture, which seldom coincide with the artificial territory of a nation-state" (p. 68). Therefore, this dimension enables citizens who hold a legal citizenship status in more than one nation-state to feel an allegiance to one nation above the other(s). *Civic virtue* refers to the skills, dispositions, behaviors, and attitudes that are expected of 'good citizens'. There is no universal understanding of what this dimension of citizenship entails, rather its various conceptualizations depend upon the particular "historical, ideological and political contexts" in which they are articulated (p. 69). Schugurensky defines citizenship *as agency* as the capability of citizens to function as social actors, which requires a recognition of the fact that social action always already occurs in a context marked by an "interplay of autonomy and domination, of liberating forces and structures of control, or possibility and limitation" (p. 69). As such, within any given context there are different types of citizen action, each with particular normative and substantive assumptions that hold important implications for the project of educating citizens.

Citizenship & Political Philosophy

As the above discussion outlines, a multitude of conceptions of citizenship are now popular, each with distinct normative and substantive assumptions. In addition to these, there are

a variety of traditions of political philosophy that have become widely adopted in post-industrial democratic societies. The most popular strands of political theory within these contexts are liberalism (e.g., Rawls, 1971), which emphasizes individual rights; communitarianism (e.g., Taylor, 1989), which emphasizes the importance of shared values within pre-political communities; and civic republicanism (e.g., Sandel, 1996), which emphasizes both individual rights as well as civic bonds to one's community (Dahlgren, 2006). Canada's socio-political environment emphasizes liberal democracy, which at the level of political philosophy, seeks to establish a constitutional consensus that ensures a common list of political rights and a minimal set of acceptable democratic conflict resolution procedures. In the next section, I expand on the historical development of political liberalism, paying particular attention to how it is applied within contemporary pluralist societies.

Political Liberalism

Owing to citizens' overwhelming confidence in the concept of divine-will, questions of social inequality were not considered politically pressing until the demise of this belief system towards the end of the eighteenth century (Laclau & Mouffe, [1985] 2001). Once revolutionary efforts of the late-eighteenth century began to flourish, the concept of equality quickly became a cultural, and therefore a political and economic concern (Marshall, 1950). The implication of this was that societies needed to devise ways to determine who legitimately held power and what responsibilities accompanied this authority. The development of the liberal state was one response to this need, and accompanying it came a deepening of democratic commitments to protect the liberal rights of freedom and equality of all who belong to the demos. Importantly, liberal democracy highlights the importance of developing specific virtues in order to ensure socio-political flourishing. For example, it champions the cultivation of virtues such as reciprocity and tolerance, as these virtues are believed to help citizens find and implement mutually agreed upon methods of cooperation in circumstances where they initially disagree about what the ethico-political principles on which liberal democracy is built – i.e. liberty and equality – rightfully require (Callan, 1997).

While many of the virtues championed by liberal democracy are necessary within any political community, many of the current citizenship debates have focused on the need to also include "virtues which are distinctive to modern pluralistic liberal democracies" (Kymlicka,

2002, p. 289). For example, virtues such as critical thinking, compassion, and political engagement, which enable citizens to engage in public discourse with people of different faiths and cultures in order to question political authority and public policy, are increasingly making their way into political theorizing. Correspondingly, education is seen as one of the primary mechanisms through which citizens develop their ability to communicate their political positions and demands "in terms that fellow citizens can understand and accept as consistent with their status as free and equal citizens" (p. 289).

Citizenship & Education

Today, citizenship is widely seen as a subject of study as well as an overarching aim of education. Within many liberal democratic societies, school-based curricula include courses meant to touch upon issues related to citizenship. These are alternately called 'citizenship education' or 'civic education'. While these terms are often used interchangeably, the latter tends to focus primarily or exclusively on teaching the information and knowledge deemed necessary in order to become a productive citizen, while the former includes the aforementioned content areas and pays additional attention the development of particular skills and dispositions related to effective citizenship (Josic, 2011; Starkey, 2002). In addition to formal school-based curriculum, citizenship education, broadly defined, is concerned with issues relating to social participation. Thus, the process of educating citizens factors into many nonformal and informal educational contexts in citizens' daily lives, as well. In particular, informal learning, which results from such activities as citizens' participation in communities or cultural groups, as well as within unguided and unstructured on- and offline environments is a fertile source for learning how to be and to live as a citizen (McGray & Thomas, 2014).

Within post-industrial democracies, citizenship is intimately tied to notions of democracy. Consequently, as scholars have rightly pointed out, the notion of democracy (and hence, citizenship) occupies a relatively privileged position within the realm of formal education in these societies (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). However, given that there does not exist a consensus on what a vision of 'education for democracy' entails, citizenship education policy-makers and practitioners pursue dozens of agendas with the aim of educating citizens. As highlighted above, these policies tend to privilege one particular vision of citizenship founded upon particular normative and substantive assumptions. In the case of most post-industrial

democracies, this vision is liberal-democratic, which produces educational programming with distinct theoretical and curricular goals (Bennett et al., 2009; Schugurensky, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

In their work, Bennett, Wells, and Rank (2009) explore the implications of the use of new technologies for citizen identity development and ultimately, for citizenship education. These scholars assert that as a result of the effects of globalization – i.e. increased connectivity across geographic and cultural borders, economic restructuring, weakening of national ties – changes have occurred with regards to youth's civic orientations. They argue that these changes have had a profound impact on the manner in which young people identify and the political structures with which they affiliate. For example, Bennett (1998) argues that younger citizens are more inclined to engage with issues more closely connected to lifestyle values, such as environmental and moral causes. As a result, shifts in citizens' political interests and commitments have given rise to two distinctly meaningful citizenship paradigms: the dutiful citizen and the actualizing citizen.

The theoretic premise underlying the notion of dutiful citizenship is that citizens' primary duty is to participate in elections, public service, community organizations, political parties, and other government-centered activities (Bennett et al., 2009; Putnam, 2000). Voting is *the* core democratic act and a high degree of trust is placed in political leaders. Education for dutiful citizenship privileges transmitting civic knowledge – i.e. knowledge of formal institutions and processes (Josic, 2011; Starkey, 2002) – via authoritative sources, such as textbooks, political leaders, or mainstream news outlets. The theoretic premise of actualizing citizenship is that citizenship consists of engagement with a brand of politics that allows for citizens to "approach politics from more personal standpoints that permit greater participation in the definition of issues, production and sharing of information, and construction of action" (Bennett et al., 2009, p. 107). Engaging in socio-political activism, self-expression, and/or self-actualization closely associated with issues of social justice and lifestyle politics are important democratic acts and peer-to-peer communication is highly valued (Bennett et al., 2009; Palfry & Gasser, 2008). Education for actualizing citizenship privileges learning that results from participatory media creation, engaging in interactive and experiential opportunities for social action, and the use of digital media.

Schugurensky (2006) explains that frequently, citizenship education programs emphasize one dimension of his multidimensional model of citizenship. Curriculum that emphasizes the

status dimension focuses on teaching facts relating to national history and geography, government institutions, political processes, and the law. Curriculum that emphasizes the identity dimension aims to build social cohesion by highlighting a common history, language, culture, etc. Curriculum that seeks to develop civic virtues tends to emphasize certain values and dispositions associated with good citizenry (however defined in context). Curriculum that is built upon the premise of citizenship as agency seeks to build active, engaged, and committed citizens.

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) forward three prominent conceptions of citizenship: personally responsible, participatory, and justice oriented. These authors explain that educational programming that caters to the development of personally responsible citizens is that which emphasizes personal character development and acting responsibly within society. Programs falling under this category espouse values such as abiding by the law, volunteering for causes that assist those less fortunate, working, and paying taxes. Educational programming that caters to the development of participatory citizens is that which emphasizes active participation in civic issues at the community, provincial/state, national, or international level. Programs belonging to this category teach citizens about the structures behind political and community-based organizations so that they may one day participate in collective efforts for social action. Educational programming that caters to the development of justice-oriented citizens is that which emphasizes social critique of the structures underlying the processes of political and community-based activities. Programs of this nature call attention to social injustice and emphasize the need for citizens to take steps towards creating social change and social justice, while considering the varying perspectives held within society. In the following section, I detail prominent approaches to citizenship education within the Canadian context.

Canadian Citizenship Education

As there is no federal ministry of education within Canada, it is difficult to speak conclusively about any pan-Canadian education policies or practices. However, even though each of the 13 provinces and territories hold jurisdiction over their own curriculum, several regions have articulated an explicit commitment to citizenship education (Hughes & Sears, 2008). In such cases, citizenship is conceived of as including all four of the dimensions of citizenship outlined by Schugurensky (2006); however, across provincial curricula, there is particular emphasis on the importance of fostering civic agency. Much of Canadian citizenship

education programming is built upon the assumption that students must be engaged in "meaningful activities designed to help them make sense of, and develop competence with, civic ideas and practices" (Hughes & Sears, 2008, p. 128). This promotes a view of citizenship as agency (Schugurensky, 2006) and the development of actualizing citizens (Bennett et al., 2009): those who are engaged, often collaboratively, in political action that is closely related to personal values. Additionally, there is a push towards personally responsible and participatory citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) within the curriculum across many provinces and territories, as well as emphasis on cultivating virtuous citizens (Schugurensky, 2006) who are willing and able to act in a socially responsible manner in order to make improvements within their local context (Hughes & Sears, 2008).

The emphasis on participatory and active modes of citizenship is reflective of many citizenship education efforts across the larger democratic world (Hughes & Sears, 2008). Notably, within the Canadian context, emphasis on active engagement through civic participation and public deliberation focuses on "seeking common goods and building a sense of community or social cohesion" (p. 127), which speaks to the diverse fabric of Canadian society. Moreover, many Canadian provincial citizenship education policies are built upon a foundation of liberal democratic ideals, offering programs steeped in discourses of tolerance and acceptance, which advance strategies to support the "development of understanding of and respect for multiple perspectives" (p. 129). While this drive towards fostering understanding and tolerance is not unique to Canadian citizenship education (Hughes & Sears, 2008), it does gain particular importance as a result of Canada's constitutional approaches to diversity (*cf. Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, 1985). Canada's constitutional support of multiculturalism affirms "the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage" (*Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, 1985, section 3.1a). As such, Multiculturalism policy supports the equality of all Canadian citizens in pursuing their diverse interests providing that citizens' beliefs and practices do not infringe upon the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Therefore, as an ideal, both the state and fellow citizens must equally respect cultural diversity that appears in the "form of numerous cultural groups or voluntary associations that, in many cases choose to cultivate cross-cultural relations … [or that] choose the path of isolation – socially, politically, and educationally – from the larger … society" (Maxwell, Waddington, McDonough, Cormier, & Schwimmer, 2012, p. 434). When enacted within such a liberal

democratic and multicultural framework, Canadian citizenship education aims primarily to build citizens' respect for the multiple perspectives that emerge due to the country's rich history of cultural diversity.

Quebec Nationalism

Importantly, one of the exceptions to the preceding discussion is Quebec's citizenship education curriculum. This province's history as a 'national minority' within Canada affords citizens distinct status and rights, including the right to self-governance, which has historically been used to preserve the French language, among other distinctions (Kymlicka, 1996). As such, citizenship education within this context often emphasizes the identity dimension of citizenship by articulating and attempting to sustain a shared identity. It is important to note, however, that the pursuit of a shared identity should not be misconstrued as "personal attachment to the fixed identity referents of the nation" (Maxwell et al., p. 433). Rather, owing to its framework of Interculturalism, Quebec society (and correspondingly, its educational policies) emphasizes the pursuit of endeavours that enable the co-construction of a common societal culture, however temporary and fragile (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008). Significantly, this policy aims to facilitate the integration of newcomers by engaging them in dynamic, open-ended dialogue and fostering commitment to shared political pursuits (Maxwell et al., 2012).

Accordingly, Interculturalism not only affirms the importance of dialogue as a key mechanism of civic engagement and transformation, but equally affirms a shared moral contract between citizens that requires that they uphold and further basic liberal democratic ethico-political principles and that they promote intercultural dialogue, an openness to pluralism, and a shared common public language (Maxwell et al., 2012). This policy equally acknowledges sociological asymmetry whereby:

> … newcomers are responsible for integrating and adapting, while established citizens have the responsibility of welcoming and accepting newcomers by (among other things) learning about and engaging with their cultures and adjusting their practices in order to facilitate social inclusion. The ideal is of a balanced but asymmetrical give-and-take of adjustment, exchanges, and compromise between the home society and those of new arrivals. (p. 434)

Hence, Interculturalism rejects familiar nationalist aims, which serve to merely protect and advance the interests and well-being of the dominant national group.

Importantly, in line with the overarching aims of Interculturalism, Quebec citizenship education curriculum includes Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) programming at both the elementary and secondary school levels. The ERC program aims to "broaden horizons, develop talents, and provide the tools needed for each individual to live with others as a self-actualized, free and responsible adult" (Gouvernement du Québec, 2015). Specifically, the major goals of the program include supporting students': a) understanding of the equality of all individuals in terms of rights and dignity, b) ability to reflect on issues pertaining to ERC, c) ability to explore the different ways in which Quebec's religious heritage is manifested in society, d) awareness of other religious traditions present within Quebec society, and e) successful participation in a society in which different values and beliefs coexist (Gouvernement du Québec, 2015).

This section has attempted to convey important information concerning the development of notions of citizenship and citizenship education within liberal democratic societies, broadly, and within the Canadian context, specifically. In the next section, I discuss how the Internet can and is impacting traditional notions of citizenship and political involvement. Specifically, I focus my discussion on issues of online identity and community development and engagement in socio-political discussion.

Online Discourses of Citizenship

Citizens' use of certain social media platforms enables the creation/performance of new kinds of identities, which are becoming increasingly integral to notions of citizenship within the twenty-first century (Bennett et al., 2009). Scholars suggest that the proliferation of these new communication platforms has changed both the scope and nature of the ways in which citizens interact (Merryfield & Duty, 2008). For example, the use of technology continues to enhance global connectivity and enables citizens to encounter ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity more frequently than in previous generations, resulting in greater potential for conflict, which is both a threat and an opportunity (Sheppard, Ashcroft, & Larson, 2011). In what follows, I outline the ways in which citizens have begun to use the Internet and its associated platforms for identity development processes. Subsequently, I highlight the potential of the Internet to function as a

space wherein socio-political discussion can and does occur, while pointing to where such discussion is both democratic and not.

Online Identities

Philosophers of technology have offered the trope that technologies are both socially shaped and socially shaping (Buckingham, 2008; *cf.* Heidegger, 1977). In his book, Kozinets (2010) argues that, "technology constantly shapes and reshapes our bodies, our places, and our identities, and is shaped to our needs as well" (p. 22). Darin Barney (2007) asserts that the "Internet *makes* people what they are, as opposed to merely being *used* by them" (p. 38, emphasis in original). For individuals who experience the Internet as a way of being in the world, it becomes a context in which citizens can construct new kinds of communities, along with their resistant identities (Hands, 2007; Markham, 2004). Moreover, it can provide those who have access to it with an "important set of tools to build social and personal identity and to create the on- and offline environments" in which to spend time (Bennett, 2008, p. 8).

Rheingold (1993) was one of the earliest scholars to highlight the potential of the Internet for social construction. He defines the communities created in online environments as *virtual communities* and stipulates that these collectives are "social aggregations that emerge from the net when enough people carry on … public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (p. 3). Within many post-industrial societies where Internet penetration rates are high and usage is nearly ubiquitous, individuals are using Internet-based communication platforms in order to sustain increased connectivity over time and across borders (Merryfield & Duty, 2008). With the advent and use of such technological platforms as social network sites, citizens are now able to form identifications across cultural and national boundaries, thus causing fragmentation and uncertainty about traditional identity markers (Bennett, 2008; Buckingham, 2008). As Bennett (2008) explains, one major consequence of greater opportunities to form global connections is that in certain instances, the broad social influence of particular social and political groups has diminished. In these cases:

> … individuals have become more responsible for the production and management of their own social and political identities. Contemporary young people enjoy unprecedented levels of freedom to define and manage their self-identities in contrast with earlier generations'

> experiences with stronger groups (denominational church, labor, class, party) that essentially assigned broad social identities to their members. (p. 13)

As such, in an era of globalization, traditional identity markers are losing their currency as national boundaries and traditional social structures weaken.

Owing to the contemporary availability of arguably unmediated and heterogeneous online social spaces that support asynchronous communication, individuals are presented with "more opportunities to engage in strategic control over information and self-presentation than [in] face-to-face exchanges" (Kozinets, 2010, p. 69). Internet users can choose to engage creatively with different textual forms (e.g., written, audio, visual texts) in order to explore identity flexibility and to effectively 'write themselves' into existence (Daley, 2012). For example, Perkel (2008) describes the process of writing an online social network profile as a complicated exercise in self-representation and outward identity formation; Greenhow and Robelia (2009) maintain that individuals "use online authorship to work out their personal beliefs, challenge cultural assumptions, and navigate complex relationships" (p. 124). As such, online identity creation/representation holds a performative aspect in which the user (citizen) becomes what they type (Slater, 2002).

Within Canada, 83% of citizens use the Internet (Internet World Stats, 2012) and of them, 58% of citizens (aged 16 and older) report using social network sites regularly (Statistics Canada, 2011). Social network sites are described as a form of participatory social media that:

> … allow individuals to 1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, 2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and 3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211)

These sites, which place the individual at the center of their community, hold the potential of enabling individuals to form identifications and to build communities around particular interests, traits, and affiliations, thereby supporting citizens in both freely creating an identity for themselves and actualizing elements of their identities that go beyond traditional identity markers.

Concurrent with the rise in usage of social network sites, there has been a rise in concern with whether or not the types of identities that are displayed therein are honest, authentic, and

representative of offline identities (Venkatesh, Shaikh et al., 2012). Scholars believe that the anonymous social interactions supported by the Internet afford individuals the opportunity to "speak more freely without restraints brought about by social norms, mores, and conventions" (Markham, 2004, p. 102). This may mean that the discourse present within online environments more accurately reflects individuals' actual identities (Kozinets, 2010). The other side of this argument is that it can be difficult to authenticate the veracity of online identities and to assess whether or not they accurately reflect offline identities.

I contend that while still advanced by some, the latter argument is untenable for two reasons. First, it presupposes that there is in fact, some definitive conception of reality that is waiting to reveal itself and that this is done most suitably through an individual's physical presence (Markham, 2004). Second, it negates the fact that discourse, in and of itself, holds meaning regardless of the beliefs held by the individual by whom it was communicated (*cf.* Venkatesh, Podoshen, Perri, & Urbaniak, 2014). Specifically, in the context of online communities with heavy usage patterns in which social bonds are created and social capital generated, sustained engagement – e.g., discussion – by a large audience produces discourse that carries important meaning and social impact (de Zúñiga, Puig-I-Abril, & Rojas, 2009; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). For this reason in particular, I contend that the question of import is not whether or not online environments afford a space in which social posturing or honest social disclosure is taking place. Rather, I argue that if particular online platforms afford individuals with spaces in which to form particular identifications and to articulate particular versions of themselves, then much can be learned from the behaviours and discourses therein. Moreover, many online communities, both those emphasizing socio-political issues and those organized around non-political topics are important spaces wherein political participation can and is taking place (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009). The next section provides an overview of the ways in which the Internet facilitates civic engagement in the form of socio-political discussion.

Socio-Political Discussion

Dahlgren (2006) explains that civil society is "the societal terrain between the state and the economy, the realm of free association where citizens can interact to pursue their shared interests" (p. 271). He suggests that such "interaction helps individuals to develop socially, to shape their identities, to foster values suitable for democracy and to learn to deal with conflict in

productive ways" (p. 272). As Smith (2001) points out, notions of civil society are being redefined as a result of the proliferation of Internet-based technologies and the types of communities, identities, and social relations that are produced therein. In particular, some citizens – especially those who have traditionally been excluded from so-called mainstream notions of civil society – use the Internet as a space where they can participate in the new versions of civil society in meaningful ways. This has given rise to a number of counter-publics or alternative spaces in which "citizens may be active, receive information, and organize against and challenge [perceived injustices]" (p. 122). In this way, the Internet lends itself to an agonistic and at times combative form of politics. This is by no means an unproblematic notion (as I detail later on in this section), but it does allude to the potential for the Internet to act as a deliberative and democratizing force.

Owing to its anarchic and decentralized form and to its support for multimodal forms of expression, the Internet facilitates the communication of alternative and contesting voices (Smith, 2001). As Kahn and Kellner (2007) assert: "the political battles of the future may well be fought in the streets, factories, parliaments, and other sites of past conflicts, but all political struggle is now mediated by media, computer, and information technologies and increasingly will be so" (p. 33). Therefore, it has rightly been suggested that the Internet and its associated communication platforms constitute a new public sphere in which public deliberation can take place (Dahlberg, 2007a/b; Daley, 2012; Kahn & Kellner, 2007; Nussbaum, Winsor, Aqui, & Poliquin, 2007). This is important because the public sphere, in its various forms, is "seen as central to strong democracy, enabling the voicing of diverse views on any issue, the constitution of publicly-oriented citizens, the scrutiny of power and, ultimately, public sovereignty" (Dahlberg, 2007b, p. 828). Thus, owing to the fact that the Internet holds the potential to act as an environment wherein interactive, transnational, and arguably accessible public commentary and argumentation take place, its use by citizens consequently holds the potential to contribute to positive democratic outcomes (Dahlberg, 2007a).

However, the Internet can also function in a fashion that is highly anti-social and anti-democratic (Dahlberg, 2007b). For example, while citizens' participation in homogeneous, interest-specific, niche online communities enables them to be more self-actualizing and personally expressive, these communities can also be repressive. On one hand, some communities afford citizens with the opportunity to engage with issues connected to lifestyle

values and to partake in social action that is both personally meaningful and socially relevant, which has positive social implications (Dahlgren, 2007; Das, 2014; Pente, 2014). On the other hand, some communities center on negative social forces, such as narcissism (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008) and hatred (Gerstenfeld, Grant, & Chiang, 2003; Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002; Venkatesh et al., 2014). In these environments, interactions typically involve like-minded individuals expressing confirmatory discourse, with little room for dissent (Castro, 2014; Netherton, 2014). This sometimes autocratic and more oftentimes technocratic use of Internet-based communication platforms may go against what many might consider to be a positive model of democracy. Moreover, when negative views and opinions flow through the increasingly porous boundaries between the on- and offline worlds, results can be particularly problematic from an educational, individual, and societal standpoint.

Commenting On & Connecting the Field of Literature

The literature outlined above informed the construction of the research study described herein in important ways. Not only does it provide contextual background for the research question, but it points to what is and is not known in the field, as well. Beginning with what is unknown, it is clear from the section pertaining to Canadian citizenship education that much debate and controversy exists both within the field of citizenship and citizenship education, as to what each category rightfully includes. Additionally, when it comes to how citizenship education is experienced in practice, it is widely acknowledged that there is often a discrepancy between what is articulated at the level of policy and what actually happens *in situ* (Hughes & Sears, 2008; Thomas, Fournier-Sylvester, & Venkatesh, 2014). Therefore, while a valuable framework for understanding the present research study, it is important to interpret findings from this inquiry against a backdrop of contestation, controversy, and change.

While a utopian view of the Internet's potential to support robust socio-political engagement and catalyze social transformation is often forwarded in theoretical writings (*cf.* Barney, 2007; Dahlberg, 2007b; Kahn & Kellner, 2007), there is a dearth of empirical research that examines if and how this potential is being realized. This research makes an important contribution in this regard: it adds to the debate concerning if and how interactions supported by online environments facilitate the articulation of powerful counter-discourses and re-imagined subjectivities and social configurations capable of disrupting hegemonic formulations. Moreover,

it suggests a potential way to converge the on- and offline worlds in favour of citizenship education.

In the next chapter, I outline the theoretical framework in which this investigation is situated and describe how central concepts from this theory operate within the present study.

Chapter 3

The research question central to this inquiry dealt with how discourses of Canadian citizenship were represented and transformed as a result of citizens' interactions in online environments. In order to interrogate citizen subjectivities and social configurations, I chose to adopt Laclau and Mouffe's ([1985] 2001) theory of radical democracy as the theoretical framework for this work. Articulated as a "theory of discourse, as well as a political discourse in its own right" (Townshend, 2004, p. 269), radical democratic theory has the aspiration of not only interrogating the meaning associated with ethico-political discourse – i.e. the discursive elements that comprise a given discourse – but also helping to determine how particular meanings become fixed and gain legitimacy in the process. Therefore, the necessarily interrelated concepts of discourse and hegemony were central to the theoretical underpinnings of this study. In what follows, I begin with a description of how the notion of discourse was conceptualized within the present study. Next, I trace the evolution of the concept of hegemony from Gramsci to Laclau and Mouffe. I then go on to summarize the main components of discursive formations under radical democracy and how they operate within the constitution of various socio-political forces.

Discourse

While pervasive in many disciplines belonging to the humanities and social sciences, the concept of 'discourse' is frequently ill-defined, "as if its usage was simply common knowledge" (Mills, 2004, p. 1). The history of its conflicting usage has included, among treatments: a) the ability to reason, b) the entire domain of communication, c) formal discussion of a subject, d) an extended piece of text used for linguistic analysis, or e) "any organized body or corpus of statements and utterances governed by rules and conventions of which the user is largely unconscious" (Macey, 2001, p. 100). As Mills (2004) asserts, the "sense in the general usage of discourse as having to do with conversation and 'holding forth' on a subject, or giving a speech, has been partly due to the etymology of the word" (p. 2), which comes from the French *discours*.

During the 1960s, the term discourse branched away from its earlier etymological roots and gained more theoretical meanings. This divergence, however, did little to add clarity to the term; rather, it expanded the range of possible meanings and introduced a new host of constraints

created within/by different disciplinary boundaries (Mills, 2004). Currently within the domains of cultural studies, linguistics, and critical discourse analysis, the notion of discourse is perhaps most prominently associated with French philosopher and historian, Michel Foucault ([1972] 2002). Although his prolific and influential writings on the topic are well documented, Foucault added to the fluctuating meaning of the term by referring to discourse alternatively as "sometimes the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements" (p. 90). These three definitions correspond broadly to:

> All utterances or texts which have meaning and which have some effects in the real world, … groups of utterances which seem to be regulated in some way and which seem to have a coherence and force to them in common, … the rules and structures which produce particular utterances and texts. (Mills, 2004, p. 6)

While these competing definitions are useful because they provide the grounds for analytic flexibility, it is important to describe the context in which the term was used within the present study, and the resultant meanings that accompanied it.

Discourse is understood here not as a set of discursive "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, [1972] 2002, p. 54), but rather as a regulated set of statements that account for particular systems of thought or knowledge claims (Stoddart, 2007). Therefore, within the context of the present study, discourse is understood not as that which creates objects, but rather as that which generates *knowledge* about the objects of which it speaks. As such, discourse necessarily not only shares an important relationship with how we construct and apprehend realities, but also dictates the terms of truth, authority, distribution, and circulation of this knowledge.

Discourse, Language, & Reality

One of the primary ways that discourse is constructed, circulated, and strengthened is through language use. Importantly, however, discourse does not equal language. Rather, "discourse begins at the point where linguistics reaches the limits of its technical competence" (Macey, 2001, p. 101). This is because rather than prescribing connections between concepts or words, discourse functions to delimit what can be said by providing the conceptual tools – e.g.,

metaphors, analogies – and the rhetorical structure for making new statements within a particular discursive structure.

Once discursive structures are established, they can be seen as sharing an important relationship to reality in that they organize systems of meaning that influence "what we perceive to be significant and how we interpret objects and events" (Mills, 2004, p. 45). Consequently, discourse is deeply involved in mediating power and authority. As Mills (2004) posits, in the "process of apprehending, we categorise and interpret experience and events according to the structures available to us and, in the process of interpretation, we lend these structures a solidity which it is often difficult to think outside of" (p. 49).

Discourse, Power, & Society

As Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) contend, "any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre" (p. 112). Although, for this to be the case discourse cannot occur in isolation; rather it must appear in relation to, and often in opposition to other discourses. For example:

> The discourse of environmentalism has been structured in reaction to government economic and strategic development policies, and also in reaction to ecological disasters. In this sense, the form that environmental philosophies have developed has depended in a large measure on events and discursive frameworks external to it. (Mills, 2004, p. 10)

Consequently, the realization of discourse is organized around principles of exclusion: a particular view and experience of any given topic is "made possible by the fact that other ways of knowing about [the topic] have been excluded" (p. 11). Thus, by virtue of the fact that exclusion is important, so too is the notion of power significant, as power dictates who has the authority to exclude.

Power serves to regulate the conditions surrounding discursive construction, dictating what can be thought and practiced at different historical junctions. Importantly, however, such discursive power serves not only to repress and exclude, but also to produce. Power factors into the ways in which citizens negotiate the construction of objects, which in turn influences them through the "process of [their] constitution [as] subjects within a hierarchy of relations" (Mills, 2004, p. 38). Therefore, as Mills (2004) asserts:

> A discourse is not a disembodied collection of statements, but groupings of utterances or sentences, statements which are enacted within a social context, which are determined by that social context and which contribute to the way that social context continues its existence. (p. 10)

For this reason, discourse shares critical conceptual ground with the concept of hegemony in that in addition to being derived *from* hegemony, the effects of discourse in turn *become* hegemony, as it "becomes the concretisation and realisation of the world-view of the philosophical subject" (Joseph, 2002, p. 27).

Hegemony

Gramsci

One of the most prominent thinkers associated with the concept of hegemony is Antonio Gramsci, who was, "above all else, a Marxist, interested in the actual issues of power, politics and class struggle" (Joseph, 2002, p. 26). However, to say that he was simply a Marxist concerned with matters of the political base and superstructure would do injustice to his contributions. Gramsci extended the realm of politics beyond the domain of the state, government, and political leadership, to also include social life as a whole – i.e. the everyday beliefs and behaviours of human existence. Gramsci's hegemony shows "how seemingly private or personal aspects of daily life are politically important aspects of the operation of power" (Ives, 2004, p. 71). Thus, for Gramsci, hegemony "comes to refer to the general social requirement for the construction of rulership" (Joseph, 2002, p. 28).

Gramsci's notion of hegemony was as an ideal type, theorized as one that would represent unqualified commitment by all in society around one common affiliation (Ives, 2004). It is distinguished from mere political power and conceived of as a form of cultural predominance that functions as a mode of "moral and intellectual persuasion rather than control by the police, the military, or the coercive power of the law" (Entwistle, 1979, p. 12). Therefore, Gramsci's vision of unqualified socio-political commitment should not simply be understood as the necessary result of state power over its people, but rather as the result of power that permeates civil society:

> Whereas the state establishes and reproduces the dominance of a ruling group or class through direct forms of domination ranging from legislation to coercion, civil society reproduces its hegemony by ensuring that the mass of the population 'spontaneously' consents to the general direction imposed upon social life by the ruling group. (Macey, 2001, p. 176)

Notably, the continuity of spontaneous consent is ensured through the "embodiment of hegemony in everyday common sense, through the mundane activities connected with work, school, the family, and the church" (Stoddart, 2007, p. 203). For this reason, it requires the perpetual circulation of discourses, which are systems of thought capable of creating "a concrete phantasy which acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organise its collective will" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 126).

Hegemony & Discourse

The preceding discussion makes clear that discourse is the means through which we construct and understand the world. The meanings that get associated to particular objects influence how we speak and what can be said. Hegemonic discourse can been seen as resulting from the successful presentation of one definition of reality, one worldview, in such a way that it is accepted as 'common sense'. It ensures consent of the masses by producing concrete universals – i.e. worldviews – which are particular expressions "derived from hegemony in the sense that they are the expression of those groups who are seeking positions of authority or moral leadership" (Joseph, 2002, p. 27). Importantly, however, the forces of authority, leadership, and domination are rarely overt (Ives, 2004). Rather, hegemonic discourse is the subtle means through which *consent* is garnered: "the way in which dominant social groups achieve rulership or leadership on the basis of attaining social cohesion and consensus" (Joseph, 2002, p. 1).

For example, language, and in turn, discourse, is a hallmark method of creating and maintaining unity. Language was an emblem of European nation building during the nineteenth century (Ives, 2004). Within Italy, it was not only the means through which disparate linguistic regions were joined together under newly defined national borders – i.e. how linguistic differences between the North and South were reconciled – but also how a standard, presumably elite language (largely derived from Florence) was imposed. As Joseph (2002) suggests, it was "necessary to develop a set of ruling alliances that [could] draw together different sections of the

population" (p. 22), although in order to do so, it was important to promote specific meanings and constrain alternatives, so that meanings appeared natural, neutral, and normal (Welch, 2013). Thus, in this case "language became a powerful symbol of the modern unity of national Italy and the prestige or dominance accorded to the industrialized, city life of northern Italy" (Ives, 2004, p. 84). As a result, discourse not only impacted hegemony, but was impacted by it as well.

Although hegemonic discourse subtly and pervasively provides the moral and intellectual direction within society, thus persuading citizens to maintain the *status quo*, it is possible to realize alternative and even counter-hegemonic forces. When successful, a hegemonic revolution is most often not the result of political violence, but rather the co-occurrence of cultural predominance and political power. That is to say, a cultural group must already exercise its own 'leadership' and sustain its own moral and intellectual hegemony before successfully realizing counter-hegemony and acquiring formal political power (Gramsci, 1971). Once these revolutionary efforts are realized, the key to enduring success then lies in the group's ability to propagate and diffuse its culture, ideas, and leadership. Significantly, the notion of unstable social relations that supports the ever-present possibility of social re-organization – e.g., counter-hegemony – is the starting place for theorists like Laclau and Mouffe, who radicalized the Gramscian notion of hegemony.

Laclau & Mouffe

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) reject a solely Marxist understanding of hegemony on the grounds that to adopt this view would be a denial of the stratification and differentiation of reality (Joseph, 2002). In effect, "if the structures of the world operated in an automatically given way … then hegemony would be entirely redundant" (p. 39). In contrast, Laclau and Mouffe begin their work from the assumption that "all systems of meaning are in a fundamental sense lacking or incomplete, and this absence or negativity prevents the full constitution of discursive structures" (Howarth, 2009, p. 312). As such, their interpretation of hegemony does not seek to promote 'unqualified commitment' to one common goal or alliance, as this would dissolve the difference inherent in every social formulation. Instead, they suppose "the incomplete and open character of the social" (Laclau & Mouffe, [1985] 2001, p. 134) and assert that the aim of hegemonic struggle is to reconfigure discursive elements in order to create new discourse(s), which can never be understood as fixed nor

permanent. Specifically, hegemony involves a series of complex strategic moves, each of which require "negotiation among mutually contradictory discursive surfaces" (p. 93) in order to establish a temporary moment of sameness.

Importantly, Laclau and Mouffe extend Gramsci's (1971) articulation of hegemony above and beyond the realm of class struggle and conceive of hegemonic struggle as taking place within and across a variety of social domains and relations. Consequently, they do not limit their application of hegemony as a discursive practice to linguistic matters. Rather, they "affirm the *material* character of every discursive structure" (Laclau & Mouffe, [1985] 2001, p. 108, emphasis in original) and argue that both linguistic and material objects "constitute a differential and structured system of positions – that is, a discourse" (p. 108). The main consequence of such a conceptualization is that it breaks the discursive/extra-discursive dichotomy and enlarges the "field of those categories which can account for social relations" (p. 110). For these authors:

> … the material character of discourse cannot be unified in the experience or consciousness of a founding subject; on the contrary, diverse *subject positions* appear dispersed within a discursive formation. … [Moreover,] the practice of articulation, as fixation/dislocation of a system of differences, cannot consist of purely linguistic phenomena; but must instead pierce the entire material density of the multifarious institutions, rituals and practices through which a discursive formation is structured. (p. 109, emphasis in original)

Thus, for these authors hegemonic formulations emerge within a context of fragmentary and uncertain relations between different subject positions and social struggles: from a dance between the meanings ascribed to contested discursive components.

As the preceding quotation indicates, Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) conceive of hegemony as a discursive process; it "is an *articulatory practice* which constitutes and organizes social relations" (p. 96, emphasis in original). It does this by establishing a relation among elements in a discursive chain, which modifies the identity of each element in the process and which results in a specific, provisional articulatory relation or *discourse*. In the next section, I provide a detailed description of the main components of discursive formations under radical democracy and how they operate within the constitution of various socio-political forces.

Radical Democracy

Within radical democratic theory, the "major aim of hegemonic projects is to construct and stabilize systems of meanings or 'hegemonic formulations'" (Howarth, 2004, p. 259). Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) explain that these formulations "cannot be referred to by the specific logic of a single social force" (p. 142). Rather, they are:

> … constructed through regularity in dispersion, and this dispersion includes a proliferation of very diverse elements: systems of differences which partially define relational identities; chains of equivalences which subvert the latter but which can be transformistically recovered insofar as the place of opposition itself becomes regular and, in that way, constitutes a new difference; forms of overdetermination which concentrate either power, or the different forms of resistance to it; and so forth. (p. 142)

Hegemonic formulations, therefore, serve to organize particular constellations of discursive characteristics – e.g. nodal points, moments, and elements – in order to represent society in certain ways.

Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) contend that the stability of social configurations – i.e. hegemonic formulations – is achieved through a process of *articulation*: a discursive practice that constructs *discourse* by establishing "a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (p. 105). For example, on their own, terms such as 'citizen', 'freedom', 'secular', and 'society' carry multiple meaning potentials; however, once articulated to a liberal democratic discourse, these terms carry particular connotations, which are derived from each term's relationship to other terms within the discourse. Importantly, once the articulatory practice temporarily arrests the meaning potentials within the field of discursivity, the meaning of nodal points, moments, and elements are established.

Nodal points are key signifiers that encapsulate an entire discourse, thereby offering a way to identify, map, interpret, and invoke it (Rear & Jones, 2013). They are understood as organizing "discourse around a central privileged signifier or reference point … [and binding] together a particular system of meanings or 'chain of signification', assigning meanings to other signifiers within that discourse" (Rear, n.d., p. 6; see also Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Once nodal points are articulated, they temporarily fix the meaning of different signs within the discourse, which are then known as *moments*. Signs within discourse whose meanings have not

yet been fixed are known as *elements*; these signs are imbued with a flow of multiple, different possible meanings.

As Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) explain, "a discourse attempts to transform *elements* into *moments* by reducing their polysemy to fully fixed meaning" (p. 28, emphasis added). However, it is also understood that the meaning of discourse – and consequently nodal points, moments, and elements – can never be *fully* fixed. Rather, articulation serves to provide provisional moments of partial fixity in order to establish meaning by temporarily positioning nodal points, moments, and elements (which are all empty signs in and of themselves) relative to other signs. Importantly, therefore, discourse becomes hegemonic at the moment in which it successfully neutralizes polysemy to the extent that dominant meanings appear absolute and are accepted as 'common sense' (Gramsci, 1971; Laclau & Mouffe, [1985] 2001).

Subjective Identifications

Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) deny any essentialist approach to social relations and affirm "the precarious character of every identity and the impossibility of fixing the sense of the 'elements' in any ultimate literality" (p. 96). However, this does not indicate that radical democratic theory embraces a vision of society that lacks all reference to unity, for this would simply indicate a new form of fixity. Instead, Laclau and Mouffe argue that subjectivity (internal identity) is created through a process of identification with external objects (subject positions), which themselves are always incomplete. They clarify their position, by stating:

> The irresoluble interiority/exteriority tension is the condition of any social practice. … For the same reason that the social cannot be reduced to the interiority of a fixed system of differences, pure exteriority is also impossible. In order to be *totally* external to each other, the entities would have to be totally internal with regard to themselves: that is, to have a fully constituted identity which is not subverted by any exterior. But this is precisely what we have just rejected. (p. 111, emphasis in original)

In the above passage Laclau and Mouffe are arguing that the existence of any identity is dependent upon an affirmation of difference or the 'constitutive outside' – i.e. the 'we' from which the 'they' is differentiated (Mouffe, 2005). Consider for instance, Canadian identity: it is affirmed as much by such 'internal' characteristics as tolerance, ethnic diversity, and global

peacekeeping, as it is by a rejection of 'external' American identity characteristics – e.g., overzealous patriotism, individualism, and global aggression (Kymlicka, 2003).

Importantly, however, both internal and external identities are radically incomplete, only gaining meaning at the moment when they become interpreted relative to one another. Consequently, "because all identity is marked by a constitutive outside that both makes the identity possible and prevents it from achieving closure, it is by definition dislocated" (Howarth, 2004, p. 268). Such dislocation does not signify a total lack of unity. Rather, the notion of "the impossibility of an ultimate fixity of meaning implies that there have to be partial fixations – otherwise the flow of differences would be impossible" (Laclau & Mouffe, [1985] 2001, p. 112). As such, partial fixations establish social configurations and depend on particular constellations of antagonisms and equivalences. Explained another way: partial fixations provide temporary meaning – e.g., Canadian identity differs from American identity in that it is synonymous with global peacekeeping – but also, partiality of meaning enables the continuous manifestation of struggle over particular interpretations – e.g., Canadians as global peacekeepers is a mere myth (Kymlicka, 2003; Schick & St. Denis, 2005).

Social Configurations

Central to the establishment of relational systems are both the logic of antagonism and the logic of equivalence. Antagonisms are affective forces that are key to the formation of identities in that they emphasize the self/other relation (Mouffe, 2005; Townshend, 2004). Howarth (2004) explains that social antagonisms occur when "social agents are *prevented* from attaining their identities (and attendant interests)" (p. 260, emphasis in original), either by an external agent or as a result of an individual's own internal subjective division. External identity blockage arises, for example, in instances where an individual is prohibited from performing the work with which they had previously identified. In cases involving a switch from identifying with the role of 'employee' to 'unemployed' could give rise to antagonism where one would no longer view their former employer (and perhaps, colleagues) as being like 'self', but rather would construe those actors as 'other'. On the other hand, internal identity blockage results from the inherent division of subjective identities – e.g., Canadian identity represents tolerance, ethnic diversity, and global peacekeeping, *as well as* not-American.

As the above discussion outlines, subjective identifications are created from various and competing discursive components, which in and of themselves are always contingent and open to contestation. Thus, the possibility always exists for these components to act as the site of antagonisms. Such dynamics, however, do not necessarily constitute hostile relationships; rather, antagonisms merely indicate the ineradicable pluralist character of social configurations and enable the fixity of any identity or hegemonic formulation to be challenged (Mouffe, 2005).

Equivalences are affective forces that constitute collective forms of identification. For example, citizens engaged in apparently discrete struggles against homophobia, racism, or sexism are actually aligned in a chain of equivalence insofar as "they have all become, strictly speaking, equivalent symbols of a unique and indivisible struggle" (Laclau & Mouffe, [1985] 2001, p. 182); namely, that of social justice. It should be highlighted, however, that "two terms, to be equivalent, must be different – otherwise, there would be a simple identity" (p. 128). Therefore, while homophobia, racism, and sexism can be seen as representing a common struggle, they each must retain parts of their unique identities – i.e. be the result of different discursive configurations – so that the possibility of re-articulation to a different chain of equivalence remains ever-present.

Owing to this, the logic of equivalence is interpreted as both political and hegemonic. It is political because participation in comparable struggles creates an alliance between disparate interests, thereby inevitably excluding alliances between other possible alternatives. It is hegemonic because any association between disparate interests modifies the very identities of the forces engaged in the alliance in the process without collapsing them into oneness.

Social Imaginaries

As the preceding discussion emphasizes, the establishment of any subjective identification or social configuration is always hegemonic. Hence, the construction of any social configuration is also always an act of power in that it requires choosing among the alternatives in a decidedly chaotic terrain, thereby consciously or unconsciously suppressing certain alternatives in favour of others. It would seem then, that a successful hegemonic project would subvert the notion of diverse and provisional identifications. However, Laclau and Mouffe explain that this is not actually the case, as social configurations are only ever constructed and *partially* fixed through a process of articulation. To be precise, the construction of social configurations relies

upon the logics of antagonism and equivalence, which can serve to achieve socio-political alignment "between diverse interests and identities, but only ever according to a contingent set of identifications that remain open to contestation" (Barnett, 2004, p. 507).

When hegemonic projects are successful in constructing social configurations that appear fixed and blocked from contest, they form *social imaginaries*. These social forces are realized not only by defining a common project – i.e. when boundaries between diverse or competing interests or social groups are dissolved in order to move a larger collective onto universal terrain – but also by defining a common 'other' (Rear, n.d.). Social imaginaries are not reflective of some essential quality, but rather representative of some pure, idealized, and impossible identity. They are impossible because they are presented as fully fixed (which runs counter to the main tenets of radical democracy), and yet they are hegemonic, in that they have temporarily successfully neutralized the instability of social relations. Understood then as powerful hegemonic formulations, social imaginaries are crucial to any political project in that they are both a practice of coalition building, as well as a form of rule or governance (Howarth, 2009).

Social Transformation

For Laclau and Mouffe, *politics* is understood as the manner in which social relations are configured. It not only signifies the organization of society in particular ways, but it also necessarily represents the continuous inclusion and exclusion of various potential alternatives. In order to fully recognize the provisional nature of social configurations, Laclau and Mouffe, like Gramsci, expand the area of politics beyond the realm of instrumental activities carried out by political parties and the State, to also include the terrain of *the political* – i.e. the space in which private interests, passions, and antagonism pervade. One consequence of this expanded conceptualization is that discourse operating within the realm of the political is legitimized and included in public life. Importantly, however, unlike classic Marxists, Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) reject any version of politics that privileges "points of rupture and the confluence of struggles into a unified political space" (p. 152), such as those visions of politics that privilege class struggle. Instead, they maintain that it is "impossible to define *a priori* the surfaces on which antagonisms will be constituted" (p. 179, emphasis in original), and defend including both public and private interests within the political terrain.

Importantly for Laclau and Mouffe, this politicization of the realm of the private legitimizes all social relations and consequently enables social transformation. For instance, when politics is understood only as what occurs at the level of formal politics, different subjective classifications, such as whether one identifies as man, woman, or other imply a neutral differential position between social agents. However, when politics is understood as the manner in which social relations are configured, citizens' 'private' discourse is recognized and given political discourse status, thereby affording social actors the ability to articulate forms of resistance to differential systems of classification and to challenge the oppression that results from such classification schemes. Under such an expanded conceptualization, therefore, subjective classifications are able to enter into the public arena, becoming topics of discursive contestation. This results in the potential for existing structures – i.e. hegemonic formulations – to become destabilized, which in turn points to the "void or undecidability at the heart of any social order" and opens up a space in which "new forms of political agency are made possible" (Howarth, 2009, p. 314).

Consider, for instance, the gender classifications mentioned above: when such referents as man and woman, which arguably were previously perceived as stable referents, became insufficient in characterizing the subjective experience of social agents who identify as transgendered, the terms became destabilized, which created the opportunity for a new hegemonic articulation – e.g., transgender. It is precisely this vision of a new hegemonic articulation that challenges power relations and acts as the site of antagonism. This antagonism, in turn, prompts socio-political transformation.

Summary

As the above discussion highlights, the theory of radical democracy offers important benefits when seeking to understand how social configurations come into being and/or are transformed. Specifically, its main strength is that it conceives of social configurations as always being in flux, as only ever constituting partial fixations that depend on particular constellations of antagonisms and equivalences. Importantly, rather than understand antagonism as a hostile social force that seeks to subvert apparently stable identifications and social configurations, it foregrounds antagonism as a positive socio-political force that signifies the fluidity and partiality of subjective identifications. The importance of this cannot be overstated: when every socio-

political configuration is conceived of as being the result of various and competing discursive components, which in and of themselves are always contingent and open to contestation, the potential always exists for every hegemonic formulation to be challenged and changed. However, when the importance of antagonism is disavowed – i.e. when social relations are presented as fixed – not only do channels for challenging hegemony dissolve, but the elimination of the possibility of legitimate dissent also creates a "favourable terrain for the emergence of violent forms of antagonisms" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 20).

In what follows, I describe how radical democratic theory was applied as an analytic tool capable of identifying and interrogating dominant social relations. In chapter 4, I provide an interpretation of radical democracy as a research methodology. In chapter 5, I apply the central concepts of the theory highlighted within the present chapter in order to identify meanings that have successfully neutralized the polysemy in order to appear as 'common sense' and to recover the contingent meanings associated with these dominant configurations. In chapter 6, I probe at who/what purpose(s) apparently absolute meaning representations serve. Subsequently, in chapter 7, I recommend a practical approach to intervening, disrupting, and transforming unjust social relations, as well as a means to rearticulate antagonistic social relations as agonistic relations.

Chapter 4

This inquiry asked: How do online discourses of citizenship reproduce or challenge existing discourses of (Canadian) citizenship? The nature of this question has six distinct areas of procedural consideration (see Figure 1 for an overview of the research design). In what follows, I begin with a discussion of the research methodology and paradigmatic assumptions that undergird my work. Next, I describe the research method that was used for this investigation, detailing the two research techniques that were used to analyze the data within this study and the affordances of such an analytic pairing. I then go on to discuss the methodological and analytical limitations of the study. Subsequently, I discuss ethical considerations that factored in to this work. Next, I describe the research site used for this study. And finally, I conclude by outlining the steps undertaken to generate an appropriate data corpus.

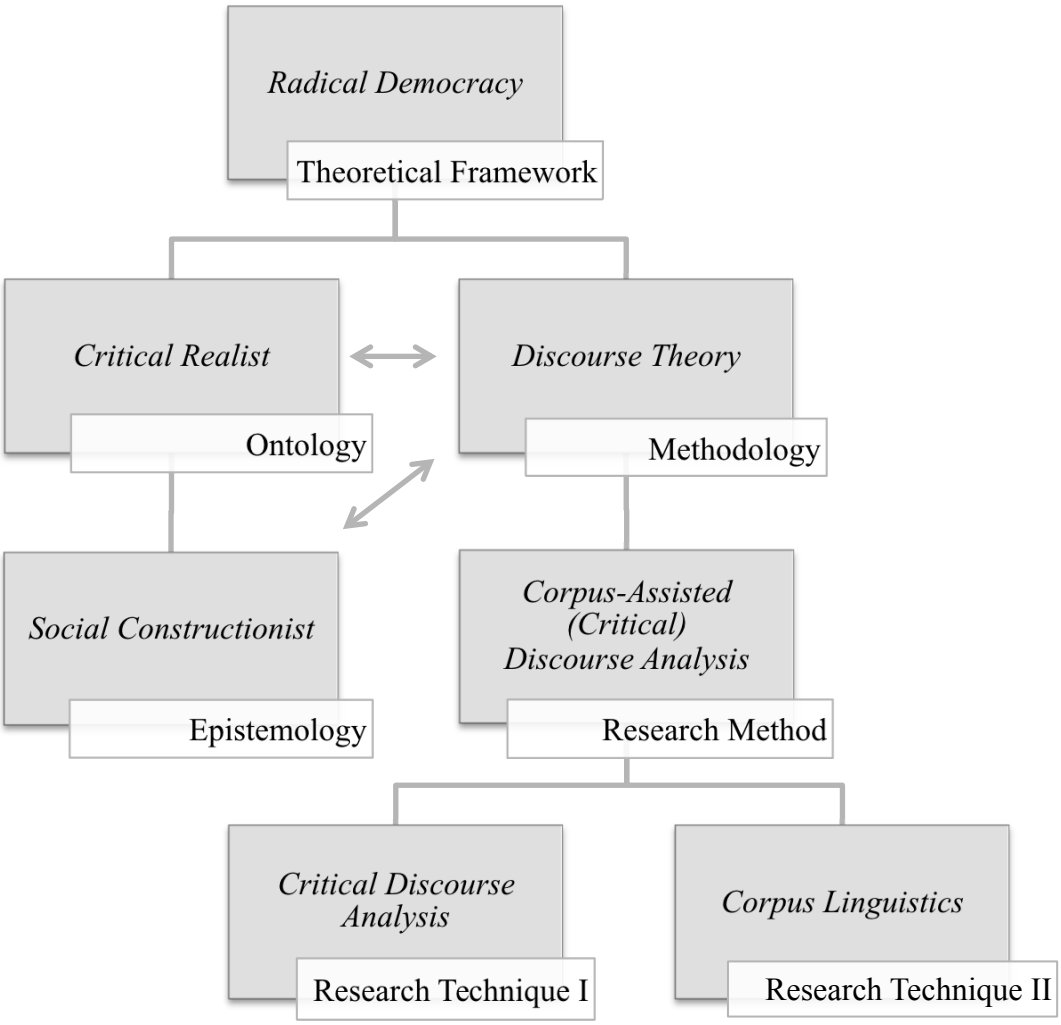

Figure 1. Overview of the research design.

Discourse Theory

The nature of discursive realities was of central concern to the research described herein. It follows, therefore, that in order to facilitate an investigation in which the unit of analysis was discourse itself, my methodology needed to not only be grounded in theories of discourse, but it needed to provide a clear rationale for choosing research methods that facilitated an exploration of the ways in which discursive realities become constructed, as well. As such, as a discourse theory, Laclau and Mouffe's ([1985] 2001) radical democracy allowed me to both theoretically respond to this study's research question, as well as to carry out an active, applied investigation into this domain.

Paradigmatic Assumptions

Radical democracy is a poststructuralist discourse theory with its roots in social constructionism. Ontologically, radical democracy stipulates that social and physical objects exist; however, reality (realities) is characterized as a "set of constructs formed through discourse" (Mills, 2004, p. 45). As Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) contend:

> The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of [individual] will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. (p. 108, emphasis in original)

The assumption here is that while objects exist independently of our perception, the *meaning* ascribed to these objects depends largely upon our discursive practices. Consequently, our epistemic access to ways of representing and understanding the world and the objects within it is largely a social process that is dependent on the (co-)representations of social actors. That is, "knowledge is created through social interaction in which we construct common truths and compete about what is true and false" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). Furthermore, owing to the assumption that knowledge is created, maintained, and mediated through social action, it is assumed that understanding and representation are deeply historical, and culturally contextual and contingent affairs. Consequently, the potential exists for our knowledge and access to it to shift over time as social paradigms transform and evolve. This assumption serves to reject a foundationalist position in which identities and social relations are predetermined and fixed. Rather, it supports a view that knowledge is the provisional result of power struggle and negotiation within the context of a given time and place.

While radical democracy, as a theory of discourse explicates the necessary components of discursive practice, "questions of agency are less clear and, as a consequence, questions of how much control one has over what happens as a result of one's own actions are very much to the fore" (Mills, 2004, p. 27). Consequently, within the context of this study, it was necessary to adopt a philosophical frame that conceives of discursive representation as not merely the means

through which individuals unconsciously reproduce systems of thought. Rather, it was important to acknowledge that:

> … the fact that reproduction of social structures requires the activity of human agents means that the possibility exists, within very definite limits, that agents may transform such structures or that another group of agents may try to preserve the existing structures or prevent transformations from taking place. (Joseph, 2002, p. 38)

Given this affirmation, I approached this study through a lens of critical realism and began from the assumption that "society is both the ever-present *condition* (material cause) and the continually reproduced *outcome* of human agency" (Bhaksar, 1989, as cited in Joseph, 2002, p. 9, emphasis in original). I acknowledged a stratified reality, in the sense that there are various ontological strata that constitute the real, and throughout my analysis and discussion, I attempted to explain how the mechanisms underlying a small sliver of these strata operate, intersect, and codetermine each other. Such an approach, therefore, enabled me to assess how hegemony and hegemonic practices relate to a variety of socio-political, economic, and cultural domains.

It should be noted, however, that even though I recognized reality as being constituted from "pre-existing raw material that is already stratified and differentiated" (Joseph, 2002, p. 32), the stratification of reality was not understood as a wholly determining social force. Instead, I recognized that human action is both necessarily dependent on the existence of social structures and that "the structures themselves depend upon being reproduced through [social] activity" (p. 9). Importantly, the structural location of human agents is one force that affords them the "*potential* to engage in transformative practice, albeit with definite limits" (p. 9, emphasis in original). This aspect was particularly important within the context of this study, as it allowed me to account for citizens' agency and behaviours *vis à vis* social transformation, as well as to examine and critique the social conditions that enabled and/or constrained this potential.[2] Thus, as a methodological framework, a critical realist reading of discourse theory enabled me to avoid "both the demoralising structuralist position that structures reproduce themselves and are all powerful, and voluntarist humanism that believes that everything can be explained in terms of

[2] This aspect was equally important as it relates to assessing citizens' use of reddit's online voting system (for a full description see Research Site: reddit, this chapter).

human activity" (p. 10). In effect, such a view enabled me to characterize citizens as "engaging in their own constitution, acquiescing with or contesting the roles to which they are assigned" (Mills, 2004, p. 40).

Theoretical Contributions

From an explanatory perspective, the theory of radical democracy allowed me to accept that "every objectivity, every identity, is constructed through the assertion of a difference, the determination of an 'other' that serves as its 'exterior'" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 45). One of radical democracy's key premises is that there are no essential identities; rather social configurations are always in flux, only ever representing partial meaning fixations that depend on particular identifications, on particular constellations of antagonisms and equivalences. As such, the power of this particular research methodology was that it provided me with the conceptual tools needed to first, examine and identify dominant social relations, second, to interrogate these relations with a view of recovering the contingent meanings of apparently stable discursive formulations, and third, to suggest ways to rearticulate antagonistic, 'us/them' relations in a way that alleviates the occurrence of unnecessarily volatile forms of antagonism (Mouffe, 2013). Each of these aspects is fundamental to any project that seeks to support the disarticulation and re-articulation of particular social 'givens' – i.e. that aims to support social transformation.

Accordingly, my first step in the pursuit of social transformation was to expose the forms of hegemony (power) that are used in constructing and perpetuating dominant meanings. For example, by examining the relations of antagonism and equivalence that constitute different social configurations, I revealed how these configurations were articulated so as to represent hierarchical differential positions that perpetuate dominant notions of privilege and cultural belonging. Similarly, using radical democratic theory to support an analysis of the discourse surrounding Quebec's proposed *Charter of Values*, I outlined the hegemonic strategies used in order to reinforce dominant discourse, particularly with regards to which 'expert' discourses were used in constructing and representing subjectivities and social configurations. This allowed me to shed light on patterns of identification that speak to the larger ideological structures functioning within society.

However, as Rear (n.d.) postulates, the aim of providing this account was not to merely discover the:

> …'truth' about reality (for example, to find out which groups exist within society) but to describe how discursive struggle constructs this reality (for example, how people and groups perceive their identity within society) so that it appears natural and neutral. (p. 5)

Therefore, my second step in the pursuit of social transformation was to then interrogate patterns of identification in order to determine who hegemonic power serves, how, and for what purpose. By identifying, for instance, what meaning potentials were excluded in the process of constructing such hegemonic formulations as social imaginaries, I highlighted how these social logics can be used in order to build coalitions and to discipline and regulate the beliefs and behaviours of the citizenry.

Notably, as Mouffe (2013) asserts, "the critique and disarticulation of the existing hegemony ... should go hand in hand with a process of re-articulation" (p. 74). As such, my third and final step was to recover the contingency of prominent discourses by exposing their partiality and fluidity in order to contribute to the legitimization of alternate, antagonistic interpretations. As recognition of antagonism as a productive force is crucial to any project in favour of radical and plural democracy, throughout my analysis and critique, I sought to highlight powerful counter-discourses that rearticulate antagonistic, 'us/them' relations in less conflictual and more neutrally differential terms. In doing so, I aimed to open a space in which hegemonic formulations might be disrupted and transformed, and to provide the basis for social-political transformation and change.

Empirical Contributions

In addition to being a useful conceptual tool for the research that I report on here, from an empirical standpoint, radical democratic theory demanded the use of discourse analytic research methods. Specifically, this theory allowed me to accept the premise that all social phenomena are mediated through discourse, thereby providing the justification for using methods that permitted an investigation of discursive meanings as they relate to the ideological and linguistic structures of social lives and the processes by which these meanings become fixed and unfixed. Moreover, radical democracy facilitated the use of methods that attempt to map out frequency information and association patterns related to linguistic phenomena. Owing to this and to both the size and the scope of the data connected to my research question, I felt it appropriate to draw upon discourse analytic methods that would enable the exploration of a large volume of electronically

encoded text; namely, corpus-assisted (critical) discourse analysis (Baker, 2006; Baker, Gabrielatos, KhosraviNik, Krzyzanowski, McEnery, & Wodak, 2008; Baker, Gabrielatos, & McEnery, 2013; Orpin, 2005).

Corpus-Assisted (Critical) Discourse Analysis

As the name suggests, corpus-assisted (critical) discourse analysis (CACDA) is a corpus-driven inductive analytical process in which a corpus of text constitutes the data, and the patterns within it are explored from a critical perspective. Emphasizing such theoretical concepts as power and ideology, this research method combines both conventionally quantitative corpus linguistic techniques, as well as typically qualitative critical discourse analytic methods. There was no priority to the use of these two techniques within the present study. Rather, they were applied in an iterative manner in order to complement and extend each other in important ways. In what follows, I provide a description of how each was used for this research.

Critical Discourse Analysis

This study sought to examine the discursive representations of 'Canadian citizenship' that emerged from citizens' online discussions surrounding the *Charter of Values*. Given that identities are often constructed by defining not only what *is*, but also what is *not*, this study aimed to analyze instances of self-(re)presentation as well as instances of other-(re)presentation. As Baker et al. (2008) assert, strategies of representation are "manifested textually through a number of linguistic indicators, such a specific lexical items to construct in-groups and out-groups, along with adjectives, attributes, metaphors, and the selection of verbs" (p. 281). As such, the specific analysis technique Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was particularly helpful in enabling me to assess citizens' various constructions of self and other.

As Fairclough (1992) writes, CDA is built upon the assumption that "discourse is a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as a mode of representation" (p. 63). Within this approach, discourse is categorized as talk, text, and other semiological systems, which are understood as contributing to the construction of social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge. Importantly, CDA does not view discourse as neutral; rather, as Van Dijk (2008) maintains:

> One of the crucial tasks of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is to account for the relationship between discourse and social power. More specifically, such an analysis should describe and explain how power abuse is enacted, reproduced or legitimized by the text and talk of dominant social groups or institutions. (p. 65)

Therefore, in order to achieve the status of *critical*, throughout the analytic process I was "interested in accounting for what linguistic elements and processes exist in a text or set of texts", as well as in explaining "why and under what circumstances and consequences the producers of the text have made specific linguistic choices among several other options that a given language may provide" (Baker et al., 2008, p. 281).

Analytic Dimensions. CDA provided me with the methodological tools required to analyze discourse both in terms of the internal and external relations of texts. Analysis of internal relations of texts included engaging in systematic and concrete linguistic analysis of real life language use. This analytic dimension assisted me in uncovering salient linguistic features and describing how they were used to realize discourses. Table 1 outlines the three aspects of internal relations textual analysis that were used for this research.

Table 1

Three Aspects of Internal Relations Textual Analysis

Analytic Dimension	**Aspects**
Internal (linguistic)	Grammar Vocabulary Cohesion

Source: Adapted from Fairclough (1992)

Analysis of grammar accounted for the design and structure of the clauses that citizens chose to use to signify their identities, social relationships, and knowledge and beliefs. Analysis of vocabulary accounted for the political and ideological significance of word choice, as well as for the use of metaphor. Analysis of cohesion accounted for how clauses were linked together to form larger segments of text, and the meaning or semantic relations that these expressions signified. The next section, Corpus Linguistics, provides a detailed description of the internal relations textual analytic process.

Once the internal relations textual analysis was complete, external relations textual analysis enabled me to interpret the descriptive sketch of linguistic features in order to connect the micro with the macro. This external analytic dimension helped me to uncover the relations between texts and "other elements of social events and, more abstractly, social practices and social structures" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 36). Table 2 outlines the three aspects of external relations textual analysis that were used for this research.

Table 2

Three Aspects of External Relations Textual Analysis

Analytic Dimension	**Aspects**
External (discursive)	Action Representation Identification

Source: Adapted from Fairclough (2003)

Textual analysis of external relations emphasized "three main ways in which discourse figures as a part of social practice – ways of acting, ways of representing, ways of being" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 26). This analytic process helped to reveal citizens' representations of particular parts of the world – e.g., the material world, social practices, self-/other-representations. Furthermore, this analytic dimension enabled me to attend to the notion of intertextuality, or the ways in which a text draws upon other texts, discursive events, or existing conventions in order to communicate meaning.

As Fairclough (2003) asserts, intertextuality "broadly opens up difference by bringing other 'voices' into a text" (p. 41). However, as texts differ in their orientation to difference, the ways in which "difference is accentuated, negotiated, bracketed or suppressed" (p. 40) impacts how texts are both produced and consumed. For example, dialogicality requires negotiation, if it is to be meaningful; whereas, difference, when suppressed, produces language that is authoritative, assumed, and absolute. Within this inquiry, intertextual analysis enabled me to reveal the limits of hegemony by exposing where difference was embraced and negotiated and where it was suppressed. As a result, I was able to reveal citizens' strategies for reinforcing or disrupting dominant discourses and to highlight which 'expert' discourses citizens drew on in constructing and representing identities (Bloor & Bloor, 2007).

Corpus Linguistics

Corpus linguistics is the quantitative study of language through the analysis of bodies of electronically encoded text in order to derive frequency information about particular linguistic phenomena in real life language use (Baker, 2006). A corpus can consist of existing electronically written texts, transcriptions of spoken texts, scanned texts, and/or online texts. Typically, "corpora are generally large (consisting of thousands or even millions of words), representative samples of a particular type of naturally occurring language" (p. 2). Importantly, however, corpora do not consist of "any collection of texts, picked at random" (p. 26); rather, they are assemblages of particular texts, which align with specified research goals. The main types of corpora are: specialized, diachronic, and reference.

A specialized corpus is one that exemplifies a particular genre of language or that refers to a specific topic (Baker, 2006). For example, a corpus built of English-language newspaper articles is indicative of a genre of language and a corpus built of different texts dealing with changing immigration policies is indicative of a specific topic; a corpus built of English-language newspaper articles covering changes to immigration policies is representative of both language genre and topic. A diachronic corpus is one that contains texts that exemplify changes in language use, over time, whereas, a reference corpus "consists of a large corpus (usually consisting of millions of words from a wide range of texts) which is representative of a particular language variety (often but not always linked to national language)" (p. 30).

Once a corpus is selected or assembled, there are a series of quantitative techniques that can be used to carry out analysis. Frequency counts and dispersion analysis (plots, clusters) can reveal the use and dispersion of important concepts within a corpus, which can help to illuminate a corpus' focus. Concordance analysis can be used to reveal not only the frequency of a particular search term within a corpus, but also to facilitate detailed analysis of the context surrounding each instance of the term, which can expose certain discursive constructions. Collocation analysis is a means to assess the strength of the relationship between two or more words; as this analytic technique was used extensively for this research, it will be discussed in greater detail within the next section.

Collocation. Collocation is defined as a sequence of words (word pairs) that co-occur more often than would be expected by chance – i.e. word pairs that hold a relationship that is

statistically significant in some way (Baker, 2006; Baker et al., 2008; Hunston, 2002). Collocation analysis is an important tool for the discourse analyst because while some words hold meaning on their own, a collocation or association between words imparts meaning that goes beyond the apparent meaning of either word in the pairing alone. Collocation analysis, therefore, is concerned with how particular words are used in context and can be used to "provide a semantic profile of a word, and thus enable the researcher to gain insight into the semantic, connotative and prosodic meaning of a word" (Orpin, 2005, p. 39).

In its most basic form, collocation analysis is carried out by specifying a specific term or 'node' and then counting the "number of times a given word appears within, say a 5-word window to the left or right of a search term" (Baker, 2006, p. 100). However, one of the challenges with such an approach is that high-frequency words, such as articles, tend to have strong collocations with the node without also holding interesting discursive relationships. Therefore, a more sophisticated method of calculating collocates is to use statistical tests that "take into account the frequency of words in a corpus and their relative number of occurrences both next to and away from each other" (p. 101). There are a number of these tests, including Mutual Information (MI), log-likelihood, MI log-frequency, and *logDice*, and while it is beyond the scope of the present discussion to provide a full examination of the differences between these tests, the next chapter provides an explanation of the *logDice* statistic and rationale for its use within the present study.

Analytic Intersections & Affordances

It can be argued that the different theoretical perspectives that traditionally inform CDA and corpus linguistics make the methodological synergy created by CACDA problematic. For example, corpus linguistics, "with its initial emphasis on comparing differences through counting, and creating rather than deconstructing categories, [can] be viewed as somewhat retrograde and incompatible with post-structuralist thinking" (Baker, 2006, p. 9). However, I determined the analytic pairing appropriate within the context of the present study due to the methodological framework in which the connection is made. The philosophies of social constructionism, broadly, and poststructuralism, specifically, emphasize perspectivism, which favours eclectic approaches to research "whereby different methodologies can be combined together, acting as reinforcers of each other" (p. 16). Therefore, such a methodological

configuration enabled me to articulate a form of contextual and contingent knowledge throughout the research process, which provided different perspectives and knowledge about the phenomenon so that ultimately the research culminated in a multifaceted and complex understanding (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Specifically, by pairing CDA and corpus linguistics together, I was able to "trace relationships between micro examples of discourse (texts) and macro-level representations of the wider socio-political world" (Rear & Jones, 2013, p. 377).

From an empirical or technical standpoint, corpus linguistics and CDA intersect in order to extend and reinforce one another in important ways. One common criticism of CDA is that, due to the labour-intensive nature of the method, it tends to involve small-scale analyses, which "may not be able to identify which linguistic patterns are cumulatively frequent (and therefore likely to represent powerful discourses) and those which are less frequent (and therefore may constitute minority or resistant discourses)" (Baker et al., 2008, p. 283). One way to attend to this concern is to draw upon the advantages of using electronically encoded texts common to corpus linguistics. This analytic technique permits complex calculations to be carried out relatively frequently, "revealing linguistic patterns and frequency information that would otherwise take days or months to uncover by hand, and may run counter to intuition" (Baker, 2006, p. 2). Likewise:

> A single word, phrase or grammatical construction on its own may suggest the existence of a discourse. But other than relying on our intuition (and existing biases), it can sometimes be difficult to tell whether such a discourse is typical or not. … And this is where corpora are useful. An association between two words, occurring repetitively in naturally occurring language, is much better evidence for an underlying hegemonic discourse which is made explicit through the word pairing than a single case. (p. 13)

The opposite is true, as well. Corpus data can reveal the presence of a counter-discourse – i.e. a small-scale or resistant discourse, which would otherwise be difficult to discern within the limits of the analysis of a single text. Consequently, CDA is made arguably more reliable through the use of large bodies of data.

An additional critique, not unrelated to the preceding one, is that CDA does not facilitate an objective analysis of data. As Baker (2006) maintains, "it *is* difficult if not impossible to be truly objective, and acknowledging our own positions and biases should be a prerequisite for

carrying out and reporting research" (p. 10, emphasis in original). Corpus linguistics may help in this regard, as it provides the researcher with an arguably more objective method of approaching texts, free from any preconceived notion of linguistic or semantic content (Baker et al., 2008). Thus, through the use of corpora, "we at least are able to place a number of restrictions on our cognitive biases" (Baker, 2006, p. 12), which helps to mitigate the risk of over-interpretation. Therefore, a corpus-based approach is useful:

> … in that it helps to give a wider view of the range of possible ways of discussing [issues]. A more qualitative, small-scale approach to analysis may mean that saliency is perceived as more important than frequency – whereby texts which present shocking or extreme positions are focused on more than those which are more frequent, yet neutral. (p. 88)

The above affordance, however, should not be overstated. Corpus linguistics equally necessitates a high degree of subjective input, requiring at the very least human interpretation of statistical results "in order to identify wider themes and patterns in the corpus …, usually with reference to one or more theoretical frameworks" (Baker et al., 2008, p. 277). Without this qualitative input, corpus linguistics runs the risk of treating a corpus as a mere body of decontextualized data in which specific frequencies and collocations can be found. In order to offset this, qualitative interaction with the corpus, such as finding and selecting texts, transferring texts to electronic format, and/or reading through entire transcripts help to "ensure that the discourse analyst does not commence from the position of *tabula rasa*" (Baker, 2006, p. 25, emphasis in original). The use of corpus linguistics in conjunction with qualitative discourse analytic methods can therefore provide both a rigorous initial analysis of data, as well as room for the critical researcher to then interpret the *meaning* of the analysis, taking into account absences as well as presences in the data.

Limitations

The analytic pairing described above enabled me to not only reveal hegemonic formulations operating within discussions surrounding the *Charter of Values*, but also how power is used to construct discourses and what role power dynamics "play in furthering the interests of particular social groups" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 63). I would, however, be remiss to proceed without attending to the limitations of the methodological framework and

analytic techniques described previously. Regarding the methodology, as a theory of discourse, radical democracy does not adequately theorize access to material goods; therefore, it limited my ability to respond to questions of how access to discourse is regulated and distributed. This is particularly relevant to this study in which I not only analyzed discourse resulting from citizens' use of the Internet, but also restricted my analysis to discourse appearing within the context of one website that caters to a specific audience of predominantly North American, college-educated, tech-savvy males living in urban areas (Duggan & Smith, 2013). Consequently, analysis and findings resulting from this work must be interpreted against a backdrop of capitalist hegemony and acknowledge that citizens' access to and use of new information technologies is deeply affected by their access to such material goods.

Regarding the analytic techniques, it is well established that discourse is not confined to verbal communication. However, within the confines of this study, corpus-assisted (critical) discourse analysis was used for language data only. More precisely, analysis was restricted to naturally-occurring online texts. An important future step would be to analyze discursive constructions and semiotic patterns as they appear within audio and visual data, such as those found within Internet memes and videos, in order to understand how these representations function intertextually to support and extend hegemonic practices.

Ethics

Research as a practice of power, and academic research as a discourse all its own, have the potential to both limit and liberate. Admittedly, under certain circumstances research "'excludes, it 'represses, it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'" (Foucault, 1995, p. 194); however, it also "produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" (p. 194). Therefore, research holds the potential to produce a space in which existing power relationships can and should be questioned. It is a type of power that supports human flourishing: power that strikes a balance between promoting cooperation and autonomy (Heron & Reason, 1997). However, scholars caution that Western research practices stem from an imperial desire for control (*cf.* Scheurich, 1997) and that such meaning-making projects become dangerous when those of us engaged in them fail to fully realize that our understanding is severely restricted by the limits of our own knowing (Crowe, 1998; McKenzie, 2005; Pascale, 2011). In describing one particular form of knowing (usually our own) as the one 'true' form or

by insisting in the validity of our observations at the expense of others, we negate other forms of knowing and other truth(s). Moreover, this practice often fails to acknowledge that the truth(s) that we claim to have discovered (or approximated) is a fabrication of space, time, place, culture, etc. These arguments hold significant implications within the context of this research, specifically with regards to my positionality as researcher, the potential contribution of this work, and issues of evaluative criteria.

Researcher Stance

Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) caution that "in working with discourses close to oneself with which one is very familiar, it is particularly difficult to treat them *as* discourses, that is, as socially constructed meaning-systems that could have been different" (p. 21, emphasis in original). Thus, in order to ensure the rigour and credibility of my work, I needed to determine how I would reflexively engage in assessing the limits of my own understandings. Ultimately, I decided that neither employing the entirely subjective nor objective devices routinely championed by scholars interested in issues of quality assurance would suffice. For instance, simply declaring my personal circumstance and relationship to the focus of this study would do little to distance myself from my taken-for-granted ways of seeing the world. Even if I were able to lay bare all of my deeply held biases, honesty alone would not prove sufficient without an interrogation of these convictions. Similarly, if my aim were to appear objective, a stringent application of both theory and method would not necessarily produce less biased research if the selection of my topic and methodology were biased on a subconscious level to begin with. Therefore, instead of attempting to distance myself from or thwart my own temporal, contextual, emotional, and intellectual circumstance, I merely acknowledge that the theories – ethical, political, aesthetic, and otherwise – that I took with me into the field of inquiry constrain and stimulate what is possible for me to know and to say. Consequently, the research contained herewith must be interpreted with the understanding that it is impossible for my position as researcher to be completely outside of the ideas and practices that I analyze; acting as a subject of these discursive frames, I can only speak from within their limits. Thus, any critique that I offer is always already determined and formed by the power relations of which I am a part (Mills, 2004).

In addition to the above, I recognize that I hold various positions of power and that this power both contributes to and constrains my research. For example, as one who has been sanctioned to conduct academic research I am afforded a degree of power that enables me to circulate discourses that hold the potential to be impactful; yet due to this role I may also be limited in what I am able to say. Therefore, my participation in this inquiry is both complex and contradictory.

Although the discourses involved in this research were very much the object of my scrutiny and interpretive authority, my objective in pursuing this inquiry was not to act as expert or truth-sayer. Rather, as a discourse analyst, I aimed instead to recover and reveal the contingency of hegemonic discourses in order to contribute another perspective to public debate. There are, however, certain challenges in pursuing such an aim.

First, the creation and circulation of discourse is, in and of itself, a political act. As Baker (2006) explains, "one of the most important ways that discourses are circulated and strengthened in society is via language use" (p. 11) and it is neither merely the quality nor the quantity of discourse that carries the largest impact. An individual text, communicated by a speaker in a position of power may carry as much influence as hundreds of related texts created by 'ordinary people' (Baker, 2006). Consequently, I recognize that in analyzing particular discourses and omitting others, I, too, have contributed to their (de)legitimization.

Second, given that the aim of this inquiry was not to "uncover the truth or the origin of a statement but rather to discover the support mechanisms which allow it to be said and keep it in place" (Mills, 2004, p. 44), much of my interpretation within this study involved analysis and critique. A danger with this is that it creates an unequal balance of power between the person(s) critiquing and those being critiqued. However, by adopting the poststructural analytic practice of de-centering the individual, my researcher gaze fell upon the discourse that shapes the individual, rather than the individual herself. Not only did this remove the individual from her subjective position, thereby helping to reduce the power that I exert over her, but it focused my scrutiny on the value-laden political discourses that shape texts and their production, and consequently, individuals and contexts. While not a perfect method of righting power imbalances, such an analytic process did help to mitigate these dynamics and to enable critique of dominant socio-political forces.

Potential Contributions

My goals in conducting the inquiry described herein were not to use my power as a researcher in order to alter discursive practices, thereby resulting in some form of social engineering, nor to colonize knowledge for my own political agenda (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Rather, I aimed to highlight how and where language use produces discourse that perpetuates dominant social structures and power relations in the hopes that making these dynamics overt would contribute to their interrogation and transformation, if necessary. Thus, the potential contributions of this research flow from the meta-objective of this project: to be a humanly compelling pursuit that supports the development of individual autonomy and social cooperation (Heron & Reason, 1997; Lather, 1992).

In particular, this work aims to go beyond the study and organization of the world as a merely theoretical practice that produces a written text that categorizes discursive constructions. Rather, this work aims at praxis. In highlighting relations of unspoken oppression and domination, where difference is routinely reduced to sameness, I endeavored to open up a space for an interrogation of the privileged meanings ascribed through dominant discursive practices and an exploration of in-between positions that challenge "hierarchical oppositional logic and the privilege certain positions have over others" (Crowe, 1998, p. 343). Moreover, through this work, I have aspired to create the conditions for critique: a critique of what we have come to know, as well as the spaces and manner in which this knowledge was created. It is my hope that this inquiry will support examinations of our own complicity in creating and sustaining (in)justice and will have created the conditions necessary for the emergence (co-creation) of knowledge that catalyzes individuals into thinking and/or behaving differently.

Quality Criteria

It is not possible, necessary, or desirable to live a life devoid of making evaluative judgments. However, judgments about what is 'good', 'useful', or 'worthwhile' should mirror the ethos of the knowledge that they are seeking to assess. For example, evaluative assessment that assumes that the world is definitively knowable is an inappropriate valuation method within the context of this research. Given that this study is based on an epistemic view that knowledge forms at the convergence of multiple truths, where diverse data and complex theory come together, methods of quality assessment that are based on how well the research reflects the

multi-centered complexity of the data-theory nexus are well suited. Similarly, owing to the view that knowledge is partial, fluid, provisional, and both personal and communal, evaluative strategies that do not foreclose quality assessment within an either/or binary – e.g., determine whether research is 'good' or 'bad' – but rather evaluate how well dissonance is highlighted rather than obfuscated are appropriate. For example, such appraisals might support an evaluation of how well analysis exposes intricate association patterns within social configurations and highlights the tensions therein. Importantly, any such appraisal must support both an interrogation of power by asking such questions as: Who is speaking? For whom? For what purpose?, as well as an examination of issues of praxis and creation, by posing such questions as: What is this research good for? Who will benefit? If this knowledge is true, what then?

Research Site

Social Media: Forum-Based Social Network Sites

The growing availability of high-speed Internet access and the rise of Web 2.0 technologies at the turn of the 21st-century permitted individuals to create and publish online content themselves, which supported the evolution of social media. Understood as a "group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0.", social media platforms "allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Included under this vast category are social network sites, which are described as a form of participatory social media that allow individuals to:

> 1) Construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, 2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and 3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211)

Typically these sites enable users to send private emails and instant messages between one another.

Forum-based social network sites extend the previous definition by also allowing individuals to use public forms of text-based communication such as posting comments in public discussion forums, and to share pictures, video, and other forms of media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; *cf.* boyd & Ellison, 2008). These online platforms provide users with contact zones – i.e. spaces in which "diverse groups of people meet, clash, and grapple with their different ways of

knowing and being" (Sheppard et al., 2011, p. 77). Thus, if one accepts the basic premise that the meaning ascribed to objects within the world depends largely upon discursive practices then it logically follows that the uniquely textual nature of behavior and interactions on the Internet are fertile ground for social negotiation and social construction (Kim & Kim, 2008; Ravenscroft, Wegerif, & Hartley, 2007).

reddit

reddit (http://www.reddit.com/) was founded in June 2005. It is a private enterprise, subsidiary of Advance Publications, Inc., an American media company that owns such publications as *Wired* and *The New Yorker*. It is a publically available, open source website, meaning that anyone with an Internet connection can view users' activity on the site without having a reddit account themselves. Registering for a reddit account, however, is free and does not require an email address. In January 2015, reddit counted over 159 million unique visitors hailing from over 214 countries, including over 3.2 million registered users (http://www.reddit.com/about/).

reddit is most aptly understood as a hybrid forum-based social network/news aggregator site. This is because registered reddit users are able to submit content to the site in the form of a link (e.g., link to a news article, photo, video) or as a text ("self") post. Once content has been submitted, registered users can then vote it 'up' or 'down', which moves this content to a different rank on the website's pages. Users are encouraged to 'upvote' content if they think that it contributes to the conversation and to 'downvote' content if they think that it is off-topic; in short, "the popularity and prominence of material on the site are determined by voting from the reddit community" (Duggan & Smith, 2013, p. 2). Registered users are equally able to comment on one another's content and to vote on these comments, thus enabling discussion and accentuation of issues that users themselves deem relevant and meaningful. Importantly, users are cautioned not to vote based on their feelings about who contributes the content to the site, nor to downvote content that contributes to the conversation simply because they might have a strong negative reaction to it. Despite this directive, however, the potential exists for users to ultimately choose to cast their votes based on how much they do or do not like a particular post, contributor, etc.

In addition to voting functionality, reddit users are also able to customize their comment viewing preferences by sorting comments according to either a 'Best', 'Top', 'Hot', 'New', 'Controversial', and 'Old' order. 'Best' prioritizes comments that receive a high number of upvotes proportional to the amount of views that the comments receive; 'Top' lists all comments in order of most upvoted to least upvoted; 'Hot' prioritizes comments with a recent high number of upvotes; 'New' lists comments in reverse chronological order; 'Controversial' prioritizes comments that have received both a high number of upvotes and downvotes; 'Old' lists comments in chronological order. Furthermore, registered users are able to customize what they see on their personal account pages by subscribing to 'subreddits'. Any registered user may create a subreddit on any topic, and there are currently over 5,400 active subreddits existing under such categories as: educational subreddits, entertainment subreddits, discussion subreddits, and humour and image-sharing subreddits (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reddit). This customization permits each registered reddit user to create their own 'front page', wherein content (links, self-posts) from the subreddits to which users subscribe appears. Importantly, because site content is actively voted upon once it is contributed (January 2015 saw users cast approximately 23,5 million votes), each user's front page (regardless of whether users are logged in to a profile or not) does not appear static – i.e. it is constantly updated to reflect the popularity of user-contributed content.

reddit was chosen as the site for this research study both because of the site-specific features listed above, as well as for its potential to reach a large, homogeneous, international audience. Specifically, it contributes positively to broad civic engagement and political participation through its numerous socio-political and non-political subreddits, which research has shown are important spaces wherein political participation takes place (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009). Moreover, owing to such technological features as its commenting and voting functionality, reddit provides users with a highly customizable and interactive experience that affords them the potential to engage in discursive practices that shape the meaning associated with objects in the world. These features equally support the articulation of dissenting views: builders of the site even encourage this by stipulating that comments that users disagree with, but which contribute to the discussion, should be upvoted; a fact that aligns with the general principles of radical democratic theory. Thus, the general ethos of the site, as well as its technological affordances made it an appropriate context in which to explore the question central

to this inquiry. In the subsequent section, I detail the process that I undertook in order to identify and build an appropriate data corpus from material appearing on reddit.

Corpora Building

The process of building the corpus of data used for this research proceeded in four phases: locating pertinent data, identifying pertinent data, retrieving pertinent data, and cleaning and preparing pertinent data for analysis.

Search Strategy

The starting point for this study was to first locate pertinent discussion threads appearing on reddit. To do this, I first conducted Boolean searches using the following terms and expressions: "charter of values," "charte des valeurs," "Quebec," "Bill 60." Through trial and error, the search term – ("charter of values" OR "charte des valeurs") AND "Quebec" – captured the largest number of relevant, bilingual (French, English) hits: 323 discussion threads. The search term was not case sensitive and did not incorporate "Bill 60" as the inclusion of this term returned many irrelevant financial results.

Data Identification

Once the final pool of discussion threads was located, the next step was to identify which threads could be used for analysis. To do this, I reviewed all 323 threads, recording pertinent information about each – e.g., thread title, subreddit, date started, number of comments, content and quality of comments. Additionally, I performed branching searches from the initial 323 threads, which led to the inclusion of an additional 7 relevant threads that were similarly reviewed. Once this initial review phase was complete, I removed 73 duplicate threads – i.e. threads that were cross-posted in more than one subreddit, which left me with a total of 257 unique threads.

My review of the 257 unique threads led me to discard 223 threads for such reasons as: poor discussion quality, brief discussion, absence of any commentary, and no direct relevance to the research question and/or research problem. Moreover, discussion start date was a criterion for inclusion because although no date range was specified within the initial query, only threads that were created between May 2013 and April 7th, 2014 were included in the final corpus. These

dates coincide roughly to the period of time from which the Parti Québecois first mentioned that it would be introducing *The Charter* to the date of the party's electoral defeat. After this next review phase, 34 threads were identified that were relevant to my research question, created within the specified date range, and contained robust discussions of the issues (see Appendix 1 for details of these 34 threads).

Data Retrieval

Once relevant discussion threads were located and identified, data were recorded using *Diigo* (https://www.diigo.com/index), an Internet browser plug-in. This plug-in allowed me to save links and webpages to a personal library in the cloud. As such, the data were saved exactly as they appeared at the time of sampling (July 2014), even though these webpages may have subsequently changed over time. Data recorded during this phase included links to external webpages, multimedia content, self posts, discussion comments, time stamps, and users' demographic information (username, geographic location, if available).

Data Cleaning & Preparation

Once data from the 34 discussion threads were saved to *Diigo*, all self posts, discussion comments, time stamps, and users' demographic information were manually extracted – i.e. copied – and pasted into Word documents, which were then converted to .txt file format. Each discussion thread was saved as its own .txt file. Subsequently, these files were prepared for corpus analysis by removing time stamp and user demographic information and saved as a new 'clean' .txt file. Next, these 34 clean files were uploaded to the online corpus analysis interface, Sketch Engine™ (http://www.sketchengine.co.uk/).

The Corpus

The data gathered and used for this research were the discussions produced by users of the r/Quebec, r/Canada, r/CanadaPolitics, and r/Montreal subreddits. Data consisted of self posts and discussion comments stemming from 34 unique discussion threads. Table 3 presents an overview of the corpus, as well as a description of each sub-corpus.

Table 3

Corpus and Sub-Corpora Overview

Corpus	Threads	Tokens	Types	Sentences	Language[a]
Dissertation	34	269,538	18,239	12,947	English
r/Quebec	19	78,111	9,134	3,569	French
r/Canada	11	162,028	11,145	8,153	English
r/CanadaPolitics	3	12,933	2,186	635	English
r/Montreal	1	12,563	2,408	595	English

Note. "Dissertation" refers to the entire corpus (34 discussion threads) that was assembled for this research.

[a] All of the discussion threads contained bilingual (English, French) data. The language listed in the table reflects the language of the majority of the data contained within each sub-corpus.

As outlined above, data from the following educational subreddits were collected and analyzed: r/Quebec, r/Canada, r/CanadaPolitics, and r/Montreal. These subreddits contained a high proportion of the initial 323 discussion threads – i.e. 222 links, self posts (68.7%) of a possible 323 entries. Table 4 shows the number of users subscribed to each subreddit.

Table 4

Number of Users Subscribed to the r/Quebec, r/Canada, r/CanadaPolitics, and r/Montreal Subreddits.

Subreddit	Number of Users[a]
r/Quebec	8,549
r/Canada	160, 076
r/CanadaPolitics	15, 602
r/Montreal	19,480

Note. Users may subscribe to more than one subreddit, therefore the numbers listed above should not be interpreted as unique users.

[a] Data obtained on December 21, 2014.

As we note in Table 3, the total number of words (tokens) across the entire corpus is 269,538. While there is no set standard for acceptable corpus size for CACDA, this is a relatively small corpus for traditional corpus linguistics. However, as Baker (2006) contends, an important

"consideration when building a specialized corpus in order to investigate the discursive construction of a particular subject is perhaps not so much the size of the corpus, but how often we would expect to find that subject mentioned within it" (p. 28). In the case of the corpus used for this investigation, salient types, such as 'Quebec', 'charter', and 'value' were mentioned 1,367, 804, and 338 times, respectively. Therefore, it was assumed that this corpus provided ample coverage of the issues of interest.

Summary

This chapter has outlined an interpretation of radical democracy as a research methodology supporting the identification and interrogation of dominant social relations. It has provided details of the research site and data corpus, as well as the two research techniques used to analyze the data within this study. The next chapter turns to the application of radical democratic theory in order to examine hegemonic configurations and to recover the contingent meanings of these apparently stable discursive formulations.

Chapter 5

This section presents my analysis of data used to answer my research question: How do online discourses of citizenship reproduce or challenge existing discourses of (Canadian) citizenship? My chosen methodology, corpus-assisted (critical) discourse analysis, used both traditional corpus-based analysis techniques in order to provide a general map or pattern of the data, as well as more granular qualitative discourse analysis techniques in order to explore the meaning ascribed to certain discursive constructions. In order to both comment on my research question as well as to depict a coherent representation of two arguably divergent analysis methods, I have chosen to organize the data into three discursive themes: liberal democracy, nationalism, and the current Western security environment. In what follows, data are presented first as they appear within the entire corpus (34 discussion threads). Subsequently, these data are segmented into discussion threads within two sub-corpora (r/Canada and r/Quebec). Finally, data representing counter-discourses are examined. This analysis reveals both what was and was not expressed in conversations surrounding *The Charter* and highlights the ways in which particular discourses are circulated and strengthened through language use.

Preliminary Analysis

Prior to engaging in detailed data analysis, I generated frequency lists of the most frequent sets of words (lexical sets) appearing within the entire corpus. These lists were produced using the Word List function within Sketch Engine™. While producing a word list is a typically straightforward endeavor – i.e. often as easy as one mouse click in many corpus linguistic software programs – no such comprehensive list could have been automatically produced given the bilingual nature of the data used here. Instead, I had to devise a search strategy that captured not only bilingual synonyms of each lemma (base or stem form of a word), but also captured a series of possible spelling variations that accounted for grammatical errors and French accents. For example, in order to capture all variations of the 'Quebec' lemma, I had to enter **(?i)qu.*be.*** into the word list form. The wild cards **(?i)** indicated that the search was not case sensitive and the wild cards **.*** were used to broaden the search. This particular query returned 41 variations of the 'Quebec' lemma, including: Quebec, Québec, Quebecois, québecois, etc.

Using this particular search strategy, I was able to manually produce a frequency list of lexical sets containing both English and French synonyms of particular lemmas. A final list of 68 bilingual search terms (lexical sets) was conceived and applied (see Appendix 2), returning a total of 827 unique words. This frequency list was used in the collocation analysis phase of this investigation.

Qualitative Discourse Analysis

Detailed qualitative discourse analysis was performed on three discussion threads found within the entire corpus. These were: Thread 5: *La Charte des valeurs québécoises* (r/Quebec), Thread 10: *Amnesty International Slams Quebec Values Charter For Limiting 'Fundamental Rights'* (r/CanadaPolitics), and Thread 11: *Can some of you from Quebec tell me why you think the Charter of Values is a good idea?* (r/Canada). A selection from r/Montreal was omitted from this portion of the analysis, as only one thread from this subreddit was included in the full corpus.

Sampling

Two of reddit's site-specific features afforded me a unique advantage when sampling discussion threads that potentially contained hegemonic indices. The first was comment upvote and downvote functionality, and the second was the 'Controversial' comment viewing option. For the purpose of this analysis, a high number of upvotes was considered a marker of hegemony – i.e. a comment with a high upvote value meant that a) more users "agreed" with the views being expressed, and b) the post potentially had more visibility within the site's pages. Similarly, a comment with a low controversial rating meant that it had received an unequal number of up- and downvotes – e.g., 200 upvotes and 5 downvotes for a total upvote value of 195 meant that the popularity of a comment had remained relatively stable over time.

Based on the two aspects described above, sampling involved identifying the discussion thread that contained the highest upvoted comment with a relatively low 'controversial' rating within each of the r/Quebec, r/CanadaPolitics, and r/Canada subreddits. Table 5 outlines pertinent characteristics of the three discussion threads used for qualitative discourse analysis.

Table 5

Sample of Discussion Threads Used For Qualitative Discourse Analysis

subreddit	Thread #	Discussion Prompt	Total # of Comments	Value of Highest Upvoted Comment
r/Quebec	5	*La Charte des valeurs québécoises* (link to *The Charter* appearing on http://nosvaleurs.gouv.qc.ca/)	236	58
r/CanadaPolitics	10	*Amnesty International Slams Quebec Values Charter For Limiting 'Fundamental Rights'* (link to news article appearing on http://huffingtonpost.ca)	97	25
r/Canada	11	*Can some of you from Quebec tell me why you think the Charter of Values is a good idea?* (self post)	695	576

In-depth analysis of each of the three threads focused on uncovering thematic and discursive patterns within the data. Analysis began by organizing the discussions chronologically using the 'Old' comment viewing option. Then over the course of two weeks, I read through each thread in its entirety, jotting down preliminary impressions. Subsequently over the course of one month, I re-read each thread, applying initial codes to the data. These codes and their definitions were recorded in my research journal as they emerged.

Once all of the threads were coded entirely, I reviewed my initial collection of codes, collapsing redundant codes and refining code definitions. After this was complete, I had created 19 unique codes (see Appendix 3). From this point, I re-coded each of the three discussion threads using the updated codes over the course of one week. At the end of this phase of analysis, I had coded 568 text segments across the three threads using the 19 unique codes. Finally, I organized the codes into three themes (see Hegemonic Profiles section within this chapter; Appendix 4).

Collocation Analysis

Once qualitative analysis was complete, I moved from the specific to the general by carrying out collocation analysis on the entire corpus. In linguistic research, collocation is

defined as the above-chance co-occurrence of two words or a sequence of words within a predetermined span – e.g., 5 words on either side of the node word. Collocation, therefore, can be used as a "way of understanding meanings and associations between words which are otherwise difficult to ascertain from a small-scale analysis of a single text" (Baker, 2006, p. 96). Consequently, this second phase of analysis allowed me to not only corroborate my qualitative findings, but also to reveal the limits of my necessarily subjective analysis.

Collocation analysis was carried out using the Word Sketch function within Sketch Engine™. This program identifies collocates from a span of ten words on either side of a node (lemma), calculates the collocational significance (*logDice* value), and produces a list of collocates in order of statistical significance or frequency. Not only does this function identify collocates of particular lemmas, but it also identifies the grammatical relationships of these collocations. As such, word sketches provide a "more sophisticated picture of collocational patterns than merely considering pairs of words together" (Baker et al., 2013, p. 260).

Word sketches were produced by keying in lemmas into the word sketch entry form within Sketch Engine™. In an effort to capture as many possible collocates as possible, 'part of speech' was not stipulated prior to generating word sketches. As such, certain lemmas produced results for multiple grammatical forms – e.g., sketches were automatically produced of the lemma 'Muslim' both when used as a noun and as an adjective.

Once word sketches were produced, significant collocations were identified based on their *logDice* value: a statistic that combines the "relative frequencies of XY in relation to X and Y" (Rychlý, 2008, p. 9), rather than relying on total corpus size. The *logDice* statistic carries a theoretical maximum value of 14, in cases where "all occurrences of X co-occur with Y and all occurrences of Y co-occur with X" (p. 9); for example, the collocation 'discourse analysis' would carry a *logDice* value of 14 if every time the lemma 'discourse' appeared within a text, it appeared alongside 'analysis' and vice versa. Usually, however, *logDice* values are less than 10.

In the analysis that follows, I describe collocations with a *logDice* value of 10 or greater in order to highlight exceptionally strong discursive relationships within the data. As previously stated, data are organized into three discursive themes: liberal democracy, nationalism, and the current Western security environment. Within each theme, text segments produced from qualitative discourse analysis of the three primary samples and contextual analysis of the

immediate discursive context - e.g., sentences, paragraphs – of secondary samples support collocation analysis. All text segments used within this portion of the analysis carry a neutral (zero) or positive upvote point value. As comments with a positive number of upvotes are potentially highlighted on the main thread page to which they belong via reddit's 'Best' and 'Top' comment display modes, these text segments potentially carry a large social impact. Strong collocational relationships appearing within text segments that carry a negative upvote point value – i.e. downvoted comments – are discussed in the Counter Discourse section of this chapter. Prior to presenting details of the collocation and qualitative discourse analysis of the full corpus, r/Canada sub-corpus, and r/Quebec sub-corpus, I begin by summarizing the hegemonic profiles of these various forms of the data.

Hegemonic Profiles

Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) conceive of hegemonic formulations first and foremost as political relations that emerge within a field of articulatory practices in which *elements* have not yet crystallized into *moments*; that is, where systems of relational identities have not yet been absolutely fixed. The process of hegemonic construction is made possible by a "generalized crisis of social identities" (p. 136); which is to say that this practice requires both that discursive signs contain a surplus of potential meanings and the possibility of partially fixing the meaning of these signs within a common frontier. They explain that potential exists for every society to constitute "its own frontiers of rationality and intelligibility by dividing itself: that is, by expelling outside itself any surplus of meaning subverting it" (p. 136-137). However, insofar as no configuration can ever be a sutured totality – i.e. fixed, every social frontier varies in order to subvert itself and the identity of the actors within it. Consequently, hegemonic struggle is an ever-present social condition. In what follows, I describe both the shape of dominant discourse appearing within the upvoted comments within the entire corpus, the r/Canada sub-corpus, and the r/Quebec sub-corpus, as well as the hegemonic struggles appropriate to each.

Collocation and qualitative discourse analysis revealed three interrelated and competing discourses: liberal democracy, nationalism, and the current Western security environment (see Figure 2).

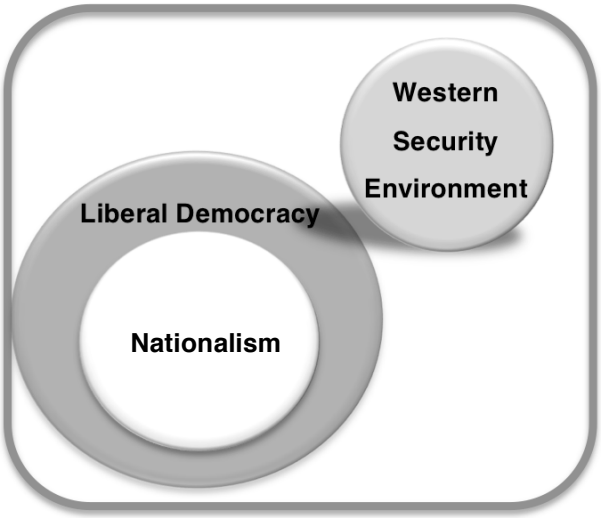

Figure 2. Relationship between the three analytic themes (discourses).

These discourses complement and extend each other in important ways. The liberal democratic discourse subsumes and shapes the limits of nationalist discourse, while the current Western security environment discourse casts its shadow on liberal democracy, and nationalism as a result.

Overall discussion concerning Quebec's proposed *Charter of Values* appearing within the entire corpus emphasized the importance of upholding the liberal principles of individual rights and freedoms. Furthermore, and in line with democratic principles, discussion served to demarcate "who belongs to the demos and who is exterior to it" (Mouffe, 2000, p. 39). This helped to highlight the boundaries of social antagonism as well as to define what falls within and without the limits of liberalism. These boundaries, however, did not appear as static. Instead, there was evidence of hegemonic struggle surrounding the secular characterization of Canadian society. While there was never a total denial of the importance of secularism, there was qualified support of it as a social strategy that could be used to establish and regulate what is considered tolerable within society. For instance, at times Christianity was discursively articulated as the religious hegemony, which resulted in the beliefs and behaviors of individuals of non-Judeo-Christian faith becoming discursively constructed as external threats. This provided justification for the majority's intolerance toward minority positions and, as a result, their use of secular logic to regulate any "non-Canadian" beliefs and behaviours. Similarly, discussion revealed that the limits of tolerance under nationalist discourse are deeply informed by the post-911 Western

security environment: particularly, with respect to the Islamic faith and Muslim identities. Both 'Islam' and 'Muslim' were often imbued with negative connotations, portrayed as homogeneous entities involving the image of a backward, hostile, oppressive/oppressed, *jihadist* individual, and juxtaposed with the notion of a 'good, peaceful Christian'.

Discussions within the r/Canada sub-corpus mirrored much of the dominant form of the overall discourse; however, distinctions were found within its construction of nationalist discourse. The shape of the dominant discourse from this sub-corpus emphasized the importance of adhering to a common liberal democratic, Judeo-Christian, predominantly (ancestrally) European white Canadian culture. While there was discursive contestation surrounding whether or not this national culture was inclusive of Quebec culture and the French language, it was never articulated as including any historically non-European cultures. Conversely, the lines of social antagonism were routinely drawn between white Judeo-Christian Canadians and immigrant and minority groups from non-white and non-Judeo-Christian backgrounds.

Discussions within the r/Quebec corpus also corresponded quite closely to the dominant form of the overall discourse, except for the shape of its nationalist discourse once again. Here, discourse was congruent with Interculturalism policy, which advocates for the respect of differences around one strong central culture. Notably, unlike discourse belonging to r/Canada, comments within r/Quebec were relatively inclusive of immigrants and minority groups, providing that these "foreign cultures" embraced the common Quebec culture. While no obvious markers of the exact characteristics of Quebec culture were readily apparent within the data, hegemonic struggle did not arise concerning its representation; rather, contestation came about over the most effective practices and social strategies for regulating social cohesion.

Full Corpus

Liberal Democracy

Lemmas within the lexical sets of FREE | LIBRE, RIGHT | DROIT, and SOCIETY | SOCIÉTÉ were used as discursive markers of liberal democratic discourse. Each set was chosen because of its relative frequency within the entire corpus (see Table 6).

Table 6

Frequency of Liberal Democratic Discourse Lexical Sets

Lexical Set	**Discursive Markers (lemmas)**	**Frequency**
FREE | LIBRE	free, libre, freedom, liberté	598
RIGHT | DROIT	right, droit	347
SOCIETY | SOCIÉTÉ	society, société	273

Collocation analysis of the discursive markers (lemmas) of liberal democratic discourse revealed that both *freedom* and *right* show a strong collocational relationship with the term 'limit'. The prosody of 'limit' (imply, include, restrict, violate) indicates that both *freedom* and *right* carry a semantic preference for the concepts of veneration and respect (see Table 7).

Table 7

Salient Collocates of Freedom, Right

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
freedom (noun)	limit (imply, include, restrict, violate)	Object of	10.45
right (noun)	limit (violate)	Object of	9.99

Note. Salience is a measure of the strength of collocation and is calculated by the *logDice* statistic (see Rychlý, 2008).

Collocation analysis revealed that lemmas within the lexical sets of FREE | LIBRE and RIGHT | DROIT collocate strongly with terms that carry a semantic preference for concepts that denote the essential quality of these principles, such as 'fundamental' (see Table 8).

Table 8

Salient Collocates of FREE | LIBRE *and* RIGHT | DROIT *Lexical Sets*

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
freedom (noun)	personal (fundamental)	Modifier	10.75
liberté (noun)	fondamentale	Modifies	11.16
	morale	Modifies	10.70
right (noun)	human	Modifier	11.78
	individual (special)	Modifier	10.89
	fundamental (important)	Modifier	10.85

The collocations between these terms are not surprising, given that these particular word pairs are typically used to describe many Western, liberal democratic societies. What are noteworthy, however, are the alternate interpretations that arise around the 'freedom' nodal point. Views such as, "This proposed policy would limit religious freedom. If a person wants to wear an item of clothing or a cross or whatever for religious reasons, that is their business, and not the business of the government" (r/Canada, Thread 34, 3pts) indicate strong support for limitless personal freedom. Conversely, expressions such as, "The State should not have the power to obstruct personal identity and limit the freedom of cultural expression if those actions pose no harm to the public good" (r/Canada, Thread 7, 5pts), simultaneously support the importance of personal freedom, while also suggesting a limit to such a claim. Therefore, while seemingly a central principle that binds together liberal democratic discourse, 'freedom' operates here as a contested signifier rather than a simple and neutral tenet.

In addition, at times 'freedom' is opposed in distinct and antagonistic terms to 'secularism': "Canada values fundamental freedoms above all else. Ergo, freedom trumps secularism" (r/Canada, Thread 34, 14pts), and "You don't need secularism to be free. You don't even need government to have freedom whereas secularism actually requires government. Freedom does not rely on secularism and freedom trumps secularism in Canada" (r/Canada, Thread 34, 6pts). This is significant because collocation analysis revealed that secularism, as a social logic, is used to represent Canadian society and to mediate its social practices. Table 9

outlines the collocation relationships between *society* and 'secular' (free), 'Canadian', 'civil', and 'modern'.

Table 9

Salient Collocates of Society

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
society (noun)	secular (free)	Modifier	11.10
	modern	Modifier	10.83
	Canadian	Modifier	10.03
	civil	Modifier	10.61

The word pairings shown in the above table are used in order to discursively construct the boundaries of what belongs to Canadian society and what does not. For example, comments such as: "I feel that it [the crucifix] violates the separation of church and state" (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 38pts) and "the hidjab *[sic]* is a medieval relic that doesn't have it's *[sic]* place in modern society" (r/Canada, Thread 19, 2pts) serve to articulate and reinforce what belongs within and without the dominant social structure. In this case, Canadian society is discursively articulated and momentarily sutured around a 'secular' nodal point (see Table 10).

Table 10

Qualitative Comments in Support of a Secular Society

Comments
"The governing of the people should be secular" (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 14pts).
"Removing any and all of religion's influence on state affairs is a sound objective" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 92pts).
"Separating church from state is great, and I agree with that" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 12pts).
"The only way to reduce religious influence is to show religious people how wonderful secular society really is" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 3pts).

Interestingly, however, the 'secular' nodal point shows signs of hegemonic struggle concerning the discursive construction of Canadian society. Views such as "I'm in favor of a secular society, particularly the government setting that example, but not to remove religions entirely so long as they don't cause trouble" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 3pts), point to a potential fluidity of meaning concerning social identity. Without totally dismissing the importance of

secularism, the previous comment points to evidence of its qualified support as a social strategy. Specifically, this comment maps out how secularism should be enforced by specifying that it should be promoted in instances where religious affiliations and/or practices are perceived as disrupting the status quo.

As the above analyses highlight, liberal democratic discourse attempts to appropriate both 'freedom' and 'secular' as its nodal points in order to not only define the boundaries between 'us' and 'them', but also to delimit what should be tolerated within society. Notably, the 'both … and' construction of the following quotation reflects the hegemonic aim of this discourse: it seeks to appropriate and to combine signifiers whose meanings in this case are contested in and of themselves, in order to exclude other meaning potentials and to establish itself as a social logic that appears as 'common sense':

> Personal freedom should be paramount to our society. The Charter of Rights gives us freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of conscience, and yes, freedom of religion. Secularism in public life is also important because of that freedom of religion. We all have the right to our own beliefs. The State shouldn't be putting one religion above others, or making life easier or harder for any given religion. My personal beliefs are my personal beliefs, and I should have the right to express my beliefs, provided they don't infringe on your own personal rights. You may have a different opinion on where my rights end and yours begin, but personal displays of belief generally do not affect other reasonable people. (r/Canada, Thread 34, 147pts)

As we can see from the above statement, both the meaning of 'freedom' and 'secular' is made ambiguous as a result of these semantically antagonistic terms being articulated within the same discourse. It is unclear whether or not there are limits to personal freedom and consequently, how secularism factors into social life. This causes the social frontier to appear variable and distorted. Significantly, however, both terms are still applied uncritically within liberal democratic discourse, as if their meanings are given, which signifies that this discourse has succeeded in becoming hegemonic.

Nationalism

Lemmas belonging to the lexical sets of CULTURE, SYMBOL | SYMBOLE, PROBLEM | PROBLÈME, IMMIGRANT, and MINORITY | MINORITÉ were used as discursive markers of nationalist discourse. Each set was chosen because of its respective frequency within the entire corpus (see Table 11).

Table 11

Frequency of Nationalist Discourse Lexical Sets

Lexical Set	Discursive Marker (lemmas)	Frequency
CULTURE	culture, cultural, culturel	436
SYMBOL | SYMBOLE	symbol, symbole	362
PROBLEM | PROBLÈME	problem, problème	301
IMMIGRANT	immigrant, immigration	216
MINORITY | MINORITÈ	minority, minorité	179

The three strongest collocates as objects of *culture* are 'protect', 'preserve', and 'lose' (stop) (see Table 12). When paired with culture, these expressions all suggest the presence of an external threat.

Table 12

Salient Collocates of Culture

Discursive Marker (lemma)	Term (prosody)	Grammatical Relation	Salience (*logDice*)
culture (noun)	protect	Object of	11.12
	preserve	Object of	10.59
	lose (stop)	Object of	10.06

In the following comment, individuals of non-Judeo-Christian faith constitute this threat:

> Prohibiting civil servants from wearing religious symbols will, in and of itself, do nothing to protect historical Quebec culture. They'll go to work, take off their veils and turbans, but then they'll go home and continue to raise their families … Sikh/Muslim/Hindi/etc. (r/Quebec, Thread 9, 2pts)

Similarly, the strongest collocate as an object of *problem* is 'solve' (attack) (see Table 13), which also suggests the presence of an external threat.

Table 13

Salient Collocate as an Object of Problem

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
problem (noun)	solve (attack)	Object of	10.41

Again, discussion comments overwhelmingly suggest that individuals of non-Judeo-Christian faith characterize this threat:

> Just as I don't want Muslims to shove their views down my throat, I don't have the right to tell them how to conduct their lives, either. A better policy would attack the problem at its root, investing in programs for the education of Muslim women, not cut off branches that'll only grow back…. (r/Canada, Thread 16, 2pts)

In the preceding two quotations, individuals who adhere to the Sikh, Muslim, and/or Hindu faith are interpreted as being outside of and in opposition to the historical Quebec and Canadian cultures and identities. In the first instance, certain religious and cultural symbols – e.g., veils and turbans – are understood not only as occupying differential positions in the construction of Quebec identity, but also come to represent a danger to this apparently sutured social configuration. In the second example, the perceived different beliefs expressed by Muslims constitute a threat to Canadian social practices, and rather than acknowledging these difference as constitutive of Canadian social configurations, there is an attempt to subvert and neutralize the "problem" caused by such diversity in order to reduce difference to sameness.

The three strongest collocates as modifiers of *problem* denote scope or size (see Table 14). The prosody of the terms 'real' (many, only, other), 'big' (huge), and 'immense', are markers of the significance of the "diversity problem". However, somewhat counter to the preceding results, collocational relationships of *problem* as modifier do not all portray immigrant/minority issues in a negative light.

Table 14

Salient Collocates as Modifiers of Problem

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
problem (noun)	real (many, only, other)	Modifier	11.12
	big (huge)	Modifier	10.58
	immense	Modifier	10.14

Instead, many of these collocations are markers of hegemonic struggle in that they do not automatically construe difference as representing some form of threat, but rather serve to diminish the importance of immigrant/minority issues: "With so many real problems in society, I think ceremonial daggers, veils, and yarmulkes are pretty low on the societal to-do list" (r/Canada, Thread 34, 147pts), and:

> Women having to remove their veil when they workd *[sic]* for the governement *[sic]* is not a big problem. Like letting them wearing *[sic]* their veil at work is also not a big problem. We are not talking about such an important issue. (r/CanadaPolitics, Thread 10, 1pt)

We see here evidence of the fact that the articulatory relationships between *problem* and terms carrying a negative prosody are not absolutely fixed. Instead, the meaning and character of these social relations are in flux. For instance, the mere presence of difference is not always understood as problematic; rather, difference is only a "problem" at the moment when it infringes upon dominant social practices and identities: "I wouldn't mind either way about religious beliefs, symbols and attire, as long as none of the daily life is affected" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 576pts).

Somewhat similar to the above, the strongest collocate as a modifier of *immigrant* is 'second' (generation) (see Table 15), which tended to be used not as a means to represent negative attributes or danger, but rather as a qualified defense of immigration policies.

Table 15

Salient Collocate as Modifier of Immigrant

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
immigrant (noun)	second (generation)	Modifier	11.07

This collocational relationship indicates a semantic preference for terms that qualify immigrant type, and this qualification was used in order to afford positive attributes to immigrants: "Most second generation immigrants seem to integrate very well. Second generation immigrants are simply Canadians. As long as they identify as such" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 20pts). Likewise:

> The vast majority of first and second generation immigrants were patriotic Canadians and didn't want to live anywhere else than Canada. The vast majority of second generation immigrants are perfectly fluent in English, well educated and are contributing citizens. What is wrong with allowing cultural diversity if it doesn't go against the basic values of the country? (r/Canada, Thread 7, 5pts)

Hence, we once again find evidence of a struggle surrounding the discursive construction of the social categories of Canadian/non-Canadian. In this instance, the construction of the 'Other' is not articulated in absolute terms as a menace whose identity subverts positive Canadian identity. In contrast, there is qualified defense of the equivalence between 'Canadian' and 'immigrant' identities, albeit with an emphasis on the primacy of the former.

The collocational analyses of the discursive markers of nationalist discourse highlight the positionality and dominant structure of many comments made within the discussion threads. What is apparent within the above analyses is that whenever immigrant/minority issues are discussed, they are examined from the status of the majority position within society. This position is characterized by a Canadian identity, which is articulated as ostensibly involving either critical adherence to secularism and/or to the Judeo-Christian faith. Given that this identity is articulated both by defining a common project – i.e. embracing the basic values of the country – as well as common 'Others' – i.e. adherents of the Sikh/Muslim/Hindu faiths – this identity has successfully become a social imaginary. Hence, 'Canadian' here functions as a powerful nodal

point that organizes the discourse of nationalism in order to build alliances, as well as to regulate social practices.

Specifically, one way in which social practices are organized is through 'tolerance', as a civic virtue and social logic that functions as a nodal point within the discourse. Importantly, however, the collocational relationships discussed within this section highlight that tolerance is not a doctrine that is evenly applied. Rather, hegemonic struggle concerning the articulatory relationships between Canadian/non-Canadian inform the shape of Canadian social configurations, and consequently, the limits of what is acceptable and tolerable within the dominant social structure.

Current Western Security Environment

Lemmas within the lexical sets of MUSLIM | MUSULMAN, JEW | JUIF, CHRISTIAN | CHRÉTIEN, SIKH, and WHITE | BLANC were used as discursive markers of the current Western security environment discourse. Each set was chosen because of its respective frequency within the entire corpus (see Table 16).

Table 16

Frequency of Current Western Security Environment Discourse Lexical Sets

Lexical Set	**Discursive Marker (lemmas)**	**Frequency**
MUSLIM | MUSULMAN	Muslim, musulman	221
JEW | JUIF	Jew, juif, Jewish	185
CHRISTIAN | CHRÉTIEN	Christian, chrétien	164
SIKH	Sikh, Sikhism	161
WHITE | BLANC	white, blanc	107

The strongest collocates as modifiers of/modified by *Muslim* are 'moderate', 'girl', and 'woman' (people) (see Table 17). These collocational relationships are not surprising, given the context of the discussions – i.e. banning religious symbols; therefore, many conversations involved debating the potential impact of the Charter on the lives of women and girls who wear the hijab.

Table 17

Salient Collocates of Muslim

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
Muslim (noun)	moderate	Modifier	12.00
	girl	Modifies	11.54
	woman (people)	Modifies	10.89

What is noteworthy, however, is that these word pairings point to a semantic preference of stereotypical fragility, delicateness, and obedience, which is further supported by the results of collocation analysis of the *woman* lemma (see Table 18).

Table 18

Salient Collocates of Woman

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
woman (noun)	Muslim (Islamic, Jewish)	Modifies	12.25
	muslim (young)	Modifies	11.46
	oppression (case)	PP of	10.54
	Hijab	PP in	11.25
	modesty	Possessed	12.19

Thus, the assumption promoted by the dominant discourse is that there exist links between being a Muslim woman and experiencing oppression and abuse:

> À noter que maintenant les femmes dont les voiles couvrent le visage au complet ne pourront plus recevoir des services publiques. Donc, une femme musulmane battue par son mari ne pourra plus aller à l'hôpital ni aller voir les services sociaux dénoncer son mari sans aussi franchir l'obstacle émotionnel majeur d'enlever son voile. [*It is now worth noting that women whose faces are covered entirely by the veil can no longer receive public services. Therefore, a Muslim woman who is beaten by her husband can no longer go to the hospital or to social services in order to report her husband without also enduring the emotional obstacle of removing her veil*]. (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 22pts)

> I am on the fence on things like the Burka. You can't interact in society without showing your face, people rely on facial cues too much. I think being required by your religion to isolate yourself from society is oppressive. They might themselves say it's not, but when it's all you've known.... (r/CanadaPolitics, Thread 10, 1pt)

Another dominant belief that was expressed is that regardless of Muslim women's domestic safety and wellbeing, they lack autonomy and agency overall: "Tu parles comme si elle [une femme musulmane] pouvait sortir de chez elle" [*You're speaking as though a Muslim woman could leave her home*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 17pts). Consequently, popular opinion is that by encouraging Muslim women to work and to integrate into Canadian society, they will be "saved" from their situation: "Don't even get me started on how making it more difficult for Muslim women to work will contribute to an increase in unreported domestic violence" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 3pts).

In contrast to the above, four of the strongest collocates of *white* are 'male', 'man', 'old' (nice), and 'Catholic' (Christian) (see Table 19). These word pairings point to a stereotypically powerful and positive semantic preference: "That nice white christian *[sic]* male got the charter of rights of freedoms going" (r/Quebec, Thread 8, 11pts).

Table 19

Salient Collocates of White

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
white (adj)	male	Modifies	10.38
	man	Modifies	9.42
	old (nice)	And/Or	10.69
	Catholic (Christian)	And/Or	8.97

This semantic preference is further supported by the results of collocation analysis of the *male* and *man* lemmas (see Table 20).

Table 20

Salient Collocates of Male, Man

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
male (noun)	nice	Modified	10.79
man (noun)	Jewish (Muslim, Sikh)	Modifies	11.29
	white (old)	Modified	10.20

Interestingly, the lemmas of *white-Christian-man* were often juxtaposed with *Muslim-woman*, thereby pitting these two identities against one another: "If one is capable of determining your religion by looking at your attire I would say that that qualifies as flaunting, be it a Muslim woman in a Hijab or Christian man wearing a crucifix" (r/CanadaPolitics, Thread 10, 0pts). Comments such as this, and the one that follows demarcate the boundaries between the 'us' and 'them' within society and serve to hierarchically organize social relations by representing the minority as frail and the majority as robust: "All this law does is make it easier to prey on minorities while protecting the white, Catholic or secular, and French-speaking population" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 1pt).

Analyses of the discursive markers of the current Western security environment discourse highlight that issues concerning the 'Other' are constructed and discussed from the status of the majority position within society. Specifically, this discourse constructs the male 'Other' as a paternalistic, violent, and oppressive force who constitutes a threat to the welfare of the female 'Other'. This reified image then functions as the foundation for claims as to how this threat extends to broader Canadian society and serves as justification for the majority's social practices for regulating this perceived danger. Thus, the 'Other' here functions as both a powerful social imaginary and a nodal point that organizes this discourse. As a social imaginary, the 'Other' comes to be understood as a coalition between male and female 'Others' who are complicit in their relationship as oppressor/oppressed, which is then articulated as existing in opposition to the Canadian social imaginary.

Notably, it would appear as though the particular articulatory relationships surrounding the image of the 'Other' are relatively static, as the preceding analyses did not reveal any instances of hegemonic struggle. This is not entirely accurate. While there were attempts to challenge the apparent fixity of the discursive constructions of 'Muslim', 'woman', 'white', and

'male/man', these efforts were largely unsuccessful. The Counter-Discourses section of this chapter provides a thorough discussion of the attempts to re-articulate these dominant interpretations and to disrupt prevalent social configurations.

Sub-Corpora

r/Canada

Results of the collocation analysis of the r/Canada sub-corpus revealed many of the same significant collocations as analysis of the entire corpus (see Tables 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25).

Table 21

Salient Collocates of Freedom, Right

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
freedom (noun)	limit (include)	Object of	10.42
	abridge	Object of	10.33
	value	Object of	10.09
	restrict	Object of	10.02
right (noun)	guarantee	Object of	10.64

Table 22

Salient Collocates of FREE | LIBRE *and* RIGHT | DROIT *Lexical Sets*

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
freedom (noun)	personal	Modifier	10.77
	fundamental	Modifier	10.44
free (adj)	totally (entirely)	Modifier	11.30
right (noun)	human (important)	Modifier	11.82
	fundamental	Modifier	10.94
	individual (special)	Modifier	10.43

Table 23

Salient Collocates of Society

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
society (noun)	secular	Modifier	10.90
	modern	Modifier	10.85
	civil	Modifier	10.85

Table 24

Salient Collocates of Muslim

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
Muslim (noun)	moderate	Modifier	12.09
	woman (people)	Modifies	10.13
	girl	Modifies	12.00
Muslim (adj)	woman	Modifies	11.25

Table 25

Salient Collocates of Man, Woman

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
man (noun)	Jewish (Sikh)	Modifier	11.54
	dominance	PP of	11.83
woman (noun)	force (allow, require)	Object of	10.12
	scare	Object of	10.00
	Muslim (Islamic, Jewish)	Modifier	12.40
	muslim	Modifer	11.02
	oppression (case)	PP of	10.83
	modesty	Possessed	12.42

What stand out, however, are the results of the analysis of discursive markers of the nationalist discourse. Specifically, the salient collocations between *culture* and *problem* are particularly striking. In addition to collocating strongly as an object of 'protect' (speak), 'lose'

(enforce, practice), and 'preserve', *culture* has a strong collocation with 'Canadian' (traditional) as its modifier (see Table 26): "Canadian culture is built by Canadians" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 2pts).

Table 26

Salient Collocates of Culture

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
culture (noun)	protect (speak)	Object of	10.92
	lose (enforce, practice)	Object of	10.39
	preserve	Object of	10.70
	Canadian (traditional)	Modifier	11.08

In this instance, 'Canadian' functions as a nodal point that binds together nationalist discourse. It is interesting to note, however, that there is evidence of hegemonic struggle surrounding whether Canada, as a country and Canadian culture includes Quebec and the French language. Neither an entirely rigid view of a wholly inclusive Canada nor a consistent Canada/Quebec distinction is dominant.

At times, antagonistic relations are constructed between the province and the rest of the country: "[The implementation of *The Charter* has been] fodder to drive a wedge between Quebec and the country" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 2pts), "Quebec has different values and a different culture than the rest of Canada" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 2pts), and "The vision of "Quebec culture" appeared as the rest of Canada embraced the vision of itself as more than estranged British citizens while denying the french *[sic]*canadian *[sic]* culture" (r/Canada, Thread 34, 3pts). At other points, however, the image that is conveyed is of an inclusive Canada: "Quebec is clearly a distinct culture - you sure as hell aren't French anymore. You are, however, Canadian" (r/Canada, Thread 1, 1pt), "Participating in the French language and in French Canadian culture is an affirmation of not only Quebec's unique place in [the] confederation, but also of Canada as a whole" (r/Canada, Thread 1, 2pts), and "I can think of nothing more quintessentially Canadian than to speak both our official languages and to appreciate and adopt aspects of French Canadian culture" (r/Canada, Thread 1, 2pts).

The ‘both … and’ construction of the inclusive-themed comments points to a discursive attempt to hegemonically structure an image of an inclusive Canadian society. In this instance, discourse is used as a hegemonic intervention that attempts to converge ‘Canadian’ and ‘Quebec’ cultures, which are elsewhere articulated as distinct social configurations, in order to construct a broader coalition between these two social identities. Through such a process, the nationalist discourse effectively attempts to align these forces in order to arrest the meaning of Canadian nationalism around a geographically-inclusive ‘Canadian’ nodal point.

Significantly, regardless of where the national boundaries are drawn, what the hegemonic discourse concerning (French) Canadian culture decidedly lacks is any mention of characteristics belonging to any non-English or non-French cultures. Instead, antagonistic relations between presumably white Judeo-Christian male (female) Canadians and immigrants or minority groups are routinely highlighted: “They [Canadians] don’t (and couldn’t if they wanted) give a rat’s ass about empathy or what immigrants can feel like” (r/Canada, Thread 11, 2pts), and “These policies seem primarily aimed at getting dirty foreigners out of government positions so that there’s more room for nice clean white Quebeckers” (r/Canada, Thread 11, 1pt).

Expanding on these antagonistic relations, discourse surrounding collocates of *problem* overtly portray particular groups such as immigrants, minorities, and specifically, Muslims, in a negative light. In particular, popular opinion calls attention to challenges created by linguistic barriers, a lack of integration, religious accommodations, and perceived intolerant beliefs and behaviours (see Tables 27 and 28).

Table 27

Salient Collocates of Problem

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
problem (noun)	arise	Subject of	12.16
	niqabs	Predicate	12.09

Table 28

Qualitative Comments from r/Canada (Thread 11)

Linguistic barriers
"In a cohesive society, EVERYONE needs to be able to communicate with one another. I'm all for retaining ones cultural heritage, but to isolate yourself and your peers from the community, then refusing to learn even a basic grasp of English or French is, in my opinion, disrespectful" (7pts).
"Problems arise when we can't communicate, and it's unreasonable and inefficient to cater to every minority language" (7pts).
"In richmond *[sic]* we have a very large chinese *[sic]* population and I know from first hand experience and people telling me that if someone wants to they can pretty much go their entire lives without speaking english *[sic]*" (9pts).
"We have a similar issue with some older Italian immigrants. People who have lived in this city for 30+ years and can't have a conversation in English" (6pts).
Lack of integration
"I see where the problem arises. There are whole enclaves with immigrants who have been here for at least a decade and still live like they're back home" (10pts).
"Micro-cultures in Vancouver and Toronto might be wrong (or very wrong), but it seems to me that they clump together in such and such neighborhoods and live half their lives on their own, 'outside' of canadian *[sic]* society" (25pts).
"Immigrants here will indeed clump together in particular areas when they arrive" (13pts).
"The issue of immigrants not fully living the local culture … there are concerns and frustrations sometimes" (29pts).
Religious accommodation
"How we should accommodate unnecessary, backward, sexists requests just because it is labeled 'religion'?" (8pts).
"I have interacted with many doctors, public employees, teachers, wearing hijabs, and I got the service from them I came for. No religious pitches from them, no feeling of division. Just what they were paid to do" (7pts).
"The Sikh faith is particularly disruptive, with Sikh's everywhere lobbying for the right to carry their curved daggers everywhere" (1pt).
Perceived intolerant beliefs and behaviours
"It may be that part of what Quebec is going through is the very difficult issue of how does a tolerant society deal with immigrants of cultures and religions that have strong intolerant beliefs and behaviours?" (3pts).
"What about the case where a female child of the age of majority wants to dress in a legal manner that her parents forbid? If I'm not mistaken, this very situation has caused more than a few murders in Canada already by immigrants with intolerant beliefs" (3pts).

Throughout the above comments we see evidence of hegemonic struggle around a 'tolerance' nodal point: expressions oscillate between articulating a view of society as inclusive and tolerant of difference and a view in which beliefs and behaviours that are perceived as falling outside the so-called mainstream are rejected. This discursive struggle is not surprising, as it flows from the hegemonic struggle belonging to liberal democratic discourse and echoes many of the same debates concerning the limits of freedom and role of secularism therein. What is interesting is that notwithstanding this contestation, a common undercurrent within all these comments is unqualified support of the need for social integration within Canadian society: "Let people be people. With every successive generation, they will integrate more" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 26pts). Specifically, the process of integration that is promoted predominantly involves being able to communicate in either English or French and keeping religious expression outside of public life. The variable element in these instances concerns the importance of also retaining one's cultural, religious, and linguistic heritage above and beyond basic social integration.

These analyses, in conjunction with analyses of the articulatory relationships surrounding *culture* point to a relatively stable representation of Canadian society as a social configuration that primarily includes English- and French-speaking, secular or religiously unproblematic citizens with tolerant behaviours who integrate well into mainstream society. However, discursive contestation concerning this representation arose in instances where the articulatory relationship between Canadian society and differences perceived as potentially subverting this social frontier was in question. Specifically, evidence of this hegemonic struggle was particularly highlighted in situations where the 'Other' problem was believed to infringe upon dominant society's progress towards "learning to deal with multiculturalism" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 576pts). The implicit/explicit assumption is that social transformation and adaptation is a welcome social force, as long as it doesn't require the social majority to adapt to the needs and customs of minority groups: "We don't want exceptional rules and laws favoring people who refuse to acclimate to our society" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 25pts). In short, "tell them to check their beliefs at the door or get out" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 8pts).

r/Quebec

As with the collocation analysis of the r/Canada sub-corpus, results of the collocation analysis of the r/Quebec sub-corpus revealed many of the same significant collocations as analysis of the entire corpus (see Tables 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33).

Table 29

Salient Collocates of Liberté [Freedom], Droit [Right]

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
liberté (noun)	limiter (protéger)	Object of	10.83
	permettre (défender, savoir, servir)	Object of	10.81
	choisir	Object of	10.61
droit (noun)	garantir	Object of	11.06
	defender (limiter, protéger)	Object of	10.83
	brimer	Object of	10.32

Table 30

Salient Collocates of FREE | LIBRE *and* RIGHT | DROIT *Lexical Sets*

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
liberté (noun)	fondamentale (morale)	Modifies	12.68
	individuel	Modifies	11.68
	intellectuel	Modifies	11.09
droit (noun)	fondamental	Modifier	12.58
	humain	Modifier	12.50
	individuel	Modifier	10.96

Table 31

Salient Collocate of Society

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
society (noun)	democratic	Modifier	13.00

Table 32

Salient Collocates of Musulman [Muslim], White, Blanc [White]

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
musulman (noun)	femme (homme)	Modifier	10.82
white (noun)	christian	Modifies	13.00
	old	And/Or	12.68
blanc (adj)	québécois	Modifies	12.36
	homme	Modifier	10.57

Table 33

Salient Collocates of Homme [Man], Femme [Woman]

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
homme (noun)	barbu	Modifies	12.19
	musulman	Modifies	11.63
	blanc	Modifies	11.14
femme (noun)	battre	Object of	10.83
	musulman	Modifies	12.87
	porte	Modifies	12.42

Once again, the results of the analysis of discursive markers of nationalist discourse contain discernable differences. In particular, the salient collocations between *culture* and *immigrant* are noteworthy. The three strongest collocates of *culture* are ‘central’, ‘dominant’, and ‘commun’ (see Table 34).

Table 34

Salient Collocates of Culture

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
culture (noun)	central	Modifies	12.19
	dominant	Modifies	11.58
	commun	Modifies	11.19

These relationships are not surprising, given the province of Quebec's adherence to Interculturalism, a policy regarding the relationship between a cultural majority and cultural minorities (*cf.* Bouchard & Taylor, 2008), which supports "le respect des différences autours d'une culture centrale forte" [*respect of differences around one strong central culture*] (r/Quebec, Thread 17, 2pts). As one comment notes:

> Au Canada le modèle est le multiculturalisme, on n'y reconnait pas de culture dominante. C'est un pays d'immigrant et les "Anglais" ne représente pas plus de 50% de la population. Dans le contexte élargie du Canada, la culture Québecoise est une culture parmi les autres et la culture Anglo-saxonne aussi. Dans le contexte du Québec, le modèle est l'interculturalisme et reconnais la culture dominante de 80% et plus de la population. [*In Canada the model is Multiculturalism, they don't recognize the dominant culture. It's a country of immigrants and the "English" only represent 50% of the population. In the larger Canadian context, Quebec culture is one culture among many, as is Anglo-Saxon culture. In the Quebec context, the model is Interculturalism and it recognizes the dominant culture of more than 80% of the population*]. (r/Quebec, Thread 18, 2pts)

Interestingly, while a policy of Interculturalism arguably facilitates an explicit articulation of the importance of social integration within Quebec, the shape and limit of this particular social logic still produces discursive variability. Views such as, "Je crois que c'est effectivement très accueillant de vouloir avoir une culture commune en voulant accueillir les nouveaux venus dans celle-ci et qu'ils amènent du leur à celle-ci au lieu d'encourager la ghettoïsation" [*I believe that it's effectively very welcoming to want a common culture and to want to welcome newcomers within it and for them to bring their backgrounds to it instead of encouraging ghettoization*] (r/Quebec, Thread 8, 1pt) echo the hegemonic struggle apparent

within the r/Canada discussions concerning the importance of retaining one's cultural, religious, and linguistic heritage after social integration. Conversely, views such as "C'est pas ça, le but de l'intégration des immigrants – qu'ils tentent de s'adapter à notre façon de vivre et de voir les choses?" [*Isn't that the goal of immigrant integration – so that they want to adapt to our way of life and worldview?*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 5pts) suggest a social practice in which newcomers give up their cultural background and adopt Quebec culture as their own.

Along similar lines, collocation analysis of *immigrant* supports an inclusive sentiment and suggests at the importance of coming together around one strong, central culture. Both 'intégrer' [integrate] and 'aider' [help] hold a strong relationship with the *immigrant* lemma and carry a semantic preference for inclusion (see Table 35).

Table 35

Salient Collocates of Immigrant

Discursive Marker (lemma)	**Term (prosody)**	**Grammatical Relation**	**Salience (*logDice*)**
immigrant	intégrer	Object of	11.19
	aider	Object of	11.05

However, while the dominant discourse defends the importance of social cohesion, there is evidence of hegemonic struggle surrounding the suggested approaches to achieving unity. On one hand, discursive articulations defend shared social responsibility for the inclusion of immigrants, which is somewhat in line with the actual tenets of Interculturalism policy, and on the other hand, articulations uphold the view that integration should be done by force, when necessary (see Table 36).

Table 36

Qualitative Comments from r/Quebec (Thread 5)

Unity
"Il est important de pouvoir intégrer les nouveau arrivants à notre société. Le multiculturalisme nous dicte que nous devons accepter les nouveaux arrivants tel quel et qu'ils n'ont presque aucun effort d'intégration à faire. A mon avis, cela crée différentes communautés qui interagissent peu avec le reste de la population. Ca amène de l'incompréhension et de la division" [*It's important to be able to integrate newcomers into our society. Multiculturalism dictates that we have to accept newcomers as-is and that they have to make almost no effort to integrate. In my opinion, this creates different communities that have limited interaction with the rest of the population. This leads to incomprehension and division*] (2pts).
Social responsibility
"La société du Québec a accepté ces immigrants. Nous avons donc une responsabilité partagée de les intégrer correctement" [*Quebec society accepted these immigrants. Therefore, we have a shared responsibility to integrate them correctly*] (5pts).
"C'est une question de moralité. C'est immoral refuser d'aider quelqu'un - même quelqu'un de différent ou venu d'ailleurs et qui ne partage pas ton point de vu - quand c'est possible et très peu incommodant de le faire. Tu n'es évidemment pas obligé d'être moral, mais en tant que société, j'ose croire que nous voulons l'être" [*It's a question of morality. It's immoral to refuse to help someone – even if they are different or come from somewhere else and don't share your point of view – when it's possible and easy to do. You are obviously not required to be moral, but I believe that we want to be, as a society*] (3pts).
Integration by force
"Je suis bin content d'avoir du monde qui vient de partout au monde pour vivre ici. Sauf que ceux qui viennet vivre ici, ils n'ont pas d'affair à nous achaler avec leurs sparages religieux, pas plus que n'importe-qui" [*I'm very happy to have people from all over the world come live here. Except when they come, they aren't allowed to bother us with their religious grandstanding, I don't care who they are*] (10pts).
"Oui ont peu obliger les "autres" comme tu dis à adopter nos valeur. Cela s'appelle l'interculturalisme. Pis il n'y a rien de mal l'a dedans. Quand tu invite quelqu'un chez toi tu as le droit divin d'interdire que l'on chie dans ton évier de cuisine! Bon ben c'est pareil" [*Yes we can force "others" as you call them to adopt our values. It's called interculturalism. And there's nothing wrong about it. When you invite someone to your home you have the divine right to forbid them from pooping in your kitchen sink! It's the same thing*] (1pt).
"Nous sommes chez-nous et nous faisons les règles point! Personne n'a forcé personne à venir ici. Et c'est normal d'adopter les valeurs et la culture de son pays d'accueil. Et oui nous imposons nos valeurs et C'EST NORMAL!" [*We are at home and we make the rules period! And it's normal to adopt the values and culture of one's host country. And yes we're imposing our values and IT'S NORMAL!*] (0pts).

These comments reflect a depiction of Quebec society as one in which newcomers must adopt and adapt to a sutured Quebec culture. Interestingly, although the exact shape of Quebec culture, its values, and its practices is not evident from comments made within the discussion threads, hegemonic struggle did not arise concerning the shape and/or limits of these social forces; instead, they are presented as absolute. 'Quebec culture', therefore, functions as both a strong social imaginary and a nodal point within the nationalist discourse which helps to identify, map, interpret, and invoke a larger, macro-level discourse of Quebec nationalism. Moreover, in contrast to r/Canada, 'inclusion' rather than 'tolerance' acts as an additional nodal point and an important social logic within this discourse. Even though the reasons for the push towards inclusion are not readily apparent, inclusion, as a social strategy – which in this instance means the process through which the 'them' becomes like 'us' – is unequivocally supported. Given that both 'Quebec culture' and 'inclusion' are applied uncritically within nationalist discourse, as if their meanings are given, there is evidence that this discourse has succeeded in becoming hegemonic.

Hegemonic Profiles

Before proceeding with the analysis of the counter-discourses, it is helpful to reexamine the shape of the dominant discourse. The preceding collocation and qualitative discourse analysis revealed three interrelated and competing discourses: liberal democracy, nationalism, and the current Western security environment. The liberal democratic and nationalist discourses contained evidence of hegemonic struggle, specifically concerning the limits of freedom and secularism and the shape and practices of both Canadian and Quebec culture. This analysis equally showed that the limits of secularism and as a result, tolerance as a civic virtue, are deeply informed by the post-911 Western security environment: particularly, with respect to the Islamic faith and Muslim identities. Significantly, hegemonic struggle over discursive representations of Muslims as backward, hostile, oppressive/oppressed, *jihadist* individuals was seemingly lacking. However, as the next section makes clear, it is not that attempts at offering counter-discourses were absent, but rather that these attempts were made to go unnoticed.

Counter-Discourses

One of the aims of this research was to uncover how online discourses challenge existing discourses of Canadian citizenship, if at all. As such, it was particularly important to recover the contingent meaning of dominant discourses in order to assess if and how counter-discourses were created, legitimized, and sustained within the context of the data used for analysis. Again, reddit's voting and controversial rating features were particularly helpful in this regard. Not only does reddit, as a social media platform, allow users to show their support of a particular viewpoint through upvotes, but if a comment is deemed as disagreeable, unworthy, or not contributing to the discussion then users are free to downvote it as well. Consequently, both upvotes and downvotes help to determine a post's position on the site's pages – i.e. comments with a high number of upvotes will potentially be highlighted within the thread to which they belong. In contrast, comments with a high number of downvotes will all but disappear into the abyss as they become 'downvoted into oblivion' – i.e. hidden from the main pages of the discussion thread, only to be displayed if users elect to do so by loading more comments and/or continuing to view the thread in a new window/tab.

In identifying and analyzing the counter-discourses found within the corpus, it became apparent that the majority of downvoted comments related to the same analytic theme: namely, the current Western security environment. As has been alluded to previously, dominant discourse within the data offered particular constructions of the Other and associated social problems, hindrances, and menaces. These constructions seemed to constitute a widely acceptable form of prejudice, or *prejudice du jour* in that they went largely unchallenged. For example, within the overall corpus, adherents to non-Judeo-Christian faiths were constructed as a particular threat to the Canadian social imaginary. Additionally, within both the r/Canada and r/Quebec sub-corpora, Muslims were explicitly identified as a threat to society with few counter-discourses offered in an attempt to disrupt anti-Muslim rhetoric.

r/Canada

As was revealed through analysis of the upvoted data, the r/Canada sub-corpus contained overt references to the perceived negative consequences of Muslim residents/citizens within Canada: "I think allowing Muslims into Canada is a long term nightmare as it is so for every single country on earth that has large populations of them" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 1pt).

Presumably, these perceptions are the result of an articulatory relationship between Muslims, intolerance, and all things illogical: "It also says something when this guy [a man who is pro-Sharia law] is on the side of tolerance" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 4pts), and "There are plenty of shittier places in the world that are way more intolerant, most of them Muslim nations. If you want to languish in absurdity, live there" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 6pts).

A similar undercurrent within the upvoted r/Canada corpus was an overall fear of Muslims: "I've experienced what these cultures are like first hand. I know what they're like. I simply do not trust that the majority of muslim *[sic]* and indian/pakistani *[sic]* immigrants have everyone else's best interests in mind" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 0pts), and:

> I look to other countries who [*sic*] have significant Muslim immigrant populations, and they're not doing so well with it. … What happens when they outnumber us and things go bad? Will they pull together like I imagine Canadians doing and work for everyone's benefit? Or will they still see to their own kind first? (r/Canada, Thread 11, 0pts)

Not only are the antagonistic relations between (presumably non-Muslim) Canadians and Muslim 'Others' explicitly delineated, but the subtext is also that Muslims are a volatile people who cannot be trusted in the long run.

It must be noted that the upvote point value of the two immediately previous comments are zero. Logically then, it can be argued that these comments are not convincing examples of hegemonic discourse. However, when analyzed in conjunction with the content and degree of downvoted comments, the shape of what is and is not acceptable discourse becomes more apparent.

For example, comments that called attention to Islamophobia, such as "The Quebecoise can pull all kinds of absurd shit but if three muslims *[sic]* do something all of a sudden there is a problem" (r/Canada, Thread 11, -20pts), were downvoted into oblivion. Similarly, comments that highlighted privilege resulting from belonging to the hegemonic majority were also downvoted: "I'm merely pointing out that people who aren't in my position in society (white skin colour) have more barriers" (r/Canada, Thread 11, -1pt), and:

> The ugly side of Canadian politeness. The sitting government is pushing a "go back home you towelheads" political message, and people get offended that someone uses the word

> "idiot" to describe those who fall for the "christianity *[sic]* is in our history, we're being secular by exempting it" excuse. (r/Canada, Thread 11, -2pts)

What this analysis reveals is that while some of the more extreme anti-Muslim sentiments within the r/Canada sub-corpus may not have received a high number of upvotes, they were still visible within the main discussion threads, whereas, any compelling counter-discourse was made invisible through a series of downvotes. In particular, the above statements regarding the provisional and constructed frontiers between Canadian society and Muslims, as well as the status and privilege afforded to the former, were expelled outside of the accepted political space. Not only were these attempts at discursive contestation deemed disagreeable, unworthy, and/or non-contributory, as shown by virtue of their downvote value, but in some extreme cases, these counter-discourses were denied the opportunity to confront dominant discourse, by virtue of the fact that they were all but made to disappear from the main discussion thread.

r/Quebec

The current Western security environment discourse and counter-discourse within the r/Quebec sub-corpus fell along similar, yet divergent lines to the r/Canada discourse. For example, wearing a hijab (widely recognized within the discussions to be a cultural marker for Muslim women) was construed as an archaic practice within the dominant discourse: "Désoler mais il faut sortir du moyen âge. Je sais que c'est [enlever son foulard] inconfortable pour elle mais c'est maintenant comme ça" [*Sorry but it's time to leave the middle ages. I know that removing the veil is uncomfortable for her but that's the way it is now*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 5pts). Not only was this cultural marker represented as antiquated, but it was also understood as a signifier of a regrettable lack of progress and evolution: "Oui, nous ne sommes plus au moyen âge, mais elle, malheureusement, elle l'est encore" [*Yes, we are no longer in the middle ages, but she is, unfortunately*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 5pts).

Given this, popular opinion was that the "civilized" and "progressive" cultural majority needed to save Muslim women from themselves:

> C'est à nous de l'aider, et si sa veut dire qu'elle vient nous voir encore habillé en moyen âge, et bien c'est à nous de l'accepter et lui montrer qu'elle a d'autres choix. C'est pas à nous de la rejeter parce que son linge n'est pas approprié – c'est insensé [*It's up to us to help her, and if that means that she comes to us still dressed as though she's living in the*

middle ages, it's still up to us to accept her and to show her that she has other choices. It's not our job to reject her because her clothes are inappropriate – that's crazy]. (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 8pts)

Owing perhaps to this impression of outdated and illogical social practices, Muslim countries were also portrayed in a negative light and overtly juxtaposed with Quebec: "Quand notre réponse c'est "ben c'est comme ça en Arabie Saoudite", c'est que nous avons des gros problèmes" [*We have big problems when our response is "well it's like that in Saudi Arabia"*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 10pts), and "Le québec et l'Arabie Saoudite, deux choses différentes" [*Quebec and Saudi Arabia, two different things*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 12pts). These comments not only served to construct a provisional frontier between Quebec society and Muslims, but also to hierarchically organize these relations by reinforcing the status and privilege afforded to the former.

Interestingly, and contrary to the r/Canada discursive constructions, there was a dearth of evidence supporting an overall fearful attitude towards Muslims within the r/Quebec sub-corpus. Instead, downvoted discourse was largely overtly racist rhetoric that promoted xenophobic attitudes and fear mongering. For example, comments such as "Vous êtes en train de nous détruire de l'intérieur. Sincèrement je vous hais tous l'un plus que l'autre, à vouloir faire de Québec le paradis de l'immigration, de vouloir rendre cette place à tout pris multiculturalisé" [*You're in the process of destroying us from the inside. I sincerely hate each one of you more than the next, wanting to make Quebec an immigration paradise, wanting to turn this place multicultural at all costs*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, -14pts) were downvoted into oblivion. Similarly, comments that promoted an explicitly stereotypical view of Muslims as terrorists were not endorsed: "Tu viens au Québec t'enlève ton tapis pis tu va à l'hôpital comme du monde civilisé, la terreur ici ça se fait pas" [*You've come to Quebec, remove your carpet [Hijab] and go to the hospital like a civilized person, terrorism has no place here*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, -9pts).

Significantly, the above comments are evidence of hegemonic struggle in that rather than endorsing negative conceptualizations, overt stereotypes are downvoted – i.e. deemed disagreeable, unworthy, and/or non-contributory – and made to disappear from the main discussion thread. While this is a promising step towards disrupting prominent negative expressions, explicit discursive articulations that challenged anti-Muslim rhetoric and attempted to construct a new social imaginary were not forwarded as alternatives. Therefore, a full

realization of hegemonic struggle and a successful installation of counter-discourse was not effective.

By virtue of the system of upvotes and downvotes, attempts at countering extreme anti-Muslim sentiments were arguably more obvious within the r/Quebec sub-corpus than within the r/Canada sub-corpus. Overall, however, counter-discourses did little to disrupt the appearance and propagation of many of the negative Muslim stereotypes that appeared across corpora. As Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) explain, this is perhaps because it is difficult to subvert hegemonic formulations if the system with which you are trying to maneuver is seemingly reified. That is, if the identities of Muslim and Islam are social imaginaries and understood as devoid of floating elements, these arguably negative identities are understood as emerging from a single space – i.e. they are seen as fixed. Consequently, they are not perceived as containing a surplus of meaning that could enable them to become articulated to a different chain of antagonism/equivalence, which could ultimately help to recast their identities. This is, of course, inaccurate insofar as no identity can ever constitute a sutured totality. In order to explain this seemingly incongruent phenomenon, in the next chapter, I discuss the processes through which certain social configurations and hegemonic formulations come to be understood as absolute.

Chapter 6

The preceding analysis of online discussions concerning Quebec's proposed *Charter of Values* served to reveal both the shape of dominant discourses of Canadian citizenship, as well as relevant instances of hegemonic struggle. Given that Laclau and Mouffe ([1985] 2001) assert that there exists an infinite possibility for the transformation of social 'givens' through articulatory discursive practices, it is important to consider how certain discursive configurations subvert the "infinitude of the field of discursivity" (p. 113, italics removed) in order to appear as objective truths. As such, this chapter attempts to map the mechanisms at play within the dominant discursive meanings discussed in Chapter 5 in order to trace the processes by which the contingency of these discourses has become invisible and meanings have become ingrained to the point of appearing as 'common sense'. In particular, discussion focuses on the forms of hegemony (power) that are used in constructing and perpetuating dominant meanings.

This chapter equally attempts to tease apart the consequences of instances of discursive contestation. As Rear and Jones (2013) assert, it is "at the level of the individual signifier that crucial contests over meaning take place, often with far-reaching consequences for entire discourses qua structured wholes" (p. 376). Therefore, discussion focuses on the processes and consequences of instances where two or more identities formed an antagonistic relationship with one another and how these identities became reconciled or not. Specifically, I highlight where difference was embraced and negotiated and where it was suppressed, and how differential positions were constructed and used in order to discipline and regulate the beliefs and behaviours of the citizenry.

Finally, this chapter attempts to outline the strategies used in order to reinforce and/or disrupt dominant discourse. Particularly, I highlight which 'expert' discourses are used in constructing and representing subjectivities and social configurations. This sheds light on patterns of identification that speak to the larger ideological structures functioning within society.

Hegemony

Rear and Jones (2013) explain that discourse attempts to pull into its orbit and appropriate terms that "on the surface, often seem simple and ideologically neutral; but … can

possess a latent meaning potential that is complex and multifaceted" (p. 381). It is therefore important to understand the processes by which alternate meanings become suppressed, and to what ends. The preceding analysis revealed that the liberal democratic, nationalist, and current Western security environment discourses are each organized around terms that are neither simple nor ideologically neutral; however, these discourses succeed in appropriating complex terms to the point that they become applied uncritically within each thought regime.

For example, liberal democratic discourse adopts both 'freedom' and 'secular' as its nodal points, and although individually these terms are each the topic of discursive contestation, their combined use within the discourse appears natural and reinforces a particular social logic. The nationalist discourse belonging to the r/Canada sub-corpus appropriates 'Canadian' and 'tolerance' as its nodal points, whereas, the nationalist discourse belonging to the r/Quebec sub-corpus appropriate 'Quebec culture' and 'inclusion' as its nodal points. In combination with one another, the instability of each of these terms becomes all but effaced, and a compelling means to regulate social practices is constructed. Dominant representations of Other function as a nodal point within the current Western security environment discourse, which serves not only to impart meaning to other signs within this discourse, but also to position the Other as a powerful social imaginary that comes to exist in opposition to the Canadian social imaginary. Applicable to each of these examples of successful hegemonic formulation is an articulatory practice involving the process of inclusion and exclusion, the construction of hierarchies, and the suturing of identities within closed meaning systems.

Antagonisms/Equivalences

One of the main mechanisms by which discourse regulates subjectivities is through a process of inclusion and exclusion (Naseem, 2004). By including certain classifications of people within dominant discursive structures and excluding others, discourse effectively constructs both the 'us' and the 'them'. To be precise, dominant identities depend on "marginalized identities against which the norm can be compared" (Schick & St. Denis, 2005, p. 299). Liberal democratic discourse is an excellent example of how this mechanism works. On one hand, it affirms the liberal concept of equality, which "postulates that every person is, as a person, automatically equal to every other person" (Mouffe, 2000, p. 39). However, by virtue of the fact that liberal democracy is a regime built upon defining antagonistic boundaries in order to symbolically order

social relations, it does more than merely prescribe a vision of human coexistence; practically speaking, it also articulates a particular form of government. Specifically, it affirms the democratic conception of equality, which for the purpose of ensuring the rights and freedoms afforded to citizens living within any liberal democratic society, requires distinguishing between "who belongs to the demos and who is exterior to it" (p. 39). Evidence of this particular principle was highlighted in the struggle over the meanings of both 'freedom' and 'secular' within discussions concerning *The Charter*. In particular, certain expressions, such as "the hidjab *[sic]* is a medieval relic that doesn't have it's *[sic]* place in modern society" (r/Canada, Thread 19, 2pts) attempted to structure Canadian society around a strictly secular nodal point in order to determine who freedom belongs to and to regulate how it is substantively understood. In this case, secular logic was used to limit the freedom of religious expression of individuals who choose to wear the Hijab.

At the level of rhetoric, therefore, liberal democratic discourse supports freedom and equality for all; however, the limits of freedom are clearly borne out within its operationalization. It is apparent that in the case of the online discussions involving *The Charter*, a majoritarian conception of democracy not only trumps liberalism – "If Quebec wants to go ahead and pass any legislation they should be able to if they have the support of the majority of the population. This is the way our society works" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 7pts) – but also not everyone who belongs to the demos is granted the *same* freedoms: "We do not want exceptional rules favoring people who refuse to acclimate to our society" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 25pts). Discussion comments reveal that there are firm limits to individual freedoms, particularly with regards to how these freedoms are exercised within society: "Individuals' beliefs have to be limited reasonably and equally when they become impractical" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 2pts) and "Ce n'est pas normal qu'une société juste impose ses valeurs sur les minorités à moins que ce ne soit absolument nécessaire à la sécurité des gens" [*It's not normal for a just society to impose its values on minorities, except when absolutely necessary for the safety of others*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 6pts). Moreover, the above comments indicate that there is an important, yet ill-defined conception of 'our society', which permits the cultural majority to enjoy the unmediated benefits of freedom and equality, while also providing the grounds for limiting the rights of groups who are perceived as belonging outside of and in opposition to Canadian social fabric.

Therefore, we see evidence that Canada is not a 'free' country in any absolute sense; rather, the right to freedom is, at times, granted and regulated in very exclusive ways:

> C'est du double standard quand tu demande au gens de ne plus porter de signe religieux au travail au nom de la séparation de l'église et l'état mais que tu laisse un crucifix chrétien en gros plan dans la salle même où les décision de l'état son prisent. [*It's a double standard when, in the name of separation of church and state, you demand that people no longer wear religious symbols while at work, but you leave a Christian cross in the middle of the very room where state decisions are made*]. (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 13pts)

In this case, the dominant social strata are afforded privileges and rights relating to freedom, whereas the beliefs and behaviours of minority groups are regulated and disciplined through this social logic: "I'm all for religious freedom and Sikhs are good people, but weaponry is weaponry, and laws [that prevent carrying weapons] exist for a good reason" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 1pt), and "We've already decided, as a society, that we're OK with people displaying visible symbols of their faith, where those symbols don't interfere with their work and aren't blatantly offensive/dangerous" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 18pts).

Effectively, by ignoring the tensions between liberalism and democracy, liberal democratic discourse provisionally stabilizes meaning in an arguably ambiguous fashion, which results in both the tenets of liberalism and democracy being applied in inconsistent ways: "I wouldn't mind either way about religious beliefs, symbols and attire, as long as none of the daily life is affected" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 576pts). Such an expression not only provides evidence of the hegemonic status of liberal democratic discourse – e.g., the logics of freedom and secularism are applied as 'common sense', despite their internal and external tensions – but also, it begs the question: whose version of 'daily life' is to be given priority within society? It is possible, and I would argue already apparent, that the particular meaning constellation surrounding liberal democratic discourse facilitates the perpetuation of unjust power relations within society: "Les Émigrant on fait le choix conscient de quitté le moyen orient, Afrique du Nord pour venir habiter en Amérique du nord au Canada et en particulier le Québec. … C'est à eux de changer pas à nous!" [*Immigrants made a conscious choice to leave the Middle East and North Africa in order to come to North America to live in Canada and in particular, Quebec. ... It's up to them to change, not us!*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 7pts).

Differential Positions

Not only did discussions surrounding the *Charter of Values* draw upon liberal democratic discourse in order to define the boundaries between 'us' and 'them', but also they simultaneously hierarchically positioned the 'us' above the 'them' in order to delimit and justify what can and will be tolerated within society. As Naseem (2004) explains:

> Meaning fixation involves ascribing certain values to certain signs (notions, words, symbols, concepts), the privileging of certain signs by ascribing to them superior meanings, [and the] creation of the 'other' using binaries (e.g., male-female, nation-enemy binary etc.) where the first element is good, better, superior, rational, privileged, in other words the 'self', and the second bad, worse than, inferior, irrational, in other words, the 'other'. (p. 249)

An example of this hierarchical othering is found within discursive representations of Canadian identity. This construction was not only articulated around what 'Canadian' *is* and is *not*, but equally articulated in such a way as to either implicitly or explicitly align self-(re)presentation with qualities that are superior to the attributes associated with other-(re)presentation. For example, expressions such as, "Most [people] have a hard time believing that immigrants, who choose our part of the country, resist/refuse to adapt to the way of life that makes it so great" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 576pts) and "The fact that [immigrants] don't share all the same values as white Québécois is part of the thing that makes free societies beautiful and vibrant" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 5pts), not only establish immigrants as the liminal group within Canadian society, but also associate the dominant group with having a "great," "beautiful," "free", "vibrant" – i.e. superior – way of life.

Similarly, unqualified support of the need for social integration common to both the r/Canada and r/Quebec sub-corpora provides implicit support for an overall 'west is best' attitude. Comments such as, "The best way for people to integrate is to participate in public. To see how vibrant and wonderful this country is" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 1pt), and "Nous avons juste à continuer à bien vivre librement, interagir avec eux de façon positive afin de leur montrer les bienfaits de notre liberté morale, et attendre qu'ils réalisent et choisissent par eux-mêmes de nous joinder" [*We just have to keep living well and freely, interacting with [immigrants] in a positive way in order to show them the benefits of our moral freedom, and wait for them to*

realize and choose for themselves to join us] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 10pts) discursively position Canadian and Quebec society as pinnacle examples of civil society. Moreover, expressions that were negatively framed such as, "I would guess that intolerance is the norm for most places from non western or European cultures" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 3pts) provide indirect support for the superiority of Western (ancestrally) European culture by presupposing that the West holds a unique history of liberties and rights (Mouffe, 2013; Sen, 2007). Importantly, both the call to embrace a certain moral code within society and the reference to intolerance as being a non-Western social trait are (not-so) subtle hegemonic directives, which serve to sustain the *status quo*.

In addition to discursively positioning Canadian and Quebec society as outstanding social configurations, expressions that drew parallels between minority groups, such as Muslims, and practices that are perceived as being intolerant and illogical serve to construct these groups as the alter ego to the dominant group's apparent constitution. Importantly, in many instances the subordinate positioning of these subjectivities did not invite successful contestation (see Chapter 5: Counter-Discourses); rather, these articulatory relationships reinforced power differentials that enabled the cultural majority to discursively construct an imagined inferior Other. As Rutherford (1990) explains, "in the hierarchical language of the West, what is alien represents otherness, the site of difference and the repository of our fears and anxieties" (p. 10); consequently, in the process of hierarchical othering, liberal democratic discourse succeeds in designating difference that helps to form influential social imaginaries that are then used in order to justify particular exclusionary social policies and practices.

Social Imaginaries

Analysis of online discussions concerning *The Charter* revealed that in addition to reproducing and reinforcing liberal democratic discourse, expressions drew upon and emphasized Canadian and/or Quebec nationalist discourse. These narratives, which speak to broad social identities and moral orientations are particularly salient in that they are used to provide subtle hegemonic direction by offering moral and intellectual persuasion. Moreover, these narratives are used in the construction of social imaginaries, which are totalizing, homogenizing forces. These forces serve to disguise difference resulting from economic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and gender positioning by providing stasis of meaning around one

dominant referent – e.g., nation. Social imaginaries then help to regulate and discipline the emergence and interpretation of new identities (Rutherford, 1990), and in the process of hegemonizing social relations, construct social frontiers that build coalitions, regulate social practices, and define common Others.

Poole (2003) explains that national identities are important hegemonic projects that help us to interpret, understand, and represent our own identities:

> We discover our nation – as we discover ourselves – in the bed-time stories that we are told, the songs which put us to sleep, the games we play as children, the heroes we are taught to admire and the enemies we come to fear and detest. … As we learn to speak, we find ourselves already spoken for. (p. 275)

Canadian nationalist discourse provides an interesting case study of how the mechanism of a social imaginary works. The Canadian nationalist narrative has long depended upon the pathologized presence of Other: popular national tropes such as *freedom*, *autonomy*, *rights*, and *power* arise in opposition to groups who have neither freedom nor power (Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Historically, Canada's Aboriginal groups who were (are) seen as neither autonomous, nor powerful, nor entitled to rights, served as this binary; now, however, these groups have come to also encompass religious minorities with perceived illiberal norms and customs (Macedo & Bartolomé, 1999). This particular phenomenon is typified in such comments as:

> What about the case where a female child of the age of majority wants to dress in a legal manner that her parents forbid? If I'm not mistaken, this very situation has caused more than a few murders in Canada already by immigrants with intolerant beliefs. (r/Canada, Thread 11, 3pts)

The discursive creation of an intolerant and oppressive Other serves not only to construct a self/other binary that produces and reinforces a celebratory 'Canadian' narrative that exists in opposition to the threatening 'Other' narrative, but also helps to propagate a heroic 'Canadian' narrative that effectively ignores the country's difficult past in order to represent Canada as being a welcoming, generous, tolerant, and peaceful nation.

Correspondingly, within the discourse sampled by the present study, Canadian nationalist identity is positioned and articulated around the rhetoric of multiculturalism and pluralism, tenets that provide a specific moral and intellectual agenda by recognizing multiple conceptions of the

'good life'. These principles are hegemonic in that they provide a specific vision of social life: one that privileges a particular culture – e.g., Canadian *multi*-culture – and imbues socio-political power by requiring that citizens not only think for themselves (read: freedom, autonomy), but also respect – and in many cases, tolerate – ethical viewpoints that differ significantly from their own (read: rights, power). It is important to note, however, that these principles are always already imbued with a sense of entitlement; they impart power – both the power to tolerate and to respect, as well as the power to interfere and to prevent – to those in society who already hold power to make judgments concerning what is agreeable, harmful, etc. in social life (Balint, 2011; Corngold, 2005; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). On their own, therefore, the principles of multiculturalism and pluralism do little to "challenge linear histories or dominant cultural totalities, [they] simply reaffirm them as the referent for acknowledging other cultural groups who may be offered some crumbs to join the elite club" (Macedo & Bartolomé, 1999, p. 101). Within the context of this study, there was evidence that these principles are used in practice as one means by which the cultural majority is granted the authority to recognize diversity without fully embracing or affirming it (see Hegemony as Social Practice: Regulating the Citizenry, this chapter).

Evidence of the authority afforded by multicultural and plural rationale is present in expressions such as, the "Québécois are very tolerant, welcoming and peaceful, but not ready to say "sorry" for not agreeing to some eccentric requests" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 8pts), and "An interesting thing to note about Canadian pluralism is that immigrants overwhelmingly integrate themselves into the existing Canadian political system. That's the hallmark of a well-integrated plural society" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 1pt). These comments not only present pluralism as a principle that is successfully realized within society, but also as one that is unquestioningly dependent upon the majority accepting and integrating the minority: "… they should integrate into our lifestyles without expecting reciprocation. Our culture is perfect, so it's unreasonable to expect us to change anything in our daily lives to accommodate other religions or cultures" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 6pts). We see from these comments that while the *idea* of living in a diverse and multicultural society is celebrated within the Canadian nationalist narrative, it is far from authentically adopted in practice. Instead, diversity is conceptualized as a starting point for social integration, rather than a positive social end in and of itself.

Similarly, in order for the cultural majority to justify the need for cultural minorities to integrate into their way of life, the majority uses the ideologies of multiculturalism and pluralism, on which Canadian nationalism is built, in order to tacitly imply the superiority of 'their' society. Evidence of this superiority is shown in such comments as, "…how much richer my life is speaking multiple languages fluently. Same with religions, morals and ethics: it helps you appreciate the values at the core of most beliefs" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 8pts), and "Personally, I'm ashamed and disgusted by this proposed charter, as it goes against the very core values I hold as a Canadian. State sanctioned discrimination has no place in this country, or this century" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 17pts). These particular sentiments position the manifestation of diversity and the ability to appreciate and affirm diversity, which the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1985) supports, as both markers of a 'richer' life and points of Canadian pride. The supposition is then that Others who do not manifest or appreciate diversity in the same way are inferior. This gives rise to both covert and overt forms of racism in which the hierarchical positioning of the Other is not troubled, but rather taken as given: "We are morally superior to others" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 6pts).

As such, the adoption of the tenets of multiculturalism and pluralism as national moral and intellectual codes enables questions of equality to be addressed through language couched in surreptitious racism, thus becoming embroiled in 'dances with bigotry' (*cf.* Macedo & Bartolomé, 1999). Such a maneuver permits masking important questions concerning cultural difference, power relations, and privilege, and facilitates dismissal of attempts to highlight complex relations of oppression. Evidence of this was presented within Chapter 5: Counter-Discourses, which shows that comments that overtly called attention to such phenomena as white privilege and Islamophobia were simply dismissed (downvoted) rather than engaged with in any genuine fashion. As the discourse sampled by the present study suggests, a distorted application of multiculturalism policy permits the cultural majority to pay lip service to the importance of diversity, without a corresponding authentic affirmation of it. A somewhat similar practice is supported by Quebec nationalist identity; however, in this case, the application of intercultural policy facilitates affirmation of one central culture.

The social imaginary representing Quebec nationalism mobilizes "linguistic and other cultural resources to create a representation of the *nation*" (Poole, 2003, p. 272, emphasis in original). This discourse "provides the taken for granted and inescapable framework within

which [citizens] think, experience, imagine, and dream" (p. 271). Notably, within the context of the present study, Quebec nationalism is represented as a somewhat misinterpreted form of Interculturalism (*cf.* Bouchard & Taylor, 2008). Whereas, intercultural policy "proposes to substitute personal attachment to the fixed identity referents of the nation with a view of citizenship that is grounded in the collective effort to codetermine a societal culture" (Maxwell et al., 2012, pp. 432-433), the image of Quebec nationalism within the r/Quebec sub-corpus appeared as a social imaginary so powerfully fixed and ingrained that it needn't be readily described nor codetermined. This identity was not represented as being in the process of evolution, but rather signified some unspoken and yet entirely known entity.

Schick and St. Denis (2005) posit, "the unmarked [unnamed] norm is the space of privilege, an identification that gets to define standards according to itself" (p. 299). Thus, similar to Canadian nationalist discourse, Quebec nationalism depends upon the construction of Other. Within this space, Quebec national identity comes to be understood only according to the antagonistic lines that are drawn, which privilege certain linguistic, geographic, and cultural referents. Comments such as: "The entire raison d'etre of the [PQ] party is to separate Quebec from Canada because of the distinct, and presumably incompatible, identity of the French Quebecers" (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 3pts), and "Je parle du Québec précisement, pas du Canada en général" [*I'm speaking of Quebec in particular, not Canada in general*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 1pt) explicitly point out what is not a matter of Quebec identity and suggest what is. Specifically, these comments distinguish between Canada and Quebec, without fully articulating specific features of the Quebec nationalist identity. Ultimately, by attempting to simplify the polysemy of the political space through the articulation of a clearly defined non-identity – i.e. the social imaginary representing Canadian nationalism – Quebec national identity achieves apparent unity and secures itself as the dominant cultural referent within the Quebec socio-political environment.

Hegemony as Social Practice

This study sought to examine the discursive representations of Canadian citizenship that emerged from citizens' online discussions surrounding the *Charter of Values*. As many post-structuralist thinkers maintain, identities are neither absolute nor fixed; they are "points of identification that continue to change within the discourses of history and culture" (Ghosh, Abdi,

Naseem, 2008, p. 57). Hall (1990) clarifies this point by stating, "cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*" (p. 226, emphasis in original). As such, these articulations are continually in flux, which opens up the possibility for new articulatory relations to be formed. This process of re-envisioning social configurations is a crucial hegemonic social practice: when two or more identities form an antagonistic relationship with one another an opportunity arises for difference to be embraced and negotiated or to be suppressed. In cases where antagonistic relations are converted into equivalencies – i.e. where collective forms of identification are articulated – new hegemonic formulations are realized and new coalitions forged. In cases where antagonistic relations are reinforced by emphasizing self/other relations, an opportunity arises for those that hold power in society – i.e. the 'us' – to use these differential positions in order to discipline and regulate the beliefs and behaviours of those that occupy subordinate positions – i.e. the 'them'. Consequently, hegemonic struggle gives rise to powerful instances of coalition building as well as influential forms of rule or governance.

Coalition Building

Liberal democratic political communities require some definition of sameness. This is due in particular to democracy's emphasis on demarcating who belongs within and without the demos, a practice which helps to secure citizens' rights and freedoms. Balint (2006) argues that liberal democratic societies require that:

> … citizens respect each others' common citizenship: that is, they treat each other as equal members of the political community and as the legitimate bearers of the rights provided by the state. A just society also requires that the state respects this common citizenship, that is, the state treats its citizens with equal concern by both providing appropriate rights and creating and maintaining the conditions for them to be upheld. (pp. 43-44)

Consequently, within such a political configuration, the status of citizen determines who can legitimately stake a claim to the rights and freedoms afforded by such belonging, and dictates how fellow citizens are required to interact with one another. It follows therefore, that such a hegemonic formulation involves defining and building coalitions amongst citizens in order to not only maintain the character of citizenship – i.e. to protect this identity from outside or

antagonistic identities that could subvert it – but also to regulate how citizens belonging to these coalitions should behave with respect to one another.

Under identity-based conceptualizations of citizenship, nationalism seeks to be the identity referent to which coalition building – i.e. sameness – relates (Poole, 2003). However, the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic pluralism within many contemporary liberal democracies makes such a homogeneous signifier problematic. In particular, questions abound concerning how to acknowledge and accommodate the multicultural attitudes and practices of diverse citizens bound together by one common geographic nationality (Balint, 2011). There are, however, two popular attitudes and approaches towards cultural diversity:

> One approach that has been suggested is the encouraging of respect of difference, and with it an approach of embracing diversity. Another approach would be to promote the importance of respecting sameness, that is, common citizenship, or if one wishes to cast the net wider, common humanity. (p. 41)

It would appear from discussions concerning *The Charter* that citizens within Quebec and Canada champion both of these strategies. Comments that support embracing diversity include: "The varied headgear is a mark of pride, not shame" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 1pt), and "You can teach specific religions but still teach an appreciation for other religions as well" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 2pts). Whereas, comments that support common citizenship include: "Eux aussi, ils sont chez eux. Ils sont Québécois, comme toi. Ce n'est pas parce que tu es né ici que tu as plus de droits que quelqu'un qui n'est pas né ici" [*They too, they are also at home. They're Quebecois, just like you. It's not because you were born here that you have more rights than someone who wasn't*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 1pt), and "This is Canada. Come as you are. We'll make Canada together" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 3pts).

Regardless of whether instances of discursive contestation emphasize the importance of difference or sameness, it is clear from the discussions that the question concerning the relationship between cultural diversity and tolerance are:

> … very often conceived of as involving the relationship between the majority and the minority (or minorities). … Moreover, this question is quite commonly only asked in one direction; that is, should the majority respect the practices and beliefs of their minorities – should *we* tolerate *them*? (Balint, 2006, p. 40, emphasis in original)

Accordingly, the process of discursive coalition building within Canada helps to maintain the character of the dominant group, which consists of liberal democratic, Judeo-Christian, predominantly (ancestrally) European white[3] citizens. Essentially, this group tends to *celebrate* a wide variety of group identities and will embrace and negotiate these identities providing that they do not infringe upon the prevailing identity, interests, and social norms of the majority: "We've already decided, as a society, that we're OK with people displaying visible symbols of their faith, where those symbols don't interfere with their work and aren't blatantly offensive/dangerous" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 18pts). Effectively, by setting arguably subjective limits to what 'interferes' and/or is 'offensive' or 'dangerous', the social majority attempts to reduce antagonism resulting from difference to the point that minority groups are assimilated into becoming more like the dominant group (Lincoln, 2010; Scheurich, 1997).

Interestingly, while there is unqualified support of the need for basic social integration – i.e. coalition building – within Canadian and Quebec societies, there was very little (if any) discussion and critique of why Others either fail or refuse to integrate into society, or of the mechanisms which prevent outsiders from joining the coalition. Rather, there was a tacit privileging of mainstream society and a belief that its superiority alone would entice Others to participate in meaningful ways:

> Si nous croyons, en tant que société, que notre façon de penser est la bonne, ça implique nécessairement que nous croyons qu'une personne saine d'esprit à qui on explique notre façon de penser acceptera probablement aussi que c'est la bonne de son propre gré. … Si nous n'avons pas confiance en ça, et bien, nous n'avons pas confiance en la supériorité de nos libertés. [*If we believe that as a society, our way of thinking is the right way, this implies that we also believe that a person of sound mind to whom we explain our way of thinking will probably of their own free will, also accept it as good. … If we don't have confidence in this, well then, we don't have confidence in the superiority of our freedoms.*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 10pts)

This particular process of coalition building does little to foster a truly plural political community, one that acknowledges diverse forms of cultural and political membership

[3] Here 'white' is understood as more than skin colour; it refers to *whiteness*, as a privileged signifier (*cf.* Schick & St. Denis, 2005).

(Kymlicka, 1996). Conversely, it (in)voluntarily reinforces antagonistic boundaries by insisting that anyone who exists outside of society, either by their own choice or externally-imposed circumstance, is irrational and inferior.

Regulating the Citizenry

Within many contemporary liberal democracies, dominant social groups tend to be hostile towards groups who they perceive to be illiberal: groups that allegedly threaten the basic liberal democratic tenets of freedom and equality (Macedo, 2012). Within dominant social configurations, appraisal of what is and is not acceptable is often done on the basis of the antagonistic boundaries constructed by liberal democratic discourse. Specifically, the differential, hierarchically organized divisions between 'us' and 'them' are used to justify dominant social logics and disciplinary practices. As was discussed above, one of the hegemonizing forces of liberal democratic discourse within the present study is that it is used to paint a portrait of Canadian and Quebec societies as being superior to other social configurations. Such a depiction not only hierarchically positions these societies above others, but also helps to justify both the need and measures endorsed for the protection of these dominant identities.

As analysis in the preceding chapter reveals, the construction of in-groups and out-groups is used as a strategy to represent certain groups as being outside of an in opposition to historical Quebec and Canadian cultures and identities. Markers of the liminal groups, such as religious and cultural symbols, are not only understood as occupying differential positions, but also as representing a threat to the seemingly sutured dominant social configuration. Instances of hegemonic struggle concerning what does (not) belong to the central identity provide an illustration of where difference is suppressed, rather than embraced and negotiated. Importantly, the exclusion of diverse identifications is done on the grounds of a perceived threat and regardless of the fact that this threat is tenuous at best, it serves the majority's interests to construct a powerful Other social imaginary, one that exists in stark opposition to itself.

Rutherford (1990) explains: in order to construct a more robust image of self, "the centre invests the Other with its terrors. It is the threat of the dissolution of self that ignites the irrational hatred and hostility as the centre struggles to assert and secure its boundaries, that constructs self from not-self" (p. 11). Subsequently, once the Other is articulated, the dominant group is then free to devise and apply strategies to regulate difference that is perceived as infringing upon their

constitution. For example, comments such as: “Part of what Quebec is going through is the very difficult issue of how does a tolerant society deal with immigrants of cultures and religions that have strong intolerant beliefs and behaviours?” (r/Canada, Thread 11, 3pts), and “Should we accommodate unnecessary, backward, sexists requests just because [they are] labelled ‘religion’”? (r/Canada, Thread 11, 8pts) portray certain cultures and religions (associated with certain immigrant groups) as incompatible with Canadian social values. This particular discursive practice then serves as the basis for policies that seek to suppress difference in order to protect Canadian values and identities.

When combined, both the discourse of nationalism and liberal democracy provide an important framework in which disciplining strategies emerge: “modern citizenship has always relied for its moral force on its association with national identity, and national identity has always aspired to citizenship” (Poole, 2003, p. 276). Specifically, the rhetoric of national liberalism provides:

> …the context in which freedom is exercised. … We do not exercise our freedom of choice in a void. Choosing, especially where the choices concern the kind of life we intend to lead, presupposes the existence of a framework within which various options may be evaluated. (p. 277)

Canadian national identity, with its emphasis on multiculturalism, provides an important hegemonic moral and intellectual framework in which the limits to freedom are articulated. Drawing on, for example, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1985), the rhetoric associated with Canadian nationalist discourse affirms “the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage” (section 3.1a). Thus, this discourse rhetorically supports the equality of all Canadian citizens in pursuing their diverse interests providing that citizens’ beliefs and practices do not infringe upon the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Moreover, in combination with liberal democratic discourse, nationalist discourse facilitates the use of tolerance not only as a core civic virtue for recognizing, affirming, and accommodating difference stemming from Canada’s multicultural heritage, but also as a strategy for disciplining and regulating seemingly offensive and/or disagreeable customs and norms.

Macedo and Bartolomé (1999) caution that for many liberals, “the appeal to tolerance allows them to keep in place … their own sense of privilege while simultaneously making it

appear that they are addressing the issues of cultural difference" (p. 98). However, tolerance as a primary method of social interaction does little, if anything, to interrogate, disrupt, or equalize power disparities between social groups. This is because tolerance operates in such a way as to benefit those who already hold power within society. On its own, it does not invite those who are privileged by virtue of race, class, and gender to seriously consider issues of power, privilege, or cultural belonging because to do so would require the privileged groups' acknowledgement of their involvement in systems of oppression. Moreover, such an acknowledgement might ultimately contribute to the conditions necessary for social transformation that would unseat the majority from the dominant position.

Instead, tolerance seeks to *manage* diversity through a process that in reality reinforces and perpetuates subordination by situating the Other "within a discourse of mutual respect, a discourse that sets the limits to what the dominant class can tolerate or find acceptable" (Macedo & Bartolomé, 1999, p. 98). While setting limits as to what is tolerable is not inherently problematic, the interpretation of tolerance manifested within Canadian society is insufficient insofar as it sets limits that often only reflect the beliefs and behaviours of a nominal 'dominant class' section of society: Judeo-Christian, predominantly (ancestrally) European white Canadians. When, within a pluralist social context the limits of toleration are not framed so as to include customs and practices that reflect a wide cross-section of the population, it can lead to such consequences as disaffection with and alienation from the dominant group, or disavowal of one's own cultural heritage. This is particularly undesirable because, at its core, tolerance is both a important principle of governance – e.g., the state must not interfere with the non-harmful practices of its citizens – as well as a principle of civil relations – e.g., suggested ways in which citizens relate to one another within liberal democracies (Balint, 2011; Corngold, 2005).

Significantly, Balint (2011) explains that the meaning of tolerance is, in and of itself, a matter of discursive contestation. He postulates that there are two very different views:

> One view sees tolerance as a type of forbearance, of putting up with things you disapprove of despite having the power to negatively interfere, and the other sees tolerance as something much more than simply not interfering with things you believe to be repugnant or problematic, but much more positively, embracing and appreciating these very things. (p. 42)

Within discussions concerning the *Charter of Values*, instances of hegemonic struggle include a gentle nod towards the value of heterogeneous societies and to the importance of embracing and appreciating diversity; however, ultimately there is a larger emphasis on practical difficulties associated with having to endure the social consequences resulting from this diversity. Hence, dominant views frame tolerance as a type of forbearance, as something that needs to be applied and shouldered in order to achieve social harmony.

Comments such as: "This is a fundamental step of plural integration that cannot be avoided. … The next generation ends up far more integrated than the last, as long as you remain inclusive and tolerant of language difficulties" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 1pt) align the importance of enduring "problems" posed by language difficulties with the larger goal of social integration. While this application of tolerance – i.e. forbearance – possibly leads to positive social aims, it merely reflects a broad category of respect for the *right* to hold a particular difference, rather than respect for the *difference* itself (Balint, 2011). Respect for the right of difference is expressed in many conversations concerning *The Charter*, where for instance, linguistic differences are framed as problematic cultural disparities that at best, engender feelings of polite indifference, rather than as social variations that are appreciated and affirmed:

> In a cohesive society, EVERYONE needs to be able to communicate with one another. I'm all for retaining ones cultural heritage, but to isolate yourself and your peers from the community, then refusing to learn even a basic grasp of English or French is, in my opinion, disrespectful. (r/Canada, Thread 11, 7pts)

Additionally, certain expressions applied tolerance as a socio-political commodity that helps to delegitimize Other practices and beliefs: "Religiously homogeneous societies don't have a very [good] track record for tolerance" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 1pt) and "It may be that part of what Quebec is going through is the very difficult issue of how does a tolerant society deal with immigrants of cultures and religions that have strong intolerant beliefs and behaviours?" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 3pts). Here, calls to tolerance are applied as a means of defining antagonistic boundaries between societies that are 'superior', 'heterogeneous', and 'tolerant' and those that are 'inferior', 'homogeneous', and 'intolerant'. This application of tolerance – i.e. currency within and marker of civil society – does not reflect toleration. Instead, it serves to further alienate marginal identities by associating them with inferior attributes. Moreover, a commodification of tolerance enables it to be traded: "Je veux bien respecter le monde, mais si

eux ne respecte pas mes valeurs et que j'en parle je deviens un intolérant" [*I want to respect others, but if they don't respect the values and I'm talking about it, I become intolerant*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 2pts), which lessens the moral imperative behind this civic virtue and facilitates its inconsistent application.

While respect for the right of citizens to hold and follow diverse beliefs and practices is necessary for a society to be described as tolerant, the moral imperative for citizens not to "negatively interfere in the lives or differences of [their] fellow citizens does not automatically imply directly respecting their differences" (p. 44). Moreover, simply permitting fellow citizens to retain for example, elements of their distinct religious and cultural heritages does little to manifest an actual *rapprochement* between diverse social entities by encouraging a respectful curiosity about the other. Both of the strategies for toleration championed within discussions concerning *The Charter* do little to support authentic grappling with the complexities of non-binary thinking or to deeply embrace and appreciate things that differ from one's own way of thinking (Macedo & Bartolomé, 1999). These approaches are merely used to undermine the legitimacy of different identities, which pose a perceived and/or constructed threat to the dominant identity. As such, they simply become a call for consensus that is always already "produced through a process of exclusion that benefits those who have power" (p. 98). Nevertheless, within the data sampled by the present study, there was evidence that 'tolerance' was used as a hegemonic directive that provided a touchstone for social practices.

'Expert' Discourse as Power

As the preceding discussion emphasizes, the construction of dominant identities is dependent on the presence of not only positive attributes, but also the presence of an Other who is an "integral though displaced part of the [construction of] centre, defining it even in its non-identity" (Rutherford, 1990, p. 22). The construction of these identities depends on 'expert' discourses, which are used to construct, represent, legitimize, and circulate subjectivities and social configurations. In what follows, I elucidate on the authoritative discourses used in constructing the current Western security environment discourse in order to shed light on patterns of identification that speak to the larger ideological structures functioning within society. Specifically, I discuss how the current Western security environment merges together aspects of multicultural, religious, and popular discourse in order to discursively articulate Other.

I contend that within Canada, the current Western security environment discourse emerges from multiculturalism, which opens up a space in which the presence of Other is not only articulated, but also affirmed as constitutive. The discourse then takes up elements of religious discourse in order to homogenize the identity of the Other around one referent: religion. In doing so, it degrades Others by equating them with one simple identity marker, which exists in opposition to plural mainstream identities. Subsequently, this image of Other is circulated via popular discourse, which relies on groups that are seen as having power within society to take up and circulate these hegemonic ideas.

Multicultural Discourse

Many expressions concerning *The Charter* stemming from both Quebec and Canada use multicultural moral and intellectual logic in order to justify particular social beliefs and practices. For example, citizens' comments reflecting their preferred attitude and approach towards cultural diversity support both the importance of respecting difference and sameness, strategies that are both referenced in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1985):

> It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to…
>
> *(c)* promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation; …
>
> *(g)* promote the understanding and creativity that arise from the interaction between individuals and communities of different origins. (section 3.1)

These statements affirm the importance of respecting sameness – i.e. common citizenship – and working together to build a shared vision of society, as well as the importance of embracing and respecting diversity. On its own, therefore, a discourse of multiculturalism supports the presence of Others as non-hostile and constitutive forces of any social configuration: notably, the plural character of Canada is what gives it its very identity. However, when aspects of this discourse appear within the larger discourse of the current Western security environment, difference relating to Others comes to be understood as problematic.

No longer is multiculturalism seen as merely a positive social aim, but this social policy comes to be seen as the cause of many practical problems. As the rhetoric concerning universal

tolerance towards all cultural and religious traditions falls apart, the image of society as one that "breathes the breath of hospitality and freedom and equality for all" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 1pt) is more difficult to sustain. Consequently, comments referring to having to "deal with the diversity problem" and "learning to deal with multiculturalism" emerge as dominant/subordinate relations get articulated. Multicultural discourse then becomes one prominent method for approaching and understanding tangible cultural difference and the tensions that result. To be precise, the discourse opens up a space in which the 'us' can organize, articulate, and reinforce differential, hierarchical positions resulting from actual cultural difference in order to infuse judgment as to the trustworthiness of the 'them'.

Religious Discourse

Popular comments stemming from discussions concerning the *Charter of Values* use religion (practices, beliefs) as the basis for negatively framing the Other. This is not surprising given the context of the debate; however, what is interesting is how aspects of religious discourse are leveraged as an authoritative force that can help to (de)legitimize subjectivities and social configurations. For example, within the r/Quebec sub-corpus, comments discursively frame religion as a social force that can potentially be abused, as well as something can lead to extremism: "Désoler mais je ne crois pas que l'on doit respecter les religions tout simplement parce ce sont des religions. Sinon tout les abus sont possible!" [*Sorry, but I don't believe that we have to respect all religions simply because they're religions. Otherwise, all kinds of abuse is possible!*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 1pt), and "Ce projet de loi ne change absolument rien pour les fous extrémistes, mais ne fait que punir les modérés - ce qui ne fera que les pousser plus loin vers l'extrémisme" [*This law won't change anything for the crazy extremists, but it will punish the moderates – which will only make them move towards extremism*] (r/Quebec, Thread 5, 1pt).

Similarly, within the r/Canada sub-corpus, comments characterize religious customs as 'disruptive', 'silly', 'unnecessary', 'backward', and 'sexist': "The Sikh faith is particularly disruptive, with Sikh's everywhere lobbying for the right to carry their curved daggers everywhere" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 1pt), "If your particular faith requires you to wear a silly hat of some kind…" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 22pts), and "There is also a widespread outrage about how we should accommodate unnecessary, backward, sexists requests just because it is labelled 'religion'" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 8pts). These articulations help to discursively characterize

adherents to particular faiths – i.e. Others – as existing outside of and in opposition to mainstream society. Moreover, these comments paint a hostile and somewhat threatening image of the Other, which helps to justify the majority's intolerance towards and regulation of difference.

Arguably, by focusing on constructing negative representations of religions and religious symbolism, the current Western security environment discourse magnifies the voice of religious authority and ignores other significant attachments that mobilize citizens (Sen, 2007). Effectively, its use in this way facilitates expressions in which "despite our *diverse diversities*, the world is suddenly seen as not a collection of people, but as a federation of religions and civilizations" (p. 13, emphasis in original). This is problematic not only because it homogenizes identities, but it also stereotypes individuals in damaging ways. As Ghosh, Abdi, and Naseem (2008) contend:

> When people are misidentified, the ensuing projects of misrecognition damage their ontologies and existentialities (Taylor, 1994), rendering them in the process less confident beings who will actually collaborate with their oppressors in the project of oppression. With these in place, people's capacity to define and control their lived contexts will also be problematic, thus precipitating quasi-curricular realities of self-blame, self damnation and a diminished prospect for socio-economic and political advancement. (pp. 65-66)

Evidence of this particular contention was manifested within the relatively static articulatory relationships surrounding the image of the Other. The counter-discourses that were offered ultimately proved to be unsuccessful attempts at disrupting the appearance and propagation of many negative stereotypes and patterns of oppression, particularly with regards to the portrayal of a homogeneous and unfavourable Muslim identity.

Popular Discourse

The *prejudice du jour* apparent within discussions concerning *The Charter*, helped to construct Muslim identity as a powerful social imaginary. While the presence of such a reified and negative representation is remarkable, it is not unexpected, for within contemporary global power relations it serves the West to have such a pathologized Other. Sen (2007) argues, "in confronting what is called "Islamic terrorism," in the muddled vocabulary of contemporary

global politics, the intellectual force of Western policy is aimed quite substantially at trying to define – or redefine – Islam" (p. 12). It is believed that this articulatory practice helps to secure the West's dominance in the competition for global wealth, territory, and influence (Bloor & Bloor, 2007). For example, the West's use of negative stereotypes, which portray a homogeneous image of a *jihadist* Muslim that exists as a binary to the good, peaceful Christian serves as justification for particular immigration and security policies (Hamdon, 2010; MediaSmarts, n.d.; Saeed, 2007). Importantly, however, the power of these stereotypes comes not merely from their articulation, but also from their movement within and across societies. These prejudicial views gain their legitimacy and influence by being taken up and circulated by groups that are seen to have power within society.

Politicians, journalists, individuals within the entertainment industry, as well as the entertainment industry itself all play a pivotal role in (re)producing the current Western security environment discourse. For example, cultural texts produced by the media and popular entertainment outlets serve to construct social groups in particular ways, which then form a type of public pedagogy that legitimizes racist viewpoints. Although these perspectives and opinions are often "coloured, [for example,] by the political priorities of newspapers or the abilities of the journalists who are writing for them" (Baker, Gabrielatos, & McEnery, 2013, p. 3), they are nevertheless used as the basis of "material discrimination in such areas as employment, promotion, wages, education, relations with the law and political representation" (Bloor & Bloor, 2007, p. 128). Consequently, these ideologically motivated representations of reality, which are controlled by those who occupy majority positions within society, carry far-reaching consequences. The size of the audience to which the current Western security environment discourse is disseminated, as well as the realms of society to which it touches upon has a profound effect on the way that social identities and configurations come into being and/or are transformed.

Summary

This chapter sought to respond to the central question posed by this inquiry: How do online discourses of citizenship reproduce or challenge existing discourses of Canadian citizenship? Analysis of conversations dealing with Quebec's proposed *Charter of Values* revealed that many conceptualizations of Canadian citizenship merely reproduce existing

discourses. Moreover, within the context of this study, attempts at challenging these dominant meanings were largely unsuccessful. As the preceding discussion highlights, the discourses of liberal democracy, nationalism, and the current Western security environment produce a mighty hegemonic project that not only perpetuates dominant conceptualizations, but makes it difficult to intervene in order to disrupt these seemingly stable meanings as well. This is not to say that discursive intervention and disruption is not possible. In the next chapter, I posit that by reconceiving of Canada as a site of plural and radical democracy, certain strategies can be put in to place that could help to sustain a different vision of coexistence. In particular, I argue for the need to leverage the power of education, as a popular tool of identity (de)formation (Ghosh, Abdi, & Naseem, 2008) and mechanism for informing civic relations, in order to teach citizens how to critically reflect on the discourses that produce and shape them, and to challenge, dislocate, and rearticulate these hegemonic formulations, when necessary.

Chapter 7

This chapter offers a discussion of the educational implications and recommendations stemming from the present research study. It aims to not only re-envision Canada as a site of plural and radical democracy, but also to suggest ways in which education, as a significant site of citizen identity formation and means through which relational strategies are imparted, can be used to disrupt prominent discourses of citizenship in which relations of oppression are articulated and sustained. I begin by highlighting the shortcomings of current conceptualizations of citizenship based on the liberal democratic tradition. I then go on to 'metaphorically re-describe' (Mouffe, 2013) liberal democratic practices so that they more closely resemble a vision of radical democracy. Finally, I suggest a vision of citizenship education for a re-imagined plural and radically democratic Canada.

The Liberal Democratic Paradox

Central to the vision of liberal democracy is its acknowledgment of pluralism. While the merit of pluralism as an axiological principle can be upheld, its practical advantages are more problematic to sustain. Mouffe (2013) explains:

> The typical understanding of pluralism is as follows: we live in a world in which there are indeed many perspectives and values, but due to empirical limitations, we will never be able to adopt them all; however, when put together, they could constitute an harmonious and non-conflictual ensemble. (p. 3)

This perspective, which is central to liberal democratic thinking, is however, paradoxical. A contradiction arises when respect for individual liberty – i.e. freedom to be different – supported by liberalism, clashes with democracy's visions of equality and sovereignty. Substantively speaking, the democratic stipulation that in order to be treated as equals, citizens must consent to common citizenship depends on at the very least, suppression of difference in favour of foregrounding sameness. This requires a partial denial of the constitutive antagonistic dimension of social configurations in order to create an identity that depends on homogeneity (Mouffe, 2000).

It would, however, be false to claim that liberal democrats deny the existence of antagonism entirely; rather, they fail to conceive of antagonism as a productive socio-political

force. Importantly, while this in no way signals "the substantive disappearance of inequalities" (Mouffe, 2000, p. 41), such theorizing does not facilitate an examination of power relations. Instead, it gives rise to socio-political dynamics wherein liberal democratic theorists:

> … envisage the field of politics as a neutral terrain in which different groups compete to occupy the positions of power, their objective being to dislodge others in order to occupy their place, without putting into question the dominant hegemony and profoundly transforming relations of power. It is simply a competition among elites. (Mouffe, 2013, pp. 8-9)

From the standpoint of conceptualizing citizenship, therefore, owing to the fact that liberal democratic discourse fails to adequately acknowledge antagonism as a constitutive force that enables the creation and establishment of any identity or social configuration, it fails to support the recognition of productive or *agonistic* conflictual relations (Mouffe, 2000, 2005, 2013).

This is undesirable because a vibrant, well-functioning democracy that works in favour of pluralism does not simply require attempts to overcome 'us/them' distinctions in order to build consensus, nor does it require a mere recognition of difference. Foregrounding consensus is insufficient because, as I have argued previously, it denies the necessarily constitutive element of difference. In short, any 'us' cannot exist without a corresponding 'them'. Therefore, the crucial task for plural democratic politics is to establish antagonistic relations – e.g., difference, us/them distinctions – "in a way that is compatible with the recognition of pluralism" (Mouffe, 2013, pp. 6-7). Correspondingly, such an aim necessarily requires not only the recognition of difference, but also an *interrogation* of the power relations that such relations signify, in order to potentially interrupt and transform oppressive relations.

Therefore, adopting an agonistic vision of politics is a more appropriate approach to pluralism: it requires both an affirmation of difference that signifies neutral differential positioning, as well as an interrogation of difference that signifies more antagonistic or conflictual relations. Importantly, an agonistic approach to politics "acknowledges the real nature of its frontiers and the forms of exclusion that they entail, instead of trying to disguise them under the veil of rationality or morality" (Mouffe, 2000, p. 105). Not only does recognizing the very real struggle between various opposing hegemonic projects alleviate the occurrence of unnecessarily volatile forms of antagonism by providing each position with a legitimate outlet in

which to compete for their hegemonic interpretation, but it also recovers and recognizes the 'lost' voices and contingent meanings belonging to often-disqualified groups. This is what the crux of contemporary citizenship education within multicultural and plural societies must be about.

A Radical Vision of Socio-Political Life

As findings of this research confirm, the liberal democratic paradox is manifested in important ways within contemporary Canadian society. For example, discussions concerning *The Charter* reveal that liberalism is supported at the level of rhetoric; however, in practice, a majoritarian view of democracy trumps liberalism. Moreover, tensions between liberalism and democracy cause certain rights and privileges to become applied in unequal and inconsistent ways. This leads, for example, to the articulation of nationalist discourse in which Other is not merely viewed as a non-harmful adversary, but rather as one whose very existence threatens the stability of dominant identities and social configurations. At best, this produces situations in which Other is encouraged to assimilate into mainstream society in order to appear more like the dominant group. At worst, it propagates prejudicial and racist views towards Other. Both approaches, however, prevent a full realization of the deep, authentic appreciation for pluralism to which Canada's multiculturalism policy aspires.

Proponents of radical democracy (*cf.* Laclau & Mouffe, [1985] 2001; Mouffe, 2000, 2005, 2013) suggest that the political shortcomings of liberal democratic thinking can be overcome through a 'metaphorical redescription' of liberal democratic practices (Mouffe, 2013). Notably, they argue that foregrounding the role of antagonism as a positive socio-political force enables every political order to be conceived of as only ever resulting from a provisional moment of sameness. Thus, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic processes are an ever-present possibility that allow for a constant disarticulation and re-articulation of particular social 'givens'. The importance of this particular conceptualization cannot be overstated: when conceived of as a driving socio-political force, antagonism comes to not only represent difference, but also acts as the potential site of social transformation.

Accordingly, throughout chapters 5 and 6, I attempted to recover the contingency of prominent discourses by exposing their partiality and fluidity in order to open a space in which hegemonic formulations might be disrupted and transformed. Specifically, I endeavoured to

highlight powerful counter-discourses in order to contribute to the legitimization of alternate, antagonistic interpretations. This was imperative because when the importance of antagonism is disavowed, not only do channels for challenging hegemony and the basis for social-political transformation dissolve, but the elimination of the possibility of legitimate dissent also creates a "favourable terrain for the emergence of violent forms of antagonisms" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 20). Moreover, the disavowal of the importance of difference prevents the recognition of "how certain differences are constructed as relations of subordination and should therefore be challenged by a radical democratic politics" (Mouffe, 2000, p. 20).

Significantly, Rutherford (1990) supports this assertion, in a rather long, but important passage:

> Binarism operates in the same way as splitting and projection: the centre expels its anxieties, contradictions and irrationalities onto the subordinate term, filling it with the antithesis of its own identity; the Other, in its very alienness, simply mirrors and represents what is deeply familiar to the centre, but projected outside of itself. It is in these processes and representations of marginality that the violence, antagonisms and aversions which are at the core of the dominant discourses and identities become manifest – racism, homophobia, misogyny and class contempt are the products of this frontier. But it is in its nature as a supplement to the centre that the margin is also a place of resistance. The assertion of its existence threatens to deconstruct those forms of knowledge that constitute the subjectivities, discourses and institutions of the dominant, hegemonic formations. It is here, where power relations and historical forces have organised meaning into polar opposites that language becomes a site of struggle. Even as difference is pathologised and refused legitimacy, new terms and identities are produced on the margins. (p. 22)

Essentially, the recognition of the subjectivities and struggles operating within and across the site of antagonism not only helps in their legitimization, but also supports the possibility of transforming conflicts arising from difference into sites of political flourishing (Mouffe, 2005). Consider, for example the various struggles that have led to social movements surrounding issues of gender, race, and sexual orientation[4]. Not only have these movements arisen in response to the

[4] These categories should not be interpreted as singular, but as porous classifications that reflect heterogeneous differences within society.

oppression that members of these groups have faced, but they have been borne out of a dismantling of the essentialist binaries promoted by dominant groups' political projects. The current significance of racial, postcolonial, feminist, and queer socio-political theories could not have been possible without the margins resisting and discovering their own words, and transforming their own meaning (Rutherford, 1990).

Importantly, this vision of social relations "recognizes that divergences can be at the origin of conflicts, but … asserts that those conflicts should not necessarily lead to a 'clash of civilizations'" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 41). Rather, the strength of democratic politics relies on citizens' abilities to view any socio-political Other as an individual with whose ideas one may be required to struggle, "but whose rights to defend those ideas will not be put into question" (Mouffe, 2000, p. 102). This re-interpretation of the liberal democratic notion of tolerance does not entail "being indifferent to standpoints that we disagree with, but treating those who defend them as legitimate opponents … with whom we have some common ground because we have a shared adhesion to the ethico-political principles of liberal democracy" (p. 102). For instance, with regards to the counter-discourses forwarded within discussions surrounding *The Charter*, rather than passively ignoring or actively eliminating (downvoting) viewpoints that were perceived as disagreeable, radical democracy demands these ideas be engaged with, so as to legitimize alternate perspectives and potentially challenge the dominant hegemony.

Significantly, the ethico-political principles within and for a radical and plural democracy will always signify many different and conflicting interpretations of the common good, which can only ever result in at best, a 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe, 2000). Therefore, rather than aim for rational consensus in the public sphere, the task of democratic politics within multicultural, plural, and radically democratic societies is to transform its essential character of *antagonism* into *agonism*. Specifically, an agonistic vision of politics requires a vibrant clash of legitimate democratic positions that supports dissent and acknowledges the form and role of exclusion whenever provisional hegemony is achieved (Mouffe, 2000, 2013). The following example helps to illustrate the point that I am making here.

The current liberal democratic model operates as follows: "its particular conception of human rights, is the expression of a given cultural and historical context, in which, as has often been noted, the Judeo-Christian tradition plays a central role" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 29). While an arguably appropriate model within many Western democracies, there is no sound reasoning to try

to impose it on the rest of the world, particularly within cultures whose traditions are not informed by the same kind of individualism dominant within many Western societies (Mouffe, 2013). However, as I have outlined in the previous chapter, this form of democracy has been constructed as an objectively good way of organizing human coexistence and used as a powerful rhetorical weapon to assert the West's 'global superiority'. This is regrettable, because the pretense of such a social objectivity necessarily hides the traces of exclusion which govern its constitution and negates other possible interpretation of human coexistence that could come together to create the kind of 'conflictual consensus' envisioned by agonistic politics (Mouffe, 2000). What is needed therefore, is an agonistic vision of politics that for example, requires learning how to discern functional equivalents: recognizing other forms of democracy – perhaps those that value community over individual liberty – as legitimate political models that, while different, do not represent a threat to such things as human rights and freedoms. In what follows, I suggest ways in which citizenship education can support the development of citizens' abilities to embrace such an agonistic vision of socio-political life.

Educational Recommendations

The move from emphasizing antagonism towards agonism does not necessarily require that we promote modes of citizenship education that 'celebrate difference' while affirming the universal humanness of us all. As Sen (2007) contends, "the insistence, if only implicitly, on a choiceless singularity of human identity, not only diminishes us all, it also makes the world much more flammable" (p. 16). If, on the other hand, we aspire to achieving "harmony in our troubled world," we need to affirm the "plurality of our identities, which cut across each other and work against sharp divides" (p. 16). As such, any morally defensible view of citizenship education operating within and for a radically plural and democratic society must turn towards teaching strategies that encourage recognizing complex and overlapping individual differences, and participating in opportunities to make sense of, and do something about, social and political conflicts (Bickmore, 2008).

Importantly, citizenship education within such a society must help citizens to engage in forms of conflict that do not destroy political association (Mouffe, 2005). Educators must find ways to teach citizens how to deliberate in such a way so as to maintain the autonomy of multiple struggles without giving priority to one above any other and without conflating or

reducing distinct struggles into oneness. The simultaneous challenge for these educators is to help citizens understand the importance of retaining the "contestation and conflict of the political while extricating the violent and oppressive" (Hands, 2007, p. 90). Ruitenberg (2009) suggests that this can best be achieved by paying attention to the area of political emotions, fostering an understanding of the difference between political and moral disputes, and developing political literacy.

Political Emotions

Under typical liberal democratic conceptions, "ideas about how a society ought to be structured, about what kinds of power relations are just and unjust" (Ruitenberg, 2009, p. 272), are considered private convictions. Consequently, traditional models of citizenship education for liberal democracies have emphasized the development of rational reasoning abilities that can be applied in the public sphere. However, it has been argued that a "prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions from the sphere of the public, but to mobilize those passions towards democratic designs" (Mouffe, 2000, p. 103). For example, any collective identity, such as national identity, "is the result of a passionate affective investment that creates a strong identification among the members of a community" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 46). As such, a prime task for citizenship education is to not only take into account citizens' desire for belonging to various collectivities, but also to teach citizens how to avoid transforming 'us/them' relations into relations of enmity or estrangement. One way that this can be achieved is to teach citizens how to recognize politically relevant emotions such as empathy and anger by fostering conversations that critically evaluate how social relations are structured (Ruitenberg, 2009).

Citizenship education in favour of agonistic pluralism emphasizes helping citizens to discern emotions that go beyond themselves and relate to hegemonic social relations involving the larger socio-political collective. This requires supporting "the development of a sense of solidarity, and the ability to feel anger [and empathy] on behalf of injustices committed against those in less powerful social positions rather than on behalf of one's own pride" (Ruitenberg, 2009, p. 277). Regrettably, within discussions surrounding *The Charter*, there was evidence of the socio-political majority dismissing injustice that was not perceived as affecting them directly. For example, across corpora, comments minimized the effects of various forms of discrimination facing immigrants – e.g., a woman having to remove her veil as a result of the proposed *Charter*

of Values was not considered to be "a big problem". This is perhaps one consequence of the widespread application of tolerance as forbearance. Such an operationalization of tolerance permits different cultural groups to merely acknowledge the existence of difference – different beliefs, practices, and injustices – rather than to engage with it in an authentic fashion.

From a citizenship education standpoint, a focus on the importance of critically evaluating social policies and the effects that they have on a broad socio-political level might help to remedy some of the indifference that individuals feel towards their fellow citizens by preventing the dominant group from simply expelling outside of itself any difference that they wish to ignore. Instead of passively ignoring or actively eliminating viewpoints that are perceived as disagreeable or irrelevant, agonistic citizenship education requires helping citizens to develop respectful curiosity about the other in order to engage with and embrace conflict, which can ultimately help to legitimize diverse democratic political positions. For instance, promoting empathy by recognizing the power differentials that certain hegemonic social configurations signify helps to highlight relations of subordination, which in turn legitimizes these positions and provides the conditions necessary for the articulation of new hegemonic projects. Moreover, such a focus can legitimize different forms of conflictual relations – i.e. difference, which can help to minimize the risk of violent forms of antagonism. As Mouffe (2000) explains, "if this is missing there is the danger that this democratic confrontation will be replaced by a confrontation among other forms of collective identification, as is the case with identity politics" (p. 104).

Political Anger

Importantly, an emphasis on helping citizens to discern politically relevant emotions must go beyond simple recognition of political passions, to a simultaneous emphasis of the importance of mobilizing these emotions towards such democratic ends as increased social inclusion and improved social justice. However, for this to be successfully realized, citizenship education must support citizens' abilities to differentiate between moral and political anger in order to probe citizenship at a structural level, both in terms of theory and practice. Ruitenberg (2009) explains, "moral anger could be the anger that one feels after seeing moral values one cherishes violated" (p. 277), whereas political anger results from situations in which decisions are made that violate

the ethico-political values that are fundamental to liberal democratic societies' notions of justice – i.e. liberty and equality for all.

The ability to make this distinction helps citizens to recognize where their democratic positioning may occupy common ideological space with other groups within society – i.e. where they might already be or have the opportunity to become articulated to a chain of equivalence. Such a social configuration can be created between, for example, citizens engaged in apparently discrete struggles against homophobia, racism, or sexism. Citizens belonging to each of these groups are actually aligned in a chain of equivalence insofar as "they have all become, strictly speaking, equivalent symbols of a unique and indivisible struggle" (Laclau & Mouffe, [1985] 2001, p. 182); namely, that of social justice.

Emphasis on discerning socio-political equivalence helps to narrow the distance between the divides in the population and, once equivalence is established, agonistic citizenship education stipulates that citizens must then be encouraged to develop and act upon shared concerns within these socio-political alliances in order to come together to seriously consider and perhaps challenge hegemonic social relations and the power differentials that they signify. Notably, the goal is to create bonds among different identities, without reducing the differences to sameness. The idea is to support a *rapprochement* between distinct identities and to actively engage citizens in "addressing the shared problems that affect them" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 56). Once common concerns are identified, citizens can then be encouraged to join together in order to challenge and change prevailing norms, and/or to challenge the same norms, albeit by different, culturally-appropriate routes.

It is important to note that the conversations analyzed within this research did indeed touch upon recognition of elements of commonality. However, the commonality that was emphasized did not involve political anger as it is conceived of here. Instead, it involved the cultural majority theorizing minority groups to appear more like them. Unfortunately, such a conceptualization did little, if anything to challenge and disrupt existing relations of oppression and injustice. Therefore, an important challenge for citizenship education is to turn this conceptualization on its head and to highlight the ways in which dominant groups might actually share common ideological space with perceived Others. This would help to right the injustice experienced by groups that have been discursively constructed to represent differential, subordinate positions. Igniting the socio-political imagination in this way would enable citizens

to theorize different social relations that may situate themselves in positions of dominance in one context and in positions of subordination in another, which can help to catalyze challenging and changing existing systems of oppression.

Political Literacy

Finally, in order for citizens to participate fully in a radical and plural democracy, citizenship education must provide citizens with opportunities to learn about both historical and contemporary socio-political configurations, as well as provide citizens with the tools to create, recognize, and sustain legitimate political channels in which dissenting voices might exist (Ruitenberg, 2009). While the importance of providing citizens with opportunities to engage in conversation and debate surrounding complex policy issues has strong support within contemporary citizenship education research, there is little evidence that these discussions are actually making their way into many liberal democratic citizenship education programs (Thomas et al., 2014). Under an agonistic conception of citizenship education, one way to support the development of political literacy could include, for example, opportunities to explore political texts stemming from both on- and offline spaces in order to "unpack how power, leadership, and credibility is acquired and maintained" (p. 222), and how such dynamics relate to broader hegemonic social configurations. Such an exercise could consist of analyzing the roles of hegemonic ideas and ideologies, as well as the ways in which these forces are articulated, circulated, and strengthened within society. Subsequently, citizens could be encouraged to critically reflect on what meaning potentials are excluded in the process of creating and sustaining such authority, and to disrupt these hegemonic formulations, if necessary.

As an ideal, this vision of citizenship education combines both dutiful as well as actualizing conceptions of citizenship (Bennett et al., 2009) in that it not only provides a robust foundation of civic knowledge, but also encourages a brand of political participation that allows for self-expression and self-actualization. Moreover, such a vision brings together aspects of personally responsible, participatory, and justice oriented citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) by emphasizing citizens' individual responsibility to critically reflect on the hegemonic formulations that structure society and promoting citizens' active participation in thinking and doing something about civic issues that they deem unjust. Although this may seem like a tall order, I ardently assert that it is not overly idealistic.

Citizenship Education & The New Public Sphere

As I have argued elsewhere (McGray & Thomas, 2014; Thomas et al., 2014), one potential way that a multi-dimensional vision of citizenship education can be achieved is for citizenship educators to look towards the new political spaces created and supported by the Internet. This is an arena in which the democratic exercise of engaging in debate concerning socio-political issues is currently taking place (Daley, 2012; Kahn & Kellner, 2007; Ravenscroft et al., 2007). Although to date, there is little evidence that the Internet's full potential as a site of radical democracy is being harnessed, there is nothing to suggest that it couldn't be otherwise. In fact, an integral part of radical democracy is that it conceives of politics as taking place within and across a variety of social domains and relations. This supports citizens' use of the Internet as a new public sphere, one in which legitimate outlets for conflict – i.e. the manifestation of agonism – can be pursued. By providing citizens with access to arguably heterogeneous and unmediated social interactions, the Internet potentially affords citizens the opportunity to encounter authentic pluralism in terms of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. This results in greater potential for conflict, which is at once a threat and a valuable opportunity (Sheppard et al., 2011). On the one hand, the Internet supports social interaction that is at once polyphonic and polyvocal, which serves plural and democratic aims; on the other hand, it supports and reinforces sometimes anti-social and anti-democratic ambitions by providing a space in which like-minded individuals interact with little room for dissent (Castro, 2014; Netherton, 2014). Regardless, if citizens are taught to approach and use it critically, it is fertile ground for individuals to engage in informal and formal learning about how to be and to live as a citizen.

The potential for radical social transformation to be realized through and with the Internet requires attending to four particular dimensions: philosophy, motivation, organization, and strategy (Ransome, 1992; Stoddart, 2007). Philosophy is the primary, and I would argue overarching element that must be addressed. It relates to citizens' abilities to become "philosophers of their daily experience" (Stoddart, 2007, p. 202), and to reflect upon the hegemonic forces that both overtly and covertly direct their lives. Once these forces are identified, citizens may then develop the motivation to enact change. Motivation relates to citizens' desires to rearrange and redress unjust social relations in order to produce a more equitable vision of social life. Without a vested interest in upsetting the *status quo*, there is little

hope for change. However, once an aspiration for transformation is identified, the process of organization can occur. Organization relates to citizens' knowledge of and access to the processes of production, which in this case translates loosely to citizens who are both familiar with and close to Internet technologies. Understanding what platforms lend themselves to radical expression and how these spaces might facilitate epistemological displacement is key to social transformation. Once suitable online environments are identified, strategies can be developed to realize change. Strategy relates to citizens' abilities to capitalize upon the contradictions and instability of every social configuration in order to make this contingency overt and to forward alternate socio-political visions.

It is perhaps helpful at this point to provide a concrete example of what this might look like: While the present study revealed reddit to be a more or less hegemonic space reflecting the views of a predominantly white-Judeo-Christian-(ancestrally)-European-cultural majority, it equally exposed moments of discursive tension wherein opportunities for hegemonic intervention and revolution were present, if ultimately underexploited. For instance, citizens' comments that reflected 'dances with bigotry' are fertile grounds for counter-hegemonic change. Expressions such as, "It's possible to accommodate [Sikhs]. As you say, they are generally good people" (r/Canada, Thread 11, 1pt) present an opportunity to probe at the hegemonic directives present within such a statement (read: philosophy). Citizens can be encouraged to reflect on what is left unsaid and, if they deem such a remark problematic, to challenge the dominant group's perceived ability to sanction another group's freedom of religious expression based on evaluative judgments concerning that group's 'goodness' (read: motivation). For this to be achieved, however, citizens must learn, both informally and formally, how to intervene.

Informally, citizens can be encouraged to engage in online spaces in order to offer and acknowledge a plurality of previously unheard voices and perspectives. These insights might be operating from often-disqualified locations, but if citizens are urged to explore and to speak outside of customary political structures, they may be able to interrogate the master narrative (read: organization). Furthermore, in locating and acknowledging socio-political allies, they may also be able to construct alternate meanings, which one day will themselves be the subject of contestation and ultimately, transformation (Dahlberg, 2007a). Formally, citizenship educators can, within their institutions, take online texts – e.g., discussion threads, images, audio material, video – and encourage citizens to probe at the power relations that these texts signify. These

artifacts may, on the surface, represent highly static and oppressive discourses, but by attempting to discern where they are actually in flux, dynamic, and contestable, citizens might be able to disrupt typical center-periphery relations and trouble existing hierarchies and systems of oppression (McCarthy, 2006). Once the contextual, fluid, and dynamic nature of subjectivity is recognized, citizenship educators can then encourage citizens to theorize different social relations, which might result in an increased sense of empowerment and agency, and prompt socio-political transformation (read: strategy).

Public Pedagogy

Significantly, the opportunity to assist in sparking a radically democratic re-envisioning of Canadian life does not simply lie in the hands of citizenship educators. An equal part can and should be played by actors positioned to provide public pedagogy that reaches Canadians throughout their lifespan. This pedagogy could include (non-)governmental campaigns in which everyday philosophy is encouraged by prompting citizens to reflect on, for example, the racial biases and prejudices that they carry with them throughout their daily activities. Such an initiative could resemble "The Invisible Discriminator" campaign, which is an Australian national anti-discrimination program launched by beyond blue, an Australian health promotion charity. This campaign aims to reduce the prevalence and impact of depression, anxiety, and related disorders by highlighting the "impact of racism on the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people" (Beyond Blue Ltd, 2015). Included in the program's resources is a short video that depicts a series of individuals experiencing discrimination because of their skin colour; the video closes with a simple call to stop, think, and respect. The underlying message is for citizens to stop the discrimination, to think or reflect on how their comments or actions cause harm and distress to others, and to respect different people, beliefs, customs, etc. This video, available on YouTube™, is a short and effective strategy of prompting critical reflection on issues that touch the lives of citizens living within any multicultural society. Far from being overly prescriptive, it presents the audience with a general social problem, which raises social consciousness, and then provokes personal reflection, which hopefully leads to the motivation to change.

Another form of public pedagogy could include a government-led campaign in which Canadians would be called upon to capture positive representations of Canadian diversity

through various artistic media. Images, videos, and sound clips could be posted on such social media platforms as Instagram™ and Twitter™ and accompanied with the hashtag #MyCanada or #CapturingCanadianDiversity. Such an initiative would allow citizens to express their own interpretation of their experiences of multiculturalism and enable for a varied depiction of Canadian society. Relatedly, an additional campaign could focus on capturing instances of anti-racist/anti-discrimination intervention, which could then be posted to Instagram™ and Twitter™ using a #iCANstophate hashtag. The idea behind this would be to highlight attempts to counter instances of oppression and unjust social relations. Importantly, however, notwithstanding representations of a criminally hateful nature, the media generated in response to either campaign should not be curated by the organization(s) leading the initiatives, so as to most accurately reflect the beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of all those who participate. This approach would undoubtedly reveal different and quite possibly conflicting interpretations; however, this dissonance is important if the aim of the campaigns is to contribute positively to recovering the contingency of social configurations and to be one starting point for broad social change.

Summary

Mouffe (2013) asserts: "A well-functioning democracy calls for a confrontation of democratic political positions. If this is missing, there is always the danger that this democratic confrontation will be replaced by a confrontation between non-negotiable moral values or essentialist forms of identifications" (p. 7). Regrettably, within the context of the discourse analyzed within this study, confrontation of democratic positions was determined to be largely absent. Instead, discourses of liberal democracy, nationalism, and the current Western security environment produced a mighty hegemonic project that not only helped to perpetuate dominant conceptualizations of citizenship, but also made it difficult to intervene in order to disrupt these seemingly stable meanings. This is not to say that discursive intervention and disruption is not possible. I maintain that by reconceiving of Canada as a site of plural and radical democracy, certain strategies can be put in to place that could help to sustain a different vision of coexistence.

I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this document that radical democratic theory broadly and agonistic pluralism specifically are important socio-political theories that can be used to support social transformation. Their power lies in their emphasis on the role of

antagonism as both a constitutive and positive socio-political force that enables every political order to be conceived of as only ever resulting from a provisional moment of sameness. This, however, requires more than a mere recognition of difference; it requires a vibrant clash of legitimate democratic positions that supports dissent and acknowledges the form and role of exclusion whenever provisional hegemony is achieved (Mouffe, 2000, 2013). Such a conceptualization sustains the ever-present possibility for every hegemonic configuration to be disarticulated and re-articulated in order to challenge particular social 'givens'.

When applied as an education theory, radical democracy demands that citizens (learn to) recognize the contingent, antagonistic character of all subjectivities and social identities. In particular, this would involve citizens reflecting on "how certain differences are constructed as relations of subordination and therefore should be challenged" (Mouffe, 2000, p. 20). Moreover, it requires that citizens (learn to) interact with this inherent diversity in such a way so as to recognize its legitimacy and work with it in productive ways. This is imperative in order to minimize the unnecessarily volatile, prejudicial, and violent interactions that increasingly characterize our world and to create a more critical, politically passionate, and engaged citizenry.

Chapter 8

Postscript

Before I go, I want to make the following points concerning what was (not) written:

First, the debates brought into the spotlight by *The Charter* surrounding issues of cultural difference, privilege, and belonging did not dissipate with the Parti Québécois' (PQ) electoral defeat. Not only is an updated version of *The Charter* currently being drafted by members of the PQ, but such recent world events as the 'Charlie Hebdo' shooting in France in January 2015 and the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014 highlight that matters of cultural, ethnic, and religious animosity are still very much *au courant*. Therefore, it is imperative to devise ways to provide citizens with legitimate outlets in which to voice dissenting opinions and to provide channels in which citizens might be able to redress the tensions and inequity between dominant and subordinate social groups. Extreme social policies that cast the Other in a negative light and encourage the militarization of society only serve to alienate and subjugate difference. Not only are such policies unjust, but also such a characterization of social relations has no hope of sustaining the deep, authentic appreciation for pluralism to which Canada's multiculturalism policy aspires.

Second, I recognize my privilege in being able to critique my country, its power, and its politics, and I acknowledge my power in contributing my own critique to the current narrative. The ideas present within this text are, as always, but a partial reflection of my understanding, one that is necessarily situated within a specific temporal, contextual, emotional, and intellectual space. Moreover, the silences and unspoken critique within this text are, as always, present as well as value- and theory-laden. I invite you to explore these partial as well as unspoken (unknown?) spaces and to interrogate them, as I am compelled to do.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: 34 Discussion Threads Comprising the Data Corpus

Thread #			reddit Rank[5]
1	**Thread Title**	Cher /r/Canada, Dear /r/Canada	*1*
	Subreddit	r/Canada	
	Date	7-Apr-2014	
	Comments	817	
2	**Thread Title**	The Québec Charter of Values	*2*
	Subreddit	r/Canada	
	Date	10-Sep-2013	
	Comments	311	
3	**Thread Title**	And it begins: Charter of Quebec Values: 'We don't care what's on your head,' Ontario hospital says	*4*
	Subreddit	r/montreal	
	Date	12-Sep-2013	
	Comments	225	
4	**Thread Title**	10 FAQs on the Québec Charter of Values	*6*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	21-Jan-2014	
	Comments	105	
5	**Thread Title**	La Charte des valeurs québécoises	*7*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	10-Sep-2013	
	Comments	236	
6	**Thread Title**	Muslim Woman in hijab harrassed on bus; Quebec Values Charter cited in rant	*8*
	Subreddit	r/Canada	
	Date	17-Sep-2013	
	Comments	111	
7	**Thread Title**	Ban on religious headgear will 'unite' Quebec. Premier Pauline Marois defends proposed 'Charter of Quebec Values'	*9*
	Subreddit	r/Canada	
	Date	25-Aug-2013	
	Comments	144	

[5] Rank on reddit at the time of sampling (July 2014).

Thread #			reddit Rank[5]
8	**Thread Title**	Le père de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés se prononce en faveur de la Charte des valeurs	*10*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	28-Dec-2013	
	Comments	134	
9	**Thread Title**	Charte des valeurs québécoises - Québec présente ses propositions en matière de neutralité religieuse de l'État et d'encadrement des accommodements religieux	*11*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	10-Sep-2013	
	Comments	42	
10	**Thread Title**	Amnesty International Slams Quebec Values Charter For Limiting 'Fundamental Rights'	*12*
	Subreddit	r/CanadaPolitics	
	Date	22-Sep-2013	
	Comments	97	
11	**Thread Title**	Can some of you from Quebec tell me why you think the Charter of Values is a good idea?	*13*
	Subreddit	r/Canada	
	Date	15-Sep-2013	
	Comments	698	
12	**Thread Title**	All the municipalities of Montreal island will ask to be exempted of the Quebec Charter of values. (Links to french language article in La Presse)	*16*
	Subreddit	r/Canada	
	Date	11-Sep-2013	
	Comments	47	
13	**Thread Title**	Amnestie internationale critique la charte des valeurs	*18*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	21-Sep-2013	
	Comments	91	
14	**Thread Title**	Janette Bertrand et 20 personnalités féminines appuient la Charte des valeurs	*21*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	15-Oct-2013	
	Comments	96	
15	**Thread Title**	Charte des valeurs: plusieurs propositions contraires à la Charte des droits et libertés de la personne du Québec	*22*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	17-Oct-2013	
	Comments	63	

Thread #			reddit Rank[5]
16	**Thread Title**	Hundreds of Quebec women demonstrate in support of values charter	*23*
	Subreddit	r/Canada	
	Date	26-Oct-2013	
	Comments	129	
17	**Thread Title**	Charte des valeurs: l'île de Montréal se rebiffe	*27*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	11-Sep-2013	
	Comments	67	
18	**Thread Title**	Charte des valeurs québécoises - Une mauvaise réponse à un faux problème (Pas de la grosse Presse a Desmarais)	*28*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	31-Aug-2013	
	Comments	66	
19	**Thread Title**	Pro-Charter of Quebec Values rally in Montreal draws hundreds	*31*
	Subreddit	r/Canada	
	Date	22-Sep-2013	
	Comments	41	
20	**Thread Title**	Une Charte des valeurs sans compromis	*32*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	6-Nov-2013	
	Comments	53	
21	**Thread Title**	Quebec 'Charter of Values' draws protests in Montreal	*33*
	Subreddit	r/Canada	
	Date	15-Sep-2013	
	Comments	23	
22	**Thread Title**	La future charte des « valeurs québécoises » attendue de pied ferme	*35*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	20-Aug-2013	
	Comments	71	
23	**Thread Title**	L'équivalent Français de la « charte des valeurs Québécoises », en place depuis 2011.	*36*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	13-Sep-2013	
	Comments	38	
24	**Thread Title**	L'Hôpital général juif ne veut pas de la charte des valeurs	*46*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	14-Nov-2013	
	Comments	31	

Thread #			reddit Rank[5]
25	**Thread Title**	Charte des valeurs: Marois envisage la clause dérogatoire	*47*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	31-Mar-2014	
	Comments	36	
26	**Thread Title**	[QC][FR] The father of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in favour of the Quebec charter of values	*50*
	Subreddit	r/CanadaPolitics	
	Date	29-Dec-2013	
	Comments	17	
27	**Thread Title**	Excellent commentataire sur la charte des valeurs. C'est le meilleur discours que j'ai vu sur le sujet. - [9:08]	*58*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	25-Nov-2013	
	Comments	21	
28	**Thread Title**	Richard Dawkins on the Quebec Charter of Values	*64*
	Subreddit	r/CanadaPolitics	
	Date	9-Feb-2014	
	Comments	20	
29	**Thread Title**	Louise Harel critique le projet de charte des valeurs québécoises	*69*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	26-Aug-2013	
	Comments	19	
30	**Thread Title**	Excellent texte d'un collectif d'auteur en faveur de la charte des valeurs	*81*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	5-Sep-2013	
	Comments	20	
31	**Thread Title**	Charte des valeurs québécoises: face à la fronde populaire, le PQ veut durcir son projet anti-démocratique	*102*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	16-Oct-2013	
	Comments	16	
32	**Thread Title**	Opinion: To which Charter do we owe our allegiance: Values or Rights?	*107*
	Subreddit	r/Quebec	
	Date	26-Mar-2014	
	Comments	57	

Thread #			reddit Rank[5]
33	**Thread Title**	Parti Québécois leader Pauline Marois vows to use notwithstanding clause to save values charter Federal Conservatives have vowed to launch court challenge if Quebec ban on religious symbols becomes law.	*123*
	Subreddit	r/Canada	
	Date	31-Mar-2014	
	Comments	31	
34	**Thread Title**	Quebec bashing propaganda machine is now in full gear because of law on religious symbols [discussion/mockery of articles from important publications on this subject]	*169*
	Subreddit	r/Canada	
	Date	21-Aug-2013	
	Comments	240	

Appendix 2: 68 Bilingual Search Terms (Lexical Sets)

Search Term (Lexical Set)	Total Frequency[6]
(?i)they.*|their|those|leur.*|eu.*	2782
(?i)r.*ligi.*	2037
(?i)qu.*be.*	1367
(?i)people.*|peuple.*	1009
(?i)chart.*	804
(?i)canad.*	795
(?i)wear.*|porte.*	788
(?i)other.*|autre.*	669
(?i)go.*vern.*	628
(?i)free.*|libert.*|libre.*	598
(?i)cultur.*	436
(?i)public.*|publiqu.*	424
(?i)choi.*|cho.*se.*	371
(?i)symbol.*	362
(?i)rights.*|droits.*	347
(?i)value.*|valeur.*	338
(?i)woman|women.*|femme.*|femal.*	329
(?i)french.*|francais.*	314
(?i)probl.*m.*	301
(?i)PQ.*	300
(?i)reason.*|raison.*	285
(?i)soci.*t.*	273
(?i)racis.*	242
(?i)english.*|anglais.*	231

[6] Total frequency reflects the total amount of times that all terms belonging to each lexical set appeared within the entire corpus.

Search Term (Lexical Set)	Total Frequency[6]
(?i)school.|.*cole.*|scolair.*	228
(?i)Muslim.*|musulman.*	221
(?i)immigr.*	216
(?i)bill.*|loi.*	212
(?i)secular.*	186
(?i)jew.*|jui.*	185
(?i)anglo.*|franco.*	183
(?i)minorit.*	179
(?i)langu.*	175
(?i)turban.*	170
(?i)Chr.*ti.*	164
(?i)sikh.*	161
(?i)discrimina.*	156
(?i)x.*nophob.*	148
(?i)man|men|mens|homme.*|male.*	148
(?i)crucifi.*	148
(?i)neutr.*	146
(?i)identi.*	116
(?i).*equal.*|.*gal.*	159
(?i)wrong.*|incorrect.*	109
(?i)islam.*	107
(?i)nationali.*	109
(?i)la.*c.*|la.*q.*	94
(?i).*thni.*	94
(?i)multicultural.*|multi-cultural.*	86
(?i)constitut.*	85
(?i)tol.*ran.*|intol.*ran.*	84
(?i)accommodation.*|ac.*om.*.*dation.*|ac.*om.*ode.*	77

Search Term (Lexical Set)	Total Frequency[6]
(?i)int.*grat.*	76
(?i)kip.*	71
(?i)bigot.*	68
(?i)sorry.*|d.*sol.*	59
(?i)notwithstanding.*|dérogatoire.*	54
(?i)sovereign.*|souver.*	44
(?i)scar.*|foulard.*	44
(?i)ROC	37
(?i)coloni.*	37
(?i)ind*pend.*	36
(?i)sill.*	31
(?i)burka.*|bourqua.*|niqab.*	31
(?i)intercultural.*|inter-cultural.*	23
(?i)kirp.*	20
(?i)nazi.*	13
(?i)Hitler.*	12

Appendix 3: 19 Unique Codes Used for Analysis

Code	Description
Antagonism	Evidence of productive (?) conflict. [Procedural rather than discursive]
Colonialism	Reference to Canada's or Quebec's colonial history
Dancing with bigotry	Trying to defend minority interests/positions, but coming off as a bigot/racist; in tension with multiculturalism - i.e. assimilate and give up cultural heritage in order to become "Canadian"; power-laden statements spoken from a majority position; tokenism
Democracy	Reference to democratic procedures, rules, or governance
Enforcement of law	As an ideal, the enforcement of law should be fair and equal (non-discriminatory), non-intrusive (public rather than private), just, and ethical
Equality	Things should be equal
Equality: non-discriminatory	There shouldn't be discrimination against minorities
Equality: pro-majority	The minorities should be like the so-called majority
Harmony	Important societal values include peace and harmony
Multiculturalism	Canada is (should be) inclusive, diverse, accommodating, and supportive of integrating a variety of viewpoints, beliefs, and practices
Neutrality	Any/all religions are acceptable
Prejudice du jour	Racist, specifically anti-Muslim/-Islam sentiments [largely unchallenged within the threads]
Rights & Freedoms	In support of individual rights and various freedoms (religion, expression)
Rights & Freedoms: qualified	In support of individual rights and various freedoms, as long as they don't infringe upon the common good
Secularism	There should be no religious affiliation within government; definite separation between church and state
Secular (neutral) education	Exploring the relationship between school, religion, and faith
The “Other” problem	Issues that (can) arise because of minority groups, immigrants, individuals with strong (“non-mainstream”) religious beliefs
Us/Them	Drawing boundaries of antagonism and equivalence

Code	Description
West is best	Statements asserting that owing to their liberal democratic principles (e.g., democracy, freedom) and perceived levels of civility, Canada/Quebec are the best places on earth, particularly in comparison to MENA

Appendix 4: Three Discursive Themes

Discourse	Description	Codes
Liberal Democracy	Citizens are free to have their own viewpoints, beliefs, and practices; however, anything falling outside the limits of liberal democratic values should be left to the private sphere or forbidden.	Democracy; Enforcement of law; Equality; Equality: non-discriminatory; Harmony; Multiculturalism; Neutrality; Rights & Freedoms; Rights & Freedoms: qualified; Secularism; Secular (neutral) education
Nationalism	The (uncritical) promotion of tolerance as a civic virtue, along with other strategies for "managing" diversity and difference.	Dancing with bigotry; Equality: pro-majority; Multiculturalism; Neutrality; Secularism; Secular (neutral) education; The "Other" problem
Current Western Security Environment	Dominant conceptions of the "Other", particularly as they relate to the perceived threat posed by Muslims.	Prejudice du jour; The "Other" problem; Us/Them; West is best