Beyond the Civic and Ethnic Divide: The Cultural Conception of National Identity and Its Influence on Opinions about Immigration and Diversity in Quebec

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Au-delà de la dichotomie civique et ethnique: la conception culturelle de l'identité nationale et son influence sur les opinions à propos de l'immigration et la diversité au Québec

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ABSTRACT

Beyond the Civic and Ethnic Divide: The Cultural Conception of National Identity and Its Influence on Opinions about Immigration and Diversity in Quebec

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It is increasingly documented that individuals' conceptions of national identity influence their opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. The most well-known ideal types to capture conceptions of national identity are found in the civic-ethnic dichotomy; while the former emphasizes inclusive criteria such as citizenship and is associated with positive opinions about immigration and diversity, the latter emphasizes exclusive criteria such as ancestry and is associated with negative opinions of these same issues. Though the relationship between national identity and immigration and diversity has been extensively studied, the mechanism behind this relationship is still unclear. Moreover, the civic-ethnic dichotomy does not reflect current debates about immigration and diversity, which are increasingly framed in cultural terms. To address this gap, scholars have proposed a cultural conception of national identity. The relationship between the cultural conception of national identity and immigration and diversity, however, remains contested.

My study investigates the relationship between conceptions of national identity and immigration and diversity in the context of Quebec by looking at two cases: Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of the identity group *La Meute*. The analysis of interviews conducted with these two populations shows that the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity are respectively related to positive and negative opinions about immigration and diversity and that this relationship hinges on an *evaluation mechanism* whereby one evaluates if immigrants and minorities conform to different markers of identity. However, the analysis shows that the civic-ethnic dichotomy neglects a significant part of the story; that is, the salience of cultural markers of identity. It demonstrates that a cultural conception of national identity is related to both positive and negative opinions about immigration and diversity. Indeed, the evaluation mechanism inherent to this conception of national identity involves assessing whether immigrants and minorities adopt the national culture. Positive evaluations of cultural compliance are associated with positive opinions about immigration and diversity, while the opposite is true for negative evaluations. Finally, emphasizing that the evaluation mechanism does not occur in a vacuum, my study explores how evaluations are informed by traditional news media and alternative sources of information.

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Introduction

Through the construction of symbolic and social boundaries, nations define criteria of collective identity and differentiation from other nations (Anderson 1983; Lamont and Molnár 2002). Although national identity has long played an important role in collective identification and mobilization, many maintain that it is the product of a specific historical period (i.e. modernity) whose importance is deemed to decrease with globalization (Hobsbawn 1992; 2007; also see Norris and Inglehart 2009). The postulation is that, by triggering greater mobility, globalization changes immigration dynamics and therefore redefines national identity by increasing inflows altering the composition of national populations. Yet, contrary to these expectations, questions of national identity, including concerns about immigrants and religious and ethnocultural minority groups undermining national identity, have become the focus of salient and polarized debates in the past decades (Foner and Simon 2015; also see Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007). Central in these debates, therefore, is not differentiating nations but differentiating collective identities in a given nation. An example of this is concerns about the perceived lack of integration of immigrants that would threaten social cohesion and cultural cohesiveness of the national in-group (see Koopmans, Lancee, and Schaeffer 2014; Holtug and Mason 2010).

Social and political debates about the impact of immigrants and ethnocultural diversity on national identity have the potential to stir strong feelings and fuel heated conflicts, reflecting a divide between two contrasting worldviews: a liberal cosmopolitan outlook based on values of tolerance and inclusion, and a populist, (far) right-wing outlook based on national sovereignty (Norris and Inglehart 2019; Kriesi et al. 2006; also see Strijbis, Helmer, and de Wilde 2020). As such, debates about immigration and diversity are often characterized by polarized discourse, divided into strident pro-immigration and anti-immigration camps – this includes mass public

opinion about immigration-related issues, as well as grassroots movements adhering to more radical ideas about immigration and diversity and emphasizing the need to protect the national identity (see Gest 2016; Busher 2016; Kriesi et al. 2006; Akkerman and Hagelund 2007; Yılmaz 2012; Caiani, della Porta, and Wagemann 2012; Bjørgo and Mareš 2019).

Whether it is on the part of individuals among the mainstream or those sympathizing with identity groups, these pro- and anti-immigration camps emphasize different symbolic boundaries between 'us' and 'them', reflecting different conceptions of national group membership.[1] Indeed, scholars maintain that individuals endorse different conceptions of who belongs to the national imagined community, which, in turn, influences their opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity (Theiss-Morse 2009; Simonsen 2016). The most well-known ideal types to capture conceptions of national identity are found in the dichotomy between the civic and the ethnic conceptions of national identity (Smith 1991); while the former emphasizes inclusive criteria such as citizenship and respect of laws and institutions and is associated with positive opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, the latter emphasizes exclusive criteria such as ancestry and religion and is associated with negative opinions of these same issues (Reijerse et al. 2013; Wright, Citrin, and Wand 2012; Ceobanu and Escandell 2008; also see Bilodeau and Turgeon 2020).

In recent years, however, social and political debates about immigration and ethnocultural diversity have become increasingly framed in terms of cultural identities, including concerns about

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[1] In this research, I employ the terms "identity groups" to refer to those groups of individuals who come together through their views that there is a need to protect the national identity from immigration and ethnocultural diversity (see pages 71-72 for a more refine discussion explaining such decision). In social sciences, this terminology is used to describe phenomena as diverse as people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, people of colour and women's movements, and also ethnic, far-right and right-wing nationalist movements (see Bernstein 2005).

immigrants threatening the national culture, language and values (Duyvendak, Geschiere, and Tonkens 2016). Accounting for the salience of cultural markers of national identity, scholars have proposed a cultural conception of national identity that emphasizes criteria such as sharing a common culture, language and values (Reijerse et al. 2013; also see Lecours 2000). In contrast to the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity, however, the question of whether the cultural conception of national identity is related to positive or negative opinions about immigration and diversity is still a matter of debate. Considering that culture has come to play a central role in social and political debates about immigration-related issues (Duyvendak, Geschiere, and Tonkens 2016; Goodman 2010), it is important to further explore the extent to which the cultural conception of national identity helps us make sense of current social and political debates about immigration and ethnocultural diversity and to investigate the attitudinal ramifications of this conception, including whether it is inclusive or exclusive in nature.

Research question

My research investigates the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity among the mainstream and more radical actors sympathizing with identity groups, with a particular focus on the way conceptions of national identity influence these opinions. Indeed, while the causal connection between the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and diversity has been corroborated, the mechanism behind it remains to be explained and thoroughly investigated. This is even more the case for the cultural conception of national identity, for which the relationship with immigration and diversity is still a topic of debate. Specifically, my study asks the following question: **how do different conceptions of national identity influence the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural**

diversity? I investigate this question by looking at two expressions of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, namely opinions about 1) immigration levels; and 2) the management of religious and ethnocultural diversity. These two dimensions are particularly interesting as they reflect topics of public debate over immigration and integration that have recently taken place in multiple liberal democracies. These contested, interconnected topics of political discussion relate to immigration volume and origin (including who is permitted to enter a country and under what conditions), and how immigrants and ethnocultural diversity are incorporated and accommodated in society (see Filindra and Goodman 2019).

In my research, I adopt a micro perspective that focuses on how individuals holding civic, ethnic or cultural conceptions of national identity relate to immigration and ethnocultural diversity. To do so, I explore two cases: individuals from the general public (i.e. the mainstream) and individuals who are part of a group that comes together through their anti-immigration views (i.e. more radical actors). Comparing the relationship between conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and diversity among the mainstream and more radical actors allows me to explore differences and similarities in opinions shared among and between these two groups of individuals, as well as to explore whether the same mechanisms are at play when it comes to the construction of their opinions. This inquiry is all the more important considering the mainstreaming of more radical opinions about immigration and diversity, including radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies (see Miller-Idriss 2018; Mondon and Winter 2020; Portelinha and Elcheroth 2016).

My study explores these relationships in the context of Quebec, Canada, a province that has been characterized by salient and polarized debates about immigration-related issues, often framed in terms of the challenges immigration poses to Quebec identity (Gagnon and Larios 2021; Xhardez

and Paquet 2020; Lamy and Mathieu 2020; Giasson, Sauvageau, and Brin 2018; Giasson, Brin, and Sauvageau 2010a; 2010b; Tessier and Montigny 2016; Nieguth and Lacassagne 2009). Examples include debates over the accommodation of religious and ethnocultural minorities, legislative bills to restrict the right of certain Quebec public servants to display religious symbols and, more recently, the reduction of annual immigration intakes. Moreover, there has been, in the past years, a growth and greater visibility of identity groups in the province, showing their discontent with liberal immigration policies and accommodations to religious and ethnocultural diversity (Perry and Scrivens 2016b; 2018; also see Gagnon 2020).

One of the most prominent groups attempting to challenge mainstream ideas about immigration and national identity and to introduce more radical and exclusive stances in Quebec is *La Meute* (in English: *The Wolfpack*) (see Tanner and Campana 2020). La Meute was founded in 2015 by veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces to oppose the arrival of 25 000 Syrian refugees in Canada – in order to combat what was perceived as a threat posed by Islamic extremism. In a short time, the group constituted Quebec's largest and most prominent identity group (Montpetit, CBC News 2017). It gained unprecedented popularity on social media, attracting more than 43 000 people to a secret Facebook group in little over a year[2] (Montpetit, CBC News 2016; Tanner and Campana 2020) and consists of an estimated 4 000 to 5 000 active members (Vice 2017). The group advocates, among other things, for reducing the number of immigrants admitted each year; recognizing the principle of secularism; prohibiting wearing the burqa and the niqab in Quebec; and promoting Quebec culture and language (La Meute manifesto 2018) – thus expressing views on issues that have recently been debated among the mainstream in the province.

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[2] This number has to be considered with great caution as it is inflated by observers such as journalists and scholars (including myself) along with fake identities following La Meute secret Facebook page.

In order to better understand the way different conceptions of national identity influence the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, both among the mainstream and more radical actors, three sub-questions are investigated: 1) what are the opinions held by Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of La Meute about immigration and ethnocultural diversity?; 2) what is the mechanism behind the relationship between the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity?; and 3) how can we understand the construction of mainstream negative opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity compared to that of radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies?

The first sub-question involves providing a descriptive account of the shared opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity among Quebecers. The second sub-question involves unpacking the relationships between the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity and these opinions; in particular, it aims to provide a better understanding of the mechanism linking conceptions of national identity and attitudes toward immigrants and ethnocultural minorities. Since the cultural conception of national identity is largely undertheorized and understudied compared to its two counterparts, the civic and the ethnic conceptions of national identity, this second part of my investigation specifically aims to shed light on the specificity of the cultural conception of national identity and its ramifications for immigration and ethnocultural diversity. The third sub-question, for its part, pertains to exploring the divide between holding more mainstream, negative opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity as opposed to more radical, negative opinions about these issues. In line with the literature on the far-right, my research maintains that radical opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity are related to a sense of existential threat posed by the "Other" and include, in particular, anti-Muslim and white

supremacist ideologies (for example, see Kinnvall 2014). As such, mainstream and radical opinions about immigration and diversity are differentiated based on the perception of the consequences they pose to society and the favoured solutions (e.g. while mainstream opinions might involve reducing immigration levels, more radical opinions might involve opposing the immigration of a specific group, such as Muslims, or of immigrants in general) (also see Fangen and Vaage 2018). Considering that negative opinions about immigration and diversity are becoming increasingly salient and have the potential to redefine the ideological polarization that structures Western political landscapes (Norris and Inglehart 2019; Eatwell and Goodwin 2018), it is particularly important to better understand what fuels strong anxieties about immigration and fear of ethnocultural diversity.

My study mobilizes an innovative approach comparing the construction of opinions about immigration issues among the mainstream and more radical actors. This allows me to take into account multiple opinions about immigration and diversity, while highlighting the (dis)similar mechanisms informing them. Indeed, being skeptical about the benefits of immigration on the host society and feeling a sense of existential threat related to immigration and diversity might both lead to supporting restrictive immigration policies. However, the symbolic boundaries and belief systems informing this preferred policy choice might differ significantly. The intensity of the restrictive immigration policies supported might also differ.

Through semi-structured interviews conducted with Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of the identity group La Meute living in various localities across the province, my research deepens our understanding of the way the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity influence the construction of opinions about immigration and diversity as located on a continuum from more positive to more negative stances, including radical anti-Muslim and white

supremacist ideologies. In line with other studies, the analysis shows that the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity are respectively related to positive and negative opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity (also see Smith 1991; Jones and Smith 2001; Kunovich 2009; Wright 2011; Shulman 2002). I maintain that this relationship can be better understood by the identification of a *mechanism of evaluation* whereby one evaluates if immigrants and ethnocultural minorities are included or excluded from the national in-group based on their (non)conformity to specific markers of identity. However, I argue that the civic-ethnic dichotomy neglects a significant part of the story, namely the salience of symbolic boundaries emphasizing cultural differences. My research demonstrates that the cultural conception of national identity can be related to both positive and negative opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. Indeed, the mechanism of evaluation inherent to the cultural conception of national identity is more flexible. Specifically, individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity tend to assess whether or not most immigrants seem to adopt the national culture, and thus, whether or not they are included in the national in-group. Positive evaluations of cultural compliance are associated with positive opinions about immigration and diversity, while the opposite is true for negative evaluation of cultural compliance.

My research also argues that the mechanism of evaluation underlining the relationship between conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and diversity does not occur in a vacuum; it occurs in a context in which individuals are often exposed to information reifying the 'us' and 'them', particularly mediatized information about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. As such, the analysis further explores the mechanism of evaluation by exploring the way individuals endorsing different conceptions of national identity process and

build on mediatized information about immigration-related issues when evaluating (perceived) differences between 'us' and 'them'.

Following the literature on confirmation and selection biases, I argue that conceptions of national identity provide the lenses through which individuals receive and interpret mediatized information related to immigration issues, which, in turn, confirm ideas of similarity and difference between groups. In the case of individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity, news media represent a tool for evaluating whether or not most immigrants and ethnocultural minorities adopt Quebec culture, thereby influencing their opinions about immigration and diversity. In contrast, some individuals endorsing more exclusive conceptions of national identity (in my research; sympathizers of La Meute) feel alienated by news media's representation of immigration-related issues and therefore seek meaning by consuming a variety of online sources of information, specifically far-right groups and activists on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. By selectively exposing themselves to these social media accounts, they confirm pre-existing concerns about immigration and diversity and encounter new (radical) narratives and ideas for thinking about these issues. The more individuals feel alienated by news media, the more they tend to selectively expose themselves to far-right actors and groups on social media, thereby normalizing antagonistic and racist discourses, as well as conspiracy theories related to immigration and ethnocultural diversity. This contributes to the construction of more radical, negative opinions about these topics.

Overview of this research

My dissertation is divided into three sections. The first section includes chapters 1 to 4 and sets the stage for the analysis by presenting a literature review focusing on the relationship between

national identity and immigration-related issues, an overview of the case of Quebec, the methodology employed and a descriptive analysis of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity shared among Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of La Meute interviewed for my research. Chapter 1 presents a literature review on the multiple ramifications of national identity, specifically, the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity, and their implications for the relationship between 'us' and 'them'. It also explores the ways different sources of information (i.e. news media and far-right actors and groups on social media) can reify the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy through diverse framings of immigration-related issues, and highlights that individuals might tend to adhere to framings that are in line with their worldviews. Indeed, according to the theories of confirmation and selection biases, individuals tend to seek and process information that bolsters their pre-existing beliefs. This chapter also introduces the theoretical framework underlying my research. It builds on existing theories highlighting the relationship between conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and diversity, as well as individuals' confirmation and selection biases when seeking and interpreting mediatized information about immigration and diversity. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the Quebec case, highlighting markers of Quebec and Canadian identity (re)produced through policies, as well as media and political discourses, about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. It also explores how more radical actors in Quebec capitalize on political debates to express themselves and gain traction among the public on far-right accounts on social media, representing a more exclusive conception of national identity. This allows me to better situate how Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of La Meute might conceive of and contest the national identity.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology and data. I explain the methodology employed for qualitative data generation and analysis, which is grounded theory. I also explain the data

collection process, including the recruitment of participants and conduct of semi-structured interviews with Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of the identity group La Meute. Finally, I reflect on the implications of my dual identity as both an insider and an outsider of my research topic throughout the research process.

Chapter 4 presents a descriptive analysis of the different opinions about immigration-related issues among Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of the identity group La Meute. It shows that immigration and diversity are complex and multi-faceted issues, with the potential to stir strong emotions resulting in a polarization among those who perceive that immigration contributes to the national in-group (i.e., immigration as an economic and cultural benefit and as a humanitarian act) and those who perceive that it poses a challenge (i.e., immigration as an economic, cultural and security threat). Moreover, some individuals put immigration and diversity at the centre of various conspiracy theories, fuelling radical, antagonistic views on these issues. This cleavage between these two contrasting worldviews on immigration-related issues is, however, only a part of the story. Indeed, a majority of Quebecers interviewed from the general public hold a combination of perceptions about the benefits and challenges of immigration, but they are overall divided between holding more positive or more negative stances about immigration and diversity, depending on how they weigh different cultural considerations.

The second section includes chapters 5 and 6 and presents an analysis of the ways different conceptions of national identity influence the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity in Quebec in both their mainstream and more radical forms. These chapters show that the relationships between the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration issues are characterized by a mechanism of evaluation based on different boundaries determining who is included and excluded from the national in-group. Chapter

5 shows that the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity involve a mechanism of evaluation through which immigrants and members of ethnocultural minority groups are either included or excluded based on their conformity to different markers of national identity. These conceptions of national identity are respectively associated with positive opinions about immigration and support for multiculturalism policies, and negative opinions about immigration and support for assimilation policies. Chapter 6 shows that the mechanism of evaluation related to the cultural conception of national identity is more flexible as individuals assess whether or not immigrants adopt the national culture. This evaluation, in turn, determines whether these individuals hold positive or negative opinions about immigration. Positive evaluations of cultural compliance tend to be associated with positive opinions about immigration and diversity, while negative evaluations of cultural compliance tend to be associated with negative opinions. Individuals endorsing a cultural conception of the national community also tend to favour interculturalism or assimilation policies.

The mechanism of evaluation based on civic, ethnic or cultural characteristics thus plays a fundamental role in the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity as it determines who is included and excluded form the national in-group. This mechanism is, however, only a part of the story as it does not explain in itself the construction of the gap between holding more mainstream, negative stances about immigration and diversity and endorsing radical anti-Muslim or white supremacist ideologies. In the third section, composed of chapters 7 and 8, I argue that the mechanism of evaluation does not occur in a vacuum; it interacts with and is informed by the environment in which it takes place. Notably, as chapter 7 shows, when individuals are exposed to mediatized information related to immigration and ethnocultural diversity, their conception of national identity becomes the lens through which they receive and interpret

information about these issues. Some individuals, however, feel alienated by news media, in the sense that they feel that their concerns about immigration-related issues are not represented by news media. This is especially the case among interviewees endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity. They thus seek meaning by consuming a variety of online sources of information, especially far-right actors and groups on social media who directly address their concerns and bring value to their more exclusive identity. Through selectively exposing themselves to far-right accounts, these individuals construct what I refer to as an "imagined community of interest" centered around exclusive markers of identity, shared concerns about immigration and diversity and the exclusion of (Muslim) immigrants, while confirming or reinforcing their more radical, negative opinions about these issues, including radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies. Finally, chapter 8 shows that interviewees who endorse a cultural conception of national identity tend to use news media's representation of immigration-related issues as a tool informing their evaluation of whether immigrants adopt the national culture or not. This is especially the case for individuals who do not have quality contacts with immigrants and ethnocultural minorities in their daily lives; they tend to build on information provided in news media to evaluate immigrants' adoption of the national culture.

The contribution of my dissertation is threefold. First, it contributes to the scientific literature exploring the relationship between national identity and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. Specifically, my research goes beyond existing quantitative analysis to provide an in-depth account of different patterns of identification coexisting in Quebec and identify a mechanism deepening our understanding of their attitudinal ramifications. It demonstrates that conceptions of national identity are either rooted in civic, ethnic, or cultural markers of identity, each providing information for evaluating who is accepted in the community and under what

conditions. The more exclusive the markers of identity, the most difficult, if not impossible, it is for immigrants and ethnocultural minorities to be evaluated as conforming to the national in-group, thereby resulting in greater differentiation, othering and, in some cases, dehumanization. The opposite is true for more inclusive markers of identity. This also tends to result in the construction of negative opinions about immigration and diversity. Furthermore, my research deepens our understanding of the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity (particularly the cultural conception, which is still largely understudied at the empirical and theoretical levels compared to its two counterparts) by presenting, explaining and theorizing markers of identity. Exploring the ways individuals conceive of national membership allows us to go beyond the study of the civic turn in integration policies on the part of many liberal democracies (Goodman 2010; 2014; Joppke 2017; Mouritsen, Kriegbaum Jensen, and Larin 2019; Borevi, Jensen, and Mouritsen 2017) toward an understanding of individuals' motivations in supporting policies requiring newcomers to speak the language of the host country, to adhere to liberal principles and values, and to learn the country's history and culture. My research shows that many individuals in the mainstream think of their national identity in cultural terms and thus support civic integration policies not so much to promote immigrants' political, social and economic integration, but to protect the national language, values, and culture.

Second, although many scholars are interested in the construction of negative opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, few explore this phenomenon among individuals endorsing radical views. The same holds for the construction of positive opinions about these issues: they are largely understudied (see Haubert and Fussell 2006). By exploring the construction of opinions about immigration and diversity among Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of the identity group La Meute, my research takes into account the multiplicity of

opinions about these issues along with the different ideas informing them, providing nuances and insights in the pro- and anti-immigration dichotomy. It explores the construction of opinions about immigration-related issues as located on a continuum from more positive to more negative stances about immigration and diversity, including radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies. I argue that exploring more radical, negative views about immigration and diversity deepens our understanding of the construction of opinions about these issues, as they seem to have a mainstream appeal and are thus not a fringe phenomenon exclusively restricted to sympathizers of radical communities (Bail 2014; Miller-Idriss 2018; Kallis 2013; Minkenberg 2013). Considering the growing visibility and presence of far-right and identity movements across North America and Europe (Lazaridis, Campani, and Benveniste 2016; Rosenthal 2020), better understanding opinions and ideologies informing these movements is all the more important.

Finally, while a number of studies explore the influence of news media and ideologically-oriented media on the construction of opinions about immigration-related issues (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2007; 2009; Theorin and Strömbäck 2020; Theorin 2019), we know very little about the ways individuals process information about immigration and ethnocultural diversity that are represented by these sources of information and what motivates them to consume some sources over others. My research contributes to the scientific literature in communication and (social) media by showing that an individual's conception of national identity influences the way they receive and interpret mediatized information about immigration and diversity, thereby influencing the type of information they seek. This inquiry is all the more important considering that immigration and diversity have become highly mediatized topics (Gagnon and Larios 2021; van der Brug et al. 2015; Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou, and Wodak 2018; Krzyżanowski 2018; Triandafyllidou 2018) and that advances in communication technologies have increased

individuals' opportunities for seeking sources of information confirming their pre-existing views and selecting information reinforcing these views. Compared to individuals consuming news media, consumers of far-right content on social media have access to a much wider range of options and more control over the content they consume, thereby increasing the possibilities of creating ideological echo chambers (also see Sunstein 2007).

Section 1: Setting the stage

Before presenting the analysis of the way different conceptions of national identity influence the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity in Quebec, the first section of this research sets the stage by presenting a literature review exploring the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity, as well as their attitudinal ramifications. Individuals' opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity do not exist in a vacuum. Therefore, this section also investigates the tendency of individuals to seek for and interpret information presented in news media in a way that confirms their existing perceptions and ideas (such as boundaries between 'us' and 'them') – a phenomenon that is even more salient in the case of individuals who selectively expose themselves to content that confirms or reinforces their perceptions and ideas, such as individuals consuming far-right content on social media (chapter 1). This is followed by a presentation of the case of Quebec, including an overview of dominant markers of Quebec and Canadian identities (re)produced through policies, as well as media, and political discourses about immigration and ethnocultural diversity (chapter 2). This section then presents the research methodology and data (chapter 3). Finally, this section addresses the first sub-question of this research, that is: what are the opinions held by Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of La Meute about immigration and ethnocultural diversity? Specifically, it presents a descriptive analysis of the different, and at times antagonistic, opinions about immigration-related issues and demonstrates that opinions are located on a continuum from more positive to more negative stances, including radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies (chapter 4).

Chapter 1: The 'Us versus Them' Dichotomy and Its Multiple Ramifications

Scholars have long highlighted the implications of categorization and identification processes when examining public opinion about immigrants and members of religious and ethnocultural minorities. As explained by social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979), individuals tend to self-categorize themselves within a social group and to group other people into categories (Islam 2014, 1781; also see Henri Tajfel and Turner 2004). The categorizations used, despite their multitude possibilities, frequently take the form of a distinction between 'us' and 'them'. Indeed, since the pioneering works of Lévi-Strauss, binary opposition has been considered to be the basic form of human social cognition underlying many complex social phenomena. For instance, notions of 'us' and 'them' are often used to represent social structures and therefore to differentiate social categories, such as individuals with differing political affiliations (see Duck, Hogg, and Terry 1995) or different age groups (see Huddy, Jones, and Chard 2001).

Processes of categorization involve individuals' identification with the in-group, 'us'. The concept of identification (initially introduced by Freud) was brought to scholars' attention by Gordon W. Allport in his influential book *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954), as he was the first to link this concept with ethnicity (for an analysis of the emergence and diffusion of the term 'identity', see Gleason 1983). Allport maintains that individuals – some more than others – have a natural tendency to esteem and value the group they identify with in comparison to other groups. As he argues (1954, 25), "one must first overestimate the things one loves before one can underestimate their contraries." Social identification thus generates a feeling of cohesion, group preference and loyalty (Sumner 1906; Brewer 1999). It has psychological and behavioural implications that shape how individuals see themselves and act with others.

Since the publication of *The Nature of Prejudice*, social identification has gained a prominent place in the vocabulary of sociologists and psychologists. The concept proved particularly resonant in the 1960s, with the rise of Black Power, as well as other identity movements and processes of decolonization that highly influenced types of analysis and spurred numerous studies on new social movements[3] (Touraine 1981; Melucci 1996; 1989), nationalism (Calhoun 1993a; Taylor 1989; Laitin 1998; Anderson 1983) and intergroup conflicts (Horowitz 1985). Social identification allows us to better understand the emergence of movements organized around and acting on behalf of the group they identify with (Eriksen 2001, 42).

In more recent years, scholars have become particularly interested in better understanding the identification of members of majority groups and its implications (Jardina 2019; Simonsen 2016; Simonsen and Bonikowski 2020). They suggest that the group identity that usually comes to the forefront when dealing with issues of immigration and religious and ethnocultural diversity is that of national identity (Theiss-Morse 2009). An important example of this is the increasing emphasis, on the part of multiple actors both in the mainstream and on the far-right, on the need to protect national identity, in relation to concerns that immigration would threaten national unity and cohesion (Eatwell and Goodwin 2018; Gest 2016; Foner and Simon 2015; Ivarsflaten 2005). This phenomenon attests of the importance of further exploring patterns of national identification and their relationships with immigration and religious and ethnocultural diversity. Doing so involves a broader discussion about nationalism and conceptions of national identity.

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[3] The new social movements grew from the New Left and related students' movements of the 1960s. They concern peace, equality, gender and other related issues in a way that turned away from power politics toward assertions of identity (Calhoun 1993b). These movements' objectives are often conceived as closer to a sense of collective identity and growth than achieving specific economic gains.

Conceptions of National Identity

Several scholars of nationalism, including Benedict Anderson (1983) in his influential book *Imagined communities*, hold that nationalism is a construction deriving from "imagined communities". This imagined character of nations must be reinforced by collective events and experiences to persist (Smith 1991). National identities are therefore (re)constructed by members of the societies that perpetuate the myths, symbols, memories, and values that are central to them. Building on this work and following Simonsen (2016, 1154), I define national identity as "the national community's self-image (cf. Anderson 1991); an image which requires not only ideas of who belongs, but also of who does not belong to the national community." It is a social construction that is maintained through imagined characteristics of the national group members. When someone activates a certain conception of national identity, these characteristics function as criteria of group membership, also called markers of national identity, and are used to include or exclude (potential new) members.

Scholars maintain that a shared conception of national identity depends on the context at hand and thus varies from one nation to another (Simonsen 2016; Kunovich 2009; Wright 2011). Most suggest this is the case because conceptions of national identity are rooted in national policies and discourses about immigration and citizenship. In that regard, studies show that the strength of individuals' national attachment relates to their attitudes toward immigration and ethnocultural diversity and that the direction of that relationship varies across national contexts depending on the prevailing conception of national identity (Raijman et al. 2008; Escandell and Ceobanu 2010; Bilodeau et al. 2021). For instance, Citrin, Johnston and Wright (2012) demonstrate that the relationship between national attachment and support for immigration and multiculturalism in the United States and in Canada diverges sharply. Indeed, while national attachment is associated with

opposition to immigration and multiculturalism in the United States, the reverse is true in Canada. The authors explain this divergence by the ideological response to diversity shaping general conceptions of membership in the nation. While the American identity is understood through the lens of its policy of assimilation, multiculturalism occupies a central role in making the Canadian identity an inclusive force. This is in line with other studies showing that the strength of attachment to one's country, which would involve an identification with the imagined boundaries of the national community, is associated to political attitudes and behaviours, particularly in relation to immigration issues (see Kinder and Kam 2010; Raijman et al. 2008; Hjerm 1998).

Research shows that the relationship between national attachment and attitudes toward immigration also holds at other levels of identification. Specifically, in federal and multinational states, individuals can express attachment to the country and to its territorial units, such as provinces (Moreno 2006; Henderson 2007). Hence, for example, Bilodeau et al. (2021) demonstrate that national and provincial attachments in the Canadian federation can lead to different attitudes toward ethnocultural diversity. Stronger attachments to Canada relate to more positive attitudes toward ethnocultural diversity in all provinces. In contrast, the direction of this relationship with regards to provincial attachment varies in some provinces (Quebec, Alberta, and Saskatchewan). It is thus crucial to consider attachments at the national and subnational levels when exploring attitudes toward ethnocultural diversity in multilevel political communities (also see Escandell and Ceobanu 2010; Billiet, Maddens, and Beerten 2003; Maddens, Billiet, and Beerten 2000).

My research acknowledges the importance of considering the general tendencies differentiating the ways (sub)nations conceptualize their national identity. Yet, it argues that this tendency does not preclude national conceptions of collective identity from being contested or

subjected to different interpretations by diverse segments of the population. Indeed, different views on what characterizes the national group may coexist within a given nation. As posited by Elizabeth Theiss-Morse (2009), although there are formal and legal boundaries established by the nation, people can still disagree over who is fully included in the national community and who is not. Each individual maintains his own conception of the "imagined community" reflected through the markers they set to determine what is required to be a true national. Inclusive markers of identity make it possible for immigrants to be seen as part of the national in-group, while exclusive ones limit their access to be part of the in-group because they are more rigid and narrowly defined (Alba 2005). In this way, inclusive conceptions of national identity tend to be related to more positive opinions about immigration, while exclusive conceptions tend to be related to more negative ones (Theiss-Morse 2009). When considering the relationship between national identity and immigration and diversity, it is thus important to differentiate the strength of one's attachment to the national group from one's conception of the markers defining membership in the national group (Wright, Citrin, and Wand 2012).

Three Ideal-Types: The Civic, Ethnic and Cultural Conceptions of National Identity

Scholars of nationalism have developed different ideal types to capture conceptions of national identity. The most well-known are the dichotomous civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity. Following the work of Anthony Smith (1986, 1991), the civic conception of national identity involves a well-defined territory and a community of laws and institutions. The national group is therefore conceived as an imagined community "of people who adhere to a social contract" and includes criteria such as living within the national territory and respecting societal rules and laws (Reijerse et al. 2013, 613). By contrast, in its strictest understanding, the ethnic

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conception of national identity involves an imagined community "of people of [alleged] common descent" and includes criteria such as having ancestors from the dominant national group and belonging to the host nation dominant religion[4] (Reijerse et al. 2013, 613). Studies show that civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity are associated with different relationships to immigration and ethnocultural diversity. Specifically, the civic conception of national identity is associated with support for immigration, positive attitudes toward immigrants and support for multiculturalism, while the ethnic conception is associated with resistance to immigration, more negative attitudes toward immigrants and support for cultural assimilation (Citrin, Johnston, and Wright 2012; Billiet, Maddens, and Beerten 2003; Heath and Tilley 2005). For instance, studies show that sympathizers of far-right and identity groups tend to value ethnic markers of identity such as whiteness and Catholicism (Atton 2006; Stern 2019; Perry and Scrivens 2016b; Hawley 2017; Adams and Roscigno 2005; Futrell and Simi 2004). Sympathizers of these groups call for drastically reduced immigration in order to protect these markers of identity under threat by the alleged invasion of immigrants (Rydgren 2007). For example, in exploring the case of the Alt-Right in the United States, Hawley (2017) highlights the way in which this white supremacist movement values whiteness as determining the essential character of individuals and advocates for the creation of a white ethnostate in North America.

The ethnic conception of national identity, however, is not restricted to sympathizers of identity groups. Although probably less blatant and visible, the ethnic conception can also be endorsed by the mass public. For example, Billiet, Maddens and Beerten (2003) observe that in Flanders (Belgium), where an ethnic conception of subnational identity predominates, individuals

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[4] As explained by Simonsen (2016), religious conversion is a possibility, but most people consider religion a permanent trait of individuals. Scholars also maintain that religion is often associated to race and ethnicity in people's minds (Ajrouch and Kusow 2007).

with a strong Flemish identification tend to have more negative attitudes toward immigrants. The opposite is observed in Wallonia, where a civic conception predominates.

Drawing on the Canadian case and comparing the ways Quebecers and other Canadians construct their national identity, Bilodeau and Turgeon (2020) differentiate between "attainable" and "ascriptive" characteristics defining who is a true national (also see Simonsen 2016). Attainable characteristics can be associated with a civic conception of national identity and includes markers such as feeling like a Quebecer/Canadian, respecting institutions and laws of Quebec/Canada and speaking French or English. By contrast, ascriptive characteristics can be associated with an ethnic conception (because ascriptive characteristics are (almost) impossible to acquire if an individual does not have them in the first place) and includes markers such as having ancestors in Quebec/Canada, being born or having lived most of their life in Quebec/Canada and being Christian. The authors show that individuals endorsing an ascriptive conception of national identity tend to hold negative attitudes toward immigration; their study, however, shows that those endorsing an attainable conception of national identity do not necessarily hold more positive attitudes. Bilodeau and Turgeon thus suggest that, when it comes to attitudes toward immigration, only ascriptive characteristics matter. However, it could also be the case that some attainable characteristics can be conceived differently by different individuals and thus result in different implications with regards to attitudes toward immigration. For instance, while speaking the host country language is an achievable characteristic, one can argue that it has less to do with fulfilling civic duties and more with adhering to norms and ethnocultural practices (Hjerm 1998). This suggests a need to investigate the mechanism behind each marker of national identity to better understand their relationship with immigration and ethnocultural minorities.

While the civic and ethnic dichotomy is widely used in the literature and has deepened our understanding of how nations grant access to citizenship and who majority group members consider as co-citizens (Brubaker 1990; Smith 1991), it is increasingly contested. Indeed, scholars argue that the ethnic conception of national identity is not relevant in modern days as it no longer reflects current debates on what it means to be considered a member of the national community – which are increasingly framed in terms of cultural markers of identity (Duyvendak, Geschiere, and Tonkens 2016). Hence, scholars propose alternative concepts (Simonsen 2016; Bilodeau and Turgeon 2020; Jones and Smith 2001) or include other categories in order to capture today's reality of national identity (Pehrson, Vignoles, and Brown 2009; Simonsen and Bonikowski 2020). For instance, Reijerse et al. (2013) argue that the introduction of a cultural conception of national identity reflects new dynamics in which public debates about national identity and citizenship are increasingly framed in cultural terms. The cultural conception of national identity represents an imagined community "of people who share a common culture" (Reiherse et al. 2013, 613). Yet, the markers of national identity included in the cultural conception of national identity remain contested. For instance, some maintain that language is a civic marker of national identity, because language acquisition would be essential for communicating and participating in a democratic society (Lamoureux 1995; also see Bilodeau and Turgeon 2020). Others argue instead that language cannot be "de-ethnicised" and thus necessarily involves a boundary demarking those who belong and those who do not (Oakes 2004). However, it could also be the case that language is conceived as a common cultural trait that individuals have to acquire to be considered as part of the national group (Pehrson, Vignoles, and Brown 2009). Investigating whether or not language is conceived as a cultural marker of national identity is particularly relevant for the case of Quebec in which the French language is central to its sense of distinctiveness in a predominantly English-speaking Canada. For instance, Quebec recognizes French as the province's only official language

(as opposed to Canada's official bilingualism) and has long articulated the need to protect and prioritize the French language (Bouchard 2011). My research maintains that refining the theorization of different markers of national identity is of particular importance to better understand their relationship with immigration and ethnocultural diversity. It therefore explores the ways individuals conceptualize and think about different markers of national identity.

In addition to contestations about the markers of identity characterizing the cultural conception of national identity, the relationship between the cultural conception of national identity and immigration, as well as ethnocultural diversity, is still a topic of debate, hinging on two different perspectives. The first perspective maintains that the cultural conception of national identity is inclusive because the national community would be open to all those who adopt the host culture (Shulman 2002). As brought forward by the ideological turn toward civic integration policies, a certain degree of cultural adaptation would increase opportunities for immigrants, thus reducing barriers to full participation and autonomy in the host society (Mouritsen et al. 2019; also see Joppke 2017). The requirement of integration tests, courses and contracts for entry, permanent settlement, or status acquisition (Joppke 2017) constitute examples of civic integration policies aiming at "promoting functional, individual autonomy" (Goodman 2010, 754). Civic integration requirements, such as learning the majority language, would not aim to create cultural uniformity, but to open the door to greater job opportunities and social interactions. Following this line of reasoning, the national culture is composed of certain characteristics, such as language, values and ways of life, that can be learned by immigrants, thus reducing the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' and facilitating immigrants' integration into the host society, but also imposing conditions on immigrants' entry and settlement.

From a public opinion perspective, the cultural conception of national identity would thus include in the in-group those immigrants perceived as having adopted the national culture and exclude from the in-group those perceived as not having adopted the national culture. In this regard, research in social psychology suggests that policies for the management of intergroup relations in culturally plural societies involve two distinct processes for cultural integration (Berry 2001). On the one hand, immigrants can be expected to learn the national culture, that is "culture learning". On the other hand, immigrants can be expected to suppress and replace their home culture by that of the national society, that is "culture shedding". Immigrants' integration into the imagined national community understood in cultural terms can thus be considered as conditional on culture learning, and in some cases, culture shedding, with the latter imposing stricter conditions on immigrants' belonging by requiring the sacrifice of their home culture. The same way policies across communities vary in their expectations of culture learning and culture shedding, so can individuals' expectations within a community. While some individuals have a preference for culture learning, others favour both culture learning and shedding. This highlights the potentially subjective and contingent nature of the cultural conception of national identity. If this is the case, the cultural conception of national identity would contrast with the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity that are respectively and intrinsically characterized by their inclusivity and exclusivity. Specifically, different individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity might not evaluate immigrants' adoption of the national culture in the same way (i.e. culture learning and shedding), thus potentially resulting in different opinions about immigration (positive evaluations of immigrants' adoption of the national culture would be related to positive opinions about immigration and diversity, and negative evaluations would be related to negative opinions).

The second perspective on the cultural conception of national identity maintains that the cultural conception of national identity is exclusive in nature because it builds on an understanding of culture as homogeneous and static (Reijerse et al. 2013; also see Duyvendak, Geschiere, and Tonkens 2016). It also implies that some categories of immigrants and ethnocultural minorities are not culturally 'assimilable' and therefore constitute a danger of disorder for the national group. In a similar way, scholars distinguish between civic integration requirements, which aim to enable membership, and obligatory requirements, which "have the reverse intent of actual integration" and aim to "limit and control the inflow and settlement of migrants", thus "excluding applicants" (Goodman 2010, 767).

This perspective is widely mobilized by scholars of the far-right, highlighting that opposition to immigration is increasingly framed in terms of irreconcilable culture (e.g. values, ways of life, traditions and so on) (Froio 2018; Yılmaz 2012; Akkerman and Hagelund 2007). The cultural conception of national identity would thus involve essentially fixed characteristics among different groups, which would serve as a basis for exclusion and inferiorization. These scholars associate the recent shift in emphasis from ethnic to cultural markers of national identity in multiple liberal democracies to the shift from an era of the classical "biological racism" to "cultural racism" (Ramos, Pereira, and Vala 2020).[5]

Biological racism, also called old racism, is principally used to characterize racial inequality and discrimination, and involves ideas of genetic racial inferiority (Leach 2005). It informs the way individuals conceive national identity by emphasizing race and ethnicity and attributing ascriptive characteristics differentiating national groups. Cultural racism, also called new racism, involves

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[5] Concepts of new racism and cultural racism are highly contested for silencing the centrality of race in power relations and practices of exclusion (see Leach 2005).

ideas of intrinsic cultural differences between ethnocultural groups and the superiority of some cultures over others (Chua 2017). Immigrants, as well as religious and ethnocultural minorities, are essentialized through their culture and regarded as not 'adapting' and therefore 'incompatible' to the prevailing (and deemed superior) national culture. Some scholars argue that racism grounded in language, culture, and religion is expressed to mask biological racism (see Siebers and Dennissen 2015). As such, this perspective suggests that, for certain individuals, cultural markers of identity are widely related to the ethnic conception of national identity, which is intrinsically exclusive and rigid.

While potentially different in nature, the cultural and ethnic conceptions of national identity have in common that they are related to greater processes of differentiation. Differentiation, either rooted in cultural or ethnic terms, has the potential to generate hierarchical distinctions between 'us' and 'them'. This, in turn, can have negative implications, such as engaging in practices of dehumanization on the part of some individuals. Dehumanization involves the denial of full humanness to others (i.e. perceiving others as less than human) and thus leads to exclusion and, at times, hatred of the other. An important way in which others may be denied full humanness is through a perception that they lack human traits like civility, morality, self-control and cognitive sophistication (Haslam et al. 2008; see Kteily and Bruneau 2017). As argued by Haslam et al. (2008), the meaning of the concept of humanness is more slippery than often anticipated. While dehumanization is a strategy frequently mobilized in times of war and ethnic conflict, it is also observed in everyday life, notably through maintaining that immigrants or ethnocultural minorities have different morals and values (see Greenhalgh and Watt 2015). For instance: "common terms of abuse compare people to nonhuman entities, individuals who violate social norms are described as beasts or monsters in the news media, and discourse about race and gender contains explicit or

thinly veiled comparisons of people to animals." (Haslam et al. 2008, 55) As explained by Esses et al. (2013), dehumanization of immigrants may appeal to members of the majority group to strengthen ingroup-outgroup boundaries and protect their privileged positions by justifying the status quo. Through the conduct of experiments in Canada, they demonstrate that media portrayals promoting the dehumanization of immigrants and refugees lead to less favourable attitudes toward immigrants and Canada's pro-immigration policy. While immigrants and refugees as broader categories can be dehumanized in media and political discourse through their association with disease or illegal and violent actions, specific immigrant groups can also be the target of such negative depictions. In contemporary days, Muslims are often at the centre of dehumanizing portrayals and rhetoric. Leyens et al. (2007) argue that dehumanization is central to the exclusion of Muslims in Europe. Europeans who perceive of Muslims as not experiencing emotions generally attributed to humans, such as hope and remorse, are more likely to oppose Muslim immigration.

In a nutshell, there is a need to revisit notions of national identity to better understand how and why individuals draw boundaries, and to unpack the way this can result in differentiation and exclusion. Research on national identity mostly relies on opinion surveys to determine the ways individuals draw boundaries, thus leaving aside how they make sense of these boundaries (Wright 2019). My study maintains that it is crucial to investigate how individuals make sense of what it means to be part of a national group – therefore accounting for the subjective nature of determining who is included or excluded from conceptions of national identity and nuancing our understanding of national identity as rooted in the civic-ethnic binary. Doing so also enables us to better understand patterns of inclusion and exclusion that are rooted in conceptions of national identity. It also allows us to investigate the question of whether the cultural conception of national identity hinges on a preference for the adoption of the national culture on the part of immigrants or on racial

or ethnic characteristics. As such, in this study, I explore if, beyond the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity, there is a distinct cultural conception of national identity and I clarify the relationships between each of these conceptions of national identity and attitudes toward immigration and ethnocultural diversity in Quebec.

Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, no research explores patterns of identification among sympathizers of identity groups nor compares them with those among the mainstream. While studies show that identity groups are concerned about protecting the national culture and ethnicity, making their concerns salient in their claims and actions (Giugni et al. 2005; Nouri and Lorenzo-Dus 2019; Berbrier 1998), they tell us little about how sympathizers of these groups delimit the boundaries between who belongs to the national community and who does not. My study thus investigates whether sympathizers of identity groups conceive their national identity in a different way than the rest of the population, and how this affects their opinions about immigration and diversity.

My research maintains that, by establishing different markers of identity for evaluating who belongs to the national group and who does not, conceptions of (sub)national identity play a fundamental role in defining an individual's relationship with immigration and diversity. That said, it argues that it is only the starting point of the construction of opinions about these issues. Indeed, following the theory of symbolic politics (Sears 1993), national identity is conceived as a social construct based on influential and relatively enduring predispositions acquired through socialization processes (usually, though not necessarily, in early life). Symbolic predispositions are generally affective responses evoking strong emotions and conditioning individuals' evaluations of society and politics and thus their attitudes and opinions. As such, national identification in itself does not explain the increasing support for protecting national identity by limiting immigration or

implementing restrictive integration policies on the part of multiple liberal democracies over the last decades (Norris and Inglehart 2019), nor the increased polarization and radicalization over these issues (Ignazi 1992; Kriesi et al. 2006; Youngblood 2020; also see Miller-Idriss 2020).

Further discussion is needed to assess what influences or reinforces perceptions that immigration constitutes a challenge to the national in-group. This inquiry taps into research on threat perceptions associated with immigration and immigrants' (perceived lack of) integration, with a particular focus on the ways the mediatization of these topics draws attention to and links these threat perceptions to immigration. Indeed, contemporary manifestations of the reification of the (perceived) distinctions between 'us' and 'them' often emerge during social and political discussions about immigration-related issues that are made visible through news media, as well as events that are connected to immigration. This is especially salient in instances where there is a lack of contact between members of the majority group and immigrants, which reduces opportunities to directly expose individuals to new information about immigrants and ethnocultural minorities. Indeed, intergroup contact can transform individuals' perception of the outgroup by refuting negative stereotypes and even foster the development of affective ties (Allport 1954; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004; Savelkoul et al. 2011; Gagnon 2018; Voci and Hewstone 2003; McLaren 2003)[6].

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[6] In *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon W. Allport (1954) establishes four conditions under which intergroup contact should occur in order to effectively reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members. These are: 1) equal status – both groups must be engaged equally in the relationship; 2) common goals – both groups must work to reach a common goal; 3) intergroup cooperation – both groups must work together for their common goals without competition; and 4) support of authorities, law or customs – both groups must acknowledge some authority that supports the contact and interactions between the groups. According to Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory, contact under Allport's optimal conditions leads to greater reduction in prejudice. However, these conditions are not essential for prejudice reduction.

How Confirmation Bias Might Influence Individuals' Processing of Media Representations of Immigration-Related Issues

In "Imagined Communities", Benedict Anderson (1983) highlights the influential role of newspapers (in contemporary days; news media) in the social construction of national identities. Newspapers, he argues, consolidate ideas of commonness, and unite individuals through the perception that they are connected and form a political community. While doing so, they promote certain conceptions of the national group membership and (re)assert the inclusion and exclusion of Others from the imagined national community.

Though the use of different framings of immigration-related issues, news media constitute a vehicle for the representation of 'us', members of the imagined national group, and of 'them', immigrants and religious and ethnocultural minority groups. Indeed, when describing an issue or an event associated with immigration and diversity, news media can emphasize different potentially relevant considerations, thus (re)orienting the way individuals may think about this issue (see Chong and Druckman 2007). This is especially the case during instances of politicization of immigration-related issues, characterized by increasing polarization and salience in the media (van der Brug et al. 2015). When immigration and diversity are at the center of social and political discussions and are connected to incidents and disruptive international events in news media (e.g. terror attacks), it opens space for hegemonic narratives, or framings of these issues, to become more visible in the news media (Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou, and Wodak 2018; Barrero 2003; Grande, Schwarzbözl, and Fatke 2018).[7]

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[7] When referring to news media framing of immigration-related issues, this research also considers political claims and actions that are reported in the media and emphasize different framings of these issues.

Immigration and ethnocultural diversity can be framed by news media, and political actors' claims and actions reported in news media, as being a resource or a benefit for the host society, but also as a threat to the national in-group. For example, immigration can be described as an economic and cultural resource, as well as a humanitarian act. The frame of immigration as an <u>economic resource</u> presents immigration as a mechanism for labour force growth, highlighting its economic benefits for the host society (see de Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko 2011). Immigration can also be framed as having a <u>positive cultural impact</u> on the host society. This frame values cultural differences, as well as the social cohesion and inclusion of ethnocultural minorities (West 2011; Bos et al. 2016), perceiving the national group as "a community of communities" (Parekh 2000). Finally, immigration can be framed as a <u>humanitarian act</u>, which emphasizes the need to help these immigrants considering the difficult conditions they face in their home countries, such as natural disasters and wars (Bauder 2008; Newman et al. 2015).

There is growing evidence, however, that the frames of immigration as an economic resource, as having a positive cultural impact and as a humanitarian act are not the most prevalent. Research shows that news media coverage presents a largely negative image of immigration in various liberal democracies (Chavez 2008; Dunaway, Branton, and Abrajano 2010). For instance, Eberl et al.'s (2018) review of research on news media representation of immigration-related issues in European countries shows that the coverage and framing of immigration and integration vary across time, media outlets and countries. However, immigrant groups are generally underrepresented in the media and, when they are represented, they are often associated with economic, cultural or security threats.

<u>Economic threat frames</u> related to immigration have long dominated collective imaginaries (Sherif and Sherif 1953; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Card, Dustmann, and Preston 2005;

Blumer 1958; Quillian 1995). Such frames involve the perception that immigrants constitute a threat to national workers or to the national economy. An example of this is the perception of being in competition with immigrants for obtaining finite resources such as jobs or social welfare, which is especially prominent among individuals with low socio-economic position or during bad economic times (Mayda 2006; Hjerm 2009; Meuleman, Davidov, and Billiet 2009; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2016; Rydgren and Ruth 2013). Economic threat perceptions, however, have become less salient in news media and political discourse as Western countries increasingly select immigrants based on their labour needs or qualifications (see Bloemraad 2012). That is not to say, however, that economic threat frames are no longer employed (see Eberl et al. 2018).

Cultural threat frames involve the perception that immigrants from different cultural, ethnic or racial backgrounds pose a challenge to the cultural majority and the cohesiveness of the nation (Sears 1988; Kinder and Sears 1981).[8] Their presence in the host country would increase sociocultural heterogeneity, thus threatening the majority group's language, values and ways of life (Card, Dustmann, and Preston 2005; Van Oudenhoven, Ward, and Masgoret 2006; Dustmann and Preston 2007; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2009; Sides and Citrin 2007; Kessler and Freeman 2005). Cultural threat frames have been largely mobilized by news media and political actors arguing to "protect" the national culture in light of a "failure of integration" among new and long-established immigrant populations (Duyvendak, Geschiere, and Tonkens 2016; also see van der Brug et al. 2015; Yılmaz 2012; Helbling 2014b; de Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko 2011). Important examples of this are civic integration policies that are increasingly discussed and adopted

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[8] The identification of threat to culture as a concern over immigration has its intellectual roots in the study of nativism. As explained by Schrag (2010), the belief that specific immigrant groups fail to assimilate due to their ethnicity, religion or culture or origin, or are "not fit for our society", is rooted in past and present debate about who is fit for citizenship.

to promote common country knowledge, language proficiency and dominant liberal and social values among newcomers (Goodman 2010). These include the requirement of integration tests, courses, and contracts to entry, permanent settlement or status acquisition (Joppke 2017). While civic integration policies aim at integrating immigrants in general, informally they tend to target specific immigrant groups, particularly Muslims.

Muslim immigrants have been at the center of cultural threat perceptions, emphasized in news media and political rhetoric (Bail 2012; Kundnani 2007). On the one hand, these immigrants tend to be visibly different in terms of their religious garments and their ethnicity or race (i.e. visible minorities) from majority groups in Western countries. This enhances the perceived social and cultural distance between them and national in-groups (Di Stasio et al. 2019). On the other hand, demands for religious accommodations on the part of some Muslims are perceived as colliding with liberal values including freedom of choice, gender equality and secularism (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; Helbling 2014a). These perceptions are often coupled with representations of Muslims as endorsing practices such as honor killings, forced marriages, female genital mutilation and corporal punishment of children, particularly by far-right political actors (e.g. Betz and Meret 2009).

The frame of security threats involves the perception that immigration enhances criminality or constitutes a national security threat. Studies show that media and political discourses tend to revive long-standing debates about the consequences of immigration on crime, framing immigrants as especially involved in criminal activities (Harris and Gruenewald 2020; Zatz and Smith 2012). Scholars have thus long been interested in the impact of crime worries on opinion about immigration (e.g. fear of robberies, street attacks and so on) (Fitzgerald, Curtis, and Corliss 2012; Dinas and van Spanje 2011; Cohrs and Stelzl 2010). Yet, in more recent years, a national security

threat frame related to immigration has been activated, following the dramatic events of 9/11 in the United States and subsequent terrorist attacks in Europe (Turper 2017; Canetti-Nisim, Ariely, and Halperin 2008). These terror attacks on various democratic countries seem to have given rise to widespread perception that immigrants, particularly Muslim immigrants, constitute a danger to national security (Saeed 2007; Brown 2010; Poole and Richardson 2006). Fears of national security threats have been heavily emphasized to justify the securitization of immigration (Huysmans 2006), with Muslims being largely at the center of negative media and political discourses (Allen 2010; van Meeteren and van Oostendorp 2019; Fekete 2004; Powell 2011).

It is increasingly documented that news media's coverage and framing of immigration-related issues tend to influence public opinion about these issues (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2007; 2009; Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013; Dunaway, Branton, and Abrajano 2010; Eberl et al. 2018). Specifically, by covering and framing immigration-related issues in certain ways, news media tend to increase public attention to these issues, while influencing the way people think about these issues. What remains to be fully explored, however, are the ways in which individuals process different coverages and framings of immigration-related issues.

Research shows that individuals' predispositions, such as their existing attitudes, political views, and social identity, can influence their news-seeking behaviour and interpretations (Klurfeld and Schneider 2014; Tully, Vraga, and Smithson 2020; Knobloch-Westerwick and Hastall 2010; Landreville and Niles 2019; Jean Tsang 2019). According to the confirmation bias theory, individuals tend to (unconsciously) favour, more heavily weight, and more easily recall information that is in accord with their existing beliefs, and interpret information contradicting their beliefs as incorrect or biased (Nickerson 1998). For instance, through survey experiments conducted with Americans, Lerman and Acland (2020) demonstrate that individuals engage in

confirmation bias – that is, they seek and process information that bolsters their pre-existing beliefs – when they encounter new information about government service delivery, and that this is driven by their political identification, particularly partisanship, and pre-existing beliefs about the quality and efficiency of government.

If political identification and pre-existing beliefs provide lenses through which individuals process news content, it might also be the case that other patterns of identification and beliefs influence individuals' news-seeking behaviour and interpretations. As such, it seems reasonable to argue that confirmation bias also holds in relation to confirming conceptions of who belongs to the national community and who does not, as well as concerns about immigration-related issues. Specifically, it is possible that different conceptions of national identity act as lenses through which individuals receive and interpret mediatized information about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, thereby rejecting or ignoring incongruent information and adhering to congruent information. Indeed, media coverage of immigration-related issues exposes individuals to different representations of 'them' and their potential impacts on 'us' and might thus inform their evaluation regarding who belongs to the national group and who does not. Yet, it does not mean that individuals adhere to these representations. For example, cultural threat frames might be coherent with cultural conceptions of national identity by indicating that the national culture is potentially threatened by the presence of immigrants, thereby confirming one's evaluation that most immigrants do not adopt the national culture. However, it might not be coherent with civic conceptions of national identity, which do not differentiate between in- and out-group members on the basis of cultural traits. In order to deepen our understanding of the relationship between conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, this research explores the ways that individuals' conceptions of national identity relate to and interacts

with mediatized information about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. Specifically, it explores if and how individuals' conceptions of national identity influence the way they process mediatized information about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, thereby potentially confirming and reassessing their evaluation of a differentiated 'us' and 'them' or alienating them. This investigation thus accounts for the sociopolitical environment in which individuals evaluate immigrants and ethnocultural minorities' belonging to the national group.

Selective Exposition to Far-Right Actors and Groups on Social Media

Research exploring individuals' biases in news-seeking behaviour and interpretations highlights the increasing diversity of sources of information and representations of news available to individuals. Indeed, with the Internet and social media, individuals have access to a diverse and wide-ranging assortment of political ideas and attitudes that go beyond those represented by traditional news media (for instance, see Sunstein 2007; Garrett 2009; Eady et al. 2019). For example, individuals can easily access information provided by far-right groups and actors on social media who actively contest and challenge mainstream representations of immigration-related issues, while valorizing more exclusive conceptions of the national in-group and providing more radical interpretations of these issues (Figenschou and Ihlebæk 2019).

Mobilizing social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, far-right actors and groups offer an alternative voice to (re)interpret immigration issues, tapping into fear and nativist sentiments (for example see Awan 2014; Tuters and Hagen 2020; Nygaard 2019; A. Gagnon 2020;

Froio 2018).[9] As argued by Ekman (2019), alternative sources of information, such as identity groups on Facebook, provide spaces for the production and dissemination of xenophobic, racist and nationalistic discourses. His analysis of how immigrants and refugees are discursively constructed in the Facebook group *Stand up for Sweden* shows that this is done through the recontextualization and reframing of mainstream news covering immigrants and refugees (including "using certain naming strategies, selective extraction, reformulation of paragraphs or omission of explanatory factors in the story" [Ekman 2019, 608]) and the publication of comments expressing strong emotions, thus triggering racist attitudes. This constant flow of information, stories and news about immigrants and refugees, coupled with the affective responses of users, creates an environment where only certain ideas, information and beliefs are shared (see Sunstein 2009).[10] These ideological "echo chambers" tend to support existing beliefs, and intensify individuals' attention to and concerns over these issues, thus amplifying political polarization and sustaining racist discourse (also see Törnberg and Wahlström 2018; aslo see Farkas, Schou, and Neumayer 2018a; 2018b).

By offering alternative narratives and accounts of events, far-right actors and groups on social media tend to build on and promote conspiracy theories, offering simple causes to highly complex social phenomena.[11] For instance, criticisms of liberal immigration and integration

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[9] Following Mudde (2019), the term "far-right" includes both the radical right, which is against aspects of liberal democracy, such as minority rights and free speech, and the extreme right, which is fundamentally antidemocratic.

[10] The risk and impacts of ideological echo chambers on social media are contested. Although there is evidence that people tend to select sources of information that confirms their beliefs on social media, these are generally not the only sources of news and political information individuals consume (Dubois and Blank 2018). However, research show that some segments of the population who largely mistrust news media and are critical of immigration selectively inform themselves on social media and alternative sources of information that validate their concerns and amplify their perception that immigration represents a threat (Thorbjørnsrud and Figenschou 2020).

[11] As explained by Bergmann (2018), in the fast-changing, globalized, high-tech world, the simplicity offered by conspiracy theories can be comforting to some individuals. As such, while flourishing within

policies are often coupled with conspiratorial ideas about the perceived threat of "Islamization"[12] of Western countries or that of the "Great Replacement"[13] of natives by immigrants (Haller and Holt 2019; Holt 2018, 50; also see Bergmann 2018). Ideas about immigrants and refugees thus travel from news media to far-right actors and groups on social media, transgressing the boundaries of publicly acceptable discourses and facilitating the spread of misinformation and conspiratorial thinking among its audience (Zollo and Quattrociocchi 2018; Ehrenberg 2012). The production of, legitimation of, and higher exposure to radical anti-immigration discourse on far-right pages on social media can amplify antagonistic opinions and even radicalization leading to violence (Wahlström and Törnberg 2019).

Beyond developing and articulating narratives, myths and ideologies related to immigration issues, far-right pages on social media also act as a crucial site of collective identity-building (Scrivens and Amarasingam 2020). I refer to collective identity as the specific content of the social identity associated with a group membership (see Klandermans 2014 for an insightful discussion

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groups on the far-left and -right, conspiratorial thinking is not only limited to the fringe of society. Conspiracy theories present a simplistic dualistic interpretation of the world, in which dark and powerful people orchestrate events to exercise and protect their power – thus separating the world between 'good' and 'evil' and positioning the in-group as a victim of the powerful out-group (such as elites, Marxists, feminists, Jews, Muslims and so on). This becomes the prism through which some individuals make sense of social phenomenon.

[12] The fear of the so-called Islamization has been brought to the fore since the events of 11 September 2001, following discussion about issues of security, threat to Western values and to Western countries very existence (Bergmann 2018). It builds on discourse about an essentialized Islam as an ideology that seeks to overturn Western countries, along with a perception that Muslims are faithful to alleged Islam expansionism and imperialism goals (see Berger 2016, 248). This conspiracy theory involves the invasion of Western countries and the substitution of their values, norms and culture by Islamic ones (e.g. the imposition of Sharia laws). It is notably found in stories about Muslims' demographics, request for religious accommodations and construction of mosques and places of prayer (Betz 2013).

[13] The "Great Replacement" is a conspiracy theory stipulating that Western countries have been betrayed by a left, liberal and globalized political establishment, that has implemented politics that allows – even promotes – the West to be flooded by ethnically and culturally "incompatible" immigrant groups. With this "massive" arrival of immigrants, 'native' European population will ultimately be "replaced" by non-European populations – thus leading to the happening of a "white genocide" (Bergmann 2018).

on the link between social identity and collective identity), which involves, in this instance, (1) shared beliefs about the national in-group and (2) salient concerns about immigration and religious and ethnocultural diversity. Indeed, far-right pages on social media construct and promote an "imagined community" based on exclusive conceptions of national identity (e.g., united through culture, heritage, and whiteness) and potential threats to it (e.g., immigrants, Muslims). For instance, in their comparative study of *Britain First* and *Reclaim Australia*'s discourse on Facebook and Twitter, Nouri and Lorenzo-Dus (2019) demonstrate that these groups establish their own imagined community, which involves the construction of a repressed national identity, under threat by immigrants and Muslims, and thus in need of defence (also see Atton 2006; Ekman 2018). Another example is provided by Gagnon's (2020) analysis of the way the Canadian and Quebec chapters of the far-right group *Soldiers of Odin* present their claims and identity on their public Facebook page. It shows that the Canadian chapter of the group constructs a collective identity centered around an image of "good Canadian patriots", while that of Quebec constructs a collective identity that is embedded in a transnational movement represented by the far-right. Both collective identities, however, converge through the creation of communities of like-minded individuals and that of boundaries excluding immigrants and Muslims and presenting them as threatening the in-group culture, laws and heritage (also see Scrivens and Amarasingam 2020).

These studies are particularly informative as they highlight that, just like news media, far-right actors and groups on social media promote certain conceptions of the imagined national community and reify perceived distinctions between 'us' and 'them'. Conceptions of the national group are, however, more exclusionary and perceived distinctions, more polarized. Through their representation and interpretation of immigration-related issues, far-right actors and groups on social media construct a collective identity centered on cultural and ethnic markers of identity,

shared concerns and the exclusion of others. In doing so, they tend to build on antagonistic discourse and conspiracy theories about immigration and religious and ethnocultural diversity, which might, in turn, influence the construction of radical, negative opinions about these issues. Most of these studies, however, explore these phenomena by analyzing far-right content and interactions on social media platforms. As such, they provide little information regarding individuals' motivations to seek for and expose themselves to far-right content on social media.

Perspectives that could deepen our understanding of individuals' motivations to consume far-right content on social media is found in the psychological literature on confirmation bias and selective exposure. As already explained, individuals tend to seek for and interpret information that support and confirm their pre-existing worldviews (Nickerson 1998). As argued so far, it could also be the case that individuals seek for and interpret mediatized information about immigration and diversity in light of their conception of national identity. But, what if some individuals do not encounter information that is coherent with their pattern of identification or information confirming their pre-existing beliefs about immigration and diversity in (mainstream) news media? Considering the widespread availability of ideologically diverse sources of information on the Internet and social media, it is particularly easy for individuals to seek out content that is in accord with their existing patterns of identification and beliefs, thereby selectively exposing themselves to perspectives they tend to agree with (Sunstein 2007). Such an account is grounded in individuals' tendency to associate with others who are ideologically similar to themselves and to consume information that aligns with their beliefs and views (see Eady et al. 2019). This is in line with Thorbjørnsrud and Figenschou's (2020) research exploring the ways consumers of far-right media evaluate and engage with mainstream and far-right news media (one of the rare studies exploring individuals' motivations in consuming far-right sources of information). Through the conduct of

interviews with consumers of far-right media in Norway, these authors show that these individuals are "alarmed citizens" who mistrust news media coverage of immigration issues and turn to alternative sources of information to stay "fully" informed on the "immigration threat". These individuals perceive that news media are biased toward pro-immigration stances and misrepresent or demonize those who criticize immigration.

By selectively exposing themselves to far-right pages on social media, these individuals find a community of like-minded individuals scattered over large geographical areas. Indeed, far-right pages on social media increase individuals' possibility of gathering and sharing information, while also allowing them to connect and discuss with others who have similar interests and concerns over immigration issues (see Caiani and Kröll 2015; Adams and Roscigno 2005). Finding a community of like-minded individuals can, in turn, comfort and empower individuals. When individuals have different interests or opinions than the majority, they are under pressure to conform with established norms and are thus more likely to self-censor themselves. When they meet with others who share their ways of thinking, they feel empowered to assert their opinions and express themselves more freely, challenging conventional behavioural norms (Noelle-Neumann 1974).

In my study, after analyzing opinions about immigration and diversity among the mainstream, I explore La Meute sympathizers' pathways to following far-right actors and groups on social media and interacting with like-minded individuals on these platforms. The aim of doing so is to better understand individuals' motivations to expose themselves to far-right content on social media, as well as to further investigate whether doing so influences the creation of ideological "echo chambers" confirming existing beliefs, intensifying individuals' attention and

concerns over immigration and diversity, and thus facilitating the endorsement of radical, negative opinions about these issues.

Theoretical framework

My literature review on the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity, as well as on the ways individuals seek and interpret news media and far-right information about immigration-related issues, suggests the presence of a mechanism of evaluation through which individuals assess whether or not immigrants are part of the national in-group based on different markers of identity. This, in turn, influences the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity in both their mainstream and more radical forms. This mechanism of evaluation is presented in Figure 1 and forms the basis of my study.

I argue that each conception of national identity provides the basis for evaluating who is part of the national in-group and who is not. While the mechanism of evaluation inherent to the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity involves determining if immigrants and members of ethnocultural minority groups conform to rigid markers of identity, the mechanism of evaluation inherent to the cultural conception of national identity involves a more flexible process through which individuals assess whether or not most immigrants and different groups of immigrants seem to adopt the national culture. This evaluation is often informed by the environment in which it occurs, including the media environment which provides information about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. Positive evaluations of immigrants' cultural compliance are associated with positive opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, while the opposite is true for negative evaluations.

In the case of individuals who do not find information in news media that supports and confirms their pre-existing patterns of identification and beliefs about immigration and ethnocultural diversity (more likely those holding an ethnic conception of national identity), they tend to seek and selectively expose themselves to content that does so, such as far-right groups and actors on social media. Through these sources of information, they are exposed to more negative, radical information about immigration and diversity that reifies perceived incommensurable differences between 'us' and 'them'.

Figure 1 : The Influence of Conceptions of National Identity on the Construction of Opinions about Immigration and Diversity
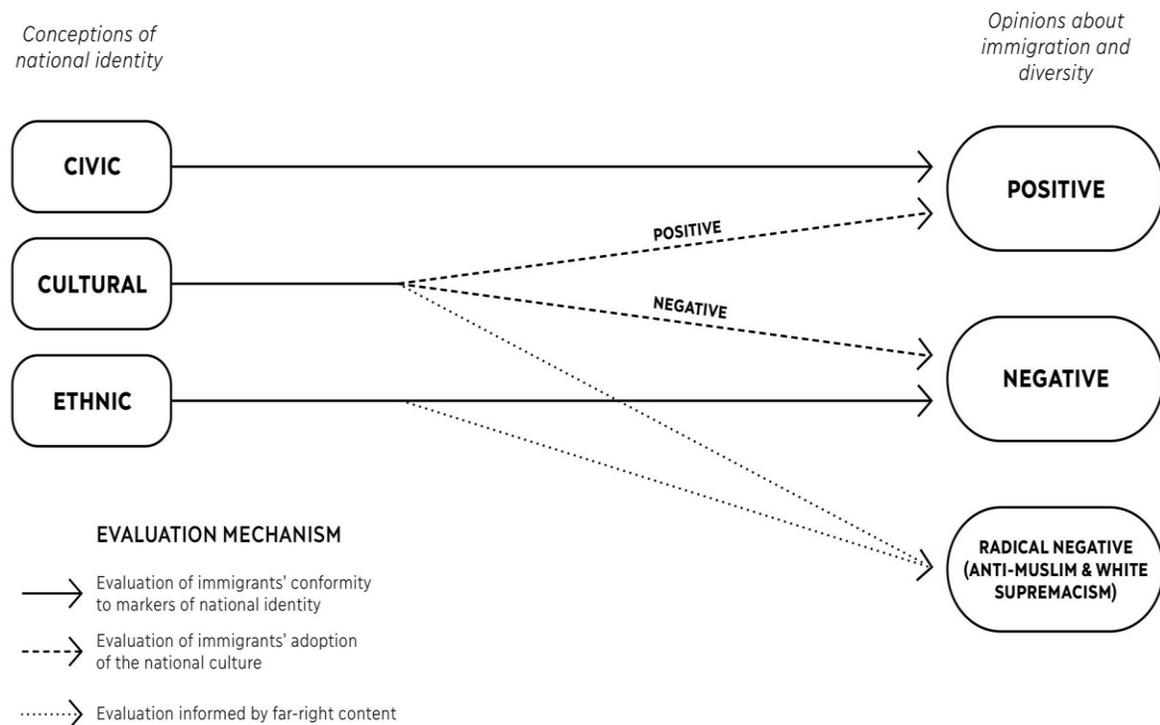
Conclusion

By setting boundaries providing the basis for evaluating who belongs and who does not belong to the national community, conceptions of (sub)national identity play a fundamental role in defining individuals' relationship with immigration and diversity.

While the civic conception of national identity is associated with positive opinions about immigration, inclusive attitudes toward religious and ethnocultural diversity and support for multiculturalism, the ethnic conception is associated with negative opinions about immigration, more exclusive attitudes and support for cultural assimilation (Reijerse et al. 2013; Heath and Tilley 2005). With regard to the cultural conception of national identity, the question of whether it includes all of those adopting the national culture or whether it serves as a basis for exclusion and inferiorization is still a topic of discussion (see Wright 2019). Answering this question is all the more important considering the prominence of social and political discourses emphasizing perceived cultural differences between immigrants and the national in-group, as well as the increasing adoption of civic integration policies by many liberal democracies.

Although conceptions of national identity deepen our understanding of patterns of inclusion and exclusion, I argue that it is only the starting point of the construction of (radical) opinions about immigration and diversity. Indeed, for individuals to perceive that immigration constitutes an increasing challenge to the national identity, 'us' and 'them' distinctions have to be reified or reinforced. This is mainly done during instances of mediatization of immigration-related issues, during which media draw public attention to these issues, making them salient in everyday life (Hopkins 2010; also see Kinder and Kam 2010).

My research maintains that media, whether mainstream or on the far-right, constitute a vehicle for the representation of 'us', members of the imagined national community, and of 'them', immigrants and ethnocultural minorities. While news media overall tend to frame immigration-related issues in civic and cultural terms (e.g. immigrants as cultural resource or threats), far-right actors and groups on social media tend to frame immigration-related issues in ethnic terms. Specifically, they construct and promote an "imagined community" based on exclusive conceptions of national identity (e.g. united through whiteness, heritage and culture) and potential threats to it (e.g. immigrants, Muslims). These alternative sources of information create an environment for the production and dissemination of information and beliefs that are more extreme than what is presented in news media, offering alternative narratives and accounts of events and promoting conspiracy theories.

Building on these literatures, my study explores how Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of La Meute conceive their national identity (either rooted in civic, ethnic, or cultural markers of identity) and how these conceptions offer lenses to receive and interpret information about immigration and integration as covered and framed in the media. Before engaging in such inquiry, the following chapter explores how Canada and Quebec have defined the national identity and established boundaries between 'us' and 'them' through policies and discourse across time. Doing so provides insight into the way Quebecers might think about their Canadian and Quebec identities and conceive their relationship with immigrants and religious and ethnocultural minorities.

Chapter 2: Dominant Boundary Drawing in Canada and Quebec

National identity is based on the idea that a national community exists and that the people within it share certain characteristics (Theiss-Morse 2009; Anderson 1983), either defined in civic, ethnic or cultural terms. Through its policies and discourse, each nation provides indications of imagined boundaries, establishing who is included in the national community and who is not. These official and symbolic ideas for thinking about the national community can condition or influence members of the community's conceptions of the 'us' and 'them' from an early age (see Sears 1993). Better understanding how Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of La Meute conceive (and contest) their Canadian/Quebec identity thus necessitates a discussion about the (re)production of community boundaries through official policies and political discourse about immigration and the management of religious and ethnocultural diversity, as well as news media coverage and framing of these issues in Canada and Quebec. Moreover, highlighting that (mainstream) news media are not the only sources of information available to understand and interpret immigration and diversity, this chapter also explores the way that far-right actors and groups in Quebec use social media to provide more radical interpretations of immigration-related issues and promote more exclusive conceptions of the national in-group.

By exploring the evolution of conceptions of the "imagined community" as represented in media and political discourses in Canada and Quebec, this chapter sheds light on the dominant ideas about 'us' and 'them' that coexist in the province, as well as those that emerge from far-right content disseminated on social media. Doing so provides insight into the way Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of La Meute may conceive their national identity and how markers of national identity can be reinforced and reified during instances of public debates about immigration and the management and accommodation of ethnocultural diversity.

Boundary markers in Canada and Quebec

Immigration and integration policies in Canada have evolved over time from colonial and restrictive policies aimed at attracting (white) immigrants from European countries to more inclusive and integrative policies, in an attempt to make immigration an integral part of Canadian society and identity. Building on a settler national identity, Canada has long adopted policies of erasure and forced homogeneity rooted in Britishness, whiteness and Christianity (Mackey 2002; Mann 2014; 2016). In the postwar period, Mann explains (2016), Canada sought to redefine its national identity, struggling with the conflicting imperatives to embrace immigrants and ethnocultural minorities and to create a cohesive national identity that was distinct from British conceptions of the nation. This led Canada to adopt assimilation policies, designed to help immigrants become part of the dominant national group (while also encouraging "easily assimilable" immigrants, understood as white immigrants [also see Igartua 2006]). This changed in the early 1960s as the country acknowledged that immigrants and ethnocultural minorities could enrich and contribute to the Canadian national culture, which was followed by the adoption of bilingualism and, later in the 1970s, multiculturalism, in order to build an identity more reflective of Canada's cultural complexity (also see Conway 2018). Canadian multiculturalism recognizes cultural diversity as a reality in Canadian society and calls for the preservation and enhancement of Canada's multicultural heritage (Kymlicka 2003).

Following these policy changes, while researchers have documented periods of increased political discussion on immigration in Canada (for example, Abu-Laban, 1998; 2004; Paquet and Larios, 2018), open political debates on topics such as immigration and multiculturalism among Canadian political elites have been relatively limited (Ambrose and Mudde, 2015). Canada's expansionist immigration policies and multiculturalism are widely embraced as central and positive

symbols of Canadian identity (Citrin, Johnston, and Wright 2012; Environics Institute for Survey Research 2015). It is thus possible that Quebecers have internalized this inclusive conception of the contemporary Canadian identity, which can be related to an imagined community understood in civic terms, that is, a community that is open to newcomers and that recognizes and supports ethnocultural differences. Citrin, Johnston and Wright (2012) maintain that this is the case. Their research on the relationship between national identification and preferences about immigration shows that Quebecers who strongly identify as Canadians tend to support immigration and multiculturalism, as other Canadians do (also see Bilodeau et al. 2021).

This narrative, however, might overestimate the inclusivity of the Canadian identity and its positive relationship with immigration and diversity. Indeed, while cultural pluralism and tolerance are often represented as central to the Canadian identity, a variety of contemporary examples challenge this representation. This includes the relationship between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples, French Canadians, and immigrants, which, as Mackey (2002, 38) argues, is often interpreted and re-shaped in order to present an inclusive and tolerant conception of national identity: "Aboriginal people and non-British cultural groups are managed, located, let in, excluded, made visible or invisible, represented positively or negatively, assimilated or appropriated, depending on the changing needs of nation-building." (also see Winter 2011; 2015) As such, it is possible that Quebecers who identify as Canadians hold exclusive attitudes toward immigrants and ethnocultural minorities that are rooted in ethnic conceptions of the Canadian identity.

Another contemporary example challenging the inclusive, more civic conception of the Canadian identity is that, while multiculturalism is the official Canadian model for the integration and administration of ethnocultural diversity, integrationist policies remain and indeed contribute to the multiculturalism programme (Mann 2016). Indeed, the goal of the Canadian regime is to

assist minorities to overcome barriers to wider engagement and focuses on employment, learning the national language and shared liberal values (Banting and Kymlicka 2013). In this regard, immigrants' integration into Canadian society has been a topic of concern for some Canadians, including the question of whether newcomers would adequately embrace Canadian values (Soroka, Johnston, and Banting 2007). Of all minority groups in the country, Muslims are most likely to be the focus of such anxieties (Environics Institute For Survey Research 2018). As such, it is possible that Quebecers who identify as Canadians hold concerns related to protecting the national identity defined in cultural terms, meaning a cultural conception of the Canadian identity perceived as composed of certain characteristics, such as language, values, and ways of life, that can (and should) be learned by immigrants.

Exploring Canadian identity and its relationship with immigration and religious and ethnocultural minorities is only a part of the story. In multinational states, the national community membership can be conceived differently on the part of the national and the subnational communities. Different conceptions of the national community membership, in turn, can be associated with different relationships with immigration and religious and ethnocultural diversity (see Escandell and Ceobanu 2010; Billiet, Maddens, and Beerten 2003; Bilodeau et al. 2021). Exploring the production and reproduction of community boundaries in Quebec is particularly relevant since a majority of Quebecers identify themselves as Quebecer first (but also Canadian) (Mendelsohn 2002). Indeed, Quebecers have had a consciousness of their distinct cultural identity dating as far back as the colonial domination of New France by the British in the second half of the eighteenth century (Zubrzycki 2016, 3). In more recent history, this identification culminated in two referendums on Quebec sovereignty and demands for constitutional reforms in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Just like Canadian identity, the general conception of Quebec identity and its relationship with immigration and ethnocultural diversity has evolved over time. Specifically, scholars maintain that the province has experienced a gradual transition from an ethnic to a more civic form of nationalism and identity (Balthazar 1995; Breton 1988; Kalin and Berry 1995). Quebec nationalism was long oriented toward ensuring the survival of the national group conceived primarily through the bonds of ethnicity, that is a French-Canadian Catholic identity (Balthazar 1995; Mendelsohn 2002; Bouchard 2001). The Catholic Church and associated traditions (such as the central role of family and agriculture) were considered indispensable to the maintenance of the French-Canadian ethno-national identity and culture against the influence of Anglo-Protestants surrounding French-Canadians on the North American continent (Rocher 2002). The Church performed many functions such as providing education, health and social services, cementing Catholicism as a fundamental marker of identity (Zubrzycki 2016, 3). However, societal changes brought a transformation of Quebec nationalism and identity. The Quiet Revolution, a period of important political, economic, and cultural structural changes in Quebec in the 1960s, brought a new nationalism emphasizing democracy, statism and modernity (Rocher 2002) – transformations that were made possible due to a secularization of Quebec identity and political institutions. Through the Quiet Revolution, Quebec identity evolved from a French-Canadian Catholic identity to a Quebec identity circumscribed by the territory of the province and a civic and secular identity (defined in opposition to the old Catholic narrative of the nation) centered on the French language (Zubrzycki 2016; Kalin and Berry 1997; Breton 1988). Quebec nationalism was thus consolidated through the development of a political French-speaking community, that is Quebecers (in French: Québécois).

Since the 1960s, nation-building and linguistic protection has been central in Quebec nationalism, therefore stimulating a desire to integrate immigrants into the francophone majority.

As argued by Balthazar (1995, 84): "The logic of a modern and secular Quebec, which would be at once francophone and pluralistic, gradually forced itself upon people". The author illustrates this by the implementation of the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (1975), signaling the equality of persons and the rejection of all forms of discrimination, and the Charter of the French language (also known as Bill 101, 1977), ensuring the protection of French, the province's official language. Motivated by the desire to protect and maintain its distinct language and culture as a minority nation and to maintain its demographic weight in Canadian federalism in the face of declining birth rates, Quebec also negotiated authority over immigration and integration policies (Paquet 2019; Barker 2010). This enabled the province to acquire extensive powers over the selection and reception of newcomers, as well as to undertake its own integration services guided by the principles of interculturalism. As a model for the integration and administration of ethnocultural diversity, interculturalism aims to ensure the preservation of Quebec's culture (notably by recognizing the status of the majority culture and language in the province) while accounting for diversity and the rights of ethnocultural minorities (Bouchard 2011; also see Lamy and Mathieu 2020). This model differs from the model of multiculturalism institutionalized at the federal level, which is often perceived by Quebecers and political elites in Quebec as an attempt by the federal government to weaken the legitimacy of Quebec's national aspirations by presenting Quebec's culture as one of the various cultures that form the Canadian mosaic (McRoberts 1999). Interculturalism, although not officially endorsed as a policy, would balance the recognition of French as the common language of public life, along with the fundamental values of Quebec society, and that of a pluralist reality contributing to society (Bouchard 2012).

These historical transformations related to Quebec identity and its relationship with the rest of Canada point to the particular role of culture in (re)defining Quebec identity. Indeed, culture and

French language were long associated with an ethnic French-Canadian identity, up until the development of a Quebec identity. These markers of identity still occupy an important place in Quebec's conception of the imagined community, indicating the possible prevalence of a cultural conception of national membership. This perspective is supported by Bilodeau and Turgeon's (2020) study on the ways Quebecers and other Canadians construct their national identity. It shows that a large proportion of Quebecers stress the importance of speaking French in defining Quebec community. However, their study also shows that language as a marker of identity in Quebec is at times coupled with more rigid and exclusive markers of identity (such as having ancestors in Quebec, being born or having lived most of one's life in Quebec, and being Christian) that are related to more negative opinions about immigration in Quebec. This suggests that cultural markers of Quebec identity, such as the French language, could be rooted either in a cultural or an ethnic conception of belonging.

The expression of cultural markers of identity understood in ethnic terms is also exemplified by research exploring widely mediatized and politicized public debates over religious accommodations in the province in 2006-2008, often referred to as the so-called "reasonable accommodation crisis"[14] (Potvin 2014), and, more recently, those over legislative bills to restrict the right of certain Quebec public servants to display religious symbols (Nadeau and Helly 2016b). Indeed, scholars note a proliferation of racializing rhetoric on the part of certain segments of the mass public, as well as in news media and political discourses, reifying ethnic conceptions of the national group understood as sharing a homogeneous culture and values (such as gender equality

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[14] The so-called "reasonable accommodation crisis" refers to increased public tensions concerning the accommodation of religious and ethnocultural minority groups in Quebec. This led to the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences launched by Liberal premier Jean Charest in 2007, also known as the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, after Quebec academics Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor who co-chaired the report.

and support for secularism) that would be threatened by religious and ethnocultural minorities. Cultural markers of identity, however, are not the only ones that could play a central but contested role in (re)defining Quebec identity (that is, markers of identity that can be understood in different ways and thus associated with different conceptions of belonging); religion also maintains a particular and contested relationship with Quebec identity. As explained, historical transformations in Quebec involved a secularization of Quebec political institutions. From this ensued an understanding of Quebec identity as secular, and at times defined in opposition to the old Catholic narrative of the nation. Yet, recent accounts of Quebec politics show that the Catholic religion has not been completely evacuated from the collective imaginary. For instance, Zubrzycki (2016, 2) maintains that religion remains "a skeleton in Quebec's closet", one that became apparent in recent years during the aforementioned debates over religious accommodations (with news media mainly presenting demands for accommodations on the part of non-Christian groups, such as Muslims, Sikhs and ultra-Orthodox Jews, leaving aside those on the part of practicing Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists) (also see Giasson, Brin, and Sauvageau 2010b) and legislative bills to restrict the right of certain Quebec public servants to display religious symbols (disproportionately affecting religious minorities, notably Muslims whose markers of identity were targeted) (also see Giasson, Sauvageau, and Brin 2018). During these public debates, Zubrzycki (2016) argues, the Catholic religion was conceived as part of the national heritage and culture on the part of certain segments of the population. Zubrzycki's argument is consistent with Bilodeau et al.'s (2018) study on Quebecers' motivations to support legislative proposals to ban religious symbols in the public sphere. It shows that Quebecers are divided into two groups with different motivations. On the one hand, some individuals support a ban on all religious symbols and are motivated by principles such as secularism and other liberal attitudes. On the other hand, some individuals favour restricting only the symbols of religious minorities and thus preserving the

historical legacy of Catholicism in the public sphere. The latter individuals are motivated by prejudice and a perceived threat to Quebec heritage and culture, conceived in religious terms. These studies suggest that religion might still structure Quebec identity for some Quebecers, despite an important decline in religiosity.

Quebec's history in the Canadian federation, as well as its immigration and integration policies, point to the presence of different conceptions of national identity (i.e., civic, ethnic, and cultural), but also different understandings of some markers of national identity, specifically culture and religion. For example, Quebec culture can be understood as characteristics that can be learned by immigrants (i.e. related to a cultural conception of national identity), but also as ethnic markers of identity, representing a more rigid understanding of Quebec's norms and heritage (i.e. related to an ethnic conception of national identity). Just like different conceptions of the national in-group, 'us', seem to coexist in Quebec, different representations of 'them', immigrants and ethnocultural minorities, are mobilized by news media and political elites, reinforcing or reifying certain distinctions between 'us' and 'them'.

Research exploring Canadian and Quebec media and political discourses about immigration-related issues reveals a diverse portrait, highlighting different representations of immigration and ethnocultural diversity. Specifically, immigrants are at times framed as a threat to the national in-group, and at others as a resource or a benefit for the host society. Exploring the ways political elites frame immigration-related issues in electoral debates covered in news media and in party platforms, Gagnon and Larios (2021) show that the framing of immigration and integration issues in Quebec varies across time and between political actors. Specifically, while frames of immigrants as economic and sociocultural resources have long dominated political discourses in the province, these were recently challenged by frames of immigrants as economic

and cultural threats. For example, frames of immigrants as challenging dominant societal values and the French language were recently employed by political actors to promote the implementation of a values test and the proposal for a mandatory language test for newcomers (also see Xhardez and Paquet 2020). Gagnon and Larios' study also highlights a resistance to these frames on the part of some political actors who advocate for the inclusion of immigrants and ethnocultural minorities, emphasizing values of tolerance and equity. As such, although the analysis points to a shift in dominant political discourses from frames of immigrants as resources to that of immigrants as potential threats, it also reveals the presence of different patterns of representation of immigrants' inclusion in Quebec's society among Quebec political actors.

Similar results can be found in research exploring Canadian media and political discourses about immigration-related issues. Specifically, the frame of immigration as an economic resource is particularly salient in Canada, where the point-system gives considerable importance to newcomers' education and skills (Bloemraad 2012). As such, immigration is often viewed as a mechanism for labour force growth, and mediatized and politicized discourses about economy and immigration tend to be positive across the country (Lawlor and Tolley 2017; Lawlor 2015; Paquet 2019). That is not to say, however, that economic threat frames are no longer employed by Canadian media and political rhetoric (Fiřtová 2019). The frame of immigration as a cultural resource, for its part, is at times mobilized in Canadian media and political discourses emphasizing multiculturalism (Winter 2011). Finally, while fears of national security threats have been heavily emphasized to justify the securitization of immigration in Canada (Frederking 2012; Fiřtová 2019), the frames of immigration as a humanitarian act persist (Frederking 2012; Bauder 2008; Wallace 2018).

I maintain that these different frames of immigration-related issues are related to different conceptions of national identity. For example, the frame of immigrants as a cultural resource is coherent with an understanding of national identity in civic terms, which does not require immigrants to adopt the national culture to be included in the imagined community. The frame of immigrants as a cultural threat, for its part, is coherent with a cultural conception of national identity, for which the national in-group is bounded by a common culture. Finally, frames of immigrants as threatening the national religious heritage, as exemplified by Zubrzycki (2016)'s depictions of mediatized and politicized debates over religious accommodations in Quebec, is coherent with an ethnic conception of national identity. It thus seems reasonable to believe that different frames of immigration and ethnocultural diversity resonate more or less among individuals, depending on their conceptions of the imagined national community. As such, when evaluating whether or not immigrants and minorities conform or comply to different markers of identity, individuals might build on frames that are coherent with their perspective and reject those that are not. This should also be the case among individuals who have abandoned the mainstream to join groups that represent more exclusive conceptions of the national group and adhere to radical ideas about immigration-related issues.

National Identity Among Radical Actors in Quebec

Beyond emphasizing different conceptions of 'us' and 'them', recent debates over religious accommodations, the display of religious symbols in the public sphere, and level of immigration intakes in Quebec, brought more radical actors to express themselves on these topics (Gagnon *forthcoming*; Nadeau and Helly 2016; also see Potvin 2017). Indeed, Perry and Scrivens explain (2018) that debates over immigration and the management of religious and ethnocultural diversity

in Quebec provided opportunities for far-right and identity groups to express their concerns through the lens of cultural nationalism and the perceived threat posed by religious minorities' (in particular, Muslims') "failure" to assimilate into a secular Quebec.

Far-right and identity actors and groups capitalizing on political debates to express themselves and gain traction among the public are particularly visible on social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (A. Gagnon 2020; Froio and Ganesh 2019; Ekman 2014; 2018). La Meute constitutes an example of an identity group using Facebook as a site of alternative information to influence political debates on these issues. Exploring the public Facebook pages of *La Meute, Atalante*, and the *Fédération des Québécois de souche*, Potvin (2017) highlights the ways that these far-right and identity groups reify an exclusive conception of Quebec identity, dovetailing with hatred of Others such as immigrants and Muslims and emphasizing a fear of the loss of Quebec identity and values. Tanner and Campana's (2020) analysis of the way La Meute uses its private Facebook page also reveals that, through its posts, the group attempts to gather people around populist, anti-immigration and pro-white nationalist discourses. Specifically, La Meute builds a Canadian and Quebecer exclusivist identity, while diffusing negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims.

La Meute's Facebook page is not, however, the only alternative source of information associated with the group and its sympathizers. Recent journalistic accounts reveal the relationship between sympathizers of La Meute and other far-right actors and groups on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, which promote an exclusive conception of Quebec identity (e.g. united through culture and heritage) and potential threats to it (e.g. immigrants, Muslims, political elites, news media and so on), dovetailing with far-right populist discourse and conspiracy theories (Péloquin in La Presse 2020; Noël in TVA Nouvelles, 2018). The motivations of sympathizers of identity groups such as

La Meute to expose themselves to far-right content on social media, as well as the ways in which this content might resonate with their conception of the national group and confirm or reinforce their concerns about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, remain, however, to be explored.

Conclusion

In Canada and Quebec, legal and political conceptions of the "imagined community" have evolved through time going from ethnic to more civic understandings of national belonging. Yet, recent social and political debates about immigration and the management of religious and ethnocultural diversity attest of the presence of divergent ideas about 'us' and 'them', including cultural and ethnic markers of national identity. As such, civic, ethnic, and cultural conceptions of national identity seem to coexist in Quebec, each providing the basis for different opinions about immigration and diversity. Moreover, research suggests a prevalence of ethnic conceptions of national identity coupled with deep concerns about immigration and diversity shared among more radical actors in Quebec.

By presenting dominant conceptions of national identity coexisting in Quebec, this chapter situated how the mainstream and more radical actors might conceive and contest the national identity. It also highlighted that news media in Quebec, as well as far-right groups and actors on social media, tend to reify different markers of Quebec identity. My research further investigates the way individuals conceive the national identity and whether, and if so how, conceptions of national identity influence opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity by looking at two populations in Quebec: Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of La Meute. The mechanism identified in this study involves joining dots well-drawn by scholars and, in other cases,

adapting or further developing theories on the basis of the rich data collected through the conduct of semi-structured interviews with Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of the identity group La Meute.

Chapter 3: Data and Methods for Investigating Conceptions of National Identity and Opinions About Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Quebec

This research seeks to deepen our understanding of the ways different conceptions of national identity influence the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity in Quebec. I investigate this through the conduct of semi-structured interviews with Quebecers from the general public (hereafter also referred to as Quebecers) and sympathizers of the identity group La Meute. The conduct of interviews with these two populations allows for a comparison of the mechanisms influencing the construction of opinions about immigration-related issues in both their mainstream and more radical forms, with a particular interest in exploring in detail the causal forces between individuals' conception of their national identity and their opinions.

Although understanding mass public opinion is of crucial importance, I argue that only focusing on the mainstream neglects a significant part of the story: the construction of opinions among those who are part of a group that comes together through their anti-immigration views. Following authors such as Collier and Mahoney (1996, 72–75), I maintain that analyzing extreme cases on the dependent variable is useful to achieve greater insight into the phenomenon and into its causes. Indeed, a deliberate selection of cases that have extreme values on the dependent variable (i.e. sympathizers of La Meute), especially when analyzed in comparison with a more representative distribution of the dependant variable (i.e. Quebecers from the general public), increases variance along relevant dimensions (i.e. opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity) and thus facilitates the introduction of nuances and complexities into the understanding of a phenomenon, as well as the elaboration of causal explanations. Specifically, what can we learn from the radical opinions that sympathizers of identity groups express about immigration and diversity in Quebec? Moreover, do sympathizers of identity groups really conceive national

identity in a different way than the rest of the population? If so, how does this affect their opinions about immigration and diversity? I maintain that sympathizers of identity groups constitute a crucial case to better understand the link between conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and diversity.

I suggest an innovative approach comparing the construction of individuals' opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity among the general public and sympathizers of an identity group in Quebec. This allows me to explore the mechanisms influencing a variety of opinions, including being more or less enthusiastic about immigration, but also endorsing anti-Muslim rhetoric and defending white supremacism. Exploring a broader set of opinions than what would be expected among the general public only further allows for differentiating and nuancing mainstream and radical opinions about immigration-related issues, while exploring the (dis)similar mechanisms informing them.

Before further explaining what my research does and the methodology it employs, it is important to highlight what my research does not do. First, my research does not focus on the evolution of the predominant conception of national identity in Quebec (for such inquiry, see, among others, Breton 1988; Lecours 2000). Instead, it uses Quebec as a case study to explore the way different conceptions of national identity influence the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity both among the mainstream and more radical actors. Second, my research does not investigate news media framing of immigration-related issues in Quebec or Canada (for studies engaged in such inquiry, see Gagnon and Larios 2021; Lawlor 2015; Lawlor and Tolley 2017), nor the impact of the consumption of news media on public opinion per se (see Bos et al. 2016; Schemer 2012; Hopkins 2010). Instead, I explore how individuals endorsing different conceptions of national identity – civic, ethnic or cultural – receive and interpret

information related to immigration and diversity as presented in news media and how they use this information to inform their opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. Finally, my research does not analyse the internal nor organizational aspects of the group La Meute. As such, it differs from various studies exploring identity groups aiming to identify and understand organizational strategies or qualifying the type of actions undertaken by group activists (e.g. Caiani, della Porta, and Wagemann 2012; B. Klandermans and Mayer 2006; Bjørgo and Mareš 2019). My research adopts a socio-psychological approach to understand the relationship between different conceptions of national identity and the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity among sympathizers of an identity group (from the micro perspective of the individual). The focus of my research is therefore on individuals within a social organization and not on the social organization itself (and in comparison with Quebecers from the general public).

Recruitment Process

This research follows Cramer's (2016, 18) approach to studying public opinion through engaging in discussions with people to better understand *how* people think about 'us' and 'them' (as opposed to *what* people think). From June 18, 2019 to January 27, 2020, I conducted a total of seventy-eight semi-structured interviews with Quebecers from the general public (N=44) and sympathizers of the identity group La Meute (N=34) living in various localities across the province of Quebec, Canada. Prior to commencing the fieldwork, approval was obtained from Concordia University Human Research Ethics Committee Office of Research. All participants were provided with a form to explain the research purpose, as well as data use and handling, and were asked to give their written consent to the interview and its audio recording.

Quebecers from the general public are "ordinary people" (Cramer 2016, 18) recruited through their participation in a firm's online survey on national identity and participation in Quebec's social, cultural and civic life, conducted by Professor Antoine Bilodeau (Concordia University). These people were adults (18 years or older), born in Canada, who live in Quebec, who do not consider themselves to be part of a visible minority and whose parents (at least one) were born in Canada as well. Participants who indicated their willingness to be contacted again for other research and who provided their e-mail address were invited to participate in a one-hour long face-to-face interview conducted by me. This method allowed me to recruit a variety of interviewees from diverse demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds and living in different localities across the province.

Participants were informed that they would be asked to answer questions about national identity and political issues, with a particular focus on immigration and ethnocultural diversity in Quebec. It is important to note, however, the possible presence of a selection bias, as most of those who contacted me to participate in this research were interested in giving their opinions on these topics. Specifically, most participants had well-defined views that they were looking forward to sharing with me. For instance, the majority of interviewees had a strong sense of national attachment (to Quebec and/or Canada, but mostly to Quebec) and had a clear idea of how they felt and thought about their (sub)national identity. As such, the data collected for this research do not allow for an exploration of variations in the strength of the sense of national attachment among participants – measuring and comparing strength of national attachment is also a somewhat complex endeavour in the context of qualitative research. However, the data do provide sufficient information to engage in an in-depth analysis of the different conceptions of national identity

shared among participants and the ways markers of identity generate patterns of inclusion and exclusion.

Interviews with Quebecers from the general public were mostly held in Tim Hortons located in interviewees' city of residence and generally lasted about an hour.[15] During these interviews, I met with 22 men and 22 women, aged between 26 and 82 years old. Interviewees lived in eight different localities, with the greatest concentrations in the Montreal, Trois-Rivières and the Greater Montreal area (see Appendix 1).[16]

Sympathizers of La Meute, for their part, consist of people active "physically" or virtually in the group. La Meute has been occasionally present and visible in physical space during a few demonstrations each year since 2015 (Radio-Canada 2017; 2019; Béland in La Presse 2017; Lajoie in Journal de Québec 2018). Most of the group activities and practices, however, take place virtually on Facebook (Tanner and Campana 2020; also see Montpetit in CBC News 2016). People active physically are those attending public demonstrations and activities organized by La Meute (N=17). Some of them are regular members and others are involved in the organizational structure of the group – to protect interviewees' anonymity, I do not divulge their positions in the group. La Meute is a hierarchical organization modelled on a military structure, which includes members of a Council, clan chiefs and assistant chiefs, and various committees (which each have their commanders, assistants and captains), including the Canadian, socio-politics, security, logistics, guard, operations, TV and riding club committees. People active virtually in the group (N=17)

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[15] Tim Hortons is a Canadian multinational fast food restaurant chain best known for their coffee and doughnuts.

[16] Participants' locality of residence includes Montreal (City-Center, St-Henri, Ahuntsic, Plateau Mont-Royal, Mile Ends, Parc Extension, Little Italy, Saint-Leonard, Anjou, Verdun, Pointe-aux-Trembles, Pierrefonds and LaSalle), the Greater Montreal Area (Laval, Terrebonne, Ste-Agathe-des-Monts, Chambly, Mascouche, Mirabel, Boucherville, St. Jean-Sur-Richelieu), St-Hyacinthe, Trois-Rivières, Saguenay, Sherbrooke, Granby and Quebec.

engage with the group on La Meute Facebook page, either by posting and commenting or following the projects and ideas posted on the Facebook page – among these, five were previously active "physically" in the group.[17] Since the focus of this research is on individuals' conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity (as opposed to their involvement with the group), it does not differentiate between individuals active physically and virtually in the group.

Sympathizers of La Meute were recruited by sending private messages on Facebook Messenger to random people following La Meute's public Facebook page (a total of two hundred messages were sent).[18] Several of these people either never received my message (as the message indicated being sent, but not delivered) or never opened it as I was not their Facebook friend.[19] Among those who did receive and open my message and answered me, twenty-three told me they were either too busy, needed time to think about it (and never came back to me) or did not feel comfortable participating in my research as they were barely following the group's Facebook page and were not involved with the group. One of them referred me to his clan leader (members of La Meute have guidelines stating that only the leader of each clan is allowed to publicly talk about the group and its activities) and four of them explained to me their opinions on immigration and accommodations of ethnocultural minorities on Messenger, but did not want to meet me (their

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[17] Three sympathizers interviewed were kicked out of La Meute after a split within the group and two decided to join groups more aligned with their ideologies (white supremacism). Other members of La Meute were also kicked out of the group following a second split, some time after the interview.

[18] Although I had access to La Meute's private Facebook page, I used the group's public page to recruit due to ethical considerations. Public Facebook pages do not require membership nor approval to read the posts and see who follows the page. Followers of the public Facebook page are thus aware that their online participation in La Meute is publicly available, which made it less intrusive to contact them for research aiming at better understanding their opinions.

[19] When people receive private messages from someone that is not their Facebook friend, they do not receive a notification informing them that someone is trying to contact them. Instead of appearing in their default inbox, messages are logged in a "message requests" folder.

opinions were excluded from the research as these individuals did not sign the consent form). Finally, twenty agreed to meet with me. Twelve other interviewees were recruited through the snow-ball effect, and two were introduced to me through acquaintances – for a total of 34 sympathizers of La Meute.

The snow-ball effect was particularly helpful to reach people who would probably not have accepted to meet with me otherwise. Indeed, some told me they had accepted to meet with me only because I was referred by their friend. Snow-ball sampling is considered a method of choice for most studies with hard-to-reach populations, such as activists who are associated with stigmatized movements (Blee 2013). Nevertheless, fractionalized relationships within the group made interviewees' suggestions of potential participants slightly restrictive since they would only suggest people with whom they got along (and therefore excluded antagonists). The combination of both recruitment technics (i.e. contacting random individuals following La Meute's Facebook page through Messenger and the snow-ball method) was helpful for obtaining access to individuals living in different locations and with different roles within and relationships to the group (also see Baltar and Brunet 2012 on using Facebook to recruit hard-to-reach populations while reducing the selection bias problem).

When sending messages and communicating on Messenger with sympathizers of La Meute, it was particularly important to assure them that the interviews would be confidential and that the dissertation would not contain real names, and to explicitly state the purpose of the research – that is, better understanding the way they conceive their national identity and their opinions about immigration-related issues (and not to judge them for their opinions). As anticipated, most of these individuals felt that they were being marginalized, notably due to the critiques they face frequently

in the news media. Therefore, they wanted to validate the integrity of the research process before accepting to meet with me.

Interviews with sympathizers of La Meute generally lasted about an hour and a half, but a few lasted about two hours. Most communicated with me before and after the interview. Those who contacted me before meeting with me wanted to ask additional questions about my research or make sure that I was really who I presented myself as (a PhD student at Concordia University) – this involved talking with them on Messenger, over the phone or FaceTime (as a way of verifying my identity). Some contacted me after the interview to explain or clarify their ideas and opinions and to send me articles, videos and other documents illustrating or justifying their beliefs and opinions. With their consent, this additional information was included in the analysis. Finally, some sympathizers of the group added me on Facebook and invited me to join identity, far-right and anti-Islam groups on Facebook, including La Meute's official Facebook page, telling me that following these pages could be interesting for my thesis, or as one interviewee told me: "to put flesh on the bones [of my thesis]".

Interviews with sympathizers of La Meute were held in cafés selected by respondents so that they could feel comfortable talking to me. For logistical reasons, a few interviews with sympathizers of La Meute were conducted on Skype (1) and FaceTime (3). One interview was conducted through a voice call on Messenger because the interviewee wanted to remain anonymous. Sympathizers of La Meute who consented to be interviewed included 24 men and 10 women. The youngest participant was 23 and the oldest was 74. These individuals lived in 10 different localities, with the greatest concentrations in the Greater Montreal area, Sherbrooke and Saint-Hyacinthe (see Appendix 2).

To facilitate the recruitment of research participants (both Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of La Meute) and in order to display some gratitude for their participation, a $10 Tim Hortons gift card and a hot beverage was offered to each of them. Most sympathizers of La Meute, however, refused to accept the gift card arguing that they considered meeting with me as an opportunity to express themselves and, therefore, did not want to be rewarded for their participation. In order to facilitate the research process, all interviewees agreed to be audio recorded during the interviews. Recordings were fully transcribed to facilitate the analysis.[20] Interviews were conducted and transcribed in French, but selected quotes were translated into English by the author. In this research, all participants are identified with a fake name in order to preserve their anonymity.

Some Particularities about La Meute and its Sympathizers

Journalists and scholars describe La Meute as a far-right group (Montpetit 2016), a neonationalist or neopopulist group (Morin in Radio-Canada 2020), a populist identity group (Potvin 2017) and a far-right vigilante group (Tanner and Campana 2020). Leaders of La Meute, for their part, refuse being labelled as part of the far-right, arguing that they are a group of citizens militating in favour of "Quebec identity" and against "illegal immigration" and "radical Islam" (Robillard in Radio-Canada 2017; La Meute pamphlet 2018). The same goes for the sympathizers of La Meute to whom I have talked: they strongly reject appellations such as radical and extreme right, arguing that these terms are negatively connoted and that they refer to violent groups and actions – which most claimed to be opposed to. They also reject the 'racist' label as they do not

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[20] All interviews conducted with sympathizers of La Meute were transcribed by the author to preserve anonymity and confidentiality. Interviews conducted with Quebecers from the mass public were transcribed by the author, with the help of two research assistants (all interviews transcribed by the research assistants were subsequently revised by the author).

consider themselves as such – most sympathizers of La Meute explicitly told me they that their views were not racist. Most instead maintained that La Meute is a civil society group that peacefully pursues an identity-related agenda that seeks to protect Quebec identity. My intention in this research is not to debate what kind of ideology better defines La Meute and its positions. Instead, my focus is on the sympathizers of the group, specifically, their conceptions of national identity, motivations, beliefs, and opinions, and on comparing them with those of other Quebecers. As I demonstrate in this research, these individuals hold a spectrum of ideas and opinions going from relatively exclusive views about immigration and ethnocultural diversity to anti-Muslim and white nationalist ideologies. What unites them, however, are their concerns about protecting Quebec identity from the perceived threat posed by immigration and ethnocultural diversity. As such, for the purpose of this research, and in an attempt to adopt the language used by these individuals, I refer to La Meute as an identity group (also see Busher 2016: 20-21 for a thoughtful discussion on terminological debates when doing research on "unloved" groups).

As already mentioned, La Meute was founded in 2015 to oppose the arrival of 25 000 Syrian refugees in Canada, seeking to resist what they perceived as a threat posed by Islamic extremism. Acknowledging La Meute's particular interest in opposing "radical Islam" highlights a potential bias against Muslims and Islam shared by its sympathizers. Indeed, some individuals might support the group for its anti-immigration views, but more particularly for its focus on Muslim immigration. Increasing concerns over Muslim immigration and Islam are also widespread among contemporary identity and far-right groups in Europe, the United States and Canada (e.g. Busher 2016; Froio 2018; Bail 2014; Gagnon 2020). Indeed, insecurities about Muslims' integration into liberal democracies has had an important impact on the success of far-right movements (Berntzen 2019). It is important to note, however, that this phenomenon is not restricted to radical actors (Bail 2014).

Indeed, a climate of othering of Muslim communities has also taken root in mainstream political and public discourses (Sniderman and Hagendoorm 2007; Helbling 2013). In line with this phenomenon, Quebecers of the general public interviewed also expressed more discomfort and skepticism regarding the presence of Muslims in the province. As such, although this research is interested in opinions about immigration-related issues, a particular focus is given to opinions about Muslim immigration and religious accommodations.

Grounded Theory

In this research, I build an understanding of the ways different conceptions of national identity influence the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity in both their mainstream and more radical forms. Doing so involves engaging in grounded theory to generate theory through the inductive examination of data that are difficult to access with quantitative research methods (such as conceptions of who belongs to the national group and who does not, different belief systems informing views about immigrants, as well as opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity among sympathizers of an identity group) and to explore in detail the mechanism behind the causal relationship between conceptions of national identity and the construction of opinions about immigration-related issues. This methodology involves "a process of data collection that is often described as inductive in nature, in that the researcher has no preconceived ideas to prove or disprove" (Mills, Bonner, and Francis 2006, 26). Traditional grounded theory suggests that researchers should enter the field of inquiry with as few predetermined thoughts as possible (Mills, Bonner, and Francis 2006, 29). This was, however, not the case in this research: I engaged proactively with the literature throughout the research process. Doing so provided me with more information about different factors that could play a role in

defining the relationship between national identity and opinions about immigration and diversity (such as the role of confirmation and selection biases when seeking for and processing information about immigration and diversity in the media) and stimulated my thinking about this phenomenon. Building on Strauss and Corbin, the founding fathers of grounding theory, Mills et al. (2006, 29) consider "interweaving the literature throughout the process of evolved grounded theory as another voice contributing to the researcher's theoretical reconstruction." This proved to be particularly valuable when collecting and analyzing data, as the questions and categories developed were ultimately linked to different fields of research – thus directing me toward an exploration of the literature in political psychology, political culture and ideologies, media and political communication, and social movements (particularly on the far-right), and allowing me to grasp the complexity of the data.

Conducting Interviews

The interest of this research lies in individuals' conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, with a particular focus on their motivations, interests, and belief systems. Interviews conducted with both populations (i.e., Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of La Meute) thus consisted of questions about participants' conception of their (sub)national identity, their experiences with individuals of different origins, their opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, and more general questions about their opinions on politics in Quebec, Canada and elsewhere. For sympathizers of La Meute, questions about why and how they came to join the group (physically or virtually on Facebook) and their role in the group were also posed.

Grounded theory involves a constant comparative method throughout the research process, including during data collection and analysis. During data collection, while mobilizing the same interview grid across interviews, I included sub-questions to further explore topics that revealed similarities or differences with previous interviewees. For example, after conducting a few interviews, I noticed a similarity of opinions among individuals consulting similar sources of information (i.e., news media compared to far-right actors and groups on social media). I thus began to guide the interviews by paraphrasing interviewees' comments while asking them, in a non-judgemental way, "why they thought that" or "how they knew that". This approach helped me to elicit a discussion about the type of media consumed by interviewees, thus gaining a better understanding of the processes influencing the way they think about immigration-related issues.

Conducting interviews allowed me to address the way individuals conceive their national identity and their attitudes towards immigrants and ethnocultural minorities in a deeper and more specific way than statistical analysis. Indeed, most of the inferences that scholars make about political preferences and behaviors among the general public come from surveys and experimental research (Druckman, Green, Kiklinski and Lupia 2011). As a result, our understandings of the construction of opinions about immigration-related issues hinge on the relationship between two variables that are defined by researchers. Yet, my argument resides precisely in individuals' understanding of these variables and the way they make sense of immigration and ethnocultural diversity (also see Huddy 2001). Specifically, how do individuals conceive the 'us' and 'them' in Quebec, and how do these conceptions influence their opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity? Conducting interviews allowed me to go beyond looking at the attachment for one's national identity or country of origin in order to get a better understanding of the way individuals conceive and define the national identity and how this influences their opinions about

immigration and diversity. This allowed me to take into account the subjectivity, flexibility and contingency of conceptions of national identity.

In this research, conceptions of national identity were mainly assessed through engaging in two topics of discussion. First, interviewees were asked whether they considered themselves to be a Quebecer, a Canadian, both or neither of these – follow-up questions were then adapted to their answers in order to learn more about the way they conceive their pole of identification, such as "why?"; "what does it take to be a *true* Quebecer/Canadian for you?"; "can someone who lives in Quebec, but is not born in Quebec, be a *true* Quebecer/Canadian?" To engage in the second topic of discussion, I asked interviewees what the difference was between them and an immigrant. While interviewees' answers to these questions were particularly useful to understand who is included and excluded from their conception of the imagined national community (and were, most of the times, remarkably straightforward), the analysis was not limited to these answers: other information provided during the interview was also analyzed to grasp the boundaries between their explicit conception of identity and who was excluded from this conception during the interview. Throughout the interview, individuals established and (re)negotiated their identity. They offered narratives in which they stressed individual characteristics, behaviours and experiences that represented their conception of national identity. In these narratives, notions of 'us' and 'them' were pervasive and informed who they perceived as belonging or not to the nation (e.g., as many interviewees maintained at some point during the interview: "in my view, [(not) engaging in this behaviour] is not being a *true* Quebecer").

Questions on opinions about immigration-related issues included asking interviewees about their personal experiences with immigrants and people of different origins; what they considered the biggest problem regarding immigration in Quebec; and what would happen if the number of

immigrants admitted each year in the province were to increase. These questions were followed by sub-questions such as: what would be solutions to the perceived threats posed by immigration; how they came to think these ideas; and, from as far back as they could remember, had they always had these opinions. Conducting interviews proved to be an effective way to unravel individuals' opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, while exploring the ideas and belief systems informing these opinions. As argued by Krupnikov, Piston, and Bauer (2016), offering participants the opportunity to explain their views about sensitive topics (such as race and ethnicity) can lessen social desirability pressures. Indeed, doing so would offer participants a "psychological 'out' from social desirability pressures", as the participants are able to provide reasons and explanations for their socially undesirable attitudes (Krupnikov et al. 2016, 254). It thus decreases misrepresentation of preferences. However, it was still necessary to reduce social desirability pressures by creating a non-judgmental environment. I carefully explained and reminded interviewees that my aim was to understand their opinions about immigration-related issues and not to judge them. I also avoided prompting or reacting to interviewees' response so as not to give the impression that I was supporting or repressing their views – in an attempt to create a more neutral environment.

Engaging in discussions about patterns of inclusion and exclusion remains, nevertheless, a delicate endeavour. For some interviewees, these topics were even more sensitive as they came to realize they held more exclusive attitudes than they thought. In contrast, others positioned themselves as victims of "immigrants' imposition of their way of life" or of the perceived dispossession from "their nation". Finally, some were constantly challenging their own opinions – trying to convince me, or themselves, that their views were just and inclusive. Rephrasing their

opinions and asking if I understood them clearly proved to be a good solution for those expressing ambivalent and contrasting ideas.

Analytical Process

The analytical process was divided into four steps and was facilitated by using NVivo 12 (a qualitative data analysis software). The first step involved an open coding procedure. I carefully examined data in order to develop categories describing interviewees' perceptions, opinions and ideas about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, politics, media and society, conceptions of their (sub)national identity, experiences and relationships with immigrants and religious and ethnocultural minorities, sources of information, and any other themes highlighting how individuals make sense of immigration and diversity and why. Since my interest specifically lied in individuals' understanding of sociopolitical phenomena, the explicit content of the interviews was analyzed, so that the interviewees' own words were at the center of each category.

The second step was to compare similarities and differences of opinions and beliefs among all participants, and across the two populations under study (i.e., sympathizers of La Meute compared to Quebecers from the general public). Through these comparisons, categories were reviewed and refined, and core categories were identified. Core categories are selected "through [the] exploration of the centrality of the story, [the] narrative rendering of the analysis" (Mills, Bonner, and Francis 2006, 30).

The third step involved searching for connections between core categories. Specifically, I worked to identify specific features, such as conditions that could influence the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, going from holding positive stances about

immigration-related issues to holding more negative ones to endorsing radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies. This took the form of a conditions/consequences analysis; that is, when the condition X is present, the consequence Y is also present. These features were organized into schemes – for instance, different conceptions of 'us' and 'them', different sources of information consumed, and diverse belief systems were contrasted to identify if and how they influence the construction of different opinions about immigration-related issues. A particular attention was given to instances where there were variations and contradictions in the data. The last step was to build a conceptual framework to integrate the main categories, relationships and mechanisms into a coherent theory.

The theory presented in this research has been formulated from the data by developing provisional categories and mechanisms based on half of my data set, reformulating them throughout the research process so that they were empirically valid. I considered my analysis to be complete (or validated) when upon adding and comparing new interview data (the other half of the data set), I consistently found that the theoretical categories and the mechanism I had generated worked. This approach of checking and reworking the categories and the mechanism enabled me to verify whether the interpretation offered fit with and consistently explained interview data that were not originally part of the analysis. Ultimately, I believe that the validity of my analysis is best evaluated by the relevance, evidential adequacy and persuasiveness of my arguments and demonstrations.

Through the elaboration of a mechanism, my research deepens our understanding of the way different conceptions of national identity influence the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity in Quebec in both their mainstream and more radical forms. Specifically, my research contributes to theory building by specifying the operation and

influence of an evaluation mechanism based on civic, ethnic or cultural conceptions of national identity on the construction of a variety of opinions about immigration-related issues (see Paquet and Broschek 2017). Following Beach and Perdersen (2012: 172, quoted in Paquet and Broschek 2017, 298), I define mechanisms as a "theorized system that produces outcomes through the interaction of a series of parts that transmit causal forces from X to Y." The mechanism identified in my research is understood to generate causation, but it is not considered deterministic; it is flexible (for instance, it varies in term of the way in which it materializes among individuals) and contributes to a better understanding of the complex and dynamic relationships between national identity, information presented in news media and shared by far-right groups and actors on social media, and opinions about immigration related-issues (see Paquet and Broschek 2017: 300).

Reflexivity

Following Corbin and Strauss (2012, 9), I agree with the constructivist viewpoint that "concepts and theories are *constructed* by researchers out of stories that are constructed by research participants who are trying to explain and make sense of their [opinions,] experiences and/or lives, both to the researcher and themselves." It is out of these multiple (re)constructions that I have developed a conceptual framework to better understand how different conceptions of national identity influence the construction of (mainstream and radical) opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity in Quebec. Recognizing that personal experiences and identity, along with the cultural context in which we evolve, influence our understanding of the sociopolitical world, it was crucial to be self-reflective about how my own identity and preconceptions could influence the research process throughout.

I consider myself both an insider and an outsider of my research topic. These positions have had different implications throughout the research process. On the one hand, being a white, Quebec-born, French-speaking Quebecer facilitated the recruitment and interview processes. As one interviewee mentioned, reassured to be able to express herself openly: "Before coming here, I told my husband: what if she is not *really* from here and I cannot… say everything I think?" On the other hand, not being a member of an identity group and, more importantly, being a university student (and therefore associated with the liberal ideas cultivated by most of these institutions) did, at times, complicate the recruitment process. As a sympathizer of La Meute told me after I contacted him to explain my research and asked if he would be interested in participating: "I can already smell the influence of Adorno's works and the rest of the Frankfurt subversives […] whose objective seems to be to further pathologize nationalism." After reminding him that the objective of the research was to "understand the way he thinks about his identity and immigration" and not to "judge his point of view", he congratulated me (probably in a sarcastic way) for being "so impartial in the nest of an indoctrination center" and agreed to meet with me. These experiences suggest that the ability to get access to and build a relationship of trust with sympathizers of identity groups is possible, but can be constrained by the identity(ies) of the researcher (also see Ashe et al. 2020).

In this research, my dual identity as an insider and an outsider of my research topic also complicated the analysis process. Being close to my case study (composed of "ordinary" Quebecers and activists who could easily have been family members, colleagues or neighbours), but also far away from most of their ideas and opinions, was a sensitive and challenging undertaking. It was therefore crucial to be very mindful and intentional, and specifically to think about what kind of preconceptions I might be bringing to the analysis. Therefore, I kept a journal during my fieldwork

in which I would write down reflections about my own assumptions, emotions, first impressions and any other details that could have an impact on the data collection and analysis. Moreover, in order to challenge the reliability of my coding, I used the alterity of the data to identify my own preconceptions (seeing the data itself as an alternative voice to challenge my perspective) (see Fisher Smith et al. 2020).

Chapter 4: A Portrait of Mainstream and Radical Opinions about Immigration and Diversity in Quebec

Before exploring the specific mechanism linking conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity among Quebecers and sympathizers of La Meute, I describe how interviewees perceive, feel and think about immigration-related issues. This chapter builds on the political psychology literature to explore individuals' perceptions and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. Immigration and the management of diversity are complex, multi-faceted issues involving multiple considerations. They thus have the potential of being associated with positive (e.g. enthusiasm) or negative (e.g. insecurity) emotions related to perceptions that immigration and diversity benefit or threaten them personally or Quebec society (Kisić Merino, Capelos, and Kinnvall 2020, 77).

In this research, some interviewees have deeply entrenched opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. Specifically, a minority of Quebecers interviewed are enthusiastic about immigration and diversity, and endorse liberal immigration and integration policies, motivated by values of tolerance, social justice and inclusion. In comparison, another minority of Quebecers interviewed are insecure about all aspects of immigration and diversity and tend to favour restrictive immigration and integration policies in order to protect national sovereignty. This is also the case of a majority of interviewed sympathizers of La Meute; they are deeply insecure about immigration and position themselves against the growth in religious and ethnocultural diversity. However, their insecurity tends to be associated with different belief systems than those of other Quebecers. While Quebecers from the general public tend to endorse stereotypes and prejudices about immigrants, sympathizers of La Meute tends to adhere to conspiracy theories and white supremacist ideologies.

This cleavage between these two contrasting worldviews on immigration-related issues is, however, only a part of the story. Indeed, a majority of interviewees from the general public are more or less enthusiastic about immigration and diversity and hold both relatively positive and relatively negative stances about these issues, while predominantly emphasizing cultural considerations.

This chapter first presents perceptions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity shared among the few interviewees who are enthusiastic about most aspects of immigration (economic, humanitarian and cultural), followed by perceptions shared among the few interviewees who are insecure about most aspects of immigration (economic, security and cultural). It then presents two conspiracy theories that are endorsed by a majority of interviewed sympathizers of La Meute who are particularly insecure about immigration, that is the perceived threat of "Islamization" of Western countries and that of the "Great Replacement" of natives by immigrants[21]. Finally, this chapter presents the ways a majority of Quebecers interviewed balances perceived benefits and threats of immigration, with a particular consideration about the perceived impact of immigration on Quebec culture.

Enthusiasm Related to Immigration

Only a few interviewees are thoroughly enthusiastic about the perceived benefits of immigration for Quebec society, that is, without being insecure about any aspect of immigration. Among these interviewees, two main perceptions stand out: 1) the perception that immigration

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[21] The term "native" is often used to describe indigenous inhabitants. In the case of Quebec, this refers to the descendants of the French and/or English settlers. This is in contrast with "Indigenous", which refers to Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and communities.

represents an economic resource – this perception is associated with fostering immigrants' economic and social integration in Quebec society, while recognizing and valuing their cultural differences; and 2) the perception that immigration constitutes a humanitarian imperative – this perception is associated with values of tolerance, solidarity and social justice.

Some interviewees are predominantly enthusiastic about immigration due to economic considerations, such as the perceived impact of immigration for the national economy or demography. For example, Daniel argues that Quebec needs immigrants to offset labour shortages and increase the vitality of the province given declining birth rates and ageing population:

Interviewer: What do you think is the biggest problem with immigration in Quebec?

Daniel: The biggest problem with immigration? I don't know if there is a big problem with immigration… For me, it takes immigrants because, first of all, we don't make children anymore! I come from a family of ten children; then I had two children; then my two children have two children – you see? So we need people to work and everything.

Daniel emphasizes the potential social and economic benefits of immigration, and he is enthusiastic about keeping the same level of immigration intakes in Quebec. To maximize immigrants' integration and contribution to Quebec society, he maintains that the government should provide newcomers with "the necessary tools to integrate" and "function within society". This includes promoting the learning of French or English. However, he acknowledges that it is difficult for some immigrants to acquire new languages – for multiple reasons that vary from one individual to another, but especially for the elderly and refugees suffering from traumas – and thus maintains that society must remain open and tolerant of this reality and should not make language a criterion of exclusion. Another example is provided by Nicolas who is in favour of increasing immigration

intakes because it would revive the Quebec economy and meet labor needs. He perceives, however, that most immigrants settle in Montreal, thus resulting in the rest of the province receiving a negligible proportion of the immigrant population. To overcome this situation, Nicolas argues to remove barriers to integration by promoting multiculturalist policies in Quebec's rural areas:

> Newcomers might look for traces of their country of origin. They might go to the religious temple that is located close to their home or to the religious institution representing them – and it is ok that they look for that. But if we don't offer this outside of the Montreal area, well that will create ghettoization and there won't be many [immigrants] elsewhere.

Interviewees like Daniel and Nicolas mainly emphasize the perceived benefits of immigration for Quebec economy and tend to be enthusiastic about immigration. To accommodate and facilitate immigrants' social and economic integration into Quebec society, these interviewees tend to favour multiculturalist integration policies.

For other interviewees, immigration mainly represents a humanitarian act, upholding values of tolerance, solidarity and social justice. These individuals are proud that the country welcomes immigrants and refugees in relatively large numbers and argue that these numbers should be maintained or even increased, emphasizing that those in need or whose lives are in danger should also have access to safety and decent living conditions. As Sophie argues:

> It is in the interest of Quebecers to welcome more immigrants, because our population is aging; we are going to need them, but also because we have the means to do so. It is a question of solidarity, social justice: populations in Southern countries will often be the most affected by the climate crisis – when it is the populations of the North that have caused

it in a more important way. Well, immigration is a way to repair the situation by making room for them, by welcoming them when their living environment is no longer habitable.

In the eyes of Sophie, immigration is a matter of social justice and human rights values. This perception is also shared by Alexandra who maintains that, beyond immigrants' cultural and social contributions to Quebec society, immigration is a human right:

Sometimes [immigration] is not about life and death, it's about quality of life. People just want the best for themselves, and that's a right: it's a basic need like drinking water. It's normal to want to live better. Based on that, I think I would say [to immigrants]: come [in Quebec]!

Interviewees like Sophie and Alexandra tend to have positive opinions about immigration and favour multiculturalist integration policies in order to strengthen social cohesion, to accommodate immigrants and to support their full participation in society. These individuals also tend to perceive that immigration contributes to the well-being and culture of Quebec society. As Alexandra puts it: "there is so much to learn from them", claiming that immigrants expand Quebec culture by introducing new ideas, cultural traditions and customs. Alexandra values cultural differences, which, she argues, contribute to the vitality of Quebec society.

Interviewees like Daniel, Nicolas, Sophie and Alexandra are enthusiastic about the perceived positive impacts of immigration for Quebec society – mainly emphasizing economic and humanitarian considerations – and they hold positive opinions about immigration (i.e., keeping the same level or increasing immigration intakes) and favour multiculturalist integration policies. These individuals tend to value openness to diversity, inclusion and cultural exchanges. This is in sharp contrast with other interviewees who are insecure about most aspects of immigration,

including the perceived negative impacts of immigration on Quebec's economy, security and ethnic fabric.

Insecurity Related to Immigration

A minority of Quebecers and a majority of sympathizers of La Meute interviewed in this research emphasize perceived negative impacts of immigration for Quebec society. These individuals highlight economic, security and ethnocultural insecurities related to immigration, dovetailing with negative stereotypes about immigrants and ethnic and racial prejudices. These individuals tend to favour a reduction in immigration intakes and assimilationist policies to protect national sovereignty from increasing diversity.

Some of these interviewees are predominantly insecure about immigration due to the perception that it has negative <u>economic</u> impacts on Quebec society. This includes the perception that an increasing presence of immigrants constitutes an economic burden and increases crime rates. Scholars of public opinion suggest that economic and crime insecurities mainly take two forms: that of insecurities for one's self (egocentric) and for the well-being of the nation (sociotropic) (Burns and Gimpel 2000). The analysis suggests that the latter is far more prevalent among interviewees. For instance, most of interviewees' restrictive opinions about immigration that are associated with economic insecurities are justified by perceptions of welfare services and labour market competition between immigrants and Quebecers (as opposed to between immigrants and them personally). An example of this is provided by Bruno who calls into question whether or not immigration is good for the national economy and safety. Bruno maintains that declining

standards of living and violence in increasingly diverse neighbourhoods is an illustration that immigrants are not doing well economically:

> My mother was from Montreal, and she stayed in Côte-des-Neiges [neighbourhood] in the 60s and... it wasn't the same as it is today. I also stayed in Montreal in the 80s and Côte-des-Neiges started... I used to stay up the hill, but if you went down the hill, it was rougher. In my opinion, today, in Montreal, there are a lot of areas that... We don't see it right away, but in the long term, we'll see it. I think it's even too late, the way it's doing now, it's just going to amplify, amplify, amplify. […] You know, at some point, there is a capacity limit. And this is not because people are bad: they come here and they do not have the means to make it, and when you cannot make it, it does not go well. [Specifically, it results in "the creation of ghettos" and "violence"].

As illustrated in this excerpt, Bruno fears that immigration results in deteriorating economic conditions and increasing violence. In his eyes, this is the consequence of selecting immigrants with lower skills and income. He thus argues that Quebec should have stricter immigration criteria regarding the level of education and social status of newcomers. In the meantime, he argues for a decrease in immigration intakes. A similar pattern is illustrated by Jean, who favours a reduction in immigration intakes and maintains that immigrants should be selected based on the province's employment needs.

> Interviewer: What do you think will happen if the number of immigrants admitted annually to Quebec increases?

> Jean: If we are smart enough to accept refugees and immigrants who have the skills and professions we need; it will be good. But if we continue to accept just about anyone, then

we're going to end up with social problems, because we're going to have too many unemployed, and then the important jobs won't be covered – as it is more or less the case right now. They bring in anyone, and then, you see that in businesses, there are not enough people. It's terrible the shortage of staff there is everywhere. Just in hospitals, it's astronomical!

Some individuals, like Bruno and Jean, hold stereotypical images of who immigrants are. Specifically, most immigrants would be uneducated, manual workers, poor and would accept to work at lower wages. Based on these stereotypes, they perform cost-benefit calculations of the perceived impact of immigration on Quebec society well-being and conclude that immigration constitutes an economic burden. This perception of immigration is associated with a preference for restrictive immigration policies.

In the case of other interviewees, however, economic insecurities associated with immigration are rooted in ethnic and racial prejudices. Discourse involving the idea that immigrants "are lazy", "do not want to work" or tend to engage in criminal activities "more than us" (often associated to the colour of their skin) constitute examples. These individuals thus favour giving Quebecers priority over jobs, housing, health care and welfare benefits – as opposed to "undeserving" immigrants. As Éric argues:

There are [immigrants] who have no respect and who come here to do crimes and other things, and who cost us a lot of money instead of contributing to the economy. How many are in prison because they have committed crimes? Immigrants do not adapt to our society and now we pay for them. This is my opinion and that of many others.

Interviewees like Éric perceive that immigrants are more inclined to be unemployed and to engage in criminal activities than the rest of the population, due to their prejudices toward people of different origins. These interviewees tend to favour a reduction in immigration intakes.

In the eyes of other interviewees, immigration represents a potential national security threat. This insecurity is largely associated with Muslim immigrants, perceived as increasing risks of terrorism and other sources of violence. Interviewees explain this association through the perception that Islam would incite violent and conquering practices. An example of this is provided by Sofia who feels very insecure about the arrival of Syrian refugees in Canada, arguing that this could lead to terrorist attacks in the country:

> In some countries, they organized street protests not so long ago – after the terrorist acts in Germany, at the airport and all that. People got together so that Muslims could not enter. Because the refugees went to many countries and it could have been a double-edged sword: after accepting them into the country, [the receiving society] would have been bombed. But here [in Quebec], we do nothing about that…

Individuals who hold insecurities fueled by their association of Muslim immigrants with violence and terrorism tend to favour a reduction in (Muslim) immigration intakes. They also support policies that reify the secularism of the state and the implementation of a values test for newcomers to attest of their attitudes toward Western democracy and its values.

Finally, some interviewees emphasize ethnocultural insecurities that are embedded in a perceived increase in ethnic and racial heterogeneity. Specifically, these individuals perceive immigration as a zero-sum game in which the increasing presence of immigrants signifies the decreasing presence of Quebecers. Immigration is thus perceived as jeopardizing the long-term

survival of the national group and culture because it would alter the ethnic fabric of Quebec society. When explaining the perceived impacts of immigration on Quebec society, these interviewees use statements such as "Quebecers will disappear", "we will become a minority in our own country" and "Quebecers will be replaced". The following except further illustrates this dynamic:

> Interviewer: What do you think will happen if the number of immigrants we receive in Quebec each year increases?

> Jane: Oh, I disagree. Why [would we increase immigration intakes]? I don't agree to increase it indefinitely. It's not because there won't be any more room, it's because there won't be any more Quebecers. Due to their quantity, they will prevail. They're going to take the monopoly... of... race. This is not because Quebecers are going to leave; Quebecers are going to stay here, but with [immigrants] coming here... Are we going to be half and half? I don't know. Before, we were all Quebecers. [...] Now, I'm afraid that there would be too many of them.

As illustrated in this excerpt, Jane perceives that there are too many immigrants coming in Quebec, which makes her feel insecure about the composition of society. In her eyes, an increasing presence of immigrants jeopardizes the long-term survival of the national group. Individuals like Jane tend to be critical of liberal immigration policies, arguing that this could lead to Quebecers become a minority or even to disappear. While these participants tend to favour a significant reduction in immigration intakes to ensure that the composition of society is not altered, they also support assimilationist policies as a way of reducing the impact of immigrants' presence on Quebec society.

As illustrated, a minority of Quebecers and of sympathizers of La Meute have deep insecurities about the potential consequences of immigration for Quebec society that are related to

economic, security and ethnocultural threat perceptions and rooted in negative stereotypes and in ethnic or racial prejudices. In the case of a majority of interviewed sympathizers of La Meute, however, these insecurities are justified or rationalized through adhering to conspiracy theories and white supremacist ideologies. These individuals hold radical, negative and restrictive opinions about immigration and integration issues.

Conspiracy Theories Shared Among Sympathizers of La Meute

A majority of interviewed sympathizers of La Meute perceives that Muslim immigrants pose a serious threat to Quebec community. Specifically, they maintain that Muslims would be engaged in a tightly organized and well-advanced conspiracy to take over the world and impose authoritarian Islamic rule, starting with European countries, the United States, Canada and Quebec – a process referred to as the "Islamization" of Western democracies (Bergmann 2018). From their perspective, Muslims would thus compete for political and legal sovereignty, as well as cultural autonomy, and would aspire to "replace" the native Quebec population, whether by mobilizing legal means or terrorist actions.

These conspiratorial ideas are made tangible through concrete assessments of how the Islamization of the province will allegedly occur (i.e. the "steps" toward Islamization). Indeed, most sympathizers of La Meute endorsing the idea of Islamization have a clear idea of how Muslims are allegedly going to succeed in imposing authoritarian Islamic rule. In their eyes, the Islamization of a society proceeds in different steps, starting with Muslims immigrating and "reproducing massively" to populate the host society. This would be followed by normalizing their presence and "imposing their values" (e.g. women's domination) and ideologies (e.g. the practice

of Islam). The following excerpt illustrates this through Jules's perception of how Muslims aim to dominate and replace Quebecers:

> What you need to know is that, in Islam, they have what they call the Jihad. In the Jihad, there are three steps. The first step: they settle somewhere. The second step: they assert their Islamic rights. The third step is the Islamization. Now, we are in the second step: Muslims and Islamists assert their right to Islam. They want their own schools, Koranic schools, they want their own cemeteries, they want their own courts, Sharia courts. They said that we reject them, but they are clearly setting themselves apart! They do not want to recognize our rights, our values, our laws! They refuse our laws. They do not want to integrate. They flew away from their country to come here, but now that they got here, they want to transform our country into the country they flew away from in the first place. In the long term, it will be an Islamic Quebec or an Islamic Canada.

Like Jules, most sympathizers of La Meute adhering to the conspiracy of the Islamization of Quebec maintain it has already begun and thus share deep insecurities related to (Muslim) immigration. As Stephan puts it: "there are as many mosques that are built as Catholic churches that are closing. This means a lot. It is a symbol; it is a sign of a major change." Examples suggesting that Islamization has also begun in other countries mentioned by interviewed sympathizers of La Meute include stories about neighbourhoods being governed by Islam in Belgium or Sharia law being imposed in England. As Lucie argues:

> This is very disappointing. People think that this kind of thing [the Islamization] only happens elsewhere. As if we were smarter than anybody else and that this won't happen here. I would like people to explain to me why this won't happen here, while it is happening everywhere? Everywhere. Can someone tell me one country where they have entered, and

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things are going well: where it's true happiness? Just one! Nowhere. I read the other day; I think it is in Belgium: gays cannot even get out of their home because of Islam!

Interviewees like Jules and Lucie tend to favour reducing or stopping Muslim immigration in Quebec.

For these sympathizers of La Meute, the vision of an increasing presence of Muslim immigrants in the province, coupled with requests for religious accommodations, suggests that Quebecers will eventually be dominated by Muslims. For example, many associate Muslims' mobilization against recent legislative bills to restrict the right of certain Quebec public servants to display religious symbols as a demonstration of premeditated actions to "impose" their values on Quebecers, including requiring women to wear the veil (although the opinions of non-Muslims and Muslims were divided on the issue of prohibiting certain public servants from wearing religious symbols, some arguing that it is necessary to bolster state secularism, while others maintain that it marginalizes religious minorities and unfairly targets Muslim women). In the eyes of Pierre, bills restricting the display of religious symbols are necessary to prevent Muslims' domination over Quebecers. As he puts it:

> I agree 100% with Bill 21, because I don't want these people [Muslims] to use all the doors. As I was saying earlier, they progressively use doors to enter and try to control people here. When they are wearing the veil – when they expose their religion –, they are influencing people and children in schools and in childcare centres. This is not good.

While sympathizers of La Meute tend to support Bill 21, many argue that this policy should be stricter and ban the wearing of Islamic veils in public spaces.

Assessments of when the Islamization of Quebec would reach a point of no return vary widely from one sympathizer of La Meute to another. However, all agree that it is necessary to respond preventively to this threat. Political discourse and actions that do not prevent changes related to the presence of Muslims from happening are thus perceived as opening the door to or promoting the Islamization of the province. This kind of discourse is often supplemented with narratives about the UN being controlled by Muslim extremists or Prime Minister Trudeau working hand in hand with Islamists – otherwise, considering the magnitude of the perceived threat posed by Muslims, why would Prime Minister Trudeau allow them into the country?

A majority of interviewed sympathizers of La Meute endorse the vision that the increasing presence of Muslim immigrants in Quebec could hinder the dominance and survival of the national group. A few others, for their part, openly endorse white supremacist views and see the presence of immigrants in Quebec as threatening dominant whiteness. These individuals maintain that liberal and multiculturalist immigration policies are part of a plan that seek to "replace" Quebecers by immigrants. This idea is embedded in a white supremacist conspiracy theory known as the "Great Replacement" (see Cosentino 2020). This conspiracy suggests that powerful elites are responsible for a plan aimed at replacing white populations with immigrants of different ethnicities – what Patrick refers to as "the conquest". "Mass immigration", unregulated demographic growth among immigrants and low birth rates among whites would be promoted by governments as a way of jeopardizing the genetic and cultural heritage of white people. As John puts it:

I don't want to undergo demographic replacement. Quebec won't be Quebec if it does not belong to Quebecers. […] When I am on the bus in Montreal, most of the time, I am the [white] minority. And this is the same thing in Paris, London, Malmö, Copenhagen. All

metropolitan cities are subjected; they are objects of the same phenomenon. Try to tell me that the Great Replacement is a conspiracy when I can see it with my own eyes.

Sympathizers of La Meute like John are opposed to immigration (considered as "mass immigration") due to their perception that white Quebecers are being overtaken in the province by the presence of immigrant populations. They fear that native Quebecers are losing their hold on Quebec as a majority and believe that the same phenomenon is happening in other Western countries. For them, demographic changes represent the erosion of dominant whiteness in society and will eventually lead to whites' extinction – what some refer to as the "white genocide" due to the perceived replacement of natives by immigrants. As Mathieu maintains:

> We are going to be assimilated. This is already happening. Right-wing groups have been talking about this for a long time: white genocide. This is happening. This is a term that will never be used in the media because it is not a genocide like that of the Jews: it is not direct and violent. It is a form of genocide that is like… like a trap: we are voluntarily assimilating! In 100 years, the white race will no longer exist if we keep doing mass immigration. Our genes are going to disappear. We are already at maybe 10-12% of immigrants in Quebec? And this is exponential.

Though mainstream scholars on nations and nationalism have long discredited primordialist view of nations as rooted in shared heritage and cultural characteristics among members of the same ethnic group (e.g. Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983), interviewed sympathizers of La Meute that are endorsing the theory of the "Great Replacement" take this as a given. They sense that members of a community understand themselves better and are more unified when they are among their own

people in their native land. As explained by Stern (2019), white nationalists' version of diversity purports to accept radical differences and "respect" races by separating them.[22] In their eyes, separate nations would allow different races to flourish according to their own capacities and to live in accordance with their own identity. The promotion of separate nations is understood as a way to preserve differences across distinct cultures and, therefore, protect diversity. As John argues:

> If you replace Quebecers by another pillar, another group: this group is going to fight to keep its own things. They do not have any connection to the land or to the culture: they will want to implement what they had in their own country. In the long term, this will create conflicts. We can already see this in the United States: there are schools closing for weeks because of conflicts between Blacks, Mexicans, Vietnamese and so on. There are multiple studies showing that people are more comfortable among their own people and this is why small communities are created. This is normal. If I was a Vietnamese, I would not want to be the only Vietnamese in the neighbourhood: I would like to be around people who understand me, who understand my values, my country and everything.

Following this idea, John supports the idea of "remigration", that is reversing multiculturalism through mass deportation of immigrants back to their country of origin – regardless of their citizenship status. He also opposes miscegenation, which is conceived as diluting the pure bloodstock of whites (based on the view that fundamental differences distinguish one race from another).

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[22] White nationalism is often presented by its proponents as contrasting with white supremacism, which argues for white domination over mixed-race populations. Yet, as explained by Hawley (2017, 13), white nationalism was elaborated to make white supremacist views more palatable.

All interviewed sympathizers of La Meute hold negative opinions about immigration and religious and ethnocultural diversity. Their opinions about these issues, however, are more or less radical depending on whether they are informed by threat perceptions or conspiracy theories. Specifically, a majority of interviewed sympathizers of La Meute is deeply insecure about what they perceive as an ongoing conspiracy of "Islamization" of Quebec or "great replacement" of Quebecers. These individuals hold radical, negative opinions about immigration and diversity. A minority of sympathizers of La Meute, for their part, join the minority of Quebecers from the general public in holding insecurities about perceived threats of (Muslim) immigrants for Quebec's economy, security and ethnicity and endorsing negative opinions about immigration and diversity.

The Centrality of Culture in Quebecers' Insecurity

As demonstrated so far, only a minority of Quebecers interviewed are deeply enthusiastic about perceived economic and humanitarian aspects of immigration. In contrast, another minority of Quebecers and a majority of sympathizers of La Meute interviewed in this research are deeply insecure about perceived economic, security and (ethno)cultural threats of immigration for Quebec society. These diametrically opposed views of immigration and ethnocultural diversity are, however, only a part of the story. In fact, the majority of Quebecers (but also a minority of sympathizers of La Meute) interviewed balance perceived positive and negative impacts of immigration, with a particular consideration for the potential transformations that immigration could bring to Quebec culture. Indeed, beyond perceptions that immigration represents an economic benefit or threat, a humanitarian imperative or a security threat, cultural considerations are central in the way a majority of those interviewed think about immigration-related issues.

A majority of interviewees hold insecurities related to the perception that the national culture may eventually erode or is eroding due to the presence of immigrants. These insecurities are particularly salient, even among interviewees who hold positive opinions about immigration. Specifically, these individuals perceive that immigrants bring into Quebec society different languages, ways of life and values, thus hindering the majority culture predominance and continuity. These cultural insecurities echo the perspective of Quebec's historical position as a French-speaking minority within an Anglophone Canada (Bouchard 2012). For most, Quebec culture is essential for maintaining the province's difference and its existence as a distinct society (especially, French language as a vehicle of culture and a symbol of differentiation in a predominantly English-speaking Canada). In this line of reasoning, many feel insecure about the threat that globalization and immigration would pose to Quebec culture. Globalization is perceived as subjecting the province to global trends that would favour cultural homogenization (e.g. favouring English as the predominant language in various fields), while immigration would contribute to erasing Quebec cultural distinctiveness. An example of this is provided by Alex, who fears that immigration could lead to the assimilation of Quebecers into an English and multicultural Canada. As he argues:

> There are many places in the world that have been inhabited by people coming from different places and with different cultures, and some cultures have been absorbed by others, and now it's a different culture. This has happened everywhere in the course of history, so there is no reason for history to stop today and for there to be no more cultural transformations in Quebec.

Insecurities related to the perceived consequences of immigration on the dominant culture in Quebec, as those expressed by Alex, are often substantiated by the perception that most immigrants

adopt the English language and preserve their own cultural heritage. When expressing their insecurities about the impact of immigration on Quebec culture, interviewees used statements such as "the disappearance of the Francophone community in Quebec", "our assimilation" (that of the majority group) and "losing our culture" (the majority group culture).

Cultural insecurities shared by participants also include the perception that immigrants endorse values and practices that differ from and would be at odds with those of the Quebec society. This is especially the case of religious immigrant populations wearing conspicuous religious symbols including Muslims, Jews and Sikhs. Immigrants (and religious minorities) who publicly identify with a religion are perceived as prioritizing values and practices that would be valued by their religion over those deemed shared by Quebecers, and thus pursuing different interests. Participants point to (some) religious minorities asking that their children do not attend sex education or swimming lessons as examples of their different values. Requests for religious accommodations are also mentioned as an indication that religious minorities ask Quebecers to adapt to their practices, and not the other way around. In the words of many: "*they* impose their religion on *us*" (my emphasis). For example, many perceive that, through the promotion of different values and practices, such as the wearing of religious symbols, religious minorities could eventually threaten Quebec secularism. As argued by Sylvain:

> It's been a long time since we took the [Catholic] Sisters out of the schools. It took a long time before we managed to get out of the Catholic religion; we cannot remove one religion from state positions and replace it with another. Because a teacher with any religious sign is always going to have an influence on the child.

In the eyes of Sylvain, the lack of a dominant religion in Quebec has created a void that can be filled by others. This generates an insecurity related to a return of religion in public institutions, such as schools (i.e. a process of de-secularization).

Cultural insecurities rooted in religious threat perceptions are even more pronounced when associated to Muslim immigrants. Some maintain that Muslims' values are fundamentally different than those of Quebecers, thus creating conflicting ways of life (also see Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007). For instance, ideas and practices that come to mind for many interviewees when thinking about Muslims are related to oppression, especially of women. As Gertrude puts it: "[Muslims] impose so many things. Just about women – that I find terrible; the wife is so submitted to her husband." Moreover, the hijab, the niqab and the Islamic law invoke negative connotations and associations with non-modern or "backward" practices. As Rita argues: "When we see Muslim women, covered from head to toe: the husband is in front and then the wife follows behind. The man who would force me to do that is not in this world, oh, no, no, no!" As such, many perceive that Muslims' religious customs collide with Quebec's liberal and secular values, including the principles of tolerance, egalitarianism and democracy. Interviewees who share cultural insecurities related to the presence of immigrants and religious minorities tend to support policies that reify the secularism of the state and the implementation of a values test for newcomers to attest of their attitudes toward Western democracy and its values.

Cultural insecurities do not, however, prevent interviewees to recognize and appreciate immigrants' contribution to Quebec cultural scene, including international and multicultural art festivals, restaurants, and music – but only as long as immigrants' cultural heritage does not threaten that of the majority. These individuals thus tend to favour interculturalist or assimilationist policies. An example of this is provided by Claire, who recognizes the benefits of immigration on

the cultural scene of the province. As she puts it: "There are immigrants who open restaurants, who share their culture with us. It's a positive experience; they have something to bring to us". However, she fears that "our French language goes backwards" and maintains that "when immigrants arrive, they should learn to speak French". If the number of immigrants in Quebec who learn the French language does not increase, she argues, immigration intakes should be reduced to protect the majority language.

For a majority of Quebecers interviewed, the perception that immigration threatens Quebec culture is central in their evaluation of the potential costs and benefits of immigration for Quebec society. Specifically, in addition to cultural considerations, many of these individuals perceive that immigration constitutes an economic resource or threat, a humanitarian act and/or a security threat. However, the need to protect Quebec culture is the most salient consideration when thinking about immigration policies and the management of religious and ethnocultural diversity.

Conclusion

This chapter provides insights about the ways interviewees perceive, think and feel about immigration-related issues. It deepens our understanding of individuals' motivations in supporting more inclusive or restrictive immigration policies and models of management of religious and ethnocultural diversity. It also illustrates the ways a majority of interviewed sympathizers of La Meute endorse conspiracy theories and legitimize radical stances about immigration and ethnocultural diversity (also see Hawley 2017) – a topic largely understudied in the context of Quebec, where research on identity groups and far-right ideologies are scarce (see Tanner and Campana 2020; Potvin 2017).

This descriptive account of perceptions and opinions about immigration and diversity shared among Quebecers and sympathizers of La Meute shows that it is possible to categorize interviewees into three broad groups. The first group is composed of a minority of Quebecers and refers to interviewees in favour of liberal and multiculturalist immigration and integration policies. These individuals are enthusiastic about immigration, emphasizing its perceived benefits, valuing openness to the world and to diversity, and embracing cosmopolitan values. The second group is composed of a majority of sympathizers of La Meute (and a minority of Quebecers). It refers to interviewees in favour of restrictive and assimilationist immigration and integration policies. These individuals are insecure about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, highlighting the perceived erosion of their privileges and status due to the presence of immigrants. Deep insecurities related to immigration are, in some cases (i.e. among the majority of interviewed sympathizers of La Meute), associated with conspiracy theories about (Muslim) immigrants. These two contrasting stances over immigration and ethnocultural diversity reveal a strong cleavage among some interviewees and resonate with what scholars describe as a sociopolitical divide between materialist and post-materialist values (Inglehart 1990), libertarianism and authoritarianism (Kitschelt 1994) or populism and cosmopolitan liberalism (Inglehart and Norris 2016).

The third group, for its part, consists of the majority of Quebecers from the general public (and a minority of sympathizers of La Meute) interviewed and refers to those for whom culture trumps other considerations about immigration (including economic, security and humanitarian considerations). These individuals are open to immigration as long as it does not erode the majority culture. They thus favour interculturalist or assimilationist policies to prevent cultural change. These results echo research on public opinion about immigration-related issues in Quebec, which

highlights the persistence of long-standing cultural insecurities (Bilodeau and Turgeon 2014; Turgeon and Bilodeau 2014; Bouchard 2012).

This descriptive account of perceptions and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity shared among Quebecers and sympathizers of La Meute raises two main questions. First, how can we make sense of the construction of positive and negative opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity? Specifically, how are different opinions about immigration and diversity related to different conceptions of national identity and what is the mechanism behind this relationship? This question contrasts the different opinions of those who endorse diametrically opposed (and almost unyielding) stances over immigration and diversity (e.g. supporting an increase or a decrease in immigration intakes; supporting multiculturalist or assimilationist policies). It also contrasts the opinions of those who first emphasize cultural considerations (i.e. the majority of Quebecers interviewed) and those who are divided between holding positive and negative opinions about immigration and diversity – their opinions being more nuanced as they rest on immigrants and ethnocultural minorities' adoption of the national culture.

Second, how can we make sense of individuals who, beyond holding negative opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, adhere to radical anti-Muslim or white supremacist ideologies? Specifically, how do they come to encounter and endorse these negative, radical views? This question primarily refers to sympathizers of La Meute who adhere to conspiracy theories and legitimate radical political actions (e.g. reducing or stopping Muslims immigration; banning the wearing of Islamic veils in public spaces; "remigration", etc.). The following chapters address these questions by analyzing and comparing the way different conceptions of national identity influence the construction of opinions about immigration and diversity among Quebecers and sympathizers of La Meute.

Section 2: Evaluating Who Belongs to the National Group

This section addresses the second sub-question of my research, that is: what is the mechanism behind the relationship between the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity? My investigation shows that, while each conception of national identity has a particular relationship with immigration and ethnocultural diversity, they all hinge on a *mechanism of evaluation* through which individuals assess immigrants and ethnocultural minorities' inclusion in the national group. This evaluation influences individuals' opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity.

Specifically, chapter 5 presents an analysis of the relationship between civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural identity in Quebec. It shows that this relationship can be better explained by a mechanism of evaluation through which individuals assess if immigrants and minorities are part of the national group based on their conformity to inclusive (civic conceptions) or exclusive (ethnic conceptions) markers of identity. The mechanism of evaluation behind these conceptions of national identity is rooted in a rigid assessment of immigrants and ethnocultural minorities' conformity to specific markers of identity: most immigrants and ethnocultural minorities tend to conform to civic markers of identity and the opposite is true for ethnic markers of identity. Positive and negative evaluations of immigrants and minorities' conformity to specific markers of identity tend to respectively result in positive and negative opinions about immigration and diversity. This contrasts with the mechanism of evaluation behind cultural conceptions of national identity. Indeed, as shown in chapter 6, the relationship between cultural conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural identity hinges on a more flexible mechanism of evaluation through which individuals assess whether or not most immigrants and ethnocultural minorities seem to adopt the

national culture. Positive evaluations of cultural compliance tend to be associated with positive opinions about immigration and diversity, while negative evaluations of cultural compliance tend to be associated with negative opinions. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

Further exploring the way the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity relate to immigration and ethnocultural diversity allows us to refine the theorization of each of these conceptions and deepens our understanding of their attitudinal ramifications. It also contributes to a better understanding of the difference between individuals who endorse diametrically opposed stances over immigrants and diversity, compared to those who first emphasize cultural considerations and who hold both positive and negative opinions about immigration and diversity.

Figure 2 : Evaluation Mechanism Behind the Relationship between Conceptions of National Identity and Opinions about Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity
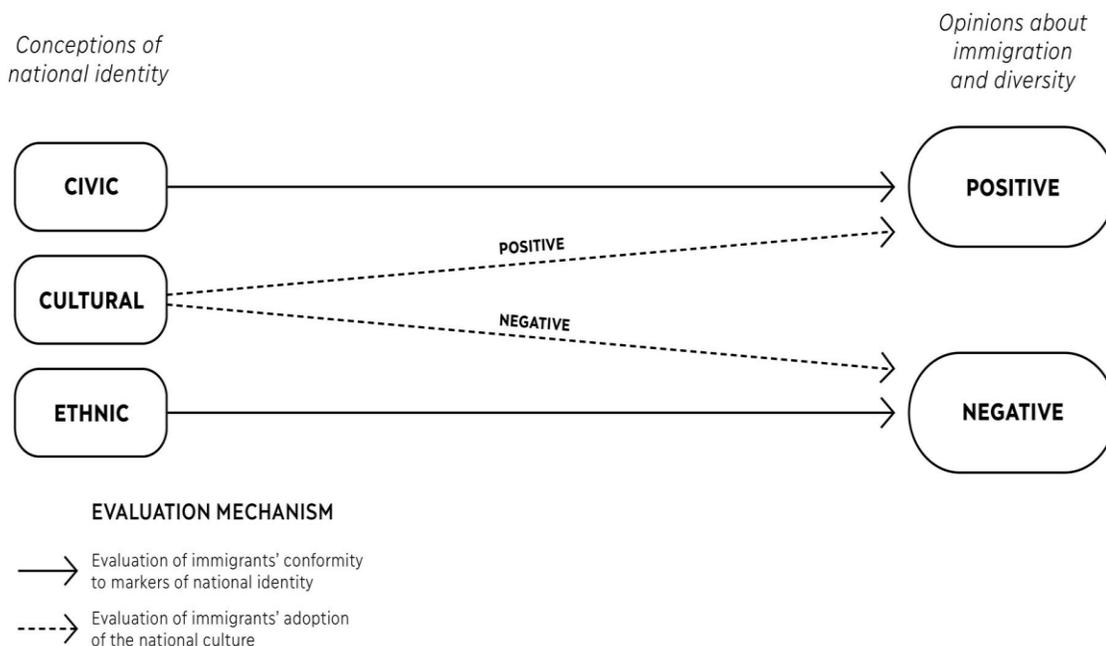
Chapter 5: Exploring the Civic and Ethnic Divide in Quebecers' Conceptions of National Identity

Building on the literature on the relationship between national identity and immigration (Theiss-Morse 2009; Wright 2011; Simonsen 2016; Bilodeau et al. 2021), this chapter places individuals' conceptions of the national in-group at the centre of analysis. Specifically, it explores how Quebecers from the general public and sympathizers of La Meute draw boundaries between who is included in the imagined national community and who is not (i.e. categorizations of the 'us' and 'them'), and how this influences the construction of their opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. It argues that each conception of national identity provides the basis for the evaluation mechanism concerning who is accepted in the community and on what conditions. Some markers of national identity are exclusive in nature and thus make it more difficult, if not impossible, for immigrants and ethnocultural minorities to be evaluated as conforming to the national in-group, thereby resulting in greater differentiation, othering and, in some cases, dehumanization (the opposite is true for markers of identity that are inclusive in nature). This can limit immigrants and ethnocultural minorities' access to the "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) and result in the construction of negative opinions about immigration and diversity.

This chapter presents an analysis of the ways interviewees conceive their (sub)national identity and focuses on the usual binary conceptions mobilized by scholars of nations and nationalism, that is the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity (Smith 1986; 1991; Breton 1988; Wright, Citrin, and Wand 2012; also see Brubaker 1999). It highlights significant differences in the criteria that define membership to the nation from these two perspectives and thus influence how individuals distinguish "nationals" from "others". It also shows that the way individuals conceive the national in-group and evaluate who is excluded from it plays a crucial role in the construction of their opinions about immigration and diversity.

It is important to note that while some interviewees consider themselves as both Canadians and Quebecers and a few as Canadians first, the large majority consider themselves as Quebecers first or only Quebecers, an observation consistent with findings of other research on Quebecers' feeling of identification (Mendelsohn 2002). However, whether interviewees identify as Quebecers, Canadians or both, they tend to endorse similar patterns of boundary drawing, that have similar implications regarding their relationship with immigration.[23] For ease of reading, this text mainly refers to the Quebec identity, except when it focuses specifically on an interviewee considering himself/herself otherwise, and employs "national identity" to designate Quebec or Canadian identity.

The Civic Conception of National Identity

The civic conception of national identity includes markers of identity such as residing within the nation territory, respecting the nation's laws and institutions, and having the host national citizenship (also see Reijerse et al. 2013). This conception involves very few identity markers and those involved are easily attainable. Therefore, it is the most open to newcomers and members of religious and ethnocultural minority groups. Interviewees who endorse such a conception tend to accept (almost) anyone in the national group and to hold positive stances on immigration and diversity. Moreover, they tend to believe that equality and social cohesion are better achieved through the recognition and valorization of cultural differences. This indicates that the civic conception of national identity involves little differentiation. Specifically, because their

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[23] In their study on the ways Quebecers and other Canadians construct their national identity, Bilodeau and Turgeon (2020) also find that individuals living in Quebec and in the rest of Canada broadly draw the boundaries of their nation in similar ways and with similar implications.

in-group conception is inclusive, it leaves less room for inter-group comparison and for exaggerating differences between them. Among the participants to whom I talked, only a few endorse a civic conception of national identity, and none of them were sympathizers of the group La Meute. Discourses among individuals endorsing the civic conception of national identity were significantly less tinged with stereotypes and prejudices than among those endorsing other conceptions. The following excerpt illustrates the view that Quebec identity is voluntarist and inclusive:

> Interviewer: For you, what is a Quebecer?
>
> Joseph: Well… for me a Quebecer is simply someone who lives in Quebec. Someone who integrates… who lives in Quebec.
>
> Interviewer: What do you mean by "integrate"?
>
> Joseph: Well… I mean… who respects the laws. Well, for me, it's quite simple: if you live in Quebec, you are a Quebecer. I don't know what else to tell you. That's what it is!

Interviewees endorsing a civic conception of Quebec identity do not promote one culture over another. Indeed, one does not have to adopt the national culture to be part of the national in-group. Moreover, for them, culture is conceived as something malleable and in constant evolution. From that perspective, anybody can contribute to the national culture. For instance, even though Alexandra highly values Quebec culture and emphasizes its richness, she argues that culture "evolves" and "moves" through time and with the contribution of immigrants:

> We have to stop thinking that Quebec culture is still the French lumberjack in his log cabin. It's normal that there are people who come here, and our Quebec culture is going to be

based on the fact that, now, you have a kebab on every street corner! That's going to be Quebec culture and that's fine. We won't lose our poutine, but instead of only eating poutine, you'll have the choice between poutine and kebab. It's nice, you have the choice between the two now. There are a lot of contributions. So that's it, for me, our Quebec identity is going to grow and expand beyond the French man, who is 45-year-old, white and heterosexual.

Alexandra greatly values diversity in all its forms and believes that being open to others is a strength that allows us to progress and innovate. In her eyes, immigration and multiculturalism have positive impacts on Quebec society. This viewpoint is shared by Sophie, who is also in favour of an increase in immigration intakes in Quebec and multiculturalist policies:

First of all, I consider that immigrants who settle here are Quebecers. This is evident. […] I believe there are many ways of being a Quebecer. There are people who were born and raised in the English-speaking community and that's absolutely legitimate, I mean, they have been established here for a long time as well – and even recent immigrants: they each have different backgrounds.

Although Sophie believes that sharing a common language facilitates encounters, she does not make it a marker of exclusion. As she puts it:

[Immigrants] have a right to their own choices too. It would be a shame if the majority chooses not to learn French, because it's always more interesting if we can really exchange with each other and all that. Fortunately, policies have been put in place to promote the adoption of French. All the better if they choose to learn and use all the languages they can and want to, but it is a choice.

Sophie is strongly attached to Quebec culture. However, she considers the presence of immigrants as a richness that contributes to the culture.

> Sophie: I would say that anyone who is interested in discovering it [Quebec culture] has access to it, and it is an enrichment for everyone as well that everyone shares what they have to bring here.

> Interviewer: Do you think immigrants are interested in discovering Quebec culture?

> Sophie: Yes – and there are as many reasons and ways to be here than there are immigrants here. I respect their choice, and their life trajectory can lead them to want different things and at different times. Somehow, I always feel a little bit sad when they choose to leave, but it's really just because it feels like a loss in some way. I appreciate the richness they bring, and I would like to be able to keep that possibility of exchanges.

For interviewees endorsing a civic conception of national identity, culture evolves through everyday exchanges between citizens – regardless of their cultural background. In their eyes, society needs to rethink existing practices in order to promote unity, instead of division. The only point of disagreement among interviewees endorsing a civic conception of identity relates to public displays of religiosity in Quebec. While some believe that individual expression of religiosity is a "personal choice" or a "fundamental right" that should not be regulated by the state, others are more reluctant to see displays of religiosity in the public sphere, arguing that religion is of the private domain. An example of this is Daniel who identifies as a Canadian first but is also proud to be a Quebecer. He endorses a civic conception of Canadian identity and is open to immigration:

A Canadian is a citizen of Canada, that's just it. […] I believe that if you apply for Canadian citizenship, it doesn't matter what brings you to Canada – there are different reasons; economic, career, you can be a refugee – it all leads you to be Canadian. If you apply for citizenship, you agree to be part of our social contract and to be a Canadian with all that it implies, with the rights, privileges and obligations of being a Canadian.

Daniel holds positive opinions about immigration and believes it is a positive asset for Canada. As he argues, "there are beautiful stories of integration, of the contribution of immigrants to Quebec" including the presence of new businesses and artists. While he firmly believes that individuals from different ethnocultural and religious backgrounds should be welcomed into the country, he is not comfortable with individual expressions of religiosity. However, he does not exclude those who wear religious symbols from the national group. As he puts it:

I respect those who believe [in religion] and I am ready to defend the right of people to practice their religion in their church, in their home or in their head. Absolutely! […] I will defend the right to believe in a religion, any religion, even if I don't believe in any religion. I will defend that right because I think it's important for human rights to allow that. But apart from that, I think that we must restrict ourselves as much as possible. [...] We really freed ourselves from religion in Quebec in the 1960s and we don't really want to hear about it anymore. So, people can do their business [i.e. practice their religion], that's fine – and outside of that, you're a citizen, it's an ordinary civic life and we keep it simple.

The same holds for Janette, who also endorses a civic conception of Quebec identity. She is very open to immigration and believes that "there will never be too many immigrants". However, she also believes that individual displays of religiosity should be limited, particularly in positions of authority. Examples she provides include Catholic nuns wearing cornets and Muslim women

wearing headscarves when teaching, Monsignors at the Vatican wearing uniforms and politicians wearing conspicuous religious symbols. As she explains:

> Everyone should be dressed like everyone else. Besides, there's no reason to have visible signs in the public sphere. Religion is something personal, I don't blame anyone who is active in their religion or who is very religious. I have been active in religion myself all my youth. But I feel that it should no longer have its place [when in positions of authority].

As noted by scholars, and illustrated in these excerpts, religiosity in Quebec declined drastically after the Quiet Revolution and left a particular discomfort with public displays of religiosity (Dufresne et al. 2019; also see Meunier and Wilkins-Laflamme 2012). Turgeon et al. (2019) demonstrate that Quebecers tend to be more supportive than other Canadians of restrictions on minority religious symbols in the public sphere. This greater support would be in part motivated by a particular variant of liberalism. In this way, Quebecers hold a different understanding of the role of the state in the promotion and enforcement of liberal values. While other Canadians' interpretations of liberalism is associated with the precedence of individuals rights, that of Quebecers involves a willingness to restrict some rights (such as the wearing of religious symbols) in order to promote collective goals.

These excerpts demonstrate that a civic conception of Quebec identity promotes civic values within a diverse society. It is an inclusive and (almost) unconditional conception of national identity in which immigrants and ethnocultural minorities are perceived as belonging to the imagined community. Civic conceptions of national identity are therefore related to a more rigid mechanism of evaluation through which one evaluates that immigrants and ethnocultural minorities conform to inclusive markers of national identity (such as residing in Quebec), without imposing additional conditions, thus resulting in positive opinions about immigration and diversity. For

instance, the civic conception of national identity is not associated with the expectation that immigrants should adopt the national majority culture. Indeed, individuals are less worried about how immigration could alter the dominant culture; on the contrary, they allow for cultural continuity among immigrants and members of ethnocultural minorities, and support multiculturalist policies. As demonstrated, individuals endorsing a civic conception of national identity consider culture as something malleable and fluid. Yet, the analysis shows that the understanding of cultures as dynamic is far from being dominant among interviewees (also see Tonkens and Duyvendak 2016). Indeed, for many, cultures are static and immutable. This is the case for individuals endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity.

The Ethnic Conception of National Identity

The ethnic conception of national identity involves one or more of the following markers: Quebec/Canadian ancestry, being of the traditional national religion or descent (Catholic or Protestant religions) and being white.[24] This conception of national identity results in a process of exaggeration of differences through which the national in-group is conceived as diametrically opposed to (unwanted) "others", thereby creating a schism in society. Interviewees who endorse this conception tend to evaluate that most immigrants and ethnocultural minorities do not conform to ethnic markers of identity (ethnic markers of identity are more or less impossible to acquire if

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[24] When conceptualizing ethnic or ascriptive markers of national identity, scholars usually include being born in the community as such marker (e.g. Bilodeau and Turgeon 2020; Simonsen 2016). In this research, all participants who included this marker of national identity also highlighted the importance of having ancestors in the community, suggesting that heritage and descent is what really matters in the eyes of these individuals.

an individual does not have them in the first place) and thus have a strong preference for limiting or denying the presence of immigrants in the province.

Some interviewees were quite explicit about the need to have ancestors in the province in order to be considered a "true Quebecer". Most of these individuals conceptualize Quebecers as descendants of French settlers, and some also include descendants of English settlers (a few briefly mentioned Indigenous communities). While conceptions of identity including ancestry were more prevalent among sympathizers of La Meute, a minority of Quebecers from the general public also share this conception. This is the case of Chantal who is very firm about the fact that Quebec identity involves Quebec ancestry:

Interviewer: In your opinion, what does it take to be a Quebecer?

Chantal: For me, you have to be born in Quebec and your roots really have to come from Quebec – that's a Quebecer. Even if you have your Canadian nationality, you will never be a Quebecer, because you were not born here. For me, that's it.

Interviewer: When you say 'roots', what do you mean?

Chantal: Your parents have to come from Quebec, and it has to be from generation to generation.

A similar pattern is observed in John's conception of Quebec identity. John is a sympathizer of La Meute who explicitly believes in white nationalism. For him, Quebec identity involves ancestry, which is related to whiteness and a religious past.

Interviewer: For you, what is a Quebecer?

John: I would define a Quebecer as someone who is part of those who cleared the land, who comes from the first settlers, and those who established the communities, who helped build the infrastructure. I mean, to a larger extent, they are Catholics – even if since the 1960s, with the Quiet Revolution, there was a culture shock and that was abandoned. It is someone who has heritage here.

In the eyes of interviewees endorsing an ethnic conception of Quebec identity, cultural markers of identity are conceived as unattainable characteristics – it is something immutable that is learned through ancestry. Specifically, race, ethnicity and religion are perceived as influencing a community's beliefs, values and practices and shaping its culture. For instance, when explaining his conception of Quebec identity, John argues that "culture is widely related to race" and that some cultures are more developed than others. As such, the culture of the host society will never be appreciated by immigrants. Another example of this is provided by Gilbert, a sympathizer of La Meute who believes that Quebec identity is related to culture, which in turn, is related to ancestry. For him, Quebec culture will never be fully adopted or even understood by immigrants, because they have their own culture – thus excluding immigrants from the national group.

Interviewer: For you, what is a Quebecer?

Gilbert: Well, I think a Quebecer is someone who really cares about the French language, who cares about the traditions of Quebec, someone who has roots in Quebec. […]

Interviewer: What do you mean by "roots in Quebec"?

Gilbert: The descendants, the traditions: the sugar shack, the Christmas dinners, the turkey, all those things that are typically Quebecer. […]

Interviewer: And, for you, what would be the difference between a Quebecer and an immigrant?

Gilbert: An immigrant; his roots are elsewhere. His path in life was not made with Quebec traditions, so he cannot understand [them]. He might understand them in the long run, but no… When he arrives, he doesn't know; he has his own traditions.

Although religiosity has declined sharply in recent years in the province, conceptions of Quebec identity associated with religion were the most shared among sympathizers of La Meute (and among a few Quebecers) interviewed. Indeed, most do not believe or practice the Catholic religion, but consider that it is an important part of Quebec's cultural heritage. They maintain what Laniel (2016, 382) calls a "selective relationship" to Catholicism, "one where the rosy reminder of membership in a shared tradition is in contrast to the Church's many normative commands and interdictions." For these individuals, the Catholic religion does not represent a faith, but a characteristic that is in continuity with past generations and contrasts with other religious communities. In other words, even if these individuals value the secularization of institutions and the emancipation from religion in Quebec, being of Catholic descent is part of their national identity. This is the case of Éric, a sympathizer of La Meute who claims that "anyone can become a Quebecer – but you have to respect our values, language and convictions." For him, however, "Quebec values and convictions" are conceived through the influences of the Catholic religion, thus excluding members of religious minority groups. Like many other sympathizers of La Meute to whom I have talked to, Éric does not have faith, but maintains an attachment toward Catholicism. In his eyes, it is an important element of Quebec's collective memory. As he mentions: "I have a lot of discomfort with the Catholic faith, as probably many Quebecers do. But it's our religion, it's

our roots, it's our values, it's what our parents went through." For Éric and others, the Catholic Church and certain religious symbols represent a historical symbol of continuity of Quebec identity that has survived the loss of official beliefs and practices among a large proportion of the population. They therefore think that these symbols should be preserved. However, they are in favour of limiting the public expression of other religions in Quebec, because, as many put it: "we were here first". In this regard, Éric maintains:

> What I like less, among other things, is when people from other communities come here [to Quebec] and have no respect. They have other values from their country of origin, and they don't want to understand the difference between theirs and ours. I think that when we arrive somewhere, we should try to acclimatize ourselves to the cultural life of this country. There is abuse. The fact that we were obliged to make a law on secularism, to put it mildly, that we were obliged to remove the crucifix that we have had for so many years in the Blue Hall[25] – and then, [immigrants] have difficulty accepting the fact that they have to take away just a part of their culture when working as a public servant [i.e. conspicuous religious signs].

Éric's understanding of religion as a cultural trait is rooted in an ethnic conception of identity, one that favours the culture associated with the Catholic religion. In his eyes, immigrants of different religious backgrounds and religious minorities can never fully adopt or even understand the majority culture, even if they wanted to, because religion, he perceives, informs communities' customs and habits of thought. However, he argues that immigrants should attempt to assimilate in

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[25] The National Assembly Chamber in Quebec Parliament is known as the "Blue Hall" (in French "le Salon Bleu") due to the colour of its walls.

order to reduce the impact of their presence on Quebec society. Immigrants who "do not respect Quebec culture" should leave the province. Éric also argues for a decrease in immigration intakes.

Some participants, on the other hand, highly value the belief in the Catholic religion and consider it a fundamental marker defining "true Canadians and Quebecers". This is the case of Louis, a sympathizer of La Meute who identifies himself as much with Canada as he does with Quebec, the former being his country and the latter his homeland. For him, the Canadian and Quebec identities are rooted in ethnicity and religion:

> Interviewer: For you, what is a Canadian?
>
> Louis: Ah, yes, that's good. It's a good [question]. I don't think there is one Canadian ethnicity, that's clear to me: there are two ethnic groups that are the founders of the country, English-Canadians and French-Canadians. There were the Aboriginals, who were there, but they didn't really participate in the creation of the country. […] And then I also identify myself to the origins: that is to the Christian foundations of our country.

From Louis' point of view, it is easier to integrate immigrants from different cultural backgrounds into society than from different religions. As he argues: "the plurality of cults […] undermines the very foundations of our country." He maintains that Canada and Quebec receive too many immigrants.

For interviewees endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity, immigrants are evaluated as being incompatible with the national in-group due to their ethnic and/or religious differences. These individuals thus argue to limit immigration intakes in order to protect their national identity. Some of them argue that immigration is not necessary to the development of the country and should be stopped or that "we should take a break from it". Others maintain that

immigration intakes should be reduced and that immigrants should be selected in order to limit their impact as much as possible on Quebec society. For instance, Denis, a sympathizer of La Meute whose conception of national identity involves being of Catholic descent, argues that we should favour the immigration of individuals who are also of Catholic descent:

> Denis: I would be in favour of the immigration of people who are culturally closer to us, historically.

> Interviewer: Like who, for example?

> Denis: South America! South America! Hispanic immigration.

> Interviewer: Why do you think they are closer to Quebec culture?

> Denis: First, same religion: Christian. It sounds silly now, I'm not... Except that, from the start, you will facilitate part of the integration if you have the same religion as the majority, or the one we are used to.

> Interviewer: So you think that religion is central in –

> Denis: It has an impact – although we are very secular, and I believe that Quebec must remain a secular state; it's very important that we have become secular – but I think that culturally, integration would be easier – and I did say 'I think' [in the sense that selecting immigrants on the basis of their religion could potentially facilitate their integration].

As illustrated in this excerpt, some individuals, such as Denis, argue that one's religious heritage influences its culture and values. In order to reduce the impact of immigrants on the host society, these individuals tend to favour assimilation (even though immigrants are perceived as never fully grasping the majority culture) and favour the selection of immigrants who would share some

"cultural similarities" with the national group. In the case of Denis, cultural similarities are associated with sharing a religious background. For others endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity, cultural similarities are associated with a certain ethnicity and race that would be more compatible with each other.

Interviewees who hold an ethnic conception of national identity demonstrate less trust in immigrants and tend to adhere to strong stereotypes and hold (religious, ethnic or racial) prejudices against them. For instance, some immigrants are depicted as originating from "countries afflicted by war and violence" and are singled out as especially harmful as per the assumption that they have internalized violent practices and will reproduce them in Quebec, including joining gangs or engaging in violent actions. An example of this is Kevin's discourse about immigration issues in Quebec. Kevin is a sympathizer of La Meute who believes that Quebec identity is based on ancestry. He, however, argues that some immigrant communities are "better" than others:

> In my opinion, there is a problem of *who* we let immigrate. You know, there has never been a Belgian who has committed a massacre. It's not something that you see, because Belgians are not like that. The French are not that kind of people either. It's not in their nature, do you understand? But when you have people from the Middle East, Arabs, Muslims; they have been fighting for 2000 years! They are raised in that! And at five years old, they learn to use a gun. They have known nothing else, so when they come here – even when they are born here; the fact they are born here does not make you a Quebecer. Legally yes, but… you understand? […] In Quebec, 98% of the pimps are immigrants: blacks, Haitian, Jamaicans, and now it's the Arabs and all that. Some were born in Quebec and then people say: he's a Quebecer. That insults me, because he is not a Quebecer! He doesn't know how

it works here. You know; you don't sell a 14-year-old girl to make 100,000 bucks. That's no Quebecer.

Interviewees endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity tend to exclude immigrants, and religious and ethnocultural minorities in general, from the national in-group. However, most evaluate that Muslims form a religious community that cannot integrate into Western societies. Specifically, Islam would shape the way they think and act in a more pervasive way than other religious minorities. Although many interviewees maintain that one should not "put all Muslims in the same basket" (e.g. that it is a question of "degree of faith"), many (and often the same) suggest that it is difficult to differentiate "good" from "bad" Muslims. This would be the case because some Muslims would be engaged in different strategies to "hide their true nature". As expressed by Louis, a sympathizer of La Meute: "I have nothing against Muslims, except that I don't trust them."

In the eyes of these individuals, Islam is perceived as a homogeneous, static religion that is fundamentally at odds with the norms of a secular liberal state. An example of this is expressed by Jacques (sympathizer of La Meute):

I would like all Quebecers to share the moral values that I share. For example, we don't cut off the hand of a thief; we don't hit a woman; we don't marry a girl at 7, 8 or 9 years old; the woman is the equal of the man; excision is not a value that is acceptable in Western countries. But unfortunately, we accept migrants who are really the opposite. They are for Islam, fundamental Islam. Fundamentalists cannot integrate in any Western country, because Islam does not recognize anything that can take precedence over Allah.

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This excerpt shows the implicit assumption that Muslims are intrinsically different and, therefore, that they cannot be integrated into Quebec society. It highlights multiple beliefs about Islam that are widely shared among these individuals, including ideas about Muslims' values and religious practices. Moreover, stereotypical traits are often attributed to Muslims, such as the patriarchal man and the submissive woman. These beliefs are presented in contrast to Quebec identity, underlining the alleged incompatibility of values between Muslims and Quebecers.

Among interviewees, especially sympathizers of La Meute, stereotypes and prejudices about Muslims are often coupled with a conception of an essentialized Islam as a political force, which is perceived as attempting to redefine Islam within political institutions and thus politicizing it by turning it into a national ideology. As Stephan (sympathizer of La Meute) argues:

> Islam has a project: it is to conquer the whole world. Muslims know this, but they don't say it: they consider that the whole world must become Muslim.

Stephan sees Quebecers as potential victims of this project of conquest and domination. He depicts Islam as a totalitarian and essentially bad force. In this line of reasoning, Muslims are also conceived by many in a way that bridges security and identity; as if they intrinsically represented a security threat. An example of this is Louis's (sympathizer of La Meute) presumption that Muslims have a predisposition toward dominance and violence because of their religion and culture. He frames Muslims as the enemies of Quebecers:

> Interviewer: Why do you say that – that there are some [Muslims] who want to 'integrate' us (i.e. who want Quebecers "to become like them")?

> Louis: Well, it is because there are fundamentalists, especially among Muslims: it is in their culture. […] I see this in the newspapers; all the crimes they did – they destroy. When the

Muslims in Syria destroyed everything that was there. They are destroying. For example, they can take a statue of Jesus, throw it on the ground and laugh; they have fun! But you should not do that with a picture of Allah, because that would not be funny. Yet, they allow themselves to do it – they attack you. They are aggressive – not all of them, but there are some, oh there are some!

Like for other interviewees, Louis is engaged in a dehumanization process through which Muslims are portrayed as lacking some level of humanity, such as the ability to feel emotions or think critically – as he argues: "they blindly follow religious traditions." This creates strong negative images of Muslim communities living in the province and abroad (for instance, the labelling of Muslims as "fanatics" or "backwards", or as expressed in the previous excerpt: "they are fundamentalists"). Thinking of Muslims as lacking empathy reinforces the perception that they are inherently violent and could engage in violent or terrorist actions.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the clear distinction between civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity, along with the way they relate to immigration and religious and ethnocultural diversity. Civic conceptions of national identity define membership in the nation based on one's residence in the country, respect for laws and institutions and/or national citizenship. Individuals endorsing such conceptions consider cultures (that of Quebecers and those of immigrants) as something malleable and fluid. As such, they do not expect immigrants to adopt the national majority culture and instead maintain that immigrants contribute to it. Moreover, they consider religions as personal beliefs that can coexist within a society. These individuals tend to evaluate

immigrants' integration as a given and to be favorable to immigration, ethnocultural diversity and multiculturalism.

In contrast, ethnic conceptions of national identity define membership in the nation based on one's ancestry, religious descent and/or skin colour. Individuals endorsing such conception consider cultures as something fixed, that is acquired through ancestry (whether that of Quebecers or those of immigrants). Religions, for their part, are considered as a permanent trait or a "lineage of belief" (Laniel 2016, 379), representing a symbol of unity and continuity within the community. From that perspective, it is impossible for immigrants and ethnocultural minorities who do not respect ethnic markers of identity to integrate into the host society. Individuals endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity tend to evaluate immigrants and minorities as not conforming to the individual's (unattainable) markers of identity. They tend to be unfavorable to immigration and ethnocultural diversity and see assimilation as a way to limit immigrants' impact on the host society (even though they perceive that (some) immigrants' adoption of the national culture is impossible). Table 1 summarize these findings.

These findings contribute to the nation and nationalism literature by providing a more complete portrait of the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity and the way they relate to immigration and ethnocultural diversity. They also show that, although scholars maintain that national identities are increasingly converging toward more attainable definitions (i.e., civic national identities) (for example, Breton 1988), ethnic conceptions of national identity are still present in Quebec. Generally, ethnic conceptions of national identity manifest among sympathizers of La Meute, but also sometimes among the general public. This is in line with Bilodeau and Turgeon's (2020) study which shows that, while understandings of national identity grounded in attainable makers of identity are more prevalent among Quebecers and other Canadians, rigid and

exclusive markers of identity still have substantial importance in defining membership in the nation and in shaping public opinion about immigration.

Table 1. Characteristics of civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity and how they relate to immigration and ethnocultural diversity

	Civic	Ethnic
Markers of national identity	Residing within the nation territory; respect for the nation's laws and institutions; having the host national citizenship	Ancestry; traditional national religion or descent; being white
Conception of the culture	Malleable, fluid	Fixed, acquired through ancestry
Conception of the religion	Personal belief	Permanent trait; "lineage of belief"
Views about ethnocultural diversity	Integration is given Favourable to multiculturalism	Integration is impossible Favourable to assimilationism
Views about immigration	Positive	Negative

The analysis also shows that the historical legacy of Catholicism left an enduring imprint upon a certain number of Quebecers and the way they think about their national identity, despite the rise of secularism and decline in religiosity (also see Zubrzycki 2016). In the eyes of some Quebecers, religion has had a fundamental influence on contemporary culture, informing its norms and values. The national religious heritage could be eroded by the presence of immigrants from different religious backgrounds. This insecurity is especially related to Muslims and Islam, which

are perceived as fundamentally at odds with the values and norms of Western democracies. Individuals endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity tend to conflate Muslims with fundamentalists, extremists and terrorists. The presence of Muslims in Quebec is thus perceived as that of an "enemy within" (Fekete 2004).

Moreover, ethnic conceptions of Quebec identity characterized by religious markers of identity manifest in opposition to accommodations for religious minorities, in opposition to the public expression of minority religious identities (along with support for the preservation of traditional symbols of the dominant national religion exclusively) and in favour of decreasing levels of (Muslim) immigration. These findings are consistent with Bilodeau et al. (2018)'s study on Quebecers' motivations to support legislative proposals to ban religious symbols in the public sphere. The study shows that some Quebecers who favour restricting only religious minority symbols (thus preserving the historical legacy of Catholicism in the public sphere) are motivated by prejudice and a perceived threat to Quebec culture.

This chapter contributes to a better understanding of recent debates over immigration and religious and ethnocultural diversity in Quebec, which have been characterized by polarized discourses fuelled by two contrasting worldviews. The analysis suggests that this sociopolitical divide reflects different conceptions of national identity. While Quebecers endorsing a civic national identity tend to converge toward a liberal cosmopolitan outlook motivated by values of tolerance and inclusion, those endorsing an ethnic national identity, that is, mostly sympathizers of La Meute, tend to adhere to a more populist, (far) right-wing outlook based on national sovereignty. Public debates about these issues, however, are not solely marked by these two camps. Indeed, only a few Quebecers interviewed endorse a civic conception of national identity and, apart from sympathizers of La Meute, only a few Quebecers interviewed endorse an ethnic conception of

national identity. In fact, a majority of Quebecers interviewed think about the national community in cultural terms. Cultural conceptions of national identity are thus the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Beyond the Civic and Ethnic Dichotomy: The Cultural Conception of National Identity

Public debates about immigration and ethnocultural diversity are increasingly framed in cultural terms (e.g. Gagnon and Larios 2021). In that respect, scholars note an increasing shift away from historical integration models such as assimilationism and multiculturalism toward civic integration policies, which involve the idea that immigrants' integration relies on their commitments to liberal and social values, thus increasing their autonomy in society (Goodman 2010). This is in line with what Tonkens and Duyvendak (2016) refer to as an increasing "culturalization of citizenship", in which belonging to the national community tends to be less defined in civic or ethnic terms and more in adherence to norms, values and cultural practices.

Beyond the cultural, formal and legal boundaries established by the state to distinguish "nationals" from "others", my analysis shows that Quebecers also emphasize cultural criteria to define national membership. Specifically, the majority of Quebecers interviewed, along with a minority of sympathizers of La Meute, define membership to the nation based on cultural markers of identity. This shows the significance of moving beyond the civic/ethnic binary to include a third conception of national identity: the cultural conception of national identity (also see Reijerse et al. 2013).

This chapter offers an analysis of the way interviewees think about the cultural conception of national identity. It shows that cultural conceptions of national identity involve criteria distinct from, or distinct understandings of, the criteria employed for the civic and ethnic conceptions, which then provide the basis for evaluating whether immigrants and ethnocultural minorities are included or excluded from the national group. The mechanism of evaluation behind the relationship between cultural conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and diversity is

more flexible and dynamic than that intrinsic to the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity. While individuals endorsing a civic or an ethnic conception of national identity evaluate whether immigrants and minorities conform to inclusive (civic) or exclusive (ethnic) criteria, individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity evaluate whether or not most immigrants adopt the national culture. This evaluation determines whether they hold positive or negative opinions about immigration and diversity.

The Cultural Conception of National Identity

Beyond the civic/ethnic dichotomy, the analysis shows the presence of a cultural conception of national identity, which involves distinct in-group/out-group criteria. Among the participants in this research to whom I talked, the majority of Quebecers and a few sympathizers of the identity group La Meute endorse such a conception. Cultural conceptions of national identity involve an understanding of Quebecers (or Canadians) as one unified community of people sharing a common language, way of life and/or values. Interviewees who endorse such a conception consider that the in-group is open to anyone, as long as they adopt the national culture and, therefore, help to preserve it. Specifically, they believe that a certain level of cultural integration or assimilation is crucial to preserve social cohesion, facilitate intergroup contacts, and more importantly, protect the national culture. The following excerpt provides a common example of the cultural conception of Quebec identity:

Interviewer: For you, what is the difference between a Quebecer and an immigrant?

Jean: I don't think there is any difference. When an immigrant comes to Quebec, if he wants to integrate, he's going to become a "pure laine" Quebecer[26], like anyone else.

Jean places great importance on the integration of immigrants, which includes complying with the host society or, in his words, "adapting to our values".[27] He is firm about the need for immigrants to adopt Quebec values in order to earn their place in Quebec society:

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your relationship with immigrants?

Jean: Well, I was raised in very diverse neighborhoods, so I was surrounded by immigrants. That's how I learned English; by conversing with the friends I was playing with; they were Jews, Pakistanis, from all origins. So, for me, the colours, the languages, the turbans, the – anything, I don't care. It's the human being that is important: as long as he wants to integrate. If you come here in Quebec and you don't want to integrate, then, for me, it's get back on the plane and go home.

The analysis reveals four main cultural markers of identity expressed by interviewees, namely speaking the national language, embracing Quebecers' liberal values, respecting Quebec secularism and sharing Quebecers' political aspirations. Each is presented and illustrated below, highlighting the ways interviewees think about these criteria and differentiate between who is part of the national in-group and who is not.

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[26] The French term is "Québécois pure laine" and refers to individuals whose ancestry is French-Canadian.
[27] From the perspective of individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity, immigrants' integration mainly refers to their adoption of the national culture. Considerations about immigrants' economic, social and political integration are secondary in their assessment of who belongs to the national community.

Speaking the National Language

A first marker of national identity associated with endorsing a cultural conception of national identity is that of language. Specifically, a majority of interviewees endorsing such a conception claims that language is an integral part of their identity. Quebec or Canadian identity thus includes speaking French (and/or English). An example of this is provided by Stephanie who places a strong emphasis on speaking French in order to be considered as a member of the national group:

> In Quebec, I tell myself that an immigrant should make an effort to learn to speak French, if he wants to stay in Quebec. Otherwise, he would not be a Quebecer. I wouldn't accept that.

In the eyes of Stephanie, French language is conceived as a distinguishing characteristic of Quebecers within a predominantly English-speaking Canada. Immigrants should therefore learn to speak French in order to be included in the national in-group. The same goes for Rita who defines Quebec identity through cultural markers, including the French language. She maintains that immigrants should learn the French language in order to integrate into Quebec society and to protect one of Canada's two official languages. Following this line of thought, she supports policies requiring newcomers to speak the language of the host country:

> In the Montreal area, people seem to have forgotten that there is a Bill 101. I think that at this point, the government has the right to require that newcomers learn French. You know, I force myself to… when I go to another country that speaks English, I make big efforts to… and I am not bilingual! […] Newcomers could take night classes to learn French, or today, there are all kinds of things you can do to learn languages. As long as the person is

interested in learning French, that is very important me. I am quite open; I do not close the

door to an immigrant who wants to come and work in Quebec, and who promises to learn

French. I do not close the door on that.

The salience of language as an important marker of national identity among interviewees is

not surprising considering the centrality of the French language as a characteristic distinguishing

Quebec from the rest of Canada. Indeed, the French language has occupied a key role in Quebec's

nation-building throughout history (a notable example of this is the adoption of Bill 101 in 1977,

which seeks to ensure the quality and status of the French language in Quebec – as illustrated in

the previous quote, Bill 101 was mentioned by many interviewees to emphasize its importance).

Nowadays, language politics are still a matter of concern and debate (the "Bonjour-Hi" controversy

is a recent example of this[28]) and are often connected to immigration (Conrick and Donovan 2010;

A. Gagnon and Larios 2021; Xhardez and Paquet 2020).

Embracing Liberal Values

A second marker of cultural identity that stands out in the analysis as delimiting who is

included in the national group and who is not is that of embracing liberal values. Specifically, in

the eyes of interviewees, Quebec has made important progress throughout the past few years in

terms of improving gender and sexual equality, tolerance and, more generally, democracy

(including the rule of law and fair and equitable elections). For those holding a cultural conception

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[28] In 2019, the Quebec government proposed measures to enforce unilingual greetings at businesses and in government offices. Media referred to this event as the "Bonjour-Hi" controversy.

of national identity, these liberal and progressive values would constitute markers of identity that one needs to adhere to in order to be included in the national in-group. An example of this is provided by Stephanie who, in addition to highlighting language as a marker defining Quebec identity as described above, includes sharing common values as a boundary delimiting who is part of the national in-group and who is not. As she puts it:

> For me, a Quebecer is a person who integrates into Quebec society, who truly makes it his values – a person who doesn't just pretend to make it his values. For me, it is not necessarily someone who was born here in Quebec. It is a person who considers himself a Quebecer, regardless of his ethnic origin. It's someone who really wants; who has wanted to change his life for his own reasons, but at the same time really loves Quebec, and accepts the values; values of equality.

For Stephanie, values of equality, such as gender and sexual equality, are a fundamental component of Quebec identity. Immigrants should therefore endorse these liberal values in order to be recognized as members of the national in-group.

The emphasis on liberal values on the part of many interviewees echoes recent social and political debates in Quebec about newcomers embracing Quebec values. A notable example of this is the intense public debates over the Parti Quebecois' proposed Charter of Values starting in 2013 (see A. G. Gagnon and St-Louis 2016). This Bill aimed to affirm the values of State secularism and religious neutrality and of equality between men and women, along with providing a framework for accommodation requests related to religious and cultural differences. Although never adopted, a majority of Quebecers were in favour of the Charter of Values (Tessier and Montigny 2016; Turgeon et al. 2019).

Respecting the Principle of Secularism

A third marker of national identity associated with endorsing a cultural conception of national identity, also closely related to the idea of embracing liberal values, is that of respecting the principle of secularism. Echoing recent public debates over the right of employees and users of public services to display religious symbols (see Béland, Lecours, and Schmeiser 2021), many interviewees conceive Quebec identity as predominantly secular. They explain this by the emancipation from religion and the secularization of institutions. Specifically, during the 1960s' so-called Quiet Revolution, Quebecers drastically reduced the place occupied by the Catholic religion both in their lives and in society in an attempt to build a modern provincial welfare state and create a division between public services and the Catholic Church. For many interviewees, religion evokes negative memories rooted in stories of population control and abuse. Becoming a secular state, therefore, represents a progressive movement for the common good. As such, most of these interviewees feel uncomfortable with all religions – particularly those that are visible. For them, religious minorities wearing conspicuous religious symbols (especially when in positions of authority) represent disharmony and discontinuity in narratives about Quebec identity. Visible religious minorities, such as Muslims, Hasidic Jews and Sikhs, are perceived as not only failing to integrate, but as refusing to integrate into secular institutions. Paul's comment illustrates this dynamic:

> In the last [federal] elections, a Sikh was the leader of a political party. I don't think he had any vote in Quebec because of what it represented: a culture that we don't have and that we don't want. His religion is important to him, and it must prevail over the rest of society. That is what bothers me. [...] Or the Muslim woman who arrives with her hijab [to work for government services] in Quebec, for me, that is unacceptable. We took religion away,

you know. We were forced, we were the slave of a religion for I don't know how many hundreds of years. We got rid of it, and then, they come here to impose theirs on us. That is what I find difficult. In my opinion, it's clear that they are neither Quebecers nor Canadians.

For Paul, and many others, secularism ensures that religious groups do not interfere in affairs of the state and defends the right to be free from religion. As such, everybody is free to practice their religion and to express their faith, as long as they support Quebec's secularism. This form of secularism, however, tends to use religion as a negative mirror, thereby excluding religious minorities that are not deemed compatible with this value. For instance, in the eyes of many, the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols involves the de-emphasis of established "national values" broadly aligned with majority cultural norms (see Verkuyten 2005). Religious minorities are thus perceived as not endorsing Quebec's values and secularism; they would instead "impose" their religion by publicly expressing their religious identity and asking for religious accommodations. The previous excerpt provides an example of this, illustrating that Paul values a form of secularism that advocates for a national identity transcending private identities and making Quebec the main site of identification (also see Nilsson 2019). For him, individuals must demonstrate that their loyalty to Quebec society and public institutions is above that of their religious affiliation. They argue this can be done through the privatization of religion and religious practices, or in the words of many: "religion done at home."

Sharing Political Aspirations

The last marker of identity associated with cultural conceptions of national identity involves the idea that Quebecers share the same political aspirations. As such, they would mainly vote for Quebec nationalist parties, including the Parti Québécois in provincial elections and for the Bloc Québécois in federal elections. However, in the eyes of some interviewees, Quebecers and immigrants have fundamentally different political affiliations. Indeed, the idea that immigrants are loyal to Canada as opposed to the province of Quebec, and thus vote for political parties promoting Canadian federalism (as opposed to Quebec nationalism) is widely shared – an idea that goes back to the 1980 and 1995 referendums on Quebec sovereignty, during which a majority of immigrant groups rejected the 'yes' option (see Hepburn 2011, 516). Interviewees associate this with the perception that immigrants do not know Quebec's historical relationship with the rest of the country (marked by both demands for constitutional reforms for recognizing the place of Quebec within the Canadian federation and by an organized movement promoting the political independence of the province) and do not embrace Quebec culture nor the French language (the protection of these two components being at the heart of the province's social project). As Paul maintains: "[newcomers] should learn the history, our history, the origins of Quebec and the particularity of Quebec in Canada; because there is a particularity." Alex's discourse further illustrates this cultural marker of Quebec identity:

Interviewer: According to you, what is a Quebecer?

Alex: I would say that it is more like… being part of a hockey team: if you choose to play with the Canadians or the Bruins or any other teams, you have to tell yourself that you are part of that team and that you will advocate for its interests and defend them against other teams. […]

Interviewer: Does it mean that everyone can join the Quebec team?

Alex: Yes, it is a choice. You decide to join a dynamic that already exists. I think that I could be American if I wanted to; I know pretty well the country's history and culture. […] I know enough historical references to identify as an American, to hold an American identity. The same goes for China. I know China well enough to build a Chinese identity if I wanted to. I have spent some time there, so I could picture myself living there. I know what their interests are, and I could contribute to building something. But for now, I am a Quebecer; this is my team.

The Evaluation Mechanism Inherent to Cultural Conceptions of National Identity: A More Flexible Approach

For individuals who endorse a cultural conception of national identity, it is possible for immigrants to embrace Quebec culture (including speaking the national language, embracing liberal values, respecting principles of secularism and sharing Quebec political aspirations) and therefore for them to become Quebecers. This contrasts with the ethnic conception of national identity under which immigrants can never fully adopt the national culture. It also contrasts with the civic conception of national identity under which immigrants are included in the national in-group regardless of whether or not they adopt the national culture. Interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of national identity are divided on whether they evaluate immigrants as adopting the national culture or not. Considering individuals' evaluations of whether or not most immigrants adopt the national culture is crucial in order to better understand their opinions about immigration and diversity. While interviewees who evaluate most immigrants as adopting the national culture tend to hold positive opinions about immigration and diversity, those who evaluate most

immigrants as not adopting the national culture tend to hold negative opinions about immigration and diversity.

Quebecers interviewed endorsing a cultural conception of national identity are divided in their evaluation as to whether or not most immigrants do adopt the national culture and are therefore divided between holding positive and negative opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. In contrast, all interviewed sympathizers of La Meute endorsing a cultural conception of national identity evaluate most immigrants as not adopting the national culture and thus hold negative opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity.

Positive Evaluations of Immigrants' Adoption of the National Culture

Interviewees who endorse a cultural conception of national identity and evaluate most immigrants as adopting the national culture tend to hold positive opinions about immigration. An example of a positive evaluation of immigrants' adoption of Quebec culture is provided by Claude. He defines Quebec identity through "the culture, language and secularism – those are the three main things". He believes that immigrants can and, more importantly, do integrate into Quebec society by adopting the national culture. Those who do not adopt the national culture, on the other hand, are excluded from his conception of the national group.

Interviewer: Can someone who doesn't speak French be a "true Quebecer"?

Claude: From the point of view of laws and freedoms, yes, he can be a Quebecer, but not in relation to what I feel about the true Quebec culture, the French culture. […] Yet, the current government seems to be doing things to really get [immigrants] to integrate. I think that this helps a lot. I have seen people in Trois-Rivières and Louiseville, recent immigrants

from Syria, learning [Quebec] customs, going to classes to learn French, all these small things. I think there's a lot of effort going on there and that helps [with immigrants' integration]. We see it more and more.

Individuals, like Claude, who endorse a cultural conception of national identity and evaluate most immigrants as adopting the national culture tend to be open to immigration. In order to protect the national culture, however, they tend to support policies requiring newcomers to speak the language of the host country, adhere to liberal principles and values, and learn the country's history and culture.

This is also the case of Alexandre who maintains that newcomers remain "Quebecers in the making" as long as they do not adopt Quebec's language, way of life and values. In this regard, he considers that Quebec has implemented the right policies to ensure immigrants adopt Quebec culture and thus he holds positive opinions about immigration.

Interviewer: What do you think will happen if the number of immigrants we receive each year in Quebec increases?

Alexandre: I don't think that Quebec will change that much. First of all, they put [selection] criteria: they take people who are a little more suited [to the national culture] and they talk about putting into place integration tests.

A final example of a positive evaluation of immigrants' adoption of Quebec culture is provided by Jean-Christophe. He holds positive opinions about immigration, and he is in favour of the implementation of language and values tests for newcomers in order to ensure they adopt the

national culture. The implementation of these policies in Quebec reduces his cultural anxiety related to immigration. As such, he maintains that: "Some say that [immigration] could be a challenge to our Quebec cultural identity [defined in terms of language and the endorsement of democratic values], but I don't see the problem if we do a good integration [of immigrants]."

Negative Evaluations of Immigrants' Adoption of the National Culture

Interviewees who endorse a cultural conception of national identity and evaluate most immigrants as not adopting the national culture tend to hold negative opinions about immigration. Yet, just like interviewees who evaluate most immigrants as adopting the national culture, they believe that it is possible for immigrants to learn the national culture with the implementation of the right policies or infrastructures. Negative evaluations of immigrants' adoption of the national culture lead to differentiation between "Quebecers" and immigrant populations, excluding the latter from the national group. For example, Robert differentiates between immigrants who "live" and those who "reside" in Quebec. As he explains:

> Immigrants who reside here keep all their cultural references: they only go to restaurants from their country of origin, they don't learn Quebec's language or culture. They reside in a country without ever living there. There are communities that are able to reside in complete autonomy without ever having to live here. This was the case with the Chinese community for many years; they did not need to learn English or French. They had Chinese doctors, Chinese grocery stores; they could stay on the margins of society. When you're here for a few years, I understand very well. A worker who arrives doesn't necessarily need to speak French. But if you really want to integrate, to live in Quebec, it's a step that I think

you have to take gradually. But you have to give it time. I don't necessarily agree with imposing an automatic language test. I think we can give it time and there are some very good success stories of people who have done it, but we have to give messages that are positive and clear about this need to live. If they want to live in Quebec, there are many elements that they miss out on by not knowing the language, by not knowing the culture.

Robert evaluates most immigrants as "residing" in the province, as opposed to "living" in the province by adopting Quebec culture. He thus favours a decrease in immigration intakes. However, he believes that it is possible for immigrants to learn the national culture with the implementation of policies indicating the importance of cultural integration. Examples provided by interviewees of how to ensure immigrants' adoption of the national culture include the development of intercultural exchanges, values and language tests for newcomers, and promoting the regionalization of immigration.

Another example of a negative evaluation of immigrants' adoption of the national culture is provided by Alex. He endorses a cultural conception of Quebec identity and emphasizes the idea that Quebecers share common political aspirations. However, he evaluates most immigrants as not voting for Quebec nationalist parties. He argues:

The Montreal area is red, red, red, everywhere [referring to the official colour of Quebec Liberal Party]. So, we see that immigration changes something. The average pattern is that [immigrants] vote, on average, for the opposite of what the majority votes for. So necessarily, with a certain number of years, well, it tends to be red [as opposed to blue, the official colour of the Parti Québécois]. It could change if there were big transformations in the province and that people suddenly felt that the pole [of identification] was Quebec, that

it was no longer Canada. But it will be difficult to change; people are exhausted [referring to Quebec nationalists].

As illustrated in this excerpt, Alex evaluates most immigrants as loyal to Canada as opposed to the province of Quebec. They would thus vote for Quebec Liberal Party, undermining Quebec's political aspirations and identity. However, Alex maintains that immigrants could identify with Quebec and share its political aspirations if the province became an independent country. In that way, he argues, "immigrants would feel more attached to Quebec than Canada".

Other examples of negative evaluations of immigrants' adoption of the national culture include perceptions that "most immigrants refuse to speak French", that "many reject Quebec values" and that "they impose their religion on us". These two last examples are particularly salient when it comes to evaluating Muslim immigrants' adoption of the national culture. Indeed, in the eyes of many interviewees for whom the national identity is centered around common values, Muslim communities are especially not adopting Quebec values. Specifically, many believe that Muslims resist integrating into Quebec society by either "rejecting" Quebecers' values or attempting to "impose" and implement theirs – particularly by asking for religious accommodations. For example, Ghyslain perceives that most immigrants adopt Quebec culture and thus become "true Quebecers". However, he evaluates Muslims as "imposing" their way of life on Quebecers and as "going against our free country". Like many other interviewees, Ghyslain seems more comfortable expressing his prejudices towards this community than towards other communities.

For me, people who come here and adapt well to the culture that we have in Quebec become Quebecers. For example, if a Russian comes here to live with the same mentality as us – even if he is not of French descent, he is a Quebecer. […] But people who come [to Quebec]

and say: 'I'm coming here because I want to live in a free country', but then try to impose their things on me, that I have a little difficulty with.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about this?

Ghyslain: Yes. It's the Muslims. I have never been a racist, except now. When I see women with their veils, and then I see there is a school board in Quebec that is obliged not to give sex education courses to 200 children, because according to their religion they can't have that. What the heck?! You have to try to adapt to the country you're going to: if you go to Rome, live like the Romans. Society has to be very open; I agree – but let's take away the chador and all the things that women have in their faces, and children: let them be free to choose. I've seen children who were not allowed to go to the swimming pool because they were not allowed to take off their Muslim dresses. They can't go to swimming lessons! There is a problem – and in the name of rights and freedoms, we let them!

For many Quebecers interviewed, ideas and practices that come to their mind when thinking about Muslims are related to oppression and evoke negative connotations. An important example of this is the perception that the wearing of the headscarf among Muslim women is not related to religion, but to patriarchal values endorsed by Muslim communities and imposed on women. Furthermore, Islamic law and religious education, gender-separated sport lessons, forced marriages and female circumcision were often mentioned as illustrations that Muslims would endorse non-modern or "backward" values.

Negative evaluations of Muslims' adoption of the national culture are also particularly salient with respect to their perceived respect for the principle of secularism. This results from the perception that Muslims would make more requests for religious accommodations than other

religious minorities, suggesting the pervasiveness of Islam in all spheres of Muslims' life. As Claude argues:

> Claude: The law on secularism was necessary – really necessary – to show that in Quebec, we are people who accept absolutely all possible and imaginable religions, but you can't impose them. Not imposing them makes all the difference in the world.

> Interviewer: Do you think that there are some communities that try to impose their religion more than others?

> Claude: Oh yes! It's clear. I mean Muslims, we're not going to hide it. It's not just here, it's everywhere in the world.

> Interviewer: Can you tell me more about this?

> Claude: If we look, for example, in France, there are polls that have been done and that show that 70% of the French are more and more afraid of the rise of Islamism. Unfortunately, it's not something that has to do with the whole Muslim religion; but it's really, really taking over their culture and their secularism, and it's giving them a lot of problems.

Following this line of thought, some interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of national identity also associate Muslims with terrorism. The dominant narrative among interviewees is that the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 and the subsequent attacks in European countries constitute crucial illustrations that Muslims represent a security threat. This is the case of Violette who is not comfortable with the public display of religiosity as it would conflict with Quebec's secularism. She argues, however, that Quebecers

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need to be accommodating toward religious minorities and allow the wearing of religious symbols when not in positions of authority – except for the wearing of the niqab. In her eyes, the niqab attests to the endorsement of more "extreme values" that would be related to terrorism:

> We don't wear veils like that [niqab], and it is often associated, whether you want it or not, with a form of religion that is a bit more extreme, which can even be linked to terrorists.

The idea that increasing the Muslim population in Quebec could enhance the possibilities of violence and terror attacks happening in the province was part of some interviewees' discourse and mobilized in evaluations of most Muslims as failing to integrate into Quebec culture.

Conclusion

This chapter assesses the relationship between the cultural conception of national identity and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. It highlights three main dynamics. First, interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of Quebec identity regard Quebecers as one unified community of people sharing a common culture that needs to be protected – this includes a common language, perceived as a vehicle of culture and as a cultural symbol of group membership. Individuals in this ideal type consider that it is possible for immigrants to adopt the national culture and they are open to the idea of including them in the national group – as long as immigrants think and act like the majority group (to a certain extent). As such, these individuals favour immigrants' adoption of the national culture in order to reduce cultural distinction and protect the national culture. Their willingness to accept and include immigrants as members of the national in-group does not, however, prevent their discourse to be at times tinted with stereotypes, prejudices and processes of othering from which (some) immigrant communities are excluded.

Second, in order to understand opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity among Quebecers endorsing a cultural conception of national identity, it is crucial to consider the evaluation mechanism inherent to this conception of national identity, which is more flexible than that involved with the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity. Specifically, individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity evaluate whether or not most immigrants adopt the national culture based on information they have about immigrants. Such evaluations influence their opinion about how many immigrants should be admitted annually in Quebec and the importance of immigrant selection criteria based on cultural considerations. Immigrants deemed "culturally distant" from Quebecers and who are evaluated as not adopting the national culture are considered to be a threat to Quebec's common cultural and linguistic roots and its common collective memories (related to the secularization of the province and its historical relationship with the rest of Canada) by increasing cultural heterogeneity. As such, in the eyes of these individuals, immigrants' belonging to the national group is conditional. Individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity tend to support civic integration policies requiring newcomers to speak the language of the host country, adhere to liberal principles and values, and learn the country's history and culture (see Goodman 2010; Joppke 2017). They do so, however, not so much to promote immigrants' political, social and economic integration, which are the goals put forward by these policies, but instead to protect the national culture. This suggests that the "civic turn" in immigrant integration policies finds support among Quebecers as a result of cultural considerations.

Third, Quebecers endorsing a cultural conception of national identity to whom I have talked are divided in their evaluation as to whether or not most immigrants do adopt the national culture and therefore hold a combination of positive and negative opinions about immigration. In contrast,

all sympathizers of La Meute endorsing a cultural conception of national identity evaluate most immigrants as not adopting the national culture and thus hold negative opinions about immigration. These results suggest that not all sympathizers of identity groups are concerned with protecting the white or ethnic identity: a minority, instead, have deep cultural insecurities. These individuals nevertheless also hold exclusive views about immigration and diversity, justified by perceptions of cultural differences between the majority and minority groups that could threaten the national culture.

When engaging in the mechanism of evaluating whether immigrants adopt the national culture or not, Quebecers and sympathizers of La Meute seem to be divided in their expectations. On the one hand, for all interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of national identity, *culture learning* was a clear and explicit expectation. On the other, it was not always clear whether interviewees also expected immigrants to suppress their home culture and replace it by that of the national society, that is, through *culture shedding* (see Berry 2001). Requiring immigrants to sacrifice their home culture in order to be recognized as members of the national group was an issue on which many interviewees did not seem to have well-defined opinions. While this might simply reflect the more sensitive nature of this issue, it could also suggest uncertainty among interviewees as to whether they consider that culture learning is sufficient to protect the national culture. Future research should further investigate this.

The analysis of my whole sample of interviewees endorsing civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity indicates the structuring role of conceptions of national identity in the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, while identifying the underlying mechanism of evaluation of such causation. Individuals endorse different conceptions of national identity (i.e. civic, ethnic and cultural), which influences their perception of the degree

of commonness of the national in-group, and at the same time, that of out-groups (e.g. Muslims). While some emphasize diversity and differences (i.e. the civic conception of national identity), others value commonness (i.e. the cultural and ethnic conceptions of national identity). National identities that are rooted in commonness tend to be more reluctant or even opposed to the presence of immigrants who could alter perceived common cultural, ethnic or racial origins.

Moreover, comparing the ways interviewees conceive national identity highlights the particular relationship that civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions each maintain with different markers of national identity. This is an important contribution as it deepens our understanding of whether or not markers of identity can overlap. Specifically, some scholars maintain that conceptions of national identity are not mutually exclusive (Hjerm 1998; Bilodeau and Turgeon 2020; Pehrson, Vignoles, and Brown 2009). For example, someone endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity could also include civic and cultural markers of identity in his/her representation of who belongs to the national group. This research shows that markers of national identity are indeed not mutually exclusive, but that they have different meanings and there is a hierarchy of importance depending on whether individuals hold a civic, ethnic or cultural conception of national identity. Individuals holding a civic conception of national identity tend to define culture as something fluid and malleable – cultural makers of identity are, therefore, not included in their conception of national identity and immigrants and ethnocultural minorities are accepted regardless of their culture. Immigrants and minorities are even perceived as contributing to the national culture. Those holding an ethnic conception of national identity tend to consider cultural markers as something fixed that is acquired through ancestry – immigrants and ethnocultural minorities can never really adopt or even understand the national culture. Finally, those holding a cultural conception of national identity tend to describe cultural markers as

something shared by members of the national group and that has to be preserved – it is, however, possible for immigrants and minorities to adopt and cherish the national culture.

This research also demonstrates that Quebecers' relationship with religion is complex and that there are multiple understandings of the role and place of religion in defining Quebec's identity. Individuals with civic conceptions of national identity maintain that faith does not define one's national belonging and that different faiths can coexist within a society. Religious markers are thus not included in their conception of national identity. In the case of individuals who hold an ethnic conception of national identity, religion is conceived as a permanent trait as it would represent a national reference point and a sense of continuity with the past even if religious beliefs and practices have decreased within the province. These individuals confer an important place to religion in Quebec identity whether they identify themselves as believers or not. In the eyes of non-believers, Christianity/Catholicism is detached from faith and represents what Laniel (2016, 379) calls a "lineage of belief". It is not an affiliation with religion in itself, but a subscription to a symbol uniting a community. As such, they value conformity to prescribed behaviours and the celebration of their national religious heritage (e.g. the preservation of Catholic symbols and the valorization of Catholic values). Finally, individuals who hold a cultural conception of national identity, for their part, stress the importance of practicing a religion in a manner that can be separated from the state so that it does not affect Quebecers' culture and ways of life. While some of them have faith in the Catholic religion, others reject it and argue that it represents years of societal control and abuse. All agree, however, that the existence of secular institutions constitutes an important part of Quebec identity and, therefore, feel uncomfortable with displays of religious symbols by public servants. They see secularism as the result of the process of modernization of Quebec society during which religious structures and practices have weakened, allowing the

acceptance of modern principles of democracy, freedom of conscience and the separation of Church and State.

As a result, when exploring an individual's conception of national identity, it is the most restrictive marker of national identity that signals the boundaries of the national in-group – even if more inclusive or flexible makers are also included. Specifically, these more restrictive markers influence the meaning of other markers of identity, such as culture and religion, and inform the way individuals distinguish those who belong from those who do not. These findings are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity and how they relate to immigration and ethnocultural diversity

	Civic	Ethnic	Cultural
Markers of national identity	Residing within the nation territory; respect for the nation's laws and institutions; having the host national citizenship	Ancestry; traditional national religion or descent; being white	Common language; common values (including secular values); sharing political aspirations
Conception of the culture	Malleable, fluid	Fixed, acquired through ancestry	Fixed, possibility to adopt the national culture
Conception of the religion	Personal belief	Permanent trait; "lineage of belief"	Religious identity should not predominate over the national identity
Views about ethnocultural diversity	Integration is given Favourable to multiculturalism	Integration is impossible Favourable to assimilationism	Integration is possible, but conditional on immigrants' adoption of the national culture Favourable to interculturalism or assimilationism
Views about immigration	Positive	Negative	Conditional on one's evaluation of immigrants' adoption of the national culture

Section 3: The Evaluation Mechanism Under the Magnifying Glass: How Individuals Use Media to Inform their Evaluation of Immigrants' Conformity to Different Markers of Identity

So far, my research has described Quebecers and sympathizers of La Meute's opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, has refined the theorization of the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity, and has proposed a mechanism of evaluation to deepen our understanding of the relationship between national identity and opinions about immigration and diversity. This last section of my research puts a magnifying glass on the evaluation mechanism in order to draw a more complete portrait of the ways different conceptions of national identity influence the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity, including radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies. Specifically, it addresses the third sub-question of this research: how can we understand the construction of mainstream negative opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity in comparison to those of radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies? To address this question, this last section explores how the mechanism of evaluation interacts with and is informed by different sources of information about immigration-related issues, which in turn influence exposure to more or less radical ideas about immigration and diversity. It shows that the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity act as lenses through which individuals receive and interpret mediatized information about immigration-related issues, in a manner that confirms ideas of similarities and differences between 'us' and 'them'.

Chapter 7 shows that some individuals, however, feel alienated by news media, in the sense that they feel that their concerns about immigration-related issues are not represented by news media. This is especially the case among interviewees endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity. These individuals thus seek meaning by consuming a variety of online sources of

information, especially far-right actors and groups on social media who directly address their concerns and bring value to their more exclusive identity. By selectively exposing themselves to far-right content, these individuals construct what I refer to as an "imagined community of interest" centered around exclusive markers of identity, shared concerns about immigration and the exclusion of (Muslim) immigrants, while confirming or reinforcing their more radical, negative opinions about these issues, including radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies.

Chapter 8 shows that interviewees who endorse a cultural conception of national identity, for their part, tend to use news media's representation of immigration-related issues as a tool to inform their evaluation of whether immigrants adopt the national culture or not. This is especially the case for individuals who do not have quality contact with immigrants and members of religious and ethnocultural minority groups in their daily lives; they tend to rely on information provided in news media to evaluate immigrants' adoption of the national culture.

This section highlights that the construction of more mainstream negative opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity and that of radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies both have as a starting point relatively exclusive conceptions of national identity. The difference between these opinions lies in one's mechanism of evaluation; specifically, the tools that one uses to inform his or her evaluation. In the case of more mainstream negative opinions about immigration and diversity, individuals tend to use news media coverage of immigration-related issues to inform their evaluation of whether or not most immigrants adopt the national culture. In contrast, individuals who endorse radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies tend to confirm and reinforce their perception of inherent differences between 'us' and 'them' by seeking far-right content on social media.

Chapter 7: Seeking and Interpreting Information that Bolsters the Civic and Ethnic Conceptions of National Identity

Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate how interviewees evaluate who is included and who is excluded from the national "imagined community". Individuals engage in a mechanism of evaluation assessing if immigrants and ethnocultural minorities conform to civic or ethnic criteria or adopt the national culture (depending on whether they endorse a civic, ethnic or cultural conception of national identity). This evaluation influences their perception of the impacts of immigration and diversity on the host society and influences the construction of their opinions about immigration and religious and ethnocultural diversity (e.g. positive or negative opinions about immigration; being in favour of multiculturalism, interculturalism or assimilationism). Better understanding the way different conceptions of national identity influence the construction of opinions about immigration and diversity, however, is only the first step toward deepening our understanding of the role of national identity in the construction of more mainstream opinions on the one hand, and radical opinions, such as the adherence to radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies, on the other.

I maintain that the mechanism of evaluation does not occurs in a vacuum; it occurs in a sociopolitical context in which individuals are exposed to different ideas and information about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. For instance, in contexts in which immigration and diversity are at the center of multiple public discussions and are connected to incidents and disruptive international events (e.g. terror attacks), individuals are often exposed to information about these topics through news media. This is the case in Quebec, where Quebecers have been exposed a great deal to mediatized information associated with immigration and diversity, as these topics have been at the center of social discussion, political debates and controversies (for example, Xhardez and Paquet 2020; A. Gagnon and Larios 2021; Nadeau and Helly 2016a; Tessier and

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Montigny 2016). When this exposure happens, I argue, individuals' conception of national identity (i.e. civic, ethnic or cultural) becomes the lens through which they receive and interpret information about immigration-related issues.

Some individuals, however, are less receptive to news media coverage and framing of these issues because these are less coherent with their conception of who belongs to the national in-group and thus do not address their perspective. Specifically, these individuals are more critical of and tend to dismiss (some of) news media's representation of immigration and diversity. The analysis shows that this is the case of most interviewees endorsing a civic or an ethnic conception of national identity, and particularly for sympathizers of La Meute. Indeed, sympathizers of La Meute feel alienated by news media, in the sense that they feel that their concerns about immigration-related issues are not represented by news media. They thus seek meaning by consuming a variety of alternative sources of information, especially far-right actors and groups on social media who address their concerns and bring value to their more exclusive identity.

This chapter presents the ways interviewees endorsing a civic or an ethnic conception of national identity interpret and understand mediatized and politicized immigration-related issues. It shows that these individuals tend to be critical of what they perceive to be dominant framings of immigration-related issues. Specifically, news media coverage and framing are perceived as too exclusive or inclusive, depending on whether the individual in question endorses a civic or an ethnic conception of national identity. This is followed by an analysis of pathways by which sympathizers of La Meute are led to consume far-right content on social media and interact with like-minded individuals on these platforms. This allows me to explore the ways individuals who feel alienated by news media seek meaning by selectively exposing themselves to a variety of

online sources of information (in the case of sympathizers of La Meute; far-right actors and groups on social media). [29]

Interpreting Immigration News Through a Civic Lens

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, individuals endorsing a civic conception of national identity tend to include in the national in-group anyone who resides in the country and/or adheres to the nation's laws and institutions. This conception of national identity involves little differentiation and is not associated with the expectation that immigrants should adopt the national majority culture. When these individuals are exposed to information about immigration-related issues in news media, they tend to embrace framings of these issues that are coherent with this perspective and criticize or discard the rest. For instance, one of Daniel's concerns about immigration is that newcomers are given sufficient resources to integrate into their new community at the economic, social and political levels. He follows news media's coverage of the work of a local organization for the integration of immigrants located in his municipality:

> I was able to see the programs offered by this organization. It's published in the local newspaper. You can follow the successes they've had, the challenges they face, the funding and all that. […] They're very involved. So, I think that this organization has greatly facilitated immigration to my region.

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[29] A few Quebecers endorsing civic conceptions of national identity were also highly critical of news media's representation of immigration issues, arguing that most journalists frame immigration as a threat to Quebec culture, language and values and thus engage in politics of fear and division. However, these individuals were receptive to some journalists' coverage and framing of these issues and perceive that their concerns are being (somewhat) addressed in news media. Yet, it seems reasonable to argue that others could reject news media and consult alternative sources of information that are more in line with their cosmopolitan views. Future research should explore this through the conduct of interviews with sympathizers of pro-immigration groups.

In his eyes, this local organization plays a fundamental role in immigrants' integration and success in the host society. This represents his vision of a society that provides the necessary resources and conditions to enable immigrants to integrate and feel welcomed.

Individuals endorsing a civic conception of national identity, however, are not receptive to all coverage and framing of immigration-related issues by news media. Specifically, for these individuals, frames of immigration as a cultural or security threat are not coherent with the way they comprehend the social reality (this is in line with the confirmation bias theory; see, for example, Nickerson 1998; Lerman and Acland 2020). Indeed, in their eyes, immigrants are part of the national in-group; this leaves little room for (re)affirming perceived differences between Quebecers and newcomers. Moreover, discourses about immigrants not adopting the national culture are not in line with their conception of culture, which is flexible and in constant evolution. These individuals thus tend to criticize or discard this kind of politicized and mediatized discourse. An example of this is provided by Sophie who argues that political debates about immigration and integration have "created fake problems". When addressing Quebec's political debate about the wearing of religious symbols in the public sphere, – a topic that has long been highly salient in Quebec news media (Giasson, Sauvageau, and Brin 2018) – she argues that it should not even be a topic of political debate:

> It is truly an abomination. It's ridiculous. We often talk about solutions to a problem that doesn't exist; but it's not even a solution and it's a problem that doesn't exist. It's nothing at all, so it's really just – my God it feels like such a demagogic move. It's a purely electoral move with a certain ill-informed base that we want to keep ill-informed and among whom we want to maintain fear in order to continue to get their votes. And that's no way to run a society. It's not a way to create a society that works, and I find it appalling.

Sophie rejects politicized and mediatized discourses that, in her eyes, promote differentiation, and instead she endorses discourses and actions aiming toward a more inclusive society.

The same goes for Alexandra: she is highly critical of the type of discourse used by some journalists and political elites to describe the state of the French language and culture in Quebec, which they argue is in decline due to the presence of (non-francophone) immigrants in the province.

> I don't like when journalists use the word 'fighting' [for French language in Quebec]. It's like fighting with someone. It's not that; you have to promote, to show how beautiful the French language is. […] So clearly, the French language has its importance just like Quebec culture, but not at the cost of lives, not at the cost of human misfortune, and not at the cost of losing our mind. I mean; Quebec culture is alive and in constant development! We have to stop living in constant fear of… ugh! It's okay. We just have to put in place the right means for the promotion of the French language, culture, etc., but without crushing, without trying to diminish others. People who come here want to be Quebecers.

As illustrated, Alexandra is critical of mediatized political discourses about immigration threatening the majority language and culture. In her eyes, this kind of discourse promotes division instead of unity and "encourages the fear of foreigners". She argues that political elites should "stop the politics of fear" and that Quebecers "have everything to gain by letting [immigrants] come with their cultural background" – because, for her, culture is fluid and evolves through exchange with others. Alexandra, like other individuals processing immigration issues through a civic lens, tends to consult news media that do not reinforce these discourses and pay more attention to political elites who share her vision of an inclusive national in-group.

Interviewees endorsing a civic conception of national identity feel that their perspective is under-represented, and their concerns, including issues of equality and social justice, are only marginally addressed by news media. These individuals tend to be more receptive to frames that represent immigration as a humanitarian imperative, highlight immigrants' benefits to the national culture, and are rooted in economic terms. Frames of immigration as a humanitarian act and a cultural benefit are coherent with the civic conception of national identity, which recognize and value cultural differences, and emphasize tolerance, solidarity and social justice. In the case of economic frames related to immigration, however, individuals endorsing a civic conception of national identity seem to be receptive to both positive and negative assessments of immigrants' impact on the national economy (thus generating enthusiasm or insecurity related to immigration). This indicates that, in some instances, economic considerations might be dissociated from national identity considerations. This should be further explored in future research.

Interpreting Immigration News Through an Ethnic Lens

In the eyes of interviewees endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity, (most) immigrants can never really become "true Quebecers", because the national in-group is conceived in racial, ethnic or religious terms. For them, an increasing presence of immigrants signifies a decreasing presence of Quebecers, following a zero-sum game logic. When these individuals are exposed to information about or related to immigration-related issues in news media, they tend to interpret this as evidence informing their evaluation of the province as becoming increasingly diversified, and of the national identity as under threat by the presence of immigrants. For instance, Jane argues that she has not always had strong, negative positions over immigration issues. However, in recent years, she has become more concerned about what she perceives as an increasing number of

immigrants entering the country and challenging the Canadian identity. This evaluation is fuelled by information presented in news media:

> Interviewer: Have you always had these positions [about immigration]?
>
> Jane: No, not always; because there weren't as many before – I mean different nationalities coming into Quebec. There weren't as many, so before we didn't see [immigration] that way. It's just that since it's been happening in large groups, we say to ourselves: "Well, come on! Are they all going to come here?" […] We can't welcome everyone. It's a wave of immigration. It started with Justin Trudeau, about 4 years ago; I mean, the wave.
>
> Interviewer: What made you realize that?
>
> Jane: Communications, the media, television; let's just say that people talked a lot about it: that Canada brings in [immigrants].

The same goes for Gertrude who evaluates the province as having experienced a significant increase in (ethnically different) immigration levels in recent years – one that seems out of control:

> Interviewer: Have you been thinking that [Quebec is accepting too many immigrants] for a long time?
>
> Gertrude: I don't think so. We used to accept some, we used to hear a little bit about it and all that, but I don't know if things have amplified or... But now, in the last couple of years, [immigrants] have been coming in, coming in, coming in. It's terrible!

For many interviewees endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity, like Jane and Gertrude, the increasing salience of immigration-related issues in news media enhances their concerns over

immigrants' impact on the national in-group. Many argue that, in recent years, that is, since immigration and religious and ethnocultural diversity have become contentious, public topics of discussion, the perceived consequences of immigration on Quebec society seem to have worsened. For example, when describing immigration and diversity as increasingly concerning issues, interviewees use statements such as "it has degenerated", "it has accelerated", "the evolution of the situation", "there have been big changes" and "we see this increasingly".

Evaluations of immigration as threatening Quebec identity shared among interviewees are particularly associated with the presence of Muslims in the province; a community that has been at the centre of mediatized controversies and politicized discourses in Quebec (Bakali 2015). In the eyes of Hugo:

> The biggest problem is that [Muslims] do not integrate into the way of thinking of their host country. They continue to think in the same way they used to think at home, and I think that they almost want to impose their way of thinking on us. Anyway, this is from what I see, and I may not be neutral in the sense that I have to rely on what I read, what I hear, because here, in the country-side, there are no immigrants. I can't say that I'm around several Muslims a day who are trying to convert me. That is not true.

Another example of this is provided by Gertrude:

> Interviewer: Are there immigrant communities who would "impose their culture" more than others?
>
> Gertrude: Muslims.
>
> Interviewer: What makes you think so?

Gertrude: One just has to watch television to know! We can see everything they do: we can no longer have pork served in daycare centres; in many places, we can no longer have Christmas trees. They wear their religious signs, and we, we no longer have religious signs. We have nothing.

As illustrated in these excerpts, interviewees endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity tend to rely on what they see in news media to confirm and deepen the divide they emphasize between 'us' and 'them'. They interpret mediatized information associated with immigration as evidence that their ethnically conceived national identity is under threat.

Although Quebecers endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity tend to think that news media can be informative about certain immigration issues, they also tend to be critical of their coverage and are not always receptive to their framings of these issues. Indeed, representations of immigration-related issues are not always coherent with their conception of who belongs to the national community and, accordingly, who should be favoured and prioritized in society. As such, in the eyes of many, news media is politically biased, emphasizing pro- diversity and immigration views, and fails to address their concerns about immigration-related issues – a psychological phenomenon of cognitive dissonance that is related to the confirmation bias theory (for instance, see Jean Tsang 2019). This is particularly the case among interviewed sympathizers of La Meute.

Feeling Alienated by News Media

Sympathizers of La Meute tend to feel that their (more exclusive) views and their concerns about immigration and diversity are not represented in news media. In their eyes, news media disproportionately presents left-wing and liberal interpretations of immigration-related issues, thus

producing what Jacques qualifies as the "construction of a [liberal] consensus". In his view, this also involves a tendency to represent and value immigrants and religious and ethnocultural minorities' interests over that of Quebecers – a phenomenon he describes as a "reversal of values". In a similar way, John argues that news media largely depict Quebec and other liberal democracies in a negative light, reflecting their adherence to "more globalist than nationalist" stances. Specifically, in order to promote globalization, news media "deride [Quebec] culture", while "infantilizing other cultures". As he puts it: "Everything the West has done is always viewed in the context of being the bad one: sexism, racism, colonialism, slavery… It's never really a celebration of our culture and the good that we've done." Individuals like Jacques and John thus feel that news media are biased against their views on immigration and diversity.

Following this line of reasoning, these interviewees feel that their concerns about immigration and diversity are ignored or dismissed by news media. Indeed, news media would not cover all issues deemed worthy of attention, thereby downplaying what they perceive as the ongoing threat of immigration. As Jacques expresses: "it is incomprehensible that mass media don't get offended by this", referring to his concerns about "mass migration". In the eyes of these individuals, the feeling that their concerns are not being addressed suggests a "complacency" on the part of news media and a failure to keep people informed. As Cynthia explains:

> For example, in Saudi Arabia, women cannot drive – well they can now, but only if they are accompanied! But anyway, that's a reality, and it comes from a religious political system. You can't deny that it exists. What I don't get is that here [in Quebec], when [news media and political elites] talk about Islam, it seems that they ignore the fact that it exists. At some point, things must be said as they are, we must talk about it: yes, things are happening over there. Why wouldn't it happen here?

Another example of this is provided by Denis who maintains that "the media don't talk about the dangers related to immigration". In his eyes, news media is instead engaged in "excessive propaganda campaigns [in favour of immigration and multiculturalism, and against sympathizers of groups such as La Meute]" – a perception that was expressed by many other interviewees.

Other examples of concerns about immigration that would not be addressed by news media include the perceived assimilation of Quebecers by immigrants, the presence of terrorist immigrants on Canadian soil, and the "invasion" of immigrants creating an increasingly multicultural society. These concerns are rooted in exclusive conceptions of national identity, which involve important differentiation processes between 'us' and 'them' and create space for the dehumanization of immigrants – for instance, conceiving immigrants as terrorists or "invaders". These individuals, therefore, feel alienated by news media.

Seeking Meaning and the Creation of an Ideological Echo Chamber

In response to the feeling that their concerns about immigration issues are not represented by news media, a phenomenon I refer to as media alienation, interviewed sympathizers of La Meute seek meaning by consuming a variety of online sources of information, particularly far-right actors and groups on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Far-right pages on social media discuss issues and news that are covered by news media, as well as issues that are not, in a way to offer their own interpretations, which are often rooted in racial and ethnic understandings of society and politics (see Ekman 2019) and serve to confirm more exclusive views about immigration and diversity. As interviewees explain in an almost systematic way: "when [insert an event associated with immigration] happened, I started doing my research" (also see Busher 2016), mentioning their

interest to "seek more impartial information", "find out the truth", "seek answers", "address my concerns" and "form my own opinion". An example of this is provided by Alain, who started consuming far-right content on social media to find information explaining why Western governments, particularly the Canadian government, would allow the influx of what he perceives as "mass migration" – a topic, he feels, is not addressed in news media:

> When Justin Trudeau got elected, I was surprised. And this was during the context of mass migration in Europe; specifically, in Germany where we were talking about hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants. It was at that moment that I started to inform myself on social media […] and I found this identity group on Facebook that shared the same concerns as me, asked a lot of questions, and *really* discussed these concerns.

Far-right actors and groups on social media provide answers to Alain, addressing his concerns and offering radical interpretations of immigration-related issues that he finds compelling.

By consuming far-right content on social media, sympathizers of La Meute selectively expose themselves to views they tend to agree with, thereby reducing cognitive dissonance and creating an ideological "echo chamber" sustaining or reinforcing political polarization and antagonistic discourse (Törnberg and Wahlström 2018; Ekman 2019). On the one hand, these individuals tend to value information provided on these platforms because they allow them to explore what those they qualify as "ordinary people" and "independent experts" think about immigration issues. For instance, Anne explains that she started following La Meute's Facebook page to access information and explore what other Quebecers thought of various debates about immigrants' integration in the province; a topic she finds deeply concerning.

I thought [La Meute's public Facebook page] was a good place to get information beyond what is presented in Le Devoir, La Presse, La Gazette, you know...[30] I thought it was also interesting because it didn't come from... it came from the people! The people. I really did it because I was curious to see what was being said.

On the other hand, perspectives presented by far-right actors and groups on social media tend to be perceived as more relevant because they shed light on concerns on which the news media does not provide clear answers in their view. In the case of most interviewees, this results in mistrusting or rejecting news media, thus further strengthening their ideological echo chamber.[31] Many interviewees indeed argue that these sources of information are the only ones that are eye-opening and honest regarding immigration issues. As John explains, far-right actors and groups on social media allow him to explore "broader perspectives that focus not only on mass immigration or Muslims as such, but on the system that makes it work, like the big manufacturers who almost want to create a migratory crisis." John adheres to these perspectives, which provide support and explanations for his perception that the national in-group is under threat by the presence of (non-white) immigrants. Interviewees like John tend to immerse themselves in far-right pages on social media in order to make sense of their concerns related to immigration and stay informed. An example of this is provided by Jacques, who began to explore online sources of information in the aftermath of 9/11, because he was not satisfied with the information provided by news media to explain these attacks.

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[30] Le Devoir, La Presse and La Gazette constitute daily newspapers in Quebec.

[31] Note that not all respondents consuming far-right actors and groups on social media reject news media, but most tend to consume far-right content on social media when seeking information about immigration-related issues.

Eighteen years ago, September 11, 2001 happened. And then I started to be interested in this topic [...] It marked me, as it did everyone else. So, I started thinking about it. In February or March 2002, I listened to a documentary that began to cast doubt on the real causes of the September 11 attacks, and I spent at least several thousand hours [doing research] on this. Listen, I know EVERYTHING about September 11, 2001. And I came to the conclusion that the official version could not be true. And then I said to myself: 'If we can be lied to on such an important topic, what else can we be lied on? On absolutely everything!' And that's when my obsession to know the truth took off.

In the eyes of Jacques, mainstream explanations of 9/11 do not resonate with the way he conceives the 'us' and 'them', understood as an ethnic national in-group in opposition to a barbaric, violent other. Far-right actors and groups on social media, in contrast, provide him with explanations that are coherent with his ethnic lens and confirm his perception of an impending security threat that Muslims would pose to Western societies. Jacques thus immerses himself in far-right sources of information, investing a large amount of time on social media platforms to find out "the truth" and disregarding news media as "manipulative" and "lying". This is also the case of Emma who describes herself as "anti-mass-media" and only consumes far-right sources of information. As she puts it: "I am for intellectual independence" and against "blindly espousing a doctrine", referring to the pro-immigration stances she perceives are being conveyed by news media. Immersion in far-right sources of information leads most interviewed sympathizers of La Meute to explore and endorse all-encompassing explanations about immigration and the sociopolitical reality. Indeed, far-right discourses often involve pervasive explanations rooted in conspiracy theories. As explained by Bergmann (2018), conspiracy theories tend to (1) create an

external threat to the nation (in the case of interviewees: immigrants and Muslims); (2) accuse the domestic elites of betraying the people (i.e. news media and political actors) and (3) position themselves as the only true defenders of the "pure people" (i.e. members of the national in-group). As such, many interviewees who consume far-right actors and groups on social media share the view that the implementation of multicultural and liberal immigration policies is orchestrated by a small number of powerful individuals, such as the United Nations, corrupt political elites, the "New World Order" or Muslims, in an attempt to erase ethnically conceived national identities. In the eyes of many, sociopolitical phenomena appear interconnected, from the 9/11 terrorist attacks to the increasing presence of immigrants in Quebec, to the 2015 refugee crisis and the election of incumbent Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, as part of a larger plan that seeks to "replace" natives by immigrants or to "Islamize" Western countries.

The Construction of an Imagined Community of Interest

Beyond adhering to radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies that are disseminated on far-right pages on social media, sympathizers of La Meute identify themselves (to varying degrees) with the far-right online community. As other studies exploring online communities show, far-right pages on social media constitute a crucial environment for collective identity-building (Scrivens and Amarasingam 2020; Bliuc et al. 2019; also see Gaudette et al. 2020; Perry and Scrivens 2016a). However, as discussed below, this collective identity is not restricted to the online world; it transcends the boundaries of far-right actors and groups on social media to include other individuals who share concerns about immigration and value a more exclusive conception of the nation, thus creating what I refer to as an "imagined community of interest". Across the literature on the far-right, it is not uncommon to refer to the development of an

"imagined community" among members of far-right groups (for example, Nouri and Lorenzo-Dus 2019). Pathways toward the construction of a common sense of "we" among these individuals, however, remain to be further investigated and explained.

The imagined community of interest is derived from conceptions of the national community emphasizing particular markers of national identity in a way to exclude (potential new) members and justify the privileged position of the national in-group. Just like "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983, 6), members of the imagined community of interest "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion".[32] The construction of the "imagined community of interest" is enabled by the media (in this instance, far-right pages on social media), which provide the basis of representation of the community and allow the identification and formation of new solidarities.

By selectively exposing themselves to information disseminated on far-right pages on social media and interacting on these platforms, sympathizers of La Meute find a community of individuals endorsing a similar understanding of the 'us' and 'them' and, accordingly, sharing a similar perception of who should be prioritized or protected in society. As Denis explains, following La Meute's Facebook page allowed him to "meet people like me, people who think like me". Moreover, by connecting and interacting with like-minded individuals on social media, these individuals actively (and discursively) develop feelings of mutual recognition and solidarity. As John explains: "We are guys with common interests, we support each other, […] it's good to

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[32] Note that, in this research, the parallel between "imagined communities of interest" and Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" is used as a way to illustrate the social construction of national identities and the idea that groups of people who do not know each other can rally around a given sense of their community. It is important to highlight that Anderson's concept refers to whole, all-encompassing nations, while sympathizers of La Meute and their imagined community of interest only represent a fragment of the Quebec national community. Yet, these individuals tend to perceive themselves as representing the nation.

have someone you get along with, that you can be honest with." This is also the case of Rémi who argues that La Meute has become "his fraternity", even though he has only met a few other sympathizers – he is, however, able to interact with a few of them on Facebook. In his eyes, La Meute brings together people who think like him, specifically, "patriots" who stand up to "defend Quebec identity". Rémi has developed a sense of "we", involving perceived commonality and solidarity with what he refers to as his "fraternal brothers" constituting the group. As he puts it:

> The day they'll need me, I'll be there to defend our rights. That's what La Meute is for; it's for gathering a lot of people. When we will need something, we'll be there. And there's a lot more people [in the group] than people think. There are a lot of people [in the group]!

For a majority of sympathizers of La Meute, the construction of an "imagined community of interest" goes beyond the online community to include sympathizers of other groups and other individuals who share the same concerns about immigration and endorse a similar conception of the national group they aim to protect. For instance, many interviewees mentioned sympathizers of the Quebec far-right group *Storm Alliance* as people sharing the same concerns and committed to the same cause as them. In a similar way, when explaining his attachment to certain far-right groups in Quebec, Alain explains that he appreciates that these groups "promote who we are. It's very clear to them who they are, and they don't care what others think. That's what I like about them". For these reasons, he consumes these groups' Facebook pages as sources of information and reads other materials they produce, such as blogs and books. He also spends a lot of time engaging in online discussions with other followers of these pages.

Although members of the imagined community of interest converge around a preference for a more exclusive conception of the national in-group, they tend to conceive the community in relation to other communities of interest around the globe, particularly in Western Europe and the United States (that is, communities perceived as sharing some racial, religious and/or cultural markers of identity), because they appear to be experiencing the same struggles. For example, Adam has developed a sense of mutual recognition with like-minded people in Europe, centered on a shared fear of Muslim invasion:

> I know that in France there is a lot going on: I speak with a couple of French people on social networks and, well, things have calmed down a bit, but it's still the same and you can see that they [Muslims] are quietly infiltrating the government.

Another example of this is provided by Lucie, who follows multiple far-right groups on Facebook and other platforms, which she refers to as "her team". Through social media, she found a community of individuals who share the same concerns about (Muslim) immigration, and with whom she identifies. As she mentions: "I started chatting with people from all over the world, and if you look at all this, it's the same everywhere [referring to a "clash of cultures" between Islam and Western society]." She explains that the spread of Internet usage has profoundly altered networked connectivity beyond local and national communities: "Before, I didn't have a computer. Now the world is next door! France is at my fingertips! […] It made me realize what's going on everywhere [referring to the perception that Muslims pose a security threat in Europe and elsewhere]." By engaging in discussions with followers of far-right actors and groups on social media, individuals like Adam and Lucie foster a sense of collective identity based on shared concerns and grievances.

The "imagined community of interest" is conceived as composed of individuals valuing exclusive boundaries of the national in-group and sharing concerns related to immigration and diversity. As demonstrated, this generates feelings of belonging, mutual recognition and solidarity. Yet, it also generates patterns of exclusion. Indeed, it gives these individuals the perception that, outside the "imagined community of interest", people do not really understand the potential threat of immigration – or as Lucie puts it: "it's so big – people don't want to know about it". Other people who think differently would not realize or would not want to see the "facts". As Pierre explains:

> [Sympathizers of La Meute] are a little bit more aware of what's coming than most other people. Because here, in Quebec, we haven't experienced war like they have in Syria, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, etc. We haven't really experienced that. We've known the Hells Angels and the Rock Machines who were fighting,[33] but it's nothing like that: it didn't prepare people to react if there's a threat. So people are a little bit asleep, you know. They just go with the flow and it might be too late when they wake up. Processes may already be initiated: that radical Muslims are in the government and that they impose laws like Sharia or similar things that people don't want, but they don't have the awareness that this could happen. For them, everything is fine, everything has always been fine, and it will always be fine. They are not awake.

The same goes for Stephan who sometimes experiences friction with his friends because he feels that they do not want to understand the importance of taking immigration issues seriously. When describing some of his friends' views about the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in public

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[33] The Hells Angels and the Rock Machines are two outlaw motorcycle groups that fought each other in the late 1990s, resulting in a violent war.

institutions in Quebec, he argues that they are closing their eyes in front of what he perceives as the threat from Muslims: "This is laxity. It's 'I don't want to deal with it. I don't want to go too far in understanding the situation. As long as they're not in my yard, they can dress as they want'."

Research shows that when individuals with different opinions than the majority meet with like-minded people, they feel empowered to assert their opinion and express themselves more freely, challenging conventional behavioural norms (Noelle-Neumann 1984). In the case of individuals who feel that their views and concerns are not represented by news media, the creation of an imagined community of interest can motivate them to express their views and reinforce certain opinions and beliefs. For instance, connecting with an imagined community of interest validates their views that Quebecers should be proud of who they are (e.g. "being proud of our flag", "being proud of our identity"), instead of being demonized for wanting to protect the national identity or being labelled as racists. As such, many interviewees explain that one of the things they like the most about connecting with like-minded actors and groups on social media is to be able to express their opinions and discuss their concerns related to immigration. As Cynthia explained when asked why she decided to follow La Meute's Facebook page: "I wanted to get to know these people, I wanted to see what they think and what they're going to do about it. The goal for me was first, to get answers, and second, to be heard, to be able to say: 'hey wait a minute' [referring to her concern about liberal immigration policies]!"

By joining an imagined community of interest, most interviewees become not only consumers of far-right content, but active actors in this community of like-minded individuals (to varying degrees). Many aspire to have a role in the conversation in order to introduce and disseminate their perspective, which they perceive to be demonized or dismissed by news media and political elites. Through far-right pages on social media, individuals can engage, mobilize and

participate in public and political life by expressing themselves, sharing and reacting to information, engaging in discussion with like-minded individuals, joining or organizing events and protests and so on. For many, informing people about the challenges and threats posed by immigration in Quebec and expressing their disagreement with political decisions motivate them to be part of the imagined community of interest. Emma, a sympathizer of La Meute who spends a lot of time doing research and publishing on the group's Facebook page, stresses the importance of doing this: "That's important. It's important to be informed, it's important to think!" In her view, it is a duty to conduct research in order to better inform other members of her community about information that is not presented in news media: "we do research a lot, a lot, a lot. We publish information, things like that […] to inform people about the real stuff that [news media and political elites] don't dare to say."

Conclusion

Interviewees endorsing a civic or an ethnic conception of national identity tend to be critical (to different degrees) of news media representations of immigration-related issues. In the eyes of interviewees conceiving national belonging in civic terms, coverage and framing of immigration and ethnocultural diversity tend to (re)assert perceived differences between Quebecers and newcomers – a representation that is not coherent with the civic lens through with they make sense of immigration-related issues. Moreover, they feel that news media under-represent their perspectives and concerns centered around issues of equality and social justice. In a similar way, interviewees conceiving the national community in ethnic terms tend to criticize news media for over-representing immigrants and ethnocultural minorities' perspectives and for not challenging multiculturalism and liberal immigration policies. Some of these individuals, nevertheless, build

on mediatized news related to immigration to further differentiate between (ethnically conceived) Quebecers and immigrants, and confirm or reinforce their evaluation that Quebec identity is under threat. Others, as is the case for a majority of sympathizers of La Meute, feel alienated by news media. These individuals mistrust or reject news media, contending that these sources of information do not represent their perspectives and do not address their concerns about immigration. They thus seek meaning by consuming far-right content on social media, including content disseminated on La Meute's Facebook page.

Far-right actors and groups on social media provide an environment for individuals who feel alienated by news media to inform their evaluation of immigrants and ethnocultural minorities as a threat to the national identity, connect with others who endorse more exclusive conceptions of the national in-group and share their concerns about immigration and religious and ethnocultural diversity. This creates an "imagined community of interest". Consuming far-right content on social media, as well as sharing and engaging in discussion with other members of the (online) community of interest, nourishes a sense of conviction, while also sustaining or reinforcing pre-existing views. By selectively exposing themselves to interpretations of immigration issues they tend to agree with, these individuals confirm or reinforce their negative opinions about immigration. Indeed, as argued by others, selective exposure to "ideologically congenial content" results in "an 'echo chamber' environment that could facilitate political polarization and social extremism" (Barberá et al. 2015, 1531). The echo chamber effect emphasizes individuals' concerns related to immigration and reinforces a deep disillusionment with the performance of mainstream political parties in addressing these concerns. It also facilitates the creation of a collective narrative anchored in far-right worldviews and conspiratorial thinking. As such, most interviewed sympathizers of La Meute adhere to radical anti-Muslim and/or white supremacist ideologies.

Members of the "imagined community of interest" converge around a preference for a more exclusive conception of the national in-group. Yet, they tend to conceive this community in relation to other Western communities of interest that would share similar concerns and would be experiencing the same struggles related to (Muslim) immigration. Future research should further explore the boundaries of the imagined community of interest, specifically by exploring the tension between the preference for more exclusive markers of national identity and the transnational nature of these (online) communities.

Chapter 8: News Media as a Tool for Evaluating Immigrants' Adoption of the National Culture

This chapter presents how Quebecers interviewed who endorse a cultural conception of national identity use mediatized information about immigration-related issues as a tool to inform their evaluation of whether most immigrants adopt the national culture or not. Individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity constitute a majority of Quebecers interviewed, which, as explained in chapter 6, differentiates between 'us' and 'them' on the basis of perceived cultural similarities or differences. In contrast with the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity, which involve a more rigid mechanism of evaluation through which immigrants and members of ethnocultural minority groups are either included or excluded based on their conformity to different markers of national identity, the cultural conception of national identity involves a more flexible mechanism of evaluation through which immigrants' adoption of the national culture is assessed to determine if they are included or excluded from the national in-group.

The analysis demonstrates that interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of national identity tend to be receptive to news media's coverage and framing of immigration and diversity issues, which they interpret as providing cues about the potential cultural threats associated with immigration and ethnocultural diversity. Specifically, they use information provided by news media as a tool to evaluate whether different immigrant communities adopt the national majority culture or not.

This chapter first presents examples of the ways interviewees evaluate immigrants' learning of the French language, embrace of Quebec liberal values, respect of the principle of secularism and support for Quebecers' political aspirations mostly by drawing on representations of these

issues in news media. It then shows that news media play an even more important role in the evaluation of Muslims' adoption of Quebec culture; a group with which very few interviewees have contact.

Evaluations of Immigrants' Adoption of the National Culture

In Quebec, many mediatized and politicized events related to immigrants' relationships to Quebec culture have attracted Quebecers' attention throughout the years (for example, Giasson, Sauvageau, and Brin 2018; Giasson, Brin, and Sauvageau 2010b; Laxer and Korteweg 2016). As Gisèle puts it: "Before, we didn't hear much about immigration. Now, it seems to be a topic that is more prevalent. On television, in the newspapers; we hear about it constantly." When individuals are exposed to mediatized information about immigration-related issues, they use it to inform their evaluation of whether or not most immigrants adopt the national culture. Only a few interviewees have quality contact with immigrants and members of religious and ethnocultural minority groups in their daily lives. Specifically, most interviewees reported having few interactions, distant encounters, or no contact with immigrants and members of religious and ethnocultural minority groups in their daily lives. In the absence of quality contact, such as having friends or colleagues of different origins, most interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of national identity rely instead on news media as a tool to inform and substantiate their (positive or negative) evaluation of immigrants' adoption of the national culture (as opposed to drawing on real life experiences). This is particularly the case for individuals with negative evaluations of immigrants' adoption of the national culture; those were mainly informed or confirmed through news media's coverage and framing of immigration-related issues. Negative evaluations result in a greater process of

differentiation in which immigrants and Quebecers are perceived as having distinct cultural traits, with those of the former threatening those of the latter.

First, the majority of interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of national identity evaluate whether or not most immigrants learn the French language. Indeed, the analysis shows the presence of long-standing linguistic insecurities shared by many. Many retrace their insecurities about the preservation of the French language to the time of the British conquest of New France and link them to the situation of Francophones as a minority in a predominantly English Canada. Nowadays, immigrants are at the center of these linguistic insecurities. As argued by Marco:

> In the past, if we go back in the history of Quebec, Quebecers could have been assimilated by Anglophones. Now we have moved to something else: Quebecers could be assimilated by other cultures.

While some interviewees illustrate their linguistic insecurities through stories about visiting or being in Montreal and not being able to be served in French, linguistic insecurities are most often substantiated by mediatized information about immigrants who would not be willing to learn French. This is the case of Joanie who has always been concerned about the future of the French language in Quebec, but for whom recent events such as the "Bonjour-Hi" controversy have led her to re-evaluate the situation and enhanced her concerns:

> What will be left of Bill 101 in 10 years? Not much, I think. […] I heard about it not so long ago on the radio: I think it was 67% of the population who spoke French in Quebec. There's a good 33% missing compared to 30 years ago! And now they say it will decline even more, precisely because of immigration. People who don't want to speak French...

To protect the French language, which she perceives is under threat in light of her evaluation of immigrants' learning of the French language, Joanie favours a reduction in immigration intakes. Another example of a negative evaluation of immigrants' learning of the French language is provided by Gaétan. He argues that when he goes to Montreal, most people from different origins that he meets in the street speak English. He therefore evaluates the French language, and by extension Quebec identity, as threatened by immigration. To protect the French language, Gaétan favours the selection of immigrants who already speak French. As he puts it:

> There is a form of immigration that I appreciate and that I favour: immigrants who speak French. Many immigrants who come here are not interested in learning French because it is too complicated. […] When I went to Montreal, I listened to the people around me; they speak English! […] I would say that it has increased in the last ten years. It was very subtle at first, but today we're losing our language and if you listen to columnists, those who choose to save the French language, you'll see that I'm not the only one who thinks like this.

Gaétan corroborates his evaluation of most immigrants as not learning the French language with information provided by newspaper columnists. He feels somewhat reassured that a few Quebec columnists defend the French language and inform society about this perceived threat and argues that more should be done to protect the French language (such as favouring immigrants who speak French). As he puts it: "Some columnists write to say that we must not give up. We need our Quebec identity. We must not give up, but at some point, it is heavy to bear; we are losing our Quebec identity."

Second, the majority of interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of national identity evaluate whether or not most immigrants adopt Quebec liberal values by building on mediatized

discourses about the congruence between newcomers' values and that of Quebecers, as well as on mediatized debates about religious accommodations in the province. For example, Paul evaluates immigrants' embrace of Quebec liberal values by drawing on mediatized events related to the so-called "reasonable accommodation crisis" in Quebec. He perceives that religious minorities ask for accommodations that are incompatible with Quebec liberal values and therefore he evaluates them as not sharing the same values as Quebecers. As he puts it:

> Oh, we learned a lot from the Bouchard-Taylor Commission! Even before the Commission came out in the media, there was a story about requests for accommodation by Jews that caused a scandal, and people felt that it was a disturbing subject, that it could threaten some of our values.

Paul's evaluation of immigrants' adoption of Quebec liberal values is negative. He favours a decrease in immigration intakes.

Third, interviewees use news media's representation of immigration issues to evaluate whether or not immigrants respect the principle of secularism. For example, Claude argues that religious accommodations are often "unreasonable", suggesting that some religious minorities do not respect Quebec secularism. In his view, however, the law on secularism recently adopted by the Quebec government will improve the situation by ensuring the ordering of public life exclusively on the basis of non-religious practices and values, delimiting a neutral ground that stands outside religious controversy. Moreover, through information provided in news media, he considers that the law on secularism relegates the practice of religion to the private and communal spheres and evaluates some religious minorities as supportive of this. As he argues:

There have been many examples of accommodations that have been accorded that, in my opinion, were unreasonable. It was exaggerated. There had to be a law on secularism, to put a stop to that. And, for example, there are a lot of Muslims who agree with that, and they say so; there was a journal article that I read about the Association of... some association of Muslims who said how [wearing the veil] is retrograde for women and that it has nothing to do with [the practice of] religion.

Drawing on information from news media, Claude re-evaluates in a positive way immigrants and religious minorities' respect for Quebec secularism; he expresses positive opinions about immigration. The opposite is true for Nathalie, who evaluates most immigrants as not supporting Quebec secularism. She favours a decrease in immigration intakes. As she explains:

I am a bit strict when it comes to immigrants: I am open to immigrants, but I like them to respect us as Quebecers. When I see that things happen, like when I read the newspaper, well sometimes it irritates me. […] For example, when there were immigrants who protested against secularism – while many Quebecers were in favour of secularism. I followed a lot the debates on secularism.

Finally, many interviewees evaluate most immigrants as voting for the Parti Libéral du Québec in provincial elections and for the Liberal Party of Canada in federal elections (as opposed to voting for the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois like large proportions of Quebecers have done over the last decades). As most of these interviewees argue, this is information that "everyone knows", sometimes mentioning that Jacques Parizeau was right in his (in)famous remark that

Quebec sovereignty had been defeated by "the ethnic vote"[34], sometimes mentioning the widely mediatized controversy of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's visit to India, dressed in traditional Indian clothing. The latter example would illustrate Trudeau's perceived strategy of "putting on costumes" to win immigrant votes. In the case of Alex, this evaluation is also substantiated by information provided in news media. He argues that immigrants and ethnocultural minorities' claims for cultural recognition suggest that they do not want to identify with nor belong to the Quebec political community. Instead, Alex further argues, they embrace the Canadian political community, which promotes differences rather than common bonds, and they pursue their own political interests. This would result in the creation of a division among communities, particularly in relation to that of the majority group in Quebec. Immigrants and ethnocultural minorities, he evaluates, would thus not share Quebecers' political aspirations. As he argues:

> It is difficult for an immigrant to fully immerse himself into being a Quebecer. It seems to me that before, there was no 'us' and 'them'. Today, it's really… I don't know if it's the media that amplifies it, but I really have the impression that there are different groups and that, when [immigrants] come [to Quebec], it is as if they don't want to be a Quebecer. As if what's most important is their personal identity and where they come from, and their cultural habits, and that takes precedence over everything else; there's not really a shared reality. The emphasis is always on the characteristics that separate people rather than the fact that a person can come here and choose to participate fully in our political life and identify himself as a Quebecer as well if they want to. I think that's a bit unfortunate. That comes from a Canadian mentality or an Anglo-Saxon mentality.

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[34] After Quebec independence referendum loss in 1995, Quebec Premier Jacques Parizeau mentioned that sovereignty has been defeated by "money and ethnic votes".

Alex evaluates immigrants as valuing diversity at the expense of community cohesion and adhesion to a common public culture. The emphasis immigrants put on their distinctive cultural practices and interests, he perceives, impedes them from becoming Quebecers and sharing Quebec's political aspirations. Unless this situation changes, Alex argues for a reduction in immigration intakes.

For interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of national identity, it is possible for immigrants to embrace Quebec culture and for them to be included in the national in-group. To ensure immigrants' culture learning and, for some, culture shedding, these individuals tend to favour interculturalist or assimilationist policies. However, the extent to which interviewees perceive that most immigrants do adopt the national culture varies from one to another, highlighting the contingency and subjectivity of the evaluation mechanism associated with cultural conceptions of national identity. Moreover, beyond individuals' few interactions and distant encounters with immigrants and ethnocultural minorities, news media's representation of immigration-related issues plays a key role in individuals' evaluations of immigrants' adoption of the national culture. This is especially the case regarding interviewees' evaluations of Muslim immigrants' adoption of the national culture; a minority group that stands out in the eyes of interviewees as the least inclined to adopt the national culture. Specifically, very few interviewees have quality contact with members of Muslim communities. For a large majority, the (negative) evaluation of Muslims' adoption of the national culture draws on information presented in news media.

Evaluating Specific Immigrant Communities' Adoption of the National Culture

While information about immigration and ethnocultural diversity presented in news media informs individuals' general evaluations regarding immigrants' adoption of the national culture, it

also provides cues about which specific immigrant communities would be more willing than others to embrace Quebec culture. Indeed, many interviewees suggest that news media have drawn their attention to the (perceived lack of) cultural integration of particular immigrant communities. This is particularly the case for Muslim communities.

An example of this is provided by Johanne who evaluates most immigrants as adopting the national culture and thus integrating into Quebec society. Johanne has positive opinions about immigration and values the presence of newcomers in the province. However, she is skeptical about Muslims' adoption of Quebec's liberal values. Like many other interviewees, she does not have daily contact with immigrants and members of religious and ethnocultural minorities, including Muslims. She mentions that what she knows about Muslim communities, she learned through news media.

> If you follow the news a little bit, you can see that – although it's controversial... I'm not knowledgeable enough to give details here, but Muslims may be reluctant to adopt our ways. Just the fact that women wear the veil and all that – and when one is well informed, one knows that it's not a religious issue, it's more a question of their more masculine culture. It's very much the men who are at the base of maintaining that culture. Otherwise... I can't say that I've known many immigrants. […] What I know is because I've read about it in the newspapers and seen it on the news.

This excerpt demonstrates how individuals can draw on particular depictions of immigrants and religious and ethnocultural minorities that are disseminated by news media to inform their evaluation of whether or not some immigrant communities are more willing than others to adopt the national culture.

As documented by others, Muslims have been disproportionally (mis)represented in news media and political discourse in liberal democracies (Bail 2012; 2014), including in Quebec (Bakali 2015; also see Pottie-Sherman and Wilkes 2014). Widely mediatized stories featuring Muslims involved in terrorist acts or in the midst of controversy were often mentioned by interviewees to illustrate their feelings about these communities. An example of this dates back to 2007, when a sugar shack removed pork from its menu to accommodate Muslims. This event made headlines and puzzled many Quebecers as sugar shacks are strongly associated with Quebec's cultural identity, and pork with the traditional food served there (see Zubrzycki 2016, 149). It was mentioned by several interviewees as an example of religious accommodation that would favour this minority group at the expense of the national majority culture. For Jean, this mediatized event provides strong evidence that Muslims are not willing to adopt Quebec culture.

Interviewer: What do you mean by "they [immigrants] are imposing their values"?

Jean: Well, it's like the case, a few years ago, when some Muslims, not to mention them, came into a sugar shack and wanted to take all the pork out because they didn't want it, they didn't eat it. If you don't want to adapt to what's here, you just don't go in there, that's all.

Interviewer: How long has it been since you've noticed this?

Jean: I haven't noticed it directly, because I was not aware of this directly in front of me, but I rely on newspapers and reports on this topic. So, it's been maybe ten years or so that we've been noticing this. Because here [in Mascouche], we're starting to have veiled people, but it's not that bad. It's not that bad.

The same goes for Gaétan who argues that Muslims are "imposing" their values on Quebecers, something he "noticed" following another controversy related to Muslims asking for accommodations in a sugar shack:

> I noticed this at the time when in a sugar shack – I don't know if you remember; it made the headlines in the news: Muslims in a sugar shack asked that people who were singing and playing music go outside so that they could say their prayer, and the owner said yes. It caused a lot of reaction. It's a sugar shack! We're here to have fun!

Jean and Gaétan both evaluate Muslims as representing the community that adopts Quebec values and culture the least. These examples show that concerns over immigration can become salient when the media stir up public anxieties about the erosion of national culture and identity. News media constitute a means of representing the social reality, which reassert notions of 'us' and 'them' and are used as a tool of evaluation that influences patterns of inclusion and exclusion on the basis of cultural arguments. Specifically, some individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity inform their negative evaluation of immigrants and ethnocultural minorities' adoption of the national culture from news media's representation of immigrants and religious and ethnocultural minorities when they are at the centre of controversies. As Suzie points out: "maybe we have developed an intolerance because the media talks more about [Muslims]." Suzie evaluates most immigrants as adopting Quebec culture, but she is more ambivalent when it comes to Muslims.

Conclusion

The relationship between cultural conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity can be further explained by a mechanism of evaluation through which individuals assess whether or not most immigrants adopt the national culture and thereby, whether or not they are included in the national group. In this research, most interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of national identity use news media's coverage of events, news and political discourse related to immigration and diversity as a tool of evaluation – as opposed to or in addition to real life encounters. Indeed, news media have the potential to attract people's attention to immigration-related issues, while reasserting notions of 'us' and 'them'. In order for individuals to be receptive of news media's coverage and framing of immigration issues, however, these have to be somewhat in line with individuals' conception of who is included and who is excluded from the national in-group. As demonstrated in chapter 7, interviewees endorsing a civic conception of national identity tend to be more receptive to frames of immigration-related issues emphasizing the positive impact of immigration for the national economy and culture and for humanitarian reasons, while interviewees endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity tend to be more receptive to frames involving ethnic/racial and security threat perceptions. As demonstrated in this chapter, individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity, for their part, are particularly receptive to framings of immigration-related issues highlighting the potential impact of immigration on the national culture. These individuals tend to use information provided by news media to evaluate whether or not most immigrants adopt the national culture. Since the majority of Quebecers interviewed endorse a cultural conception of national identity, this suggests that Quebec news media might frame immigration-related issues predominantly in cultural terms (this is in line with Quebec policies and political debates about immigration and the

management of religious and ethnocultural diversity (see, for instance, Gagnon and Larios 2021; Xhardez and Paquet 2020; Lamy and Mathieu 2020)).

This chapter demonstrates that individuals tend to use news media as a substitute for quality contact with members of minority groups (see Allport 1954), influencing their evaluation of immigrants and ethnocultural minorities' adoption of the national culture. This is especially the case for individuals holding a cultural conception of national identity. A crucial example of this is interviewees' evaluation of Muslims' adoption of the national culture: very few interviewees have contact with Muslims, yet a majority has a negative evaluation of their adoption of the national culture. Using information provided in news media, including highly mediatized stories featuring Muslims in the midst of controversy, most interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of national identity evaluate Muslims as challenging instead of adopting the national culture.

Interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of national identity predominantly substantiate their negative evaluations of immigrants' adoption of the national culture by drawing on news media's representation of immigration-related issues. However, there are also interviewees who draw on news media to positively evaluate immigrants' adoption of the national culture. Different evaluations of the extent to which most immigrants learn the French language, embrace Quebec liberal values, respect the principle of secularism and support Quebecers' political aspirations suggest that evaluation processes are highly subjective and contingent. A task for future research is to further deepen our understanding of the mechanism of evaluation based on cultural terms, specifically by exploring determinants of positive and negative evaluations among individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity.

Conclusion: Shedding Light on Mainstream and Radical Opinions about Immigration and Diversity: The Role of Cultural Identities, an Evaluation Mechanism and the "Imagined Community of Interest"

The need to "protect the national identity" is a catchphrase that has been heard in various liberal democracies in the past few years. Quebec is no exception: despite being part of the Canadian "multiculturalist unicorn" (Mudde 2016), many Quebecers believe that there is a need to value and protect the national identity. Yet, this research indicates that there are fundamentally different understandings (and implications) of what 'national identity' means for Quebecers. Different conceptions of national identity involve different sets of criteria and considerations to define what it takes to be a Quebecer and to evaluate whether or not immigrants and ethnocultural minorities are considered as such. This evaluation, in turn, provides the foundation for different, and at times polarized, opinions about immigration and diversity.

This research shows that it is possible to categorize interviewed Quebecers and sympathizers of La Meute into three groups. The first group is composed of a minority of Quebecers and refers to interviewees in favour of liberal and multiculturalist immigration and integration policies. These individuals are enthusiastic about immigration, emphasizing its perceived benefits, valuing openness to the world and to diversity, and embracing cosmopolitan values. These individuals tend to hold a civic conception of national identity, according to which immigrants' belonging to the national in-group is (almost) unconditional. Specifically, the civic conception of national identity includes people who live on the same territory and who respect the laws and institutions, thus facilitating living in a community.

The second group is composed of the majority of sympathizers of La Meute (and a minority of Quebecers). It refers to interviewees in favour of restrictive and assimilationist immigration and integration policies. These individuals are insecure about immigration and ethnocultural diversity,

highlighting the perceived erosion of their privileges and status due to the presence of immigrants. The majority of interviewed sympathizers of La Meute justify or rationalize these insecurities with conspiracy theories about (Muslim) immigrants. These individuals tend to hold an ethnic conception of national identity, relying on an ethnic, racial or religious understanding of national membership. From that perspective, immigrants' belonging to the national in-group is (almost) impossible. Indeed, in the ethnic conception of national identity, immigrants are evaluated as diametrically opposed to and incompatible with the national in-group and can thus never be considered as "true nationals".

The civic and ethnic conceptions correspond to diametrically opposed understandings of national identity. The cleavage between these two contrasting worldviews, however, is not the key element of the story about national identity and immigration and diversity in Quebec. The majority of Quebecers interviewed (and a minority of sympathizers of La Meute) instead endorse a cultural understanding of national identity. In that regard, the third group refers to those for whom culture trumps other considerations about immigration (including economic, security and humanitarian considerations). These individuals are open to immigration as long as it does not erode the majority culture. They thus favour policies facilitating immigrants' culture learning (and, for some, culture shedding) to prevent cultural changes in Quebec. These individuals tend to hold a cultural conception of national identity. In the cultural conception of national identity, it is possible for immigrants to adopt the national culture, thus becoming "true nationals" – if, and only if, they adopt the national culture.

This research also identifies a mechanism of evaluation that links conceptions of national identity to opinions about immigration and diversity. The mechanism of evaluation associated with civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity is rigid in nature as individuals assess whether or

not immigrants and ethnocultural minorities conform to their respectively inclusive and exclusive markers of identity. For instance, an individual endorsing a civic conception of national identity might evaluate that immigrants are part of the imagined national community simply because they reside on Quebec territory. In contrast, an individual endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity might evaluate that immigrants are not "true Quebecers" because their ancestors were not Quebecers. Such negative evaluation opens the door to zero-sum game logic in which immigrants are perceived as threatening Quebec' s economy, security and ethnicity.

The evaluation mechanism associated with cultural conceptions of national identity, for its part, is more flexible as individuals assess immigrants and ethnocultural minorities' adoption of the national cultural. This evaluation is crucial in determining whether immigrants are included in or excluded from the cultural imagined community and whether they are perceived as representing a threat to the national culture (in that respect, Bilodeau and Turgeon (2014) show that 42 per cent of Francophone Quebecers perceive immigration as a threat to Quebec culture, while 32 per cent consider that immigration enriches Quebec culture). Quebecers interviewed endorsing a cultural conception of national identity are divided in their evaluation as to whether or not most immigrants do adopt the national culture and are therefore divided between holding positive and negative opinions about immigration. In contrast, all sympathizers of La Meute endorsing a cultural conception of national identity evaluate that most immigrants do not adopt the national culture and thus hold negative opinions about immigration.

This research also highlights that the evaluation mechanism interacts with and is informed by different ideas and information about immigration and ethnocultural diversity represented in the media. Notably, through their representation of immigration-related issues, news media provide information confirming or substantiating individuals' evaluation of immigrants and ethnocultural

minorities' conformity to different markers of identity. As argued by others, immigration is a distant and abstract issue that people usually do not have direct experience with (Hopkins 2010). As such, individuals tend to rely on information provided in news media to evaluate the potential costs and benefits of allowing immigrants to come and settle into the nation. This is especially the case of interviewees endorsing a cultural conception of national identity. Indeed, these individuals use news media's representation of immigrants and religious and ethnocultural minorities as a tool to evaluate whether or not most immigrants adopt the national culture, which as a result either enhances or reduces their cultural insecurities.

However, this research shows that some individuals are not receptive to the information associated with immigration that is represented in news media. This is especially the case of interviewees endorsing a civic or an ethnic conception of national identity. These individuals tend to criticize and discard framings of immigration-related issues that are not coherent with the way they apprehend the social reality, that is, framings that are respectively perceived as too exclusive or inclusive. While some of these individuals continue to inform themselves on news media, thereby exposing themselves to a variety of ideas, including those they tend to disagree with, others limit or cease their consumption of news media. This is the case of a majority of sympathizers of La Meute who feel alienated by news media (i.e. they feel that news media do not represent their perspectives nor address their concerns related to immigration). Alternatively, they seek meaning by consuming far-right content on social media, which tends to normalize and bring value to their more exclusive conception of the national group. These alternative sources of information also directly address and thus confirm their concerns related to immigration, while exposing them to radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies.

By consuming far-right content on social media and interacting with like-minded people on these platforms, interviewed sympathizers of La Meute construct what I refer to as an "imagined community of interest" centered around exclusive markers of identity, shared concerns about immigration and ethnocultural diversity and the exclusion of (Muslim) immigrants. By being part of the imagined community of interest, these individuals selectively expose themselves (to varying degrees) to ideologically congenial content that could amplify antagonistic opinions and even radicalization leading to violence (Wahlström and Törnberg 2019). These individuals tend to embrace various conspiracy theories and consider news media and political actors to be corrupt elites that are leading society into destruction through their support of multicultural and liberal immigration policies.

In sum, I argue that civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity are intrinsically related to different opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. I explain this by an evaluation mechanism through which individuals assess whether or not immigrants and ethnocultural minorities conform to different markers of identity. This mechanism underlying different conceptions of national identity sheds light on diametrically opposed stances over immigration and diversity (e.g. supporting an increase or a decrease in immigration levels; supporting multiculturalist or assimilationist policies for the management of religious and ethnocultural diversity) as well as on the emphasis of cultural considerations on the part of many Quebecers. Radical, negative opinions about immigration and diversity, for their part, are in part explained by a selective exposure to far-right content on social media and interacting with like-minded people on these platforms. By following and interacting with far-right actors and groups on social media, individuals are repeatedly exposed to radical worldviews, such as radical anti-

Muslim or white supremacist ideologies, thereby confirming or reinforcing their more exclusive stances.

What do we learn from the comparison between the mainstream and more radical actors?

This research employs an innovative approach comparing the link between conceptions of national identity and the construction of opinions about immigration and diversity among the general public and sympathizers of identity groups, thus taking into account multiple opinions about immigration and diversity and highlighting the (dis)similar mechanisms informing them. It shows that sympathizers of La Meute tend to differ from other Quebecers on three main aspects: 1) their conception of national identity; 2) their media consumption and 3) their opinions about immigration and diversity. Specifically, sympathizers of La Meute tend to hold more exclusive conceptions of who belongs to the national imagined community than other Quebecers. The increasing presence of immigrants and ethnocultural diversity in Quebec creates insecurities on their part, as they feel that their position in society is threatened. Yet, these individuals perceive that news media do not address their concerns related to immigration and diversity; they feel alienated by news media. They thus selectively expose themselves to far-right content on social media, consolidating or reinforcing their more radical and negative opinions about immigration and diversity.

Despite these generalized patterns differentiating sympathizers of La Meute from other Quebecers, two elements need to be stressed. First, it is crucial to add more nuance to these results and emphasize that the general public and sympathizers of radical communities do not constitute dichotomous, homogenous populations characterized respectively by their more inclusive ideas

about the imagined community and more antagonistic, white supremacist ideas. On the one hand, the ethnic conception of national identity is not restricted to sympathizers of identity groups. It also manifests among the mainstream, alongside the more exclusive stances on immigration and ethnocultural diversity that characterize this conception. This is in line with Barrett's (1989) postulate that identity groups (in his words, right-wing groups) represent a more overt form of a broader phenomenon that is embedded in the wider society (for examples of the way far-right ideas have entered the mainstream, see Bail 2014; Miller-Idriss 2018). On the other hand, sympathizers of identity groups are not all concerned about protecting the ethnic or white identity: some, instead, have deep cultural insecurities. Yet, their perspectives and concerns still resonate with the more exclusive ideas represented in far-right sources of information, such as La Meute's Facebook page (Potvin 2017; Tanner and Campana 2020). This could be explained by identity groups' strategic negotiation of their identity and ideologies on public social platforms by adapting (i.e. toning down) their discourse and communicating a wide self-representation (Ekman 2018; Gagnon 2020; Forchtner and Kølvraa 2017). In doing so, these groups might succeed in reaching a broader audience, thus exposing people from the mainstream to more radical ideas about immigration, and thereby potentially amplifying political polarization and sustaining a discourse of othering. Future research should investigate whether, and if so how, following far-right pages on social media can contribute to the co-construction of imagined boundaries of the national community. For example, can individuals who endorse cultural conceptions of national identity and who are repeatedly exposed to far-right content emphasizing ethnic markers of national identity ultimately adhere to these markers and/or develop more radical opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity?

Second, beyond these generalized patterns that tend to differentiate sympathizers of La Meute from other Quebecers that were interviewed, there remains an important similarity: the same

mechanism of evaluation of immigrants' conformity to markers of national identity plays a key role in the construction of their opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity. This suggests that the construction of more radical opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity does not differ significantly from that of more mainstream opinions; they are both influenced by one's criteria of national belonging and evaluation of immigrants and minorities' conformity with these criteria. Among both populations, moreover, the mechanism of evaluation tends to be informed by mediatized information about immigration-related issues. This highlights that opinions about immigration and diversity are not dissociable from the broader environment in which they evolve: they are embedded in a cultural context (mainstream or on the far-right), which (re)produces and reasserts notions of 'us' and 'them' (also see Gagnon 2020). This can be further illustrated by the prejudices and stereotypes about Muslim communities that have been internalized by many Quebecers and sympathizers of La Meute (which they often substantiate with mediatized controversies involving these communities). To paraphrase Kallis (2013), virulent concerns about Muslims' (perceived) negative impacts on the national society (its culture, values, laws, and on so) have crossed multiple boundaries: from more radical to mainstream actors, from a taboo to more legitimate views and from one nation to another.

Research contributions

This research offers an exploration of the relationship between civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity and the construction of opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity in their mainstream and more radical forms by adopting a micro perspective that focuses on the general public and sympathizers of identity groups at the individual level. In

doing so, it bridges the literature on political psychology, political culture and ideologies, and communication and (social) media, and offers three broad contributions.

First, this study contributes to the scientific literature exploring the relationship between national identity and opinions about immigration-related issues. It provides an in-depth account of different conceptions of national identity coexisting in Quebec, refining the theorization of different markers of national identity and shedding light on their attitudinal ramifications. This research indicates that the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity involve distinct criteria of belonging, or distinct understandings of these criteria, and relate differently to immigration and diversity. In line with other research, this research finds that the civic conception of national identity is related to positive opinions about immigration and diversity (Reijerse et al. 2013; Kunovich 2009; Pehrson, Vignoles, and Brown 2009). Indeed, the civic conception of national identity is associated with (almost) unconditional acceptance of immigrants and ethnocultural minorities. In contrast, and as other scholars have demonstrated, the ethnic conception of national identity is related to negative opinions about immigration and diversity (Kunovich 2009; Pehrson, Vignoles, and Brown 2009; Ceobanu and Escandell 2008; Wright 2011). This conception of national identity also includes cultural markers of identity understood as homogenous and static, thus rendering some cultures "incompatible" and providing a basis for exclusion. Finally, beyond the civic and ethnic divide (also see Reijerse et al. 2013), this research reveals the presence of a third conception of national identity: the cultural conception – a conception that, furthermore, predominates among Quebecers interviewed. As such, a binary typology is not sufficiently exhaustive to capture the variation in conceptions of national identity shared among individuals. This constitutes a significant contribution to the literature on nationalism and national identity, which tends to focus exclusively on dichotomies, whether referring to the

civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity or alternative concepts such as "attainable" and "ascriptive" conceptions. Investigating the cultural conception of national identity among Quebecers has allowed me to refine the theorization of the different markers of identity characterizing such conception. Indeed, this conception includes markers of identity such as speaking the national language – which predominates among Quebecers interviewed –, embracing liberal values, respecting principles of secularism, and sharing Quebec political aspirations. It also demonstrates that the cultural conception of the national community can be both inclusive and exclusive. In fact, it is conditional on one's evaluation of immigrants' compliance to cultural markers of identity. This evaluation mechanism highlights the subjective and contingent nature of the cultural conception. This is an important distinction from the more rigid mechanism of evaluation behind the civic and ethnic conceptions of national identity, which results in more static relationships with immigration and diversity.

Further exploring the way individuals conceive national membership also allows us to go beyond the study of the civic turn in integration policies on the part of many liberal democracies (Goodman 2010; 2014; Joppke 2017; Mouritsen, Kriegbaum Jensen, and Larin 2019; Borevi, Jensen, and Mouritsen 2017) toward an understanding of individuals' motivations in supporting the adoption of civic integration policies, including obligatory language and country-knowledge requirements for settlement, naturalisation and immigration. While a few interviewees support these policies in an attempt to limit and control the inflow and settlement of immigrants by excluding immigrants deemed "unassimilable" (i.e. individuals endorsing an ethnic conception of national identity), a majority of interviewees support these policies to promote cultural convergence (i.e. individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity). This suggests that the "civic turn" embraced by multiple liberal democracies to promote immigrants' integration

(Mouritsen, Kriegbaum Jensen, and Larin 2019) may be better characterized, from a public opinion perspective, as a "cultural turn" aiming to protect the national culture, at least in the context of Quebec.

Second, this research takes into account the multiplicity of opinions about immigration and diversity along with the different ideas informing them, providing nuances and insights in the pro- and anti-immigration dichotomy. It allows us to explore the construction of opinions about these issues as located on a continuum from more positive to more negative stances about immigration and diversity, including radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies. Indeed, although many scholars are interested in the construction of negative opinions about immigration and diversity (e.g. Ivarsflaten 2005; Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Valentino, Brader, and Jardina 2013; Fetzer 2000; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2016; Davidov et al. 2020), few explore the construction of positive opinions about these issues (see Haubert and Fussell 2006). Yet, certain segments of the population have (almost) unconditionally positive opinions about immigration based on a liberal cosmopolitan outlook. These individuals' positive opinions, as the analysis shows, are motivated by values of tolerance and social justice, but also by economic considerations. In a similar way, the construction of radical, negative opinions about immigration and diversity also remains overlooked. However, exploring mechanisms shedding light on the construction of radical anti-Muslim and white supremacist ideologies is crucial to deepen our understanding of the "mainstreaming" (see Miller-Idriss 2018; Mondon and Winter 2020; Portelinha and Elcheroth 2016) of these radical, negative opinions as well as radicalization leading to violence. The analysis shows that one of the points of departure of radical opinions is individuals' understanding of who belongs to the national community, and therefore who should be prioritized in society. This prioritization of relatively exclusively conceived groups in society is substantiated or rationalized

by drawing on conspiratorial thinking, vilifying the Other and justifying protecting the national identity or the national group itself.

Third, this research contributes to the scientific literature in communication and (social) media by exploring how individuals endorsing different conceptions of national identity receive and interpret news media and far-right representations of immigration-related issues. On the one hand, it highlights the role of news media in informing the mechanism of evaluation assessing whether or not immigrants conform/comply to different markers of identity. This is especially the case among individuals endorsing a cultural conception of national identity for which news media tend to act as a substitute for quality contact with immigrants and ethnocultural minorities, becoming a crucial tool of evaluation of their adoption of the national culture. On the other hand, this research goes beyond studies exploring far-right content and interactions on social media platforms to analyze individuals' pathways to consuming far-right content on social media (also see Thorbjørnsrud and Figenschou 2020), including their feeling of alienation by news media, the way negative, radical narratives about immigration and Muslims resonate with their configuration of the 'us' and 'them', and the way they relate to the online community of like-minded individuals. It shows that individuals seeking meaning by consuming far-right content on social media tend to create ideological "echo chambers" supporting their existing beliefs and intensifying their attention and concerns over immigration and diversity. This result also contributes to debates on the risks and impacts of ideological echo chambers on social media. It suggests that, although it might be the case that people generally consume a variety of sources of information (Dubois and Blank 2018), certain segments of the population, such as sympathizers of identity groups, selectively inform themselves on social media and from alternative sources of information that validate their concerns, thus isolating themselves from perspectives and ideas they tend to disagree with.

Future Research

In light of the findings demonstrated in this research, I maintain that one cannot fully understand opinions about immigration and diversity, as well as processes of othering and dehumanization, without paying close attention to conceptions of national identity. Indeed, the civic, ethnic and cultural conceptions of national identity establish different boundaries between 'us' and 'them', which inherently impede or facilitate individuals' belief in similarities between the national in-group and out-groups. More exclusive markers of national membership tend to involve differentiation processes and devaluation of others through exaggerating differences between groups. This stimulates the construction of stereotypes and prejudices toward immigrants and religious and ethnocultural minorities, while also enabling the perception of threats (e.g. cultural and security threat perceptions) and imminent upheavals on the part of out-groups (e.g. invasion, domination, replacement and so on). However, some findings in this research necessitate further discussion.

First, my research argues that the underlying mechanism behind the relationship between conceptions of national identity and opinions about immigration and ethnocultural diversity is one of evaluation of immigrants and minorities' conformity to different markers of identity. Future research could investigate whether this mechanism of evaluation based on civic, ethnic or cultural criteria can be transposed to the construction of other opinions. Indeed, it could be the case that, beyond immigration-related issues, different conceptions of national identity provide lenses through which individuals evaluate the social and political reality, thereby influencing the construction of their opinions over a range of different issues (see, for example, research on the relationship between national identity and opinions about welfare programs, the European Union, environmental policies, and foreign policies, such as Johnston et al. 2010; Carey 2002; Aichholzer,

Kritzinger, and Plescia 2021; Milfont et al. 2020; Hintz 2016; also see Kinder and Kam 2010). Indeed, it is possible that other policies are related to perceptions of deservingness or hierarchies on the basis of perceived national membership or commonness.

Second, this research highlights that different conceptions of national identity are associated with different understandings of culture (e.g. culture as fluid or fixed) and religion (e.g. religion as a personal belief or a permanent trait), which impedes or enhances the perception that immigration constitutes a cultural and security threat. What remains less clear, however, is how different conceptions of national identity are associated with economic threat perceptions. Among some interviewees, insecurities about the perceived consequences of immigration on the national economy seem to be bound up with their insecurities about the broader position of the national in-group in the society. Yet, for others, economic insecurities seem to be rooted in stereotypes about who immigrants are (e.g. less educated, manual workers) (see Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010). Future research should thus further explore if and how economic threat perceptions are related to conceptions of national identity.

Third, this research suggests that, through consuming far-right content on social media and interacting with like-minded people on these platforms, sympathizers of La Meute construct an "imagined community of interest" centered around exclusive markers of identity, shared concerns and the exclusion of (Muslim) immigrants. This is in line with other studies showing that far-right actors and groups on social media and other online platforms generate an environment conducive to collective identity-building (Nouri and Lorenzo-Dus 2019; Scrivens and Amarasingam 2020; also see Futrell and Simi 2004). However, the analysis indicates that this collective identity is not restricted to the online world; it transcends the boundaries of far-right actors and groups on social media to include other individuals who share concerns about immigration and value a more

exclusive conception of the nation. Future research should further explore these boundaries and their implications for identity-building and collective action. Moreover, future research should investigate whether the "imagined community of interest" persists over time and thus contributes to further polarizing and radicalizing individuals.

Finally, insecurities about the potential impact of immigration on national identities are not about to disappear; if anything, they are going to heighten with time as Quebec and other liberal democracies are becoming increasingly diversified. As Koopmans et al. (2005, 5) maintain, many people experience a loss of identity as a result of globalization and immigration and thus turn to their national identity as a way to renew a sense of control. As such, future research should investigate the micro-sociological forces that produce different conceptions of national identity. While this research highlights the role of media and political discourse in informing and reifying different conceptions of national identity, socialization could play an important role in the construction of these symbolic predispositions influencing the way individuals think about national belonging (see Sears 1993). Socialization could perhaps explain why the cultural conception of national identity seems to predominate in Quebec society. Indeed, culture has been at the center of national discussions and debates for many years, shaping the environment in which a generation of Quebecers were socialized by stressing the role of culture as a glue cementing Quebec society. Future research should explore whether the predominance of culture in defining national membership also holds elsewhere in Canada and in other national contexts. Furthermore, considering the influential role of conceptions of national identity in the construction of opinions about immigration and diversity, future research should also investigate whether and how it is possible to alter individuals' conception of national identity toward more inclusive understandings of the in-group. In addition to supporting more harmonious intergroup relations in society, research

shows that more porous and flexible conceptions of national identity send a welcoming message

to newcomers and encourage identification with the host society (Simonsen 2016).

Appendix 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the Quebecers from the general public interviewed in this research[35]

Name	Gender	Locality of residence	Age group
Francine	Woman	Montreal	60-69 years old
Chloé	Woman	Montreal	18-29 years old
Susan	Woman	Montreal	50-59 years old
Anne	Woman	Montreal	60-69 years old
Cynthia	Woman	Montreal	30-39 years old
Diane	Woman	Montreal	50-59 years old
Sofia	Woman	Montreal	30-39 years old
Rita	Woman	Montreal	70-79 years old
Louise	Woman	Montreal	40-49 years old
Stéfanie	Woman	Montreal	40-49 years old
Steve	Man	Montreal	40-49 years old
Marie-Hélène	Woman	Montreal	70-79 years old
Sylvie	Woman	Montreal	70-79 years old
Pascal	Man	Montreal	40-49 years old
Bruno	Man	Montreal	60-69 years old
Marco	Man	Montreal	40-49 years old
Jean-Pierre	Man	Montreal	50-59 years old
Nathalie	Woman	Montreal	60-69 years old
Jean	Man	Greater Montreal	60-69 years old
Alex	Man	Greater Montreal	40-49 years old
Claude	Man	Greater Montreal	60-69 years old
Gertrude	Woman	Greater Montreal	70-79 years old
Joseph	Man	Trois-Rivières	50-59 years old
Jane	Woman	Trois-Rivières	60-69 years old
Paul	Man	Trois-Rivières	50-59 years old
Rose	Woman	Trois-Rivières	50-59 years old
Christian	Man	Trois-Rivières	60-69 years old
Christophe	Man	Granby	50-59 years old
Simon-Pierre	Man	Granby	50-59 years old
Colin	Man	Granby	50-59 years old
Gaétan	Man	Granby	70-79 years old
Ghyslain	Man	Sherbrooke	60-69 years old
Sophie	Woman	Sherbrooke	40-49 years old
Blanche	Woman	Sherbrooke	80-89 years old
Antoine	Man	Sherbrooke	30-39 years old
Alexandra	Woman	Quebec	20-29 years old
James	Man	Quebec	20-29 years old

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[35] All participants are identified with a fake name in order to preserve their anonymity.

Guillaume	Man	Quebec	30-39 years old
Gisèle	Woman	Saguenay	60-69 years old
Mario	Man	Saguenay	50-55 years old
David	Man	Saguenay	40-49 years old
Marc	Man	St-Hyacinthe	50-59 years old
Émilie	Woman	St-Hyacinthe	40-49 years old

Appendix 2. Sociodemographic characteristics of the sympathizers of La Meute interviewed in this research[36]

Name	Gender	Locality of residence	Age group
Rémi	Man	Greater Montreal	36-50 years old
Marc	Man	Greater Montreal	18-34 years old
Éric	Man	Greater Montreal	35-49 years old
Pierre	Man	Greater Montreal	50-64 years old
Bertrand	Man	Greater Montreal	50-64 years old
Mathieu	Man	Greater Montreal	18-34 years old
Lydia	Woman	Greater Montreal	18-34 years old
Kevin	Man	Greater Montreal	50-64 years old
Laurie	Woman	Montreal	18-34 years old
Anne	Woman	Montreal	50-64 years old
John	Man	Montreal	18-34 years old
Jean-Pierre	Man	Montreal	50-64 years old
Louis	Man	Montreal	65-80 years old
Adam	Man	Sherbrooke	35-49 years old
Gilbert	Man	Sherbrooke	35-49 years old
Luc	Man	Sherbrooke	50-64 years old
Philippe	Man	Sherbrooke	35-49 years old
Stephan	Man	Sherbrooke	50-64 years old
Cynthia	Woman	St-Hyacinthe	35-49 years old
Dorothée	Woman	St-Hyacinthe	65-80 years old
Lucie	Woman	St-Hyacinthe	50-64 years old
Emma	Woman	St-Hyacinthe	35-49 years old
Jules	Man	Trois-Rivières	35-49 years old
Lise	Woman	Trois-Rivières	50-64 years old
André	Man	Trois-Rivières	35-49 years old
Denis	Man	Saguenay	50-64 years old
Patrick	Man	Saguenay	18-34 years old
Marianne	Woman	Saguenay	35-49 years old
Jacques	Man	Quebec	35-49 years old
Alain	Man	Quebec	35-49 years old
Dominic	Man	Granby	35-49 years old
Guy	Man	Granby	65-80 years old
Hugo	Man	Drummonville	18-34 years old
Doriane	Woman	Gatineau	65-80 years old

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[36] All participants are identified with a fake name and age categories have been extended in order to preserve their anonymity.

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