Francophone Minority Communities and Immigrant Integration in Canada: Rethinking the Normative Foundations

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Francophone Minority Communities and Immigrant Integration in Canada: Rethinking the Normative Foundations

Abstract
This paper addresses one particular feature of Canada's accommodation of diversity—the existence of French-language communities outside of Quebec and New Brunswick—to show how there continues to be conceptual difficulties in reconciling Canada's many diversities. More specifically, we are concerned with conceptual ambiguities associated with the place of these minority communities in Canada's constitutive political sociology, and difficulties in promoting a coherent set of policies for their flourishing. Moreover, this paper will not simply rehash arguments about their formal and conceptual status. We are interested in illuminating a recent initiative that seeks to direct immigrants to these communities in the hope of maintaining their overall percentage of the Canadian population. This is a development that has received little attention to date from the perspective of the scholarship of multiculturalism and minority rights, and political theory more generally. We argue that the strategy to target Francophone minority communities as 'sites' of integration represents a false promise for both these communities and immigrants. This article will show that the federal framework of 'multiculturalism within a bilingual framework' obscures the realities confronting Francophone minority communities and thus their capacity to integrate newcomers, on both empirical and normative grounds.

Résumé
Cet article porte sur un cas particulier de l'accommodement canadien de la diversité – l'existence de communautés francophones en dehors du Québec et du Nouveau-Brunswick – pour montrer comment des difficultés conceptuelles à réconcilier les multiples aspects de cette diversité sont encore présentes. Plus précisément, ce qui nous concerne, ce sont les ambiguïtés de la sociologie politique constitutive du Canada envers la place donnée à ces communautés minoritaires et les difficultés promouvoir un ensemble cohérent de politiques en faveur de leur épanouissement. De plus, il ne s'agit pas ici de simplement répéter les arguments sur leur statut formel et conceptuel. Ce qui nous intéresse, c'est d'éclairer une initiative récente qui tente de diriger des immigrants vers elles dans l'espoir de maintenir leur pourcentage général de la population canadienne. Ce développement a reçu peu d'attention du point de vue de la recherche sur le multiculturalisme et les droits des minorités, ainsi que sur la théorie politique en général. Nous soutenons que la stratégie de viser les minorités francophones comme «lieux» d’intégration représente une fausse promesse, aussi bien pour ces communautés que pour les immigrants. Nous montrons dans cet article que les modalités fédérales du «multiculturalisme dans un cadre bilingue» cachent les réalités auxquelles elles sont confrontées et, donc, leur capacité à intégrer les nouveaux-venus, aussi bien pour des raisons empiriques que normatives.
INTRODUCTION

Canada has long been considered a pioneer and a leader in state-minority relations. Pollster Michael Adams has even claimed that “if there’s one area where Canada can truly be called a global expert, it’s in managing diversity” (Adams 2007, 8). This article examines one particular feature of state-minority relations in Canada—French-language communities outside of Québec and New Brunswick.1 More specifically, it is concerned with ambiguities associated with the place of these minority communities in Canada’s constitutive political sociology, and difficulties in promoting a coherent set of policies for their flourishing.

In the usual discourse on diversity, most observers have borrowed from Will Kymlicka’s distinction of ‘national minorities’ and ‘ethnic groups’ to interpret minority claims on the wider political community (Kymlicka 1995). In terms of language rights, we tend to assume that the necessity for a common public language, from both instrumental and cultural perspectives, is more apparent within national minorities, as part of their claims for distinct national status. Yet Canada’s Francophone minority communities (FMCs, hereafter) do not fit neatly into these categories, and there continues to be a debate concerning how to define these groups in the landscape of Canadian diversity (see Landry 2012; Thériault et al. 2008). However this paper will not simply rehash arguments about their formal and normative status. We are particularly interested in illuminating a recent initiative that seeks to direct immigrants to these communities in the hope of maintaining their overall percentage of the Canadian population—articulated in the *Strategic Framework to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities* (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2003) and the *Strategic Plan to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities* (CIC 2006). This is a development that has received little attention from the perspective of the scholarship on multiculturalism and minority rights, and normative political theory more generally.

In broad terms, this article argues that the existing strategy to target FMCs as sites of integration represents a false promise for both these communities and immigrants. More precisely, it shows that the normative ideal of ‘multiculturalism within a bilingual framework’ underpinning the *Strategic Plan* and the *Strategic Framework* obscures the realities confronting FMCs and thus their capacity to integrate newcomers. We proceed in three main parts. First, we situate these tangled questions concerning competing conceptions of community by examining the broader Canadian discourse on state-minority relations. Second, we demonstrate that the well-being of immigrants is neglected due to a misunderstanding of the relationship between the responsibility of a host society, on the one hand, and a project to carve out a bilingual Canadian nation in the face of a competing nation-building project.
in Québec, on the other. Third, we offer an account of the importance of public language as an integral component of a ‘societal culture’ (Kymlicka 1995, 76), which we argue is a necessary component of immigrant integration regardless of existing commitments to FMCs. We thus argue that French-language communities outside of Québec and New Brunswick cannot act as host societies and that immigrants cannot legitimately be asked to integrate into minority communities. In conclusion, we propose a way out of these seemingly irreconcilable claims of integration with the flourishing of FMCs that go beyond a linear response based on the proportional devolution of selection and integration.

**MERITS AND DIFFICULTIES OF CONTEXTUAL NORMATIVE THEORIZING**

Sorting out the puzzle of Canada’s constitutive communities and identities is a difficult task. We proceed with the assumption that group claims on the state and the broader society need to be evaluated in their particular political and social contexts. The approach adopted in this paper is thus both theoretical and historical. It follows what Joseph Carens has called “a contextual approach to political theory” (Carens 2000; 2004). While abstract theorizing points to conceptual contradictions and generally allows for a framework for normative debate in various areas of interest, contextual theorizing allows the theorist to include the historical, political and moral aspects of ‘hard cases.’ As Carens puts it, “What justice permits or requires with respect to institutional arrangements and policies may be intimately linked at time to the particular culture and history of a given political community” (2000, 35).

Without the historical part, we may fail to see some justifications that form part of the context. Without a consideration of politics, we may fail to see the element of power between competing claims that are, by themselves, morally defensible. For example, some competing rights claims often come into conflict, yet they may be equally based on strong moral grounding. Context allows us to ground such claims in particular spatio-temporal settings that may reveal justifications and legitimating factors that cannot be brought to light in the abstract.

The contingent facts of political sociology thus serve as the context through which normative theory is given its parameters. Sujit Choudhry offers a thorough account of the shortcomings of this approach in discussing Kymlicka’s reliance on political sociology in the construction of a liberal theory of minority rights (Choudhry 2002). For Kymlicka, a liberal state ought to take societal cultures seriously, for they provide the context of choice through which individuals exercise their autonomy, providing the range of options in which citizens can choose their particular conceptions of the good. In unpacking diversity as such, Kymlicka’s contribution emphasizes that national minorities are distinct from ethnic groups to the
extent that the first have access to a societal culture, whereas the second seek integration into an existing societal culture. Following from this, national minorities seek self-government rights, which include jurisdictional claims to various areas associated with immigration, including recruitment, selection and integration. Ethnic groups have forced us to rethink the terms of integration to account for constituted collective identities—moving away from undifferentiated citizenship towards recognition of cultural pluralism that might include group-differentiated rights.

Choudhry’s concern is not the sociological account as such, but the fact that Kymlicka employs such sociopolitical categories to construct a normative argument. Two streams of justification by Kymlicka are revealed: one based on the fact that national minorities never consented to incorporation in many respects and another, which constitutes the bulk of Choudhry’s criticism, based on the notion that the political discourse and the actual sociological experiences of these two categories have revealed ‘what is possible’ institutionally—in other words, the aspirational and institutional capacities of these groups and their capacity to sustain a societal culture ought to have normative weight.

Choudhry believes the most problematic aspect of Kymlicka’s contribution is his use of political sociology to do normative work. He highlights three empirical claims made by political sociology. First, the aspirations or expectations of ethnocultural groups must be taken seriously. Second, the notion of feasibility is salient. For example, can such groups realistically institutionalize their cultural practices on a viable scale? Finally, current political practices, or standing institutional arrangements to accommodate difference, must be considered. Without delving too deeply into Choudhry’s account, which is exhaustive in its criticism, it will suffice to boil down his concern to the notion that contingent facts of political sociology cannot in themselves constitute the basis of a normative theory of justice. He states it succinctly:

Kymlicka’s mistake is to take the institutional capacities of ethnocultural groups as factual givens, and to base his account of just institutions around them. In reality, these institutional facts are highly contingent. They are a function of existing distribution of resources and political power. Moreover, there is a recursive relationship between institutional capacities and the rights that groups currently possess, making it unfair to regard them as decisive considerations in arguments for why and why not those current arrangements should be altered. Institutions are a function of rights, not the other way around (Choudhry 2002, 69).

Carens also warns us of this danger, arguing that deeply embedded political practices should not be confused with justice simply because they are consolidated over a long period of time (Carens 2000, 4). This, of course, is a familiar argument against attributing normative value to observations borne out of the social sciences.
In the end, Choudhry suspects that Kymlicka’s work is more concerned with political stability than with justice in diverse societies. Since liberal states assume the distinction of ethnic immigrant groups and national minorities in their discourses and institutions, then that practice ought to be justified. To reiterate, Kymlicka believes a societal culture provides context along a wide range of human activities encompassing both the public and private spheres. Moreover, this involves the institutionalization of these activities, which include not only cultural attributes, but also broad economic, social and political institutions that we usually associate with sovereign states. A subculture, on the other hand, often lacks such institutional completeness and operates along a more narrow range of activities. Many such groups are a function of liberalism itself—of reasonable pluralism—existing as a result of freedom of association. Here we find social movements, voluntary associations, and, to the extent that they do not make claims to frame citizenship, immigrants groups.

Choudhry disputes the argument that immigrant groups lack the institutional support required for their members to enjoy a broad range of choices within which they may pursue their goals. This is deemed to be a morally arbitrary distinction. The mere fact that their institutions are not constitutionally protected does not diminish their force as institutional poles of allegiance for individuals. In short, Choudhry believes that taking culture seriously requires avoiding making the arbitrary distinction between subcultures and societal cultures based on scope alone. If contexts of choice matter for liberal theory, then ethnocultural groups matter empirically as well, regardless of the extent of their institutionalization—which only brings us back to the problem of justifying political practices because they are established, or what Choudhry calls ‘per se’ normativity. We will leave it to Choudhry’s own words to sum up the argument:

Inasmuch as the argument from political sociology turns on the aspirations and institutional capacities of ethnocultural groups, the sharp dichotomy that Kymlicka draws between ethnic immigrants and national minorities cannot withstand an encounter with reality. At best, these groups lie on a sociological continuum that Kymlicka attempts to shoehorn into his rigid categories. Thus, the argument from political sociology cannot compensate for the failure of the argument from consent. Even worse, the argument from political sociology fails on its own terms (Choudhry 2002, 77).

We have introduced this debate because it is an excellent illustration of the kinds of issues that are raised in attempting to wed normative political theory to political institutions or discourses, or to particular policies. Employing contextual political theory will inevitably lead to debates concerning the various interpretations of the contingent facts of political sociology, particularly when such interpretations are attributed a normative value. The problem, however, is not inherent in the approach.
—we contend that normative theory may very well be a product of political sociology. Rather, the problem is that one cannot simultaneously criticize both the use of political sociology as context for normative theorizing, as an epistemological matter, while questioning the particulars of the sociological account. Either the sociological categories have political salience in constitutional matters or they do not. We argue that they do, and we will demonstrate that in the case of FMCs. Conceptual ambiguities need to be redressed in order to provide a preliminary normative account of recent attempts to turn to immigration to ensure the flourishing of these communities. One cannot debate the merits of such an undertaking without clearly outlining where such groups ‘fit’ in the larger Canadian political community.

The issue here is that the accommodation of particular groups requires a deep study and categorization—how they fit into the constitutive elements of the larger society. Kymlicka has argued that diversity in Canada is really about three distinct accommodation strategies. In the case of FMCs, we argue that its place in Canada’s diversity of diversities is ill-defined. The goal is to provide standards of evaluation to determine which languages to privilege in which contexts, and this is a particular contextual wrinkle that we are only beginning to explore. In short, how do we reconcile the idea that targets of state protection are placed in a position to act as host societies? What are the implications for incoming immigrants? This is not strictly a normative reflection about language rights. It aims to resolve some political and constitutive questions that happen to involve certain linguistic groups.

**MULTICULTURALISM WITHIN A BILINGUAL FRAMEWORK**

This second part examines the normative ideal of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework in order to subsequently illustrate, in the third part, how this ideal serves to obscure the realities confronting FMCs and in particular their capacity to integrate newcomers. In the early 1960s, Canada found itself confronted with a more assertive Québec nationalism that demanded some form of recognition of majority status for French-speakers in the institutional configuration of the federation. At the same time, Canada was experiencing increasing cultural diversity due to immigration. These twofold developments culminated in the establishment of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, whose final report was released in thematic volumes at the end of the 1960s. While adopting the principle of bilingualism recommended by the Commission, Prime Minister Trudeau rejected the premise of biculturalism as a structuring principle of Confederation and opted instead to define Canada as a multicultural society. The resulting ideal endures to this day—multiculturalism within a bilingual framework. It holds that Canadian citizenship can be accessed through either the French or English languages, across the country
(see McRoberts 1997), yet culture would not form the basis of belonging to distinct majorities, which would in effect institutionalize a communitarian conception of Canada. In delineating the host society of reference, the recognition of cultural pluralism could neatly be divorced from the question of public language. Newcomers could choose to integrate through either French or English while acquiring public recognition of their cultures of origin.

Since then, the federal government has adopted a broad range of rights and policies that complement conventional individual rights of citizenship with group-differentiated rights for Aboriginal peoples, Francophones/Québécois, and immigrant groups. If the balance of individual rights and group-differentiated rights may indeed be fragile, the argument remains that this working balance forms the basis of Canada’s success in coming to terms with diversity. Indeed, the distinctive feature of the Canadian model has been its ability to extend group-differentiated measures that are tailored to distinct demands coming from its two broad sociological forms of diversity: national minorities and ethnic groups. To reiterate, while national minorities strive for self-government, ethnic groups seek provisions that will facilitate their full integration into their host society without threatening their cultural or religious background.

In Québec, the normative ideal of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework is generally understood as a denial of Québec’s traditional interpretation of Canadian dualism, which defined the country in terms of two nations or two founding peoples. Without delving too deeply into an analysis of the policy, the key element for the purposes of this discussion is its inherent centralizing effect. By not differentiating between various politically-salient collective identities—for example, between historical national minorities, the majority nationalist identity and immigrant groups—the idea was that all group claims were the same, and their primary reference was to be found in the bundle of rights accorded by the federal government.

The nationalizing appeal of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework is evident. While denying that Canada consists of a dominant culture around which political institutions will be organized, the central state nevertheless managed to foster a pole of allegiance based on sentiments of belonging to Canada as the primary political community of reference. Multiculturalism as one of the pillars of Canadian citizenship is thus not merely a commitment to a certain model of diversity that embraces group-differentiated rights. Rather, in what can be confidently said to reflect somewhat of a consensus position among Québec governments since the inception of the policy, it is a nation-building device meant to undermine the primacy of any particular collective grouping that claims the right to govern a separate democratic political community as part of the federal framework (see Breton 2000; Gagnon and Iacovino 2007; Labelle and Rocher 2006; and Seymour 1999).
However, if the normative ideal of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework meant to act as a safeguard against a conception of Canada that includes two primary host societies, the socio-political reality of the past forty years has proven otherwise. Indeed, since the late 1960s, the Québec government secured the control over the selection of newcomers and has articulated an alternate ideal of immigrant integration—interculturalism. The control over the selection of immigrants was secured over the span of two decades, beginning with the creation of a Québec Ministry of Immigration in 1968 and culminating with the signing of an agreement between the Canadian and Québec governments in 1991 granting to Québec the power to recruit, select and integrate immigrants based on its own prioritization of Canada’s broad criteria. The articulation of interculturalism dates from the early 1980s. The model is centered on the idea of convergence around the French language. The model seeks to foster a ‘fusion of horizons’ through dialogue, mutual understanding, and compromise. It is arguably more robust in its demands than Canadian multiculturalism because it claims to provide a more coherent point of reference for newcomers—varying over time between a common public culture delineated by the territory of Québec and a greater emphasis on integration to the majority culture (Iacovino and Sévigny 2011).

These pillars of control over immigration and interculturalism, in addition to the academic and state discourses accompanying them, have led to an increased acceptance of Québec as an ethnically diverse host society. The usual story with regards to immigrant integration thus pits one model against another, with the resulting ambiguities, difficulties and opportunities that may arise (Labelle and Rocher 2004). Indeed, the Québec case is particularly complex in that it is both an object of diversity management as a group that makes claims on the Canadian state, and a site for diversity management, itself grappling with minority/majority relations.

While Canada has articulated its ideal of multiculturalism within a bilingualism framework and Québec has countered with its distinct model of interculturalism, very little normative or even conceptual work has been undertaken on the place of FMCs in the area of immigrant integration. While these groups have traditionally been the target of federal government protections through minority language rights guaranteed by the constitution and various official language programs and policies, they have recently entered the game of integration in collaboration with the federal government. Rather than re-conceptualize integration policy to account for the reality of two distinct host societies in a more forceful and formal manner, this new orientation signals a willingness to further the project of strengthening a pan-Canadian conception of bilingualism as an organizing principle for citizenship that persists in dismissing the country’s dualist/territorial political sociology. We will turn to an overview of how these communities have been conceptualized within the larger society prior to assessing initiatives in the area of immigration.
FRANCOPHONE MINORITY COMMUNITIES AND IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

FMCs exist in every province and territory. According to the 2011 Census of Canada, they total 1,067,000 people, which amounts to roughly 4.1% of the total Canadian population. These communities emerged for the most part from French colonizers that founded Acadia in 1604 and Québec City in 1608 and from their descendants that moved and settled throughout the continent. French Canadians (and, to a lesser extent, Acadians) relocated to Ontario and Western Canada, at times via the United States, for a number of reasons, but decisions almost always hinged on economic factors. Mass migration movements began in the 1830s and hit their peak in the 1840s (Frenette 1998). As such, when Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia came together to form the Dominion of Canada in 1867, all were home to FMCs, the same for all other provinces that would enter Confederation over the next decades.

If FMCs are the result of long historical processes within their respective provinces, they are at the same time the result of what Michael Behiels calls a “three-decade-long renaissance” (Behiels 2004, xxii). This renaissance is intimately tied to the collapse of French Canada in the 1960s. From around 1840 to 1960, FMCs were part of the nation canadienne-française, which purported to unite all French Canadians, including Acadians in the Maritime provinces. The idea of a coast-to-coast French Canadian nation emerged in the mid-1800s amid Lord Durham’s infamous report recommending the assimilation of French Canadians as well as the exodus of large numbers for greener pastures in the Ottawa Valley, Northern Ontario, the Prairies, and eventually into present-day British Columbia.

French Canadian and Acadian communities were able to maintain some demographic and cultural vitality owing in no small part to the support of the Catholic Church. With the support of the Church, newly transplanted French Canadians established parishes, classical colleges, convents, Saint-Jean-Baptiste societies, weeklies, and health and social services (Allaire 2007). In other words, French Canadians brought with them their culture and institutions wherever they went. Over the years these mostly local or regional infrastructures were deemed insufficient to preserve the distinct features of the nation and so were complemented with two national organizations that were to oversee and coordinate actions aimed at the flourishing of the French Canadian nation. The Ordre de Jacques-Cartier was the political arm aiming to influence officials in provincial capitals and in Ottawa, whereas the Conseil de la vie française en Amérique (formerly the Comité de la survivance française) provided financial assistance to local structures and committees that promoted French Canadian values and traditions. These two organizations sought to enable cooperation between French Canadian leaders from across the country and,
ultimately, to foster a strong sense of solidarity among French Canadian and Acadian communities. “The call to solidarity” Marcel Martel explains, “was an attempt not merely to justify Québec’s support of the other communities, but to associate and involve all French-speaking communities in French Canada’s fundamental struggle to preserve the features of its identity, in short, the struggle for survival” (Martel 1998, 9).

Of course there were internal differences in terms of identity between FMCs. At national conventions in Memramcook (1881), Miscouche (1884), and Pointe-de-l’Église (1890), Acadians adopted their own national flag, anthem, and holiday, and created a national organization to promote their interests (see Dumont 1997). Moreover, with provinces holding legislative powers over education following Confederation, struggles for instruction in their language pitted FMCs against their respective provincial governments. The first quarter of the twentieth century witnessed the creation of organizations in virtually every province dedicated to promoting French-language education. These struggles for rights and services provided the grounds for distinct founding myths and the emergence of collective identities that differed from province to province and from that of French Canadians in Québec. However, Martel clarifies that “although they used the terms Franco-Ontarian, Franco-Canadian of Saskatchewan or Franco-Albertan, the elites that defined identity were conscious of belonging to the French Canadian community, a national community that transcended their provincial identities” (Martel 1998, 6).

French Canada both as an institutional network and a political concept came to an end in the 1960s. Determining factors include the consolidation of state welfare programs that came to supplant French Canadian services, public disenchantment with an elite message centered around religion and agriculture, and, of course, the advent of a secular nationalism that viewed the province of Québec as the national territory of the French Canadians and the Québec government as the best means for collective action. The final straw was the Estates general of French Canada. Approximately 2,000 delegates met in Montréal in November 1967 to discuss the future of French Canada and the role and status of Québec within Canada. Stated briefly, the Québécois delegates supported a motion on Québec’s right to national self-determination and delegates from other Canadian provinces rejected it. The Estates general has thus been described as the formal breakup of French Canada.4

This division created an important void for FMCs. With French Canadians in Quebec framing their political demands around the province, coupled with the decline of the Catholic Church’s influence and financial resources and the fading of traditional nationalist organizations, FMCs found themselves at the mercy of provincial governments that had historically proven themselves hostile to enforcing any formal status for their language. As such, with French Canadians within Québec focused on making the Québec government the principal means of collective action
for the French Canadian nation, French Canadians outside Québec sought to consolidate their provincial institutional networks and to build national institutions that could represent their collective interests.

This ‘renaissance’ of FMCs received crucial support from the federal government. Shortly following the enactment of the 1969 Official Languages Act, the federal government began granting funds to French-language community-based organizations and institutions that offered cultural programming and services. This initiative, along with other promotional and developmental programs in the area of official languages, gained legislative status with the passage of the 1988 Official Languages Act. The federal government also enshrined minority language education rights into Section 23 of the 1982 Constitution Act. Since then, and following a number of legal battles, FMCs have been granted the right to manage and control French-language elementary and secondary schools.

From an identity perspective, the void that ensued from the tumultuous 1960s was filled through redefinitions along both provincial and national lines. French Canadians became Franco-Ontariens, Franco-Manitobains, Fransaskois, Franco-Albertains, Franco-Colombiens, Franco-Yukonnais, Franco-Ténois (and more recently Franco-Nunavois). At the same time they also became Francophones outside Québec, or “les restes de la nation canadienne-française” (Cardinal 2003). Other significant shifts have since ensued. These are evidenced, for example, in the Fédération des francophones hors Québec changing its name to the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada. This change, according to Linda Cardinal, exemplifies the formal end of the pursuit of coast-to-coast dualism in favor of the protection and promotion of French-language communities (Cardinal 1994). At present, FMCs are in many ways still trying to forge a path that would reconcile them with “le Québec français” as well as incorporate them within the political institutions of their respective provinces and territories. Indeed editors of a recent volume on the politics and sociology of these communities observe that the consolidation of community institutions and the flourishing of their language and culture remain a work in progress (Thériault et al. 2008, 22).

Since the early 2000s, immigration has made its way on the political agenda of FMCs. It has come about for two interrelated reasons. First, the population of these communities has been steadily declining. Second, French-speaking immigrants to Canada have not settled in these communities, opting to settle mostly in Québec and especially in Greater Montréal. These two tendencies have prompted leaders and representatives of FMCs to lobby the Canadian government to bring changes to its immigration strategy. In 2003, a joint FMC-Citizenship and Immigration Canada steering committee released the Strategic Framework to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities, which listed five objectives:
1. Increase the number of French-speaking immigrants to give more demographic weight to FMCs.
2. Improve the capacity of FMCs to receive Francophone newcomers and to strengthen their reception and settlement infrastructures.
3. Ensure the economic integration of French speaking immigrants into Canadian society and into FMCs in particular.
4. Ensure the social and cultural integration of French-speaking immigrants into Canadian society and into FMCs.
5. Foster the regionalization of Francophone immigration outside Toronto and Vancouver.

Perhaps the most salient aspect of the Strategic Framework is that the flourishing of these communities is equated with the maintenance of their overall percentage of the Canadian population. The idea is to target 4.2% of incoming immigrants to ensure that French is their mother tongue, and to direct them to these communities. According to immigration levels established by the Canadian government at the time of publication, this would represent 8,000 to 10,000 francophone immigrants settling outside Québec. The Strategic Framework then goes on to argue that a long-term vision is required to ensure continuity of immigration into these communities, as well as the continuation of recruitment, integration and retention of new French-speaking immigrants. In 2006, the Strategic Plan was released with recommendations along these lines. The basic thrust of the plan is to promote immigration to FMCs in order to preserve what is claimed to have been a defining feature of the country—linguistic duality. Moreover, the plan sets out to allow FMCs to engage in the economic, social and cultural integration of immigrants into those communities.

Rather than provide a detailed description of the content of the Strategic Framework and the Strategic Plan, we will instead look at the motivations and justificatory scheme that can be read into the documents. The relationship between language and social and political integration is complex. Most agree that the adoption of a public language by political communities cannot be understood in the same sense as culture or religion. Language is a necessary component of both identity-shaping initiatives as well as more instrumental concerns regarding the participation and deliberation underpinning healthy democratic life (Kymlicka and Patten 2003, 13). In either case, FMCs do not constitute ‘sites’ that can effectively provide the basis of either of these broad justificatory schemes. These groups do not constitute viable demoi that delineate popular sovereignty. This is not a normative claim, but a sociological postulate. Assuming they can serve as focal points for social and political integration misconstrues the ends of integration as merely an administrative matter. Again, this is not a normative position that seeks to discredit the goals of such ini-
tiatives—the flourishing of FMCs. However, the question of immigrant integration cannot be neatly divorced from the much larger issue of what is required for a viable host society to exist. At a minimum, it must provide institutions that are conducive to the creation of a large and inclusive public space, a propitious setting for deliberation, and appropriate resources to foster an ethic of participation.

The Canadian ideal of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework was meant to dampen the political nature of linguistic-based claims on the federal state by ensuring the equality of the French and English languages throughout Canada. The basic thrust of Québec’s interculturalism is to carve out a host society that stands in contradistinction from Canada’s multiculturalism within a bilingual framework. It is thus a competing site for integration. FMCs operate along a different logic. They are afforded protections for a number of reasons, but especially because their perpetuation and flourishing solidifies existing bilingualism. Their status has been bolstered by court rulings that have compelled federal and provincial governments to take active measures to ensure their continuing vitality. Their existence is the result of a national integration strategy that explicitly differentiated them from both internal nations and ethnic immigrant groups. Their status as historically protected communities is a direct result of Canadian plurinationalism (Thériault 2007, 259). That said, they do not enjoy the institutional capacities of an internal nation. They are not a societal culture that enjoys institutional completeness, to use familiar jargon. If we assume that language in this sense serves to bind a community together, in a culturally robust sense, then FMCs are caught in a bind. Not only do they lack the institutional tools to determine such constitutive matters, but they are hamstrung by formal multiculturalism. The Canadian model of diversity does not allow for social integration around particular identity-groups defined by language. FMCs cannot justify acting as an attractive pole of allegiance, through language, since language is defined instrumentally by the Canadian constitution—it was dissociated from the question of culture.

Moreover, as the experience in Québec illustrates, the degree of adherence to cultural pluralism within its own articulation of interculturalism has been the subject of passionate debates that are ongoing. The basic tension in the Québec model has always been to find a balance between the instrumental character of language and the extent to which it is the carrier of a more robust cultural identity. This is why the model has always oscillated between an emphasis on cultural convergence versus cultural synthesis as the basic thrust behind its integration strategies, and this has persistently been a controversial and tense issue (Iacovino and Sévigny 2011). While FMCs do enjoy some capacity to shape identity as a facet of their integration initiatives, most notably through its control of education and community economic development programs, they are nevertheless constrained by requirements of individualism and instrumentalism in the federal language regime (see Léger 2012).
In assessing the objectives of the Strategic Plan and Strategic Framework, several other shortcomings can be highlighted. The first is that the effectiveness of state-minority relations in Canada depends on a hierarchical conception of politically-salient groups, whether or not this is formally conceded. Kymlicka’s observation that it can be conceptualized as three silos is paramount here, since each can plausibly be addressed with different, compatible and non-intrusive responses (see Kymlicka 2012). In the case of the Strategic Plan, however, we are confronted with a situation that actually pits two ‘targets’ of constitutive federal initiatives against one another—ethnic immigrant groups and linguistic minorities. The institutional capacities of national minorities can allow for this co-existence, in most cases. Stated simply, Québec is in a position to accommodate ethnocultural diversity in however manner it sees fit because the federal government has devolved some of its citizenship functions to Québec (again, we assume this to be the case to a degree). FMCs, conversely, enjoy the status of protected linguistic minorities whose existence depends on considerations related solely to language.

The nature of language rights as opposed to the capacity to engage in language policy across a wide spectrum of areas is a key distinction here. Immigrants are expected to integrate into communities that have fought for a bundle of rights that they invoke through judicial channels, not as a self-governing political community with representative institutions and legislative powers. The only way it can be defended normatively is if immigrants were given the choice of which language community to adopt. In this scenario, French-speaking immigrants may want to settle in Francophone communities for their own purposes related to, for example, ease of transition. However, if they are in any way coerced, as a condition of their acceptance, to be subject to a minority community in a larger setting that may not recognize French as an official language, then it is difficult to defend by any account. They are being integrated into a minority situation against their will. Canadian bilingualism is based on the personality principle, and this would result in a situation where some citizens (newcomers) cannot exercise their prerogative to integrate into a majority linguistic community.

Part of the difficulty here can be grasped by pointing to the contested arena of Canadian dualism. In Québec, it is viewed as the basis for a multination federation, with two majorities acting as the basis for an asymmetrical institutional configuration centered on Québec and the rest of Canada. This would clearly outline the boundaries of the respective Canadian host societies. The view of the federal government, and that which is implied by the adoption of the Strategic Plan and the Strategic Framework, is a form of dualism which privileges English and French languages throughout the country without formal constitutive implications. Integration becomes a governance issue that can be devolved to interested
This ideal of personal bilingualism that is meant to unite Canadians has been soundly criticized by Kenneth McRoberts (2004). For him, it is difficult to justify the federal language regime since it is underpinned by a desire to construct a bilingual nation. This is the heart of the matter. Whether or not one believes it is the appropriate role for the federal government to support minority language groups is not the issue—the question is whether or not this is working, or whether the concept of a bilingual nation is even feasible considering Canada’s particular sociological make-up. His answer is that such policies have largely failed due to sociological obstacles that we will not repeat here, and we contend that attempting to remedy the situation through the devolution of immigration policy is not the answer. Slotting immigrants into this complex political struggle undermines genuine efforts at social integration.

Another shortcoming is that initiatives in Québec have always oscillated between language and identity—this has constituted the main debate in Québec for over 30 years. The expectation is that acquisition of the majority language will eventually create an overarching common identity that seeks to sustain the language for future generations. While a similar logic may be applied to the case of FMCs, in the sense that such groups see the loss of their linguistic communities as an affront to their identities, the overall framework for belonging explicitly removes cultural identity as a reference point. The common public identity rests on the twin pillars of bilingualism and multiculturalism. In effect, there is no attempt to foster community through a particular formative project promoted by the host society, in the sense of fostering a particular public identity that is shared. They are promoting a minority identity that cannot effectively serve as the basis for a national identity group, a distinct democratic space, a host society, and so on. Rather, the goal is to preserve a linguistic balance that is overwhelmingly punitive to the minority language group. This is difficult to justify through the lens of common identity, since this is not an explicit feature of the initiative. This is one of the shortcomings of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework to begin with, but it acquires all the more urgency in this outcome-oriented application. While language is a constitutive aspect of identity, its public implications cannot simply be extended to immigrant integration. The Canadian constitution provides linguistic protection to FMCs, not identity recognition, and this distinction cannot be understated.

In terms of the second consideration related to the importance of language, there is also the increasing prominence of deliberative democracy as a normative end. The idea is that a common public language is meant not only to sustain a community though a shared identity but to empower immigrants and other targets of integration. The basic prescription here is that immigrants ought to be able to
determine the main orientations of society through formal institutions as well as within civil society. The community of reference in which these processes are articulated and result in decision-moments becomes extremely important because of the imperative of representation underlying such policy outcomes. Through deliberation, citizens participate in the formation of public opinion. While this may seem as though it is an implicit argument for linguistic assimilation as a policy goal, it cannot be denied that learning a majority language in a particular community of reference is now a democratic imperative. It is motivated by inclusion, and the willingness of the nation or host society to provide resources in order to learn the language of public deliberation has become an important responsibility in our evaluation of models of diversity.

Indeed, Québec’s model of diversity, in all of its manifestations, has always sought to incorporate immigrants or ethnocultural minorities into the larger public sphere. This project is ongoing, still engages in much introspection, and continues to have trouble convincing a large number of newcomers that the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship in Québec are distinct. Québec has negotiated a good deal of control over immigration selection, recruitment and integration, and in many respects has begun to be treated as a separate host society. Collective deliberation, political agency and will-formation lie at the heart of the Québec project, and this, through no fault of their own, cannot be said about FMCs. Indeed, efforts in Québec must always be supplemented with a much larger array of policies including a vast network of immigration officers, a public sphere that operates in the majority language, a network of civil society actors which operate in the majority language, and so on.

The point is not to disregard the real and legitimate claims of FMCs to sustain and foster growth within their communities. We only argue that the existing strategy is misguided because of the nature of Canadian dualism. In the present configuration, groups have the choice to demand certain public services in French. They may choose whether or not to act on this right. By way of analogy, directing immigrants to be integrated into these minority communities is akin to asking immigrants to slot themselves into a particular culture in the Canadian multicultural mosaic. While it is an individual choice to proclaim that one belongs to a particular cultural group that makes recognition claims on his/her behalf, the strategy set out in the Strategic Plan would place burdensome and restrictive conditions on applicants that restrict their choice of which linguistic group they would adopt. The idea is sound through the lens of reproducing a linguistic minority, but it is difficult to justify on the grounds of social integration (Weinstock 2003).

The fundamental problem resides in the Canadian normative ideal of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework. These linear, proportional, outcome-ori-
mented responses based on population maintenance are cosmetic attempts to remedy a very pressing concern among FMCs. Multiculturalism within a bilingual framework as a template for integration assumes that individuals enjoy the freedom to select both the culture with which they will identify, a decision that is and ought to be revisable, as well as the linguistic community into which they will integrate. Members of FMCs may very well choose to belong to the minority linguistic group, but the very fact that their right to receive recognition of their language is framed in terms of a choice to be acted upon by individuals precludes them from attaining the status of a host society that can legitimately integrate newcomers. They would have to force their own members to accept certain restrictions on their capacity to choose a language community, which in effect would serve to unravel the Canadian ideal.

CONCLUSION

If this ideal of a bilingual nation is to come to fruition, the broad strategy undertaken presently through the leadership of the federal government is doomed to failure. We propose that strengthening bilingualism with the assistance of provincial governments in order to make French a pole of attraction is the only justifiable strategy, on both pragmatic and normative grounds (see also Landry 2008). As we have attempted to illustrate, the wider context of Canada’s accommodation of diversity does more to affect the capacity of these groups to flourish than these tailored programs. While this may be dismissed as unrealistic, it is nonetheless the only path available to ensure the flourishing of French-speakers outside Québec and New Brunswick in the face of increasing immigration. Why should we expect bilingual immigrants and not bilingual citizens if the ideal is to maintain a system of personal bilingualism? If personal bilingualism is deemed to be an inherent failure, then compensating for declining numbers within FMCs is a difficult proposition. In Québec, it is framed explicitly as a collective rights issue—immigrants, in theory, cannot choose not to participate in the broader society. In this case, it is expected of them and built into the model of diversity. Under the present scenario outlined in the Strategic Framework and the Strategic Plan, newly-arrived citizens are treated like pawns in a great game of national integration. A more meaningful bilingualism that applies to all citizens, with the strong support of provincial governments, seems more likely to result in some movement towards the Canadian ideal.

In conclusion, we do not make the claim that FMCs should cave into sociological and political pressures and drop their legitimate claim of maintaining and receiving support for healthy and flourishing communities. We simply question the motivations of the federal government in devolving a policy area to groups that are not in a legitimate position to succeed.
NOTES

1. Québec and New Brunswick contain large French-speaking populations and their respective provincial legislatures have adopted French as an official language.

2. Admittedly, this is a simplification of the model. Québec interculturalism has largely been inferred by academics through a series of Government policy statements and state sanctioned commissions of inquiry. While the Québec state uses this terminology to guide its policies on cultural diversity, there is no Interculturalism Act that is comparable to the Canadian policy of multiculturalism. For more on the development of this model over time and its theoretical foundations, see the Final Report of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission (La Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d’accommodementrelées aux différences culturelles 2008) or recent publications from its two co-chairs, Gérard Bouchard (2011) and Charles Taylor (2012).

3. FMCs in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have different histories and confront distinct realities. See Robineau and Traisnel, La francophonie boréale (2010).

4. While some put great emphasis on debates that played out at the Estates General, others argue that results of these meetings merely embody tensions and contradictions that began emerging with struggles for French language schools outside Québec and the Conscription crisis. See Martel and Choquette (1998) for an excellent overview of the different perspectives.

5. This is assuming that the accommodation of national minorities such as Québec is undertaken in good faith. The difficulties Québec has experienced in getting its status as a host society recognized in Canada does not bode well for this observation, yet we will assume, for the purposes of our argument, that Québec’s capacity to carve out a citizenship space in Canada through administrative deals with Ottawa, along with the traditional division of powers that affords Québec a large measure of self-government, are sufficient to qualify the situation as a genuine attempt to accommodate the specific needs of a national minority.

6. See the Final report of the Estates General on the Situation and Future of the French Language (2001) (Larose Commission) for more on this relationship.

7. This is a normative position, not merely a descriptive one. Québec ought to promote a common public language, yet this does not preclude its recognition of official minority languages. See Seymour 2008.

REFERENCES


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