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**LETTING THE OTHER SOLITUDE BE HEARD:  
ON THE MEDIA'S ROLE AS A FORUM FOR MULTINATIONAL  
CONVERSATION IN CANADA**

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# **LETTING THE OTHER SOLITUDE BE HEARD:**

## **ON THE MEDIA'S ROLE AS A FORUM FOR MULTINATIONAL CONVERSATION IN CANADA**

Marc Chalifoux

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines media coverage of the 2006 debate on recognizing Québec/the Québécois as a nation within Canada. It articulates a specific function for the media in democracies such as Canada: to act as a forum for multinational conversation. The research seeks to determine the extent to which the media fulfilled this function in their coverage of the debate by looking at how the English Canadian media presented Francophone Québécois voices and vice versa. It also draws on three theories from media and communication studies - indexing, othering and framing – and investigates how each respectively acted as an impediment to a multinational conversation. A two-pronged empirical research design was developed to assess the degree to which actual coverage reflected this normative expectation and understand the nature of the identified short-comings. A content analysis was performed to uncover trends across a sample of 200 articles from two English-language newspapers, the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*, and two French-language newspapers, *La Presse* and *Le Devoir*. A rhetorical discourse analysis was undertaken on six key articles, three in each language, to highlight the various subtle discursive devices at work.

It was found that the Anglophone and Francophone media allowed for a limited degree of representation of voices from the other national/linguistic community, while falling short of the balance required for an effective multinational conversation. The research also demonstrates that indexing, othering and framing were operating throughout the articles and proved to be impediments to an effective conversation among citizens from Canada's two solitudes.

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## Introduction

*"While all countries are complex, the central characteristic of the Canadian state is its complexity."*

John Ralston Saul, Canadian philosopher (1997: 3)

*"We are now nine provinces, three territories and a nation inside a nation."*

Rick Mercer, Canadian political satirist (2008: 86)

While all Canadians share a common land and political institutions, they have diverse origins: Aboriginal peoples, the descendents of French and English settlers and immigrant communities from all corners of the world. The tension caused by this diversity predates Confederation and continues to this day. The schism that has most often dominated debates in Canada has been between the descendents of the two European founding peoples, Canada's "two solitudes" (Taylor 1993). The dividing line largely shifted in the twentieth century from religion – Catholic and Protestant - to language – French and English - to federal politics –Québec and the provinces of English Canada (Balthazar 1991; 1996). The question has increasingly become "what does Québec want?", yet its answer –recognition, more powers, decentralization, sovereignty-association, independence- remains elusive (Pratte 2006a: 15-9). Recent decades have witnessed periods of high emotion, such as referendums and failed constitutional negotiations, as well as periods of *accalmie*. But, despite these crises, the country remains one of the most enduring constitutional democracies in the world (Saul 1997: 81-3). Thus, as Kymlicka notes (2001: 116), Canada "appear[s] to combine a weak sort of unity with a surprising degree of resilience".

One of the most recent debates on Canadian national unity took place in the Fall of 2006. The proposal to recognize Québec and/or the Québécois as a nation within Canada was hotly debated not only during the Liberal Party of Canada's leadership race, but also in the House of Commons. Arguments were made, accusations levelled, praise lavished, criticisms voiced; resolutions were passed and withdrawn; parliamentary motions were adopted and rejected. The entire debate is premised on the understanding that there are at least two distinct communities in Canada - one to be recognized, Québec, and its recognizing counterpart, the rest of Canada – even if boundaries defining them are blurry.

The issue was widely discussed in the mass media. The question of how it was covered is essential as most citizens witnessed the debate only through the media. The

present research focuses on a particular aspect of the media's coverage: how it presented and represented voices from the other national/linguistic community. As English Canadians and Québécois rarely interact on a day-to-day basis, even if they share the same country, the media play an important role. This study looks at how English Canadian newspapers presented the Québécois and their views on being recognized as a nation, as well as how the Francophone press in Québec presented sources and opinions from English Canada.

It is argued that Canadian political philosopher Charles Blattberg's (2003a) concept of conversation is useful to understand the ideal role played by the media in such debates. A conversation is seen as a dialogue that seeks "to reach an understanding that allows [participants] to share an interpretation" (ibid: 28). The media may fall short as a forum for Blattberg's demanding ideal of conversation, but understanding *how* it falls short may provide new insight into a long-standing tension within the Canadian federation. The research draws on media and communication theories of indexing, othering and framing to better analyze the specific impediments to a multinational conversation.

The study is organized into several distinct parts. It begins by situating the research within the relevant academic literature and defining the conceptual framework that is used. It then details the two-pronged methodological approach adopted: a content analysis of 200 articles from two English-language and two French-language newspapers, as well as a rhetorical discourse analysis of six key texts. The findings from both approaches are then presented as they relate to general trends and the three impediments to conversation identified earlier.

## **1. THEORETICAL CHAPTER**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA'S ROLE IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY**

The media are not mere observers in the democratic process; they are active and important participants (Lichtenberg 1990: 1; Cammaerts & Carpentier 2007: xi). Gurevitch and Blumler's (1990) typology of the democratic functions of the media is frequently cited (e.g. Habermas 1997: 378). Two of these are worthy of particular mention as they are directly relevant to the topic at hand. The media should act as "platforms for an intelligible and illuminating advocacy by politicians and spokespersons of other causes and interest groups", as well as present a "dialogue across a diverse range of views, as well as between power holders (actual and prospective) and mass publics" (Gurevitch & Blumler 1990: 270).

Debate remains over how these roles should be understood. Siebert et al. (1956: 39-71) present a libertarian theory where the press is viewed as fulfilling specific "functions" for its customers, such as acting as a watchdog of the government. This approach is contrasted with the social responsibility theory where the "power and near monopoly of the media impose on them an obligation" vis-à-vis citizens (ibid: 5 & 73-103). Gurevitch and Blumler (1990: 270) present the media's democratic functions/obligations as "expectations", a scale against which its performance can be measured by the public. Curran (2005: 128) notes that, as "the media are not a single entity", "there should be a division of labour in which different sectors of the media [...] make different contributions to the functioning of the democratic system".

### **MEDIA AND NATIONAL IDENTITY**

Anderson's description of nations as 'imagined communities' has "become the dominant metaphor for the social scientific study of nationalism" (Day & Thompson 2004: 87). Under this view, nations exist as mental constructs "because the members of even the smallest nation 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" (Anderson 1991: 6). He focuses on the cultural, rather than political, origins of nationalism (ibid: 12). He argues that the rise of print-capitalism and written vernacular languages are key features that allowed the emergence of nations (ibid: 37-46). Anderson cites the daily ritual of newspaper reading as illustrative of the community taking part in a shared ritual and reinforcing its sense of collectivity (ibid: 35).

Billig (1995) argues that a particular form of nationalism remains pervasive in established Western nations. Banal nationalism is sustained through “routinely familiar habits of language [that act] as reminders of nationhood” present everywhere including within media and political discourse (ibid: 93). National identity is thus best understood by looking, not at ‘loud’ and ‘assertive’ events, but by focusing on the “background hum” of largely unnoticed discursive devices (Day & Thompson 2004: 100). “[T]he crucial question [...] is how the national ‘we’ is constructed and what is meant by such construction” (Billig 1995: 70). This sense of ‘we’ is inexorably linked to and defined by its opposite, ‘them’. Thus, “[t]he national community can only be imagined by also imagining communities of foreigners” made up of ‘others’ (ibid 78-79).

Both accounts understand nations as communicative communities (Schlesinger 2000: 105-6). They also attribute a key role to the media in creating and sustaining identity. However, Castells (2006:32) warns against “excessive deconstructionism” and reminds that national identity is also grounded in “a shared history and a shared project”.

## **THE COMPLEX REALITY OF MULTINATIONAL DEMOCRACIES**

In his analysis of the ‘imagined communities’ model, Schlesinger (1991: 165) warns against assuming homogeneity within nations that does not actually exist and advocates instead for a “sceptical measure of attention” to be given to “the socially located sources of division”. Because of Anderson’s (1991) and Billig’s (1995) focus on communication, linguistic differences must be given particular consideration. These theories of nationalism, like those of deliberative democracy, both take for granted a common language within the national community (Ipperciel 2007; Patten & Kymlicka 2003: 15). However, Canada is characterized by a multiplicity of languages. Anglophone and Francophone communities each possess their own media systems that largely cover different subjects, focus on different personalities, place different emphases and cater to different audiences (Siegel 1996: 215-242; Elkin 1975: 235)<sup>1</sup>.

The nation-state is often presumed to be the norm (Tully 2001: 2), when in fact nations vastly outnumber states in the contemporary global system (Keating 2001). Many countries, including Canada, are better understood as “multinational democracies, [which] are

constitutional associations that contain two or more nations or peoples [...] that are more or less equal in status" (Tully 2001: 2-3). Gwyn (1995: 254) posits that Canada may be better understood as "[a] state-nation rather than a nation-state" – a community held together by shared institutions and rights, rather than deep bonds of language, ethnicity or nationality.

The national communities that make up Canada are Francophones, Anglophones and Aboriginal peoples, even if the latter have only recently received recognition as 'first nations' in Canada (Ignatieff 2007: 58-59). Balthazar (1991; 1996) describes how national identity among Francophones shifted, particularly after the 1960s Quiet Revolution, from the ethnic "Canadiens français" to the territorial "Québécois". The majority of the Québécois population consider themselves a nation (Tully 2001: 8; Venne 2000), however, this sentiment is not widely shared in the rest of Canada where many appear to "still dream of a unique and indivisible Canadian nation, and [...] oppose meaningful recognition of a distinctive Québec" (Balthazar 1996: 111).

## **THE CONCEPT OF THE MULTINATIONAL CONVERSATION**

These two linguistic, national communities have frequently been described as Canada's "two solitudes" (MacLennan 2003; Taylor 1993; Jean 2005), entities that have very limited interaction with each other despite being part of the same country.

Political philosopher Charles Blattberg (2003a) presents a different conception of multinational relations within Canada. Rather than solitudes, he envisions them as "part[s] of an organic whole [that] is nevertheless not in a unified state" (ibid: 28). In seeking to resolve key conflicts, Blattberg (ibid: 27) argues that citizens should seek to engage in "an altogether different form of dialogue: *conversation*". Through "tactful speaking and profound listening", conversing citizens "try really to *learn* from each other, to reach an understanding that allows them to share an interpretation" (Blattberg 2003b: 69; 2003a: 28). "[T]he aim is always to express something meaningful *together*", a common good (ibid: 28). Blattberg (2003b: 169) acknowledges that conversation is "an extremely fragile mode of dialogue" as it requires the sustained commitment of all interlocutors. He cites the specific example of "recogniz[ing] *la nation québécoise* [as] the kind of thing that [Canadians] need to be conversing [...] about" (2003a: 106).

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<sup>1</sup> Gonthier (2003: 8) describes a similar situation within the Flemish and French media systems in Belgium.

Blattberg (ibid: 34) draws a sharp distinction between conversation and negotiation, which is inherently adversarial and where gains appear zero-sum. The latter has characterized the acrimonious history of constitution-making in Canada (ibid: 83-86; Russell 2004; Webber 1994). Blattberg (2003a: 33) does not entirely rule out negotiations, but stresses these “should be engaged in only *after* conversation has been attempted”.

Blattberg’s (ibid) account is similar in many regards to Habermas’ (1974; 1992; 1997) notion of the public sphere, which views democracy as a wide-ranging body of citizens engaged in inclusive and rational deliberations about political issues. However, key differences exist between both theoretical models. Firstly, Habermas’ (1990: 87-89) theory of deliberation articulates precise rules for participants within the public sphere, notably limiting it solely to rational arguments. Conversation under Blattberg’s (2003b: 158-159) view should operate with few “rules of thumb” derived largely from common sense rather than theory. Furthermore, Habermas (1974: 49) argues that the public sphere and the state are distinct entities that “do not overlap”, but rather “confront one another as opponents”. Blattberg (2003b: 168) instead calls for “a blurring [of the] distinction between the domains of state and society” as both contribute to deliberation and decision-making.

Blattberg is surprisingly silent on the role of the media, considering that direct conversation between citizens appears at best impractical across Canada, the second-largest country in the world. Furthermore, Siegel (1996: 222) argues that constitutional dialogue, a key concern in Blattberg’s work, has largely taken place through the media. Combining his account with communication theory suggests a particular function for the media in countries such as Canada: to act as a forum for multinational conversation. The media can increase interaction between the two national communities by presenting voices from the other side and, thus, allow citizens to engage in conversation and gain understanding. Even if both media systems remain largely distinct, they become respective zones of a “public meeting place” that otherwise does not exist for most citizens (Taras 1999: 2). As the Québécois and English Canadians share the same country, informing readers from each community about the views of the fellow citizens appears a legitimate expectation of the Canadian media.

### **THREE IMPEDIMENTS TO MULTINATIONAL CONVERSATION**

As conversation is an inherently fragile form of communication, the media’s ability to adequately fulfil this function may be hindered by several factors. Communication theory

offers insight into three distinct, albeit interrelated, impediments: indexing, othering and framing. It is important to acknowledge other factors which presumably also hinder a multinational conversation, but remain beyond the scope of the present study. For example, the imperfect nature of translation can be seen as an obstacle as its scope is never commensurate with the political community as a whole and miscommunications are common (Ipperciel 2007: 401; Watzlawick 1977: 3-14). McChesney (1999; 2003) also notes how dwindling news budgets hinder the quality of coverage, in this case, of voices from the other national/linguistic community.

### *INDEXING*

Bennett's (1990) theory of 'indexing' argues that the media do not present the full range of opinions on political issues, but only those present in official debate among a nation's elites. They "tend to "index" the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic" (ibid: 106). Concerns and criticisms that fall outside these bounds are ignored. Thus, the higher the degree of elite consensus, the narrower the range of opinions presented in media.

Bennett (ibid: 122) notes that "military decision, foreign affairs, trade, and macroeconomic policy – issues of great interest to political and economic elites are most likely to be indexed"<sup>2</sup>. In Canada, Taras (1999: 143) argues that national unity should be added to the list of issues where indexing is prominent.

Indexing can limit the media's ability to act as a forum for multinational conversation, as coverage becomes largely indexed to the views of one's *own* political elite's, rather than those actually held in the other national community. As English-Canadian elites are highly federalist, the views of hard or soft Québécois nationalists tend to receive relatively little coverage (ibid: 143-4). Similarly, it is expected that Québécois media would present a more diverse range of English-Canadian views when federalists, nationalists and sovereignists disagree.

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Entman & Page 1994; Zaller et al. 1994; Mermin 1999; Bennett et al. 2007.

### *OTHERING*

Investigating processes of othering involves the study of rhetoric, which “explores *how* things are said” (Robinson 1998: 111). Such analyses highlight that national identity is constructed through “discourses of both difference and similarity”: difference with the Other, “all people the Self perceives as mildly or radically different” and similarity among co-nationals (Riggins 1997: 3-4). These studies also seek to understand how national identity is given prominence among the multiple identities that individuals possess (Wodak et al. 1999: 16).

For Billig (1995: 94), analyzing rhetoric “means becoming linguistically microscopic”. The focus is on the subtle use of small words, rather on “grand memorable phrases” or “blatant stereotypes” (ibid: 93; Van Dijk 1997: 62). Journalists often contribute unwittingly to the process of othering (Riggins 1997: 25). Through their choice of words, they can reinforce in co-nationals “the feeling that they share something that makes them distinct [from] other groups in society and that also makes irrelevant other traits which could link them to those other groups” (Martin 1995: 10). Ignatieff (1996) invokes the Freudian expression “narcissism of minor difference” to highlight that this differentiation is particularly present in groups, like English-Canadians and Québécois, that are much more similar than dissimilar. The media can exacerbate the sense that “differences that [...] may be tiny to an outsider” are highly significant (ibid: 45).

As Riggins (1997: 10) notes, acknowledging the rhetoric of othering is “not to say that empathetic cross-cultural communication or a mutually modifying relationship are impossible ideals”. However, it may prove a significant, yet subtle, obstacle to multinational conversation.

### *FRAMING*

According to Entman (1993: 52), “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation”. This definition highlights two important aspects of framing: selection and salience. As selection inevitably involves choice, one must look both to what is included and excluded (ibid: 54). Salience involves assessing which elements are made “more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (ibid: 53). Effective frames are persistent across a large number of texts (Reese 2001: 15-6; Gitlin 1980: 7). However, the presence of a frame

in media texts does not guarantee that they will necessarily influence the public's view (Graber 1988).

Eight specific frames are explored in the present research and present opposing views of the debate on four levels: politics, society, history and significance. The first pair concerns the political sphere and focuses on the movement for Québec sovereignty. The issue of recognizing Québec as a nation within Canada can be presented according to a "frame of anti-sovereignty", if it is shown to weaken the secessionist option, or a "frame of pro-sovereignty", if it is seen to strengthen it. The second set focuses on relations between citizens in Québec and in English Canada, rather than on formal politics. Young (2001: 65) notes the enduring presence in media coverage of a "frame of unity", "which emphasize[s] factors that bring 'an otherwise divided society together'", as well as a "frame of division", which concentrates on aspects of disunity. The third set focuses on how the recognition relates to previous historical events/trends in Canadian politics. A "frame of continued recognition" highlights on-going efforts at collaboration among the national communities, including the openness of English Canadians to the recognition of Québec's distinctiveness (Pratte 2007). The opposing "frame of continued rejection" instead focuses on those attempts that failed or insists on the continued victimization of Francophone Québécois by English Canada (Pratte 2006a: 26-34; Lester 2001). The final pair of frames concentrates on the scale of the proposal's impact, regardless of whether it is viewed as positive or negative. A "frame of significance" emphasizes that it should be seen as having important repercussions, whereas a "frame of triviality" dismisses the measure as mere symbolism or semantics with little, if any, lasting effect.

The media's ability to act as a forum for multinational conversation can be distorted by the presence, dominance, combination or absence of these frames. By privileging particular frames, "journalists may [...] preven[t] most audience members from making a balanced assessment of a situation" (Entman 1993: 56). Frames form the lens through which the debate, including its protagonists from both national/linguistic communities, is presented.

## **PUTTING THE DEBATE ON RECOGNIZING QUÉBEC AS A NATION IN PERSPECTIVE**

It is impossible within the confines of a few pages to provide an accurate summary of the national unity debate which has largely dominated Canadian political life for the past half-century. Instead, the aim here is to give some historical context to media coverage of the 2006 debate on recognizing Québec as a nation.<sup>3</sup> While Soroka (2002) notes the presence of a pan-Canadian media agenda on many policy issues, this has not been the case with national unity. Siegel (1996: 222) has described such media coverage on this issue as “one event - two views”.

The first referendum on Québec sovereignty took place in 1980 and was defeated by 59.6%. A content analysis noted major differences in the media coverage presented by Montréal and Toronto media (Halford et al. 1983). Whereas the former gave balanced treatment to both sides, the latter strongly favoured the No side. A discourse analysis of media texts by French and English journalists in Montréal revealed similar differences (Robinson 1998).

The 1987 Meech Lake Accord sought to gain Québec’s signature to the 1982 patriated Constitution by enshrining five specific demands, including the recognition of Québec as a ‘distinct society’. The Accord died in 1990. The similarly-minded, but more complex, Charlottetown Accord was defeated in a pan-Canadian referendum in October 1992 (Russell 2004). Taras (1993) argues that “the Québec media [...] became a powerful participant in the political process [with] extraordinary influence over attitudes in Québec”. Felske’s (1988: 250) analysis of English-Canadian print coverage found a strong tendency to adopt a regional, rather than national perspective.

The second referendum on Québec sovereignty in 1995 yielded a razor-sharp victory for the No side. Siegel (1996: 236-8) notes how during the referendum the French- and English-language media gave “different perspectives on the same political events”, focused on different personalities and emphasized different issues.

These events form the backdrop against which the events of 2006 took place. Following the second referendum, a “silence” emerged over issues of national unity in Canada on the federalist side – with the exceptions of the sponsorship programme and the Clarity Bill. The conversation appeared particularly silenced on constitutional issues (Pratte 2007: 9-11).

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed timeline of events, see Appendix I.

After their January 2006 defeat, the Liberal Party of Canada, the country's "natural governing party", was plunged into a leadership race that culminated in a December convention. Michael Ignatieff, an internationally renowned public intellectual and newly-elected Member of Parliament, soon became the front-runner among the eleven declared candidates (Taber & Clark 2006: A1). The recognition of Québec as a nation in Canada became a major media story in September when Ignatieff (2006: 27-29) proposed it and called for its eventual constitutional enshrinement in his campaign platform. This proposal built on previous declarations he had made thirteen years earlier in his book *Blood and Belonging* (Ignatieff 1993) and in the days following Québec's *Fête nationale* on June 24 after the Prime Minister refused to do so (Bauch 2006).

The debate culminated on November 27 when the House of Commons adopted by a wide margin a surprise motion tabled by Prime Minister Harper to recognize the Québécois as a nation within a united Canada. The motion eschewed any mention of constitutional change (Galloway et al. 2006: A1).

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Canada is better understood as a multinational democracy than a nation-state. This complex reality has implications when applying Anderson's (1991) theory of nations as 'imagined communities' and Billig's (1995) view of banal nationalism. They emphasize, respectively, the role played by mass media and everyday rhetoric in creating and sustaining national identity. As English-Canadians and the Québécois share neither the same language, nor often the same media system, the metaphor of Canada's two solitudes remains relevant (Taylor 1993).

Blattberg (2003a) proposes that discussions among citizens from these two communities on issues such as national unity and the Constitution be approached as a conversation. This suggests a particular role for the Canadian mass media: to act as a forum for multinational conversation. A multinational conversation is defined here as a 'dialogue between citizens from English Canada and Francophone Québec where the aim is to learn from each other in order to develop a shared understanding of an issue'.

Three theories from communication studies provide insight into how this function is likely to be imperfectly fulfilled. Indexing (Bennett 1990) suggests that the voices presented in the conversation may be more representative of the opinions shared by a community's own elite rather than those actually held in the other community. Othering draws attention to the ways in which small words in media discourse can enhance both the sense of differentiation with the other community and the sense of similarity with one's own community (Riggins 1997). Framing highlights how the media through processes of selection and salience shape the flow of information that audiences receive about an issue (Entman 1993). Conversation is a very fragile mode of communication; these forces may imperil it.

The 2006 debate on recognizing Quebec as a nation within Canada provides a useful case study. Media coverage of the issue can indicate the extent to which a multinational conversation occurred between a potentially recognizing and a potentially recognized community. It also highlights some of the countervailing forces in operation.

It is beyond the scope of the present research to discuss the various arguments in favour or against recognition, as well as to argue to whom – Québec, Quebeckers, the Québécois, French Canadians- it should be given. Instead, the focus here is *precisely* on how the media acted as forum for a conversation on these questions between members of two national/linguistic communities.

### 3. RESEARCH QUESTION

By combining insights from political philosophy and communication theory, this research seeks to articulate a specific function for the media in democracies such as Canada: to act as a forum for multinational conversation. Empirical research allows an investigation into the degree to which actual coverage reflected this normative expectation.

The present research also analyzes in detail a recent debate about Canadian national unity that remains, at the time of writing, unexamined by academic inquiry. It thus builds on and updates previous studies on national unity in the Francophone and Anglophone media. Both contributions, normative and empirical, seek to fill a gap in the academic literature.

The research question for the present study is:

***To what extent did the Francophone and Anglophone media act as a forum for multinational conversation in their coverage of the 2006 debate on recognizing Québec as a nation within Canada?***

The research pays particular attention to the way indexing, othering and framing acted as impediments to a multinational conversation.

## **4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **RESEARCH STRATEGY**

A two-pronged strategy that combines quantitative content analysis (CA) and qualitative discourse analysis (DA) was adopted to offer a fuller understanding of complex phenomena in media texts. CA can be seen as providing insights into overall trends across a large body of texts, whereas DA allows detailed investigation of the discursive processes at work in specific articles (Bauer 2000: 147; Gunter 2000: 91).

Stone et al (1966: 6) define CA as a “research technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics within text”. As the rules and procedures of CA are clearly articulated and open to scrutiny, the degree of subjective interpretation is curtailed (Krippendorff 2004: 19). Even if research can never be entirely “value-free” (Hansen et al 1998: 95), using CA allows the researcher, a Québécois, to minimize bias.

CA is useful for cross-sectional analysis, where “empirical comparison [...] involve[s] texts from different contexts” – in this case, Québécois and English Canadian media (Bauer 2000: 135). Furthermore, CA has frequently been used in empirical research on indexing (see Mermin 1999; Bennett et al. 2007) and on framing (see Iyengar 1991; Entman 2004), two impediments to a multinational conversation.

However, CA runs the risk of being more descriptive than analytical by focusing mainly on frequencies (Neuman 1989: 223). It also can provide inaccurate interpretations by ignoring the context in which an item appears or partial interpretations by “neglect[ing] the rare and the absent” (Hansen et al 1998: 148). By combining CA with DA, these weaknesses can be overcome to a large extent, as the latter allows for “a whole variety of subtle patterns of linguistic and production formats [to] be analysed to uncover meanings that may not be immediately apparent from a purely quantitative frequency count of content elements” (ibid: 91).

DA’s central focus is to analyze how reality and identity are constructed through discourse, which Fairclough (1995: 56) defines as “the language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view”. DA investigates discursive choices – whether

conscious or not- by looking at how things were expressed (Riggins 1997: 2). DA also pays close attention to what is *not* said (Billig 1991: 44).

There is a false impression that “anything goes” in DA (Antaki et al 2003), as traditional social science norms of “reliability and validity are largely unworkable” (Potter 1996: 138). The most useful indicator of valid DA remains “readers’ evaluation”, particularly by fellow social scientists (ibid: 139; Howarth & Stavrakakis: 2000: 7). DA’s subjectivity can be limited by a detailed description of the specific linguistic and thematic analyses undertaken (Gunter 2000: 88). DA has been adopted in numerous studies of two impediments to a multinational conversation, ‘othering’ (see Riggins 1997; Bell 2005) and framing (see Johnson-Cartee 2005).

### **SAMPLING (CONTENT ANALYSIS):**

Broadsheet newspapers were chosen as the media of analysis as they have a greater “facility to communicate rather more complex ideas” than television and radio which generally present news items in 30- to 60-second spots (McNair 2000: 136). Newspapers were chosen over internet coverage as they remain a daily news source for three times more Canadians (CMRC 2004). In English Canada, the two national newspapers were selected: *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* (Taras 1999: 18)<sup>4</sup>. While both publications support the federalist cause, the *Globe and Mail* is generally perceived to be more moderate in its views on Québec (Lacombe 2007: 3). In Québec, *La Presse* and *Le Devoir* were selected as they are province-wide newspapers that respectively favour the federalist and nationalist position (Landry 1997).

A search was conducted to find articles using ParlMedia, the Canadian Parliament’s media database. The dates selected were from September 6, 2006 – when Michael Ignatieff launched his campaign platform – to December 1, 2006 – four days after the House of Commons motion was adopted and the opening day of the Liberal Leadership Convention. A subject search using the word “nation” AND “Quebe\*” OR “Québ\*”<sup>5</sup> was performed. This yielded 373 items from the *Globe and Mail*, 285 from the *National Post*, 356 from *La Presse*

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<sup>4</sup> The *Toronto Star* was excluded from this study despite having the largest readership in Canada, as it is available only in the Greater Toronto area (CNA 2008).

<sup>5</sup> These incomplete words were used to avoid excluding any of the following terms: Quebec, Quebecers, Quebecois, Québec, Québécois.

and 338 from *Le Devoir*. A final sample of 200 texts was obtained by selecting 50 articles from each publication using a random number generator.

### **DESIGN OF RESEARCH TOOLS (CONTENT ANALYSIS)**

A coding frame of 40 variables was developed (see Appendix II). The coding frame was translated into French (see Appendix III) to limit subjectivity by coders when analyzing articles from *La Presse* and *Le Devoir*. A pilot study was conducted on a random sample of 30 articles on April 19, 2008. It allowed the researcher to correct flaws in the initial description of variables and amend those with categories that were not exhaustive. The pilot study also highlighted the need for additional notes defining key terms to be included in the coding frame.

The first four variables record factual information: language (V1), name of newspaper (V2), date of publication (V3) and type of article (V4). At the analysis stage, V1 will allow for comparisons between coverage in Québécois and English Canada media.

The next seven variables (V5-V11) focus on general trends throughout the sample. V5 looks at the article's overall tone about the recognition. V6 and V7 identify whether the article mentions the reaction to the recognition among the general public, usually by referring to opinion polls, in both Québec and English Canada. These communities are referred to as either 'own' or 'other' community depending on the language of publication, i.e. for English newspapers, 'own' community refers to English Canada. V8 verifies whether the author of the article is a known proponent of Québec sovereignty in order to gauge the degree to which these commonplace views were represented. V9 quantifies the number of sources quoted in each article. The pilot study revealed that very few articles quoted more than five sources, thus the top category in V9 is labelled as "5 or more". Anonymous sources were excluded as their community of origin could usually not be identified with certainty. V10 identifies the community of origin of the majority of sources quoted. Sources were again coded as "own" and "other" community. Those who could not be clearly identified as Francophone Québécois or English Canadian, such as Aboriginal Canadians, were coded as being from "neither" community. Similarly to V8, V11 quantifies the number of sources in the article that are known sovereignists.

The next twenty variables (V12-31) focus on the phenomenon of indexing. The same 4 variables were repeated for each of the first five sources quoted in each article. When less than five sources appeared, respective variables were left blank for ease of analysis. The first variable (V12, V16, V20, V24, V28) identifies the source's community of origin. The second (V13, V17, V21, V25, V29) further clarifies the person quoted. Particular attention is given to whether the source is involved in the Liberal leadership race. The variable also distinguishes between elite and non-elite sources. The third variable (V14, V18, V22, V26, V30) identifies the position taken by the source on the recognition. The fourth variable (V15, V19, V23, V27, V31) investigates whether the position taken by each source is consistent with the most-commonly held view in his/her community of origin. Thus, a Québécois who supports the recognition is coded as a match, whereas an English Canadian with the same view is coded as a mismatch.

The last nine variables (V32-V40) focused on framing. V32-V39 identified whether each of the eight individual frames identified earlier were emphasized in the article. V40, then, sought to determine the dominant frame in each article. Articles where no frame or more than one frame appeared as dominant were coded accordingly.

The first coder undertook a content analysis of the entire sample of 200 articles (see Appendix IV for the first coder's coding sheets). A second coder looked at a random sample of 15% of these articles (see Appendix V for the second coder's coding sheets). A very high degree of inter-coder reliability was achieved overall (98.5%) and there was complete agreement on 80% of variables. No variables had inter-coder reliability below 86.7% (see Appendix VI for a detailed breakdown for each variable). This indicates that the variables in the coding frame were well-defined and that the results obtained are largely reliable, as the content analysis can be replicated by independent researchers. The highest levels of discrepancy were linked to variables related to framing (V32-V40), which appears to indicate that identifying the presence and dominance of frames is more subjective. No significant differences were noted in inter-coder reliability between Anglophone and Francophone articles. An example of coded articles from each newspaper can be found in Appendices VII-X.

## **SAMPLING (DISCOURSE ANALYSIS)**

As Gunter (2000: 91) notes, in discourse analysis, “[s]ampling is theoretically informed: researchers choose cases for strategic reasons because they represent the phenomena under study in a particular way.”

The analysis begins by looking at an editorial from the English-language *Globe and Mail* (2006: A22; see Appendix XI) and one from the French-language *La Presse* (2006b: A12; see Appendix XII), both published on September 8, 2006. These specific texts were selected as they lay out the initial views taken by an editorial board from each linguistic community. Furthermore, as they were released on the same day and reference the same material, they allow for meaningful comparison.

Four commentary pieces were then selected, “The return of the General Store” by *La Presse’s* Vincent Marissal (2006: A5), “Must Québec Always be Placated?” by the *National Post’s* Andrew Coyne (2006: A1), “Mr. Ignatieff’s Lose-Lose Québec Proposition” by the *Globe and Mail’s* Lysiane Gagnon (2006: A19) and “No Question of a Québécois «Nation»” by *Le Devoir’s* Norman Spector (2006: A7).<sup>6</sup> A meaningful analysis of these four op-eds is possible as they were all published within a relatively short time frame and, thus, present similar snapshots of the debate. These specific four texts were also selected as they each discuss views on the recognition in both Québec and English Canada. Furthermore, the latter two texts are respectively written by a Québécois columnist in an English-language newspaper and an English-Canadian columnist in a French-language paper – such arrangements are quite rare in the Canadian media. Potter (1996: 138) notes that deviant cases, such as these, allow for illuminating analysis.

## **DESIGN OF RESEARCH TOOLS (DISCOURSE ANALYSIS)**

There exist many different types of discourse analysis. The present research adopts rhetorical analysis which investigates “how the message is presented”, including “distinctive features such as composition, form, use of metaphors and structure of argumentation or reasoning” (Gunter 2000: 89). Critical DA, a commonly used approach, was rejected as its central focus on social domination and inequality seems to preclude the possibility of a Blattbergian conversation ever taking place among citizens (Van Dijk 2001: 352).

In all six articles, analysis focuses on the discursive construction of both the community of Self and the community of Others. Thus, attention is given to the words chosen by authors and their sources to describe Québec, English Canada and their respective inhabitants. The notion of 'deixis' refers to the "little words – mostly overlooked" that are "continually pointing to the national homeland as the home of the readers" (Billig 1995: 11). Riggins (1997: 8) notes that the "expressions that are the most revealing of the boundaries separating Self and Other are *inclusive and exclusive pronouns and possessives* such as *we and they, us and them, and ours and theirs*". Billig (1995: 116-8) also highlights that there is another, even subtler, form of deixis that can pervade texts: the definite article 'the'. By simply referring to *the* nation, an author assumes a defined entity within which readers are included. *The* nation translates to *our* nation, one distinct from *other* nations (ibid: 108).

Particular attention is also given to the words used to portray Michael Ignatieff who remained closely associated with the proposal throughout the entire debate. Ignatieff's depiction can be indicative of attitudes towards the recognition itself. Furthermore, because Ignatieff's support of the recognition was not widely shared in English Canada, analyzing his portrayal – often as a dissident- offers unique insights into the way this community was presented.

The DA will also focus on the phenomenon of framing. More specifically, attention is given to how the frames were discursively constructed in the six analysed texts. Each author selected particular elements of the debate in his/her article. The analysis will focus on the words chosen to describe these frames – metaphors used, sources quoted, past events referenced. It also concentrates on aspects of the issue that were ignored by authors. These omissions become apparent by comparatively analyzing multiple texts.

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendices XIII-XVI, respectively.

## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION – CONTENT ANALYSIS

This section presents and discusses the findings obtained through the content analysis of 200 articles. For the purposes of clarity, the results are organized as they relate to general trends, the impediment of indexing and the impediment of framing.

### RESULTS-GENERAL TRENDS

Within the sample of articles, a total of 402 sources from English Canada or Francophone Québec were quoted. In English-language articles, 60% of sources were Anglophone and 40% were Francophone. In French-language articles, 63% of sources were Francophone and 37% were Anglophone.

*Table 1: Crosstabulation – Origin of Sources According to Language of Publication*

	Sources from own community	Sources from other community	Total
English	121 (60.2%)	80 (39.8%)	201 (100%)
French	126 (62.7%)	75 (37.3%)	201 (100%)
Total	247 (61.4%)	155 (38.6%)	402 (100%)

In English-language articles, Anglophone sources outnumbered Francophones in 61% of articles, whereas the reverse appeared in only 21% of articles. In French-language articles, Francophone sources outnumbered Anglophones in twice as many articles (52%) as the reverse (26%). 11% of English-language articles and 18.5% of French-language articles had an equal number of sources from each community.

*Table 2: Crosstabulation – Origin of Majority of Sources According to Language of Publication*

			What is the balance between number of people quoted from one's own community and from the other community?				Total
			more from own community	equal number from own community and other community	more from other community	more from neither community	
What is the language of publication?	English	Count	49	9	17	5	80
		% within What is the language of publication?	61.3%	11.3%	21.3%	6.3%	100.0%
	French	Count	42	15	21	3	81
		% within What is the language of publication?	51.9%	18.5%	25.9%	3.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	91	24	38	8	161
		% within What is the language of publication?	56.5%	14.9%	23.6%	5.0%	100.0%

Of the total number of sources quoted in English-language articles, only 7.5% are known proponents of Québec sovereignty. French-language articles quoted 4 times more sovereigntist sources (29.9%). A chi-square test of independence indicates that the systematic underrepresentation of sovereigntist sources was characteristic of overall coverage in the Anglophone press, not merely in the sample of articles coded ( $X^2 = 33.269$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ).

*Table 3: Crosstabulation and Chi square test – Number of Sovereigntist Sources According to Language of Publication*

Language of publication	Number of sovereigntist sources	% of sovereigntist sources	Total number of sources
English	15	7.5%	201 (100.0%)
French	60	29.9%	201 (100.0%)
Total	75	18.6%	402 (100.0%)
$X^2 = 33.269$ , $df = 1$ , $P < 0.001$			

Turning to authorship of articles, one finds that only 8 English-language articles out of the sample of 100 were written by Francophones (8%), including one by Liberal leadership candidate Stéphane Dion. Similarly, 8 French-language articles out of the sample of 100 were written by Anglophones (8%), including 3 by Liberal leadership candidates. Furthermore, 13% of French-language articles were written by known sovereigntists, whereas not a single English-language article was written by a sovereigntist author.

*Table 4: Crosstabulation – Type of Article According to Language of Publication*

			What is the type of article?							Total	
			News article	Editorial	Op-ed, comment - author Liberal leadership candidate from own community	Op-ed, comment - author Liberal leadership candidate from other community	Op-ed, comment - author from own community, but not Liberal leadership candidate	Op-ed, comment - author from other community, but not Liberal leadership candidate	Op-ed, comment - author from neither community		Op-ed, comment - multiple authors
What is the language of publication?	English	Count	45	8	2	1	30	7	5	2	100
		% within What is the language of publication?	45.0%	8.0%	2.0%	1.0%	30.0%	7.0%	5.0%	2.0%	100.0%
	French	Count	36	9	1	3	42	5	2	2	100
		% within What is the language of publication?	36.0%	9.0%	1.0%	3.0%	42.0%	5.0%	2.0%	2.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	81	17	3	4	72	12	7	4	200
		% within What is the language of publication?	40.5%	8.5%	1.5%	2.0%	36.0%	6.0%	3.5%	2.0%	100.0%

Table 5: Crosstabulation – Sovereignist Authors According to Language of Publication

			Is the article's author known as a proponent of Quebec sovereignty?		Total
			Yes	No	
What is the language of publication?	English	Count % within What is the language of publication?	0 .0%	100 100.0%	100 100.0%
	French	Count % within What is the language of publication?	13 13.0%	87 87.0%	100 100.0%
Total		Count % within What is the language of publication?	13 6.5%	187 93.5%	200 100.0%

16% of Anglophone and 29% of Francophone articles highlight that English Canadian public opinion is largely unfavourable to the recognition of Québec as a nation, whereas only a minority of articles presents it as mixed (1% and 5%, respectively). Similarly, 27% of Francophone and 15% of Anglophone articles note that the general population in Québec supports the recognition, whereas a minority presents public opinion as mixed (4% and 2%, respectively). A single English-language article (1%) present the Québécois as largely opposed<sup>7</sup>.

Table 6: Crosstabulations and Chi Square Tests – Mentions of Public Opinion in English Canada and Québec According to Language of Publication

Mention of public opinion on recognition in English Canada					
Language of publication	Yes – Largely Favourable	Yes – mixed	Yes – largely unfavourable	No	Total
English	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	16 (16%)	83 (83%)	100 (100%)
French	0 (0%)	5 (5%)	29 (29%)	66 (66%)	100 (100%)
Total	0 (0%)	6 (3%)	45 (22.5%)	149 (74.5%)	200 (200%)
$\chi^2 = 8.362, df = 3, P < 0.05$ 4 cells (50%) have an expected count of less than 5.					
Mention of public opinion on recognition in Québec					
English	15 (15%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	82 (82%)	100 (100%)
French	27 (27%)	4 (4%)	0 (0%)	79 (79%)	100 (100%)
Total	42 (21%)	6 (3%)	1 (0.5%)	151 (75.5%)	200 (100%)
$\chi^2 = 6.214, df = 3, P > 0.05$ 4 cells (50%) have an expected count of less than 5.					

<sup>7</sup> Chi square tests of independence cannot be used in these cases as expected frequencies are not sufficiently large (Agresti & Finlay 1997: 258).

## **DISCUSSION – GENERAL TRENDS**

Both English-language and French-language media quoted more sources from their own linguistic community (60% and 63%, respectively) than they did from the other community (40% and 37%, respectively). In this regard, both sets of newspapers acted in a similar fashion. These figures indicate that, while perfect parity between Anglophone and Francophone voices was not achieved, the media nonetheless presented voices from the other linguistic community. Québécois voices that otherwise would hardly be heard in English Canada could be found in newspaper coverage, and vice versa.

There were very few articles where the majority of sources came from the other linguistic community (17% for English-language and 21% for French-language). This suggests that informing readers of opinions in the other linguistic community was rarely seen by reporters as their primary focus, but it appears to have been a concern nonetheless.

Both the Anglophone and Francophone media published very few op-eds or comment pieces written by authors from the other linguistic community (only 8% of articles in each case). Whereas a quote from a source often only allows a single point to be made, an op-ed generally presents and defends a more nuanced argument. Thus, English Canadian readers were considerably more likely to gain a deep understanding of the views of Anglophone opinion-makers and a more superficial view of Francophone opinion-makers, and vice versa.

Previous studies (see Lacombe 2007; Halford et al 1983) have noted the significant underrepresentation of sovereigntist voices in English-language media. This trend was replicated here as not a single article was written by a sovereigntist author and merely 7.5% of Francophone sources held such views. In this regard, the English-language media is failing to present to its readers the full range of opinions in Québec where at least 40% of the population favours sovereignty (Pratte 2006a: 15). French-language media tended to present a slightly more balanced view in this regard.

The majority of articles did not mention measures of public opinion on the issue. As Entman and Herbst (2001) and Bourdieu (1979) have noted, this form of mass aggregated opinion is often problematic as polls tend to measure views before issues have been debated and pollsters often shape the very opinions they claim to measure.

Thus, in its coverage of the debate, the media is shown to have provided some valuable information to members of the “recognizing” community (English Canada) about views in the “recognized” community (Québec) and vice versa. In this regard, the media acted not only as a source of information, it also appeared to have been a key location where a multinational conversation on the issue took place. However, the media fell short of fully representing the range of public opinion from the other linguistic community. These empirical findings indicate that overall the Francophone and Anglophone media acted as an imperfect forum for multinational conversation.

## RESULTS – INDEXING

A closer analysis indicates that elite voices were overwhelmingly represented among the sources quoted. In fact, only 1% of sources quoted in English-language articles and 6% of sources quoted in French-language articles were ordinary citizens. Politicians and political actors were by far the most common sources (85% and 81%, respectively). Ignatieff was the most frequently cited (14% and 9%, respectively).

*Table 7: Crosstabulation – Sources Quoted According to Language of Publication*

Person quoted	English-language Publication	French-language Publication	Total
Michael Ignatieff, Liberal Leadership Candidate	31 (13.7%)	19 (9.0%)	50 (11.4%)
Hon. Stéphane Dion, Liberal Leadership Candidate	17 (7.5%)	15 (7.1%)	32 (7.3%)
Hon. Bob Rae, Liberal Leadership Candidate	15 (6.6%)	8 (3.8%)	23 (5.3%)
Gerard Kennedy, Liberal Leadership Candidate	7 (3.1%)	3 (1.4%)	10 (2.3%)
Other Liberal Leadership Candidate	7 (3.1%)	5 (2.4%)	12 (2.7%)
Liberal Politician affiliated to a leadership campaign, but not a candidate	15 (6.6%)	11 (5.2%)	26 (5.9%)
Liberal Politician not affiliated to a leadership campaign	9 (4.0%)	8 (3.8%)	17 (3.9%)
Politician, not from the Liberal Party of Canada	65 (28.8%)	92 (43.4%)	157 (35.8%)
Spokesperson, strategist or delegate affiliated to a leadership campaign	19 (8.4%)	4 (1.9%)	23 (5.3%)
Spokesperson, strategist or delegate not affiliated to a leadership campaign	6 (2.7%)	6 (2.8%)	12 (2.7%)
Media personality (journalist, commentator, editorialist)	14 (6.2%)	10 (4.7%)	24 (5.5%)
Expert outside the media sector (academic, constitutional lawyer, pollster)	15 (6.6%)	15 (7.1%)	30 (6.8%)
Non-expert citizen	3 (1.3%)	13 (6.1%)	16 (3.7%)
Other	3 (1.3%)	3 (1.4%)	6 (1.4%)
Total	226 (100.0%)	212 (100.0%)	438 (100.0%)

English-language articles that presented a normative assessment were 4 times more likely to view the recognition of Québec as a nation unfavourably (32%) than favourably (8%). On the other hand, 31% of French-language articles presented it as a positive development, whereas 14% viewed it negatively (14%). A chi square test of independence indicates that

overall coverage was significantly more likely to be unfavourable in Anglophone newspapers and favourable in Francophone newspapers ( $X^2 = 21.323$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ).

*Table 8: Crosstabulation - Overall Tone of Article by Language of Publication*

			What is the overall tone of the article to the recognition of Quebec as a nation?				Total
			Largely favourable	Mixed - both favourable and unfavourable	Largely unfavourable	Neutral - no position taken in article	
What is the language of publication?	English	Count	8	9	32	51	100
		% within What is the language of publication?	8.0%	9.0%	32.0%	51.0%	100.0%
	French	Count	31	11	14	44	100
		% within What is the language of publication?	31.0%	11.0%	14.0%	44.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	39	20	46	95	200
		% within What is the language of publication?	19.5%	10.0%	23.0%	47.5%	100.0%

*Table 9: Chi square test - Overall Tone of Article by Language of Publication*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.323 <sup>a</sup>	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	22.438	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.108	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	200		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.00.

One finds that the English-language press presented an increasing proportion of favourable articles as the debate evolved: none following the launch of Ignatieff’s platform, 9.1% following the Montreal debate and 9.4% following the Prime Minister’s motion. Similarly, one finds that the Francophone press presented slightly more unfavourable articles as the debate progressed: 10%, 11% and 17% respectively.

Table 10: Crosstabulation – Overall Tone of Article by Language According to Date Published

What is the date of publication?				What is the overall tone of the article to the recognition of Quebec as a nation?				Total
				Largely favourable	Mixed - both favourable and unfavourable	Largely unfavourable	Neutral - no position taken in article	
06.09.2008 - 21.10.2008	What is the language of publication?	English	Count % within What is the language of publication?	0 .0%	1 7.1%	5 35.7%	8 57.1%	14 100.0%
		French	Count % within What is the language of publication?	5 50.0%	0 .0%	1 10.0%	4 40.0%	10 100.0%
	Total	Count % within What is the language of publication?	5 20.8%	1 4.2%	6 25.0%	12 50.0%	24 100.0%	
22.10.2008 - 22.11.2008	What is the language of publication?	English	Count % within What is the language of publication?	3 9.1%	4 12.1%	12 36.4%	14 42.4%	33 100.0%
		French	Count % within What is the language of publication?	14 38.9%	5 13.9%	4 11.1%	13 36.1%	36 100.0%
	Total	Count % within What is the language of publication?	17 24.6%	9 13.0%	16 23.2%	27 39.1%	69 100.0%	
23.11.2008 - 01.12.1008	What is the language of publication?	English	Count % within What is the language of publication?	5 9.4%	4 7.5%	15 28.3%	29 54.7%	53 100.0%
		French	Count % within What is the language of publication?	12 22.2%	6 11.1%	9 16.7%	27 50.0%	54 100.0%
	Total	Count % within What is the language of publication?	17 15.9%	10 9.3%	24 22.4%	56 52.3%	107 100.0%	

Two-thirds of Francophone sources in English-language articles were favourable to the recognition of Québec as a nation. This result is considerably lower than the 86% of Francophone sources quoted in French-language articles who supported the recognition. The French-language press presented nearly as many Anglophone sources who supported the recognition (47%) as opposed it (53%). Interestingly, the English-language press presented far more Anglophone sources who were in favour of the recognition (60%) than who were against it (40%) – even if the overall tone of English-language press was largely disapproving (as discussed above). Chi square tests of independence indicated that these findings are likely to be reflected in overall press coverage (for English-language newspapers:  $X^2 = 11.135$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ; for French-language newspapers:  $X^2 = 20.371$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ).

*Table 11: Crosstabulation and Chi square tests – Opinion of Sources Quoted Relative to the Majority View According to Language of Publication*

Language of publication	Origin of sources	Match with majority view in community	Mismatch with majority view in community	% Match	% Mismatch	Total
English	Own Community (Anglophone)	34	52	39.5%	60.5%	86
	Other Community (Francophone)	47	24	66.2%	33.8%	71
	Total	81	76	51.6%	48.4%	157
<b><math>\chi^2 = 11.135, df = 1, P &lt; 0.001</math></b>						
French	Own Community (Francophone)	84	14	85.7%	14.3%	98
	Other community (Anglophone)	33	29	53.2%	46.8%	62
	Total	117	43	73.1%	26.9%	160
<b><math>\chi^2 = 20.371, df = 1, P &lt; 0.001</math></b>						
Total		198	119	62.5%	37.5%	317

In the early stages of the debate, the over-representation of Francophone sources unfavourable to the recognition in English-language newspapers (62%) was most marked compared to French-language press (22%). The gap disappeared in the second phase of the debate, but reappeared following the Prime Minister’s motion: 33% in English-language and 10% in French-language articles.

The French-language press consistently presented a larger proportion of Anglophone sources who were favourable to the recognition in the early phase (60%), but then this proportion was reversed in the second phase (33%). Following the parliamentary motion, they presented almost an equal number of Anglophone sources who were favourable as who were unfavourable (49% and 51%, respectively). The proportion of favourable Anglophone voices in English-language articles diminished as the debate evolved (75%, 68% and 52%, respectively)<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup>It is not possible to report significant chi square tests for these different tables as expected frequencies are too small (Agresti & Finlay 1997: 258).

Table 12: Crosstabulation and Chi square tests – Opinion of Sources Quoted Relative to the Majority View According to Language and Date of Publication

Date	Language of publication	Origin of sources	Match with majority view in community	Mismatch with majority view in community	% Match	% Mismatch	Total	
06.09.2008-21.20.2008	English	Own Community	4	12	25.0%	75.0%	16	
		Other Community	3	5	37.5%	62.5%	8	
		Total	7	17	29.2%	70.8%	24	
	<b><math>X^2 = 0.402, df = 1, P &gt; 0.05</math></b> 2 cells (50%) have an expected count of less than 5.							
	French	Own Community	7	2	77.8%	22.2%	9	
		Other community	4	6	40.0%	60.0%	10	
		Total	11	8	57.9%	42.1%	19	
	<b><math>X^2 = 2.774, df = 1, P &gt; 0.05</math></b> 2 cells (50%) have an expected count of less than 5.							
	Total		18	25	41.9%	58.1%	43	
	22.10.2008-22.11.2008	English	Own Community	7	15	31.8%	68.2%	22
Other Community			16	5	76.2%	23.8%	21	
Total			23	20	53.5%	46.5%	43	
<b><math>X^2 = 8.502, df = 1, P &lt; 0.01</math></b>								
French		Own Community	20	6	76.9%	23.1%	26	
		Other community	10	5	66.7%	33.3%	15	
		Total	30	11	73.2%	26.8%	41	
<b><math>X^2 = 0.510, df = 1, P &gt; 0.05</math></b> 1 cell (25%) has an expected count of less than 5.								
Total			53	31	63.1%	36.9%	84	
23.11.2008-01.12.2008		English	Own Community	23	25	47.9%	52.1%	48
	Other Community		28	14	66.7%	33.3%	42	
	Total		51	39	56.7%	43.3%	90	
	<b><math>X^2 = 3.213, df = 1, P &gt; 0.05</math></b>							
	French	Own Community	57	6	90.5%	9.5%	63	
		Other community	19	18	51.4%	48.6%	37	
		Total	76	24	76.0%	24.0%	100	
	<b><math>X^2 = 19.562, df = 1, P &lt; 0.001</math></b>							
	Total		127	63	66.8%	33.2%	190	
	Total		198	119	62.5%	37.5%	317	

**DISCUSSION – INDEXING**

Bennett’s (1990) theory of indexing argues that the various opinions presented by the media reflect not the full range of views, but only those held by elites, particularly political elites. Of the 438 persons quoted in the sample analyzed, only 16 (4%) can be classified as non-elite citizen voices. The debate was dominated by politicians and political actors (83% of sources), as well as other ‘experts’ (14% of sources). Non-elite opinion was typically only reported as the results of opinion polls, actual voices were almost exclusively elite.

The main insight from indexing theory as it relates to the present study suggests that English-language newspapers will present Francophone views that more closely resemble the range of debate in English Canada rather than in Québec, and vice versa. The near-absence of sovereignist voices from Anglophone coverage, discussed above, supports this view.

The challenge in evaluating the impact of indexing is to define official elite opinion in both communities. Among Anglophone politicians, virtually only Michael Ignatieff and his caucus supporters publicly claimed to support recognition until the Prime Minister's motion on November 22. In Québec, there was a large degree of support for the recognition among both federalist and sovereigntist politicians. However, the sole Québécois leadership candidate, Stéphane Dion, was largely opposed, as were certain Liberals. Thus, elite opinion in English Canada was largely opposed to recognition throughout the period analyzed, whereas Québécois political elites were largely favourable.

The results presented above suggest that indexing was discernable in coverage of the debate. In English-language media, Francophone sources were more than twice as likely to be unfavourable to the recognition (34%) as they were in French-language media (14%). In the early stage of the debate, unfavourable Francophone voices (62%) were considerably more prevalent than favourable ones (37%). Thus, a distorted view of Québécois views appears to have been presented, particularly at the outset of the debate.

Indexing theory would suggest a discernable shift in the view presented in the media following the Prime Minister's motion which was adopted almost unanimously by the House of Commons. However, this shift did not actually occur, as unfavourable Francophone sources continued to be overrepresented in the English-language media (33%), compared with the French-language media (10%). This suggests greater degrees of media independence to political elites and consistency in media opinions than assumed under Bennett's (1990) model.

Favourable Anglophone sources were far more present in English-language articles (60%) than could have been expected under indexing, particularly in the early stage of the debate (75%). However, a large number of these favourable views can be attributed to a single source: Michael Ignatieff accounts for 14% of all quotes in English-language articles. McChesney (2003: 303) has noted that the norm in contemporary journalism has often been reduced to presenting –at least- one official dissenting view on an issue to maintain the appearance of impartiality. Ignatieff appears to have been used to fulfil this function.

In French-language media, a majority of Anglophone sources were favourable (53%) to the recognition, even though English-Canadian elite opinion was largely opposed. These findings are consistent with indexing theory. Favourable Anglophone sources were over-represented

in French-language coverage, thus reflecting the views of Québécois elites who were largely supportive. As was the case with English-language coverage, the overrepresentation was most discernable in the early stage when 60% of Anglophone sources were presented as favourable.

Thus, indexing theory provides useful insight into understanding media coverage of the Québec as a nation debate. It appears that both the English-language and French-language media overrepresented views from the other linguistic community which were consistent with elite opinion in their own community. In other words, Anglophone media tended to seek out Québécois sources that reflected the English-Canadian take on the issue, and vice versa. Such distortions impede the ability of citizens to effectively take part in a multinational conversation, as unpopular opinions from the other national community were consistently underrepresented in favour of more palatable ones.

## **RESULTS – FRAMING**

At least one of the eight frames identified in the coding frame appears in 83% of English-language articles and 85% of French-language articles. The frame of divisive force is the only one that appears more often in Anglophone articles (37%) than Francophone articles (12%). Five frames appeared more often in French-language articles than English-language articles: anti-sovereignty (25% and 17%, respectively), pro-sovereignty (32% and 28%, respectively), continued recognition (13% and 4%, respectively), continued rejection (28% and 11%, respectively) and significance (22% and 13%, respectively). English-language and French-language media highlighted with the same frequency both the frame of unifying force (22% each) and triviality (38% and 39%, respectively). However, the chi-square test of independence reveals that significant discrepancies in the presence of frames within overall coverage can only be shown for the frames of divisive force ( $X^2 = 16.894$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ), continued recognition ( $X^2 = 16.894$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) and continued rejection ( $X^2 = 9.205$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). For the other 5 frames, it must be assumed that they are equally present in overall coverage regardless of language.

Table 13: Crosstabulation and Chi square tests – Presence of Different Frames According to Language of Publication

	Yes	No	Total		Yes	No	Total
<b>Frame: Anti-sovereignty</b>				<b>Frame: Continued recognition of Quebec</b>			
English	17 (17%)	83 (83%)	100 (100%)	English	4 (4%)	96 (96%)	100 (100%)
French	25 (25%)	75 (75%)	100 (100%)	French	13 (13%)	87 (87%)	100 (100%)
Total	42 (21%)	158 (79%)	200 (100%)	Total	17 (8.5%)	183 (91.5%)	200 (100%)
$\chi^2 = 1.929, df = 1, P > 0.05$ 0 cells (0%) have an expected count of less than 5.				$\chi^2 = 5.207, df = 1, P < 0.05$ 0 cells (0%) have an expected count of less than 5.			
<b>Frame: Pro-sovereignty</b>				<b>Frame: Continued rejection of Quebec</b>			
English	28 (28%)	72 (72%)	100 (100%)	English	11 (11%)	89 (89%)	100 (100%)
French	32 (32%)	68 (68%)	100 (100%)	French	28 (28%)	72 (72%)	100 (100%)
Total	60 (30%)	140 (70%)	200 (100%)	Total	39 (19.5%)	161 (80.5%)	200 (100%)
$\chi^2 = 0.381, df = 1, P > 0.05$ 0 cells (0%) have an expected count of less than 5.				$\chi^2 = 9.205, df = 1, P < 0.05$ 0 cells (0%) have an expected count of less than 5.			
<b>Frame: Unifying force</b>				<b>Frame: Significance</b>			
English	22 (22%)	78 (78%)	100 (100%)	English	13 (13%)	87 (87%)	100 (100%)
French	22 (22%)	78 (78%)	100 (100%)	French	22 (22%)	78 (78%)	100 (100%)
Total	44 (22%)	156 (78%)	200 (100%)	Total	35 (17.5%)	165 (82.5%)	200 (100%)
$\chi^2 = 0.000, df = 1, P = 1.000$ 0 cells (0%) have an expected count of less than 5.				$\chi^2 = 2.805, df = 1, P > 0.05$ 0 cells (0%) have an expected count of less than 5.			
<b>Frame: Divisive force</b>				<b>Frame: Triviality</b>			
English	37 (37%)	63 (63%)	100 (100%)	English	38 (38%)	62 (62%)	100 (100%)
French	12 (12%)	88 (88%)	100 (100%)	French	39 (39%)	61 (61%)	100 (100%)
Total	49 (24.5%)	151 (75.5%)	200 (100%)	Total	77 (38.5%)	123 (61.5%)	200 (100%)
$\chi^2 = 16.894, df = 1, P < 0.001$ 0 cells (0%) have an expected count of less than 5.				$\chi^2 = 0.024, df = 1, P > 0.05$ 0 cells (0%) have an expected count of less than 5.			

More English-language than French-language articles had their dominant frame as pro-sovereignty (18% and 13%, respectively), divisive force (26% and 6%, respectively) and triviality (19% and 11%, respectively). On the other hand, more Francophone than Anglophone articles had their dominant frame as anti-sovereignty (6% and 2%, respectively), unifying force (12% and 10%, respectively), continued rejection (13% and 1%, respectively) and significance (8% and 5%, respectively). The frame of continued recognition was dominant in a similar proportion of English-language and French-language articles (3.6% and 2.4%, respectively). A chi-square test of independence reveals that it is highly likely that the language of publication is associated with an article’s dominant frame ( $\chi^2 = 28.709, P < 0.001$ )

Table 14: Crosstabulation and Chi square test: Dominant Frame According to Language of Publication

	Anti-sovereignty	Pro-sovereignty	Unifying force	Divisive force	Cont'd recognition of Quebec	Cont'd rejection of Quebec	Significance	Triviality	More than 1	None dominant	Total
English	2 (2.4%)	15 (18.1%)	8 (9.6%)	22 (26.5%)	3 (3.6%)	1 (1.2%)	4 (4.8%)	16 (19.3%)	4 (4.8%)	8 (9.6%)	83 (100%)
French	5 (5.9%)	11 (12.9%)	10 (11.8%)	5 (5.9%)	2 (2.4%)	11 (12.9%)	7 (8.2%)	9 (10.6%)	9 (10.6%)	16 (18.8%)	85 (100%)
Total	7 (4.2%)	26 (15.5%)	18 (10.7%)	27 (16.1%)	5 (3.0%)	12 (7.1%)	11 (6.5%)	25 (14.9%)	13 (7.7%)	24 (14.3%)	168 (100%)
$\chi^2 = 28.709, df = 9, P = 0.001$ 4 cells (20%) have an expected count of less than 5.											

## **DISCUSSION - FRAMING**

One of three frames, all negative, was dominant in a majority (63.9%) across the English-language sample. Articles were more than twice as likely to insist that it would have a divisive (26%), rather than a unifying (10%), impact on Canadian society. On a political level, articles were considerably more likely to argue that it would bolster the Québec sovereignty movement (18%) rather than would weaken it (2%). With regards to the measure itself, articles were four times more likely to insist that the recognition was trivial (19%) rather than significant (5%). Thus, in the English-language press, the recognition was generally framed in overtly negative tones. While proponents – including a large number from Québec - claimed that it would have a discernable, positive effect on national unity, this was rarely the dominant message presented in coverage. Instead, the backdrop against which Québécois views were presented in the Anglophone press typically ranged from scepticism to hostility.

In the French-language press, a greater balance between dominant negative and positive frames can be found (29% and 26%, respectively). A notable difference with the English-language press is that twice as many articles insisted that the recognition would be a unifying force among citizens (12%) rather than a divisive one (6%). The prevalence of articles focusing the positive impact on the sovereigntist movement (13%) can at least partially be attributed to the greater number of authors and sources sympathetic to its objectives. It was against this more nuanced backdrop – a collection of articles, both favourable and unfavourable – that Québécois readers approached the issue. In this context, favourable English-Canadian voices were overrepresented.

French-language articles were significantly more likely to situate the issue within a broader historical context of Québec-Canada relations and these historical frames were three times more likely to be dominant in Francophone than Anglophone texts (15% and 5%, respectively). When discussing the current proposal, past attempts at recognizing Québec's distinctiveness, whether successful or failed, were of greater concern to the 'recognized' than the 'recognizing' community. When a historical view was dominant, it was likely to be positive in English-Canada (4%) and negative in Québec (13%). Here again, the greater prevalence of sovereigntist authors and sources can at least partially account for the greater insistence on past rejections.

Framing theory provides useful insight into understanding how the media acted as an imperfect forum for multinational conversation. Framing provided the lens through which voices and views, including those from the other national/linguistic community, were presented. This lens was not neutral. In English Canada, frames were overwhelmingly negative. In Québec, a greater between positive and negative frames was noted, as was the prevalence of historical frames. Sources who voiced opinions that were consistent with these dominant frames were more likely to be included and prominently featured in articles. Thus, Québécois voices who were often at odds with the majority view in the province were often sought out by English Canadian media as they fit the frame, and vice versa. As the media was one of the sole forums where English-Canadian readers could find out about Québécois views – and vice versa – the framing process proves to be a key obstacle to a multinational conversation. Discourse analysis complements these findings as it explores how frames were discursively constructed.

## 6. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION – DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The discourse analysis focuses in-depth analysis of six key media texts. It first looks at two editorials, then at four op-eds. For each set of texts, attention is first given to identifying the process of 'othering' before turning to a discursive investigation of 'framing'.

### OTHERING: AN ANALYSIS OF TWO EDITORIALS

The editorials, both from federalist newspapers, are premised on different understandings of the political community. The title of Pratte's editorial "Ignatieff and the Nation" clearly identifies where the boundary of the "we" community is drawn. The definite article "the" performs the function of deixis (Billig 1995: 108), as it indicates that Québec is *the* shared community to which both the writer and his readers belong. In fact, the terms *Québec* and *Québécois* are pervasive, appearing no less than 18 times in the 634-word article. The Québécois are the "we" that *La Presse's* head editorialist invokes in the second half of his text. However, Pratte does not present this community of Self as a homogenous group. He highlights a particular division within the Québec nation when he says "we hear them", where *we* refers to "federalists" and *them* refers to "sovereignist" and "the most nationalist". The editorialist seeks to ridicule the latter group by presenting their views as exaggerated ("insulted", "an affront", demands are presented as "existential"), imprecise (unable to answer basic questions such as "what exactly do they want?") or overly emotional ("The horror!"). Pratte invites readers to abandon these views by saying they are held by "too many Québécois".

Pratte refers to Canada once as a "federation", twice a "federal government" and twice as "federalism". These terms suggest to readers that Canada can be understood as an administrative arrangement and thus requires a less primal sense of belonging than that evoked by the Québec nation.

The *Globe and Mail* editorial presents Canada in different terms. On six occasions, it refers to the "unity" of Canada. Contrary to the administrative terms used by Pratte, "unity" evokes positive emotions and indicates a more organic understanding of Canada. The *Globe* editorial also uses the term "nation" and "national" six times to describe Canada and five times to describe its constituent parts. This creates ambiguity over the meaning of the term and reinforces the idea that recognition of Québec as a nation is a threat to the Canadian

nation's sovereign existence. In the *Globe* editorial, Canada appears as the natural political community although it is made up of an implied community of like-minded co-linguists and certain antagonistic components.

The *Globe* editorial repeatedly presents Québec's desire to have its distinctiveness recognized in negative terms: it is "wrenching and time-consuming", "disconcerting" and "nearly impossible", as well as "magic", "an illusion" and the opposite of "common sense". Furthermore, the *Globe* editorial equates Québec's distinctiveness with that of Aboriginal peoples, whereas Pratte is silent about the latter group. It appears that Québec is seen as unique when it is the "we" community as in *La Presse*, but not when the political community is more broadly defined.

In *La Presse*, Ignatieff is presented as "the favourite" in the leadership race and as a politician of "stature", whereas the *Globe* refers to him simply as a "Liberal leadership contender", the same generic term they employ for Rae and Dion. This simple rhetorical device appears to give greater or less weight to Ignatieff's proposal. In *La Presse*, Ignatieff is elevated vis-à-vis retrograde politicians from Québec –both sovereigntists and federalists – and English Canada. Pratte's praise of Ignatieff's position - "carefully thought out, coherent and balanced" - stands in sharp contrast to the *Globe's* depiction of "folly", "glee" and, in a Dickens-inspired fantastical reference, as "Ghost"-like. The *Globe* also seeks to draw a distinction between "Ignatieff's folly and his rival Rae's wisdom and experience. Rae's term as Premier of Ontario is highlighted positively despite its widely-acknowledged dismal record (Walkom 1994). Ignatieff's dissenting views are also contrasted against those of an academic who presents a further expert, rational rebuttal from the "we" community. Ignatieff is also shown to be out of step with Québécois politicians, both Dion and Premier Charest. Finally, the *Globe* seeks to further discredit Ignatieff by questioning his very belonging to the "we" community by presenting him as an outsider "over the last twenty years". In *La Presse*, Ignatieff is presented as an exemplar for English Canada and is contrasted with "out-of-date federalists" and "opponents of Bill 101"<sup>9</sup>.

Thus, a process of 'othering' was at work in these two editorials. The views and voices presented 'flagged' existing identities and reinforced particular conceptions of the political community. In *La Presse*, the "we" community is made up of largely-federalist Québécois

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<sup>9</sup> The Quebec law passed in 1977 which made French the sole official language in Québec. The law is part of the so-called Québec consensus, but has been challenged in the courts with limited success (Pratte 2006a: 59-63).

who exist within an administrative framework, Canada. Ignatieff, like his proposal, is presented in highly favourable terms. In the *Globe and Mail*, Canada is seen as the natural political community whose unity must be defended. Ignatieff is discredited as a member of the “we” community and is shown as out of step with respectable politicians. It is against this backdrop that the potential for the media acting as a forum for multinational conversation was established at the outset of the debate.

## **FRAMING – ANALYSIS OF TWO EDITORIALS**

Pratte defends the thesis that “Canadian federalism is not immutable” and the frame of “continued recognition” of Québec features most prominently. Pratte takes a historical view referring notably to Confederation in 1867 and also equates the recognition within a list of recent “important” measures, such as “asymmetrical federalism”. He states that this narrative is misunderstood by many Québécois and lays particular blame on the French-language media and nationalist/sovereignist politicians. The editorial itself can be viewed as an attempt to defend an underappreciated view of Québec-Canada relations as one of cooperation and respect for diversity (see also Pratte 2007; Saul 1997). The prominence given in the editorial to this history of collaboration and the dynamic evolution of federalism constructs a further “frame of unity” between citizens of Québec and English Canada. Finally, Pratte repeatedly emphasizes the “frame of significance” as he states that Ignatieff’s proposal “would represent a major change of direction”, “a change of political philosophy” and “is no small thing”.

The *Globe and Mail* instead argues that “[t]he current approach to national unity is working.” It frames the proposal in largely opposite terms to *La Presse*. It emphasizes the “frame of division” between Canadian citizens by evoking a language of violent conflict - “corrosive constitutional wars”- in the opening sentence and is re-emphasized later as “scuffling”. The Anglophone editorial also insists on a “frame of pro-sovereignty” as it states that Ignatieff’s proposal could raise a “troublesome” “right to secession” based on the principle of national self-determination. However, it nuances this alarmist view by stating the Québécois are not oppressed, although it claims that Aboriginals may be. Finally, the historical examples referenced in the *Globe* editorial fit more closely with the “frame of continued rejection” as they stress failed attempts at recognition of Québec’s distinctiveness. It places the responsibility for the failure of the Social Union Framework Agreement on Québec itself,

thereby insinuating that even goodwill gestures are often rejected. None of the positive examples from *La Presse* are evoked.

The above analysis shows how the frames identified by the researcher were discursively constructed: through the sources quoted, events referenced and arguments made. This process of selection and salience helped shape the views of the audiences at the outset of the multinational conversation. Rather than encouraging citizens “to reach an understanding that allows them to share an interpretation”, these editorials appear to have sought to shape readers’ views to their own (Blattberg 2003a: 28).

### **OTHERING – AN ANALYSIS OF FOUR OP-EDS**

These four articles again present different understanding of the “we” community. Only the English-language columnists describe Canada as a whole as a nation. Coyne rejects the idea that the country is comprised of nations, rather than comprises one. By describing English Canada as “the nation of ... not-Quebec”, he insinuates that, in offering recognition to Quebec, it would lose its own identity. Coyne appears to use the inclusive pronoun “we” to describe Canadians, however, many citizens are excluded from this “we” community: the Québécois and “a great number of Westerners”. Instead, “we” refers to Canadians who - like Coyne himself and presumably his readers - believe in the integrity of the Canadian nation. Spector shares the view that Canada cannot be comprised of several nations. However, he does not present Canada as a single homogeneous entity, but views it as made up of distinct sub-national components. Spector stresses throughout his article that his province, British Columbia, is deeply distinct from other parts of the country and has “its own demands”. When Spector uses the possessive “our”, he is referring to British Columbians, not to all English Canadians. His article seeks to counter the myth among his Québécois readers that English Canada is a unitary block.

In contrast, Gagnon asserts that the “rest of Canada” or “English Canada” has a single “mood” and expresses itself as a single entity. Gagnon repeatedly uses the exclusive pronoun “they” to describe the Liberals in an apparent effort to dissociate their debate, akin to “suicide”, from infecting the country as a whole. Those who may eventually agree to recognize Québec as a nation are presented as Others and excluded from the political community. The myth of a unitary English Canada is also clearly visible in Marissal’s op-ed, particularly in his metaphor of a bad marriage to describe Canada. The implication of this

metaphor is that Québec and English Canada are conceived as two spouses, each with a single set of interests and views. Thus, the Anglophone authors, regardless of the language of publication, view Canada as the true nation. They also seek to present the English-Canadian community as diverse, whereas the Francophone authors present it as a unitary block.

Different understandings of Québec are also visible in these articles. In Marissal's metaphor of the bad marriage, it is obvious to whom the author and his readers are identified: the wife –Québec- about to leaving her timid and unresponsive spouse – English Canada. He also highlights that Québec is perceived as "the spoiled child of the federation" by many English Canadians, a further reference that implies that, while part of the same family/country, the members are distinct units. When Marissal refers to the Québécois as "they", he seeks to differentiate himself and his readers from Chrétien and Dion, two "francophone Québécois [who] most strenuously opposed" recognition. Marissal, thus, traces the proper boundaries of the "we" community and ostracizes those who disagree with the majority view. Gagnon, a Québécoise, refers to the Québécois as "they", rather than using terms such as "we" or "us". Instead, she describes the Québécois as "victims" of the cynical, self-serving tactics of their political class. Gagnon further dissociates herself from the Québécois by acknowledging that they have a "visceral desire for official recognition" while she herself strongly opposes such measures. This clear dissociation from the Québécois majority calls into question Gagnon's effectiveness as one of the few regular columnists from Québec in English Canada to offer a perspective that informs, rather than misinforms, readers about the views of their fellow citizens. This appears as a missed opportunity to foster a multinational conversation.

Coyne describes the Québécois in terms of antagonism and irrationality. He presents Québec nationalism as a "tiger" that "feed[s] [off] bits of the country". The image of the tiger as an aggressive and unpredictable animal is common throughout literature (see notably Kipling 2002; Martel 2002). Thus, any attempts to recognize Québec as a nation will come at the expense of Canada imperilling its very survival. Coyne also presents the opinions and grievances of the Québécois as "vague, inchoate", thereby delegitimizing them. Like Marissal, he excludes Dion and Chrétien from the Québécois community. However, this is a positive exclusion as Coyne shares their views and spares them from the irrational, disloyal 'other' community. Spector argues that many British Columbians – his "we" community – see Québec's uniqueness as a positive force in Canada. However, he refuses to recognize Québec as a nation, as indicated by the use of quotation marks around the word "nation" in

the title of his op-ed which render the concept dubious. Thus, three of the four authors, including Gagnon, identify Québec as a community of “others”. Only Marissal speaks of the Québécois as the “we” community, but in doing so, ostracizes those who hold dissenting political opinions.

Marissal describes Ignatieff as “the first Liberal to extend a hand to the Québécois” and contrasts him with the long-standing hostility of Dion, Chrétien and English Canada. Gagnon, on the other hand, repeatedly condemns Ignatieff by calling into question his judgment, intelligence and intentions: “erratic”, “foolish”, “cynicism”, “naïveté”, “hubris”, “irresponsible”, “explosive”, “demagogic”. Coyne presents Ignatieff as naïve and opportunistic, as well as equates him with Québécois “separatists”. Coyne contrasts Ignatieff with his rival Dion who is presented as brave for defending Canada. Spector mentions Ignatieff only once as championing a position that is unpalatable in British Columbia and discredited throughout the op-ed.

Three of the four authors mention the media, indicating its potential importance as a forum for multinational conversation in the debate. However, they are bleak in their assessment of its abilities. Marissal accuses English Canadian columnists of “too willingly, and even disingenuously, confus[ing]” the view of the Québécois. Gagnon notes how “nationalist commentators” are dissatisfied with the measure, while Coyne notes that Québécois editorialists are now ominously issuing “warnings” to English Canada after initially supporting the recognition. Both Gagnon and Coyne use the same quote by English Québécois columnist Macpherson which states that “Québec [i.e. the political and media elite] has already rejected” the proposal and avoid mentioning supportive voices from Québec.

The above analysis shows that these four columnists, rather than facilitating a multinational conversation on the recognition of Québec as a nation, created obstacles to it. Through a subtle rhetoric of othering, they emphasized differences between Québec and English Canada and grew the gap of incomprehension between them. Spector and Gagnon appear to be serving a function akin to ‘foreign correspondents’ as they seek to present English Canadian opinions to the Québécois and vice versa. Spector sought to break the myth of a unitary English Canada and to explain the reluctance of British Columbians to the recognition. On the other hand, Gagnon distanced herself from Québécois opinion and marginalized supportive voices.

## **FRAMING – AN ANALYSIS OF FOUR OP-EDS**

Only Marissal is favourable to the recognition. He argues that “Québec’s status within Canada is far from settled [...] but once again, resistance to change [in English Canada] is very strong.” His op-ed places current hostility to the recognition as part of a “frame of continued rejection”. Marissal cites almost 25 years of rejection dating back to the patriation of the Constitution and highlighting the thwarting efforts of Chrétien and Dion. He places the proposal within a “frame of unity” between citizens in Québec and English Canada as the former have been waiting for a quarter of a century for such “a gesture of good faith”. He also notes a “frame of anti-sovereignty” as the proposal would finally give federalists a strong argument to counter the sovereignists’ “wonderful [appeal] to build a new country”. He ends his op-ed with a “frame of significance” by stating that it is “a golden opportunity” to break with “the Canadian status quo”.

Gagnon defends the deeply negative thesis that “the Liberals are unleashing a process that will inevitably lead to division and resentment throughout the land and end in abject failure.” She insists on a “frame of division” between the Québécois and English Canadians. Even if recognition is granted, she insists that the former will feel “duped and frustrated”, “disappointed” or “furious” and that the latter will resent the “pandering to Québec”. Like Marissal, she places the proposal within a “frame of continued rejection”, including “the Meech and Charlottetown sagas”. The word “sagas” emphasizes not only the failed results, but also the arduous process that led to them and Gagnon cautions against the present proposal on both counts. She also emphasizes a “frame of triviality” describing the recognition as merely “symbolic” and “token”.

Coyne vehemently argues against the very idea of recognizing Québec’s distinctiveness by stating that “the heart of the problem [is] the idea that [the Québécois] must be satisfied”. He situates the proposal within a “frame of pro-sovereignty” as it “conced[es] the legitimacy of the separatist “option””. By placing the word “option” between quotation marks, Coyne seeks to discredit not only the specific arguments of the sovereignists, but also any claim they may have to articulate them. He also insists on a “frame of division” between citizens, as the Québécois can be expected to “bull[y] into submission” and issue an “ultimatum” to English Canada. This threatening language further imperils a multinational conversation by creating bad will among Anglophone readers towards the supposedly-aggressive Québécois. He opens his article with a “frame of continued rejection” by employing the bloody metaphor

of “smash[ing] ourselves on the same rocks we have so often visited before”, which highlights both the futility and danger such attempts. Coyne also places the proposal within a “frame of significance”, albeit a negative one. He argues that it would change the very conception of the country and evokes the Fathers of Confederation to highlight this radical break.

Spector’s article seeks to give Québécois readers some understanding of the apprehensions of British Columbians about the proposal. His thesis is that they “would have little interest in seeing their government embark on constitutional talks knowing that they were destined to fail”. Despite evoking the Meech Lake Accord – and his own role in it – in positive terms, he nonetheless insists a “frame of continued rejection”. He highlights the 1982 constitutional negotiations as well as the Charlottetown Accord and argues that any future proposal could not succeed. He also places the proposal within a “frame of division” between the Québécois and English Canadians as it would imperil the former’s attachment to the country. He nuances this frame by stating that British Columbians “want Québec to preserve and promote its distinct personality”, albeit in the absence of any formal recognition.

The common insistence on a “frame of continued rejection” reflects the increasing hostility to the proposal within English Canada as the debate evolved. Only Marissal presented frames that put the proposal in a positive light to an audience of favourably-predisposed readers. The other three including Gagnon, a Québécoise writing for an Anglophone public, only evoked negative frames. It is within this context that a multinational conversation through the media took place. The frames present in these op-eds served to limit the range of views presented, including those from the other community, largely to those defended by the various authors.

## **REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The methodological approach of combining content analysis with discourse analysis proved useful as it allowed the researcher to investigate media coverage as a whole, as well as minute rhetorical devices. However, both approaches have in common that they analyze only media output (Gunter 2000: 55-92). As such, they are silent about the way that texts are produced by journalists and editors, including how their own biases and norms of objectivity influence the way they write about the other national community. Similarly, these methods

assume, rather than investigate, the effects that texts have on audiences, including how they shape understanding of fellow citizens from the other national community. Interviews and/or surveys would help address these issues and would be an interesting way to complement the research presented here.

Furthermore, it would be useful in future research to focus more extensively on differences between newspapers published in the same language, particularly in the CA. The above discussions confirmed that different trends existed in the coverage by the Anglophone and Francophone media. However, this approach runs the risk of minimizing differences between the more nationalist *Le Devoir* and the more federalist *La Presse*, as well as between the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*, which typically takes a harder line on Québec (Landry 1997; Lacombe 2007: 3).

## CONCLUSION

The analysis detailed above investigated the extent to which the Francophone and Anglophone media act as a forum for multinational conversation in their coverage of the 2006 debate on recognizing Quebec as a nation within Canada. Four major findings were uncovered in the present research:

- The Anglophone and Francophone media allowed for a limited degree of representation of voices from the other national community, while falling short of the balance required for an effective multinational conversation. Sources from one's own linguistic community were consistently found to be more prominent. Only rarely did newspapers publish entire articles by authors/commentators from the other community.
- 'Indexing' proved an impediment to multinational conversation. Views presented from the other national community were often 'indexed' to the opinions held by one's *own* political and media elites. Québécois who opposed the measure were overrepresented in the English-language media, as were supportive English Canadians in the French-language press. This distorted view made it difficult for members of either community to "*learn from each other*" (Blattberg 2003a: 28).
- 'Othering' proved a further impediment to multinational conversation. Subtle rhetorical devices were used to create differentiation between the 'we' community and the 'other' community, which reinforced the sense that these groups were "independent or separate to begin with", rather "part of an organic whole" where conversation can –and should- occur (ibid: 27-8).
- 'Framing' also proved an impediment to multinational conversation. Frames focusing on politics, society, history and significance – both positive and negative- shaped the tone of the debate. By selecting and giving salience to different aspects of the debate, the Francophone and Anglophone media hindered the ability of readers to reach the degree of mutual understanding needed to "express something meaningful together" through a multinational conversation (ibid: 28).

Like much academic research, this paper generates more questions than it can answer. It would be interesting to see what references, if any, are made in the Anglophone and Francophone media to the *nation québécoise* close to two years after the debate started. Has this acknowledgement of Québec's distinctiveness aided or impeded further

conversation, for example on the limiting of federal spending power or on Québec's role in international affairs? Canada's multinational and multicultural character offers countless avenues to further explore and nuance the notions presented in this research. The newly-formed Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Aboriginal Residential Schools will focus on victims' narratives of a dark and largely unknown chapter in Canadian history (IRSTRC: 2008). The media can play a pivotal role in fostering mutual understanding or impeding reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians on this issue<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, the 2007 Taylor-Bouchard commission on accommodations of cultural differences would be an interesting case study of conversation between majority and minority groups (CCPARDC: 2008).

As noted previously, Blattberg's (2003a) account of conversation assumes rather than articulates a set of roles for the media. However, in a modern society, particularly one as large as Canada, it seems impossible to remain silent on this topic. The media provide one of the few shared spaces for citizens who rarely, if ever, meet face to face; they thus allow the "imagined" community to assemble and converse (Anderson 1991). To paraphrase Gertrude Stein (1971: 289), without the media, there may be "no there there" for wide-ranging societal deliberations to occur, including those on national unity. Thus, understanding how a societal debate occurs in the media and, more specifically, understanding the media's shortcomings in this regard, offer important insights into the very functioning of the political community.

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<sup>10</sup> See Krog (2000) for an account of the media's role in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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