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Individual Values and Popular Support for a Sovereign Quebec¹

IN THIS ARTICLE, I EXAMINE the relationship between the values of individual Quebecers and support for sovereignty. I argue that generational differences in support for sovereignty are a consequence of a value shift in Quebec. Younger generations of Quebecers have values that are substantially different from the values of their elders and, thus far, this value shift has contributed to increasing support for a sovereign Quebec. Because those with different values may support sovereignty for different (and possibly contradictory) reasons, however, those seeking to build a majority in favor of sovereignty in a future referendum have a difficult task.

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Various demographic variables have been shown to have an impact on support for sovereignty. For example, support for sovereignty increases with increasing education,² and there is a small but consistent tendency that support for sovereignty is greater among males than among females.³ The demographic variable with the strongest impact on support for sovereignty, however, is age. There is widespread agreement that a generational effect in support for sovereignty exists because those born prior to 1940 are not likely to support sovereignty.⁴ Figure 1 demonstrates the relationship between age and support for sovereignty. Support for sovereignty averages 10 per cent higher among Quebecers born in the 1940s than among those born prior to 1940 and another 10 per cent higher again among those born after 1950 than among those born in the 1940s. This difference has been attributed to socialization, as those born before 1940 were socialized prior to the Quiet Revolution of the early 1960s and prior to the formation of the Parti Québécois in the late 1960s.⁵ Socialization effects, however, can come from many different sources. Parents may transmit their political beliefs to their children. Students may be taught nationalist dogmas in schools. The political context existing as a young person first begins to think about political issues may make a particular position seem especially appealing. Although none of these explanations can be dismissed, I contend that changes in political

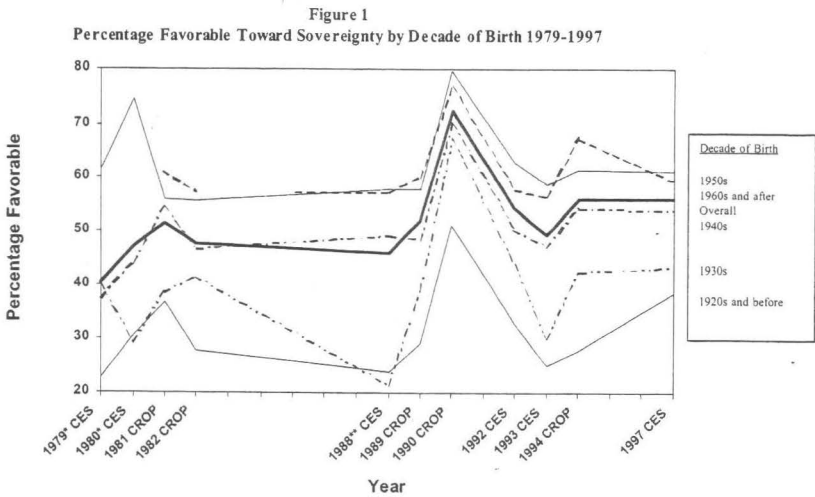
²Édouard Cloutier, Jean H. Guay, and Daniel Latouche, *Le Virage: l'évolution de l'opinion publique au Québec depuis 1960 ou comment le Québec est devenu souverainiste* (Montréal: Québec/Amérique, 1992) 125–27.

³André Blais, Pierre Martin, and Richard Nadeau, "Attentes économiques et linguistiques et appui à la souveraineté du Québec: une analyse prospective et comparative," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 28 (Dec. 1995): 637–57.

⁴Maurice Pinard, Robert Bernier, and Vincent Lemieux, *Un Combat inachevé* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1997); André Blais and Richard Nadeau, "To Be or Not to Be Sovereignist: Quebecers' Perennial Dilemma," *Canadian Public Policy* 28.1 (1992): 89–103; Richard Nadeau, "Le Virage souverainiste des Québécois, 1980–1990," *Recherches Sociographiques* 43.1 (1992): 9–28; André Blais and Richard Nadeau, "La Clientèle du OUI," *Comportement électoral au Québec*, ed. Jean Crête (Chicoutimi, PQ: Gaëtan Morin Éditeur, 1984); Cloutier, Guay, and Latouche, *Le Virage*.

⁵Pinard, Bernier, and Lemieux, *Un Combat inachevé*; Kenneth McRoberts, *Québec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988); André Blais and Richard Nadeau, "L'Appui au Parti Québécois: Évolution de la clientèle de 1970 à 1981," *Comportement électoral au Québec*.

beliefs express much more fundamental shifts in societal values.



* Those born after 1960 have been combined with the 1950-1959 age cohort.

Values are standards by which various alternatives are judged that can be applied to a variety of different situations. More than mere opinions, values can be generalized to numerous situations, and once internalized by an individual, values are unlikely to change. This article will demonstrate that different generations of Quebeckers have different values and that these values often lead them to have different opinions regarding the issue of sovereignty. The nature of these value differences is an empirical question that will be addressed in this study by examining the relationship between values and support for sovereignty. The values to be tested in this analysis fall into six categories: ethnocentrism, personality, religion/moral values, collective vs. individual values, postmaterialism, and political values. The hypothesized relationships between specific value orientations and support for sovereignty are based on previous research on support for sovereignty, political discourse, and my own observations in Québec.

Support for sovereignty among francophones has fluctuated over the past twenty years as Figure 1 demonstrates. If one assumes that values are relatively stable and the relationship between

values and support for sovereignty are stable, then overall support for sovereignty should either be stable or it should increase or decrease incrementally as generational replacement takes place. The sharp increase in support for sovereignty measured in 1990—coinciding with the failure of the Meech Lake Accord—does not fit this pattern, and clearly there are factors in addition to values that influence support for sovereignty.⁶ Nevertheless, the overall pattern is consistent with a generational effect as support for sovereignty.

Methodology

This article will make use of data from the Canadian Election Studies (CES) that were conducted between 1979 and 1997 to test whether consistent relationships can be identified between the values that individuals hold and whether such individuals support sovereignty. In some cases, data from surveys taken by the Québec public opinion firm CROP are used as well. In all cases, my analysis is confined to francophone Quebeckers and is limited to respondents who express an opinion on the question that is under consideration.⁷ The basic strategy is to locate questions that measure value orientations and cross tabulate the responses with support for sovereignty. The questions need not be directly about val-

⁶There are at least two additional components affecting whether a Quebecker supports sovereignty: injustice and agency. Injustice refers to the perception that existing social conditions are unfair to a particular group. Agency refers to one's belief that collective action can ultimately succeed in achieving a group's goals.

⁷Eliminating non-francophones is standard practice among those who study support for sovereignty in Québec because non-francophones are nearly unanimous in their opposition to sovereignty. This study defines francophones as those who speak French at home. My choice to eliminate respondents who do not give decisive answers follows from the nature of the research. Those who express "no opinion" on the question of sovereignty may do so because they are torn between the two sides, because they have not seriously considered the issue, or because they do not want to reveal their preferences to the interviewer. There is no way to distinguish one reason from another when analyzing the data. Taken together, these methodological decisions may create a false impression about support for sovereignty in Québec. Because non-francophones typically oppose sovereignty and because it seems that more undecided Quebeckers eventually opposed sovereignty when forced to choose in a referendum, support for sovereignty is greater among those Quebeckers included in the analysis than in the population of Québec as a whole.

ues because in some cases questions about specific issues or questions about behaviours can provide a reasonable indication of respondents' underlying values. Ideally, such questions are asked on multiple surveys and the relationship can be tested multiple times to establish whether it endures over time. Because values by definition should not fluctuate wildly over time and because a generational shift in values is predicted, my analysis also focuses on the distribution of value orientations by age cohorts.

Although this is a quantitative analysis, my goal is not simply to identify statistically significant relationships. Problems of measurement error must be taken seriously. Survey questions often do a poor job in distinguishing the respondent who cares deeply about a given issue from a respondent who gives a certain answer without having ever given any thought to the subject at hand, and surveys tend to assume that respondents share common definitions of political concepts when this is not necessarily the case. In Québec, even the dependent variable, support for sovereignty, presents problems. Although it may be difficult to imagine that many Quebeckers would not have an opinion regarding an issue that has been so central to the political debate, Quebeckers may not always agree on a common definition about what many of the key terms in the debate mean. Because the term *sovereignty* has been linked with the word *association* so often in public discourse, sovereignty is indelibly linked in the minds of many Quebeckers with some type of association with Canada. Independence, on the other hand, may imply the absence of an association with Canada. Sovereignty consistently does receive more support than does independence or separatism and less support than does "sovereignty-association" or a "mandate to negotiate sovereignty-association" in public opinion surveys.⁸ In this article, sovereignty or sovereignty-association will be the preferred choice of dependent variable when such a choice exists.⁹

⁸Pinard, Bernier, and Lemieux, *Un Combat inachevé* 38–39; Cloutier, Guay, and Latouche, *Le Virage* 45–46

⁹The 1988 CES uses the term *independence*, and one can only speculate to what degree results would have been different had the term *sovereignty* been used. A more serious problem existed in 1984, because the CES did not ask about the subject at all. In some cases, support for the Parti Québécois (PQ) is used as a substitute dependent variable, but it is clear that in 1984, with sovereignty temporarily off the agenda, support for the PQ and for sovereignty were not equivalent.

Ethnocentrism

Opponents of Québec's nationalism often emphasize its ethnocentrism and point to discourse by nationalist leaders that seems to divide Quebecers along ethnic lines as evidence of this ethnocentrism. Premier Parizeau's disdainful post-referendum remark that the referendum's defeat was the result of "money and the ethnic vote" is perhaps the most egregious example in recent memory of this phenomenon. For some Quebecers, sovereignty is seen as a way to promote the interests of *pure laine* Quebecers at the expense of other groups. On the other hand, defenders of nationalism contend that it would be wrong to characterize the nationalist movement in Québec as a primarily ethnocentric movement. For example, Balthazar¹⁰ contends that Québec is developing a "civic nationalism" that is not ethnically exclusive. If support for sovereignty is primarily a function of ethnicity, evidence should support the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1a: Québec francophones of French descent will be more likely to support sovereignty than will those of other ethnic backgrounds.*¹¹

Table 1: Percentage of Francophones Favourable toward Sovereignty by Ethnicity

	Percentage Favourable toward Sovereignty						
	1979*	1980**	1984 ^a *	1988	1992	1993	1997
French	42.6	53.3	39.9	47.7	55.4	53.2	56.9
Other	32.1	28.3	26.9	39.0	45.4	43.5	48.6

^a Support for *Parti Québécois*

* significant at p=0.05

** significant at p=0.01

As Table 1 indicates, Quebecers of French descent are more likely than are Québec francophones with different ethnic backgrounds to support sovereignty for Quebec in each of the surveys analyzed. The gap between these two groups, however, has narrowed over time. Considering that in 1997 nearly half of Québec's francophones

¹⁰ Louis Balthazar, "Within the Black Box: Reflections from a French Quebec Vantage Point," *The American Review of Canadian Studies* (Winter 1995): 530–32.

¹¹ Note that a francophone is someone who speaks the French language, whereas someone of French descent can trace his or her ancestors to France.

of non-French descent have a favorable view of sovereignty, it would be difficult to argue that nationalism in Québec has appeal only to the dominant ethnic group. Although sovereignty has greater appeal to Quebeckers of French descent than to others, this factor alone certainly does not explain much of the variance in support for sovereignty. Of course, simply being a member of a particular ethnic group is a characteristic, not a value, and having a particular ethnic background does not guarantee that any individual will have an ethnocentric world view. One cannot infer that a desire to create a sovereign state to promote the interests of one's ethnic group implies a desire to exclude those from other groups. Conversely, even Quebeckers who are not particularly attached to their ethnic heritage or francophones of non-French descent could be motivated by antagonism toward other groups to support a change in the political order. If the worst fears of opponents of sovereignty are true, and sovereignists truly do feel animosity toward other groups, the following hypothesis should be confirmed:

Hypothesis 1b: Québec francophones who have more negative views regarding Quebeckers of non-French descent will be more likely to support sovereignty than will those having more positive views of such groups. Such groups include: (i) Immigrants, (ii) Aboriginals, and (iii) English Canadians.

Many Quebeckers have an unfavorable view of immigrants. In each of the past three CES surveys (1988, 1993, and 1997) francophone Quebeckers were more than twice as likely to respond that Canada should admit fewer immigrants than to respond that Canada should admit more immigrants. How one answers this question, however, seems to have no bearing on whether one supports sovereignty. Similarly, in 1992 and 1997, large majorities of francophone Quebeckers agreed with the statement "Too many recent immigrants do not want to fit in," but there is no indication that such sentiments are related to support for sovereignty. (Sovereignists are in fact more likely than are non-sovereignists to express support for immigration, but this correlation disappears when one controls for education.) Any relationship between age and views of immigration is very weak. With regard to the question of how Quebeckers view aboriginals, there is likewise no evidence

to support the notion that anti-aboriginal sentiment was in any way related to support for sovereignty. As with immigrants, pro-aboriginal sentiments are highest among the most educated groups, but there is little evidence that younger generations are becoming more favorable toward aboriginals.

Supporters of sovereignty do tend to have a more negative view of English Canadians than do opponents of sovereignty. As Table 2 shows, sovereignists rated English Canadians significantly lower on the feeling thermometer scale than did non-sovereignists in 1988. In addition, Quebecers born after 1940 have more negative views of English Canadians than do those born prior to 1940. Negative views are more prevalent among sovereignists than among non-sovereignists and are more prevalent among younger Quebecers than among older Quebecers. The views of French Quebecers toward English Canadians, of course, cannot be analyzed outside of a historical context. Relations between these groups have historically been characterized by cultural isolation and economic exploitation. Although there is evidence that anglophone Canadians and francophone Quebecers are becoming increasingly similar in terms of lifestyles¹² and values,¹³ Pinard and Hamilton's observation¹⁴ that French and English Quebecers maintain separate societies with separate media, schools, churches, and even places of work remains largely true. In addition, the perception that group differences exist endures. Laczko¹⁵ reports that 58 per cent of francophone Quebecers and 40 per cent of anglophone Quebecers view the two groups as "very different" or as "fairly different." Despite the findings regarding feelings toward English Canadians, the weight of the evidence suggests that nationalism in Québec is not based on an animosity toward outsiders.

¹²Stéphane Dion, "Le Nationalisme dans la convergence culturelle: Le Québec contemporain et le paradoxe de Toqueville," *L'Engagement intellectuel: Mélanges en l'honneur de Léon Dion*, ed. Raymond Hudon and Rejean Pelletier (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1991) 299–301.

¹³Neil Nevitte, *The Decline of Deference: Canadian Value Change in Cross-National Perspective* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996) 295–97.

¹⁴Maurice Pinard and Richard Hamilton, "Les Québécois votent NON: le sens et la portée du vote," *Comportement électoral au Québec* 225.

¹⁵Leslie S. Laczko, *Pluralism and Inequality in Quebec* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) 56.

Table 2: Mean Feeling Thermometer Scores for Various Groups by Support for Sovereignty, 1988

	Percentage Favourable toward Sovereignty			
	Very Favourable	Somewhat Favourable	Somewhat Unfavourable	Very Unfavourable
French Canadians*	86.5	82.2	79.2	77.1
English Canadians*	56.5	58.5	65.6	66.1
Ethnic Minorities	67.0	60.7	63.3	62.1
Native Peoples	69.6	64.9	64.3	60.9

* significant at $p=0.01$

Personality

As an outsider observing Quebeckers, I am often surprised by the adulation that many Quebeckers seem to have for their political leaders. There is a certain deification of René Lévesque, and for some a statement like “X is part of the legacy of René Lévesque” is intended to indicate that the praiseworthiness of X is beyond dispute. Similarly, admiration for Lucien Bouchard often seems exaggerated. His triumph over a deadly flesh-eating virus, his oratorical skills, and his rescue of the Yes campaign in the 1995 Referendum give Bouchard an aura that is clearly a political asset. The contribution of the “Bouchard effect”—the personal popularity of Lucien Bouchard—to the near victory of the Yes side in 1995 has stirred considerable academic debate.¹⁶ Recognizing that some Quebeckers may decide whether to support sovereignty on the basis of their feelings toward the political leaders championing one side or the other does not, however, demonstrate that this effect favors one side or the other. Sovereignists do not have a monopoly on charismatic leaders. The spectacular (and short-lived) turnaround in public opinion in the Spring of 1998 regarding the Parti libéral du Québec (PLQ) following the news that Jean Charest would assume the leadership of the party can only be explained by his personal popularity. Clarke and Kornberg¹⁷ examine the role that personalities played in the 1980 and 1995 referendums and find that public feelings

¹⁶For contrasting analyses see Pinard, Bernier, and Lemieux, *Un Combat unachevé* 285–87; and Pierre Drouilly, *Indépendance et démocratie: Sondages, élections et référendums au Québec 1992–1997* (Montréal: L’Harmattan, 1997) 265.

¹⁷Harold D. Clarke and Allan Kornberg, “Choosing Canada? The 1995 Quebec Sovereignty Referendum,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 29 (Dec. 1996): 676–82.

about the principal advocates for each side—Chrétien, Parizeau, and Bouchard—are an important variable in explaining the votes of many Quebeckers. In their view, however, this effect did not greatly benefit one side or the other. Nevertheless, the following hypothesis deserves consideration:

Hypothesis 2: Québec francophones who base their decisions on political issues primarily on their evaluations of political leaders will be more likely to support sovereignty than will those who base political decisions more on other factors, such as on issues.

In 1979–80 and 1984, CES respondents were asked whether their decisions on how to vote in the Canadian federal election were based more on the party leaders, the parties themselves, or on local candidates. For those answering “party leaders,” a follow-up question asked if they reach their decisions based on the leaders’ “stands on issues” or on the leaders’ “personalities.” If this hypothesis is correct, one expects that the respondents who chose “personalities” would be more likely to support sovereignty than would others. One should note, however, that not very many people fall into this category (16 per cent in 1979–80 and 32 per cent in 1984) and that the size of this group may be underestimated because some respondents may be reluctant to admit making voting decisions on such a “superficial” basis. Nevertheless, assuming that this variable does capture some of the differences between those making their decisions based on personality and those who do not, the above hypothesis receives no support. On the contrary, in 1979 those making their decision on the basis of personality were less likely to support sovereignty than were those who made their decision based on other reasons, by a margin of 48 per cent to 24 per cent. Similarly, in a 1989 CROP survey regarding the Québec provincial election, 46 per cent of those who indicated that they would decide how to vote based on the personality of the leader supported sovereignty as compared with 54 per cent of those who indicated that some other factor was most important. Furthermore, if a generational shift is taking place, it is away from basing one’s political decisions on the personalities of political leaders, as it is the oldest Quebeckers who are most likely to base their votes on personalities.

Religion and Moral Issues

The decline of religion is a trend that is evident in many advanced industrial societies.¹⁸ When measured in terms of church attendance, the decline of religion in Québec has been exceptional. Pinard and Hamilton¹⁹ report that in 1962, 88 per cent claimed to have practised their religion once a week or more, whereas in 1980 only 37 per cent of Quebecers claimed similar levels of religious practice. In the same period, the percentage of those practising rarely or never increased from 5 per cent in 1962 to 48 per cent in 1980. Data from the 1981 and 1990 World Values Surveys reveals that this trend continued in the 1980s as Quebecers reporting weekly church attendance declined from 35 per cent in 1981 to 26 per cent in 1990.²⁰ The relationship between more secular orientations and support for sovereignty has been well documented.²¹ Cloutier, Guay, and Latouche²² write that in 1980, aside from language, religion is the best predictor of support for sovereignty because support for sovereignty declines as church attendance increases. They argue that the relationship continues to exist in 1990–91 but is less striking. The most in-depth analysis of the relationship between religion and nationalism was conducted by Gingras and Nevitte. They argue that the Quiet Revolution marked a shift from religious to secular values in Québec.²³ Gingras and Nevitte distinguish between personal and cultural dimensions of religion. Using a survey conducted in 1976, they measure cultural religiosity by asking respondents whether they view religion as “important or very important to French-Canadian culture.” They find that those who view religion as less culturally important are more likely to support independence for Québec than are those who place greater emphasis on the cultural importance of religion. A generational trend was also evident as younger respondents were less likely to re-

¹⁸ Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997) 99.

¹⁹ “Les Québécois votent NON” 381.

²⁰ Nevitte, *Decline of Deference* 210.

²¹ Pinard and Hamilton, “Les Québécois votent NON” 376; Blais and Nadeau, “L’Appui au Parti Québécois” 297.

²² *Le Virage* 141–43.

²³ François-Pierre Gingras and Neil Nevitte, “La Révolution en plan et le paradigme en cause,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 16 (Dec. 1983): 305.

spond that religion was important to the culture.²⁴ The above discussion suggests the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: Québec francophones who attend church infrequently will be more likely to support sovereignty than will those who attend church more regularly.

Evidence from the CES data demonstrates that the relationship between church attendance and support for sovereignty is clear and enduring. As Table 3 indicates, support for sovereignty (or support for the PQ in 1984) declines steadily as frequency of church attendance increases. Table 4 shows that younger Quebeckers attend church far less frequently than do their elders. More than half of those born prior to 1940 report weekly church attendance, but a sharp drop occurs among the cohort born in the 1940s—the generation of the Quiet Revolution—of whom only about a quarter attend church on a weekly basis, and a gradual erosion continues to the point where nearly three-quarters of Quebeckers born in the 1960s attend church rarely or never. Controlling for the respondent's age does substantially reduce, but does not entirely eliminate, correlations between church attendance and support for sovereignty; thus, the interpretation that this relationship is largely spurious cannot be entirely dismissed.

Table 3: Frequency of Church Attendance by Support for Sovereignty

Church Attendance	Percentage Favourable toward Sovereignty		
	1979**	1984 ^a *	1988*
Once a Week or More	29.2	24.2	33.1
1 to 3 Times Per Month	35.7	39.8	40.9
Less Than Once a Month	49.8	47.0	51.7

^a Support for *Parti Québécois*

* Significant at $p=0.01$

** Significant at $p=0.001$

Declining church attendance does not necessarily translate into declining religious beliefs. Harvey²⁵ notes that only seven per cent

²⁴ "La Révolution" 312–17.

²⁵ Julien Harvey, "Le Québec, devenu un désert spirituel?" *La Société Québécoise après 30 ans de changements*, ed. Fernand Dumont (Québec: Institut Québécois de Recherche sur la Culture, 1991) 155–57.

Table 4: Frequency of Church Attendance by Decade of Birth

Decade of Birth	Percentage Attending Church: Weekly, Monthly, and Rarely or Never								
	1979			1984			1988		
	W	M	R	W	M	R	W	M	R
1930s or Earlier	58.3	12.0	29.7	55.2	13.1	31.7	51.7	18.5	29.8
1940s	32.3	21.3	46.5	27.5	25.5	47.0	24.2	21.9	53.9
1950s	18.7	16.7	64.6	18.5	16.7	64.9	11.8	24.1	64.2
1960s or Later	*	*	*	22.8	6.3	70.9	13.6	12.9	73.6

W=Weekly M=Monthly R=Rarely or Never

* Those born after 1960 have been combined with the 1950–1959 age cohort.

All differences are significant at $p=0.001$

of Quebeckers in one survey admitted themselves “without faith”; that surveys show that between 60 per cent and 80 per cent of Quebeckers are concerned with spiritual matters; and that more than 75 per cent of Quebeckers report that they occasionally pray. Depending on how the question is asked, one can find a majority of Quebeckers in even the least religious age cohort that will respond that religion is important to them personally. Nevertheless, in terms of its relationship with support for sovereignty, there are no striking differences between religiosity measured by church attendance and religiosity measured by one’s view of the importance of religion. Sovereignists are less likely than are non-sovereignists to view religion as important, and members of younger birth cohorts are less likely to view religion as important than are older Quebeckers.

Although there seems to be universal agreement that the relationship between religious belief or practice and support for sovereignty exists, there are conflicting explanations for why this is the case. The most extreme argument is that nationalism has replaced religion.²⁶ Another explanation is that those who have moved away from the controlling authority of the church find it easier to question the utility of other long-standing institutions. Blais and Nadeau,²⁷ for example, suggest that religious practice is linked to a more general conservatism and a lack of willingness to question existing social institutions, such as traditional political parties and the Canadian regime. Others note that secularism brings with it a

²⁶ Jacques Bouchard, *Differences: The 36 keys of the Québécois According to their Six Vital Roots*, trans. Marc Plourde (Montreal: Éditions Héritage, 1980) 37.

²⁷ Blais and Nadeau, “L’Appui au Parti Québécois” 297.

different set of values. Langlois²⁸ contrasts traditional values, which emphasize conformity and the acceptance of authority, with the new values of individualism and immediate gratification. This suggests that the decline of religion has had an indirect influence on support for sovereignty because religious values are replaced by other values that are not reflected in older political institutions, and those who adhere to those new values tend to favour radical changes.

Decline in church attendance and religious beliefs have been mirrored by other changes in moral values that are not necessarily related to religion. Attitudes in Western societies are changing with regard to many moral issues, such as abortion and homosexuality. These trends are particularly evident in Quebec. Nevitte²⁹ reports on a scale of "moral permissiveness," constructed using the 1990 World Values Survey, that French Canadians are not only more permissive than are English Canadians but rank behind only the Dutch in a comparison of attitudes in industrialized countries. Although moral permissiveness is certainly not incompatible with religious beliefs, there are strong correlations between less permissive attitudes with regard to such moral issues and measures of religiosity. Because the leaders of the Catholic Church generally oppose abortion, homosexuality, and pornography, and practise institutional discrimination against women, it would not be surprising to find that less religious Quebecers have more permissive attitudes on such moral issues. Given that less religious Quebecers tend to support sovereignty, one expects that those Quebecers with permissive attitudes on these issues will also be more likely to support sovereignty.

Hypothesis 3b: Québec francophones who have more permissive opinions regarding matters such as homosexuality, abortion, and women's rights, will be more likely to support sovereignty than will those who adhere to more traditional moral values regarding these issues.

The evidence strongly supports this hypothesis. Those with more permissive attitudes toward homosexuality are more likely to sup-

²⁸ Simon Langlois, "L'Évolution récente des valeurs dans la société québécoise," *L'action nationale* 80 (Sept. 1990): 926–32.

²⁹ *Decline of Deference* 218.

port sovereignty. In 1993 and 1997, 56 per cent and 64 per cent of those respondents who agreed that homosexual couples should be allowed to legally marry supported sovereignty, whereas only 45 per cent (in both surveys) of those who opposed homosexual marriages supported sovereignty. A similar pattern exists with respect to views regarding abortion. Those who agree that the decision of whether to have an abortion belongs solely to the pregnant woman were also more likely to support sovereignty in 1988, 1993, and 1997 (49 per cent, 55 per cent, and 62 per cent respectively) than were those who oppose abortion under any circumstance or would impose conditions on when abortion may be permissible (40 per cent, 41 per cent, and 42 per cent). Likewise, when Quebeckers were asked whether they agreed that "society would be better off if women stayed home with the children," in 1993 and 1997, those who agreed were much less likely to support sovereignty than were those who disagreed (60 per cent to 40 per cent in 1993, and 69 per cent to 31 per cent in 1997). Younger Quebeckers consistently gave more permissive responses than did their elders regarding homosexuality, abortion, and the role of women. Strong correlations among permissive responses on homosexuality, abortion, and the role of women, as well as among these variables and the various measures of religiosity, provide strong evidence that it makes sense not only to view these issues together but also to view these issues in conjunction with religion. Overall, there is a clear trend for younger Quebeckers to have more permissive attitudes regarding moral issues, and these value orientations are strongly related to support for sovereignty.

Collective versus Individual Values

Although Québec has not avoided the trend toward individualism that has occurred throughout advanced industrial societies, there are reasons to believe that Quebeckers may tend to value the good of the community more so than do other Canadians. Québec's language legislation is often portrayed by its opponents as a violation of a basic individual right to express oneself in the language of one's choice. On the other hand, its defenders contend that certain restrictions on individuals are necessary to protect a larger good of the community—the survival of the French language. This suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Québec francophones who tend to value the welfare of the group more than the rights of individuals will be more likely to support sovereignty than will those who tend to value the individual more than the group.

Unfortunately, there is very little evidence in the CES surveys that is useful for testing this hypothesis. The evidence that does exist, however, suggests that sovereignists may be more rather than less individualistic than other Quebecers. A 1988 statement asked respondents whether "in society today, there is too little emphasis" on "respect for institutions" or on the "rights of individuals." A majority of respondents chose the "rights of individuals," and of this group, 46 per cent support sovereignty, whereas only 34 per cent of those choosing "respect for institutions" support sovereignty. This difference, however, disappears entirely when one controls for age. Furthermore, the fact that younger Quebecers were more likely than their elders to choose individuals over institutions suggests that the societal trend is toward more rather than less individualism. On the other hand, in another 1988 question, nearly three-quarters of Québec respondents agreed that "in society today, too much emphasis was placed" on "individual freedom" as compared to "the community"; however, there was no relationship between the responses to this statement and support for sovereignty. The problem here is that the dichotomy between individual and collective rights fails to identify where value divisions exist in Québec and elsewhere. Rather, one needs to consider under what circumstances one would privilege collective rights over individual rights and vice-versa. For example, a 1993 question that asks whether the respondent agrees that the government should "crack down on crime even if it means losing rights" receives significantly less support among sovereignists than among non-sovereignists. Although this finding provides evidence that most sovereignists tend to value individual rights more than they value "law and order," perhaps the results would be different if the statement posed individual rights against some other collective good, such as the preservation of the French language or the protection of the environment. Conversely, perhaps those willing to restrict individual rights in order to fight crime would be less willing to

restrict individual choices in matters such as the use of private property or the use of corporal punishment. In its simple form, the existing evidence does not support the hypothesis that sovereignists are more likely to favor collective rights over individual rights.

Postmaterialist Values

An impressive amount of data supports the argument that a value shift is occurring in advanced industrial democracies as younger cohorts adopt what are termed "postmaterialist" values. Surveys asking respondents to rank four societal goals in order of their importance (maintaining law and order, fighting rising prices, protecting freedom of speech, and giving citizens more say in government decisions) have revealed that while older cohorts are more likely to choose the materialist goals as most important (law and order, fighting rising prices), younger cohorts are more likely to choose postmaterialist goals as more important (freedom of speech, more say).³⁰ There are data that indicate that this phenomenon is taking place in Québec. Using data from the 1981 and 1990 World Values Surveys, Nevitte³¹ finds that more French Canadians³² were postmaterialists in 1990 (29 per cent) than in 1981 (13 per cent), and fewer French Canadians were materialists in 1990 (21 per cent) than in 1981 (35 per cent). He notes that across Canada, postmaterialism is most prevalent among the youngest-age cohorts.

Inglehart³³ suggests a link between nationalist movements and postmaterialist values because the rise of postmaterialism creates space for ethnic and cultural issues to become prominent where class conflicts have receded. Studlar and McAllister³⁴ consider the

³⁰ Respondents are asked to choose the goal they find most important and the goal they find second most important. Those choosing the two "materialist options" are categorized as materialists, and those choosing the two "postmaterialist" options are categorized as postmaterialists. Those choosing one materialist and one postmaterialist option are categorized as "mixed." This is the basic model. More complex batteries of questions have been devised as well.

³¹ *Decline of Deference* 31–32.

³² Note that Nevitte's figures include francophones throughout Canada and are not limited to Québeckers; nevertheless over 80 per cent of Canada's francophones reside in Québec.

³³ *Modernization* 237.

³⁴ Donley T. Studlar and Ian McAllister, "Nationalism in Scotland and Wales: A Post-Industrial Phenomenon?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11 (Jan. 1988): 48–61.

issue of the link between postmaterialism and nationalism in Scotland and Wales and find that supporters of "territorial autonomy" for Scotland and Wales in 1983 were slightly more likely to be postmaterialists than was the average voter. Although postmaterialism has been suggested as a possible factor in support for sovereignty in Québec,³⁵ there has not been a detailed study of the link between Québec nationalism and postmaterialist values. In terms of partisan orientation, however, Pelletier and Guérin³⁶ find that PQ voters are much more likely to be postmaterialists than are PLQ voters (35 per cent to 13 per cent). One would expect sovereignists (who also tend to be PQ voters) to be more postmaterialist than non-sovereignists because the case for an independent Québec relies on postmaterialist arguments about improving quality of life and access to political participation, whereas materialist concerns, such as economic growth and security, make the best arguments for Québec remaining in Canada. In addition, young and more highly educated Quebecers are disproportionate supporters of sovereignty, and these are the same groups that tend to be the most postmaterialist. This suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Québec francophones who have "postmaterialist" values will be more likely to support sovereignty than will those who have "materialist" or "mixed" values.

The results from the last three Canadian Election Studies using the basic battery of four statements provide only modest support for this hypothesis. As Table 5 indicates, in each case, postmaterialists are more likely to support sovereignty than are those respondents characterized as mixed, who in turn are more likely to support sovereignty than are materialist respondents; however, the difference achieved statistical significance only in the 1997 survey.³⁷ The trend toward postmaterialism among Quebecers

³⁵Pinard, Bernier, and Lemieux, *Un Combat inachevé* 63

³⁶Réjean Pelletier and Daniel Guérin, "Postmatérialisme et clivages partisans au Québec: les partis sont-ils différents?" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 29 (March 1996): 86.

³⁷I should note here that in each case, sample sizes are low—in 1988 and 1993

seems to have slowed down in recent years as the percentage of postmaterialism in 1988 (24.5 per cent) and 1997 (25.0 per cent) is nearly identical. In addition, evidence from these surveys (not presented here) suggests that younger cohorts of Quebeckers are not significantly more postmaterialist than are older cohorts. Although there appears to be a relationship between postmaterialist values and support for sovereignty, this relationship is relatively weak and cannot adequately explain the strong tendency of Quebeckers born in the 1940s and after to be more sovereigntist than their elders.

Table 5: Support for Sovereignty by Postmaterialism/Materialism

	Percentage Favourable toward Sovereignty		
	1988	1993	1997 ^a
Postmaterialist	59.6	63.5	65.8
Mixed	51.6	56.3	52.5
Materialist	43.2	52.9	38.0

^a Note that in 1997 an experiment was conducted with the wording of this battery of questions. Half of the respondents were given the choice of "Fighting Unemployment" rather than "Fighting Rising Prices." This change altered responses considerably, increasing the percentage of materialist responses. The results presented here include only those respondents who answered the original battery of questions.

* significant at $p=0.05$

Political Values

The principal institutional advocate for sovereignty, the Parti Québécois (PQ), has a history of supporting policies that are more left-of-centre than its political opponents and generally maintains closer ties with unions and weaker ties with business than its main rival, the Parti libéral du Québec (PLQ). Its support for free trade agreements with the United States and Mexico, confrontations with public-sector unions in the early 1980s, and the deficit-reduction focus of the present PQ government have weakened the PQ's claim to be a true party of the left. Nevertheless, within the political context of Québec, the PQ can still be regarded as more sympa-

these questions were asked on a mailback survey, and in 1997 an experiment in question wording halved the sample size—and if these small samples do accurately reflect the opinions held by the population at large, the differences among postmaterialists, materialists, and mixed respondents are large enough to be worthy of further analysis.

thetic to leftist goals than is the PLQ. Therefore, one expects to see a relationship between support for sovereignty and the political values associated with the left:

Hypothesis 6a: Québec francophones who identify more with the political left will be more likely to support sovereignty than will those who identify with the political right.

The evidence is convincing that those Quebeckers who place themselves on the political left are more likely to be sovereignists than are those who consider themselves to be centrists, who in turn are more likely to be sovereignists than are those who place themselves on the political right (Table 6). In addition, left-right self-identification does vary by age—those born prior to 1940 are more likely to identify themselves as on the right and less likely to identify themselves as on the left than are those born after 1940. One must note, however, that a plurality of respondents always tend to situate themselves in the center, and self-identification on the left or on the right may be an indication that the respondent believes that he or she is to some degree out of sync with the dominant position in society. Because dominant positions in society change, one could find oneself on the left in 1980 and on the right in 1995 without ever changing one's personal preferences on the issues that constitute the left/right axis. The determination of just what issues divide left from right is itself a subjective decision. As the earlier discussion on moral issues demonstrates, when it comes to issues such as homosexuality and abortion, Quebeckers who accept the morally permissive positions associated with the political left are more likely to support sovereignty than are those who accept the positions associated with the right. With regard to

Table 6: Left-Right Self-Placement by Support for Sovereignty

	1979**	1980**	1984 ^b **	1988	1992**	1993**	1995 ^c *	1997**
Left	67.5	81.6	69.6	77.3	78.9	72.7	74.0	73.6
Center	39.4	43.8	30.9	48.7	50.8	52.6	45.7	50.7
Right	29.5	33.8	7.4	35.5	31.9	28.1	52.6	44.8

^a Voted "Yes" in 1980 Referendum

* Significant at $p=0.01$

^b Support for Parti Québécois

** Significant at $p=0.001$

^c Voted "Yes" in 1995 Referendum as reported in 1997

the economic positions associated with left/right divisions, on the other hand, the trend is not so clear.

The case for creating a new sovereign state is premised on the idea that nation-states are important instruments for advancing the interests of national collectivities. In Québec there is a strong belief that the Québec government is the best tool for advancing the interests of francophones in Québec and for countering the economic power of anglophones throughout North America. Although they disagree on the means for achieving the end, sovereignists and federalists in Québec have often agreed on the need to increase the power of the Québec government. Jean Lesage, the premier of Québec during the Quiet Revolution, stated flatly that the Québec state is "the necessary instrument for the cultural, economic, and social progress" of the French-Canadian community.³⁸ This is a heavy responsibility indeed, and it seems reasonable to hypothesize that sovereignist Quebeckers will be more likely than will non-sovereignists to believe that only a powerful state can hope to meet this responsibility. This suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6b: Québec francophones who have more expansive views of the role of government will be more likely to support sovereignty than will those who have more restrictive views of the role of government.

There is little evidence from the CES data to support this hypothesis. In 1980, respondents were asked to assess the impact of government on life satisfaction. Sovereignists were not more likely than were non-sovereignists to respond that government has a large impact. In 1984, respondents were asked if government should ensure housing, and in 1992, respondents were asked if government should ensure that basic needs are met. In neither case is one's position on the issue related to whether one supports sovereignty. On the other hand, responses to a 1997 question reveal that 60 per cent of those who respond that government is responsible for ensuring a decent standard of living support sover-

³⁸ Cited in Louis Balthazar, *Bilan du nationalisme au Québec* (Montréal: L'Hexagone, 1986) 126.

eighty, whereas only 39 per cent of those who respond that people should get ahead on their own support sovereignty.³⁹ Overall, however, this hypothesis receives little support. Perhaps it is not opinions regarding the size and scope of government that divide left from right and sovereignist from federalist; rather, perhaps it is the role of government in redistributing societal wealth and providing aid to the less fortunate that matters:

Hypothesis 6c: Québec francophones who have more egalitarian views on redistribution of wealth will be more likely to support sovereignty than will those who have less egalitarian views.

There is evidence that those who favour programs to redistribute wealth are disproportionately pro-sovereignist. For example, those opposed to cutting welfare are slightly more likely to favor sovereignty than are those who support such cuts. Likewise, analysis of a 1997 question shows that of those favouring tax cuts, only 47 per cent support sovereignty, whereas 59 per cent of those who answered that taxes should be increased or kept the same support sovereignty. On the other hand, there are no significant differences on support for sovereignty among those who responded to a 1997 question asking respondents to assess whether protecting social programs was "very important," "somewhat important," or "not very important." Younger Quebeckers are actually more likely than are older Quebeckers to agree that social programs that redistribute wealth, such as welfare, should be cut and are more likely to give lower assessments of the importance of social programs. Although it may be true that there is a long-term trend for Québec society as a whole to move toward the left on issues of personal morality, a contrary trend may be taking place on issues of redistribution of wealth. In 1993 and 1997, 55 per cent and 59 per cent, respectively, of those who agreed that government should

³⁹ Each of these questions shares the problem that there are at least two governments that Quebeckers may be considering when answering these questions. A sovereignist, for example, may favor a very expansive role for the government of Québec and a minimal or nonexistent role for the Canadian federal government in Québec's affairs.

do more to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor also supported sovereignty, whereas 47 per cent and 44 per cent of those who disagreed supported sovereignty. These differences are not statistically significant, and very few respondents disagree that this is a problem that justifies government intervention. In 1988, CES respondents were asked two questions about the relative fairness of the distribution of wealth with regard to the working class. Of those who responded that working people "do not get their fair share," 54 per cent also support sovereignty, whereas only 35 per cent of those who responded that working people "get what they deserve" supported sovereignty. Similarly, of those responding that the wages of unskilled workers are "much too low," 49 per cent favored sovereignty as compared with only 30 per cent of those who answered that such wages are "about right." In both cases, however, the results are based on a small set of usable responses and achieve only modest levels of statistical significance. In both cases, younger Quebeckers were more likely to give an egalitarian response than were older Quebeckers.

Conclusion

The hypotheses tested in this article are summarized in Table 7 (see next page). Clearly, supporters of sovereignty can be differentiated from opponents of sovereignty in the categories of religious/moral values and political values. Quebeckers who have less strong religious beliefs and more permissive attitudes regarding moral issues and locate themselves on the political left are considerably more likely than are other Quebeckers to support sovereignty. Weaker relationships are evident in the categories of ethnocentrism and postmaterialist values, as supporters of sovereignty do have a tendency to have less favourable views of English Canadians than do opponents of sovereignty, and there is a weak tendency for those who have postmaterialist values to support sovereignty. Evidence regarding collective versus individual values remains inconclusive. The hypothesis that Quebeckers who make political decisions based on the personalities of political leaders rather than on issues are more likely to support sovereignty receives no support.

There is strong evidence that there is a value shift taking place in Québec when it comes to religious/moral issues as younger

Conceptualizing identity in terms of values does seem to be useful for understanding why different arguments for and against sovereignty appeal to some Quebeckers and not to others. There is strong evidence that a value-shift has taken place in Québec because younger-age cohorts of Quebeckers tend to have values that are very different from the values held by older Quebeckers. What does generational change portend for the future of the sovereignty movement in Québec? Clearly, time is removing one major obstacle to a referendum victory: those Quebeckers born prior to 1940 who have been generally hostile to the idea of separating from Canada. The reduction of such Quebeckers as a proportion of the electorate can explain much of the difference between the support for sovereignist options in the 1995 referendum versus the 1980 referendum.⁴⁰ It is as if the Parti Québécois built its house far from the ocean and has watched the value of its property increase steadily as the tides have eroded the beach and have washed away those, such as the Union Nationale, who built their houses too close to the sea. Without question there are enough Quebeckers who are sufficiently receptive to sovereignty that Lucien Bouchard's famous "winning conditions" could materialize. Sovereignty is, however, not inevitable. The tide of generational change keeps coming in, and although the youngest generation of voters in Québec is open to the idea of sovereignty, their values are not necessarily in sync with those traditionally associated with the PQ. The sovereignist movement needs to find arguments that will reach younger Quebeckers whose faith in nation-states and the power of politics to transform living conditions may be waning, or it risks becoming a victim of the tides itself. Thus far, it is not clear whether those younger Quebeckers who are attracted to Mario Dumont's Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ) are making a permanent break with Québec's older parties. If they have turned to the ADQ because their interests have been ignored by the PQ and the PLQ when it comes to specific issues, such as labour laws that discriminate against younger workers, or if they are frustrated by the lack of younger faces among the leaders of these parties, modest policy changes or an infusion of new faces may be all that is needed to win them back. On the other hand, if they truly share the ADQ's

⁴⁰ Drouilly, *Indépendance* 280.

hostility toward big government, they may be less receptive to sovereigntist arguments.

The traditional case for sovereignty is that the Québec state needs to be able to act on behalf of Quebecers without the constraints of the Canadian federal system undermining its ability to achieve its goals. This presupposes that the Québec state has goals and that some large majority of the people of Québec support these goals. A strong case can be made that the accomplishments of the Québec state have transformed Québec's society. From multi-billion-dollar hydroelectric projects that have made cheap electricity available to most Quebecers, to sweeping language legislation that has safeguarded the future of French in Québec, to more modest programs that have nevertheless had real impacts on the lives of Quebecers (such as five-dollar-a-day childcare), the Québec state has been a highly relevant institution. Today (1999), it seems that the only goal of the current PQ government is sovereignty itself, and there is very little being said about how an independent Québec state would make use of its sovereign powers to improve the lives of Quebecers. Ongoing efforts to recast the rationale for sovereignty in an age of globalization have thus far failed to provide any new answers to the question of why sovereignty is necessary. Arguments about how the government of Québec needs sovereignty so that Québec can be represented at international negotiations are weak and reveal the depth of the dilemma that sovereigntists face. Political leaders can ask people to take great risks and to make great sacrifices for the prospects of a better future or to preserve their language and culture, but very few are willing to take risks so that a cabinet minister has the right to speak (and likely be ignored) at an international conference. Nevertheless, one must not forget that, among francophone Quebecers, a majority supported sovereignty in 1995, a majority probably support sovereignty today, and fewer and fewer are simply so hostile to sovereignty that they cannot be converted to the cause. Furthermore, the Canadian government has done nothing to make remaining in Canada any more appealing to Quebecers. The future of Québec remains undecided.