Normative Groups

Religion and Language as Structural Determinants of the Choice between Marriage and Common-Law Union in Quebec and Ontario, 1937-2001

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ABSTRACT

The author argues that the important changes in the behaviour related to family and sexual life that have been observed in Quebec during the second half of the 20th century are consequences of an important transformation of the foundation of the normative system shared by the members of its main socio-religious group, French-speaking Catholics. Using biographical data from the 2001 Survey on Family History, he compares the evolution, from 1937 to 2001, of the behaviour of Quebec French-speaking Catholics and Ontario English-speaking Protestants in the rate of union formation and the choice between marriage and common-law union as the form of first union. The general result is that the evolution of the differences between the two groups is compatible with the hypothesis.

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The strength of the rise of cohabitation in Quebec and the related strong decline in marriage have attracted the interest of some demographers who have documented it, but, until now, none of them really came up with an explanation of the phenomenon. This transformation of the behaviour of Quebecers has been related to the second demographic transition (Van de Kaa, 1987), but there is no real explanation of why Quebec "lagged" behind the rest of Canada on this path until roughly the end of the 1960s, and then became a "forerunner" (Le Bourdais and Marcil-Gratton, 1996).

In their study of the early life transitions of Canadian women, Ravanera, Rajulton and Burch (1998) interpreted Quebec women's atypical behaviour as "a distinctive mixture of Gallic sophistication and modernity with lingering traces of a very conservative brand of Catholicism", which alludes to some form of normative distinctiveness, but hardly qualifies as a real explanation. Wu (2000), in his study of cohabitation in Canada, leaves largely unanalysed the difference between Quebec and the rest of Canada and, although he describes changes over time in the incidence of cohabitation and in the attitudes towards it, he assumes that the micro-level processes leading to the choice of cohabitation, or attitudes towards it, are stable over time. Lapierre-Adamcyk, Le Bourdais and Marcil-Gratton (1999) analyze current attitudes towards marriage and cohabitation among young Ontarian and Quebecois, but do not examine the evolution of such attitudes over time. Bélanger and Turcotte (1999) do examine the change over time in the effects of education and work on the choice of cohabitation or marriage as the form of the first union among Quebec women. They show that, contrary to what is assumed by the economic approach to human behaviour, these effects change over time. However, as their analysis is limited to Quebec, it is not possible to evaluate how the pace of these changes compares with that of Ontario or those of other Canadian provinces. Had they made such comparisons, they may not have been

able to explain any observed differences using the economic explanatory framework and independent variables they chose.

From a completely different perspective, relying heavily on Parsons and Bales' (1955) work on the family, Dagenais (2000) has examined changes in the contemporary family. Although he presents his analysis as a general one, and not specific to Quebec, Quebec is the only actual society he refers to. Once again, this prevents any comparison with the rest of Canada or any other society. Beaujot (2000) alludes to the role of religion in Quebec's two demographic transitions, but leaves the question largely unanalyzed. More recently, McQuillan (2004) explores the relation between religion and changes in Quebecers demographic behaviour, but its argumentation is based on a sample of rather conventional scholarship on the "Quiet Revolution".

Our view, developed in a related paper (Laplante, *forthcoming*), is that Quebec's shift and recent rapid progress along the path of the second demographic transition has to be envisioned in the broader framework of an important transformation of the foundation of the normative system shared by the members of its main socio-religious group, French-speaking Catholics. We refer to recent research on the "Quiet revolution" that examines the philosophical debates within the Catholic Church that lead the Quebec Catholic Church to voluntarily handover all of its health and education organizations to the provincial government and we stress the fact that French speaking Quebecers, unlike most other normative groups in North America, did not simply tweaked their inherited Christian moral to make it fit modern circumstances, but simply threw away the Christian tradition as a foundation of their moral reasoning.

This paper is part of a research effort in which we look for empirical evidence to sustain our claim. According to our hypothesis, from the end of the 1960's, Quebec French-speaking Catholics should have progressively shifted from a normative system based on catholic morality, similar or more conservative than that of our comparison group, Ontario English-speaking Protestants, to a normative system that is not founded on Christian morality. In a related paper based on Gallup polls from the 1950's to 2000 (Laplante, Miller and Malherbe, *under review*), we show that the changes and the pace of the changes in the *opinions* of Quebec French-speaking Catholics and English-speaking

Protestants fit with our view. However, if our view really holds, it should be possible as well to see traces of that shift in the *behaviour* of Quebec French-speaking Catholics on matters related to sexual and family behaviour. More specifically, the behaviour of Quebec French-speaking Catholics in these matters should have been similar to or more conservative than the behaviour of our comparison group, Ontario English-speaking Protestants, before the changing process began, whereas they should be more liberal by the end of it, and, to be more specific, should have become identical to the behaviour of the people who declare they have no religion at all.

In this article, we begin by providing a description on the current state of demographic behaviours in Quebec with a comparison with Ontario. We then show that the differences in demographic behaviour between the two provinces can hardly be accounted for by several common explanations. We present, in a condensed from, the rational for our hypothesis. We then proceed with the formulation of specific empirical hypotheses, the description of data sources and methods, results and discussion.

CONTEMPORARY BEHAVIOURS IN QUEBEC AND ONTARIO

From a general point of view, it is easy to argue that when it comes to demographic behaviour, Quebec is different from the rest of Canada which, in contrast to Quebec, looks pretty homogeneous. However, the "rest of Canada" is not so homogeneous that one should not take into account many special local peculiarities in order to really study the whole range of differences that may be found there. When focusing on the case of Quebec, Ontario, because of the size of its population, its close location, the structure of its economy and its comparable history, offers a far better comparison than the whole of the rest of Canada.

[Table 1 about here]

Table 1 compares the structures of families in Quebec and Ontario using data from the 2001 census and provides information about the respective importance, in each of the two provinces, of families with and without children and about the type of union of the couples who live with children. As one can see, childless families are a bit more common in Quebec than in Ontario, as are lone-parent families. However the big difference between the two provinces has to do with common-law unions. From the 2001 census, we

learn that in Quebec, 30% of couples live in common-law unions whereas only 11% do so in Ontario. We also learn that 21% of the families with children are headed by a couple living in a common-law union in Quebec whereas only 6% belong to that category in Ontario. To put it more clearly, in more than one two-parent families out of four, the parents live in common-law unions in Quebec, whereas this is the case of less than one two-parent family out of ten in Ontario.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 2 gives an overlook of the current situation relative to some other demographic behaviours in Quebec and Ontario. We will base our comments on the figures for 2002 but the reader will see by himself that they do not apply solely to that year.

In 2002, the total first marriage ratio among females under 50 years was 333.7 per 1,000 in Quebec and 558.7 in Ontario, which is 40% lower in Quebec than in Ontario. The same ratios for males were 303.4 in Quebec and 531.1 and Ontario, which is 43% lower in Quebec than in Ontario. The same year, the 30 year total divorce rate per 1000 marriages was 476 in Quebec and 349 in Ontario, which is 36% higher in Quebec than in Ontario. Still in 2002, the ratio of induced abortions per 100 lived births was 42.6 in Quebec (*sic*) and 29.7 in Ontario, which is 43% higher in Quebec than in Ontario.

Despite all of these differences, the total fertility rate was 1460.5 in Quebec and 1474.1 and Ontario, which is just a bit under 1% lower in Quebec than in Ontario. In other words, although people in Quebec marry less, divorce more if they marry, and women abort more than women in Ontario, women have roughly the same number of children in both provinces.

The overall picture of the current situation relative to family related behaviours in Quebec can be summarized as follows. In this province, where 83% of the people declare themselves to be Catholic, 30% of the couples are not married, almost half of marriages end in divorce, 28% of the couples who live with children are not married, and, very roughly, three out of ten pregnancies are ended by induced abortion. All of these figures are higher than in the neighbouring province, where only 35% are Catholic and 16% say they have no religion. So the big question is: How is it that the only Canadian province

where the vast majority of the people say they are Catholic is also the province where the people manage their sexual, reproductive and family lives in the way that is the less compatible with catholic morality?

Various hypotheses have been proposed to explain why people choose common-law union over marriage. Some of them, such as the selection hypothesis, hypotheses based on the cost of children and the expected cost of separation, and hypotheses in which common-law union is seen as a "budget form" of marriage may be discussed while looking for an explanation of the difference between two provinces that differ in some aspects of their economy and legal system. There are not that many hypotheses about the decision to divorce, the most common being that people who lived through bad experiences in childhood and those who experienced the divorce of their parents are more prone to divorce. One has a hard time figuring how such psychosocial explanations could be used in explaining differences in divorce rate between two provinces. Finally we do not know of any proposed explanation of the use of abortion as a method of contraception that does not explicitly involve moral norms. Given the lack of serious contender when it comes to divorce and abortion, and despite the fact that our interest is not limited to this sole behaviour, we will limit our discussion of proposed hypotheses to those which deal with cohabitation and marriage.

One of the simplest hypotheses about the choice between marriage and cohabitation is the selection hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, people who choose to live together without being married do so because they know they are more prone to separation than people who choose to marry. Here we see that Quebecers marry less than Ontarians, live more in common-law union[1] but those who marry divorce more. This runs contrary to the selection hypothesis: given the higher proportion of Quebecers who choose to live in common-law unions, the stock of people who choose to marry should be made of a higher proportion of people who are not prone to separation. We see the opposite. To keep the selection hypothesis, one would have to assume that Quebecers who marry are really bad at estimating their risk of divorce, or that Quebecers who marry do not value marriage in the same way as Ontarians. Thus, to maintain the selection hypothesis in the case we are looking at, the only serious option is a cultural argument about values. The problem is that up to now, no one came up with any.

Another way to look at the problem would be to argue that the relation between religious composition and demographic behaviour is spurious and that the difference in behaviour between Quebecers and Ontarians is really related to some other cause, for instance of the economic variety. True, there are differences between the two provinces other than linguistic and religious composition: Ontario's population is about 65% larger than that of Quebec (in January 2005, the size of their populations were estimated at 12,449,502 and 7,568,640 respectively); the participation rate and employment rate are typically higher in Ontario than in Quebec (respectively 68.5% and 63.8% in Ontario, and 65.1% and 59.6% in Quebec for May 2005) while the unemployment rate is typically lower in Ontario than in Quebec (6.9% and 8.5% for May 2005); the average earnings are also higher in Ontario than in Quebec ($35,185 per year among the population aged 15 years and over in Ontario according to the 2001 Census and $29,385 in Quebec); according to the 2001 Census, 14.1% of the people living in private households are below the low income level in Ontario whereas this proportion is 19.1% in Quebec.

Many of these differences between the two provinces may suggest looking at economic factors to account for the difference in demographic behaviour. On the whole, Quebec is not as rich as Ontario and, as we have already mentioned, common-law union has been related to poverty and uncertain economic prospects. One can imagine at least two explanations of the differences in demographic behaviour between Quebec and Ontario that are based on economic arguments. One is related to the cost of children and of separation while the second is to see common-law union as a budget form of marriage.

Cost of children and cost of separation. Any argument about the choice of marriage or common-law as a form of union that would involve expectations concerning the cost of children or the cost of separation should lead to a lower number of children when common-law unions are proportionally more important because they are more prone to separation than marriages and lead to more insecurity in the economic consequences of rupture because, generally, the obligations of each party are not as well defined in common-law unions as they are in marriage. In our comparison, the difference generated by uncertainty is aggravated by legal differences. In Ontario, the civil law, that is the Common Law, entitles cohabiting partners to alimonies when they separate, whereas in Quebec, the Civil Code limits alimonies and the compulsory sharing of patrimony (house,

retirement savings, etc.) to married partners. There is absolutely no way to refute empirically that people maximize their utility function, but it would hard to pretend that Quebecers avoid risk when they choose common-law union rather than marriage. One could of course argue that Quebecers choose to live in common-law unions rather than marriage to avoid what they perceive as a liability rather than a protection, but if doing so, one would have to explain why Quebecers, unlike Ontarians, would prefer avoiding a potential liability rather than choosing a quite certain protection.

Budget form of marriage. This idea has been proposed and developed in Oppenheimer (1994) and in Oppenheimer, Kalmijn and Lim (1997). As mentioned above, Quebecers are not as rich as Ontarians. Using annual earnings as an approximation of wealth, the average Quebecer would be 16% poorer than the average Ontarian and, as we have already seen, 19.1% of Quebecers live below the low income level while only 14.4% of Ontarians are in the same situation. Until now, no one has proposed a convincing explanation of how to relate rather small differences in earnings and proportion of low income people to a large difference in proportions of people living in common-law unions. Relating such moderate size differences in economic conditions to differences in divorce rates and abortion rates as large as those of Table 2 seems even harder to imagine.

AN EXPLANATION BASED ON RELIGION AS A SHAPER OF SOCIAL GROUPS

Our view is that the differences in demographic behaviour between Quebec and Ontario, or Quebec and the rest of Canada, which developed over the last four decades, should be envisioned in the broader framework of an important transformation of the foundation of the normative system shared by the members of Quebec's main socio-religious group, French-speaking Catholics.

As we argue elsewhere (Laplante, *forthcoming*), these differences can be explained, at least in part, by the fact that almost all of Quebec French-speaking population during the 1960s belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, at a time when the local Catholic Church was changing in one important transformation while failing to change in another equally important one. More specifically, we argue that the Church authorities' refusal to

change their doctrine on marriage and sexuality and to allow the laity to play a decisional role in the definition of doctrine and the orientation of pastoral activities gave Quebec Roman Catholics a strong motive for abandoning the Christian tradition as the provider of moral guidelines for sex and family matters; at the same time, the withdrawal of local Roman Catholic authorities from the set of institutions that framed people's lives "from cradle to grave" made it possible for Quebecers to actually abandon it.

As explained by Baum (1990), since the 19th century, the Roman Catholic Church's main tendency had been to resist the widespread movement towards democratization of its political structures and to affirm the Church as a monarchy; adopting the dogma of papal infallibility, in 1870, was the acme of this trend. Authority is centralized and, since 1870, the definition of the *magisterium* on moral theology practically rests in the sole person of the head of the Church (Mahoney, 1987). Theological and moral doctrine is highly intellectualized and theology, as a discipline, is held to be a science in the strictest sense (Ratzinger, 1987). Important matters of faith and morality, and not only the organization of the Church, are expressed as rules of law – the Canon Law – which binds all Roman Catholics.

Although all Western Christian churches have inherited the same basic theology and moral doctrine, the Protestant and Catholic Churches differ on two important matters for the topic discussed here.

The first difference is that, although mainstream Protestant churches kept most of the prevailing traditional Christian moral doctrine at least until the beginning of the 20th century, from the start they all differed from Catholicism on one topic: divorce. Divorce is permitted by all Protestant churches and, in most of them, remarriage is also allowed and even encouraged (Phillips, 1988). In the wake of the Reformation, the state seized the Church's jurisdiction on marriage and related topics both as a civil and a religious matter (Kitchin, 1912). Thus, in countries where the Reformation prevailed, ecclesiastical courts disappeared, and a divorce granted by a state court, parliament or the sovereign himself dissolved the marriage both as a contract and as a religious bond. As long as divorce remained exceptional, these differences bore little consequence. The context changed somewhat when the number of couples requesting separation and divorce increased

among Protestants as well as Catholics, and when the Canadian Parliament made divorce easier. From then on, what had been of little consequence became a huge difference: Protestants were able to get a divorce that put an end to their marriage both as a civil and a religious bond whereas Catholics were able to get a divorce that kept them married and unable to remarry in their own religion.

The second difference is that protestant churches have moved away from Catholicism's centralist trend and have reinstated the autonomy of national churches that never disappeared in Orthodoxy. Even in the Anglican Church, the closest to Catholicism, national synods may or may not enforce the canons of the Church of England. Furthermore, in the protestant world, theology and moral theology are areas of debate, and whatever is accepted as right by the relevant collegial authority becomes right. Decentralization and a belief that matters of faith and morality are to be defined by the assembly of believers in its historical circumstances have given protestant churches the latitude to deal with matters of morality in a wide variety of ways. The important point is that this latitude existed, was used, and is still used, to accommodate a wide range of conceptions of moral behaviour that make it possible to keep divorce, remarriage of the divorced, contraception, women ministers, and even, in some cases, homosexuality and abortion within the realm of religious morality.

No such latitude existed within the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960s. Although we have no direct evidence from interviews or published material, it is not unreasonable to imagine that Quebec Roman Catholics might have been satisfied if their Church had followed, at least with respect to contraception, a path and a timing similar to the one taken by the Anglican Church between 1920 and 1958 (Noonan, 1965). The Roman Catholic Church did not.

Protestants, who had the power to define religious morality within some deliberative bodies, were able to keep adapting it to the new realities. From the Protestant perspective, religious morality is open to change and does change. This has two consequences. First, it makes it possible both to remain within the church or retain religious beliefs and to live according to an updated religious ethic, either because one's particular Church or congregation has updated its moral doctrine, or is likely to do so, or

because an equivalent Protestant Church or congregation will have done so. Second, by keeping religion relevant to such issues, it continues to legitimate control of sexual and reproductive behaviour by churches and, more important, by the community. Within the Protestant world, the act of matrimony is relevant as an orderly moral event although, in the Protestant doctrine, as in the Orthodox doctrine, it is not a sacrament in the sense it is in the Roman Catholic Church.

More important, this deepening of the normative gap between the catholic and the protestant worlds happened at a time when almost all of the institutions structuring the everyday life of French-speaking Roman Catholic Quebecers "from the cradle to the grave" were changing; they had either been handed over to the Quebec government by the religious communities who had owned and managed them for centuries, as in the case of health and education, or had just abandoned their affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church, as in the case of labour unions and credit unions. In less than ten years, the Roman Catholic Church's authority and influence over all of these institutions ended completely, and they became officially non-confessional. As a result, for the first time in Quebec history since the Conquest, not being in line with the Roman Catholic Church ceased to have practical consequences for the entitlement to health, education and a host of other services related to everyday life or important occasions.

In other words, the Catholic Church in Quebec gave up its power over these institutions, its most obvious and effective means of controlling its members, at the same time as the Holy See was tightening its control over the definition of right and wrong, and using it to ensure that the doctrine would not change. This combination created a situation inviting Quebecers to act as though it was no longer relevant. Given the circumstances, Quebecers chose to accept the invitation, and began treating the Church and religion as well, as irrelevant in matters of family and sexual life.

HYPOTHESES, DATA AND METHOD

Hypotheses

Over time, Quebec French-speaking Catholics should have moved from having a more traditional or a similarly traditional behaviour than Ontario English-speaking Protestants to having a more liberal behaviour than them. In recent years, Quebec French-

speaking Catholics should make choices similar to those made by people who have no religion. In a study of the formation of the first union, we expect Quebec French-speaking Catholics to move from choosing marriage as much as do English-speaking Protestants to presumably as little as do non religious groups, and from choosing common-law union as little as do English-speaking Protestants to presumably as much as do non religious groups.

Data

We use data comes from the public use microdata files of Cycle 15 of Statistics Canada's General Social Survey 2001, on the retrospective history of the family. The Survey Family History, as it is also known, uses a retrospective biographical questionnaire focused on the respondent. It collects detailed information on the main family-life related events and spells in the life of the respondent (family changes in childhood, moves out of an back to parent's home, all unions, all children either born to the respondent, adopted or step) as well as less detailed information on the various steps of schooling and university and on the work life. The timing of events is recorded as age of the respondent at time of event; age is measured in years plus one decimal.

We use the subsample of all women residing in Ontario or Quebec at the time of survey and aged less than 80 years, the latter condition due to the fact that age is capped at 80 years in the data file.

Method

The dependent variables are changes of state, thus hypotheses are tested using Cox semi-parametric proportional hazards model (Cox and Oakes, 1984; Box-Steffensmeier and Jones, 2004). We perform two analyses, one on the formation of the first union disregarding the type of that union at the time of its beginning, and a second one on the choice of either marriage or common-law as the form of the first union at its beginning. The second analysis requires a competing risks treatment and is done by estimating two separate equations, one for each option (Crowder, 2001).

In these analyses, individuals are at risk from age 15 or, for immigrants, from their age at the time of their arrival in Canada as immigrants. Said otherwise, people born

outside Canada and who started their first union before they landed in Canada are never at risk in these analyses. The estimation sample is made of 5586 women among which are observed 4514 first unions of which 3044 are marriages and 1470 are common law unions.

Normative groups are formed by combining province, language and religion. Limitations are obvious: language is "first childhood language of respondent", which, in the Canadian context, may have changed aver the life course, especially from French to English; religion is measured at time of survey, not at the time of the formation of the first union; province is province of residence at time of survey. None of these variables is measured as time-varying whereas all of them may have varied over the life course. This obviously leads to some form of measurement error. We can only hope that the size of this measurement error is small and follows a random distribution, which would limit its effect to attenuating coefficients. In this context, there is no real way to test or account for a systematic bias in measurement.

We model historical time as a three category time-varying variable: from 1937 to 1967, from 1968 to 1979, and from 1980 to 2001. Boundaries arise from a mix of practical and substantive reasons: the youngest respondents reached age 15 in 1937 whereas the survey has been conducted in 2001; the *Humanae Vitae* encyclical, which can be seen as the single most important historical event in the matter of moral theology for Catholics in the period we are interested in, has been released in July 1968; from other research, it is known that common law union really became widely spread in Quebec in the 1980's.

These two variables define the normative groups we are interested in and the historical time periods in which their moral norms may have changed at different paces or evolved in different directions. To model the possibility of different paces or different directions in the changes, we build the independent variables of our equations by crossing normative groups with periods. This is technically equivalent to the interaction of province, language, religion, and period, but allows for a much easier interpretation. The reference category is Ontario English speaking Protestants from 1937 to 1967 for the equations in which "all-unions" and "marriage" are the DV. Given that common law

union was an equally rare choice in all normative groups before the end of our first period, we use all groups from 1937 to 1967 as the reference category for the equation in which "common-law union" is the DV.

Survey design issues. The 2001 General Social Survey 2001 on Family History uses a survey design that involves stratification and unequal sampling probabilities. The effect of unequal sampling probabilities on point estimates is accounted for by computing these using sampling weights. However, accounting for the survey design in the estimation of the standard errors and other test statistics is not so simple.

In order to insure confidentiality, Statistics Canada (SC) does not release information on stratum membership and adds a random component to the final weights it provides with its public use microdata files (PUMFs). This makes useless analytically based robust variance estimation methods. Given the size of the samples of most SC's surveys, the only realistic variance estimation strategy is reweighted bootstrapping (Rao and Wu, 1988; Rao, Wu and Yue, 1992). To make things more challenging to the end user, SC does not release "conventional" bootstrap weights with PUMFs because the structure of the weights would manifest stratum and cluster membership which is considered an unacceptable risk of confidentiality breach. The researcher must thus estimate the variance-covariance matrix of estimates (VCE) using mean bootstrap weights (Yung, 1997). In our case, this involves the use of 200 sets of mean weights, each set of weights having been averaged over 25 different replicates. The standard errors and Wald tests we report in the tables are based on a VCE matrix that accounts for the survey design using such mean bootstrap weights.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

"Raw" results are estimates of the coefficients of three hazards models that are hardly interpretable in their original form. We report results in three tables in which we include only the coefficients and the tests that are related to our hypothesis and in which these are arranged in a way that makes relevant comparisons as easy as possible.

[Tables 3, 4 and 5 about here]

Formation of the fist union, all unions (Table 3)

Point estimates decrease over time in all groups but that of Quebec French-speaking Catholics. In all other groups, there is either no statistically significant trend over time or a statistically significant decreasing trend. Quebec French-speaking Catholics are the only group in which the rate of formation of unions increased from the beginning to the end of the period under study and this increase has occurred between the first and the second period. This is not related in any interpretable way to our hypothesis, but underlines that this group behaved in a particular way from the onset.

In the most recent period, the rate of the formation of the first union of the Quebec French-speaking Catholic group is similar to that of the Quebec French-speaking non religious group, whereas it is higher than the rate of the Ontario English-speaking Protestant group. This is consistent with our hypothesis.

Choosing marriage as the form of the first union (Table 4)

There is a statistically significant down trend in all groups. In the most recent period, the rate of the Quebec French-speaking Catholic group is similar to that of the Quebec French-speaking non religious group, whereas it is lower than the rate of the Ontario English-speaking Protestant group. Again, this is consistent with our hypothesis.

Choosing common-law union as the form of the first union (Table 5)

Point estimates increase over time in all groups except Quebec French-speaking protestants, which could be related to a change in the composition of this group through immigration and proselytism: evangelism is known to be active among Haitian people, traditionally Catholics, who now account for the most of the Quebec French-speaking protestants.

In the most recent period, the rate of the Quebec French-speaking Catholic group is similar to that of the Quebec French-speaking non religious group, whereas it is higher than the rate of the Ontario English-speaking Protestant group. Again, this is consistent with our hypothesis.

Discussion

We expected Quebec French-speaking Catholics to move from choosing marriage as much as do English-speaking Protestants to presumably as little as do non religious groups, and from choosing common-law union as little as do English-speaking Protestants to presumably as much as do non religious groups.

As we have seen, our results are consistent with this view, and our general hypothesis, that of the rejection, by Quebec French-speaking Catholics, of the Christian tradition as a foundation of their normative system, seems to hold. Said otherwise, there seems to be no difference nowadays between the Quebec French-speaking Catholic group and Quebec French-speaking non religious group when it comes to the formation of the first union.

However, some other results suggest that the dynamics of the changes in the behaviour of the groups we defined by province, language and religion is not completely accounted for by our theory. We already noted that the changes in the behaviour of Quebec French-speaking Protestants probably arise from a change of the composition of that group over the period under study. There are however patterns of change that are of more substantive interest.

The most striking of such findings is that the most recent rates are not statistically different within each province but are statistically different between provinces, with one exception worth noting: Quebec English-speaking Protestants, whose results were not reported in the tables, have rates equal to those of Ontario English-speaking Protestants in 1968 and 1980: 14.4 and 21.6. The most likely explanation is that, in the most recent years, the dominant normative group, within each province, sets the tone for the province where people behave as if they belonged to it despite religious differences. The one exception, Quebec English-speaking Protestants, simply reflects a basic fact of Quebec social structure: English-speaking Protestants socially belong to either the neighbouring mainstream Ontarian society or to the larger English Canadian society rather than to the Quebec society.

The broader substantive conclusion is thus that the contemporary patterns of demographic behaviour in Quebec and Ontario are rooted in historical religious differences but have become larger societal facts.

To this we can add a more methodological conclusion. Our results suggest that when studying demographic behaviours using linear models, religion, language, and political territory should not be used as variables having unrelated linear effects and should not be interpreted as individual characteristics. On the contrary, they should be combined in a way that allows modeling the differences between groups which have their own normative dynamics. This definitely holds for the Canadian case and should probably be considered in other countries as well.

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Table 1   **Some recent demographic indicators in Quebec and Ontario**

	First marriage ratio				
Total, first marriage ratio, females under 50 years (Ratio per 1,000 females)					
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Quebec	347.9	350.1	370.2	329.4	330.7
Ontario	596.9	611.0	595.4	563.7	558.7
Total, first marriage ratio, males under 50 years (Ratio per 1,000 males)					
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Quebec	315.3	317.7	334.9	300.0	303.4
Ontario	564.8	581.1	566.7	540.2	531.1
	Total fertility rate				
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Quebec	1.48	1.45	1.43	1.47	1.46
Ontario	1.53	1.52	1.48	1.51	1.47
	Ratio of induced abortions per 100 live births (Hospitals and clinics)				
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Quebec	41.8	41.7	43.2	42.2	42.6
Ontario	32.0	30.5	31.0	29.5	29.7
	30 year total divorce rate per 1000 marriages				
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Quebec	452	465	474	483	476
Ontario	330	344	346	353	349

Sources :
First marriage ratios : *Marriages. Shelf Tables*, Table 18, Statistics Canada, 84F0212XPB.
Total fertility rates: *Births. Shelf Tables*, Table 1.4, Statistics Canada, 84F0210XPB.
Ratio of induced abortions: *Induced abortion statistics*, Statistics Canada, 82-223-XIE, with reference to CANSIM Table 106-9013.
30 year total divorce rate: *Divorces. Shelf Tables*, Table 1, Statistics Canada, 84F0213XPB.

Table 2   **Census families in private households by family structure and presence of children, by provinces and territories (2001 Census)**

	Quebec	Ontario
All families		
Without children at home	37,22%	34,79%
With children at home	62,78%	65,21%
Two-parent families		
Families of married couples	69,80%	88,96%
Families of common-law couples	30,20%	11,04%
Families with children at home		
Families of married couples	52,87%	70,64%
Families of common-law couples	20,66%	6,00%
Lone-parent families	26,47%	23,36%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, authors' calculation.

Table 3   **Formation of the first union**

Quebec Catholic French-speaking	1937	0.68	≠1.00	1937	Ontario Prostestant English-speaking
	1968 ≠	0.94	=0.88	1968	
	1980 ≠ =	0.91	≠0.57	≠ ≠1980	
Quebec No religion French-speaking	1937	≠1.13	---	1937	Ontario No religion English-speaking
	1968 =	=0.96	=0.86	1968	
	1980 = =	=0.98	≠0.60	≠ 1980	
Quebec Catholic English-speaking	1937	=0.97	=0.73	1937	Ontario Catholic English-speaking
	1968 =	=0.77	=0.78	1968	
	1980 = =	=0.66	≠0.54	≠ ≠1980	
Quebec Protestant French-speaking	1937	≠1.59	≠1.13	1937	Ontario Catholic French-speaking
	1968=	=1.33	=0.91	1968	
	1980= =	=0.84	=0.80	= =1980	

Coefficients of Cox proportional hazards models in exponential form. The dependent variable is the hazard of forming a union from age 15 among women living in Ontario or Quebec. The estimation sample is made of 5586 women among which are observed 4514 first unions. Data come from GSS 2001. Comparison between groups (coefficients) are made using Wald tests based on a variance covariance matrix estimated using reweighted bootstrap resampling with 200 mean bootstrap weights, each weight being averaged over 25 replicate samples.

To the immediate right or left of"1968" or "1980", an equal sign means that the coefficient is not statistically different from the coefficient associated with "1937" within the same normative group; an unequal sign means that the difference is statistically significant. The second equal or unequal sign to the left or right of "1980" refers to the difference between the coefficient associated with "1980" and "1937" within the same normative group.

The coefficients associated with each of the three periods within QCF are compared to the coefficient associated with the corresponding period within each other normative group. The se comparisons appears as the equal or unequal sigh to the left of the coefficients themselves.

Table 4 **Formation of the first union by marriage**

Quebec Catholic French-speaking	1937	0.67	≠1.00	1937	Ontario Prostestant English-speaking
	1968=	0.63	=0.74	≠1968	
	1980≠ ≠	0.19	≠0.37	≠ ≠1980	
Quebec No religion French-speaking	1937	≠1.22	---	1937	Ontario No religion English-speaking
	1968 ≠	≠0.31	=0.56	1968	
	1980 ≠=	=0.12	=0.22	≠ 1980	
Quebec Catholic English-speaking	1937	=0.98	=0.73	1937	Ontario Catholic English-speaking
	1968=	=0.63	=0.64	1968	
	1980 ≠ ≠	=0.21	≠ 0.31	≠ ≠1980	
Quebec Protestant French-speaking	1937	≠1.75	≠1.15	1937	Ontario Catholic French-speaking
	1968 =	=0.76	=0.73	1968	
	1980 ≠ =	≠0.44	≠0.35	≠ ≠1980	

Coefficients of Cox proportional hazards models in exponential form. First part of the competing risks model. The dependent variable is the hazard of forming a union by marriage from age 15 among women living in Ontario or Quebec. The estimation sample is made of 5586 women among which are observed 3044 first unions by marriage. Women forming their first union by cohabitation are at risk until they start cohabiting. See Table 3 for further details.

Table 5 **Formation of the first union by common-law union**

Group (Quebec)	Year			Year	Group (Ontario)
Quebec Catholic French-speaking	1937			1937	Ontario Prostestant English-speaking
	1968	28.8	≠13.2	1968	
	1980≠	70.0	≠25.0	≠1980	
Quebec No religion French-speaking	1937			1937	Ontario No religion English-speaking
	1968	≠60.4	=27.3	1968	
	1980=	=80.4	≠36.5	1980	
Quebec Catholic English-speaking	1937			1937	Ontario Catholic English-speaking
	1968	=12.9	≠12.0	1968	
	1980=	=44.7	≠22.3	≠1980	
Quebec Protestant French-speaking	1937			1937	Ontario Catholic French-speaking
	1968	=51.2	=16.8	1968	
	1980=	=37.9	≠43.2	≠1980	

Coefficients of Cox proportional hazards models in exponential form. Second part of the competing risks model. The dependent variable is the hazard of forming a union by common-law union from age 15 among women living in Ontario or Quebec. The estimation sample is made of 5586 women among which are observed 1470 first unions which begin as a common-law union. Women forming their first union by marriage are at risk until they marry. In this equation, the reference category is the hazard of forming a first union as a common-law union in all normative groups altogether. See Table 3 for further details.

Notes

[1] Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a common-law union in Quebec because Quebec does not use common law and because the Civil Code has no provision for people living together without being married. I use « common-law union » as an equivalent of « cohabitation » for linguistic reasons: "to cohabite" does not make much sense in English and "living in a cohabiting union" is pretty cumbersome.