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National frenemies: linguistic intergroup attitudes in Canada

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ABSTRACT
Intergroup sentiments have been shown to be an important determinant of social stability in multinational countries. The present study explores the present state of linguistic intergroup tensions in Canada to contribute to the understanding of outgroup attitudes among minorities and majorities. Four main findings are derived from the results of empirical analyses on survey data. (1) Cultural threat impacts outgroup attitudes in both the national minority and the national majority. (2) Education has a strong impact on feelings towards the linguistic outgroup. (3) Unexpectedly, age does not display a statistical influence on intergroup attitudes. (4) Specifically relating to Canada, intergroup feelings between Francophones and Anglophones have over the last quarter century become considerably more positive, both groups hold quite positive attitudes towards one another.

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Intergroup; culture; threat; Canada; language; identity

Multinational countries face the challenge of developing and/or preserving serene relations between their constituent groups. Intergroup sentiments are a main factor that stands out as an indicator of social stability (Petersen 2002). The more the groups in a country like each other, the less problematic the sociopolitical context tends to be. Therefore, positive intergroup relations are an important element for countries seeking social (and political) peace.

Though intergroup relations are a multifaceted phenomenon (see Esses, Haddock, and Zanna 1993), the scholarship highlights perceived ingroup threat as an important determinant to intergroup attitudes. Collective fears tend to poison intergroup relations (Sherif 1961; Ng 1982). Research has more precisely underlined the threats posed to a group’s culture as having

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a negative influence on intergroup attitudes (Sidanius et al. 1997; Chandler and Tsai 2001).

Yet, the locus of insecurity differs depending on the group type. In the case of minorities, fears related to the ethnic marker – such as language – that distinguishes them have been shown to lead to antagonistic feelings towards the majority outgroup (Taylor, Meynard, and Rheault 1977; Ros, Huici, and Cano 1994). However, in terms of majority groups, it is identity that is at the heart of collective sensitivities that can negatively impact on minority outgroups (Tajfel 1969; Sears 1988; McRae 1997; Hehman et al. 2012). While both minorities and majorities are affected by perceived cultural threats, which taint intergroup relations, there appears to be a limited number of studies that empirically explore the influence of these threats on both a national minority and a national majority.

Canada is one such country where its multinational nature has not always been harmonious. Its history has been marked by sociopolitical tensions opposing its Francophone minority to its Anglophone majority (Martel and Pâquet 2012). Specifically, intergroup attitudes have been described as essential in understanding the country’s sociopolitical debates (Berry, Kalin, and Taylor 1977). While the linguistic cleavage has played an important part in Canadian history, the literature exploring the intergroup attitudes of the country’s two main constituents is somewhat limited. The few studies that have surveyed linguistic intergroup attitudes in Canada essentially did so in times of intense sociopolitical debates in which language played a salient role (Berry, Kalin, and Taylor 1977; Blais 1991; Berry and Kalin 1995). However, as linguistic tensions in Canada have abated during the last two decades, we are left to wonder if mutual sentiments among Francophones and Anglophones have changed?

The present study therefore examines the tensions between Canada’s Francophones and Anglophones, to – in general – contribute to the understanding of outgroup attitudes among minorities and majorities by particularly focusing on the potential determining role of cultural threat on such attitudes, as well as – specifically – re-explore intergroup relations among Canada’s two main groups in a period of relative linguistic peace. To do so, the study uses survey data from the 2015 Canadian Election Study (CES).

Four main findings are derived from the results of empirical analyses. (1) Firstly, cultural threat is shown to impact outgroup attitudes in both the national minority and the national majority. Perceptions of French being threatened in Quebec leads Francophones in that province to have more negative sentiments towards Anglophones; whereas, perceptions that the Canadian identity is threatened result in Anglophones having more negative sentiments towards Francophones. Therefore, developing policies to stimulate or maintain positive intergroup relations need to mind potential risks to the culture of the minority and the majority. This finding also pushes for
the spotlight on Quebec regarding cultural sensitivity to be equally shined on the Rest of Canada (RoC). (2) The findings also demonstrate a strong impact played by education. The more educated the respondents were, the more positive were their feelings towards the linguistic outgroup. (3) Additionally, while it is common for research to show negative intergroup attitudes related to age, the results unexpectedly show that age does not impact intergroup attitudes. (4) Finally, in specific reference to the Canadian case, the data reveal that intergroup feelings between Francophones and Anglophones have in the last quarter century become considerably more positive. Both currently hold on average quite positive attitudes towards one another.

**Intergroup attitudes: the power of cultural insecurity**

Negative intergroup attitudes are risks to serene social relations that can be quite difficult to resolve (Tajfel and Turner 1986; Balcells 2012). The great deal of attention received by academia in order to understand and alleviate adverse intergroup sentiments is thus understandable (see Dasgupta and Greenwald 2001; Paluck and Green 2009).

Trust between groups is an important determinant to serene intergroup relationships. One way in which trust impacts intergroup relations is through perceived threat. More precisely, a lack of trust between groups can amplify fears (Parks and Hulbert 1995; Alesina and Zhuravskaya 2011). These collective fears that influence intergroup tensions have often been demonstrated to arise from an unsatisfactory distribution of economic resources (Sherif 1961; Ng 1982). Still, sensitivities that impact intergroup attitudes are not only of an economic nature. Threat to a group’s culture has also been shown to negatively affect intergroup relations (Chandler and Tsai 2001). These findings are in line with Berry, Kalin, and Taylor’s “multicultural hypothesis” (1977, 225) that states that in diverse societies “the promotion of multiculturalism leads to increased confidence in one’s own identity which in turn leads to respect for the diversity of others”. The authors specifically find that cultural security and economic group security are related to greater tolerance towards outgroups. However, scholarship has presented cultural factors as tending to trump economic ones in explaining intergroup tensions (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004; Sides and Citrin 2007).

The national status of a group – whether it is a minority or a majority – plays an important part in the type of collective fears that might arise. In the case of minorities, fears are derived from a strong survivalist impulse. Their political, economic and even physical security can more easily be threatened due to their lack of control of the state (Saideman and William Ayres 2000; Sidanius and Pratto 2001). Furthermore, perceptions of the outgroup’s intentions by “small peoples” heavily impact perceived existential threats (Abulof 2009). However, if the threat is perceived to target the cultural marker that defines
the group, the collective fears can be more acute. Linguistic minorities are groups prone to such cultural sensitivities. Language has an important attachment for linguistic groups as its well-being represents the symbolic security of the group (Laitin 1998; Safran and Liu 2012). Yet, the vitality of a language can have more tangible impacts as it is often attached to economic considerations for group members (Giles and Johnson 1987; Woolard 1989). Though language vitality can be measured in an objective manner (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor 1977), it has been shown that it is the perceptions that linguistic group members have of their language’s social health that impact intergroup relations (Taylor, Meynard, and Rheault 1977; Ros, Huici, and Cano 1994). Specifically, if members of a linguistic minority perceive their language to be threatened, their attitudes towards the linguistic majority should be negatively affected.

In the case of majority groups, the mere presence of minorities can be seen as a threat (Offe 1998; Yavuz 2001). Though national minorities can represent a danger to the territorial integrity of the state (through desires of autonomy and/or independence), social pluralism can also be a threat to the identity of the country (McRae 1997; Hehman et al. 2012). Seeing as most multinational states have a national identity constructed by the majority for itself (Bauböck 2002), the desire of minority groups to be different – by simply existing and refusing to completely assimilate – represents a risk to the coherent conception of the country held and defined by the majority. Hence, pluralistic social conceptions such as multilingualism and multiculturalism can be perceived as dangers to the integrity of a country’s dominant culture and its values (Breton 1988; Sears 1988). Threat to the integrity and coherence of a collective identity can result in the development of negative feelings towards outgroups (Tajfel 1969). Therefore, if a majority group’s members perceive their identity to be threatened, negative attitudes towards minorities – responsible for social pluralism – should ensue.

The literature thus demonstrates that collective fears can impact intergroup attitudes in both minorities and majorities. However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has empirically explored through multivariate analyses the precise influence of perceived cultural threat on the intergroup attitudes of a minority and a majority in a multinational country towards each other. We take on this challenge by relying on a case with a longstanding tradition of intergroup tensions between its national minority and its national majority: Canada.

Canada: two languages and some tensions

Canada is a multinational country that has been marked by social tensions between its main linguistic groups. The friction between the Francophone minority and the Anglophone majority has persisted arguably since the
British Conquest of 1759. This is not so surprising because, as Martel and Pâquet (2012) assert, language is – besides being a mode of communication – a symbol of identity, used to express one’s social belonging, as well as a political issue that conveys groups’ aspirations and anxieties. Therefore, throughout Canada’s post-Conquest history, language has been at the very heart of political interactions.

While the Canadian linguistic divide is oft depicted as “Francophones vs. Anglophones”, it is important to note that these two groups are not homogeneous (Berry and Kalin 1995; Frenette 1998; Henderson 2010). Most notably, Francophones outside Quebec and Anglophones in Quebec face different sociopolitical realities than their brethren (Martel 1997; Christofides and Swidinsky 2010). Nevertheless, since the collective social emancipation of Francophone Quebecers in the 1960s – known as the Quiet Revolution – linguistic tensions have tended to mostly play out through the country’s “two solitudes”: Francophone Quebec and the Anglophone RoC. Though important social and political differences exist between these two entities (see Baer, Grabb, and Johnston 1993; Bélard and Lecours 2005), language – specifically the place of French in Canada – has played a quintessential part in Canadian sociopolitical debates (Martel 1997; McRoberts 1997).

However, as with most Western societies, immigration has in recent decades made Canada more diverse. While Canada had until the 1960s been a profoundly discriminatory country towards non-whites (Bolaria and Li 1988), it quickly liberalized and became in 1971 the first country to officially adopt multiculturalism as a policy. By 2011, over 20 per cent of its residents were foreign born, roughly the same proportion had a mother tongue other than English or French, and more than 18 per cent were visible minorities.¹

Since the late 1960s, the tensions between Francophones in Quebec and Canada have arguably been dominated by the debate surrounding secession. The scholarship has demonstrated a relationship between Quebecers’ perceptions of French’s vitality in Quebec and their support for independence (Nadeau and Fleury 1995; Nadeau, Martin, and Blais 1999). However, these studies explore the potential linguistic gains for French in an independent Quebec rather than examine the effect of perceiving French to be currently threatened. To the best of our knowledge, only Gidengil et al. (2004) investigated the influence of perceiving French to be currently threatened on support for Quebec independence and showed a positive relationship between both variables.

As for the country’s Anglophones, as Resnick (2005) states, the cultural threat to this group lies not with their language but rather with their communal identity. After all, Canada was initially dominated by a conception of “Anglo-conformity” (Palmer 1976). Francophones and, thereafter, immigrants were expected to assimilate into the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture (Breton
While the identity of Canada has been transformed into a civic conception detached of ethnic markers – notably through the incorporation of multiculturalism – some have noted that this has had the effect of “robbing” the Canadian identity of its cultural core (Resnick 1994; McRoberts 1997). Mackey (2002, 142) describes this sentiment among white Anglophones as “a sense of insecurity, uncertainty and crisis fed [by] a backlash to the gains made by minorities [in which] cultural pluralism weakened an already crisis-ridden and insecure national identity”.

Cultural fears have thus been shown to be present among Francophones and Anglophones. However, the former have been presented as being more sensitive towards cultural threats than the latter. According to Abulof (2009), Francophones have experienced a persistent sense of group insecurity. Moreover, these fears have been shown to be interlinked with perceptions of the vitality of the French language. Specifically, Berry, Kalin, and Taylor (1977) found that Francophones tended to have lower intercultural attitudes than Anglophones. This finding was attributed to Francophones having a lower sense of group security. This assumption has been utilized to explain Francophones more negative attitudes towards immigration in more recent studies (Bilodeau, Turgeon, and Karakoc 2012; Turgeon and Bilodeau 2014).

In terms of intergroup attitudes between Francophones and Anglophones, the scholarship appears to be surprisingly limited. Berry, Kalin, and Taylor’s seminal work (1977, 216) on intergroup attitudes in Canada, using survey data collected in 1974, found that Francophones and Anglophones “possess relatively positive attitudes towards each other”. These data actually show that these two groups had the most positive mutual ratings. Reciprocal positive sentiments between Francophones and Anglophones were subsequently replicated in 1991 by Berry and Kalin (1995). Blais (1991) also shows that the two linguistic groups have similarly positive sentiments for one another. However, Blais’ research does not explain what determines these intergroup attitudes. As for Berry, Kalin, and Taylor, the 1977 study demonstrates that Francophones had lower levels of group security than Anglophones and that perceived group threat has a strong relationship with intergroup attitudes. However, no statistical correlation is found between cultural security among Francophones and their evaluation of Anglophones. The authors also do not show a correlation between cultural threat among Anglophones and their evaluation of Francophones. Yet, a recent study by Medeiros, Fournier, and Benet-Martínez (2017), using an experimental framework, empirically demonstrates a connection between perceptions of threat to French and Francophone Quebecers’ attitudes towards Anglophones in Canada.

While there have been a few studies that have explored linguistic intergroup attitudes in Canada, they are quite limited in number. This is surprising considering that intergroup attitudes impact social relations and that the
social tensions between Francophones and Anglophones in Canada have been long-lasting. We thus also take up the challenge to re-explore and expand the understanding of intergroup attitudes between Francophones and Anglophones in Canada.

The literature on intergroup attitudes, cultural threat and the relationship between Francophones and Anglophones in Canada allow us to propose two hypotheses:

H₁: Among Francophone Quebecers, perceiving French to be threatened leads to negative attitudes towards Anglophones.

H₂: Among Anglophone Canadians, perceiving Canadian identity to be threatened leads to negative attitudes towards Francophones.

Data

In order to investigate the sociopolitical relationships that were highlighted in the hypotheses, data from the 2015 CES were used.

The dependent variable is attitudes towards Anglophones or Francophones. If the survey was taken in English, the respondent was asked for their feelings towards Francophones; if the survey was answered in French, the intergroup linguistic question measured feelings towards Anglophones. Linguistic intergroup attitudes were grasped through a feeling thermometer ranging from 0 (dislike) to 100 (like).

However, seeing as 87 per cent of mother tongue Francophones outside Quebec responded to the CES in English, it was decided to restrain the Francophones and Anglophones to respondents whose mother tongue corresponded to the linguistic category and who answered the survey in that language.

For Francophones, the main independent variable is perceived threat to French in Quebec. The variable was constructed through a dichotomous question gauging if the respondents believed French was threatened in Quebec or not. As for Anglophones, the main independent variable is perceived threat to the Canadian identity. This variable was ascertained through a dichotomous question asking respondents if providing funding to ethnic groups weakens Canadian identity. Though this question does not directly measure fears to the Canadian identity posed by Francophones, social diversity in general has been shown to be a cultural threat to dominant group identities (Sniderman et al. 1989). Thus, both Francophones and Allophones are minority outgroups to majority Anglophones.

Two series of control variables were used to better determine the specific influence of perceived cultural threat on intergroup attitudes. The first series is composed of classic individual-level sociodemographic controls: gender, age and education. The age of the respondents was divided into 11 ranked groups in order to form an 11-point continuous variable. As for education, the CES
question ascertains respondents’ highest completed level of education on an 11-point continuous scale.

The second series of controls are attitudinal variables. The ideological preferences of individuals have been found to influence intergroup attitudes (McRae 1986; Hodson and Busseri 2012). However, instead of utilizing a unidimensional left–right scale, research has shown that a multidimensional approach to ideology provides greater insight, notably in the Canadian political context (Albright 2010; Gauvin, Chhim, and Medeiros 2016). Therefore, social and economic dimensions are explored separately. The social dimension is created by combining two questions. The first one is a dichotomous question that asks respondents if abortion should be banned. The second one is also a dichotomous question that gages whether respondents favour or oppose same-sex marriage. Before creating the scale, its validity and reliability were tested. Principal component analysis showed that the variables were part of a single factor, thus confirming that they relate to a common dimension. It also showed that the two variables were independent from the intergroup attitudes variable. In terms of reliability, the Cronbach’s α score is 0.73. As for the economic dimension, no variables were shown to combine into a single factor and result in a Cronbach’s α score above 0.7. Therefore, we use a question gaging respondents’ attitudes to the free market, specifically how interventionist should government be in the economy. Finally, social (sociotropic) economic evaluations have also been demonstrated to impact intergroup attitudes, though this influence has been essentially towards immigrants (Citrin et al. 1997; Wilkes, Guppy, and Farris 2008). This variable was ascertained from a question asking respondents’ perceptions of the Canadian economy’s performance over the past year.

Lastly, seeing as Francophones, Anglophones and Allophones are not evenly distributed in Canada, geographic clustering is controlled for through a categorical variable of the provinces.

In order to facilitate the interpretation of the results, all scales were made to run on a negative to positive range. “Don’t know”, “Refuse to answer” or “Left Blank” answer choices were coded as missing. All continuous variables were converted into a 0 to 1 scale.

Results

The averages of intergroup feelings are firstly explored. They are compared to those reported by Blais (1991) in order to gage if there have been noticeable changes in the two groups’ reciprocal feelings.3

The means of intergroup attitudes, in Table 1, reveal two interesting findings. Firstly, intergroup sentiments between both groups are quite similar.4 In 2015, there was very little difference in Francophone Quebecers’ feelings
towards Anglophones compared to those of Anglophone Canadians’ attitudes towards Francophones. These results match the findings reported by Blais (1991) for 1988. Secondly, though the lack of linguistic cleavage in intergroup attitudes has persisted through the decades, the feelings themselves have considerably changed. Attitudes towards opposing linguistic groups have become more positive. In 1988, both groups held, at an average of 61, moderately positive feelings for their linguistic counterparts. However, in 2015, the intergroup feelings towards opposing linguistic groups are, at 80 or close to, unquestionably more positive. Therefore, in nearly the last three decades, Francophones in Quebec and Anglophones in the RoC have warmed up in a profound manner to the other “solitude”.

Table 1. Mean intergroup attitudes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Francophone Quebecers towards Anglophones</th>
<th>Anglophone Canadians (RoC) towards Francophones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>61 (517)</td>
<td>61 (1697)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>80 (385)</td>
<td>78 (1954)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Numbers reported are averages on a 0–100 scale. The number of respondents in parentheses.

Figure 1. Mean intergroup attitudes per threat category Notes: Markers report averages on a 0–1 scale and bars represent confidence intervals at 95%. The mean attitude of Francophone Quebecers towards Anglophones was 0.85 for the Not Threatened group (92 respondents) and 0.76 for the Threatened one (129 respondents). The mean attitude of Anglophones Canadians from the RoC towards Francophones was 0.85 for the Not Threatened group (512 respondents) and 0.71 for the Threatened one (341 respondents).
Though intergroup feelings are reciprocal along the Canadian linguistic cleavage, does perceiving one’s culture to be threatened impact these attitudes?

The means of intergroup attitudes per threat category, displayed in Figure 1, clearly indicate a difference between individuals who perceive a threat to their culture in both linguistic groups. Francophones in Quebec who perceive French as threatened possess on average more negative feelings towards Anglophones than their brethren who do not fear for French’s vitality; there is a 9-point difference between both groups. As for Anglophones in the RoC, those perceiving a threat to Canadian identity posed by immigrant organizations had on average more negative sentiments towards Francophones than fellow group members not threatened by immigrant organizations. The difference between both groups is 14 points. In both cases, the results of $T$-tests (not reported) show that the differences in linguistic intergroup attitudes were significant (at $p < .01$). The findings also indicate that Anglophones in the RoC who perceive their culture to be threatened have more negative intergroup sentiments than Francophones Quebecers. The results of a $T$-test (not reported) also indicate that this difference is statistically significant (at $p < .05$).

However, to get a more precise idea of the influence of perceived cultural threat on intergroup attitudes, OLS regressions were performed. The results, displayed in Figure 2, support the proposed hypotheses for both of Canada’s main linguistic groups. Firstly, the findings show that perceiving French as threatened has a negative and significant (at $p < .01$) impact on

![Figure 2. Determinants of intergroup attitudes](image)

Note: Markers represent OLS coefficients.
attitudes towards Anglophones. Specifically, perceiving French to be in danger among Francophone Quebecers led to a 9-point decrease in the appreciation of Anglophones compared to ingroup counterparts who do not perceive a threat to their language. In terms of the control variables, none of the attitudinal controls displayed a statistical influence on feelings towards Anglophones. However, two demographic controls demonstrate a significant (at $p < .01$) impact on linguistic intergroup attitudes. Francophone women from Quebec are shown to have more positive attitudes towards Anglophones than Francophone men from Quebec. Yet, the standout in terms of substantive impact on attitudes towards Anglophones is education. Francophone Quebecers with a professional degree or doctorate compared to those with no formal education display a 28-point increase in positive attitudes towards Anglophones, this difference represents over a quarter of the scale.

As for Anglophones, the findings also show that cultural threat impacts their attitudes towards their linguistic counterparts. Anglophones – from all of Canada – who perceive the Canadian identity to be threatened demonstrate a 13-point lower appreciation of Francophones than their brethren who do not see cultural associations as a threat to the Canadian identity. While Francophones have usually been presented as having greater cultural threat than Anglophones (Berry, Kalin, and Taylor 1977; Turgeon and Bilodeau 2014), these findings show that cultural threat actually has a greater impact on Anglophones attitudes to Francophones than vice versa. Two of the attitudinal controls present a statistical impact on sentiments towards Francophones. Perceiving the state of the Canadian economy to have worsened, compared to those who did not perceive a change in the country’s economic fortunes, shows a negative and significant (at $p < .05$) influence on attitudes towards Francophones. A statistical impact is also garnered for social ideological preferences. The more socially conservative an Anglophone is, the more negative are their attitudes towards Francophones. As with the results for Franco-Quebecers, two demographic controls also demonstrate a statistical influence on intergroup attitudes. Anglophone women are shown to be statistically (at $p < .1$) more positive to Francophones than their male ingroup members. Also, education shows a strong and significant (at $p < .01$) positive influence on Anglophones’ intergroup attitudes. Anglophones with a professional degree or doctorate compared to those with no formal education display a 20-point increase in positivity towards Francophones. For more details on these results, see Table A1 in the Appendix.

The model for Anglophones’ intergroup attitudes also includes the province of residence of the respondents (full results in Table A1 of Appendix). Surprisingly, the province of residence of Anglophones does not display a statistical impact on their attitudes towards Francophones. Seeing that this is in comparison with Anglophones who reside in Quebec, this last result is
somewhat unexpected. Though Blais (1991) had shown that Anglophones from Quebec’s attitudes towards Francophones were more positive than their brethren from the RoC, our regression analysis demonstrates that home province does not have an influence on Anglophones’ feelings towards Francophones.

One last note on the results is warranted. Age does not show a statistical impact on intergroup attitudes. This finding is quite interesting as it contradicts much of the literature on intergroup attitudes that tends to demonstrate older respondents having more negative attitudes towards outgroups (see, e.g. Wilson 1996; von Hippel, Silver, and Lynch 2000).

The findings from the analyses support the hypotheses that were put forward. Perceived cultural threat in both Francophone Quebecers and Anglophones in Canada is shown to negatively impact the groups’ attitudes towards each other. Therefore, both hypotheses, H1 and H2, can be accepted.

**Conclusion**

The present study sought to contribute to the literature on intergroup tensions by exploring the influence of perceived cultural threat on intergroup attitudes in both a national minority and a national majority. The study uses Canada as a case and utilizes survey data from the country’s Francophone minority and its Anglophone majority.

The findings support a theoretical reasoning that presents a cultural minority to be affected by threats to its ethnic marker – in this case language – and majorities to be sensitive towards dangers to the country’s identity. The results demonstrate that both groups’ attitudes towards one another are impacted by perceived cultural threat. Specifically, perceiving French to be threatened in Quebec leads Francophones Quebecers to have more negative sentiments towards Anglophones; whereas, perceiving the Canadian identity to be threatened among Anglophones results in more negative sentiments towards Francophones.

The present study’s re-exploration of linguistic group tensions in Canada uses data collected in a period of relative linguistic peace. Nevertheless, cultural fears are shown to lead to negative linguistic intergroup attitudes. These findings support the structuring force of culture, and the fears related to it, in multinational societies. Specifically, in Canada, even when language is less salient (than in the past), it still has an influence on intergroup attitudes. As Martel and Pâquet (2012) state, language as a political issue is intimately linked to realities of the time and the place. While sociopolitical factors related to language might change, language nonetheless remains important in multilingual societies.

Gidengil et al. (2004) put forward – after finding a relationship between perceived threat to French in Quebecers and their attitudes towards
immigration – that reducing fears to French was necessary in order to improve attitudes towards immigrants. The results of the present study demonstrate that this reasoning is easily extrapolated to the sentiments of Franco-Quebecers towards Anglophones. The more secure they feel about French’s vitality, the more positive their feelings towards Canada’s majority will be. Furthermore, this result supports a recent finding by Medeiros, Fournier, and Benet-Martínez (2017) that highlights the determining potential of perceived language threat among Franco-Quebecers on their attitudes towards Anglophones.

Gidengil and colleagues also show that Anglo-Canadians can be affected by cultural insecurity. The results of the present study also support this conclusion and refine it by demonstrating the importance of fears related to Canadian identity for Anglophones. Therefore, to reduce or prevent negative attitudes among Anglophones towards Francophones, the risks posed to the Canadian identity by social diversity need to be considered and mitigated.

The results of the present study should motivate a correction regarding the attention that Quebec garners in terms of cultural sensitivity. Clearly, Quebec Francophones are sensitive about their cultural distinction and this sensitivity influences their relations with Canada’s majority. Yet, Anglophones are also shown to be quite sensitive about “Canadian” culture, a sensitivity that also impacts their attitudes. Quebec, and its Francophones, receives the quasi-total share of academic – and even media – attention concerning cultural fears. The results of the present study demonstrate that this focus is uncalled for and that a rebalancing of attention more towards Anglophones is in order; if not, the influence of cultural threat on Canadians’ attitudes will continue to be explored and presented in a skewed manner.

The main findings of this study can reasonably be applied to multinational contexts in general. In order to produce or maintain serene social relations between national minorities and their national majorities, each groups’ specific cultural insecurities must be respected. Yet, respect for both groups’ concerns does not equate to parity. Seeing as national majorities effectively control national resources and institutions (Saideman and William Ayres 2000; Sidanius and Pratto 2001), more efforts might be necessary to respond to minorities’ fears. Nevertheless, the fears of the majority group must not be ignored.

Furthermore, seeing that there is a relationship between cultural threat and social tensions in multilingual countries (Medeiros 2017a), these findings emphasize that states need to account for the cultural sensitivities of their linguistic groups in policy development in order to avoid and/or mitigate intergroup conflict, and thus contribute to the stability of the multinational country.

The universal applicability of two other major findings from the current study, however, cannot presently be determined. Firstly, the results also
show that the education level of individuals is the main determining factor in outgroup sentiments. While Berry and Kalin’s works (Berry, Kalin, and Taylor 1977; Berry and Kalin 1995) have highlighted that more educated individuals tend to have more positive intergroup attitudes, the substantive impact of education in the present study’s results emphasize the important role that education might play in the development of serene intergroup relations. This finding would seem optimistic as the worldwide trend is towards ever higher levels of education for individuals. Nevertheless, its dominant influence is somewhat unexpected. Secondly, age is surprisingly shown not to have a statistical impact on intergroup attitudes. This finding goes against much of the literature and would undermine the determining nature of age on outgroup prejudice. Rather, according to the results, it would be more flexible factors, such as attitudes and education, that explain outgroup attitudes. Still, the novelty of these two findings calls for further research in other cases in order to grasp their precise impact on intergroup attitudes.

As it specifically relates to Canada, the findings reveal a positive linguistic social environment. The data show that Francophones and Anglophones have on average quite positive attitudes towards one another. While the limitations of the data do not allow to explore divergences that might exist between Francophones in Quebec and their counterparts from outside the province, a recent study by Medeiros (2017b) demonstrated that the relationship between perceived linguistic threat and sociopolitical attitudes is not confined to a Quebec vs. RoC dynamic. Specifically, the author finds that perceptions of linguistic threat have a greater influence on sociopolitical attitudes than a Francophone’s home province. The results of the present study regarding Anglophones’ outgroup attitudes support this finding. The present study does explore for provincial effects among this group and the results show no statistical difference between Quebec and other provinces. Therefore, home province would not be such a determining force on sociopolitical attitudes in Canada, at least not when compared to cultural threat perceptions.

The findings also display that linguistic intergroup sentiments have greatly improved during the last quarter century; a trend that corresponds with the steady decline of support for Quebec independence (Durand 2014). Nevertheless, cultural sensitivities cannot simply be ignored in Canada. Political entrepreneurs constantly seek to highlight and exploit group grievances, notably cultural grievances (Gurr 2000). The examples of political entrepreneurs attempting to underline threats to French in Quebec are still omnipresent. The same can be stated for risks to the Canadian identity posed by bilingualism and multiculturalism. Therefore, vigilance is still warranted because if perceived cultural threat grows, intergroup attitudes will sour, and social tensions will increase.
Notes

1. Demographic data were obtained from Statistics Canada at http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm.
2. Attitudes towards abortion and same-sex marriage were the only social variables in the survey that formed a common factor, were not related to the dependent variable, and had a Cronbach’s $\alpha$ score above 0.7.
3. To the best of our knowledge, Blais’ article is the last one to examine linguistic intergroup attitudes using CES data.
4. Seeing that a very high proportion of mother tongue Francophones outside Quebec responded to the CES in English and that we are aiming to compare with Blais’ findings (1991), the decision was taking to only examine the means of linguistic intergroup attitudes of mother tongue Francophones in Quebec and mother tongue Anglophones in the RoC.
5. The decision was taken to include Anglophones from Quebec in the analysis to explore a possible intragroup difference, seeing as Quebec is the only province in which Anglophones are the linguistic minority.
6. Analyses (not reported) were also performed with a categorical variable for generations (born prior to 1960, generation X (born between 1960 and 1979), and millennials (born after 1979)) replacing the Age variable in the models. Results also do not show a generational difference in intergroup attitudes for both Francophones in Quebec and Anglophones in Canada.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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References


Appendix

Table A1. Determinants of intergroup attitudes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Francophone Quebecers towards Anglophones</th>
<th>Anglophones towards Francophones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat to French</td>
<td>−0.09***</td>
<td>−0.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat to Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of economy:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unchanged (Ref.)</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>−0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>−0.03***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social ideology</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>−0.05**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support free market</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (women)</td>
<td>0.07***</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>−0.06</td>
<td>&lt; −0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.28***</td>
<td>0.20***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Province:
Quebec (Ref.) —
Newfoundland 0.02 0.02
PEI 0.03 0.03
Nova Scotia −0.01 (0.07)
New Brunswick 0.05 (0.07)
Ontario 0.02 (0.06)
Manitoba −0.04 (0.07)
Saskatchewan 0.04 (0.07)

(Continued)
Table A1. Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Francophone Quebecers towards Anglophones</th>
<th>Anglophones towards Francophones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>−0.04</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>0.71</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.71</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. *p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01. The coefficients displayed are from OLS regressions performed with unweighted data. Regressions were also performed with weighted data, the results (not reported) show few differences and the influence of the main variables, cultural threat are exactly the same.