



**University  
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

**STEPHEN GNANASIHAMANY**

BA Hons. (University of Alberta, 2016)

**“Anxious Identity and the Challenges of Cultural Diversity:  
Understanding Québec’s National Identity Debate”**

Department of Political Science

Wednesday, August 21, 2019

1:00 P.M.

David Turpin Building

Room A357

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Oliver Schmidtke, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)  
Dr. Matt James, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Cindy Holder, Department of Philosophy, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Adam Con, School of Music, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## **Abstract**

This research seeks to understand how Québec governments have constructed the relation between national identity and cultural diversity from the 1960s' Quiet Revolution to the 2010s by analyzing the discursive and historical dynamics that have shaped Québec identity politics in this period. First, it clarifies how national identity and cultural diversity are symbolically constructed in relation to one another by analyzing three key interpretive frames that have shaped the construction of national identity and cultural diversity in Québec since the Quiet Revolution, namely nationalism, pluralism, and secularism. These frames offer competing imperatives that social actors must balance against one another when constructing the relation between national identity and cultural diversity. Second, this research examines how state actors in Québec have navigated these interpretive frames and tried to influence how members of their community think about national identity and respond to cultural diversity through policy initiatives and discursive strategies. Québec governments' approaches to diversity management have shifted significantly in this period, from promoting the French language and intercultural integration in the mid- to late-20<sup>th</sup> century to focusing on religious difference and rigid secularism in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Contributors to this shift include increasing nationalist anxieties through the 1990s, followed by the reasonable accommodation debate and the Bouchard-Taylor Commission in the 2000s. This analysis highlights the challenges that sub-state nationalists face when constructing the relation between national identity and cultural diversity, including the need to manage the cultural anxieties of the majority group.