

The evolution of beliefs and opinions on matters related to marriage and sexual behaviour of French-speaking Catholic Quebecers and English-speaking Protestant Ontarians

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Abstract

Based on previous work, we argue that Quebec's relatively rapid progress along the path of the second demographic transition is a consequence 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 data from Gallup polls, we search for traces of that shift in the opinions of Quebec French-speaking Catholics on matters related to sexual and family behaviour from the 1950's to beginning of the 2000's. The general result is that the changes that can be seen in these data are compatible with our general hypothesis. Over a 40 year period, the religious attendance of Quebec French-speaking Catholics has decreased to a level similar to that of Ontario English-speaking Protestants. The opinion of Quebec French-speaking Catholics on contraception seems to have been starting to shift from clearly conservative towards a more liberal one during the 1970's. By the 1990's, Quebec French-speaking Catholics were more tolerant towards homosexuality than Ontario English-speaking Protestants. While they clearly held more conservative opinions on abortion in the 1960's, by 1995, they had a more liberal opinion than Ontario English-speaking Protestants.

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Comparative studies of European countries show important differences in the prevalence of cohabitation. According to Kiernan's (2000; 2002) analyses of data from the European Commission for 1996, cohabitation was the living arrangement for between 20% and 35% of women, aged 25 to 29 years, in Norway, Sweden, Finland and France, between 10% and 20% in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Britain, between 5% and 10% in West Germany, East Germany and Austria, and less than 5% in Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Italy. Strong differences also exist within Canada: in 2001, 30.0% of couples residing in Quebec were cohabiting compared with only 12.1% in the rest of Canada.

From the evolution of cohabitation in Sweden, where it developed as a widespread phenomenon earlier than in other countries, several researchers have hypothesized that some Western societies are going through a transition in the way couples are formed. This transition occurs in several stages, in the first of which cohabitation is limited to a small group of deviant or "avant-garde" people and, in the last, where marriage and cohabitation become indistinguishable (Hoem and Hoem, 1988; Prinz, 1995; Kiernan, 2002). From a broader perspective, this shift from marriage to cohabitation is viewed as part of a more general phenomenon, the second demographic transition (van de Kaa, 1987).

However interesting, such a generalization falls short of explaining why this transition starts earlier or later in different countries or societies, why its pace varies, and why some countries, like Italy, seem immune to it. More specifically, it does not explain 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 through 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 Ontario or the 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's (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.

Our view, developed in a related paper (Laplante, *forthcoming*), is that what looks like Quebec's relatively rapid progress along this path 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.

This paper is part of a research effort in which we look for empirical evidence to sustain that claim. According to our hypothesis, from the 1960's and on, Quebec French-speaking Catholics 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. If this is true, it should be possible to see traces of that shift in the opinions of Quebec French-speaking Catholics on matters related to sexual and family behaviour from the 1950's to beginning of the 2000's. More specifically, the Benoît Laplante, Caia Miller and Paskall Malherbe, *The evolution of beliefs and opinions on matters related to marriage and sexual behaviour of French-speaking Catholic Quebecers and English-speaking Protestant Ontarians* [2005]

opinions of Quebec French-speaking Catholics on these matters should have been similar to or more “conservative” than the opinions of our comparison group, Ontario English-speaking Protestants, at the beginning of this period, whereas they should be more liberal by the end of it.

We first provide 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 form, the rationale 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

Canada is a federation of ten provinces and three territories. Its population is currently estimated just over 32 millions. More than a third of the Canadian population lives in Ontario, whereas about a fourth lives in Quebec. Quebec and Ontario are neighbours and, given their share of the total population, they make the heart of the country. 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 gives an overlook of the current situation relative to 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, that is 40% lower in Quebec than in Ontario. The same ratios for males were 303.4 in Quebec and 531.1 in Ontario, that 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

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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 in 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.

Table 2 points to an answer to the riddle. This is a table about families with and without children and about the type of union of the couples who live with children. As one can see that childless families are a bit more common in Quebec than in Ontario, as are lone-parent families. But the big difference 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 family 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.

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.

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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 the author does 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 common law union and marriage

One of the simplest hypotheses about the choice between marriage and common law union is the selection hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, people who choose to live in common-law unions 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 unions, 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 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

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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 be 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 rather 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 in the differences

between Quebec and Ontario, 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 1 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 either to change their doctrine on marriage and sexuality, or 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 encircled 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

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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 – Canon Law – that 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, 2002 [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 remained of 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 Church of England canons. 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 his 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 was happening 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. With Quebec's Catholic Church, therefore, no longer able to enforce this dogma, this created a situation inviting Quebecers to act as though it was no longer relevant. Given the circumstances, Quebecers chose to accept the invitation, and treated it as irrelevant

Hypotheses

According to our hypothesis, from the 1960's and on, Quebec French-speaking Catholics 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. If this is true, it should be possible to see traces of that shift in the opinions of Quebec French-speaking Catholics on matters related to sexual and family behaviour from the 1950's to beginning of the 2000's. More specifically, the opinions of Quebec French-speaking Catholics on these matters should have been similar to or more "conservative" than the opinions of our comparison group, Ontario English-speaking Protestants, at the beginning of this period, whereas they should be more liberal by the end of it.

The main problem in such an endeavour is, of course, the availability of data. As detailed in the next section, we use data from Gallup polls realized from 1957, which enables us to follow the opinions of the two groups we are interested in over more than 40 years. The main limitation of these data is the availability of long series of questions on the same topic. Typically Gallup questionnaires include questions on topics that are known to be of public interest or political relevance at the time of the survey. Although some questionnaires included questions about free love and related matters, we have not been able to localize questions from which it would have been reasonable to build a series on the acceptance of common-law union. We have been able to localize questions on the acceptance of contraception from the mid-1960's to the mid-1970's, which is a rather short span for our purpose. There are only three topics related to our interests from

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which it proved possible to build long series of questions: religious attendance, acceptance of abortion, and acceptance of homosexuality. The series on religious attendance ranges from 1957 to 1999, while the series on the acceptance of abortion and homosexuality range from the mid-1960's to 2000.

Religious attendance is not an opinion, but behaviour. Given that this behaviour is an indicator of the importance that people give to religion in their life, that such a thing is definitely related to what we are interested in and that we do not know of any other source of data that provide such a long series of data on this topic and for the two groups we are interested in, we chose to use it.

Homosexuality is not a demographic behaviour, but a high level of acceptance of homosexuality within a group is definitely an indicator that this group has moved away from the catholic doctrine that strongly rejects homosexuality as part of its doctrine of natural law as the foundation of moral law in sexual matters.

The level of acceptance of abortion is the only series that is perfectly suited to our hypothesis, as it is as directly as possible related to the use of abortion as a contraceptive method and as it is strongly rejected by catholic morality.

Data and method

We compare the evolution of the opinions of French-speaking Catholic Quebecers and English-speaking Protestant Ontarians on matters related to marriage and sexual behaviour using data from Gallup polls realized from 1957 and available to university researchers through Carleton University Library Data Centre (see Bibby, 1987, 2002 and Gallup and Lindsay, 2002, for examples of similar uses).

We use the data for Ontario and Quebec from 86 different pools; each pool provides around 600 cases. The data are poststratified and weighted according to contemporary censuses. We use questions on the opinion of respondents on divorce, contraception, cohabitation, pre-marital sex, homosexuality and abortion. Answers to these questions are recoded so as to contrast all levels of traditional opinions to all level of liberal opinions, while keeping distinct alternative answers such as “qualified”, “without opinion” and “refused to answer”. Analyses are conducted using

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multinomial logit models, using the liberal answer as the reference category of the dependent variable. Models are estimated twice, first using province of residence, religion and language as distinct variables and second combining them to form a single multiple categories variable. This allows us to test whether the effects of these variables are simply additive or, on the contrary, reflect the existence of distinct social groups defined by the combination of province of residence, religion and language. In all cases, English, Protestant and Ontario are used as the reference categories of the independent variables. All models include other presumably relevant variables, i.e sex, age and education, whose effects are thus controlled for. Tests are adjusted to take into account weighting and, as much as possible, design effect. In the cases where tests show that answers are distributed as if there were distinct social groups defined by language, religion and province of residence, the estimates associated to the French-speaking Catholic Quebecers category are estimates of the odds of French-speaking Catholic Quebecers to provide answers of any type but of the liberal one, relative to the odds

The tests show that aggregating province of residence, religion and language consistently provides a statistically significant better explanation of the distribution of answers than assuming that the effects of these variables simply are additive. Thus, on matters related to marriage and sexual behaviour, the Canadian society truly appears structured in groups defined by the combination of political territory, language and religion.

Estimates of the numerous regression-like models are reported in graphics (Figures 1 to 4) that allow seeing the evolution over time in the odds, for French-speaking Catholic Quebecers, of providing a conservative or some alternative answer rather than a liberal one relative to the odds of English-speaking Protestant Ontarians to provide corresponding answers.

Results

Religious attendance (Figure 1). Religious attendance is commonly known to have dropped sharply among Quebec French-speaking Catholics after 1967, but our data show that their level of attendance remained higher than that of Ontario English-speaking Protestants until 1991. It was apparently lower among Quebec French-speaking Catholics than Ontario English-speaking Protestants in 1997, but both group had a similar attendance in 1999.

Contraception (Figure 2). The series stops in 1975. Throughout the period, Quebec French-speaking Catholics consistently had a higher probability of providing a more conservative opinion. However, from 1967, they also had a higher probability either of giving a qualified answer or of refusing to answer. Such a pattern of opinions can be interpreted as reflecting a period of split in the opinion, some people maintaining the traditional view while others either provide some kind of “middle of the road” opinion or simply refuse to admit that they do not agree with the opinion that still prevails in their group.

Homosexuality (Figure 3). Questions have been asked on homosexuality in 1968, when the federal Parliament removed it from the Criminal Code, once in 1977, and then regularly through the 1990’s and in 2000, presumably because questions related to homosexual rights, such as social benefits for same sex partners, adoption by same sex couples, and homosexual marriage were publicly debated. The overall trend indicates that Quebec French-speaking Catholics seemed to have been more tolerant towards homosexuality from the onset of the series which, unfortunately, starts after the time at which, according to our hypothesis, their opinion should have started to shift. From 1994 till 2000, Quebec French-speaking Catholics clearly hold a more liberal opinion on homosexuality than Ontario English-speaking Protestants.

Abortion (Figure 4). The overall trend is the one we expected, although the pattern seems to reflect differences in the rhythm at which the opinions shifted in both groups. Until the mid-1970’s, Quebec French-speaking Catholics clearly held a more traditional opinion than Ontario English-speaking Protestants. In 1975 and 1983, Quebec French-speaking Catholics are more likely than Ontario English-speaking Protestants to provide a more traditional answer and a qualified one. This is likely to indicate that the opinion was moving towards a level of acceptance of abortion similar to that of Ontario English-speaking Protestants. Quebec French-speaking Catholics are still more likely to provide a qualified opinion in 1989. By 1991, they are less likely to provide a qualified opinion and, by 1995, they are less likely to provide a conservative opinion. This new difference between the two groups becomes blurred in the following years. The most likely explanation is that after 1995, Ontario English-speaking Protestants had reached the level of acceptance of abortion that Quebec French-speaking Catholics had reached a few years before.

Discussion

Our general hypothesis is that Quebec's relatively rapid progress along path of the second demographic transition is a consequence an important transformation of the foundation of the normative system shared by the members of its main socio-religious group, French-speaking Catholics. Using data from Gallup polls, we searched for traces of that shift in the opinions of Quebec French-speaking Catholics on matters related to sexual and family behaviour from the 1950's to beginning of the 2000's. We expected the opinions of Quebec French-speaking Catholics on these matters to have been similar to or more "conservative" than the opinions of our comparison group, Ontario English-speaking Protestants, at the beginning of this period, whereas they should be more liberal by the end of it. Given the limitations of the data, we have been restricted to four topics: religious attendance, opinion on the use of contraception, tolerance towards homosexuality, and opinion on abortion.

The general result is that the changes that can be seen in these data are compatible with our general hypothesis. Over a 40 year period, the religious attendance of Quebec French-speaking Catholics has decreased to a level similar to that of Ontario English-speaking Protestants. The opinion of Quebec French-speaking Catholics on contraception seems to have been starting to shift from clearly conservative towards a more liberal one during the 1970's. By the 1990's, Quebec French-speaking Catholics were more tolerant towards homosexuality than Ontario English-speaking Protestants. While they clearly held more conservative opinions on abortion in the 1960's, by 1995, they had a more liberal opinion than Ontario English-speaking Protestants.

The main limitation of this analysis is obviously that of data. Although we had access to Gallup polls from 1953 till 2000, we were not able to build more than four series of questions related to the topics we were studying. Only two of these series, religious attendance and opinion on abortion, cover the largest portion of the period we are interested in. Only one, opinion on abortion, is exactly the kind of series we were looking for. Further research would definitely be a good thing, if data to realize it existed.

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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				1431.2	1470.2	1460.5
Ontario				1476.2	1508.7	1474.1
		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

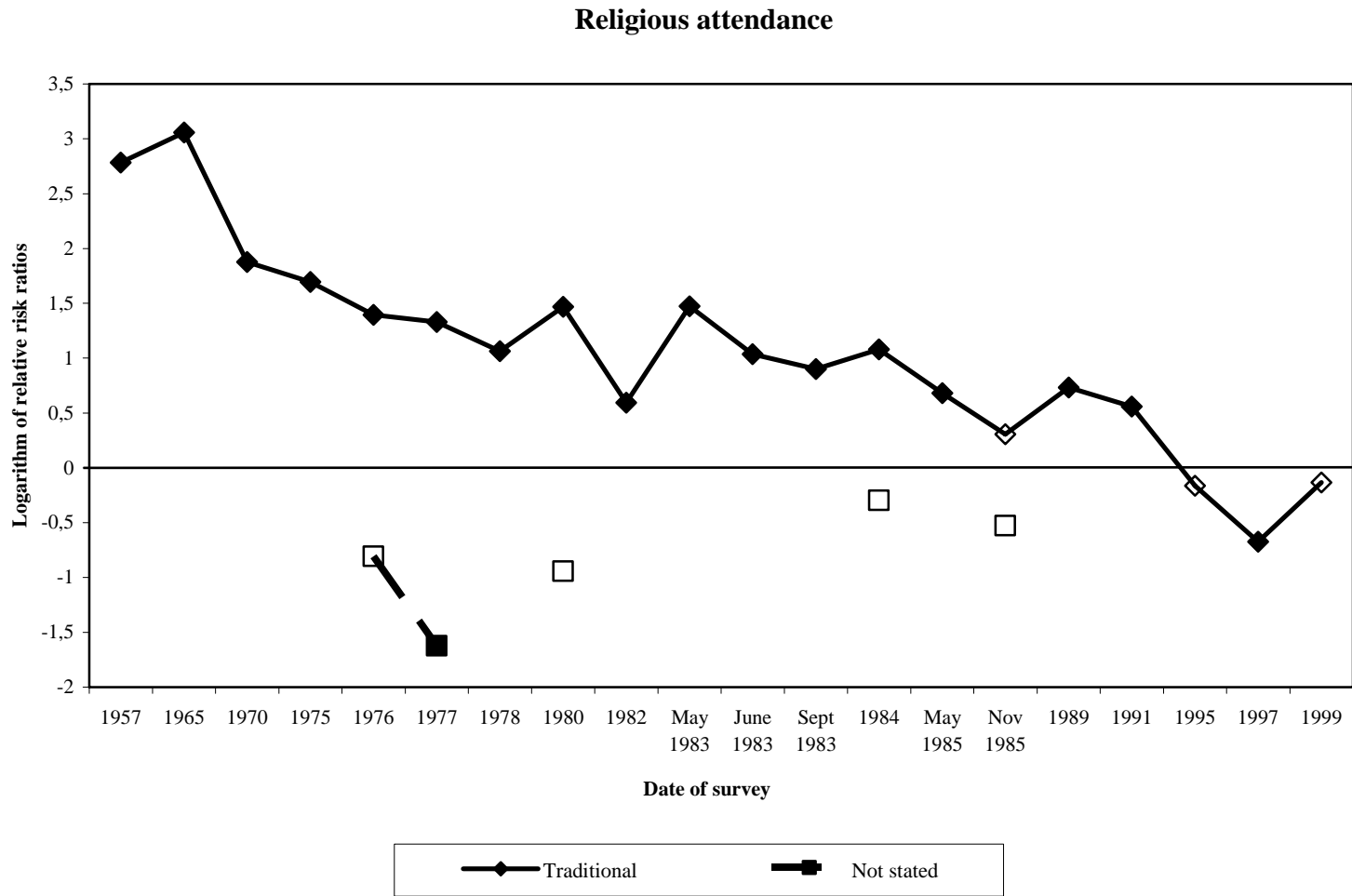
Note: Data users should be aware of certain limitations to the Therapeutic Abortion Survey. There are recognized issues concerning coverage, increased submission of aggregate counts instead of detailed records, and an increased reliance on age estimation.

Due to changes in data collection methods in Ontario for clinic abortions, caution should be taken when comparing data for 1999 and later to data for 1998 and earlier.

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

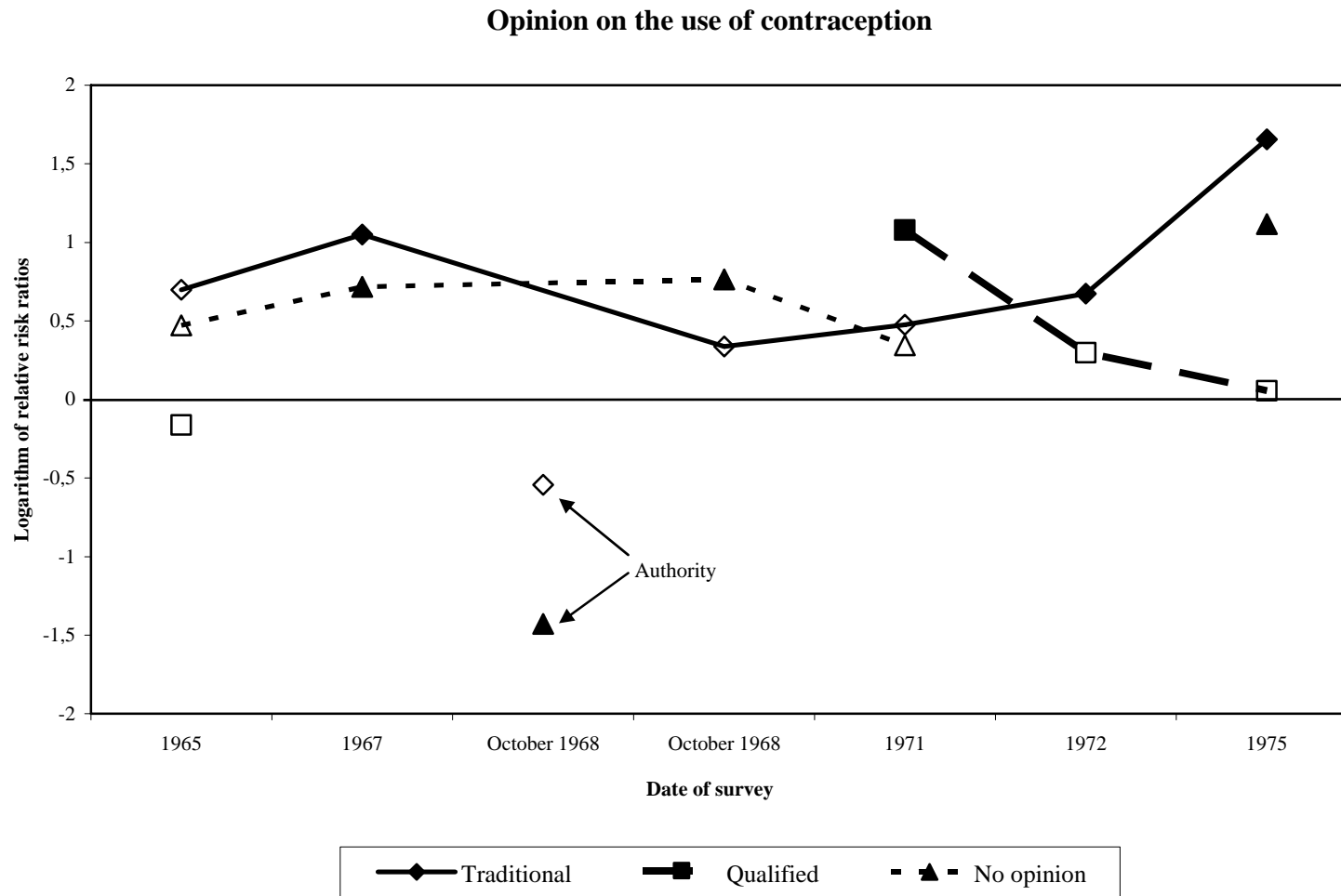
	Québec	Ontario
All families		
Without children at home	37,22%	34,79%
With children at home	62,78%	65,21%
Two-parent families		
Families of married couples	69,80%	88,96%
Families of common-law couples	30,20%	11,04%
Families with children at home		
Families of married couples	52,87%	70,64%
Families of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

Figure 1



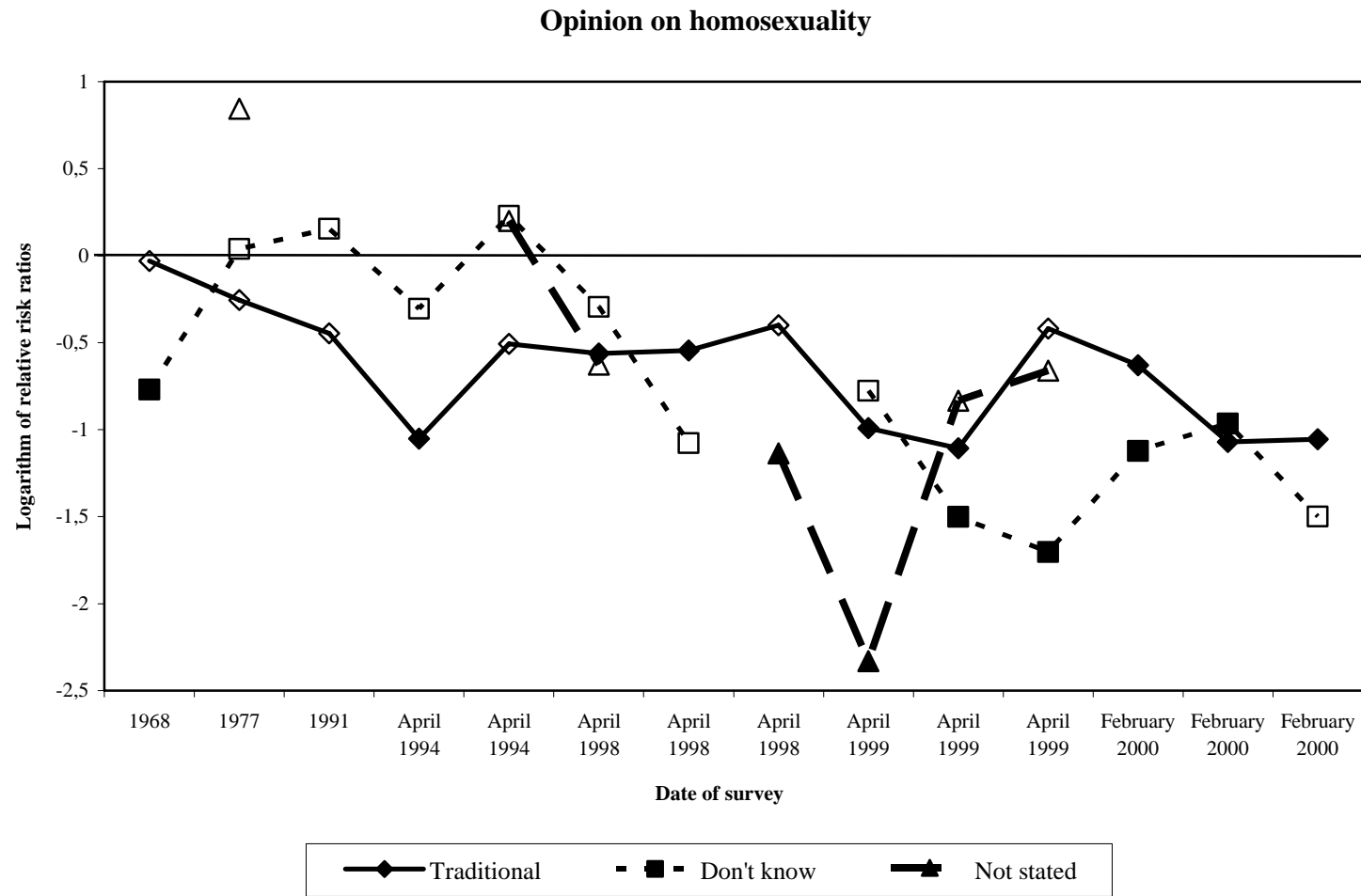
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Figure 2



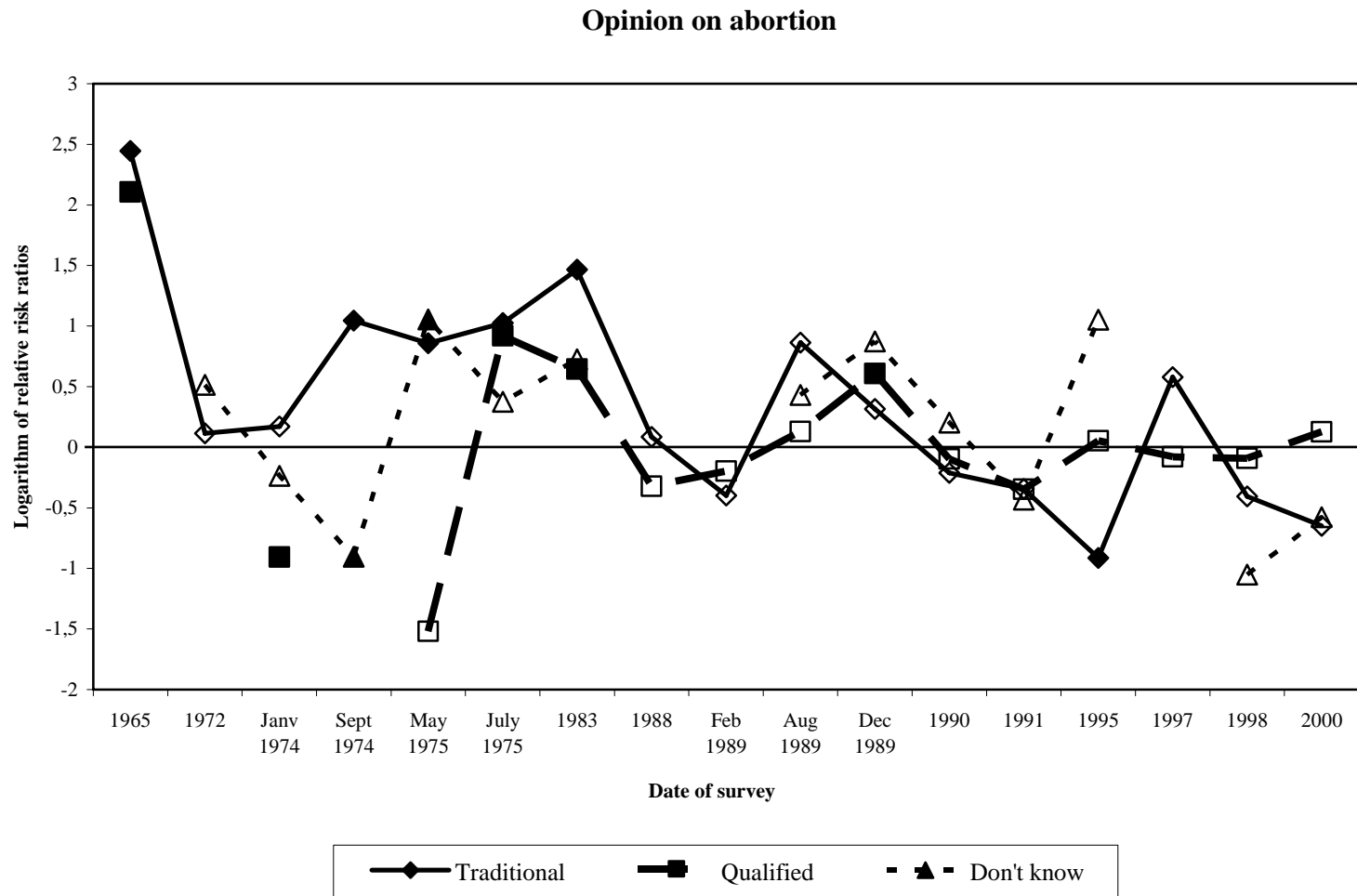
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Figure 3



Benoît Laplante, Caia Miller and Paskall Malherbe, *The evolution of beliefs and opinions on matters related to marriage and sexual behaviour of French-speaking Catholic Quebecers and English-speaking Protestant Ontarians* [2005]

Figure 4



Benoît Laplante, Caia Miller and Paskall Malherbe, *The evolution of beliefs and opinions on matters related to marriage and sexual behaviour of French-speaking Catholic Quebecers and English-speaking Protestant Ontarians* [2005]