banned, which triggered a division of opinion among the leaders of the main political parties and became a significant factor in the level of support given to each party by the electorate. Finally, the debate merged the private and the public, centering on one woman's desire to remain veiled throughout the citizenship ceremony and the generalized discussion in the media and the general population that ensued. Whether or not this entire debate was strategically planned and deployed by one political party, as some evidence suggests, the enormous reverberations it had in the campaign testifies to the weighty nature of the question for all ordinary citizens.

The fact was that there are extraordinarily few women in Canada that wear a nikab, fewer still that would be in the process of obtaining citizenship and thus possibly in a position to demand that they be sworn in while covered, and that it is difficult to imagine how that could conceivably have any direct impact on anyone save perhaps a handful who happen to be present at such a ceremony, all beg the question of how this question could come to occupy such a prominent place in a national political process. The conceptions of the role of the state, the proper place of religious convictions in the public sphere, and the varying degree of embrace of the idea of multiculturalism are poles of what Sikka refers to as the negotiation of religious identity. I would widen the claim, bearing in mind the very divergent articulation of these notions in Canada, India, and Israel, the three countries canvassed more fully in the two books reviewed here, to suggest that collective discussions about often local or individual practices capture an existential yearning to bond with our fellow human beings. Human rights, religion, the state, are all interacting frameworks that allow us to set parameters of belonging, mapping the differences that are deemed not to matter and those that are felt to be fundamental. Each country stands as a project aiming for a coherent and distinctive assemblage of these elements to project a certain identity to which every citizen is invited to subscribe.

Response to René Provost

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In his review, Dr. Provost considers the justification for bringing together studies of India and Canada, and in this brief response I would like to

extend his question to both volumes. What might we learn, in general terms, from these studies of Canada, Israel, and India about the political management of religious diversity? What do they tell us about the virtues and pitfalls of multiculturalism as a paradigm for such management? While traditional liberal approaches view religion as a matter of individual conscience, the multiculturalist frame sees it as a form of group identity akin to culture. An advantage is that the latter perspective recognizes the communal character of religion. It is then better able to promote legal and social equality between religious groups, since multiculturalism's normative ideal is that, subject to certain constraints, the laws and policies of a nation should respect the identities of all of its citizens rather than privileging that of the majority.

We can also see, however, how far India, Canada and Israel are from actually implementing this ideal. Israel may seem the starkest case, given that it was founded as and remains an avowedly Jewish state. Yet the actual dominance of a majority is also visible in India and Canada, in how individual disputes are in fact resolved, in the interpretation and implementation of secularism, in defining the terms of recognition. It is a reality that, even when nations are formally committed to even-handedness across differences, the perspectives and interests of the majority holding the balance of power dominate the conversation.

Furthermore, being oriented toward relations between groups, multiculturalist approaches to religion must confront the problem of intra-group and especially gender inequality, in contexts where some of the beliefs and practices defining the identity of a group prescribe subordination. This too is an issue of power: who holds it and therefore gets to make decisions for the religious community, who has authority to speak on its behalf, who has a voice in shaping what a given religion has been, is, and will be. Religious identities, like cultural ones, evolve and change under a variety of pressures, but the trajectory they follow is at least partly dependent on who is given the opportunity to direct them and who is left out. At the same time, it needs to be understood that religious actors are not merely passive recipients of state management. They interact creatively with governmental policies, often reforming their communities and relations with others in the process, for better or worse.

The studies in our two volumes demonstrate the necessity of paying close attention to particular traditions, circumstances, and interactions, but they also illustrate these general lessons about the biases of majorities, hierarchical relations of power between and within groups, and the impacts of governmental policies on evolving identities. To be sure, the risks of

ignoring or underemphasizing power and of interpreting identities as fixed rather than dynamic have been well-covered in critiques of multiculturalist theory. In going forward, however, the task is to formulate policies that manage these risks effectively, for contested and evolving communities are still real, and justice toward those placed within them cannot be assured through models that recognize individuals alone.