Youth, Identity and the Search for Meaning

A qualitative study of religion and spirituality among adolescents

in contemporary Quebec

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ABSTRACT

Youth, Identity and the Search for Meaning: A qualitative study of religion and spirituality among adolescents in contemporary Quebec

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While changes in the Quebec's immigration patterns and demographics over the past forty years are well researched, scholars have rarely investigated how young Quebeckers make sense of themselves and the world around them. Previous research on the topic of youth religiosity in Western countries (Campiche, 1997; Smith and Lundquist Denton, 2005; Crawford and Rossiter, 2006; Lefebvre, 2006; Roehlkepartain et al, 2008; Valk et al, 2009; Kimball et al, 2010) has outlined adolescents' interest in questions of meaning and in learning about religions from an unbiased perspective. We addresses this issue by adding to the data we have on adolescents meaning-making strategies within a sociological perspective, and seeks to integrate the voice of adolescents to discussions on educational questions that are directly relevant to their development and wellbeing.

This dissertation reports on a detailed investigation of seventeen Québécois teenagers' lives and worldviews, using qualitative methods. Through an individual, semi-directed interview, 17 Montreal adolescents (nine girls and eight boys) between the ages of 14 and 19 (m = 16.05) were asked about their views on religion, spirituality, adolescence, the place of religion in society, as well as ethnic and religious diversity in their school, and

their appreciation of the recently implemented Ethics and Religious Culture Program. We found that the participants to this study had a non-religious perspective, evidenced by a distrust of religious institutions and an absence of religious beliefs and practices, coupled with an interest for learning about religious culture and ethical questions, evidenced by a generally positive evaluation of the Ethics and Religious Culture Program.

Keywords: Adolescence – Religion – Spirituality – Quebec – Religious diversity – Religious identity – Quebec Ethics and Religious Culture program – Meaning – Qualitative methods

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INTRODUCTION

Young people do in fact have a great deal to cope
with and require a certain amount of "faith" to get
by, but this is not necessarily religious faith.
(Collins-Mayo et al 2011, 7)

Contemporary Quebec adolescents, as other young people in the world, live in an era that is marked by global population movements and religion-based conflict on a scale never seen before. At school and on the street, they are exposed to greater religious and cultural diversity than preceding generations ever were (Duhamel and Estivalèzes 2013, 82; Ministère de l'Éducation, des loisirs et du sport 2008, 1). Yet there is little recent data that accounts for the search for meaning and the spiritual lives of adolescents in this part of the world. Major changes in the province's immigration patterns and demographics over the past forty years are well researched, but, beside a few notable exceptions (Cadrin-Pelletier and Nadeau, 1992; Lefebvre, 2008; Gauthier and Perreault, 2008) scholars have rarely investigated how young Quebeckers make sense of themselves and the world around them within a society that defines itself as both secular and religiously inclusive. Furthermore, the recent debate on immigration and reasonable accommodations has shown different responses to the cultural and religious diversity of the Quebec population (Bouchard and Taylor, 2008). It has also shown a significant difference in outlook on these issues between generations, as young people seem

consistently more open to religious difference than their elders. These elements point to a change in Quebec's religious perspective that must be investigated further.

Developing hybrid religious identities in a context of globalization

Qualitative perspectives on Québec adolescents' quest for meaning are thus lacking, whether in the context of academic research or within the debate about the teaching of the various religions that are now part of Quebec society in schools. This research project seeks to address this situation by adding to the limited data we have on adolescents' spiritual lives within a sociological perspective, and to integrate the voice of adolescents in discussions on educational questions that are directly relevant to their development and well-being. The goal of this project was to record and analyse the processes through which Quebec adolescents, specifically 15 to 18 year olds, choose and use elements from different belief and thought systems in order to shape their identity and give meaning to their lives, and to consider what this tells us about the evolution of the religious landscape in Quebec society and the spiritual dynamics of adolescence.

The questions I wanted to explore were as follows:

> 1. In an increasingly multi-religious society like Quebec, what spiritual and/or religious elements do young people use to give meaning to their life and world, and build their identity?

> 2. To what extent are adolescents' systems of meaning an amalgamation of different religious traditions and thought systems? Is there any circulation, transmission or appropriation of religious elements between adolescents of different belief systems?

3. How do adolescents from a francophone, culturally Catholic background assimilate information about people from different religious backgrounds, especially those most visible in Quebec?

4. Do differences in worldviews tend to be a source of conflict or a source of enrichment for adolescents?

5. How do familial transmission, the school environment, media and other factors affect worldview and identity?

6. Are increased tolerance and understanding of religious diversity encouraged by involvement with the Ethics and Religious Culture program?

Choosing Qualitative Methods

Following a micro-qualitative approach (Spickard 2007), more specifically, that of grounded theory (Charmaz 2000, 2006; Charmaz and Henwood 2008; Berg 2004; Bryant and Charmaz 2007), themes, categories and conclusions, situated within the fields of religion, sociology and education, were allowed to emerge from the data. The majority of studies about adolescents and religion or spirituality are designed from a psychological perspective and use quantitative methods; they generally posit religiosity as a protective factor that "lessens risk behaviour [such as drug abuse or criminality] and enhances positive outcomes" (Benson et al 2005, 25; Regnerus and Elder 2003, 10). Yet such a perspective, while not entirely misguided nor held by all scholars who study adolescence, is still dominant in Western scholarship in general, and scholarship on youth in particular – indeed, such "age-old anxiety about youth" (Bibby 2001, 1) is "so widespread that even those interested in young people are inclined to define adolescence itself as a social

problem" (ibid, 1-2). Like other scholars, (Lesko 2001; Piot 2002; Fize 2003; Vadeboncoeur and Patel 2005; Yust et al 2006; Smith and Lundquist Denton 2006) I believe it is important to question this conception of adolescence as problematic, and that is why I am proposing a qualitative study where it is possible to give young participants the opportunity to express their ideas and experiences regarding how they make sense of life[1]. Studies using qualitative methodologies are necessary in order to better understand how adolescents define their spirituality and religiosity, and this from their own perspective.

This study builds on my Master's thesis in educational studies, which found that Quebec teenagers have an interest in religion and spirituality, though in unorthodox and idiosyncratic ways (Martel-Reny 2003), and takes into account results from other studies done in Europe and North America (Bibby 2009; Campiche 1997; Smith and Lundquist Denton 2009; Smith and Snell 2009; Lefebvre, 2008). The data obtained from my doctoral study show that just like their parents, who grew up during or just after the Quiet Revolution, today's teenagers in Quebec are highly suspicious of religious institutions, especially the Catholic Church, and tend to reify religion as a power that limits people's freedom and agency. However, some participants were more positively minded toward spirituality, perceiving it as useful and more open, and tended to be quite accepting of religious diversity.

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[1] Some scholars (Falardeau 2002; Pommereau 2005) conclude that the presence of coherent meaning given to life – through religion, spirituality or other means – can be a key element that prevents numerous problems for adolescents, but especially suicide. Given the high level of suicide among male youths in Quebec, this is a perspective that could benefit from further research.

In order to do so, this thesis starts with a review of the existing literature about youth, religion and spirituality, mostly of studies from Quebec, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and France that have, in the past twenty years, investigated the issue of how youths relate to religion, spirituality, and diversity. The second section of the literature review discusses works that explore spirituality as a growing and distinct field within sociology, education and religious studies, the definitions of spirituality found within these works, and how they may differ from religion. In order to contextualize the study, chapter two outlines the historical events that have shaped the evolution of Quebec's educational system, and within that, of religious education, leading to the implementation of the Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) programme in 2008. Chapter three details the methodological steps taken in order to complete the study, and chapter four lays out the data yielded by each of the 120 questions that were asked to the participants. Finally, in chapter five, I discuss what the findings may mean in terms of youth spirituality and religiosity, of education about religion and diversity, and of religion in Quebec today.

Meta-questions

This study's findings directly inform one of the meta-questions that I seek to investigate with this project, that of spirituality as an emerging concept in the study of contemporary religion. In the past decade, numerous popular books and scholarly articles have been published about spirituality as something that differs from religion (Bosacki and Ota 2000; Carette and King 2005; Fuller 2006; Smith and Lundquist Denton 2005; Smith and Snell 2009), especially in the fields of education, psychology and management (Erricker,

Ota and Erricker 2001; Roehlkepartain and al 2005; Tacey 2003). In these works, spirituality is generally characterized as individualistic, experiential and authentic, while religion is seen as institutional and dogmatic (Fuller 2006; Wuthnow 2007; Heelas and Woodhead 2004). The participants, in line with these definitions, viewed spirituality as something that differs from institutional forms of religion; whether what they call spirituality actually functions differently, sociologically speaking, from religion, needs to be examined through a more detailed analysis. Whether "spirituality" is just another name for what is otherwise called "religion", an entirely new phenomenon, or a mutation of the religious, remains to be seen - for instance, some scholars see spirituality simply as the penetration of capitalism into the domain of religion (Carrette and King 2005), while others see it as a crucial shift in religious paradigms (Heelas and Woodhead 2004).

These findings lead toward another meta-question this study seeks to investigate, that of religious identity and globalization, or more specifically, the question of how the building of religious identity in a specific locale articulates itself with trends and events that are felt globally, such as secularization, globalization, and the perceived threat of religious fundamentalism. With this meta-question, I especially address the distinctiveness of Quebec culture, with its dual legacy of intense religiosity as an identity marker until the 1960s, and its broad rejection of religious institutions from the Quiet Revolution onwards.

Beyond this greater picture, it seems important to investigate the meaning-making strategies of youths for their own sake. Asking adolescents how they experience and

interpret their own spirituality or religiosity is not only an excellent way to document the religious experience of this segment of the population and put it in relation to their society's social and historical evolution, but also a way to recognize them as full beings who are active agents of their own development rather than passive and disengaged objects of study.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

It should be an aim of education to provide children with such "stars" to guide them to richer private lives as well as more generous and thoughtful public lives.
(Noddings 2003, 177)

Select Studies On Youth, Religion And Spirituality

Although this research project is qualitative and based on a small sample of participants, I did include certain wide-sample, quantitative studies in my body of literature, such as the *National Study on Youth and Religion* (Smith and Lundquist-Denton 2006; Smith and Snell 2009), and *With Their Own Voices: A Global Exploration of How Young People Experience and Think about Spiritual Development* (Search Institute 2008). This partly has to do with the fact that there were not many studies on youth and religion available in the mid-2000s when I started conceptualizing my research project. But I also included these studies because the questions they asked their participants were similar to those I wanted to explore, and to provide a comparison with youth religiosity in other Western countries. I reviewed studies with a methodology closer to mine, notably work by Clive Erricker and Cathy Ota of the *Children and Worldviews Project* in the United Kingdom (Erricker and Ota 2001; Erricker et al 1997). Such studies were generally conducted with small samples of about twenty participants, with research teams of one or two people. I also included work specific to the Quebec and Canadian context.

Search Institute's Center for the spiritual development in childhood and adolescence

The Center for the spiritual development in childhood and adolescence is a project of the SEARCH Institute, a private research centre based in Minneapolis (MN, USA). Notable publications include *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (Roehlkepartain et al. 2005), and *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality: Perspectives from the World's Religious Traditions* (Yust et al. 2006). In the first chapter of *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality,* Yust and her colleagues summarize the current state of research on children and adolescent spirituality:

> Despite the popular buzz about spirituality, relatively little critical attention has focused on the spiritual lives of children and adolescents. […] When [they] are considered, one of two emphases appears to dominate. In the field of education, the concern is with how the natural spirit of the child can be nurtured and enhanced through family and classroom practices from birth through higher education. […] In religious disciplines, the primary focus seems to be socialization (or even indoctrination) into a particular form of adult awareness. […] Stereotypes regarding children's capabilities and youth angst limit the type of spiritual nurture that adults believe will be effective in cultivating predetermined beliefs about, and attitudes toward, what is holy or divine. Left unaddressed, these assumptions contribute to the impoverishment of spirituality research, and […] the growing social scientific inquiry and popular discussion regarding spirituality remain relatively uninformed by the perspectives, questions, and wisdom of the world's children [and youths]. Perhaps most significant, however, an important opportunity to enrich the lives of children and adolescents is being lost, set aside by most religious traditions and religious studies scholars [and, I would add, of education scholars] as unworthy of critical attention. (Yust et al. 2006, 2-3)

The authors further explain how these concerns gave rise to the SEARCH Institute's interfaith initiative on spiritual development in childhood and adolescence, spearheaded

by Peter L. Benson, which was conducted between 2006 and 2008, and surveyed 7000 youths between the ages of 12 and 25 in seventeen countries that included Canada, the UK, the US, India, Cameroon, Ukraine, Thailand and Australia. It used multiple methods of investigation that included focus groups and interviews, but mostly surveys with set answers. Key questions included the following:

- How do individual, cultural, and societal perceptions of and beliefs about human nature and transcendent or spiritual realities/beings inform, shape, and give structure/language/narrative to young people's spiritual development?

- What spiritual and religious practices (rituals, rites of passage, disciplines, quests) do they engage in? How do they perceive these shaping or influencing their spiritual development as well as other areas of development?

- What spiritual or transcendent experiences have young people had? At what ages? In what contexts or settings? How do they perceive these shaping or influencing their spiritual development?

- How does the young person interact with her or his environment in regard to spiritual development? What factors within a young person and her or his environment (family, community, broader culture) enhance or thwart spiritual development? What dynamics moderate the bi-directional influence (e.g., goodness of fit, attachment, intentionality)? (Search Institute 2008, 24)

The researchers created a three-dimensional framework based on these questions in order to account for the way "spiritual development is/can be widely affirmed across cultures, traditions, disciplines and worldviews" (24-5). They conceptualize spiritual development as

A constant, ongoing, dynamic, and sometimes difficult interplay between three core developmental processes [...] **Awareness or awakening -** being or becoming aware of,

or awakening to, one's self, others, and the universe (which may be understood as including the sacred or divine) in ways that cultivate identity, meaning, and purpose; **interconnecting and belonging** - seeking, accepting, or experiencing significance in relationships to, and interdependence with, others, the world, or one's sense of the transcendent (often including an understanding of God or a higher power) and linking to narratives, beliefs, and traditions that give meaning to human experience across time; and a **way of living -** authentically expressing one's identity, passions, values, and creativity through relationships, activities, and/or practices that shape bonds with oneself, family, community, humanity, the world, and/or that which one believes to be transcendent or sacred (25).

The key findings of this study can be summarized in eight points, of which I have retained four as directly relevant to my purpose:

1. The majority of participants (93%) believe there is a spiritual dimension to life, which they understood as "believing there is a purpose to life", "believing in God", or "being true to one's inner self".
2. About 30% of participants see themselves as "pretty" or "very" spiritual, but this level varies considerably depending on the country – from a high of 52% in the United States to a low of 23% in Australia.
3. Participants see religion and spirituality as related, but different. 34% said they were both; 23% that they were spiritual but not religious.
4. A majority of participants view both religion and spirituality positively, saying it was usually good. Interestingly, in subsequent focus groups, some participants expressed more positive views about spirituality than religion, as in this example: "Spiritual is something one experiences in your own being. Religion is, well, your religion. Most of our religion is forces – the dos and don'ts." (Female, 15, South Africa) (Search Institute 2008, 2)

The National Study on Youth and Religion

The NSYR is a longitudinal research project conducted in the USA out of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and one of the biggest studies on the religiosity of American youths ever undertaken (Smith and Lundquist Denton 2006; Smith and Snell 2009). It was conducted in different phases, one on the religious lives of adolescents (age 13 to 17), another on that of emerging adults (age 18 to 23). The phase on adolescents collected data through in-depth interviews with 267 teenagers in 45 American states, selected from 3370 participants who completed the NSYR telephone survey. For the emerging adult phase, the investigators re-contacted most of the youths who had already participated in the first two phases of the NSYR, resulting in 230 in-depth interviews. The findings of this project are numerous and multi-faceted; for the sake of this thesis, I will focus on findings that directly connect with my own research project.

In *Soul Searching*, Smith and Lundquist Denton identify several characteristics of contemporary American adolescent religiosity (2005, 155-7). Their research shows that religion is a significant presence in the lives of many American teens today. Even if their beliefs are not well articulated, the majority still embrace some kind of religious identity, and the majority are affiliated with a religious organization. The authors also conclude that American teenagers' religiosity is conventional, and that the majority of American teens are not alienated or rebellious when it comes to religious involvement; rather, most are quite content to follow in their parents' footsteps (119). Furthermore, most are positive about religion, pointing out the advantages they see in it for individuals and society (125). Only a few American teenagers are exposed or interested in the "spiritual

but not religious" quest (127), and there are very few American youth under the age of 18 who appear to be exposed to, interested in, or actively pursuing a "spiritual but not religious" eclectic personal quest. Although most teenagers grant other people theoretical right to pursue a religious seeker's quest, very few are interested in doing it themselves, or know someone who does. The single most important influence on the religious and spiritual lives of American adolescents is their parents, but grandparents and other relatives, mentors, and youth workers can be influential as well. Finally, the study found that adolescents' understanding of religion and spirituality seemed weak, underlining a lack of religious literacy. Most teens in the study had a hard time explaining what they believed, what it meant, and what the implications of their beliefs for their lives were (131).

One of Smith's most interesting theories is that the actual religion of the majority of American teenagers (age 13-17) is something he calls Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD) rather than any world religion. MTD can be defined as a widely shared, largely apolitical, interreligious faith fostering subjective wellbeing and lubricating interpersonal relationships in the local public sphere. MTD has five key beliefs:

> First, a God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth. Second, God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions. Third, the central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself. Fourth, God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem. Fifth, good people go to heaven when they die. (Smith and Snell, 154)

For Smith, MTD may well be the new mainstream American faith, displacing the substantive traditional faiths of conservative, black, and mainline Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism, as the believers get to enjoy whatever particulars of their own faith heritage while also reaping the benefits of this shared, harmonizing, interfaith religion. This helps explain the noticeable lack of religious conflict between teenagers of different faiths (ibid 166). Moral Therapeutic Deism is about inculcating a moralistic approach to life, as it "teaches" that central to living a good life is being a good, moral person, that is, "being nice, pleasant, respectful, responsible, at work on self-improvement, taking care of one's health, and doing one's best to be successful" (ibid 163). MDT provides therapeutic benefits to its adherents; it is about feeling good, happy, secure, at peace, attaining subjective well-being, being able to resolve problems, and getting along amiably with other people (164). Finally, MDT entails a belief in a particular kind of God: one who exists, created the world, and defines our general moral order, but who is not especially involved in human affairs. God gets involved only when called upon, mostly in case of a problem. Like the deistic God of 18th century philosophers, the MTD God is a divine creator and lawgiver. But he is not demanding. He is something like **"a combination of Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist" (165).**

In *Souls in Transition*, Smith elaborates a six-fold typology of adolescent religious types, based on the last wave of data from the National Study on Youth and Religion. This typology illustrates the saliency of religion in American society, where a majority of people are favourable to religion but where religious literacy is fairly low.

1. Committed traditionalists (15% of participants) have a strong religious faith, well-articulated beliefs, and an active religious practice, which form a significant part of their

identity. They tend to adhere to mainstream traditions (such as conservative Protestantism and Mormonism in the US), and to focus on inner piety and personal moral integrity.

2. Selective adherents (30%) believe and/or perform some aspects of the religious tradition they were brought up in while neglecting others. Some of their opinions and wants are different from what is permitted in their familial religion, especially regarding issues such as birth control, sex before marriage, and the need to attend religious services, so they pick and chose.

3. Spiritually open (15%) participants are not committed to any particular faith, but have some interest in spirituality and religion, although they are sceptical of some aspects and receptive to others. They explore specific ideas or practices without committing, and are either from non-religious, nominal, or non-believing backgrounds.

4. Religiously indifferent (25%) participants neither practice nor oppose religion; they are simply too involved in other activities and interests to care. They come from any religious or non-religious background.

5. Religiously disconnected (5%) participants were those who had little or no exposure to any form of religious people, ideas, and organizations. Just like the religiously indifferent, they do not oppose or have interest in religion, but in their case it is because they have little relational ties to it, generally being from non-religious backgrounds.

6. Irreligious (10%) participants are critical of religion in general and reject the idea of faith. Although they concede that religion can be functionally good for some people, they themselves have thought about existential questions and opted for secularism or atheism. Some are angry at religions, or mystified that anyone would believe in them. They are either from non-religious families, or ex-believers of their childhood faith. (Smith and Snell 2009, 166-168)

A last notable point made by Smith and Lundquist Denton is that "an important impediment to understanding adolescent life is the routine failure of adults to recognize the responsibility of their own adult world […] for presenting huge challenges to youth. Instead, adults typically frame adolescence in a way that defines teenagehood as a social problem itself" (264), a view that is characterized as counterproductive by the authors, creating distance where connection is needed. Rather, many problems and issues that

adults consider teenage problems are in fact inextricably linked to adult-world problems, and the traditional "storm and stress" model of adolescence accurately depicts only a minority of teens - about the same amount of adults suffering of storm and stress at a given time[2].

Religion in Education. A contribution to Dialogue or a factor of Conflict in transforming societies of European Countries (REDCo)

REDCo is "the first substantial research project on religion and education financed by the European Commission, running from March 1st 2006 until March 31st 2009. The team of scholars involved in this ambitious project includes scholars known for their contributions to research on religion and education, such as Jean-Paul Willaime from the Sorbonne, and Robert Jackson from Warwick University (U.K.) under the coordination of Wolfram Weisse of Hamburg University. It has carried out qualitative and quantitative research in eight countries (Germany, England, France, The Netherlands, Norway, Estonia, Russia, Spain) mainly focusing on religion in the lives and schooling of students in the 14–16 age group, using the methods of text analysis, participant observation, qualitative and quantitative questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and videotaping in order to gather their data. The students expressed their attitudes about personal experience with religion, the social dimension of religion, and religion in school (Weisse et al 2007, 2).

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[2] Vadeboncoeur (2005, 6-7) remarks that "although a century stands between current research and [G. Stanley] Hall's (1904) definition of adolescence as a stage marked by 'storm and stress', the insertion of this [concept] within industrialized social contexts remains a prominent fiction. [...] While maintaining that they have uncovered an objective phenomenon – [one] that exists in the real, external world – these discourses actually produce the phenomenon they claim to study and understand."

Three volumes documenting the REDCo findings have been published: *Religion and Education in Europe* (Jackson et al. 2007); *Encountering Religious Pluralism in School and Society* (Knauth et al. 2008); and *Teenagers' Perspectives on the Role of Religion in their Lives, Schools and Societies* (Valk et al. 2009). The main findings of the REDCo project have been thus summarized in a report for the EU and other agencies:

1. The majority of students appreciated the religious heterogeneity in their societies, although a range of prejudices was expressed.

2. The most important source of information about religions and worldviews is generally the family, followed by the school.

3. The school population includes a sizeable group of students for whom religion is important in their lives, a sizeable group for whom religion is not important and a sizeable group who hold a variety of occasionally fluctuating positions between these two poles.

4. Irrespective of their religious positions a majority of students are interested in learning about religions in school.

5. Students are well aware of and experience religious diversity mostly in school, but also outside school.

6. Students are generally open towards peers of different religious backgrounds. At the same time they tend to socialise with peers from the same background as themselves, even when they live in areas characterised by religious diversity.

7. Students often express a tolerant attitude more at an abstract than a practical level. The tolerance expressed in classroom discussion is not always replicated in their daily life/world.

8. Those who learn about religious diversity in school are more willing to enter into conversations about religions and worldviews with students from other backgrounds than those who do not have this opportunity for learning.

9. Students desire peaceful coexistence across religious differences, and believe that this is possible.

10. Students believe that the main preconditions for peaceful coexistence between people of different religions are knowledge about each other's religions and worldviews, shared interests, and joint activities.

11. In most countries students support the right of adherents to a moderate expression of

religious faith in school. For example, they do not oppose in school the wearing of unobtrusive religious symbols or object to voluntary acts of worship for students who are adherents of a particular religion.

12. Students for whom religion is important in their lives are more likely to respect the religious background of others and value the role of religion in the world.

13. Most students would like to see schools dedicated more to teaching about different religions than to guiding them towards a particular religious belief or worldview.

14. Students express their desire that learning about religions should take place in a safe class-room environment governed by agreed procedures for expression and discussion. (Weisse 2009, 2-3)

These findings suggest that education about religious diversity is a positive thing, not only in terms of its social impacts, but also for the students who clearly are in favour of it. Based on these findings, the REDCo team made four specific recommendations in terms of public policy: encouraging peaceful coexistence; promoting diversity management; including religious as well as non-religious worldviews; and increasing the competence of education professionals in terms of religious diversity – all within a "degree of differentiation at the national level regarding the implementation of policies in the educational system." (4). While it is not the purpose of this work to analyse public policies, it is worth noting that these recommendations are highly similar to the conclusions of the Report on the place of religion in Quebec schools (Proulx et al. 1999), which were the starting point of the current Quebec ERC Program, as well as those of the *Rapport de la Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement liées aux différences culturelles* (Bouchard and Taylor 2008).

Roland Campiche: Youth Culture and Religions in Europe

Roland Campiche (1997), following a study of religion among young Europeans in the late 1990s, noticed the decline of a strong religious identity among them, giving way to a diffuse identity and an indifference to religion (62), as well as a fairly low occurrence of transmission of religious values between generations, (in about 30% of cases). He also found that limited schooling increases the transmission of religious values, while "la poursuite d'études favoriserait la perte ou les recompositions d'identité religieuse" (63). Finally, he observed that a sizeable part of European youths had built their own religious identity rather than receiving it from religious institutions. Based on his findings, Campiche developed a six-fold socio-religious typology of young Europeans:

1. Non-religious (23%) youths exhibit strong relativism and interest for politics, are often aligned on the left of the political spectrum, and prefer new ideas.

2. Religious youths (11%) favour strong and clear moral guidelines that determine what is right and wrong, are generally on the right of the political spectrum, and prefer traditional ideas.

3. Heterodox believers (10%) have strong beliefs but ones that differ from the "religious" type, above, and are not in line with the orthodox dogmas of religious institutions. They are a socially composite group, and the most pessimistic one.

4. Secular humanists (10%) share characteristics with the "non-religious" type, but think that religious institutions must take position on social issues. They have a high level of interest for politics and lean left of the political spectrum, holding humanistic and universalist values. They are especially present in the UK and Scandinavia, but also in Spain.

5. Irregular or lukewarm believers (23%) adhere to certain beliefs and give the impression that they keep connections with the religious, but without it being a fundamental part of their lives.

6. Ritualists (24%) belong to a religious confession, and are characterized by their attachment to the ceremonies and rituals that mark the main events of life, such as birth, marriage and death. While they do not have a strong religious identity, they express a

need for rites of passage. Whether they experience these as social or religious rituals remains, according to Campiche, open to further investigation. (Campiche 1997,)

An interesting aspect of Campiche's study is the integration of the participants' position on the political spectrum in relation to their degree of religious implication, a dimension that is lacking in many American studies; another is that it offers a comparative perspective on youth religion in national contexts in Western Europe, some of which share elements with Quebec's social and religious context.

Reginald Bibby: Religion and the Emerging Millennials in Canada

Reginald Bibby of the University of Lethbridge (Alberta) has been conducting extensive surveys on many aspects of Canadian culture (youth and adult) for the past thirty years, including religion. His 2001 study *Canada's Teen: Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow* is based on 3500 questionnaires filled by 15-19 year olds in 150 randomly selected schools in Canada (6). Among many topics, Bibby enquired about Canadian youths' religion and spirituality, and found that roughly one in five Canadian teenagers were involved in organized religion, and that 75% identified with a religious group such as Catholic, Protestant, Jewish or Muslim. For Bibby, this means that "in a psychological and emotional sense, they still 'think' they are 'religious somethings', even if they are not actively participating" (116-7). Further, he found that nine out of ten adolescents "anticipate turning to [religious] groups for future ceremonies relating to marriages and funerals" (118). This latent religious identification surfaces "during times when couples are thinking where and how they want to get married, what should 'be done' now that the baby has arrived, where they should have a relative's funeral" (ibid). Bibby contends that

this desire for rites of passage is not just a case of "bowing to family pressures", with ministers frequently encountering young people who "have little understanding of theology, yet have a sometimes poorly articulated sense that 'God needs to be brought in on the event'" (ibid). Yet I wonder if calling on religious institutions for rites of passages comes from a genuine feeling of belonging to a religious institution, or if people turn to these by default, because there are no other meaningful options to mark important events in their lives.

Bibby also found that Canadian teens frequently raise questions about life's origins and purpose, suffering, and life after death. 78% of his participants said they often or sometime raised questions about what happens after death, 72% about the purpose of life, and 56% about the presence of a god or supreme being (119-20). They are also interested in interpretations of life and existence that transcend "the human plane", with 86% of his participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that life has meaning beyond what we ourselves give to it (120).

When it comes to defining what a spiritual person is, responses were extremely varied, encompassing ideas such as someone who "has a close relationship with God […] is in touch with themselves and cares about others […] is looking for or has found God […] believes in an afterlife […] has some guidelines in their life" (121). Bibby rightly points out that North-American media have given extensive attention to questions pertaining to the "spiritual quest" since the early 90s, as they have to the supernatural (121-2). Thus 78% of Bibby's participants believed in life after death, 73% in the existence of god, and

68% in a higher power that cares about them (123). This, however, does not translate into a high level of private religious practices: 33% of the participants said they prayed weekly or more often. Finally, despite not being involved in organized religions, many young people in Bibby's sample are seemingly interested in many things that organized religion is about (127). Bibby interprets these findings as evidence that Canadian teens are receptive to interpretations of existence that transcend the human plane.

In a more recent study, *The Emerging Millennials* (2009), Bibby sharpened his analysis by doing comparisons across provinces, and across decades. He devotes an entire chapter to religion among Canadian teenagers, and observes that

> many [Canadians] indicate that they have little use for organized religion. […] Yet, in the next breath, large numbers of people are quick to say that they are spiritual or interested in spirituality. […] so thumbs down on religion and churches, thumbs up on spirituality and self-motivated virtues. […] Much of today's ambivalence about religion and religious organizations can be tracked to – you guessed it – Baby Boomers. (Bibby 2009, 163)

Eight out of ten participants to Bibby's study said that they had discussed the question of the existence of god or a higher power, but only 67% had concluded that such a force existed (down from 73% in 2001) (166). Bibby found that there had been a marked increase in the numbers of teenage atheists, from 6% in the mid-1980s to 16% in the late-2000s. Bibby (176-7) also found that fewer teens now identify as mainline Protestant or Catholic (from 50% to 32%) and more as other faiths (3% to 16%) such as Islam (5%), Buddhism (3%), Hinduism (2%) and Aboriginal spirituality (2%). The number of teens who do not identify with any faith at all has also risen sharply (12% to 32%), and the author underlines that a salient point of this data is "the growing polarization between

teenagers who are actively involved in religious groups and those who are not" (178), with high levels of involvement among Conservative Protestant, Sikh, Muslim, Hindu and Jewish youths, and a steady decline in Catholic attendance in Quebec since the 1980s (179).

More specifically, "among Quebec teens, those who said they 'definitely' believe in God plummeted from 55% in 1984 to 22% in 2008" (169), while in the rest of Canada "the proportion of teenagers who say they 'definitely' believe in God has dropped since the 1980s from 54% to 41%" (ibid). Bibby concludes that all over Canada, diminishing levels of belief in god or a higher power among adults has "not so much involved a movement to outright atheism so much as a movement from decisiveness about belief in God to tentative belief or increasing agnosticism. With teens we see what amounts to an ongoing intergenerational shift – from tentativeness to agnosticism, and from agnosticism to atheism" (ibid).

Christine Cadrin-Pelletier and Sylvie Nadeau: L'expérience morale et spirituelle d'étudiants du secondaire

An older but important study of youth and religion in Quebec, Christine Cadrin-Pelletier and Sylvie Nadeau's *L'expérience morale et spirituelle d'étudiants du secondaire* (1992) remains pertinent despite being over two decades old. It is probably the first study of its kind and scope, which investigated the moral and spiritual experience of teenagers through directly questioning them from a non-confessional perspective. The authors surveyed over 6000 grade 10 and 11 youths across Quebec, through a 45 item

questionnaire divided in three sections (relation to others, to self, and to transcendence). Participants included pupils who were attending both private and public schools, who were francophone as well as anglophone (though not allophone), and who were attending schools that belonged both to Catholic and Protestant school boards. The authors' aim was to go beyond the moral anomie popularly assigned to adolescents, and explore

> à quoi ressemblent les jeunes du secondaire aux plans moral et spirituel, de quoi est faite leur expérience à cet égard, en quoi la formation morale ou religieuse offerte à l'école les rejoint-elle et dans quelle mesure les jeunes peuvent en tirer profit; comment contribuer au développement moral des jeunes d'aujourd'hui et sur quelles bases favoriser le développement spirituel des adolescents et des adolescents. (1)

This study remains pertinent because its conclusions overlap with the findings of many other studies on youth and religion, especially regarding adolescents' search for meaning:

> Les résultats donnent un portrait nuancé des jeunes, au plan moral, […] dans lequel se profilent, pour plusieurs d'entre eux : un idéal de liberté responsable, des rapports équitables avec les autres et de respect des personnes; une attitude ouverte envers les autres […]; un intérêt marqué pour les questions fondamentales de « sens » au sujet de la vie et de la mort; des prédispositions à réfléchir par soi-même et à discuter avec d'autres pour trouver des réponses aux enjeux de l'existence […]; enfin, des attentes des jeunes pour que les cours d'enseignement moral ou religieux […] les guident à l'égard des défis personnels et sociaux auxquels ils sont confrontés. Les jeunes du secondaire ne sont pas sans repères moraux. […] Ils sont, malgré cela, en attente de plus dans leur formation, […] sentant confusément, sans doute, l'urgence d'être formés pour faire face à la complexité de la vie. (127)

More specifically, 71% of the participants disagreed that "le monde va si mal qu'il n'y a pas d'avenir pour l'humanité", while 29% agreed. Twenty years later, while the threat of nuclear obliteration that was so prevalent in the 1980s is less present in the public mind,

young people are more than ever aware of the menace of global warming, as we shall see in chapter 4. This study concluded that the participants displayed "l'expérience des adolescents et des adolescentes comporte des résonances spirituelles et religieuses. Elle peuvent êtres fragiles ou inarticulées, elles sont surtout intimes, mais présentes." (128)

Sandra Bosacki and Cathy Ota: Preadolescents' Voices: a consideration of British and Canadian children's reflections on religion, spirituality and their sense self

This study is part of the Children and Worldviews Project, a collective spearheaded by Clive and Jane Erricker and Cathy Ota from the University of Winchester in England, which conducts qualitative studies that are smaller in scope, using "qualitative, narrative methods to investigate the worldviews of children, that is, the way in which they make sense of their experiences and matters which are of particular importance to them[3]". It developed into the International Association for Children's Spirituality (IACS) in 2006, following conferences on children and youth spirituality, as well as publication of the Journal of Children Spirituality[4]. The IACS aims to "promote research and practice in relation to children's spirituality; to promote effective communication and the distribution of information between those involved in the development of research and practice which focuses on children's spirituality, and to promote children's spirituality as an important educational focus within wider contexts"[5].

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[3] http://www.childrenspirituality.org/support/projects/childrenandworldviews, accessed May 27, 2013.
[4] *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*. London: Taylor and Francis.
[5] http://childrenspirituality.org/about/, retreived December 12, 2012.

In "Preadolescents' Voices: a consideration of British and Canadian children's reflections on religion, spirituality and their sense of self", Cathy Ota (Winchester University, U.K.) presents the result of a study she conducted with 135 children who were between 9 and 11 years old, in four United Kingdom schools. Through open-ended interviews in mixed-gender groups, she "sought to establish the nature of the children's worldviews and how these worldviews were constructed" (Bosacki and Ota 2000, 210). In the same article, Sandra Bosacki reports on a study she did with 128 Canadian preadolescent (11-12 year old) boys and girls. To probe the youths about their global sense of self-worth, she administered in-class questionnaires and then interviewed them, asking "if they were happy the way they were or if they wished they were different" (213).

Bosacki and Ota found that the adolescents they interviewed "were eager to engage in conversations about deeper philosophical, existential and ontological issues" (210). My own research suggests the same thing, and also that adolescents seldom find a place where they can safely voice and discuss such concerns, in a way that is nurturing and non-judgmental. The making of meaning then is a co-construction that builds itself over time, between the experiences of the individual, the narrative which they then form around it, and the way in which it is conveyed, shared and given feedback on by significant people in the person's environment (parents, teachers, siblings, friends).

In this article, the authors define spirituality as a dimension that "can be approached as the context within which human thinking and feeling can be synthesized and integrated" (200). Spirituality is seen as "our lifelong search for meaningfulness and purpose in the

world. In short, it refers to how we make sense of our selves and the universe (Hutchinson 1998). Thus spirituality and stories about our self are one and the same" (206). For Bosacki and Ota, spirituality also has a fundamental relational component – relation to the self, and relation to others and the world. They extend this definition to suggest that spirituality and a sense of self can be equated, as "spirituality is the feeling of genuine connectedness, not only to others and nature/universe, but also with oneself" (206). Finally, the authors question the linear notion of spiritual development, modeled on theories of psychological development such as Freud's or Erickson's, that are so prevalent in our societies as to suggest a cultural obsession with classification and gradation. They suggest that notions of development as a multi-dimensional process may be a more useful and accurate description of a child's development.

Marie-Paule Martel-Reny: Un point de vue différent sur la place de la religion à l'école

I end this section with a review of my M.A. thesis' results (2003), as it directly influenced my research interests at the doctoral level. My goal here is not to rewrite my Master's thesis; rather, I want to point to continuity or discrepancy in results between sets of data from similar samples of participants that were gathered eight years apart. The data for this study was gathered between May and September 2002 through an anonymous questionnaire of forty-two multiple-choice and semi-open questions, which was administered to a sample of 262 grade 10 students who were between 14 and 17 years old, with a near-equal gender ratio (50.2% girls, 49.8% boys).

65% percent of the participants were born in Québec: 40% from parents also born in the province, and 25% from immigrant parents. The remaining 35% were born outside the province, mostly in China, South-East Asia, Russia, North Africa, and Haiti. While this study was initially designed as a quantitative one, a qualitative dimension was added early on in the data gathering process, because many participants asked to share personal opinions or stories about their own religious experiences. As it was not possible to gather these stories verbally without compromising the participants' anonymity, I asked them to write their comments at the end of the questionnaire. These comments became one of the most valuable and revealing parts of the study. Not only did they corroborate the quantitative data, but they also illustrate the participants' preoccupations pertaining to questions of meaning and religious diversity.

The first noteworthy finding pertains to the level of comfort of the participants with other religions. When asked if there were any religions they were uncomfortable with, 72% answered that no religion made them uncomfortable. 28% of the participants answered that some did; in this case they were asked to identify for which religion(s) they felt that way. Ten single participants named Islam. Six more mentioned the Raelians, five "extremist Islam", and another five "any extremist religion".

The next important result pertained to the participants' interest in various religions. They were provided with a list of the major world religions and other lesser-known ones, and were asked to pick the one they were most interested in. The participants had an overwhelming preference for Buddhism (27%), followed by "others not on the list"

(15%) such as cults, Wicca, Satanism, Voodoo, Shamanism, and Candomblé. Christianity came in third (12%), followed by Hinduism, Islam, and not interested in any religion (7% each). We may wonder if this clear preference for Buddhism has a real impact on these youth's values and behaviours, or if it is merely a taste for the exotic. Unlike other institutional religions, Buddhism is perceived as largely free from the negative attributes that are often associated to the idea of religion, such as rigid dogmas, sectarian conflict, and constraining institutions, and perceived as peaceful and playful, experiential and somewhat easy to practice, and it may be why it is appealing to teenagers (Gauthier and Perreault, 16). This interest for the exotic is also reflected in cults and lesser-known religions coming in second; but it is also telling that the third choice of the participants was Christianity, which suggest curiosity for the religious history of Quebec, its mores and symbols.

This study probed the level of satisfaction of participants with moral and religious education classes, which have since been replaced by the Ethics and Religious Culture Programme. Here the participants were asked if they were following religious (Catholic) education classes or moral (non-religious) education classes, and then to rate this class. 53% of the participants were enrolled in moral education classes, and 44% in Catholic religious education classes. Both were either very much - 38% - or moderately - 41% satisfied with this class. The reasons invoked for this satisfaction included being able to have genuine discussions about religion; being able to reflect about the meaning of one's life; and having the opportunity to get acquainted with other cultures and religions. 21%, of the participants were moderately (11%) or very (10%) dissatisfied with their moral or

religious education classes. They either felt that they were being indoctrinated in something they did not believe in; that they could not express what they thought about religious issues in the context of their class; or they thought that the class was disconnected from social realities. The data did not show a correlation between participation in religious education classes versus moral education classes and the satisfaction level.

Finally, 73% of participants believed in god or a transcendent power, 17% did not, and 8% did not know. Some participants were very comfortable with the idea of a higher power, but that did not mean that they agreed part and parcel with religious institutions. Others were clearly atheist, and did not see the need for a divine figure in their lives, or were critical of the power exerted over some people by religious leaders and institutions. Others dabbled in syncretism, uniquely mixing and matching elements from different religions. Overall, the results suggest that teenagers are more preoccupied by questions of meaning than reported by the media and held by popular belief, hold a strong curiosity for different worldviews and how they are lived in daily life, and are struggling to find answers to life's fundamental questions.

Salient Points

What do these studies tell us about young people, and their relation to spirituality and religion? The first issue that stands out is that of religious identity. According to Smith and Lundquist Denton, most American teenagers not only identify, but are affiliated with, a religious institution, while Bibby reports that while the majority of Canadian

adolescents affiliate with a religious denomination, few actually attend religious institutions. In contrast, the European youths surveyed by Campiche showed a decline in marked religious identity, and tended to build their religious identity by themselves without attending religious institutions. Such a decline in a strong religious identity has also been noted by Bibby among Quebec teens, and a point that is also salient in my doctoral data. Further, the family is identified as the primary place for transmission of religious values and worldviews in all the reviewed studies, which was also the case for my participants – although in their case it is an agnostic, atheistic and anti-clerical worldview that was transmitted.

The second noteworthy issue is that of religious diversity. Participants in all the reviewed studies display a notable openness to religious differences. Smith theorizes that this has to do with Moral Therapeutic Deism being the actual worldview of the majority of American teenagers, beyond whatever faith they adhere to (see page 13). Yet this openness to religious diversity may be differ in principle and in practice, as the REDCo team's results indicate: their participants socialized mostly with people from similar backgrounds and did not always enact the tolerance they displayed in school discussions in real life situations. The participants in my doctoral study displayed a the opposite attitude: the majority had friends from varied ethno-religious backgrounds, and said that religion was not a factor in choosing their friends, although they drew the line when religious mores became "too" visible in the public domain, as with Muslim women wearing the hijab.

Smith and Lundquist Denton observed that their participants generally had a weak understanding both of religion and spirituality, also noted by Bibby. This lack of religious literacy does not seem to preclude an interest for learning about religious matters and exploring questions of meaning, as found by REDCo, Bibby, Cadrin-Pelletier and Nadeau, Bosacki and Ota, and Martel-Reny (2003). Indeed, information about religions and worldviews without indoctrination seems to be a factor that contributes to social stability, as underlined by the REDCo team's observation that youths who "learn about religious diversity are more willing to enter into conversations about religions and worldviews with other students" (3).

In all the reviewed typologies, there is a sharp difference between youths who have a strong faith (Smith's Committed Traditionalists, Campiche's Religious youths), those who perform certain parts of a religious tradition with lukewarm faith (Smith's Selective Adherents, Campiche's Irregular Believers), those who have an interest in spiritual and religious matters with committing to a specific tradition (Smith's Spiritually Open youths, Campiche's Heterodox Believers), and those who reject religion and spirituality or are indifferent to it (Smith's Religiously Indifferent, Religiously Disconnected, and Irreligious youths, Campiche's Non-Religious youths and Secular Humanists). In Canada, the two fastest-growing types are the strong believers, and those who do not believe at all, as reported by Bibby (2009), who attributes this polarization to increased immigration and secularization.

Smith and Lundquist Denton as well as the SEARCH institute (2008) found that young people generally view religion positively, although this is highly dependent on the country, with young American and Canadians generally being more positive toward religion and spirituality than European and Australian youths, as shown by the REDCo results. The SEARCH Institute researchers (2008) found that their participants had a more positive view of spirituality than religion, and this point also strongly comes out of my doctoral data. While I discuss in greater depth the differences between spirituality and religion in the next section, it is worth noting that empirical studies on religion and spirituality have also explored them as two separate (if related) constructs, indicating a change in worldviews that is present in many Western societies.

Defining Spirituality

One of this thesis' aims is to review current research on spirituality, to assess whether the participants make a difference between religion and spirituality, and if that is meaningful in the context of Quebec society. Spirituality is a concept that is difficult to define. Is it a genuinely new phenomenon, or a reworking of religion in the context of today's secularized societies? Yet it has been used in different ways by various researchers in religious studies and other disciplines such as psychology, education, and business in the past decades (Holmes 2007; Heelas 2008), as well as being increasingly used in popular speech, especially in Euro-American societies (Wood 2010, 270; Lefebvre, 2008). As Robert C. Fuller (2006, 1) puts it, "almost everyone I talk to these days describes him or herself as spiritual. Yet few have a very clear idea of what 'being spiritual' really means. Most of us find it easier to use the word as vaguely as possible". Although the words

"spirituality" and "religion have different meanings, up to the twentieth century there were virtually synonymous; as Solange Lefebvre remarks, "au sens théologique, [la spiritualité] désigne […] le formes particulières que prennent les croyances et les pratiques afférentes dans les religions" (2008, 184). Over the past twenty-five years, scholars have attempted to define the possible differences between world religions, which are historical and institutional, and modes of beliefs and rituals that do not conform to these. Thus the word "spirituality" has increasingly been used to designate an alternate form of belief, one that stands outside religious institutions and held by people who do not define themselves as religious. Yet the contemporary concept of spirituality remains extremely fluid – not to say unclear – and each scholar working on this issue carefully describes what they mean by that term, as we will see in this section.

Robert C. Fuller: Spiritual, but not Religious

In *Spiritual but not Religious*, Robert C. Fuller (2001) equates spirituality with genuine faith, one that is lived in the 'private' realm of thought and personal experience, and is associated with higher levels of interest in mysticism, experimentation with unorthodox beliefs/practice, and negative feelings toward clergy and churches. He points out that "before the twentieth century the terms religious and spiritual were used more or less interchangeably. But a number of modern intellectual and cultural forces have accentuated differences between the "private" and "public" spheres of life. […] Many began to associate genuine faith with the "private" realm of personal experience rather than the "public" realm of institutions, creeds and rituals" (5). In contrast, he puts religion in the 'public' realm of institutions, creeds, and rituals, which involves membership in

religious institutions, participation in formal rituals, and adherence to official denominational doctrines, and association with higher levels of church attendance and commitment to orthodox beliefs.

Fuller thus identifies 3 types of what he calls "unchurched" Americans, people who are outside the purview of traditional religious institutions:

1. **Not religious at all** (1 in 7). Those are secular humanists who are completely indifferent about religion, reject supernatural understandings of the world and rely solely on reason and common sense to make decisions and lead their lives.
2. **Ambiguous towards organized religion** (1 in 10). These people belong to a church but rarely attend, or they attend a church but do not join its community.
3. **Unchurched people** (20%) are concerned with spiritual issues, but choose to pursue them outside formal religious organizations, and identify themselves as spiritual but not religious. Some are "highly active seekers" who are more concerned with spiritual development than the majority of churchgoers and view life as a spiritual journey (4). They value curiosity, intellectual freedom, and experiential approaches to religion. (Fuller 2001, 34)

For Fuller, it is important to distinguish "unchurched" spirituality from secular interests, as "it is not sufficient for beliefs or practices to function *like* a religion for us to consider them spiritual. Many secular activities meet some of the social and psychological needs often associated with religion (providing a sense of meaning, fostering inner satisfaction or building community)" (8). Yet such activities lack a distinctive spiritual quality, consisting of attitudes, ideas, lifestyles, and specific practices based upon a conviction, first, that the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its significance, and second, that union or harmonious relation with this "spiritual more" is our true end, as proposed by William James (2003).

Finally, Fuller contends that "spirituality exists wherever we struggle with the issue of how our lives fit into the greater cosmic scheme of things. […] We also become spiritual when we become moved by values such as beauty, love, or creativity, that seem to reveal a meaning or power beyond our visible world." (8), and that "unchurched" spirituality is reshaping the faith of many who belong to mainstream religious organizations, having a major impact on American society (9).

Solange Lefebvre: Youth Culture and Spirituality

In this thickly referenced essay published in 2008, Solange Lefebvre addresses the issue of youth spirituality and culture in Western countries. She defines the terms "spirituality" and "religion" by looking at their etymology, with "spirituality's" original meaning being found in the word "breath", calling forth notions of the invisible and intangible, and is cognate to the latin word *spiritus*, the greek *pneuma*, and the Hebrew *rouah*, which are related to notions of breathing, of a wind that animates beyond matter, the spirit of god in Judaism and Christianity. In Western thought, spirituality stopped being purely religious after the Enlightenment; today, it is has an individual character that allows one to affirm their religious freedom outside of institutions. In contrast, the etymology of the term "religion" is contested. Although it is often linked to the Latin *religiare*, to relate, it could also come from the word *relegere*, to reflect, re-read, or meditate upon. Either way, Lefebvre agrees with the basic definition given by E.B. Taylor that religion is at the very least "a belief in supernatural beings" (184). As for the term "religiosity", she defines it as a religious feeling, with or without formal adhesion to an institution.

Lefebvre rightly underlines that beyond these definitions, the distinction between religion and spirituality is so much part of usual parlance that it must be taken into account when studying contemporary religiosity (186). In this context, spirituality is, as we have seen in previous pages, regarded as more individual, freer, with greater emphasis on one's experience. It is also understood as interior but inclusive, pluralistic, and defined not by religious institutions but by individuals themselves. Spirituality is linked to meaning making and coherence, and Lefebvre suggests that the expression *quête de sens* (also used by R. Lemieux, below) could be used instead of spirituality, as it often relates to seeking coherence and making meaning out of life's various dimensions (188-9).

Raymond Lemieux: Les itinéraires de sens

In a series of articles published in 2002, Raymond Lemieux defines the religious in a wide way, inspired by Peter Berger's definition. Religion is thus the "établissement, à travers l'activité humaine, d'un ordre sacré englobant toute la réalité, c'est à dire d'un cosmos sacré qui sera capable d'assumer sa permanence face au chaos" (P. Berger, *La religion dans la conscience moderne*, quoted in Lemieux, 3). For Lemieux, it is rather the notion of *itinéraire de sens* that is closer to that of spirituality. He defines this as "une *composition personnelle* dont la logique n'est plus celle des institutions du sens, celles des dogmatiques, mais une logique *affective*, renvoyant aux besoins sentis et appréhendés par les individus, lié à la façon dont chacun est *affecté* par les expériences qui s'imposent à lui" (9). Thus the individual can build her personal history in a way that allows her to overcome the obstacles thrown her way and the irruption of otherness in her own life (10).

Lemieux's *itinéraire de sens* has four main characteristics:

1. There is no notion of ultimate destination, but rather, successive re-readings of the itinerary one has treaded, which are never definitive.
2. One's itinerary of meaning is generally perceived as progress by the individual. The moves accomplished by one are seen as allowing progress toward greater consciousness, although this aspect can also be perceived as an imperative to perform and always do better.
3. Moments of re-composition in one's history are often associated with unwanted experiences of rupture that are often painful, but that open unto a new kind of relation to the individual's environment. One's beliefs thus get structured by the void caused by the absence of something that is wanted.
4. Inscription of one's personal history within a larger history. The *itinéraire de sens* cannot be thought outside of lived experiences nor outside of a given culture and history. (Lemieux 2002, 11-12)

Thus for Lemieux, if various types of spirituality are so popular, it is because there is an active spiritual quest among many people – especially in light of the experiences of limitation that each person goes through on a daily basis, and that must be transcended so that one does not get trapped in non-sense. For him, beliefs answer to a market imperative, and it is in the market's interest that what he calls "les biens de salut" - that is, beliefs and belonging to a certain group - be ephemeral and in competition with one another. As individuals progress, "used" beliefs become obsolete and must be discarded and replaced, and this attests to their spiritual progress. Thus for Lemieux, the kind of identity that is sought after is not a social position within an economic, political, or cultural order, but "une appropriation de son existence propre" (21).

Jeremy Carrette and Richard King: Selling Spirituality

In this book, Jeremy Carrette and and Richard King (2004) hypothesize that spirituality is increasingly shaped by a neoliberal agenda. They conceptualize a threefold development of spirituality in Western societies. In the first phase, which they call "the first privatization of religion", spirituality is equated with a romantic emphasis on *feeling* in response to the rationalism of Enlightenment, and to the impact of the German theological tradition on the birth of psychology. The authors underline that the term "spirituality" was only infrequently used in the late-19th century, with debates on its nature and value reflective of European and North-American tensions between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, traditional religion and scientific truth claims, and allegiance to institutional religions versus new social freedoms. The most important aspect of this development was *associating spirituality with the interior life*; thus in the early 20th century, this association became more pronounced with the rising privatization of religion, which the authors associate with the development of 20th century psychology. For Carette and King, this type of psychology is tied to new ways of living, characterized by individualism, that emerged after World War II's capitalist re-organization of Europe and North America. The writings of William James, Abraham Maslow and Gordon Allport played a key role in establishing this worldview.

According to the Carette and King, this "psychologization" of the human experience resulted in an experience of contemporary individualism that increasingly brought with it loneliness (42). Alongside, spirituality emerged, in Western societies at the end of the 20th century, as a designation for a phenomenon that was not only de-traditionalized but

also this-worldly. Carrette and King associate two main aspects with this form of spirituality: first, a rejection of materialism and institutional forms of religion - especially Christianity - expressed by an interest for Asian mystical tradition and culture; and second, a celebration of the creative genius of the individual, with the emergence of a psychological, non-religious understanding of spirituality. They add that for established religions, this signals a move away from cosmological and disciplinary language towards an interiorised and psychological language of spirituality.

This transformation culminated in the rise of what the authors call "capitalist spirituality", characterized by the interiorization of spirituality, locating it within the modern/individual self. This conception of spirituality became popularized in the 1950s-60s with humanistic psychology, professional counselling, and psychedelic culture. In the 1980s, as neo-liberalism became the global ideology, cultural forms became commodities (45). Likewise, spirituality became a way of shaping individual sensibilities in terms of a new economic power that demands a compliant workforce. Carrette and King underline that at this time, there was an explosion of the word "spirituality" in educational, medical and corporate contexts. For them, this is a new form of socialization and thought-control. In this form, spirituality can be mixed with anything; as a "positive but largely vacuous trope, it manages to imbue any product with a wholesome and life-affirming quality" (46). Yet they add that spirituality can also be a space of contestation for human values across differing institutional forces, and it remains an active signifier for human experience.

Carrette and King underline the following problems of definition and contemporary application of the term spirituality: first, it is imprecise and ambiguous. It carries a vague emphasis on meaning, value, transcendence, connection and becoming, and encompasses a diverse range of experience recorded and classified under this term; without clearly being associated to one. Second, the authors see a subtle form of privatization, linked to the marketization of all dimensions of human life, as associated with this term. This is dangerous because the need for meaning is real, and market answers to it – which can be boiled down to an injunction to consume more - are not ultimately satisfying. Self-help books and seminars are a palliative for the ills of a consumer society, with psychology as a mechanism of a wider ideology of privatization and individualization.

> Spirituality in its privatised, psychological formation is not a cure for our sense of social isolation and disconnectedness but is, in fact, part of the problem. Private spirituality, as opposed to an understanding of spirituality as linked to issues of social justice, is dangerous precisely because it conceals the underlying ideological effects of individualism (56).

In this perspective, spirituality entails ceases to be a mystery and a way of life (52-3), and becomes a merchandizing label for many undefined ideas about inner self, wholesomeness and quality of life, locating the human experience within a psychologized world that downplays the social and political aspects of life (54).

Salient Points

The distinction made in common parlance between religion and spirituality can be summarized by a series of characteristics that can also be found in works on spirituality or spiritual education, as seen in the reviewed works: religion is seen as external and

public, emphasizes formal religious practices and observances, is regulated by religious authority, has normative teachings and doctrines, is organised and structured, authoritatively proposes absolute truth claims, underlines the importance of history and tradition, and does not always accommodate questioning. In contrast, spirituality is said to be internal, informal, private and subjective, to emphasize personal experience, to rely on personal interpretation; it tends to be individualistic rather than institutional, admits uncertainty and constructivist notions of personal truth, is not as concerned with traditions, and tends to accommodate questioning (Crawford and Rossiter 2006, 183).

My own findings echo this dichotomy, as my participants consistently viewed spirituality more positively than religion, although not overwhelmingly so, as we shall see in the next two chapters. It is easy to see why "spirituality" could be more appealing to adolescents than "religion", since the distinctions between the two "tend to project negative stereotypes about the religious, while the connotation of spiritual appears more 'human' and 'liberal'" (Crawford and Rossiter 2006, 182). This is especially true in Quebec, where, as we shall see in the next chapter, a majority of French-Canadians from the post-World War II generation felt stifled by the intense Roman Catholic piety of their society, to the point where "la chape moralisatrice [de l'Église Catholique Romaine] pèse si lourd que la génération qui pousse finira par ne plus juger qu'à son aune toute l'histoire de l'Église en Canada" (Ferretti 143-4). Personal freedom and experiential truth being cardinal values for young people, and indeed in most Western societies, it makes sense that "[t]he traditional sense of belonging to one specific interpretation of the world not

only runs counter to the new experience of diversity and social plurality, but also to the modern experience of education" (Tacey 2003, 45).

CHAPTER 2

SOCIO-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Au Québec, les gens se divisent en deux catégories : ceux qui croient en rien, et ceux qui croient en "quelque chose". Ce "quelque chose" doit rester le plus vague possible et, comme nos politiciens, ne rien exiger de nous.
(Les Zapartistes)

In order to fully appreciate the data presented in this study, it is crucial to situate it within the evolution of educational and religious institutions in Quebec. My purpose in this section is to outline the historical events that have influenced Quebec society at large and the evolution of its educational system, and within that, of religious education, leading to the implementation of the Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) programme in 2008.

Quebec is, geographically, Canada's largest province, and second in terms of population[6]. Its history is marked by French being the language of the majority and by a constant struggle, over the last two centuries, to maintain that culture while being surrounded by Anglophone-American culture. Quebec culture and institutions have also been shaped by centuries of Catholicism, followed by rapid and widespread secularization starting in the 1960s (Dickinson and Young 2008, 336). These elements fostered values and cultural references that have, up to the late 20th century, been markedly different from the Anglo-

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[6] As of January first, 2011, the population of Canada was estimated at 34 278 400 inhabitants. The population of Ontario was 13 282 400, and that of Québec, 7 943 000 (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Protestant, North American mainstream (Dickinson and Young 2008, 363-377). More pointedly, Catholicism has been part of Quebec identity from its very beginning, but acquired a political dimension after the British conquest of New France in 1760. This conflict coloured the history of education, in particular, until the end of the 20th century. As sociologist Micheline Milot (2012) puts it, "depuis la fin du XVIIIe siècle jusqu'à aujourd'hui, la conception de l'enseignement religieux, de son contenu et de ses visées s'est vue investie par des préoccupations sociales et politiques divergentes, notamment de l'identité nationale et de la formation du citoyen. […] et constitue un excellent révélateur des valeurs dominantes à différentes époques." (35).

The Development of a Dual Education System in Quebec

Schools in Quebec have been organized along religious lines, Catholic and Protestant, going back to the 18th century. In terms of education, what emerged over time were two different conceptions of religious education, Franco-Catholic and Anglo-Protestant that would become embodied in separate, exclusive school boards for each community.

Lower Canada pioneered a state-run school system as early as the 19th century with the adoption in 1829 of the law on the *Écoles de syndic*, which encouraged the installation of a subsidised network of schools in rural areas. These schools were managed by syndics elected by tax payers, thus making the school system more democratic, and increasing the number of schools in Lower Canada from 325 schools in 1828, to 1530 schools in 1836 (Gagnon 1996, 20). However, the Roman Catholic Church's influence over education had lasting results until the 20th century. For the Quebec Roman Catholic Church, the school's

main duty was to safeguard the two main identity markers of French-Canadian culture, the French language and the Catholic faith, rather than to give a solid general education to pupils (Milot 2012, 37), and it "resisted all attempts to place the responsibility for education in the hands of the state—whether the initiative came from Anglo-Protestants who attempted to create a public school system, or from French-Canadian nationalists who advocated the separation of Church and state" (Boudreau 2011, 213). For over a century, this conception of education penalized French-Canadians economically and educationally. Indeed, "les conceptions quant à la place de la religion dans l'école n'opposent pas croyants et non-croyants. Aucun groupe ne conteste l'idée que la religion soit source de morale, et, par conséquent, soit fondamentale dans la socialisation scolaire. Mais les différentes forces sociales en présence ne privilégient pas les mêmes dimensions constitutives de l'école" (Milot 2012, 37).

The distinctive characteristics of Franco-Catholic and Anglo-Protestant schools in Quebec were crystallized following the Patriots' Rebellion of 1837-38, and from 1836 to 1840, no school acts were in force and education was disrupted in Lower Canada (Gagnon 1996, 20). The idea of a public school network resurfaced in 1838, following the report on the state of education in Lower Canada by Arthur Buller, a collaborator of Lord Durham (Dufour 1997, 34). In his report, Buller proposed a common national school system, where French and English speaking children would receive instruction together. However, the Act of Union that joined Lower and Upper Canada in 1841, creating United Canada, had also made Catholics a minority in the newly constituted country (Audet 1971, 47). Thus, following Lord Durham's report, which recommended

the assimilation of French Canadians to the English majority (Dickinson and Young 2008, 182-3), the goal of Buller's project was to anglicise French-speaking Canadians:

> Le système imaginé par Buller est aussi fort différent quant à son financement. […] Dorénavant, ce sont les collectivités qui doivent au premier chef soutenir les écoles […]. Tous les propriétaires fonciers sont mis à contribution car, aux yeux de Buller, l'école constitue un moyen efficace de protéger la propriété individuelle. […] La régie interne des écoles est cependant confiée à des commissaires élus par les propriétaires. […] Avant d'être adopté en 1841, le projet Buller subit quelques changements, à la suite de protestations des Églises et des députés Canadiens-français. […] Les Églises obtiennent que les habitants de régions différentes de celles de la majorité d'une paroisse ou d'un canton aient des écoles distinctes. […] C'est ainsi que le principe de dissidence religieuse en matière d'éducation fait son entrée dans la loi. (Dufour 1997, 34-5) :

Before 1840, clerics were only minimally present in Lower Canada, given the ban on clerical recruitment and immigration that followed the Conquête of 1763 (Dufour 1997, 19), and during that period, they did not have much impact on Lower Canada's school system (Voisine 1998, 34). However, following the Catholic Church's attachment to the legitimate authority that was the British authorities during the Patriots' Rebellion (Perrin 1996, 196), clerical immigration resumed in 1840. This led to an explosion of the number of clerics, who, among other things, engaged in the field of education, their numbers increasing steadily up to 1950 (Audet 1971, 319). The religious orders that came from France to Canada starting in 1840, such as the Oblates, Franciscans, and Holy Cross Fathers, also revitalized Ultramontanism, a development of Catholicism where "the Holy See was seeking to centralize ecclesiastical power in Rome, instil uniform liturgical and devotional practices throughout the Catholic world, emphasize Catholic dogmas in opposition to Protestantism, and impose ideological conformity based on a rejection of revolution and liberalism" (Perrin 1996, 197). Although this program spread throughout

the Catholic world, Perrin points out that it was especially well suited to the new realities of French Canadians, whose revolutionary ambitions had been crushed after the defeat of the Patriots' insurrection, as the Catholic Church offered "hope in the form of an alternative vision of national development: one that would not run afoul of the established (i.e., English) authorities and would make French Canadians a truly distinct people in North America" (197). Ultramontanist piety greatly influenced French-Canadian society, especially in the realm of education.

> For the clergy, [Ultramontanism] meant a new liturgy, catechism, style of dress, method of training, ideological discourse; for the laity, it denoted an Italianate piety and a symbolic universe revolving around a beleaguered Pope who refused to compromise with the forces of modernity. French-Canadians spontaneously identified with Catholic causes around the world […] because such issues reinforced their collective identity. (Perrin 1996, 257-8)

In 1867, the British North America Act was passed, which laid the foundations of modern Canada, which meant a clarification of the provinces' powers in the whole field of education. Although education was deemed a provincial matter, the federal government guaranteed the rights of religious minorities to an education in their denomination.

> Under section 93 of the British North America Act of 1867, education was designated the exclusive responsibility of the provinces, except that no provincial legislature could pass any law which would "prejudicially affect any Right of Privilege with respect to the Denominational Schools which any Class of Persons have by Law in the Province at the Union." This restraint on the law-making powers of the provincial legislatures was inserted in the act to protect the educational rights of denominational authorities who were maintaining schools at the time of the Confederation. As applied to Quebec, it meant that the provincial legislature could not tamper with the educational rights of Roman Catholics and Protestants. (Magnusson 1980, 38)

Although the goal of this legislation was to protect communities who were in a minority situation, it was quickly interpreted by the Quebec Catholic Church "comme étant aussi la garantie de pérénnité de son pouvoir sur les écoles par le Conseil de l'instruction publique" (Milot 2012, 43). Milot underlines the impact this had on Catholic and Protestant educational styles in Quebec: while the Catholic schools were confessional, clerical and exclusive to Catholic children, Protestant schools were Protestant in law, community-based, and somewhat open to the religious plurality already present among Protestants and the English-speaking population. The two school systems also differed in terms of their aims: while Catholic schools placed the transmission of faith above any other pedagogical goal, Protestant schools focused on general instruction, among which broad religious and moral principles were included. As for the Jewish population, starting in 1894, a ruling established that for school purposes, they would be considered Protestant (Dufour 1997, 60). Milot claims that one of the most important result of this difference, which was to last up to the end of the 20th century, was that "les écoles protestantes [étaient] déjà pluralistes par la diversité interne au protestantisme, mais aussi parce qu'elles accueillaient les enfants non catholiques. Comme la majorité des écoles protestantes sont anglophones, l'intégration des immigrants se fait par leur anglicisation, isolant du coup les jeunes Canadiens français de la socialisation à la pluralité. " (43).

1867 also saw the establishment of the short-lived *Ministère de l'instruction publique* in the Province of Quebec (Audet 1971, 101). In 1869, Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau, the first Premier of the Province, created two confessional committees at the Council of public instruction. Although Catholic and Protestant schools were already separately

funded and managed, the law of 1869 established a bi-confessional structure that would last to the 20th century. It is worth noting that the *Conseil de l'instruction publique* also created teacher training schools (écoles normales) where teachers received instruction in order to qualify for the teaching certification. The teaching certificate was compulsory for lay teachers, but members of religious orders did not require it, and were thus favoured when the time came to get teaching positions (Gagnon, 72). However, the Ministry of Public Education was abolished in 1875, increasing the power of the two confessional committees (Audet, 118).

In 1897, the newly elected provincial government of Félix-Gabriel Marchand intended to reform the public education system in order to make it more uniform across the province, with the creation of a ministry of education, standardized school manuals, a better distribution of government funding, and compulsory testing of teachers who were from religious congregations (Dufour 1997, 53). This project was the beginning of a battle between the provincial government and the high clergy, with archbishop Paul Bruchési fearing a loss of power for the Church : "Si l'État et les laïcs redevenaient prépondérants dans le monde de l'enseignement, la conséquence concrète risque d'être, selon lui, la déchristianisation des écoles" (Dufour 1997, 54). Eventually the pressure exerted by the Catholic Church forced Premier Marchand to adopt, in 1899, a bill that was a far cry from what he had originally intended, without the creation of a ministry of education.

The time period between 1875 and 1925 saw the rapid rise of industrialisation and urbanisation in Quebec, leading to major social and economic changes: farming lost its

position as the main employment sector to mining and forestry; work in factories and service industries triggered massive exodus from rural areas to the cities, leading to the urbanization of the majority of the population; consumer goods challenged Quebec's conservative culture, with electricity, radio and automobiles becoming available to nearly all regions of the province by the 1930s; literacy grew, along with the availability of new modes of communication such as telegraph and telephone (Dickinson and Young 2008, 198-9). In terms of education, an important issue at that time is the fact that schooling was elective. Although, as Dufour points out, the majority of children attended school, many did so only for a few years:

> Les familles ont besoin de l'aide de leurs enfants aux champs, à la maison ou à l'atelier. Il faut aussi se rappeler que l'accès à une instruction élémentaire plus avancée est alors réduit. Les élites laïques et religieuses sont, en effet, opposées à l'instruction poussée des enfants des classes populaires, par crainte de voir changer l'ordre social. […] [I]l faut donner aux enfants des classes inférieures des connaissances solides plutôt qu'étendues. Car le but est d'en faire simplement de nobles et honnêtes travailleurs et agriculteurs. La religion doit également tenir une place importante et même prépondérante dans leur modeste formation. (Dufour 1997, 55)

The Catholic Church feared the rise of secular schools, and religious instruction remained the touchstone of schooling for young French-Canadians (Dufour 1997, 57); thus "l'école catholique se cantonne comme lieu de transmission des valeurs fondées sur la religion, et, ainsi, d'un conservatisme culturel associé à la survie de la culture canadienne française" (Milot 2012, 44).

The Quiet Revolution and Creation of the Ministry of Education

The period between the Great Depression and the Quiet Revolution is often called "la Grande noirceur" as it was marked by a strong conservative ideology under the leadership of Premier Maurice Duplessis[7]. Clerical influence peaked, being part of most aspects of Quebeckers' lives, especially education and healthcare (Dickinson and Young 2008, 271, 298). In terms of education, there were still issues, in the Catholic system, of low levels of perseverance and of limited access to higher education (Dufour 1997, 85). Yet, as Dickinson and Young (2008, 271) point out, other changes were afoot, slowly building undercurrents that would emerge in the 1960s:

> People became more conscious of class and ethnic realities. Jewish, Slav, and southern European immigration in the postwar years heightened ethnic and linguistic tensions in Montreal and contributed to the resurgence of Quebec nationalism. Labour became better organized, more secular, and more vocal. […] Feminism became more important, and women pressed for political rights and increased social services.

The death of Premier Duplessis and the election, in 1960, of a provincial Liberal government under Jean Lesage were the beginning of the Quiet Revolution, a period of profound social and institutional changes in Quebec that were especially visible in the area of education, where the Catholic Church's influence gradually loosened as education became a state concern. Paul Gérin-Lajoie, then minister of youth in Lesage's government, linked to his ministry the Department of public instruction, and reclaimed all the educational responsibilities that were scattered among various administrative groups; school attendance became compulsory until the age of 15, and school boards had to offer free schooling up to grade 11 (Dufour 1997, 87). At the same time, new demographic and

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[7] Although this interpretation has begun to be questioned by a new generation of historians, such as Lucia Ferretti, Michael Gauvreau, and Jean-Philippe Warren.

economic realities, such as the shortage of nuns and brothers - which meant that new teachers were mainly laypeople, who had to be paid better salaries then clerics - were impacting the Catholic school system.

1961 saw the creation of the *Commission royale d'enquête sur l'enseignement dans la province de Quebec*, known as the "Commission Parent" from the name of its president, Monseigneur Alphonse-Marie Parent[8]. Composed of various members of civil society and of the clergy, its goal was to study the state of education in Quebec, how it was funded and organized, and to make recommendations to improve it (Dufour 1997, 87). According to Milot (2012, 46), the stakes of the Commission Parent were the respective role of the State and the Church in the domain of education, as the legislative power of the State wrestled with the institutional power of the Church.

> Dans l'esprit des commissaires, ces nouvelles structures éducatives seront modernes, démocratiques, respectueuses des particularismes de la société québécoise et susceptibles de « donner à tous la possibilité de s'instruire », de « rendre accessible à chacun les études les mieux adaptées à ses aptitudes et ses goûts » et de « préparer l'individu à la vie en société ». Les idéaux d'accessibilité et de démocratisation de l'enseignement sont au cœur du rapport Parent. (Dufour, 89)

Thus the result of the Commission Parent was a democratisation of education in Quebec. The commissioners delivered their report[9] in 1963 and 1964 and proposed that a public education system – from kindergarten to university - be created, unified and integrated under the authority of a ministry of education. In 1964 the Quebec Ministry of education

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[8] It is worth noting that Mgr Parent, along with other notable figures of the Quiet Revolution, was influenced by Personalism, with its emphasis on acting as Catholics, which, among other things, meant cooperating with non-Catholics on public issues of social justice.

[9] Commonly known as "Rapport Parent", from the name of its president.

was created, as well as the *Conseil supérieur de l'éducation*, a separate, autonomous body composed of various groups from Quebec society, whose duty was to advise the Minister of Education (Dufour 1997, 88). Furthermore, classical colleges, which had educated the elite of Quebec society for over three centuries, were transformed into a network of pre-university and technical level colleges known as Collèges d'études générales et professionelles, or CEGEPs. Numerous high schools were also created (called "écoles polyvalentes"), as well as, starting in 1969, a network of public universities, l'*Université du Québec*, which has satellites in half a dozen cities across the province, giving further access to a university education to young people from all regions (Dufour 1997, 91), including pre-service teachers.

A large section of the *Rapport Parent* was devoted to religious education, and recommended the institution of non-confessional school boards. This particular recommendation was not followed at the time; rather, confessional school boards were maintained, due to the pressure of Catholic bishops, and so were two different religious education programmes in Catholic and Protestant schools (Milot 2012, 47). As Spencer Boudreau explains:

> [w]hen the new Ministry of Education was established in 1964, the Council of Public Instruction was abolished and the Superior Council of Education was established as an advisory body to the Ministry of Education. The only two committees of this advisory body who had regulatory powers were the Catholic and Protestant Committees. Through these committees, the government and the Church authorities shared their responsibilities for confessional education. Among other responsibilities, these confessional committees set the curriculum for religious education in the schools. (Boudreau 2011, 213)

Yet the two school networks, despite similar administrative structures, had little in common in terms of education about religious diversity (Milot 2012, 47). As Cadrin-Pelletier succinctly puts it:

> Dans les commissions scolaires catholiques, la question de l'éducation à la diversité religieuse ne se pose pas vraiment, même en milieu urbain. Les écoles publiques ne reçoivent que des élèves catholiques, majoritairement francophones, dispensent un enseignement religieux de type catéchétique, assurent la préparation sacramentelle des enfants et sont très proches des instances paroissiales. (Cadrin-Pelletier 2005, 93)

In contrast, Protestant schools offered a form of religious education that recognized the right of children to an education that offered a variety of opinions without imposing a given religion or ideology (Cadrin-Pelletier 2005, 94).

The Adoption of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedom and of Bill 101

The push for secularism became stronger in the late 1970s and early 1980s, following the adoption of the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms in 1975 and of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. The Charters make individual liberties paramount and inviolable, and forbid any form of discrimination based (among others) on religion[10]. The educational privileges historically granted to the Catholic and Protestant communities became still harder to justify socially and legally. Immigration patterns were also drastically altered, which altered Quebec society, especially in the Greater Montréal area. While immigrants to Quebec had previously been from European, Christian background, the 1970s saw the arrival of immigrants from other parts of the

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[10] Clause 15.1 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that "(1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability." (http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html)

world, especially South-East Asian, Caribbean, and North-African countries, many whom already spoke French, but who were often from non-Christian backgrounds.

Since the 1950s, Quebec had been the stage of an open linguistic conflict, and a latent political conflict generated by a desire from the French-speaking majority to emancipate itself and become, as Premier René Levesque would put it, "masters in one's own house". Up to the adoption of the *Charte de la langue française*, also known as Bill 101, in 1977, all non-Catholic students - which included the majority of immigrant children - attended schools from Protestant school boards. The Protestant religious education programme was therefore non-confessional and diversified, and soon included sections on religions other than Christianity (Milot 2012, 48; Cadrin-Pelletier 1992, 99). The adoption of the *Charte de la langue française* changed this situation, making it compulsory, for the majority[11] of immigrant children to attend francophone schools that were generally part of the Catholic system. Schools from the Franco-Catholic network suddenly had to manage a greater cultural and religious diversity, and the evolution of school programmes inevitably reflected that.

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[11] There are exceptions to article 72, and in some cases primary and secondary education can be in English, as stated in article 73 of the *Charte de la langue française*:

"1. Les enfants dont le père ou la mère est citoyen canadien et a reçu un enseignement primaire en anglais au Canada, pourvu que cet enseignement constitue la majeure partie de l'enseignement primaire reçu au Canada;

2. les enfants dont le père ou la mère est citoyen canadien et qui ont reçu ou reçoivent un enseignement primaire ou secondaire en anglais au Canada, de même que leurs frères et soeurs, pourvu que cet enseignement constitue la majeure partie de l'enseignement primaire ou secondaire reçu au Canada."
(http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2andfile=/C_11/C11.html)

Another important factor in the secularization of Quebec schools was the gradual change in the relation to religion that took place in the population at large, which started during the Quiet Revolution. Quebecers, especially the Baby-Boomers' generation, massively turned away from religion, resulting in a spectacular drop in Church attendance, from 88 percent in 1965 to 46 percent in 1975, to 38 percent in 1985 (Dickinson and Young 2008, 336). As fewer Quebeckers were actively religious, the demand for non-religious education about values in school increased. The 1980s saw the emergence of a non-religious "moral education" program, an option offered to parents who did not want their children to receive religious instruction. Up to that time, religious education – Catholic or Protestant depending on the school board - was compulsory in primary school, with the option, in grade 7 and 8 of high school, to be exempted from it. In 1983, the exemption system was transformed into two options: non-religious moral education, and either Catholic or Protestant moral and religious education, in primary and secondary schools. In Catholic schools, non-Catholic students – either because they practiced another religion, or were non-religious - usually registered in moral education (Cadrin-Pelletier 2005, 96-97). But as underscored by Cadrin-Pelletier, this arrangement was not always perfect:

> Ce programme sera longtemps perçu comme un choix par la majorité catholique mais ressenti comme une contrainte discriminatoire par les groupes minoritaires puisque le peu d'élèves inscrits en enseignement moral se sentiront parfois exclus de la classe ou auront parfois peine à obtenir les services d'enseignement moral auxquels ils ont droit. (Cadrin-Pelletier 2005, 97)

Thus in the Catholic sector, a somewhat odd situation emerged, especially in the Montreal area: a majority of immigrant, non-Christian students, who often actively

practiced another religion, attended non-confessional moral education classes, as their parents did not want them to receive Catholic religious education (Cadrin-Pelletier 2005, 96). Moral education classes often became a space where issues of cultural and religious diversity were *de facto* tackled, given the diversity of the student body.

The *Commission des États généraux sur l'éducation* and *Rapport Proulx*

From 1995 to 1996, the *Commission des États généraux sur l'éducation* was set up. This was a forum for collective discussion put forth by the Quebec government to consult the people of Quebec about what changes were needed in order to improve education (Gouvernement du Quebec, 1997). One of its recommendations was that school boards should no longer be religion-based. As the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was embedded in the Canadian constitution, the arrangements that allowed Catholic and Protestant religious education could only stay legal through the use of the notwithstanding clause[12]. Nevertheless, the recommendation was implemented in 1998, when, after amending article 93 of the Canadian Constitution, it became possible for Quebec to get past the constitutional obligation to maintain Protestant and Catholic school boards. School boards in Quebec became language-based, either French or English; however, this did not change the offerings in terms of religious education, and it soon became obvious that the contentious issue of religion in Quebec schools needed to be addressed in this new context.

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[12] "The notwithstanding clause" refers to article 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and allows a provincial government to override certain clauses of the Charter, as long as they are not fundamental, legal, or equality rights. Such overrides are valid only for five years. (http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html).

Indeed, if school boards were no longer religion-based, what would become of moral and religious education, which up to that point was either Catholic or Protestant? The Task force on the place of religion in school was commissioned in 1999 by the government of Quebec to study this issue. Under the direction of Jean-Pierre Proulx, professor at Université de Montréal's Department of Education, the group conducted a vast consultation on the issue of religious education in Quebec's primary and secondary schools[13]. The Task force commissioned studies that probed the opinions of many actors in the religious education debate: parents, teachers, school boards, religious communities, and actors of civil society. It published its report, entitled *Laïcité et religions*[14], but better known as *Le Rapport Proulx*, in 1999, and recommended that the Quebec government should not fund confessional religious education in public schools, but fully secularize public schools and school boards.

In 2000, bill 118 was voted, and all confessional structures at the Ministry of Education were abolished (Cadrin-Pelletier 2005, 112). The study group also recommended that both kinds of confessional religious education be replaced by a course that would enable students to address the social, historical and ethical aspects of religions: "Nous en sommes venus à la conclusion qu'il convient maintenant de réaménager la place de la religion à l'école dans une nouvelle perspective. Cette perspective est celle de la laïcité ouverte. […] Cette perspective fait place à un enseignement culturel des religions et des visions séculières du monde." (Laïcités et religions, V). Indeed, article 36 of Bill 118

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[13] The other members of the *Groupe de travail* were Yves Lafontaine, Lawyer; Micheline Milot, sociologist; Lise Racine, school principal; Ammar Sassi, high school teacher; Francine Tremblay, primary school teacher; Daniel Weinstock, philosophy professor, and Margaret Whyte, college principal.
[14] Ministère de l'éducation du Québec. *Laïcité et religions: Perspective nouvelle pour l'école québécoise*, Rapport du Groupe de travail sur la religion à l'école, Québec, 1999.

requires schools to "facilitate the spiritual progress of the student in order to foster his/her blossoming" in a pedagogical context that must respect the freedom of conscience and religion of pupils, parents and school personnel (article 37) (Cadrin-Pelletier 2005, 103).

The Ethics and Religious Culture Program

The year 2000 saw major changes in legislation pertaining to the religious structure of schools and school boards in Quebec. In June 2000, Bill 118 was adopted; it modified the confessional status of school boards (Cadrin-Pelletier 2005, 112; Estivalèzes 2012b, 71), and in July of the same year, all confessional structures at the Quebec Ministry of education were abolished, including the Catholic committee and the Protestant committee. In December 2000, the *Comité des affaires religieuses* was created, whose mandate was to make recommendations to the minister regarding religion in Quebec schools (Estivalèzes 2012b, 73). Another innovation of the new structures is that pastoral or religious animation was abolished and replaced with nondenominational spiritual care and guidance and community involvement service, which was implemented in high schools in 2001, and in elementary schools in 2002.

In March 2003, the *Comité des affaires religieuses* issued the report entitled *Rites et symboles religieux à l'école*, where it put forward the concept of "laïcité ouverte[15]", stating that "[l]a société québécoise est en mesure de continuer d'aménager ses institutions, tout particulièrement l'école, selon une laïcité respectueuse de l'égalité de tous et ouverte à la diversité des expressions de la liberté de conscience et de religion"

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[15] The concept of an open secularity – as opposed to a "closed" one – was suggested in the Proulx report (1999), and resurfaced in the Bouchard-Taylor report (2008). See glossary for definition.

(22). In 2005, bill 95 was adopted by Quebec's National Assembly and severed the last confessional hold on education in Quebec, replacing religious education classes by a new programme, the "Ethics and Religious Culture program" (ERC). Thus the three options of Catholic moral and religious education, Protestant moral and religious education, and non-denominational moral education that had been the norm for the previous twenty years became a thing of the past.

The new programme became mandatory in all public and private elementary and secondary schools in 2008. Its purpose is to recognize and address the increasing pluralism in Quebec, and to foster a way of living together with differences in a tolerant and inclusive society through a better understanding of those differences. The program, in line with the broader goals of the Quebec education program of encouraging students to play a "constructive role as citizens" and "contributing to a democratic and just society" (MELS 2001, 4), underlines that "it is pedagogically desirable to facilitate students' understanding of the world by not putting up barriers between worlds that, although specific, may be complementary" (MELS 2006, 4). In this perspective, religious pluralism is something to be respected and appreciated, not just tolerated, and the ERC Program two broad aims are "recognition of others" and "pursuit of the common good".

The ERC Program: Implementation and Pedagogy

Pedagogically, the ERC Program is built on four great learning principles, emphasizing respect, impartiality, critical thinking and open-mindedness from both students and teachers, as Estivalèzes explains:

Le premier [principe] est la continuité et la progression de ces apprentissages conformément à l'approche par compétences, mise en place par la réforme de l'école québécoise à partir de 2000. Le deuxième principe veut que les apprentissages du nouveau programme "s'enracinent dans la réalité du jeune et dans la culture québécoise", notamment à travers des connaissances liées à l'architecture, au langage, à la toponymie, mais aussi par la transmission de certaines valeurs, dont "l'importance accordée au droit à l'égalité, à la solidarité, au respect des institutions démocratiques ou au rejet de la violence comme mode de résolution des conflits". […] Le troisième principe de la formation en éthique et culture religieuse consiste à "respecter le droit fondamental à la liberté de conscience et de religion". En vertu de ce principe, l'enseignant doit respecter les valeurs, les convictions et les croyances des élèves et de leurs familles et avoir une posture professionnelle d'impartialité. […] Au secondaire, on attend des élèves qu'ils fassent preuve de plus d'objectivité et de discernement dans le traitement des questions éthique ou religieuses, ce qui contribue au développement de l'esprit critique. Enfin, le quatrième principe […] vise à favoriser le vivre-ensemble et la cohésion sociale par "le partage de valeurs communes, l'acquisition d'un sens civique […] et la prise de conscience que les choix individuels ont des effets sur la collectivité[16]". (Estivalèzes 2012, 76-7)

These principles are further organized within three complementary facets. The first is ethics, which includes reflecting on values, worldviews and developing critical thinking about moral or ethical issues. The second is religious culture, which is further developed around three main lines: first, students are expected to familiarize themselves with the traditions associated with Quebec's religious heritage - Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism and the spiritualities of First Nations – and their expressions such as symbols, holidays, places of worship, beliefs, etc. The second axis is openness to religious diversity as illustrated by the religious traditions of groups recently immigrated to

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[16] MELS, *La mise en place d'un programme d'éthique et de culture religieuse. Une orientation d'avenir pour tous les jeunes du Québec.* Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2005, pages 4 – 8, as quoted by Estivalèzes 2012b, 76-7.

Quebec, such as Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism. The third axis is the ability to reflect about and position oneself in regard to religious traditions and new religious movements. The last facet of the ERC Program is secular worldviews and philosophies, which, the programme underlines, are as important an influence as religious worldviews (Estivalèzes 2012b, 77).

After having been tested in a few school through pilot projects, the Ethics and Religious Culture program was implemented in September 2008 for all elementary and secondary school students, from grade 1 to grade 11, and is now mandatory in all Quebec schools. This did not happen without friction; although the ERC Program was generally well received and seen as an improvement over the old system, some groups strongly opposed its implementation, seeing it either as too religious, or not enough – although we must keep in mind, as Morris (2011, 3) reminds us, that "many of the reactions and criticisms to date blatantly misrepresent the program". In the first case, the recommendation to abolish Catholic school boards and the Catholic moral and religious education program "did not sit well with many Francophone Quebecers [who] felt that an essential part of their identity was being attacked" (Boudreau 2012, 6), especially in areas of the province that were strongly homogeneous culturally and religiously.

On the other end of the spectrum, some groups such as the *Mouvement Laïque québécois* argued that religion had no place in school whatsoever, "the continued presence of religion in Quebec public schools [being] perceived to undermine the very foundations of modernity and the goal of educating rational-autonomous citizens" (Morris 2011, 3). For

Boudreau, "some of these groups appeared clearly concerned about the discriminatory nature of the confessional programs, whereas others simply appeared anti-religious in their rhetoric […]. Other groups like the English-speaking Catholic Council, Catholic Parents' associations, and the Québec Catholic Bishops criticized the government's decision" (10), even taking it to court, as did Loyola High School, or the Comité pour la liberté en éducation[17].

The fact that the ERC Program uses a transversal approach, presenting religions through themes such as religious practices, family celebrations and religious values (MELS 2008, 341-347) rather than looking at each religious tradition separately had some worry that it would make it difficult for students to grasp each religions' particularities. Others were concerned that the students' freedom of conscience would be jeopardized, or that the ERC Program would contradict the religious education given within the family (Estivalèzes 2012b, 78). Finally, there was the issue of training teachers for this course, with respect not only to the breadth of knowledge and pedagogical skills needed to teach ERC, but especially with the possible "manque d'objectivité, voire la partialité, des enseignantes et enseignants […] dans le choix des themes du programme et la façon de les aborder" (Comité sur les affaires religieuses 2007, 25, quoted in Estivalèzes 2012b, 79). This last point, as we will see in the data gathered for this study, still appears to be somewhat problematic, as there is no control over the way teachers implement the program in their classrooms, and over which part of it they chose to emphasize – which

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[17] In both cases, the court ultimately ruled in favour of the government. See S.L. *v.* Commission scolaire des Chênes, 2012 SCC 7, [2012] 1 S.C.R. 235, as well as Québec (Procureur général) c. Loyola High School. 2013 QCCA 2139.

clearly had an effect on the students' appreciation of the course. Indeed, Boudreau underlines that the challenges of implementing the ERC Programme included the following:

> Considerable evidence of religious illiteracy among the teachers and education students, and this continues to be a serious challenge for the success of the [ERC] program. In a conference given at McGill University during the consultation process regarding the program, Professor [Jean-Pierre] Proulx admitted that the ''Achilles heel'' of the process was the religious illiteracy of the teachers—particularly the elementary teachers who were not subject specialists. It would require a massive effort to implement a formation for teachers and education students so that they would feel competent teaching the subject matter. (Boudreau 2011, 221)

The *Service d'Animation spirituelle et d'engagement communautaire*

Another noteworthy development was the transformation of denominational pastoral care: "pastoral or religious animation (a Catholic or Protestant chaplaincy service) was abolished and replaced by a nondenominational spiritual care and guidance and community involvement service for all elementary and secondary schools. […] The service is government funded and the individuals who provide the service are required to have a relevant university education." (Boudreau 2011, 8). The spiritual animators, or *Animateurs à la vie spirituelle et à l'engagement communautaire* (AVSEC) as their official title goes, are part of the team of specialists (psychologists, nurses, speech therapists, guidance counsellors) that offer services to students in need. They are present in all elementary schools and some selected high schools, and their tasks include the elaboration and implementation of community, humanitarian, spiritual and religious programmes, as well as supporting, individually or collectively, students, teachers or school personnel who are seeking spiritually or religiously, or need help in the spiritual or

community aspects of their lives (Le monde du travail de A à Z, 2013). This service is unique in that AVSECs address spiritual and religious issues, and do so for the whole school community, regardless of religious affiliation.

Salient Points

This historical overview shows how religion has not only been a structuring factor of the Quebec educational system but also a locus of identity for Quebeckers. It also underlines the strong clerical influence that coloured Quebec culture in the 1940s and 50s, the decades during which the participants' parents grew up, which explains why most of the participants' parents were anti-clerical and, in many cases, atheists, influencing, as we shall see in the next chapter, the participants' religious identities. This self-identification as non-religious indicates a shift in identity marking from religious to linguistic, one that is recent and indicative of the deep changes that took place in Quebec society over the last half-century.

The changes that occurred over time in Quebec's educational institutions are especially obvious in primary and secondary educational institutions, which went from being confessional and exclusivist, to having to welcome and manage increased cultural and religious diversity. Thus the Quebec school system went from being made of institutions that were entirely run by religious congregations, and that, as a way to ward off the threat of assimilation, placed the transmission of faith above other pedagogical goals, to a structural overhaul of the whole educational system during the 1960s whereby schools became state-run - making religious education a subject like any other. As it became

compulsory for immigrant children to attend French school after the adoption of Bill 101, an important shift occurred in the way cultural and religious diversity were managed by public schools, especially in the greater Montreal area. Within three decades, religious education underwent a spectacular transformation, going from teaching a single religious worldview, to an inclusive program *about* religion that promotes openness to religious diversity and dialogue with the "other". Whether the Ethics and Religious Culture Program fulfils its promises is beyond the scope of this thesis and will require further research and analysis. However, some of this study's data directly address the appreciation of the participants for this new course, and points to a relatively positive appreciation of the ERC Program, but one that needs to be improved by better teacher training.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Si les chiffres de Statistiques Canada permettent d'esquisser un portrait des appartenances religieuses des jeunes, ils ne peuvent rien nous dire des convictions profondes de ces derniers ou de leurs interrogations.
(Castel 2007, 146)

This study is a detailed investigation of seventeen Québécois[18] teenagers' lives and worldviews. It was completed using micro-qualitative methods (Spickard 2007), more specifically, that of grounded theory (Charmaz 2003; Berg 2004; Bryant and Chamaz 2007). These methods were selected as the best way to obtain information on adolescents' worldviews, as direct observation of participation in ritual activities may then not be representative of young people's actual convictions, which may or may not be openly expressed. As beliefs, values and worldviews are not observable (though they may lead to behaviours that are), one of the best ways to obtain data pertaining to adolescents' worldviews is to directly ask youths about it. In the case of this study, the interviews are the primary source data used. As Dimitriadis explains:

> Interviews allow the researcher to understand more explicitly how participants understand their experiences, […] allow researchers to how individuals to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences – give them shape and nuance. They are

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[18] Throughout this thesis, I use the word "Québécois" both as a noun and an adjective that represents the French-speaking people of the Canadian province of Quebec, who sees itself as culturally and historically distinct from English-speaking Canadians. I am fully aware of the historical and political implications of this word, and deliberately chose to use it because that is how the people of Quebec call themselves, but more importantly, it is the word my participants used in order to talk about their own culture and collective identity.

a particularly good way to understand people's beliefs- or at least their articulated beliefs. […] Unlike field notes, interview data come largely preprocessed. Once transcribed, data can be readily worked with using a range of coding and interpretive methods. (Dimitradis 2008, 140-2)

Indeed, when studying children and adolescents' spirituality, one must keep in mind that they are chiefly influenced by their family's religious or spiritual practices (or lack thereof), and also that they do may have the choice to participate or not in its religious practices. The increased influence of peers and significant adults must be taken into account, as is the emergence of questions about religion or spirituality.

Method

Grounded theory is a "methodological approach and associated set of inquiry methods" (Charmaz and Henwood 2008, 241) that consists of "a systematic inductive, comparative, and interactive approach *to* inquiry with several key strategies *for* conducting inquiry" (Charmaz, 2006), with the intent of constructing theory (Charmaz and Henwood, 243). I chose qualitative interview methods in general and grounded theory in particular for many reasons, one of them being that such methods were used in studies on which I had previously worked as a research assistant (Rahm, 2010; Beyer and Ramji, 2013). As I was involved in gathering data through these techniques, I had a first-hand idea of the kind of data they generated. Indeed, one of the strengths of the interview method is that it allows the investigator to probe the participants about their perspectives on life, society and beliefs, and to record the answers in all their complexity.

I fully take responsibility for the lack of a clear hypothesis for this project. For this kind of project, as Erricker and Ota (2001) remark, a hypothesis "cannot be formulated in clear terms because of the complexity of the situations and the impossibility of the control of variables." (33). The use of grounded theory allows the researcher to identify areas of interest, and to let themes and categories emerge from the data without imposing pre-existent theoretical frameworks on it, and "not just to represent one's informants' subjective views, but to locate patterns in those views of which the informant may not be aware" (Spickard 2007, 129).

The downside of such qualitative methods is that they are rather time-consuming, both in terms of participant recruitment and of data analysis. While a questionnaire with set answers would have been much easier to manage, I wanted to have a detailed exchange with my participants, as directly talking to adolescents about their religious and spiritual lives has rarely been done in existing scholarship in Quebec. I also had already gone the questionnaire route for my M.A. research project, and wanted to delve deeper into what my participants might have to share about their worldviews. Having worked on qualitative research projects and seen the richness of the data they yielded, I thought that this type of methodology was appropriate for my topic and would generate fresh and exciting data. More specifically, grounded theory analysis has many aspects that make it suitable to the study of individuals' internal processes, as in the fields of religious studies, education, or psychology. Charmaz (2008, 241) underlines that "it can be used in conjunction with numerous qualitative approaches such as ethnographic, biographical, or

discursive analysis [and] fosters viewing individual behaviour as embedded in situations and social contexts".

The Participants

Participants for the present study were nine girls and eight boys from Montreal, who were between the ages of 14 and 19 (mean = 16.05). They attended different schools and CEGEPs, nine in total, that were located in various neighbourhood on the island of Montreal, with the exception of one that was in a suburban area, and another in a small town an hour away from the city. Three of these schools were private, and the other six were public[19]. Some had specific pedagogical projects, such an arts, sports, or an international curriculum, while others were "regular" high schools with no such focus. One participant attended a vocational school, and two were CEGEP students enrolled in general (two-years) programs.

I wanted to talk to teenagers who could be considered "average", that is, neither categorized as having major psychological, educational or family issues, nor youths who were considered gifted or exceptional. To achieve this, one criterion was that the participants be registered in a regular high school or CEGEP, which is the academic path taken by the majority of adolescents in Quebec. I also wanted to limit the age range, since the differences between a twelve year old and a nineteen year old are quite broad in terms

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[19] In Quebec, the term "private college" or "private school" refers to schools that are partly funded by the provincial government (50%), but where parents must pay tuition fees that are significantly higher than in public schools. Unlike the majority of public schools, which must by law welcome all students, private schools screen students through entrance examinations. Also, there is a fairly high flexibility in Quebec about which public school one might attend than elsewhere in North America. For instance, a student can attend a school that is outside her district of residence.

of life experience, psychosocial development, and worldviews. My first batch of recruitment emails called for fifteen to eighteen year-olds who were attending grades nine to eleven in high school. However, as participants were more difficult to recruit than I had initially anticipated, I decided to widen the age of potential participants from fourteen to nineteen, and to include CEGEP students. Finally, I wanted to focus on ethnic Québécois youths, since there is little research done on this particular segment of the Quebec youth population, compared, for instance, to first or second-generation immigrant youths. Thus my first two criteria were that the participants' first language be French, and that their parents be born in Quebec.

Recruitment Process

Recruiting youths under the age of 18 for any study is notoriously difficult. Not only must the research team contact the youths, often through a third party such as school or youth organization and get their consent, but they must also get parental consent (Berg 2004, 57), and, in most cases, the consent of the institution where the recruitment takes place (Creswell 2005, 150-1). Furthermore, unlike in other countries such as the United States where schools are often paired with universities for research purposes, and therefore more easily accessible to researchers, school administrations in Quebec tend to only grudgingly grant researchers access to their students. Initial attempts to access students in a few high schools and school boards only confirmed this. A dual recruitment strategy was therefore devised for this study, comprised of a first purposeful sample of ten participants gathered through my own personal network, and of a second sample of

seven participants gathered through selected schools of the Commission scolaire de Montréal (CSDM), Montreal's largest school board.

The first group of participants was recruited through sending an email to family, friends and co-workers, and asking them to forward the information to as many people as they could. Three participants were referred through my aunt's co-worker, one by a colleague of my mother's, one by another aunt, and the five last participants were told about the study by friends or colleagues of mine, who had relayed the email I had sent to recruit participants (figure 1).
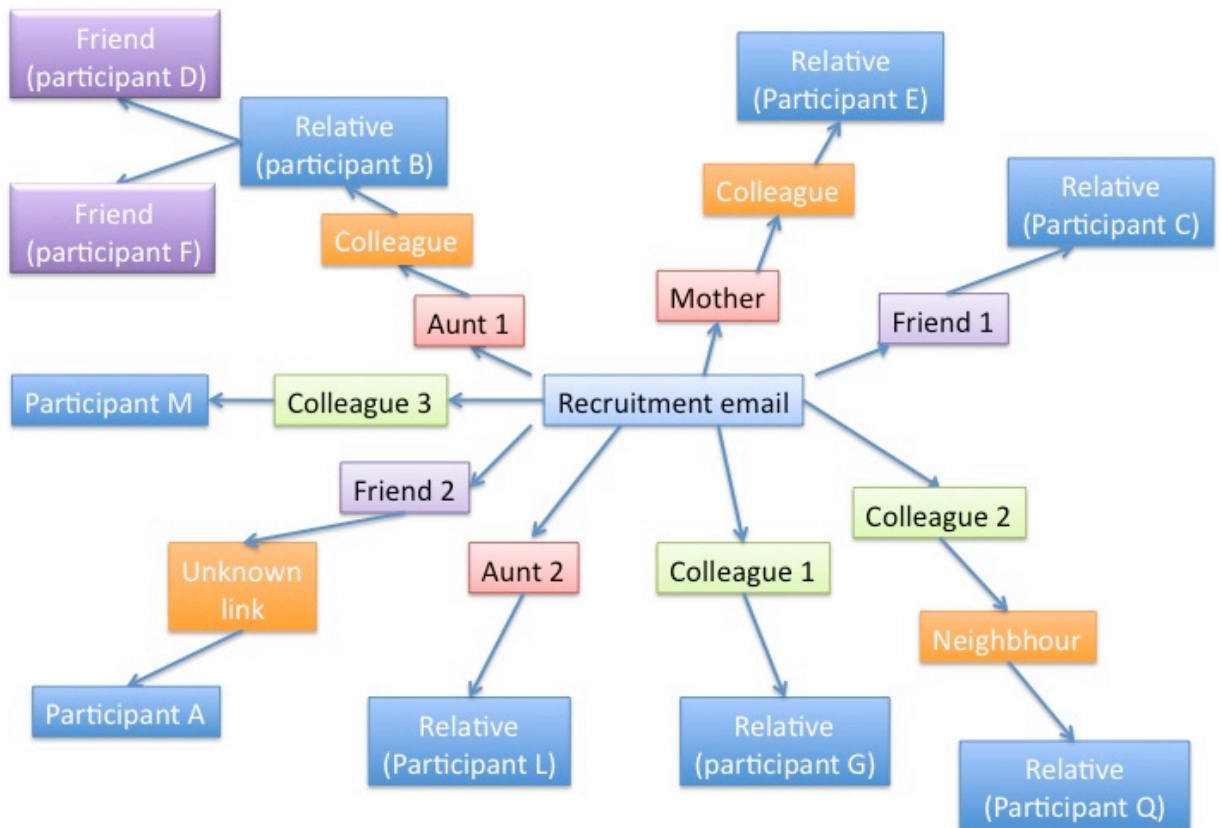
Figure 1: First recruitment process (snowball)

The second group of participants was recruited with the help of two *animateurs à la vie spirituelle et à l'enseignement communautaire* (AVSEC) from the Commission scolaire de Montréal. These two professionals were extremely helpful in presenting the socio-economic background of their students, as well as specific characteristics of their school[20]. With my recruitment letter in hand, it was then up to them to identify potential participants, and ask them if they were interested in participating in the study (Figure 2).
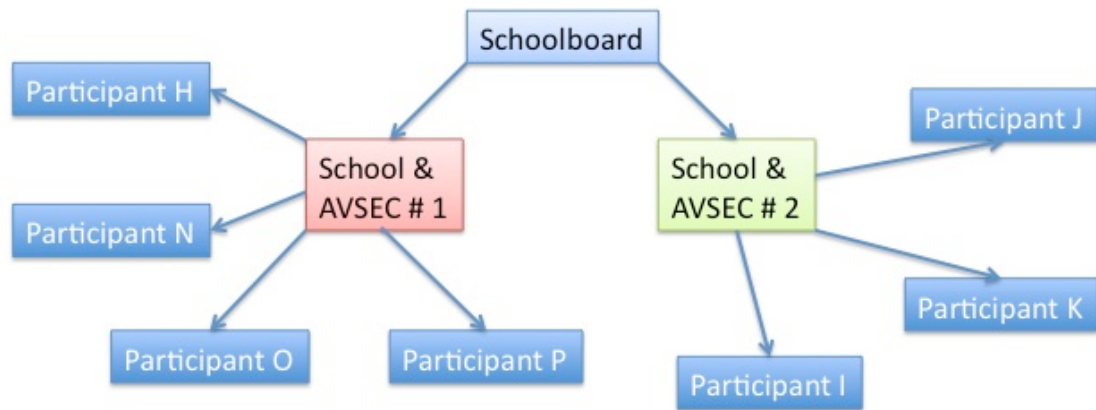
Figure 2: Second recruitment process (through school board)

Since these participants were approached by their AVSEC, who pre-selected them as having something to contribute to my research, it is possible that the AVSECs favoured some while disregarding others. Had I been allowed to meet with all the students who met the participation requirements, I might have reached other youths, and some of the

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[20] The official at the CSDM who granted me access to two schools felt that the two AVSECs would be best placed to put me in contact with potential participants. With his recommendation, I contacted the two AVSECs and the principal of their school by email, forwarding them all my documents – information letter, consent forms, questionnaire. I then spoke with them on the phone, and had a preliminary meeting with one of the AVSECs.

results might have differed. However, both AVSECs knew their students quite well, and it is also possible that they enhanced my sample by convincing students who might otherwise not have participated. In the end, the seventeen youths who participated in the study came from rather dissimilar socio-economic backgrounds, and yet, many of their answers to key questions were strikingly similar, suggesting, as we will see in the analysis chapter, certain trends that are likely present in much of this population segment.

Once they had received the information about the study, the prospective participants of both groups contacted me to agree on a date and location for the interview. This process took quite a bit of time: I had to leave messages and emails, chase potential participants from one parent's house to another, and it often took a few weeks before we managed to connect and agree upon a date and meeting place. I kept a detailed journal of these interactions in order to keep track of whom I had contacted, and what the outcome was. As the excerpt below demonstrates, many promising contacts led to nothing (figure 3). For both samples, once initial contact had been made either through email or telephone, I sent an information email to the potential participant and their parents, if the youths were under 18, consisting of the information letter and consent form(s) (annexes 3, 4, 5 and 6).

DATE	ACTION	RÉSULTAT	SUIVI
3 oct	Envoyé info à E pour [école A]	Le directeur veut l'approbation de la CSDM.	Entamer les procédures à la CSDM?
14 oct	Envoyé info à S.F. pour ses 2 nièces	Aucune réponse	x
22 oct	Laissé message à V, prof à [école]	Aucune réponse	x
1er nov	Envoyé info à D, N et P pour distribuer dans leurs réseaux.	P: suivi pour le jeune auquel il pensait.	P: pas de réponse
4 nov	Parlé à E qui m'a donné le contact de D, responsable des programmes jeunesse à [institution religieuse]	Aucun de leurs jeunes ne rencontre mes critères.	x

7 nov	Envoyé info à T pour qu'elle fasse suivre à ses amies.	Intérêt d'une de ses amies, mais aucune réponse concrète.	x
8 nov	Contact de L (via D) pour son fils de 15 ans.	Son fils n'est pas intéressé.	x
10 nov	Courriel d'AM, qui relaie l'info aux services de pastorale de [paroisse]	Pas de retour	x
12 nov	Pris contact avec C, mère d'un ami de R, pour son fils L	[courriel et téléphone] Contacter début janvier	Contact établi
13 nov	Courriel de P (via D) pour son fils E, 15 ans.	Envoyé info complète via courriel; pas de réponse une semaine plus tard.	Téléphoner [numéro] Pas de réponse
14 nov	RDV pris avec M, 15 ans, pour début décembre (contact via L).	RENDEZ-VOUS LE 10 DÉC. À 10H30	**ENTREVUE COMPLÉTÉE le 10 décembre**
16 nov	Parlé à M pour 2 contacts potentiels : sœur de J à [ville] (près de Québec); et beau-fils de son [amie], prof au privé à [ville].	M fera contact; lui rappeler **début décembre**	Rappel effectué
16 nov	Parlé à I qui fera suivre à son cousin de 18 ans.	Follow-up pour voir s'il l'a fait.	x
17 nov	Envoyé info à A pour sa sœur de 13 ans	Sa sœur aura 14 ans en février; elle est intéressée et sa mère aussi. Recontacter en février 2011.	**2ᵉ contact effectué; ENTRVUE COMPLÉTÉE LE 5 MARS**
17 nov	Envoyé info à J pour son fils et amis (contact d'AM).	Pas de réponse	x

Figure 3: Recruitment journal (excerpt)

Interview Script

The interview script was elaborated based on three major sources. The first one was, as mentioned above, my work as a research assistant, especially for the two studies on second-generation immigrants, which used Grounded Theory as an analytical framework, and in-depth interviews or focus groups as research method. The second source of inspiration for my interview questions was the review of the literature described in chapter one, especially the very detailed appendixes of the National Study on Youth and Religion (Smith and Lundquist Denton 2005, 292-310) and the questions found in the

Search Institute's report *In Their Own Voices* (Search Institute, 2008). The third source was an extra body of questions specific to the Quebec context that I wanted to explore with my participants, and that had to do with the Ethics and Religious Culture programme, the perceptions and interactions between the participants and their immigrant classmates, as well as their families' background and values. Although the participants' comments about the ERC class are likely to be of interest to teachers and policy makers, this study does not evaluate the ERC Program itself, nor is it a review of existing religious or spiritual education programmes taught in various countries, or of available texts for teaching such programme. Rather, it aims at assessing how the participants perceive the programme, and whether it contributed to their spiritual development.

My goal was to explore three major themes. First, the participants' opinion and level of satisfaction about the Éthique et culture religieuse program, which, as explained in chapter 2, replaced the religious and moral education programs that had been in place up to 2008. To my knowledge, such data had not been gathered when I conceptualized the study. Secondly, I wanted to explore the participants' perception of their immigrant classmates. The participants' generation is at the forefront of socio-demographic changes brought by recent immigration patterns in Quebec, and, as the audiences of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission of 2008 have shown, that generation is much more open to cultural and religious diversity than older ones. I wanted to probe that specific topic and evaluate whether that relative open-mindedness to religious difference was also part of the participants' experience. Lastly, the question of religious and cultural transmission is of particular interest in Quebec, given its history and unique place in the North-American

social landscape. Thus data on the participants' parents, family situation and values serve not only to contextualize the results, but also to track the aspects of Quebec's religious culture that are transmitted to its youngest generation. I adapted questions from the sources identified in the previous paragraph in order to fit the themes that I wanted to explore, and completed them with my own list of questions.

The semi-structured interview script was composed mostly of open-ended questions (appendix 2) and was developed in order to elicit comments about the participants' experiences and give them space to express their thoughts and opinions (LeCompte and Preissle 1993, 160-1; Erricker and Ota 2001, 38). The questions were arranged in broad topical sections (Family and significant adults, School environment, Friends, Identity, religion and spirituality) that were divided in subsections according to more pointedly defined themes (for instance, the "Identity, religion and spirituality" section had subsections on defining religion and spirituality, religious beliefs, religious identity, the meaning of life, and religion and society). Subsections typically had between four and eight questions that were ordered so that "questions addressing the same topic or culminating in a major idea are grouped together" (LeCompte and Preissle 1993, 175). In order to put the participants at ease and gradually work into the more complex questions pertaining to religion, spirituality, beliefs and society, I started with socio-demographic questions, and followed with sections on family and school. I pre-tested the questionnaire through an interview with the teenage daughter of a friend, held under the same conditions as all subsequent interviews (see next paragraph for details). No major problems appeared during that interview.

Informed Consent

Informed consent, that is, "the knowing consent of individuals to participate [in research] as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation (Berg 2004, 56). In Quebec, youths between the ages of 14 and 17 are legally allowed to consent to many things without their parents' authorization. For instance, they can consult a health professional on any issue without said professional contacting their parents. Therefore, I could technically have done this study without parental consent, as my participants were all above the age of 14 – which I did for my M.A. study in 2003. However, ethical guidelines in that respect have changed since, and the Concordia University Ethics board thought that it would be safer to obtain parental consent for all participants under the age of 18, in order to ward off any possible misunderstandings, potential lawsuits or bad publicity. When potential participants were contacted, I enclosed a copy of the information letter (appendixes 3 and 4) as well as the consent form, both for the parent and the participant (annexes 5 and 6).

While I anticipated questions and even refusals from a few parents, all parents who were asked by their child to agree to their participation did so swiftly and gracefully. I did not have to convince any of them of the validity of my study – they all seemed to support their child's desire to participate, and most found the topic of the study interesting. Indeed in some cases, it was the parent who told the participant about the study. Yet at least fifteen other potential participants were contacted, mostly through snowball recruitment, and in the end did not participate in the study; it is possible that for some, it was because their parents did not agree with their participation.

Prior to the interview, each participant was reminded, as listed on the front page of the interview guide (appendix 2), that they were free to stop the interview at any time, to not answer any of question they disliked, and that the results were entirely confidential – meaning that they would never be shared with their parents, teachers, or anyone else - and that any identifying information would be changed in publications resulting from the study (Berg 2004, 57). They were also told that there was no right or wrong answer to the questions they were about to be asked, and that it was their opinion that was sought. The University's Ethics Board also required that I give the participants a list of resources they could contact should the interview with me elicit difficult feelings or difficulties (appendix 7). Most participants simply shoved this paper in their bag, or directly put it in the recycling bin; one even told me that adolescents were given too many resources of this kind, and that they were not really helpful.

Interview Procedure

The interviews started in December 2010. By July 2011, fifteen youths had been interviewed, and the last interview took place in May 2012. The interviews took place wherever it was most comfortable and convenient for the participant. Five interviews took place at the participant's home, in four cases with the parents being in the house but not attending the interview; three interviews took place in study rooms in a municipal library, and two in cafés. The interviews of the seven participants who were contacted through the CSDM took place in their respective schools, either in a classroom, in the community project room, or the student lounge.

The interviews were recorded on a mini-disc (MD) player linked to a unidirectional microphone - a piece of technology that elicited many amused comments from the participants. The microphone was set on the table somewhat to the side of the participant, in order to minimize its visual impact, and I kept the MD player in front of me. I refrained from manipulating both the microphone and the MD player during the interview so that the participants would forget about both of them, and see the questions and their answers as a conversation with me. Indeed, in this study, the participants were always treated as able to make their own decisions and having worthwhile ideas, as it is built on the premise that adolescents can think for themselves and have valuable information to contribute about their own identity and religiosity. I therefore tried to instil a feeling of casual conversation in the interviews, putting the participants at ease by smiling, looking them in the eyes, and encouraging them when they went on a tangent (LeCompte and Preissle 1993, 179).

One condition of participation was that the participant and I should be alone during the interview so that the adolescent could freely express himself. Therefore when interviews took at home or at school, parents, siblings, teachers or friends did not attend. However, there were a few interruptions in four interviews, either by students or school personnel. In one instance, the mother of a participant brought us lunch; in another, a vice-principal who did no recognize me as part of his school's personnel while peeking in the class where I was interviewing a participant came in and inquired about what was going on, which I gladly explained. In such cases I paused the MD player, stopped the interview,

waited for the visitor to leave, and resumed. Such interruptions were brief (two or three minutes) and did not seem to have an impact on the flow of the interview.

I did not take detailed written notes during the interviews because I wanted to interact as much as possible with the participants by looking them in the eye, authentically reacting to what they were saying, and ask more pointed questions if needed. Taking detailed notes, I felt, would have impeded on the direct and authentic quality of the exchange. In a way, not taking notes was a mistake, as one interview was entirely lost due to a malfunction with the MD player and another's last twenty minutes disappeared, depriving me of precious information. I noticed only later that an interview had been lost, and that participant's answers are not part of the data used in this study. However, the remaining data from the interview of which twenty minutes were lost were usable, and were included in the analysis. That loss of an interview occurred early in the gathering process – it was the third participant – so after that, I started taking short notes on my interview guide in order to reconstruct the interview should another malfunction occur. Overall this did not seem to have an impact on the quality of my connexion with the participants, as I was careful not to stare at my notes for more than a few seconds at the time.

Data Analysis

After I had collected the interviews, I listened to each one and took detailed notes (figure. 4) that included the time mark of each question or intervention on the mini-disc (in minutes) so they could easily be located again, a key word that summarized the question that was being discussed or the number of said question, and, when the participant

expressed an opinion in an especially meaningful way, a verbatim transcription. The next step, coding, is "the process of segmenting and labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data" (Creswell 2005, 237). I decided to code my data by theme rather than by word or line, (Berg 2004, 246) which is why I decided against making complete verbatim transcriptions of each interview; not only are such transcriptions very time-consuming to write, but as I was working alone and not doing discourse analysis, I did not deem it crucial to have minute transcriptions.

Then, instead of superimposing fixed categories on my data, I developed categories for each question that were directly grounded in the answers given by the participants, an inductive approach that "begins with the researcher 'immersing' themselves in the documents (that is, the various messages) in order to identify the dimensions or *themes* that seem meaningful to the producers of each message" (Berg 2004, 245). Charmaz identifies the following steps to the coding and analysis process in grounded theory:

> **Initial Coding** – begins data analysis early while collecting data by asking "what is happening in the data?" The researcher examines the data for its potential theoretical importance, uses gerunds to code for processes, and remains open to the emergence of theoretical possibilities. Codes are short, analytic, and active. […]
>
> **Focused Coding** – takes the most frequent and/or significant initial codes to study, sort, compare, and synthesize large amounts of data. Focused codes become tentative categories to explore and analyse.
>
> **Memo-writing** – occurs throughout the research process to raise the analytic level of the emerging theory, identifying tentative categories and their properties, define gaps in data collection, and delineate relationships between them. […]
>
> **Theoretical Sampling** – entails seeking specific data to develop the properties of category or theory, not to achieve representative population distribution.

Saturating Theoretical Concepts – means that gathering more data reveals no new properties of a theoretical category nor yields further insights about the emerging grounded category.

Theoretical Sorting and Integrating: involves weighting, ordering, and connecting theoretical memos (1) to show how the theory fits together, (2) to make relationships explicit between theoretical categories or between the properties of one theoretical category, (3) to specify the conditions under which these categories […] arise and (4) to state the consequences of the theorized relationships. (Charmaz 2008, 242)

Each interview yielded between fifteen and twenty pages of manuscript notes, which I re-read in order to immerse myself in the participants' views and ideas, highlighting relevant elements of each answers, noticing the themes and patterns that emerged along the way (Creswell 2005, 237-239). I then transcribed the key points of the answers to each question so that the answers to each question would all be in the same place, allowing me to glance at one or two sets of data at once (figure 5). I then colour-coded each theme in every set of answers, allowing for specific categories to emerge. Sometimes the themes that came out for a given question were somewhat predictable, while in other instances, unexpected answers nudged categories that I would not have thought of, as in question 69, "quel est le but de l'existence", to which three participants answered that there was none.
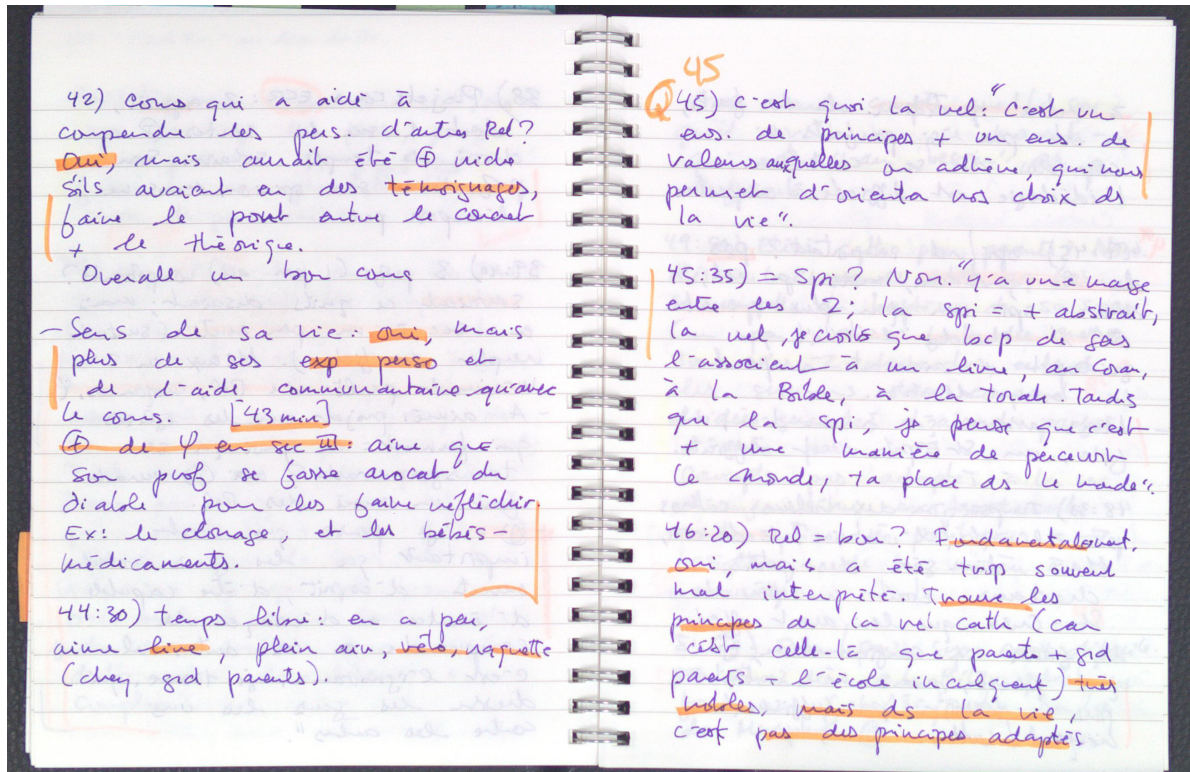
Figure 4: Example of detailed notes from an interview

Figure 5 shows focused coding with categories emerging from the data (Dimitriadis 2008, 147; Charmaz and Henwood 2008, 243). I examined the notes from each interview segment-by-segment, in order to find similarities and differences in the participants' answers to the question from the interview script. Transferring each code (keywords) on a table, one line per participants, I moved from initial to focused coding, and was able to clearly see the codes and synthesize each segment (Charmaz and Henwood 2008, 243). Attributing a colour to codes helped me to have a global image of the emerging categories for each of the question found in the interview script that I had discussed with the participants. With the data condensed in this way, it was possible to compare the participants' worldviews and experiences across the interviews, and have categories

emerge from the comparison. Such "cross case analysis and constant comparison allowed for key themes to emerge" (Raftopoulos and Bates 2011, 157).

Figure 5: Example of coding, showing emerging categories

Results

Despite my assumed bias toward taking into account adolescents' perspectives and opinions, I remained as objective as possible throughout the analysis, and as neutral as possible in my vocal tone and reactions during the interviews with my participants. Throughout this thesis, I report quotations from the participants to illustrate the data and provide evidence of an objective interpretation (Raftopoulos and Bates 2011, 157) although randomly selected pseudonyms are used to identify the participants and guarantee their anonymity.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION OF DATA

Tu sais que je trippe pas trop sur les prières

Sauf quand je suis dans' marde ou trop content.

(Keith Kouna 2012)

As is often the case with qualitative studies such as this one, some questions did not yield clear patterns, while some strikingly clear answers emerged from others. This may partly be due to the length of the questionnaire, which, retrospectively, was excessive, and made interviews last on average an hour and fifteen minutes. Indeed, by the time the interview came to an end, the participants were less focussed and started to lose interest, which meant that they answered questions in more general terms. There were also some instances where we ran out of time, meaning that some questions were not discussed. A few questions have thus been invalidated because they were not asked of enough participants[21].

The questionnaire ended up being this long partly because I was not entirely clear on where I was going, and wanted to make sure I was not leaving something out. I also wanted to have as much background information in order to contextualize my participants' answers about their worldviews. Some sections also yielded little conclusive

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[21] These were questions 24, 49, 58, 59, 60, 77, 88, 96, 98, and 117.

information given the time they took out of the interview. For instance, section VI about media consumption had detailed questions about the participants' tastes in film, books, video games, etc. However, in order to establish a clear correlation between these and the participants' worldviews, a much more detailed analysis of their preferred media would have been required, which was beyond the scope and means of this study.

I. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Question 1: Age and gender

17 youths participated in this study. Two were 14, four were 15, seven were 16, one was 17, one was 18, and 2 were 19, with a mean of 16.05. Nine participants were female, and eight were male.

Age	14	15	16	17	18	19	Total
Female	1	3	4	0	1	0	9
Male	1	1	3	1	0	2	8
Total	**2**	**4**	**7**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**17**

Table I. Age and gender of participants.

Questions 2, 5 and 6: Place of birth and residence

I was fortunate to have a sample of participants that came from varied backgrounds. Though all participants were born in Montreal, they were raised in different neighbourhoods that ranged from very affluent (Westmount and Town of Mount Royal) to middle-class (Notre-Dame de Grâce, Mile-End, Ahuntsic, Plateau Mont-Royal, Rosemont), and working class (Centre-sud, Saint-Henri, Ville-Émard, Pointe-aux-trembles). Two participants were born in Montreal but moved outside the city at a young

age (to the South Shore of Montreal, and the Lanaudière area). One participant was born outside Canada but was adopted in infancy by Québécois parents. Only two participants were from outside Montreal, thus the results of this study reflect the views of youths who have grown up and lived in the metropolitan area, with its cultural, ethnic and socio-economic diversity.

Question 3a: Parents

The participants' parents came from varied backgrounds and employment situations. Out of thirty-six parents, fourteen were born and grew up in Montreal, five in the suburbs surrounding Montreal, and eight elsewhere in the province of Quebec, generally from other cities such as Chicoutimi, Gatineau or Saint-Hyacinthe. A few participants (4) did not know where their father was born.

The parents' lines of work were fairly varied, with the bulk working in white-collar professions (3 engineers, 4 secretaries, 2 civil servants, 6 upper and middle-managers), but also in health, the arts, and services. The participants' mothers worked as social worker, advertising specialist, middle and upper managers, civil servant, secretary, cultural agent, teacher, lawyer, and physiotherapist. One mother stayed at home, another was on welfare, and yet another was on leave from work due to health reasons.

The participants' fathers worked as civil servant, stage technician, engineer, human resource specialist, computer programmer, financial analyst, lawyer, security agent, university professor, construction entrepreneur, lift operator, and land surveyor. One

father had recently been laid off and was working in a sector that had little to do with his training.

All couples of parents were heterosexual. Eleven couples were married or living together as common law partners, and six couples were divorced; of these, three couples had never actually lived together (in two cases, the biological fathers had never or hardly ever been involved and the mothers had remarried, the step-father officially adopting the participants; in another, the biological father raised his child in shared custody and was very present in his child's upbringing). Two participants were estranged from their fathers due to messy divorces, and a third participant was still in contact with the father following the parents' divorce, but the relationship was strained. One participant's father was deceased and the mother had re-married.

Question 3b: Siblings

Keeping with the times, ten participants had full siblings (born from the same parents); one of these had three siblings; three had two siblings, and six of them had one sibling. Seven participants were only children, but three of the latter had half-siblings, with whom they lived and who they considered full siblings; one of the participant who had a full brother also had an older half-brother who did not live in the same household. Two participants also were in contact with the children of a parent's new partner, and they described the relation as harmonious. The siblings' ages ranged from a two year old baby brother to an older brother of 23 and a 31 year-old half-sister, but the majority of the participants' siblings were between 10 and 18 years old, closer to the participants' ages.

Question 4: School

The variety of backgrounds noted in the previous section was also reflected in the schools the participants attended. Four attended private schools[22], and thirteen attended public schools – some among the most prestigious, others with a fairly negative reputation. Of those who went to public schools, two had already graduated from high school and were attending CEGEP, and one had gone on to a vocational (trade) school.

Question 7. Reasons for participating in the study

The reasons for participating in the project varied from one participant to another, although most had a basic interest in the topic. Many said that they wanted to help out, and that they knew how difficult it was to find people for studies such as mine because someone they knew told them so. Those who were approached in school by their AVSEC agreed to participate because of the relation they had with that professional, because they trusted her. It can also be assumed that they did participate because they had things to say and wanted someone to hear them.

II. FAMILY AND SIGNIFICANT ADULTS

Question 13: Perceived level of support from parents

To question 13, « Trouves-tu que tes parents t'encouragent et te soutiennent? », the majority of participants answered that they indeed felt supported and encouraged by their parents - eight very much, six much. Three participants felt more or less supported – or only for specific things, such as academics. Interestingly, these were all boys.

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[22] All but one schools were co-ed. Only a few girls-only private schools remain in Quebec, and boys-only schools have all become co-ed in the past few decades.

Question 14: Familial values

A wide range of values were cited by the participants as being important in their family, although three had never given the question much thought and could not answer. I did not supply the participants with values or categories; they could name any value, and there was no pre-established number they had to meet either. The values that were cited most often were: respect, of oneself and of others (7), honesty (2), family (4), equality (3), and freedom of action and expression (3). Other values cited once as important were patience, education, material comfort (associated with money and the freedom it brings), being true to one's word, being appreciated by others, autonomy, religion, good manners, authenticity, empathy, understanding others, adaptability, generosity, and harmony.

Question 17: Other significant adult in the participants' lives

Fifteen out of seventeen participants had adults other than their parents who were significant for them. For seven participants, it was another family member, either a grandparent (3), an aunt or uncle (3), or an older cousin (1). For two more, it was an older colleague from work. For two others, it was either a friend of the family, or the parent of their best friend. And last but not least, four participants had significant adults in their school environment, either a teacher, a coach, specialised educator (psycho-éducatrice/ technicienne en éducation spécialisée) or an AVSEC. Further, two participants who had significant adults in their family also mentioned the presence of a significant adult at school.

Question 18: Models and inspirations

Who do the participants look up to as models and inspirations? Seven participants could not think of anyone they admired. Among the ten remaining, all but one, whose models were hockey players and improvisation actors, named people who were close to them: either a mother (2), a grand-parent (2), an aunt or uncle, or a cousin, but also the mother of a friend (2), a best friend, or a girlfriend, or a teacher.

III. SCHOOL, LEISURE AND FRIENDS

The 17 youths who participated in this study attended nine different schools mostly located across the island of Montreal, with the exception of one in a suburban area, and another in a small town. Three of these schools were private, the remaining six were public[23].

Question 19: Appreciation of school

To question 19, « En général, aimes-tu l'école? Qu'est-ce que tu aimes le plus et le moins à l'école? », participants had mixed answers. Six of them did not like school, while nine did (and two did not answer). The overwhelming majority of the students who disliked school were male (five out of six); the reasons they cited included the lack of interest of other students, being unable to chose classes according to their own interests, the fact that classes were too general in their contents, uninspiring teachers, the fact that high school

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[23] In Québec, the term "private college" or "private school" refers to schools that are partly funded by the provincial government (50%), but where parents must pay overall costs that are significantly higher than in public schools. Unlike the majority of public schools, which must by law welcome all students, private schools screen students through entrance examinations. Also, there is a fairly high flexibility in Québec about which public school one might attend, as compared to elsewhere in North America; for instance, a student can attend a school that is outside her district of residence.

took too long to complete, and overly strict discipline. Three of these participants liked nothing at all about school; however, the three others did like some things, two of these crediting after-school activities as the main reason that kept them attending.

Even participants who enjoyed school still disliked some things about it. Four mentioned a form of discipline that was too strict or authoritarian (copying lines, detention) and that eschewed any form of dialogue. Two mentioned the pressure to succeed, which they at times found overwhelming and left them little place to grow personally (these two participants attended private schools). However, the participants also enjoyed much about school, including being more autonomous, a thriving social environment (four of them), after-school programs (three), and even actual classes and learning (four)! The quality of teachers made a significant difference in the participants' appreciation of a given class; as we saw in the section about significant adults, teachers and other school personnel were among those most cited as significant adults and people worthy of admiration.

Question 20: Grades

In terms of grades, the participants were generally above-average students, according to their own assessment. When asked if they thought they had good grades, two rated themselves with an average above 90%; nine above 80%; three above 79%; and one below 70%. Two participants did not answer.

Question 21: School's educational project

Three of the schools attended by some of this study's participants had a well-defined educational project: two were international schools (4 participants in one, 1 in the other), the other focused on theatre (2 participants), and the last one on music and sports (2 participants). The other schools, while offering a variety of activities, did not focus on a specific discipline.

Question 22: Ethno-religious background of students at participants' schools

According to the participants, the other students attending their school came from a wide variety of background, which reflects recent immigration patterns in the Montreal area (Statistics Canada, 2013). The participants spoke about the presence of students who were Asian (9), especially Chinese, Haïtian (6), "Arab" (7), and Russian (2). English-speaking Quebecers were mentioned once, and one participant who attended a CEGEP also mentioned gay classmates, who he saw as having their own culture and references. Two participants said that the students at their school came "from everywhere". And what of old-stock Québécois, or "Kebs", as they are often called, in ethnically diverse schools? They were mentioned by six participants as being part of a school student population. Four other participants said that there were "very few" old-stock Québécois at their school, and three of these attended the same school, which had an international program. The only two schools that did not fit the above description were, in one case, outside of the Montreal area, and in the other, a high school with a focus on the arts.

Question 23: Most and least liked school subjects

Perhaps unsurprisingly, subjects that the participants liked the least included French (4), mathematics (3), physical education (2), and science (2). But French and mathematics were also among the favourite subjects of other participants (4 each), with a high number of participants who especially enjoyed history classes (7), as well as their option classes, such as theatre (4), music, journalism, and entrepreneurship. ERC was a favourite for two participants.

Question 25: Afterschool activities

Out of seventeen participants, nine did not participate in any afterschool activity (which does not mean that they had no leisure activities; see question 41 for what they did in their spare time). The eight others were involved in at least one afterschool activity, including choir or band (4), improvisation league (2), writing for the school paper (2), running (2), volleyball, robotics, and Amnesty International.

Question 26: Community activities at school

The majority of the schools attended by the participants offered activities to involve the students socially or in the community, generally in the form of volunteer work, which we will explore further at question 44. The schools that did not offer such activities included the vocational school, which by definition offers a core set of skills to enable the students to find work without extraneous classes and activites; and the small high school that offered a theatre program, attended by two participants. These community activities were

attended by eight participants, three from the inner-city high school, one from a private high school, and one from a CEGEP.

Question 27: Spiritual and religious activities at school

Only one school, a private high school with an active Catholic tradition, still offered an explicitly religious activity to its students - to attend mass - but in an entirely elective way. Two other public schools had, as part of their professional team, an animateur à la vie spirituelle et communautaire (AVSEC), who was in charge of organizing and leading various activities relating to helping others and tackling questions of meaning. All the other schools had no explicitly spiritual or religious activities beside the ERC course.

Question 28: Participants' friends

This question, a very general one, was meant as an ice-breaker to get the participants talking about their friends. There were no general patterns in the types of friendship the participants had. Some had mostly friends of the same sex (Mélina, Sabrina); some had a large group of friends - over a dozen – (Héloise, Liliane) while others were very exclusive and had one or two close friends (Philémon). Some were always with the same group; others had friends from different groups that they saw in different moments and circumstances (Ludovic). But all participants had friends, and to all of them these friendships were important.

Question 29: Friends' ethnic and cultural origins

To the question "Tes amis sont-ils de la même origine ethnique/culturelle que toi? », the majority (11) of participants had a mix of friends from varied ethnic backgrounds, reflecting their schools' student population. Predictably, those who went to schools with a more homogeneous ethnic make-up had fewer friends from non-Quebec backgrounds.

Participant	Ethnic origin of friends
Mélina	Québec (5), Haiti
Théo	Haiti, Argentina, Vietnam, Québec
Ludovic	Québec, Haiti (2), Russia
Liliane	Québec (10), Arab (no country specified)
Philémon	Québec, Québéco-Tunisian
Liliane	Québec
Marjolaine	Québec (3), Mexico, Congo
Ariane	Bolivia, Romania, Morocco, Québec, Franco-Algerian
Grégoire	Salvador (2), Russia, Québec (2)
Mélanie	Salvador (2), Lebanon, Québec
Myriam	Québec (6)
Julien	Guatemala, Québec, Franco-Quebecer
Noël	Québec (2), Morocco, Portugal
Judith	Franco-Quebecer, Guatemala, Québec
Sabrina	Russia (2), Algeria, Québec, Jewish (no country specified)
Colin	Québec (majority), Bulgaria, Asia
Loïc	Québec, Asia

Table II. Ethnicity of the participants' friends

Question 30: Talking with friends about the meaning of life

Do participants have discussions with their friends about existential questions, or is this a topic that does not interest them? Seven of them said that they often had such conversations with their friends; three said that they did, but only with certain friends who they considered mature enough to talk about such topics. Three more said that they sometimes did, but that this was not a common topic of conversation, and three more said that they never discussed such issues. Data was unavailable for one participant. One participant said that discussions about the meaning of life took place especially in her ERC class, but keenly added that despite what adults might think, "teenagers have varied conversation topics" (Marjolaine) even outside of the ERC class.

Question 31: Talking with friends about social issues

Social issues such as poverty, the environment, or politics, were similarly discussed: eight participants said that they often talked about such topics with their friends, and two only with specific friends; three said that they did so occasionally, and three said that they never did. Data was unavailable for one participant. Political and ethical questions were often discussed, especially in relation to the daily news. One participant said that various posters on social issues at her school often prompted discussions between her and her friends.

Questions 32-33-34: Love relationships

Seven participants were involved with a boyfriend or girlfriend at the time of the interview. All of them were involved with someone who was culturally Québécois.

Whether this is telling or simply a coincidence is debateable; when asked whether they would consider being in a love relationship with someone from a different religion (question 33), twelve participants answered that they had no issues with dating someone from a different religious background, although one added "only if [that religion] was not imposed" on him (Julien). Two said that they would not, one adding that it would be "too complicated" (Marina)[24]. As for the possibility of being in love with someone who has different values, regardless of religious affiliation (question 34), nine participants said that they would date someone who had different values from them. These included five of the participants who were already in a relationship, who said that their current partner had different values from them, even if they were from the same cultural background, and that it did not bother them. Five participants said that they would not consider it, including the two participants who, at question 33, said they would not date someone from a different religious or cultural background[25].

Question 36: Interest and usefulness of the ERC class

Eleven participants thought the ERC course was useful and interesting, five found it boring and useless, and one was undecided. Those who liked the ERC course found that it helped them to better understand the profusion of religions in the world, to reflect upon their values, and to tackle a topic that was seen as different from the others in school. Being able to share one's experiences and opinions was highly valued, as well as having the possibility to externalize thoughts and feelings through projects such as reflexion papers. Religious self-identity was not necessarily a determining factor in liking or

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[24] Data was missing for three participants.
[25] Data was missing for three participants.

disliking the ERC course. For instance, a participant who self-identified as atheist said that "même pour moi, c'est un bon cours, parce qu'on discute avec respect et on écoute le point de vue de tout le monde" (Mélina). Of the two participants who identified as Catholic, one liked the course, and the other was lukewarm about it.

Participants' words: Perspectives on the ERC Program

Positive

"C'est vraiment bien, on apprend beaucoup de choses. Ça amène une plus grande ouverture d'esprit chez les élèves, car ça permet de voir les points communs [entre les religions]. Ça me rend heureuse! C'est une bonne chose, ça nous donne plus de culture. En plus ma prof cette année est une perle!" **Marina**

"Je comprends pas les parents qui se sont plaint, moi j'ai aucun reproche à faire à ce cours-là. C'est pas un cours où on va essayer de te convertir à quoi que ce soit, c'est seulement de l'information qu'on nous donne par rapport aux différentes religions qui existent, et où on te fait réfléchir sur le sens de la vie, sur ce qui est bien ou mal. À mon sens c'est juste une meilleure façon de te developer et de devenir plus complet." **Julien**

"C'est utile car on nous donne des faits, puis les élèves jugent par eux-mêmes. Donc la croyance est pas imposée, et on apprend des autres cultures." **Myriam**

Negative

"J'aime pas ça parce que je trouve que c'est juste du politically correct. Je côtoie plein de personnes de cultures différentes à l'école, et je crois pas que le ministère [de l'éducation] a quelque chose à m'apprendre là-dessus." **Colin**

"Mon cours d'ERC était donné par la prof d'histoire, qui n'avait pas envie de le donner. Alors deux fois sur trois, on faisait en fait de l'histoire. Je trouve que le programme n'est pas très bien construit, j'ai l'impression que ça a été bâclé." **Liliane**

However, not all participants were thrilled by the ERC programme. The five participants who did not like it thought that the programme was too superficial or incomplete, or that it was simply irrelevant. This clearly had something to do with the person who taught the class (see question 38 for more on this topic), but for two participants, the idea of a class about religions was simply not something they liked. Four participants also mentioned that although they liked that class, some of their classmates did not take it seriously, or even slept during it, emphasizing how low on the list of students' priorities the ERC class was.

Question 37: ERC learning activities

The types of learning activities done by the participants in their ERC class were quite diverse, and included readings, in class discussions, filling comparative tables of different religions, reflecting on and/or debating an ethical issue, discussing events from the news, visiting a place of worship, researching a chosen topic, oral presentations, introduction to various concepts such as the sacred, and creating a religion with its own ritual, symbol, sacred book, and foundational myth. The participants were enthusiastic about the majority of these activities, especially those that provided a space to discuss their views, such as debates and discussions, and those that allowed them to explore ethics and religion through their imagination, such as creating a religion, or imagining what could be done with an abandoned church. One activity that they found tedious was filling

comparative tables about the characteristics of different religions, which is an activity that many teachers seemed to propose.

Question 38: Perceived competence of ERC teachers

The ERC teacher was perceived as competent and knowledgeable by twelve participants, and as incompetent and unknowledgeable by five (the latter were the same participants who did not find the ERC program useful). Of the latter, two thought that their teacher was actually good, but that it was the programme that needed improvement. In contrast, three of the participants who did not like the programme underlined that the teacher was clearly not knowledgeable on the topic and "searched Wikipedia to find the information she was giving us" (Mélanie), or resented having to teach that subject (Éloïse). Two participants who had the same ERC teacher (Myriam and Mélanie) said that although she was nice, the fact that she had no control over her class kept them from enjoying it. They thought their spiritual animator, who occasionally visited the class for special lectures or activities, was more interesting and knowledgeable.

Question 39: Usefulness of ERC course in better understanding other religions[26]

Seven participants found that the ERC course helped them better understand other religions and worldviews, and two more said that it did, but only somewhat. Another said that she much preferred the ERC course to its ancestor, the moral education course, because it helped her better understand the many religions that exist in the world (Marjolaine). Two participants said that while the course did bring some new information

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[26] Data was unavailable for two participants.

about other religions, it was not what had best helped them to understand other cultural groups (Grégoire, Judith). For the latter, it was dialogue through direct contact with classmates and other friends that had helped the most in this endeavour. Two participants added that they already had some amount of information about the various religions that existed, and that ERC confirmed and completed it, while adding some theoretical notions such as monotheism and polytheism (Myriam, Julien). This latter participant would have enjoyed presentations by people who were believers/practitioners of the various religions they studied, "in order to bridge theory with practice".

Six participants found that the ERC course did not contribute to their understanding of other religions and worldviews. Two (who had the same teacher) said that in her ERC class, they talked mostly about ethical topics and "éthique de vie", and not very much about religion – indeed, they only had one project in the schoolyear that had focused on religion, which they thought was not enough (Sabrina, Ariane).

Question 40: Usefulness of ERC course in reflecting on the meaning of life

Eight participants found that the ERC course helped them to reflect on the meaning of life and other existential questions. Seven found that it did not, and data was missing for two. One participant (Eloïse) found that the in-class debates helped her to clarify and elaborate her own views because she had to present and defend them during that activity. Another (Loïc) liked the fact that there were no right or wrong answers and that they were entitled to have their own opinion. Another (Ariane) pointed out that although in this aspect, ERC was very useful to her, it was not for everyone in her class, and that a

basic receptivity was necessary. Among those who did not find the course helpful in reflecting on existential questions, one commented that she did not need a class for that, and that her teacher gave her own interpretation of such questions without encouraging the students to do so.

Question 41: Leisure activities outside afterschool programs[27]

Reading was the favourite hobby among this group of participants: twelve of them said that they read a lot. Artistic pursuits came next (9), and included dance, music, theatre or writing; spending time with friends and going out with them was equally popular, be it by going to a café, a party, or a picnic, or just strolling around town. Watching movies and television programs, as well as physical activities or sports, came next (6 each). Four participants, all males, listed computer games as a hobby they enjoyed. Two participants were involved in live action role-playing games, and one enjoyed cooking.

Question 42: Paid work

Six participants had paid employment, though of very different kinds. One babysat, two taught an art form on week-ends, and one occasionally did clerical tasks at her father's company. These four participants were 15 or 16 year-old girls, and they did such work occasionally. Three older male participants (16, 18 and 19 year-old) had more demanding employment, one as a cook, one as a car mechanic, and one as a movie theatre clerk. For the two former, working was seen as a necessity: one was about to move out to his own place, and the other one was not given pocket money by his parents.

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[27] Data is missing for one participant (Liliane) for this whole section due to a technical problem.

Question 43: Impact of work on the participants' studies

The last participant mentioned in the previous paragraph admitted that his work schedule had had a negative impact on his grades, since he often worked over twenty hours a week. For all the others, work was less important than school, something that was strongly reinforced by their parents.

Question 44: Volunteer work

Ten participants did volunteer work. However, it must be said that five of them did so because they were registered at schools with an international program where volunteer work was a program requirement. Only one was involved in volunteer work that was religiously or spiritually related, by being involved in a committee to create a "multi-religious spiritual space" at his school, a space of quiet introspection and prayer for students and staff of all religious and spiritual backgrounds, a project that was successfully implemented. The bulk of volunteer work the participants took part in centred on helping the community in some way or another: one participant helped with a group of midwives her mother was involved with by babysitting during events. Two were volunteers during sports or community events such as le Tour de l'Île or la Fête des neiges de Montréal. Another distributed Christmas baskets to families in need, an activity sponsored by the school, and one participant was part of a school choir that did benefit concerts for charities. Finally, three participants went to Cuba on an exchange trip to help build facilities and meet the local population.

IV. IDENTITY, RELIGIOSITY AND SPIRITUALITY

Question 45: Defining religion and spirituality

For this question, it is worth noting that as the participants got older, their views about religion got more detailed and critical. Second, there is no significant difference in the definitions of male and female participants. Third, the participants gave definitions that could be applied to any religion; even Loïc and Sabrina, the two participants who self-identified as Catholic at question 56, gave a definition of religion that was etic rather than emic.

Participants' words: Definitions of Religion

C'est quelque chose pour encadrer les gens, où il y a un dieu, quelqu'un de supérieur. **Mélina**

La religion ou la croyance? La religion, c'est une *business*, fondée pour faire du cash, gagner du pouvoir et un contrôle sur la population, en utilisant les moyens de la croyance, c'est à dire essayer de trouver des réponses à des questions auxquelles on en trouvera jamais. Les gens cherchent des réponses, et certains, plus *wises*, ou plus croches, ont décidé qu'ils s'en serviraient pour avoir un contrôle total sur [les autres]. **Théo**

La religion, à l'origine, a été inventée à cause de la peur de la mort, et qu'il n'y ait rien après. **Ludovic**

C'est des explications à des questions qui nous font peur, parce que l'humain ne peut pas envisager qu'il y a juste rien. Les religions sont différentes manières de répondre à ces questions. La religion, c'est du bourrage de crâne, comme avec la Bible ou le Coran. C'est un dogme. **Éloïse**

La religion, c'est le fait de croire et d'expliquer certains phénomènes par des croyances. C'est juste le fait de croire en quelque chose. En fait, la religion, c'est d'appliquer un dogme à des croyances. Le point d'ancrage entre toutes les religions, c'est de mettre des règles pour que ton univers soit le plus structuré, pour empêcher que notre monde s'écroule – même si ça ne marche pas. **Philémon**

La religion, ça peut être deux choses. Premièrement, c'est une croyance qui va aider, guider, donner un sentiment de protection; et changer les actions et les perceptions, accompagner le cheminement de vie. Ça peut aussi être un endoctrinement, pour manipuler les masses et avoir du pouvoir sur elles. **Liliane**

[Hesitates] La religion, c'est… les croyances. Chacun a sa façon de penser … **Marjolaine**

La religion, c'est des croyances que les gens se créent. Je sais pas jusqu'à quel point les gens peuvent croire que c'est vrai: vu qu'il y a plein de religions dans le monde, comment un individu peut croire qu'il détient <u>LA</u> vérité? Donc la religion, c'est une bonne manière de se trouver un but dans la vie, des réponses aux questions insolubles de la vie. On peut y croire, mais pas avoir la conviction totale qu'une religion est la seule [bonne réponse]. **Ariane**

C'est une pratique où on donne de l'importance à quelqu'un ou quelque chose qu'on vénère. **Grégoire**

C'est des gens qui ont besoin de croire à quelque chose pour vivre, sinon y'ont pas de sens [dans leur vie]. La religion t'impose des valeurs que tu pourrais avoir sans la religion, comme quelqu'un qui a besoin d'un repère dans sa vie. Mais tu peux atteindre ça toi-même. **Mélanie**

La croyance envers quelque chose de plus haut que [soi], une manière de vivre, d'agir pour certains. **Myriam**

C'est un ensemble de principes et un ensemble de valeurs auxquelles on adhère, qui nous permet d'orienter nos choix dans la vie. **Julien**

La religion a plusieurs définitions. Ça peut être une sorte de spiritualité de groupe. La religion ne sert qu'à mettre des structures dans la spiritualité. **Noël**

C'est quelque chose qui donne du sens à la vie, ça permet de répondre à des questions qu'on se pose. **Judith**

La religion c'est… plutôt personnel, c'est pas un choix qu'on peut influencer. […] C'est ce que tu penses que signifie la vie et la mort, et pourquoi on vit. En fait, c'est juste une grosse question existentielle. Donc c'est comment tu réponds à cette question. **Sabrina**

Ça n'a aucun lien avec les dieux, c'est ce que les humains construisent autour d'un concept qu'ils appellent 'dieu'. **Colin**

C'est un moyen pour les gens de se rassurer, d'avoir quelque chose en quoi croire pour expliquer les choses qu'on ne comprend pas. **Loïc**

Although the particpants' definitions of religion were generally rather negative, their definitions of spirituality tended to be more neutral or positive, echoing definitions seen in the literature review.

Participants' words: Definitions of Spirituality - is it different from religion?

C'est différent. La religion, c'est comme être catholique, orthodoxe, etc. Être spirituel, c'est comme ma mère, qui parle beaucoup d'énergie, de l'univers. **Mélina**

C'est la même chose que les croyances, mais pas que la religion. Le bouddhisme n'est pas une religion, car il ne donne aucun moyen d'avoir du pouvoir sur les autres, ne force personne à faire quoi que ce soit. C'est une religion qui propose [qui dit] "essaie ça et regarde ce qui arrive". **Théo**

Je ne sais pas. La spiritualité, c'est pas la religion des amérindiens? **Ludovic**

C'est différent. La spiritualité c'est individuel – y'a pas de livre « la spiritualité, comment faire ». C'est une manière de croire, peut-être en quelque chose qui n'est pas Dieu ou Allah, ou whoever. Quelque chose de plus grand, d'unique à chaque individu. **Éloïse**

Absolument pas. La religion c'est un dogme, la spiritualité c'est personnel, c'est plus des croyances individuelles. **Philémon**

C'est différent. On peut avoir une spiritualité sans avoir de religion. La spiritualité est fondée sur le cheminement de soi, sur l'évolution qu'on veut donner à notre esprit. La religion, c'est une croyance envers des dieux, qui va nous guider. La spiritualité est fondée sur soi, on n'est pas obligé de croire en un dieu pour l'avoir. **Liliane**

Je suis pas certaine. J'ai entendu ce mot seulement avec 'autochthone'. C'est des croyances aussi, mais on dirait que la religion, c'est fait [pratiqué] par plus de gens. **Marjolaine**

[Incertaine] « La religion, c'est d'adhérer à tout un concept, une histoire, des croyances complètes, des traditions. Alors que la spiritualité, c'est une manière de voir la vie, de se trouver soi-même. **Ariane**

Je ne sais pas… Je ne pense pas. **Grégoire**

Non. Je pense qu'une religion t'impose ses valeurs: 'si tu fais pas ça, tu vas aller en enfer…' Tandis que la spiritualité, ça t'aide à trouver ton chemin. T'as des questions, des

valeurs, mais c'est moins direct, moins imposé. C'est toi qui cherche en toi, c'est comme la connaissance de soi. **Mélanie**

Non. Je crois pas en dieu, mais je crois qu'on a une âme, et je sais – j'espère - qu'après la mort il y a une vie. C'est déjà génial qu'on ait un corps, et qu'en plus il y ait une âme dedans! **Myriam**

Non, y'a une marge entre les deux. La spiritualité c'est plus abstrait. La religion, je crois que beaucoup de gens l'associent à un livre, au Coran, à la Bible, à la Torah. Tandis que la spiritualité, je pense que c'est plus une manière de percevoir le monde, ta place dans le monde. **Julien**

La religion a plusieurs définitions. Ça peut être une sorte de spiritualité de groupe La religion ne sert qu'à mettre des structures dans la spiritualité. **Noël**

Non. La spiritualité c'est […] abstrait pour moi. **Judith**

C'est différent. La spiritualité, c'est plus une pensée, c'est ce qu'on pense, ce qu'on croit, nos valeurs. La religion c'est plutôt… est-ce qu'on pense qu'il y a quelque chose qui nous dirige en général. La spiritualité, c'est s'il y a quelque chose qui nous dirige, mais plus [par rapport] à notre vie à nous, nos pensées, nos choix. Même si les deux se rejoignent, ils ne sont pas pareils. **Sabrina**

Non. La spiritualité, c'est les croyances; dieu, la vie après la mort, alors que la religion c'est ce que les humains ont créé en faisant croire que c'était les dieux. Je serais surpris que Dieu ait vraiment dit, dans l'Islam, que les femmes sont inférieures. La religion, c'est le côté social, des personnes de mêmes croyances qui se regroupent. **Colin**

C'est difficile à dire… mais probablement que oui, car la religion est un recueil intérieur, et la spiritualité aussi. **Loïc**

Question 46: Is religion a good or a bad thing?

Religion was seen as a good thing by three participants, as a bad one by five, and as good or bad depending on the context by nine. It is seen as good when it gives goals and support in times of difficulty (4), helping people to be courageous, or gives them boundaries so that they do not commit crimes. It is seen as a bad thing when it is the cause of countless wars and genocides, when it restricts people's freedom to experiment and imposes strict rules, especially regarding sexuality and gender roles, and when used to brainwash and control people. However, a majority of participants agreed that religion could be good or bad depending on how and by whom it was used. Four said that for them, religion was basically a good thing, as in the cases cited above; however, they also thought that it was too often wrongly interpreted (4), which leads to radical behaviours (2).

Participants' words: Are Religion and Spirituality Good or Bad?

Ça dépend comment on l'interprète. Certaines personnes ont besoin de cet encadrement pour s'accrocher à quelque chose, et tant mieux si ça leur fait du bien. Mais je suis contre les religions qui lavent le cerveau, et les gens qui suivent aveuglément les préceptes. [Chercheur: et la spiritualité ?] Oui, mais il faut pas être trop dans sa tête. **Mélina**

Non. C'est une des pires horreurs jamais inventées, pas tellement pour faire de l'argent sur le dos des autres, mais pour avoir tué des centaines de millions [de personnes], sous prétexte qu'ils ne pensaient pas comme eux. [Chercheur: et la spiritualité ?] Oui. Ça peut aider des gens à aller plus loin. C'est pas mon truc, mais ça peut rassurer, rendre plus confiant, consoler. **Théo**

En général, non. À l'origine, c'est censé montrer la paix et l'amour; mais ce n'est plus

comme ça, c'est plutôt des règles prises trop au sérieux. Mélanger politique et religion, c'est dangereux. C'est pris trop au sérieux, surtout les messages négatifs de la religion, sur l'avortement, ou l'homosexualité qui n'est pas un choix. **Ludovic**

Non, car c'est trop dictatorial: pas de sexe avant le mariage, habillement strict, juif hassidiques… C'est mauvais car vivre veut dire faire ses expériences, décider de sa propre manière de voir les choses et d'agir, sans menacer la société. La religion brise la liberté. **Éloïse**

C'est une bonne chose si c'est bien appliqué, mais j'ai jamais vu ça. Tout le monde sait que croire en quelque chose, ça aide; les gens très croyants ont généralement une bonne vie. Sauf que c'est des vies restreintes. **Philémon**

C'est bon en général, individuellement, ça donne du courage et ça soutient dans l'adversité. Mais socialement, c'est utilisé pour contrôler, pour endoctriner, comme au Québec pendant la Grande noirceur. Ça c'est mauvais. [Chercheur: et la spiritualité ?] Oui, ça pousse à l'introspection et à la compréhension de soi. **Liliane**

Ça peut mener à des guerres… donc c'est pas toujours bien. C'est correct si on veut y croire, mais il faut être capable de décrocher. On peut pas se tuer pour ça. **Marjolaine**

Oui, si ça te permet de faire quelque chose de ta vie, de te sentir mieux, supporté. Mais si ça devient trop radical, que ça mène à la guerre, non. [Chercheur: et la spiritualité ?] Je ne sait pas, c'est flou pour moi. Ça peut être bon comme la religion, mais ça n'a pas de stade où ça devient néfaste. Être un être spirituel, c'est comme être un saint, comme Bouddha. **Ariane**

Ça dépend. C'est bon jusqu'à ce que ça intervienne dans ta vie personnelle, comme avec l'avortement. Mais ça peut être bon car ça permet de garder un focus, ça donne un sentiment de sécurité. **Grégoire**

C'est mauvais. C'est toute la même chose, mais avec des dieux différents ; et ça fait des

conflits pour savoir laquelle est la meilleure. On pourrait faire un 'wrap' de toutes les religions, et c'est les mêmes valeurs, mais véhiculées différemment dans des histoires différentes. [Dans le catholicisme][28], ils disent que certaines choses sont péchés; mais c'est impossible de vivre sans pécher, même les prêtres; et tu peux pas dire aux autres comment penser. Ils disent de ne pas juger, mais eux jugent tout le temps. [Chercheur: et la spiritualité ?] Oui, ça peut [être bon]. **Mélanie**

C'est neutre, car ça dépend de la personne. Y'a des gens qui ont besoin de croire. Moi j'ai choisi d'être athée, alors je ne me vois pas imposer un point de vue à quelqu'un. **Myriam**

À la base, oui, mais ça a été trop souvent mal interprété. Les principes de la religion catholique sont nobles, mais ils ne sont pas adaptés à notre quotidien. Dans les faits, on n'est pas si parfaits, ni si capables de se contrôler. C'est difficile à respecter. **Julien**

La religion est inévitable, le conflit entre les humains aussi. La religion ne sert qu'à mettre des structures dans la spiritualité. La spiritualité c'est très bon, ça l'a toujours été, pour le corps et l'âme. Ça aide au réconfort et à la recherche du sens de la vie. [La religion] amène aussi une certaine détresse, mais c'est un mal nécessaire. **Noël**

C'est une bonne chose, il y a des gens qui en ont besoin pour s'accrocher à quelque chose. **Judith**

Ça dépend. Quelqu'un qui est généreux à cause de sa religion, c'est bien ; quelqu'un qui se fait exploser, qui est extrémiste, c'est mal. Ce sont les actions qui décident, pas les croyances.

Et la spiritualité ? Les deux aussi, car essayer de convaincre quelqu'un c'est l'opprimer.

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[28] Mélanie, like several other participants that I have interviewed for this study, seemed to confuse Roman Catholicism and contemporary Evangelical movements and put them all under the term "Christians" (chrétiens).

Si tes pensées sont positives et gentilles, c'est mieux que égoïste et méchant. **Sabrina**

En général, c'est mauvais. On ne voit pas des guerres de spiritualité, on voit des guerres de religion. La spiritualité c'est mieux. **Colin**

Quand ça va bien, oui. Mais y'a tout le temps des gens qui vont interpréter les passages des livres, les règles de la religion, pour faire du mal, ou qui croient qu'ils font bien, mais c'est pas exactement ce que ça dit. Dans toutes les religions, y'a des gens qui croient qu'il faut absolument se battre pour avoir une harmonie, mais c'est pas ça. **Loïc**

Question 47: Importance of religion for the participants

Religion was not important for 14 out of 17 participants. It was more or less important for one; of the two who said it was important, one confessed that it was only important when "things were not going well". However, six participants told me that spirituality was somewhat important to them (4) or actually important. Yet this did not translate into any specific behaviours, but meant instead that participants held certain beliefs such as in a form of afterlife (reincarnation), or in some overarching energy or meaning permeating the universe and human life.

Question 48: Belief in a god or a higher power

Question 48, "Crois-tu en un dieu, ou en une puissance supérieure qui existe au-delà du monde matériel? Pourquoi? » needs a little bit of explaining. I was fairly certain that simply asking the participants whether they believed in god would automatically evoke the Christian god. Yet I did not define what I meant by "god" when I asked them that question; I left that to the participants. I also added, as I had done in my M.A. research project, a question about other forms of spiritual powers, which I chose to call "puissance

supérieure" (higher power) and to characterize as "beyond the material world". Again, beyond that, I did not add any more details as to that what such a higher power might entail.

So did the participants believe in a god? The answer is no. Only one out of seventeen said that he did, but for him god and a higher power were the same. Even the two participants who identified themselves as Catholic said they did not believe in god; however, eight participants believed in some form of a higher power – two described it as "energy", and one described it as "a force, or fate". Two said that they did sometimes; and seven said that they did not believe in a higher power any more than they believed in a god.

Participants' words: Belief in God or a Higher Power

Je ne crois pas au dieu catholique; je n'ai pas besoin d'une prison. Je crois en l'humain qui est capable de beaucoup de choses. Je crois en l'énergie, mais je ne peux pas la définir. **Mélina**

Il doit y avoir autre chose, parce qu'il y a trop de questions auxquelles on ne peut pas répondre. Je crois au hasard, à la chance, aux coincidences – mais ça ne s'explique pas du tout, ça ne se nomme pas. C'est l'équivalent de la nature, un genre de conscience intangible, impalpable, mais qui est là. **Théo**

J'aime pas l'idée d'une puissance supérieure, que quelque chose ait un pouvoir sur moi. **Ludovic**

La physique et les maths, ça explique tout – sauf la creation [de l'univers]. C'est trop hasardeux, faut qu'il y ait une autre explication. Moi je suis agnostique, parce que 'athée'

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c'est trop fort; ce n'est pas possible de croire à rien, on doit être malheureux. Je crois en quelque chose, mais je ne sais pas quoi. **Philémon**

[Dieu] ce n'est pas quelque chose qui existe sur la Terre, c'est quelque chose qui existe en dedans de toi. Ce n'est pas présent en dedans de moi, mais ça l'est pour d'autres et je le reconnais. **Liliane**

Je ne crois pas en un dieu (Jésus, Allah, Zeus…) mais en quelque chose de plus fort que nous qui nous guide. **Sabrina**

Non. Je ne pense pas que Dieu pourrait decider de faire mourrir un enfant. **Myriam**

Je ne crois pas au dieu de la Bible; plutôt à une force, une fatalité. **Grégoire**

Question 50: What happens after death?

What happens after death? According to seven of the participants, nothing. Seven more said they did not know (one participant added that he did not know and did not care, while another admitted to often wondering about it). Three participants said that there was an afterlife: one did not know what form it took exactly; one thought that the soul separated from the body, and a third thought that human memory stayed somewhere. None of these views were very developed, but two are clearly influenced by a Christian view of the afterlife. Among the thirteen youths who did not believe in an afterlife, or did not know if there was one, four admitted that they would like it if there was something after humans died, even though, two of them added, it was logically impossible.

Question 51: Belief in reincarnation

The concept of reincarnation has, along with other concepts drawn from Eastern religions such as karma, permeated Western popular culture, albeit in a form that is often rather altered when compared to the original. Two participants believed in reincarnation, nine did not; five thought it was a possibility, and data was missing for one.

Question 52: Belief in spirits[29]

Seven participants did not believe in spirits and ghosts; four did, and four were unsure, thinking it illogical but possible nonetheless.

Question 53: Belief in heaven and hell[30]

The belief in paradise and hell was nearly absent among the participants. Twelve did not at all believe in it – indeed one participant thought that the idea of Hell was too extreme to be believable. Two were unsure – one wondering if Hell wasn't on earth - and one believed in Paradise but not in Hell, saying that even for the worse possible crime, an eternity of suffering seemed overkill.

Question 54: Origin of the universe[31]

How did the universe come into existence? Here the answer was resolutely scientific. For nine participants, the universe started with the big bang, and for two more, with "a

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[29] Data was unavailable for two participants.
[30] Data was unavailable for two participants.
[31] Data unavailable for three participants

scientific phenomenon". Three did not know. None of the participant believed in the creation of the universe by a deity or supernatural force.

Question 55: Possibility of extra-terrestrial life

All participants thought that some form of life on other planets was a possibility, or even a certainty. They argued that since the universe was infinite, the probabilities for life somewhere in it were very high. However, three participants added that such life was likely to be very far away from our own planet. One participant added that he thought it was hypocritical to think that humans were the only species in the universe.

Question 56: Religious self-identification

In order to assess their religious self-idenfication, participants were asked "Si on te demande quelle est ta religion, que dis-tu?" with no prompt as to what the possible answer might be. The majority of participants answered that they were either atheist (7), agnostic (2), had no religion (2), or were "laïque" (1). Two participants labelled themselves as Catholic. One was uncertain, saying he was neither Catholic, which he found outdated, nor atheist, which he found too extreme a position; so he opted for "a little spiritual". One labelled himself as "other", and data was unavailable for one.

Question 57: Religious or spiritual?[32]

Nine participants said they were neither spiritual nor religious; six said they were spiritual (two said "a little"), and two said they were religious – the same two who had

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[32] Interestingly, although in French "religieux" and "spirituel" do not exactly have the same meaning as in English, the participants knew what I meant with these terms and did not hesitate in their answers.

self-identified as Catholic. The answers to this question matched what the participants had answered to question 56 about what their religious identity was: the nine who said they were neither spiritual nor religious also identified as atheist; two more said they were spiritual, and the two who identified as agnostic said they were spiritual but not religious, as did the two participants who identified as "other" and "undecided".

Question 61: Belonging to a community[33]

Being religiously active often entails being part of a community of beliefs and practices. If the participants did not identify with a group based on their religion, did they belong to some other group – be it based on family, community, or any other defining characteristic? The question was not asked to the two participants who identified as Catholics. Of the remaining fifteen, eight participants did not feel they belonged to any group, a few of them even being quite suspicious of the notion of group solidarity (Ludovic). One felt that he was part of generation C[34], and another, of her family.

Questions 62 and 63: Friends' religion and beliefs

Keeping with the diversity of their friends' backgrounds (see question 29), one may have expected the participants' friends to also hold a very wide variety of beliefs. If we go back to the chart presented under question 29, and add the religion of the participants' friends, we see, for instance, that friends who come from Algeria or Morocco are not

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[33] Data was unavailable for three participants.
[34] Generation C stands for "Connected", for the generation who is connected through the Internet and social media.

necessarily identified as "Muslim" in the religion column, while friends coming from South-America or Haiti are not necessarily equated with "Catholic", though some are.

Participant	Ethnic origin of friends	Religion of friends
Mélina	Québec (5), Haïti	Atheist, 1 interested in Buddhism
Théo	Haïti, Argentina, Vietnam, Québec	Generally atheists, 1 Catholic, 1 non-practicing Catholic
Ludovic	Québec, Haïti (2), Russia	Atheist, Pentecostal (2), culturally catholic but atheist in belief (2)
Liliane	Québec (10), Arab (non-specific)	All atheist or non-religious
Philémon	Québec, Québéco-Tunisian	All non-religious or agnostic
Liliane	Québec	All friends atheist/agnostic, except 1 devoutly Christian
Marjolaine	Québec (3), Mexico, Congo	Does not know; not important
Ariane	Bolivia, Romania, Morocco, Québec, Franco-Algerian	Non-religious or atheist
Grégoire	Salvador (2), Russia, Québec (2)	Not available
Mélanie	Salvador (2), Lebanon, Québec	Not available
Myriam	Québec (6)	Generally atheist
Julien	Guatemala, Québec, Franco-Québecker	Atheist
Noël	Québec (2), Morocco, Portugal	Varied: atheist, spiritual, Muslim, Christian
Judith	Québec (2), Romania, Guinea, Russia (2), Bulgaria, Arab (2)	Generally atheist, Muslim (2), Catholic (1)
Sabrina	Russia (2), Algéria, Québec, Jewish	All friends atheist except 1 practicing Muslim
Colin	Québec (majority), Bulgaria, Asia (non-specific)	Does not know; not important
Loïc	Québec, Asia (non-specific)	Varied

Table III. Religion of participants' friends

Question 64: Good things in the participants' lives

What is good in the participants' lives? In asking that question, I sought to discover what they value as positive and important. Although a couple of participants were somewhat vague in their answer ("everything", "wanting to do something different for the world"), the majority had specific answers to give. The element cited most often (ten times) was having sustaining, positive relationships with family and friends; then came being passionate and motivated about an activity or project (6). The activities themselves were quite varied, from writing scenarios for live action role-playing games and playing hockey, to planning a trip abroad and being about to move out into one's first apartment.

Question 65: If the participants could change anything in their lives, would they?

This question complements the previous one; I asked the participants whether they would change anything in their lives if they were given a magic wand that could do so. Five of them said they would change nothing. While in most cases it was obviously because the participants were satisfied with their lives, one participant said that humans "had to accept things as they were" (Noël). Six participants had altruistic wishes: four said that they would remove the health or financial problems of a family member, and two more said that they would correct a difficult situation in their relationship with a family member or (ex) boyfriend. Three would have changed socio-economic problems in the world such as inequality, poverty and ignorance. Two wanted to change things about their own attitude, such as spend less time playing video games, or having more determination to get through challenges. Finally, four participants would have changed things for themselves, such as having a boyfriend, having more money, or living to 100

years old to see all the changes that would come about during that time. It is worth noting that a participant could have an altruistic goal, such as eradicating world poverty, while at the same time wishing to have more money in order to travel (Marjolaine).

Question 66: What brings joy and enthusiasm

What enthused the participants and made them the most happy was to practice an artistic (9) or physical (3) activity that they enjoyed, such as photography, theatre (4), writing (3), dance (2), choir, hockey, or skiing. Also mentioned were topics of interest (4), including neuropsychology, biology, dentistry, and international cooperation - or professional activities (3), including cooking, car mechanics or landscaping, that they were passionate about. Interacting with people and being with friends was mentioned by three participants.

Question 67: Things to accomplish in one's lifetime

The participants had an array of things that they absolutely wanted to accomplish during their lives, some serious, others whimsical. Some were related to furthering education and working in their preferred field (5); others had to do with travelling (4) or moving outside of Montreal (2). Two female participants absolutely wanted children (Judith, Ariane), and another wanted a boyfriend (Sabrina). One more wanted to parachute jump, another to write a novel, and a third wanted to build an orphanage in India. One participant did not have an answer (Liliane), saying that her goals changed all the time (though her professional goals were very clearly defined).

Question 68: Participants' values

When asked about their values, the participants named many. The first thing that emerged from this question is that the values that mattered to the participants are mostly individual ones; none of them cited collective values such as nation, religion or culture, or implication in political or social movements[35]. What is most important for them are their own lives and choices, and the people close to them; concern for others or for the general state of the world is further down the list. Participants expressed no sense of duty be it to community, beliefs or nation. Their loyalty is first to themselves. The following categories have emerged from the participants' responses to the questions about values.

a. Values related to integrity were mentioned 15 times: Respect (of oneself and others) (3), loyalty (2), courage (2), honesty (2), assuming one's decisions, integrity, dignity, honour, faithfulness, serenity.

b. Values related to positive relationships with others were mentioned twelve times: friendship (4), family (3), love (2), being considerate, understanding others, and not hurting others.

c. Values related to self-confidence were mentioned eight times: believing in oneself, ambition, perseverance, following one's instincts, loving oneself, understanding oneself, being happy with oneself, self-accomplishment.

d. Values related to justice were mentioned four times: justice (2), helping others (2).

e. Values related to freedom were mentioned three times: Freedom (2), democracy.

f. Values related to personal well-being were mentioned three times: comfort, money.

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[35] The data for this study was collected before the student protests of spring 2012. Answers to this question might have differed in that context.

Question 69: The goal of life

For three participants, there was no point to existence; when I asked them "quel est le but de l'existence", they answered "none", one even adding "to be and to suffer". Interestingly, these were all male, and among the older participants (Colin, Théo, Philémon). Three more did not know, and told me that they had never pondered that question. For three other participants, it was happiness: to do what one wants and loves, without fear of being judged by others; and for two others, being alive was about learning how to live, to discover that life is good despite being difficult (Loïc). For one last participant, it was to improve things in the world.

Question 70: Introspection

a. Reflecting in silence

Ten participants said that they regularly spent time reflecting in silence, very much so in the case of four of these. One 14 year-old participant added that it made her feel better, allowing her to "think about my life and to clarify my ideas". Three more said that they did so occasionally, and one, never. Data was unavailable for three participants.

b. Taking walks alone

Only three participants said that they often took walks on their own, and all three were male and over 16. One more participant said that he would like to, but that his neighbourhood was too tough for him to do that. When putting this question in my interview guide, I did not take into account that some participants would be too young for their parents to allow them such an activity.

c. Writing to clarify one's ideas

Six participants wrote regularly, either in a diary or jotting down random thoughts, or actually writing novels or poetry. Interestingly, all of them were female. None of the male participants wrote on a regular basis, except for one who wrote poetry.

Question 71: Basis for guiding one's actions

To the question « sur quoi comptes-tu pour guider tes actions? », seven participants said that they tried to think logically about the possible consequences of various actions and weighed them; four more said that they asked the opinion of people around them – parents or friends and took that into consideration. Two more said that they relied on themselves, on their instinct and gut feelings, without second-guessing themselves.

Question 72: Is there such as thing as absolute good or absolute evil[36]?

Was there anything that was seen as altogether good or evil by the participants? It is often said that today, everything is relative, and that young people especially tend to hold this view – this was the case for two participants. The question of absolute evil elicited more answers (8) than that of absolute good (2), the latter being seen as "helping others". What came out as the most evil kind of act for four participants (two of them female, two of them male) was sexual violence, such as rape, incest and excision. For two of these participants, while murder could sometimes be justified – for instance, in the case of self-defence – rape never could, and was always unjustifiable. Four other participants

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[36] Data for this question is missing for six participants.

mentioned, once each, the following as being absolutely evil: murder; violence; indoctrination and capitalism.

Question 73: Meaningful objects

Question 73, "As-tu des objets qui sont très importants pour toi? » was an attempt to see if the participants had objects that had special value for them, and if any of these objects were religious in nature. When the participants did have such objects, they were related to their childhood (teddy bear, baby blanket), their family (locket that belonged to a grandmother), or to important events from their lives (drawings, photos). None of them had meaningful objects that were in any way connected to any religious or spiritual tradition, such as a rosary, prayer beads or religious figure statue or image.

Transmission of beliefs

The participants' parents were generally described as non-religious or atheist, with a few nominally Catholic (but non-practicing), and a few more described as spiritual. Yet a fair number of participants (5) mentioned, without being asked, that their parents opted to have them baptised, not "because they were religious, but for tradition's sake" (Grégoire), or to "do like everybody else" (Mélanie).

Question 74: Mother's religion

All participants but one knew their mother's religious affiliation. Ten categorized their mothers as atheist, non-believing or non-religious; two were described as practicing Catholics, and two more as non-practicing Catholics. Two mothers were said to be

spiritual, practicing meditation. Interestingly, two participants whose mothers were categorized as atheists insisted that they were "open" to other belief systems, while one participant whose mother was a nominal Catholic called her a "soft" Catholic. It seemed important for these participants to underline that their mothers were not confined to a single belief system, and that they were accepting of religious diversity.

Question 75: Father's religion

A similar, though more polarized, picture emerged in terms of the fathers' religious affiliation[37]. Here some of the data is missing, as two participants were not in contact with their fathers. The only participant who did not know her mother's religious affiliation, did not know her father's either. Among those who did know, ten described their fathers as atheist, non-believing or non-religious; one participant even emphasized that his father was a "strict atheist" (Théo). One was categorized as a practicing Catholic, the two others as non-practicing Catholics. None of the participants' fathers were seen as spiritual or involved in practices such as meditation.

Question 75b: Grandparental religion

While there was no question on grand-parental religion in the interview guide, over half of the participants (10) volunteered that information in the course of the interview. This in itself is telling: not only did these participants have more to say about their grandparents' religion than their parents', but grandparental faith also had a clear affective significance for them. Indeed, nine of the participants who mentioned a

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[37] Something seen also in studies on second generation immigrant youths; for instance, see Beyer, 2013.

grandparent did so to underscore that they were practicing Catholics with strong beliefs that placed much importance on their faith. This was something that two participants (Sabrina, Marjolaine) especially admired, as it had given their grandparents strength and resolve during difficult times of their lives. This data suggests that religiosity resonates with the participants, not in term of beliefs – which they obviously disagree about, as we can see in section 3.1 – but as of way of coping, religion being a touchstone that helps one through the difficult parts of life.

Question 76: Rejection of parental teaching

One characteristic of adolescence is the increasing independence young people gain in relation to their family and its worldview. Sometimes it is a continuation of the familial outlook; sometimes young people adopt a whole new way of viewing life, which can also be a way of asserting one's identity. To assess whether this was the case for the participants, I asked them "Y a-t-il des choses que tes parents t'on apprises quand tu étais petit que tu ne trouves pas vraies?" Seven participants said that this was not the case for them, with some adding that their parents were like "giant encyclopedias" (Colin) to whom they could ask anything. But five participants found flaws with what they had been taught about life, though in one case this was a positive thing. Granted, one of these (Santa Claus) was fairly trivial[38], but the others point to a discrepancy between the world as parents and adults would like it to be for their children, and how it often is in their children's experience – or between ideals and reality.

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[38] Or is it? Should we question the fact that children are taught to believe a tale that we as adult know to be false?

For instance, one participant (Mélina) found that prejudices held by certain people in her family, especially grandparents, that bordered on racism, were not true. Another was adamant that the prohibition against violence his mother had raised him with was not always justified:

> Ma mère m'a toujours dit que 'la violence c'est pas une solution'. C'est de la bullshit. C'est malheureux, ça devrait pas, mais dans la société actuelle, c'est une *criss* de bonne solution. Je suis le premier à dire qu'il faut d'abord se servir des mots, et je l'ai fait souvent […]. Sauf que y'en a qui sont vraiment trop crétins, et ne comprendront qu'avec un coup de poing, et vont te respecter juste s'ils ont peur de toi. (Théo)

Ludovic was suspicious of the concept of solidarity, of the idea that people could get together for a good cause; he did not believe this actually happened. Finally, Sabrina reflected on the prohibition against lying, saying that it was sometimes better to lie to someone instead of hurting their feelings.

Question 78: Self-perceived level of information about other religions and worldviews

This question complements the section on the ERC course. Four participants said that they thought they had enough information about the various religions in the world, one of them adding that this was because of the ERC course. Eight participants said they did not; out of these, two said this was a topic that interested them and that they would like to know more about it, and four said that this was not a topic they cared much about. One said that the ERC course was in fact not enough. Data was missing for two participants.

Question 79: Prayer

One half of participants said they had never prayed (8). Out of the other half, five said they prayed very rarely, in times when they were in crisis and needed help, such as when there was a death in the family, or when something was not going well in their life. Four participants said that they prayed regularly, although for two of them, prayer and meditation overlapped; one described it as "se ressourcer". Of those four, two described themselves as Catholic, and two others as spiritual. Quite a few participants admitted that they had tried it (the most common example was before an exam they were not sure they would pass) and were disappointed in the results. For some participants, prayer was seen as a somewhat hypocritical way of coaxing fate: "Tu pries quand tu veux quelque chose, mais pourquoi tu pries quand tu n'y crois pas vraiement, quand tu pourrais te dire à toi-même 'il faut que je passe mon examen'" (Mélanie).

Question 80: Meditation

Three participants said they meditated on a regular basis; of these, two were introduced to meditation through martial arts classes (specifically, karate). The third one said she meditated before exams, as a way to calm herself and better focus. Three more said that, though they did not meditate, they had other practices which can be associated with meditation: "faire le vide" before going to bed, "se calmer et se centrer", or visualisation. Three more said that they had tried meditating but that they could not stop thinking as

they focused on their breathing, as one participant put it: "Ma tête, c'est comme à l'Assemblée nationale, y'a toujours un tata qui dit des niaiseries[39]" (Philémon).

Question 81: Other spiritual or religious practices

The most common other religious or spiritual practice (beside prayer and meditation) was to attend mass at Christmas, something that was mentioned by four participants. For three of them however, it was more of a community than religious practice – something they did with their family as part of a tradition. The last one served mass on a weekly basis, and was the only one to also attend catechism. Nine participants had no other religious or spiritual practice; three more were the participants mentioned in the previous paragraph, who had practices that could be likened to meditation. One participant said that for him, art and poetry had a spiritual aspect. Mélanie, a participant who described herself as a strong atheist, nonetheless said that she often prayed, when she needed help or a sign about a difficult situation. She said that her family belived in "signs" and strong gut feelings; for her, such signs and feelings were useful in validating a decision.

Question 82: Level of implication in spiritual or religious practices

Since the majority of participants said they were not religious, this question becomes almost irrelevant. Almost, but not quite: it is worth noting that one participant, Noël, estimated his religious implication to be higher than that of his parents: though they were Catholic, Noël said that they did not attend mass – rather, he attended it at school. He also occasionally served mass, which soothed him and allowed him to contemplate life.

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[39] Literal translation: "inside my head, it's like in parliament; there's always a twit who's saying something stupid".

Sabrina, the other participant who identified as Catholic, said she liked going to church occasionally to listen to the priest, and found what he had to say interesting. She also liked it when her grandfather said grace before supper.

Question 83: Attendance of religious places and institutions

Attendance in religious institutions and places was minimal for the majority of participants. The most common reason for attending church was either for the Christmas service – which was seen as a tradition rather than an active religious act – and for family events such as weddings or funerals.

Question 84: Feeling different due to one's worldview

The original formulation of this question was "T'es-tu déjà senti différent des autres ados à cause de tes croyances et/ou pratiques religieuses/spirituelles?". Five participants said that they never did. Seven said they did, but not because of their personal beliefs; it had more to do with how they perceived life, and the fact that they felt more mature and thoughtful than the majority of their classmates. In a couple of cases it was because of experiences that set them apart from the other people of the same age, such as caring for a parent who was sick, or choosing a different line of study. Data was missing for five participants.

Questions 85 and 86: Supernatural and religious experiences[40]

Whether the participants ever experienced supernatural or religious experiences were originally two separate questions, one about the supernatural, the other about the religious. Again, what is meant by these concepts was left open to interpretation; as the majority of participants did not see themselves as religious, that question was dropped early on. I assumed that if a participant ever had a religious experience, it would come out under the supernatural. Eleven participants said that they had never had a supernatural experience – though one said that he nonetheless yelled at God when he was angry! Three of them thought that maybe they did, once… but were not entirely certain. One said that once, while with a friend who could "feel" spirits, she felt a malevolent presence intensely staring at her, but that this never happened again (Liliane). Another recalled an incident when he was canoeing with his family and they were caught up in a rainstorm, and found shelter in a chalet just in time, which was interpreted by the participant as something auspicious. I could tell that they were struggling about how to interpret an experience that perhaps had another, more logical interpretation.

Question 87: Importance of religion in Quebec society

Is religion still an important social factor in Quebec today? Thirteen participants did not think so (and data was not available for four participants). Out of those thirteen, seven said religion was not at all important in Quebec nowadays; one participant (Loïc) attributed that to the increasing place science took as a worldview, while another (Ariane)

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[40] Data was missing for three participants.

said that this left the field open to a variety of religious perspectives, which she saw as a good thing.

Two more participants said that religion was important for "those who needed it" but not for the society as a whole. Four added that although religion was not important for cultural Québécois, it was for immigrants – which they had mixed feelings about: a few participants reflected on the fact that although religion was once important in Québec but was not anymore, and thought it a good thing. "Les religions imposent des valeurs", said Liliane, who also added that it was a good thing religion did not mix with politics in Quebec.

Question 89: Are some religions better or worse than others?

For five participants, no religions were better or worse than others. For five more, whether a religion was positive or negative depended on its cultural context and how it was interpreted; it is extremism that was seen as problematic, more than a specific religions in itself. Among the remaining participants, Buddhism was seen as positive by two, and First Nations spirituality by one, as "they teach peace and respect" (Ludovic). Another participant (Philémon) thought Swedish Lutherianism was good. Islam and Christianity were perceived as negative by three and two participants, respectively, and cults by one.

Question 90: Is religion the same things as culture?

All participants but three, who did not know, made a clear distinction between religion and culture. Although a few had a hard time articulating why this was so, the majority equated religion with beliefs, institutions and social control, and culture with tradition, community, and how one was raised. For over half the participants, religion and culture overlapped and influenced each other, although culture was generally seen as larger and containing religion. A couple of participants pointed out that it was possible to have a culture without a religion (which they said was their case) while the opposite was not.

Question 91: Gender and social roles

When participants were asked whether some roles in society were better suited to men or women, eight of them answered that gender had no impact on a person's career choice, and that the only thing that mattered was a person's taste and ambition. Five participants thought that only physical restriction could make a difference: for instance, lines of work that require strong physical abilities, such a fireman or policeman, in which case anyone who did have the required abilities should be able to do it – but that would necessarily favour men over women. Data was unavailable for four participants.

Question 92: National self-identification

All participants, when asked about their nationality, identified as Quebecers (Québécois). They were asked what they would answer when asked where they were from when travelling outside of Canada (« Quand on te demande 'tu es quoi, toi?', que réponds-tu spontanément? Dis-tu que tu es canadien, québécois, ou autre chose? »). Twelve

participants answered that they were Quebecers, without further comments. Two more said that they were Quebecers first, and then Canadians. Finally, two more saw themselves as Montrealers before being Quebecers[41]. For all these youths, it is clear that Quebec is, culturally at least, an entity separate from the rest of Canada, and the one they relate to in terms of national identity.

Question 93: Perception by non-Québécois classmates

The majority of participants attended schools with a very diverse student population. How did they feel they were perceived by their classmates who were not culturally Quebeckers? The answers varied depending on the attended school and its ethnic make-up. (For two participants who attended a school where the majority of students were Quebecers, this question did not apply.[42]) Three participants said that Quebecers were perceived as warm, welcoming and understanding of cultural differences; two more said that it made no difference, that students from many backgrounds intermingled well at their school. Five participants said that at their school, Quebecers were perceived negatively, either as "low class", not inspiring respect, or as racist and narrow-minded. Another said that at her school, a Quebec accent (instead of an international French one) was seen negatively, and that she changed hers between school and home. This points to a lingering stereotype of Québécois people as unassuming and uncultured, and in the context of this thesis it is not possible to investigate why this is so; one may surmise that as the "default" culture of the majority, Québécois culture is not exotic enough to be cool, but this is only a speculation.

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[41] Data is unavailable for one participant.
[42] The question was not asked to four participants due to time constraints.

V. REFLECTIONS ON ADOLESCENCE AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

Question 94: Defining adolescence

What is adolescence, and how is that period of life experienced by the participants? For most participants, adolescence was a question of maturity rather than age: though seen by many as starting with puberty, when it ends was another matter. Seeking one's identity is a dominant theme, as is transformation, obviously physical, but most importantly psychological; a few participants said that this aspect was actually the most important, although most of the information they were given focused on the former. For a couple of male participants, adolescence was seen as a time of possibilities without responsibility.

Participants' words: Definitions of Adolescence

C'est très différent pour chacun. Tu te cherches ; tu cherches ton identité, tu veux essayer des choses. Certains ados ont besoin de plus d'encadrement que d'autres, sinon ils se laissent aller. C'est une étape pour devenir adulte. **Mélina**

C'est un mal nécessaire. Ça peut être plaisant car c'est le temps de faire des conneries. On n'a pas de responsabilités mais beaucoup de permission. Mais ça reste difficile. C'est pas un âge, mais un état d'esprit. **Théo**

C'est l'étape de ta vie où tu décides qui t'es. C'est en général de 13 à 18 ans, mais ça dépend de toi. T'arrêtes d'être un ado quand tu décides qui tu es. **Ludovic**

C'est le nom d'une phase un peu floue. À part les changements physiques, chaque personne le vit différemment. C'est une période où on se cherche, mais pas tous. Ça commence et ça finit à des moments différents, selon les expériences de vie. **Liliane**

C'est faire des niaiseries, et pas se casser la tête. C'est le moment de faire des gaffes, car quand on est adulte, on n'a plus le temps. C'est une période de transition, ce qui n'est jamais bon. **Philémon**

C'est un passage obligé qui mène vers l'âge adulte, mais le côté enfant n'est jamais loin, ce qui cause des crises. On est extravagant, c'est l'âge où on est le plus ouvert, où on expérimente et apprend le plus de choses. C'est l'âge le plus trippant, où on peut faire ce qu'on veut, sans vraiment avoir de responsabilités, où on a beaucoup de choses à apprendre et à développer. **Liliane**

C'est une période compliquée, où on dirait que tout est flou, où on est un peu perdu. C'est le fun parce que tu peux faire n'importe quoi. Tu as plus de liberté, sans trop de responsabilités. Il y a les changements physiques, mais surtout mentaux. Mais les adultes oublient qu'ils sont passés par là. On arrête de l'être à 18 ans, mais ça peut durer plus longtemps. **Marjolaine**

Les adultes disent toujours que c'est une période trouble et tourmentée. Je ne trouvais pas ça à 13 ans, mais maintenant [16 ans], je commence à être d'accord. Il y a beaucoup de questionnements, je veux devenir une personne responsable. C'est une période de changements, surtout psychologiques. Dans les livres sur l'adolescence, on parle beaucoup des changements physiques, mais je trouve qu'on devrait parler plus des changements psychologiques. **Ariane**

Une étape comme les autres. Il y a la puberté et les hormones, mais pour moi y'a pas eu de grand changement. Ça commence lorsque le corps change, et ça arrête quand tu veux. Moi j'ai l'impression d'être déjà adulte, parce que je sais ce que je veux. **Grégoire**

C'est de 13 à 18 ans. C'est une transition. Mais je ne pense pas qu'on est adulte à 18 ans. Ça dépend de la famille, de ta vie, de l'école, de ton attitude. **Mélanie**

C'est l'étape entre enfant et adulte. On le devient à la puberté, mais mentalement, on s'en rend compte quand on comprends qu'on ne peut pas faire les mêmes choses qu'avant, que l'école, c'est important. C'est une phase qui ne commence et n'arrête pas au même moment pour tout le monde. **Myriam**

C'est une période difficile pour certains, mais pas pour moi. C'est la transition entre l'enfance et la vie adulte, pas juste physique, mais surtout psychologique. J'ai senti que j'avais muri. Tu vis des expériences qui te permettent de définir qui tu es et qui tu veux devenir. **Julien**

C'est un questionnement sur soi et les autres, et la meilleure façon de devenir un adulte accompli. **Noël**

C'est le passage à la vie adulte. Ça commence à un âge variable selon la maturité de la personne, et ça finit à 18 ans. **Judith**

C'est un temps où on se pose des questions. On devient ado quand on a ses règles (pour une fille) ou d'autres changements physiques, et quand on commence à avoir un chum sérieux. Ça se termine quand on sait ce qu'on veut faire de notre vie. **Sabrina**

C'est entre douze et dix-sept ans. **Colin**

C'est un passage entre l'enfance et quand on devient adulte, où on se cherche, et on essaie de trouver ce qu'on est, et ce qu'on veut faire de notre vie. On le devient par un changement de comportement, un peu plus de « pourquoi ? ». On arrête d'être ado quand on parvient à se dire que c'est bien d'avoir du plaisir, mais qu'à un moment donné, il faut arrêter et se concentrer sur avoir un équilibre. **Loïc**

Question 95: Social perception of adolescents

The participants were unanimous in finding that adolescents were negatively perceived by the population at large, and in thinking that situation unfair and unjustified. There were degrees in that assessment – three participants thought that this general opinion was sometimes justified, and two said that some adults, especially around them, were very enthusiastic and supportive of teenagers – but many of them had anecdotes of adolescents being discriminated against because of their age, especially by security personnel in malls or in certain upper-class neighbourhoods. A few mentioned that this stereotyping was prevalent especially among the elderly; others were critical of the way the media portrayed adolescents, saying that the positive things they did were rarely reported upon.

> *Participants' words: Social Perceptions of Adolescence*
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> Il y a une amélioration, même s'il y a encore des préjugés négatifs. Les gens autour de moi voient l'adolescence positivement. **Mélina**
>
> Mal! La parole d'un ado ne vaut rien, parce qu'il est jeune et ne comprend rien à la vie. C'est insultant. **Théo**
>
> Les adultes pensent que les ados sont des délinquants, qu'ils sont bêtes, mais c'est surtout les jeunes ados. C'est pas comme ça à 16 ou 17 ans, on est plus matures. **Ludovic**
>
> Les ados sont hyper-mal perçus par la société, ils sont vus comme des fauteurs de trouble. C'est injustifié, mais on voit toujours ceux qui crient le plus fort, ceux qui ne sont pas correct. Les jeunes qui ont de l'allure, on ne les voit pas. Les ados sont vus comme « des êtres bruyants, qui exagèrent, boivent tout le temps, se droguent. Mais c'est des

stéréotypes, c'est une forme de racisme. Ça fait peur un ado. **Liliane**

Les ados sont mal perçus dans la société, avec raison. Ils ont des agissements irrespectueux et impulsifs, et c'est ce qu'on retient, comme être *stone*, ou mal habillé. Mais c'est réaliste. **Philémon**

[Ils sont perçus] comme un trou noir, contre lequel les grands chialent, et les jugent. **Marjolaine**

Les ados sont perçus de façon mixte. Certains adultes adorent les ados, aiment les voir s'épanouir – c'est surtout ça autour de moi. Les autres trouvent qu'ils ne font que des problèmes. **Ariane**

En général, assez négativement, mais c'est moins pire qu'avant. On ne leur donne pas assez de privilèges. Comme pour conduire une auto, on est brimés à cause de ceux qui font des niaiseries. Je trouve ça plate de payer pour les autres. **Grégoire**

Mal, mais pas par tout le monde; surtout par les personnes âgées, qui elles ne sont pas plus respectueuses. Ils ne donneront pas leur place à un jeune dans l'autobus, même s'il a l'air de ne pas aller bien. Et quand les jeunes ne leur donnent pas ce qu'ils veulent, ils se plaignent que les jeunes ont pas d'allure. Mais il y a aussi des ados avec une mauvaise attitude, surtout en secondaire 1. **Mélanie**

Mal. Beaucoup de personnes âgées les perçoivent comme paresseux et fainéants, sans sens des responsabilités. Je trouve que c'est un préjugé. On ne parle pas assez des bons coups des ados, juste des mauvais. C'est pas vrais qu'on joue tout le temps aux jeux vidéo. **Myriam**

Trop mal! Des histoires de jeunes qui se font sortir d'un centre d'achat, il y en a plein. On subit plein de discrimination et de préjugés. [Les gens] jugent avant de connaître, comme avec une autre religion ou une autre ethnie. Même mon père a des commentaires de ce

genre-là. Les gens généralisent beaucoup. **Julien**

Négative. Les gens pensent que les ados ne connaissent pas leurs limites, qu'ils manquent de respect et ne comprennent pas où sont les limites des uns par rapport aux autres, qu'ils imposent une arrogance irritante et sont frondeurs. **Noël**

Les ados sont mal perçus: les adultes trouvent qu'ils font du trouble et qu'ils sont bruyants. **Judith**

Les adolescents sont vus comme [étant] amorphes, qui ne font rien, irresponsables; ils sont traités comme une autre race. Les enfants sont 'cutes', les adultes sont aptes à décider, et les ados sont sans conséquence ni pouvoir. **Sabrina**

Ils sont mal perçus par la société, comme pour les assurances automobiles. Même s'il y a des bases [statistiques] pour ça, c'est pas toujours vrai. Moi je ferais pas ce genre de connerie. Il y a trop de préjugés sur l'adolescence, que c'est juste de la drogue et des mauvais coups. Quand je marche dans Outremont avec des amis, on se fait souvent suivre par la sécurité publique. **Colin**

Pas très bien. Aux nouvelles, on parle de ceux qui font [de mauvaises choses]. Il y a aussi des préjugés sur l'habillement, ça fait peur surtout aux personnes âgées. Mais c'est justifié, car dans des quartiers démunis, y'a des jeunes qui vont essayer de trouver de l'argent, et les personnes âgées sont plus vulnérables. On en voit dans [le quartier] qui regardent les jeunes avec peur et s'en tiennent loin. **Loïc**

Question 97: The three most important issues in the lives of teenagers

When asked to identify the three most important problems faced by teenagers today (D'après toi, quels sont les problèmes les plus importants auxquels font face les adolescents aujourd'hui?), participants identified many, which can be grouped in two categories: lack of support and guidance, and peer pressure. The first category includes

the negative perception and prejudice that society has about teenagers (see question 95 for more on this topic), which was mentioned four times, leading, in the participants' view, to being misunderstood by adults, and invalidated in their life experiences, as well as lacking real support in this phase of their life. Another problem in this category was the pressure to perform academically, which came from parents more than teachers. The three participants who mentioned this were all attending schools of very high academic standing. Two participants mentioned having too little time in order to choose a professional path, which they felt shortened the time they had to live their adolescence, as well as forcing them to decide on a course of study that they would eventually have to change. Four participants said that one major issue for youths was wrestling with questions of identity and meaning, again underlining that they felt little support when dealing with these. One participant felt pressured by her parents to be a good person, while two others were wondering about the meaning of life and existential questions. Another said that a major concern for adolescents was they did not know who they were anymore, and did not know what to do about that.

The second category includes issues of sexuality and bullying. Interestingly, problems linked to sexuality – especially the hypersexualisation of girls, and the lack of reliable information about sexuality – were mentioned by two male participants. Female participants mentioned social pressure and bullying (four times), especially in relation to physical appearance and popularity.

Question 99: Feeling down

Eleven participants reported feeling of depression or anxiety: eight of them regularly, and three, sometimes. One participant knew he had seasonal affective disorder; another suspected he had clinical depression, and a third had self-mutilated but was now doing better. Only two participants said they never had such feelings. In asking this question, I wanted to assess whether a strong religious or spiritual outlook was a resilience factor for depression. The next question (#100) was "Est-ce que tes valeurs spirituelles t'aident quand ça ne va pas?" As no participants actually had strong religious beliefs, this question became irrelevant.

The strategies used by the participants to cope with depression and anxiety were threefold. The most common one was to "just wait for it to pass" (5); the second was to focus on something distracting until it changed (3). Finally, a few participants talked to friends when they felt blue (3). Only one participant was talking to a mental health professional, in this case the school psychologist.

Question 101: Physical appearance

Somewhat surprisingly, as issues of self-confidence and body image among youths are regularly discussed in the media and are an important research area in education and psychology, eleven participants said that they were satisfied with their current physical appearance. One said she was not and was working on it, and one more said he was not, but that it was the physical limitations that bothered him more than the look. Data was unavailable for four participants.

Question 102: Post-high school projects and expected highest level of education

All participants had a fairly clear vision of what they wanted to do after high school – indeed, three of them were already in CEGEP, and one in a vocational school. Eight were aiming for a specific curriculum and profession, five hesitated between two or three options, and four had lots of interests but were uncertain which to pick. Six participants were planning on completing at least a CEGEP degree (Diplôme d'études collegiales), six a bachelor's degree, and four were planning on going to graduate school.

Questions 104 and 105: Dream career versus real work possibilities

The professional options that the participants saw as available for themselves were influenced by their social and familial situation, as well as how much they liked (or disliked) school, and by their grades. Nine participants were aiming for what they said was their dream careers, but seven admitted that they would have made different choices if they had had better grades, or if their school had supported them better. It is worth noting that having low grades in mathematics was a major hurdle for four of them: one participant would have liked to be a nurse but was planning to go into photography or graphic design, and another would have liked to become a police officer, but was instead going to web design. Two participants who were about to start trade school or technical programs said that they would have been interested in engineering. One was on his way to become a car mechanic, while the other was planning to become a chef. These two participants, however, did not rule out going back to university at a later time; but they were fed up with regular school, and deeply passionate about their technical programmes' subject (in this case, cooking and cars). Among the first group of participants, planned

fields of work included neuro-psychology, journalism or communications (3), acting, teaching, medicine, dentistry, and microbiology.

Question 106: Projected adult life

Five participants envisioned their adult life as a mix of work, spending time with their partner and children or their friends, and living a healthy daily life. One was worried about the stress of paying bills and being financially responsible, even if he came from an affluent family. Three participants said "they didn't imagine their adult life", that they just wanted to experience it when they got there. Only three participants saw themselves as living a somewhat adventurous life, following their hearts or not knowing what tomorrow might bring. Data was unavailable for three participants.

Question 107: Projected family life[43]

Finding a partner and having children was important to a majority of participants. Twelve of them said that finding a partner was among their goals as adults, although two added that this did not necessarily mean living with their partner. Further, seven of these said that they did not want to get married. They saw marriage as an outdated institution or a form of imprisonment that had nothing to do with the relationship itself. The fact that they volunteered that information – there wasn't a specific question on marriage in the questionnaire – shows that they felt strongly about this issue. This view of marriage is congruent not only with their familial background, as many had parents who were living as common law partner, or divorced, but also with the mainstream attitude toward

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[43] Data was unavailable for three participants.

marriage in Québec, which is seen as an option rather than an obligation. Two participants said that they did not see themselves as living in a couple; of these two, one was strongly against weddings, which he perceived as another way to spend money, and the other was gay, and somewhat struggling with his sexual identity; therefore being with a partner was not an option for him at the time.

Ten participants said that having children would be part of a fulfilling adult life for them. Two of these, female participants, said they wanted a lot of children, at least three or four. Not all participants who wanted children were girls; four were boys, one even adding that he wanted to adopt, since "there are already so many children who need parents". Two of the ten participants added a caveat: that they would postpone having their children until they were able to support them financially, suggesting a preoccupation with teenage pregnancy and poverty. Two more participants – one female, one male - added that they would like to have kids if the opportunity presented itself, but that it was not a something that they wanted at all cost. Interestingly, these two were a couple. The gay participant mentioned above did not want children. Data was unavailable for three participants. The reasons given for wanting to have children included wanting to transmit values, and to have a full and happy life, since a childless life would be boring.

Question 108: Future values and beliefs

Three participants said that their values will likely change by the time they reach 25. Four said that they would not, and five said that it would depend upon what might happen. This question was not asked of six participants.

Question 109: The three most important issues facing humanity

When asked about the most pressing problems that humanity faced in the 21st century, participants gave answers that can be classified in three main categories: environmental deterioration, wealth inequalities, and war. Issues that belong to the first category were mentioned by ten participants, sometime under the general term "the environment", but also as specific issues such as global warming and climate change, exhaustion of natural resources, pollution, hydraulic fracturing for shale gas extraction, or nuclear incidents. The second issue that stood out (mentioned eight times) is the lack of balance in the distribution of wealth and resources, and poverty. Lack of food and water was mentioned by three participants. War and conflicts were mentioned by six participants, with two more specifically referring to religion-based conflicts and religious extremism.

Finally, other issues that do not belong to the three above categories include corruption (2), health (2), overpopulation, energy crisis, ignorance, increasing criminality, the incompetence of governments, gender inequalities, insufficient education, lack of freedom in some countries, as well as humans creating problems for themselves that they could solve but chose not to. Two participants thought that a major problem was the dramatic and negative tone in which the media talked about these issues, and wondered whether that wasn't also part of humanity's problems.

Question 110: Hope for the future

So despite all the above issues, did participants think there was hope for our planet and its inhabitants? Did they think things were getting better, or worse? For four of them, things

were only going to get worse. According to them, the environment and economy are in too sorry a state, which is compounded by the inaction of governments, especially those of right wing persuasion who deny issues such as climate change (Colin). For three more participants, it was possible but unlikely. They saw some people and countries making efforts, but doubted it would be enough. Two other participants said that while certain things were getting worse (environment, overpopulation), others were improving, such as the situation of women. One participant said that things were neither improving nor worsening, only continually changing. Finally, three participants were optimistic, saying that mentalities were changing and that it was never too late for things to get better.

VI. MEDIA USE

Question 111: Reading materials

This group of participants was unusual in that it was composed of avid readers: eleven out of fourteen[44] participants said they read often or very often. Their reading materials were extremely varied, ranging from novels of all kinds, poetry and philosophy, to newspapers and magazines, comic books and psychology.

Question 112, 113, 114 and 115: Television, Films, Internet and Music

The questions on the kind of television programs, films, music and Internet use of participants did not yield any significant pattern in terms of the kind of movies, programs and music the participants consumed. What is perhaps more significant is the way in which these different media were consumed, illustrating the changes caused by new

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[44] Data is unavailable for this whole section for one participant (Liliane) due to a technical problem, and for two more (Julien and Mélanie) due to lack of time to complete this section of the interview.

technologies. Seven participants said they only rarely watched television. They preferred to watch their favourite programs on the Internet and watched movies either on the Internet or on DVD. All participants had access to the Internet at home, although seven of them said that they did not spend much time surfing the web, using it mostly for schoolwork and to keep in touch with friends through Facebook and email. Yet seven more said they used the Internet a lot, including to watch films and television programs or YouTube, as well as chatting with friends and playing online games. All participants enjoyed listening to music, and all had an iPod or MP3 player, and had extremely varied tastes, from rock, metal and punk to pop, country and Quebec pop and traditional music, to classical.

Question 116: Perceived influence of media on one's values and beliefs

Six participants did not think that the media they consumed influenced their values and beliefs, saying that it was rather the opposite: they saw their own values as influencing their choices in media. One more participant said that it did but only a little, and that interactions and relationships had much more influence than the media. Finally, five participants thought that the media did influence one's values and beliefs, since "the media were omnipresent in society" (Philémon).

Questions 118 to 120.

Participants had very few extra comments to make at the end of their interviews. As the average time spent answering questions was an hour and fifteen minutes, it is likely that they were fairly tired at the end. Many thought that the interview questions were quite

exhaustive, and covered most of what they had to say about their lives and how they gave it meaning. A few wanted to know more about the research process and how the data was going to be used in order to become a doctoral thesis, which I was happy to answer.

Salient Points

Some interesting trends, which we shall analyse in the next chapter, emerge from this data. First, the participants had an ambiguous relation to the cultural and ethnic diversity that surrounds them at school: although the majority had friends with different backgrounds and were comfortable with the diverse religions and ethnicities they were in contact with, others pointed out that they felt somewhat uncomfortable with certain aspects of religious diversity especially, such as gender inequality and what they saw as a lack of consideration for Quebec culture.

Second, the participants were highly suspicious of religious institutions, which they saw as outdated, hypocritical and controlling, and of religion in general, which they tended to reify as a force that imposes values and behaviours on people. They were more open to the idea of spirituality, which they saw as personal and authentic, and outside of institutions. Out of seventeen, fifteen described themselves as atheist or non-religious, and two as Catholic. In terms of beliefs, they were mostly in agreement with a rational-scientific worldview and did not believe in heaven and hell, reincarnation, or in god or any other non-material entity. They did, however, all believed in the possibility of extra-terrestrial life, which they saw as coherent with science. This perspective (minus the last

point) is partly due to parental influence, as all participants but one reported that their parents held a secular worldview and did not held religious beliefs.

Third, a majority of participants were satisfied with the Ethics and Religious Culture Program, which they saw as stimulating and interesting. Whether or not the ERC Program was positively seen was correlated with the teacher's attitude and perceived competence, as all the participants who disliked the program reported that their teacher either did not enjoy teaching it, or was not well-prepared to do so, whereas those who liked it said their teacher was well informed, enthusiastic about this subject, and proposed pedagogical activities that the students enjoyed.

Finally, the participants all found that adolescents were negatively represented in the public mind, and strongly resented this situation and resented being seen as irresponsible and shallow, and even discriminated against. They identified lack of support and guidance, in the form of close and significant relations with understanding adults, and peer pressure, as the most important issues faced by contemporary teenagers. The participants also identified environmental deterioration, inequalities in the distribution of wealth, and war in its many forms, as the most pressing problems in the world.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In an environment flooded with ways to make meaning and to find our 'true selves', there is an urgent need to help young people learn how to think critically about the issues [of meaning, identity and spirituality]. On one hand, lifestyle expectations in Western countries have never been higher. […] Freedom and individuality are prized. The suggestion that life also needs altruism, commitments, and fidelity, let alone some sacrifices, in usually notable by its absence.
(Crawford and Rossiter 2006, 11)

In this chapter, I look in greater detail at the results presented in the previous chapter. The majority of youths who participated in this study were exposed to a great amount of cultural and religious diversity in their educational and social circles, although not much in their familial environment. This resulted in a number of findings, many of which are, as we shall see, correlated to existing data on youth and religious diversity. Religion and spirituality were seen as two different concepts by the participants, the first defined either as a set of beliefs, as an answer to existential questions, or a form of social control, and the second as an individual, fluid concept, dependant on the individual's choice. The participants held neither beliefs in supernatural phenomenon such as spirits or angels nor in conceptions of the afterlife such as heaven, hell or reincarnation, but they all thought that alien life was a strong probability. The lack of belief, as well as this negative view of religion held by the participants can be traced to their parents' worldview, which was for

the most part anti-clerical and non-religious. Furthermore, the participants all self-identified as Québécois rather than Canadian or any other nationality.

In terms of society and religion, the participants also thought that the separation of state and church in Quebec was a positive factor. Some religions were seen more positively than others: many found Buddhism a beneficial religion, devoid of rules and obligations, while religions that were seen as dogmatic and unequal were frowned upon, with Catholicism and Islam emerging most often in this category. The Ethics and Religious Culture Program was positively evaluated by a majority of participants, although this was correlated with the skill of the teacher, as participants who found their teacher unskilled also evaluated the program negatively. The participants' relations with peers from other ethno-religious backgrounds were generally positive, and the participants' religious identity had no bearing on their friendships, which were formed with classmates from all origins. Most participants reported that Quebec culture was seen as welcoming by their immigrant classmates, although a few reported that it was perceived as "uncool" by some of their peers.

The participants identified significant adults as people they admired, chiefly for their personal qualities. They expressed frustration at the way adolescents are portrayed in the media, and how they are perceived by many people, especially the elderly - as delinquents without values or respect. Many participants underlined that most teenagers did not fit that image, and they wished a positive light could be shed on their lives. Finally, despite being quite aware of the issues facing humanity in the twenty-first

century, the majority of participants said they wanted to find a partner and have children, although only a few wanted to get married.

Religion and Spirituality: Two Different Concepts

Is there a difference between religion and spirituality? How can these two concepts be used to better understand the contemporary search for meaning? As we have seen in chapter 1, for many scholars, religion and spirituality are analytical categories that differ significantly. One of this study's central questions was to investigate the relation of the participants to religion and spirituality, how they conceptualize it, and what role, if any, it plays in their lives. As do many scholars who have worked on defining religion and identity, the participants also saw religion and spirituality as different, but for them this distinction is part of the natural language, rather than the result of a carefully thought-out reflexion.

Religion

Unlike American teenagers who, according to Smith, generally see religion as positive, fifteen out of the seventeen participants showed characteristics of Smith's religious types for whom religion was unimportant: they were generally indifferent to religion, being too involved with other occupations to care, and were disconnected from it, having had minimal exposure, if any, to any form of religious people and organizations as they grew up. The participants also displayed characteristics of the irreligious type, being rather critical of religion in general and dismissing the idea of faith, conceding that "while religion can be functionally good for some people, they themselves have thought about

existential questions and opted for secularism or atheism" (Smith and Snell 2009, 168). Paradoxically, the participants to this study are also conventional in the sense that, unlike in the United States and some parts of English Canada, where a majority of people are religiously affiliated, the most common worldview in Quebec is to be unreligious and unaffiliated with any religious organization. In that way, the participants were following the dominant, secular worldview of their society.

The first theme that stands out when looking at the answers to question 45 ("Si je te demande de définir ce qu'est la religion, que réponds-tu?") is that of religion as a set of beliefs, that is, a mental construct that people chose to believe in, which was given by eight participants, who defined religion with keywords such as "croire", "croyance" or "construction". Such a definition carries a negative value judgement, as in popular speech, there is an elective dimension to the idea of believing, a choice that is made by the individual to believe or not, whether what one chooses to believe is perceived as making sense from a rational standpoint. Conceptions of religion as ritual practice, of values one chooses to live by, or of a community that shares one's goals and tribulations, were nearly absent from the definitions put forward by the participants: only one said it could be a form of practice (Grégoire), another suggested it was a way of life (Myriam), and one a guiding set of principles and values (Julien).

The second theme to emerge is that of religion as an answer to existential questions. Nine participants defined religion primarily as a way to answer life's most difficult questions (why do we exist and suffer?), and to deal with the fear of death. In some cases, this was

seen as positive, as "une croyance qui va aider, guider, donner un sentiment de protection" (Liliane) or a set of cardinal values that allowes one to "orienter nos choix dans la vie" (Julien). Seven of the participants' answers were to the effect that religion can be useful as a form of psycho-emotional support, or a way to have a goal in life: "c'est quelque chose qui donne du sens à la vie" (Judith); "c'est ce que tu penses que signifient la vie et la mort, et pourquoi on vit" (Sabrina). This was seen as positive, though the underlying assumption was that religion can be a crutch that is only needed by people who are going through difficult times, or lack the willpower to stand on their own: "c'est des gens qui ont besoin de croire à quelque chose pour vivre, sinon y'ont pas de sens dans leur vie" (Mélanie); "Certaines personnes ont besoin de cet encadrement pour s'accrocher à quelque chose, et tant mieux si ça leur fait du bien" (Mélina). However, some of these participants also mentioned that such beliefs could just as easily be detrimental, especially when they took over a person's daily life: "C'est bon jusqu'à ce que ça intervienne dans ta vie personnelle, comme avec l'avortement." (Grégoire).

This last point brings us to the third theme, that of religion as a form of social control. Religion was seen by eight participants as imposing rules, values and principles in a dogmatic way, with keywords such as "encadrer", "pouvoir", "contrôle", "structure", and "dogme" coming forward. Furthermore, religion was seen by some participants – interestingly, the older ones (Théo, Philémon, Mélanie) - as a tool used by certain individuals or organisations to control the masses and make money. This reification of religion as a vague but powerful force that pushes the individual to get indoctrinated into a way of life that limits the range of experiences that they might have in life, and such

perspective is anathema to young people who are precisely in the process of discovering what they want out of life, and thus trying a variety of activities, friendships and ways of being: "C'est mauvais car vivre veut dire faire ses experiences, decider de sa propre manière de voir les choses et d'agir, sans menacer la société. La religion brise la liberté." (Éloïse).

The answers to question 46 ("En général, crois-tu que la religion soit une bonne chose? Pourquoi?") further illustrates these themes, and gave the participants the opportunity to expand on them. For instance, many participants who thought that religion could be good, depending on the person and the context, mentioned the supportive aspects of religion in difficult times, as mentioned under the "religion as an answer to existential" questions theme: "C'est une bonne chose, il y en a qui en ont besoin pour s'accrocher à quelque chose" (Judith); "Tout le monde sait que croire en quelque chose, ça aide: les gens très croyants ont généralement une bonne vie. Sauf c'est [une] vie restreinte." (Philémon). Yet five participants flat-out labelled religion as bad, adding to the theme of "religion as a form of social control", which they saw as resulting in coercion and violence: "[C'est bon] si ça te permet de faire quelque chose de ta vie, de te sentir mieux, supporté. Mais si ça devient trop radical, que ça mène à la guerre, non." (Ariane); "C'est une des pires horreurs jamais inventées […] pour avoir tué des centaines de millions [de personnes], sous prétexte qu'ils ne pensaient pas comme eux" (Théo). These participants related the negative sides of religion to current events in world politics, or to historical events: "C'est bon en général; individuellement, ça donne du courage et ça soutient dans

l'adversité. Mais socialement, quand c'est utilisé pour contrôler, pour endoctriner, comme au Québec pendant la Grande Noirceur, ça c'est mauvais." (Liliane).

Thus we can see that the participants' view of religion can be traced to the Quiet Revolution, where religion became, for many, equated with an oppressive force that kept individuals from living their lives according to their own choices and values (Dickinson & Young 2008, 336-7; Ferretti 1999, 166, 171). This is especially true of the Baby-boomers' generation, who grew up in the 1940s and 50s in an era they remember as morally stifling (Meunier & Warren 2002, 11-12; Ferretti 1999, 169-70). The participants' parents would mostly belong to the end of the Baby-boom generation (who were born between 1947 and 1968), and would have been between 45 and 65 years old at the time of the study (Statistics Canada 2011). People of that generation tend to hold a rational-scientific perspective on life, and many of them had negative experiences with religion as an institution and with clergy members who were in charge of education and other social institutions. However not all Quebeckers from the Baby-boomers' generation have had such an experience of religion, as some historians are now in the process of affirming (see for instance Vaugeois, 2010). Yet most of the participants' parents held views of religion, and especially of Catholicism, that remained strongly coloured by negative experiences, and seem to have transmitted that perspective to their children, as answers to questions 45 and 46 show. It is worth noting that, beyond the rejection of Catholicism that took place during the Quiet Revolution, a link between Québec identity and Catholicism remains for some; this is exemplified by the fact that five of them were

baptized, in four cases "for tradition's sake" (Grégoire) since they did not, according to the participants, actively follow or even believe in the tenets of Catholicism.

Spirituality

The participants were more open to the concept of spirituality than to that of religion, which they described in terms that were decisively more positive. As we have seen in chapter 1, whether scholars agree as to whether religion and spirituality are the same (Farias & Hense 2009, 2) or not (Heelas and Woodhead 2004, 5), or whether it is too vague a term to be of any use at all (Carrette and King 2005, 46), the difference is definitely established in popular thought and parlance. Crawford and Rossiter (2006, 9) point out that "in addition to th[e] religious usage, the word [spirituality] has been selected by others precisely to avoid the religious connotation. […] Spirituality has become a ubiquitous term covering many aspects of personal life and culture; it is used in […] new religious movements and non-religious spiritual groups; it also figures in areas as diverse as ecology, new age, healing, health sciences, social sciences, business and education". Faria and Hense (2009) add that spirituality is used "almost invariably with a positive connotation, although very few people seem to know exactly what they are referring to. Central to the matter is a construction of spirituality as a universal feature of human experience addressing a feeling of transcendent force or presence, which need not be framed within any particular theological or belief system but can instead rely solely on the individual's experience" (163).

Furthermore, spirituality is "seen as addressing something deep and private within each one of us, something which is also envisioned to be potentially shared by the all humanity beyond racial, national and cultural distinctions" (Faria and Hense 2009, 163). The participants' responses to questions 45, 45a on defining religion and spirituality, and 46 and 46a on whether religion and spirituality were good or bad, strongly echo this definition, as they all equate religion with the public and collective sphere, while associating spirituality with the private and individual. Coherent with the worldview held by a majority of people in Quebec since the 1970s, which is materialistic, scientific and often non-religious, a majority of participants also view religion as dogmatic and coercive, or as a fear-mongering enterprise designed to control the masses and amass profit. In contrast, spirituality is seen as a personal option that is chosen by the individual, where one can be authentic and grow as a person without undue pressure.

Two themes thus emerged from participants' definitions of spirituality. The first is that of spirituality as an individual choice. For the participants, spirituality is about the individual's personal evolution, perception of the world and chosen path to navigate the world: "On peut avoir une spiritualité sans avoir de religion. La spiritualité est fondée sur le cheminement de soi, sur l'évolution qu'on veut donner à notre esprit. La religion, c'est une croyance envers des dieux, qui va nous guider. La spiritualité est fondée sur soi, on est pas obligé de croire en un dieu pour l'avoir." (Liliane). The concept of spirituality, being as we have seen above more abstract than that of religion, can also be more readily adapted to a person's needs and values, unlike religion, which, in this perspective, demands that people adapt themselves to the religious institution.

The second theme to emerge was that of spirituality as fluid. Spirituality was seen as much more permissive and accommodating than religion, because it was not perceived by the participants as a coercive institution, and was also seen as lacking the concepts, structures, dogmas and traditions of religious institutions, which the participants saw as a constraint, as did Mélanie: "Je pense qu'une religion t'impose ses valeurs. […] Tandis que la spiritualité, ça t'aide à trouver ton chemin. T'as des questions, des valeurs, mais c'est moins imposé. […]". In following such a path, individuals are free to explore and change according to their own rhythms and values. It is seen as an elective dimension of life, one that is there if needed or wished, but by no means an obligation – indeed, for many participants, a spiritual outlook or practice was not something they needed, but they were comfortable with the option being there for people.

Interestingly, two participants (Ludovic and Ariane) mentioned spirituality in relation to First Nations' traditional beliefs, likely because the Ethics and Religious Culture Program has a section about "spiritualité amérindienne" (MELS 2008a, 41). The notion of belief ("croyance") was mentioned by seven participants as part of their definition of both religion and spirituality. While I did not ask the participants to clarify what that term meant to them, the connotation in French does suggest that for them, religion is very much a cognitive phenomenon that takes place in thoughts and feelings, while only two participants saw religion as a practice or a way of life.

Finally, it is worth noting that the definitions of religion and spirituality given by the participants show elements of what Christian Smith calls moral therapeutic deism

(MTD). Although the participants did not endorse the first, second and fifth beliefs of MTD as outlined by Christian Smith and his collaborators of the NSYR (that is, the existence of a creator God who watches over human life, who wants people be good and nice to each other, and the belief that good people go to heaven when they die), their worldviews certainly echoed the third and fourth key beliefs of MTD, that "the central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself, and that God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when he is needed to resolve a problem." (Smith & Snell 2009, 154). For instance, Ariane thought that "la religion, c'est pas supposé te faire croire quelque chose, c'est sensé t'aider dans ta vie"**.** Likewise, five out of the nine participants who said they occasionally prayed did so only on an as-needed basis, which is coherent with the fourth belief of MTD.

Beliefs: God Does Not Exist but Aliens Do

The answers to the questions in the section on beliefs were remarkable in their similarity, and suggest a shared worldview among young Quebeckers, one that is resolutely marked by rationalism and science, but where yearnings for a greater meaning sometimes peek, especially when addressing metaphysical questions – and where beliefs in supernatural phenomena coexist with scientific explanations.

None of the participants believed in – and much less followed - the tenets of Catholicism, even the two who identified as Catholic, which points to Catholicism being related to identity rather than religion. The majority of participants held that nothing happened after death, though a few found the idea of reincarnation appealing, but illogical. Yet, the

riddle of what happens after death was something many pondered; despite being convinced that nothing survived the death of the body, some participants added that it would be nice if it did (Myriam). Another participant, whose aunt believed in spirits and past lives, said that although she herself did not believe in such things, she sometimes felt like she wanted to (Liliane). This suggests not only an interest in metaphysical questions, as is often the case in adolescence, but also a thirst for meaning that is not entirely quenched by a rational-scientific worldview.

None of the participants believed in heaven and hell, finding the idea of everlasting torture, especially, much too extreme even for the worst offences one might commit. Nor did they believe in spirits or other supernatural beings, beside alien life, which the participants saw as a plausible possibility, or even a certainty. The rationale behind that belief was that there are too many planets in the universe and that it is statistically impossible for humans to be the only existing life form. As one participant put it, "si nous on est là, pourquoi il y aurait pas de vie ailleurs?" (Myriam). The creation of the universe was assigned to the big bang, or "some scientific reason" (Marjolaine), by the majority of participants, and not to any kind of supernatural being or phenomenon. The answers to these two questions blend in an interesting way, making for a worldview that is based on science but clearly influenced by popular culture.

Parental Transmission of Religion

The majority of the participants' parents were atheist or non-religious (questions 74 and 75), and did not transmit any religious values to their children. It is rather a rejection of

the religious institutions exemplified by Catholicism that was generally transmitted, with language and culture replacing it as identity markers. Although the majority of these parents did not discuss religion at all with their children, a few did. For instance, one explained that although his parents were both atheists, his mother never told him not to believe, or that religion was a bad thing; rather, she explained the tenets of various religions, their good and bad sides, and let his son free to make up his own mind (Théo).

Yet religion-based traditions, such as attending midnight mass at Christmas, persisted for many participants, although the most frequent reason for visiting a church was in order to attend the funeral of an elderly relative. Attending church was definitely not something that was a regular part of the participants' lives, except in the case of one participant who attended catechism at his local church (Loïc). The same participant also characterized his parents as actively engaged in their religion, which for him was a good thing. Another participant (Myriam) said that her mother and grand-mother were devout Catholics, but self-identified as atheist. Interestingly, that participant, although she did not believe in god, nonetheless believed in having a soul and in a higher power which she identified as a source of energy rather than the Christian god: "[Je crois] juste à une énergie qui est là, et que nous en même temps on dégage, et que cet espace-là dégage avec nous. Je ne crois pas qu'il y a une puissance plus grande que moi qui me dirait quoi faire, ou qui m'aiderait à choisir entre çi ou ça. C'est moi, c'est ma vie, c'est mon contrôle." In this case there seems to be a transmission of certain religious concepts – the soul, the presence of a higher being – that has been re-interpreted by the participant to make it her own.

Grandparental religion was an influence for half of participants, in some case a major one. Contact with grandparents was often the only direct contact the participants had with the pre-Vatican II generation and its religiosity. Although the ideology of this era has generally been rejected by Quebec society during the Quiet Revolution, it would seem there is still an emotional link that lingers for some of the participants (Liliane, Marjolaine, Noël, Sabrina). This also points to the absence of shared religious experience between grandparents and grandchildren, and about the lack of knowledge of social and economic struggles of the past, be it about working conditions, women's right to vote (which came especially late in Québec), health care or accessible education, and to a yearning by some participants for such a connection. However, for other participants such inter-generational transmission of religious values was not something that had much impact, and some reported having been to church a few times with one of their grandparents as children without enjoying it (Mélina, Myriam).

Society and Religion: the Further Apart, the Better

The concept of open secularity (*laïcité ouverte*) was coined by the Proulx task force on religion in school. It « recognizes the need for the State to be neutral (statutes and public institutions must not favour any religion or secular conception) but it also acknowledges the importance for some people of the spiritual dimension of existence and, consequently, the protection of freedom of conscience and religion » (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 137). The concept of *laïcité ouverte* as put forward in the ERC program, seems to correspond to how the participants self-identify in terms of religion: the majority are non-religious, but open to religious worldviews. When asked what their religious affiliation was

(question 56), the majority of participants (twelve out of sixteen[45]) said they were atheist, agnostic or non-religious. This finding is even more interesting when put in relation with how the participants define their national identity (question 92), as all of them first and foremost identified as Québécois. It has often been said, and documented, that in Québec, national and linguistic identity have replaced religious identity after the Quiet Revolution (Meunier et Warren 2002, 8-9), and it certainly seems to be the case with these participants. The fact that that all participants, when asked about their nationality (question 92), identified themselves as "Québécois" is in itself telling. This is one of the few questions where the answer was so unanimous that it underlines a clear national and cultural identity among the participants' generation. The only nuance to this portrait was the two participants who saw themselves as being Montrealers before Quebeckers, as did Julien: "Je suis québécois, mais je dirais que je suis de Montréal avant d'être du Québec".

The participants agreed that religion was not an important factor in Quebec society[46] (question 87), and also thought that this was a good thing, as they thought mixing religion with politics only created problems (Théo, Éloïse, Colin). Others pointed out that religion was more important for immigrants than for old-stock Quebecers (Mélina, Sabrina, Mélanie, Éloïse), which led to some interesting comments about reasonable accommodations: for instance, Éloïse did not think that any religion was better or worse than another, saying that religions evolved within a given cultural context, which she did not think she had a right to judge. However, she thought that immigrants in Quebec were

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[45] Data is unavailable for one participant.
[46] Although observers of the debate on the so-called Quebec Charter of values, which started in September 2013, would disagree.

privileged and that they should accept the rules of their host society, adding that Quebec language and culture did not impose themselves enough in the public sphere.

As to whether some religions were better or worse than others (question 89), those that limit basic rights and freedoms, as well as the rights of women, were seen negatively, whereas those that allowed people to "be themselves" and were perceived as less dogmatic were seen positively. The inherent contradictions of many religions were not lost on the participants; for instance, Philémon pointed out that for him, "the Pope living in opulence while African children died of hunger" placed Catholicism among the worst religions. The place of women was also seen as problematic: Mélanie objected to the values of Islam when applied to women who were forced to wear the hijab – especially very young girls. Mélina commented on the narrow choice of options given to women in most religions, saying "dans mon livre d'[éthique et culture religieuse], il y a une page sur la place de la femme pour chaque religion. C'est pas très valorisant, on dirait que la seule façon pour la femme de s'épanouir c'est dans la maternité et la domesticité. Il y a des filles à mon école qui croient vraiment ça, et ça me fâche!"

Finally, the case of Buddhism is worth looking at for its saliency. For two participants, Buddhism was mentioned as an example of a "good" religion. This is also a result that came out of my M.A. data, where 55 percent of participants said that if they could learn more about one religion in particular, it would be Buddhism[47] (Martel-Reny 2008, 65). For instance, one participant (Théo) thought that Buddhism was the only religion that was

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[47]. This study was conducted in 2002 through an anonymous questionnaire, among 262 participants from 4 Montreal high schools, who were between 14 and 18 years old, and attending grade 10 or 11 classes.

not about power, control and money: "C'est une religion qui ne donne aucun moyen d'avoir du pouvoir sur les autres, parce que ça ne force personne à faire quoi que ce soit. C'est une religion qui propose, qui dit 'essaie de faire ça ou ça, et vois ce qui arrive'". This positive perception of Buddhism is worth pondering, and we may wonder if it has a real impact on these youth's values and behaviours, or if it is merely a taste for the exotic. The data I gathered does not suggest that the participants practiced Buddhism in any other way than in doing meditation to "centre themselves", in a way that was unrelated to any communal or social context. Rather, the participants who mentioned Buddhism were attracted to it because they saw it as a religion without institutions, creeds or rigid limitations.

Indeed Buddhism is often perceived in the West as a philosophy or spiritual path rather than a religion, regardless of how it is actually lived in its countries of origin. It is thus largely free from the negative associations given to religions, such as rigid dogmas, sectarian conflict, and constraining institutions, and perceived as peaceful and playful, experiential and somewhat easy to practice (Martel-Reny 2010, 15). Some scholars are critical of this stance; for instance, Carette and King (2005, 102) underline that the purpose of Buddhist contemplative techniques is to "unravel or deconstruct the fixed boundaries of the individual self so that one might see things as they really are and live one's life for the sake of the flourishing of all beings, not just oneself" rather than leaving behind the turmoil of the world for a set comfortable practices and self-centred quest for individual enlightenment.

The Ethics and Religious Culture Program: a Good Idea that Needs Good Teachers

If one conclusion can be drawn from questions 36 to 38 about the participants' appreciation of the Ethics and Religious Culture Program, it is that the involvement and enthusiasm of the teacher is paramount for the participants' appreciation of the ERC Program and assimilation of its subject. All the participants who liked ERC said they had good or excellent teachers who challenged them to think critically, often by playing the devil's advocate during debates and discussion, who gave them space to reflect on their own experiences, and who enabled discussions between classmates so that they could learn about each other's culture and religion. This suggests that the presence of an educator who can inspire relaxed, respectful and yet critically motivated exchanges is key to the success of the ERC programme as a space where students can experiment living together with diversity through free and respectful exchanges.

How is this to be done? While it is not the purpose of this thesis to improve the pedagogy of the ERC programme, the data does suggest a few elements that can be taken into consideration by teachers and program designers. For instance, one participant really appreciated the fact that her teacher facilitated discussions between students, thus helping her to better understand the various religions represented in her class. When these group conversations took place, the teacher placed the chairs in a circle, which helped the students to be engaged in the activity and to listen to everyone's ideas (Mélina), giving students the opportunity to have an authoritative voice on topics that were close to them. The participants also favored activites such as debates on current affairs, presentations and creative projects (such as inventing a religion based on componants found in most

religions, such as ritual, founding myth, sacred site) over research projects and filling out comparative tables.

Morris, Bouchard and De Silva (2011, 258) likewise document a positive response to the ERC program from students, who experienced the course as empowering, enjoyed constructive class discussions as well as opportunities to share a part of their own cultural and religious heritage. They also report that they appreciated frank information from reliable sources about issues that are often considered controversial and thus avoided by adults, a conclusion that also emerged from my M.A. data[48] (Martel-Reny 2003, 78-80). They point out that in that way, education about religion can be compared to sex education:

> [students know] that not unlike sex education, some controversial material will be examined. As with sex education, the students acquire bits and pieces of information about different religious traditions from a variety of sources, some more reliable than others (e.g., family, friends, media). A great deal of this information is incomplete, erroneous, and biased. In this context children tend to invent facts to fill in the gaps in their knowledge. I believe that they are therefore appreciative of being exposed to accurate knowledge on subjects considered volatile and often avoided by adults. They yearn for knowledge that comes from reliable sources. (Morris et al, 258)

From this perspective, education about religions can be seen as necessary in a pluralistic society in order to dispel preconceptions and prejudices about other cultural and religious groups (Leroux 2007, 14). As children, most people are raised with a given, definite worldview, and many assume that it is the only valid one. By learning about other religions and worldviews, there can be a shift in consciousness for youths: they realize

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[48] This study was conducted in 2002 through an anonymous questionnaire, among 262 participants from 4 Montreal high schools, who were between 14 and 18 years old, and attending grade 10 or 11 classes.

that there are other ways of making sense out of life, and learn to respect the people who adhere to them even if they do not agree with their tenets.

School and Classmates: Experiencing Diversity Together

The question of diversity was central to this research project, and questions were devised to specifically explore this issue. Questions 22 ("À ton école, les élèves sont de quelle(s) origine(s)?") and 29 ("Tes amis sont-ils de la même origine ethnique/culturelle que toi?") both probed the perceived degree of diversity in the participants' social environment, as well as their attitudes toward this diversity. Thirteen participants attended schools that had a high level of cultural diversity, and eleven had a group of friends which reflected this diversity. The following description by a grade 6 teacher paints a portrait that reflects the majority of the schools attended by the participants in this study:

> Dans ma classe de 21 élèves, j'avais 14 langues maternelles différentes, et ce, sans compter l'anglais et le français. Pouvez-vous imaginer un jeune africain, originaire du Congo, fan de hockey et du Canadien de Montréal[49]? Avez-vous déjà rencontré des enfants d'origine chinoise et sud-américaine qui se retrouvent le soir pour aller patiner et glisser? Imaginez le spectacle du temps des fêtes avec de jeunes filles de religion musulmanes, foulard sur la tête, qui, avec leurs amis bouddhistes, sikhs, chrétiens et autres, chantent des cantiques de Noël. C'est la réalité des élèves du Montréal d'aujourd'hui. (Cournoyer 2012)

Is this picture, however, overly idyllic? While all but one of the participants (Colin) said that relations between different ethno-cultural groups generally went well at their schools and that they were personally comfortable with this diversity, some (Mélanie, Myriam)

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[49] Le Canadien is Montreal's professional hockey team, whose antics are followed in a quasi-religious way by thousands of supporters.

reported that at their school, to be from an ethnically Québécois background was not considered "cool" – unlike students from a Latino or Haitian background, "qui dansent bien et sont fiers de leur culture" (Myriam) - while others (Colin, Sabrina) mentioned that at their school, speaking with a Quebec accent was frowned upon: "À mon école, avoir un accent québécois c'est mal vu, c'est pas beau. Alors je change ma façon de parler quand je suis à l'école, parce que dans mon quartier et à la maison je parle québécois" (Sabrina). We may certainly wonder why such negative attitudes toward Québécois accent and culture persist, as there seems to be a distinction of class based on language.

The participants' ethnicity did not have an impact on the diversity of backgrounds among their friends, which were quite varied in terms of ethnicity (as seen with the answers to question 62, "En général, tes amis sont de quelle religion?"). Personal affinities seemed to override cultural differences, except when participants attended schools with little ethno-cultural difference. However, a sharp divide appeared in terms of religious diversity, as nine participants said that all or most of their friends were atheist or non-religious (see table III, p. 113 "Religion of the participants' friends"), even friends who came from religious backgrounds that differed from the participants', and because of that, might be expected to be actively involved in religious practice. Interestingly, two participants did not know the religious affiliation of their friends and did not think it was important (Marjolaine, Colin), even if some of their friends were of different cultural backgrounds. Two participants further mentioned that some of their Muslim or Catholic friends attended religious services in order to please their parents, without believing themselves in the tenets of the faith.

The (perceived) perception of the participants by their immigrant classmates was rarely problematic, but not strongly positive either (question 93, "En tant que jeune québécois « de souche », comment penses-tu être perçu par tes camarades de classe qui ne sont pas nés au Québec?"). Though question 93 may seem convoluted, it actually yielded interesting data about the relationship between different ethnic groups at the participants' schools, and their place in its social hierarchy. While half of the eleven participants who answered this question said that Québécois culture was seen as positive, warm and welcoming by their classmates, the other half said that in their schools, it was not seen especially positively by classmates from immigrant backgrounds: "Mon école secondaire était très multi-ethnique. Les québécois n'étaient pas dénigrés, mais ils inspiraient pas le respect non plus, on les remarquait parce qu'y en avait pas beaucoup. Y'a plusieurs québécois qui avaient appris le créole, et ils étaient plus respectés parce qu'ils faisaient partie d'un [groupe]" (Théo). This can be contrasted to the participants' answers to question 29 ("Tes amis sont-ils de la même origine ethnique/culturelle que toi?") about the ethnic background of their friends, which was varied and included friends from Québécois and immigrant backgrounds. It seems that despite being quite open-minded to religious difference, some participants had issues relating to linguistic identity.

Significant Adults Outside the Family: Proximity and Trust

The answers to questions 17 and 18 underline the importance of significant adults other than parents in the lives of the participants, someone from their wider family circle (8), from school (4), or from work. The common characteristics of these significant adults were that they were present on a regular basis in the lives of the participants, available for

them when necessary, and that they were open-minded and compassionate enough that it was possible for the participants to talk about anything with them. The participants appreciated being able to be themselves with these adults, and being considered as equals by them. One participant thus described her relation with her school's social worker: "Je peux lui parler de tout et de rien, vivre mes émotions avec elle, et elle me traite en égale. Quand je vais la voir, c'est comme [si elle me disait] 'Je suis ta chum, vas-y, jase-moi'" (Éloïse). Another (Ludovic) said that he appreciated being able to talk to someone who was not one of his parents, but who was also an adult, as his peers were not always able to understand what was going on in his life. The participants also appreciated, when the significant adult was a professional such as a teacher, spiritual animator or social worker, that this person was competent and skilled in their work. This increased the respect and trust they had for them.

Interestingly, the role models of participants (question 18), that is, people whom they admired, were mostly (for nine out of ten who answered the question) people they knew, rather than remote, idealized personalities such as pop stars or athletes. The people they admired were often significant adults, and the reasons for the participants' admiration generally had to do with how their role models had handled challenging situations, such as illness, poverty or violence, and the qualities they mobilized to achieve this, such as resilience, determination, and hard work. Also appreciated were qualities such as open-mindedness and good listening abilities, which some participants found in people who were not close relatives, but who they saw on a regular basis, such as a friend's mother.

Finally, an anecdote that underscores the need of adolescents for significant adults in their lives, and how few resources they actually have when they go through difficult times. At the end of each interview, I was required by my university's Ethics Board to give the participants a list of resources they could contact in case the interview triggered strong feelings that they might need help with (see appendix 7). Upon receiving this list, one participant commented that teenagers were drowning in such resources: websites, help lines, public interest messages on television and in public transit. But, he added, what adolescents really need is the presence of real, trustworthy adults in their lives, with whom they can communicate on a regular basis. He felt that adults and society were, with these resources, only giving themselves a good conscience while not really attending to young people's real needs.

Perceptions of Adolescence: "We're Not all Delinquents"

Question 95 about the social perception of adolescents is another one to which the participants' answers were unanimous. They all vehemently denounced the negative stereotypes about adolescence that are common in the media and, in their experience, shared by many adults, that portray teenagers as unreliable, reckless trouble-makers who only want to party and escape reality (as exemplified in the answers given to section 4.1) – even though a few of them added that the adults around them were generally supportive toward teenagers. Some male participants said they felt discriminated against because of their age. Such a negative view of adolescence has been noted (and denounced) (Lesko 2001; Vadeboncoeur 2005), and is part and parcel of the concept of adolescence in Western societies, going back to G. Stanley Hall's definition of adolescence as a time of

storm and stress (1904). The fear of working-class youths without religious or moral education was a key concern in the creation of public school systems in North America throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, which are similar to contemporary fears about youth and concerns about industrialization's impact on parent-children relationships (Gauvreau 2008, 15). In Quebec, the idea of youth as a separate "class" that was less docile and inclined to follow tradition was a new idea that was imported from European youth organizations from the 1920s and 30s, and was a major component of the Action catholique movements, as positive religious values such as spiritual force, vigour and purity were attributed to young people, in opposition to conformity, individualism, hypocrisy and moralizing (Gauvreau 2008, 15). It is paradoxical that youths are seen negatively in today's society, but that the characteristics of youth are extolled in advertising and the media – a fact that was not lost on the participants.

In terms of the most important challenges faced by adolescents today (question 97), I have, as seen in the data chapter, grouped them in two categories, that of lack of support and guidance, and that of peer pressure. This suggests that although the participants value their increased freedom, they also appreciate having solid, trustworthy adults on whom they can depend. The lack of such support seems to be acutely felt in times of challenge or simply when a participant is struggling with a personal or ethical issue. Yet the answers to question 98, about what the participants do when they feel down or upset, show that they tend to deal with difficulties on their own or with friends, but rarely seek the help of adults, even trusted ones. It is somewhat disturbing that the first impulse of these youths, when confronted with feelings of depression or anxiety, was to weather

things out. This suggests that mental health issues are still too taboo to mention to peers and family. It also suggests that teenagers are not comfortable seeking[50] adult or professional help when confronted with such issues.

Perspectives for the Future: "The World is Falling Apart but I still Want Kids"

We can see from the responses to question 109, ("D'après toi, quells sont les plus grands défis ou problèmes auxquels fait face l'humanité en ce moment?") that the participants were well informed about current issues, locally and worldwide, which they say they gleaned from the Internet and various readings. They were fairly aware socially and politically, yet this awareness did not translate to religion or spirituality. This is not surprising, given, first, the reification of religion in Quebec as a factor of oppression and social control, and second, given how little media exposure is given to the positive aspects of religion and spirituality. The participants' awareness of social and political issues was influenced by the humanist values carried by their parents, and by an interpretation of Quebec history through the lens of the Quiet Revolution. For them, there was no connection between the transformative aspect of religion and social justice, which are also part of Quebec's history[51], although for some participants, this connection was sometimes made through the concept of spirituality rather than religion, the former being seen as less threatening and charged historically.

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[50] We should probably ask ourselves if it is the responsibility of a 15 or 16 year-old to find help by themselves in such situations, when they are still, legally and psychologically, considered children.

[51] Meunier and Warren (2002) underline certain characteristics of the Personalist ethic that would likely be embraced by many of today's youths, such as the affirmation of the sacred, transcendent and inviolable character of the human person against any kind of determinism, as well as the rejection of totalitarianism (80). The religious dimension of the unionization of Québec workers would also be a worthwhile element to discuss with high school students, as with the lives of Léa Roback or Simone and Michel Monet-Chartrand.

Despite a rather bleak look at the state of the world, the majority of participants (12) wanted to be in a relationship with a significant other when they grew up, although getting married was not important, or downright rejected by some participants - which is congruent with current mores in Quebec. Furthermore, ten participants wanted to have children and a family of their own, and two more were open to the possibility should it arise. This suggests that despite the many difficulties seen, and sometimes experienced, by the participants in the contemporary world - such as poverty, environmental destruction, and armed conflicts-, there were enough positive aspects to their life experience to make them want to build a family.

Salient Points

As with youths in other western countries, the participants to this study made a clear distinction between religion, which they saw as collective, dogmatic and external, and spirituality, which was perceived as authentic, fluid, and more suited to individual needs (Search Institute 2012, Weisse 2009, Smith 2005, Campiche 1997). However, unlike American teenagers, the participants self-identified as non-religious, agnostic or atheist; in this they were closer to the Eurepean youths surveyed by Campiche, but also much like their own parents, whom they described as non-religious and anti-clerical, a characteristic that can be viewed as particular to the socio-historical context of Quebec.

As did the adolescents surveyed in European studies (Weisse 2009, Campiche 1997), the youths who participated in this study agreed on the separation of church and state, and were critical of religious institutions, especially the ones they saw as limiting personal

freedoms. A majority also displayed interest for the different religions and worldviews, either through personal contact and readings, but also through school teaching dedicated to that topic, as in the Quebec Ethics and Religious Culture Program. Thus the points discussed in this chapter paint a portrait of Quebec adolescent values, identity and religiosity that are in some ways unique, but that in others can be linked to trends seen in Europe and the United States.

CONCLUSION

Teenagers are not a people apart, an alien race about whom adults can only shake their heads and look forward to their growing up. Teenagers are a part of us, fully members of our families, religious congregations, neighbourhoods, communities, and nations.

(Smith & Denton 2005, 259)

The data gathered for this project help us not only to answer research questions, but also to give a voice to the participants' concerns about the meaning of their lives and the state of the world they live in. The first concluding point that emerges from this study is that in terms of giving meaning to their life and world, the participants rarely used religious or spiritual elements, such as beliefs or rituals. Rather, it is humanistic and communitarian ideals that shaped their meaning-making strategies, with an emphasis on social justice, family and friends. Likewise, their identity was defined by a non-religious stance – and even, in some cases, by a decidedly anti-religious one – with some openness to spirituality, a feature that seems unique to Quebec. Also of interest is the fact that the participants' answers tended to be more aligned with data pertaining to European youths rather than American ones, especially in terms of religious beliefs and of perception of religion as a socially positive or negative factor – which points to Quebec's saliency in the North American landscape.

Worldview and Identity

The participants' worldviews were shaped through a variety of interactions, their parents being the cardinal influence, as also found in other research on youth and religion such as the REDCo Project (2009), and Smith & Denton's (2005, 56), who noted that "parents are normally very important in shaping the religious and spiritual lives of their teenage children, even though they may not realize it. […] Simply by living and interacting with their children, most parents establish expectations, define normalcy, model life practices, set boundaries, and make demands – all of which cannot help but influence teenagers, for good or ill". However, in the case of this study's participants, parental influence on their children's worldview takes the form of rejection of religious beliefs and behaviours, rather than emphasizing them. Thus the religious identity of the participants was first and foremost shaped by their families – mostly their parents, but also other significant adults such as aunts and uncles, grandparents, teachers and spiritual animators, with one of the most salient aspects of this transmission being a strong anti-clericalism and suspiciousness toward the religious. Rather, it was the linguistic and cultural elements that were positively affirmed in the participants' identity.

Indeed, it is this rejection of religion in general and Catholicism in particular that is a conducting thread of the participants' religious identity, which seems to be negatively constructed: the participants were generally *not* Catholic, *not* greatly religious, and did *not* believe in god. It is difficult to pinpoint where this feature of the participants' worldview, that is unique to Quebec, comes from. The experience of parents and other relatives during previous decades (1930s to 1960s) where Catholicism was a structuring

force in Quebec society certainly is a major factor, but so could be the collective representation of that period that is emphasized by the media, which are highly negative and to this day, elicit strong emotional responses among most francophone Quebeckers (Warren & Meunier 2002).

Yet one interesting and unforeseen element that emerged from the interviews was the interest that half the participants had for their grandparents' Catholic faith. For instance, one participant (Sabrina) had much admiration for her grandfather, who built a life for himself despite not having been to school; he was also strongly Catholic, and she enjoyed having conversations with him on this topic. Another participant (Marjolaine) was close to her maternal grandmother, who had been through difficult events such as domestic violence, but nevertheless retained her *joie de vivre*, partly because of her religious convictions. This points, perhaps not to a yearning, but certainly to a curiosity for the religious mores of their forbears, which may not be fully addressed in the participants' current context, and to a lack of shared experiences pertaining to meaning between generations. However I must point out that this interest was not shared by all participants; some had a strong relationg with a grandparent that did not involve religion.

The participants to my study saw a difference between religion and spirituality – the former as a structuring force that curtailed individual freedoms, the latter as an elective and private choice that is free from the dogmatic taint and power struggles they associated with religion. Such differentiation between religion and spirituality is common in popular speech and has also been underlined in findings from other studies on youth religion and

spirituality, such as the REDCo project, which found, for instance, that young Europeans' "negative experiences of their own religion are mainly linked to constraint, to feelings of being obliged to do things […] without understanding their meaning" (Jozsa & Friederici 2008, 393). Data from the SEARCH institute also underlines a different perception of religion and spirituality in their participants, who saw spirituality as "more expansive than religion and religious observance", exemplified by comments such as "the most of religion is forced – the do's and don't – being spiritual means standing on a mountain with the wind blowing through your hair, and the feeling of being free. (Female, 15 South Africa)", " 'Religious' is kind of knowing the things in your head, but 'spiritual' is knowing them in your heart" (Female, 15, Australia)", or "Religion is like creating boundaries for spirituality (Indian youth)" (SEARCH Institute 2012b, 1-2).

In a way, spirituality seems to be a way for some young people to re-appropriate certain elements of the religious, such as interiority, searching for meaning, and questioning scientific materialism, without the stigmatization that may be associated with religion by their parents' generation - especially in Quebec. "Spirituality" can therefore be fruitfully used in the study of contemporary religion, as a concept that elicits less intense responses then that of "religion", allowing researchers to address beliefs, behaviours and views that participants may not even label as religious.

For most participants, religious diversity was a generally positive fact of life in school and society rather than something that called for adaptation and compromise. Yet strong opinions were voiced by some participants who disagreed with human rights and

freedoms being curtailed for religious reasons, especially for women, and with demands relating to reasonable accommodations, showing that their views on religious difference are a mix of their experiences with schoolmates from different backgrounds, and of whatever debates were prevalent in the news. It also points to a discrepancy between teenagers' attitude toward religious diversity, depending on whether it is at an abstract or practical level, coherent with findings of the REDCo project that "students are generally open towards peers of different religious backgrounds" (Weisse 2009, 2). However, Weisse also found that young Europeans "often express a tolerant attitude more at an abstract than a practical level", contrary to Quebec adolescents, who seemed more inclined to accept the diversity present in their daily lives, but less so when faced with more general and abstract questions pertaining to the place of religious signs in the public sphere.

The participants' worldviews were not especially marked by an amalgamation of different religious traditions and thought systems; while there was a certain circulation and discussion of religious views between peers from different religious backgrounds, transmission and appropriation of these elements between adolescents seemed minimal. Other religions were seen as worthy of interest by most participants, but as part of their friends' culture, and not as something that had a significant impact on their own search for meaning. The only area where an overlap emerged between the material-scientific worldview and popular culture ideas was the belief in alien life, which was seen as plausible by the participants.

The participants' responses about belief in god, as well as their definitions of religion and spirituality, were striking in their similarity: thirteen defined themselves as atheist, agnostic or non-religious, while only two defined themselves as Catholic, though without practicing or even believing in its tenets, which points to Catholicism as important culturally rather than religiously in contemporary Quebec.

> Ce déclin des valeurs religieuses [chez les adolescents] (Bréchon, 2000, chap. 7) peut être associé à l'érosion de toute norme institutionelle, et plus généralement au refus latent des grandes institutions que sont l'Église, les grands partis politiques, etc. En d'autres termes, on s'en remet non pas à l'autorité des chefs religieux ou politiques pour définir le vrai et le bon, mais à une morale plus diffuse s'appuyant sur l'expérience individuelle et des consensus fragmentaires. (Pronovost and Royer 2003, 207)

Rather than the differences, it is the commonalities that are noteworthy in this sample, with themes such as distrust of religious institutions, especially Catholicism and Islam, the importance of self-realization, and the value put on the experiential, authentic and immanent aspects of the spiritual. The participants' worldview also fit the third and fourth key beliefs of Christian Smith's Moral Therapeutic Deism: first, that the main goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about one's life, and second, that God is not especially present in people's lives, except when needed in times of crisis (Smith and Snell 2009, 154). Indeed, saturation[52] showed early in participants' profiles on questions such as national identity, definition of religion and spirituality, a critical (if not pessimistic) outlook on the world's situation, especially among older male participants,

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[52] In grounded theory, "*saturation* means that no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category. As he sees similar instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that the category is saturated." (Glaser and Strauss 2012, 61)

and the prevalence of a materialistic-scientific worldview that generally excluded supernatural explanations - although the concept of an omniscient being was present for some participants, though in a vague, diluted form, and the possibility of extra-terrestrial life was seen by all as a valid scientific hypothesis, raising questions about the boundaries between scientific and popular culture.

Is such a worldview likely to be a positive factor in a multi-religious society, and be conducive to accepting otherness? Overall, no participants reported conflicts with classmates or other youths over differences in worldviews. The majority had a culturally and religiously diverse group of friends, among which a spirit of tolerance seemed to prevail, and some participants expressed a keen interest in learning about different religious customs and views directly from their peers and through the Ethics and Religious Culture Program, though for others, openness to cultural and religious diversity had its limits.[53] The great religious systems were "generally perceived in a relativistic way by these youths, as simply many ways of seeing the world, all potentially authentic and efficient, but in no way owning a monopoly on Truth" (Martel-Reny 2008, 68). Such an interpretation of established religious systems points to a deep change in western societies, where truth is no longer given from a high authority, but validated through experience and personal insight. Such a transformation has been noticed notably in Europe, where Lambert and Voyé (1997, 132) report, from their study of young Europeans' beliefs, "a decline of belief in a personal God in favour of belief in a

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[53] This study was conducted two years before the debate on the so-called "Charter of Quebec values" raged in the media and amidst the population. Would it have been conducted in the fall of 2013, the data would likely have been impacted – but to what extent, one cannot say.

supernatural force – an evolution that speaks to a growing distance from the representations of God offered by religious institutions".

The Quebec Ethic and Religious Culture Program

The data indicates that the Quebec Ethics and Religious Culture Program contributes to tolerance and understanding of religious diversity, but this seems strongly mitigated by the skill of the teacher. This is one of the clearest correlations that emerged from the data: participants who evaluated their ERC teacher as competent also evaluated the course positively, and vice-versa. Indeed, the data suggests that the ERC program only partially succeeds in fostering a better understanding of different religions, but meets its goal of furthering dialogue and reflecting on ethical questions. As also found by Morris, Bouchard & Da Silva (2011, 258-9), the program was appreciated by a majority of participants as a space where they could not only learn about different religious cultures and systems of meaning in an unbiased manner, but also as one where they could share their spiritual questions and experiences with others in a judgment-free environment. Just as their European counterparts, who, according to the REDCo Project (Weisse 2009, 2), "would like to see schools dedicated more to teaching about different religions than to guiding them towards a particular religious belief or worldview", expressed "their desire that learning about religions should take place in a safe class-room environment governed by agreed procedures for expression and discussion", and, irrespective of their religious positions, were interested in learning about religions in school, this study's participants did appreciate their ERC class as a space where they could safely discuss worldviews, religious diversity and ethical dilemmas, and share interrogations on the meaning of life

without feeling judged, regardless of their beliefs and background – in short, "a safe, accepting –even fun– place where they can ask hard religious questions, and where 'doubt' is not a dirty word" (Todd, 1999).

However, for many participants, religion was seen either as irrational and backward, or as an emotional crutch. Perhaps the positive contributions of various religious traditions over time needs to be better addressed, such as institutions, concepts and social development. This means that teachers have to be well prepared and knowledgeable about such topics. Teacher training has been identified as the most problematic issue concerning the ERC program: Morris, Bouchard & Da Silva (2011) point out that "providing in-service and pre-service teachers with more university courses is clearly desirable. Simply providing more courses, however, is insufficient; especially considering that the ERC program ambitiously brings together two subject areas usually taught independently of each other" (263), despite the fact that a deep and thorough knowledge of the different religions, worldviews and thought systems is crucial for ERC teachers, perhaps more than for any other school subject as it addresses sensitive and complex questions.

While it is not possible to generalize this study's results to all Quebec adolescents, it nonetheless opens a window unto their perspective on family, school, religion and world events. The findings lead to other questions that would be worth investigating. For instance, would the general openness to religious difference displayed by the participants in this study be displayed at the same level by youths from suburban or rural areas? How,

if at all, do various worldviews affect different aspects of adolescents' lives, such as academic performance, self-esteem or health? To what extent are the spaces of dialog and knowledge that are opened through the ERC program invested by adolescents, and how does this impact their development and school experience? What are high school teachers' perspective on religious and ethnic diversity, and how does it influence teaching and success?

Researchers such as Bosacki and Ota (2000, 210), who conducted interviews on religiosity and spirituality with British and Canadian teenagers, found that young people in their study were "eager to engage in conversation about philosophical, existential and ontological topics". Isabelle Fortier, AVSEC at Cégep de Maisonneuve, stated in a recent presentation (2012) that "les jeunes cherchent le sens", and that before their contact with a spiritual animator, "personne ne leur avait montré le chemin de la connaissance de soi, et qu'ils ont besoin de modèles à ce sujet". In other words, "the need for young people to find ways of making meaning in their lives and developing an authentic sense of self is of great concern to them. […] In addition, they are not sure where to look for help, and they are not confident that adult institutions understand their questions, let alone have satisfying answers" (Crawford in Rossiter 2006, 8). As adolescents are in a period of their cognitive development where their critical thinking skills are getting formed, and thus are increasingly able to question what goes on around them, and how the different views offered by family, school and society differ (Richard 1985, 24), this study suggests that the spaces of dialogue and knowledge that are opened through the ERC program are a needed addition to the school environment, where most pedagogical activities are about

"getting it right" rather than engaging with issues that are of interest to high school students.

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APPENDIX 1

BASIC PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

In an effort to lighten the text, I have chosen to display basic information about the participants in this chart instead of writing it next to their names each time I quote one of them.

Pseudonym	Age *	Gender	Religious identification	Educational institution enrolled in *
Mélina	15	F	Atheist	Girls-only private high school
Théo	16	M	Atheist	Vocational school (attended a polyvalente)
Ludovic	16	M	Agnostic	Polyvalente
Éloïse	15	F	Non-religious	High school, theatre program
Philémon	19	M	Agnostic	Cegep (attended a polyvalente)
Liliane	15	F	Atheist	High school, theatre program
Marjolaine	14	F	Without religion	Private high school, International program
Ariane	16	F	Atheist	Public school, International program
Grégoire	16	M	Atheist	Public High school
Mélanie	18	F	Atheist	Public High school
Myriam	16	F	Atheist	Public High school
Julien	15	M	Undecided	Private high school, arts and sports program
Noël	19	M	Other	Cegep (attended a private high school)
Judith	16	F	Atheist	Public school, International program
Sabrina	16	F	Catholic	Public school, International program
Colin	17	M	Non-religious	Public school, International program
Loïc	14	M	Catholic	Private high school, arts and sports program

* At the time of interview

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Questions sociodémographiques

1. Quel âge as-tu?

2. Où es-tu né?

3. As-tu des frères et soeurs? (combien, quel âge)

4. À quelle école vas-tu?

5. Où habites-tu?

6. As-tu toujours habité dans cette région/ce quartier?

7. Pourquoi as-tu décidé de participer à cette entrevue?

• SECTION I – FAMILLE ET ADULTES SIGNIFIANTS

1.1. Relations familiales

8. Avec qui habites-tu ?

9. Parle-moi de ta mère. Où est-elle née? Quel est son métier?

     - T'entends-tu bien avec elle?

     - Y a-t-il des choses dont tu discutes spécialement avec elle?

     - Y a-t-il des choses dont tu ne parlerais pas avec elle?

10. Parle-moi de ton père. Où est-il né? Quel est son métier?

     - T'entends-tu bien avec lui?

     - Y a-t-il des choses dont tu discutes spécialement avec lui?

     - Y a-t-il des choses dont tu ne parlerais pas avec lui?

11. Comment t'entends-tu avec tes frères et sœurs? (Incluant demi-frères et sœurs, etc)

12. Y a-t-il d'autres personnes qui vivent avec vous?

13. Trouves-tu que tes parents t'encouragent et te soutiennent?

14. Quelles valeurs (ou principes) sont importantes dans ta famille / chez ton père et ta mère?

15. [Si les parents sont divorcés/séparés] Quel âge avais-tu quand tes parents se sont séparés?

     - Comment leur divorce t'a-t-il affecté?

16. [Si les parents sont divorcés/séparés] T'entends-tu bien avec les conjoints de tes parents?

1.2. Adultes signifiants

17. As-tu des relations importantes avec des adultes autres que tes parents? (par exemple, enseignants, coach, animateur, etc)

18. Y a-t-il des personnes que tu admires? Qui sont-elles? Pourquoi?

• SECTION II – Activités scolaires et parascolaires

2.1. Milieu scolaire

19. En général, aimes-tu l'école?

    - Qu'est-ce que tu aimes le plus à l'école?

    - Qu'est-ce que tu aimes le moins à l'école?

    - Est-ce toi qui a choisi d'aller à cette école? Si oui, pourquoi?

20. Trouves-tu que tu as de bonnes notes? Pourquoi?

21. Ton école a-t-elle un projet particulier (sports, arts, international, etc) ?

22. À ton école, les élèves sont de quelle(s) origine(s)?

23. Quelles sont tes matières préférées? Celles que tu n'aimes pas?

24. Qui est ton professeur préféré? Pourquoi?

25. Participes-tu à des activités parascolaires à l'école? Lesquelles?

26. À ton école, est-ce qu'il y a des groupes ou des activités pour des causes comme la paix dans le monde, l'aide aux démunis, la protection de l'environnement, etc?

    - [Si oui] Y participes-tu? Pourquoi?

27. Y a-t-il à ton école des activités religieuses ou spirituelles?

    - [Si oui] Y participes-tu? Pourquoi?

2.2. Amis

28. Qui sont tes amis? Dirais-tu que tu en as beaucoup?

29. Tes amis sont-ils de la même origine ethnique/culturelle que toi?

30. T'arrive-t-il de discuter du sens de la vie avec tes amis? (de Dieu, de l'univers, etc)

31. T'arrive-t-il de discuter de questions sociales avec tes amis? (paix dans le monde, l'environnement, etc)

32. Est-ce que tu as présentement un-e amoureux-se?

    - Est-ce que cette personne est de la même origine ethnique/culturelle que toi?

33. Envisagerais-tu d'être amoureux de quelqu'un qui n'est pas de la même origine ethnique/culturelle que toi?

    34. Envisagerais-tu d'être amoureux de quelqu'un qui n'a pas les mêmes valeurs / la même religion que toi?

35.Est-ce que cette personne a les mêmes valeurs / religion que toi?

2.3. Cours d'éthique et culture religieuse

36. Parle-moi de ton cours d'ERC des deux dernières années?

        - Trouves-tu cela intéressant et utile?

37. Quel genre de projet et d'activités faites-vous dans ce cours?

38. Trouves-tu que ton professeur sait de quoi il/elle parle?

39. Trouves-tu que cela t'aide à mieux comprendre d'autres personnes de religion différente?

40. Trouves-tu que cela t'aide à réfléchir au sens de ta vie?

2.4. Loisirs

41. Que fais-tu dans tes temps libres?

42. As-tu un emploi rémunéré?

    Si oui :   - Est-ce par choix ou par obligation ?

        - Combien d'heures par semaine?

43. Est-ce que tu penses que cela a un impact sur tes études?

44. Fais-tu du bénévolat? Pourquoi? Qu'est-ce que ça t'apporte?

• **SECTION III– IDENTITÉ, RELIGIOSITÉ ET SPIRITUALITÉ**

3.1.1. Définir la religion

45. Si je te demande de définir ce qu'est la religion, que réponds-tu?

    a. Est-ce que c'est la même chose que la spiritualité?

46. En général, crois-tu que la religion soit une bonne chose? Pourquoi?

    b. Et la spiritualité?

47. Est-ce que la religion et/ou la spiritualité sont importants pour toi?

3.1.2. Croyances religieuses

48. Crois-tu en un dieu, ou en une puissance supérieure qui existe au-delà du monde matériel? Pourquoi?

    Si oui - Comment le conçois-tu?

        - Te sens-tu proche de Dieu/de cette force?

        - Penses-tu que ce Dieu/cette force se préoccupe de toi?

49. As-tu déjà eu des doutes par rapport à tes croyances ou ton absence de croyance?

50. D'après toi, y a-t-il quelque chose après la mort?

Crois-tu…

    51. À la réincarnation?

    51. Aux esprits?

    53. Au paradis et à l'enfer?

54. D'après toi, comment l'univers s'est-il formé?

55. y a-t-il de la vie sur d'autres planètes?

3.2. Identité religieuse

56. Si on te demande quelle est <u>ta</u> religion, que dis-tu?

57. Dirais-tu que tu es une personne religieuse, spirituelle, ou aucun des deux?

    [si se définit comme religieux/croyant :]

    58. Est-ce que ta religion/tes croyances ont changé depuis ton enfance?

    59. Est-ce que ta religion affecte la façon dont es en relation avec tes parents? Si oui, comment?

    60. Est-ce que ta religion influence tous les aspects de ta vie, ou seulement certains d'entre eux? Lesquels?

61. Si tu es une personne qui n'est pas religieuse ou n'a pas de religion, sens-tu que tu appartiens à un autre groupe, tel une culture, une nation, une race, ou toute autre communauté?

62. En général, tes amis sont de quelle religion?

63. Tes amis ont-ils des croyances semblables aux tiennes?

3.3. Sens de la vie

64. Qu'est-ce qu'il y a de bon dans ta vie?

65. Y a-t-il des choses que tu changerais dans ta vie si tu le pouvais?

66. Qu'est-ce qui te fait vraiment « triper », t'excite et te rend enthousiaste?

67. Qu'est-ce que tu veux absolument accomplir dans ta vie?

68. Quelles valeurs sont très importantes pour toi?

69. D'après toi, quel est le but de l'existence?

70. T'arrive-t-il…

     - de réfléchir longuement en silence?

     - de faire des promenades seul?

     - d'écrire pour mettre de l'ordre dans tes idées?

        [Si oui à un des 3 : à quoi penses-tu?]

71. Sur quoi comptes-tu pour guider tes actions? (force spirituelle, conscience, préceptes religieux, etc?)

72. Est-ce qu'il y a des choses qui sont vraiment bien ou vraiment mal pour toi? Lesquelles?

73. As-tu des objets qui sont très importants pour toi? Si oui, peux-tu m'en décrire un et me dire pourquoi cet objet est important pour toi?

3.4. Transmission

74. Quelle est la religion de ta mère?

75. Quelle est la religion de ton père?

76. Y a-t-il des choses que tes parents t'on apprises quand tu étais petit que tu ne trouves pas vraies?

77. Y a-t-il quelqu'un qui te guidé dans tes convictions religieuses/spirituelles et/ou tes valeurs?

78. Penses-tu que tu es assez informé sur les autres religions et spiritualités?

3.5. Pratiques

79. T'arrive-t-il de prier? Pourquoi?

> **Si oui** : À quelle fréquence? Dans quel endroit? Comment as-tu commencé?
>
> - Utilises-tu tes propres mots ou des prières que tu as apprises?
>
> **Si non** : Que penses-tu de la prière ?

80. T'arrive-t-il de méditer? Pourquoi?

> Si oui : À quelle fréquence? Dans quel endroit? Comment as-tu commencé à méditer?
>
> **Si non** : Que penses-tu de la méditation ?

81. As-tu d'autres pratiques religieuses ou spirituelles?

82. Es-tu impliqué dans des activités religieuses ou spirituelles?

83. T'arrive-t-il d'aller à l'église/temple/synagogue/mosquée? À quelle occasion/fréquence?

84. T'es-tu déjà senti différent des autres ados à cause de tes croyances et/ou pratiques religieuses/spirituelles?

85. As-tu déjà vécu une expérience qui t'a semblé surnaturelle? Comment ça c'est passé?

> - Comment tu t'es senti?

86. As-tu déjà eu des « expériences religieuses » importantes? Comment ça c'est passé?

> - Comment tu t'es senti?

3.6. Religion et société

87. D'après toi, est-ce que la religion est importante dans la société québécoise?

> - Est-ce que c'est une bonne ou une mauvaise chose?

88. T'intéresses-tu à d'autres religions/manières de voir le monde que la tienne? Si oui, lesquelles? Pourquoi?

89. Y a-t-il des religions qui sont meilleures ou pires que d'autres?

90. Penses-tu qu'il y a une différence entre la religion d'une personne et sa culture? Si oui, quelles sont-

elles?

91. D'après toi, y a-t-il des rôles sociaux qui sont plus appropriés pour les hommes que pour les femmes, et vice-versa?

3.7 Identité nationale

92. Quand on te demande « tu es quoi, toi? », que réponds-tu spontanément? Dis-tu que tu es canadien, québécois, autre?

93. En tant que jeune québécois « de souche », comment penses-tu être perçu par tes camarades de classe qui ne sont pas nés au Québec?

• SECTION IV – ADOLESCENCE ET PERSPECTIVES FUTURES

4.1. Bien-être et adolescence

94. C'est quoi pour toi l'adolescence?

> - Quand est-ce qu'on devient un ado? Quand est-ce qu'on cesse de l'être?

95. Comment trouves-tu que les adolescents sont perçus en général?

96. Certaines personnes disent que les parents et les adultes ne savent pas ce qui se passe vraiment dans la vie des jeunes, comme si les ados vivaient dans un « monde parallèle ». Trouves-tu que c'est vrai?

97. D'après toi, quels sont les problèmes les plus importants auxquels font face les adolescents aujourd'hui?

98. Que fais-tu quand tu as un problème ou que tu te sens à l'envers?

99. T'arrive-t-il de te sentir déprimé?

> - Dans quelles circonstances?
> - Que fais-tu alors?

100. Est-ce que tes valeurs spirituelles t'aident quand ça ne va pas?

101. De façon générale, es-tu satisfait de ton apparence physique?

4.2. Perspectives professionnelles

102. Quels sont tes projets après le secondaire?

103. Quel niveau de scolarité prévois-tu compléter dans ta vie?

104. Si tu pouvais exercer n'importe quel métier (peu importe tes notes), que choisirais-tu?

105. Dans la réalité, qu'est-ce que tu penses devenir professionnellement?

    - S'il y a une différence, peux-tu m'expliquer pourquoi?

4.3. Perspectives personnelles

106. Comment imagines-tu ta vie quand tu seras adulte?

107. Penses-tu un jour vivre en couple? Penses-tu te marier? Veux-tu des enfants?

108. Penses-tu que quand tu auras 25 ou 30 ans, tu auras les mêmes croyances et les mêmes valeurs que maintenant?

109. D'après toi, quels sont les trois plus grands défis/problèmes auxquels fait face l'humanité en ce moment?

110. Trouves-tu qu'il y a de l'espoir pour la planète et l'humanité? Est-ce que ça s'améliore ou ça va de plus en plus mal?)

• SECTION V – CONSOMMATION MÉDIATIQUE

111. Est-ce que tu lis? Si oui, quel genre de livres ou publications?

112. Écoutes-tu souvent la télévision?

    - Quel genre d'émissions écoutes-tu? Quelles sont tes préférées?

113. Écoutes-tu souvent des films?

    - Quel genre de films écoutes-tu? Quelles sont tes préférées?

114. Utilises-tu Internet?

    - Que fais-tu surtout avec Internet? Messagerie instantanée, Facebook, sites web?

    - Quel genre de sites web consultes-tu?

115. Quel genre de musique écoutes-tu?

116.Penses-tu que tes valeurs et tes croyances sont influencées par le genre d'émissions de télé, de films, de livres, de site internet, et de musique que tu écoutes? Si oui, de quelle façon?

117. Plusieurs films et émissions de télé incluent des scènes violentes. Est-ce c'est quelque chose qui te dérange?

<u>Conclusion</u>

118. C'est tout ce que j'ai comme questions. Est-ce qu'il y a quelque chose dont on n'a pas parlé que tu trouves important?

119. As-tu quelque chose à ajouter?

120. As-tu des questions?

INFORMATION LETTER TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Adolescents, spiritualité et identité au Québec

Un projet de recherche sous la direction de Michel Despland, Professeur

Département de sciences des religions, Université Concordia

Cher étudiant, chère étudiante,

Nous sommes à la recherche de jeunes de 15 à 19 ans pour participer à une étude sur les adolescents, la spiritualité et l'identité au Québec. Cette étude est supervisée par des chercheurs de l'Université Concordia à Montréal. Son objectif principal est d'examiner les attitudes des adolescents québécois par rapport à la spiritualité, la religion, et la diversité culturelle, ainsi que leur implication dans diverses activités scolaires et de loisirs. Cette étude tente de comprendre comment les adolescents donnent un sens à leur vie dans un contexte de mondialisation. On veut aussi comprendre l'impact de ta famille, tes amis, ton école, et des médias sur ta façon de donner un sens à ta vie. **Cette étude est basée sur une approche sociologique et ne favorise aucune perspective religieuse en particulier.**

Pour participer à cette étude, tu dois :

- avoir entre 15 et 19 ans;

- être inscrit dans une école secondaire ou un cégep/collège au Québec;

- avoir le français comme langue maternelle;

- que tes parents soient nés au Québec.

La participation à cette étude consiste en une entrevue individuelle d'environ 1 heure avec la chargée de projet, dans un lieu de ton choix (café, restaurant, bibliothèque, ou à l'université, selon ce que tu préfères). Cette entrevue est composée de questions ouvertes auxquelles il n'y a pas de bonne ou de mauvaises réponses : **ce sont tes opinions et tes idées qui nous intéressent**. Ces questions ont pour but d'explorer l'importance et le rôle de la spiritualité dans ta vie, de comprendre tes croyances et tes pratiques spirituelles (si

tu en as), et de comprendre comment tu te situes en matière de religion et/ou de spiritualité par rapport à tes parents et ta communauté.

La participation à ce projet de recherche se fait sur une base volontaire et tu n'es pas obligé(e) de participer à cette étude. Ta décision de participer ou non n'aura aucune conséquence positive ou négative sur tes notes. Ce que tu diras lors de l'entrevue restera **complètement confidentiel** : ni tes parents, ni tes professeurs, ni la direction de ton école n'y auront accès. Les entrevues seront enregistrées sur support audio (minidisque) et ensuite transcrites par la chargée de projet. L'enregistrement audio sera conservé à l'université dans un classeur et un local barré, et seuls la chargée de projet et le coordonnateur de l'étude y auront accès. L'enregistrement audio sera détruit lorsque l'étude sera terminée.

Il n'y a pas de bénéfice matériel à ta participation à cette étude. Mais en y prenant part, tu auras l'occasion de faire connaître ta manière de voir le monde, tes idées sur le sens de la vie, et ton opinion sur la place de la religion dans la société québécoise. Cela aidera les chercheurs à mieux comprendre les adolescents d'aujourd'hui, et la façon dont la société québécoise évolue.

Si tu as envie de participer à ce projet, tu dois d'abord demander à tes parents de lire la lettre de présentation, puis de **signer le formulaire de consentement** (inclus avec cette lettre). Tu dois ensuite contacter la chargée de projet, Marie-Paule Martel-Reny, afin de prendre un rendez-vous pour l'entrevue, par courriel (reli361japan@gmail.com) ou par téléphone (514-568-7751).

Pour toute question à propos de cette étude tu peux contacter la chargée de projet, Marie-Paule Martel-Reny, à reli361japan@gmail.com ou au au 514-568-7751, ou le chercheur responsable, Michel Despland, au 514-848-2424, poste 2076, ou par courriel à desplan@alcor.concordia.ca.
Nous te remercions de ton intérêt et espérons avoir bientôt de tes nouvelles.

Adolescents, spiritualité et identité au Québec
Un projet de recherche sous la direction de Michel Despland, Professeur
Département de sciences des religions, Université Concordia

Madame, Monsieur,

Dans le cadre d'une étude intitulée *Adolescents, spiritualité et identité au Québec*, votre enfant a été, comme tous ses camarades de classe, invité à prendre part à une entrevue individuelle portant sur ses croyances, ses valeurs et son identité. L'objectif principal de cette étude est d'examiner les attitudes des adolescents québécois par rapport à la spiritualité, la religion, et la diversité culturelle, ainsi que leur implication dans diverses activités scolaires et de loisirs. Par le biais de cette étude, nous tentons de comprendre comment les adolescents donnent un sens à leur vie dans un contexte de mondialisation. Nous voulons aussi comprendre l'impact de différentes sources (famille, amis, école, médias) sur leur façon de voir la vie. Il n'y a pas de bonne ou de mauvaise réponse à ces questions, car c'est l'*opinion* des adolescents que nous souhaitons entendre. **Cette étude est basée sur une approche sociologique et ne favorise aucune perspective religieuse ou idéologique en particulier.** Cette étude s'adresse aux adolescents de 14 à 19 ans inscrits à l'école secondaire ou au cégep, dont le français est la langue maternelle, et dont les parents sont nés au Québec.

L'entrevue aura lieu dans un endroit au choix de votre enfant: soit au Campus Sir George Williams (Centre-ville) de l'Université Concordia, ou encore dans un café ou tout autre endroit où votre enfant se sent à l'aise. Pour des raisons techniques, l'entrevue sera enregistrée sur support audio (minidisque) et sera ensuite transcrite par la chargée de projet. Les propos de votre enfant seront traités de manière strictement confidentielle; dans les rapports de recherche qui seront produits à la suite de cette étude, votre enfant ne sera identifié que par un pseudonyme, et toute information personnelle (tels que détails géographiques et solaires) sera changée. L'enregistrement audio sera conservé à

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l'université dans classeur et un local barré, et seul la chargée de projet et le coordonnateur de l'étude y auront accès. Personne d'autre n'aura accès aux entrevues (ni le personnel de l'école ou de la commission scolaire, ou qui que ce soit d'autre), et l'enregistrement audio sera détruit lorsque l'étude sera terminée (en 2012 selon le calendrier prévu). Afin de permettre à votre enfant de s'exprimer pleinement sur une variété de sujets, il est entendu que vous n'aurez pas non plus accès à ce qu'il/elle dira lors de l'entrevue.

La participation à cette étude est entièrement volontaire, et ne comporte aucune conséquence négative pour vous ou votre enfant en cas de refus ou de retrait. Votre enfant est libre de se retirer de l'étude à tout moment, sans que cela ne lui porte atteinte de quelque façon que ce soit. Si jamais votre enfant décide de se retirer de l'étude en cours d'entrevue, les données qu'il ou elle a fournies seront détruites et ne feront pas partie de l'analyse. Comme votre enfant a moins de 18 ans, il nous faut votre consentement écrit afin qu'il ou elle participer à ce projet. Si vous acceptez, je vous serais fort reconnaissant de bien vouloir compléter et signer le formulaire de consentement ci-inclus. Votre enfant sera par la suite libre de contacter la chargée de projet afin de planifier le moment et l'endroit de l'entrevue. Votre enfant devra avoir avec lui le formulaire de consentement avec votre signature.

Je vous invite à communiquer avec nous si vous avez des questions à propos de cette étude, au 514-848-2424, poste 2076, ou par courriel à desplan@alcor.concordia.ca . Vous pouvez également contacter Marie-Paule Martel-Reny, qui est responsable de cette étude, à etudejeunes@gmail.com. Ce projet a reçu l'approbation du comité d'éthique de l'Université Concordia; si vous avez des questions concernant vos droits en tant que participants à cette étude, veuillez contacter madame Brigitte Des Rosiers, conseillère en éthique de la recherche, Université Concordia, au 514-848-2424, poste 7481, ou par courriel à bdesrosi@alcor.concordia.ca

En vous remerciant à l'avance, vous et votre enfant, de votre attention et de votre collaboration, je prie d'agréer mes salutations distinguées.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Formulaire de consentement du participant

Étude Adolescents, spiritualité et identité au Québec

Par la présente, je déclare consentir à participer à une entrevue individuelle dans le cadre de l'étude menée par Mr Michel Despland et Mme Marie-Paule Martel-Reny, du Département de sciences des religions de l'Université Concordia.

A. BUT DE LA RECHERCHE

On m'a informé du but de la recherche, qui est d'obtenir des données sur le processus de composition identitaire et spirituel chez les jeunes Québécois. L'équipe de recherche s'intéresse particulièrement à mes expériences, valeurs et opinions à propos de la religion, de la spiritualité et du sens de la vie.

B. PROCÉDURES

• Cette étude s'adresse aux adolescents âgés de 14 à 19 ans, inscrits dans une école secondaire ou un cégep/collège au Québec, dont la langue maternelle est le français, et dont les parents sont nés au Québec.

• Les entrevues seront effectuées soit au département de sciences des religions de l'Université Concordia (2050 Mackay), soit dans un café ou tout autre lieu où je me sens à l'aise.

• L'entrevue sera enregistrée sur support audio (minidisque) et sera ensuite transcrite par la chargée de projet (M.-P. Martel-Reny). Si à n'importe quel moment je décide d'interrompre ma participation à l'étude, l'entrevue sera détruite.

• L'enregistrement audio sera conservé à l'Université Concordia dans classeur et un local barré, et seul la chargée de projet et le coordonnateur de l'étude y auront accès.

• Mes propos seront traités de manière strictement confidentielle; dans les rapports de recherche qui seront produits à la suite de cette étude, je ne serai identifié que par un pseudonyme, et toute information personnelle (tels que détails géographiques et solaires) sera modifiée afin de protéger mon anonymat.

• On attend de moi que je réponde honnêtement aux questions qui me seront posées.

• L'entrevue devrait durer entre une heure et deux heures.

• La probabilité de tout risque associée à ce projet est minime. Néanmoins, afin de me protéger de tout inconfort, la participation à cette étude est entièrement confidentielle, et l'entrevue aura lieu ailleurs qu'à mon école (dans le cas où le recrutement aurait été fait en milieu scolaire).

C. CONDITIONS DE PARTICIPATION

• Je comprends que je peux retirer mon consentement et interrompre ma participation à tout moment, et ce, sans aucune conséquence négative pour moi.

• Je comprends que ma participation à cette étude est CONFIDENTIELLE, c'est-à-dire que la chercheure connaît mon identité, mais ne la révélera à personne, y compris mes professeurs, camarades, ou à la direction de mon école. Afin de me garantir une pleine liberté de parole, mes propos ne seront pas non plus rapportés à mes parents ou gardiens légaux.

• Je comprends que les données de cette étude seront publiées, mais que toute information personnelle sera modifiée de façon à ce que personne ne puisse me reconnaître.

• Je comprends le but de la présente étude; je sais qu'elle ne comprend pas de motifs cachés dont je n'aurais pas été informé.

J'AI LU ATTENTIVEMENT CE QUI PRÉCÈDE ET JE COMPRENDS LA NATURE DE L'ENTENTE. JE CONSENS LIBREMENT ET VOLONTAIREMENT À PARTICIPER À CETTE ÉTUDE.

Nom du/de la participant-e (en caractères d'imprimerie): _____

Signature du/de la participant-e :_____Date :_____

Nom du chercheur: _____

Signature du chercheur:_____Date :_____

Pour toute question ou commentaire, tu peux contacter la chargée de projet, Marie-Paule Martel-Reny, M.A. au 514-568-7751, au par courriel à etudejeunes@gmail.com. Tu peux aussi rejoindre le chercheur responsable de cette étude, Dr Michel Despland, au 514-848-2424, poste 2076, ou par courriel à desplan@alcor.concordia.ca

Si tu as des questions concernant tes droits en tant que participant à l'étude, contacte Madame Monica Toca, conseillère en éthique à la recherche à l'Université Concordia, au 514-848-2424, poste 2425, ou par courriel à mtoca@alcor.concordia.ca

Aimerais-tu être tenu au courant des résultats de cette étude? Si oui, laisse-nous tes coordonnées.

Adresse: _____

Courriel: _____

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Formulaire de consentement du parent

Étude Adolescents, spiritualité et identité au Québec

Par la présente, je déclare consentir à ce que mon enfant participe à une entrevue individuelle dans le cadre de l'étude menée par Mr Michel Despland et Mme Marie-Paule Martel-Reny du Département de sciences des religions de l'Université Concordia.

A. BUT DE LA RECHERCHE

On m'a informé du but de la recherche, soit d'obtenir des données sur le processus de composition identitaire et spirituel des jeunes québécois. L'équipe de recherche s'intéresse particulièrement aux expériences, valeurs et opinions de mon enfant en rapport à la spiritualité, la religion, et au sens de la vie.

B. PROCÉDURES

• Cette étude s'adresse aux adolescents âgés de 14 à 19 ans inscrits dans une école secondaire ou un cégep/collège au Québec, dont la langue maternelle est le français, et dont les parents sont nés au Québec.

• Les entrevues peuvent se dérouler dans tout endroit où l'étudiant se sent à l'aise : à la maison, dans un café, à la bibliothèque, ou au département de sciences des religions de l'Université Concordia (2050 Mackay).

• L'entrevue sera enregistrée sur support audio (minidisque) et sera ensuite transcrite par la chargée de projet. Si à n'importe quel moment mon enfant décide d'interrompre sa participation à l'étude, l'entrevue sera détruite.

• L'enregistrement audio sera conservé à l'Université Concordia dans un classeur et un local barré, et seuls la chargée de projet et le coordonnateur de l'étude y auront accès.

• Les propos de mon enfant seront traités de manière strictement confidentielle; dans les rapports de recherche qui seront produits à la suite de cette étude, mon enfant sera identifié par un pseudonyme, et toute information personnelle (tels que détails géographiques et solaires) sera modifiée.

• On attend de mon enfant qu'il réponde honnêtement et aux mieux de ses connaissances et opinions aux questions qui lui seront posées. Il/elle aura toujours la possibilité de refuser de répondre à n'importe quelle des questions.

• L'entrevue dure généralement entre une heure et une heure trente.

• La probabilité de tout risque associée à ce projet est minime. Néanmoins, afin de protéger mon enfant de tout désagrément, la participation à cette étude sera entièrement confidentielle.

C. PARTICIPATION

• Je comprends que moi ou mon enfant pouvons retirer notre consentement et interrompre la participation à l'étude à tout moment, et ce, sans aucune conséquence négative.

• Je comprends que la participation de mon enfant à cette étude est CONFIDENTIELLE, c'est-à-dire que les chercheurs connaissent leur identité, mais ne la révéleront à personne, y compris les professeurs et la direction de l'école du participant. Afin de garantir une pleine liberté de parole aux participants, leurs propos ne seront pas partagés avec leurs parents.

• Je comprends que les données de cette étude seront publiées, mais que toute information personnelle sera changée afin de protéger l'identité des participants.

• Je comprends le but de la présente étude; je sais qu'elle ne comprend pas de motif caché dont je n'aurais pas été informé.

J'AI LU ATTENTIVEMENT CE QUI PRÉCÈDE ET JE COMPRENDS LA NATURE DE L'ENTENTE. JE CONSENS LIBREMENT ET VOLONTAIREMENT À CE QUE MON ENFANT PARTICIPE À CETTE ÉTUDE.

NOM DE L'ENFANT (caractères d'imprimerie):_____

NOM DU PARENT (caractères d'imprimerie) : _____

SIGNATURE DU PARENT _____ DATE _____

Pour toute **question ou commentaire**, vous pouvez contacter la chargée de projet, Marie-Paule Martel-Reny, 514-568-xxxx, ou par courriel à etudejeunes@gmail.com. Vous pouvez aussi rejoindre le chercheur responsable de cette étude, Michel Despland, au 514-848-2424, poste 2076, ou par courriel à desplan@alcor.concordia.ca

Si vous avez des questions concernant vos droits en tant que participants à l'étude, veuillez contacter madame Monica Toca, conseillère en éthique à la recherche à l'Université Concordia, au 514-848-2425, poste 7481 ou par courriel à mtoca@alcor.concordia.ca

Aimeriez-vous être tenu au courant des résultats de cette étude lors de publications ou de colloques? Si oui, veuillez nous laisser vos coordonnées.

Adresse : _____

Courriel : _____

APPENDIX 7

LIST OF RESOURCES GIVEN TO PARTICIPANTS

Liste de ressources

Tous ces services sont gratuits et confidentiels. N'hésite pas à les contacter si tu en as besoin.

Tel-Jeunes

1 800 263-2266

http://teljeunes.com/accueil. Service anonyme d'écoute professionnel, confidentiel et gratuit. 24 heures sur 24, 7 jours sur 7.

Agressionsexuelle.com

http://www.agressionsexuelle.com

Aide pour les jeunes victimes de violence sexuelle.

Jeunesse, j'écoute

1-800-668-6868

http://www.jeunessejecoute.ca/Teens/Home.aspx

Services anonymes et confidentiels de counselling et d'information en anglais et en français, tous les jours, 24 heures sur 24. Consulation téléphonique ou en ligne.

ZAP-Prévention

(514) 376-4666

problème de taxage

Gai Écoute

Grand Montréal : 514 866-0103

http://www.gai-ecoute.qc.ca

Ado-Cause

(514) 5 SACADO

http://www.ado-cause.ca/

Clinique des jeunes St-Denis

(514) 844-9333

CLSC Métro

(514) 934-0354

1801, boulevard De Maisonneuve Ouest

Clinique L'actuel

(514) 524-1001

http://www.cliniquelactuel.com

Spécialisée dans le traitements des MTS et plus spécialement du VIH

GLOSSARY

AVSEC: Acronym for "Animateur à la vie spirituelle et à l'engagement communautaire". Their job is to

> "assumer le service non confessionnel mais obligatoire d'animation spirituelle et d'engagement communautaire dans les écoles primaires et secondaires. À cette fin, elle élabore et met en œuvre des programmes d'activités à caractère communautaire, humanitaire, spirituel et religieux. Elle accompagne individuellement ou collectivement les élèves qui ont besoin d'approfondir un questionnement ou un cheminement précis ou de solutionner des difficultés liées à leur vie spirituelle ou à leur engagement communautaire." (L'emploi de A à Z, 2013)

CEGEP: Acronym for *Collège d'études générales et professionelles*. This institution, unique to Quebec, takes the place of grade 12 and university freshman year in most North American school systems. Cegeps offer pre-university programmes (2 years) that prepare students for undergraduate university programmes, and technical programmes (3 years) that allow students to move on directly to the job market.

CSDM: Acronym for *Commission scolaire de Montréal*, formerly known as *Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal*. It is Quebec's largest school, managing schools based in the centre of the island of Montreal, and as such is one of the province's school boards where the student body is among the most diverse.

ERC: Acronym for *Ethics and Religious Culture* programme. Lauched in 2008, this program, compulsory in all Quebec primary and secondary schools, replaced the Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction, Protestant Moral and Religious Education, and Moral Education programs that had been taught until then. It endeavours to build harmonious social relations by giving students opportunities to

> acquire or consolidate, if applicable, an understanding of how all individuals are equal in terms of right and dignity; learn to reflect on issues responsibly; explore, depending on his/her age, different ways in which Québec's religious heritage is present in his/her immediate or broader environment; learn about elements of other religious traditions present in Québec; grow and develop in a society in which different values and beliefs coexist. (MELS 2014)

Laïcité: A French term that has become commonly used in Quebec, it is often translated as "secular" though the two terms do not are not exactly align. Laïcité is inspired by the French concept that became popular after the *instauration de la laïcité* in France, in 1905. It designates a philosophy of the state where the latter is neutral from religion, and is often confused with secularisation, which can be defined as the social process of gradual dissociation from religion. However, not all scholars agree with this definition; for instance, Charles Taylor is

> "critical of the view that secularization designates the decline of religion or the retreat of religion from public spaces, and rejects what he calls 'the subtraction thesis,' a view which sees secularism as loss. […] In his view religious faith "appears as one among several reasonable and possible alternatives" (p. 197). Here the secular is not the absence of religion or a separation from religion, but rather an opening of "new avenues of faith" (Taylor 210)". (Morris, 2014)

Polyvalente: In Québec, *polyvalentes* are large public high school that welcome between 2000 and 3000 students and offer both general and vocational training. Although the term is no longer officially in use (as of 2001), it is still used in popular speech. I use it here to differentiate from smaller high schools that often offer a specialized program.

Public school (*école publique*): In Québec, public schools are fully funded by the government, and must welcome all students regardless of grades and financial means.

Private school (*école privée*): In Québec, the term "private school" refers to schools that are partly funded by the provincial government (up to 50%), but where parents must pay tuition fees that are significantly higher than in public schools, and that screen students through entrance examinations. These schools generally have a specific educational project, and are often religion-based.

Reasonable accommodation (*accommodement raisonnable*): This principle of law that applies mainly to work environments is based on Canadian and Quebec jurisprudence. It recognizes that exceptions to certain rules can be applied in order to avoid discrimination, as long as both parties (usually an employer and an employee) both agree on its application, and as long as the accommodation does not break existing laws. Resonable accommodation thus "désigne une forme d'assouplissment visant à combattre la discrimination causée par l'application stricte d'une norme qui, dans certains de ses effets, porte atteinte au droit à l'égalité d'un citoyen". (Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles, 3).