

***Journeying to the Father: Researching Faith and Identity
in a Contemporary Catholic Youth Movement in Canada***

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Abstract

The New Evangelization (NE) is a recent development in the Catholic Church. It seeks to preserve, restore, and re-invigorate Catholic religious identity in the face of what it perceives to be a dominance of secular values. This proselytization program instigates personal religiosity among adherents in the hopes of forming an evangelical Catholic identity. However, little is known of the processes and discourses of Catholic evangelization, especially among young people in Canada. This thesis responds to the main question: *How are young people engaging and interpreting evangelical modes of religious and socio-political identity, and integrating or negotiating this worldview within a pluralist Canadian society?* This research, therefore, focuses on an annual summer Catholic youth conference called *Journey to the Father* as a case study that sheds light on the dissemination of Catholic perspectives, the development of a personal and charismatic religious experience, and the instigation of an evangelical impetus in young Catholic participants. Using participant observation and semi-structured interviews with both the adult organizers (ages 18 and older) and young participants (ages 13–18) in *Journey to the Father*, this research examines the processes of identity formation through affective and experiential religiosity, and the formulation of a minority identity politics among young Catholics within a diverse Canada. It also takes into account the correlation between an evangelical Catholic worldview and young people, spelling out different reflections on religion and society, experience and agency. This research emphasizes how young people *negotiate* (i.e. appropriate or negate) evangelical Catholic values and charismatic religious experience when forming their social, political, and religious identities, in order to gain an understanding of their socio-political position within a diverse Canadian society.

Sommaire

La *Nouvelle évangélisation* est un nouveau mouvement dans l'Église catholique. Ce programme de prosélytisme recherche à obtenir la reconnaissance de l'identité religieuse dans une société laïcisée en incitant une religiosité personnelle parmi les adhérents avec l'espoir de former une identité catholique évangélique. Cependant, on connaît peu les processus et les discours de l'évangélisation catholique, particulièrement chez les jeunes au Canada. Cette thèse répond à la question principale, *comment est-ce que les jeunes s'engagent et interprètent les modes évangéliques de l'identité religieuse et sociopolitique, et l'intégration ou la négociation de cette vision du monde dans une société canadienne pluraliste?* Cette recherche se concentre donc sur une conférence d'été annuelle catholique pour les jeunes, appelée *Journey to the Father* (Cheminement vers le Père), comme une étude de cas qui observe la diffusion des valeurs morales catholiques, la production des expériences religieuses charismatiques, et l'instigation d'un élan évangélique avec les jeunes participants catholiques. En utilisant l'observation des participants et les entrevues semi-structurées avec les organisateurs adultes (18 ans et plus) et les jeunes participants au *Journey to the Father* (13 à 18 ans), cette recherche examine les processus de formation d'identité par le biais de l'expérience religieuse affective et la formulation d'une politique d'identité minoritaire avec les jeunes catholiques au sein d'un Canada diversifié. Elle tient aussi compte de la corrélation entre la vision du monde catholique évangélique et les jeunes, expliquant clairement une variété de réflexions sur la religion et la société, l'expérience et l'agentivité. Cette recherche met l'accent sur la façon dont les jeunes gens *négocient* les valeurs catholiques évangéliques (c.-à-d., appropriées ou déniées) et l'expérience religieuse charismatique lors de la formation de leurs identités sociales, politiques et religieuses afin de comprendre leur position sociopolitique dans la société canadienne diverse.

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Dedication:

This thesis is dedicated to *mon papa*, Rémi Gareau, who taught me to bridge the gaps of difference between different people, and make peace with the world. Love you and miss you.

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Chapter 1 — More than a *Jesus Camp*: Researching Religious Experience and Socio-Political Identity for Catholic Youth

1. Experiencing *Jesus Camp*: Controversies and Confusion over Political Socialization and Evangelical Youth

In the Fall of 2006, a group of friends and I gathered at the central campus at Concordia University in Montreal to watch a new documentary called *Jesus Camp* (Papantonio et al., 2006), which followed three teenagers attending a Protestant Evangelical bible camp in the United States called *Children on Fire*. The documentary was publicized as being a balanced effort to capture the religious socialization of young campers into American Evangelical Christian values. As a person studying religion and interested in religious conservatism, I thought this would be an educational moment, especially given the context that I was living in. It was a time of intense political strife in the US characterized as a *Culture War* between liberal and conservative socio-political factions. It was an era dominated by political conservatism in the US, which seemed unapologetically aligned with Evangelical Christianity.

Jesus Camp was a rare exposition into the discourse and socio-political values of the Evangelical Christian political Right. The camp activities were strongly political, with the deliberate intention to inculcate conservative religious and political values among the young campers. Issues like abortion and Pro-Life, patriotic American values and views against the Islamic terrorist threat, and anti-homosexuality sentiment was front and centre, unapologetically present as part of

the evangelical paradigm. There was even a moment when a cardboard cutout of George W. Bush was brought out for the young people to stretch their hands out over, praying for the Christianization of America in order to safeguard the future. The camp organizers in the documentary were very forward with their conservative message, stating that this generation of young people needed to stand up for Christian values, otherwise they would lose the war for America. Thus young people were to become the warriors for the Army of God.

Beyond the intensely religious actions of the adults, I was completely fascinated by the young people. The three teenage leads in the documentary were absolutely devoted to God and the evangelical political paradigm. The film looked into each of their private lives, portraying their experiences of homeschool education, proselytizing “non-believers,” and even reflecting on the morality of dancing to evangelical heavy metal—with a particularly fun scene of a gangly young blond girl thrashing about her bedroom to squelching guitars and guttural vocals. These young people were talking about the impact of religion and how this affected their identities. At the camp, things were even more intense. Many of the camp activities, if not focused on the political agenda, revolved around highly emotional Christian ritual and prayer activities. These consisted of deep prayer led by the adults, where the young people were moved into charismatic religious expressions, like weeping, laughing, speaking in tongues, and swooning or passing out. The youth were asked to let themselves go completely to Jesus Christ, and to let the Holy Spirit expunge their sense of sin or any conflicted feelings in order to fully embrace their

personal relationship to God. And this was done with tremendous pathos and spiritual resonance amongst the youth.

As a student of Religious Studies, I was immediately struck by the cultural exposition of the documentary and the strangeness of this kind of Christian ritual. Having grown up in a French-Canadian and Catholic village in rural Saskatchewan, I had never seen anything like it in terms of political and religious engagement. As a child, I had witnessed charismatic religiosity in the Catholic Church, like speaking in tongues, charismatic healing, and swooning in the Spirit. However, this was not representative of the “normal” Catholic experience. For people in my village, religion (more precisely, Catholicism) was a cultural engagement related to identity, like language, in that it largely served to shape who you were against different people from surrounding villages—i.e. you were a French-Canadian Catholic and not a German-speaking Mennonite or a Ukrainian-speaking Orthodox Christian. The religious content of *Jesus Camp* coupled with the discursive political engagement was therefore fascinating to me. However, as the lights in the theatre brightened and the crowd settled into a Q&A panel, the tension in the room was palpable. People around me started to call out that this was a clear example of brainwashing, that these young people had no choice in the matter, being emotionally manipulated into joining the ideological political apparatus that was Protestant evangelicalism. Other people called out the danger of mixing religion with politics in that this would inevitably breed intolerance. The consensus was that these American Evangelicals, as portrayed in *Jesus Camp*, were completely misguided in their views of the

environment, religious diversity, and gender and sexual diversity, and were purporting a distorted patriotism that ultimately represented a social and political threat to the wellbeing of democratic, global citizens. The message was that not only was the religious culture at this camp wrong, it was dangerous.

Caught up in the wave of critique and indignation, I could not help but resonate with the crowd's responses. These were good points being made. American politics seemed, at the time, to be dominated and manipulated by the Evangelical Christian Right, with President Bush at the helm openly invoking religion in his political discourse. Montreal seemed to me like a liberal bastion on the fringe of political culture in North America, and this documentary was the warning clouds of a conservative religious political domination increasingly mounting on the horizon. *How could we not see this as impending doom?!* As these emotions washed over me, I looked over to my friend and found her crying. Surprised, I asked her what was wrong. She confided in me, saying that she was raised in a mixed religious family—Christian and non-Christian—in the US. She had participated in a camp like this when she was young, though in a different Christian denomination. Her tears were not related to memories of religious brainwashing or socio-political manipulation. Rather, she was caught up in the moment of watching the experiences and emotions of the young people, which evoked her memories of the rich, emotional, transcendental religious experiences of her youth. Her nostalgia was in stark contrast to the tension that surrounded us because, for her, only the religious experience mattered. I was left to ponder the intersections of politics and religion in

the social and political sphere related to conventional society, while the screen flashed with the different transcendental experiences of these little mystics.

2. Evangelical Contexts in Canada: Proselytizing Young People

Yah I go to church, big deal? And then I go to *Jesus Camp* in the summer, what's the big deal?!

(Erika, youth: age 16)

Watching the *Jesus Camp* documentary in this setting had a multi-layered effect, which ultimately served as the point of departure for this doctoral research on evangelical discourse within the Catholic Church and the contentious role of religion in Canadian society today. This experience raises three reflections on religion and identity: 1) “conservative” religious and political socialization through the dissemination of values among young people; 2) the response to the politicization of religion in Western democracies largely dominated by social and political values defined by “secularism”; and 3) understanding that religious experience (rational and emotional) is multifaceted and nuanced, providing an important means to inculcating social and political identity, but remaining an indefinite variable that has tremendous influence on people’s lives.

The *Jesus Camp* documentary offers interesting reflections and raises some important questions for this research, but it remains a document of the Protestant Evangelical perspective on religion in the US. Though Canada retains a distinct historical and socio-political identity from the US, both countries nevertheless share a common heritage regarding a Christian hegemony. As Lori Beaman (2003, 2013)

explains, against the perception of a drastic decline in religious identity in the US and Canada, the American situation still reflects a Protestant hegemony—and a joint Protestant/Catholic hegemony in Canada—that dominate the contours of national identity. In both countries, Christian values and worldview remain pervasive within governance structures, different epistemologies, and societal norms (Andersen, 2014; Beaman, 2013; Beckford, 2012; Beyer, 2013a; Bramadat, 2009; Brown, 2006; Sullivan, 2009). Though both countries assert secularism as an important value in operationalizing political neutrality in the social and political sphere (i.e. governance and epistemology), Christianity remains an underlying, defining value for the American and Canadian body politic.

The dual influence of religious identification and secularism causes a sense of confusion or ambivalence about the definition and viability of religious identity. We have a situation where religion is understood as being part of the historical identity of a nation, but is currently unjustifiable in terms of the public expression of a decidedly non-religious perspective related to national identity. This ambiguity is clearly evident in the *Jesus Camp* documentary, but can the same be said about the wider Canadian context? One important case that points to this struggle between religion and secularism is that of *S.L. v. Commission scolaire des Chênes*, more colloquially known as the “Drummondville case” in Quebec in 2011. This case involves the contentious implementation of the *Ethics and Religious Culture* (ERC) education program in the Quebec school system in 2008–2009. The ERC was mandated to replace religious denominational education with a non-doctrinal

approach to teaching about religion in pluralist public school settings. This course sought to teach about all religions equally so as to instil in Quebec youth an attitude of tolerance to difference, preparing them to live in a pluralist and diverse world (Morris, 2011). Though there are more controversies surrounding the implementation and effectiveness of the ERC (e.g. the Loyola Catholic High School controversy in Montreal), the biggest complaint was raised in Drummondville by Catholic parents who wanted their children to be exempt from participating in the ERC, citing their right to religious freedom. Their claim was that it was unconscionable that their children participate in the ERC as “religious instruction.” The school and the provincial court of Quebec denied them the exemption, stating the mandatory nature of course. The parents appealed the verdict and the case went before the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court overturned the parents’ case on a technicality, stating that the ERC did not impinge on their capacity to transmit religious identity to their children and claiming that the state was not *teaching* religion, it was teaching *about* religion—i.e. education over indoctrination (Hunter, 2012). The parents were disappointed with the verdict and are now without recourse for excusing their children from participating in the ERC.

One of the strongest voices of opposition to the ERC with regards to the Drummondville case was the *Evangelical Fellowship of Canada* (EFC), which is an assembly of political associations of different Protestant Evangelical communities from across Canada. Though the Drummondville case related to Catholic parents and their perspective, the EFC was interested in the struggle over the recognition of

Christian concerns and Christian identity in public institutions, like schools. They produced a document of frequently asked questions (FAQ) and answers in response to this case (The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 2011). This FAQ sheet spells out the EFC's social and political view, incorporating the language associated with liberal values of tolerance and equality while asserting a conservative religious worldview. In this document, the EFC spelled out their main concern, that the Supreme Court was impinging on their sense of religious freedom as evangelical Christians, and thus, they assert, was morally exclusivist. One telling statement was EFC's worry that "True religion will stand only on the same footing as ancient mythologies if taught in the classroom according to the ERC curriculum" (2011: 4). The EFC felt that the ERC's mandate to equalize all religions for the sake of engaging in tolerant discourse could not be affirmed in good conscience. Instead, the EFC advocated that the ERC be eliminated altogether in order to accommodate Christians and non-Christians alike:

Canada's longstanding tradition of education from a Judaeo-Christian foundation has bred a vibrant, multicultural nation known for its acceptance of others and tolerance for differing opinions and religious beliefs. To compel tolerance is to dispense with it. Every religion—including no religion—is, in essence, exclusive. Compelling tolerance by state-mandated compulsory religious and moral education can only be accomplished by violating the freedom of religion and conscience of each religiously devout individual. (2011: 6)

The message is that the best way to accommodate everyone in a diverse social and political setting (i.e. multicultural Canada) is for *no one* to receive special treatment. In other words, within the sphere of public education dominated by secular values, teaching religion should not be part of the public curriculum.

Though it would seem the EFC is parroting the same values asserted by the proponents for the ERC, the EFC asserts that, in the Drummondville case, the rights of Catholic parents to be recognized for their religious (Christian) identities was denied by a social and political system that emphasizes the liberal values of tolerance and equality, which relates to the dominant discourse of secularism. The EFC emphasizes the intolerance involved in not gaining accommodation from a government program designed to emphasize tolerance and recognition. This “cultural clash” points to interesting internal dynamics around the hegemony of secular values and its overall effect on political discourse, looking specifically at Christian conservative discourse. The argument is further developed when the EFC claims that dismantling the ERC program would better serve the value of social equality because asserting that religious traditions are *different but equal* is unacceptable and disingenuous to the reality of these traditions. It is significant to note in this instance how the EFC is operationalizing core liberal values in order to gain social and political recognition for conservative, evangelical religious perspectives and identities.

This issue becomes more complex when looking at the Catholic context in Canada. As seen in the examples of *Jesus Camp* and the *S.L. v. Commission scolaire des Chênes* case, Protestant Evangelicals provide very clear delineations and approaches towards political recognition for religious identity in secular society. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, does not have the same level of public profile or political engagement. I could not find any commentary from institutions within the Catholic

Church on the Drummondville case—either from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops or from the Vatican. The only exception to this is Ian Benson (2012) who provides a highly technical legal analysis of the case and its relevance to a Catholic perspective, but nothing comparable to the EFC pamphlet. This lack of response from the Catholic Church is remarkable because, again, the parents at the centre of the Drummondville case were Catholic. However, this is not to say that the Catholic Church is politically inactive. There is a tremendous amount of literature both from the Vatican (The Holy See, 2015) and from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (2015) representing significant political arguments against abortion, euthanasia, contraception, corporal punishment, etc. The sense is that the Catholic Church simply is *not as visible or as vocal* as Evangelical Protestants on the issue of gaining social and political recognition for religious identity. Is this true?

The experience and examples of both *Jesus Camp* and the EFC response to the Drummondville case raised, for me, important questions about the relevance and presence of evangelical discourses in the Canadian social and political context. What is the role of religion in the Canadian social context? How has secularism informed or shaped the public sphere in Canada? How have political liberal values come to define public opinion regarding the separation of Church and State? How has secularism affected the contours of religious identity in Canada? How prominent are evangelical discourses in the political field in this country, and have evangelical values affected Catholics? Do Catholics share the same worldview as the Protestant Evangelicals in *Jesus Camp*? What are the common values and discourses between

Protestant and Catholics, and where do they differ? Do Catholics even use the same language as Evangelicals?

This lacuna of institutional engagement on behalf of the Catholic Church in the Drummondville case is indicative of largely unexplored aspects of Catholic culture and perspectives as they relate to the social and political context in Canada. Catholicism is a dominant religious organization in Canada. According to the last reliable dataset on religion in Canada from 2001 (Government of Canada, 2005), there were 12,936,905 Catholics out of a population of 29 million—note that the current population in Canada is 35.5 million (Government of Canada, 2014). In 2001, Catholics were nearly 41% of the Canadian population. It is fair to say that there are a significant number of Canadians who identify themselves as Catholic. But, this large demographic is largely unknown, other than through political advocacy in the abovementioned public debates. How do Catholics feel about their religious identities within the social and political diversity of Canadian society? What do they think of the dominance of liberal, secular values in Canada? Is there an awareness of evangelical discourse in the Catholic Church? If so, how does this operate in terms of the institution and among the laity? And more significantly, how are young Catholics being engaged and how are they engaging in this socio-political discourse?

These questions ultimately point to blind spots in the academic literature regarding religion and identity in a secular and diverse Canada, the prominence and influence of evangelical discourses in the Catholic Church, and their impact on the

formation of socio-political identity among young Canadians. This reflection on the form and substance of Catholic evangelization served as the impetus for this doctoral research focusing on youth and how they negotiate competing social and political values in the formation of their identities.

3. Thesis Structure: *Journey to the Father* as a Case Study

The *Drummondville Case* and the EFC response raise important reflections on the socio-political reality of religion and identity in the public sphere, and bring up questions on the salience of evangelical discourse in the Catholic Church. Though as previously discussed, there is no specific response from the Catholic Church to the Drummondville case on the question of the religious socialization of Catholic youth, there are many Catholic evangelization movements in Canada in operation today that are specifically geared towards teenagers. To name a few, there is Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO), a proselytization organization that has student groups in universities across Canada (Catholic Christian Outreach, 2015), and NET Ministries, which organizes both travelling and parish teams of young missionaries seeking to challenge young Catholics to become more religiously involved (NET Ministries of Canada, 2015). Both organizations look to engage young Catholics in personal religious experience so as to inform a more active or engaged religious identity. These organizations represent a nascent movement in the Catholic Church called the *New Evangelization* (NE).

The idea of “evangelicalism” is a recent phenomenon in the Catholic Church. Judging by the work done by CCO and NET Ministries, we can infer that the NE

program represents a political force that ultimately seeks to gain recognition for Catholic religious identity in a society perceived as dominated by secular values. The NE promotes an evangelical religiosity that encourages a personal engagement with Jesus Christ, through the Catholic Church, with the hope of engendering a strong evangelical impetus among Catholic adherents, especially young people. However, there remain gaps in terms of gaining a clear understanding of the NE in Canada and around the globe. There is a lack of academic literature, and a clear understanding of the history and rise of the NE. Little is known of the NE in terms of proselytization and the discourse through which Catholics are being engaged. Finally, with regard to evangelization work like CCO and NET, how are young people being *engaged by* and *engaging with* evangelical discourses regarding their religious identities? Ultimately, the presence of the NE and religiously active, evangelical Catholic youth within the public landscape in Canada raises questions about the dynamics and contours of Canadian diversity, and the role of religion in shaping modern identity. These issues feed into the main question of this thesis: *How are young people engaging and interpreting evangelical modes of religious and socio-political identity, and integrating or negotiating this worldview in a diverse Canadian society?*

In order to examine the deployment of Catholic evangelical discourse and its impact on identity formation in youth, I centred my thesis work on a single case study, an annual weekend Catholic youth conference called *Journey to the Father*. This was a three-day conference that took place in village called Saint Raphael's, located 30 minutes outside of Cornwall, Ontario. *Journey to the Father* ran for 15

years between 1999 and 2013, with the exception of 2002 (World Youth Day in Toronto). It was based on the Steubenville Catholic Conferences, which still operate at the Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio, US. The Steubenville conferences are big events with up to 2,000 young people participating. They have inspired 18 regional conferences across the US, as well as ones in Halifax and Toronto; the latter was just recently initiated in 2014 (Steubenville Conferences, 2015). *Journey to the Father* was relatively small, hosting an average of 300 students annually, with 500 at its peak in the mid to late 2000s.

Journey to the Father was operated by a core group of roughly 200 volunteers from the Alexandria/Cornwall Catholic diocese (i.e. seniors groups, Knights of Columbus, individual young people, etc.) and attracted young participants between 13 and 18 years old from across Southern and North-Eastern Ontario, and Western Quebec. Following the same structure each year, the weekend activities presented the possibilities of an engaged Catholic identity through skits, sessions, and music (plus a talent show), a highly affective charismatic experience through Eucharistic Adoration followed by Reconciliation, and a consolidation of these experiences through an open-mic session and Altar Call on the last day. These activities were all in the hope of instilling an evangelical impetus in young participants. The structure of *Journey to the Father* offers much in terms of how adult organizers wish to disseminate the message of Catholic evangelization against the various ways in which young people interpret and appropriate these messages. In 2013, after 13 years, *Journey to the Father* came to a close due to the factors of decreasing

participation, the fatigue of organizers and volunteers (many of whom had been volunteering for the full 15 year run of the conference), and the inauguration of Steubenville Toronto. At this point, in 2016, there is no longer any online presence for *Journey to the Father*, and the organizational team have turned their attention elsewhere, to youth ministry in their parishes and diocese, Alexandria-Cornwall. The termination of the conference does raise questions about the stability and effectiveness of *Journey to the Father* as a venture as well as questioning the efficiency of the NE program in general. Nevertheless, *Journey to the Father* offers insight into the intersections of religious discourse, religious experience, and the formation of evangelical Catholic identity among young people.

Journey to the Father as a case study helps us to understand the dynamics of Catholic evangelization as it centres on a specific location of religious revivalism and socialization, outlining a description of the culture and worldview that it embodies. The basic premise for the NE in terms of evangelical values and perspectives in the Catholic Church is: 1) a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, 2) moderated through the moral and ritual prerogative of the institutional Catholic Church. *Journey to the Father* is a platform in which young Catholics could encounter NE values and perspectives as well as affective and charismatic religious experiences. *Journey to the Father* serves as a means to capture the multilayered messages of evangelization from the adult organizers, as well as providing a platform for young people to spell out their reflections on religion and society, experience and agency. Therefore, this case study has provided two related reflections on the inculcation of

evangelical identity: 1) the perception and promotion of evangelical Catholic identity by the adult organizers; and 2) how young participants embody and operationalize these values in forming their socio-political identities.

This thesis focuses identity formation as its central concept. As will be further developed throughout this work, theories of social and identity formation are tethered to an epistemological subjectivity, which necessitates a deeper understanding of how the individual is impacted by multiple forces of meaning. Identity has become a hub where the individual can be accounted for in the analysis of different social systems and competing messages about how to form the *self* and how to engage the *other*. This research is informed by the idea that Catholic youth are more likely to invest themselves in the Catholic evangelization program by way of highly affective and emotional experiences like those happening at events like *Journey to the Father*. It is through such experiences that youth are able to generate a directed (or constructed) sense of Catholic identity that both drives their participation in the Catholic Church, and helps them understand and negotiate the social and political pluralism of the world in which they live. But this hypothesis is tempered by the nuances of how the adults promote evangelical Catholic values, and how the young participants in *Journey to the Father* encounter and appropriate or negate these messages and values.

Above and beyond the series of questions already raised, this thesis is guided and shaped by the following questions: What are the social and moral contours of Catholic identity promoted by the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father*? What

are the strategies taken to promulgate perspectives of Catholic evangelization among the young participants? How are young participants encountering these notions of Catholic identity? Which of the views of the participating youth diverge from the evangelical paradigm? How do evangelical Catholic youth negotiate their sense of *self* within a modern and diverse Canadian society? How is the *other* conceived (i.e. physical, social, and metaphysical/symbolic conceptualizations), and in what way is the other negotiated or negated? How does this affect young people's social and political outlook in contrast to the general values of Canadian society?

This thesis aims to examine the motivation of adults who proselytized Catholic youth through *Journey to the Father*. It also seeks to explore the worldviews of the youth who participated in the event, who negotiated the variety of socio-political and religious values. This research centers on a specific location of religious evangelization, investigating the culture that was generated as well as seeking out the lived experience and worldview of the young participants. Overall, this research provides an insight into a conservative Christian phenomenon of evangelization within the Catholic Church that remains, as already stated, largely unobserved and understudied. This case study approach to the Catholic evangelization program, the NE through *Journey to the Father*, will provide an understanding of the different processes of identity formation among a varied group of evangelical Catholic adults and youth, *Journey to the Father's* effects on socio-political engagement of its different participants, and a reflection on different ways in which identity is formed in the Canadian context.

This thesis is made up of seven chapters organized into three sections: 1) an ethnographic description of the *Journey to the Father* conference; 2) a methodology and literature review; and 3) data exposition and analysis. Under the first section, this thesis begins with Chapter 2, *Journey into the Experience of Catholic Evangelization*, which outlines a composite narrative covering the three years of participant observation (2011–2013). This serves to introduce the conference setting, and outline the major themes of *Journey to the Father* in order to provide background and a starting point for the discussion of how young people are being engaged in Catholic evangelization discourses and how they negotiate the weekend experience.

The second section begins with Chapter 3, *Research Design, Methodology, and Theory*, which serves as an exposition of the research design and sets up an analytical framework regarding theories of social construction, socio-political identity formation, and approaches to studying religion and young people. This chapter provides direction for the literature review as well as a basis for the overall analysis for the thesis. Chapter 4, *The New Evangelization in a “Secular Age”* covers the literature relevant to the overall social and political dynamics at play at *Journey to the Father*. This means an exposition of the prominence of the secularism narrative in shaping normative society, and its effect, the misrecognition of religion. The discussion transitions into a description of the shape of Catholic conservatism throughout the modern era (17th–20th centuries), the sea changes of the Second Vatican Council (mid-20th century), and the recent rise of the NE (late 20th century).

This discussion serves to flesh out the information and the tone of evangelical discourse in the Catholic Church to add context to the events of *Journey to the Father*.

The third and final section of this thesis includes two chapters that provide an exposition and analysis of the rich data collected through this research. Chapter 5, *Journey to the Father: Exploring Evangelical Experience and Religious Identity*, outlines the participants' perspectives and reflections on how religion is lived at home (i.e. in their families, in their church communities, and at school) and at *Journey to the Father*. This chapter focuses on the personal reflections and religious experiences of both adult organizers and young participants in *Journey to the Father*, looking to understand how these experiences inform individual and denominational identities, and gauge whether there is an impact on their identities. This discussion is followed by Chapter 6, *Journeying to the Father: Evangelical Impetus, Individual Engagement, and Catholic Identity*, which provides a description and analysis on two levels: 1) the proselytization of evangelical values and worldview (i.e. discursive engagement) of the adult organizers through *Journey to the Father*; and 2) young participants' perspectives on the impact of religious experience, operationalizing socio-political and religious values as part of forming Catholic identity, and reflections on living as engaged Catholics in Canada. This final chapter provides an understanding of how evangelical values and worldview shape Catholic identity today, focusing on the insight drawn from young people's experiences and perspectives. And finally, Chapter 7, entitled *A Catholic Evangelical Identity*

Confirmed: Conclusion, serves as a global analysis of the different elements raised in this thesis, ultimately asking whether this analysis can be generalized to other communities of Catholics engaged in the NE movement in different parts of the world.

This thesis is, first and foremost, an academic investigation of the NE, focusing specifically on the dynamic operation of proselytization within the specific context of *Journey to the Father*. This work is needed because there is no academic research on this movement, which has only recently come to dominate current expressions of Catholic identity in Canada and around the globe. As well, this thesis represents a new look at how religious groups perceive their marginalization and how they participate, engage, or establish their presence within a diverse Canadian social context through identity politics (i.e. an empowering approach that is usually reserved for socially and politically marginalized individuals, groups, communities, or cultures). And finally, this thesis is an exposition of the perspectives of “conservative” religious youth (i.e. evangelical Catholics) and how they negotiate the formation of their religious identities as social agents and not as “brainwashed” by the socialization project of evangelical Catholicism. Hopefully this thesis gives unique insight into a little known religious movement that is engaging young people within a diverse Canada.

Chapter 2 — Journey into the Experience of Catholic Evangelization: Composite Narrative and Exposition

Introduction:

Viewing the documentary film *Jesus Camp* provided me with a unique insight into evangelical influence and emotional religiosity among Protestant Evangelical youth in the United States. This became a motivational factor to find a research site in Canada where Catholic youth are engaged in similar evangelical political discourse and charismatic religious and ritual activity. I found an annual Catholic youth conference called *Journey to the Father*, located 30 minutes North-East of Cornwall, Ontario, where approximately 300 Catholic youth converge in a small village to experience God in a unique way, with the organizers hopes of affecting young people's commitments to their religious identity.

This chapter consists of a composite narrative that covers three years of participation observation performed at *Journey to the Father* between 2011 and 2013. While the conference retains the same format each year, its invited presenters, who lead the rituals, workshops, and talks, bring their own interpretations and messages. These presenters are religious lay people as well as priests and bishops. The overarching themes remain the same each year for the young participants: the Catholic Church is relevant to their lives; they have a choice to engage fully in the weekend; there is an underlying need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; and they must remain open to the possibility of conversion.

This chapter is organized into three sections, each of which describes a day of the conference and its intended experience and message. Each section provides a discursive backdrop to the analysis: 1) the message and tone of the Catholic evangelical discourse deployed at *Journey to the Father* (Friday night and Saturday); 2) the means through which personal charismatic religious experience is produced or performed at *Journey to the Father* (Saturday night); and 3) a summary of personal experiences from the conference and expectations for returning home (Sunday morning). The purpose of this chapter is to outline an exposition of how religious experience is produced at *Journey to the Father*, and how it encourages a personal relationship between the young Catholic participants and God.

1. An Engaging Journey: Faced with a “Different” Catholic Experience (Friday Night)

The road into farming country rolls with gentle movements. The pastoral landscape of early July is vibrant with symmetrical fields, lush pastures with grazing cattle, and dense wooded areas opening again and again onto quick vistas. On the last rise before my destination is an ancient and massive stone Catholic cathedral. Alone and without a roof, it stands sentinel over the countryside, and as the landmark for Saint Raphael’s, Ontario, the site of the annual Catholic youth conference *Journey to the Father*.

Upon my arrival, I am struck to see how the sleepy village on Highway 18, just 30 minutes North-East of Cornwall, has been transformed into a hub of buzzing activity. Along with the cathedral and Iona Academy Catholic elementary school, the usual attractions of Saint Raphael’s, three huge white tents now dot the grounds;

two are sleeping barracks (for boys and girls), and the third, the main venue for the weekend's activities. Volunteers zip by on golf carts with the fragments of conversation crackling through walkie-talkies and melting into the dust. People are everywhere, setting up tables and chairs, preparing food, and adjusting sound equipment.

In the week leading up to *Journey to the Father*, volunteers scramble to finish clearing the grounds, set up porta-potties, and lay down plastic matting in the sleeping tents. Electricians and plumbers make sure the basic infrastructure is working properly, like electricity for the main tent and working showers in the school. During this time, there is also a special Disciple Week where 8 to 15 participants between 16 and 18 years old, usually past participants of *Journey to the Father*, are led by the four Head Disciples in activities to help them deepen their faith, learn more about their roles at the conference, and organize events such as the theatre plays that run throughout the conference. Disciples act as mentors to help young people feel more at ease at the conference. Their presence is complemented by the Wannabes, young adults who, like the Disciples, act as mentors for the young participants, but are also short-term volunteers who help with food preparation and service, as well as guiding traffic. The dozens of Wannabes, with their mustard yellow T-shirts, are especially noticeable all over the grounds.

As buses and vans roll in from different areas of Ontario and Western Quebec, young people begin pouring out onto the field with their backpacks and sleeping bags, looking for direction. Chaperones lead clusters of six or seven youth

clad in matching t-shirts, while other groups of young people play Frisbee or volleyball out on the open lawn, or basketball in the school's parking lot. Youthful shouting and laughter erupt across the grounds as people fill the space. As the afternoon wears on, excitement for the weekend is palpable as we make our way to the main tent.

1.1. Overture and Awkwardness: Fidgeting before Christ

The music is loud, lively, and insistent. The house band, the Mustard Seeds, pump out Christian rock music about Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, calling on the audience to let go of their inhibitions and open up to a new experience. The music bangs through a space that can accommodate 500 people. White plastic chairs are organized in symmetrical rows to seat only 300, leaving a wing of green grass on one side. The rows of chairs are split by a wide aisle leading to a low stage and a high altar. Behind it hangs a large tapestry with a cornucopia and three banners speaking of the themes of the weekend: *patience*, *kindness*, and *mercy*. The atmosphere urges us to move, to open up, and to shed our discomforts and awkwardness.

The young participants stand in rows, exuding various levels of enthusiasm. Some are singing and clapping their hands to the rhythm, many are looking around the space, and others stand with arms crossed or hands in their pockets with cool postures of self-control. Disciples and Wannabes, clad in their matching yellow T-shirts, buzz their way through the crowd in an attempt to drum up enthusiasm. But not everyone is enthusiastically joining in. At the back of the tent where I stand are

five boys, fidgeting, each of them looking nervously at the other reflecting the general atmosphere of anxiety and reluctance to participate. After a few songs, the band leader looking at the crowd points to the Disciples and Wannabes, saying, “It looks as though they are ready to gang up on you, or something!” At this point, everyone is directed to participate by clapping and singing:

Our God is an awesome God
He reigns from heaven above
With wisdom pow’r and love
Our God is an awesome God!
(Chorus from “Awesome God” by Rich Mullins)

With each new song, I feel the tension ease and the excitement build in the audience. A giant wooden cross is ushered into the tent by six Wannabes, and at their head was a Scottish bagpiper dressed in full regalia. With a blast of the pipes, the cross is placed on the stage behind the altar. We are then treated to a theatre sketch about a nasty young character trying to take advantage of the tooth fairy. This sketch is the first episode in a play that will unfold throughout the conference. As our character is trying to swindle the tooth fairy out of her coin, I reflect on the slippery slope of bad behaviour and its negative effects on our lives.

As the cheers and clapping fill the space, our two MCs, dressed in white golf shirts, emerge on stage. A woman and man in their early 20’s, they are dynamic and easygoing, which puts the crowd further at ease. They tell personal stories to break the ice and let us know about the rules of conduct for the weekend. At the same time, the MCs stress that our participation at *Journey to the Father* matters, saying, “You only get out what you put in.” The man states that this weekend is to celebrate the

glory of God and that we should feel free to do whatever we want to make that happen. He says, “Don’t be afraid to yell, I LOVE YOU JESUS!” People around me chuckle. The MCs also speak of respect for property, for one another, and for people on stage telling their personal stories. The MCs also remind us to be open to God and to what he has to offer. The woman says, “Be open to the moment and not to get wrapped up with other concerns. Be open to hearing each other’s testimony, because it could be very similar to your experience.” Ultimately, the MCs are stressing that this is about being open to change: change in knowing ourselves, knowing others, and knowing God.

1.2. First Speaker: The Father’s Love

The first speaker is a middle-aged man with greying black hair who stalks the stage with great charisma and conviction, speaking of the idea of the Father’s love, of God’s love. He points out that the idea of God’s love is not abstract, but something real in our everyday lives. He says, “God’s love is not cosmic. God’s love is something real, true, and relevant in your lives.” He then points out how this idea is undermined in two ways. The first is that the word *love* is tossed around too casually. He says, “We love pizza, we love Justin Bieber, we love Kung Fu. Do we love God in this same way, at this same level?” He underscores that God’s love would be radically different. Secondly, Catholics today are suffering an identity crisis caused by an era of fracturing relativism and individualism. He notes, “The objective truth of the Catholic Church has been lost to this fragmentation. And that truth is God’s love. Catholics must become the beloved children of God.” The message is that God’s love is infinitely greater than what people can imagine because God is the father of

all creation, the father of humanity, and the source of all truth. He remarks, “When God looks at his human creation, all he can say is love.”

As the speaker moves across the edge of the stage, he poses the question, “Does the love of God really mean anything to me?” In response, he reminds us that if God’s love is not abstract, it must be personal. He then says, “For love to work, it has to be individual, it has to be personal, and it necessitates relationship.” He explains that what God is asking of us will lead to a paradigm shift, represented by a personal relationship with Christ. He is suggesting that over the course of the weekend, we will discover that God loves us personally, through other people, through the sacraments, through the speakers, and through personal reflections that will affect us heart, head, and soul. He claims, “This is not about groupthink,” and “God’s love needs to be proven” through religious experience and giving ourselves over to God’s will. This means opening our hearts and minds to the idea of God, to his presence in our lives and at this weekend conference. He beseeches us to see that “God cares about the details ... He cares about the thoughts, fears, anxieties that you may have at this weekend. Allow God into your lives to part of those details.” The lesson is that the details of our lives make things personal and make our relationship with God work.

Each young participant is thus faced with a choice at the very start of this literal *Journey to the Father*. The choice is to allow God’s presence through love within one’s mind, body, and soul. The speaker reminds us that love does not fall into our laps, it must be chosen. Choice is a fundamental element. He remarks, “You

can be forced to do anything under the sun, but you cannot be forced to love. Love must be chosen.” He goes on to explain that people can be forced to do things that might look like love, but the heart needs to be captured by love, and then says, “God is love.” Standing in the dimmed spotlight before the tapestry of God’s cornucopia, he concludes his talk with a prayer, stating, “God, you have given us the great gift of choice; we can chose you. I invite you to choose the Holy Spirit and to give God permission this weekend. Simply, *I give you permission.*” The talk concludes with the idea, swirling through the space, that we must allow ourselves to be stirred to God’s love, as an opportunity for deeper engagement and personal transformation.

1.3. The Second Speaker: The Mother’s Discipleship

The second speaker is a tall, thin priest in his mid-40’s, here to discuss the significance of the Virgin Mary in Catholic life. The first talk established that a relationship with God is personal, reciprocal, and based on a choice. The message was that we need to choose to let God into our lives so that we can become the best versions of ourselves, or as he claimed, “beloved children of God.” Our current speaker agrees with this perspective, asserting that to become the best versions of ourselves is to radiate the love of Jesus Christ, so that when people meet us, they too fall in love with God. Wearing a deep black cassock with a tight row of rounded, cloth-covered black buttons and punctuated by a starch-white, roman collar, the priestly speaker explains that in the Catholic Church there are a multitude of heroes of the faith, the Communion of Saints, who have, in their different ways, proved their

capacity to become the best versions of themselves in their relationship with God. He claims that the Virgin Mary, however, reigns supreme in all of these matters.

As he calmly swishes across the stage, the speaker explains that Mary is an effective mentor for every Catholic because she herself has sought to become the best version of herself. He states, “Mary learned to listen, to wait, to ponder, to imagine, to adapt, to make decisions, and develop good habits in the presence of her son Jesus. Jesus praised her for listening to the Father, acting on his word.” The message is that a relationship with the Father must come through the son, but in order to augment one’s relationship with the son, one should turn to Mary and the Catholic Church. However, he goes on to warn us that Marian devotional prayer, like reciting the rosary, “is not a jewel [i.e. something to be objectified and abstracted]; it is a map in becoming the best version of yourself.” When we as participants will later go to pray at the statue of the Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel in front of Iona Academy, our speaker will ask us to contemplate Mary’s perfect discipleship “by bearing witness to the different set of mysteries as she and Jesus experience joy, pain, loss, love, and glory.” The message that we are faced with is that Mary remains important in our lives as Christians because she was the first to say yes to God’s plan. Therefore, we are asked to imitate Mary, and to trust in her intercession and protection. In his closing prayer, the speaker asserts the vision of a deepening relationship with Christ, stating, “Let us pray the rosary together, and watch Mary and her son lead us down the road that leads us to the Father—that road being Jesus.”

Once the talks are over, the MCs come back to the stage to wrap things up. Soon after, the cross is carried out by the Wannabes in solemn silence, leading a procession down the long driveway to the school. The night is calm, and distilled by the reflective silence and the soft scrunching noises of many feet on gravel. We stop at the statue, a flaking gold-painted plaster cast of Mary with downcast eyes, gently holding the baby Jesus before her. There, Disciples lead the rosary in its usual call and response for 30 minutes. A singular voice calls out over the speaker, "Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee..." while the congregation calls back in a baritone hum, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen." Many of the young people murmur the prayer by heart or follow by reading it from the back of the information booklet, while some do not speak but stand in patient solemnity. As we call and respond, the horizon sheds its sunlight, becoming a deep azure, and the stars begin to shine brightly across a vaulted rural sky.

The rosary concludes around 10:00 PM, allowing free time where everyone mills around the parking lot and the book store/confection stand located in the school's gym. Every year, a chip truck rolls in on both Friday and Saturday evenings selling fries, hamburgers, and everyone's favourite, poutine. There are always long line-ups of both youth and adults. Some people play basketball, others strum guitar and sing, while chaperones chat near the edges of the circles of youth under their care. Along the side of the long driveway, there are four to six priests sitting in open-sided tents, performing the sacrament of Reconciliation. On Friday nights, I have

noticed that the lines for confession are always shorter than those for poutine. The priests receiving Reconciliation over the weekend are always in full priestly garb, like what they wear to church on Sundays. Each booth has a small table with a burning candle, and an empty chair facing the priest. It is a solemn but also inspiring, open, and inviting atmosphere. I am reminded of the amalgamation of themes for this Friday evening: choose to nourish a personal, face-to-face relationship with God the Father and the Son, through Mary and the Catholic Church.

2. Encountering the Person of Christ: Charismatic Experience and Religious Transformation (*Saturday*)

After an exciting first night in the open-area tents, the young people wake around 6:00 or 7:00 AM to walk slowly out to the cafeteria for breakfast, which is organized and cooked by volunteers. People queue into two lines where they are served the usual breakfast fare like eggs, bacon, potatoes, and toast, with juice, coffee, and tea to ease away the haze of the morning. There are places to sit within the cafeteria, with the option of eating at tables outside. There is a dull murmur sounding off the cafeteria walls.

Though most people are awake and eating at 7:00, some people are awake at the crack of dawn, 5:30 AM, to take showers in an ingeniously converted 50-foot semi-truck trailer that was designed with two sections for men and women. Some young people are drowsy from having stayed up all night in hushed and excited whispers, while others couldn't sleep due to minor infestations of frogs and ants, or the early bellowing of cows in the adjacent pasture. We walk in shuffling silence

over scraping gravel, murmuring in the early morning light, making our way to the main tent to begin the day's activities.

Between 8:20 and 9:00, the Mustard Seeds snap us to attention, playing rousing music to get us going. Songs like "Come Now is the Time to Worship" and "Today Is the Day" electrify the senses and remind me of the tone of this conference in that they seek to shake all complacency. The musical set is followed by the second part of the theatre skit from the previous night, which further develops the story of our misguided protagonist, who slips further from God with a negative attitude and bad behaviour towards family and friends. Between 9:00 and 10:30, the MCs guide us along and prepare us for Catholic Mass. This Mass is very significant because it is presided over by two bishops from the Alexandria/Cornwall diocese and the archbishop from the diocese of Ottawa. Also in attendance are priests from neighbouring parishes, the priest from Saint Raphael's church, and six seminarians who fill the role of altar servers. This Mass takes the usual form, with readings, a homily, and Eucharist. The Mass aims to amplify the message of the previous night: This is our opportunity to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that will change our lives.

2.1. Men's and Women's Sessions: The Means of Being a Catholic Man or Woman?

Following the Mass are the men's and women's breakout sessions. These are geared towards reflecting and discussing Catholic perspectives on gender in contemporary society. They are led by speakers in their 20's who use humour, popular cultural references, and personal experiences to reach their audience on the

subject of gender identity and the place of the Catholic Church in young people's lives. These talks are also punctuated with young people's testimonies, usually Disciples or Wannabes, who reflect on the meaning of leading a life of faith in the modern world.

The men's session opens with the question, "What does it mean to be a man?" The responses range from being happy, being a provider, having a legacy, being selfless, and being chivalrous, to having an Xbox. The question that follows is, "What does society say a man is?" The responses include that men need to get money, be responsible, accrue material possessions, impress girls, be virile, have sex, have a nice family, drink scotch and smoke cigars, be strong, leave home to serve one's country, feel no pain, feel no fear, and not express emotion. We are then asked if this is achievable. "Is it possible?" The answer is a resounding "*NO!*" For the session leader, it seems important to underscore that young men are trying to negotiate their masculine identity against a background of illusory social ideals about masculinity. The leader, a man in his 20's, stalwart and fashionably dressed in hip-hop apparel, speaks of how peer pressure and self-esteem are inextricably linked to experiences around things like partying, recreational alcohol and drug use, sex and sexuality, objectifying and lusting over women, dealing with popularity or lack thereof, material possessions, and bullying or being bullied. These experiences have an impact on self-esteem, which affects men's roles in community, society, and the world at large. He says, "We have to come to the conclusion that *we are enough.*"

The women's session is much like the men's in terms of using elements of popular culture (like the Dove soap ads on misperceptions of femininity) to highlight the issues women face in contemporary society. Like men, women are bombarded with messages of how to be, how to act, and how to think. The session leader, a soft-spoken university-educated woman in her mid-20's, notes that women are continually objectified in the media, treated as sexual objects in ads, degraded in popular music, and depicted in movies and television as catty, competitive, and unsupportive. Women are broadly and implicitly valued for their external beauty, which only deepens a distorted perception of themselves and the world around them. This leads to very detrimental issues of self-esteem, the struggle of "seeing that you are not beautiful enough." But the session leader counters this admonishment with a question: "How do we hear God's voice instead of hearing the voice of the world?"

The answer to the conundrum of modern life for Catholic men and women is to turn to Jesus Christ. In the men's session, Christ is illustrated and held as the ideal man. Therefore, if men put Christ at the centre of their lives—as a lens through which to see the self, filial and social relations, and the world—they will acquire the substance necessary to become true men, and circumvent what is perceived as a crisis of masculinity. The session leader says, "God has a battle to fight, and that is for our freedom." Christ shows men strength through weakness, acceptance through rejection, and happiness through suffering. Men can take this masculinity on only by accepting God's fellowship. The presenter concludes by saying, "You are in the

middle of this war and God has called you to fight. It is up to you to answer that call. To say yes or no. It is to be a man to accept that or refuse that. I challenge you guys to accept that.”

For women, Jesus Christ offers solace in countering the critical voice of the world that is both within and outside of themselves. The session leader says that there are but three truths for Catholic women in this regard: 1) I am loved by God as an individual and unique child of his creation; 2) I am beautiful through my spirit, a beauty that increases when God shines through me; and 3) I was created with a purpose, which is mine to discover, and should not be dictated by relationships with others but only through God. The presenter explains, “If I know that I am loved and that I am beautiful, I can be confident to go out into this world and live a life that God has intended for me to live. If I don’t feel loved and I don’t feel like I have worth, and I don’t feel like I have anything to offer the world, then I am going to just close myself in and shut myself down.” We are meant to understand just how important it is to instigate and maintain an active relationship with God so as not to become caught up in the destructive tempest of the various relationships of the wider world.

2.2. Choice Workshops: The Means of Connecting with God

After lunch, we have the choice of attending workshops that cover different themes. The purpose of these workshops is to inspire young people to communicate more effectively about their religious identity and to endow a more personal relationship with God. This year, there are three workshops offered around themes like *fear and suffering in your world* and *the God of technology—texting, tweeting,*

and Skyping with God. One presentation uses everyday objects, for instance, dissolving Styrofoam cups in nail polish remover, in order to point out the insatiable appetite for sin in the world, and suggests that realizing this fact leads to a happier life. But the themes all revolve around one idea: choosing God, and speaking about that choice through testimonials.

2.2.1. Choosing God:

The first workshop that I attend relates to the theme of choice. In heat of the early afternoon, a group of us sit sleepily in the main tent, clustered together in the largely empty space. Our presenter strides up on stage and speaks of the good news and the bad news of the world. “What is good news?” he asks the audience. “Good news is advantageous, but in ways that cannot be foreseen.” He goes on to say that the Catholic Church has good news that is worth hearing, and it will affect lives. But unfortunately, Catholics tend not to hear the good news, or see it. He says that Catholics see this engagement with God as a burden, something that is taken for granted. He then gives us the bad news. He says, “The bad news is that humanity has been alienated from God with the transgression of Adam and Eve.” He goes on to explain that in the Garden of Eden, the perfect relationship between humanity and God was broken by Adam and Eve’s actions, which allowed sin to come into the world. He reminds us that sin is not a judgment, because we are all sinners due to the eternal separation of that Original Sin.

He asks how many of us have pains, regrets, and weaknesses that we face day after day. “We all have sin,” he says. But he reminds us that Jesus came into this

world to take that sin away, which means that we do not have to carry this daily burden. He explains that Jesus Christ bridged the gap of that separation, through the Crucifix. Our presenter then claims, “And the good news of the Catholic faith is that now they can get to heaven through faith in Jesus, because he took our sins, died and resurrected to give them eternal life. It is not just a nice thing—Christ is the good news for taking care of their problems.”

Finally, our presenter tells us that Catholics have lost sight of the bad news, which diminishes the impact of the good news of the Crucifix and the Catholic Church. The message is that to hear the good news is to embrace Jesus Christ in our lives so that he can deal with our sin. This means being open and free to choose Jesus Christ as the saviour, and place him at the centre of our lives. Our presenter concludes by encouraging us to seek confession and really deal with the problem of sin. He says, “We are going to choose Jesus today.”

2.2.2. Workshop on Testimonials:

After a short break, I walk up the long driveway towards the school to attend the second workshop, on the theme of conversion and testimonials. Under a smaller white canvas tent with open sides and a breezier atmosphere, the session leader tells us her conversion story of growing up Catholic but falling out of faith at university. A woman in her mid-20's, she speaks of how she explored faith outside of the Catholic Church, but found it deeply unsatisfying. She remembers encountering Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO) on her university campus and thinking they were brainwashed and weird for espousing public prayer and a personal relationship

with Jesus. And like thunder out of a blue sky, she then describes how she was overwhelmed with the radiance of God, which led her to burst out of her dorm onto the street with a paradigmatic change of heart. Before her conversion, she thought God was far away, and therefore lived her Catholic identity out of guilt and family responsibility. But then she opened her heart, and now her life is filled with joy, freedom, and purpose.

The purpose of her testimonial, she goes on to say, is that there is nothing to fear in sharing your faith in your public life. “It does not have to be private anymore,” she says. But she also stresses that we should not be weird or alienating with our testimonies of faith. “Don’t be a religious freak,” she says. If we are serious about faith, we need to testify in an assured and personal manner. She makes it clear that it is important to lead by example, and not by throwing religion in people’s faces. However, “nothing should stand in the way of telling people your story of faith—at home, at church, and in your community.” She concludes by saying that the most important thing is to act in order to let flourish faith in our lives and the world around us.

2.3. Eucharistic Adoration: The Holy Spirit in Action

After a long and hot afternoon of talks on how to build a stronger relationship with Christ, and a highly entertaining talent show (with dancing, popping and locking, and lip-syncing), nightfall offers relief, and anticipation for the most important experience of the conference: Eucharistic Adoration. This is the moment when all of the lessons from the weekend about choice and personal

relationships with Jesus Christ are put into practice. The organizers and presenters explain that the Eucharist in the Adoration ritual is the transubstantiation of Jesus Christ, i.e. God's literal presence beholden in the host. The organizers stress the fact that Jesus is actually in the tent with us, flesh and blood. This allows for a palpable charismatic experience where participants may begin laughing, crying/sobbing, swooning, and/or speaking in tongues. And for many of the young people, this is their first experience of both Adoration and charismatic Catholicism, with its outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The organizers underscore that Adoration generates a tremendously affective and personal experience of the divine, with a lasting impression.

2.3.1. Teaching on the Holy Spirit:

Adoration begins with a teaching on the Holy Spirit. The priest from the previous night stands on stage as our session leader, illuminated with muted lights of blue, red, and gold while incense wafts around the altar and out into the space. He says that what happens tonight will only be limited by how we decide to participate: "It is by your will. Jesus has no limit and what he can do tonight can be nothing short of a miracle." We are reminded that Jesus is the same today as he was before, and forever. He is everlasting, and will literally walk the passages of this tent and stand before us. The speaker points out that this is something that must be taken seriously. He goes on to explain that the Holy Spirit is a powerful aspect of God that is present at every instant in prayer and in Catholic ritual like Eucharistic Adoration

and Reconciliation. He observes that even though the Holy Spirit is omnipresent in our daily lives, people still do not understand.

Our priestly session leader goes on to say that the Holy Spirit is the fire of faith that energizes us. He says, “It is powered by warmth, light, goodness, and freshness, even to the breaking point.” He speaks of how the Holy Spirit can reach us in places we never thought possible. And he maintains that we cannot understand Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church without understanding the Holy Spirit. He asks, “Why is it then that we keep pushing away the Holy Spirit? God knows everything about you. You can shy away from confession. You can run away from the Church. He still knows all of your sins.” He explains that Reconciliation is not about telling God our sins; it is an opportunity for us to acknowledge our sins and give them to God so that he can throw them away. He concludes: “The devil says to you that you can’t change, and you will know that if you remain alone. With the Holy Spirit, you are not alone and you can change.”

2.3.2. Procession of the Eucharist:

The priest then invites the Mustard Seeds to accompany him as he proceeds to unveil the monstrance before the prostrating crowd. The monstrance is a device that holds the Eucharist suspended in a glass-windowed casing, with radiating gold-plated tendrils that emanate out like a sun’s rays. With it held up above his face, the priest asks that the Holy Spirit breeze into the tent and take hold of people’s lives. With gentle lulling music and the dimmed colours of the stage lights, the priest asks that we say yes to being Christians, by allowing Christ into our lives—to open our

hearts and let the Holy Spirit pour into every crevice of our being. He preaches, "Let the Holy Spirit turn the tides of sin and forgetfulness, so that we can be whole again." He asks that the Holy Spirit allow us to rise above the hardships, intellectual obstacles, moral crises, and injustices that we may face within our families, at school, at church, and in society in general. He beseeches the Holy Spirit that we may overcome our sins and the regrets of past actions, which keep us down and away from God. He affirms that things like selfishness, consumer culture, and moral and spiritual relativity can be expunged by the saving grace of God through the Holy Spirit, and that with a commitment to God's call comes the liberation and freedom of our souls.

As the priest voices this teaching and message of the Holy Spirit, he slowly walks down from the altar into the kneeling crowd, with the monstrance held before him. He never touches the monstrance directly with his hands, but only through the long, draping sleeves of his white alb. With him is an entourage of four young seminarians who are dressed in lace-fringed cassocks: one holding the Cross at the head of the procession, two holding candles, and one swinging a smoking incense burner. The procession begins at the front of the tent before the altar, then heads to the left side of the tent, pausing every few metres to turn the monstrance's protracted gaze upon the prostrated crowd. Though I am not the only one fidgeting on knees aching from the roughness of the ground and grass, the young people before me seem calm, peaceful, and contemplative. The music gently plays,

There is a God who loves me
Who wraps me in His arms

That is the place where I'm changed
That's where I belong
(“Wrap Me In Your Arms” by Michael Gungor)

Behind me, the adult organizers and chaperones murmur prayers, some gently crying. As the procession continues, the young people too begin to show signs of transformation, of engagement in a collective effervescence. Some of them continue to kneel with heads down and hands threaded together, some are laughing, some are crying, some are stretched out prostrate between and under the chairs, while some, with closed and quiet eyes, are praying softly. Throughout, chaperones and adult volunteers move assuredly, consoling and checking in with the people in their care. The monstrance comes to a girl across from me who is kneeling at the end of her row. The priest bends down and places the monstrance just before her face. She gazes into the monstrance, not with bursting emotion but with a peaceful smile and a look of amazed contemplation, a quiet experience of the divine. And as the priest leaves, her face does not break the equanimity of the moment as she lifts her eyes upwards to the stage and altar. She has a look of satisfied contemplation.

The priest, speaking during intervals in the music, says that on this night, “Jesus was raising souls from the dead, casting out demons, healing lepers, and giving sight to the blind.” The music converges,

Take me to that place Lord
To that secret place where
I can be with You
You can make me like You
Wrap me in Your arms
Wrap me in Your arms
Wrap me in Your arms
(“Wrap Me In Your Arms” by Michael Gungor)

The priest continues his trajectory, asking that Jesus lead us out of the confines of our choice of Hell over Heaven. He asks the crowd how many times we have thought ourselves better than God. "That," he stresses "is Hell." He goes on to say that Jesus will break us out of our prisons, break the negative habits ingrained within our families and communities. His voice resounds over the speakers, saying, "Jesus, make us faithful like you. Change our hearts to allow holy action in our daily lives."

Adoration concludes with the priest saying a final prayer asking for the intercession from God as Trinity, from Mary Mother of God, the Communion of Saints, and the entirety of the Catholic Church. At this point, the priest takes the Eucharist out of the monstrance and the music begins to swell with drums and the whole band singing,

I am free to run
I am free to dance
I am free to live for You
I am free
("I am free," author unknown)

This marks the denouement after over an hour of ritual Adoration. I am left with a sense of euphoria, which seems to permeate the entire space. The young people are up off their knees and moving excitedly to the music. The music is exuberant and inspiring, bold and enticing. The priests proceed out to the confessional areas while young people come running to the stage before the band, jumping up and down, moshing with arms outstretched, singing,

Everyday it's You I'll live for
Everyday I'll follow after You
Everyday I'll walk with You my Lord
("Everyday" by Hillsongs Australia)

As things begin to slowly unwind and the music stops playing, people continue to mill about. On the way up the gravel lane to the chip truck, there now stretch long line-ups of both young people and adults waiting for confession. Tonight, there are six to ten priests on hand who will work from 10:00 PM until midnight. There is a definite contrast with Friday night. It seems like people are seeking to further unpack and broaden their Adoration experience. You can feel the buzz in the air.

3. The Journey Home: The Seeds of an Evangelical Impetus (*Sunday morning*)

We wake on the closing day of *Journey to the Father*, still hearing the echoes of the experience of the past two days. The conference officially closes with a Mass that is open to the public, for those who can drive to Saint Raphael's. Many of the participants' parents and families will come to take part in the celebrations, and some will stay afterwards to picnic on the grounds before heading back home with their kids. They will fill the empty seats and add numbers to the youth and adults who have participated in the conference. Preceding the final Mass, however, Sunday opens with sessions just for the participants in order to wrap things up and say goodbye.

3.1. Music at the Ruins: Transforming the Church

In the crisp morning air, music can be heard emanating out of the massive stone cathedral at the edge of the conference grounds. This cathedral is an important historical site that stretches back to the late 18th century. It has

reinforced walls, but stands gutted and without a roof. I am left with the feeling that this is an elegant and poignant representation of the ethos conveyed by *Journey to the Father*: Though the Catholic Church is ancient and majestic, and yet seemingly empty, young Catholics can fill that space by being religiously engaged and expanding up and outwards into the world beyond. The cathedral's interior, made up of the remaining foundations and grassy floors, is jammed with people, some sitting in rows or dancing near the stage, and some milling about in both corners of the transept. It is a social time where the young people around me take photos, exchange contact information, and come together before the end of the conference. It is a period for unwinding, where people can dance and sing worship music together in this highly symbolic space.

The Disciples and Wannabes perform worship music for about an hour. The band consists of one guitar player, a djembe drummer, and five singers. The songs touch on the different experiences and themes of the weekend. Together we sing,

I am pressed but not crushed
Persecuted not abandoned
Struck down but not destroyed
I am blessed beyond the curse
For His promise will endure
That His joy's gonna be my strength

Though the sorrow may last for the night
His joy comes with the morning
("Trading my Sorrows" by Darrell Evans)

3.2. Testimonies: Bearing Witness to Change

After the music at the ruins, everyone walks down the hill to the main tent for the last act of the weekend's theatre play, and to hear testimonials. The play ends

with our plucky protagonist coming to the realization that the ill path she was on was ruining her most important relationships. The message is that a relationship with Jesus Christ is the most important factor in one's life. Christ is the one through which the world must be experienced in order to gain true happiness. There is much appreciative fanfare, hooting, and hollering for the performances of these young actors.

Following the play are the testimonials, an "open mic" for young people to come up and speak about their experiences of the weekend. It is a time for the participants to take the stage and share how God has come into their lives. The MCs explain that the testimonials do not need to be tremendous or paradigmatic like an all-out conversion story. The female MC says, "Every experience is welcomed because people want to know about it." Off to the right side of the stage, a line of young participants begins to form. I can sense excitement and trepidation from those in the queue, who I imagine must be shoring up the courage to speak of their experiences and feelings in front of their peers. Nevertheless, one by one, they move to centre stage and speak into the microphone.

3.2.1. Resistance and Doubt:

Many participants speak of how they felt resistance to participate in *Journey to the Father*, a resistance to connecting with other people and/or to being open to religious experience. Many express how much it "sucks" to be a religious person at school, because one gets picked on for it. They speak of how they just want to be "cool" and fit in, but find it difficult to make their religious convictions cool. One

young woman notes the shame of being religious, having heard people say, “The weird, eccentric Catholic people; don’t hang out with them!” Some speak of having being Catholics their entire lives, but not having known how to talk to God. Many mention how Adoration precipitated a change of heart. They say that *Journey to the Father* helped them to overcome judgmental attitudes. One person proclaims that at Adoration, “God says he is never ashamed of you.” Some warn the audience not to hold back from letting Jesus into their lives. “Fear kept me in my seat,” a person admonishes, “I cannot be afraid.” Some speak of how they had stumbled in their faith, but feel that things are clearing up thanks to *Journey to the Father*. Many have found closure for past mistakes. And yet many wonder whether they will remain strong in their faith at school, out in the world, at university, or away from home.

3.2.2. *Personal Troubles and Loss:*

Some feel that depression is a disease, and that coping, with the help of God, is a process and not a miracle. Some describe how problems with family or school had tainted their view of God, but feel that Adoration has allowed them to reflect on their actions and to seek resolution. Some admit to having done terrible things in their lives, but feel that God helps them keep to the right path. One person says, “Forgiveness is always possible.” Many young participants speak of someone close to them dying, recounting how Adoration allowed for an emotional release, and revealing that this is the first time they have cried since the event, and that it is cathartic. Some claim to have felt anger towards God for taking their loved ones away, but say that Adoration has helped them to accept that the will of God is deeply

mysterious but always benign. Some describe how personal tragedy and loss (accidents, suicide, cancer, abandonment) drove them away from God, forcing them to struggle with their faith, but suggest that the experience of Adoration and the entire weekend has brought them back to themselves, and back to a life of faith. Some say that *Journey to the Father* has cleaned up the “mess” of their lives, and that they are deeply grateful for this change.

3.2.3. *Personal Relationship with Christ:*

Numerous testimonials speak about people’s positive experiences of Adoration, allowing them to see God as “an ‘actual’ person.” One person says, “He is not out there watching over us like ants. Even when you don’t feel his presence like you do at Adoration, it is important to know that he is always there.” Many participants mention that Adoration was their first really affective religious experience. Some mention that their physical proximity and connection with the monstrance deepened their experience. Some say that they have been going to church their entire lives, even participating in youth group activities, but that Adoration was their first time having a religious experience. For others, it was deeply satisfying to laugh, cry, and just be moved by the spirit. Finally, some mention that they are able to talk to God as a best friend, and that this has helped transform all their other relationships.

3.2.4. *Social Element:*

Some say that they have been coming to *Journey to the Father* for years, and speak of how happy they are with the friends they have made. Some note how their

friends at home tease them for going to some crazy “Jesus Camp,” but that it is worth it to meet friends who are likeminded and share the same values. One person says, “You don’t have to explain yourself or be scared to be yourself at *Journey*.” Some reveal that they are in fact atheists or agnostics, but stay involved in *Journey to the Father* because of the joy that people of faith have in being together in Christ, suggesting that this is something they want in their own lives. Some express the desire to receive the “gift of faith,” having searched but not yet found it. And yet, they say, bearing witness to other people’s religious experiences in a vicarious way is worth the time and effort of participating. Some relate that they are very shy and that *Journey* has helped them to open up and meet new people. They explain that they feel safe to approach anyone at *Journey to the Father* without either judgment or fear of being judged, because everyone shares the same values. One person says, “Here, I feel free to be me!” Many say that they appreciate the consistency of *Journey to the Father*. They look forward to it each year so they can experience it all over again, because of the support that they receive. Someone comments, “It’s not dorky or lame to be praising God. So don’t be afraid to go out and evangelize in your own way.”

After the long queue of 15 to 20 young participants has finished and the cheers have died down, the MCs find closure, suggesting that these stories of inspiration and change should not stay in the tent or the conference grounds. The male MC says, “These stories need to go out far and wide so that the fire does not get quenched. Its gotta be more than a Facebook experience.” They ask that we tell at

least one friend or family member about what happened to us at *Journey to the Father*. And, they say, if our families do not attend church and/or do not have a religious practice, we need to tell them of our feelings and experiences, so that they too can open their eyes. They intone, “Go home and bring Jesus into the world.”

3.3. Altar Call: Claiming Catholic Identity

With the emotions of personal testimonials still fresh in my mind, we move to the last event of the weekend, an altar call. The priest who presided over Adoration the night before leads this ritual explaining that the altar call is a means to allow those who did not come up to deliver testimonials the chance to be recognized by their peers for their experiences of *Journey to the Father*. By this time, the crowd of young participants is rapt in the thrill of emotions from the testimonials, and the air is percolating with religious devotion.

The priest begins by calling on the Holy Spirit to come into our hearts and inspire us to make commitments to better our lives. He claims that God is calling on us to have personal relationships with Him and to become missionaries. He says, “With every small moment of saying yes to God, you are on the road to sainthood and becoming the best version of yourselves. God chose you—respond to the call!” Young people, he notes, do not need to go far to missionize. He points out that in Canada, only a fraction of Catholics go to church and participate in any meaningful way. He concludes by revealing that this is where the mission must take place. We respond by singing,

How great is our God, sing with me,
How great is our God, all will see,

How great, how great is our God.
("How Great is our God" by Tomlin/Cash/Reeves)

At this point, the priest calls out different Catholic vocations and personal spiritual commitments, and asks those of us who feel inspired to come to the front to the altar to be witnessed by our peers and by God, and receive a special blessing. He begins by asking those who feel the call to become priests, nuns, or monks to come up and be witnessed in their commitment. He asserts that these commitments are not to be taken lightly, for there is always a need in the Catholic Church for vocations, especially for the priesthood. 10 to 15 young people walk to the foot of the altar to be witnessed by their peers. The priest asks us to stretch forward our hands to help bless these young people and pray for their commitment. He then calls out to the married couples present to please stand where they are so that they may be blessed for their Catholic vocation. He concludes saying, "Strong families are a strong Church."

The priest explains that a profession of faith in the Catholic Church is a personal profession of faith to a personal Jesus, and that this commitment should be made in public. This affirms again the idea that the belief in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ will affect us and everyone around us. Finally, the priest says that it is important for those who have not come to the stage to remain standing in place and say, "I the beloved child of God believe in you Jesus." The voices of this prayer resound all around me as the young people stand with heads bowed and eyes closed. I am left to contemplate the idea that those present in this public forum are

articulating a commitment to choose God and to stride out into the world as missionaries of Jesus Christ for the Catholic Church.

In the closing moments of the conference, I appreciate how *Journey to the Father* allows young people to express their feelings and experiences of religion in a safe public setting. It is clear that the organizers hope these experiences will galvanize an evangelical impetus in young people, so that they will return home to their families, schools, and churches hot with the fire of evangelization and spread the message. I am certainly feeling the residual overtones of excitement as everyone prepares to leave Saint Raphael's until next year. As we tear down the site, put away the chairs, and pack the audio-visual equipment, I am left with a question: "How will this excitement change, transform, or translate when I leave and go home?" In other words, "Now what do I do?"

Chapter 3 — Research Design, Methodology, and Theory

Introduction:

The *Journey to the Father* conference is a perfect site at which to analyze the shaping of Catholic identity in youth through religious experience. The messages disseminated by the organizers throughout the conference speak of the relevance of the Catholic Church in young people's lives and of the importance of living and expressing one's religious identity at home, at school, and in one's community. Key to this revitalization of a religious, Catholic identity in the young participants is the idea of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In other words, evangelization seeks to build a one-on-one relationship between the individual and God, and *Journey to the Father* provides a complex structure through its talks, rituals, spectacle, and people, to facilitate this relationship.

This form of personalized evangelical religiosity is a relatively new phenomenon within the Catholic Church. It reflects the values and approaches of the *New Evangelization* (NE), a Catholic proselytization programme that promotes personal and direct devotion to Jesus Christ, while remaining highly conservative by deferring to the structures of authority of the Catholic Church (i.e. papal and ecclesiastical authority, the Magisterium). The main concerns of the NE are two-fold: 1) an understanding that Catholicism continues to lose social and civic prominence in a modern world dominated by secularism; and 2) the problem of how to deal with a large adherence base of Catholics in Canada but low participation rates. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the NE promotes a *proselytization from within* that seeks to

engage “disillusioned” or “latent” Catholics so that they assert their religious values and Catholic identity in their public lives.

One key focus for the NE is Catholic youth. Beyond *Journey to the Father*, there are currently a significant number of evangelization projects in Canada seeking to instil religious, Catholic identities in young people (e.g. Catholic Christian Outreach, 2015, NET Ministries of Canada, 2015). Like *Journey to the Father*, these organizations seek to inform youth of the relevance of Catholic identity in the modern world. The presence of the NE and religiously engaged Catholic youth raises questions about the contours of Canadian diversity and the role of religion in shaping modern Canadian identity. The main question driving this research is: *How are young people engaging and interpreting evangelical modes of religious and socio-political identity, and integrating or negotiating this worldview in a pluralist Canadian society?*

Using identity formation as a central organizing concept, this doctoral research outlines the perspective of contemporary Canadian evangelical Catholic youth as a means to understand their perceived socio-political position in Canadian society. The *Journey to the Father* conference, therefore, serves as a case study to help understand the dynamic process of evangelizing youth. This research analyzes the discourses of Catholic evangelization produced during the *Journey to the Father* conference, and charts the different kinds of impact the participants’ experiences have on them during and after the event. This research also emphasizes how the

young people *negotiate* (i.e. appropriate or negate) evangelical Catholic values and charismatic religious experience when forming their identities.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first outlines the research design of this project. In it, I will explain the rationale for focusing on a case study in examining Catholic evangelization and youth in Canada, describe my approach to participant observation at *Journey to the Father*, outline the methodology used for data collection through semi-structured interviews, and briefly describe the interview questions and data organization. The second section discusses different theoretical frameworks informing this research project. There I will examine theories on social construction and lived religion, review relevant theories regarding identity formation, and explore the academic literature on the study of youth and religion. This will help unpack the social and political dynamics at play between Catholic evangelization and identity formation among young people.

1. Research Design and Methodology

1.1. Case Study Approach and Participant Observation

This research outlines the socio-political dynamics of modern identity formation among evangelical Catholic youth in Canada through a case study: *Journey to the Father*. As a case study, *Journey to the Father* provides an effective means to underscore and understand the messages and dynamics of the NE in relation to young people. Jamie Baxter explains that “case study research involves the study of a single instance or small number of instances of a phenomenon in order to explore in-depth nuances of the phenomenon and the contextual influences on and

explanations of that phenomenon” (2010: 81). Far from attempting a general survey of the evangelical Catholic community in Canada—which is beyond the scope and capacity of this doctoral thesis—this approach allows a focus on a particular event with social significance.

Running for 14 years between 1999 and 2013 (excluding 2002 for the World Youth Day papal visit in Toronto), *Journey to the Father* attracted participants between 13 and 18 years old from across Southern and North-Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec. At the height of its popularity, the conference attracted 500 youth. There was also an equal number of volunteers from the Diocese of Alexandria/Cornwall and surrounding parishes who helped with the organization, infrastructure, security, and production of the conference. The village of Saint Raphael's, Ontario was transformed each year into a bounded and encompassing space where participants were led in charismatic experiences and instructed in religiosity through a Catholic evangelization discourse. The intention for *Journey to the Father* was to transport adults and young people from different communities and places to an alternative social, public space where young people could explore and perhaps claim an active or intentional religious identity.

As a case study, *Journey to the Father* helps illuminate the process of Catholic evangelization over its three days of activities. On Friday night and Saturday, the conference introduces young people to the idea of religious engagement; Saturday evening allows the opportunity for religious engagement and experience, and Sunday morning aims to provide the means to apply these lessons and experiences

to real life. This structure offers much in terms of how the organizers wish to disseminate the message of Catholic evangelization, and the various ways in which young people interpret this message.

In studying *Journey to the Father*, participant observation was an important first step in understanding how people behaved and reacted. In the spring of 2011, I was granted access to the conference by the main organizer Marilyn Bergeron. My participant observation spanned three years, from 2011 to 2013. I was present to observe and take note of the activities before and during the conference. I attended many organizational meetings in Cornwall where decisions were made regarding fundraising, organizing food and drinks, directing volunteers into their different functions, etc. These were great opportunities to network, ask questions, and build trust with the organizing team. As well, before the conference at Saint Raphael's each year, I would spend 1 to 2 days with the Disciples as they prepared for their special roles. Activities consisted of team-building exercises, spiritual and religious development, organizing theatre plays, and learning about how to help the young participants maximize their experience. Finally, I volunteered my time during the conference, helping out when I was needed. This included pegging tarps into the ground for the sleeping tents, placing chairs, raising tent shelters, moving picnic tables, and even, one year, working a graveyard shift as security. This was very fulfilling work that allowed me access to the experience behind the scenes.

During the *Journey to the Father* conference, I participated in all of the scheduled activities. I wrote field notes on a flip notepad describing the different

themes of each event, the tone and performance of each session, my sense of the feelings of the participants, and my own general and analytical reflections. When I had free time, I strolled through the grounds, reflecting on my own preconceived notions, personal biases, and expectations. Over 3 years, I took only one opportunity to interview an adult organizer, which happened during a lunch break and lasted about an hour. Otherwise, I did not seek to interview any of the young participants or adult organizers during the conference. My goal was to participate, to observe, and to build trust with the organizers and leaders so that I could interview the participants at a later date with written parental consent. Ultimately, being a participant observer allowed me a deeper insight into how *Journey to the Father* was organized and how it affected people. These experiences have informed the interview questions, which make up a large part of the data for this thesis project.

1.2. Semi-Structured Interviews: Adult Organizers and Youth Participants

Over the span of two years, from 2012 to 2014, I conducted a total of 50 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews in order to ensure that the different types of participants involved in *Journey to the Father* had voices in my research. This enabled me to better analyze the different perspectives as well as the larger picture of *Journey to the Father*. These interviews were split between the adult organizers (over 18) and the young participants (ages 13 to 17).

I conducted 25 individual interviews with adult organizers. Each lasted 1 to 2 hours, and involved written, informed consent wherein each individual stipulated whether they wished to remain anonymous in my research process and

dissemination (cf. Appendix A for adult consent form). Each interview was organized independently on a case-by-case basis at the subject's convenience, and at a location where the interviewee felt safe and comfortable (e.g. office, residence, classroom, coffee shop). Among these were the main organizer Marilyn Bergeron, conference keynote speakers and session leaders André Regnier, Father Stéphane Pouliot, and Sister Anne Elisabeth, bishop Marcel Damphousse of the diocese of Alexandria/Cornwall and bishop Paul-André Durocher of the archdiocese of Gatineau, the main coordinating volunteer Ken Lalonde, four youth group leaders, and one adult chaperone.

The second part of this first block of interviews was conducted with the Disciple leaders, aged between 18 and 25. The Disciples provided a mentorship role for the young participants throughout their *Journey to the Father* experience. They offered important insight because of their closeness with the participants. Each of the adult organizers was asked to reflect on their role in organizing the conference, their views on religion in Canadian society, and their future goals for engaging youth through Catholic evangelization.

I conducted 25 interviews with young participants from *Journey to the Father*, each lasting between 40 minutes and 1.5 hours. Because these interviewees were minors (below the age of 18), I received written, informed consent from each individual as well as from their parents or guardians (cf. Appendix B for youth and parental consent form). All young participants were guaranteed anonymity and thus

have been assigned pseudonyms in this thesis for the purposes of presenting the data.

Having had limited success with post-conference interview recruiting through techniques such as email and phone calls, I sought the help of youth group leaders who had participated in *Journey to the Father*. I was able to organize interview sessions with four different youth groups, each having between 4 and 8 young interviewees who had participated in *Journey to the Father* during the time of this research (2011–2013). Like the adult organizers, the young participants were asked to share their experiences of the conference, their outlook on religion in society, and their daily religious practices.

My overall experience of the face-to-face interviews was that the interviewees were generous, candid, thoughtful, and enthusiastic in speaking about their religious identities, their forms of religious engagement, and their socio-political views. These interviews were among the most rewarding aspects of this research.

1.3. Interview Questions and Data Organization

Following a semi-structured format with an interview guide, the questions were intended to explore and help understand Catholic identity through the experiences of *Journey to the Father* (cf. Appendix C includes interview guides for adult and youth participants). The same questions were asked of my adult and youth interviewees. These fell under three broad themes: 1) religiosity and religious

identity at home; 2) diverse experiences of *Journey to the Father*; and 3) integrating and consolidating experiences and worldview.

The first theme relates to the background through which the participants were already socialized within a Catholic context—religion and/or religiosity at home, as well as at school, at church, and within the wider community. Participants were asked whether they consider themselves religious, whether they have been involved in religious activities at home or with family, what it is like in their schools, their experiences of going to church, and their experience of religious identity in wider social contexts. The second theme revolves around the experiences of *Journey to the Father*. The participants were asked about their experience, their thoughts on engaging or witnessing charismatic religious expression, their participation in Adoration and Reconciliation, what their favourite parts and/or least favourite parts of the conference were, and their feelings or reactions emerging from these experiences.

The third theme looks at how the experiences of *Journey to the Father* were integrated and whether they impacted the interviewees' lives after the conference. They were asked about how the conference affected them personally. This allowed for personal reflection on their experiences of *Journey to the Father* and on how they translated that experience into their personal lives. They were also asked *what does it mean to be a Christian in Canada today, what are the greatest challenges for Catholic youth today, and what does it mean to be a Catholic woman or a Catholic man?* These questions sought a broader understanding of my interviewees' views of

their positions in society. Lastly, I asked them *what are your hopes and dreams for Catholicism or for the Catholic Church in Canada* and *what do you think the future holds for Catholic youth?* Like the previous questions, these look at how the interviewees see the future for themselves and for the Catholic Church, offering insight into what they wish to accomplish and how they want things to change.

In summary, the analysis for this research incorporates data collected from three years of field notes and participant observation as well as the 50 semi-structured interviews with adult organizers and youth participants. I have transcribed the fieldwork and interviews verbatim from audio recordings. A content analysis of the qualitative data was performed using NVivo version 10 qualitative analysis software. Content analysis allows both manifest messages (i.e. observable content of the data) and latent messages (i.e. the underlying or implied meaning) to emerge from the data (Waitt, 2010). This analysis was also sensitive to “in vivo codes,” i.e. the discovery of various themes that emerge from the participants themselves. This software was utilized for the purpose of organizing and analyzing this qualitative data, and not to generate or impose quantitative results.

2. Theoretical Frameworks

This section discusses the theoretical frameworks that I drew upon in the design of this study and in the interpretation of the data: 1) theories of social formation and lived religion; 2) theories of identity formation; and 3) theoretical approaches to youth and religion.

2.1. Social Construction and Lived Religion Theories

The goal of this research is to outline the formation, perception, and expression of socio-political identity among Catholic youth who are engaging Catholic evangelical discourses. Identity is a complicated concept, especially regarding the social elements involved in forming the self, and the structures and influences informing social relations with others. This project seeks to understand the connections and dynamics between the individual and society, and not the psychological or psychosocial processes of individuation. Though there will be an elaborated discussion on identity later in this section, I begin with the premise that identity is the product of interactions and perceptions between *self* and *other* amid different social structures such as society, community, culture, ethnicity, and personal relations. These multiple interactions and experiences are the base of influence on an individual's life. Therefore, theories of both social construction and lived religion are key to unpacking and understanding the formation of identity.

2.1.1. Social Construction Theory:

A social construction perspective asserts that identity is formed within a field of complex social relations. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that all knowledge, even common sense, is socially constituted by an individual's interpretation of reality in relation to others and maintained by those interactions, helping to build a conception of the world, or worldview. The authors assert that identity is conditioned by a dialectical engagement between the individual and the social structure, and that the individual grows with every interaction. This perspective

allows for a certain relativism in viewing the building and maintenance of social structures as apt to change based on the individual's perspective.

This approach, however, can also lead to deterministic understandings of change in social processes by asserting that social structures dictate meaning for individuals, thus defining their worldview. In other words, it presents a top-down view of the influence of social structures on the self. Berger, for example, sees the function of society as giving order to a chaotic universe, i.e. a *Sacred Canopy* (1967). He argues that religion and religious structures once dominated the social aspect of meaning-making and influence on people's lives, but that they have since been undermined by the values of modernity, most importantly secularism. Berger initially understood secularism to be a process that allows for more complex and pluralistic means of constructing knowledge and defining perceptions of reality, beyond the once-dominant influence of institutional religion. He eventually shifted his position on secularization (Berger, 2002), but his theories on social construction remain unchanged.

Social construction theory has been influential in studying the dynamics between the forces of society and the individual. However, the application of a deterministic view of social structures' influence in shaping worldview to an understanding of the propensity toward secularization remains problematic within the study of religion. In this regard, it is important to consider that much social science scholarship has kept religion marginalized from important discussions on social theory. James Beckford in *Social Theory and Religion* (2003) reclaims religion

as an important tool in helping to illuminate the blind spots in social theory. He shifts the premise of social construction by claiming that religion is a complex, non-unitary, and multifaceted element of influence in people's lives. Beckford is "advocating a form of prophylaxis that will help to keep social scientific discourse about religion to some degree free from the assumption that religion is an easily delimitable, invariant object that has a single, common sense meaning in everyday life" (2003: 18). This view counters Berger's institutional determinism, advocating instead a view of a social formation that "involves subtle and complex choices that respond, in part, to the perceived situation, the actions of significant others and the actor's stock of religious resources" (2003: 25). By emphasizing *choice*, this nuanced approach places more power in the hands of social agents who are aware, be it consciously or subconsciously, of the influences of social relationships and socio-religious resources on their lives. Beckford's theory of the social construction of religion places the individual at the centre of variant, competing elements, affirming the role of individual agency in the process of social formation.

Complementary to social construction theory as presented by Beckford is Kim Knott's analysis of religion in social geographies. In her book *The Location of Religion* (2005), Knott seeks to understand the social and symbolic production of religion in places and spaces thought to exclude religion by virtue of secularism. She writes, "My concern is...to see what happens when we look at institutions and processes that are commonly defined in terms of traditions of belief and practice from an unusual perspective, in terms of their spatial character and location" (2005:

5–6). This shift into seeing religion within the social geographies of people's everyday lives within secular societies is indeed a product of shifting the analysis away from religion as defined by structures or frameworks (i.e. church, religious law, holy scripture, ritual specialists, etc.) and focusing on individuals' experiences of religion. Knott's concerns, though largely focused on outlining a theoretical framework regarding the spatial analysis of religion, are as follows: 1) the everyday practice religious people; 2) the production of religious spaces; 3) the presence of religion in "secular" spaces; 4) the competition within and between religions based on different ideological perspectives; 5) religion and its relations of power intersecting with gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and social class; 6) religious identity politics in the "contestation of spaces"; and 7) the relationship and operationalization of different capital by religions (2005: 6). Knott's framework shifts the analytical approach away from conventional definitions of religion (with relation to dominant religious institutions) as having a dominant impact on people's religious identities, to seeing how people construct their own religious lives within everyday spaces.

Beckford's analysis allows for a shift of the power of influence in constructing social meaning onto the individual or social agent, from the bottom up. Knott's perspective provides an understanding of how religion is constructed or constituted within social spaces, apart from the conventional definitions of religious structure. Though these perspectives do not deny the impact of institutions, Beckford and Knott's theoretical approaches allow for individuals' perspectives to matter in the

grand scheme of constructing social meaning and identity. For this doctoral research, social construction theory lays the groundwork upon which other theoretical set pieces can be placed.

2.1.2. *Lived Religion Theory:*

The second theoretical framework needed to understand social formation and the impact of religion in people's lives is *lived religion theory*, expounded by Meredith McGuire and Robert Orsi. This will act as a methodological basis for this thesis, allowing a place for the nuance of an individual's personal engagement with religion, as against deterministic perspectives of the impact of institutions on religious identity. Adding to Beckford and Knott, lived religion theory allows for a deeper regard of the social agency of individuals engaged in religion.

Meredith McGuire (2008) presents a compelling and critical look at the study of religion. Concerned with the dominance of institutional models of religion in the social sciences, she argues that the traditional conceptualization of religion based on confessional affiliation is an historical continuation of discourses of authority and power sourced in what she calls the "Long-Reformation," which involves a dichotomous valuing of religious belief over practice. She writes, "Definitional boundaries are the outcomes of *contested meanings*; that is, people have actively exerted their power to affect the outcome and to resist others' efforts to gain control" (2008: 22). McGuire argues that the exertion of power in defining social normativity, which is historically apparent in Christian Europe, is perpetuated in contemporary scholarly perspectives, assumptions, and analyses.

McGuire asserts that dichotomous thinking and the projection of cultural and social unity has led to a form of conventional thinking that continually reinforces the status quo and remains ignorant to the actual processes and actions happening on the ground in terms of religious thought, engagement, and expression. McGuire's perspective provides a background that will allow the notions of subjectivity and fluidity to permeate the methodological and theoretical frameworks of this research. Like Knott, McGuire draws attention to the ways in which individuals define religion, as opposed to focusing strictly on how it is defined by institutions.

In *Between Heaven and Earth* (2005), Robert Orsi complements McGuire's perspective by presenting a radically personal approach to the social scientific study of religion. Through sets of personal narratives, Orsi explores the intersections between social construction and subjective interpretation—between imposed and negotiated meaning—occurring within the lives and lived experiences of religious people. On a theoretical level, he advocates for the notion that lived experiences cannot be easily abstracted and compartmentalized into sets of epistemological normativities. He attempts to admonish and destabilize the illusion of scholarly objectivity and the imposition of the values of the researcher upon the subject, by advocating for an interpretive subjectivity that includes both the perspectives of researcher and research subject, in turn affecting the overall analysis.

Orsi's epithetic claim in "studying and thinking about despised religious idioms" (2005: 7) has become a premise and motivating factor in the study of religion, meaning that scholars can no longer find epistemological refuge in an

abstracted subjectivity, but must now fully engage with their own assumptions, prejudices, and discomforts in the analytical process. He writes, “The point is rather to bring the other into fuller focus within the circumstances of his or her history, relationships, and experiences. ...We do not impose our wishes, dreams, or anxieties” (2005: 8). Orsi’s perspective underlines the fact that, even though there are often clear religious and political differences between the scholar and her/his chosen subject of research, there is no reason that one’s own values and opinions should get in the way of outlining the worldview and personal experiences of others from within the academic discourse of social science research. The focus must be on how people negotiate and formulate religious worldviews as means of constructing social normativities and disseminating knowledge.

Related to this discussion of the epistemological shift towards the thoughts and experiences of individuals and the construction of religious worldviews is a broader theoretical discussion of the affective importance of religious emotions. In Ole Riis and Linda Woodhead’s *A Sociology of Religious Emotions* (2010), the authors claim that emotions are largely ignored in the social scientific study of religion. The authors attempt to subvert the “widespread popular as well as scientific tendency to reduce emotions to something private, personal and subjective...in favour of an analysis of emotion as constructed in the interplay between social agents *and* structures. On this account emotion is “both-and” rather than “either/or”: both personal and relational; private and social; biological and cultural; active and passive” (2010: 5). Riis and Woodhead’s collapse of dichotomized thinking about

the effect of emotion on social formation helps to understand the interaction between individuals and structures in the context of religion. This focus on the impact of emotions on the religious experiences of individuals dovetails with McGuire's and Orsi's perspectives of lived religion in that all of these deny the triviality of personal matters in comparison to institutional perspectives and prescriptions. Emotions are a key factor in my examination of *Journey to the Father*, especially in looking at the motivation for young people to deepen their commitment to a more engaged Catholic identity.

This combined framework of social construction and lived religion provides the space to hear untold narratives of people negotiating the different facets of religion in their everyday lives. These theories shift our focus toward the importance of individuals in shaping their own social, political, and symbolic worlds. With respect to this thesis, this allows us to move beyond a deterministic view of the institution of the Catholic Church, and appreciate the perspectives and experiences of individuals who participated in *Journey to the Father*. Accompanying this approach, however, is the need for a more complex discussion on how identity is structured and informed.

2.2. Identity Formation: Authenticity, Recognition, and Agency

The concept of identity has become increasingly relevant in the social scientific study of religion. The theories of social construction and lived experience are tethered to an epistemological subjectivity, which necessitates a deeper understanding of how the individual is engaged and impacted by multiple forces of

meaning. Identity has become a hub where the individual can be accounted for in the analysis of different social systems and power relations. In this section, I will briefly examine social theories of identity formation. This section on identity will focus on social theories of *self* and *other* mainly through a discussion of authenticity and recognition, as well as by reviewing theories on the capacity for individual action through agency.

Although there is a robust literature on religious identity in social psychology (Ysseldyk et al., 2010), this thesis is concerned with how identity is structured from the perspectives of sociology, cultural theory, and political philosophy. This means examining how identity is formed for the sake of understanding socio-political agents in varying discursive fields. In other words, this discussion is not interested in *why* it works (i.e. religion benefits identity), but *how* it works (i.e. how identity is formed/structured vis-à-vis religion). Regarding the latter approach, a review of the literature on identity yields a tremendous amount of material, for example, social theory frameworks (Akhtar, 2011; Beckford, 2003; Connolly, 1999, 2002; Giddens, 1991), ethnic and/or cultural categorization of identity (Anderson, 2006; Bayart, 2005; Bhabha, 2004; Bramadat, 2009; Bramadat and Seljak, 2009; Coleman and Collins, 2004), and critiques of hegemonic structures of identity (Beaman, 2008; Brown, 2006; Eisenberg, 2009; Razack, 2008; Shachar, 2009).

Social theorists Bhikhu Parekh and Jean-François Bayart stand out in terms of elaborating comprehensive theoretical models of identity formation. Parekh, in line with Berger and Luckmann (1966), explains that identity is forged through a

dialectical process out of personal tendencies and inherited histories, which are contingent on one's complex relations and experiences in life—i.e. between *personal identities* and *social identities* (Parekh, 2008, 2009). Bayart adds to this, writing, “The production of identities, and thus the production of cultures, is relational; it reflects a relationship to the Other as much as a relationship to the Self. Thus it probably emanates less from a ‘privileged institutional site of the symbolic process’...than from [the] fringes and [the] hollows” (2005: 96). Both Parekh and Bayart express the importance of *relationship* in the formation of identity, which is sourced in the actions of the self but limited and conditioned by experiences of various social forces in relation to others. The challenge in the attempt to understand the dynamics of identity formation, therefore, is to reflect more deeply on how the self is impacted by and engages with the other.

2.2.1. *Dialogical Identity: Reciprocating Authenticity and Recognition*

Charles Taylor views the dynamic in which identity is formed and informed as a *dialogical* engagement between self and other, i.e. through an emphasis on dialogue between different people. In countering what he sees as the alienation of the self through the modern *subjective turn*, Taylor advocates the importance of common *horizons of significance* (i.e. universal, relational commonalities) as a means of establishing a society of reciprocal relations wherein people can live responsibly. Taylor argues that in order for people to begin to relate to one another in a dialogical framework, they must first explore conceptions of self through *authenticity*, so as to nourish relations between self and other through *recognition*.

Authenticity is a philosophical idea that denotes a “genuine” being within the modern identity complex—a personal drive towards greater or better forms of “true” selfhood. It revolves around the question, *how does an individual engage her/his “full potential”*? As stated above, Taylor perceives modern identity as being in a general state of alienation, a “narrowing and flattening of our lives” in which authenticity is undermined by a movement within society towards an ambivalent moral relativism. Taylor sees the lack of authenticity in modern identity as revolving around what he calls the three malaises of modernity: “The first fear is about what we might call a loss of meaning, the fading of moral horizons. The second concerns the eclipse of ends, in face of rampant instrumental reason. And the third is about a loss of freedom” (Taylor, 1991: 10). Stated in dramatic terms, Taylor believes that modern individualism has a “dark side,” in which the self becomes the moral centre around which the world is measured and understood. Taylor argues that this social malaise undermines a more genuine sense of authenticity, a result of the move towards an ambivalent moral relativism, self-centeredness brought on by instrumental reason where our interactions are based on the logic of individual gain, and the devastating effects of technology and industry on social and environmental wellbeing.

Taylor believes that there are “inescapable horizons” or universal truths that must be acknowledged in order to rectify these social malaises and re-establish a sense of authenticity within modern identity. The first is that authenticity should be reconsidered, retrieved as a “moral ideal” against the “thickened darkness” of moral

relativism. In order to do this, Taylor notes that three controversial ideas surrounding authenticity must be engaged: “(1) that authenticity is a valid ideal; (2) that you can argue in reason about ideals and about the conformity of practices to these ideals; and (3) that these arguments can make a difference” (Taylor, 1991: 23). These points drive the main themes behind his philosophical thought and the ethical imperative that is asserted throughout his work: 1) identity is a dialogical process with others and not an expression of absolute, sovereign individuality; 2) recognition through dialogical means becomes the foundation for authentic ascription to people’s identities — recognizing each other’s differences, but more importantly those elements that are universally similar, i.e. horizon of significance; and 3) an understanding of authenticity facilitates socio-political processes inherent to plural social settings, reducing the sting of social alienation and moral difference while nurturing a reciprocal process of mutual recognition. The most important thing for Taylor is that the individual is uncompromisingly important in qualifying authenticity, but subjectivity is not hegemonic, for she/he is constantly shaped in connection with others.

In plural social and philosophical settings, recognition becomes the foundation upon which identity is negotiated and built, from the place of an authentic self in relation with others. Taylor, however, sees a misappropriation of recognition in modern, individualistic identity. As with his critique of authenticity, recognition under these terms is self-absorbed and narcissistic, always asking to be recognized for one’s sovereign individuality. He writes, “The relationship is

secondary to the self-realization of the partners” (Taylor, 1991: 43). Taylor sees a misguided approach to dialogical interrelations, which should be reciprocal and intersubjective. Taylor views the act of understanding (i.e. recognizing) difference as the response to the challenge of pluralism and heterogeneity. His understanding of common horizons of meaning does not mean erasing the other’s distinctiveness but allowing difference to define identity. It is about recognizing in the other *who they are, what they do, and what they need*. For Taylor, respect and recognition are fundamental elements in any deliberation process where recognition is not tied to relative individual capacities, but which takes place in dialogical and reciprocal relations with diverse others.

Taylor sees deliberation as a virtue. This relational view of identity addresses some of the difficulties that often surround the negotiation of difference. “That is why the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity gives a new importance to recognition. My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others” (Gutmann, 1994: 34). Essentially, this structure proposes that to better understand the self is to understand and relate to the other, which in turn helps to better understand the self. This reciprocal process of mutual recognition is teleological, holding the promise of mutual benefit and betterment with every cycle of engagement between the self and other, between authenticity and recognition. The key distinction in Taylor’s reckoning, however, is that the constructive action of recognition always has the other in mind, rather than being driven by the inductive

reasoning of a selfish individual. The ethos of authentic engagement then results in an identity based on recognition.

Taylor's perspective adds to our discussion of theories of identity, seeing identity formation as largely relational, with a strong emphasis on dialogical engagement. His language of loss and recovery through authenticity, and of recognition in terms of both being recognized and recognizing others, has much to add to our understanding of how identity is understood and formed at *Journey to the Father*. We can see in this instance of identity formation an attempt to retrieve an authentic identity in evangelical Catholicism, and to gain recognition for one's socio-religious identity. But most importantly, Taylor provides a framework that sheds light on the tacit formation of the self. This is a valuable addition to the theories of social formation and power that hinge upon the individual. Ultimately, Taylor offers an important basis for understanding identity formation through the particulars of the individual in relation with others.

2.2.2. *Agency: Functioning of the Self*

Taylor provides important elaborations on the theoretical framework of identity formation, but his perspective is not without its critics. William Connolly, for example, argues that Taylor's *theo-teleological* perspective ensures the dominance of structural powers (i.e. science, rational thought, God, etc.) and perpetuates the institutions of thought, culture, and action that remain affixed on the notion of a compartmentalized and "disembodied" reality (2002: 85). Inspired by Connolly's critique, we can see in Taylor's framework for a politics of recognition

that agency remains unquestioned or unexamined, and that the reality of marginalization is largely unaccounted for. The issue of universality in Taylor's work speaks to the problems of privilege and power, and a corresponding misrepresentation of agency. Here I will briefly outline some feminist discussions on theories of agency as they inform our understanding of subjectivity, looking at traditional definitions of agency and critiques of said conventions, and review the applicability of agency to the formation of identity.

Agency speaks directly to the underlying elements of autonomy and freedom that allow an individual to act within systems of social formation, power, and identity. The traditional conception of agency relates to the individual's capacity to act in the way that she or he chooses. "Linked to notions of self-determination and autonomy, agency denotes the exercise of free will and personal freedom, at least within the bounds of social authorized actions" (Bowden and Mummery, 2009: 125). Agency, therefore, has always been a key concern for feminism, in seeking ways to disrupt an androcentric worldview and establish modes of action for women in all facets of life—i.e. the freedom for women to make their own decisions. Furthermore, this understanding of agency is crucial to deconstructing a wide array of oppressive and hegemonic forces in order to make visible those who have been marginalized for not conforming to gendered norms.

Nevertheless, there are important critiques emerging within feminist discourse that examine the problem of agency and its underlying notion of the freedom of will. Sumi Madhok et al. assert "that agency is never simply gendered but

that it is always so in ways that intersect with hierarchies of class, sexuality, and race” (2012: 2). Madhok et al. point out that attached to the traditional idea of agency are elements like conspicuous consumption, which are affectively different in each social, cultural, economic, and political context around the globe. Therefore, the conventional definition of agency is inherently problematic, being too narrowly based on Western political (neo)liberal ideals. Saba Mahmood also critiques the Western ideal of autonomy attached to agency, describing it as an “imaginary freedom” based on the view that “an individual is considered free on the condition that she act autonomously: that her actions be the result of her own choice and free will, rather than of custom, tradition, transcendent will, or social coercion” (2005: 148). This perspective serves to question the very idea that people have the independent agency to make independent choices.

Agency and choice, therefore, are problematic categories that need to be further developed. Madhok et al. point to the inescapable factor of coercion when discussing the relationship between agency and choice. They point out that coercion figures prominently in their work, “reminding us that agency is always exercised within constraints, that inequality is an ever-present component, and that the constraints relate to social, not just personal, power relations” (2012: 7). As authors they “wish to move away from the problematic binary between agency and coercion, and yet they also must remain attuned to the reality of their interplay” (2012: 260–261). Coercion is something ubiquitous and undeniable that must therefore be negotiated on a political front. And, again, this conceptualization of coercion points

to a Western ideal of independent agency against independent coercive forces. Mahmood presents the perspectives and actions of non-Western, conservative Muslim women as a commentary on this illusory category of the independent self outside of embedded relations with others. This nuanced assessment of the traditional notion of the autonomous agent has been picked up by feminists calling for more invested understandings of the contexts in which agency exists.

Bowden and Mummery outline a concept called *relational autonomy*, which takes into account the reality(ies) of the agent rather than a projection of the ideal of agency. This is translated into what they call a set of competencies for autonomous agents: “first, the possession of certain skills or competencies; secondly, the capacity for reflections based on these skills; and thirdly, the activation or exercise of those skills” (2009: 133). This dovetails into Michel Foucault’s view that power is productive in that people gain possession of knowledge and competencies through action within discursive fields that can be at times restrictive. Relational autonomy stresses the underlying notion that people are themselves reproducing power by virtue of their actions and agency, in forming identity in relation to others. Madhok et al. also come to this conclusion, in that “Agency is not just a matter of individual self-awareness and individual action; it is a matter of collective transformation as well” (2012: 8). Against the forces of “varying and unequal constraints,” women must work together in order to exercise agency. This theory outlines different tiers of action.

There is a warning, however, not to essentialize identity as an operational factor in our understanding of agency. This critique reflects the problems surrounding identity politics in that, to be recognized by others, one must belong to a reified category or articulated identity—i.e. race, culture, language, sexuality, gender, age, socio-economic status, etc. Bowden and Mummery explain, “This in turn entails that the self is inextricable from its social discursive context, and that there can be no pre-cultural sense to any of the categories used to describe the self” (2009: 140). In other words, when identity begins to speak for you, it is hollowing out any sense of personal agency. Lois McNay responds to this caveat, saying, “Rather the challenge would be to continue to reconfigure notions of embodied identity and subjectivity in materialist and relational terms in order to work towards the realization of renewed and creative forms of political action” (2010: 523–524). Again, the terms of engagement must remain sensitive to multiple layers of subjectivity and reciprocal relationships, as individuals reflect on *who they are* in relation to others.

Identity formation is a process whereby the self explores, questions, and engages multiple experiences of the other (i.e. community, culture, society, or the unknown) in an ongoing process of continual definition and redefinition. Choice and agency are operational factors in this process, but these terms must remain sensitive to the influences and experiences of social relations. Identity formation, therefore, stands at the heart of this research project where, at *Journey to the Father*, conventional understandings of Catholic identity are stretched and redefined within

a discursive space and by galvanizing personal experiences. Put differently, identity becomes the book in which the narrative of evangelization is written, but as discerned by Catholic youth.

2.3. Youth Perspectives: Theories on Youth, Religion, and Identity

The final section of this discussion on theory looks at approaches to studying youth and religion. Youth have become an important subject in the multidisciplinary study of religion around the world, with a proliferation of theories and methods for studying young people's engagement with religion in terms of belief, practice, and experience in the formation and maintenance of their identities.

There is a varied literature on the topic of youth and religion. This includes edited volumes specifically on religion and youth (Collins-Mayo and Dandelion, 2010; Giordan, 2010), studies of mixed-faith families (Arweck and Nesbitt, 2011; Arweck and Penny, 2015), formal education (Beaman and Van Arragon, 2015; Conley Tyler et al., 2009; Halafoff, 2015; Halafoff et al., 2015), the relations of religious and sexual identities (Page, 2012; Page and Yip, 2012; Yip and Page, 2013), and popular culture and media (Jarvandi, 2014; Lövheim, 2004, 2008). Work by Canadian scholars has focused on religion in the second generation of recent immigration (Beyer, 2005; Beyer and Ramji, 2013; Lefebvre, 2012), and on religion, identity, and spirituality among young people (Bibby, 2001, 2009, 2011; Lefebvre, 2008; Lefebvre and Chakravarty, 2010). As a whole, this scholarship underscores the importance of focusing on youth in the study of religion. My own theoretical

discussion necessitates an understanding of how young people are studied and their relative agency with regard to identity formation.

In an article looking at the historical trends in the study of youth and religion, Carol Cusack remarks that “the emergence of the independent teenager in the second half of the twentieth century was part of a rapid process of wide-ranging social change, in which the interrelated phenomena of secularisation, individualism and consumer capitalism emerged as the dominant discourses in Western culture” (2011: 410). This new category of social agent indeed warranted a new definition and analysis. Cusack outlines three major trends in the emerging study of youth and religion. First, a basic understanding coming out of the mid-20th century that youth are social agents with the capacity to shape their own individual and group identities. Cusack points to the evidence of youth agency when “decisions are made on the grounds of tastes and inclinations, rather than family ties or community values” (2011: 411). Secondly, countering a thesis of religious decline that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, research began looking at youth participation in global religious communities and new religious movements. And finally, the shift toward a view of youth as being part of a complex developmental process in relation to historical, geographical, and economic elements and influences. Cusack reflects that the scholarship on youth and religion is heading in the right direction thanks to efforts to define youth not with reified categories, but rather as social agents whose capacity for choice allows them significant input in identity formation.

Referencing the same values as Cusack, Peter Hemming and Nicola Madge delineate a clear methodological approach stressing that research in the area of youth, religion, and identity should focus on the agency of young people. They make four interrelated points. The first is that religious identity is complex, and one must remain sensitive to *what people are* as well as *what they are not*. Secondly, they define religious identity by four elements, “(1) affiliation and belonging; (2) behaviours and practices; (3) beliefs and values; and (4) religious and spiritual experiences” (2012: 39–40). Thirdly, they assert that agency is exercised among young people, to the possible contradiction of adult misperceptions and/or misconceptions, and that youth may develop religious identities that challenge “dominant representations and discourses” (2012: 45). And finally, they examine the methodological implications of research on youth, religion, and identity, which include the notion that social spaces are complex, fluid, and in flux, which necessitates using mixed-methods in order to generate comprehensive research.

Peter Beyer and Rubina Ramji in *Growing Up Canadian: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists* (Beyer and Ramji, 2013) provide an example of the study of young people and religion within a Canadian context that relates directly to this doctoral research. This edited book provides a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the religious identity of 1.5 and 2nd generation Canadian youth between the ages of 21 and 22 of Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist backgrounds. In summary, their findings are that these youth have a belief in gender equality, but even more in complementarity (i.e. the genders are the same but different), accept multiculturalism and celebrate religious

diversity, have no favourable view of religious politicization, and that their religious identities are based on socialization but are also tempered by individual engagement. This suggests that identity is in flux, presenting an image of minority young people engaging with dominant socio-political values. Beyer writes, “There was a consistent expectation that beliefs and practices had to make sense, to fit into a larger context of meaning, to have a reason other than that this was simply the way things were done. At the same time, it was up to the individual to discover this meaning from whatever sources each found authoritative or trustworthy, whether that be family, religious leaders, books, friends, the Internet, school, or other media” (2013: 11). Beyer speaks of a level of cultural and social negotiation on the part of young 1.5 or 2nd generation immigrant youth in the process of forming identity, pointing to an underlying premise of agency. This supports the view that young people are always negotiating religious tradition and socialization as active agents and not as passive recipients of inherited tradition.

Beyer and Ramji’s perspective provides us with a substantive insight into the theoretical models of Cusack, Hemming and Madge with a special focus on youth agency in the negotiation of different, and often competing, discourses informing religious identity. However, Kylie Valentine warns, “A critical account of agency requires that the concept do more work than establishing that children are capable of willed action and are competent in specific situations” (2011: 356). Again, it is important for this research on Catholic evangelization and *Journey to the Father* to emphasize how young people actively engage the different elements of identity

formation, and not to relegate their agency to the purview of adult organizers. Though adult perspectives at *Journey to the Father* are clearly articulated and convincing in terms of the complexity of discourse at the conference, we must nevertheless remain open to perceiving how young people are engaging as well as resisting discourses of Catholic evangelization and Catholic identity.

2.4. Summary

Journey to the Father as a case study necessitates a theoretical framework that explicates the dynamics of the social formation of identity, the subjective experience of religion, and a methodological view of the agency of young people. The *Journey to the Father* conference serves as an alternative social geography for the inculcation and formation of Catholic identity in young people. It provides a space or structure for the dissemination of socio-religious perspectives, moral values, and charismatic experiences that are not usually found in the home, at school, or within the parish/church. The adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* share a hope in influencing young people to become more active agents within the Catholic Church. However, the reaction or level of engagement of the young participants in *Journey to the Father* has yet to be determined. How are young people interpreting the socio-political and religious messages from *Journey to the Father*, and how are they negotiating their religious experiences and Catholic identity within the larger conventional, secular society?

This union between research structure, methodology, and theory will help us to understand the dynamics at play in *Journey to the Father*, and its impact on young

people's lives. This framework can be separated into two related sections: 1) the formation of religious experience, and 2) the negotiation and formation of religious identity. Regarding the formation of religious experience, Beckford and Knott each see the individual as informing and forming their socio-religious realities in conjunction with dominant social structures. McGuire, Orsi, and Riis and Woodhead add to this view, underscoring the importance of lived experience and recognizing the role of emotions in colouring a religious worldview. Together, these theoretical frameworks underscore the basic premise that religious experience at *Journey to the Father* exists between institutional prescriptions and individual perspectives.

With regard to the negotiation and formation of religious identity, *Journey to the Father* serves as a platform through which messages of an active Catholic identity are disseminated by the organizers, and are therefore negotiated and appropriated by the young participants. Taylor's depiction of a dialogical identity between authenticity and recognition helps to shed light on the underlying dynamics of identity formation between *self* and *others*. Furthermore, a more critical discussion of agency and coercion sourced in feminist theory and the recognition of the place of young people in the study of religion provides a more grounded understanding of young people as social agents. Together, these theoretical frameworks serve to expose and to analyze the different dynamics between the adult organizers who engender a specific socio-political and religious discourse as well as modes of disseminating that discourse, and the young people as the recipients, negotiating these messages and experiences.

This theoretical and methodological framework acts as a basis for the following literature review. The next chapter provides a discussion of the impact of secularism on religion, a history of the Catholic Church in the modern era, and the rise and influence of the New Catholic Evangelization.

Chapter 4 — The *New Evangelization* in a “Secular Age”: Literature Review

Introduction

Evangelical discourse adheres to a narrative depicting an antagonism between secularism and religion, which serves to inform modern evangelical identity. *Jesus Camp* and *Journey to the Father* both tell this story, where secular values, entrenched in conventional society, provide a tension that helps motivate young people to assert a more active or engaged religious identity. This antagonism between secularism and religion has a long history in Western Europe, where religious wars, the emergence of the nation-state, and the rise of Enlightenment values led to the view that religion was a detriment to tolerance, political neutrality, freedom, and the public good. In turn, this had abiding effects on religious institutions like the Catholic Church who, as a result of this shift in socio-political values, became politically, socially, and philosophically marginalized from the political/public sphere. Evangelization seeks to redress this historical and contemporaneous de-emphasis of religion, as a means to redefine the contours of modern religious identity.

This chapter offers a review of the literature examining the historical, social, and political dynamics at play behind *Journey to the Father*—specifically, the impact of religious engagement on contemporary Catholic identity. This will be delineated into three sections: 1) outlining the historical rise and significance of secularism; 2) drawing a brief historical exposition of the Catholic Church in the modern period; and 3) presenting a description of the New Evangelization as an increasingly

popular expression and definition of Catholic identity. The purpose of this literature review is to outline the social and political forces that inform the various underlying discourses of *Journey to the Father*.

1. Secular Narratives: Seeking Political Neutrality

The idea of secularism has come to dominate our understanding of Western civilization. The basic premise is that the emergence of the 18th century Enlightenment values of free thought and political neutrality necessitated a worldview free from the machinations of religion. However, this deterministic understanding of secularism and its effects on the West should perhaps not be accepted without question. In fact there are many important critiques by authors like Jacques Berlinerblau (2014) who see secularism as a congruous part of a genealogy of religious discourse in a Western context, or Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini (2004) who point to the collusion of church and state in forging civic morality around normative forms of sexuality. Talal Asad is particularly comprehensive in unpacking and deconstructing the universality of secularism (2003) and the definition of religion (1993), pointing to the discursive impact of secularism on modernity. Nevertheless, these critiques do not diminish the resonance secularism has for contemporary understandings of modern identity. Secularism is a complex idea, so it is worth examining its various definitions.

José Casanova (2011), drawing from the large and varied literature on the topic, provides a summary of the three important elements of secularism: the *secular*, *secularization*, and *secularism*. First, Casanova explains that the *secular*

speaks broadly of a codification of values that are different from “the religious.” He describes the secular as a “central modern category” that now serves as an underlying framework for the Western worldview. Secondly, *secularization* speaks of the patterns of change and influence of secularism on different social structures and systems, such as politics and epistemology. The “secularization thesis,” or the inevitable de-emphasis of religion corresponding to an increase in social progress, is a strong proponent of this category, with the idea of the privatization or domestication of religion at its centre (i.e. religion being barred from the public sphere).

Finally, *secularism* is a broad category, encompassing various values and worldviews, describing the impact or importance of the secular in society, epistemology, or identity, which Casanova argues has at times been operationalized without reflexivity. He notes that secularism “also refers to different normative-ideological state projects, as well as to different legal-constitutional frameworks of separation of state and religion and to different models of differentiation of religion, ethics, morality, and law” (2011: 66). Secularism and the secularization thesis have become part of a dominant narrative describing modernity and modernization, which has affected how we understand the conditions for civilization—e.g. liberal democracy endowed by the political neutrality of a secular polity. The discourse on secularism is complex, touching on core Western values. What follows is an overview of this idea’s rise to prominence, and an examination of how it has affected our conceptions of modern identity.

1.1. Historical Rise of a Secularism Narrative

Modern society has its roots—though not exclusively—in the 17th century, whose social and political values have come to dominate Western Europe, becoming synonymous with modernization and, thus, “civilization.” In contrast to the overarching values and socio-political perspectives of Medieval Europe, Peter Beyer outlines the key differentiations that mark the social and political shift in the early modern period: “no longer the “glory” of certain strata, but discovery, enlightenment, freedom, (national) fraternity, equality” (2006: 39). Prior to the 16th century, the Catholic Church dominated the political and spiritual realms of Western Europe, meaning that the Church held a hegemonic influence on people’s lives, and on various affairs related to governance. However, significant social and political events like the Protestant Reformation (16th century), the Scientific Revolution (17th century), and the Enlightenment (18th century) led to far-reaching paradigm shifts that have helped shape the modern era until today. One of the major elements to emerge from these shifts was secularism, a political discourse informing economic policy, epistemology, and political identity.

Secularism has therefore been a key factor in shaping Western understandings of the role of religion in our lives. Beyer has effectively pointed to the Peace of Westphalia (1648) as a watershed moment in the de-emphasis of religious authority and the rise of the burgeoning nation state (2013a, 2013b). From the bloodshed of post-Reformation religious conflict in the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) came the *Westphalian model* regarding state sovereignty, territorial integrity,

and religious unity. Beyer remarks that, though this was a moment of re-conceptualizing “religion and polity,” it did not dismiss religion from the political sphere, but redefined it. He writes, “[The Westphalian model] helped ensure that the ‘establishment’ of a religious confession in a particular state always also introduced the question of how to ‘tolerate’ religious ‘minorities,’ of other ‘confessions’ and of ‘dissenting’ minorities, including that of the Jews” (Beyer, 2013b: 668). Though Beyer’s analysis hints at a broader discussion of the “post-secular” regarding the link between secularism and religion today (i.e. religion has not disappeared but transformed; cf. Beckford, 2012), it is important to recognize the liberal values of tolerance and pluralism established in the Westphalian model, and that religion was decoupled from the political power and prerogatives of the nation state. This transformative period served as a wellspring for secularism to develop throughout the modern period.

Paul Kelly describes political liberalism as a “branch of the broader liberal tradition that places liberal-egalitarianism distributive principles at its core. It is political for the reason that it is intended to accommodate the plurality of different views about how individuals should live their lives” (2005: 2–3). The intention of political liberalism was largely the recognition of individual values against the violence and tyranny of entrenched authorities, with religious institutions (like the Roman Catholic Church) exerting a tremendous hegemonic influence over multiple spheres of social, political, and economic realities. What is key to political liberalism is the importance of the individual over the communal or collective needs, concerns,

and/or worldview. This does not negate community or society, but rather the individual becomes the operational factor for key ideas and socio-political values such as individual agency, free will, unimpeded choice, social and economic equality, tolerance of social and political pluralism, and the social good.

Secularism and political liberalism are therefore intimately linked, especially with regard to the social and political operation of the public sphere. Jürgen Habermas reminds us that “Political liberalism...understands itself as a non-religious and postmetaphysical justification of the normative foundations of a democratic constitutional state [...] the legitimating foundation of a state power that is neutral between world views derive from the profane sources of 17th and 18th century philosophy” (2005: 340). Habermas underscores the importance of secularism to the maintenance of liberal values and *vice versa*, which supports secularization as an operational factor in maintaining political neutrality with regard to socio-political pluralism. This view speaks to the ideal that, with the development of political systems reflecting more complex and pluralistic societies, the separation of Church from State must become the political norm. He writes, “What is illegitimate is the violation of the neutrality principle according to which all enforceable political decisions must be formulated in a language that is equally accessible to all citizens, and it must be possible to justify them in this language as well” (Habermas, 2006: 12). If secularism is the common language of the system, then religious discourse must be translated into “neutral” or “accessible” terms, as a means of political integration. Habermas is suggesting that if there is no communication due to

conflicts of clashing values, there cannot be participation and civic engagement. He is claiming that religion should not get in the way of an individual's freedom of political and social engagement.

1.2. Secularization Thesis and its Impact on Religion

The view of the inherent neutrality of secularism also finds resonance in scholarly ideas of epistemological objectivity. In describing the impact of secularism on the academic study of religion, James Beckford briefly sketches the historic moments and elements that brought about supersession of religious authority in the political sphere. He writes, "in the course of the nineteenth century, and particularly under the auspices of positivism, socialism, theories of evolution and liberal biblical criticism, the idea that religious and secular views of the world were *opposed* to each other gathered momentum" (Beckford, 2003: 34). Academics as well as political theorists began asserting secularism to be an underlying premise of social reality. Peter Berger, in his seminal book *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), develops a theory of secularization alongside his broader theory on social construction. He sees religion as a socially constructed "human enterprise" that serves a social and psychosocial function. Religion's role is to pacify and cohere individuals in a social context, which works at relieving tension and provides a cosmological orientation for human institutions. However, Berger believes that religion has alienated humanity from the knowledge that they are "co-creators" in this social construction. Secularization offers a vehicle through which to engage this "de-alienation" project that would put humanity in touch with the actual social realities of the world.

These narratives on the secularization thesis have fed academics like Steve Bruce (2002), who understands secularism as heralding the decline of religion's influence and power and a rise in individualism, diversity, and egalitarianism within liberal democracies. He sees sociological perspectives like those of Berger as correct in terms of the secularization thesis and social vitality. This, he claims, is apparent in the way that religions have changed in relation to secularization. Bruce points to the cultic rise and fall of religious authority within Western contexts with the "Easternization of the West" (2002: 235). Bruce sees this change exposing how individualism informs and perpetuates secularization for the benefit of society rather than being dictated by religious authorities. Secularism is an important part of evolution of Western civilization. Charles Taylor shares this perspective in his evaluation of the impact of secularism, defining it as an undeniable fact for people who live in the Western world. Though Taylor holds to the idea of "religious transformation," as opposed to a complete shutting out of religion from the political public sphere (cf. Beyer, 2013b: 664), he acknowledges a clear separation of religious institutional influence from the political fields of governance and influence. Taylor writes, "religion or its absence is largely a private matter. The political society is seen as that of believers (of all stripes) and non-believers alike" (2007: 1). Within this broader perspective, Taylor summarises and explains the conditions for secularism, and its effects on Western society, on three fronts.

The first front is *public spaces*, where what reference to God that still exists is nominal compared to the presence of God in the socio-political world that predated

modernity. Taylor points out that things have definitely changed, in that in pre-modern societies, God was everywhere, impossible to disentangle from all structures of society, which enabled religious structures to exert tremendous coercive authority across all social strata. Thus the process of extracting religious influence from public political authority was necessary in order for the ideals of liberal democracy to take root. This served to justify the relegation (or marginalization) of religion to the private sphere. The second front is the *falling off of religious belief*, which simply points to a perceived disenchantment with religious belief, where people have stopped contributing to and engaging with religious structures. The third front relates to *conditions of belief*, which is an important element for Taylor as the motivating factor in the rise of secularism in Western societies. He describes the decline of the conditions of belief due to the fact that a “Belief in God is no longer axiomatic. There are alternatives” (Taylor, 2007: 3). This speaks to a broadening of the “conditions of experience” of faith and engagement, resulting from an increased diversity of choice.

Taylor ultimately understands that “we have moved from a world in which the place of fullness was understood as unproblematically outside of or ‘beyond’ human life [i.e. Christendom], to a conflicted age in which this construal is challenged by others which place it (in a wide range of different ways) ‘within’ human life [i.e. Secular Age]” (2007: 15; square brackets mine). Modern perspectives both assert and justify the veracity of the idea of a secular age; in other words, the idea of secularism has undeniably conditioned our understanding of

social and political reality. In an edited volume called “Rethinking Secularism,” Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen argue that that secularism, as a mark of the apparent decline of the socio-political significance of religion, is not neutral. Rather, “Secularism should be seen as a presence. It is *something*. ...Whether it is seen as an ideology, a worldview, a stance towards religion, a constitutional framework, or simply an aspect of some other project...secularism is, rather than merely the absence of religion, something we need to think through” (Calhoun et al., 2011: 5). Though the notion of “thinking through” the importance and function of secularism points to a larger discussion of post-secularism or *the return of religion to the public sphere* (cf. Beckford, 2012; Calhoun, 2011; Connolly, 1999), it is most relevant to the broader discussion of this doctoral thesis to recognize how secularism serves as optic that conditions the way we see modern life. Primarily through antagonistic relationships with religion regarding institutionalization, practice, and worldview, narratives of secularism have come to dominate the fabric of modern identity.

2. The Modern Catholic Church: Sea Changes in Political Influence

The Catholic Church, from the early modern period to today, has weathered the storm of modernity and secularism by drawing from a deep institutional conservatism that asserts the importance of tradition and institutional religiosity. And yet, the Church has also been shaped by the winds of modern change. From the Council of Trent (16th century) to the Second Vatican Council (20th century), the Catholic Church has asserted its importance as an institution while negotiating the

rise of liberal political values both without and within. The modern Catholic Church is one that effectively changes with the times, without undermining its fundamental structural. It is this negotiation between “tradition” and “modernization” that defines the Catholic Church today.

This section will first briefly examine the Catholic Church’s historical negotiation of modernizing, liberalizing forces from the Council of Trent to the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. This will be outlined in two parts: 1) *Conservative Frameworks* will provide an historical exposition of the conflict between the Catholic Church and broader modernizing forces; 2) *Modernizing the Church* will examine the impact that the Second Vatican Council has had on the Church today, as a benchmark of its socio-political engagement with modern values. This historical exposition will reveal the context of the form and substance of Catholic evangelization today.

2.1. Conservative Frameworks: Asserting Catholic Institutional Authority

With the Protestant Reformation (16th century) came a series of conflicts that shifted the limits of Catholic and Protestant influence back and forth throughout Western Europe. It was an era when the Catholic Church generated a defensive attitude in order to consolidate denominational and political affiliation, but it was also a time of great reflection for the Church. From the sea change of the Reformation came the Catholic counter-Reformation response in the form of the *Council of Trent*, the foundation stone for the Church in the modern period. The Council of Trent was a significant event for asserting Roman dominance and papal

power of influence within the Church. The council was called by Pope Paul III and took place over three different sessions (1545–1563) in the city of Trent in Northern Italy. Thomas Bokenkotter notes that “The spirit of the Catholic Reformation, forged at Trent, was one of strict orthodoxy and morality, deep personal piety, and obedience to Church authority, a revival that was profoundly successful in giving the Church a character that would endure for four hundred years” (2004: 291). Tridentine doctrine helped secure Catholic political and religious allegiances throughout Europe, where different Protestant factions contested it. Trent asserted the importance of Church hierarchy in all aspects of Catholic Christian tradition in the wake of an eclipsed Christendom. This attitude would come to characterize conservatism within the Catholic Church.

Trent had an impact on Church doctrine as well as on popular devotion or the religious engagement of the laity. It generated the first catechism to systematize and disseminate Catholic doctrine around elements such as transubstantiation, scripture and Catholic canon, a unified liturgy, and Catholic understandings of justification of faith through the moral prism of the Catholic Church (Hitchcock, 2012: 289–290). Though the stipulations of Trent served as means to stop the fragmentation of Catholic influence in Western Europe, they also gave rise to a sense of Catholic triumphalism that asserts papal power and control, and institutional self-importance. As Jonathan Hill notes, “it set a standard of faith and practice that defined the Roman Catholic position as opposed to its opponents” (2007: 207). This triumphalism would become a defining element of modern Catholic conservatism,

and come to characterize its dealings with the emerging, conflicting values of the modern period.

From the 17th century to the mid-20th century, the Catholic Church became increasingly marginalized from the public discourses of science, philosophy, and politics, forcing the Church to assert its influence over the religious sphere in its systematic relegation to the private sphere. As pressure increased, the election of Pope Pius IX (1846–1878) proved the ultimate expression of Catholic conservatism's influence within the global Church. His tenure as pope had two defining moments: the Syllabus of Errors and the First Vatican Council. Pius IX was suspicious of the spread of liberal ideology over Western Europe and its influence on the Church. This suspicion led to the Syllabus of Errors (1864), a compendium that listed eighty errors perpetuated by the modern world, “including rationalism, naturalism, a socialism that would subject the family totally to the state, and liberal capitalism that had no other end than material gain. For most people, however, the most startling thing was the condemnation of freedom of religion, progress, and liberalism” (Bokenkotter, 2004: 315). This powerful pronouncement had a dampening effect on modernizing elements within the Church, and served to set the tone of Catholic institutional identity.

The First Vatican council was a key event, in which Pope Pius IX affirmed his institutional control through the promulgation of the dogmas of Marian Immaculate Conception (1849) and Papal Infallibility (1854). This, along with the Syllabus of Errors, became a strong assertion of papal and ecclesiastical dominance over the

Church. Hill speaks of these actions as a formal assertion of the value and validity of the Council of Trent at a time of great change within society and the Church. He writes, “It upheld [Pius IX’s] teaching...that reason is decidedly inferior to revelation and that revelation is to be found solely through the Roman Catholic Church” (2007: 256–257). By promoting these dogmas through the council, all questions of dissent within the Church from the authority of the Pope were quelled for the sake of asserting Tridentine counter-Reformation values—i.e. a Church opposed to its opponents. This consolidated Catholic conservatism through the 20th century, centering it on the power and authority of the Pope and the Holy See.

2.2. The Second Vatican Council: The Modernization of the Church

The conflicts and political positioning of the Catholic Church from Trent to the First Vatican Council left an impression that the Church was locked in mortal combat with the ever-expanding modern and secular world. Yet this would prove less than true with the turn of the 20th century and some instances of “modernization.” After the long pontificate of Pius IX, Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) took a more moderate approach to the negotiation of the Church with the modern world. Leo XIII was able to steer the Church away from ideological conflict, in a direction that acknowledged the stark realities of a burgeoning Industrial Revolution. Bokenkotter remarks that with the swift changes of industrialization affecting communication and travel, people were moving away from agrarian lifestyles, toward greatly dense cities. This worried the Church, which saw how urbanization “made the average person peculiarly susceptible to mass suggestion

and mass action” (2004: 333). Exploding populations, a rise in literacy, media expansion and dissemination, and access to political democracy made for a broader and more engaged public for the Church to negotiate. Bokenkotter explains how Leo XIII was able to integrate the “techniques of liberalism without subscribing to its philosophy” (2004: 333). With the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Leo XIII was able to champion the oppressed workers without asserting socialist values of absolute equality that would contradict the very structures of the Church.

The subsequent four popes, however, upheld the status quo, put in place by their predecessors from the last century. Pope Pius XII (1939–1958) was the last significant pope of an era that claimed a triumphalist discourse of the power and authority of the Catholic Church. Subsequently, Pope John XXIII (1958–1963) was elected in his 70’s, with the understanding that he too would maintain the status quo of the institutional Church. However, as Bokenkotter writes, “Though his pontificate was destined to be one of the shortest in modern history (four years and seven months), it was undoubtedly one of the most important and, in fact, really amounted to a revolution that brought an end to Tridentine Era of the Church and the whole fortress mentality characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church since Trent” (2004: 394). Pope John XXIII took steps to ensure that the Church would indeed ride the currents of modernity rather than drown in its eddying torrents.

The Second Vatican Council (or Vatican II) took place over four sessions. It was opened by John XXIII on January 25, 1959 and closed in 1965 by Pope Paul VI, who presided over the last three. The council periods were tremendous events

where several thousand bishops and cardinals deliberated over the changes needed for the Church (Alberigo, 2006). This council brought sweeping changes to the Church regarding ecclesiology, liturgy, scripture, and divine revelation as well as many aesthetic elements, from the use of vernacular language to changes to the habits worn by Catholic nuns. The council also sought to reconcile the Catholic Church with the world through ecumenical engagements with willing Protestant groups and the Eastern Orthodox Churches, as well as multi-faith engagements especially with different proponents of the Abrahamic faiths (Faggioli, 2012). Overall, the Church adopted a more tolerant posture towards social, cultural, political, philosophical, and religious difference.

Ultimately, the Second Vatican Council changed the face of the Catholic Church. Though it spoke of an institutional program of reform, its greatest impact was felt among the Catholic laity. Melissa Wilde notes that “along with transforming the Church’s culture, Vatican II, at least temporarily, profoundly altered the modes of power, and with them, the distribution of key resources within the Church” (2007: 15). Liturgy in vernacular languages opened up a new engagement of the laity with regard to the mechanics of religiosity that were once obfuscated by the transcendent effect of indiscernible Latin. With the encyclical *Lumen Gentium* (Second Vatican Council, 1964), for example, came a de-emphasis of the hierarchical power of the Curia and a move towards more democratic engagements with the laity. Bokenkotter writes, “*Lumen Gentium* shifts the emphasis from the Church as a pyramidal structure to the Church as the whole people of God, and it lays stress on

the fundamental equality of all as regards basic vocation, dignity, and commitment; it dwells on the common priesthood of the faithful” (2004: 406). This encyclical establishes a precedent for including the laity as part of the revelatory Church. But it also shifts to a personal engagement in Catholic theology and religiosity sourced in the experiences of direct contact with God rather than through a devotional bureaucracy of the Holy See.

Though Vatican II ushered in a great deal of change regarding attitudes of tolerance and inclusivity, as well as shifts in ecclesiastical collegiality and lay involvement, the Church remained a structure defined by the auspices of the Holy See; in other words, papal authority still ruled over the consensus of different voices in a global church (Alberigo, 2006: 119). The best example of this assertion of papal prerogative was in the controversy surrounding artificial contraception, where Pope Paul VI superseded the majority view of his commission on birth control and condemned the practice in his encyclical *Humane Vitae* (1968). Though this was an assertion of papal authority, Bokenkotter explains how it also affected the self-understandings of the Catholic laity: “The whole controversy over the exercise of authority in the Church, painful and disturbing as it is for the faithful, has certainly aroused the ordinary member of the Church to a much greater awareness of his own personal responsibility. It has made him realize that the hierarchy does not have all the answers, and it forced him to think about the role of the individual’s conscience” (Bokenkotter, 2004: 413). This indeed changed the mind-set of lay Catholics who moved from being directed by the moral authority of the Church to an acceptance of

individual agency, where one must negotiate and shape one's own Catholic identity vis-à-vis the institutional Church.

Each council, from Trent to Vatican II, was syncretic in generating a Catholic culture that was affected by the wider world. This is also true for the Catholic program of the New Evangelization (NE), influenced by the discourse of Vatican II as well as discourses of Catholic conservatism of institutional authority. It is therefore important to see how Catholic identity incorporates this tension between the institution and the individual in the NE.

3. Evangelical Contexts: The New Evangelization and Catholic Identity

The New Evangelization (NE), strictly speaking, is a post-Vatican II movement. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the theological nomenclature of evangelical Christianity was not a Catholic concern, being rather the province of Protestantism in terms of shaping the tone and approach to evangelization. This changed with Vatican II, where the shift toward democratization of the Church influenced the Catholic perspective on how a person engaged in various activities and attitudes with respect to Christian salvation. With more open access to a religiosity once rigorously administered through Catholic liturgical principles and sacramental devotion, Catholic lay people were now charged with engaging Jesus Christ and the Christian salvation directly, as individual agents. Note, however, that Catholic liturgical religiosity was not abandoned, but transformed. This transformation brought about new forms of religious and devotional engagement with the Catholic soteriology (theology of salvation). From once seeing the term

evangelical as anathema to Catholic identity, Catholics began to adopt long-held Protestant values. But the question is, just how does the Church go about engaging in evangelization while remaining Catholic?

This final section will examine how the Catholic Church deploys an evangelical discourse through the NE that, at once, maintains the modernist impulse of the Second Vatican Council to assert the importance of subjective engagement, while also asserting papal and ecclesiastical authority, and the overall importance of the Church institution. In order to unpack this discourse, this section will be outlined in two parts: 1) *post-conciliar identity complex* will look at the impact of Vatican II on the Catholic Church in two areas, the emergent category of cultural Catholicism and the rise of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement (CCR); and 2) *the New Evangelization* will conclude with an exposition and analysis of this largely understudied movement and its impact on contemporary Catholic identity.

3.1. Post-Conciliar Identity Complex: Catholic Engagement and Charismatic Renewal

The Second Vatican Council brought about many changes to the structures of the Church, but also had a great impact in terms of the role of the laity in shaping the Catholic Church. This change added a subjective element to individual religious engagement with the Catholic Church that reflects a paradigm shift in philosophical positioning around questions of authority and interpretation related to values of freedom of conscience and the importance of choice. Fay remarks that “The subjective universe emphasized affectivity, authenticity, personal growth, and the creation of human solidarity” (2002: 293). Within the space created by a shifting

institutional identity, Catholic laity has been slotted into two different types that broadly characterise Catholics today as a disaffected (*cultural*) Catholic or an engaged Catholic.

The disaffected or cultural Catholic is a broad and a somewhat undefined (if not problematic) category, mainly due to the fact that there is a lack of academic literature on this subject. And yet, cultural Catholicism remains a useful moniker for a majority of Catholics all over the world (Corcoran and Share, 2008; Gaudreault-DesBiens, 2009; Gillis, 2013; Inglis, 2014; Perreault, 2012; Portmann, 2010). Cultural Catholics are defined as members of the Catholic Church who claim cultural identification, but who nominally participate in Church culture only through life-cycle rituals (i.e. to baptise, marry, and die in the Church). In establishing a working definition, Chester Gillis (2013: 4) outlines of two types of cultural Catholics: 1) one that identifies with the authority structures of the Church, and 2) the other, which does not. John Portmann agrees, stating, “Cultural Catholics tend to espouse secular culture, not condemn it. Cultural Catholics are often willing to accept the authority of bishops and the pope; in any event, cultural Catholics do not insist on the primacy of biblical authority. And cultural Catholics squirm at the idea that conversion to Catholicism (or even Christianity) is necessary for salvation” (2010: 165). One relevant suggestion is that cultural Catholics engage the modern, secular world and overcome the potential cognitive dissonance raised by the conflicting worldview of the Catholic Church by decidedly *not engaging*. This sense of disaffection—consciously or subconsciously—is somewhat mandated by the transformations

brought on by Vatican II. These commentators (excluding Portmann) argue that disaffected/cultural Catholics are a problem for the perpetuation of the Catholic Church. Though this perspective on the negative impact of cultural Catholics on the Catholic Church necessitates more in-depth research, it nevertheless remains a significant point of contention and call to action for religiously engaged Catholics.

The term Engaged Catholics, like cultural Catholics, is also a misnomer, as disaffection does not necessitate ambivalence toward or disengagement from the Church or Catholic identity. However, for the particular Catholic movement I will discuss below, engagement has specific parameters, and disaffection or non-participation in the Catholic Church is not a viable option. In correlation with the new reality proffered by Vatican II, especially in terms of the newfound importance of subjectivity, the laity responded by emphasizing a personal, inner spiritual renewal. Fay explains, “The notion of the fundamental option in moral decisions helped to deepen a sense of personal conscience. There was a new effort to strive for authenticity by the four conversions of religion, morality, understanding, and psychic integration. The charismatic renewal brought into many people’s lives the experience of the Spirit for which they yearned” (Fay, 2002: 296). Though there are many Catholic organizations and approaches that could be defined as religiously engaged, Fay believes that the clearest expression of religious engagement in the post-conciliar Catholic Church is the *Catholic Charismatic Renewal* movement (CCR).

The CCR translated the subjective turn in modern society, as reflected in Vatican II, into the Catholic ritualistic terms of religious and spiritual engagement.

Though this approach presented a new form of religiosity within the Catholic Church, the CCR still acknowledged the importance of papal authority, the Holy See, and Catholic tradition. Though Susan Maurer points to Medieval and 15th century Catholic mystics as precursors to Catholic Charisma (Maurer, 2010: 70), the CCR movement largely adapted religious expressions that were connected to Protestant Pentecostal religiosity—e.g. glossolalia (speaking in tongues), charismatic emotional outpouring like crying and laughing, swooning in the Holy Spirit, prophetic visions, and faith healing. Michael Wilkinson writes, “Experience is a hallmark for Pentecostalism but it is based on a particular reading of the Bible” (2009: 9). Though this “reading of the bible” is different for each community, relating it more effectively to Protestant Evangelical values of biblical authority, the argument in favour of the CCR was one where the purview of the institutional Catholic Church (i.e. the Holy See) had to remain paramount to the expression and operationalization of Pentecostal, or in this case, charismatic hermeneutics and religiosity.

Until the 1960s, charismatic or Pentecostal religiosity was the domain of the 20th century Protestant Pentecostal movement and was unheard of in Catholicism. Charismatic religiosity in general has caught the attention of a number of academics whose work has focused on it because of its ability to generate community, and to influence modern Catholic identity through healing and a charismatic/Pentecostal religious encounter with Christ (Csordas, 1997; Hocken, 2013; Maurer, 2010; McGuire, 1982; Neitz, 1987). All agree that the strength of this movement is its

ability to wed the particularities of charismatic, personal religious experience to the importance of a structural Catholic Church.

Donald Swenson (2009) describes five elements that fed the popularity of the CCR within the institutional Church: 1) a liturgical movement that focused on Christian mysteries of incarnation, Jesus' ministry, crucifixion and resurrection, and Pentecost; 2) a conciliar emphasis on biblical hermeneutics that was theological and experiential; 3) an engaged laity endowed with Charismatic gifts without the dependence on ordained priests; 4) an ecumenical movement that did not deny disunity but asserted encounter, tolerance, and understanding; and 5) the Mystical Body movement, initiated by an encyclical *Mystici Corporis* from Pope Pius XII (1943), that justified the importance of the Holy Spirit to the Catholic Church.

Meredith McGuire and Mary-Jo Neitz each did important sociological work in the 1980s outlining the significance of the CCR for the Catholic Church in the United States. For her book *Pentecostal Catholics* (1982), McGuire researched the para-institutional elements of the CCR's activities, looking specifically at mystic healing rituals. Her analysis outlines beliefs and practices, and the discursive impact of conversion, charismatic religiosity, and incitement to discourse. Her aim is to examine the impact of authority within a community with a reciprocal relationship to religious practitioners. In *Charisma and Community* (1987), Mary-Jo Neitz uses a case study to extrapolate important reflections on the social reality of the religious experiences and worldview of Charismatic Catholics.

Neitz in particular looks at the impact of conversion and personal religious engagement within the CCR movement, focusing on psychosocial elements that affected identity formation and the structuring of religious worldviews. She describes the de-emphasis of the “mind-body” dualism inherent in the traditional Catholic worldview, in favour of the “present-orientation” of charismatic renewal. Neitz explains how this inspires “beliefs about the way that God intervenes directly in the lives of his people, especially through the gifts of the spirit and beliefs about the necessity of having personal relationship with God” (1987: 250). This speaks to the social agency of individual choice, and the transformative quality of conversion (i.e. born-again), which has repercussions in people’s relationships (i.e. family, friends, work, etc.). However, Neitz is careful to point out that these efforts are always grounded in community, writing, “The focus on the local community transcends the prevailing individualism and narcissism of modern culture” (1987: 260). She explains that choice and experience for Catholic charismatics oscillates between the individual and the community in seeking to mitigate the structural fragmentation of the Catholic Church.

McGuire raises another key element, regarding how the CCR seeks to counteract the influence of secularism. She explains that her interviewees “decried the influence of secularity within the church itself and called for the recognition of several pentecostal principles to overcome these forces: specifically, reliance on Scripture as ultimate authority, recognition of prophesy, and attention to spiritual warfare with the forces of Evil” (1982: 206). She points out the double bind inherent

in this perspective, being Christianity's loss of influence on the moral principles of both people's private lives and the public sphere—"business, politics, and education" (1982: 207). McGuire notes that this perceived societal refusal to recognize the importance of the Christian God in all aspects of everyday life has led her participants to fear that their religious identity would be further marginalized, risking increasing alienation and the denial of their religious identity.

Neitz and McGuire's work on CCR communities is very helpful for understanding the dynamics of Charismatic religiosity and its impact on Catholics communities. However, their analysis does not provide a full picture of the current state of the CCR, this scholarship being thirty years old. The CCR has witnessed transformation and controversy through the end of the 20th and into the 21st century. In her review of the history of the CCR, Susan Maurer points to four major trends and changes that she sees as apparent (2010: 74). The first is that both the CCR and Protestant Pentecostal movements strongly emphasized ecumenism, but the CCR has sacrificed some enthusiasm for this in return for acceptance by the larger Catholic Church. The second is that along with acceptance by the Church and growth in membership, the CCR has lost some of its "original spontaneity." The third trend is that with its global expansion, the CCR has seen a shift in representation from predominately white, middleclass membership (Neitz and McGuire's research subjects, for instance) to other ethno-cultural communities, especially in continental Africa and Latin America. And the fourth trend is the CCR's resilience in adapting to

changes both within society and within the Church, which Maurer sees as “demonstrating continued vitality and appeal both at home and abroad” (2010: 74).

As against this somewhat optimistic view of the CCR globally, Swenson notes a transformation within the CCR movement in Canada, and an apparent decline at the end of the 20th century. He points out that many Catholic clergy distrusted charismatic religiosity, while the internal dynamics within prayer groups around charismatic elements like prophecy and divergent leadership caused division and fragmentation. He writes, “while renewal played an important role for many in the Catholic Church, the institutionalization of renewal communities and their ensuing decline in Canada illustrates the various tensions of transition for Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity” (2009: 230). It is unclear whether the CCR is in decline today, or whether it is simply undergoing a transformation, as Maurer would suggest. As we will see below, it would appear, however, that core elements of a charismatic religiosity have been absorbed into the New Evangelization, possibly as a broader and more directed religious program within the Catholic Church.

3.2. The New Evangelization: A Paradigm of Personal Engagement, Authenticity, and Proselytization

The New Evangelization (NE) shares many key elements with the CCR, like a personal, charismatic religiosity that is maintained by communities. However, beyond the community basis upon which McGuire and Neitz have conducted their analyses, the NE as an evangelization program of the Catholic Church asserts the moral and political importance of the Church in terms of institutional authority. It is remarkable in that it represents the current mandate of the institutional Church

regarding evangelization, and yet it has remained in the background of Catholic perspectives, only recently acquiring its defining elements and receiving the attention of the wider Catholic Church. The lack of definition and latent rise to public recognition of the NE means that, in contrast to the work done on the CCR, there has been little to no academic analysis of its rise or its social and political impact. The literature referred to below is largely drawn from ecclesiastical leaders and authors within the Catholic Church who seek to influence and shape the movement.

The NE as a movement is rather unique, and distinct from the CCR, in that it represents the values and ambitions of the *Magisterium* (the teaching authority of the Catholic Church) in attempting to shape Catholic religious identity, but has eluded a clear definition, with a tendency, rather, to be seen as part of the natural evolution of the Church. The term “New Evangelization” was coined by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), which stressed the Pauline importance of inner conversion to Christ as a basis for outreach to a wider culture (Rymarz, 2011). John Paul II writes,

[T]here is an intermediate situation, particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. In this case what is needed is a “new evangelization” or a “re-evangelization.” (John Paul II, 1990: ¶ 33)

As an almost secondary reflection, John Paul II refers to the movement as “a new evangelization.” Case in point, Pope Benedict XVI named the period from Oct. 11,

2012 to Nov. 24, 2013 the *Year of Faith* as a commitment to evangelization within the Church (Benedict XV, 2011), though he had been talking about this *new* evangelization as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger since 2000 (Ratzinger, 2000). In 2012, a synod of Catholic bishops was held in Rome on the topic of the New Evangelization. The rhetoric of this synod reflected the missionary tone of the documents of Vatican II: “The new evangelization means an adequate response to the signs of the times, to the needs of individuals and people of today and to the new sectors with their cultures through which we express our identity and the meaning of our lives” (Synod of Catholic Bishops, 2012: ¶ 164). The new evangelization means missionary activities located within the Catholic faith, the Church as a strong proponent of faith through sacramental and ecclesiological emphasis, and the laity as a leading force of engagement within the family, in the Parish, and in broader society.

Today the NE has become the *lingua franca* of the Catholic institution. Pope Francis provides evidence of this with his second encyclical entitled *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), where he reiterates the importance of the Gospel, conversion of latent Catholics, an emphasis on the poor and tolerance of difference, and the importance of the Church in guiding one’s faith and the emergent faith of all Catholics. Even at the time of writing this thesis, there was a Catholic conference called a *New Evangelization Summit* taking place, from April 15–16, 2016 at the Westin Hotel in downtown Ottawa, ON. An estimated 5,000 people of all ages attended, with webcasts to 30 host parishes throughout North America (The New Evangelization Summit, 2016). These examples underscore the fact that the NE has

become a reality for many Catholics in Canada, where every parish has literature reflecting pastoral and liturgical perspectives on evangelization, and a myriad of activities like *Journey to the Father* and the New Evangelization Summit are taking place, aimed at proselytizing the widest possible audience of Catholics. In order to justify this shift in tone in Catholic proselytization and the overall newness of the NE program, the proponents of the NE are careful to relate this discourse of “Evangelical Catholicism” to Vatican II, which remains tethered to the teleology of Christian salvation history by way of Catholic tradition and its institutional longevity. It will be helpful to further examine the dynamic between the Vatican II reforms and Catholic institutional authority that is reflected in the NE.

Vatican II, as mentioned above, was a significant moment in terms of modernization for the Catholic Church. This signalled a progressive shift in attitude towards freedom of consciousness, religious freedom, ecumenism and multi-faith dialogue engagements, liturgical reforms, ecclesiastical collegiality, and greater involvement of the laity. Second Vatican Council encyclicals like *Dei Verbum* (1965c) reinforce modern biblical exegesis and hermeneutics as a means by which the Church interprets and defines the Christian past. *Gaudium et Spes* (1965e) speaks of human dignity and the need for respect and reconciliation as well as social justice. *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965d) underlines the invariable rights of the person and the protection of religious freedom in relation to secular society. And *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (1965b) describes the involvement and vocation of the Catholic laity in the modern world. Even encyclicals like *Ad Gentes* (1965a), which justifies a

continuing Catholic missionary work abroad, emphasize cultural sensitivity and cooperation, not coercion. These encyclicals represent a modernist impulse to see the value of diverse human experiences and perspectives, and the view that individual rights play an important role in the contemporary Church. The idea of evangelization, however, reflects a powerful element of “conservative” discourse despite this new modernist backdrop.

In an encyclical called *Evangelii Nuntiandi* published in 1975, commemorating 10 years since the end of the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI asserts the need for evangelization in the world:

Evangelization, as we have said, is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative. These elements may appear to be contradictory, indeed mutually exclusive. [...] The value of the last Synod was to have constantly invited us to relate these elements rather than to place them in opposition one to the other, in order to reach a full understanding of the Church’s evangelizing activity. (Paul VI, 1975: ¶24)

Paul VI explains that the impetus to evangelization was the common thread tying together the various documents produced in Vatican II. He points to *Ad Gentes*, which states, “The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father” (Second Vatican Council, 1965a: ¶2). He reiterates this sentiment by referring to *Apostolicam Actuositatem*: “The Church was founded for the purpose of spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth for the glory of God the Father, to enable all men to share in His saving

redemption, and that through them the whole world might enter into a relationship with Christ” (Second Vatican Council, 1965b: ¶2). And in *Lumen Gentium*, Paul VI postulates a foundation for the NE program with the assertion of the eschatological nature of the Catholic Church through Christian salvation history (Second Vatican Council, 1964: ¶48-51), the soteriological justification for Catholicism (1964: ¶1-8), the importance of the hierarchical Church in maintaining tradition through a somewhat mitigated collegiality (1964: ¶18-29), the active inclusion of the laity in the economy of Salvation (1964: ¶30-38), and the Church’s universal call to holiness by way of evangelization (1964: ¶39-42). Looking back on Vatican II, Paul VI sees that the seeds of evangelization were planted, and endowed with the purpose of bearing fruit in the contemporary Church; it only needed the proper conditions to grow.

The NE, therefore, is a product of a post-conciliar Catholic Church. What makes this evangelization program “new” is that it brings together the Vatican II values of individual agency, freedom of consciousness, tolerance and dialogue, and democratization, marrying these with the assertion the importance of papal authority, the Holy See, and Catholic Tradition, within an evangelization framework. Furthermore, the ecumenical nature of Vatican II has brought Catholics into greater proximity with different Christian denominations, in particular Protestant Evangelical values and worldview (Del Colle, 2012; George and Guarino, 2015; Noll, 2005; Rausch, 2000). The merging of Catholic and Protestant values and perspectives is operationalized through the evangelization process, which focuses

on a personal relationship with Christ through the Catholic Church, and an evangelical impetus towards proselytization. Like the CCR, the NE aims to help “cure” the ills of society from the bottom up—i.e. from the individual transforming her/his family, to a transformation within the Church, particular culture(s), society, the globe, and even at a metaphysical level—with a major difference being that the NE is more politically minded and active. This bottom-up approach to proselytization and evangelical theology makes for a unique perspective within the Catholic Church.

The evangelization paradigm within a Catholic context is significantly different from that of Protestant Evangelicals. Proponents of the NE have pointed out that the historical Christian Church has had at its core an evangelical imperative (Boguslawski and Martin, 2008; Dulles, 2009; George and Guarino, 2015; Martin, 2012). Dulles explains that the Catholic Church has been actively involved in evangelization throughout history, with monasteries and churches all over Europe, the early missionary work of St. Boniface and St. Cyril, and missionary activity across the globe. With the Reformation, however, came a shift in ownership of the term *evangelical*. Dulles writes, “The crisis of evangelization has its roots in the Counter-Reformation, when the term *gospel* and *evangelical* were taken over by Protestants and become suspect to Catholic ears. Catholics put the accent not so much on announcement as on teaching, not so much on the message of salvation as on the moral law, the Church, and the sacraments. Their missionary activity was therefore less evangelical and more ecclesiastical” (2009: 2). The Tridentine Church

was one of institutional prerogative, based on the idea that the Catholic Church held stewardship over a deposit of faith rather than the Word of God. The latter was the territory of the Protestant reformers and the basis for Evangelical Protestantism. Yet, Vatican II offered an ecumenical rapprochement that helped shift the tides.

Proponents of the NE see Protestant Evangelicals and Pentecostals as having infused an inspired sense of purpose into Christianity. The NE therefore involved an approach by which Catholics could develop personal relationships with Jesus Christ in order to become more involved in the Catholic Church. The NE is based on a perception that Protestants have mastered the art of the evangelical imperative, and a feeling that Catholics must do the same. Timothy George and Thomas Guarino remark, “As Catholics, we need continually to retrieve the gospel (the *evangel*). Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. He can never be too much at the center of our preaching” (2015: 168). With regard to the Catholic mistrust of or disinterest in evangelization as mentioned above, Dulles explains that “Evangelicalism is not a denomination or a party but a dimension of authentic Christianity insofar as the gospel is the heart of Christian faith” (2009: 51). In his view, the term *evangelical* is no longer exclusive to either Protestants or Catholics. What has been important, therefore, is to translate this new paradigm into terms that can be understood by non-evangelical Catholics.

Though the Catholic Church has no formalized policy regarding the NE beyond the moral and liturgical impetus of Magisterial documents as outlined above, Dulles delineates a vision for the implementation of these evangelical values

with three basic features: 1) the gospels as authoritative; 2) personal faith in Christ; and 3) the impulse to disseminate the gospel through evangelism and social reform. Two key characterizations emerge that add to the basis of religiosity presented by the CCR. The first is that Catholic evangelization emphasizes the relevance and importance of the institutional Church in aiding one's personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The NE suggests that, without both the personal relationship with Christ and the institutional Church as a guide to this relationship, full participation in a Christian economy of salvation would amount to little. The second characterization relates to how the post-conciliar Catholic Church has shifted its attention to *being in this world* rather than *being apart from it*. Dulles writes, "Vatican II is careful not to reject authentic values that exist in the world before it is touched by the gospel. Evangelization, it declares, preserves everything good that is to be found in human cultures or religions, frees it from admixture with evil, and elevates it to a higher plane" (2009: 6). This perspective runs parallel to McGuire's and Neitz's descriptions of the CCR in that the actions of the NE are seen as important in countering the corrupting influence of secularism on the lives of individuals in the world as well as within the Catholic Church.

Authors like Timothy Byerley (2008) and Avery Dulles (2008, 2009) propose proselytization frameworks for the NE that outline the evangelical approach of personal witness, testimony, and conversion. Byerley recommends that the NE program and message be understandable (transferable) and able to be absorbed into any cultural milieu. This notion of culture builds on Pope John Paul II's

encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), which describes the moral ethos of *culture of life* vs. *culture of death*. This is a dichotomous conceptualization of moral versus immoral social action. The culture of death describes actions contingent on secular society (e.g. contraception, abortion, embryonic stem cell research, capital punishment, and euthanasia), whereas the culture of life reflects the moral imperative of the Catholic Church and personal engagement with it through the NE. This broad moral and political approach to culture within and outside of the Catholic Church is very important to the NE.

The NE promotes a highly personal religiosity that still accounts for the moral prerogative of the Catholic Church. Though the moral views of conventional society are seen as somewhat antagonistic, the NE insists on engagement with and not separation from secular society. This is a value shared by Protestant Evangelicals in Canada, who “participate in nearly all aspects of Canadian life with non-evangelicals. [...] Individualism, consumerism, and pluralism shape them, too, challenging subcultural distinctiveness and an external locus of authority” (Reimer and Wilkinson, 2015: 67). For evangelical Protestants and Catholics alike, a missionary attitude is about being in the world and not apart from it. Dulles states,

Evangelization is not and never has been easy. Today we tend to blame the prevalent culture for our lack of success. We denounce its individualism, secularism, relativism, hedonism, and other vices, which do indeed render the environment unfriendly to the proclamation of the gospel. But we too easily overlook the deep religious hunger that continues to stir in the hearts of contemporary men and women. Discontented with a civilization of gadgets and entertainment, many are looking for some overarching meaning in life. (Dulles, 2009: 78)

Dulles notes how Catholic evangelization is a response to the perceived moral “needs” of those in the throes of secular society. This represents a view that, amid the alienation of modern, secular society, there is a hunger for authenticity and a clearer sense of self. According to the NE, this hunger can only be satiated by an active engagement in the Catholic Church through the Catholic evangelical paradigm.

The evangelical purview and institutional framework of the NE are important for understanding the discourses at *Journey to the Father*. They point to an evangelical discourse that is inherently conservative, asserting the values and prerogatives of the institutional Catholic Church while also defining the attitudes and approaches of Catholic evangelization in a pluralistic world. They speak to the tenor and approach with which the NE engages the public sphere, asserting Catholic religious identity. The various elements discussed above are key to understanding the dynamics at play in *Journey to the Father*: 1) the historical influence of the Catholic Church from the institutional conservatism of Trent to the modernization of Vatican II; 2) the emergence of the ambiguous category of cultural Catholics and the instigation of the CCR movement, which infused charismatic elements into Catholic practice; and 3) the rise of the NE as an institutional proselytization program for the Catholic Church, which operationalizes all the abovementioned elements towards the goal of informing an evangelical Catholic identity. The above discussion will therefore be critical in helping us to understand the experience of *Journey to the Father* and the boundaries of Catholic identity in Canada today.

Chapter 5 — *Journey to the Father*: Exploring Evangelical Experience and Religious Identity

They'll only be Catholic because their parents have taught them to be Catholic, but they still don't want to be. So it can be any person to put down your faith. It can be your closest friend; it can be your enemy.

(John: age 14)

Surrender in a sense that you recognize Christ as being your master, your Lord, your King. He is everything to me, he is everything to everyone. So it's learning how to die to yourself of all the worldly things so that you can embrace Christ totally.

(Bishop Marcel)

I think, as a young Catholic I am the happiest person in the world. I'm blessed, and I have with God what I wouldn't get if I wasn't Catholic. He's like my best friend.

(Peggy: age 17)

Introduction

Journey to the Father acts as a node at the intersection of modern, secular society and the institutional Catholic Church. It is a place, among others, where young people can encounter these competing values and perspectives, and appropriate their experiences as part of their identities. The statements above, drawn from the research interviews, are indicative of the tone of evangelization within the Catholic Church through the New Evangelization (NE), as well as the ways that young people think and talk about religion and identity. The first statement points to what is perceived as the deplorable situation of Catholic faith and the need for evangelization. The antagonism of secular influence is ubiquitous in John's home and school life. This is a reflection on a situation that necessitates a call to action. The second statement operationalizes this call to action by speaking of

complete surrender to God through conversion. This represents a major theme for an evangelical perspective, where one subverts one's sense of doubt and overriding individualism in order to submit to the transcendent authority of the lordship of Jesus Christ. This perspective does have resonance in the discussion on agency in the following chapter, but for the current discussion it represents the institutional Catholic perspective in terms of the drive of evangelization. This leads to the final statement, which represents much of the youth perspective on religious engagement. This young woman speaks of how religion has made her happy because she has God in her life as a best friend. Her statement provides an intriguing shift in tone from the previous one, from the determinism and domination of the Lordship of God to a relationship that is reciprocal, intimate, and almost between equals, as best friends.

After an initial visit to *Journey to the Father* through an ethnographic description, and an exploration of the theoretical and historical context of the subject matter of this thesis, the remainder of this thesis provides an exposition of the perspectives from both adult organizers and youth participants in *Journey to the Father*. This chapter focuses on the participants in terms of how they perceived the different elements of being Catholic vis-à-vis their experiences of *Journey to the Father*. It intertwines the voices of both adult organizers and young participants in order to add context and colour to how they live their Catholic identity at home, in the parish, and at school, as well as their experiences of *Journey to the Father*. The merging of adult and youth perspectives was done to help establish a holistic

depiction of lived experience as described by the participants, as well as to deemphasize a vision of bifurcated perspectives between adults and youth. This chapter unites the different perspective within the same narrative, allowing for parallels and differences to emerge within the discourse.

Lastly, this chapter is largely expositional, which serves two purposes: 1) it acts as a companion to the ethnographic description, adding exposition in terms of the lived experience of the participants regarding religion at home and *Journey to the Father*; and 2) it provides a launching platform for the following chapter, which delves into the different purposes and perspectives at play between the adult organizers and the young participants at *Journey to the Father*. Note as well that this chapter acts as a bridge between the depiction of the *Journey to the Father* event and the different perspectives on evangelization among adults and youth. Therefore, it will outline a rich dataset drawn from the interviews in two sections: 1) experiences of living religion as a Catholic, and 2) the varied experiences of *Journey to the Father*.

1. Personal Religiosity: Reflections on Religion Lived

One of the most significant influences on youth and their identity is social institutions. This calls for looking at young people's experiences of and reflections on religion in the parish (i.e. Catholic church community) and in their families, and how they negotiate and live religion at school. The following section takes up these themes as they emerged from the interviews.

1.1. Living Religion in the Parish

The Catholic parish plays an important role in the formation of religious identity and in people's overall social religious engagement. This section will bring forward the participants' responses in exploring their religious identities in the parish setting.

1.1.1. Personal Engagement with the Church

Whichever of the two categories of participants at *Journey to the Father* interviewees were in—adult organizers (which include Disciples and Wannabes) or young people—most saw the involvement in church and its various roles as a normal part of life. Fourteen-year-old Mark, unassuming and soft-spoken, discussed his active participation at church as an altar server. He mentioned how church was something social. It was something that he did because his parents and the other adult leaders in the community expected it of him. Mark's discussion acts as a reminder that taking part in an activity like being an altar server does not necessitate being pious, or goodie-two-shoes. Mark spoke of trying to keep from falling asleep so as not to draw attention away from the Mass. This underscores how young Catholics like Mark do not conform to all of the adult expectations.

Although the youth spoke of expectations from their parents and communities, they also acknowledged that they received a great deal of support from those same communities. John, at age 14, who is very serious about his faith being a part of his social identity, mentioned the impact of the church community on his life: "because even after church we have this little, um, time, um, to gather, um, in

the basement of the church where you just talk and just, um, visit and talk about things that are happening in your life that... And some of it doesn't even relate to faith, but most of it does." Through halting speech, we see that faith and regular living are intertwined in his experience, and that the community helps him to navigate the different elements of his life. Jocelyn, a head Disciple in her early 20s, talked about how the church was a constant element throughout her teenage years, with God at the centre. Even in different parishes and in different provinces, she always found contentment and support in the Catholic Church community, which helped her in her faith development.

Some adults explained how charismatic engagement with the church has had a positive effect on their personal lives, increasing their levels of faith and involvement. Sam, a long-time youth group leader and the bandleader in a music ministry program, spoke of how his family was very active in prayer groups and with things like healing Masses. He always sought a church that would allow him to grow in his faith. Sam remarked, "It wasn't like, 'We're gonna go where we're fed,' because they're not that shallow. It was more like, 'We're gonna go where we can minister, where we'll be allowed to fulfil the mission God has for us.'" Yvette, a youth group leader and mother in her 50s, discussed at length the importance of charismatic elements in her life and in that of her community. However, she also pointed to her frustrations around the mistrust of charisma in the Catholic Church at large. She talked of a charismatic priest at her church inspiring her personal faith, but his being the only priest in the diocese willing to engage in this form of

religiosity. She states, “He explained a lot of things, how the Church doesn’t understand it, because either they’re afraid of it, and all this sort of things. But he said, ‘These are the gifts that were given to us at Pentecost so why are we so afraid of it?’” Yvette’s experiences underscore the tenuous role charismatic religiosity has in the Catholic Church.

Father Stéphane, a priest in his mid-40s with glasses and black hair matching the cassock he proudly wears everywhere, explained the importance of the church setting in providing a complex platform for the religious life of Catholics.

It’s a Catholicism that leads to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and that doesn’t substitute the Sacraments for Jesus Christ, but uses the Sacraments as a way to encounter Jesus Christ. So it’s not a ritual for the sake of the ritual, it’s the Sacraments as a visible encounter with Christ, so let’s prepare ourselves, let’s be coherent, let’s come and lay everything down, let’s not make a compromise, let’s be joyful, let’s be free so as to publicly profess your faith.

This is an important aspect in understanding the link between the individual and the institution in the Catholic worldview: that church—not just the building but also the place where the community assembles under an ecclesiastical leadership—is the nexus for the personal experience of *transubstantiation*, the literal presence of God in the Eucharist. This is the reason why he discussed theology in depth. His comments underscore the role of the institution in the formulation of Catholic religious identities that navigate the intersection of personal experience and the structures of the Catholic Church.

1.1.2. Problems with the Church

The majority of the respondents spoke of their regular participation at church, with only a few exceptions related to scheduling conflicts with work. At the same time, some discussed problems in their local parishes and what these problems entailed. Sam talked of a generation gap where adults of the previous generation, raised in the 1970s and 80s, were ambivalent to the Church as they resisted their parents' institutional Catholicism. He said, "It's what you knew: your grandparents went, your parents went, that's what you do, you go to Mass. It wasn't enough for my parents and their generation." Sam noted that this attitude had a negative impact on youth in his church, because parents did not understand the function of a personal relationship with Christ.

Others mentioned difficulties resulting from internal problems and politics. Some adults talked of how priests or lay individuals would nearly sabotage the youth and faith programming for very seemingly petty reasons, increasing frustrations with an already tenuous situation. Yvette remarked that, "Yep and the devil had a go and wouldn't leave us, so I had to quit. I couldn't do this anymore. It was that awful." Ryan, a young participant who would drive one hour from his house in a neighbouring city to attend youth group meetings and our interview, also talked of how efforts to maintain a youth group in his home parish were hindered by the school board, who claimed that a special permit was needed for after school activities. His response, like others, was to leave his church in search of one that was less problematic.

Both adults and young people raised issues around the idea that people were too busy for church. Bradley, a youth participant aged 16 who mentioned a love for science and engineering, spoke of his after school job and the barriers it raised for participating in church, from finding the time to go to Mass to being part of the youth group. He tried to participate, but things became difficult as his life got busier. Marilyn, the main organizer of *Journey to the Father*, who, in her late 50s, had spent most of her life as a community leader, expressed very strong opinions about the problem of busy parents: “This conference is definitely youth ministry, but I am no longer actively involved in youth ministry because we couldn’t get parents to drive their kids out to the youth programming, we couldn’t get parents to pay money for youth programs, and we don’t charge a lot, this is not a money making operation.” This is a frustrating development for Marilyn, who has devoted much of her life to young people, but now sees an issue with parents who are not willing to invest in their children’s religious engagement. This speaks to a larger systemic issue, as will be discussed below.

Father Stéphane noted the underlying issue that some churches lack a “culture of faith,” which suggests that people only want partial commitment to and engagement in the Church. He said, “There’s often an acceptance of sin in our parishes so instead of calling people to conversion, at times there is a soft-selling of the Gospels. And because of that, the young people are often uncalled. They feel unchallenged and they sense that there is a relativism that’s at play, possibly in the preaching, possibly in the way that people are worshiping, possibly in the way that

people are singing.” Father Stéphane’s comments point to the ambivalence people within the Catholic Church have about fully embracing an evangelical identity, which is seen as having a negative impact on how youth are engaged and their commitment to a religious identity. Others echoed his perspective, speaking of their desire to engender a more active evangelical culture within the Catholic Church.

Some young people were disinterested in participating at church due to a lack of energy or engagement among fellow parishioners. Rita, a quiet young woman aged 18, was critical of her church in that “some of the people there were Faithful but some of the people you could tell only went there because their parents went there so they just started going there and all their family went there. It’s like the family thing to do. Um, so and we didn’t like, their music was often, they wouldn’t sing at all, they would have a band and it was very dull.” She felt that there was a lack of engagement because church was just a routine. Amanda, a rather feisty teenager of 14, saw a lack of energy at Mass: “I like to play piano so when I’m reading the music I’m like, ‘this is not supposed to be this slow; it’s supposed to be faster!’” Frustrated, she continued to explain that the membership of her church was mostly seniors and middle-aged people, and that there were no youth or youth groups to be found. This made participating all the more difficult.

1.1.3. Youth Group Experiences

The young participants talked of how youth groups had helped expand their faith and inform their religious identities. For many, youth groups were social, helping them to meet new people and make friends. Rita mentioned how “the youth

group really helped me in being more outgoing... To like go out of your way and start a conversation with someone you don't know, you know, but it's good for you and it's good for them." Amanda, a reflexive and self-proclaimed shy teen aged 14, spoke at length about how the experience of herself being forced to be outgoing helped her to integrate into the youth group. She remarked on an experience with a new youth group member: "I think he was pretty intimidated because I was talking, talk talk talk talk talk, and he was like really quiet, like he's still really shy and quiet, but I was like talking to him and he wouldn't even barely look at me he was just like, 'Why is someone talking to me that much?!'" Forced beyond her comfort zone, this humorous anecdote outlines a constructive social experience.

Some expressed the view that their youth groups augment their religious experiences. For example, Vanessa, aged 16 and an active volunteer in her church community, saw how her youth group had changed the way she participated at church: "Before that, it was just like everyone else is they don't have a youth group they just go on Sunday with their parents but that's about it, they don't really take it any further." Youth groups would also organize religious activities for their members. Rita said, "We would go on prayer walks and say the rosary while we walked. And then sometimes on the way there and back we would say the rosary on the bus ride." These activities were not shared with her family, remaining unique to the youth group experience. Some participants also mentioned how these experiences were helping them to become young missionaries for the Catholic Church.

Some pointed to the effectiveness of youth groups being based on the strength of their adult leadership. Ryan, a youth who actively sought out his youth group experience, saw his group leader as a positive role model: “He also like helped me with my faith in the form of a relationship and actually praying and all that stuff.” Amanda, in a shy tone, mentioned that her relationship with her youth group leader was a welcome change from her relationships with other adults in her life, like parents, teachers, and even friends. She said, “I just think it’s an extra thing to lean on when you need it if you have any issues.” These interactions and relationships helped them to better deal with their problems.

Father Stéphane shared the same view to some extent, but also recognized the negative impact that some leaders may have on youth groups. He pointed to the unfortunate fact of charismatic or energetic youth group leaders who represent the sole reason some youth want to participate: “To have a pied piper for a while, and then the piper leaves and everything collapses.” This, he suggested, does not bode well for generating self-sustaining groups beyond the draw of individual personalities. Father Stéphane explained that some youth group leaders are toxic members of their communities because of distrust and politics. He also mentioned the unfortunate fact of youth programming being underfunded in many dioceses. In stark terms, he stated, “You can try to nickel and dime your costs, but if you want to live within your means, you end up cutting a staff member, and let’s face it, you won’t cut the secretary, you won’t cut the custodian, and you won’t cut the priest so you end cutting the youth minister.” This, he noted, is endemic to the situation of

trying to raise young people to be more religiously active, with the hope that they will carry this religious identity over into adulthood. As with Marilyn above, Sam recognized the problem of finances, in that the cost of youth group activities often dissuades parents from allowing their children to fully participate. This puts further stress on the community, because youth groups are constantly working to raise funds for activities. These are all obstacles in trying to engage and challenge young people in their religious lives.

The perspectives of both adults and young people point to the importance of church structures for religious identity. These structures are not without their problems, from parish politics to leadership personalities to a general air of disengagement among fellow parishioners. But these different viewpoints all underline the feeling that, though there are issues in terms of engagement, efforts must still be made, because church life remains an important aspect of religious identity.

1.2. Living Religion at Home

The interviews also reveal that family life is an important element of people's religious lives. Religious identity in the home is connected to how religious identity is engaged in the community, particularly at church. This section will outline a few themes that were raised in the data.

1.2.1. Religion at Home

Most young participants spoke of how religion played an important role in their lives at home. They explained that one or both parents were religious, raising

their children through prayer, bible reading, and/or praying the rosary, as well as being active in the parish. Some of these activities are very involved. Erika, aged 16, explained her family's activities: "Well, like we're trying to finish the whole Bible, so we, first we do, we're reading all the psalms because we love psalms, and then we're going through John, and then we finished Romans yesterday, so we're starting Corinthians." Though Erika's family prayer life was very active, some mentioned that things were more of a routine at home, and there was less consciousness of one's activities. In other words, they were just a part of life.

Vanessa noted, "Yes, so we get up, do chores, go to church, it's like a routine, I'm kind of lost without it because it's so routine." Many also spoke of how their grandparents, extended family, or neighbours had influenced their religious lives and engagement in the church. Some pointed to cultural religious practices bequeathed by parents and grandparents. Carry talked of how her grandparents would say the rosary together in silence while she watched, while Vanessa remarked that her mother would pray the rosary on long road trips, especially when stressed out about traffic. The tone of this discussion of religious routine in the context of family life was somewhat different from what was said about the negative effect of routine at church. In a family context, religious routine is active, experiential. It is something that is done together. However, there was an underlying sense of trepidation or awareness that these religious actions must be actively engaged so as not to succumb to the atrophy found in their negative church

experiences. These narratives show the experiential aspects of religious identity in people's private lives.

1.2.2. Interdenominational Parents

Some of the participants interviewed spoke of being raised Catholic but having a parent from another Christian faith. Some could articulate the denomination their parent was raised in, e.g. Lutheran or Presbyterian, while some were uninformed about their parent's religious background. Amanda stated clearly, "I've never been anything other than just a Catholic girl like growing up in that, and like my dad's not Catholic, but like the rest, the kids are and my mom is." It was not uncommon for only one parent to claim a religious identity. In most cases, this was simply stated as a fact rather than as a problem. Kyle, a very athletic teen aged 16, spoke of the dynamic in his family: "My um, mom's really, like she was born Catholic so she really supports me and my dad wasn't born Catholic, he was born like Protestant or something, but he became Catholic but he's not like the, not like the most enthusiastic Catholic there is, he's kind of just like, he's more about helping people, he's more of a service person than a talk about it, and deep down and stuff, he's just helping people and stuff [...] he also just wants to help people." Kyle's remarks point to the fact that whether their parents had converted to Catholicism or remained affiliated to their former denomination, the young participants underlined the good qualities of their parents, though they did not know the details of their non-Catholic identities.

1.2.3. Parent Troubles

Marilyn, as mentioned above, held very strong opinions and frustrations about parents who were not willing to invest time in their children's religious lives. She stated, "The fact that so many of the parents don't get their Catholic faith; they go to church on Sunday, some of them, or when they can, but they don't understand that they haven't got a relationship with Jesus that they need or that I would hope for them at some point. They don't get it and they don't want their kids to be considered religious, nerds...or whatever." Marilyn, like Father Stéphane and Sam, pointed to a generation gap with adults between 35 and 50 who do not understand the validity of a personal relationship to Christ.

This sentiment is related to an idea of irreligious socialization, which was expressed by Carry, a youth participant of 18 who spoke of the slippery slope of declining participation. Carry said, "If you were raised in a house that doesn't go to church, you don't go to church and you don't get used to going and you don't get to love it, you don't adjust. You just, it's just like, you feel like the opinions are being pushed down your throat because you weren't raised with those opinions, and I don't know, it's once the ball starts rolling too, society starts pushing you along that path like they make fun of Catholics on TV, and all the stereotypes, and choppy, like, 'Why do they want to take me to church, are they trying to steal my soul?'" This idea of wariness of religious participation was real for many of the participants, which they saw as something that could come to dominate their home and school lives.

These descriptions relating to the formation of religious identity in the private lives of adult organizers and young participants bear similarities with the former discussion of church and parish life. Religion in family life did not always conform to the expectations of these participants. There were important elements of an implicit experience of religious identity, but as in the church setting, each individual was actively working to develop their religious identity among the different people and influences in their lives.

1.3. Living Religion at School

Like the church and family settings, school is an important space in which young people are forming and negotiating their religious identities through personal effort and experience, as well as through relationships with others. School is in some ways more important than church and family with regard to identity formation, because there, young people are constantly negotiating their sense of self in relation to values and pressures from friends and peers. This section explores the complex relationships that emerge in the school environment in terms of education, socialization, friend relationships, and dealing with diversity, antagonisms, and resiliency.

1.3.1. Religion in Catholic Schools

The most frequent comment about religion at school was that people are largely non-religious, in various ways. Some noted that many Catholic youth attending Catholic schools are not at all interested in Catholicism, in terms of either practice or identification. Vanessa, an active volunteer in her community, spoke with

a twinge of disdain about her relationship with the religious structure of Catholic school: “I’ve never been at a Public school but for me, you don’t really see that it’s Catholic other than that you have monthly masses and prayer in the morning.” Ryan, who explained the dynamic with his non-practicing peers: “Well you could call them Catholic; they’ve been baptized and have been to the Catholic schools and they’ve received communion and confirmation and everything so [...] they don’t go to mass, like we have once a month we have mass at school where a priest comes to school to do a mass um, and most of the people they will skip.”

Jocelyn, a Disciple Leader in her early 20s, expressed a same attitude: “People are ‘Catholic’ and going to Catholic schools, but they’re not really Catholic as in they don’t believe in God or if they believe in God, they don’t believe in the Catholic faith. So you go to Catholic school and you’re forced to go to religion class, but then in religion class you’re not even told the truth about religion. So these people have misconceptions of what being Catholic is, but they’re in Catholic schools. So they’re specifically Catholic, so I feel that they become bitter to being Catholic.” This underscores an important point regarding a perceived ambivalence among the non-engaged Catholic youth in Catholic schools. In Jocelyn’s view, this is due to a lack of evangelical culture in schools—one that would support personal religious engagement and take religion more seriously.

Interviewees talked about the struggles they faced within this environment in trying to be openly religious. Jocelyn went on to explain how religiously engaged students were negatively perceived and why: “When you’re in a Catholic school and

you are super, super Catholic, I feel like the people who aren't Catholic or Catholic in name only, look at you as the outsider. I almost feel like if you go to Catholic school... you go to Catholic school and the thing you bond over is that you go to Catholic school but you're not really Catholic and you don't really care." Again, she underlines the negative association with religion within school culture, i.e. being a religiously engaged Catholic at a Catholic school is uncool. John, a small and thoughtful youth participant of 14, spoke of his friend's experience of falling out of religion: "His parents went to church but they gave him a choice: 'If you want to, you can go to church on Sundays, but you don't have to.' And most of the time he didn't go to church." John pointed out that the norm was not to engage in religion, even if one had a deep desire otherwise. Sometimes academic and social pressures got in the way of fulfilling religious goals. Carry, aged 18 and struggling over her active religious identity, reflected on her internal conflict: "I'm supposed to be in the chapel now and I'm supposed to pray, because a lot of the time, praying is pushed aside, like I got all these assignments and tests to study for so praying kind of got left in the way side. But having that reminder and having people being like, 'Where were you? You missed praying, we missed you. This was your idea!'" Though she had trouble finding the time and putting in the effort to reach her goals, her friends helped her stay on track, which made her feel better.

Many of the adults spoke of these same issues within Catholic schools. Father Stéphane, in an outspoken manner, reiterated the problems of a "culture faith," and that high school was more inclined to a "culture of fear; there's an awful lot of fear in

high schools, fear of not belonging, fear of not being accepted, fear of not fitting in.”

This has an effect not only on students, but also on teachers, in their attitudes against fully engaging the pedagogy and practice of Catholicism. Father Stéphane lamented the reality of a culture of accommodation rather than evangelization.

Marilyn presented similar views on the problems with Catholic schools. “Our schools are not imbued with the Catholic faith because we have non-Catholic teachers in our Catholic schools, we have teachers who are Catholic in name only and don’t practice our Catholic faith. And the kids know that.” She felt that teachers, course material, and parents were equally to blame for the lukewarm and lackluster way that Catholicism was being perceived and taught. These interviewees viewed schools as places of overwhelming ambivalence that posed a challenge for those adults and students who wished to live their religious identities more actively.

1.3.2. Perceptions of Public Schools

In contrast to the polarizing experiences of Catholic school, many of the participants viewed public schools as places where someone can more safely express their religious identity within a pluralism of different identities. Marilyn reflected, “In a public school, you can be Hindu, Muslim, Evangelical with a Bible under your arm, you can be Catholic, nobody cares because everyone does their own thing. In a Catholic school, you are either Catholic geek or you’re cool.” Jocelyn also reflected this idea, based on her personal experience of going to public school with a great number of different Christian denominations, where everyone got along without conflict over religious identity. Tied to his negative experience in Catholic

school, Ryan expressed the desire to go to public schools or privately funded Catholic school in order to more fully express his religious identity.

Not all perceptions of public school were positive, however. Some young participants expressed that public schools could not accommodate their needs for developing a more engaged religious identity. John spoke of his friend who wanted to practice her faith in public school but could not. Bradley, aged 16, spoke of how religion class in public school just wasn't fun because it lacked in content and enthusiasm, which left him disappointed. Amanda, aged 14 and also shy, spoke of the awkward cultural divide between Catholic and public schools: "In the morning we have prayers, which are like I don't know I find it nice; one day there's kids on the bus who go to public school, and they don't understand why we had prayers in the morning." Other interview participants shared this experience of being singled out, but such experiences were not exclusively with public school students. The problems these interviewees felt were related to their level of engagement in religious activities and religious identity.

1.3.3. Perceptions of Religious Identity

Having discussed the topic of the challenges faced by religiously engaged youth in Catholic and public schools, some adult organizers and young participants articulated feelings of aggravation regarding the scorn and judgement they had received for expressing their religious identity. Some described how they were negatively perceived as acting morally superior. Malusi, a head Disciple in his early 20s who was very popular at *Journey to the Father*, mentioned encountering these

challenges in high school. “Because there are a lot of Christians and people that would say that I have been saved and that I know the truth, and that everyone else who hasn’t or lives a life of sin or whatever is below me, and I can’t be associated with them.” His perspective points to how some of the respondents were made to feel bad for having their religious identities, needing to hide them so as not to be socially marginalized. Some respondents had particularly remarkable challenges. Kyle, aged 16 with a serious demeanour, spoke of the challenges of bringing religion into his sports life, where he was ridiculed by his teammates and school peers, meeting with scornful comments about bringing “church into the game.” Kyle spoke of an experience where his schoolmate confronted him during play: “He called me a ‘Bible Thumper’ and I was just like, ‘What?’ they actually called me that?” So I was just like taken aback that they had called me that.” This led to confusion and hurt feelings for Kyle, who felt increasingly marginalized for expressing his religious identity at school.

Some noted, however, that they were respected for their religious convictions, and that people were aware but didn’t make a big deal over it. They described as well how faith had offered a positive influence in keeping to a moral path regarding social activities like partying, consuming alcohol and/or drugs, and sex. Some expressed that their religious identity had allowed them to be more engaged in school with regard to academics, sports, and school politics. Malusi summarized it thus: “You can be a full person and be out-there and be popular and have everyone know you, but also have this faith and not be subject to like all the

abuses and struggles that you would find in high school with drinking and partying and all those things.” Monique, a young participant aged 16 who was confident in her religious identity, also described the mutual respect between her and her peers: “All my friends know that I’m Catholic and I’ve asked them not to swear around me and to respect my religion. So they’re pretty good about it, sometimes they’ll slip up, but everyone who knows me, knows that.” These young people expressed success in emphasizing boundaries of behaviour around themselves as part of asserting their Catholic identity.

This section has underscored the struggle that many young people face regarding the formation of religious identity in their private and public lives. Issues of religious engagement at church, at home, and at school emerged. This examination of the social dynamics of religious peoples’ lives serves as a preamble to delving into the experiences of both young people and adults at *Journey to the Father*.

2. *Journey to the Father*: A Paradigmatic Event

Journey to the Father offered a different experience from what young people are used to at church, at home, and at school. The young interviewees highlighted challenges in understanding their own religious identities, as well as communicating their views to the people around them. The common theme was that religious identity is difficult for individuals to understand, and then to integrate into their private and public lives. And this is the reason why *Journey to the Father* existed: to transport young people into a social geography where being religious was normal

and they would not be scorned or scrutinized. From the bursts of energy from the raucous band to the charismatic outpouring of Adoration, *Journey to the Father* provided a highly affective religious experience that could shift those who felt undecided in their religious identities towards being more “openly” Catholic. The following section will outline the different reactions and responses of both adult and young participants to *Journey to the Father*.

2.1. Discursive Engagements: The Component Make-Up of *Journey to the Father*

This section will examine the responses to and moral engagements with the events that took place, looking at the educational activities, which aimed to inform young people’s Catholic identities. This incorporates the activities like workshops, plays, talks, and homilies. As in the previous section, it will combine adults’ and young participants’ responses into one narrative.

2.1.1. Creating a Moral Landscape: Saint Raphael’s

Equipped with a greater understanding of the young people who participated in *Journey to the Father*, it is useful to return to Saint Raphael’s to reflect more fully on the links between the spatial and the social. As the lead organizer, Marilyn was especially aware of the symbolic significance and practical worth of having *Journey to the Father* at the same site each year. “It’s very holy ground. You feel the peace and you feel the presence of God out there. It was the perfect spot. People often ask me since then, ‘why don’t you move it from year to year to different places to be fair?’ And I would say, ‘to be fair?’ [*She laughs*]. We have cable buried, we know how

many feet from the third post the tent goes in...to start that over someplace, it would die out in a year having to start from scratch.” Marilyn pointed to how, over the course of 15 years, the organizing committee had built up a solid infrastructure based on layout of the village of Saint Raphael’s itself, with access to Iona Academy, the church and cathedral ruins, the cafeteria building, and the various green spaces. Along with the major electrical outlets ready to be used each year, Marilyn also had access to rental items like tents, porta-potties, a showering tractor-trailer, a freezer tractor-trailer, golf carts, and tables and chairs.

The volunteers made up the backbone of this massive undertaking, working in food services, security, infrastructure (with volunteer plumbers and electricians), as sound engineers, lighting technicians, and musicians as well as the organizing committee. There were also many volunteers who were not present for the weekend, who worked at raising funds, drumming up interest, and even a special group who prayed for the success of *Journey to the Father*. During the event, a perpetual Adoration was held in nearby Cornwall, where volunteers sat in twenty-four-hour vigil with the Eucharist, praying for the smooth operation of the conference and for the conversion of the young people. Though there were volunteers from all over Ontario, the majority were from the diocese of Alexandria/Cornwall, like the Knights of Columbus, who did much in terms of labour at the event, as well as fundraising. Marilyn explained, “We’re family. We’re a very close-knit group. The new people involved give their heart and soul to it.” Bishop Paul-André, the former bishop of the diocese of Alexandria/Cornwall, described the

experience of the adults: “Both in terms of a way for them to participate in the evangelization of young people, also in the part, in a sense of their own growth and faith, because often they will come to the tents, listen to the talks, share in the moments in prayer and the Eucharistic celebrations, and for a lot of the adult volunteers, *Journey to the Father* also marks their own journey in faith.” And their efforts did not go unappreciated by the young people. Malusi recalled, “I remember the first night, we got there on a Sunday night for us leaders as we’re going to prepare for this week-long kinda of retreat thing. And they were just showing us around the school and—they had built showers for us in the bathroom. And I was like, ‘Wow! This is amazing. They built this here for us.’ I was thinking that that was a big thing to me, ‘Why would they go out of their way to build showers?’”

Throughout my research, the volunteer machine was without falter, and every year the event operated smoothly—even when faced with the prospect of a tornado on the Friday night of the last year of this research (2013).

The accommodations formed an integral component of the overall experience. The girls’ and boys’ tents were well-arranged and mostly without incident. Some organizers mentioned that in years past, young people would sometimes sneak out at night to tramp around the grounds, in the cemetery or the cathedral ruins. In the three years of this study, there were no incidents of bad behaviour after hours. The only complaints involved issues of personal preference and comfort. The weather was often at issue—scalding days and frigid nights—though in the three years of my participant observation, the weather was rather

temperate. Otherwise, discomforts consisted of small infestations of ants, frogs, or earwigs in the sleeping tents, as well as the annoyance of early wakeups by bugling cows in a nearby pasture. One deeply cringe-worthy story involved a chaperone who had to be rushed to the hospital in the middle of the night because a beetle got lodged in her ear canal and seemed to be boring its way through her ear drum!

There were also challenges involving food and the schedule for meal times. Kyle, an athletic young man aged 16, spoke of the food with clear disdain: "So, well we were relatively early but all the guys just started to go last so we were trying to like show humility, chivalry and then we go uh, sandwiches, I was like, *Ugh!*" Even though Kyle felt he had the best of intentions in participating at *Journey to the Father*, seeking to elevate his spiritual and moral self, he (as well as others) could not hide his disappointment with the smaller inconveniences.

Both the adults and young people perceived the benefits in holding *Journey to the Father* in a rural setting. Bishop Marcel, a gentle man with a kind face who was the presiding bishop of the Alexandria/Cornwall diocese, summarized the experience, saying, "Saint Raphael's is just a super place for young people to experience God, and for many of them they are city people and to be out in the country is to breathe fresh air, and have peace and quiet, and not having city noise. That creates a whole different environment where they can better develop their listening skills through silence, so that they can connect with God." The village was seen as a refuge from the distractions of urban settings. It was a place to gain peace of mind, which generated a prayerful atmosphere for youth who may not have been

used to such an environment in their communities, at school, or at home. Saint Raphael's also had the practical drawback of having terrible cellphone reception, which inadvertently freed the young people from their media and mobile devices. Also, there was nowhere to go. Cornwall was over 30 minutes away by car, and the conference took up almost the entire village. That said, many posited that it allowed young people freedom of movement, which had unplanned benefits. Sam, a youth group leader, pointed out, "Just to be able to walk around and play Frisbee, you know, feel the grass between your feet. [...] To me, the real strength of *Journey*—I would even say its main strength—is what happens between the sessions more than what happens at the sessions." Malusi added his wonder at the site, "For me, this is a sacred space, like Hogwarts it would be so different. When walking up the path, I would be like 'I'm leaving my home to go to the session tent.' But when that's not there, you're just walking up the long driveway leading to the school and to the field across the street where there are cows." Overall, people were happy with the effect that the rural setting had on their experience of *Journey to the Father*.

Adult organizers, volunteers, youth leaders, and parents undertook the massive effort of organizing the *Journey to the Father* conference each year in the hope of generating change in young people's lives, in terms of instigating a conversion towards a more active Catholic identity. Many participants used the allegory of planting seeds, hoping that their efforts would bear fruit in the years to come. Marilyn seemed to speak for everyone involved with the conference when she said, "I just wish...for our kids, but I also wish for the staff all the way up, that we

have, in the Catholic Church and in our schools, more opportunities for people to encounter Christ.” Marilyn pointed to the labour and time involved in generating an atmosphere—a moral geography of sorts—in which young people would be allowed, and would allow themselves, the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with Christ, so as to initiate an evangelical impetus.

2.1.2. Tilling the Discursive Soil: Reflections on the Talks and Workshops

The talks and workshops were a key part of the *Journey to the Father* weekend in that they offered a religious education that was unique in many of the young people’s lives, as well as formulating parameters for the core religious rituals like Adoration and Reconciliation as charismatic experiences. It is therefore important to focus on what the young people thought of their experiences during these presentations.

Youth participants remarked how difficult it was to remember the content of the presentations and workshops. Though many mentioned the heat and the intense scheduling as possible reasons for this, the majority pointed to the fact that the interviews were performed long after *Journey to the Father*. The specific details of their experiences had mostly lapsed from their minds. However, an interesting element emerged regarding experiential knowledge retention. Jimmy, a young man of 17 who proclaimed that he hated just “sitting around,” explained, “I rarely remember the speeches that the priests gave. For example, like, the, um, the word of the lord, the one that he reads out of the book, I remember them in the back of my mind, and every year, when they redo it, I’ll remember: ‘Oh, yeah, he did that before.’”

But if you ask me, so, like after Sunday, on Monday, you'll ask me 'so what did he talk about?' I'll be like 'I don't know.'" Jimmy's perspective was indicative of the way in which young people engaged the material and messages of the talks: not in terms of recalling content, but of embodied memory. This will be further explored in the following chapter. Sam, while reiterating that the most compelling experiences of evangelization at *Journey to the Father* happened between organized events, during social time, added that sometimes the themes presented at the conference and in the workshops were difficult for the young people to grasp. He noted that these talks sometimes added confusion more than anything.

Some young people described how the talks did not leave a lasting impact on the development of their religious identities. Like Jimmy, some talked of how they could not sit still in order to fully engage with the message being presented. Some blamed the weather and the busy schedule for taking a toll on their capacity to absorb the messages. But the majority felt that, even if they were not fully engaged, the talks were good nonetheless. Vanessa candidly stated, "Yah, not anything that was like [*makes the blotchy sound of "mind blown"*] or anything, but they were good." Mark noted that he couldn't remember the content, but, "I don't know, I just like listening to people talk." And finally, Erika pointed out, "They were like, they were interesting, but then sometimes they were boring but I like...if you paid attention like I actually wanted too, then they were ok to understand and stuff." These remarks again point to the importance of experience and embodied learning as opposed to the retention of facts, details, or abstract understanding. There was less

emphasis on the content of each activity and more on the constructive experience of just participating.

Some participants expressed how constructive and helpful the workshops and talks were. Carry, a young woman of 18 who spoke of hard work and growing up on a farm, reflected on how remarkable it was that adults would spend so much time and energy helping young people in their religious development. She said, “Adults don’t typically have the energy but because they did, it kind of showed that they had a divine intervention from God to say, ‘Have this energy and show these kids the way in the way you lead your life.’” Monique, a quirky young woman of 16, said that she liked *Journey to the Father* because she could ask questions, which was something unique in her life. Many found the workshops highly entertaining, which had an impact in that sense. Bradley spoke of the highly popular “Science Guy,” stating, “His talk was actually pretty good. He was talking about how whenever we lie; we’re just feeding ourselves. And he was putting cotton balls into a mixture of liquid. And as he put them in, they would instantly dissolve and how the lies aren’t really filling us, but we think they’re filling us.” Youth engagement in the talks was, as mentioned above, indicative of an embodied learning, but also an affective or emotional participation. These descriptions of participation may not match the expectations of conference organizers for young people’s comprehending or grasping deep, abstract ideas, but something meaningful emerged on an individual level. This is further explored in discussing the gendered talks.

The girls' and boys' talks were important elements of the conference experience. Again, as in the prior discussion, some found it difficult to remember the content or details of the gendered talks, but walked away with embodied memories. The young women recollected the ideas of chastity and that sex was not a dirty word. They also recalled the topics of relationships with boys, with themselves, and with God. Some expressed disappointment in the talk, thinking, one year, that it was largely boy-bashing, and were left with a negative impression of the chastity talk. Rita, who always spoke her mind, said, "Nobody's perfect and you can't please everybody...but I remember this one year everybody was really turned off by the talk."

The young men recalled the themes of chivalry, how to treat women, and how to live a life of faith out in the world. Another theme was the virtue of masculine strength—not physical or psychological prowess, but rather strength of faith. Both women and men shared the view that it was great to be among their own gender, sharing the same faith. Kyle, who had mentioned the humiliation he felt for bringing religion into sports, said, "Everyone was so welcoming and they don't judge you as much and they, I just loved that about it, I could speak freely and they were not going to judge you or anything." Everyone touched on the positive impact of people's testimonies, pointing to the value of personal experience as a success factor. Monique said, "I like hearing other people's stories of their Faith, how they got there, or their struggles they've been through and seeing how it connects to me,

and how they got through.” Experience, therefore, stood as an operational factor in the participation of these young people at *Journey to the Father*.

Experience, as something lived and emotional, had the greatest lasting impact on young participants’ lives. *Journey to the Father* proved enduring and special because it represented a religious experience that was outside of the ordinary landscape of their lives. But these experiences were complex. Young people brought various identities and attitudes to *Journey to the Father*. They were engaged in spiritual and social practice at these events, and responded with curiosity, boredom, preoccupation, etc.—captivated by the things that grabbed their attention. But in the variety of perspectives, it is important to note these young people’s overall sense that they shared something in coming together to generate a safe space in which to explore and express religious identity.

2.2. Experiential Openings: The Impacts of Religious Experiences

The overall social and symbolic space, as well as the talks, served to set up the main event of *Journey to the Father*, Eucharistic Adoration. The organizers arranged the activities in order to contextualize and explicate the possibilities available to the young participants in terms of religious experience through Adoration. But Adoration was not the sole site for religious engagement. Participants also placed importance on Reconciliation, the cathedral ruins of Saint Raphael’s, Sunday morning testimonials, and the altar call. These ritual elements added to the experiential apparatus of *Journey to the Father*, which had an impact on the lives of these participants, young and old.

2.2.1. *Feeling Comfortable with Feeling: Changing your Perspective*

The young participants spoke of their first impressions of *Journey to the Father*. A number of them said they did not know what to expect from the weekend's activities. Erika, aged 16 with a very religious family life, said, "It was like at first everyone was like, 'uuuuh,' like it's weird, there's like 500 other kids there and you're like with your group of 20 people and you don't really know what's going to happen." Faced with new ways of acting and behaving in a Catholic context, they were taken aback. When asked about dancing, many felt weirded-out and intimidated, some saying that this was not a part of Catholic tradition. Erika explained, "Yah, it's just different, you're used to praising God and singing your heart out, but not like your whole body's into it...like it's weird."

But for others these new actions were a means of breaking out of their usual patterns of thoughts and behaviour. Carry, aged 18, spoke of her shyness: "I needed that push to get involved; I would just stand there until someone would say, you know, 'You're going to have so much more fun if you're up here with us dancing!'" Others echoed Carry's experience, seeing this playful push as having allowed them to overcome their shyness and participate more fully. They talked of being in a safe place for expressing strong emotions. Malusi explained, "You can cry and no one will look twice at you. And not in a bad way, it's in a way that it's okay; 'If you need to cry, cry. If you need someone to cry with you, I will cry with you. If you need Kleenex, I will bring you Kleenex. If you don't want it, that's ok.' It's a safe place to experience those things that you might be afraid to experience anywhere else."

Through the aid of the Disciples/Wannabes, the chaperones, and the other young participants, a space of empathy and non-judgement was generated so that young people, being caught up in the emotions of the moment, were free to express themselves and not feel embarrassed. These efforts, especially by the organizing staff and volunteers, were aimed at helping to usher a deeper religious experience throughout the weekend.

2.2.2. Sacramental Devotion: Adoration and its Varied Experiences

Adoration was the paramount experience at *Journey to the Father*.

Eucharistic devotion is a longstanding tradition in the Catholic Church that has been repurposed to resonate with the evangelical framework of engendering personal experiences of Jesus Christ. The following section looks at the varied explanations and experiences of the adult organizers and young participants.

Though many of the young participants explained that *Journey to the Father* was their first experience of Adoration, some mentioned prior experiences. Some talked of an active Adoration culture in their home parishes, like at Sam's church, where a perpetual Adoration was performed twenty-four hours a day since 1998. Sam explained that this has offered him the opportunity for more in-depth prayer. Some talked about how Adoration in their home churches was boring. Amanda said, "I didn't know what to do so I was sitting there like, 'When is this over?' I was really bored, but like we had music and like quietly, and you could kind of see, if you looked around you could see people like, their reactions to the Adoration, I thought that was pretty interesting." While she got something out of the social element of

observing other people's actions, Adoration lacked a spiritual impact for Amanda. And finally, many participants noted that their experiences of Adoration at home never compared to those at *Journey to the Father*.

Devotional Adoration was a confluence of theological premises and embodied engagement. Bishop Marcel explained,

The youth who have experienced it before look forward to that evening with great expectations. But for all of the new ones, coming to Jesus in the real presence of the Blessed Sacrament, for many of them that's a new experience and they have to be introduced to that. So when they see other youth believing in the real presence and expressing through their posture, through their prayers, through their singing that they recognize the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, it's a huge witnessing.

It is the act of believing in the literal, physical presence of Jesus in the monstrance that makes a "personal" relationship with Jesus Christ possible. Father Stéphane further clarified the impact of Adoration:

I think that maybe young people who go to *Journey to the Father* for the first time, it's often their very first experience of Eucharistic Adoration. It's usually the first time they see the consecrated host exposed in the monstrance and that in procession, they realize that Jesus is actually coming down and in visiting them, they can touch Him, extend their hands towards Him. All of a sudden, the Jesus in the past becomes the Jesus now. The fact that Jesus existed becomes Jesus is alive.

This provides a clearer understanding of the dynamic at play within this particularly Catholic way of engaging in a personal encounter with Jesus. The theological knowledge held by Bishop Marcel and Father Stéphane (i.e. transubstantiation) underscores the discursive framing (i.e. a personal relationship with Christ) and ritual performance of Adoration at *Journey to the Father* (i.e. a highly symbolic religious space among peers). Adoration generated a real world, charismatic

experience that had as its goal a material or lived, personal relationship between the participant and Christ. In other words, Adoration was not an abstract concept, but a lived experience. This garnered diverse reactions from the young people.

Some participants remarked that the performance of Adoration had a strong impact on their experience. Vanessa said, “Adoration was pretty cool ‘cause like it was all dark around you and then there was this big light at the front; it was kind of like visual of what it should be, because you know outside the tent it was all dark but in the tent all around it was light and we were all touched by light so it was kind of visual and it was what we thought it would be.” Others were affected by the music. Though some noted that the music was outdated, which took them out of the experience, others mentioned feeling comfortable because they knew the songs, and saw the musicians as mentors of similar age to themselves. With regard to Adoration, Rita noticed that “everyone would just be like fully into it, consumed in the music, they wouldn’t care who was around them.” Spectacle and performance added to the affective experience of Adoration, in sharp contrast to the experiences mentioned above of Adoration in their home churches. The coloured lights, the wafting smell of incense, the touch of grass, the crisp evening air, the swelling music, and the sounds of others’ emotions all deepened the impact of the event.

The emotional elements were the most common reflection about Adoration among the young participants. Their reactions ranged from fully embracing the experience and their emotions to feeling overwhelmed and scared about losing their self-control. Many described tremendous conversion experiences in their

participation in Adoration. Some spoke of this conversion experience as a rush of emotions that left them feeling empowered. Some talked of conversion as a clear moment, saying that it was *life changing*, a *high moment of faith*, or a *clear moment of connection with Jesus*. Others saw their conversion as gradual, taking place over years of participating in Adoration at *Journey to the Father*. Some regretted the fact that they failed to have a religious experience. Erika spoke candidly of her experience: “It was pretty emotional and then everyone was like, ‘Did you feel God’s presence?’ And I was like, ‘Yah but didn’t really have the Jesus moment.’” She was disappointed by her perceived failure, but not dissuaded from seeking out her ‘Jesus moment’ by continuing her annual participation in *Journey to the Father*.

On the other hand, many spoke of awkwardness and feeling uncomfortable during these events. Erika, in a flurried outburst, said, “It was crazy, everyone was like, you could feel everyone’s emotions like, I don’t know, you could feel everyone’s emotion on you and then it was like, ‘Oh my God’ and then Jesus is there and everyone is like crying and it’s like so emotional, but it was crazy, it was cool though.” The experience was intense and overwhelming, but Erika spoke for many participants in that she reflected on it as having been a positive one. Fear dominated some reflections on these situations. Monique said, “I was kind of confused. I didn’t understand what they were feeling and how it could be so deep that you can’t hold back.” Mark shared this feeling of confusion, saying, “I’m just sitting there, not crying, everyone else around me, even the people I wouldn’t picture crying, would cry, I’m just kinda looking around like, ummm, I don’t what you’re doing here, I’m

not crying.” Some felt that Adoration was too long, mentioning the physical discomfort of having to kneel in the grass and mud for long periods of time, and the social discomfort of witnessing the religious experiences of others. Vanessa summarized it best, saying, “‘How are you crying?’ because I didn’t feel like crying and I didn’t feel happy I was just kind of weird like: ‘Why are you doing that kind of thing?’ [...] It’s just kind of weird because you don’t really know it, what you’re looking for, what you are trying to see and trying to experience.”

Judging by these comments, emotions seemed to come from nowhere—sudden—throwing people off balance, leading to confusion about others’ emotions as well as confusion about their own emotions or lack thereof. This outburst of emotion, however, was not treated in a reckless manner; the adult organizers took great pains and preparation to help young people work through their experiences. It nevertheless represented a unique event for the young people, different from anything they had experienced outside of *Journey to the Father* (i.e. at home, at church, or at school). This made for an *unusual* experience unlike the *usual* in people’s lives, which led to telling signs like confusion and trepidation. These reactions therefore did not diminish the effectiveness of the experience, and indeed serve to highlight the power of *Journey to the Father* in dictating the boundaries of young people’s Catholic identities.

Some spoke of their experience of Adoration as being social rather than spiritual, which was still meaningful. This was described as bearing witness to others as they went through a charismatic experience, connecting with other people

by helping them out, or just plain people watching. Amanda explained this alternative experience, saying, “cause I didn’t have that much of an experience with it so it was like, ‘What is happening, what is happening to them?’ Because I was like, I don’t know, they were, like I don’t know, it was just different, I wasn’t expecting it and I’ve never been to anything like it.” This response adds to the discussion above of the Adoration as an emotional and affective experience. Watching people living their emotions is also gratifying, if not difficult to put into words. Vanessa said, “I was just like it felt powerful you know with all the people around you and it’s like you’re not used to that, I’m not used to being in a group of people where they all feel the same way about faith.” Though she admittedly did not have a charismatic experience, and expressed confusion over the behaviour of others around her, Vanessa walked away from her experience reflecting positively on the social aspect.

This, again, underscores the importance of emotional experience as an operational factor in generating meaning for these young people. Adoration served as a vehicle for the internalization of more abstract lessons, such as those from the talks and breakout sessions. From religious conversion to the confusion of the Adoration event, be it spiritual or social, young people gleaned what they could through experiential learning, which ultimately helped form and inform their religious identities. This emphasis on experiential learning helps flesh out a more complex understanding of social agency in young people. Experiential understandings facilitate an evangelical incitement to discourse because whatever experience young people have, they feel justified and compelled to carry it forward

and use it in their identity formation. In other words, it becomes a living part of who they see themselves as. It is, therefore, important to see how these experiences were consolidated before the end of the *Journey to the Father* weekend.

2.3. Consolidating Experience: Thoughts of Moving On

Following a delineation of the experiences of youth and adults with regard to Saint Raphael's, the talks, and Adoration, this section brings together the outcomes, or denouement, of the experiences of the *Journey to the Father* weekend. This includes people's experiences of Reconciliation, music at the ruins, the testimonials, and the altar call.

2.3.1. Reconciliation

The sacrament of Reconciliation (i.e. confession), like Adoration, is a tradition within the Catholic Church that has been appropriated by the NE as a means to generate in young people a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Bishop Marcel explained, "It's a witnessing. Christ is working in people's lives and the sacraments do have something to offer these people, the power of the sacraments." For the adult organizers and ecclesiastical presence at *Journey to the Father*, such as Bishop Marcel, Reconciliation was intended to serve as a consolidating element for religious identity in the young participants, in terms of unpacking their experiences of Adoration.

Some young people agreed with this perspective, seeing Reconciliation as a positive experience, with some stating that they loved the ambiance, feeling a weight being lifted from their shoulders and a deepened personal relationship with

Jesus Christ. Carry best summarized the common experience of the young people in negotiating Reconciliation at *Journey to the Father*: “I was like, ‘Ok I guess I’m going to go do it.’ I went and you know, it always makes you feel better letting go of everything you’ve been holding on to. I think it’s great that the Catholic Church does that. I mean, other churches don’t and they, you have to keep it inside and you kind of have to forgive yourself. [...] It’s the feeling that’s most important, feeling God’s forgiveness. I mean it’s amazing.” Like Adoration, Reconciliation acted as an evangelical element for these young people, deepening their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. However, some of the young participants described having felt uncertainty about Reconciliation. They were not sure if they wanted to participate, some stating that they were too shy, or pointing to the long line-ups or their feelings of paranoia about the open and public setting as deterring factors.

2.3.2. *Testimonials*

Sunday morning testimonials also served the purpose of engaging young participants in an evangelical impetus as they bore witness to their friends and peers. Some forgot the details of this experience, explaining that by the time Sunday rolled around they were too tired to absorb new things. A number of them associated less with specific memories of the unfolding of events and more with the emotions that the experience produced. Mark described how the testimonials provoked a mild fascination with other people’s experiences. “I thought it was kinda interesting, like when people would come up on the stage, you just kinda look and think: I never thought about that, or, yah that’s kind of interesting.” Peter, a young

man aged 16 with an inquisitive and intelligent face, had a more negative assessment of the testimonials. He explained that he had not felt compelled to testify for fear of being too critical because of his opinion of how the conference was organized. His criticism was largely theological, seeing the evangelical discourse taken up by the Catholic Church in emphasizing personal engagement to be detrimental to the corporate identity of the Church. His unique perspective was extremely thoughtful, and he saw his participation at *Journey to the Father* as purely social. However, he admitted, "If I had had a really powerful religious experience like an outpouring of the spirit [...] I would probably have felt called to go up and share it. But that didn't really happen." Some were simply in awe of the number of people going up to testify to their experiences, while others said that they were too shy to speak, which kept them glued to their chairs, listening to others.

Other participants saw the experience of the testimonial as positive and constructive. Some described unexpected benefits from hearing other people's testimonies, having an impact on their own personal reflections on faith as well as grounding their experiences of *Journey to the Father*. Carry reflected, "They've such a strong faith and it makes me feel like, I've had a relatively easy life compared to them, why can't I have that Faith? Why don't I have that Faith? And it just, it got me thinking and, why don't I? Why can't I do that?" But the vast majority of interviewees noted how important it was to bear witness to people's stories of faith, i.e. testimony.

Many reflected on how inspired they were to hear these difficult stories from their peers about how faith is helping them to cope, either as a strong religious experience through Adoration, or as a small nudge towards healing. They were impressed with these stores of religious experience and resilience. Morgan, being quite shy, was very inspired by the event though she felt too intimidated to go up. She said, "I really liked it, just hearing their stories and stuff, it's just that it inspired me to like think more out of the box; I just thought it was really cool to just listen to like what has happened in their lives and stuff and just kind of like feel like has that ever happened to me?" Morgan's perspective speaks to how events like *Journey to the Father* allow people to break out of conventional, normative patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. These examples reveal just how variable these experiences can be. To speak and to listen brings people into the same discursive stream, which has an impact on the formation of identity. Even Peter, who was critical of the system in place, felt a resonance with discursive elements through these complex, affective experiences. Ultimately, the experience of testimonials served as the culminating factor in *Journey to the Father* as an important discursive space for the evangelization project of the Catholic Church.

2.3.3. *Altar Call*

Finally, the weekend ended with the altar call, where the priest or speaker called upon the young people to promise to live more religious lives. Father Stéphane explained the altar call, saying, "Again the response was phenomenal in a sense of the generosity of those hearts that were willing to put themselves out there.

It was very moving to see some young boys coming forward for the call to religious life. [...] I remember the overall sense that God had visited his people and that the young people were very generously responding to the Call of God.” Bishop Marcel iterated the importance of witnessing these actions: “To see all of these youth come up to the front I think was a moment that strengthens their yes to that initial call they sense from God, to know that they are not alone, that they are not weird, that they are not crazy.” According to these key adult organizers, the altar call became a site for the further consolidation of religious identity in these young people with regard to their overall experiences at *Journey to the Father*. The responses of the young people, however, were more varied.

According to my observations, some young people responded very positively. Some went up to respond to the altar call, while most remained seated, though the actions of the latter did not necessarily indicate a disinterest in the activity. Natalie, a volunteer in her mid-20s, mentioned that she had participated at *Journey to the Father* many times throughout her teens. She famously stated that she was forced to go, kicking and screaming, by her mother. However, it was her experience of the altar call that made her reflect on her participation and convinced her to return the following year. She explained, “They did the altar call [...] And not everybody went up, but everybody from my group did, so it was kinda powerful in that, even though we don’t all know each other, and we can very easily sit down and not go up because we do not want to be judged by anybody, we all went up and it was really powerful. In that moment, I was like, ‘I’m going to come back next year.’” For Natalie, it acted

as a pivotal moment in shifting her attitude about *Journey to the Father*, and eventually about her religious identity.

Others found it difficult to remember the details of the altar call, for reasons similar to those involved in forgetting the testimonials. Some mentioned that it would be very embarrassing to go up and be witnessed by your peers. Amanda said, “I don’t know, I would probably have to see if I would be the only one going up because I would be too embarrassed to go up by myself.” Some noted decisively that their youth was a deterring factor for making such a promise. Vanessa had a very pragmatic excuse for not having participated in the altar call: “I know I won’t be a nun, I know I’ll either be a single working woman or a married person, like I, my teachers have told me like I will not be a nun, like nothing against nuns, like some nuns are very nice, but like sometimes we talk about it in my civics and careers class, and no one could like just to think, that’s not what I’m going to do.” Vanessa’s point speaks to the agency of young people. Though she respected the values of the Catholic Church and its structure, she couldn’t go against her conscience and participate fully in the altar call. Her remark adds another shade to the discursive dynamic being delineated throughout this section. Though young people are discursively engaged through the various elements of participation in *Journey to the Father*, they have at their disposal modes to resist expectations, especially if they feel that these expectations do not conform to their own personalities. This is a reflection on the flexibility of the overall power structure: it is a rigid hegemony, but one with which social agents are actively negotiating.

2.3.4. *Coming Home from Journey to the Father*

The experience of returning home from *Journey to the Father* was complex for some of the participants. The rush and confusion of the last day was often punctuated by deep emotional connections between new friends and old ones, with promises to write or to keep in contact through Facebook, email, or texting. After the intense personal and social experience of *Journey to the Father*, many spoke of a spiritual high that comes face-to-face with the reality of everyday life. Bishop Marcel summarized the experience of young people, saying,

What they experience on the weekend where they felt safe on very different levels, and safe as well to express their faith without being judged, without being ridiculed, without being laughed at, that's even a step higher in this whole security environment that I'm talking about. Because some kids go back home and it's a violent scene. They go back to school and they're bullied. So they go back to harsh realities. So, sometimes their faith is going to be important to help them get through it, but it's a very different reality then what they have experienced at *Journey to the Father*.

Though Bishop Marcel touches on cases of deplorable domestic situations, none of the respondents spoke of being aggressed or physically bullied for being religious, at home or at school. Many of them, however, spoke of the scorn and social marginalization they experienced for their expression of a religious or Catholic identity.

Upon their return home from *Journey to the Father*, some young people found it difficult to talk about their experiences with their friends. Erika took an assertive stance toward her participation in *Journey to the Father*: "I don't find it that big of a deal, like I don't get why people have to make fun of you for it. So even if everyone did I'd be like, 'Yah I go to church big deal, and then go to Jesus Camp in the summer,

what's the big deal?!” Many explained that the religious zeal they had felt at *Journey to the Father* quickly dissipated due to either being confronted and ridiculed for participating in a religious camp, or just forgetting about the details and feelings of the experience. Some noted how toned-down regular life was in contrast. All of this served to dampen the impact of the complex experiences of *Journey to the Father* on their regular lives.

However, some participants described the lasting impact of *Journey to the Father*. Carry talked about how she became more religiously active: “My mirror in my room is covered with Bible verses on sticky notes that have spoken to me, and every time I look in the mirror, which isn’t often, I look at the sticky notes, and the one that draws my attention, I read it and it will remind me of a little message for the day.” These activities allowed her to remain inspired long after the conference was over. There were, however, challenges for even the most motivated young people to remain engaged. Many observed that in order to keep the spirit of Catholic evangelization alive in their lives, they needed a community to come back to. Some of the organizers talked about how adults need to step up and listen to young people in everyday life. Matt, a dynamic young Disciple in his early 20s, said, “Lots of times, we didn’t have time, we didn’t give time for the chaperones to take their kids aside and talk to them. That was the hope that they would take it upon themselves to invest in their kids. Their kids need to talk, talk to your chaperones because they were with them all weekend; they drove up together, or whatever. That was kind of the hope, but I think that sometimes the chaperones didn’t fit the age group and

that's why they were chaperones." A theme running throughout *Journey to the Father* was that young people needed to communicate and connect with one another in order to gain support in building their religious lives. Malusi talked about moving your experience beyond the Facebook page. However, a major challenge involved building a support network of friends, parents, and community members who would listen, help bring about change in their various communities, and nurture the young people's evangelical impetus and religious identities. And sometimes in the absence of such a community, many looked forward to returning to *Journey to the Father* in order to relive their experiences and that reality again.

The reality faced by the interviewees on returning home from *Journey to the Father* involved adjusting to regular life and regular circumstances, and communicating their experiences to others. Though the majority felt positively about their participation in *Journey to the Father*, facing these realities was difficult for some. The following section will investigate both the adult organizers' and young people's perspectives and experiences of evangelical Catholic values, and how these values come to inform their identities.

Chapter 6 — *Journeying to the Father: Evangelical Impetus, Individual Engagement, and Catholic Identity*

We need to call them into making a choice to be radical, to make Jesus the centre of their lives.

(André: Speaker)

Yah and also I have this little uh, plaque on my wall [...] and it's like, 'Don't be afraid to be different; don't be afraid to be unique.'

(Kyle: age 16)

Journey to the Father, it's been an experience of education.

(Ryan: age 18)

God gave us free will for a reason.

(Jimmy: age 17)

Introduction:

The adult organizers and young people participating in *Journey to the Father* explained their processes of exploring and expressing religious identity in contemporary society. As outlined in the previous chapter, this formation of religious identity is relevant to three spheres: church, home, and school. These spaces have engendered different experiences, as varied as the participants themselves. The *Journey to the Father* event, however, is organized the same way each year. It is about producing a religious space or a socio-religious geography with the hope that young people will be affected enough to change their attitudes about religious identity (i.e. paradigm shift through conversion) and then return home to change the lives of those around them (i.e. evangelical impetus). Though young people see *Journey to the Father* as a constructive experience, they are nevertheless interpreting and absorbing values and experiences in their own way, for their own

reasons. It is safe to say at this point that the adult organizers have a specific and rather unified goal in mind with the organization and operationalization of *Journey to the Father*, and expect certain outcomes for their efforts, while the young people negotiate these expectations and experiences on their own terms.

This chapter is separated into two sections that will provide an exposition and analysis of the themes raised in the literature in correlation with the data from the interviews. It will: 1) outline the way in which the adult organizers disseminate evangelical religiosity and values to an audience of Catholic youth, and 2) examine how young people interpret and integrate (i.e. negotiate) these values and socio-political perspectives in the formation of their own identities. The first section will focus on the discursive apparatus that is deployed at *Journey to the Father*. This means looking into how Catholic evangelization is constructed, and how it informs or shapes identity. Though perspectives from the young participants will seep into this presentation, it remains the discursive domain of the adult organizers by virtue of the fact that they have clear goals and outcomes in organizing the *Journey to the Father* conference.

This section will describe and analyze how the adult organizers advocate an enticing frame of Catholic identity that they hope young people will understand as something meaningful in the contemporary social and political context. The second section will focus on the youth participants and how they interpret the values and experiences offered to them through *Journey to the Father*. This section will provide an exposition of their responses to the questions about choice and experience of the

Catholic evangelical message, examine how gender acts as an optic for socio-political worldview, and outline their different views of adapting evangelization to their lives, and of moving forward. Together, these will offer an insight into evangelization in the Catholic world and how young people engage or negotiate this worldview.

1. Identity Politics: Recognizing Evangelical Catholic Identity

The New Evangelization (NE), as seen through *Journey to the Father*, is an institutional proselytization program operated by the Catholic Church that seeks to communicate to Catholics new ways of thinking about Catholicism and religious identity. As discussed by Byerley (2008) and Dulles (2008, 2009), this means that the NE seeks to criticize the values of conventional, secular society, but without separating itself from it. The outcome, though conservative in its substance, is an attitude in which the NE seeks to occupy the social and political structures of conventional, secular society that have historically marginalized religious voices and perspectives. This engagement with conventional society is done through the deployment of an identity politics that emphasizes the marginalization of religious individuals in a broader social context that lacks the capacity for recognition. This, in turn, relays to Catholic adherents a *clearer* delineation of an evangelical identity. In other words, the NE's claim that religious people are oppressed for their *difference* justifies its identity politics (Kenny, 2004; Macey, 2000), and thus the right of Catholics to be recognized for their Catholic identity. This section will

examine the deployment of an identity politics of difference by the NE and outline the evangelical strategy of conviction operating at *Journey to the Father*.

1.1. Crisis of Faith: Retrieving Catholic Identity

The general attitude gleaned from the interviews with the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* involves a sense of fear or trepidation regarding a “crisis of faith” at the heart of the contemporary Catholic Church, and in society at large. This fear is linked to an historical antagonism between religious institutions and secularism as a prevalent force shaping modern identity. This perspective, therefore, justifies *Journey to the Father* as a means of countering the prominence of secularization by reaching young Catholics with the messages and experiences of evangelization.

Chapter four of this thesis provides an in-depth historical review of the Catholic Church in order to help understand how the NE justifies its proselytization program through a connection to Catholic tradition. But in order to understand the perspective of the NE at play at *Journey to the Father*, there must be a clearer understanding of the adult organizers’ views on the state of religious identity today as a *crisis of identity*.

1.1.1. Individualism, Secularism, and Atheism: Modern Problems

Many of the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* spoke generally of a crisis of faith as a justifying and operational factor in their actions and engagement in the NE. Bishop Marcel reflected on the idea of a “God-less society,” saying,

The world repeats continuously that you don't need God in your life. [...] Freedom without God is a freedom that allows a person do to whatever they want even if it means to oppress someone else in order to gain a great position. [...] And that's what they are hearing over and over again through the commercials, the consumerism that we live in, the individualistic life we also live in, this me-myself-and-I; everyone becomes their own God.

Bishop Marcel is pointing to the unfortunate outcomes of modern identity's pervasive self-centredness, which pushes people away from God. André agrees, and expressed with zeal the importance of transforming one's attitude towards the world in order to transform the world:

The Church has spent too much time being on the defence. [...] We should be proposing the faith on the offence. We should be the ones to transform culture. Culture doesn't transform us; we should be doing that to the world in the most positive sense. Once our people understand, once the young generation understands that, then they can begin to really rise and become the men and women, the parents and the doctors and the lawyers that some day they will become. They will be a transformed culture. They need to understand their missionary identity.

The intention of this attitude and approach, raised by Bishop Marcel and André, is understood to be a retrieval of Catholic identity within the context of the perceived loss of authentic religious identity, and active engagement as evangelical Catholics in political and social structures. This comes out in many different ways.

The first issue that was raised in the overall discussion on loss of faith was the problems inherent to aspects of conventional society, i.e. liberalism, secularism, and atheism. As previously discussed in Chapter 4, the historical rise in prominence of political liberalism and its values of equality, tolerance, freedom, and choice (Kelly, 2005) operationalized secularism as a means for establishing and maintaining political neutrality in the public sphere (Habermas, 2005). Though

there are more complex and critical understandings of secularism, the conventional narrative of secularism is that religion can be part of an individual's personal life, but cannot impede on the capacity for political engagement in the pluralistic public sphere (Casanova, 2011).

Adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* echoed the narrative that secularism is a dominant social discourse that harbours the political liberal values of individualism, tolerance, and freedom, and has marginalized religion and religious institutions from the public sphere. As reflected by Bishop Marcel and André, the adult organizers largely responded that they saw secularism as having a negative impact on society. For example, Bishop Marcel took offense at the operationalization of secularism and individualism in the recently proposed Quebec "Charter of Values," which sought the laicization of the public sphere in Quebec (i.e. spaces related to public service like government offices and daycares) by prohibiting workers' display of "ostentatious" religious symbols on their person (Guo and Wong, 2015; Lampron, 2014; Lefebvre, 2014). Bishop Marcel said, "Religion is not meant to be lived alone, and that's what the world is trying to tell us all the time. Our politicians [...] want to restrict any religion to a very individualistic experience where it's only you and your God. [...] Of course, my relationship with God is going to be a personal one, but as a Christian it is never an individual one. There is a difference between personal and individual, or individualistic." Bishop Marcel is again pointing to the perceived problem of the idealization of individualism as a social value inherent to secularism, which sets the individual outside of the

community for the sake of keeping religion or religious expression private. This, in his view, leads to social alienation, and with it a plethora of personal and social problems. It is seen as carrying a message that religious people and their values, informed by religious authority, have no place in conventional society. This perspective on individualism both adheres to and validates the secularization thesis (Beckford, 2003; Berger, 2002; Beyer, 2013b; Bruce, 2002), which, in turn, helps to justify the NE proselytization program.

Another side of this perspective on individualism is the view that it is informed by atheism and agnosticism, and has thus influenced social norms that are detrimental to the Catholic Church and society at large. André spoke of how an ethos of rejecting God has pervaded society to the point of being a social norm, saying, “20 years ago, it was just the opposite: ‘What? You don’t believe in God? How can you not believe in God, that’s silly!’ But now it’s reversed completely. And I believe it is because the people, 30, 50, 100 years ago never told us what we should believe. They never asked us to have conviction. To give our lives to Christ is to have a relationship. So it became indifferent—it became cultural.” André sees this social ethos of atheism as having furthered an alienating individualism that stands at odds with what he believes is the *modus operandi* of the Catholic Church. It must be noted, however, that this perspective is not shared by all proponents of the Church, as in the example of Pope Francis famously defending the salvation of atheists if they follow their consciences (Day, 2015). In other words, the Catholic Church is by no means a monolithic political unit, be it liberal or conservative.

Nevertheless, what lies at the crux of *Journey to the Father* and the evangelization program of the NE is the idea that Catholics have not experienced God on a personal level. Marilyn, the head organizer of *Journey to the Father*, shared the view of a general alienation and pointed out that this had even affected volunteers at *Journey to the Father*. She said, “We have one school board rep who lives just around the corner from Saint Raphael’s and comes to the Sunday mass every year. But I know they’re somewhere off doing something else...I understand all these things, but I suspect that it’s that whole ‘Working hard for Catholicism without having yet encountered Christ themselves.’” With frustration, Marilyn recognized a disaffected attitude even among active members of her church community. The reflection is: *If only they could experience Jesus Christ, they would change their lives*. This points to a subtext describing how this constructed individualism pervades even the Church itself, in terms that Marilyn and André would relate as the trappings of the *cultural*.

1.1.2. “Cultural Catholics”: A Pervasive “Problem” in Need of a Solution

Adult organizers at *Journey to the Father* shared the view of an underlying alienation within secular society that is inherent to modernization or modern lifestyles. In the Catholic Church since Vatican II, this idea has had a strong correlation with the informal category of cultural Catholics. To return to our earlier discussion on the subject, Chester Gillis delineates two types of post-conciliar Catholics, one of which identifies with the authority of the Catholic Church and the other of which does not (2013: 4), while John Portmann explains how cultural

Catholics “espouse secular culture, not condemn it” and “squirm at the idea that conversion to Catholicism...is even necessary for salvation” (2010: 165). It must, however, be stated that the socio-religious perspectives of “cultural Catholics” remain understudied, in contrast to the acceptance of the view of *engaged vs. disengaged* Catholics. For the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father*, this dichotomy serves to justify the idea that cultural Catholics are a major adversary for the NE program and the vitality of the Catholic Church. This perceived conflict has provided a backdrop for a program of identity formation that incorporates Catholic evangelical action and religious identity.

Sister Elizabeth, in her crisp polyester black habit with white trim and a pleasant demeanour, summarized this embattled sentiment, stating, “Our Catholic identity is not as strong as it was, say, pre-Vatican II. So we’ve got a couple of generations now that have been raised without that Catholic identity.” In this statement, she pointed to a culture gap of religious engagement and to the breaking point having been Vatican II. To her, Vatican II represented the loss of a dynamic Catholic landscape. She stated that a return to sacramental devotion, as evidenced in the NE, had given flesh to the bones of Catholic religiosity, which had been restrained by cultural Catholicism. Pat, a lead Disciple in his early 20s who spent his days at college studying carpentry, agreed, pointing to the difficulty of living a Catholic faith in society today. He said, “Being Catholic is tough. We’re called to do a lot of things and to be the perfect person you can be or the most you can be, right? So it is tough so some people chicken out and they find those questions that don’t

have easy answers and they don't look as much as they need to and accept the doubts as the Truth and lose their faith. Well, they don't lose their faith, they just sell their faith, they give it away, they don't want it anymore." This sentiment was echoed by other adult organizers, who expressed that living a life of conviction was not for the faint-hearted and would be met with scorn and marginalization, but it remained something worth working at and, perhaps more importantly, worth speaking about.

This leads into the second aspect of the problem of cultural Catholicism as it relates to the NE, and the struggles adult organizers faced with *Journey to the Father*. Those participants in *Journey to the Father* who expressed an affinity with evangelical Catholicism spoke of the negative attitude that the label 'evangelical' often provoked. Sam was frustrated with how these labels were getting in the way of asserting his authentic (evangelical) Catholic identity:

I hate those terms because...[*laughs*] What terminology can be used? Call the falling away ones something else...Catholic is Catholic...People are always labelling me and our Church and our youth group as different things...I'm just striving at being more and more Catholic. I'm not a special kind of Catholic, or an Evangelical Catholic. I'm not a conservative Catholic. I'm not a Bapti-Catholic or a Pentcosti-Catholic, or an Orthodox Catholic, or anything...What we need to do is—I think, anyway—to stop labelling everybody Catholic [*laughs*].

As was the case for many of my interviewees throughout this research, Sam saw cultural Catholicism, or the acceptance of secular values, as having become a defining or normative element of what it means to be Catholic. As Sister Elizabeth expressed it, the problem is that *Catholic identity meant cultural Catholic*. This itched at Sam, in that he felt he did not have to be labeled or to assert a qualifying adjective

to define his identity because he *was* Catholic, and his actions and socio-political perspective should be the determining factor. In other words, Catholicism should not be defined as a cultural framework but related to active socio-religious engagement. This perspective drove Sam's efforts to establish the NE paradigm of religious engagement in his home parish, as well as his long-term participation at *Journey to the Father*. His aim was to establish that *Catholic identity means evangelical identity*.

André too shared this perspective, and sought ways to reclaim Catholicism for the NE through his term "missionary identity." He explained his "belief that as a Catholic, our deepest identity is missionary. Meaning, we at baptism, our natural response is to let the world know...We have been silent, so it means that we're in a crisis of identity. And you know when somebody who doesn't know who we are, what's going to happen? Dysfunctional behaviour, drift, find identity somewhere else." For André, the search for identity outside of Catholic tradition had led to a sense of loss, which affirmed the need for recovery through the authenticity of a Catholic evangelical identity. He reflected the feeling of alienation that many adult organizers expressed throughout these interviews—that the draw of secular society and its expression as normative within the Church through Cultural Catholics could no longer stand. André's idea of missionary identity seeks to insert the evangelical impetus, in a move to normalize it within the Catholic worldview. André's missionary identity focuses on the *self*, establishing an "authentic" Catholicism in order to go out into the world and proselytize to the *other*.

1.1.3. Catholic Identity Politics: Struggling for Recognition against Hegemonic Social Values

Cultural Catholics were perceived by many of the adult organizers to be a major antagonistic element that played into the normativity of the discourse of secular values. As Father Stéphane explained, “There’s a necessity to revive faith and resuscitate faith when it’s dead. Sometimes some parishes might not be dead but they might be dying. Sometimes there’s more of a culture of doubt or a culture of relativism than there is a culture of faith.” There is an underlying need for action from evangelical Catholics in the face of the overpowering conventions of secular society. Recalling John Portmann’s view of the ease of cultural Catholics with secular culture, and their disregard for the necessity of religious conversion, sheds light on the fact that evangelical Catholics feel marginalized by the culture of disaffection, both from within their community and from without.

Relying on a discourse of marginalization, which they evidenced in describing their separateness from the normative frameworks of secular society and cultural Catholicism, the adult organizers and the NE situated themselves as purveyors of an authentic Catholicism, building on the framework of a politics of recognition in order to assert their social and political relevance. Seen in terms of Charles Taylor’s dialogical identity framework, which is informed by the dynamic between authenticity and recognition (Gutmann, 1994; Taylor, 1991), the adult organizers are executing a retrieval and reinvigoration of an authentic form of Catholic evangelical identity in order to seek recognition from those with the power to shape the normative values of conventional society, by whom they perceive to

have been marginalized. In connection with Mark Kenny's definition of identity politics as being the emergence of hidden issues in matters of political concern (2004: 10), the adult organizers were asserting a means to engage Catholics in a religious identity that was not available to them in their regular (conventional) lives. *Journey to the Father* served this goal of retrieval because it was a public space outside of conventional society (i.e. a rural space) in which Catholic youth could feel fully immersed, and supported, while discovering or developing their otherwise private religious identities.

It must be noted that identity politics is typically employed by groups or individuals who are marginalized by the conventions of normative society, like social and political subcultures, people of colour and ethno-cultural communities, women and feminist organizations, the LGBTQ community(ies), and anti-ableist political movements. Their continued apparent or inherent marginalization by normative society through various kinds of discrimination affirms the need for this type of politics. Otherwise, they are communities largely ignored and without rights or political recognition. David Macey explains, "Identity politics usually takes the form of a demand for the right to be different, and for that difference to be recognized as legitimate. This form of politics can be viewed either as a celebration of cultural diversity and a defense of minority rights, or as a betrayal of the universalist values of the Enlightenment" (2000: 197). It is interesting to note how the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* and the NE fit this paradigm in form, if not in spirit—in other words, the "strangeness" of the idea of a global, conservative

religious organization like the Catholic Church asserting a discourse of marginalization and difference. However, what was evidenced in the interviews with adult organizers was the idea that Catholic evangelicals are being “closeted” for their beliefs and worldview, which are perceived as being different from the norm. What is important to realize here is that evangelical discourse generates a differentiation from secular society as well as within the Catholic Church, portraying evangelicals as needing to fight for their recognition as authentic Catholics. Ultimately, this perspective has breathed life into NE ventures like *Journey to the Father* by asserting a right to be recognized in conventional society for having “outed” religious identities, which necessitates a political language and minority identification. The message that is therefore justified becomes increasingly clear: *It is ok to be Catholic—it is ok to be different.*

1.2. Catholic Evangelization Discourse and Evangelical Impetus: *Journey to the Father*

Though the adult organizers are individuals who differ in terms of professions and roles in *Journey to the Father*, they nonetheless shared the same or similar views when it came to the goal of their efforts in organizing and operating the conference: to offer the young people an alternative religious experience so that they can take religion more seriously in their lives. As André explained, “We need to call them into making a choice to be radical, to make Jesus the centre of their lives.” This was a bold statement related to André’s view of Catholics and their missionary identity when young people to take a chance and do something radically different with their lives. This initiates an important discussion of two elements that stand at

the heart of *Journey to the Father* with regard to evangelization: 1) the importance of individual choice; and 2) the need for a paradigm shift through conversion.

1.2.1. The Regime of Individual Choice and Agency

Choice was a major theme throughout *Journey to the Father*. It was raised by the conference speakers and in the talks as a means to get young participants more involved or invested in the weekend's proceedings. The overall intent was for young people to break free of their inhibitions in order to fully participate. Choice was also emphasized on the last day of the conference as the youth were faced with the realities of going home. The message throughout the conference was consistent: *Choose God as the centre of your life*. Choice was the operational factor for the adult organizers, making the difference between reaching the young audience with their intended message and the young people being disengaged. However, questions of choice also raise questions of agency and the requisite freedoms for individual action—i.e. *is there an actual choice being offered?* Though the discussion below relates to a broader debate around the effectiveness of agency in relation to the liberal value of individual freedom of will, it is more important to understand how the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* define and deploy the notion of choice, why they are doing this, and what purpose it serves. Below are the ways in which the ideas of choice and agency are deployed at *Journey to the Father*.

The first element that emerged with respect to choice was the notion that secular society has locked young people in, prohibiting them from making the choice to put God first at the centre of their lives. This perspective was raised many times

in the interviews. Natalie, a regular volunteer at *Journey* who spoke candidly of her struggles in embracing religious identity, raised the idea that “there is a lack of choice or whether if kids realize it or not because the peer pressure behind it all is so powerful. [...] I think that a lot of it...is just breaking down that misconception of ‘If it’s cool, it’s right.’ And telling them that ‘Not necessarily.’” Natalie emphasized the idea that choices important to one’s identity and well-being can often go against the status quo, and that discernment is necessary for young people to make choices. This underscored the purpose of *Journey to the Father*, in that ‘informed’ choices could help reclaim Catholic identity against a backdrop of disengagement. Pat pointed out the distinguishing fact that choice, for young Catholics, made the difference between receiving identity and engaging it directly. He said, “Your faith is not something that you inherit; it’s got to be your own.” Choice was promoted as a gift into which a person must put effort in order for it to become meaningful. In other words, choice required effort and action from the individual.

Some people noted how choice cut through the clatter and confusion of experience, and pluralism. André, for example, saw choice as more important than experience. He explained that experience without community support was nullified, while choice asserted a continued orientation toward a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and toward the Catholic Church. He spoke about the young people whose religious experiences at *Journey to the Father* had led them to choose God: “They came and Jesus was real to them. So they’re choosing. So the ones that move forward are those that chose for themselves, but they had a community that

supported that language of choice, meaning *choose Him, believe in Him, enter into a relationship with Him*. Those are the ones that continue from the experience of *Journey to the Father*.” André was expressing the view that, in the pluralism of choices, choosing religion may not be the easiest choice to make, and yet it must be made—a deliberate and non-coerced action. Morgan, a head Disciple in her early 20s who had worked extensively evangelizing young people, made the analogy of a mailman coming to your door and you having the choice to read or not read the mail. Your actions dictate your ultimate fate, though you do not know what that fate will be. She said, “Now, you can choose to read the letter or not, and as you read the letter, you find out that you’ve won the lottery, or you could not read the letter and toss it into the junk mail and you would have lost out on the lottery. It’s like that.” In other words, choice is always made against the consequences of deciding not to act. This notion of choice to engage or participate will always draw to the benefit of the adult organizers who are invested in proselytization.

Adult organizers noted that making the choice to embrace an active religious identity can be very difficult for young people. Bishop Paul-André, former Bishop of the Alexandria/Cornwall diocese and a long-time supporter of *Journey to the Father*, described the challenges that young people face when making choices at their age: “Those choices you’re making, you can say, it’s impossible at the age of 15 to be aware of the consequences of the choices we’re making then. So, young people are often making choices and unmaking the choices, trying something on, letting it go. They’re trying to feel their way forward.” This perspective underscores an

important characteristic element of how young people process their experiences in order to inform their decisions. To *feel one's way forward* is a very provocative and astute way to describe young people and their process of identity formation. Natalie suggested that choosing religious identity did not necessarily lead to becoming socially marginalized. She said, "We're trying to show that you can still live your life. I think they think that there is a separation between a secular and a religious life or faith life. We're telling them that you can choose to have God in your life and still live a 'normal' life." This pointed to the challenge youth face when making the decision to deepen their religious faith. Significantly, the message was that being religious can also be normal.

In terms of the attitudes and approach of the adult organizers, they promoted the idea that evangelizing young people was not a "hard-sell" in convincing them to embrace their Catholic identities. Bishop Paul-André said that you can not force someone to become religious: "If you can guarantee someone will be a believer at the end of a process, we're no longer talking about faith because faith is a free choice. And so freedom has to be there; we have no control over it." He suggested that the freedom of the individual prevails over coercion of thought and identification. Some felt, however, that young people should not be fed religion in small doses either. Sam, who had many years experience as a youth group leader, expressed frustration at the state of indifference and apathy at all levels of the Catholic Church. He believed that bold actions could lead to better choices in terms of people engaging their religious identity. He pointed out, "If you get a lot of

Catholicism or a lot of Christianity, you'll catch it; if you get a little bit of it, you're immunized against it, or you're inoculated against it." This provocative metaphor underscores the view that youth need continual engagement in religious culture, or else they will simply fall out of practice and ultimately ignore it entirely.

The above discussion on the choice that Catholics have to engage in an evangelical form of religious identity speaks of the multifaceted operation of agency. The conventional definition of agency involves the freedom of an individual to act autonomously. Sumi Madhok et al. point out that "Agency is now widely invoked in ways that sometimes make it synonymous with individual choice, [yet] coercion is barely addressed, and the ways in which agency continues to be gendered and racialized are insufficiently appreciated" (2012: 2). This feminist critique of the idea of agency is echoed by Saba Mahmood (2005), who contests the conventional understanding of agency, calling it a fiction about individuals acting independently of social relations with others.

This broadened perspective on relational agency resonates with some of the views presented by the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father*. They sought to depict the Catholic Church as a nexus of young people's social relations but also a space open to individual agency. Bishop Paul-André and Natalie both raised the concern that the Church must be sensitive to the individual needs and differing levels of engagement of young people. And yet, each Sam's and André's perspectives were indicative of a feeling of urgency for evangelical Catholics to inspire young people to deepen their commitment to a religious identity through lived, religious

experience. The framework being projected by the adult organizers is: 1) the Catholic Church is malleable and yet directive in the moral and social formation of Catholic identity among young people; and 2) young people are social agents who have the capacity to make their own decisions, but need to be embedded in the Catholic community in order to be able to effect positive change in their lives.

It is difficult to assess the validity of the idea of agency based on the above discussion on feminist theory and the perspectives of adult organizers of *Journey to the Father*. This difficulty aligns with how Mary Evans sees the problems inherent in the idea of agency as obscuring both “individual and collective politics,” and the idea the “getting agency” is complex and sometimes contradictory (2012: 60–61).

Coercion is therefore an operational factor in this discussion of agency. Madhok et al. speak of how they wish to move away from the problematic binary of agency and coercion, and yet they recognize that they must also remain attuned to the reality of this interplay (2012: 260–261). In other words, agency is always tempered by the variety and tone of coercive forces at play. I would argue that the complexity of this interplay between agency and coercion was picked up on by the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father*, who do not want to push young people away from engaging an evangelical Catholic identity by trying too hard, but also do not want to undercut the strength of their evangelical perspective and proselytization. This articulation of the evangelical perspective also coincides with Peta Bowden and Jane Mummery’s warning that the directive aspects of identity can hollow out any sense of

autonomous agency (2009: 140). This, again, points to the definition and interpretation of choice within this context.

Choice was a consistent theme throughout *Journey to the Father* and coercion or hard-sell proselytization was largely de-emphasised. The adult organizers were clearly attempting to convince young people to invest in their religious identities in a manner that would not drive them away or alienate them completely from the idea. This need informed their perspective on young people's agency. It would seem that the NE at *Journey to the Father* were sensitive to how the self explores and questions different experiences of the *other* in an ongoing process of identity formation—i.e. *a person has the right to choose how to live their lives*. The distinguishing factor in the interplay between agency and coercion in the context of the NE and *Journey to the Father*, however, is that with the formation of an evangelical, religious identity comes the dynamic of paradigm shift or *conversion*.

1.2.2. *Conversion: Paradigm Shift towards a "Larger World"*

Conversion was also emphasized in the process of proselytization and the evangelical impetus in the Catholic Church. Evangelization in the Church was largely focused on individuals raised in the Church, but who did not feel engaged in a personal relationship with Christ. Conversion in this context was not converting to another religion or to a different Christian denomination, but towards a greater personal commitment to a more active and engaged religiosity within the Catholic Church. Again, this is not to devalue the various ways in which cultural Catholics (which is itself a problematic category) engage with God. This discussion reflects the

identity paradigm of *us* (evangelical Catholics) and *them* (cultural Catholics), and the NE strategy for evangelization wherein a palpable and personal experience of God comes to shift one's manner and orientation in religious engagement. At *Journey to the Father*, this was manifested through the sacramental devotion of Eucharistic Adoration and Reconciliation.

The adult organizers emphasized Adoration as a mechanism representing the shift toward devotional subjectivity, promoting Adoration as a material and personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Having led Adoration twice at *Journey to the Father*, Father Stéphane explained, "It's a Catholicism that leads to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and that doesn't substitute the Sacraments for Jesus Christ, but uses the Sacraments as a way to encounter Jesus Christ. So it's not a ritual for the sake of the ritual, it's the Sacraments as a visible encounter with Christ." Father Stéphane saw Adoration as a unique aspect of Catholicism wherein a material representation of God was offered to young people as a conduit for their religious experience, which, it was hoped, would lead to conversion.

The first element to emerge from the interviews regarding conversion was the idea of surrendering to God. Bishop Paul-André went into great detail about the theological aspects of sacramental devotion, stressing its uniqueness in helping to enter into a personal relationship with God. He said, "That notion of Christ living in me of being alive here and now within me, that is foundational to Christianity and it really distinguishes Christianity from every other religion. Because there's no other religion that you have a sense that you are entering into a relationship with the

founder of the religion.” This assertion of the importance of a personal relationship with God was further complemented by the idea of the complete surrender of the self to God in order to fully embrace a Catholic identity. Bishop Marcel explained: “Surrender in a sense that you recognize Christ as being your master, your Lord, your King. He is everything to me; he is everything to everyone. So it’s learning how to die to yourself of all the worldly things so that you can embrace Christ totally.” Within this framework, the ideal of surrender is not an abstract concept but necessitates a personal, lived experience. But it is important to qualify the statement of “surrendering to God” from an evangelical Catholic perspective with the importance of the institutional church as a mediating factor for one’s personal relationship with God (i.e. sacramental devotion and the authority of the Catholic Church).

Some adults pointed to the importance of a charismatic engagement in Adoration as an effective means of surrendering to God. Though charismatic religiosity is not completely embraced in the Catholic Church (Fay, 2002; Swenson, 2009), it still remains an overt element of the *Journey to the Father* experience. Yvette, a youth group leader who confided having run into problems with her home church regarding charismatic religiosity, talked of how this element augmented the experience and effectiveness of Adoration at *Journey to the Father*. She said, “You know that you’re just praying and you’re praying in beautiful tongues, nobody really knows what that is, they could just think that it’s your own tune, why would you have to explain everything?” For her, the beauty of this experience outweighed the

need to understanding the situation, which allowed her to accept transcendental feelings and actions (i.e. speaking in tongues). The charismatic element moved her to a deeper connection with the personal experience of God. For her, lived experience was of primary importance for “knowing” God.

Somewhat in contrast to Yvette’s perspective, Lauren, who was a long-time volunteer at *Journey to the Father* and a former youth participant, stressed the importance of explaining the religious implications of Adoration to young people. She described her first experiences of Adoration at *Journey to the Father* when she was younger: “I think my first year I was kind of, like... ‘What’s the big deal?’ I don’t remember if we ever talked about it with our group after that first Journey. But, in my second year when I listened to the priest telling us what we are about to go into and why and what’s going to happen, oh! That is a big deal. And no wonder people are affected by it. They are opening their hearts, to let God in.” Lauren reflected that contextualization helped enrich her experience, and that framing was part of the *Journey to the Father* experience. Bishop Paul-André concurred, saying, “There’s also a teaching of the creed and the code; what we believe, how we believe it, what we live, how we live, and why we live that way, how we celebrate, why we celebrate. So there’s an education around the creed, the code, and the cult, but the heart of *Journey to the Father* is helping out people find the heart of that religious structure, which is the faith.” He asserted that, in the context of *Journey to the Father*, sacramental devotion was always supported by a structure and dissemination of theological knowledge and ecclesiastical support.

Along with teaching and support, Adoration also had an enticing element of spectacle or the performance of ritual. Again, Bishop Paul-André explained the importance of building up to Adoration and that its performance helped with engagement:

You can say theatrically it is prepared, the lights are dimmed, the music swells, the whole atmosphere of it, the night is coming down, the gradual quietness that comes down on the young people, the reflections, the readings, the witnessing of young people, everything is built up to make this a humanly powerful moment. [...] that sense of an encounter... it's really meant to help the young people really understand that Christ wants to enter into relationship with me.

He was pointing to the contextualization of religious experience in order to maximize its effect and draw young people towards the intended message; i.e. a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Morgan agreed, describing her first experience of Adoration at *Journey to the Father* as a global sensory experience that took in the power of a collective effervescence, the surrounding environment, and the elements that made up the performance of Adoration.

I just threw up a prayer and said, 'God, if you are really present in that little piece of bread, can you come to me?' [...] And he got about three feet in front of me and the priest put the monstrance right in front of my face. [...] I just started laughing. I was just filled with so much joy and there were people around me. Some were crying, some were silent, some were kneeling quietly, and here was me. [...] And in my head I was like, 'Morgan! What are you doing? Shut up already!' But it was absolutely uncontrollable.

Spectacle narrowed the gap between the experiential learning of charismatic religiosity and the contextualization of theological knowledge and ecclesiastical support in the Adoration ritual, as well as in Reconciliation. Through the spectacle of ritual, the experience was powerful beyond what we can understand.

Father Stéphane mentioned, however, that Adoration has an external power beyond the leaders' ability to perform. He said, "I'm sure if you were doing amazing preaching, you could lead them to a deep confession of faith, but there's something about Eucharistic Adoration that makes even their body deeply echo what their soul's experiencing." Adoration provided an embodied experience of religion in each person, and the other people all around amplified that experience. Malusi reflected on how his experience of Adoration was augmented by the fact that there was a community that supported his actions without judgement. He said, "Everyone there is supporting you and there's no feeling of shame as in embarrassment because you are at home with everyone and the people here are praying that you can experience the Lord and open your heart to acknowledge it." For Natalie, the experience of Adoration was liberating from all the social pressures from peers and society:

I remember putting my hands up during a song and I was like, 'Hey, I can do this. Nobody is pointing me out or making fun of me.' It was just like so awesome that this is safe and I get to do something that feels so natural and I don't have to hide it. I get just to be who I want to be. That was really powerful. Then again, you leave the weekend and unless that you have something set up at home like a youth group or something like that, you're going to lose the feeling. I think because of that, I was motivated to return the next year. That there was no youth group at home so this is the only other thing available to me.

This was a common reflection, as will be discussed below—that *Journey to the Father* allowed participants, adults and youth, to feel free to express themselves without fear of being ridiculed or scorned. However, outside the confines of this Catholic evangelical geography, feelings of collective effervescence quickly

dissipated as young participants returned to their regular lives, just as the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* feared.

The adult organizers believed that young people needed a choice in order to fully embrace a conversion to the Catholic evangelical worldview. There was a conviction that young people could not be coerced into doing things they did not want to do. *Journey to the Father* was a venue, therefore, that offered youth the opportunity to experience charismatic forms of religiosity, bracketed by ecclesiastical support and religious teaching, which would ultimately serve to shape Catholic identity. The adult organizers believed that, if treated with respect, young people could absorb and expound these values and experiences to the point of paradigmatic conversion; i.e. from living *with* Catholicism to living *their* Catholicism. Now, what did the young people think of all of this? The following section will seek responses and perspectives from the youth participants regarding their place in the NE, at *Journey to the Father*, and within conventional society as young Catholics.

2. Embodied Catholicity: Youth Engagements of Religion and Identity in Secular Society

Journey to the Father was a complex event that held within it different aspects regarding the formation (or in-formation) of Catholic identity in youth under the terms of the Catholic New Evangelization (NE). This was bolstered by the impact of the historical changes in the Catholic Church regarding the relationship between the institution and the individual, which affected attitudes about and understandings of religiosity. Based on the sea changes of Vatican II, the new subjectivity among the laity (i.e. lay access to a once strictly institutional Catholic

religiosity) had also given the Church a new framework for engaging in their long struggle for the recognition of religious identity in modern society. This suggests an identity politics that speaks of the marginalization of Catholic identity by the normative values and structures of conventional society, which has enshrined political liberal and secular values. This perceived hegemonic power also influenced a majority of Catholic adherents in the form of cultural Catholicism. This internal dynamic led to further urgency in the proselytization actions and activities of the NE, since they were not only trying to prove themselves important in their difference from conventional society, but had to do so against the tide of alienation within the Church itself.

Overall, the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* were advocating for a strong presence of religion in young people's lives as they live in the "regular world." However, the organizers have highlighted a separation from conventional, socio-political discourses that perpetuate the disaffection of religious engagement and identity (i.e. secularism and cultural Catholicism). This separation is done through the claim of being marginalized (i.e. misrecognized if not persecuted), thus asserting a strong boundary through an identity politics of difference and recognition. It is this identity politics, however, that tethers this socio-political perspective *to the world*. Ultimately, the "real" or "true" way (i.e. authenticity) to be religious is advocated as being an evangelical Catholic, but the mitigating factor remains that the individual has choice.

This perspective underscores the justification given for putting so much effort into organizing the *Journey to the Father* conference annually, for the presence of so many important ecclesiastical functionaries (bishops and priests), for the relevance of sacramental devotions as the centre of the conference activities, and for the urgency for an evangelical impetus and the emotional engagement of youth. However, one distinguishing factor between the adult organizers and young people is the idea of marginalization. Whereas the adults portrayed, at times, dire situations, none of the young people claimed being physically harmed. Though many talked of social marginalization for being religious and bearing the scorn of their family, friends, and peers, the strong point about marginalization does not fully resonate with many young people, whose lives are filled with multiple influences, a range of friends, and the message of socio-political diversity and multiculturalism that fleshes out and informs their identities. So how do young people negotiate this evangelical worldview that they encounter within the social and symbolic geography of *Journey to the Father*? How do they interpret and negotiate agency, coercion, and choice? Do people feel compelled to do things at *Journey to the Father*? How are they negotiating this message of evangelical engagement and the problems and occurrences of regular life? In other words, how are they negotiating these religious values and perspectives in the formation of identity?

This final section will look at the questions regarding integration and the consolidation of experience. These revolve around personal experiences, social and political perceptions, and symbolic or universal worldview. This section will reflect

perspectives from the young participants in order to examine the ways in which they intersect with and diverge from the messages and perspectives of the adults at *Journey to the Father*. It will be divided into three parts: 1) youth responding to the idea of choice in engaging a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; 2) seeing how gender serves as an optic for understanding socio-political worldview; and 3) outlining young people's views on evangelization and the impact on identity.

2.1. Stuck between Two Worlds: Responding to Choice and Religious Experience

Young people are negotiating different messages of evangelical worldview and engagement at *Journey to the Father*. It is helpful, then, to review Foucault's dynamic understanding of power/knowledge and how it is reflected in this situation. Foucault sees that power is produced, and is inherently democratic, but can serve a hegemonic perspective through force relations (1978: 60). And if knowledge is intimately related to power, then the dynamics of force or power relations operationalized through different strategies of conviction (i.e. messages of evangelical engagement) necessitate an incitement to discourse (i.e. evangelical impetus). *Journey to the Father*, therefore, serves as a nexus of different strategies of conviction for the NE to produce knowledge and experience in the hope of inciting discourse in youth (i.e. testimonials and proselytization) towards a new normative framework (i.e. evangelical Catholic identity).

Furthermore, looking at the work of Carol Cusack (2011) as well as Peter Hemming and Nicola Madge (2012), it is important to stress the inherent agency of young people, "establishing that children are capable of willed action and are

competent in specific situations” (Valentine, 2011: 356). With this in mind, we can see youth negotiating the different messages disseminated at *Journey to the Father* with both assent and resistance. Bishop Paul-André reflected on how young people process experiences in order to make choices that impact their lives: “They’re trying to feel their way forward.” This is acutely reflective of the layered and complex nature of young people’s social realities, with lived experience acting as a compass in the formation of identity. This section will outline the reflections of young people regarding the themes of experience, choice, and conversion as raised by the adult organizers.

2.1.1. Problems with Secularism, Cultural Catholics, and Peer Pressure

The perceived impact of secularism on religion within the confines of conventional society was an important theme for many young participants of *Journey to the Father*, with a few conflicting perspectives. Peter, an intellectual youth aged 16, was particularly blunt, saying, “I think Nietzsche was right. For society, God is dead. And it’s hard for me to imagine how the cultural consciousness could include God again. [...] It’s true that Canada was once a Christian society, even though a divided and antagonistic society... it’s kind of hard to imagine how society that could end up being a more broadly Christian, ecumenical thing, but that can’t really happen in Canada for instance as we have it today because Christianity, well, it’s a majority on paper.” The broad impact of secular values on religion in Canada has not gone unnoticed by this young participant, who mused on this reality though it had not affected his Catholic identity. Jimmy, an introspective young man aged 17,

reflected on the idea that there may not be a God. He talked of how “everyone seems to prefer the idea that there is none, no God, no nothing. Um, yeah. So occasionally I’ll get the feeling that maybe we’re wrong. Just occasionally. I don’t like that feeling, but I don’t feel it occasionally. [...] But then, immediately after, I’ll snap myself out of it. Like, ‘why are you even thinking this?’” Like Peter, Jimmy reflected on the importance of doubt and how it reflects a social reality that does not entirely fit with his own values and view of the world. Jimmy spoke of how this made him feel, saying, “It makes me feel like I’ve been wrong for a long time and it doesn’t feel good. It doesn’t feel good at all.” Ultimately, Jimmy said, he had no regrets, and the choice he had made to develop his own religious identity had led him down the right path. But that did not stop him from musing on the impact conventional social mores had on his life, and his view of doubt as a factor that seeks to undermine his faith.

As with the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father*, the young people also took issue with cultural Catholics as a ubiquitous, normative force in their lives as engaged, evangelical Catholics. John, at 14 years old, mentioned how difficult it was to speak to his friends and family, who scorned him for his religious engagement, about Catholicism. He said, “Those kinds of people, I don’t want to totally stay away from because I want them to realize that people do love their faith. Like, they don’t hate it, they actually want to practice it and that they should try too. [...] They’ll only be Catholic because their parents have taught them to be Catholic, but they still don’t want to be. So it can be any person to put down your faith. It can be your

closest friend, it can be your enemy.” This pointed to a situation that many of the young people faced, where the people closest to them dissuaded and discouraged them in their evangelical engagement in religious identity. Ryan, aged 18, out of school and working, mentioned what he saw as a common problem for the Catholics that he knew: “If you come up from a family where your parents told you to go to church and also if you’re not educated...sometimes you’ll start to question when you’re alone and that’s when you’ll start drifting away...a good question like, ‘Why am I doing this?’ and you’re not really rooted, and you’re not really prudent and haven’t really been taught why...they don’t know what to say because no one really ever educated.” In his view, some people do not even know why they are participating in religious activities; they are just doing it for cultural reasons.

These young people raised the issue of being dissuaded at the social and community levels, while others said that peer groups and friends might influence their choice to stop engaging or exploring their religious identities. Bradley, aged 16, mentioned how much he liked his experience at *Journey to the Father*, but said that if his friends were more opposed to his expression of religious identity, he would eventually stop participating. Jimmy also expressed disappointment in the negative reactions of his peers, saying, “I definitely like to be in the group, but I don't feel like I should change myself to be that way. Um, if they accept me for the way I am, I feel that that's the way I am.” Some mentioned the challenge of being asked to participate in what they saw as immoral social activities, like partying, drug and alcohol use, and premarital sex. John spoke of his negative experiences of peer

pressure: “Even when you’re thinking of going to a party and they’re like, ‘Oh, can you bring any booze’ or ‘Do you want some?’ [...] there’s people who are just like okay and leave you alone, and there’s other people who just keeping nagging you and nagging you and nagging you. And, um, those are the people where it gets really annoying, ‘cause it’s hard to say no every single time.” They expressed the difficulty in asserting their moral values when faced with unrelenting pressure to fit in by engaging in behaviour they believed to be immoral. Yet this is not a complete negation of values outside of the evangelical Catholic purview. There is a negotiation of different moral perspectives as these young people explore their identities.

This perspective of negotiating the values outside of one’s moral purview resonates with the discerning force inherent in identity formation as delineated by Charles Taylor (1989, 1991). Taylor’s view that identity is dialogical allows for the interplay between authenticity and recognition to be a matter of the *self* relating to the *other*, with the *other* informing the *self* within a *common horizon* (i.e. areas of common values and perspectives). More importantly, Taylor’s view assures that the individual is not alienated from her/his social relations. The challenge of authenticity is to negotiate a pluralism of values and perspectives in a deliberate reciprocal process. However, the view of what constitutes authentic Catholic identity is somewhat different among adults and young people—i.e. different in tone, but not in content. Where the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* stated that an engaged, evangelical Catholicism—related to the benefits of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ—is the best option for happiness in an alienated

secular world, the young participants agreed, but conveyed a more nuanced engagement with the world outside the directed structure of evangelical identity. This is a case of adults and young people agreeing on the terms of evangelization, but having different perspectives on its execution in terms of forming identity.

This perspective on the nuanced engagement in religious identity formation among young people relates to Peter Beyer and Rubina Ramji's research describing how 1.5 and 2nd generation young Canadians of Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist backgrounds negotiated their inherited religious traditions through the optic of personal engagement, which was tempered by dominant socio-political values. Returning to Beyer's statement, "There was a consistent expectation that beliefs and practices had to make sense, to fit into a larger context of meaning, to have a reason other than that this was simply the way things were done. At the same time, it was up to the individual to discover this meaning from whatever sources each found authoritative or trustworthy, whether that be family, religious leaders, books, friends, the Internet, school, or other media" (2013: 11). This helps to characterize, in a comparative framework, the way that young people negotiate their religious identities in relation to different sources of socio-religious and moral authority and influence. This reflects an element at play for the young participants in *Journey to the Father*, which is their impulse to accept the modernist, multiple, diverse, plural nature of society, but as young, evangelical Catholics. The fluidity or even ambiguity is acceptable to them, though it is not for the adult organizers.

2.1.2. *Popular Culture and Media Engagement: Finding a Middle Path*

Another theme raised in the interviews was the influence and impact of popular culture and media. The perspective put forth by the participants was largely that popular culture and media were a conduit for secular values that could potentially corrupt religious moral frameworks. Father Stéphane provided an example which illustrates a common view among the adult organizers on the influence of media technologies and culture: “There’s an increased loneliness, people are increasingly being sucked into the technological novelties that are out, most of them have a smart phone, many of them have an iPad, lots of them have the video game stations, and they’re spending an increasing amount of hours in total isolation. And *Journey to the Father* feels very uncomfortable to such a culture.”

André described the challenge as hinging on young people’s religious capacity: “The big challenge for [young people] is to understand who they really are as Catholics. Once they understand that, then their lives and their voices will be able to reflect Christ, which will ultimately transform. Yes, there are the challenges of TV, of culture and all that. But if you have conviction and you know your missionary identity, you are not threatened by the world.” Both André and Father Stéphane felt that young people do have the capacity to engage with the moral values of the secular world, but only once they have fully embraced an evangelical identity framework. The implication of this idea of agency is that, until young people have a personal experience of Jesus Christ, the world will be a difficult and dangerous place.

The young people, however, were comfortable with continuing to engage with popular culture and media, with the conviction that they would not be overly affected. Jimmy, who had mused about the death of God, said, "I go on the Internet a lot. I like to almost whitewall the things that I don't want to see; it's almost like a blind spot on me, I don't even look at it." Vanessa, aged 16 and an active volunteer in her parish, explained her internal critique of popular culture: "Sometimes you see a movie and you're like, 'Well you won't see a Catholic doing that' or something." In both of these examples, the participants learned to negotiate the moral minefields of the Internet and pop culture without feeling like they had transgressed against their sense of personal integrity or religious identity. Malusi summarised the challenge that young Catholics face when negotiating popular culture: "Sometimes as a young person, you have that image of being faithful, being Catholic doesn't embody those things, it doesn't allow it, it prohibits it. So you are at a clash, 'Dude, do I want this or do I want that?' When in reality, you can have a little bit of both." This attitude of compromise seems to allow these young people to operate in a way that does not negate either popular culture or religious identity. They wish to live in the world and not apart from it.

Faced with this way of being in the world, many young people discussed the choice to be actively religious in terms of a lifestyle. Carry, aged 18 and very outspoken on her religious identity, said, "Well it's like walking a straight and narrow path, but it is more than that. It's a lifestyle choice, to live the best life that you can, and lead others to live the best life that they can. And help them to find God

along the line through that lifestyle.” As previously discussed, choice is attached to a core political liberal value that speaks of individual agency as the freedom to think and act. However, choice was also an operational factor in the message of Catholic evangelization at *Journey to the Father*. In this case, lifestyle is an offshoot of this idea that the individual has the freedom to choose the way she or he wants to live (Kelly, 2005; Kenny, 2004). The idea of lifestyle was raised multiple times in relation to the actions and behaviours of peers that stand outside the moral purview of the Catholic Church (e.g. partying or premarital sex). Estelle, aged 17, who talked of her struggle with shyness, mused on what faith had offered her: “Yah sometimes my friends are like, ‘[Estelle] you’re just so happy all the time, I’ve never seen a person so happy before.’ I’m just like, ‘Well I’ve got nothing to complain about!’ I don’t know it’s...like your Faith is like a lifestyle and you see things differently.” This level of self-determinacy could be an indicator of socio-political value syncretism, in which this young woman chose to further a relationship with God and the institution of the Catholic Church for her personal wellbeing. For her, happiness was the indicator of a healthy lifestyle choice.

However, these negotiations of pluralism as it related to religious identity do call into question the value of choice and agency for young people with regard to the discursive impact of community. In other words, was this sense of agency actually the product of an evangelical force relation? Recalling Lois McNay’s challenge, this analysis must remain sensitive to “embodied identity and subjectivity in materialist and relational terms in order to work towards the realization of renewed and

creative forms of political action” (2010: 523–524). Notions of agency and identity must be sensitive to the multiple layers of subjectivity and reciprocal relationships as individuals reflect on *who they are* in relation to others. We may conclude that, while these young (proto)evangelical Catholics see themselves as self-sufficient, they are actually internalizing knowledge and experiences from specific outside sources (i.e. from experiences of secular society to those of *Journey to the Father*). This necessitates, again, a nuanced understanding of the social agency of young people.

2.1.3. “Pushed” into Choice: Pros and Cons

The analytical premise for this research is a nuanced understanding of the agency of young people. With that said, there were many stories from the young participants of being pushed or coerced—for lack of a better word—into participating at *Journey to the Father*. They described being pushed by their youth group leaders at church or forced by their parents to go. Though the majority said that they were grateful for having participated, some reflected on the nature of free choice in the matter. Jimmy, who was not afraid to speak his mind, mentioned how “people are always pushing me to go to church and all that. And in the beginning, I started getting a little annoyed, really. Like, I can make my own choice and I was never really sure. But now, yeah. When I got there and I saw this, I got the feeling that He is real. He has to be. He can’t not be.” Though Jimmy felt that being pushed was beneficial in the end, being told what to do still rankled his sense of agency and independence.

Some participants felt insecure about their participation in *Journey to the Father*. Peggy, aged 17, confided by saying, “I find for me if I open my heart and then I show it to everyone all weekend and then I hear a really bad word someone says to someone else it’s like a little piece of my heart is gone. So I’m afraid of opening it up to others. [...] I was insecure and I’m still now.” This feeling of disconnect left Peggy feeling that she could not fully absorb her experience of *Journey to the Father*, and therefore apply these lessons to her religious identity. Similarly, Carry mentioned her dread of having the Disciples and Wannabes literally drag her out of her seat to participate. She said, “Like I don’t make friends easily, and I don’t talk to people much, and all of a sudden here’s a bunch of people that want to talk to you, and pushing to talk to you. And it’s scary, but you get used to it, and you do the same to others.” But, like Jimmy, Carry eventually felt that she needed the push (i.e. the peer pressure) to become more engaged.

Some young people brought up the fact that they were constantly faced with moral dilemmas in their lives. As Peggy said, “It’s like I’m two people, one’s the angel the other’s the devil, it’s like, ‘Do this, no do that’ kind of thing. So um, I don’t want to go against God, but sometimes that’s really hard and that’s when you have to make the choice, ‘Am I going to do it, am I not?’ And will I suffer the consequences because there are consequences for everything.” This was a common sentiment, echoed at the beginning of this section where Peter and Jimmy struggled to understand the relevance of God in their lives. Peggy’s statement is an example of how young people are thinking and feeling through tense moral issues and choices that they feel are

pulling them in multiple directions. This did not represent an identity crisis, but is a normal part of the fluidity of identity formation for young people.

2.2. To Be a Catholic Woman or a Catholic Man: Gender as an Optic for Socio-Political Worldview

One of the questions of this research was *what does it mean to be a Catholic woman or a Catholic man?* In practical terms, it was a question tied to the gendered breakout sessions at *Journey to the Father* and was posed to both adults and young participants. This section will largely focus on the young people's responses. It must be noted, however, that many of them had difficulty providing an answer. Some met the question with confusion; some took it literally as a chance to reflect on religious engagement, and others looked at the social, political, and moral imperative that lies at the centre of the question. Nevertheless, these are all important reflections on how young people are negotiating discourses of evangelical identity through the optic of gender. Though the question was asked in terms of gendered responses for men and for women, the themes that emerged from the interviews with young women and men intersected with one another quite seamlessly. The following section will outline the major themes and thereby delineate the gendered perspectives.

2.2.1. Living in the World and Being Objectified: Issues for both Men and Women

One of the biggest challenges to Catholic men and women was related to the issue of "temptation" in the modern world. Ryan, who had just graduated high school and mused on a life of work and responsibility, mentioned, "There was this

video tape and it was talking about men to women, somehow men are very visual and I don't know and I think the world, well the devil, the devil's like corrupted the world and is putting all these things in front of our face, visual things because I guess men are more visual beings and women are more like emotional and everything like that, so yah the TV, everything you look, it's all sexualized so like the world is like trying to corrupt the imagine of guys and everything." He explained that sexual temptation had become commodified in conventional society as expressed through media portrayals of women. For him, this was not only degrading to women but to men in instigating a normative attitude of disrespect and objectification of women. Ryan held the view that media was harmful to women's self-esteem in that it lied to them about what beauty was and continually objectified them. This leads people to thoughts of depression, self-harm, and suicide. Rita, aged 18 and not afraid to speak her mind, mentioned her friend who was suffering through issues of self-esteem: "She really struggled with her image, her body image, and I think a lot of girls are pressure to look a certain way and like act a certain way." These interviews suggested that media portrayals of sexuality and gender have had an effect on young people in how they view themselves and each other.

This points to a concern with objectification among the young men and women in this research. Many of the participants spoke of how men are often denigrated in society today. Ryan pointed out that all men are portrayed as animals due to the bad behaviour of the few. He remarked, "Blaming them, 'Oh they're just guys' you know it's like and I don't know it's just how I feel, like they portray us as

animals almost... like in relations, going after girls, um and just like I don't know, there's a lot of guys that are like that, and you understand why they are like that and that's just what we're portrayed as because some people do things like that." The corollary was that women let themselves be denigrated because of this understanding of uncontrollable men. Kyle, aged 16, reflected on his life in high school sports, saying, "I found that women...feel like they want to have more but 'That's all a guy wants, so I guess.' Like that's the only way they will be loved. [...] I would say...don't settle for that guy just because he's the only one you've seen at that point, what you personally you think you deserve, there's always a better person out there and if he's not loving you for who you are then probably it's not the best circumstance for you." The message these young men were advocating was that women were not sex objects and that relationships were of primary importance. The view was that if men attained higher moral standards, they would also help women attain higher standards. It was a role-model effect that they saw as mutually beneficial.

Many women agreed with this assessment, suggesting that they needed to be treated with respect, that building emotional relationships was primary to sexual exploration, and that women should not lead men on or entice them with sexuality. However, many participants raised the idea that women should not be defined by their relationships with men—instead, women should realize their capabilities on their own. Lisa, aged 15, with a curious attitude and a sharp wit, said, "I think a lot of people don't see themselves, they're just so desperate for boyfriends and need

someone...I think I'm totally fine on my own. I'm going to be totally honest...in the future I do want someone. I think God really made me feel that I don't need someone right now, but it's his plan that someday it will happen." This statement raised a sense of female empowerment—that Lisa does not need to be defined by men in order to exercise her individual agency. In line with this idea of female agency, when asked about the challenges Catholic women face, Carry, who at 18 reflected much on the next stage of her life, said, "Well there's the obvious gender discrimination, we can't become priests, we can be nuns. It's the same but it's different. I don't know, I think in today's society we're getting more equality, and everyone is meeting the same challenges keeping the faith to begin with." Carry did not deny the challenge that women face in gaining offices traditionally held by men within the Catholic Church, which contests the long-held androcentric structure of the Catholic Church. Her concern was not with changing the structure of the Church, but with the challenges of keeping faith, which she saw as relevant to Catholic men and women equally. Note that this was not in contradiction with her views on gender empowerment, but suggested a more inclusive personal worldview.

2.2.2. *Strong Enough to be Yourself: Religious Engagement and Self-Esteem*

The majority of young people, when asked the question *what does it mean to be a Catholic man or a Catholic woman?* answered that you have a strong and active engagement in faith and religious identity. Jimmy suggested that a Catholic man can not sit passively accepting his religious identity, but must work for it. He said, "It's to be strong for my religion...I feel it's important to question [faith] 'cause to question

it is to reconnect with it and to reconfirm that it is what I believe. I feel that to not question it is slowly weakening your belief.” This sense of active engagement was also reflected in the view of some participants that to be a Catholic man was to be openly religious. Bradley, who had mentioned his trouble in asserting his religious identity among friends, said, “Don’t be ashamed of it. If you’re going to be religious, be religious. Don’t hide it from people. Because there’s no point in being religious if you’re just going to be like, ‘Oh no, I’m not going to be religious in front of your friends.’” Though he spoke of being courageous, he also admitted how difficult that was to do, which ultimately fed his sense of self-doubt.

Nevertheless, the logic was that a person of religious conviction (i.e. a Catholic man) must have the courage to be open in his religious identity (*out of the closet*, so to speak). The women also held the view that to have faith is to fight for it. Carry said, “You have to fight to keep the Faith, and in the face of society you have to say it’s not acceptable to not be religious at all because there are just so many people nowadays that aren’t engaged in their Faith. [...] Yah we have to unite and like, men and women, unite under the Catholic Faith.” The struggle shared by both men and women was something that transcended gender boundaries and related at the level of religious identity. In their view, both men and women are fighting against a common enemy of secular values that seeks to devalue faith and undermine religious identity.

John reflected the view of many that men and women needed to put God at the centre of their lives. He said, “It means...to practice your faith, and be strong in

your faith, and help other people on their way to being...to have their faith being a big part of their life, and having God on the top of their list of the things in their life.” For him, as it was for many participants, God was the ideal lens through which to view the world. Peggy, aged 17, who had previously discussed her own struggles with self-esteem, said, “We have to treat, well we don’t have to, but that’s something that we have, we have that ability to treat others as we want to be treated. [...] The most immodest are still people. They’re still human. They’re still children of God.” Vanessa, aged 16 and an active member of her community, noted,

I do have a lot of higher expectations for myself that are based on what I’ve grown up with and what I’ve been instilled with by the Church. [...] Well most of my friends have high expectations of themselves, but mine are based on different things, mine are different like you know, I go to church and like and then just, theirs are based on their own morals for like what’s best for them but I’m like, ‘What is best for my Faith, and what does my Faith expect of me as opposed to what I expect of myself.’

Vanessa did not denigrate her friends who may not believe as she did. However, she did feel that she was availed a greater *potential* by virtue of her faith. These perspectives speak of the nuance of Catholic evangelization, not as an exclusivist moral category, but as something moderately tolerant.

2.2.3. *No Moral Difference between Catholic Women or Men*

The impression taken from the interviews is, on one level, recognition of gender differences as characterizing the social realities of men and of women. However, there is a subtext in this discourse about gender and religious identity, in that there is no *moral* difference between Catholic women and men. Peter, aged 16, who had a tremendous capacity for theological analysis, remarked, “I don’t think it’s

greatly different than being a Catholic woman, even though the differences between men and women are real and I suppose they are not unimportant but I...in Faith I don't think they're that great apart from the...the fact that the priesthood is male. [...] Other than that I don't see a really big difference in Catholic manhood versus Catholic womanhood." Peter was being honest about the gender disparities that exist in the Church by mentioning the male-exclusive priesthood, but he did not preclude the place of women in the moral dynamic of the Church, as part of the institution, and indeed in a way that transcends the institution. It is again a reflection of the social value of tolerance that individuals, in their difference, are an operational factor in how the Catholic worldview is drawn up.

Some spoke further on gender equality, describing how being a Catholic woman offered opportunities, through challenges, to rise to equality with men. Christine, aged 19, who also mused on her life after high school, said, "It's my chance to show my faith, a lot of people say that men are the strong ones out there and they're the ones that take charge of everything, but I guess with my faith, it's my chance to take charge, to do something with my life more powerful and to inspire other people, be a woman in my faith." In her view, faith and religious identity offered her the chance to take charge of her life, which was conditioned by a gendered mode of understanding. It was a perspective in which gender was an important element in connection to faith, challenging her to change and to grow. But some asserted that equality between the sexes should not be conflated with sameness. Estelle, aged 17 and shy, put it this way: "It's not really about equality

between man and female, but just females respecting themselves.” Again, this was an important piece of the puzzle of Catholic evangelical agency, in that faith affords young people a certain capacity or power to attain freedom from the conventions of secular society.

This sense of empowerment should not be conflated with liberal equality, i.e. that men and women are inherently equal. Akin to Beyer and Ramji’s (2013) work, the young participants of *Journey to the Father* valued complementarity over equality (i.e. same but different). Gendered complementarity, however, has been conflated with conservative views of women’s domesticity, something that Second Wave feminists, for example, strove to rectify for the sake of gender equality (Collins, 2006; Evans, 1995; Mackey and Coney, 2000). The young participants of *Journey to the Father* are speaking how faith allows them an understanding of gendered agency (i.e. *God gives me the capacity to act*) within the structure of a gendered complementarity (i.e. *my gendered perspective is special*). This provides further evidence for the idea that young people are actively negotiating the confluence of evangelical and plural values.

2.3. Evangelization and Moving Forward: Final Reflections

The previous section pointed to the socio-political values of the young participants in *Journey to the Father* that informed their religious identity and Catholic worldview. A discussion on gender reflected self-awareness and a consciousness of the world around them. This exposition and analysis has taken into account the agency of young people, the significant details of their social worlds, and

the content of their political worldview in a world that is in constant flux. Therefore, it has included instances where the young people asserted the values of the adult organizers, but has also presented perspectives and reflections from the young people themselves. This final section will present reflections from the young participants on evangelization and how they view their place in the world. It covers their responses to the question, *what are your hopes and dreams for the Catholic Church?*

2.3.1. “Gentle” Evangelization

Traditionally, evangelization brings to mind religious exclusivity driven by the idea of the hard sell, with admonitions of brimstone and hellfire. There has been, however, a consistent picture drawn from the interviews with adult organizers and youth participants of an approach that could be considered *gentle evangelization*. John explained, “Even people who don't believe in anything just trying to, um, like, trying to help them along the path to righteousness.” And Carry said, “Yah it's kind of like the foundations but not being pushing, like you can force someone to believe what you believe. You sort of have to be gentle and let them find it on their own.” There was a consensus that people could not be pushed or coerced into becoming more religiously engaged. The only viable option was to lead by the example of one's own choices. The underlying message here was the importance of building relationships of trust. Rita, whose dynamism was palpable, described her approach to proselytization: “Like go and visit people you don't normally go to visit and talk to them. Build relationships with people who are outside of the Church and really

trying to bring people in.” Rita was negotiating the reality, common within the NE perspective, of trying to speak of an evangelical Catholicism to Catholics who may be suspicious of evangelization, and the idea of conversion as a means of expressing and fulfilling religious identity.

Other participants mentioned more apparent awkwardness in trying to talk to others about their religious experiences at *Journey to the Father*. Monique wished other Catholics did not feel so embarrassed to come out and let people know about their identity. But she admitted that “sometimes I just go with it too because like I don’t want to seem like that weirdo so strong in their Faith and so different from everybody else, but I just try to forget what other people think and say, and just ignore that. [...] Almost embarrassing, because you want to fit in but you don’t really know how to and let people know that you’re Catholic.” This represented a delicate balance between two worlds. The majority of responses regarding evangelization suggested that it must flow from a sense of personal conviction. Rita, though appearing confident, also expressed social insecurity. “I still struggle with evangelization, I don’t want to say the wrong thing and turn people off. I want to make sure I say the right thing, kind of feel anxious for them, you want to be able to share your relationship with Jesus without overwhelming them.” This feeling was common in the interviews—trepidation with evangelization so as not to dissuade friends from the possibility of religious engagement. No stepping on people’s toes, so to speak.

2.3.2. *Catholic View of Non-Catholic “Others”*

A surprising response to these questions about evangelization was how young people interacted with non-Catholic Christians and non-Christians. Most, if not all, of my interviewees said that they would never proselytize to non-Catholics. When asked the question, Vanessa responded in an ardent tone, “No, I would never do that, no. [...] When we die, who knows, Muslims might be right!” This perspective was also reflected in examples of young people having Protestant and non-Catholic friends in school and in their communities. Jimmy elaborated his view of Protestant relations with Catholics, saying, “What real reason do we have to hate each other for our religions? Because we should learn from each other, far more than we should fight each other.” His view, as was the case for many, was that there is no point in fighting over truth claims, but rather we can learn from one another instead.

Some participants pointed to the strength of their religious conviction and how it had a central effect on their lives. But they also talked of friends who did not share these values of an active religious identity. As previously mentioned, Vanessa said, “Most of my friends have high expectations of themselves, but mine are based on different things, mine are different like you know, I go to church and like and then just, theirs are based on their own morals for like what’s best for them. But I’m like, ‘What is best for my Faith, and what does my Faith expect of me as opposed to what I expect of myself.’” This pointed to a notion held by many young participants, that having friends who do not share the same values did not necessarily dissuade

them from living out their evangelical Catholic values. In other words, religious and moral difference did not lead to cognitive dissonance or an identity crisis.

But a counterpoint to the above statement of tolerance was the consistent lack of knowledge about the *other*. As mentioned in Chapter 5, many young people were raised in interdenominational Christian families or with family members claiming to be atheists. But when asked for details of their non-Catholic family members, there was little to no explanation or awareness of those differences. This suggests an underlying motif that these young Catholics can coexist peacefully in mutual tolerance, but without deeply knowing the *other*. As Monique mentioned, “Yah like two of my best friends are Catholic and [...] one friend is really strong Christian, the other, I cannot ever remember what branch she is.” This ignorance was not due to a lack of interaction with Protestants, because Monique continued: “We’re very open, like I’ve been invited to youth groups with her, ‘cause she’s starting one at her church and I would love to go there and see what’s similar. And, um, we love to tell each other about different youth conferences we’ve been to. Like we talk about different games they did, like different icebreakers they’ve tried, what the other person could put it.” The conflicting views of Monique’s narrative are remarkable.

On one level, this reflects the rapprochement between Catholics and Protestants in the context of both Vatican II and evangelical Christian values in the NE (Dulles, 2009; Martin, 2012). Though the ecumenical movement involving Protestant and Catholic Evangelicals looks at bridging the gap in issues of

theological and institutional difference (Byerley, 2008; George and Guarino, 2015), these young people largely were not interested in the details of denominational difference, but rather in the feelings and experiences of faith. But on the other hand, there is a subtext of insecurity present in these interviews, which arose when the young participants discussed evangelizing the people in their own homes, churches, or schools. This instance of the socio-political and religious understanding of an evangelical Catholic *self* against the overriding influence of the secular *other* is indicative of a discursive resonance for young people of the NE identity politics that asserts a struggle against antagonistic forces from within, which ultimately fleshes out evangelical Catholic identity.

2.3.3. *Challenges and Optimism for the Future: Reflections on Agency*

The most common theme from the interviews with young people was how their experiences at *Journey to the Father* were beneficial, and yet challenging in terms of finding acceptance from others. This affected them in their churches, schools, and broader communities. Some mentioned the fear of losing their faith when they move away from home to go to university. Others spoke of initiatives they had taken to bring religion into their schools, but which fell flat due to lack of interest/support from administrators, teachers, or peers. This was a universal challenge among the young participants—finding acceptance for their religious identity.

Many experienced scorn for their expressions of religious identity. Though no one was mistreated for their faith, they were pointedly questioned about why

they believed in God, and about the actual agency of God in physically affecting the world. Carry related a experience with a peer at school: “I had one person tell me outright, ‘God isn’t real...God if you’re real, throw down a strike of lighting right beside me but don’t kill me. Send me a sign that you’re real.’ And it’s like, *it doesn’t work that way.*” Though she went on to say that she had explained to that person how to properly look for God in life, Carry still felt aggravated for being belligerently questioned for her faith. John explained that the *other* did not dissuade him in his expression of religious identity, saying, “Those kinds of people, I don’t want to totally stay away from because I want them to realize that people do love their faith. Like, they don’t hate it, they actually want to practice it and that they should try too. Just try to get them.” Many shared feelings of being judged by their friends or family for being religious. They reflected that friends had made them feel like they were in the spotlight for having a religious identity. They were no longer invisible, within the background noise of social normativity. They were different for being religious. This, in turn, consistently provoked a feeling of marginalization.

Some young people described how difficult it was to find support outside of conferences in furthering their religious experiences and education. Again, this lack of support systems or services in the different areas in their lives (i.e. school, peer support, etc.) raised feelings of marginalization. With regards to experiences of church settings, some mentioned that the Catholic Church should not be just an old-people thing. Amanda, aged 14, who claimed to be shy and quiet, said,

The church back home, it’s mostly old people or adults like middle-aged...people that don’t have kids that live at home any more...they’re

all the same age and they all talk about the same things and...I think it's really boring sometimes to go to church for teenagers so if there's more churches like this one where there is a youth group and there's a youth minister and then it's like a lot more alive in church, not everyone's falling asleep and stuff like good music [...] I think if you make the church more modern I know some people are against that...you make the Church more modernized, I think more people would be involved in it.

A message across the interviews was the need for things to be more relevant for young people at their home parishes and schools, as they were at *Journey to the Father*. Others mentioned that their religious identities were fully shaped by Catholic conferences like *Journey to the Father*, and less so by their home churches, family lives, or school experiences. Bradley strongly supported this view: "I want to keep going to conferences, I know that. Until I find one that completely turns me off. But I don't think that's going to happen with how they've been going so far." There was a sentiment that spaces like *Journey to the Father* were unique in that young people could feel safe to ask questions about religion and feel supported in their religious identities.

Ryan, who at 18 was past the participant age, saw conferences like *Journey to the Father* as means for generating religious conviction, and finding the reasons for being religious. He said, "*Journey to the Father*, it's been an experience of education." This statement returns us to the importance of experience as presented at *Journey to the Father* in the overall religious education of young people. According to the adult organizers, the framing *Journey to the Father* of was that embodied experience was absolutely essential to understanding what's going on in people's lives and finding

personal conviction, but that experience must always be couched in an institutionally Catholic, discursive space like *Journey to the Father*.

As stated above, many participants asserted that their sense of agency was connected to their understanding of faith and the evangelical message of *placing God at the centre of your life*. With regard to the question of choice and the issue of feeling pressured into engaging religious discourse, Jimmy raised an important response: “God gave us free will for a reason. So we could choose for ourselves.” This is an intriguing intersection between the message of choice at *Journey to the Father* and individual agency. On the surface, it seems that Jimmy is internalizing André’s claim to “missionary identity” as stated at the beginning of this chapter: “We need to call them into making a choice to be radical, to make Jesus the centre of their lives.” Though the adult organizers stress the need for participation in order to gain the enlightenment of a conversion to an evangelical Catholic perspective, Jimmy asserts that God is the mediating factor in his individual capacity to choose. This distinction is very important. In his attempt to absorb and recapitulate evangelical values and worldview, Jimmy (or the young Catholic social agent) cannot be coerced into doing or thinking something that he cannot feel; i.e. embodied learning.

Jimmy’s statement points to an intersection between the liberal values underscoring individual choice and agency based on freedom of thought, and attributing this human capacity to God as implicit for people of faith and religious inclination. It brings this discussion full circle in terms of the values of individualism, while still tying it to a transcendental God, which, in this context, is

enshrined in the structural Catholic Church. This, in a sense, is the basic character of the NE at *Journey to the Father* and indicative of the way young people are engaging the NE. Malusi stated as much, saying, “I think because teenagers are at a point in their lives where they are making their own decisions, they have to decide what they believe and what they want, and no one else can make that decision for them.” This underlying agency is important to grasp when looking at how young Catholics are interpreting and negotiating evangelical Catholic discourse. Some are more certain and assertive about their religious identities, while others are less so, and are more critical of the adult organizers’ incitement to evangelization. Nevertheless, the majority of young participants along the political spectrum are somewhere in the middle, quietly trying to form the boundaries of their religious identity while remaining in contact with the broader secular (conventional) world. Ultimately, these young people are synthesizing Catholic and secular values, and asserting their religious identity without seeing themselves as fundamentally different from their non-religious peers.

The idea of “finding a middle path” plays into Michel Foucault’s definition of power as productive and non-hegemonic, which suggests that power is everywhere and is propagated by everyone, and yet there always remains recourse for individual agency through acts of resistance (Lynch, 2011: 22). Jimmy’s statement about free will and agency being tied to a reciprocity with God reflects Foucault’s view that “truth is not by nature free...but that its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power” (1978: 60). This puts into focus Malusi’s assertion of the

importance of an individual's freedom to act as inherently tied to the evangelical perspective of equating faith and agency. From this perspective of young participants in *Journey to the Father* actively engaging evangelical Catholic identity, there is always recourse to resisting directive or coercive elements. As Lori Beaman stated with regard to Protestant Evangelical women, these evangelical Catholic young people "perceive themselves as agents, not doormats" (Beaman, 1999: 138). Jimmy's statement asserts his sense of agency as an evangelical Catholic youth out in the world and on his own terms.

Chapter 7 — A Catholic Evangelical Identity Confirmed: Conclusion

The New Evangelization (NE) is a recent development in the Catholic Church. It seeks to preserve, restore, and re-invigorate Catholic religious identity in the face of what it perceives to be a dominance of secular values. The NE advocates an affective religiosity that encourages a personal engagement and relationship with Jesus Christ, enshrined within the prerogatives of the institutional Catholic Church. This approach to religious experience aims at engendering a strong evangelical impetus among Catholic adherents, especially young people. However, little is known of evangelical discourses and processes through which young Catholics are being engaged in Canada as well as around the world. Furthermore, the presence of the NE and religiously active, evangelical Catholic youth within the public sphere in Canada raises questions about the dynamics and contours of Canadian diversity, and the role of religion in shaping modern identity. The main question is: *How are young people engaging and interpreting evangelical modes of religious and socio-political identity, and integrating or negotiating this worldview in a diverse Canadian society?*

This research examines the processes of identity formation through evangelical religious experience and a minority identity politics for young Catholics within a diverse Canada. *Journey to the Father* serves as a case study to help understand the dynamics of evangelization as it centres on a particular location of religious engagement, and to outline a specific description of the culture that it generates. This case study provides an exposition of the lived experience of religion and how it impacts the moral and socio-political outlook of the youth participants.

Journey to the Father serves to shed light on the NE and the dynamic process of evangelizing Catholic youth through the perspectives of the adult organizers, as well as the perspectives of the young participants who negotiate multiple socio-political and religious values. Principally, this research provides insight into a nascent conservative Christian phenomenon in Canada, and around the globe, which remains largely unobserved and understudied.

Using identity as a central concept, this doctoral research outlines perspectives of contemporary evangelical Catholic youth in Canada as a means to understanding their perceived socio-political position in Canadian society. At the centre of this process of identity formation are underlying socio-political narratives that influence the evangelical Catholic perspective and engagement. This thesis is delineated as follows: 1) reviewing the impact of narratives of secularism on adult organizers and young participants in *Journey to the Father* with regard to the deployment of an identity politics by the adult organizers as a means to mobilizing an evangelical Catholic identity that is “discernable” to young people; and 2) discussing the impact the socio-political forces of secularism and Catholic evangelization have on the young participants as they *negotiate* (i.e. appropriate or negate) evangelical Catholic values and affective religious experiences when forming or informing their identities. Together these perspectives describe the negotiations between an evangelical worldview and young people, which suggest a variety of important reflections on religion and society, experience and agency.

1. Identity Politics: A Means to a Complex *Religious* Engagement

Secularism has become a dominant framework in the West, affecting epistemology and political governance and influencing the contours of normative or conventional society. Many academics as well as the participants in *Journey to the Father* adhere to narratives of secularization that speak of promoting political neutrality in a politically diverse social setting by marginalizing religion, confining it to the domestic sphere. The notion here is that the more complex and diverse a society becomes, the more political and governance systems must operationalize the equalizing value of secularism (Habermas, 2005, 2006). For academics and political theorists, the benefits of a “tolerant” political system outweigh the need for the representation of special interest groups (i.e. the separation of *Church and State*). Socially and politically minded religious actors like the participants in *Journey to the Father*, however, argue that secularism has impeded their claim to authentic identity through which they could seek recognition within conventional society. Though there are a number of scholars who critique the idea that secularism is a neutral category (Beaman, 2003, 2014, Beckford, 2003, 2012; Connolly, 1999), and others suggest that secularism is actually a product of Christianity, which points to Christianity’s continued influence of on social norms (Berlinerblau, 2014; Jakobsen and Pellegrini, 2004). These scholars assert that religion was never fully expunged from the public sphere and that it still shapes national identity in many countries, like Canada.

Nevertheless, the participants in this research adhere to the secularism narrative, which helps provide form and substance to the program of an identity formation. In other words, this discussion on secularism serves as a backdrop for an examination of the different forces of normativity that the participants in *Journey to the Father* are engaging or negating in the process of forming an evangelical Catholic identity. Our goal will be to shed light on the resonant *and* dissonant factors that revolve around identity as a basic premise for political action in a secular social setting like Canada.

Theories of identity formation are tethered to an epistemological subjectivity, which necessitates a deeper understanding of how the individual is impacted by multiple forces of meaning. Identity has become a hub where the individual can be accounted for in the analysis of social systems and power relations. Charles Taylor describes identity as oscillating between the formation of the *self* through the retrieval and operationalization of *authenticity*, and the engagement with the *other* through *recognition* (Taylor, 1989, 1991; Taylor and Gutmann, 1994). Taylor views identity formation on three levels: 1) as a dialogical process with others and not an expression of absolute, sovereign individuality; 2) recognition through dialogical means becoming the foundation for the authentic formation of the *self*—meaning, recognizing each other’s differences is formative, but more importantly focusing on the elements of similarity over dwelling on difference; and 3) an understanding that authenticity facilitates socio-political processes inherent to plural social settings, reducing the sting of social alienation

and moral difference, while nurturing a reciprocal process of mutual recognition. Taylor's view of a reciprocal process of mutual recognition is teleological, holding the promise of mutual benefit and betterment with every cycle of engagement between the *self* and *other*, between authenticity and recognition.

This process of dialogical identity formation, informed by an idealization of diversity, asserts a "politics of recognition" or, more broadly, an "identity politics." With a politics of recognition, individuals or groups must gather together into "recognizable" communities in order to gain recognition from normative institutional and social structures. Hence these communities are engaging in an identity politics that seeks to outline the boundaries of their collective identity or community in order to gain recognition within the context of conventional society. David Macey notes, "Identity politics usually takes the form of a demand for the right to be different, and for that difference to be recognized as legitimate. This form of politics can be viewed either as a celebration of cultural diversity and a defense of minority rights, or as a betrayal of the universalist values of the Enlightenment" (2000: 197). It has been my observation that the participants in *Journey to the Father*, particularly the adult organizers, deploy this type of identity politics within the context of *Journey to the Father* when talking about Catholic identity. Their politics can be outlined as follows: 1) adhering to the idea that religious voices are marginalized from normative society, and 2) using this perceived marginalization and difference to claim recognition for their distinctive identity. Under these terms, the adult organizers are providing a strong message of a minority identity politics

that *could* speak to an understanding of identity discernable by the young participants in *Journey to the Father*. Ultimately, it would be up to the young participants to interpret and incorporate these politics to their own identity formation.

Nevertheless, a question arises regarding how a dominant, mainline religious denomination like the Catholic Church in Canada can appropriate a minority identity politics when they are largely associated with the hegemonic centre rather than the margins of social normativity. How can an institution like the Catholic Church, whose ecclesiastical structure and longstanding tradition depicts an inherent conservatism, appropriate a discourse of minority identity? I claim that the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* utilize the perceived *misrecognition*—i.e. the *denial of or lack of* recognition of one's "authentic" identity—of Christianity within the secularism narrative in order to justify the Catholic evangelization program. This misrecognition is a major point of political assertion for the adult organizers in justifying the evangelical Catholic program—it both shapes the contours of evangelical Catholic identity and justifies Catholic evangelization. It is also a frame for identity formation that is inherently recognizable within the Canadian social and political context, helping to communicate the message of Catholic evangelization to a young audience. In order to operationalize this identity politics, the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* stress two perspectives: 1) that choice is a key factor in order for young people to engage fully their religious

identities—to the point where religious conversion represents a *radical choice* in life; and 2) the notion that it is okay to be Catholic and, therefore, to be different.

Choice endows the individual with a level of agency within a discourse of evangelical Catholicism. Simply put, individuals have the agency to choose to engage or disengage in the activities and attitudes of evangelization. Agency is based on core values of political liberalism, namely freedom, choice, equality, and tolerance (Kelly, 2005), which allow an individual to act independently within systems of social formation, power, and identity. However, there are significant critiques of this definition of agency with regard to coercion and relational autonomy. In terms of coercion, Sumi Madhok et al. reflect that “agency is always exercised within constraints, that inequality is an ever-present component, and that the constraints relate to social, not just personal, power relations” (2012: 7). As seen in Chapter 6, choice is a dominant theme at *Journey to the Father*, which acts as a key factor in asserting the agency of the young participants, facilitating their participation in *Journey to the Father* with the hopes of an evangelical impetus through conversion.

Though the adult organizers claimed that young people had complete control over their degree of participation in *Journey to the Father*, choice in this context remains conditioned by the underlying coercion of the evangelical Catholic perspective and prerogative. On one level, the language of choice in an evangelical context would constrict the freedom of the individual, i.e. *how can young people make a choice when the institutional Church already makes the choice?* This question points to the coercive and hegemonic nature of the hierarchical and authoritative

Catholic Church. It could be understood that within this system, there is no choice to be had, but rather moral directives to follow. However, there is more to this vision of choice than adult coercion in socializing young people in the structural Catholic Church. When Pat, the Disciple Leader, said, “faith is not something that you inherit; it’s got to be your own” and when André, a *Journey to the Father* speaker, said, “We need to call them into making a choice to be radical, to make Jesus the centre of their lives,” it is clear that they, as adult organizers, are advocating the idea that the young person is making a choice that is difficult and unconventional (i.e. *be radical*), and that this is a choice that they can only make on their own (i.e. *faith...it’s got to be your own*). In the context of establishing a minority identity politics that both defines evangelical Catholic identity and the Catholic evangelization project, the difficulty in making this choice to embrace evangelical identity acts as a gauge to measure the relative authenticity of one’s agency. Because the choice of being evangelical is “radical,” it is an explicit action based on the agency of the individual. From this perspective, agency reflects a relational autonomy where making the choice to invest in an evangelical Catholic identity pushes the individual against the currents of social normativity sourced secular society. This drive towards an identity politics of being different acts to shore up the boundaries of an evangelical, Catholic identity. According to the adult organizers in *Journey to the Father*, young Catholics must, therefore, make an active and informed choice to engage the *radically different*, evangelical Catholic, collective community.

The question of collective identity and the relation between *self* and *other*, however, needs to be further unpacked. Relational autonomy, the second part of the feminist critique of traditional agency, stresses the underlying notion that people are themselves reproducing power by virtue of their actions in forming identity with others. Madhok et al. come to this conclusion in that “Agency is not just a matter of individual self-awareness and individual action; it is a matter of collective transformation as well” (2012: 8). Collective identity is important to Taylor’s conception of identity being formed between the *self* and the *other*. However, Taylor’s perspective is somewhat misrepresentative because of the bifurcation of *self* and *other*, which lacks the complexity or nuance to reflect the dynamic of identity formation in a diverse setting.

In response, Elke Winter adds a third element to this understanding of identity within a plural setting—specifically, regarding multiculturalism—in that “‘us’ and ‘others’—becomes meaningful only through the presence of (real or constructed) outsiders (‘them’)” (2011: 5). Winter’s addition of the inherently antagonistic and objectified term of *them* helps explicate the perspectives and attitudes of the young people forming the notion of evangelical Catholic identity as a minority identity. The perspective of the participants in *Journey to the Father* would therefore play out as follows: The *self* is the evangelical Catholic, the *other* is the diversity of non-Catholic others, and the *them* is the cultural (non-evangelical) Catholic as they reflect the ubiquity of secular values in the Catholic Church. The last category explains the reality expressed by my interviewees of an almost insidious

influence of secularism, labeled as *conventional culture* and *cultural Catholicism*, whose influence reaches into their schools, their families, and even their churches, outlining what is perceived as *a crisis of faith*. In collusion with secular values, the cultural Catholic *them* is the hegemonic force against which the adult organisers deploy their identity politics of an evangelical Catholicism. In this way, the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* have something and someone to struggle against, without the compulsion to proselytize to the non-Catholic other, which helps shape their collective identity as evangelical Catholics in a diverse Canada.

Echoing Taylor's notions of authenticity as a response to the social malaise of loss and recovery in the modern world, and recognition as facilitating dialogue with others, the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* build an identity framework that effectively promotes evangelical Catholicism to young Canadians. The contours of an evangelical Catholic identity structure are: 1) a person endowed with the recovery of an *authentic self* through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, 2) can enter into a mutually beneficial *process of recognition* with others due to the defining quality of a Catholic evangelical collective identity 3) brought on by the *marginalization of religious identity* by secularist forces, even from within the Catholic Church. Ventures like *Journey to the Father* help assert the right of Catholic youth to be recognized for their "outed" (i.e. *openly evangelical in a secular world*) religious identities, which necessitates a political language and minority identification. The message is justified and becomes increasingly clear: *It is okay to be Catholic—it is okay to be different*. Ultimately, this further justifies the implicit

rapprochement rather than the separation of evangelical Catholic discourse present at *Journey to the Father* from the socio-political purview of the diversity framework that characterizes normative Canadian society.

2. Evangelical Catholic Youth: In Perspective

It is clear that the young people who participated in *Journey to the Father* encountered a complex and enticing discursive structure deployed by the adult organizers, which represents the socio-political elements of the norm and the margins in a campaign to instigate an evangelical Catholic identity. With regard to the regime of secularism, the Catholics of this study are offered an applicable framework in which to engage in a politics of recognition relevant to the Canadian socio-political context. The adherence to the political liberal values of freedom, agency, and choice intertwine with the institutional conservatism of the Catholic Church as a moral authority against the moral antagonisms of conventional, secular society. Though there were participants like Peter who critiqued the Catholic evangelization movement for its overemphasis on individualism over the corporate moral structure of the Catholic Church, the majority of young participants spoke of their experiences in terms of living without much cognitive dissonance regarding their evangelical identities. As will be discussed below, delineating this approach to identity as embedded in normative socio-political structures helps explain much of the “moderate tone” of the young participants at *Journey to the Father*.

In recognizing the reality of the young participants in *Journey to the Fathers*, it is important to note that these people are negotiating two worlds: one of

institutional, political conservatism within the Catholic Church, and the other of underlying political liberalism from secular society. This grounds an analytical reflection on the actions of these young (proto)evangelical Catholics as being subjectively self-sufficient, but who operationalize the different knowledge and experiences from their lives (i.e. from experiences of conventional society to those from *Journey to the Father*). This necessitates, again, a nuanced understanding of the social agency of young people in terms of *who they are* in relations to others.

Gender is a good point of entry for understanding this negotiation of experience. In parallel with the observation of Beyer and Ramji (2013) looking at 1.5 and 2nd generation immigrant youth in Canada and their appropriation of religious identity, the overall perspective from the young participants in *Journey to the Father* is of “gender complementarity”—i.e. being different but equal. The challenge for men was to treat themselves with respect in order to treat women with respect, and for women to find empowerment through a resolve towards independent thought and action. In each case, they must move past the social conventions that define perceived negative gender relations, and become morally conscientious. In other words, to be a Catholic man or woman is to treat the opposite gender with equality and respect.

The subtext to this notion of equality is that, though there are gendered differences, there is no *moral* difference between Catholic women and men. The perception is that Catholic men and Catholic women have the capacity to overcome gendered disparities by putting God at the centre of their lives. This perspective was

raised multiple times throughout the interviews with the young participants in Chapter 6. The logic is that a person of religious conviction (i.e. Catholic woman or man) must have the courage to push against the perceived oppression of social normativity, which means *being okay with being different from the norm*. Therefore, the young participants in *Journey to the Father* view that the struggles shared by both men and women transcend gender boundaries because they are related to *religious identity*. In other words, Catholic identity helps emulate the values of tolerance and equality against the perceived hegemony of secular society and its negative impact on gender.

This perspective, again, points to discourses of marginalization in that, to be a good Catholic man or woman, you need to be distinct and embrace the differences that subvert the norm—e.g. *the world says one thing about gender and sexuality, and you do the opposite*. Though this discussion does not account for the polarizing issues around gender usually tied to conservative Christian values (i.e. abortion, premarital sex, women's domesticity, etc.), these perspectives of minority identification tied to gendered complementarity and religious identity underscore the nuance of Catholic evangelical identity for young people. For these young participants, the ideals of gender equality and tolerance are not tied to a religiously exclusivist exhortation by the Catholic Church. And yet, these perspectives remains within the purview of an evangelical understanding of individual agency tied to one's personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

This presents an interesting conundrum: How do young people interpret the world through a religious lens that does not espouse an exclusivist moral worldview? How can a young person evangelize others without seeing the *other* as morally wrong? How are these “liberal” values of tolerance and equality informing evangelical Catholic identity with young people? These questions point to what would seem like contradicting values and perspectives on the Catholic evangelical view that faith and religious engagement afford young people a capacity or power to attain freedom from the conventions of secular society. However, both adult organizers and young participants in *Journey to the Father* hold to this sentiment of evangelical agency. I believe this is a situation where liberal values are deployed in order to furnish the conservative moral and social purview of the NE through a particular approach to evangelical proselytization. This relates to a common theme at *Journey to the Father* and throughout the interviews, where *evangelization is not something you talk about, it is something you do*. In other words, to evangelize others in the Catholic context is a somewhat indirect action—to *lead by example*, and not through direct proselytization.

The adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* have emphasized that evangelization is an *essential* part of Catholic identity; it is the justification for *Journey to the Father*. However, related to the action of *evangelizing through the self* (i.e. leading by example), feelings of trepidation were expressed by the young participants about taking action in evangelization, based on a desire to not dissuade friends or family from the possibility of their religious engagement through

overzealousness. The idea is *not to step on people's toes* and hoping that your friends, family, and peers see you for your moral life-choices. This points to the complex reality that many young participants have friends who do not share their same values, and yet this does not dissuade them from living out their evangelical Catholic values. There is an underlying resiliency in that religious and moral differences do not lead to cognitive dissonance or an identity crisis among these young people.

This perspective is modified by the suggestion raised in Chapter 6 that the *evangelical Catholic self* and *non-evangelical and non-Catholic others* can coexist peacefully in mutual tolerance, but without deeply knowing one another. The connection with the religious, denominational, and even atheistic *other* is not about the details of faith or worldview, but the importance of positive or constructive feelings and the experiences of interaction with others—i.e. *they do their thing and I do mine*. As detailed in Chapter 4, this attitude can be interpreted as an product of the ecumenism and multi-faith initiatives of Vatican II (Horn, 2015; Wilde, 2007). And yet a subtext of insecurity emerges when the young participants discuss evangelizing the people in their own homes, churches, or schools—i.e. with regards to Winter's (2011) schema of identity formation in diverse societies, the young participants' interactions with the antagonistic *them*.

As discussed in Chapter 5, many young participants mention having experienced scorn for expressing their religious identity. Though none of them mentioned being physically bullied for their faith, they have been pointedly

questioned and mocked for their belief in God. The reflections of the young participants are that the criticism of friends and family put them in the spotlight for their religious identity, making them no longer invisible within the background noise of social normativity. They are different for being religious, which in turn invokes a feeling of marginalization from the norm. These negative experiences are indicative of a resonance of the young participants at *Journey to the Father* with the minority identity politics explained in the previous section. Ultimately, these identity politics assert a struggle against antagonistic forces—secular influence and cultural Catholics—which ultimately flesh out and inform evangelical Catholic identity.

The message across the interviews, among both adult organizers and youth participants, is that Catholicism needs to be more relevant for young people in their homes, parishes, and schools, as it is at *Journey to the Father*. Many share the opinion that *Journey to the Father* is a vision of success. They view this embodied experience of Catholic religiosity as absolutely essential for 1) understanding what is going on in people's social and religious lives, and 2) establishing personal conviction for religious engagement among young people. However, these experiences must be couched in an institutionally Catholic, discursive space like *Journey to the Father* through elements like the talks, testimonials, Adoration, Reconciliation, and altar call. And yet, this correlation between experience and identity needs to be further explained.

The interviews with the youth participants also brought out examples of how they still had recourse to resist the compulsion to fully engage. This was raised when young participants in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 were seemingly ambivalent about *Journey to the Father*, mentioning being bored, being confused, being shy, not liking rules, or being there for purely social reasons. These background moments of resistance are equally important in defining the substance of young people's agency as they interpret and negotiate the form of their religious identities. Regarding the question of choice and feeling pressured into engaging the religious discourse at *Journey to the Father*, I return to Jimmy's intriguing response: "God gave us free will for a reason. So we could choose for ourselves." This represents an intersection between the efforts and messages of evangelical engagement by the adult organizers at *Journey to the Father*, and the young participants as individual social agents. In his attempt to absorb, understand, and operationalize evangelical Catholic values in his life, Jimmy represents the young Catholic who cannot be coerced into doing or thinking something that he cannot feel. In other words, God gave Jimmy the capacity to make his own decisions. As discussed in Chapter 6, Jimmy's statement also points to an important connection between the liberal values that underscore individual choice and agency, and God as a force in the lives of people of faith and religious inclination.

At first glance, this statement reflects precisely the intent of the adult organizers—i.e. that the young participants put God at the centre of their lives. But it is the way that Jimmy stated his relationship to God that exposes his act of

resistance, which shifts matters in terms of discourse, power, and agency. In other words, young people are exercising the choice that the adult organizers want them to, but not in the direction or aspirations of the organizers. The young people do express a religiosity that combines a lived and engaged commitment to Catholicism, but are less enamoured by the urgent tone projected by the adult organizers. This is not to say that the young participants are not engaging in the Catholic evangelical project of identity formation as presented above. The reality is that the young participants are synthesizing secular values in their regular lives, which reflects an implicit acceptance of socio-politically diversity. Ultimately, this is the message of secular, political liberalism.

Overall, this conglomeration of different values amounts to a set of oppositional categories, which I termed, illustrating the socio-political and religious identity of these young evangelical Catholics in correlation to the perspectives of the adult organizers in *Journey to the Father*. The first category is *pluralistic Evangelicals*, which is an inclusive exclusivism whereby young evangelical Catholics advocate moderation, pluralism, and diversity over discourses of socio-political and religious exclusivity. Based on their experiences of “living” their evangelical identities at home, at church, and at school, they dislike political religion and hard lines in favour of social and cultural tolerance, but still advocate a religious identity intimately tied to the moral prerogatives of the structural Catholic Church (i.e. Papal authority, the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and the Magisterium), and the evangelical religiosity and worldview of the NE. The young participants in *Journey to the Father*,

in other words, are conservative Catholics who do not need to express exclusivist attitudes against the *other* in order to understand the *self*.

The second category is *minority Catholics*, which speaks of the way both the adult organizers and young participants operationalize a politics that is based on the perception of a collective identity marginalized from the cultural Catholic and secular *them*. It is important not to underestimate the power of a minority identity politics in this case. It is a strong factor in building a collective evangelical identity informed by the objectified antagonism of secular values within the Catholic Church (i.e. cultural Catholics) and secular forces dominating conventional society. However, we cannot ignore the fact that, as Catholics, they remain a demographic majority in Canada with a long history of social, ethno-cultural, and political representation and recognition (Beaman, 2003). Though the tone of Catholic evangelization is set by the perception of marginalization and oppression, these participants (adults and young people both) are part of the privileged echelons of Canadian society.

More conventional social and political minority issues, such as racism, sexism, or ablism—which represent external pressures that shape identity politics—were never raised in the discourse of evangelical Catholic identity formation within *Journey to the Father*. The marginalization of evangelical Catholics was almost completely internal to their community (i.e. the local *and* global Catholic Church) or resulting from the pressures of conformity to normative, secular society. Though this fact underscores a problematic aspect of the appropriation of a

minority identity politics by a historically normative, global Christian denomination, the reality remains that the young participants in *Journey to the Father* felt justified in accepting the modernist, multiple, diverse, plural nature of society as young evangelical Catholics through a minority identity politics. It is unclear if this acceptance of pluralism contradicted the expectation and purview of the adult organizers. But, overall, these young evangelical Catholics have a strong case for asserting their religious identities that speaks of being unique (i.e. the power of being different), but without any debilitating or dissonant social marginalization (i.e. the grace of being normal).

A key factor in differentiating the perspectives of the adult organizers and young participants in *Journey to the Father* is the importance of *experience*. The adult organizers and the very structure of *Journey to the Father* point to the paramount importance of translating religious experience into evangelical action and socio-political identity (preferably religious conversion). In other words, the adult organisers see experience as simply a path to a greater goal of evangelization. For young people, on the other hand, experience is the epistemological framing for the negotiation of different and competing values and discursive forces. Young people are agents of their own identity formation because they are indeed *feeling their way*. This experiential modality does not take away the power of their agency as thinking and rational people, but places above everything the discerning quality of experience. Experience, therefore, could be the operationalizing factor in how

young participants negotiate the confluence of a moral and socio-political pluralism at the core of their evangelical identities.

Journey to the Father is certainly a religious framework that focuses heavily on heightening the quality of religious experience. Experience is a powerful vehicle for meaning making and *Journey to the Father* fulfills these expectations. But young participants spoke of the outcome of their experiences differently: 1) some leading to an evangelical impetus, as was intended by the adult organizers; 2) some pointing to instances, attitudes, and behaviours that speak of resistance to these powerful evangelical forces. These are not flat-out refusals to engage evangelical values, nor a complete acquiescence—they speak of a negotiation of socio-political and religious values that make up an evangelical Catholic identity for young people. This negotiation of evangelical identity speaks of the particular agency related to the subjectivity of experience. It would appear that an individual's experiences are ultimately more influential than the discourses that are being transmitted to them. In other words, young participants are appropriating the values and messages presented them at *Journey to the Father* under their own terms, bearing the weight and repercussions of their social and political agency.

When I entered into this research, I did not anticipate the complex ways in which the young people I would study would exercise agency or the manner in which they would navigate the complexities of modern life, constructing their religious identities alongside a commitment to values that might be construed as belonging to liberal secularism. I was expecting something closer to what was

presented in the *Jesus Camp* documentary, an expression of politically conservative, hard-line proselytization of evangelical Christian social and political identity. In other words, I was expecting a polemic or *Culture War* between the political and moral values of conventional society and those of the evangelical Catholics. The case study of *Journey to the Father* has helped unpack the situation, offering insight into the proximity and interaction between what are commonly defined as liberal and conservative value systems, through which young people engage as social agents, determining and shaping their own religious identities.

There is room, however, for additional research on Catholic youth and the ways in which they construct their identities in a diverse society. Questions related to ethnic and cultural identification and Catholicism have not been answered in this thesis—i.e. *how are historically Catholic societies (like Quebec, Ireland, Poland, Italy, Spain, etc.) negotiating ethnic Catholic identity, socio-political liberalism, socio-cultural pluralism, and Catholic evangelization culture?* These questions seek a deeper reflection on the category of cultural Catholics and its interaction with the evangelical program of the Catholic Church. It also speaks to the importance of studying social and political contexts that negotiate secular liberalism within a homogenous Catholic, national identity. Ethnic identity and religious identification would be areas of further research for understanding the negotiations of socio-political identity among Catholics today.

This doctoral thesis entitled *Journeying to the Father: Researching Faith and Identity in a Contemporary Catholic Youth Movement in Canada* centers on a specific

location of religious evangelization, the *Journey to the Father* youth conference, and describes the culture generated by the adult organizers as well as outlining the lived experience and socio-political perspectives of the young participants. Overall, this research provides an insight into a nascent conservative Christian phenomenon of evangelization in the Catholic Church, which is largely unobserved and understudied. This thesis also points to intersections of political values and concepts regarding narratives of the ubiquity of secularism, but also how the New Evangelization, through *Journey to the Father*, deploys a minority identity politics while speaking of the need for religious identity. And finally, the title *Journeying to the Father* refers to the young Catholics in this study and their particular mode of action as they negotiate different and yet intersecting socio-political values on their own terms. Their thoughts and actions point to an experiential and relational agency that is indeed a matter of *journeying* towards an evangelical Catholic identity within a diverse Canadian society.

Appendices

Appendix A — Adult Consent Form

Consent to Participate Form: Adult Organizers

Title of the study: **Journeying to the Father: Researching Faith and Identity in a Contemporary Catholic Youth Movement in Canada**

Principle Researcher:

Paul Gareau, M.A.

Ph.D. candidate in Religious Studies, Specialization in Canadian Studies

Department of Classics and Religious Studies

Faculty of Arts

University of Ottawa

Thesis Supervisor:

Dr. Lori G. Beaman

Department of Classics and Religious Studies

Desmarais Bld. 55 Laurier Avenue E. Room 10127

Faculty of Arts

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to explore and understand what it is like to be young and religious in Canada today. Based on my thoughts and experiences of organizing and participating in the summer conference *Journey to the Father*, researcher Paul Gareau wants to understand how I feel it is like to be a young Catholic both at the conference and at home. He wants to know what it means to be a Catholic Canadian today and to see what I think the future looks like for me at this moment?

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of participating in an interview session that will last 1 to 2 hours during which I will be asked to reflect and respond to the study's research questions. This interview will be audiotaped. The interview sessions will be scheduled between March 2013 and March 2014 at the place of my choosing (i.e. home, office, church, community centre, or other safe and convenient space). The specific date will be determined by the researcher and participant: place, date and time of the interview.

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Paul Gareau with funding from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

I am invited to participate in:

Interview: ☐ Taking place on (date): _____

Risks: My participation in this study will entail that I volunteer personal reflections and information regarding feelings and personal experiences about religion and Canada. This may cause me to feel some discomfort in sharing personal experiences, especially talking about religion or religious experiences. I have received assurance from the researcher Paul Gareau that every effort will be made to minimize these risks by being allowed to share to the extent that I feel comfortable in sharing my experiences.

Benefits: My participation in this study will be beneficial because I will have a chance to speak about the experiences, struggles, and joys of being a young Catholic in Canada today. It will also help others understand my point of view, the work that I do to help Catholic youth, and add to the greater discussion of what it means to be Canadian.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I understand that the contents of my participation will be used only for Ph.D. research and scholarly pursuits (such as conference papers and journal articles). I have the option to remain anonymous by marking an X in the checkbox below. If I have chosen to remain anonymous, I have received assurance from Paul Gareau that the information that I will share will remain strictly confidential and that my anonymity will be protected using a pseudonym or a fake name that cannot be traced back to me. Anonymity will be protected in the following manner: only Paul Gareau will know my name and the name of my community, and keep it confidential.

*I chose to remain **anonymous** in this research:* ☐

Conservation of data: The data collected through our interviews, both hard copy and electronic data, such as interview notes, interview transcripts, and audio recordings, will be kept in a secure manner at Paul Gareau's home office under lock and key with all electronic data on a separate hard-drive. Nothing will be left out in the open for people to see. This material will be kept for at least 5 years and maximum 25 years. Once the conservation period has expired, Paul Gareau will dispose of the data by shredding all written records, identity codes, and material data and by way of secure deletion dispose all audio recordings, and computer data used during the course of this research.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions without suffering any negative consequences from Paul Gareau or from any organizer and/or parent or guardian. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will not be used in any of the research and will be disposed of in a safe and effective manner as mentioned above. I may ask that quoted interview material be reviewed by me before integration into Paul Gareau's research and writings.

Acceptance: I, [print name]_____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Paul Gareau of the Department of Classics and Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ottawa, whose research is under the supervision of Dr. Lori G. Beaman.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher Paul Gareau or his thesis supervisor Dr. Lori Beaman.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5 Tel: (613) 562-5387 Email: ethics@uOttawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B — Youth Assent and Parental Consent Form

Title of the study: **Journeying to the Father: Researching Faith and Identity in a Contemporary Catholic Youth Movement in Canada**

Principle Researcher:

Paul Gareau, M.A.
Ph.D. candidate in Religious Studies, Specialization in Canadian Studies
Department of Classics and Religious Studies
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

Thesis Supervisor:

Dr. Lori G. Beaman
Department of Classics and Religious Studies
Desmarais Bld. 55 Laurier Avenue E. Room 10127
Faculty of Arts

Purpose of the Study: The reason Paul Gareau wants to talk to me is to find out what it is like to be a young Catholic today. He wants to know what it was like to be at *Journey to the Father* and how these experiences affected me. He wants to know how I deal with being Catholic or being religious at home, school, and in my hometown.

Participation: In order to help him with his research, I am invited to do one interview with Paul Gareau that will take 45 minutes to 1 hour. I am going to have a conversation with him, and listen to his questions and engage in a conversation. This interview will be audiotaped. This conversation will happen when I have time and when I have talked to my parents with written permission from them that this is okay.

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Paul Gareau with funding from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

I am invited to participate in:

Interview: ☐ Taking place on (date): _____

Risks: My participation in this study will be that I have a conversation with Paul Gareau about my feelings and experiences of being a Catholic in Canada today. This may cause me to feel strange sharing my personal feelings with an adult, especially about religion. Just in case I have feelings or questions that he can't answer, Paul has given me a list of people from the community that I could talk to.

Benefits: My participation in this study will be great because it gives me the chance to speak out about my personal religious feelings and how I see the world. I can talk about how I see my community and my country. I can speak about my feelings and experiences of Journey to the Father. And I can talk to an adult who is open to listening to what I have to say.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I am guaranteed that all this information that I share with Paul Gareau is anonymous and secret. He will be giving me a fake name in his research so that nobody will know what I said or where I come from. I understand that the information that I give him will be used for his research and that nothing I say will come back to me or get me in trouble. Only Paul will know my name and the name of my community, and keep it secret.

Conservation of data: This conversation will be kept in a safe place at Paul Gareau's house under lock and key. Nobody will be told where it is. Paul will keep our conversation for at least 5 years up until 25 years safe and sound. Once that time is done, Paul will get rid of all the material so that nothing that I said can be found by accident.

Voluntary Participation: I am not forced or am under no obligation to participate, and if I choose to participate, I can stop at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions without getting in trouble with Paul Gareau or from any organizer and/or parent or guardian. If I choose to stop, all the material gathered until the time that I do stop will not be used in any of the research and will be destroyed like Paul said above.

Acceptance: I, [print name]_____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Paul Gareau of the Department of Classics and Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ottawa, whose research is under the supervision of Dr. Lori G. Beaman.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher Paul Gareau or his thesis supervisor Dr. Lori Beaman.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5 Tel: (613) 562-5387 Email: ethics@uOttawa.ca

There are two copies of this consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent or Guardian (for youth under 18 years of age)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C — Interview Guides for Adults and Youth

1. Adult Leadership Interview Guide

- 1.1. I am looking at understanding the role of adult organizers in *Journey to the Father*. What was your experience of working with the youth?
- 1.2. How would you describe your role in *Journey to the Father*?
- 1.3. How long have you been involved? What got you involved?
- 1.4. What are some of your experiences of Catholicism before and after *Journey to the Father*?
 - 1.4.1. What have been the highlights of *Journey to the Father*?
 - 1.4.2. What have been some of the challenges of *Journey to the Father*?
- 1.5. How did you bring *Journey to the Father* experience home?
- 1.6. What does it mean to be Catholic in Canada today?
- 1.7. What are the greatest challenges for Catholic youth in Canada today?
 - 1.7.1. What are the greatest challenges within the communities?
- 1.8. What does it mean to be a Catholic woman or a Catholic man?
- 1.9. What are your hopes and dreams for Catholicism and Catholic youth in the future?
- 1.10. In a few words, what is the impact of *Journey to the Father* in helping Catholic youth in the Church and in society?

2. Individual Youth Participant Interview Guide

1. *Experience of Journey to the Father*
 - 1.1. I would like to get to know people's experience of *Journey to the Father*. Could you tell me about your experience?
 - 1.2. Was this your first experience of the *Journey to the Father* conference?
 - 1.3. Who influenced you to come to the conference?
 - 1.4. What were you expecting before you arrived?
 - 1.5. What is your impression now?
 - 1.6. What part of the *Journey to the Father* conference influenced you the most (i.e. speeches, testimonials, music, drama, ritual participation, being with others, being alone)?
 - 1.7. What part of the conference influenced you the least?
 - 1.8. What did you take away from *Journey to the Father*?
 - 1.9. Are you planning on returning to the next conference either as a participant or as a volunteer?
 - 1.10. Would you recommend *Journey to the Father* to your friends or family members?
2. *Personal Spiritual/Religious Practice*
 - 2.1. I would like to understand more about people's spiritual and/or religious practice. Could you tell me about your religious and/or spiritual practice?

- 2.2. Could you tell me if you have a religious practice at home?
- 2.3. Do you go to church? What is that like?
- 2.4. Does your family have a religious practice?
- 2.5. Do you have a personal prayer practice? What is it like?
- 2.6. Has the way you prayed changed with your experiences of *Journey to the Father*?
- 2.7. Where do you find your greatest inspiration?
- 2.8. Do you have a special place in your house? If yes, could you describe it?
- 2.9. In a few words, describe your personal spiritual self today.
3. *Community Involvement*
 - 3.1. People have a personal practice of faith, as well as a practice in their community.
 - 3.2. What is your involvement with your local church community?
 - 3.3. What has been your experience of Mass, the Eucharist, and confession?
 - 3.4. What was your experience of these sacraments at *Journey to the Father*?
 - 3.5. Have your experiences of *Journey to the Father* changed your perspective of the sacraments and/or the Catholic Church?
 - 3.6. How does the Church influence your life and the way you see the world?
4. *Experiences of being a Catholic Canadian*
 - 4.1. I would also like to find out how young Catholics see themselves within the larger view of being Canadian. In your own words, what does it mean to be a Catholic in Canada?
 - 4.2. Do you feel free to express your religious identity with others, like your peers or people in your community?
 - 4.3. Compared to other young people in Canada, do you feel you share the same viewpoints and values? How do they differ from you and how are they the same?
 - 4.4. Tell me about your experiences with people of different viewpoints from your own?
 - 4.5. Tell me about your experiences with people of different cultures?
 - 4.6. Are you often in contact with people of different faiths or religions?
 - 4.7. When you explain your religious views, how do you explain it to someone who is not of the same faith background as yourself?
 - 4.8. With people different from yourself, how would you talk about religion?
 - 4.9. In your opinion, what are the greatest challenges facing Canadian society today (e.g. secularism, materialism, moral relativity, multiculturalism)?
 - 4.10. In your opinion, what are the greatest elements of being Canadian (e.g. multicultural society, freedom of belief, freedom of thought, speech and movement, political stability)?
 - 4.11. As a young Catholic, what do you feel you can offer to Canadian society?
 - 4.12. If you had a message to give to people about your faith, what would that message be?
 - 4.13. Finally, is there anything you would like to add to the interview?

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