

Canadian Catholic Experience: The New Evangelization and Identity in a Diverse Canada



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Abstract The New Evangelization is a recent development in the Catholic Church that 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 attempts to instigate emotional religious experiences among adherents in the hopes of forming an evangelical Catholic identity vis-à-vis the institutional Catholic Church. However, little is known of the processes and discourses of Catholic evangelization, especially among young people in Canada. This chapter focuses on an annual summer Catholic youth conference in rural Ontario called *Journey to the Father*. This conference serves as a case study shedding 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. The following discussion will explore the New Evangelization (NE) in the Canadian context, outline personal, theoretical, and methodological reflections on studying youth and religion, and provide inquiry for further research on the youth and Catholic identity. This chapter underscores the dynamics of identity formation of Catholic evangelical youth in a diverse Canada.

Keywords Identity formation · Catholics · Youth · Evangelization · Values · Agency · Charismatic Catholics · Proselytization

1 General Introduction/Synopsis of the Theme

1.1 *The New Evangelization in the Canadian Context*

Evangelical Christian values and worldview have taken hold of discourses of socio-political identity in the US and Canada. Ironically, these are two political contexts dominated by discourses of political and ethno-cultural pluralism, and secular values. Nevertheless, you need only to look at the influence of the Christian Right on

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US politics over the past three or four decades to see how embedded Christian values are, not only in the structures of governance, but in the way people self-identify (Gregg 2013; Kyle 2009; Smith 2014b; Sutton 2014). Though this does not discount the longitudinal impact of Christianity on Western norms and worldview (Beaman 2003), the attitudes and tone of evangelicalism today relates to how people present themselves with the view of being recognized by others for their religious identity. In short, evangelicalism has become an ubiquitous force in the engagement of a politics of identity in a context of social, political, and moral pluralism.

The impact of evangelicalism, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon for the Catholic Church. Evangelicalism is a trans-denominational political movement that operationalizes Protestant theological values of faith through Jesus Christ and through Biblical scripture alone by focusing on personal religious experience, such as religious conversion, as the driver to socio-political identity (Kyle 2009; Noll 2010). Before the mid-20th century, evangelical Christianity was largely the domain of Protestant denominational movements—being somewhat anathema to Catholicism (Bokenkotter 2004; Fay 2002; Hitchcock 2012). The *New Evangelization* (NE), however, developed in the last half of the 20th century as a grassroots response to the call of the contemporary Catholic Church, which had been shaped by the discourses of evangelization from the Second Vatican Council (Faggioli 2012; Paul VI 1975; Second Vatican Council 1964; Wilde 2007). The NE is largely informed by the perspective that secular values dominate Western societies and have permeated the Catholic Church (Dulles 2008, 2009; Portmann 2010). This social and political view perceives secularism as corrosive and hegemonic, which in turn must be challenged and overturned in order to regain the lost ground of the Church.

This understanding of “lost ground” is based on a perceived decline in Catholic adherence in Canada over the past few decades (Clarke and Macdonald 2017). However, according to the last reliable dataset on religion in Canada from 2001 (Government of Canada 2005), denominational adherence was rather stable for the Catholic Church. In Canada, there were 12,936,905 Catholics out of a population of 29 million representing nearly 41% of the Canadian population, down from 45% in 1991. Note that the current population in Canada is 35.5 million; a difference of 6.5 million over 13 years will have generated change in the number of Catholics in Canada (Government of Canada 2014). Nevertheless, according to the 2001 data, it is obvious that Catholicism remains the largest religious denomination in Canada and the data tells a peculiar story. Between 1991 and 2001, the number of Catholics increased 4.8% (Government of Canada 2001). In provinces like Quebec, Catholics make up an overwhelming majority at 83%, whereas in Ontario, Catholics account for 34% in close parity with Protestant denominations at 35%. In both of these provinces, there is a trend of denominational decline among Protestant denominations, but Catholics have remained stable if not increasing through this period—e.g., Ontario shows a 10% rise of Catholics from 1991 to 2001 (Government of Canada 2001). Though there was a slight growth in the 1990s, there was nevertheless an overall downward trend in terms religious participation.

According to the General Social Survey (GSS) data, church attendance (i.e., measure of active participation) has fallen dramatically over 15 years. In 1986, 28% of individuals over the age of 15 noted they did not attend church service, while

43% (4 in 10 adults) reported non-attendance in 2001. This 15% jump in non-participation contrasted by the seemingly constant number of denominational affiliation has an effect on how the Catholic Church sees itself and its membership. What this says to the NE is that there is large population of Catholics who adhere to Catholicism but do not participate or are seemingly inactive. Therefore, this perspective justifies the NE approach to “internal” proselytization rather than external; meaning Catholics need to evangelize Catholics rather than non-Catholics. The *modus operandi* of the NE is to tap into this largely “disaffected” denominational affiliation to the Catholic Church with the enticements of a personal, evangelical religiosity. Therefore, the main purpose of the NE is to engage Catholics in personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which reflects a turn towards the institutional Church. This Catholic type of evangelism is the marriage of personal religious conviction with institutional authority.

The NE is a broad proselytization programme for the Catholic Church reaching all sectors of the Church; from the Magisterium to the laity (Synod of Catholic Bishops 2012a, b). Truly a widespread initiative, there are various NE activities in every Catholic diocese and church across Canada. There has been, moreover, an intense focus on young people, specifically adolescents and young adults. Currently, there are many Catholic youth organizations that serve to assert and disseminate the NE program. Two important organizations in Canada that operate on a national scale are Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO) (Catholic Christian Outreach 2013) and National Evangelization Team (NET) Ministries (NET Ministries of Canada 2016). Both of these proselytization programs seek to engage young Catholics in the values of the institutional Church through personal, charismatic religious experiences. The goal of this engagement is to instigate in Catholic youth an evangelical orientation to their socio-political identities.

Due to the fact that the NE is a recent movement in the Catholic Church, there is a lack of academic research on the impact of evangelization on young people in Canada and around the globe (Norman 2011; Smith 2014a). The presence of the NE and religiously active, evangelical Catholic youth within the political landscape in Canada raises questions about the dynamics and contours of Canadian diversity, and the role of religion in shaping modern identity: *How are young people engaging and interpreting modes of religious and socio-political identity, and integrating or negotiating this worldview in a diverse Canadian society?*

This chapter focuses on my recent doctoral research of an annual summer Catholic youth conference called *Journey to the Father* that serves as a case study on the production of personal and charismatic religious experiences, and the instigation of an evangelical impetus in Catholic youth. More importantly, this research examines the process and formulation of a “minority” identity politics in these young people. Identity politics is typically reserved for socially and politically marginalized individuals, groups, communities, or cultures based in liberal socio-political values of freedom, equality, and choice (Kelly 2005). However, *Journey to the Father* serves to help young Catholics assert their right to be to be recognized for their “outed” (i.e., *openly evangelical in a secular world*) religious identities, which necessitates a language of minority identification. The message is: *it is okay to be Catholic—it is okay to be different*. My doctoral research looks into the

dissemination and appropriation of concepts of contemporary socio-political identity formation among young people. This chapter, however, will review the process and structure, and theoretical and methodological approaches for this research, look at the challenges and opportunities for future research endeavors, and note important literature on this topic. Though not confined to the topic of Catholic identity, this chapter serves as a general exposition and guide on doing research among religious youth at the intersection of liberal values and conservative religious discourses in a diverse Canadian society.

1.2 Researching Faith and Socio-Political Identity: The New Evangelization at Journey to the Father

The confluence of evangelical and secular values within Canadian society became the starting point for my research on the engagement of youth by Catholic socio-political discourse. My thesis entitled “Journeying to the Father: Researching faith and identity in a contemporary Catholic youth movement in Canada” centred on a specific location of religious evangelization—the *Journey to the Father* youth conference in rural North-Eastern Ontario. This annual three-day conference was designed to instigate emotional and charismatic religious experiences with young people with the hopes of encouraging them into becoming more religiously active in their lives. Though I will expand on the details of my research below, this research describes the culture generated by the adult organizers as well as the lived experience and socio-political perspectives of the young participants.

Overall, the research centres around the dynamics of socio-political identity. Identity has become central hub for how an individual can be understood in the analysis of different social systems and competing messages about how to form the *self* and how to engage the *other(s)* (Akhtar 2011; Parekh 2008; Taylor 1989; Winter 2011). 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 akin to the activities at *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 in these programs promote evangelical Catholic values, and how the young participants at *Journey to the Father* encountered and appropriated or negated these messages and values. From this discourse, three main themes emerge: 1) crisis of faith; 2) regime of liberal values; and 3) youth “between two worlds.”

The first theme speaks to the intersections of political values and concepts regarding narratives of the perceived ubiquity of secularism in contemporary society. This perception and attitude is core to the NE and the organizers of *Journey to the Father*, and justified a deployment of a minority identity politics while imploring

the need for religious identity. This socio-political engagement in identity politics points to the second theme regarding underlying liberal values of freedom, choice, and agency that undergird contemporary Western societies. This work delves into the ideas of authenticity and recognition inherent to the discussion on identity and how the NE has operationalized it to assert evangelical values and worldview among Catholic youth. This leads to the third theme regarding how young people negotiate the competing values of religious evangelization and secular society. The title *Journeying to the Father* refers to the young Catholics in this study as they negotiate different and yet intersecting socio-political values on their own terms in the process of identity formation. Their thoughts and actions point to an experiential and relational agency that is indeed a matter of *journeying in the direction of* an evangelical Catholic identity within a diverse Canada. Meaning, these young Catholics are exercising resistance while embracing evangelical values in an overall negotiation of their place in the social, political, and moral pluralism that is Canadian society.

Overall, this research provides an insight into a nascent conservative, Christian phenomenon of evangelization in the Catholic Church, which is largely unobserved and understudied. It also comments on the convergence of competing socio-political values within the frame of a more fluid identity formation among young people. This analysis serves as the lynchpin for the abovementioned idea that “it’s ok to be different,” which inherently reflects the idea that identity is formed in comparison and contrast to others as well as through a consolidated understanding of the self. Though this does not represent a universal understanding of identity formation, within the confines of this research young people at *Journey to the Father* claim a minority identity against the perceived hegemonic force of secular society in order to access a socio-political recognition within a diverse Canada.

2 A Real-Life Story from Qualitative Research

2.1 Case Study Approach: Journey to the Father

In order to examine the deployment of Catholic evangelical discourse and its impact on identity formation in youth, I centred my research on a single case study; the Catholic youth conference called *Journey to the Father*. This was an annual, three-day conference that took place in a tiny village called Saint Raphael’s, located 30 minutes outside of Cornwall, Ontario. *Journey to the Father* ran for 15 years between 1999 and 2013, except in 2002 (World Youth Day in Toronto). It was modeled after 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 2000 young people participating at each conference. There are now 18 regional conferences across the US and two Canadian events. One is called Steubenville Atlantic (Canada) that takes place in Halifax, NS (Steubenville Conferences—Atlantic n.d.) and in Toronto, which was recently initiated in 2014 (‘Steubenville Conferences—Toronto n.d.). *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., senior's 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 of the Catholic sacraments through Eucharistic Adoration followed by Reconciliation (confession). These experiences were then consolidated with an open-mic session and Altar Call on the final day. These activities were all conducted in the hope of instilling an evangelical impetus in young participants.

In 2013, after 15 years, *Journey to the Father* came to a close due to 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 in nearby Toronto. At this point, in 2018, 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 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, and (2) moderated through the moral and ritual prerogative of the institutional Catholic Church. *Journey to the Father* was 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 provides 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 embodied and operationalized these values in forming their socio-political identities.

2.2 *Ethnographic Research: Experiencing the Experiences*

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 throughout the day, the conference introduced young people to the idea of religious engagement. Saturday evening allowed the opportunity for charismatic and emotional religious engagement and experience. Finally, Sunday morning aimed to provide the means to apply these lessons and experiences to real life. This structure offers much in terms of how the adult 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 step in understanding how people behaved and reacted. 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 youth leaders—known as *Disciples*—as they prepared for their special roles. Activities consisted of team-building exercises, spiritual and religious development, organizing theatre plays, and learning 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 emotional and analytical reflections. When I had free time, I strolled through the grounds, reflecting on my own preconceived notions, personal biases, and expectations. 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 informed my interview questions, which make up a large part of the data for this research project.

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.

2.3 *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 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. I interviewed the main organizers, most of whom had volunteered for the entire 15 years. I also interviewed conference keynote speakers and session leaders as well as the bishops of Alexandria/Cornwall and Gatineau. The second part of this first block of interviews was conducted with the Disciple leaders, aged between 18 and 25. Being close in age, the Disciples provided a mentorship role for the young participants throughout their *Journey to the Father* experience. 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. Finally, I conducted 25 interviews with young participants from *Journey to the Father*. 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.

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. 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*.

This qualitative research served to ground me and my research in the lives and experiences of my participants. From here, I was able to challenge my pre-conceived notions of conservative, Christian perspectives as well as inquire on the dynamics of socio-political engagement regarding identity formation. These attitudes emerge from my own childhood and the recent blooming political hegemony of evangelization in the US and in Canada. However, *Journey to the Father* as a research space offered me the opportunity to ask different questions about what it was like negotiating evangelical, Catholic values in a secular and pluralistic Canada. *Journey to the Father* was definitely something that I had never experienced before.

3 Key Concepts

3.1 Major Themes from this Work: Lived Religion, Identity Formation, and Youth Perspectives

Sourced in my research questions and my lived experience of Catholic identity formation, I sought broad theoretical and methodological approaches to help contextualize my research. *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. I therefore settled on three key theoretical concepts that helped explain the dynamics of *Journey to the Father* as an alternative social geography for the inculcation and formation of Catholic identity in young people. These concepts are: 1) lived religion and the importance of religious action; 2) identity formation that engages notions of authenticity and recognition; and 3) youth perspectives, which reflects on a methodology of young people's agency that helps mitigate adult interference, misrepresentations, and distortions of young people's perspectives and experiences. Each discussion will be linked to the research on *Journey to the Father*.

3.1.1 Lived Religion: Experiential Meaning

Framed and popularized by Meredith McGuire and Robert Orsi, lived religion allows a place for the nuance of an individual's personal engagement with religion against deterministic perspectives of the impact of institutions on religious identity. *In Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, 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 a 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, p. 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. Instead, 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 epistemologically normative categories. 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.

Lived religion provides the space to hear untold narratives—experiences or feelings—of people negotiating the different facets of religion in their everyday lives. These stories came out through the interview questions revolving around my participants’ experiences of religion in the parish, at home, at school, and at *Journey to the Father*. In my ethnographic work, I integrated the voices of both adult organizers and young participants in order to add context and colour to how they live their Catholic identity. With that said, their perspectives were not homogenous, but highly varied. Adults and young people were often critical of the state of Catholicism in and around their private and public lives, while speaking highly of the religious experiences of the *Journey to the Father* event. On the surface, you could easily construe these perspectives as an apologetic assertion of the value of evangelization in combatting a lethargic and hostile culture of secularism within Catholicism. However, the young participants provided particularly varied and nuanced experiences of this narrative of religious identity that helped mitigate assumptions.

Many youth participants spoke of the challenges of being *religious* at school or with friends. Upon returning from *Journey to the Father*, some found it difficult to talk about their experiences with friends. Erika, aged 16, took a defensive and 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 charisma and 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.

Counter to this feeling of marginalization for asserting a religious identity are the ambivalent experiences of *Journey to the Father*. When asked about the different events, Vanessa, aged 16, candidly stated, “Yah, not anything that was like [*makes the blotchy sound of “mind blown”*] or anything, but they were good.” Mark, 14 years old, noted that he couldn’t remember the content, but, “I don’t know, I just like listening to people talk.” And Erika, who above defended her experience of “Jesus Camp,” spoke candidly of her mixed experience of *Adoration*: “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 to attain the common experience of those around her. But this did not dissuade Erika from seeking out her “Jesus moment” by continuing her annual participation in *Journey to the Father*, nor did it reduce its significant impact on her understanding of her religious identity.

The textured and emotional experiences of my participants, trying to live religion at school and musing on failed religious experience, are examples of their asserting or negotiating the role of religion in their sense of identity. Lived religion theory shifts our focus away from the imposition of dominant discourses towards the significance of individuals’ lived experience in shaping their own social, political, and symbolic worlds. With respect to my work, this allows us to move beyond a deterministic view of the institution of the Catholic Church, and appreciate the varied 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.

3.1.2 Identity Formation: Authenticity and Recognition

The concept of identity has become increasingly relevant in the social scientific study of religion. Lived religion theory draws substance from the subjective experiences of my participants, which necessitates a deeper understanding of how the individual is engaged and impacted by multiple forces of meaning. Identity becomes the form for the substance of religious experience with which the individual can negotiate the different forces of social formation and power relations. Though there are multiple approaches in the study of identity, the concept of identity in this research focuses 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.

Charles Taylor (1989, 1991) has done much to establish the view that modern identity is formed and informed as a *dialogical* engagement between self and other, i.e., through an emphasis on social, cultural, and personal interchange between different people. 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 together 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 by being “understood” through *recognition*.

For Taylor, 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”?* The dependent variable for Taylor is that modern individualism has a “dark side” in which the self becomes the moral centre around which the world is measured and understood. He 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 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 political 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. His understanding of common horizons of meaning does not mean erasing the other’s distinctiveness, but rather 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 takes place in dialogical and reciprocal relations with diverse others. This reciprocal process of mutual recognition is teleological—that is, holding the promise of mutual benefit and betterment with every cycle of engagement between 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 provides important elaborations on the theoretical framework of identity formation by 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 was 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. This was a strong theme throughout the interviews with the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* involving 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 a historical antagonism between religious institutions and secularism as a prevalent force shaping modern identity. This perspective justified *Journey to the Father* as a means of countering the prominence of secularization by reaching young Catholics with the messages and experiences of evangelization.

This was illustrated by André, one of the important leaders of *Journey to the Father*, who stated, “The Church has spent too much time being on the defense. [...] We should be proposing the faith on the offence. [...] [Young people] need to understand their missionary identity.” 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 Catholic identity through an evangelical lens. He reflected the feeling of alienation that many adult organizers expressed throughout these interviews—that the draw of secular society and how it is made manifest in the Church could no longer stand. André’s idea of missionary identity seeks to assert evangelization as a way to normalize and define religious identity 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* (i.e., other non-evangelized Catholics). And this vision was echoed among the adult organizers and some of the young participants.

Though the perspective of the organizers of *Journey to the Father* matches the underlying message of Taylor’s identity formation, there remains a nuance to his overall structure regarding the tacit formation of the *self* through experience. This is a valuable elucidation regarding theories of social formation and power that hinge upon the individual. 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 more than 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.

What emerged from my research was that young people were largely keen on the adult discourse of proselytization, but at the same time, had little to no problem negotiating the ambiguities of modern life. Though the young participants had many different thoughts and experiences regarding their negotiation of a “missionary identity,” gender serves as an effective optic for understanding socio-political worldview, underscoring their tacit acceptance of ambiguity in their everyday lives as they negotiated the conservative values of the NE against the different values of

normative society. In this research, one of my key questions was “what does it mean to be a Catholic woman or a Catholic man?” My male participants spoke mostly on the temptations of secular society regarding unfettered materialism, pre-marital sex, and the sexual objectification of women. They pointed to a personal experience with Jesus as the mitigating factor in their daily struggles.

My female participants also spoke of challenges regarding the idealized representations of women’s bodies in popular culture and how this negatively impacts body image, as well as issues around premarital sex and the values regarding chastity. But they also went a step further. Many 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, with the help of Jesus, did not need to be defined by men in order to exercise her individual agency and make choices.

In line with this idea of agency (which is further discussed in the next section), 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’s 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. Carry was able to challenge the inherent gender inequalities in the Catholic Church without detracting from her Catholic identity.

Throughout this discussion, it is surprising to hear these Catholic evangelical perspectives on gender equality that are moderately progressive/liberal. The subtext to this notion of equality is that, though there are gendered differences, there is no *moral* difference between Catholic women and men. But the perspective is nevertheless evangelical in that Catholic men and Catholic women have the capacity to overcome gender disparities by putting God at the center of their lives. Estelle, aged 17, 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 and reflect on their own identities.

3.1.3 Youth Perspectives: Reflecting on a Methodological Approach to the Agency of Young People

Youth have become an important subject in the multidisciplinary study of religion around the world, with a proliferation of theories and methods for researching young people's engagement with religion in terms of belief, practice, and experience in the formation and maintenance of their identities. Some of the more germane literature covers a general approach on how best to think about youth and how to engage youth in the context of studying religion (cf. Collins-Mayo and Dandelion 2010; Giordan 2010; Madge et al. 2014). The theoretical discussions of this research necessitate an understanding of how young people are studied and their relative agency with regard to identity formation.

Agency, as mentioned above, 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. There are, however, significant critiques of the idealization of freedom and choice that underscore agency. Saba Mahmood, for example, 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, p. 148). This perspective serves to question the very idea that people have the agency to make independent choices. Agency therefore is tempered by different realities of coercion. Though sometimes coercive forces can be restrictive or hegemonic, Mahmood assuages this interpretation by asserting the importance of different relations for the individual, stating that the terms of engagement for agency must remain sensitive to multiple layers of subjectivity and reciprocal relationships, as individuals reflect on *who they are* in relation to others.

Peter Hemming and Nicola Madge (2012) 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, pp. 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, p. 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* (2013) provide an example of the study of young people and religion

within a Canadian context that relates directly to this discussion operationalizing this methodology of young people's agency. Beyer and Ramji provide 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 young people have a belief in gender equality, but even more in *complementarity* (i.e., the genders are equal 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 in a Western context. Beyer and Ramji write,

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, p. 11).

The authors speak 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.

In summary, Beyer and Ramji provide us with a substantive insight into the theoretical models of Hemming and Madge by focusing on youth agency in the negotiation of different, and often competing, discourses of religious identity formation. 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, p. 356). With regards to my research, it is imperative for 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.

The adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* believed that young people need to make a choice in order to fully embrace a conversion to the Catholic evangelical worldview away from the dominance of secular values in Canadian society. There was a conviction that young people cannot be coerced into doing things they do not want to do. *Journey to the Father* offered youth the opportunity to experience charismatic forms of religiosity bracketed by ecclesiastical support and religious/moral teaching, which would ultimately serve to shape Catholic identity. The adult organizers believed that, if treated with care and respect, young people can absorb and expound these values and experiences to the point of paradigmatic religious conversion; i.e., from *living with* Catholicism to *living their* Catholicism. To be clear, though the adult organizers spoke of the choices that young people were free to make, their rhetoric was morally unilateral. The implication was that to choose not to embrace an authentic Catholic identity would leave one spiraling deeper into the confines of the secular world. Though this was understood by the young participants,

what became apparent was that young people were exercising the choices presented by the adult organizers, but maybe not in the same direction or aspirations of the organizers.

The young people of *Journey to the Father* expressed a religiosity that combines a lived and engaged commitment to Catholicism, but with less of the urgent tone projected by the adult organizers. This is not to say that the young participants were not engaging in or are disinterested in the Catholic evangelical project of identity formation. The reality is that the young participants at *Journey to the Father* were synthesizing religious experiences and secular values in their everyday lives. Case in point would be Jimmy, aged 17, who reflected with me 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 then, immediately after, I’ll snap myself out of it. Like, ‘why are you even thinking this?’” In this piece of introspection, 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. Ultimately, Jimmy had no regrets, and the choice he had made and continues to make in developing his own religious identity had led him down what he felt was the right path. But, importantly, 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.

Like the participants in Beyer and Ramji’s study, the youth of *Journey to the Father* reflect an implicit acceptance of socio-political diversity and moral pluralism while attending to their religious identities. The reality is that the message of secular, liberal tolerance is married to a rather conservative socio-religious identity formation. In the case of this research, it was clear how liberal values were being deployed in order to furnish the conservative moral and social purview of the NE, especially regarding evangelical proselytization. At *Journey to the Father* and throughout the interviews, the common theme was that *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. But, what is important to note in the analysis is that people do things differently. Within this same evangelical paradigm, the young participants’ 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.

4 Current Challenges and Future Opportunities

4.1 *The Challenges of Studying Young Evangelicals Effectively*

In the study of identity formation among evangelical Catholic youth, the greatest challenges are simply a matter of gaining access and insightfully representing their agency. It is a matter of respecting young people and their diverse perspectives. As academics, we tend towards understanding conservative socio-religious movements as being recalcitrant and endemically oppositional. This perspective is not surprising given the link between political conservatism and religion among the Christian Right in the US and Canada. In this context, there is a sense of a desperate need to assert one's socio-political values no matter the cost. This urgency can still be seen through the work of the adult organizers at *Journey to the Father*.

Echoing Taylor's notions of authenticity as a response to the social malaise of loss in the modern world, and recognition as facilitating dialogue with others, the adult organizers of *Journey to the Father* built an identity framework that effectively promoted evangelical Catholicism to young Canadians. The contours of this 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 (non-evangelicals) due to the defining quality of a Catholic evangelical collective identity and (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. As mentioned above, the message that is therefore justified and becomes increasingly clear is that *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.

To elaborate what was mentioned in the previous section, 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 that represented 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 were 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 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 this research, I have come to the realization that young people were exercising the choice that the adult organizers had promoted throughout *Journey to the Father*. That is, an evangelical, charismatic engagement of Catholic religious tradition and institution through a personal relationship with Christ. The young people in this study engaged in this Catholic evangelical praxis, but not to the exclusion of secular values and worldview. They expressed a religiosity that involves a lived and engaged commitment to Catholicism without reifying the urgent tone projected by the adult organizers. The reality is that the young participants were synthesizing secular values in their regular lives, reflecting an implicit acceptance of socio-political diversity, while remaining dedicated to a conservative, charismatic Catholic religious praxis. 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).

When I entered into this research, I did not anticipate the complex ways in which the young participants of *Journey to the Father* would exercise agency or the manner in which they would navigate the complexities of modern life and construct their religious identities alongside commitments to values that might be construed as belonging to liberal secularism. I was expecting an expression of politically conservative, hard-line proselytization of evangelical Christian social and political identity. In other words, I was expecting a polemical *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.

4.2 *Ethno-Nationalism and Catholic Identity: New Avenues of Research*

This research on *Journey to the Father* bore fruit in terms of shifting preconceived notions on religious conservatism in evangelical culture as well as effectively recognizing the social agency of young people as they negotiate their different relations in forming their socio-political and religious identity. There is room, however, for additional research on Catholic youth and the ways in which they form their identities in a diverse society. Questions related to ethnic and cultural identification to Catholicism have not been examined: *how does ethnic Catholic identity negotiate*

socio-political liberalism, moral pluralism, and Catholic evangelization culture? This question seeks a deeper reflection on the impact of ethno-cultural religious identity engaging liberal secularism and the NE. 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 in Canada today.

The management of religious diversity has become a major concern in liberal democracies around the globe due to intensifying pluralism. An example of this in Canada is evidenced in the recent debates about reasonable accommodation in Quebec. What is key to this example is the underlying importance of Catholicism to Quebecois (French-Canadian) identity as part of a historical national identity reflecting the dominance of the Catholic Church and a subsequent secularization (Baril and Lamonde 2013; Stevenson 2006). Underlying these issues of “accommodation” is the separation of Church and State (or *laïcité* in France and Quebec), which relegates religion to the private sphere for the sake of political neutrality in the public sphere (Arneson 2014; Beaman 2014; Westmoreland 2011). This vision of political neutrality is based on core liberal values of tolerance and equality, and has given rise to secularization as its main operational factor. In Quebec, *interculturalism* is the ethno-cultural, nationalist ethos that puts into practice a secular worldview in the management of religious and ethno-cultural diversity while still asserting the importance of religious heritage in safeguarding the host society’s communal values (Bouchard 2012; Cante 2012). Against this backdrop of secular values and religious heritage, religion remains relevant in the recognition of identity in the public sphere.

As we have discussed at the outset of this chapter, evangelical Christianity has become a strong political force throughout the world, and is primarily invested in gaining recognition for their religious identities in the public sphere. Though evangelicalism has historically been the domain of Protestant Christianity, the NE has done much to shape the form and substance of the Catholic Church today. Catholic proselytization organizations like CCO and NET Ministries have grown out of the NE mandate to generate an evangelical impetus through charismatic and personal religiosity with its members. NET Ministries in fact is attempting inroads into Quebec (NET Ministries of Canada 2016). Quebec presents an enticing proselytization opportunity for groups like NET for the rather homogenous population that still asserts a Catholic identity (Government of Canada 2005). However, it is unclear what effect secularism has on the process of evangelizing nominal or *cultural Catholics*, especially in formally secular societies like Quebec. This leaves unanswered the question: *how is Catholicism influencing Quebecois identity on the ground?* Though there is little academic research on the NE and cultural Catholics (Martel-Reny 2008; Inglis 2014; Lefebvre 2011; Seljak 1997; Stevenson 2006), their encounters represent negotiations between liberal/secular and religious values in the struggle to gain precedence in shaping public and national identity.

A research program based on the above theoretical discussion on lived religion, identity formation, and the agency of young people would be applicable to the

question: how do Quebecois youth actually interpret Catholicism within secular worldviews in the construction of ethno-cultural identity? This research could focus on the tensions between liberal/secular values and evangelical Catholic values and revolve around three components: (1) an analysis of the impact of secularism and Catholicism in defining national identity in Quebec; (2) a focus on the encounter between evangelical Catholics and cultural Catholics, and how they define national identity between religious and secular ideals; and (3) an empirical focus on young people negotiating these different power relations. This research would fill the gaps of knowledge regarding how Catholicism operates within formally secular societies in generating ethno-national identity.

5 Questions for Critical Thought

Questions for critical thought are drawn from each section of this chapter.

1. **The New Evangelization in the Canadian context:** When you think about the term “evangelization” what is the first thing that comes to mind? Televangelists? The evangelical Protestant church in your neighbourhood? Maybe you know someone who is evangelical. Does an evangelical Catholic identity seem familiar or foreign to you?
2. **Methodological reflections (case studies; youth agency; participant observation and interviews):** If you were to do research on young people and religion, what would be the best way to capture their thoughts and feelings? Would it be through interviews? Would it be best to visit spaces imagined and understood as religious? Or is it best to think of different creative or arts-based ways of finding answers?
3. **Subjectivity and self-reflexivity (challenging empirical objectivity):** What do you consider as religion or religious? Does religion look like a person sitting in a church or crouched over in prayerful supplication? Do you have a set definition? Can you think of alternative definitions?
4. **Youth:** Why do you think it is difficult to understand young people’s perspectives in social science research? Do you think adults have the capacity to understand young people’s thoughts and feelings on the topic of religion? Why is it important to make those connections and understand young people’s perspectives?
5. **Socio-political impact of religion:** Have you ever heard someone say, *never talk of religion or politics at the dinner table*. Why is that? Why are the topics taboo? Should we focus on politics when we talk about religion or should things remain separate?

6 Online Teaching and Learning Resources

The following websites provide a sample of materials regarding the study of religion and youth germane to the discussion of this chapter:

1. *National Study of Youth and Religion*, Christian Smith and Lisa Pearce: <http://youthandreligion.nd.edu/>

This website brings together a massive research output in qualitative and quantitative research on the religious lives of different Christian young people in the United States.

2. *Religion, Gender and Sexuality Among Youth in Canada (RGSY)*, Pamela Dicky Young and Heather Shipley: <http://www.queensu.ca/religion/faculty-and-research/faculty-research/pamela-dickey-young-rgsy>

This website outlines the research on young adults in Canada ages 18–25 on questions of religiosity and gender and sexuality. Using an extensive survey methodology, the RGSY looks to underscore how young people in Canada form and manage their sexual and gendered identities.

3. *The Project Teen Canada Youth Surveys*, Reginald W. Bibby: <http://www.reginaldbibby.com/projectcanadaprogram.html>

Reginald Bibby has been collecting data on the topic of religion and youth since 1984. This has produced a rare longitudinal data-set on how young people in Canada negotiate their religious identities. This website offers a good platform to delve into the material representing relevant research outcomes.

4. *National Evangelization Team (NET Canada)*: <https://www.netcanada.ca/en/> | *Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO)*: <https://cco.ca/>

NET Ministries and CCO are Catholic evangelization programmes that seek to engage youth in Canada with the message of the Catholic New Evangelization regarding a personal and charismatic religiosity as well as a moral orientation to the Roman Catholic Church. NET Ministries has proselytization programmes in the US, the UK, and Australia where young people evangelize to young people through retreats, music, drama, and religious practice. CCO is a Canadian student organization present in 14 universities across Canada. The main goal of both organizations is to evangelize young Catholics and non-Catholics through peer witnessing and emulation (i.e., leading by example).

7 References for Further Reading

This section below provides some basic literature reflective of the major themes covered in this chapter.

1. Catholic Identity and Evangelization:

Grogan, P., & Kirsteen, K. (Eds.). (2015). *The new evangelization: Faith, people, context and practice*. London/New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Grogan and Kirsteen (2015) discuss the theological and historical development of the New Evangelization. They provide a Catholic institutional perspective key to understanding the tone and values of this contemporary Catholic proselytizing movement.

2. Identity Formation:

Parekh, B. (2008). *A new politics of identity: Political principles for an interdependent world*. Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Post-colonial political theorist Bhikhu Parekh (2008) elaborates a theoretical model of identity formation that is both approachable and useful. Providing key terms and concepts of identity, this reading outlines an effective structure that helps explain the dynamics of modern identity.

3. Lived Religion:

Ammerman, N. T. (2007). *Everyday religion: Observing modern religious lives*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

Lived religion is a dynamic and engaging theory in Religious Studies. Ammerman's edited volume effectively showcases lived religion's theoretical and methodological reflections on the definitions of religion, the fluidity of *place* with regards to religious actions, and the production of religious meaning and meaningful religious action.

4. Youth and Religion:

Collins-Mayo, S., & Dandelion, P. (Eds.). (2010). *Religion and youth*. Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate Publishing.

There is varied literature on the topic of youth and religion underscoring the importance of focusing on youth in the study of religion. Collins-Mayo and Dandelion have produced a relevant resource for anyone considering studying the religious lives and experiences of young people.

8 Researcher Background and Connection to the Topic

Dr. Paul Gareau is Métis and French-Canadian from the village of Bellevue near Batoche, Saskatchewan. He is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Native Studies and Research Fellow for the Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research at the University of Alberta. His research is grounded in critical theory and methodology relating to the social and cultural impacts of religion on identity formation. This chapter reflects the idea that the actions and worldview of people are equally important to those disseminated or deployed by dominant institutions (i.e. the Church, government, civil society, race-based identity structures, etc.). His academic publications and community research projects explore the influence of Catholicism on early and late modern identity, the legacy of colonial discourses on Indigenous and ethno-cultural minorities, and the experiences of rural spaces. Critically reflecting on the dynamics of power informing religious identity has allowed Gareau to delve deeper into his personal Métis identity by looking for the untold stories of Métis experiences of religion. This exploration reflects a next phase in his program of research, looking into the relationship between the civilizational project of Catholic institutional structures and the resistance of Métis kinship/religious practices and worldview. Overall, his research focuses on the Métis, Indigenous religiosity, youth, gender, *la francophonie*, and rural Canada.

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