Everyday Enchantments and Secular Magic in Montréal

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Abstract

In this thesis I argue that dominant ways of imagining modernity constitute a modern imaginary that carries with it particular expectations concerning modern places, spaces, emotions, and affects as well as expectations concerning the place of religion and enchantment in the modern world. I argue that this modern imaginary and the expectations it entails works to conceal and trivialize supra-rational beliefs and behaviours in scholarship but also in the lives of individuals. I focus on one particular subset of the supra-rational beliefs and behaviours that modern imaginary conceals and trivializes, namely beliefs and behaviours associated with lucky and protective objects. I also focus on the ways the modern imaginary conceals the presence and prevalence of these objects and the beliefs and behaviours they entail in one particular context, namely Montréal, Québec. I argue that these supra-rational beliefs and behaviours constitute a subjunctive mode for understanding and experiencing daily life and describe how the modern imaginary works to discredit this subjunctive register. Finally, I argue that scholars must begin to recognize and examine this subjunctive mode and the playful engagement with half-belief it involves.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This project explores the ways dominant conceptualizations of modernity work to encourage certain ways of understanding and experiencing the world while discouraging and dismissing others. I argue that despite recent debates concerning the precise nature of modernity and its value as an analytical category, the idea of modernity remains both coherent and operative in contemporary society. Central to my argument is the notion that this idea of modernity, or modern imaginary, involves both descriptions of what modernity is and also normative statements concerning what modernity ought to be.

1.1. Modernity

Modernity is one of the most contested, debated, and “muddled” terms in the scholarly lexicon (Chakrabarty 2011). In what follows, I use the word ‘modernity’ to describe both our current social situation and also a dominant, coherent, and often contested program for social life. Importantly, I view the program of modernity as one that strives for universality. Thus although modernity is often associated with ideas that arose in a particular period (sometime after the Enlightenment) and in a particular context (Western Europe) the social program of modernity extends both forward in time and outwards in influence. Central to the program of modernity is the assertion that modernity is the potential (and perhaps inevitable) endpoint for all persons and places.
This very broad definition of modernity lacks precision and this is inevitable. In part, this stems from the fact that I am unwilling to view modernity as something around which clear boundaries can be confidently drawn. I am unwilling to do this because any concise definition of modernity ignores modernity’s status as a deeply contested concept. I will not, therefore, attempt to describe what modernity really is, assuming that final pronouncements on this subject are even possible. Nor will I take sides as to whether our current social situation is best viewed as constituting modernity, late-modernity, advanced modernity, or post-modernity. For although there is disagreement as to whether modernity is plural (Eisenstadt 2000), entangled (Göran 2003), liquid (Bauman 2000), reflexive (Beck et al. 1994), or valid at all as an analytical category (Wolin 2011; Chakrabarty 2002), I am reluctant to join in these discussions for two reasons. First, because a comprehensive survey and assessment of contemporary debates surrounding the concept ‘modernity’ would require a volume of its own; and second, because my primary concern is not modernity itself, but rather how the concept of modernity works to privilege some social arrangements while concealing or discouraging others. In other words, I am interested in the idea of modernity.

Yet I do not mean to suggest that there is any single or universally applicable ‘idea of modernity.’ As my brief reference to contemporary debates concerning the nature of modernity demonstrates, multiple conceptualizations of modernity co-exist and in fact compete with one another. Nevertheless, I contend
that the concept ‘modernity’ nevertheless carries with it certain dominant associations interpretations and, as I argue below, expectations. In section two I trace the contours of these associations, interpretations, and expectations and provide more detailed overview both of scholarly work on modernity and of the ‘modern imaginary’ as I conceive it.

1.2. Imaginaries and the Social Construction of Reality.

This project assumes that reality is socially constructed (cf. Berger and Luckmann 1966). According to this view reality is always refracted through the prism of culture and is shaped by shared interpretive frameworks. While there is disagreement among social constructionists as to exactly which shared interpretive frameworks are involved in the social construction of reality, ‘discourse’ (cf. Foucault 1995 [1975]) has become a particularly influential term for social constructionism (Hjelm 2014, 5). Yet I am also interested in non-discursive and pre-discursive orientations, commitments, and beliefs that may never be fully articulated. For this reason I explore the social construction of reality through the concept of imaginaries.

The concept of an imaginary or of imaginaries has been gaining popularity in cultural studies and other associated fields in recent years (Strauss 2006). Developed in different ways by Cornelius Castoriadis in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1998), Benedict Anderson (1983) in *Imagined Communities*, and
more recently by Charles Taylor in his *Modern Social Imaginaries* (2004), the term has been used in association with a wide variety of adjectives and nouns in recent scholarship. In the last decade, for instance, scholars have described political imaginaries (Adams et al. 2012), geographical imaginaries (Lopez 2010), secular imaginaries (Casanova 2008), urban imaginaries (Huyssen 2008), queer suburban imaginaries (Tongson 2011), radical feminist imaginaries (Subramanian 2013), the female imaginary (Odin 2010), the Jewish imaginary (Scott 2007), the Hindu imaginary (Bhagavan 2010), and the Muslim imaginary (Miller and Ahluwalia, 2011), to name only a few. The term has become so common, in fact, that many authors fail to attribute the concept or else provide only a cursory overview of its meaning (Strauss 2006, 323).

I employ the term ‘imaginary’ to describe, “an enabling but not fully explicable matrix with which a people imagine and act as world-making collective agents” (Gaonkar 2002, 1). Thus an imaginary involves both consciously held ideas about the world and also implicit values or intuitions about the world that may never be clearly expressed and indeed may never be fully explicable. Imaginaries therefore work on both discursive and non-discursive (or pre-discursive) levels. Importantly, an imaginary involves both the images we form of the world as it is (either explicitly or implicitly) and also the process of imagining the world as it should be. Imaginaries are thus both descriptive and prescriptive and determine not only how we see the world but also affect how we imagine the
world ought to function while also setting guidelines for how we ought to behave within this imagined world.

My conceptualization of imaginaries relies on Charles Taylor’s discussion of the ‘modern social imaginary.’ Yet Taylor and I have very different goals. For his part, Taylor is interested in describing the “special form of social imaginary” that gives rise to modernity in its multiple forms (Gaonkar 2002, 5). One important element of this social imaginary is a new conception of the moral order of society, which Taylor sees as being central to Western modernity (Taylor 2002, 92). But whereas Taylor describes the particular moral order and social imaginary that lead to modernity, I describe instead the ways modernity itself comes to be imagined along with the effects of this imagining. Or to frame it somewhat differently: whereas Taylor describes the specific social arrangements that led to modernity, which he views as an “historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices and institutional forms... of new ways of living... and of new forms of malaise” (2002, 91), I describe the specific arrangements that are held up as key features of modernity and explore the social, spatial, emotional, and affective potentials these imaginings afford.

1.3. Field of Study

The modern imaginary as I conceive it has effects for scholarship. According to the modern imaginary, certain places, spaces, emotions, affects,
and beliefs are pre-modern (primitive) or non-modern (backward) and are therefore largely ignored by contemporary scholarship. I focus on one instance of this exclusion and examine the ways lucky and protective objects and associated supra-rational beliefs and behaviours are not only ignored by contemporary scholarship but are rendered practically invisible both to scholarship and more generally.

1.3.1 Lucky and Protective Objects and Supra-rational Beliefs

My decision to focus on lucky and protective objects is, to some extent, arbitrary. For as Jonathan Z. Smith argues, “no datum possesses intrinsic interest. It is of value only insofar as it can serve as exempli gratia of some fundamental issue…” (1982, xi). The fundamental issue I explore involves both the way belief or half-belief in supra-rational forces tends to be cast as antithetical to modernity and ignored in contemporary scholarship and also the way supra-rational beliefs tend to be justified, rationalized, and minimized by individuals who engage in these beliefs. I focus on lucky and protective objects rather than supra-rational beliefs because individuals are often unwilling to admit to entertaining supra-rational beliefs as these tend to be disparaged as irrational or superstitious (Vyse 1997, 18). As the psychologist Stuart A. Vyse notes in Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition, for instance, “many believers are reluctant to confess their superstitions for fear of ridicule” (14). Focusing on objects allows me to better navigate the potential difficulties associated with
discussing supra-rational beliefs and provides a strategy for exploring the supra-rational beliefs that lucky and protective objects often entail. This focus on objects also allows me to explore the ways individuals sometimes believe or only half-believe in the efficacy of lucky and protective objects. Thus my focus on lucky and protective objects provides me with a strategic means for discussing a limited though fascinating subset of the supra-rational beliefs and associated behaviours the modern imaginary renders invisible.

I employ the qualifier ‘supra-rational’ to refer to beliefs and explanations that fall outside the sphere of mainstream scientific rationality. Rather than rely on scientific notions of cause and effect, supra-rational beliefs allow for the existence of immaterial causes, unseen influences, hidden meanings, and unmediated actions at a distance. These kinds of beliefs are sometimes called ‘magical,’ ‘superstitious,’ ‘enchanted,’ or ‘religious,’ depending on the intellectual commitments of the person describing them. Yet, as I argue below, the adjectives ‘magical’, ‘superstitious’, ‘enchanted’, and ‘religious’ are often used not only to describe but also to disparage. Additionally, the nature, extent, and rigidity (or fluidity) of the boundaries that separate these terms from one another are often debated. Thus whereas 19th century anthropologists and sociologists made clear distinctions between religion and magic (cf. Styers 2004), contemporary religious scholars sometimes argue that religion is becoming increasingly magical (cf. Turner 2012). Likewise whereas a contemporary ‘new atheist’ might characterize both religion and magic as superstition, a religious individual might disagree with
this assessment. I use the term ‘supra-rational’ to avoid the negative connotations sometimes associated with the terms magic, superstition, enchantment, and religion. Yet while supra-rational beliefs may be outside mainstream scientific rationality, they are not always irrational. Individuals who engage in supra-rational thinking often develop complex and highly rational explanations for how a particular effect is achieved – even if these explanations rely on immaterial or unseen forces and causes.

Although some individuals develop rational explanations for their supra-rational beliefs, others engage in supra-rational thinking only occasionally and hold supra-rational beliefs only tentatively. I use the term ‘half-belief’ to refer to these occasional or tentative beliefs. Additionally, while some individuals are willing and able to defend a particular tentative supra-rational belief, other supra-rational beliefs are framed instead as playful or ironic. I also use the term ‘half-belief’ to refer to these beliefs that individuals consider or play with rather than sincerely hold and defend. Tentative and playful half-beliefs often involve excursions into a subjunctive modality that privileges what-if and if-only scenarios according to which a particular belief is possible rather than certain and desirable even if questionable or unlikely. I return to this point in the conclusion.

1.3.2. Montréal

This project focuses on the ways the modern imaginary is refracted in a particular context, namely Montréal Québec. Because the modern imaginary that
I describe is a universalizing force, any modern, secular context would have served my purposes. In fact, owing to the universality of the modern imaginary, I could have investigated the effects of the modern imaginary almost anywhere. Yet Montréal is a particularly interesting context in which to examine the modern imaginary at work. Because modernity tends to be associated with specific locations and with Western cities in particular, Montréal’s status as the second largest city in Canada makes it an appropriate site in which to investigate the effects of the modern imaginary. Moreover, both secularization and the growth of secularism tend to be seen as important modernizing forces. Since Québec is often viewed as a thoroughly secularized society and secularism has become a key political issue in the province in recent years and since Montréal is the largest city in this apparently secularized and increasingly secular province, Montréal is therefore a particularly interesting context in which to describe the effects of the modern imaginary.

But while the modern imaginary has effects for scholarship, it also has effects for individuals. In what follows I argue that the modern imaginary renders supra-rational beliefs and behaviours associated with lucky and protective objects invisible more generally but also works to cast these beliefs and behaviours as silly, backward, and as something therefore about which individuals who possess and use such objects should remain silent. In order to examine the ways the modern imaginary affects individuals, I conducted field research in Montréal, Québec.
1.4. Methodology

Between December 2013 and January 2015, I conducted qualitative research in Montréal, Québec. My research involved two stages: a preliminary online survey in both English and French and thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in both languages. Rather than employ an inductive grounded theory approach (cf. Glasser and Strauss 1967) and generate theoretical arguments inductively ‘from the ground up,’ I originally sought to test my theoretical hypotheses in a deductive ‘top down’ fashion through qualitative research conducted in a specific context. The first stage of my qualitative research, which involved the online survey, was designed as a preliminary test of my hypothesis that individuals in secular, modern, Western contexts (i.e. Montréal) engage in supra-rational beliefs. However, the data collected in the first stage of my research included unforeseen surprises that necessitated an eventual change of plan.

The online survey received 227 responses and nearly half of all survey respondents reported possessing lucky and protective objects. 45.3% of respondents (n= 103) reported having possessed lucky and protective objects as adults and 34% of respondents (n= 77) reported that they currently possess a lucky and protective object. Yet while these data indicate that there is reason to believe my initial hypothesis is correct, I was unable to reliably verify or falsify my hypothesis using these data. Because many of the questions, including the questions concerning the possession of lucky and protective objects, required
‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers, I was unable to determine how respondents interpreted the terms ‘lucky’ and ‘protective.’ Thus although many respondents reported possessing lucky and protective objects, it was not always clear whether respondents thought these objects worked via supra-rational means. Additionally, 12.3% (n= 28) of the survey respondents self-identified as Wiccan or Pagan. Because Wiccans and Pagans make up only 0.002% of the population of Québec (Statistics Canada 2011), this group was clearly over-represented in the survey data.

Yet despite its failure as a reliable measure of the presence of supra-rational beliefs in Montréal, the survey did provide interesting and valuable insights concerning how those respondents who reported possessing lucky and protective objects conceptualize both the objects themselves and also their own beliefs in these objects’ efficacy. Several respondents opted to explain, qualify, justify, or minimize their belief in the efficacy of the object(s) they posses in a variety of ways that I explore in greater detail below. Although I did not ask respondents to qualify or comment on their belief in the efficacy of their objects in the survey, 14% (n= 32) provided explanations and justifications for their possession and use of lucky and protective objects in the open comments section at the end of the survey. That individuals would want to justify their belief in lucky and protective objects came as surprise and caused a shift in my overall focus as I became interested in developing theoretical frameworks to explain this
surprising eventuality. This shift in focus necessitated a shift from a deductive research design and methodology to an abductive one.

1.4.1 Abduction

Although the majority of qualitative empirical research is undertaken in deductive and inductive modes, the recent “abductive turn” (Flick 2013) has positioned abduction as a valid and productive approach to qualitative research design and analysis. Popularized by the American pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce, abduction involves developing likely or plausible explanations and is a particularly useful tool for theory creation. As Peirce succinctly argues, “abduction seeks a theory” (Peirce 1958 217-18), or as Timmermans and Tavory (2012) put it, “abductive analysis constitutes a qualitative data analysis approach aimed at theory construction” (169). Central to abductive approaches is a focus on surprising, unexpected, or mysterious findings that inspire or necessitate subsequent theorizing. In this way, abduction differs from inductive approaches that seek to allow theories to emerge from data (180) and also from deductive approaches that seek to confirm or falsify existing theories. In abductive analysis, the researcher engages instead in “an inferential creative process of producing new hypotheses and theories” (170).

In their book *Qualitative Research and Theory Development: Mystery as Method* (2011), Mats Alveson and Dan Kärreman provide an overview of the
abductive approach to qualitative research and also offer practical advice for the
development of abductive research plans. Alveson and Kärreman argue that the
abductive approach, or what they call the ‘mystery approach’ to qualitative
research, is informed by a social constructionist approach to both reality and also
to empirical research. As Alveson and Kärreman put it,

We construct rather than collect data. We do not discover
knowledge or theory and we do not believe that data can
be used as reliable informants for what is true or false.
Taking the construction metaphor seriously means that
the landscape and its mapping will always become
uncertain, precarious, and metaphorical (24-5).

Not only are data constructed but so too are results and findings. Alveson and
Kärreman dismiss the idea that results passively ‘emerge’ from data or that
findings can be reliably tested as this obscures the creative and active presence
of the researcher, her goals, and her position within a particular research
community along with the theoretical and methodological commitments this
position implies (98). But also although data are created in abductive research;
they are not created in a theoretical vacuum. Indeed, theory plays an important
role in abductive research not only as the overall goal of abductive analysis and
research design but also as a means of guiding research design and data
creation.

While producing new theory is the goal of abductive research, abductive
analysis depends on the “scope and sophistication of the theoretical background
a researcher brings to research” (Timmermans and Tavory 2012, 173). This
theoretical background is necessary in order to ensure that the “anomalous and surprising empirical findings” (169) that fuel the abductive research process are actually anomalous and surprising and are not already explained or accounted for in other theoretical works. By placing theory as both the starting point and goal of empirical research, abductive research designs differ from inductive approaches that begin with data and analyze these with little or no recourse to existing theory. Likewise, although both deductive and abductive approaches to qualitative research begin with theory, abductive approaches differ from deductive ones in that they seek to explain anomalous data with reference to “multiple existing sociological theories” rather attempt to test or “fill the gaps” in a single theory or outlook (169).

This focus on theory generation, inference, and mystery along with abduction’s social constructionist epistemological agenda fits with this project’s overall goal and has effects both for how results are obtained and how these are assessed. As Alveson and Kärreman note, abductive approaches to empirical research are often processual and benefit from flexible research designs that allow researchers to shift their focus as research progresses (2011, 98). Additionally Alveson and Kärreman describe abductive approaches as involving a reflexive interplay between theory and empirical material in which empirical material is understood to be a “source of inspiration” and a “partner for critical dialogue” (14, italics in original). As Timmermans and Tavory put it, Abductive
research engages with empirical material through a “recursive process of double-fitting data and theories” (179).

According to this view, the data a researcher constructs through empirical research does not serve as a “validator of truth claims” (Alveson and Kärreman 2011, 119) or as a window into an objective reality from which theory can eventually emerge but is used instead in an illustrative way and to anchor theoretical innovation (105). This use of empirical material as an anchor for ideas rather than a test-case for theory or as the ground from which theory eventually springs privileges “intuition, curiosity, problematization, openness, and creativity” over “rationality, control, theory-data separation, and abstraction” (112). The goal of abductive qualitative research is therefore not to produce a reliable or valid representation of some aspect of objective reality but rather to construct data in such a way so as to anchor novel theorization in some aspect of social reality, which is always constructed both by research participants and by the researcher. Rather than focus on validity, abductive research focuses on plausibility. Rather than attempt to prove or disprove a theoretical claim, abductive research attempts to generate productive theoretical insights by grounding these in some aspect of our (constructed) social reality.

The second phase of my research is informed by abductive research design and analysis. I conducted interviews in order to further investigate how individuals conceptualize their belief (or half-belief) in lucky and protective objects with the aim of generating theoretical frameworks to explain the tendency to
qualify or justify this belief indicated in responses to the online survey and in subsequent interviews. In explaining this tendency I draw on Charles Taylor's (2007) concept of ‘disciplines of disenchantment’ (28) and develop two additional metaphors: *everyday enchantment*, which refers to the presence of enchantment (i.e. supra-rational beliefs) in everyday life and outside of organized religious or occult practices, and *secular magic*, which refers to the presence of suprarational beliefs in individuals who self-identify as non-religious, atheists, or secular.

1.5. Organization

This thesis is divided into six chapters. In chapter two I draw on scholarly work on modernity, religion in modernity, and imaginaries to develop the theoretical background that informs this thesis, the fieldwork I conducted in Montréal, and the three theoretical frameworks I develop in chapter five. I argue that dominant ideas about modernity constitute a modern imaginary that has effects for both scholarship and for individuals who entertain supra-rational beliefs and possess and use lucky and protective objects. In chapter three I ground the larger concept of the modern imaginary in scholarly and popular conceptualizations of modernity and religion in Québec and Montréal and provide an overview of the ways the modern imaginary has been refracted in this particular context. In Chapter four I present the findings of empirical qualitative
research I conducted in Montréal focusing on the ways supra-rational beliefs tend to be rationalized and minimized by individuals who entertain these beliefs along with the ways lucky and protective objects and the supra-rational beliefs these entail problematize the religion/secular binary on which the modern imaginary relies. In Chapter five I develop three theoretical frameworks for studying modern enchantment and anchor these frameworks in the empirical material presented in chapter four. I argue that contemporary scholarship on religion and spirituality in modernity fails to account for the ways enchantment (i.e. supra-rational beliefs) are often linked to everyday realities; that contemporary work on re-enchantment fails to account for partial belief in supra-rational forces, playful excursions into supra-rational realities, and the ways individuals who self-identify as non-religious or secular sometimes entertain and rationalize supra-rational beliefs; and finally I describe how contemporary disciplines of disenchantment render supra-rational beliefs invisible to scholars and more generally. In the sixth and final chapter I argue that contemporary scholarship on religion, spirituality, and enchantment must dissolve the religion/secular binary; focus on half-belief and play; and discard disenchantment as a descriptor of modernity as it fails to account for the complex lived realities of individuals and constitutes a normative program for how modernity ought to be rather than a neutral description of modernity. I conclude by arguing that a renewed appreciation for enchantment holds promise not only for accurate scholarly portrayals of religion, spirituality, and enchantment in
modernity but also for encouraging subjunctive ‘what-if’ and ‘if-only’ registers that may support contemporary projects for meaningful social change.
Chapter 2: The Modern Imaginary

In this chapter I provide an overview of dominant conceptualizations of modernity and frame these as constituting a coherent though contested modern imaginary. I draw on scholarly work on modernity, religion in modernity, and social imaginaries in order to set out and explain the theoretical framework that underlies this project.

According to the modern imaginary I describe, supra-rational beliefs should be practically non-existent in a modern, urban, secular, and disenchanted locations. The apparent existence of these beliefs in Montréal not only calls these dominant conceptualizations of modernity into question but also provides a starting point and framework for new theorization. The modern imaginary thus offers an explanation for why supra-rational beliefs are often assumed to have been overcome through the processes of modernization; relegated to the private sphere by the processes of secularization and secularism; and diminished by increased rationalization and disenchantment and therefore rendered largely invisible to contemporary scholarship. At the same time, the modern imaginary offers a framework for understanding why individuals who engage in supra-rational beliefs sometimes minimize and justify these beliefs and provides a starting point for new theoretical frameworks to explain this. This chapter explores the theoretical background that renders both the persistence of supra-rational beliefs in modern, secular, and urban contexts invisible and also the tendency to justify and explain these beliefs as surprising and in need of
2.1. Modern Times

The word ‘modernity’ typically makes a temporal distinction between the present and the past. Bruno Latour (1993), for instance, notes that while modernity comes in as many versions as there are thinkers, “all its definitions point, in one way or another, to the passage of time” (10). More specifically, for Latour, the adjective ‘modern’ “designates a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture, a revolution in time” (10). This idea that modernity constitutes a rupture in time is fairly common. It is present, for instance, in Charles Taylor’s description of modernity as “unprecedented” (2002, 91) and also in Peter Berger’s description of modernity as “a cataclysmic and unprecedented event in human history” (1979, 2). Yet this common distinction has consequences. Importantly, this metaphor of ‘rupture’ creates a clear dichotomy between modern societies and earlier societal forms that are variously called premodern, nonmodern, primitive, or traditional (Venn and Featherstone 2006, 549). In this view, modernity depends upon a movement in time away from traditional ways of life and toward new and apparently unprecedented ways of living that are distinctly modern, which is to say untraditional. Importantly, this temporal distinction is complicated by the fact that apparently ‘primitive’ or ‘early’ societal forms are contemporaneous with modern ones. In other words, although modernity distinguishes between periods of time, it also distinguishes between groups and
social arrangements that co-exist in a single time period marking some as modern (advanced) and others as non-modern (backward) (Chakrabarty 2011, 663).

This strict modern/traditional dichotomy has been widely criticized in recent years. Mary Douglas (1988), for instance, dismisses the notion that premoderns are fundamentally different from modern individuals as having been “constructed to flatter prejudged ideas” (481). Likewise, Peter Berger (1979) is careful to point out that the modern situation, while perhaps unprecedented and cataclysmic, is nevertheless not “altogether unheard-of in some of its characteristics” (3). Still, the basic logic behind the modern/premodern dichotomy seems inevitable. As Dipesh Chakrabarty (2002) notes, “if modernity is to be a definable, delimited concept, we must identify some people or practices or concepts as nonmodem” (xix, italics in original).

But if modernity represents a rupture in time, when did this rupture occur? Unsurprisingly perhaps there is considerable disagreement as to when modernity began in earnest, though most accounts of modernity make some reference to the Enlightenment (Chakrabarty 2002), the Scientific Revolution (Gaukroger 2005), the Protestant Reformation (Walsham 2008), or the Industrial Revolution (Wagner 2012) as key ‘moments’ responsible for the onset of modernity. I have placed the word ‘moments’ between inverted commas to emphasize the somewhat obvious fact that the Enlightenment, Scientific Revolution, and Reformation, like modernity, are not discrete events-in-time but refer instead to
broad developments that extend in time. Thus to claim that modernity is the largely the result of the Protestant Reformation is not to claim that modernity began October 31, 1517 at the precise moment that Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses on the door of the church in Wittenburg or that this pivotal moment separates the premodern world (October 30, 1517 and earlier) from the modern world (Nov 1, 1517 and onward). Anthony Giddens (1990) provides a typically broad definition of modernity, therefore, when he claims that modernity “refers to modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards…” (1).

But if modernity tends to be located in time, however inexact this location may be, it has also been described as constituting a particular kind of orientation toward time as well. Once again, this view of modernity depends upon a clear dichotomy between the past and the present/future. In his description of ‘entangled modernities,’ for instance, Therborn Göran (2003), describes modernity as involving a conception of time that looks forward to the future, which is viewed as being open and novel, and that interprets the past “as something to leave behind or as a heap of ruins, pieces of which might be used for building a new future” (294). For Gören, temporality is essential for modernity because modernity tends to be conceived by contrasting an imagined past with an imagined future (298). One strength of this approach is that it uncouples modernity from any particular historical period. Another is that it captures to some extent the ways the word ‘modern’ tends to be contrasted against an imagined
torpid or static past to signify development, novelty, and progress. Indeed, as Dipesh Chakrabarty notes, modernity has largely been seen as being “coeval with the idea of progress” (2002, xix). I will return to this idea of modernity as progress in my discussion of both secularization and disenchantment below.

Yet, somewhat ironically perhaps, modernity is more often described in spatial terms than in temporal ones. Below I describe both where modernity tends to be located in the geographical sense as well as some of the particular spatial arrangements that tend to be held up as being characteristically modern.

2.2. Modern Places, Modern Spaces

Giddens’ definition of modernity, which I have described as typical, not only describes when modernity began to emerge, it also describes where modernity emerged: in this case, Western Europe. This practice of associating modernity with a specific set of geographical locations has, until very recently, been widespread. In his influential book, Religion in the Modern World (1996), for instance, Steve Bruce describes the modern world as made up of the “urban industrial societies of Western Europe, North America, and Australasia” (25). Yet this practice of viewing ‘the West’ as synonymous with modernity has historical precedents as well. As S.N. Eisenstadt (2000) notes, for instance, the classic sociological analyses of Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber all assumed, even if only implicitly, that the cultural program of modernity began in
Europe – even if this cultural program was eventually exported elsewhere (1). According to this view, rather than being contrasted against a premodern past, modernity is contrasted against a traditional, nonmodern, and geographically distant other. Dibazar et. al. (2013) comment on this dual positioning of modernity in both time and space noting that in academic, popular, artistic, and political discourses, the concept of modernity has reflected a spatio-temporal bias that cuts the world into “different spaces and times: into the first and the third, the modern and developing” (646).

This practice of locating modernity in the West has been widely criticized by postcolonial critics and others (cf. Asad 2003; Chidester 1996; Inden 1990; Said 1979). Richard Wolin (2011), for instance, who considers ‘modernity’ a contested historiographical concept, describes how “modernity has often been used as a transparent normative justification for the West’s predatory and imperious mission civilisatrice” (741, italics in original). What emerges, then, is not merely a neutral West/East distinction, but rather a host of value-laden binary distinctions including civilized/uncivilized, rational/emotional, emancipated/suppressed, etc. (Dibazar et. al. 2013, 648). According to these binary formulations, modernity comes to be associated with the West not only because a particular constellation of developments (the Enlightenment, the Scientific Revolution, etc.,) originated there, but because the West is inherently civilized, rational, and modern, while the East, broadly conceived, is inherently uncivilized, irrational, and unmodern. In this view, Western modernity is not
merely one possible societal future: it is the only valid or desirable societal future. Modernity is therefore not only the potential universal endpoint for all societies but is itself a universalizing force.

But this once-prevalent conception of the world, which saw Western models of modernity as not only the earliest but as also the only authentic models of modernity, has also been criticized. S.N. Eisenstadt (2000), for instance, developed his concept of ‘multiple modernities’ in an effort to correct this Western-centered understanding of modernity. Dismissing the once-dominant view that Western modernity is the only authentic form of modernity, Eisenstadt focuses instead on the “actual developments in modernizing societies” rather than the “homogenizing and hegemonic assumptions of this Western program of modernity” (1, my emphasis). Yet while Eisenstadt’s critique calls the historical link between modernity and ‘the West’ into question, it also speaks to just how influential, pervasive, and enduring this link has been. That critiques such as his are necessary at all indicates the extent to which modernity’s association with the West continues to inform dominant conceptualizations of modernity.

Although the West is often viewed as quintessentially modern, not all sections of Western society receive this designation in equal measure. Or to put this another way, just as some geographical regions (the West/Developed World) have been viewed as being more modern that others (The East/The Third World), certain portions of the developed Western world, namely cities, have been deemed more modern than other more rural areas. As Gyan Prakash argues in
The Spaces of the Modern City (2008), “if modernity is a Faustian bargain to unleash human potential and subdue nature to culture, then modern cities are its most forceful and enduring expressions” (1).

This explicit link between modernity and cities dates back to at least the late nineteenth century and the founding fathers of urban studies who, according to Nigel Thrift (1997) “depicted the city as a mirror of modernity” (141). In part, cities are viewed as modern because of the technologies and complex infrastructures required for their existence. But the modern city also represents innovation and social vitality as well (Robinson 2004) – especially when contrasted against small-scale and tradition-bound rural areas (Thrift 1997). Once again modernity depends on a strict binary division between the (modern) urban and the (backward, nonmodern) rural. Or as Justin Wilford (2010) puts it, in modernity “individuals, organizations, and communities seem only to exist in one of two differentiated spatial zones: urban or rural. These designations almost serve as proxies for levels of modernization…” (331).

Yet this urban/rural binary does not supersede the Western/Eastern binary discussed above. As J. Robinson (2004) notes, “the association of the western city with modernity left cities in other places in a troubled relationship to the modern” (17). This explains perhaps why two different terms exist to describe the academic study of urban areas. If an urban area is located in the West, broadly understood, then it tends to be studied under the aegis of urban theory, if it is not located in the West, it tends to be approached instead through the lens of
‘development studies’ (17). Thus as Dibazar et al. (2013) argue, the concept of urban modernity creates a hierarchy based on Western standards in which some cities are deemed properly modern while others are perceived to be “in need of development” (648).

Yet if Prakash is correct in describing modernity as involving efforts to “unleash human potential and subdue nature to culture,” then cities are deemed modern not only in contrast to rural areas but also in contrast to ‘nature’ writ large. In part this distinction between the city and ‘nature’ draws on earlier conceptions medieval cities that “stood out against the landscape walled and compact, surrounded by a hinterland” (Çinar and Bender 2007, xi). Yet even now when cities sprawl endlessly outward, this notion that the city represents ‘civilization’ in contrast to ‘raw nature’ persists. Perhaps this basic distinction is one element of what Alison Stone (2006) describes as the “familiar narrative” concerning the emergence of modernity that describes a process in which nature, once mysterious and dreadful, becomes wholly accessible to our understanding and manipulation (231). For if, in the metanarrative of modernity, nature represents a dangerous or chaotic force that must be subdued and rural areas represents stolid tradition, then the city comes to represent civilization, organization, and control. Which is not to say that cities cannot be chaotic in their own right. In fact, the chaos of cities has been thought to produce its own particular emotional and affective states.
2.2.1. Modern Spatiality

I have argued that the idea of modernity involves distinctions between ‘then and now’ and also between ‘here and there’ and that these binaries imply constitutive others: the primitive, the traditional, the ‘Oriental’, the rural, the natural. But modernity also involves distinctions between certain kinds of spatial arrangements as well. So far I have been describing modernity in terms of its location both temporally and spatially. I now want to make a few brief distinctions before expanding my analysis to modern space/spaces.

First some clarifications concerning terminology: I use the term ‘location(s)’ to describe “situated positions vis-à-vis others” as in East as contrasted against West or Montreal as separate and distinct from Toronto (Knott 2005, 29). I use the term ‘spatial arrangements’ to refer instead to several different things including the ways individuals imagine separate locations in relation to one another (e.g. England as being somehow ‘closer’ [in values, norms, etc.] to Canada than Mexico); the differences individuals imagine between place on the one hand, and space on the other (e.g. place as bounded, space as empty); and finally the ways individuals imagine their own and others’ relationships with locations, places, spaces, and space.

According to both Edward Casey (1997) and Doreen Massey (2005), modernity entails distinctions between place on the one hand and space on the other. Yet while Casey views this modern distinction as involving the dissolution
of parochial and limited place into unlimited space (288), Massey argues instead that modernity involves a particular conceptualization of space in which space is made up of discrete places. As Massey puts it, within the history of modernity “places came to be seen as bounded, with their own internally generated authenticities” (64). In part, this view of space/place reflects modern advances in communication technologies (i.e. telegraph, telephone, internet) and transportation technologies (i.e. air and space travel) that acted to both shrink distances and emphasize differences between far-flung locations. Yet Massey also describes a movement away from this view of space as being “divided-up and bounded” and toward a view of space as “barrier-less and open” (84). Massey connects this more ‘open’ view of space to modern processes of globalization in which even far-flung places begin to share common features and, importantly, are seen to possess “the same trajectory as the West” (82). The idea that individual places have their own authentic cores, and that even geographically distant locations may share common trajectories are all important elements of the modern imaginary. I will return to these distinctions below when I describe Montréal as a secular and disenchanted modern place.

But while modern spatiality involves a basic distinction between place and space it also involves distinctions between different kinds of places and spaces. In other words, modern spaces and places are differentiated. Writing about the spatial effects of secularization, for instance, Justin Wilford describes modern space as “fragmented space” (329). Yet while the fragmentation of modern
spaces and places into ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ is a central feature of modernity, modern spaces and places are also differentiated according to other important categories as well. I have already argued that modern places are differentiated from one another according to binaries such as West/East, developed/developing, and urban/rural, but other binaries including work/home and public/private are also operative. In part this differentiation is a result of broader processes of institutional differentiation in which, for instance, an individual’s principal economic activity ceased to be performed in or around the home and was instead performed in a specialized location (i.e. workshop, factory, office) set apart for this purpose. According to Nicos Mouzelis (2012), it is precisely this differentiation of separate institutional spheres that renders modernity unique in the first place (207). Of course this distinction between work on the one hand and home on the other also contributed to a distinction between public and private spheres more generally. Whereas certain activities (work, for instance) were seen to take place in the company of others and outside of the home, other activities were deemed private. As I argue below, religious beliefs and practices in particular have largely been cast as private affairs in modernity while a default secular outlook has come to dominate the public sphere.

2.3. Modern Emotions / Modern Affects

In addition to particular times, locations, places, and spaces being viewed as quintessentially modern, certain emotional realities and affective states are
often viewed as being quintessentially modern as well. Before describing these apparently modern emotions and affects, I want once again to make a few important clarifications concerning my use of these two terms. As Ann Pellegrini and Jasbir Puar (2009) note, the terms affect and emotion are closely related; so much so in fact, that ‘affect’ is sometimes used interchangeably with other related terms including ‘emotion,’ ‘feeling,’ and ‘sensation’ (35-36). Additionally, both emotion and affect are employed in different ways by scholars working in separate fields from geography, to psychology, to evolutionary biology.

The multiple interpretations of emotion and affect in different fields is complicated by the fact that the field of affect studies is not organized around any single approach or orientation. In their introduction to the *Affect Theory Reader* (2010), for instance, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth list eight different overlapping but distinct approaches or ‘orientations’ that broadly inform affect theory. Nigel Thrift (2004), for his part, presents only four different if overlapping approaches to the term. Given the wide variety of approaches to ‘affect’ available, I am unable to provide an overview of affect theory more generally. For one thing, such an enterprise would require far more space than I have at my disposal; and yet according to Gregg and Seigworth, any attempt to provide a complete outline or overview of affect theory is necessarily misguided since there is not, and should never be in their view, any single generalizable theory of affect (3).
Yet despite the wide variety of approaches to the terms ‘emotion’ and ‘affect’ within affect theory and despite affect theory’s own multiplicity, these terms do tend to be used to refer to different kinds of human experience. In what follows I highlight three distinctions in particular and describe differences between where emotions and affects ‘reside;’ how they are perceived or experienced; and how they are produced, managed, or manipulated.

2.3.1. Individual / Collective

I use the term ‘emotion(s)’ to refer to particular feelings as particular individuals experience them. In contrast to this individual-centered approach, I will use ‘affect’ to refer instead to broad social trends and to feelings and orientations that are typically shared among members or larger groups. Nigel Thrift (2004) also makes this distinction, noting that whereas ‘emotion’ refers to individual feelings, affect refers instead to “broad tendencies and lines of force” (59). In this sense the term affect refers to what Raymond Williams (1977) and more recently Ben Anderson (2014) have called “structures of feeling.” Anderson offers a detailed description of structures of feeling noting, First, a structure of feeling is the affective quality that is common across otherwise disparate practices, events or processes. By which I mean that a structure of feeling is one way in which a dispersed collective is gathered and comes to have some form of coherence, if only a temporary one. Second, a structure of feeling gives a kind of unity to a multiplicity through that characteristic affective quality that cuts across, draws together, and
holds together disparate practices, events, or situations (119, italics in original).

Thus for Anderson, a structure of feeling, which he calls a “collective dispositional relation to the world” (121), brings together otherwise disparate individuals or groups based on their shared affective response. Importantly, for Anderson, this bringing together may be temporary and need not be shared by among individuals in what might otherwise be viewed as discrete societal groupings (religions, polities, etc.).

Anderson uses the example of precarity as affect to illustrate this point. While precarity, or the sensation that one is unable to access and maintain ‘the good life’ may be a shared affective response to the pressures of contemporary neoliberal society, the experience of precarity as affect is something that unites otherwise disparate social groupings. In Cruel Optimism (2011), Lauren Berlant, also views precarity in terms of modern affect, noting that precarity is felt by members of a wide range of populations from “workers in regimes of immaterial labor and the historical working class to the global managerial class; neobohemians who go to university, live off part-time or temporary jobs, and sometimes the dole while making art and, well, everyone whose bodies and lives are saturated by capitalist forces and rhythms” (192). Berlant uses the term ‘precariat’ to group together members from these otherwise very different social groups. Thus for Berlant, the collectivity of affect groups individuals together from among many different levels of a given society based on their shared experience
of a given affect. Following Anderson and Berlant, I use affect to describe a shared or common experience that is not only felt by members of a single class or society, but that unites disparate classes and societies by virtue of their shared affective experiences.

2.3.2. Thought / Felt

I also distinguish between the different ways emotions and affects are perceived or experienced: while emotions are experienced at least in part by the intellect, which is to say as conscious thoughts or sensations, affects manifest instead as unconscious tendencies or bodily realities. Or as Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jen Halley put it in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (2007), “affectivity [is] a substrate of potential bodily responses, often autonomic responses, in excess of consciousness” (2). Thus whereas a particular emotion exists, at least in part, as a conscious sensation (e.g. anger), affect tends create effects in the body rather than in the intellect. As Steve Pile (2010) puts it, affect is the “unthought,” and represents the non-cognitive bodily capacity to be affected and to affect (12). Of course this is not to say that emotions are without bodily effects. An individual who is consciously in love, for instance, may still experience a quickened heart rate when thinking about her or his romantic interest. The point is that affect moves beyond an intellectual appreciation of an emotional state and influences bodily and felt realities as well. This distinction is an important one since, as I argue below, disenchantment in the Weberian sense
can be productively viewed as an affective rather than an intellectual or emotional state.

2.3.3. Inspiration / Coercion

One final distinction between emotion and affect involves what Nigel Thrift (2004) refers to as the politics of affect. Because affects can be shared by whole societies and because they are unconscious bodily responses, affects can also be engineered by a variety of social actors. Thrift, who is particularly interested in the spatial politics of affect, describes how monumental architecture, for instance, can help to create particular affects in a given society and how military drills work to encourage certain affective states while discouraging others. Anderson describes this view as “affect as object-target” noting, “affects are objects of knowledge, targets of intervention, and may be the means of intervening in life” (24). Anderson discusses the use of various branded scents in upscale commercial venues as an example of affect as object-target. Here Anderson takes a more individual-centered approach describing the ways particular affective states (in this case those that support consumption) are targeted and consciously manipulated for maximum effect and profit.

Of course emotions can be manipulated as well and certain cultural artifacts (e.g. horror movies) are designed to produce particular emotional states (e.g. fear). The difference is that while cultural artifacts are designed to produce
particular emotions in individuals, cultural arrangements can be engineered to produce unconscious affective states in whole societies. To put this another way, while emotions are sometimes manipulated so as to produce moments of conscious fear, populations may also be manipulated to produce whole cultures of fear for particular political or militaristic ends (cf. Furedi 1997). Thus affects have real consequences in the world. Or as Anderson puts it, affects “are as real as the infrastructures, classes, Gods, and other social factors and forces that populate life” (77). As I argue below, the affective state of disenchantment generates particular outcomes that support governmental and academic discourse surrounding the place of religion in liberal democratic society.

2.3.4. Modern Emotional States: Novelty and Desire

Drawing on Gören’s (2003) concept of entangled modernities, I described modernity as involving a particular time-orientation that equates modernity with progress and which privileges all that is new. In this sense, modernity entails emotional states linked to excitement about new trends and developments. Robinson (2004), for instance, lists the “valorisation and celebration of innovation and novelty” as one of urban modernity’s defining characteristics (17).

But innovation and novelty are also linked to another emotional state: desire – whether this be desire to acquire the latest fashion or to participate in the latest development or trend. These twin emotional states, excitement concerning
novelty and desire for novel things, finds its most iconic expression in the particularly modern phenomenon of consumerism which, according to the editors of *Consuming Modernity* (2013), can be considered a “quintessentially modern activity” (Krasnick and Mulleck, 4). But even though consumerism itself might better be qualified as an affective rather than emotional state, the emotions that consumerism involves can be considered quintessentially modern as well. Importantly, these emotional states have also been seen to threaten or disrupt “the emotional life that sustains religion” (Turner 2008, 136). According to this view, excitement for new religious fads and interest in consuming worldly religious paraphernalia are positioned as being somehow contrary to authentic religious attitudes. Krasnick and Mulleck agree with this general diagnosis when they imagine consumer culture facilitated by advertising as a secular replacement for religious experiences facilitated by churches (4). I explore the imagined threat that novelty and desire pose for religion in greater detail below in my discussion of secularization as religious change.

2.3.5. Modern Affective States: Disenchantment and Indifference

But while modernity has been tied to apparently positive emotions, it has also been linked to negative emotional and affective states as well – what Charles Taylor (1991) has referred to as the malaise of modernity. Two such negative affective states are particularly important for this project: disenchantment and indifference.
Modernity has often been linked with increasing rationality (cf. Weber 1917; Taylor 1991, 2007). While modern rationalization involves several different processes, one key factor is the apparent triumph of the intellect as well as a growing preference for scientific explanations over emotional, traditionally religious, mythological, magical, or enchanted ones. As Stephen Gaukroger (2005) puts it, the gradual assimilation of all cognitive values to scientific ones is “tied up in a fundamental fashion with the self-image of modernity” (1). Or as Peter Wagner writes in *Modernity: Understanding the Present* (2012), “modernity is the belief... in the human capacity to reason, combined with the intelligibility of the world, that is, its amenability to human reason” (4). But this modern triumph of scientific rationality, framed by Max Weber as constituting the disenchantment of the world, produces its own particular affective results. The affective state of disenchantment, while largely an unconscious orientation to the world and therefore not an emotional state in itself, nevertheless acts to preclude or discourage certain emotional responses including mystery, wonder, and awe. Precisely because a disenchanted world is one in which everything can be explained by human reason, there is little room left for enduring mystery. In this view, mysteries are always only temporary and wonders always merely subjective. As I argue below, the affective state of disenchantment – or even the view that disenchantment is natural or desirable – can work to limit an individual's access to or enjoyment of otherwise wondrous, mysterious, or magical experiences.
Indifference is another affective state that tends to be associated with modernity and especially with modern cities. As Steve Pile (2005) puts it,

> What makes a city a city is not only skyscrapers or the shops or the communication networks, but also that the people in such places are forced to behave in urban ways. For some, this involves an ever-increasing pace of life, the necessity of blocking out most of what goes in cities, and a mental attitude based on calculation, rationality, and abstract thought. In many ways this implies that city dwellers are ‘locked down’ emotionally: reserved, detached, distant, calculating” (1, italics in original).

Pile’s characterization of modern cities refers both to the idea of rational calculation (disenchantment) but also to the necessity of blocking out stimuli and the sense of detachment this engenders. It is precisely this cultivated distance or detachment in response to modern (urban) life that I want to describe as constituting the affective state of indifference. Pile bases this diagnosis of modern urban consciousness as detached on the influential work of Georg Simmel, considered by some to be a “sociologist of modernity” (Frisby 1985; Goodstein 2005).

While Simmel wrote on many topics, one of his most enduring works is *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903) in which he describes how urban individuals cope with the strains of city life. Central to Simmel’s argument is his notion of the blasé attitude. As Simmel puts it, “there is perhaps no psychic phenomenon which has been so unconditionally reserved to the metropolis as has the blasé attitude” (178). For Simmel, this particular attitude is necessary for
psychic survival in the city. Faced with the “intensification of nervous stimulation” that city life provides, the modern individual (or metropolitan type of man in Simmel’s formulation) must develop “an organ protecting him against the threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment,” namely an attitude of reserve and detachment (175-6). As was the case with disenchantment as an affective state, indifference as affect works to limit the kinds of experiences that are available to modern individuals. According to Simmel, for instance, “[objects] appear to the blasé person in an evenly flat and gray tone; no one object deserves preference over any other” (178). Importantly, Simmel explains that modern blasé individuals do in fact value objects but that this valuation tends to be conceived in purely monetary terms and does not, therefore, refer to the objects’ intrinsic value. As I argue below, the affective state of indifference – or even the view that indifference is natural or desirable – is often interpreted as limiting an individual’s appreciation of or ability to forge meaningful connections and attachments to particular kinds of experiences and objects.

2.4. Secular, Secularization, Secularism(s), Secularity

Modernity also carries with it certain commonly held expectations about the fate of religion; its proper place in the public sphere; how it should (or should not) influence politics; where it should (or should not) be practiced; how religious individuals choose among religious options; and finally which kinds of interactions
with supra-rational realities constitute religion and which constitute superstition, magic, or nonsense. In what follows I focus on two important and apparently modern developments: secularization and disenchantment. The adjective ‘secular’ can be used to describe many different things. So too can the nouns ‘secularization,’ ‘secularism,’ and ‘secularity.’ But common to all these words is an implicit connection to the concept ‘religion.’ To oversimplify things, these words all point away from religion in different ways. If something is secular then it is not religious. If something is undergoing a process of secularization then it is becoming less religious. In what follows I examine each of these terms before providing an overview of the ways modernity tends to be associated with the secular as well as with increased secularization, secularism, and secularity.

2.4.1. Secular

The root of the word secular (and also of secularization etc.) is the Latin word *saeculum*, which refers to a large expanse of time and has more recently come to mean, in many modern languages, a period of one hundred years or a century (in French *siècle*, for example). But the more common meaning of the word secular as ‘not religion’ that I mentioned above traces its origins to a distinction in Christianity between ordinary time, which can be measured in ages, and higher time, which cannot be measured in these terms (Taylor 2007, 265). Thus, whereas secular time is mundane, earthly, and of this world, higher time
represents instead ‘godly’ time or eternity and is therefore beyond human comprehension. As such, *saeculum* also denotes worldly affairs more generally. The Christian distinction between regular clergy, who are members of a particular religious order, are bound by its rules, and who live apart from the world in monasteries, and secular clergy who remain ‘in the world’ (“dans le siècle”) is the most common example of this expanded definition. Thus before ‘secular’ came to mean ‘other than religious,’ it was a term deployed by religious authorities to distinguish between two different kinds of religious ways of interacting with the world.

Eventually the term began to be used to distinguish between religious and non-religious (secular) persons who were not only outside the bounds of organized religious communities but were also outside the bounds of religious life entirely, as when the House of Lords in England distinguished between spiritual lords (Bishops) and temporal or lay ones. The term also came to be used to distinguish between religious and non-religious (i.e. secular) authorities as well, as when heretics were remanded to the secular arm (i.e. the State) for punishment (265). These kinds of religious/not-religious distinctions eventually led to the more common religious/secular distinction we have today in which certain organizations, persons, institutions, buildings, activities, objects, and ideas are understood to be religious while all others are understood to be not religious, which is to say secular. Although there is sometimes considerable disagreement as to just which organizations, persons, etc., are religious and
which are not, the notion that the world can be divided neatly into religious and secular spheres remains pervasive and relatively uncontroversial.

Not only is the secular/religious binary uncontroversial, in many ways this distinction is central to our understanding of modernity. In their edited volume Secularisms (2008), for instance, Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini explore “the way the religious and the secular have been constituted in relation to in modernity and indeed as modernity” (1, italics in original). In part, this distinction is both a cause and an effect of larger processes of differentiation mentioned above that saw the development of separate institutional spheres. Thus whereas even secular rulers were once legitimated by the divine right of kingship, eventually political rule would become largely divorced from religious authorization to exist as a separate (secular) sphere. Similarly, whereas the church once oversaw and maintained a wide variety of social services (education, health care, etc.), these social services would become separated from religious institutions to be managed by separate (secular) institutional frameworks. But while modern institutions (even religious ones) depend upon this basic distinction, modernity has become associated not only with this basic dichotomy between religious and secular spheres but also with an observed and anticipated movement away from the religious and toward the secular. This movement constitutes secularization.
2.4.2. Secularization

Although the term secularization can be used in a limited sense to describe a particular historical event (e.g. the seizure of particular church property by government authorities), it tends instead to be used more broadly to refer to a series of related, interconnected, and much-debated changes that religion has apparently undergone in the wake of modernization. Understood in this broad sense, secularization is a term used by social scientists to describe the processes that have caused religion either to disappear from the modern world or else to change radically as a result of modernization. According to José Casanova, secularization is not only a term, but rather the term for describing religion’s fate in modernity. As Casanova puts it, “secularization has been the main theoretical and analytical framework through which the social sciences have viewed the relationship of religion and modernity” (1994, 211). Casanova’s use of the word ‘framework’ to describe secularization is apt. For scholars have put forward many competing interpretations of this apparently distinctly modern trend. While most interpretations share a basic suspicion that religion is disappearing from the world, there is considerable disagreement concerning why this is the case and also how and to what extent this is happening. As Steve Bruce, who has written extensively on religion in the modern world notes, “there is no one secularization theory. Rather there are clusters of descriptions and explanations that cohere reasonably well” (2002, 2). The coherence of secularization theories or of the ‘secularization paradigm’ (Bruce 2011,
Tschannen 1991) depends upon the basic insight that changes in modern individuals, institutions, and society have all displaced religion from the centre of human life. Or to return to Steve Bruce, “the basic proposition [of secularization] is that modernization creates problems for religion” (2002, 2).

Bryan Wilson (1982) provides a comprehensive list of the kinds of changes that the term secularization attempts to describe. According to Wilson,

Secularization relates to the diminution in the social significance of religion. Its application covers such things as, the sequestration by political powers of the property and facilities of religious agencies; the shift from religious to secular control of various of the erstwhile activities and functions of religion; the decline in the proportion of their time, energy, and resources which men devote to super-empirical concerns; the decay of religious institutions; the supplanting, in matters of behaviour, of religious precepts by demands that accord with strictly technical criteria; and the general replacement of a specifically religious consciousness (which might range from dependence on charms, rites, spells, or prayers, to a broadly spiritually-inspired ethical concern) by an empirical, rational, instrumental orientation; the abandonment of mythical, poetic, and artistic interpretations of nature and society in favour of matter-of-fact descriptions, and, with it, the rigorous separation of evaluative and emotive dispositions from cognitive and positivistic orientation (149).

While there is disagreement about the nature, scope, and cause of these modern changes, most secularization theories agree on a core list of modern developments that are to blame for religion’s declining social importance as encapsulated by Wilson above. These lists typically include differentiation, rationalization, pluralization, and privatization as key modern secularizing
developments (Tschannen, 1991, Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008). Before continuing my account of secularization I want to briefly unpack each of these developments.

The term differentiation is variously used to describe the differentiation of social spheres (religious vs. secular, private vs. public, home vs. work) and also the differentiation of institutions in terms of their social functions. Whereas single institutions (i.e. the Catholic Church in Mediaeval Europe) once served a large number of functions in society (e.g. education, health care), in modernity institutions have been differentiated according to their functions with churches serving exclusively religious ones (Bruce 2011, 30). Importantly, although religious institutions continue to engage in social work (e.g. charity), differentiation often frames these activities as religious incursions into secular dimensions of social life rather than as intrinsically religious endeavours.

In part, differentiation is a result of rationalization or the process whereby an individual “learns to use rigorous cause-and-effect thinking” (Wilson 1982, 43). Growing instrumental rationality, which tends to be associated with modern technological developments, is seen to cause social systems to become organized in rational, bureaucratic, and highly technical ways. This process lends itself to differentiation much in the same way that modern factories employ the rational logic of the assembly line, with each component serving one and only one function in service of the larger whole. Rationalization also tends to be associated with disenchantment when enchantment is understood as involving a
loss of overarching meaning in contemporary society as close relationships are
replaced by cold bureaucratic ones; human spontaneity becomes managed by
fixed schedules; and poetic or mythical interpretations of the world are replaced
by technical explanations and scientific facts.

Pluralization refers simply to the multiplication of religious (and non-
religious) views and options in a given society. While pluralization is of course not
a uniquely modern phenomenon (a plurality of religious and non-religious
viewpoints existed in Antiquity, after all), the vastly increased ease of travel and
of communication in modernity has been viewed as the cause of particular and
important problems for religious outlooks. Peter Berger is perhaps the most
eloquent proponent of this claim. For Berger (1979), “modernity [is] a near
inconceivable expansion of the area of human life open to choices” (3) such that
modern individuals are not only able to choose from among a wide variety of
options, they are obligated to do so. This obligation (which Berger dubs the
universalization of heresy) results from the multiplication and fragilization of
plausibility structures in the wake of pluralization brought on my modernity (16).
Simply put, because premodern societies enjoyed a high degree of social
cohesion and seldom encountered vastly different viewpoints, social norms,
traditions, and explanations—including religious ones—remained highly
plausible. In the modern situation individuals face vastly different viewpoints on a
daily basis and as a result social norms, traditions, and explanations—including
religious ones—are no longer taken-for-granted. Having lost their taken-for-
granted status and facing competition from a plurality of other religious and secular views, particular religious outlooks become less plausible when faced with modern pluralization and cease therefore to structure society in any meaningful way. This in turn is thought to lead to an overall decline in the public presence of religion or secularization. Pluralization coupled with rationalization and privatization has also been interpreted to cause not only an overall decline in religious beliefs and practices but rather important changes that nevertheless somehow render these outlooks ‘less religious.’

Privatization describes religion’s apparent relegation to the interiors of churches or else to the interiors of individual minds. Thus privatization represents one of the key claims of the secularization paradigm: that modernity has caused a decline in religion’s social significance. In part, privatization tends to be explained with reference to secularism, which I explain below. But privatization also tends to be seen as an unavoidable consequence of rationalization, differentiation, and pluralization. According to this view, religion has retreated from the public sphere and from public consciousness precisely because modern individuals and social systems prefer to organize themselves according to rational principles rather than religious ones; because churches and other institutions have lost many of their former social functions; and because religions no longer enjoy their taken-for-granted status in any given society. Whereas in pre-modernity religion was at the centre of social life, religious institutions offered myriad services, and religious outlooks faced very little competition, in modernity
religion has ceased to influence public life in any significant way. For Wilson, privatization is nearly synonymous with secularization, which he defines as “that process by which religious institutions, actions, and consciousness, lose their social significance” (1982, 149).

Despite having been the primary lens through which social scientists understood religion in modernity since at least the 1960s, the secularization paradigm has been widely criticized. This critique has been launched on both empirical and ideological grounds. Empirically, scholars have claimed both that the premodern world was never all that religious to begin with and also that the modern world is far more religious than proponents of secularization are willing to admit. In his article “Secularization R.I.P.,” for instance, Rodney Stark (1999) uses historical evidence to show that Mediaeval England, far from representing a golden age for the social importance of religion, was never really all that religious. In making his case Stark cites literature bemoaning the fact that parish priests often lacked education in even the rudiments of Christianity (many did not even know the Lord’s Prayer) along with evidence showing that only a tiny percentage of the population could have fit inside the churches that were known to have existed. Critics such as Stark cast doubt on there ever having been a golden age of faith in Europe and view the evidence that secularization theorists put forward for religious decline as having actually been present in one form or another all along.
Looking at recent eruptions of religion into the public sphere (the Iranian Revolution, high levels of religious affiliation in the United States of America, the rise of Al-Qaeda and more recently of I.S.I.S. / Daesh) critics such as Jürgen Habermas (2008) have argued that the social significance of religion has not actually diminished in modernity and describe the modern world not as secular but rather as post-secular. In response to apparently renewed public presence of certain religious forms (Pentecostalism, so-called Jihadi movements, etc.) many erstwhile supporters of secularization have lately recanted. Peter Berger (2012), for instance has admitted that the secularization thesis has been “empirically falsified” and has described the modern world not as secularized but instead as “intensely religious” (313).

But proponents of the secularization paradigm have been quick to respond to these critiques. José Casanova (1994), for instance, upholds the basic tenets of secularization while agreeing that religion continues to loom large in the public sphere by arguing that we are witnessing the de-privatization of religion. Yet for Casanova the fact that this de-privatization is often deemed problematic actually supports the secularization paradigm’s claim that modernity has led to “the differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms” (211). Steve Bruce (2011), for his part, has used sociological research to offer detailed empirical rebuttals of anti-secularization critiques. In his recent book *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*, Bruce argues that despite potential de-privatization, levels of individual commitment to religion have
actually fallen throughout Europe and even in the United States of America, which was long held to be an ‘exceptional case.’

But whether or not the world was less religious than generally thought or whether the world is actually more religious than secularization theorists have claimed, the secularization paradigm has also been criticized on ideological grounds for being less a description of religion in the modern world than a program or prescription for what its fate ought to be. As David Martin (2014) argues, for instance, “secularization as a concept is not a neatly bounded entity suspended ahistorically in neutral ideological space but is bound up with... ideological notions of the direction of history and the teleology of progress...” (464). Or in J.C.D. Clark’s (2012) succinct formulation, “secularization is not a process, but a project” (190, my emphasis).

Still, only some aspects of the secularization paradigm have been criticized as constituting ideological programs. No one argues, for instance, that observations of increased pluralization in modernity are really statements that the modern world ought to be more plural. Likewise, while differentiation clearly privileges secular institutions over religious ones (at least in terms of their provision of non-religious services in society), no one claims that differentiation has not in fact taken place or that secularization theorists are ideologically committed to its taking place. Additionally, hardly anyone accuses secularization theorists of promoting, rather than simply analyzing, the apparently modern interest in increased rationality as a social goal.
Rather, it is privatization that has received the brunt of this ideological critique. David Martin (2014), for instance, describes privatization as “a political desideratum and an ideological prescription about what ought to happen and what must happen” (468). According to this view, describing modern religion as having been pushed to the private sphere not only ignores evidence that religion continues to exert considerable influence in the public sphere but also communicates the message that religion ought to become privatized. According to Steve Bruce (2011), this view that religion ought to be privatized is widely shared. Bruce explains that whereas pre-modern individuals likely made distinctions between true and false religion, modern persons are much more likely to “distinguish between privatized tolerant and liberal religion, which is fine, and any religion that makes demands on them and that insists on a public presence” (223). Whether or not religion has become privatized, this sentiment, shared by theorists and non-theorists alike, that religion ought to be a private affair and ought not to exert any public pressure remains pervasive.

2.4.3. Secularization as Religious Change

While secularization has most often been interpreted as entailing religion’s decline or eventual disappearance it has also been taken to refer to important religious changes. Basically, this position argues that although religious beliefs and practices remain relevant in the modern world, these beliefs and practices
have changed in such radical ways that they have nevertheless become ‘secularized.’ While there is, as always, disagreement concerning the exact nature of these supposed changes, scholars who describe religious change tend to describe religion as increasingly voluntary (Hunt 2005; Roof 1999; Stark et. al., 2004; Wuthnow 1998), syncretic (Dobbelaere 2000; Lambert 2000; Roof 1999), and commercialized or consumer-oriented (Hunt 2005; Turner 2012).

Increased voluntarism refers to the ways in which religious affiliation is apparently becoming a matter of personal choice rather than a taken-for-granted social fact in modernity. In other words, whereas religious affiliation was once a matter of course, it has apparently become just one possible option in modernity. The increasingly voluntary nature of modern religion tends to be presented as both a cause and as an effect of changes to modern religious institutions. Typically, those who focus on the growing voluntary nature of religion argue that owing to a decline in public presence of religion as a result of pluralization and privatization and existing in a contemporary situation marked by increased individualism, modern religious institutions no longer compel the kind of dedicated participation they once did. As a result, religion has changed in its encounter with modernity to involve casual and sometimes temporary voluntary associations of like-minded individuals. Rodney Stark et. al. (2004), have used the term ‘unchurched’ to describe this move toward congregation-less religion (133). Similarly, when describing modernity’s apparently new religious forms,

One of the most enduring characterizations of this apparently modern change is Robert Wuthnow’s (1998) description of a general move from ‘dwelling’ to ‘seeking.’ As Wuthnow puts it, “at one time people identified their faith by membership; now they do so increasingly by the search for connections with various organizations, groups, disciplines, all the while feeling marginal to any particular group or place” (7). Wuthnow’s use of the term ‘marginal’ hints at the ways increased voluntarism or the unchurching of religions has been viewed as problematic for religious individuals and for religion more generally. Stark et. al., for instance note, “religions without congregations cannot exert social pressure to observe the moral” which means that unchurched religions “have little or no social impact” (133). Recalling that secularization has been described as a decline in religion’s social importance (Wilson 1982), increased voluntarism and the move from churched to unchurched religion has sometimes been interpreted, therefore, as a secularizing development.

Increased syncretism is closely related to this modern trend toward unchurched voluntaristic seeking. Wade Clark Roof (1999), for instance, links the modern shift “from unquestioned belief to a more open, questing mood” (9) and to increased eclecticism (35). The term ‘syncretism’ is a technical one that refers to the combination of different (sometimes contradictory) religious elements within a single religious outlook. However, alongside syncretism a number of
other less technical metaphors have been proposed to describe this trend including: bricolage (Dobbelare 2000); self-spirituality (Lambert 2000); religion à ma manière (Parker 2002); and do it yourself (DIY) or mix-and-match religion (Turner 2012). While syncretism is sometimes viewed in a neutral manner, when linked to instrumental consumerist attitudes, the modern mixing and matching of religious options also tends to be interpreted as a secularizing force.

Given increased voluntarism, weakened institutions, and a movement toward selectively combining palatable religious beliefs and practices, scholars have also described an apparently modern movement toward commercialized or consumer-oriented religion. Often, consumer-oriented syncretic unchurched religion is described not as religion at all but rather as spirituality. Stephen Hunt (2005), for instance, describes religion’s new voluntarism coupled with an instrumental selection of religious options as “self-spirituality.” Likewise, J. Carette and Richard King (2004) describe what they call a “silent takeover of religion” in their book Selling Spirituality. Hunt summarizes the changes religion has experienced in its apparent commercialization noting, “churches display their wares, compete in the field of advertising and marketing, and allow their potential customers to browse among an ever more exotic array of religious possibilities [that are] thoroughly world-affirming” (112).

Often this move toward consumer-oriented religion is positioned as a response to the new modern emotional realities of novelty and desire. In this view, religion has changed in order to meet the fickle emotional needs of modern
individuals who are prepared to abandon traditional religion for new forms and who privilege the worldly satisfaction of combining the more palatable elements of particular religious traditions according to their whims and desires. For many scholars, it is precisely the world-affirming nature of contemporary consumer-oriented religion (or spirituality) that is problematic. Noting that modern consumer-oriented religion has eroded the tension between religion and the world, Bryan Turner (2012) argues that “religion as consumption” is neither religion nor spirituality but is instead “a secular practice” (142).

It is unclear, therefore, whether secularization as religious change is really any different from the standard view of secularization as religious decline. Not only have the changes that religion has apparently undergone in modernity been linked to secularization, they have also led some scholars to abandon the term religion entirely, preferring instead the somewhat nebulous term ‘spirituality.’

What the secularization as religious change thesis shares with the broader secularization paradigm is the claim that modernity has caused problems for religion: religious organizations have lost their social importance, religious beliefs and practices have been combined in sometimes contradictory ways, and religion has become so consumer-oriented that it is perhaps unrecognizable as religion.

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1 Courtney Bender, for instance, describes the term spirituality as “bedeviled not by a lack of definitions but by an almost endless proliferation of them” (2010, 5).
2.4.4. Secularism

The complaint, described above, that secularization theorists are not merely describing the privatization of religion but are rather prescribing it, positions secularization theorists as secularists. For if secularization refers to the apparently modern processes of differentiation, rationalization, pluralization, and privatization, secularism refers instead to the “institutional separation of politics/the state and religion as well as to their ideological legitimizations” (Wohlrad-Sahr and Burchardt 2012, 880-81). Thus secularism is less a means of describing the world than an ideological-philosophical program for shaping (or re-shaping) the world. As Talal Asad (2003) puts it, secularism is a “political doctrine” (1).

The English freethinker George Jacob Holyoake coined the term ‘secularism’ in 1851 as means to distinguish his own anti-theistic philosophical position from other popular atheistic ones (Asad 2003, 23n6). In keeping with this heritage, the word secularism continues to denote attempts to manage, limit, or constrain religion’s presence in the public sphere rather than its outright rejection. Yet secularism also draws on European anti-clerical movements and especially on anti-clericalism in France both leading up to and following the French Revolution (Calhoon et. al. 2011, 15). In France, attempts to limit clerical control and to constitutionally enshrine the separation of church and state are grouped under the term laïcité. Like the English word ‘secular’ the French term ‘laique’ draws on a Christian distinction between religious professionals and ordinary
(lay) persons. Yet while French laïcité, which was officially established in 1905 with La loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Églises et de l’État, is sometimes translated into English as ‘secularism’, the term ‘laicism’ has also been used. The existence of two separate terms, both describing attempts to delimit religion’s influence, speaks to secularism’s complicated history.

Secularism is also complicated by the fact that its manifestations have depended both on the particular religious makeup of the society in which it has been developed (Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008, 12) as well as on that society’s particular political organization (Calhoon et al. 2011, 17). Thus while the same term may sometimes be used to describe the relationship of the State vis-à-vis religion in France, Turkey, India, the United States of America, and Québec, each particular context has given rise to a unique and historically contingent expression of secularism. This complexity has led some scholars to abandon talking about secularism in the singular and to instead describe multiple secularisms (Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008).

Yet although each particular manifestation of secularism may be different from every other, secularisms nevertheless share a particular orientation toward both religion and modernity. In terms of religion, secularism describes the neutrality of the State toward religious institutions, beliefs, and justifications. While this neutrality may be enshrined constitutionally (as is the case in France and the United States of America) it may also be largely implicit (as is the case in Canada). But common to all secularisms is the view that the State ought to be
free from religious influence or interference. While justifications for this separation between politics and religion vary, most draw upon the notion that the State must base its policies on universal rational principles and arguments that can be understood (if not accepted) by all citizens rather than on religious principles and arguments, which are held to be the expressions of particular cultures or groups (Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008, 9). According to Jakobsen and Pellegrini (2008), secularism thus depends upon an Enlightenment narrative of progress in which “reason progressively frees itself from the bonds of religion” and in which religion is seen as “a regressive force in the world, one that in its dogmatism is not amenable to change, dialogue or nonviolent conflict resolution” (2). Conversely, as Talal Asad (2003) puts it, secularism is often taken to imply “the suppression—or at any rate the restraint—of religious passion so that a dangerous source of intolerance and delusion can be controlled, and political unity, peace, and progress secured” (21).

Importantly, this view has implications for religion’s perceived proper place in society and in public debate. According to this view, while religion may influence private opinion, it should never intrude into politics and, given its cultural specificity in comparison with secular reason’s universality, should not contribute to public debates. Commenting on this view David Martin (2014) describes the modern secular State’s relationship with religion as oppositional and as one according to which “religion has to be banned from the public sphere and confined to the private sphere as... an irrational intrusion on the space of
rational debate” (467). In this way, secularism comes to be associated with rationality, universality, freedom, peace, and, importantly, modernity. Described as a “pillar of modernity” by Jawaharlal Nehru, secular India’s first prime minister (Calhoon et al. 2011, 6), secularism has long been associated with a modern progressive movement away from the constraining influence and provincialism of religion. As I argue below, this common association between modernity, secularism, and freedom was and remains a major influence in the continued development of secularism (laïcité) in Québec.

But although secularism has entailed limiting the public presence of religious ideas and discourse, it has also involved placing limitations on the kinds of religious objects that are permitted to be worn in particular contexts. One of the earliest laws prohibiting religious dress by an avowedly secular state was passed in 1923 in Turkey. This dress code, updated in 1925, 1934, and again in the early 1990s stipulated “religious clothing should not be worn outside times of worship” (Hancock 2008, 167). Strictly enforced since 1997 and surviving political and legal challenges in mid 2000s, head scarfs are prohibited in Turkey in public schools, universities, courts, and in official buildings more generally (167). A similar situation exists today in France. In March 2004 France passed a law on laïcité supported by both sides of the political spectrum that prohibits “the carrying of signs or dress through which students ostensibly manifest a religious belonging” (Joppke 2007, 317). Even more recently a similar law prohibiting the wearing of “ostentatious religious objects” including hijabs but also very large
crosses, turbans, and kippas by state employees was proposed by Pauline Marois’s Parti Québécois Québécois government in Québec in 2013. Much criticized at the time, the charter of secularism, officially Projet de loi n°60: Charte affirmant les valeurs de laïcité et de neutralité religieuse de l’État ainsi que d’égalité entre les femmes et les hommes et encadrant les demandes d’accommodement, was not passed by the National Assembly and became a key issue in the 2014 election that saw Pauline Marois lose her seat in the National Assembly and the establishment of a new Liberal government in Québec under Philippe Couillard.

Common to all three movements by secular states to ban religious objects is a sense that these objects do not belong or should not have a conspicuous or overt presence in particular public (secular) contexts whether worn by students in public schools or by civil servants in government buildings. Thus secularism involves an important spatial component, which has led some scholars to map out the spaces and places where religious practices are prohibited by law under the rubric of a “geography of the secular” (Hancock 2008). I return to both secularism and, importantly, its spatial components below in my account of secularism (laïcité) in Québec.
2.4.5. Secularity

The noun ‘secularity’ is a recent addition to the secular lexicon and has been used by Charles Taylor (2007) to describe different modes of being secular in what he has termed our secular age. Taylor distinguishes between three different kinds of secularity, which he straightforwardly names secularity 1 (S1), secularity 2 (S2), and secularity 3 (S3). S1 and S2 refer to different aspects of the broader secularization paradigm and of secularism as discussed above. Taylor uses S1 to describe the retreat of religion in public life, a movement related to privatization as a general social process and also to secularism as a concerted effort to separate politics and public debate from religion and private belief. Taylor uses S2, in contrast, to describe instead an overall decline in belief and practice, which I described as the secularization paradigm’s central claim. But Taylor is most interested in S3, which he uses to describe important modern changes in the conditions of belief (Warner et al., 9).

Taylor’s analysis of our modern situation in A Secular Age is detailed and complex and stretches over nearly eight hundred pages of text and one hundred pages of notes. Yet Taylor’s central project is relatively straightforward: he attempts to describe how it is that Western (North Atlantic, in his terms) society has moved from a situation in which religious belief was taken for granted to a situation in which religious belief is optional. As Taylor puts it, “the shift to secularity in this sense [S3] consists, among other things, of a move from a society in where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one
in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the
easiest to embrace” (3). Thus S3 for Taylor does not necessarily entail the
disappearance of religion (secularization), changes to religion (secularization as
religious change), or concerted attempts to manage or limit religion’s expression
in the politics or the public sphere (secularism), though he admits that all three
have, to some extent, taken place. In his description of S3 Taylor is concerned
not so much with religion but rather with the ways modern human subjects
understand and experience the world or our modern social imaginary. Although
this experience of the world may include unbelief, and it often does especially in
“academic and intellectual life” (13), S3 entails the availability and social
acceptability of unbelief rather than its inevitable spread.

This movement from a world in which religion was taken for granted to a
social situation in which religious belief and unbelief are equally plausible options
is, for Taylor, closely linked to a number or related modern developments
including: differentiation (425), the triumph of naturalistic materialism (28), a
movement away from acceptance of ‘higher’ time toward homogenous, empty
time (124), the development of a (secular) public sphere (185), and finally
disenchantment (539). But unlike secularization theorists who link these changes
to the decline of religion, Taylor associates these modern developments instead
with changes in “lived conditions” (2007, 8) and new ways of experiencing of the
world (Butler 2010, 198). Importantly, Taylor claims that S3 has altered the lived
conditions not only for those individuals who, given the growing plausibility of
unbelief, opt out of religion, but also for those who maintain religious commitments. José Casanova (2010), a contributor to an edited volume dedicated to Taylor’s *A Secular Age*, describes Taylor’s S3 as a situation in which “belief in God not only is no longer axiomatic but becomes increasingly problematic, so that even those who adopt an ‘engaged’ standpoint as believers are forced to adopt simultaneously a ‘disengaged’ standpoint, in which they experience reflectively their own belief as an option among others—one, moreover requiring explicit justification” (266). This means, for Taylor, that we currently inhabit an “immanent frame.”

Taylor is not alone in describing a kind of modern dual-consciousness. Peter Berger (2012), for instance, has noted that individuals need not be either religious or secular but may instead be both religious and secular (314) and may in fact alternate between religious and secular definitions of reality (315). Like Taylor, Berger sees modern religious commitments as requiring explicit justifications but Berger also claims that the secular is the default mode both in public discourse and also in individual consciousness. In Berger’s formulation, in modernity even a religious individual who falls ill will first consult a doctor and consider prayer or spiritual healing etc. afterward as an additional response to her illness (315).

What distinguishes Taylor’s take on the modern conditions of belief from Berger’s is his sense that the disengaged standpoint of the religious person, disenchantment, and the growth of unbelief all threaten what he calls “fullness.”
Fullness is not necessarily religious for Taylor but represents for him a place, activity, or condition in which “life is fuller, richer, deeper, more worthwhile more admirable, more what it should be” (2007 5). There is a sense, in A Secular Age, that religion’s new status as merely one option among many others and one that must be rationally defended, has drained the world of meaning. As Michael Warner, Jonathan Vanantwerpen, and Craig Calhoon (2010) put it, for most moderns “a strong sense of the fullness of the world, of the wonder of it that goes beyond everyday concerns... is available only occasionally” (12). Although Taylor locates moments of fullness in modern secular “festive” moments such as rock concerts and raves (516-17), he nevertheless associates the immanent frame with a recognition both that meaning is extremely fragile and that ordinary life is flat and empty (309)—a position that Simon During has characterized as melancholic and nostalgic (2010, 110). I will return to these themes of default immanence and the loss of meaning or fullness that tends to be associated with it below in my discussion of disenchantment and in the conclusion.

2.4.6. The Secular: A Summary

Modernity depends upon what has now become a commonplace distinction between religion and the secular. Caught up in modernity’s image of itself is the idea that whatever the secular might entail, there is more of it now than there once was. This movement towards the secular has been presented as the result of secularization, which reduces religion’s social importance; religious
change, which renders religion unrecognizable; and secularism, which limits religion’s role in politics and in the public sphere. Taken together, these changes have been characterized as resulting in a situation of increased secularity in which modern individuals inhabit an immanent frame that is increasingly devoid of meaning. Thus the secular, secularization, secularism, and secularity all denote, in Simon During’s (2010) phrasing, “not so much what lies beyond religion’s interest and grasp but what contributes to its intermittent diminution, corruption, marginalization, and undoing” (113).

Importantly, like modernity itself, this movement toward the secular is often viewed as progressive. The secular is thus caught up in claims for a higher form of civilization and involves “shaping and stigmatizing a certain understanding of religion (as backward)” (Nilüfer 2010, 244). Descriptions of the modern world as privatized are thus not always neutral and are often instead prescriptions that set out religion’s proper place in modernity as something that should be confined to the interiors of churches and other places of worship or else to the private thoughts and commitments of a growing minority of religious believers. Those believers, moreover, inhabiting as they do an immanent frame in which the default discourse is a secular one, should be prepared to rationally defend their religious commitments whenever these are made public. Likewise, secularism holds that religion ought to be managed by the State and prevented from intruding on politics in the form of irrational religious ideas or into the public sphere in the form of conspicuous or ostentatious objects or clothing. Because
‘the secular’ is such a central epistemic category (Casanova 2011, 54), the project of modernity and the secular are intrinsically linked. This means that non-secular beliefs, persons, institutions, and ways of being in the world, even when present and indeed thriving in contemporary society, are nevertheless viewed with a certain degree of suspicion and distaste. In Saba Mahmood’s (2010) concise formulation, “one cannot inhabit the label ‘non secular’ indifferently in our age but must bear the consequences of such an inhabitation” (294 n19).

2.5. Disenchantment

As is the case with ideas surrounding the secular, disenchantment has been entangled with the project of modernity for nearly a century. But disenchantment has also been linked to secularization as well as both as a cause of religion’s decline in social importance but also as an effect of this. Simply put, disenchantment holds that: (1) modernity involves fundamental changes in the ways humans explain the world and attempt to control it; and (2) these changes have associated costs in that the world ceases to be meaningful or a site for wonder and awe.

2.5.1 Origins and Extensions

Max Weber coined the term disenchantment in a lecture entitled Science as a Vocation delivered in Munich in 1917. In this lecture, Weber famously
described the disenchantment or more literally the de-magicking of the world (*die Entzauberung der Welt*). According to Weber, in the modern world “one need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service. This means that the world is disenchanted” (1946, 139). Weber associates disenchantment with the twin modern processes of rationalization (in which spontaneous human action is replaced by instrumental rationality and bureaucratic structures) and intellectualization (which involves the prioritization of technical modes of thinking).

But Weber does not view disenchantment or the replacement of ‘savage’ magical thinking with rational modes of apprehending the world as unambiguously progressive. Weber is careful to point out, for instance, that although modern individuals may live in a highly technical world, this does not mean that they have a better technical understanding of their environments than the so-called savages. In fact, Weber argues that ‘savages’ have a better understanding of the technology they use on a daily basis than do modern individuals who, though they may take advantage of modern advances (streetcars, in Weber’s example), are nevertheless largely unable to explain how these work. Weber’s approach thus differs from other sociological and anthropological approaches to magic, which I discuss in greater detail below, that tend to associate magical thinking and modern technology with ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ societal forms respectively. Indeed, while Weber sees disenchantment as
an unavoidable symptom of modernization he nevertheless approaches
disenchantment with a certain degree of ambivalence, noting that increased
rationalization can enclose modern individuals in a “stahlartes Gehäuse,” a shell
as hard as steel—or as Talcott Parsons famously translated it, “an iron cage”
(Weber 1958, 181).

Since Weber introduced the term nearly a century ago, the term
disenchantment has influenced both academic and popular appraisals of
modernity so deeply that it has become a not only a “salient feature of the
modern epoch” (Asad 2003, 13) but also nearly taken-for-granted feature of the
modern world. Narratives of modern progress have so depended upon
disenchantment that it has become, according to one critic, one of the most
“fundamental clichés of the modern period” (Fisher 1999, 82). Or as Charles
Taylor (2010) puts it, “everyone can agree that one of the big differences
between us and our ancestors of five hundred years ago is that they lived in an
“enchanted” world and we do not, or at least much less so” (302, my emphasis).
Given its popularity as a means of understanding the modern world, the meaning
of the term disenchantment has expanded beyond Weber’s original sense of ‘de-
magicking’ to describe a series of related modern developments. Michael Saler
(2006), who writes extensively on disenchantment and re-enchantment,
describes disenchantment “in its broadest terms” as maintaining that “wonders
and marvels have been demystified by science, spirituality has been supplanted
by secularism, spontaneity has been replaced by bureaucratization, and the
imagination has been subordinated to instrumental reason” (692). Yet like Weber, many contemporary theorists view disenchantment with ambivalence or outright suspicion. As I explain below, concern with the apparent negative effects of disenchantment, succinctly outlined by Saler, have led some scholars to seek out modern sources of re-enchantment as remedies for the loss of meaning or coherence that disenchantment entails.

2.5.2. The Enchantment of Disenchantment

But if disenchantment is merely a modern cliché and one that, moreover, entails negative consequences, how has it come to enjoy such a central position in appraisals of the modern world? Saler traces disenchantment’s popularity to a diverse population of elites who promulgated the discourse of modern enchantment for a variety of reasons. In Saler’s analysis, disenchantment was taken up by social elites in an effort to elevate these elites and their thought above the superstitious masses in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; to secure their cultural authority in the face of the development of mass culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and more broadly to secure the predominance of science against both religion and alternative pseudo-scientific forms of knowledge between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries (693). Although Saler does not put it in these terms, the current popular acceptance of disenchantment is thus a result of the slow propagation of elite views through the general population until such time as these became common sense or, in
Taylor’s terms, a component of the legends, stories, etc., that make up the social imaginary (2007, 172). This association of disenchantment with elite ‘high culture’ is perhaps responsible for what Taylor calls “disciplines of disenchantment” according to which we regularly criticize each other for engaging in childish magical thinking (2007, 28). Wouter J. Hanegraaff (2003) aptly sums up this view arguing that disenchantment involves the internalization, by means of socialization, of an (elite) ideology of instrumental rationality including, importantly, this ideology’s claims to exclusiveness and sufficiency (376). The popularity of disenchantment, then, is a result not only of its status as an effective means of describing the world but also of “social pressure” to accept this view (377).

In his article *The Charm of Disenchantment* (2010), Herbert De Vriese takes a more psychological approach in his explanation of disenchantment’s popularity. De Vriese includes a quotation from Roger Scruton’s (1999) lyrical and philosophical appraisal of modernity entitled *Perictione in Colophon* that aptly describes the psychological motivation to disenchant.

You know there are two kinds of charm, the charm of enchantment, and its opposite, the charm of disenchantment, the charm which compels us to take all charm away... just as a man can be delighted by the behaviour of a dog, when he sees it as he would the conduct of his human friend, so can he be delighted by the conduct of a human being, when he sees it as he would the behaviour of a dog. There, he tells himself, is the truth of our condition! And like as not he laughs (422).
With this quotation De Vriese seeks to encapsulate the delight associated with disenchantment as an intellectual process that involves discarding foolish and antiquated beliefs or indeed the contemporary delusions of other people. As De Vriese puts it, “there is a perverse pleasure in taking away someone else’s most cherished illusions, for it proves that we have the theoretical superiority to see through them, and the practical maturity to live without them” (423).

In this way, De Vriese distinguishes between disenchantment as a passive state of affairs and active attempts or programs to disenchant. Disenchantment may carry with it associated problems (a lack of overarching meaning not least among these) but the act of disenchanting, of “demystifying old and new illusions, of challenging time honoured values, beliefs, and customs,” is for De Vriese itself a potential meaning-making activity (424). Importantly, for De Vriese, the popularity of disenchantment and what fuels contemporary efforts to disenchant is the fact that an individual who thoroughly embraces the project to ruthlessly discard false beliefs is herself immune to the kind of disillusionment, loss, and regret associated with disenchantment (424). De Vriese thus positions these active attempts to dispel “culturally significant illusions” as a form of modern ‘enchantment’ claiming that the pleasure or joy associated with disenchanting is the only credible form of enchantment available in the modern world (424).
2.5.3. Disenchantment, Enchantment, and Affect

So far I have been exploring disenchantment from an intellectual standpoint as the abandonment of magical explanations in favour of rational, technical, and scientific ones. But this is only one aspect of modern disenchantment. Many scholars and critics understand disenchantment more broadly to entail the diminution or disappearance of particular ways of experiencing the world. This interpretation of disenchantment moves away from Weber’s formulation in which disenchantment is primarily about new ways of interpreting and controlling the world (technical vs. magical means) but draws on Weber’s insight that increased rationalization (and by extension disenchantment) has consequences for human experience and may in fact enclose us in a shell as hard as steel or imprison us in an iron cage. In other words, some critics choose to focus on the experiential, lived, emotive, or to use my preferred term, affective dimensions of disenchantment. I briefly present two examples of scholars who take this approach below. I begin with Charles Taylor’s account of the buffered self and then examine Jane Bennett’s understanding of the affective potential of disenchantment’s apparent opposite: enchantment.

Although Taylor is deeply interested in the history of ideas, his take on disenchantment refers instead to modes of experience. As Taylor puts it, “disenchantment to me is not a matter of changing theory but rather of a transformation of sensibility” (2010, 307). More specifically, Taylor describes this transformation of sensibility as the replacement of a ‘porous’ pre-modern self with
a modern ‘buffered’ self (2007, 37-38). Taylor uses the term porous to describe what he takes to be a premodern condition in which humans felt vulnerable to the presence of invisible agents in the forms of demons, spirits, etc. (29). According to this understanding, the porous self not only believes that these forces exist but also feels open to the influence of these forces, whether positive or negative. For the modern buffered self, however, this kind of affective register is inconceivable (30). This is the case not only because we apparently no longer believe that invisible forces can harm us but also because it has become axiomatic for us that all thought, feeling, and purpose exist only in (human) minds and not in the outer world in the form of invisible or supernatural agents (539). Thus this feeling of openness to hidden powers and invisible agents isn’t just dismissed by modern individuals, it becomes inaccessible to them in that they are unavoidably buffered from such influences.

For Taylor, then, disenchantedment involves not only an intellectual preference for technical explanations over magical ones but also an affective immunity to the vulnerability that premodern individuals apparently experienced in the past. I say ‘apparently’ because Taylor has been criticized for his characterization of the ways premodern individuals experienced their world. Jon Butler (2010), for instance, notes that in his comparison between porous and buffered selves Taylor fails to provide any historical evidence to support his claims (201). Still, whether or not Taylor is correct that premodern individuals were open to superhuman influences and modern individuals are not (I take issue
with this claim below), he is not alone in seeing enchantment as a particular kind of experience and disenchantment as its lack.

In her book *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (2001), Jane Bennett also focuses on the experiential and affective dynamics of enchantment. But Bennett moves even farther away from Weber’s original formulation of disenchantment as privileging technical means over magical ones than Taylor does. For Bennett, and for many who write about possible modern re-enchantment, enchantment is associated with wonder and awe rather than with magical forces or superhuman agents. Thus in Bennett’s (2001) formulation, “enchantment is a mood of fullness, plenitude, or liveliness, a sense of having had one’s nerves or circulation or concentration powers turned up or recharged...” (5) or again “a mood of lively and intense engagement with the world” (111). Like Taylor, Bennett sees enchantment as a potential site of unease but for very different reasons. In Bennett’s formulation enchantment can be disturbing because, when enchanted, “your background sense of order has flown out the door” (34). Like proponents of re-enchantment described below, Bennett locates modern enchantment in the material world and not in invisible forces or agents. Specifically, Bennett sees complexity (92) and hybridity (98) as potential sites of modern enchantment.

What stands out in Bennett’s assessment of the enchantment of modern life is her focus both on the ways that enchantment encourages “affective attachment” to the world and also on the ways disenchantment comes to be
associated with “dearth and alienation” (3). Bennett is particularly interested in the ethical and political consequences of the detachment disenchantment encourages, arguing that without modes of enchantment we may lack the energy and inspiration to enact ecological projects, contest commercialization, or respond generously to unsettling others (174). Implicit in this understanding of the negative effects of disenchantment (and of the positive effects of enchantment) is a desire to seek out and create enchantment. In this Bennett’s view differs from Taylor’s in that for Bennett enchantment is not something we experience passively but is rather “something to be made, a technical or cultured effect” (51).

Like Taylor, Bennett sees modern disenchanted individuals as being to some extent buffered against possible enchantment. However, in Bennett’s formulation this buffering is not a result of modern individuals being unable to feel vulnerable to unseen influences but is instead caused by narratives of disenchantment. Citing the geographer J. K. Gibson-Graham, Bennett discusses the “performativity of social representations” or the ways “the cultural narratives that we use help to shape the world in which we have to live” (9). Thus for Bennett our tendency to characterize the world as disenchanted, described above, is not merely a statement of the way the world is or ought to be, it is itself a disenchanting force that “ignores and then discourages affective attachment” to the world. Yet although Bennett traces the negative influences of disenchantment, which she views as a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts, and
actively promotes enchantment as a social and indeed political good, she does not advocate a program of re-enchantment. This is because in Bennett’s view, “enchantment never really left the world” (91) which means “enchantments are already in and around us” (174). Bennett thus places herself outside a growing body of scholarly literature focused on the apparent re-enchantment of the world.

2.5.4. Re-enchantment

If the world is disenchanted and if disenchantment carries with it a sense of loss associated with an overall decrease in the meaningfulness of the world, can the world ever become re-enchanted and can meaning be restored? Two recent books, The Re-Enchantment of the West (2004) and The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age (2009), explore this issue, affirming that re-enchantment is possible. But although both volumes share a common interest in re-enchantment, they differ as to where this apparent re-enchantment resides. In The Re-Enchantment of the West, Christopher Partridge traces the growth of modern occultism as a source of modern re-enchantment, whereas in The Re-Enchantment of the World, editors Joshua Landy, Michael Saler, and their contributors turn instead to apparently secular sources in their description of modern re-enchantment. Below, I provide an overview of each take on re-enchantment before highlighting what I take to be a common approach found in both volumes in which enchantment is presented as unusual, spectacular, and therefore outside the realm of normal, everyday life.
In *The Re-Enchantment of the West, vol. 1*, Christopher Partridge accepts the basic premise of the disenchantment paradigm noting that rational, scientific, and technical explanations of the world have become “official definitions of reality in modernity” (40) and describing disenchantment as part of an “accurate interpretation of the Western landscape” (57). Yet Partridge also traces the development of resistance to these official definitions in the growth of a broad social movement that he calls “occulture” (40). Occulture, for Partridge, involves a “vast spectrum” of beliefs and interpretations of the world that share a common suspicion that official scientific and technological explanations are neither the only nor the best explanations available (69). Examples of occulture include: Eastern spirituality, Paganism, Spiritualism, Theosophy, alternative science and medicine, popular psychology, and a range of beliefs related to a general cultural interest in the paranormal (70). Thus for Partridge, occulture does not describe any particular ‘occult’ movement but refers instead to a broad “reservoir” of ideas, beliefs, and practices that fall outside official technical and scientific (disenchanted) interpretations of the world (84). In part, the popularity of these varied non-official interpretations stem from what Partridge calls a “de-exotifiction” of previously obscure beliefs that have become incorporated into “Western plausibility structures” (53). Examples of this trend might include the growing social acceptability of yoga as a spiritual activity, the widespread popularity of astrological forecasts, etc. Importantly, Partridge notes that participation in occulture is not an exclusive enterprise: individuals can and often
do combine a number of disparate elements to create an individual occulture that is suited to their own particular tastes (70-71).

In The Re-Enchantment of the World, Joshua Landy and Michael Saler take a different approach to modern re-enchantment noting at the outset of their volume that they are not interested in describing the “periodic resurgence of traditional ideas and practices,” such as exorcism rites or “the sporadic generation of new creeds,” including Spiritualism (2) as re-enchantment. Instead, Landy and Saler seek to describe modern, “fully secular and deliberate strategies for re-enchantment” (2, italics in original). Like Bennet, Landy and Saler view the modern world as a world of dearth and lack and like Bennett they turn to the material, rather than to the spiritual world for strategies to fill what they describe as “a God-shaped void” (2). But whereas Bennett locates enchantment in an appreciation of the complexity and hybridity of the everyday world, Landy, Saler, and the other contributors to their volume locate modern enchantment in mass culture, literature, spectacle sports, stage magic, and other secular activities. Like Partridge, Landy and Saler accept that the world has become disenchanted but focus on strategies for re-enchantment that accept, rather than oppose, the apparent disenchantment of the world. To this end Landy and Saler describe modern enchantment as a form of enchantment “which simultaneously enchants and disenchants, which delights but does not delude” (3) and about which “no one, however hard-bitten he or she may be, need feel ashamed” (2). Stage magic is a particularly good example of the ‘secular magic’ Landy and Saler seek
to describe, for while an audience member watching a magic show may be delighted and amazed by the various 'tricks' the magician performs, she is nevertheless always aware that these are only tricks and so her official rational/scientific understanding of the world remains intact.

These two takes on re-enchantment thus offer two very different interpretations of enchantment. For Partridge, re-enchantment entails opposition to Weber’s technical means and an acceptance of supernatural or paranormal forces. For Landy and Saler, re-enchantment refers more broadly to feelings of awe and wonder rather than to a sense that magical means exist and possess real power. But despite these differences, both volumes position modern enchantment as something that is extra-ordinary, unusual, uncommon, or strange. Partridge points to this with his use of the term ‘occulture,’ which connotes an interest in ‘occult’ or hidden truths. But even if Partridge is correct in describing the de-exotification of these once-hidden beliefs and practices, by positioning them as opposed to mainstream interpretations of the world he nevertheless affords them a special status as outside or separate from the ordinary. Likewise, Landy, Saler, and their contributors focus mainly on rare or uncommon cultural experiences such as spectacle sports and performances by magicians. Both volumes make bold claims concerning the re-enchantment of the West (Partridge) and more broadly of the world (Landy and Saler) and yet in both accounts the world remains for the most part thoroughly disenchanted. In both accounts modern enchantment is unusual, either because it finds expression in
occult forms or else because it fleetingly appears in literature, sport, and spectacle.

2.5.5. Enchantment Appraised

Since Weber, commentaries on the apparent disenchantment of the world have presented disenchantment as a mixed blessing. Enchantment has been interpreted both as a source of awe, wonder, and meaning and also as involving delusions about the workings of the world that can and should be overcome. In part, this latter view stems from a longstanding trend in anthropological literature on religion that views religion as evolving from primitive ‘irrational’ forms (animism, polytheism, magic) to more ‘rational’ forms of monotheistic religion that resemble Protestantism and post-Reformation Catholicism. I explore the consequences of this now largely abandoned but still highly influential trend in the academic study of religion in greater detail below. For now I want only to point out that evaluations of the value of this project to ‘de-magick’ the world depend upon evaluations of the merits (or lack thereof) of magic as a means of interacting with and controlling that world. Yet because Weber’s term _Entzauberung_ has been widely translated into English as ‘disenchantment,’ English language appraisals of enchantment tend to reflect the fact that the word enchantment has two meanings in English: delight and delusion. So far I have focused mainly on the first of these meanings, noting that many critics of disenchantment and proponents of re-enchantment worry that the modern world
has become largely devoid of meaning. Yet these same critics nevertheless offer negative appraisals of enchantment as well, seeing it as a potential source of dangerous delusion.

Representations of enchantment as delusion often associate enchantment with childhood and especially with childhood fantasies. Charles Taylor (2007), for instance, notes that the “world of spirits and magic forces,” against which modern selves are buffered, can still “haunt us in our dreams, particularly those of childhood” (548, my emphasis). Likewise, Bennett (2001), who positions enchantment as a key factor for modern political generosity (111), nevertheless characterizes enchantment as “a fleeting return to childlike excitement about life,” (5) or as a “momentary return to childhood joie de vivre” (104). Seen in this way, enchantment, however positive a force it may be, is not something that rational adults can easily enjoy. Enchantment is thus often associated with a certain naïveté (Taylor 2007, 21; Landy and Saler 2001, 2) or is described as involving a childlike innocence that depends upon both a lack of maturity and also on a lack knowledge about the ways the world really works. I discuss the social opprobrium enchantment faces, the ways it limits scholarly attention paid to contemporary enchantment, and how it sometimes prevents individuals who engage in ‘magical practices’ from speaking openly about these practices in greater detail below. For now I want only to point out that a kind of evolutionary outlook remains implicit both in negative portrayals of the disenchantment of the world and also in programs of re-enchantment in which enchantment tends to be portrayed as
childish or retrograde. As Landy and Saler put it, enchantment is associated with the “cognitive outlooks of groups traditionally cast as inferior” including “primitives” and “children” (3). Or as Frazer (1940) put it much earlier, magic is practiced only by “the dull, the weak, the ignorant and the superstitious” (55).

2.6. Imaginaries.

My own concept of the ‘modern imaginary’ draws on the idea of ‘social imaginaries’ developed by Castoriadis and, more recently, by Charles Taylor. Both Castoriadis and Taylor employ the term ‘social imaginary’ to describe, “an enabling but not fully explicable matrix with which a people imagine and act as world-making collective agents” (Gaonkar 2002, 1). In this view, the discourses, theories, attitudes, practices, and daily behaviours of a given society are made possible by an underlying and largely implicit shared understanding of the society itself and of its place in the larger world. As Taylor (2007) puts it, the social imaginary “incorporates a sense of the normal expectations that we have of each other; the kind of common understanding which enables us to carry out the collective practices which make up our social life” (172). Or more succinctly, for Taylor the social imaginary is “what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society” (2002, 91). But while Taylor and Castoriadis share a similar general conception of the social imaginary, certain aspects of Taylor’s formulation of modern social imaginaries stand out as being particularly useful for
my purposes. Specifically, I want to highlight three points raised in Taylor’s account of social imaginaries: the way social imaginaries involve interplays between elite and popular conceptions of reality; how social imaginaries offer both factual and normative accounts of reality; and how social imaginaries work to frame what is possible or conceivable in a given society.

2.6.1. Elite / Popular

Taylor is careful to differentiate the social imaginary on the one hand from social theory on the other. In Taylor’s formulation, the social imaginary differs from social theory both in terms of who considers social reality and also in terms of how they consider it. According to Taylor, whereas social theory is espoused by intellectual elites, the social imaginary refers to instead to the ways “ordinary people” imagine their worlds (2007, 171-72). Similarly, whereas social theory is expressed in technical terms or in formal language, the social imaginary is expressed instead in “images, stories, legends, etc.” (172). Yet Taylor is also careful to point out that elite theoretical formulations can and often do infiltrate the social imaginary. It would be wrong, therefore, to imagine a strict dichotomy in which social theory includes only elite viewpoints and the social imaginary includes only popular ones. Instead, Taylor describes a process of dissemination in which ideas that are originally formulated by social elites (philosophers) in technical terms (formal treatises) slowly spread within a given society until they become commonly held and often taken for granted. Taylor describes, for
instance, how John Locke’s vision of society as individuals coming together for mutual benefit, which constituted an important rupture from the premodern social imaginary of the time, eventually became taken for granted in our modern social imaginary (2002; 2007).

The modern imaginary as I conceive it is also made up of both elite and popular accounts. Although I have focused mostly on elite accounts of modernity in this chapter, in later chapters I focus instead on largely popular accounts that depict Montréal as modern, secular, and disenchanted. Yet although elite and popular accounts are often framed differently from one another both in terms of how they are expressed (scholarly vs. informal language) and where they are expressed (academic journals and books vs. entertainment media or informal fictional accounts), elite conceptions and popular conceptions of modernity are informed by and influence one another. I should point out that this view of the modern imaginary is somewhat at odds with Taylor’s understanding of the modern social imaginary. Whereas Taylor describes a unidirectional top-down model in which elite conceptualizations infiltrate popular views (Butler 2010, 197), I want to envision a much more reciprocal relationship in which popular accounts come to shape elite conceptions as well.
2.6.2. Factual / Normative

Taylor is also careful to point out that while the social imaginary offers factual accounts of reality, describing society as it is, it also offers normative accounts that describe how society ought to be. In this sense, the social imaginary offers two different kinds of representations of a given society, some produced by observing social realities and others by imagining desired futures. But these imaginary desired futures are more than mere passive representations. Precisely because normative accounts lend legitimacy to and encourage certain beliefs and practices while discouraging others, they come to act as blueprints for rather than portraits of a given society. Importantly, the lines between what is and what ought to be are often blurred. In the United States, for instance, the concept of freedom forms an important element of the social imaginary both factually and normatively. Freedoms are (actually) enshrined in the constitution and freedom is also (imaginatively) held up as a societal ideal. Yet contradictions often arise. In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks in New York City, for instance, certain actual freedoms were restricted in the United States in an effort to defend the ideal of freedom against individuals and groups perceived to be “enemies of freedom” (Bush, 2001).

Like Taylor’s social imaginary, the modern imaginary involves both factual descriptions of the way things are and normative descriptions of the ways things ought to be. Discussions surrounding the separation of church and state, for instance, typically involve both factual and normative aspects. The separation of
church and state (to varying degrees and in varying forms) is, factually, one aspect of ‘modernity,’ assuming that we consider the United States of America, Canada, France, etc., to be modern states. But aside from representing social reality, the separation of church and state is also often framed as being desirable or even natural in these contexts.\(^2\) Importantly, it is not always easy to determine whether an account is factual or normative – or both at the same time. The idea that modernity entails the disappearance of religion, for instance, has been presented as both social reality and as desired future. Yet the fact that the modern imaginary necessarily involves imagined futures does not mean that these futures are any less real or influential than apparently factual accounts. To quote Bruno Latour (1993), “things do not hold because they are true; they are true because they hold” (63; quoted in Thrift 1997, 139).

2.6.3. Possible / Impossible

In addition to offering factual and normative accounts of reality and acting to legitimize certain beliefs and practices over others, the social imaginary also works to delimit what is (or is not) possible in a given society. As Taylor puts it, the social imaginary forms a kind of “background” that makes certain views and behaviours conceivable in the first place (173). In other words, the social imaginary does not only offer descriptions of what is and what ought to be, it also

\(^2\) For example, in a 2014 report presented to the French government by l’Observatoire de la laïcité, the formal separation of church and state is described as both emancipatory for French citizens and as necessary for the proper functioning of the state ("La laïcité aujourd'hui, note d'orientation de l'Observatoire de la laïcité")
provides a more general framework for social reality that renders some options not only desirable or undesirable but also imaginable or unimaginable.

The modern imaginary also works to set limits for what is, what ought to be, and also for what is deemed possible or conceivable in the first place. This point is central to my larger argument. As I argue below, the modern imaginary renders certain possible futures – futures that include magic and enchantment, for instance – inconceivable in the context of modernity. Importantly, the inconceivability of certain modern futures has important effects both in terms of scholarship on religion and disenchantment but also in terms of the ways individuals imagine, explain, and justify their own particular beliefs, behaviours, and practices. Because the modern imaginary sets limits for what is possible or conceivable in modernity, it also structures both elite and popular ‘factual’ accounts. Thus the modern imaginary works to exclude and conceal particular social, spatial, emotional, and affective dimensions of modernity from contemporary portrayals of religion, secularity, and magic.

2.6.4. Static vs. Fluid

The social imaginary is clearly fluid for Taylor as his argument depends upon perceived changes to our social imaginary that rendered modernity possible in the first place. Likewise, the modern imaginary is not static. What counted as modern in 1910 is obviously different from what counted as modern in 2010. This
fluidity is inevitable because particular competing accounts of modernity (whether elite or popular, factual or normative) necessarily influence the larger picture.

Social scientists generally agreed in the 1960s and 1970s that secularization entailed the disappearance of religion in its encounter with modernity (Casanova 1994), making this view one aspect of the larger modern imaginary. Yet by the early 2000s many social scientists, even erstwhile supporters of secularization, had abandoned this once-dominant view (Berger 2012). These shifts in elite and apparently factual accounts of modernity have had repercussions more generally, which is why the modern imaginary of the early 2000s, while in many ways very similar to earlier conceptions, is nevertheless not identical to the modern imaginary of the 1960s and 1970s.

2.6.5. Particular vs. Universal

So far I have been describing a single modern imaginary. Yet as I explained above, it seems clear that different accounts of modernity co-exist and in fact compete with one another. I am reluctant to describe multiple modern imaginaries, however, in part because describing multiple imaginaries detracts from the ways competing views of modernity nevertheless cohere into a general, pervasive, influential, and remarkably stable and unitary conceptualization (imaginary). Although not all modern individuals share the modern imaginary in its entirety, it remains coherent and operative. In other words, while individuals
and groups (e.g. individuals who engage in what Partridge terms ‘occulture’) may position themselves in opposition to particular aspects of the modern imaginary, they still operate with a shared (if somewhat vague and contested) understanding of what modernity entails.

2.7. Conclusion

The myriad theoretical approaches to modernity and to the place of religion in modernity discussed above constitute a coherent if contested modern imaginary. Before I examine the ways the modern imaginary plays out in the contexts of Québec and the city of Montréal, I want to provide a brief summary of the arguments made in this chapter.

Modernity tends to be conceived in relation to an imagined nonmodern past; whereas modernity is viewed as advanced, progressive, and novel, this past is seen as primitive, retrograde, and traditional. Modernity also tends to be associated with particular historical events namely the Enlightenment, the Scientific Reformation, the Protestant Reformation, and the Industrial Revolution. Finally, modernity involves a particular attitude toward the passage of time that looks forward to new developments while viewing the past as something to be either discarded or else as foreshadowing contemporary developments.

In addition to distinctions between modern and nonmodern times, modernity also tends to be conceived in relation to an imagined nonmodern
geographical other. Whereas the West, broadly conceived, is seen as properly modern, the East, broadly conceived, is seen to be undergoing processes of development and modernization. Additionally, even within apparently modern Western contexts, cities stand out as being more modern than either nature (wilderness / hinterland) or rural areas. Whereas cities are dynamic, advanced, and modern, rural areas are torpid, backward, and traditional. Yet modernity also involves a particular orientation toward place. This orientation is twofold and includes both the belief that places have authentic cores that differentiate one place from any other along with the belief that globalization results in the homogenization of places according to a particular (Western) trajectory. Finally, modern space is fragmented and differentiated into separate spheres including work/home, public/private, and secular/religious.

Importantly, Modernity tends to be associated with particular emotional and affective states. The emotional states of excitement concerning novelty and of desire are often linked to modern consumerism which has in turn been described either as a replacement for religious commitments or else as detrimental to religious emotional realities. Additionally, modernity is often associated with disenchantment and indifference, which I have framed as affective states and which apparently impinge on our capacity to experience magic, wonder, and awe along with our ability to appreciate objects as inherently meaningful.
Modernity is also closely linked to arguments concerning the fate and scope of religion and enchantment in the modern world. Despite predictions to the contrary, both religion and enchantment persist in the modern world. Yet as I have argued, according to both scholarly appraisals and our shared common-sense understanding of the world, both religion and enchantment have changed in their encounters with modernity. As should be clear given the discussion above, these changes, which I summarize, using the terms ‘secularization’ and ‘disenchantment,’ are multiple, complicated, and contested. Yet these perceived changes, contested though they may be, nevertheless contribute in important ways to our understanding of what modernity is and to our expectations of how it ought to be. In other words, ideas about the nature, scope, and proper place of both religion and enchantment are key features our modern imaginary.

In their edited volume Religion in the Public Sphere (2014), Solange Lefebvre and Lori G. Beaman note that religion’s continued presence in the public sphere tends to be identified as problematic or as “requiring discussion” (3). This view owes much to popular theories of secularization, which describe religion’s apparent retreat from the public sphere, and also to secularist policies that seek to monitor and limit both religion’s presence in politics as well as the presence of religious markers in certain public spaces (schools, courts of law, government offices etc.). Taken together, these developments have caused religion to become “more personal” (Warner et. al., 2010, 17). It is only in light of the view that religion is (or should be) private, in fact, that contemporary
Canadian debates concerning whether or not a niqab may be worn during
citizenship ceremonies and, as I explore in greater detail below, whether or not
public servants should be permitted to wear ‘ostentatious’ religious objects in
Québec, can be considered important matters for public debate.

The apparent relegation of religion to the private sphere, however this
sphere may be imagined, is also indebted to Weber’s disenchantment paradigm.
For Weber’s claim that modern individuals prefer technical means and
explanations to magical ones has not only been used to separate apparently
irrational magic from the modern world; it has also been interpreted to have
consequences for religion more generally. As Frederick Bauerschmidt puts it,
disenchantment holds that “religious faith has become a private (and irrational)
set of beliefs held by individuals” (19). Thus according to the modern imaginary,
religion is no longer something that influences public life in an unproblematic
way: its influence, however backward this may seem in light of both
secularization’s and secularism’s normative claims, is something that must be
interrogated, debated, managed, and explained.

Similarly, according to discourse surrounding disenchantment explored
above, modernity has stripped the world of meaning, coherence, and magic.
While moments of enchantment may still exist in modernity, these occur either in
the context of occult practices that, while popular, nevertheless exist outside
mainstream society (Partridge 2004) or else in moments of wonder and awe
brought on by secular strategies for re-enchantment (Landy and Saler 2009). In
either case enchantment has ceased to be an unproblematic or taken-for-granted feature of the modern world. Even those individuals who do seek out enchantment nevertheless live within a modern imaginary in which enchantment is viewed to be childlike, naive, and as something therefore that ought to be kept private.

As should be clear from my discussion of disenchantment, secularization, and secularism, both religion and enchantment tend to be viewed either as irrational remnants of the past or else as dangerously irrational incursions into the secular (rational) public sphere. To some extent, religion and enchantment have been positioned both by secularization theorists and by secularists as antithetical to modern progress. In describing religion and enchantment as rational, therefore, I refer not to those forms of religion and enchantment that are dismissed as problematic, but rather to the forms that are viewed as somehow amenable to the project of modernity. My argument is that to the extent that religion and enchantment are viewed as acceptable or desirable components of modernity, however privatized they may have become, this acceptability or desirability is contingent on their being viewed as rational or at least as rationally defensible.

This view that religion must be rational in order to have a place in modern society is manifested in different ways from John Rawls’s notion of public reason (1997), according to which apparently religious arguments should be formulated in ways that are accessible and comprehensible by the whole of society, to the
development of ‘creation science,’ according to which the religious doctrine of creationism is supported not by scripture or revelation alone but rather by ‘scientific’ inquiry into biology and geology. According to the modern imaginary, therefore, religion has not disappeared from the world (though this may yet happen), nor has it retreated from public life and political debate (however desirable this may be). Instead, religion is held to the same standards as the rest of the rationalized, bureaucratic, disenchanted modern world and has developed a rational and at times scientific public face.

Similarly, enchantments have also become rational, technical, and secular endeavours in modernity as both Bennett (2001) and Landy and Saler (2009) have argued. The move to justify a variety of magical, supra-rational, and enchanted interactions with reality in scientific terms is, as I argue below, a view espoused by individuals who possess and use lucky and protective objects in Montréal. But this view is also present in a range of recent books on the topic of modern enchantment including, for instance, Astrology: A Cosmic Science (Hickey 2011), The Secret Science of Numerology (Lawrence 2001), The Science of the Craft: Modern Realities in the Ancient Art of Witchcraft (Keith 2005), and Magic Dimensions: Personal Transformations through Magic, Miracles, and Quantum Mechanics (Oester 2002), to name only a few. Thus to the extent that magic and enchantment are thought to exist in modernity, these have to a large extent become rational, scientific, or secular pursuits.
Of course the modern imaginary I have described is only one among many potential and actual imaginaries. But what makes this imaginary significant is the ways it influences both academic portrayals of modern religion, magic, and enchantment along with individual accounts of magical objects and their importance in everyday life. I use the term ‘modern imaginary’ therefore to refer to a coherent and operate interpretive framework that involves discursive elements (e.g. elite conceptualizations of modernity) along with non-discursive ones (e.g. the emotional state of urban indifference and the affective state of disenchantment).

The modern imaginary I have described is a theoretical construct and represents an attempt to describe the temporal, spatial, intellectual, and affective dimensions of modernity along with the expectations and limitations these dimensions imply. I have argued that disparate processes of modernization including secularization and disenchantment constitute an enabling but not fully explicable matrix with which people imagine our current social context along with the directions, goals, and outcomes this social context privileges.

Yet in addition to positioning the modern imaginary as an interpretive framework that limits or obscures the presence of supra-rational beliefs in modern, urban, secular contests in scholarly literature, this project also argues that the modern imaginary causes individuals in particular social contexts (i.e. Montréal) who engage in supra-rational beliefs to justify, explain, and minimize these beliefs. Before I turn to my qualitative research and engage in an abductive
analysis of the data I collected in Montréal, I want first to demonstrate both that
the modern imaginary as I have presented it has influenced the ways
modernization and especially the place of religion and enchantment have been
conceptualized in this context. In other words, I want to anchor the broad
theoretical background I have described in scholarly and popular accounts of the
trajectory of modernity in one particular context (i.e. Montréal).
Chapter 3: The Modern Imaginary in Québec and Montréal

In this chapter I focus on the province of Québec and the city of Montréal both in order to provide some context for the location in which I conducted my qualitative research but also to examine the ways the modern imaginary is refracted in this particular context. As I argued in chapter two, although modernity tends to be associated with specific locations and tends to privilege certain ways of understanding and experiencing the world while discouraging others, expectations both for what modernity is and what it ought to be still form a coherent if contested background against which all locations (even non-modern ones) are measured. In other words, any location could serve as a context for exploring the modern imaginary at work. Yet although Montréal may not be the only location in which to explore manifestations of the modern imaginary, it nevertheless serves as a particularly interesting starting point. Because Montréal is a large indisputably modern city in a province that has undergone extensive secularization and in which secularism (laïcité) remains a key political project, it stands out as a fruitful location for observing one particular iteration of the modern imaginary along with its effects.

In what follows I provide some historical context in order to better be able to assess the trajectories of both secularization and secularism in Québec before examining Montréal as a modern secular city. First, I situate Québec’s and Montréal’s particular historical narratives within the larger narrative of progress (i.e. secularization) associated with modernity. To this end I provide an historical
overview of religion in Québec and Montréal. But I also show that Québec's self-image fits within the larger modern imaginary I have been describing. To this end I examine not only historical facts but also what Gérard Bouchard (2005) has called Québec's *imaginaire collectif* or collective imaginary. Québec's religious history and the perceived changes, ruptures, and new developments it involves serve therefore not only to contextualize Québec and Montréal as objects of study but also serve as evidence of the ways the modern imaginary has shaped Québec's and Montréal's self-image. As I argue in chapter four, this self-image continues to inform the ways some Montréalers understand religion, the secular, and their own supra-rational beliefs and practices associated with lucky and protective objects.

3.1. Historical Overview

By most accounts, Québec's identity and the identity of its inhabitants were shaped and continue to be shaped by their shared Catholic heritage. For instance, even amid recent debates concerning official state secularism and attempts to prohibit civil servants from wearing 'ostentatious’ religious objects,

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3 “Je désigne par imaginaire collectif l’ensemble des repères symboliques qu’une société élabore pour s’inscrire dans le temps et dans l’espace, parmi les autres sociétés. Ces repères consistent dans les représentations que cette société se donne d’elle-même et des autres, dans les reconstructions de son passé et les visions de son avenir” (Bouchard 2005, 412).

“By collective imaginary I refer to the collection of symbolic reference points that a society develops to situate itself in time and place among other societies. These reference points involve the representations this society gives to itself and to others, its reconstruction of its past, and its visions for its future.” Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
the government of Québec has nevertheless called for the protection of Québec’s religious heritage both in terms of retaining the crucifix in the National Assembly and also in terms of disbursing large sums of money for the maintenance and preservation of religious buildings in the province. In what follows I trace the standard narrative of religion in Québec focusing on the historical processes of secularization and secularism that culminated, perhaps, in 2013 with Québec Values Charter.

The story of religion in Québec begins in 1608 with the founding of Québec by Samuel de Champlain. Space limitations prevent me from providing a full account of the intervening centuries between the founding of Québec city and formation of the province of Québec in its current form. However, certain key developments remain important for the larger narrative. Although religious diversity in Québec is often presented as a particularly modern development, the territory that would eventually become the province of Québec experienced religious diversity and attempts to limit and manage this diversity long before contemporary debates concerning reasonable accommodation.

Before the Company of One Hundred Associates was given a trade monopoly in New France in 1627, both Catholics and French Protestants (Huguenots) engaged in fur trade in the colony. Despite the Edict of Nantes (1598), which granted Huguenots rights and privileges in France, Louis XIV nevertheless prohibited Huguenots from trading in New France by instructing the Company of One Hundred Associates that only Catholic fur traders were to be
admitted to the territory. Even after the Company’s trade monopoly was revoked in 1663, Protestants who arrived in New France despite the official ban were not permitted to hold public office and were prevented from building churches or cemeteries and from congregating for religious purposes (Poton 2015, 59). State management of religious diversity would continue in the colony – though on very different terms – under English control.

The Province of Québec was created following France’s defeat in the Seven Years’ War (1754-1763) as the fourteenth British colony in British North America. Despite having had a very close relationship with the French State, Catholic priests in what had been New France were quick to urge the Canadiens to declare allegiance to their conquerors. Sermons preached following the capitulation of Montréal (1760), for instance, urged French Catholics to pledge allegiance to their new king George III (Rousseau 1994, 71). The Royal Proclamation (1763), which set the territorial boundaries of the Province of Québec, also set clear boundaries for the practice of religion in the territory. Like Louis XIV, George III was not only the head of state but also the head of the State Church. Yet although the Church of England enjoyed official status in the Province of Québec, Catholics were afforded basic freedoms of religion following the conquest.

Nevertheless, certain conditions of the Royal Proclamation directly threatened the power of the Catholic Church in British North America. On a basic level, George III denied the supremacy of the pope but more practically,
Catholics were prevented from holding office as a result of the Test Act which required public servants to be members of the Church of England. Additionally, civil control was extended to Church property and the Church was no longer permitted to collect tithes. All these initiatives were part of a broader project to weaken the power of the Catholic Church and to assimilate French-speaking Catholics (Milot 2004, 37). By limiting the scope of Church influence to strictly religious matters, England not only effectively ended the Catholic Church’s formerly close relationship with the state but also began a process of secularization that would culminate nearly two hundred years later.

Additionally, American independence increased religious diversity in the Province of Québec. Following the American War of Independence, tens of thousands of Anglophone Protestants who remained loyal to the British crown fled the newly formed United States of America to settle in other British colonies, including the Province of Québec. These Loyalists settled mainly outside the seigneurial zone, which lay along the banks of the St. Lawrence River, in what would later become the province of Ontario. This Loyalist influx dramatically changed the demographic makeup of the Province. The colony, which had, until this point, contained mostly French-speaking Catholics, now contained a growing number of Anglophone Protestants who were not only religiously and linguistically different from the Canadiens, but who also had their own customs and operated under the British legal system.
The presence of a growing Anglophone Protestant population in the colony led to the eventual splitting of the Province of Québec in 1791 into two separate provinces: Mostly Anglophone Protestant Upper Canada and mostly Francophone Catholic Lower Canada. Both Upper and Lower Canada would engage in armed rebellion in 1837-8 for economic and political reasons. Although these rebellions would ultimately be unsuccessful, the actions of the rebels, known as Les Patriotes in Lower Canada, are evidence of a growing sense of nationalism among Francophone Catholics that would culminate in later years.

3.1.1 Religion in Québec and Montréal 1840-1930

As a response to the rebellions of 1837-8 and keeping with its goal of assimilating French-speaking Catholics, Britain combined Upper and Lower Canada into a single province named United Canada in 1840. The political dimensions of this period are interesting and complicated but fall outside the scope of this project. In terms of religion, however, the period from 1840-1870, which includes Confederation in 1867 and the creation of the Province of Québec in its current form, was marked by a significant rise in the power and influence of the Catholic Church in what had been Lower Canada (renamed Canada East after the Act of Union 1840) and what would become the province of Québec after confederation in 1867 (Ferretti 1999, 55).
To a large extent, two bishops were responsible for this rise in the influence of the Catholic Church in Québec: The Bishop of Montréal Ignace Bourget and the Bishop of Trois-Rivières, Louis François Laflèche. Both Bourget and Laflèche were champions of ultramontanism and supported the supremacy of religious authority over civil authority (55). Likewise, both promoted Church control of social services and education in Québec (Gossage and Little 2012, 97-8). But both Bourget and Laflèche also sought to re-draw the lines separating religion and politics in Québec. Despite a close historical relationship between the Catholic Church and the state in New France, these two powers were nevertheless clearly contrasted before 1763 and this contrast only became clearer following the conquest. Yet both Bourget and Laflèche directly opposed the separation of religion and politics. In a pamphlet published in 1866, for instance, Laflèche argues, “it is an error condemned by reason, by history, and by Revelation to say that politics is a field in which religion has no right to enter, and in which the Church has no concern” (quoted in Gossage and Little 2012, 99).

In part, these attempts to dissolve boundaries between religion and politics reflect the rising importance of Catholicism in French Canadian society during this period. Not only was Catholicism linked to broader issues of public morality as evidenced by arguments for Church control of education and social services, but Catholicism also became increasingly present in public life as well. From 1840 onward, Québec experienced a religious revival that saw a rise in the
popularity of pilgrimages, processions, and the veneration of martyr's relics, which were imported from Rome in large numbers (98). This rise in the public social importance of Catholicism was also linked to growing nationalist ambitions that had been expressed in the 1837-8 rebellions. Laflèche summarizes this view in his 1866 pamphlet writing,

> A nation is constituted by unity of speech, unity of faith, uniformity of morals, customs, and institutions. The French Canadians possess all these and constitute a true nation. Each nation has received from Providence a mission to fulfill. The mission of the French-Canadian people is to constitute a centre of Catholicism in the New World. (Quoted in Gossage and Little 2012, 98)

In this view, not only did Québec’s Catholic nature determine its status as a nation, but as a nation, the French Canadians were charged with promoting and supporting Catholicism in North America.

This association between Catholicism and French Canadian society and identity would become further entrenched after the First World War. For one thing, as a result of its ultramontanist principles, the Catholic Church continued to be the prime organizer of Québec society and continued to offer key social services in the province. But the association between Catholicism and French Canadian identity would also grow as a result of the work of public intellectuals including Lionel Groulx (1878-1967).

Lionel Groulx was a Catholic priest and an historian who was appointed to the newly created chair of Canadian History at the Montréal campus of Laval
University, which would eventually become the University of Montréal. Like Bourget and Laflèche before him, Groulx thought that the Church rather than the state should be the ultimate arbiter in matters of education and of social welfare and argued that the Church, and priests in particular, should extend their influence beyond theological concerns and private religious practice to become implicated in politics and commerce. Apart from stressing the importance of the Church for Québec society, Groulx also stressed the importance of traditional ways of life, the family, and a return to the land, thereby setting the tone for later clerical nationalists and conservative politicians including Maurice Duplessis (Gossage and Little 2012, 176). But perhaps Groulx’s greatest legacy is his popularization of la survivance4 ("survival") as the central theme of Québec history since the conquest. According to this view, the history of French Canadian society is best understood in terms of “the struggle for survival of a conquered people against formidable odds and in the face of sustained pressure for assimilation into the dominant British culture” (176).

As was the case in the rest of Québec, Catholicism’s social importance grew considerably in Montréal beginning in 1840. Perhaps owing to growing religious difference in the city or to the distractions provided by urban life, Montréal experienced a certain detachment from religion in the decades leading up to 1840 (Rousseau 1994, 14). Yet this would change considerably under the ultramontane principles of Montréal Bishop Ignace Bourget. As noted above,  

4 “survival”
ultramontanes including Bourget and Laflèche sought to make the Catholic Church central to French Canadian society and politics. In part, this effort to reiterate the church’s importance in Montréal and elsewhere was a response to increased modernization and religious change at the time. In the half-century between 1840 and 1890, Montréal began a process of concerted urbanization and modernization that saw the introduction of democratic municipal politics, increased demographic growth, and large-scale residential and commercial building projects that allowed Montréal to present itself “comme une ville en effervescence, participante de l’urbanisme occidentale de l’époque” (Fougères 2012, 431). Conservative Catholics like Bourget sought to temper this rapid change with a return to traditional Catholic principles and values. But Bourget also sought to respond to growing Protestant evangelization in Montréal as well. While there were hardly any French-speaking Protestants in Montréal in 1830, according to a report issued by Montréal’s Presbyterians, by 1892 nearly 12,000 French-speaking Montrealers had converted to Protestantism (Perron 2012, 726).

Montréal’s cultural landscape also began to change during this time. In part this cultural change was a consequence of immigration after Confederation. While immigrants from France, England, and Ireland made up the highest percentage of immigrants to Montréal between 1871 and 1931, this period also saw immigrants arrive from other European countries, especially Italy (Gauvreau 2012, 645). Although Montréal’s growing Italian population was almost entirely

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5 “as a dynamic city participating in the Western urbanism of the time”
Catholic, Italians nevertheless added to the cultural diversity of Catholicism in Montréal that had begun with the arrival of Irish Catholics a century earlier. Additionally, although census data does not specify country of origin, Jews began immigrating to Montréal at the start of the 20th century. Although Jewish immigrants made up only 3% of total immigrants in 1931, they nevertheless contributed to Montréal’s growing religious and cultural diversity in important ways (645). Many immigrant newcomers settled along Saint Laurent Boulevard, which retains vestiges of the enterprises, surnames, and institutions of these communities including Moishe’s delicatessen, a Dutch bakery, a Portuguese savings bank, and a Chinese hospital (Olson and Thornton, 2014, 279). But other cultural changes in the city were consequences not of immigration but rather of innovation and of new technologies. Montréal became home to Canada’s first movie theatre in 1896 and films soon became a popular form of entertainment in the city, especially after the opening of the popular Ouimetoscope in Montréal in 1906 (Linteau 1992, 100). Yet while popular with some, films were criticized by the Catholic Church and in a series of brochures in the 1920s with evocative titles such as *Cinéma Corrupteur* (Lamonde 2012, 795).

3.1.4. La “Grande Noirceur” 1930-1960

The concept of *La Grande Noirceur* or the Great Darkness, in combination with the associated Quiet Revolution, is a central concept for understanding Québec’s religious history. *La Grande Noirceur* represents what Gérard
Bouchard has called “une mémoire honteuse” (2005, 411) or a shameful memory against which intellectuals in Québec would continue to position themselves from the 1960s onward. Broadly speaking, La Grande Noirceur describes the period after the Great Depression leading up to the Liberal government of Jean Lesage, which began in July 1960. Although this period would see Québec politics vacillate between Liberal governments led by Louis-Alexandre Taschereau (1920-36) and Adélard Godbout (1939-1944) and conservative Union Nationale governments led by Maurice Duplessis (1936-39 and 1944-59), it is Duplessis’ conservatism that best characterizes this era for Québec.

Again, the political dimensions of this time are interesting and complicated but fall outside the scope of this thesis. Yet in terms of religion, the period between 1930 and 1960 represents the height both of Catholic influence and of social conservatism in the province. Like Bourget, Laflèche, and Groulx before him, Duplessis felt that Québec should rely on traditional values stemming from the family, a return to the land, and from the Catholic Church. Québec intellectuals eventually criticized Duplessis for failing to usher Québec into the modern era, for being resistant to change, and for his support of commercial and religious interest groups (Gossage and Little 2012, 220). As I demonstrate below, these critiques of Duplessis would eventually lead to the near total dismissal of traditionalism during the Quiet Revolution.

Yet these critiques also serve, as Gérard Bouchard (2005) has argued, as evidence that La Grande Noirceur was not quite as dark a period in Québec’s
history as is often thought. According to Bouchard, this image of a conservative, traditional, and static Québec constitutes a social myth that, while it fails to account for strong counter currents in the period, nevertheless dominates Québec’s self-image (415). Bouchard provides a useful list of attributes typically associated with Québec during La Grande Noirceur noting “ruralisme, cléricalisme à outrance, hégémonie du religieux, analphabetisme, xénophobie, refus de changement, État quasi feodal... économie de type artisanal ou familial, [et une] mentalité de type préindustriel”⁶ (416) as key elements.

Yet as Bouchard notes, signs of impending change were present in Québec society even before Duplessis’ sudden death and the eventual election of a Liberal government under Jean Lesage. In 1948, for instance, a group of Montréal artists known as Les Automatistes led by Paul-Émile Borduas issued a social and political manifesto entitled Refus Global or Total Refusal that called for an abandonment of the social conservatism and traditionalism of the time. Borduas famously referred to French Canadians as “un petit people”, or a small people “serré de près aux soutanes restées les seules dépositaires de la foi, du savoir, de la vérité et de la richesse nationale. Tenu à l'écart de l'évolution universelle de la pensée pleine de risques et de dangers…”⁷ (Borduas 1977, 27). In blaming the Church for Québec’s backward status, Borduas and Les

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⁶ “ruralism, excessive clericalism, religious hegemony, illiteracy, xenophobia, the refusal of change, a quasi feudal state, an artisanal or family-based economy, and a pre-industrial mentality”

⁷ A small people huddled by the robes of priests who remain the sole depositories of faith, knowledge, truth, and national heritage. Kept apart from the universal evolution of thought with its risks and dangers…”
Automatistes pointed to a growing anticlerical sentiment in Québec that would come in many ways to define Québec society in the ensuing decades.

Other Québec intellectuals at this time also criticized clericalism and the intermingling of religion and politics in Québec. In 1950 Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who would later become Prime Minister of Canada from 1968 to 1984 with a short interruption from 1979-80, and journalist Gérard Pelletier founded Cité Libre, a political journal that criticized the Duplessis government and called for a strong federalist state while nevertheless accepting the important role of the Catholic church in social domains including education (Gossage and Little 2012, 223). By the 1960s these themes of anticlericalism and a desire to catch up to other modern industrial societies would dominate Québécois thought and initiate a “Quiet Revolution” in Québec society.

As Québec’s largest city and economic center, Montréal remained a symbol of dynamism and change between 1930 and 1960 despite both the traditionalist stance of Maurice Duplessis and a marked economic downturn during the Great Depression. For instance, it was in Montréal that Borduas and Les Automatistes wrote Refus Global in 1948 and it was in Montréal that Cité Libre was first published in 1950. Thus the perception of Québec as backward and traditionalist leading up to the Quiet Revolution was popularized by Montrealers who considered themselves to be at the forefront of change. It was in Montréal that the intellectual currents that would eventually inspire the Quiet
Revolution of the 1960s originated.

3.1.5 The Quiet Revolution\(^8\) 1960-1980

If *la survivance* served, since Groulx, as the key term for understanding Québec’s history up to and including *La Grande Noirceur*, the key term for understanding Québec during and after the Quiet Revolution is *rattrapage* (“catching up”). Beginning in the 1960s Québec would enter into a period of swift and extensive political, social, and religious change that for many would signal Québec’s attempt to catch up to the rest of the world and begin its belated entry into modernity. On the political front, the Quiet Revolution began with Maurice Duplessis’ sudden death in 1959 and the eventual election of Jean Lesage’s Liberals in 1960 who campaigned under the slogan *c’est le temps que ça change!*\(^9\) Despite signs of intellectual change decades prior, the replacement of the conservative traditionalist Union Nationale government led by Duplessis tends to be seen as a turning point not only politically but also socially in Québec. Louis Rousseau, professor emeritus at the Université de Québec à Montréal, eloquently summarizes the perceived changes in Québécois society associated with the Quiet Revolution in a series of interviews conducted by Stéphane Baillargeon. Rousseau notes (1994, 106):

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\(^8\) Although often rendered as *la revolution tranquille*, the term originated in English in the Toronto-based newspaper *The Globe and Mail* (Linteau et al. 1989, 423),

\(^9\) “It’s time for a change!”
The Quiet Revolution involved myriad changes in Québec society but several stand out in particular in terms of religion. Some of these changes were initiated politically as is the case with the Parent Commission and the Boucher Committee. The Parent Commission sought to reform the educational system in Québec and recommended in 1964 that a centralized Ministry of Education replace the old decentralized system of private confessional schools. The Boucher Committee sought to reform the social service network and recommended in 1963 that trained medical professionals rather than Catholic nuns provide healthcare in the province.

But other changes were more explicitly religious. During this time the Catholic Church went through its own process of *rattrapage* or *aggiornamento* following the Second Vatican Council (1962). Key changes were introduced in the liturgy following Vatican II. For instance, priests were instructed to face the congregation rather than the altar during mass and were required to perform services in the languages spoken by their congregants rather than in Latin. Codes of dress for lay clergy were also updated and priests were instructed to

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10 “The quiet revolution was the great moment when we began to liberate ourselves. From that moment on religion is seen negatively; it takes the form of a prison, a black night, a great darkness. There is the fatal *before*, smothered by authoritarian structures and the *after*, which is liberation.”

11 “Bringing up to date”
wear less formal vestments in public. During this period and facing concerns surrounding growing anticlericalism in Québec, Cardinal Léger went so far as to prohibit members of religious communities from wearing their formal religious habits on city streets (Rousseau 1994, 24).

Yet despite attempts by the Vatican to bring Catholicism up to date with the modern world, Québécois Catholicism experienced drastic decline in the 1960s. In part, this decline involved a mass defrocking of Catholic priests. By 1981, despite a marked increase in overall population, there were about half as many Catholic priests in Québec as there had been in 1961 (Gossage and Little 2012, 240). Additionally, many Catholics stopped regularly attending mass. In Montréal, for instance, between 1961 and 1971 the number of Catholics attending mass dropped by 50% (240). This decline in church attendance has continued since the 1960s although a large majority of Québécois continue to self-identify as Catholic.

Yet as was the case with La Grande Noirceur, the Quiet Revolution, though an incredibly influential term for understanding Québec history, is nevertheless a “myth” (Rousseau 1994,106). A myth, moreover, that that has been called into question by new generations of Québécois historians (Rousseau 1994,106). Both the timeline and the scope of the Quiet Revolution have been challenged in recent years. In terms of the timeline, Gérard Bouchard (2005) has argued both that important precursors were present much earlier (416) and also that a new generation of scholars have drastically re-imagined the period
stretching from 1900-1960 noticing signs of progress, urbanization, ethnic and ideological diversity, individualism, and tolerance in place of the static traditionalism typically associated with *La Grande Noirceur* (416). In terms of the scope of the Quiet Revolution, François-Pierre Gingras and Neil Nevitte (1983) have argued that despite falling church attendance, traditional religious values continued to play a major role in Québec politics and society even after the 1960s (692). In particular, Gingras and Nevitte question whether the changes experienced during the Quiet Revolution were caused by fundamental changes in Québécois mentality or were the result instead of important institutional changes in the province, arguing that the secularization of institutions (e.g. education) does not necessarily entail the secularization of the broader population (702).

In addition to its timeline and scope, the origins of the Quiet Revolution have also been questioned. Michael Gauvreau (2000), for instance, has argued that Québec’s ideological modernization originated not in the writings of Borduas or Trudeau but rather in the “efforts of the Catholic Church to devise a socio-political solution to the economic catastrophe of the 1930s” (2000, 806). According to Gauvreau, the secularization of health and education were not primarily the result of government action but were instead consequences of the Church’s recognition that these social services could be better mobilized by the secular state. Yet despite these challenges, the Quiet Revolution remains a hugely influential concept in Québec. According to Gossage and Little (2012) “there is no more widely circulated phrase in Québec's historical lexicon” (232).
3.2. Religion in Québec Today

Although there is disagreement concerning the timeline, scope, and causes of the Quiet Revolution, nearly everyone agrees that religion in Québec has changed in important ways since the 1960s. Before focusing on discourse surrounding secularism below, I want to briefly outline three of these perceived changes: secularization, cultural Catholicism, and religious change. In what follows I shift my focus from historical assessments of Québec’s religious past to sociological assessments of religion in present-day Québec. Yet as was the case with academic discourse surrounding modernity explored above, academic assessments of religion in Québec also contribute in important ways to Québec’s imaginaire collectif.

3.2.1. Secularization

As I noted above, the term secularization has been used to refer to a variety of perceived changes resulting from religion’s encounter with modernity including differentiation, rationalization, pluralization, and privatization. Taken together, these changes are thought to entail either an overall decrease in the social importance of religion or else drastic changes to religious practices and beliefs. Here I will consider differentiation in the Québec context. Although rationalization, pluralization, and privatization have also all taken place in Québec, I will examine pluralization in greater detail below when describing
controversies surrounding the management of religious difference in Québec leading up to and following debates on reasonable accommodation and I will consider rationalization and privatization in my summary of the modern imaginary in Québec.

Québec, like all modern societies, experienced processes of differentiation associated with modernity. Some of this differentiation involved changes brought on by industrialization as noted by Bouchard (2005) above including the replacement of home-based and artisanal labour with work conducted outside the home (416). But industrialization in Québec also led to increased urbanization and the replacement of largely unified rural patterns of life with increasingly differentiated urban ones. In terms of religion, however, Québec experienced marked institutional differentiation in the wake of the Quiet Revolution that saw the Catholic Church lose its monopoly in the provision of education, health, and other social services. While the development of secular government agencies for health and social services are key factors for differentiation in Québec, the de-confessionalization of education in Québec and the recent introduction of the Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) curriculum in the province in 2008 loom large in recent scholarship. It is to these developments that I now turn.

The Catholic Church supervised education in Québec from the 17th century up until the conquest in 1763, which saw the introduction of Anglophone Protestant educational institutions in the newly created Province of Québec. In 1658, one year before the Vatican established a vicariate apostolic in New
France, Marguerite Bourgeoys opened a Catholic school in Montréal (then Ville-Marie), though as noted above, schools for the education of First Nation children had been introduced in New France decades earlier.

Struggles to ensure the survival of Catholicism and of Catholic education in particular after the conquest motivated the creation of section 93 of the British North America Act in 1867, which guaranteed provincial jurisdiction over education and protected the rights of Catholics (and Protestants) to separate confessional schools. For the next century the Catholic and Protestant Committees of the Council of Public Instruction, which operated largely free from government influence and interference, oversaw education in Québec (Boudreau 2011, 213).

Although the secularization (institutional differentiation) of Québec schools occurred with the creation of the Ministry of Education in 1964 following the recommendations of the Parent Commission, these schools, though now under governmental rather than religious control, continued to be fully denominational and confessional (Mager 2002, 185). The denominational nature of Québec schools began to be criticized, however, in the wake of the Quiet Revolution. In the 1970s and 80s, for instance, there were several attempts to abolish confessional school boards. But while confessional school boards would remain in place until 1999, in the 1970s and 1980s teachers won the right to be exempted from teaching religion and parents won the right to enroll their children in a non-confessional moral and religious education program (MRE) that provided
a non denominational introduction to contemporary ethical and moral issues from a broadly secular perspective.

The outright de-confessionalization of Québec’s schools began following the Proulx Report (1997), which was commissioned by Pauline Marois, the Minister of Education at the time, and which was named for University of Montréal education professor Jean-Pierre Proulx. Proulx headed the government task force whose mandate it was to examine the place of religion in schools and his report recommended, among other things, that the government revoke the denominational status of school boards and introduce a mandatory non-confessional religious education program that would favour a cultural rather than a religious approach to religious education. This cultural approach introduced students to religion as an element of shared culture rather than educate students in the doctrines and practices of any particular religious tradition. Although the earlier Parent Commission had also recommended the de-confessionalization of Québec schools, by 1999 the government of Québec was finally ready to take action and in the year 2000 school boards were divided along linguistic rather than religious lines and public confessional schools, whether Catholic or Protestant, were abolished outright (Boudreau 2011, 218). Yet despite the creation of language-based school boards and the abolition of confessional public schools, religious education continued in the Québec school system — though considerably less time was afforded to religious education after 1999 (Mager 2002, 185).
The institutional differentiation of education in Québec also led to a secularization of the curriculum beginning in 2005 and culminating in the introduction of the mandatory ERC curriculum in all provincial schools in 2008. At its outset the new program was controversial and these controversies continue today. At the heart of the controversy is a fear among religious parents and religious leaders that the new curriculum fails, in its cultural approach, to instill necessary religious values in students. Donald Boisvert (2015) has criticized the new curriculum along these lines asking whether the religious studies scholars who helped develop the new curriculum should really be “the new arbitrators for how the religious experience should be viewed, dissected, and then internalized by youth” (389).

But institutions have also fought back against what they see to be an infringement of their constitutionally protected religious freedoms. Private schools, including Montréal’s Loyola high school, requested that they be permitted to teach the religiously neutral ERC curriculum from a religious (in this case Catholic) perspective. Although the government of Québec initially refused to grant any exceptions to the mandatory ERC curriculum, Loyola recently won its case with the Canadian Supreme Court in 2015 and both Loyola and other private religious high schools are now able to request exemptions and offer their own curriculum, as long as this curriculum is approved by the Ministère de L’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (CBC 2015).
3.2.2. Cultural Catholicism

In recent decades scholars in Québec have argued that Catholicism has become a cultural rather than a religious marker in the province. In part, academic descriptions of cultural Catholicism seek to explain a puzzling trend in Québec according to which secularization in the broad sense of religious decline appears to be occurring unevenly. For although rates of church attendance and other markers of regular religious participation have dropped steadily since the 1960s in the province, the vast majority of people in Québec continue to self-identify as Catholic.

The term cultural Catholicism was popularized by Raymond Lemieux in the early 1990s. Lemieux noticed that although regular Sunday worship had experienced “une baisse spectaculaire” (1990, 146) between 1965 and 1990 with church attendance dropping from 85% to only 35%, the majority of Québécois continued to self-identify as Catholic. Additionally, while church attendance was experiencing a decline in popularity, other markers of Catholic identity and practice were not. Lemieux noted, for instance, that Québécois continued to turn to the church to celebrate important rites of passage, including baptism and marriage. In fact, Lemieux argued that in some areas, most notably the suburbs outside of Québec city, Québécois were more likely to have their children baptized in the Catholic Church in 1990 than they were in 1965 (148). Lemieux also noted that in the 1990s the vast majority of Québécois (90%) opted

12 “a spectacular drop”
for Catholic funerals rather than civil ones leading him to remark, “la quasi-totalité des Québécois passe par l’église à l’occasion de la mort d’un de leur proche”\textsuperscript{13} (147). Taken together these observations led Lemieux to posit that Catholicism in Québec had become an ethnic or cultural marker by the 1990s, rather than a religious one. Thus according to Lemieux, while Québécois were perhaps unwilling to attend church regularly, they nevertheless continued to describe themselves as Catholics and to turn to Catholic rituals to commemorate important life events.

Although the idea of cultural Catholicism was developed to explain the realities of Catholic practice in the 1990s, it has remained a popular trope for understanding religion in Québec today. However, changing realities have led scholars to revisit cultural Catholicism in recent years. Interestingly, the overall trend as described by Lemieux has not changed. Even today most Quebeckers continue to self-identify as Catholic while fewer and fewer of them attend church regularly. If anything, recent data casts this puzzling situation in even starker terms. By 1998, for instance, regular church attendance had dropped from 35% to a mere 18.5% in Québec with an even lower rate of 7.3% for youth aged 15-24. At the same time, rates of Catholic self-identification remained both steady and high in 2001 for all Quebeckers (83.5%) with even higher rates for French-speaking Quebeckers (91.9%) (Meunier and Laniel 2012, 598-9). What has changed since the 1990s are rates of participation in Catholic rites of passage.

\textsuperscript{13} “Virtually all Quebeckers turn to the Church when someone close to them dies”
including baptism and marriage. Between 1991 and 2005, for instance, the percentage of Quebeckers opting for Catholic baptism fell from 80.3% to 63.3% and the percentage of Québécois opting for Catholic marriage fell from 51.6% to 40.1% (611, 599).

These changes have led E.-Martin Meunier and Jean-François Laniel to revisit and revise Lemieux’s cultural Catholicism thesis. Although Meunier and Laniel agree that high levels of Catholic self-identification in the province may be evidence of a shift according to which Catholicism has become a cultural rather than a religious marker, they argue that declining participation rates for marriage and baptism reflect an important change in the ways Quebeckers conceptualize and relate to Catholic teachings. According to Meunier and Laniel, Québécois have entered into a love-hate relationship with Catholicism (559). Although Quebeckers may choose to self-identify as Catholic (love) Meunier and Laniel posit that Quebeckers are less willing than they were in the 1990s and earlier to accept rigid Catholic doctrine (hate). Importantly, the practices rejected by Québec Catholics are those that are typically related to social control and dogmatism, especially in the realm of sexual values. In other words, declining participation rates for Catholic marriage might represent unwillingness on the part of Quebeckers to accept and submit to Catholic doctrine on monogamy or, more broadly, heteronormativity. Likewise, reluctance to regularly attend mass might also represent resistance to perceived dogmatism in the form of obligatory Sunday worship (600).
The problem of high levels of self-identification coupled with low levels of church attendance has also been explained as a situation of “believing without belonging” in recent years (Davie 1994; Gauthier and Perreault 2013). Yet for the most part, scholars have resisted applying this model to the situation in Québec. Instead, as Jean-Philippe Warren (2012) points out, the situation in Québec involves concerns surrounding Catholic practice rather than self-identification. Indeed, it seems that while most Québécois continue to self-identify as belonging to the Catholic Church, drops in participation rates indicate a reluctance in Québec to follow the dictates of Catholicism whether in terms of sexual values or in terms of mandatory regular church attendance. Warren sums up this situation succinctly noting, “Catholic was what kers wanted to ‘be.’ It was just no longer what they wanted to ‘do’” (91). This points to a different kind of privatization in Québec. Thus it is not only the case that religion has been removed from public life in Québec through processes of institutional differentiation that saw the Catholic church lose its influence over health and education, but Catholic practice has also seen a marked decline in the province and Catholicism has been relegated not so much to the private sphere as to the sphere of cultural self-identification.

But the idea of cultural Catholicism has also been used to buttress arguments against secularization as religious decline in Québec. Donald Boisvert (2010), for instance, argues that stable rates of Catholic identification refute arguments for this kind of secularization. While Boisvert admits that institutional
differentiation has certainly taken place in Québec, he argues that high levels of Catholic self-identification show that Québécois continue to turn to Catholic values as a means of organizing both their individual lives and also the development of their secular state (62). Using Charles Taylor’s terminology, Boisvert admits that Québec may have experienced S1 (differentiation) and S2 (decline in practice) but argues that Catholicism’s central place in Québec’s self-image and in its societal values indicates that Québec has not yet undergone S3 (changes in the condition of belief such that religion is only one option among many and frequently not the easiest option to embrace) (60). Yet as I argue below, the idea that elements of Catholic belief and practice ought to be optional and that religion constitutes therefore a choice rather than a taken-for-granted reality are key aspects of religious change that tend to be associated with the religious landscape of contemporary Québec.

3.2.3. Religious Change

Secularization has often been interpreted to involve not an overall decline in religious beliefs and practice but also important changes in the ways modern individuals engage with religion. Again, Québec is no exception. Recent scholarship on religion in Québec and especially on the beliefs and practices of youth in Québec describe a society undergoing drastic religious change. As is the case more generally, these changes tend to be described as symptomatic of modernity. Scholars who present younger generations as being at the forefront of
change further emphasize this point. In what follows I briefly consider scholarship on religious change in Québec focusing on the three main developments noted above: increased voluntarism, syncretism, and commercialization.

As I argued above, indications of growing voluntarism in Québec have been associated with Catholicism’s transition from a religious marker to a cultural one. In other words, the notion that Québécois want to be Catholic without necessarily doing Catholicism is evidence that Catholic practice in Québec has become more voluntaristic. As Québécois eschew regular church attendance and refuse to have their sexual values dictated to them by religious authorities, they abandon obligatory adherence in favour of religious communities and practices that fit with their own individual values and preferences. As Jean-Philippe Perreault (2011) puts it, in Québec there has been a move from “l’obligation à la liberté”14 (772). Likewise, declining rates of church attendance since the 1960s are evidence of what Stark et. al (2004) have referred to as the unchurching of modern religion.

But there is also evidence in Québec of what Robert Wuthnow (1998) has called a move from dwelling to seeking as well. In part, as both Suzanne Boutin (2008) and Solange Lefebvre (2008) have noted, this attitude of seeking rather than dwelling is evidenced in the growth of so-called popular Catholicism and especially in the growing popularity of religious pilgrimage in Québec. As Lefebvre argues, through contemporary pilgrimage “les individus réapproprient

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14 “obligation to freedom”
plus individuellement, sélectivement et émotionnellement la tradition religieuse…” (2008, 5). Rather than representing a religious obligation, contemporary pilgrimages are instead examples of “la quête de mieux-être de la modernité” (Boutin 2008, 30).

The fact that contemporary Québécois are increasingly seeking spiritual wellbeing outside of the strictures of the Catholic Church has also been interpreted as a cause of increased syncretism in the province. In a limited sense, the refusal among certain Québécois to fully accept Catholic teachings concerning sexuality, for instance, is evidence of what Reginald Bibby (2008) has called a selective use of Catholicism or in his terms, “religion à la carte” (169). Bibby argues that a discrepancy between what Québec Catholics want and what the Catholic Church is willing is to offer is in fact to blame for declining rates of religious practice in the province (169). But although syncretism can involve the selection of palatable religious options and the dismissal of unpalatable ones from within a single religious tradition, it also refers to the tendency to combine desirable elements from more than one religious or spiritual tradition.

Sometimes, the combination of disparate spiritual beliefs and practices is associated with the New Age movement in Québec. Yet as Geoffroy Martin (2001) notes, there have been very few sociological assessments of the New Age movement in the province. Frederick Bird and Bill Reimer conducted two

15 “individuals re-appropriate the religious tradition in more personal, selective, and emotional ways…”
16 “[a] modern quest for well-being”
surveys in Montréal in 1975 and 1980 in an attempt to gauge participation rates in new religious and para-religious movements noting what they called an “experimental attitude” among the individuals they surveyed (1982, 13); however their study included both typical New Age practices including palm reading and also involvement in so-called “new” religions such as Scientology and Baha’i and so fails, in my assessment, to give an accurate portrayal of the New Age movement in the province.

More recent studies on religion in Québec have claimed that youth in particular are especially prone to syncretism. François Gauthier and Jean Philippe Perreault (2008) note in their edited volume Jeunes et Religion au Québec, for instance, that youth often reinterpret traditional Christian themes and combine these in a syncretic fashion with exotic religions, spiritualism, and other magical beliefs and practices (10). Elsewhere, they argue that Québec youth increasingly combine disparate “tribal” and archaic practices along with shamanism, drugs, and other esoteric beliefs in attempts to create their own individual religious outlooks (2013, 535-6). Importantly, this mixing and matching of religious options tends either to be dismissed or is presented as evidence of commercialization or consumerism.

Increased voluntarism and the fact that individuals tend to pick and choose from among religious options have led scholars to describe modern religious practice as increasingly commercialized or consumer-oriented. Again, Québec is

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17 Youth and Religion in Québec
no exception. In 1989, the Catholic bishops of Québec organized a research project among Catholic communities in the province to define future directions for the church. In their report, they noted “too many Catholics are behaving in the church as simple consumers of the services a particular religious institution can offer to them, without feeling themselves to be full members of a communion, a family, one people” (quoted in Lefebvre 2012, 49). In their diagnosis of Catholic practice in Québec they point both to voluntarism but also to a perceived commercialization. But while Catholic bishops viewed this trend with apprehension in 1989, in recent years the Catholic Church has adapted to this perceived commercialization in part by producing their own advertisements designed to secure donations for yearly fundraising campaigns.

In 2008, for instance, the Catholic diocese of Québec created three videos that, according to Jean-Philippe Perreault (2012), used conventions typically found in commercial advertising (358). One of these advertisements opens with a young man wearing a hooded sweatshirt who says: “Moi pis mes chums, on est devenus complètement accro… accro à Dieu” (ECDQ.TV 2008). The short clip, which plays on themes related to drug addiction, also asks viewers to donate to the Catholic diocese online. More recently in 2011 the Catholic diocese of Montréal working with the advertising agency Dentsubos put up a billboard that read simply “Faites votre prière” near the entrance to aging Champlain Bridge. The diocese also placed ads in the sports sections of Le Journal de Montréal and

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18 “My friends and I became completely addicted… addicted to God.”
19 “Say Your Prayer”
La Presse, Montréal’s two largest daily newspapers, showing a list of hockey team placements with the word “Prions”\textsuperscript{20} replacing Montréal’s team name on the list: Montréal’s team, the Canadiens, were in eighth place at the time (Vaillancourt 2013).

But as is the case with the commercialization of religion more generally, scholars of religion in Québec have also noted a movement away from transcendent goals and toward this-worldly benefits in the province. Perreault (2012), for instance, describes contemporary religiosity in Québec as becoming increasingly focused on utility (378). Likewise Boutin (2008) describes a movement within both popular Catholicism and within new religious movements in Québec toward therapeutic benefits arguing that religious goals and practical concerns about health and wellness have become entwined (31). Guy Laperrière (1992) also comments on this apparently modern focus on health and wellness but notes that Quebeckers also combine religious pursuits with the secular pursuit of wealth. Laperrière provides a negative evaluation of this perceived change arguing that secular religions of health, wellbeing, and wealth have replaced traditional religious goals. As he puts it, “la loterie a remplacé le miracle: Loto-Québec représente pour plusieurs le dernier espoir… voilà les nouveaux dieux de la société québécoise…!”\textsuperscript{21} (124). As Raymond Lemieux (1991) puts it, Quebeckers have moved away from traditional religious values to consecrate on

\textsuperscript{20} “Let us pray”

\textsuperscript{21} “the lottery has replaced miracles: Loto-Québec represents for many their last hope… here are the new gods of Québec society!”
The allures of modern commercial life have also been seen as both

distractions from and as threats to traditional religious values. But the apparently

modern affects of innovation and desire have also been blamed for an overall
decline in the social importance of religion in Québec. Jean-Philippe Warren

(2012), for instance, argues that growing consumerism in Québec following the

Quiet Revolution helped fuel the decline of the Catholic Church in the province.

According to Warren, the “spectacular rise in secular opportunities in a rising

consumer society” (82) made the Catholic Church, which continued to promote

the values of “poverty and abnegation” (87) considerably less attractive to

French-speaking Quebeckers after the 1960s. More specifically, Warren claims

that this shift in values caused the priesthood and other religious occupations to

be viewed as out of step with modern Québec society (90). Thus increased

commercialization and consumerism in Québec are perhaps not only responsible

for fundamental changes in religion in the province as evidenced by a movement

from otherworldly to this-worldly goals but are also responsible for an overall

decline both in religious practice and in the prestige associated with the

priesthood in Québec.

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22 “a mix of marketing, science-fiction, and real or presumed technological advances…”
3.3. Secularism in Québec

An exploration of secularism in Québec is complicated somewhat by the fact that although the both secularism and laïcité are sometimes understood to refer to the same ideological-philosophical program for shaping (or re-shaping) the world, the term laïcité has its own particular history that reaches back at least to French Revolution. Thus while some scholars treat the two terms as equivalent (cf. Bouchard and Taylor 2008), others have provided a separate English term instead, translating laïcité as laicism (cf. Koussens 2009).

Jérôme Melançon (2015), who translates laïcité not as laicism but rather as laicity, argues that there is a fundamental difference between secularism and laicity and he insists that this difference depends upon the religious tradition in which each term arose. According to Melançon, secularism depends upon Protestant reference points and tends to involve attempts to ensure state neutrality in order ensure that a plurality of religious options are free from government control. Laicity, on the other hand, depends instead upon a Catholic model and seeks to protect the State from the overarching control of a single religious institution, in this case the Catholic Church (87). My own description of secularism as a program to manage, limit, or constrain religion’s presence in the public sphere encompasses both attempts to ensure state neutrality in the face of religious difference and also attempts to protect the State religious influence or control. In what follows I use the terms secularism and laïcité interchangeably.
3.3.1. The Origins of Secularism in Québec

Although *laïcité* has become a key term in Québec in recent decades, precursors to contemporary secularist projects existed long before the Quiet Revolution and contemporary debates surrounding charters of secularism in the province. As I noted above, the Province of Québec experienced a form of secularism under British rule (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 139). Despite the presence of a national Church following the conquest and an initial lack of neutrality that saw Catholics submitted to the Test Act, among other controls, between 1763 and 1774, Britain nevertheless gave Catholics some degree of religious freedoms while working to limit the presence of the Catholic Church in the political sphere. Likewise, anti-clerical movements in the 1940s and 1950s combined with the publication of *Refus Global* and the advent of *Cité Libre* saw intellectuals in Québec attempting to limit the Catholic Church’s influence in Québec society. However, formal attempts to create official secularism in the province began in earnest during the Quiet Revolution with the creation of the *Mouvement laïque de langue française* (MLF).

The first congress of the MLF was held at the University of Montréal on April 8, 1961 and was attended by over eight hundred people (Lebeuf 1963, 180). The form of *laïcité* proposed by the MLF both at its inaugural congress and afterward reflects the goals of both secularism and laicity in Melançon’s terminology. On the one hand, according to Pierre Lebeuf, secretary of the MLF in 1960s, the MLF sought to renew Québec society by opposing what it saw to be
an increase in intégrisme catholique or Catholic fundamentalism (179). In part this involved attempts to end what the MLF saw to be a dangerously close association between the State and Church leading up to the Quiet Revolution that permitted the State to violate the conscience of its citizens through its institutions (Langevin 1963, 184). Yet Robert Élie, who wrote the introduction of the published 1961 congress proceedings, notes that the creation of the MLF was also a response to growing pluralism in the province and involved the recognition that Protestants, Jews, and non-religious individuals deserved equal and neutral treatment by the government and its institutions (Lamonde 2010, 64).

At its outset, the MLF combined the goals of protecting the State from religious interference (laiicity) and ensuring state neutrality in the face of religious diversity (secularism) in its push for the creation of a non-confessional educational system in Québec. In February of 1962, the MLF submitted its eighty-eight-page report to the Parent Commission. The report outlined eighteen recommendations that urged the Parent commission to de-confessionalize the school system, to respect the beliefs of religious minorities and non-religious persons, to divide school boards along linguistic rather than religious lines, and to create a separate Ministry of Education in Québec (87). Yet as noted above, while the government did create a Ministry of Education in 1964, it would take another four decades for Québec schools to become de-confessionalized and for school boards to be divided according to language of instruction.
But even the formal secularization of education with the creation of a Ministry of Education did not necessarily ensure the kind of state neutrality sought by the MLF. During the 1960s, religion and politics remained closely linked in Québec. In a speech given in 1961 after being awarded an honorary degree at the University of Montréal, for instance, then Premier Jean Lesage explained, “au Canada-Français la liberté des cultes est garantie par la loi, mais l’État est officiellement chrétien”23 (6).

3.3.2. Reasonable Accommodation

As I explain below, questions as to the religious nature of the State in Québec and concerns regarding its preferential treatment of Christian symbols both within the National Assembly and elsewhere continue to be pertinent issues in the province. Yet the growing popularity of laïcité in Québec is a result not so much of attempts to officially separate the Church and State but rather of attempts to manage religious difference in the province. Or as Alma Mancilla (2011) puts it, laïcité has become a key term for framing “la presence du religieux, en particulier du religieux minoritaire, dans l’espace public québécois”24 (791). In fact, despite the presence of discourse surrounding laïcité in the 1960s centered on the actions of the MLF, the term was hardly used at all in Québec until the 1990s and only became a central theme in Québec politics leading up to

23 “In French Canada [Québec] freedom of religion is guaranteed by law, but the State is officially Christian”

24 “the presence of religion, and especially minority religion, in public space in Québec”
debates on reasonable accommodation, which peaked in the late 2000s (Koussens 2011, 812).

The problem of reasonable accommodation in Québec is aptly summarized in a detailed report entitled *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation* published in 2008. The three hundred-page report presents the findings of the *Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences*, more commonly referred to as the Bouchard-Taylor Commission and named after its co-chairs Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor. On February 8, 2007 Premier Jean Charest established the Commission to take stock of accommodation practices in Québec; analyze the pertinent issues; conduct public consultations on the topic of religious accommodations; and formulate recommendations (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 17).

In part, the creation of the Commission was a response to a flurry of media coverage beginning in 2006 that focused on governmental accommodation of minority religious views and practices in the province (Giasson and Brin 2010, 433). As Giasson and Brin (2010) argue, intense media coverage of religious accommodations in all of Québec’s largest daily newspapers in the mid-2000s precipitated a perceived crisis in Québec society as Quebeckers began to fear that the presence of minority religious groups would threaten the dominant secular culture of the province (432).
Bouchard and Taylor also note that media coverage exacerbated fears about cultural and religious diversity in Québec and divide media coverage of religious accommodations into three evocatively named phases: antecedents (1985-2002), the intensification of controversy (2002-2006), and a time of turmoil (2006-2007). Bouchard and Taylor document over sixty cases of real or perceived religious accommodations reported in the media. Key moments include: the controversy surrounding the hanging of an eruv wire and concerning the erection of sukkahs in a Hasidic neighbourhood in Montréal that peaked in the early 2000s; the so-called Multani affair in 2002 concerning whether or not a Montréal Sikh student should be permitted to wear his kirpan to school; media reports of a student being expelled from a Montréal private school for refusing to remove her hijab in 2003; controversy over the installation of frosted windows at a YMCA in Montréal at the request of an Orthodox Jewish organization in 2006; and the creation of a code of ethical behavior or “life standards” in Hérouxville, Québec in 2007 (48-56). As Bouchard and Taylor note, the media misrepresented many of these issues at the time. To give just one example, while the media and public generally assumed that the Montréal YMCA was obligated to install frosted windows, their decision to install these windows was actually the result of open talks with an Orthodox Jewish organization that requested and paid for the installation of frosted windows to replace defective blinds that it had requested and paid for (without controversy) a decade earlier in 1995 (70).
The case of the Hérouxville life standards controversy reflects in some ways both the fears of Québécois and also their misapprehension of the likelihood that immigrant populations pose real threats to Québécois culture. In 2007 the small town of Hérouxville (Pop. 1,300), north of Shawinigan, passed a document outlining the normes de vie or life standards of the town and subsequently sent the document to the Canadian and Québec ministers of immigration at the time (Leroux 2010, 112). Among other things, the life standards document argued that women should be permitted to drive cars; vote; have their own belongings; sign checks; dress as they see fit; and walk alone in public places. The document also stressed that women should not be burned alive; circumcised; burned with acid; or treated as slaves (112). As many commentators have argued, the life standards document appears to be aimed at perceived Muslim practices in particular. Yet as Leroux notes, although the document seems to target Muslim immigrants to Hérouxville, at the time of its production there were no Muslim immigrants whatsoever either in Hérouxville or in any neighbouring towns (112). Additionally, the document is redundant as both the Canadian (1982) and Québec (1975) charters of rights and freedoms already guarantee the rights and privileges it prescribes and the Canadian Criminal Code already protects against the crimes it prohibits.

Bouchard and Taylor are careful to point out in their report that Hérouxville is not representative of the views of rural Québécois, noting that although its life standards document received international media coverage, out of Québec's 763
small towns, only five followed Hérouxville’s example (2008, 75). Yet what the Hérouxville case does speak to is an apprehension, fueled by media coverage, that Québec culture faces serious risks owing to requests for accommodation. Of course the kinds of accommodation feared in the Hérouxville context are absurd and already prohibited by Canadian law. The crisis of reasonable accommodations centered on the fear that accommodations such as those mentioned, including the installation of eruv wires and frosted glass etc. would erode secular values in the province. Still, it remains unclear whether these fears reflect a real or only an imagined danger. As Bouchard and Taylor note, requests for reasonable accommodation in Québec are very rare and moreover in their estimation, “this situation is under control” (79).

The Hérouxville life standards document and the ensuing controversy most importantly point to the problem of Islamophobia in Québec. Bouchard and Taylor devote a section of their report to this issue noting that Muslims, and in particular Arab Muslims, are the groups most subject to discrimination in Québec (234). Although I am unable to give a full account of growing anti-Muslim sentiment in Québec, it is worth noting that among the “offensive remarks” voiced at the regional and province-wide forums organized by the Commission, most of these were aimed at Muslims 25 (233). As Bouchard and Taylor note, part of the problem lies in a basic misapprehension according to which some Quebeckers

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25 Bouchard and Taylor also note that while most “offensive remarks” targeted Muslims, several interveners criticized Jews and Jewish religious practices as well (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 233).
fear a takeover of their basic values in the face of Muslim immigration. Yet Muslims account for only 2% of the population of Québec and, overwhelmingly, Muslim immigrants support the basic projects of democracy, equality, and, importantly, women’s rights (234). In part, reluctance among some to accommodate Muslim religious practices, most notably women wearing the hijab, is the result of a process whereby some Quebeckers have projected their unease concerning certain elements of their own religious past, most notably Catholic dogmatism and traditionalism, onto other religious groups (Shrify-Funk 2010, 540). Thus visible religiosity among immigrant populations (and also among members of Montréal’s Jewish population) is sometimes seen as threatening a return to *La Grande Noirceur* and a disavowal of Québec’s secular commitments.

The Bouchard-Taylor Commission was tasked not only with taking stock of accommodation processes in Québec but also with making recommendations. In presenting their recommendations Bouchard and Taylor attempted to strike a balance between preserving French Canadian identity and culture, promoting the values of secularism, and integrating new immigrants while working to adequately accommodate minority religious views and practices. One important mitigating factor in Québec is the province’s dismissal of the Canadian multicultural model in favour of interculturalism. In Québec, interculturalism refers broadly to attempts to maintain social cohesion through the establishment of French the common public language while encouraging the democratic participation of all citizens (Leroux 2010, 107). Thus in contrast to
multiculturalism, which emphasizes individual rights within a pluralist society, interculturalism emphasizes instead integration into a common, yet flexible, culture (108). Bouchard and Taylor recommend both that Québec “launch a vigorous campaign to promote interculturalism in Québec society” and also that it become officially enshrined in public policy (269). Importantly, secularism is one aspect of the common public culture that Bouchard and Taylor envision.

In their report, Bouchard and Taylor recommend a particular kind of secularism for Québec, which they call laïcité ouverte or open secularism. Jean-Pierre Proulx coined the term laïcité ouverte a decade earlier in Laïcité et religions: Perspective nouvelle pour l’école québécoise (1999), more commonly referred to as the Proulx Report. In the context of Québec schools, laïcité ouverte entailed a secular and cultural approach to religion in education, coupled with recognition of and respect for individuals' spiritual dimensions (Proulx 1999, 229). Yet while it introduced the term laïcité ouverte into Québec's lexicon, the Proulx Report does not fully develop the concept in any general sense. In fact, the term only appears three times in the two-hundred-and-eighty-two page report.

Bouchard and Taylor, on the other hand, include laïcité ouverte as a key recommendation and so devote an entire section to open laicity in their report. Bouchard and Taylor argue that there is a broad consensus in Québec for open secularism which they define as a form of secularism that “recognizes the need for the State to be neutral (statutes and public institutions must not favour any religion or secular conception) but also acknowledges the importance for some
people of the spiritual dimension of existence and, consequently, the protection of freedom of conscience and religion” (2008, 140). They also argue that open secularism reflects a general desire among Quebeckers to permit religious expressions (e.g. the wearing of the hijab) in schools and that open secularism expresses therefore an institutional arrangement designed to protect rights and freedoms rather than “a constitutional principle and an identity marker to be defended” as is the case in France’s republican model of secularism (141).

3.3.3. The Québec Values Charter

Despite the recommendations of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission and their focus on laïcité ouverte, in 2013 the Parti Québécois government opted for a strict version of secularism in their proposed Values Charter, also called the Secularism Charter. The proposed charter, eventually framed as a bill and renamed Projet de loi 60 - Charte affirmant les valeurs de laïcité et de neutralité religieuse de l'État ainsi que d'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes et encadrant les demandes d'accommodement26, received national and international media attention and precipitated a fierce debate in Québec concerning the province’s perceived secular identity and the place of minority religious expressions in Québec.

26 “Bill 60 – Charter affirming the values of State secularism and religious neutrality and the equality between women and men, and providing a framework for accommodation requests”
The proposed charter marks a clear departure from the recommendations of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission. Yet as Raffaele Iacovino (2015) argues, this departure may not reflect an actual shift in public or political opinion. Although Jean Charest commissioned the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, his Liberal government did not implement the Commission’s recommendations. Moreover, even before she won a minority government in 2012, Pauline Marois, then leader of the Parti Québécois, openly flouted the Commission’s findings (Iacovino 2015, 51). Thus although Bouchard and Taylor claim to represent a majority opinion in the province concerning the desirability of open secularism, their findings may have instead been “a last ditch effort to keep Québec on the pluralist path” (50).

As the official title of the proposed bill suggests, the Values Charter sought to accomplish several goals at once. These goals are summarized in the preamble to the bill as follows.

Ce projet de loi a pour objet d’instituer une Charte affirmant les valeurs de laïcité et de neutralité religieuse de l’État ainsi que d’égalité entre les femmes et les hommes et encadrant les demandes d’accommodement.

Le projet de loi a aussi pour objet de préciser, dans la Charte des droits et libertés de la personne, que les droits et libertés fondamentaux qui y sont prévus s’exercent dans le respect des valeurs que constituent l’égalité entre les femmes et les hommes, la primauté du français ainsi que la séparation des religions et de l’État, la neutralité religieuse et le caractère laïque de celui-ci, tout en tenant compte des éléments emblématiques ou toponymiques du patrimoine culturel du Québec qui témoignent de son parcours historique.

Le projet de loi prévoit également que les organismes
publics doivent, dans le cadre de leur mission, faire preuve de neutralité en matière religieuse et refléter le caractère laïque de l'État. Il énonce aussi diverses obligations pour les membres du personnel des organismes publics dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions, dont un devoir de neutralité et un devoir de réserve en matière religieuse se traduisant notamment par une restriction relative au port d'un objet marquant ostensiblement une appartenance religieuse. Le projet de loi énonce également que les membres du personnel d'un organisme public doivent exercer leurs fonctions à visage découvert et que les personnes à qui leurs services sont fournis doivent également avoir le visage découvert lors de la prestation de tels services (Québec 2013, 2).

Thus the bill attempts to 1. Legally establish secularism in Québec, 2. Ensure equality between men and women, 3. Establish the primacy of French as a common public language, 4. Ensure the continued presence of markers of Québec cultural heritage, and 5. Ensure the neutrality of state employees, by 6. Requiring state employees to avoid wearing “ostentatious” religious objects and 7. Requiring state employees as well as those seeking governmental services to uncover their faces.

In part, the tabling of bill 60 was in keeping with the Bouchard-Taylor

27 “The purpose of this bill is to establish a Charter affirming the values of State secularism and religious neutrality and of equality between women and men, and providing a framework for accommodation requests. A further purpose of the bill is to specify, in the Charter of human rights and freedoms, that the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by that Charter are to be exercised in a manner consistent with the values of equality between women and men and the primacy of the French language as well as the separation of religions and State and the religious neutrality and secular nature of the State, while making allowance for the emblematic and toponymic elements of Québec's cultural heritage that testify to its history. Public bodies must, in the pursuit of their mission, remain neutral in religious matters and reflect the secular nature of the State. Accordingly, obligations are set out for personnel members of public bodies in the exercise of their functions, including a duty to remain neutral and exercise reserve in religious matters by, among other things, complying with the restriction on wearing religious objects that overtly indicate a religious affiliation. As well, personnel members of a public body must exercise their functions with their face uncovered, and persons to whom they provide services must also have their face uncovered when receiving such services” (Official Translation).
Commission’s recommendations as the Commission urged Québec to officially clarify secularism in the Québec context (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 271). But the bill’s prohibitions on religious objects and clothing mark a clear departure from the open secularism that Bouchard and Taylor champion. The banning of so-called ostentatious religious objects by state employees became a central issue in subsequent debates and represented, for the government at least, a key point in their overall program.

Fig. 1
The centrality of these prohibitions led the government to widely circulate an infographic that provided visual guidelines for the kinds of religious objects that would be permitted and those that would be prohibited (See Fig. 1). Thus while religious jewelry including small crosses, crescent earrings, and Star of David rings would be allowed, very large crosses, kippas, hijabs, and turbans would be prohibited. The rationale behind the banning of “ostentatious” religious objects is worth exploring as it represents a new interpretation of secularism in Québec that differs from Melançon’s models of secularism and laicity mentioned above.

Rather than protect the State from an overarching religious institution (laicity) or protect religious minorities from governmental controls (secularism), the new model of secularism in Québec framed by prohibitions concerning “ostentatious” religious objects attempts not only to ensure official governmental neutrality but also to protect citizens from accusations of implicit proselytization. Bernard Drainville, the minister responsible for the bill, introduced the concept of implicit proselytization arguing that ostentatious religious objects communicate the beliefs of the individuals who wear them. Importantly, Drainville framed this communication as the promotion or proselytization of these beliefs (Boisvert 2013). In other words, the Charter sought to manage not only the visual presence of religious objects in Québec but also the presence or promotion of religious beliefs. This marks a move toward increased privatization in the province as, according to the proposed Charter, ostentatious religious objects and the

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28 “A NEUTRAL STATE IN THE SERVICE OF ALL. Examples of non-ostentatious signs that would be permitted to State employees. Examples of ostentatious that would not be permitted to State employees.”
religious commitments they communicate should remain private matters and should not be permitted in government offices.

Yet rules for determining just which objects are ostentatious and therefore communicate religious beliefs and which are not were uneven at best. While the presence of hijabs, kippas, and turbans in government offices were deemed problematic, the continued presence of a large crucifix in the National Assembly was not. The introduction to bill 60 contains the justification for this perplexing unevenness. Although the Charter sought to limit the presence of certain religious objects in certain contexts, other apparently religious objects (i.e. the crucifix in the National Assembly) were deemed to be “emblematic… elements of Québec’s cultural heritage” (Québec 2013, 2). In other words, the Charter sought to avoid what could only be seen as hypocrisy in banning some religious objects while maintaining others by reframing some objects as historical rather than religious markers. Yet the status of the crucifix in the National Assembly as a historically important object is questionable. In 2013 the crucifix was less than a century old, having been placed there by Maurice Duplessis in 1936 (Globe and Mail 2013).

The tabling of bill 60 in 2013 caused a great deal of controversy. There were large protests in Montréal, for instance, that saw thousands of religious minorities, many of them wearing so-called ostentatious religious objects, march through downtown Montreal (CBC 2013). The issue also became a focal point for the 2014 provincial election that saw Pauline Marois’ Parti Québécois government replaced by the Liberals under Philippe Couillard, who opposed the
bill. Yet while the Values Charter was certainly divisive, both Action Democratique and Québec Solidaire, the two other major provincial political parties, supported the bill in principle. Québec Solidaire presented its recommendations for a secularism charter leading up to the election that both relaxed regulations concerning ostentatious religious objects and recommended the removal of the crucifix from the National Assembly (Québec Solidaire, 2013). But while bill 60 may have ultimately led to the defeat of Pauline Marois’ Parti Québécois government, a majority of French-speaking Quebeckers supported the bill (La Presse 2013). As I explain in the next section, if discourse surrounding official secularism was practically nonexistent in Québec prior to the debates on reasonable accommodation, in recent years secularism has become a key marker of Québec society.

As was the case with debates concerning reasonable accommodation, the Values Charter once again brought Islamophobia to the fore in Québec politics. Almost immediately the proposed Charter was condemned for promoting Islamophobia. Importantly, the Québec Coalition Against Islamophobia was one of the main organizers of the protests in Montréal in September 2013 (CBC 2013). Anti-Muslim sentiment in the province peaked during the Charter debates as Muslims, and Muslim women in particular, became the target of verbal and physical abuse. Muslim women both in Montréal, where the majority of Muslim immigrants reside, but elsewhere in the province as well, were spat upon and told to go back to their own country (CBC 2013). The Charter was criticized for
targeting Muslims in particular in part owing to the focus on equality between women and men in the title. Because gender equality was enshrined in Québec decades earlier with the Québec Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1975), the Charter’s focus on gender equality linked as it was with restrictions on conspicuous religious clothing was widely seen to target perceived Muslim religious obligations for the wearing of the hijab.

Concerns surrounding religious clothing including the hijab, burqa, and niqab intensified both in Québec and in the rest of Canada after recent attempts by Stephen Harper’s federal Conservative government’s to ban the niqab at citizenship ceremonies. Although the banning of the niqab was eventually deemed unlawful, the niqab debate reignited discussions concerning ostentatious religious objects in Québec leading up to the 2015 federal election. But although a large majority (93%) of Québécois supported the niqab ban (Beeby 2015) there appears to be a growing recognition in Québec that Islamophobia constitutes a real social and political problem. On October 1, 2015, the National Assembly unanimously passed a motion tabled by Québec Solidaire spokesperson Françoise David condemning Islamophobia (Biron 2015). In an apparent rejection of the implicit connections made between Islam and gender inequality in the Values Charter, David stressed, “l’immense majorité de nos concitoyens de confession musulmane ne veulent qu’une chose: vivre en paix au Québec, en
3.4. The Modern Imaginary in Québec

Discourse surrounding religion and modernity in Québec has undergone major changes in the last century. Yet I contend that Québec’s ‘imaginaire collectif’ can be understood as a particular instance of the larger modern imaginary that I outlined in chapter two.

In chapter two I described the modern imaginary as involving both temporal and spatial dimensions. Temporally, modernity in Québec involves a contrast between a perceived dark (religious) past and an imagined bright (secular) future. Spatially, modernity in Québec is understood both in terms of a movement from a rural social organization to an urban one but also in terms of a distinction between a modern, enlightened, and secular us in contrast to a backward, oppressive, religious other. This perceived other, highlighted in the debates surrounding reasonable accommodations and the Values Charter, is often perceived as originating from a geographically distant location (as an immigrant) and supporting ethically distant beliefs and practices as summarized both in the somewhat hysterical Hérouxville life standards document but also in the government’s largely implicit assertion in its proposed Values Charter that the

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29 “the vast majority of our Muslim fellow citizens want just one thing: to live in peace in Québec while integrating the Québécois values of equality between men and women.”
beliefs and practices of religious others conflict with modern secular values including the equality of women and men (Québec 2013, 2).

I also claimed that the modern imaginary depends upon a particular understanding of religion’s place in the modern world. Modernity in Québec is not only contrasted against a perceived religious past but is also seen as involving the key processes of secularization and secularism. As is the case more broadly, increasingly modernity in Québec involves a clear distinction between religion and the secular in which the secular position is viewed as a default position and in which religious commitments are seen to be conscious decisions that might threaten the secular status quo and ought to be managed.

This last point speaks to increased privatization in Québec not only in that religion has retreated from politics and the public sphere but also in that religious commitments have been framed as both personal and as a potential threat to Québec’s secular values. This view is apparent in the widely supported notion that civil servants ought to be prohibited from wearing ostentatious religious objects. According to this view, such objects flaunt the religious beliefs of those who wear them in an unacceptable way and in fact constitute implicit proselytization. Thus religion in Québec has recently been viewed as not only something that should remain private and be enclosed within the walls of religious buildings or within the minds of adherents, but as something that should be practically invisible. Of course support for the invisibility of religion, at least among civil servants and within government offices, has its limits. Certain
apparently religious objects (i.e. the crucifix in the National Assembly) are viewed as both acceptable and desirable markers of identity. Yet much in the same way that religious heritage has been re-imagined in Québec as cultural heritage, these religious objects and toponymic elements have been stripped of their religious significance to become symbols of cultural, rather than religious heritage.

The move towards extensive privatization in Québec is also linked to increased rationalization. In part Québec’s secularism project is one example of the broad trend explored above according to which religious views, to the extent that they are permitted in political discourse, must be stripped of their religious contents and re-framed so as to be comprehensible to all citizens whether religious or not. Additionally, as is the case more generally, secularism is sometimes presented a movement away from the irrational past through the valorization of rational principles.

Both these views were often expressed in the public consultations in the lead up to bill 60. For instance, in its statement during the public consultations the Rassemblement pour la Laïcité notes, “dans une société pluriculturelle, plusieurs convictions spirituelles et pratiques religieuses cohabitent, parfois s’affrontent. Il va de soi que l’État doit fonder les règles de vie en société sur des principes rationnels…” (RL 2014, 9). Similarly, the Movement Laïque Québécois criticizes religious schooling noting, “[les] enfants sont à la fois victimes d’un

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30 “in a multicultural society many different spiritual convictions and religious practices coexist and sometimes clash with one another. It is obvious that the State must base its rules for social life on rational principles.”
endoctrinement religieux qui atrophie leur jugement rationnel... et ne reçoivent pas l'instruction qui leur est due”31 (MLQ 2013, 22). Denis Jeffrey (2010) describes a movement toward increased privatization in Québec as a response to processes of rationalization, noting that Québécois are reluctant to publicly declare a religious affiliation out of fear that these views will be deemed backward or foolish. As Jeffrey puts it, describing a hypothetical modern Québécois,

[C]e Québécois, qui a vécu la modernisation de sa société en accéléré, est forcé de vivre sa religion dans le privé, et à éviter toute confession publique afin de se protéger du mépris et de l'humiliation. Il est devenu trop gênant, et même honteux, pour ce Franco-Québécois qui se veut moderne, de confesser son appartenance religieuse. Il ne voudrait pas perdre la face devant les autres32 (Jeffrey 2010, 255).

As I explain in greater detail in section six, the perceived shame associated with holding irrational beliefs is not limited to religious beliefs but also holds, to an even greater degree, with beliefs that are deemed superstitious or magical.

As I argued above, the processes of rationalization and disenchantment are closely linked (cf. Weber 1917). In describing disenchantment, Charles Taylor invokes Québec’s experience as a paradigmatic case that shows how modern dismissals of magic and enchantment involve more than simply replacing religious theories of the world with rational or scientific ones. According to Taylor

31 “children are both victims of religious indoctrination, which atrophies their rational judgment... and do not receive the instruction they deserve.”

32 This Québécois, who lived through the accelerated modernization of his society, is forced to live his religion in private and to avoid the public expression of his religion in order to protect himself from contempt and humiliation. It has become too embarrassing, even shameful, for this Québécois, who sees himself as modern, to confess his religious adherence. He would not want to lose face in front of others.”
one of the big differences between, say, a Québécois today and his French ancestors of five centuries ago lies not merely in different beliefs about spirits of the woods or the healing powers of relics but in our inability to conjure up the experience of woods and relics as charged, to sense the charge inherent in these objects rather than seeing it as a theory we have formed about their power (307, italics in original).

Thus while rationalization or the privileging of rational, scientific, and technical explanations of the world tends to be associated with Québec’s movement from a premodern past into modernity, Québec has also undergone processes of disenchantment in its encounter with modernity. These processes, which I explore below in the context of Montréal, have not only caused enchanted views of the world to become undesirable; according to Taylor, they have caused these views to become inconceivable in the context of modern Québec.

3.5. Religion in Montréal Today

A full account of cultural and religious developments in Montréal from 1960 to today would require a volume of its own and falls outside the scope of this thesis. In what follows I highlight three main factors that set Montréal apart from Québec’s larger imaginaire collectif described above: religious pluralism, secularization, and disenchantment. I contend that these features make Montréal a particularly interesting location for an investigation of the modern imaginary described in sections two and three above.
Because Montréal remains Québec's largest city, it has experienced a marked growth of religious pluralism that has not occurred to the same degree in the rest of the province. As was the case historically, this religious diversity is largely the result of immigration. Between 1960 and 1970, Montréal's immigrant population came mostly from Europe (67.7%), Africa (11.9%), and Asia (9%) but this picture of immigration would change drastically by the 1990s. Between 1990 and 1996, for instance, European immigration had dropped (19.3%) while immigration from Africa (13.4%) and especially Asia (43.3%) had risen. Additionally, growing numbers of immigrants from Central and South America (11.7%) and the Caribbean (10.3%) arrived in Montréal during this time. As a major city, Montréal receives nearly half of all Québec immigrants and the majority of these live in the city centre rather than the suburbs (Germain 1999, 15). As a result, Montréal has witnessed a “mushrooming of new religious spaces” built to meet the needs of its increasingly diverse population (Mossière 2012, 97). Thus in addition to its Catholic and Protestant churches, Montréal is home to a growing number of mosques, gurdwaras, Hindu temples, and Pagan or Wiccan stores. Moreover, as I note below, Montréal’s China Town, a tourist attraction in its own right, contains dozens of shops that sell good luck charms, amulets, and talismans.

As was the case in the rest of Québec, Montréal’s ethnic and religious diversity has sometimes caused problems in the city, both real and imagined. Historically, Montréal’s large Jewish population has been targeted as a
problematic source of cultural and religious difference. Montréal Jews faced widespread discrimination in Montréal (and elsewhere) leading up the Second World War during which time political leaders issued anti-Semitic statements and a small number of Montréalers vandalized Jewish business in the city (Linteau 1992, 122). But concerns over religious difference were not limited to the 1930s. As noted above, concerns regarding real and perceived requests for religious accommodations made by conservative Jewish organizations including the hanging of eruv wires in Outremont and the installation of frosted glass at a Mile-End YMCA became headline news in Montréal in the lead up to the Bouchard-Taylor Commission. More recently, Montréal’s Muslim population has faced discrimination and, at times, violence. While Muslims account for only 2% of the population of Québec, a majority of these live in Montréal (Bouchard and Taylor 2008, 234). While many Montréalers vocally opposed the Québec values charter and marched in solidarity with Muslim residents during protests against the charter in 2013, Montréal has also witnessed violence directed against Muslim populations. In October 2015, for instance, in the wake of debates concerning the legality of wearing the niqab during the Canadian citizenship ceremony, two teenagers attacked a pregnant Muslim woman and attempted to forcibly remove her hijab (CBC 2015).

But religious pluralism in Montréal is not only a consequence of increased immigration. Since at least the 1960s, Montréalers have also embraced a growing number of new religious movements and alternative spiritualties. As
Richard Bergeron (1994) puts it, since the 1960s “Montréal a été envahie par une plethore de nouveaux groupes spirituels, religieux et parareligieux [qui] ont connu une croissance spectaculaire”\(^{33}\) (187). Somewhat surprisingly, despite Bergeron’s claims of spectacular growth, there is no reliable data concerning the popularity or scope of new religious or spiritual movements in the city. Yet anecdotal evidence points to the presence, if not the popularity, of these movements in Montréal. Montréal’s yearly *Salon International ESP de l’Ésoterisme* for instance brings together dozens of vendors twice a year at Place Bonaventure. Advertisements for this event on the Montréal Tourism website read: “astrologues, numérologues, clairvoyants, médiums, artisans et plus encore. Assistez à des conférences sur les phénomènes paranormaux, en recevant des messages personnels sur l’ésotérisme et en apprenant à faire confiance à l’avenir”\(^{34}\) (Tourisme-Montréal). Additionally, *24 Heures*, a daily newspaper that is handed out free of charge in Montréal’s metros features advertisements for mediums, clairvoyants, psychics, and fortune tellers and advertisements for these same services are often posted outside of metros and on hydro poles on Montréal streets (Fig. 3).

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\(^{33}\) Montréal was overrun by a plethora of new spiritual, religious, and para-religious groups [that] have experienced spectacular growth

\(^{34}\) “astrologers, numerologists, clairvoyants, mediums, artisans, and more. Attend conferences on paranormal phenomena while receiving personal messages on esotericism and learning to trust in the future”
The Quiet Revolution has long been imagined as a cause of increased secularization in Québec both in terms of institutional differentiation but also in terms of declining church attendance. Montréal is no exception to this rule. Despite the growth of minority religious groups and new religious and para-religious options, Montréal is often described a secular city. In part, as Solange Lefebvre (1994) notes, broad historical associations between modern cities and secularization are partly to blame for this characterization (322). Lefebvre points in particular to Harvey Cox’s influential book *The Secular City* (1966) as having
set the tone for later evaluations of the religious or secular nature of cities like Montréal. But empirically driven scholarly work on Montréal also describes declining rates of church attendance in the city, especially among Catholics. For instance, Paul-André Turcotte (1994) notes that Montrealer are less likely than other Quebeckers to attend church: in 1990 75.7% of Montréal Catholics reported that they attended church fewer than five times a year (161). As was the case with the rest of Québec, this trend has been linked to cultural Catholicism. Turcotte notes, for instance, that when Catholic Montrealer do attend church, they do so mostly to celebrate marriages, attend funerals, or else to participate in key markers of Catholic identity including Christmas and Easter masses (161). Again, individualism, dissatisfaction with prescribed church attendance, and a rejection of Church authority are seen as important factors that have led Montréaler to reconceptualise Catholicism as a cultural rather than a religious marker of identity (183).

The decline of religious participation in Montréal has also been explained not so much as a result of the changing preferences of religious adherents but rather as a consequence of urban disenchantment more generally. As I argue below, the built environment of the city is sometimes seen as evidence of this as skyscrapers have come to overshadow churches and cathedrals in Montréal. Guy Lapointe (1994) points to this change in the built environment in Montréal arguing that a lack of “points de repère” or reference points have transformed Montréal in a “non-lieu” or non-place and that this has created a situation in
which spiritual and religious experiences “semblent déphasées dans la ville” (298). Lapointe recognizes cultural and religious diversity in Montréal but argues, “la culture urbaine dans une ville comme Montréal est une culture plurielle, laquelle, malgré ses beautés, comporte aussi un caractère de dureté et génère un monde qui se fait à même une dimension d’anonymat” (297). The hardness of character that Lapointe evokes recalls Simmel’s claims about the urban blasé attitude. Likewise, the anonymity that Lapointe associates with city life recalls Pile’s focus on detachment as a key urban affect.

But disenchantment can also refer to a preference for rational and scientific explanations over religious and supra-rational ones. Historians of Québec routinely focus on Montréal’s scientific pedigree, noting for instance that Ernest Rutherford taught at McGill University or that between 1996 and 1998 Montréal was considered one of the top scientific cities in the world (Trepannier 2012, 1081). According to Michel Trepannier, “dans les faits et “dans sa tête”, la région métropolitaine [de Montréal] est une ville de savoir” (1104). Thus aside from internalizing urban detachment, Montrealers have also internalized the view that their city is “un milieu innovateur” or an innovative environment (1083). Lefebvre lists this kind of disenchantment brought on by rationality and scientific outlook as one of the key projects of the secular city but notes that it has had effects on the public expression of religious beliefs as well. According to

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35 “seem out of place in the city”
36 “the urban culture in a city like Montreal is a plural culture that, despite its beauty, also includes a certain hardness of character and generates a world that also has an anonymous dimension”
37 “In the facts and “in its mind” The metropolitan region [of Montréal] is a city of knowledge”
Lefebvre, in the secular, disenchanted city, religious beliefs are not only privatized and relegated to the private sphere, and their expression almost becomes “taboo” (Lefebvre 1994, 325).

Yet, as is the case more generally, some scholars reject any straightforward narrative of disenchantment in Montréal. While I will pay closer attention to evidence of continued enchantment in Montréal in chapter four, I want to pause briefly in order to examine arguments for apparent re-enchantment in the city. Guy Ménard (1994), for instance, has argued that although traditional religious adherence may have declined in Montréal, contemporary life in the city is nevertheless imbued with sacred experiences. But as was the case with Saler and Landy, Ménard turns to apparently secular experiences in Montréal as sources of contemporary re-enchantment. In particular, Ménard discusses the “tam-tams,” a popular Sunday gathering at the foot of Mount Royal. Montréal’s tourism website describes the event as “a colourful gathering of drummers, dancers, vendors and their admiring audiences” (Tourisme-Montréal). Every Sunday in the spring and summer, hundreds of Montrealers converge near the George-Étienne Cartier monument on Mount Royal to sit outside on the grass, play drums, dance and sing. According to Ménard, many Montrealers also come to the tam-tams to “trip out,” usually by smoking marijuana (Ménard, 314). While there is nothing obviously religious about these gatherings, Ménard nevertheless presents them as examples of the sacred in everyday life. Ménard also mentions
Montréal's popular punk bar *Foufounes électriques* as a potential source of re-enchantment (317). Yet, as I argued above, it remains unclear to me whether these kinds of secular enchantments that delight but do not delude actually constitute enchantment at all. I will return to this point in the next section.

4.6. The Modern Imaginary in Montréal

So far I have described both Québec and Montréal as geographical locations with their own distinct histories. But Montréal is also a particular place with its own particular spatial dynamics. By describing Montréal as a place I want to highlight the ways Montréal tends to be imagined as a unique city with its own authentic core that differs in important ways from its surrounding context (i.e. Québec and Canada). Yet, as I argued above, while modern places tend to be imagined as possessing distinctive elements that separate them from other places—both modern and non-modern—modernity also presupposes that apparently distinct places are caught up in broad developments associated with the Western modern trajectory. Thus while Montréal is routinely imagined as distinct from the “rest of Québec,” and especially from rural Québec, its trajectory fits within narratives concerning Québec’s encounter with modernity (e.g. the Quiet Revolution) and also broader narratives concerning urban modernity explored above. In what follows I briefly outline some key factors that distinguish Montréal as a unique place that is different from, while nevertheless similar to,

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38 Electric Buttcheeks
other modern places. In particular, I examine the city’s perceived relationships with rural areas and the ways the city’s spatial arrangements include important distinctions between religious and secular spheres.

Montréal is routinely contrasted with the rest of Québec both generally and in terms of scholarship on religion. The city’s status as the economic center of Québec and, in the past, of Canada; its ethnic, cultural, and religious pluralism; and its urban nature and related affective dimensions all distinguish Montréal from other cities in Québec and especially from the province’s rural areas. Precisely because Québec had long been associated with a certain rural backwardness, especially leading up to the Quiet Revolution, Montréal tends to be viewed as quintessentially modern. While this distinction between backward rural areas and progressive urban ones is widespread, it became a key feature of modernization in Québec after the 1960s. As Odette Lacasse argues, the views espoused both by the Aménagement rural et Développement agricole (ARDA) and the Bureau d’aménagement de l’Est du Québec (BAEQ) were founded on the conviction that modernity was, above all else, urban (471). Québec’s efforts to strategically develop its agricultural regions in the 1960s were therefore attempts to extend the economic vigour of Montréal to its more rural, economically backward, and traditional areas. Rural areas, typically associated with Québec’s past, constitute therefore Montréal’s constitutive non-modern other. In other words, Montréal’s distinctiveness as a modern, urban city depends upon both a non-modern past and an imagined non-modern rural and backward present.
Yet while Montréal may differ in important ways from contemporary rural and agricultural regions and from Québec's agrarian past, the city is also steeped in Québec’s religious history. Although Montréal is by all accounts a modern metropolis it remains, in the words of Mark Twain, a city of a hundred steeples. Twain, who visited the city in 1881, apparently remarked that it was the first time he had visited a city where “you can't throw a stone without breaking a church window” (Roddick 2010, 133). Likewise, it is difficult to walk anywhere in Montréal without encountering the name of a saint on any street corner. For instance, Montréal’s downtown core and tourist centre lies above Saint Catherine Street between St. Laurent and St. Denis Boulevards. The city is also dotted with impressive Catholic and Protestant churches and Basilicas including Christ Church Cathedral, the Notre-Dame Basilica, St. James United Church, and St. Joseph’s Oratory, to name only a few. Even prior to Brother André’s canonization in 2012, St. Joseph’s Oratory was one of Montréal’s most popular tourist attractions for religious pilgrims who came in search of healing but also for apparently secular tourists as well. Additionally, tourists visiting Montréal’s less obviously religious but nevertheless trendy neighbourhoods to the north of the city centre need only look up to see yet another marker of Montréal’s religious heritage in the form of a 31-metre high illuminated cross on the top of Mount Royal that memorializes the cross reportedly planted there centuries earlier by the city’s founders.
Still, as Montréal’s tourism website makes clear, these religious buildings, street names, and markers are signs not of Montréal’s essential religious nature but rather of the city’s patrimoine religieux or religious heritage. This move to re-imagine apparently religious objects, in this case buildings, as historical rather than religious markers is widespread and has informed, among other things, recent debates concerning the continued presence of a large crucifix in the National Assembly. As is the case in the rest of Québec, attempts to transform religious objects into religious patrimony are present in Montréal. For instance, this move to transform religion into religious patrimony is implicit in recent projects to renovate and restore Montréal’s churches. Churches undergoing government-sponsored renovations in Montréal typically display large government banners that announce: “notre patrimoine religieux, c’est sacré” along with the amount of money being paid to renovate the particular building (Fig. 4). The use of government funds is therefore represented as necessary not so much for the maintenance of religion or even of a religious building themselves, but rather as important for the maintenance of a part of Montréal’s religious heritage.

But this tendency has also involved attempts to re-imagine religious buildings not as memorials to Québec’s religious heritage but rather as formerly religious places that have gradually become secular ones. To give just one example, Concordia University recently organized an exhibition focused on the

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39 “our religious heritage, it’s sacred”
religious buildings located near its downtown campus including the Grey Nuns Mother House, a convent the university acquired and in 2004 transformed into student residences. The exhibition was titled *From Sacred to Secular: How Six Religious Properties Shaped our Urban Grid*. In framing these buildings as *formerly* sacred, the exhibition makes an important claim about the religious or secular nature of Montréal’s built environment and also about the city’s passage through modernity. According to this view, while Montréal may have once been a ‘sacred’ environment, it has undergone a process of secularization in recent years that has precipitated a re-imagining of urban space. Thus in keeping with
broader movements toward modern spatial differentiation, Montréal has become divided into religious places (churches, etc.) and secular ones (everything else).

Although Montréal was founded as a religious settlement in the 17th century, economics rather than religion quickly came to dominate the city’s self-image. This economic growth led to increased immigration beginning as early as 1763 and intensifying in the 1960s, which led to growing cultural and religious pluralism in the city. While Québec’s unique modern trajectory and imaginaire collectif have shaped Montréal, the city tends to be imagined as possessing a particular set of characteristics according to which it differs in important ways from the rest of Québec. In particular, Montréal tends to be viewed as economically, intellectually, and culturally dynamic; as progressive, modern, and secular; as religiously plural; and like other modern cities, as disenchanted. Spatially, Montréal tends to be viewed as possessing a diversity of religious markers in its built environment, place names, and monuments but as a result of processes that transform religion into religious patrimony, these seemingly religious buildings, place names, and monuments are often framed either as markers of religious heritage or else as formerly religious spaces that have now become secular.

4.7. Conclusion

The modern trajectories of both Québec and Montréal mirror the broader developments I traced in section two in my description of the modern imaginary.
Scholarly and popular accounts of Québec and Montréal illustrate the ways key processes associated with modernity including secularization, secularism, and disenchantment have apparently taken place both in the province as a whole and also (and perhaps especially) in the pluralized, urban context of Montréal. Scholarly and popular descriptions of both Québec and Montréal presume that secularization has taken place; that religion and enchantment have retreated from public life; and that religious identification is increasingly a marker of cultural rather than religious identity. Importantly, enchantment in Montréal tends to be conceptualized either in terms of organized new age or occult practices or else tends to be located in secular peak experiences associated with music and drugs.
Chapter 4: Supra-Rational Beliefs in Montréal

In the preceding chapters I described what the modern imaginary is and provided an overview of the ways that this imaginary has been expressed in both Québec and Montréal. In the next two chapters I describe instead what the modern imaginary does. I argued above that the modern imaginary works to privilege some social, spatial, emotional, and affective ways of being in the world while discouraging and concealing others. In what follows I examine a particular subset of the social, spatial, emotional, and affective realities that the modern imaginary excludes and conceals, namely supra-rational beliefs and behaviours associated with lucky and protective objects. My goal in this chapter is not to use survey and interview data to access objective reality or to make claims about Montrealers or Montréal in general. Rather, I present the findings of my qualitative research as a means of empirically anchoring the theoretical points I make in the concluding chapters of this thesis.

4.1. Online Survey

I created an anonymous online survey in both English and French and hosted this survey on two websites created for this project\(^{40}\). The survey was run using LimeSurvey, a free encrypted open source online survey engine. In keeping with my focus on Montréal, I employed a criterion sampling strategy. Criteria for participation were: survey participants were adults (18 years and over)\(^ {40}\) everydayenchantments.com and enchantementsquotidiens.com
who self-identify as current Montréal residents. The first stage of qualitative research was originally designed as a test of my initial hypothesis that enchantment (i.e. supra-rational beliefs) persists in urban, secular locations (i.e. Montréal). However, the surprising data I collected in the online survey led me to revise my research plan and goals and to approach both the survey and subsequent interviews from the standpoint of abductive research design and analysis. Rather than test a hypothesis or allow theory to ‘emerge’ from data, I used the data obtained in the online survey both to structure subsequent interviews and to ground subsequent theorization.

4.1.1. Ethical Considerations

This project received ethical clearance from the General Research Ethics Board of Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario (approval number Romeo #: 6011276). On the landing page of the online survey website, participants were provided with a written letter of information that included contact information in the event they had questions or concerns. All survey participants gave written informed consent. Survey responses were anonymous, though participants who were willing to be interviewed were asked to provide contact information. Survey data were anonymized to prevent any potential harm respondents might suffer from admitting to possessing lucky and protective objects, which are often viewed as superstitious. Additionally, respondents were informed that they could skip any questions that made them feel uncomfortable or that they did not want to answer.
4.1.2. Participants and Recruitment

I recruited participants by posting advertisements for the survey on a number of English and French Montréal-based social media groups concerned with religion and spirituality including Réseau Spirituel de Montréal, Montreal Christians, and Montreal Pagans / Païens de Montréal. Additionally, I left business cards advertising the survey at locations where lucky and protective objects are sold in Montréal including Charme et Sortilège and shops in Montréal’s China Town. Finally, I posted an advertisement for the survey on my own Facebook page and asked personal contacts in Montréal to share the survey on their social media pages as well. In total the online survey received 227 responses.

Recruiting participants primarily through social media limited potential participants as Montrealers who do not use social media were largely excluded. Additionally, hosting the survey online excluded participants without Internet access. Finally, posting advertisements primarily on social media groups concerned with religion and spirituality limited the number of non-religious individuals who had access to the survey. Owing to the limitations of my recruitment strategy, the data I collected are not representative of Montrealers more generally. Rather, they reveal the extent to which particular, limited group of Montréal residents possess and use lucky and protective objects along with the ways they sometimes explain, justify, and minimize the supra-rational beliefs associated with the possession and use of these objects.
4.2. Survey Results

The responses to the online survey revealed five interesting themes that informed the second stage of abductive research: a large number of respondents reported possessing lucky or protective objects; respondents reported varying degrees of confidence in the efficacy of their lucky or protective object; respondents described their objects as being meaningful, important, or significant for a variety of reasons; and several respondents chose to comment on, explain, or justify their possession and use of lucky or protective objects in the open comments section at the end of the survey. Survey questions are attached in appendix A.

In the survey I asked respondents two initial questions about lucky and protective objects. First, I asked, “As an adult, have you ever possessed a lucky/protective object?” 45.3% of respondents (n= 103) answered ‘yes’ to this question. Next I asked, “Do you currently possess a lucky/protective object?” 34% of respondents (n= 77) answered ‘yes’ to this second question. Given the limitations of the survey format, I was unable to determine why over a tenth of those respondents who had possessed lucky or protective objects at some point in the past no longer possess these objects. Still, these initial results are informative. While these percentages are of course in no way representative of Montréal residents more generally, they nevertheless confirmed my suspicion that structuring subsequent interviews around the topic of lucky and/or protective
objects as a means to access supra-rational beliefs would yield interesting results.

Of the 103 respondents who self-identified as having possessed a lucky or protective object as an adult, 92% (n = 95) answered the question, “How confident are you that lucky/protective object contributes to your good luck/protection?” Respondents were asked to rate their confidence on a four-point Likert scale. The results are listed in table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Confidence</th>
<th>Percentage (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Confident</td>
<td>12.6% (n= 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Confident</td>
<td>41.0% (n= 39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very Confident</td>
<td>23.2% (n= 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not At All Confident</td>
<td>23.2% (n= 22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Level of Confidence in the Efficacy of Lucky and Protective Objects

These results indicate an apparent disconnect between an individual’s possession of an object that she conceives as being lucky or protective and her confidence (or lack thereof) that the object really does provide luck or protection. For instance, participant 51 (Female, 31, non-religious) describes her collection of stones as lucky but adds, “I consider them lucky because they’re supposed to have different properties than affect your energy/chakras/aura. I don’t know if it really does, but even if it doesn’t it can put me in a good mood/give me a positive attitude. I don’t know if chakras/auras are real but I kind of feel like they might be…” This issue of confidence (or lack thereof) in the efficacy of lucky or protective objects became a key theme in subsequent interviews and contributes to my discussion of half-belief below.
Because survey respondents were asked to describe their lucky and/or protective objects, the survey also provided an overview of the kinds of objects that respondents conceptualized as lucky or protective. Respondents described nearly two hundred objects from lucky coins and jewelry to prayer beads and images of saints. These descriptions reveal not only what kinds of objects respondents consider lucky or protective but also why these objects are special or important. I asked respondents whether they considered their object to be religious and invited them to comment on this categorization.

Respondents who categorized their object as religious often noted that this categorization depended on that object being associated with a particular religious tradition as with participant 145 (Female, 45, Pagan) who describes a pentacle pendant she received from “a good friend” as religious because it is a “Pagan symbol.” Likewise, participant 1 (Female, 24, Orthodox Jew) describes her hamsa symbol as religious because it is “often seen in the Jewish religion as a symbol of protection.” Participant 18 (Female 23, informed by Buddhism) describes blankets, earrings, and Buddha statues as lucky and protective but notes that while her earrings make her feel “protected, strong, and safe” they are not religious “because their meaning is not drawn… from a group of people that congregate… or call themselves religious” and adds that the Buddha statues are “obviously religious” owing to their association with Buddhism.

Responses to this question often reveal not only whether or not the object is considered religious but also why the object is significant as with participant 45
(Female, 35, Catholic) who notes her “pewter Amerindian stamp of a Thunder Bird” is not religious but instead “has personal meaning” associated with her experience around the time she bought it and with the “wisdom a friend shared” with her at that time. Similarly participant 36 (Female, 26, Culturally Jewish) notes that her “necklace with a dove charm” on which the Hebrew word for peace is written is not religious but is instead “something that has personal meaning.” Importantly, some respondents noted that although their object is religious, it is significant for other reasons as with participant 142 (Female, 32, non-religious) who describes her saint medallion as “a religious symbol” noting, “I value it because it was given to me by my mother.”

Other respondents associated their lucky or protective object not with any religious tradition, with a strictly personal significance, or with family members or friends but rather with the fact that the object is used to obtain certain desired results. For instance, participant 32 (Male, 30, Catholic) describes a piece of quartz as lucky because “good things happen” when the object was with him. Similarly, participant 104 (Female, 39, non-religious) describes a “Chinese dragon carved from pink jade” as lucky because “it brings health, wealth and success.” Sometimes these practical benefits were associated with Wiccan or Pagan practice as with participant 227 (Female, 29 Wiccan) who describes precious stones as lucky and protective noting that thanks to her stones, her “dépression saisonnière n’a pas apparue [sic].”

Likewise participant 194

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41 “seasonal depression did not appear.”
(Female, 20, Wiccan) describes her protective incense as non-religious but
effective as it is “powered by positive intent/energy.”

Finally, some participants linked the significance of their object to cultural
beliefs or ‘superstitions.’ In these cases the objects were often seen as significant
because they were associated with cultural beliefs concerning their lucky or
protective powers rather than because they were associated with a religious
tradition, important moment or person, or because they were effective. For
instance, participant 111 (Male, 29, non-religious) describes a four-leaf clover as
lucky or protective but notes that it is merely “a gimmick bought at a store.”
Similarly, participant 160 (Female, 24, Greek Orthodox) describes her evil eye
necklace as protective but notes that it is important to her because it was a gift
from her grandmother who “was Greek and very religious/superstitious” and who
believed it would “ward off any evil.” Participant 16 (Female, 23, non-religious)
links her lucky rabbit’s foot and evil eye medallion to “cultural beliefs” that such
objects are “for good luck or to ward off evil.”

The importance or significance of the objects can be divided into four
broad categories: objects that are special because they tend to be associated
with or are symbols used in a particular religious tradition either by the
respondent herself or by others (religious objects); objects that are special
because they are associated with cultural ‘superstitions’ (cultural objects); objects
that are special because they are used to obtain particular beneficial results
(practical objects); and finally apparently mundane objects that were either found
and became important in the lives or respondents or else were given as gifts by family members, friends, or other significant persons and became significant owing to this personal connection (personal objects). Importantly, these categories often overlap. For instance, participant 112 (Female, 28, non-religious) describes her “little silver angel” as religious because it is a “representation of an angel” but also notes that it was a gift from her mother and that she keeps “mostly because she gave it to me.” Some examples of the objects described in the survey results are listed below in table 2. Survey participant identification numbers are listed in parentheses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Objects</th>
<th>Personal Objects</th>
<th>Practical Objects</th>
<th>Cultural Objects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Photo du pape” 42 (212)</td>
<td>“My deceased grandfather’s pocket watch” (176)</td>
<td>“Deck of Tarot cards” (68)</td>
<td>“Rabbit’s foot” (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Cross of Jesus above my bed” (32)</td>
<td>“Melted ken doll head” (102)</td>
<td>“My book of Shadows” (137)</td>
<td>“Trèfle à 4 feuilles” 45 (223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Pentacle Pendant” (147)</td>
<td>“A lucky work out top” (91)</td>
<td>“Un autel qui est dédié à ma pratique magique de sorcière” 44 (196)</td>
<td>“Lucky coins” (125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Buddha pendant” (53)</td>
<td>“Chandail chanceux” 43 (202)</td>
<td>“Crystals” (181)</td>
<td>“Lucky cat figure” (85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A St. Christopher medallion” (142)</td>
<td>“Good luck bracelet for exams” (35)</td>
<td>“Incense and candles” (166)</td>
<td>“Lucky penny” (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Emerald stone” (39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Examples of Objects Divided by Category

42 “Photo of the Pope”
43 “Lucky sweater”
44 An altar that is dedicated to my magical practice as a witch”
45 “Four leaf clover”
This separation of lucky and protective objects into four categories based on their significance is not meant to be exhaustive. For although some participants opted to describe their object using words like “religious,” “personal,” “cultural,” or “superstitious” most did not. It remains unclear, therefore, whether or not “a lucky work out top” would be deemed by its wearer to be personal or practical or whether a saint’s medallion would be deemed religious, cultural, spiritual, personal, a combination of one or more of these categories, or something else entirely. This reinforced for me the importance of asking interview participants to describe what role, if any, their lucky or protective object plays in their daily lives.

What this categorization does reveal is the extent to which very different types of objects come to be viewed as both significant and also lucky or protective along with some of the reasons survey respondents considered these objects to be significant. Importantly, this categorization reveals that although a large number of apparently religious objects (e.g. saint medallions) are viewed as lucky or protective, many non-religious objects (e.g. four-leaf clovers) are understood to have similar effects. This indicates that the religion/secular binary on which modernity and the modern imaginary depend fails to adequately account for the diversity of lucky and protective objects and the supra-rational beliefs these sometimes entail. Sometimes lucky and protective objects are both religious and not religious. Likewise, objects that are used for the acquisition of practical benefits via supra-rational means are not always religious or spiritual but
are sometimes cultural artifacts or, as participant 159 (Female, 23, non-religious) describes her lucky necklace, are instead “secular” objects.

In addition to describing their lucky or protective objects, several survey participants (n = 34) also opted to qualify their belief (or lack thereof) in the efficacy of their objects. The survey contained the question, “How confident are you that lucky/protective object(s) contribute to your good luck/protection?” But several participants decided to expand upon their answers either in the space provided to describe their lucky or protective objects or else in the comments section at the end of the survey. While these comments varied, I divide these comments into five broad categories based on the explanations offered: re-iterations of non-belief in the efficacy of lucky or protective objects; psychological explanations of the efficacy of lucky or protective objects; explanations of the ways objects are associated with family members or friends rather than luck per se; appeals to some variation of Pascal’s wager\(^{46}\); and finally appeals to humour, play, and/or irony. I address each of these categories below.

Several participants chose to indicate that although they possess lucky or protective objects, they do not really believe that these objects provide good luck or protection. For instance participant 102 (Male, 30, no religious affiliation) wrote, “For a time I had a melted Ken doll head that I would impale onto various parts of my drum set. This little character was my power animal or protective

\(^{46}\) The 17\(^{th}\) century philosopher Blaise Pascal argued that the benefits of believing in god, even if god does not exist, outweigh any detriments.
friend should something go wrong during a live show. Of course I did not take any of this seriously” (my emphasis). Similarly, participant 48 (Male, 37, atheist) described possessing “various sporting related items that I considered to be good luck charms, such as old equipment and figurines,” but chose to remark in the comments section, “they were good luck charms in tradition and fun only, and in no way did I think they actually caused my teams good luck” (my emphasis). The idea that lucky and protective objects were not actually lucky or protective came up in several responses. Participant 192 (Female, 28, non-religious) described lucky t-shirts she had as a child but notes, “I knew they weren’t actually lucky.” In all three these cases, the participants had already indicated that they were not at all confident that their objects really did provide luck or protection in their answers to the question, “how confident are you that lucky/protective object(s) contribute to your good luck/protection?” Yet despite having already indicated that they were not at all confident in their object’s efficacy, these respondents nevertheless chose to reiterate this point. Whether these respondents chose to reiterate their non-belief for clarity’s sake or to further distance themselves from undesirable superstition is not clear. Yet their repeated denial of the their objects’ efficacy may point to the ways supra-rational beliefs tend to be viewed negatively more generally.

Other participants chose to explain how their objects provided luck and protection. For the most part, these explanations described the objects’ efficacy in terms of psychological processes. For instance, participant 188 (Female, 38, Pantheistic) described several lucky and protective objects including a Chinese
coin stamped with a phoenix and dragon, a baby blanket, a dream catcher, and various precious stones but added immediately after her description, “please note, I do not believe these objects have inherent powers, they only carry the value I ascribe to them.” Later, in the comments section she wrote, “these special objects are not "lucky" per se but they provide comfort which translates to confidence which can result in fortunate outcomes.” Similarly, participant 61 (Female, 29, no religious affiliation) described possessing a saint’s medallion and a “little mini bread to leave in [my] wallet to help for good fortune” but added, “I think lucky objects sometimes work because of the psychological effect we attribute to them. So it could become lucky but not entirely because of the object itself.” Several participants stressed the idea that it is not the object itself that provides luck or protection but rather the meaning or symbolism that individuals attribute to the object including participant 15 (Female, 35, atheist) who wrote, “I think if you believe something brings you good luck, it may help you but it's psychological.” Thus while these participants admitted that they felt their objects might provide luck or protection, they explained the provision of luck or protection in terms of psychological rather than supra-rational processes.

Staying within the broad category of psychological explanations, several participants explained the efficacy of their objects with reference to family members and friends. For some participants, the object’s importance was linked not so much to luck or protection but rather to the family member who gave it to them. For instance, participant 113 (Female, 28, raised Catholic, currently Protestant) notes, “my mom gave me a little silver angel that I keep in my wallet, I
hold on to it mostly because she gave it to me." Several participants described
their lucky and protective objects as gifts, family heirlooms, or mementos of
deceased love ones. Other participants explained that their belief in the efficacy
of their object was contingent on family members believing in its power. As
participant 212 (Female, 24, No religious affiliation) explains, "les objets
généralement [sic] sont reçu [sic] de la famille croyante, ce qui nous fait croire un
peu aussi." For other participants, the object(s) worked instead to remind them
of important relationships. For instance, participant 200 (Female, 27, Non-
practicing Christian) notes, "Mes objets "chanceux" ne sont pas symbole [sic] de
"chance" à proprement parler, ils sont importants dans la mesure où ils
deviennent un espèce [sic] de clin d'oeil d'une personne que j'ai beaucoup
aimée, par exemple. Je me dis qu'ils sont, au travers les objets, présents dans
ma vie." Themes of family, friends, memories, and nostalgia appeared in thirty
of the object descriptions as well.

Several participants also chose to specify that although they were unsure
whether or not their objects really were effective, they kept them because they
might work and because there was no harm in doing so. Participant 28 (Female,
40, no religious affiliation), who keeps "some four leaf clovers smushed into the
pages of books" explained, "I take Pascal's wager to heart -- better to believe and
be wrong than not to believe and be wrong. I don't mind if all I get from them is a

47 "Generally speaking, these objects are received from religious family members and this causes
us to believe a little as well."
48 "My "lucky" objects are not strictly speaking symbols of luck; they are important in so far as the
become a kind of wink from someone who I've loved very much, for instance. I tell myself that,
through the objects, they are present in my life.”
kind of comfort or placebo effect. That's okay with me. Ultimately, what difference does it make if it makes me feel better about life?” Several participants echoed this sentiment including participant 1 (Female, 24, Orthodox Jew) who possesses a necklace with the hamsa and evil eye symbols on it and notes, “Whether these religious/lucky object work or not there's no harm done by keeping them in your possession.”

Finally, some participants focused instead on humour noting that while they possess lucky and protective objects, their possession of these objects is either completely or partially ironic. As I noted above, Participant 48 (Male, 37, Atheist) writes that he has possessed various sporting items that he considered to be good luck charms in tradition and fun only. Likewise participant 69 (Female, 32, Atheist) reports possessing lucky underpants, lucky coins, and lucky rocks “just for fun.” But one participant noted that although she views her objects ironically, this does not detract from their significance. Participant 166 (Female, 40, agnostic) writes,

There is almost a sense of the ironic when I bring a lucky object to an exam or light a candle during a prayer. And yet that makes it all the more precious and poignant to me, somehow touching and even brave, to think that in the face of complete doubt, one presses on with one's little comforts and can have amazing experiences as a result.

Thus while participants reported recognizing humour or irony in their possession of lucky objects, this did not always mean that the objects were completely
ineffective. These objects could nevertheless provide comfort in the face of doubt or, at the very least, some humour or fun.

These various explanations of the objects’ power indicate that individuals have complex and often paradoxical relationships with purported lucky or protective objects and that they survey itself did not provide them with sufficient space to fully explain the objects’ role(s) (if any) in their lives. In designing the subsequent interview questions I therefore chose to ask survey participants to describe what role (if any) their objects’ play in their daily lives. Additionally, several survey participants expressed doubts concerning what I meant by various key terms including ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ in the comments section. In order to explore this in greater depth, I asked interview participants to reflect directly on what significance these and other key terms have (if any) for them. These explanations and justifications also point to the fact that believing in supra-rational powers may be seen as problematic or as something that requires explanation or justification. While it is impossible to test this hypothesis using survey data, this became a core question for subsequent empirical research.

4.3. Interviews

I conducted thirteen interviews between January 2014 and January 2015. These interviews afforded me an opportunity to address some of the questions raised in the survey and to speak at length with individuals who possess and use lucky or protective objects about the role(s) these objects play (if any) in their
daily lives; how they conceptualize and understand these objects; how they imagine the possession and use of lucky and protective objects is viewed more generally; and finally how they imagine the contexts in which they possess and use these objects, namely Québec and Montréal. A core question in this second stage of empirical research was how individuals explain, justify, rationalize, and/or minimize their use of lucky and protective objects along with the supra-rational beliefs these objects entail. Interview questions are included in appendix B.

4.3.1. Ethical Considerations

This project received ethical clearance from the General Research Ethics Board of Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario (approval number Romeo #: 6011276). Interview participants were provided with a written letter of information that included contact information in the event they had questions or concerns. All survey participants gave written informed consent. Interview responses were anonymized with one exception: Robyn, the owner and former manager of The Magical Blend, consented for her real first name to be used in this project. Pseudonyms were attributed randomly from lists of popular Anglophone and Francophone names.
4.3.2. Participants and Recruitment

Four interview participants were recruited using the online surveys. As was the case with the surveys, I employed a criterion sampling method while recruiting interview participants: only Montréal residents who possess and or use lucky and protective objects were eligible to be interviewed. Additionally, I employed a “snowball” sampling methodology (Patton 2002). I contacted the current owner and former manager of a well-known pagan supply store in Montréal who later put me in touch with several members of the Montréal Pagan community as well as with other non-Pagan personal contacts who had expressed an interest in the acquisition and use of lucky and protective objects. These contacts subsequently put me in touch with additional contacts.

I sought to recruit Wiccans and Pagans in particular because Wicca and Paganism represents an 'enchanted' outlook in which magical beliefs and practices are encouraged and often form a key component of daily religious or spiritual practice. Several non-religious individuals provided contact information and noted they would be willing to be contacted in their comments to the online survey. I also actively sought to recruit these non-religious individuals for interviews in an attempt to provide examples of 'disenchanted' viewpoints. Thus rather than recruit ‘typical’ Montrealers in an attempt to obtain a representative sample, I employed a purposive strategy and only recruited individuals who already possess lucky and protective objects while seeking to ensure that certain categories of cases (i.e. enchanted and disenchanted viewpoints) within my sampling universe would be represented (Robinson 2014).
recruitment complete when the core question had become saturated. In this
case, saturation did not imply that no new interesting results would arise with
additional data collection but rather that sufficiently rich and interesting data had
been collected to enable an adequate understanding of key concepts (Charmaz,
2014).

4.3.3. Methodology

In the second phase of my research I employed an abductive qualitative
research design informed by constructivist theory. This approach enables
researchers to “study the multiple realities constructed by people and the
implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others”
(Patton 2002, 96). Because I was interested in determining how my interview
participants imagine and construct their lived realities, my overall approach was
ontologically relativist and epistemologically subjective in that I assumed both
that reality is socially constructed and that knowledge depends upon subjective
experience (Patton 2002). In other words, rather than attempt to formulate
universal laws or objective generalizations, I focused instead on developing an
“in-depth understanding of a particular situation” (Willis 2015, 111), namely the
lived realities of a small group of Montrealers who possess and use lucky and
protective objects along with the explanations and justifications these individuals
provide to explain the supra-rational beliefs associated with these objects.
Constructivist approaches aim to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and the authenticity of data collection and analysis rather than the validity of the data or the systematic rigour of fieldwork procedures (Patton 2002, 544). In the semi-structured interviews I asked participants to clarify statements and often repeated portions that I deemed significant back to them to provide them with an opportunity to correct or add to these, thereby ensuring more trustworthy data. Additionally constructivist research is reflexive. To this end, I discussed both my research goals and rationale with my research participants, explaining that I was interested in speaking about the ways interview participants conceptualize lucky and protective objects; their relationships with these objects; the ways these objects are viewed more generally in Montréal and elsewhere. Finally I invited participants to qualify or disagree with both the overall direction of my research program and also with the particular categories and terms I employed. My goal in the interviews was not generalizability and external validity, but rather an enhanced and deepened understanding (Verstehen) and the recognition of particularity with an aim to do justice to the integrity of each unique case (Patton 2002, 544).

In keeping with my focus on the nature and effects of the modern imaginary in Montréal and Québec, I employed the discourse analytic model for collecting and analyzing qualitative interview data (Talja 1999). The main goal of the discourse analytic method is to identify interpretive repertoires or discourses present in the qualitative data. This method allowed me to appreciate and interpret the ways my interview participants approached the topic and lived
experience of possessing and using lucky and protective objects in Montréal from different angles and also permitted me to notice and analyze their sometimes contradictory views (Talja 1999, 463). Rather than approach my data from a ‘factist’ perspective that focuses on the contents of my data, I approached it instead from a ‘specimen’ perspective according to which “research data do not describe reality; rather they are specimens of interpretive practices” (470). Although the main goal of the discourse analytic model is the identification and description of repertoires and the ‘statements’ or the “unspoken theories about the nature of things” that underlie these (468), a further goal is identifying “the power and influence of particular narratives” and analyzing these narratives’ “potential societal and institutional effects” (474). In the context of this project, these narratives, statements, and discourses serve both to ground the theoretical construct of a modern imaginary and also the explanations and justifications this imaginary apparently requires in empirical material.

4.3.4. Data Collection

I collected data by conducting semi-structured interviews. Whenever possible, these interviews were conducted face-to-face in the research participants’ homes, though scheduling conflicts also necessitated several interviews to be conducted over the phone. I conducted five face-to-face interviews in participants’ living rooms; one in an empty office at Concordia University; one in my own living room; and six interviews over the phone. All of the face-to-face interviews were conducted with only the interview participant and
myself present. I conducted two interviews in French and the rest in English. Of the five Francophone interview participants, three were perfectly bilingual and opted to conduct their interviews in English. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to collect “open-ended, emerging data” (Cresswell 2003, 18) and permitted me to modify and adapt interview questions in accordance with new directions and topics raised in the interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded with a small digital recording device. This device was placed between the interview participant and myself on a table during face-to-face interviews. Additionally, while I asked interview participants to describe the ways their objects contribute to their daily lives; I was also able to observe this contribution in certain cases by being present in the homes of my research participants. In every face-to-face interview, participants either retrieved the object(s) they described and showed these to me or, when these were conducted outside of their homes, brought one or more of the objects with them to show me.

4.3.5. Analysis

I transcribed interviews *verbatim* and read the transcripts in order to pre-code them. In my pre-coding stage I highlighted significant passages and noteworthy quotations. After pre-coding, I re-read the transcripts line by line and holistically in order to identify codes. I formulated themes from emergent codes for each interview and then engaged in a second level of axial coding in which I identified higher-level, more conceptual themes and categories across the
4.4. Interview Results

In the interviews I sought to obtain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the ways individuals describe and conceptualize the lucky and protective objects they possess along with their uses; the ways these objects contribute to individuals’ religious or spiritual lives; the manner in which these objects achieve practical results (i.e. luck and/or protection); and how these objects are viewed in society more generally. The interviews reveal that the individuals I spoke with often have very complicated religious or spiritual backgrounds and that even individuals who self-identify as non-religious often engage in rituals, have collections of significant or powerful objects that they refer to as ‘altars,’ and see meaning and significance in everyday events and coincidences. Before I explore some common themes that I distilled from the interview data I want first to briefly profile each participant. These profiles present each participant’s often-complex religious, spiritual, or non-religious background; details concerning each participant’s lucky or protective objects; and the ways each participant conceptualizes their objects and their uses and significance. I draw upon these profiles to develop broader themes below.
4.4.1. Participant Profiles

Amélie is a thirty-six year old woman. Born in Québec city, Amélie has lived in Montréal for fifteen years. She is Francophone and has a master’s degree in French literary studies. Amélie did not grow up in a religious household and was excused from religion courses in primary and secondary school. She self-identifies as an atheist. Amélie has attended public religious events (marriages, baptisms, funerals) but does not engage in any private religious or spiritual practices.

Amélie and I spoke about a fertility statue in the living room of her small house in the borough of Verdun. Amélie received the statue as a gift three years ago from a friend who travelled to Senegal. During the interview, Amélie retrieved the object from a shelf near the dining room table on which she keeps several bottles of alcohol. We spoke with the statue between us at the dining room table. I asked Amélie to describe the statue and she gave the following description:

C'est un objet en bois. C'est une petite statue... c'est une forme humaine avec des bras très courts, un visage de femme, pas de cheveux, et puis c'est du bois Africain, avec... il y a deux colours de bois et quelques motifs géométriques blancs dans le front du visage.49

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49 “It is a wooden object. It is a small statue... it's a human form with very short arms, a woman’s face, no hair, and it’s made of African wood with... there are two colours of wood and some white geometrical patterns on the forehead of the face.”
I asked Amélie where she kept the object and she explained that she keeps it behind a bottle Kahlua, which is a coffee flavoured liqueur. I asked Amélie why she kept the statue in that particular location and she explained,

Je n'ai pas envie de la mettre en evidence parce que c'est quelque chose d'un peu privé, tu vois, je n'ai pas envie d'avoir à la décrire à tout le monde, mais en même temps j'ai envie qu'il soit à un endroit central où s'il peut avoir une influence sur ma vie, il y aura. Mais vraiment c'est l'ordre du symbole – pas que je crois que ça m'influence.50

Amélie went on to explain that the object would seem out of place in her home since she does not put any other African art or objects on display. I asked Amélie to elaborate on why she chose to keep the object in the dining room specifically, rather than elsewhere. She explained, “c'est la pièce où on passe le plus de temps en famille... et plus que dans notre chambre par exemple.”51 I also asked whether the object plays any role in Amélie’s daily life. She explained that generally she forgets about it. Amélie described the object’s purpose or use as mostly decorative but then laughed and remarked that it does not really serve as a decorative item since she hides it behind a bottle. When asked whether or not she would be upset if the object was broken or destroyed she explained, “oui je serais derange parce que, tu vois, je veux un autre enfant et donc maintenant il

50 “I do not want to highlight it because it’s something a bit private, you see. I do not want to have to describe it to everyone, but at the same time I want it to be in a central place where if it can have an influence on my life, it will. But really it is symbolic – it isn’t that I think that it influences me.”
51 “It’s the room where we spend the most time as a family and more than in our bedroom, for instance”
aura un malaise." Finally, I asked Amélie whether the object could be used by anyone and she added, “si j’ai un autre enfant et puis je décide que ma famille est complète peut-être que je pourrais le donner à quelqu’un d’autre qui aura envie à commencer une famille, par exemple.” Yet when I asked Amélie how confident she was that the object really did help encourage fertility she said she was not at all confident. She remarked that if she had to rank her confidence on a scale from one to ten of confidence, she would choose zero.

Caroline is a forty-eight year old woman. Although she lived in Hamilton Ontario previously, Caroline has lived in Montréal for twenty-seven years. Caroline is a bilingual Anglophone with an undergraduate degree. Caroline’s parents came from a Muslim background but were not practicing Muslims. Caroline self identifies as secular and ecumenically spiritual. She does not usually engage in any public religious or spiritual practices but does engage in private religious or spiritual practices: she meditates, believes in blessings, and believes in giving thanks.

Caroline and I spoke about her father’s wristwatch. Caroline was not willing to meet me in her home and so we spoke in an unused office at Concordia University in Montréal. The watch belonged to her father and when she went to the hospital to collect his personal belongings after his death she saw the watch,

52 “yes I would be disturbed because, you see, I want another child and so now there would be some discomfort."
53 “if I have another child and then I decide my family is complete maybe I could give it to someone else who would want to start a family, for example.”
put it on, and has worn it on her wrist for the last fourteen years. Caroline was wearing the watch when we spoke but I asked her to describe it to me. As Caroline put it,

it’s a silver, I guess you would call it that, link band man’s watch… the crystal [face] is cracked and the head has twisted and it’s kind of grubby and it’s too big for me so it jangles on my wrist and there is a quality of that noise that I like.

Caroline mentioned that while the watch does not actually work anymore, occasionally, because it is an automatic self-winding watch, the hands of the watch move. Caroline explained that she is unsure whether the watch is simply a memento of her father or whether she endows it with power adding,

sometimes I enjoy a fanciful notion that it might have guiding properties or some kind of connection to the concept of my father or the… I don’t know… the spirit of my father

Caroline also mentioned that although she had considered repairing the watch, “it has never felt right” adding that she felt as though “its properties were defined by maintaining it in the condition it was in when I took it on.” When I asked how confident she was that the watch provides guidance she laughed and said, “not at all. That may be partly wishful thinking and that may be partly a romantic sensibility.”

Emily is a forty-year-old woman. Born and raised in New Brunswick, Emily has lived in Montréal for eleven years. Emily is an Anglophone who is currently
completing a PhD. Raised as a “fundamentalist” evangelical Baptist, Emily became an “angry atheist” after completing her undergraduate degree. Subsequently she “returned to a fuzzy theism” and is a currently a member of the United Church of Canada. Emily engages in public religious practices by attending church semi-regularly. She also participates in “girls nights” where her and her friends create rituals and make wishes together. Privately, Emily prays, lights candles, makes wishes, goes out into nature, and has “little superstitions” surrounding auspicious signs such as repeating series of numbers (e.g. 2,2,2).

Emily and I spoke on the telephone about two small rubber dogs and a rosary. Emily told me that she possesses several lucky or protective objects but chose first to describe two small dogs that were the first gift her now ex-husband had given her. Emily found the dogs while preparing to move. She described her reaction upon finding the dogs as follows:

Immediately I was like, oh these are very important. I have to be really careful with them. If anything bad happens to these then my husband will never get back together with me, which is what I wish for my future.

Emily described the dogs as “little rubber sculptures of painted cute puppies” and describes them as lucky “in the sense that finding them was like a sign like oh this relationship could heal in whatever way.” She also describes the dogs as “auspicious.” When I asked Emily how confident she was that the dogs might really help mend her relationship she laughed and said, “not at all.” Immediately
after this she added, “It’s not zero percent confidence, but it’s like the five to ten percent… no more than ten percent confident.”

Emily also spoke to me about a rosary bracelet that a co-worker had given her. The co-worker, who is Catholic, gave her the rosary and told her, “you can wear this bracelet as long as you’re single, but when you find love, you have to give it back to me.” Typically Emily keeps the rosary and the dogs together but also sometimes wears the rosary if she needs confidence for an interview or in other “nerve-wracking” situations. When I asked her how confident she was that the rosary might help her find love she replied, “it’s the same, very low, five to ten percent,” then laughed.

Étienne is a sixty-two year old man. Born in Chicoutimi, Québec, Étienne lived in Montréal as a child and in his youth and moved back to Montréal with his family in the mid 1980s. Étienne is a bilingual Francophone with a high school leaving diploma; he is beginning a master’s degree in theology. Étienne was raised Catholic but stopped attending church at the height of the Quiet Revolution at the age of 15. After experimenting with transcendental meditation, Étienne reconverted to Christianity when he was twenty-one years old. He identifies as an interdenominational Christian with connections to evangelical Protestantism and Catholicism. Étienne has engaged in regular public religious practices by regularly attending Anglican and Baptist churches. Privately, he reads scripture, writes, and prays.
Although I told Étienne that the purpose of the interview was to discuss the lucky and protective object(s) he possesses, during the interview he revealed that he does not possess any lucky or protective objects. Nevertheless, Étienne indicated that he wished to speak both about the religious situation in Québec and also about the phenomenon of lucky and protective objects more generally. I asked Étienne over the telephone whether in his experience there are people in the world who do have lucky and protective objects. He answered, “I would say no. People might believe in certain lucky things or amulets, etc., but I perceive that as misplaced faith and in many ways in the domain of superstition.” I asked Étienne to expand on the notion of misplaced faith and he elaborated,

When people trust objects... objects are objects. To go into a little bit of Old Testament theology, you know, the prophets of the Old Testament always came down hard on the people of Israel, because they trusted in different idols that were made out of rock, carved out of stone, or made out of melted metal and, and, basically the prophets all said there’s no life in any of those objects because they are objects. Faith has to be placed in the living and present god. Because an object is an inadequate representation of who God could be.

Yet Étienne also remarked that persons who were interested in such objects have “umpteen” opportunities to find them at a variety of New Age stores in Montréal.
Francesca is a twenty-five year old woman. Born and raised in Italy, Francesca has lived in Montréal for four years. Francesca is trilingual Allophone (Italian, French, English) with a bachelor’s degree. Francesca was baptized Catholic but her parents were non-practicing. She describes her mother as a very spiritual and esoteric person who has greatly influenced her own spirituality. She self-identifies as questioning and adds “I guess most people would consider me very superstitious.” Later in the interview Francesca described ‘superstitious’ as referring to “irrational beliefs that actions will have some kind of concrete consequence in your life” and later added, “I hate when people use it in a negative way” and explained that superstition refers to “a type of irrationality that in our society doesn’t have space otherwise.” Francesca has engaged in a few different public religious practices including visits to Catholic churches for mass and visits to Hindu temples. Privately, she occasionally meditates and reads tarot for herself and for others.

Francesca and I spoke on the telephone. She told me that she possesses many lucky and protective objects but chose to speak first about a dream catcher she received as a gift from a religious Muslim friend of hers and this friend’s husband. Francesca described the dream catcher as made of suede or very soft leather and added that beautiful black and purple and green feathers hang from the bottom of the circle. I asked whether or not the object has a use and Francesca explained,

54 In Québec, the term “Allophone” is used primarily to describe immigrants whose first language is neither French nor English.
It depends on if you believe in its function or not, but I think so. I mean I still have nightmares, so it’s that that I expect it to take away the nightmares but I feel kind of… protected, you know? I feel that even if I’m going to have a nightmare I’m going to, you know, it’s going to remain a nightmare. It’s going to remain in the realm of dreams and not come out of it.

Francesca keeps the dream catcher in her bedroom. It hangs from her curtain rod. When I asked how confident she is that the dream catcher protects her she replied “I’m very confident of it even though I cannot see the results, I’m very confident that it works.”

When I asked Francesca whether she wanted to talk about any other lucky or protective objects she replied, “hold on, let me just go closer to my little altar where I keep everything.” Francesca retrieved another object and described it as “tiny elephant made of marble” that she bought in India, adding, “I like to believe that it brings me good luck.” She described herself as being “pretty confident” that the elephant statue brings good luck.

Isabelle is a forty-two year old woman who has lived in Montréal her whole life. She currently lives in the Sud-Ouest borough. Isabelle is a bilingual Anglophone who is completing a master’s degree. Although Isabelle was baptized Catholic, her mother was a non-practicing Catholic who taught Isabelle to value nature and honour the changing seasons and cycles of the moon.

Isabelle attended a private Catholic high school for personal and academic rather
than religious reasons and was initiated into Gardnerian Wicca\textsuperscript{55} at college (CEGEP). Isabelle currently identifies as practicing a syncretic Wiccan tradition that is a blend of Celtic Pagan and East-Asian influences including Daoism, Buddhism, and Zen. Isabelle engages in public Wiccan rituals, attends Pagan festivals around Montréal, and performs public Pagan and Wiccan ceremonies including baby blessings and marriages. In terms of private practice, Isabelle describes her private life as deeply spiritual. As she put it, “I live my spiritual life. So everything I do is part of my private practice. I can’t – I don’t separate the two.”

Isabelle and I spoke in her apartment. In the hallway outside her apartment door I noticed a small stand with a bowl of water on it. Later, Isabelle described this as an “entrance shrine where normally people will bless themselves before they cross the threshold.” When I asked whether she possesses any lucky or protective objects Isabelle said, “my house!” then explained that her house is designed as a temple with two shrines and a central altar. Next, we spoke about a wooden shield that Isabelle was in the process of making to house a protective wolf spirit. The shield is large and made of wood with a recess cut into the back into which she intends to put wolf fur. Isabelle spoke about how the shield works and mentioned that she feels the protective spirit is doing its job since “things happen around me but never to me.” As examples of this, Isabelle spoke about the fact her upstairs neighbour was once

\textsuperscript{55}Traditional or Gardnerian Wicca is a form of Wiccan practice developed by Gerald Gardner in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century in England.
robbed, and mentioned that she never had been. She also explained that that although other people had been shot and stabbed near where she lived, she has never had any problems directly.

Isabelle and I also spoke about her portable altar in which she keeps everything she needs to perform rituals. Isabelle described the altar as “a round-topped chest, must like you would think a pirate treasure chest would look like.” Although the box itself contained many interesting items (a chalice, sacred ash, crystals, salt, candles) Isabelle described the box itself as a protective object. She found the box in a thrift shop and mentioned that this particular box “really, really spoke to me.” When I asked how confident she was that the box magically protects her ritual implements Isabelle said, “I never lose anything,” then laughed and added, “and it’s been dropped a number of times and it really should never have survived,” finally stressing that she was “very, very confident.”

Michel is a thirty-four year old man. Born and raised in Shawinigan, Québec, Michel has lived in Montréal for twelve years. Michel is a bilingual Francophone with a bachelor’s degree in psychology. Michel grew up as a Roman Catholic and later became involved in an evangelical church in Shawinigan that he described as “the very bigoted violent stereotypical type, not dissimilar to the Westboro Baptist church.” Later, he became interested in Wicca and esotericism. Michel currently identifies as adhering to many religions at once
and is particularly interested in Discordianism\textsuperscript{56}, Greco-Roman Paganism, Gnostic Christianity, and ceremonial magic. Michel is a Discordian Pope, a member of the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO),\textsuperscript{57} and a member of A Druid Fellowship (ADF). Michel engages in public religious practices by distributing what he calls Discordian “propaganda” and by engaging in what he calls “poetic terrorism,” which involves increasing people’s perception of “weird things” that “break out of this insubstantial consensual reality.” Privately, Michel engages in ceremonial magic and devotional magic.

Michel and I spoke in his apartment in the Ville-Marie borough. Michel told me that he possesses multiple lucky or protective objects. We spoke first about his “lucky cup” which he also calls his “Dionysian cup.” Michel purchased the cup in Shawinigan at a beer store. Originally, he bought it as a prop for live action roleplaying (LARP).\textsuperscript{58} Michel described it as “a pewter cup with three scenes of Norse mythology” engraved on it. Michel has used the cup “mundanely” to drink out of, but has also used it in a variety of rituals. When describing the cup Michel noted, “over the years I have had many, many excesses where this could have been lost in ravines, forgotten in some weird bar, some weird crazy after-party with drug-ridden Goths or whatever, but it has always stayed with me.” Michel

\textsuperscript{56} Discordianism is a new religious movement founded in 1963 by Greg Hill and Wendell Thornley. Discordians reject religious dogma: all Discordians are officially ‘Popes’ of Discordianism. Discordianism has been described as an “invented” or parody religion (Cusack 2010). Michel describes Discordianism as “iconoclastic.”

\textsuperscript{57} The OTO is a secret initiatory religious organization that originated in the 19th century. Alesiter Crowley, a well-known English occultist in the 19th and early 20th centuries is a notable member of the OTO.

\textsuperscript{58} Live action roleplaying or LARP refers to organized fantasy games in which players physically act out their imaginary characters’ actions.
mentioned that he usually keeps the cup on his altar, though this was not set up when we met.

Michel and I also spoke about a large iron railway nail that he keeps by the back door of his apartment, which leads out to a small balcony and fire escape. Michel found the nail while walking along a train track in Rouyn-Noranda. In describing the nail’s use Michel explained, “I leave my nail on the side of the door to ward off or prevent any spirits or undesirables from coming in…” Later, Michel added,” these spirits fear metal points… I was very skeptical of it, of course, it’s completely ridiculous as a belief, but if it works, if the universe behaves as if it were real, then who am I to argue, I guess.” Michel also noted his apartment is also a “fully functional magical temple.”

Nina is a thirty-eight year old woman. Born and raised in New Brunswick, she lived on Prince Edward Island for seven years and has been in Montréal for seven years. Nina is an Anglophone with a college degree. Nina was raised Baptist and Anglican but realized that Christianity was “too limiting” around the age of eighteen. She practiced Buddhist meditation in New Brunswick and eventually met some Pagans on Prince Edward Island. Later, after reading a book on the feminine divine she found in a used bookstore, she became involved in a Coven in Charlottetown. She currently identifies as Pagan and describes herself as a solitary eclectic witch. Nina occasionally participates in public

59 A solitary witch is a witch who is not a member of a coven. Eclectic witches draw on a number of different Wiccan traditions.
Nina and I spoke over the telephone. Nina also told me that she possesses several lucky and protective objects. First, she described a wing crafted by a friend of hers that is made out of eagle feathers, a pigeon feather, leather, and a labradorite stone. She also mentioned that inside the wing are the ashes from a cremated white buffalo that her friend received as gift from an aboriginal acquaintance. As Nina explained, “because it holds these sacred ashes I consider that object to be lucky, I would say, and possibly quite protective.” Nina, who also makes similar wings herself, uses the object during healing work to “waft smudge over people.” Nina typically keeps the object on her “altar” and explained, “when it’s not on my altar it’s in another space that is reserved for different objects that go on the altar.” I asked Nina how confident she was that the object helped in her healing work. She replied, “because of the importance given to the ashes by the local North American [aboriginal] community I have confidence that this brings with it a specific energy that helps the healing work.” Immediately after this she added. “in terms of having some kind of physical proof to give you, I actually have none.”

Rachel is a fifty-six year old woman who has lived on the island of Montréal her entire life except for a short period between the ages of five and twelve. Rachel is a bilingual Anglophone with a CEGEP degree. Rachel was

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60 Smudging typically involves burning sage, cedar, and sweet grass.
raised as a “fundamentalist Baptist” but took issue with the doctrine of the physical resurrection of the body and with miracles from an early age. She learned about Wicca and Paganism on the Internet and currently identifies as a “modern Pagan.” Rachel occasionally attends Pagan discussion groups and public rituals and creates charms and engages in meditative magic in private.

Rachel and I also spoke on the telephone. Rachel told me that she possesses more than one lucky or protective object. When I asked her about them she left the phone briefly to retrieve her “magic box.” I asked Rachel about her magic box and she explained, “it’s a special box, nobody’s allowed to open it but me… I don’t say I treat it with reverence – I mean it’s got all kinds of shit piled on top of it, mostly to make it unobtrusive.” When I asked Rachel what was in the box she began to empty it out and describe its contents. Inside she found incense, tarot cards, coloured candles, her athame, a chestnut, a crystal, and a piece of broken jewelry. She explained, “if I ever want to do a really important spell, I will use some of these treasured objects,” then added, “oh god, I hope I don’t creep you out...” before telling me she also keeps a lock of someone’s hair in the box. Later, Rachel told me that she doesn’t really believe in random luck, which she considers superstition. In speaking about a spell she performed to keep mice out of her mother’s house she explained that such spells “decrease anxiety and increase positive feeling.”

Rachel and I also spoke about a ceramic green man wall sconce. She explained, “he’s by a door for a reason, he is protecting an entryway” then added,
“I really don’t believe that this particular bit of ceramic is protecting me from anything.” Rachel bought the wall sconce at Le Mélange magique. After describing the object she added, “the object does not provide me with protection. I light a candle, I go into my meditative mood, and I am calmed when I use it in a ritual.”

Rebecca is a thirty five year old woman who was born in Sherbrooke, Québec and grew up in nearby Lennoxville, Québec. She has lived in Montréal for ten years. Rebecca is a bilingual Anglophone who is in the process of completing a master’s degree. Rebecca’s parents were not religious and she did not attend church as a child. In her twenties she became interested in Daoism and later attended an ex-pat Anglican Church with an Anglican friend of hers while in Italy. When she returned to Montréal she became a member of an Anglican Church and currently works in youth ministry for the Anglican diocese of Montréal. Rebecca identifies as a spiritual seeker and as “an eclectic person of faith.” In terms of public religious or spiritual practice Rebecca attends Sunday worship and engages in talking circles. Her private practice consists of meditation, journaling and spontaneous prayer.

Rebecca and I spoke on the telephone owing to numerous scheduling conflicts. Rebecca told me that she possesses a few different lucky and protective objects. First, we spoke about a small pouch she bought at a Daoist temple in Taiwan. She describes the pouch as having writing on it, which she explained as being “basically auspicious, you know, wishes and good omens.”
Inside the pouch, which she wears around her neck, Rebecca keeps a moonstone that encourages “intuition and feminine powers” as well as another unidentified stone that has the “power to enhance skills of communication.” She also keeps fortune cookie fortunes that she has received at the end of meals or that she finds “on the ground.” She collects these fortunes because she feels that “there are messages for us everywhere in all things.” While she was describing the pouch and before I asked her about its use or her level of confidence, Rebecca added,

Okay, how do I believe this works for me? I don’t really know… I don’t give too much thought to it except that I think all of the things that I’ve just described are good qualities, good characteristics that I would like to exude, I would like to be able to sort of center myself on, and by having this around my neck… I don’t necessarily think that this is, like, some sort of magic thing that’s going to allow me to do that, but it’s almost like a little reminder, I guess.

Rebecca and I also spoke about an Isis necklace she wears. When I asked about the necklace she explained, “I feel like when I’m wearing it it’s putting me in a frame of mind or, like, it’s… allowing my spiritual outlook to center itself on feminine energy and, like, the power of femininity.” Rebecca also mentioned that she felt that unlike the pouch, which she wears under her clothes, the necklace is very noticeable and that she has worried this would cause problems in Christian contexts. She also mentioned that her Isis necklace has “an equivalent power or impact” of similar objects worn by her friends who practice Wicca. When I asked how confident she was that either object offers
good luck or protection she laughed and explained, “I guess that’s where my Christian outlook kind of kicks in where I feel like the only person or force that’s offering me protection is god.” Later she added, “instead of being for completely worldly concerns they’re sort of markers of spirituality.”

Robyn (real name used) is a thirty-five year old woman who has lived in Montréal her whole life. Robyn is a bilingual Anglophone who has a master’s degree in anthropology. Raised in a conservative Jewish family, Robyn was interested in mythology and different religions from an early age. When she was twelve, Robyn’s mother gave her a copy of *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* written by the feminist, activist, Wiccan Starhawk and this sparked her interest in Paganism and Wicca. Robyn currently identifies as practicing Traditional Wicca and worked for several years at *Le Mélange magique*61, a popular Pagan store in Montréal. Robyn currently owns *Le Mélange magique*, which she now runs as an online store. Robyn has participated in public Pagan and Wiccan rituals in the past but now that she has a young child she mostly performs private rituals at home with her husband. As Robyn puts it, “it’s hard to be practically Pagan and practically a parent.”

Robyn and I spoke in her apartment in the Sud-Ouest borough. When I asked Robyn whether she possesses any lucky or protective objects she replied, “Oh sure, I sell that,” and later added, “I’ve got hundreds in my basement, where do we begin?” Robyn and I spoke about a money-drawing candle she received

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61 “The Magical Blend”
as a gift. She explained that if she were in a situation where she was “really strapped for cash” she would burn the candle “with the intention of bringing in a bit more money.” Immediately after saying this she continued,

But one of the things we tell people, it's not enough to just burn the candle. It's not enough to just do a spell. It's sort of like saying this is my intention, this is the energy I need. You also have to be willing to do something. You know, like, the first step of a spell to get a job is to write a resume and put it out there. The spell is going to help augment that energy, but if you’re not willing to do anything, nothing is going to happen. So it's... that's how... magic is like a prayer. A spell is a fancy word for a prayer. Likewise a talisman is just, you know, a rock until you give a purpose to that rock, a use to that rock, right?

Robyn and I also spoke about a money tree. She explained, “it’s said that as it grows your business grows” and later added, “by tending it I feel like I’m also tending to my luck, my business, my money and I’ve definitely seen as it has grown, so has my business.”

Tim is a thirty-year-old man. Tim was born and raised in the suburbs of Montréal, commonly called the “West Island” but has lived closer to the downtown core for eight years. Tim is a bilingual Francophone who has a bachelor’s degree in creative writing and English literature. Raised Anglican, Tim stopped attending church and began to self-identify as non-religious at the age of fourteen. Tim currently self-identifies as having no religion but adds, when describing his religious or non-religious identification, “the closest term – and it’s the one I like the least – is spiritual.” Tim does not engage in any public religious
or spiritual practices. Privately, he has an “altar” or collection of significant objects he keeps in his bedroom. He also prays occasionally.

Tim and I spoke in my apartment. Tim told me he possesses several lucky and protective objects. First, we spoke about a small number eight that Tim keeps with him in his wallet. Tim’s lucky number is eight and he found this particular object in a decorative vase filled with other numbers in a hotel room and took it. Tim pulled the number out of his wallet when I asked him to describe it to me. Tim described the number as “really small, it fits in my wallet, it’s made of plastic or rubber” and added “it’s gold on one side and black on the other.” Tim explained, “it looks like it used to be the number for a door of some sort… or a mailbox.” While describing the number Tim told me that prior to meeting with me he had parked on a city street knowing that he did not have enough change for the parking meter and that he might receive a parking ticket. After, Tim explained, “I got back in the car, didn’t get a ticket, looked at the clock and it was eight minutes past my time… and then I just took that as a little nod or something. It was just, like, oh it had to be eight minutes.” I asked Tim how confident he was that the object provided luck and he replied, “fifty-one percent.”

Tim also spoke about a small box in which he keeps other significant objects. At the beginning of the interview Tim described the box as “a little altar, so to speak” then added, “that’s not really the right word but in my bedroom there’s just a little collection of symbols that I’ve accumulated over the years.”
Finally, Tim and I spoke about a large portrait of the Italian saint Padre Pio he and his wife had received as a gift from his father-in-law. Unlike the number eight, which Tim described as contributing to good luck, Tim explained that he felt the portrait would bring bad luck if he failed to hang it up in his apartment. Tim described the gift as a “hideous, hideous portrait” and continued, “it’s a portrait of an ugly old guy wearing a brown robe… it’s not painted all that well.” Tim added, “I have attached such a superstition to it that if I didn’t hang it up – if I didn’t, in fact, highlight it – then bad things would happen to me.”

Valérie is a thirty-one year old woman who has lived in Montréal for twelve years. Valérie is a Francophone with a CEGEP degree. Raised Catholic, Valérie became uncomfortable with the ways women were represented in the bible and ceased to engage with Catholic practice shortly after her first communion. As a teenager she read the Qur’an, the Torah, and later read Buddhist texts. Although she self-identified as a Buddhist during her teenage years and in her early twenties, she now self-identifies as Wiccan. Valérie has attended a variety of public Pagan and Wiccan rituals but now that she is pregnant she finds herself more focused on her own body rather than her spiritual nature. Privately she reads the tarot, gives offerings to deities, and burns incense.

Valérie and I spoke over the telephone. Valérie described a triskele\textsuperscript{62} necklace that she bought at the Montréal Pagan store \textit{Charmes et Sortilège}\textsuperscript{63} as

\textsuperscript{62} A triskele or triskelion is an image of three interlocked spirals.
\textsuperscript{63} “Charms and Sorcery”
“un symbole de protection.” She further described the necklace as “métal avec une corde pour attacher autour du cou. Un métal qui rouille pas.” When I asked Valérie whether she usually wears the necklace she explained, “avant j'avais une pièce spirituelle où j'ai gardé toutes mes choses. La triskèle… d'habitude ce que je fais maintenant… quand j'arrive dans un nouvel appartement ou nouvelle maison je l'utilise comme un protecteur de maison.” Valérie added that while she has kept the necklace hanging on the thermostat in past apartments, now that she is living with her in-laws, she does not feel comfortable having it visible.

Valérie also described a tattoo of two crescent moons with a full moon between them that is marked with a pentacle on her back. Valérie described the tattoo as a “pentacle de la triple déesse.” Valérie decided to get the tattoo four or five years ago to ensure extra protection. Now that she has the tattoo, she told me, she wears the triskele less often.

I have summarized the demographic and object-specific information described above in Table 3 below. Although I have provided a single religious or non-religious designation for each participant in the above table, these designations cannot capture the complex religious, spiritual, or non-religious journeys each of the participants has undertaken.

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64 “a symbol of protection.”
65 “metal with a cord to attach it around the neck. A metal that does not rust.
66 “Before I had a spiritual room where I kept all my things. The triskele, usually what I do now… when I arrive in a new apartment or a new house I use it as a house-protector.”
67 “pentacle of the triple goddess.”
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Object(s)</th>
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<td>Fertility Statue</td>
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<td>Dream Catcher; Elephant</td>
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<td>Shield; Portable Altar</td>
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<td>Number Eight; Box; Portrait</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Wiccan</td>
<td>Triskele Necklace; Tattoo</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Summary of Survey Participants Listing Pseudonym, Age, Sex, Religious Self-identification, and Objects

4.4.2. Geographic, Religious and Cultural Milieu.

I also asked my interview participants to reflect on a number of key terms (religious, spiritual, secular, and modern) and asked them to speak about whether they would use any of these terms to describe Montréal and Québec. I also asked whether they felt these terms should be used to describe both Montréal and Québec in equal measure or whether they felt there were differences between Montréal and Québec in terms of this framework. My interview participants conceptualized these key terms in very different ways and subsequently used them in different ways in their descriptions of Montréal and Québec. However, several interesting themes emerged.
Most participants noted that they felt Québec and Montréal were different from one another in important ways. As Étienne puts it “there’s Montréal and then the ROQ, the rest of Québec, which is significantly different.” Yet my participants also noted similarities as well. The most significant similarity they noted concerned a shared Catholic heritage. As Tim notes, “well religion, you can’t separate Montréal from religion. It’s in our architecture, it’s in our everyday life, it’s such a huge part of our history.” Likewise Caroline notes, when describing Montréal, “I don’t think you can get away from the Catholic roots.”

Importantly, the participants tended to associate religion in the ROQ with Catholicism and only with Catholicism. Francesca, for instance, notes, “I know that Québec has a long history of Catholic presence, a heavy Catholic presence to be sure.” Or as Emily explains, “in rural Québec there is still strong Catholicism. I have no statistics. That’s my impression or experience.” The main difference the participants reported between Montréal and Québec was expressed in terms of religious difference. As Étienne notes “there’s a difference in terms of religion and religious presence because a lot of smaller towns [in Québec] only have the Catholic Church.” Whereas in Montréal, Étienne explains, “you no longer just have the Catholic Church or the Protestant Church you also have the Hindu temple, in some neighbourhoods several mosques, you have the synagogues, the Baha’i…”

Unlike the ROQ, the participants tended to describe religion in Montréal as a product mainly of immigrant populations. Thus while participants linked
Catholicism to Montréal’s architecture, history, and roots, they conceptualized contemporary religious expressions as primarily non-Catholic. For instance, when describing Montréal Caroline adds, “I don’t think you can get away from the influx of immigrants from a lot of very strong religious backgrounds.” Or as Francesca puts it,

I don’t sense Montreal to be particularly religious. I mean I feel that there are some neighbourhoods where certainly there is a heavier presence. Like I think when you go to Outremont and there is a heavy presence of Orthodox Jewish people or in Parc Extension there is a huge South Asian community.

Similarly, after explaining that she does not feel Montréal is particularly religious, Amélie went on to explain, “il y a des communautés, c’est certain, des communautés très religieuses. Pas juste un peu, là. La communauté Juive par exemple.”

The participants also stressed that Montréal is a very multicultural city when compared with the ROQ. In fact, two participants stressed that Montréal may be the most multicultural city in the world. Isabelle, for instance, remarked, “many people will say Montréal is the most multicultural city in the world.” Likewise, Valérie explained, “C’est une ville multiculturelle, multireligieuse, multi-ethnique. La ville la plus multiculturelle au monde.” Unlike Montréal, which tended to be presented as multi-religious and multicultural, Québec was viewed

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68 There are communities, that’s certain, very religious communities. Not just a little either. The Jewish community, for example.”

69 “It is a multicultural city, multi-religious, multi-ethnic. The most multicultural city in the world.”
as predominantly Catholic and monocultural. As Michel put it, for instance, “one of the reasons I live in Montréal is I come from a place [Shawinigan] where people just want to watch TV in their air-conditioning. It’s mono-cultural. It’s one track minded.”

Participants sometimes connected this idea of a mono-cultural Québec with a sense of being mired in tradition or in the past. When asked to describe Québec in relation to Montréal Rachel explained, “I would use the term ‘provincial,’ or ‘backward.’” Likewise Isabelle described Québec as “very traditionally minded.” These characterizations differ substantially from participants’ views of Montréal. Whereas Québec was viewed as traditional, Montréal was generally seen as progressive and modern. In Tim’s formulation, “[Montreal is] a forward-thinking city,” whereas for Tim, “modern is a harder word to associate with the rest of Québec. They’re more steeped in their history and their religion.” Rachel, who described Québec as provincial and backward noted, “I do not see Montréal as being mired in the past. I do see it as a growing, living thing.” Likewise Isabelle linked modernity with evolution noting, “Montréal is very modern in that it is constantly evolving and staying on top of things.” Yet while modernity was almost always described in positive terms, Valérie saw modernity as possessing negative attributes as well. As Valérie put it, “le monde moderne
Participants also commented on religious change in both Montréal and Québec. For some participants, these changes were imagined in terms of ‘the secular.’ Francesca, for instance, after noting Montréal’s religious heritage, nevertheless described Montréal as a “really secular city.” Likewise Isabelle noted when describing Montréal that the “secular has pushed its way in and a lot of the churches and religious perspectives have diminished a great deal.” Québec was also described in these terms as well. As Rachel put it,

“[The] Québec where there was a church on every fourth street corner is gone. It's not here anymore. The last generation of that is in their seventies. You know, ten more years they're all gone. The generation after that has resentment against the church and then my generation has… “I don't give a shit about it”.

Echoing this sentiment, Valérie noted, “c'est sûr qu'on est très mal à l'aise au Québec au niveau de la religion.” Yet there was disagreement as well. For instance, Emily saw Montréal’s apparent dismissal of its Catholic heritage as indicating an obsession with religion rather than a move toward the secular. In her view, “[Montréal] is so interested in proving that it’s not Catholic that it’s practically obsessed with the topic.” Whereas Isabelle described Québec as increasingly secular, noting, “Québec as a whole went through this severe severe

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70 “The modern world is very cold and very judgmental about people who move beyond the model that we are used to seeing.”

71 “We are certainly very uneasy about religion in Québec.”
aversion to religion.” But Isabelle continued, “It shows how Montréal is so different from the rest of Québec because of that aspect of acceptance of religion and culture whereas Québec had that push for secular and abandonment.”

Some participants conceptualized Montreal’s apparent openness and acceptance in terms of spirituality. For instance, Michel remarked,

I would say it’s this whole attitude that there is in Montréal that yes it is okay to open up to otherness, open up to curiosity, open up to people and have conversations that isn’t anywhere else… or very little in Québec, unfortunately. And that, I would say, is an important spiritual aspect to have.

Valérie also associated spirituality with openness noting that spirituality refers to “les gens qui sont ouverts à qu'est qui est invisible”72 and associating this openness with Montréal rather than with Québec. Similarly, whereas Tim described Montréal as spiritual, he added, “the current use of the word spiritual doesn’t really make me think of the rest of Québec. Religion is the more appropriate word.”

This distinction between religion and spirituality was fairly common among the interview participants.73 For instance, Rachel noted, “we have a lot of aversion to the idea of religion that it is binding and… and so a lot of people push the idea of religion away and almost demonize it. But spiritual they will admit to.”

72 “people who are open to that which is invisible.”
73 Although I did not ask survey respondents to describe what religion or spirituality meant to them, six respondents made a similar distinction between religion and spirituality when describing their objects, noting that their object was spiritual rather than religious.
Often, spirituality was seen as having more positive connotations than religion. As Caroline put it, “I tend to think a little more favourably about the idea of spiritual… and I conveniently think of spirituality as something that manages to avoid the negative aspects of religion.” Other participants recognized the distinction but disagreed with it as was the case with Emily who noted,

I don’t like the distinction between religious and spiritual because I don’t like that it’s okay right now to say, like, I’m a very spiritual person but it’s not okay to say I’m a religious person.

For several participants, the key distinction between religion and spirituality involved spirituality’s focus on the personal and individual. Isabelle summarizes this view when she noted, “people who are spiritual are spiritual because they are looking to express themselves… and to feel an internal connection with themselves.” Or as Nina put it, “Spiritual connotes personal belief and more of a sense of freedom than religion.”

Broadly speaking, then, the interview participants agreed with the ways religion and modernity tends to be refracted in Montréal and Québec as described in the preceding sections. In apparent agreement with my summary of the modern imaginary at work in Montréal, the interview participants recognized a Catholic religious heritage in Montréal but also focused both on the ways the city is secular and also on the ways the multicultural nature of the city allows for minority religious expressions. Overall, they viewed the city as modern, especially when compared with the rest of Québec. Yet rather than view the city
as disenchanted, the interview participants stressed instead the city's spiritual nature and its openness to otherness. As I explain in greater detail below, the interview participants also see Montréal as a place where lucky and protective objects can be purchased or stumbled upon and where personal meaning and hidden signs can be experienced and discovered.

4.4.3. Themes

Despite the obvious differences between the objects themselves and the ways the participants interact with and understand their own objects, several important themes emerged from the interview data. Participants commented on their varying levels of confidence in the efficacy of their objects; provided empirical evidence for this efficacy; provided various rationales for their belief in the efficacy of lucky and protective objects; associated this efficacy with belief; described lucky and protective objects as stigmatized or viewed as foolish; and described a variety of places and spaces where lucky and protective objects can be found.

i. Confidence

Interview participants expressed a wide range of confidence in the efficacy of their lucky and protective objects. While some participants explained that they were very or absolutely confident that their objects really do provide luck or
protection, others laughed and explained that that were not at all confident. Yet the disavowal of belief in the efficacy of their objects by some participants was complicated by the amount of thought, time, and attention they paid to their objects. For instance, Caroline explained that she was not at all confident that her father’s wristwatch provided guidance and described this notion as “wishful thinking” or the product of a “romantic sensibility” and yet she has worn two wristwatches, her regular watch and her father’s broken watch, for the last fourteen years. Also, although she has considered repairing the watch so it could function properly, this “has never felt right.” Although Caroline describes the notion that the occasional movement of the watch’s hands might signal her father’s presence or guidance as “fanciful,” she nevertheless has thought carefully about whether or not the watch’s guiding properties are defined by maintaining it in its current broken condition.

Similarly, while Amélie described herself as an atheist and said she was not at all confident that her fertility statue could promote fertility, she still had given some thought both to where she should keep the object and what she might do with it after she no longer required its effects (if indeed it has any). Amélie decided to place the fertility statue in the dining room, rather than in the bedroom, because she and her husband spent the most time together in that room. She also explained that she would only give the object away after she had a second child and that she would give the object to someone who was hoping to start a family. Although Amélie considers the object decorative and not at all
effective, she also explained that she would be disturbed somewhat if the object became broken precisely because she wanted to have another child.74

Likewise, while Emily told me that she was only slightly confident (five to ten percent) that her small rubber dogs and her rosary bracelet would have any positive effect on her love life either by allowing her to find new love or by re-establishing her relationship with her husband, she nevertheless pays special attention to these objects. Concerning the dogs, Emily explained, “I baby them and, like, make sure they’re upright, they’re not knocked over.” Additionally, Emily explained that she keeps the two dogs and the rosary bracelet together on her bedside table because they both have similar (potential) effects.

In making these observations I am not arguing that these participants are being dishonest when they claim to have very little or no confidence in their objects’ efficacy. Rather, I want to highlight a degree of uncertainty and ambiguity in these responses. As was the case with Tim who explained he was “fifty-one percent” confident that his number eight brought him good luck, nearly all participants were at least somewhat confident that their objects might work at least to some extent. As I argue below, this appeal to “what if” scenarios is an important tool for understanding modern enchantment.

74 Amélie contacted me recently and told me that she gave birth to a second child a year after our interview and subsequently gave the fertility statue away to a friend of hers who is hoping to have a child of her own.
ii. Evidence

In considering how confident they were concerning their objects’ efficacy, several participants sought to provide evidence or proof that their object(s) really did provide good luck or protection. This was the case, for instance, with Isabelle. Although Isabelle is very confident that her shield and portable altar actually provide protection, she justified this confidence with reference to actual events. Isabelle mentioned that although her neighbours were robbed, she never has been and that although she has dropped her portable altar many times, neither it nor its contents have ever broken. Likewise, while Francesca is very confident her dream catcher actually works; she nevertheless spoke about obtaining evidence for its effectiveness when considering her level of confidence. She mentioned, for instance, that in order to know for sure if the dream catcher worked she might have to “measure, you know, what my life is like if I take off and if I put it back up.” This idea that the effectiveness of the objects might be measured empirically also came up in my interview with Nina. When speaking about whether the white buffalo ashes in the wing her friend gave her made the object effective, she added, “in terms of having some kind of physical proof to give you, I actually have none.”

This tendency on the part of some participants to provide external validation for their objects’ efficacy relates to the broader theme of rationalization discussed above according to which all events in the world must have rational or scientific explanations. Several interview participants also presented this very
disenchanted worldview more broadly when I asked whether not everything has a rational or scientific explanation at the end of each interview. With three exceptions, all participants felt that everything could, at least in principle, be rationally or scientifically explained. Several participants noted that while not everything had yet been explained, this was still a possibility. For instance, Caroline explained “I think that everything is ultimately explainable on some terms… if we had the time to do so.” Or as Emily put it, “yes everything has an explanation but we… but science is there yet to know all the explanations.” Isabelle, who is a practicing witch and who built a shield to house a protective wolf spirit, offered scientific explanations for her Wiccan practice noting that gemstones affect human beings as a result of their physical properties since “scientifically, everything in the world vibrates at different frequencies.”

Yet three participants also rejected the idea that everything can be rationally or scientifically explained. When I asked Tim whether everything had a rational or scientific explanation he answered “no” and then told the story of an art project that he undertook some years ago. For this project Tim collected bus transfer tickets and transformed these into a mosaic. When he finally completed the mosaic he found he had exactly the right number of transfers. As he put it “that was one of those strange moments I’ll never be able to explain… that just does not have a rational explanation.” Later, when describing similar coincidences, Tim remarked that those kinds of moments “just make the story of your life more optimistic. It makes the story of your life have meaning.” Likewise,
when I asked Francesca whether everything could be rationally explained she replied, “absolutely not. I really don’t believe in that” but added, “I hope we’re never going to get to a point where science has explained everything because at that point I think it will be a pretty boring existence.” I will return to themes of boredom and play below. Étienne, who does not possess any lucky or protective objects, spoke about the negative effects of total rational and scientific explanations from a different angle. He noted,

There are things that are beyond our rational minds to grasp and that’s the domain of mystery. If just the brain can figure it all out then there’s no more mystery. There’s no more wonder. And wonder is one of the most beautiful things that we can enjoy as human beings.

Francesca and Étienne dismissed the idea that the world can be rationally or scientifically explained not only because they disagreed with this postulate but also because they associated this view with potential negative effects including boredom and the cessation of mystery. Likewise, Tim mentioned that believing in the unexplainable leads to optimism and meaning. These comments reflect an appreciation of the apparent downside of disenchantment discussed above, namely a reduction in meaning and wonder.

iii. Rationale

Although only one participant offered scientific explanations of how her object works, many others provided what I term psychological explanations for
the efficacy of their object(s). In this framing it is not the object itself that
magically provides good luck or protection but rather its ability to affect the mood
or mindset of the participants. For instance, when talking about how the contents
of her Daoist pouch permit her to “exude” certain good characteristics, Rebecca
remarked, “I don’t necessarily think that this is, like, some sort of magic thing
that’s going to allow me to do that but it’s almost like a little reminder, I guess.”
Similarly, when speaking about her Isis necklace Rebecca said that when she
wears it the necklace “it’s putting me in a frame of mind.” For Tim, this frame of
mind is one of thanks. Speaking about his number eight he said, “it just reminds
me to maybe be thankful for the fortunate things that have come to my life.”
Similarly, when speaking about noticing repeated series of numbers (i.e. 2,2,2)
Emily told me that she often made a wish when she saw these then added,
“which I don’t cognitively believe and yet I do them [wishes] as a practice and
they enhance my life.” Thus for Emily the benefit of these wishes is less that they
actually work and more that they enhance her experience. This idea that the
objects work not through magic, but rather by creating or enhancing
psychological states came up often in participant responses and represents a
different kind of appeal to logical or rational explanations for the efficacy of
participants’ objects.
Belief

Several interview participants commented on belief as an important factor in their objects’ efficacy. For some participants, belief in the object’s efficacy was seen as a necessary requirement to ensure the object really did provide luck or protection. As Caroline put it, “for all the protectiveness of any object, if you don’t believe that it’s going to protect you then you’ve already put up the blocks towards that success.” Likewise, when I asked Francesca whether anyone could use her dream catcher she replied, “it’s all about believing in it and if, you know, I would give it to anyone else I think it would have the same function as long as they believe in it.” Yet some participants noted that whether or not they believed their objects really do provide luck or protection, they felt as though they wanted to believe that they were effective. Francesca, for whom belief is an important factor in the efficacy of a lucky or protective object, told me that she had encountered differing opinions as to whether she should orient her lucky elephant statue so it faced toward or away from her window and added, “no matter where I keep it, I like to believe that it’s bringing me good luck.” Tim framed his belief not only in the efficacy of his lucky number eight but also in meaningful signs and coincidences as desirable, if sometimes difficult to maintain. Specifically, Tim noted that he finds himself disavowing belief in luck and meaningful coincidences. As Tim explained,

when we’re talking out loud about our system of beliefs we have a tendency to refer to it as silly, as bullshit, as ridiculous, even when we don’t mean it. I
never mean it when I say it. Deep down, I want those things to be true.

Michel explained that belief and doubt are not irreconcilable. For Michel, it is important to be able to “play with your belief or beliefs as tools rather than beliefs of… objective reality.” Both Tim and Michel point to the idea of half-belief or partial belief. When Michel described the spirits that he seeks to protect himself from by use of the nail placed by his door he added, “If we consider that they [the spirits] might exist, it’s superstitious and silly, I guess, but you know I like [the nail] there.

This idea that a person can both believe and not believe, or be somehow divided internally, came up in several interviews. For instance, Emily described feeling “divided in two” and explained that she had two conflicting views about how her rosary contributes to her life. As she put it, “in my spiritual mind the use is that it will bring the kind of love to me that I want and protect me, but in my scientific mind the use is that it brings me comfort.” Similarly, when speaking about her small dogs she noted, “in my superstitious world their use is to mend this relationship, but taking a distant stance and speaking as some kind of psychologist, they have a use in comforting me.” I return to this notion of half-belief or partial belief in the next chapter.
Another important theme in many of the interviews was the idea that belief in the efficacy of lucky or protective objects tends to be stigmatized. Étienne, who does not possess any lucky or protective objects, framed this with reference to the Quiet Revolution. As he put it,

> there are many people, particularly those leaning towards more of a scientific approach... who will basically see these things as pretty negative and basically we’re still living in the dark and actually, you know, les enfants de la Révolution tranquille\textsuperscript{75}, that’s the way they would perceive a lot of this stuff.

This notion that the use of lucky and protective objects somehow represents an outdated or old-fashioned practice came up frequently. As Nina noted, “I don’t think it’s [possessing lucky or protective objects] necessarily an entirely current practice with a large percentage of the population." Or as Emily put it, “I think it [possessing lucky or protective objects] is considered old-fashioned and not scientific and something old people do but it’s dying out and if you do that you’re duped.”

Other participants explained that the use of or belief in the efficacy of lucky or protective objects tends to be seen as “silly” or “crazy.” As Nina explained, “I imagine a lot of people probably would see it [possessing lucky or protective objects] as being not useful or silly.” Talking about reactions to the objects that she makes and sells, Robyn noted, “some people roll their eyes and are like

\textsuperscript{75}“the children of the Quiet Revolution”
that’s a kind of silly superstition.” Or as Valérie put it, “le trois quarts des gens pense que c'est fou ou que t'est encore dans ta phase d'enfant ou que tu as trop d'imagination. Les gens ne prennent ça du tout au sérieux.”

Some participants also noted that the stigmatization of lucky and protective objects made them unwilling to speak about such objects and their uses because doing so might result in negative consequences. As Francesca put it, “I do find that you have to be careful who you talk about this stuff with because some people will be, like, oh my god, you’re crazy, what are you talking about?” Or as Isabelle noted, “it’s a stigma across the world that if you believe in things that are unreal then you’re not very grounded as a human being and maybe you are mentally unstable and maybe I don’t want to hire you.” Faced with the prospect of perceived skepticism or disdain from others, participants noted that they often felt uncomfortable talking about their objects or their belief in the efficacy of lucky and protective objects more generally. As Valérie noted, “c'est difficile de comme aller vers les gens pis dire ‘Eh! Mois je crois à ça!’” Or as Emily put it, “I wouldn’t tell everyone that I have this practice.”

Several participants explained that despite possible stigmatization, they nevertheless suspected that the possession and use of lucky and protective objects is actually fairly common – even if most people would not be comfortable admitting that they believe in or use such objects. For instance, Francesca noted,

76 “three quarters of people think that it’s crazy or that you’re still in your childish phase or that you have too much imagination. People do not take this at all seriously.”
77 “it’s difficult to like go up to people and say ‘hey! I believe in this!’”
“I think most people have lucky or protective objects whether they admit it or not.”
Likewise, Isabelle noted that although “there’s a lot of doubt, a lot of logical
thinkers, people who are very locked into this scientific perspective,” she still felt
that “everybody has something. Not everybody will admit that they have
something, but there’s always something they like to keep in their pocket.” Or in
Emily’s succinct formulation, “I think a general Montrealer would not admit to
believing such objects exist.”

vi. Places and Spaces

Finally, I asked the interview participants where someone might find or
acquire a lucky or protective object in Montréal. Each participant was able to
provide a list of likely places in the city where such objects could be found. Often
participants began by listing Pagan shops including the recently closed Mélange
Magique, but also Charmes et Sortilège in the Plateau-Mont-Royal borough and
the Sacred Cauldron in Montréal’s West Island suburbs. Aside from Pagan stores
in Montreal, participants mentioned a Haitian store that sells various items; stores
that sell precious and semi-precious stones; shops that sell various lucky items in
Montréal’s Chinatown; the gift shop at Saint Joseph’s Oratory; the yearly esoteric
and occult fair; Catholic supply stores that sell vestments, candles, and other
items; and shops on St. Denis street that sell Hindu and Buddhist statues. For the
participants, therefore, Montréal is a city in which there are many discrete
locations where lucky and protective objects can be readily acquired.
But while every participant was able to list one or more location where lucky and protective objects can be acquired, nearly every participant explained that lucky and protective objects can be found almost *anywhere* in the city. As Nina explained, “I mean ultimately you could, in my opinion, you could probably find a lucky object anywhere if you were looking for one.” Or as Rebecca told me, “I mean it could be pretty much anywhere.” When I asked Francesca where one could acquire a lucky or protective object she replied, “I would say anywhere, like, you could get one even from the dollar store.” Likewise when I asked Isabelle that same question she answered, “practically anywhere.” Some participants expanded on the view that lucky and protective objects can be acquired anywhere in the city adding that, in fact, lucky and protective objects are “everywhere.” As Robyn put it, “they’re everywhere, they are everywhere.” Or in Michel’s formulation, lucky and protective objects can be acquired “exactly everywhere you go.”

Several participants noted that they did not seek out lucky and protective objects but rather waited to come across them in the course of their daily lives. As Emily put it, “I don’t go looking for them [lucky and protective objects], I let them occur to me.” Likewise Rachel noted that lucky and protective objects are often acquired by “stumbling over something that intrigues you.” Tim explained, he does not typically seek out lucky or protective objects but has found significant objects “on the street, shops, garage sales.” Or as Rebecca put it,
it's not really like, oh there’s a depot where I can drop in and sort of stock up on all these magical items. For me it’s just part of… I don’t know, like, you know, living and seeing what I come across in my daily life.

Several participants stressed that it was not so much the object itself that was important but rather the feeling that an object called to them or spoke to them. The phrase “spoke to me” recurred in six interviews. For instance, Francesca explained, “sometimes an object will speak to me and I’ll just look at it and be like, oh yeah, I love this.” Speaking about her portable altar, Isabelle explained that she chose that particular box at the thrift store “because it spoke to me. It was… you know, this feels like the right thing.”

One final common theme in the interviews involved the participants’ description of an “altar” or a special space set aside inside the participant’s home in which she or he keeps her or his lucky and protective objects. Sometimes, as with Isabelle and Michel, this altar was set apart for Wiccan or Magical practices and was a key location in their homes, which they also describe as working temples. But Tim and Francesca also described the location where they keep their lucky and protective objects as ‘altars,’ and other participants, though they did not use this term, described special or magic boxes in which they kept their items.
4.5. Conclusion

The interviews reveal several interesting points. First, although the participants tend to agree that Montréal is a modern, urban, secular space, especially when compared with the rest of the province, they nevertheless characterize the city as a space in which there are many discrete locations where magical objects can be acquired. This seems to contradict the popular notion that modern, urban, secular, cities are devoid of enchantment. Likewise, although the participants noted that lucky and protective objects tend to be stigmatized, they nevertheless indicated that they remain popular and pervasive. Yet although the participants saw lucky and protective objects and associated beliefs and practices as being prevalent, they also noted that these tended to be dismissed by Montrealeans and more generally as being either old-fashioned remnants of the past or else as being foolish, silly, or “crazy.” Perhaps in response to these perceived negative appraisals of the use, efficacy, and social acceptance of lucky and protective objects, many participants chose to downplay their belief in the efficacy of their own lucky and protective objects either by explaining that they do not really believe in their efficacy or else by framing this efficacy in psychological, scientific, or rational terms.
Chapter 5: Modern Enchantment

The thirteen interviews I conducted shed light on the ways thirteen individuals with very different religious or non-religious backgrounds and with very different lucky and protective objects conceptualize Québec, Montréal, lucky and protective objects, and their uses. While the data I collected and analyzed cannot be used to make generalizations about Montréal or its inhabitants, the discourse analytic method I employed does point to some common discursive themes surrounding lucky and protective objects that seem to colour the ways the participants imagine Québec, Montréal, their objects, and their uses. While aspects of this operative discourse fit with the modern imaginary more generally – and especially with the ways this imaginary has been refracted both historically and currently in the contexts of Québec and Montréal – other aspects contradict the modern imaginary as I have presented it.

The main goal of the abductive approach to qualitative research that I employed is theory production. In this chapter I outline three novel theoretical frameworks through which modern enchantment can be viewed and studied: everyday enchantments, secular magic, and disciplines of disenchantment. These theoretical frameworks respond to and are anchored in the empirical data I collected during my qualitative research and explain why certain aspects of the lived reality of my interview participants are rendered invisible in contemporary scholarship.
5.1. Everyday Enchantments

The argument that modernity may still contain enchantments can be divided into two main forms: 1. Global modernity may still involve enchantments, but these are simply remnants of the past; present in non-modern contexts (the ‘developing world,’ rural areas); or else are survivals among uneducated, socially disadvantaged, backward, or otherwise ‘primitive’ individuals (cf. Frazer 1940; Thomas 1971; Styers 2004; Saler 2006); and, 2. Modernity may still involve enchantments but these are the result of an appreciation of complexity (Bennett 2001) or else tend to appear either in organized occulture (Partridge 2005) or in unusual and spectacular situations (Partridge 2005; Landy and Saler 2009). To some extent, the data provided by participants support both of these formulations. Many participants recognized that lucky and protective objects and other ‘superstitions’ tend to be viewed as old-fashioned. Likewise, several participants were actively invested in what Partridge would term occulture, most notably the practicing Wiccan participants (Isabelle, Robyn, and Valérie) and the unaffiliated Michel who engages in various forms of ceremonial magic.

But the data also disagree with these two arguments in several ways. Although many participants noted that lucky and protective objects might be viewed as foolish or backward, they nevertheless possess and use these kinds of objects in their daily lives. But contrary to the presumption that enchantments should only persist in non-Western or non-modern contexts, the participants I spoke with live in a thoroughly modern Western city within a province that has
undergone processes of intense secularization and has largely embraced secularism as a social and political project. Moreover, contrary to the presumption that enchantments should persist among “the dull, the weak, the ignorant and the superstitious” (Frazer 1940, 55) or be a sign of “social disruption” (Styers 2004, 16), my participants are highly educated and are able to provide cogent and rational explanations for their object’s efficacy either with appeals to science or else to psychology.

Similarly, although Michel mentioned ‘raves’ as possible sources of modern enchantment, most participants conceptualized modern enchantments as being present not in extraordinary circumstances but rather as being important aspects of mundane, everyday reality. Interestingly, even those participants who actively participate in public rituals nevertheless focused on this ‘everyday’ dimension. Moreover, while several participants engage in what Partridge calls ‘occulture,’ they nevertheless chose to speak about everyday objects as well. Thus while Michel views his apartment as a working magical temple, he spoke not about this temple but rather about the railway nail he keeps by his back door. Likewise, although Robyn makes and sells a wide variety of magical items, she chose to speak about a money-drawing candle and a money tree, both of which are used for the mundane work of helping make her business a successful one rather than in magical ceremonies.

The data point, therefore, to a third and as yet largely ignored facet of modern enchantment that is present in daily life and is separate from
extraordinary events and circumstances. The data reveal a third form of modern enchantment present in Montréal – a form that I refer to as **everyday enchantments**. These everyday enchantments are, according to the participants, widespread. While they are sometimes associated with religious traditions and ceremonial magic, more often these everyday enchantments are a part of daily existence and contribute to this-worldly ends. Participants make use of lucky and protective objects to improve and restore romantic relationships, protect their homes and apartments, bring them luck in business, help control nightmares, improve their chances of having children, and help them avoid receiving parking tickets. Moreover, while these objects can be acquired in specialized stores or contexts, they can also be found anywhere and everywhere – in dollar stores and at garage sales, at thrift stores and in the trash, in hotel rooms and laying on the ground.

Through the framework of everyday enchantment, therefore, Montréal appears as a place where enchantment overflows the boundaries of public and private spheres. Lucky and protective objects are not only found in churches and Pagan stores or in the homes of those who possess them, but can be found nearly anywhere and by anyone who feels drawn to such an object or, as some of the participants phrased it, by anyone who is able to hear the object call to them. Thus Montréal is not only a place dotted with enchanted spaces but is itself a space of potential enchantment, filled with unseen forces, messages, and signs. This view goes against Charles Taylor’s notion of the bounded,
disenchanted modern individual who is closed to magical influences. The people I spoke to are anything but closed. Instead, they are open to hidden meanings and signs and to the influence of energies and objects. Whereas Taylor conceives of modern individuals as protected from unseen influences, the people I spoke to appear ‘porous’ in that unseen influences, both positive and negative, affect their lives and can be encouraged or discouraged by the lucky and protective objects they possess.

5.2. Secular Magic

The term ‘secular magic’ was coined by Landy and Saler (2009) to describe modern enchantment that “delights but does not delude” (3). For Landy and Saler, secular magic is experienced by the imagination and expressed in literature, stage magic, spectator sports, and artistic endeavours. Yet in Landy and Saler’s framework, enchantment is seen as already and necessarily delusional. Landy and Saler note that secular magic is a form of enchantment about which “no one, however hard-bitten he or she may be, need feel ashamed,” indicating that non-secular enchantment (supra-rational beliefs) remain a shameful or foolish project (2). I want to re-imagine this term to mean something very different. Rather than use the term ‘secular magic’ to describe attempts by “fully secularized subjects” (2) to experience wonder and mystery by participating in creative or athletic endeavours or by consuming creative or athletic cultural products, I want to use the term instead to describe the
complicated position of wanting to believe or half-believing or sometimes believing in supra-rational forces along with the scientific, rational, and psychological explanations this position sometimes involves.

In part, the modifier ‘secular’ in my use of the term refers the non-religious self-identifications of some of the participants. Thus while some participants conceive of their objects and associated beliefs (or half-beliefs) and practices as an element of their larger religious or spiritual lives, other individuals possess and use lucky and protective objects without recourse to any religious or spiritual framework. I want to use ‘secular magic’ therefore to refer to the beliefs and practices of individuals like Amélie, Caroline, and Tim, who self-identify as atheist, secular, and non-religious respectively. For these participants, the ‘magic’ of their objects is not linked to any overarching religious or spiritual conception of the world and represents instead what Caroline called a “fanciful notion” that the participants both believe in to a limited extent but also doubt.

More broadly, however, I want to employ this term to refer to the tendency among both ‘secular’ and religious or spiritual participants to justify or explain their belief (or half-belief) in the efficacy of lucky and protective objects in terms that fall outside their own religious or spiritual commitments. Thus while Amélie, Caroline, and Tim all referred to the power of symbolism and psychology in their accounts of their objects and their uses, this tendency to turn to scientific, rational, and psychological explanations was widespread. Participants with complex religious or spiritual outlooks also chose to explain their objects and
their uses by referring to processes outside these outlooks, as was the case with Isabelle, for instance, who is a practicing witch and yet explained the efficacy of crystals with reference to physical explanations concerning the ways all matter vibrates. In this sense secular magic involves a process of secularizing magic.

Finally, I want to use the term secular magic to indicate the dual position of belief and disbelief that seems to exist in many of the participants. I use it, therefore, to refer to the idea that while participants may want to believe, or sometimes believe, or decide to believe in the efficacy of their objects, they nevertheless are prepared to doubt their objects’ efficacy or else explain this in scientific (secular) terms. This points to the divided nature of modern subjects that Charles Taylor and Peter Berger describe in which religious (or in this case enchanted) positions are not taken-for-granted realities but are instead choices that can and must be explained and defended. In this sense, the modifier ‘secular’ refers not to the individuals who engage in this kind of magical thinking but rather to the secularized social context in which this thinking takes places, what Taylor (2007) calls the immanent frame and what Berger (2012) calls modern consciousness.

For nearly a century, social scientists, scholars of religion, and commentators on secularization, secularism, and modernity have all described and predicted the disenchantment of the modern world. In part, this disenchantment was presented as the natural consequence of perceived widespread secularization. But it was also viewed as the natural consequence of
the world’s movement away from traditional, rural life as a result of the important changes and technological and scientific developments that took place most clearly in the modern, secular West. Recently, scholars have begun to describe modern re-enchantment and have framed this as involving organized occult practices or else secular strategies for the creation of wonder and awe through art, sport, and other avenues. Both descriptions of enchantment and modernity, whether of its disappearance or its reappearance, fail to account for the everyday enchantments and secular magic my participants describe. In the next section I attempt to explain why this is the case and argue that the invisibility of everyday enchantments and secular magic is a consequence of the modern imaginary I have been describing and the disciplines of disenchantment that it involves.

5.3. Disciplines of Disenchantment

The concept of disciplines of disenchantment refers to ways supra-rational beliefs tend to be rendered invisible to scholars. Although I borrow Taylor’s (2007) term ‘disciplines of enchantment’ to describe this academic disregard for lucky and protective objects, I employ the term differently than Taylor does. Taylor views disciplines of disenchantment as the almost inevitable result of the modern social imaginary and as a product of the slow dissemination of elite conceptions concerning the unlikeness or undesirability of supernatural explanations. I take a different view and argue instead that disciplines of disenchantment constitute a kind of feedback loop that is linked, not to modernity
itself, but rather to a widespread and influential idea of modernity.

5.3.1. Academics

While supra-rational beliefs and practices (everyday enchantments) tend to be ignored or trivialized in general, they have also been ignored and trivialized in academic accounts of the development of human culture (anthropology), contemporary human life (sociology), and especially in academic accounts of human interactions with the supernatural (religious studies). In what follows, I examine this situation by looking at academic portrayals of magic; the tendency to privilege apparently serious or sincerely held beliefs in the study of religion; and an apparent unwillingness to explore what lies on the margins of the religion/secular dichotomy.

5.3.2. Magic

Like the term ‘superstition,’ the term ‘magic’ is often used both to describe and to evaluate the beliefs, practices, and behaviours to which it is applied. Academic literature on the topic of magic from the 19th and 20th centuries is rife with negative assessments of both magic and of those who engage in magical practices. In The Origins of Primitive Culture (1871), for example, E. B. Tylor describes magic as “one of the most pernicious delusions that ever vexed mankind” and associates magic with “the lowest known stages of civilization...
the lower races, who have not partaken largely of the education of the world" (112). Likewise, in the *Golden Bough* (1890), James George Frazer describes magic as “a mistaken application of the very simplest and most elementary processes of the human mind” practiced by “the dull, the weak, the ignorant and the superstitious” (55). Even Marcel Mauss, who takes a more neutral approach to magic in his *General Theory of Magic* (1902), writes that magic’s “incoherence and the important role played by pure fancy make it a far cry from the image we have learnt to associate with religion.”

This clear division between religion on the one and hand and magic on the other is, as Randall Styers (2004) argues, an important factor that causes magic to be seen as undesirable or, as Keith Thomas puts it, to be “rightly disdained by intelligent persons” (1971, 76). According to Styers, “magic has played a central role in scholarly efforts to define the nature of religion and to demarcate its proper bounds” (6). According to this view, magic stands “as a vivid foil for religion” (76) and serves therefore as religion’s constitutive other. As Styers points out, in part this clear 19th and 20th century distinction between religion and magic is the result of a much older distinction between apparently ‘magical’ and therefore undesirable Catholic religious practices and non-magical Protestant ones in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. Central to the Reformation was the repudiation by reformers such as Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli of ‘superstitious’ or ‘magical’ Catholic liturgical practices and doctrines (36-38). I noted above that the Protestant Reformation tends to be viewed as one possible starting point for the
advent of modernity. If Styers is right when he argues that there is a “broad consensus that magic is an archetypically non-modern phenomenon” (8), then part of the movement toward modernity that the Reformation apparently set into motion involved this distinction not only that magic is undesirable but also that magic is (or ought to be) consigned to the dustbin of history.

This view that magic is not only undesirable but also a remnant of the past explains, perhaps, the broader academic trend according to which magic is associated with lower forms of civilization. As Styers explains, European intellectuals have long seen magic as “a symptom of psychological impairment and marker of racial or cultural inferiority” (27). As was the case with modernity, magic also tends to be associated with particular (non-Western) geographical areas or else, when present in the West, with social groups that threaten social disruption including “women, people of color, members of lower social classes” and other deviants (16). Thus magic has come to serve as a marker of primitive or non-modern engagements with supra-rational forces and realities. While religion, divorced from magic and viewed therefore as rational and “serviceable for liberal modernity”, has remained an important academic topic, magic has been consistently denigrated and neglected. Thus while specialized departments exist for the academic study of religion, magic has increasingly been viewed either as a remnant of the past, a peculiarity of non-Western places and peoples, or else a problem for various less-than-fully-modern segments of contemporary Western society (Styers 2004).
Of course not all academic approaches to magic have cast magical beliefs and practices in so negative a light. Bronislaw Malinowski, for instance, has described magic as being similar in some ways to science (1954, 19). This view that magic, in its attempts to bring out practical benefits, is a basic or undeveloped form of science is widespread. Yet this view is not without its critics. Rodney Stark (2001), for instance, has argued that although magic, like science, is concerned with the empirical world, unlike science, magic rarely attempts to explain why a particular magical practice or incantation works (110). Thus for Stark, magic lacks science’s explanatory power. Moreover, Stark notes that while magic is in some ways similar to religion in that both magic and religion are based on supernatural assumptions, he notes, “the supernatural assumptions of magic are crude and impersonal” (101). In other words, not only has magic been clearly separated from religion (and deemed inferior) it has also been clearly separated from and deemed inferior to science as well. Additionally, these negative evaluations of magic, while widespread in the 19th and 20th centuries, persist today. 21st century scholars, Stark among them, maintain this basic division and continue to cast magic in an unfavourable light.

Of course there is nothing wrong with the fact that generations of scholars have made clear divisions between religion and magic and, more recently, between magic and science or that these scholars have tended to cast magic as undesirable, primitive, foreign, or backward. As Jonathan Z. Smith notes, religion is not a natural term but is instead “created by scholars for their intellectual
purposes” (1998, 281). Smith adds that precisely because religion is a category invented by scholars to support their interests and projects, it is therefore theirs to define as they see fit. Smith also notes that binary distinctions such as the magic/religion and magic/science binaries I have been describing are commonplace. As Smith puts it,

> The most common form of classifying religions, found both in native categories and in scholarly literature, is dualistic and can be reduced, regardless of what differentium is employed to “theirs” and “ours” (276).

Smith goes on to list a variety of such dualistic formulations including religion/paganism, religion/idolatry, monotheism/polytheism, true religion/false religion, religion/superstition, and religion/magic. In other words, I take no issue with the simple fact that magic has, for centuries, been viewed as religion’s less desirable constitutive other – as “theirs” in relation to “ours.” Rather, I want to point out that this ‘othering’ of magic is closely tied to the ‘othering’ present in the descriptions and assessments of modernity and non-modernity explored above. Magic is fundamentally ‘other,’ therefore, not only because it is apparently distinct from ‘our’ religion, but also because it is fundamentally un-modern. What separates the modern West from magic is not, therefore, only our distinction between religion and magic but also our distinction between where and who and what is modern and where and who and what is not.

Before I move on to describe how magic’s invisibility is also a result of an historical focus on sincerely held belief, I want to briefly describe the ways
psychological explanations have been used in an attempt to justify magical practices or to salvage magic as a potentially useful, if fundamentally misguided, aspect of human experience. Thus while I have focused on largely unsympathetic appraisals of the nature and uses of magic above, not all academic depictions of magic are quite so dismissive. Perhaps the most sympathetic appraisals of magic’s value in society draw on psychological arguments. Again, Malinowski provides a clear example of this. In his work with Trorbriand Islanders, Malinowski noticed that that although the islanders engaged in a number of magical practices when fishing offshore in dangerous waters, they never performed these practices when fishing in the safer waters near the shoreline. This led Malinowski to conclude that the islanders used magic not in order to catch fish, but rather as a means of instilling confidence or responding to uncertainty when undertaking dangerous activities. According to this view, magic does not actually attempt to control or manipulate empirical reality but serves instead to mitigate psychological distress and to increase confidence. As Malinowski explains,

We find magic wherever the elements of chance and accident, and the emotional play between hope and fear have a wide and extensive rang. We do not find magic wherever the pursuit is certain, reliable, and well under the control of rational methods and technological processes. (1948, 139-140).

Again, this view that magic works psychologically rather than empirically is widespread. Stuart A. Vyse, for instance, views magic and superstition as an
almost inevitable response to uncertainty. As Vyse puts it, most people are able to accommodate randomness and risk and avoid “a variety of psychological problems,” but others “many of who are quite sensible about other aspects of their lives, respond to uncertainty with superstitious beliefs or actions” (1997, 5).

5.3.3. Sincerity

In addition to this tendency to view magic as a primitive survival or else as a psychological tool, an historical preference for discussing firm or sincerely held beliefs in academic work on magic and religion also has consequences for the visibility (or lack thereof) of secular magic (i.e. half or partial belief). The view that religion involves serious or sincerely held beliefs is widespread. It is the basis, for instance, of fears in Québec concerning so-called implicit proselytization.

According to this view, not only are religious objects markers of religious belief, but these beliefs, when expressed, risk impinging on the rights of secular citizens and constitute hidden attempts to gain religious converts. Likewise, the United States Supreme Court has long used sincerity both as a means to determine whether a particular religious belief would permit a citizen to conscientiously object to military service and, more recently, as a gauge for whether a given belief should be understood to constitute a religious belief and be protected therefore under the free exercise clause of the First Amendment (Finkelman 2000, 104). While a full assessment of the importance of sincerity and sincerely held beliefs falls outside the scope of this thesis, I want to briefly consider two
recent approaches to the topic of sincerity in academic work on religion: attempts to explain so-called theological incorrectness in cognitive approaches to the study of religion and recent work on sincerity and play in ritual studies.

In his book *Theological Incorrectness* (2004), Jason Slone seeks to explain why it is that religious individuals entertain beliefs that run contrary to the official beliefs of their religious traditions. As is the case with other cognitive approaches to the study of religion (cf. Atran 2002; Boyer 2001), Slone explains the presence and persistence of religion with reference to our shared cognitive capacities. Rather than see religion as the product of interactions with actual deities or ‘the sacred,’ or as a product of human culture or imagination, Slone and others who approach religion from a cognitive standpoint see religion instead as the product of the human mind and its evolved cognitive capacities. But what interests me about Slone’s approach is not so much his explanation of why religious people “believe and do what they shouldn’t” (4, italics in original), but rather his largely unquestioned presumption that religious people should sincerely and reliably believe the tenets of their particular traditions. Thus in explaining why it is that “Bible believers eat cheeseburgers when the rules in Leviticus say to not mix beef and dairy” (4) and other similar instances of theological incorrectness, Slone frames religious belief as something that ought to be determined by religious texts and doctrines and, moreover, as something that ought to be so sincerely held that religious belief can consistently work to determine human behaviour. In other words, in his very framing of the question
Slone and others who approach religion from this cognitive standpoint operate under the (widespread) assumption that religious beliefs are coherent and sincere motivators of human action.

In his explanation of theological incorrectness, Slone notes that human beings tend to employ abductive thinking and so prefer temporary and casual explanations to theologically correct explanations deduced from religious texts and traditions (121). In so doing, Slone presents human belief as fluid, partial, and at times contradictory. I agree with Slone’s assessment of human belief and, as I explain below, view belief in the efficacy of magic as one example of the fluidity and at times contradictory nature of human thought. But what stands out in Slone’s discussion of theological incorrectness is not so much his characterization of human belief in general but rather his presumption that religious beliefs are (or ought to be) exempt from this general trend toward incompleteness and self-contradiction. In other words, by attempting to show over the course of several hundred pages that religious beliefs are really just like any other human beliefs, Slone assumes at the outset that this fact requires proof and explanation. In explaining the sometimes self-contradictory nature of religious belief, Slone reifies the widespread view that religious beliefs are somehow exempt from self-contradiction, amendment, or temporary dismissal. It is precisely this widespread view that I want to call into question.

But this widespread view that religion ought to involve sincerely held beliefs has also been problematized. In their book *Ritual and Its Consequences:*
An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity (2008), Adam B. Seligman et al., argue that sincerity became the dominant mode of religious behaviour only during and after the Protestant Reformation. Seligman et al., contrast this sincere mode of religious behaviour with the ‘subjunctive’ or what-if mode that, in their view, characterizes much of pre-modern ritual. Although Seligman et al., are primarily interested in ritual, their discussion of sincere versus subjunctive modes sheds light not only on the rise of sincerity as a dominant form of religious belief and behaviour since the Reformation, but also on issues surrounding the importance of subjunctive, imagined worlds and play. I will return to the issues of imagined worlds and play below.

In discussing ritual and what they see to be problems in contemporary ritual theory, Seligman et al., argue that whereas ritual used to take the ambiguity and imperfection of both life and ritual seriously, since the Reformation ritual has tended to be imagined either as mere formality or else as a direct expression of the sincere beliefs of ritual participants (4). Yet Seligman et al. are careful to note that both sincere and subjunctive forms of ritual have probably always existed in tension with one another. Seligman et al. note, for instance, that reform movements prior to the Protestant Reformation also sought to replace the perceived arbitrary or meaningless character of ritual with reformed, sincere expressions (133). Yet in their view, the sincere mode is a particularly modern phenomenon. As they put it, “the entire world of liberal modernity can be usefully understood in terms of the trope of sincerity” (118). Later they add,
what we usually call the “modern” period, therefore, should instead be understood in part as a period in which sincerity claims have been given a rare institutional and cultural emphasis (181).

In contrast to the ambiguity of the subjunctive mode of ritual and of religious action more generally, Seligman et al. characterize the sincere mode as involving “a search for motives and for purity of motives” (105). In their view, the sincere mode discourages all subjunctive what-if worlds including “music, adult play, dance, and even humor” (104).

But what sets sincerity apart from the subjunctive mode for Seligman et al. is not only its focus on pure motives and its mistrust of play. Rather, they see the sincere mode as one that values the primacy of internal reality and the truth of that reality while encouraging individuals to imagine “that there is only one possible world – a world as is” (98, italics in original). According to this view, not only are religious (or ritual) actions representative of sincere, coherent internal states, the world itself is seen as constituting a single objective reality. Thus religious or ritual beliefs correspond to the ‘real world’ and religious actions correspond to ‘real’ internal beliefs.

Although Seligman et al. recognize that both modalities, the subjunctive and the sincere, are perhaps necessary for human ritual and religious life, they note that the sincere mode carries with it certain limitations. As they put it, sincerity “is a dynamic that leaves little room for ambiguity, for mixed motives, and for the complexity and contradictory character of most human striving” (107).
Although Seligman et al. never mention magic, superstition, or magical objects, I want to extend their argument to claim that sincerity, which “has become almost an icon of modern culture” (106) also leaves little room for the ambiguity, complexity, and contradictory nature of the beliefs and behaviours that the research participants associate with lucky and protective objects. I will discuss how I imagine appreciating the subjunctive mode may help to ‘make room’ for lucky and protective objects and the conflicting beliefs and behaviours they inspire in more detail in the conclusion below.

5.3.4. Religion and the Secular

I argued above that the religion/secular dichotomy is a key factor for the larger modern imaginary and, indeed, for nearly all characterizations of the modern world. But this dichotomy, though foundational, is not without its consequences. The apparently neat division of religion from the secular also creates margins surrounding both these spheres – margins that often go unexplored in academic work on religion. In other words, this general preference for splitting the world into discrete ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ spheres and the disinclination on the part of academics to question this boundary and explore its margins has caused secular magic (i.e. surpa-rational beliefs held by individuals who self-identify as secular) to fall through the gaps of scholarship on religion.
At its most basic, a clear separation between religion and the secular threatens to divide the world neatly into religious and secular individuals and to obscure the ways these self-identifications fail to account for the complexity of lived experience. Although Tim officially self-identified as ‘non-religious,’ during our interview it became clear that this self-identification failed to account for the complexity of Tim’s religious upbringing; his eventual (if hesitant) re-identification as spiritual; the fact that he occasionally prays; his (partial) belief in the efficacy of his own lucky and protective objects; and his (partial) fear that removing the portrait of Padre Pio that he received as a gift from his apartment might result in negative consequences. Of course I do not mean to say that these elements of Tim’s life should earn him the designation ‘religious’ either. Rather, I want to show that neither designation is up to the task of describing Tim’s complex and sometimes contradictory beliefs and practices. Moreover, preferring an either/or designation in which Tim is either religious (Anglican) or secular (non-religious) ignores his marginal in-between status as both religious and secular and also not-religious and not-secular. Likewise Caroline, who describes herself as secular, nevertheless engages in a variety of “improvised” private rituals that involve “blessings” and “giving thanks” or that mark transitions. As Caroline puts it, the ritual “might be Wiccan or it might be Hindu… there will be an occasion where I want to mark an experience or an event and so I’ll borrow and adapt a ritual.” Again, describing these rituals as religious would ignore Caroline’s self-identification as secular. Yet categorizing these rituals as straightforwardly
secular ignores the way they are linked to religious traditions. Neither designation accurately captures Caroline’s complicated lived reality or the fact that while she likes “a lot of different things about different religions,” she does not “subscribe whole cloth to anything in particular.” In world that is neatly divided between religion and the secular, both Tim and Caroline and their complex lived realities remain invisible to scholarship.

But the religious/secular binary also renders marginal or in-between spaces invisible to scholarship as well. Courtney Bender (2012) has recently commented on some of the problems associated with dividing the world neatly in religious and secular spaces. Bender notes that although academics have, belatedly, embarked on a project of “retheorizing religion and the secular,” nevertheless, “most empirical research on religion does not incorporate these theoretical turns” (44). Thus although recent appraisals of religion have tended to view religion and the secular not as discrete and separate spheres of life but rather as co-constitutive and fluid designators (cf. Asad 2003), scholars continue to neglect the ways these two spheres intersect and blend into one other more practically. Bender is particularly interested in scholarly neglect of ‘spirituality,’ which she refers to as “religion out of place” (67). By religion out of place Bender refers to apparently religious or spiritual beliefs or activities that take place in apparently secular contexts. Given Bender’s admission that “spirituality is bedeviled not by a lack of definitions but by an almost endless proliferation of them” (2010, 5), I am unwilling to use this term to refer to the supra-rational
beliefs, objects, and practices that the interview participants describe. Yet Bender’s claim that the “predominant theoretical logics of secularization” have deflected scholarly attention away from “the continued circulation of religious meanings, yearnings, and imaginations in spaces understood to be secular” (2012, 50) is apt. According to this view, religion occurs only in religious places and is somehow ‘out of place’ in secular ones. But the powerful objects the interview participants describe are found not only in religious contexts (i.e. churches) or at stores that sell magical objects but are found instead nearly anywhere. As Michel explained, significant objects can be found “in the trash.” Likewise Tim explained that such objects can be found “on the street,” at “garage sales,” and in “antique shops” and Francesca noted that lucky and protective objects can be purchased “even from the dollar store.” Again, by insisting that the world be divided into religious and secular spheres, institutions, and spaces, scholars risk ignoring the complicated and fascinating realities that fall between these two apparently opposite realms.

The problems that the secular/religious binary poses for scholarship on religion in modernity are not limited to individuals and spaces, however. For while scholars have recently argued that scholarship on religion should increase its focus on religious objects and on the material dimensions of religious practice (cf. Plate 2015), this push to study material religion only renders lucky and protective objects even less visible to scholars. According to the growing interest in ‘material religion,’ scholarship on religion must focus on religious objects and
their uses. But the claim that some objects are religious also entails the claim that other objects are not. Thus while from a material religion standpoint Emily’s rosary would be a valid and interesting object of study, her rubber dogs would be viewed as non-religious and would therefore fall outside the scope of material religion. Likewise, while Tim’s portrait of Padre Pio might catch the interest of a scholar interested in the material dimensions of religious life, his lucky number eight might be ignored. In other words, dividing objects into religious and non-religious categories risks ignoring not only those significant objects that might fail to earn the designation ‘religious,’ but also those apparently non-religious objects with which individuals have similar (if not identical) relationships. While Tim and Emily and at least some of their objects might be deemed interesting and worthy of study, then, it seems unlikely that Caroline’s wristwatch or Amélie’s African statue would merit serious consideration – despite the fact that all these objects play similar roles in the lives of the people who possess them.

I have grouped an historical disdain for magic and superstition; a preference for exploring sincere beliefs and practices and an attendant disregard for subjunctive realities and play; and a propensity to neatly divide the world into religious and secular spheres as constituting disciplines of disenchantment. I think the scholarly disdain for magic and superstition can easily be understood to constitute disenchantment in the Weberian sense, but what about sincerity and the religion/secular binary? In using the term disenchantment to characterize these trends I employ the term somewhat differently than with the widespread
disregard for magic. In describing the modern preference for sincerity as
disenchantment I point to disenchantment’s affective register and the ways it
works to limit meaning, wonder, awe, and play. In its focus on the world as is the
sincere mode precludes the kind of playful ‘what-if’ scenarios described by
Bennett (2001) and others. In describing the tendency to divide the world into
discrete religious and secular spheres as disenchantment, I point instead to
Frederick Bauershmidt’s (2001) point that disenchantment has involved a
movement according to which religion has been cast as its own separate, private,
and irrational sphere that is distinct from secular reality. Yet scholars are not the
only ones who encourage or are subject to such disciplines of disenchantment.

5.3.5. Individuals

Disciplines of disenchantment also work to conceal and minimize the
presence of lucky and protective objects for the individuals who possess and use
these objects. In this section I want to expand upon some of the points I raised in
chapter four and outline several ways in which the modern imaginary I have been
describing frames the possession and use of lucky objects as evidence of
psychological weakness, as theologically incorrect, as conspicuously religious, or
else as superstitious, silly, or absurd.
i. Psychological Weakness

I have already pointed out that participants tended to present psychological explanations for their belief in the efficacy of their objects, framing these objects not as magical in themselves, but rather as tools to achieve desired psychological states or to boost confidence in stressful situations. Coupled with participants’ framing of their objects’ efficacy in rational or scientific terms and their tendency to provide physical or empirical evidence for their objects’ efficacy, this *psychologization* works to disenchant lucky and protective objects in the Weberian sense by stressing technical (psychological, rational, empirical) means over magical ones. But some participants also discussed being reluctant to speak about their objects and their uses for fear of appearing mentally imbalanced or weak as well.

The idea that speaking openly about lucky and protective objects or other supra-rational beliefs might cause others to view the speaker as mentally unstable came up in several interviews. Francesca mentioned that speaking about these issues might make someone think she was “crazy,” for instance, and Isabelle noted that admitting belief in “things that are unreal” might make potential future employers view her as “mentally unstable” and would therefore make them unwilling to hire her. But Isabelle also expanded on this point in her interview and explained; “I would think people wouldn’t want to admit it [possessing a lucky or protective objects] for the purpose of saying that I’m not confident to stand on my own. Nobody wants to say, ‘Hi, I’m weak.’” Although
only one participant linked possessing a lucky or protective object to psychological or personal weakness, many mentioned they would be unwilling to speak about their objects more generally.

But while it might be an unjustified leap to imagine that other participants were reluctant to discuss their objects for fear of appearing as though they required these objects to maintain their confidence or well-being, Isabelle’s comment speaks to a broader societal issue according to which individuals are expected to be self-reliant and capable without the kinds of psychological benefits lucky and protective objects provide. This speaks the idea that any attachment to objects more generally is childish or superstitious. As Rachel put it when describing the superstitions of other people, “I know that there are some people who are extremely superstitious and they have to have their crucifix” (my emphasis). Or as Caroline put when describing her brother’s habit of carrying a rosary, “it’s more of a fetish object or a comfort, I suppose, or a nervous tick” (my emphasis).

ii. Theological Incorrectness

Other participants were troubled not so much by the fact that their possession or use of lucky or protective objects might cause others to doubt their mental health or their ability to function on their own, but rather that their possession or use of lucky and protective objects might cause others to doubt
their religious credentials. Rebecca, for instance, who self-identified as a ‘seeker’ but who works in youth ministry for the Anglican diocese of Montréal, explained that she sometimes felt uncomfortable wearing her Isis necklace in the company of Anglicans at work. As she put it, “but I feel a little… sometimes a little strange wearing it in a Christian context.” Rebecca explained that in part this had to do with the necklace being a symbol of feminine power that might not be accepted owing to the fact that Christianity is somewhat “male-leani...
frowned upon in religious circles. This points to the more general de-magicking of religion following the Protestant Reformation and the subsequent Catholic Counter Reformation discussed above according to which apparently magical practices were discarded by Protestants and which saw important changes to Catholic liturgy that culminated in the aggiornamento of the Second Vatican Council. But other participants explained that they were reluctant to speak about their lucky and protective objects not for fear of reprisals from religious individuals but rather because they worried they would be labeled as religious themselves.

iii. Conspicuous Religiosity

As I argued above, several participants indicated that whereas the word ‘spiritual’ carried with it mostly positive connotations, religion tends to be frowned upon both in general and especially in Québec. In part, this negative appraisal of religion in Québec was linked the Quiet Revolution. Étienne, for instance, described Québécois as “les enfants de la Révolution Tranquille” and explained that some Québécois are “very adamant and very anti-religious” adding that these individuals support “harder secularism that excludes religion altogether.” Or as Valérie noted, “c'est sûr qu'on est très mal à l'aise au Québec au niveau de la religion.” This general disdain for religion in Québec led some participants to note that while they felt ‘spiritual’ objects might be accepted in Montréal,

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78 “the children of the Quiet Revolution”
79 “We are certainly very uneasy about religion in Québec.”
problems would arise if these objects were perceived to be religious ones. Thus while Tim explained that he would be comfortable talking about his lucky object and noted that he did not feel such objects were stigmatized in Montréal, he added “if the item were religious, there would definitely be a stigma.” In Tim’s view, while Montrealers might “scoff” at someone who wore a cross, for instance, lucky and protective objects would be “less likely to get a negative reaction.” Robyn also mentioned that she felt certain objects might be viewed negatively if they were perceived to be religious. After speaking about a pentagram necklace she added,

in Québec there is a stigma, you know, about wearing these things. The weird part is if I said it’s a fashion choice and not a religious choice, then no one would have a single problem with it. The second you say this represents my religion, whoah, whoah, whoah!

Other participants explained that they felt only non-Christian religious objects would be viewed negatively in Montréal. When I asked Caroline whether she felt lucky or protective objects would be viewed negatively in Montréal, for instance, she replied, “does clothing count?” When I asked her what kind of clothing she had in mind she replied, “I don’t know… a head covering?” Caroline told me that she actually wore a hijab for three months. She explained, “I was very nervous about putting it on because I was afraid I was going to encounter something ugly that I hadn’t had to face before.” Although her experience wearing a hijab in Montréal was largely positive and inspired “really interesting
conversations,” she also noted, “I’m sure if I had been the regions [the ROQ] it would have been different.” Likewise, when I asked Rachel whether she felt lucky and protective were viewed negatively in Montréal she replied,

not if they’re Christian objects, in this society. But anything else... you’d better have a darn good explanation for it. And there’s definitely a stigma for anyone these days wearing a turban or a hijab.

As several participants pointed out, their understanding of the ways religion and especially minority religions are perceived in Montréal and Québec had shifted somewhat in the wake of the controversy surrounding the proposed Values Charter (bill 60). Thus both the histories of secularization and of secularism in Québec and Montréal have had consequences for the kinds of objects the participants feel comfortable talking about and wearing in public.

iv. Superstition, Silliness, and Absurdity

Nearly all participants explained that most people would view the possession or use of lucky and protective objects as superstitious or silly. As I argued above, participants tended to frame this as involving a stigmatization of lucky and protective objects according to which these objects are viewed as old-fashioned or unscientific. Several participants also noted that belief in these objects tends to be seen as childish, superstitious, or crazy. But this perceived disdain for lucky and protective objects also has effects. Specifically, the perceived disdain for lucky and protective objects was viewed as something that
encouraged the participants to remain silent about their objects and associated beliefs or half-beliefs.

This reluctance on the part of participants to speak openly about their objects is, I want to argue, an important instance of the disciplines of disenchantment that Taylor describes according to which we “regularly reproach each other for our failings… and accuse each other of ‘magical’ thinking, of indulging in ‘myth’, of giving way to ‘fantasy’…” (2007, 28-29). In other words, a perceived disdain for enchantment, magical thinking, myth, and fantasy works to discipline the speech and actions of modern individuals. Sometimes this perceived disdain caused participants to be cautious about the people with whom they spoke about their objects, as was the case with Emily who explained, “I wouldn’t tell everyone that I have this practice.” Yet as Tim explained, this perceived disdain can also work to preclude any possible discussion of lucky and protective objects. In our interview Tim explained that I was first person he had ever told about his lucky number eight. He remarked, “I’ve never really talked about it before now.” When I asked Tim why he had never spoken about his lucky object he explained that he felt his particular case was unique and added that he felt others would not be able to relate to his experience. He explained, “it just doesn’t relate and so I guess I’ve given up trying to relate and maybe other people have given up trying to relate.”

This idea that others might not be able to relate to an individual’s possession or use of lucky and protective objects, coupled with the notion that
these objects would be deemed superstitious, silly, or absurd, is a key example of the disciplines of disenchantment I am describing according to which technical means and explanations are favoured over magical ones. Again, I employ the term disenchantment more broadly when considering participants’ concerns about psychological weakness, theological incorrectness, and being perceived as conspicuously religious. In describing fears concerning perceived mental imbalance and psychological weakness as disenchantment I point both to a general framing of magical beliefs in modernity as pathological but also the view that ‘depending’ on lucky or protective objects is immature or childish. By describing theological incorrectness as a form of disenchantment I point instead to prevalent post-Reformation conceptions of religion that question the efficacy or appropriateness of using objects to attain benefits via supernatural means. Finally, in describing concerns over appearing conspicuously religious as disenchantment since disenchantment is closely tied to both secularization and secularism and to what Taylor calls our ‘immanent frame.’

5.3.6 Disciplines of Disenchantment and the Modern Imaginary

In this section I have explained why it is that lucky and protective objects and the beliefs and behaviours they involve remain invisible to scholarship and more generally. I have argued that the presence of lucky and protective objects and associated beliefs are rendered invisible by disciplines of disenchantment
that frame these objects as unworthy of scholarly scrutiny and as subjects about which even those who possess such objects ought to remain silent. Before offering suggestions for overcoming these disciplines of disenchantment and explaining why paying attention to everyday enchantments and secular magic might benefit both scholarship on religion and society more generally, I want to link the disciplines of disenchantment I have been describing to the modern imaginary. In other words, I want to explicitly set out how the modern imaginary I have been describing works to encourage the disciplines of disenchantment outlined above.

i. Modern Times

The temporal divisions present in the modern imaginary work to set modernity apart from pre-modern eras. Importantly, these pre-modern eras tend to be seen as primitive or backward. This aspect of the modern imaginary is responsible for the evolutionary tendencies in scholarship on religion and magic that cast magic as not only different from but also inferior to post-Reformation religions and science. It is also responsible for the notion that lucky and protective objects and other similar ‘superstitions’ are merely survivals from pre-modernity. Additionally, the modern impetus for progress and change reinforces these evolutionary conceptions and supports the broader movement away from both the superstitions of the past but also superstitions that are perceived to be childish or naïve.
ii. Modern Places / Modern Spaces

The spatial divisions present in the modern imaginary work to set modernity apart from non-modern locations and spatial arrangements. Importantly, these non-modern locations and spatial arrangements also tend to be seen as primitive or backward. This aspect of the modern imaginary is responsible for the widespread view that magic and superstition persist only in geographically distant locations (i.e. non-Western ones) or else in rural or undeveloped locations within the Western world (i.e. non-urban ones). Additionally, the modern focus on differentiation and privatization reinforce the idea both that the modern world is neatly divided into religious and secular spheres and also that religious (or magical) beliefs, behaviours, and objects are (or should be) relegated to the interiors of churches, individuals homes, or in the case of beliefs, to the interior of individual minds. Finally, by stressing the idea that modern spatiality is homogenous owing to globalization, Western modernity comes to be imagined to be the only authentic modernity such that non-modern locations and non-modern spatial arrangements are viewed as requiring or as being caught in processes of modernization.

iii. Modern Affect

The affective dimensions of the modern imaginary work to set modernity apart from pre-modern and non-modern times and locations by virtue of their
privileging novelty, desire, and change over tradition and non-commercialized modes of interacting with the world and by virtue of the blasé and detached attitudes that are typically associated with modernity and with urban modernity in particular. This aspect of the modern imaginary is responsible for the view that modern, urban individuals prefer shallow religious or spiritual commodities that do not warrant scholarly attention. It is also responsible for the view that modern, urban individuals are unwilling or unable to form attachments to their urban environments. Claims concerning the affective register of modernity also work to cast meaning, wonder, and magic as non-modern and undesirable and cast belief (or half-belief) in magical objects as backward or unsophisticated.

iv. Modern Secularization

The widespread, if contested, view that modernity involves religion’s eventual disappearance from the world is both a description of apparent facts and also a normative statement concerning a desired future. By framing the modern world as already secularized or else as in the process of secularization, this aspect of the modern imaginary works to cast religious (and magical) beliefs and behaviours as problems to be explained rather than as realities to be explored. Additionally, discussions of the immanent frame (Taylor 2007) or of modern consciousness (Berger 2012) cast religious beliefs as imperiled and in need of explanation and justification. According to this view, individuals should be able to defend their supra-rational beliefs or behaviours either with reference to
coherent religious systems or else by other rational means. Coupled with
disenchantment, this aspect of the modern imaginary is responsible both for a
reluctance to discuss religious objects (or objects suspected of being religious)
and also for reluctance on the part of academics to engage with the partially held
or tentative half-beliefs associated with lucky and protective objects.

v. Modern Secularism

The spread of secularism as a socio-political project works to cast religion
as separate from the public sphere and as an aspect of human life with
associated risks both for individuals and for governments. According to this view,
religious beliefs risk being imposed on others or risk unduly influencing
government institutions or policies. This aspect of the modern imaginary works to
cast public religious expressions and, especially in the case of Québec, the
public display of religious objects and clothing (or of objects and clothing that are
suspected of being religious) as both undesirable and potentially dangerous. This
aspect of the modern imaginary is responsible for an unwillingness to speak
about objects or beliefs that may appear to be religious. Additionally, it reinforces
the idea that the world can (or ought to be) neatly divided into religious and
secular spheres and that these spheres are (or ought to be) distinct and mutually
exclusive.
vi. Modern Disenchantment

The view that the modern world is disenchanted works to cast magical beliefs and practices as survivals from the pre-modern past, as present only in mentally unstable or childish individuals, or else as harmless but absurd. This aspect of the modern imaginary works to frame magical beliefs and practices as unworthy of serious scholarly attention and as thoroughly non-modern endeavours that ought not be taken seriously or discussed. Because discussions of re-enchantment take the disenchantment of the world for granted, they only re-enforce the idea that magical objects and associated beliefs represent delusions or childish fantasies. More than any other component of the modern imaginary, disenchantment is responsible for the near total dismissal of lucky and protective objects and other ‘superstitions’ in scholarship and elsewhere.

5.3.7. The Invisible Modern World

In the second section of this thesis I explained that I was interested not in modernity itself, but rather with the idea of modernity or the modern imaginary. This imaginary constitutes a largely implicit or non-discursive lens through which modern individuals experience and understand the world. It is expressed both in formal scholarly literature but also in popular accounts of modernity. Importantly, it works to encourage some social, spatial, emotional, and affective arrangements while concealing or discouraging others.
The modern imaginary encourages a world in which social actors are rational and coherent and in which their beliefs are sincerely held, defensible, and stable. It encourages a world that is neatly divided into religious and secular spheres and in which the religious sphere is progressively shrinking. It encourages emotional states associated with growth, novelty, and progress while casting desire for change as inevitable but shallow. Finally, it encourages an affective register that privileges detachment, indifference, and disenchantment.

The world that the modern imaginary discourages is one in which social actors grapple and play with partially formed, fluid, and sometimes-irrational beliefs; where religion and enchantment infuse apparently secular spaces and places; where progress is sometimes viewed with ambivalence or suspicion and where swift changes between religious, spiritual, or secular options is inevitable but reflects the plurality of choices available; where coincidences are meaningful and hidden messages can be encountered; where objects are significant and sometimes powerful; and where enchantment is everywhere and already present in daily life.

But it would be wrong to imagine that this alternate modernity is bounded and separate from the dominant conceptualization of modernity and the world it encourages. It exists alongside and within the world described by the modern imaginary. Both worlds are present, for instance, in the lives of the interview participants. Thus modernity is already fluid, porous, multiple, and enchanted. Yet while present already, these aspects of modernity are concealed and
discouraged by the modern imaginary's many disciplines of disenchantment. These disciplines of disenchantment constitute a feedback loop according to which certain expectations for modernity are expressed in both scholarship and more generally and thereby come to limit the presence and importance of these alternate conceptions. Faced with an image of what modernity ought to be that is framed as a depiction of what modernity really is, scholars and non-scholars alike ignore these alternate conceptions and thereby contribute to and reinforce the modern imaginary. Modernity is therefore already enchanted. But the idea of modernity is one that disenchants.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

I have argued that dominant ways of imagining what modernity is and what modernity ought to be have effects both for scholarship and for individuals. Through myriad disciplines of disenchantment, the modern imaginary works to conceal the presence and prevalence of supra-rational beliefs and practices while discrediting these and casting them as silly or as superstitious survivals. The modern imaginary therefore renders significant aspects of contemporary human life and imagination invisible. In reinforcing a particular image of what modernity really is this modern imaginary precludes ‘what if’ scenarios that imagine alternate possible futures and that consider what modernity might be or what it might become. These concluding remarks are future-oriented. Here I set out what must be done so that contemporary scholarship can begin to explore the what-if world that everyday enchantments and secular magic involve. I also describe the promise that enchantment holds for contemporary society.

I am emphatically not arguing for re-enchantment as a social project nor am I arguing that contemporary scholarship should focus on apparent efforts on the parts of individuals to re-enchant modernity. Modernity is already enchanted and always has been. Rather, I am arguing that scholars should continue to question the received knowledge that disenchantment is a key feature of modernity and pay attention to how their portrayals of modernity are normative and work to conceal and discredit rather than to illuminate or explain.
In claiming that modernity is enchanted I do not ignore the ways dominant conceptualizations of modernity are themselves tools for disenchantment. Disenchantment is a real and important social process. But it is a social process and not a social fact. It is a desired reality rather than an established one. In other words, scholars must shift their focus from the root causes or origins of disenchantment and its effects to study disenchantment as a strategy for privileging some social, spatial, and affective realities while dismissing others. Rather than explore the apparent disenchantment of the world as if this has already taken place, scholars must therefore interrogate continued attempts to frame the world as disenchanted and question which social actors take up this project along with their motives for doing so.

6.1. Re-imagining Modernity

Modernity is a deeply problematical concept. Yet the idea of modernity is also powerful and colours, for better or for worse, our understanding of the past, present, and future. Rather than discard the concept, I want to re-imagine it so it includes the invisible modern world I have described. In this section I set out what must be done to ensure that our idea of modernity includes the kinds of lived experiences the interview participants described. I list these as imperatives below.
i. Dissolve the Religion/Secular Binary

I have argued that the religion/secular binary is foundational for modernity. Not only have predictions concerning the course of modernity stipulated that modernity involves religion’s displacement by ‘the secular’, but modern secularist projects have also worked to define and police the boundaries between these two apparently discrete realms. Yet as I explained above, this neat dichotomy between religious and secular individuals, places, and spheres works to conceal marginal or in-between cases.

Some scholars have recently called for the complete abandonment of religion as an analytical term; pointing to the ways that term is irrevocably tied to Western religious categories and to Western colonialism. Daniel Dubussion (2003), for instance, has argued that “the West not only conceived of the idea of religion, it has constrained other culture to speak of their own religions by inventing them for them” (93). Likewise Tomoko Masuzawa (2005) has interrogated the development of the ‘world religions paradigm’ according to which all cultures have their own distinct but essentially comparable religions arguing that this comparative project amounts to little more than “a discourse of othering” (20). These insights have led Timothy Fitzgerald (2000) to suggest, “we abandon as an analytical concept the word ‘religion’ and the religious versus secular dichotomy it implies” (106). But in suggesting that the religion/secular binary must
be dissolved I do not mean to suggest that all aspects of human life should be therefore considered secular or that the term ‘religion’ cannot be employed in useful ways.

It seems clear to me that by abandoning the terms ‘religion’ and the ‘secular’ we risk ignoring the extent to which individuals, states, and institutions (religious or otherwise) continue to employ these terms to justify, explain, or condemn a wide range of beliefs and practices. Rather than simply abandon these terms I suggest we work to dissolve the binary formulation according to which they are viewed as coherent, stable, and opposing realms of human life. Thus rather than take this distinction for granted, I suggest we interrogate they ways social actors use this distinction and the motives that underlie these uses. In this sense I agree with Fitzgerald when he argues that the categories ‘religion’ and ‘the secular’ should become objects rather than tools for analysis (106).

But dissolving the religion/secular binary involves more than simply interrogating the ways this binary is used. It also involves the recognition that there are beliefs, behaviours, attitudes, and practices that are rendered invisible by this strict dichotomy. While belief (or half-belief) in the efficacy of lucky and protective objects is one example of this, I suspect it is not the only one. Thus dissolving the religion/secular binary must also involve an unwillingness on the part of scholars to assume that certain beliefs or ways of understanding the world are best categorized using the term ‘religion’ while others are best understood as ‘secular.’ It must also involve efforts to re-frame apparently marginal cases that
straddle the religion/secular divide as marginal only in so far as they resist being categorized by either term – or in other words as not really marginal at all. The dissolution of the religion/secular binary is therefore a process. To suddenly refuse to employ ‘religion’ or ‘secular’ as meaningful terms would be absurd. Instead, scholars must continue to focus on the apparent margins that separate these two apparently distinct spheres in an attempt to show that the aspects of human life that appear marginal in light of this binary are in fact both commonplace and worthy of scholarly scrutiny.

ii. Pay Attention to Play

There is a tendency among scholars to take religion very seriously. Religion tends to be taken seriously as an object of study but more importantly, religious beliefs tend to be taken seriously as coherent, stable, and defensible. But while religious studies may be a serious endeavor and while many religious individuals may have extremely serious beliefs about the world, this limited focus on seriousness risks ignoring the ways beliefs (religious or otherwise) can be playful, ironic, tentative, or partially held.

This problem is compounded by the religion/secular dichotomy discussed above. For while religious beliefs tend be viewed as serious, there is also a tendency to assume that other beliefs about the world (secular ones) are or should be based on scientific fact or rational analyses. Yet many of the research
participants discussed in section five have beliefs (or half-beliefs) about the world that are neither religious (in that they do not depend on any religious authority, text, or tradition for their legitimacy) nor secular (in that they are not strictly speaking scientific) nor serious. Again, these beliefs risk being cast as marginal.

Rather than assume that beliefs (religious or otherwise) are coherent, stable, and serious, scholars must recognize the extent to which individuals operate in what Seligman et al. (2008) refer to as the subjunctive mode. For while some beliefs about the world are sincerely held and defensible, others represent not what individuals understand the world to be but rather what they imagine the world might be. In linking this subjunctive modality to play I do not mean to trivialize it. But I do not mean to ‘take it seriously’ either. Instead, I want to recognize the extent to which individuals employ irony, play, and humour in their daily lives and the extent to which any given belief may be serious in one moment and playful in the next. Importantly, I do not want to frame this movement from seriousness to play as hypocrisy or equivocation. Rather, I want to stress that the fact that an individual may seriously believe a given proposition in one moment and consider that same belief to be silly or absurd in another as both natural and widespread.

By imagining beliefs to be coherent, stable, and serious, scholars risk ignoring the myriad half-beliefs or temporary beliefs that individuals hold or hold occasionally. Moreover, scholars risk trivializing interpretations of the world that never become beliefs, per se, but instead constitute hopes, desires, or
imaginings. Thus by paying attention to play and the subjunctive mode, we are able not only to appreciate the complexity and fluidity of human believing but we can also learn about the ways individuals tentatively engage with imagined futures in non-discursive ways. We must not only pay attention to individuals’ engagements with subjunctive ‘what if’ scenarios, therefore, but also ‘if only’ scenarios that represent not so much what individuals sincerely believe but rather what they playfully wish to believe. I return to this point below.

iii. Discard Disenchantment

Finally, disenchantment must be discarded. Although disenchantment is sometimes represented as providing a neutral description of reality, as I argued above, disenchantment is a self-fulfilling prophecy and a social and political project. Yet as with my discussion of the religion/secular binary above, I am not suggesting that the term itself be excised from our shared lexicon. Rather, I am arguing that disenchantment must no longer be taken for granted as a neutral descriptor of the modern world.

Accounts of both disenchantment and of re-enchantment are themselves programs for excluding and trivializing a particular affective register and for framing this register as incompatible with or antithetical to modernity. Arguments that view the world as already disenchanted cast belief or half-belief in magical entities or forces as backward, non-modern, primitive, or absurd. Ironically,
arguments for the re-enchantment of the world merely reinforce this view both in their acceptance of disenchantedness as social fact and also in their tendency to focus on apparently rational strategies for re-enchantment. Thus rather than accept the premise that the modern world is disenchanted or encourage projects of re-enchantment, I want instead to view the modern world as already enchanted.

In claiming that the modern world is already enchanted I am not making claims about the existence of magical entities and forces. Rather I am pointing to the fact that intelligent, thoughtful, and thoroughly modern individuals entertain magical beliefs and play with the idea of magical forces in their daily lives. For some, the presence and existence of magical forces forms an important and serious component of their religious or spiritual outlooks. For others, magical forces represent playful excursions into the ‘what-if’ or ‘if-only’ scenarios of the subjunctive register. Sometimes these form a strategic counterpoint to the dearth and alienation associated with the disenchanted modern world. Other times these represent instead an outlook grounded in lived experiences or complex assessments of the nature of reality. Yet no matter the seriousness with which these beliefs or half-beliefs are held or how these beliefs work in the lives of the individuals who hold or play with them, the reality or possibility of hidden meanings, mysterious forces, and magical interventions contribute in significant ways to the lived realities of modern individuals.
In assuming that the world is disenchanted or that the world needs re-enchanting, we risk dismissing these lived realities at the outset. We also risk participating in the feedback loop that disciplines of disenchantment involve. Scholars must examine instances of enchantment not as problems to be resolved or as peculiarities of particular groups or contexts but as simply an interesting if seldom examined feature of human life and imagination. Thus even my claim that the world is already enchanted is somewhat misleading as it reifies the enchanted/disenchanted dichotomy that disenchantment upholds. Perhaps it is less the case that the world is enchanted than it is the case that supra-rational and magical explanations have formed and continue to form a lens through which humans view the world. By presuming the world is disenchanted we trivialize this way of viewing the world and ignore the images of the world it provides.

6.2. The Promise of Enchantment

But the presumption that the world is disenchanted may also work to preclude affective attachments to the world. Jane Bennett (2001) makes this argument in *The Enchantment of Modern Life*. Yet while Bennett takes enchantment broadly to refer to “a condition of exhilaration or acute sensory activity” (5); a complex “mood of fullness, plenitude or liveliness” (5); or a “momentary return to childhood joie de vivre” (104), I am also interested in the
affective potential of the ‘what-if’ and ‘if-only’ subjunctive modes outlined by Seligman et al. (2008).

The participants with whom I spoke tended to associate modern rationality and scientism, which constitutes disenchantment in the Weberian sense, with a loss of meaning and with boredom. According to this view, disenchantment encourages a world that is bereft of meaning and in which affective attachments are increasingly difficult to form. Enchantment may therefore provide an opportunity for renewed connection and meaning and could be an important source of the kind of fullness that Bennett describes and that Taylor describes as being conspicuously absent in our immanent frame.

As the participants demonstrated, affective attachments to places, spaces, and to significant objects persist. Yet because, as Bennett argues, the story of disenchantment contributes to the condition it describes (4), these attachments are often viewed as trivial or foolish. Thus a renewed appreciation for enchantment may not only draw scholarly attention to these attachments, but might permit individuals to speak openly about these attachments and more fully appreciate the ways these attachments are implicated in their lived experience.

Finally, a renewed appreciation for enchantment and the ‘what-if’ and ‘if-only’ subjunctive modes it encourages might serve to inspire playful and imaginative interventions. The promise of modernity has been mixed. Technological advances have entailed remarkable improvements but have also
caused catastrophic environmental devastation. Dominant modern economic systems have permitted the acquisition extraordinary wealth but have also led to extreme poverty. New modes of communication have permitted unprecedented interconnectivity but have also encouraged widespread alienation. Yet modernity and the world it has made, for good or ill, are often seen as inevitable. In its preference for the sincere mode of human life, modernity can therefore encourage resignation, detachment, apathy, and despair.

But modernity and the world it has made are not inevitable. The future is always a work-in-progress and its success depends upon our ability to see beyond the world as it is and to imagine the world as it might otherwise be or become. Appreciating the ‘what-if’ and ‘if-only’ scenarios that enchantment encourages directs us away from the inevitability of the modern world and toward potential as yet unimagined futures. It is this ability to encourage playful incursions into subjunctive modes constitutes enchantment’s greatest promise. In The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire, Sherlock Holmes, the great rationalist, scoffs at Watson’s credulity and declares, “the world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply” (Doyle 1996, 1016). But enchantment does not only make room for ghosts, spirits, supra-rational forces, and magical objects. Enchantment makes room for alternate conceptualizations of reality and for new visions for the future – rather than insist the world is enough, enchantment asks instead which world?
Bibliography


Appendix A

Survey Questions

1. How old are you? _______

2. What is your sex?

   Female ☐   Male ☐
   Trans ☐   Other ☐

   Please state: (______________)

3. How would you define your ethnic origin? (Select all that apply)

   Aboriginal
   Please specify: Caribbean
   Please specify: Québécois

   Acadian
   Please specify: East or Southeast Asian
   Please specify: West Asian

   African
   Please specify: European
   Please specify: Other North American

   Arab
   Please specify: Latin, Central or South American
   Please specify: Other

   African
   Please specify: South Asian
   Please specify: Other North American
4. What is your highest level of educational qualification? ____________________

5. With which religion do you most or exclusively identify with? Also, please specify your particular denomination, if applicable (e.g. Sunni, Catholic etc.)

Buddhism
Please state:____________

Christianity
Please state:____________

Hinduism
Please state:____________

Islam
Please state:____________

Judaism
Please state:____________

Non Religious
Please state:____________

Sikhism
Please state:____________

Spiritual But Not Religious
Please state:____________

Other
Please state:____________

6. Please select a number from the scale below to indicate your religious position (if applicable)

Liberal --------------------------------------------------------------- Conservative

1  2  3  4  5

7. How important is your religion (if any) in your daily life?

Very --------------- Somewhat------------------- Not very----------- Not at all

1  2  3  4
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

8. Objects can sometimes help bring about good luck
   Agree -------- Agree Somewhat-------- Disagree Somewhat-------- Disagree
   1          2                    3                  4

9. There is no such thing as good or bad luck
   Agree -------- Agree Somewhat-------- Disagree Somewhat-------- Disagree
   1          2                    3                  4

10. Everything has a scientific/rational explanation
    Agree -------- Agree Somewhat-------- Disagree Somewhat-------- Disagree
     1          2                    3                  4

11. As an adult, have you ever possessed a lucky/protective object? Please specify:

12. Do you currently possess any lucky/protective objects? Please specify:

13. When was the last time you acquired a lucky/protective object? Please specify:

14. Where did you acquire your last lucky/protective object? Please specify:
15. Do you/did you consider your lucky/protective object to be a religious object? Please specify

16. How confident are you/were you that your lucky/protective object contributes/contributed to your good luck/protection?
   Very -------------- Somewhat----------------Not very-------- Not at all
   1               2               3               4

17. Do you have any additional comments?

18. Are you willing to be contacted for an interview? If yes, please provide your contact information.
Appendix B

Interview Questions

Personal Information:

1. What is your age?
2. How long have you lived in Montréal?
3. In which borough or municipality do you live?
4. What is your highest level of education?
5. What is your religion (if any)?
6. Describe your religious background? This can include upbringing and also stages in your religious identity and/or where you are now religiously/spiritually.
7. Do you engage in public or private religious/spiritual practices? If yes, what are they?
8. How important is your religion/spirituality in your daily life?

Objects

I’m interested in talking about a particular category of objects. This category includes objects that individuals possess and/or use with the idea, however vague, that these objects may bring them good luck, protection, or other ‘practical’ benefits. I will use the term ‘lucky/protective object’ in the next few questions to refer to this broad category of objects.

9. Do you currently possess an object that you would consider to be protective and/or lucky?
10. What was the last lucky/protective object you acquired?
11. Please describe the object. What does it look like? What is it made out of?
12. Why did you acquire the object? This could include what prompted you to acquire that particular object and also your motivations for acquiring these kinds of objects more generally.
13. What did/do you find appealing about this particular object?
14. Does the object play a role in your daily life? Explain.

15. Would you say the object has a use? If so, what is it used for? Can anyone use the object?

16. Would you describe the object as a religious object? Why/Why not?

17. Where do you keep the object? Do you typically carry the object with you?

18. When did you acquire it?

19. Where did you acquire it?

20. How confident are you that the object really does provide good luck/protection.

21. Do you have any similar objects? Please tell me about them.

Montréal / Québec

I’m also interested in hearing your thoughts both on the religious/spiritual/non-religious nature of Montréal and Quebec and also on the ways the kinds of objects we’ve been talking about are viewed more generally in Montréal and Québec.

22. Where can one acquire lucky/protective objects in Montréal?

23. How do you think a typical Montrealer views the possession/use of lucky/protective objects?

24. In your experience, how is the possession of lucky/protective objects viewed more generally in society?

25. What does the word ‘religious’ mean to you?

26. What does the word ‘spiritual’ mean to you?

27. What does the word ‘secular’ mean to you?

28. What does the word ‘modern’ mean to you?

29. Would you use any of these words to describe Montréal? Why/Why not?

30. Would you use any of the above-mentioned words to describe the province of Québec? Why/Why not?

31. What does the word ‘superstitious’ mean to you?

32. Would you say that everything has a rational explanation?
Appendix C

Survey Letter of Information

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in this research project. This project will collect information about the religious/spiritual attitudes and practices of individuals living in Montréal. In particular, this project seeks to explore both the extent to which individuals in Montréal make use of particular lucky and protective objects (e.g. good luck charms, protective amulets, images of saints) and also their attitudes toward these objects and their use.

All information collected will remain confidential and any identifiable information will be removed or changed in the research findings.

The information collected will be analyzed and included in a doctoral dissertation presented to the Cultural Studies Department at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. The information collected may subsequently be communicated in a range of outlets (e.g. academic publications).

If you wish to participate in the survey, please click next to move forward to the consent form. Please note that your participation in this survey is voluntary and that you will not be compensated for your time.

I am very grateful for your important contribution to this research. Thank you for your time.
Survey Consent Form

Please select 'Yes' to indicate that you agree with the following statements:

I am over 18 and I voluntarily agree to take part in this survey.

I give Ian Alexander Cuthbertson and Queen’s University permission to use the results of my participation in this survey once any data that may identify me have been removed.

I understand that any information about me recorded during this survey will be stored in a secure database accessible only to the researcher. No data that may identify me will be transferred outside this survey. Data will be kept for seven years after the results of this survey have been published. Once any identifiers are removed, data may be shared with other researchers.

I understand that I can ask for further instructions or information at any time by contacting Ian Alexander Cuthbertson, Cultural Studies Department, Queen’s University, Kingston, ON K7L 3N6 (ian.cuthbertson@queensu.ca).

I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time, without having to give a reason for withdrawal. Any data collected from my participation will be destroyed in the event I withdraw from this study.

I understand that I do not have to answer every question.

Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

If you consent to participate in this study, you can continue by pressing the ‘Next’ button at the bottom of each page.

You must click ‘Submit’ on the final page of the survey for your results to be included in the project.

You can choose at any time not to have your results tabulated in the project by exiting the survey.

Thank you for your time and interest.
Appendix D

Interview Letter of Information

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in this research project. This project will collect information about the religious/spiritual attitudes and practices of individuals living in Montréal. In particular, this project seeks to explore both the extent to which individuals in Montréal make use of particular lucky and protective objects (e.g. good luck charms, protective amulets, images of saints) as well their attitudes toward these objects and their use.

The information collected will be included in a doctoral dissertation presented to the Cultural Studies Department at Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario. The information collected may subsequently be communicated in a range of outlets (e.g. academic publications).

The interview should take about an hour. Interviewees do not have to answer all the questions to take part in the interview. Participation in this interview is voluntary and participants will not be compensated for their time. Please feel free not to answer any questions you are uncomfortable with.

Any ethical concerns relating to this project may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081. Concerns may also be communicated to Ian Alexander Cuthbertson at ian.cuthbertson@queensu.ca or 514-243-5368.

If you consent to participate in the interview, please sign the attached consent form.

Thank you for your time,

Ian Alexander Cuthbertson
Doctoral Candidate
Cultural Studies
Queen’s University
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6
ian.cuthbertson@queensu.ca
Interview Consent Form

I consent to participate in an interview for this study entitled “Everyday Enchantments: Mapping Appeals to the Supernatural for Practical Benefits in Montréal.”

By signing this consent form, I agree to the following:

I am over 18 and I voluntarily agree to take part in this interview.

I give Ian Alexander Cuthbertson and Queen’s University permission to use the results of my participation in this interview once any data that may identify me has been removed.

I understand that the interview will be audio recorded.

I understand that the audio recording of this interview and the transcription of the recording will be stored on a secure password protected USB key. No data that may identify me will be used in the presentation of interview results. Data will be kept for seven years after the results of this research have been published. Once any identifiers are removed, data may be shared with other researchers.

I understand that I can ask for further instructions or information at any time by contacting Ian Alexander Cuthbertson, Queen’s University, Kingston, ON K7L 3N6 (ian.cuthbertson@queensu.ca).

I understand that I am free to withdraw from this interview at any time, without having to give a reason for withdrawal. Any data collected from my participation will be destroyed in the event I withdraw from this interview.

I understand that I do not have to answer every question.

_________________________  ______________________________
Signature                        Name (please print)

_________________________
Date
Appendix E

December 04, 2013

Mr. Ian Cuthbertson
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Cultural Studies
c/o School of Religion
Theological Hall
Queen’s University
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GCUL-031-13; Romeo # 6011276
Title: "GCUL-031-13 Everyday Enchantments: Mapping Appeals to the Supernatural for Practical Benefits in Montreal"

Dear Mr. Cuthbertson:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GCUL-031-13 Everyday Enchantments: Mapping Appeals to the Supernatural for Practical Benefits in Montreal" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]
Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Chair, General Research Ethics Board

C: Mr. James Miller, Faculty Supervisor
   Dr. Magda Lewis, Chair, Unit REB
   Ms. Danielle Gugler, Dept. Admin.