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RESEARCH REPORT

Preparing Professionals to Dialogue about Extremism and
Radicalization:

A look at the ERC programs at McGill University and University of Quebec in Montreal

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1. Introduction

Historically, extremist groups from religious and far-right organizations have been active across Canada. In the last few years, the situation in Quebec has been particularly alarming (Amarasingam and Tiflati 2015; Dwivedi 2017; Zine 2019). According to *Ministère de la sécurité publique* (2016), between 2013 and 2014, religious-based hate crimes against Jewish people, Muslims, and unspecified group increased by 190%, 175% and 400% respectively. In 2017, the *Ministère de la sécurité publique* (2017) announced that 47% of hate crimes across the province in 2015 (130 of 272 incidents) were based on religion indicating a 200% increase in religious-based hate crimes in Montreal and Quebec cities (combined) between 2016 to 2017 (Duval 2018). The horrific far-right extremist attack on a mosque in Quebec City that killed six innocent people in early 2017 was the climax of this vicious development (Fundira 2017). Meanwhile, the departure of several Muslim Quebec CEGEP students to join ISIS in Syria in the preceding years shows another dimension of the threat to public and national security.

Almost all of these young people who joined a terrorist organization such as ISIS were in their teenage years or early twenties which indicates that young people are especially susceptible to adopting radical or extremist ideologies compared to older generations. They are in the active process of uncovering their own identity and searching for meaning in their lives, so that they are highly prone to be misled by the narratives of the radical groups (Samuel 2012). Psychologically speaking, on the one hand, this age group tends to be very much action-oriented and highly risk-prone. On the other hand, they lack life experiences and solid ideological positions, so that they are always ready to experiment with new values and identities (Silke 2008). This is one important reason why young people have been most likely to be attracted by and recruited to the extremist groups worldwide (Neumann 2017).

Given that education plays an important role in helping students construct their identities it can be a significant force in helping young students to become resilient against the narratives of the radical and extremist groups that exist in both online and offline environments. Neo-liberal economies have been focusing educational goals on economic skills at the expense of



values and soft skills which are also necessary in a globalized world, although there is no contradiction between the two sets of skills. The 11-12 years of compulsory education for all students in most Western countries provides an opportunity to develop educational programs that will make young people resilient to violent ideologies. In Quebec we identified the Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) program as having the potential of teaching children to aim towards social cohesion in a diverse Quebec society. In the ERC program, teachers' competency is the key to its success. To this end, we tried to evaluate pre-service teachers' (hereafter students) as well as ERC professors' perceptions of the efficacy of the ERC program in making students resilient towards violence. We looked at this through teaching programs that prepare ERC teachers at McGill University (hereafter McGill) and University of Quebec in Montreal (hereafter UQAM). Meanwhile, we also tried to evaluate if the ERC program can produce a positive impact on student open-mindedness, which would potentially enhance their resilience against extremism. While the ERC program does not aim to prevent or reduce violent extremism, its pursuit of the common good and recognition of others through multi-faith and intercultural education that stresses the dialogical method we assume will help them develop critical thinking skills that will make students resilient towards violence. For this purpose, we used a mixed method approach (quantitative survey and qualitative interview and survey). Yet, we have to emphasize that our study is not representative, as our findings are based on quite small samples. Moreover, there are multiple courses involved in this program and we focused on only one of them – the methodology section (compulsory). Each university may have quite different delivery methods and individual teachers have a lot of freedom in delivering the material, although there is a universal guideline.

In line with critical pedagogy, the Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) program, introduced in 2008 in the Quebec curriculum, responds to the increasing diversity in Quebec society. It aims to develop social cohesion through open-mindedness, critical thinking, and media literacy in students, and recognition of 'the other' for the common good in Quebec society. In other words, this program has the potential to make students resilient to extremist ideologies by encouraging multiple perspectives and countering binary thinking which is a common trait among extremists. Although this program does not focus on extremism or radicalization specifically, it implicitly

addresses most of the push factors towards radicalization that have been identified in the literature (Ghosh 2018).

2. The Ethics and Religious Culture Program (ERC) in Quebec

The launch of the Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) program was the result of the de-confessionalization or secularization of the Quebec education system that started in 2000, as well as the increasing religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity in Quebec society that accentuated the need to help dominant and minority groups to better understand and accept each other (Ghosh 2018; Morris 2011). It was introduced in 2008 by the *Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS)* for Grades 1 through 11 (except in Grade 9) to replace the existing confessional and moral courses of both public and private schools in Quebec (Boudreau 2011). Currently, Quebec is the only Canadian province where religious education, such as ERC, is mandatory in both public and private schools (Chan, et al. 2019), although the emphasis is on religious cultures, not dogma. The declared aim of the program is to promote “the recognition of others” and “pursuit of the common good”. The first objective prioritizes the right of all people to “equal value and dignity” and the second objective seeks to promote “the common good, which goes beyond the satisfaction of purely personal interests” (MELS 2008a, 296). Despite its multiple limitations, as Fujiwara (2011) puts it, the ERC program could be seen as “one of the most deliberately designed models of multi-faith, intercultural religious education” (278).

The program aims to cultivate the ability in students to “reflect on ethical questions,” “demonstrate an understanding of the phenomenon of religion,” and “engage in dialogue”. Students learn the first and second competencies separately or combined, whereas the third competency (dialogue) is ubiquitous in the whole learning process (Cherblanc 2018; Morris 2011).

The ERC program is based on the principles of learning as a (a) continuous phenomenon following the cognitive development of the child the content proceeds from simple to complex, from the concrete to the abstract. (b) ERC is rooted in Quebec culture. Importance is given to democratic institutions and “**rejecting violence as a method of resolving conflict**” (MELS 2005,

6), (c) Learn to respect the freedom of conscience and religion of others “without negative prejudices or blind submission,” (d) Learn to live in harmony and promote social cohesion through free and responsible expression of ideas and exchanges (Ghosh 2018, 376). While teaching “religions that today contribute to Québec culture and inspire different ways of thinking, being and acting” (MELS 2008b, 462), the program prioritizes Quebec heritage, giving special attention to Catholicism and Protestantism, and to a lesser extent to Judaism and native spirituality.

In its design to promote interreligious, intercultural understanding and resilience in creating and sustaining a peaceful society which is diverse in multiple ways, the teacher’s role is crucial. This is because of the need to be skillful in developing critical skills for good citizenship that will also work against extremist narratives, radicalization, and recruitment into violent extremism. It does this through experiences that address a number of push and pull factors identified as contributing to vulnerability to radicalization (Ghosh 2018). Morris (2011) identifies three main aims of the ERC program directly answering the issues that have been problems with extremist thinkers: (1) the construction of a world-view; (2) construction of identity; and (3) empowerment. The program provides a range of ethical questions and issues, and knowledge of people’s religious beliefs and customs that enable teachers to have opportunities to dialogue with their students so as to relate them to their daily lives (Ghosh 2018).

The overall goal of the ERC program outlined above is very much in line with cultivating open-mindedness, which would help students become more resilient against extremism. The impacts of educational programs are difficult to assess because cognitive as well as affective skills and moral values develop over time and cannot be isolated from other influences. Pre-service teachers’ perceptions will provide an indication of the potential of this program in working towards a peaceful, cohesive society and therefore to reduction in violence. We assume that there is an indirect yet strong link between the purpose of the ERC program and preventing/reducing radicalization to violence/violent extremism (hereafter RTV/VE). That is why we tried to measure the attitudinal change among students regarding their open-mindedness before and after the ERC courses through a standardized instrument that measures

open-mindedness. The first cohort to complete the full program graduated in 2018 and there has not yet been an evaluation of the program. This small study endeavors to explore the perceptions of the potential of this program in cultivating student open-mindedness and critical thinking which would make them resilient against extremism and radicalization.

Main research question:

Do professionals specializing in teaching ERC courses in the formal (primary/ secondary levels) and non-formal education spaces of McGill University (English) and University of Quebec in Montreal (French) perceive that the ERC program can indirectly have an effect in dealing with issues of extremism and radicalization, given its focus on social cohesion and emphasis on **rejecting violence as a method of resolving conflict**, and do these courses have a positive impact on student open-mindedness, which would contribute to the efforts to prevent/reduce RTV/VE?

3. Research Methodology

Given the above research question, we sought to find out two things: 1. To understand the effectiveness of the ERC program in cultivating open-mindedness amongst the students in the pre-service teacher education programs (henceforth referred to as 'students') in Quebec because extremist thinking is binary and close-minded towards accepting the other. 2. Teaching methods and discussion of issues related to extremism and radicalization. We also examined the ERC professors' proficiencies and experiences in connecting course content with current pressing events, as well as their teaching methods with regard to debunking stereotypes and binary thinking that lead to bigotry and social exclusion.

To this end, a mixed methods approach was utilized consisting of a standardized questionnaire to measure open-mindedness of the teacher education students before and after an ERC course (quantitative data), and interviews with the professors of the ERC courses as well as a handful of the students (qualitative data) who had done the qualitative questionnaire.

In total, 143 students participated our study: 99 from McGill University, 44 from the *Université du Québec à Montréal* (UQAM). This evaluation technique was applied in a repetitive "semi longitudinal research tool" manner in order to gather comparative baseline data from control groups and experimental groups (Doney and Wegerif 2017, 10) among the students. The

ERC professors who taught the courses were interviewed. To identify and compare the responses of students and professors, we issued a token for each of them.

Student participants who are in the teacher education programs

Following snowball approach, we identified a few professors who were teaching ERC and other courses at both universities. Those professors helped us recruit students for both control groups and experimental groups. A research assistant from our team went to each class, introduced the project and asked the students if they would like to participate in this study. Then the interested students were given consent forms to fill out and asked to provide their email addresses. Afterwards the survey questionnaires were sent to their email boxes. The total number of participants was 143.

Categories	Number	Gender	Background
McGill experimental group	47	Male -14 Female -33	Primary or secondary ERC
McGill control group	52	Male - 6 Female - 46	Secondary Social Studies
UQAM experimental group	30	Male -5 Female - 25	Primary or secondary ERC
UQAM control group	14	Male- 3 Female -11	Secondary Social Studies

Quantitative questionnaire for the students (SQ2) (Appendix 2)

This questionnaire was borrowed from Doney and Wegerif 's (2017) study on the effectiveness of the Face to Faith (F2F) program. It aims to measure open-mindedness to the other, positionality of the other, and openness to ambiguity; etc. A total of 143 students from both universities responded to the questionnaire (SQ2) twice, once at the beginning of Winter session 2019 and another time at the end of the session (January 2019 and April 2019). The questionnaire (SQ2) measured two aspects of student open-mindedness through 40 questions:

- a. Dialogical Open-mindedness (MDOM) evaluating their dialogue competency (32 questions)

- b. Knowledge and Experience of Difference (KED) evaluating their critical understating of ethical issues and the phenomenon of religion (eight questions)

For the analysis of our quantitative data (Appendix 1), we estimated the latent trait of Likert scale responses by using Item Response Theory through the “R” program. We measured mean differences of individuals in both MDOM and KED between experimental and control groups. We also measured mean differences of individuals in both MDOM and KED between English (McGill) and French (UQAM) schools. Accordingly, we defined the null hypothesis (H_B): The ERC program did not have a significant positive impact on students’ open-mindedness, as well as the alternative hypothesis (H_A) The ERC program had a significant positive impact on students’ open-mindedness. The significance level (or alpha) was set to 0.05, meaning that we needed to have at least 95% confidence level to reject the null hypothesis (H_B). We also considered significance level 0.10 as marginally significant.

Our quantitative data analysis showed that the ERC course had a positive impact on both Dialogical Open-mindedness (MDOM) and Knowledge and Experience of Difference (KED) in both English (McGill) and French (UQAM) sectors despite the varying levels of significance (Table 1 and 2, and Figure 1). The impact of the ERC course on McGill students in their MDOM was significantly higher than on UQAM students (Table 3, Figure 2). However, regarding KED, the impact on McGill students was not significantly better than on UQAM students (Table 4, Figure 2). While, the social science courses in both universities also made their students more open-minded, the ERC course was more effective (Table 4, Figure 2 and 3).

Qualitative questionnaire for the students (SQ1-3) (Appendix 3)

Student participants:

Six students (K, L, M from UQAM and N, O, P from McGill) who were in the experimental groups responded to our SQ1-3 qualitative questionnaire via email. UQAM students responded to the questionnaire in French.

Interview questions for professors teaching ERC courses at McGill and UQAM (SQ 1) (Appendix 4)Professor participants

Based on our current contacts and snowball method and an open invitation to faculty, we approached two ERC professors at UQAM (Professor A and B) (UQ for UQAM)), and three at McGill University (Professor D, E, and H) (MG for McGill) to participate in the interviews and complete the open-mindedness questionnaire. The interviews conducted in English at McGill, and in French at UQAM, took place at the offices of each professor and were audio-recorded for transcription. The audio files were transcribed in English and French, but all data were analyzed in English. All qualitative data were thematically analyzed (using NVivo software) to evaluate the participants' open-mindedness, the nature of the content related to violent extremism used in class, and the experience of students and professors (in teaching the content). Several questions guided our research to evaluate the professors' proficiency, qualifications, experience, and general attitudes towards the ERC program as well as teaching methods for developing critical thinking skills that have the potential to thwart violent extremist ideologies.

Obtaining the perceptions of students and professors of the ERC program in relation to violent extremism is to identify to what extent they believe the ERC program could help students become more resilient against extremism and radicalization. Their position on this is important, as the more they believe this program can contribute to the efforts of preventing/reducing PVE/VE, the more they would consciously and effectively employ it for such a purpose. This is also to understand, from insiders' perspectives, to what extent the ERC program is useful in supporting efforts to prevent/reduce RTV/VE.

4. Key Findings from Professor Responses to the Interview

From the interviews of five ERC professors, the following findings emerged.

Finding # 1: ERC Program has great potential in making students more resilient against violent extremism, but the professors' competency is the key.

All instructors argued that ERC course content had great potential to build resilience against extremism and radicalization through helping students to understand cultural and religious differences from multiple perspectives and a broad spectrum. They all highlighted that the course content has the potential to connect current events to *"debunk a lot of the radical ideas and potential acts of violence that we see in the media,"* although the program does not focus on radicalization or violent extremism (D-MG). D (MG) also stressed that the ERC program would

enable students to understand difference from multiple perspectives through dialogue for the “pursuit of the common good”; despite the differences among us *“we’re still here together and we’re gonna make it work,”* he said.

However, the professors were aware that exploration and realization of ERC competencies for the purpose of cultivating student resilience against violent extremism heavily depends on instructors’ knowledge, experience, open-mindedness and capacity to deconstruct underlying socio-political issues the ERC program is concerned with. For example, according to the same professor (D-MG), with a skilled professor, the ERC program provides the grounds for aligning theoretical content with current events, so that students develop soft skills to understand religious and cultural difference in a multicultural society and foster their open-mindedness towards social cohesion. Yet, *“it is definitely on the shoulders of the educator to institute the type of curricula that would allow for it,”* he said.

In the same vein, B (UQ) contended that although *“the program (ERC) is not a course on undoing extremism, through experience and training the professors get,”* they would be able to effectively stop students *“falling into”* the trap of radical groups. In other words, instructors’ proficiency, attitude, and positionality play a pivotal role in thwarting violent extremism and radicalization, as H (MG) highlighted. Nevertheless, according to her, there is a severe shortage of professors that are trained in Ethics. And without a trained professor, the ERC program *“has the potential to stay within the realm of close-mindedness, absolutely,”* she further elaborated. D(MG) echoed H’s points, while emphasizing the responsibility of professors in this regard.

Moreover, D(MG) showed deep criticism towards the quality of the ERC curriculum by pointing out some flaws within it. Although, *“it (the ERC program) tries to be a helpful program...it is completely messed up. And a lot of it comes down to ideas of promoting tolerance instead of acceptance. To me the two are very, very different... So, I think, there is potential in the ERC curricula to be able to help with that. But it is nowhere near, nowhere,”* he said.

Furthermore, the professors at both universities believed a trained and skillful professor can create an effective curriculum to foster open-mindedness and critical thinking skills and allow students to examine their own beliefs and recognize their own stereotypes through dialogue.

Meanwhile, many professors pointed out that the guidelines for connecting the ERC course content with religious extremism and radicalization were not clear. Given the fact that the ERC program does not directly aim to counter violent extremism, this is understandable. As such, it is mostly up to the ERC professors themselves who should find out how to approach the topic of violent extremism based on the existing general guidelines of the Ministry of Education. Yet, as H (MG) contends, some professors *“are not as clear as they should be, (although) there’s a lot of room for (them) to address violent extremism and radicalization.”*

Indeed, the impact of the ERC program can be very effective, as all professors highlighted. Yet, many of them also acknowledged the importance of professors’ competency, which would be tightly linked to their pedagogical or methodological skills. However, according to a review (Chan 2018) of the ERC programs in nine Quebec universities including McGill University and UQAM, ERC courses have been mostly focusing on content knowledge, overlooking methodology or pedagogy, while both aspects are equally important. As building resilience against radicalization and violent extremism heavily relies on good teaching approaches, the methodological part should be given more attention. This means the pedagogical training of ERC professors should be improved.

Finding # 2: Current events are widely discussed including the ones related to violent extremism or radicalization

Each professor at both universities, reported that they use current local and global events to teach the competencies of ERC. They appeared to be highly aware of the importance and possibility of discussing current events when teaching ERC courses. As A(UQ) said *“almost everything in the news can be connected to ERC.”*

Accordingly, the specific topics seem to be quite diverse and relevant to the immediate social reality. They would talk about many controversial issues and events like the provincial government’s recent ban on wearing religious symbols for public servants in positions of authority (H-MG), First Nations, the young missing native women (A-UQ), how media misrepresents the Muslims, events related to Islamophobia as well as government bills regarding religious expressions in Quebec such as Charter of Value, Bill 59 etc. (E-MG).

However, according to H(MG), it is important to note that although, *“the connections are there, it’s a question of whether the professor explores them (current events) and explains them, you can teach ethics and never talk about these topics ever”*. Thus, it would be possible to avoid discussing current events in ERC courses, and it is up to the professor who could decide which way to go. The ERC program does not have any strict and clear requirements to include current events into the teaching process. Furthermore, as B(UQ) also said, *“the program is constructed with big themes that can be explored in many different ways.”*

Meanwhile, E (MG) stated that the course content could be connected to current events and their responsibility *“to help the students understand and debunk a lot of the radical ideas and potential act of violence that we see in the media, so it absolutely has to be taught and (they do) it fairly on a regular basis.”* Accordingly, when asked whether they would talk about radicalization and violent extremism especially when relevant events occurred, they all said they would discuss them directly.

In sum, all ERC professors try to include a wide range of current events and many controversial topics like radicalization and violent extremism into their teaching.

Finding # 3: Although it claims to be so, the ERC Program is not neutral: it could marginalize minority religions.

Doney and Wegerif (2017) specifically warn us against biased education systems which exclude minority voices, by stating:

Many education systems, whether consciously or unconsciously, promote a monochrome view of the world; where one particular narrative is privileged, and all others are rejected. In some cases, this can directly support extremist narratives, but in all cases, privileging of one viewpoint over others, and teaching students that there is always ‘a correct answer – that cannot be questioned’ is in itself supportive of a mindset that is open to radicalization” (16).

Indeed, the ERC program’s purpose is the opposite: recognition of the Other and the common good, which is totally against prioritizing some groups over others. The ERC program itself

highlights the importance of neutrality and requires the professors to maintain their neutrality within their classroom.

The Ministry of Education of Quebec (MELS 2008a) also declares that “since this subject matter touches upon complex and sometimes delicate personal and family dynamics, teachers have an additional obligation to be discreet and respectful, and to not promote their own beliefs and points of view” (293). However, the content of the ERC program does not seem to be altogether neutral:

This program takes a special look at Québec’s religious heritage. The historical and cultural importance of Catholicism and Protestantism is especially highlighted. However, attention is also given to the influence of Judaism and Native spirituality on this heritage, as well as other religions that today contribute to Québec culture and inspire different ways of thinking, being and acting (MELS 2008b, 461-462).

With this background, it would be interesting to see how the ERC professors position themselves while being required to maintain “neutral impartiality” when teaching. Not surprisingly, one of the most important findings that arose was directly related to the content of the ERC program. For example, H (MG) argued that the program would need to be more balanced regarding all religious traditions. Currently, *“certain religions (such as Catholicism) receive more airtime in class than others.”*

Furthermore, the same professor highlighted the explicit problem hidden within interculturalism in the ERC program, that may come along as *“nationalism thus, implicit exclusion of minorities and privileging white dominant groups”*. (H-MG). She went on to point out that *“education is never neutral, and so ethics is also a tool of nationalism, it’s a tool of making future Quebecois citizens...inter-culturalism creates a power dynamic in between them (dominant groups) and minorities, namely the First Nations.”*

D (MG) had similar views, he went deeper by critiquing the post-colonial elements within the program, by saying *“I would say it is still too much of a colonial document, for example, one of the problems that I have with the program, and I continue to have with the program is the*

content of Native spirituality. That is a complete westernization of Indigenous Peoples and their spiritual beliefs”, and according to this professor, only a trained professor can avoid perpetuating these types of stereotypes. “If they use what is only in the curriculum, they are actually gonna end up perpetuating these types of stereotypes”, which is totally contrary to the primary objectives of the program: recognition of others and the common good (social cohesion).

Many researchers question the legitimacy and/or negative effects of emphasizing Catholicism, and Protestantism over other religions, as required by the Ministry of Education (Cherblanc 2018; Ghosh 2018; Gravel 2016; Vallerand 2018; Zaver and DeMartini 2016). The critiques raised by McGill professors went one step further by exposing the hidden post-colonial nature of this aspect that might be perpetuating white supremacy.

Interestingly, no similar critiques and observations were made by any professors at UQAM, which could be the result of their majority background. For this reason, they may not have questioned their own positions vs. a vs. other religious and cultural groups, especially minority groups.

Finding# 4: All professors attempt to cultivate multiple and critical perspectives regarding religion, including concepts like violent extremism and radicalization

In general, most of the professors interviewed highlighted the importance of multiple perspectives in effectively understanding the religious topics. For example, H(MG) said:

I try to see it from multiple perspectives, and I try that my students to be critical thinkers and see it from multiple perspectives to avoid phobias, like Islamophobia, or religious phobia. Because if I don’t’ give them the opportunity to see it from multiple perspectives, then I’m just perpetuating the norm.

When it comes to violent extremism, they emphasized the importance of highlighting intra-group differences for dismantling the relevant harmful discourses. This critical perspective reveals that extremists do not constitute the majority of people and debunks the binary, “us vs. them” dichotomy the violent extremist groups try to propagate. They also warned against the danger of judging the whole group of people according to the actions of some individuals as has oftentimes been perpetuated by various media outlets, consciously or unconsciously.



Some of them indicated nuanced perspectives over the issue at hand, stating that they would *“never judge a group based on either side, to show that in each group we have people who can move in this spectrum throughout their lives. (B -UQ). Analyzing group identity through the lens of a “spectrum” would effectively deconstruct the binary and “right or wrong” form of viewing the world, which is what the extremist groups are trying to popularize. This is also the basis of ideologically motivated violence. B (UQ) continued to express her perspectives:*

Well, I always see this as a sort of spectrum, the center of which contains the majority of people, living their traditions peacefully.

In the same vein, A (UQ) also explained how she highlights and draws the attention of the students to their real experiences with different groups within the same community in the multicultural context of Montreal. This is also for linking real life experiences with the theoretical content of ERC in order to eliminate the wrong projections of mass media.

Similarly, E (MG) talked about how Muslims are being unfairly judged and portrayed by the mass media in relation to violent extremism. *“In the current Islamophobic environment, violent extremism is mostly linked to Islam rather than to other religions,”* she said. While she said she does not talk about radicalization, as *“it is not really in the fundamental terrain of religions”*, she stressed that no religion can be immune to extremism, and **extremism “is a distortion of religious ideologies, and it has nothing to do with religions...The real information about religious groups can act like a protective barrier against this notion like all Muslims are extremists...”**

H (MG) highlighted the contextual process of radicalization by saying *“somebody doesn’t wake up and become violent or extreme or radicalized. It’s a process. We’re partially responsible for people who are radicalized”*. According to her, the number one factor that would push the young students towards extremism was marginalization and discrimination, as she further elaborated:

When one person is radicalized, I feel that the person feels that they have no more options. They’ve been isolated...In a society, humans all want to belong. And if we create a situation where they belong to the norm. They will create their own norm. And therefore, become radicalized..., one of the reasons they were radicalized is because they were outcastes in their

schools. So I think radicalization is a response to isolation, deep seated isolation... And they might feel oppressed. They might feel unheard...

She further highlighted that searching for meaning in life through religion could be another factor that would make the youth vulnerable to extremist ideologies. Indeed, the capacity of religions to fulfill identity needs and provide meaning in life can be tremendous (Baumeister 1991; Steger and Frazier 2005). Accordingly, looking for meaning in life: depression; loss of significance; search for identity, all can push many young people to accept the ideologies of various extremist groups who promise to offer them (Euer et al. 2014; Ghosh et al. 2016, 2017). Recently, the religious as well as far-right extremist groups have become increasingly sophisticated and effective in attracting and recruiting the innocent and naïve young people through internet and social media (Atwan 2015; Nacos 2016).

Moreover, this professor's perspectives demonstrate a deep understanding and critical observation of the effects of marginalization on minority students. Such a condition could only push some of those youth towards extremism, as emphasized by many scholars (Bizina and Gray 2014; Euer et al, 2014; Ghosh et al, 2016, 2017, 2018; Upal 2015).

Finding # 5: All professors said, in preparing their students, they emphasize and try to cultivate open-mindedness and comparative and critical analysis through the dialogue competency.

As mentioned earlier, the dialogue competency is at the center of the ERC program's aims. And all five professors stressed the dialogue competency of the program as the strength of the program. They all said they would apply different methods to foster dialogue in their classrooms. According to their responses, there seem to be two different approaches to cultivate the dialogue competency:

- a. Developing a basic social skill for living and communicating in a multicultural society like Quebec. Understanding the meaning of dialogue and developing an effective communication skill can be crucial for the young students who are going to be ERC teachers, and the professors would take it very seriously, as explained by them.



- b. Exploring dialogue as a skill to understand, accept, interact and respect differences for the pursuit of the common good, instead of avoiding, ignoring or fearing difference.

Generally speaking, the professors were also able to deconstruct the purpose, rules and definition of dialogue so that students learn the distinction in between dialogue with other forms of communications. Meanwhile, many professors stated that teaching the dialogue competency effectively would orient students towards open-mindedness, critical reflection on their own beliefs and judgement with regard to the Other. The students could reexamine their beliefs and potentially their biases. As E (MG) said:

I think it (the dialogue competency) helps foster open-mindedness because, it asks us to really dialogue with others and to go like this is what I think, that is what you think, and let me see if there's a basis for what I think, right? or maybe I grew up this way and I never examined it, or maybe I've heard my mom and dad say this since I'm little.

In this regard, A (UQ) expressed that she would help the students to “*see the differences to understand different ways of thinking from (their) own... to go further and understand how people can be different.*” B (UQ) said that it is important for students to learn that individuals may and can change their ideas and beliefs as their identities are being shaped through dialogue.

Moreover, offering students the experience of dialogical encounter allows them to develop the skills to refuse monologic worldviews and narratives. As highlighted by professor A (UQ), “*It's through this aspect that I manage to undo the prejudices, and to relativize a view that is radical or fundamentalist within a big religion.*”

In brief, they all believed that the enhancing students' dialogue competency not only enhances resilience against religious or political extremism, but it can also help them to “unlearn radicalization” or deradicalize. “*It can undo extremism*” (B-UQ), and according to D (MG), “*one learns how to become radicalized, therefore, one can learn how to become unradicalized [sic].*” This could be seen as a very strong trust in the power of the dialogue competency.

Although, the professors were deeply aware of the importance of dialogue competency, they may not always have been successful in cultivating that competency among their students. There might be some factors beyond the control of professors. For example, D-MG pointed out that



cultivating the dialogue competency *“is more problematic in more homogenous communities like rural areas where 98% of students are White”*. Yet, our quantitative analysis revealed that after the ERC course students’ Dialogical Open-mindedness (MDOM) improved significantly at McGill, while at UQAM there was a positive shift too, although it was not significant.

Finding # 6: All professors stress the importance of media literacy and most of them use various effective ways to guide their students to deconstruct “fake news”.

All professors highlighted that the theoretical content of ERC has the potential to teach media literacy and to guide students to recognize “fake news” and “false narratives” related to radicalization and violent extremism. Meanwhile, we found out that most professors teach media literacy to a certain extent, and they each have different approaches in teaching, media literacy, and fake news. D (MG) stated that he teaches media literacy and recognition of fake news by encouraging the students to develop critical and analytical research skills. *“Media literacy is as much about research skills as it is about anything else and showing students how easy it is to manipulate information. So, I tell my students all the time any picture you see on the internet double check, because it could come from absolutely anywhere, so it is really a matter of citing sources and learning how to reference work properly,”* he said.

Other than E(MG) who said she hadn’t *“yet actually looked at fake news”*, but she had *“certainly asked students to look at false narratives to a certain extent,”* all professors said that fake news was discussed to various degrees in their classrooms. For example, A(UQ) explained that she teaches media literacy and fake news by asking her students to investigate the sources of the news and the discourses and ideologies hiding behind. In the same vein, H(MG) emphasized looking into the purpose or intention of the narrator, by pushing students to *“look at every angle and see what’s happening”* and ask *“who wrote it? What are they writing for? What is the affiliation of the author? Who owns it? Why they focused on it, so on.”* For D (MG) *“media literacy is as much about research skills as is about anything else and showing students how easy it is to manipulate images.”* Accordingly, B (UQ) helps the students *“explore false narratives and conspiracy theories”*, although she would not use the word *“fake news”*.

Some even problematized the concept of “fake news”. For example, H(MG) said:



I actually don't use the concept "fake news" and "false narratives", because I think that's a bias...Instead, I teach my students to figure out what part is missing. And to take all those pieces, and to get the most collective and holistic picture of the topic...Because all the elements of fake news and false narratives always have a negative truth.

Overall, most professors seem to have been trying to enhance their students' media literacy through guiding them to effectively deconstruct "fake news" and "false narratives". Their approaches appear to have been very effective and highly relevant and engaging. This is very important as many extremist groups use various forms of social media to spread their false and misleading narratives, rendering social media illiteracy one of the push factors leading to radicalization (Alava, et al 2017).

5. Key Findings from Student Responses to the Survey

Finding # 1: Most students strongly believe that the ERC program has potential to make students less vulnerable to radicalization and violent extremism and highly regard the dialogue competency in this respect

Most students suggested that the dialogue competency of ERC was the strength of the program and strongly believed that it has the potential to make students less vulnerable to radicalization and violent extremism. According to them, it would allow students to learn about other ways of being, doing, and thinking outside their lives through dialogue. For example, N (MG) wrote:

Learning and dialoguing about the similarities between other religions, hopefully makes the connections that others aren't as different as they might think. They (students) may also be exposed to a different side of their religion that they are unaware of; not an extremist view.

Similarly, according to L(UQ), the ERC program could be seen as "one of the best ways" to help students build resilience against extremism. K(UQ) responded the same way.

M (UQ) highlighted the importance of dialogue in such a process, by saying: *"indeed, the ability to dialogue allows students to reflect on their own opinions and those of others. As such,*

students' knowledge and awareness of life realities make them better human beings." Along the same line, P(MG) emphasized the role of dialogue that would *"help students communicate with others that have different perspectives than their own. "*

Accordingly, P(MG) underlined that the dialogue competency would foster social cohesion, democratic citizenship, mutual respect, and support religious freedom in classrooms and in society with religious and cultural diversity. Through such a skill, the students *"will know how to properly receive, interpret, and critically think about the views of others, in a way that is not disrespectful or hurtful towards others", said he.*

K(UQ) expressed a deep sense of obligation in guiding future students towards a right direction regarding such topics, while highlighting the potential of the ERC program in improving young students' capacity to dismantle extremist narratives and ideologies. While this student acknowledged and emphasized the potential of the ERC program in countering violent extremism, according to her this would also depend on the willingness and capacity of the instructors. When discussing radicalization and extremism, it is important that professors shed light on the underpinning social-political tensions that lead to extremism and radicalization.

As O (MG) elaborated:

I believe that it is our responsibility as future educators/teachers of the ERC Program to address the drivers of violent extremism and build learners' resilience to hateful narratives and propaganda that legitimize the use of violence.

However, it seems that not all students would highly regard the potential of the ERC program in thwarting violent extremism. For example, while P(MG) also acknowledged the potential of dialogue competency, she could not *"see a connection between the topics of violent extremism and radicalization and the ethics and religious culture competencies in the ERC program because the ERC program's aim is to encourage our students to view all religious and ethical perspectives with respect and empathy."* It appears that this student was questioning the cultural relativism the ERC program could propagate, which would allow the violent cultures thrive safely. Indeed, this is a very critical point which demonstrates a deep analytical thinking skill.



Finding # 2: Discussing controversial issues such as violent extremism, as well as deconstructing “fake” news are very much incorporated into the teaching process.

Five out of six students responded that their professors had routinely used current events to teach theoretical content of ERC, as M(UQ) said,

In general, our professors use news topics with which they can relate to their topic... For example, in our religious classes, professors talk a lot about the charter of rights and freedoms and the relevant laws to address the theme of religious symbols.

In the same vein, P (MG) said that her professor would link current events to course content allowing students to engage and better understand pressing local and global religious and ethical tensions. She said:

Throughout my class, we have discussed certain religious and ethical issues that are affecting our world and the society we live in today. One topic that we have continuously addressed throughout the class is how Quebec wants to pass a ban that inhibits professors from wearing any religious symbols. This issue is one that affects us as future educators in Quebec.

Obviously, the students in this class were able to connect the theoretical knowledge with the current events closely related to their reality around them, which would make the ERC course more effective. K (UQ) from UQAM also confirmed that her professor “*incorporates recent events into discussions and it was the professors’ duty to motivate students through this way.*”

Further, L(UQ) mentioned that while discussing current events her professors would try to defy stereotypical ideologies that hide in language and text that circulate in the media. “*We discuss some types of problematic judgments, which are obstacles to a good dialogue, by exposing the linguistic distortion in the media,*” she said.

Moreover, according to M(UQ), their professor was able to deconstruct stereotypes in current events by developing critical and analytical skills in students regarding violent extremism: “*In our ERC program we identify the origins of such ideas, how they develop and how they can be modified to provide a better understanding of what extremism and radicalization really is.*” The



student also mentioned a very critical point they discussed in class, which is, *“a visible increase in stereotyping of Arabs as ‘terrorists,’ since 2001.* That said, all of the above students confirmed that their professors talk about violent extremism and radicalization whenever there is an opportunity to do so.

However, N (MG) responded that their professors usually do not discuss current events, and if they did: *It is very casual, and the prof mentions it nonchalantly at the beginning of the class. For example, ‘did you hear that Riverdale is closing down?’* N (MG) continued:

We are looking at every religion in a very superficial, factual, and ‘safe’ way. We do not look at things happening in the news related to religion or look at ‘touchy’ topics like radicals or extremists. I feel like the ERC curriculum would say that is going too far.

In brief, most students from both universities seem to be very satisfied with their professors’ teaching approaches in terms of connecting course content with the immediate realities and pressing issues like violent extremism and radicalization. Evidently, not all professors are effective to the same degree.

Finding # 3: Most students from both universities have a critical understanding of violent extremism and radicalization. However, students at UQAM gave more detailed answers to questions on these topics.

Our survey showed that most students had a reasonable understanding of violent extremism and radicalization. For example, for O (MG), radicalization is a process in which an individual adopts an extremist set of beliefs. For N (MG), *“violent extremism is the execution of radicalization, twisting the doctrine of religion.”* L (UQ) demonstrated some deeper knowledge by saying,

violent extremism is a type of radicalization, which maintains that violence is necessary to bring about changes in the value system and the socio-political environment. In my opinion, it is a way to talk about what the media refers to as radicalization.

In addition, we found that some students who participated in our survey had good knowledge of intra-group differences, which would protect them from binary thinking regarding the people from other cultural and religious backgrounds. Such a capacity enables students to understand religious beliefs and religious minorities in a spectrum, and in a non-stereotypical manner. K (UQ) and M (UQ) highlighted that only a small percentage of religious believers adhere to violent extremism and radicalization.

M (UQ) further demonstrated her critical understanding of extremist groups, and the mass media's role in perpetuating hate against religious minorities. *"Those radicalized misinterpret the view of religion held by the majority. Many, including the media, misinform and perpetuate Islamophobia,"* she said.

L (UQ) went even deeper, pointing out that it should not necessarily be associated with fundamentalism, as it may be simply *"a change in values and norms,"* while L(UQ) stressed that it would be a deviation from the norm, and there could be many ways to become radicalized.

Meanwhile, the students were aware of the reality that helping students understand violent extremism and making them more resilient against it is not an easy task, as *"radicalization is a sensitive subject, which requires tact"* L(UQ). Further, as P (MG) emphasized, it is important to enable students to *"hear other opinions and have a safe platform to talk about their own" in order to help them "avoid radical thoughts"*. Overall, all the students showed some good understanding of violent extremism or radicalization, yet the UQAM students might have possessed more critical and greater knowledge about this subject.

6. Key Findings from the Data

1. Overall, we found that almost all professors and students who participated in this study highly regard the potential of the ERC program in cultivating resilience against violent extremism and radicalization. Although, as many of them highlighted, the ERC program does not explicitly aim to do so, the competencies it intends to develop among young students could help students enhance their capacity to thwart violent and radical ideologies.
2. The McGill professors also saw the flaw within the program itself which would marginalize the minority groups and their religions in the name of Quebec heritage

and Interculturalism. This could negatively affect the intended goal of the ERC program if not critically dealt with.

3. Most professors try to cultivate multiple and critical perspectives regarding religion, violent extremism and radicalization, and most students as well demonstrated critical understanding of the issues.
4. All professors and students highly regard the dialogue competency in boosting students' resilience against radicalization. Professors actively connect diverse current events and controversial issues like violent extremism with the course content and their students are content with their professors' teaching styles. In 2011, Fujiwara commented that the phenomenological presentation of religions "avoids controversial issues" (278) in teaching ERC courses in Quebec. This small study finds that there has been some improvement in this regard since then.
5. The students are effectively supported in improving their capacity to deconstruct fake narratives or "fake news".
6. Our statistical analysis of the quantitative data also shows that the program had a positive impact on the students' open-mindedness and had a positive impact on both Dialogical Open-mindedness (MDOM) and Knowledge and Experience of Difference (KED) in both English (McGill) and French (UQAM) sectors despite the varying levels of significance. While the social science courses in both universities also made their students more open-minded, the ERC course was more effective. This is quite in line with the findings from the qualitative data analysis.

7. Recommendations for Pre-service Teacher Education

1- In a highly inter-connected world, the ERC program should give more attention to cultivating media literacy in order to build resilience against religious and political extremism among students.

2- The ERC program's content should include some theoretical as well as factual knowledge and information about radicalization and violent extremism. Students should also receive some

training on violent radicalization and terrorism in the form of guest lectures given by a recognized expert in this field.

3- The ERC program should reconsider its “neutrality” that is marginalizing the minority religions and cultures in the name of Quebec heritage and Interculturalism.

4- The ERC curriculum should stress the aim of social cohesion. While this should not replace specific efforts aimed at developing resilience (and thus preventing radicalization to violence), promoting social cohesion does supplement prevention efforts and could work towards preventing/reducing RTV/VE (and have potentially less marginalizing/stigmatizing of minority groups).

5- The ERC program should further emphasize soft skills such as empathy and compassion in order to cultivate emotional literacy among young students. The affective domain has been neglected in our contemporary education systems, while technical or hard skills have been overemphasized (Noddings, 2002). Highlighting empathy or care while teaching the ERC courses would be particularly effective and crucial in fortifying student resilience against extremist ideologies (Ghosh, 2018).

6- The ERC program should dismantle the cultural relativism that would make violent ideologies and cultures immune to criticism and condemnation.

7- In addition to curriculum and pedagogy, instructors of the ERC courses need special training on various educational approaches including equity approach and critical multiculturalism so that they can more effectively interact with diverse students and critically deal with their own biases while teaching this course.

8. Conclusion

While this study is very small and only deals with two university students, it is limited in scope. Overall, this study suggests that the ERC program has potential for students’ emotional development, open-mindedness and critical thinking skills, therefore enhancing their resilience against radicalization and violent extremism. We found that most professors and students highly regard the power of ERC in this respect, and most professors try to use effective methods to cultivate skills that would help their students to deconstruct anti-social behaviors and false narratives generally, and thwart radical and violent ideologies in particular. Our statistical

analysis of the quantitative data also shows that the program had a positive impact on the students' open-mindedness. Especially the Dialogical Open-mindedness of McGill students was significantly enhanced, while UQAM students also showed some visible improvements in their open-mindedness.

Since the program does not directly aim to prevent radicalization, although it explicitly rejects violence as a method of resolving conflict, there are not guidelines for professors for connecting the ERC course content with extremism/radicalization. Albeit, professors generally do not avoid discussing sensitive topics like violent extremism and radicalization and are able to connect the course content with very relevant current events. Most of them try to cultivate the multiple and critical perspectives regarding religion, violent extremism and radicalization, and their students as well demonstrated critical understanding of such issues. Yet, we also observed that teaching ERC is sometimes limited to superficial exploration of course content in regard with religious issues. It is known, for example, that in many schools ERC courses may be taught by teachers who have specialized in other subject areas and therefore, their own understanding of the competencies and content of this course are not adequate.

It should also be noted that, if the ERC professors are not careful, the ERC's focus on religious cultures - which, when paired with a goal of reducing RTV/VE through education (as highlighted in this report) could promote the very stereotypes that link religion and extremism that the program purports to counter. It must be remembered that though ERC comes from an inter-faith perspective the focus on ethics makes it broader than just a religious perspective and there are other ways in which national and personal security must also be discussed.

Meanwhile, there are issues in terms of professor competency in both universities. There needs to be in-service professional development and improved pre-service teaching programs that focus on dialogical methodology in order to more effectively be involved in critical pedagogy and cultivate resilience against anti-social behaviour (e.g. gangs, drugs, etc.), and more specifically RTV/VE. It is also urgent to upgrade the ERC professors' focus on soft skills such as empathy, as well as their awareness, knowledge and willingness to approach such pressing topics in both English and French education sectors in Quebec.



Finally, we want to reemphasize that our study is not generalizable. We do not claim that our findings can be seen as an evaluation of the whole ERC program in Quebec universities. This study could be best regarded as a snapshot of perspectives of the ERC program in two Montreal universities in relation to its possible contribution to the efforts to prevent/reduce RTV/VE.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Quantitative Analysis and Findings

Estimating the latent trait of Likert scale responses (MDOM+KED) using Item response theory through “R” program (version 3.60)

Table 1: Mean differences of individuals in Dialogical Open-mindedness (MDOM) between Experimental and Control groups following the McGill and UQAM ERC course

Group	n	Mean difference	SD
Experimental	77	0.108	0.891
Control	66	-0.111	1.16

Table 1 shows that there is a difference in the mean differences among individuals regarding their Open-mindedness (MDOM) between the students of the experimental groups (0.108) and the students of the control groups (-0.111) following the completion of the ERC course. This difference indicates that the ERC course has a positive effect on MDOM in both McGill and UQAM. However, this effect is marginally significant ($t=0.104$) as the Alpha level for the one-tailed p-value is smaller than or equal to 0.10 ($p \leq 0.10$) in one tailed p-value.

Table 2: Mean differences of individuals in Knowledge and Experience of Difference (KED) between Experimental and Control groups following the McGill and UQAM ERC course

Group	n	Mean difference	SD
Experimental	77	0.147	0.993
Control	66	-0.146	1.37

Table 2 shows that there is a difference in the mean differences among individuals regarding their Knowledge and Experience of Difference (KED) between the students of the experimental group (0.147) and the students of the control group (-0.146) following the completion of the ERC course. This difference indicates that the ERC course has a positive effect on KED in both McGill and UQAM. This positive effect is significant ($t=0.071$) at Alpha level of one-tailed p value $p \leq 0.07$ which is in between marginal level and high-level significance scores ($0.05 \leq p \text{ value} \leq 0.10$).

Figure 1: Individual level difference in both MDOM and KED between Experimental and Control groups following the McGill and UQAM ERC course

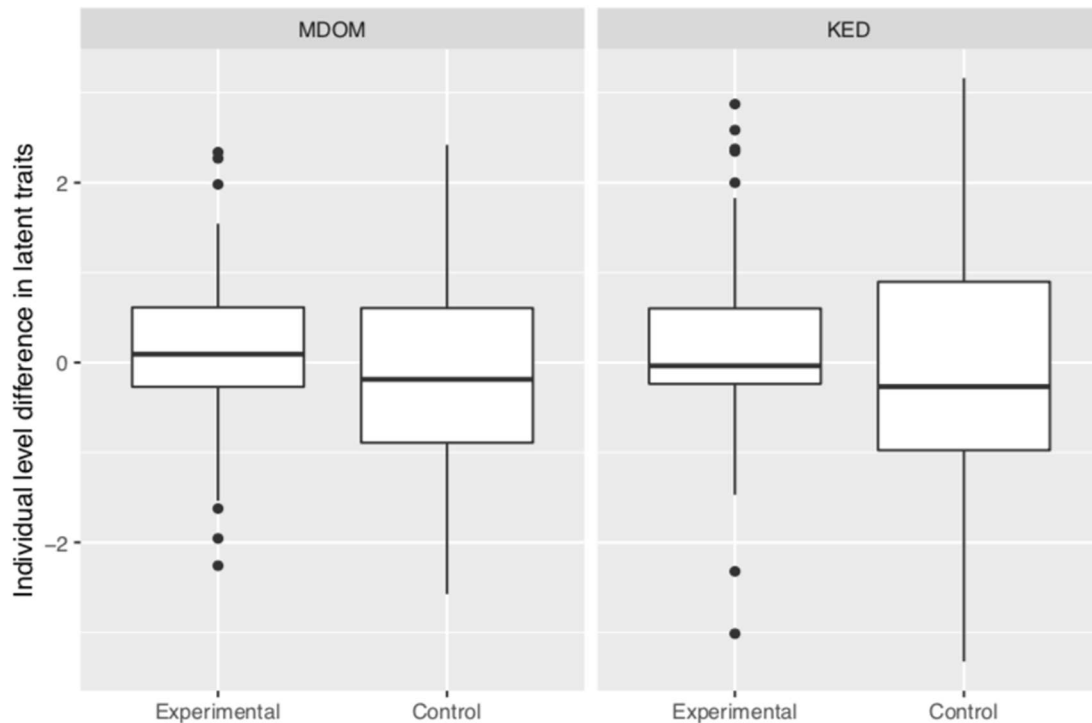


Table 3: Mean differences of individuals in Dialogical Open-mindedness (MDOM) between McGill and UQAM following the ERC course

University	Group	n	Mean difference	SD
McGill	Experimental	47	0.230	0.848
	Control	52	-0.0035	1.21
UQAM	Experimental	30	0.0792	0.936
	Control	14	-0.510	0.901

Table 3 shows that mean differences of individuals in Dialogical Open-mindedness (MDOM) are significantly higher ($t=0.0499$) among the students of the experimental groups (0.230; 0.0792) than the students of the control groups (-0.0035; -0.510) in both McGill and UQAM schools after completing the ERC course. This table also indicates that the mean differences among individuals in Dialogical Open-mindedness (MDOM) are more in McGill (0.230) than in UQAM (0.0792). These higher mean differences reveal that the ERC course has significantly more effect ($t=0.0215$) on the students of McGill in their Dialogical Open-mindedness (MDOM) than that of UQAM.

Table 4: Mean differences of individuals in Knowledge and Experience of Difference (KED) between English and French Schools following the McGill and UQAM ERC course

University/Language	Group	n	Mean difference	SD
McGill (English)	Experimental	47	0.215	0.825
	Control	52	-0.161	1.31
UQAM (French)	Experimental	30	0.0435	1.21
	Control	14	-0.0937	1.61

Table 4 shows that mean differences among individuals in Knowledge and Experience of Difference (KED) are higher among the students of the experimental groups (0.215; 0.0435) than the students of the control groups (-0.0435; -0.0937) in both McGill and UQAM after completing the ERC course. This difference between Experimental and Control groups is marginally significant ($t=0.0655$) at Alpha level of one-tailed p value 0.10 ($p \leq 0.10$). This table also indicates that the individual level mean differences in Dialogical Open-mindedness (MDOM) are more in McGill (0.215) than that of in UQAM (0.0435). These higher mean differences indicate that the ERC course has more effect on the students in McGill in their Knowledge and Experience of Difference (KED) than that of in French schools (e.g. UQAM). However, the difference between McGill and UQAM is not significant at all ($t=0.3555$). This difference is not significant because of many possible reasons. One possible reason might be related to the variation of the individual responses (0.21944).

Figure 2: Individual level difference in latent traits of the students in both McGill and UQAM for both experimental and control groups following the ERC course

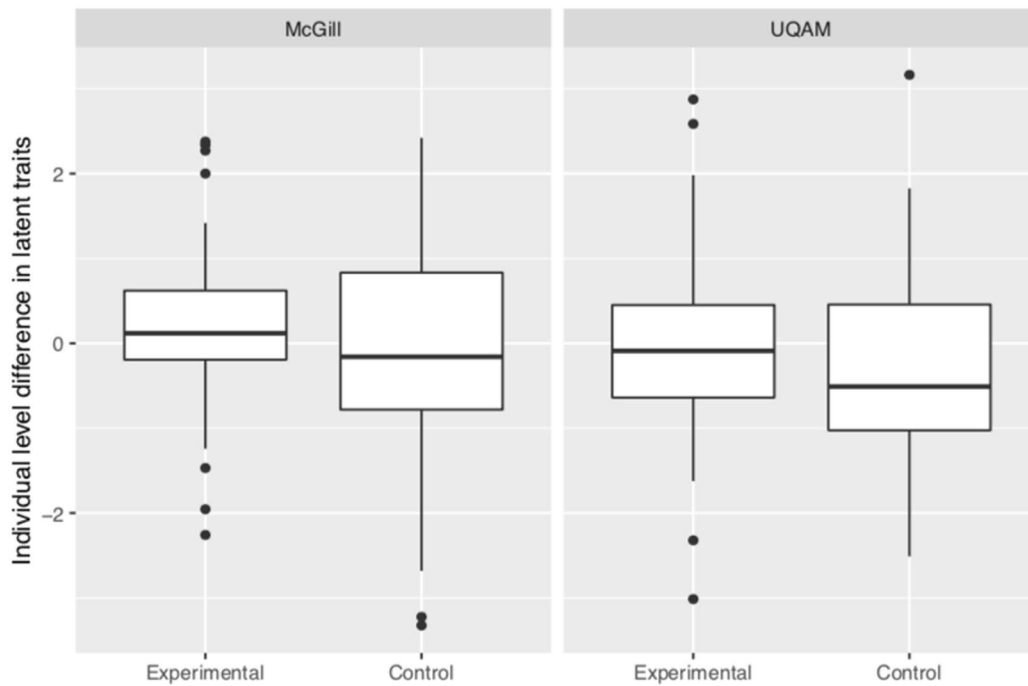
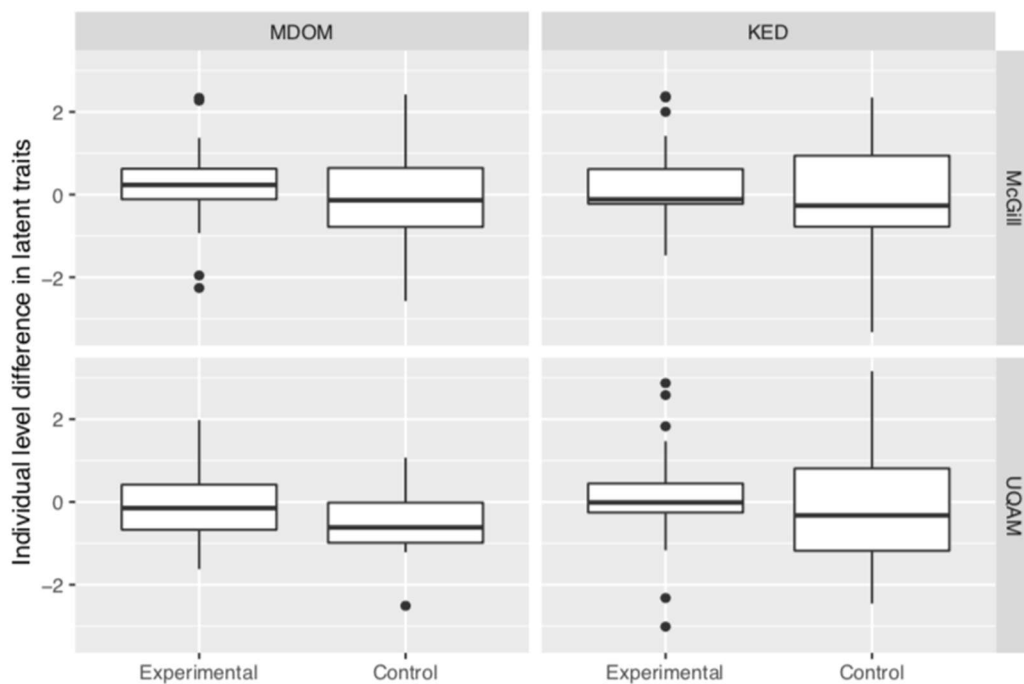


Figure 3: Individual level difference in latent traits in MDOM and KED of the students in both McGill and UQAM for both experimental and control groups and the differences among them following the ERC course





Appendix 2: Questionnaire for the students (SQ1-3)

40 item questions. For each statement, respondents are invited to rate their agreement on a five points scale [Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree].

1) I have interacted with other people through social media who live in other countries.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

2) I know whatever I say, my professor treats me with respect.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

3) I appreciate the way my world view helps me to structure and organize my day to day life.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

4) When I get lucky breaks it is usually because I have earned them.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

5) Outward-going, sociable people deserve a happy life.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**



- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

6) I am confident in talking to someone from another country.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

7) Interacting and communication with others help me to learn more about myself.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

8) After talking to others, I sometimes think differently about myself.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

9) When I see someone being picked on for having different beliefs from others, I think I should stand up for them.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

10) I can present my own beliefs effectively to people with different worldviews, beliefs and cultures.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**



☐ **Strongly Agree**

11) I understand why other people's worldviews, beliefs or cultures are important to them.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

12) I have had lots of online experiences exploring and discussing different worldviews, beliefs and cultures.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

13) I enjoy communicating with those of different worldviews, beliefs or cultures.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

14) The idea of speaking to people that I don't know makes me feel anxious.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

15) I am OK with being uncertain about something.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

16) I love to bounce ideas around with other people.



- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

17) I am confident discussing my worldview, beliefs and values with others who share my views.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

18) The reason there are lots of languages is so that we can learn from each other.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

19) I have had lots of real-life experiences of different worldviews, beliefs and cultures.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

20) When I see people being mocked for being different I get angry and I tell those who are mocking to stop.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

21) I do not like it when other people's ideas are different from my own.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**



- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

22) We never talk about issues of worldview, belief or values in school.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

23) I have recently communicated on line with someone from a different worldview, belief or culture.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree,**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

24) In my class, disagreements are resolved so that we can get along well after the disagreement.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

25) I prefer not to share my views with others when I think they think differently.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

26) I am interested in getting to know people who are different to me and having them as friends.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**

**Strongly Agree**

27) I need to be secure in my own identity, worldview, belief and culture.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

28) It really helps me if I can imagine why others might be thinking how they think.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

29) I am confident about speaking out even when I suspect the people listening to me may hold different views.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

30) I can imagine how people with different worldviews, beliefs or cultures from me will react to important issues.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

31) I am only interested in people who share similar worldview / priorities / values/ points of view.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**



32) As I progress through school I have stopped even noticing differences in other people, I like most people and accept them for what they are.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

33) I can almost always contribute to conversations about problems.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

34) I am confident about talking to others about worldviews, beliefs and cultures.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

35) I have a good knowledge of different branches within various different religious traditions.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

36) I have a good knowledge of different worldviews, beliefs and values.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- ☐ **Agree**
- ☐ **Strongly Agree**

37) I am confident about speaking out in class.

- ☐ **Strongly Disagree**
- ☐ **Disagree**
- ☐ **Neither Agree nor Disagree**



- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

38) I have friends (both offline and online) who celebrate different festivals to me.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

39) My professor helps me to build my confidence in ERC course.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

40) When other people disagree with my views I feel uncomfortable.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree,
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree,
- ☐ Agree,
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Source: Doney, Jonathan and Rupert Wegerif. 2017. *Measuring Open-mindedness. An evaluation of the impact of our school dialogue programme on students' open-mindedness and attitudes to others*. Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

Appendix 3: Qualitative questionnaire for the students (SQ1-3)

- What kind of topics do you usually address in your classes in relation to current events?
- Have your courses given you the skills to teach using dialogue as a method?
- Is there a connection between hate crimes/violent extremism, and the ethics and religious culture competencies in the ERC program?
- Do the religion and ethics competencies through dialogue have potential to make students less vulnerable to radicalization /violent extremism? Why or why not?
- How has media literacy, 'fake news', and 'false narratives' related to radicalization/violent extremism been discussed in your pre-service education?

Appendix 4: Interview questions for McGill and UQAM ERC professors (SQ1):

- What kind of topics do you usually discuss in your classes in relation to current events?
- How do you foster dialogue in your teaching?
- What do you understand by “violent extremism” and “radicalization”?
- Have you discussed these concepts in class, especially when extremist attacks happen at home or abroad? Why or why not?
- Do you see a connection between the topics of violent extremism and radicalization and the ethics and religious culture competencies in the ERC program?
- Do the religion and ethics competencies through dialogue have potential to make students less vulnerable to radicalization and violent extremism?
- Do these competencies enable you to foster-
 - (a) open-mindedness,
 - (b) comparative and
 - (c) critical analysis?
- How do you teach media literacy and guide students to recognize ‘fake news’ and ‘false narratives’ related to radicalization and violent extremism?

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