



*Reaching runaways on the streets
A shared child-protection responsibility*

FINAL REPORT

**Sylvie Hamel, Ph.D., Ps.Ed.
Professor
Department of Psychoeducation
Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (UQTR)**

Contributors:

Sylvain Flamand, Dans la rue
Anna Di Tirro, Dans la rue
Audrée Courchesne, Dans la rue
Chantal Crête, UQTR
Sabrina Crépeau-Fernandez, UQTR

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DANS LA RUE



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INTRODUCTION

In September 2005, *le Bon Dieu dans la Rue*, the Centre jeunesse de Montréal-Institut universitaire and the Institut de recherche pour le développement social des jeunes came together to submit a letter of intent to the National Crime Prevention Centre. In the letter, the lead organization—*le Bon Dieu dans la Rue*—informed the Centre of its desire to qualify its entire range of services, particularly those devoted to runaway minors, through a research and sharing approach. The objective was to gain a better understanding of the work done with children who occasionally slip through the child protection mechanisms. The letter also indicated that the organization wanted to learn more about its clientele, its intervention practices and the impact of its various programs. Furthermore, it specified that *le Bon Dieu dans la Rue* wanted not only to study its own expertise, but also to examine it in relation to that of its immediate partners, or with other agencies in Québec with similar vocations. The purpose was to document, as thoroughly as possible, as well as to share and develop their practices towards runaway minors.

More fundamentally, this initiative stemmed from reports that the agencies appear to be losing their ability to reach runaway minors who have broken ties with their families or protective structures, at a time when the runaway phenomenon is in constant growth. A drastic drop in young people visiting youth centres indeed raises much concern in the community. Not to mention the fact that reaching these young people in urban spaces has become extremely difficult because of the changes in street cultures and realities; and that, in this context, caseworkers quickly fall behind in their understanding of what these youths may be experiencing. Additionally, the amendments to the *Youth Protection Act*, which have brought about considerable changes to the conditions relating to intensive supervision, are being called into question. They are also creating challenges for the institutions, in terms of intervening with returning runaways, and causing uncertainties among police officers, who are privileged witnesses to this transition and key players in intervening with runaway minors.

This is why the three identified sectors —community, institutional and police— eventually joined together to participate in this project, for which *le Bon Dieu dans la*

Rue finally received funding. The adventure took place between 2008 and 2011, uniting partners from four different cities: Montreal, Québec, Drummondville and Trois-Rivières. More specifically, these partners—which are still active participants in the project—consist of 1) in Montreal: *le Bon Dieu dans la Rue, En Marge 12-17, the Centre jeunesse de Montréal-Institut universitaire*, the Batshaw Youth and Family Centres, and the Montreal police force; 2) in Québec: *Squat Basse-ville, the Centre jeunesse de Québec-Institut universitaire*, and the Quebec City police force; and 3) in Drummondville and Trois-Rivières: the *Refuge La Piaule, Point de Rue, the Centre jeunesse de la Mauricie et du Centre-du-Québec*, the Trois-Rivières police force, as well as the Sûreté du Québec.

Nonetheless, this project, on which these partners have collaborated for five years, had four main objectives: 1) update our understanding of what runaway youths experience; 2) document the practices used with runaway youths by the institutions, the community, and the police; 3) mobilize networks of players (partners and collaborators) from these three sectors to open a new dialogue centered on intervention with an emphasis on complementary expertise; and 4) plan and try innovative projects and new practices using better strategies for reaching and protecting youths, but without restricting their development.

This report thus pertains to the first objective: present the results of our study to update our understanding of the runaway youth experience. It includes a frame of reference, information on the methodology, the results as such, as well as a summary divided into six findings that we believe are the most significant at this stage of our reflection.

FRAME OF REFERENCE

The first chapter of this report is not intended to cover all that is known about the runaway phenomenon, but rather to situate a few key elements related to its scope and definition, the associated motivations and risks, as well as the characteristics of runaway youths. We believe these to be the most important and fundamental dimensions for establishing an initial frame of reference. We will eventually enhance this frame of reference by consulting the most recent papers on the subject, while pursuing our reflection on the results of this study.

1.1 SCOPE

According to the *Missing Children Reference Report* (Bender, 2007), which was based on data from the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) system and presented by the National Missing Children Services, runaways were the leading object of missing child reports in Canada, representing 76% of all cases. This register places the number of runaway reports in Québec at 5163 and ranks this province fourth in the country. Also according to the same source, 30% of runaway cases reported in Canada concern children who left their family and 20% of cases involve flights from a foster family. The *Missing Children Reference Report* (Bender, 2007) also reveals that 58% of the children classified as runaways are girls and 42% are boys. It further reports that in half the cases—for girls and boys alike—the runaways are between 14 and 15 years of age. Moreover, this source indicates that 82% of youths (both boys and girls) who run away have done so before. Only 17% are on the run for the first time. These data are consistent with what Dion (1999) had already said 10 years earlier to the effect that so-called repeat flights represent 70% of all runaway cases. Dion also added that young “re-offenders” most often come from an institutional setting rather than from a family environment. Moreover, that author’s attention at the time to repeated flights and the situation of youths in institutional settings has been echoed in the results of more recent research. A prime example is Paquette’s (2004) study on nine street youths whom he met in a community shelter, which revealed that none of the youths had run away from a family environment. The study by Levac (2007) also showed that 86% ($N = 21$) of the youths whom he accompanied along their street journey had been placed in the care of

Québec's social services (foster families, group homes and youth centres) and that several of them had attempted to escape from this “forced” placement by using drugs, running away and attempting suicide.

Moreover, this portrait of the situation in Québec and the rest of Canada does not appear to differ much from those drawn by other researchers around the world. For example, the U.S. study by Fasulo, Cross, Mosley and Leavy (2002), which focuses on the situation of runaway youths in institutional settings, showed that a good proportion (44%) of them run away repeatedly and that they do so an average of 3.4 times. It also demonstrated that girls run away more than boys do and that older runaways are on the run for longer periods.

Therefore, the situation of youths running away from institutional settings seems even more worrisome given the fact that those who engage in running away repeatedly would be more at risk of becoming permanently attached to life on the street (Paquette, 2004).

Nevertheless, these data, although enlightening, must be interpreted with caution. First, not all runaway cases are reported to the police. This is true notably of youths leaving a negligent family environment (Paquette, 2004). However, practices related to reporting runaways vary greatly from one youth centre to another, whereby, in some cases, statistics include absences of a few hours and in other cases, they include flights of a few days. In this context, it is obviously difficult to establish clearly the facts¹.

¹We attempted to draw a portrait of the runaway phenomenon based on the data provided by the project partners, only to find that the data were not comparable and that this operation would undoubtedly be more productive if youth centres adopted a data-standardization framework. One such framework was, in fact, established during the course of the project, on the recommendation of the Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux (Québec's department of health and social services).

1.2 DEFINITION

This situation also raises the possibility that there are many different ways to define “running away.” Literature suggests a number of definitions; however, the various authors we consulted seem to agree on the one put forward by Impe and Lefebvre in 1981, which was again used by Hanigan in 1997 and cited by Fredette and Plante in 2004. According to this definition, running away is [*Translation*] “...the fact that a minor voluntarily leaving the family home or any other custodial environment... (foster family, group home, rehabilitation centre...) without the authorization of his or her guardian for at least one night” (Fredette & Plante, 2004). However, this definition is undoubtedly far from what youths could tell us on the subject. Nevertheless, it still attempts to highlight a few key parameters that appear fundamental to the authors who proposed it. First, the definition indicates the voluntary nature of the act. Next, it includes various possible scenarios, where youths leave a rehabilitation centre, a group home, a foster family or even their home of origin. It also specifies a duration—overnight—and implies that the act is somewhat of a violation, since youths’ departures would not be considered running away if they were permitted to leave. And because youths who leave their living environment (home, foster family, rehabilitation centre or hospital) without authorization from their parents or the person acting in that capacity (article 38.1 of the *Youth Protection Act*) put their safety and development at risk (as per the *Youth Protection Act*), running away justifies the implementation of protective measures (*En Marge 12-17*, 2002).

That said, this legal dimension of running away contrasts somewhat with the fact that various experts consider the experience an integral part of the development process for some adolescents. These experts believe that running away would be a way to assert new psychological needs, such as self-realization, belonging and peer conformity (*En Marge 12-17*, 2002). Therefore, the notion that running away is an irresponsible adventure no longer seems to apply. For the time being, researchers and caseworkers are more inclined to think of running away as a symptom, a way for youths to express

themselves when facing a situation likely to prevent them from satisfying various needs.

Indeed, running away could not be considered an ordinary trip or relocation, even though it often has no specific goal, since it generally occurs in a particular emotional context and in an atmosphere of conflict with the family or the institution. Running away therefore involves a rupture or distancing, which reveals a psychic or existential impasse that the youth is trying to resolve. Some thus consider it important to distinguish clearly running away from vagrancy (Guillou, 1998), although, with time, vagrancy may become part of the journey of a young person who started in a runaway situation. However, vagrancy is associated with a certain passiveness, which, at first glance, does not characterize the need reflected in the runaway act. Thus, the flight itself is a sudden act that seems necessary and that involves a spatial and relational rupture.

1.3 MOTIVATIONS

In this perspective, young people usually run away on the spur of the moment (Chenelot, 2008), although much deeper motivations may be associated. Therefore, the direct reason for running away is generally a concrete circumstance or event, such as the fear of punishment or an argument. Dion (1999) as well as Fredette and Plante (2004) elaborate on the subject by describing a series of triggers, which they group into three categories—cognitive/emotional, behavioural and contextual. They also distinguish between youths leaving their family and those leaving an institution. Youths who leave their family would do so as a result of feelings of guilt, injustice or rejection brought on by their situation, because they are experiencing relational difficulties and are being kept from their friends or forbidden to see them., It may also be because they are confronted with house rules and strict supervision, severe punishment and scenes of violence. Conversely, youths would leave an institution because of similar feelings to those experienced in their family, but also because of situations that make them feel like outsiders and because they need to find a group to which they can belong. Also,

they sometimes leave because they are opposed to the decision of being placed, are prevented from contacting their network and friends and are having major relational difficulties with their peers and caseworkers.

However, based on Dion's (1999) work, Fredette and Plante (2004) also developed a flight typology whose descriptive elements refer somewhat to the more fundamental motivations that may be linked to this experience. This typology consists of six categories of flights, beginning with the "flight for survival." This first category is associated with an escape or departure from a violent, dangerous family environment from which youths run away to survive. The next category is the "anomic flight," which takes root in deviant social models and is part of a series of events involving various behavioural problems and the desire to escape punishment. Next, the "detachment flight" would result from a situation of rejection or abandonment, a sensation of inner void creating the need to verify the degree of attachment to adults. Meanwhile, the "emancipation flight" would reflect an attempt or a need to escape control by authorities, discover new places, meet new people and experience new things. Then, the "self-empowerment flight" would be characterized by the desire to carve oneself a place in society, enter adulthood, experiment with autonomy and enjoy one's freedom. The last flight category is what the authors call "street attachment," which would refer to choosing the street lifestyle further to a series of difficult experiences leading to social disaffiliation.

1.4 RISKS

Although we might understand the motivations of runaway youths, the fact remains that they take considerable risks and, they sometimes place themselves in danger. The first risk that these young people cannot avoid or circumvent is related to the fact that people are looking for them. In this context, they hide out of sight from the adults who could protect them. Some do not even turn to the resource centres for fear of being denounced and sent back to the environment they escaped or left. As Paquette (2004) explained, this outlaw condition places youths in a position of alienation, causing them

to withdraw or to count only on their friends, outside the world of adults, whom they associate with authority and with whom it becomes increasingly difficult to develop true relationships of trust. These youths thus live in a state of hidden vagrancy, like many other street youths, of whom only a minority uses the aid agencies (Robert & Desrochers, 2002). Additionally, Chesney-Lind and Selden (1992) indicated that when hiding from the authorities, runaway youths commonly hang out in underground worlds, which lead them to consider crime as a possible and legitimate means of surviving and of satisfying their basic needs. However, Fredette and Plante (2004) believed, as did Parazelli (2000), that the offences committed by these youths should be considered adaptation strategies rather than indicators of a structured delinquency. Along the same lines, Douville and Jehl (2003) stressed the importance of not labelling these youths as delinquents, but rather of viewing these delinquent acts as cries for help and as sounding an alarm.

However, this delinquency, regardless of the importance we attach to it, will generally have a significant impact on other areas of the youths' lives. This situation contributes to their isolation and vulnerability. Moreover, Paquette (2004) claimed that the violence these youths sometimes cause, but more often witness, make them prime victims. These inexorable processes sometimes lead them to normalize and internalize violence as a problem-solving strategy (Kelly & Caputo, 2001). In this perspective, several youths will turn to prostitution as a means of support (Bernier & Trépanier, 1994), despite the associated risks, seeing it as a way to earn money quickly. However, resourcefulness only serves to diminish the stress generated by their precarious living conditions. In some cases, these conditions are conducive to the development of psychological problems, such as depression and suicidal ideations, as well as substance abuse, which can sometimes lead to toxic psychosis (Paquette, 2004).

Nevertheless, these reflections on the risks taken by the youths while on the run, although very meaningful, focus mainly on their potential consequences and tell us little about the more basic reasons why youths place themselves in such situations. In this regard, the literature on the sociology of risk and on risky behaviours among

adolescents provides some essential reference points. For example, Dessez and De la Vaissière (2007) stated that risky activities are paradoxical social practices of self-assertion and socialization and that they are the manifestation of adolescents' mutation crises. In fact, these activities would be an indication of these young people's struggles to be recognized within certain limits that they would like to be able to identify. In other words, adolescents' risky behaviours also express their search for otherness, for an alterity that would ensure not only personal recognition, but also an understanding of the distinction between constituent and symbolic rules (Dessez & De la Vaissière, 2007; Le Breton 2002).

Le Breton (2002) explained that adolescents' risky behaviours stem from abandonment and family indifference, but inversely, also from overprotection, notably by the mother. Furthermore, in a difficult family context where youths witness or are victims of violence or sexual abuse, of conflicts between their parents, or even hostility from a stepfather or stepmother, some lack direction on how to live. The adults around them seem unable to enforce or sufficiently justify restrictions that would ultimately enable adolescents to internalize the boundaries intended to protect them. But the author also stresses that these behaviours are different from wanting to die. They serve only to ensure the value of existence and invalidate the hypothesis of personal insignificance.

Therefore, these behaviours most often occur during recreational, festive or friendly moments. It may be at times when social behavioural control is more relaxed, offering a particular forum for individuals to lower their guard, contact others and participate in a collective activity (Le Breton, 2002). Young people thus seek to find their place, learn what to expect from others and, reciprocally, what others expect from them. But these sometimes revealing experiences lead some youths to copy the same behaviours and thus develop compulsive behavioural patterns where they no longer take risks by choice but rather are subjected to them (Dessez et de La Vaissière, 2007). In the excerpt below, the authors clearly illustrated the trap into which youths sometimes fall.

“ J'exhibe une autonomie, une liberté conquise dans le risque, mais ce risque apparemment libre est celui-là même par lequel je montre que je m'enferme dans un cercle sans fin de la

répétition d'une même conduite qui restreint en fait mes possibilités d'autonomie. J'affirme une dépendance pour conquérir une liberté promise, mais cette dépendance ne m'accorde que la liberté de répéter indéfiniment une conduite aliénante.² ”

1.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTHS WHO RUN AWAY

The experiences that characterize runaway youths appear to be family abandonment, indifference and violence, which Le Breton (2002) identified as basic conditions for creating a feeling of inner void, which in turn leads some adolescents to adopt risky behaviours. This is particularly true for those who leave a family setting. One of the first official studies on street youths in Québec, which also examined the runaway phenomenon, led to Côté's (1988) doctoral thesis on urban ethnology. The project involved 20 semi-structured interviews with street youths aged between 14 and 25 years old. Almost all the interviewees indicated that they had experienced violence, abandonment and rejection during their childhood and/or adolescence, in a family and/or an institution.

Robert and Desrochers (2002) subsequently confirmed the same finding. This time, their research led them to compare two groups of youths living in a rehabilitation centre. The first group consisted of youths who had been through a period where they had no fixed home, while the second had similar socio-family characteristics, but had not experienced homelessness. Still, the youths in the first group had clearly suffered more violence and mistreatment in their family than those in the second one. The authors specify that this family situation was a major factor in these youths' “decision” to run away from home. However, these researchers also discovered that the first group had been placed numerous times in foster or group homes because of greater behavioural problems (Robert & Desrochers, 2002). This brings to light the fact that cases of adolescent abuse and mistreatments are rarely identified (Robert, Fournier & Pauzé, 2004; *Direction de la santé publique de Montréal*, 2006). Indeed, among adolescents, case management, related to inappropriate parental behaviour, drops

² Dessez & De la Vaissière, 2007, p.12.

dramatically and is replaced by case management related to the adolescent's conduct, such as behavioural disorders or delinquency (Robert & Desrochers, 2002). This under-representation of youth protection management explains why mistreatment is not identified among adolescents and why they are somewhat forced to run away to stop the abuse suffered in their family (Robert, Fournier & Pauzé, 2004; *Direction de la santé publique de Montréal*, 2006).

But regardless of the reason for case management, the youths' situations force the *Direction de la protection de la jeunesse* (Youth Protection Department) to remove them from their environment and to place them in an institution. This management by social-control agencies makes no sense to these young people. That is why placement is often the starting point of these youths' escalation of rebellion and of the institution's repressive responses, which can incite youths to run away again (Bernier, Morissette & Roy, 1991). In fact, being placed in a foster family or youth centre would double the risk of a youth experiencing a period of vagrancy (Robert & Desrochers, 2002).

Other descriptions of runaway youths found in the literature also use typologies that highlight different elements of their profiles. For example, Robert, Fournier and Pauzé (2004) distinguished between two types of runaways: the “fly to” and the “fly from.” The first group consists of those heading towards new experiences and adventures, while members of the second group want to flee from their family environment. Also, the first group (fly to) would be more likely to be diagnosed with a behavioural disorder, to be male and to associate with deviant peers, whereas the second (fly from) would be mostly girls suffering from a high level of parental violence, but exhibiting no behavioural disorders and no association with deviant peers.

En Marge 12-17 (2002) also used two categories: “running from” are youths leaving a destructive situation in the hope of drawing attention and receiving help, and “running to” are those who want to take part in activities that are forbidden in their family (alcohol and drug consumption, sexual relations, parties, hanging around certain friends, etc.). But this organization has also added other categories to its typology, including

“vagabonds,” who are young people toying with the idea of leaving their family or who leave it for less than 48 hours. Next, the “splitters” are those who are influenced by their peers’ perceptions of running away and who want to escape minor frustrations. Then, there are the “travellers,” who want to discover new places, meet new people and experience new things. Meanwhile, the “hard road freaks” are youths between 16 and 17 years of age who have severed ties with their families and adopted a nomadic lifestyle.

En Marge 12-17 (2002) also added to its typology another series of categories specifically concerning youths who leave an institutional setting. The first category, called “refusal”, describes youths running away to oppose being placed. The next category, “contagion”, refers to youths running away because of reciprocal influence dynamics that are common among youths sharing the same conditions of being placed. Next, “vacation” refers to youths running away because they need to unwind, to take a break. Then, the “demand” category concerns youths whose flight reflects a demand for a change in setting. Finally, “rebellion” is a flight by some youths in reaction to an event deemed abusive or unfair. However, as we can see, this typology provides as much, if not more, information on the various contexts in which the flight may occur as it does on the youths themselves.

We could say the same about another typology, developed by Bernier, Morissette and Roy in 1991, based on research conducted by Miller in the 1980s. These authors described six categories of runaways, which they named victims, exiles, rebels, fugitives, refugees and migrants. The victim category consists of youths who ran away because of physical violence suffered in their family environment. The exiles also ran away from the family environment, but because they felt rejected or unwanted by their parents. As for the rebels, they left their family because of serious authority-related conflicts with their parents. Next, the fugitives believe they have committed acts condemned by their community or by society. They would therefore be fleeing to avoid punishment. Refugees are youths who are no longer under their family’s responsibility, but rather under institutional management whose control they want to escape. Finally,

migrants are youths who have decided to claim their freedom and take control of their own lives. The authors specify that, in their case, the departure cannot be deemed a flight *per se*, but rather an appropriation of autonomy.

In summary, it is still difficult to say whether runaway youths fit particular characteristics that indicate, for example, that certain personality traits would impel them to flee from difficult situations. At the very least, the literature we have consulted to date does not allow us to draw any such conclusion. It shows instead that these youths come from very difficult environments where they experience disruptions that arouse painful, equivocal feelings. These feelings are even more complicated to manage since this period of turbulence occurs at a point along their developmental journey when they should normally be able to identify symbolic boundaries and ultimately situate themselves as individuals (Dessez & De la Vaissière, 2007).

In fact, we must not forget that these youths are adolescents first, and that this period of their lives presents major imperatives. Acquiring autonomy, differentiation and identity building are only a few of the processes that characterize this stage of life. And the adults who accompany adolescents during this stage need to be responsible and to be there for the duration and in the moment to ensure their well-being and growth (Gaillard, 2009). Furthermore, adolescents do not need to be imitated; but rather they need to be able to lean on adults who stand their ground, tolerate conflict, guarantee passage and help them to overcome the pain and anxiety of adversity (Dessez & De la Vaissière, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

2.1 QUALITATIVE METHOD

To meet the objectives of this project, the research is based on various theoretical frameworks, including phenomenology, which comprises the study of humans' subjective experiences and unique, personal perceptions of the world. This is the reason why a qualitative method is used to highlight the viewpoint of the social actors and to consider it in the exploration of a given reality (Poupart, Deslauriers, Groulx, Laperrière, Mayer & Pires, 1997). Furthermore, the qualitative methodology enables us to study complex processes and discover not only regularities, but also discontinuities, changes and transitions that occur during the social actors' lives (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Deslauriers & Kérisit, 1997).

Our approach is based also on the principles of symbolic interactionism (Dorvil & Mayer, 2001, Le Breton, 2004), which conceives social phenomena as social constructs according to individuals' interactions and their representations of reality. In short, reality is perceived as being individual and personal at the same time as it is the result of a social construct, originating from the amalgamation and inter-influence of individual perceptions.

These structures explain why we wanted to hear from the youths first, but also from other actors, such as parents, caseworkers and police officers so that their views on the same phenomenon could intersect and provide a more complete picture.

2.2 SAMPLING METHOD

In the context of this research, the sampling method is non-probabilistic and is based on a reasoned choice, since the population was selected according to specific criteria. The first criterion is to cover several cities in Québec—four, to be exact—because runaway

minors move around³, and focusing on one city would have been irrelevant in this context. Since the intention was to learn about the path followed by runaway youths, it seemed important to us to solicit participation in various locations to provide the opportunity to the associated players also to give their points of view on the situation. Nonetheless, including several cities is a means in itself of forming a homogenous sample (all runaways or former runaways) while meeting internal diversification criteria (Pires, 1997), which are likely to help broaden our knowledge considerably on the subject.

When preparing the sample, we also drew upon two fundamental principles: diversification and saturation (Poupart et al., 1997). Diversification is the method used by researchers to provide the most complete representation possible of the problems and situations, an overall view, or a comprehensive portrait of a research question. The principle can take two forms: 1) external diversification (between groups) and 2) internal diversification (within each group).

In the case at hand, external diversification of the sample consisted of the five categories of players that we chose: 1) youths, 2) parents, 3) community caseworkers, 4) institutional caseworkers and 5) police officers. All these categories seemed appropriate for developing a good body of knowledge that would enable us not only to explore the runaway phenomenon as such (the experience and its significance), but to also take a broader look at the issue, including the challenges surrounding the mobilization of adults and caseworkers for the protection and development of the youths concerned.

In contrast, internal diversification also aims at providing an overall portrait of the situation, but this time, within each of the groups. As far as we are concerned, the internal diversification criteria concern mainly 1) the respondents' original location (Montreal, Québec, Trois-Rivières, Drummondville), 2) their gender (boy, girl), 3) their age (14 to 21 years) and 4) their position (street worker, coordinator, educator,

³ For example, the data reported by En Marge 12-17, between 1994 and 1999, show that nearly one-third of the youths who were met at this organization come from the Island of Montreal, whereas 56% to 67% are from another city in Québec.

psychosocial worker, investigator, patroller or youth police). It is recommended to have at least two respondents in each subcategory.

Finally, the saturation principle means that after successive applications, the data do not add any new properties to the concept. The saturation threshold depends, of course, on the characteristics of the sample. It may be difficult to reach in a category with a greater number of internal diversification criteria. This is why the number of youths we initially targeted was 34, compared with 15 caseworkers and police officers, and 10 parents. Regarding the latter category of respondents, we also had to consider limitations inherent to the field, being that parents are difficult to reach.

2.3 COMPOSITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

In the end, our actual sample came close to our theoretical sample, with 33 youths who had experienced running away, 10 parents whose youths had experienced running away, 16 institutional caseworkers, 15 community caseworkers and 16 police officers. Table 1 provides a detailed description of the sample, where the categories of respondents were divided according to the environments where they were recruited. A higher number of respondents from Montreal makes sense because of the larger clientele in the area.

Table 1**Breakdown of the sample by respondent categories and recruitment locations**

	Montreal		Québec		Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec	
	Institutional	Community	Institutional	Community	Institutional	Community
Youths	6 Boys 4 Girls	3 Boys 4 Girls	4 Boys 4 Girls		2 Boys 2 Girls	1 Boy 3 Girls
Parents	1	6	2		1	
Institutional caseworkers	8		4		4	
Community caseworkers		7		4		4
Police officers	8		4		4	

Therefore, all the youths we met had experienced running away, and only two were still on the run at the time of the interview. We met with these youths at *le Bon Dieu dans la rue*, which, under its agreements with the institutions, may “keep” youths for a few hours. The interviews with these youths therefore took place specifically during these periods. The other youths spoke of their experience retrospectively. For some, it had occurred barely a few days before, whereas for others (the older ones in the sample), it went back further than two years.

The youth portion of the sample thus consists of 16 boys and 17 girls between 17 and 20 years old (average of 16.5 years old). Among these 33 youths, four are of Haitian origin, two are of Armenian origin and one is of Irish origin. 14 of these boys and 10 of these girls resided at a drop-in centre at the time we met with them, one boy and four girls lived in an apartment, two girls lived with their family of origin and, finally, one boy and one girl (who were on the run at the time of the interview) lived in a community resource centre. We also know that 14 boys and 16 girls are still in contact with their families, through either a parent or a sibling. However, 13 boys and 15 girls indicated that at least one of their parents had a (mental or physical) health problem. Also, nine boys and nine girls specified that one of their parents had had dealings with

the judicial system. Moreover, the recruitment method that we used explains why several youths in this sample have been under the care of youth centres at some point in their lives. Seven girls and three boys were thus taken in under the *Youth Protection Act*, six boys and three girls, under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, as well as four boys and three girls, in virtue of both acts.

The parents we met were all women between 31 and 57 years of age. Nine are of Canadian origin and one of Romanian origin. Four of these women are single mothers, five are in a blended family and one has been neither separated nor divorced. Three of these parents did not pursue their studies beyond high school, three others went to CEGEP (general and vocational college) and four went to university, three of whom have pursued graduate studies. They all have a child who has experienced running away, and three of them have had two children in this situation. Today, seven of these parents have health problems. Among the 31 caseworkers that we met (institutional and community), there were 7 men and 24 women, all between 21 and 54 years of age. They held various positions—educator, social worker, human relations officer, team leader, department leader, director, coordinator, caseworker and street worker—which they have held for periods ranging from 5 months to 25 years. Moreover, seven of them had already received training related to runaways, four had been guided by a colleague, and none of the others had had any training or information on the subject.

Among the police officers are six women and ten men between 27 and 51 years of age, among them, there were socio-community, youth intervention and prevention officers, as well as constables, sergeants and youth investigators. They have held their current positions for periods ranging between 1 and 12 years. Furthermore, four of them had already received training on the runaway phenomenon, six had been guided by a colleague and six had received no training on the subject.

2.4 INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

The templates were designed for active, semi-structured interviews (Boutin, 2006). They contained a large number of questions that we developed with the goal of answering the numerous concerns of the sectors with which we were collaborating⁴. We also wanted to provide the interviewers with a complete tool that would enable them to engage in a dialogue with the respondents on a group of themes that seemed important to us. Therefore, they were not required to ask all the questions systematically, but rather to make sure to cover all the themes by using the proposed questions as needed. This approach also met the objective of intersecting and even comparing viewpoints from the different categories of respondents on similar dimensions. That is why the themes that we developed in the questionnaires were relatively similar for all the respondent categories. For the youths and parents, they covered 1) before the flight: reasons and planning; 2) during the flight: hang outs, movements, occupations, survival, socialization, substance use, risks, dangers and communication; 3) after the flight: return and anticipation of the return, lessons learned, impacts on the family; and 4) child protection: adults' responsibilities, amendments to the *Act*, relevance of the protective measures, and possible contributions from the community and institutional sectors and cross-sectoral action networks. For the caseworkers and police officers, they covered 1) recent changes associated with running away and the youths who tried it; 2) before the flight: reasons and planning; 2) during the flight: locations frequented, movements, occupations, survival, socialization, substance use, risks, dangers and communication; 3) after the flight: return and anticipation of the return, lessons learned; 4) challenges faced concerning intervention and communication between the sectors; and 5) child protection: adults' responsibilities, amendments to the *Act*, relevance of the protective measures, possible contributions from the community and institutional sectors and cross-sectoral action networks.

The questionnaires were thus developed in close collaboration with the funding body and were translated into English to ensure the participation of the Batshaw Youth and

⁴ The questionnaires, letters of consent and other related documents may be consulted in the Appendix to *Rejoindre les mineurs en fugue dans la rue : une responsabilité commune en protection de l'enfance*.

Family Centres. More specifically, the youths' questionnaire was translated by an outside firm and then examined by an English-speaking caseworker associated with the project, to make sure that certain words or expressions were correctly used or adapted. The responsibility of translating the caseworkers' questionnaire was then given to a UQTR student, who, at that point, could refer in large part to the translation of the youths' questionnaire⁵. Here again, additional questions that had not been previously translated were examined by an English-speaking caseworker associated with the project, to make sure that certain words or expressions were correctly used or adapted. Next, the more complex questions from the two questionnaires were then back-translated, as is usually recommended by the experts (Vallerand, 1989). This exercise was conducted by a graduate student who is proficient in both languages. Then, the final version of the two questionnaires was produced and revised by the main investigator. Finally, the same steps were followed for the translation of the data sheets that accompanied the questionnaires and the letters of consent.

2.5 INTERVIEW TEAM

Ten people were hired and trained to conduct the interviews. Since the research was being carried out simultaneously in four cities, a large team was needed. This also explains why we developed relatively structured templates, even though the instructions were not to ask all the questions literally or sequentially. This approach was intended to ensure a cohesive corpus, by compensating for the very different bodies of data that interviews could generate. But from the start, the interviewers needed to have research qualifications. Eight of them were graduate or postgraduate students in the fields of psychoeducation, social work, criminology and sociology. Only one was in the psychoeducation undergraduate program. However, she was very familiar with the project and the manner in which to conduct interviews since she had first done the transcription. Then, two others were caseworkers from the partner agencies. One of them was responsible for leading a group of parents in a program offered by *En Marge*

⁵ The parents' questionnaire was not translated because we knew these participants were going to be difficult to solicit and reach.

12-17 ans. The sensitivity of this category of respondents did indeed require the expertise of someone in this field. The other was the coordinator of the action component of this project. By residing at *le Bon Dieu dans la rue*, she could be available at a moment's notice to interview youths in a runaway situation. Like all the other interviewers, these caseworkers were given the appropriate training in an effort to standardize the practice as much as possible on this aspect. The training sessions also provided the opportunity to ascertain their professional qualifications and personal abilities to conduct such interviews. In all, four training sessions were held in groups or individually, to accommodate the specific needs and availabilities of the interviewers. Additionally, the interview team was continuously supervised throughout the data collection process, which took place between January, 2009 and November, 2010.

2.6 RECRUITMENT OF RESPONDENTS

Youths were recruited through trusted caseworkers, most of them worked in an institution. To do so, these caseworkers had received some basic information indicating that the research team wished to meet with youths 14 years or older who had experienced running away. We had also asked that particular attention be paid to youths who had run away repeatedly. Depending on the institutions, steps were then taken to contact the parent, who also had to be informed of this study and had to consent to their child's participation. Agreements were then made with the research coordinator to schedule an appointment where the youth was residing at the time. Among the youths solicited to participate in this research, very few refused; only three were unavailable to meet with us because they were on the run at the time the interview was planned.

Parents were also recruited through trusted institutional caseworkers, but in larger part from *En Marge 12-17 ans*, which offers a program specially designed for parents whose child is on the run or has experienced running away. In this regard, the caseworker responsible for leading the groups proved to be absolutely indispensable; without her, we would have been unable to face the great opposition coming from the parents. This explains why there are only 10 parents in the sample.

Additionally, caseworkers and police officers were solicited by people in their sector who were authorized to present the project. These participants were then freed up to answer the study. The majority of those solicited accepted to participate, except for those who had no availabilities or felt they did not have enough experience with runaway minors to participate.

2.7 CONDUCT OF THE INTERVIEWS

Since the youths were recruited through youth centres, they were all interviewed in an institution, except for one, whom we met at his parent's home while he was out on authorized leave. As mentioned, two youths, who were on the run at the time, were met in a community centre. As for the parents, they were met at a location that suited them, either in a room made available to them at the community agency or at the institution through which they had been recruited. An interview was also conducted at the home of one parent who specifically requested it. As for the institutional and community caseworkers and the police officers, they were all met in their respective workplaces. In all cases and for all respondent categories, the interviewers were instructed to conduct the interview in a quiet, isolated location, where respondents could express themselves freely.

At the start of the meetings, the project was explained again, using the letter of consent that had to be signed before the actual interview could begin. After the interview, the interviewer had to make sure that the data sheet was filled out with the respondent and to give, only to the youths, a \$20 Subway gift certificate.

The maximum time that we had initially planned for the interviews was 90 minutes. This proved realistic for a large portion of the youth sample. Some, however, took longer and raised the average time for the youths' interviews to 2 hours and 25 minutes. At first glance, this may seem like a long time for the youths; however, those whose interviews took longer were among the eldest in the sample. They obviously had a lot to say, and some even wanted to return to the interview location the following day to listen

to the recording. In doing so, they wanted to further the reflection triggered by this exercise, which, in a way, made them take stock of their lives. Thus, great pains were taken during this process to respect their pace and their need for an occasional break, as well as to allow them to tell their entire story and share all their ideas. And, of course, respondents were advised from the start that the time required for the interview could vary greatly. In this perspective, the average duration of the interviews with the other categories of respondents—parents, community and institutional caseworkers and police officers—was 3 hours and 30 minutes. In a few cases, the interviews required two different meetings, particularly for caseworkers who had to deal with emergencies during the interview.

2.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Three different ethics certificate applications were submitted, first to the ethics committee at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, and then to the ethics committees of the Centre jeunesse de Montréal-Institut universitaire and the Centre jeunesse de Québec-Institut universitaire. With these certificates in hand, we had access to all the categories of respondents targeted by this research. Various consent forms were prepared according to the specific requirements of the committees, covering the entire range of considerations needed to ensure the strictest observation of the research participants' rights.

2.9 DATA ANALYSIS

The audio recordings were first transcribed integrally and incorporated in the interview template to facilitate subsequent coding. The content was then entered into the NVivo program for the qualitative data analysis. The program is designed to analyse unstructured data and generate a specific, thematic classification of a relatively large corpus. It allows a corpus to be gradually classified and continuously refined throughout the analysis. The process consists of going back and forth between the text and the

categories that emerge or that have been determined by the analyst. The analysis is therefore performed in iterative mode, which allows the tool to use raw data (the corpus) as a source from which to develop the meaning. Therefore, despite the relatively structured approach that we used initially for coding the content, the flexibility of the software enabled us to re-organize the material progressively ultimately to establish broader themes and to highlight the important characteristics and significance of the analyzed phenomenon. In the end, the process generated 35 themes around which the presentation of the results is structured in the following chapter.

It should also be noted that the analysis process was enhanced through close collaboration between the researcher and her partners in the field throughout the entire study. During this time, the preliminary research results were presented and discussed twice with the partners. The final results, which will be presented below, have already been shared with the involved parties. It was necessary to do so, given their context where sometimes decisions need to be taken swiftly. This technique, which experts in qualitative research associate with credibility (Huberman & Miles, 1991; Turcotte, Dufour & St-Jacques, 2009), enabled the researcher to pursue her reflection, clarify her interpretations and verify if the research results clearly reflected the participants' experience and the context in a plausible manner.

RESULTS

As previously indicated, the results presentation is structured around 35 themes derived from the analysis. We will attempt here to highlight not only the points of convergence, but also the points of divergence, emerging from the respondents' accounts, to depict the complexity of the phenomenon as clearly as possible. To help with the interpretation, we will systematically distinguish, for each of the themes, the results related to the youths, parents, caseworkers and police officers. Community caseworkers, institutional caseworkers and police officers are presented as one group. However, we do highlight the major differences that occasionally arose between the respondents of this category. For the youths, we paid particular attention to gender-specific differences, as well as to the place where they were recruited. Finally, the first three themes concern only the viewpoints of the caseworkers and the police officers, since they were the only respondents to whom these dimensions were addressed.

3.1 HAS RUNNING AWAY CHANGED OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS?

We began by asking the caseworkers and police officers if they had noticed any changes over the past few years, notably whether runaway cases were more common and whether the profiles of the runaway youths were different. These questions were reserved for these respondents because of the work they do, through which they encounter several scenarios and witness, in a way, the evolution of the phenomenon, which is not necessarily the case for youths and parents.

In this regard, caseworkers and police officers differ. More specifically, 25 caseworkers have an opinion on the subject, 13 of which (with no distinction between the institutional and community sectors) claim that the number of flights is constant, as is the number of youths who run away. These respondents come from all the regions that participated in the research, that is to say, Montreal, Québec as well as the Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec. However, the 12 other respondents noticed an increase in the number of flights. They also were from all the regions that participated in the study, but with a greater proportion of caseworkers covering the Québec, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec regions. These caseworkers had different explanations for the changes they

have seen. According to a community worker from Montreal, these changes reflected the lower number of youths going to the agency.

“Euh y a plusieurs années.... euh y a plusieurs années euh... on a vraiment vu une diminution là. Si ma mémoire est bonne, c’était en 2004 ou aux alentours de ça, 2004-2005, ben cé là qu’on a euh... pris peur quelque part en voyant que y avait euh pratiquement moitié euh moins de jeunes... qui venaient dans notre ressource.”
(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Four other caseworkers linked the situation to the amendments made to the *Youth Protection Act*. Whereas others explain that the higher number of agencies capable of taking in youths reassured them that the youths can run away and not worry about surviving. Also raised was the possibility that street gangs were to blame, that they have now infiltrated the youth centres, by recruiting and thus inciting youths to prepare their flights. Seven police officers believed that the situation was stable, whereas six of them insisted that there had been a noticeable increase. These officers were evenly distributed across the regions participating in the study.

The majority of caseworkers and police officers claimed that large cities like Montreal and Québec were the hardest hit by the phenomenon; they also mentioned Sherbrooke, Toronto and Vancouver. However, the respondents themselves are from large cities, which means that they may have reported events that they were better placed to observe. It is also interesting to note that more than half of the caseworkers from the Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec regions believed that the phenomenon concerns the outlying areas as much as it does the large cities. We can take this to mean that they are more aware of this problem and undoubtedly more skilled at recognizing the signs.

Whatever the case may be, caseworkers and police officers agree that large cities generally have more facilities, resources and opportunities for runaway youths. More specifically, three police officers linked running away to cities where there are youth centres, or street gangs. Furthermore, ten of them claimed that runaway youths come more often from youth centres (housing) than from any other environment. This was also stated by 23 caseworkers.

Nevertheless, the changes were not only related to the number of flights and to the youths who run away. They also pertained to the characteristics of the flight and the youths involved how the events occurred and the surrounding circumstances. 17 caseworkers gave their opinion on the subject, whereas 12 others—five of whom were from the Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec region—insisted that they saw no difference.

Additionally/Similarly, among the 17 caseworkers who spoke on the subject, several mentioned that more girls are running away now, to the point where their numbers would match those of the boys. Actually, the number of caseworkers who believe that boys run away more frequently than girls do is identical to the number of caseworkers who believe the opposite. To establish this proportion, we eliminated those who would have been in contact with only one population because of where they work (e.g. living units in youth centres where there are only girls or only boys). Thus, the caseworkers associated this change notably with street gang activities. With this in mind, they noticed that the girls' networks have changed, that they are more sexualized than before and that, consequently, more of them are recruited for dancing or prostitution. Even more generally, these caseworkers believed that society has changed, causing the youth culture to transform as well, in particular that of street youths who no longer identify themselves with specific groups, but rather increasingly abide by the “every man for himself” rule. By extension, some respondents also noted a transformation among caseworkers whose sense of belonging to their community or institution is sometimes no more developed than that of the youths with whom they intervene.

“(R) On travaille différemment, mais j’té dirais que la nouvelle génération de gens qui viennent travailler ici, y’ont aussi moins d’appartenance qu’on n’avait! Fa que ça je pense que ça fait une différence et ça se voit au niveau du travail qu’on fait!

(I) Ok ! Ça des répercussions sur les jeunes ?

(R) Moi j’pense que oui! Parce que si t’es pas... t’appartiens pas à quelque part, comment veux-tu qu’un jeune puisse y appartenir?”

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

Among the changes that the caseworkers see in young people, they also underline that youths no longer drop by the resource centres and agencies the way they used to. This could be related to the fact that they do not know about the resource centres and

agencies. Some would be too young to have such information, not to mention that those who visit these centres now fit a specific profile. A certain standard seems to have set in recently, causing newcomers who do not have the usual characteristics of street youths to be somewhat marginalized. However, this point of view contrasts somewhat with that of another institutional caseworker. She believes that the existence of lodging resources is among the reasons for the changes observed in the past few years. Without going as far as to say that these resources encourage youths to run away, she believes nevertheless that they reassured youths that they would be able to survive one way or another.

But beyond these nuances and divergences, community and institutional caseworkers seemed to agree that the availability of drugs is a major change, as is the use that young people make of them, not to mention the increasingly harmful effects on their health. Consequently, the caseworkers also noticed that the runaway youths whom they took into their agency or those who came back to their institution were more damaged physically and psychologically than before. The deterioration of their mental health, mostly, appears to be a major concern for some of the caseworkers.

“Beaucoup de jeunes qui ont des problèmes de santé mentale, beaucoup plus qu'avant. Bon en même temps, est-ce que c'est des jeunes euh... est-ce que y a plus de diagnostics maintenant... Quand je dis ça cé des jeunes qu'on voit beaucoup médicamentés, qu'on nous dit quand on a des contact avec la protection de la jeunesse, qui a tel, tel, tel diagnostic. Donc beaucoup de jeunes diagnostiqués, est-ce qu'ils l'sont plus maintenant qu'ils l'étaient avant ? Ça, je le sais pas... mais ça nous donne à penser... euh, euh... en tout cas que, que... qui qui... a plus de jeunes qui ont des problèmes de santé mentale. Comme je le disais avec la nuance là, sont-ils peut-être plus diagnostiqués qu'ils l'étaient avant. Mais je sais pas, y a quelque chose qui se passe en tout cas... plus médicamentés ça cé clair.”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Six of the police officers mentioned that the characteristics of the flights and of the youths concerned have changed over the past few years. Their point of view converges with that of the caseworkers on the fact that youths run away at increasingly younger ages, and that the number of girls who run away is on the rise. They consider the fact that communication methods have evolved and now allow youths to contact their

network more quickly and more easily, which sometimes enables them to organize and plan their flight.

3.1.1 Characteristics of the flights and of the youths who run away

Therefore, through the caseworkers' and the police officers' accounts, we traced various elements related to the characteristics of the flights and the youths who run away. This information concerns primarily the age of the youths. In this regard, 26 caseworkers and 13 police officers estimated that youths generally run away before they turned 15. In addition, the first flight generally lasts a shorter time than those of the older youths. The younger ones have far less developed networks and know little about the resources. In fact, at least half of the caseworkers said that flights usually last between a few hours and a few days, and do not exceed a week; police officers agreed. However, some pointed out that flights may also last longer, depending on a few very specific variables, including age, as was just mentioned, which remains the first parameter to consider.

“Because they get a little bit more scared and they’re not as resourceful and they don’t really know all the places to go and stuff. Humm but the more experience that they get with it, the longer that they, that it lasts.”
(11342, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

In this perspective, the older youths, who have acquired some experience in the field and have even started down the path of social exclusion, may be able to stay away as long as an entire year. Obviously, their network would have some influence, but so would their location. In an urban setting, notably, they often are more difficult to find. Respondents also explained that their return might be further delayed if the parents do not take action and if the youth ran away with no intention of returning to the living environment, either way.

The caseworkers noted also that girls generally place themselves in more dangerous situations than boys do, because they turn more towards their network of friends and acquaintances to provide for their basic needs, specifically in terms of lodging. Consequently, they receive little support from the agencies, or at least less than boys do,

and would thus be at greater risk because they often accept help from strangers. This caseworker described a rather classic scenario that we were unable to observe as clearly among the girls whom we interviewed. In other words, if the events related by the girls were similar to those stated by this caseworker, the girls told their stories in a different manner, without first letting on that they themselves may have been victims.

“That will be like you know “You’re such a great girl, you just, you deserve to be treated like a princess...” you know and they charm and charm and charm and we’ll end up getting them to come and run away and come and stay with them and, and that’s how we get into recruiting and prostitution and all that kind of stuff that happens.”
(11342, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

Moreover, some caseworkers mentioned other characteristics, which are unrelated to the youths’ age or gender, but that could have considerable influence on the course of the flight. Caseworkers insist particularly on family history (abandonment, abuse, difficult relationships, dysfunctional environment), the youth’s temperament (impulsivity, difficulty in controlling emotions, easily influenced or not, refusing authority, tendency to run away, bad company) as well as personal history (depression, substance use problems).

“Ben y’a plein d’facteurs de risque dans l’fond...Y peuvent être personnels là, ça peut être “j’ai pas d’confiance en moi”, fa que si j’ai pas d’confiance en moi, t’as peut-être plus tendance à t’mettre avec un gang de rue que si t’as plus de confiance en toi et qu’tu fugues. C’est peut-être une recherche d’autonomie. Fa que, j’pense que oui...”
(11354, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Beaucoup de consommation dans sa famille, dans son entourage, un peu de prostitution. Ben elle, c'est sûr que, a va tout de suite aller dans des milieux plus criminalisés où est-ce qu'a va avoir des comportements de prostitution eh... Y en a d'autres qui sont plus aventureux, qui ont le sens plus de l'aventure, ben eux-autres y vont partir à Montréal eh... y vont partir en région, un pack sac, y vivent plus comme un ... (...) J'aurais tendance à penser que oui, j'pense qui en a qui sont plus peureux, d'autres plus aventuriers pis y vont se ramasser dans des endroits différents.”
(12354, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

“Sure. Well you know the age humm you know usually depending on who the child is humm connected within the community. It could humm.... They could be humm young 12-13-14 year old and humm they’re being groomed humm for other... issues, other humm activities. Could be criminal, could be prostitution, could be humm drug-related business humm could be like criminal, could be like doing small stuff like breaking-and-entering and petty theft and stuff like that.”
(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

3.1.2 Should we distinguish between running away occasionally and running away repeatedly?

Our strategy was not to steer the caseworkers too quickly onto the subject of running away repeatedly, despite it being our primary concern because we did not want to influence or direct their accounts. As we know, some of them did nevertheless mention the number of flights and of runaway youths, but without necessarily specifying that these numbers most assuredly represented an increase. However, a few did so, although with some reservations, regarding the extent of the increase. Furthermore, only four caseworkers and one police officer—which was far fewer than we would have thought—associated this situation directly with the amendments to the *Youth Protection Act*. Nonetheless, the fact remains that most of the caseworkers and police officers believe that it is important to distinguish clearly between the two realities, that is, running away occasionally and running away repeatedly. The latter would seem to present a greater challenge for intervention than the former.

Thus, the caseworkers described the occasional flight as a relatively isolated event along a youth's life journey, usually occurring only once or twice. They explained that it could stem from either a spontaneous desire, or a sudden impulse, or a driven quest for pleasure, or an interest in a new experience, or a need for fresh air, or to take a break. They also said that the flight may be a way of sounding an alarm; and, consequently, a sign of distress. Nevertheless, compared with the repeated flights, the occasional flight would last a shorter time and would be easier to resolve. The malaise it conceals would somehow be temporary, unless the youth did not feel understood or heard upon returning. In this case, another process would be set in motion, sometimes leading the youth to run away repeatedly. Several caseworkers believe, however, that these two realities—running away occasionally and running away repeatedly—must not be seen as part of a continuum.

This means that running away repeatedly corresponds to characteristics that are relatively distinct from running away occasionally. Caseworkers see it as a means of adaptation and not only as a reaction. There would be something more deeply rooted, a

manner in which youths try to solve their problems... all their problems. It would be a reflex, in a way, or a defence mechanism, as some caseworkers called it, which is more common among youths living in an institution and which represents a major challenge for intervention. Some believe that the quest of youths who run away repeatedly may be more fundamental, that it would be related to autonomy and freedom. Others said that these youths have become detached and withdrawn over time because they have not found valid alternatives or seen the changes they had hoped for following their first flight. In this perspective, caseworkers believe it is more difficult to control the youths and their situation.

“Les chroniques, nous, on les appelle les fugueurs chroniques, c'est comme si ça faisait partie d'leur pattern, fa que, c'est, ça va de soi. C'est rendu leur mécanisme, t'sé, un peu comme un mécanisme de défense où. c'est là-dedans qui se réfugient tout le temps. Si ça va pas bien, ok, on fugue. Ça va pas bien, ok, j'ai une raison de fuguer. Donc, ça devient un prétexte. Donc, moi, j'les différencie beaucoup là, j'en ai des fugueurs chroniques qui eux, j'sais à peu près quand qui vont fuguer.”
(11314, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“Humm well the more chronic, the more disengaged they are, the more difficult at us it is for us to engage them too. I mean in the process. We're not able to negotiate some sort of a happy agreement to work together to resolve the youth protection issues humm and the occasional runner I mean is more engaged with us still at that point, the families are involved in a positive way to humm [coughs] to try and address the behaviour so that we can humm humm help them humm humm stay safe and and help them make better healthier decisions you know.”
(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

“Ça c'est des cas que, on peut régler. Mais tandis que le chronique, tu le règleras jamais. Si lui y veut fuguer, y va toujours fuguer. Tu vas le ramener, y va fuguer à nouveau... c'est des chroniques. (...) Selon moi, tu règles pas le problème jamais, jusqu'à la majorité. Jusqu'à 18 ans tu vas l'avoir jusqu'à majorité comme ça. Le jeune, parfois, il peut avoir 12 fugues à son actif. Si le jeune veut sortir, y va fuguer à nouveau. La différence avec un fugueur que... dit non chronique, c'est que lui, y va revenir à la maison, y va régler le problème avec ses parents, pis, règle générale, tu vas régler le problème.”
(11462, Police officer, Montreal)

However, in the following excerpt, we can see that, despite the repetitive nature of the flight, some caseworkers still managed to make certain arrangements to ensure the youths' safety, without necessarily preventing their movements.

“Si on cerne bien l’message, pis ceux qui sont à répétition, aussi faut aller voir pourquoi qui fuguent autant, qu’est-ce qui s’est passé pis... Peut-être même là, à ce moment-là, peut-être entreprendre une stratégie eh, d’intervention avec le jeune, avec son milieu. Est-ce que ce jeune qui a juste besoin de... de prendre de l’air. On a déjà fait ça nous avec le, avec un jeune et les centres jeunesse. À chaque fois qui fuguait, y venait ici, tout l’temps, tout l’temps, tout l’temps, tout l’temps...”

(11356, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

It must be said that repetition would have the effect of increasing these youths’ means of organizing their flights and of staying away for longer periods. To begin, their network widens. It consists of people whom caseworkers consider disreputable, but to whom youths can turn quickly when they want to leave their environment. In this context, youths also diversify their means of survival and experiment with various forms of crimes that, unfortunately, draw them into inexorable processes (debts, dues, aggressions) that only aggravate their situation. If they do not return to their environment, they will have to run away frequently, or at the very least travel further away or disappear for a while.

In fact, this is why several caseworkers believe that the dangers involved in running away repeatedly are greater and more imminent than those related to an occasional flight. Indeed, this situation multiplies the risks of having experiences (encounters, crimes, substance use) that may lead to irreversible consequences. However, this opinion is more common among the institutional caseworkers rather than the community caseworkers. The latter believe that youths who run away repeatedly are more familiar with the risks and the ways to avoid them, whereas youths who are in this situation for the first time or who rarely run away are far more vulnerable. In fact, one respondent indicated that this is the reason why police officers are generally required to give priority to first-time runaways or those who run away occasionally, rather than to those who run away repeatedly. Although, in the end, a flight remains a flight, and we never know what the consequences might be.

“Ben un fugueur chronique, quand qu’on le connaît beaucoup nous, c’est certain qu’on va mettre beaucoup moins d’énergie qu’à un jeune que c’est sa première fugue là. (...) Euh, parce que le jeune que c’est sa première fugue, y est pas connu dans l’milieu, qu’ça soit milieu familial ou centre d’accueil là, y est pas connu, y a un danger, parce qu’on l’ connaît pas. Souvent l’autre on, on l’négligera pas, mais...”

(11465, Police officer, Montreal)

3.2 REASONS FOR RUNNING AWAY

3.2.1 The youths' perspective

The interviews continued with questions directed to all the categories of respondents. In the analysis, we hear from the youths first. Here, they tell us that the reasons for their first flights, notably when they were still with their family, were mainly related to relational problems, violent arguments in the family, abuse and conflicts.

“Ben c'est ça là. Un moment donné, mon père est arrivé chez nous, pis, y était vraiment tard le soir, genre 3h00 le matin, pis... Y consommait de la cocaïne, fa que, c'était tout le temps vraiment tension. J'sais pas si t'as déjà vu quelqu'un fumer du crack ou ben être là-dessus, mais en tout cas, c'est vraiment pas drôle là. T'es dans ton monde pis... Disons que c'était déjà pas... c'était pas rose moi pis lui en partant. On s'entendait pas ben, en partant. Pis, on se voyait jamais. On était dans la même maison, mais si on se voyait, une heure par jour, c'était beau là. Pis là ben, ça l'a été, ça déclotché là, pis, mon père m'a dit à deux pouces de la face qui, qui m'aimait pas, qui m'haïssait, pis que.... J'ai pogné mes affaires, pis j'chus décrissé là.”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community and Centre-du-Québec)

“Ben c'est parce que ma mère est, tout le temps, comme... cadrée, pis j'ai pas le droit de rien faire, pis... J'ai de la misère à aller genre au parc, pis toute, pis ça ça me faisait... ça me chier, mais ça me faisait chier, pis ça me fait encore chier là. Pis, c'est ça, pis genre... Comme à chaque fois que je faisais quelque chose, pas nécessairement de mal, mais à chaque fois que je faisais quelque chose, on disait que c'était pas bien, pis toute, même si c'était pas, pas bien là.”

(11117, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

Others seem to have been influenced by friends, sometimes even a family member. But this reason also seems to conceal a negative family climate.

“Disons que... Je voulais pas vraiment fuguer (...) J'étais en sortie autorisée. Ben ça c'est passé en fin de semaine passée. J'étais en sortie autorisée chez une de mes amies. Et, on est allées se promener, pis on est comme tombé en panne. On pensait avoir assez de gaz de, de se rendre jusqu'au dépanneur, pis en fin de compte, on en n'a pas eu assez, donc on est tombées en panne. Ça pris du temps avant qu'on réussisse à, à trouver quelqu'un qui veule vraiment nous aider pour aller en chercher. On a réussi à trouver quelqu'un, on est allées en chercher. (...) Vu que, c'est un centre, un centre jeunesse assez sévère, je ne pouvais pas les appeler. Parce que je n'avais pas de cellulaire, rien, j'avais oublié mon cellulaire ici. Fa que, je suis arrivée, beaucoup en retard, donc ils m'ont déclarée en fugue.”

(12122, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

“Ben la raison pourquoi j’ai fugué la dernière fois c’est parce que quand j’ai été libérée de l’encadrement intensif, y m’a j’ai, y m’ont permis d’aller chez ma mère tout suite en partant d’ici j’ai été chez ma mère pis quand mon éducatrice est arrivée pour me déposer chez ma mère, ma sœur était là, pis ma sœur était déjà en fugue pis ee à m’a incité de fuguer avec elle a m’a dit : “a viens t’en t’sé, eille j’ai d’la drogue banana” fa que t’sé chus partie avec elle.”

(12126, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

In the youth centres, youths seem to have clashed with authorities. Some would have then left on a whim, after arguing with their caseworker.

“Tanné pasque... ça faisait mon deux... euh... j’suis revenu ici en février... pas que j’ai eu déjà un placement pis j’suis revenu pis cé ça qui a fait le déclenchement que j’voulais pus rien savoir des éducs... (...) j’voulais pus être ici... j’mé suis dis cé mon deuxième placement... pourquoi r’venir t’sé... (...) j’tais pas bien genre (...) t’sé comme toutes les conneries qu’j’ai faites pis que ça m’a ortomber d’su genre ben j’ai resté juste deux mois à l’extérieur fa que t’sé toutes les conneries qu’j’ai faites en deux mois qui m’ortomber d’sus j’ai faite... comme shit... genre j’mérite pas d’vivre genre pis c’pour ça j’suis parti... (...) comme qu’est-ce que j’fais icitt genre j’rais jamais capable de de r’vivre dans une vie normale j’vas toujours rester en centre d’accueil fa que s’tais ça le le... principe pis c’pour ça qu’j’ai crissé mon camp.”

(11111, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

“Pis ee, ma dernière job, quand j’étais à Cartier, y voulaient m’faire perdre ma job... En fait, y m’ont... J’suis rentré l’soirée 2 heures en retard pis y m’ont interdit d’aller travailler le lendemain matin. J’pouvais même pas appeler mon boss pour leur dire.”

(11153, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

“Au jour de l’an dans le fond j’ai été pas mal parti toute le temps des fêtes pis toute j’étais à l’étape pis ee dans le fond le soir le 30 je suis arrivé en retard je suis arrivé à 3 heures du matin bin saoul à l’unité pis y m’ont coupé ma sortie du lendemain pis euh c’est ça y était rendu 6 heures le soir le 31 pis euh j’ai appelé ma mère j’y ai expliqué la situation j’ai dis là m’man je penserais pas être capable de rester icitte toute la nuit euh toute la soirée pis là je l’ai mis au courant j’y ai dit que je m’en allais pis c’est ça.”

(12121, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

But also, youths mentioned more fundamentally that they ran away because they needed to feel autonomous, to prove to themselves that they could manage on their own, without social workers. They wanted to change their lives and some no longer believed that youth centres could help them to do so.

“J’savais que j’avais pas besoin d’être ici, cé que c’était pas ma place. Fa que check, c’pas ma place pis je l’ vois fa que j’ai décidé d’aller par moi-même essayer jusqu’à 18 ans, mais partout où tu vas t’as des problèmes, fa que autant r’venir ici pis finir mon temps.”

(11114, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

“C'est parce que ça fait depuis exactement 2005 que je suis placé et que ça fait qu'un m'ment donné chus comme écoeuré du ee... comment j'pourrais dire ça, un peu tanné de d'la DPJ un peu t'sé, parce que qu'est-ce que j'me dis moé c'est que t'sé en 5 ans si y'on pas été capables de m'aider y seront pas plus capables dans les 2 mois qui m'restent à faire.”

(11156, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

“Je voulais être libre la... t'sé j'avais 17 ans, j'allais avoir 18 ans 4-5 mois plus tard pis j'étais en centre d'accueil encore fa que... c'tait un milieu fermé, y m'ont envoyé dans un milieu ouvert, j'ai fugué.”

(11154, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

Several examples do indeed show that youths seek to give meaning to their lives.

“Pour aller voir mon père...parce que ça f'sait...une couple d'année j'l'avais pas vu là...pis j'avais r'croisé mon oncle genre pendant j'travaillais...pis là y m'avait dit que mon père 'tait encore vivant pis toute fa que là j't allé l'voir...dans l'fond j'avais dit à mes parents que j'tais parti à l'hôpital parce que j'avais mal à quelque part, dans l'fond c'tait pas vrai pis j't allé voir mon père...pis avant j'tais allé avec mon chum de gars...prendre d'la...d'la consommation... c'est ça...mais j'suis r'venu chez nous...”

(13131, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

“C'est que, dans l'fond c'est que quand j'étais là-bas t'sé ça faisait déjà un bon boute que j'étais placé, fa que t'sé j'étais comme un peu tanné pis t'sé chu comme parti sur un coup de tête... dans l'fond c'est parce que t'sé y s'avait passé plusieurs trucs avant, dans ma famille j'ai vécu beaucoup de violence t'sé comme mon enfance en gros t'sé j'ai pas mal été battu fa que t'sé ça m'arvenait tout l'temps, ça m'arvenait tout l'temps pis ché pas pourquoi j'partais de même, ché pas si je cherchais une voix ou queque chose, mais t'sé un m'ment donné chus parti de là.”

(12126, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

“Ma première idée de départ c'était euh...j'veux sacrer mon camps pis euh... jamais pu revenir. Pis tranquillement, ça s'est transformé en... ok ben pourquoi je, je me servirais pas de ça pour, pour en bénéficier, à l'avenir, me trouver une job”

(11158, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

“Parce que contrairement aux autres, cette fugue là je m'en sers pour avancer. Les autres c'était plus pour pas accepter l'autorité.”

(11156, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

They also claim their right for freedom.

“Si j'm'en si j'm'en souviens de l'autre fugue que j'ai faite après le centre c'était pas parce que j'avais fugué c'était pas ça. Parce que l'élément déclencheur, c'était qui me plaçait un an pis que je pouvais pas avoir ma liberté. Ça faisait 2 ans que j'tais dans un centre dans c'temps là... pis j'avais jamais de liberté jamais jamais jamais je sortais juste les fins de semaine. C'était jamais assez pour moi, j'arrivais tout l'temps en retard tout l'temps t'sé.”

(12127, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

“Cé juste parce que ben... je prenais de la drogue là... pis je me suis rendu compte que rester chez ma mère je pouvais pas prendre autant de drogue que je voulais... fa que j'étais complètement désaxé dans ma tête t'sé... (rire) je suis parti de chez nous pour consommer plus pis pour être libre pis pour je sais pas trop quoi là... (rire)”
(11152, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

3.2.2 The parents' perspective

The parents' accounts highlighted the fact that running away could be linked to relational distress. The reasons raised by some are thus related to difficulties within the family. One mother, for example, spoke of her son's conflicts with his father and of how the son tried to change the situation.

“Chez lui... Moi, probablement que c'est encore parce que... Son père a un caractère, un tempérament, il a déjà eu des problèmes de violence, parce que lui a été violenté, étant enfant. Fa que y a... Y était dans un beat de perdre patience, tout ça. Il a été suivi pour ça son père. Donc, là, au lieu de, de vouloir fesser sur XXX (son fils), il fessait dans les murs, pis XXX (son fils), ben, un matin que YYY (père) en avait assez, il a levé son lit, il l'a lancé à terre, pis y a dit “get out”. Il l'a mis dehors. “Va, va faire ce que t'as à faire. Pis tu reviendras quand ça sera fait.” Ça, je pense qu'à ce moment-là, il est parti comme quelques jours, sans dire où il allait, mais je pense qu'il était chez un ami.”
(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

“Ben en tout cas, entre autres, pour la première fugue, c'est vraiment par rapport au conflit avec son père. Moi je pense qu'il aurait voulu que je le reprenne tout de suite chez moi. Sauf que moi, c'était pas possible, parce que j'étais engagée à 3h de Montréal, 4 jours ½ par semaine. Donc je pouvais pas être là, pis dire “reste tout seul là”. T'sé. Donc, je pense que sa motivation, c'est pour ça qu'il avait amené sa valise là.”
(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Another parent today acknowledges that she no doubt wanted too much control over her child and that this dimension of her relationship with her son was a major factor in his decision to run away.

“Non mais... y a une partie de ça euh... de... selon eux pis je me dis... là j'ai assez de recul, je me dis, moi je voulais bien faire mais il devait (enfant) me trouver ben contrôlante mais en même temps euh... j'ai encore de la misère à penser que... t'sé maintenant je regarde ça... pis je me dis... quand je regarde ça... avec ce que ça donné, je me dis : “hey avoir su j'aurais été plus euh... moins inquiète”, t'sé na, na, na, na, na... Mais ça cé facile à dire après mais probablement je pense que y partait parce qui avait trop de contrôle à la maison... Moi je pense pas que je contrôlais trop, je pense que je contrôlais comme des parent surveillent leurs enfants là...”
(11254, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Next, one mother raised another possible situation, where her son ran away for friendship because he wanted to follow a friend who was in great difficulty. This view of a friend's influence is certainly very different from the others, in the sense that it is usually adults who criticize the devastating effects of peer pressure.

“Pis c'est une fille je pense qu'il voulait sauver. Parce qu'elle avait des graves problèmes, pas mal plus graves que lui au niveau de la toxicomanie. Puis, elle voulait s'en sortir, pis elle partait chez son grand-père en Gaspésie. Fa que lui, dans le fond, il l'a suivie pour l'aider, pis embarquer dans son, dans son élan de vouloir s'en sortir, t'sé.”
(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Some parents also spoke of the problem that youths have with authority, particularly with institutional educators. However, some believe that the environment is what does not adapt to the youths, and not the other way around. In this perspective, parents added that youths are bored there, that adults do not understand or listen to them, leaving them in a state of confusion such that it could incite them to run away repeatedly. But others believe the youths shared the responsibility, having a tendency of fleeing from their malaise and their problems, as well as the possible related consequences.

In their reflection, parents thus attempted to identify the deeper reasons why youths run away and, to do so, went further back in their child's past to trace the determining factors. They thus seemed to want to give meaning to these painful events. Here, one parent spoke of the difficulties her daughter had integrating the school community, as well as other problems that followed at school. Here again, this excerpt demonstrates the importance of the relational dimension.

“Euh, peut-être euh, une motivation plus, plus ancienne, c'est hum, son début dans la secondaire qui n'a pas été sous de bonnes auspices comme euh, quand qu'elle a débuté la secondaire euh, euh nous sommes allés à l'école deux semaines plus tard parce que nous avons dû voyager à l'extérieur du Canada. Hum, et à ce moment, elle n'était pas préparée pour ses devoirs euh, le système d'enseignement ne prévoyait pas de de manuel, il y avait des feuilles volantes, elle avait perdu le rythme avec les autres enfants. Peu à peu elle s'est découragée et pis avec des autres facteurs euh, elle a commencé à avoir de mauvaises notes, c'qu'y'était inhabituel euh, pour elle. Hum aussi peut-être le faite que euh, dans la sixième primaire, ha on lui reprochait beaucoup à l'école euh, qu'elle euh, qu'elle euh s'habille comme une vieille femme, qu'elle n'est pas à la mode euh, hum elle souffrait beaucoup de ça et tout ça a fait que, avec d'autres facteurs, son image d'elle-même était très, très mauvaise. ”

(11152, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

“Mais ça c'est une longue histoire. Euh, ça commence avec son décrochage scolaire euh, qui c'est produit au mois de février 2008 euh, à l'époque elle était dans la première secondaire à l'école XXX à Montréal et ces notes n'étaient plus bonnes euh, elle euh avait redéveloppé une euh, une euh dépression à la suite de laquelle euh, elle ne dormait plus, elle avait des insomnies depuis des semaines et semaines. Finalement, ces notes tombées, son attention était, y'avait un grande manque de concentration. Hum par la suite, elle était euh, souvent en retard à l'école, elle se mettait souvent en retard, ne répondait pas bien aux devoirs. Euh, la mesure que la directrice de l'époque a trouvé, a été de l'envoyer dans une école qui s'appelle “Repères”. Moi je savais pas à l'époque qu'est-ce que c'est “Repères”. Euh, il y a des intervenantes euh, merveilleux là-bas, sauf que le pool d'élèves comme le, l'entourage d'élèves euh est très différent de ma fille. Ma fille n'était pas (...) à l'époque, elle était une décrocheuse euh. ”

(11251, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.2.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

Several institutional caseworkers confirmed the reasons that the youths have already given, starting with the desire to change their lives and to express their dissatisfaction with and their rebellion against the measures used on them. These respondents also insisted that running away is a means for youths to gain autonomy or to solve, if not escape, their relational problems. Others mentioned instead their curiosity and need for freedom. Some added that running away reflected the difficulty these youths had in controlling their emotions as well as their tendency of defying authority. It is important to understand that in an institution, caseworkers are more often confronted with this dimension. One caseworker brought an interesting nuance to the subject, indicating that a youth's defiance could in turn reflect profound internal conflicts.

“To you know humm humm hurting trying to hurt their family or maybe be angry at the staff and humm... the same pattern emerges you know. They’re angry at their parents, they’re angry at the staff, they run away from their parents, they run away from the staff for the same reasons.”

(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

The triggers mentioned by the caseworkers are almost the same as those raised by the youths, except the caseworkers believe that an accumulation of these factors could be what precipitates the events. They also said that crises (squabbles, death, separation, restrictions, and ruptures), failures, prolonged placement or the need to consume substances are also powerful triggers.

Furthermore, the reasons given by the community caseworkers were identical to those given by the institutional caseworkers. Nevertheless, they differed in the priority given to youths’ need for freedom. They focus more on the youths’ desire for a new environment and new experiences, on their rebellion, as well as on learning, gaining their autonomy and experiencing their emancipation. Some also mentioned the loss of trust in adults and institutions, which the youths no longer saw as valuable allies that could bring about the desired changes in their lives. Consequently, the relationships fall apart and the youths find themselves without a place to belong. Even worse, some caseworkers condemned the approach of the youth centres and lamented the fact that the youths they had met in their practice often did not feel appreciated, valued, supported, heard or understood. However, they acknowledged that these youths experienced several relational conflicts that they were unable to resolve and from which they turned away because they had no help or means to deal with them. These conflicts with caseworkers, which are the same as the ones they first experienced with their parents, continue to push the youths to test the authenticity of the relationships they have developed. As a result, running away seems to carry a message and seems to be the only way they know to communicate their malaise.

The police officers’ viewpoints were relatively close to those of the community caseworkers. They also focused on youths’ need for freedom and autonomy. Some

thought that young girls were overprotected, and that this would incite them to take greater risks and more ardently request the freedom they are entitled. Also mentioned was the fact that youths want to experiment, discover who they are, prove their true value and test their ability to live autonomously. Therefore, the police officers were also inclined to say that running away would be an indication that youths were looking for a way to change their lives, to resist the restrictions imposed on them, and to escape difficult relationships with several people in their circle, more specifically family members or caseworkers from the youth centre. This excerpt from an interview with a police officer provides a clear example.

“Exemple le fils qui vient d'un milieu bourgeois ok toujours placé dans les écoles où est-ce que c'est très très cé correct, y peut fonctionner mais où ça fonctionne pas. Cé au niveau familial, la mère elle le laisse pas grandir, s'épanouir. La mère l'encadre, l'encadre, l'encadre, à un point tel que lors... Écoute, il était suivi en ... mettons un pédopsychiatre, non pas pédopsychiatre, eee un psychoéducateur à l'école, un travailleur social à l'école, les deux, pis la mère pouvait appeler chaque jour le psychoéducateur : “pis, comment tu peux prendre mon gars?”. Pis cé une mère hyper intelligente, hyper eee, mais le coté... elle a pas coupé le cordon. (...) Rendu à 16 ans, 17 ans, y faut que tu laisses, laisses devenir adulte, pis le cordon. Pis ce jeune là, ce que je savais, ce que j'ai appris, cé que il connaissait même pas manger dans des fast food, il connaissait même pas aller dans des restaurants chinois, il connaissait pas c'était juste de la haute gamme de nourriture, de la haute gamme... Pis lui était pas capable lui, pas capable de dealer avec ça. Pis c'était une famille divorcée, une famille reconstituée, le père absent. Pis y cé rebellé, pis dans la rébellion... Étant donné que je voulais pas qui fugue, eee avec le psychoéducateur, on a travaillé et le travailleur social, j'ai dit «écoute, à partir du moment où ce que ce jeune là soit placé, sa mère est capable de lui payer un appartement». Qu'elle paye un appartement, j'ai dit, il va se responsabiliser, il va se rendre contre comment elle est sa mère qui va l'aimer etc. Non, non, non, non, non, non, non, non, un moment donné ça a fini que... cé, oui, oui, oui, pis il est revenu de lui-même après 4 mois. Il a appelé la police. il a dit “venez me chercher”. Pis il est retourné pour la période des fêtes, chez sa mère, pis sa mère avait pris l'initiative, moi je lui avais dit prenez l'initiative en dehors du travailleur social j'avais poussée.”

(11464, Police officer, Montreal)

Although the viewpoints reported so far converge with those of the youths, we also found a few new elements in the caseworkers' and police officers' accounts that were barely mentioned by the youths. The first one was the desire to consume substances, which some caseworkers and police officers placed almost at the top of the list of possible motives. This reason was mentioned not only by institutional caseworkers, but also by community caseworkers, as well as some police officers. Other caseworkers and police officers raised the idea that, as these youths approach adulthood, they would rather escape their responsibilities and not face the consequences of their actions. A few

of them associated running away with the world of street gangs as well, mentioning specifically that this was particularly true for girls. Some would run away to join gang members around whom they felt wanted and appreciated. As for boys, running away could also be a way of having sexual experiences.

3.3 EVOLUTION IN THE RUNAWAY TRAJECTORY

3.3.1 The youths' perspective

Generally, the time spent on the run seems to increase with time. This is no doubt related to the fact that youths perceive differences between their flights, from the first to the more recent ones. Out of 25 youths who answered this question, nine did not see much difference between the various times they were on the run. But a few saw a positive evolution. They became more careful with time, changed the company they keep, got themselves into fewer tight spots, and informed their loved ones before leaving. Furthermore, their objectives would also tend to change. One boy said that, at first, he would run away as a reaction. Now, he does it for himself, as a way to move ahead. Others, however, indicated that their flights, which began by lasting longer and longer, also entailed greater risks and consequences that were more severe. They spoke of bad company and substance abuse, among other things. This point of view is consistent with that of the caseworkers and police officers who, as we saw earlier in the analysis, associated the most important dangers with running away repeatedly.

“T’sé j’prenais ça parce que j’avais pas l’choix. Y’a un boute, une période dans l’coin de mes 15 ans et demi, 16 ans où c’que j’commençais à faire d’la poudre. Ben au début dans l’fond, j’ai commencé que j’ai consommé, j’ai commencé à consommer des solvants. Ça viré au pot pis là, pis j’ai viré au gaz. Fa que là, j’étais tombée dans coke pis t’sé quand tu fais d’la coke, t’as besoin d’argent, t’as besoin de t’en procurer t’sé, Fa que c’était le moyen que j’mé faisais, j’mé disais : “ah j’vas faire une pipe t’sé, j’vas m’faire 40 piasses”. ”
(12126, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

“Ben j’ai consommé comme j’ai jamais consommé (ok) pis ben dans le fond... Cé en touchant le fond que j’ai là... j’ai appris de moi pis je me suis dit : “je vais aller en thérapie faut que je fasse de quoi ” là pis toute là...”
(12128, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

3.3.2 The parents' perspective

As for one mother, she pointed out that the duration of her daughter's flights increased with time, which reflected somewhat her inability to resolve the situation that tormented her. This point of view is thus very different from the one that emerged from the youths' accounts. This mother explains below that her daughter would wander around, so to speak, without a dream, an objective or a life plan.

“Donc euh, les différences les plus visibles sont la durée des fugues, qui a augmenté. Première, temps a doublé et pour la troisième, ça été à peu près 8 fois plus longue. Et pour expliquer ces différences euh, je crois qui, que c'est une euh, insatisfaction euh, qui s'est accumulée sur euh tous les plans. Sur euh, surtout au, dans sa vie quotidienne. Euh, elle était au centre euh, elle a essayé de se faire d'amis, mais apparemment elle n'a pas réussi. Euh sur le plan scolaire euh, elle a essayé de se corriger, mais sans de traitement médical approprié, elle pourrait pas prêter beaucoup d'attention à l'heure. Parfois, ses efforts malgré qu'elle avait parfois de très bonnes notes, euh parfois ses efforts échouaient. Aussi, sa relation avec eux, moi n'étais pas toujours euh, la meilleure euh, parce que, elle reprochait beaucoup de choses euh du passé et elle se laissait envahir par le passé. Et je crois que la chose la plus importante euh, est que malgré les efforts du centre et malgré mes efforts euh, elle n'avait pas réussi à se faire euh, à se refaire un euh, un objectif de vie, un projet. Un euh, une euh, comment t'on dit? Un rêve, a s'avait construit un rêve de vie, elle se voyait très laide, très grosse euh, tout ça et son estime d'elle-même euh, était comme euh, à terre.”
(11251, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Other parents mentioned that their child became more strategic from one time to the next, making more meticulous plans. Another one said that her daughter wanted to travel farther away to be able to consume more substances. These elements in the youths' and parents' accounts converge somewhat with the viewpoints of the caseworkers regarding their distinctions between running away occasionally and running away repeatedly. These distinctions suggest that running away repeatedly may become a vicious circle in which youths sometimes become caught, but which remains a renewed effort, in many cases, to change what is wrong.

3.4 BEFORE THE FLIGHT—ARE THERE ANY WARNINGS, ANY INDICATIONS?

3.4.1 The youths' perspective

Several youths said that they gave no indications, and that nobody suspected they would run away. They chose not to for fear of being reported, or because they did not want to cause worry. However, other youths handled it differently. For example, one youth said that he did not inform anyone, but he still made sure to tell a friend. Another one would sometimes call his parents before running away, to reassure them, but would give no indications to the caseworkers. Nevertheless, several youths were apparently in equivocal situations, where some adults (parents or caseworkers) were suspicious or were informed of their departure and others (parents or caseworkers) were not.

“Pis personne remarque. Ils remarquent pas pis c'est quand je reviens de fugue là, ils me disent : “mais on a pas remarqué les... ” Je comprends pas pourquoi vous avez pas remarqué. Ma mère, elle, elle le sait toujours quand je vais fuguer. Toujours, chaque fois que je vais fuguer, là elle dit aux éducs : “Elle va fuguer! ” Là, eux autres, ils disent : “Mais non madame ” “Moi je sais que ma fille va fuguer, je la connais ” .”
(11118, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

Among those who ran away for longer periods, some explained, however, that they notified people in their circle, reassured them, and somewhat negotiated their freedom. Some specified also that, with time, they learned to express themselves before acting.

“(I): Mais est-ce que ça t'es arrivé un moment donné d'avoir le goût de fuguer mais d'en parler.
(J) Ouais, mais pas... Après celle-là oui, mais pas avant ça! Avant ça j'en parlais jamais. Je m'en allais, je faisais mes affaires, pis quand je me faisais retrouver, je me faisais retrouver. Sinon je ne retournais pas chez nous et je ne reviens pas ici.
(I) Ok. Pis là, t'a comme un nouveau mécanisme, maintenant t'en parles avant de... y'a un cran de sécurité sur le spring là! ”
(11113, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

In this regard, one youth said that she spoke directly to a caseworker from school, who then gave her the address for the Bunker. Another time, however, the same caseworker

threatened to warn the authorities and, consequently, the youth decided not to run away. Therefore, this caseworker reacted very differently from one time to the next. We must consider, however, that the youths leave hints that also convey very different messages, sometimes intending to reassure, but other times in the hope that someone notices their distress.

In some cases, caseworkers and organizations show some flexibility, most likely to avoid breaking ties and rendering the youth more vulnerable.

“Mais qu'est-ce qui était bizarre comparé aux autres, c'est que j'avais dit à mon éduc : “écoute, à s'appelle x ”. J'y ai dit : “écoute, x hum, j'te mentirai pas, j'vas refuguer ” J'y ai dit, j'ai carrément toutes toutes les éducateurs de centre, ils l'savaient que j'allais refuguer. J'leur ai dit. Y m'ont mis code vert pareil. Y'ont dit : “ on peut rien, fa que là, on te laissera pas code rouge jusqu'à temps que t'sé. ”.”
(12127, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

But some youths said that when in doubt, caseworkers used intensive supervision. Conversely, when they informed their caseworkers that they were going to run away, some youths got no reaction and thus concluded that they had not been believed. Moreover, one youth said that he told his educator and parents that he was leaving, admittedly to see their reaction. He had done so in an effort to let them know that something was not right with him. Here again, this youth perceived indifference coming from the caseworkers and powerlessness on the part of his parents.

“J'disais euh, j'ai dit à mes parents : “ben écoute moi j'vas m'en aller là ”. (...) Ouais, y m'ont, y m'ont dit : “ben tu t'en iras ”. Moi, c'était, ben tu t'en iras. Eux autres, dans leur tête, c'est sûr que j'allais m'faire retrouver. (...) J'pense que mes parents sont plus contents parce que y'ont pus à payer là. Les allocations, parce que, parce que très peu de gens l'savent aussi. Fa que euh, les, les parents payent 500\$ par mois, ou un p'tit peu moins ou un p'tit peu plus, dépendamment du revenu. Euh, je l'savais, pis c'était un peu voulu, pour que, y, y connaissent mes intentions (éducateurs en CJ). Pis euh, je l'savais que, à c'moment là ben, c'est, c'était pas pour fuguer que j'veoulais, euh, j'veoulais faire ça. J'savais qu'j'allais fuguer, mais c'est parce que j'avais un message à transmettre à quelqu'un avant de, avant d'partir. Pis finalement, j'ai pas été capable de l'transmettre. ”
(11158, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

In the end, his friends were the ones who had the best reaction in his eyes, that is to say, openness and understanding. Friends are indeed the ones who are most often informed of one's intent to leave. This type of news sometimes arouses their curiosity and other times, causes them concern. In many cases, these friends are also the ones who would take runaways in for a while.

3.4.2 The parents' perspective

Parents confirmed that when they learned that their child had run away, their first reaction was to worry. Not only were they concerned, but also felt anxiety, incomprehension, panic and a sense of powerlessness. For some parents, it even caused them health problems, the consequences of which they are still feeling today.

The intensity of their reaction could explain why they were rarely informed of their child's intention of leaving. Parents also understood that youths generally prefered to discuss it with their friends, where they find support and understanding, which they may find with some caseworkers as well. Whereas it is more difficult to confide such a thing to a parent, it is also because youths are afraid of being denounced and stopped. Alternatively, sometimes there are things that simply cannot be shared with a parent, as this mother explains here.

“Ouais, ouais, ouais, c'est dommage parce que je croyais avoir cette image-là pour lui, d'avoir un sentiment que j'étais à l'écoute. Eee mais c'était pas suffisant, j'étais l'image de la maman. Donc, eee c'était pas quelque chose qui pouvait exister. Donc, de partager ça ee à du monde, des amis c'était plus facile. Il se sentait plus proche d'eux. Eee de d'en exprimer aussi eee à la dauphine, c'était aussi probablement une permission de se donner, de donner confiance et de de penser que ces gens-là pouvaient mieux le comprendre que moi.”
(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Nevertheless, only three parents said that they sometimes suspected that their child was going to run away. Besides the fact that the information was not communicated directly, it would also seem just as difficult to detect the warning signs.

“Non. Pas vraiment. Pas vraiment parce que... Y avait une ouverture quand même, entre nous là. T’sé, moi, je suis pas... Il me cachait pas qu’il consommait. Je pouvais savoir. Bon, c’est sûr que je pouvais faire mes mises en garde pis tout ça. Mais je pense que j’étais une personne ouverte. J’étais pas dans l’interdiction, ni dans la répression. Donc... Je pouvais pas me douter que ça arrivait pareil.”

(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Among those who did recognize the warning signs, there was notably one mother who said that her daughter hid in the broom closet at the youth centre in the hopes of getting caught and of being put under intensive supervision. This strategy, however, did not work. Nothing having come of it, the girl lost her confidence and, today, leaves almost no warning signs before running away. Another mother instead explained that her daughter would brag about her ability to run away to confront and defy caseworkers at the youth centre. Regardless of what happened, parents believed that these actions, which they saw as clear indicators of their child’s intention, were interpreted differently by the caseworkers. The parents thus believe that the caseworkers did not take the situation seriously.

Conversely, among those who did not recognize the signs, some explained that they were not ready to see them at the time the events occurred. Today, they could surely decipher them more easily; but the first time, it was apparently difficult for them to see it coming.

“En ce moment je pourrais peut-être dire oui. Mais à la période où je le vivais pour moi, c’était vraiment pas évident, vraiment vraiment pas. C’était pas quelque chose qui était significatif pour moi. C’était facile de dire que c’était peut-être à cause de telle chose, ou peut-être bon en début d’adolescence. C’était sûr que c’était normal de se sentir un peu plus enfermé ou de chercher de l’essayer de trouver des groupes d’amis. What ever, c’était pas quelque chose de flagrant pour moi : “ha ah yé en voie de fugue”. Non vraiment pas.”

(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.4.3 Caseworkers’ and police officers’ perspectives

According to the caseworkers and police officers, it is relatively rare that youths turn to them to inform them directly of their intention of running away. Nevertheless, sometimes they do, often in the form of threats, which unfortunately can be confused

with other difficulties that these youths present, in terms of communicating and controlling their emotions. In the institutional sector, it is believed that youths often “brag” about their intention of running away to impress the people around them. But the large majority of caseworkers who work in this environment thought that youths confided instead in a friend first, or other youths from their living unit—but only a few, whom they trust. Or sometimes, the youths confided in family members, particularly their parents. However, they may have also told certain adults, including caseworkers, educators, street workers and teachers. But it was a delicate and less common situation.

Furthermore, the majority of institutional caseworkers believed that there are warning signs, which they are able to recognize. These signs are related mostly to changes in the youths’ behaviours. They noticed a certain restlessness that led them to being more vigilant and more observant than usual. Sometimes, the youths were irritable, intolerant and even more aggressive. With others, there was a forewarning in the form of a drop in academic performance and involvement in the various activities offered. In fact, their attitude would have such negative effects on everyone in their living unit that the warning signs would sometimes escape the caseworkers, who became overwhelmed by the group’s problems and did not know the youths well enough on an individual basis to recognize the warning signs of their departure.

Some caseworkers thus believe that the first flights are the most difficult to see coming, as they are more sudden than the others. Othercaseworkers, in contrast, specified that repeated flights were more difficult to detect, because the signs seemed to disappear with time. Of course, it remains to be seen whether the novelty or the habituation could also have an influence on the caseworkers’ ability to recognize the warning signs of an imminent flight. In addition, a sign by definition remains a foreshadower, a symptom for which the majority of caseworkers believe youths are completely unaware. However, youths leave these hints so they can be found in case of danger or because they have trouble communicating. But it would be difficult for them to identify clearly this malaise because they usually react more than they think and because they hope so strongly to live this experience, despite the risks, and do not want to be denounced.

Therefore, those who would voluntarily show signs were rather viewed as youths who wanted to manipulate the people around them and to attract attention.

As for the police officers and community caseworkers, they identified essentially the same signs as the institutional caseworkers. However, the community caseworkers did not distinguish much between youths who showed signs voluntarily and those who did not. Some of them stated that youths leave signs in all sorts of circumstances, which means that those who were completely caught up in the habit of running away repeatedly could be found out, as could those who were running away for the first time. But to recognize these signs, which sometimes change, become blurred, or resurface stronger at other times, it is necessary to listen to the youths and maintain a close relationship with them. One needs to be aware of their concerns, their state of mind at the time and recent events having occurred in their lives. It is also necessary to consider that running away expresses a malaise and carries a message. This applies to youths who run away repeatedly as much as to those doing it for the first time. The tendency among youths to run away repeatedly actually sets in when people do not take enough time to listen to them when they return.

“Y envoie un message le jeune... généralement y... cé ça y envoie un message, y envoie un message de mal être, ça va pas bien... Ça va pas bien, pis euh... moi je prends cette décision là t’sé... Et aussi pour faire euh... souvent les jeunes veulent faire réagir leurs parents... Cé pour ça que les parents se sentent visés, pis ils le sont ben souvent t’sé... “pourquoi il me fait encore ça?... Y sait ben quand qui fugue, j’arrive pus à dormir pis... euh... Y a tu pensé à son petit frère qui s’inquiète pis euh ”.... Le jeune sait qu’il bouleverse la famille t’sé. Quand y en a une là, sinon y sait qui va... euh... questionner peut-être les éducateurs euh... qui va euh... t’sé... Y veut susciter.... Y veut susciter oui... même, même, même si y a pas de signe. Pas que des fois... t’sé euh... quand je dis oui y en laisse... y laisse souvent des signe. Ça va arriver qu’un jeune, de façon très euh... p’t-être mettre une bémol sur ce que je disais tout à l’heure, spontané y va fuguer... Ça arrive des fois des jeunes qui dit euh... euh... “bon j’suis en centre jeunesse, j’avais rendez-vous chez le médecin pis... on est sorti du médecin pis j’ai faite.... Go! J’men vas...”, pis c’était pas prévu d’avance pan toute... genre là là... Ah ça vient de le pogner “ah sac, j’ai la liberté là. qui est là là ”...”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Conversely, a few caseworkers believe that the signs are impossible to discern. But those who are of this opinion come from youth centres, and some police officers share

their opinion. From their perspective, the impulsivity and spontaneity of the youths' actions are to blame, not to mention the fear that someone could prevent them from leaving or track them down. In their reflections, these caseworkers also mentioned that the signs, if any, became less obvious with time because, at any rate, these youths would have lost all their trust in adults, as well as in the help they might provide.

3.5 BEFORE THE FLIGHT—SPONTANEITY, PLANNING, ORGANIZATION

3.5.1 The youths' perspective

Among all the youths we met, 17 said they ran away spontaneously. However, some stated that the first times were generally spontaneous, whereas the following ones were more planned, without necessarily being meticulously organized. But with no planning whatsoever, flights obviously would fail. This is why runaways prepare a few hours, sometimes only a few minutes ahead, with the help of a friend or lover. Some left in pairs, preferring to do so for safety reasons.

“Parce que, je me souviens que, j'avais peur de partir seule. Si je réussissais pas à trouver une place, ou quelque chose du genre. Moé qui connaît pas partout Québec, qui déteste la ville. Je voulais pas partir seule. Donc, je me trouvais une co, une personne avec qui partir. Qui connaissait quand même beaucoup de monde, qui connaissait Québec, pis toute. Pis, j'y parlais de... “Ça te tentes tu de faire, de partir? On pourrait faire telle(s) affaire(s). On pourrait partir à telle heure, tel jour, vu que c'est tel éduc, telle personne qui travaille. On va avoir de la chance de partir, que si c'est tel autre jour.” Pis... On se parlait, pis... Quand que tout était pris comme décision, ben on partait.”

(I2122, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

One boy specified, however, that they got organized essentially while on the run, not before. Before leaving, runaways gathered what they needed, and nothing more, and then they had to hurry. The departure was thus spontaneous, but afterwards, things might have occurred differently.

Obviously, running away for a long time required more preparation. In this regard, one boy said he made sure to save some money before his last flight. Another young girl said she prepared two weeks in advance. She wanted to leave the youth centre for a long time, which was not the case when she would leave her family's home. Another explained that planning took three months, with the help of old friends from the youth centre and people he knew in the street; they helped him travel to another Canadian province.

However, one youth added that, in her experience, planning does not ensure feasibility.

“C’tait spontanément planifié.... (rire) (...) J’ai d’jà voulu en faire une ee fugue planifiée, pis ça ça même pas marché (...) On voulait trop. Fa que, ma chum de fille, on voulait s’en aller au BC... On s’ramassait d’l’argent pour s’acheter des billets d’bus. Pis finalement, on l’a dépensé à St-Jean. On est pas allées....Ca nous tentait pus... trop d’trouble. ”
(14151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

3.5.2 The parents’ perspective

The parents’ accounts were similar, except that they said some flights were spontaneous and others were better planned and organized. In fact, parents made a clearer distinction between the two types of flights, whereas youths suggested that the same flight might have both characteristics at the same time. Thus, parents said that the more recent flights notably were more organized when youths ran away after gaining some experience. For example, this mother explains below that even though things appeared to happen spontaneously, the youths’ behaviours showed a certain level of organization. She noted that her son controlled his environment to buy some time and gain freedom. In this perspective, he called her so that she would not report him as having run away.

“Ouais, ouais, ou carrément juste me dire : “je sais pas quand est-ce que je vais revenir.” Donc, eee pour moi, c’était de me dire : “Ok, eee y a quelque chose à vivre, pis ee je vais j’ai assez confiance en lui pour lui donner cette liberté là.” Mais, je savais pas tout à fait qu’est-ce qui pouvait se passer. Alors, lui, de cette façon là, y mettait une ouate pour pas que, moi, je m’inquiète. Pis, pour pas que je le considère comme une fugue. Alors, c’était : “ Ok, bye, t’sé reviens-tu à soir”. “Je sais pas.” Donc, ça cé comme, il a organisé ça comme un peu, pareil comme si il se disait : “inquiète toi pas, je vais revenir”. Fa que, pour moi, c’était vraiment très difficile à cette époque là. Pis, ça je le répète, parce que cé important là, pour moi, vu que c’était une expérience, une première expérience, je ne pouvais vraiment pas comprendre le processus qui était en train, que je vivais. Mais, c’était vraiment une façon pour lui de se permettre de fuguer.”

(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Then, another parent made this nuance, suggesting that although flights are not always planned as such, they require some mental preparation at the very least. This idea shows that parents are concerned with the causes, contexts or events that could be conducive to emerging thoughts of running away. It also contrasts somewhat with the opinions of the youths who say that, in some cases, their decision to run away could be completely spontaneous.

“Euh je crois que, on peut pas parler d’une planification. Par contre, je crois que c’était, c’est une préparation mentale qu’elle avait fait peut-être, sans le vouloir. Euh, dans les premières fugues, elle se disait, elle disait souvent : “Je m’ennuie, je m’ennuie, c’est une vie très plate”. Hum, pour la dernière fugue, hum, elle avait dit : “Mais, ils vont me laisser jamais sortir du centre jusqu’à 18 ans. Ma jeunesse est perdue.” ”.

(11251, Parent, Community, Montreal)

However, in other situations, parents said that organizing the flight was too complex to have been done solo. Moreover, this mother believes that her daughter had to have played an active role at the very least, but without necessarily being the instigator. Here, the parent seems more concerned with the manner in which her daughter was manipulated, and the negative influence that an ill-intentioned adult may have had on her.

“C'est peut-être ma fille qui a participé à l'organisation, mais je crois qu'elle a été, là, le facteur passif. C'est quelqu'un d'autre qui à chaque fois. (...) Je le connais pas, je sais qu'elle euh, lui a parlé à plusieurs reprises. Euh, c'est une des raisons pour laquelle j'avais changé le numéro de téléphone de la maison. Mais finalement, le dernier numéro de téléphone qu'elle a appelé avant sa dernière fugue, coïncide avec le numéro qu'elle avait à plusieurs reprises euh, lié à cette personne.”

(11251, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.5.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

In the same way as the parents did, caseworkers tended to distinguish rather clearly between the two types of flights—spontaneous and planned. Only three of all the caseworkers and police officers made the nuance that a flight may have both these characteristics. Therefore, about twenty of them said that both types of flights are possible but that they are different nonetheless. Some associated spontaneous flights with first and occasional ones and planned flights with repeated ones, which last longer and, consequently, required better organization. However, this point of view was not unanimous. Other caseworkers believe instead that, with time, running away requires less and less planning given that youths know ahead of time where they are going and what means they can use to survive. Finally, some caseworkers and police officers think that, even though both types of flights are possible, the fact remains that they are not manifested in equal proportions. Indeed, nine caseworkers believe that spontaneous flights are the most common and just as many believe that planned flights are more common. Generally, flights would be planned either a few hours or a few days ahead, at the very most.

3.6 BEFORE THE FLIGHT—REFERENCE POINTS AND INFORMATION

3.6.1 The youths' perspective

In spite of youths claiming that they did not know where to go, their accounts suggested that they nevertheless had a few reference points. Although they did not necessarily seek to obtain information, it came to them without having to ask. For example, information on places to go, such as community organizations, came notably from other young people in youth centres. Some offered it spontaneously when they themselves returned after running away.

Without this information, others managed regardless, knowing that their friends would take them in. It also seems that information comes while they are on the run. Those who had previously run away would know the agencies or other runaways who informed them of these resources. Most often, youths turned to their network of friends and acquaintances. One youth explained that this was what she did. To use her own words, she would have left on a “nowhere,” knowing that her friend would take her in. This friend was 18 years old, while a friend’s friend was 40. Comparing herself to her friend, the respondent stated that she does not trust just anyone. But does this information suffice to reassure us?

Then, there are those who are familiar with the agencies, but still prefer to go to people they know. One youth gives his reasons here.

“Y a une fois ou j’avais attendu. P’t-être lors de ma deuxième, troisième fugue euh... d’un bunker qui est en plein Montréal. Mais, j’ai jamais été, ça m’intéressait pas vraiment. J’mé suis dit : “Euh... moi si j’fugue, cé pour euh... être... aller m’amuser dans l’fond, être un peu libre du centre. J’ai pas envie d’aller m’installer dans un bunker qui va r’sembler à un centre jeunesse. ”.”

(11112, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

3.6.2 The parents’ perspective

As for the parents, they believe that youths share a lot of information amongst themselves. This would be particularly true for those in youth centres. They share information notably on places to hang out and activities to do while on the run. Youths also exchange names and addresses while chatting online. Furthermore, as their network widens, notably in the context of running away and meeting others in the same situation, the number of information sources increases substantially.

In fact, only two parents believed that their child ran away without any information, because they were planning, in any case, to go to friends or family. Others said instead that their child had often been exposed to this reality, having known or hung out with

other youths on the run, and that information on the subject circulated in various ways. Like other parents, who are not the majority, however, this mother said that her daughter had a certain admiration for runaways.

“Une fois qu’on était allés à Montréal. Pis, oh wow!, avait dont trouvé qui avaient d’la belle liberté...”
(11256, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.6.3 Caseworkers’ and police officers’ perspectives

Among the caseworkers and police officers, none seemed worried about youths not finding a place to sleep. They think that some arranged a meeting with people from outside; they would pick them up and take them elsewhere to stay. Young girls, in particular, often had a lover to go to where they could sleep. But some caseworkers described the lover as a shark who would end up exploiting the young girl sexually for his own profit. If youths did not join a lover, they might also go to a friend’s or to a family member’s. Parents, notably, would sometimes organize the flights so they could get their child back. Whatever the case may be, youths are not described here as being completely isolated. On the contrary, they would spend very little time by themselves, which in itself is not a bad thing, although not completely reassuring. In fact, we are not sure how well youths know the people they meet up with after leaving their environment.

“J’pense qui ont des poteaux dans rue pis y savent où aller quand qui sont, qui sont en fugue eh... Y a beaucoup internet hen, moi j’ai vu des jeunes eh... qui sont devenus amis eh... Maintenant on devient ami avec n’importe qui sur facebook, sur msn, y connaissent pas la personne mais c’est vraiment leur bon chum là. J’pense qui a, y a internet, y a l’téléphone, y a les réseaux.”
(12354, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

Besides, twenty-odd caseworkers and a dozen police officers indicated that, from one flight to the next, youths generally return to the same people. This often makes it easier for caseworkers to find them. However, as mentioned by this caseworker, these

networks which youths try to form, by getting together with others who share the same suffering and the same characteristics, do not completely save them from being alone.

“T’sé mettons, j’pense que souvent tu vas r’trouver les mêmes personnes, comme les deux p’tites filles qui fuguent ensemble là, celle-là, en tout cas, c’t’ensemble. Pis dans ton unité, si t’as tendance à fuguer tout l’temps avec la même personne, c’est surtout ça, c’est la même personne. Mais rendu ici, dehors là, tu peux rencontrer tout l’monde, pis tu finis par connaître tout l’monde. On dirait que tout l’monde se connaît entre eux finalement. (...) Mais moi, j’ai tendance à croire que les jeunes sont tout seuls un peu. T’sé y ont beau s’associer avec du monde, sont comme tout seuls... Quand j’t’allé faire une visite chez Pop’s, j’trouvais qu’tout l’monde était tout seul, pis c’tait comme une grosse solitude qui r’ssortait t’sé... ”

(11354, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

3.7 BEFORE THE FLIGHT—PRESSURE OR TEMPTATION?

3.7.1 The youths’ perspective

Among all the youths whom we met, very few said they were forced to run away. In fact, there was only one, whose flight was completely orchestrated by his mother. Besides this one exception, we more often found that youths were influenced by their friends or acquaintances. Sometimes, the influence is direct, in situations, for example, where friends have invited youths to run away with them or to join them in interesting activities.

“Je me souviens, par rapport à la St-Jean, oui, je suis partie, mais, j’avais la frousse. J’avais tellement la trouille de partir là. C’était épouvantable. Là, les filles étaient de même, “envoye, envoye, envoye, faut y aller, faut y aller, faut y aller.”» On a fini par partir le système d’alarme, mais, je pense, avoir été deux, maximum trois, je l’aurais pas faite. J’aurais trop eu peur. Donc, j’aurais sûrement restée coucher dans mon lit ben tranquille. ”

(12122, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

“Non, mais parce que... Genre, je devais rentrer, pis là, je suis comme : “Ha, je vas, je dois rentrer”, pis tout. Mais en même temps, ça me tentait vraiment pas de rentrer là. Pis... T’sé... Je me disais, “O.k., mais je vais partir au plus vite avant qui en aille un qui me dise, genre que, comme, y a quelque chose chez un tel à soir”, pis que c'est, que j'aille le goût d'y aller pis tout. Pis là, je suis comme o.k. là, vite, il faut que je parte. Pis là... genre, c'est ça. Pis là, justement, y est arrivé qu'est-ce qu'il ne fallait pas qu'il arrive. Genre, un de mes amis a dit : “ha, tu viens-tu, blablabla là, y a quelque chose...telle place... Pis, ha, ça va être le fun, pis toute là.” Pis là, j'ai fait “merde”. Là, j'étais comme “Non, non, je vais y aller, pis tout.” “Ha non, viens-tu, vas voir, ça va être chill!” Pis j'ai pas été difficile à convaincre là, pis c'est ça.”

(11117, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

Alternatively, they may be influenced indirectly, when they see other young people running away and then coming back. Several said that they know people who have run away, such as youths in their circle, close relations, friends or even family members.

“Pas d'l'argent, mais de, de, de l'intimidation, des menaces indirectes oui. Ben pas, pas, pas en m'disant : “ha tu, tu, y va t'arriver si, si tu peux pas”. C'est plutôt hum, une pression psychologique, si j'pourrais dire.”

(11158, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

One respondent, who was staying at a youth centre, explained here the context in which the idea came to him.

“First time I figure out all it was a runaway, I was in a group home and I saw a kid runaway that and I ask the kid what do you do.... then he told me that he runs away to his friend's house and then I did it....

(C) He gives you like the inside....the....

(Y) Yeah”

(11141, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Batshaw)

So, although some fear the idea of running away and express indifference towards those who do...

“Ben j'en ai pas entendu parler beaucoup avant ma fugue de deux jours. Mais y en a une qui m'a dit justement genre : “Ha, je suis partie, pis tout. Pis, j'ai été à telle place, blablabla. J'ai été voir telle personne...” Pis, je suis revenue, ben comme, peut-être, genre mettons, six heures, après. Pis ha, j'ai eu de la shit, pis toute, parce que j'étais fucking gelée, pis toute. Pis j'ai comme faite : “o.k., mais ça t'as servi à quoi là? ”. Genre “t'es conne ”. Mais, en même temps, genre... T'sé, comme, t'sé, dans ma tête, genre, ça faite , “t'es conne là ”. Mais... C'est ça.”

(11117, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

...their opinion sometimes changes to the point of developing respect or even admiration for these youths.

“Au début, j’trouvais ça vraiment nono et après ça, j’ai comme commencé à faire comme eux. ”

(11113, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

Some even pointed out that in youth centres, running away has become a matter of prestige. Whatever the case may be, being exposed to these situations, youths think about it, one way or another, and sometimes end up putting into perspective what such an experience could bring to their lives.

“Ben c’est ça, comme j’te dis là, tout le monde a une bonne raison de partir. Jamais j’croyrais là. T’sé, moé mon chum XXXX, y a fugué pendant j’pense 5 ans. Pis, t’sé, c’est parce que t’as tout le temps des problèmes familiaux, t’as tout le temps, t’sé, de quoi de pas cool là. T’sé... y était mieux dans rue ostie que, qui était mieux en famille d’accueil ou chez ses parents. Fa que, dans ce temps là t’sé, moé j’dis que c’est tout le temps le best là. Moé avec, ça été de même là. ”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

When youths look back, their perception of running away and of runaways may nevertheless change. It remains to be seen, however, if these youths who seem to have a different opinion on the issue, also have an influence on their peers.

“En vieillissant c’tait comme, c’tait pus une question d’être cool là. C’est une question de faire... Mais ee j’te dirais qu’au centre d’accueil, c’tait comme un prestige qui avait. Plus tu fuguais, pis plus tu fuguais longtemps, t’étais comme plus hot là. ”

(11157, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

3.7.2 The parents’ perspective

Despite the concerns that some expressed over the bad company their child kept, none of the parents who participated in this study thought their child could have been forced or pushed into running away as such. For example, the mother below believes that her daughter was not pushed into running away, but that she was enticed by other factors

that were just as powerful. In her case, it would have been money. According to this mother, the young girl would also have been influenced by possessions and the life offered to her, as well as by the affection that she thought she would also receive from her new lover.

“Mais, je pense euh, c'est personne qui l'a vraiment forcé. Mais oui euh, je crois que que ce sont des personnes qu'y'étaient plus expérimentées qu'elle euh, et qui ont profité de, de son... Elle était assoiffée d'avoir plus d'amis et d'affection. Donc euh, c'est pas, c'est pas, c'était pas forcé, mais c'est vraiment, vraiment spéculer beaucoup cette chose.”

(11251, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Another parent raised one more possibility. Her son would have tried to run away because of a sense of belonging to a group of people who were in this situation and with whom he identified.

“Ouais, je croirais bien que oui, parce que étant donné que eee quelque mois après, il a amené un fugueur chez nous... Je me dis : “tu amènes pas un fugueur comme ça, sans en eee, sans en connaître le comment ” Je pourrais dire sans côtoyer des fugueurs, je pense qu'à quelque part, il vivait dans un monde de jeunes fugueurs. (...) Pour lui, il y avait plus d'existence ou de signification vis-à-vis de son papa et de sa maman. Maintenant, il s'identifiait très bien à de nouvelles familles.”

(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.7.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

As for the caseworkers and police officers, they did not believe that youths could be forced into running away. At least, those who did raise the possibility (7 caseworkers and 1 police officer) explained that the flight would then occur in particular circumstances, which they all associated to the world of street gangs. Girls would be particularly at risk. One caseworker demonstrates here how this pressure on youths can manifest itself.

“(C) Ouais absolument! Ah ouais... “Si tu viens pas avec moi là, je sais pas comment que ça va s’passer... ” C’té des affaires de même, comme exemple ouais!

(I) Pressions, menaces, intimidations...

(C) Ouais! Menaces de suicide... Si j’suis tout seul, je sais pas comment j’vas faire... pour être solidaire de quelqu’un d’autre...”

(11352, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

But other than this type of context, caseworkers and police officers seemed to believe instead that youths are somewhat influenced and pushed by the people in their circle. They can thus experience and feel strong pressure in some cases. But caseworkers believe that ultimately youths are responsible for their actions and that those who clearly stated they were forced into it were the ones who had the least self-confidence. The people they knew and whom they contacted first when on the run would also give them a lot of useful information for organizing their flight. All the means were good for communicating this information, starting with word of mouth, but also by email, chatting on line (Facebook) or even on their cell phone. As a result, several caseworkers believe that youths are generally well aware of the community organizations that offer a place to stay. They find this information in flyers distributed in youth centres. Sometimes, caseworkers give them the information directly. Respondents who addressed this issue hinted, however, that they were not all comfortable with this practice, which they seem to consider an incentive that can reassure youths that they would be able to survive one way or another. One police officer deplores, however, that some youths run away to meet up with strangers with no information on resources that could help them. For this reason, he visits schools regularly, as do some of his colleagues, to provide youths with this information. However, not all the caseworkers and police officers agreed that it was appropriate to give youths information on agencies that offered help and lodging to runaway minors.

Whatever the case may be, the majority of caseworkers and police officers think that youths are interested in and curious about youths who have run away, and that they admire and respect them. In fact, all but three caseworkers said that the runaway youths they had met in their work knew someone in their circle who had run away. This could include friends, acquaintances, other youths they met in their living unit, family

members and, even sometimes, adults. In this regard, one police officer expanded that this is particularly true for young people in youth centres, thus raising the possibility of a ripple effect. Along the same lines, this other caseworker believes that certain youths sometimes envy those who have run away, whereas they have not yet attempted the experience themselves.

“Ben, moi je pense... Moi je pense, pour un, un jeune qui a le goût de faire une fugue, pis qui, y a déjà parlé à un ancien fugueur, si il vit de la colère, c'est parce qui dit : “toé, tu l'as faite, pis pas moi encore.” J'pense que c'est plus de la colère envers lui-même de dire : “Pourquoi je l'ai pas faite avant ?” ou... Mais je pense pas qui peut être en colère contre l'autre.”

(13352, Caseworker, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

A few respondents—two caseworkers and one police officer—believe, however, that this sentiment that youths have towards other runaways is not felt by all. Sometimes, they feel indifference or even contempt towards them. This reaction would depend essentially on their personal development.

“Humm impressed, they could be... very humm humm humm gain some sort of a status in their group humm humm for certain kids they say you know “I would never do that” humm they're not really in my that's not the way I deal with my situation. I don't want to get involved in.”

(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

3.8 BEFORE THE FLIGHT—WHAT COULD HAVE PREVENTED THEM FROM RUNNING AWAY?

3.8.1 The youths' perspective

To this question, a few youths replied that they would not have run away had they gone back to live with their parent (father in one case, mother in another). Another explained that her sister would have found a way to stop her simply by talking. She would have found the right words because she means a lot to her. Another youth spoke in the same way about the positive influence his brother could have had on him. Even an educator who had taken the time to talk and understand his motives could have helped.

“Euh, mais t’sé comme j’té dis, sont restés indifférents. Si y m’auraient dit : “Écoute XXX, euh, on, on, on sait tu vas fuguer, qu’est-ce qu’on peut faire pour t’aider. ” Non pas : “qu’est-ce qu’on peut faire pour t’aider, mais qu’est-ce que tu veux aller chercher pendant ta fugue. ””

(11158, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

And others mentioned other concrete ways, related to the development of their autonomy. They would thus have liked someone to give them work or have them participate in interesting, stimulating activities, giving them the chance to surpass themselves.

Otherwise, it seems very few things could have held these young people back. One of them explains here that he might not have run away had he felt he had something to lose or had he had something to occupy his mind, to stop him from thinking constantly about running away. In his case, he ended up completely consumed by the idea.

“Bon, dans ma tête, j’ai un an à perdre... Mais j’ai l’droit d’avoir des sorties quand même t’sé... J’vas, j’vas tout l’temps avoir des sorties... Qu’est-ce que j’ai à perdre, c’est peut-être que j’aurai pus de sorties... (...) Mais même à ça, t’as un an. Fa que, même si tu fugues, t’as l’temps en masse de r’prendre tes sorties là. (...) Pis t’sé, j’trouve ça quasiment payant fuguer. C’est vraiment payant. 24 heures en chambre pour deux semaines de fugue. T’sé, c’est quoi qui est équivalent ? C’est ben plus payant fuguer.”

(12127, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

3.8.2 The parents’ perspective

One mother says here that nothing could have prevented her son from running away.

“Ben moi je pense que la première, le conflit avec son père... J’pense que... C’est dur à dire. Parce qu’il y avait l’élément de consommation là-dedans. Fa que, je pense qu’il était déjà enclenché assez. Pis, y avait tellement de divergences d’opinion, pis de façons de vivre différentes que son père... Fa que, je pense que rien aurait pu l’empêcher dans le processus. Il était déjà rendu là, t’sé. Pis, je pense que c’est la même chose aussi chez moi. Quand même que... parce que j’étais toujours là à y parler là. Fa que, dans le fond, t’sé. Si je regarde ça, y a pas grand-chose qui aurait pu l’empêcher. C’est une expérience qui voulait vivre, point là, t’sé.”

(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

In the same perspective, another mentioned with a certain resignation that had her son not experienced mourning or sadness and had he felt loved, he would not have thrown himself on an emotional quest and would not have opposed authority. In other words, her child would have needed to be spared the period of adolescence.

Conversely, others considered some solutions. One mother thought, for example, that an educator could have prevented her child from running away by approaching him just before his departure. And another mother said that had she listened to her child, she could have prevented him from running away. She explained that things might have been different had there been better communication between the parents. As a result, she regretted not being sufficiently available at the time the events occurred.

“Moi j’étais à l’époque... Eee je venais d’acheter ma maison. J’étais énormément préoccupée, occupée, inquiète. Je n’avais qu’une fixation, c’était : “comment je vas réussir maintenant que j’ai ma maison, comment il faut que je m’organise pour pas manquer d’argent». Et eee son père, ee bin, y vivait ce qu’il avait à vivre. Et la communication était pas ee très proche. On n’était pas très proches l’un de l’autre. Donc, eee les échanges eee, de semaine en semaine, on était supposés avoir une semaine, une semaine. Eee, si y venait pas à la ”maison, moi je présumais qu’il était encore chez son père et vice versa. Et ça a pris du temps avant qu’on commence à communiquer, pour finalement diagnostiquer que y’était ni chez un ni chez l’autre. Alors, la communication entre les deux parents aurait tout de suite... Eee nous aurait tout de suite eee mis eee la puce à l’oreille.”

(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Another mother blamed instead the quality of the communications between the institution and the parents. She believes that her child could have been prevented from running away while placed, had the caseworker respected the court-appointed visitation rights and had the established rules been observed at home.

Thinking back on a few episodes in her own youth, another mother suggested that we could focus more on youths’ needs and on the possible opportunities or means that could be offered to meet those needs.

“Ben, j’imagine que si on était capable d’offrir autre chose que rien ... Y seraient pas obligé de fuguer (rire). T’sé, cé ... si on était capable d’offrir des ... euh ... d’autre chose que ... Hey, qu’est-ce qu’on fait avec nos jeunes ? ... Dans le fond, peut-être y faudrait demander aux jeunes qu’est-ce qu’ils veulent ? ... Dans le fond, ... t’sé, on est là à essayer de dire ... “quessé qu’on pourrait faire pour eux autres ? ” Ben, regarde, euh ... y’ont-tu quelque chose? T’sé, ... moi j’arrive avec ma lecture de, de ... des années 70. T’sé, quand on voulait partir à l’étranger pis tout ça ... Chez certains jeunes, en tout cas... Moi je regarde, les miens rêvent pas d’aller en Europe. Sont déjà allés. T’sé cé comme cé pas un objectif à atteindre parce que ... sont allés déjà ... Cé fou euh ... t’sé. XXX y ... fait ... y é allé en Europe deux fois euh ... Une fois avec l’école, pis une fois avec moi. Euh, cé comme ... y é pas y é, mais, mais, y doivent sûrement avoir quelque chose qui les mobiliseraient. Mais faudrait savoir, leur demander. Pis ..., faut pas s’imaginer qu’on leur demande dans deux semaines ça va sortir hein ... ”

(11254, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.8.3 Caseworkers’ and police officers’ perspectives

Caseworkers and police officers believe that youths are usually intrigued with the runaway experience, and they admire those who get organized and leave their environment. However, the large majority of these respondents believe that various measures could be implemented to prevent youths from taking such an action. Only one caseworker and one police officer believe this to be a waste of time and energy. The officer was inclined to say that the only possible way to prevent youths from running away would be to put them in prison.

Other caseworkers and police officers are rather of the opinion that adults in their circle could have a major impact on youths by being open-minded, by listening to them, and by understanding them. They believe that youths’ problems and the situations they react to could be resolved quickly and easily if they were played down and handled immediately. A few problem-solving methods could be used, leading them to progress and alternatives could be offered, rather than turning exclusively to supervision. Some would like to see new efforts and new, more attractive projects in which youths would want to become involved and immersed. Here are three excerpts that illustrate rather clearly the body of comments gathered on the subject.

“Pour empêcher les jeunes de fuguer c'est d'avoir eh... des familles aimantes eh... de pas se ramasser au centre jeunesse, d'avoir des personnes ressources autour d'eux autres. Mais une fois qui ont pu ça, ben là qu'est-ce qui peut les empêcher de fuguer moi j'pense... ça serait de, d'être capables d'avoir des compromis, moins de cadre, moins de règle eh... tout en en ayant là, parce que j'pense ça prend ça pour les ados dans vie mais eh... ça soit plus souple peut-être, ça soit... plus écouter.”

(12354, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

“(C) Working, engaging the kid with services humm depending on their need humm and.

(I) What about those who just want to have fun

(C) Humm well those that humm that want to have fun... no matter

(I) Can you prevent this kind of hummm

(C) No matter what you do, if they want to do something, they'll do it.

I think humm the ones that can... develop a good relationship let's say with a child care worker

(C) Or a specific humm person the likes could be a big sister or a mentor of some sort. If there's some kind of humm personal involvement engaging and... even for those kids that run away to have some fun

(I) It's like to create a significant relationship”

(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

“Having a sense of belonging... That they actually feel like they belong somewhere (...) To connect with them, it's difficult because... you can't beat the glorified of the, of the though life, you know like the, the gang life, the fast cars, money, women, drugs, alcohol, party (...) If would could... instil an environment and... connections with the staff that are working... and that... it's, it's something that is worked with them so they... ”

(11342, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

3.9 DURING THE FLIGHT—HANG OUTS

3.9.1 The youths' perspective

Almost all the youths said they went to cities other than the one where they lived. Only a few stayed close by so they could go see their friends or because they felt safer in places that they already knew. One respondent suggested that this behaviour was more common among girls.

“Cé ça... t’sé, y s’en iront pas dans un milieu inconnu... dans nuit... pis toute, genre, pis qui savent pas qu’est-ce qui se passe là ... Tandis que, comme chez nous même, y a des coups d’gun chez nous, pis tout, mais j’le sais que... c’tà cause de une ... une bataille de gangs. T’sé, fa que, si moé j’arrive en rouge ou en bleu chus dans marde. Mais si j’arrive en vert chus correct... (...) Cé ça, tandis que moé, si j’m’en vas au centre-ville, dans, dans, l’milieu d’la nuit, ché pas cé quoi qui s’passe là... Ché pas si y a les gangs qui, qui s’affrontent. Ou, je sais pas qu’est-ce qui s’passe à quelle heure. Pis..., fa que là, j’vas arriver là en bleu pis la j... j’va m’faire tirer... Pis fuck that..., j’prends même pas la chance d’y aller là...”

(11111, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

Others said that they ran away to different cities, generally within the province of Québec. Although one youth said he visited all the Canadian provinces.

The big cities, however, do not always feel safe...

“Parce que, c’est une place de fous là... Le, le..., surtout les filles là. T’sé, les gars, o.k., y peuvent plus se, se défendre pis se débrouiller. Mais les filles, quand qui sont naïves pis toutes là. Y peuvent se faire avoir facilement là. Pis se faire embarquer dans les réseaux de prostitution, se faire violer ou what ever. Cette affaire là... Fa que Montréal, c’est vraiment la place à éviter (...) Les gangs de rue, les... les fous men, des affaires de meurtres, de viols, de batailles, pis toute là.”

(13151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

... even though they have more resources.

“Montréal, Québec et Valleyfield. Bin c’est sûr et certain que Montréal, c’est pas la meilleure ville. Québec non plus. Mais y a des squats à ces deux endroits-là. Si la personne connaît du monde, t’sé, si tu connais quelqu’un qui vit dans rue à Montréal, t’sé, pis, que cette personne-là, c’est ton ami ou de quoi, là, va voir c’té-personne là pour fuguer. Reste tout le temps proche de cette personne-là, parce qu’en plus être avec quelqu’un qui vit dans rue, pis qui sait ce que c’est la rue, bin cte personne là va pouvoir, premièrement : te donner des conseils, deuxièmement : te surveiller un peu, parce qu’ils savent comment y se sentaient eux autres à leur début dans rue. Ça fait peur! Ça fait peur en maudit! Fa que, y va t’aider le plus possible.”

(14151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

These cities are also the ones that offer the most opportunities. One young girl said that she chose to go to Montreal, because it is a big city, there are more people, she is more likely to have fun, and it is easier to get food, money, and drugs as well.

“Les stationnements étagés, c'est vraiment là... Montréal, c'est juste que...tout est plus accessible tout le temps là. La dope 24 heures, les parcs, tout le temps. Y a tellement de monde dans rue que... t'sé, ça paraît pas que t'es dans rue là, carrément. Pis, y a tellement justement de, t'sé, d'églises qui donnent de la bouffe, du monde qui donne d'la bouffe din parc, t'sé, des...Justement, comme chez POPS ou des centres de jour comme icitte Ou t'sé...C'est fois dix qu'icitte t'sé. Fa que, c'est...c'est super cool pour ça, mais... pour faire de l'argent, c'est vraiment plus tough là.”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Nevertheless, youths insist that big cities require vigilance. They even name certain places, such as parks and alleyways, where youths are likely to be found or certain neighbourhoods where young people are not safe. One boy indicated that the street is the place to avoid at all cost.

“Ben la rue, ... ça c'est sûr ! C'peut-être pas un endroit, mais c'est vraiment la rue. Y doivent vraiment éviter ça. J'l'ai vécue, pis c'est ... J'ai des amis qui se sont fait tirer, qui se sont fait jacker. Pas c'pas une bonne place disons ! Au début, j'tais là-dans. Mais, j'me suis sorti de ça assez vite ... pis ... fa que ... ouais.”

(11114, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

“T'sé là, y a gros des places là, que tu peux aller là. Vraiment là. Mais t'sé... Câlisse. T'sé c'est, c'est con là ça, mais vraiment là. Berri. Tous les pares la nuit, c'est vraiment dangereux là. T'sé, dans le mois que j'ai été là moé, y a du monde qui s'est fait tuer dans le parc là. T'sé, c'est vraiment là. Heavy, là. Pis...c'est pas...T'sé. Tous les jeunes en fugue devraient, ostie, le soir men, aller coucher quelque part. Coucher dehors ostie. (...) C'est vraiment dangereux là. Moé, quand j'y r'pense, j'aurais pu me faire violer, pis j'aurais pu me faire battre là, vraiment! J'ai été sauvée par la peau du cul là. Vraiment là. Mais t'sé, genre... Un... Une personne mineur, ostie, en, au centre-ville de Montréal là nuit, ça pas d'affaire là. En partant là. Ça vraiment pas d'affaire là.”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

In addition to the better-known gathering places, youths also mentioned a few specific neighbourhoods in Quebec City and Montreal alike. Obviously, the intention here is not to name these places to label them negatively, but to highlight the fact that youths also know and dread certain spots and are thus aware of the dangers they present.

“St-Rock, parce que dans le fond, cé la place de la fugue. Pis dans le fond, cé plate à dire, mais dans le fond, là-bas, cé presque toutes des junkys. Le monde en revient peut-être pas, moi j'ai fait une coupe de psychoses à cause de ce quartier-là hum. (...) Ouais ouais, là-bas, là y a de la drogue à toutes les coins de rue, les dépanneurs, y a personne qui carte, rien. L'alcool t'en as, des cigarettes t'en as. Pas besoin de rien. Tout ce que tu as besoin y é là. (...) Y a plein de deps à braquer, pis le monde vole des deps là-bas, pis la violence, tout le monde se bat.”

(12121, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

One youth explained that she still preferred to stay downtown because she could find everything she needed in terms of drugs or alcohol. In fact, she would go to places where heavy drug users hung out, knowing that police officers are less vigilant in these sectors. This included spots that are close to the resources as well, such as the Bunker. However, from her point of view, there were people, rather than areas, that should be avoided.

3.9.2 The parents' perspective

Compared with the youths, a higher proportion of parents (4/10) thought their children did not leave their city of residence. And among those who raised the possibility that they did go to other cities, some indicated that they would have done so to join specific people whom they knew. So, they would have known where to go and would not have left on an adventure without thinking about tomorrow.

A few parents claimed, however, that their child liked to hang out at known meeting places, the same ones that some young respondents also identified. For example, one mother claimed that her daughter prefered spots like Place Jacques Cartier and Carré D'Youville. She also mentioned agencies in Quebec City like *Squat Basse-Ville* and the *Dauphine*. Another also mentioned Park Émilie-Gamelin, under the Jacques-Cartier Bridge, as well as the Mont-Royal (the Tam Tams). Parents thus seemed to say that youths particularly like public places. Sometimes, they prefered places that were more anonymous, like stores, but, most often, they chose large gathering places, where there may be other youths in the same situation. Two of them stated that their child was attracted to places where punks gathered or where "bad boys" were likely to be. In some way, these parents referred to identification processes marked by specific places and the people who hang out there. It is somewhat of a new dimension, associated with the symbolism of the journey of youths on the run, which the youths did not really touch on, at least not as directly as the parents did.

Among the places where youths hung out, some seemed more dangerous in the parents' eyes. Essentially, they were the same ones that the youths identified.

"Probablement qu'il a fumé ce qu'il avait, pis... Mais il fallait qu'il donne quelque chose aussi. Ça, je sais ça là. Fa que, c'est sûr que si t'embarques dans ce réseau-là, ben... ça peut se rendre loin, t'sé, au niveau de... T'sé, après ça, d'être pris dans un circuit de, de... de gang de motards là. C'est sûr qu'ils font bien du recrutement là. Les jeunes sont vulnérables, pis tout ça."

(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Finally, as some youths pointed out, one parent believed that it was not only bars, parks and big cities that should be avoided, but also certain people, particularly the older ones who offer food and lodging. In summary, people who could have bad intentions, which are difficult to identify by less experienced youths.

3.9.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

As for caseworkers and police officers, they suggested that some youths did not leave the area where they lived when they ran away, whereas others did. These respondents thus believe that younger and less experienced ones would not tend to go far. Instead, they would take refuge at a friend's home and limit their movements. Or, youths who are already from Montreal would often stay in the city and not leave the area, to take advantage of the resources and opportunities (experiences, drugs and alcohol, networks, crime) that are found there. However, youths who do not come from Montreal or who do not live in a big city would tend more systematically to head in that direction. Their destination could also be Quebec City or Sherbrooke, since these cities also offer lodging services. But their destination could also be other Canadian cities, particularly in cases where youths become involved with street gangs. In addition to the large centres that youths preferred, caseworkers and police officers also named various hot spots that they believed to be popular with youths. They mention the subway system and other public places, such as Carré Viger and Carré Berri in Montreal, as well as Place d'Youville in Quebec City, which are meeting places where youths feel protected and can sometimes hide more easily. They also mentioned that they like to hang out in

bars, amusement parks, raves and crack houses to consume substances and to take advantage of everything that is available and could give them pleasure. Others mentioned apartments or private homes instead, where their friends or family members live. In addition, they spoke of abandoned buildings, tunnels and shopping centres, which bring to mind youths hiding to avoid being found. Then, some mentioned community resources, which they present as places that youths like to visit, notably for the way they are received.

Similarly, the spots that caseworkers and police officers mentioned were the same as those mentioned by the youths. However, although opinions seem to converge on these locations, they diverge regarding the associated dangers. That is to say, that almost all the places that the caseworkers and police officers identified were also the ones they said should be avoided to be safe. The list included the street, downtown areas, meeting places, specific subway stations, apartments where youths hang out without really knowing the owners, bars where street gangs recruited, raves and after-hour clubs. Some even mentioned certain community resources, specifying that youths sometimes meet other young people there who introduce them to the street culture.

Moreover, very few caseworkers and police officers made the nuance that the youths made, to the effect that the road travelled while on the run can consist of several places, depending on the time of day and the circumstances.

“Y a pas d’endroits fixes nécessairement. Moi j’en vois pus en tout cas d’endroits fixes. T’as toujours, comme j’te dis, t’as toujours à Carré d’Youville mais t’sé... Carré d’Youville, c’est pour les revendicateurs t’sé! C’est pour... t’sé... Anciennement c’tait les punks qui étaient là... Maintenant, y en a pus d’mouvement d’punks ou y en a moins... Ou c’est plus déguisé j’te dirais, le punk, le revendicateur Aheaheah... Aujourd’hui là, ça va veiller din raves, ça prend, ça consomme à tour de bras, ça va danser toute la nuit, y rencontrent des gars, y partent... T’sé c’est ça aujourd’hui... C’est pas la même... C’pour ça que j’te dis que les fugues sont différentes t’sé!”
(12321, Caseworker, Institution, Quebec)

Yet, they know that youths often move around while on the run, thus comparing them to nomads. At least 26 caseworkers and police officers thought this was the case, believing for the most part that this strategy served mainly to avoid the authorities. Nevertheless, about twenty of them raised the idea that these movements and relocations may be related to other objectives, such as widening their network, following friends, finding a place to stay, escaping a dangerous situation, experiencing something new, or gaining more freedom.

3.10 DURING THE FLIGHT—AVOIDING GETTING CAUGHT

3.10.1 The youths' perspective

In addition to the difficulty of learning to recognize risky areas, youths must develop strategies to avoid being caught. One youth explained that, to do so, they hide and change cities. They sometimes use other strategies as well; for example, they may also change their hair colour and their clothing style regularly.

“R’garde, comme moé, j’ai été jusqu’à me raser la tête. Pis ma chum de fille aussi (...) À ma deuxième fugue, j’ai changé de style .J’m’habillais en p’tite pouponne, pis toute là. Pis ça ben passé. (...) Oué. Changer de ville, changer de place... Même aller chez du monde que tu... que que...mettons, les adultes savent pas avec qui tu te tiens genre.”
(13151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Another confirmed that she had encounters with police officers but they never recognized her, because she was dressed as a boy. In addition to changing her clothing style, she would give a false identity.

“La majorité du temps, genre, y... comme moi, ben pas, mon ami s’est changé. A s’habillait en gars, pis toute là. Y changent de personnalité. (...) Tu restes tout le temps chez la même personne.”
(11113, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

“On s’habille le plus possible comme on s’habillerait pas d’habitude. On essaie de se mettre des grosses lunettes, on se maquille, on se coiffe de manière différente. Y en a qui vont se teindre les cheveux. N’importe quoi, pour pas se ressembler. Pas aller dans les rues bin passantes. Aller dans les petites rues, passer par les p’tites rues tout le temps. Pas se tenir dans les endroits où ce que y a beaucoup de trouble … Vas pas dans un bar t’sé, vas pas dans des endroits où est-ce que les autorités vont. Vas pas dans les endroits publics le plus possible. Vole pas. Si tu veux quêter, arrange-toi pour être bin discret de le faire. Surveille tout le temps partout autour de toi. Hum, c’est quasiment la même affaire que de vivre dans rue.”

(14151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Girls are not the only ones to use such strategies. One boy explained that he would hide his face with his hood and would make sure to change his clothes regularly every four or five hours. He would sometimes hide in garbage cans or under vehicles. These youths' everyday lives seem similar to that of a fugitive. But it appears that, with time and experience, youths' attitudes towards authority changes to the point of becoming more self-assured.

“Tu restes toi-même. Tu cherches ton style c'est sûr. Mais tu restes toi-même. Pis, c'est la première chose… Tu les regardes, tu défies pas son regard. Ou mettons la police passe, pis là tu pars à courir… Tu restes calme pis tu fais tes affaires. (...) Comme moi, j'restais tranquille, j'traversais pas sur les lumières rouges vraiment là…”

(11114, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

Moreover, with time and experience, youths develop a wider network, which increases their means of finding refuge and satisfying their needs. However, as we will see further, this network may lead them into new experiences that involve their share of risks.

“Ben t’sé comme là à c’t’heure, j’ai tellement fugué longtemps, que j’ai plusieurs contacts que j’peux rester longtemps t’sé. (...) Mais sinon, un m’ment d’nné, t’sé, y s’écoeurent là t’sé. Fa que, un m’ment d’nné, on va aller à un autre place t’sé. Ou ben..., moé j’ai des amis à Saint-Sauveur, j’ai du monde, j’ai des amis à Limoilou, j’ai du monde en basse-ville, j’connais du monde en haute-ville, j’connais du monde à Beauport, j’connais du monde partout...”

(12127, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

3.10.2 The parents' perspective

As for the parents, they appeared to know the strategies that young runaways must use to avoid being caught. Since they had already tried to reach their children or to receive news about them, they were obviously familiar with this side of running away. They also knew that young people sometimes use additional tactics, such as changing their appearances, their clothing style and even their identity.

3.10.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

In contrast, the caseworkers and police officers focused instead on the movements of youths on the run, which in their eyes were the primary means used to avoid being caught by the authorities. In fact, only one respondent in this category mentioned that some youths did not worry about getting caught by the authorities.

“It doesn’t take much, it really doesn’t take much because all they have to do is be down in metros humm jump on a metro, be at a friend’s house, party, cracked out for days, they don’t come outside.”

(11342, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

Moreover, caseworkers and police officers mentioned other methods used by young runaways to avoid getting caught, including giving a false name and sometimes even having false identification cards made. Or, as some youths have already mentioned, they change certain parts of their appearance, such as their clothes or hair colour. All the examples given by the caseworkers suggested that it generally took very little for youths to slip through their fingers.

“They change their look a little bit you know sometimes a lot humm and they you know they they just avoid as much as possible. They wear a hood you know.”

(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

3.11 DURING THE FLIGHT—OCCUPATIONS

3.11.1 The youths' perspective

3.11.1.1 Day to day

Day to day, being on the run does not necessarily seem like a great adventure. Youths certainly take advantage of the situation to be with their friends. But many of them seem to want to remain in relatively protected contexts and environments. Therefore, these youths, who represent approximately one third of the sample, spend as much time as possible with friends and acquaintances, in their homes or apartments. They lay low, hide and concern themselves with not being found or disturbed. This is not necessarily how they do it at first. Without resources, less experienced youths are often forced to sleep outdoors. One girl explained that the third time she ran away, she set herself up in an abandoned garage, which provided a roof over her head and which she considered safe. During the day, she would go see her friends, watch TV or go on MSN. And this is how she was found.

“Non, parce que c'est dans un garage. Y a la porte fermée, barrée pis y a sa porte tout le temps barrée, pis y'avait personne qui rentrait. Fa que, on pouvait pas m'voir. Ben c'parce que j'me suis faite découvert parce que j'allais su MSN.”
(11113, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

Another respondent explains here that he would try all kinds of ways to avoid hanging around the streets. In this regard, his interpretation of risky and dangerous areas seems more familiar to us.

“Ben mon ami y avait une maison de chambres. Fa que, moi j'ai loué une chambre. C'est ça. J't'arrivé comme ça, pis y m'a dit qui avait d'la place pis toute. J't'arrivé pis j'ai commencé à travailler, pis toute là. J'parle pas illégal, vente de drogues pis toute. Mais j'tai, travaillais din restaurants, dans un magasin à bonbons. Euh, fa que, c'est ça là ! J'travaillais dans un entrepôt. Ça m'aidait à pas traîner dans les rues. Pis y a une fois où est-ce que je travaillais 7 jours sur 7, justement pour pas traîner din rues, pis toute!”
(11114, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

Similarly, one youth explained that he had specific itineraries. Although he could not always hide at a friend's or an acquaintance's, he did not go to just any public place. He would therefore hang around swimming pools, movie theatres, shopping malls or libraries, where there were fewer risks of having problems.

“Y a rien que du monde, des vieilles mémés qui vont là là-bas. Là... y a pas des... des gangsters qui vont dans piscine là... Pis moi, j’té dis là, le prochain qui va partir en fugue là... j’y donnerais des conseils. J’tel dis là, y vont pas l’trouver...”

(11116, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

However, another youth explained that he avoided moving around as much as possible for fear of getting caught by the police.

“Because, if I move on too much, cops can find us or see me. So I have to stay in one spot and then the cops can't find us up there and my friends tell me cop is going out there. So I leave and I'm going to my other friend's house.”

(11141, Jeune, Garçon, Institutionnel, Batshaw)

And, as this young girl explains, the apartments where youths end up are not always safe.

“Une fois je pense que c'est arrivé que... quelqu'un était en prison, pis on est comme allés dans son appart, genre, pis y était comme... t'sé, y était en prison. Fa que, on avait comme la clef de l'appart pour X raison. C'tait dégueu par exemple, je pense que cé un crack house... Je suis pas sûre cé quoi un crack house, mais si, si un crack house ça existe, ça doit ressembler à ça...”

(11152, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

These last excerpts suggest that the street is not necessarily the first option chosen by runaways who have been on the run a few times. Thus, although they gain experience and become more self-assured, it does not mean that they become insensitive to danger. On the contrary, they appear to become more vigilant with time and to use their network as a means of protection. But does this network protect them completely from danger or are there other forms of risks involved? Without answering this question directly, the results show here that the opportunity to see their friends again and to meet people is

one of the great benefits that these youths associate with running away. In some way, these young people seem to make up for lost time, to seize every opportunity to socialize and party. Inevitably, these festivities also involve heavy substance use.

3.11.1.2 Consuming substances, socializing and partying

However, they consume substances when they are alone as well, often during the day. But they also enjoy doing it in groups and continue doing so throughout the evening and night, staying at a friend's or heading to parks and other public places. Nonetheless, they hang out at these places while trying to remain in a group as much as possible.

“Ben en groupe parce que cé la nuit, pis je voulais pas être toute seule la nuit la dans le centre-ville. Parce que je sais que je me serais faite violée, violentée, je sais pas trop quoi là. T’sé, j’tais consciente de tout ça là un tit peu là...”
(11152, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

That said, those who can go to a friend's place during the day can also sleep there because they switch to party mode in the evening and even at night.

“(I) Dans le fond, tu dormais davantage dans la journée que dans la nuit.
(Y) Oué. Pis, j'aime mieux ça aussi là. T’sé, t'es quand même dans rue là. Moé, t’sé quand qui avait du monde au parc avec moé, dormir la nuit, j'avais pas d'trouble là. Mais de un, c'est plus payant vendre la nuit, pis de deux, ben t’sé, le jour, c'est cool là. J'me sens pas en danger là. J'me sens pas dans marde. J'me criss sur un banc, pis t’sé, chus ben là. Le soleil, y fait chaud pis...”
(13152, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Partying is apparently one way to socialize, but this context can also lead to heavier substance use, as well as new acquaintances and new networks.

“Ben y vendent d’la drogue ou y quêtent d’l’argent ou j’le sais pas...Sérieux moi, j’ai tout l’temps eu ma drogue gratuite là, pour vrai t’sé... Mes amis c’est quasiment juste des vendeurs. Pis, au début t’sé, tu rencontres les personnes, pis moi j’ai rencontré mes amis, pis j’savais même pas qu’c’tait des vendeurs de drogue, jusqu’à temps qu’y fassent une transaction d’vant moé... J’t’ai “Quoi!!! Tu vends?!?!” Moé j’leur ai jamais rien d’mandé là t’sé, j’demande pas d’la drogue à mes amis là...Si y veulent m’en donner, y m’en donneront, mais à part ça t’sé... Y m’en donnent tout l’temps là... tout l’temps, tout l’temps, tout l’temps... Pis y m’disent t’as juste à l’demander. J’y dis : “hey arrête, j’té l’demandera pas, tu l’sais, fa que, arrête”... C’est ça...”
(12124, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

In this regard, some said they spent a lot of time in clubs and bars, whereas others did not identify with these environments. They prefer private parties, particularly those that were organized spontaneously.

“Ben parce que tout le monde s’organisait, ben c’est soit que y organisaient déjà le party ou soit que on s’en faisait un, genre live up, genre on se fait un party, ça nous tente de faire un party, on fait un party.”

(11113, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

“Moi j’ai veillé un peu sur la Grande Allée, au Dag pis toute ça. Je suis allé au terminal, chus allé à des party à Ste-Croix, des beachs partys toute la nuit. Je suis allé à des raves d’halloween. XXX, elle, a trippe pas sur les raves pis toute. A trippe pas quand y fait chaud pis y a plein de monde. Elle, a l’aime ça être au plein air. Cé ça, moi j’aime ça des raves de temps en temps, mais là, j’en fais pus, je consomme pus.”
(12121, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

3.11.1.3 Visiting the agencies

With all these places to go, youths do not seem to hang out regularly at community organizations. Some youths know them well and have adopted them. Other youths became familiar with them later in their journey, through people they met along the way, such as caseworkers or other youths. And finally, others did use them but then stopped for various reasons, including the one mentioned by the young respondent below.

“Ben un squat, j’t’allée une fois là. Mais c’est pas des affaires que j’trippais là. C’est plein de pourris, dégeulasses. Moé, j’trippe pas là. Si y a des murs toute pttt. Ça, ça m’a amené des problèmes de respiration là, vraiment là. Pis en plus, mon appart, y en a chez nous là. Fa que... non. J’aime mieux dormir à belle étoile. Ostie,, à l’air frais. Que... dans un endroit tout, tout pourri, qu’on est vingt-cinq.”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Another youth would go to the agencies only to sleep, as much as possible at least, because the rules limit the length of time a person can stay.

“Parce que t’sé, au Bunker, c’est quand même 5 nuits, pis après ça, 10 jours de break. Pis en Marge, t’as 1 nuit, pis après ça, 7 jours de break. Fa que, fallait aussi j’m’arrange avec ça là.”

(11157, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

With no network or resources, one nevertheless needs nerves of steel to sleep on the street. The same youth explains here that amphetamines helped her to get through it.

“T’as pas l’goût d’t’endormir, parce que tes affaires sont là. T’as le goût... Té, t’sais pas qui qui va arriver.”

(11157, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

The street therefore contains its risks, which the youths confront with more or less vigour, but this place is symbolic of the freedom that the youths seek above all else. Despite their fears and restrictions, the stories they tell suggest that their priority is to make the most of this freedom. So much so that they seem to spend relatively little time getting organized and surviving compared with the time spent experiencing new things or simply enjoying the passing moment.

3.11.1.4 Surviving

This youth’s story is thus exceptional. Once while on the run, he worked and continued his schooling. He even participated in the CLSC (local community service centre) meetings to solve a violence problem. He wanted to put his life in order, had plans, and wanted to become a specialized caseworker.

“J’peux réussir pis que j’peux aider du monde qui ont passé par la même place que moi... Pa ce que j’aimerais ça dev’nir intervenant spécialisé... C’pas ce que moé j’en ai eu des intervenants. Pis... ici, y ont jamais été là pour m’écouter, ou peu importe là... Y ont tout l’temps été là pour me rabaisser ou pour comploter des affaires avec ma travailleuse sociale, ou tout l’temps pour leux dire ce que j’faisais de pas correct... et non c’que j’faisais de bien... Fa que... d’la marde... Si j’peux être un intervenant correct, bah go. Pis ... j’connais déjà le milieu ... j’connais l’système (...) Si j’peux réussir là-d’dans, tant mieux ... Pis si j’peux aider du monde ... ben c’t’encore plus génial.”
(14152, Youth, Boy, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Truth be told, very few runaway youths devote their time to reorganizing their lives. They do not even seem to spend much time ensuring their survival—two or three hours per day generally. The rest of the time is reserved for friends and hanging out. Nothing seems vital in itself.

“I just survived, I only, I don’t know.... I don’t really have to survive, my friends help me... (...). I don’t worry about survive because I know I could survive. (...) Don’t party during the day. Loafing I’m mean stay at house and watch tv... ”
(11141, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Batshaw)

3.11.2 The parents’ perspective

At first glance, parents appeared well informed of the activities their children engaged in while on the run, as well as the places where they hung out and the people with whom they spent time. Obviously, their accounts were less detailed and did not show the sequence of events from morning to night, but they nevertheless corroborated the fact that youths may spend time during the day at a friend’s or an acquaintance’s, to hide or sleep, and then gather in the evening to party. It should be noted also that the picture emerging is not one of youths who are isolated, lost, starving and without resources, but rather one of youths who manage or attempt to surround themselves with an entire range of resources (friends, people they met previously or while on the run, family, community resources) to satisfy their needs. Therefore, the parents, much like the youths, did not focus so much on their having to spend all their time begging or surviving through various means. Instead, they focused on them spending as much time as possible in a group, not only to satisfy their basic needs, but also to be with people

they like, to socialize, party and consume substances. Indeed, parents also believe that substance use is an important dimension in the runaway experience.

However, unlike the youths, the parents focused more on the limitations and poor quality of the networks that the youths sometimes used. But then again, some parents found their children after they had used up the resources of the people in their circle.

“Mais c'est hypothétique, mais comme j'ai dit, je crois qu'elle a passé ses journées dans la maison de quelqu'un. (...) Et possiblement que y avait des fréquentations là-bas, des vas et des viens de différentes personnes. Probablement pas les meilleures du monde.”
(11251, Parent, Community, Montreal)

“Parce qu'à ce moment-là, ça allait bien avec ses amis là. Quand il est revenu habiter chez moi, ben là, c'est là, il avait jamais d'argent, pis tout ça. Fa que, les gens étaient tannés. Fa que, donc, il avait moins de ressources là. Fa que, c'est pour ça qu'il s'est retrouvé comme peut-être plus au carré Berri après t'sé.”
(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.11.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

As for the caseworkers and police officers their views were divided concerning the places where the youths hung out during the day. As reported by the youths and parents, some caseworkers and police officers think that youths go to sleep during the day at a friend's or an acquaintance's. However, these respondents were not the majority. Others mentioned also that youths are frequently outdoors, in public places, such as parks, skate parks, arcades, subway stations, shopping malls, movie theatres, libraries or even community-based day centres. One caseworker pointed out, however, that youths who run away repeatedly do not present the same profile as those who do so occasionally. The latter more often spent their days in public places, whereas the former preferred the apartments of members of their network to sleep, hide and recuperate before moving on to the next part of their day, that is the evening or nighttime. But again, this viewpoint is not unanimous among caseworkers and police officers since they generally make no distinction between day, evening or night, claiming that runaway youths do not concern themselves with organizing their day. In the following excerpts, one police officer and

some caseworkers provide details of the places where runaway youths hang out throughout the day.

“Ben j’té dirais euh... le jour, le soir, la nuit euh... c’est, c’est, p’t’être un tit peu plus risqué, y a pus... pus grand monde... y a des règlements municipaux, ça va attirer l’attention ou euh... Ou à 11 heures normalement, té s’posé d’être sorti du parc. Si tu vois un gang de jeune dans l’parc, euh comme bon policier, tu vas aller trotter là pis tu vas aller poser des questions t’sé.”

(11461, Police officer, Montreal)

“Y en a qui vont chez leurs amis pendant la journée quand qu’on est l’été peut-être. Mais y en a qui vont se tenir dans les centres d’achats euh... Y a ben des jeunes la t’sé y... y viennent de Point-aux-Trembles, y retournent à Point-aux-trembles pendant la journée, y reviennent coucher au Bunker le soir... Y traînent dans les centres d’achats, ça ça va être les plus jeunes.... Les 14-15 ans là... euh... y a des jeunes qui ont peur du centre-ville, qui viennent juste coucher au Bunker pis y partent en ouu... y’en a qui ont peur de Chez Pops aussi là. Hey tabarnouche, cé impressionnant la cé gang de jeunes-là, ça va jusqu’à 25 ans euh... y ont leurs studs dans le cou, leur chien qui jappe euh... Y puient des fois, sont g’lés raide sur l’héroïne, y en a qui ont des problèmes de santé mentale euh... Heavy là, ça peut ressembler dans une institut psychiatrique des fois là... Chez Pops ça peut faire peur aux jeunes... Fa que... bah, y vont, y vont, y vont se promener euh... Souvent le jeune dit hey j’ai marché, j’ai marché, j’ai marché... Y marchent...des affaires de même là y vont... Y t’sé y’en a beaucoup qui vont se tenir euh... dans le réseau souterrain de Montréal aussi là... Toute la partie euh Mc-Gill et compagnie, y vont se promener là’dans, y vont rester dans le métro aussi en hiver pas mal à la place du... Puis, pour ce qui est du centre-ville là... Fa que, ils vont trouver leur euh... y vont trouver leur refuge là-dans là... y attendent que le temps passe là... Le jeune trouve ça... finit par trouver ça ben plate hein... Cé pour ça qui retournent souvent.”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Moi spontanément là, quand vous dites, quand c’est séquencé comme ça, quand un jeune est en fugue dans un milieu d’vie, on parle de fugueur chronique répétition pis... Y a pas de journée type! C’est... y a la nuit où... pis aussitôt... Le soir... ça s’passe là... Le jour, c’est euh... C’est... y’a pas grand-chose à faire! On chill pas... On va s’reveiller un m’ment d’né, pis on va r’garder comment c’qu’on va faire à soir, pis où c’qu’on va aller dans nuit mais ça... Y s’couchent pas à 9hrs le soir là c’est... y s’lèvent à 9hrs le soir! C’est la nuit que ça se passe! Les partys, la danse, quand... C’est ça, on va chiller... C’est pas à 10hrs le matin... Ça peut être à aussi... mais c’est déstructuré, y a pas de... Y travaillent pas comme nous là... Nous c’est 8hrs à 5hrs, pis on sait qu’on rentre chez nous l’soir, on soupe, on s’couche pis on s’lève... C’est pas ça! Y n’a pas d’structure! Les occasions de chiller, de fumer un pof, de s’droguer... ça peut arriver à 10hrs le matin, à 2hrs la nuit... Y’en a pus de structure! (...) On parle plus des fugueurs dans des milieux d’vie qui les accueillent pour faire des activités d’fraude, prostitution, d’la vente de drogues ou ces choses-là. Y en a pas là de... matin, midi pis soir! (...) Y s’promènent pas là! Y sont à que’que part! Y sont dans des apparts, y s’promènent pour aller chiller d’une place à l’autre, ou faire des passes din motels... Mais y s’promènent pas dehors! Ça c’est les crevettes qui arrivent là, les supposément fugueurs des régions là! Eux autres y vont coucher en d’sous d’un arbre là mais, d’un banc d’parc. Mais les vrais fugueurs organisés à Montréal, y couchent pas dehors! Y s’promènent en char... Y vont voir des films des fois là! C’est comme... y font pas juste fumer d’la dope pis d’baiser, s’cusez l’expression... Y vont voir des films des fois, y trippent, y chillent.”

(11311, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

However, this institutional caseworker's perspective offered a notable contrast with that of another caseworker from the same sector; they undoubtedly work with different clienteles. Whereas the first caseworker commented on the casualness of minors on the run, the second one noted, in the excerpt below, the control that some may be under. This situation concerned girls in particular.

“Les jeunes vont souvent vivre des... y vont être séquestrées si on veut, c'est contre leur gré, y auront pas l'droit d'partir. C'est très difficile pour une jeune qui est dans un milieu structuré de partir quand a va vouloir, ça c'est clair. Y a beaucoup de garçons qui surveillent dans ces milieux-là. Fa que la jeune a va t'être... En somme a va t'être séquestrée... à son insu! ”

(11313, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

Moreover, a considerable portion of the caseworkers do not believe that runaway youths favour abandoned places. Police officers were of the same opinion. Some did believe, however, that youths might come across these places, but that they move on. They do so to avoid the authorities or to go find people they know. Nevertheless, some youths become hooked on these places, particularly those who consume hard drugs and who are seriously engaged in a process of social disaffiliation.

“Ouais, y en, à moins qui en avait, mais y en a encore certaines jeunes justement, dans l'milieu d'l'itinérance, des jeunes toxicomanes, souvent des jeunes toxicomanes qui s'ramassent justement dans des endroits désaffectés. Les jeunes qui vivent en marge d'la société, jeunes anarchistes, jeunes marginaux... qui vont s'ramasser justement dans les... Si on veut, dans les crackhouses, dans les piqueries, vont s'ramasser un peu partout là... ”

(11313, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“Moi y a... J'ai jamais des jeunes... Ça c'est... Ça aussi c'est peut-être plus la rue d'parc, des jeunes démunis, comme un peu les itinérants là... C'est pas toutes des jeunes... Y a des jeunes crevettes, ben là y se r'trouvent ouais, y'ont pas accès au réseau structuré, fa que y vont aller coucher où est-ce qui a un toit minimalement dans un lieu désaffecté. Mais c'est pas ça nos jeunes de fugueurs à répétition chronique! ”

(11311, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“Ben, c'est pas donné à tout le monde de faire du squattage. C'est des jeunes qui sont comme... qui ont un type bien particulier de personnes. C'est, c'est des gens qui sont, sont comme marginals un petit peu. Ça prend des gens comme, marginals, squatters. C'est pas donné à n'importe quel jeune d'aller squatter là. C'est des jeunes qui sont marginals qui vont aller à ces endroits-là, règle générale. C'est pour ça que j'en rencontre très rarement. Parce que c'est rare là. Squatter, un jeune là, j'veo pas ça. Très rarement, très rarement. Très rarement.”

(11462, Police officer, Montreal)

From another perspective, we noticed that caseworkers did not believe that there were many youths staying at the agencies, except to eat, to seek medical treatment, to satisfy their basic needs or to take a break from the street. Or some youths, who have no network and nowhere else to go, will sometimes end up in these places because they were brought there by someone they know.

“Ben je pense que c'est parce que ça dépend des ressources, mais si y ont de la bouffe, pis y ont pas mangé... Moi je pense que c'est vraiment les besoins primaires là. T'sé... J'veux aller aux toilettes, j'amerais ça me laver... J'aimerais ça, au pire, lâcher un coup de fil à ma chum ou... Fa que, j'pense que c'est vraiment des besoins de base, au lieu de dire... Y en a, peut-être que c'est “j'veux aller parler à un intervenant”, mais moi, je pense pas. Dans les premiers moments là, t'sé, au contraire, y veulent pus rien savoir des, des intervenants. Sont méfiants. Fa que y vont plus aller là pour les besoins de base.”

(13352, Caseworker, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

“Non parce que dans les ressources y'ont pas l'droit d'être là le jour, c'est juste le soir! En tout cas, ceux que j'connais. Y doit sûrement en avoir d'autres j'ai connais pas toutes. Mais ceux que j'connais, y est prennent pas l'jour! C'té y vont aller manger là mettons, y vont aller voir leur chum, y vont r'partir... Mais y é gardent pas nécessairement là tout le jour là au complet là! C'té si on parle ancienement d'la, on n'entend moins parler, mais la Maison Dauphine à l'époque, à une certaine époque c'tait très fort là! C'té nos jeunes fuyaient, y allaient là à Maison Dauphine. Y leur donnaient à manger, y passait leur journée là... Maintenant, on n'entend moins parler d'la Dauphine, on entend plus parler du Squat! Le Squat eux autres, y vont offrir à manger. C'té y vont y aller faire des checks point, mais c'est plus le soir, c'té c't'un endroit pour aller coucher. T'es en sécurité, tu sais que tu t'ferais pas voler c'té... c'est tout ça aussi là!”

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

“C'est souvent des premiers fugueurs! Première fugue donc démunis, pas d'reseau, pas d'contact... Et y ont entendu parler de, exemple, En Marge ou Bunker. Le pattern classique c'est ça! Sont en fugue, mais là le soleil se couche et la température descend, pis là ben ... on a faim... On r'tourne pas au centre d'accueil, y va nous mettre en arrière... On va pas chez nos parents, y vont nous tuer... “Ah... J'ai entendu parler de En Marge...” Fa que là, y s'en vont cogner... “Ah on est en fugue... on peut dormir...” Bon! C'est toutes premières fugueuses ça! Des premières fugues organisées, parce que c'est quand même... y ont déjà pensé peut-être qui pourraient pas rentrer au centre d'accueil le soir quand y commence à faire noir et froid! Fa que eux autres y vont utiliser ça, mais pas les fugueurs chroniques c'est... Tant qu'à aller à En Marge, y vont r'tourner au centre d'accueil ou y vont v'nir ici là! “Aille, je r'veiens!” Y vont pas s'faire chier.”

(11311, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

However, as this caseworker indicated, a youth's typical day can change over time, if the flight changes direction as well. Along the way, youths' contacts with the resources and caseworkers may also evolve.

“(R) Dépendamment où ils sont rendus là-dedans, dans leur cheminement là t’sé... Pour certains, oui, si y a une volonté de prise en charge... Souvent, ils vont... En étant en contact avec des ressources, les intervenants, des fois, ben, le chemin change un peu. Les buts, les objectifs... Parce que c'est dur. C'est difficile la rue. Certains... leur parcours change... Y ont une volonté de se sortir de ça. C'est trop dur pour eux autres. Malheureusement, il y en a qui plongent plus longtemps, pis... qui y passent à la limite.

(I) O.k. Fa que le type de journée change avec, avec le temps.

(R) Oui. Avec le temps. T’sé, un jeune qui fugue au moi de mai, ça se peut que, rendu en septembre là, y soit, y soit à boute pas mal là, t’sé. Que ça été difficile, pis... Pis en rencontrant des intervenants, ben, il peut être aidé là, à se reprendre en main, si tu veux ou... à se donner des objectifs pour un changement de vie. Parce qu'ils s'aperçoivent que ça l'a pas de bon sens de continuer comme ça. C'est trop exigeant t’sé. Dépendamment de ce qu'on a à leur offrir. T’sé, si c'est un retour en famille d'accueil ou en centre d'accueil, ben c'est difficile à prendre pour eux autres.”

(13352, Caseworker, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

“(C) Parce que t’sé au départ, t’as t’as toute la lune de miel... C'est l'fun, c'est ma liberté, c'est ça. Après ça, y a des affaires moins drôles qui arrivent, pis après c'est pas tout l'monde non plus qui sont des délinquants finis là. Dans l'sens où c'est pas parce que tu touches à la délinquance, c'est pas parce que tu fais des activités de délinquance, que t'es un délinquant profond là. Fa que t’sé, j'pense c'est des expériences, pis un moment donné y a, y a une prise de conscience où y se passe des trucs où c'que là, à ce moment là, le désir de réorganiser ou de changer, ou de réfléchir à ce qui est en train de se passer arrive. T'sé donc pour moi.

(I) C'est pas à chaque jour de leur fugue, mais y va avoir un moment clé des fois où ça va

(C) Moi j'pense à un moment donné, y se passe quelque chose. Pis selon le cas, ça peut amener à vouloir réorganiser sa vie, pis à faire des démarches quelconques. Par contre, t'as d'autres jeunes que c'est quelque chose qui va arriver très vite pis que c'est très clair pour eux, dépendant de l'âge aussi. Quand t'as 17 ans, ça se peut que tu penses qui a une transition qui s'en vient, pis qui faut que tu t'occupes de tes affaires, pis que tu vas vouloir réorganiser des choses. Fa que les jeunes 16-17 ont va souvent voir des jeunes qui vont arriver, pis qui viennent, pis qui vont se mettent presque immédiatement à réfléchir. Pis ceux-là, c'est ceux-là qu'on va voir dans la ressource de jour, qui vont rester au centre de jour pendant la journée, pis qui vont essayer de trouver un emploi, qui vont essayer, qui vont être en démarche. Mais t'sé le jeune de de 14 ans ou 15 ans, lui y é complètement dans d'autre chose.”

(11357, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Therefore, as previously mentioned, many caseworkers and police officers did not see much difference between the various times of the day. Although, some think that youths must spent more time on surviving in the evening, because they had to find a place to sleep. However, little time would be devoted to surviving in general. Those with less experience, nevertheless, would have to put a bit more effort into finding food and lodging, although runaway youths generally hope to do what they want when they want. Therefore, in the evening and at night, youths would hang out in the streets, parks and public areas, where events are held and where they could party and socialize.

“T’sé... Ça va être... Ben, en fait, ça va être la continuité. Dans le jour, si y ont pas trouver de place où aller, rester, manger. J’pense qui vont, sont encore en mode survie t’sé. Fa que, même à ça, j’pense que, pour la plupart... J’pas sûr que ça leur dérange ben ben de rester dans la rue, pis, j’pense pas que qu’est-ce qui veulent retrouver cette soirée-là, c’est un toit ça tête... Moi je pense qui sont plus axés sur, sur socialiser, d’être avec du monde qui a l’impression qui peuvent les comprendre, pis... On est, on est, ouin, on est vraiment dans les besoins de... c’est même pas des besoins de base, c’est, c’est... j’pense à rien, je fais rien, pis, la plupart du temps, j’mé gèle, pis on verra t’l’heure là.”

(13352, Caseworker, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

However, only eight caseworkers pointed out that youths hung out at clubs, bars and after-hour clubs, three of whom stated that this was rather unusual and that there even have been fewer youths hang out in these spots over the past three years.

“Pas pour aller prendre un verre pis jaser des chums! Si y se r’trouvent là, c’est pour travailler , vendre d’la dope ou d’la prostitution ou d’la danse! Y sortent pas faire la fête din bars! Ça peut arriver... Genre, ouais... J’en ai comme... Exemple, la madame que j’veux disais que sa fille a déjà été hébergée, est devenue adulte, demeure à maison pis que ça devient une recruteuse. C’est d’même que les centres d’accueil l’identifie, c’t’un gros mot mais en tout cas... Ben là, un m’ment d’nné... “Aille on sors-tu à soir?” Fa que là, y a une de mes jeunes qui est passé par là, pis a m’disait toutes les bars qui ont faite... Y sortent! Ouais on va aller chiller! Ça peut arriver pour certains types de fugueuses, c’est d’avoir du fun pis s’défoncer! C’est pas de se r’trouver din gangs, de faire d’la prostitution, d’la fraude ou... C’est juste... CHILLER, YEAH! J’en ai d’même! Là dans c’sens-là, y vont aller avoir du plaisir, y vont aller consommer din bars. Y vont découvrir le monde des adultes, la danse tout ça, l’alcool... Mais y en a d’autres pour qui y rentrent pas nécessairement par la porte d’en avant din bars, c’est pour aller danser, travailler, vendre d’la dope! C’est pas la même chose...”

(11312, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

Some other caseworkers believe instead that youths prefer private parties, which were less expensive, but where unusual experiences happened to them.

“Cé ça, ça peut-être dans des appartements, y'a beaucoup dans des appartements hen. Quand on dit eee t'sé un jeune, une jeune, ou un jeune qui va consommer, mais t'sé qui se défoncera pas là, t'sé pis qui dort ici et là chez des amis, il y a il y a un certain aspect où elle garde le contrôle là. Mais les jeunes qui mettons fuguent et vont rejoindre des, des jeunes adultes qui vivent 5-6 dans un 4 et demi là, c'est vraiment excessivement débridé là. Y a beaucoup de consommation, y a beaucoup d'échanges sexuels eee pis, cé souvent ils dorment sur place parce qu'ils sont toutes complètement rincés à l'os. T'sé là, ça fait que c'est plus débridé là. Remarque, ça cé vraiment des fugues où les jeunes disent, eee. Écoute, il y a 2 jours c'est la black out là (...) Pis t'sé, la jeune fille qui dit “écoute, j'ai perdu mes sous vêtements, je sais pas où ils sont, je sais pas combien y en a qui m'a passé sur le corps, je m'en rappelle pas”. Cé triste ça là. “J'ai toute le haut des cuisses là bleus”, mais qui se souvient plus ce qui c'est passé.”

(12322, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

Finally, as indicated by this caseworker and this police officer, it was difficult for them to answer the question regarding the places where the youths hung out.

“Ben, c'parce qu'on les forcera pas nécessairement à dire... Bon ben là t'sé comme on faisait auparavant, on donne un papier avec un crayon pis dire écris-moi c'que t'as fait pendant ta fugue! On fait pas ça maintenant! Avant on faisait ça, mais ça enlevait l'lien d'confiance qu'on avait avec le jeune, parce que bon à quelque part, “tu penses-tu que j'vas te l'dire...” Des fois, y finissent par nous l'dire, parce que on établit quelque chose avec eux autres qui fait en sorte que bon, y s'ouvrent un peu plus, mais c'est pas en les prenant d'front comme ça qu'on réussit à l'savoir! Fa que on va y'aller vraiment avec bon, les besoins d'base... Quand y arrivent et tout ça, on va vraiment r'garder qu'est-ce qui ont d'besoin, qu'est-ce qui vivent, qu'est-ce qui ont vécu... Y ont-tu été bien au moment où y ont été partis? Qu'est-ce qui fait qui sont revenus? Ou qu'est-ce qui... Bon t'sé... (rires)...”

(11312, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“Y sont toujours surveillées et encadrées pour pas leur laisser la liberté d'appeler quelqu'un. Y leur saisissent le téléphone, les empêchent de communiquer avec leurs parents, ou leurs amis, justement pour pas qui soient localisés. C'est difficile nous autres, en tant que policiers, de retrouver ces jeunes-là, parce que, justement... Les personnes qui les recrutent, y savent comment que ça fonctionne. Y savent qui faut pas qui communiquent personne, parce qu'on pourrait les retracer.”

(11462, Police officer, Montreal)

3.12 DURING THE FLIGHT—LODGING AND OTHER BASIC NEEDS

3.12.1 The youths' perspective

On the subject of lodging, youths explained that they first turned to friends and acquaintances. These responses were consistent with the results produced to date by the analysis, as well as with the fact that joining their friends is often the reason youths run

away. So, by preparing to run away in advance, youths generally know where to go. One of them explains that he would go to his girlfriend's place. This way, he never slept in the street. And another one confides that she would go to her mother's. Therefore, family members may also be solicited in these circumstances.

Sometimes also, youths sleep in the homes of strangers, whom they met on the street and whose intentions they do not know.

“Moi j'ai été chanceux. J'connais une fille qui travaille, dans l'fond, c't'une masseuse érotique. Pis ee a m'hébergeait t'sé, a trouvait que j'y faisais penser à elle quand j'tais, quand qu'était jeune. Parce que, elle aussi était din centres pis ... pis a m'hébergeait tout l'temps, a me payait la bouffe. Eee a m'a même déjà payé du linge.”

(12127, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

“J'ai rencontré un monsieur. Pis là, le monsieur, j'ai pas compris, y parlait pas notre langue, y parlait pas le québécois. Fa que là, y m'a dit : “a viens-t-en , viens avec moi, j'vea payer une chambre d'hôtel ”. Fa que là, c'est toute sorte de trucs que là, ça commencé à déraper. ”

(12126, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

But, with time, some learn to figure it out.

“Fa que là t'sé, même si y é vieux, tu y parles t'sé, “t'as-tu une cigarette tatatatata ? ” T'sé, pis là, un m'ment d'nné, tu t'arranges pour faire par exprès tu. “bah, qu'est ce que tu as, té tu dans rue t'sé ? ” Y te posent ces questions là. “Ouais chus dans rue, pis j'ai pas de place où coucher, ché pas où j'veais coucher là”. Pis la y dit “Ah ouin, ben tu viendras coucher chez nous ”. Non, tu sais lesquelles les personnes avec qui coucher, ça se voit tout suite là, c'est flagrant là...”

(12127, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

Moreover, community organizations are identified as resources that youths can count on...

“Pour la bouffe là. À Viger, ben... moé j'couchais souvent là, pis, j'pense que c'était deux trois fois par semaine là. Le matin, soit qu'on avait du café ou que, t'sé genre, y avait du monde qui venait là, pour la bouffe, la bouffe populaire là. Y se standaient pis comme, le monde se mettait ligne up. Pis y donnaient de la bouffe là. Mais des fois, quand qui en avait pas là, mettons courir la bouffe là. S'renseigner là. J'sais qui à deux trois églises au centre-ville qui en donne pis, POPS, pis, t'sé. (...) Ben POPS dans le fond, y donne à bouffer, y donne du linge, y a même un vétérinaire gratis. C'est cool en criss là.”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

“En connaissant des gens... T’sé moi j’présente beaucoup des personnes qui m’ont aidée dans mes autres fugues aux fugueurs qui arrivent pis que j’connais pas... J’leur présente, pis j’leur dit : “lui y peut vraiment t’aider si t’es vraiment dans marde, t’sé appelle-le, y va t’héberger pis toute ”... Pis c’pas mal ça t’sé... Sinon, y a des ressources, le Squat... C’pas mal la seule place que tu peux coucher quand t’es en fugue le Squat, parce que Lauberivière c’est 18 ans. Pis...le Gîte...ouin, mais le Gîte c’est affilié au centre jeunesse. Fa que, t’sé tu t’dis “ah, j’ai juste le droit d’aller au Squat ” Mais après trois nuits, qu’est-ce tu fais ? Y a plusieurs jeunes qui couchent dehors. Mais t’sé l’hiver c’est plate si à là... L’hiver, tu t’arranges pour avoir une place où aller coucher là, ça c’est clair là... Moi j’ai jamais couché dehors à part une fois, pis c’t’à cause que j’voulais rester dehors, y faisait chaud pis on était bien là...”

(12124, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

“(Y) Pis la plupart du temps, le monde qui vont héberger quelqu’un pour une fugue, ça va être temporaire, très temporaire. Parce que personne veut se ramasser avec une fugue sur le dos. (...) Bin encore, une fois en quêtant, même en volant, en se débrouillant avec les moyens du bord. T’sé la débrouillardise. C’est fort l’instinct de survie (...) J’ai rencontré quelqu’un qui ma dit : “écoute y a tel, tel organismes où est-ce que tu peux aller.” Pis y é venu avec moi. J’ai été très chanceuse, très très chanceuse. Y é venu avec moi, y m’a montré c’était où. (...) Fait que, j’ai dormi à voyons câline, l’espèce d’armée du salut pour les femmes. Pis j’ai été nourrie le matin pis toute.

(I) Pis lui, c’est qui c’té, c’t’un monsieur qui passait, c’était un intervenant un quelqu’un.

(Y) Non c’était un itinérant. Il vivait dans rue avec son panier d’épicerie pis son petit chien. En échange, je lui ai payé un repas chaud. Pis j’ai acheté de la bouffe à son chien.”

(14151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

.... but this does not seem to be the avenue first considered by youths, except to receive food and clothing. Friends, acquaintances or even family members can sometimes fulfil these needs. One young girl explains that she did not like going to the Bunker, which reminded her too much of the youth centre.

“C’est juste que je voulais pas là. Parce que là-bas, t’arrives, pis y faut que tu prennes ta douche, y te fouillent, t’as pas le droit de consommer... Y te prennent toutes tes affaires. T’as un uniforme pour coucher... Fa que,... moé, ça faisait pas mon affaire.”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

For these same reasons, another youth mentions that she preferred to find other means, such as joining other people in the street to build ties with them and be able to sleep in a group in public places. In short, youths want to use other means, proving to themselves that they can manage alone and are capable of being autonomous.

“Bouche à oreilles, y a des ressources là que tu vas entendre plus que d’autres là. Pis sinon, tu peux avoir des liens significatifs avec d’autre monde que tu peux aller dormir avec. (...) Genre Squat, lieu public. (...) Aussi, je pense que tu as besoin d’être débrouillard...Parce que si tu es pas débrouillard, ça fait en sorte que la plupart du monde quoi vont être euh... c’est la plupart du monde qui va être euh... Y ont besoin des organismes qui vont toujours être là, pis qui vont être complètement euh... désorientés pis y ont aucune autonomie.”
(11151, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

Then again, community organizations still serve a purpose, since youths sometimes tell lies to access their services.

“Ben à Montréal y en a plein, y a des ressources euh, des ressources qui se, qui te sont proposées, des fois euh (...) le Bunker, pis euh, En Marge, 12-17. (...) Ben t’sé, (rires communs), j’connais certaines personnes qui sont obligées de mentir, parce qu’au Bunker, quand t’es un jeune en fugue, t’as juste 3 nuits. Après ça, c’t’une carence de 7 jours. Pis En Marge, c’est euh, 1 journée/semaine. (...) Donc, y’a des jeunes qui sur leur âge euh, y vont chercher des fausses pièces d’identité, y vont dans d’autres organismes communautaires qui ne devraient pas aller normalement. (...) Fa que, les ressources euh, tu vas les chercher comme tu peux.”
(11158, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

3.12.2 The parents’ perspective

Parents also say that youths generally stay at a friend’s or an acquaintance’s, where they can eat and exchange clothes, in some cases. Some parents are delighted that their child ended up with good people, as this mother explains.

“Des fois, proche de chez moi, y a une brasserie et sous cette brasserie, il y a des locaux de pratique. Y avait fréquenté pendant quelque temps des jeunes adultes qui pratiquaient et je pense que y ont pris mon fils en pitié et ils lui ont remis beaucoup de vêtements.”
(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

But, as another mother mentioned, the network cannot always intervene so generously. She made the distinction between two types of people: those who provide lodging only and those who take care of everything. Immediately, this contribution can lead to other issues; this type of situation cannot last forever, or youths may have to render services in exchange for what they have received.

Therefore, the networks where youths go, as well as the services they can receive do not necessarily reassure the parents.

“Y ont toujours des endroits pour dormir. Y ont toujours donc, cé vraiment entre eux autres... Pis ça, c'est beaucoup en lien avec la consommation...”
(12221, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

Other parents identified community organizations as potential places for lodging, food and clothing.

“Donc, probablement que y a ça, y savent qui peuvent toujours appeler au Squat, y peuvent toujours euh, y savent que quand ça va pas bien, y savent qui peuvent toujours appeler là là... Donc, euh... cé sûr qui partent avec une certaine, un certain sentiment de sécurité, parce qui savent qui peuvent reculer pis revenir... ”»
(12221, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

Youths can feel safe in these places if they need to, despite some limitations and the fact that they sometimes prefer avoiding them because they have trouble getting used to them or feeling like they fit in.

But again, as this same parent mentioned, some basic needs are not as important to certain youths, notably heavy substance users.

“En tout cas de, de ce que je connais de, de, de ces jeunes là, les filles... sont tellement dans la drogue, tellement pognées là-dans là, que les vêtements là, cé le dernier de leur soucis là...”
(12221, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

3.12.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

Generally, caseworkers and police officers did not seem concerned about youths finding a place to sleep. Although some did indicate that not all youths manage to do so, particularly first-time runaways. But the fact remains that the information to this effect is readily available, so youths often already know where to go. They may also have help

from their friends, acquaintances, other youths or even adults whom they meet on the street. Some have bad intentions, but youths may sometimes come across good Samaritans.

“Mais les nouveaux qui arrivent au Bunker sont référés majoritairement par des jeunes dans notre dossier là comme référés par... c'est tout le temps marqué jeunes quasiment, des fois t'as la roulotte, des fois t'as premier arrêt, des fois tu vas avoir une autre ressource, travailleur de rue... souvent c'est jeune... Fa que, ah ben regarde, t'as le Bunker, y reviennent les reconduire, y vont dire, “regarde St-Hubert la porte bleue ”... Pis ben souvent ben y se font aussi offrir euh... de l'hébergement par du monde là, qui sont pas nécessairement pleine de bonnes intentions... ou... d'autres qui sont naïfs un peu, des personnes monsieur et madame tout le monde qui ont pitié du tit gars ou de la petite fille qui quête, pis qui fait “ah ben là, tu peux venir coucher chez moi ce soir? ” ”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Moreover, caseworkers and police officers stated that community organizations can also help them in this regard, although some pointed out that youths would sometimes go without their help for fear of being turned in.

“(C) Usually with the peers, usually with the group that they're connected with, that they're hanging out with. Very rarely do I hear of them going to shelters.

(I) Why do, why don't they go? Why...

(C) Because too afraid they're going to get caught if they go to the shelters. They have this paranoia thought process like I said, that they're the only person the only person that's missing right now and their picture has been faxed to every shelter and every facility and every coffee shop and every McDonald's and every you know what I mean... And everybody's looking for me, like it's crazy that they think this way

(I) So don't they know that it's private? For example if they go to Dans la rue, they cannot tell... do they say... if you come and say

(C) if it's a minor that they might”

(11342, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

Otherwise, youths may also turn to their family, particularly a parent. Caseworkers and police officers also noted that parents often take in their child who has run away.

3.13 DURING THE FLIGHT—THE PRICE OF AUTONOMY AND RESOURCEFULNESS

3.13.1 The youths' perspective

Generally, youths believe that people who take in and help runaway minors do not necessarily ask for money in return. This is consistent with the fact that several youths ask for help from people they know and can trust. But the situation can change when youths deal with strangers.

However, this reality appeared in a different light when youths made nuances by indicating that for them, they wanted to help in exchange for what was given them.

“Moi y me d'mandait d'faire le ménage, la vaisselle, toutes les corvées que j'déteste faire... Y en a qui demande des faveurs sexuelles. Ça par exemple, ça m'est arrivé une fois d'me faire d'mander ça. J'y ai rit dans face, j'y ai dit : “j'espère que t'as du bras, parce que moé là, j'sais m'défendre l'gros.” Pis y ma rit dans face, pis j'y ai dit : «essaye pour voir»...Pis y a pas essayé, pis je l'ai jamais r'commandé à aucune jeune, aucun gars, pis y m'parle même pus dans rue là t'sé... Y m'fait même pus salut. J'y fait un beau grand sourire (rire), pis y m'parle même pus... Fa que, c'est pas mal ça... Sinon, quel service, j'sais pas moé... j'me suis d'jà faite demander de sortir le chien à toutes les matins... T'sé, rien de plus basic là, au pire ton chien je l'adore... C'pas mal ça... J'faisais l'ménage, pis j'sortais l'chien... ” (12124, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

By way of thanks or compensation, some youths therefore offered to contribute, with money, alcohol or drugs. In other circumstances, some youths did housework. One boy said that the one-night stands that he had with girls who took him in was his way of making himself useful.

In summary, as this young girl explains, even if runaways have a good network and can use the services of the best people, the situation cannot last forever. Sooner or later, they will have to find other means of survival.

“Parce que tu peux pas, tu peux pas... comment j’pourrais dire ça, tu t’fras pas héberger éternellement par des bons samaritains... Y va falloir que tu t’débrouilles un m’ment d’nné, parce qu’un m’ment d’nné, nourrir, vêtir, prêter ton divan à quelqu’un t’sé, c’est chiant là, C’est chiant, pis j’l’ai comprend là... T’sé, un m’ment d’nné, mais t’sé, moi ça m’est jamais arrivé d’m faire crisser dehors de quelque part parce que j’change de place à toutes les s’maines t’sé. Mais mon dieu que ça doit être chiant pour vrai là... avoir un fugueur qui fait rien d’ses journées, tout l’temps, évaché sur ton divan à écouter la tv... Aarrghhh... je l’étranglerais j’pense... j’s’rais pus capable. Fa que, un m’ment d’nné t’as pas l’choix d’te débrouiller par toi-même, pis la seule solution qu’tu vois c’est criss vas faire d’l’argent facile, pis en plus de ça, si je travaille légalement, j’vas m’faire pogner. C’tu ça que j’veux? Non! J’vas faire d’l’argent facile. Si j’fais d’l’argent facile, j’vas pouvoir payer la personne qui m’héberge, comme ça j’vas continuer à faire le ménage pis a va plus m’accepter.”
(12124, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

Youths also agreed that services were sometimes required in exchange, such as selling drugs or granting sexual favours.

“Y en a qui écoute là, j’veux dire euh, tu peux rendre des services, tu peux aller vendre de la drogue pour un gars parce que euh, en échange d’une couchette, euh tu peux aller faire euh, ouf... C’est, faut qu’tu fasses attention pour pas tomber dans le pattern. (...) Ben t’sé, si, si, si t’es rendu à, à, c’est sûr, c’est tes choix, pis si t’es dehors dans, de des centres jeunesse, ou peu importe, c’est parce que, regarde tu voulais, soit qu’tu voulais ... Mais, y en a que, au début, y voulaient juste avoir une liberté, (...) T’sé, y’étaient pris à, à devoir débourser de l’argent pour leur crack, pour leur smack pis euh, euh avoir une place où coucher. T’sé, pis y en avaient pus de liberté, parce que y devaient faire euh, y avaient un pimp qui leur disait euh “go ahead, vas faire de l’argent, rapporte moi tant, tiens v’là un 20 sur ton 200.” T’sé, c’est, y ont pas plus de liberté, ils sont pris dans une, dans un mauvais pattern.”
(11158, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

This scenario is not really enviable and suggests that the freedom youths gain by running away is paid dearly.

“Fa que là, ce que les filles finissent par faire ? Elles vont danser ou elles se prostituent. Ou elles font de l’esclavage. (...) C’est pas de l’exception ! Même ici genre, parce que que moi, je te dis... Quand j’étais à XXX là, y’avait les filles, les filles là, elles venaient toujours me voir, pis elles me racontaient leur histoire, pis moi je leur parlais. Pis, en plus, y en avait qui étaient plus vieilles que moi là. Pis moi, pis moi, je suis là en train de leur parler : “Oh, faut pas que tu fasses ça, les gars ils sont comme ça. Pis t’sé, ils parlent, c’est comme, y en a plein là qui sont comme ça. T’sé, il, il faut pas que tu te fies à l’apparence.””
(11118, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

“(...) Or they want you to do thing some....some one of them ask, said to beat person that they want beat up....or they said to rob something, you rob it.... if you don’t want to do it... you just say no... and they just say, I do what ever.... So they said you have to leave... I guess I pretty sure.”

(11141, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Batshaw)

3.13.2 The parents' perspective

Parents' opinions were divided on this subject. Some said that no money or service was usually requested in return for lodging or other forms of support that youths were offered, whereas others raised issues pertaining to reimbursing a debt, with money or through services related to theft, drug sales, prostitution and helping with household chores.

“Ben oui, la même chose que pour l'hébergement de tantôt. Ça peut être eee faveur sexuelle, à vendre de la drogue, n’importe quoi là. “Fais mon ménage.” Oui, je le crois ça.”

(11211, Parent, Institutional, Montreal)

“Non euh, au début, on lui a pas prétendu de travail pour gagner d'l'argent. Sauf que, elle était à la disposition de ce type. Euh, euh, mais vers la fin du, avant qu'elle revienne euh, apparemment ce, ce... elle a entendu ce type euh parler à son cousin et en lui disant qu'il euh, voulait la faire se prostituer à Pierrefonds. (...) Non, je n'pense pas, qu'elle avait faite euh, euh là. Une bonne partie qui a sauvé peut-être ma fille de ces situations, est aussi que hum, ma fille a peur de prendre de la drogue.”

(11251, Parent, Community, Montreal)

This parent even claimed that youths also trivialize certain situations, which means that they do not actually recognize these insidious transactions.

“Mais que l'enfant, ben l'enfant, la jeune, elle se doute pas t'sé. Dans ça tête, c'est comme : “Ah, c'est juste une pipe là, c'est pas de la prosto là.””

(12222, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

3.13.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

According to caseworkers and police officers, youths do not generally need to pay money for the help they receive, although it may happen. These respondents thought instead that youths must render services, generally sexual favours in the case of girls

and crimes (theft in particular) in the case of boys. Very few respondents—only two caseworkers, in fact—believed that youths could receive help on the run that is completely free.

“Ben pas généralement, mais ça, ça se peut t’sé bon souvent les hommes vont... vont offrir aux jeunes filles ou aux jeunes hommes euh... t’sé des euh... cé ça euh... un hébergement pour la nuit. Ça commence comme ça, y é super gentil, l’amène au restaurant na, na, na, pis euh... moment donné, le jeune au bout de quelques jours euh..., y arrive au Bunker en disant “ben là euh... t’sé... me demandaient d’autres choses là” ou “je le voyais venir” ou «y s'est essayé sur moi ” ou... Y a des jeunes qui vont... y vont accepter, d’autres qui accepteront pas... Pis y a des viols aussi qui peuvent se passer carrément aussi... euh... De l’argent ben parfois, ça peut arriver pendant une fugue que... d’autres jeunes vont héberger ces jeunes-là... gratuitement pendant un temps... ou y vont dire ben “regarde euh..., tu vas coter le loyer toi avec t’sé... ”.”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Qu'est-ce qui peut demander? Mais moi j’pense que ça peut être unh... ça peut être un pédophile, ça peut être une façon de de de... entrer en contact avec lui, pis venir qu'à avoir des contacts sexuels avec eux autres... Pis des fois, sont pas allumés t’sé, y s'font approcher ça de même, s'en vont là pis euh... tranquillement, y a fait un bon contact avec eux autres, pis là, moment donné..., sont comme un peu pognés t’sé... Y veulent euh... y veulent pas euh... y veulent pas être s'a... veulent pas être s'a rue, veulent pas r'tourner mais... t'sé si... ça commence de même pis là y peuvent essayer d'avoir des contacts sexuels... ”

(11461, Police officer, Montreal)

Furthermore, youths who are also given food, which is generally the case, as well as clothing, could increase what they owe. This caseworker described what could happen to young girls.

“Pas nécessairement! Pas dans les premiers temps parce que... ça va de façon graduellement souvent, surtout les jeunes qui sont, dans l'fond, y va essayer de... c't'un peu comme dans la rue, y va essayer de casser la fille si on veut... Y vont essayer justement, là là, t'as rien à manger, y vont essayer de créer c'te survie-là si on veut, d'la faire assez forte c'te survie-là pour que la jeune justement quand a va recevoir exemple son Mcdo, a va t'être tellement reconnaissante envers c'te gars-là, écoute y va y avoir donné le Bon Dieu. Pis souvent ça sera pas le même gars nécessairement. Ça va t'être.... Chaque personne a un rôle à jouer dans l'fond dans ces gangs-là... La première justement, va abuser d'la fille, va justement installer c'te climat de survie-là, que la jeune a pas de vêtement, a pas rien... Des fois, moi j'ai j'déjà connu des jeunes qui étaient séquestrés, y ont pas eu de vêtement à peu près pendant un mois su'l'corps.”

(11313, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

Then again another caseworker made a nuance where she demonstrated that boys were also solicited for sexual favours, undoubtedly more often than we could imagine.

“Pour les filles, plus pour les filles, mais pour les garçons aussi. On va retrouver aussi des hommes qui vont héberger des garçons et qui ee qui vont, en échange, demander ee des services sexuels et ça c'est beaucoup, beaucoup, beaucoup plus répandu qu'on peut le croire. Moi je sais en tout cas personnellement, dans dans mon expérience là, t'sé au départ, c'est pas queque chose que j'étais consciente de ça, pis avec l'expérience tout l'temps tu vraiment restes fort surprise là.”

(11357, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

However, this institutional caseworker seemed to make a clear distinction between youths' realities, according to whether or not they are involved with street gangs. He claimed that only youths involved with organized groups find themselves forced to render services or to pay money in exchange for the support they receive for their protection or for other basic needs.

“Non, les jeunes dans l'milieu d'l'itinérance... C'est clair que la réponse c'est non! Les jeunes qui sont dans l'milieu de façon structurée au niveau des gangs de rue vont toujours avoir à rembourser où y habitent, comment dans l'fond y sont nourris, comment y sont vêtus aussi là! Y'ont toujours un dû envers le proxénète.”

(11313, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

3.14 DURING THE FLIGHT—MONEY AND WAYS TO EARN IT

3.14.1 The youths' perspective

To survive, youths could get by on \$5, \$10, \$15 or \$20 per day. However, they specify that these amounts are required only to ensure their survival and that they are realistic to the extent that the youths also resort to the agencies. Otherwise, youths mentioned amounts of \$30, \$50 or \$100 per day, according to individual needs. Cigarettes are a necessity for some, and the situation becomes inevitably more complex and demanding for regular drug users.

“Ça dépend, si t'es fumeur, si t'es non-fumeur. Si euh... quel genre de ressource tu fréquentes, pis ça dépend aussi de quelle consommation. C'est sûr que si tu fais du smack, ça va te coucher beaucoup plus cher que si tu fais euh... je sais pas... du mush mettons. Tu tombes dans coke, c'est sûr que ça va vite. Si t'es dans le crack ou pas, si tu euh... Ça va dépendre énormément de la consommation.”

(11151, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

“J'te dirais ça dépend de ta journée. Comme moi, j'me lève à midi. T'sé, j'me lève en déjeunant. J'ai pas besoin d'dîner là. T'sé fa que, mettons... J'ves essayer d'me mettre dans la peau d'une fugueuse, ben je suis une fugueuse. Mais t'sé, j'ves essayer d'me mettre dans ma peau pendant que j'suis en fugue... j'dirais à peu près 50-60 piasses par jour. Mais t'sé, si mettons j'suis dans marde là, vraiment vraiment dans marde, pis qui me reste juste 20 piasses ok, j'va m'acheter un sous-marin, plus des cigarettes, parce que c'est essentiel des cigarettes en fugue, ça c'est clair. Pour gérer ton stress, pour gérer mettons que t'es pus capable, pour gérer l'fait que tu manques de bouffe, y fait frette dehors mettons. Ostie, y t'faut des cigarettes... t'as pas l'choix, faut qu'tu fumes, t'as pas l'choix là t'sé... c'est essentiel... pis y faut qu'tu manges, pis faut qu'tu dormes... Malgré que j'ai pas tout l'temps faite ça, mais t'sé, c'est les conseils à suivre là... Moi durant ma dernière fugue, c'tait l'enfer comment j'dormais, pis que j'mangeais, pis que j'fumais du pot... plein...”

(12124, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

Thus, the youths' needs and the habits they develop have major consequences on the money required for their survival, as well as the freedom that they wish to enjoy.

“Ben c'est parce que... plus tu vends... plus tu consommes, plus tu vends t'sé. T'sé... ça... ça tu dors pas là-dessus t'sé... Mettons là, justement, quand tu vends deux quarts, t'as un quart à quinze piastres, t'as un quart gratis, t'sé. Fa que, plus que t'en fais, plus que t'es debout, plus que tu vends. Fa que, plus que t'es longtemps debout, ben, plus c'est payant. Fa que..., tu t'arranges pour pas dormir. T'sé, mettons là, tu passes trois, quatre, cinq jours debout, t'endors, t'endors mettons là, t'essayes de dormir durant la journée là. Tu dors une journée, après tu recommences ben... ça vient que t'es maigre comme un clou pis, t'es tout croche là, mais...”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

One youth says here that he managed to work, but this is rather unusual.

“Ouais c'est ça! Quand j'vendais, j'ramasse d'l'argent pour le loyer tout, mais pendant c'temps-là, pendant que le loyer était payé, ben t'sé, j'allais voir si... À cause que moi, j'avais aucune carte, rien! J'allais voir comme dans les restaurants si y'avait besoin d'un boss-boy ou quelque chose, t'sé, comme en dessous la table! T'sé, ça c'est sûr que ça l'aide beaucoup là... C'tait ça que j'faisais, même si j'avais aucune carte, j'allais voir les personnes pis si y prenaient du monde en-dessous la table pis toute, fa que ...”

(11114, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

Most often, the methods used by youths to obtain money must be profitable, quick and efficient. Therefore, several turn to drug sales and prostitution. To pay their debts, a few

boys said that they had to beat up and assault strangers, which was also the case for a few girls. However, girls would more often be required to work in strip clubs.

“Ça dépend parce que y en a plusieurs qui travaillent en fugue... Dans pas mal toutes les trucs qu'on peut imaginer... Y en a qui font d'la prostitution, y'en a qui font d'la danse pis qui sont pas majeurs, mais qui l'font pareil. Y en a qui travaillent, mettons comme femme de chambre ou des trucs comme ça. Mais t'sé..., la plupart des choses qu'on fait en fugue pour avoir d'l'argent, c'est vendre d'la drogue... t'sé... c'est payant... pis ça d'mande pas vraiment d'effort comme femme de chambre. T'sé moi, je l'ai déjà faite femme de chambre en fugue, pis après une semaine tu t'fais r'tracer, parce qu'y checkent. Fa que..., j'suis restée là une semaine pis là. Y m'reste encore un chèque là-bas d'ailleurs, faudrait peut-être que j'aille le chercher... Ça r'ssemble à ça là... mais c'qu'on fait d'nos journées si on travaille pas, on vedge, on est avec nos amis pis on prend d'la drogue.”
(12124, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

3.14.2 The parents' perspective

To answer this question, parents generally estimated only the basic costs related to youths' primary needs, so the amounts they mentioned were relatively lower than those reported by the youths. In fact, only a few declared numbers, which varied between \$3 and \$10 per day. It is not that the parents excluded substance abuse and addiction problems presented by runaway minors, but rather it seems that they did not want to include them at first in the expenses required to survive. It thus appears that the youths' and the parents' perspectives differed on this subject.

3.14.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

Most of the caseworkers and police officers thought that youths did not require more than \$5 or \$10 per day to meet their basic needs. Some even believed that they could manage without money, since they could use the services offered by the various charitable organizations. However, substance users need more—\$20, \$30, \$50, \$100 or even \$200 per day—and this situation could have a major impact on what occurs while youths are on the run. For example, as this caseworker explained, some youths spend everything they have on drugs or alcohol.

“Pis y compense ça vers la nourriture, ben y en a beaucoup qui... t’sé quand tu consommes des drogues fortes là, t’as pas besoin d’manger! C’pas comme un joint que tu fumes, tu vas avoir un trip d’bouffe après là! Quand tu consommes là, t’as pas besoin d’manger! Fa que t’sé t’achètes ta pilule 5 piasses pis... t’as pas besoin d’manger! Des fois y en a qui sont 24 heures sans manger, 48 heures sans manger, parce que sont ça peanut, pis ça les maintient! Fa que... Pis on va l’voir beaucoup parce que y partent y ont un tel poids, pis y r’viennent y sont grosses de même! Ça ça veut dire que y ont consommé pas mal, y ont pas beaucoup mangé! ”

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

Caseworkers and police officers described various activities in which youths engage to obtain the money they need, such as squeegeeing, begging, stealing, and selling or delivering drugs. Youths could also receive support from their family, but this would be rather unusual. Respondents focused instead on the crimes that might lead the youths into committing under such circumstances. Notably, police officers were particularly sensitive to the girls’ situation and the prostitution rings in which they get involved.

“Soit qui quêtent, soit qui... Y en a... t’sé tu peux faire plein d’choses là! Tu peux..., soit que t’sé tu peux voler un peu, tu peux... Tu fais un peu d’affaires... Tu fais ton possible là, t’essais de ...! Tu peux vendre d’la drogue aussi ou faire..., rendre des services à quelqu’un qui va t’donner d’l’argent, je sais pas là! T’sé c’est... Mais si tu veux faire d’l’argent, tu vas t’organiser pour en faire là! ”

(12463, Police officer, Quebec)

“Moi je n’ai rencontré une, exemple cé un cas un exemple, j’arrive là “t’as-tu fait de la prostitution” Oui t’sé direct là, ça a 15 ans, oui, oui, “cé quoi tu as fait, de l’escorte de la danse ”, “j’ai fait un peu de toute, mais cé temps-ci, cé de l’escorte”. Comment ça fonctionne bin là, elle m’expliquait comment ça fonctionne : ils lui donnaient 120\$, en tout cas, ils ont des tarifs chacun là, pis y avait un conducteur. trois filles. quatre filles sont assis avec le conducteur, et ça se promène d’une place à l’autre... et les tites filles débarquent, elles vont se prostituer, et elles rembarquent dans l’auto, pis elles font ça une partie de la nuit... elles rentrent vers trois heures. quatre heures du matin, pis sur leur nuit, il leur reste, elles font 2 000\$-2500\$, pis y leur reste, je sais pas 50-100\$... parce qui donnent toute ça à leur prox., à leur amoureux. Mais quand qu’on les rencontre, il faut jamais dire que nous autres, on peut pas dire que cé ... cé un “ostie” ... ”

(11464, Police officer, Montreal)

Another officer described the relentless processes in which youths with substance abuse problems also find themselves.

“Souvent les services sexuels ou les services des transports de drogue. Souvent y deviennent pas des mules là, mais y deviennent des runneurs. Partir du point A au point B, faire des petites jobs, faire de la livraison tout en livrant des stupéfiants. Pis ça ça leur fait sans doute payer leur consommation. T’sé ceux qui sont longtemps partis, qui vont se ramasser à faire des jobs parce que, souvent y se font prêter de la drogue... Mais là y faut qui remboursent, pis en étant redevable, té tout le temps redevables à ce moment-là, ce monde-là tu prends jamais le dessus. Fa quee y te gardent pas le l’esclavage, mais de redevance.. Pis tu dois tout le temps quelque chose, pis ça vient difficile de sortir du milieu de la rue quand tu viens bin bin en plus tu deviens dépendant. Y les rendent dépendants à la drogue. Je te parle pas de toutes les gars-là, ça c’est quelque cas, j’té parle de mes vieilles affaires, t’sé quand j’étais aux stupéfiants. ”

(12462, Police officer, Quebec)

3.15 DURING THE FLIGHT—NETWORKS, FORMAL OR INFORMAL CONNECTIONS?

3.15.1 The youths’ perspective

We thus imagine that the activities required to survive are not done solo. This youth stated that a network was indispensable.

“C'est tout l'temps une question d'association, là ça c'est... Tu peux pas faire d'argent en restant sur le coin de la rue comme ça, t'sé non. C'est, si tu décides de mettre une casquette devant toi pis d'quête, ben c'est ton choix pis, tu t'associes aux gens de la rue en quelque sorte, qui passent pis qui te donnent des 2 piastres, pis des 1 piastre, pis des 25 sous. Fa que, si, si tu t'associes pas à personne, tu sais que tu restes dans ton coin, pis tu fais absolument rien. Donc, oui. ”

(11158, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

Some youths would indeed have had close ties with organized networks, including friends and certain family members, for example a brother or parent, who were official members of the network. One youth explained that, nevertheless, this situation had nothing to do with his running away. These connections have benefits related to money, but mostly, they provide prestige and popularity. Furthermore, another respondent believes that it is difficult to integrate a crime ring. To do so, you need a certain body type and must be willing to do many things; she mentioned especially gangbangs and porn videos. Or, you need to show that you are tough: you have to steal or you must

beat, or even kill, people. And despite all the evidence available, the local law remains the same – every man for himself.

“Parce que c'est... c'est un milieu beaucoup plus rude ou y a beaucoup plus de violence ou faut beaucoup plus que tu te prouves t'sé. Si t'as... tu boites en arrière, tu vas boiter en arrière, tu vas rester là, y va te tirer une balle dans jambe t'sé.”
(11151, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

As for the boys, they also revealed that to join these groups, youths have to show what they are capable of and that they are trustworthy. This leads them to commit crimes and suffer violence intended to gauge and test their determination to integrate the group and abide by its rules. The fact remains, however, that in such a group, youths find safety, as well as protection and self-esteem, not to mention solidarity and respect.

“(Ces groupes offrent) la protection. Mettons, tu sais que... qui a quelqu'un qui te cherche parce que... té allé voler chez eux pis toute. Ben, tu peux les caller pis y vont s'arran... y vont s'en occuper là.”
(12128, Jeune, Garçon, Institutionnel, Québec)

“Beaucoup de la solidarité, l'idée de famille, milieu... milieu d'appartenance, d'avoir un réseau euh... (...) Pis la sécurité aussi. Tu sais pus où te garrocher bah...”
(11151, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

Therefore, youths' opinions were divided in regards to organized networks. Some said they sympathized with these groups, but the youths who claimed this were rare among those we met. Most often, youths dismissed any form of potential benefit in becoming linked to these groups. Their personal experience, as well as that of people whom they knew well, clearly revealed the associated risks. One of them explained, for example, that he had to test crack in exchange for lodging. This experience caused him health problems from which he still suffers the consequences. Another related that she knew one youth who took refuge in a therapeutic community to hide from gangs. He was under the impression that he was advancing in life by belonging to an organized network, but it was only an impression.

The large majority of youths in the sample did not think it was necessary to join an organized group to survive on the run. This would be particularly true for those who have a good network of contacts to whom they can turn and for those who do not hesitate to turn to community organizations. Some would never even have access to them, even if they wanted to. The older youths among those whom we met stated that youths are often just pawns for these organizations, even though they may think they are among the most important members. Therefore, the relationships they youths have with them are usually rather informal. The youths have dealings with these groups and work for them, without necessarily being chosen as members.

As a result, there would be several subtleties to be made regarding the variety of possible relationships with organized networks. The results highlighted the fact that a runaway's involvement or affiliation with these groups is not necessarily a consequence or the result of running away. These groups are apparently part of their environment and their lives. In this logic, some youths would have known them even before having run away.

“You growing up into it, your family into it... some of your friends it’s part of it... or know people who in it.... or say I.... I walk on the street and I see. Let’s see I saw one person ok... I know the drug dealers, I see them with two people, and if I go and I help him.... and I make them get away.... like.... I will talk with them... and he might help me after...”
(11141, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Batshaw)

It is understood, however, that given the presence of these groups and some youths' familiarity with them, these young people could be at greater risk of hanging out with them more seriously while on the run. And, since these groups often include familiar faces from one's social environment (friends, acquaintances and family members), it is likely that youths who get involved with them do not feel that they are trapped, nor subjected or reduced to using a last-resort solution, but rather that they are being resourceful and proving their ability to survive autonomously on the street.

3.15.2 The parents' perspective

The majority of parents considered that it is very difficult for runaways to function completely independently, without an organized network. However, they did not only refer to “questionable” alliances that youths must establish, but also largely reported the possible contribution of friends, acquaintances and lovers. Moreover, the accounts that we communicate here suggest that there is a spirit of mutual help between youths who are in this situation. At least, this was what some parents believe.

“Mais cé des jeunes adultes hein, dans le fond, cé qu, t’sé je veux dire... Regarde, XXX a l'a 18 ans... demain... elle devient un adulte... On r’garde nos tites filles qui sont à l’Escale, je nommerai pas... bon ben... ça s’r’trouve dans rue... Pis a voit XXX... Ben, XXX va l’aider... Donc, cé... comme ça que ça s’installe... T’sé, je regarde XXX, a en a eu une fille plus vieille... qui avec, qui elle a faite sa fugue euh... Quand qu'est revenue du Maroc. Elle est devenue adulte elle donc, elle, elle a d’autres contacts. Cé par ces contacts là que XXX a connu d’autre monde, mais cette fille là, elle l’a connue à l’Escale...”
(12222, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

“À la quête je crois que c'est effectivement, former un espèce d'échange de “on quête chacun sur notre coin de rue, on fait du squeegee chacun sur notre coin de rue.” Comme ça, ça va être plus rapide pour ramasser plus rapidement l'argent.”
(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Adding to these examples are two other parents' accounts. The first said that her son was part of a group of friends in which the person who paid was simply whoever happened to have money. Therefore, different people paid from one day to the next, depending on the resources that the group could gather. We learned also from another parent's story that while on the run, her daughter met up with young adults who manufactured circus accessories. These adults, who were themselves linked to a community organization, took in mainly young people who had gone to youth centres. The group asked youths to show up and be diligent in their activities, which, in the end, had beneficial effects on her child. This parent therefore believes that there are advantages to being part of any group with which youths share a common interest. Obviously, this point of view stems from a positive experience, which, unfortunately, is the exception among the stories we heard.

However, based on other much tougher examples, the other half of the parents explained that the alliances that youths are forced to form to survive often involve adults with dubious intentions or difficult to pinpoint. These people are everywhere, and they target youths by offering them the comforts that they are used to. Otherwise, youths are forced to beg, which they can do only for a short time. And those who want to earn a living that way need strong solidarity within their group. These excerpts thus illustrate in part the processes that await runaway minors.

“Elle a commencé par être une cliente, pis elle a commencé à rendre service à un ti peu plus haut, pis a un ti peu plus haut. Pis là, ben à un moment donné... euh... plus qui vont monter dans l'échelle de la drogue toute ça. Ben, y ont plus de besoin au niveau pour aller transporter, vendre euh... si et ça... d'avoir de la liquidité, faire des vols pour aller voler, pour aller acheter d'autre drogue. Donc, qui fait qu'à un moment donné... y a toujours des services à rendre...”

(12221, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

“Je commence à penser que c'est un réseau qui contient des, qui est formé par des adultes et, qui peut-être euh, euh mettent en avant des jeunes. (...) Ma fille m'a mentionné une fois : “en faisant partie d'un tel réseau, tu seras protégée.” Si quelqu'un te menace ou si quelqu'un, si une fille plus âgée veut te battre ou si je l'sais pas, qu'un garçon plus âgé veuille te faire quelque chose de mal. Tu vas dire : “ha, mais je fais partie de mon gang euh, donc je suis protégée.”.”

(11251, Parent, Community, Montreal)

These parents had a lot to say about organized crime rings. This suggests that their own child lived such an experience, much more than the youths in our sample let on, or that they were extremely worried in this regard. Among other things, these parents spoke about the methods that young people must use to approach these groups. They said that boys must prove their strength and courage, that they must somehow impress members of the group they wish to join by proving they are capable of extending their limits in terms of crime.

“Des vols, des fois qui agressent quelqu'un, ça faisait partie d'une initiation d'une gang de rue un moment donné, ça été t'sé des agressions gratuites carrément, des initiations pour montrer que té quelqu'un, que té hot, que tu peux faire partie de la gang de rue que tu veux faire partie. Y faut que tu montres que té tough. Fa que, fais quelque chose pour montrer, t'sé surprends nous.”

(11211, Parent, Institutional, Montreal)

For girls, scenarios are raised where they fall into a trap, believing that they have found the love and affection they were seeking.

“À ce moment, elle a tout de suite accepté qu’elle fait l’amour à un type, qu’elle considérait comme euh, un type qu’il l’aimait. Parce qu’il écrivait des poésies d’amour sur euh, certains cas et trucs. Bien sûr, c’était pas ça, parce qu’a l’a finit par être agressée, mais c’que je veux dire, je veux dire que hum. Euh, il y a une, vraiment comme euh, je me répète, c’est une stratégie, une tactique qu’ils connaissent euh.”

(11251, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Some parents even saw a few advantages to being associated with a group. These advantages would be related to protection and safety, as well as self-esteem and a sense of belonging, in the sense that these groups could serve as a new family for these youths.

“Je crois que le jeune y voit ça comme un avantage parce que y est protégé, y fait partie, cé une appartenance. Garde, nous autres, quand on est tout seul, on déménage à St-Clinclin, pis qu’on connaît pas personne, tu vas te sentir mal. Quand t’as quelqu’un, bin cé le sentiment d’appartenance, té pas tout seul. T’sé, avoir des relations avec du monde, des amis, des confidents, de faire des activités avec tu demande des conseils. T’sé, cé toute là, là, socialiser que je pense que cé important. Pis être en gang, bin t’as beaucoup plus de pouvoir que tu seul.”

(11211, Parent, Institutional, Montreal)

One parent cautiously explained that some youths could even learn from such an experience.

“C’est sûr que... ouf... Seigneur... c’est sûr à répondre à ça parce que... t’sé, autant qu’ça peut être pos... négatif euh... c’est quand même une... une... une expérience t’sé... Mais en même temps, euh..., j’pas en train de t’dire que... oui, finalement ça va être positif. T’sé..., j’pense que c’est différent pour chacun. Mais... à quelque part, c’est... son instinct d’survie, certain. Pis...c’est plate, mais... t’sé, c’est comme un choix que les jeunes font... en espérant que cet épisode de vie-là perdure pas, pis que ça l’aille pas trop d’repercussions négatives là, en vieillissant. Mais... ça dev... ça devient..., ça peut devenir des jeunes très débrouillards, très autonomes... Des jeunes... qui grandissent, pis qu’un moment donné, y se sortent de là pis que... Mais t’sé, c’est pas l’idéal comme ch’mín d’vie...”

(13231, Parent, Institutional, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

But as a rule, we found that parents see more disadvantages. They indicated, among other things, that these groups could only drag youths down even further. Most of them added that running away in itself does not force youths to associate with such groups.

They believe that, in principle, the resources and connections that youths create with one another should and could enable them to avoid this type of thing. Only one parent differed on this point and had this to say:

“Pour vivre dans la rue je crois qui faut que tu ailles un réseau gang de rue ou autre. Mais y faut que tu ailles un réseau, tu peux pas être tu seul. Bin non, faut que tu connaises où tu vas où tu vas manger, tu peux … bin non. ”

(11211, Parent, Institutional, Montreal)

3.15.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

In their accounts, caseworkers also suggested that runaway youths are often connected somehow, either closely or remotely, with the criminal world through members of their own network. Therefore, the steps required to get close to them generally are not very complicated. However, the majority caseworkers believethat youths who become more seriously involved with the criminal world do so only for utilitarian reasons, to satisfy their primary needs, as well as their needs in terms of substance use.

“Cé le monde de la criminalité là. Cé le monde interlope. Ils finissent toujours par connaître un des leurs, ou par connaître quelqu'un qui connaît quelqu'un. Fa que cé un peu comme ça qui finissent par connaître quelqu'un. Mais ils sont vraiment pas bavards par rapport à ça. Cé très très difficile d'avoir de l'information précise; premièrement, ne jamais dire aucun nom, alors eee cé une affaire un peu nébuleuse là. ”

(12322, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

On another aspect, some caseworkers mentioned that alternative types of relationships are possible. In this perspective, caseworkers determined that some friendships could lead youths into criminal circles, as could family relations, since it is not unusual to have a brother or cousin who is already part of that world. Sometimes, also, the people in their circle are already involved, meaning that in the end some youths identify themselves better with the criminal world. In his comments, this caseworker suggested that some youths feel more important because of their contacts with the criminal world. We thus conclude that he believes this to be true for runaway youths as well.

“(Soupir) Oui... ça on... t’sé on... du temps du Wolf Pack, on en entendait parler, quand y en a un qui sortait dans les journaux “Ah! C'est l'ami d'un tel pis... ” C'est quasiment valorisant pour eux autres su'l coup, parce que là y connaissent quelqu'un d'important. C't'une vedette qui fait l'journal t'sé... Fa que là nous autres, la confrontation t'sé. Y aurait-tu pu faire des choses bien, au lieu d'encourager les p'tites filles à s'prostituer, t'sé... Mais... c't'important pour nos jeunes d'être toughs pis d'être... le king, pis de... t'sé. J'le disais tantôt, de r'tourner au centre d'accueil par soi-même... c'est poche... D'y r'tourner les menottes aux poings, c'est ben plus cool... t'sé on en a une qui é en prison pis... faut qu'a jouse la tough parce que... est en prison, pis est faite forte, pis plus de temps a va passer au trou, mieux ça va être pour son... son image... J'n'ai déjà eu un qui é sorti d'ici avec six chars de police en avant, pis y était fier là... y avait t'nu six chars de police de minuit l'soir à huit heures le lendemain matin, icitte en avant... J'peux-tu t'dire que quand y é sorti, y avait la tête haute... J'veais juste envie d'y... une claque en arrière d-la tête, dire “Heille, baisse les yeux là... ” Quelque chose... quelque part... c'est pas cool, mais pour lui... d'avoir faite déplacer l'artillerie lourde là, parce qui é appellait l'artillerie lourde... euh... y était quelqu'un... Si y avait été... un jeune normal... qui s'rait sorti d'ici l'matin pour s'en aller à pied jusqu'au tribunal, parce que c'est là qui s'en allait... non..., ça y prenait... la police. Y manquait les caméras, pis y aurait été cont... oublie ça, y était au septième ciel... Fa que... l'image!”

(12351, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

Actually, only one caseworker clearly stated that only a minority of youths become formally associated with organized groups. She is from the Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec region. Proportionately, more police officers—that is, three out of the 16 whom we met—were of the same opinion. However, some of them anticipated an increase in the presence of gangs.

“Une minorité, une minorité qui se ramasse dans les pattes des gangs de rue, mais maintenant avec l'avènement des gangs de rue, ça va commencer. D'après moi, ça changé un peu je pense, parce que de plus en plus, les gangs de rue prennent de la place. Les Motors sont quasiment toutes en dedans. Fa que les gangs de rue, tites gangs émergentes.... ça peut un moment donné, que ça soit eux qui contrôlent la drogue. Si c'est eux qui contrôlent la drogue, un moment donné. C'est sûr, surtout pour la prostitution, les filles, l'argent, la drogue. Je sais pas, peut-être éventuellement ça va commencer à changer.”

(12462, Police officer, Quebec)

Therefore, these caseworkers think that to be part of these groups, youths must prove themselves by fighting, stealing, selling drugs, transporting merchandise and, sometimes, prostituting themselves. It is a matter of gaining the group members' trust. This means the use of violence, to which youths are subjected and which they inflict upon others.

“Ben souvent y va avoir, dans l’fond, les groupes plus structurés, y va avoir une initiation souvent. Si on parle des jeunes filles, j’pourrais parler des garçons aussi parce que j’ai déjà travaillé avec les garçons aussi. Au niveau des garçons, c’est plus dans le fond de commettre soit un délit, de justement se positionner dans une façon d’agresseur si on veut. Y a un côté qu’on connaît un p’tit peu moins, c’est que les jeunes garçons vont... si on veut, la gang va leur passer d’ssus, mais de façon agressive. Dans l’fond, y va avoir une bataille, y va n’avoir peut-être six contre le gars, pis après ça y va t’être initié, ça va t’être son initiation. Pis les filles ça va t’être plus au niveau du gang bang, y vont vivre un viol collectif dans la majorité des cas. Mais simon, y a pas vraiment de, si on parle des jeunes plus d’la rue, des jeunes itinérants, y a pas vraiment d’initiation. En tout cas, connue, à mon sens.”

(11313, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“(R)Yeah I mean there are certain things that they would have to do. I’m sure, to prove that humm their, their interested and most of the time, it’s something that’s illegal or humm humm or degrading or whatever. Like prostitution, trafficking and you know humm...

(I) ok... is this, it’s not free, you don’t get in for free? Or you don’t stay in it for free

(R)Humm not necessarily, not necessarily, I mean, there has to be a motivation or commitment.”

(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

These caseworkers also noted the benefits for youths of associating with these groups, including money, recognition, enhanced social status, protection, self-esteem, access to drugs, power, prestige and pride. In closing, six caseworkers, including five from Montreal, brought us back to our first subject of interest—running away—noticing that in this specific context and to survive on the street, youths are absolutely not obliged to associate with organized groups. As a rule, runaway minors could manage without these groups and could even disassociate themselves from them. Police officers were also of this opinion. The large majority of the officers mentioned that youths do not need these groups, that they should not associate with them and that it is possible to disassociate themselves from from these groups.

3.16 DURING THE FLIGHT—SUBSTANCE USE, RISKS AND DANGERS

3.16.1 The youths' perspective

The previously mentioned substance use appears to be at the heart of the runaway experience. Without being the main motive, it could be somewhat of a symbol or at least a way for youths to savour fully their freedom. It is also part of the social activities, which are central to these youths' runaway experience. The list of drugs they consume or have consumed is generally quite long. Most of the youths, 19 to be exact, claimed that there are no drugs that they can obtain on the run that they cannot obtain otherwise. There are three exceptions, including one girl who said that every drug is more available when you are on the run. More concretely, the list of drugs that the youths claimed to have consumed in their lifetime includes alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, Seroquel, glue, solvents, hallucinogens, amphetamines, mescaline, heroin, ecstasy, morphine as well as other non-prescribed medications, such as antipsychotic drugs and Ritalin.

What is most worrisome is unarguably the fact that youths stated that their first opportunity to experiment with certain drugs arose while they were on the run. Some experimented with alcohol and cannabis, whereas others took the opportunity to try heroin. Either way, this situation applies to 12 of them. As a result, youths generally associated drugs with the most serious risks they took while on the run.

Of course, the risks faced by these young people were associated with other factors also, including the means used to survive and make money, as well as the people they spent time with, whose intentions they did not know.

“Ben, coucher dans rue pis... si té en hiver, tu peux mourir. Mettons se prostituer là... Si tu rentres din gangs de rue, tu peux t’faire poignarder... ou tirer ou... battre... C'est tout le temps à risque, surtout en fugue.”

(11115, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

“T’sé, en même temps, t’sé, quand que tu es mineur, t’es un peu in, dépendant, de, des adultes, ou t’sé, des affaires de même là. Pis si t’es pus en contact justement avec tes parents, ben... Comme t’sé, des besoins là... T’sé, y en a comme... Qui ont, qui ont pas d’amis, à mettons là. On va y aller à l’extrême là, que y ont pas d’amis, que y ont comme pas de connaissances. Fa que, justement, y vont avec des personnes pas bonnes que, y demandent de faire des affaires. Mais ça veut pas dire que la personne... Peut-être qu’elle va te donner un endroit où dormir, pis genre... T’as le droit de te laver, mais ça veut pas dire qu’elle va te laisser manger, qu’elle va te laisser boire, qu’elle va te laisser genre... ”
(11117, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

“You can be dead... you can take drugs and die... you can get into an accident, you could... sleeping on the streets... you can kidnap. If it’s a grow running away, they can get rape, they can kidnap, they put in to doing something, they don’t want do like prostituting, or sleeping with people that live in the house... yeah... ”

(11141, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Batshaw)

Again, consuming drugs and alcohol seems to be the risk that plays the worst tricks on them. Among the youths we met, nine were of this opinion. They explained that after consuming substances, they had less self-control, and the groups they were with could sometimes lead them to taking things further. One young girl related how she once let someone with hepatitis prepare her injection. Youths thus spoke in considerable detail of the risks they took by going to dangerous places, sleeping on the street, and hanging out with strangers who often had bad intentions, assaulted them and led them into crime. Furthermore, substance abuse is risky in itself for the youths’ health, especially since they do not always know the quality of the products they consume and because substance abuse renders them even more vulnerable to abuse from others.

“Bin cé le risque que toute tourne autour de la conso. Ce que tu vas consommer, ce que tu fumes aujourd’hui, y savent pas ce qui vont consommer, à quelle fréquence. Pis y savent pas ce qu’ils consomment non plus. Y a tellement de marde dans ce qui consomme, qui peuvent péter des psychoses n’importe quand. Pis eee moi, juste pour te donner un exemple, moi je suis psychotique sur le bord de la schizophrénie, parce que j’ai trop faite de psychose pis eee les médecins me l’ont dit, la prochaine psychose, on sera pas capables de te ramener. Pis eee dans le fond, moi ça m’a fait arrêter une shot, c’était de la marde que je prenais.”

(12121, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

“Quand tu pars, tu pars là... pis tu consommes, pis que t’as pas de juste milieu... Comme moi, quand j’consommais pis j’tais chez nous, j’avais un juste milieu... j’tais comme : “j’vas pas arriver trop g’lé chez nous... j’vas pas faire si ”... Mais on a pus d’juste milieu... ”

(11111, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

“(le plus grand risque c'est) De me faire mal... Que les gars profitent de toi ou que t'ailles pas des bons amis, pis que finalement, y faut que tu prennes la drogue ou des affaires de même, que tu prennes trop de drogues ou des choses comme ça là. Mais c'est parce que j'tais sur une drogue là, et le gars y a comme voulu profiter de moi... ”
(11113, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

“Ouais. Parce que mettons t'es en fugue, pis je sais pas pis tu décides d'aller chiller avec je sais pas trop qui. Là, ils te fournissent de la drogue, pis là tu te drogues. Là, tu fais une overdose là, là, tu penses qu'eux autres ils vont t'aider ? Bin non, ils vont savoir que t'es en fugue, pis là ils vont être comme... “je vais pas appeler la police là sinon... ” Ils vont être impliqués aussi là. La police ... ”
(11118, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

“Oui, c'est sûr, pour n'importe qui, oui, elle est un risque, parce que tu sais pas vraiment ce que la fille va faire. Euh, je sais pas, t'as consommé, t'as consommé un petit peu trop. T'es pu allumée. Euh, y a quelqu'un qui demande euh, je sais pas “tu viens tu chez nous ”. C'est bon. Tu vas chez eux, pis en fin de compte, tu te souviens pus de rien, tu sais même pas où est-ce que t'es, pis t'sé... Oui, ça s'en est un danger, mais en fin de compte, la fille, elle, elle se dit : “hum, j'ai toujours consommé là, voyons là, il m'arrivera rien là. ”.”
(12122, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

Apparently, at the time these youths participated in the study, they were able to recognize the risks they had taken. This may not have been the case when the event occurred. The fact remains that some of them—six, regardless of gender—believed that it is important for them to take risks in life. They not only do so mainly for the thrill, but also to learn from their mistakes and to prove that they can do anything.

“Mais moi j'ai aimé que, la sensation que ça m'a donné. T'sé quand, quand le policier tape sur l'ordinateur, pis il l'sait que c'est toi, pis il te poursuit. Lui y'est comme en voiture, mais tu cours pas, tu restes à marcher tranquillement, au même rythme. Tu ralentis pas, tu n'accélères pas. Rien, même euh, comme si de rien était. Tu regardes le policier comme “qu'est-ce qu'y a? ” Tu continues ton chemin comme si de rien était. Mais en même temps, en dedans de toi, ce que tu ressens, c'est fort là, parce que tu le sais que, peut-être qu'a va débarquer de son char pis commencer à te courir après, juste pour t'embarquer, pour te ramener en centre. (...) Ha ça c'est, des fois ç'est l'fun. Un policier un moment donné, j'étais, ça faisait une semaine que j'étais en fugue, même manteau, même pantalon quand j'étais, j'avais fugué, même soulier. Tape sur son ordinateur, elle me regarde, là elle m'suivait en auto là, mais vraiment. Elle m'suivait pas parkée sur le coin de la rue, elle m'suivait pis plus j'avançais, a l'avançait, pis était vraiment à côté de moi, pis a regardait. J'ai continué à marcher, pis je me suis rendu jusqu'au métro. ”
(11158, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

The youths' conception of danger appears to be different from their perception of risk. Out of the 26 youths who answered this question without hesitation, nine claimed that

they never felt in danger while on the run. A slightly higher number of them—15 to be exact—narrowly escaped or experienced some difficult times.

“Oué. Pis je me suis senti en danger aussi, parce que... t’sé là. L’été d’après, chus retourné à Montréal avec un, un de mes chums de gars pis... J’y parlais justement de ça que, Montréal, je viendrais le moins souvent possible, parce que j’voulais pas revoir ces gens là, t’sé. Pis, que je serais vraiment bad lucké de tomber dessus t’sé. Pis deux minutes après, quand j’ai dit ça. Y est rentré dans le Mc Do. T’sé. Je l’ai vu arriver, la face en sang t’sé, pis toute. J’ai comme gelé, carrément. Pis là, j’mé suis senti vraiment dans marde là, genre. J’étais sûr que j’allais me faire tuer, parce que moé, j’passais trois jours dans rue là-bas cette été là. Pis... genre, j’voulais coucher à Viger t’sé, où c’est que je couchais avant t’sé. Pis là, y était pas question que j’aille coucher là, là. T’sé. Si eux autres y étaient là, c’est parce qui allaient coucher là ce soir là, là. Pis là, oui, j’mé suis senti vraiment en danger, pis... Quand sa gang est passée à côté de la vitre pis qui m’ont tout reconnu, avec le gros smile dans face, là, j’étais dans marde là. J’étais vraiment, vraiment dans marde, pis... Sur le fait, j’ai dit à mon chum de gars “tabarnack, c’est pas vrai que je reste icitte à soir, sti, j’vas manger une balle entre les deux yeux. Pas de joke.” Fa que, oui, c’té fois là, j’mé suis senti en danger là, mais... C’est arrivé deux fois là. Avant ça. Tant que je faisais tout ce qui me disaient, pis que toute était correct là. On, tout était cool.”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

“Un moment donné je squeegais pis y’a un gros noirs, bah c’est pas la couleur ça me dérange pas mais un gros gars, un gros jack. Y m’avait claqué le cul pis disait awaille viens-t’en ma criss de salope pis j’avais comme figé. Je suis venue vraiment en criss, ça ma vraiment fait peur pis là je me suis sentie en danger, y s’en allait sortir un gun genre. Pis y...lui... je dis qu’est-ce que tu veux taba...tab...j’étais jeune pareil là, pis j’avais pas autant d’affirmation que j’en aurais aujourd’hui t’sé. Pis y s’en allait me frapper. Au début c’est ça, y’avait plu c’té journée là pis y m’avait faite ça avec son parapluie, pis y’avait sorti son boute de gun, pis y m’avait dit toi reste tranquille. J’ai faite comme oups, là j’ai comme retourné de bord pis... y s’est mis à rire genre HAHAHA mais full fort. Je m’en rappelle comme si c’était hier genre, pis je suis allée voir mes chums genre pis le temps que je leur explique la situation, euh autres s’en allaient leur péter la gueule, y était parti.”

(11151, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

In every case, danger seems to refer to everything happening beyond their control, whereas risk depends directly on their own behaviours. In this regard, the consequences of the risks they took seemed to have marked them far more than the consequences of the dangers they may have encountered. In other words, it would appear that youths make a distinction between external dangers—those stemming from the street and the people they may encounter there, both of which they have little control over—and internal dangers, which concern them more directly. These two types of dangers certainly deserve the same attention.

However, only one respondent explained that she does not feel safe anywhere anymore, as a direct consequence of the dangers she faced while on the run. The others said that when they felt in danger, they could turn to their friends or their mother. Nine youths mentioned this solution. Four young respondents said they would turn to community organizations. The same number of them said that going back to the youth centre was another solution they had considered. One youth even raised the idea of contacting the police. Therefore, youths could very likely mobilize various resources to deal with external dangers. Whether this is true for internal dangers is another question.

3.16.2 The parents' perspective

The parents also had a rather long list of drugs that their child consumes or has consumed. They are drugs that youths can obtain at any time, with the exception of certain hard drugs such as crack, crystal meth and heroin. In concrete terms, the parents' list of drugs that their child has consumed in his or her lifetime included alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, glue, solvents, hallucinogens, amphetamines, PCP, heroin, ecstasy, as well as GHB. Some of them also indicated that running away gave their child the opportunity to experiment with new drugs.

Among the risks that youths take while on the run, the parents raised substance abuse again, just as the youths did; hard drugs, more specifically, are mentioned.

“Mais cé ça la consommation de drogues dures... pis ce qui est dangereux cé euh... mais cé tout ce qui est lié à l'exploitation sexuelle... la t'sé...”
(11254, Parent, Community, Montreal)

“Peut-être que oui en consommant de la cocaïne là... t'sé... y'avait jamais connu ça euh... t'sé y connaît pas ça. Fa que, malgré qui avait euh... son ex beau-père était quelqu'un d'habitué là'dans là... Mais, euh... oui à mes yeux euh..., toute qu'est-ce qui est drogue... là,... pour moi, cé à risque t'sé...”
(11255, Parent, Community, Montreal)

“Ouais. En danger, la quantité, la...le...la quantité de c'que tu consommes euh...Pas manger pas euh...Les psychoses aussi euh..., le suicide..., la prostitution...J'pense que...après tout ça, c't'en masse...”
(13231, Parent, Institutional, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Furthermore, parents mentioned other risks that often resulted from this substance use, and which youths are willing to engage in for money—such as prostitution as well as any other means they are willing to use. Among other things, running away also leads them to meeting evil people, capable of exploiting them sexually and in other ways. Even more importantly, parents worry that youths may be assaulted, robbed, raped, beaten, mistreated and kidnapped.

“Bin oui cé ça cé ça... “Est-tu avec un violeur? Est tu en train de se faire découper en morceau? On va-tu la retrouver dans un mois dans un boisé? On va-tu t’sé ? ” Cé ça qui nous passe par la tête là, cé vraiment ça. Pis l’histoire de Cédrica t’sé. “elle va-tu revenir elle? ... cé tu une fugue ou elle cé fait enlever ? ” Nous autres... était partie acheter un chip. (...) Toutes ses choses étaient restées à la maison, aucune carte, pas d’argent, elle avait juste 3 \$ pour un chip pi cé tout. Fa que, nous autres on a vraiment... moi j’envisageais plus l’enlèvement que la fugue t’sé.”

(11211, Parent, Institutional, Montreal)

Thus, parents consider the risks not only related to youths’ substance use, but also related to their vulnerability, to the trauma they could experience due to this use, and the potential consequences.

“Cé ça... vraiment qui soient... récupérés par des plus euh... des plus forts qu’eux pis qui y ait de l’abus euh physique euh... sexuel beaucoup beaucoup t’sé des... Ma plus grande crainte cé qui... qui se passe quelque chose de... déterminent t’sé euh... Comment dire... qui se passe... quelque chose qui va être lourd à porter pour le restant de tes jours... T’sé mettons t’as... je me dis... fuguer cé, cé... cé pas le fun rencontrer du monde cé pas le fun... à mon sens euh... être violé par une gang... dans un parc... cé comme un autre niveau. Fa que t’sé comme a va tu être capable d’éviter ça... t’sé euh... Est-tu dans une situation qui peut être dans... t’sé y a des... y a des événements qui sont plus graves que d’autres là... pis ça ça n’est... Fa que,... là si... t’sé se faire tabasser t’sé je pense à XXX mettons se faire tabasser par une gang euh... cé comme plus difficile à porter que... ”

(11254, Parent, Community, Montreal)

“La première fois ou la ouin... la première fois c’était d’être désemparé de pas... savoir qu’est-ce que ça voulait dire... de pas savoir quoi faire... d’être euh... J’étais comme un bloc de béton qui vient de me tomber dessus euh... Pis la deuxième fois c’était d’être... ce que je trouvais le plus difficile cé que je me disais pas encore je suis tellement fatiguée t’sé... Cé comme, cé épuisant hein t’sé de vivre avec un... pis de recommencer la séance avec l’autre là... Je me souviens avec ma pis là ouin... pis euh le ben... malgré tout ce qu’on veut, la une fille cé différent. Fa que... j’tais encore plus insécuré... je trouvais qu’est, qu’elle a encore plus euh... susceptible d’être abusée t’sé même si... les gars peuvent l’être aussi là... ”

(11254, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Plainly, parents thus imagined the worst—abuse, rape, kidnapping—powerful and traumatic experiences that could have irreversible effects on the youths. That is why these parents had difficulty dealing with their child running away. Two of them stressed that the wait was never-ending, not only for their child to return, but also for things to get underway to find the youth. The sense of powerlessness is thus difficult to bear, as is the feeling of rejection, not to mention the possibility of never seeing their child again.

“Un moment donné elle parlait d’aller eh... d’aller, partir dans l’Ouest, pis... un moment donné j’pensais qu’a serait, a serait partie à Toronto eh... Mais ma plus grande crainte c’est ça, c’était de... de pas la “re”... pas la revoir. Je sais pas eh... je pense que... à long terme, mais ouf, je sais pas si j’pensais à du long terme... c’est vraiment le temps s’arrête.”
(11256, Parent, Community, Montreal)

We were not surprised to learn that these parents took action upon learning that their child had run away. Four of them notified the police. Others called their child’s friends, advised the caseworkers, and asked their advice. One parent even notified the media. Two other mothers said they searched on their own, walking through alleyways, parks and other places where they thought they might find their child.

“J’ai fait des téléphones dans... chez Pops eee, au Bunker, pour vérifier si y avait mangé là, si y avait dormi là ee... J’ai aussi cherché mon fils dans la rue, marché dans les secteurs que je pensais qui se tenait, en face de chez Mado coin Beaudry et Ontario coin Beaudry. Cette rue là Beaudry cè vraiment le coin où il se tenait le plus. J’ai regardé le square Berri aussi et eee j’étais très heureuse de pas le retrouver là parce que j’avais vraiment un choc culturel quand j’ai faite le tout eeee ça ca a été eee... À part ça qu’est-ce que j’ai fait, j’ai essayé de rejoindre des amis mais j’ai remarqué que j’avais pas nécessairement beaucoup de téléphone de ses amis. Fa que, ça a été difficile ouais.”
(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

We can also understand that the parents’ had mixed responses in regards to whether or not the risks these youths take are significant for them. Some acknowledged that youths could feel the need to push their limits, as well as derive a certain pleasure in facing the unknown. This sensation could, to some extent, reduce their ability to sense and recognize danger.

“Ouan cé ça j’ai l’impression qu’elle sentait pas le danger, elle sentait plus l’excitation pis euh. T’sé euh j’occupe tout l’espace pis euh, un grand sentiment de puissance d’une certaine façon là... euh... ouan...”
(11254, Parent, Community, Montreal)

However, parents gave fewer examples of the dangers to which runaway youths are exposed, except for a few examples that were almost the same as those given in regards to the risks. On this subject, parents preferred to talk about the means that young people could use in extreme situations to feel safe. Therefore, three of them reported that family was the best place for their child to go. In fact, some of them did just that. One mother also explained that she would leave the door unlocked at all times, so her daughter could come back home if she needed to. She said that she did not sleep during this period, to the point of developing health problems from which she had still not completely recovered. Others learned that their child had called a friend, or had even gone back to a youth centre.

Finally, one parent made sure to specify that he did not know all the details of the dangers his son faced, because he did not want to question him on the subject, for fear of learning things that were too hard to hear.

“Bin c’est tout ce qui compte des fois, c’est le fun de le savoir parce que tu te dis que ee ça y faudrait peut-être regarder ça pis en discuter mais eee je pense que ça va aussi avec les capacités que j’ai. On dirait que des fois y a des choses, que des fois y me dit des choses, pis ça rentre dans mes oreilles avec un gros choc, genre j’ai pris du “mushroom”, ça prend, ça fait un effet choc pis eee là, j’ose pas aller plus loin. Fa que, dans ces expériences de fugue eee, on dirait que pour l’instant eee moi j’ai décidé de pas poser beaucoup de questions. Je respecte aussi le fait que y a pas le goût nécessairement d’en parler plus qui faut, c’est quelque chose qui est encore pour lui ee pas plaisant à se rappeler.”
(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.16.3 Caseworkers’ and police officers’ perspectives

Among the caseworkers whom we met, nine believe there is no drug that youths can obtain on the run that is not available otherwise. The other caseworkers, who were more numerous, think instead that the runaway context makes it easier to obtain drugs, and they noted that some drugs in particular are easier to consume in this context, such as

crack, heroin, amphetamines and hallucinogens. Still, these caseworkers think that being on the run is conducive to trying drugs for the first time. This would be true for cannabis and alcohol in some cases—as a few police officers believe—and injection drugs, in other cases, as some caseworkers were inclined to think.

“Non, je pense qu’ils peuvent les utiliser. C’est sûr que, souvent, les jeunes qui vont commencer à consommer par injection, vont le faire durant qu’ils sont en fugue, t’sé. Parce que ça demande du matériel, c’est plus, il faut être plus caché. T’sé de consommer une pillule d’amphétamine, tu peux faire ça n’importe où, c’pas compliqué. De t’injecter, un hit d’héroïne ou de coke, ben, ça demande une... t’sé faut que tu sois plus tranquille, là t’sé. Ça demande la seringue, ça demande l’eau, ça demande la substance. Faut que tu chauffes ça, faut tu taponnes. Fa que, peut-être de faire ça dans ta chambre, c’est plus risqué, t’sé. Ça, pis ça fait des plaies aussi, t’sé, fa que... Ça peut éveiller les soupçons de... Tandis que quand qui sont en fugue ben... personne en a rien à foutre autrement dit, t’sé.”

(13351, Caseworker, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

“Quand on parle de drogues un peu plus chères... ben des drogues de synthèse dans l’fond, si on veut, sont quand même assez facilement capables de s’ procurer ça, si on parle d’ecstasy ou du speed. Mais si on parle de cocaïne, d’héroïne, c’est pas nécessairement des jeunes qui consomment ça dans la vie, sauf que justement, en échange de services sexuels ou en échange de ... Pis on a des revendeurs aussi dans nos fugueurs là, qui vont t’être capables justement de s’ procurer ça par la vente de d’autres stupéfiants dans l’fond.”

(11313, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

Also raised was the notion that being on the run is a particular context that can influence young people’s behaviours. This context sometimes involves being in places where people take hard drugs.

“Oué. Moi je pense qui vont plus se, faire un choix, ou peut-être aussi que, dans la rue, mettons, qui s’est jamais injecté, y a plus de chance qui s’injecte dans la rue, que quand qui, qui, qui, mettons, qui était avec d’autre monde qui s’injectaient pas. De pas avoir l’influence, de pas, mais dans la rue... Ça, si tu te ramasses avec du monde qui s’injectent, c’est souvent là ta première fois que tu as le goût de l’essayer t’sé.”

(13352, Caseworker, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Another point of view is that the runaway context may lead youths to think they have nothing to lose anyways.

“Ben, pas vraiment à ce niveau-là. Mais il y a tout le temps un risque de consommer d’autres… T’sé les raisons qui les amènent à fuguer, des fois, c’est lourd hen. Fa que, y a beaucoup de désespoir là-dedans, qui peut faire en sorte que.... Y vont avoir une prédisposition à essayer les drogues plus dures, parce qui sont un peu à boute, pis ça leur dérange pas qui arrivera ce qui arrivera, t’sé.”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Alternatively, this long-awaited freedom could intensify their desire for new experiences.

“Ah c'est possible oui! Parce que y a des jeunes qui peuvent essayer des nouvelles choses, comme j'disais tantôt, la curiosité, le fait de vouloir essayer des nouvelles choses pendant la fugue. Fa que, fort possible que oui, y en a qui vont y aller à plein, pis qui vont dire “ben r'garde, tant qu'à faire j'ves essayer ça...” Ben oui! Ça s'peut! Mais euh... c'que j'dis, c'est que y peut avoir autant d'possibilités, j'pas sûre que c'est relié au fait que...”

(11312, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“They could take maybe humm an excess of combination of different kinds of drugs and alcohol and humm humm humm and they're at risk for humm again the same theme around sex and humm and humm humm... humm disease, sexually transmitted diseases.”

(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

Besides substance use, and abuse particularly, caseworkers and police officers believe that runaway youths also take several other risks. Most of the caseworkers and police officers—except for only five caseworkers—believe that taking these risks is important to these youths. Taking risks would give them a sense of power, a means to break the rules, surpass their limitations, as well as feel completely alive.

“Important ben... ça vise surtout je pense à l'exploration de leurs euh... de leurs capacités, de leurs limites euh... Cé important dans ce sens-là, cé qui se croient capables de... pis ils expérimentent... Fa que pis ce qui est intéressant dans la fugue, cé que souvent justement... cette expérimentation-là... va leur permettre de voir que oh, oh... “j'avais peut-être pas raison à ce niveau-là, comme je ne peux pas me débrouiller tout seul, cé pas vrai... j'y arrive pas t'sé ”... par exemple... (...) Un adolescent, de toute façon, par nature, est en plein développement et donc en pleine, en plein désir d'expérimenter. Fa que cé sûr que hyper stimulé comme il peut l'être lors d'une fugue où tout est nouveau, surtout quand qui débarque dans un... dans un quartier comme le centre-ville de Montréal qui ne connaît pas... Euh wow là, y en a à voir, les organismes sont fa...”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Des fois y ont l’air bin bin game, mais entre ce qui disent pis ce qui font, cé des affaires différentes, pi ça cé une question que je vais poser à des jeunes que je trouve un peu intenses, un peu heavy. Pi moi, j’ai l’impression qui brûlent des étapes, y fond des affaires qui sont t’sé, y a pas de schémas idéal, y a pas de pattern nécessairement, ça dépend du jeune. Mais un moment donné t’sé ee, un moment donné cé des questions qui faut qu’on pose “jusqu’où té près à aller”. Pis je leur dit souvent “moi, je veux pas la réponse, ça m’intéresse pas, je veux que tu te la poses la question, la réponse a t’appartient”. Cé de, truc y vont pas me dire je suis prêt à aller jusque-là, ou je suis prêt à faire ça… moi je leur dis, pis cé la suite de ma question “jusque où té prêt à aller, moi je veux pas, la réponse je veux que tu te la donnes à toi”.”

(11353, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Ouais, si c’est important pour eux j’pense que oui, t’sé quand tu prends des risques tu te sens en vie, tu sens qui se passe des choses, tu sens qui a de l’adrénaline ee. T’sé y a des sentiments, t’sé y a des jeunes, juste de penser à partir en fugue, de commencer à préparer ee leur départ ee, y vont ressentir une grande fébrilité t’sé. Pis c’est le risque du départ… t’sé j’veux dire, les risques c’est c’est, on en a nommé quelques-uns, mais j’veux dire chaque question on pourrait passer beaucoup de temps si on décortiquait t’sé toute. T’sé j’pense qui a des risques de différents niveaux pis t’sé c’est ça, j’pense que cette recherche de de se sentir en vie, en train d’accomplir quelque chose. T’sé sont souvent dans des, dans des milieux un peu statiques, dans des situations un peu statiques, dans des choses qui sont routinières, qui sont… Comme j’disais, t’sé, des jeunes qui disent, faut que tu demandes peut-être que ça l’a changé là, mais t’sé faut tu demandes des Q-tips pour te laver les oreilles le soir, faut tu y penses l’après-midi, pis que tu fasses une demande de matériel t’sé pour pouvoir recevoir ça dans certaines unités. Peut-être que ça l’a changé.... Moi c’que j’té parle là, c’est quelqu’un qui me conté ça y a quand même deux ans, trois ans peut-être là. J’sais qui a eu beaucoup de changements, mais t’sé toute est tellement régi... Y ont certainement peut-être pas le choix mais ee ça reste que pour les jeunes t’sé, j’pense que la prise de risque devient à ce moment-là comme un espèce de moteur, t’sé qui peut leur permettre de sentir qui se passe quelque chose dans leur vie t’sé. J’pense qu’on en a tous besoin un peu.”

(11357, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Institutional caseworkers also had something to say on the importance of risk in the lives of these youths. In this regard, some of them focused on the potential consequences of these risks on the youths’ lives.

“C’est ça le danger, là. C’est qui sont pas assez solides. Pis souvent, c’par imitation qui fuguent, ou pour un… T’sé, impulsivité. Mais ee, t’sé, c’est dangereux un jeune qui prend d’la médication pis qui part sans médicaments. Des jeunes qui sont ee épileptiques, des jeunes qui sont diabétiques, des jeunes qui sont eee… Eee… borderlines, pis qui fuguent, t’sé.”

(11314, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“Ben c’est ça, c’que, dans l’fond, c’que je dirais c’est qu’c’est plus Mon Dieu, au niveau de… c’est l’impulsivité du moment… Y vont pas calculer si c’était un risque ou non ou si ça va… y vont calculer, calculer si ça va rapporter, mais pas dans l’sens eh… c’tu dangereux ou pas.”

(11316, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

Whatever the case may be, caseworkers and police officers identified a relatively large number of other risks. They mentioned unprotected sex, drug addiction, overdose, abuse, bad company, kidnapping and prostitution. The risks they mentioned are physical, psychological and social. Some believe also that the time spent on the run could have long-term repercussions on their personality and mental health. In summary, living on the street severely tests young people, exposing them to violence and exploitation, as well as to the possibility of becoming attached to a particular lifestyle, and eventually being unable to consider other alternatives. In this perspective, some police officers and caseworkers said that dropping out and having suicidal thoughts are also risks that may be associated with the runaway experience.

“Ben écoute si on va à l’extrême ça peut être le risque de s’faire tuer à quelque part! Ça peut être le risque d’avoir, de faire un overdose, ça on l’voit de plus en plus! Ça peut être le risque d’être pris à... pis t’sé des fois les premières fugues, j’té parle pas des fugues plus courantes, mais des premières fugues, y ont toujours le risque de connaître des inconnus qui ont peut-être pas l’goût d’connaître nécessairement! T’sé y a des risques beaucoup reliés à ça aussi là t’sé! La jeune qui part pour la première fois en fugue, qu’a rencontre une gang... m’a dire que l’risque est pas mal plus élevé que la fille qui connaît l’coin un peu pis qu’a connaît les gangs qui sont alentours de d’là! Le risque est pas pareil... Abus sexuels, t’sé, agressions... mets-en là! On peut en nommer plein là mais...! J’té dirais qui risquent gros!”
(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

“Eee la mal nutrition, pis des problèmes de santé que le jeune à déjà d'avance de base. Mettons qui est diabétique, y é si, y é ça, bin y se met en risque parce que c'est certain parce qui va mal manger dans rue. T'sé même si y a Squat, ou bin Dauphine leur donne de l'insuline, des choses comme ça, peut-être que c'est mal contrôlé pareil, parce que t'sé c'est pas évident de suivre le jeune. Après ça, bin eee c'est toutes les gens qui peuvent côtoyer pis qui connaissent pas au boute, pis c'est quoi l'intention de chacun? Supposons qui rencontre un groupe d'adultes, bin y en a peut-être qui on des intentions pas correctes face au jeune. Des risques... y a beaucoup de retour d'agression sexuelle eee ... T'sé on disait des fois, y sont peut-être d'accord pour avoir un échange de relations pour avoir des choses en échange de la drogue ou bin des fois, y sont peut-être pas bin bin d'accord non plus pour avoir des relations, pis des fois y en ont forcé. T'sé y peuvent risquer de commettre des infractions, des crimes juste pour pouvoir survivre un peu dans rue, hum voler. Eee y en a qui sont pas mal grands, y peuvent recruter pour de la prostitution juvénile. Les jeunes filles peuvent être amenées dans une autre ville peut-être bin, dans le trouble... Moi j'en ai rencontré comme ça.”

(12461, Police officer, Quebec)

“ “Moman, papa sont pus là pour moi, pis, de toute façon, m'a être placé jusqu'à 18 ans... euh... j'en ai plus rien à foutre de toute manière, y m'arrivera ce qui m'arrivera ”... Des actes très suicidaires là t'sé euh... Comme ça qui peuvent être euh... Des actes de détresse profonde... Plus que la détresse est profonde, plus que le jeune va prendre des risques, parce que plus qui va être euh... y va en avoir rien à foutre finalement ... ”
(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

In another perspective, this caseworker suggested, however, that youths might learn from the risks they take, just as, in principle, anyone can learn from his or her own mistakes.

“Eee ben par méconnaissance de leurs limites t’sé, pis y a du positif là’dans là. T’sé moi j’pense pas que t’sé, de prendre des risques c’est juste négatif là. Ça peut être positif aussi que y apprennent à se connaître là’dans, y apprennent à découvrir c’est quoi justement leurs limites. Ça peut être un risque au départ, mais ça reste que ça peut être un risque ben positif, où ça leur a permis de se connaître, de se dépasser de ... C’est ça, de mieux connaître leurs limites pour le futur, de de voir comment y peuvent se débrouiller comment... T’sé des fois c’est en commettant aussi des erreurs que t’apprends t’sé la plupart du temps, t’sé en faisant des mauvais choix, ee en prenant des risques. C’est pour ça que la question du risque pour moi reste à peu, reste positive là.”»

(11356, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Actually, in addition to describing the risks that young people take while on the run, some caseworkers wanted to talk about the notion of risk as such, claiming that it would not have had the same significance in all fields of practice. This could also be part of the problem itself.

“Euh... Mon Dieu! Si la DPJ m’entendait... Euh... j’té dirais qu’on a une notion du risque qui est très large... comparativement au milieu institutionnel... euh... T’sé c’est comme nous autres, une jeune qui va faire d’la prostitution, si a l’fait d’manière autonome, qu’a l’a conscience de c’qu’a fait, de comment a l’fait, pis qu’a prend des méthodes pour se protéger qui sont pas la contraception d’urgence, parce que moi, Mon Dieu, c’est rare qu’une fille utilise la pilule du lendemain comme moyen d’contraception, ça m’fend l’cœur... mais t’sé que bon... oui ses clients vont porter des condoms, que si son client dit “J’té donne vingt piasses de plus pour pas mettre de capote”, pis qu’a tient son boutte... va être moins en compromission qu’une fille qui l’fait, qui a un pimp en arrière pis que... bon... a pas conscience de toute, toute c’qu’a fait euh... Au niveau d’la consommation... euh..., t’sé moi un jeune qui va avoir pris... du speed pendant des années ou qui va avoir pris d’la coke pendant des années, pis qui va m’arriver un moment donné pis qu’a m’dit “Eille, j’ai slacké la conso, j’fais juste fumer un joint par jour... ”, ben j’vas être fier d’elle... Pour moi, ça c’ra pas si compromettant qu’ça... euh... Pis t’sé din fois ça va faire longtemps qu’le jeune est en fugue, pis y va avoir un p’tit quelque chose qui va m’accrocher, j’vas avoir une information qui va me... “Ok, son développement c’est compromis un p’tit peu... ”, mais moi j’vas mettre ça plus gros justement pour que là, y commence à être temps qu’on mette un terme à son... à sa fugue...”

(12351, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

Nevertheless, after identifying the potential risks, caseworkers and police officers also addressed the issue of danger. However, this subject seemed slightly touchier for them. Some associated danger with abandoned locations where youths sometimes have hang

out, where they may witness fights and other violence. The respondents also associated danger with adults whom youths may encounter, and who may lead them to commit inappropriate acts. Generally, however, the respondents' accounts indicated a certain distinction between the notions of risk and of danger. The former would be more commonly associated with the youths themselves, since they take these risks and are responsible for them to a certain extent. Whereas the notion of danger would be associated with contexts or external events over which youths have less control. Yet, these dangers are tremendous in the eyes of caseworkers, and the fear they arouse in them is part of what they consider the most difficult to manage when intervening with runaway minors.

“When they run away... Well you fear the... worst case scenario... you know they get used, abused humm raped humm put in situation where they can get killed, whether it's humm drug humm related business or... humm [pause] You know there's all, there's that AND their age. If they run away.”

(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

“Rape, the danger, the nasty stuff that happens to them when they're out there like when I heard one of my kids tell me that she was urinated and defecated on like I was just mortified... No human being should ever have to entail something like that, you know it's just, it's, it's... It's not something that you, you just, it's not something that you think about, it's not something that you know, it's not something that if you looked at a kid, you wouldn't, first thought wouldn't come to your mind... “Yeah she's probably been urinated and defecated on.” It like a foreign thought process, it's very sick.”

(11342, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

“Bin cé sûr que cé toujours la crainte que le jeune soit mal pris, cé tout le temps ça évidemment. Je vous disais tantôt, toujours la crainte qu'on les retrouve mort dans un fossé là, mais bon, ça cé comme ça fait partie de la légende urbaine un peu de la fugue là. Moi ça m'est jamais arrivé là, pis on n'entend pas beaucoup parler, bin peut-être dans des grands centres là, mais ici à Québec, on n'entend pas beaucoup parler, mais évidemment cé la crainte là, qui leur arrive un malheur, qui se fassent recruter dans un gang organisé criminalisé, pis t'sé cé beaucoup ça là.”

(12322, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

However, a few caseworkers claimed that there are not very many situations where youths are in real danger, because most of them do not cross the critical boundaries beyond which they would be in such a position. Youths would therefore return to the fold before it is too late. Some go back to their parents, take refuge with friends or head back to the institution. This idea coincides with the statements of the large majority of

caseworkers, who emphasized the presence of organizations and resources that youths can turn to when they feel in danger.

“Ben moi j’pense que oui là... Un m’ment d’nné, quand tu sais pas où tu t’en vas, t’sé tu vas r’chercher la sécurité là! Mais t’sé j’y vas par opinion là, mais c’est sûr que tu vas chercher une ressource si tu sens que ça va pas bien, tu vas essayer d’te trouver quelqu’un pour t’aider ou... Tu vas r’venir chez vous au pire! T’sé si t’as eu ton trip pis t’as pas aimé ça, tu vas r’venir au Gouvernail, pis tu vas r’tourner dans tes affaires, pis tu vas être ben content! Tu vas r’trouver ta sécurité qu’t’avais dans ton... dans ta place là! T’sé quand t’arrives au Gouvernail ben t’as ton... 3 repas par jour t’sé... Un m’ment d’nné tu rentres là! Ça fait 3 jours que t’as pas mangé là, un m’ment d’nné tu vas t’en aller à quelque part où manger... Ta survie va prendre le dessus là! C’est ça! ”

(12463, Police officer, Quebec)

In some sense, these results suggest that, whereas caseworkers worry about danger, in the true sense of the word, it is not their only concern. We could almost say that they preferred not to dwell on the subject because of the deep emotions it arouses in them and because when all is said and done, they hold very little sway over them. Therefore, they would focus more on the risks that youths take, and that caseworkers were more willing to discuss. In a way, the risks that they spoke of raised our awareness about another form of danger, the internal danger in a way, which would certainly be appreciated to address in regards to intervention.

3.17 DURING THE FLIGHT—COMMUNICATION

3.17.1 The youths’ perspective

Among the youths in the sample, only two did not communicate with anyone while on the run. All the others—22 to be exact—had some contact with the people from their circle, most often their parents. As a rule, they did so to provide reassurance, being well aware that these people would be worried about them.

“Yeah I guess... let's said I'm staying at the friendhouse because I don't really move that much.... I'm stay most in one spot..... and tell my friends that if something does happen to me, like I'm fired, hurt or anything, call my dad, and they do that... (...) Or if I get caught to call my dad, if i'm moving to another spot and I can tell him and said I'm moving to another spot, I won't tell where I am... Like I tell him... well I'm not that far... (...) Next times I will call him, He will see differents number, I'm gonna said dad a move that place I as to another spot... I won't tell exactly where I am.”

(11141, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Batshaw)

“Ben, j'ai essayé, mais j'ai pas pu leur parler parce que genre, j'ai appelé, pis ça été la boîte vocale. Fa que, j'ai dit “je vais bien, blablabla, inquiétez-vous pas.”.”

(11117, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

The young girl below reassures her parents, and does so despite the fact that she does not get along with them and that the conflicts between them were the source of her being placed. However, other youths get along very well with their parents, to the point of going directly to their home or workplace. Another explained that because he had left during the Holidays, he saw his entire family while on the run, and everyone had treated him the same as usual. Another respondent specified, that as for her, she would go see her mother at work every day, and one boy said that he would have supper regularly at his mother's, father's and grandparents', who were understanding and open towards him. The youth wanted to stay in touch with them to prove to them that he could be autonomous. He related how his return to the youth centre was hard on them.

“Mais ils, y étaient encore, y avait quand même un, un p'tit euh, une petite responsabilité parentale. Comme si, juste de dire comme si ils parleraient à un jeune de 20 ans, t'sé ok, garde euh, t'es en appart, comment tes affaires, t'as perdu ta job ben là, garde euh, c'est correct, mais retrouve-toi une job d'abord, retrousse-toi les manches, t'es capable là. T'sé, pis y'étaient tout le temps là, on est fier de toi, c'est beau, t'es capable. Quand j'suis retourné en centre, ils l'ont pris dur.”

(11158, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

Another respondent stated, however, that he began contacting his mother later on, after running away a few times. At first, he was afraid she might report him and take him back to the youth centre. For other young participants, communicating with their parents was simply impossible.

“Mon père y é en dedans à cause ... C’tun ancien Hell’s Angel, pis ma mère est dans un institut en santé mentale à cause qu’a se piquait à coke. (...) Fa que, disons que ma mère pis mon père j’ai jamais appelé ben ben la... (...) Si j’avais le numéro ben je pourrais appeler ma mère mais mon père, j’ai jamais vu mon père...”
(12128, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

In another perspective, some youths preferred avoiding contact with their parents not to worry them any further, or simply because they believed that their parents would rather not be mixed up in their affairs. In this regard, one young person explained that she did not contact anyone close to her mother either, particularly the extended family because she knew that her mother would have been ashamed.

“(Y) Non, non, non... cé fouuuuuu (non) parce que l’affaire cé que y a une affaire que je respecte que ça j’ai toujours respecté ça avec ma mère, my mom knows but not her friends. Parce que cé pour ça... parce que... elle a honte
(I) ok du fait que t’aises fugué...
(Y) fa que je respecte ça... tout à fait... qu’une mère elle veut pas que ses amis y font comme ouin ben t’sé ta fille est dans la rue...”
(11152, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

Youths’ contacts with other family members, excluding their parents, are apparently more sensitive and require more discernment. For example, this boy came across his brother by accident, while on the run. The brother asked him how he was and what he was doing there. When the brother learned that he had run away, he stared at him, left and called his mother.

Despite the threat or fear of being turned in and thus losing their freedom, youths also explained that they want to maintain ties. A network is the foundation for safety and survival.

“(Y) Non, pour maintenir un lien, peut-être pas significatif, mais pour maintenir un lien
(I) Un lien avec les membres de ta famille?
(Y) Ouais, comme dans le temps des fêtes, ma grand-mère a, est partie 3 jours, pis a m'a laissé... Pas, pas dans l'temps des fêtes euh, 1 ou 2 semaines avant. Pis a, a, j'l'ai appelé une fois, d'une cabine téléphonique. Pis j'étais toute seul [ostie], j'avais pu euh, j'avais pu personne [ostie] en ville. Fa que là j'ai, j'ai eu des amis, pis ça allait super bien, pis euh, y m'ont montré, y m'ont montré, c'est là qu'ils m'ont montré toutes les ressources.”
(11158, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

“Oui ben a consomme pis toute ma grand-mère (ok) pis... dans le fond euh... t’sé je suis son petit fils pis toute pis... Si je suis dans le trouble elle va ca... elle va être capable de m'aider pareil là... mais pas trop non plus... Ce qu'elle avait peur, cé que la police arrive chez eux pis que... a me pogne pis que là elle ait du trouble pis toute pour ça là (...) Ben était quand même contente, mais après ça elle a dit t'aurais pu appeler pis toute là...”
(12128, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

However, several youths also contacted their caseworkers. In fact, nine turned to the youth centre and 13, to community organizations. They also wanted to reassure them. The circumstances mentioned by these youths suggest that they also wanted to avoid panic and put a stop to the search. Although the youths did not say so directly, we think this could be another way for them to build a safety net.

“Y a mon éducatrice de rencontre ici que j'ai son email. (...) Que, au moment que je peux être en fugue, elle va m'écrire, pis qu'a, on va toujours se récrire pour être capables au moins d'avoir des nouvelles. (...) T'sé, ça là-dessus, je les comprends là. (...) T'sé, c'est normal qu'ils veulent avoir des nouvelles pis toute. Donc oui, je vais leur en donner des nouvelles. ”

(12122, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

“Fa que dans l'fond, c'té, cé sûr que y aurait aimé que j'revienne en centre toute. Mais c'est mon choix, pis y peuvent pas ramener en m'tirant par l'oreille. Y m'a laissé aller jusqu'à temps que j'revienne ici, pis quand j'ai dit que j'tais r'venu ici ben y'était content. ”
(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

In this logic, another respondent declared that he had called an educator at the youth centre while on the run, to give him a return date and to show his good will. He would also contact his social worker sometimes to negotiate his return without consequences. When trying these approaches, he was often confronted with indifference and powerlessness on the part of the caseworkers. The youths' accounts thus suggest that these contacts were not always easy. Nevertheless, some of them found a person who would listen and be receptive.

This youth tells here of a relationship of trust that he had developed with one community caseworker, to whom he could go back in any circumstance. This example, however, does not rule out the fact that other youths also found someone who would listen in an institutional setting.

“(Y) Parce que j’ai un bon lien avec, je trouve que c’est une personne qui est capable de bien comprendre. XXX c’est comme le père de bien du monde là.

(I) y’a un lien de confiance en fait, tu savais que y’allait pas te saouler …

(Y) Même pas… Je pensais même pas à ça, ça me dérangeait pas. C’est juste que XXX ouais, c’est comme le popa de la famille là, y a énormément de monde dans rue qui le respecte là.”

(11151, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

3.17.2 The parents’ perspective

As for the parents, they confirmed that youths know how much they worry. Out of ten parents whom we met, only one had no contact with her daughter while she was on the run, whereas all the others received news, at the very least. Most of the time, this news would arrive directly, but sometimes it came through another person. These contacts were meant to reassure them.

“Cé drôle c’est vraiment drôle parce que à quelque part au début il se sentait obligé, mais il le faisait eee pi après, ça y a vu que y’avait pas de d’attaches au fait qu’il ,fallait qui appelle, si y’avait pas d’attache, c’était juste pour moi pour eee rendre ma vie plus facile à vivre. Eee ça je lui répétais très souvent que c’était vraiment un besoin que j’avais pour être capable de fonctionner. Alors ee là-dessus eee, même si ça lui tentait pas tout le temps, il m’appelait.”

(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Parents also explained that youths call in so that they can be found in case of danger. In this context, parents become intermediaries, so to speak. By calming their parents down, youths also hope to keep them from sending the police after them. But the fact remains that this position is touchy for parents. The first contacts, which are a relief, are intense and emotional, but as they re-occur, it becomes harder for parents to adopt and maintain a positive attitude. Without taking action, some parents attempted to sensitize their child to the dangers that awaited them and to convince them to come home. Yet they realized that this approach might increase the risk of completely losing contact.

“J'avais du sentiment mais si je gardais mes émotions pour moi, si je les projetais pas sur lui, wee me sentait pas lourde et pénible. Fa que, y disait gosh, elle m'aime ok je vais la rappeler d'abord. T'sé c'était pas lourd de rappeler pour lui à part quelque moment que je me rappelle que là j'étais peut-être trop émue pis trop inquiète eee... Mais en majorité du temps eee, je lui déversais pas ma souffrance, je lui faisais seulement comprendre que c'était difficile pour moi et que je l'aimais et que je le respectais et que t'sé, je disais pas je veux que tu reviennes, je créais pas d'attente “je vais être là pour toi tout le temps. ”.”
(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Another mother explained that the contacts were even more delicate because they were intended to prepare for a return. To do so, her daughter had set her sights on being sober and did everything she could to avoid angering her mother in an attempt to encourage some kind of reconciliation. In other cases, parents were contacted when their child was hungry or afraid and had nowhere else to go. In fact, they had used up the time usually allotted by the agencies. Therefore, except for one parent, all were asked at some point or another to take in their child who was on the run. In these circumstances, only one notified the authorities immediately and even drove her child to a youth centre. Another threw her son out because she felt that by taking him in, she would only be helping to delay the outcome. All the others agreed to take their children in, believing at the time that it was the best thing to do to keep them safe. After the fact, however, we see that these parents had different reactions. Some never warn the institution, whereas others will try to find a middle ground, without rushing things, while nonetheless notifying the other adults concerned.

“Fa que, il est arrivé chez nous comme ça. Mais, sur le coup, moi je me disais “Ha ben, c'est une surprise ”, j'étais contente. Mais là, en parlant avec lui, je me rends compte que son père ne sait pas qu'il est chez nous. Fa que donc, je me suis organisée, j'ai appelé son père, tout ça. Pour l'aviser après t'sé.”
(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

This parent showed us another facet of this reality. At first glance, such a decision could be seen as irresponsible, or even as a distrust of the system and the authorities. However, the explanation below suggests that this could be a pause within a painful episode.

“Pis en même temps, ben je sens que ça fait comme un climat de sécurité là, entre nous deux. Pis en même temps, y a un côté qui est très tendu par rapport à son beau-père. Parce que lui, il en laisse encore moins passer, pis il est plus chialeux. Fa que c'est ce bout là qui crée une tension. Mais aujourd’hui, oui. Parce que je viens d'avoir trois jours de brake, le seul trois jours depuis deux mois. Parce qu'il est très présent, pis très demandant XXX, t'sé. Donc, là, aujourd’hui, ça fait, ça juste permis un peu de prendre un recul, pis... Ça repart mieux là. Mais c'est quand même bon.”

(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Furthermore, this position could reflect another perspective shared by a few parents, who consider the family to be a valid resource for youths on the run. At the very least, this could be a moment where the youths feel loved and wanted by their family. It would be a beneficial break, which might encourage them to return, and which they could not have in other circumstances, since families are generally pushed aside when youths return directly to the youth centre.

“C'est, c'est, tu fais une p'tite pause là dans le... prendre une p'tite douche prendre un... bon steak hen, regarder la télévision eh... je sais pas (rire), avec, en famille n'importe quoi, voir ses sœurs (...) Fa que non, pour moi c'est toujours été important qu'elle sache qu'elle avait sa chambre et d'ailleurs, c'est un peu une des raisons pour lesquelles je... je fais pas vraiment son, son ménage là dans sa chambre là, parce là, c'est là rendu absolument eh ... effrayant là. Mais j'me dis ah... mais j'me dis eh... bon y a des choses qu'a veut garder mais on... je, je, dès que j'ai l'temps là, je vais m'y mettre là.”

(11256, Parent, Community, Montreal)

However, these parents also know that they were not the only ones to be contacted. At least half of them said that their child also had help from caseworkers from various community organizations, of which they only had good things to say. An equal number of parents also confirmed that their child contacted a sibling or a member of the extended family. But when they considered the possibility of one of them taking in their child, their positions differed. To some, this would be evidence of support.

“Ben je pense que j'aurais aimé ça ... ben cé, cé une drôle de question parce que dans ma famille on est tellement euh... gentils les uns avec les autres on est tellement près... que je... j'aurais pris ça comme euh... ah j'aurais aimé ça... j'aurais pris ça comme un coup de main... Écoute, mon doux que j'aurais aimé ça mais euh... mais je pense que les enfants auraient jamais pensé se tourner vers les autres membres de ma famille compte tenu qui... qui savent combien on est liés. Fa que, c'est... y auraient pas ... y auraient pas pu aller là pour se cacher... euh... Pis euh... pis quand cé pas... cé pas euh envisageable parce qui auraient pas pu aller là pour se cacher, pis y'auraient pas pu... euh... y... Je pense qui savent que mes frères et sœurs avaient un parti pris pour euh... me soutenir... envers et

contre tout Alors euh..., faut que la question est non pertinente dans mon cas mais euh... Mais si y étaient allés chez des amis mettons, je sais pas si ça vaut la même chose là... ben j'aurais trouvé ça l'fun moi... Mais moi, j'ai... j'ai le concept des familles élargies là t'sé là... ouin j'aurais trouvé ça... ah j'aurais aimé ça, ça aurait été comme un signe de... de confiance... D'ailleurs, un moment donné quand XXX euh j'ai été obligée de le mettre dehors de chez nous, y é allé vivre chez une amie un moment donné, elle l'a dépanné pendant une coupe de semaines t'sé.”

(11254, Parent, Community, Montreal)

“Ben moi pour moi je veux dire... je, je ça me dérange pas que quelqu'un d'autre, disons de ma connaissance tout ça, qui l'héberge toute ça... Dans la mesure où euh... c'est dans son intérêt, qu'elle est... qu'est dans son intérêt à elle aussi là... t'sé je veux dire comme qu'a reste pas là pour dire qu'a squat là pis que... a repart quand qu'a veut tout ça là. T'sé, je veux dire faut, faut que ça arrête là mais euh... non j'ai pas de problème avec ça là...”

(12221, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

As for other parents, such a situation could prove problematic. This parent explains here that she prefers to be the only one responsible for such a decision to be sure that its meaning is not lost.

“(Silence) Je pense je l'aurais mal pris. (...) Oui. Je veux qu'elle, j'aime autant qu'elle vienne chez nous qu'elle aille heee chez du monde que je connais. (...) Ça l'air niaiseux là, mais c'est comme heee... C'est un peu comme si ils me trahissaient. (...) C'est un peu comme s'ils disaient : “C'est correct que tu sois en fugue.” (...) Parce que ma fille heee, si est en fugue demain matin..., elle sait très bien que je cautionne pas ça. Parce que c'est comme l'encourager pis j'en, j'encourage pas ça.”

(12222, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

3.17.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

All the caseworkers except one insisted that it is common for youths to contact their parents directly while on the run. The large majority of police officers were of the same opinion. Youths therefore contact their parents to reassure them, give them news and ask for money, for food, or whether they can sleep at home, or to make sure they can be found in case of danger. Others said that these communications are intended to find out if they can come back, and therefore to talk, discuss the situation or attempt reconciliation. Also mentioned was the fact that youths contact their parents simply to maintain ties, because they sometimes miss them, and despite some difficulties experienced within their family, their parents are still important to them. Actually, some indicated that running away is often a way for youths to get the attention of their

parents, with whom they are in conflict. It is therefore in this context that the efforts made by the youths to reach their parents should be interpreted. In this perspective, some caseworkers, from the community sector notably, stated that they encourage these contacts in the hopes of resolving impasses, or at least of reducing tensions, to help create a more conducive climate for the youth's return.

“Pour donner des nouvelles, pour tâter le pouls, pour continuer une discussion, parce que une de nos job, une de nos job c'est vraiment de les inciter à régler le conflit que ce soit avec le parent ou avec la famille d'accueil ou le foyer de groupe. L'idée c'est de continuer d'avoir un dialogue t'sé, eee je pense qui se rendent contre très vite que les gens, les gens autour d'eux peuvent être inquiets de où sont pis de qu'est ce qui font. Et c'est une des choses qu'on va leur dire t'sé “tu penses tu qui soient inquiets, t'sé té pas obligé de dire où té, mais le fait de dire que tu es en sécurité, de donner de tes nouvelles de temps en temps, ça l'aide aussi à faire diminuer la tension d'une part et d'autre ”.”

(11353, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Donner signe de vie, dans c'temps-là, y ont l'impression qui vont être moins r'cherchés... mais... pis... pour eux autres, c't'important pareil t'sé... Moi je r'garde din fois les jeunes... “Ah non, j'l'appellerai pas ma mère, j'veux rien savoir... ” pis... t'sé... Le but d'leur fugue est souvent d'inquiéter, aussi pis d'avoir d'l'attention, pis là en étant en fugue, ben y l'ont parce qu'le parent met comme sa vie en veilleuse... parce qui y é à recherche de son fils. Fa que le jeune est ben content... Fa que... t'sé l'but est là aussi... euh... mais... Fa que t'sé de... de... d'en prendre conscience, ben din fois ça... ça les... ça les valorise pas dans leur fugue, mais ça... permet la réflexion aussi... t'sé din fois “Ah ouin... j'l'ai peut-être inquiété plus que j'veoulais... ” Euh...pis t'sé si nous autres on a réussi à parler aux parents aussi... euh... c't'un avantage, parce que din fois l'parent va avoir le réflexe de... de l'chicaner pis... t'sé nous autres on leur dit d'pas faire ça... “Écoutez le...allez-y jusqu'où y é prêt en vous en dire, posez pas trop d'questions, de toute façon, vous voulez pas vraiment savoir c'qui a faite là... ” Euh... pis j'pense que c'est pas ça l'important, l'important c'est plus le pourquoi y é parti, pis d'en prendre considération au retour aussi. Fa que... quand on a réussi à parler aux parents avant din fois ça aide... ”

(12351, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

“Le lien est très significatif mais que ca va pas bien dans le sens ou y arrive pas à s'entendre ou les règles sont trop rigides, trop euh... là l'enfant va quand même donner signe de vie. Ou si y donne pas signe de vie à ses parents, y va donner signe de vie à quelqu'un d'autre. Pis y va dire “appelle mes parents ”.”

(11468, Police officer, Montreal)

“Ben souvent des fois c'parce que ça fait un boutte qui leur ont pas parlé non plus. T'sé quand t'es en centre de... parce que si t'es en milieu familial c'est sûr que, si t'appelles tes parents, tu peux leur parler pis t'sé y vont dire “R'viens pis tout ça... ” ... mais t'sé... Quand té vois pas tes parents, t'sé c'est pas eux autres qui t'gardent pis tout ça, ben tu vas aller... tu vas les appeler là! Tu vas leur demander des conseils pis tout ça! Pis souvent... t'sé... Si t'as d'bons liens avec eux autres... même si ça pas bien été chez eux! Des fois c'est des parents, y sont tout croches pis t'sé ça va pas bien chez... t'sé sont pas capables d'garder le jeune en protect... protéger un peu, pis y sont, mettons, j'sais pas, les parents sont pas mieux que les enfants non plus. Fa que t'sé... y vont donner un coup d'main! J'pense c'est aller chercher une sécurité aussi là! T'appelles tes parents pis tout ça là! C'est ça! ”

(12463, Police officer, Quebec)

These contacts with the parents can produce various reactions, including anger, panic, anxiety, sadness, surprise, relief, openness, rejection, understanding, silence, incomprehension, indifference and powerlessness. The repercussions of these contacts would thus vary depending on the stories, contexts and initial situations, which also differ considerably from one youth to the next.

“Y en a qui réagissent bien, qui sont contents que leur jeune leur donne des nouvelles, pis cé ça qui veulent... Pis y en a d’autres euh... qui euh... qui réagissent mal et qui sont tannés que leur jeune fugue par exemple, pis qu’à chaque fois euh... ça leur fait vivre tellement de choses euh... qui sont... y a une fermeture au dialogue... Parfois cé parce que le jeune y veut juste euh... cé ça obtenir la euh... des choses euh... Donc euh... cé, cé des raisons utilitaires justement, fa que cé comme pas plaisant pour le parent un moment donné. Y dit à chaque fois que tu m’appelles cé juste pour de l’argent des choses comme ça. Donc ça dépend de sa teneur...”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“50% du temps ça s’passe bien, 50% du temps ça finit en raccrochage au nez j’pense... justement à cause d’la réaction du parent... pis d’la réaction du jeune aussi, parce que c’pas évident pour un parent de s’faire dire “je veux ça, je veux ça, je veux ça, pis j’sus pas prêt à faire des compromis, pis si c’est pas ça, je r’viendrai jamais pis... ” Fa que c’est pas évident.”

(12351, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

“La généralité ça va être juste que t’sé c’est si y a des réactions, pis y a de l’amour, pis y a de l’incompréhension, pis ee t’sé, y a, y a, y a des choses qui sont exprimées, y a des choses qui sont pas entendues, y a des choses qui sont entendues, de part et d’autre, pis ee t’sé au bout du compte j’pense que, la plupart du temps, les parents c’est rare qui s’en foutent complètement. T’sé pis on peut regarder ça pis dire qui ont l’air de s’en foute, mais au fond, on sait, on on sait jamais c’est quoi le chemin que les jeunes y’ont, y’ont traversé pour être rendus où c’qui sont rendus. Pis dans l’expression, c’qui ont exprimé tu peux pas juger de de c’qui ressentent réellement, pis c’est quoi vraiment leurs relations. T’sé j’pense que c’est sûr que t’sé un enfant qui est en train de fuguer, mais y a quelque chose à la base qui va pas, qui va pas bien et qui a quelque chose qui est exprimé la plupart du temps.”

(11357, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“It depends. It depends on the dynamics, it depends on the way that the family is, it depends... it depends on a lot of things, but obviously like... the parents’ reaction a lot of the times is not the best one.”

(11342, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

“Ils sont contents, la majorité des parents sont contents d’avoir des nouvelles eee, la majorité des parents aussi vont tenter de convaincre là leur jeune de revenir. Eee ça arrive que ça se fini par le jeune raccroche la ligne au nez eee “elle trop insistance cé la morale qui embarque”.”

(12322, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

The large majority of caseworkers said that after hearing from their child, parents resumed contact with a caseworker. Some parents, however, hesitated a longer time

before doing so, for all kinds of reasons, which we could understand. Yet, one institutional caseworker would like parents to develop the reflex of calling systematically.

“Si le parent pense euh... connaît suffisamment la ressource, pense que ça peut être utile... euh... pense que nous on aimeraient ça... (...) Parce que ben souvent je pense que y a une méconnaissance de ce qu'on fait aussi... Euh... les parents oseront pas t'sé, des fois on leur dit... on les appelle avec la permission du, du, de l'enfant, pour voir un peu ce qui est possible, pis sont tous surpris qu'on les appelle, sont tous surpris qu'on les prenne en considération... Y pensent qu'on est juste pro jeune et contre les parents ou t'sé bon... Y a toute sorte de philosophie la euh... de... y ont pas nécessairement le réflexe ou je pense qui ont peur d'être jugés aussi des fois... Fa que y vont peut-être pas vouloir parler à l'intervenant... Cé ben rare qu'un jeune va raccrocher avec ses parents après une discussion par exemple hyper orageuse, pis tu va voir un parent qui aura le réflexe de rappeler... et de demander à parler à un intervenant, de dire “je sais que votre fils est chez vous ce soir... je viens de m'engueuler avec, avez vous des pistes à me donner, ou pourriez vous lui dire que... ou... ça serait peut-être important pour vous d'avoir telle, telle information pour mieux intervenir auprès de lui... euh... ”.”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“T'sé mettons avec le centre jeunesse souvent... parce que nous autres, si l'parent nous téléphone, on va donner...s i l'tuteur légal nous téléphone, on donne l'information si l'jeune est là ou pas, mais si l'centre jeunesse nous appelle, on l'f'r'a pas... Fa que souvent l'parent va contacter l'centre jeunesse pour avertir que oui l'jeune est passé par ici, y é ici... euh... qui y a parlé, qui va bien, ces choses-là. Pis l'centre jeunesse, on a une bonne collaboration, on respecte ça... euh... y respecte le fait qu'on va travailler... on va essayer d'travailler avec le jeune pour le ramener dans son milieus pis ça... C'est rare un interv... un éduc de centre jeunesse qui va appeler pis qui va s'braquer contre nous... Euh...nous autres, ça va arriver qu'le parent va nous appeler pour euh... nous donner d'l'information par rapport à situation du jeune, au domicile familial ou au centre, la relation qu'y ont avec le jeune. Pis nous autres, ça nous donne du jus pour travailler beaucoup parce que... “ben oui tu m'dis ça, mais ton parent c'est pas ça qui m'dit...pis j'pense que ton parent est honnête là-d'dans, j'pense qu'y a peut-être ça à travailler”. Pis...pis les parents sont conscients d'leurs tords aussi souvent. Fa que t'sé “j'aurais peut-être dû faire autrement...”... Fa que t'sé ça nous permet d'travailler avec le jeune pis de... de... Ouais les parentscommuniquent bien avec les intervenants..généralement...”

(12351, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

“(Rires) Dépendamment d'la collaboration qu'on a avec eux! Mais la plupart du temps y vont nous l'dire. La plupart du temps y vont nous appeler pis euh... Souvent nous, pendant les fugues, on reste en contact avec les parents. Pis aussitôt que le jeune est déclaré en fugue, on appelle le parent pour lui signaler que son jeune est en fugue, pis on dit qu'on garde contact ensemble au cas où un ou l'autre recevrait des nouvelles! ”

(11312, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“Sometimes, yap. And then other times you have those parents that as soon as they get off the phone with the kid and they've told them “Yeah, yeah don't worry, you know...” “Yap I just heard from her, she's on the run, she's here, she's here, she here. Call, call the police, call the police” and then we're saying to them “Ok but she contacted you and you have to call the police” That's a hard thing too... because the parents don't want to call the police on their kids.”

(11342, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

“Parce que les parents ont comme l'impression d'avoir été un peu complices t'sé “il est venu chez nous, eee j'ai pas appelé la police, je l'ai pas retenu, il est parti, t'sé je veux pas que vous pensiez que je le cache...” Parce qu'il y a des parents qui cachent leur jeune en fugue, cé pas la majorité, mais il en a. Alors eee, mais quand le jeune a appelé pour donner des nouvelles là, je vous dirais la majorité du temps le parent va nous le dire pour rassurer aussi. Pis il est tellement content d'avoir des nouvelles aussi là...”

(12322, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

Furthermore, caseworkers and police officers explained that parents are not the only ones whom youths contact while on the run. All these respondents confirmed that youths also contact friends or other family members, through whom they can send messages to their parents. Alternatively, they call them directly to request help to satisfy their basic needs, as well as to reassure them, maintain ties, find out what impact their running away has on the people in their circle, or make sure they can be found in case of danger. Even so, these network members are not impassive. Caseworkers have witnessed reactions just as diversified as those of the parents. Here again, they mentioned relief, surprise, understanding, indifference, mobilization, anger, rejection, powerlessness, openness, silence, as well as sadness.

“Parce que cé des adultes significatifs, parce que ces gens-là vont pouvoir servir de messagers ou de modérateurs dans ces situations, pis cé bin tant mieux dans le sens où on parle toujours de jeunes qui viennent du milieu familial. Bin t'sé je le répète, mais ça veut dire qu'il y a un filet de sécurité. Cé gens-là sont pas, sont pas tout à fait démunis en termes de soutien t'sé. Ceux, ceux qu'on va ee, qu'on va accueillir, bin ça veut dire qui a pas grand monde autour d'eux, pas des masses de monde qui traîne autour d'eux qui peuvent être le le passeur entre, entre le jeune et le parent. Fa que tant mieux.”

(11353, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

As this caseworker explained, members of the extended family, grandparents notably, sometimes find themselves caught in the middle, in an uncomfortable position that can complicate the situation considerably.

“Ah ben les grands-parents sont en pleurs, y savent pas quoi faire eh... Certains veulent pas s'immiscer entre leur eh... entre leur propre enfant et leur petit enfant aussi. Donc, ça peut être dur aussi pour le, pour le grand-parent, difficile à gérer, parce que le grand-parent y doit porter le message, y devient le messager eh, hum... “ton fils m'a appelé, t'as fille m'a appelé” Eh... pis tout suite, bon le, le grand-parent va se faire bombarder de questions par le père, le parent “qu'est-ce que tu y as dit au sujet tatata...” Pis ça peut être, ça peut être inconfortable. D'ailleurs, on a quelques appels des grands-parents.”

(11356, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

And as another caseworker indicated, among members of the extended family, grandparents are certainly the ones who follow up most often with the caseworkers.

“Les grands-parents nous appellent plus eh... eh pour nous dire, pour nous demander de l'aide, pour nous dire que y ont leur eh... y font, y ont leur petit fils, leur petite fille qui a beaucoup de difficulté. La mère est pus capable, le père, donc si y, eux y vont appeler pour eh... trouver des solutions. Pis après ça, y va l'transmettre, ouin. Rare les tantes, les oncles appellent, c'est rare.”

(11356, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

However, besides such situations, caseworkers found that friends and other members of the extended family do not tend to contact them, contrary to the parents, who usually do. Their reflex is rather to communicate with the parents, or if they do contact caseworkers, it is because they deem the situation serious. They want to warn them of something the youth may do or they call because the youth specifically asked them to do so. However, as for the police officers they confirmed that members of the extended family contact them regularly enough to provide pertinent information. But then again, their mandate is obviously not the same as that of the caseworkers.

And as this caseworker suggested here, friends and acquaintances of runaway youths do not keep the secret very long. Over time, this type of situation can become very uncomfortable.

“Les autres jeunes, ben des fois, y en a qui vont v'nir nous l'dire, ou on va les entendre en parler entre eux autres. Ou encore (rires), y en auront pas du tout, mais ça finir par sortir tout l'temps un moment donné. Parce que y finissent par pas être bien avec ça! Fa que y viennent nous l'dire... “Ben là, a m'a appelée, pis a semble pas être bien”. Ou encore, “a m'a appelée, pis toute est ben beau, c'est cool, t'sé”... ”

(11312, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

Another caseworker added another interesting consideration pertaining to the networks of youths who run away repeatedly. She noted that these youths sometimes see their social universe change, to the point of being unable to maintain ties with the friends they had before. And for us, we could infer that this makes it even more difficult to reach or protect these youths.

“Bin je vous dirais qu’un moment donné, l’ami qui se fait contacter là… Vous savez mettons le jeune qui fugue beaucoup a pas beaucoup d’amis qui sont pas dans ce mode de vie là. Pis mettons un jeune qui a beaucoup de difficulté, pis qui avait des amis assez adéquats, pis qui commence à fuguer pis tout ça, un moment donné, les amis ce tannent, pis veut veut pas, il finit par se faire une distance. Le mode de vie, la pensée, les intérêts sont à l’opposé là hum hum.”

(12322, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

Caseworkers continued along these lines saying that runaway youths often communicate with them also. In fact, youths could contact caseworkers from different sectors—community, medical, police or institution—depending on their needs and the circumstances. In fact, some caseworkers specified that youths often feared that they had lost their place at the institution and thought they would have to be placed elsewhere. Their contacts would thus serve to plan their return. This suggests that these youths need reference points, including, notably, the relationships they have developed with some caseworkers in the different sectors. Indeed, this idea is similar to that of other respondents who, for their part, say that the contacts established by youths with them are not only utilitarian in nature, but also, to a certain extent, an emotional one.

“Tout dépendant du lien qu’ils entretiennent, j’pense que dans le même but, parce que les intervenants qui représentent qui ont une représentation pour le jeune qui s’apparente à à la famille, une figure parentale. Fa que veut veut pas, y vont avoir besoin de le rassurer ces ces gens-là, ou si c’est, pas besoin de le faire, à un moment donné y vont prendre conscience que y a des gens qui s’inquiètent.”

(11357, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“C'est surtout le cas où des jeunes ont développé, j'vous dirais des jeunes qui sont placés depuis de nombreuses années ou qui ont un suivi avec un intervenant depuis de nombreuses années et qui s'est développé un lien, une relation significative et que le jeune a, en fait le jeune la considère à ce moment-là, comme quelqu'un qui peut être inquiet pour lui. Il le sait! Et y va aussi pouvoir le rassurer. Ça peut être aussi l'intervenant qui va pouvoir... Les jeunes vont vouloir valider des conditions d'retour... “Qu'est-ce qui va arriver mè que j'ervienne? ” En ayant un contact avec l'intervenant, ben là, y a l'heure juste quant à sa, aux conditions d'retour! ”

(11311, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

Conversely, however, some youths establish contacts in the hopes of remaining hidden for a longer time. Contacts with caseworkers help to reassure them for a while and perhaps slow down the search operations. In fact, police officers are familiar with such maneuvers. In the following excerpt, this officer explains that he even encourages

youths to communicate with him. Whatever the motive, a contact helps maintain ties with the youths.

“Ben souvent y a, souvent sont pas très ouverts à nous rencontrer, pis une fois que le, le lien d’confiance est établi... C’pour ça que moi, j’aime beaucoup, pis j’pas la seule, quand on a une première fugue, qu’ça soit euh, du milieu familial ou d’un centre, d’aller rencontrer le ou la jeune par la suite pour savoir qu’est-ce qui s’est passé durant sa fugue, pis pourquoi pis qu’est-ce qu’on peut faire pis si y a, si y fugue à nouveau, “garde j’té laisse ma carte là, juste à m’donner un coup d’fil, si tu veux pas que j’té repère, appelle moi d’une boîte téléphonique”. ”

(11465, Police officer, Montreal)

In this perspective, another officer explained that through these contacts, they could sometimes intervene and encourage youths to come back by trying to reassure them about the conditions under which their return can be arranged.

“Des fois ça marche, oui, y téléphone, y me tient au courant de qu’est-ce qui se passe, qu’est-ce qui arrive. Nous, dans le fond, c’est juste savoir si sa sécurité est pas en danger. “Bon, ça va bien, c’est beau... Bon, on aimerait ça que tu reviennes là. Écoute, fait des démarches auprès de ton travailleur social. Tu veux pas retourner au centre. o.k. J’peux rien te promettre, mais écoute, je vais essayer de trouver une solution. ”. ”

(11462, Police officer, Montreal)

However, the same police officer specified that he sometimes reluctantly insisted that the youths go back to the youth centre, knowing that they dread what awaits them and are not comfortable with the usual practices planned for their return.

“(P) Des fois, de la peine, je trouve ça de valeur, parfois je suis obligé de dire au jeune “r’garde, tu vas retourner au centre, pis tu vas retourner, y vont te mettre en arrêt d’agir dans un centre fermé ”. Écoute, ça me fait de quoi, mais qu’est-ce que tu veux. C’est pas moi qui a le contrôle là-dessus. Mais je sais ce qui va arriver. Pis c’est ça que le jeune veut pas. C’est ça là, c’est là que je leur dit “r’garde, pour régler le problème, essaie de négocier ça avec ton travailleur social». Règle générale là, quand un jeune est localisé à un centre, ils l’envoient en arrêt d’agir, dans un...
(I) C’est toujours la même chose.

(P) Une coupe de jours, c’est toujours la même chose. Pis le jeune il le sait bien. Il me le dit : “r’garde, là, y vont, tu vas me ramener, je vais aller en arrêt d’agir une coupe de jours, y vont m’envoyer dans un centre fermé, je veux pas aller là...” Je peux rien promettre aux jeunes. Mais je le sais. Ça me fait de quoi mais... Je le sais que t’es... T’sé, le jeune a 16-17 ans là. Le jeune est tanné là. T’sé, y se dit “ r’garde, moi je suis écoeuré de t’ça là”. ”
(11462, Police officer, Montreal)

The caseworkers' reactions when contacted by youths on the run are apparently as diversified as those of the parents and friends. They may be surprised, relieved, angry, open, closed, sad, indifferent, proactive, accommodating or encouraging, depending on the youth and the situation.

“T’sé j’aurais pas d’colère pis de, de... de... Face à ça là... moi ça va être, en être une euh de... premièrement d’empathie... de, de ,de.... de, de d’ouverture, de, de... t’sé de... si j’l’applique pour moi, j’peux appliquer pour un médecin, mais j’ai... cé une relation professionnelle versus ça... C’fa que j’aurais pas, j’aurais pas de... j’aurais pas d’colère, j’aurai pas de... de surprise...ou euh... Malgré que la surprise j’té dirais peut-être que oui. Quand j’ai eu des, euh des jeunes qui m’ont rappelé mais qui m’ont r’donné des nouvelles suite à leur fugue, au niveau du euh... Ça s’en était une belle surprise... t’sé de, de... euh. t’sé de voir que j’l’ai ai touchés, pis qui ont le goût ... oui... mais pas une de, de, de sentiments négatifs.”

(11461, Police officer, Montreal)

“Ben quand je parle avec un jeune, cé sûr que moi... personnellement là, j’essaie d’être euh, j’essaye de le rapatrier, j’essaye d’y parler... pis dire “regarde, vient-en au poste, on va s’occuper de toi, ça va bien aller... euh... y t’arriveras rien là .. cé ben le contraire, tu vas, tu vas embarquer dans le système dans le sens que... si ça fait pas avec tes parents, on va te trouver un foyer d'accueil»... “Ouin mais si j'aime pas le foyer d'accueil...” “Ben regarde, à quelque part faut que tu restes chez quelqu'un... là, tu peux pas subvenir à tes besoins à l'âge que t'as là... faut que t'ailles à l'école... faut que tu manges, ça te prend des sous, ça prend de l'argent de poche. ça te prend si, là ...là t'as pus rien.” Fa que en discutant avec, ben des fois là... regarde euh... ça, ça vient euh... j’viens que je le convaincs de... de dire ben “regarde euh... j’vas... aller au poste, on va régler ça là...””

(14461, Police officer, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Whatever the caseworkers' reactions are, the fact remains that the contacts that youths establish with them indicate that they may constitute a safety net.

“En lien! Ben là t’sé, tu vas t’organiser pour l’appeler su’ sé chiffres t’sé! “Ah inquiète-toi pas...” Pis nous autres, on va faire aussi l’même message! “Rappelle-nous, donne-nous des nouvelles, t’sé laisse-nous pas dans l’inquiétude t’sé...” Fa que, plus qu’on a d’contact avec elle, plus qu’on est capable d’évaluer au téléphone la situation aussi! Une fille qui s’rait vraiment en danger, a va dire “V’nez m’chercher là, j’pus capable là...” Pis ça je l’ai déjà vu! Une jeune me dire “Aille, v’nez m’chercher, j’t’ à telle place là, v’nez chercher là!” Pis là, a l’arrive pis est super pockée... Pis là, 2-3 jours après, on est capable de r’prendre la situation, parce qu’est pus droguée, a pus d’alcool dans l’corps, pis tout ça, a l’a pris soin un peu d’sa santé! Ben t’sé, on est capable de voir qu’est en danger à c’té moment-là là! T’sé la fille va nous appeler là t’sé! Y en a qui appellent leurs parents “V’nez m’chercher! M’man viens m’chercher j’t’ à telle place ou p’pa!” Pis une chance!”

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

3.18 DURING THE FLIGHT — COMMUNICATION THAT THE INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR ESTABLISHES WITH THE PARENTS AND OTHER SECTORS

When caseworkers are informed of the youths' situation and are somewhat reassured of their safety, it is not rare for them to contact the parents to reassure them in turn, knowing how difficult it is for them to bear the silence.

“Ils ont besoin d'une grande oreille ses mamans-là. Hen, quand ça fait longtemps qu'un jeune est en fugue, pis que là, ils sont inquiets. Pis écouter, cé comme genre des t'sé, si le jeune est en fugue 10 jours, eee ça fait 10 jours que ce parent-là dort pas, la plupart du temps, pis craint le pire. Fa que cé sûr il y a des parents qui systématiquement vont nous appeler t'sé. Pis y en a d'autres qui le feront pas, mais moi je le fais, moi je vais prendre la peine des appeler là, pis juste pour voir comment ça va, pis comment qui sent ça, qui se porte “pis, avez-vous des nouvelles”. Pi t'sé, des fois je les appelle juste pour donner le nom de l'enquêteur, “si vous avez quelque chose appelez le.” Pis eee aussi, un moment donné, aussi eee est-ce que bin oui j'ai oublié de vous dire ça, des fois on fait des démarches pour que eee la photo du jeune paraisse dans les médias.”

(12322, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

However, sometimes, the contacts with parents are more painful, particularly when the caseworkers have to advise them that their child has just run away. Some parents find it hard to understand how the youth centre could let their child get out and escape.

“Beaucoup vers le jeune, mais... din fois par oui... “Ben pourquoi vous l'avez laissé sortir ? Pourquoi...?” T'sé, parce que les parents din fois y pensent qu'en étant en centre jeunesse, ben on t'embarre dans une chambre, pis t'attends là... Qu'le temps passe t'sé... Mais y ont une vie là, t'sé j'veux dire. Si j'les amène à XXX pis qu'a décide de fuguer, ben... t'sé pourquoi j'l'aurais pas amenée là... Non, mais c'est rare que les parents sont fâchés, mais ça arrive...”

(12324, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

In other instances, caseworkers will sometimes contact a wider network to help in the search operations.

“Ben souvent on va contacter sa liste de contacts, les parents tout ça... On va essayer d’voir aux endroits où y’était auparavant, si y a fait des fugues antérieures... Donc c’est ça, on essaie de faire des démarches téléphoniques souvent pour tenter de l’rejoindre! Si on a son numéro de cellulaire, on va y laisser un message sur son répondeur, parce que souvent y nous répondra pas... Alors... C’est à peu près c’qu’on fait...”
(11312, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

This manner of doing things shows that, in some instances, caseworkers mobilize and take several steps to try to find the youths. Nevertheless, this mobilization appears to vary according to the situation. As this caseworker explained, the energy spent on a search may depend on the gender and age of the youth. Then again, it may sometimes be deemed inappropriate to chase after certain youths and preferable to let them go for a while.

“Euh... Ah pour retrouver un jeune en fugue... Ça dépend... c’est, bon évidemment y a la collaboration avec les parents, avec les forces policières... Des fois, y m’arrive de faire des p’tites tournées dans des coins possibles... Mais j’vous dirais... Moi j’vous dirais j’pas porté à aller... C’est pas comme si un jeune me dit que y a une problématique suicidaire, là j’vas être plus actif... Mais dans l’cas d’une fugue, d’aller courir après un de mes jeunes... non... Encore là, tout dépendant d’la mobilisation avec le sexe et l’âge du jeune. Mais c’est... non... Quand on est suffisamment rassuré, on laisse aller. Moi j’trouve que mon jeune a besoin de ça, y faut qui vive ça, y faut qui s’en aille pour mieux r’venir. Bon évidemment, quand la situation est plus difficile, ben là on recourt plus à c’moment-là à des mesures au niveau judiciaire, aller chercher au tribunal des mandats. Y a différentes étapes là qu’on peut... Amener les parents à collaborer avec bon... là c’est là, avec les policiers... Tout dépendant encore de l’âge et du sexe... Est-ce que les parents peuvent fournir des photos... Y a comme quelque chose qui peut être plus fait! Mais y a des fugues pour lesquelles ont... c’est pas une bonne idée d’courir après l’jeune! Un jeune de 17 ans ½ qui travaille en fugue... non j’irais pas amener les policiers à son lieu d’travail pour le faire replacer! ”

(11311, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

This approach contrasts somewhat with the accounts of other institutional caseworkers who, for their part, indicated that when youths run away, steps must be taken and maintained systematically to observe a protocol established within their institution.

“En tant qu’institution on n’le fait pas! On va l’donner aux policiers, on va l’donner au... on, à un enquêteur qui travaille pour nous autres. Donc, on va appeler l’enquêteur pis on va lui donner des nouvelles. On va appeler les parents “Aille, le jeune m’a appelé, y m’a dit telle affaire, ça vous dis-tu quelque chose? ” Tatatatata! Y a des parents qui vont s’déplacer, pis qui vont y aller! Y en a d’autres qui y iront jamais. Mais y en a qui vont s’déplacer, y vont aller chercher leur jeune! ”

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

“Dès qu'on fait un avis de fugue, c'est une démarche très concrète parce qu'on envoie ça aux policiers. J'ai déjà été appelé l'enquêteur tôt parce qu'il y a toujours un enquêteur là de nommé pour être donné et nous mettons des informations que je pourrais avoir recueillies par un parent ou par un autre jeune ou bien quoi que ce soit. Écoutez, je suis jamais partie à la recherche d'un jeune au centre-ville là.”

(12322, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

“Ben les policiers, ben premièrement quand qu'on envoie l'avis d'fugue, la police nous appelle. Ça que là on dit “Ben probablement qu'est à l'appartement d'chez XXX...” Ça que... la police nous rappelle “Ah était pas là ou était là pis quand j'suis arrivé, est sortie par la porte d'en arrière na na...” (...) Des informations, des numéros d'téléphone, des peut-être... une adresse que j'ai... des informations qu'j'ai eues d'autres filles... On s'parle avec les policiers... mais non j'ves pas les chercher s'à rue St-Jean...”

(12324, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

In addition to communicating with police officers and investigators, institutional caseworkers sometimes contact community caseworkers.

“On travaille en collaboration avec les policiers, avec les parents, avec euh... C'est déjà arrivé aussi avec les ressources communautaires. Y a certaines ressources qui sont... surtout En Marge 12-17, qui collaborent beaucoup avec les centres jeunesse. Bunker un p'tit peu plus depuis quelques années.”

(11313, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“Ben habituellement... Maintenant y a beaucoup plus de collaboration j'dirais... J'dis pas qu'on avait pas une bonne collaboration auparavant, mais souvent eux voulaient garder un lien d'confiance avec les jeunes, donc les informations étaient pas diffusées comme telles... Maintenant, y vont dire oui le jeune est ici mais sauf que on ira pas nécessairement l'cueillir là-bas... En bas de 14 ans oui par exemple; les policiers vont les chercher pis les ramènent en bas de 14 ans! (...) Mais maintenant, j'pense que y a plus... Parce que quand j'parlais avec l'intervenant du Bunker dernièrement, c'qui nous disait, c'est que oui y veut savoir un p'tit peu c'est quoi le travail qu'on fait présentement... Sont plus à l'écoute, ouverts, pis nous aussi c'est la même chose! On va pas juste... y vont s'refugier là pis que bon... À quelque part, y a un travail qui est fait là. Ça que on essaie de collaborer le plus possible maintenant! C'est quelque chose qui s'en va vers... en tout cas, au niveau d'la recherche... au niveau de... Ça sous-tend un peu vers tout ça un peu plus... Y a un peu plus de collaboration entre les organismes.”

(11312, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“Bin écoutez, les gens du Squat souvent c'est eux qui vont nous appeler la troisième journée. Mais pour certains jeunes des fois un peu plus problématiques là, des fois on va les appeler. C'est sûr qu'on a quand même une bonne collaboration avec ces organismes là mais comment je vous dirais, quand eux nous appellent c'est parce que dans leur espèce de protocole de fonctionnement, ils sont rendus là. Quand nous on appelle pour avoir de l'information, là ils sont beaucoup moins bavards parce que c'est, tôt c'est un organisme d'aide concrète pour les jeunes en fugue.”

(12322, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

The previous excerpt, just as others that we could identify, raised the sensitive issue of confidentiality rules, which, despite all the good will, apparently hinder communications between the institutions and agencies.

“Parce que eux leur mandat, c'est de protéger le jeune, d'y donner un endroit où dormir, d'y donner à manger, d'repondre aux besoins... Sauf qu'y ont pas l'droit de nous dire “Bon ben tel jeune est arrivé au Squat...” Y ont pas l'droit d'nous l'dire ça... Non y l' cachent... La police a pas l'droit d'renter dans l'Squat pis aller les chercher... T'sé on peut pas dire à police “Bon ben disons, Mariane vient d'm'appeler, est au Squat présentement...” La police a pas l'droit d'aller dans rue, à côté, l'attendre... y ont pas l'droit d'faire ça...”
(12324, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

“(I) So community organizations have you ever contact workers from community

(C) No...

(I) Humm

(C) Unless the kid is involved in a program there and the confidentiality is already been you know... acceptable between one of the workers at this community place and the social worker has approved for you know... so that, that... let's say it's Head and Hands and there's a counsellor that works at Head and Hands and that person humm knows that my kid let... Sally goes there for humm you know... babysitting course workshop or something, the social worker's approved for Sally to go there. The staff know that Sally lives at Oasis, this is the contact number at Oasis to contact.”
(11342, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

However, as this caseworker explained, the purpose of these contacts is not always to break the confidentiality rules, but only to inform on the situation, in the hope of widening the safety net.

“Si l'intervenant connaît le jeune on va l'appeler, on va l'informer de surveiller ou autre. Ou comme La Piaule, les travailleurs de rue, ça nous est déjà arrivé ... pis une jeune qu'on est très très très très inquiets parce qu'elle est très à risque de... très à risque, on va appeler parce qu'elle est connue du du... ou il est connu du des travailleurs de rue, on va les informer. Écoutez là, c'est le secret professionnel, mais c'est ... l'enfant est en danger. S'cuse, l'enfant c'est jusqu'à 18 ans là, on va tout faire pour le retrouver.”
(14331, Caseworker, Institutional, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Therefore, the contacts between the institutional and community sectors sometimes lead to conversations that do not aim at collecting sensitive information, but only to advise others that a youth has run away, to draw the attention of the partners. In other situations, we learned that the community sector might advise institutional caseworkers of the youths' state of health, notably in the specific cases of those who need

medication. In return, institutional caseworkers may provide a few indications of the youths' specific needs, so they will not be tempted to obtain their medication themselves on the black market or simply to disregard their prescription. For these youths, consuming new drugs could have serious consequences, which affect some caseworkers to the point of believing that these situations exceed the youth centres' responsibilities.

"Jamais quelque chose de confidentiel! Ça c't'important! Jamais, jamais, jamais! On est tenu à la confidentialité nous autres ici, mais on va donner des détails genre "A l'a fugué, ça s'peut qu'a l'aille chez vous, on sait que les dernières fois qu'est allée en fugue est allée chez vous..." Mettons, juste une jeune qui est diabétique par exemple, qui fugue, ben a l'a-tu pris son insuline t'sé? Parce que si est diabétique, ça y prend son insuline à tous les jours, faut qu'a l'prenne à quelque part là! Fa que est-ce qu'est en bonne santé? Est-ce que ci, ça... T'sé oui! C'est des renseignements qu'on peut donner quand qu'on s'associe avec eux autres! Le Squat surtout! Maison d'jeunes, j'pas sûre que je l'donnerais le ... Mais j'dirais c't'une jeune qui est en... qui a une difficulté d'santé pis telle telle affaire là!"

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

These illustrations thus show that the institutional and community sectors may communicate together without breaking the confidentiality rules, while sharing information that may be useful to building a safety net around the youths. It should also be noted that the great majority of caseworkers insisted that they had never encountered a situation that led them to break the confidentiality rules.

"Not really... when a kid runs away, they put themselves at risk... There's really humm I mean I'm not going to... call and let... the community worker know the family address and phone number and that. I would ask them to call me."

(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

As for others, such exchanges are just talk. They would like to see community organizations participating actively in the searches for runaway youths. They believe that their contribution would be essential because they have the advantage of being in the field. Their comments highlighted the fact that youth protection is at the forefront of their priorities and that this mission—which also corresponds to their mandate—should in itself justify breaking the confidentiality rules that too frequently constrain caseworkers.

“(I) Humm... what would you, this one, those questions they come back like 3 times, but with different people. What would you have needed in order to ease or improve your intervention at that point, meaning... I don’t know if you... cuz it’s with community organization, I’m still in that section. What would you need to... or need in order to ease or improve your intervention... while the minor is on the run, with the community organization? Do you need anything

(C) To have the community organization that actually is responsible for looking for runaways, that would be a fantastic resource to be able to have.

(I) But do they know?

(C) We don’t have

(I) How do they know?

(C) We have Missing Children, we have Missing Children basically, right?

(I) Oh

(C) That’s the only organization that’s out there to be able to look for... it’s like the amber alert, right?”

(11342, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

However, discussions with police officers do not seem to pose much of a problem *per se*. The information is generally factual. In this context, caseworkers are required to describe certain physical characteristics of the youths, as well as the events surrounding the flight and, of course, some information that may help to find them. Here again, these exchanges rarely lead to a breach of confidentiality. Only one caseworker mentioned that she once asked police officers not to contact the father because of the abuse the child had suffered at his hands. Besides this one exception, caseworkers had nothing in particular to report on their exchanges with the police, other than the hidden mechanism, which seems very cumbersome and which could be harmful for the youths. Indeed, some lament the fact that due to administrative considerations, which seem endless in their eyes, there are often delays before the search operations get underway.

“Moins de bureaucratie, pis un délai plus court. La jeune a peut être encore dans les environs, a peut encore se promener. Mettons, ici on est dans Ahuntsic, a peut t’être la rue d’à côté, mais le temps que l’information s’transmette, souvent là... C’est quand même un délai très très bureaucratique! ”

(11312, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

In this perspective, others would also like to be more familiar with the work that police officers do so they could better understand their procedures for finding youths.

“Moi j’aimerais ça connaître leur façon de procéder, parce que... je sais qui a, le numéro de police jeunesse, mais j’pas sûr comment ça fonctionne. Y a des policiers, y a des enquêteurs eh... eh, est-ce qui vont sur les lieux quand on leur donne des places?... Quand y font de la recherche, comment y font ça ? Là, y s’promènent tout l’temps ? Y ont la, la photo du jeune ? ”

(11316, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

3.19 DURING THE FLIGHT — COMMUNICATION THAT THE COMMUNITY SECTOR ESTABLISHES WITH THE PARENTS AND OTHER SECTORS

As for community caseworkers, they expressed concern over the fact that fewer youths have been visiting their agencies over the past few years. This situation raises various issues, including the agencies' ability to reach youths while they are on the run. Among other things, they mentioned street gangs as a possible cause, because there are more of them than before and they may be recruiting youths. Others believe that the repressive practices of some police officers may cause youths to run away or relocate. Finally, others indicated that the youth culture has changed, leading some young people to avoid the agencies now because they want to show that they can manage on their own or hide the fact that they have no money.

“Pis t’sé de faire, de venir dans les ressources, t’sé les ressources sont parties un peu d’eux t’sé, pis des besoins qui avaient, pis t’sé y avait pas de honte nécessairement à fréquenter les ressources qui étaient là pour eux autres. Pis t’sé on dirait qu’aller à quelque part ça changé, ça un p’tit peu. ou est-ce que dans ce besoin d’émancipation là pis de de s’organiser, t’sé d’avoir besoin d’aller dans une ressource, t’sé c’est comme un peu négatif, mal vu, c’est comme si tu t’organises pas bien t’sé. ”

(11357, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Ben plusieurs théories euh... qu’on a élaboré... vérifié avec nos partenaires et tout ça, pis cé de là que part la recherche aussi hein? Cé constats là aussi... cé carrément ça... euh... ça cé stabilisé depuis là, mais euh cé jamais revenu comme avant et pourtant, on a vérifié avec les centres jeunesse, y a autant de fugues sinon plus.... Fa que là on cé dit “qu’est-ce qui se passe”... Bon... première théorie qu’on a eue cé que... euh ça concorde pas mal avec le moment où est-ce que les hells se sont faits emprisonner... et que les gangs de rue ont pris le contrôle sur ce qui est du trafic de la drogue et la prostitution au centre-ville de Montréal... Et euh donc euh... et et et... le, le... quelque part euh... y avait euh... je pense qu’au niveau des gang de rue, euh ça commencé à se perfectionner, ça commencé à s’étaler dans la ville beaucoup plus... Pis y ont commencé euh à faire du recrutement directement dans les centres jeunesse. Pis on a su que y avait énormément de jeunes qui fuyaient, pis qui allaient directement dans les gangs de rue... Gars et filles... Donc, euh... ils étaient pris en charge par les gangs t’sé, au lieu de venir au centre-ville... Ça cé un élément... La répression policière qui a énormément augmentée au début des années 2000 a fini par faire son effet... Je pense qu’un mineur euh avait compris que... si y fuyait, il allait se faire

ramasser rapidement, plus rapidement là qu'en allant ailleurs.... Fa que ça, la répression policière peut être un exemple... Euh de ça... euh... le fait que justement au même moment, on voyait qu'il y avait un déplacement de la population itinérante, vu la répression policière aussi là... Fa que ça cé, cé pis y a aussi une question de mode euh... Les, les punk, étaient beaucoup plus euh... enclins de venir au centre-ville, avoir le ,le, le mode de vie qui va avec hein, on va dans les squats, on dort dans les parcs euh on est bon... t'sé on est vraiment marginal, pis on vit notre marginalité jusqu'au bout. La mode hip hop euh, cé beaucoup plus euh mon chandail blanc faut qui reste blanc, pis faut que j'aille euh mes bijoux qui étincellent de partout, mon téléphone cellulaire, pis euh t'sé... là... que je sois le plus autonome possible, pis j'aille du fric... t'sé... Fa que cé pour ça... que y a aussi cette influence gang de rue là... qui fait que y aille avec ça «je peux faire de l'argent, je vais avoir du pouvoir» Euh t'sé... tu verras pas un punk vouloir entrer dans une gang de rue. ”
(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

However, the drop in the number of youths staying at the agencies is not as drastic everywhere.

“Ouais, si on a vu une augmentation ? Bon pour ici, là, cette année eh... y a eu, on dénote une p'tite, une p'tite baisse là, au niveau, au niveau de la fréquentation, eh voyons, au niveau de la fugue, que ce soit, centre jeunesse eh... service de police et ici parce qu'un m'ment d'nne, on eu un... pic là, pendant deux ans, ben quand la LPJ a été mise en place là, y a eu une énorme augmentation, pis là après ça, là ça veut... baisser un p'tit peu, pis j'ai l'impression qu'un m'ment d'nne ça va se stabiliser là.”
(12352, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

Some sectors have even noted an increase in the presence of youths.

“Ben si on parle de notre ressource ici. Moi je suis ici depuis sept ans... J'en vois un petit peu plus, mais en même temps, je sais pas si c'est parce qui a plus, je dirais pas que c'est parce qu'il y a plus de jeunes qui fuguent. J'dirais que l'organisme est plus connu. Il y a plus de monde qui fréquente l'organisme, point. Donc on a plus de, on a plus de gens qui consomment par injection, on a plus de filles qui font de la prostitution, et de gars..., Fa que on a plus de jeunes qui font des fugues aussi.”
(12353, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

Nevertheless, the manner in which youths are received from the start is a major issue in community interventions. A welcome that is unconditional, attentive, respectful, open to difference and non-judgemental is required. However, this reception does not exclude confrontations, if youths do not tell the truth, and which may force them to face their responsibilities. In other words, what is needed is an authentic, transparent welcome that, in principle, should encourage the development of a relationship of trust.

“Ben avec ouverture euh... respect... évidemment... euh... On les accueille euh en, en ben... d'abord ils arrivent pas toujours d'emblée en disant je suis en fugue... Donc, des fois faut faire un tit travail pour qu'ils nous disent la vérité... Mais on détecte ça très rapidement... parce que leur histoire tient pas debout ben souvent... de toute façon... Fa que parfois on va un tit peu les euh les confronter... là, à leur contradictions pis leur dire... bon les rassurer je pense cé là... Faut vraiment les rassurer comme quoi y peuvent nous dire ce qui... qu'est-ce qui se passe si sont en fugue ou pas... Donc, on leur explique notre fonctionnement même si y disent qui sont pas en fugue. Par exemple, on dit «ben écoute... té mineur... mettons que tu serais en fugue... mais on trouverait ça important que tu saches que... on fonctionne comme ça... si jamais la police appelle, voici ce qui se passe...» On est très, très transparent et au clair avec les jeunes... On leur explique vraiment notre protocole... qu'est-ce qui se passe si jamais la police appelle et te, te... te détecte ici... te localise... et euh... cé ça... si euh... Que nous on appellera pas... à moins que le jeune aie 12-13 ans là... on le rassure tout de suite que nous on appelle pas... Mais qu'on l'encourage fortement à donner des nouvelles et tout ça... Fa que... et on les encourage à nous compter leurs histoire, “pourquoi tu fugues toi? Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé, pis qu'est-ce que tu penses faire”... Pis tout de suite, on fait de la prévention sur ...si une personne qui est nouvelle sur la rue par rapport à la rue euh, les dangers... euh on regarde un peu là... au niveau de la toxicomanie... cé quoi leur euh... leur portrait là, voir sont-tu euh... polytoxicomanes, est-ce qu'ils ont jamais consommé de leur vie... Bon, déjà ça donne une idée là... on essaie d'évaluer la vulnérabilité de la personne... pour lui donner le plus d'outils possible pour que... elle se protège le plus possible là... Que sa fugue soit le moins nuisible possible pour elle... Fa que euh... pis après ça, ben cé sûr que... on essaie de créer un lien en... jasant aussi de choses et d'autres avec eux... Pis euh... en leur offrant nos services là, de base... euh... Cé pour ça que la première fois qu'un jeune fugue, on va avoir cinq jours au lieu de trois jours à lui donner, parce qu'on veut créer un lien, de se donner le temps de de, de... faire connaissance que lui aussi t'sé... euh... y prenne conscience de qui on est pis que... bon... une confiance se développe un minimum...”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Community interventions thus appear to be structured around a principle according to which youths allow themselves a break, to clear their minds...

“Euh... ben c'est sûr que c'est... la majorité étant des jeunes de milieux institutionnels... on va y aller très molo avec eux autres. T'sé y vont arriver, on va prendre le temps d'manger, de... de... d'les envoyer prendre une douche, d'leur montrer leur chambre, on va les faire visiter, euh... toute ça... C'est pas mal dans l'informel, pis la seule partie qui est un peu plus formelle, c'est leur rencontre d'admission, ces choses-là, mais c'est très... Le premier soir là, c'est... c'est très relax, on les laisse arriver, on les laisse prendre leurs repères un peu, pis le lendemain matin là, souvent on va commencer à creuser un peu plus les raisons d'la fugue pis qu'est-ce qui s'passe dans l'milieu...”

(12351, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

“De pas avoir la gâchette facile pour appeler la police ou les parent sur le premier coup là. C'est sûr et certain, mais vraiment pas. Plus d'accueil comme je disais, le jeune, pis d'être emphatique, comprendre la situation, pis de voir à partir de là, où est ce qu'on en est. Pis c'est sur que à partir de là, l'équipe de travail, ici, on va s'asseoir, pis on va en discuter en en, on va en discuter avec mes collègues, pis aussi eee qu'est ce que vous pensez qui est le mieux de faire, pis eee... Parce que c'est des situations uniques à chaque fois.”

(14352, Caseworker, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

...and then consider their responsibilities...

“Pis on a tout l’temps le souci de les mettre face à leur propre responsabilité. T’sé ça c’est très important, t’sé pour nous, t’sé “t’as choisi d’être en fugue, on respecte ça, mais tu vas vivre ta fugue”. Fa que on facilite pas non plus tant que ça les choses, pis on va les remettre.... T’sé comme “j’ai pas de manteau, mais y pleut ee” “j’te, ouin mais t’en as un manteau, t’en as un à queque part” T’sé, fa que moi, j’veais pas nécessairement en donner un. “T’as choisi de partir, ton manteau est à quelque part, si tu veux ravoir ton manteau, tu peux retourner le chercher” C’est comme, on trouve ça important de les mettre face à leurs choix, t’sé exactement. Pis de pas, faque c'est sûr que la fille qui arrive à 3 heures du matin, qui est à moitié pas habillée, pis que là bon ben, c'est sûr qu'on va y en donner un manteau.”

(11357, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

...finally to regroup, always based on their own decisions, after examining their objectives.

“Nous autres c'est accueil inconditionnel, go, c'est un sourir, c'est des blagues, c'est un café, c'est l'écoute, c'est la compréhension, c'est, c'est de répondre aux besoins des jeunes. Fa que rendu là, c'est pas nous autres qui décident comment qu'on, où ce qu'on va aller, pis qu'est-ce qu'on va faire, c'est vraiment le jeune qui, qui va décider, qui va décider pour lui là.”

(13352, Caseworker, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

At the beginning of this process, caseworkers generally encourage youths to contact the people they left to reassure them and maintain ties. If they refuse, they can be allowed a bit of time...

“Parce que... (rire) parce que ça faisait partie des conditions, parce que, on... on est quand même la, le seul organisme à Québec qui... qui héberge des fugueurs. Donc c'est quand même la fugue, c'est quand même eh... Fugueur ça ludit c'est, c'est illégal. Fa que c'est une entente eh... eh... parce que on se rappelle que le Squat est une ligne à concertation du centre jeunesse, service de police et des organismes communautaires qui travaillaient avec les problématiques jeunesse. Et vu que les fugues étaient existantes et que les personnes hébergeaient. Fa que, c'est les ententes qui ont été prises que... Trois nuits eh, trois nuits pas obligé de signaler.”

(12352, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

...but there should be limits to this delay, after which youths must establish contact, or the caseworker can do so for them, if the youth agrees.

“Euh... ben... parce que on les sensibilise au fait que malgré tout ce qui peut reprocher aux adultes autour d’eux, c’ est des personnes qui sont attachées à eux et qui évidemment s’inquiètent... Que c’ est à leur avantage de rassurer... euh... c’ est peut-être à leur avantage de prendre une entente aussi... pis peut être une belle occasion d’exprimer pourquoi ils ont fugué... Pis à quoi ils s’attendent... et parfois, y a des choses euh y ont raison des fois les jeunes là... Et puis... c’ est ça, y a peut-être des choses des fois à négocier. Donc euh... c’ est sûr avec les parents ou la protection de la jeunesse, on peut rentrer dans un rôle de médiation... Euh ou on va aider le jeune aussi, c’ est ça, t’sé à trouver des pistes... Euh... y a des jeunes euh... aussi on... que quand ils fuguent, euh... c’ est pas la première fois qui fuguent, on connaît leurs éducateurs, leur travailleurs sociaux, on sait comment ils fonctionnent euh... pis on... dans le fond, si on a ça, on va les encourager. T’sé on va dire bon ben “tu te rappelles la travailleuse sociale, elle t’a dit la dernière fugue quand que tu me donnes des nouvelles à tous les jours, moi je suis rassurée pis euh t’sé... je peux faire avec pendant un certain temps... tu me dis euh... ok euh... de savoir que tu couches au Bunker ça me rassure... que tu manges bien à tous les jours ça me rassure, que tu restes en contact avec les organismes, ça c’ est un élément rassurant pour moi”... ”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Ee pour les rassurer, pour rassurer le milieu d’origine, pour garder le lien, pour eee, pour que le jeune ait la possibilité de s’expliquer, de dialoguer et de continuer une discussion qui vient d’avoir dans son intérêt. Aussi t’sé, c’ est dans l’intérêt du jeune de donner des nouvelles de où il vient, pour pas que les gens y s’inquiètent, pour pas que les gens y prennent de mesures qui vont être ultra drastiques à leur égard. T’sé, fa que, c’ est dans son intérêt.”

(11353, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Peu importe le jeune qui est en fugue, on leur demande d’appeler, on les impose pas, on leur dit ce serait préférable d’appeler dès le premier soir.”

(11356, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Caseworkers attributed various benefits to this communication. Sometimes, it enables the planning and organization of the youth’s return, in which caseworkers can play an active role as mediators and negotiators. However, a return to the environment of origin is not the only benefit they see. They also considered it a means to obtain pertinent information that could help initiate a reflection process. This approach does not rule out the possibility of caseworkers accompanying youths who want to return home, but only upon their explicit request. Therefore, without forcing them, except in the case of imminent danger, they can reflect on their situation, provide suggestions, recommendations and advice, in the hope that the gesture comes from the youths themselves. One caseworker explains here that this process is often devoted to calming the fear aroused in youths at the thought of leaving their living unit.

“Oui oui oui oui... euh on va insister parfois plus que d’autres fois... Dépendamment du jeune encore là, est-ce qu’on le connaît, cé-tu un fugueur répétitif, euh cé-tu quelqu’un qu’on sait que... y fugue... tout le temps, une semaine ou deux pour prendre un break... pis il retourne par lui-même. T’sé je veux dire... ce jeune-là on va faire bon ben... tu prends un break ça... “fais attention à toi... fais bon...” Euh cé des jeunes des fois qui se mettent plus ou moins en danger là t’sé... Fa qu’on va... on va y aller selon le jeune... Le jeune qui se met toujours super en danger quand qui fugue euh... Cé clair t’sé qu’on va... on... va peut-être euh... voir... cé plus une intervention à ce niveau-là t’sé... essayer de, de... de l’encourager là à... à... à rentrer t’sé... Un jeune pour qui on sait très bien que la fugue va lui être nuisible par exemple... euh. “ton placement doit se terminer dans deux mois... tu vas passer en cours là... tu penses-tu que ta fugue va t'aider à convaincre le juge de te libérer, de t'envoyer en foyer de groupe, ou en appartement supervisé T’sé... cé pas comme ça que tu vas l'avoir”... Donc, on... on reflète au jeune qui est en train de se saboter quelque part... et des fois, derrière ça,... y a la peur de sortir du centre jeunesse... paradoxalement... Ben oui cé sûr... le jeune qui va finir son placement va souvent fuguer deux, trois mois avant... (ah oui oui) parce qui va vouloir squiffer cette étape de transition d’au revoir... euh cé-tu de rupture... y a des jeunes qui sont dans leur euh unité, puis même, même si y disent qui aiment pas ça le centre jeunesse là, pis qui haïssent le mooty, pis l’éducateur là... cé pas vrai là... y ont, y ont un attachement et un attachement aussi aux jeunes avec qui ils habitent. Cé une famille ça là. Alors euh, la rupture étant quelque chose de déjà très douloureux, qui ont vécu très souvent déjà en partant de leur famille, cé encore une rupture qui, qui est appréhendée de la part du jeune... Fa que parfois y vont... y vont juste disparaître, y vont... éviter cette étape là... de l’au revoir ... Fa que ça parfois, on va essayer de creuser, pis d’aller voir ça... “T’sé, regarde té en train de finir ton placement,, ça se pourrait-tu que... ça... fasse peur.... Que t’sé... euh que ça fasse quelque chose, quelque part là...” Pis des fois, y vont dire “non non non non non”... Mais... parfois, y vont dire “oui cé un fait... cé un fait que ça me fout la chienne... ça me fout la chienne cet appartement supervisé là ou... t’sé euh... me retrouver là... euh dans ce monde d’adultes là... faire mon épicerie, me faire à manger, payer mes comptes” Alors que t’as été pris en charge par la DPJ, ton plat y t'est servi dans la face à tous les jours, que t’as pas pensé à rien, que t’as pas jamais vu ce modèle-là finalement...”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Parce que des fois leur plan de prendre un peu d’air n’est pas la pire décision au monde! Pis peut-être 2 heures de fugue, y ont pas assez dépassé leur période de crise pour avoir un retour avec une capacité pour en discuter... Sont trop dans l’émotion encore! Si y s’mettent super en danger, on peut leur refléter les risques et sont-tu bien avec les risques qui veulent peut-être... tu commences à refléter qui sont en train de pousser leurs propres limites pis euh...”

(11352, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Of course, caseworkers may help youths with their more concrete processes, in the areas of health and justice, but ultimately, reflection would remain, in principle, at the top of their priorities.

“J’les encourage si y a un besoin de démarche, la démarche que j’peux encourager des fois c’est... aussi une démarche de réflexion personnelle pour savoir c’est quoi, ou les raisons pourquoi qui ont faite la fugue en fait! Et là de là on... t’sé peut-être c’est de clarifier comment qu’on s’sent, qu’est-ce qu’on essaie d’dire avec nos fugues et ensuite peut-être contacter un TS pour faire part de pourquoi que y ont fugué, voir si y a des solutions qui peut s’faire après ça, pis d’autres démarches t’sé si sont mal, CLSC, etc... Ça arrive des fois des affaires de même! ”

(11352, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Ee ce serait la principale démarche, j’pense que de l’aider à réfléchir à, à c’qui est en train de de vivre, de comment il le vit, pis de l’importance t’sé de prendre soin de lui pour pouvoir défendre c’qui a à défendre. T’sé pouvoir être crédible dans c’qui veut exprimer t’sé. Fa que la première chose c’est vraiment de prendre soin de toi, t’sé de te mettre en sécurité, de t’sé d’être capable de reconnaître, pis on va vérifier ça c’est super intéressant cette discussion-là où “est-ce que tu penses prendre des risques? ” “non non non” “c’est quoi un risque pour toi? ” Pis là, t’explores ça avec, pis tu vois qui a pris tellement de risques hier, pis y s’était même pas rendu compte qui avait pris des risques, pis là tu peux échanger. Fa que toute la richesse, t’sé toute la richesse de cette possibilité de lien-là, t’sé qu’un jeune qui est en fugue que le lien est coupé. Mettons, pis qui peut pas, fa que c’est, c’est vraiment intéressant de faire voir que ce soit au centre jeunesse ou que ce soit aux policiers, que se soit aux parents, t’sé l’importance c’est qui se passe des choses. T’sé ton jeune, t’sé y va, y va, y va pouvoir faire du sens avec c’qui est en train de vivre, mais peut-être pas au centre jeunesse, parce qui est dans un cadre...”

(11357, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Moreover, the procedures followed by community caseworkers also include communications with other partners from the various sectors. At times, these contacts may be reported to the authorities, because the youths are under 14 years of age, or because they believe the youths' safety is compromised. But most often, communications established by community caseworkers are intended to make their work with youths more effective or to help build a safety net around them. Therefore, it is not a matter of sharing sensitive, confidential information, unless there is a fear for the youths' safety, but rather of ensuring, for example, consistency between interventions, given that the youths are free to circulate between agencies and are required to meet with several different caseworkers along their way. Therefore, community caseworkers sometimes contact other community resources.

“Mais cé ça cé... je dirais cé vraiment quand qu'on s'inquiète pas mal là t'sé... Euh... des fois, on va dire, on va agir ensemble, des fois aussi cé pour, parce qu'on est sur le point de faire un signalement, pis on se dit on a peut-être besoin d'information, peut-être qu'on ... comment ça se passe avec eux... qu'est-ce que eux y en pensent... aussi Fa que là souvent ça peut euh... on peut le faire avec ou sans l'accord du jeune, parce que si y a un taux de dangerosité qui est gros, euh on peut abattre la confidentialité hein? Quand qu'on sent, mettons on a plus contact avec un jeune, y vient plus ça fait deux semaines qu'on l'a pas vu, mais on sait pertinemment qui est encore en fugue, on est très inquiets... on va appeler En Marge pis on va leur dire “écoutez... on est très inquiets pour cette personne-là, pour telle telle telle raison est-ce que vous l'avez vue? ”...”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

In fact, this is the avenue that caseworkers identified first as a means to improve their intervention, that is to say, more communication and collaboration with their other resources, as well as the youth centres. In this perspective, they would like youth centres to be more open and patient towards youths whom they would like to see return quickly to the institution, when they are not yet ready and still need to take stock of their situation. Some acknowledged that the agreement protocols facilitate things, but that social emergency workers could still be better informed of the problem and made aware that youths are safe at night when they are staying at the agencies.

“Ok! Une meilleur ouverture de la DPJ, qui des... on aimerait parfois travailler mieux ensemble et arrêter la panique de “Ah non! Faut qu'on l'embarque tout d'suite...” et qui peut ensuite briser notre lien avec un jeune! Pis une fois que le lien avec un jeune, y a plus de chances que le jeune va être plus à risque, en fait, et ne gardera pas contact dans des situations précaires! ”

(11352, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

However, some caseworkers admitted that connections are made more easily when community caseworkers have a good understanding of the educators' jobs. This information sharing is sometimes essential to finding a middle ground that serves the youths first and foremost.

“Ben en fait, on veut pouvoir parler avec le travailleur social pour essayer de voir qu'est-ce qui est en train de se passer, essayer de donner du temps au jeune pour un éventuel retour par lui-même. Fa que là, l'idée avant c'était que les policiers voulaient prendre le jeune, le ramener de force. On s'est, on a fini par faire entendre que c'était pas une bonne idée, puis maintenant, ben on a ces échanges-là réguliers avec les travailleurs sociaux pour pouvoir justement... Mais souvent, les travailleurs sociaux sont pas présents quand ça se passe la nuit. Fa que à ce moment-là, c'est l'urgence sociale du centre jeunesse, la permanence avec qui on va négocier pour essayer de dire «ben est-ce qu'on peut attendre à demain matin?”

On va faire un contact avec le travailleur social, pis à ce moment-là ben, selon ce qui se passe, on verra qu'est-ce qu'on va, qu'est-ce qu'on va faire. Fa que on essaye de gagner du temps. Fa que nos échanges avec les travailleurs sociaux se font ee via ce processus-là et ee... par d'autres processus quand ee on a des jeunes... C'est ça, quand les travailleurs sociaux sont ouverts à plus... Ben des fois, on a eu des rencontres réseaux avec le travailleur social, le psychiatre d'la jeune, nous, pis d'autres intervenants dans le, dans le réseau qui sont, qui interviennent auprès d'elle, quand qu'est en fugue. Parce que c'est une fugueuse à répétition, pis t'sé au bout du compte y se passait rien, fa que là "on peut-tu se parler, on peut-tu regarder qu'est-ce qui se passe pis tout ça" Ça c'est super intéressant, c'est là qui a des choses qui se passent pour de vrai."

(11357, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Nevertheless, certain situations may require caseworkers to contact the police, in cases notably of a suicide crisis, in instances where youths get out of hand in the resource centre, or when youths simply want to be accompanied by police officers when returning to the youth centre. Although contacts with the police are generally positive, respondents stressed that there is one issue still outstanding: that police officers not come pick up youths on the premises. Situations in which they do so are apt to create considerable tensions, not only among the youths, but also among the caseworkers. The best option for them would be that the officers enter only when they are asked to do so. Furthermore, caseworkers noted that police officers who do not respect these boundaries are often those who do not understand the agencies' mission. This observation is therefore consistent with the idea raised by several respondents to the effect that collaborations are generally better when the parties involved understand one another's respective mandates.

"Oui cé assez informatif... là, on demande de leur aide là pour amener un jeune... ça se passe mal, ça va dans l'attitude des policiers auprès du jeune... Des fois, envers nous, y lâchent des craques aussi comme quoi euh... t'sé euh genre... euh... "vous auriez dû nous appeler avant"... Ben cé parce que cé maintenant qu'on évaluait t'sé euh... ça fait trois jours là qui est en fugue cé comme... faut qu'on évalue un peu là... Y é en sécurité, y é avec nous pendant ce temps-là t'sé bon... Mais de façon générale, de plus en plus... plus ça va, plus que les policiers comprennent notre travail (...)... comprennent beaucoup plus notre travail... Euh... cé le sens que ça l'a... euh... puis euh... ben souvent, on se fait féliciter pour notre beau travail, chose qu'on voyait pas avant... T'sé cé incroyable ah oui..."

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Des fois moins bien! Euh dépendant d’la situation! Un retour là y a pas d’trouble là! Mais y a certains... On a un protocole avec les DPJ et police etc... Mais un protocole c’est pas la loi non plus... Et euh... c’est... Certains policiers qui sont pas habitués à faire affaire avec nous, eux autres leur mandat c’est de v’nir chercher un jeune qui a un avis d’disparition, localiser un jeune... Mais on aime pas qui utilisent le Bunker pour le faire... Pour avoir une place, un lieu safe, pour les jeunes qui sont en fugue pis qui soient à l’aise de v’nir! Si les polices utilisent la place pour embarquer des jeunes, c’est clair qui ne viendront pas.”
(11352, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Ben j’dirais que moi j’ai été agréablement surpris, j’té dis pas que j’ai pas rencontré quelques cowboys ee, mais vraiment j’ai été... parce que j’étais une personne, à prime à bord, qui avait des préjugés envers les policiers, puis c’est ça quand j’ai commencé à travailler dans la rue pis que là j’ai eu à travailler avec des policiers ça beaucoup démystifié ma, ma façon de les percevoir. Pis j’ai vécu, t’sé j’ai été chanceuse, j’ai vécu vraiment des belles expériences, des policiers qui étaient respectueux, qui donnaient le temps au jeune de digérer le fait que y se sentait trahi par nous autres. Ou t’sé parce que des fois, les jeunes aussi on leur explique que nous, notre limite c’est le mandat de recherche et d’amener, pis là on essaie de les faire réfléchir t’sé “tu penses-tu que y pourrait y avoir un mandat de recherche et d’amener qui soit émis contre toi? Sais-tu dans quel cas qu’on...” Pis là, on leur explique “t’sé les gens qui vont se mettre en danger, les gens qui vont prendre des risques, des gens qui vont”. Pis là, le jeune va faire “non pas pantoute” Fa que là t’sé y oublie comme ça, pis là à un moment donné ben c’est ça, bing ça arrive. Fa que su’l’coup des fois c’est pas facile à digérer, pis t’sé ça prend du tact pour que ça se passe bien t’sé. Pis ee j’ai rencontré quand même beaucoup de policiers dans ces cas particuliers là où c’que on mettait en, en place un mandat de recherche et d’amener. J’ai eu des bonnes expériences j’té dirais que y a eu des expériences vraiment moins heureuses là.”

(11357, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

3.20 DURING THE FLIGHT — COMMUNICATION THAT POLICE ESTABLISH WITH THE PARENTS AND OTHER SECTORS

When police enter the scene, their work obviously depends on good collaboration from the network of partners and members of the youth they are looking for. They will thus turn to parents, friends, youth centres or even hospitals to obtain any useful information that might help find the youth. The contacts they establish, at the outset and throughout the search, usually go well, although some remarked that parents are sometimes indifferent and do not participate much, having abandoned the idea that something can be done for their child. We infer that the quality of the police officers’ work depends primarily on the availability of the people from the youth’s circle, which varies from one situation to the next. Thus, it could bring the police to reinforce their operations in situations involving youths who have run away for the first time, who need medication, who exhibit suicidal thoughts, or who have known contacts within organized crime

networks. In this logic, these situations take precedence over cases of repeat runaways, whose habits the police already know, and who have a better chance of finding repeat runaways than those mentioned above. Actually, these chronic runaway situations affect police officers greatly. Some believe that youth centres should be equipped with better security systems, whereas others wonder how appropriate it is to return youths to the same environment that, in any case, they will leave if they do not receive the help they need.

“Son problème au niveau de, de d’hébergement, c’est pas, c’est pas mon problème à moi. Je peux peut-être parler avec son travailleur social pour dire “bon, le jeune veut plus retourner là, ça serait peut-être bon l’envoyer dans un autre foyer de groupe afin d’empêcher la fugue, parce que si il retourne au même foyer de groupe y va fuguer, ou dans le même hébergement, les risques de fugue sont énormes. Moi je privilégierais que le jeune soit envoyé ailleurs. ”.”

(11462, Police officer, Montreal)

“Ouais ben exemple, j’ai… y en a un ça fait peut-être trois semaines on est allés l’chercher, y était dans… y restait dans l’fin fond d’un duplex pis tout ça, pis on est allé l’porter au Gouvernail pis y l’ont r’donné à sa mère mais c’tait pas… c’tait pas la meilleure affaire, y est r’parti tout suite après! Ça fait chier! Tu fais, t’sé y avait besoin d’aide c’te jeune-là, y avait des gros problèmes de consommation pis tout ça, pis j’pense que y aurait fallu qui soit référé à quelque part pour lui donner un coup d’main là! T’sé y avait de… besoin d’aide! ”

(12463, Police officer, Quebec)

Additionally, concerning collaborations with community organizations, police officers also mentioned the rule to the effect that they should not go on the premises to pick up youths. The rule seems less of a problem for some of them, particularly those who have established communication channels that enable them to call the agencies to make sure the youths are healthy and safe. Nonetheless, a few would like the agencies to contact them systematically when they take in runaway minors and believe that they have a better understanding than the agencies of the protocols to observe, as well as the agencies’ mandates, services and the role they play with the youths.

3.21 AFTER THE FLIGHT—THE RETURN

3.21.1 The youths' perspective

A certain number of youths came back against their will. They want to make it clear that they never returned voluntarily. However, other youths seem to perceive things differently. They want to specify that they decided when they would come back. Yet, the circumstances described by the youths indicate that they did not have much choice. Whatever the case may be, for a good number of them, solitude, boredom and fatigue would have triggered the desire to return.

“Je finis par me tanner. (...) Parfois je suis comme : “Oh, je vais aller voir ma mère.” T’sé, parfois là, je te dis je suis en fugue là, juste comme ça : “Ah, ma mère me manque.” Là je commence à pleurer comme une conne. Là mon chum : “Mais va voir ta mère, moi je t’empêche pas, depuis le début je te dis vas chez ta mère.” T’sé...”
(11118, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

The cold was also given as a reason, as well as lodging and various problems encountered by the youths, for which they had run out of resources.

“La deuxième fois j’ai fait... “check, j’ai pus d’job, ça va mal, partout où est-ce que j’vas, qu’ça soit n’importe où y’a des problèmes”. J’avais aucune carte en plus. Fa que cté, j’mé suis dit “check”, j’mé suis dit “j’vas r’tourner, j’vas aller profiter du temps qui m’reste, j’vas aller faire le reste de mon temps jusqu’à mes 18 ans”. C’est ça, j’chus r’venu par moi-même, j’mé suis dit j’vas aller profiter des services qui vont m’offert. Renouveau d’carte, dentiste pis toute... J’en ai profité pis j’suis revenu, pis check aujourd’hui, ça peut pas m’arriver mieux qu’ça! J’ai fait le bon choix!”
(11114, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

“On était tannées pis on n’avait rien mangé... On avait marché d’ici à XXX à pied, XXX jusqu’à un autre métro, pis du métro jusqu’à XXX. On est rentrées dans un métro pis de XXX on a... pis on s’est perdues pis toute là. On n’avait rien mangé en deux jours.”
(11113, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

“T’sé elle a été full pissoune rendue au Squat à Québec. Elle avait appelé son père, pis elle avait peur, pis toute là. En tout cas. Pff. Gros bébé lala là. Fa que moi, j’ai pas eu le choix d’appeler ma famille d’accueil, pis toute là. Pis là, son père est venu nous chercher à Québec. C’était con là. T’sé, moi j’avais comme pus le choix de revenir avec la fille, parce que là, ils savaient que j’étais rendu à Québec, fa que, y avait juste à appeler la police de Québec, pis dire “ ha, ha, est à Québec.” Fa que là, j’ai comme faite “ha, j’ai pas le choix.”.”
(13151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Furthermore, youths sometimes return to the fold to ensure their survival and safety.

“Y m'avait dit d'aller faire une commission, justement, avec lui, pis... on s'était ramassés chez, chez son père à lui, pis... finalement, c'était récolter sa sœur, pis le lift était parti, pis en tout cas... Genre, pas de joke, j'ai eu peur de me faire violer là. C'te shot là, genre. T'sé, y, y s'essayait, mais un peu trop fort là. Y a fallu, là criss, que j'décalisse là, genre là. Le pousser, pis de claquer la porte, pis m'en aller. Pis j'étais, Mont Royal, j'connaissais pas pantoute, genre, ce, ce bout là de Montréal là. T'sé, pis justement, de un, y a pas moyen de poucer à Montréal. De deux, j'sais pas y est où le métro. Fa que là, le gars y ressort du bloc, pis là, y est en tabarnack, pis wawawwa, pis là, j'y dit “Là, tu vas me ramener au parc, tabarnack, pis là, t'sé, chus pas contente là, t'sé... Ben oué, là, chus vraiment pas contente, parce que criss, en tout cas”. Pis là, finalement y a dit “en tout cas, si tu veux retourner au parc, suis moé, j'm'en retourne là”. Pis moé, j'l'avais suivi, pis en arrivant, XXX m'avait pété une coche t'sé “Là, tabarnack, c'était supposé prendre cinq minutes, ça pris deux heures”... J'étais vraiment partie longtemps là. Pis, plus tard, j'l'avais vu avec le gars pis t'sé, genre... J'sais pas quoi, le gars l'avait payé, mais t'sé, y s'était engueulé, pis t'sé, ça paraissait que c'était pour ça là, t'sé. C'était vraiment hypocrite là. Pis y trouvait ça drôle, j'me souviens là, c'est... c'était vra... en tout cas. (court silence) Pis c'te veillée là, j'avais décidé de décrisper, carrément là. T'sé, y était venu me voir, pis t'sé, y trouvait ça drôle, pis là j'étais “Tabaranack, ton ostie de zouf y a essayé d'me...” en tout cas. Pis là “heille, arrête dont là...” Pis... j'avais poigné mes clics, mes clacs, j'avais dit “garde, moé j'décalisse d'icitte là. J'm'en vas men. chus sûre que tu joues pas faire avec moé men. J'chus sûre que...” T'sé.... pis là, ça faisait pas son affaire, pis... y était pas content...”
(13152, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

As for another young girl, she said that she decided to go back under difficult circumstances; that is, after seeing a friend overdose. Her social worker then convinced her that it was time to come home, that she had projects to turn to, notably school, as well as therapy for her addiction problem.

“Ouais, en parlant avec ma T.S, a me disait “Là, là, c't'assez! Là, r'veins!” T'sé, a me disait vraiment des phrases de même. “Là, là, c'est fini l'niasage là, gua.” T'sé, des fois, a me mettait une échéance. Je l'appelais mettons le vendredi, a me disait là, bon t'sé, a dit euh “Combien de temps tu veux j'te laisse encore? ”.”
(11157, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

In this context, the young girl's return would have taken on a meaning that enabled her subsequently to change things in her life. Otherwise, with no meaning to attribute to their return, youths would have little reason to return and stay. They would then go back only to recuperate and leave again. Some of them would adopt a lifestyle that would somehow lead them to living with one foot in the street and one in the institution.

“Ça mé arrivé souvent de me faire arrêter pis de me faire demander mes papiers pis y me ramènent. Mais la plupart du temps, je disais un faux nom pis je revenais tout seul quand que le trip était fini pis quand j’étais fatigué là j’étais fatigué, je r’entrais pis je repartais le lendemain.”

(12121, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

This idea is similar to that of the boy who explains here that if youths run away repeatedly, it is because they feel that their previous flights served no purpose.

“Comme moi la dernière fois j’ai fugué, j’ai fugué pa’ce que j’mé suis dis que je l’avais faite une fois... ça avait super bien été... pis que. Bref, quand chus r’venu, ça servi à rien... y ont réouvert mon dossier... donc, j’ai r’fugué pour leur remontrer que j’tais capable de fonctionner sans eux-autres.”

(14152, Youth, Boy, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Therefore, the reactions encountered when youths return are very important, although we can understand that the reactions sometimes are explosive. These youths provide a few illustrations here.

“La première fois, ma mère m’a sauté dans les bras quand je suis revenue. La deuxième fois, ma mère a dit “t’était où! Pourquoi nanana...” Troisième, en tout cas, ainsi de suite, pis de plus en plus genre, pis... Là, la dernière que j’ai fait, ben elle était vraiment frus contre moi, pis elle voulait pus me parler, pis... Je l’ai appellée pour dire “O.k. mais sont où mes affaires?”, parce qu’elle travaillait genre, quand je suis revenue. J’ai dit “O.k. elles sont où mes affaires, pis toute.”, parce qu’on avait acheté du linge genre cette fin de semaine-là. Pis elle a dit “O.k. je l’ai retourné au magasin, j’ai retourné ton I-Pod, j’ai retourné ci, j’ai retourné ça.” Pis là, on a poigné une chicane au téléphone, pis là, genre, je voulais repartir là, mais je me suis dit, “O.k. mais fuck off là”. La police était en avant de chez moi, je me suis dit “o.k., je vais sortir par où? Par la cours, je vais sauter la clôture, pis, je vais partir à courir là? ”.”

(11117 Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

“A me péait une sale coche pis là, je disais du calme. Premièrement, chus partie parce que tu me gueulais après. Ça te tente tu que j’m’en aille encore. A se calmait les nerfs, j’t’ais capable d’y expliquer. Ça changeait rien, mais au moins, j’avais essayé.”

(14151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Thus, when youths run away, the people in their circle are severely tested, to the point that it is often difficult for parents to find the right tone when their child returns. Nevertheless, there are cases where one family member—a brother in this particular example—knows how to go about it and succeeds in dealing with the relational issues raised by a runaway’s return.

“Y’était... Moi j’vas donner tout mon soutien si tu veux. J’vas même v’nir te porter à la porte. Y dit c’est un des meilleurs choix qu’tu peux faire. Ça m’a donné comme espoir que mon frère allait être encore là, même si j’rentrais ici. Y cé dit : “ah j’l’ai un peu convaincu...”. Fa que y’était fier.”

(11114, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

However, when speaking of the circumstances of their return, youths speak more often about the way things went at the youth centre. Generally, they are first received by security agents or members of a patrol on standby and then taken to a block where their educators do a follow-up. After discussing the flight, youths are placed in time-out, during which they are grounded and are supposed to reflect on their behaviour. In some cases, this quarantine can last up to a few weeks. One youth said that in his case, he was searched, immobilized and isolated for five days. However, with practice, he learned to say what the caseworkers wanted to hear so he could get out as quickly as possible and run away again. Similarly, another one explained that he never bothered to do any reflecting. He would run away before then.

“Bin y me mettent tout le temps en chambre. T’sé cé pas pire, tu dors pis tu te fais réveiller à 11 heures avec un déjeuner au lit parce que t’sé y faut que tu déjeunes dans ta chambre. Quand tu reviens de fugue genre moi je vois ça du bon côté moi je vois ça comme un déjeuner au lit. Pis je vais prendre ma douche, je fais mes téléphones pis je m’en vas.”

(12121, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

This exercise, in which youths were urged to engage, inviting them to reflect on their situation, seems to have had little impact on the youths in our sample. Some would have preferred that their return be handled as if nothing had happened, that the caseworkers turned the page and no longer talk to them about it, or that the intervention plan be more personalized. They would also have liked to find a less oppressing atmosphere. Similarly, they would have liked that the caseworkers show interest in understanding the reasons why they ran away and take the time to talk with them.

“Non j’ai, j’ai envoyé chier les éducs, j’ai frappé une fille pis… j’ai été retournée au XXXX (rire) (...) j’pensais qui allaient être… essayer de comprendre pourquoi que… j’tais partie… (...) Mais cé pas ça tu suite, pas que mon inter… pas que… Y’ont essayé d’comprendre… mais pendant ma ren… ma rencontre de s’maine.... Mais pas au début… quand j’tais arrivée y m’ont pas posé de question, rien, pis m’ont pas posé pourquoi? Pis y’ont tu suite comme… on va dire je faisais queqchose… ah c’ta cause que t’as fugué, que tu fais ça bla bla bla… t’sé y mettaient toute sur mon dos genre… Fa que, cé là que j’commençais à pèter des “fiuses” genre.”

(11111, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

That said, although youths generally do not give much thought to the flight *per se*, some seem to have given more thought to their return, imagining scenarios that were very indicative of the changes they would have liked to see around them. The youths speak here of understanding and reconciliation.

“Premièrement, que je ne sois pas rushée par mes amis là, vite, vite. Que moi, je décide de retourner par moi-même genre. (...) Pis que, comme… Que j’arrive, que mes parents soient là. Mes deux parents, mais pas mes petites sœurs genre, pour pas que, ça fasse fucker l’affaire. Pis là, ma mère a… Comme j’arrive, pis là, ma mère a fait : “Je me suis inquiétée pour toi. T’étais où”. (Sur une voix attentionnée et douce.) Pis comme t’sé que… T’sé pas! “Heille, crime, qu’est-ce que tu fais-là, t’es dont ben conne toi d’être partie de même! Je m’inquiétais.” (Sur un ton fâché) Heille, ça paraît que tu t’inquiétais toi la grande hen. (Léger rire de I) Yes sir, continue de même t’sé, non, mais comme t’sé qu’elle arrête. “Ha….”.”

(11117 Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

“Je r’viens chez nous, je m’assis à table, ce que je faisais à chaque fois. Ma mère arrive pis me r’garde “qu’est- ce que t’as à me dire”. T’sé qu’a me gueule pas : “que c’est qui s’est passé! ” Qu’a me dise, t’sé qu’a vienne s’assir avec moi, qu’a prenne le temps d’arriver pis toute, qu’a fasse ses affaires : “va prendre une douche” Qu’a mange un peu, je sais pas, t’sé a se relaxe, qu’a vienne s’asseoir avec moi pis qu’a me d’ mande “qu’est ce que t’as à me dire” tout simplement.”

(14151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

3.21.2 The parents’ perspective

According to the parents, their children returned because they had no other place to go because they were hungry or cold, or because they had over-consumed. In short, these reasons suggest that the return is generally involuntary, as in the case of this mother, who explained the events that occurred when she went alone to pick up her daughter.

“C'est ça, je l'avais r'trouvée... au coin de... Beaudry et... Maisonneuve... pis là ben... j'ai stationné l'auto pis ben elle wo! à... m'avait vu fait que à se cachait derrière les autres fait que là... j'ai marché vers elle là a s'est mise à courrir, pis là, là, j'ai couru, couru après elle à s'est cachée dans un... est entrée dans un dépanneur, elle s'est cachée au sous-sol, en tout cas j'lai retrouvée pis la ben... là, on est venus à En Marge, ici.”
(11256, Parent, Community, Montreal)

However, such situations are unusual. The stories that the parents related revealed instead the frictions and the ambivalence displayed by their child at that moment. When they reach their limits, youths sometimes arrange to be caught by the authorities, or are convinced by people in their circle to do things differently.

“Mais là... Là, je l'ai vu, la première journée. Là, il voulait rien savoir de revenir. Il voulait rester là. Bon, ben je lui ai dit : “R'garde... Moi, tu m'appelles là, quand c'est fini” t'sé. Pis le lendemain, je suis repassé. Mais là, il était seul au carré Berri. Complètement déprimé. Pis ça été la dernière fois qu'il est allé. Parce que je pense, la fille, elle avait fait la rechute. Elle partait faire de la prostitution, pis là, ça y... Y a décroché. Là, il ne pouvait pu là”. ”
(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

“Bin écoute je dis que c'est lui qui a voulu revenir en fait quand ee à la fin octobre ee quand la maman de sa copine l'a vu ee reprendre le chemin pour aller dormir dans un stationnement, elle n'en pouvait plus de le voir eee. Parce que il était premièrement, il se lavait pas. T'sé tu sais un peu ce que ça peut donner au niveau des soins et des besoins primaires. Et puis, ee elle lui a dit qu'elle pouvait l'accueillir chez elle à deux conditions. Cé qu'il se trouve un travail pour se payer ses petits besoins personnels, exemple cigarettes, et qu'il retourne à l'école. Et il l'a fait De d'là, ça a créé, ça a déclenché quelque chose chez lui, pis cé ça qui a fait que y a repris eee le goût de revenir.”
(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Therefore, the ambivalence they express when they return could be associated with the fear of being badly received, of having to face strong reactions and severe consequences. In this regard, one mother deplores the fact that her daughter was received at the youth centre the caseworkers showing not much happiness or satisfaction upon seeing her again. Other parents admitted crying, reprimanding their child and displaying extreme anger. Then again, some deplore not having been able to restore contact. One mother said, for example, that her son acted at home as if nothing had happened. At the youth centre, he did not confide in the caseworkers either, except for one, in his four years of being placed. Another family member also tried to reason with him, but in vain. Similarly, another mother said that when her daughter came home, she went immediately on the Internet. She spoke to no one and had an arrogant

attitude. At the youth centre, her attitude was the same, and it was only after a month of silence that mother and daughter finally spoke for the first time. However, trust was not restored. Finally, only much later, the girl had a crisis at the youth centre and told her educators of her suffering.

Thus, the ambivalence displayed by youths when they return could also be associated with the fear of having to deal with their suffering and difficulties, which already existed before they ran away, and frequently worsened while they were on the run. In fact, this second possibility did emerge more frequently in the parents' accounts.

In this perspective, one parent explained that when her son came back, he showed great willingness to participate in family activities. But he was fragile and could easily fall back into his old habits, without, however, running away.

“Il est très motivé pour trois semaines, t’sé, les choses sont, il y avait un respect, il y avait un bon échange, il avait une bonne humeur, bon, tout ça. Pis là, les trois semaines arrivaient pis oups, ça repartait. Il consommait plus, tout ça. Fa que, c’était plein de bonne volonté, mais aussitôt que, il re consommait un peu plus, ça re dégringolait.”
(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Another parent raised an entirely different scenario. Her daughter came back by fleeing the apartment of the one who had taken her in. The girl made the decision after realizing that her lover wanted her prostitute herself. Therefore, her problem was far more fundamental, driving her to seek evidence of love at any cost.

“Aussi moi, peut-être c'est, c'était pas correct de ma part euh, de toute façon, j'ai dévoilé là-bas, le faite qu'elle était dépressive et qu'elle prenait des médicaments, et au même temps je, j'envoyais des messages comme “je t'aime” et ça, mais je disais aussi ces choses avec les médicaments et c'est possible que ça aussi, euh éveillé une euh réaction aux gens qui la gardaient, pour la laisser s'échapper. (...) Ça aussi peut-être aussi, vous voyez dans sa tête, ma petite fille, elle euh, croyait qu'elle n'est pas aimée et tout ça. Elle a dit “ho, ok”, voilà je suis cherchée, voilà quelqu'un m'aime.”
(11251, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.21.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

Regarding the circumstances in which runaways return police officers and caseworkers present different points of view. In both groups of respondents, some think that, as a rule, runaway youths do not go back voluntarily, whereas others believe the opposite. Youths go back on their own to avoid being forced to do so by the authorities. These respondents also believe that they come back voluntarily because they are bored, no longer know where to go, can no longer meet their basic needs, have exhausted their resources, or need to disappear from the street for a while.

“C'est dur des fois t'as faim, tu gèles, tu dois te dire “où cé que je m'en vas, qu'est ce que je vais faire de ma vie”. J'imagine que quand té poqué, ou quand y pleut pis que t'as pus de place, tu te fais [casser] une volée, tu dois pas tripper fort. Autant qui en a qui ont du fun en fugue, tu consommes à mort la plupart du temps pas la plupart du temps la moitié reviennent par eux autres même, l'autre moitié par la police. T'sé quand y reviennent d'eux autres même c'est parce que le fun était passé. ”

(12462, Police officer, Quebec)

Therefore, their return is sometimes motivated by a need for safety. Some have experienced or witnessed traumatic events and fear the worst. In this context, some youths therefore return directly or arrange to be caught by the police. However, other respondents said that the youths return because they are bored, they realize the situation they are in, and being on the run is not really what they want, their crisis has passed, they have had time to blow off steam, they believe their message has been conveyed, or they knew from the start that they could not be on the run forever. However, this does not apply to those who run away for longer periods. Generally, this would be their first time, and they would not have initially planned to be away for long.

In the following excerpt, one community caseworker explains what he knows about the protocol for runaways who return to youth centres, in closed environments. He is among those who believe that youths never return voluntarily, but prefer to persist until the end, until they are caught by the police.

“Parce que... la plupart y l’savent que quand y r’viennent, sont pas nécessairement écoutés. Mettons, j’prends un exemple là... à DPJ, tu r’tournes dans ton centre jeunesse, fermé là... C’t’intense là quand tu r’viens, c’est vraiment intense, c’est genre là, y t’déshabillent, y a personne qui t’parle, y t’déshabillent, y checkent si t’as d’la drogue, une arme machin... Pis t’sé, quand qu’t’arrives (Rire)... à Cité des Prairies, t’arrives, quand t’arrives, y a quelqu’un qui pèse sur un bouton rouge. Fa que sont huit à courir, huit agents d’intervention genre, vite, vite, vite, vite... Pis là, y arrivent ok là, on t’fouille, on enlève toutes les choses t’sé, des armes ou des trucs comme ça, pour pas qu’y’aille l’droit... Après ça, y l’mettent toute une nuit en isolement dans... pis c’est comme... en réflexion, en papier là... Toute une nuit comme ça, pis après ça, y l’mettent en arrêt d’agir dans une unité fermée où t’as cinq cigarettes par jour, six cigarettes par jour... j’pense, pendant 30 jours. Fa que la question c’tait...penses-tu qui veulent r’tourner eux-mêmes genre? ”

(11354, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Conversely, this institutional caseworker offered a completely different point of view on the return of youths to youth centres. He agreed that the protocol can be restrictive, but suggested that things may be different when youths return on their own accord.

“Mais t’sé pis en même temps c’pas d’la détention! J’veux pas qu’on parle de détention parce que c’est plus d’la frustration là t’sé de savoir que y auront pas s’sorties, de savoir que y a des choses qui vont leur être coupées parce que avant d’avoir, de savoir c’est quoi qui s’passe t’sé... Alors qu’un retour qui r’vient de par lui-même, c’est très différent! T’sé... “J’ai réalisé que j’mé suis mis dans marde, j’ai réalisé telle affaire... Oui, y s’est passé telle chose! Oui, j’ai consommé... Oui c’est... Mais là, maintenant j’mé suis mis dans marde pis là faut j’mé sorte de d’là. Fa que faut j’mé r’prenne en main! ” Y’en a de ça aussi! J’té dirais de plus en plus, parce que les jeunes r’viennent de plus en plus... T’sé y en a plusieurs qui r’viennent par eux autres mêmes! Y en a beaucoup qui s’font prendre, mais y en a plusieurs qui r’viennent! T’sé de parler “Aille tu r’viens-tu là? T’sé r’gardes, t’as pas d’place où aller coucher à soir tout ça... r’gardes t’es en sécurité ici! ” ... “Ok j’vas y’aller... Tu viens tu m’chercher? ”... “Oui j’vas y’aller! ” T’sé, ça arrive! On en voit pas toujours, les policiers des fois c’est nous autres qui vont les chercher! ”

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

The caseworkers also explained that in other circumstances, youths would generally go to their parents or caseworkers when they come back. In summary, they will turn to a person whom they trust, or who means something to them, which does not exclude those with whom they were in conflict at the time of their departure. Essentially, these people had the same reactions as those previously described in the analysis of the contacts that youths have while on the run. These reactions thus vary considerably, depending on the person and the environment, and can range from anger to understanding.

However, the caseworkers noticed that youths often expect to face serious consequences when they return and that what they imagine is far worse than reality.

“Le contexte d’la fugue, ça fait quelques années comme j’disais tantôt. Avant ça, c’tait un automatisme qu’on l’envoyait en arrêt d’agir pour la faire réfléchir pis connaître le contexte. On les faisait même rencontrer des intervenants au niveau gangs de rue. On voulait savoir où c’qui étaient, avec qui, etc... C’pas un automatisme maintenant! ”
(11313, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

Youths who run away for the first time imagine the worst scenarios, whereas those who have done so before generally know more what to expect, although some continue to dread the reactions. In short, the return is apparently a turning point for all youths, filled with expectations and emotions.

“Moi j’pense qui savent très bien à quoi s’attendre quand y r’tournent en centre jeunesse. Y savent très bien à quoi s’attendre... J’pense que...y peuvent te décrire ça d’une étape à l’autre “pis r’garde qu’est-ce qui m’attend”... Moi j’en ai vu plein me décrire «r’garde qu’est-ce qui m’attend”... Mais din fois, y peuvent exagérer un peu... pis mettre ça dans beaucoup l’négatif là... Fa que peut-être pas dramatiser, mais genre mettre ça vraiment beaucoup négatif. Fa que faut ramener toujours à la réalité un peu... “Oui c’est sûr que ça va être dur, machin, machin, mais qu’est-ce que tu peux négocier. ” Mais y sont très au courant, mais en l’mettant dans l’négatif au complet parce que ça les angoisse beaucoup... le retour. J’pense qui sont conscients...”
(11354, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Maintenant, j’pense qui reste juste une unité ou deux, t’sé y a vraiment très peu d’unités d’arrêt d’agir. pis c’est pus systématique. Pour aller en arrêt d’agir, y faut que ça soit accepté par des autorités plus hautes là, t’sé fa que faut vraiment que tu fasses des demandes, pis y faut que tu le justifies si c’est ça. Fa que là, c’est sûr que c’est quand même plus soft, c’est plus des réflexions, des trucs justement c’est essayer d’entendre j’pense c’qui s’est passé, des choses au niveau des centres jeunesse par rapport à la prise de conscience de c’que vraiment difficile de r’venir! Fa que une fugue peut exprimer, pis c’est pas. C’est pas un problème en soi t’sé, c’est pas, c’est pas juste... T’sé y a, y a des choses à aller chercher là-dans, pis y a des choses qui expriment, t’sé comme on va prendre en compte une évaluation, t’sé on va faire une évaluation au niveau du suicide quand quelqu’un crie à l’aide. Mais t’sé la fugue t’sé c’est la même chose, pis t’sé ça devrait être pris en compte de la même manière, de la même façon, parce qui a des choses à aller valider, pis aller vérifier dans dans chaque, dans chaque expression t’sé de fugue là t’sé. Fa que j’pense que c’est ça pour les jeunes... y des fois quand c’est les premières fugues y s’attendent peut-être au pire. ”
(11357, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Des fois y en a qui s’imaginaient probablement que ça serait plus difficile de r’venir, pis y en a d’autres que pour eux c’est ça va dépendre... C’est du cas par cas j’dirais! Mais habituellement y nous connaissent assez pour savoir qu’on les r’cevera pas avec une brique pis un fanal là t’sé... Y vont arriver ici, pis y vont être quand même accueillis. Mais par contre, y vivent quand même tout un sentiment de culpabilité ou de dire “ben là r’garde, à quoi j’vas m’attendre mais que j’arrive”... Pis ben des fois on les envoie pas nécessairement en arrêt d’agir à l’extérieur quand y arrivent de fugue. Fa que ben souvent on les accueille ici, pis y vont rester ici, pis on les puni pas nécessairement parce que y sont allés en fugue là! C’qui est différent avec auparavant ou que c’tait automatique qu’on les envoyait en arrêt d’agir. Pus maintenant! ”

(11312, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

3.22 AFTER THE FLIGHT—MORE DETAILS ON THE PRACTICES IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS

When providing more details on youth centres’ practices related to returning runaways, the caseworkers from this sector do not focus on the same elements. Some indicated that they would first want to check if the youths are hungry and if they need to wash or sleep. Their priority thus seems to be the youths’ basic needs, before moving on to the next step, which consists in reviewing the events and the reasons that led the youth to run away.

However, other caseworkers used completely different words to show that the search is the first step and the next one is to develop an intervention plan that would include certain restrictions and require the youths to begin a reflection on their situation. Then, depending on the information they are able to gather regarding the severity of the situation and the danger the youth is in, they would decide whether a time-out will be imposed or not.

We could infer that very different approaches are used with returning runaways, depending on the environment and the caseworkers. Nonetheless, it remains difficult to tell if these distinctions are related to distinct intervention philosophies or different circumstances relating to the return itself. This nuance is based on the clarification provided by some respondents regarding the fact that their practice is necessarily influenced by the behaviours of the youths, who usually show stronger opposition when

returning against their will. An angry youth will obviously be less receptive to intervention.

“Ah ben là, là c'est par des mesures le plus souvent de contraintes, de privation d'liberté, sorties... De... Et là, on va devoir évaluer le risque de récidive immédiat... C'est pas la même chose là... Le jeune y voulait pas r'venir (rires) Y est pas prêt là! On le r'met dans une situation ou en général y a fuit, parce que y était trop stressé, fa que là, on y fait r'veivre encore plus de stress. En plus, en mettant des mesures d'encadrement plus importantes alors... là, ça peut être juridique, ça peut être des contentions, ça peut être des arrêts d'agir, ça peut être l'encadrement intensif... Écoutez, c'est pas simple rendu là, c'est pas facile de rétablir un contact avec le jeune. Alors que quand les jeunes reviennent de façon volontaire, là c'est la beauté de notre intervention au niveau... Dans l'premier cas, on doit assurer la sécurité du jeune. Et dans l'deuxième cas, on travaille plus le développement! Qu'est-ce que l'jeune a retiré de ça? Qu'est-ce qui s'attend? Qu'est... et là, le travail peut se faire avec l'institution ou la famille! ”

(11311, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“La base ok! En premier, dans un premier lieu, c'toujours ça! Si a l'a besoin d'dormir, a va dormir! Si c'fait 4 jours qu'a pas dormi parce qu'est s'es speeds, ben on va la laisser dormir! Pis on va aller voir régulièrement, voir comment qu'a feel, pis si ça va bien pis tout est beau... Pis c'est ça, on y donne à manger, on... c'est vraiment d'survie! Après ça, on prend l'temps d'la rencontrer pour comprendre le pourquoi! Y est arrivé cette situation-là... Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé? Qu'est-ce que t'as faite durant cette fugue-là? Est-ce que tu t'es mis en danger? Pis là ça va être... on va parler aux parents, on va parler aux travailleurs sociaux. Elle, a va parler à ses parents, a va parler à son travailleur social aussi! Pis à partir de d'là, ben, en principe, on devrait regarder un peu les objectifs de c'qui s'est passé, pis de voir un peu qu'est-ce c'qu'on fait pour l'avenir. Ça c'est dans l'idéal des mondes! Quand une jeune arrive avec les policiers, qui est menottée, qui hurle, qui crie, on va aussi répondre à un besoin d'base, mais mettons qui va être différent parce que a veut pas nous voir, a veut rien entendre de nous autres, t'sé... C'est sûr que la situation est complètement différente là! C'est sûr que c'est une jeune qui va revendiquer beaucoup, c't'une jeune qui va déranger, c't'une jeune qui va dire qu'est pas correcte, c't'une jeune qui va dire qu'on n'est pas corrects pis qu'on y'a coupé toute sa liberté pis ci, pis ça... Mais on va faire un plan d'travail à partir de c'qu'a va nous donner, elle! Où c'qu'à n'en est rendue dans sa démarche! T'sé... c'pour ça que j'te dis y a toujours deux côtés d'la médaille. Des fois, ça va super bien aller pis d'autres fois, ben écoute on peut être là-dans une semaine de temps là, parce que la jeune revendique et revendique et revendique et pète des crises et toute revole su'lé murs pis... Y'en a de d'ça! (...) C'est sûr que la situation est pas pareille! On va faire la même affaire! On va répondre à un besoin d'survie, on va r'garder c'est quoi qui s'est passé pis on va r'garder dans l'avenir qu'est-ce qui en est! Y va-tu avoir des conséquences? Y'en aura-tu pas? Ça va être quoi les conséquences? On laissera pas la fille dans l'néant! Parce que c'est insécurisant, premièrement c'est insécurisant, c'est c'qui les fait sauter l'plus! Quand qu'une jeune sait où c'qu'a s'en va, d'habitude, ça passe quand même assez bien! ”

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

Regarding elements that could facilitate youth centre interventions, very few caseworkers raised the idea of reverting to the former *Act* to facilitate the use of intensive supervision. Their statements rather suggested that they were seeking new

solutions and would therefore like to receive training on the subject or have access to the expertise of others and communicate with other resources.

“De quoi qu'on aurait besoin pour faciliter... (silence 7 secondes) Je sais pas là! Comment j'pourrais répondre à ça comme tel? On essaie le plus possible d'améliorer nos interventions pis de... On apprend c'est ben sûr! Pis comme j'dis, au cours des années, ça changé beaucoup notre façon d'voir la fugue! Euh... Mais... On essaye le plus possible d'aller voir en-dessous la fugue plutôt que de r'garder la fugue comme telle là! Mais j'pense que oui, effectivement, on a du travail quand même à faire là-dedans... Pis de tenter d'avoir des solutions... Mais des fois... c'est pas toujours simple (rires), dépendamment des cas aussi... de trouver d'autres moyens pour aider les jeunes... Bon, la collaboration avec leur travailleur social, avec d'autres gens c'est aussi quelque chose qui est primordial. Moi j'pense c'est c'qu'on a l'plus de besoin aussi là! Avec la famille... bon de s'regrouper tout l'monde ensemble pour pouvoir le plus possible donner d'l'aide à ce jeune-là! Moi j'pense que c'est plus de l'entourer, de l'encadrer le jeune pour éviter que y récidive là... Mais c't'une question que j'trouve difficile à répondre là! (rires)”
(11312, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

Furthermore, this caseworker raised the idea that better solutions would not necessarily come from elsewhere, but that with smaller administrative burdens and, consequently, greater availability, the caseworkers in youth centres could no doubt have a different impact on the youths when they return from running away.

“En fait, j'ai eu une vingtaine de jeunes à m'occuper dans mon case load. Fait que si j'en ai une couple en fugue en même temps, c't'arrivé, pis, c't'arrivé aussi qui reviennent dans un décalage ee... quand même proche l'un de l'autre. J'peux pas être disponible, t'sé, j'peux pas aller les rencontrer, j'peux pas me diviser en 10. Des fois, j'ai des rencontres déjà planifiées, des fois, on se rencontre, fait que, la question de disponibilité là eee... Eux autres y choisissent quand qui reviennent, souvent ou pas, ben moi, j'peux pas choisir quand j'peux les accueillir, t'sé. Fait que, c'est sûr que quand qui sont au centre d'accueil, c'est facilitant, parce que eux autres sont là en tout temps, fait qui l'accueillent mais, t'sé, si j'veux être là, des fois j'peux pas. Ça, j'aurais besoin de ça, pis j'aurais besoin peut être de... em... Ben que ça soit aussi plus facile au niveau de... de, d'l'administratif. Parce que nous on, t'sé, quand le jeune revient de fugue, là, y faut annuler la fugue, faut remplir tel papier, si y a une unité plus que 14 jours, t'sé, comme je disais, faut le changer de place. T'sé, ça l'implique administrativement là, beaucoup beaucoup de démarches. C'est sûr que faciliter, y a une forme de protocole, là, qui est mis en place là mais les situations sont tellement différentes d'un jeune à l'autre que t'sé eee... Pis d'avoir la chef proche, parce qu'a signé toutes les papiers, t'sé, quand qu'on lui demande des autorisations pour un arrêt d'agir, ben c'pas moi seule moi qui décide là, mon chef cautionne ça, faut qui soit là, faut qui signe la paperasse, faut que je rejoigne la personne qui s'occupe des places en centre d'accueil, y a tu encore sa place ? T'sé, j'aurais besoin que ça soit plus simple, finalement! Au niveau des démarches là.”
(11314, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

3.23 AFTER THE FLIGHT—LESSONS LEARNED

3.23.1 The youths' perspective

At least ten of the youths we met admitted that things did not go the way they had imagined. For example, some did not expect to have to work for a pimp to support themselves. Others indicated, however, that they had never imagined anything anyway, that they just lived from day to day while on the run, trying to make the most of it, or simply enjoying the freedom gained. Still, the fact that things did not go as planned was not a problem in itself for most of the youths who replied without hesitation to this question, except, of course, for those who made a point of specifying the extent to which their experience had turned into a nightmare.

However, only a few youths in the sample only saw the negative sides to their experience. The following youths feel that, in the end, running away did not change much in their lives, except to create problems, notably legal ones, as well as disappointments. Among these youths specifically, some of them had taken steps to solve a substance use problem. This initiative then led to other positive changes in their lives. However, these girls and boys still maintained their position that running away was a mistake, or at least a useless decision in their lives.

The following respondents thus differed from the other youths who have a more nuanced position and who represent a larger part of the sample. These young people see both positive and negative sides to their experience. Although some acknowledged that running away had several negative consequences, related notably to the deterioration of their health, they nevertheless said that running away was a way of getting to know themselves better as well as the world around them. This youth suggested here that he was now more aware of the power he has over his life. Then another believes that he has more self-control now.

“J’penserais pas! Toute vient de moi! C’est sûr que les autres peuvent m’apporter du soutien ou quelque chose, mais t’sé c’est moi qui fait mes choix! Y peuvent pas décider à ma place. Fa que, c’est vraiment plus moi. C’est pas vraiment mon milieu de vie.”
(11114, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

“We say now or I go back in time.... if I have the chance of going back on time, I’m not doing at all.... or I do.... If I go back in time and I have to decide to AWOL or to not AWOL....I do... I’m say Yeah... It’s help me... to control myself better, I learn from my mistake, if I wouldn’t did it... I know know.”
(11141, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Batshaw)

This statement is along the same lines as the one given by several youths regarding the autonomy and resourcefulness that they developed. One young girl specified that running away taught her to recognize dangerous situations more easily and that she had become more adventurous in life. One boy also believes that this experience enabled him to develop his autonomy, or at the very least, gain a better knowledge of the resources around him, which he would have been unable to do had he stayed in his living environment.

“Ben, j’sais comment, j’sais comment faire face aux situations, pis j’sais que dans l’avenir, s’il m’arrive de quoi, à tout perdre, si, ben j’sais que je vais avoir quand même des ressources pour m’aider, pis je sais que, j’va euh, ça, ça m’a apporté le faite de, de pouvoir dire, “garde moi j’ai vécu ça”. ”
(11158, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

For another, the most important thing is to have learned to function outside a shelter.

“parce que c’est un monde artificiel en centre d’accueil”
(11153, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

On the other hand, another boy explained that running away allowed him to take a step back and to become aware of his share of the responsibility in his conflicts with caseworkers. His account raised another important dimension. Running away represents a way of resolving a dead end, of solving relational issues that youths cannot settle by any other means. For example, one young girl came out of this experience convinced that she was wanted. This has given her the strength to face her substance abuse

problem. These two youths also noted a few improvements in their family. Some people now paid more attention and listened to them.

“Ouais augmenter un peu parce que... ma mère (ouin) t’sé quand... j’feelais pas, ma mère cherchait plus à savoir qu’est-ce qui avait tout ça...”
(11112, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

“Parce que la situation de ma famille a évolué. Chus beaucoup plus proche de ma sœur, beaucoup plus proche de mon père, ma belle mère est merveilleuse, pis même mon ti-frère est écoutant, bin écoutant, y’écoute mais yé pas écoutant. (rire). Mais chus capable de parler aujourd’hui avec ma famille, beaucoup plus facilement que je l’ai déjà faite. Mais la relation avec ma mère, elle, a absolument pas changé.”

(14151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Nevertheless, the impasse that the youths attempt to resolve is also the one related to the youth centre. They explained that running away was the solution to the malaise they felt in their living environment. They were searching for a way to have a break...

“Résolution d’conflicts un peu... la t’sé quand qui avait des comme euh... ben comme la fois qui avait eu ben des interventions sur moi là, ça m’as permis comme de... de résoudre ... ben pas d’résoudre mais comme m’évader...”
(11112, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

...and make a transition before becoming an adult. This would include trying to consolidate ties with friends and learning to share and live in solidarity, which, although forbidden in youth centres, would be a determining asset in their eyes when the time comes for them to become autonomous.

“Mais quand les gars, y font des conneries, là, ça tombe à “tu vis en groupe, tu payes en groupe” (...) Des conneries là. Faut qu’tu sois parfait, pis, faut que... Faut pas tu sacres, faut pas tu si, faut pas tu ça. C’pas ça la vie man, garde.”
(11153, Youth, Boy, Community, Montreal)

Another explained that despite the support that the youth centre can offer him, he worried about his ability to function alone when there will no longer be anyone to tell him what to do and to guide him from day to day.

“Ben y peuvent, y peuvent y vont te dire : “tu peux porter-ci, tu peux travailler”, mais c'est pas une vie normale pareil là, parce que. t'sé, admettons que j'aurais t'sé, y vont, me t'sé ça peut m'aider pour plus tard t'sé, mais que j'aille 18 ans t'sé y vont m'aider à me trouver une job. Fa que plus tard, j'ves savoir comment me trouver une job, mais t'sé si j'ai une job icitte.... Ben ... t'sé y vont me lever le matin t'sé... si j's'rais en dehors, y'a personne qui me lèverait le matin fa que... t'sé faut j'le fasse par moi-même là.”

(12127, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

In this perspective, another youth suggests here that before turning 18, youths had to take risks and make the most of the time they had left and of the youth centres that could still provide a safety net.

“Ouais pis y savent pas quoi faire avec, pis y'a quelqu'un qui a dit ça un moment donné t'sé... quand est-ce que c'est mieux de faire nos... de prendre des risques... ou de faire nos erreurs... t'sé est-ce que c'est mieux de les faire avant 18 ans pis que là à limite. Mais si t'es en centre jeunesse, t'as un filet de sécurité. Ou si tu peux pas les faire là bah t'attends à 18 ans pis la tu te plantes parce que tu as pas de filet de sécurité...”

(11151, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

However, some youths come to very difficult conclusions regarding this autonomy that they try so hard to acquire by running away. They realize that they are not autonomous, at least not for now, and that the freedom they gained was not the one for which they had hoped.

“Ça m'a permis de voir aussi que quand que t'es lousse euh... t'sé c'est pas tout le temps drôle là.”

(13132, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

“Justement, je me mets dans marde, je fais des conneries moi en fugue là, je me ramasse avec des peines pis des plaintes, pis je passe en cour. Cé tannant ça.”

(12123, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

Despite these considerations, many of the youths maintained that they would do the same again. Only five of them confirmed that they would not do such a thing again. Reminiscing over the best moments, the others still preferred freedom, even though it was not perfect. It is apparently a vital need. One respondent specified that she would certainly have lost her mind had she stayed in the youth centre. If they were to run away

again, some would try to control their substance use, however, or maintain closer ties with their parents.

We infer, in a way, that although running away may have negative consequences on the lives of youths, not running away could have been, in their eyes, just as devastating. Not only because of the autonomy and the freedom they gained, but also because of the anxiety they could no longer bear. In other words, we could consider that, in some cases, not running away, just as running away, could have led to the worst consequences.

3.23.2 The parents' perspective

In spite of the stress and worries the parents experienced, at least a few among them acknowledged that youths could draw on the runaway experience and learn valuable lessons from it. The lessons learned would be similar to life lessons, such as the fact that it is pointless to run away from your problems, that not everyone can be trusted, and that running away is truly dangerous.

“Qu’elle se met en danger pis que quand elle est sortie comme ça si y’arrive quelque chose comme ça y a personne pour la protéger on y a vraiment reflété les dangers que elle peut se faire violer elle peut se faire arracher une partie du corps elle peut se faire droguer elle peut se faire emporter pis là ya eu un reportage là une fille qui s’est fait séquestrer pendant 18 ans.”

(11211, Parent, Institutional, Montreal)

From one aspect, some parents also acknowledged that the flight helped resolve a few relational issues. Nonetheless, they think youths learn that, from then on, they can count on the people around them and that their parents love them. Since the flight was taken as a warning sign, some parents also believe that their children saw proof that their circle could mobilize for them, and that they realized how much pain they could cause their family.

“Je te dirais cé en train d’aboutir cé en train d’aboutir moi je pense que ça a pas servi à rien t’sé la fugue cé un cri au secours comme quelqu’un qui fait une tentative de suicide ça dit au secours je souffre aidez-moi pis y faut régler ça.”
(11211, Parent, Institutional, Montreal)

From another aspect, some parents acknowledged the more personal dimension of the lessons learned from running away. They mentioned that their children now know they can survive and manage without being dependent on adults.

“Une énorme autonomie avec des choix il a compris qui fallait qu’il fasse, des choix il est pour son âge quelqu’un eee qui a une débrouillardise incroyable eee suite wise eeee il peut dépasser bin des jeunes qui ont resté ou qui restent encore chez leurs parents pis qui ont 22, 21-22. Il se débrouille comme ça se peut pas, si yé à maison chez nous pis que je lui dis tantôt je t’ai entendu dire que tu voulais aller au centre-ville, moi tantôt je m’en vas jusqu’à Frontenac, tu veux tu que je t’embarque. Oui je le débarque au coin de mettons Sherbrooke pis Frontenac, le métro y é-tu en haut ou en bas en bas, ok cé cool, pas d’inquiétude, je vais le trouver le métro. Fa que, une très grande assurance. Eee cé de la façon dure, mais eee écoute, eee il rêve de voyager en Europe, pis ej suis convaincue qu’il va être capable de le faire.”

(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

However, the parents confirmed without exception that running away was an emotionally harrowing adventure for their children. In this regard, the parents were obviously sensitive to the negative repercussions of such an experience on their children’s lives. They deplored in particular the health problems that the youths developed because of their substance use, as well as the psychological problems that others experienced as a result of being assaulted. Not to mention the fact that the situation did not help resolve impasses but, in some cases, it aggravated conflicts and precipitated break-ups that have become almost irreparable.

Nonetheless, seven out of ten parents think their children would run away again if they had to start over. However, some nuances must be made in the interpretation here. The respondents here took various positions to answer this question. Some looked at their present situation and realized that, despite the problems caused by the experience, the positive lessons learned are such that their child could be persuaded to do it again. Other parents, however, looked back and believed that, in this context, it would have no doubt been difficult for their child to do otherwise. For this parent, who reflected on the path

her son had followed since these events, it was particularly difficult to resolve this question. Her reflection led her to acknowledge, in a way, that her son running away did not have only a bad side to it.

“Je crois que cette question là c'est vrai, moi je pourrais pas y répondre. Pis si eee je me mets à la place de mon gars je pense que dans 15 ans il va pouvoir y répondre parce que en ce moment, eee je crois que vu qu'il a quitté la rue, il va dire no fucking way que je retourne là. Mais à quelque part, il a tellement de choses qui l'on fait grandir que il va les reconnaître un ti peut plus tard. Mais moi eee moi honnêtement, cé sûr que je dirais bin j'aimerais pas ça qui revive, mais eee je trouve que cé pas nécessairement une question qui s'applique aux parents. C'est quelque chose qui est très difficile eee dire. Ee cé sûr en tout cas, cé sûr je te dirais que la réponse habituelle qu'on pourrait entendre cé non parce qu'on veut pas revivre ça. Eee si je regarde eee tous les bons cotés de ce que ça lui apporté, ee je voudrais pas dire oui mais je pourrais pas dire non non plus. ”

(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Furthermore, this same parent saw positive repercussions on her own evolution. With the sequence of events that followed, her son's flight also helped this mother to change things in her life.

“Ça ouvert des portes que je ne croyais jamais ouvrir parce que j'étais inquiète à mon travail, ça m'a fait faire des erreurs qui on été très importantes qui eee... à cheminer une coupure d'heures qui a cheminé... Cé fantastique ce qui est arrivé, cé fantastique. Cé sûr que quand t'as une hypothèque à payer mais après ça, tu reçois un billet de médecin parc'que t'avais jamais remarqué que tu étais vraiment fatiguée, pis tu te fait dire ça par un médecin qui te connaît pas, suggère “je peux te faire un billet de médecin, tu vas être capable d'avoir un chômage” Ça venait de créer une porte, une ouverture de ce que je voulais développer. T'sé un projet qui tenait dans ma tête, dans un rêve. Bin tout cas, tout cas, veux dire sur le coup quand tu vois ton fils qui fugue pis rentre pas, pis qui rentre tout croche, pis qui t'appelle, pis que ça fait trois jours qui dort pas, tu peux jamais imaginer que tout ça va t'amener à créer un moment de ta vie. Très important pour un changement, cé magnifique dans le fond, cé un changement qui a été excessivement bénéfique pour moi. Pis là je parle pas finance, parce que ça oublie ça les finances cé beurk, mais ce que ça a amené à à me faire réaliser que “sky is no limit” finalement. ”

(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

This passage leads us to another subject, that is, what the parents learned from such an experience. Their stories first indicate that their child's flight was an ordeal for them. A blow, in a way, which was accompanied by moments of intense stress and anxiety, which, in some cases, led to depression and caused other serious problems within the family.

“Surprise eh de son audace. Je savais que ça allait mal eh mais de là, là c'est... Ben faut dire, l'été précédent, a l'avait fait plein de p'tites fuguettes là, a l'écoutait plus ou moins mais là là, oh là c'était grave qu'a rentre pas pour l'école (...) Quand nous, qu'a rentre pas durant l'été pour nous voir nous... eh, qu'elle étire les... ses, ses jours là. Mais eh... là, là qu'a rentre pas du tout là... Ah pis quand eh... mais y avait eu ben des chicanes aussi avant là...” je fais c'que j'veux eh... avec ma tête eh... pis mon corps». Ah mon dieu. Non ça ça avait été très dur, l'étonnement vraiment là, woups! une claque en pleine face, un coup d'poing.”

(11256, Parent, Community, Montreal)

The consequences include job loss, financial problems and, most notably, relationship problems between couples, not to mention shame and isolation. While a child is on the run, time stops, so to speak. Thus, the family image can be severely affected. This mother, who explains her situation here, also confided in the interview that she had to rebuild her social network.

“Nous autres on avait beaucoup d'amis qui avaient des enfants du même âge là t's, pis on partait ensemble en vacances euh la semaine de relâche pis t'sé ... na na na ... Mais ces amis là, les enfants ont continué eux-autres d'étudier pis de... suivre la ligne droite là t'sé euh... et là m'en d'nné... ouin. Fa que, ça, ça amené beaucoup d'isolement... Ouin cé ça... ça, ça amène beaucoup beaucoup d'isolement parce qu'un moment donné té tellement tanné d'entendre parler... des enfants des autres qui vont bien, pis qui sont dont... na na... pis ta ta... pis ça va bien, pis y a fait sa demande au CEGEP pis là, là pis... Fa que, cé ben... pis, “pis toi, comment ça va ? ”... Ben... t'sé euh...“ça va pas ben»... (rire) Fa que, un moment donné on s'isole beaucoup... oui... mais cé beaucoup euh beaucoup pis dieu sait que je suis pas une fille euh solitaire... ben je me suis beaucoup beaucoup isolée... Euh... pis si y a une partie de moi qui attend encore... que les enfants aillent vraiment bien... pour pouvoir euh... recontacter du monde... oui... Fa que, y a une espèce de honte finalement hein.”

(11254, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Nevertheless, it seems that parents retain a few good elements. One mother explained that her son's flight enabled them to get to know each other better. Another one claimed that she was more aware of what her daughter was experiencing. She is more open and understanding towards her now. Similarly, another mother indicated that she learned to adjust to the fact that she cannot act in the place of her son. She has accepted that she does not have complete power over his life. This idea is similar to that of another parent with regards to the responsibility of adults when it comes to protecting childhood and the related limitations.

“Ben qu'est ce que je vois cé que... on chemine ensemble... pis euh la relation parent ben... cé la... est beaucoup liée avec la protection de l'enfant... d'enlever tout ce qui est dangereux pour lui pis cé de... cé une utopie, cé une illusion... Pis euh on dirait d'être dedans ça m'a fait prendre conscience de ça, parce que je me suis comme... détruit à me sentir responsable... de la mort de mon fils, avec cette impression que y avait des choses que j'avais pas faites... assez bien ou bien que j'avais faites que j'aurais pas dû faire ou ben quoi... Pis moi, ben j'avais un parcours particulier moi, je travaillais à... en éducation, science de l'éducation, j't'ais euh... pédagogie... pis euh... ma... j'avais une bonne connaissance du développement de l'enfant. Donc, on dirait que je me suis nourrie là-'dans... je me suis nourrie de tout les... l'impact que l'adulte peut avoir sur le développement de l'enfant, pis je me suis nourrie dans... dans ce que j'aurais dû faire... de ce que j'aurais peut-être pas dû faire... et qui a nourrit beaucoup ma culpabilité pis mon autodestruction là... Alors ça ma comme permis de me détacher, de voir qui a une grande partie là... que les enfants là on... est en train de glisser vers quelque chose là... En tout cas, moi cé ce que j'ai compris vu de l'extéri... maintenant là... pis on est... on est tenu très responsable de nos enfants... trop... Pis euh... en tout cas au niveau du... du milieu scolaire là, t'sé quand qu'on dit les parents sont les premiers responsables de leurs enfants, ça veut dire quoi ça ? Cé pas clair... ça veut dire qu'on est responsable si y se suicident? Ça peut aller jusque là ? Y a quelque chose, y a quelque chose qui est pas clair là-'dans là... Pis euh... y a une part de l'enfant là... l'enfant cé pas vrai que cé un enfant euh... en tout cas... y fera pas toujours les bons choix les enfants, qu'importe quel parent qui ont... Pis ça ben cé important, pis cé ça que j'ai compris... j'ai vu euh cette part là... mais que cé autrement... accompagner les enfants ensemble mais... euh... je l'apprends...”

(12221, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

From another aspect, some parents said that they turned to their doctor for help getting through this painful episode of their lives. The medication they were given enabled them to overcome their anxiety and, for this reason, they believe the treatment was beneficial for them.

Others spoke of the services they received from *En Marge 12-17 ans* in Montreal, which is, in fact, the agency through which we recruited most of the parents who participated in this study. They recalled how they were given the chance to vent their feelings, express their fears and try to give meaning to their experience. Above all else, they appreciated the fact that the caseworkers did not judge them or their children. Their intervention is thus designed specifically for parents, yet always with a positive attitude towards their children. Among the parents who spoke of this experience, some compared the support they received from this agency to that received from other professionals and lamented the fact that the latter often made judgmental discourses regarding the youths. These parents found that very few professionals seemed to know how to react towards this issue. As for one mother, , she acknowledged that her

expectations were unrealistic. The only intervention that could have provided her relief would have been one where her daughter had been brought back. However, beyond these considerations, she still believes that the youth centre educators could have been more sensitive and more compassionate towards her. In her eyes, they rather trivialized the situation, not to mention that the police could not give her much information either. In the end, one social worker was able to give her better support. Then again, this contact was quickly cut off because of personnel turnover. This was another problem that a few parents raised, as well as the underfunding of community organizations, which are apparently the only ones from whom the parents can hope to receive direct support. *En Marge 12-17 ans* is, strictly speaking, the only agency that offers activities specially designed for parents. However, other parents also mention the Bunker, as well as *Squat Basse-Ville*, *Point de Repère* and *PIPQ*, with whom they had good communications when trying to obtain news of their child.

3.23.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

Among the caseworkers we met, 28 believe that the flight never goes the way youths had imagined it would. A large majority of police officers were of the same opinion. Their first experience is obviously the most difficult to imagine, but sometimes youths do not see things coming during subsequent flights. Youths do not know how to survive, nor do they know what this experience can require on a daily basis. Some think that youths are not ready for this eventuality where they must devote their time to meeting their needs. However, this point of view contrasts with other information that we collected in the interviews, concerning the youths' daily activities. At that time, the majority of caseworkers said that youths did not spend that much time on their survival, but rather on having fun and socializing. This information corroborated that which was reported by the youths on the subject. Nonetheless, caseworkers added that the consequences of substance abuse are what youths least expected.

“Non! (rires) Y ont souvent des surprises au cours de leur fugue! Y partent souvent sur un... sur un beat positif, y pensent que ça va t’être ben l’fun, pis qui vont vivre que du plaisir, mais y a beaucoup beaucoup de déplaisir! Quand y r’viennent, les jeunes sont souvent dans des situations... physiquement sont pockés, mentalement aussi! Des jeunes qui justement ont vécu en situation de survie... fa que c’est pas nécessairement l’idéal. Y a des jeunes qui, ceci dit, ont vécu des très belles fugues, qui s’est rien passé, mais ça, c’est souvent dans les premières fugues.”

(11313, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“J’pense pas non. Non... ça on a ça souvent comme confidence de, de jeunes qui sont rendus plus vieux, dans la vingtaine, qui on fait des fugues. Pis qu’aujourd’hui, sont ben maganés. Pas juste à cause de la fugue, t’sé mais à cause de tout ce qui ont vécu. Mais s’attendaient certainement pas à, à descendre si bas, pour reprendre leurs mots. J’pense entre autres à la consommation par injection qui va les amener à, presque à 100% à contracter l’hépatite. Fa que, la plupart des jeunes qu’on voit ici ont l’hépatite C t’sé. Plus toutes les problèmes de dépendance là. J’pense pas que ça faisait partie de leur plan, c’est sûr.”

(13351, Caseworker, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

“Non. C’est... ils sous estiment souvent les dan, les dangers. Pis ils, ils pensent que c’est parce que, pour, dans leur tête, eux, c’est, c’est plus d’avantages que d’inconvénients. Mais des fois, c’est parce que malgré eux, c’est insidieux, ils vont se faire euh... kils vont embarquer dans ce pattern-là pis là il est trop tard, ils vont être, soit dans la criminalité...”

(11467, Police officer, Montreal)

Furthermore, several caseworkers and police officers think that the lessons youths could learn from this experience are rather meagre. The few worthy exceptions are the ability to differentiate between those who are their real friends and those who are not, and the realization that, after all, it is unrealistic to think they can look after themselves alone.

“Moi j’pense que là, qu’est-ce qui peuvent apprendre c’est que, les, les fréquentations peuvent influencer sur ton, sur ta personne, parce que à quelque part, quand tu fais des fugues y doivent voir qu’y a toute sorte de monde, pis ça t’fait faire toutes sortes d’affaires. Fa que j’pense que y peuvent voir que la fréquentation ça l’a une importance...”

(13462, Police officer, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

“Ouin mais y ont... oui... mais eux autres là... c’qui comprennent là... cé que... premièrement, y peuvent pas subvenir à leurs besoins comme ça, sans travailler euh... T’sé y comprennent ça là, y reviennent, regarde, y savent... y reviennent, y sont au bout du rouleau... Y ont pas dormi ben ... si cé une fugue de 4-5 jours, y ont quasiment pas dormi... euh... y ont mangé juste un peu... euh... y sont pas lavés euh... Là y comprennent que m’ment d’nné faut qui reviennent à maison... y faut qui vivent à quelque part, pis ça prend... ça prend euh... ça prend une place pour manger... prend une place pour dormir... pis tout ça... Ça y comprennent ça là... y voyent qui peuvent pas passer 5-6 jours là... à... pas manger, pis euh... t’sé à... à pas avoir d’argent sur eux autres pour faire de quoi là ça cé clair là... Y reviennent de là, pis y se disent ouin... prend quelqu’un là...”

(14461, Police officer, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

However, other respondents mentioned certain positive points, such as discovering themselves and the world around them, as well as autonomy, resourcefulness, maturity, self-esteem and learning new values. Others also focused on the transition that running away offers to youths, that is, a pause before entering adulthood. They also believe that through such an experience, some youths manage to resolve conflicts, resolve impasses and build ties, particularly with the parents.

“Ah beaucoup de débrouillardise, moi je trouve ça positif.... Euh....à se faire.... Y apprennent à développer leurs sens, leur intuition... euh.... pis malheureusement, ils se trompent beaucoup. Mais y devraient suivre leurs intuitions quand même là si ils sont à l'écoute de ça.... Ils peuvent apprendre dans telles circonstances.... pis quand d'autres... non.... Apprendre la vie de la rue, souvent euh... les jeunes ont l'impression que la rue c'est une grande famille hein.... À la vie à la mort.... Tous pour un, un pour tous.... Que c'est ça...”

(12354, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

“Encore là, c'est difficile à répondre parce que y a tellement de possibilités. Mais j'vous dirais, en général, les jeunes ne sortent pas... sortent quand même grandis d'une expérience comme ça! Ça l'a sollicité pour eux à peu près toutes les facultés d'adaptation et de survie qui sont possibles. Alors, le jeune r'tire... habituellement y en sortent grandis, plus matures, plus... Y ont une meilleure vision, y prennent du recul là... Oui, le jeune va en général changer des choses! Y va avoir appris des choses pendant sa fugue! ”

(11311, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

However, the caseworkers made sure to specify that running away also involves its share of traumatic experiences, and conflicts that are sometimes aggravated, not to mention the various legal problems, as well as those related to substance use, which lead to severe consequences for their health.

“Ben c'est sûr au niveau de la justice, on en a vu beaucoup. Euh c'est sûr que malheureusement, même j'en ai une qui doit passer en LSJPA parce que pendant sa fugue, elle a faite certaines choses. Eee t'sé comme j'ai dit, coup de poing au policier ou ee... T'sé, fa que c'est sûr qu'elle a des problèmes avec la justice. Problèmes de consommation effectivement, c'qui prime dans leur fugue c'est la consommation. Fa que c'est sûr qui a toujours un retour au niveau de la santé, au niveau du sevrage et tout ça. Ce n'est pas passé comme elle aurait pensé, quand j'te dis que y en à qui se sont retrouvés dans des situations dangereuses, dans des gangs, dans des, des... Fa que c'est sûr que ...”

(13332, Caseworker, Institutional, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

“Fa que, les aspects négatifs : Problèmes, problèmes avec la justice, évidemment. Consommation, souvent, c'est augmentation. Y a des délits, fa que ça va avec. La peur, a vécu des expériences traumatisantes, évidemment là, t'sé, c'est pas... Les dangers vont avec, pis... Déception, c'est ça, quand qu'on parlait d'illusion tantôt. Questionnement, cette expérience a fait naître de nouvelles questions. J'imagine, mais je pense qui sont tellement dans le, j'sais pas si c'est négatif, parce qu'eux autres, j'pense quand qui sortent de là, sont vraiment dans, dans le ici et maintenant. Fa que, je suis pas sûr qui sont ben ben dans les questionnements là. Rupture de liens, de liens significatifs, pis de liens aussi qui sont plus sains je pense.”

(13352, Caseworker, Community and Centre-du-Québec)

Nonetheless, it remains to be seen if all these lessons learned will lead to real changes in the youths' lives. As some caseworkers noticed, some youths will reduce their substance use, even begin therapy, and manage to establish better communications with their parents, or they may see no changed in their lives, depending in part on their willingness.

“They always have choice humm but you're right, on one level depending on who you... get in tou... humm get in touch with or humm... the kind of network that they set themselves up with... it can be humm... very difficult... way... difficult to get out of...”

(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

However, as these two police officers indicated, the changes also depend on the lessons learned by the adults supporting the youths and the adults' willingness, like the youths, to resolve the problems at the root of the situation. Otherwise, despite all the lessons that may be learned, the situation could worsen and arise again with time.

“Bien il peut y avoir un changement si le jeune montre de la volonté de... se sortir de son problème. Mais c'est sûr que s'il a fugué, il y avait un problème, il y a quelque chose qui ne marche pas à quelque part dans sa vie. Il peut y avoir un changement si lui montre de la volonté pis que c'est... les personnes avec qui qui vient, ses parents ou les intervenants démontrent aussi une volonté de l'aider pis... chacun fait son bout là finalement. Il peut y avoir des changements... Sinon j'ai l'impression que ça va rien change, pis que la vie va continuer, puis qu'il va arriver un autre élément déclencheur, une autre fois peut-être ou...”

(12464, Police officer, Quebec)

“Ça dépend si c'est une affaire à court terme ou à long terme si c'est répétitif ou juste éeoccasionnel. Mettons un évènement isolé, je veux dire que mettons souvent quand y en viennent à faire ça pis que y ont.... c'est parce que y ont un pedigree, y a quelque chose qui les suit c'est sûr que ça a déjà laissé des traces, leur passé a déjà laissé des traces. Fa que ça, ça peut continuer d'en laisser, parce que c'est ee, c'est ça continue le même pattern là. Mais ee en même temps, oui, ça peut être bénéfique et positif de dire «non, moi j'ai pas aimé ça, pis je retournerais pas, pis ee c'est correct, c'est un trip que je voulais faire pis ee c'est correct c'est passé”.”

(13462, Police officer, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

These two police officers' comments are perfectly consistent with the elements of the analysis surrounding the intervention challenges. In fact, as this caseworker explained, one key intervention dimension depends on the willingness and the ability of caseworkers to restore communication with the youths, to examine not only the events and behaviours, but also more fundamentally the meaning of the flight. The aim is to develop a certain understanding that is beneficial for both the youth and the caseworker.

“Euh... Ben ça nous parle beaucoup! Faut aller voir c'est quoi le sens de la fugue parce que on r'garde pas la fugue comme telle, on essaye de voir qu'est-ce qui est sous-jacent à ça... Qu'est-ce qui fait en sorte que le jeune est parti, pis pourquoi... Pis... Donc comment on peut pallier à ça aussi! C'est c'qui fait que nous autres comme intervenants ça nous interpelle. Auparavant, on r'gardait juste “bon le jeune a fugué» t'sé... J'pense qui a beaucoup de travail qui a été fait au cours des dernières années par rapport à ça! C'qui fait qu'on s'interroge beaucoup plus sur comment on peut l'aider c'te jeune-là à éviter de reproduire le même pattern de façon continue là!”

(11312, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

Nevertheless, the fact remains that these situations surprise caseworkers all the time. They therefore believe that they must adapt constantly, and they see these situations as obstacles, or interruptions at the very least, to the path on which they are trying to lead the youths.

“Au niveau d'la confiance... Moi j'dirais au niveau d'la confiance c'est toujours une confiance qui est à rétablir, particulièrement dans les cas des filles qui fuguent à répétition. C'est pas évident, où on s'positionne par rapport à ça ? Qu'est-ce qu'on donne comme marge de manœuvre à ces jeunes-là? C'est souvent... on bâtit des projets d'veie avec ces jeunes-là, y vont v'nir brûler l'projet d'veie, y vont v'nir scrapper ça. C'est souvent à recommencer... On vit quand même pas... y a pas beaucoup de valorisation de l'intervenant pour des jeunes qui fuguent à répétition.”

(11313, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

Others, however, see things differently. The changes and adjustments they must make to their work is not their main concern. They consider it part of their job. Their focus is rather on the notion of accountability. This caseworker's statements suggest that he often worries about being blamed and found at fault for being unable to prevent a youth from running away.

“Je pense qu'on a toujours des choses à corriger ou à remodifier ou à modifier ou à mettre de nouveau ou à... J'pense que ça ça fait partie de notre travail, c'est important! À quelque part, si la fille fugue, c'est pas MA responsabilité, pis ça c'est important, parce que souvent on s'met beaucoup d'responsabilités cé épaules en tant qu'intervenant. Mais si t'as tout fait c'que t'as à faire, un moment donné la fugue tu ne peux pas l'éviter. Parce que ce n'est plus TA responsabilité, mais c'est la responsabilité du jeune! Faut apprendre à départager la responsabilité! Si moi, j'ai tout mis en place, si j'ai tout fait c'qui a été d'mandé, si j'ai pris du temps avec cette jeune-là, si j'ai vérifié des choses auprès de cette jeune-là et elle fugue pendant une sortie par exemple, j'peux pas rien faire! Tu comprends tu ? Mais, si je sais que j'ai tout fait c'que j'avais à faire, oui j'ves être inquiète, oui j'ves avoir peur qu'a meurt, oui j'ves avoir peur qu'a s'fasse embarquer dans des réseaux... Oui ça c'est vrai! Mais à quelque part, ma job a été faite, mon travail a été fait! J'sais pas si tu comprends bien l'sens?”

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

3.24 AFTER THE FLIGHT—DO CASEWORKERS ALSO LEARN SOME LESSONS?

As a rule, the caseworkers in youth centres seem to find it hard to imagine anything they could change in their practices that would have an impact on the problem at hand, that is, youths running away. Some go as far as to say that the problem does not justify a change in their intervention style. Others, however, have something different to say. Based on their experiences, the latter today believe that they could have been more magnanimous, or less intrusive and more respectful of the youths' needs.

“Well I think it's, it's about listen to what the kid is trying to tell us and try to be... working... on the same objective because if, if, if humm they're so stuck... in growing in one direction... and we're so stuck in... being so firm about not being flexible... about... meeting some of her own needs, what's the worst that can happen? Well she can fail... in, in doing... humm the, the, the program... humm humm but at least she tried and she saw for herself. I mean there's, there's nothing to lose in failing. In fact, you learn a lot about yourself when you fail.”

(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

“Dans un cas, entre autres, où une jeune fille appelait pour dire... a voulu parler avec un autre jeune puis euh... J'aurais dû comme essayer de garder l'lien avec elle plus au téléphone plutôt que de... Ben là, a l'a d'mandé à parler à la jeune, ben là moi j'ai essayé d'voir ben oui mais qu'est-ce qui passe avec toi pis tout ça... Et là a voulu absolument parler à la jeune et tout ça... J'aurais dû essayer de, plutôt que de bon... d'essayer de voir avec elle un peu plus, bon “oui t'es-tu en sécurité, ça va-tu mieux, qu'est-ce que tu fais”... J'ai beaucoup posé des questions sur qu'est-c'qui s' passait pour elle en fugue, t'es où, pis...” Plutôt que d'y aller par la bande en demandant en sécurité ou quoi que ce soit... J'ai vraiment été plus... T'sé bon j'ai compris que c'tait pas ça qui fallait faire parce que a l'a raccroché ça pas été long! ”

(11312, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“Ben t'sé ça s'peut que ça soit une situation, t'sé une jeune que j'lui parle pis finalement c'tait pas à moi qu'a voulu parler, c'tait à une autre éducatrice... Ça aurait peut-être été rentable que ça soit un autre qui y aille, comprends-tu? Ou ça m'est déjà arrivé une jeune, qui est à l'extérieur, pis que j't'en auto, pis que j'la vois, pis j'y dise : “T'es en retard, t'embarquerais-tu dans ma voiture on s'en irait au centre? ” Pis a l'a dit : “Non j'y vas pas!” Ben j'pas sûre que j'ai été aidante quand j'me suis arrêtée...»

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

Such considerations are not limited, however, to interventions with runaway minors, as this caseworker indicated. This suggests that caseworkers do not hesitate to question themselves.

“Sûrement (rire) mais je le sais pas, je le sais pas, je le sais pas vraiment là t'sé. Des fois on se dit comme je vous disais là tantôt là t'sé, avec nos jeunes, qu'on a l'impression qu'on vit le jour de la marmotte là. Mais t'sé souvent moi je vais me remettre en question peut-être qu'il y a quelque chose que je fais ou que je fais pas qui fait que peut-être on pourrait sortir de cet espèce de cercle vicieux là. Pis vous savez comme intervenante on se remet en question 10 fois par jour. Fa que cé pour ça que je dis sûrement.”

(12322, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

Furthermore, in an even more fundamental perspective, another caseworker wonders about the element of passion, which she seems to believe plays a major role in intervening with runaway minors and youths in general, but which she apparently sees dwindling with time in the new generations of caseworkers.

“Je l’sais pas! Moi, j’pense qui faut être proche de ces jeunes-là quand même là, mais t’sé, c’est-tu ça que ça prend plus ? Je l’sais pas! T’sé quand j’té disais les nouveaux intervenants sont pas comme, moi j’plus en fin d’carrière qu’en début t’sé pis... T’sé tu dis, t’sé pour moi ça toujours été une passion, ça toujours été quelque chose que j’ai beaucoup adoré, que j’ai beaucoup aimé, que j’aimerai tout l’temps là t’sé, par défi, par plein d’chooses là t’sé! Mais y a des nouveaux qui rentrent, des nouveaux éducateurs qui rentrent, y ont pas ça, y ont pas cette passion-là! Y ont l’goût d’aller ailleurs! Pis ça c’est correct là! J’enlève pas ça là, pis c’est correct pour eux autres, y ont l’opportunité, pis c’est ben correct là mais t’sé... C’est ça t’sé... Je sais pas, c’que ça va prendre, j’en ai aucune idée!”
(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

Community caseworkers also reflected on the improvements they could bring to their intervention. In this regard, one respondent thinks there were times when she could have worked more closely with the youth centres or with the parents of the youthsinvolved. Another one remembered that when she first started practicing, she would exaggerate the dangers and would have liked to be better equipped to analyze the situations and estimate the associated risks. In addition, another one today believes that some situations would no doubt have called for a quicker reaction on her part to ensure the youths’ safety.

“Oui sûrement des fois euh... les jeunes sont intelligents et ils savent qu’on les aime et des fois, ils ne veulent pas nous décevoir.... Fa que ils nous disent pas tout.... mais en même temps, c’est de l’amour... mais y a des situations qui auraient pu être faites autrement.... Din fois c’est à double tranchant les organismes, car est-ce qu’on maintient les jeunes en fugue ou on les sécurise.... La plupart du temps, on les sécurise.... D’autres fois peut-être qu’ils seraient rentrés 3-4 jours plus tôt pour leur donner des bobettes propres, pis des bas. Alors, oui, je crois que y a des interventions... sont jamais parfaites et certaines auraient pu être mieux faites que d’autres là...”
(12354, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

But again, some caseworkers indicated that to change their intervention, they would need better collaboration with their partners, and they deplored the fact that, often, institutional caseworkers are not open to working with them, not seeing what they can contribute. Conversely, they also have difficulty warming up to institutional caseworkers who persist in observing rigid procedures that, for their part, somewhat threaten the trust they are trying to instill in their relationships with the youths.

“Ah ben oui et c'est à de nombreuses (rire), à de nombreuses reprises. Dans l'sens où justement, si y avait plus de communication, plus d'échange, plus de compréhension, de c'qu'on, de c'qu'on fait de la fugue en général par rapport au jeune, c'qui vit... Ben là, ça ferait, ça, ça, ça, si y a plein de situations où ça aurait pu être des interventions différentes... T'sé des fois où c'qui a des jeunes qui ont été ramenés de force, peu importe c'qu'on pouvait amener comme argumentation, parce que la personne qui prenait la décision le connaissait pas, mettait en, en application un, un système, une façon de fonctionner très très t'sé ee comment on dit, vraiment systématique, t'sé une façon unique de fonctionner... pis c'est comme ça, ça marche, sans tenir compte de tout c'qu'on pouvait apporter. Pis à ce moment-là, le lien a été brisé, pis on l'a pus jamais revu ce jeune là, mettons.”

(11357, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Their comments also concerned the difficulty they still have of sometimes being respected by the police who intervene without notice inside their agency. Here again, they noted that the police did not have a good understanding of what they do with youths and wrongfully believe that community caseworkers try to keep youths on the run. Some respondents acknowledged, however, that in wanting to preserve ties with the youths too much, their past relationships with the police have not always been as transparent as they are today.

“Ah oui cé sûr on s'est beaucoup plus euh rendu compte de notre responsabilité dans, à travers les années là. Euh depuis l'ouverture du XXX je vais te dire euh... ça rien à voir euh... rien à voir. Avant, on était vraiment dans une euh... dans une approche euh nous accueillons le jeune comme il est... et puis euh on le prend dans ce qu'il est... Mais on avait pas autant... cette conscience... de la responsabilité qu'on avait de notre responsabilité de faire une évaluation de la dangerosité de... de... des défis qu'on pouvait avoir pour arrêter le jeune... dans sa fugue. Aussi t'sé euh une peur beaucoup trop grande de briser le lien. Aussi en, en ramenant le jeune dans les centres jeunesse... T'sé avant, par exemple, on... ce qu'on faisait, on était jamais euh... aussi transparents qu'on l'est là, on attendait que le jeune parte... du XXX pis on disait à la police... t'sé euh quand qui va avoir euh... franchi une coupe de portes là... pis... hypocritement vous arrêtez... pis hey euh “je te reconnaîs toi té en fugue donc... euh...”.”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

3.25 SHOULD WE PREVENT YOUTHS FROM RUNNING AWAY?

3.25.1 The youths' perspective

Most of the youths we met did not believe that it was possible to prevent young people from running away. Furthermore, despite the risks, dangers and negative consequences

involved, several believe that it is also not advisable to stop youths from running away. Actually, youths are relatively divided in their opinions on the subject, with one half being in favour of preventing youths from running away and the other half being against it. For example, one youth explained that he likes his life now and believes that he had to take that route to be where he is today. He considers, however, that it is advisable to prevent youths from running away because nobody should have to use such extremes/measures to get his or her point across. He thinks that at his age today, he would not be so far behind in school, and that his new projects would thus be more advanced.

“J’aurais aimé ça que ma mère me dise de pas l’faire... pa’c’que comme j’disais tantôt... 16 ans et d’mie, j’tais tu vraiment prêt à partir en appartement?... J’aurais ...ok j’tais pas bon à l’école, mais au moins, j’aurais p’t’être sauvé une année que ... aujourd’hui, au lieu de faire mon secondaire 2, mon secondaire 3, ben j’aurais p’t’être fait mon secondaire 3, mon secondaire 4. J’aurais sauvé une année.”

(14152, Youth, Boy, Community and Centre-du-Québec)

Another young man today accepts that this experience was part of the path he chose to follow.

“Non ça changera pas ma vie mais eee ça fait partie de ma vie. T’sé, je veux dire ma vie, mon adolescence, je l’ai passée au centre d’accueil. Fa que t’sé, dans le fond, c’était ma vie là fuguer tout le temps, pis eee t’sé tripper, pis être axé sur le plaisir, ça a été ma vie. Fa que, je pense pas que ça a changé ma vie là je pense que c’est l’expérience c’est mon passé qui change dans le fond. Je me sers de ça pour me forger un avenir différent des autres.”

(12121, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

From his standpoint, it is therefore not advisable to prevent youths from running away within certain boundaries to ensure their safety.

“Je penserais pas empêcher quelqu’un de faire ce qui veut tant que c’est dans la mesure de la sécurité, pis t’sé si cé pas dangereux pour sa vie euh... pis pour celle des autres. Je pense que chaque personne doit faire ses expériences pis euh... ça fait partie de sa vie pis ça fait partie de son avenir. Pis si on m’aurait empêché de partir ou n’importe quoi, je m’aurais révolté contre les personnes comme telles. Pis ça aurait pas été beau t’sé. J’aurais pu me laisser emporter pis tomber dans la violence, pis battre du monde, pis avoir des plaintes, pis me mettre dans la marde, pis euh ça arrête pas, T’sé, si quelqu’un... tout le monde a le droit à faire ses choix, pis euh, pis y é fait pis y subit les conséquences de ses actes.”

(12121, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

However, he stated that if he were to do it again, he would try to ask permissions from his social worker before leaving, so he could go back to his family of origin instead of living in a youth centre until the age of 18.

Then, another explains here that the consequences of coercion could be even worse. As far as she was concerned at least, any attempts to prevent her from doing such a thing could push her to go even further.

“Souhaitable? Non. J’reponds pour moi là parce que ça change absolument rien... Si vous t’sé, si vous empêchez les jeunes de fuguer, mettons qu’vous essayez d’m’empêcher d’fuguer, pis mettons qu’vous réussissez ok... parce que j’garantie pas qu’vous allez réussir parce que... En tout cas... c’est ça... mettons vous m’empêchez d’fuguer, ça va juste me mettre encore plus en criss, pis me donner une bonne raison pour m’en aller plus loin dans ma fugue, pour me cacher de plus en plus pour pas qu’vous m’retrouviez, que j’change de ville, que j’mé mette deux fois plus d’en marde pour vous faire chier. Mais dans l’fond, c’est moi qu’ça fait chier... Fa que, dans l’fond, on s’met dans marde à cause qu’on veut vous faire chier, c’est comme... (...) pour pas t’faire pogner, t’es prêt à pas mal toute... pas mal toute... j’dis pas mal toute, parce que t’sé pour moi, j’suis pas prête à m’prostituer, j’suis pas prête à entrer dans un gang de rue, mais j’suis prête à battre quelqu’un, à voler des chars, voler des maisons, mais t’sé j’m’en fous...”

(12124, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

One boy said he would have committed suicide had he been prevented from running away because it was his only way out. He nevertheless believes that it would be advisable to hold back less mature youths who run away only for the prestige of the experience.

In summary, there appears to be somewhat of a dilemma here. Some believe that it is advisable to prevent youths from running away, but that it is impossible to do so. However, others believe instead that we could find ways to prevent youths from running away. One way, in particular, would be to give them hope.

“Quand tu fugues c’est parce que t’a pus d’espoir, pis encore une fois c’est parce que t’as pus rien à perdre. ”

(12127, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

These means should not be associated with restraint, since this could lead youths to take even greater risks. Nevertheless, the fact remains that, for some, running away is a significant experience from which they learn important lessons. This is why some youths think they should not be prevented from running away...

“Pas c’que... si y peut pas apprendre déjà de ses conséquences... euh ben de ses conséquences de ses agirs, euh... en faisant ça ben... y... si y apprend jamais ça. Pis t’sé, pendant une fugue, veut, veut pas, faut tu te débrouilles toi-même. Fa que, si t’apprends jamais ça... si té pogné comme ça plus tard là, tu vas être... tu sauras pas vraiment quoi faire. Tandis que là, tu vas déjà avoir une base...”
(11112, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

...at least, not the first time. In this perspective, some mechanisms could be set up after the second flight. With this view, these respondents seemed to seek solutions to help manage the risks associated with running away rather than preventing it completely.

3.25.2 The parents’ perspective

In this regard, the parents’ opinions were also divided. On the one hand, some parents said it was not advisable to prevent youths from running away.

“Moi je dirais empêcher c’est eee contrôler et eee contrôler c’est toujours pour créer une résistance, parce que contrôler ça veut dire eee maintenir, maintenir ça veut signifier aussi eee garder dans son, dans sa directive, dans son pouvoir, dans sa ligne. Pis cé pas nécessairement ce que le jeune désire. Fuguer ça veut pas dire eee partir eee au désespoir, ça peut signifier bin des choses. Fa que eee, interdire de fuguer je pense que c’est interdire de au jeune de se reconnaître. C’est très difficile à dire ça pis à accepter là, ça cé clair. Parce que tu veux ee en tant que parent “je voulais absolument pas qu’il vive ça” mais un m’ent d’né j’ai compris que lâcher prise voulait pas nécessairement dire eee laisser aller. Cé cé vraiment d’être quand même là t’sé.”
(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

On the other hand, others believed the opposite, but without being in favour of control and restraint. They would like to understand, more fundamentally, what drives youths to want to run away and would like to do what is necessary for them no longer to see it as a solution.

“Mais cé sûr que... oui faudrait les empêcher, en tout cas faire en sorte qui ait... Cé pas les empêcher de fuguer... cé pas les empêcher de fuguer, cé faire en sorte qui ait pas le goût, le besoin de fuguer. T’sé pour moi cé ça, on est pas là pour les empêcher ou permettre, on est... on devrait être capable de faire en sorte de leur offrir quelque chose... qui fait que... y ont pas ce besoin-là de fuguer. Parce que... y ont assez de place pour faire les affaires, parce que je pense que... je suppose que les jeunes qui fuguent y veulent faire des affaires autrement. Sinon y resteraient, y restent dans le système... Fa que ceux qui veulent faire les... qui veulent faire leur vie autrement... euh... té capables de les aider t’sé.”

(11254, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.25.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

Caseworkers' and police officers' opinions also appear to be divided. Some think youths should be prevented from running away because of the potential risks and dangers. These respondents, more particularly the police officers, focused on the resulting problems and taxing procedures, not to mention the stress that the youths cause the people in their circle. All these arguments thus led them to say that, ideally, a way should be found to prevent youths from running away.

“Bin pour éviter, pour éviter un, un, t’sé on veut pas le décès d’aucun jeune, on veut pas que... C'est parce que si on empêche pas les jeunes de fuguer là, bin on sait ce qui se passe dans leur fugue pour de vrai. Y a pas personne qui sait ce qu'un jeune vit, pis ce qui a toute faite pendant la fugue, parce qui diront pas toute, y en a qui vont être plus ouverts, y en a qui vont être plus fermés, pis peut-être qui vont vivre des choses qui vont être plus graves qu'on pense dans rue. Aussi t’sé les abus sexuels, les choses de même, le recrutement, les stupéfiants que... c'est toute mauvais pour eux autre. Y ont toutes accès à des choses qui les mets en danger, que si y sont pas en fugue pis y se désorganisent plus quand qui sont en fugue, y sont pas organisés si y ont besoin de médicaments, parce qui sont sous médication, si y ont besoin de ci, pis y ont pas ça, bin on risque beaucoup. Moi je pense c'est pour ça qui faut empêcher les fugues.”

(12461, Police officer, Quebec)

“Plus contrôler au moins, pis là si y fugue, bin là tu le mets dans un milieu en encadrement intensif : “tu fugues mon homme, je sais que si je le laisse ouvert, tu vas fuguer.” Comme je leur dis souvent : “Hey barrez-vous les portes ici? J’ai 4-5 fugues. Barré les portes, y en aura pas de fugues”. “On peut pas”. “Si tu peux barrer les portes, y en aura pas de fugues t’sé” “J’vas jouer dans cour” “Mais non, c’est bin de valeur, mais toi té trop à risque de fuguer.” Ee c’est sûr qu’on peut pas leur mettre des colliers à puce là (rire), mais t’sé quelqu’un qui est dangereux pour lui... “si té dangereux pour toi mon homme, écoute, on fait en sorte que tu fugues pas” J’sé pas, quand j’étais chez nous j’ai jamais fait une fugue de chez nous, c’est pas normal qui en aient qui fuguent. C’est peut-être pas des vies épouvantables, mais y faut. “comporte toi comme du monde, pis un m’ment d’nné on va t’empêcher de fuguer.” Pis c’est quoi le nombre, je sais pas, t’sé quand tu le sais que c’est un fugueur, pis qui se gèle, pis met le...“non, toi tu fugues pas”. Un moment donné, on peut pas empêcher tout le monde de fuguer, mais c’est sûr qui sont pas en prison, y sont en... comme d’une famille. Une famille, si tu fugues tout le temps, un m’nent d’nné y a quelque chose qui marche pas.”

(12462, Police officer, Quebec)

Thus, although it may be tempting to lock them up for this reason, as was somewhat suggested by this police officer, he agrees that it is not, in itself, the ideal solution. This is why others speak instead of listening and communicating.

“Bah.... dans un monde idéal.... c’est pas souhaitable qu’on empêche un jeune de fuguer, mais pas en les enfermant.... En faite, il faudrait les empêcher de fuguer en leur donnant le plus tôt possible les outils pis un milieu de vie sain pis euh.... un ouverture, pis une façon de s’émanciper qui est positive mais pas en les enfermer. Mais... pas en les recherchant activement nécessairement parce que... y vont tout le temps rechercher à fuguer.... Mais dans un monde idéal.... il ne faudrait pas que les jeunes fuguent.... Il faudrait qu’ils aient tout le temps un membre de la famille assez ouvert qui les accueillerait... qu’ils sentent qu’ils ont de l’amour... Sauf que cela, comment on fait comme société pour leur donner ça... C’est une bonne question ça.... Y faudrait être plus que 100 à y penser là... (Rires)”

(12354, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

“Parce que c’est toute leur sécurité pis leur développement qui est compromis. C’est ... y peuvent tellement, comme y peuvent pas avoir de problèmes. Ha non non, y faut les empêcher chaque fois qui fuguent, y se mettent en danger, y deviennent des victimes pour n’importe qui qui est pervers, un peu pis qui est allumé à abuser un peu d’eux autres là. Eee personnellement, mes enfants veulent aller à quelque part, pis y faut que je sache c’est qui le parent où qui vont, pis des fois, je dis non... pis en fugue... non non non, je sais pas.”

(12462, Police officer, Quebec)

However, the other half of the respondents believed that it was not advisable to prevent youths from running away and argued that institutionalization might hinder their development. They believe that by holding the youths back, they would want to flee even more; and that, in any case, youths need to live adolescence. One respondent also raised the fact that depriving them of running away could also deprive them of learning

important lessons. Several community caseworkers are of this opinion; however, they are not the only ones.

“Si ça devient comme une prison.. tu dis euh... cé vraiment là euh... comment veux-tu les amener à les... à, je sais pas, à les rendre autonomes, pis à leur donner un... un... vouloir, leur donner comme un sens à prendre en charge de leur vie. Ça cé comme ceux qui ont passé euh 25-30 ans en prison là... si euh... si tu ... les as encabanés comme ça, quand qui ressortent su'à rue après 30 ans... y savent pas comment fonctionner dans... dans la société. Y sortent pis... y sont complètement perdus là. Tout a été beaucoup trop vite...”
(11461, Police officer, Montreal)

“Hum... J'suis très partagée sur cette question là! Personnellement, j'pense que y'a certains jeunes pour qui la fugue, dans un certain sens pourrait avoir été assez bénéfique. Les jeunes qui sont institutionnalisés, ça fait depuis l'âge de 4 ans qui sont dans des centres, des fois un peu plus que ça, sont rendus à l'âge de 16 ans, qui vivent dans une programmation t'sé jour-soir pis qui sont, que les gens ont toujours fait pour eux autres dans l'fond là... C't'à peu près ça les centres, on fait avec mais on fait pour aussi! C'est des jeunes qui sont pas nécessairement autonomes, ça pourrait avoir du bon pour ces jeunes-là. Des fois, nous autres on trouve ça, j'en ai souvent parlé avec des collègues, on trouve ça sain qu'un jeune de 16 ans aille pas nécessairement s'mettre en danger mais juste voir qu'est-ce qui s'passe à l'extérieur. Ça, on trouve ça sain, mais dans un autre sens c'est sûr que c'est des jeunes, au niveau que... du faite qui soient pas en sécurité, qui s'mettent en danger, t'sé plus ou moins favorable là...”

(11313, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

3.26 DO YOUTHS RISK SLIPPING INTO VAGRANCY?

3.26.1 The youths' perspective

Youths do not deny that running away may lead to vagrancy. About twenty of them believe it is possible. However, some spoke about it as though the possibility did not affect them directly. Therefore, whereas they recognize the dangers associated with living on the street, some hesitated to identify personally with this situation. Most of them even said that vagrancy in itself did not scare them. In reality, some are counting on the support they will receive once they turn 18, which, in principle, will save them from such a lifestyle.

“Ça dépend, si t’as des bons amis, si t’as des bons alliés. Ça dépend aussi de c’que tu veux dans vie, si t’es vraiment trop su’a drogue, ça s’peut que ça t’amène à l’itinérance. Mais si t’es capable de t’gérer là-dans, pis te dire criss tu r’ssembles d’un squelette dans l’miroir là, arrête estie... Ben c’est clair que si t’es capable de t’mettre des limites là, tu d’viendras pas une itinérance... (...) À mes 18 ans y vont m’aider à me trouver un emploi, y vont m’héberger jusqu’à temps que j’aille ma première paye pour pouvoir me payer un loyer ok... Si mettons j’perds mon loyer, j’vas pouvoir compter sur eux, mais y vont m’donner une chance... y vont m’donner une chance, y me l’ont très clairement dit... y m’ont dit “r’garde, j’t donne une chance là si tu perd ton loyer parce que... de un, si tu perds ton loyer c’t’à cause que tu dépenses ailleurs que dans ton loyer pis dans ta bouffe, de deux, parce que faut pas qu’tu consommes abusivement pour payer ton loyer, de trois, t’es capable de payer ton loyer tout seul à 18 ans”... Fa que c’pas mal ça...”

(12124, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

Others depend on the fact that they are now aware of what is involved, having spent some time on the street. Therefore, they know how to handle it and to use the resources available to them.

“Ben pour moi, non là. Ben t’sé, je le vis en ce moment là. Moé, j’ai pas de place, j’ai pas de chez nous. J’squatte chez le monde pis toute là. (...) Mais t’sé.... Justement, je sais me débrouiller, pis je sais... j’connais des ressources pis... quand j’ch... quand j’ai besoin d’aide, je la demande mon aide à c’tte heure. Je suis capable de le faire là. Chose que je ne faisais pas avant là. Mais pour certains là....pour d’autres monde...ça fait un peu plus peur là. T’sé, y en a qui savent pas comment ça marche la vie, parce que, y ont rien vu. Y ont toute eu....cru dans le bec. Mais on sait jamais ce qui peut se passer là.”

(13151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

This account suggests that some youths take the initiative, in a way, to try out this lifestyle while they are still minors. Therefore, they view this situation as a possibility for their future and believe they will be able to deal with it better when they become adults. This scenario contrasts somewhat with the idea that we may have of it, where vagrancy catches up sooner or later to these youthsdespite their indifference. This is a different account which suggests that some youths prepare for it and thus try, to a certain extent, to take some control over their lives.

However, as this youth indicated, the people in his circle would never let him go down such a path. He could therefore count on somewhat of a safety net.

“Ouais bin parce que t’sé, si un m’ment d’nné tu fais juste ça pis tu va pas à l’école parce que la vie de fugue, tu vas sûrement pas à l’école en fugue euh... Rendu à 18 ans tu dépends de toi même pis si t’as passé ta majeure partie du temps en fugue. Bin dans le fonds tu as pas entretenu tes relations parentales, je pense pas que tes parents vont te reprendre parce que, si tu es dans le rue tu consommes sûrement, pis si tu consommes, bin té parents vont pas te reprendre pis ainsi de suite, ça dégrade.”

(12121, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

Then again, youths take this stand because they think they are different from those who slip more permanently into this lifestyle. In fact, some consider vagrancy a sign of weakness. They believe this situation would concern people who were unable to overcome their difficulties and to make the necessary efforts to free themselves.

“Moi euh non! J'l'ai pas vécu, mais j'connais du monde qui l'ont vécu pis check, ça m'fait pas plus peur que ça... Moi j'ai juste à m'enligner sur mes choses. Si tu veux devenir itinérant c'est parce que y a queque chose que tu veux pas faire, comme travailler ou queque chose. Tu veux pas faire d'effort. Fa que, si tu vires itinérant ben c'est ta faute, c'est toi qui a pas l'vouloir, la volonté.”

(11114, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

“(Y) T’sé. Comme XXXX là, si y se serait pas aidé là... T’sé, on s’entend tu que...criss, y est rendu à 21 ans. À 21 ans, y se piquerait encore. Ça c'est vraiment dur là, arrêter... t’sé, de se shooter là. C'est vraiment dur. Vraiment vraiment dur là. YYY là, y est rendu à 33 ans, 34... y est dans rue, y se pique. Pis je pense pas qui arrête jamais de sa vie là. T’sé, si un jour y arrête, j'y donne 200\$. T’sé. Mais... à minute que tu tombes dans les drogues dures là, fumer d’la puff, se shouter là...
(I) C'est dur de s'en ressortir après.

(Y) Très dur.

(I) Ce qui va faire que tu vas rester dans rue ou pas.

(Y) Ouin. Parce que... T'as pas le goût de payer un loyer, c'est ben trop, c'est ben trop cher. T'as pas le goût de manger, c'est ben trop cher. T'as pas... toute est trop cher parce que tu penses rien qu'à ça.”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Conversely, others view vagrancy as a display of strength, of an ability to manage.

“Parce que ceux qui vont aller jusqu'à l'itinérance vont être assez débrouillards pour s'en sortir. Moi j'me suis pas rendu là parce que chu pas assez débrouillarde (rire) Mais ceux qui le font sont assez débrouillards pis y savent comment s'en sortir, pis si y se plaignent de leur situation, c'est les seuls qui peuvent faire de quoi, pis y ont pas à se plaindre. Y ont voulu se ramasser là, y se sont ramassés là. C'est à eux autres de s'en sortir. Si y sont bien là'dans, tant mieux, c'parce qui sont capables de s'en sortir, y sont capables d'être là. C'est pas, ché pas quand j'entends itinérance, on dirait tout le temps que le monde associe ça à quelque chose de plate pis de bad : “ha mon dieu, pauvre personne”. Non non la personne a l'a choisi d'être là t'sé.”

(14151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

However, another young girl dissociated herself from the possibility of adopting a vagrant lifestyle, in any case, by remembering that she could return to the youth centre.

“Surtout si t’as pas d’place où aller pis t’apprends à t’débrouiller d’même, ça peut devenir comme la seule vie. T’sé si tu fais ça pendant deux, trois, ans ça peut devenir comme la seule vie que tu vas connaître pour plus tard t’sé...”
(11112, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

However, another older girl had a very different point of view on this issue. Shortly before turning 18, she lived on the street for eight months and found out that the resources available to her were no longer the same as the ones she had received when she was younger.

“Quand t’es su l’bord d’avoir 18 ans, pis que t’as connu beaucoup la rue, pis t’as pas de famille, rien, t’as pas de monde qui pourrait te prendre sous leur charge. Parce que quand t’es au centre jeunesse, c’est qui a des raisons en arrière de ça. (...) Pis, euh, t’sé, le monde qui fugue à répétition, y ont pas vraiment de vie qui se, pas, ben t’sé... Des plans de match, là... Pour avoir 18 ans, souvent y t’inscrivent dans une ressource communautaire ou whatever (...) Si t’es continuellement en, en fugue, y prennent pas le temps avec toi d’faire ça.”

(11157, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

Here, another respondent raised the possibility that one could get used to this lifestyle to the point of losing the desire of leaving it.

“P’t-être pas à c’té point là là... mais comme quelqu’un j’té dis qui est habitué... qui part en fugue, qui vit dans rue. Pas... c’t’une, pas une routine, tu peux pas avoir une routine à vivre dans rue... fuck c’t’impossible... Ben... la personne qui est habituée d’vivre comme ça, ben un moment donné ça y dérangera pus là. A va... a va être habituée comme ça. Fa que, si a fugué toute sa jeunesse... ça y dérangera pas d’vivre dans rue plus tard là...”
(14152, Youth, Boy, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Then again, youths could lose the means of improving their situation, considering the losses and major consequences that may result from this lifestyle, as raised here by one of the respondents.

“Because you never get your schooling...if you runnay, you can't get school, if you can't get school, you can't get a job... if you don't have the knowlegde they won't take you...you could sell drugs, but you can't survive fo the rest of you life... One day you have to stop...”
(11141, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Batshaw)

3.26.2 The parents' perspective

As for the parents, they all feared that running away would lead to vagrancy. They indicated that life on the run could lead to a process in which a youth would run away repeatedly. Vagrancy could therefore be its outcome, once running away has become a lifestyle, whereby youths end up losing their dignity and pride. Moreover, despite the few positive sides to running away, parents believe that youths cannot truly learn to be disciplined from the experience, nor to become financially autonomous. Some draw an even gloomier picture for youths with mental health problems or drug addiction. Finally, this mother explained that running away repeatedly might lead to vagrancy because, in her eyes, street life could be an “easy” route where youths become used to being accountable to no one.

“Ouin pis ça pis l'B.S. là ou eh... C'parce qu'un moment donné ça, si tu t'prends pas en main eh... qu'est-ce qui t'reste? Y reste le B.S., mais encore là, c'est ça qu'j'essaye d'y dire... si là... toi t'aimes décider là, t'aimes ça eh... Ben si t'es, t'as... je, je répète l'importance, l'autonomie financière, pas riche pour une femme mais pour n'importe qui, si t'as, t'as pas d'argent, t'as les miettes (...) L'argent c'est, c'est ben noir, c'est ben laid, mais qu'est-ce tu veux, la société est basée là d'ssus, pis c'a... son importance pis c'a, c'est pas juste l'argent eh... le, eh... le... le, les rapports bassement mercantiles là, c'est... eh... l'autonomie.”

(11256, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Therefore, as this parent believes, to prevent such a situation from arising or deteriorating, youths must apparently meet certain characteristics, and be strong enough not to make poor choices that could potentially contribute to their degeneration.

“Cé pas nécessairement par la fugue et la vie de rue que tu deviens itinérant. Ça cé clair, parce que j'en ai été témoin pour avoir connu quelqu'un qui faisait énormément d'argent, qui était vraiment très bien, qui a tombé dans la cocaïne pour se ramasser jusqu'à la Maison du Père. Alors, c'était pas un jeune, c'était quelqu'un qui, eee probablement qui avait pas une solidité, qui croyait l'avoir par le pouvoir, mais qui l'avait pas...”
(11252, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.26.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

Like the parents, all the caseworkers, except for two, feared that running away might lead to vagrancy. Therefore, the majority of caseworkers believe that the street experience, particularly when it is repeated, could lead to vagrancy. This might occur because youths settle into a lifestyle where they do not take any responsibility, nor learn anything in terms of their development, but end up believing nonetheless that they can manage on their own, and live on the fringe of society. Youths could therefore gradually settle into such a lifestyle—especially if their stay on the street is prolonged—leading them to become comfortable with the street culture and making it more difficult for them to pursue other potential projects, such as going back to school or finding a job.

“Exemple... Jeune de 17 ans, 16 ans, peu importe l’âge en fait, quitte le centre d’accueil ou... pis y décide d’être en fugue longtemps, a d’la difficulté à s’débrouiller mais ne retournera pas, y passe à côté de plusieurs étapes! L’école... Les programmes de transition de centre... Aller en appart indépendant supervisé... Y peuvent manquer des étapes de développement pendant qui sont en fugue, qui peut leur nuire dans l’ futur ou rendre plus difficile leur futur, autant que ça peut aussi les donner des outils d’survie, dépendant d’la situation aussi! ”

(11352, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Parce qu’y auront pas développé des acquis nécessaires pour avoir une stabilité à 18 ans ou une autonomie fonctionnelle à 18 ans... T’sé si l’jeune y fugue à 17 ans et demie, pis qui y a pas trouvé d’job, pas trouvé d’appart pendant qui y était en centre d’accueil, pis qui réussit à rester en fugue six mois, y arrive à 18 ans pis y é dans même situation... Pas plus compliqué qu’ça... C’est drôle parce qu’on en a eu un c’matin, c’tait sa fête pis c’est ça, ç’fait six mois qui y é en fugue, fa que ç’fait six mois qui y é dans même situation, qui y erre à gauche, à droite... mais qui y é pas capable de se stabiliser quelque part... Y a 18 ans à matin, donc y é officiellement un itinérant majeur...”

(12351, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

“Parce que dans leur fugue, y prennent pas aucune responsabilité. Y s’fient toujours su’ é autres personnes alentours d’eux autres. Fa que éventuellement là, ça s’peut ben que y arrivent à l’itinérance parce que y auront jamais rien fait... de par eux autres même! Moi j’pense c’est plus par là qu’on va arriver à l’itinérance! La douleur trop intense aussi... des sentiments qui vivent! (...) On va arriver à l’itinérance un moment donné, effectivement! On en a pas beaucoup nous autres ici à Québec, mais si j’fais référence à Montréal là, où la population est beaucoup plus grande là, j’pense que oui! T’sé si j’té dis que y a des fugues destructives, pis y a des fugues qui servent à rien, pis y a des fugues où y vont s’ramasser su’l’ bien-être social, pis un moment donné, y auront pus d’adresse, pis ça marchera pus, pis c’est là qui vont vivre dans l’itinérance, vraiment! ”

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

“À force de faire des fugue, tu vis dans misère pis t'apprends à vivre dans marde. Tu te lèves pas plus quand té en fugue, tu manges ce que tu trouves, tu consommes ce que tu trouves. L'itinérance c'est à peu près la même affaire. Y é en fugue de sa vie, y é en fugue des valeurs de la société. Travailleur, s'occuper de lui, s'occuper de personne autre de lui, ramener de l'argent à maison. Aucune, tout ce qui pense c'est à sa prochaine consommation. Mais moi je te dirais que, personnellement, l'itinérance c'est, tant qu'à moi, beaucoup, beaucoup de problème de santé mentale, avec la désinstitutionnalisation qui ont mis tout le monde dehors des asiles. Ce monde-là y sont même pas foutus de s'arranger tout seuls, pis de se débrouiller dans vie. Fa que, y se ramassent dans l'itinérance, pis la fugue souvent, y vont fuguer, y vont apprendre ce mode de vie-là, pis pour certains, y vont l'adopter. C'est pas tout le monde, certains qui ont pas de valeurs, y sont fuckés. J'en ai qui sont poqués en [ostie] à 18 ans “Tiens mon homme, t'as 18 ans, arrange toi”. Qu'est ce que tu penses y va devenir dans rue si y va pas dans la criminalité. En tout cas, c'est sûr qui s'en ressortent très mal, ça doit être un film en [Ostie]. C'est triste, mais c'est le constant que je crois. C'est triste parce que c'est toutes des vies gâchées, des ti enfants qui étaient des beaux petits enfants quand y étaient jeunes, pis t'sé, un moment donné, par la force des choses, pis la misère humaine t'sé qui ont vécue. C'est sûr qu'on a tout le temps libre choix dans vie, mais y en à t'sé, le libre choix y a pas grand liberté. C'est ça, pis t'sé quand t'as jamais appris à te lever le matin pour aller travailler, t'as jamais vu personne faire ça, tout ce que t'as vu, c'est du monde qui crosse pi qui mettent des pellules su le système, pis qui vont en chercher un peu là, pis qui vont chercher dans leur chèque jusqu'à fin du mois, bin les enfants c'est ça qui apprennent en pensant juste au chèque qui vont être capables d'avoir. De crosser, crosser l'autre, de fourrer le système. Y ont appris, mais y ont pas appris les bonne choses qui devaient apprendre. Pis, de toute manière, les éducateurs font bin ce qui veulent, ce qui peuvent plutôt, mais t'sé tu fais pas du cristal avec de la pruche. T'as beau vouloir toutes les bonnes volontés du monde, si personne a jamais, premièrement été aimée, l'estime de soi est premièrement à zéro.”

(12462, Police officer, Quebec)

The process would thus be insidious, as this police officer indicated, since youths do not think of these kinds of things, but rather of having fun, or they believe themselves immune to such a danger. Furthermore, the danger that awaits them would be even greater for those who are ill equipped or who present major vulnerability factors, such as mental health problems. In fact, only a few respondents do not think that running away can lead to vagrancy, believing that youths are afraid of this reality.

“Ben à ceux qui sont peut-être un tit peu plus matures, qui sont peut-être plus groundés là t'sé, pis qui vont euh... qui vont euh... qui vont avoir un regard critique sur les autres jeunes qui peuvent voir euh... des jeunes qui fuguent, des fois y a, y nous disent “Mon dieu je regarde euh... je regarde les jeunes euh qui sont ici euh... j'ai pas envie de devenir comme eux euh...”. T'sé y vont voir des jeunes qui vont déliorer, y vont voir des jeunes qui sont très très pris dans une toxicomanie là... T'sé euh ... pis euh parfois y a les pairs aussi qui, plus vieux, qui leur disent hey euh... “toi, retourne en centre jeunesse là, tu sais pas ce que tu fais, tu sais pas cé quoi la rue là t'sé, moi j'ai... le VIH, j'ai l'hépatite euh... patatipatata... euh... Moi je suis obligé t'sé de vendre de la drogue, faire de la prostitution, j'ai fait de la prison cé tu ça que tu veux t'sé?”... Fa que des fois l'influence des pairs peut être positive aussi...”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“(C) Pour eux... j’veux dirais... Et ça c’est une question intéressante parce que ça c’est notre point d’vue l’itinérance. C’est la façon dont nous on juge les gens qui sont pas capables de s’adapter à notre fonctionnement social... Mais pour les jeunes... c’est pas comme ça qui voient ça... Y vont pas ça comme “Ah, j’vas être un inadapté, un asocial...” C’est pas comme ça. C’est leur façon d’être, de vivre... C’est... C’est nous autres les fuckés (rires)! Non, moi personnellement j’ai jamais réussi, pis de toute façon, j’utilise pas nécessairement ça comme discours mais, à faire peur ou à intervenir de façon à présenter que tel type de comportement pourrait t’conduire à un mode de vie sur l’itinérance là! Ça ne parle pas à... Non

(I) Donc y a jamais d’jeunes non plus qui vous a parlé de cette peur-là?

(C) Jamais!

(I) De devenir itinérant parce qui font des fugues à répétition?

(C)

(11311, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

JA-MAIS! ”

3.27 HOW DO WE COMPENSATE FOR YOUTHS’ NEED FOR FREEDOM?

3.27.1 The youths’ perspective

As a rule, youths have trouble seeing how their living environment could offset their need for freedom and autonomy, which they so ardently demand. The institutions, which several youths have left, are often severely criticized.

“La seule chose qui a été bonne cé que j’tais enfermé genre... Mais les éducateurs y ont juste rajouté à la peine et à la tristesse que j’avais. C’tait juste... c’tait juste... c’était juste méchant... Moi là, tout ce que je vois cé qui sont fucking méchants, moi je te dis y’étaient juste méchants là. Y avait rien d’autre, y avait pas de gentillesse, y en avait qui était fines là mais... non. ”

(11152, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

Then again, without denying that they learn some things, youths indicated that they did not find what they needed there...

“Bah pas de toujours leur dire bon euh.... “veux-tu que je fasse tes toasts? ”. Bah, c’est sûr que si a fait ton déjeuner tout le kit là, c’est correct là, avoir plus d’activités de cuisine, mais pas être obligé de... On fait la ligne pour aller à telle place. T’sé ça marche pas ça, faut que tu leur donnes de l’autonomie, faut tu leur fasses, faut tu leur donnes un sentiment de confiance (...) C’est toutes des activités vraiment poches là. T’sé de donner, donner plus le choix aux jeunes... “qu’est-ce que vous voulez faire? ” Emmenez-en des projets, on va les faire, on va les construire, on va les monter. Vous voulez du sport, on va en faire, let’s go, t’sé on bouge. ”

(11151, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

...to the point, in some cases, of them becoming withdrawn, and thus completely impervious to all contacts in their environment.

“Plus maintenant... parce j’suis rendu à un stade de ma vie où c’que y a pus grand monde qui ont d’l’emprise sur moi, parce que y l’savent très bien, même qui me l’ont dit en rencontre, on sent qu’on peut même pus t’approcher... Genre, j’suis rendu... j’mé fous d’toé, j’mé fous d’toé, j’mé fous d’toé, crissez-moi la paix... Approchez moi même pas, j’ai même pas l’goût d’veux parler. C’est laissez moi faire mon temps, j’vas crisser mon camp après, c’est toute... c’est ça...”

(12124, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

Concerning family, several youths did not see much hope; however, they did add a few interesting nuances. They explained, among other things, that this avenue was pointless because their need for freedom was too great.

“Parce que, là, ben c’est ça, mon centre d’accueil, y peuvent pas faire ça. Y ont des choses à respecter pis toute, pis y savent que veut, veut pas, si j’ai c’té liberté là, j’vas consommer pis toute. Pis eux autres, leur mandat, c’est de me protéger.”

(11157, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

They also explained that running away is a means of putting a necessary distance between themselves and their living environment. Therefore, neither the family nor any other environment could compensate directly for this need, except by listening, being open and communicating. They would thus like to talk about the experiences that they wanted, without dispute; on condition, however, that the discussions not be intended to implement restrictions.

3.27.2 The parents’ perspective

In fact, the parents hesitated to say that they alone would be able to satisfy fully their youths’ needs, particularly those hidden behind the youths’ actions when they ran away. Their need for autonomy and emancipation requires in itself some distance and detachment.

“XXX euh... je... comme j'ai dit un peu plus tôt euh... c'tait sûrement, y pouvait pas se... y'é... y vivait quelque chose de difficile par en-dedans là... Euh... émotivement... pis hormonalement probablement. Mais euh... cette euh... cette période là, où on se questionne, pis qu'on se comprend pas là... Fa que ce que ça lui apportait, c'était de... d'aller prendre... d'aller expérimenter autre chose... D'aller prendre de l'air, de se détacher... d'essayer de ... de se découvrir autrement... je pense... Pis, YYY, elle, c'était euh... ses fugues c'tait de se prouver qu'était euh... ce qu'était.... c'tune tough.”
(11254, Parent, Community, Montreal)

In this context, most of the parents instead limit themselves to proving that they love them and are important to them. Some specified that their contribution was limited to their presence and support, which they offered as a safety net. Therefore, the help they can offer would be limited, as is that of the youth centres, which are also powerless, in their eyes.

“(P) Nous, ce qu'on fait, c'est plus du soutien. Je peux pas faire grand-chose d'autre heee... J'ai vrai, sincèrement, j'ai vraiment tout essayé. La seule chose que je fais présentement, c'est du soutien. Pis en fugue ben, c'est ça. L'écouter pis, je peux juste la soutenir je peux rien faire d'autre.

(I) Pis est-ce que le centre d'accueil peut, peut l'aider d'après vous à, à avoir un meilleur contrôle sur sa vie, ou jusqu'où le centre d'accueil peut l'aider dans ce sens-là?

(P) Heee... Elle leur fait tellement pas confiance là. (...) Elle a perdu totalement confiance en eux autres, pis ça fait des années. Eux autres y ont comme, au début perdu confiance en elle. Donc, à quoi ça sert de t'aider, si tu veux pas t'aider, t'sé.”

(12222, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

Whatever the case may be, very few parents succeed in finding means they could directly use to satisfy their youth's needs for freedom, autonomy and self-discovery.

“Eh ben ouin c'est ça là... ben premièrement fuir eh... fuir l'école qui, où elle était vraiment eh... très malheureusement et où ça allait pas du tout. Était vraiment ostracisée. Pis même eh, mal menée eh...(...) Pis, à la maison, ben... c'est... est... elle trouvait pas qu'on la soutenait ou qu'on la comprenait. Fait que,... ah c'est ça qu'elle a eh... est allée vers des gens, bon, qui la prenaient comme elle était.”

(11256, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Nevertheless, some take action despite the efforts it may require.

“T’sé euh... moi je laisse pas que, je laisse a rien passer, mais je vais essayer de l’enligner dans le droit chemin t’sé... XXXX a comme un...un côté qui est ben rebelle pis la délinquance, pis y a pas peur de rien la t’sé...Fa que,... se montrer qui est capable... ben y é prête à faire n’importe quoi t’sé...(...) T’sé fa que,... quand... on dirait qui réalise pas que même dans le passé, d’avoir agi de même, ça l’a mis dans le pétrin... T’sé y’a déjà pogné une sentence de prison de six mois... pis euh... T’sé y a, y avait euh... 16 ans... pis euh t’sé pour lui, dans sa tête euh,... ben non cé moi qui a décidé de le faire, mais euh t’sé on le sait que... y aurait pu s’en passer dans le fond là...”

(13231, Parent, Institutional, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

3.27.3 Caseworkers’ and police officers’ perspectives

Whereas caseworkers and police officers agreed on the fact that running away satisfies a large number of youths’ needs—such as to be free, to express a malaise, to become fulfilled, to become emancipated, and to control their lives—they were not unanimous in saying that the youths’ living environment could compensate for their needs. In fact, the police officers and caseworkers were divided on this issue. Some respondents, particularly the caseworkers, liked to say that the youths’ living environment could help them and that families also had this ability, given their considerable influence on them. They said families could do so by being there, by providing stability, guidance and supervision, and by listening, being open and understanding. They also suggested that they could do so by initiating concrete changes.

However, others took into account the fact that some families were limited, even dysfunctional, and thus thought educators were sometimes better equipped to help youths along their journey.

“Y ont besoin d’un parent, mais t’sé c’est sûr que quand sont ici, sont confrontés à ça, pis y sont insécuries là dans, pis sont sont y s’disent : “ah, c’est dont ben fatiguant des règles yagnayagnan”». Mais d’un autre côté, celui qui est capable d’insight et tout ça, y é capable de nous dire ee : “non c’est important, pis j’en ai besoin de ça”. Oui on souhaite toujours que le parent, mais quand tu travailles avec des grands adolescents ben, lui y comprend pas ça parce qui est au même niveau que son jeune...”

(13332, Caseworker, Institutional, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Others raised the fact that some families are too involved to listen truly to the youths and to satisfy their needs. That they must, to begin, be well balanced to be able to find

the necessary solutions and negotiate properly with the youths who demand a freedom that no environment can fully provide. Another caseworker maintained, however, that youth centres face this difficulty. This environment also lacks flexibility in the sense that the units house a large number of youths who must follow the same rules, without exception.

“(P) En essayant de leur donner le plus possible dans les, dans les normes prescrites. C'est-à-dire qu'un foyer de groupe, ou un centre d'accueil pourra pas dire au jeune : “Bon, tu vas rentrer à deux heures... Tu peux rentrer à deux heure du matin”. Je ne crois pas...”

(I) Donc y a une limite là, à répondre à ces besoins-là.

(P) Y a des limites qui doivent respecter. Y a certaine, peut-être, latitude, mais elle est mince la latitude. Faut que la règle soit bonne pour tout le monde là. Si elle est bonne pour un, elle doit être bonne pour l'autre. Ça veut dire que le jeune, y peut avoir très peu dans un centre ou un foyer de groupe, parce que, y doit mettre les règlements dans l'ensemble du groupe, ou du foyer.”

(11462, Police officer, Montreal)

“Bah c'est sûr que moi j'ai encore... Les préjugés dans la vie que si tu as une famille aimante, qui est attentif à tes besoins, une famille ou une famille d'accueil ou euh... l'éducateur, un milieu de vie ... euh... les jeunes vont chercher à faire des expériences quand même... Y vont chercher de la liberté là... Mais y seront pas obligés d'être aussi intenses dans la liberté qu'ils vont chercher, parce qu'ils vont savoir qu'en retour... D'avoir une mère qui dit moi “non, je veux pas que tu consommes... que tu fasses le party, mais que si jamais ça t'arrive, je préfère que tu m'appelles, que tu fasses du pouce là”... Fa que... c'est quoi la question ?... Ah oui... C'est un vrai... Un cadre, un bon cadre... un cadre en fait qui est toujours le même... Pis peu importe l'adolescent... la grosse majorité des ados, même qui ont un cadre qui est toujours stable, vont chercher un moment donné à sortir du cadre voir ce que cela fait.... Quand je sors du cadre... la la différence en centre jeunesse, c'est que le cadre est vraiment là, pis y peuvent pas rentrer et sortir du cadre comme ils veulent. Mais moi je pense que... la famille... le milieu de vie, peut avoir une influence sur la fugue là... Si ça... mais si sont moins répressifs.”

(12354, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

3.28 SUPERVISED FREEDOM?

3.28.1 The youths' perspective

Then, would it be advisable to allow youths more freedom? We asked them the question directly. Most youths smiled at this possibility. It could thus appease the anger, frustrations and indignation, as well as the sense of being locked up and of being trapped in an institution. However, respondents added that such a decision could also

have a reverse side. Risks would necessarily be associated with this practice, but youths would take these risks regardless. According to this youth, these risks are worth taking, because of the trust that would thus be placed in them. In return, they would learn to trust their own judgement and rely on it to get ahead in life.

“Oui y a des risques, mais ça s’rait quoi la vie si on en prenait pas...y’ a des risques de perdre le jeune, y a des risques... y a des risques immenses de de... T’sé ça s’peut qu’le jeune te manipule ben raide là pour te dire, écoute, j’consomme quasiment pas bla bla bla, pis qu’tu y laisses d’la liberté pis qu’dans l’fond, y r’vent super scrap pis qu’y’a failli mourir ok... Mais t’sé, si l’jeune est vraiment honnête, tu vas pas l’priver d’la liberté qui peut avoir... T’sé c’est sûr que y a des risques à prendre, mais moi j’trouve qu’y en valent la peine, parce que ceux qui ont l’droit à leur liberté, y doivent l’avoir. (...) Quels sont ces bénéfices ? Ça s’rait de pouvoir avancer dans vie...d’avancer dans vie parce que en donnant une liberté au jeune, ça va leur prouver que vous avez confiance en lui. Fa que, ça va l’aider à avoir lui-même confiance en lui...pis pouvoir se voir plus tard faire quelque chose de sa vie et non vendre d’la drogue toute le reste de sa vie dans l’fond...”

(12124, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Quebec)

Nevertheless, youths generally believe that with more freedom, they could further their development, with the condition, however, that certain boundaries be imposed. They proposed, among other things, that freedom be granted gradually. Alternatively, they suggested working on individual bases because, despite all the advantages that may be associated with this practice, some youths could abuse it and develop problems that are more serious than the ones they had before, in particular those related to drug addiction.

In the end, all the youths’ comments on this subject suggested that they would like “supervised” or “assisted” freedom, so to speak. This is because the freedom they want is not so much from the rigid institutional structures, nor is it from the ties with the people they leave, but rather the freedom to go find themselves and to test their ability to manage on their own in the world that awaits them.

However, some youths doubt that caseworkers could go this route, knowing that such a practice would surely involve considerable work for them. They would need to know the youths, be willing to keep in touch with them during their absences, never cut communications with them, and remain available in all circumstances.

3.28.2 The parents' perspective

On the subject of freedom, the parents' opinions are divided, with half of them being against the idea of giving youths more freedom and the other half being in favour of it. However, all the parents concur on the risks that could be associated with such a practice. They therefore agreed that youths could abuse it and get into unfortunate situations that could ultimately have severe consequences on their lives. In this regard, one mother maintained that if her son is in a youth centre, it is because she gave him too much freedom. Comparing herself to other parents, she said that she would like to learn to set limits, and that the freedom her son was granted in his life had only negative consequences for him. Moreover, another mother said she was not in favour of freedom, explaining that her son needs to be protected from himself.

“Non, c'est ça, ça dépend de si ça se retourne beaucoup contre eux-mêmes. Ben là, faut les protéger ouin, là. C'est vraiment les protéger contre eux-mêmes. Ou quelqu'un qui se pique ou qui s'drogue tout l'temps. Eh... là, faut les, c'est là, faut les maintenir un peu plus.”
(11256, Parent, Community, Montreal)

However, other parents' arguments in favour of greater freedom for youths are also justified and appear to be well thought out. At the very least, they are based on an experience that showed them that a lack of freedom might have consequences that would be just as harmful. For example, one mother explained that when her son's freedom is restricted, he lies, manipulates and rebels, and that this leads to communication problems between them. Another one believes that if her child had had more freedom, he would undoubtedly have not run away so many times. She realizes that this approach involves risks and that her son would probably have taken advantage of the situation to go consume substances. Ultimately, she believes that he still has the right to freedom and that, either way, a lack of freedom can only feed youths anger and incite them to rebel. Alternatively, it could contribute to their developing a negative self-image. Consequently, youths could become withdrawn and give up hope of going any further in life. Our responsibility would thus consist in providing them with the

supervision they need based on a proper analysis of each situation, while taking into consideration their age in particular as well as their abilities and tolerance.

Another mother even proposed that youths be accompanied when running away for the first time, and they could only gain pride and self-confidence from the experience. She suggested that the risks from which we want to protect these youths already exist and that, sooner or later, they will have to learn to face them. This is similar to the statements of another mother who thinks that youths have a better chance of developing through freedom than through restraint. If we force them to wait too long to be free and to assess their abilities to manage on their own, the restraint would ultimately produce anxiety and paralysis. In this logic, experimenting with freedom would be the best way to protect them.

However, as another mother stressed, this does not mean to let them go, but rather to maintain a proper balance between freedom and supervision. She thinks this can be achieved by persuading youths to participate in projects that interest them and make them accountable. She thinks they would have a better chance of coming to grips with their autonomy and developing their ability of making choices.

“Oui, oui... Moi je peux... exemple, juste par rapport à moi, des fois, peut-être que... Je laisse pas assez XXX faire ce qu'il faut qu'il fasse lui-même, t'sé. Oui, t'sé, y a un espèce de, de truc, des fois que je confonds entre, mettre des limites, pour qu'il fasse ses propres choix, ou devenir envahissante, avec mes propres lois, t'sé. Fa que, y a comme un... C'est comme un, un transfert de mon inquiétude sur lui là, t'sé. Un moment donné, t'sé. Pis je pense que je ne suis pas toute seule dans mon cas là, mais... Oui, ce serait souhaitable de réussir à trancher ça cette question-là, là. De laisser libre, là où il faut, t'sé. Mais, toujours en considérant qu'il est chez moi, qu'il y a des limites, qui a des ch, t'sé... Qui a des responsabilités, mais en même temps : “r'garde, fais ce que tu as à faire, pis le reste, ça m'appartiens pas là.””

(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

“Ben, le risque c'est que la, le jeune devienne plus autonome. D'un côté ou de l'autre, un jeune qui l'est pas pantoute, ben, le risque, c'est qu'il devienne insécuré lui-même, à pas trop... Si il en a trop de liberté, y a moins de sécurité peut-être, t'sé... Encore là, ça dépend où.”

(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.28.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

Generally, both institutional and community caseworkers believe that it would be advisable to allow youths more freedom and that this principle should be reflected in the interventions, taking into account the age, maturity level, skills, and the level of responsibility that it would be appropriate to give them. This point of view is in line with the police officers' opinions. The caseworkers advocate an intervention that favours autonomy for youths, which in itself should already be part of the intervention plans, but which could undoubtedly be incorporated even more significantly. One caseworker cited the example of a practice that is currently in effect in youth centres, whereby youths are colour coded. Code-red youths require constant supervision. Code-yellow ones must remain in the unit in proximity to the caseworkers. However, code-green youths can leave whenever they want to. Similarly, another respondent mentioned the use of supervised apartments with youths over 16 years of age. These young people are given a weekly allowance, which helps them learn how to manage a budget. Nevertheless, beyond these technical elements, some caseworkers consider the main challenge to be their ability and that of their agency to manage risky situations. By being more magnanimous towards youths, they could undoubtedly avoid some runaway situations, without being able to eliminate them completely, especially since freedom itself, in the true sense of the word, must be experienced beyond the walls. Therefore, one major challenge for caseworkers would consist in developing effective ways to manage risky situations. In the eyes of the community caseworkers, this could not be achieved, of course, without a close collaboration between the institutions and agencies.

“Quand les intervenants pensent que de prendre des risques, les risques, que que prendre un risque a la possibilité d'être lucratif ou t'sé de de bon, y vont essayer, y vont souvent essayer pas tous les intervenants, mais y en a qui vont prendre des risques. Donc un exemple, j'donne un exemple, c'est un jeune qui a une blonde à l'extérieur qui est majeure qui a un appartement, pis le jeune a 16 ans, la blonde a 18 ans whatever. Bon, ben crime ee les intervenants, même si y connaissent pas la fille ou blablabla y vont laisser le jeune découcher une ou deux fois par semaine pour être avec sa blonde, parce qui savent pertinemment que si y le laissent pas aller découcher une fois de temps en temps, y risque de se pousser un m'ment d'nne t'sé.”

(12353, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

Nevertheless, as this respondent here explained, the room that caseworkers can allocate for freedom in their intervention depends on several factors. These include the caseworker's commitment to the premise of the intervention advocated by the youth's living unit (open or closed environment) and the way the flight is interpreted by the caseworker, which may also depend on his or her level of experience.

“Ben... là... C'est... C'est une grande question aussi! Comment est perçu la fugue par les... Supposons qu'on parle d'un enfant qui n'est plus dans son, qui a été retiré de son milieu familial, pis qui est hébergé dans un de nos services... Comment est-ce que... Et que ce jeune-là fugue d'un de nos services! Comment est-ce que la fugue est perçue? Est-ce que c'est perçu comme étant un échec d'intervention? C'est perçu comme étant une façon pour le jeune d'exprimer un malaise important? Est-ce que c'est perçu comme étant une façon pour le jeune d'utiliser un moyen d'pression pour manipuler son environnement et non... Bon fa que tout ça c'est... j'veux dire ça... tout dépendant d'l'expérience des intervenants, d'la façon dont est géré le service, le type d'encadrement que ce service-là dispose aussi ou pas ou... le degré... Encore là, on r'vent toujours à l'âge et au sexe d'l'enfant... Ça c'est toutes des variables qui... s'ront pas... y a pas de balises claires par rapport à ça! ”

(11311, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

In fact, there are numerous risks associated with a practice favouring more freedom. In particular, the respondents think of the risk of excessive substance use, of youths falling back into their old habits, and of regressing because they left before acquiring the basics for true autonomy. The police officers, more particularly, worried about youths becoming seriously involved in crime and ultimately losing faith in the adults around them. But in another way, the caseworkers also acknowledged that with a practice that allows greater freedom, youths would also have the chance to find themselves, to learn from their mistakes, to get in touch with their values and to prove to the caseworkers that they can be trusted.

“Oui! Oui parce que... Oui parce que à une époque, l'intervention qu'on faisait était correcte! J'veux pas r'mettre en doute c'qu'on a fait v'là 20 ans là, même si on sait que des fois on était vraiment pas correct là! J'veux pas r'mettre en doute ça! Mais j'pense que maintenant, aujourd'hui c'qui d'mande aux jeunes, c'est de prendre des responsabilités très tôt! Alors moi, j'pense qui faut les mettre dans l'bain très tôt aussi! Parce que j'pense que ça devient de plus en plus ça, même si on voudrait pas que ça l'soit! Un moment donné ça nous prend d'court pis l'tournant y est là pareil là! Fa que moi j'pense que c't'important ça! Pis c't'important que y aillent d'l'espace eux autres! C'pas à moi à décider! J'peux ben décider pour lui c'que j'aimerais ça qui fasse, ça j'peux l'faire n'importe quand, mais y va-tu plus la respecter parce que c'est moi qui l'a décidé! Y va plus le respecter parce que c'est lui qui a, qui s'est mis des choses en place! C'est ben plus... y va respecter sa parole à

lui, plus que la mienne! Fa que moi j'pense que effectivement y faut en donner! Faut qui arrivent, faut qui prennent position ces jeunes-là. Arrêtons d'prendre la parole pour eux autres, y ont d'quoi à dire aussi! Pis des fois c't'intéressant c'qui ont à dire, fa que faut les écouter à quelque part, faut les voir! ”

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

Looking back, some added that risks were unavoidable in any case, even in homes and living units. Finally, practices that involve smaller risks would be put forward by the caseworkers who are conscious of their own limitations and who can see the constructive side to this freedom. Obviously, granting this freedom would not be a matter of eliminating supervision, but rather of providing it differently, in particular by being readily available to respond immediately to the needs of the youths who are experiencing freedom. On a daily basis, such a practice would lead to major changes in the way that the caseworkers' jobs are organized.

“(C) Ben, dans la gestion du risque, c't'une mesure ça, assez ee spéciale, dans le sens où, des fois, on peut savoir qui va avoir un risque, mais on permet la liberté, mais on est comme en filet de sécurité parce qu'on veut vérifier des choses. Oui, c'est possible, mais c'est très demandant et c'est, en même temps, de prendre un risque comme professionnel aussi. Eee on se fait backer là, on a un chef, tout ça, mais des fois on prend des risques, on se dit “Ben coudonc, t'sé eee, si des fois y se fait embarquer, ben on le revoit plus jamais” T'sé, ça peut arriver.

(I) Quand tu dis, on se met en filet en arrière, c'est quoi cette pratique-là?

(C) Ben, c'est dans le fond de... de gérer le risque, de se mettre en filet, c'est de s'assurer que si jamais qu'il y a quoi que ce soit, qu'on est en back up, qu'on va répondre rapidement à par exemple, un jeune, qui ee, qui fugue là, pis eee... genre eee... on sait qui peut être retrouvé là dans nuit, ben là, le filet de sécurité, la DPJ est au courant, dès qu'un policier appelle au numéro, ben, on sait quoi faire avec. Y a un filet là, qui est là, qui va le ramasser finalement. Eee. Pis c'est ça, on met plus d'emphase sur certains jeunes là.”

(11314, Caseworler, Institutional, Montreal)

Accordingly, this could only be based on strong, stable relationships, which are, however, difficult to establish in an organizational context where caseworkers change regularly.

“Euh... ben... oui mais non en même temps, parce que si... euh... t'sé la confiance c'est...ça peut être à double sens, pis ça peut être à sens unique... Pis avec nos jeunes, c'est hyper difficile de r'gagner leur confiance parce que t'es l'vingtième intervenant, éduc de rencontre, t'es l'quatrième T.S. d'l'année... euh... plus toutes les intervenants qui ont gravité autour, plus les T.S. de C.L.S.C. qui sont tombées enceintes... Fa que t'sé, un moment donné...parce qui ont... j'dis tombées enceinte parce que c'est dont ben c'qu'on entend... “Ben là! J'suis fâché après ma T.S. Pourquoi? Ben là j'change de T.S., est tombée

enceinte pis a s'en va, a l'avait pas l'droit d'me faire ça... ” C'parce que quelque part, y ont une vie aussi, mais... euh... le roulement d'éducateurs et de travailleurs sociaux autour de ces jeunes-là est tellement impressionnant que... un moment donné, ça vient normal qu'y perdent confiance, pis si l'jeune fait pas confiance à son éduc, même si son éduc y fait confiance, ben ça va être difficile de... T'sé si l'lien est pas là, ça va être difficile pour le jeune de s'dire ben... “J'veux pas l'décevoir... ” Y va s'en sacrer, y va l'décevoir rendu-là... Faque... oui et non...”

(12351, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

In fact, this is why a few caseworkers and police officers hesitated to say that practices involving greater freedom could have only positive consequences for youths. They were very few, but they did raise an interesting notion. They did not focus so much on the potential abuse by the youths, but more fundamentally on the fact that freedom is not the only thing they need and seek when they run away. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to grant more freedom to all youths in all circumstances. Furthermore, these respondents believed that when granting more freedom, caseworkers would have to make sure that they are able to give the youths more than just that. They know that this practice is demanding and that it must be based on a certain amount of intervention experience and maturity; otherwise, the freedom granted to youths could convey other messages that they do not need.

“Yeah sure. It depends on where they're at, I mean, how old they are, their skills, their maturity, their... level of accountability, responsibility.”

(11341, Caseworker, Institutional, Batshaw)

“Écoutez c'est toujours plein de négociations, de perceptions, de façons d'interpréter ce comportement-là en fonction d'plein d'paramètres, et des fois non y a pas de... C'est pas quelque chose de nécessairement bon quand c'est une fugueuse à répétition de 14 ans qui va dans un réseau de prostitution, c'est... Non! C'est... On est habituellement... C'est plus facile à gérer parce que les parents sont aussi inquiets que nous! Des fois un jeune de 17 ½ qui fugue c'est pas nécessaire.”

(11311, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

“Ffffff! C't'un contrôle assez serré d'savoir où c'qui est, pis tout ça là... T'sé peut-être que y a une façon d'faire qui dit ben y s'en va à telle place, mais si mettons y dit “Ah j'm'en vas à... j'm'en vas r'joindre... j'vas voir ma tante des affaires de même...” Pis tu fais des téléphones, pis y est pas là t'sé là t'sé... Tu peux toujours contrôler, mais ça s'contrôle pas tant que ça... C'est dûr à contrôler là! Quand y a passé la porte là! Si y décide qui s'en va à gauche au lieu d'aller à droite, ben y va partir à gauche pis y a personne qui va pouvoir y empêcher!”

(12463, Police officer, Quebec)

However, excessive, prolonged restraint could also have devastating effects on youths. It could not only hinder their development, but also exacerbate their indignation and anger and make them want to run away and fight the system. That said, although intensive supervision is sometimes essential for the protection of youths who are a danger to themselves, conversely, abusive use of such a method could also comprise other risks that would become increasingly difficult to control over time.

“(C) Ben c’pour les protéger... c’pas une punition là, c’t’une protection... T’sé contrairement à avant, ok j’laisserais peut-être pas un jeune six mois en encadrement intensif, c’qui s’faisait avant facilement là... Y pouvaient passer des années, des années... Mais j’trouve que c’t’une bonne façon d’les protéger... pis j’en protègerais une couple là...
(I) Cette protection là est nécessaire?

(C) Ah oui! Parce qu’on va les... on va les perdre là... c’est ça... Ben comme celle que j’parle qui é en encadrement intensif depuis hier... Quand a va rev’nir, a va r’fuguer pis une fois, a va s’rentrer la mauvaise s’ringue à mauvaise place, pis a va mourir là... Mais si a restait là pis qui y avait un travail à long terme qui s’faisait là... on pourrait peut-être la sauver... thérapie, t’sé là... C’est trop... la Loi a trop changé... c’est trop difficile d’les laisser en encadrement intensif...”

(12324, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

“Mais les enfermer là, à long terme comme on faisait, NON! À court terme, OUI! Le temps qui se r’prennent en main, le temps qui fassent leurs démarches, leur temps... Pis écoute là, on s’leurra pas, ceux qui s’en vont dans l’milieu sécuritaire, ça va être nos plus plus plus plus plus plus plus pockés! Ça va être nos plus durs! Ça s’ra pus “Ah elle est difficile, on va l’envoyer là une semaine là!” C’est pus ça là! C’est “Est difficile... Tu vas l’avoir dans l’unité, pis tu vas mettre des moyens en place pour qu’a passe à travers, pis qu’a l’exprime c’est quoi qu’a vit!” On va arrêter d’les envoyer au sécuritaire pour rien! C’est ça que la nouvelle Loi nous dit.”

(12321, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

3.29 PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

3.29.1 The youths’ perspective

Evidently, youths want to be protected by the adults around them. They believe that the adults’ main responsibilities towards them are to provide their basic needs and ensure their well-being, protection and safety. Some also mentioned supervision and discipline, and are well aware that not having these elements in their lives constitutes a deficiency in itself.

“T’sé genre, comme, comme j’ai toujours dit là. Y en a qui fume des bats avec leur père là. Moi j’ai dit non là. Même si mon père me, m’offrirait de fumer un bat avec là, j’pense que j’en fumerais pas là, genre. J’trouverais ça trop louche. “Heille pa...” Non. T’sé, ça tout le temps été non là, fa que. Partage d’expérience, j’pense pas là. Mais accompagnement oui là. Super cool là.”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community and Centre-du-Québec)

Furthermore, at least half of the youths in the sample believe that the protective measures generally intended for youths are appropriate. These respondents maintain here that youths sometimes need to be closely supervised, or even protected from themselves.

“Oui parce que pendant la semaine y vont être en centre, y vont avoir l’encadrement dont y ont besoin, y vont avoir le la la discipline dont y’ont besoin, pis y vont avoir les outils dont y’ont besoin. Mais la fin de semaine qu’est ce qui faisait qui s’en vont pas fumer du pot ou se “junker” ou “what ever”, qui s’en vont pas faire ce qui s’en vont pas faire dans vie de tout é jours, qui s’en vont pas voler, qui s’en vont pas faire du trouble, qui s’en vont pas juste recommencer pis continuer de quand y’étaient déjà dehors.”

(14151, Youth, Girl, Community and Centre-du-Québec)

“Ouin t’sé, y’en a qui sont icitte pis y sont obligés de suivre des règles à cause de du monde qui sont, qui ont besoin de ces règles là. T’sé y a des gars qui vont suivre des règles qui ont pas besoin de suivre parce que c’est pas vraiment leur problème t’sé. Y en a qui sont icitte à cause que y ont perdu leurs parents t’sé, pis ee y ont pas de place pis y vont être obligés de suivre des affaires de drogues quand y sont même pas drogués t’sé.”

(12127, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

“Même si euh... je me suis déjà faite interné en psychiatrie, pis j’étais pas content, pis j’étais fâché après tout le monde euh... Finalement ça ma fait du bien parce que sinon j’aurais pu mourir.”

(12121, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

In this perspective, some stated that the new *Act* allows young people in youth centres to run away for longer periods before they are placed under intensive supervision. Some feel this is not necessarily a good thing for them.

“Oui pis non parce que y a des... À c’t’heure ça prend beaucoup de critères pour être en encadrement intensif. Pis quand tu es en encadrement intensif, bin ça te prend vraiment une grosse grosse bonne implication pour sortir de là. Bin non là, un coup que tu es là, tu es en sécurité pis y t’arrivera rien, pis cé pas mal ça.”

(12121, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

“Ben tout simplement si l’gars y fugue de l’endroit que tu vas l’r’mettre en r’venant d’fugue... pfff.. y va r’fuguer si ça y tente là... S’cuse moi mais moi j’rvenais d’fugue, y m’mettaient d’dans 23 heures su 24 dans ma cellule, pis j’avais pas l’droit d’sortir là... J’sortais pour aller aux toilettes pis j’avais mon déjeuner, mon diner, mon souper dans ma chambre là. Ben t’essayeras de d’pousser de d’là après... c’pas mal plus dur que... Tout cas, moi j’pas d’accord avec ça... (...) cé ça. (...) Ça dépend des situations d’fugue... comme moi oui ça été pour me prendre en main, mais y en a d’autres que criss y’ont faite le con durant qui ont ... qui ont été en fugue pis toute... Eux autres là ..., exemple la fille qui s’rend su l’coin d’la rue pis toute, a arrêtez la mettez la en arrêt d’agir si il faut criss est... C’est sûr qu’a arrêtera pas de même... Quelqu’un qui... un moment donné y’en a qui sont dans drogue pis cé pas si facile que ça arrêter là... pis... si y ont besoin d’aide pour les arrêter ...ben oui.”

(14152, Youth, Boy, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

However, these youths are among only a few—four, more precisely—who are familiar with the amendments to the *Act* and who have an opinion on the potential consequences. As for one of them, she determined that the open centres in particular provide little protection for youths, having all their doors unlocked and being surrounded by strange people who lurk in the vicinity and reside close to the living units.

Whatever the case may be, most of the youths believe nonetheless that being locked up inside small living units is not very beneficial for them. In this regard, one youth related how she has had anxiety attacks just by going shopping. Therefore, placement in a living unit for a short while could be beneficial, but, over a prolonged period, such a practice could hinder a youth’s development. This youth believes that it is preferable to save the more restrictive measures for those who need it the most and to grant more freedom to others, so they can be exposed to reality as quickly as possible.

“Si té rendu comme euh... trop encadré euh... ça peut devenir comme de... de... comment dire... Si té trop encadré pendant longtemps, un moment donné tu sais plus quoi faire par toi-même pa’ce que t’as toujours été encadré t’sé, t’as peur de faire des choses par toi-même, t’sé, tu développes pas ton ha... autonomie... Même ici au XXXX t’sé, on est quand même encadré mais on développe très bien notre autonomie euh... même à YYYY ça s’fait quand même assez bien mais à plus long terme...”

(11112, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

This idea is akin to the notion that protection and supervision can ensure the well-being of youths, but only to a certain extent. In fact, this idea is shared by several youths in the sample. If the focus were solely on protecting youths, without consideration for other

needs and possible dimensions, youths would end up being overprotected. This could not only hinder their development, but also constitute a new danger: making them want to place themselves in riskier situations.

“Ben c'est ça là. Moé, être enfermé dans ma chambre tous les jours, qui aille des clôtures barbelées tout le tour du terrain... que tu peux pas... que tu puisses pas sortir... t'sé quand tu calls, t'sé, y faut que tu calls tes déplacements... Je m'en vas aux toilettes, ha, j'm'en... t'sé, un m'ment d'nné là criss là. T'sé, c'est con là. Ça me tente d'aller pisser moé... j'ai pas besoin de te le dire là t'sé.”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community and Centre-du-Québec)

“De l'protéger, j'entends... le protéger, mettons j'le protège d'un pédophile ou j'le protège de quelqu'un, de quelque chose qui pourrait lui nuire. Mais faut pas protéger, surprotéger ok. Faut pas... le mettre dans une cage tu comprends, mais pas une cage réelle, une cage fictive, si là tu l'laisses pas aller marcher dans rue là, ostie, y va être malheureux men. Un m'ent d'né, y faut qu'tu y fasses confiance, faut qu'tu... t'sé même si y'a perdu ta confiance, estie essaye... Tout d'un coup qui dit la vérité, tout d'un coup qui veut vraiment arrêter pis qu'tu l'crois pas men, y va r'plonger ben plus solide que vous l'pensez là... T'sé faut y faire confiance, mais le protéger en même... Faut qu'tu l'protèges, mais pas surprotéger... tu peux l'protéger à un point, jusqu'à un point, mais rendu après, tu peux pus rien faire, même si tu l'surprotèges. Y va juste encore plus se rebeller, ça sert à rien...”

(12124, Youth, girl, Institutiona, Quebec)

Therefore, no matter how protective youth centres might become, some youths remain invariably cynical, or at least skeptical, about the help that youth centres could provide, believing that an institution could never replace a family.

“Ce que signifie pour elle la protection des mineurs : (Léger rire). Moi c'te phrase là a ma faite rusher pas mal toute mon adolescence. Protection de la jeunesse pis toute là. Parce que... y en a que... j'trouve c'est exagéré. T'sé, j'ai faite gros des familles d'accueil. J'en ai faite comme quatorze là. Pis t'sé... C'est pas toute protection de la jeunesse là. Garde, c'est pour le cash pis y se calissent des jeunes qui ont là.”

(13151, Youth, Girl, Community and Centre-du-Québec)

“Ben, parce que j'ai jamais vu... parce que premièrement, t'es pas dans une famille conventionnelle ostie. T'as pas des parents qui t'aiment, ostie. T'as pas... du monde qui sont alentour de toé pis qui, qui sont là pour te dire “criss, chus fier de toé, criss, c'est cool qu'est-ce que tu fais, criss...” T'sé. T'as pas ça t'sé. T'as pas ça, c'est comme si t'étais dans une prison pour les jeunes, carrément. C'est vraiment con t'sé.”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community and Centre-du-Québec)

“C’t’écrit “Protection de la Jeunesse” mais des fois les jeunes y peuvent pas sortir ou y peuvent pas... Moi, j’trouve c’est trop exagéré. Quand tu vis avec tes parents ou quelque chose, tu peux sortir comme après l’souper ou quelque chose! Aller marcher ou aller au parc. Ici tu peux comme pas, t’es obligé de rester ici pis de faire un sport en groupe... C’est quand même pas mal exagéré moi j’trouve à c’t’ sujet là. C’est comme une prison icitte... Je sais pas mais pour moi, c’t’une prison! Des murs en béton... Cé pas une vie familiale là!”

(11114, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

Nevertheless, as a rule, the main issue concerning overprotection relates to the youths being deprived of opportunities to become autonomous. We can understand that it may be difficult to give responsibilities to youths who lack the basic skills to handle them properly. But the youths’ accounts suggested that youth centres should nevertheless explore new avenues. To this effect, one respondent said that school, STI and substance-use awareness workshops, as well as anger management and social skills workshops, which inform and prepare them as best as they can, do not replace real-life situations.

“Offrir des portes de sortie... pas l’eux donner à 18 ans ... pis dire gars bye té un numéro.... Prendre le temps de dire : “gars, avant 18 ans, faudrait p’t-être que tu t’trouves une job ou... va falloir que tu payes tant... va falloir que tu payes ton chauffage”... Ou... moé quand j’t’arrivé en appartement la première fois, j’ai steppé en maudit là...”

(14152, Youth, Boy, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Another youth did not agree, however. Without claiming that the youth centre is a family, this young girl learned some things that could help her become autonomous. These are things that she learned in an institution but, apparently, did not learn from her family.

“T’habites dans un centre... t’as douze filles avec toi... cé très dur ok... Pis j’imagine pas les douze gars... t’sé... Fa que, ça doit être encore plus dur ça... Pis... tu peux faire d’la bouffe deux fois par semaine... tu peux t’faire d’la bouffe deux fois par semaine... tu tu... sors... tu ... Fa que, t’sé ça t’montre comme... té autonome... ça t’montre l’autonomie... Ici... ça t’montre que té capable de faire du ménage... On fait du ménage deux fois par jour... deux fois par semaine j’pense, ou même trois fois des fois... Pis ça t’montre que tu peux faire du ménage que cé pas si long qu’ça faire du ménage t’sé (...) Cé ça, ça nous montre un peu d’vivre... dans une maison ...dans un appartement pis tout...”

(11111, Youth, Girl, Institutional, Montreal)

In short, youths seem to say that the system in which they are focuses more on protection than on development. It provides sufficient, appropriate protection in extreme situations where children are victims of mistreatment. Nonetheless, youths' responses were more mitigated regarding other potential situations, and several were inclined to say that the protective measures are exaggerated. They explained that coercion-based measures do not contribute to the youths' well-being. Instead, caseworkers would have to provide more guidance to youths by offering them a greater variety of interesting activities. One young girl stated that the two go hand in hand, that there cannot be protection without well-being and that, consequently, measures that go against the well-being and development of youths cannot help protect them. A few respondents—boys, more specifically—believe that tough, even coercive measures were beneficial in their case. But not everyone agreed. As a rule, youths have rather bad memories of such experiences. They believe that even if the caseworkers in youth centres try to contribute to their well-being, they do not succeed in doing so.

The fact remains, however, that some youths bring up other interesting nuances, recalling notably that the youths themselves are responsible for their development and evolution...

“Yeah I would.... For minor Yeah... I don't know like I'm not hurt so If I'm not hurt I guess I am okay.... They did a pretty good job. Some kids like if you ask somebody else on the campus they would say that's it's scrap.... they don't do anything.... but they just saying it because they don't like the place.... they say that place's crap for a reason, it's up to them to change, to do what they have to do. It's up to them.... they can't oh well you have to do that... and that...and you listen... you have to change on your own... they can't change you, nobody can't change you.”

(11141, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Batshaw)

...and that the caseworkers, much more than the system itself, make all the difference. Whereas the system dictates the rules, caseworkers are the ones who apply them, and this is why youths are sometimes protected sufficiently, insufficiently or excessively.

3.29.2 The parents' perspective

Regarding the responsibilities of adults towards youths, the parents covered a wide range of possible dimensions, which include the duty to provide children's basic needs, offer them stability, and ensure their safety and protection. However, their vision did not stop there. When discussing this issue, some preferred avoiding the legal dimension that could be attributed to the concept of child protection. Other parents, when defining child protection, want to include other elements that are necessary to its achievement.

“Ouin... ouin... en tout cas... on a une... une responsabilité de... protéger... je sais pas, mais en tout cas de... de soutenir... je sais pas... Pour moi, quand j’entends protéger les mineurs... ça... pour moi ça, ça sonne euh... la Loi... la t’sé puis cé pas mon domaine... Moi je suis dans l'affectif pas dans le légal.”
(11254, Parent, Community, Montreal)

“Quand que je dis protégés des abuseurs, cé pas juste de dire enfermer les abuseurs, mais que les jeunes sont conscient qui y a des abuseurs pis que cé pas juste la belle vie. T’sé je veux dire que cette réalité là... faut qui soient mis au courant de ça...”
(12221, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

Their reflections took into account the fact that, to develop, youths must also learn to assume some responsibilities themselves. Additionally, they considered that in this context, youths must also be supervised, disciplined, accompanied and guided. This is why adults, for their part, must also set an example and teach them proper values. When all is said and done, it thus appears that protection, in the strict sense of the word, would not be sufficient in itself. Some parents believe that youths need help in becoming adults. This is a major task for which some admit to being ill equipped and which they see as being difficult to manage alone. Then again, as mentioned by this parent, teaming up with other resources does not guarantee that they will all share the same perspectives, and consequently the parents will not receive from the resources the support for which they hoped.

“Mais cé d'arrêter de penser ... cé, comme moi, je trouve qu'actuellement on est rendu dans une société... moi j'ai été beaucoup dans l'éducation hein. Je porte regard au niveau de l'éducation. Moi quand j'ai vu des argent qui ont été dépensés là... pour les... pour euh les... les parcs de garderie. T’sé les jeux, dans le temps à la garderie là... au cas que les enfants y se blessent là... on est en train de faire des cages d'enfants... rembourrées

là...pour être sûr qui arrive à rien aux enfants. Comme si on pouvait être responsable, qui pourraient tomber pis s'écarter un genou... Y a comme une phobie là... On est... je trouve qu'on est rendu dans une irréalité là... qu'on peut protéger nos enfants contre tout... Ce qui est pas vrai, pis en même temps, cé qu'on enlève la propre identité de nos jeunes... Pis que peut-être qu'on nourrit ça justement... c'te besoin là de se détacher de nous autres de façon plus violente parce que justement, cé qu'on les protège trop... Pis qu'on leur permet plus d'être ce qui sont... En tout cas, moi là-dessus là euh... oui, on est responsable de leur offrir un, un minimum mais un moment donné... qu'y se responsabilisent les jeunes aussi là... Que ça l'aide à l'ultime pour changer les ressources... vous dites oups... faudrait qu'on regarde ça... Pis cé ça... on va pas, on est pas... je trouve que les services actuels vont pas... sont à la remorque de ce que les enfants leurs envoient comme signe de détresse.... Pis qu'un moment donné, y vont se réveiller... mais faut comme... faut qui aillent beaucoup de signes de détresse pour que ça se réveille..."

(12221, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

The last excerpt enables us to move on to another question that we asked the parents regarding what they knew about the *Act* and what they thought of the child protection system. On this subject, about half of the parents claimed to be familiar with the recent amendments to the *Act*. Moreover, they did not share the same opinions on the advantages they represent. On the one hand, some see no advantage to them. The changes make it easier for youths who want to run away, encouraging them to do so even more. This is even more problematic in the eyes of one respondent who thinks that youths often know how to manipulate the system and get what they want. She therefore believes that the *Act* provides better protection for youths without severe behavioural problems. Otherwise, the system has too many shortcomings, too few resources and too few effective tools to protect truly the youths in this situation.

Others, on the other hand, who were just as harsh towards the youth protection system, believe that the amendments to the *Act* could potentially present a few advantages, which include making the youths accountable for their actions. However, the scope of these changes would be limited by the fact that caseworkers are ill equipped and lack the means to intervene. Therefore, although they manage in some cases to protect the youths despite the lack of resources, they do not succeed in attaining them when they are distressed, or in helping them to develop. To do so, caseworkers would have to take a far more personalized approach. Another parent's standpoint was that this situation shows that the system is poorly organized and that social services are in crises.

Finally, the last parents, who have a better opinion of the youth protection system, also have a few reservations. They do not reject the system as a whole, and they appreciate the fact that it protects youths in the most critical family situations. One mother clarified, however, that in her daughter's case, the system did not meet this objective. Having just left a school where she had been severely ostracized, she ended up in an institution where the other youths were aggressive towards her, not to mention that the caseworkers enforced very strict rules that made no sense to the girl or to the mother, for that matter. Therefore, this mother insisted that the benefits that the system offers youths depend on the nature of their problem. In that, this mother's statements resembled those of another mother who noticed that reports are usually retained only in the most severe situations and that the system would therefore be designed only to help youths presenting major difficulties.

Yet, some parents see youth centres as a last-resort resource designed for a very specific clientele, and they deplore that they cannot count on the support of other resources that would enable them to go further, perhaps, in terms of intervention.

“Faudrait que le communautaire revienne là à faire un peu ce qui faisait. Mais ça c'était bien ça avant. Cé sûr que le CLSC font des choses, mais y manque de ressources... y manque toujours... Moi je trouve que actuellement le problème cé que la DPJ cé la dernière ressource, c'est la dernière ligne. Mais y'en a pus de ressources avant la dernière ligne... Alors on va trop vers la... euh... le centre jeunesse, alors qui devrait avoir des ressources bien avant... qui sont pas existantes... Même si y nous disent que cé existant, puis même si dans la Loi cé supposé être... parce qu'on oublie pas que la protection de l'enfance... le, le but ultime, c'est de maintenir l'enfant dans son milieu familial et le... les services doivent permettre au milieu familial de prendre l'enfant. Ça veut dire que cé un service pour la famille... alors qu'en fait, cé pas ça qui se passe... Y a pas de ressources... pis euh les CLSC, moi je me souviens que les CLSC sont supposés euh soutenir, être la première ligne où on va aller... mais y ont pas de ressources, y ont pas d'argent y, y... Cé pour les personnes âgées, donc ya pas de ressources... Donc où qui a... un manque là, cé quand, on est rendu à, à la... à centre jeunesse... y cé passé ben des affaires... qui auraient pas eu à se passer si y'avait eu les ressources, pis le gouvernement en met pas là... Y a une coupure là, y ont mis l'argent dans les garderies.”
(12221, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

Therefore, the parents' opinions are divided regarding the relevance of the protective measures. Some are rather understanding, explaining that caseworkers do what they can, and that it is difficult for them to personalize their interventions. However, others

are more critical and question the practices where, in their opinion, caseworkers do not show enough concern for the youths. They claim, for example, that the diagnostic questionnaires that the caseworkers use cannot replace listening. These approaches are apparently perceived as indicators of the complexity of the system and its inability to adapt to the needs of youths.

In this perspective, others believe that treating youths as criminals is harmful and that society would benefit from developing more naturalistic approaches, which would spare youths from facing the burden and rigidity of the system. They wish instead that youths could continue evolving in environments that were as normal as possible, by developing interventions in school settings, for example, or favouring foster families over lodging units where youths are often introduced to crime.

“(P) Ben moi je pense vraiment que les familles d'accueil c'est le salut des enfants. (...) Les foyers de groupe, à la limite. (...) Mais les centres d'accueil là, je t'en, je te brûlerais ça. (...) (Rires) Ah que je te brûlerais ça. C'est l'école du crime. (...) Ça, ça devrait être en dernier ressort.

(I) Pis à partir de quel âge tu penses que le centre d'accueil pourrait peut-être aider au lieu de nuire ? (Silence) Si y a un âge.

(P) Moi je dirais 14, 15 ans là tu sais heee... (...) Parce qu'à 11 ans là, je m'excuse là, mais y a de quoi à faire avec un enfant de 11 ans. À 14 ans là, ça commence à être plus dur. (...) Tu sais qui aille pas une façon... qui y aille pas un quotidien normal là-bas là. (...) Parce que c'est comme, ce, c'est une institution là.”

(12221, Parent, Institutional, Quebec)

The parents' have a rather harsh opinion of the child protection system, particularly concerning youth centres, with which they have sometimes had serious difficulties communicating...

“Si on parle du système euh... protection de la jeunesse, c'est pas d'es protéger, c'est d'es détruire... (...) Bah je pense que selon les dossiers c'est complètement différent là, mais écouter aussi l'enfant. (...) Pis y avait pas de raison qui voit pas son parent, mais là à quelque part, ya un problème là. T'sé combien de fois que moi, je me suis présenter au centre jeunesse pour aller à une visite de... avec XXX, pis rendue là-bas a me disait XXX y veut pas vous voir parce que XXXX bon “tu vois ta mère, est pas venue”... Fa que t'sé, dans ce temps là, XXX y pétait les plombs t'sé... y pétait une coche, y cassait toute, y se ramassait en salle d'isolement...”

(11255, Parent, Community, Montreal)

...or where they received very little support for their own difficulties. Some also noticed that since the arrival of the new *Act*, caseworkers tend to put more pressure on them to solve their problems themselves.

“Les intervenants mettent beaucoup, beaucoup de pression sur les parents, mais y offrent pas d'aide. T'sé là, mettons le parent y a un problème de consommation de drogue, de boisson ou peu importe. Y vont mettre de la pression, pis y faut que tu règles tes affaires, mais tu as pas de support, t'as pas d'appui... On est laissé à nous autres même t'sé... malgré les efforts. Mon expérience, les efforts que j'ai faites, le cheminement que j'ai faite... J'ai pas eu d'encouragement, ça été que du dénigrement pis euh... des mensonges là. T'sé vraiment faut pas se fier à... on est capable de se remonter, y faut pas attendre après l'autre...”

(11255, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.29.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

According to the majority of police officers and caseworkers, with no distinction between the community and institutional sectors, the primary responsibility of adults towards youths is ensuring their protection and safety. Next on the list is supervision, a dimension to which institutional caseworkers and police officers attached particular importance, without, however, neglecting other dimensions such as care, listening, guidance, education and opportunities for development. Community caseworkers also mentioned elements related to nurturing that highlight, among other things, the importance of respecting the youths' pace, giving them the chance to make their own choices, providing them with tools to help them become adults in their own right, and teaching them proper values. Although both groups of caseworkers highlight similar dimensions, there are nonetheless differences in the way they explain things and in the priority that they give to certain elements. And these elements seem to reflect their respective spheres of activity.

Moreover, some mentioned the particular difficulty of protecting adolescents, referring to the challenge of finding a proper balance between independence and supervision.

“Ok... C'est d'avoir un bon balan là-d'dans! Parce que... Quand on parle de jeune, y a différents groupes d'âge! Et à certains moments, y a des jeunes qui sont prêts pour prendre un p'tit peu plus d'indépendance, mais ça veut pas dire qui faut lâcher complètement prise non plus! Y a un balan dans cela! Donner d'l'ouverture et donner conseils au même temps, pis trouver le bon balan! ”

(11352, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

“Ben, dans le fond, c'est de s'assurer ee... les protéger là, c'est les faire grandir selon moi, parce que quand on les protège de... des choses là, ben t'sé, négatives là, de ce qui pourrait leur arriver, ben, on a une forme de responsabilité, pis c'est comme, dans le fond, de les amener ailleurs, là, de faire d'eux des adultes bons, responsables, matures pis tout ça là. C'est ça notre but là. J'dis notre but, bon, comme organisme là, c'est vraiment là de... dans le fond, les équiper le mieux possible là... c'est ça, c't'une responsabilité là.”

(11314, Caseworker, Institutional, Montreal)

Furthermore, when discussing the latest amendments to the *Act*, the caseworkers and the police officers first strived to determine whether the changes were responsible for an increase in the number of runaway cases. On this issue, the police officers took a stronger stance than the caseworkers did, estimating that the number of flights had increased considerably since the *Act* was amended. Some even claimed that the changes have led some youths to run away, whereas they would not have done so in another context. Some caseworkers were also of this opinion; however, they generally proposed this idea cautiously. In this regard, some say instead that the number of cases of repeated flights has increased but not the number of occasional flights. Others added that this increase would not last and that the situation should thus stabilize soon.

“Moi j'pense que c't'un p'tit peu des deux! J'pense qu'au début, y va avoir une augmentation! Mais au long, peut-être qu'on va voir une baisse! Si tu t'sens pas attaché, t'as pas nécessairement à courir! (...) Leur fonctionnement, ça va être très... beaucoup plus important que ces éducateurs créent un lien de confiance qui était peut-être moins le cas dans l'passé, parce que y avaient toujours dernier recours, une porte barrée... Mais sans ce dernier recours, leur dernier recours va être leur lien!!! Alors ça devient plus important, travailler ce lien-là et être moins contrôlant et travailler plus avec le jeune versus contre le jeune! (...) Pis j'pense les retours vont être plus importants... aussi par rapport au lien qu'on a. Ça va être important de utiliser cette ouverture de retour pour créer, travailler des liens! C'est un peu le contraire que qu'est-ce que nous dans l'communautaire on vit, mais en même temps, y a l'même sens de travail qui peut être fait! Exemple! ”

(11352, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

However, for this to occur, other changes will have to be made at other levels. Institutional caseworkers will have to adapt their interventions. In fact, some respondents stated that in a less strict supervisory context, caseworkers would have to

attach more importance to the hints left by youths and would need to become closer to them, which in itself could add to their workload. To manage, they would have to meet more frequently with the youths and delve deeper in their interventions.

Nevertheless, some might believe that things are being neglected in this transition. This police officer, for example, believes that intensive supervision is the only effective context for in-depth interventions in youth centres.

“C'est ce que je te parle tantôt, c'est que l'ouverture des centres jeunesse, c'est ça, ça a faite en sorte que, un moment donné, que si un jeune, exemple, tu sens qui part en crise au centre, bin t'es pas obligé de le garder dans son unité, pis d'essayer de travailler avec lui, pis de discuter avec lui. Des fois là ça fonctionne pas, pis ça crée des ouvertures que là ça fait en sorte que les fugueurs se sont multipliés un peu avant ça. Si ça marchait pas y pouvaient le mettre dans un milieu fermé au centre, pis ça limitait la fugue parce qui était dans une unité fermée. C'était barré, maintenant ça existe pis maintenant, c'est fini.”
(12461, Police officer, Quebec)

However, institutional caseworkers do not share this opinion. On the contrary, some appreciated the recent amendments to the *Act*, believing that youths are therein given more consideration, and that the abusive use of security supervision measures would be thus prevented. They confirmed that such measures had sometimes been prolonged to prevent youths from running away. In fact, this is the main point used by caseworkers to argue that the *Act* encourages youths' development as much as it ensures their protection. But also, institutional caseworkers take into account all the amendments made to the *Act* that do not concern security supervision measures, and they like the fact that it will be possible to place youths more quickly in a location that best suits them. This change should also enable youth centres to contribute better to their development.

“Le développement c'est toujours difficile à quantifier. Je vous dirais c'est oui je crois que il restera toujours des situations particulières, il restera toujours des situations qu'on va échapper. Mais oui, il y a beaucoup plus de choses maintenant qui sont en place pour que éviter que un grand nombre de déplacements, pi de replacement. Alors ça, il y a toujours un impact important sur le développement, plus que sur la sécurité. Alors oui, oui, c'est sûr que c'est pas des changements qui vont être visibles à court terme, ça va être beaucoup plus à long terme qui vont être visibles ces changements-là. Ça fait comme 2 ans, 2-3 ans qui a eu les modifications sont en place. Donc, peut-être dans 10-15 ans t'se les enfants qui ont profité de ces modifications-là peut-être que dans les études, on voir là, des écarts là.”
(12322, Caseworker, Institutional, Quebec)

On a more realistic note, however, another caseworker mentioned that, whereas the *Act* supports the development of youths in principle, bureaucracy and caseworkers' excessive workloads render this outcome difficult to achieve. The red tape often cuts into the time they would like to devote to the youths on an individual basis.

“Ça serait le fun d'avoir plus d'intervenants pour faire plus de services intensifs dans le milieu, parce qu'on fait c'qu'on peut. L'intervenant ee si a 20 dossiers peut pas donner de l'intensif à 20 dossiers, une fois par semaine, à tous, parce que faut penser que t'as un jeune, t'as un parent, les parents sont séparés, t'as ben souvent 2 parents, t'as l'école, t'as plein de choses là. Fa que c'est pas juste un client que t'as, t'as toute un système. Fa que moi j'dis que la Loi... la Loi est bien bien construite, mais c'qui nous manque comme moyen pour aider aux jeunes, c'est plus d'intervenants sur le plancher, plus d'intensif eee plus de ressources adaptées. Si on part du milieu familial mettons là, on va à l'extérieur eee on a pas de foyer de groupe, on a pas pour les jeunes eee adolescents bien souvent, un foyer de groupe. C'est nécessaire si sont oppositionnels ou autre. Le centre d'accueil, t'as besoin de plus un milieu entre deux, on n'a pas de ça. Hum ... malheureusement les familles d'accueil ee y font leur possible, c'est des bonnes gens ok ee, moi j'serai jamais famille d'accueil ok, t'acceptes des gens chez toi de n'importe quel âge mais y'en a qui sont plus typiques. Eee mais j'que j'déplore c'est que ... ch que certaines familles d'accueil qui qui se voient comme familles d'accueil, se voient comme une job, se voient comme le jeune, mais ee ne donnent pas un milieu familial comme tel.”

(14331, Caseworker, Institutional, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Thus, some distinctions need to be made between the principles of the *Act*, the caseworkers' goodwill and the limitations of the system in which they work. This is the idea raised in the last excerpt as well as by community caseworkers, who are relatively skeptical about the contribution of youth centres to the development of youths. Without questioning the caseworkers' goodwill nor their abilities, these respondents wondered about certain organizational practices, in particular the way youths are grouped in living units and the activities offered to them, which, in their eyes, are not the kind that encourage youths' engagement and participation.

“Si tu mets plein de monde avec des problèmes tous ensemble, c'est tu partie du ratio naturel, de la vie et... Moi j'crois que c'est un problème qui s'manifeste dans beaucoup de personnes... dans société et des les, les gros regroupements. C'est pas nécessairement aidant aux jeunes, ça les stigmatise, y s'développent toutes des liens entre personnes qui vont peut-être pas bien... à place de faire différents liens dans vie! Si t'es dans un unité avec 8 personnes qui sont décrochées d'l'école et tu rentres là, tu risques fortement de décrocher d'l'école... C'est pas des ratios naturels! Je n'aime pas ça!”

(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

Furthermore, when observing the principles of the *Act*, youth centres have a tendency to control youths in such a way that they turn 18 without having explored their autonomy and freedom. The community caseworkers thus lamented the fact that very few means are used to encourage their passage into adulthood, except for a few specific programs. Moreover, all things considered, they concluded that the *Act* and the youth centres contribute far more to the protection of youths than to their development.

“Ben là, eh ben là, c'est sûr qu'avec leur nouveau programme là eh... comment ça s'appelle là, qualification eh... compétente, eh j'appelle toujours ça qualification, compétence, mais c'est qualification. En tous cas, leur, leur nouveau programme qui ont mis en place là, depuis quelques années pour que le jeune justement puisse développer son autonomie et eh... Bon, mais, mais actuellement j'trouve que, pis c'est ça, la nouvelle LPJ l'amène pas non plus eh... autre que ce programme là, pis c'est juste un p'tit jeune qui peut y participer. Je, je trouve qu'actuellement non, y développent pas eh... moi j'trouve que développer l'autonomie ça se fait dès le bas âge, en donnant des responsabilités et là, j'trouve que, que, que non, pis j'veis pas dans la nouvelle LPJ eh... des moyens non plus autres que ce programme là. Mais dans leur façon de faire, dans leur intervention, j'trouve que non, pis j'trouve que ça, ça devrait en faire partie eh... L'autonomie ça se développe pas quand t'as 18 ans ou, ou quand t'es prêt, quand t'as 16 ans et quelques mois, c'est tout p'tit, pis ça j'trouve qui devrait eh... devrait...”

(12352, Caseworker, Community, Quebec)

This standpoint was similar to that of police officers, who also thought that the *Act* gives priority to youth protection. However, from their point of view, youths' development should still not be neglected, and the youths do recognize that caseworkers can contribute to this dimension. Some of them stated, however, that it is a difficult task because youth centres do not constitute real families and all the youths gathered therehave difficulties. In this regard, some police officers seemed concerned about the effects of contamination. As this one explained, it is unrealistic to think that we can help youths develop without, first and foremost, ensuring their protection.

“Officiellement ça devrait aider plus le développement si on se fit aux penseurs, mais c'est pas ça pantoute. Quand t'en vois une tite fille qui connaît rien dans rue, qu'est ce qu'a fait pour faire de l'argent, a va prendre la manière facile. Comme le gars, y va plus aller au niveau de la drogue t'sé pour survivre dans rue. Y a pas de protection, pis toute c'est comme envoyer des agneaux à l'abattoir, c'est des amener din problèmes. C'est rien que ça, tu peux pas parler des fugues... J'sé pas, un gars fait une fugue, une fois c'est drôle mais la vie c'est pas si drôle que ça. Quand tu fais une fugue c'est la consommation, c'est les problèmes. C'est ça, c'est mieux que d'autre chose... je pense que le développement peut être sérieusement compromis. T'sé parlais du ti gars qui a besoin d'argent. pis qui va aller avec un bonhomme, toute ça vie y va se rappeler de ça, pis c'est grave, pis y en à plein des

absurdités comme ça. T'sé si y avaient dit non non tu sortiras pas en fin de semaine, c'est bin trop dangereux, ou je sais pas, mais t'sé y aurait pas connu ça, je dis pas qui aurait pas connu ça, mais là un m'ment d'nné peut-être dans sa vie, y aurait... mais en tout cas, y a tellement de si là-dedans. ”

(12462, Police officer, Quebec)

The last excerpt brings us back to the main point of the issue at hand. Protection and development are closely and inextricably linked. So much so that it would no doubt be a mistake to think that by mentioning protection first, some respondents in this study do not attach the same importance to the development of youths. But in their logic, safety and protection are fundamental and indispensable conditions for development-centred interventions to have an impact.

Moreover, in light of the answers given regarding the intensity and relevance of the youth protection measures, it thus seems that respondents from all categories are concerned with the youths being well protected. The community caseworkers, in particular, suggested that although institutional caseworkers appeared more inclined to protect youths rather than to contribute to their development, they are not sufficiently successful at it. That said, community caseworkers do not want protective measures to be put aside, but propose instead that they should be applied differently. These respondents saw undesirable effects resulting from the measures being enforced too strictly or inconsistently, due to certain incoherences in the approaches used by various caseworkers. In fact, this point of view is similar to that of several institutional caseworkers, who often see the measures being applied in an exaggerated way and regret being unable to use a more personal approach with the youths.

3.30 ARE CASEWORKERS MORE INCLINED TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT THAN PROTECTION?

3.30.1 The youths' perspective

On this subject, there are nuances in the youths' accounts. In other words, most of them did not seem to want to divide the caseworkers into two categories, with those concerned only with the development of youths on one side and those concerned only with their protection on the other. For example, one youth explained that the priority given by caseworkers to protecting youths, particularly when they are in crisis, does not prevent them from being concerned, at other times, with their development and well-being.

“J’dirais que oui, pas qu’en revenant de fugue y en a que... euh... y a des éducateurs qui me d’mandaient euh... : “Comment ça été... t’as-tu été correct... y é-tu arrivé queq’chose? ”... Pis y’en a d’autres qui me d’mandaient euh... : “Qu’est-ce que t’as faite... t’as-tu su te débrouiller... ”.”

(13151, Youth, Girl, Community and Centre-du-Québec)

Therefore, several youths placed institutional and community caseworkers on an even keel, noting that their emphasis on one dimension rather than on another depends on the situation.

Still, some youths tended to separate the two sectors, recalling that in the legal context where youth centres intervene, they have no choice but to react strongly in certain situations. However, problems arise/we can question when caseworkers take action only in these situations. They would then have a tendency to box themselves into structures that do not lend well to interventions that would help youths to develop. Then again, as this youth indicated here, caseworkers in youth centres see only part of the reality of the youths whom they see evolving only in an institutional context, and not outside this structure.

“Icitte les éducateurs connaissent rien d'autre que le p'tit (son nom) à jeun, t'sé hum qui a juste des problèmes de comportement, t'sé, des problèmes de fugue. Mais t'sé, y nous voient pas en dehors parce qu'en dehors, on est pas pareil, on agit différemment t'sé pis c'est justement, c'est en dehors que faut que lé... Si j'te mets en dehors que le monde faut qui voit comment on agisse... parce que le but c'est de vivre en dehors pas de vivre icitte. Fa que. c'est en dehors qui faut voient comment on agisse pas icitte.”
(12127, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Quebec)

Therefore, those who have been in such situations are tempted to say that youth centres are more focused on protecting youths, whereas community caseworkers would be more sensitive to their development. In this regard, they explained that it is easier to talk about some things with community caseworkers, knowing that no consequences will follow.

“Ben certainement là. Icitte avec XXX, ou avec mon intervenante quand j'étais mineur là. Mettons avec XXX, je pouvais tout y dire, pis je sais qui aurait pas, si ça mettait pas personne en danger, ni moi, ni personne, t'sé. J'sais que je pouvais y faire confiance, j'pouvais tout y compter sans qui aille dire ça à tout le monde. Que si je disais ça à ma TS ben, j'risquais d'avoir des conséquences. C'est, c'est... eux autres icitte, sont pas icitte pour me dire quoi faire, sont icitte pour me dire, pour me conseiller. T'sé, si je prends pas leurs conseils, c'est mon problème. Si je les prends, temps mieux pour moé. Que t'sé, centre jeunesse, y sont, y t'poussent plus dans, dans d'autres chemins t'sé. Suis pas les conseils c'est... y font quasiment le chemin pour toi, à ta place.”
(13151, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Moreover, some revealed a preference for the community caseworkers' approach and characteristics. The youths believe these individuals generally have more life experience than institutional caseworkers, who sometimes appear more concerned with their work than with the youths themselves. Furthermore, some youths would have found some community caseworkers who are somewhat like the youths themselves, considering that they are all motivated by the same desire to help and nurture youths. In their eyes, this would not always be the case in youth centres.

“Ben, parce que XXX... T’sé c’est, notre coordonatrice depuis le début du projet. Pis, t’sé, elle est jeune quand même là. Pis est drôle, pis est a, est avec nous autres à chaque jour. Fa que t’sé, chus pas mal plus porté à lui conter mes affaires là t’sé. J’t’avec à longueur de journée, fa que t’sé, on déconne... T’sé, j’y fais des mauvais coups, pis a me fait des mauvais coups. A me vole mon portefeuille pis... Là chus là, “tabarnak, mon portefeuille, j’mé suis faite voler mon portefeuille.” Pis c’est elle qui l’a genre. (Rire de A) Des ostis d’affaires connes là, mais t’sé. Ou ben y a YYY en bas, YYY, elle avec là, j’pense qu’a vingt-quatre ans t’sé. T’sé c’est... Ou ZZZ. T’sé, ZZZ... y connaissait mon beau-père là. Le chum à ma mère, fa que ça fait lui avec là. Mais t’sé. Tous les intervenants, oui y en a que chus plus proche, genre là, YYY pis, XXX là. Mais t’sé, genre ZZZ, AAA, BBB t’sé. Si t’as besoin d’aide, y sont là t’sé. Pis sont pas gênants là. T’as le goût d’aller les voir là t’sé. T’es pas là comme “ha non, y va rire de moé,” pis t’sé, “y va me trouver conne” ou a t’sé “y va me trouver dégueux.” T’sé, non. Y sont là pour toé, pis t’sé, sont tout le temps là ostie pour t’écouter pis t’aider. Fa que, c’est vraiment cool, j’trouve que c’est #1.”

(13152, Youth, Girl, Community, Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec)

Moreover, youths indicated that help from the community sector is not limited to taking in, listening and lodging. Caseworkers may also accompany youths in a more concrete manner with procedures related, among other things, to job search or their more personal problems, including drug addiction. They may also intervene in problems within the family.

Despite the youths’ apparent preference for community caseworkers, they do not lack ideas on what institutional caseworkers have to offer: assistance in case of emergency, supervision, discipline, support, hospitality, listening, relationship of trust, information, and knowledge of available resources. They also think that these caseworkers can help them deal with various problems, related particularly to their substance use, as well as managing their anger and aggressiveness. Furthermore, they can sensitize young people to certain things, as well as teach them to speak using “I” and to accept authority. Only one youth claimed they have little to offer, unless they want to grant the youths the freedom to which they are entitled.

Other youths also declared that the relationships with caseworkers in youth centres might be more powerful and meaningful, given that youths spend more time with them. These people are part of their living environment and can therefore have a greater impact on their evolution as well as push their learning further than the community caseworkers can. Boys particularly are inclined to acknowledge that the discipline and

supervision they received in an institution gave them a solid base that enabled them to make important decisions for their future, notably to pursue their studies.

Therefore, it seems that things are not so easy to separate, in the sense that youths would be as much in need of protection—sometimes literally, to the point of being removed from the action—as of being placed in situations conducive to their autonomy and development. Furthermore, these needs sometimes arise separately, at different points along their journey, or sometimes they arise simultaneously. For this reason, youths do not seem to want to choose between the institutional and the community sectors, but would rather make the most of the benefits and resources offered by both of them, which are different, but nonetheless complementary.

More fundamentally still, youths remind us of what is essential when they stress that what matters most to them is not their caseworkers' organization but rather their approach, openness and ability to create meaningful relationships. Youths do not necessarily prefer one sector in particular, but for the people whom they met in both sectors, at various points along their journey. The youths liked them for various reasons, notably because, in them, the youths found the values that meant a lot to them, because the caseworkers were respectful and attentive to their needs, they were not afraid to tell them the truth, they had a critical view of the system that they had to deal with, they involved them systematically in the decisions that concerned them and thus showed that they trusted them, and could give them more room to maneuver.

3.30.2 The parents' perspective

The parents' accounts reflect a more divided view on things, which suggests that there may still be a long way to go before ties can be rebuilt with the institutional sector. The general opinion on youth centres thus appears to be rather negative. Without denying that they can ensure their children's protection, since it is their mandate, parents believe that other players—from the police sector, the first-line network and the community

sector—also contribute to it. Moreover, parents give only a few examples of how youth centres might have contributed to the development of their child. One of them stated, however, that caseworkers are making more efforts to this effect. In fact, out of the 10 parents we met, six believed that community interventions are more favourable to the development of youths. Other parents also mentioned that the medical and school sectors could intervene in this regard, as could the police sector when, for example, an officer makes sure of bringing a youth to the appropriate resource.

Yet, the majority of the parents we interviewed saw institutional caseworkers as being less committed to youths than those in the community sector. They see institutions as big machines in which it is difficult to change things and to ensure the effectiveness of the interventions. Caseworkers in these settings are generally less passionate, contenting themselves with standardizing youths and restraining them, whereas community organizations remain closer to the youths' needs, and they are more humane and more aware of what is going on in the street and in the field.

“Ben, les intervenants en institution, c'est quand que c'est rendu que... il a fallu qu'il fasse des choix pour se retrouver là. Mon dieu. Elle va peut-être plus agir dans une crise, en institution qu'en communautaire, ça va peut-être être plus une action... Dans, guider le jeune, dans l'aider à trouver des solutions à ses, pour combler certains besoins... T'sé, c'est... c'est moins... En communautaire, il peut peut-être avoir une crise, mais, il est encore temps de faire quelque chose. Pis en institution, y est comme... Le mal est fait. Fa que là, c'est la conséquence. Donc l'intervention ne sera pas la même. En tout cas.”
(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

However, one mother acknowledged that her daughter did receive beneficial assistance from the institutional sector. The opportunities offered enabled her to develop her talents, as well as a positive self-image, which in turn allowed her to rebuild her life. By working closely with the youths, and sometimes intimately, on a daily basis, caseworkers can tend to them directly and help them change considerably. Nevertheless, this feature of youth centre interventions would lead nowhere without caseworker stability. Parents raised this as a major problem here, such that some believe the community sector to be where their child found the most stability among caseworkers. Moreover, some parents believe that in community settings, caseworkers have more

time to devote to each youth, on an individual basis and with a personalized approach, developed with the youth's perspective in mind. One mother said that they offered the possibility of participating in special projects, one of which enabled her daughter to realize a dream and change her view on life. At the base of this change were caseworkers with whom she was able to develop authentic, respectful relationships. But these caseworkers are not, in principle, exclusive to the community sector. Despite the parents' relatively unflattering comments regarding the youth protection system and the associated institutions, they nevertheless stated that some of the best caseworkers their child had ever met along the way were from the institutional sector.

3.30.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

3.30.3.1 *What young people can gain from the institutional sector*

From the outset, the institutional caseworkers declared that their intervention context requires them to be accountable, produce results and intervene with youths who do not want to be helped by youth centres. They also added that institutions intervene at a time when there is concern over a youth's safety and that this situation generally involves a difficult life journey, which, in itself, constitutes an intervention challenge. These respondents also mentioned that youth centres could still help young people in various ways. First, youth centres offer them safety, which, from their standpoint, is fundamental. In these centres, youths can also learn to manage their stress and emotions, protect themselves against abuse, tolerate delays and internalize life rules. On a more technical level, they also learn to resolve conflicts and may develop social skills. With time, they are also given certain responsibilities that can sometimes lead to employment. Along the way, youths can thus learn to trust themselves and develop their potential.

However, some community caseworkers also confirmed that the institutional sector could help young people progress. They stressed that youths are guaranteed safety and

supervision from which they may derive several benefits, which include living in a group and sharing tasks that can ultimately contribute to the development of their autonomy. Some also noted that youths might find positive adult role models with whom they sometimes develop extremely meaningful relationships. However, this depends on the attitude of the educators, who would have difficulty achieving such results if they did not establish egalitarian, respectful relationships with the youths. In a context of supervision that is too strict and too harsh, or a practice that is too standardized, without warmth and personality, it is difficult to gain the youths' trust and convince them to participate in new programs or simply experience new things. Police officers also have good things to say about institutional caseworkers. Sometimes, youths become attached to them, finding love and attention. The environment also provides the youths with a break that gives them the opportunity to reflect on certain things, solve problems and integrate certain structures that can then help them organize their lives. Nonetheless, others deplore that the intervention context, mandates and constraints create certain difficulties and ultimately prevent some youths from keeping a positive image of their time in the institutions.

3.30.3.2 What young people can gain from the community sector

Youths gain various benefits from community interventions as well. Several institutional caseworkers agreed. They appreciated the fact that outside the constraints of institutional practices, youths could participate in activities that sometimes lead them to discover their interests and set their sights on new objectives. The community sector may thus contribute to young people's progress, help them develop their potential and gain self-confidence. Thus, fundamentally, while the community sector may satisfy the primary needs of youths, it can also do much more for them.

As for the community caseworkers, they also acknowledged that they intervene in an entirely different context from that of the institutional sector, which spares them from certain obligations in terms of results and makes it easier for them to respect the youths'

pace. Their intervention context would therefore be more conducive to personalized interventions, to which they give priority, leaving room for the strength and quality of the relationships that they develop with the youths. In a context of voluntary intervention, it is understood that this dimension is essential and that it requires caseworkers to devote all their energy to making sure a youth is ready before proceeding to the next step. They added that the unconditional welcome that youths receive also helps keep them safe.

Finally, these positive comments regarding community interventions were corroborated by police officers who noted that youths find, among other things, a place to vent their feelings as well as various opportunities to learn from their own experiences.

3.30.3.3 What youths can gain from their contacts with police officers

On the subject of what the police can bring to youths, institutional and community caseworkers provided some examples of police officers' contributions, except for their teaching youths about the *Act* and the possibility of dispelling certain myths regarding their rights and responsibilities. Generally, the caseworkers indicated instead that police officers are viewed as a threat by youths, and the caseworkers suggested that this negative image constitutes a barrier to the police officers' contribution.

However, as for police officers, they appeared to have a far more positive view of their role and potential contribution, although they acknowledged that they are first and foremost authority figures. Some of them thus explained that, at their level, they can also develop good relationships with youths, by being open and empathetic, adopting a flexible and egalitarian approach, while maintaining their credibility. Therefore, without claiming the ability to become significant for youths, they nonetheless indicated that they could actively participate in the development of a safety net for them.

3.31 A CROSS-SECTORAL ACTION NETWORK?

3.31.1 The youths' perspective

Regarding the network of adults surrounding them, the youths suggested that the relationships between them are generally good. Furthermore, they are generally satisfied with the way things are. Indeed, at least half of them had a positive view of the fact that the adults around them—parents, police officers and caseworkers—shared information with one another, and they think these communications work well. However, some youths made a few nuances on this subject. For example, one respondent believes that she was very lucky that things went the way they did and that not all relationships are harmonious. Another one related a different experience. The network that adults attempted to create around her served only to complicate further her situation. At times, she felt more controlled than supported. She explained this situation by the fact that even though the caseworkers try their best to work along the same lines, their mandates nevertheless remain different.

In addition, another one would have preferred that his parents not be involved at all. He understands that social workers share information amongst themselves, but still, it is generally difficult for them to develop a common view of the same situation.

“Parce que t’sé y’ont pas tout le temps comme le même œil disons. Y l’voient pas tout l’temps d’la même façon. Tu comprends? T’sé, l’éducatrice, elle, j’l’a vois quasiment toutes les semaines, tandis que mon TS j’le vois une fois par mois, par deux... On s’voit pas souvent. Fa que t’sé y m’connaît pas bien bien comme mon éducatrice pourrait m’connaître (...) Fa que, des fois y r’veint sur un sujet de v’la deux mois... Pendant c’temps-là, j’peux en avoir fait des en [ostie] des progrès là! ”
(11114, Youth, Boy, Institutional, Montreal)

In a similar vein, another youth explained that ten or so different caseworkers participated in an orientation panel intended for her and that she took this as somewhat of an intrusion.

“Y disent n’importe quoi là. Y savent pas vraiment c’que j’pense, y, t’sé... Y disent des suppositions, moi j’t’en face! Sont en train de dire qu’est-ce qui pensent de ma vie. Dans ma face! T’sé! Ça me frustrait tellement là.”
(11157, Youth, Girl, Community, Montreal)

These statements are similar to those of other youths, including one who did not see the relevance of the caseworkers communicating amongst themselves, believing that the caseworkers in youth centres already have their noses far enough in the youths' lives. Another one explained that, even if caseworkers make the effort to work towards the same objective, they do not always take the same route. Therefore, as far as he was concerned, it was difficult, even destabilizing, to have to adjust to the very different approaches taken by the caseworkers around him. These different approaches constitute a challenge for youths and caseworkers alike, so much so that collaboration is sometimes impossible. In fact, some youths stressed that even though caseworkers communicate amongst themselves, it does not mean that they actually work together. Alternatively, the youths simply confirmed that they had never seen their caseworkers trying to collaborate with other players, be it community caseworkers or parents.

3.31.2 The parents' perspective

, As for the parents, they cast a different light on the subject. In fact, they suggested that collaborating is not always easy, even though it is important and necessary for protecting the youths. For example, this parent criticizes the fact that organizations do not all have the same powers, which leads to contradictions and inconsistencies in communications. In fact, she has seen youth centres “fix” mistakes made in school settings with which they had difficulty communicating on a regular basis. This was also the case with the medical sector, which would often not return their calls., As for her, she ended up making a decision alone on a very difficult issue because the sectors that she was dealing with presented diametrically opposing positions.

“Pis, pour vous donner un exemple euh, quand ma, quand ma fille était en fugue euh, à un certain moment je, quelqu'un me disait de, de, d'afficher ses photos tout de suite, quelqu'un me disait de pas afficher, euh. Puis, j'avais une, quand j'avais une question si j'appelais, on me disait d'appeler le centre, si j'appelais le centre, le centre y me disait d'appeler la police. Euh, ça faisait, il faisait beaucoup de ping-pong. ”

(11251, Parent, Community, Montreal)

Another mother elaborated further on the importance of communicating, although she understood that confidentiality issues present a challenge for caseworkers. Furthermore, in case of an emergency or a crisis, they are not always sure to be able to find caseworkers on duty who are up to date on the cases. This is why relationships between caseworkers and police officers are often formal; they are in contact without actually working together. Nonetheless, some parents have seen caseworkers truly work together successfully because they need one another. Therefore, parents generally believe that good communication between caseworkers can improve the effectiveness of their work with youths.

“Si un jeune, exemple, essaie de se défiler, pis d'en passer une à une autre, ben que là, vu qu'ils se sont parlés, qui peut pas... Y va peut-être plus facilement confronter à prendre sa responsabilité justement. T'sé. Fa que je pense qu'il y a une façon d'intervenir qui pourrait être plus efficace.”

(11253, Parent, Community, Montreal)

3.31.3 Caseworkers' and police officers' perspectives

At first glance, it appears that proportionately more institutional caseworkers than community caseworkers are satisfied with the current situation, with respect to collaboration between adults and caseworkers. The responses of institutional caseworkers reflected the importance that they attach to informing parents first and collaborating with police authorities. Some counted community organizations among their collaborators, but with less conviction than the other part of this group of respondents, who believe, conversely, that both institutional and community caseworkers still tend to work solo, often unaware of each other's respective jobs. Consequently, the relationships are often limited to communicating, without exploring other possible collaborative avenues. In another way, some caseworkers seemed to want

to blame the community caseworkers who, they claimed, withhold information and thus hinder the intervention process.

However, the community caseworkers also expect a great deal from the institutional sector. Some stressed that collaborations have improved over the past few years, but they would still like things to go further and see institutional caseworkers develop the reflex to contact them earlier in the process, to inform them particularly when youths have run away.

Yet, communications are still sometimes painful today, given that caseworkers have completely different views regarding the ultimate purpose of intervention.

“Ah cé le terme... oui... euh donc euh... cé sûr parce que nous on agit pas de la même manière avec un jeune qui est en fugue qui est pas en... qui est pas en fugue aussi... T’sé le cadre légal est pas le même du tout... euh... Comme je disais tout à l’heure, parfois on a be... tsé... avec la permission du jeune on veut savoir un tit peu plus la euh... euh cé quoi qui est prévu pour lui, pis y a tu des choses de possibles là-dans, pis euh est-ce que on peut peut-être donc travailler ensemble... Là cé la collaboration qui embarque... pour peut-être unir nos têtes hein? Nos savoirs, les ressources aussi, parce que les centres jeunesse ben souvent y... connaissent même pas... tant que ça les ressources là t’sé qui sont disponibles là... Souvent on va se mettre dans le décor dans une collaboration à la fin du placement. Là on sent qui peut y avoir un risque... énorme que le jeune se ramasse à la rue... Donc là dans un... but de prévention on va vouloir établir une collaboration avec l’équipe des centres jeunesse pour bien préparer sa sortie... pis faire en sorte, finalement, qui finalement, qui soit pas nécessairement chez nous qui se retrouve... Pis que nous on a beaucoup de ressources... Ou si cé la rue qui attire le jeune... ben qu’est-ce que nous on est à même d’y offrir, qu’est-ce qu’on peut mettre en place tout de suite peut-être là pour que le jeune soit pas juste... “partons dans la rue, pis rien qui se passe là t’sé....”.”
(11351, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

However, as the respondent here recalled, this should still not prevent caseworkers from continuing in their efforts. Youths need them to persevere along these lines, to be surrounded and supported by a cohesive network made up of players who know each other and communicate together, and who thus demonstrate that they have the ability and the means to support the youths, wherever they may be and whatever they may do.

“Hum... Faut que ça parte du jeune aussi parce que on va pas toujours briser la confidentialité, en fait le plus, le moins possible on va briser la confidentialité, mais dépendant... Et c'est là où notre travail est important, c'est que le jeune ait confiance dans les différents acteurs! Car si le jeune a confiance dans tous les acteurs, y s'rait beaucoup plus à l'aise que les acteurs se communiquent! Si un jeune n'a pas confiance avec un acteur, peut-être qui voudra pas que les autres communiquent avec cet acteur là! Alors le lien de confiance est l'affaire la plus importante. Que le jeune aille avec tous les acteurs pour que les acteurs travaillent ensemble. Alors l'importance dans ça c'est que toutes les acteurs fabriquent un lien d'confiance avec le jeune! Et sans ça, y a pas grand-chose qui va s'passer! ”

(11352, Caseworker, Community, Montreal)

KEY FINDINGS

The results of this research are worth discussing at length. However, at this stage, with the study having just ended, it is more prudent to begin by presenting a few key findings. In this chapter, we therefore present the six findings that we believe to be the most important. We are aware, however, that the exercise is not exhaustive and that other dimensions will arise as we pursue our reflection. Nevertheless, for now, the benefit of this first summary is that it will allow us to identify some possible avenues and to somewhat prepare for the continuation of the analysis, which will undoubtedly take several more months, if not a few years. It is also understood that we must not make any broad generalizations based on the results obtained, given the exploratory nature of this study and the methodology used. We thus hope that these findings will trigger future studies that will verify the hypotheses that they raise.

4.1 MAJOR CHANGES IN THE PHENOMENON

First, we learned that not all the respondents believe that the number of runaway minors and the number of runaway cases has increased significantly over the past few years. Then again, the phenomenon is still difficult to measure accurately, since the youth centres have only recently adopted a prescriptive framework intended to standardize institutional practices for collecting information on runaway-related events. Whatever the case may be, the convergence points indicate instead that the most substantial changes are found primarily in the characteristics of the flights and of the youths who run away. Indeed, it appears that the age at which youths are running away is decreasing and the number of girls running away is increasing, in contexts that place them particularly at risk. When seeking protection, girls turn to unfamiliar networks more frequently than boys do. Police officers are particularly concerned over this situation. In the same vein, other caseworkers noted that the youth culture has changed. In fact, they noticed that street youths no longer identify themselves with specific groups but rather that the rule is increasingly “every man for himself.” Furthermore, a certain standard appears to have settled into the agencies, according to which newcomers, who do not meet the usual characteristics of street youths, are often marginalized. Indeed, these two

phenomena would explain, at least in part, a situation that caseworkers both noted and deplored: the fact that youths no longer visit the resource centres and agencies as they did before. Moreover, the ones who are taken in by the agencies or who go back to the institutions are more damaged both physically and psychologically. The deterioration of their physical and mental health is a major concern for caseworkers. Therefore, this first finding is consistent on all points with the observations made by the instigator of this project at the time the process was initiated.

4.2 FOCUS ON THE RETURN RATHER THAN ON RESTRAINING THESE YOUTHS TO PREVENT THEM FROM RUNNING AWAY

Although there is no numerical data to illustrate clearly that the number of runaway cases has increased over the past few years, the fact remains that at least some respondents, if not several, believe this to be true. And this is apparently the reason why they would like to identify specific characteristics of the youths who tend to run away repeatedly, perhaps with the thought that we should be able to identify and intercept them before they leave their families or institution.

It is, of course, understandable that the situation of these youths worries caseworkers and police officers. In fact, the latter expressed their discomfort openly regarding chronic runaway situations, which they consider difficult to handle and to which they cannot give the same attention as that they do to first-time runaways. Their mandate forces them to reinforce operations related to first-time runaways, whereas they would like to give the same attention to all runaway minors. Consequently, some police officers wonder how appropriate it is to bring these youths back to the same environment, especially the youth centres, which they will want to leave in any case. Some police officers would also like to see the institutions reinforce their security systems and find it regrettable that the *Act* prevents caseworkers from using intensive supervision as it was before.

However, in another way, the results also show that the respondents in all categories more often claimed that youths should not be prevented from running away. At the very least, it is pointless to restrain them forcibly. Dialogue, discussion and understanding would no doubt be far better means of keeping them close to us. In fact, some youths confirmed that this could have worked in their case. They believe it could have made them realize that they were going to lose something worthwhile or perhaps it would have helped them abandon the idea of running away, which, over time, had completely invaded their thoughts. Furthermore, listening and watching would be even more effective, since it is rare that youths openly express their intent of running away, at least to adults. Nevertheless, there may be some visible warning signs, such as restlessness or irritability, which caseworkers sometimes manage to detect. Then again, some believe that the signs tend to fade away over time, and others believe that the impulsive nature of the first flights may conceal the signs completely.

Nevertheless, the hints left by youths of their imminent departure are not sufficiently substantial or constant to be a valid leverage for intervention. The time to intervene would be much earlier, at the first signs of a malaise or at any other moment in the process that would seem far more meaningful for the youths. This could be at the time of their return, which youths anticipate and for which they plan far more than their departure. The importance of this dimension is reflected in the respondents' accounts when they attempted to define repeated flights and occasional flights according to their distinctive elements. Yet, whereas some claimed that a characteristic of an occasional flight is that it is an isolated event, usually stemming from a spontaneous desire or a search for pleasure, others say that it may be a sign of distress. It may conceal only a temporary malaise that could be relatively easy to resolve, unless the youth, upon his or her return, is not heard nor understood. In this case, another dynamic would be set in motion, which could lead to a cycle of repeatedly running away. As a result, the quest of runaway youths would become increasingly fundamental, and harder and harder to respond to for caseworkers. With time, these youths could become withdrawn and detached, and could perceive running away as the only solution to their problems. Even so, the return from a flight is apparently an intervention turning point. Many

caseworkers already know this, yet they do not advocate the same approaches. The results of this study do indeed show two trends emerging, with caseworkers focused on the youths' care and needs in one camp and those who adopt control strategies and focus more on security-related dimensions in the other camp. Either way, very few caseworkers suggested a need to revert to the former *Act* to achieve better results with the youths. In fact, despite the difficulties it presents, the current intervention context is forcing them to find new solutions and give new depth to their interventions.

Nonetheless, the very different approaches that these caseworkers use when runaways return may of course reflect the very different circumstances under which the youths return to the institutions. Then again, with a better understanding of the meaning and significance of such an experience in the lives of youths, it may ultimately be possible to aim towards greater uniformity in the practices used with returning runaways.

4.3 RUNNING AWAY—A MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE FOR YOUTHS THAT SATISFIES CERTAIN BASIC NEEDS

The results of this study do indeed show that running away constitutes a meaningful experience for youths. Obviously, such an event may be triggered by a conflict between the youths and the authorities. However, generally youths refer to reasons that are more fundamental, related to suffering and relational conflicts, notably within their family, and to an urgent need to test their ability to function alone in the world, outside the structures of youth centres. By running away, several youths thus want to prove their true self-worth and even give meaning to their lives. Moreover, although the experience may involve negative consequences, which the youths themselves acknowledged, the fact remains that running away is a way for them to discover themselves as well as the world around them. And if they had to start over, several youths would do it again. Some explained that this experience ultimately helped make them stronger and happier in their current lives, even though their happiness was dearly paid, and although nobody should have to go to this extreme to be heard.

The runaway experience therefore comprises a fundamental dimension for youths that is related to autonomy and emancipation. It concerns a need to distance themselves, which the living environment cannot satisfy, at least not directly, since youths cannot fully experience their freedom while accompanied by a parent or an adult.

Therefore, the need for freedom that the youths expressed so ardently apparently poses a problem, that is to say that very few adults in this sample opposed the youths' right to freedom. No one is insensitive to the fact that these youths sometimes see no other way out, to the point where restraint could lead to suicide. Most of them also acknowledge that excessive, prolonged restraint could have devastating effects on youths. They realize that it could not only hinder their development, but also exacerbate their indignation and anger, and thus fuel their desire to run away and fight the system. However, several caseworkers worry about the potential risks of a different practice that entails greater freedom for youths. They mentioned in particular that youths need much more than just freedom and that if such an experience is to be constructive for them, caseworkers have to be there, available and accessible at all times. For this to occur, major changes would be necessary to the way their work is organized. In addition, innovative solutions would have to be found to the difficulty posed by the mobility of caseworkers within the institutions.

However, the fact remains that youths are making it obvious that these changes are nonetheless necessary for them. The large majority of them do not want to break their ties completely with the caseworkers, whichever they may be, but rather to make use of the safety net that youth centres, notably, can offer them until they turn 18.

4.4 REAL AND UNVOIDABLE RISKS

Institutional caseworkers believe that the risks that the youths take while on the run are serious and sometimes have severe consequences for them. Moreover, youths do not

refute this finding when they say, among other things, that they travelled to cities other than the one where they lived to make the most of their experience and to take advantage of all the opportunities these places could offer them. However, they also noticed that large cities do not always feel safe and that to survive, they sometimes had to deal with strangers who incited them to sell drugs or to grant them sexual favours.

Yet, caseworkers in youth centres believe that youths face tremendous risks while on the run. These respondents focused on the youths' lack of skills and maturity, which can place them in dangerous situations. They worry also about their own accountability implied in their mandate. Therefore, the fear provoked by these risks is among the things that they consider most difficult to handle when intervening with runaway minors. In this respect, their point of view meets that of the parents who, for their part, are inclined to imagine the worst and to worry that youths may be assaulted, robbed, raped, beaten, mistreated and kidnapped. But the parents also expressed ambivalence by saying that youths will have to learn sooner or later to face life's risks and dangers, and that they could even learn from their runaway experience some lessons that could help develop their autonomy and identity. The parents' point of view thus resembles that of the community caseworkers who believe that the risks taken by runaway youths are sometimes reckless, but that they may also serve to explore their abilities.

The adults thus presented various views on the risks taken by youths, illustrating the breadth of the challenge that awaits them in terms of introducing or considering this dimension in their interventions, which they will have to do one way or another, since risk is inherent to running away and fundamentally constitutes a true test for youths. Yet, without thinking about it or being able to state that risk is what they seek when running away, youths nevertheless learn some very significant lessons from taking risks. In this regard, their accounts of their experiences related to substance use are heartbreakingly tragic. Several of them emerged somewhat terrified, noting today that they did not know how to limit themselves and that it almost cost them their lives. From this, they concluded that they themselves were the greatest danger they faced in the context of running away. In this perspective, danger takes on an entirely different meaning from the one we had

imagined. To approach better the youths and grasp their perception of reality, it seems necessary to make a distinction between external dangers, that is to say the dangers of the street over which they have little control, and internal dangers, for which they are more directly responsible. These two types of dangers no doubt deserve the same attention; yet our reflex, as adults, is to worry mostly about external dangers, without realizing that youths are anxious over their own unfamiliar feelings, which they want to explore at any cost.

4.5 YOUTHS KEEP IN TOUCH

It is also possible that external dangers are not as easy for youths to perceive in contexts where they are rarely alone. In most cases, they travel in groups or arrange to be in public and gathering places, where they can blend into the crowd and avoid being isolated. Alternatively, the less experienced youths would tend to remain close to their friends and stray as little as possible, believing this to be the best way to avoid being caught. Nonetheless, this portrait of the youths is relatively similar to the one drawn by the adults who, at first glance, do not seem to worry about youths going hungry, not having any resources or a place to sleep. Instead, they discern/recognize that runaway youths spend very little time by themselves. From their point of view, this would nonetheless make the youths invisible and place them at risk of meeting undesirable people because the various activities in which they engage to socialize and party sometimes involve unexpected experiences. It is also true that the resources that youths draw on within their network eventually run out.

Yet, in the perspective where youths see their network widening while they are on the run, they sometimes meet new people whose intentions are not always in the youths' best interest. Although these people are strangers, they seem to be from a world that, as a rule, is not entirely new to the youths. In fact, some nuances must be highlighted regarding the ties that runaway youths sometimes develop with organized networks. Their involvement or affiliation with these groups does not necessarily appear to be the

consequence or result of their running away. These groups are apparently part of their environment and their lives. Therefore, some youths would have known them even before running away. It is understood, however, that the presence and familiarity of these groups could put these youths at risk of hanging out with them more seriously while on the run. In addition, since these groups often include familiar faces from their social circle (friends, acquaintances and family members), it is very possible that youths who associate with them would not likely feel trapped, nor would they feel subjected or reduced to using a last-resort solution. Instead, the youths would prove to themselves that they are capable of surviving on the street autonomously. Still, the youths' opinions on the potential link between running away and street gangs are very different from the police officers and caseworkers' views, several of whom perceive a direct link between these two realities. The youths confirmed this link to a certain extent; however, their experiences and perceptions are different, since they experienced the related processes first hand.

Therefore, the desire expressed by youths to test their ability to be autonomous is the underlying reason why they resist turning to the agencies on a regular basis. However, this does not prevent them from keeping in touch with community and institutional caseworkers, whom they contact regularly. These contacts are used to find out whether they can return, and therefore to talk, discuss the situation, or attempt reconciliation. These contacts indicated that the youths need reference points, including the relationships that they developed with certain caseworkers and that are apparently not only utilitarian but also emotional.

Moreover, despite the debates that sometimes oppose the two sectors, in which community organizations wish in particular that youth centres would be more open to collaboration, the youths confirmed that they need both institutional and community services. In fact, they do not appear to want to choose between the two, but they prefer to make the most of what both have to offer. For example, the youths indicated that the relationship with the caseworkers in youth centres could be more powerful and meaningful because youths spend more time with them. They also specified that the

supervision provided by the institutions was necessary for them and that they are still benefitting from it today. In contrast, others expressed a preference for the approach and characteristics of the community caseworkers, who generally have more life experience. Whatever the case may be, the most important thing to them is not the caseworkers' organization, but rather their approach, openness and ability to create meaningful relationships.

When seeking to develop and renew ties, youths make sure to visit their parents. This is true for all those we met as part of this study. This proves that despite the threat or fear of being denounced and thus losing their freedom, youths want to maintain ties at any cost. A network is the base for safety and survival. However, although the parents are, well aware that youths need them, they still mention the delicate position such communications place them in. They said that the first contacts provided relief, but as their frequency increased, it became difficult to adopt and maintain the right attitude. Without taking action, some parents attempted to make their child realize the potential dangers and to convince them to come home, only to realize that this approach could increase the risk of completely losing contact. These parents, who end up playing the role of intermediary, should not be left to themselves. These contacts with their child are turning points—sometimes restorative, sometimes devastating—but their significance indicates that the parents must be taken into consideration, with the numerous conflicting emotions they go through all at once, from feeling incompetent, to worrying that they are accomplices, to feeling indispensable.

4.6 PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT GO HAND IN HAND

For these parents, as well as for all the other adults around the youths, it seems that things are not so easy to separate. Meaning that youths are as much in need of being protected—sometimes literally, to the point of being removed from the action—as of being able to use the available opportunities to contribute to their autonomy and

development. Furthermore, these needs sometimes arise separately, at different times along their journey, but sometimes they arise simultaneously.

At first glance, this finding seems obvious from a developmental standpoint; that is to say, that it simply describes the normal needs of any adolescent. Nevertheless, it poses a problem for caseworkers, some of whom have reason to believe that they cannot contribute to the development of youths without first ensuring their protection. But, apparently, protecting adolescents is not so easy to do, at least not through the means best known to the caseworkers, because the youths, , believe that adults cannot ensure their protection without first contributing to their development, by teaching them in particular how to protect themselves.

Thus, this is how the youths indicate the first path we should take to follow to ensure their protection.Though, some caseworkers appear to focus far more on ways to form a wider, safer network around them. It is understood that this could partly satisfy the needs of runaway youths, to whom we must listen and for whom we must be available in all circumstances, outside our usual intervention channels. Then again, developing such a network remains a challenge in itself, as the youths themselvescommented. A few of them have already experienced some unsuccessful attempts where the network formed around them by adults only complicated their situation further and, in their eyes, served to control rather than support them. Therefore, it would no doubt be appropriate to combine several strategies, and under no circumstances should the energy used to put them into effect draw us away from the youths themselves and from their true needs.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, this study highlights the fact that to ensure the protection of runaway minors, without restricting their development, adults will have to strike a balance between two types of interventions. First are the ones they will need to develop around, and undoubtedly with, youths to ensure their safety. This first component concerns the issues related to risk management and the challenge involved in creating a wider intervention network, inviting players to co-operate and sometimes to act outside their usual intervention channels. Next are the interventions that they will need to develop to ensure that young people internalize the feeling that they are able to take charge of and ensure their own safety. Although these two intervention components are, in principle, complementary, they could generate a certain internal and external tension, each of which refers to relatively different paradigms. While the former implies that youths are supported, accompanied and encouraged to develop their skills and identity, the latter could imply that they are controlled and deprived of these opportunities. This in itself could be necessary in certain cases, but certainly harmful if, through excess, it were to create a polarization between the two approaches. In the end, as we already know, it is the youths who would ultimately pay the price, caught between two worlds that they nevertheless need separately and simultaneously.

However, this is not the first time that youths give us such a challenge. The issue we raise here is the same as that faced with respect to other problems that concern them. Hence, it may be possible to draw inspiration from what others have put in place to manage their controversies and turn them into innovations. In fact, we should stress that unifying, innovative projects have already been set up at this stage of the process. We refer in particular to the Internet site that the partners developed for youths, parents and caseworkers. Moreover, some of the committees that were initially formed are still active, even though the funding has ceased. These people are thus pursuing their efforts—of which the instigator of this process would be proud—to learn to speak the same language, share ideas and resources, and develop new initiatives together. We should pay utmost attention to their achievements, as they will be the fruit of compromises dearly won and will, for this reason, result in significant changes.

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ANNEXE

Questionnaire for young people

SERIES OF RUNAWAYS

THE MOST RECENT RUNAWAY

If Yes, go to the second section, the PROCESS, after having completed information about THE MOST RECENT RUNAWAY

If no, then ask the questions about OTHER RUNAWAYS and THE FIRST RUNAWAY

Information about the time

- 3) How old were you? _____

4) In what year did this runaway take place? _____

5) What time of the year was it? _____

6) About how long did this runaway last?

Reasons for running away

- 7) What are the main reasons that led you to run away?

Next check to see if these reasons are linked to

- Revolt (opposition, reaction to adult authority)
 - Search for autonomy (to know oneself better and see if one is capable of taking care of oneself)
 - Dissatisfaction and desire to change one's life (at school, in the family or in one's entourage – to escape to a new situation)
 - Relational problems (tensions, conflicts, abuse, absence of emotional support)

- To verify the quality of the relationship (to test the commitment one has toward the young person)
- Looking for a solution (wants to make someone think or incite them to react)
- Curiosity, attraction of a new lifestyle (to check out his/her beliefs and perceptions)

8) What were the triggering factors? (What made you finally do it?)

Living environment of the young person

9) Where were you living before you ran away?

- Family of origin
- Placement:
 - a. Youth Center or Unit
 - b. Group Home
 - c. Foster family

10) In which city or which region? _____

11) How were you spending your time or what was your occupation at that time?

Next check:

a) Were you a student? a) Yes ____ b) No ____

b) If Yes, what year in school? _____

c) If not, how long before had you stopped going to school? _____

d) Did you have a job? a) Yes ____ b) No ____

e) What kind of job? _____

THE OTHER RUNAWAYS

12) Now we are going to look in a more general way at what happened in the other runaways. Next we will look more specifically at the first time you ran away, with the same attention as for your most recent runaway.

	Runaway #	Runaway #	Runaway #	Runaway #
Age				
Year				
Time of year				
Duration				
Reasons				
Triggering elements				

For the reasons, we can use the same categories as before. If the runaway is associated with another reason, it is important to note it below and to associate it with the right runaway.

- Revolt (opposition, reaction to adult authority)
- Search for autonomy (to know oneself better and see if one is capable of taking care of oneself)
- Dissatisfaction and desire to change one's life (at school, in the family or in one's entourage – to escape to a new situation)
- Relationship problems (tensions, conflicts, abuse, absence of emotional support)
- To verify the quality of the relationship (to test the commitment one has toward the young person)
- Looking for a solution (wants to make someone think or incite them to react)
- Curiosity, attraction of a new lifestyle (to check out his/her beliefs and perceptions)

13) Other reasons:

THE FIRST RUNAWAY

Information about the time

14) How old were you? _____

15) In what year did this runaway take place? _____

16) What time of the year was it? _____

17) About how long did this runaway last? _____

Reasons for running away

18) What were the main reasons that led you to run away?

Next, check to see if these reasons are associated with

- Revolt (opposition, reaction to adult authority)
- Search for autonomy (to know oneself better and see if one is capable of taking care of oneself)
- Dissatisfaction and desire to change one's life (at school, in the family or in one's entourage – to escape to a new situation)
- Relationship problems (tensions, conflicts, abuse, absence of emotional support)
- To verify the quality of the relationship (to test the commitment one has toward the young person)
- Looking for a solution (wants to make someone think or incite them to react)
- Curiosity, attraction of a new lifestyle (to check out his/her beliefs and perceptions)

19) What were the triggering elements? (What finally pushed you to do it?)

Living environment of the young person

20) Where were you living before you ran away?

- Family of origin
 - Placement:
 - a. Youth Center or Unit
 - b. Group Home
 - c. Foster Family

21) In which city or which region? _____

22) How were you spending your time or what was your occupation at that time?

Next check:

a) Were you a student? a) Yes ____ b) No ____

b) If Yes, what year in school? _____

c) If not, how long before had you stopped going to school? _____

d) Did you have a job? a) Yes ____ b) No ____

e) What kind of job?

In finishing up this part, it is important to identify, with the agreement of the respondent, the runaway or runaways which have different characteristics than the others, with particular attention to the first runaway. This or these runaway(s) should then be looked at specifically in the following section, even though the questions may be worded globally.

23) For those who have identified one or more of the runaways as being different from the others:

24) How do you explain these differences?

PROCESS

Even though the process may be explored in a general way, it is important to always look for ways to distinguish the characteristics of the first runaway as compared to the following ones, or even the characteristics of runaways which are different from others in the series.

BEFORE THE RUNAWAY

25) Did your parents or the adults you were living with have any idea that you were going to run away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, what were the warning signs?

b) Did you want to leave these signs? a) Yes ____ b) No ____

c) If not, why not?

Check to see if this was because he (she):

- Was afraid of being told on
- Did not know who to tell
- Thought that no one would care

d) Was or were your runaway(s):

a) Planned ____
b) Spontaneous ____

The following questions are pertinent for all the respondents, no matter if the runaway was planned or spontaneous.

26) How did you organize your runaway(s)?

27) With whom?

Next, check to see if it was with:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)

28) How long had you been thinking about running away this time or these times?

29) Did someone tell you about places to go, people to contact, what to do, etc.?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, who was it? _____

Next, check to see if this information could have come from

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)
 - Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)

30) How did you get this information? (By what means and not by what person)

- Next check to see if this information was obtained through
 - Word-of-mouth
 - E-mail, chatting
 - Written documents
 - Other means

31) Did you want to have this information or did it come to you without your asking for it?

THE DEPARTURE

32) Did someone push you or force you to run away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, how did this happen?

Next check if the young person could have been placed under the influence of:

- Pressure (someone who insists a lot)
- Threats (verbal or physical)
- Intimidation (indirect threats)
- The offer of money

33) Did you know people (or had you heard of people) who had already been through a runaway experience?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, who was it? _____

Next, check to see if these people were:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)

34) What did you know about or what did you think about these people at that time?

Next, see if they felt:

- Fear
- Interest
- Respect
- Curiosity/attraction
- Indifference
- Anger

- Contempt
- Admiration

35) Had you informed the people around you that you were going to run away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

Next, check to see if it could be:

If not:

- Fear of being told on
- Not knowing what to tell them
- Not thinking that anyone would care
- Did not believe that the situation could change
- Had lost the feeling of confidence toward the adults

If yes:

- To be able to organize the runaway better
- To be able to be found in case of danger
- To reassure and be assured so as not to be stopped
- To notify others that he/she has found a way to answer to an unfavourable situation
- To tell the adults that he/she is feeling embarrassment towards the situation he/she is in and then hoping that the adults will get the message

b) Who was it? _____

Next check to see if it was:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)
- Adults

- Members of the family
- Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
- Friends
- Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
- Someone you met during another runaway
- Unknown people (website, chatting)

36) Why did you choose to talk about it with this/these person(s)?

37) What were their reactions?

- Next, check to see if it was :
 - Surprise
 - Indifference
 - Understanding
 - Anger
 - Rejection
 - Taking action
 - Helplessness
 - Opening
 - Silence
 - Hurt or Sadness

38) What could have stopped you from running away at that time?

DURING THE RUNAWAY

The arrival

39) Did you go to a city or region other than the place where you were living?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, to what city or region did you go? _____

b) Why did you choose this city or region? _____

40) Did you know where to go? (Exact place)

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, how did you find out?

41) Were you planning to meet up with particular friends or people in this place?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, who are these friends or these people?

Next, check if they were:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)

- Someone you met during another runaway
- Unknown people (website, chatting)

b) How did you find them? (Telephone, e-mail, etc.)

c) Did you go find the same people each time?

- a) Yes
- b) No _____

The places stayed in

42) Are there places in particular where you could stay or where you preferred to go?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, why?

b) Next, check if these places could be:

Cities (Which ones?) _____

Regions (Which ones?) _____

Neighbourhoods (Which ones?) _____

43) Did you go from place to place once you had run away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, why?

Next, check if that could have been for any of the following reasons:

- To flee from the authorities
- Because he (she) had to “disappear” for a while (flee from other persons)
- To follow friends
- Because he (she) wanted a change
- Because one is dissatisfied with the place where one is (difficult to survive or to make a place for oneself)

- There are less public places where young person can gather together

44) How was this moving around done?

45) Was this moving around organized, planned? a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, how?

b) If yes, with whom?

Next, check to see if it was with:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)

46) Are there places that young people who are running away should avoid?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, which ones?

b) Next, check to see if these places could be:

Cities (Which ones?) _____

Regions (Which ones?) _____

Neighbourhoods (Which ones?) _____

Attention: do not lead the young person to identify specific persons or groups, or events in particular which could reveal the existence of past or future victims. Otherwise, you will be obligated to stop the interview and make a report.

47) What do young people do to avoid the authorities?

TYPICAL DAY

The day

48) Where did you spend your days?

49) Next, check to see if he she could go

- On the street
- In parks
- In private apartments or a house

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

50) In abandoned places

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

51) At someone's house in particular

- Minors
 - Known before the runaway
 - Met during the runaway
- Adults
 - Known before the runaway
 - Met during the runaway
- Always the same one(s)
- Not always the same one(s)
- Unknown persons
- Members of the family

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out? _____

52) In clubs, in bars

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

53) In public buildings (organizations)

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

54) What did you do during the day?

55) Next, check how much time he or she did or could have devoted to:

- Survival (meeting his/her basic needs) _____
 - Partying (or socializing) _____
 - Wandering around or loafing (doing nothing in particular) _____
-

- To reorganize his/her life (take action) _____
- Specific activities (which ones?) _____

One must remind the young person that if these activities are of a criminal nature and are not known about by the interveners, you will be obligated to make a report.

a) Did you know the exact places for these activities?

b) Did you do these activities alone or in a group? _____

c) Who did you do them with? _____

Next, check to see if it was with:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)

The evening

56) Where did you spend your evenings?

57) Next, check if he she went or could have gone:

- On the street
- In parks
- In private apartments or a house

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

58) In abandoned places

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

59) At someone's house in particular

- Minors
 - Known before the runaway
 - Met during the runaway
- Adults
 - Known before the runaway
 - Met during the runaway
- Always the same one(s)
- Not always the same one(s)
- Unknown persons
- Members of the family

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out? _____

61) In clubs, in bars

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

61) Afterhours, private parties

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

62) In public buildings (organizations)

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

63) What did you do during the evening?

64) Next, check how much time he or she did or could have devoted to:

- Survival (meeting his/her basic needs) _____
- Partying (or socializing) _____
- Wandering around or loafing (doing nothing in particular) _____

- To reorganize his/her life (take action) _____
- Specific activities (which ones?) _____

a) Did you know of precise places for these activities?

One must remind the young person that if these activities are of a criminal nature and are not known about by the interveners, you will be obligated to make a report.

b) Did you do these activities alone or in a group? _____

c) Who did you do them with? _____

Next, check to see if it was with:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)

At night

65) Where did you spend your nights?

66) Next, check to see if he (she) went or could have gone:

- On the street
- In parks
- In private apartments or a house

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

67) In abandoned places

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

68) At someone's house in particular

- Minors
 - Known before the runaway
 - Met during the runaway
- Adults
 - Known before the runaway
 - Met during the runaway
- Always the same one(s)
- Not always the same one(s)
- Unknown persons
- Members of the family

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out? _____

69) In clubs, in bars

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

70) Afterhours, private parties

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

71) In public buildings (organizations)

a) What is bringing them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How did you find out about them? _____

72) What did you do at night?

73) Next, check how much time he or she could devote to:

- Survival (meeting his/her basic needs) _____
- Partying (or socializing) _____
- Wandering around (doing nothing in particular) _____
- Specific activities (which ones?) _____

a) Do you know the exact places for these activities?

One must remind the young person that if these activities are of a criminal nature and are not known about by the interveners, you will be obligated to make a report.

b) Did you do these activities alone or in a group? _____

c) Who did you do them with? _____

Next, check to see if it was with:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family

- Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
- Friends
- Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
- Someone you met during another runaway
- Unknown people (website, chatting)

It is important to inform the young person that the questions associated with the next three sections have to do with young people in general, because the interviewer will be obligated to make a report if he or she learns of things (illegal activities, names ...) that the interveners do not yet know.

NEEDS

Housing/food/clothing

74) How do young people who have run away find housing?

75) In your opinion, do young people who have run away have to spend money or give services in exchange for their housing?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, how do they get this money?

b) What types of services are they asked to do?

76) When young people are being housed at someone's house or apartment, do these persons also offer food and clothing?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If not, then how, in your opinion, do the young people manage to get food and clothing?

b) If yes, who are these persons? (be careful not to give a name)

Next, check to see if it was:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)

c) Do these people ask for something in exchange, such as money or providing services?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

77) If yes, what kinds of services do they ask someone to do?

Money

78) In your opinion, how much money does a young person who has run away need in order to get through a day?

79) To find the money that he or she needs, can he/she or should he/she associate with other people?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, what must he or she do to enter into contact with these persons?

b) If yes, who are these persons? (Be careful not to give any names)

Next, check to see if it was with:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)

80) In your opinion, are certain ones of these people part of groups or organized networks?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, have you met any other young people who are part of such groups?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

b) What ties do you have with these young people?

Next, check to see if it was with:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway

- Unknown people (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that you know but with whom you do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone you met during another runaway
 - Unknown people (website, chatting)

81) In your opinion, what must one do to link up with or be a part of these groups?

82) Do these groups ask one to do something in exchange?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) What do they ask people to do?

83) In your opinion, are there advantages to being part of such a group?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

84) What do these alliances offer to young people who have run away?

85) Is it possible for young people who have run away not to have anything to do with these groups? (Is it an obligation in order to survive on the street?)

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why ?

Drug-Use

I am going to show you a table in which there are different kinds of drugs.

- Please tell me if you have already taken these drugs and if so, how often.
- If you still take these drugs and if so, how often.
- Whether or not you started to take these drugs while you were a runaway.

Type of drug consumed	I have taken	I still take	About once a month	On the weekend or 1 or 2 times per week	3 or + times per week but not every day	Every day	Method of consumption**	I began when I was a runaway
Alcohol								
Cannabis (marijuana, pot, hashish, resin...)								
Cocaine (coke, snow, crack, freebase...)								
Glue/solvent								
Hallucinogenics (LSD, PCP, mescal, buvard ecstasy...)								
Heroin (smack, junk, chnouff...)								
Amphetamine/Speed (upper, crystal, monster...)								
Others *								

* Any of the following medications **taken without prescription**: barbiturates, sedatives, hypnotics, tranquilizers and Ritalin.

** Method of taking: injection, inhalation, ingestion, etc.

86) Are there drugs which young people can get (or consume or use) while they are running away that they cannot get (or consume or use) at other times?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, what are these drugs? _____

b) What do young people have to do to get them?

Risk

87) What do you consider to be a risk in the context of a runaway?

88) Have you already taken risks during a runaway? a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, which ones?

b) Under what circumstances?

c) Why?

HERE, ONE CAN OFFER A CHOICE OF RESPONSES TO CHECK IF THE YOUNG PEOPLE CONSIDER THESE ELEMENTS TO BE RISKS

89) Is it important for you to take risks? a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, why? Do you think that that gives you something?

Danger

90) Are there times when you felt in danger while you were on the run, or have you ever felt in danger the previous times you have run away? a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, what did you do?

b) Where did you go?

91) Are there places you can turn to in order to feel safe? a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, which ones?

Communications

92) Have you made contact with your parents during the time that you were a runaway?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) For what reasons?

Next, check to see if it is a matter of:

If not:

- Fear of being told on
- Had not thought that anyone would care

If yes:

- To be able to be reached in case of danger
- To reassure and thus assure oneself of not being stopped
- To maintain a bond with their parents
- Because his/her parents are representing significant adult figures for him/her

b) If yes, by what means? (E-mail, telephone...) _____

c) Directly or through the intermediary of someone else? _____

93) Why did you choose these people?

a) What were their reactions?

o Next, check if it was :

- Surprise
- Relief
- Indifference
- Understanding
- Anger
- Rejection
- Taking action
- Helplessness
- Opening
- Silence
- Hurt or Sadness

b) How did it go?

c) How is your relationship with them?

94) Did you contact other members of your family or close friends?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) For what reasons?

Next verify it if could be a matter of:

If not :

- Fear of being found out
- Not thinking that anyone could care

If yes :

- To be able to be reached in case of danger
- To reassure and thus be reassured of not being stopped
- To maintain a significant bond with these persons
- Because these persons are representing significant adult figures for him/her

b) If yes, by what means? (e-mail, telephone...) _____

c) Directly or through the intermediary of another person? _____

95) Why did you choose these people?

a) What were their reactions?

Next, check if it was:

- Surprise
- Relief
- Indifference
- Understanding
- Anger
- Rejection
- Taking action
- Helplessness
- Opening
- Silence
- Hurt or Sadness

b) How did it go?

c) How is your relationship with them?

a) If yes, which organization?

- Next, check to see if it was :
 - Institution (Youth Center)
 - Community organization
 - Medical

b) For what reasons did you establish this contact?

Next verify it if could be a matter of:

If not:

- Fear of being found out
 - Not having thought that anyone could care

If yes:

- To be able to be reached in case of danger
 - To reassure and thus be reassured of not being stopped
 - To maintain a significant bond with these persons
 - Because these persons are representing significant adult figures for him/her

c) If yes, by what means? (E-mail, telephone...)

d) Directly or through the intermediary of someone else?

97) How did you become acquainted with this environment?

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98) Why did you choose this environment or this person?

a) What were their reactions?

Next, check if it was:

- Surprise
- Relief
- Indifference
- Understanding
- Anger
- Rejection
- Taking action
- Helplessness
- Opening
- Silence
- Hurt or Sadness

b) How did it go?

c) How is your relationship with them?

99) During the time(s) that you were a runaway, did things turn out the way you had imagined?

Return or anticipation of return

100) Did you want to return?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, for what reasons?

Next, check if it could have been for any of the following reasons:

- To flee from the authorities
- Because he (she) had to “disappear” for a while (flee from other persons)
- Because he (she) wanted a change (way of life)
- For questions of safety
- Because it was harder than anticipated to answer by oneself to one’s basic needs

- Because it was anticipated from the beginning that the runaway would only last for a while
- Because policemen brought him/her back
- Because he/she was tired
- Because he/she wanted to see again people towards whom he/she is going back

101) Was there a triggering element?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, which one?

102) In what circumstances did it happen?

103) When did it come about? (Year, time of year)

104) When you came back from your runaway, who did you go see first?

Next, check to see if it is:

- Parent
- Member of the family _____
- Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
- Friend
- Intervener
 - Police officer
 - Institution (youth centre)
 - Community centre
 - Medical personnel

a) What was his (her) reaction?

Next see if it was:

- Surprise
- Relief
- Indifference
- Understanding
- Anger
- Rejection
- Taking action
- Helplessness
- Opening
- Silence
- Hurt or Sadness

105) How would you have liked for it to turn out?

106) Did things turn out as you had imagined? a) Yes ____ b) No ____
a) If not, how had you imagined it?

107) Are there changes in your daily life? a) Yes ____ b) No ____
a) If yes, which ones?

Next, check to see if those changes in his/her everyday life are influencing:

- His/her functioning
 - Increase of consumption/drug-taking
 - Decrease in consumption/drug-taking
- His/her ties with the his/her family
 - Increase
 - Decrease

108) What is the most important thing that you learned from this experience? What has this experience given you?

109) Positive aspects

Next, verify whether that is linked with:

- Values (friendship, sharing, solidarity ...)
- Discovery (or better understanding) of self
- Better understanding of the world (opening up, realism)
- Transition (a pause before making the passage into adulthood)
- Friends
- Conflict resolution
- Consolidation of ties
- Projects
- Ability to get out of a deadlocked situation (one that seemed impossible)

110) Negative aspects

Next, verify whether that is linked with:

- Problems (problems with the law)
- Functioning (problems of drug-taking)
- Fear (has lived through traumatizing experiences)
- Disappointment (did did not turn out as he or she expected)
- Questions (this experience brought up new questions)
- Breaking of ties
- Conflicts
- Deterioration of health (infections, colds, flus, etc.)

111) Do you think that this experience of running away will change or have an influence on your life?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

b) If yes, how?

112) What could you do as a runaway that you cannot do in your ordinary life?

113) What can you do in your ordinary life that you could not do as a runaway?

114) In your opinion, what needs did this experience fulfill or attempt to fulfill?

Next, verify whether it is:

- Freedom (go where I wanted to go, when I wanted and with whom I wanted)
- Identity (to know who I was)
- Autonomy (knowing that I was capable of taking care of myself)
- Control of his or her life (knowing that I was able to make choices)
- Finding a meaning in his or her life (to know who I wanted to be)
- Not going crazy (to ease a feeling of anxiety)
- Avoiding suicide (to feel alive)

115) Do you believe that your living environment, your family, could help you meet these same needs?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

b) If yes, how?

c) Up to where can his/her life environment or family help the young person answer his/her needs?

116) Is it more or less easy for certain people to live through such an experience?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why is it easier for certain people?

b) Why is it more difficult for certain people?

117) If you had it to do all over again, would you do the same thing?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

118) Do you still have contact with people you met when you ran away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

b) If yes, who are these persons?

119) Would you like to be able to maintain these ties?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

120) In your opinion, is it a good idea to keep young people from running away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

121) Do you believe that a life as a runaway can lead to homelessness?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

122) Are you afraid of that?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

CHILD PROTECTION

Responsibilities

123) In your opinion, do adults have responsibilities toward young people?

a) Yes

b) No (why?)_____

a) If yes, what are the most important ones, in your view?

b) Why?

Next, check to see if he or she gives importance to

- Responding to basic needs
 - Food
 - Clothing
 - Housing
 - Safety
- Supervision

- Discipline
- Guidance or advising (listening, advice, support, sharing of experience or accompaniment)
- Opportunities for development (learnings, participation, responsibilities, chances of success...)

124) What does “the responsibility of protecting minors” that is attributed to adults mean to you?

125) How do you think that this responsibility can be translated into action?

Youth Protection Act

126) Are you aware of the changes that have been made to the Youth Protection Act?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, do you believe that these changes have advantages?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

b) If yes, which ones?

127) If yes, do you believe that these changes have disadvantages?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, which ones?

128) Do you believe that this law allows young people to be well protected?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

129) Do you believe that this law allows young people to develop well?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

130) In your opinion, does this law give more importance to the protection or to the development of young people?

131) Do you believe that certain living environments or certain interveners are more concerned with protection of the young than with their development?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, which ones?

Next, check if it is

- Police
- Institution (youth centres)
- Community centres
- Medical personnel

132) Do you believe that they are right to intervene in this manner?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

133) Do you believe that certain living environments or certain interveners are more concerned with the development of young people than with their protection?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, which ones?

Next, check whether it is

- Police
- Institution (youth centers)
- Community centers
- Medical personnel

134) Do you believe that they are right in intervening in this manner?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

Protective Measures

135) Do you believe that adults or the system protects young people?

- Enough
- Not enough
- In an exaggerated manner

136) In your opinion, are the protective measures that are taken for young people adequate?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

b) If not, what should these measures be?

137) In your opinion, do the protective measures that are taken for young people assure their well-being?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

b) If not, what measures should be put in place to assure the well-being of the young?

Institutional and community Resources

138) What difference do you see between the interveners who work in an institution (youth center) and in the community organizations?

139) What can the interveners who work in an **institution** (youth centre) offer you that the interveners who work in community organizations cannot give you?

140) What can interveners who work in **community organizations** offer you that the interveners who work in an institution (youth center) cannot give you?

141) Among all of these interveners, are there any or some with whom you feel more at ease?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, why? (How do these persons act with you?)

b) What environment do these persons work in?

- Police environment
- Institutional environment (youth centers)
- Community environment
- Medical environments
- None of these environments

Cross-sectoral Network

142) Do you know if the adults around you maintain ties among themselves?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, which ones?

- Parents
- Interveners in an institutional environment (youth center)
- Interveners in a community environment

- Police
- Interveners in a medical environment

b) If yes, do they talk and communicate among themselves?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

c) If yes, do they work together?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

143) If yes, does that work well, in your opinion?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If not, what needs to be improved?

144) Is it necessary for them to do it?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

Questionnaire for workers in the community or in the institutional field

1) The person's work environment: a) Institutional b) Community organization

RUNAWAY PHENOMENON: GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

2) In your work have you met minors who ran away?

- a) Many _____ (more than 5)
- b) Some _____ (5 or less)
- c) None _____

3) Are they more often girls or boys?

- a) Girls _____
- b) Boys _____

4) When was the last time that you have known or been responsible for young runaway?

Time-related Information

5) According to you, at what age do young people generally run away for the first time?

- a) Younger than 15 years old _____
- b) Older than 15 years old _____
- c) It depends on the person _____

6) Generally, how long do runaways last?

7) When are they taking place the most during the year? Are there any peaks?

Personal characteristics

8) Does the way a runaway unfold depend on the minor's characteristics?

a) Yes _____ b) No _____

a) If so, why?

Next, check if the runaways differ depending on:

9) The young person's age: _____

9a) If so, why? Specify what the difference is

10) The young person's sex: _____

10a) If so, specify what the difference is

11) The young person's background story: _____ (particular problems, life or services trajectory)

11a) If so, specify what the difference is

12) In your opinion, do minors who run away have common features or traits?

a) Yes _____ b) No _____

12a) If so, which ones?

13) Should we make a difference between occasional and recurrent runaways?

a) Yes _____ b) No _____

13a) If so, what are these differences?

14) How do you define occasional runaways?

15) How do you define recurrent runaways?

16) Are recurrent runaways more frequent than before?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

16 a) If so, is it a:

- Low increase _____
- Medium increase _____
- Big increase _____

b) How do you explain this increase?

c) According to you, why some minors become chronic runaways?

d) Next, check if it is linked to:

- The personal characteristics of the young person _____ (which ones?)
- The familial characteristics of the young person _____ (which ones?)
- The social characteristics of the young person _____ (which ones?)
- Others circumstances or events in particular _____ (which ones?)

Recent changes

17) Have you noticed any differences regarding minors who run away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, since when?

b) What are those differences?

c) Next, check if it's about:

- The number : increase ___ or decrease ___
 - The age ___
 - The duration ___
 - The motives ___
 - The circumstances ___ (planning, organization)
 - Other
-
-

Runaway motives

18) To your knowledge, what leads a minor to run away?

Next, check to see if these reasons are linked to

- To rebel (opposition, reaction to adult authority)
- Search for autonomy (to know oneself better and see if one is capable of taking care of oneself)
- Dissatisfaction and desire to change one's life (at school, in the family or in one's entourage – to escape to a new situation)
- Relational problems (tensions, conflicts, abuse, absence of emotional support)
- To verify the quality of the relationship (to test the commitment one has toward the young person)
- Looking for a solution (wants to make someone think or incite them to react)
- Curiosity, attraction of a new lifestyle (to check out his/her beliefs and perceptions)

a) According to you, are these motives the same as before?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

b) If not, why?

19) In the case of minors, what trigger the running away ? (factors or events that are finally pushing them to run away)

Living environment of the young person

20) Where are young people generally living before running away?

a) Family of origin Most of them ____
 Some of them ____
 Few of them ____
 None ____

b) Foster family Most of them ____
 Some of them ____
 Few of them ____
 None ____

c) Accommodation (which one?) _____
 Most of them ____
 Some of them ____
 Few of them ____
 None ____

21) In this respect, should we make a difference between the first runaway and the other ones?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, why? _____

22) To your knowledge, are there cities or regions that are more affected by the reality of runaways?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, what are these particular places?

Occupation

23) Among minors who run away, are some of them :

- a) Students? Most of them _____
 Some of them _____
 Few of them _____
 None _____

b) If not, have they left school a long time ago?

- c) Workers? Most of them _____
 Some of them _____
 Few of them _____
 None _____

d) What type of work do they do?

PROCESS

BEFORE RUNNING AWAY

24) According to you, might people around the minor be informed or have any doubts that he or she will run away? a) Yes _____ b) No _____

a) If so, who are these persons? Who is most likely to be informed of that matter?

b) In your opinion, why are these persons chosen?

c) How do they react?

○ Next, check to see if it is :

- Surprise
- Indifference
- Understanding
- Anger
- Rejection
- Taking action
- Helplessness
- They are opened
- Silence
- Hurt or sadness

25) In your opinion, what could prevent minors from running away?

26) If minors who run away were to show any warning signs, what would they be?

27) In this respect, should we make a distinction between the first runaway and the other possible ones? (are the signs always the same, with time, can young people not leave signs anymore?)

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, what's different?

28) In general, do minors want to leave these warning signs?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

If yes, check to see if it is :

To better organize the runaway

- To be found in case of danger
- To reassure and be assured so as not to be stopped
- To notify others that they have found a way to answer to an unfavourable situation
- To tell the adults that they are not at ease with the situation they are in and they hoping that the adults will get the message

If not, check to see if it is because they:

- Fear of being told on
- Don't know what to tell them
- Don't think that anyone would care
- Don't believe that the situation will change
- They don't trust in adult

29) To your knowledge, are the runaways generally:

Planned	Most of them _____	Spontaneous	Most of them _____
	Some of them _____		Some of them _____
	Few of them _____		Few of them _____
	None _____		None _____

30) In your opinion, how do minors plan and organize their runaways, if the need be?

a) With whom? _____

Next, check to see if these people are:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)

31) In your opinion, how much time before running away a minor might think or plan to do it?

32) To your knowledge, can minors find, through people in particular, information on places to go, people to contact, activities to do, etc? a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, who might it could be?

Next, check to see if the information could come from:

- Other young people
- Members of the family
- Boyfriend/Girlfriend
- Friends
- Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
- Someone they met during another runaway
- Strangers (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)

33) To your knowledge, by what mean do minors obtain the up cited information?

Next check to see if this information was obtained through:

- Word-of-mouth
- E-mail, chatting
- Written documents
- Other means

34) Do minors have to ask for the information or it is coming to them without them having to ask for it?

THE DEPARTURE

35) Do you think that one can force or push a minor to run away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, how?

Next check if the young person could have been placed under the influence of:

- Pressure (someone who insists a lot)
- Threats (verbal or physical)
- Intimidation (indirect threats)
- Money offer

36) Do young runaways have generally heard of known about someone in their environment who had already run away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, who are these persons?

Next, check to see if these people were:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)

37) According to you, what do young runaways think about these persons? (what image or what opinion do they have about them?)

Next, see if it's about:

- Fear
- Interest
- Respect
- Curiosity/attraction
- Indifference
- Anger
- Contempt
- Admiration

DURING THE RUNAWAY

The arrival

38) Do you think that young people run away in cities or regions other than where they live?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, are there cities or regions young people tend to go more?

b) Why are they choosing these cities or regions?

39) According to you, do they know where to go? (exact place)

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, how do they happen to know?

40) By going to these exact places, are they going to meet friends or people in particular?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, who are these friends or people? _____

Next, check to see if these people are:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)

41) How do young people find these people or get in contact with them? (phone, e-mail)

42) To your knowledge, are they always going to meet or see the same persons?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

The places stayed in

43) According to you, are there places in particular that minors running away prefer to go, without it being necessarily their first destination?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, why?

b) Next check if these places are:

Cities (which ones) _____

Regions (which ones) _____

Neighbourhoods (which ones) _____

44) Do you think that young people are moving from one place to another while they are on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, why?

Next, check if that could have been for any of the following reasons:

- To flee from the authorities
- Because they had to “disappear” for a while (flee from other persons)
- To follow friends
- Because they wanted a change
- Because one is dissatisfied with the place where one is (difficult to survive or to make a place for oneself)
- There are less public places where young people can gather together

45) In your opinion, how do they move around?

46) To your knowledge, is it organized, planned?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, how?

b) If so, with whom? _____

Next, check to see if these people are:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends

- Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)

47) According to you, are there places young people should avoid while on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, which ones?

b) Next check if these places are:

Cities (which ones) _____

Regions (which ones) _____

Neighbourhoods (which ones) _____

48) What do you think that minors on the run do in order to avoid the authorities?

A TYPICAL DAY

Daytime

49) To your knowledge, in which places are young people who are running away spend their days?

50) Next, check to see if they might be:

- On the street
- In parks
- In private apartments or homes

a) What brings them to these places? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How do they get the information? _____

51) In abandoned places

a) What brings them to these places? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How do they get the information? _____

52) At someone's house in particular

- Minors
 - Known before running away
 - Met during the runaway
- Adults
 - Known before the running away
 - Met during the runaway
- Always at the same person's house
- Not always at the same person's house
- Strangers
- Members of the family

a) What brings them to these places? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How do they get the information? _____

53) In clubs, in bars

a) What brings them to these places? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How do they get the information? _____

54) In public buildings (organizations)

a) What brings them to these places? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How do they get the information? _____

55) To your knowledge, what do they do during the day?

56) Next, check how much time they might devote to:

- Survival (meeting their basic needs) _____
- Partying (or socializing) _____
- Wandering around or loafing (doing nothing in particular)

- To reorganize their life (take action) _____
- Specific activities (which ones?) _____

a) Do they know any specific places for these activities?

b) Do they do these activities alone or in a group? _____

c) With whom are they doing these activities? _____

Next, check to see if it was with:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends

- Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
- Someone they met during another runaway
- Strangers (website, chatting)

Evening

57) To your knowledge, in which places do minors on the run spend their evenings?

58) Next, check to see if it might be:

- On the street
- In parks
- In private apartments or homes

a) What brings them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How do they get information? _____

- 59) In abandoned places

a) What brings them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How do they get the information? _____

60) At someone's house in particular

- Minors
 - Known before the runaway
 - Met during the runaway
- Adults
 - Known before the runaway
 - Met during the runaway
- Always at the same person's house
- Not always at the same person's house
- Unknown persons
- Members of the family

a) What brings them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How do they get the information? _____

61) In clubs, in bars

a) What brings them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How do they get the information? _____

62) Afterhours, private parties

a) What brings them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How do they get the information? _____

63) In public buildings (organizations)

a) What brings them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How do they get in the information? _____

64) To your knowledge, what do they do during the evening?

65) Next, check how much time he or she might devoted to:

- Survival (meeting their basic needs) _____
- Partying (or socializing) _____
- Wandering around or loafing (doing nothing in particular) _____
- To reorganize their life (take action) _____
- Specific activities (which ones?) _____

a) Do they know specific places for these activities?

b) Do they do these activities alone or in a group? _____

c) With whom are they doing these activities _____

Next, check to see if it was with:

- Other young people

- Members of the family
- Boyfriend/Girlfriend
- Friends
- Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
- Someone they met during another runaway
- Strangers (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)

Night

66) To your knowledge, where do minors on the run spend their nights?

67) Next, check to see if it might be:

On the street

- In parks
- In private apartments or homes

a) What brings them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons) _____

b) How do they get the information? _____

68) In abandoned places

a) What brings them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons)

b) How do they get the information? _____

69) At someone's house in particular

- Minors
 - Known before the runaway
 - Met during the runaway
- Adults
 - Known before the runaway

- Met during the runaway
- Always at the same person's house
- Not always at the same person's house
- Strangers
- Members of the family

a) What brings them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons) _____

b) How do they get the information? _____

70) In clubs, in bars

a) What brings them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons) _____

b) How do they get the information? _____

71) Afterhours, private parties

a) What brings them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons) _____

b) How do they get the information? _____

72) In public buildings (organizations)

a) What brings them to this place? (choices, criteria, reasons) _____

b) How do they get the information? _____

73) To your knowledge, what do they do during the night?

74) Next, check how much time they might devote to:

- Survival (meeting their basic needs) _____
- Partying (or socializing) _____
- Wandering around or loafing (doing nothing in particular) _____
- To reorganize their life (take action) _____

- Specific activities (which ones?) _____

a) Do they know specific places for these activities?

b) Are they doing these activities alone or in a group? _____

c) With whom are they doing these activities?

Next, check to see if it was with:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)

NEEDS

Housing/food/clothing

75) How do minors on the run find a place to stay? Housing?

76) According to you, must they spend money or provide services in exchange for their housing?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, how do they get the money?

b) In your opinion, what kind of services are they asked to do?

77) When minor on the run are being provided with sheltered at someone's house or apartment, do these persons also provide food and clothing? a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) **If not**, then how do they manage to get food and clothing?

b) If so, who are these persons who are providing housing? (Be careful not to give a name)

Next, check to see if it could be:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway

- Strangers (website, chatting)

78) Do these persons ask for something in exchange of disbursing money or providing services?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, what kind of services are they asking for?

Money

79) According to you, how much money does a minor on the run need to get through the day?

80) To find the money they need, do you think that they can or must associate themselves with other people?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, what do they do to get in touch with these persons (they want/must associate with)

b) If so, who are these people they associate with? (Be careful not to give any names)

Next, check to see if it was with:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway

- Strangers (website, chatting)

81) In your opinion, are some of these people part of or belong to organized groups?

a) If so, do minors on the run know other young persons who are part of these groups?

b) What ties might minors on the run have with these persons?

Next, check to see if it was with:

- Other young people
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)
- Adults
 - Members of the family
 - Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances (people that they know but with whom they do not have a significant relationship)
 - Someone they met during another runaway
 - Strangers (website, chatting)

82) To your knowledge, what do you think one must do in order to join or be a part of these groups?

83) In your opinion, do these groups ask for something in exchange of getting in?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) What do they ask for?

84) According to you, do minors on the run find benefits in belonging to these groups?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

85) In your opinion, what do these alliances bring to the minor on the run?

86) Is it possible for a minor on the run not to get in contact with those groups?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

Consumption

87) To your knowledge, are there drugs which minors on the run can get (or consume or use) while on the run that they cannot get (or consume or use) at other times?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, what are these drugs? _____

Next, check to see if it is:

- Alcohol
- Cannabis (marijuana, pot, hashish, resin...)
- Cocaine (coke, snow, crack, freebase...)
- Glue/solvent
- Hallucinogenics (LSD, PCP, mescal, buvard ecstasy...)
- Heroin (smack, junk, chnouff...)
- Amphetamine/Speed (upper, crystal, monster...)
- Other _____

b) What do minors of the run have to do in order to get these drugs?

88) To your knowledge, is a runaway favourable to the first consumption of certain types of drugs?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, what are these drugs? _____

Next, check to see if it is:

- Alcohol
- Cannabis (marijuana, pot, hashish, resin...)
- Cocaine (coke, snow, crack, freebase...)
- Glue/solvent
- Hallucinogenics (LSD, PCP, mescal, buvard ecstasy...)
- Heroin (smack, junk, chnouff...)
- Amphetamine/Speed (upper, crystal, monster...)
- Other _____

Risk

89) What do you consider to be a risk in the context of a runaway?

90) Are minors taking risks sometimes while on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, which ones?

b) Under what circumstances?

c) Why?

91) Do you think it is important for minors on the run to take risks?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, why? Does it bring them something?

Danger

92) In your opinion, are there moments during their runaway that minors might feel endangered?

a) If so, what are they doing?

b) Where do they go?

93) Are there places they can go in order to feel safe?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, which ones?

Communications

94) According to you, are there minors who get in touch with their parents while on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why? For what reasons?

Next, check to see if it is a matter of:

If no:

- Fear of being told on
- Don't think that anyone cares

If so :

- To be able to be reached in case of danger
- To reassure and thus assure themselves of not being stopped
- To maintain a bond with these persons
- Because they represent significant adult figure

b) If so, how? (e-mail, telephone...) _____

c) Directly or via someone else? _____

95) Then, why are they choosing to get in contact with their parents? (redondant avec 94 a)

96) How do the parents react?

o Next, check if it is :

- Surprise
- Relief
- Indifference
- Understanding
- Anger
- Rejection
- Taking action
- Helplessness
- They are open to the communication
- Silence
- Hurt or sadness

97) How does it generally go?

98) What kind of relationship do minors on the run have with their parents generally?

99) After being contacted, do parents usually give (you) information?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, what type of information do they give?

b) If no, why aren't they giving (you) any information?

100) According to you, do some minors get in touch with other family members or close friends while on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why? For which reasons?

Next, check to see if it is a matter of:

If no:

- Fear of being told on
- Don't think that anyone cares

If so:

- To be able to be reached in case of danger
- To reassure and thus assure themselves of not being stopped
- To maintain a bond with these persons
- Because they represent significant adult figure

b) If so, by what means? (e-mail, phone...) _____

c) Directly or via someone else? _____

101) Then, why are they choosing to get in contact with these persons?

102) How do they react?

o Next, check if it is :

- Surprise
- Relief
- Indifference
- Understanding
- Anger
- Rejection
- Taking action
- Helplessness
- They are open
- Silence
- Hurt or sadness

103) How does it generally go?

104) What kind of relationship do minors on the run generally have with them?

105) After being contacted, do these people usually give (you) information?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, what kind of information?

b) If no, why not?

106) According to you, do some minors get in contact with (workers in different field) while on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, with which organization do they get in touch?

o Next, check to see if it is :

- Institution (Youth Center)
- Community organization
- Medical
- Police

b) For what reasons?

Next, check to see if it is a matter of:

If no:

- Fear of being told on
- Don't think that anyone cares

If so:

- To be able to be reached in case of danger
- To reassure and thus assure themselves of not being stopped
- To maintain a bond with these persons
- Because they represent significant adult figure

c) If so, by what means? (e-mail, phone...) _____

d) Directly or through the intermediary of someone else? _____

107) How do they get to know these places?

108) Then, why are they choosing to get in contact with these environments or these people?

109) How do these people react?

- Next, check if it is :
 - Surprise
 - Relief
 - Indifference
 - Understanding
 - Anger
 - Rejection
 - Taking action
 - Helplessness
 - They are opened to the contact
 - Silence
 - Hurt or sadness

110) How does it go?

111) What kind of relationship do minors have with them?

112) Do you think that things (the runaway) generally turn out or unfold the way the minor had thought it would?

Return or anticipation of return

113) To your knowledge, do minors on the run come back because they generally want to?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If no, why?

b) If so, for what reasons?

Next, check if it could be for any of the following reasons:

- To flee from the authorities
- Because they had to “disappear” for a while (flee from other persons)
- Because they wanted a change (way of life)
- For safety questions
- Because it was harder than anticipated to answer by oneself to one’s basic needs
- Because it was anticipated from the beginning that the runaway would only last for a while
- Because policemen brought them back
- Because they were tired
- Because they wanted to see again people toward whom they are going back

114) In your opinion, could something triggers the return?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, are the triggers?

115) In what circumstances is the return happening?

116) According to you, who are they going to see first when they come back from their runaway?

Next, check to see if it is:

- Parent
- Member of the family _____
- Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Lover
- Friend
- Workers in the following field
 - Police officer
 - Institution (youth centre)
 - Community centre
 - Medical personnel

117) To your knowledge, how do these persons react?

Next see if it was:

- Surprise
- Relief
- Indifference
- Understanding
- Anger
- Rejection
- Taking action
- Helplessness
- They are opened to the contact
- Silence
- Hurt or sadness

118) Does there return generally unfold the way they had imagined it?

a) Yes ___ b) No ___

119) How do you think they would like their return to unfold?

120) According to you, upon their return, are there changes in their daily life?

a) Yes ___ b) No ___

a) If so, which ones?

Next, check to see if the changes in their everyday life influence:

- Their functioning
 - Increase of consumption/drug-taking
 - Decrease in consumption/drug-taking
- Their ties with their family
 - Increase
 - Decrease

121) What do you think is the most valuable lesson their learn from the runaway experience?

122) Positive aspects

Next, verify whether that is linked with:

- Values (friendship, sharing, solidarity ...)
- Discovery (or better understanding) of self
- Better understanding of the world (opening up, realism)
- Transition (a pause before making the passage into adulthood)
- Friends
- Conflict resolution
- Consolidation of ties
- Projects
- Ability to get out of a deadlocked situation (one that seemed impossible)

123) Negative aspects

Next, verify whether that is linked with:

- Problems (problems with the law)
- Functioning (problems of drug-taking)
- Fear (has lived through traumatizing experiences)
- Disappointment (did not turn out as they expected)
- Questions (this experience brought up new questions)
- Breaking of ties

- Conflicts
- Deterioration of health (infections, colds, flus, etc.)

124) Do you believe that the experience of running away might change or influence their life?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

b) If so, how?

125) What could they while running away that they cannot do in their ordinary life?

126) What can they do in their ordinary life that they could not do while on the run?

127) What needs do you think this experience addressed?

Next, verify whether it is:

- Freedom (go where they want to go, when they want and with whom they want)
- Identity (to know who they are)
- Autonomy (knowing that they are capable of taking care of themselves)
- To Control of their life (knowing that they are able to make choices)
- To find meaning in their life (to know what they want to be)
- Not to go crazy (to ease a feeling of anxiety)
- To avoiding suicide (to feel alive)
- The need to be heard (the runaway is seen as a way to express their embarrassment, anxiety, unhappiness...)

128) Do you believe that their living environment, their family, can help address these needs?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why ?

b) If so, how?

129) According to you, up to what point their can their living environment or their family address these needs?

130) In your opinion, is it easier or harder for certain people to live such an experience? To run away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why is it easier for certain persons?

b) Why is it harder for certain persons?

131) Do you believe that after going through this experience, young people generally want to live the experience over again?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

132) Do you think that they still have contact with people they met while on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

b) If so, who are these people?

133) According to you, do young people generally wish to keep these ties?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

134) Do you think it is advisable to stop minors from running away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why ?

135) Do you believe that a life of running away can lead to homelessness?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

136) In your opinion, does this outlook (the homelessness) scare them?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

CHALLENGES OF THE INTERVENTION

IMPORTANT FOR THE INTERVIEWER: It is important to insure oneself to answer only to the part corresponding to the intervener's work environment.

Institutional environment

137) As an (social worker), how do you live the young people runaway's episodes?

138) What is the hardest?

139) What are your biggest fears?

a) Why?

140) How are the runaways influencing the intervention's context? Your work?

During the runaway

141) Have you ever personally taken steps to find a minor who had run away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) What steps have you taken?

b) How?

c) With whom?

With the family (CETTE PARTIE ÉTAIT MANQUANTE)

142) Have you ever contacted a member of the family while a minor was on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, for what reason?

b) With whom?

c) If so, how did it go?

With community organizations

143) Have you ever contacted workers from community organization while a minor was on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If yes, for what reason?

b) Who did you contact?

c) If so, how did it go?

144) What type of information are you generally sharing in such occasions?

145) Could you give an example where you had to “break the confidentiality”?

146) Looking back, are there any runaway situations that would have needed a different intervention than the one you made? (with the community organization)

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Could you describe these situations?

b) Looking back, what would you have done differently?

147) What would you have needed in order to ease or to improve your intervention at that point, meaning while the minor is on the run? (with the community organization)

With policemen

148) Have you ever contacted the police while a minor was on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, for what reason?

b) Who did you contact?

c) If yes, how did I go?

149) What type of information are you generally sharing in such occasions?

150) Could you give an example where you had to “break the confidentiality”?

151) Looking back, are there any runaway situations that would have needed a different intervention than the one you made? (with the police)

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Could you describe these situations?

b) What would have been your intervention then?

152) What would you have needed in order to ease or to improve your interventions at this point, which is while young people are running away? (with the police)

The return

153) Could you describe what generally happens when a minor comes back ? How does the return unfold?

154) Do you encourage them to take particular steps?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why? Which ones?

b) How?

155) According to you, are there minors for whom the return is going to be better than for others?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, how do you explain this difference?

Next, check if it could be linked to:

- The ties the young person has with the person working with him or her
- The ties the young person has with the members of his/her family
- The ties the young person has with his/her peers
- The way that the runaway has taken place
- Other possible factors: _____

156) What would you have needed to ease or improve your interventions at this point? (during the minor's return)

Community organizations

The presence of young people in the resources

157) Have you noticed any changes about the community resources' attendance by young people who ran away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, how would you explain these changes?

158) Has it ever happened to have several young people who ran away at once in your organization?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) What kind of influence do they have on each other?

b) What do you do in these situations?

Approach

159) How do you greet young people who ran away?

160) Do you incite young people to **take contact** with their original place?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why? _____

b) How? _____

161) Do you incite young people to **return** to their original place?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why? _____

b) How? _____

162) Do you incite them to take particular steps?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why? _____

b) How? _____

163) What do you find to be the hardest (in your approach)

164) What are your biggest fears?

b) Why?

Reporting

165) Have you ever had to report a minor on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) To whom? _____

b) With what conditions? _____

c) In which context? _____

Contacts

With the family

166) Did you ever take contact with a member of a young runaway's family?
a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, for what reason?

b) With whom?

c) How is it generally happening?

Other community organizations

167) Have you ever contacted people working in other community organizations while a minor was on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, for what reason?

b) With whom?

c) If so, does it go?

168) What type of information do you generally share in such occasions?

169) Could you give an example where you had to “break the confidentiality”?

170) Looking back, are there any runaway situations that would have needed a different intervention than the one you made? (with the community organisations)

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Could you describe these situations?

b) What would have been your intervention then?

171) What would you have needed to ease or improve your interventions regarding young people who ran away? (with community organizations)

Institutional environment

172) Have you ever contacted people working in Youth Centers while a minor was on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, for what reason?

b) With whom?

c) If so, how does it go?

173) What type of information are you generally sharing in such occasions?

174) Could you give an example where you had to “break the confidentiality”?

175) Looking back, are there any runaway situations that would have needed a different intervention than the one you made? (with the Youth Center)

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Could you describe these situations?

b) What would have been your intervention then?

Policemen

176) Have you ever contacted the police while a minor was on the run?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so for what reason?

b) With whom?

c) If so, how does it go?

177) What type of information are you generally sharing in such occasions?

178) Could you give an example where you had to “break the confidentiality”?

179) Looking back, are there any runaway situations that would have needed a different intervention than the one you made? (with the police)

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Could you describe these situations?

b) What would have been your intervention then?

180) What would you have needed to ease or improve your interventions regarding young people who ran away? (with the police)

CHILD PROTECTION

Responsibilities

181) In your opinion, do adults have responsibilities toward young people?

a) Yes

b) No (why?) _____

a) If so, what are the most important ones, in your view?

b) Why?

Next, check to see if they give importance to:

- Making sure their basic needs are met
 - Food
 - Clothing
 - Housing
 - Safety
- Supervision
- Discipline
- Guidance or advising (advice, support, sharing of experience)
- Opportunities for development (learning, participation, responsibilities, chances of success...)

182) What does “the responsibility of protecting minors” that is attributed to adults mean to you?

183) How do you think that this responsibility can be translated into actions?

The Youth Protection Act

184) Are you aware of the changes that have been made to the Youth Protection Act?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, what are, in your opinion, the most important changes?

185) According to you, are the changes in the YPA having an impact on the number or the frequency of the runaways?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) How?

186) Do you see other changes that results from the modifications in the Youth Protection Act?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, do you believe that these changes have benefits?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

b) If so, which ones?

c) If so, do you believe that these changes have disadvantages?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

d) If so, which ones?

187) Do you believe that this law allows young people to be well protected?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

188) Do you believe that this law allows young people to develop well?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

189) In your opinion, does this law attach more importance to the protection or to the development of young people?

190) Do you believe that some environments or some workers are more concerned with the **protection** of the young?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, which ones?

Next, check if it is

- Police
- Institution (youth centers)
- Community centers
- Medical personnel

191) In your opinion, what brings them to act, to intervene this way?

192) Do you believe that some environments or some workers are more concerned by the **development** of young people?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, which ones?

Next, check whether it is

- Police
- Institution (youth centers)
- Community centers
- Medical personnel

193) In your opinion, what brings them to act or intervene this way?

Protective measures

194) Do you believe that adults or the system protects young people?

- Enough _____
- Not enough _____
- In an exaggerated manner _____

195) In your opinion, are the protective measures that are taken for children adequate?

a) Yes _____ b) No _____

a) Why?

b) If not, what should these measures be?

196) In your opinion, do the protective measures that are taken for young people ensure their well-being?

a) Yes _____ b) No _____

a) Why?

b) If not, what measures should be put in place to ensure the well-being of the young?

197) In your opinion, what makes a minors to repeatedly run away from the same environment?

198) Is it possible, in your opinion, to keep young person from running away?

a) Yes _____ b) No _____

a) Why?

199) Is it desirable, in your opinion, to keep young person from running away?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

200) In your opinion, would it be desirable to develop interventions where the minor would have more latitude, freedom (space or autonomy)?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) Why?

201) According to you, do these kind of interventions actually exist?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) What are they?

b) What do you think of it?

202) According to you, are there risks associated with this kind of practices?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, which ones?

b) How could we limit those risks?

203) Can a minor benefit from a practice where they are given more latitude (freedom, space, autonomy)

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

204) Can there be any negative consequences for the minors in giving them a certain amount latitude?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) What are those benefits?

b) What are those negative consequences?

205) What do you think of practices where young people are given little or no freedom (space, autonomy)?

206) In your opinion, are there any risks associated with these practices?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) If so, which ones?

b) How could we limit to these risks?

207) Can a minor benefit from a practice where there is no latitude, no freedom (, space, autonomy)

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

208) Can there be any negative consequences for the minors in giving them no latitude?

a) Yes ____ b) No ____

a) What are those benefits?

b) What are those negative consequences?

Institutional and community resources

209) According to you, what do young people get from interventions like the ones practiced by institutional resources?

210) According to you, what do young people get from interventions like the ones practiced by community resources?

211) According to you, what do young people get from interventions like the ones practiced by the police?

Cross-Sectoral Network

212) Do you think that the adults and the people working around the young runaways maintain ties among themselves that are:

- Sufficient : ____
- Insufficient : ____

213) Who is generally implicated?

- Parents _____
- Workers in the institutional field (youth center) _____
- Workers in the community field _____
- Police _____
- Workers in the medical field _____

214) Are the ties among them about

- Communication (exchange of information) : _____
- Collaboration (working together) : _____

215) In your opinion, is it working well?

a) Yes _____ b) No _____

a) If so, why?

b) If not, what should be improved?

216) In your opinion, is it relevant for them to work that way? a) Yes _____ b) No _____

a) Why?
