

Tell Me What You Watch...

Last September, journalist and columnist Marc Cassivi published an article entitled "Véro qui?" in *La Presse*. The title referred to the fact that students enrolled in television and communication studies at the Cégep de Jonquière did not know Véronique Cloutier, the *queen* of Quebec television. While this observation is not alarming in comparison to other issues affecting the student community, it does merit a moment's reflection, as it is the visible tip of a *cultural iceberg*, which is also likely to be melting rapidly.

Before going any further, a few words about the findings of two teacher-researchers, Caroline Savard and Audrey Perron, in a study conducted jointly by the Centre d'étude des conditions de vie et des besoins de la population [Center for the Study of the Population's Living Conditions and Needs, Ed.] (ÉCOBES) and the École supérieure en Art et technologie des médias [Graduate School of Media Art and Technology, Ed.] (ATM).¹ In 2021, just over 600 ATM students were surveyed about their media and cultural habits.

The picture could not be clearer: Quebec television content is no longer reaching CEGEP students.

Some striking data from the study:

- Nearly one in two college students (48%) watch their series or movies in English;
- Only 22.7% of college students surveyed follow a Quebec series on a weekly basis;
- Netflix (85.4%) and YouTube (86.9%) are the most popular weekly viewing platforms for college students, far ahead of those offering mainly Quebec content;
- When asked "What is your favourite series?", three out of four college students answer by naming an American series.

Beyond the numbers, three conclusions are of interest to college educators in general. First, CEGEP students are consuming less and less Quebec content. Second, these students are mostly turning to foreign content. Third, it is obvious that an abyssal gap is growing between their popular culture... and ours.

Of course, some will say that this is not so dramatic and that we, as adults in the college network, consume content from American platforms. Isn't it true that we all contribute a little (a lot) to the *netflixization* of our culture? Aren't we all accelerating the end of a collective imagination that was largely built by Quebec television? Many thinkers of the small screen consider television in Quebec to be a fundamental part of Quebec culture and identity. In a report on the 50 years of television in Quebec published in the magazine *L'Actualité*, the late Jean-Pierre Desaulniers, a specialist in Quebec television and advertising, recalled that in most countries of the world, the collective imagination has been cultivated essentially through national literature and cinema. In Quebec, it was largely created by television. For decades, Quebec's popular culture, which is largely carried by television, has brought generations together, strengthened the social fabric, and shaped modes of socialization and engagement.

How can we slow down the erosion of these shared cultural references or, better still, how can we create new ones that would bring people together? This is not an easy task, given the eclecticism of current cultural practices. Is it possible to adapt our teaching to the new cultural references of the student community without relegating our national culture to the dustbin? And above all, how can we resist the American cultural steamroller? Can we even achieve that still? Nothing is less certain. —

¹ Interested readers can consult the complete report (in French) *Portrait des habitudes médiatiques des étudiantes et étudiants en ATM* du Cégep de Jonquière.



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