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School Mental Health

Francophone students with autistic spectrum conditions speak about their experience of inclusion in mainstream secondary schools.

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Abstract:	<p>Background. An increasing number of students with autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) attend mainstream secondary schools in both France and Quebec. The importance of considering their views on subjects that affect their daily life is now well established in education research. Still, little is known about how these students cope with specific aspects of inclusion. Objective. This article explores the school experience of teenagers, considered as “the most expert, most capable of telling what it is like to be them” (Speraw, p.736), regarding their academic and social inclusion. Specifically, we aim to identify inhibitors and enablers to promoting successful educational experiences in a Francophone context. Methods: 25 students with ASC (aged 12 to 16), attending mainstream secondary schools in France (N=16) and Quebec (N=9), were interviewed. Results. Managing sensory aspects, perceived immature behaviours from their peers and tiredness are identified as the main hardships of school life. Being included in an intensive academic program, being driven by a passion and having a friend inside the school are reported as important enablers. Perspectives. For students with ASC, transition into adult life constitutes one of the major challenges and has to be anticipated as soon as possible. Recommendations for practice are put forward to foster their empowerment and specify support needed to help them gain essential autonomy and practical skills necessary in the work place and to be able to speak for themselves.</p>

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Abstract (150-250 words):

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Methods: 25 students with ASC (aged 12 to 16), attending mainstream secondary schools in France (N=16) and Quebec (N=9), were interviewed. **Results.** Managing sensory aspects, perceived immature behaviours from their peers and tiredness are identified as the main hardships of school life. Being included in an intensive academic program, being driven by a passion and having a friend inside the school are reported as important enablers.

Perspectives. For students with ASC, transition into adult life constitutes one of the major challenges and has to be anticipated as soon as possible. Recommendations for practice are put forward to foster their empowerment and specify support needed to help them gain essential autonomy and practical skills necessary in the work place and to be able to speak for themselves.

Keywords (4 to 6): Autistic spectrum conditions · Secondary school inclusive education · Inhibitors and enablers · Students’ perspectives · Neurodiversity · Empowerment.

Introduction

Challenges of school inclusion of students with autistic spectrum conditions

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) now represent one of the most frequent diagnosis in school settings in modern countries (Blanc, 2011). According to the *Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention* (Baio et al., 2018), prevalence of ASD is around 1 in 59 in the United States. The World Health Organisation (WHO) considers that about one person in 160 presents an autistic spectrum condition (WHO, 2019). Despite the significant heterogeneity of this population, autistic individuals share two core symptoms: 1) persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts and 2) restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Also, people with autism often suffer from sensory-related issues, such as hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity. (Wing, Gould, and Gillberg, 2011). Other co-occurring conditions are also frequently associated with ASD, including attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity (ADHD), learning disabilities (dyslexia, dysphasia, etc.) or psychiatric disorders such as anxiety or depression (Geurtz et al., 2014; Simonoff et al., 2008).

We want to inform the reader that we will use the expression ‘*autism spectrum conditions*’ (abbreviated ‘ASC’) rather than ‘*autism spectrum disorders*’ deliberately in this article. Indeed, our research comes within the scope of the neurodiversity paradigm which is “the viewpoint that autism is a natural identity with strengths and weaknesses that contribute valuably to human diversity” (Gillepsie-Lynch et al., 2017, p. 3). From this perspective, the inclusion – social as well as academic – of every person, independently of his or her neurological conditions, appears to be a valuable proposition to promote affirmative diversity (Jones, 1990). Booth and Ainscow (2002) define inclusion in the school context as follows:

Inclusion involves change. It is an unending *process* of increasing learning and participation for all students. It is an ideal to which schools can aspire, but which is never fully reached. But inclusion happens as soon as the process of increasing participation is started. An inclusive school is one that is on the move. (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p. 3).

Students with high functioning ASC (HFASC) have intellectual capabilities in the average range or above the normal population. Yet, many studies have shown that they underperform in school compared to their peers (Howlin et al., 2004). As mentioned by Humphrey and Lewis (2008), the various obstacles they face “may prevent them from making the most of their education”. The low rate of academic success is observed throughout their school and professional career, resulting in a low rate of graduation or employment in this subpopulation (Griffith et al., 2011; Poirier and Cappe, 2016). Faced with this increasing number of students with HFASC in mainstream secondary schools, it appears critical to carry out an in-depth reflection: Are the schools adequately responding to the needs of this population and what strategies have they implemented in order to facilitate and support academic and social success in mainstream school settings? Despite studies showing underperforming career paths and lower quality of life of young individuals with HFASC (Hillier et al., 2017; Howlin et al., 2004), several authors deplore inclusion studies that are mainly dominated by academic performance measures (MacLeod, Lewis, and Robertson, 2013) neglecting socio-emotional and socio-cognitive aspects of school adaptation (Hill, 2014).

Inclusion in mainstream secondary schools: a France – Quebec comparison

Driven by the international dynamics of school inclusion, France and Quebec also know a significant increase of students with ASC in secondary school settings (Godeau et al., 2015; Le Laidier and Prouchandy, 2012; Poirier and Cappe, 2016). Since the 1970s, in both countries, several laws and social policies have been enacted to improve educative opportunities for all and increase participation of individuals with disabilities or special

needs. Students with ASC now represent one of the most important of all students with special needs in mainstream secondary schools (Blanc, 2011). However, differences in the school systems' organisation of the two countries can be noted. For example, contrary to France, the teaching assistant (TA) in Quebec is a trained school professional, who meets the student¹ for about 30 minutes a week, in a school office, outside the classroom and mostly during breaks (e.g. lunch or recess). In France, the TA sits in the classroom, next to the student, usually between 12 to 25 hours (Kalubi et al., 2015; Komitès, 2013).

Without detailing all the differences between the two countries, the management of school-relation provision support process is worth clarifying. In France, once a child has received a diagnosis of ASC, it is a regional non-school-related institution, called the '*Departmental House of Handicapped Persons*'², that attributes aid and services (human, financial, material, etc.), depending of the child's medical file and the social situation of the family. Hence, a child can receive the support of a teaching assistant in any school that he or she may attend. Consequently, in France, it is frequent for the parents of students with ASC to choose private schools, for various reasons: easier communication with the school staff, same establishment from primary to secondary education, smaller student / teacher ratio, more flexible pedagogy, etc. (Aubineau et al., 2018; Philip, 2012). While this can be a significant advantage for some students, it also creates an unfair situation for the less fortunate families. In Quebec, the attribution of aid, including the presence of a TA, is managed by the school board administration, like in most occidental countries (Poirier and Cappe, 2016; Komitès, 2013). In this case, families do not have the choice of the school for which the TA is assigned. Few exceptions aside, Quebec students in private schools do not receive individualised support of a teaching assistant.

¹ This is the most common situation for students with ASC in mainstream secondary schools.

² In French: 'Maison départementale des personnes handicapées'

The differences of school and health systems' management between these two French-speaking countries can constitute an opportunity to study if and how it can influence the experience of inclusion and what can we learn from each other to improve and adjust our own social policies.

The current study

This study is part of a wider doctoral research, conducted between 2015 and 2017. It aimed at understanding how students with high functioning autism cope with mainstream education in secondary schools in France and Quebec. Despite an increasing recognition of the importance of including the views and experiences of students with autism (Fayette and Bond, 2017; Humphrey and Lewis, 2008a; Tobias, 2009), very few studies have taken these recommendations into account in francophone research (Godeau et al., 2015; Komitès, 2013). Thus, in this article, we give a central place to the voices of students, "often studied but seldom heard" (Ferguson, Ferguson, and Taylor, 1992, p. 14) as we recognise them as experts and knowledge co-producers.

Recent research in the field of special education recommend using a mixed-method approach for examining the complexity of inclusion from an ecological perspective (Brewster and Coleyshaw, 2011; Harrington et al., 2014; Jindal-Snape et al., 2006; Toor, Hanley, and Hebron, 2016). Despite this advice, a recent systematic review (Fayette and Bond, 2017) noted that no mixed-method study met the criteria to be included in their research. In order to help fill this gap in Francophone research, we used a parallel, mixed-method approach with a triangulation of the instruments (semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, diaries) and the reporters (teenagers and parents). In this paper, we illustrate the results of thematic analysis from the interviews with these students and discuss the most salient findings in regard to francophone contexts.

Methods

Participants

Twenty-six (26) teenagers aged between 12 and 16 years ($M = 14.69$, $SD = 1.08$) collaborated in the project. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants (teenagers and their parents) included in the study. The inclusion criteria for the adolescents were the following:

1. Having a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder or pervasive developmental disorder (including Asperger syndrome);
2. Being enrolled full time in a mainstream secondary school (with or without a teaching assistant), in ninth and tenth grade;
3. French spoken at home;
4. Living in France or in Quebec.

All the participants, from France ($n=17$) and Quebec ($n=9$) attended mainstream secondary schools, in ninth ($n=12$) or tenth grade ($n=13$), in both public ($n=12$) or private ($n=13$) schools. In France, eight students were accompanied during class periods, between 12 to 24 hours per week. In Quebec, one student received full time assistance in school and four students received an occasional assistance when needed. Tables 1 and 2 present the socio-demographic, school and medical data of the participants for both countries.

=> Insert Tables 1 and 2

Materials

Procedure

Each participant took part in a semi-structured interview for about one hour, usually at home. Most of the families met the researcher once before the interview with the teenager, to sign the consent forms and to get to know each other. Given the communication challenges for individuals with ASC, multiple precautions were taken to increase their participation and

their engagement in the research (see discussion for details). In particular, in order to facilitate the discussion and minimise anxiety, two weeks before the meeting, all participants were given an electronic document describing the proceedings and the main themes covered during the interview (see Appendix A).

Data analysis strategy

All the interviews were recorded with a Dictaphone and then integrally transcribed for analysis. We used the software *QDA Miner 5.0.4* (Provalis) to perform a thematic analysis, in accordance with Braun and Clarke's structured six-step process (2006). We chose to prioritise identification and description of themes over their interpretation, even if we provide practical recommendations directly based on the experiences of the participants. Thus, data were analysed using a pragmatic, content-analysis driven approach.

The thematic analysis was guided by six analytic questions:

1. What do the participants say about their current experience of school inclusion?
2. To what do they aspire regarding their educational and professional ambitions?
3. What are their experiences and feelings about friendship, inside and outside of school?
4. How do they perceive themselves and how does autism play a role in their identity formation?
5. What are the satisfactions and dissatisfactions of the participants regarding the support they receive inside and outside of school?
6. What is their advice and their proposals for improvement in order to promote a more successful experience of inclusion in mainstream secondary schools?

Results

In this section, we present the main inhibitors and enablers reported by the participants regarding their inclusion in mainstream secondary schools. Tables 3 and 4

respectively illustrate the main inhibitors and enablers reported and percentage of students having mentioned these themes. All original French verbatim excerpts are available in Appendix B.

⇒ Insert Tables 3 and 4

Inhibitors

Two aspects appear to be particularly challenging for these students: 1) difficulties with social reasoning, particularly important during adolescence (Humphrey and Symes, 2011) and 2) the secondary school environment that can be very stressful and distressing (Hill, 2014; Humphrey and Lewis, 2008b; Saggars, 2015; Wainscot et al., 2008), mostly because of all the intense sensory stimulation and difficult organisation. Previous studies that focused on this field identified three main obstacles that frequently prevent students from experiencing a fulfilling and truly beneficial inclusion: 1) managing sensory aspects, 2) bullying and 3) a daily overload (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008a; Tobias, 2009). The thematic analysis of the 26 participants' interviews strengthened those observations in Francophone educational settings. This section details the three main inhibitors highlighted by the participants.

Managing sensory aspects. Among the 26 participants, about 70% describe the stressful experience of daily dealing with noise and uproar in the school environment. Listed in the DSM 5 (APA, 2013) as being a significant impairment for most of the autistic individuals, sensory overload is the main negative factor of school inclusion mentioned by the participants. For more than half of the students, it seriously hinders their well-being in school and, for three of them, it has compromised their education in a mainstream school environment.

The discomfort is pointed out in various school contexts: the shared areas (cafeteria, playground, hallways, etc.) as well as in the classroom. About half of the participants choose to eat their lunch at home or to find a quiet room inside the school. Moreover, three pupils spend most of their breaks in the special education room, when there is one. For Pierre, walking during breaks is a strategy to deal with excessive noise and agitation:

Well... I do nothing. I just walk in the playground. This way, well... I walk around the playground a bit and, well, this way, I don't think of noise.

Consequently, several students regret that they can't enjoy and use these (lunch and between-class) breaks they need to relax. In the classroom specifically, students identified three main obstacles: the frequent chattering of their peers, the difficulty working in a team and the 'inefficient' management of the classroom by the teachers. For Nathan, examination periods are a relief and a welcomed break from constant noise:

MA: As an evaluation or an exam approaches, how do you feel?

Nathan: It's usually the best day of my life because the others are stressed, they don't speak [laugh]. [...] For me, getting an exam, as important as it could be, can't be compared to the happiness of being peaceful. Silence is gold. For me, it's perfect.

In order to limit their discomfort, participants use several strategies, such as wearing ear plugs or noise cancelling headphones (n=4) or finding quieter spaces (n>10). The school library is frequently mentioned as a place they like to spend their free time.

Peers' behaviour considered as immature and peer bullying. Over 75% of participants mention the 'immaturity' of their peers as one of the main obstacles to a well-lived inclusion. In their mindset, 'immaturity' refers to their peers' indiscipline, agitation, teasing and lack of seriousness. It often goes hand in hand with bullying, a situation that more than half of the sample experiences or has experienced in the past. Bullying can take different forms, from

repeated mocking in the classroom to insults and teasing in the playground. For five students, the parents had to intervene with the school staff to solve a difficult situation. One situation necessitated the withdrawal of a participant for the rest of the school year.

Finally, teamwork is mentioned as a source of anxiety for eight students out of 26. First, teamwork inside the classroom generates important noise. Secondly, the participants point out their difficulty interacting with peers, to choose and be chosen in a team and to be at ease in a group. According to them, communication remains the main problem: six of them report situations where they did most of the work by themselves because their teammates let them do it and still had the same grade.

Fatigue. With reference to the academic curriculum and the learning process, participants report a relatively difficult academic year. Among the reasons, their very busy schedule – inside and outside of school – is reported by 15 participants. This sustained pace affects the motivation and the capabilities of several students to study after school. For Loïc, the daily pace is so exhausting that sometimes, he just does not do his work, in agreement with his parents.

As the students explain, the fatigue is a combination of different factors. Among which, students often report multiple evaluations and examinations within a same day, increased complexity of the lessons, sensory overload, social requirements and their frequent difficulties involving executive functions. Regarding the last point, we need to stress that more than 60% (n=16) of the participants present at least one comorbidity, most of them having ADHD (n=11) or a ‘dys’ disorder (n=8). Thus, several learning requirements appear to be challenging for autistic students: writing while listening to the teacher, organising their school supplies, taking notes without a computer or simply paying attention to the lesson.

Emmanuel: In fact, the computer would be like a penguin in water: I go really fast.

And as soon as I come back to the pen: it's like putting a penguin on the floor.

In France nine participants out of 16 receive individualised help from a teaching assistant, 12 to 25 hours a week ($M = 17.27$, $SD = 5.20$), to facilitate their academic inclusion. Thus, despite the challenges mentioned above, most students appear to experience a relatively satisfying academic inclusion.

Beyond the academic-related factors, ten teenagers mention tiredness due to the support they receive inside the school settings and after school. They report a critical need for relaxation and decompression. Several participants explain that they wish they had some quiet time at home, without any formal activity or support services. If they usually appreciate the support they receive and find it useful, for some of them, this constant help can be detrimental:

Nathan: To be honest, no, I wouldn't need more [of provision support], because I am at a point where I have so much help that sometimes this is an overdose of these aids... Yes, I take some medication for example, but if I had more, too much, that wouldn't be helpful. There must... to reduce... We must get as much help as possible, but with a restriction. I have a threshold, a threshold we should not exceed. There has to have some help if possible... But I need NOT too much help, because unfortunately, this can be detrimental.

The feeling of receiving too much care is reported by seven participants. Consequently, some of them chose to stop using one or more support services. In particular: social skills training groups, speech therapy or psychomotor development sessions. Their reasons vary but besides their need for rest, the participants highlight a desire for autonomy and the conviction that this support was no longer useful or wanted. Two participants report a refusal from their parents to stop some services, despite their repeated request.

Enablers

Among the facilitators of their daily school life, three are frequently mentioned by the participants: the importance of having a passion or a career plan, being in a group where students share common profiles or interests and having a good friend inside the school.

Motivation to study. Nineteen participants mention a passion or a strong interest that orients them towards specific educational choices, such as technology, computer science, music or foreign languages. Almost one third already have a precise career plan, with a good knowledge of the academic curriculum they want to pursue. Eighty percent of the participants express the wish to attend university, whether they have a well-defined career plan or not. For those who are not driven by a passion, the future appears nebulous and some of them deliberately choose not to think about it, in order to avoid too much anxiety:

Participant: No, most of the time, I don't think about it, it's too much pressure for me. I'm not in a phase where I am able to think about all this. Not thinking about the future, but rather about the present. [...] It's really consciously that I don't want to be interested in the next steps because it's only one more thought and I have been asked recently NOT to think about it.³

Even for those students who present some academic challenges (n=4), having a project for later or a field of interest appears to be a strong motivation to work hard and to persevere in school.

Being enrolled in a curriculum where the students can share their passions. In this research, seven participants were enrolled in a specific discipline-oriented curriculum or in an international program where all students had been previously selected based on their academic records. In these schools, the group size is reduced, and students usually stay with the same peers throughout the program. The thematic analysis highlights the fact that participants enrolled in these programs experience their school inclusion rather differently:

³ This participant receives support from an educational worker, inside the school, that helps him to deal with anxiety and social skills.

they have a stronger sense of belonging to the group, they tend to enjoy team work and they really appreciate the rigor and the important challenges imposed by their teachers. Because of their similar profiles, establishing friendship with their classmates seems facilitated. When comparing his group to another one of the same age, Jérémie explains:

Then, I discovered that there is a huge difference between my group and the [other] group. My group could be compared to a net: everybody knows everybody, while in the other group, there are more like ‘gangs’. For example, “YOU are not in my team because you are not in my *gang*”.

Rarely mentioned in research, these demanding curricula (music-oriented, international education, etc.) can be valuable options for these students with academic facilities or with a passion that drives them towards a specific career path.

Having a friend inside the school. Thematic analysis indicates that almost all participants can formulate their own definition of friendship. Confidence, intimacy and sharing of common interests appear as critical aspects for these teenagers. According to Matthias:

A friend, it’s someone with whom [he] can share all [his] secrets, or with whom [he] can play with, share things... talk about [his] concerns. Someone willing to support [him] if [he has] trouble, who really makes efforts to have good conversations and who has the same interests as [him].

Despite their theoretical understanding of the definition, the descriptions of their relationships with friends are more confused. Half of the participants use the words ‘friend’, ‘buddy’, ‘classmate’ or ‘relation’ in an interchangeable way. They generally describe peers with whom they spend time at school as friends. Thus, the boundary between friendship and other kind of peer relationships appears unclear and can vary during the interview.

In a more positive register, 11 participants declare having their best friend or ‘a (very) good friend’ inside the school or in the same classroom. Their presence is reported as an important facilitator in their everyday school life. It is noteworthy to mention that half of these very good friends also have special needs, such as ADHD, ASC, learning disability, physical disability or giftedness. It is often ‘thanks to’ their differences that they started to bond.

These main findings bring new insights about personal experiences of youth with autistic spectrum conditions in Francophone secondary school settings. There are no significant differences between France and Quebec regarding the overall well-being of participants. However, some distinctions between the two countries can be noted, particularly concerning the presence of teaching assistants.

Discussion

A paradoxical inclusion

The main findings spotlight a phenomenon also described in several studies in the field (Fortuna, 2014; Humphrey and Lewis, 2008b; McLaughlin and Rafferty, 2011): the inclusion of students with high functioning autism in mainstream secondary schools is a paradoxical inclusion. Although school inclusion can be stressful and challenging for most participants, it appears to be necessary and beneficial for the development of their social skills and the realisation of their full potential (Fayette and Bond, 2017; Leach and Duffy, 2009; Saggars, Hwang, and Mercier, 2011). This paradox requires an extensive reflection about the possible consequences (for short, mid and long term) of such experiences for their identity formation, their self-esteem and their mental health. Osborne and Reed (2011) reviewed numerous risks for these young persons, such as: academic and school failure (Humphrey, 2008), low self-esteem, depression, becoming a victim of bullying or absence of education and career plans (Ashburner et al., 2010, Browning et al., 2009). In average, youths

with autism are more vulnerable to a wide range of difficulties than other students (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008a; Saggars, 2015).

It is worth noting that both French and Quebec school systems have the same triple mission: to educate, to qualify and to socialise. Educating only is not sufficient to prepare students to become adults, empowered and fulfilled. For autistic youth having difficulties with social communication, this triple commitment of the school institution is particularly crucial.

Considerations requiring more investigation

Following the thematic analysis, two aspects of school inclusion stand out as requiring extensive examination. First, we consider the delicate role of the teaching assistant for HFASC students in French mainstream secondary schools. Secondly, we examine benefits and limits of social skills training groups.

Roles of the teaching assistant. In both countries, their prescribed roles consist of providing moral support (managing anxiety, explaining social situations), helping with school organisation and, if necessary, acting as an intermediary between the teenager and the teachers. Practically, in Quebec, the teaching assistant mostly provides support with social interaction, informally or in a more directive way. In contrast, in France, the TA also plays an important role in note taking, instruction rephrasing and, for three students, homework drafting.

Bao (French participant): I have a teaching assistant [...] who writes evaluations. I dictate my answers during these evaluations. And it is her who writes them, so I can finish on time. And it is her who helps me a little with daily organisation, for example to tidy up my folder, because I'm always the last one to get out of the classroom!

In France, two specific concerns regarding the intervention of the TA can be highlighted:

1. While most of the French participants acknowledge that the academic support received from the teaching assistant is helpful, 7 out of 9 mention uneasiness and discomfort associated with the daily presence of an adult next to them. A clear distinction between academic *vs* social support can be made when students express what they think about the presence of the TA during break periods:

Julian: Well... Regarding school work, I'd say it's better when she's here and regarding social aspects, I'd say it's worse. [sighs]. I don't know, I... [silence]... Seeing me with an adult like this who gets under my feet everywhere, I mean I don't know hum... It's a bit weird!

The risk of being stigmatised or bullied because of the TA's presence is a real concern among the students. To avoid "being called a handicapped [person]" or "having someone that manages everything for [them]", three students refused teaching assistant services. These observations are similar to McLaughlin and Rafferty's results (2014), where participants report negative impact of the TA on their social inclusion. This consideration is relevant to guide education policies and pedagogical innovation.

2. In 2013, the French Ministry of Education in charge of evaluating the effective roles of TA for students with special needs acknowledged that "avoiding the pitfalls of over-support" will be critical for the next years. The report especially highlights that:

Even if we have to be cautious about imprudent generalisations or hasty conclusions, this report echoes concerns expressed in work groups or by secondary school students and students with disabilities who refuse human support because it is considered as being too intrusive, which can be stigmatising and constitutes a hindrance to their autonomy and to direct relationships with their environment. (Komitès, 2013, p. 19)

The absence of a clear delineation of their role for youth with HFASC emphasizes one of the major challenges in inclusive education: how should we assist autistic students in secondary education while at the same time preparing them, as of now, for autonomy necessary for their future as students and adults?

Tobias (2009) studied the perspectives of students with Asperger syndrome and their parents regarding the provision of support received in the school environment. She showed that participants themselves request to develop practical life-skills in order to “negotiate the real world”. This perspective is widely shared by their parents who fear that a “too comfortable” school environment will handicap the young adults even more, by not preparing them sufficiently – and soon enough – for their future, without any safeguards. One efficient way to prevent the risk of “disempowerment” (Martin, 2006; Pellicano, 2017; Toor, Hanley, and Hebron, 2016) would be to provide “just enough” accommodation, depending on the needs and strengths of each student. This individualised approach requires extensive and regular evaluations with student participation, taking into account their expectations for the future, as well as promoting coordination between parents and teachers.

In 2014, the French government published a new set of recommendations to train future teaching assistants and to progressively recognise their precarious occupation as a real profession, with clearer guidelines regarding their work with youth with different special needs (Ministère de l’Education Nationale, 2014). Currently, no evident change has been noted among the participants or their parents, but we acknowledge that this is a long process whose effects might be manifest only in a few years from now.

Advantages and limits of social skills training groups. At the time of the study, nine participants (n=8 in France) were regularly participating in social skills training groups (SSTG) for teenagers with high functioning autism. Currently, no formal guidelines exist

regarding the ways and means of such groups: Who should be animating the meetings? How often and for how long the group should meet? What should be taught and how? How can we evaluate the benefits from participating at a SSTG? For now, none of these questions have been clearly answered with compelling systematic reviews. To help fill this gap, Andanson and her colleagues (2011) published a literature review with three main goals: 1) to make an inventory of the articles regarding SSTG among youth with HFASC, 2) to analyse their means of intervention and 3) to draw some general principles to facilitate the development of these interventions. After the selection process, twelve studies were included in the final analysis. The authors underlined that, despite the need for more research to evaluate generalisation and sustainability of the acquired skills, the social skills training groups appear to be “beneficial” and “significantly effective”. Andanson et al. (2011) offer some principles that seem to be worth considering: 1) importance of adapting the means to the functioning characteristics of these teenagers; 2) small number of participants in groups; 3) caring, structured and predictive environment; 4) sessions combining didactic teaching and training exercises depending on their current objectives.

Given the heterogeneity in the practices, the teenagers who take part to SSTG might have very different experiences. The interviews, when crossed with questionnaires’ results, show that being in a SSTG is mostly helpful for a positive autistic identity, especially outside the school. As most of the participants explained, the group is a place where they can be fully themselves, among other teenagers who share the same condition:

Jérémie: I find that it allows me to free my “true 100% self” and to not have a restraint about what can I say and how I can act. Because they [ndlr: the autistic teenagers in the group] know everything but, with the others, like in school, you have to keep a restraint about some spheres... or some stuff that I couldn’t say because they would get bored.

Surprisingly, few participants reported the direct benefits of improving their social skills. While the social skills training groups can be useful supports for teenagers with ASC, a possible limitation could be pointed out: among the sample, three participants chose or asked to stop participating to SSTG, for various reasons, including the wish of not always being the – only – person who makes efforts to fit in social groups or to adjust himself to the social interests or norms. This aspect is clearly reported by Stef Bonnot Briey, an autistic adult and job coach for autistic individuals, during an oral presentation for the ‘*Aspie Days*’ conference⁴ in 2016 in Lille (France):

Will we spend our life to be re-educated? Will we spend our life to be normalised? For some professionals, [yes] unfortunately... Or, at some point, we also have to learn how to live with this difference and think that if we already use all the strengths [we have], the lacks will probably be less invalidating. [...] We reach an objective, you give us another one. We never take a break. We never have time, even to enjoy our new gains because there is already another objective [...]. I think that, at some point, we need to assume who we are. If ourselves we dive into this process of trying to normalise at all costs because the milieu forces us, at some point we crack. [...] We can’t spend our a whole life in overadaptation.

This testimony emphasizes the precarious balance that needs to be found between the development of social competencies and the need for the entourage to respect the adolescent’s decisions. In the present research, ten participants express an important need to rest. This can partially be achieved by diminishing the various supports they receive. We advocate that this can be an instructive part of their emergent autonomy.

Autistic identity during adolescence

The thematic analysis highlights the variety of strategies used by the adolescents to cope with autistic identity in their daily school life. Faced with a similar situation, the

⁴ Available online video: <http://www.colloque-tv.com/colloques/salon-aspie-days>

adolescents can have different – even opposite – reactions or opinions. The disclosure of their diagnosis to the classmates is a blatant example. For nine participants, such as Alice, explaining their condition appears to be an effective way to promote tolerance and understanding among her classmates:

They [the classmates] listen, it interests them. [...] I prefer them to know, yes, because it allows me to explain certain things and hum, it also can help avoiding teasing, I think.

Whereas for Pierre, it is safer to hide his condition to his peers because “otherwise, people will call [him] names. [He] already experienced this in seventh year”. Their testimonies underline the complexity for many students negotiating their autistic identity inside vs outside the school environment. This is particularly accentuated during adolescence, a critical period for identity consolidation. The importance accorded to peers’ judgement and the social pressure increase (Barnard, Prior, and Potter, 2000; Humphrey and Lewis, 2008a), while social relationships and codes often become more complex (Humphrey and Symes, 2010; Saggars, 2015). Hence, the quality of their friendships and their self-perception can have significant repercussions on their school inclusion experiences and well-being (O’Hagan and Hebron, 2016).

In secondary schools, a significant number of students with ASC become more aware of their social challenges and, thus, try to fit in to be part of the group. They often use various strategies to hide their difficulties and “fit in” (Poon et al., 2014), even compromising their identity or using masquerading (Carrington et al., 2003). These attempts are rarely successful (Jones and Frederickson, 2010) and pose a sizeable problem for authenticity in their identity formation: how to develop satisfying friendships with peers while asserting her or his own identity – including autistic identity? – without fear of being rejected?

Therefore, it would be unrealistic and even detrimental, to propose a standard model of successful inclusion for autistic students in mainstream secondary education. As highlighted in this research, participants have different needs and different expectations at different times that must be addressed on an individual level, in collaboration with the student and parents.

Need for empowerment and participative research

The main goal of our research was to give the HFASC students voices a central place and to collaborate with the participants as coproducers of knowledge and experts (Fayette and Bond, 2017; Milton, 2012). Many studies have shown that children and adolescents are reliable reporters (Gayral-Taminh et al., 2005; Herjanic et al., 1975; Manificat and Dazord, 1997). Even more, because of rapid changes during adolescence in maturation and identity formation, their own understanding of the inclusion process and probable outcomes is essential to consider (Cascio, 2015). According to Baker (2006), conversations about autistic identity can be even more significant in adolescence and should be promoted. However, given the communication challenges of autistic individuals, some precautions should be taken into consideration to optimally investigate their viewpoints (Harrington et al., 2013). In this perspective, Preece and Jordan (2009) as well as Harrington et al. (2013) provide useful advice we could follow to facilitate the engagement of adolescents with autism in the research process. As an example, Harrington et al. mention that because autistic children usually have trouble with remembering facts from the past, the questions should focus on the present experience as much as possible. Regarding the specific subpopulation of teenagers with high functioning autism, the authors remind the reader that these teenagers can present excellent verbal skills which could mask some challenges with receptive communication.

Our study underlines the critical importance to include the participants at every stage of the research (Fayette and Bond, 2017; Pellicano, 2017) and asking for their experiences

directly. In this perspective of empowerment, participative tools such as focus group and photo elicitation could be particularly useful and relevant to an in-depth understanding of their viewpoints, needs or expectations. Focus groups have the advantage of diminishing the possible impact of social desirability, because of the presence of the other participants who share similar experiences. Moreover, the group dynamics and the anonymity can facilitate interactions and, thus, creating a context for the emergence of knowledge and shared opinions (Thibeault, 2010; Tobias, 2009). Photo elicitation consists in exchange with the adolescents through pictures they took in their various environments and that they consider as being important for them. This technique offers the opportunity to the participants to master the data and to talk about the themes that seem necessary for them without being the centre of attention. Finally, because pictures constitute explicit landmarks, the participants can develop their thoughts more easily or remember specific aspects they would like to discuss with the researcher (Dyches et al., 2004).

Implications for practice

This section presents practical recommendations for the different stakeholders involved in the academic and social inclusion of teenagers with HFASC in order to support them with their transition into adulthood.

Input from the students is critical. Every decision regarding the teenagers should be made in consultation with them, whether about education, academic and vocational guidance, leisure or support services. In particular:

- Teenagers must be involved in the drafting and (re-)evaluation of their individualised intervention plans. Their opinion is just as valuable as that of the adults: they are key stakeholders in the school community team;
- If the student prefers not to disclose the HFASC diagnosis to others (teachers, peers, etc.), this choice should be respected. Disclosing the diagnosis of a student without or against

the explicit will of a particular student would likely be counter-productive and negatively affect self-confidence and feeling of belonging;

- When the adolescent expresses a need for decompression and relaxation, various actions can be done, such as: (temporary or not) cessation of support services, participation in (non-therapeutic) leisure activities, more alone time, etc. Even if the entourage considers certain training as necessary or beneficial, it is critically important to be vigilant about the risk of normalisation and over-adaptation;
- Leisure activities with typical peers are highly valuable by allowing the establishment of relationships outside of the school environment and generalisation of certain social skills. In many testimonies, these activities (e.g. scouting, acting lessons) appear as levers for social inclusion, among typical peers.

Provide just enough to promote autonomy. Being autonomous does not mean the absence of support but rather being able to ask for the help one needs. Thus, from the perspective of empowerment, the student, the parents and the staff would benefit greatly by organising just enough support for teenagers to be able to function and progress optimally in their environment. This *just enough* depends on every student and should be regularly re-evaluated with the student's input.

Evaluate. Given the diversity of ways in which people express autism, support options should be done on a case-by-case basis, after a rigorous, regular and individualised evaluation of the student' strengths and needs. Particular attention must be paid to comorbidities that are often found in the ASC population, such as ADHD, anxiety or learning disabilities.

Invest in the students' strengths. Passions constitute one of the key enablers for inclusion. Consequently, it is critical for staff and parents to take time to get to know their interests, passions and strengths. Considering them and valorising them, in practice and in learning, will increase self-confidence and personal engagement. In this perspective, some

international education programs with a focus on music or sports can be excellent options for students strongly motivated and academically capable.

Help teenagers to have a deep understanding of their diagnosis. An in-depth and early understanding of their condition allows students to develop adaptative coping strategies, empowerment, ability to communicate their own needs and strengths to the people in charge and be able to advocate for themselves. Ideally, the child's own understanding of his or her condition should be set up as early as possible, with the support of parents, staff and professional caregivers.

Promote neurodiversity. For all the stakeholders, promoting awareness about the particularities of individuals with HFASC is essential so that they can access the same opportunities in education, work, and social life. To this end, the use of certain words is important, such as progressively moving from 'ASD' to 'ASC'. It promotes honouring everyone's capacities and adds value to neurodiversity.

These recommendations should be considered in the light of the diversity observed in this autistic subpopulation. Far from being an obstacle to the understanding of their experiences of inclusion, the heterogeneity of autistic profiles can be viewed from the angle of affirmative diversity.

Limitations and future directions

First, the sample size was limited to 26 participants in total, with an unequal repartition between France and Quebec students (respectively n=17 and n=9). Despite a wide and bi-national recruitment, the sample is not representative of most families with autistic adolescents. In France, particularly, there is an over-representation of families with higher socio-economic status. This bias has consequences regarding the access to – private – services and private schools. As shown in table 2, two third of the French participants attend

private schools whereas only two brothers are in a private boarding school in Quebec. The thesis results indicate that the French participants received significantly more services than the Quebec participants, as we analysed it in our thesis.

Secondly, it is also worth noting that the 26 participants are far from representing the subpopulation of Francophone autistic teenagers. All of them are enrolled in a full-time education, present sufficient communication skills to take part to an in-depth one-in-one interview with a researcher and have intellectual capabilities ranged from average to very superior. Nevertheless, it was important to allow them to speak, in order to gain an understanding ‘from the inside’ of their lives and personal experiences, before spreading this type of research to autistic individuals with more heterogeneous levels of functioning (Aubineau et al., 2017). Presenting their testimonies first is also a choice, to underline the importance of their subjective experience and to avoid the comparison with those of the adults (parents, professionals, school staff) (Connor, 2000; Fortuna, 2014; Hay and Winn, 2005; Howard et al., 2006). Therefore, the analysis of the parents’ interviews is currently in progress and will be presented in another article. In addition, given the considerable amount of data we have, we chose to present the teenagers’ perspectives only, without the data crossing between thematic analysis of the interviews and statistical analysis of the questionnaires.

Finally, our research was not an “action research”, or participative research strictly speaking. Even if we did our best to include participants at all stages of the project, we had some limitations, mostly for the pre-investigation phase (defining the themes with autistic students and re-drafting the interview grid), given the very limited number of families who took part to the research project.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide a valuable overview of the perspectives of 26 Francophone students with high functioning autistic spectrum conditions about their experiences of school, from their academic and social difficulties and success, to their needs, their passions and their expectations for the future. The results highlight the main obstacles and enablers emphasized by the participants for a successful inclusion. In order to support this process, two key steps can be noted: 1) promoting early empowerment by enabling youth to gain an in-depth understanding of their diagnosis (strengths and needs) and 2) encouraging them to speak for themselves. In addition, a step-by-step increase in autonomy also has positive consequences for the whole family, by relieving parents (and siblings) of the need to manage the numerous burdensome administrative requirements (school, health, service support, etc.). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is critical to look for the direct perspectives of these teenagers who are, above all, “the most expert, most capable of telling what it is like to be them” (Speraw, 2009, p. 736). It is a matter of social justice, for public policies and national recommendations to ensure that every individual has an equal access to health services and education opportunities. Therefore, without any intention of generalisability, these results fill the gap in Francophone research about the relevance and the necessity of involving adolescents in the process, to draw guidelines and policies that really take their needs and expectations into consideration for a more accessible and inclusive society.

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Table 1 Medical data of the participants, in France (n=16)^a and in Quebec (n=9)

	French participants	Quebecois participants
Current diagnosis	n	n
Asperger syndrome	13	2
PDD (or PDD-NOS)	1	5
Autism	2	2
Age of diagnosis	Age	Age
Range	4.5 – 14.8	3 – 11.1
M _{age}	10.6	7.8
SD	3.6	3.3
Comorbidity	n	n
ADHD	4	7
SLD	4	2
Dyspraxia	2	0
Psychiatric condition (OCD, DD, AD)	2	2

^aOne family did not return the personal information sheet; Abbreviations: SD for standard deviation; ADHD for Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder; SLD for Specific learning disorders; OCD for Obsessive-compulsive disorder; DD for Depressive disorders; AD for Anxiety disorders.

Table 2 Description of the participants, in France (n=16)^a and Quebec (n=9) according to age, current grade, school type and weekly presence of the teaching assistant (hours per week)

	France	Quebec
Age	Age	Age
Range	12.4 – 16.2	13.7 – 16.8
M _{age}	14.3	15.3
SD	1.2	0.8
Current grade	n	n
Year 9	9	4
Year 10	8	5
School type	n	n
Private	11	2
Public	6	7
Teaching assistant presence	n	n
0	7	4
About 30 minutes / week	0	4
12 à 15	5	0
≥ 20	4	1

^aOne family did not complete the sociodemographic information in its entirety

Table 3 Exemplars of inhibitors from thematic analysis

Subthemes	n ^a	Example statement
Managing sensory aspects		
Noise	17	<i>'I never went all the way through suicide, just to say, but sometimes [...] I almost wish I would be deaf [...].'</i>
Disorganisation	6	<i>'The exit, at the front gate! There is a long queue, we all are squashed in, everyone is shifting...'</i>
Peers' behaviours		
'Immature' perceived behaviours	19	<i>'I love to learn and study, I love to have beautiful knowledge but being with lots of others who do not have the same love for school sometimes disinterests me of school.'</i>
Bullying	13	<i>'In the changing rooms, nobody is watching so I get teased... by the others. One student was pushing me... They had fun pushing in the changing rooms.'</i>
Team work	7	<i>'Once, I had a team work to do and my teammates have given up on me... I was really anxious, so my parents [...] told me they will inform the teacher that... that it would be best to have separate grades. Yes, because I worked a lot harder than them'</i>
Fatigue		
Meeting the class requirements	>15	<i>'Well, hum, given the important workload, well... I can't really succeed. Sometimes, I come back home so tired, I can't even do my homework.'</i>
Support overload	10	<i>'I find this [homework and support after school] tiring, and sometimes exhausting! Even both, sometimes!'</i>
Need for rest and free time	10	<i>'It [provision support after school] adds one more, and finally, time flies by always too fast because if I obviously had the time I need, I wouldn't really have problems because I would have time to... to breath.'</i>

^aNumber of participants who provided a response coded into this category

Table 4 Exemplars of enablers from thematic analysis

Subthemes	n ^a	Example statement
Motivation to study		
Having a passion	16	<i>'I see life and all the stuff differently. The best way to express myself is that I do some music and it's in this direction that I want to go later and so, I produce a distinctive music because the way I see things is different from everyone else. [...] It's like a particular gift.'</i>
Going to the university	21	<i>'I intend to study physics and astronomy to become an astrophysicist! [...] It is a doctorate. The doctorate of astrophysics is 8 years after A levels. [...] It doesn't scare me. I feel ready to go!'</i>
Having a precise career plan	8	<i>'My advice: focus on your... on your future profession otherwise... You know, me at least, for me it's working well.'</i>
Being enrolled in a special curriculum		
Shared interests	4	<i>'The group is closed so it is always the same group and the persons all have something in common which is they really love school and they succeed really well at school. There are like the 'brainies' of our school.'</i>
Studious atmosphere	3	<i>'Our class is the international class. There are those who lived in USA or [...] there are clever enough people! Some are less clever but more productive. So that commands a working atmosphere. [...].'</i>
Having a good friend inside the school environment		
Friend with special needs	6	<i>'We get on very well! But in fact... Because he is... a little hyperactive, a little different as they say! Yes! He is not very included in the classroom. So, as usually during team work, he was alone, I teamed with him and that is how we met.'</i>
'Geek' friend	7	<i>'Usually, we all have our little habits. We all do the same thing, we are geeks. This is the traditional activity.'</i>

^aNumber of participants who provided a response coded into this category

Table 3 Pre-interview electronic document for youth with ASD (free translation from French)

Main themes for interviews
Daily life of students with ASD in secondary schools

Dear [name of the participant],

Thank you for your participation in this research project. In order to better understand how students with ASD feel in mainstream secondary schools, we invite you to take part to an interview with a researcher so we can collect / gather / have your testimony.

If you want to get ready for it or talk about it with your family, these are the main themes that we will discuss together:

- Your educational background (primary and secondary curricular);
- Relationships with your classmates, your teachers and, if applicable, your teaching assistant;
- Daily school life: classes, recess, lunch break;
- How you perceive and live with Asperger syndrome;
- Relationships with your family;
- Your passions and projects;
- Your activities outside of school;
- More generally, your well-being and your quality of life;

*If you have any question, you can contact us by email at: r****.a****@gmail.com*

[Name of researcher], [function]

APPENDIX B

French translations of example statements

a. Statement in the main text

English translation	Original French version
Well... I do nothing. I just walk in the playground. This way, well... I walk around the playground a bit and, well, this way, I don't think of noise.	Ben je fais rien. Je marche quand même dans la cour. Comme ça dans je fais un peu le tour de la cour avec ma voisine. Comme ça je pense plus de bruit.
MA: As an evaluation or an exam approaches, how do you feel?	MA : A l'approche d'une évaluation ou d'un examen, comment te sens-tu ?
Nathan: It's usually the best day of my life because the others are stressed, they don't speak [laugh]. [...] For me, getting an exam, as important as it could be, can't be compared to the happiness of being peaceful. Silence is gold. For me, it's perfect.	Nathan : C'est souvent la meilleure journée de ma vie, parce que les autres sont stressés, ils ne parlent pas [rires]. [...] Nan car c'est pour moi là le fait d'être devant un examen aussi important soit-il, ça se compare pas au bonheur d'être tranquille. C'est le silence est d'or. Pour moi c'est parfait.
In fact, the computer would be like a penguin in water: I go really fast. And as soon as I come back to the pen: it's like putting a penguin on the floor.	En fait l'ordinateur ça serait comme un pingouin dans l'eau : je vais vachement vite. Puis dès que je retourne le stylo : autant mettre un pingouin sur terre.
To be honest, no, I wouldn't need more [of provision support], because I am at a point where I have so much help that sometimes this is an overdose of these aids... Yes, I take some medication for example, but if I had more, too much, that wouldn't be helpful. There must... to reduce... We must get as much help as possible, but with a restriction. I have a threshold, a threshold we should not exceed. There has to have some help if possible... But I need NOT too much help, because unfortunately, this can be detrimental.	Pour être franc, non j'en aurais pas besoin d'autres, parce que c'est rendu que j'en ai tellement que des fois c'est une overdose de ces aides-là... Oui, je prends des médicaments par exemple, mais si on venait à donner tellement de médicaments, ce serait pas bénéfique. Il faut... Réduire... Il faut aider au maximum avec une restriction. Se donner une barre à atteindre, une barre qu'on ne dépasse pas. Même des aides, il en faut, il en faut un maximum... C'est... Il faut PAS trop d'aide, malheureusement ça peut en devenir néfaste.
No, most of the time, I don't think about it, it's too much pressure for me. I'm not in a phase where I am able to think about all this. Not thinking about the future, but rather about the present. [...] It's really consciously that I don't want to be interested in the next steps because it's only one more thought and I have been asked recently NOT to think about it.	Nan, souvent j'y pense pas c'est trop de pression pour moi, je suis pas à une période qui me permet de penser à tout ça. A réfléchir à l'avenir, mais plutôt au présent. [...] Oui c'est très volontairement que je ne veux pas m'intéresser au reste du parcours parce que c'est rien, de plus on m'a demandé dernièrement de ne pas y penser.

Then, I discovered that there is a huge difference between my group and the [other] group. My group could be compared to a net: everybody knows everybody, while in the other group, there are more like 'gangs'. For example, "YOU are not in my team because you are not in my *gang*".

A friend, it's someone with whom [he] can share all [his] secrets, or with whom [he] can play with, share things... talk about [his] concerns. Someone willing to support [him] if [he has] trouble, who really makes efforts to have good conversations and who has the same interests as [him].'

I have a teaching assistant [...] who writes evaluations. I dictate my answers during these evaluations. And it is her who writes them, so I can finish on time. And it is her who helps me a little with daily organisation, for example to tidy up my folder, because I'm always the last one to get out of the classroom!

Well... Regarding school work, I'd say it's better when she's here and regarding social aspects, I'd say it's worse. [sighs]. I don't know, I... [silence]... Seeing me with an adult like this who gets under my feet everywhere, I mean I don't know hum... It's a bit weird!

I find that it allows me to free my 'true 100% self' and to not have a restraint about what can I say and how I can act. Because they [ndlr: the autistic teenagers in the group] know everything but, with the others, like in school, you have to keep a restraint about some spheres... or some stuff that I couldn't say because they would get bored.

They [the classmates] listen, it interests them. [...] I prefer them to know, yes, because it allows me to explain certain things and hum, it also can help avoiding teasing, I think.

Et j'ai découvert par la suite qu'il y a vraiment une grosse différence entre mon groupe et l'autre groupe. Mon groupe, on peut plus comparer ça à un filet, tout le monde se connaît, alors que dans l'autre groupe y'a plus des *gangs*. Par exemple, « Toi t'es pas dans mon équipe parce que t'es pas dans ma *gang* ».

Un ami, c'est une personne à qui je peux confier tous mes secrets, ou je peux jouer avec, partager les choses... Faire part de mes inquiétudes, une personne capable de me soutenir si jamais j'ai un ennui, qui fait vraiment des efforts pour qu'on ait de bonnes conversations et qui a des centres d'intérêts les mêmes que moi.

J'ai une AVS! [...] qui m'écrit les évaluations. Je lui dicte mes réponses lors des évaluations. Et c'est elle qui les décrit pour que je puisse les faire dans les temps. Et qui m'aide aussi un peu dans l'organisation, par exemple pour ranger mon classeur. Parce que je suis toujours le dernier à sortir des cours !

Ben... Niveau du travail, je dirais que c'est mieux quand elle est là et niveau social je dirais que c'est moins bien. [Soupirs] Je sais pas, j'ai [silence]... Me voir avec un adulte comme ça qui me traîne dans les pattes partout enfin je sais pas euh... C'est un peu chelou !

Je trouve que ça permet de relâcher mon vrai 100 % moi et puis ne pas avoir de retenue sur qu'est-ce que je peux dire et puis comment je peux agir. Puisqu'ils savent tous mais, avec les autres, comme à l'école, tu es obligé d'avoir une retenue sur certaines sphères... Ou certains trucs que je pourrais pas dire parce qu'ils s'ennuieraient.

Oui, ils [les camarades de classe] sont... Ils écoutent, ça les intéresse. [...] Ben, je préfère qu'ils le sachent, oui, parce que ça permet d'expliquer des choses, et euh ça peut permettre d'éviter des moqueries aussi, je pense.

b. Statements in Table 3

Example statement	Original French version
I never went all the way through suicide, just to say, but sometimes [...] I almost wish I would be deaf [...]	Je suis jamais allé jusqu'au suicide, juste pour dire mais, quelque fois là j'arrive presque à la mort de mes oreilles oui... Pff... Des fois j'avais quasiment envie d'être sourd tellement ça me...
The exit, at the front gate! There is a long queue, we all are squashed in, everyone is shifting...	La sortie ! La sortie au portail! Parce que y'a une grosse file, on est tous serrés, tout l'monde se pousse euh... et le sport aussi.
I love to learn and study, I love to have beautiful knowledge but being with lots of others who do not have the same love for school sometimes disinterests me of school.	J'adore apprendre et étudier, j'adore avoir une belle connaissance mais le fait d'être avec des tas d'autres qui n'ont pas ce même amour de l'école, me désintéresse quelquefois de l'école.
In the changing rooms, nobody is watching so I get teased... by the others. One student was pushing me... They had fun pushing in the changing rooms.	Ben c'est qu'en fait dans la, dans la, dans les vestiaires y'a personne qui surveille, du coup je me fais embêter.... Par les autres ! Y'en avait un autre... y'en avait un autre qui euh me poussait ! Ils s'amusaient à me pousser euh oui.
Once, I had a team work to do and my teammates have given up on me... I was really anxious, so my parents [...] told me they will inform the teacher that... that it would be best to have separate grades. Yes, because I worked a lot harder than them	Ben, une fois j'avais eu un travail d'équipe et puis mes coéquipiers m'avaient pas mal abandonné... J'étais pas mal stressé puis justement ils m'ont conseillé... ils allaient... ils m'ont dit qu'ils allaient avertir un professeur que je... bon... que ce serait mieux d'avoir des notes séparées. Ouais parce que j'avais pas mal plus travaillé qu'eux là.
Well, hum, given the important workload, well... I can't really succeed. Sometimes, I come back home so tired, I can't even do my homework.	Hum, euh, vu comme y'a beaucoup de charge de travail ben... Euh j'arrive pas très bien. Oui des fois j'ai, je fais pas de devoirs tellement je rentre fatigué.
I find this [homework and support after school] tiring, and sometimes exhausting! Even both, sometimes!	Hum... je trouve ça fatigant, des fois pénible! Même les deux des fois !
It [provision support after school] adds one more, and finally, time flies by always too fast because if I obviously had the time I need, I wouldn't really have problems because I would have time to... to breath.	Ca en ajoute encore un, et au final, le temps qui file toujours trop vite car si j'avais évidemment le temps qu'il me fallait, j'aurais pas vraiment de problème car j'aurais le temps de... de respirer.

c. Statements in Table 4

Example statement	Original French version
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I see life and all the stuff differently. The best way to express myself is that I do some music and it's in this direction that I want to go later and so, I produce a distinctive music because the way I see things is different from everyone else. [...] it's like a particular gift.

I intend to study physics and astronomy to become an astrophysicist! [...] It is a doctorate. The doctorate of astrophysics is 8 years after A levels. [...] It doesn't scare me. I feel ready to go!

My advice: focus on your... on your future profession otherwise... You know, me at least, for me it's working well.

The group is closed so it is always the same group and the persons all have something in common which is they really love school and they succeed really well at school. There are like the 'brainies' of our school.

Our class is the international class. There are those who lived in USA or [...] there are clever enough people! Some are less clever but more productive. So that commands a working atmosphere. [...].

We get on very well! But in fact... Because he is... a little hyperactive, a little different as they say! Yes! He is not very included in the classroom. So, as usually during team work, he was alone, I teamed with him and that is how we met.

Usually, we all have our little habits. We all do the same thing, we are geeks. This is the traditional activity.

Je vois la vie et tous les trucs différemment. La meilleure façon de m'exprimer comme ça, c'est que je fais de la musique et puis et c'est plutôt vers ça que je veux aller plus tard et puis donc, je produis de la musique particulière parce que la façon dont je vois les choses, c'est différent que tous les autres. [...] C'est comme un don particulier.

Je veux étudier la physique et l'astronomie pour devenir astrophysicien ! [...] Donc déjà c'est un doctorat. Donc le doctorat d'astrophysique, c'est bac + 8. Mais ça ne me fait pas peur. Je me sens prêt d'y aller!

Mon conseil : « Focusse » sur ton... Sur ta profession plus tard parce que sinon... Tu sais, moi, en tout cas, pour moi c'est là que ça marche bien.

Le groupe, le groupe est fermé donc c'est toujours le même groupe et les personnes ont toutes un truc commun c'est que comme, ils aiment beaucoup l'école puis ils performent très bien à l'école. C'est comme les bolles de l'école.

Il y a beaucoup euh d'OIB dans la classe. C'est ceux qui ont vécu aux États-Unis ou [...] enfin c'est des gens qui sont assez intelligents ! Il y en a certains qui sont moins intelligents mais ils sont plus productifs ! Et, euh, du coup ça impose une ambiance de travail [...].

On s'entend bien! Mais en fait... comme il est... un peu hyperactif, un peu différent comme on dit! Oui ! Il est pas super bien intégré dans la classe. Et du coup comme souvent dans les travaux de groupe il était seul, je m'étais mis avec lui et c'est comme ça qu'on s'est connus.

Ben la plupart du temps on a, on a tous nos petits repères. On fait tous la même chose, on est geeks. Là c'est, c'est l'activité traditionnelle.