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Dimensions of Diversity: Toward a More Complex Conceptualization

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Abstract: The article assesses the complexity of religious diversity through a presentation of results from the Religion and Diversity Project, a seven-year project conducted between 2010 and 2017 and centred at the University of Ottawa, Canada. Analyzing five dimensions of diversity—the religions, lived, strength, institutional and forms dimensions—it demonstrates how results from the project support the thesis that religious diversity itself is changing in all these regards, becoming more complex, and relating in complex intersectionality with other categories of diversity such as sex and gender. The article concludes by pointing to the need to expand research into religious diversity to also include the growing nonreligious diversity in Canadian and other societies.

Keywords: religious diversity; religions; law; media; education; religious strength; sex; gender; Canada; religion and migration; intersectionality

1. Introduction

From its initial design in 2008 to its conclusion in 2018, the Religion and Diversity Project, centred at the University of Ottawa in Canada, was guided by the following task: to understand the contours of religious diversity in Canada and to find ways to best respond to the opportunities and challenges presented by religious diversity in ways that promote a just and peaceful society.¹ The project had an empirical and a normative component: to find out how religious diversity is enacted and perceived in Canada, and to develop strategies to facilitate the expression of differences in ways that would lead to the enrichment of life in Canadian society, and the greater inclusion of marginalized persons in Canadian power structures. This was, of course, a tall order.

In this article we summarize the outcome of the project, both in terms of the empirical and normative dimensions of the task.² Perhaps the most consequential general empirical finding that emerged is that, during the eight years of the project, the contours of religious diversity changed, themselves becoming more diverse: the ways of being religiously diverse are becoming more diverse, not just the possibilities within a given category of diversity. The conclusion is not entirely unexpected or even new; we found, however, verification for it along a number of dimensions.

¹ The Religion and Diversity Project (RDP) was a \$2.5 million, 7 years Major Collaborative Research Initiative funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The international, comparative, multidisciplinary research project involved 37 team members at 24 universities in 5 countries (Canada, US, France, UK, and Australia). The project's website is: www.religionanddiversity.ca.

² This article reports on the activities of co-investigators and collaborators of the Religion and Diversity Project. We have also included results from associated projects. For example, Solange Lefebvre led "Diversité culturelle et religieuse dans quatre contextes nationaux: étude comparée de la dynamique identitaire et de la régulation de la religion." Sheryl Reimer-Kirkham was the Principal Investigator for "Prayer as Transgression: Exploring Accommodation of and Resistance to Prayer in Public Spaces." Jennifer Selby was the Principal Investigator of "Religion in the Everyday: Negotiating Islam in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador." RDP co-investigators and collaborators were members of those projects.

As the project unfolded we began to think in terms of a ‘new diversity’, both in kind and in amplitude. In terms of the latter, this new diversity included a decreasing commitment to traditional majoritarian religion (Christianity), an increase in the number of people who self-describe as having no religion, an increased number and more visible presence of religions other than the majoritarian one, and a greater presence and acknowledgment of Indigenous spiritualities brought about in part by the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its resulting Calls to Action (Beaman 2017a). The shape of religious diversity has been changing over the past decade and so have the issues related to it.

As concerns the kinds of religious diversity, its shifting contours in Canada, as in other countries, express themselves along several dimensions. The most common is the division of religion into a series of institutional and usually organized religions, including the so-called world religions, and the subdivisions of these globally recognized religions. These religions—in Canada especially Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Judaism—are for the most part clearly delimited from one another in the minds of most people, including their adherents. They each have their characteristic and recognizable institutions. Moreover, the field of these religions as a whole is delimited against what is not religion (to be distinguished from nonreligion: see dimension below). Thus, there are the world religions, mutually identified and recognized as distinct and yet varieties of the same thing, namely religion. Within that broad category there are subdivisions of the religions, and these in turn can exhibit subcategories or subgroups, each self-identified and recognized by others as such. Throughout this dimension, these religions tend to be distinguished, if not always defined, in terms of their attributed or self-declared adherents; their characteristic cognitive (beliefs) and performative (practices) components; and their institutional or organizational manifestations like mosques, gurdwaras, temples, churches, denominations, associations, and their (professional) representatives.

Cutting through this dimension of diversity are the varied ways that persons individually appropriate and construct their personal religious identities. This variation is not simply the micro-level of the previous one, specifically in that it can vary across the religions categories or within them, in such a way that each individual is not simply a metonym of the whole. Failure to distinguish this ‘lived’ religious diversity (McGuire 2008), to assume that the diversity of religions and their subdivisions already covers it, or that lived diversity is the same as the diversity of religions, misses a good deal of the important ways that religion in Canada (and elsewhere) varies. It also has important consequences for how religious people and religious institutions can effectively exercise their religious differences.

A related dimension of religious diversity concerns the different ways that social institutions, such as law, education, health, penal institutions, the state, and the media construct religion. Thus, courts have their own way of understanding what will count as religion, what force, importance, and even specific form that such religion can have, and what is permitted or forbidden to be done in its name (Berger 2015; Moon 2008; Beaman 2008, 2018). Schools teach religion in varied ways, along a continuum between ‘teaching religion’ as informing all aspects of pedagogy and curricula, and ‘teaching about religion’ as a separated and often ‘optional’ domain about which one ought to be informed, but in which one need not be implicated (Beaman and Van Arragon 2015). Media, from print and radio to social media, enact religion in diverse ways, from online ritual and descriptive programs to a culture of hashtags (Beaman et al. 2017; Lefebvre 2015). Governments enact diverse policies toward what is understood as religion, impacting the contours of legitimacy of religion in society (Eisenberg 2015). Health institutions vary in the ways that they ‘make room for’ religious and spiritual ‘services’, including the performance of religion in the context and delivery of health care as well as the provision of medical treatment (Reimer-Kirkham and Sharma). In all these institutional settings, it is important to realize that such construction is not simply a faithful transposition of the religious institutional dimension, the religions and their subdivisions, onto and into these other institutions. Law, media, schools, and other social institutions follow their own logic for constructing religious diversity.

A further dimension of religious diversity concerns its relative strength, essentially the variation in how much religion is present in the life of a given individual, in a given place or time, in its level

of influence in other, not religious domains of social life, and in other social institutions. This is the amplitude dimension. Thus, for instance, individuals are religious in terms of how much they believe and practice and in how important such involvement is for them. Regionally religion appears to be more present and to exert more influence in the Maritime provinces of Canada than in British Columbia (Wilkins-Laflamme 2014, p. 296; Marks 2017); or more during the 1950s than during the 1990s (Bibby 1993). Closely associated with this dimension is the degree of presence of religion in the so-called public or private spheres, where greater public sphere presence, however assessed, indicates relatively stronger religion and greater restriction to the private sphere indicates the reverse (Luckmann 1967; Casanova 1994; Berger 1967, 1999; Habermas 2010).

A perhaps less easily understood dimension of diversity concerns diversity in forms of the religious. This dimension specifically seeks religion in other, related categories, for instance in the categories of spirituality, culture, values, and, somewhat paradoxically, nonreligion. These other forms may or may not be understood by insiders or outsiders as religion; they may or may not 'count as' religion or do so to varying degrees depending on the context. Or, to use a Luckmannian formulation, they may be comparatively invisible as religion (Luckmann 1967). The diversity in this dimension therefore consists not just in the varied concepts, but more importantly in the way these concepts interrogate the boundaries of religion and allow us to sharpen our ability to detect possible transformations in religion. They occupy what one might call the discursive or functional space of religion, in a way analogous to how the political may include but also exceed the state.

Beyond these dimensions of religious diversity, it is also meaningful to speak of a further axis of diversity which concerns the intersectionality of all these forms of religious diversity with other categories of diversity. In the case of the Religion and Diversity Project, this included sexuality and gender in particular, but other categories could have been areas of focus. We think here in particular of racial, ethno-cultural, ability, age, and class intersectionalities with religion (Vertovec 2007).

The immense literature tackling the issue of religious diversity has focused primarily on the so-called world religions and their subdivisions. The increase in this religious diversity that is attendant upon post World War Two global migration to primarily western countries like Canada has raised the double question of how the 'new' religious diversity will express itself concretely, and what effect this diversity will have for the social cohesion and identity of the countries affected. A significant part of the literature makes the underlying assumption that diversity is or can be problematic, that these differences may be too different and thereby undermine societal health, prosperity, and stability. By contrast, the Religion and Diversity Project joined another part of the literature which offers a counter-narrative, admittedly and unapologetically normative, that diversity is a positive opportunity in these regards; that greater diversity can make for a healthier, more inclusive, more prosperous, and stable society.

For those who fear that diversity may be problematic, both the strength and forms of diversity have attracted concern. In terms of strength, this literature has tended to observe the new religious diversity brought by migrant populations as both too different and too strong, thus potentially challenging the dominant culture and values which are assumed to be fundamental to the host countries (Joppke 2018; Wilson 2014). Although implicitly, the literature and public discourse have deemed these dominant values to be historically rooted in the majoritarian religions—almost always forms of Christianity—of the countries. They are articulated as cultural renditions of those religions (Seljak 2012; Beaman 2008). It is perhaps ironic that many of those who defend such implicitly Christian 'culture and heritage' are at the same time abandoning their own explicitly religious identities and practices (Clarke and MacDonald 2017). In that light, this literature recognizes that concern about the new religious diversity often takes the form of a seeming opposition to strong religion overall, regardless of which (world) religion one is talking about (Almond et al. 2000).

When focus is on the supposed problematic possibilities, the prevailing focus is therefore not so much on the religious diversity itself, as on 'strong' religion, including in the form of perceived, and often violent, extremism, mostly as concerns Muslims and Islam (Bramadat and Dawson 2014).

In other words, the supposed danger that religious diversity may pose stems not so much from the religions dimension as from the strength dimension. Irrespective of which religion is in question, problematic religion is the sort that is too determinative in the lives of its adherents, that thereby supposedly seeks to isolate them from the rest of society because it does not share and even contradicts the dominant values. Thus, the problem (as articulated by the literature and in public debate) of Muslim women's dress is that it isolates, contradicts central norms of gender equality, and symbolizes a refusal to participate in society (Winter 2008). The problem of (too) devout Muslim men is that their devotion signals rejection of and even violent opposition to the dominant Western way of life. The problem of the Sikh kirpan is that it is a symbol of violence. The problem of faith-based schools is that these indoctrinate their pupils into a sectarian way of life that rejects dominant values like inclusion of sexual diversity and gender equality (Van Arragon 2015).

That said, however, the greater part of the literature that actually examines the new religious diversity, above all in so-called Western countries, focuses rather on how the new migrant populations, and their second generation descendants, are establishing their respective religious institutions and practices as they adapt to the new societies. By and large the dominant question informing this literature is not how these establishments may be creating problems in the host society, but rather the opposite: how the religions are helping the new populations with their religious diversity to successfully integrate into those societies (Al-Azmeh and Fokas 2007; Amarasingam 2008; Bramadat and Fisher 2010; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Guest 2003; Nagata 1988; Parsons 1994; Pearson 2004; Warner and Wittner 1998; Wilkinson 2006; Bakht 2008; Breton 2012; Haddad et al. 2003; Haddad and Smith 2002; Nayar 2004; Kurien 2007; Rousseau 2012). Significantly, this literature focuses on a wide variety of religions, including various forms of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism, New World African religions like Vaudou or Rastafarianism, Japanese new religions, and so forth. The Religion and Diversity Project added relatively few studies to this literature.

2. Examining the Contours of Religious Diversity

The Religion and Diversity Project addressed some of these dimensions of diversity much more directly than others. In seeking a better understanding of the contours of diversity, the research concerned itself to a limited extent with the internal dimensions of diversity in religious institutions, but more with the individual 'lived' diversity dimension, and in relation to this, with the diversity of religious forms and the strength of these forms. In this section, we draw from some of the research results of the Religion and Diversity programme of research. The following section examines aspects of some projects that related to how religious diversity is inflected in various social institutions. We then discuss intersectionality and diversity.

3. Lived Religious Diversity in Relation to Religious Institutions, Strength, and Forms

The Religious and Cultural Identity survey project sought to discover more about the diverse ways that individuals in Canada constructed their religious identities, especially to what degree they did so within the recognized, organized, and institutionalized (usually, world) religions, to what degree across these religions, or outside of them. The primary focus was on the individual or lived dimension, but this in relation to the diversity of institutional religions, the diversity of forms of the religious, and the diverse strength of both of these (Beyer et al. 2016, 2019a, 2019b; Beyer 2019). The survey used was designed so as to favour the religions dimension as little as possible, deliberately seeking ways in which Canadians were perhaps doing their religion inside the boundaries of institutional religions, across those boundaries, and outside those boundaries, including the possibility of not having religious identities at all.

Looking primarily at younger ages groups in the Canadian population, and seeking to focus as much on majority as minority religious populations, the project confirmed much that the literature has already been showing, but added a number of important findings. First, most Canadians who consider themselves to be religious, and who consider their religiousness to be an important part of who they

are, still appear to construct their 'lived' religions almost entirely within the bounds of the standard, institutional religions and their subdivisions. They identify with one of the religions, and only one of them at a time; they believe and practice that religion within the bounds of the institutional parameters that one would expect: for instance, Christians go to church, pray and read their bible; Muslims pray and fast during Ramadan. While many do so in a selective way—they practice their religion *à la carte*—the more devout aver that they believe and practice all or most of what their religion requires of them. Their lived religions coincide with how the institutional and organized religions present themselves.

Beside these standard practitioners of the religions, however, there are a range of others who can be described as eclectic, moderate, even marginal, or more spiritual than religious. Their lived religion is often far less determinative of their overall lives; they vary quite a bit on the strength dimension of diversity, tending toward the weaker end of this diversity. Moreover, they more readily cross the boundaries within and across institutional religions, combining elements from more than one of them or from outside them altogether. These engage in religious *bricolage* and show that high degree of individual religious diversity that the religions dimension does not cover.

Beyond both of these diverse groups, however, there is also the substantial and growing portion of the population that finds itself outside the religious category altogether. These are the nonreligious, those who on the lived religious and strength dimensions are quite clearly entirely outside. They embody the far end of the religious forms dimension of diversity, that portion where it is questionable whether any form of religion exists at all. As the literature shows (Statistics Canada 2011; Pew-Templeton 2015; Voas and Crockett 2005; Voas and Chaves 2016; Woodhead 2016), they are a growing portion of various populations, including that of Canada. While our research raised the question of how the nonreligious positively construct their identities beyond what they are not, it did not address that aspect. Like several of the other projects conducted in the context of the Religion and Diversity Project, this research pointed to the importance of nonreligion, but could not and did not meaningfully address the actual content of this form of diversity. That would have to be the subject of future research.

With regard to specific subpopulations, previous research on religious diversity among the younger generation of more recent immigration to Canada was carried forward in a longitudinal examination of religious expression over time. Beyer, Lefebvre, Beaman, Wilkinson, and Ramji, among other Religion and Diversity Project team members, had earlier examined the range of religious identity constructions among young people with diverse backgrounds, including Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, and Sikh (Beyer and Ramji 2013; Lefebvre and Triki-Yamani 2011). They found a great diversity in how the younger generations were relating to, carrying forward, and transforming the religions of their heritages. The range of responses included the varieties of religious identity construction outlined above, including in strength—ranging from the highly religious to those who were completely nonreligious—and form, as many expressed their religiosity not as religion, but under cognate categories, especially culture, spirituality, ethical orientation, and values. The longitudinal project carried out under the auspices of the Religion and Diversity Project found that, a decade or more later, the highly religious had stayed highly religious, almost always in the religion of their heritage. Among the others, there was also a high degree of stability over time, but where we found transformation in identities it was among these groups. The moderately or eclectically religious, as well as those who considered themselves more spiritual than religious, were much more likely to identify with more than one religion. They were more likely to engage in religious *bricolage* and to change the composition of that *bricolage* over time. The major likelihood of change, however, where it occurred, was toward a weakening of religious identity over time, moving from moderately to marginally practicing to a drop in religious identity altogether. Diversity of forms of the religious appears to be much more common in the lived religions of the less standard, the less practising, the less religious than it is among those who are highly religious (Beyer 2019).

4. Institutional Religions in the Context of Religious Diversity

As we demonstrate above, individuals relate to religious diversity in their environments in different ways, reinforcing some boundaries while questioning others. Religious institutions to which these constructions relate are faced with similar questions: how do religious institutions that represent the diversity of religions negotiate their identities in a multi-religious environment, one that is moreover highly legitimated in Canada and other countries as a positive characteristic of society? Wilkinson and Reimer conducted a study on one set of such institutions, conservative Christian churches in Canada whose identity tends to include a negative view of such diversity (Wilkinson and Ambrose). These churches put emphasis on the need to spread their religion to everyone. In other words, they work towards universalization of one religion to the detriment of all others, thus contradicting, if not diversity as fact, then certainly pluralism as a normative value. In this case, their study found that these Christian churches tended to hold the two in tension, accepting the need to tolerate other religions while simultaneously claiming the need to ‘evangelize’ their adherents. This orientation included a sense that (secular) Canadian society did not accept them, that it sought to deny and even suppress Christianity, while admitting that the adherents of other religions also experienced prejudice and marginalization. The finding is reminiscent of an earlier study conducted by several RDP team members (Beyer, Lefebvre, Beaman, MacDonald) in which a similar sense of ‘persecution’ was detected among conservative Christian individuals, the sense that conservative Christian missionizing was not tolerated and that religion was under threat. (Beyer 2014; MacDonald 2018).

5. Institutional Responses to Diversity

Religious institutions and religious individuals determine religious diversity in various ways, but other social institutions play a large, and relatively independent, role in shaping what counts as religion. They do not simply determine what religious institutions and individuals will do, but they do help shape the context for what is easier and harder to enact in that regard. In particular, social institutions provide important contours for which sorts of religious diversity are more easily enabled, in what form, and which sorts receive meaningful recognition. The Religion and Diversity Project pursued this dimension of religious diversity in several projects, ones focusing on prisons, schools, mass media, and law in particular.

Perhaps the most telling litmus test of diversity is the extent to which prisons provide for the religious (and nonreligious) needs of prisoners (Beckford 2013, 2005). This is, argue Beckford and Cairns (2015) in their study of prisons in England and Wales and Canada, shaped by the different ‘establishments’ of religion. Their study addresses a number of the elements of diversity we discussed in the introduction above: the conceptualization of diversity in the world religions sense by prison administration impacts the chaplaincy services provided; the range of views about what constitutes legitimate practice within religions and the degree to which prison officials will ‘accommodate’ those practices; and diversity in that in-between space of religion and nonreligion that pushes at the boundaries of both. During the course of our program of research the Canadian federal government cancelled contracts of non-Christian chaplains at federal prisons. Christian chaplains were seen as being competent to offer services to everyone (CBC News 2012).³ Nonetheless, Beckford and Cairns found that overall Canadian law “governing religion and chaplaincy in the prison context reflects—and indeed legally promotes—this sensitivity to religious diversity.” (Beckford and Cairns 2015, p. 45). While they found that there is a commitment to freedom of religion and equality of opportunity to practice religions in prison within both the Correctional Service of Canada and the Prison Service of

³ “The federal government is cancelling the contracts of non-Christian chaplains at federal prisons, CBC News has learned. Inmates of other faiths, such as Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jews, will be expected to turn to Christian prison chaplains for religious counsel and guidance, according to the office of Public Safety Minister Vic Toews, who is also responsible for Canada’s penitentiaries” (CBC News 2012).

England and Wales, “the implementation of these ideals of freedom and equality takes different forms in each jurisdiction” (Beckford and Cairns 2015, p. 52).⁴

The provision of chaplaincy services is only one site of investigation of diversity in prison. In her research on women prisoners, Thériault (2014) examined the meaning of the plastic rosary that seemed to be ubiquitously present. The ready availability of such Catholic artifacts produced a greater profile for religion than might have been seen in life outside of prison. The rosary and crucifix import a comfort and magic to the lives of female prisoners. Thériault articulates the complex use and attitude toward the ‘glow in the dark rosary’, locating it as ‘fascination and ridicule’. This was diversity within a particular framework which was decidedly Catholic—even a prisoner of Muslim background possessed the standard issue rosary. Thus, Thériault’s work demonstrated the relationship between lived religion and institutional frames that support certain kinds of diversity and religious expression.

Another facet of institutional diversity manifested in hospitals. Reimer-Kirkham et al. (2012) found that hospitals are attempting to respond to the new diversity by creating spaces that move beyond the traditional prayer room. Some achieve this by attempting to create a space that can function for religious needs beyond Christianity, and others have created separate spaces. For example, one Vancouver hospital had a traditional and very Catholic chapel, a meditation room with an arrow pointing to the direction of Mecca, an Indigenous meeting space, and a garden space. While the first two of these addressed the diversity in institutional religion, the latter indicated a recognition of a diversity of forms in the provision of spiritual care and services. Responses to diversity were also evident at the micro level of caregivers, who for the most part genuinely attempted to be highly sensitive to the diversity of the patient populations they served. Nonetheless there were those who felt that a Christian perspective enabled them to address the needs of anyone, reflecting a universalist approach within Christianity more broadly. Another dimension of diversity within the healthcare system was community initiated response: a Sikh community that lived nearby a hospital engaged in fundraising to expand the visitor’s room because the visiting hours and space were not amenable to the food and larger groups of family members (Sharma and Reimer-Kirkham 2015, p. 40). Similarly, Sikhs in the city of Brampton (Ontario), not only raised funds to build a new hospital in their city, they brought about a greater incorporation of religious and spiritual services for a diversity of institutional religions, and raised the prominence of these services as well as the visible presence of diverse religions to a level seen in few other hospitals in the country. To an extent, and as part of incorporating religious diversity into the hospital, they also transferred the kind of social and community services that religious institutions like churches are known for providing for immigrant and minority populations beyond the Sikh gurdwaras and into the health care institution itself (MacDonald 2014).

In their research on diversity in the media, Knott et al. (2016) found that Christianity still dominated the media coverage of religion in the UK, with Islam being over-represented in terms of negative coverage. Coverage of traditions other than Christianity was reductive and stereotypical (Knott et al. 2016, p. 90). Media shaped the coverage of religion by focusing on stories with political impact rather than on those things that were important to groups themselves (Knott et al. 2016, p. 174). Our Ordinary Day project built on Knott et al.’s research, gathering newspapers on September 17 in three consecutive years (2013–2015) in the UK, Canada, Australia and Finland. We reviewed the newspapers for any religion-related entries, including news stories, editorials and comments, reader responses, reviews, obituaries, advertisements, images, classified ads and public notices. We considered conventional religion, common religion and the secular sacred.⁵ Christianity dominates in these data,

⁴ “Muslim prisoners and chaplains alike hold widely differing views about what it means to practice Islam faithfully. In this way, agencies of the state in England & Wales attempt to manage religious diversity in prisons by imposing definitions of permissible religious practices and entitlements, not all of which are legitimate in the eyes of religious authorities and practitioners” (Beckford and Cairns 2015, p. 44).

⁵ Conventional religion refers to: Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Councils of Churches, Religion General, Other Christian Churches and Groups, Church History, New Religious, Movements, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism, Other World Religions, Mixed, and Other. Common religion refers to: Magic, Witchcraft, Chance, Signs, Ghosts, Spiritualism

though often in passing. Islam was often the focus of news stories. Data analysis in this study is still underway, but we have this insight on Australia from Halafoff and Weng: “Christianity, in particular permeates all aspects from news, to entertainment, to business, and to sport. Islam received the most main story news coverage and most of this was negative and associated with Islamic State and protests against mosque building” (Halafoff and Went).

In relation to education, we found that in Canada there was little systematic information given to students on religion or religious diversity. This enters the controversial territory of education about religion and religious literacy. The major challenge here is that materials and approaches tend to essentialize religious groups, flattening the texture of lived religion and erasing elements of strength that make up diversity within religion (i.e., how much people actually participate in the standard elements of a given religion). Quebec is the exception to the general tendency toward no education about religion. In that province the Ethics and Religious Culture course is mandatory. Outside of Quebec religion is subsumed under the larger state project of multiculturalism, and most young people “appear to end up understanding religious diversity as the diversity of religions, as the diversity of adherents to these religions and mostly in terms of the so-called world religions” (Beaman et al. 2017, p. 254).

Under the direction of Solange Lefebvre, a Religion and Diversity co-investigator, a related project on how states use public commissions to manage their response to religious diversity through public policy focused on Quebec, France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom. What the respective commission reports showed was a common suspicion of strong religion, especially Islam, with the fear that this threatened to undermine social cohesion by encouraging new populations not to integrate, to lead separate, “communal” lives which could act as the seedbeds for extremism, violence, and the negation of core societal values. In each state, policies were recommended by the commissions that would lead to the opposite: integration, adoption of common values, participation by everyone in society, and, notably, the general restriction of Islam to the so-called private sphere and even its exclusion from the public sphere, for instance, in banning religious symbols/clothing from public institutions like health, education, and public administration (Lefebvre and Beaman 2014; Lefebvre and Brodeur 2017).

Legal analyses show that law also shapes religion (Berger 2015), although religion cannot be seen as passive in this process, as was demonstrated by Sullivan (2017) in her presentation at the final team meeting in 2017. As Berger notes “Law tolerates that which is different only so long as it is not so different that it challenges the organizing norms, commitments, practices, and symbols of the Canadian constitutional rule of law” (Berger 2015, p. 119). In keeping with our observations about other social institutions, religious diversity is supported as long as the religion under scrutiny or consideration is not too strong. This perhaps explains why religious freedom under section 2(a) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has been the primary locus of legal discussions of religion. As Bruce Ryder observes, there has never been a finding by the Supreme Court of Canada based on the s. 15 equality provisions of the Charter. An equality rights approach might expose the hard line between acceptable religion and ‘other’ religion (Ryder 2017).

Within social institutions Christianity still dominates, even in so-called ‘secular’ social institutions. What is, however, changing is that there is an acknowledgment that for the most part this is no longer acceptable, in part because there is an increasing number of people for whom religion is not relevant, but also because of the increased presence of non-Christian religion through migration as well as heightened awareness of Indigenous spiritual practices. Social institutions are in many cases shifting their practices to reflect this new diversity and to exhibit a more inclusive approach. To be sure, this

and Spirit Possession, Psychic Powers, Luck, Superstitions, Gambling, Fortune Telling Techniques, Fate and Destiny, Other Supernatural Beings, The Unexplained, Folk Religion, Folk Practices, Mythology, Gypsies, New Age, Mixed, and Other. Secular/sacred refers to: Secularism, religion and secular, Atheism, Humanism, Religion and Science, Liberalism, Spirituality, Religion-like, Mixed, and Other.

varies from context to context and it is also contested by social actors with a range of interests (Beckford and Cairns 2015; Sharma and Reimer-Kirkham 2015; Lefebvre 2015; Beaman et al. 2017, 2015).

6. Intersectionality

Religious diversity, in whatever dimension one examines it, expresses a major way in which people in society are different and above all a way in which Canadian society, through its institutional and power structures, enables (or constrains) them to be different. Religious diversity helps structure the stratification system of Canadian and indeed global society. It is not alone in this regard, however. Religious differences stand in relation to and intersect with other social characteristics in determining power distribution, exclusion and inclusion, recognition and invisibility in that society. Such intersecting criteria include gender, sex and sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, class, and what one can broadly class as culture (e.g., in the Canadian context, indigeneity and nationality). The Religion and Diversity Project focused its attention primarily on gender and sexuality.

7. The Gender, Sexuality, Youth and Religion Project

The Gender, Sexuality, Youth and Religion Project led by Pamela Dickey Young and Heather Shipley used a multi-method approach (interviews, survey, video diaries) and was inspired by a study conducted by Andrew Yip et al. in the UK (Yip et al. 2011). Dickey Young and Shipley examined the lived religion, lived sexuality and lived gender of nearly 500 youth. The majority, 61%, were Christian, but their participants included Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus and a large group of nonreligious (about 34%), as well as people who combine religious traditions. Their study began with the first dimension of diversity—a sample of young people who were imagined at the outset to belong to diverse religious traditions in the ‘world religions’ paradigm. But, things rapidly grew more complicated as Young and Shipley discovered that many of the youth were unwilling to adopt singular identity categories. The boundary between the religious and the not religious was often fuzzy, with multiple identities co-existing within the same person, frequently layered and intersecting with gender and sexuality. Flexibility characterized many of their participants. However, equally as present was a clear indication that for those who did have a strong religious identity, religion informs their approach to matters of sexuality, including pre-marital sex. But, a ‘whatever’ attitude toward the actions of others characterized almost all of the participants. This ‘whatever’ attitude is not, as Dickey Young and Shipley point out and drawing on the research findings of Anna Halafoff and Laura Gobey in Australia (Halafoff and Gobey 2019), indifference, but an active acceptance of difference characterized by respect for others who might not share one’s own values. Dickey Young and Shipley’s research highlights a number of dimensions of religious diversity that pressed us to refine our conceptualization of the idea of religious diversity. Most importantly, their findings suggest, as they say, that a new grammar of religion for discussing youth and identity is required. Moreover, they also suggest that older adults may express their identities more clearly not because they experience them in more rigid terms, but because they have learned to express them in the rather rigid vocabulary we currently use. For the youth they interviewed the big question is not ‘who am I’, but ‘how will I participate in the world’. This of course goes to one of the core preoccupations of the Religion and Diversity Project, which evolved into a question of how to live well together in a complex future. The question of ‘how will I participate in the world’ goes to the very heart of diversity, as Dickey Young and Shipley discovered, in that a key theme from their participants was that of negotiation.

Donald Boisvert also considered the intersection of religion and sexuality, specifically in relation to the Anglican Church in Canada. Sexuality is an issue which continues to challenge the church, illustrating the extent and consequences of internal diversity, as well as the complexity of the intersections under consideration (Young 2006; Ziedler 2019). Boisvert argued, for example, that “Religion makes queer spaces, and queer people, both possible and necessary. What could be queerer—and, by extension, more saintly—than a strappingly-bachelor, man-loving, mother-obsessed, Rome-centred, liturgically-enamoured, ecclesiastically-rebellious, yet ultimately charitable and good

man of the church, than an Anglican priest like Edmund Wood? Not many, I would think, yet perhaps not enough" (Boisvert 2013, p. 231).

Diversity is also often complicated by considerations of the intersection of gender and religion. For example, Amiraux has noted the complex negotiations around the wearing of hijab and niqab for Muslim women. The 'imperiled Muslim woman' is supported by discourse akin to gossip (Amiraux 2016) and acts as a figure, which shapes the non-Muslim public imaginary of who Muslim women are (Selby et al. 2018). The politics of gender are different for Muslim women and men—the latter being imagined in a range of ways, the Terrorist and the Enlightened Muslim Man being two of the most common (Selby et al. 2018). Again, these figures shape social interactions and frame acceptable and nonacceptable diversity both internally, in relation to amplitude and vis-à-vis institutional and state responses.

Discussions of intersectionality highlight the necessity of considering religion and religious diversity as fundamentally socially located. Religion is shaped by and intertwined with its social context, constructed by social actors through social relations in complex ways (Furseth 2018). This social location also includes spatial location, which are continuously changing geographies also linked to changing demographics and the new diversity. Church buildings are transitioning into condominiums, convents into university residences, and taking new life by expanding their repertoires, sometimes to other religious groups and sometimes to other functions, such as concerts, daycare centres, and meeting spaces unrelated to, properly speaking, church business (Dovlete and Beaman 2017). These spatial dynamics are also part of the complex picture of diversity.

8. Conclusions: Multidimensional Religious Diversity in a Transforming Landscape

James Beckford cautions against the conflation of religious diversity, the degree of acceptance of certain religions in the public sphere, the ideological commitment to the value of religious diversity and the increasing scope of religious acceptability (Beckford 2003, p. 100). We took his caution seriously in our project and have reflected it in our attempt to identify and disentangle various dimensions of diversity in this paper. As alluded to at the beginning, we did engage in normative assumptions about diversity. We were cautious, for example, about the language of management, which sees diversity as a problem to be regulated. Instead we took the position that diversity is an opportunity and an asset, which obviously imputes a positive connotation to it. From the outset we questioned the dominant narrative of tolerance and accommodation as the appropriate responses to the challenges of diversity. One approach to thinking about diversity was deep equality (Beaman 2014, 2017b), which focuses attention first on social actors as they engage with difference in their daily lives. Very often the 'response' to diversity is imagined in isolation from social life. This results in a top down response that engages with law, states, institutions but not by mobilizing the many ways that people already negotiate and navigate difference (Selby et al. 2018). Deep equality proposes these everyday moments as the appropriate beginning place for modeling living well together in diverse societies. This is not to say that institutional and state responses have no place, but that excluding the social everyday ignores a rich source of narratives and models that can be mobilized to respond to the challenges of diversity as an opportunity.

Rather than beginning with a goal of social cohesion,⁶ which too often imagines 'our values' in ways that replicate problematic power relations such as colonialism and patriarchy, the goal of living well together folds in the concept of diversity and seeks spaces of similarity rather than sameness or difference. In part, this approach has been reflected in the Canadian version of multiculturalism as a state project. This has been recently transformed into an articulation of diversity and the need for inclusion. Another refinement has been an attempt to address the legacy of colonial treatment of

⁶ See, for example, Jenson (2019).

Indigenous peoples through the process of reconciliation. Conceptually and on the ground, diversity is dynamic in all of its dimensions.

The question of religious diversity, how it manifests itself, how it provides sites of political contestation and stratification or inclusion/exclusion, how it inflects with other social dimensions, and how to respond to it in the effort toward more peaceable and just societies, are clearly very complex questions. The Religion and Diversity Project, in putting all these aspects under its purview, could only hope to make modest contributions in addressing any of them. Some of those contributions have been outlined here, mostly for Canada, but also with a comparative view to other countries like Australia, the UK, and France. In spite of the modesty of the outcomes, they were nonetheless important because they brought into sharp and incontrovertible view that the questions are indeed complex, not subject, for instance, to a simple understanding in terms of juxtaposition of supposedly clear and clearly identified religions that just have to be treated equally. Religious diversity is something different depending on the dimension of diversity one is viewing; the relation of those dimensions is complex, contested, and sometimes contradictory. Moreover, each of the dimensions is exhibiting a different sort of transformation: the religions transform as those previously absent in Canada assert their presence to a greater and greater extent, conditioning and challenging thereby the hitherto dominant Christianity in its multiple variations. Religion of one sort seems to be progressively weakening, and yet there is also a concern about religion being too strong at times. Religious diversity intersects with various other important diversities in complex and changing ways; and formally secular institutions recognize and seek to control this diverse religion in different ways.

Among its many outcomes, the Religion and Diversity Project pointed to the diverse ways forward in each of the dimensions, but perhaps in particular with respect to the dimension that we have called the diversity of religious forms. Hovering at the edges of most of the projects carried out was the question of what lies beyond and outside the recognized religions and their subdivisions. The increasing presence of the spiritual but not religious, youth who construct their (religious) identities across the boundaries between religions and between religion and nonreligion, the marginally or culturally religious, and especially those outside religion altogether, these all point to the increasing influence of nonreligion in these questions. Much of the contestation surrounding religion seems to be across this boundary between religion and nonreligion, yet, in spite of increasing work in this area, we know little about this other side that is nonreligion. This then is the subject of the successor project to the Religion and Diversity Project. The Nonreligion in a Complex Future project begins.

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