

## **Fact Sheet:**

### *A Web-based Survey Instrument on Religious Identity (I, II, III, IV, V)*

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## **Project Description and Goals:**

Previous phases of this project have: developed and pretested the core questionnaire (I); validated the questionnaire through its actual use in a concrete research setting with a select panel of participants who represented a broad cross-section of possible religious identities (II); used the questionnaire in a first study that gathered responses from about 800 18-45 year-olds in Canada and began follow-up interviews with a selection of them (III); expanded this study to reach over 1,000 responses with 50 follow-up interviews, as well as conduct interviews with a panel of longitudinal participants who also took the questionnaire (IV). The final phase completed analysis of all data, and developed a revised version of the survey questionnaire. The overall goal has been to ascertain how Canadians in this age range construct and understand their religious identities and religious diversity in the Canadian context. A second goal is to further refine and improve the survey instrument itself on the basis of the results of the first phases, especially to improve the effectiveness of the survey in being able to detect and understand non-standard religious and also non-religious identities.

## **Methodology:**

- a) The survey instrument, in its revised and refined format was launched in February 2014
- b) Recruitment to the survey was accomplished primarily through engaging the cooperation of RDP team members and members of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion, who were asked to distribute the recruitment text in such ways as they could
- c) Social media, above all Facebook, were used to solicit participation from a wide variety of Facebook groups
- d) Since a previous project had already composed the list of longitudinal participants, these were solicited for interviews and for taking the survey. The results were transcribed and analyzed through a variety of techniques and using a variety of software.

## **Student Involvement:**

- Morgan Hunter, University of Ottawa
- Caitlin Downie, University of Ottawa
- Alyshea Cummins, University of Ottawa
- Scott Craig, University of Ottawa
- Manvitha Singamsetty, University of Ottawa

## **Results:**

Analysis of the survey results and follow-up interviews revealed clusters of four types of religious identity. Standard religious identities adhered to and participated in one of the recognized religions along the more or less orthodox lines standardly expected with respect to those religions. Marginal and eclectic standard religious identities were much less consistently involved but also did not add much or any non-standard cognitive and performative components. Spiritual but not religious identities significantly moved

outside the standard religions but also featured a great many people whose spiritual identities were marginal to nominal, containing little content. Finally, non-religious identities contained little to no religious or spiritual elements, although the survey was not able to detect what they did contain. These results indicate that the survey was well able to 're-find' what other research has found in the Canadian context, and also to isolate and distribute better the so-called 'religious nones'. Analysis of the results, however, suggests that the survey needs to be improved and developed further if it is to be able to find yet further sorts of religious and non-religious identities or to more conclusively be able to demonstrate that such are actually not out there in the population to any significant extent.

### **Dissemination:**

One main output is that the survey instrument itself appears to have been highly effective in capturing much of the variety in religious identity construction that exists in the Canadian population. It is an effective instrument that can be used effectively in subsequent research projects, whether within the context of the RDP or not.

### Workshop

- **Beyer, Peter.** "Religion, Youth and Life Stages: Religious Expression of Young Adults of Immigrant Families in Canada as They Pass from Young to Mature Adulthood," *Youth, Religion, and Identity: A Canadian and International Workshop*, University of Ottawa, October 16-18, 2014.

### Publications

- **Beyer, Peter.** 2015. "From Atheist to Spiritual but not Religious: A Punctuated Continuum of Identities among the Second Generation of post-1970 Immigrants in Canada." In *Atheist Identities - Spaces and Social Contexts*, edited by Lori G. Beaman, and Steven Tomlins, 137-151. Cham: Springer.
- **Beyer, Peter, Alyshea Cummins & Scott Craig.** 2016. "Measuring Religious Identity Differently: A Canadian Survey Study," *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 45, 1: 10-15.
- **Beyer, Peter, Alyshea Cummins & Scott Craig.** (in press). "Religious/Spiritual Identity among Younger Adults in Canada: A Complex Portrait," In *Young People and the Diversity of (Non)Religious Identities in International Perspective*, edited by Elisabeth Arweck and Heather Shipley. Cham: Springer.