

Project Report: Views of Diversity in a Korean Congregation: A Follow-up Study

Michael Wilkinson

1. Project Goals

This project builds on a longer study of a migrant congregation that began in Toronto in the 1990s with interviews, observations, and a survey in 1997 and 2007. In 1997 the focus of my interviews were on the transnational relations maintained by the congregation. In 2007, interviews were conducted with second-generation members. In 2017, the interviews focused on issues about religious diversity and the interactions of the congregation with non-Koreans and non-Christians. The survey asked questions to measure religious practices and beliefs, public life and social issues, ethnic identity, and congregational culture. The goal was to collect survey data over three data collection points for comparison purposes, observations, and interviews on three different issues.

2. Researchers and Students Involved

Michael Wilkinson, PhD is Professor of Sociology. The student researchers were doctoral students at the University of Waterloo: Carmen Celistini and Zabeen Khamisa.

3. Rationale

The rationale for this project was threefold: first, it was to assess the response of participants to religious diversity in Canada; second, it was to complete a congregational survey; and third, it was to make comparisons with previous stages of the project. Observations were also made of the congregations during Sunday worship meetings.

4. Methods

The project consisted of mixed methods, specifically, face-to-face interviews, a focus group, congregational survey, and congregational observations.

5. Ethics, permissions

Ethics approval was received by the Research Ethics Board, Trinity Western University.

6. Summary of Activities

- a. Observations over two separate Sundays of worship meetings during Korean speaking service and English speaking service. Observations were summarized in written form.
- b. Face-to-Face interview with the Pastor transcribed and analyzed for views on religious diversity and follow-up on congregation since the last interview in 2007.
- c. Focus Group with 8 participants transcribed and analyzed for views on religious diversity.
- d. Congregational survey distributed following morning worship meetings at Korean-Speaking congregation and English-Speaking congregation. Surveys were inputted into SPSS and analyzed. Tables were created to compare findings from 1997, 2007, and 2017.

7. Provisional Findings

The congregational survey is still being analyzed for findings on religious beliefs and practices, public life and social issues, congregational culture, and ethnic identity. The interviews, face-to-face and focus group, suggest that among the Korean Christians there is some tension with multiculturalism and religious diversity in Canada especially over questions about inclusion and exclusion. However, there does appear to be empathy among the Koreans for some groups like Muslims who were coming to Canada as refugees or experiencing some conflict over immigration, especially in the United States.

8. Outputs

- a. Focus Group transcript
- b. Face-to-face interview transcript
- c. Data files and Tables from Congregational Survey
- d. Observation Notes

- e. Paper presented by Wilkinson at the 78th Annual Meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, August 2017, Montreal.

9. Finances

- a. Student Researchers Stipend: $\$4500 \times 2 = \9000
- b. Travel for Wilkinson to Toronto to conduct interview and visit congregation: \$1000