

## Funded Research 2010-2011

### Priority Research Area Grants Awarded

**Strand One :** Solange Lefebvre, Christopher Helland

The project created a [database](#) of representations of religious identities and diversity in a specific segment of the Canadian media, namely the internet.

#### **1. Methodological Approach**

Regarding the gathering of the newspapers, we proceeded in three steps. We first gathered articles from the French media, which are primarily located in Quebec (using links to numerous media available online). Second, we converted the format of the gathered materials from *html* to *word* to make the transcription to Ethnograph easier. Finally, we began coding the articles transcribed in Ethnograph. Our coding endeavoured to portray the main idea of each article collection through media searches.

#### **2. Trends (2009-2011)**

Our research period was between February 2009 and the first trimester of 2011. For the year 2009, we were able to gather twenty-one (21) articles from the time period of May to October. The month of October had the highest volume of relevant articles, followed by the month of May (2009). The most significant trends observed in these two months are the following: (1) *laïcité* in Québec, and (2) the wearing of veils (Niqab and Burqa) in the public sphere or when seeking government services. Additionally, there were articles focused on the case of two Hassidic Jews who insisted on being served by male agents while taking their driver's test at the *Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec* (SAAQ).<sup>1</sup>

For the year 2010, we collected eighty (80) articles between February and September. March was the most prolific month for media attention to religious diversity, mainly due to an incident with an Egyptian Muslim (Naema) who refused to remove her veil during a French class. As a result, she was expelled from the classroom. Following that incident, the issue of reasonable accommodation, among others, spread as hot topics in the media.

In the first trimester of 2011, two topics were widely reported in the media: (1) four Sikhs wearing the Kirpan who were forbidden to enter the National Assembly of Quebec; and (2) the holding of prayer meetings at the city council of Saguenay, which the mayor (Jean Tremblay) has stated he intends to continue. We gathered forty-two articles in relation to these two topics. As we have seen with previous articles mentioned, both of the hot topics from 2011 reference the issue of accommodation (who, when, and how to accommodate) relating to religion in the public sphere.

In sum, the issues of religion in the public sphere are far from being resolved. Three themes stand out in what we have coded so far: (1) veils and/or religious symbols (Niqab and Burqa in particular); (2) immigration, culture, and integration; and (3) prayer, public/private sphere, and *laïcité*. We are still coding the gathered data and reviewing previously coded data whenever needed. The aim is to come up with a table that summarizes the hot spots around religion as far as the French media (newspapers) are concerned.

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<sup>1</sup> The SAAQ is a corporation in charge of transportation authorizations in Quebec. This is similar to the ministry of transportation in Ontario, Canada.

**Strand Two:** James Beckford, Benjamin Berger

The main aim of this project is to address questions about the definition and delimitation of religion in the context of Canadian and British prisons. The project is a pilot study of questions concerning accommodation, equality and justice that arise in connection with religious diversity in prisons. Its main aim is to investigate aspects of the processes of defining and delimiting religion in Canadian and British prisons.

Applications for ethical approval of the project were submitted to the University of Victoria and the University of Warwick in the late summer of 2010. Applications were also submitted to Correctional Services Canada (CSC) and to the Prison Service of England & Wales for permission to conduct the research. Delays were experienced at each stage of these processes, and the final clearance was not received until 12<sup>th</sup> October 2010 in England and Wales and 24<sup>th</sup> January 2011 in Canada. Meanwhile, interviews have been conducted and transcribed with 14 Hindu and Muslim chaplains in the prisons of England & Wales; others are planned. All transcripts have been entered into NVivo for analysis.

**Strand Three:** Nancy Nason-Clark, Pamela Dickey Young, Pascale Fournier, Rubina Ramji, Donald Boisvert

Strand Three focused this year on the Intersections of Religion, Gender and Violence and Highlighting Marginalized Voices as priority research themes. The strand projects combine literature searches with the compilation of extensive bibliographies, analysis of Bill 94 in Québec, and the creation of a database with extensive resources regarding debates over wearing the niqab.

a) Religion and Violence Bibliography

Strand 3 funding for the preparation of a [bibliography](#) on Intersections of Religion, Gender and Violence. Nancy Nason-Clark posed a number of questions (see below) to some of her graduate students that issued in excellent literature summaries and bibliographies that can be posted.

*Is there any evidence that battered religious women look to their faith communities for help in the aftermath of domestic violence?*

*Are there elements of patriarchal religions that foster violent behavior?*

*What forms of spiritual or emotional support are available to religious women who have been battered?*

*What is the interplay between ethnicity, immigration, religion and abuse?*

*What is the link between programs for batterer intervention and matters of religious faith?*

*Are religious families more or less violent than other families?*

*In what ways are religious women more vulnerable when abused?*

*What is the role of faith in relation to hope and accountability in men who have acted abusively?*

*Are there unique vulnerabilities and specific spiritual resources related to violent men in aboriginal communities?*

*Is there a relationship between religious leaders and community agencies that respond to the needs of violated women and children?*

*Are religious leaders trained to respond to abuse in the family context?*

Then, two further questions were posed to take account of some gaps in the existing literature.

*What studies have been done and what literature is available on abuse of women in non-Christian religions?*

*What studies have been done and what literature is available on the relationship between religion and abuse of sexual minorities?*

One of the major goals in assembling the summaries and bibliographies was to see what gaps there are in existing literature on religion and violence. There would seem to be gaps in relation to violence and non-Christian religions and in relation to sexual minorities, violence and religion. Strand 3 hopes to be able to address some of these gaps in subsequent research.

b) The ‘naked face’ of secular exclusion: Bill 94 and the privatization of belief

In the West and in several Middle Eastern countries, states are actively and legally intervening to regulate Muslim women’s liberty to wear the *niqab*, a full veil covering the face and the body. Despite the fact that the actual number of women choosing the *niqab* is often quite low (Adams estimates the actual number in Quebec to be lower than 100; Adams, 2007: 93), public reactions to this piece of clothing tend to be vigorous and passionate (Cody, 2010). Québec is no exception. Recently, with the drafting of Bill 94 (*An Act to establish guidelines governing accommodation requests within the Administration and certain institutions*, 2010), a woman’s right to participate in public life with her *niqab* has been severely limited. The proposed legislation emphasizes the necessity of “un visage découvert” or “naked face” when giving or receiving a broad range of provincial public services in Québec, including government services, childcare centres, hospitals, and health and social service agencies. The *niqab* prohibition is said to be justified on the basis of state neutrality and gender equality. Ironically, both proponents and critics of the *niqab* rely on gender equality to articulate their claims: some portray the *niqab* as a woman’s right to freely express her religious convictions in the public sphere, including Amnesty International (2010), while others, like the Collectif citoyen pour l’égalité et la laïcité (2010), view it as a symbolic act of submission to men which projects the image of women as trapped in what Mackinnon (1983) would call a “false consciousness”. Against this backdrop, the place of religion in the public sphere stands as a key factor in the acceptance or rejection of the *niqab* by institutional structures. Borrowing from Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*, this paper focuses on the importance of Bill 94 in negotiating the relationship between religion and the state in modern Québec. In particular, it will evaluate the paradoxical ways in which Taylor’s scholarship fails to address the political and ideological alliance between the manifestation of secularism, on the one hand, and the emergence of “governance feminism” (Halley *et al*, 2006: 340), on the other. Drawing on legal realist and distributive interventions, the article will argue that the privatization of belief in Québec goes hand in hand and is perversely reinforced by a colonial discourse on gender equality, leaving some already marginalized women out of the public gaze. Is this legislated demand for a “naked face” truly the logical outcome of a successful feminist movement (as some have asserted) or is this erasure of religious women in fact the latest veil of patriarchy?

c) History of the Niqab: Database

A recent topic that has created a clash between freedom of religion and human rights specifically based on sex and gender is the wearing of the *niqab* by Muslim women. This strand, to better understand how gender relates to human rights and religious values, is examining

different hot issues that are currently challenging the concepts of freedom of religion and human rights - the wearing of the niqab will be the main focus of this project. Muslim communities in European countries and North America are now dealing with state sanctions based on the niqab. The banning of the niqab is an important issue for examination as it raises questions about the rights of Muslims as citizens and issues of freedom of expression, as well as questions about security, accommodation and obligations of citizenship.

In order to comprehend how women's bodies have been conceptualized and governed, we need to understand how the application of wearing the niqab has evolved in different regions and how it is being regarded in the West today. This database will be an excellent resource for other strand members (in both Strand 3 and other strands, including members from Canada, United States and France) who are focusing on the political and religious dimensions of the niqab. This database will also be made available to all MCRI members through the MCRI online team portal.

#### d) Innovative Teaching and Learning

- Completed Phase 1 of the project with a grant from UNB's Centre for Enhanced Teaching and Learning;
- Collected 20 pilot videos of scholars (2 minute duration) talking about their research. These were embedded in blogs for dissemination in teaching a first year introductory sociology of religion course;
- Nancy Nason-Clark and Catherine Holtmann presented a paper at the Ubiquitous Learning Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, in December, 2010;
- We have an article accepted for publication in the refereed journal, Ubiquitous Learning, based on the conference presentation.
- An abstract on further exploration of innovative approaches to teaching and learning in religion for the SSSR Conference to be held in October, 2011 in Milwaukee, WI.
- Further steps include: videos from religious leaders and religious practitioners from a variety of faith traditions; linking classrooms with Religion and Diversity Team members in various locations in Canada and beyond; development of workshops and other training venues for our Strand of the Religion and Diversity Team (plus other interested academics) related to the use of technology in teaching and learning about religion.

#### **Strand Four:** Pamela Klassen

The focus of this project for the year is the creation of an extensive annotated [bibliography](#) of research on religion, law and the concepts of obligation and commandment in liberal democracies.

This past year, three University of Toronto Ph.D. candidates, have amassed a collective bibliography of interdisciplinary theoretical approaches to the question of how religious conceptions of duty, law and obligation are at play under civil and legal authority.

The students will use the bibliography as a basis to write papers within the Force of Laws project. The papers are outlined briefly below to offer a sense of where the project is headed. One student, Paul Nahme, will attend an upcoming workshop at U of T on "Judicial Politics and the Accommodation of Religious Minorities", organized by Visiting Professor Matthias Koenig.

## Grants to Co-investigators Awarded

### **Rukhsana Ahmed, University of Ottawa,**

“An assessment of health beliefs among Muslim women in Canada: Implications for culturally and religiously appropriate health care practices”

Objectives: The main objective of this study is twofold: a) to investigate health beliefs of Muslim immigrant women in Canada, and b) discuss implications for developing culturally and religiously appropriate health care practices for this population group. “Muslim immigrant women in Canada” in this context refer to women who practice the Islamic faith and thus self-identify as Muslim, are foreign born, and have lived in Ottawa area for at least one year.

Preliminary Output: A comprehensive literature search on the broader topic “health, religion, and Muslim women in Canada” is being carried out; I hope to complete a literature search results chart and an abridged annotated bibliography on the subject-matter and share the documents during team meeting in April and/or post it on the project website.

### **Donald Boisvert, Concordia University**

“What Kind of Man Are You?: Same-Sex Relations, Masculinity and Anglican Angst”

Our common research project asks: What is it about sexuality that so profoundly ignites passions amongst religious groups? I ask further: When it comes to religious diversity, who is understood to be covered by, or excluded from, such diversity, and why? While Anglicanism appears to be on the decline in Canada, it, like other Christian churches, still retains a strong measure of moral authority. The debate on how to recognize and value same-sex relationships therefore represents a significant flashpoint for how these churches understand and reconcile their "moral" mission within the overall dynamics of an apparently secularized society. A broader, equally significant issue relevant to this discussion includes that of religious masculinities, and how such a notion might relate to gay identity and "presence" within religious institutions. In other words, is the refusal to accommodate gay men an indication or reflection of concerns and anxieties around questions of manhood and masculinity?

### **Avigail Eisenberg, University of Victoria**

“Religious Minorities and the Norm of Effective Participation”

The project is to examine the initiatives that have been advanced in Canada to encourage post-immigrant religious minorities to participate in public life, including political parties and election campaigns, public dialogues and debates, interest groups (especially broad-based groups like feminist organizations, labour organizations, etc. which are not religiously specific). These initiatives respond to the concerns found in scholarship and public policy that multiculturalism encourages insular groups (which can become elite dominated) and leads to social fragmentation. The research will identify some specific initiatives in Canada, at least one of which will have a BC focus (e.g. Embrace BC, sponsored by the Ministry of Regional and Economic Development, which is meant to “encourage social cohesion and promote intercultural understanding”). She will conduct preliminary work in determining the religious groups which have been encouraged to participate, to determine whether they have participated, and to discover what incentives they

received to participate. How did organizations, parties, governments engage in outreach? Who did they contact within minority communities in order to encourage participation? The next stage will be to determine whether people within religious communities view their participation as effective and what made it effective.

This consists of a literature survey of 1) the way in which minority participation is discussed in the theoretical literature about multiculturalism, 2) the different policies or govt reports in Europe and Canada (federally, BC and Ont) which directly discuss minority participation, and 3) a media survey of how minority participation is discussed in the current debates in Europe about the failure of multiculturalism.

**Anver Emon, University of Toronto**

“The Muslim Male Scholar as Feminist Authority”

The funding for the research on the Muslim male scholar as feminist authority has been used to hire student research assistants to canvass the literature on, generally speaking, ‘men in feminism’. The students identified key historiographical work in the area. Of particular note was the way in which the idea of men in feminism raised important questions about authority – who has it, how one gets it, and how one communicates it. That issue has, in turn, raised important questions about authority in Islamic education at a time when many note a “crisis in authority” has arisen in the Muslim world. For that reason, the research is shifting focus somewhat to the notion of authority claims made by both male and female authorities in the contemporary Muslim world. As will be suggested, the crisis of authority is being met with a romantic turn to premodern styles or rituals of knowledge transfer. It is romantic in the sense of seeking the promise of truth --- i.e. redemption or salvation – through the reiteration of prior practices that reflect a claim of authority.

**Rubina Ramji, Cape Breton University**

“Media Representations of Canadian Muslim Youth: Identity for Muslim Youth post 9/11”

A main MCRI objective is to investigate how religious identities are being constructed. I am examining how Canadian Muslim youth, living in a post 9/11 world, are constructing their identities in relation to often hostile and demeaning media representations of Islam and its followers. The role of media, in the maintenance and negotiation of religious identities amongst immigrants in new host societies, is an untapped field and yet its importance in shaping identities is immense. Scholarship in the field clearly illustrates that media is used not only to maintain and strengthen identity boundaries, but also creates new, shared spaces in which syncretic cultural forms, such as new ethnic identities, can be formed.

Using media representations as an entry point, this research is exploring the ways in which religious identity is produced and reproduced amongst Muslim youth; examining the ways in which Muslim youth are innovators in relation to identity construction and constitution, especially in relation to visual media; and, comparing religious identity construction across generations (first and second generations). The examination of Muslim youth identity is part of the researcher’s program of research and the study of media impact builds on this analysis.

Selected youth between the ages of 18 and 35, from various cities in Nova Scotia, who identify themselves as belonging to a Muslim background are to be interviewed. A comparative process

will be used, so that it will include 10 participants who are first generation (new to Canada) and 10 participants who have been born in Canada or arrived in Canada by the age of 10 years.

#### Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program

**Josee Trinh De Freitas** received research funding through the University of Ottawa's Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (\$1,000). De Freitas researched recent legal decisions from the [United States](#), coding for the use of terms such as neutrality, equality, accommodation and tolerance in order to build on an existing case law [database](#) developed by Lori Beaman which will be made accessible to team members.

#### Cooperative Education Program

**Vanessa Dion-Lirette** was hired through the University of Ottawa's Cooperative Education Program from May-September 2011. Vanessa researched and compiled [summaries](#) of the European Court of Human Rights decisions regarding religion from 2009-2011.