

**2012/2013 Graduate Research Grant Report**  
*Religion and Diversity Project*

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According to Statistics Canada, immigration plays an increasingly visible role in the growth of the Canadian population. According to the current demographic situation, immigration will be, for a long time, the first and almost only source of net population growth in Canada. Among the most important effects of such a policy is the constant enrichment of the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of Canadian society. Religion appears to play a central role in this phenomenon: very present in political discourse, popular and contemporary media, it is perhaps the most visible dimension of this diversity, and the most difficult aspect to manage in the public arena. It is therefore essential to continue to think about diversity, and the role played by religion in the integration thereof, in order to go beyond the simple accommodation and thus build a fairer and more peaceful Canadian society.

In this context, the Cuban immigration is increasingly present. Barely studied or not studied at all, several factors make Cuban socio-religious minority in Canada particularly interesting: recent and strong immigration, highly qualified (mostly Skilled Workers), coming from a communist society in slow transition since 1992, without escaping the totalitarian control, having complex religious practices issued from the historical coexistence and transculturation of several religious traditions that repressive communist doctrines and practices have never been able to eliminate. My doctoral research is an exploration of Cuban minority religious evolution in Canada.

*Religious and Diversity Project* accorded me a Graduate Student Award to travel to Cuba and do an exploratory, prospective and essential field work in order to settle the methodological basis of my doctoral project by overcoming some objective difficulties associated with the nature of my research. Taking into account that Cuba is still under a communist regime and having access to information continues to be particularly difficult –Access to scientific data through Internet is almost impossible-, it was necessary to travel to Cuba in order to:

1. Create a data base including the bibliography I deem essential to my doctoral research.
2. Conduct some qualitative interviews to Cuban Skilled Workers already accepted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
3. Take pictures to illustrate contemporary religious practices in Havana, Cuba.

I could finally spend eight days in Havana, Cuba, from January 7th to January 16th. Although the time was short, the stay was a success:

1. I could consult important bibliographical resources in Cuban National Library and in the Central Library of the University of Havana. I could also have access to important resources in two of the most important Cuban institutions studying religion: Fernando Ortiz Foundation and the Cuban Institute of Literature and Linguistics.
2. I conducted five qualitative interviews to five professional Cubans from Havana, accepted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to immigrate as Skilled Workers, but still waiting for their visas. In summary, three women and two men, between 28 and 38 years of age, with a Bachelor Degree or plus, and religious. All of the interviews have been already transcribed and the qualitative analysis has begun. These participants agreed to be interviewed again in 2015, in Canada.
3. I could spend some time in several important religious places in Havana where participant and non-participant observations were carried out, while taking pictures. In summary, more than 300 photographs were taken.

Partial results were already presented during the annual conference of the International Society for the Social Studies, held in Orlando, United States, from February 28th to March 2nd, and during a meeting of the Empirical Research of Religious Groups Workshop at the University of Montréal. Two conferences papers to international events were sent and I am waiting for their responses regarding acceptance. An article based on the data collected will be written and submitted to a scientific publication for review.