



THE RELIGION AND DIVERSITY PROJECT/RELIGION ET DIVERSITÉ



### **Gary Bouma**

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### **Research Statement**

Gary D Bouma has focused on the study of religious diversity and interreligious relations for all of his career. He became aware of religious diversity in his family where his mother's side never went to church and his father's side was never found outside the church. Early engagement with Jewish friends and active involvement in the civil rights movement brought people of different beliefs together to work to achieve social justice. In 1961 he established the Interreligious Council at Western Michigan University, beginning a life long commitment to promoting healthy interreligious relations. He has served as a religious professional in eight different Christian denominations.

An early study of social stratification and denominations in Princeton and an article on the consequences of internal diversity among Presbyterians in Pictou Country, Nova Scotia commenced Bouma's scholarly work in this area.

The rich treasures of the Australian five yearly census which includes a question on religious identity have been regularly mined to describe and analyze the growth of religious diversity in Australia. Comparing the religious demography of different societies provides a foundation for examining differences in the ways religious diversity is understood and becomes a factor in social policy. The involvement of religions in social policy has become the current focus of his work.