



THE RELIGION AND DIVERSITY PROJECT/RELIGION ET DIVERSITÉ



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Research Statement:

My program of research focuses on religious freedom and its articulation in Canadian society generally and in law specifically. As a nation, Canada is increasingly multicultural and diverse, which means that there are multiple religious agents challenging state-defined limits on religious freedom. Hence the need to understand religion in Canada has never been more pressing. This program of research examines the ways in which religion is defined in Canada and how these definitions are translated into interpretations of religious freedom. It explores the boundaries on religious freedom as it is currently being conceptualized by the courts. The issues that emerge from this have broad implications for the sort of society Canada is and should be. My project explores the ways in which we as a society define religion and how these definitions are translated into interpretations of religious freedom. In the process of this exploration I am taking a close look at the theoretical underpinnings of the limitation of religious freedom as it is currently viewed by Canada's courts. My research also analyses the global implications of various definitions of religious freedom. This part of the research involves an examination of case law from Britain, the United States, and France because I believe that observations about religious freedom apply across national borders, and fit more broadly into the domain of human rights. This research is helping to clarify various important religious and societal issues such as the application of Sharia law in a "secular" state, the legality of polygamy, and the role of religion in public debates over same-sex marriage.

Some main objectives in my research is to explore the concept of religious freedom; to examine the ways in which religious groups are normalized or marginalized through social and legal practices; to analyze the theoretical parameters of diversity and pluralism as they

intersect with religion and religious practices; and to conduct a comparative analysis of Canada and other countries on the issue of religious freedom.

One of the goals in my research is to connect with a multi-disciplinary network of researchers who examine questions of religious diversity, a goal that is realized with The Religion and Diversity Project and its network of collaborations. A network is essential because the social and cultural issues in an increasingly religiously diverse nation and world are multi-faceted and require transdisciplinary engagement. The Religion and Diversity project provides a centre where the dialogue, debate and integrative exploration of the issues of religious freedom can take place among scholars from all over the world by connecting Canadian and international scholars whose central focus of research is religion from sociology, anthropology, religious studies, history, philosophy, political science, and law.