
THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN CREATING COMMUNITY COHESION IN RURAL CANADA

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Canada has a long history of cultural diversity due to immigration. We also share both positive and negative outcomes when it comes to managing the conflict that sometimes occurs. It is a history concerning people of different cultural backgrounds in constant contact with one another. Social cohesion in the face of cultural diversity is therefore one of the key issues facing Canada. Religion and religious diversity are central to this since religion is a significant component of culture and cultural differences. Furthermore, rural areas are especially important in this discussion since they often reflect settlements of religious homogeneity within a society of religious heterogeneity. Describing this diversity is the first step in understanding its dynamics and impacts. Therefore, this research seeks to understand the role of religious diversity with a focus on a rural Canadian context. Our goal is to see how religious diversity functions in terms of interdenominational relations primarily connected to theological and demographical differences. To do so, we will provide a macro view of religious diversity in rural Canada, outline the immigration statistics related to specific regions and rural communities, and initiate a discussion of the

effects that theological discourse may have on generating social cohesion.

We will outline immigration numbers and religious diversity in rural Canada at a national, provincial and 'local' level. The local level will be represented specifically by communities from the New Rural Economy (NRE) Rural Observatory.¹ Next, we will discuss the theoretical framework concerning the theological and demographical elements of religious diversity and test our hypotheses of diversity and social cohesion. Finally, we will examine the results of this test and discuss the needs for further research in order to better understand the effects of religion on diversity and social cohesion.

Surveying the Landscape of Religious Diversity in Canada

Religion has always played an important role in promoting social cohesion respectively within religious groups and throughout the larger community. Social cohesion acts as a

¹For details regarding the New Rural Economy project, cf. NRE, <http://nre.concordia.ca>

motivating factor for social action and a potential asset for immigration attraction and retention. Religious diversity reflects lines of difference between people that can either promote a constructive self-reflexivity or a debilitating fragmentation. Immigration, therefore, is a primary example that raises the question of how religious diversity can come to manage conflict in a community. Our first step will be to describe the basic features of that diversity using data from the 2001 Canadian census.² This section describes the diversity of religious denominations at national, provincial, and local levels.

The majority of non-Christian religions in Canada are overwhelmingly represented in urban areas. Over 98% of the major world religions such as Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism have their members living in urban areas with fewer than 2% in rural areas. These non-Christian groups represent 1.8% of the total Canadian population. Over 90% of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches in Canada, such as Greek Orthodox and Serbian Orthodox Churches, have their members in urban areas with fewer than 10% in rural areas. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church differs slightly, however, since 78.2% of its members are located in urban areas and 21.8% in rural areas. However, these Orthodox Churches represent only 0.6% of the total Canadian population. Non-mainline Christian denominations, neo-Christian movements, and new religious movements are represented in the Census data as different religious categories such as Christ Reformed Alliance, the Church of Latter Day Saints, Adventists, Methodists, Paganism, and Brethren in Christ.

These groups have over 80% of their members in urban areas with fewer than 20% in rural areas. Overall, they represent below 0.4% of the total Canadian population. It is obvious that our cities house greater multi-faith diversity than the rural areas of Canada.

There are, however, three religious groupings that are equally balanced in their membership between urban and rural. Aboriginal Spirituality has 55% of its members in urban areas with 45% in rural areas. The Salvation Army Church has 56.6% of its members in urban areas with 43.5% in rural areas. And Mennonites have 56.1% of their members in urban areas with 43.9% in rural areas. The exception to this pattern is the Hutterite group with 9.7% of their members in urban areas and 90.3% in rural areas. Combined, these religious groups represent less than 1% of the total Canadian population. Though these are indeed exceptions to patterns of religious diversity in rural Canada, the majority of rural people are members of one of the three mainline Christian groups.

The top three mainline Christian groups are the Roman Catholic Church, the United Church of Canada, and the Anglican Church of Canada. It must be noted that the urban/rural split within each separate denomination does not differ significantly from the religious groups mentioned above. The Roman Catholic Church enjoys a majority demographic in Canada represented as 45.1% of the total population with 79.5% of its members in urban areas and 20.5% in rural areas. This is followed by the United Church of Canada whose national membership represents 9.3% of the total population with 72% in urban and 28% in rural areas. Finally, the Anglican Church of

²Cf. Statistics Canada Website, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca>

Table 1: Canadian Regional IQV Index – Ranked from most diverse to most homogeneous, 2001

5 Regions of Canada	1) BC	2) Ontario	3) Prairies	4) Atlantic	5) Quebec
IQV Scores:	0.83	0.79	0.75	0.54	0.17

Table 2: Provincial IQV Index – Ranked from most diverse to most homogeneous, 2001

10 Provinces of Canada →	1) BC	2) ALTA	3) ONT	4) MAN	5) SASK
IQV Scores:	0.83	0.82	0.79	0.75	0.72
10 Provinces of Canada	6) NS	7) PEI	8) NB	9) NFLD	10) QC
IQV Scores:	0.70	0.64	0.54	0.47	0.17

Canada has a national membership of 6.4% with 75% in urban areas and 25% in rural areas. Overall, these three denominations dominate the religious distribution in rural areas as follows: 1) 46% of all rural respondents are Roman Catholic; 2) 12.9% of rural respondents are United Church and; 3) 8.0% of rural respondents are Anglican.

The Provincial landscape in terms of religious diversity shows considerable variation. For this project, we have produced an Index of Qualitative Variation (IQV)³ using proportions of Canadians in each of the 33 religious groups (as defined by Statistics Canada). The

score varies between 1 (representing high diversity) and 0 (representing low diversity). The following tables outline the religious diversity exclusively in rural Canada within each province excluding the Northern Territories.

British Columbia has the highest score of religious diversity and Quebec has the lowest. This illustrates a pattern in which religious diversity declines from West to East. Ontario is an exception because the top mainline denominations are all well represented—34.9% Roman Catholicism, 12.4% United, and 9.3% Anglican—along with a wide variety of other religious organizations representing between 2% and 0% of the total. Quebec has the lowest overall diversity score because it is 90.4% Roman Catholic with the remaining denominations below 1.2%. Table 3 shows that an examination of the NRE field sites largely re-

³ Religious diversity is measured by an index of qualitative variation (IQV) based on the number of religious groups and the proportion of each group within a census sub-division (CSD). The formula for IQV is as follows: $(k/(k-1)) * (1 - p^2)$, where k denotes the number of religion categories and p indicates the proportion of individuals within each religion category.

Table 3: Local Site IQV Index (from the NRE Rural Observatory) – Ranked from most diverse to most homogeneous, 2001

26 NRE Sites →	1) BC3	2) BC2	3) ON5	4) BC1	5) NS1	6) ON3
IQV Scores:	0.98	0.96	0.95	0.91	0.88	0.86
7) ON2	8) MB2	9) SK1	10) NB1	11) ON4	12) NF2	13) NF1
0.85	0.85	0.82	0.83	0.78	0.71	0.70
26 NRE Sites →	14) PEI 1	15) MB1	16) SK2	17) ON1	18) NS2	19) AB1
IQV Scores:	0.69	0.68	0.64	0.30	0.24	0.22
20) QC2	21) QC6	22) QC4	23) QC5	24) NB2	25) QC3	26) QC1
0.19	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.00

flect this general pattern.⁴

Two of the NRE communities are incongruent with the general pattern. NS1 and AB1 have different diversity scores than their provincial counterparts. NS1 is widely diverse with 25.3% United, 17.3% Anglican and 16.5% Baptist, while AB1 is relatively homogeneous with 88.5% Roman Catholic and 4.9% Jehovah Witness. These anomalies remind us that in spite of the overall patterns, there are significant variations to be found at the local level.

In contrast to these religious diversity indexes, the following tables have been tabulated. They indicate the percentage of immigrants to rural

areas (with relation to the overall national urban/rural percentages of immigration) both at a national level and within the NRE field sites.

Overall regional trends of immigration parallel those in the percentages of immigrants in the NRE rural communities. Note that the community of MB1, which has the highest percentage of immigrants in contrast to the regional trends, also scored as average on the religious diversity index. This highlights the issue that diversity among local communities may vary from provincial trends. It also points to the necessity for a greater understanding of how this diversity might affect social cohesion at the local level.

Overall regional trends of immigration parallel those in the percentages of immigrants

⁴The NRE field sites are represented with pseudonyms identifying their respective provinces.

Table 4: Canadian Regional Percentages of Immigrant Population – Ranked from highest to lowest overall percentage, 2001

5 Rural Regions of Canada	1) BC	2) Ontario	3) Prairies	4) Quebec	5) Atlantic
% of Pop:	14.1	9.2	4.4	2.4	2.1

Table 5: Local Community Percentages of Immigrant Population (from the NRE Rural Observatory) – Ranked from highest to lowest overall percentage, 2001

26 NRE Sites →	1) MB1	2) ON4	3) ON5	4) ON3	5) BC3	6) BC2
% of Pop:	15.2	15.2	14.6	10.7	10.7	10.2
7) ON2	8) BC1	9) MB2	10) SK2	11) ON1	12) AB1	13) NB1
10.1	8.7	7.6	4.1	3.9	3.2	3.1
26 NRE Sites →	14) QC3	15) PEI 1	16) NF1	17) NF2	18) QC2	19) NS1
% of Pop:	2.6	2.2	1.9	1.6	1.4	1.3
20) QC4	21) QC5	22) QC6	23) NB2	24) SK1	25) NS2	26) QC1
0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

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Theoretical Framework: Diversity, Cohesion and Social Engagement

Homogeneity and Heterogeneity

Rural Canada is dominated by the Christian faith. As portrayed in the IQV indexes of religious diversity above, levels of diversity are related to the percentages of people affiliated to distinct religious organizations within the same social setting. Communities with an overwhelming majority of people affiliated to one religious organization are considered as homogenous. Communities with a spread of affiliates into different religious organizations are considered heterogeneous.

Exclusivism and Inclusivism

Religious beliefs and doctrine reinforce a variety of responses to the 'Other'—people who do not share those beliefs. Many of these ideological differences are represented by the different theological notions of Christian soteriology (i.e. doctrine of Christian salvation) reflected as different levels of either exclusivism or inclusivism.⁵ Exclusivism (or systemic exclusiveness) is the claim that righteous moral and religious qualities, such as truth and salvation, are accessed uniquely from one religious tradition while disregarding the soteriological insights of other religious perspectives. Because exclusivist religious communities are prone to support their own adherents over others, they promote high social cohesion but narrowly focused on their religious affiliates and community members. Inclusivism (or as Basinger notes, soft exclusivism) is the claim that, though righteous qualities are preferentially available to those within a particular tradition, other religious traditions have partial or selective access to righteous moral and religious qualities. Because inclusivist organizations are prone to support others as well as their own adherents, they are more likely to promote a broader network of social cohesion.

Religious Denominations

For the purpose of our study, we will focus specifically on the following religious organizations since they are well represented in rural Canada: the Roman Catholic Church,

the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada, Baptist denominations, Pentecostal denominations, Mennonite denominations, the Jehovah's Witness movement, and the Salvation Army. Though it is very difficult to gauge at a macro level of inquiry how individual people address their own views and appropriations of exclusivism or inclusivism within each denomination, in the following section we attempt to assess each denomination's relative level of exclusivist or inclusivist orientation.⁶ It must therefore be noted that the following descriptions are not a restricted delineation of denominational orientation but an expositional guide in order to ascertain the soteriological differences between Christian groups.

The contemporary Roman Catholic Church, because of its vast global presence in diverse ethnocultural regions and its history of ultramontane conservatism, promotes concurrently inclusivist and exclusivist worldviews. The Anglican Church of Canada also adheres to both inclusivist and exclusivist worldviews, though they are not as exclusivist as their Catholic compatriots due to their Reformed Protestant heritage that infuses an outwardly orientated inclusivism into the Church. The United Church of Canada takes the position that inclusivity is a fundamental Christian value making it the most inclusivist denomination in Canada. Baptists, though outwardly altruistic, view matters of faith and religious practice as resting solely in the local congre-

⁵For an in-depth discussion on exclusivism and inclusivism, cf. David Basinger, *Religious Diversity: A Philosophical Assessment*, Ashgate Philosophy of Religion Series: Aldershot, Hants, England, 2002.

⁶This assessment is based on the descriptive articles in the *Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of World Religions* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1999). For an in-depth discussion of the different effects of religious exclusivism and inclusivism, see Corwin E. Smidt, *Religion as Social Capital: Producing the Common Good*, (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2003).

gation of baptized believers enriching their worldview in a discourse of exclusivism. Pentecostalism is also outwardly altruistic, but prioritizes its worldview and the well-being of its own members. This denomination historically seeks, as one of many modes of faith, the proselytization of non-members. This means it is highly cohesive but rather difficult to enter into ecumenical relations with non-Pentecostals, making it an exclusivist organization.

Mennonites and Hutterites are of the Anabaptist tradition that adheres to the communal living patterns of the early Christian Church. Groups such as the Hutterites and the Amish are considered to be highly exclusivistic, while the wider Mennonite community is mixed. Though the complex nature of this religion does not easily delineate exclusivist or inclusivist attributes universally, the guiding factor remains that rural Anabaptists will adhere more to an exclusivist worldview while urban Anabaptists orient themselves towards an inclusivist worldview. The Jehovah's Witness movement's central belief in proselytizing 'non-Witnesses' makes it difficult to bridge religious differences and mobilize larger community cohesion. As a result, the Jehovah's Witness movement is very cohesive in their exclusivism with little to no association with other religious denominations. And finally, the Salvation Army's basic theological tenets ascribe an inclusivism that insures their leadership in building and maintaining the community at large.

Hypotheses

The following three hypotheses are considered in our data analysis: 1) inclusivist religious or-

ganizations will engender high community-wide social cohesion in both homogeneous and heterogeneous communities; 2) exclusivist religious organizations will engender high community-wide social cohesion only in homogenous communities and; 3) exclusivist religious organizations will engender low community-wide social cohesion in heterogeneous communities.

Therefore, in order to operationalize these hypotheses, we have placed the 8 different Christian denominations on an Exclusive/Inclusive Altruism ranking chart. These numbers describe the religious denomination's position between poles of exclusivism and inclusivism as follows: exclusivism = 1 and inclusivism = 8. Note that this is not a rating (which illustrates an assessment or measure) but a ranking (which denotes an ordering or classification) of denominational diversity.

These rankings were then applied to each NRE field site to see at what level of exclusivism or inclusivism they produce. The exclusive/inclusive altruism values were calculated by multiplying the percentage of people within each religious group in each community by their exclusive/inclusive ranking value from Table 7. Note that this chart is not statistically rigorous and is only illustrative to be used in tandem with the IQV index of religious diversity found in Table 3.

Findings, Discussions and Further Research

Communities like NF1, NF2, and NS1 are noteworthy because they scored as highly inclusive on the exclusive/inclusive altruism table but scored average on the IQV diversity index. According to our hypothesis, these

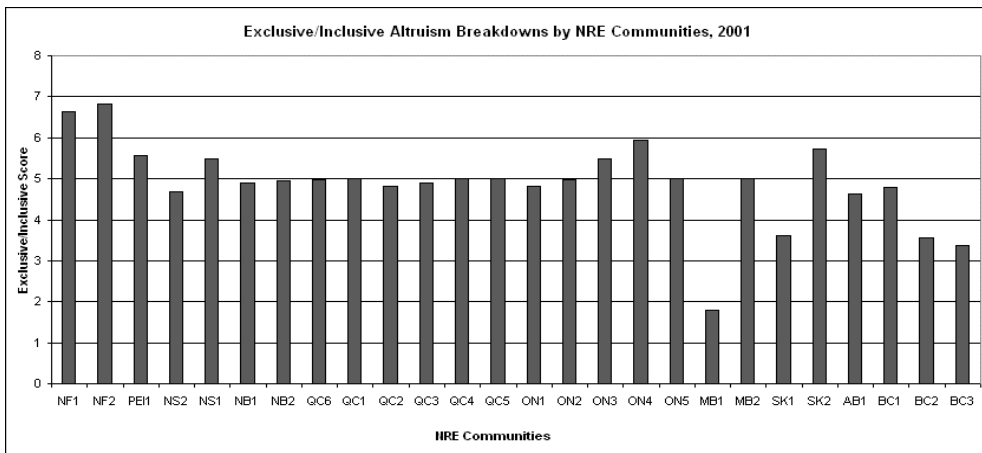
Table 6: Summary of Hypotheses—Community Social Cohesion by Religious Diversity and Level of Exclusion/Inclusion

	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous
Exclusivist	High Social Cohesion	<i>Low Social Cohesion</i>
Inclusivist	High Social Cohesion	High Social Cohesion

Table 7: Exclusive/Inclusive Altruism Ranking Chart

Religion:	Ranking:	Religion:	Ranking:
Jehovah's Witness	1	Roman Catholic Church	5
Mennonite	2	Anglican Church of Canada	6
Pentecostal Church	3	Salvation Army	7
Baptist Church	4	United Church of Canada	8

Table 8: Exclusive/Inclusive Altruism Distribution by NRE Field Sites, 2001



communities with inclusive religious organizations are likely to be highly cohesive and have a constructive effect on community development or social capacity. It must be noted that these communities have each scored below average with 2% of immigrant population. This begs the question exactly how religious diversity in these communities assists the social integration of their immigrant populations. According to the hypothesis of social cohesion and religious diversity, however, there should be a constructive impulse from the present religious communities in aiding that integration as a community beyond the borders of their respective denominations.

The community MB1 has an average religious diversity index score with the lowest altruism ranking for the following reasons: this community has a very low number of inclusive religious denominations (i.e. the United Church is second highest at 5.4%) and has the highest Mennonite population overall with 56.1%. Because this denomination leans towards a religious exclusivism—particularly in rural settings—it scored as highly exclusivist while remaining average on the diversity index. According to the hypothesis, this denomination will engender high community-wide social cohesion for it is a homogenous town having a constructive effect on community development or social capacity. Moreover, MB1 has the highest percentage of immigrants overall. Again this is a possible indicator of social cohesion where, in a community that leans towards a religious exclusivism with a minimized diversity, is also one that is conducive to integrating new people of that same denomination into the community, thus generating high social cohesion.

The community of NB1 has an altruism score below 5 with an average diversity score of 0.83 and an average percentage of immigrants at 3.1%. What is interesting here is that the religious diversity in NB1 leans towards a majority of exclusivist denominations—Roman Catholic 36.5%, Pentecostal 22.6%, Anglican Church 17.4%, and Baptist 13%. According to our hypothesis, the number of exclusivist organizations will engender low community-wide social cohesion in this religiously diverse (heterogeneous) community having an incapacitating effect on community development. It must also be noted that there are a relatively high number of immigrants in this community. This raises the question of the role these denominations are taking in integrating their immigrant population in contrast to their exclusivist view of one another.

However, not all communities fall under the classifications related to these hypotheses. The community of BC3, for example, has the highest score on the religious diversity index, yet scoring the second lowest on the altruism chart for the following reason: BC3 is tremendously diverse with a number of religious denominations below 10%. This results in a community that is potentially exclusive because its religious institutions stand in an overall minority position below 10%. In addition, this community has a high percentage of immigrants. Overall this raises the question of the validity and impact of religious organizations in influencing overall community cohesion and social integration when they are represented in a minority standing. Secondly, the majority of communities in Quebec—i.e. QC1, QC4, QC5, and QC6—are very homogeneous, all displaying 0% of religious diversity and immigrant population. However,

each community garnered average ratings on the altruism chart. This is related to the majority of residents in these communities being Roman Catholic and that this religious denomination is ranked as average in terms of exclusivist/inclusivist worldview. This creates a problem: when considering the altruistic orientation of a community, we cannot come to truthfully understand if the people within these communities adhere to the exclusivist or inclusivist worldviews inherent to their denominations through a statistical and theological analysis alone. This refers to the important issue of trying to understand the exclusivism or inclusivism of the most dominant Christian denomination in Canada by using different research means.

In order to gain more tangible results for understanding the role that religious organizations play in affecting social cohesion, there needs to be a qualitative research involving individual community members in order to ascertain perspectives related to their religious affiliation and its impact on their sense of identity and their view of the overall community. This additional research should clarify the ambiguities and blind spots apparent in the statistical and theological examination.

Conclusion

This article brings insight into how religious diversity operates in managing conflict in rural Canada through a macro level of inquiry using statistics and different theological definitions of one's attitude towards the 'Other'. Though theology and statistics have aided in grounding a clearer understanding of religious

activity in rural Canada, ultimately this is a theoretical piece that offers a solid framework for a larger qualitative research investigating the subjective aspects of religious worldviews with regard to the self and the 'Other'. This presentation, therefore, is only the beginning.

Paul Gareau is presently completing a Master's degree in the History and Philosophy of Religion at Concordia University. The questions raised by this article were initiated by his experiences growing up in rural Saskatchewan. These were experiences of objectifying, demonizing and/or ignoring the 'Other', while inversely characterized by experiences of curiosity, sharing and social engagement. Due to the relativistic nature of cultural difference, he is using this article as a platform for a doctoral dissertation where he will be investigating discourses of religious difference in rural Canada using "phenomenological anthropology.". The goal of this research is to better understand how people appropriate and negotiate religious discourses in affecting social cohesion.

