

*Growing up Canadian: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists* by Peter Beyer & Rubina Ramji (Eds.) (2013). Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press. 345 pages.. ISBN-9780773541382

*Growing up Canadian: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists* is an edited work by Peter Beyer & Rubina Ramji (2013) analysing and reporting on the results of a four year qualitative research endeavour examining the interaction between religion and global/transnational migration in multicultural Canadian society, with specific reference to studying (re) construction of religious identity and religion in transnational/multicultural contexts. Given the paucity of research on this theme, this is a valuable contribution towards the sociology of religion in a transnational context.

“Growing up Canadian”, the very opening phrase of the book, points to a process of transition and about those in transition or the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of young adult Canadians from immigrant family backgrounds who are growing up in Canada. The subtitle, “Hindu, Muslims, Buddhists” refers to their respective religious backgrounds. The analysis of this dynamic interplay between the backgrounds of religio-cultural filiations and the experience of living and growing up in a state and society that is predominately secular as well as multicultural is central to this book. The collection studies and illuminates the structuration at play between the individual (youth agency), their filiations (home-religio-cultural heritage backgrounds) and affiliations (networks) in a multicultural/secular society (Canada) and how within these contexts of ‘filiations and affiliations’ youth agency (re) constructs religious identity in a transnational/global context and in the process constructs a discourse about religion on a global scale.

The collection is composed of 13 chapters. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 set out the research foci/questions, theoretical framework and methodology. Chapters 4 to 10 present contextualised findings which are discussed around the axes of religion and gender while following two theoretical orientations for studying religion: 1) the lived religion approach and 2) the systemic religion approach. Chapter 4 analyses and theorizes how and why, given certain common features of a shared context, religion and religious identity, processes are experienced differently as these varied experiences are anchored in specific individual biographies situated in varied particularities and in turn, how these experiences and responses to these experiences (re) construct religious identity of the participating youth who are now constructing religion at a global level. This chapter provides an overarching and rich empirical-theoretical framework and structure that unfolds through the subsequent chapters, 5-10. Chapters 5 & 6 discuss thematic findings related to Muslim youth adults (men & women); chapters 7 & 8 discuss findings pertaining to Hindu youth (men & women); and chapters 9 & 10 share findings from Buddhist youth (men and women), respectively. Focusing on gender, chapter 11 analyses the role of gender in (re)construction of youth' religious identities across these religious groupings. Chapter 12 analyses how “Growing up in Toronto” (a sub-context within the study) looks like as a member of a religious minority group in the midst of religio-cultural diversity and by the same token looks at what is peculiar/specific about Toronto as a multicultural city. Finally, chapter 13 or the concluding chapter, provides a comparative analysis of similarities and differences of growing up in Canada as a religious minority as compared to growing up in the US or Western Europe.

Chapter 1, “Growing up Canadian: Systemic and Lived Religion”, succinctly outlines the focus, scope and theoretical framework orienting the study. The study's focus is to explore the relationship between religion and global migration in a Canadian context. It sets out to explore some key questions pertaining to: (a) how young adults from Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist communities relate to their religion (including its practice and the role it plays in their daily lives); (b) the way(s) in which they (re) construct their religious identity; and (c)

their attitudes towards religious diversity and their views on Canada as a multicultural society.

Seeking to study how religion is perceived, experienced and (re) constructed in specific and particular biographies of individuals in transnational settings, the construct of *glocalisation* (Robertson, 1992) and the *glocalisation of religion* in particular as utilized by Beyer (2006) is adopted; a concept which refers to “‘religion as a modern, constructed, and differentiated societal system on a glocal- that is, local and global at the same time-scale” (p.8). It is also acknowledged that there is a theoretical necessity to study the linked dynamics between the youths’ home-heritage backgrounds with their ‘home/backgrounds’ or their family origins, as these filiations play an important role in the construction of identity in the host society. The ‘home-host’/ experience-memory dynamic becomes an important dimension for exploring identity formation processes in diasporic contexts.

Detailed discussion about research design, contexts, robust sampling procedure and the approach to data analysis is presented in Chapter 2. The study employs a qualitative/mixed methods research approach including semi-structured interviews for data collection. The study sample was drawn from what is referred to as 1.5 (below puberty age at the time of their arrival in Canada) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> (native-born) generations of Canadian youth having immigrant family backgrounds (aged 18-27 years in the period from 2004 to 2006); and belonging to three religions including Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism (or major world religions). These youth were selected from post-secondary urban educational settings: university contexts from Toronto (University of Toronto), Ottawa (University of Ottawa/Carlton University) and Montreal (Concordia University). The study involved 202 interviews of which 197 were deemed valid as per predetermined criteria. The interviews conducted lasted from half an hour to two-and-a half hours. Chapter 3, titled *Young Adults and religion in Canada: A statistical overview*, is an extension of the methodological discussion, especially with respect to issues of population and representative sampling. Drawing upon two major Statistics Canada data-sets: (a) the 2001 census of the Canadian population and (b) 202 Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS), the study is able to compare demographic characteristics and density of said religious populations across Canada in order to draw closer to a representative youth sample.

Chapter 4 titled, *Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism: Differential Reconstruction of Religions*, describes and documents various ways in which the sampled youth from different religious subgroups were relating to their own religion and heritage. The discussion presents some commonalities between the youth (by virtue of sharing common contextual factors in Canadian society) and differences due to varied religious heritage backgrounds inherited from their families, as well as different ways in which these youth related to their religion, and how they (re)construct the same. In terms of some commonalities reported, a majority of the youth were found to be highly individualistic in goals of life (a key value associated with Western society) and religious choices they make and allow their children to make; displayed positive attitudes towards religious diversity; rejected any intolerance and extremisms; and held those responsible for this to be distorting the religion. In addition, majority of the sampled youth (from urban settings) saw themselves as being ‘accommodated’ or integrated in to Canadian society (specially structurally and psychologically) and were to a great extent appreciative of Canadian society being multicultural.

Chapters 5 titled, *From Atheism to Open Religiosity: Muslim men*, reports on a range of male views about and attitudes towards the Muslim religion. Majority of the respondents saw themselves as well integrated within Canadian society and almost all the respondents were respectful of other religions/diversity. Chapter 6 titled, *A variable but convergent Islam: Muslim women*, draws its analysis based on interviews with 58 young Muslim female participants. The first part of the discussion is based on themes culled across the participants’ interviewed (mainly about systemic level religion system) followed by detailed lives of

individuals (stories) reflecting the Lived religion approach (following the two theoretical directions of the study).

Chapter 7 titled, *Perpetuating Religion and Culture: Hindu women*, provides biographic profiles of four women individuals as they relate to their religion through their specific biographies. The findings show that: some participants saw a relationship between religion and culture, while for some religion and culture were distinct. Overall, participants admitted to the centrality of family/home in the transmission of their heritage; in turn becoming great resource for the youth to find solace and comfort in times of social challenge as well as in identity making processes in a multi religio-cultural and secularising Canadian society. Chapter 8 titled, *A dominance of marginal relations: Hindu Men*, presents a brief background in terms of family profiles as well as thematic discussions around the way these Hindu youth (who had family origins in: India, Sri Lanka, East Africa) relate to their religion and religious heritage.

Chapter 9 titled, *May be, in the future: Buddhist Men*, shares analysis from interviews of sampled Buddhist youth about their relationship with their religion. Overall, the discussion suggests that the sampled men seem to have engaged less in (re) construction of their religious identity (Buddhism), and tend to be a “little bit Buddhist” (p.197) and are “religio-cultural base seekers” (p.195) but continue to relate with and perpetuate their cultural identities conveyed through their family/ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, few youth thought it would be a challenge to ‘live between two cultures’ (p.212). Chapter 10 titled, *Fluid boundaries of a tolerant religion: Buddhist women*, shares findings from the interview data with Buddhist women and includes comparisons with their male counterparts and female participants from the other subgroups, i.e., Muslims and Hindus. In total, 28 Buddhist young female participants were recruited for the study.

Chapter 11 titled, *The difference that gender makes*, discusses the significant role that gender differences play in the lives of the individuals studied. In this regard, the chapter presents 6 stories of individuals, 2 (1 male and 1 female) from each subgroup-- Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim. The discussion delineates how religion, culture and gender manifest possibilities and challenges in growing up as an adult in Canadian society. Chapter 12 titled, *Growing up in Toronto: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists*, profiles Toronto’s singularity as a multicultural Canadian city. The chapter provides an auto-ethnographic view of the author-researcher from her location of being a part of a religious majority, i.e., Christianity, from where she ‘sees’ and co-produces Toronto’s multi religio-cultural landscape. This view is balanced and complemented by the interview data of the sampled youth who recognise Toronto as both a place and space that offers the required structures and resources, social atmosphere and demographic mixture which affords one to practice ones religion freely as well as intermingle with diverse religio-cultural expressions and identities. The discussion concludes that Toronto has “internalised” diversity (p. 288). These and other such qualities make the city of Toronto a particularly significant Canadian city which attracts and nurtures diversity.

The concluding chapter (chapter 13) titled, *Growing up in Canada, the United States and Western Europe*, provides cross-regional comparisons. Drawing upon scarce literature available on immigrant youth from Europe and the US and comparing it with the culled findings from the subgroup sets in the current study, the authors highlight how the experience of growing up in Canada (as a youth from religious minority within diversity) is similar or different in the ways the immigrant youth from religious minorities relate to their religion locally and globally as well as to their ‘host’ societies where they live and grow. In this respect, whilst there are vast similarities across the region, there are two specific differences which are unique to Canadian experiences: (a) the youth from these subgroups were less politically conscious and active in feeling the need to (re) construct their global religion and

(b) they are relatively better integrated in Canada than their counterparts in the United States and Western Europe.

Given the rich data included in this study, the collection could have engaged in a more substantive debate and theorisation about the role of religion in a predominantly secularised multicultural society and the tensions between the religious and secular outlooks opting instead for data-related/restricted reportage. Such an analysis could have shed significant light on (re) construction of religion at global systemic level and its transmission in individual biographies in Canadian state and social contexts. The inclusion of intergenerational perspectives on the issues explored could have proved vital, as the perceived continuity or rupture in the transmission of a particular heritage by the family elders may bear significant implications and consequences on the relationship between them as heritage transmitters and these growing youth—see, for instance, Said's (1983) work on filiations (kinship bondage) and affiliations (networks formed) in modern society and Datoos's (2009) critical ethnographic work highlighting the role and agency of parents/family elders in 're-filiations' and re-territorialisation of the youth to their roots in a globalising urban Pakistani society. Despite these critical observations, this is a seminal contribution towards the complex field of the sociology of religion in multicultural societies. The book is an outstanding and rich research-based contribution to the study of intersections between religion and global migration in global society in general and the construction of religious identity and diversity in multicultural and transnational contexts in particular.

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