EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION IN RESEARCH:

RELIGIOUS INCLUSION RESEARCH TOOLKIT

Developed for Royal Roads University by
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Acknowledgment of Traditional Lands

Royal Roads University acknowledges that the campus is on the traditional Lands of the Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) and Lekwungen (Songhees) ancestors and families. It is with gratitude that we live, work and learn here where the past, present, and future of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty and staff come together.

In honour of the Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) and Lekwungen (Songhees) ancestors, Hay'sxw'qa si'em (hy-sh-kwa sea-em)! This means, "Thank you, respected or honourable one."

[Click here to listen to the Royal Roads University Traditional Welcome](#).

Harvested and carved by Tsawout artist Tom Lafortune with the assistance of Howard LaFortune Jr., the name of this 25-foot-tall pole is "S'ael", a Sencoten word for harmony.

Religious Inclusion Research Toolkit

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- Accessibility Statement describing the design, format, and navigation options
- Navigation can be done using either a keyboard or mouse
- Footnotes are in 12-point font instead of the conventional 10-point to improve readability
- Modified American Psychological Association (APA) style emphasizes accessibility over compliance with style rules
- Each main word in the titles of articles and books cited in the References and Further Reading sections is capitalized
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Aim of this Toolkit

The Religious Inclusion Research Toolkit is a brief and high-level overview of considerations for the inclusion of religiously identified groups in research practices. Academic literature on research methodologies does not adequately address the various ethical, cultural, political, and methodological factors that come into play in research contexts with religiously and/or spiritually identified individuals and groups. Some academic studies offer fieldwork reflections about working with and among specific religious groups; however, more general principles and guidelines are not readily found.

This toolkit provides some general principles, practices, and questions to consider when working with religious communities, especially those representing marginalized groups. While some examples refer to specific ethno-racial religious communities, the focus is not intended to examine the specificities of various religious traditions.

The information provided in the toolkit is intended to be a starting point for researchers to begin thinking about how to make their research methods and practices more inclusive for religiously identified individuals and groups and to become aware of some of the ethical considerations and concerns when conducting research with these communities.

This toolkit aims to:

- provide an overview of religious diversity and religious discrimination in Canada;
- summarize considerations for research design that is inclusive of religiously identified groups, providing high-level descriptions of principles and practices;
- suggest questions that researchers can ask themselves to encourage inclusive research design;
- offer considerations about the research process, including research ethics, political concerns, and implications of methodologies and potential impacts on findings; and
- suggest decolonial approaches to research and knowledge production in religious studies that pertain to both the social sciences and humanities.

Overview: Religious Diversity in Canada

Religious inclusion in research does not only involve practices that researchers should consider when working with religiously identified groups, it also extends to working with research assistants, team members, and collaborators that may identify as being part of a religious group and/or hold spiritual beliefs that should be considered. To highlight Canada's religious diversity, this section provides some relevant statistical background. This information helps to build greater awareness of the salience of religious diversity as we consider its possible impact on research contexts, design, and practices.

According to the 2019 Statistics Canada Census report[1], just over two-thirds (68%) of the Canadian population reported having a religious affiliation, and over half (54%) said their religious or spiritual beliefs were somewhat or very important to how they live their lives. Additionally, one-quarter (23%) of Canadians reported as having taken part in a group religious activity at least once a month in the year prior to the survey. These practices included attending religious meetings or services but excluded special occasions such as weddings or funerals. Finally, more than one-third (37%) engaged in religious or spiritual activities on their own at least once a month during the same year. These observances included prayer, meditation, or other forms of devotion at home or elsewhere.

The 2021 census data[2] found that over 19.3 million people reported a Christian religion, representing just over half of the Canadian population (53.3%). The numbers have declined over the past two decades from 67.3% in 2011 and from 77.1% in 2001. More than one third of Canadians report having no religious affiliation a proportion that has more than doubled in the past 20 years. Meanwhile, other religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism and Buddhism are growing in number.[3] Immigration is one of the key drivers behind the growth in non-Christian religions. For example, immigrants represented the majority of Buddhists (68.9%), Muslims (63.1%), Hindus (62.9%) and Sikhs (53.8%).

Indigenous spiritualities may not be defined as "religious" by those who adhere to them; however, they represent sacred spiritual traditions that need to be considered in research contexts when working with Indigenous individuals and communities. Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices vary significantly among different First Nation, Métis and Inuit groups and individuals, and can also vary across different regions. Within these traditions,

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[1] Religiosity in Canada and its evolution from 1985 to 2019 (Statistics Canada)

[2] The Canadian census: A rich portrait of the country's religious and ethnocultural diversity (Statistics Canada)

[3] According 2021 census data, the population of religious minority groups in Canada is as follows: Muslim (1.8 million), Hindu (830,000), Sikh (770,000), Buddhist (360,000), Jewish (335,000).

spirituality is conceived more broadly as a "way of life" and "way of knowing" (or worldview), that is centred on a relationship with the Creator, the land and "all our relations."[4] These spiritual worldviews are integral to Indigenous cultures.

Diversity within Religious Communities

There is also a great deal of diversity within religious and spiritual traditions. People may have different orientations toward identifying with and practicing their faith. It's important to be aware of these varying personal commitments and not make generalized assumptions or stereotype individuals or groups. Some individuals may identify more culturally with their faith community as opposed to engaging in the religious practices associated with them.

There are also sectarian differences within various faith communities that are often not acknowledged because of the tendency to homogenize religious categories. Sectarian diversity may also be stratified and hierarchized reflecting specific power differentials within faith communities. Dominant sects are often privileged in research design leading to the further marginalization of minority sectarian groups. An intersectional approach (see below) should consider the saliency of intra-religious diversity in the research scope and design.

Some religious institutions may be dominated and governed by specific ethno-racial groups that have become prominent over time leading to differential power relations among the various groups vying for authority. Such ethno-racial power structures can lead to the marginalizing of other ethno-racial groups who can be excluded from key institutional roles and cannot claim the same voice and representation in community religious affairs and governance.

It is also important to consider how internal diversity within specific faith communities may lead to exclusions that researchers should be mindful of and where possible attempt to redress through their inclusive practices. For example, often 2SLGBTQ+ communities maybe marginalized, excluded, and face open hostility within some religious contexts. Patriarchal dominance may also limit cis-gendered women's roles in religious institutions and community life. Where relevant, ensuring research design and methodologies do not reproduce these exclusions is important to creating an inclusive research project.

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[4] [Policy on preventing discrimination based on creed: Section 11 Indigenous spiritual practices](#) (Ontario Human Rights Commission)

Christian Hegemony

Canada's heritage of White European settler colonialism has resulted in the prevalence and persistence of Christian privilege in shaping popular culture and institutional life. Dominant Christian traditions and holidays marginalize those of other faith communities in public life. These exclusions permeate civil society and institutions. In secular democracies, religious minorities still struggle for recognition and for the opportunity to be treated as fully and equally legitimate members of society. Joshi (2020) notes that from courtrooms to classrooms, non-Christian scriptures, traditions, and practices are viewed with suspicion, and bias.

It is important to consider how Christian hegemony can create blind spots when thinking about other faith traditions and how this may impact research design and practices. For example, researchers should be mindful not to relegate non-Christian expressions of faith, tradition, and belief systems as illegitimate forms of "exotic" "folk knowledge," thereby sustaining the hierarchy of Christian hegemony (Joshi, 2020). Methodological impacts of Christian hegemony may occur in research contexts if religious holy days and customs are not considered when working with diverse research teams or within religious communities (see Religious Accommodation below). These concerns must also be considered with respect to research taking place in international or transnational settings.

Religious Discrimination

In addition to the prevalence of Christian hegemony, individuals, and groups with intersectional identities of race, ethnicity, and place of birth, who hold non-Christian beliefs, are at risk of being excluded and oppressed by secular policies and practices. The false neutrality of secularism can lead to the disregard for religious identities, expressions, practices, and ways of knowing as well as enact discriminatory policies and practices that regulate religious expression in the public sphere such as Bill 21 in Quebec.[5]

Religious oppression is broadly construed as a form of "systemic faithism," which refers to "the ways that cultural and societal norms, systems, structures, and institutions directly or

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[5] In 2019 the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government tabled Bill 21, An Act Respecting the Laicity of the State, to ban public servants from wearing religious symbols at work. This includes schoolteachers, principals, police officers, judges, prison guards, Crown lawyers, bankruptcy registrars, the Speaker of the National Assembly, members of bodies like the labour tribunal, public inquiry commissioners, the provincial justice minister, and more. This law has been widely contested by a number of civil society organizations along and has been met with legal challenges that cite how this discriminatory law contravenes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. (For further info see: https://ccla.org/major-cases-and-reports/bill-21/)

indirectly, consciously, or unwittingly, promote, sustain, or entrench differential (dis)advantage for individuals and groups based on their faith (understood broadly to include religious and non-religious belief systems)." [6]

Another significant factor underpinning religious discrimination is the 'racialization of religion' which occurs when racial characteristics are ascribed to religious categories and racial phenotypes are associated with religious markers (Joshi, 2006). This results in an interlocking set of oppressions based on race, ethnicity, culture, and religion.

There are various manifestations of religious discrimination that can take the form of Islamophobia and ani-Muslim racism, antisemitism, anti-Sikhism, that are among the most prevalent, along with discrimination faced by other minority religious groups.

The 2018 report, *Taking Action Against Systemic Racism, Religious Discrimination Including Islamophobia[7],* put forward by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, attests to the saliency of various forms of religious discrimination in Canada and the need for a whole of government approach to tackling these concerns. In addition, all governmental bodies, funders, and universities have committed to "Equity, Diversity and Inclusion" policies and practices that include religious /spiritual identities, expressions, and practices as part of inclusion strategies.

Concerns surrounding religious discrimination are important for researchers to keep on their radar by thinking about the ways that religious exclusion, discrimination, and inequity can inadvertently become reproduced in research settings.

For example:

- Are the needs of religiously marginalized groups and/or research team members being considered and addressed?
- Are the intersectional aspects of identity and the interlocking form of oppression connected to them, being considered when working with marginalized religious communities and /or research team members?
- Where relevant, is the diversity of religious experience within faith communities adequately acknowledged?
- How can research remain free from reproducing religious stereotypes and stigmas?

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[6] [Human rights and creed research and consultation report: systemic faithism](#) (Ontario Human Rights Commission)

[7] [Taking Action Against Systemic Racism, Religious Discrimination Including Islamophobia](#) (Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage)

Religious Accommodation

Most provinces in Canada include duties to accommodate religious observances as part of their human rights code[8]. The accommodation of religious observances includes practices such as the following:

- Observation of major holy days
- Prayer or similar spiritual practices
- Funeral practices or rites
- Dietary requirements or fasting
- Dress, including modesty requirements

These practices among others should be considered, where relevant, in working with diverse research teams and within various religious communities. Being culturally responsive to the needs of religiously or spiritually observant individuals and groups is especially important among marginalized religious communities where holy days are not recognized as official holidays.

Religious Accommodation considerations for research include the following:

- Checking in with research team members and/or research participants about holy days that would need to be considered in planning research tasks, fieldwork, interviews, etc.
- Allowing time and opportunity for the observance of prayers and/or meditation or participating in sacred Indigenous traditions such as smudging, drumming, dance or sweat lodge ceremonies.
- Ensuring that religious customs are respected so that observant team members and/or research participants are not placed in situations where they may feel uncomfortable (i.e., being around alcohol, private and/or physical interaction with members of the opposite sex/gender, etc.).
- Where relevant, making sure food choices consider religious dietary restrictions.

Religious accommodations should be part of inclusive research design and methods from the outset where these needs are identified and/or expected.

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[8] See for example: Managers' Guide to Reasonable Accommodation (British Columbia Government)

Research Design

Inclusive Research Methods

The study of religion employs a variety of methodologies drawn from the humanities and social sciences. Researchers are increasingly aware of the need to adopt methodologies that make concerns about power more central.

Inclusive research design refers to a methodological approach that prioritizes the voices, experiences, and knowledges of marginalized individuals, groups, and communities, and works to reduce and/or remove power imbalances that might exist in the research process. This involves not only being aware of the power differentials within the communities being researched but also being cognizant of the power wielded by the researcher.

By incorporating inclusive research design, researchers can create more equitable and representative studies and ensure that biases are identified and addressed, and that knowledge production challenges Eurocentric hegemony and does not reproduce religious hierarchies or other oppressive structures.

Aligning with these priorities requires ongoing reflection, assessment, and adaptation allowing space for new ways of thinking about the research process.

Below are some considerations to help guide the process of conceptualizing and conducting research projects that integrate inclusive practices.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the awareness and examination of the researcher's own biases, beliefs, and perspectives and how they may impact the research process and findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Reflexivity is especially important where religion is often a sensitive and personal topic for both the researcher and the participants. The researcher must be aware of their own religious and/or secular biases and how they may influence their approach to the study, data interpretation, and representation of the findings. This awareness can help to increase the rigor, credibility, and transparency of the research. A failure to reflect on the part of researchers can not only hinder the research process but can also harm those taking part in the study and put the relationship between the researchers and the communities they are studying at risk. For instance, the use of labels and categories to describe research participants and their experiences may cause offense. Engler et al. (2022) highlight the fact that coding is a form of translation, where the language of data is abstracted, reworded, summarized or simplified into a set of codes. This process often involves making the participants' language problematic for the purpose of analysis.

Reflexivity requires researchers to be self-aware and critically evaluate their own hidden biases, assumptions, and beliefs when using language to code data.

The use of research methods, like autoethnography, that rest on the belief that research is co-created, and imagines research as relationships, embraces methods and mediums for researchers to explore, and examines the self without separation from the research (Bull, 2020).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality as a theory has given us a nuanced and potent way to think about power and difference. Intersectionality highlights the different privileges and marginalities that shape individual experiences and raises awareness of the multiple layers of identity and overlapping sources of power that shape social reality (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989). Researchers of religion are increasingly incorporating principles of intersectionality into empirical studies of religion.

Intersectional approaches include the following considerations:

- Examining the intersections of religious identity with other social markers, such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality, etc.
- Taking stock of how the intersectional identities and social locations of researchers and research team members may shape and/or influence the views they bring to the process and the positive and/or negative impacts this may have on the project.
- Analyzing how religious beliefs and practices are shaped by historical, political, and cultural contexts.
- Making salient the experiences of marginalized groups within religious communities.
- Considering different standpoints on religion and/or religious spirituality.
- Examining how religious institutions may both perpetuate and/or challenge systems of oppression.
- Questioning the power structures that influence religious beliefs, institutions, and practices, and examining identity-based exclusions with respect to gender and gender identity, sexual identity, ethnic divisions, sectarian differences, etcetera.
- Assessing the role of religion in shaping power dynamics and social hierarchies.
- Examining the impact of globalization on religious experiences, practices, and identities.

Religion and Decolonial Thought

Maori scholar Linda Tuihawai Smith (1999) warns that "Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized (page 7)." In response to these legacies, decolonial thought has been applied to analyze the impact of modernity/coloniality on the study of religion. For example, researchers advancing knowledge on postcolonialism and feminism have challenged and transformed the fields of religion, ethics and liberation theologies (Donaldson and Kwok, 2002).

A decolonial approach demands a review of the dominance of the Eurocentric canon and the need to address the legacies of colonial influence on Western academic knowledge production. Decolonial thought provides valuable insights into how colonial hierarchies persist and suggests ways for decolonizing research methods in religious studies.

Decolonial approaches to research invite us to consider the following questions:

- Are academic forms of colonialism being reproduced in the research?[9] (i.e., Are non-Western religious cultures being viewed through Western Eurocentic frames of reference? Do marginalized research assistants have opportunities to publish from the research data or co-publish with dominant scholars on the team?)
- Have Indigenous and subaltern religious histories, knowledges, voices, and worldviews been consulted and integrated?
- Are religious texts being approached contrapuntally? (i.e., a) identifying and making visible the submerged and unacknowledged foundations of colonialism in textual sources, and b) revealing what the text includes as well as excludes).[10]
- Can Liberation Theologies[11] and subaltern religious resistance movements be acknowledged?

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[9] Academic colonialism refers to the Western Eurocentric control of knowledge production over Indigenous peoples and peoples of the global south (see for example, Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Shih (2010) lays out another dimension of academic colonialism through the political economy of knowledge production: "Academic colonialism stands for how states occupying the centre where knowledge is produced, transmitted, and ordered, in an unfair academic division of-labor at the global level have successfully coerced scholars located in the peripheral states to accept their dominated relations in thoughts and ideas by standardising, institutionalising, and socialising academic disciplines (44)."

[10] See for example, Said, E. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage Books

[11] Liberation theologies refers to a theology that is responsive to the core concerns of marginalized communities working toward social, political, or economic equality and justice. While originating as a school of thought in Latin American Roman Catholic religious

Participant Recruitment

Researchers should ensure that participants are representative of the religious communities and ways of life they are hoping to study. This would require researchers to be cognizant of the relationships of power that operate in the religious communities they wish to research.

Initiating communication with those who can facilitate access, can be complicated. Researchers need to assess whether their contacts are representative of the religious communities they aim to study. For instance, the dominant interpretations of historical texts, sacred scriptures, and current religious debates often reflects the viewpoints of well-educated, upper-class males. It is therefore important to consider what voices have been historically excluded and marginalized.

Data Collection and Analysis

In qualitative research on religion, it is important to consider how those being studied understand and interpret beliefs, symbols, rituals, texts, and behaviors. It is crucial to be circumspect of the labels and categorizations we use to describe others and their social identities and backgrounds, as some research participants may take offense to certain classifications. Strategies like member checks (Birt et al., 2016) and collaborative theorizing (Asenbaum, 2022) can ensure that meanings are not imposed externally and instead ensure that the data analysis considers the worldviews of the communities being examined and allows participants to narrate their own experiences and the meanings they attach to them.

Inclusive textual analysis involves ensuring that the sources used represent scholars from within the religious tradition being studied as well as addressing gender biases in academic citations. For example, Boston University religious studies scholar Kecia Ali has been studying an extensive literature that examines the gendered citation gap in a number of social science, science, and humanities disciplines, where male authors of books and journal articles overlook research and publications by female colleagues (Barlow, 2020). Avoiding citational biases is often an academic blind spot and requires a dedicated focus on equity in knowledge production, representation, and the inclusion of subaltern knowledges and scholarship (Spivak, 1988).

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movements in the 1960s, liberation theologies have since been adopted by other traditions such as Islam, Black theology, Feminist Liberation Theology, and Dalit theology.

Questions to Consider

To acknowledge and integrate the experiences of diverse ethno-cultural, religious groups, consider how your research addresses religious diversity and inclusion as part of its design.

- If your research involves racialized and/or underrepresented religious communities, who benefits from the research findings?

- Are your research questions reflective of the needs and/or experiences of the communities you are engaged with?

- How have you ensured that the populations that will be most impacted by the research are involved in determining the research objectives and design? For example, as part of an inclusive design, will members from the population/community of interest be invited to assist in developing the research questions, take part in collaborative theorizing, or otherwise provide input into the research process and data analysis?

- Have you paid attention to how unintended impacts (positive or negative) may occur and impact marginalized religious communities because of the planned research?

- Have you considered how to enact intersectional or comparative perspectives?

Research Ethics and Protocols

Research ethics is crucial in the study of religion because it helps ensure that research is conducted in a responsible and respectful manner, protects the rights and dignity of religious individuals and communities, and ensures the validity and reliability of research findings. Adhering to ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity is essential in order to build trust with research participants and avoid causing harm to religious communities. Failure to follow ethical guidelines in religious research can result in harm to participants, damage to the reputation of the researcher and their institution and compromise the research findings.

- Respect for beliefs: Researchers must respect the beliefs and practices of the religious group being studied and avoid offending or offending the members of that group.
- Bias and cultural sensitivity: Researchers must be aware of their own biases and strive to be culturally sensitive in their research methods and interpretations.
- Power dynamics: When studying religious groups, researchers must be aware of the power dynamics that may exist between themselves and the participants and must avoid exploiting their power or position.

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- Protection of vulnerable populations: Researchers must take extra care to protect the rights and welfare of vulnerable populations, such as religious minorities and those who may be subject to discrimination or abuse.

Risk and the Securitization of Research

When research involves exposing others to greater than minimal risk it's necessary to find suitable methods to address these risks. A common concern in studies of religious phenomena is the risk to the reputation of those being studied. This is particularly true for persecuted religious minorities. For example, after 9/11, new laws and policies in Canada, Europe and North America requiring increased scrutiny of Muslims, as well as increased incidents of hate crimes against individuals perceived as Muslim, have exposed this group to greater risk in these societies (Maira, 2009; Nagra, 2017; Sian, 2015; Zine, 2022).

Global geopolitics and domestic security concerns shape, inform, and at times threaten the research context. For example, researchers conducting qualitative, ethnographic research among Muslim communities in the post 9/11 context have raised concerns about the impact of securitization on the research process (Abdel-Fattah, 2021; Ali, 2016; Zine, 2022). These concerns may involve: garnering trust in communities that have been under surveillance and may question researcher's motives; taking extra precautions to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of research participants; and carefully considering how the research findings cannot be used to harm them particularly in a climate of heightened scrutiny from security agencies.

Religious discrimination (discussed above) factors into consideration when engaging in research among religious communities who face these specific challenges and stigmas. It is important to note that these concerns about religious discrimination and securitization transcend the individualized religiosity of participants, since these racial and religious minorities have become subject to collective labeling.

Limitations of Research Ethics Protocols: Informed Consent

When it comes to informed consent, ethnic, religious, and Indigenous cultures can have different interpretations of autonomy and moral responsibility compared to the standards set by European and North American research ethics committees.

European and North American ethics approval processes tend to prioritize individualistic perspectives, which may clash with ethno-cultural, religious and Indigenous groups that value communitarianism. For instance, in parts of Africa, research success often hinges on involving families, communities, and society in the decision-making process (Rakotsoane

and Nicolaides, 2019). Additionally, in certain Islamic cultures, it is customary for women of reproductive age to seek consent from their spouses and families before participating in research (Fadel, 2010). Also, research within Indigenous and First Nations communities is valued in terms of its demonstrated responsibility and benefit to the community (Brunger and Bull, 2011, Brunger and Weijer, 2007; Bull, 2016).

In religious, ethno-cultural and Indigenous communities with a clear authority, researchers must collaborate with the community to make sure research objectives are relevant, potential impacts are explained and justified, and methods match community requirements and expectations. In order to ensure community requirements are met, flexibility should be built into a project's research design from the outset, and time allowed for collaboration between the project team and the community in which the research will be taking place. For example, in some contexts, only after community consultation has occurred can individual consent be obtained. Community agreement and shared decision-making don't compromise individual freedom or the requirement for informed consent. Researchers have a responsibility to understand and honor the traditions of religious, ethno-cultural and Indigenous communities in all research activities.

Conducting Research in Sacred Spaces

Where research protocols call for fieldwork in sacred spaces such as temples, mosques, jamatkhanas, synagogues, gurdwaras, churches, Indigenous ceremonies, etcetera, there are important points to consider in navigating these sites respectfully. It's important to learn ahead of time what are the appropriate ways to enter and inhabit sacred spaces. For example, some sites may require removing shoes, wearing head coverings or modest attire, and navigating within gender segregated spaces; practices which must be respected by visitors. Speaking with religious or community leaders in advance of visits to ask about what etiquette visitors should follow is a good starting point. Being mindful of designated prayer times, special services, funerals, and religious holidays would also be good information to plan a visit around.

While many religious institutions are welcoming to visitors and may allow for prayers or religious ceremonies to be observed, it is important to ensure that congregants are not made to feel as if their devotions are a public spectacle. Making sure that one's presence is not intrusive is an important consideration. Taking photos or videos of people during prayers or certain ceremonies would not be considered appropriate in most religious settings. Taking photos or videos of the physical space or design of the building and/or surroundings may be allowed with prior permission. When visiting sacred spaces in international settings there maybe other guidelines to follow that should be considered that might differ from those in Western nations.

Etiquette and Reciprocity Protocols

Being cognizant of cultural and religious norms helps researchers to follow proper etiquette and reciprocity protocols, such as how to dress, how to greet and be greeted, how to respond to acts of hospitality and how to express gratitude to religious, ethno-cultural and Indigenous communities. In some cases, making a donation to a local temple, shrine, synagogue, mosque, jamatkhana, church, gurdwara, or Indigenous centre may be a more appropriate gesture than offering individual compensation for research participation. The cultural context for these reciprocal exchanges is important to understand before embarking on fieldwork.

Positionality and the Politics of Knowledge Production and Ethical Issues

When considering conducting research on or with religious communities that one is not a member of, there are important issues to address before embarking on this journey. Histories of outsider research among racially and religiously marginalized groups are often rooted in colonial encounters and histories. These experiences have meant that knowledge production about marginalized religious groups has taken place through the prism of subordinating power relations. Through these discursive practices, racially marked faith communities have been relegated to subaltern roles where they have been portrayed as "exotic," "barbaric" and "irrational" (Said, 1979). In more contemporary examples, opportunistic research among racially and religiously marginalized communities that may be considered as "hot topics" may lead to the commodification, fetishization, and appropriation of these cultures through what bell hooks (1992) described as "eating the other." Even with good intentions, outsider research must therefore be considered within this historical and discursive context when assessing what projects are appropriate to take on and what may better be undertaken by researchers who share the same religious affiliation with the community being studied.

Researchers are seldom fully outsiders or insiders to a group, which raises complex ethical issues. For example, Abdullahim Ahmed (2017), a researcher and a Muslim, faced complex ethical dilemmas during his fieldwork in a mosque in Cardiff. He not only had to gain the trust of participants by showing integrity according to the Islamic ethical norms of that community, but as a researcher he also had to abide by the professional codes of conduct of research. Balancing this fluid and hybrid insider outsider role requires a nuanced approach to ethics, beyond following traditional institutional ethics review procedures.

Concluding Thoughts

The field of religious studies is extensive and encompasses a variety of research methodologies, making a one size fits all approach impossible. Nonetheless, researchers looking for advice on adopting a more inclusive approach to their research design are left with few resources to guide them. This toolkit provides a preliminary roadmap for researchers who want to transform the way they think about and conduct research projects in ways that better reflect religious and cultural diversity from an integrative and intersectional lens that is focused on producing more equitable scholarship.

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