

## **Most significant research contributions (Patrice Brodeur – 2009)**

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My five most significant research contributions span topics from interdisciplinary theory to applied social sciences and humanities, with a particular emphasis on the academic study of religions often referred to as Religious Studies. The first set of contributions focuses on the glocal dynamics of Islam in North America (Québec, Canada, and the USA). The second set reflects those dynamics internationally, with a special emphasis on challenges of pluralism in the age of globalization. The third set represents my work in the field of interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding. The fourth set demonstrates my theoretical contributions particularly in the discipline of Religious Studies, as it intersects with other disciplines such as history, philosophy, political science, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, peace studies, as well as cultural and postcolonial studies. The fifth set opens unto the new field of “Applied Religious Studies”. All these contributions directly touch upon two or more of my three central CRC research themes (Islam, pluralism, globalization), within the broader aim of promoting peacebuilding.

### **1. Glocal Dynamics of Islam in North America (Québec, Canada, and the USA)**

I published three interrelated academic articles on this topic.

- a) “La Commission Bouchard-Taylor et la perception des rapports entre Québécois et Musulmans au Québec,” in *Cahiers de recherche sociologique*, “L’Islam, l’Empire et la République”, co-edited by R. Antonius and N. Raboudi, vol. 46, sept 2008, 95-107.

This article focuses on glocal dynamics in Quebec. It followed from a collective paper (mémoire) that the CRC-IPG research team had submitted to this provincial commission, after I had served as the lead expert on Islam in their public Open Forum on Islam in Quebec. This article presents a few of my own theoretical concepts (glocalism, pluriscope identities and geographies, interworldview dialogue and power dynamics) to improve our understanding of islamophobia in Quebec today, raising several historical, psychological, and political questions to guide future research in this area. This article aims to integrate the heritage of majority French-Canadian Catholic identities with those of more recently immigrated groups, such as Quebecois Muslims. It frames the analysis within glocal dynamics in a post 9/11 world. It allows a more nuanced reading of recent events that have marked identity dynamics within Quebec in the last few years by deconstructing the interdependence between various reciprocal perceptions of various « others ». It also demonstrates how the heritage of Orientalism developed during the colonial period is still very much alive in postmodern forms.

- b) “La Commission Bouchard-Taylor et l’accommodement raisonnable: une avenue pour une meilleure gestion du pluralisme religieux dans une société plurielle?,” in *La gestion de la diversité religieuse, Liban-Québec*, ouvrage collectif sous la direction de l’Institut d’études islamo-chrétiennes de l’Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth, (Beyrouth : Dar al-Machreq, forthcoming 2010).

This article examines the fact that the Quebec government used a public commission of inquiry on reasonable accommodation practices as a strategy to address public perceptions about intercultural dynamics and especially the place of religious identities within these. Because so much of the public concerns were related to Islam and Muslim communities in Quebec in light of media attention to Islamic forms of extremism after 9/11, this article raises critical questions about the pluses and minuses of this political strategy while demonstrating why its final May 2008 report is so valuable to improve inter-group relations in Quebec, including the reduction of islamophobia and other forms of intolerance. The aim of presenting this Quebec case-study in Lebanon was not only to inform an Arab academic audience of important inter-group developments in Quebec, but to put my analysis of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission to the test of comparative socio-political analysis in light of colleagues’ work on a long-standing culturally and religiously plural society such as Lebanon.

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- c) “Religious Pluralism in Light of American Muslim Identities,” in *Diversity and Pluralism in Islam: Historical and Contemporary Discourses Amongst Muslims*, edited by Z. Hirji, (London: I.B. Tauris, December 2009), chapter 4.

Six months after September 11, 2001, I was invited by the Institute of Isma’ili Studies in London, UK, the leading academic institution on Isma’ili Shi’ite Islam worldwide, to deliver the opening lecture in a year-long academic lecture series on “Islam and Pluralism.” Building on two prior articles published in *The Muslim World* journal, linking more closely American Religious Studies and Islamic Studies, this latest book chapter demonstrates how current political ideologies underpin both the definitions as well as the theories of pluralism in general and religious pluralism in particular, leaving American Muslims to compete with each other in terms of their different ideologies, with other Americans, as well as with Muslims outside the USA, especially in majority Muslim countries with which many continue to keep close links. In short, I prove why American Muslims, despite their small numbers (American Muslims represent less than one percent of the world’s Muslim population), represent a key community for the future of Islam worldwide, as many of them negotiate between the patriotic demands for full allegiance to the US nation-state and the equally stringent demands of loyalty towards various possible sets of Islamic demands. In facing these multiple personal identity and collective political challenges, there is no doubt that contemporary American Muslims live on the fault line of the current hegemonic power struggle between, on the one hand, Western secular worldviews, especially American, and, on the other, Islamic worldviews. The tensions also exist, in many parallel ways, among Canadian Muslims.

### **2. Glocal Dynamics of Islam Internationally, with an focus on challenges of pluralism in an age of globalization**

I’ve published a book-chapter and co-edited a book on this topic.

- a) “Les tensions religieuses et internationales au Moyen-Orient: Existe-t-il une menace islamiste?,” in *Les religions sur la scène mondiale*, edited by R. Crépeau, (Montréal: Presses de l’U de M., forthcoming 2010).

In this article, using a dechronological reading of the long history of relations between the Islamic world and the West, I demonstrate how this long historical inheritance has survived to this day through patterns of discursive reproduction over generations going back over a thousand years.

It explains the international persistence in calling the region of North Africa and West Asia the “Middle East”, and suggests, in French, the simple, though not perfect, solution of “ANASO” (Afrique du Nord et Asie du Sud-Ouest). The article further describes the broad spectrum of Muslim actors in this region of the world, as in any other for that matter, using my concept of “identité pluriscope” or “pluriscope identity/ies”, which ties on-going identity construction to an always diverse identity environment affected by globalized power dynamics. The article presents a spectrum of identities among Muslim communities worldwide that spread from those that result from dependency to and co-dependency with those of the West, and those that seek a healthier interdependence, one of the greatest challenges of pluralism in the current era of globalization.

- b) *The Pluralist Paradigm: Democracy and Religion in the 21st Century*, with co-editor Sondra Myers, (Scranton, PA: Scranton University Press, 2006), 176 p.

In addition to co-editing this book, I composed alone its long introduction with two aims in mind: 1) summarizing the historical developments of democracy in the West to demonstrate how different its early emergence was from contemporary practices; and 2) presenting a Western family of contemporary models whose coexistence imply a *de facto* pluralism in democratic practices. These two points form the basis of a prescriptive conclusion in light of globalized power dynamics: that

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various cultural/religious forms of democratic practices can coexist worldwide, including within majority Muslim countries, if and when they are rooted in their own respective civilizational heritage and in dialogue with the broad variety of contemporary practices. This descriptive, analytical, and prescriptive framework presents my overarching political philosophy about pluralism and explains why I do not see any contradiction between Islam and democratic pluralism in the medium to long term range in our age of globalization.

### **3. Interreligious Dialogue and Peacebuilding**

*Religion as a Conversation Starter: Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans*, with co-author Ina Merdjanova, (London/New York: Continuum Press, forthcoming December 2009), 206 pp.

This book is the first comprehensive academic study of the present state of interreligious dialogue for peacebuilding in Southeast Europe, sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace, the most important source of funding for research in Peace Studies. The result of a three year ethnographic and historico-political study across the Balkans, this study focuses on three goals. First, it identifies key actors and activities in the field of interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding between 1990 and 2008. Second, it analyzes these activities in order to single out “exemplary practices.” Striving for a balanced research, it also seeks to identify “challenges”: those activities which have had ambiguous, negative, or no effect at all on the improvement of interreligious relations as well as on civic understanding and cooperation. Third, it presents current and future needs that would hopefully guide sustainable interreligious peacebuilding policies for this region of the world and beyond. They are summarized in a set of policy recommendations. In brief, this book maps recent interreligious relations in Southeast Europe throwing light on both the achievements and challenges of interreligious dialogue for peacebuilding in particular, and offering a set of up-to-date policy recommendations. This study contributes to a greater understanding of the local and regional Balkan particularities and how they relate to broader trends transnationally.

### **4. Theoretical advances in the discipline of Religious Studies**

“North Africa and West Asia,” in *Religious Studies: A Global View*, ed. G. D. Alles, (London/New York: Routledge, 2007), 75-101.

This chapter first surveys the current state of development in the field of Religious Studies across North African and West Asian academic institutions. It examines the differences between Turkey and Israel, where this discipline flourishes, and especially Arab countries, where there is a great paucity of academic interest and activities. Particular historical factors related to colonialism as well as the rise of Islamist politics in arabo-Muslim societies help us understand these differences in various national contexts. This article also raises an important theoretical problem related to the geographical nomenclature used to refer to this area of the world. It suggests that the term “Middle East” reflects the on-going hegemony of the Western colonial heritage, reflecting a particularly deep state of internalized oppression that has fueled anti-Western sentiments and slowed the process of integrating in its own ways the heritage of the Western academic study of religions. To help alleviate this problem, this article changed this nomenclature by systematically using the geographically more accurate expression: “North Africa and West Asia.” This point was further developed in the contribution highlighted below.

### **5. Contributions in the new field of “Applied Religious Studies”**

As a theoretical contribution in the field of Religious Studies, my critical thinking about the urgent need for a new subfield of “Applied Religious Studies” stems from the ethical challenges that scholars of religions in general and of Islam in particular have faced following 9/11. I have presented my arguments in the following two French articles:

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- a) “Pour faire place à l’étude critique appliquée de la religion,” in *Religiologiques*, Vol. 29 (2004), 61-78.
- b) “L’étude critique appliquée de la religion dans un monde pluraliste,” in *La religion dans la sphère publique*, ed. by S. Lefebvre, (Montréal: Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2005), 198-219.

In both articles, I explored the reasons behind the absence of an applied subfield in Religious Studies, when compared to the majority of other fields of scientific production. I argued that they stemmed from two value judgments implicit in the Enlightenment project developed in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, namely, the need for the scientific researcher of any subject, including religions, to remain “detached” from his subject of analysis and the need for scholars of religions in particular to remain separate from any areas of application of their knowledge production, because it would bring them too close to religious communities and institutions and make them liable of being accused of unduly biased because of their “religious subjectivity”. This tension, particular to the field of Religious Studies because of its unavoidable links to the power struggles between religious institutions and political ones in the era of nation-state building in the West, has meant that only theological studies developed an applied dimension, variously called pastoral, practical or applied theology. To make matters worse from the perspective of Religious Studies scholars who have branched out to all phenomena of religions and spiritualities worldwide, the example of the highly academic International Academy for Applied Theology that continues to be focused almost exclusively on Christian communities proves, for many, the dangers of any applied approach to Religious Studies. In short, in these articles, as well as an up-coming one in the wake of my opening lecture at this academy’s international conference last July in Chicago, I argue for the urgent need of an “Applied Religious Studies” for ethical reasons that stem both from the rapid increase in interest in religions in a variety of human sectors after 9/11 as well as the postmodern transformations in academia in general that call for greater social relevance in intellectual production. This last point can never be achieved without the cooperation of religious/spiritual persons and institutions that are engaged in a variety of human endeavors for the greater good worldwide. It requires putting dialogue, both interdisciplinarily and interreligiously, at the center of those efforts. One practical example of this approach is my co-edited book:

- c) *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement: Beyond Dialogue to Action*, co-edited with Eboo Patel, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 276 pp.

This book theorized for the need to recognize the rapidly growing interreligious youth movement on the basis of its collection of over twenty best American practices in the area of interreligious dialogue for youth, variously defined. I co-authored its introduction and wrote one chapter. This book still remains the only one of its kind to this day, and much request for a broader set of international examples have emerged, some of which I have begun to collect in the hope of publishing an internal sequel in the up-coming year. This book, together with my co-authored one on interreligious dialogue in the Balkans mentioned above, represent good example of academic scholarship bearing light on their respective subject, which in turn mirror back important theoretical and policy questions for this area of dialogue but also for those of Religious Studies and that of peacebuilding in general.