

**Religious Attendance and Affiliation Patterns in Australia**

**1966 to 1996**

**The Dichotomy of Religious Identity and Practice**

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**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of**

**the Australian National University**

## **Candidate's Statement**

This work was an original piece of research, which investigated data-sets made available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics, The Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Social Science Data Archives.

The data sets provided by these bodies are

### Australian Bureau of Statistics

Census Data in printed form 1961, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986

Census Data for the 1991 and 1996 Censuses compiled in a format requested by the researcher.

### Australian Institute of Family Studies

The Australian Family Formation Project 1991 Stage Two

The Australian Living Standards Survey 1991

These contained limited data-sets of each survey and were compiled in a format requested by the researcher.

### Social Science Data Archives

The Religion in Australia Survey 1966

The Australian Family Formation Project 1981 Stage One

The International Social Science Survey 1993

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John Malcolm Armstrong

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*“Until quite recently, it was easier in traditionally Christian countries to keep Sunday holy because it was an almost universal practice and because, even in civil society, Sunday rest was considered a fixed part of the work schedule. Today, however, even in those countries which give legal sanction to the festive character of Sunday, changes in socioeconomic conditions have often led to profound modifications of social behaviour and hence of the character of Sunday. The custom of the ‘weekend’ has become more widespread, a weekly period of respite, spent perhaps far from home and often involving participation in cultural, political or sporting activities which are usually held on free days. This social and cultural phenomenon is by no means without its positive aspects if, while respecting true values, it can contribute to people’s development and to the advancement of the life of society as a whole. All of this responds not only to the need for rest, but also to the need for celebration which is inherent in our humanity. Unfortunately, when Sunday loses its fundamental meaning and becomes merely part of a ‘weekend’, it can happen that people stay locked within a horizon so limited that it can no longer see ‘the heavens’. Hence, though ready to celebrate, they are really incapable of doing so.”*

‘Dies Domini’ Paragraph 1, Section 4

John Paul II, August 1998

**Dedicated to the Memory of Robert (Bob) Harold Rowland  
Armstrong and Ann Josephine Patricia Vella**

***FIDELIS***

## **Abstract**

The period between 1966 and 1996 was a period of great change for society in Australia. Two particular aspects of that change have been highlighted in this study. It will examine the changing patterns of attendance at religious services and religious affiliation over this time period. In particular it examines the connection of attendance and belief patterns, which have changed during this period, with particular reference to Christian religious groups.

By examining data from each of the Censuses in the period between 1966 and 1996 it was possible to note three fundamental changes in the patterns of religious affiliation. The first was the movement away from patterns of Christian affiliation to no religious affiliation. The second was the shift of migration patterns which drew substantially from Europe in the period prior to 1971 to a pattern with higher levels of migration from Asia and Oceania. The third saw a decline in Christian affiliation among the 15-24 age group.

After analysing this affiliation data a weekly average religious attendance measure was composed to compare data from each of the social science surveys. This made it possible to examine generational trends by age and sex which resulted from changing patterns of affiliation, immigration, stability of residence and marital status. Also a case study of the Canberra parishes in the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn was undertaken to examine the particular impact that these changes had on a particular religious grouping.

In studying these indicators it is believed that the change in patterns of Australian religious attendance and affiliation while influenced by life course events has also been substantially affected by issues of generational change. These changes

not only produce lower levels of religious attendance but also have significant impact on aspects of society which have sustained communal life.



## Preface

In a time of great change often the starting point for reflection is on how a person changes in his life. My initial interest in this topic reflects some of my own spiritual journey. When I was born my parents made the decision that none of their children would be baptised. Part of this decision arose from some disillusionment with the Church of England, which they saw as being particularly partisan in its approach to the Second World War, and also the belief that as children we should be able to make our own choices about religion when we reached maturity. This was the first significant event in my spiritual life that my parents allowed me the choice of how I would make my own religious commitment.

As I grew up in England, I came under the influence of various religious traditions. My grandmother and older sister took me to Baptist Sunday school. I went to the local Church of England Primary School and became involved in the local Scouting movement. At Grammar school, the headmaster was a lay preacher for the local Methodist Church and my close friends were Jewish, Catholic, Hindu and Atheist.

I witnessed the conversion of my sister to Catholicism and this had a profound effect on my own conversion. This was probably the second significant event in the desire to belong to a religious organisation and to define my religious belief. Subsequent to this decision came the first thought of issues of vocation and priesthood which I shared with a Muslim friend, a Ugandan Asian who had escaped the murderous regime of Idi Amin, who suggested that I could always become an Imam!

The third significant event in my spiritual life was the migration to Australia where I found that the Catholic Church in Australia and the attitude to religion was quite different from that in England. During that time I lapsed from regular practice but still maintained a strong sense of Catholic principles. In most cases it was the Eucharist and Reconciliation which allowed me to remain connected with the church during that time. Also it was a period in which I was called to reflect upon what my faith meant. This was influenced by living with people from diverse religious backgrounds and experience. The influence of meditation, introduced to me by an atheist friend, allowed me to reflect on what way my life was going. Also his further challenge as a result of the 1981 Census that I was not really a Catholic if I did not practice caused me to consider what my faith meant to me. At the same time my parents made the choice to become Catholic and this made the consideration of discovering what they had found more engaging for myself.

The fourth significant event in my spiritual life was the decision about my own life choices in my commitment towards others. The choice of entering seminary followed a realisation of what I considered important and also how I could best help others. This choice far from removing me from the life of the world engaged me deeper in trying to understand the religious and social issues of our time. The choice in seminary allowed me to make a decision in my life, which would allow me to experience both satisfaction and joy. What would be the wellspring and life source that I could draw on for others and myself?

The fifth significant choice is the living out of that commitment as a priest. This is still a work in progress but it is a reflection that in my life there is a struggle not just to be a cipher for an organisation but to be a person who is authentic in my

own spiritual life. The question does not seem to be defined by terms that label my religious identity but what I bring as person to give substance to that identity.

While this study reflects on the two important expressions of religious identity and practice it also points to a time of great religious change as people grow in their understanding of what it means to be who they are. In a time of change these can be important indicators of how people see themselves and their connection to institutions of religious thought. However, as in all studies they are limited by their ability to define a person's relationship to those institutions. It appears evident that as I conclude this study there would also be great value in undertaking a study of people's religious history to gain an understanding of how their life has changed and continues to change.

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# 1. Introduction

## ***1.1 Objectives of the thesis***

Over the period between 1966 and 1996, there have been distinct changes in the patterns of religious affiliation and religious attendance in Australia. This has affected the composition of religious groups and has marked a distinct change in the way people are involved with the institutions which represent those religious groups. This thesis will concentrate on how the patterns of attendance and affiliation have changed within these Christian religious groups over this time period.

The objectives of this study are fourfold. The first objective is to formulate a standard measure of weekly religious attendance based on data from surveys that use different methods of recording levels of attendance at religious services. The second is to compare and contrast changing patterns of attendance and affiliation within Christian groups. This will highlight the connection between levels of weekly attendance and affiliation and any changes which occurred between 1966 and 1996. Third, the thesis will concentrate on how various demographic and socio-economic measures help to explain whether life cycle events or generational change have a significant influence on religious identity and practice. Lastly, theories will be put forward to explain these changes.

## ***1.2 Why demography?***

Often during the course of my thesis I have been asked the question, why Demography? Other disciplines such as Sociology and Religious Studies have made fundamental contributions to the debate about changes to the nature of religion both in

Australia and internationally. In each discipline there is a tendency to focus on particular issues which are pertinent to the area. Thus in Sociology the interest in religious affiliation and attendance looks at the social nature of religion in society. Religious Studies on the other hand looks at the theological aspects of religious attendance and affiliation. In these two disciplines, demographic indicators have often been used in an attempt to understand more clearly the particular issues that are relevant to each discipline. By way of cohort analysis Demography can play an important part in clarifying and naming the major changes in patterns of religious affiliation and attendance that have occurred in the period between 1966 to 1996.

Changes in religious attendance and affiliation are important indicators of more general changes in religious behaviour. *Religious Affiliation* provides the broadest definition of what it means for a person to belong to a religious group. It allows a researcher to examine how a person's religious identity may change over time and how those changes affect the religious group. *Religious Attendance* provides one interpretation of how a person's behaviour is linked to a particular religious group and also indicates the way a person associates with that institution. The strength of this association can be determined by how frequently a person attends services conducted by that religious group. As such religious attendance is a more specific definition of what it means for a person to belong to a religious group. What is of particular interest to this thesis is how the pattern of association between religious affiliation and religious attendance has changed over the period of 1966-1996 and what demographic characteristics might help chart those changes.

In looking at religious affiliation and religious attendance there are specific issues, which need to be examined in order to understand how both terms are used by researchers. It is also necessary to examine the issues raised by other researchers to

explain changes in religious affiliation and attendance. However, this study will seek to build on this knowledge by highlighting how the patterns of religious attendance and affiliation have changed during the period between 1966 and 1996. It will seek to argue that a study of religious attendance needs to consider the level of weekly attendance among those who change religious affiliation, which might explain the different levels of attendance between and within religious groups. Lastly, it will examine the levels of weekly attendance of those who do not change their religious affiliation and how this may be related to socio-economic and demographic factors.

### **1.3 Measuring attendance**

In 1993, Hadaway, Marler and Chaves<sup>1</sup> created a major debate on the way data on church attendance were collected in the United States. This debate arose from a comparison of 'headcount' data that was collected among Protestants in the rural Ohio county of Ashtabula and from 18 Catholic Dioceses in America with those collected by other social science surveys. Their major contention was that there was a difference between self reported behaviour and observed behaviour and that the counts taken by social science surveys and opinion polls tend to overestimate the level of attendance on any given Sunday. They also added that this tendency to over-report had increased over time and that as a result church attendance in America, which had declined in the 1960s and 1970s, might have continued to decline in the 1980s and 1990s. This created considerable debate within the research community in America and led to a symposium of articles on church attendance in the *American Sociological Review* in 1998.

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<sup>1</sup> Hadaway, Marler, Chaves (1993) 'What the polls don't show: A closer look at U.S. Church Attendance' in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 58, December 741-752

This symposium raised some important ideas that any researcher examining the issue of church attendance or attendance at any religious service needs to take into account. Caplow<sup>2</sup> contends that part of this difference in measurement of attendance may be due to the over-reporting of people who claim to be members of the Episcopalian Church rather than an under-reporting of attenders. He also stresses the need to ensure that when surveys are compared the attendance counts take place at the same time of year. He adds that in many cases the counts taken are estimates rather than physical head counts of those attending a service. Greeley and Hout<sup>3</sup> contend that the over-reporting of levels of attendance is due to the 'social desirability' of attendance and that the level of 'over-reporting' has actually increased in the 1980s and 1990s. They argue that the over-reporting of attendance figures provided by surveys is not as great as that reported by Hadaway, Marler and Chaves. They make two important points to support this argument. The first is that if actual church attendance has declined among younger generations it can be assumed that some sign of this will appear in reported attendance. The second point they raise is that actual church attendance tends to increase with age and that this makes it less likely for the older generations to under-report their attendance. Lastly, Woodberry<sup>4</sup> suggests that the results of telephone polls conducted by researchers can explain half of the difference between actual attendance and reported attendance highlighted by Hadaway, Marler and Chaves. Thus he suggests that a good part of the sampling problems involved in collecting attendance data derive from the method by which the

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<sup>2</sup> Caplow, (1998), 'The Case of the Phantom Episcopalians' in American Sociological Review, Volume 63, February 112-113

<sup>3</sup> Hout, Greeley (1998) 'What Church Officials' reports don't show: Another look at Church Attendance' in American Sociological Review, Volume 63, February 113-119

<sup>4</sup> Woodberry (1998), "When Surveys Lie and People Tell the Truth: How Surveys Oversample Church Attenders' in American Sociological Review, Volume 63, February, 119-121

data are collected. He argues that asking the question in face to face polls is more reliable.

In addressing these concerns, Smith<sup>5</sup> points out some particular difficulties that are pertinent to any debate about levels of church attendance. The first is the method by which religious attendance is measured, whether it is based on a survey or a physical headcount of those attending a religious service. The second point that he raises is how broadly based the survey question is worded. For example, the response to a question on attendance at a religious service in the last seven days will not be the same as the response to a question about attendance on a particular day of worship. The last point he makes is that the standard attendance question assumes personal attendance at a formal place of worship at a regular worship service. This tends to ignore those who attend some other type of religious service or who watch a religious service on television or listen to a service on radio. There is also the possibility that those who attend a religious service and another religious event may actually have their attendance over-reported. As a result of his research he found that there is a tendency to over-report the level of attendance in social science surveys compared to actual headcounts. However the over-reporting was not as great as that reported by Hadaway, Marler and Chaves. This finding is also supported by work conducted by Presser and Stinson<sup>6</sup>.

This research is important when considering similar comparisons of the social science surveys used in this thesis to see whether there are levels of over-reporting in the time period examined. This comparison is limited in part by the historical nature of the data and the way in which questions were asked in each of the surveys.

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<sup>5</sup> Smith, (1998) 'A Review of Church Attendance Measures' in American Sociological Review, Volume 63, February 131-136

However, it does appear that two questions need to be asked of each of the surveys used. Is there a difference between reported behaviour collected by social science surveys and observed behaviour collected by headcounts? Is there a difference in behaviour, which can be related to what is defined as attendance at a religious service by the researcher and the respondent? The first question is probably the easier to answer, as it is possible to compare the attendance levels in surveys with head-counts or surveys conducted at similar times. The second is more complicated. At best it is only possible to arrive at speculations about why the level of attendance reported by a particular religious group may be different from that reported in a survey. Thus attendance reported in surveys may vary depending on whether it refers to attendance at a particular worship service, in a formal place of worship, on a particular day. People may attend a service on a day other than the formal day of worship. They may attend at a place or manner separate from a formal place of worship. They may attend at more than one service on a particular day. They may attend at a service of another religious group than the one to which they are affiliated.

#### **1.4 Demographic studies**

Australia is probably one of the few countries which provides for the collection of religious affiliation data at each census. As a result it is possible to compare this historical data over a period of time. This has resulted in the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other bodies compiling a few special studies focussing on the nature of religion in Australia. These are ‘Census 86: Religion in Australia’<sup>7</sup>, a special supplement published in ‘Australian Social Trends 1994’<sup>8</sup> and the series of ‘Religious

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<sup>6</sup> Presser and Stinson (1998) ‘Data Collection Mode and Social Desirability Bias in Self-reported Religious Attendance’ In *American Sociological Review*, Volume 63, 137-145

<sup>7</sup> Castles (1991), *Census 86: Religion in Australia*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

<sup>8</sup> Castles (1994), *Australian Social Trends, 1994*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 175-197

Community Profiles' published by the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research<sup>9</sup>. This has allowed researchers to gain a better understanding of changes that have occurred to religious affiliation, particularly in the period from 1966 to 1996.

The studies show that there has been a shift in the patterns of affiliation between 1966 and 1996. Specifically, there has been a decline in the percentage of people of Christian affiliation and an increase in the percentage of those belonging to Non Christian religions and who have 'No Religion'. The measurement of these changes is made possible by refinement of the questions that were asked in each census and of the classification of responses to the question asked on religion.

Two main factors appear to explain the changes in levels of affiliation. The first is the different countries of birth of those people who were born overseas and who arrived in Australia between 1966 and 1996. These people may display different levels of religious affiliation depending on their country of birth when compared to the Australian population as a whole. Price<sup>10</sup> comments that certain ethnic groups report significant percentages of people who state they have "No Religion". The first group come from the United Kingdom, Western Europe and North America. They show percentages of people who state that they have 'No Religion' which are similar to those born in Australia. However, those people born in China and Japan had much higher proportions in the 'No Religion' category when compared to those born in Australia. On the other hand, those who were born in East Europeans from Communist regimes and now lived in Australia had lower percentages stating they had "No Religion". This was similar for people from Southern Europe, West Asia and

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<sup>9</sup> Hughes (ed.) (1996) The Religious Community Profiles, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra

South Asia. He also states that those in the third and later generations from countries with high levels of “No Religion” come closer to levels of No Religion represented by the Anglo-Celtic third and later generations. Lastly, he points out that in marriages between people of different ethnic origins, especially where the husband and wife are of different religious traditions, this often leads to children dropping both parental faiths.

The second point, raised by Hughes,<sup>11</sup> is that there are differing age structures across religious groups. In the 1991 Census, among the Anglicans, Churches of Christ, Jewish, Lutheran, Presbyterian/Reformed, The Salvation Army, The Seventh Day Adventists, and The Uniting Church there is a tendency to have higher proportions of people in the older age groups than the total Australian population and lower proportions of people in the younger age groups. Those in the Orthodox group display a similar pattern except in the 20-29 age group where the proportion of people is higher than that in the Australian population. The Catholic and Baptist Churches show age structures that are close to those displayed by the Australian population. Lastly, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Pentecostals and those who state they have No Religion have higher proportions of people in younger age groups when compared to the total Australian population and lower proportions of people in older age groups. This may indicate that some religious groups are better represented by higher levels of people in younger age groups while other groups show a higher retention of people in older age groups. However, of itself age structure cannot be used as an explanation for the different levels of religious affiliation. It can only point to the fact that levels of religious affiliation may have changed in different age groups.

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<sup>10</sup> Price, (1991) Religion and Ancestry in Australia: Changes over the Generations: 1986, Australian Immigration Research Centre, Canberra 36-37

<sup>11</sup> Hughes (1997) Religion In Australia: Facts and Figures, Christian Research Association, Melbourne



An associated point that needs to be raised is the relationship between affiliation and attendance that was identified in the Religious Community Profiles<sup>12</sup>. Some religious groups showed clear associations between attendance and affiliation by age group. Others showed that there was a much higher proportion of attendance among older people compared to the proportion of those affiliated to that group and correspondingly lower proportions of attendance in younger age groups. Thus it appears that in 1991 the Pentecostal<sup>13</sup>, Lutheran<sup>14</sup>, Baptist<sup>15</sup> religious groups and Orthodox Jewish males<sup>16</sup> show a strong association between affiliation and attendance. That the percentage of each age group who said they attend regularly matched the percentage of those in each age group who stated that they belonged to that religious group. However, those belonging to Catholic,<sup>17</sup> Anglican<sup>18</sup>, Uniting<sup>19</sup> and Presbyterian<sup>20</sup> churches did not show this association.

Bouma<sup>21</sup> suggests that the level of attendance does not act as an indicator of how strong a religious group is and that different denominations have different standards of attendance. This is also noted by Richter and Francis<sup>22</sup> who state that while Protestant churches may display high levels of attendance people do not remain

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<sup>12</sup> Hughes (ed.) (1996) The Religious Community Profiles, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra

<sup>13</sup> Hughes(1996) The Pentecostals in Australia, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 95

<sup>14</sup> Schild & Hughes(1996) The Lutherans in Australia, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 66

<sup>15</sup> Hughes(1996) The Baptists in Australia, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 71

<sup>16</sup> Rubenstein(1996) Judaism in Australia, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 50

<sup>17</sup> Hughes(1996) Religion in Australia: Facts and Figures, Christian Research Association, Melbourne, 20

<sup>18</sup> Blomberry( 996) The Anglicans in Australia, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 74

<sup>19</sup> Bentley & Hughes(1996) The Uniting Church in Australia, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra,79

<sup>20</sup> Burke & Hughes(1996) The Presbyterians in Australia, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 85

<sup>21</sup> Bouma(1992) Religion: Meaning, Transcendence and Community in Australia, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne,95

<sup>22</sup> Richter & Francis,(1998) Gone but not Forgotten: Church Leaving and Returning, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 9

part of these churches for long periods of time. Currie, Gilbert and Horsley<sup>23</sup>, in their study of patterns of membership and attendance in Protestant churches, make the point that in many cases affiliation and thus attendance are influenced more by demographic and social factors than the actual theological style of the churches. Mol<sup>24</sup> adds to this debate by suggesting that:

*“If individual thought and conscience begin to move centre stage, a religious organisation begins of necessity to be less cohesive, more devisive and pluriform. It may maintain all the trappings of the ancient theology but it has now opened its flank to an ideology in which individual autonomy is strong. And this means that institutional decision making has to compete more with individual opinion. Church going now becomes more optional”*

### **1.5 Life course and generational changes**

When issues of attendance are debated, Greeley and Hout<sup>25</sup> argue that the changes in patterns of attendance are linked to life course events. This view is supported by Firebaugh and Harley<sup>26</sup> who note that where age differences occur in patterns of attendance this can be explained by life cycle changes rather than by generational effects. Ploch and Hastings<sup>27</sup> add that where cohort studies have been undertaken there are signs that older cohorts have higher levels of attendance.

Bouma<sup>28</sup> summarises this position in stating that:

*“Those who are under twenty are likely to be living at home and dependent upon their parents. Their religion is more likely to be like that of their parents. Those in their twenties are in the transition from dependency to growing independence, family relationships, completing training or education, finding jobs, and sorting out career issues, and are less likely to be residentially stable. This age group is likely to have the least time for religion, is likely to*

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<sup>23</sup> Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, (1977) Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 118

<sup>24</sup> Mol(1985) The Faith of Australians, George, Unwin and Allen, Sydney, 62

<sup>25</sup> Hout, Greeley (1998) ‘What Church Officials’ reports don’t show: Another look at Church Attendance’ in American Sociological Review, Volume 63, February 113-119

<sup>26</sup> Firebaugh & Harley (1991), ‘Trends in U.S. Church Attendance: Secularism and Revival’ in Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 30(4) 487-500

<sup>27</sup> Ploch and Hastings (1994) ‘Graphic Presentations of Church Attendance using General Social Survey Data’ in Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,33(1) 16-33

<sup>28</sup> Bouma(1992) Religion: Meaning, Transcendence and Community in Australia, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne,128

*view religion as constraining, when what they want is freedom, and is likely to be more interested in experimentation, including experimenting with meaning systems. No wonder it is the lowest level of religious practice. People in their thirties are usually in some form of family relationship, most have children, mortgages and relatively settled jobs. It is often reported that this group shows a return to religion. People between forty and seventy again tend to be dealing with growing families, maturing children, settled jobs and increased interest in finding meaning, opportunities to be of service and tend to demonstrate more interest in religious activity. This tapers off after seventy as they become less able to get out and about.”*

On the other hand Chaves<sup>29</sup> argues that differences in attendance by age suggest that some other factor is at work. Thus the changing patterns of attendance may be due to other social processes at work within society. Several researchers point to generational issues which may explain these changes in the case of Australia.

Flynn<sup>30</sup> in his study of Catholic schools in Australia points to declines in attendance of successive generations of students completing Year 12. He finds that these declines can be associated with issues of sexuality, faith understanding and issues of authenticity. Mason<sup>31</sup> finds that the influence of Catholic schooling has a positive effect on the level of Catholic attendance. While it is not possible to test these influences in this study, it is possible to examine comments that Mason makes that age, sex, divorce, mixed marriage, and ethnic status are distinct indicators of changing levels of attendance among young people.

Bentley, Blombery and Hughes<sup>32</sup> point to other demographic issues which may explain the change in patterns of attendance. The first is that young families have greater involvement in Church than young single people. As a result the post war baby

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<sup>29</sup> Chaves(1989), ‘Secularisation & Religious Revival: Evidence from U.S. Church Attendance Rates 1972-1986’ in *Journal for Scientific Study of Religion*, 28(4) 464-477

<sup>30</sup> Flynn,(1993), *The Culture of Catholic Schools: A Study of Catholic Schools 1972-1993*, St. Paul’s Publications, 426-427

<sup>31</sup> Mason (1985), ‘The Future of the Australian Church’ A Paper presented to The Redemptorist Pastoral Seminar at Kew, September 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>, 1985, 17

<sup>32</sup> Bentley, Blombery & Hughes, (1992) *Faith without the Church?* Christian Research Association, Melbourne, 106

boom may well have increased levels of attendance in the 1950s and 1960s but lower fertility rates have seen those levels of attendance fall in subsequent generations. This observation would appear to be sustained in Schoenherr and Young's studies of the aging of Catholic Priests in the United States<sup>33</sup> where they detail issues of the demographic transition which have an impact on levels of attendance. However they also point to an age effect in explaining the changing levels of vocations with fewer young single men committing themselves to a life as a priest.

Currie, Gilbert and Horsley<sup>34</sup> add that the demographic and religious issues affecting religious attendance need to be taken into account in understanding these changes. They point to generational issues of cultural utility as being significant in explaining changing patterns of attendance and affiliation. Thus they argue that where a person no longer believes in the influence of the supernatural they are less likely to remain part of an institution which promotes such a belief. This would also seem to be linked with the idea that where a person does not see the utility of an institution in interceding with such a supernatural force that their attendance is likely to decline. They add that in situations where this separation from an institution occurs, a lengthy process of formation has to be undertaken to reinstitute a person into regular church practice. As with Mason, they also point to issues of education, geographic and occupational mobility as being significant events which may cause a person's level of attendance to decline. This has also been highlighted by Hughes and Blombery<sup>35</sup>:

*“ Our mobility has enabled us to draw on a greater number of options for work and leisure correspondingly, the significance of the local community has declined. At the same time, life has become more thoroughly segmented. The*

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<sup>33</sup> Schoenherr and Young, (1993), Full Pews and Empty Altars, The University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 331-347

<sup>34</sup> Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, (1977) Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 122-123

<sup>35</sup> Hughes and Blombery (1990) Patterns of Faith in Australian Churches, CRA, Melbourne 141

*chance of overlap between people or the geographical areas in which they shop, work, take our leisure or go to church has declined.”*

## **1.6 Outline of thesis**

A great deal of data have been collected which have sought to measure the level of religious affiliation and attendance. Chapter Two provides an analysis of how census data on religious affiliation have been collected from 1966 to 1996. It looks particularly at the changes in the question asked in the census, the refinement in the classification of religious affiliation and the changing religious profile over the time period. In addition it looks specifically at the effects of age and those born overseas in trying to explain these changes in patterns of affiliation. There is evidence that a large part of the changes to patterns of affiliation relate to these two points. This combined immigration/conversion effect is examined by an analysis of five cohorts, which experienced these changes in patterns of affiliation between 1966 and 1996.

In Chapter Three, the main four data sets used in this thesis are described. Two of these surveys, Mol's 'Religion in Australia' survey (1966) and the International Social Science Survey, Religion, Australia (1993) were chosen to form the basis of the comparison of religious attendance at the beginning and end of the time period. The Australian Family Formation Project, a longitudinal survey conducted in 1981 and 1991, and the Australian Living Standards Survey (1991), both conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, also provide useful data in areas not covered by the first two surveys. In analysing these data it is necessary to arrive at a measure of attendance which allows a comparison of data from all the surveys. In undertaking this comparison it was decided to adopt an approach similar to that taken by

Woodberry<sup>36</sup> to arrive at a measure of average weekly attendance. The chapter also compares data from other surveys and headcount data to see whether the surveys used in this thesis tend to show higher or lower levels of attendance.

Chapter Four examines changes in the religious affiliation of individuals who took part in the Australian Family Formation Project and discusses a model which attempts to explain the changing patterns of religious affiliation between 1981 and 1991. It also proposes a model which tries to explain the changes in levels of attendance. This looks specifically at the levels of attendance of those who have always belonged to the same religious group and those who changed their religious group sometime in their life.

Chapter Five concentrates on a comparison of the levels of average weekly attendance by age and sex for those who have always belonged to the same religious group. This study will compare the periods in 1966 and 1993 to discover whether average weekly attendance is influenced by these demographic characteristics. Finally, specific religious movements will be examined to see if these explain some of the changes in patterns of affiliation and attendance.

In order to examine these changes, it was decided that certain demographic indicators related to migration, residency, and marital status would be used. These indicators are compared by age and sex to note any particular differences which may be due to generational or gender differences. By analysing these demographic characteristics it was hoped to identify the relationship they have to changing patterns of attendance. In Chapter Six, the relationship between country of birth and religious attendance is examined with a particular focus on migrants from non-English

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<sup>36</sup> Woodberry, (1998) 'When Surveys Lie and People tell the Truth: How Surveys Oversample Church Attenders' in American Sociological Review, Volume 63, February 121

speaking countries. The length of residency at a particular place is examined to determine whether issues of stability of residence has an effect on levels of attendance. Chapter Seven examines the levels of religious attendance of those who were never married, married, divorced or separated or widowed to determine whether there are changes in patterns of attendance between 1966 and 1993 based on marital status. Data from the Australian Family Formation Project are examined to observe how the religious identity of married and never married couples are related to their religious attendance. In Chapter Eight, a case study of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn between 1966 to 1996 was examined to observe how these particular changes affected attendance patterns in Canberra parishes.

The conclusion concentrates on three points. The first is how religious attendance can be measured in future surveys to arrive at more precise results. The second is how census data can be used to provide more useful information on the changing nature of religion in Australia. The third item that will be discussed is the relationship of demographic and social characteristics and the association they have with changing patterns of religious attendance and affiliation. As such it will try to postulate theories about the change in the nature of these relationships and how they may be tested through further research.

## **2. Changes in religious affiliation**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Before examining the changes in patterns of religious attendance, it is important that the changes in the religious profile of Australia's population are examined. It is also necessary to examine some important areas of change in the collection of the data on religious affiliation. This information will provide a clearer insight into how changes in religious affiliation affect particular religious groups. This is especially important because religious affiliation is used as the denominator of religious attendance in all surveys. Thus it is essential to understand how patterns of affiliation may have changed before examining changing patterns of attendance.

The five yearly censuses of the Australian population conducted by The Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, later known as the Australian Bureau of Statistics from 1976, are the sources of information on religious affiliation. Before analysing this information, it is important to understand how the question asked in the census has changed between 1966 and 1996 and also how the data have been categorised in the census reports. There have also been changes to how these data have been published over time and this needs to be reflected upon to understand how data on religion have been made available to researchers.

Another point to consider is how responses to the census question on religion can be affected when one person provides information on the religious affiliation of other people living in the household. A change can occur between censuses when the person answering the religion question changes from the parent reporting the details of a child's affiliation to the adult children reporting their own



affiliation in a later census. This change may occur due to a parent's assumption of the child's religious affiliation. However, it is also possible that the change occurs because the child's religious affiliation actually changes between censuses. For the purpose of this study the age groups that are of particular interest are those between 15 and 65.

To examine changes in religious affiliation over the period 1966 to 1996 it is also useful to follow three cohorts of males and females, those aged 15-24 years old, 25-34 years old and 35-44 years old in 1966, through the three subsequent censuses in 1976, 1986 and 1996. By examining these age groups more closely it will be possible to assess the changes which have occurred to the size of each religious group due to the net effects of net migration and movements from one religious group to another. Comparisons will also be made with two other cohorts, those aged 15-24 in 1976 and 1986, to examine whether similar changes of affiliation are present in these cohorts.

In undertaking such a comparison it is important not to ignore the significant influence of immigration in changing patterns of affiliation. While it is not possible to isolate the effect that this has on the changes in religious affiliation, the 1991 and 1996 Census data are used to examine the religious affiliation of those born overseas by the period of their arrival.

## **2.2 Census data on religion**

### **2.2.1 The census question on religion**

The religion question has been asked in each census but it has always been an optional question under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*.<sup>37</sup> The reasons for collecting these data have been: to assist in the location of places of worship and

welfare agencies, to assist governments in the appointment of Chaplains and accreditation of Marriage Celebrants, and in providing grants to religious groups to assist in provision of education and allocation of air time on radio.<sup>38</sup>

There were four transitions in the method of asking the question on religion between the 1966 and 1996 Censuses:

1966 Census:

State the full name of the religious denomination (There is no penalty for failure to answer this question.)

1971 and 1976 Censuses:

What is each person's religious denomination?

(If no religion write "None")

1981 and 1986 Censuses

What is each person's religious denomination?

(This question is optional)

(If no religion write "None")

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<sup>37</sup> Castles (1989), 1991 Census of Population and Housing: Content and Procedures, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 29

<sup>38</sup> Ibid 29

## 1991 and 1996 Census

What is this person's religious denomination?

(Answering this question is **OPTIONAL**)

(If no religion mark last box)

Catholic

Anglican (Church of England)

Uniting Church

Presbyterian

Greek Orthodox

Baptist

Lutheran

Other- Please Specify

No Religion

### 2.2.2 The classification of religion

The classification of Religious Groups by the Australian Bureau of Statistics has undergone a refinement of categories, particularly in the 1991 and 1996 Censuses, which has allowed a more detailed study of religious groups present in Australia. This can be observed in table 2.1 which highlights the greater detail that has been made available in the 1991 and 1996 Censuses. The classification structure adopted in 1996 provides for seven broad groupings: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Other Religions and No Religion.<sup>39</sup> The classification can then be divided into 33 categories known as "Narrow Groupings" and then further subdivided into a 100 specific religious groupings. The religious groups can be further defined by 1591

individual groups which are so small that statistical information is not available for them.

Table 2.1 The classification of religious affiliation in the censuses represented by number of categories identified with each religious groups<sup>40</sup>

Religious Group	1966	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996
Catholic	2	2	2	2	1	1	4
Anglican	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Uniting/Presbyterian	3	3	3	4	3	4	4
Orthodox/Oriental	1	1	1	1	2	15	14
Other Christian	8	9	10	12	11	40	39
Non Christian	2	3	3	4	5	14	29
No Religion/Not Stated	3	3	3	3	4	4	9
Total Categories	20	22	23	27	27	79	100

The changes in classification allow greater access to the religion data which have been collated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This allows for both a broad analysis of major religious groups and a more specific analysis of the spectrum of religious groups represented within the Australian population. This change in classification seems to have come about for the following reasons:

1. A more comprehensive study of Religious Groups in Australia<sup>41</sup>
2. The level of computer technology which allowed greater sophistication in the recording and presentation of data.
3. Requests by religious groups and researchers for more accurate data on the composition of affiliates.

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<sup>39</sup> McLennan, Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groupings, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 1996, 15

<sup>40</sup> A detailed summary of these classifications is contained in Appendix A

<sup>41</sup> Humphreys and Ward, Religious Bodies in Australia, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, New Melbourne Press, 1995

4. The change in the production and presentation of statistics on religion within the Australian Bureau of Statistics following the 1991 Census which provided individual tables on a fee for service basis.
5. The increased diversity and changing religious identity of Australia's population.

How these changes in classification affect the presentation of statistics on Religion is not clear. While the increase in the number of religious groups allows for a more comprehensive view of religious affiliation it seems not to have affected the classification of the five Christian religious groups used in this study. In table 2.1 it can be seen that the Orthodox/Oriental and Catholic categories have been reclassified and this is done in order to take account of different rites based on ethnic identity. Thus within the Orthodox/Oriental groups this would include such rites as the Egyptian Copts while the Catholic group would include those belonging to Maronite and Melkite rites. The Other Christian group on the other hand shows a change in composition to account for the increase in the number of smaller Christian groups which has occurred between 1966 and 1996. A detailed presentation of these changes has been provided in Appendix A.

The increase in the number of Non Christian Religions classified takes into account the increasing numbers of people affiliated with Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism among immigrants to Australia, and the number of smaller Non Christian religious groups which represent 11.1% of Non Christians in the 1996 Census.

The No Religion group also included Humanists/Materialists in 1991 and Agnostics, Atheists, Humanists and Rationalists in 1996. While the size of these groups is not large their inclusion within the census shows a more specific identification of those groups contained within the No Religion category than has

been seen in the previous censuses. These broader ranges of classification of all religious categories provide opportunities for a better understanding of the religions present in Australia.

### 2.2.3 The changes that affected Christian religious groups

During the period from 1966 to 1996 four of the Christian Religious groups examined in this thesis underwent significant institutional changes. The Catholic Church in Australia was influenced by the Second Vatican Council that was held in Rome between 1962 and 1965. This council produced sixteen documents that dealt with the relationship of the Church with the modern world. The most significant document, “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*” affected the liturgical practice of the Catholic Church and is the most important in considering issues of attendance. This document not only sought to change the liturgical rites from Latin into the vernacular but also to involve the people in the celebration of those rites. This encouragement of lay participation in the life of the Catholic Church was also accompanied by their inclusion in areas that would have previously been the preserve of priests and members of religious orders. At the same time it has also been noted that there has been a decline in the number of priests and people belonging to religious orders in Australia<sup>42</sup>.

In the same time period the Church of England was also subject to significant changes in its organisational structure. This was initially established by the new constitution approved by the 1955 General Synod which recognised the Church of England in Australia as an autonomous Church in communion with the Church of England. This was followed in 1978 by the publication of An Australian Prayer Book.

In 1981 the Church of England in Australia became the Anglican Church in Australia.<sup>43</sup> The Anglican Church in Australia became progressively self governing and eventually all legal ties with the Church of England were removed. This group will be referred to as “Anglicans” in this study.

The religious group that is identified as “Uniting/Presbyterian” in this study is made up of three churches, the Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians. These churches had been discussing church union since 1924, firstly between the Methodists and Congregationalists but later including the Presbyterians in the 1940s and again in 1954. These discussions continued to 1977 when the majority of Congregationalist churches, all Methodist churches and 64% of Presbyterian churches joined together under the banner of the Uniting Church in Australia.<sup>44</sup> The Presbyterian Church of Australia stills forms a sizeable minority of those Presbyterian churches who voted against church union. In New South Wales, half the congregations remained as part of the Presbyterian Church, and also in Queensland and Victoria, significant numbers of people remained in this church. This group was combined as one group within the study because of the similarities in their traditions, the discussions which led to the creation of the Uniting Church and the need to compare the attendance levels of this religious group before and after that union.

The Other Christian group while containing established churches such as the Baptists, Churches of Christ, Salvation Army and Lutherans was influenced by the establishment of Pentecostal churches between 1966 and 1996. This development was probably most evident in the 1960s and 1970s during which the growth of Pentecostal churches and the influence of the Pentecostal movement within

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<sup>42</sup> The Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

<sup>43</sup> Blombery, (1996) The Anglicans in Australia, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 19

established churches was most evident. The emergence of this movement occurred at similar times across the world, most notably in the USA, United Kingdom, India, South Africa and Australia<sup>45</sup>. As such it can be assumed that the Pentecostal movement has a significant impact on the composition of the Other Christian group within this time period.

### 2.2.3 The presentation of the data

As has been noted with the changes in the question on religious affiliation in the censuses, there have also been changes in the coding of the data on religious affiliation. When the investigation of these data was first undertaken there were initial difficulties in tracing data on religion by age and sex. While the data on religion from the 1961 Census had been published by the Commonwealth Bureau of Statistics in table 44 in "*Part II. Cross Classifications of the Characteristics of the Population by State and Territory*" and those in the 1971 Census were presented in table 23, it was found that a similar Table 76 prepared for the 1966 Census remained unpublished by the same body. It was known by consulting research undertaken by Hans Mol that this information was available at the time and helped in the publication of his book, "*Religion in Australia*" in 1971.<sup>46</sup>

It was decided that in order to derive these data as accurately as possible it was necessary to average the data available in ten year age groups provided in the 1961 Census with the comparable group aged by ten years from the 1971 Census. In this

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<sup>44</sup> Bentley & Hughes, The Uniting Church in Australia, Australian Government Publishing Service, 7-11

<sup>45</sup> Hughes, (1996) The Pentecostals in Australia, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra, 10

<sup>46</sup> After discussions with Hans Mol, Gary Bouma, Charles Price, Michael Mason, Peter McDonald and a search of archive records at the Australian National Library, Australian National University and the Australian Bureau of Statistics it is believed that this information is no longer available.



manner it was possible to produce data on the religion of each age group by sex for 1966 for ages 15 and above.

Group	1961 Age Groups	1971 Age Groups	1966 Age Groups
1	10-19 years old	20-29 years old	15-24 years old
2.	20-29 years old	30-39 years old	25-34 years old
3.	30-39 years old	40-49 years old	35-44 years old
4.	40-49 years old	50-59 years old	45-54 years old
5.	50-59 years old	60-69 years old	55-64 years old
6.	60 years and above	70 years and above	65 years and above

These data were then compared with information prepared by Hans Mol in “*Religion in Australia*”<sup>47</sup> for the Catholic and Anglican religious groups. It was found that the average of the 1961 and 1971 data corresponded with a great deal of accuracy to the information recorded in Mol's study. It was thus considered that this method accurately represented the Christian groups and Non Christian groups in the 1966 Census.

The one difficulty that was encountered was that the growth in the No Religion group occurred at a greater rate between 1966 and 1971 than in the period 1961 and 1966. Part of the reason behind this growth was due to the fact that the 1971 Census stated that if a person had No Religion they were asked to state this on the census form. This seemed to shift people from the Not Stated category to No Religion. The consequence was that the Not Stated group experienced a decline in the period 1966 to 1971.

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<sup>47</sup> Mol, (1971) Religion in Australia: A Sociological Investigation, Allen and Unwin, Melbourne, 35

In order to calculate the 1966 population for each group the growth factor between 1961 and 1966 and between 1961 and 1971 was measured in tables 2.2 and 2.3. This growth factor was calculated by dividing the population in the No Religion and Not Stated groups in 1966 and 1971 by the population present of each group in 1961. Then for each age category in the 1961 Census they were divided by the 1971 growth factor and multiplied by the 1966 growth factor calculated for each group. This made it possible to arrive at approximate population sizes for each of the ten year age groups from age 15 and over for the No Religion and Not Stated groups in 1966.

Table 2.2 The growth factor of the No Religion group between 1961 and 1971

Year	Male	Growth Factor	Female	Growth Factor
1961	24857	-	12157	-
1966	60524	2.43	33567	2.76
1971	517359	20.81	338316	27.83

Table 2.3 The growth factor of the Not Stated group between 1961 and 1971

Year	Male	Growth Factor	Female	Growth Factor
1961	593024	-	504547	-
1966	620607	1.05	518293	1.03
1971	421596	0.71	359651	0.71

After these calculations were undertaken each age group was totalled and this total was compared against the age structure for the total population available through the 1966 Census. It was discovered that the calculation produced differences between the 1966 Census age structure and that calculated by averaging of the 1961 and 1971 Censuses. These differences were proportionally applied across each religious group in the particular age group. After this calculation had been completed the number of people in each religious group aged 0-14 was calculated by deducting the total

number of people age 15 and above from the total population for each religious group in the 1966 Census. This calculation was carried out separately for males and females. While these estimates by Religion, Age and Sex may not be exactly the same as that produced in 1966 in table 76 by the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics it represents the best approximation given the data available. These estimates are used in the cohort analysis tables in Appendix B.

Data on religion by age and sex from the 1976 and 1986 Censuses were available from tables published by the ABS. The data were in a similar format to that made available in the 1971 Census, the main changes being the expansion of the Non Christian groups to provide specific details about individual religious groups: Hebrew, Muslim in 1976 and Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim in 1986. It can also be noted that the establishment of the Uniting Church occurred in 1977. The Presbyterian group was also expanded to include the Reformed Churches in the 1986 Census.

A special 1996 Census table was constructed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics which corresponded to the groups included in this study. Thus it was possible to gain information by religion, age and sex for each religious group used in this thesis. Thus the information prepared corresponded to the five Christian groups, Catholic, Anglican, Uniting/Presbyterian, Orthodox/Oriental and Other Christian and the three groups, Non Christian, No Religion, and Not Stated/Inadequately described.

### ***2.3 Changes in religious affiliation 1966-96***

It is important when examining changes in religious groups that both their numerical size and their proportional representation within the Australian population are observed. It should be noted that where this proportion changes over time it is not necessarily a sign of numerical growth or decline of a religious group. Where changes

occur it may indicate that the size of a religious group has grown or declined at a different rate from that of the total Australian population.

Table 2.4 The size of religious groups between 1966 and 1996  
(in thousands)

Religious Group	1966	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996
Catholic	3036	3438	3483	3787	4064	4606	4799
Anglican	3877	3953	3752	3810	3723	4019	3903
Uniting/Presbyterian	2244	2196	1937	1794	1759	2126	2010
Orthodox/Oriental	255	339	372	421	438	498	528
Other Christian	791	1065	1101	1251	1397	1217	1342
Total Christian	10203	10991	10645	11063	11381	12466	12582
Non Christian	76	99	129	198	316	445	616
No Religion	94	856	1130	1577	1977	2177	2949
Not Stated	1175	811	1644	1669	1927	1762	1605
Total Population	11548	12757	13548	14507	15601	16850	17752

Source: ABS Census

When the size of religious groups is examined it is important to note that not all of the religious groups have been affected in the same way by changing patterns of affiliation and population growth. An examination of the Catholic group in table 2.4 indicates that it has grown numerically over the whole period. However, there were two periods of marginal growth, between 1971 and 1976 and also between 1991 and 1996. There have also been two periods of sizeable growth between 1966 and 1971 and between 1976 and 1991.

The Anglican group shows only moderate change in patterns of affiliation with very little growth in the numerical size of this group. The Anglican group experienced two periods of moderate growth, from 1966 to 1971 and also from 1976 to 1981. It has also experienced three periods of moderate decline from 1971 to 1976; 1981 to 1986 and from 1991 to 1996, with a period of sizeable growth between 1986 and 1991.

There are also signs that the changes in the numerical size of the Uniting/Presbyterian group can be correlated to changes in the numerical size of the Other Christian group. Between 1966 and 1986 the Uniting/Presbyterian group experienced a sustained period of decline while the Other Christian group experienced a period of sustained growth. In the 1986 to 1991 period the Uniting/Presbyterian group experienced sizeable growth while the Other Christian group experienced a decline relative to their total numerical size. The following period from 1991 to 1996 saw the Other Christian group experience a sizeable growth while the Uniting/Presbyterian group experienced a similarly sized decline. Part of these changes may result from the regrouping of the Reformed Churches within the Uniting/Presbyterian group from 1986 onwards. However, this does not seem to explain the close link between the two groups, which existed for the whole period. It may suggest that a certain synchronicity between these two groups enables people to easily shift affiliations within and between these two groups. The Uniting/Presbyterian group was smaller in size in 1996 than in 1966

A study of the Orthodox/Oriental and Non Christian groups shows that both have grown over the time period. The Orthodox /Oriental group experienced two main periods of significant growth, from 1966 to 1971 and to a lesser extent from 1986 to 1991. The Non Christian group saw moderate growth from 1966 to 1976 and then more sustained growth from 1976 to 1996.

A comparison of the No Religion and Not Stated groups shows that for two periods of time the growth in the No Religion group was accompanied by a decline in the Not Stated group. This can be seen particularly in the 1966 to 1971 period and to a lesser extent in the 1986 to 1996 period. These changes seem to be closely correlated to times when the census question changed to enable a more explicit indication that a

person had no religion. The provision of specified responses in the 1991 Census might also in part explain the growth in the Catholic, Anglican, Uniting/Presbyterian and Orthodox groups in the 1986 to 1991 period and a decline of the Other Christian group. However, in the 1991 to 1996 period the No Religion group continued to grow, as did the Catholic, Orthodox and Other Christian groups while the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups experienced a period of decline. This suggests that the change in the manner of asking the question has tended to make explicit the nature of a person's affiliation and has tended to reduce the number of those who have not responded to the religion question. The one main exception appears to be in the 1976 Census where there was a high degree of non-response to many questions in the census. The 1976 Census had a larger number of questions than other censuses conducted in the period 1966 to 1996.

Where the proportion of a religious group has increased in table 2.5 it indicates that it has grown at a rate faster than that of the population. Where the proportion of a religious group has decreased it indicates that it has not grown as fast as the total population. The proportion of Christians in the total population has decreased between 1966 and 1996. This period of sustained change was only interrupted by a slight increase in the 1986 to 1991 period. The Catholic group on the other hand managed to keep up with population growth for the twenty years between 1966 and 1986. However, the Catholic group grew slightly faster than the total population during the 1986 to 1996 period.

The Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups were the most affected by this change. It can be seen that both sustained similar patterns of decline in the 1966 to 1986 period. In the 1986 to 1991 period the Anglican group retained its proportional size and the Uniting/Presbyterian increased its proportional size. However, in the

subsequent period the Anglican group continued to diminish to a level lower than that reported in the 1986 Census while the Uniting/Presbyterian group diminished to the same level reported in the 1986 Census.

The greatest period of growth for the Orthodox/Oriental group was between 1966 and 1971 with a sustained period of moderate growth continuing in the subsequent censuses until 1991. In the 1991 to 1996 period there are signs that this group has grown at a similar rate to the overall population.

Table 2.5 The percentage distribution of religious groups between 1966 and 1996  
(in percentages)

Religious Group	1966	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996
Catholic	26.3	26.9	25.7	26.0	26.1	27.3	27.0
Anglican	33.6	31.0	27.7	26.1	23.9	23.9	22.0
Uniting/Presbyterian	19.4	17.2	14.3	12.8	11.3	12.6	11.3
Orthodox/Oriental	2.2	2.7	2.7	2.9	2.8	3.0	3.0
Other Christian	6.9	8.3	8.1	8.6	9.0	7.2	7.6
Total Christian	88.4	86.2	78.6	76.4	73.0	74.0	70.9
Non Christian	0.7	0.8	1.0	1.4	2.0	2.6	3.5
No Religion	0.8	6.7	8.3	10.8	12.7	12.9	16.6
Not Stated	10.2	6.4	12.1	11.4	12.3	10.5	9.0
Total Categories	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ABS Census

The Other Christian group showed three periods of growth in its proportional size, from 1966 to 1971, 1976 to 1986 and 1991 to 1996 and two periods of decline in the period between 1971 and 1976 and between 1986 and 1991. The first decline may have been influenced by the higher level of non-response in the 1976 Census but this does not appear to have had a marked effect on the proportional size of this group. However, the second decline may have resulted, in part, from the change in the way the responses to the 1991 and 1996 Censuses were structured.

The changes in the proportion of people in the No Religion, Non Christian and Not Stated groups show that both the Non Christian and No Religion groups have grown at a faster rate than the overall population. The Not Stated category, however, is less proportionally significant as a group in the 1996 Census than it was in the 1966 Census and this seems to be largely a result of the changes in the manner in which the question was asked particularly in the 1971 Census and in the 1991 and 1996 Censuses. Thus in the 1971 Census the option of indicating that you had no religion was introduced as a response to the religion question. In 1991 and 1996 the censuses included an answer which allowed people to tick a box which indicated the religious group that they belonged to. Both these changes seem to have resulted in more people responding to the religion question.

#### ***2.4 Immigration and changes in religious affiliation 1966 to 1996***

As has been seen earlier the period from 1966 to 1996 is characterised by changes in the size and proportional representation of all religious groups. Part of the growth or lack of growth in some Christian groupings observed in the previous section may be related to immigration patterns during the period. This section will examine the extent to which immigration may be a factor in explaining the size and proportional distribution of the varied religious affiliations. The difficulty in comparing a person's country of birth with their religious affiliation was first faced in Australia by Charles Price<sup>48</sup> in 1986. The greatest problem is how to determine the religious affiliation of an immigrant at the time of arrival from the affiliation he or she professes at the time of a census. It is recognised that while the country of birth and

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<sup>48</sup> Price, (1991) Religion and Ancestry in Australia: changes over the generations:1986, Australian Immigration Research Centre, Deakin, Canberra



the time of residence in Australia are unlikely to change the same cannot be said of religious affiliation.

*The Community Profiles 1991 Census* produced by the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research were used to determine the representation of those born overseas who were resident in Australia at the time of the census. The profiles included those overseas born residents from 24 countries which represented the largest migrant groups in Australia. These were further classified by their period of arrival into five time periods (pre 1971; 1971-75; 1976-80, 1981-85 and 1986-90). A similar set of *The Community Profiles 1996 Census* produced for the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs was used to determine the representation of those born overseas from 16 of these 24 countries for the period from 1991 to 1995 who were resident in Australia at the time of the 1996 Census. This made it possible to determine the changes to the proportional size of migrant groups by measuring those born overseas by their country of birth and the period of their arrival in Australia.

The most distinct change to immigration patterns that occurred between 1966 and 1996 was the change from a migrant intake dominated by those born in the United Kingdom and Europe to one which drew more migrants born in the Asian and Pacific region. In the period up to 1971 immigration was heavily dominated by those born in the United Kingdom and Europe. In the period from 1971 to 1976 the migration flow was particularly dominated by migrants from the former Yugoslavia and the United Kingdom. However, people from the Asian region, New Zealand and other parts of the world also formed an increased proportion of immigrants.

Table 2.6 Distribution of the overseas born population by country of birth according to period of arrival<sup>49</sup>

Place of Birth	Pre 1971 %	1971- 1975 %	1976- 1980 %	1981- 1985 %	1986- 1990 %	1991- 1995 %
UK/Eire	39.6	37.3	21.9	24.9	18.3	12.6
Italy	12.7	2.7	1.3	0.7	0.4	0.3
Greece	6.3	3.0	1.0	0.6	0.4	0.4
Germany	4.8	1.4	1.2	1.9	1.0	0.9
Netherlands	4.4	0.7	1.0	1.0	0.4	0.4
Yugoslavia	3.1	14.7	5.3	1.7	1.0	-
Malta	2.4	1.1	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.1
Poland	2.2	0.5	1.0	3.1	1.4	0.9
Rest of Europe	4.6	3.0	2.4	1.8	2.8	11.5
Sub Total Europe	80.1	64.4	35.6	36.1	25.8	27.1
Vietnam	0.1	0.4	4.9	14.4	5.6	6.2
Philippines	0.1	0.7	2.5	3.7	6.1	4.4
India	1.1	2.6	1.3	1.7	2.6	4.0
Sri Lanka	0.4	1.4	0.6	1.3	2.4	2.3
Malaysia	0.5	1.5	2.8	3.0	4.9	3.2
Indonesia	0.3	0.8	1.1	1.7	1.8	-
Korea	-	0.2	0.8	0.9	1.9	-
Cambodia	-	0.1	0.5	2.1	0.8	-
Singapore	0.3	0.8	0.9	0.8	1.4	-
China	0.7	0.7	1.9	2.4	6.5	6.6
Hong Kong	0.3	0.8	1.8	2.4	4.9	4.6
Rest of Asia	0.9	0.8	3.0	-	4.1	13.0
Sub Total Asia	4.7	10.8	22.1	34.4	43.0	44.3
New Zealand	2.6	5.4	15.3	10.9	13.8	10.2
Egypt	1.2	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.7	-
Turkey	0.4	2.0	1.1	0.7	0.8	-
Lebanon	1.1	3.0	4.2	1.5	2.3	1.3
Other Parts of World	9.9	13.4	21.4	16.1	13.6	17.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Migrants ('000s)	1758.0	381.0	314.0	404.0	746.0	563.5

Source: ABS Census Community Profiles 1991 & 1996

During the 1976-80 period there was an increase in those who were born in Asia and this was dominated by migrants from Vietnam and to a lesser extent by people born in Malaysia, Philippines, China and Hong Kong. There was also a noted surge in migration from New Zealand and to a lesser extent from Lebanon. Many migrants from Vietnam and Lebanon entered the country as refugees.

<sup>49</sup> The figures in the five periods prior to 1990 are based on data from the 1991 Census. The period 1991-1995 is based on data made available from the 1996 census.

In the 1981-85 period, the growth in the number of immigrants from Asia was dominated by migrants born in Vietnam. However, the levels of migration from other Asian countries also rose. This was the first time that the proportion of migrants from Asia matched the proportion from the United Kingdom and Europe. There was a decline in the proportion of migrants from New Zealand and from other parts of the world.

The 1986-90 period was one of significant migration to Australia. Once again a larger proportion of these migrants came from countries in Asia, most notably, China, Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Hong Kong. Migration of people from New Zealand and Lebanon was also proportionally higher in this period. It was also evident that, in this period, migration from Europe comes largely from the United Kingdom and Eire.

An examination of the 1990-1995 period shows that the significant change in immigration were the smaller proportions of migrants from the United Kingdom/Eire and an increase in migrants from other parts of Europe. The largest proportion of these migrants came from Croatia and other Balkan countries that were part of the former Yugoslavia.

The religious affiliation of migrants from these countries is presented in table 2.7 based on data made available in the 1991 Census. These data show that particular countries are dominated by a particular religious group. This is significant in two ways: the extent to which that religious group might contribute to the change in patterns of religious affiliation in Australia and the extent to which the proportional distribution of each religious group may be similar to that of the country from which a person migrated.

Table 2.7 shows that those who were born in Australia made up a greater proportion of the Uniting/Presbyterian and Anglican groups and a smaller proportion the Orthodox/Oriental and Non Christian groups when compared to the religious affiliation profile of the whole Australian population. This indicates that the proportional size of these groups had been affected by the changing patterns of immigration during this time period.

Table 2.7 Religious affiliation of Australia's population by selected country of birth according to 1991 Census

Place of Birth	Catholic	Anglican	Uniting/Presbyterian	Orthodox/Oriental	Other Christian	Islam	Jewish	Hindu/Sikh	Buddhist	Other Non Christian	Not Stated	No Religion	Total
Australia	27.0	26.3	14.5	1.4	7.7	0.4	0.3	-	-	0.4	9.3	12.8	100
UK	12.1	43.9	11.7	0.1	6.0	-	0.4	-	0.1	0.4	11.1	15.2	100
Eire	73.9	5.8	4.0	-	2.7	-	0.2	-	0.1	0.1	6.9	6.2	100
Italy	93.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	1.8	-	0.1	-	-	0.1	3.1	1.4	100
Greece	0.5	0.2	0.1	94.0	1.5	0.3	-	-	-	0.1	2.4	0.9	100
Germany	29.6	4.7	2.3	0.8	36.2	-	1.8	-	-	0.6	9.8	14.2	100
Netherlands	35.3	3.8	12.7	0.1	10.9	-	0.2	-	0.2	0.2	11.8	24.7	100
Yugoslavia	46.2	0.4	-	36.0	4.2	3.1	0.1	-	-	0.3	4.9	4.7	100
Malta	92.8	0.9	0.3	-	1.2	-	-	-	-	-	3.4	1.5	100
Poland	75.7	0.4	0.1	1.5	4.3	-	8.4	-	-	0.1	5.4	4.1	100
Vietnam	22.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47.6	-	5.6	24.3	100
Philippines	82.9	1.2	-	-	8.8	-	-	-	-	0.8	4.1	2.1	100
India	41.7	13.4	2.1	-	5.0	1.9	0.6	24.9	-	1.6	5.0	3.8	100
Sri Lanka	36.0	13.8	6.9	-	5.3	1.5	-	14.8	16.0	0.1	3.2	2.4	100
Malaysia	18.0	7.0	7.4	-	10.6	2.9	-	4.1	17.6	0.9	9.6	21.9	100
Indonesia	31.1	2.8	11.2	-	9.4	14.7	-	1.1	7.6	0.8	6.8	14.6	100
Korea	25.7	3.5	35.4	0.2	10.9	-	-	-	2.6	0.2	4.2	17.3	100
Cambodia	4.2	0.7	1.5	-	7.2	0.1	-	-	59.9	0.3	9.7	16.6	100
Singapore	25.4	11.1	8.7	-	9.3	4.7	-	4.2	6.5	1.4	7.6	21.2	100
China	5.7	2.2	2.6	5.9	6.1	-	0.4	-	7.8	0.7	13.3	59.3	100
Hong Kong	19.0	4.5	3.2	0.1	9.0	0.1	-	-	3.6	0.3	6.3	54.0	100
New Zealand	15.9	22.5	14.7	0.2	10.7	-	0.2	-	0.2	0.5	11.5	23.5	100
Egypt	32.3	2.0	0.7	45.8	3.4	7.0	2.2	-	-	0.1	4.3	2.2	100
Turkey	1.9	-	-	9.5	1.3	76.6	0.2	-	-	-	5.8	4.4	100
Lebanon	40.2	0.3	-	10.2	1.7	37.0	-	-	-	1.3	5.3	1.4	100
Total Population	27.3	23.9	12.6	3.0	7.6	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.8	0.2	12.9	10.5	100

Source: ABS Census

Immigrants from the United Kingdom have the largest proportion of Anglicans. Therefore, the Anglican group is most likely to be affected by immigration from the United Kingdom. Any decline in the number of migrants from the United Kingdom would have an adverse effect on the size of the Anglican religious group moving to Australia. Although some migrants from New Zealand, India, Sri Lanka and Singapore are affiliated to the Anglican group, the proportion of Anglicans among these people is much lower than that among the Australian-born population.

It is not as clear that the decline in migration from the United Kingdom has significantly affected the proportion of the Uniting/Presbyterian group within the Australian population. This is mainly because the proportion of the Uniting/Presbyterian group among migrants from the United Kingdom is smaller than that for the proportion of this group among the Australian-born population. However, it does appear that this group has significantly benefited from immigration from Korea since 35% of Korean migrants were affiliated to this group. To a lesser extent this group has also benefited from immigration from those of New Zealand and the Netherlands origin.

The Orthodox/Oriental group is most heavily represented by migrants from Greece, Egypt and the former Yugoslavia. Therefore, the decline in migration from Greece after 1971 and the decline in migration from Yugoslavia after 1975 could have affected the size and growth of this group after 1976.

The Catholic group is likely to have been significantly affected by levels of immigration. Before 1976, this group would have been augmented by immigrants from European countries such as Italy, Malta, Poland, the Former Yugoslavia, Netherlands and Germany. There was also a significant proportion of Catholics among immigrants from Lebanon and Egypt during this period. In the 1980s and 1990s the

Catholic group was likely to have been augmented by immigration from Asian countries most notably, the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. The percentage of Catholics among Australian residents from these countries were higher than the percentage of Catholics among those born in Australia.

The Non Christian groups on the other hand are dominated by a mix of different religions. Migrants from Turkey, Lebanon and Indonesia include many professing Islam as their faith. Those from India and Sri Lanka include many people belonging to Hindu and Sikh groups. Those from Vietnam, Cambodia, and to a lesser extent Malaysia and Sri Lanka contain a significant number of Buddhists. Those from Poland have a large proportion who are of the Jewish faith.

Lastly, it needs to be noted that the proportion stating that they have no religion is higher among migrants from China, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Netherlands, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea, Cambodia, United Kingdom, Indonesia, and Germany than among the Australian born population. It is also significant that among the other countries represented in table 2.7 there is a very low proportion of people reporting No Religion compared to those born in Australia. It would appear that there are three distinct groups among those who profess no religion. There are Europeans who appeared to have moved from Christian religions towards No Religion. There are those from South East and Eastern Asian countries who have large numbers of people who state that they have No Religion. There are also those who express they have No Religion who make up only a small proportion of those who come from countries such as Greece, Italy, Malta, Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Turkey and Lebanon where religion is a significant part of the culture from which the person originates.

Table 2.8 Overseas born population by period of arrival and religious affiliation<sup>50</sup>

Religious Group	1991 Census			1996 Census		
	Pre 1971	1971-1975	1976-1980	1981-1985	1986-1990	1991-1996
Catholic	34.9	29.8	26.4	29.0	27.0	20.6
Anglican	22.4	26.6	14.4	13.8	10.6	9.8
Uniting/Presbyterian	8.7	6.9	8.7	6.1	5.0	4.4
Orthodox/Oriental	5.1	2.7	0.6	3.3	2.4	4.1
Other Christian	7.6	9.0	4.8	7.9	10.0	9.5
Total Christian	78.7	75.0	54.9	60.1	55.0	48.4
Non Christian	2.1	6.7	15.0	14.4	17.4	21.9
No Religion (Asia)	0.7	1.1	6.1	8.2	11.9	14.2
No Religion (Other)	9.3	7.6	10.0	11.3	10.5	10.3
Total No Religion	10.0	8.7	16.1	19.5	22.4	24.5
Not Stated	7.2	9.4	11.0	6.0	5.2	5.2
Total Categories	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

What becomes evident from table 2.8 is the extent to which the religious profile of immigrants has changed during the period from 1966 to 1996. It can be seen that the Anglican group form a progressively smaller proportion of those who arrived in Australia after 1975. On the other hand the Catholic group has maintained a significant representation coverage of immigrants in each time period. However, in the period from 1991 to 1996 the proportion of Catholic migrants was much lower.

<sup>50</sup> The figures for periods of residence prior to 1981 are drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics (1994), 1991 Census of Population and Housing Sample File [computer file], Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, the figure for the periods subsequent to 1981 are drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics (1998), 1996 Census of Population and Housing Sample File [computer file], Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Migrants belonging to the Orthodox/Oriental group appear to be well represented in the period prior to 1975 due to migration primarily from Greece and Yugoslavia. The period from 1991 to 1996 was also significant in introducing Russian Orthodox migrants from China.

The Uniting/Presbyterian group appears to be most affected by migration in periods prior to 1971 and 1976 to 1980. The proportion of the Uniting/Presbyterian group was smaller among more recent migrants. The Other Christian group appears to be affected by migration in the periods from 1971 to 1975 and in the period from 1986 to 1996. The proportion of Christians among the immigrant population is lower than that reported in the total Australian population in each census.

The proportion of Non Christians was larger among the migrants in each period from 1971 to 1996. The No Religion group also forms a larger proportion of the migrant intake in each successive period. This is explained by the proportion of people from Asia, who state that they have No Religion increasing in each subsequent period. Those from other places who state that they have No Religion but come from other parts of the world has remained proportionally at similar levels for the period between 1976 and 1996. There appears to be two groups of respondents who may appear to have contributed to the increase in those stating that they have No Religion. The first are those who arrived from Europe and have stated that they have No Religion, the second are largely migrants from South East and East Asian countries.

While it is not possible to examine in detail the actual levels of migration by religious affiliation it is possible to note some significant influences that migration has had on the levels of religious affiliation. There has been a shift away from immigration patterns which in the initial part of the period had been dominated by migration from Europe in general and the United Kingdom in particular. It is likely



that the decline in migration from the United Kingdom has contributed to the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups becoming proportionally smaller. The Catholic group on the other hand has had significant levels of immigration over the whole period.

It would appear that the growth in the Orthodox/Oriental and Non Christian groups might be largely due to immigration. While it was seen in table 2.7 that some within the Australian-born population did identify that they belonged to these two groups it was a smaller proportion than that identified with these religious affiliations among the whole Australian population. Therefore, it is probable that where these two groups have experienced growth it is more likely due to changes in levels of migration rather than conversion. Also it is more probable that these groups also retain a strong cultural identity which makes it less likely that they would see change their affiliation away from these groups.

The effect of immigration on the No Religion group would appear to have been much greater in later parts of the period. In the early part of the period where migration was dominated by immigrants from Europe and the United Kingdom it was possible that the levels of those professing No Religion were similar to those for persons born in Australia. It was less likely that those immigrants professing No Religion would have had a marked effect on the size of this group and that the rise in the size of this group was more likely to be due to movement away from other religious groups. However, as migration from South East and East Asia, particularly China and Hong Kong, became stronger towards the end of the period, immigration may have played a greater part in explaining the rise in the level of those who stated that they had No Religion, since a large proportion of immigrants from these places stated that they had 'No Religion'.

## **2.5 Cohort analysis**

Another approach that may be used to examine the net effects of immigration and movement between religious groups is to follow three ten-year age cohorts for each religious group across the whole time period. These were people aged 15-24 years, 25-34 years and 35-44 years in 1966. Each of these groups had population survival ratios applied to them based on the change in the total Australian population for each cohort aged by ten years between each census. This expected population of survivors was compared with the observed population for the appropriate age group ten years later and the difference calculated. This difference represented the increase or decrease due to the combined effect of net overseas migration and the net result of movements between religious groups. The results also provide an indication of the direction of movement between the various religious groups. Two other cohorts of 15-24 year olds in the 1976 Census and 1986 Census were added to the cohort analysis to allow consideration of whether this age group displayed any characteristics which were different from the overall trends. A summary of the findings are presented in tables 2.9 and 2.10. The background for these calculations is presented in Appendix C

### **2.5.1 The first period of change 1966-1976**

Tables 2.9 and 2.10 show that each of the three largest Christian religious groups, Catholic, Anglican, and Uniting/Presbyterian experience a decline in numbers during this period. The decline was greatest among males and females aged 15-24 years. The Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups show a greater loss among males than females in this age group. In the older age groups there was also a larger decline among Anglican males than females, while among Uniting/Presbyterian females the level of decline is similar to that of males. While the Catholics display

similar patterns of decline by sex, they occur at much lower levels among both males and females when compared to the Uniting and Anglican religious groups. In each of the age groups, males show a greater level of decline than females.

Among Orthodox/Oriental Christians and Non Christians, there were similar patterns of increase for both females and males. Similar to other religious groups the greatest level of change occurs among the 15-24 age group with each of the subsequent age groups displaying successively lower levels of change.

The Other Christian group, however, shows a distinctly different pattern from that observed in all of the other four Christian groups. In this group too, both males and females, more people in the oldest age group become Other Christian during the period than in each of the preceding age groups. It is significant to note that among the youngest male cohort there is a decline in affiliates. Also this is the only religious group where the increase in affiliation is higher for females than males.

The No Religion group experiences increases among females and males in a similar pattern to the decline of affiliation that was experienced by the three main Christian groups. This would suggest that the movement from these three religious groups was towards the No Religion group as two characteristics are evident in the distribution of affiliates. The first is that the increase is larger among males than females. The second is that the size of the changes fall as age increases.

There was also an increase in numbers among both males and females in the 15-24 age group in the Not Stated/Indefinite group although the pattern was not the same for the two sexes. The males in this group displayed similar patterns of increase to the No Religion group but not the females. Part of the reason for the growth in this group may well be the larger number of questions contained in the 1976 Census and the larger non-response rate to questions in that census.

These observations suggest that four distinct but inter-related phenomena were beginning to emerge during this period. The first is the movement away from the three main Christian religious groups towards No Religion. This movement became more noticeable in the 1971 and 1976 Censuses partly due to the change in the manner of asking the question on religious affiliation.

This movement away from Christian religion seems to express itself in different forms across the groups. It is significant that the greatest movement away from the Christian religion occurred among the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups. When the changes among the Catholic religious group are examined similar patterns of decline are observed as in the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups. However, the level of decline is not as pronounced. This could indicate that the smaller decline was influenced by the higher levels of Catholic migration that were observed during this period as shown in Table 2.8. Also as some of those Catholics who migrated to Australia came from places where Catholicism was the dominant religion and the numbers of those who stated that they had No Religion were much lower than those present in the Australian born population, this would suggest that Catholic migrants may be less likely to move from the Catholic group to No Religion than Catholics born in Australia. This appears to be sustained when the levels of increase of Non Christian and Orthodox/Oriental groups are observed. Both of these groups would have been augmented by migrants from countries with low levels of those who stated that they had No Religion. This would suggest that a large part of the apostotic movement was dominated by those who were Australian born or who migrated from United Kingdom.

The other significant change is that this apostotic movement seems to have occurred at a greater rate among males than among females and also among those of

younger age groups. This in itself is also a cultural shift and suggests that these groups are more affected by the changes within society and that these changes affect their religious identity.

A larger part of the increase among the Other Christian group occurred among those in the older age groups. The fact that this increase occurred when the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups were declining tends to indicate that a counter trend was also present within this religious group. This trend can be accounted for by the Pentecostal movement that started to find greater expression within Australia during this time period.

Table 2.9 Changes in religious affiliation of male age cohorts, 1966-1996: results from cohort analysis

Religious Group	1966-1976			1976-1986				1986-1996				
	15-24 (‘000s)	25-34 (‘000s)	35-44 (‘000s)	15-24 (‘000s)	25-34 (‘000s)	35-44 (‘000s)	45-54 (‘000s)	15-24 (‘000s)	25-34 (‘000s)	35-44 (‘000s)	45-54 (‘000s)	55-64 (‘000s)
Catholic	(32.7)	(20.3)	(17.2)	(30.8)	5.5	2.1	0.6	(18.4)	15.3	15.2	6.6	3.0
Anglican	(80.2)	(34.0)	(27.0)	(74.0)	(20.4)	(9.3)	(7.9)	(31.7)	3.8	14.4	10.0	6.7
Uniting/Presbyterian	(63.2)	(29.1)	(22.5)	(52.6)	(20.7)	(11.4)	(10.8)	(12.9)	15.2	22.6	18.1	16.5
Orthodox/Oriental	9.0	4.5	1.3	1.8	0.2	0.7	0.5	3.7	4.8	2.8	0.9	0.6
Other Christian	(1.0)	2.0	3.6	4.2	10.8	6.0	4.6	(23.8)	(12.6)	(15.2)	(11.1)	(9.0)
Total Christian	(168.1)	(76.9)	(61.8)	(151.4)	(24.6)	(11.9)	(13.0)	(83.1)	26.5	39.8	24.5	17.8
Non Christian	5.3	2.4	0.5	19.3	11.2	4.6	2.9	27.3	20.8	8.4	3.4	2.7
No Religion	131.2	61.6	52.4	121.5	21.6	12.0	6.1	100.6	(0.7)	1.6	0.9	2.4
Not Stated/ Indefinite	31.6	12.9	8.9	10.7	(8.2)	(4.7)	4.0	(44.8)	(46.6)	(49.8)	(28.8)	(22.9)
Total Categories	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Calculated by the author

Notes

1. Figures recorded in brackets indicate a decrease in the level of affiliation. Those not in brackets indicate an increase in affiliation.
2. Age groups refer to base year in each period.

Table 2.10 Changes in religious affiliation of female age cohorts, 1966-1996: results from cohort analysis

Religious Group	1966-1976			1976-1986				1986-1996				
	15-24 (‘000s)	24-34 (‘000s)	35-44 (‘000s)	15-24 (‘000s)	24-34 (‘000s)	35-44 (‘000s)	45-54 (‘000s)	15-24 (‘000s)	25-34 (‘000s)	35-44 (‘000s)	45-54 (‘000s)	55-64 (‘000s)
Catholic	(12.1)	(3.7)	(3.8)	(12.9)	9.5	3.3	1.2	(12.0)	15.4	12.1	5.0	5.3
Anglican	(57.4)	(21.8)	(16.1)	(58.0)	(20.5)	(10.4)	(10.3)	(26.8)	(7.9)	7.9	6.1	4.8
Uniting/Presbyterian	(50.7)	(23.6)	(19.1)	(44.4)	(21.2)	(11.4)	(10.1)	(6.2)	11.5	20.7	16.4	18.4
Orthodox/Oriental	9.4	4.3	2.5	(0.1)	(0.4)	0.5	0.8	1.3	3.5	1.4	0.7	0.8
Other Christian	5.6	6.5	7.1	11.8	14.7	7.7	7.2	(17.6)	(12.3)	(17.0)	(11.3)	(11.9)
Total Christian	(105.2)	(38.3)	(29.4)	(103.6)	(17.9)	(10.3)	(11.2)	(61.3)	10.2	25.1	16.9	17.4
Non Christian	4.4	1.8	0.4	18.5	9.9	4.2	3.8	28.3	21.9	9.7	5.0	3.4
No Religion	86.4	38.3	32.9	77.0	15.6	8.9	3.2	70.1	9.7	7.7	1.9	1.5
Not Stated/ Indefinite	14.4	(1.8)	(3.9)	8.1	(7.6)	(2.8)	4.2	(37.1)	(41.8)	(42.5)	(23.8)	(22.3)
Total Categories	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Calculated by the author

Notes

1. Figures recorded in brackets indicate a decrease in the level of affiliation. Those not in brackets indicate an increase in affiliation.
2. Age groups refer to base year in each period.

## 2.5.2 The second period of change 1976-1986

The patterns of decline noted in the 1966-76 period continued for both males and females in the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups during this period. This decline continued to be dominated by males and females in the 15-24 age group. Some of the decline among the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups can be explained by lower levels of migration from the United Kingdom.

Among Catholics, males and females in the 15-24 age group experienced significant levels of decline similar to those experienced in the 1966-76 period but this did not happen in the older age groups. It appeared that the Catholic group might have been sustained by immigration from countries such as Poland, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, Lebanon and the Philippines during this period.

The Orthodox/Oriental group experienced very marginal growth and this may be due to slow down in migration from countries such as Greece. However, some of the increase can be explained by a reclassification of Oriental Christians by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the 1986 Census. This by itself would cause an increase in the size of this group and a corresponding decrease of the Other Christian group under which they would have been formerly classified.

When the Other Christian group is examined, however, it can be seen that if this reclassification occurred it was more than compensated by immigration or higher levels of conversion from other religious groups. The pattern displayed by this group indicates that the most significant increase occurred in the 25-34 age group. There is also the possibility that the 15-24 age group, which experienced lower levels of increase than the 25-34 age group, was affected by the decline of religious affiliation. Thus while the Other Christian group did not experience a decline in this age group the increase was more muted than would have been expected if the highest level of conversion and migration was occurring in the 15-24 age group.



This would suggest that while this group might have attracted younger people it was also tending to lose some due to the affect of the apostotic movement towards No Religion.

Corresponding to this increase in the Other Christian group was the growth in the Non Christian group. Once again there was a similar pattern for males and females across each of the age groups. Each of the younger age groups grew at a higher rate than the next age group. This can most likely be accounted for by higher levels of migration than by conversion. This is useful to note when we contrast the pattern present in the Other Christian group. This may also suggest that the Other Christian group was affected in a similar way by the apostotic movement and that the Non Christian group was isolated from this movement.

The increase in the No Religion group does not fully account for the decline in the three main Christian groups as it did in the 1966-76 period. While the 15-24 year old age group displays the greatest increase the subsequent age groups display much lower levels of increase than were noted in the previous time period. This would suggest that while the apostotic movement greatly affected those in the 15-24 age group this effect had become much more muted in the older age groups. It would also tend to suggest that the movement away from the three main Christian groups was not solely part of the apostotic movement but was also linked to a process of conversion towards the Other Christian group.

Lastly, the Not Stated/Indefinite group shows similar levels of change for males and females. Once again while the 15-24 age group experienced the largest change, the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups actually show declines. This may result from a wording change in the religion question asked in the 1986 Census which indicated that a response was optional. However, it is more likely that more people responded to the religion question due to the fewer questions asked in the 1986 Census than were asked in the 1976 Census .

The four phenomena that were noted in the 1966-76 period seem to have been sustained in this period. The apostotic movement became more significant in this period. This would tend

to suggest that the process of transformation and self reflection continued both within religious groups and in society as a whole. This period not only saw the continued application of new liturgical forms in the Catholic Church, it also witnessed the creation of the Uniting Church, the change of name of the Church of England to the Anglican Church and a rapid expansion in the number of smaller Evangelical churches.

It becomes evident also that the connection between cultural identity and religious identity becomes a more significant explanation of the changes between religious groups. Once again the Catholic group is the most significant example of this phenomenon. Thus while migrants from countries with a strong religious identity such as Yugoslavia, Poland, Lebanon and the Philippines tended to increase size of the Catholic religious group whereas the presence of migrants where religious identity and culture were not as strongly identified such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand tended to decrease the level of affiliation. Also the distinction in changes in the level of affiliation between males and females also appears to have been lessened during this period.

It is also significant that the Other Christian and Non Christian groups experienced their greatest level of growth in this period. This would suggest that while this period was overshadowed by the apostotic movement towards No Religion there was also a smaller counter movement of conversion from the three main Christian groups towards the Other Christian group. The trend towards Non Christian religious faiths was likely to be due to the arrival of new migrants from Asian and Middle Eastern countries.

### 2.5.3 The third period of change 1986-1996

This period shows similar patterns of change for the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian group with increases for all but the youngest age group. This would indicate that there was a reversal of the trend observed in the previous two periods and a growth

in these three traditional religious groups. The one exception is among Anglicans in the 25-34 age group where there was a slight decline for females.

The Orthodox/Oriental group again achieved similar levels of growth for males and females. It is not clear whether the movement towards No Religion which was affecting the 15-24 age group in the Other Christian group might also explain the lower level of growth in this time period for those in the same age group in the Orthodox/Oriental group. That is, the second generation from the Orthodox/Oriental group might become more influenced by the same cultural influences affecting other young people and some might adopt similar attitudes towards religious affiliation.

The Other Christian group experienced a decline in each age group for both males and females. There seems to be a combination of factors at work in this change. However, it appears that the main factor is that the 15-24 age group may well have been affected by the apostotic movement towards No Religion. There also appears to be a movement away from the newer Christian groups towards more established Christian groups.

The Non Christian group experienced significant levels of growth and this is most likely due to higher levels of migration from Asian countries. The No Religion group still displayed significant levels of growth but this occurred almost totally within the 15-24 age group.

The Not Stated/Indefinite group experienced its most significant level of decline for each age group and in a similar pattern for both males and females. This would indicate that in the 15-24 age group there was a shift from this group towards No Religion. The same is probably not true for older age groups where there may have been a change to other religious groups. The fact that the 1996 Census contained a tick box answer may have led to a greater response to this question. Lower levels of the not stated response may not actually indicate a greater level of conversion from the Not Stated/Indefinite but simply an identification with a religious group when previously this was not made explicitly available. The change in the 1996 Census might

thus be a more explicit expression of people's religious identity than was evident in previous censuses. It would also mean that where people did not respond to the religion question in a census this cannot be linked with a statement about the level of religious identity within the community. Rather it is an indication of those within the population who do not want to identify their religious affiliation or, for whatever reason, do not respond to the question.

The apostotic movement seems largely to have affected males and females in the 15-24 age group. The distinction between males and females in the level of change in affiliation also seems to have disappeared. Thus the distinctions between male and female attitudes to affiliation which were present in the 1966-76 period do not appear to have been sustained over time and distinctions now are much more likely to be based on a person's age.

The cultural distinction between people from countries with strong religious identities and those where religion is not strongly identified with a person's culture seems to have been sustained over each of the time periods. However, the change in the classifications which occurred in the final two time periods might well mask the decline of affiliation among second generation members of Orthodox/Oriental and Catholic religious groups which retain both a strong religious and cultural identity.

The Other Christian group also seems to have been affected by the same phenomenon which affected the three main Christian groups. This saw a decline in the 15-24 age group but indications of growth in the older age groups might have been partially masked by the reclassification of broad religious groupings.

## **2.6 Summary**

The most significant trend in the period between 1966 and 1996 was the shift from the three main Christian religious groups towards the No Religion group. While this apostotic movement seemed to affect males and females in all the age groups in the 1966-76 period, it

became more and more isolated to the 15-24 age group in subsequent years. There was also an increasing correlation over time between males and females in changes of affiliation in each religious group and age group. There also appears to be a greater identification with a formal statement that a person has No Religion. This may be due to the change in the formatting of the question by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

There was also a decline in immigration from the United Kingdom and Europe and an increase in immigration from parts of Asia and New Zealand during this period. This change is likely to contribute to the decrease in the size of the Anglican group. The Catholic group which has drawn migrants from both the Asian and European regions has not been affected in the same way. It is also significant to note the high proportion of migrants who make up the Orthodox/Oriental and Non Christian groups which helps to explain the growth in these groups over the period from 1966 to 1996. What is also significant is the number of immigrants from Asia who state they have No Religion. This would indicate that the growth in the No Religion group might also be influenced by migration from Asian countries in the later part of the period.

These results, raise some interesting questions that will be addressed in subsequent chapters. Does the decline in affiliation based on age also correspond to a decline in attendance at religious services? How does a person's change in religious affiliation affect their attendance and can movements between religious groups be more clearly identified? Given that a person's country of birth affects religious affiliation does it also affect attendance at religious services? In answering these questions it will also be necessary to look at issues of family life, marital status and residence to examine how these may have changed people's outlook on affiliation and, as a consequence, their attendance at religious services.

## **3. Method of analysing attendance data**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The method of collecting religious attendance data suggests that it may provide only an approximate measure of actual attendance on a particular day of worship. As noted in Chapter 1, part of this ambiguity arises from the varying methods of enumeration used in different places of worship. The methods not only reflect the different theological approaches of different religions to worship and gathering of people on a principal day of worship but also the pastoral approach adopted in encouraging people to attend services regularly.

Data on religious attendance collected in different surveys can also be affected by different ways of asking the question and different perceptions of the respondent to the question being asked. This may be due to the different reasons for asking the question: whether it is to determine religiosity, a useful measure in sociological research, or whether it is to track trends in attendance over time, a useful measure for pastoral planning by religious organisations. The question and particularly the responses to the question, tend to vary from one survey to the other.

It is, therefore, important to examine the methods by which data on religious attendance are collected in the four surveys to be used in this study. These surveys are:

1. Religion in Australia Survey in 1966 by Hans Mol (Mol's Survey),
2. International Social Survey Programme, Religion in 1991, by Kelley, Evans and Bean (ISSP),
3. Australian Family Formation Project Stage 1 1980/81 and Stage Two 1990/91, by Australian Institute of Family Studies (AFFP1 & 2),
4. Australian Living Standards Survey 1991 by Australian Institute of Family Studies (ALSS).

## **3.2 An overview of surveys used in the thesis**

### **3.2.1 Religion in Australia Survey, 1966<sup>51</sup>**

This survey was carried out by Mol, as part of a study conducted by the Department of Sociology, Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. The survey was conducted between April and September 1966 in New South Wales, Victoria and Southern Tasmania by way of personal interview of respondents who were adults of over 20 years old. Out of an initial sample of 1352 households chosen to take part in the survey 165 households did not respond, giving a non-response rate of 12.2%. This resulted in 2602 adult respondents being interviewed.

The questionnaire that was administered was split into two sections. The first schedule collected information that any adult could usually provide for the rest of those living in the household. The second is an individual schedule that contained questions about attitude and beliefs. Altogether, 2602 cases were recorded in responding to questions in the first schedule and 1832 cases responded to questions in the second schedule. The first schedule was used to analyse data on age, sex, religious affiliation, church attendance, previous Sunday attendance, place of birth of respondent, father and mother, length of residence and marital status.

This survey was chosen for a number of reasons.

1. It provided an age structure which closely resembled that of the Australian population in the 1966 Census.
2. The proportions of religious groups recorded in the survey closely resembled that of the Australian population in the 1966 Census.
3. The timing of the survey occurred prior to the initial changes in patterns of affiliation recorded in the 1971 Census.

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<sup>51</sup> Mol, (1984) Religion in Australia, 1966 User Guide, Social Science Data Archives, The Australian National University, Canberra, 2-4

The survey does, however, present a couple of limitations that need to be noted. The first is that many of the responses to questions were pre-grouped into particular categories. This is the case for age which was categorised into non even age groups: 20-24 years old, 25-39 years old, 40-59 years old, and 60+ years old. When other surveys are compared against the Mol Survey, similar categories have to be used. Also the survey was confined to New South Wales, Victoria and Southern Tasmania which meant that it was not a sample of the total Australian population. Lastly, the method in which the religious questions were asked placed an emphasis on Church attendance and Christian affiliation and practice. This limited the scope of this study to attendance at Christian places of worship.

### 3.2.2 International Social Survey Programme, Religion, Australia, 1991<sup>52</sup>

This survey was carried out by Kelley, Evans and Bean as part of a study conducted by the Sociology Program, Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. This project was part of an International survey commenced in 1991. The Australian part of the survey was conducted between March 1993 and July 1993 as part of a cross sectional study of persons listed on the Australian Federal Election Rolls. The respondents for the Religion survey were chosen from two earlier National Social Science Surveys conducted on Family and Lifestyle<sup>53</sup>. The Family Sample had an initial sample of 11245 with 4511 completions, a non-completion rate of 59.8%. The Lifestyle sample had an initial sample of 3798 and 1625 completions, a non-completion rate of 57.2%. Those who were chosen to take part in the Religion survey were selected on the basis that they had not indicated that they did not wish to participate further and were still resident at the same address. The survey method was by self-

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<sup>52</sup> Kelley, Evans, Bean (1995) International Social Survey Programme, Religion, Australia 1991 User's Guide Social Science Data Archives, Australian National University, Canberra, 1995, 1-3



completion of a questionnaire by the respondent. A sample of 2023 respondents took part in the survey. The survey was used to analyse data related to age, sex, religious affiliation, religious attendance, religious affiliation as a child and marital status.

The survey was chosen because:

1. It provided an age structure which closely resembled that of the Australian population in the 1991 Census.
2. The survey collected data at close to the end of the period which this thesis is studying.

The survey does, however, contain a number of shortcomings. The first is that the sample was drawn from previous surveys that had high non-response rates. This may indicate that the sample is biased to a more conservative response and thus may provide higher levels of attendance as it would contain people who had stability of residence and who were willing to participate in the survey. The level of religious affiliation indicates that the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups are over-represented in the sample compared to the 1991 Census, while the Catholic and Orthodox groups are under-represented. As the latter two groups contain higher levels of migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds this may indicate that the sample is also biased towards Australian-born residents and away from those who do not come from an English speaking background. Also as participants were chosen from the electoral roll it does not include non-Citizens except for those Commonwealth citizens who arrived in Australia prior to 1983.

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<sup>53</sup> Bean, (1995) National Social Science Survey 1989-1990: Family and Lifestyle, Social Science Data Archives, Australian National University, Canberra, Study Description D861

### 3.2.3 Australian Family Formation Project, 1981 and 1991<sup>54</sup>

The Australian Family Formation Study (AFFP) was carried out by the Australian Institute of Family Studies in Melbourne. The study was conducted in two stages in 1981 and 1991 as part of a longitudinal study of 18-34 year olds contained within a stratified random sample of households in the 1976 Census Collector's Districts. The first stage of the survey was conducted by way of personal interview and the second stage by mail back questionnaire. In the first stage, 4074 households were chosen to take part in the survey; of these 1530 failed to take part in the survey, a non-response rate of 37.5%. This resulted in 2544 respondents in the 18-34 age group being interviewed in stage one. In stage two, 1488 of these respondents in the 28-44 age group were retained within the study, representing an attrition rate of 41.5% of the original sample. This survey was used in analysing data related to age and sex, and changes in marital status, religious attendance and religious affiliation between the two stages of the survey.

This survey was chosen because:

1. It provided a longitudinal study of the 18-34 age group who appeared to be most affected by changes in patterns of affiliation and attendance.
2. It covered a period of significant change in patterns of religious affiliation and attendance.
3. It provided data on the changing patterns of marital status over a ten year period.

The survey does have one major limitation. This relates to the high level of attrition the two stages. This will be examined in Chapter Four to see whether it has a marked affect on the level of religious affiliation and attendance.

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<sup>54</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies, Family Formation Study-Stage 1, 1980-81-Study Description, Social Science Data Archives, Australian National University, Canberra, 1984, 2-6

### 3.2.4 Australian Living Standards Survey 1991<sup>55</sup>

The Australian Living Standards Study (ALSS) was carried out by the Australian Institute of Family Studies in fourteen local government areas around Australia. The study was conducted between 1991 and 1993 as part of a cross-sectional study of parents with at least one child under twenty years of age. The respondents came from a random sample of households contained in a listing of residential properties drawn from relevant council rates lists. The survey was conducted in five parts. Parts 1 and 2, relating to personal demographics of household members, were conducted by way of mailed questionnaire. Part 3, pertaining to children's services, was carried out by way of personal interview. Parts 4 and 5 regarding personal views were collected by personal self-completion questionnaires. The average non-response rate was 29% and this resulted in a final sample of 9111 respondents over the age of 15. The data analysed as part of this study included age, sex, religious affiliation, religious attendance, non-English speaking background and place of birth.

This survey was chosen as it provided important data related to:

1. parental and childhood influences on levels of religious attendance,
2. the effect of linguistic background on religious attendance.

The survey does have one major limitation. It is limited to parents with children under 20 years old. This may mean that the sample may be slightly biased towards higher levels of attendance, due to possible greater involvement of parents in the religious formation of children.

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<sup>55</sup> Brownlee, (1994) Employment Report: Spatial Aspects of Employment in Australian Cities, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, Appendix A

### **3.3 Collecting religious attendance data**

#### **3.3.1 The headcount of people attending a religious service**

A headcount of people attending a religious service is usually undertaken so that a religious institution may gain a better understanding of the numbers of people attending a particular service on a particular day of the week. As such it is used for pastoral planning in helping to determine how much a parish should contribute to the overall administrative costs incurred by a religious institution. It also can be used as a measure of the vitality of religious life in a community.

Some problems can be faced in undertaking such a count and these can cause variations between and within religious groups. The first can be a matter of perception about why the count is being undertaken. As noted before, the count is undertaken to achieve two measures, one which allows the religious community to be levied and the other which tests the levels of vitality of that community. At times these can be seen as competing measures as high levels of attendance do not always equate to high levels of income and vice versa. Thus if there is a tendency to use attendance as a measure which equates to the payment of levies this may result in a pastor recording lower levels of attendance in a given period. If, however, attendance is stressed as a measure of vitality this can result in a pastor recording higher levels of attendance in a given period. These differences can be minimised by ensuring headcounts are undertaken at the same time by all religious communities belonging to a particular religious group.

The timing of the headcount can also lead to some differences between religious groups. In the Catholic Church the headcount is taken as an average of attendance at all masses conducted within a parish on two Sundays in October. Other Protestant churches may include attendance at other services held during the week, while the Anglican Church would tend to use attendance at services of Easter and Christmas. It should be noted that some attempt has been

made to eliminate these differences in collection technique. These were undertaken in the National Church Life Survey, conducted by the Anglican and Protestant Churches in 1991 and 1996, and in the Catholic Church Life Survey conducted by the Catholic Church in 1996 which measured the levels of attendance of people over the age of 15 years. These measures have been used to compare levels of attendance against those recorded in the ISSP and ALSS surveys.

Headcounts, however, tend to limit the religious attendance of people to a particular place of worship on a Sunday. This of itself would indicate that those attending on this day are those who identify with the religious group and that worship on this day is an important part of their life. Thus in addition to being a sign of vitality and pastoral planning it can also be seen as a sign of orthodoxy on the part of the person attending. Here orthodoxy relates to the fact that a person's actions equate to the norms of the religious group as a whole rather than an indication that a person's beliefs may be orthodox.

Also because a headcount is used for raising finances for the administration of a religious group there has been a tendency to confine counts to particular locations and times of worship. In Australia this has tended to mean that groups which fall outside the normal parameters of regular church community life are often excluded from headcount data. This would exclude those who belong to particular ethnic and religious communities that are not defined by normal geographic locations adopted by a religious institution. It would also not count those who participate in religious services outside the normal definition of places of worship such as those who participate in home churches, those attending services in nursing homes and retreat centres, and those who access services on television or radio.

### **3.3.2 Social science surveys**

Religious attendance is used in social science surveys as an indicator of religiosity. Thus it is hoped that the frequency of a person's attendance will give an indication of the degree to

which one pattern of behaviour will influence other attitudes and behaviours. As a result when social scientists measure patterns of attendance they do not adopt as strict a definition of religious attendance as that undertaken by a religious institution. This can be seen by the fact that most religious attendance questions adopt a measure that examines attendance patterns in the last seven days rather than attendance on a specific day. This is done in order to capture all religious activity that may occur within a week. This avoids the problem of religious attendance being identified with attendance on a particular day that is stressed by a particular religious group. Also there is a tendency to use a more liberal definition of what is meant by a religious service to include all aspects of worship which might not be confined to a particular place or type of celebration. The sampling technique adopted by a social science survey also captures people who would normally be excluded from counts undertaken by the headcount method.

Two questions that need to be addressed before the data from these surveys are used to examine the trend in religious attendance are :

1. How comparable are data on religious attendance from the surveys?
2. Can a measure of religious attendance be developed that can be applied to data across surveys when the surveys differ in wording of the religious attendance question and the coding of responses?

The measure developed must not only be meaningful but must also be able to be applied consistently over each of the data-sets. The problem is how a measure of religiosity can be converted to a measure that usefully aids researchers in their task of measuring changes in religious attendance over time. Thus in adopting a methodology that measures the frequency of weekly attendance it is necessary to examine how this enables a comparison between these surveys. The method that seems simplest is to attempt to convert the responses made available into weighted averages of frequency of attendance. This should allow for an easy comparison between surveys that provide both different numbering and coding of responses to the question

of religious attendance. This also allows the comparison of weekly levels of attendance from these surveys with the results from other surveys.

However, difficulties occur when comparisons between surveys are made. The first problem arises from the variety of responses which are used to measure attendance between surveys. Surveys may measure attendance through attitudinal responses like always, often, occasionally and never. This makes it difficult to give a precise measure of an individual's level of attendance in a particular year. Also where surveys do use quantitative measurements, these tend to group attendance levels particularly at either end of the scale. Thus, for example, attendance is reported as having occurred on a monthly basis or more frequently or twice a year or less. Comparisons between surveys are limited by this lack of consistency. What this study will do is introduce and test a measure of average level of weekly attendance which will enable comparisons between surveys to be undertaken.

### **3.4 Method of comparing attendance across surveys**

#### 3.4.1 Explanation of method

The major difficulty that arises in comparing the surveys is the different response categories that are adopted in recording the level of attendance. Various studies in America have indicated that the attendance levels measured by the headcount method are between 0.733<sup>56</sup> and 0.9<sup>57</sup> of the levels reported in social science surveys. Some researchers<sup>58</sup> suggest that headcount measures may be as low as 0.54 of that recorded in social science surveys. These differences may apply only in America but it would appear appropriate that a similar comparison be made of the data in the surveys that this thesis will examine with headcount data.

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<sup>56</sup> Smith, (1998) "A Review of Church Attendance" in *American Sociological Review*, 32,135

<sup>57</sup> Hout, & Greeley, (1998) "What Church Officials' reports Don't Show: Another Look at Church Attendance Data" in *American Sociological Review* 32, 118

<sup>58</sup> Hadaway, Marler and Chaves, "Overreporting Church Attendance in America: Evidence that Demands the Same Verdict" in *American Sociological Review*, 32,122-130

In order to compare the data from the four surveys used in this thesis it is necessary to arrive at a measure of average weekly attendance that can be applied to the data. This measure should also be appropriate for comparison against the headcount data collected. To arrive at such a measure, it is necessary to ascribe values to each of the responses made to the question on religious attendance. It is proposed that the measure will be based on the following assumed frequency of attendance:

<u>Survey Response</u>	<u>Assumed Annual Frequency</u>
Never	0
Once a year	1
Twice a year	2
Every two months	6
Once a month	12
Twice a month	24
Three times a month	36
Every week	48 <sup>59</sup>

It is hoped that use of assumed annual frequencies across all surveys will allow the data contained from the surveys to be compared, and also enable comparisons with the headcount data.

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<sup>59</sup> The last category has been reduced to a factor of 48 rather than 52 to allow an even spread of intervals in the last four categories and to reflect the reality that a person may be unable to attend a religious service on a weekend due to sickness or travel



### 3.4.2 Allocation of values to surveys

The following values were assigned to the response categories in the Church Attendance question asked in the Religion in Australia, 1966 Survey:

<u>Survey Response</u>	<u>Assumed Annual Frequency</u>
Never	0
Hardly ever	1
Occasionally	2
Usually	24
Always	48

The responses in the Mol Survey refer to a broad description of levels of attendance. However, it is necessary to arrive at a more precise measure for the levels of activity attributed to the responses ‘usually’, ‘occasionally’ and ‘hardly ever’ in order for comparison of attendance to be made across surveys. The above values are adopted after analysis of another question in the Mol survey that asked about particular attendance on the previous Sunday. Table 3.1 shows that by comparing the response to the question about attendance with that on attendance on the previous Sunday it is possible to estimate the annual frequency of attendance. The levels of attendance on the previous Sunday are similar to those estimated from the assumed annual frequencies. In adopting these values it is important to stress the following point, the more frequent the level of attendance the greater the difference that exists between estimated and assumed frequency. This gives a greater degree of confidence that the assumed attendance measure does report the respondent’s actual behaviour.

Table 3.1 Comparison of attendance data with respondents indicating attendance on the previous Sunday.

Responses To Attendance Question.	Total Survey Population	Attended Last Sunday %	Estimated Annual Frequency <sup>60</sup>	Assumed Annual Frequency	% Difference of Estimated and Assumed Frequency
Never	612	2.1	1.1	0	1.1
Hardly Ever	433	2.1	1.1	1	0.1
Occasionally	690	3.2	1.7	2	-0.3
Usually	263	42.6	22.1	24	-1.9
Always	600	84.7	43.5	48	-4.5
No Answer	4	25.0	13	N/A	N/A
Total	2602	25.3	13	N/A	N/A

The International Social Survey Programme, Religion, Australia, 1991 uses a broader range of attendance categories. There are more numeric categories that are similar to those adopted in allocating the assumed annual frequencies. This means that values can be assigned to the responses on religious attendance with a greater degree of certainty. Where attendance has been recorded as more than once a week this is measured as if the person were attending once a week. This is to ensure that the measure adopted corresponds as closely as possible to the other surveys that assume that the highest level of religious attendance is once a week. The assumed annual frequencies adopted for the ISSP study are as follows:

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<sup>60</sup> Average Days of Attendance calculated by multiplying the proportion of those answering Yes to the question on attendance last Sunday by the number of 52 possible Sundays of attendance in a year.

<u>Survey Response</u>	<u>Assumed Annual Frequency</u>
Never	0
Less than once a year	0
About once or twice a year	1
Several times a year	6
About once a month	12
Two or three times a month	24
Nearly every week	36
Every week	48
Several times a week	48
Once a day	48
Several times a day	48
(Can't say)	0

In the Australian Living Standards Survey, the values adopted are similar to those in the Mol survey. In this survey, religious attendance tends to be grouped at either end of the scale.

The values adopted are as follows:

<u>Survey Response</u>	<u>Assumed Annual Frequency</u>
More than once a week	48
Once a week	48
Most weeks, but not every week	36
Several times a year	6
Rarely (just weddings, etc.)	1
Never	0

The responses are similar to those of other surveys. The only major difference appears to be in the response "rarely" that attaches a statement "just weddings". This indicates a difference in the interpretation of religious attendance within this question. While the other responses could

be assumed to refer to attendance on a principal day of worship, the response “rarely” might well see a higher level of people indicating this answer than has been seen in the other surveys.

A similar set of response categories to the religious attendance question was adopted in both stages of the Australian Family Formation Project. Two broad quantitative responses adopted in the survey pose some difficulties. The response “3-12 times a year” was noted to cover two possible statements previously identified as “once every two months” and “once every month” in the allocation of assumed annual frequencies. The range allows a value of somewhere between 3 and 12 to be applied to this response. The application of this value needs to be consistent to that which has been applied in the other three surveys. Since the response appears to cover two possible answers detailed in the allocation of assumed annual frequency it would seem reasonable to obtain an average of the two values “once every two months” and “once every month”. Thus a value of 9 can be given to the response “3-12 weeks”. The other category “13-52 weeks” also covers two value labels “Twice a month” and “Three times a month”. If the same method is applied an average value of 30 can be assigned to this response.

The values given to the responses in the AFFP surveys are as follows:

<u>Survey Response</u>	<u>Assumed Annual Frequency</u>
Not at all (did not)	0
Less than once a year	0
1-2 times a year	1
3-12 times a year	9
13-52 times a year	30
Over 52 times a year	48
Unsure/Don't know	0

### 3.4.3 Comparison of results between surveys

An initial comparison of the values assigned to the religious attendance response in these surveys in table 3.2 reveals a couple of important points. The first is that the ALSS survey records a higher proportion of people who have been identified as attending a religious service at least once a year. This is most likely due to the manner in which the response is worded. It broadens the idea of religious services to include weddings and funerals. People responding this way may, therefore, include those who would in other surveys have said that they never attend a religious service. The Mol survey produced a smaller proportion of people who indicated that they never attended a religious service when compared to the other surveys. It also appears that the Mol survey indicates a higher proportion of people who attended a religious service each week. This comparison can be made clearer when the levels of attendance are consolidated into three distinct groups: low level attenders, those with values between 0 and 2, medium level attenders, those with values between 6 and 24, and high level attenders, those coded between 30 and 48,

Table 3.2 Comparison of re-coding of survey responses on religious attendance and percentage of sample in each new response category

Re-coded frequency of religious attendance	MOL 1966 %	AFFP1 1980/81 %	AFFP2 1990/91 %	ALSS 1991/92 %	ISSP 1993 %
0	23.7	47.4	54.5	19.2	52.4
1	16.6	18.7	15.5	43.5	15.6
2	26.5				
6				15.3	8.8
9		15.4	12.2		
12					2.6
24	10.1				3.1
30		11.4	6.4		
36				7.6	4.6
48	23.1	7.1	11.4	14.4	12.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Combining the religious attendance frequencies into these three groups in table 3.3 provides a clearer picture of religious attendance in Australia over the twenty-seven years between 1966 and 1993. It shows that the proportion of those with lower levels of religious attendance has remained fairly static moving through a range of 67 per cent to 70 per cent. This indicates that there has consistently been a large proportion of the Australian population who has maintained a marginal interest in being part of a religious group and this is reflected by their consistent low level of religious attendance. The major change shown between the surveys between 1966 and 1993 appears to be a movement from high levels of attendance to medium levels of attendance. This indicates a movement from attending almost every week to attending almost every month. It appears that the percentage who attend once a week has declined from 23 per cent reported in Mol's 1966 survey to about 18 per cent in the early 1990s. This pattern can be clearly seen in the comparison of the Mol survey with the AFFP and ISSP surveys. However, the slightly different pattern shown by the ALSS survey might be due to the different wording of the attendance question and those selected to be part of this sample group. What is not clear from this measurement of frequency is how the patterns of weekly attendance may have changed over this period. This will be discussed in the next section.

Table 3.3 Comparison of religious attendance for all the surveys

Level of Attendance	Mol 1966 %	AFFP1 1980/81 %	AFFP2 1990/91 %	ALSS 1991/92 %	ISSP 1993 %
Low	66.8	66.1	70.0	62.7	68.0
Medium	10.1	15.4	12.2	15.3	14.5
High	23.1	18.5	17.8	22.0	17.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

### 3.5 Example of average weekly attendance measure

The level of average weekly attendance will be applied to each of the data-sets by the application of the following formula.

$$\frac{\sum(V_p * F) / T}{T_p}$$

Where  $V_p$  = Population for a particular level of attendance  
 $F$  = Assumed frequency of attendance on a principal day of worship  
 $T$  = 52 Principal days of worship in a year  
 $T_p$  = Total population of religious group in the survey

Having allocated values to each of the response categories in the surveys, it is possible to calculate the percentage of people attending weekly for each religious group. This measure can be compared against headcounts by the following relationship:

$$\frac{\sum(V_p * F) / T}{T_p} = H_c \pm D$$

Where  $H_c$  = Head count or equivalent survey taken as percentage of religious group  
 $D$  = Percentage difference of headcount from the survey

Table 3.4 shows how the above formula is used to calculate the percentage of Catholics who attend a religious service weekly from their response to the religion question in Mol's survey. The weekly attendance measure is obtained by multiplying the number of people in each of the response categories by the annual frequency assumed for that response category. As can be seen in table 3.4 this produces the total shown in column C that is then divided by 52, which is the number of weeks in each year. The result represented in column D is the average number of people in each response category who would be expected to be attending in any particular week. Column E, the expected proportion of people from each category who attend a religious service weekly, is then calculated by dividing each of the response values in column D by the total sample size of 631. The total of values in column E is the total proportion of people attending

weekly. In this table, the calculations show that a total of 56.7 per cent of Catholics would on average have attended a religious service in a given week. This value can then be compared against data collected by other surveys and by headcounts.

Table 3.4 Percentage of Catholics attending a religious service weekly based on their responding to the Mol survey, 1966

Responses	A	B	C	D	E
	Sample Size (Vp)	Assumed Annual Frequency (F)	Column A Multiplied by Column B	Column C Divided by 52 (T)	Column D divided by Total Column A (TP) %
Never	79	0	0	0	0
Hardly Ever	55	1	55	1.1	0.2
Occasionally	85	6	510	9.8	1.6
Usually	72	24	1728	33.2	5.2
Always	340	48	16320	313.8	49.7
Total	631		18613	357.9	56.7

### **3.6 Comparison of average weekly attendance measure with headcounts**

Table 3.5 shows the estimated percentage of those attending weekly for each of the Christian religious groups in the Mol survey. This is compared with another question in the Mol survey of those who indicated that they had attended a religious service on the previous Sunday. The close agreement between these two measures indicates that the estimated measure is a good indicator of the average level of weekly attendance. In examining this table it is seen that the Catholic group had a higher level of average weekly attendance than any of the other groups. Of the Other Christian and Orthodox/Oriental groups about a third of each group attend weekly on average compared to about a quarter of the Uniting/Presbyterian group.. The Anglican group had the lowest level of attendance with about a seventh of that group attending weekly on average.



It is possible in table 3.5 to compare the levels of average weekly attendance estimated from the Mol survey with the number of respondents who identified themselves as attending last Sunday from the same survey. In using this measure it is recognised that this is not exactly the same as the headcount measure in that it does not make a physical count of people attending religious services. This provides a base from which a comparison can be made about the degree of reported behaviour and actual behaviour. It can be seen that this is not the case with the Catholic and Orthodox/Oriental groups which display similar levels of attendance between the two measures. However, the other three groups note a higher level of average weekly attendance when compared to attendance on the previous Sunday. This level of difference is greatest for the Uniting/Presbyterian and Anglican groups where the level of attendance on the previous Sunday is about 70 per cent of the average weekly attendance. The Other Christian group recorded a level of attendance on the Sunday that is about 90 per cent of the average weekly attendance. This is similar to the findings reported in the American studies mentioned earlier.

Table 3.5 Comparison of Mol 1966 average weekly attendance and attendance last Sunday

Religious Group	Sample Size	% Average Who Attend Each Week in Mol Survey	% Attend Last Sunday	% Difference between Average who Attend Each Week and Attend Last Sunday
Catholic	631	56.7	55.9	0.8
Anglican	1030	14.4	10.1	4.3
Uniting/Presbyterian	618	26.9	18.9	8.0
Other Christian	89	40.9	37.1	3.8
Orthodox/Oriental	78	32.5	33.3	-0.8
Total Population	2446			

A comparison of the ISSP and ALSS studies in table 3.6 indicates that the levels of average weekly attendance among the Catholic and Orthodox/Oriental groups were lower than those in the Mol Study. Compared to the Mol survey, the levels of average weekly attendance were similar for the Uniting/Presbyterian and Anglican groups and higher for the Other Christian group. The reasons for these differences will be examined in chapters four and five.

However, when these two surveys are compared against the headcounts taken in the same period, there were notable differences. The Catholic group shows that percentage attending last Sunday is about 60 per cent of that according to the average weekly attendance measure estimated from the surveys. The Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups show that the Sunday attendance is between 60-80 per cent of the average weekly attendance. On the other hand, the Other Christian group indicates that the attendance level on a Sunday is about 130 per cent of the average weekly attendance. Two things need to be noted in this examination. The first is the similar proportional difference in the levels of attendance of Catholics to those displayed by the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups. What this indicates is that the difference between the attendance among the Catholics may be influenced by such factors as survey overstatement that also existed in the responses from those belonging to the Uniting/Presbyterian and Anglican groups.

Table 3.6 The comparison of attendance levels contained in ISSP 1993 Religion Survey and ALSS 1991/92 compared to 1993 Head Counts

Religious Group	ISSP Sample Size	% Attending each Week in ISSP Survey	ALSS Sample Size	% Attending each Week in ALSS Survey	% Attending according to Head Counts <sup>61</sup>	Difference between ISSP Survey and Head Counts	Difference between ALSS Survey and Head Counts
Catholic	443	35.6	2354	33.3	20.4	15.2	11.3
Anglican	507	13.7	2455	10.0	7.9	5.8	2.1
Uniting/Presbyterian	336	20.4	1168	18.2	14.8	5.6	3.4
Other Christian	158	46.0	1009	48.3	60.3	-14.3	-12.0
Orthodox/Oriental	35	15.4	160	25.0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	1479		7146				

For the Other Christian group, however, the headcount measure of attendance in the 1990s is higher than that reported in the ISSP and ALSS. This may have occurred for two reasons. The first is that the Other Christian group may attract people to attend on a Sunday who are not actually affiliated with that group. Higher levels of attendance for that group would then be due to a smaller denominator being used to arrive at the headcount attendance levels. The second reason is that the headcount attendance levels may be higher due to double counting of those who attend more than one service on a given Sunday.

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<sup>61</sup> The actual rates of participation were collated from two sources: The Catholic data were collected by Dixon, (1996) on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference and were based on actual head counts collected by parish and compared against the number of people indicated as Catholics in the 1996 ABS Census and in Dixon, Catholics in Australia, AGPS. The rates identified were 0.220 in 1991 and 0.187 in 1996. The median rate for 1993 is calculated as 0.204. The other data were made available from Kaldor, (et al)1994 Winds of Change, Lancer, 344 modified to new groupings for Uniting/Presbyterian (313691/2117662=0.148) Other Christian (537243/891488=0.603)

### 3.7 Comparison of average weekly attendance measure in surveys

Table 3.7 A Comparison of average weekly attendance levels according to the Mol 1966 survey, ISSP 1993 Survey and ALSS 1991 Survey

Religious Group	% Average Attending each Week in Mol Survey	% Average Attending each Week in ISSP Survey	% Average Attending each Week in ALSS Survey
Catholic	56.7	35.6	33.3
Anglican	14.4	13.7	10.0
Uniting/Presbyterian	26.9	20.4	18.2
Other Christian	40.9	46.0	48.3
Orthodox/Oriental	32.5	15.4	25.0

A comparison of the weekly average attendance levels in 1966 and the 1990s indicates that there have been some changes in the levels of attendance between religious groups. The most noticeable in the lower weekly attendance among Catholics. In the Mol Survey one half of Catholics would have attended a religious service in an average week compared to a third in the ISSP and ALSS surveys. This points to a substantial change in the likelihood of Catholics attending in a given week. An examination of the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups shows a moderately lower attendance in the 1990s compared to 1966. What is significant in comparing the ISSP and ALSS surveys is that the former produces slightly higher levels of weekly attendance. This difference may occur as a result of differences between the surveys. As was noted earlier the ISSP was considered to be a more conservative sample due to higher levels of non-response and the sample being collected by mail back questionnaire. This may have led to slightly higher levels of attendance in this survey. The ISSP is also an older age sample on average.

A comparison from the ISSP and ALSS studies of the Other Christian and Orthodox/Oriental groups show that both have higher attendance in the ALSS study. It is possible that the greater difference shown for the Orthodox/Oriental group may be due to more people from non-English speaking backgrounds in the ALSS which provided instructions in six different languages and also conducted interviews in languages other than English. This would indicate that the ALSS study may be more reliable in examining attendance of people from a non-English background. Finally, it is shown that the attendance of Other Christians is higher in the later surveys compared to that reported in the Mol study. This may result from the changes in the composition of this group that have occurred between 1966 and 1993. The attendance level of the Orthodox/Oriental group is lower in the ALSS and ISSP studies compared to the Mol Study.

Table 3.8 A Comparison of attendance levels for the respondents contained in AFFP stage 1 1980/81 and stage 2 1990/91

Religious Group	Sample Size		% Attending each Week in	
	1980/81	1990/91	AFFP 1 Survey	AFFP2 Survey
	1980/81	1990/91	1980/81	1990/91
Catholic	710	378	27.9	29.6
Anglican	642	390	8.5	8.7
Uniting/Presbyterian	370	228	11.0	9.6
Other Christian	281	117	32.2	41.3
Orthodox/Oriental	54	28	20.6	18.5
Total Sample	2057	1141		

The AFFP study shows that each of the religious groups have lower levels of attendance than those reported in the ALSS and ISSP studies. These surveys are not directly comparable as the AFFP represents people in the 18-34 age group in 1980/81 and 28-44 in 1990/91. Hence, the

lower levels of attendance in the AFFP may indicate a difference exists in the attendance patterns of young people. This will be examined more closely in Chapter Five.

An examination of table 3.8 indicates that for some religious groups the levels of average weekly attendance of those between the ages of 18-34 in 1980/81 changed over the following ten years. There were marginally higher levels of average weekly attendance among the Catholic and Anglican groups. The average weekly attendance among the Uniting/Presbyterian and Orthodox/Oriental group was marginally lower. The Other Christian group, however, showed a distinctly higher level of average weekly attendance. This may indicate that those retained in the survey as part of this group increased their levels of weekly attendance. It may also indicate that those retained in the two stages of the survey as part of this group had higher levels of attendance than those who were not retained. Lastly, it may indicate that people who became members of a religious group during the ten year time period displayed higher levels of attendance than those who left the group, This will be examined in Chapter Four.

### **3.8 Summary**

The average weekly attendance measure appears to provide a reliable method to compare religious attendance from the four surveys in this study. This measure is not the same as that which records the level of attendance on a particular Sunday. There are indications that the survey-based average weekly attendance measure may indicate a higher percentage attending than is reported by a headcount of those attending on a particular Sunday. This difference may be related to four factors. The first is that the smaller the religious group the greater the likelihood that the headcount will be affected by other factors such as attendance by other people. The second is the method by which people are counted at the religious services they attend on Sunday and the time of the year in which the head-count is taken. The third is that there may be a tendency for people to attend on a different day of the week or in a different form from that

which is measured by the headcount method. The fourth is the possibility that respondents overstate their attendance in surveys.

The application of this method raises a number of areas that need to be investigated in subsequent chapters. The first is the reasons behind the decline in average weekly attendance levels among the Catholic and Orthodox/Oriental groups between 1966 and 1993. The second is the reasons behind similar patterns of attendance being reported by the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups. The last is the reason behind the higher levels of attendance among the Other Christian group.

## **4. Changes in religious affiliation and its effects on religious attendance**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The main results which have emerged from the cohort analysis in Chapter Two have suggested that two movements have a marked influence on patterns of religious affiliation. The first is a distinct decline in the affiliation of both females and males in the Christian groups in the 15-24 age group. The second suggests that in older age groups there has been an increase in religious affiliation. This chapter will explore the changes in religious affiliation and attendance between 1981 and 1991 recorded in the Australian Family Formation Project which covers the age group 18-34 years in Stage 1 and 28-44 years in Stage 2. The surveys show that the movements between affiliation and non-affiliation are more fluid than is initially understood. Thus it becomes necessary that certain definitions are adopted to describe these movements. This will also clarify both the state of a person's affiliation and level of attendance and also the movements between states of identity and adherence to a religious group.

Using these definitions it will be possible to look at whether there is a difference in the attendance patterns of those respondents who participated in both stages of the AFFP study with those who only took part in stage one in 1981. It is also useful to observe how retention or change of affiliation, as shown in the two stages of the AFFP study, affects levels of attendance. This chapter will also examine this issue using data from the two cross-sectional surveys, the Mol survey in 1966 and the ISSP survey in 1993.



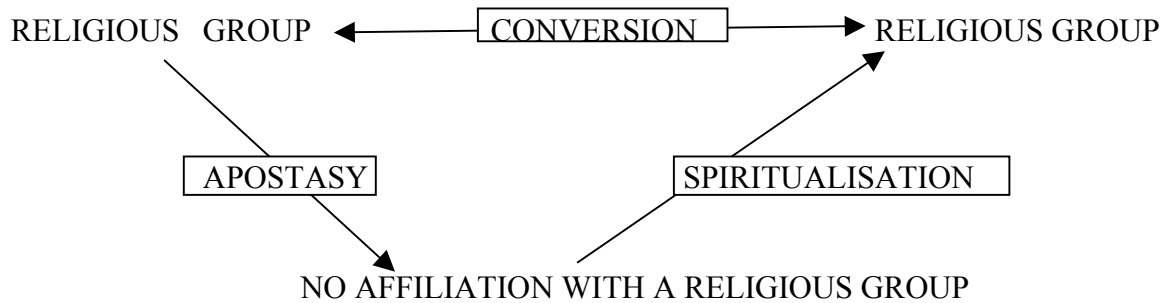
## 4.2 Definitions

Previous studies by National Church Life Study<sup>62</sup> have tended to emphasise the decline in religious attendance and affiliation. It has been assumed that attendance and affiliation are the norm and that states and movements away from this represent movements away from the norm. Thus much of the language adopted in reference to these changes stresses the dysfunctional nature of such behaviour. The difficulty with this approach is that it does not account for the more fluid state of movement both between and within patterns of religious identity and the movement between non-affiliation and affiliation. The picture becomes more complicated when it is considered that there are different levels of adherence within a religious group which are indicated by frequency of attendance. As a result, it is not only important to examine the size of a religious group and the level of attendance but also the relation between these two measures. This makes it necessary to have some definitions of the movements between affiliation and non-affiliation which were observed in Chapter Two. The changes in levels of attendance also need to be defined so as to arrive at a better understanding of these patterns. In seeking to arrive at definitions for some of these movements it is necessary to explore some terms which may not be in common usage.

Figure 4.1 acknowledges two terms which are already familiar. The term *apostasy* or the *apostotic movement* refers to the change from affiliation to non-affiliation with a religious group while *conversion* refers to the movement from one affiliation to another. The more difficult movement to name is the movement from non-affiliation with a religious group to affiliation. This movement has been described as conversion from one affiliation to another but it is actually different. The movement is one in which spiritual values are taken more seriously. However, there is difficulty in adopting a term which suggests a move away from secular values because of

the implication that spiritual values are somehow at odds with secular values. This runs the risk of adopting a theological position known as dualism.<sup>63</sup> The term *spiritualisation* is used here instead. It has been adopted to contrast with the process of apostasy and to be clearly distinct from the process of conversion.

Figure 4.1 Model of movements between affiliation



The changes in frequency of attendance have been more difficult to define because of the assumption that there are two extremes of attendance: that either you attend regularly or you do not attend at all. These two positions do not fully describe the pattern observed that there are different levels of attendance. While it can be acknowledged that *regular attendance* refers to the pattern of attending on each principal day of religious observance and *nominal* attendance refers to infrequent and irregular attendance they do not adequately explain the patterns that are observed later in this chapter. Here it is possible to see that the largest change was from regular attendance to more moderate levels of attendance. The term which seems to be most appropriate for this pattern of attendance would appear to be *periodic* attendance. This is where a person attends in a set pattern and sequence of intervals over a period of time.

The move from the highest frequency of attendance to the lowest frequency will be referred to as *lapsation* while the term *consolidation* will be used to refer to the reverse

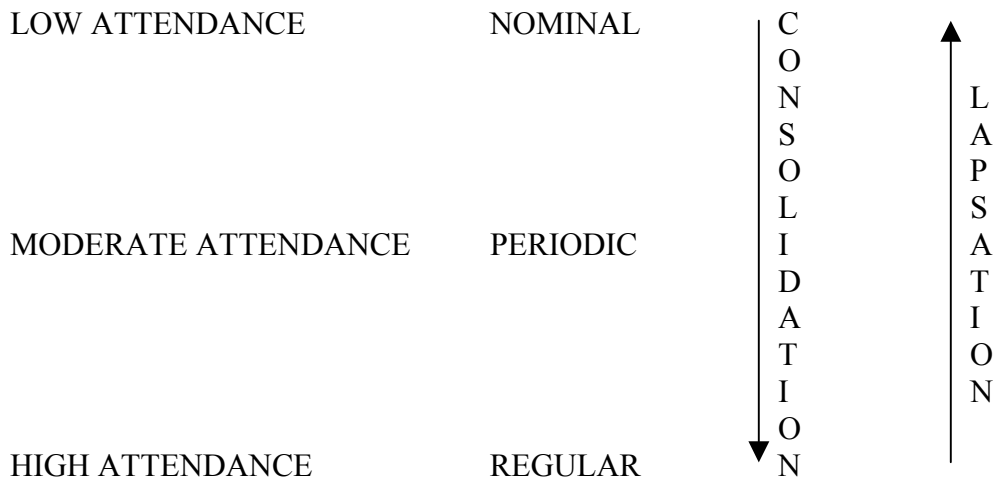
<sup>62</sup> Kaldor, Bellamy, Powell, Correy and Castle (1994), *The Winds of Change*. Lancer, Sydney 342-344 and Kaldor (1987) *Who Goes Where? Who Doesn't Care?*, Lancer

<sup>63</sup> Dualism is the process commonly seen in some faiths which views issues of bodily function as evil and issues of spirituality as good.

movement from the lowest frequency to the highest frequency (Figure 4.2). In using these terms it also needs to be noted that there can be partial lapsation or consolidation which will refer to the movements from lowest or highest level of attendance to more intermediate levels.

In this analysis it also needs to be noted that the attendance measure used in this study is not actually a description of regular attendance but is an aggregated attendance measure which seeks to describe the expected average level of attendance in any given week. Thus this measure would include nominal, periodic and regular attenders. The measure is used to describe changes in the proportion of all people affiliated to a particular religious group who attend a service on the principal day of worship. Thus any lapsation or consolidation according to this measure reflects the effect on the particular religious group of all the people affiliated to that group.

Figure 4.2 Model of movements based on changes in frequency of attendance



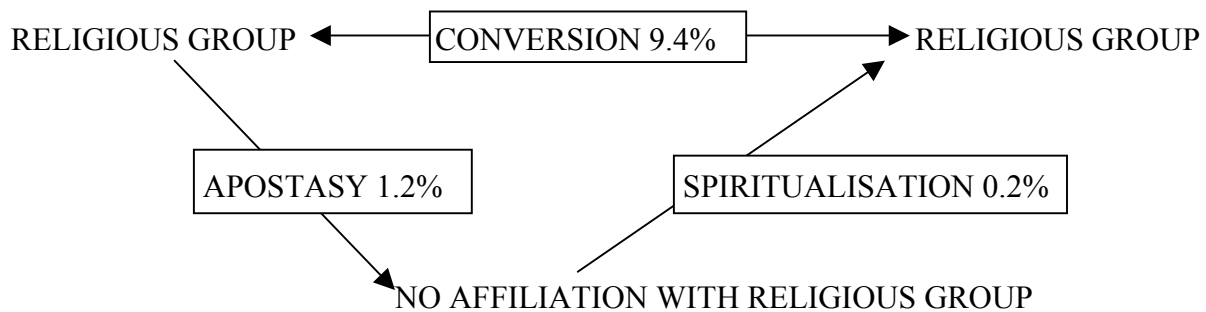
#### **4.2 Comparison of changes of religious affiliation in Mol and ISSP surveys**

The Mol and ISSP surveys examined the changes in affiliation patterns of individuals contained within each study. In each of these surveys, two questions were asked: one about the person's current religious affiliation and the other about previous affiliation. In the Mol survey the question was whether a person had ever held another religious affiliation. The ISSP survey

asked which affiliation a person was raised in as a child. Where the responses to the two questions were different it can be assumed that the person had sometime in his/her life changed his/her religious affiliation.

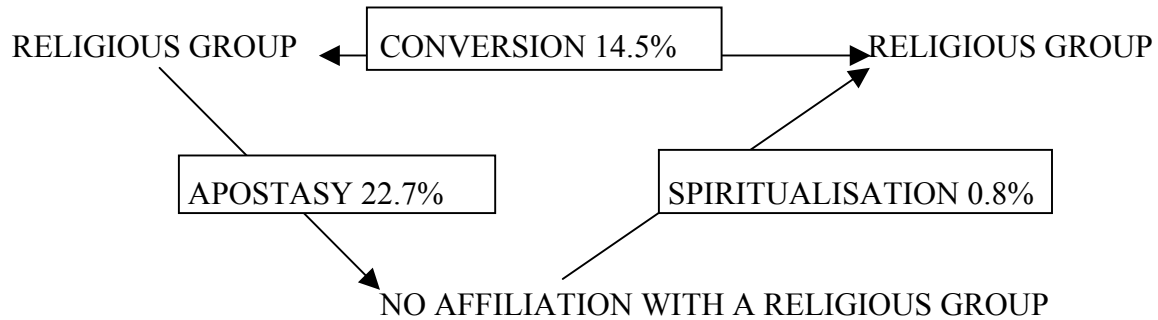
Figure 4.3 shows the changes in religious affiliation according to the Mol survey. There was little change due to Apostasy and Spiritualisation. The greatest degree of change appears to be in the conversion from one religious group to another. These changes of religious identity were similar levels for the religious groups. These changes reflect years prior to 1966 primarily in the 1950's and early 1960's.

Figure 4.3 Changes in religious affiliation patterns of respondents in the Mol survey



A comparison with patterns in the ISSP in figure 4.4 show that there are greater changes in patterns of religious affiliation in 1993 survey than were shown in 1966. These reflect patterns of change that occurred in the years prior to 1993 and could be due to changes of affiliation in the 1970's and 1980's. While there is still a significant level of conversion between religious groups, the Apostotic movement accounts for a greater portion of change. The change due to spiritualisation is very small. A possible explanation for the low level of spiritualisation is that people who have changed from having a religious affiliation to no religion may have returned to their original religious affiliation at a later stage in life. This movement can occur over different times during a person's life. Thus while for the older people this may indicate that changes in affiliation may be complete the same can not be concluded for those in younger age groups.

Figure 4.4 Changes in religious affiliation patterns of respondents in the ISSP



The comparison of these two surveys shows a greater level of change in levels of affiliation in the years up to 1993 primarily the 1970's and 1980's. In 1966 only 11 per cent of the sample had changed from one religious affiliation to another during their lifetime. However, in 1993, 38 per cent had changed their pattern of affiliation. This change notes the marked increase in apostasy from 1.2% to 22.7%, while conversion only rose from 9% to 14.5%. This suggests that changes in patterns of affiliation, particularly apostasy, may have an effect on levels of weekly attendance at a religious service. This will be studied more closely in the study of longitudinal data made available through the AFFP.

#### **4.4 Changes shown in the AFFP surveys**

One of the important issues which was highlighted in Chapter Three in relation to the analysis of data from the AFFP survey was the loss of respondents between stages one and two. The relevant issue in this study is whether those respondents retained in the study represented a substantially different group of people from those who took part only in stage one. This is an important issue because it can affect any observed differences in patterns of affiliation and attendance observed in the two stages.

Table 4.1 Religious affiliation of respondents at stage one of AFFP, study based on those respondents in stage one only and respondents in stage one and two<sup>64</sup>

Stages	Catholic	Anglican	Uniting/ Presbyter- -ian	Orthodox /Oriental	Other Christian	Non Christian	No religion	Total
Stage 1 Only	319 (30.2%)	275 (26.0%)	133 (12.6%)	27 (2.6%)	105 (9.9%)	31 (2.9%)	166 (15.7%)	1056 (100%)
Stage 1 & 2	391 (27.3%)	367 (25.6%)	237 (16.5%)	27 (1.8%)	176 (12.3%)	30 (2.1%)	206 (14.4%)	1434 (100%)
Attrition Rate	44.9%	42.8%	35.9%	50.0%	37.4%	50.8%	44.6%	42.4%

A Pearson Chi-Square test<sup>65</sup> showed that there was a significant difference between the religious affiliation of those respondents who took part in stages 1 and 2 of the AFFP and those who took part only in stage one. Table 4.1 shows that the Uniting/Presbyterian and Other Christian groups are both represented at a proportionally greater level among those who were retained in both stages of the AFFP than those who participated only in stage one. The converse is true of all the other groups. The one exception is the Anglican group which appears to retain similar levels of participants in both stages of the study. The groups most affected by the lower levels of participation in Stage Two were the Catholic, Orthodox and Non Christian groups. What also needs to be tested is whether this significant difference based on religious affiliation is also present in proportions of those who attended a religious service each week.

A similar test of significance was used to examine the difference in levels of attendance by religious group of those who took part in both stages of the AFFP survey and those included only in stage one. This helped to establish that the only significant difference in levels of attendance occurred in the Anglican group.<sup>66</sup> This test showed that those Anglicans who were

<sup>64</sup> These proportions of significance are based on the direct attendance question used in the AFFP survey not the estimated measure presented in the formula in Chapter 3

<sup>65</sup> The Pearson Chi Square Test showed that the difference was significant at  $p = .017$

<sup>66</sup> The Chi square test for the Anglican group showed a level of significance at  $p = .008$

retained in the survey were likely to have a higher level of attendance than those who participated only in stage one. However, the Anglican group appears to be the only religious group affected significantly by the retention of people with patterns of higher attendance. This may mean that overall patterns of attendance may be slightly higher among those who were retained in both stages of the AFFP study. However, as the Anglican group is only about a third of the total sample the overall effect is small.

Table 4.2 Proportion of respondents attending religious services weekly in stage one, 1981 AFFP survey among respondents in stage one only and those respondents in stage one and two based by religious group

Stages	Catholic %	Anglican %	Uniting/Presbyterian %	Orthodox %	Other Christian %	Non Christian %	No Religion %
Stage 1 Only	25.4	6.4	10.1	24.9	29.6	14.2	2.1
Stage 1 & 2	29.8	10.0	11.5	16.1	33.8	14.3	1.5

#### **4.5 Movement between religious groups**

Table 4.3 shows the movements between religious affiliations that took place among those respondents involved with both stages of the AFFP study. A study of this longitudinal data is important as it provides an insight into the changes that occurred among these respondents in the period between 1981 and 1991. This examination will lay the basis for testing whether changes in patterns of affiliation have an effect on changes in levels of attendance. However, it is necessary that to examine how these changes in patterns of affiliation have affected each religious group.

Table 4.3 Distribution of respondents by their religious groups in stage one and stage two, AAFP study

Religious Group Stage 1 1981	Religious Group Stage Two 1991									
	Catholic	Anglican	Uniting/Presbyterian	Orthodox/Oriental	Other Christian	Jewish	Muslim	Other Non Christian	No Religion	Total
Catholic	348	6	2		5		1	4	25	391
Anglican	4	302	15		6			6	34	367
Uniting/Presbyterian	1	15	181		8			2	30	237
Orthodox/Oriental				24	1				2	27
Other Christian	9	19	11	2	85		1	19	30	176
Jewish						7			2	9
Muslim							4			4
Other Non Christian			1		1			7	8	17
No Religion	16	48	18	2	11	3		8	154	260
Total	378	390	228	28	117	10	6	46	285	1488

The levels of conversion both in and out of the Catholic group are fairly low. However the levels of apostasy are greater than those of spiritualisation. Thus the decline in this group is more largely due to the movement to No Religion.

The increase in the Anglican group is the result of both conversion and spiritualisation. Movements are larger than for the Catholic group and are marked by high levels of change both in and out of the group.

The Uniting/Presbyterian group records some conversion primarily from the Other Christian group. The group also experienced a level of apostasy similar to that of the Catholic group. Overall there was a small decline in affiliation. This would indicate that while levels of



conversion and apostasy are similar to each other it is the lower level of spiritualisation into the group which sees a decline in this group.

Movements into or out of the Orthodox/Oriental group are only in relation to the Other Christian group . However, due to the very small numbers involved, it is not possible to come to any conclusion about changes affecting this group.

The Other Christian group experiences the greatest change, with a high rate of conversion in and out of the group. This is interesting in two ways indicating a stronger flow back to the three main Christian groups than the flow from those groups but also there is a strong flow to Other Non-Christian groups. There is also a significant apostasy movement that has a significant impact on this group. This would suggest that this group acts as a transit point between different religious groups.

Lastly, the data shows high volumes of both apostasy into the No Religion group and spiritualisation out of the group. This leads to a slight rise in the number of people in this group. However, the changes in and out of this group suggest that this is also a transit point in belief. This is of greatest interest as it runs contrary to the popular belief that the increase in No Religion is a one way process.

Figure 4.5 Summary of movements between religious groups,1981 and 1991, AFFP study

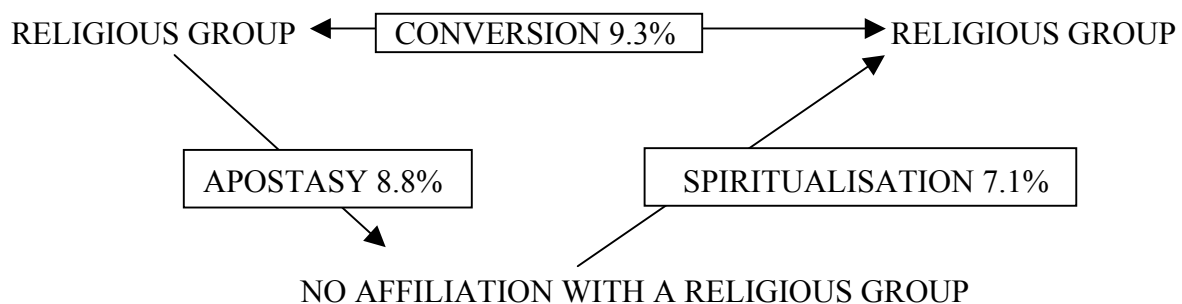


Figure 4.5 summarises the changes in affiliation of respondents in the AFFP study between 1981 and 1991. The figure shows considerable levels in the three types of movement.

There were more conversions than apostasy. However, there is also a significant movement from no affiliation to affiliation through the process of spiritualisation. Altogether 25% of the total population in this study changed their religious affiliation between 1981 and 1991. This level of change is significant in that it runs counter to the theory that the decline in religious affiliation is the result of secularisation alone. It is evident that this is a period of dramatic change for all religious groups and while the period between 1966 and 1976 witnessed a significant apostotic movement, the 1981 to 1991 period was a period of equal or greater significance in the change of religious affiliation, at least for people aged 18-34 in 1981. Therefore, the net changes observed in the census data do not give a complete explanation about the level of change in affiliation that occurred during this period.

Table 4.4 shows that changes in affiliation in the younger age groups are mainly due to the processes of apostasy and spiritualisation. The process of conversion tends to occur more among the older age groups. What is probably of greater significance is that apostasy tends to occur more among the 18-24 age group over the ten-year period than spiritualisation. This would mean that the net effect of apostasy is more noticeable among this group than among older age groups.

In the 25-34 age group the level of apostasy is similar to the level of spiritualisation. This means that our initial understanding of the apostotic movement being increasingly isolated to the 18-24 age group needs to be broadened to take account of this. Some of the change in affiliation among those in the younger age group may be explained by movement away from parental influence. However, it is also clear that older age groups in the AAFP study are also affected by changes in affiliation. This indicates that the changes in affiliation may also be influenced by other factors such as marriage.

Table 4.4 Movements between religious groups by age group, 1981-1991, AFFP study

Change in Religious Affiliation 1981-1991	1981			
	18-19 Years Old	20-24 Years Old	25-29 Years Old	30-34 Years Old
	1991			
	28-29 Years Old	30-34 Years Old	35-39 Years Old	40-44 Years Old
	%	%	%	%
Remained in Same Group	71.9	76.1	73.1	76.0
Christian to Christian	6.1	6.4	7.0	7.9
Christian to Non Christian	2.0	1.7	2.8	2.3
Christian to No Religion	9.2	9.0	8.0	7.0
Non Christian-Christian			0.3	0.2
Non Christian-No Religion	1.0	1.2	0.3	0.5
No Religion-Christian	8.2	5.4	7.5	5.5
No Religion- Non Christian	1.6	0.2	1.0	0.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of People	195	423	398	469

#### **4.6 Change in religious affiliation and attendance**

The preceding analysis indicates that the effects of apostasy, conversion and spiritualisation have had a marked impact on the composition of all the religious groups. It is also possible to examine how each of these processes affect weekly attendance at religious services. Table 4.5 shows average weekly attendance estimated for those participants in the AFFP survey who changed their religious affiliation between stages one and two. That the effect of conversion from one Christian group to another has the impact of increasing the level of a person's attendance. The one exception to this rule is the conversion from the Uniting/Presbyterian group to the Anglican group.

When a person retains the same religious affiliation over the ten year period, a process of lapsation occurs and attendance declines except among Catholics. A number of factors may explain why Catholics maintained the same level of attendance over the ten-year period. The first is that Sunday attendance is stressed as an important part of Catholic practice. A person who remains Catholic is more likely to maintain his/her level of practice. Also there may be a tendency for Catholics to marry a person of similar affiliation which would allow the maintenance of regular attendance on Sunday.

Table 4.5 Comparison of average weekly attendance level at religious services according to changes in religious affiliation, 1981-1991, AFFP study

Religious Change		Number Participating	Average Weekly Attendance 1981	Average Weekly Attendance 1991
1981	1991			
Catholic	Catholic	348	30.8	30.7
Catholic	Anglican	6	15.7	27.8
Anglican	Anglican	302	10.6	7.9
Anglican	Catholic	4	9.6	42.3
Anglican	Uniting/Presbyterian	15	7.7	14.8
Uniting/Presbyterian	Anglican	15	7.8	1.9
Uniting/Presbyterian	Uniting/Presbyterian	181	11.5	9.2
Total Catholic/ Anglican/ Uniting/Presbyterian	Other Christian	19	25.2	55.7
Other Christian	Total Catholic/ Anglican / Uniting/Presbyterian	39	13.6	21.0
Other Christian	Other Christian	85	47.8	39.2

Apostasy is likely to lead to non-attendance. This is certainly borne out by an examination of table 4.6 which shows that when a person moves from any of the Christian groups to No Religion they stop attending religious services, as expected. What is significant about this group is that their attendance in 1981 would be considered to be in the lower ranges

for each of the groups in question. This indicates that a person's attendance has already begun to decrease prior to the decision to move out of the religious group.

The movement from No Religion to Catholic and Uniting/Presbyterian affiliation leads to nominal levels of attendance. The movement from No Religion to Anglican and Other Christian appears to lead to periodic attendance. This may indicate that while a person receives an identity from belonging to a religious group this does not translate into the average weekly attendance pattern expected by the institution represented by that religious group. As such it may indicate that while the religious affiliation provides a religious identity for the person, his/her spiritual needs may not necessarily be met by attendance at religious ceremonies provided by that group.

Table 4.6 Comparison of average weekly attendance level at religious services according to changes in religious affiliation between Christian groups and No Religion group, 1981-1991, AFFP study

Religious Change		Number Participating	Average Weekly Attendance	Average Weekly Attendance
1981	1991		1981 %	1991 %
Catholic	No Religion	25	21.3	0.1
Anglican	No Religion	34	5.1	0.5
Uniting/Presbyterian	No Religion	30	8.8	0.1
Other Christian	No Religion	30	8.1	0.3
Non Christian	No Religion	10	0.1	0.2
No Religion	Catholic	16	1.3	3.4
No Religion	Anglican	48	0.5	6.7
No Religion	Uniting/Presbyterian	18	1.1	1.4
No Religion	Other Christian	11	8.6	32.5
No Religion	Non Christian	11	0.2	18.5

When the corresponding comparison is made for the shift from Non Christian groups to No Religion, there is little change in attendance, which is close to zero. However, when the movement from No Religion to Non Christian takes place, it leads to periodic attendance.

The movement from Christian groups to Non-Christian groups results in an increase in attendance as shown in table 4.7. Given the small numbers involved in the Anglican, Catholic and Uniting/Presbyterian groups, it is hard to say whether these changes would be normative for those changing from these groups to Non Christian groups. However, the examination of the Other Christian group would suggest that the movement results in slightly higher attendance or at least a transference of current attendance patterns from one group to another. This would suggest that conversion is more likely to occur among those who are already highly motivated towards regular attendance.

Table 4.7 Comparison of average weekly attendance level at religious services according to changes in religious affiliation between Christian groups and Non Christian religious group, 1981-1991, AFFP study

Religious Change		Number Participating	Average Weekly Attendance	Average Weekly Attendance
1981	1991		1981 %	1991 %
Catholic	Non Christian	5	18.8	25.4
Anglican	Non Christian	6	4.2	12.5
Uniting/Presbyterian	Non Christian	2	8.7	37.5
Other Christian	Non Christian	20	50.4	52.9

#### **4.7 Summary**

What is evident from the examination of these changes between religious groups is the significance of conversion, apostasy and spiritualisation in changing the levels of attendance. The reasons behind these different levels of attendance may be as social and cultural as they are spiritual. The process of conversion is observed to lead to similar or higher levels of attendance. To some extent this would indicate that there is a strong transference of attendance patterns from

one group to another and that a person may well be influenced by regular exposure to religious issues and thus previous modes of behaviour are enhanced in the new group. This is probably significant in that conversion appears to be more likely in older age groups. This would tend to suggest that issues of spirituality and religious identity become more important and lead to a greater level of attendance as a person grows older.

However, this pattern of greater attendance as a person ages appears to be confined to those who retain their religious identity or who convert from one religious group to another. The processes of apostasy and spiritualisation lead to different patterns of attendance. The apostasy movement as was noted earlier leads to a pattern of non-attendance. Conversely spiritualisation results in levels of attendance which would be considered nominal or periodic for the group which they join. The process of apostasy while more evident in the 18-24 age group is not confined to that group as initially thought. Movements in the 25-34 age group are mitigated by corresponding movements in the older age group towards affiliation with a religious group. As such it may be argued that the reasons for lower levels of attendance at younger ages may result from the effects of these two movements on younger people. The process of spiritualisation may also explain the lower levels of attendance among young people who retain their affiliation: that the movement is not away from religious belief but away from institutional expressions of that belief.

Thus it would appear that two major issues emerge in explaining the changing levels of attendance. The first is the effect of the processes of conversion, apostasy and spiritualisation on overall levels of attendance which can be clearly seen by an examination of the AAFP study in this chapter. The second is how attendance of those who retain their religious affiliation changes as a consequence of broader societal changes. Thus the subsequent chapters will concentrate on those who retain their religious identity in order to understand how some of the changes in the

wider society affect attendance patterns. This will also highlight the differences between males and females within the age groups adopted by the Mol study.



## 5. Patterns of religious attendance by age and sex

### 5.1 Introduction

It was observed by Greeley that almost all the decline in church attendance in the United States of America during the period from 1958 to 1986 was due to the declining attendance of Catholics while the level of attendance in Protestant churches remained virtually unchanged.<sup>67</sup> This chapter will seek to examine whether similar changes can also be observed within the religious attendance of Australia for the period between 1966 and 1993. The main aim of this comparison will be to determine whether the changes in attendance patterns within religious groups are due to generational, cross sectional or life course changes.

Since the aim is to examine changes in attendance patterns between 1966 and 1993, data from the Mol and ISSP surveys are used. These surveys are based on respondents 20 years and older and their age distributions are similar to those in the 1966 and 1991 Australian Censuses. The comparison of these surveys examines whether there were changes in the levels of attendance of males and females in the five Christian religious groups between 1966 and 1993.

In considering the change in attendance according to age, each of the Christian Groups, except the Orthodox/Oriental group<sup>68</sup>, has been examined by two methods. The first looks at the overall changes between cross-sectional age groups in the Mol survey and the ISSP. By using the religion questions asked in the Mol and ISSP surveys regarding the person's current affiliation and whether the person had grown up with a different affiliation, it is also possible to compare the weekly attendance of converts with that of those who retained their religious affiliation up to the time of the survey. The second approach seeks to observe the attendance patterns of the

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<sup>67</sup> Greeley, A.(1989) Religious Change in America, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, p55

18-34 age group in the 1981 AFFP survey over the subsequent ten-year period for those who retained their religious affiliation. These analyses will show the changes in attendance for each age group between 1966 and 1993 and also the change in attendance for specific cohorts which, as was already noted in Chapter Four, underwent a profound change between 1981 and 1991.

In analysing this data it is important to remember that the weekly attendance measure has been used by applying the methodology explained in Chapter Three. As this is a derived measure it is not possible to apply statistical tests of significance to these calculations. Thus where the measure is based on a small number of cases, these will be interpreted with caution.

## ***5.2 Differences in attendance by sex***

Both the Mol and ISSP surveys show that females are more likely than males to attend religious services weekly. This finding is not new and appears to have been a consistent pattern in each of the surveys examined during the time period. However, there has been a change in the relationship between the attendance levels of males and females over the time period.

Table 5.1 shows two distinct changes in attendance patterns. The Catholic and Orthodox groups both recorded marked declines in weekly attendance between 1966 and 1993. This decline was greater among females than males. The result is that in 1993 female attendance in these two groups was similar to that of males. The change in levels of attendance was similar for both males and females in the other three religious groups. There was a reduction in attendance in the Uniting/Presbyterian group, a slight increase in attendance in the Anglican group and a larger increase in the Other Christian group.

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<sup>68</sup> The Orthodox/Oriental group was excluded from this analysis as the sample size was too small in the ISSP and the AFFP surveys to compare attendance rates by age and sex.

Table 5.1 Comparison of weekly attendance by sex and religious group from the Mol, 1966 and ISSP, 1993 Surveys

Religious Group	Male			Female		
	% Attending Each Week 1966	% Attending Each Week 1993	Difference between 1966 and 1993	% Attending Each Week 1966	% Attending Each Week 1993	Difference between 1966 and 1993
Catholic	51.1 (n=311)	34.7 (n=236)	-16.4	59.9 (n=320)	36.3 (n=206)	-23.6
Anglican	8.9 (n=495)	9.4 (n=252)	0.5	14.7 (n=535)	17.8 (n=253)	3.1
Uniting /Presbyterian	20.5 (n=300)	15.7 (n=169)	-4.8	28.2 (n=318)	24.6 (n=166)	-3.6
Other Christian	34.4 (n=43)	41.4 (n=80)	7.0	44.1 (n=46)	50.8 (n=78)	6.7
Orthodox	25.6 (n=43)	14.1 (n=19)	-11.5	34.4 (n=35)	16.9 (n=16)	-17.5
All Christian Groups	23.7	15.6	-8.1	30.7	21.6	-9.1

While one can speculate about the causes of these changes, the movement in patterns of affiliation noted in Chapter Two may explain some of the differences in attendance observed in the Anglican, Uniting/Presbyterian and Other Christian religious groups. However, it is also possible that the combination of the Uniting/Presbyterian group in the 1970's might explain some of the decline in attendance among people upset by this change. The rise in the Pentecostal movement during the 1970's and 1980's might also explain the rise in levels of attendance in the Other Christian group.

The Orthodox and Catholic groups are also affected but there may be other factors present in these two religious groups. These two groups were augmented by migration from countries other than the United Kingdom from countries such as Greece, where the main religion is Orthodox, and Italy and the Philippines where Catholicism is the predominant religion. There

is a possibility that where attendance levels may have remained high when people from these countries first arrived their attendance may have declined as they became part of the wider community. This hypothesis will be examined in Chapter Six. However, it is also possible that declines especially in the Catholic group may be related to changes within the style of worship and this will be examined in the case study in Chapter Eight.

As shown in table 5.2, there is a distinct difference in 1966 between the level of attendance of those who have retained their religious affiliation from their childhood and those who have converted. Among Catholics those who have retained their religious affiliation have higher levels of attendance than those who have converted to Catholicism. There is also a greater percentage point difference between the attendance of males who retained their affiliation and those who converted than among females. This may suggest that in 1966 males who had converted to Catholicism may have done so for reasons other than those which motivated people to convert to other religious groups.

Table 5.2 shows that this distinctly lower level of attendance among male converts to the Catholic group is also observed in 1993. This indicates that a consistent factor is present which causes this lower level of attendance among male converts to Catholicism that is not present among males who have retained their Catholic identity. However, it can be seen that this pattern is the reverse of all the other religious groups where those who convert usually have a distinctly higher level of attendance than those who retain their affiliation. These conversions may have resulted from the situation where the Catholic Church used to adopt different arrangements for marriages between Catholics and non Catholics which did not permit them to be married in the Church but only in the sacristy. This may indicate that the reason for some of the male Catholics converting may be less related to issues of faith and more related to issues of accommodating the woman's wish to marry in the Church. The issue of marriages between people of different denominations will be examined more closely in Chapter Seven.

Table 5.2 Comparison of weekly attendance between those who retain affiliation with converts to religious group present in Mol, 1966 and the ISSP, 1993 surveys

Religious Group	Male			Female		
	% Attending Each Week		Difference between Retained and Convert	% Attending Each Week		Difference between Retained and Convert
	Retained Affiliation	Converted to Affiliation		Retained Affiliation	Converted to Affiliation	
1966						
Catholic	52.3 (n=289)	38.9 (n=22)	-13.4	60.2 (n=291)	56.8 (n=29)	-3.4
Anglican	8.7 (n=459)	11.9 (n=36)	3.2	14.2 (n=481)	19.4 (n=54)	5.2
Uniting/ Presbyterian	19.3 (n=263)	29.3 (n=37)	10.0	27.2 (n=276)	34.2 (n=42)	7.0
Other Christian	27.5 (n=25)	44.0 (n=18)	16.5	39.0 (n=34)	58.5 (n=12)	19.5
1993						
Catholic	35.7 (n=195)	25.7 (n=41)	-10.0	34.7 (n=181)	47.2 (n=25)	12.5
Anglican	8.5 (n=216)	16.5 (n=36)	8.0	15.4 (n=202)	33.1 (n=51)	17.7
Uniting/ Presbyterian	9.1 (n=86)	21.0 (n=83)	11.9	12.3 (n=70)	35.3 (n=96)	23.0
Other Christian	38.0 (n=38)	44.8 (n=42)	6.8	34.6 (n=13)	65.1 (n=35)	30.5

Female converts to the Catholic group had attendance rates that are marginally lower in 1993 than those of female converts in 1966. Catholic females who have retained their religious identity up to the point when the ISSP survey was conducted, show much lower levels of attendance in 1993 when compared to 1966. This would suggest that conversion among Catholic females still leads to similar levels of high attendance in 1993 as were seen among converts in 1966. However, the weekly attendance of Catholic females who have retained their Catholic religious affiliation is similar to that of Catholic males who have retained their affiliation.

It can be observed that the Anglican group, which was shown in Chapter Four to have the lowest levels of conversion, has the smallest percentage point difference in the average weekly attendance between those who have retained their religious affiliation and those who have converted. On the other hand, the Other Christian group, which was shown to have high levels of conversion, has the highest level of percentage point difference between those who have retained their religious affiliation and those who have converted. When the Uniting/Presbyterian group is examined it is found that the percentage point difference falls mid way between these other two religious groups. It would appear that in 1966 the more a religious group is influenced by levels of conversion the greater the difference in levels of attendance between those who have converted and those who have retained that religious identity from birth.

An examination of these three religious groups in table 5.2 also shows that there are some percentage point differences between males and females. However, these differences do not give a strong indication that conversion leads to higher levels of weekly attendance among female than males. What it does indicate is that in 1966 conversion had the same positive effect on weekly attendance for males and females belonging to these three religious groups.

When these observations made in 1966 are compared to 1993, conversion retains this same positive effect among those who belong to the Anglican, Uniting/Presbyterian and Other Christian groups. It can also be observed that the percentage point difference between female converts and those who retain their religious affiliation is still present in each of these religious groups. The difference remains much greater among the Other Christian group compared to the other two. However, it can also be observed that the percentage point difference between converts and those who retained their religious affiliation in 1993 is much greater than that seen in 1966. This is the result of two changes. First, those who retained their religious affiliation and belonged to the Uniting/Presbyterian group in 1993 had lower levels of attendance compared to those who took part in the 1966 survey. Second, those who converted to Anglicanism and took

part in the 1993 survey had higher levels of attendance than those who took part in the 1966 survey. These changes seem to suggest that conversion has a much greater influence in explaining high levels of attendance among females in 1993 than in 1966.

The same conclusion cannot be drawn from a comparison of male converts belonging to these three religious groups. It would appear that the converts to the Anglican group show higher levels of attendance in 1993 compared to those in the 1966 survey and the Uniting/Presbyterian group displays slightly lower levels of attendance. The levels of attendance among those who have converted to the Other Christian group are the same. Where changes have occurred it appears to be among the attendance levels of those who have retained their religious affiliation up to the point when the ISSP survey was conducted. Here it can be seen that the attendance level of those belonging to the Uniting/Presbyterian group is lower in 1993 among those who retained their religious affiliation when compared to those who took part in the 1966 survey. The attendance of Other Christians who have retained their affiliation is higher, while Anglicans show similar levels of attendance. Given the small changes that have occurred, the attendance patterns of males in the Anglican, Uniting/Presbyterian and Other Christian groups are similar in 1993 to those seen in 1966.

### ***5.3 Difference by age and sex***

These findings indicate that the Catholic group has been most affected by changing patterns of attendance. However, it is necessary to examine each of the Christian religious groupings to discover whether attendance patterns are affected by a person's age and sex. This is especially important in the consideration of whether attendance patterns are affected by life course, generational or cross sectional changes. If the patterns of attendance remain similar over time it is possible to consider that this is the result of life course events. However, if they show

distinctly different patterns of attendance then the changes may result from factors related to generational change. The third option is that a cross sectional change, such as Vatican II within the Catholic group, may have affected all generations at the same time.

### 5.3.1 Catholics

As shown in table 5.3, the attendance patterns of Catholics of both sexes was similar in 1966. Among males, there was a small increase in levels of attendance with age to age 59 before a marked decline in level of attendance in the 60+ age group. A similar pattern is present for females, with similar levels of attendance in the 20-39 age group, a slight increase in the 40-59 age group and a marked decline in attendance above 60 years of age.

Table 5.3 Percentage of Catholics who attend weekly by age and sex, Mol, 1966 and ISSP, 1993 surveys

Age Group	Male			Female		
	% Attending Each Week 1966	% Attending Each Week 1993	Difference between 1966 and 1993	% Attending Each Week 1966	% Attending Each Week 1993	Difference between 1966 and 1993
20-24 years	50.3 (n=42)	20.4 (n=14)	-29.9	60.1 (n=41)	16.7 (n=20)	-43.4
25-39 years	52.6 (n=113)	28.9 (n=71)	-23.7	59.8 (n=113)	24.0 (n=84)	-35.8
40-59 years	53.5 (n=112)	34.4 (n=93)	-19.1	63.5 (n=112)	48.5 (n=70)	-15.0
60+ Years	41.4 (n=42)	48.3 (n=53)	6.9	52.5 (n=42)	56.2 (n=29)	3.7

The 1993 ISSP results show that a greater percentage of males and females in the oldest age group attend a religious service weekly than was the case in 1966. Between 1966 and 1993, there was a greater decline in religious attendance for females than males under age 40. Females in the 20-24 and 25-39 age groups attended less frequently than males in the same age



group. The converse is true in the older age groups although males in the 60+ age group moved closer towards parity with females of the same age.

### 5.3.2 Anglicans

The comparison of Anglican attendance levels in 1966 and 1993 in table 5.4 also reveals some interesting facts. The percentage attending each week was the same for males in the 40-59 and 60+ age groups in both years. While there are higher levels of attendance in 1993 when compared to the 1966 survey, the change is uniform for both age groups. In the 20-24 and 25-39 age groups, there are lower levels of attendance in 1993 than in 1966. However, a uniform change of attendance is also present in these younger age groups. Thus a similar pattern is present in 1966 and 1993 although the levels of attendance among the younger age groups are lower than the older age groups in the 1993 survey.

Table 5.4 Percentage of Anglicans who attend weekly by age and sex, Mol 1966 and ISSP 1993 surveys

Age Group	Male			Female		
	% Attending Each Week 1966	% Attending Each Week 1993	Difference between 1966 and 1993	% Attending Each Week 1966	% Attending Each Week 1993	Difference between 1966 and 1993
20-24 years	13.2 (n=71)	9.1 (n=11)	-4.1	12.8 (n=59)	12.6 (n=16)	-0.2
25-39 years	7.6 (n=144)	4.9 (n=59)	-2.7	10.0 (n=146)	17.1 (n=68)	7.1
40-59 years	8.3 (n=194)	11.3 (n=97)	3.0	15.6 (n=193)	13.2 (n=89)	-2.4
60+ Years	8.3 (n=84)	11.0 (n=80)	2.7	19.3 (n=135)	25.2 (n=76)	5.9

An examination of the attendance levels of female Anglicans show little change in the 20-24 and 40-59 age groups. The 25-39 age group shows a higher level of attendance in 1993

compared to those who took part in the 1966 survey. This difference may be explained by converts to Anglicanism who formed a significant part of this age group and whose level of attendance was higher than those who had retained their affiliation. The level of attendance of females in the 60+ age group in 1993 is also higher than in 1966. This may suggest that better health may have enabled a larger proportion of older Anglicans to attend religious services on a regular basis.

Given that the patterns of attendance are broadly similar in 1966 and 1993 it is possible to conclude that the strength of the link between affiliation and attendance has been maintained. This link would suggest that attendance is likely to be higher among females than among males and that Anglicans in the older age groups are more likely to attend than those in the younger age groups. This would indicate that patterns of attendance in the Anglican group are more likely to be affected by life cycle events.

### 5.3.3 Uniting/Presbyterian

The attendance patterns of the Uniting/Presbyterian group in table 5.5 also shows little change between 1966 and 1993. There is a high rate of attendance in the 20-24 year age group but a decline in the 25-39 age group for males and females. This is then followed by higher levels of attendance in the 40-59 and 60+ age groups. The one exception is the lower level of attendance in the ISSP study among females in the 40-59 age group.

A comparison of the two time periods shows that where lower attendance occurs in 1993 compared to 1966 it is in the older age groups for both males and females. However, even given these lower levels of attendance a similar pattern of retention of the links between attendance and affiliation is maintained in both years. This would suggest two things. The first is that this group would be more influenced by any changes in levels of affiliation over this period. The second is

that where changes in affiliation did occur these may have flowed from the creation of the Uniting Church which may have led to lower levels of attendance among older members of the Uniting/Presbyterian group. This older age group may have found this institutional change in the life of the religious group more difficult than those in the younger age groups. This difficulty may have occurred due to change in place of worship or style of worship which accompanied such a transition in the life of this religious group.

Table 5.5 Percentage of Uniting/Presbyterians who attend weekly by age and sex, Mol 1966 and ISSP 1993 surveys

Age Group	Male			Female		
	% Attending Each Week 1966	% Attending Each Week 1993	Difference between 1966 and 1993	% Attending Each Week 1966	% Attending Each Week 1993	Difference between 1966 and 1993
20-24 years	19.9 (n=38)	26.0 (n=4)	6.1	32.4 (n=39)	32.7 (n=5)	0.3
25-39 years	7.6 (n=86)	10.4 (n=40)	2.8	21.8 (n=86)	26.3 (n=40)	4.5
40-59 years	21.6 (n=119)	15.2 (n=59)	-6.4	26.9 (n=120)	19.2 (n=72)	-7.0
60+ Years	23.9 (n=57)	19.0 (n=65)	-4.9	35.4 (n=73)	32.4 (n=46)	-3.0

It appears that the Uniting/Presbyterian group is affected by a combination of life cycle and generational factors. As in the Anglican group there is a tendency for people in older age groups to attend at higher levels than those in younger age groups. However, this seems to have been mitigated by institutional changes which have affected the Uniting/Presbyterian group. As shown earlier in this chapter, those who have retained their religious affiliation attend less often than those who have converted to this group. This distinction appears to be greatest in those

between the ages of 40 and 59. This appears to be the age group most affected by any changes to the institutional nature of this religious group.

### 5.3.4 Other Christians

The Other Christian group is a combination of different churches. They are combined together because of the similarities in the strong links that they maintained between affiliation and attendance. These different combinations may affect changes in levels of attendance over time. However, as this group also attracts large numbers of converts from other religious groups this may also help explain different levels of attendance. This group is also significantly smaller than the other three religious groups discussed in this section that resulted in much smaller sample sizes for each of the age groups. As a result the age groups were combined into two groups: those aged 20-39 and those aged 40+.

Table 5.6 Percentage of Other Christians who attend weekly by age and sex, Mol 1966 and ISSP 1993 surveys

Age Group	Male			Female		
	% Attending Each Week 1966	% Attending Each Week 1993	Difference between 1966 and 1993	% Attending Each Week 1966	% Attending Each Week 1993	Difference between 1966 and 1993
20-39 years	38.2 (n=15)	43.7 (n=24)	+5.5	39.0 (n=17)	46.4 (n=31)	+7.4
40 + years	32.4 (n=28)	40.6 (n=54)	+8.2	47.1 (n=29)	53.0 (n=45)	+5.9

Table 5.6 shows that the Other Christian group had slightly higher attendance patterns in 1993 in every age group when compared with similar age groups in 1966. When the 20-39 age group is examined, it can be observed that both males and females retained patterns of

attendance similar to each other. Thus while there was an increase in attendance over the period this did not lead to a significant difference between the attendance patterns of males and females in this age group.

However, there does appear to be a significant difference in the patterns of attendance of males and females aged over 40. This difference appears to be maintained in both periods even though males and females in this age group were attending at higher levels in 1993 compared to the same age group in 1966.

The higher levels of converts present in the 1993 survey, explains the higher levels of attendance in each age group when these are compared with the 1966 survey. This would indicate that religious conversion plays an important part in explaining the changes in attendance patterns of those who belong to this religious group. The influence of the Pentecostal movement might also explain part of the rise in the levels of attendance in this group.

#### ***5.4 Comparison of age effects on retention and conversion***

In examining the differences in patterns of attendance by religious group it becomes apparent that religious conversion can also have a significant effect. Whether a person has retained his religious affiliation at the point when the survey is conducted or whether he has converted to a religious group can influence his level of attendance. It is important, therefore, to discover whether particular age groups are more affected by conversion and whether these patterns are similar in 1966 and 1993.

Table 5.7 Comparison of weekly attendance by age and sex for those who retained religious affiliation and those who converted in Mol, 1966 and ISSP, 1993 Surveys

Age Group	Male			Female		
	% Attending Each Week Retention	% Attending Each Week Converts	Difference between Retained and Converts	% Attending Each Week Retention	% Attending Each Week Converts	Difference between Retained and Converts
1966						
20-39 years	23.8 (n=510)	32.5 (n=59)	8.7	29.0 (n=479)	32.5 (n=71)	3.5
40-59 years	24.0 (n=434)	19.6 (n=58)	-4.4	30.4 (n=416)	33.9 (n=62)	3.5
60+ Years	20.6 (n=189)	22.9 (n=23)	2.3	31.5 (n=263)	40.7 (n=29)	9.2
1993						
20-39 years	19.0 (n=175)	18.7 (n=56)	-0.3	21.7 (n=199)	30.5 (n=71)	8.8
40-59 years	20.7 (n=217)	27.3 (n=67)	6.6	26.7 (n=176)	29.8 (n=89)	3.1
60+ Years	22.9 (n=145)	32.5 (n=80)	7.1	34.2 (n=120)	41.7 (n=48)	7.5

An examination of the 1966 data shows that among those who have retained their religious affiliation at the time of the survey there is little difference in the level of attendance based on a person's age. The attendance levels of females are higher than those of males in each of the age groups. This would indicate that in 1966 age is not an important factor in explaining patterns of attendance among those who retain their religious affiliation. It would appear that attendance of those who retain their religious affiliation at this time was not affected by generational or life cycle events.

However, an examination of males who converted shows that those in the 20-39 year age group have significantly higher levels of attendance when compared to those who have retained their religious affiliation at the time of the 1966 survey. This appears to be the only age group

significantly affected by conversion. This suggests that a particular life cycle change occurs for males who convert in this age group that is not present in any of the other age groups.

Female converts in the each age group have higher levels of attendance than the retention group. The 60+ year age group shows higher levels of attendance among those who convert when compared to those who retain their affiliation. This indicates that females in the older age groups may be influenced by a combination of life cycle and generational effects. This suggests that two issues affect the attendance patterns of females who convert: that older women who have converted are likely to attend more often and that the age when they convert may affect the level of their attendance.

In 1993 there were some significant differences by age in the level of weekly attendance at religious services. The patterns of attendance are similar for males and females in each age group. They show that in each younger age group people who retain their religious affiliation are less likely to attend a religious service weekly. This change in pattern from 1966 indicates that generational factors play a more important part in explaining the differences in the levels of attendance of those who have retained their religious affiliation.

Attendance patterns of females who converted to a religious affiliation are broadly similar in 1993 to those recorded in the 1966 survey. It can be seen that the attendance of female converts is higher than that of male converts in each age group. The main difference is that female converts in the 60+ age group attend at higher levels in 1993 than the same age group in 1966. This difference supports the finding shown in the 1966 survey that women who convert to a religion and who are in the 60+ age group are more likely to attend a religious service on a weekly basis. The male pattern of attendance in 1993 among those who converted shows lower levels of attendance in the 20-39 age group and higher levels of attendance among the older age groups compared with the same age groups in 1966.

A comparison of the attendance levels in 1993 of those who retain their religious affiliation and those who convert shows a different pattern emerging for males and females. Among males it is only the 20-39 age group that shows some similarities between converts and those retaining their affiliation. For the older male age groups, converts show higher levels of attendance. However, among females it appears that there are higher levels of attendance for converts in every age group.

This comparison suggests that the process of conversion is similar in 1966 and 1993. Those who convert to a religion are likely to have higher levels of attendance than those who have always belonged to a religious group. The process of conversion also appears to result in higher levels of attendance among women than men. Lastly, the data shows that older women are likely to attend at higher levels than younger women.

However, there appears to have been a change in the attendance patterns of those who have retained their religious affiliation. The comparison of the 1966 and 1993 surveys suggests that there is a generational factor which is related to lower levels of attendance among those in the younger age groups. This would indicate that where a decline in attendance has occurred among religious groups it has occurred among those who retained their religious affiliation and more among younger persons than among older persons. The reasons for this decline in attendance among those who have retained their religious affiliation need to be examined more closely.

### ***5.5 Comparison of attendance patterns of those who retain their affiliation***

As has been shown the attendance levels of those who have retained their affiliation has undergone a period of change between 1966 and 1993. This appears to have occurred as a result of generational changes among younger age groups. An examination of the AFFP survey in table



5.8 confirms this observation with those in the youngest age group showing a significant lowering in their levels of attendance between 1981 and 1991. This decline is not as apparent in the older age groups. In fact in the age group who were 25-29 in 1981 there is a slight increase in levels of attendance in the following ten year period. It would also appear that in the 30-34 age group, level of attendance is sustained among females while there is a decline among.

Table 5.8 Comparison of weekly attendance level at religious services based on retention of religious affiliation by age in stage one and stage two, AFFP study

Sex	Stage 1	% 18-19 Years of Age	% 20-24 Years of Age	% 25-29 Years of Age	% 30-34 Years of Age
	Stage 2	28-29 Years of Age	30-34 Years of Age	35-39 years of Age	40-44 Years of Age
Males	1	26.7 (n=58)	18.1 (n=117)	21.2 (n=104)	17.1 (n=91)
	2	16.5 (n=58)	15.6 (n=117)	24.8 (n=104)	14.6 (n=91)
Females	1	23.2 (n=60)	21.6 (n=157)	23.9 (n=142)	23.3 (n=211)
	2	12.3 (n=60)	18.5 (n=157)	25.1 (n=142)	21.7 (n=211)

This would indicate that among the youngest age group males and females are affected by the same generational changes. However, in each of the older age groups the effects of this generational change are not as large and it appears that some life course events may slightly increase levels of attendance especially for females.

## 5.6 Summary

The initial comparison of religious groups showed that in 1993 there were lower levels of attendance of males and females belonging to the Catholic and Orthodox groups compared to the 1966 survey. The Uniting/Presbyterian group displayed slightly lower levels of attendance in

1993 compared to 1966. The Anglican group showed very small changes in levels of attendance and the Other Christian group showed higher levels of attendance in 1993 compared to 1966. Difference in levels of attendance are related to three factors: whether a person has changed religious affiliation, the age of the person at the time of the survey and the religious group to which a person belongs.

Whether a person has retained his/her affiliation up to the point of the survey or whether he/she has converted to a religious group is a significant factor in explaining different levels of attendance. The 1966 and 1993 surveys show that converts to the Anglican, Uniting/Presbyterian and Other Christian groups have higher levels of attendance than those who have always belonged to these affiliations. In both surveys for these three religious groups, the difference in levels of attendance between converts and those who retain their affiliation is higher among females than among males. It has also been shown that in 1966 and 1993 those belonging to the Other Christian group have the greatest difference in the level of attendance between those who convert and those who retain their religious affiliation while the Anglican group has the smallest difference. This indicates that conversion plays an important part in explaining the different levels of attendance in these three groups.

When the Catholic group is examined it was found that converts had lower levels of attendance in 1966 than those who retained their affiliation. In 1993 this was found to be true for males but not for females. This indicates that the process of conversion is different for those belonging to the Catholic group when compared to the Anglican, Uniting/Presbyterian and Other Christian groups.

A comparison of those who had retained their affiliation and those who had converted to a religious grouping by age showed that those who had converted maintained similar patterns of attendance in each age group in 1966 and 1993. The greatest level of change in levels of

attendance occurred among those who retained their affiliation, especially among those at younger ages who had a tendency to attend at lower levels.

A closer examination of a cohort of young people aged 18-19 in 1981 who had retained their affiliation in the AFFP study showed that they attended much less frequently in 1991. The analysis for those aged 20-34 in 1981 showed that their attendance levels had been maintained at similar levels in 1991. This suggests that in the period between 1981 and 1991 there had been a distinct change in the patterns of attendance of those in the 18-19 age group when aged over ten years. In subsequent chapters it will be necessary to examine the factors which may show a relationship to the lower levels of attendance in this age group.

## 6. The impact of immigration and mobility

### 6.1 Introduction

It is noted in chapter two that immigration has had a marked influence on the composition of religious affiliation in the period 1966-1996. The major shift is from a migration pattern dominated by people from the United Kingdom and Europe prior to 1971 to one where migrants from Asian countries make up a significant proportion. What this chapter will seek to highlight is how this change in immigration pattern may have affected the levels of weekly attendance. As has been noted by Mol in earlier works the level of attendance rose during periods of higher immigration to Australia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. While the circumstances for immigration in the 1966 to 1996 period might have been different it is important to trace how immigration changes the culture of a religious group.

Bouma<sup>69</sup> notes that there are two distinct issues that affect a migrant's religious affiliation and behaviour. These are:

1. Religion as a source of motivation, assistance and support provided to the migrant.
2. Religion aiding the individual migrant's settlement and identity formation in a new society.

Bouma<sup>70</sup> asserts that the shift experienced by international migrants, is more significant than other patterns of social change such as internal migration, a change of work or change in marital status. Hughes<sup>71</sup> adds that while many religious communities bring remarkable diversity to the religious landscape they share common experiences of settlement in Australia.

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<sup>69</sup> Bouma, (1997) 'Religion and the Migration Process' in Many Religions, All Australian: Religious Settlement, Identity and Cultural Diveristy, 53

<sup>70</sup> Bouma, (1997) 'Religion and Identity Formation in a Multicultural Society' in Many Religions, All Australian: Religious Settlement, Identity and Cultural Diveristy, 70

Gillman<sup>72</sup> also identifies that Australians have developed a particular form of religious culture which is largely tribal, non-institutional and based on living by a ‘golden rule’.

Given the importance that each of these researchers place on international migration it is important to examine the significance that a person’s place of birth may have on the level of religious attendance. The central premise that will be tested in this chapter is that patterns of behaviour such as religious attendance are not dependent on the migration of a person but can be identified with their attachment to a cultural group. Thus it is likely that the more a person identifies with a cultural group the more likely their behaviour will reflect the norms of that group. If that cultural group strongly values religious attendance this is likely to be reflected in patterns of higher attendance but if it does not value higher attendance it is likely to reflect lower levels of attendance.

In seeking to test this theory three separate but connected phenomena will be examined. The first will note the place of birth of a person and will examine differences in birthplace composition of religious groups between 1966 and 1991 observed in the Mol and ALSS studies. As both these studies used different criteria to examine a person’s place of birth it was decided that the best way of comparing the two studies was to divide the place of birth into three separate categories: those born in Australia, those born in English Speaking countries and those born in non-English speaking countries. This has the benefit of distinguishing any difference in patterns of weekly attendance between those from an English speaking and those from a non-English speaking background.

The second point identified is that some differences exist in the weekly attendance levels of those from different places of birth. These differences appeared to be more significant for migrants from a non-English speaking background. By comparing migrants by period of current

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<sup>71</sup>Hughes(1997) ‘Some Patterns in the Settlement of Religious Communities in Australiay’ in Many Religions, All Australian: Religious Settlement, Identity and Cultural Diveristy, 27

residence with those of non-migrants it was hoped that it would be possible to discover whether longer periods of residency led to attendance patterns of migrants becoming similar to those of non-migrants. This will seek to examine whether migrants become more immersed in the local culture their level of attendance becomes more affected by that culture.

The third issue linked with the process of immigration is whether the children of immigrants, the second-generation adopt similar patterns of attendance to the children of non-migrants. This seeks to find whether a second-generation effect is present in explaining the changes in religious attendance. For people from a non-English speaking background this effect only starts to emerge in the 1991 study and it is not possible to draw conclusions as to whether this was a phenomenon present in 1966. This is due to the fact that the children of immigrants in this period would have only entered into the 15-24 age group in significant numbers after 1981.

## ***6.2 The effects of place of birth and gender on level of attendance***

Table 6.1 shows that the patterns of attendance appear to differ depending upon a person's country of birth. Males who are born in English speaking countries have the lowest pattern of religious attendance and the level does not appear to have changed across the two periods measured. Males who are born in non-English speaking countries record the highest levels of religious attendance and the level also appears to remain the same in both periods of time. Where change has occurred, it is among those males born in Australia who have a lower level of religious attendance in 1991 than in 1966.

When the attendance levels of female migrants are examined it is possible to note that those born in non-English speaking countries maintain similar patterns. However, females who were born in Australia or in an English speaking country both indicate lower levels of religious attendance in 1991 than in 1966.

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<sup>72</sup> Gillman, (1988) Many Faiths, One Nation,48

Table 6.1 Comparison of weekly attendance levels between 1966 and 1991 based on place of birth

Year	% Weekly Attendance of		
	Born in Australia	Born in English Speaking Country Overseas	Born In Non-English Speaking Country Overseas
	Males		
1966	23.7 (n=440)	13.5 (n=85)	31.1 (n=158)
1991	16.3 (n=3001)	13.4 (n=459)	32.2 (n=803)
	Females		
1966	31.0 (n=462)	24.7 (n=98)	37.2 (n=129)
1991	20.9 (n=3492)	15.4 (n=499)	36.6 (n=842)

This poses the question as to what phenomena occurred in Australia and in English speaking countries that led to lower levels of religious attendance while the attendance levels of those who are born in non-English speaking countries remains unchanged. It would appear on face value that this is not related to arguments about assimilation as it would be assumed that those who arrive from English speaking countries would be more likely to adapt easily to local patterns of behaviour due to a similar culture and language. However, it appears that the reverse is true, that those born in Australia have actually adopted the lower levels of religious attendance displayed by those born in English speaking countries. This brings with it the understanding that patterns of lower level of attendance experienced in Australia mirrored those experienced in other parts of the English-speaking world and were influenced by similar experiences in those countries.

However, it appears that those born in non-English speaking countries were not influenced by these experiences of lower attendance. It is of interest to see whether this is a result

of differences in language or as a result of people maintaining their cultural identity in a new country. Although they have migrated from one country to another their continued high levels of religious attendance may be connected to their national identity. This in turn might indicate that their national identity and patterns of religious behaviour may be implicit parts of their religious identity.

It can also be observed that the period between 1966 and 1991 there were two distinct changes in the composition of those from non-English speaking backgrounds. The first, was the shift away from those of European countries to those arriving from Asian countries. Second, certain ethnic groups were more likely to establish particular churches based on religious and language groups. This can be particularly noticed among the Greek, Vietnamese, Korean, Croatian, Lebanese and Chinese communities. Other communities such as the Italian, Spanish, German and other European countries have seen a gradual decline in the provision of religious services for these particular communities.

#### **6.4 Second generation effect**

Table 6.2 Comparison of Weekly Attendance Levels by Place of Birth of Parents and Respondent in 1966 and 1991

Place of Birth of Both Parents	Year of Study	Place of Birth of Respondent	
		Born in Australia	Born Overseas
Overseas English Speaking Countries	1966	25.4 (n=40)	22.4 (n=293)
	1991	12.9 (n=128)	13.7 (n=874)
Overseas Non-English Speaking Countries	1966	-	33.1 (n=321)
	1991	22.6 (n=385)	35.5 (n=1588)



This issue of lower levels of attendance by younger people may indicate that while assimilation does not occur among those who are first generation migrants there may be a change in the attendance patterns of their children. An examination of table 6.2 indicates that change in the second generation is more significant in determining the patterns of attendance of children of parents from non-English speaking countries than those from English speaking countries. This would seem to indicate that the issue of the assimilation of patterns of behaviour related to religious attendance may be related to English as the person's language. While a person who is born overseas in a non-English speaking country maintains similar patterns of attendance in 1966 and 1991 there is a significantly lower level of attendance among those who are born in Australia. This may in part be related to the adoption of the English language by those children born in Australia which allows them to adapt more easily to the culture of the overall population and the prevalent attitudes towards religious attendance. However, among those from non-English speaking cultures who were born overseas it appears that their attendance pattern remains similar in both 1966 and 1991.

#### ***6.4 Time at current place of residence***

The place of birth does appear to play a significant part in determining the pattern of religious attendance of a person. However, what needs to be considered is whether the length of time a person has been living at their current place of residence affects the level of attendance. The longer people are resident in their current location the more likely they are to become associated with the local community and adopt patterns of behaviour which are prevalent in the place where they live. There are of course some difficulties in using such a measure. The first would be that those with longer periods of residence are likely to be older and as has already been seen older people are more likely to attend a religious service more frequently. The second would be that a higher proportion of migrants from non-English speaking countries would have

been resident for shorter periods of time than those from English speaking countries. This results largely from shifts in migration that took place between 1966 and 1996 which were noted in Chapter Two and show that a smaller proportion of migrants came from the United Kingdom and larger proportions came from other countries towards the end of this period. However, the usefulness of this measure cannot be overlooked in seeking to determine whether a person's religious attendance is modified by the length of time at current residence.

Table 6.3 Comparison of 1966 and 1991 attendance levels based on place of birth compared by length of time at current residence

Place of Birth	Year	Period Of Residence		
		Under 5 Years %	6-10 Years %	Above 10 Years %
Australia	1966	27.1 (n=223)	26.9 (n=145)	27.8 (n=533)
	1991	16.4 (n=3397)	18.2 (n=1549)	25.1 (n=1488)
English Speaking Countries	1966	20.0 (n=72)	8.2 (n=31)	23.4 (n=80)
	1991	14.2 (n=472)	14.5 (n=253)	14.8 (n=229)
Non-English Speaking Countries	1966	30.6 (n=120)	36.8 (n=79)	37.6 (n=83)
	1991	34.1 (n=1009)	34.0 (n=331)	36.6 (n=290)

When the length of current residence increases among those people born in Australia this had little effect on a person's attendance in 1966. However, in 1991, the shorter the period of residence the lower the level of attendance by the person. This may be due to those with a shorter period or residence being in the younger age groups but it may also indicate a change in the way people born in Australia associate with religious communities when they move.

For those born in English speaking countries with the exception of those who have been resident for periods of 6-10 years in 1966, probably due to small numbers within the sample group, the levels of religious attendance are similar regardless of period of residence. Similarly

in 1991 while levels of attendance are lower the change does not appear to be affected by the period of a person's current residence. Among those born in non-English speaking countries longer periods of residence might seem to lead to slightly higher attendance in both 1966 and 1991. It would appear that, where changes have occurred in patterns of attendance, they have been related to changes of behaviour among those born in English speaking countries including Australia, but as has been noted in Chapter Five this may be due to changes in the attendance patterns of younger people.

### **6.5 Summary**

This analysis indicates that the impact of immigration does have an influence on issues of cultural identity such as religious attendance.

Over the period between 1966 and 1991 there was an increasing level of congruity between the patterns of attendance of those born in Australia and those born in other English speaking countries. Both these groups of people have lower levels of attendance in 1991 compared to 1966. However, those born in non-English speaking countries appear to have maintained similar patterns of attendance in both periods. It appears that children who were born in Australia but whose parents were born in a non-English speaking country adopt levels of attendance that are closer to those of persons born in Australia or other English speaking countries.

A person's length of time at their present place of residence does not appear to have a significant impact on their level of attendance both in 1966 and 1991.

As a result of these findings it is possible to put forward the following hypothesis: That the greater the differences in culture that exist between the country of birth and the country of

residence the greater the likelihood that patterns of religious attendance will be maintained as a significant part of a person's religious identity and practice.

## 7. Marital status

### 7.1 Introduction

One of the most significant demographic changes to occur in the period between 1966 and 1996 was the increase in cohabitation associated with increasing age at marriage. This can be linked to the change to the Family Law Act in 1975 but also the emergence of de-facto relationships that started to occur in the 1970's. These changes can be observed in table 7.1, which shows the significant increase in the percentage of those who are never married and those who are divorced. There is a significant decrease in those who are married. What is hidden by this table is those who have been divorced and remarried and those in de-facto relationships.

Table 7.1 Comparison of marital status for those over age of 15 in 1966 and 1993

Marital Status	1966		1993	
	(in 000s)	%	(in 000s)	%
Never Married	2145.6	26.3	4171.1	30.2
Married	5170.7	63.4	7994.6	57.8
Married but Separated	162.4	2.0	-	-
Divorced	94.0	1.1	803.3	5.8
Widowed	585.3	7.2	861.2	6.2
Total	8158.0	100	13830.4	100

Source: ABS Marriages 1966 & 1993

Given that these changes in marital status have taken place it would be considered that there may be a corresponding relationship to changes in patterns of religious attendance. This can be attributed to two reasons. Most religious groups would believe that sexual relationships between men and women should occur within marriage and that they would discourage other forms of relationships outside of marriage such as de-facto relationships. Also they would consider that most relationships between men and women would be monogamous and lifelong. As a result there would be discouragements to couples to divorce or to remarry. The institution

may well also apply sanctions that would prevent people exhibiting such behaviours from participating fully in the life of the religious group. As a consequence these sanctions may well have an effect on a person's pattern of attendance based on their marital status.

However, against this background of religious institutions promoting the importance of marriage, greater proportions of young people remained unmarried for longer periods of time in 1996 when compared to 1966. Table 7.2 shows that a greater proportion of young women in the 20-24 and 25-29 age group delay marriage in 1996 when compared to women in the same group in 1966. There are also indications that a higher proportion of people remain never married in the 30-34, 35-39 and 40-44 age groups in 1996 when compared to the same age groups in 1966.

Table 7.2 Percentage never married by age and sex 1966 to 1996

Age Groups	MALES			
	1966	1976	1986	1996
15-19	98.7	98.9	99.5	99.9
20-24	70.0	66.7	83.7	90.9
25-29	29.3	25.5	45.3	61.4
30-34	16.2	13.0	22.0	34.3
35-39	12.7	9.5	12.4	20.9
40-44	10.6	8.7	9.0	13.5
45-49	9.5	8.8	7.9	9.2
	FEMALES			
	1966	1976	1986	1996
15-19	91.8	92.7	97.6	99.3
20-24	40.3	40.1	64.4	81.2
25-29	12.2	13.1	27.8	45.1
30-34	6.8	7.0	12.7	22.6
35-39	5.6	5.1	7.0	13.8
40-44	5.4	4.5	5.1	8.9
45-49	5.9	4.6	4.4	6.1

Source: ABS Marriages 1986 & 1996

When the median age at first marriage is examined in table 7.3 it can be seen that the longer periods of remaining unmarried have resulted in both males and females marrying at older

ages. This delay in marriage is of particular significance to this study of religious attendance, because of the longer period of time that a person might not have formal contact with a religious institution between leaving school and entering into a married relationship. This in itself may indicate a weakening in associations between attendance and religious affiliation. This would be more significant for those who attended schools affiliated to religious institutions. Second, there is a greater likelihood that those who are unmarried but in a relationship with a partner are living in a de-facto relationship.

Table 7.3 Median age at first marriage  
(years)

Sex	1966	1976	1986	1996
Males	23.5	23.6	25.6	27.6
Females	21.2	21.2	23.5	25.7

Source: ABS Marriages 1986 and 1996

What is of particular interest in this thesis is whether the change over time in patterns of attendance is affected by changes in marital status, This chapter will concentrate on three significant issues related to people's relationships. The first is the question of whether a person's marital status affects his/her pattern of religious attendance. The second is whether a person's change in marital status affects his/her pattern of religious attendance. The third is whether a partner's religious affiliation affects the person's pattern of religious attendance. These issues will be examined in order to test two hypotheses:

1. That marriage and religious attendance are mutually supportive of each other.
2. That partners from the same affiliation are more likely to attend religious services.

As can be seen in table 7.4 a greater proportion of those married in 1992 indicated that they lived at the same address as the person they were marrying. This is significantly different

when compared with similar data collected in 1976. This would indicate that a change in attitude towards cohabitation occurred between 1976 and 1992 which allowed it to become more widely accepted as a manner of entering into relationships prior to marriage.

Table 7.4 Percentage of currently married persons who cohabited prior to marriage (in percentages)

	Year of Marriage		
	1976	1986	1992
Cohabited prior to marriage	23.0	45.6	56.3
Did not cohabit prior to marriage	77.0	54.4	43.7

Source: ABS Marriages 1993

This pattern of cohabitation seemed to be highlighted by a higher proportion of people in younger age groups entering into de-facto relationships prior to marriage. Table 7.5 shows that a significant number of younger people in the 15-24 age group who were partnered were living in de-facto relationships. What is significant to this study is the level of co-habitation shown by young people affiliated to Anglican, Presbyterian, Catholic and Uniting religious groups. The fact that a greater proportion of the 15-24 age group are co-habiting when compared to the older age groups suggests a certain difference in patterns of behaviour from that which would be taught by each of these religious groups. This is especially significant when it is compared with those who have No Religion who have the highest levels of co-habitation among each of the age groups. Similarly, it is significant to notice that the Pentecostal, Islam and Orthodox religious groups have the lowest levels of de-facto relationships in the 15-24 age group. These differences may indicate not only the cultural differences which exist in the Islam and Orthodox groups but also the strong connection that the Pentecostal churches retain between affiliation and practice.



Table 7.5 Proportion of population aged 15-44 in couple relationships who were in de facto relationships in 1991  
(in percentages)

Religious Group	Age Groups		
	15-24	25-34	35-44
No Religion	58.0	22.1	11.4
Anglican	47.8	14.7	6.8
Presbyterian and Reformed	45.2	14.4	6.9
Salvation Army	38.1	11.9	6.4
Catholic	37.8	11.3	5.2
Uniting Church	37.6	9.3	4.3
Lutheran	36.8	11.9	5.7
Judaism	35.0	9.8	4.6
Baptist	26.8	7.5	3.8
Seventh Day Adventist	23.9	7.7	3.6
Buddhism	22.1	7.5	4.3
Churches of Christ	21.0	6.6	3.7
Hinduism	12.3	4.7	2.5
Pentecostal	10.7	3.0	1.7
Orthodox	9.0	4.0	2.1
Islam	4.9	2.9	1.8
Total Australia	41.3	13.3	6.4

Source: ABS, Social Trends 1994 p188

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 1994 Social Trends also showed in table 7.6 that people who are married to their partner are more likely to have the same religious identity as their partner than those living in a de-facto relationship. This would suggest that the sharing of affiliation may be a strong determining factor in how people form relationships with each other. As a consequence the pattern of a person's religious attendance might also be affected by the nature of their relationship.

Table 7.6 1991 Proportion of partners with same affiliation  
(in percentages)

Religious Group	Marital Status	
	Married	De Facto
Catholic	67.9	39.8
Anglican	65.3	47.9
Presbyterian and Reformed	45.9	19.5
Uniting Church	64.0	28.2
Orthodox	87.3	39.5
Baptist	66.7	19.3
Churches of Christ	73.1	25.6
Lutheran	59.4	19.8
Pentecostal	88.5	45.0
Salvation Army	58.8	13.2
Seventh Day Adventist	80.3	32.2
Total Australia	68.9	49.0

Source: ABS Social Trends 1994, p188

Lastly, it appears that there has been a change in the proportion of marriages conducted by religious celebrants. What can be seen is that while the majority of marriages in 1996 were still conducted by religious celebrants, a significant proportion were conducted by civil celebrants. Part of this may as a result of those seeking to be remarried after divorce not being allowed to marry according to Christian rites but it may also indicate a significant proportion of younger people choosing not to be married by religious celebrants.

Table 7.7 Percentage of marriages by ministers of religion and civil celebrants

	1966	1976	1986	1996
Ministers of Religion	89.2	71.1	59.5	53.2
Civil Celebrants	10.8	38.9	40.5	46.8

Source: ABS Marriages 1996

## 7.2 Marital status and changes in attendance between 1966 and 1993

A comparison of the attendance patterns of males in 1966 and 1993 by marital status suggests that a change has occurred in this period. In 1966 the attendance patterns of males by marital status were similar except for those who were widowed who had relatively lower levels of attendance. In 1993 the attendance levels were lower than those seen in 1966 except for those who were widowed. Also it can be seen that in 1993, a person's marital status has a more marked influence on their level of attendance. Those who are divorced or separated have markedly lower levels of attendance than those who are married. Those who have never married also have lower levels of attendance than those who are married or widowed. A man's marital status seems to be a more significant factor in determining whether his attendance at a religious service in 1993 than it was in 1966.

Table 7.8 Comparison of weekly attendance level based on marital status in 1966 and 1993

Marital Status	Males		Female	
	1966	1993	1966	1993
Never Married	24.4 (n=201)	11.6 (n=180)	37.5 (n=136)	22.2 (n=127)
Married	23.1 (n=878)	17.1 (n=896)	29.0 (n=866)	22.0 (n=771)
Divorced or Separated	28.2 (n=15)	7.8 (n=59)	16.4 (n=21)	19.2 (n=68)
Widowed	9.6 (n=28)	15.5 (n=25)	32.6 (n=125)	19.6 (n=127)

Among females, the data show that in 1966 widowed or never married women were more likely to attend a religious service than married women. Also in 1966 if a woman was divorced she was less likely to attend a religious service. A comparison with 1993 would suggest that marital status is much less likely to be a determining factor in predicting the attendance patterns

of women. It can also be seen that in 1993 the attendance levels of women are much lower than in 1966 with the exception of those who are divorced or separated, which is slightly higher.

Thus in addition to other influences which have led to lower levels of attendance in 1993 than in 1966, marital status is more likely to affect the level of male attendance than that of females in 1993. This leads us to consider whether a person's marital status actually determines the pattern of a person's religious attendance or whether it is a person's religious attendance which determines their marital status.

### ***7.3 The effects of changes in marital status on attendance***

The longitudinal nature of the AFFP data used made it possible to compare the attendance patterns of those who changed their marital status with those who did not. Table 7.9 shows that those who were married or never married in 1981 and had the same marital status in 1991 maintained similar levels of attendance in both periods, with married men having higher levels of attendance than men who had never married. Among females the reverse can be seen with the attendance of women who had never been married being a little higher in 1981 than it was for married women. In 1991, the levels of attendance of married women and women who had never been married were almost the same. This can also be seen by the group of men and women who move from being never married to married retaining very similar patterns of attendance. It appears that in this case it could be assumed that marriage has the effect of maintaining attendance patterns already established.

Table 7.9 Comparison of weekly attendance levels in 1981 and 1991 AFFP Study based on change in marital status of those belonging to Christian Groups

Marital Status 1981-1991	Male		Female		N	
	Stage 1 %	Stage 2 %	Stage 1 %	Stage 2 %	Males	Females
Never Married	16.8	18.7	28.1	24.6	80	61
Married	18.4	22.3	24.0	25.3	219	397
Never Married-Defacto	11.8	7.1	14.1	12.5	57	39
Never Married-Married	21.8	22.2	23.0	20.0	163	143
De facto-Married	1.9	15.7	2.1	0.2	19	14
Married-Post Marriage	23.6	1.1	15.7	19.6	26	61

However, it is significant to note that there are three groups where attendance declines or remains distinctly lower than among married and never married people. The first group, are those who are never married who enter into a de-facto relationship with a partner. Here it can be seen that the level of attendance is lower in 1981 when compared with the group who were never married for both periods. This would suggest that they already have a pattern of lower attendance prior to their decision to enter into a de-facto relationship. It is also observed that the attendance of males and females declines moderately for this group in the period between 1981 and 1991. This decline is greater among males than among females. This would indicate that where young people enter into a relationship of living together there is a small adverse effect on levels of attendance.

Among the group who move from a de-facto relationship to marriage it is observed that attendance of males increases to a level similar to that of males who moved from a state of never married to a de-facto relationship. However, it is seen that the attendance of the females remains very low. Part of the difficulty in coming to conclusions based on this group is its small size

within the total sample. Also those moving from a de-facto relationship to a married relationship retain relatively lower levels of attendance. What this suggests is that while de-facto relationships may act as a prelude to a future married relationship they do appear to break the connection between marriage and regular attendance at a religious service.

When the third group is examined there is a distinct difference in the attendance patterns of men and women who move from being married to being separated, divorced or widowed. Among males it is observed that there is a movement from attendance similar to that of all married people to patterns of very low attendance after they are separated, divorced or widowed. This would seem to indicate, as was mentioned earlier, that for men a separation from a lifelong partner also seems to separate them from regular attendance at a religious service. This may indicate a distinct characteristic of how males deal with marital separation that distances them from a religious institution as they seek to come to terms with that separation. However, among females it appears that a marital separation increases their attendance. The reasons for this are not clear. It would have been expected that marriage would increase the levels of attendance while marital separation would decrease attendance. While this may be due to the small nature of the sample it is an issue worthy of further research.

#### ***7.4 Partner's affiliation and patterns of attendance***

One of the observations that flows from the previous section is that the status of a person's relationship with a significant other can affect their level of attendance. When a person in that relationship has a different religious affiliation from his/her partner, this may also lower the level of religious attendance. Table 7.10 compares attendance in 1981 and 1991 based on the compatibility of a respondent's affiliation in 1981 with that of their partner in 1981 and 1991. This examines the changing patterns of attendance based on the similarity or difference in a

couple's religious affiliation and what effect a change in the partner's affiliation had on the level of attendance of the respondent.

What can be seen in table 7.10 is that among males and females who retained the same affiliation as their partner in 1981 and 1991 there is not much difference in attendance. When the group of males and females who had different patterns of affiliation in 1981 but where the partner's affiliation in 1991 was the same as the respondent's there are signs that this had the effect of increasing a respondent's level of attendance. This increase is greater among males than females but has the result of producing similar levels of attendance for both sexes.

Table 7.10 Weekly attendance levels of respondents in 1981 and 1991 based on a comparison of a respondent's religious affiliation in 1981 and its similarity with partner's religious affiliation in 1981 and 1991

	Attendance of Respondent				N
	Males		Females		
	1981	1991	1981	1991	
Religion of respondent in 1981 and 1991 and religion of partner in 1991 are all the same	25.8	27.6	32.2	33.0	256
Religion of respondent in both 1981 and 1991 is different from religion of partner in 1991	7.8	9.1	14.0	13.5	268
Religion of partner and respondent are the same in 1991 but respondent's religion different in 1981	9.6	29.8	23.8	30.5	
Religion of partner and respondent are different in 1991 but respondent's religion in 1981 was the same as partner's religion in 1991	21.5	12.4	24.5	24.6	
N	218		415		633

When this situation is reversed and the partner's religious affiliation in 1991 was similar to the respondent's affiliation in 1981 but different in 1991 the level of attendance among males drops to similar levels as those males who had different affiliations from their partners in 1981 and those males who had different affiliations than their partners in both periods. However, among females where the partner's affiliation in 1991 is something different from the respondent but was the same in 1981 this does not lower the attendance of the respondent. Also where females partner's affiliation differs from that of the respondents in both periods the level of attendance remains at similar low levels.

This comparison would indicate that a woman's pattern of attendance is not influenced by the religious affiliation of her partner. However, a man's pattern of attendance is influenced by the religious affiliation of his partner. Where the religious affiliation is the same there are indications that both men and women have very similar patterns of attendance. However, where religious affiliations are different men's attendance will be much lower. This again indicates that men's attendance is more influenced by the affiliation of their partner. It may also indicate that women have a greater influence in maintaining higher levels of attendance where affiliations of a partner are similar.

## **7.5 Summary**

There is a strong connection between a person's marital status and their pattern of religious attendance. It is clear that the levels of attendance are much lower among those who enter into de-facto relationships, among males and females who are divorced and remarried, and among those couples who maintain different patterns of affiliation.

This would suggest that three factors are at work. The first appears to be that males are more likely to stop attending when they are divorced or remarried. The second is that people who enter into de-facto relationships are more likely to be separated from a religious institution which



would consider marriage as the norm for relationships between males and females. Lastly, a difference in belief between partners leads to lower levels of attendance especially among males.

This allows a modification of the hypothesis that were put forward at the beginning of this chapter.

1. That marriage between partners with the same religious affiliation is likely to result in the maintenance of a person's religious attendance patterns.
2. That marriage between partners with different religious affiliations is likely to result in a decline of the person's religious attendance patterns.
3. Lower levels of religious attendance are more likely to occur with a person's decision to enter into a de-facto relationship.
4. Lower levels of male and female religious attendance are more likely to follow a relationship breakdown.

These hypotheses in turn would suggest that there is a strong nexus between a person's religious affiliation and their manner of forming relationships. Where either of these patterns experience a process of transition this will result in a change in the pattern of a person's religious attendance. Where two people who are in relationship share the same religious affiliation this is more likely to be reflected in higher levels of religious attendance. Where two people who are in relationship have different religious affiliations, this is likely to lead to lower levels of attendance. Also where a couple's marital status is different from that promoted by the religious group to which they belong this also is likely to lead to lower levels of attendance. As a result it can be concluded that in a period in which there have higher levels of divorce and de-facto relationships these may be significant contributing factors in explaining lower levels of religious attendance.

## **8. A case study of attendance levels and institutional changes to the Catholic Church in the Australian Capital Territory**

### ***8.1 Introduction***

The previous chapters have shown that the period between 1966 and 1996 was one of significant change in the patterns of religious attendance, particularly for the Catholic religious group. While it has been possible to highlight some of the demographic characteristics of these changing patterns, it is also important to note that this was a period in which changes occurred in the institutional characteristics of Sunday worship within the Catholic church. This study would not be complete without an examination of these changes.

This chapter discusses the changes to the celebration of Sunday liturgy that have taken place within the Catholic Church between 1966 and 1996. Some of these changes to the liturgy occurred as a result of the Second Vatican Council that was held between 1963 and 1965, but it would be wrong to conclude that changes had not been made to the liturgical celebration prior to the calling of the council as part of liturgical reform.

It is also relevant to examine how these changes affect the celebration of the Sunday liturgy in a case study of parishes within a particular region. This case study examines at what stages the attending population changed in relation to the overall Catholic population. In particular it will examine the changes in levels of attendance related to the number of masses

offered, number of priests available to celebrate masses and changes in the times of celebration.

The Australian Capital Territory was chosen for a number of reasons:

1. The availability of data within the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn archives
2. The ability to collate and compare data collected with that collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
3. The transformation of the region from a small city to a larger city.
4. The diverse mix of ethnic, social and cultural groups in the population.

## **8.2 Liturgical changes**

In the document, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* it was stated that in order to increase the vigour of the Christian life of the faithful, it was necessary:

“to adapt more closely to the needs of our age those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ ; to strengthen whatever can help to call all people into the Church’s fold.”<sup>73</sup>

It was in the light of this document that many of the other liturgical changes occurred.

Probably the most significant of these were:

1. The introduction of the vernacular into the liturgy
2. The introduction of changes to the liturgical calendar
3. The change to the architectural design of Churches
4. The introduction of acolyte, lector and special minister of the eucharist as non-clerical roles which could be undertaken by lay people.
5. The reception of communion in the hand.
6. The celebration of communion under both kinds.
7. The permission for priests to concelebrate mass.
8. The introduction of the vigil on the Saturday night prior to a Sunday celebration.

9. Revision of Sacramental rites.
10. The shortening the Eucharistic fast from three hours to one hour.
11. The celebration of the sign of peace allowing physical contact between people in Church.

Most of these changes occurred between 1966 and 1975 but were recognised as part of the sacramental life of the Church in the Code of Canon Law that was published in 1983. This would indicate that any changes to attendance patterns occurring as a result of institutional reform to the liturgy would be most likely to be reflected in the ten-year period from 1966 to 1976. This would mean that changes to attendance patterns subsequent to 1976 could not be directly linked to people's responses to institutional changes in the liturgical celebration on a Sunday.

### ***8.3 Changes in the celebration of Mass on Sundays***

An examination of table 8.1 shows that the percentage of those who are Catholic in the ACT population is larger than the national average. It can also be noted that over the thirty-year period those who are Catholic form a smaller percentage of the ACT community in 1996 than they did in 1966. Their representation in 1996 is much closer to the national average. The fall in the Catholic proportion may be due to lower proportions of Catholics migrating to the ACT in the period following 1966 or at least greater proportions of Catholics leaving rather than entering the territory when compared to the total population who migrated to the ACT. It may also indicate that some Catholics may have changed their affiliation away from the Catholic religious grouping during this time period.

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<sup>73</sup> Flannery(ed.) (1975) 'Sacrosanctum Concilium', in Vatican II, Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, §1, 1

Table 8.1 Catholic population in the Australian Capital Territory between 1966 and 1996

	1966	1976	1986	1996
Catholic	31295	61415	75021	88672
Total Population	96013	197623	249047	299243
Percentage Catholic in ACT	32.6%	31.1%	30.1%	29.6%
Percentage Catholic Australia	26.3%	25.7%	26.1%	27.0%

Source: The Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

In table 8.2 it is observed that while there was an initial increase in the total number of Sunday services between 1966 and 1976 to cater for the growing population, this did not continue into the later part of the period. In 1986 there was a significant decline in the number of masses offered while in 1996 this had increased slightly. The number of Catholics per mass celebrated increased substantially between 1976 and 1986 .

However, not only has the total Catholic population attending declined since 1976 but also the average number of those attending each Sunday service is smaller in 1996 than in 1966. Hence, if more services had been provided, there would have been smaller congregations at each of the services.

Table 8.2 Catholic population by masses in the Australian Capital Territory between 1966 and 1996

	1966	1976	1986	1996
Catholic Population	31295	61415	75021	88672
Masses	52	93	73	82
Catholic Population Per Mass	601.8	660.4	1028.7	1081.3
Attendance	16659	27265	18476	14536
Percentage Catholic Attendance	53.2%	44.3%	22.7%	16.3%
Average Number attending each mass	320	293	253	177

Source: The Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

What can also be seen is that the decline in attendance over the whole period appears to have happened in three stages. There was a moderate decline between 1966 and 1976, a more

dramatic decline between 1976 and 1986 then another moderate decline between 1986 and 1996. There are signs that since 1996 the level of attendance has remained about the same. When this pattern of decline in attendance is observed against the period of liturgical change following the Vatican Council it is possible that this may have led to some decline in levels of attendance during the 1966-1976 time period. However, it would be more difficult to extend a direct link between these changes and subsequent declines in attendance to the 1976-1986 time period. This would tend to indicate that the later changes in attendance might be due to other factors.

Thus if institutional factors played a part in the decline in levels of attendance it would be important to examine the period between 1976 and 1986 more closely. This can be seen not only through the evidence in this case study but also the information, which was provided in the longitudinal survey, the Australian Family Formation Project. This survey highlighted that two factors combined together to explain lower levels of attendance between 1981 and 1991. The first was the lower percentages of young people attending religious services. The second was that changes in marital status also led to a decline in attendance levels because those who were divorced and those who entered into de-facto relationships had much lower attendance rates.

This would tend to indicate that there were two substantially different periods of change that affected the levels of Church attendance. The first decline between 1966 and 1976 occurred at a time of great transition within the Catholic Church initiated by the Second Vatican Council. This also occurred in a period when people tended to question their individual allegiance to an institutional form of religion. This period can be seen to be highlighted by high levels of disaffiliation from institutional forms of religion and moderate declines in patterns of attendance. The period between 1976 and 1986 seems to be led by a transition in the patterns of relationship that individuals enter into and the way this affects their religious behaviour. This period was marked by more moderate levels of disaffiliation and greater levels of decline in patterns of attendance. This would tend to indicate that while the Second Vatican Council might have

highlighted a broadening of people’s questioning of religious beliefs, the second transition between 1976-1986 might highlight a divergence between the beliefs held by the institution and the beliefs of the individual.

Table 8.3 Change in distribution of masses in Canberra between 1966 and 1996

	Saturday Night Vigil	Early Morning 6am-8am	Mid Morning 8am-10am	Late Morning 10am-12noon	Sunday Evening	Total Masses
1966	0	13 25%	16 31%	11 21%	12 23%	52
1976	15 16%	5 5%	28 30%	23 25%	22 24%	93
1986	16 22%	2 3%	24 33%	20 27%	11 15%	73
1996	20 24%	0	27 33%	21 26%	14 17%	82

Source: The Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

Lastly, as shown in table 8.3 there was an institutional change away from services occurring exclusively on a Sunday to the possibility of attending the equivalent of a Sunday service on a Saturday night. This change in itself allowed the possibility of people attending at a time that extended over a greater portion of the weekend than exclusively on one day. While this change was enabled through a reflection within the Catholic tradition that was based on the Jewish custom of the celebration of the Sabbath extending from sunset on one day to the sunset on another it is not clear that this same mindset would be present within the Catholic population as a whole. What is evident is that with the provision of services on a Saturday night this would tend to change peoples attitudes to Sunday observance. As a result the observance of religious practice might be extended beyond the Sunday even if that was not the intention of the provision of the Saturday Night vigil masses. This weakening of links between Sunday observance and the

attendance at a Sunday service would need to be examined more closely to observe whether this would have changed the pattern of attendance.

#### ***8.4 Changes in the number of diocesan priests available to lead Sunday celebrations***

One of the areas which is often overlooked in the changes to the observance of Sunday liturgies is the availability of priests to celebrate the Sunday mass. What has been observed over the period subsequent to 1966 is a decline in vocations to the religious way of life. In observing these changes it is apparent that while there has been a rapid decline in those called to religious communities especially among women the same decline is not as apparent among diocesan clergy. While similar numbers of clergy are present in 1996 as were present in 1966, the average age of priests has risen from 46.5 years to 57.5 years. This ageing of the clergy is partially due to three factors, the lower levels of vocations of young people, a greater number of people entering religious life at later stages of life, and the ageing of those who entered in the 1960's, a period during which a significant number of these priests were ordained. This ageing process may explain part of the gap that exists between priests celebrating mass and the number of young people attending religious services. It might also indicate a change in the attitudes of young people towards the celebration of religious services. Thus fewer young people are willing to lead these services because they are not attending themselves.

What is apparent from table 8.4 is that while the levels of attendance might indicate that a smaller proportion of Catholics are attending Sunday services on a regular basis the number of priests available to lead those who do attend appears sufficient. This suggests that there is a nexus between the number of priests available to lead a religious service and the actual numbers of Catholics attending service. What can be seen in table 8.4 is that while the number of priests has remained similar over the period the number of Catholics attending religious services per



priest has also remained constant over that period except in 1976 when the number of Catholics attending services per priest was significantly higher. This may suggest that there is a close connection between the change in levels of attendance and the number of priests available to celebrate and lead services. Thus a decline in the number of priests able to lead Sunday worship may also be associated with a decline in the total numbers attending. This would suggest that there is a finite number of people whom a priest can lead within Sunday worship and still maintain a sense of closeness and involvement with the community. This brings with it two observations. First, religious attendance is reliant on the provision of priests available to lead services rather than the number of services provided. This would indicate that greater provision of services will not automatically lead to larger numbers of people attending. The second is that rises in levels of attendance may lead to increases in the number of people willing to offer to lead those services.

This could well indicate that the number of people who wish to become priests may be as valuable an indicator of those wishing to attend services as the actual numbers attending services. If there was an increase in vocations among Diocesan priests it would suggest that there is an active involvement and engagement of people with the Sunday celebration. This would not be surprising as a causal link between attendance at Sunday worship and the desire to lead that celebration would be expected. As a result this is one area over which local pastors do have an influence by providing liturgies that engage and encourage people to attend a Sunday service. However, the degree of influence will be mitigated by the fact that one priest only has the ability to care pastorally for a finite number of people regularly attending a Sunday service. While he may cater for the provision of the basic sacramental needs of all those who identify themselves as Catholic he is only able to provide a regular Sunday service for those with whom he has a regular relationship on a Sunday.

Table 8.4 Change in number of priests in Canberra between 1966 and 1996

	1966	1976	1986	1996
Parishes	10	18	24	20
Diocesan Priests	31	38	35	28
Masses	52	93	73	82
Catholic Population per priest	1009	1616	2143	3167
Mass Attending Population per priest	537	717	527	519
Number of Masses celebrated by each priest	1.7	2.4	2.1	2.9

Source: The Archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

There are also certain factors over which the priest would have no control. These would include the changing number of Catholics within a district and their varying characteristics. While these issues would affect the number attending they are not issues over which he would have direct influence. These issues would be affected by the provision and location of parishes in response to the number of Catholics living in an area and the number of people to whom the priest ministers.

## **8.5 Conclusions**

The case study mirrors the findings of the surveys that have been analysed as part of this thesis. It points to a marked decline in the level of attendance between 1966 and 1996 and that a large part of this decline occurred in the period between 1976 and 1986. Where the decline coincided with Second Vatican Council this may mirror peoples concerns with disaffection from institutionalised religion. However, the larger part of the decline in attendance seems to occur in a period in which these institutional changes may have had a more marginal impact on people's decisions to attend and issues of personal relationships assume a greater importance in influencing a person's attendance patterns.

It would also appear that there has been a change in the culture of attendance both in the provision and style of services and the importance placed on Sunday attendance. Thus Sunday is not the only day on which people would have been willing to attend a Church service and this may have changed people's attitudes towards regular attendance. Linked with the smaller number of priests available to celebrate Sunday services there may have been a similar decline in the number of people attending. This would seem to stress the important personal association between people participating in a service and the person leading the service. This might in itself make it imperative for priests to be allocated not solely on the demographic distribution of the Catholic population but also on the basis of the culture and needs of the congregation that he will serve. If a priest is to serve the people he also needs to understand the culture in which he leads worship and feels at home in that culture.

## 9. Conclusion

### ***9.1 The measurement of religious affiliation and weekly attendance***

One of the obvious issues in any study of religious affiliation and weekly religious attendance is the need to arrive at good definitions of the terms that are used. Thus in most common usage religious attendance would be defined as the attendance by a person at a formal place of worship on a particular day. This definition would identify religious attendance as that which conforms with the model put forward as acceptable by the religious institution to which a person belongs. This can cause difficulties when a person's definition of religious attendance may differ from that of the religious institution. It is important, therefore, when it comes to the conclusion of this study that these issues are addressed so that they may be used to refine the study of religious attendance in the future.

The first issue which was identified by Smith<sup>74</sup> is to determine what an institution means by a religious service and principal day of worship which may differ from what a person understands by referring to those same terms. This is no easy task as different religious groups would place different degrees of importance on the frequency and nature of such services. Within Christian churches it would be commonly assumed that Sunday would be considered to be the principal day of worship. However, it is clear also that the priorities placed by each Christian church on the celebration of services on a Sunday show that this importance can vary.

Within the Catholic Church there is a tendency to stress that the obligation to attend on Sundays and days of Holy Obligation is the expected norm for each Catholic. However, over the years there has been the development of the pastoral practice that this obligation can be mitigated due to issues of sickness, care of a sick relative, travel, work obligations and by permission of the

pastor. Also there has been a trend to the provision of vigil masses on a Saturday evening which have been counted as fulfilling a person's Sunday obligation.

Within the Anglican and Protestant traditions the stress on Sunday Obligation has been placed in a more biblical context but there is also a tendency to place stresses on particular services. Thus among some churches within this group there is a tendency to stress the principal solemnities of Christmas and Easter as being the principal signs of Christian faith. Among others within these traditions there is a tendency to stress regular attendance on each Sunday as a sign of common fellowship.

When Other Religions are encountered it can be seen that the degree of attendance can also depend on the level of stress that is placed on regular attendance by a religious group in general and by sections of a religious group in particular. Thus among Orthodox Jewish groups there would be a particular stress on regular Saturday attendance at Synagogue and by Orthodox Muslims the attendance at communal prayers on a Friday. Among less Orthodox members of these two groups there would be a tendency to stress the feasts such as 'Yom Kippur', 'Rosh Hashanah', 'Pesach' and 'Hannakah' as signs of faith for Jewish groups and 'eid al fitr' at the end of 'Ramadan' and seventy days later 'eid al adhah' for the followers of Islam. Among the Buddhist and Hindu faiths the stress is placed on personal devotions and practices. However, among the Buddhist community the feast of "Vesak" would have special significance. Among the Hindu faith there is no such single feast which would be considered the most important but several significant occasions are celebrated during the year such as 'Rama-navami', 'Kishna-janmastami', 'Raksha-bandhan' and 'Nava-Varsha'.

When the individual is asked what they mean by attending a religious service this may be as specific as the term used by the religious institution or it may be more general in character. As

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<sup>74</sup> Smith(1998), 'A Review of Church Attendance Measures' in American Sociological Review, Volume 63, February 131-136

a result it may be possible for people to say that they have attended a religious service during the last seven days when what they mean is that they attended a wedding, funeral or baptism of a family member or a friend. It may also mean that they attended a religious service on a day which was not considered the principal day of worship of the affiliation to which they belong. Lastly, it may also refer to alternatives to attendance at a formal place of worship either by watching a service on television or at a place where religious services would be conducted outside the normal constraints of a religious institution.

It is realised that this study has used a strict definition of religious attendance which is based on the Christian model of attendance, that a person of a Christian Affiliation will attend a formal place of worship to fulfil their Sunday Obligation. As with all models this is restrictive if it was to be used as a comparison with other religious groups and was part of the reason why an extensive study of non-Christian groups was not undertaken. If a broader measure of attendance was to be used it would probably be more appropriate to gain attendance figures on a particular feast day such as Christmas or Easter. Given that there is some evidence that patterns of attendance have changed, a measurement of attendance on principal feast days may give a better understanding and comparison between religious groups which stress different levels of institutional attendance. Thus while weekly attendance may be a measure of conformity to the level of attendance expected by an Christian institution, attendance at a principal feast may be a better sign for measurement of personal faith and association with a religious affiliation.

## ***9.2 Changes in patterns of religious attendance and affiliation***

It is realised that in the study of weekly attendance at religious services there are associated issues which relate to a person's affiliation history. As such it is necessary to see that the movement in charting changing patterns of attendance is not as simple as stating that a person

does or does not attend a religious service. What becomes evident is that there are at least six movements which can explain a person changing the level of attendance.

The Apostotic movement notes that people who move from a pattern of affiliation to non-affiliation no longer attend religious services. The one exception appears to be that they may on the rare occasion attend a religious service such as a funeral, wedding or baptism. However, it appears that the movement towards non-affiliation can be predicted by low levels of attendance prior to that decision being made.

The Spiritualisation Movement, however, sees that the reverse movement from No Religion to a religious group leads to patterns of nominal attendance. The fact that this movement was only identified within the longitudinal study conducted as part of the Australian Family Formation Project may suggest two things. The first is that this movement is a counter force to that shown by the Apostotic movement and it involves the return of people to a religious group who previously classified themselves as having no religion. Their return from a period of suspension of religious identity would see them adopt patterns of nominal attendance. The second is the movement of people to a religious group who have never belonged to a religious group and this may lead to nominal levels of attendance among those who have not been raised in a household where regular attendance is considered normative.

When issues of changing levels of attendance within religious groups are examined there is a movement towards lower levels of attendance, known as lapsation. Here people who retain their affiliation but view religion as less important in their lives are more likely to have lower levels of attendance. The contrasting movement which occurs among those who move from one religious affiliation to another, a process known as Conversion, sees mild levels of consolidation and most likely the transfer of attendance patterns from one religious group to another.

Finally, movements of attendance also appear to reflect issues which are not related directly to religious identity and are probably due to social, economic and demographic change.

Thus the group of respondents who had retained their religious affiliation for the whole of the survey period were isolated in order to examine changes. It is pertinent to note that this movement appear to be related to differences in the life cycle. Thus the partial lapsation of people in younger age groups appears to detect a movement from regular attendance to more periodic attendance. The corresponding movement notes that among people in older ages groups, particularly females there is tendency to higher levels of attendance.

The significance of these movements should not be overlooked and has been identified in other research by Kaldor , Bellamy, Powell, Castle and Hughes as newcomers, stayers, switchers in, switchers out and drifters<sup>75</sup> This study is significant to the extent that it identifies the proportional representation of each movements as present within each religious group. It is, however, evident that these groups may also maintain different patterns of attendance. This may also be linked with Hughes and Blomberry's work on patterns of faith which shows that different faith patterns result in different levels of attendance<sup>76</sup>. These are Conversionism, Devotionalism, Conventionalism and Prinicipalism. Also Currie, Gilbert and Horsley highlight five stages of institutional growth and decline; depression, activism, revival, deactivation and declension<sup>77</sup>. What seems apparent is that these give possible explanations about how religious movements affect both the level of affiliation of religious groups and the level of attendance. They concentrate on three points. The first examines the extent to which the worship style and the theological emphasis of a particular religious group can place an emphasis on regular attendance. Here it can be seen that if more emphasis is placed on the worship of the community then attendance will be higher compared to a religious group which emphasises the formation of

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<sup>75</sup> Kaldor, Bellamy, Powell, Hughes, and Castle, (1999),Build My Church: Trends and Possibilities for Australian Churches, Openbook Publishers, Adelaide, 50-58

<sup>76</sup> Hughes and Blomberry (1990), Patterns of Faith in Australian Churches, Christian Research Association, Hawthorn, Victoria, 11-26

<sup>77</sup> Currie, R., Gilbert, A. and Horsley, L.(1977),Churches and Chrchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles Since 1700, Clarendon Press, Oxford,44



people in religious values. Second, there is a tendency for religious groups which place greater emphasis on recruiting new affiliates also being affected by high levels of departure of old affiliates. This seems especially true of religious groups which are recently established. Third, those groups which rely on replacement levels of affiliates to come from the children of existing affiliates will experience decline in the long term as some of these children will not remain members of the religious group on reaching maturity if they do not recruit new affiliates.

### ***9.3 Issues of Christian religion***

It is clear that in examining the changing patterns of religious affiliation each religious group has been affected differently by these religious movements. As a result it is necessary to examine more closely what associations have changed between affiliation and attendance in each of these groups.

At first glance it would appear that the Catholic group has been the most affected by changing patterns of attendance among young people. In 1966 there was little distinction in the levels of attendance by age group and a greater distinction between attendance based on a person's sex. When the same age groups are examined in 1993 it appears that weekly attendance of people becomes progressively less with each younger age group. When this is examined in the light of the religious movements which have been highlighted it would appear that lapsation acts as the predominant force in explaining the declining attendance levels. While there are some signs that the Apostotic movement has an influence on the level of affiliation this may well have been balanced by the arrival of Catholic immigrants. Thus it would appear that the greatest effect of apostasy can be confined to the 1966 to 1986 time period. While there are signs that it still has some effect in the 1986 to 1996 time period this tends to be limited to the 15-24 age group. This would tend to suggest that the religious change which has most affected the Catholic group is

lapsation. While patterns of affiliation and attendance have in the past been strongly linked this is no longer the case. It would also appear that the primary reason behind this change is an age effect which has become stronger with each younger generation.

A corresponding examination of the Anglican, Uniting/Presbyterian and Other Christian groups shows that in 1966 and 1993 there are remarkably similar patterns of attendance for each of the groups. The Anglican group shows low levels of attendance in both periods. The Uniting/Presbyterian group shows moderate levels of attendance in both periods. The Other Christian group shows high levels of attendance in both periods, Where differences in levels of attendance occur these patterns seem to be similar to each other both in 1966 and 1993. At first appearance this would seem to confirm Bouma, Greeley and Hout's theory that levels of attendance are affected solely by life course changes, that at younger ages people may fall away from regular patterns of attendance but as they move into the family formation stage and stable employment these patterns of regular attendance return.

What is often ignored in such an analysis is that while the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups retain similar patterns of attendance over time they are more likely to be affected by changing patterns of affiliation. Thus it is significant that the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups both experienced strong levels of disaffiliation in the 1966 to 1986 period. Also similar to the Catholic group disaffiliation became isolated to the 15-24 age group in 1986-1996. Hence, the Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups have retained stable patterns of attendance for those who remain affiliated but there has been a significant level of movement away from these religious groups in the 15-24 age groups. This would suggest that these two groups have been affected by the apostotic movement but there are some signs particularly in the older people of the Uniting/Presbyterian group in 1986-96 that there is some growth in this affiliation.

At a time when the other religious groups were declining the Other Christian group experienced an increase in levels of affiliation. There were moderate levels of change in each age cohort between 1966 and 1976 but much greater rates of growth between 1976 and 1986 especially in the 15-24 and 25-34 age groups. It has been noted that these patterns of growth happened especially at times when the Uniting/Presbyterian group was experiencing a period of decline in affiliation. This may suggest that some of the growth was due to conversion between these two groups. This is significant when the decline in the Other Christian group in the 1986-1996 are paralleled with those levels of growth in the Uniting/Presbyterian group.

What is possible to conclude from these comparisons of different religious groups is that each has been affected by changing behaviour of people in the younger age groups. Among the Catholic group this has tended to see a process of lapsation among the younger age groups. Among the Anglican, Uniting/Presbyterian and Other Christian groups this has been more affected by patterns of apostasy and conversion between these groups. This would indicate that an age effect has been present in each of the religious groups but it has been experienced in different ways by each group. The long term effect, however, is the same that fewer young people are proportionally represented among those who regularly attend religious services conducted by each of these religious groups.

The paradox that is faced currently in the Australian context is that while Protestant Churches have high levels of attendance they do not have high levels of retention of affiliation. Conversely the Catholic Church retains high levels of affiliation and low rates of attendance. The fact that these differences exist indicate a profound shift in the religious culture in Australia especially among younger generations. Regele<sup>78</sup> would argue that the reasons behind these changes are periods of religious transition which are 80-90 years long. Here he would suggest the period between 1966 and 1996 is a period in which each successive generation seeks to stress

external issues of life and thus spiritual issues are considered less central. He would see 1966 to 2011 as the outward part of the cycle. This would be followed by an inward cycle which would see the return to the consideration of issues of spirituality being stressed. While this theory holds some appeal it is evident that this does not account for changes between religious groups and the fact that levels of attendance might grow in some religious groups while declining in others. While it may explain changes to particular religious groups when examined in isolation it does not appear to explain the dynamic nature of faith and belief.

However, it appears that the comment made by Mol may explain part of the decline in levels of attendance and affiliation:

*“If Individual thought and conscience begin to move centre stage, a religious organisation begins of necessity to be less cohesive, more divisive and pluriform. It may maintain all the trappings of the ancient theology but it has now opened its flank to an ideology in which individual autonomy is strong. And this means that institutional decision making has to compete more with individual opinion. Church going now becomes more optional”<sup>79</sup>*

He would argue further that a theology which stresses the personal salvation of the individual would act against the religious institution and carried to extreme would see that the function carried out by that institution as no longer being necessary. This theology of personal salvation would thus see the shift in religion investigations move from a study of the institution to the study of the individual. However, it is pertinent to note that in a recent series of articles in the Tablet, commenting on changes in religious affiliation and attendance in Europe, a Protestant theologian, Willame<sup>80</sup>, states that ‘*there is some Protestantising of Catholics going on, while Protestants tend to a vague agnosticism*’. This may indicate that a theology which stresses the importance of an individual may lead away from the ecclesial nature of the church that promotes

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<sup>78</sup> Regele, (1995), *Death of the Church*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 27-36

<sup>79</sup> Mol, (1985), *The Faith of Australians*, George, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 62

<sup>80</sup> Kerkhofs (1999) ‘Europe needs therapy’ in *The Tablet*, 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1016

that theology. In many ways the theory of a move towards personal autonomy may find its grounding within Protestant theology.

The effects of this theology of personal autonomy are commented on by Rolheiser. He notes that there is a growing dichotomy between institutional and personal religion. He identifies five areas where this separation has occurred: a divorce between religion and sexuality; spirituality and ecclesiology; private morality and social justice; the giving parent and the gifted child, and contemporary culture and Christian heritage<sup>81</sup>.

However, while this may explain the recent changes in attendance of those who come from Western European, Anglo-Celtic countries and the United States of America it does not seem to explain adequately the high levels of attendance of those immigrants who belong to Christian groups from South East Asia, Southern Europe and other parts of the world. This may indicate that those countries which have been less exposed to a Protestant theology are able to sustain stronger patterns of attendance and affiliation. The reasons behind this may well flow from the Catholic theology which would stress communal salvation and the common good of all believers. The fact that such a theology would lay stress on the precept that we are saved as a body of people and not as individuals would tend to stress the need for each person to be involved in building up the corporate body of the religious institution. This in turn would tend to stress the importance of attendance not for the individual's sake alone but for the good of the faith of all believers.

What is apparent is that it appears that both theologies need to be kept in balance with each other. When the importance of personal salvation is stressed there is a tendency to see the importance of a person's relationship with God preached to the exclusion of a relationship with the community. When the stress is placed on communal salvation there is a tendency to stress the importance of the corporate body to the exclusion of the individual's spiritual needs. It

would thus appear that Mol's initial insight into the importance of personal autonomy in an individual's life may be one of the key factors in explaining the decline in religious attendance among younger age groups. You do not need to attend a religious service in a formal place of worship on a given day if you can attend to that relationship on your own.

#### ***9.4 Issues of international migration and mobility***

When it was evident that the level of immigration had a distinct effect on the level of attendance that as far as possible it was necessary to isolate what demographic indicators might explain lower levels of attendance. Through this analysis that these appear to fall into through three broad groups. These are issues of cultural similarity, linguistic difference and region of birth. In addition it was felt that mobility should also be examined to see whether it had a distinct impact on the level of attendance.

It was possible from this study to see that the level of attendance was similar for people from Australia and English speaking countries. This is in contrast to those from non-English speaking countries who have higher levels of attendance. A person who comes from a Non-English background also has a higher level of attendance than one who come from an English speaking background. This would suggest that those migrants from cultures similar to Australia and who speak English are more likely to take on the attendance patterns of those who are Australian born. However, as Price<sup>82</sup> has suggested those from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds are more likely to sustain communities which support their ethnic identity.

It appears that these patterns of attendance are not changed as a result of mobility. Indeed when the whole population is examined in 1966 and 1991 it is possible to see that the level of attendance is only marginally higher for those who have lived in a place for over 10 years. Given

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<sup>81</sup> Rolheiser(1998) Seeking Spirituality, Hodder & Stroughton, London 31-37

that greater numbers of people who have shorter periods of residence in their current place it appears that this does not affect the level of overall attendance. In fact it appears once again that it is a generational factor with lower levels of attendance at younger ages which better explains the lower levels of attendance. This would indicate that when a person moves from one location to another they are most likely to sustain previous patterns of attendance. Thus the migration process of itself does not have an adverse effect on the levels of attendance.

What does appear to be significant is a second generation effect which notes a lower level of attendance among those who come from a Non-English speaking background who were born in Australia compared to those from a similar background but were born overseas. This may suggest that where the birthplace of a parent and a child differ there may be a likelihood that the child is more likely to adopt the resident cultural attitudes towards attendance at religious services in preference to the attitude of the parent. However, this theory cannot be conclusively proven by this research and would need to be examined further.

### ***9.5 Issues of changes in marital status***

What became clear from this study are the strong connections that exist between a person's marital status and their pattern of religious attendance. What stands out clearly are three factors which affect the level of attendance. The first indicates that marriages between people of similar affiliation leads to higher levels of attendance whereas marriages between people of different affiliations indicate lower levels of attendance. This would indicate that mixed marriages between peoples of different affiliations is a significant factor in lowering levels of attendance. The second is that relationships which occur prior to or after the first marriage between two people also indicate lower levels of attendance among those who are in de-facto

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<sup>82</sup> Price, (1991) Religion and Ancestry in Australia: Changes over the Generations: 1986, Australian Immigration Research Centre, Canberra 36-37

relationships and those who are divorced and remarried. Also, increasing number of marriages are performed by civil celebrants.

The study of these changes in patterns of attendance indicates an issue that seem worthy of further study. It would appear that where people form relationships show higher levels of attendance this occurs within the context of people with similar affiliation. This would indicate that the formation of relationships and the attendance of a religious attendance reaffirm the pattern of behaviour expected by a religious group. However, where the pattern of formation occurs outside of the context of people sharing similar beliefs or patterns of behaviour approved by the religious group this results in lower levels of attendance. What is of particular interest is the extent to which the religious group provides the context in which people establish that relationship and the degree of influence they have in maintaining the expected pattern of behaviour. It would appear that religious groups with high levels of attendance are more likely to maintain the expected pattern of behaviour while those which have lower levels of attendance are less likely to maintain those patterns of behaviour.

## ***9.6 Avenues for future research***

As with all areas of research it is quite easy to become distracted by unanswered questions and the wealth of data that is available to the researcher. When this project was engaged it sought to examine what might explain the changing levels of attendance over the period between 1966 and 1996. This is obviously a period of significant demographic and social change. It is against this backdrop that the study of religious attendance has sought to understand how these changes have affected the practice of religion. As such all religions have encountered and experienced a period of profound change not only in their institutional composition but also



in how they relate to their own members and the world as a whole. Given the speed of this change and the dramatic changes facing each successive generation each religious institution has struggled to understand the changing times in which it now lives. The changing patterns of religious attendance are but one sign that the religious activity of those who belong to religious groups has changed. This issue is not limited to Australia but it would appear that Australia is in a unique position to explore the global changes in the nature of religion.

The reason why Australia would appear to be in such a significant position in terms of such study as this one is partially due to the availability of Census material gathered on a regular and timely basis which includes information on religious affiliation. The fact that these data from earlier censuses have now also been computerised makes it possible to trace back important issues which in the past would not have been possible. It appears evident that the work initiated by Price<sup>83</sup> in trying to examine the ethnic composition and the retention of affiliation would be one significant work which needs to be continued. This could also be linked with the linguistic issues which were raised earlier and may identify more clearly the differences of changing patterns of affiliation based on residential, linguistic, cultural, racial and generational issues.

It is evident that a more complete study of changes in religious affiliation between censuses needs to be undertaken. While broad religious groups were used in analysing changes in cohort groups between censuses it was difficult to isolate whether these changes were due to migration or conversion. One way of arriving at the level of conversion for those born in Australian may be arrived at by comparing religious affiliation in each census period for this group by birthplace. This would allow for a closer examination of how the religious affiliation patterns of those who are born in Australia has changed over time.

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<sup>83</sup> Price, (1991) Religion and Ancestry in Australia: Changes over the Generations: 1986, Australian Immigration Research Centre, Canberra 36-37

Linked with this issue would be a better understanding of the review of the levels of affiliation of those arriving from different parts of the world and whether the levels of religious affiliation have changed in a similar manner to other Australians. This could be arrived at by determining the age and sex of the respondent by period of residence in Australia and religious affiliation. As part of such a study it appears that the composition of the No Religion group needs to be examined more closely. This would allow researchers to examine whether this group has a static demographic pattern or one which is more dynamic in its composition as was suggested by the data from the Australian Family Formation Project.

There are also signs that the Churches are taking the issue of religious change more seriously as they have sought through the National Church Life Survey, conducted among the Anglican and Protestant churches in 1991 and 1996, and in the Catholic Church Life Survey, conducted in 1996, to profile the age composition, practices and beliefs of their respective congregations. Such tools provide valuable insight into the changing nature of religion and how those who regularly participate in religious services are affected by these changes. However, it would also seem apparent that available Church records on life stage measures might also provide a useful measure in explaining the changing levels of religious activity within the community.

Lastly, while regular headcounts conducted by churches are useful for the institutions involved they make comparison between religious groups difficult due to when they are taken and who they include in the count. A possible solution to this issue would be for each religious group to conduct the level of attendance at major feasts. In the case of Christian churches this would be at Christmas or Easter. This may well give an understanding of religious practice which is more comparable between religions whereas the frequency of religious practice gives an understanding about the level of orthodoxy within a religious group.

However, some questions remain and these will need to be examined further. As Hughes and Blombery<sup>84</sup> pointed out, in an age of greater mobility there is likely to be a greater diversity of choices that a person is called upon to make. Religion is but one among many. Where it would have been considered central in the past it is now part of the milieu which underscores the personality and life of a person who may be influenced by different issues in life. What is clear is that profound changes have affected and are still affecting the lives of each generation. These changes have tended to be reflected more greatly among the younger generation who have been called upon to address these issues. It appears evident that a project which sought to record the personal religious histories of young people over time would be an especially useful instrument to measure religious change. What would seem to be apparent in such a study would be to isolate measures which determine issues of personal autonomy compared with life issues relating to commitment and the common good. In addition it would be extremely useful to undertake a mapping exercise which not only sought to measure locations of activities but also the competing interests which may occupy the time of younger people. If it is thought that mobility and association are primary issues behind changes in levels of attendance and religious activity then these would appear crucial to issues of religious organisation.

As with all projects these would be limited by time and money. However, it appears evident that much of the data to understanding changing patterns of affiliation and attendance are already available. What appears needed are the researchers and institutes to develop this research further.

### **9.7 Concluding remarks**

The period from 1966 to 1996 has seen a move away from institutions as places which invest people with religious meaning in their lives. This may be, as Mol suggests, a result of

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<sup>84</sup> Hughes and Blombery (1990) Patterns of Faith in Australian Churches, CRA, Melbourne 141

personal autonomy which has divorced people who consider religion as an important part of their lives from the institutions which have sought to encapsulate that religious meaning. This separation from religious institutions has resulted in religious meaning becoming a more solitary affair and has led to greater diversity of religious interest especially among younger people. This can be evidenced not only by the decline of religious attendance among the younger age groups but also the increasing level of books and other forms of media which seek to address spiritual issues. It seems that in the case of young people it is a search to find a religion which is authentic and which encapsulates their quest for meaning. Thus this period has been a time of great change as people seek to discover who it is they are called to be for themselves and for others. In such a search religious attendance becomes a less well-defined indicator of religious involvement and religious affiliation becomes a more useful tool.

As was stated earlier frequent religious attendance is a sign of orthodoxy and not necessarily a sign of spiritual growth. If religious organisations retain attendance as a sign of orthodoxy then it is vital that this search for spiritual meaning is not subsumed by the institutional needs of the religious organisation. Thus religious organisations should not act as collection points for those who may have a passing interest in spiritual issues but fellow travellers who seek to address the spiritual issues that people encounter in life.

The second point which was touched upon by Hughes and Blombery<sup>85</sup> noted that the geographical localities of where people shop, work, live, socialise and go to church are no longer necessarily the same. It appears that in such a change the nexus which once saw these activities linked closely within a community are now much looser and less likely to overlap each other. In Church activities the parish no longer forms the centre of a person's religious life and indeed their religious activities might be covered by different religious institutions within the same religious group. This means that whereas once it was the parish which provided the central

meeting point to engage all these activities a person might belong to a number of different religious groups or activities which seek to address their religious needs. This may in part explain the differences in levels of attendance recorded by headcounts and those captured by social science surveys.

As a result it is quite possible that pastoral models of church which focus solely on parish activity will not fulfil all of a person's spiritual and religious needs. Thus while a parish is geared to meet issues of managing life transition such as baptism, confirmation, marriage, sickness, and death they might deal with other issues of spiritual transition where issues of marriage and child rearing are deferred. It is clear that in some cases these tasks have been taken on by educational, social care and retreat centres which are designed to address these particular issues. It is also evident that many support groups seek to help people through specific spiritual issues related to trauma, addiction and poverty. This may be the result of better provision of counselling by government and non government organisations which offer a broader range of alternatives to help a person through these crises. Thus parishes are not the only institutions which provide help to those in need and it would appear that people may seek other institutions who can help them through issues of spirituality which can respond to their personal need.

It appears that the changing patterns of attendance and affiliation have been affected by a change in the behaviour of young people. Where a young person's attendance is lower this appears to be related to the lower level of the importance of religion in a person's life. This appears to have occurred for a number of reasons. Part of the change appears to be related to issues of relationships between young people. Contraception may have allowed young women to defer issues of marriage and child rearing to concentrate on higher levels of participation in further education and/or participation in the paid workforce. This deferment of commitment has tended to lead to the adoption among some young people of attitudes which do not see sexual

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<sup>85</sup> Hughes and Blombery (1990) Patterns of Faith in Australian Churches, CRA, Melbourne 141

relationships as being confined solely to marriage and this has led to the adoption of de-facto relationships as a valid form of cohabitation. This adoption of alternative forms of partnering is less likely to bring a young person into contact with a religious group which would not see these relationships as approved modes of behaviour. Thus there is a greater likelihood that where a young person enters into such a relationship their attendance is also likely to be lower. Change in marital patterns either due to divorce or by the death of a partner also appears to affect the levels of attendance of males and females. Among males this appears to result in lower levels of attendance. However, it is also possible that in older age groups women find their caring and nurturing roles are valued and this leads to the maintenance of regular attendance at religious services which support them in those roles.

These changes have been reflected in the different attendance patterns of each of the religious groups. Among Catholics this has seen an increasing level of lapsation among young people. The Anglican and Uniting/Presbyterian groups have seen maintenance of attendance patterns but an increasing level of apostasy among young people. The Other Christian group has shown that while they maintain high levels of attendance among young people, there is also a high level of turnover of those who are affiliated. This results in attendance levels not being maintained at high levels for long periods of time. It appears, therefore, that changes in attendance become much more sensitive to the religious issues confronting young people. While those in older age groups are prepared to retain attendance patterns for the whole of their life the same does not appear true of younger age groups.

However, it does appear that many young people still retain an affiliation to a religious group but do not attend on a regular basis. This change in behaviour has caused religious groups to question how they may better relate to issues affecting young people. The central question is how does a religious group address issues of faith in the context of changing patterns of relationships. While religious groups are well able to nurture marriages and children it is less

clear how they will be affected by a situation where an increasing number of people are partnered outside of or prior to marriage and may also be childless. Parallel to this question is the question of how religious groups sustain their communities when they increasingly rely on those in the older age groups to maintain congregations. In this light the study of lower levels of attendance cannot be viewed simply as a life cycle change but it does represent a fundamental shift in how people enter into relationships with each other and how those relationships are sustained over their lives. Thus Churches cannot just ride out the storm in the hope that one day all will be well and that young people will return to the pews. There is a need to examine how people entering into these relationships relate to the churches and how they are able to sustain their spiritual lives. The churches in turn need to examine how their teaching is presented in a way which is not seen as imposing a moral code upon others but is able to nurture relationships which are faithful, life giving and open to the nurture of children.

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