



Archived at the Flinders Academic Commons:

<http://dspace.flinders.edu.au/dspace/>

This is the authors' version of a book chapter published in *Religion, Spirituality & The Social Sciences*. The original publication is available:

<http://www.policypress.co.uk/>

ISBN: 9781847420411

Please cite this chapter as:

Newman L (2008), Demographic fertility research: a question of disciplinary beliefs and methods, in "Religion, Spirituality & The Social Sciences: Challenging Marginalisation", The Policy Press, Bristol UK, Editors: Basia Spalek, Alia Imtoul

Copyright (2018) The Policy Press. All rights reserved.

Please note that any alterations made during the publishing process may not appear in this version.

THIS IS THE AUTHOR PRE-PRINT VERSION OF

Newman L (2008) 'Demographic fertility research: a question of disciplinary beliefs and methods', in B Spalek & A Imtoul (eds) *Religion, Spirituality & The Social Sciences*, The Policy Press, Bristol UK: 93-106.

“Demographic Fertility Research: A Question of Disciplinary Beliefs and Methods

Lareen Newman, BA(Hons), PhD

Senior Research Fellow, Flinders University, South Australia

lareen.newman@flinders.edu.au

Introduction

This chapter explores the changing place of religion as a variable of interest within demographic research on fertility and family size in Australia. Fertility rates are of social, political and academic interest because of the implications for future social and economic trends. Currently each woman in Australia is having, on average, fewer than two children and each nominal couple is not replacing itself. At this rate, and without considerably higher immigration, the Australian population is likely to decrease in size over the next 50 years, leading to an undesirably high ratio of non-working to working population (McDonald & Kippen 1999; United Nations Secretariat 2000). Since about 2000 researchers and politicians have therefore increased their interest in better understanding influences on fertility behaviour, in particular to avoid “fertility gaps” where people would have additional children under different circumstances. A particular focus has been on economic and work-based constraints, perhaps as these are deemed most amenable to government policy. Less attention has been paid to social factors, including those which could be influenced through religious affiliation or contact with faith communities, such as attitudes towards different family sizes or social support for parenting.

Religion in demography

In investigating factors associated with population-level fertility change, and differences among areas and groups, religion was once “at the forefront” of demographic research (McQuillan 2004:25). Denomination is the variable traditionally included on demographic surveys, although religiosity may also be measured (as frequency of attendance at services or activities). Average family size has fluctuated over time in Australia, but a general decline commenced around the 1870s mirroring trends in Northern and Western Europe (Day 1965). There have also been obvious denominational differences, with Australian Census data from 1911 and 1921 suggesting that the first to begin limiting family size were women born in England and Wales, who were mostly of the Church of England, Methodist or Presbyterian churches (Ruzicka & Caldwell 1982:214). In contrast, Roman Catholic women who had come mainly from Ireland, and Lutherans from Germany, limited their family size later (ibid). The most rapid fertility decline in Australia, from 1911 to 1966, occurred among non-Catholics (Borrie 1975:53). Historical variation in family size was long dominated by the difference between Catholics and non-Catholic Christians (Borrie 1975). Catholics not only had larger average family sizes but also higher proportions with five or more children (Day 1965:158). However, from the mid-1970s these differences began to disappear as Catholic fertility declined towards the level of non-Catholics. The difference has continued to decline to be insignificant at the aggregate level (Hugo 2004:24), and by the 1996 Census there was little obvious difference to research. The fertility of major non-Christian groups (eg Muslim, Buddhist) has not become a major research focus, perhaps because these groups each represent only a few per cent of the population, although they do have interesting fertility behaviour. Data standardised by age and marital status, for example, show that Islamic women recorded the highest fertility in Australia in 1996, 37 per cent above that for all women (Carmichael and McDonald 2003:62).

The influence of the secularisation paradigm

The “loss of the difference” in the fertility of mainstream Christian groups appears to have coincided with a trend in Australian demography, from the 1980s on, towards a greater research focus not on the **issue** of fertility (which could have continued interest in group *differences*) but on the “**problem**” of fertility *decline* and increasing *childlessness*. Considering that the secularisation paradigm was also rising in popularity over this period, I suggest that this further discouraged demographic interest in the supposed “disappearing issue” of religion, although some general quantitative analysis which

touched on religion did occur (eg Meyer 1999). Whilst economic theories explain fertility change and decline through the impact of having children on current expenditure and capital investment, other theories give more weight to cultural change (Lesthaeghe & Willems 1999). The latter is particularly associated with increasing secularisation and postmodernisation, which are in turn (and most importantly for this discussion) associated with the increased questioning of meta-narratives and traditional authority, growing distrust and rejection of organized religious influences, and the rejection of social control on individual lifestyle (Inglehart 1977; Lesthaeghe 1998). Lesthaeghe (1977) explains the cultural changes associated with declining fertility as changes in thinking and lifestyle, from “traditional” to “postmodern” orientations. Most importantly, his analysis of one hundred years of Belgian data, from 1870 to 1970, showed secularisation (measured as lack of church attendance) to be the strongest predictor of fertility decline through its negative influence on traditional moral and religious barriers, which reduced the proportion of the population marrying and increased age at marriage (Lesthaeghe 1977:230-231).

The declining demographic interest in religion may have been further encouraged by observation of increasing individualism and rationalism, which in turn may account for an increasing research focus on “rational decision-making” about family formation. This has been associated with the more conscious planning of education and career, and consideration of the financial costs of childrearing. This increasing focus on the “rational” possibly led to assumptions that the “irrational” (including aspects of religion) was no longer influential on fertility behaviour. Bouma (2006:xiii) points out that, after all, the dominant sociological view of the last half of the twentieth century was that religion and the state were supposed to wither away as modern, secular rationalism rendered the religious, the mystical and the spiritual unnecessary. Drawing on Broom (1995), the argument could be made that demographers either individually or collectively operated on assumptions and methods which became more “masculine” (increasingly focussing on the rational, the economic, the quantifiable, the public, and the work-based), whilst underplaying the significance of the “feminine” (the irrational, the spiritual and emotional, the social, the qualitative, the private and the family-based). This can be supported by the fact that, until very recently, feminism had also more or less passed demography by (Presser & Sen 2000).

Religion and secularisation in Census data

Increasing secularisation in Australia appears to be supported by Census data, as shown in Table 1. The proportion recording a denomination decreased from just under 90 per cent up to 1971, to 73 per cent by 2001, while the proportion reporting “No Religion” rose. Bouma (2006) explains, however, that a decrease in the proportion reporting a denomination and the assumed causal influence from secularisation should not be taken to mean that religion is becoming less influential in Australian life or that Australians are now irreligious, antireligious or lacking in spirituality. Rather, he sees such changes as a reflection that, in secular societies, religion and spirituality are becoming more detached from the monopolistic control of formal organisations, so that people may still “believe but not belong”. He also sees such change reflected in the declining popularity of traditional religious groups and the rising popularity of newer groups (Bouma 2002). In light of this it is interesting to note that the proportion of Australians reporting ‘No Religion’ fell slightly between 1996 and 2001 (see Table 1), while 71 per cent of Australians in the prime childbearing age groups (20-39) in 2001 still recorded a religious affiliation (Weston et al 2004).

Table 1: Religious response in the Australian Census, 1947 to 2001

Source: Inglis 1965; Bouma 1997, 2002; ABS 2004, ABS unpublished

	1947	1961	1971	1976	1986	1996	2001
A denomination	+/- 90.0	+/- 90.0	+/- 90.0	80.0	n.a.	n.a.	73.0
‘No Religion’	0.3	0.4	6.7	n.a.	12.7	16.5	15.5
Inadequately described	0.2	0.2	0.2	n.a.	0.4	0.3	1.9
Not stated	10.9	10.5	6.1	n.a.	11.9	8.7	9.8

Note: Changes since 1961 in the proportion ‘Not stated’ and ‘Inadequately described’ do not fully account for changes in ‘No Religion’, suggesting that most increase in ‘No Religion’ between 1971 and 1996 came at the expense of stated groups. The main transfer was out of Anglican and MCPRU groups (Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, Reformed and Uniting), while the increase in ‘No Religion’ between 1947 and 1971 was mainly due to a wording change which allowed ‘No Religion’ to be recorded for the first time (Bouma 2006:54).

“Rediscovering” religious influence through qualitative research

This section explains how qualitative research found that, despite the assumed loss of religious influence on fertility and family size in Australia, aspects of religion are still influential. The research is from the author’s PhD which had the driving question of “What influences family size in Australia today?” (Newman 2006). It used Census analysis to show socioeconomic patterns of average family size in metropolitan Adelaide, and in-depth interviews to provide a deeper understanding of these patterns. In 2003-04 the author conducted semi-structured interviews with 38 mothers and 24 fathers who had between one and seven children, including at least one child aged between one to six years. Parents were recruited mainly through publicly-run kindergartens. Questions related to individuals’ perceptions of influences on family size, while a self-completed questionnaire provided demographic details for each family (for further detail about methodology see Newman & Hugo 2006).

Based on expectations from the theoretical literature it was surprising during the early stages of interviewing to find parents frequently saying that the size of family they had grown up in had influenced their feelings about the family size they were likely to have themselves. Two-thirds of mothers and almost half the fathers said this. For a considerable proportion it also seemed linked with the presence or absence of a religious upbringing:

I suppose being one of three [children] I just assumed [I’d have about that number]... Also, I’ve grown up in a Christian family and so we’d always had the church family, and there were always a lot of people in our home... You see a lot of large families in churches. I’m sure it’s not the same ratio as in society in general, and part of that might be the teaching in the Bible about the value of human life and that a child is a gift from the Lord... things like ‘God said to Adam and Eve be fruitful and multiply’... But we can’t separate it because both of us were brought up in a Christian family... It’s certainly not because we’re Christians we’ll have more children, and I know lots of people in the church who don’t [have children]. But there must be something there because I think there seem to be more bigger families within the church.

(Mother, age 34, upper-middle status area, 4 children – aged 1, 4, 7 and 9, always Uniting Church, attendance weekly in childhood and now)

Current or intended family size also appeared larger for those raised in Catholic families or identifying with newer religious groups. For some, the number of aunts, uncles and cousins that they

had had also influenced the range of family size they would consider. Sometimes religiously-influenced social factors played a part in this:

I thought I would never have children because I didn't expect to get married... at school I was very tall and not overly popular... until 18 when I met my husband... He always wanted to get married and have children. That's important to him and his family... We used to go round there for Sunday lunches and it was always really alive, full of energy, and it made me realise that having a big family would be really nice. Every weekend there was some kind of family show with big groups of people... [My family] didn't really do Sunday lunches, we weren't religious. [So] we always wanted to have a big family, four children, influenced by his family.

(Mother, age 31, highest status area, 1 child – aged 1,
no religion in childhood, now Lutheran with high attendance/importance)

As the size of family and the denomination developed into a theme of influence, and this was contrasted with interviews that did not mention them, the issues were explored further in subsequent interviews. The apparent relationship was also tested using quantitative data from the questionnaire. Based on a vague curiosity to explore the “old” religious influence on family size I had included some closed questions on religion on a previous survey of Adelaide couples thinking of starting a family. Therefore on the parent questionnaire I had repeated “current religious denomination”, “frequency of attendance” and “degree of importance of religion/spirituality in influencing your life”. Also following findings from the small survey, and a hunch that childhood religion might also be influential, I asked the parents their childhood denomination and attendance. The analysis of responses highlighted some interesting links between religion and family size. For example, mothers who had been “raised in a particular religion” and had attended religious services weekly in childhood were more likely to already have three or more children (or to have one or two but believe they would have three or more), compared with mothers who believed they were unlikely to have more than one or two children; they were also more likely to currently see religion or faith as important in guiding their lives. Tests showed that the difference in childhood religious attendance for those with larger and smaller families was statistically significant.

Cross-checking with Census data

Based on these findings, I decided to see if any relationships existed between family size and religion for the whole state of South Australia. The qualitative data had suggested exploring average family size for *all* Christian denominations, not just traditional mainstream groups. Another interview theme had been that some mothers with a university degree (and often also a professional

occupation) had gone against the generally accepted demographic trend that “family size declines as education level rises”, as they already had four or five children. I hypothesised that their religious background somehow negated this traditional relationship. I ordered customised 1996 Census data to analyse family size and mother’s religious denomination and level of education, choosing data for women aged 40-44 who could be considered to have almost finished childbearing. (The latest data available was for 1996, as the “number of children ever born” question is asked only every 10 years).

Detailed analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data on religion, education and fertility from the project can be found in Newman and Hugo (2006). For this chapter it suffices to say that the Census data showed particular denominations *within* the Christian grouping to have average family sizes well above the norm of 2.01 children (metropolitan Adelaide) and 2.33 (country South Australia), as shown in Table 2. Women in New Protestant/New Christian groups had the largest families (2.47 children in the city and 2.78 in the country), while city women with “No Religion” had the smallest, with 1.85 children.

Table 2
Average family size and religion, ^a women aged 40-44 years, South Australia 1996
 Source: Compiled from unpublished data, ABS 1996 Census of Population and Housing

Religion	Adelaide Statistical Division			Rest of State		
	Mean number of children	Number of women	Percentage women	Mean number of children	Number of women	Percentage women
New Protestant/New Christian ^b	2.43	1,023	2.6	2.78	345	2.5
Other Protestant/Other Christian ^c	2.33	191	0.5	2.35	37	0.3
Buddhist/Hindu/Muslim/Jewish	2.21	802	2.1	2.46	57	0.4
Other Old Protestant ^d	2.11	2,480	6.4	2.40	1,022	7.5
Orthodox	2.10	1,115	2.9	2.33	98	0.7
Catholic	2.08	8,925	23.1	2.42	2,130	15.7
Lutheran	2.05	1,367	3.5	2.49	1,379	10.1
Uniting Church	2.01	4,781	12.4	2.33	2,775	20.4
Anglican	2.00	6,753	17.5	2.32	2,210	16.3
Other Religions ^e	1.97	189	0.5	1.93	56	0.4
Not stated/inadequately described	1.93	3,317	8.6	2.19	1,133	8.3
‘No Religion’ ^f	1.85	7,719	20.0	2.16	2,346	17.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>2.01</i>	<i>38,662</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>2.33</i>	<i>13,588</i>	<i>100.0</i>

a According to ABS (1996) Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups

- b Includes Brethren, Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter Day Saints, Pentecostal
- c 'Other Protestant' includes Aboriginal Evangelical Missions, Born Again Christian, Congregational and Wesleyan Methodist; 'Other Christian' includes Religious Society of Friends and Christian Science
- d Includes Baptist, Methodist, Reformed, Presbyterian, Salvation Army
- e 'Other Religions' include for example Australian Aboriginal Traditional Religions, Baha'i, Chinese and Japanese Religions, Nature Religions, Sikhism and Church of Scientology
- f Represents No Religion, Agnosticism, Atheism, Humanism and Rationalism

When education level was added, a substantially higher proportion of university-educated women had no children when compared with women of all education levels (24 per cent and 14 per cent respectively). University-educated women were also *less* likely to have three or more children (23 per cent and 32 per cent). The proportion with no children was even higher for university-educated women with "No Religion" (29 per cent with none, and only 17 per cent with three or more). Table 3 shows that, among the university-educated, average family size ranged from as low as 1.33 children for Postgraduates with "No Religion", up to 1.95 for Lutheran Postgraduates. Excepting the very small group of Other Protestant/Other Christians, the largest family size for university-educated women was for New Protestant/New Christian women with a Bachelors degree (2.12).

Table 3
Average family size, religion and education level, women aged 40-44 years, Adelaide 1996
 Source: Compiled from unpublished data, ABS 1996 Census of Population and Housing

Religion	Total	Post-graduate	Bachelor	Under-graduate & assoc diploma	Skilled/basic vocational	No post-school
New Protestant/New Christian	2.43	**1.94	2.12	2.42	2.34	2.51
Other Protestant/Other Christian	2.33	*0.60	**2.20	**2.00	**2.52	2.56
Buddhist/Hindu/Muslim/Jewish	2.21	1.50	1.72	1.96	1.61	2.48
Other Old Protestant	2.11	1.55	1.97	2.28	2.23	2.11
Orthodox	2.10	1.36	1.58	1.78	2.07	2.22
Catholic	2.08	1.59	1.81	2.03	2.06	2.16
Lutheran	2.05	1.95	1.82	1.96	2.14	2.08
Uniting Church	2.01	1.80	1.83	2.01	2.06	2.04
Anglican	2.00	1.69	1.92	2.00	1.98	2.03
Other Religions	1.97	1.58	**1.83	**1.45	**1.91	2.13
Not stated/inadequately described	1.93	1.44	1.71	1.79	1.88	2.05
'No Religion'	1.85	1.33	1.50	1.69	1.80	2.05
Total	2.01	1.53	1.74	1.95	2.01	2.11

* = < 10 women in cell; ** = < 25 women in cell

Considering that Postgraduates with “No Religion” had the smallest family size, and that the university-educated are also those most likely to have “No Religion” (Newman & Hugo 2006), the focus away from religion in fertility research may reflect the background of, and accordingly the issues important to, those doing demographic research. Perhaps researchers have ignored religious influences either because they were not personally important or, at least according to the secularisation paradigm, were not *supposed* to be important, even if they were still important to, and influencing the behaviour of, those Australians who recorded a religious denomination and/or had lower levels of education (in fact, at least 70 per cent of the population). Perhaps religious influences also remained hidden due to the continuing domination of quantitative research methods which supported traditional lines of inquiry and were hard to overthrow in the face of some researchers’ beliefs that “demography without numbers is social waffle” (Coleman 2000:357). In thinking about where and when religion and spirituality are researched, it is important to remember Greenhalgh’s (1996) view that all disciplines are socially constructed and historically situated bodies of knowledge and networks of individuals which affect which aspects are given prominence. Indeed, researchers can play a major role in preventing change if they frame their research questions to reflect their cultural myths (Thurer 1994:291). One leading demographer notes that knowledge building should be seen as

a series of ‘sub-narratives’ from different disciplinary perspectives and orientations... [of which] different parts... have been highlighted at different times depending on policy interests, improvements in technical skills, availability of data, changes in societal settings, and the degree of satisfaction with the dominant sub-narratives of the day (van de Kaa 1996:389).

Qualitative insights on religion’s influence

The in-depth parent interviews give some insight into the pathways of religious influence lying behind the quantitative patterns. They partly reflect traditional demographic explanations identified by McQuillan (2004), including religious doctrine (eg attitudes to abortion, contraception and non-marital childbearing) and broader socio-cultural messages supportive of parenthood (eg praise of large families, the importance of family, gender role pressure supporting motherhood). However, the interviews also support Westoff and Potvin’s findings (1967) that the social systems of religions provide a primary source of informal social relations that affect family size preferences. The interviews also suggest that religious families and communities may be valuing, and therefore

providing practical support for, parenting, which is not offered where such religious influence is absent. In the Adelaide interviews some parents, for example, talked of religious-family influences on their confidence and support networks for parenting:

When I got married I thought we'll have children, but as for how many, I don't know that I ever really contemplated it... I was one of two but I think two might have been a bit boring! (laughs). [Husband's family of 5] was so nice, big house, everybody always went there for parties... my immediate family wasn't like that... And [husband]'s family has a lot to do with their Christian beliefs – family is the core and God's in the middle of that... [Fifth child just happened but] no question of me terminating the pregnancy. My Christian belief is that God never pushes you over the edge.

(Mother, age 41, highest status area, 5 children aged 4 to 11,
Anglican weekly in childhood, Lutheran now, religion very important in life)

One father (a Church of Christ Associate Pastor) felt that his faith encouraged anti-materialistic views which countered the fertility-lowering influences of materialism, consumerism and individualism which have accompanied secularisation:

Our Western world is very materialistic, very self-centred [so] having children is just a nuisance factor and... a lot of people are choosing not to have any [children] or to have them very late... People are very much finance-driven that they *have* to have the best car, the holiday every year... they put those things and finance before children... We chose to have a large family rather than have expensive holidays... I've never been one for desiring a lot of wealth [and] our children enjoy the simple things... Part of our belief too, in our Christian... we actually believe that there are models of servanthood, caring for others, putting others before yourself.

(Father, age 42, lower-middle status area, 7 children aged 2 to 20,
No religion in childhood, Church of Christ very important from age 14, now Associate Pastor)

Religiously-influenced environments could also play a key role in validating larger families:

In the Catholic education system four [children] was of no consequence, but we've since put [daughter] in public education and you're introduced as "A Mother of Four", like it's something different! I do remember when I was pregnant with my fourth... this woman came up to me and said 'Ooh you're *brave!*'... and I said what does *that* mean? [and she said] 'Well four - it's a lot having four'.

(Mother, age 44, highest status area, 4 children aged 2 to 11
Catholic weekly in childhood, Catholic religion now very important).

However, two mothers explained that family size could be limited by religiously buttressed views about "proper" mothers and "proper" childcare held by the grandparent generation (in these cases all Italian-born Catholics who had migrated to Australian in the 1950s):

The only negative influence in our family has been from my husband's parents who didn't want us to have the third child... [They] looked after the children [while I was at work] and they didn't want us to put them into childcare... Childcare would have been easier... It's more his mother's influence and she's just someone who's fairly set in her opinions... They kept saying "Don't have a third child" and we kept saying, "Well we intend to"...

(Mother, age 34, highest status area, 2 children aged 2, 3½, pregnant with third
Anglican rarely in childhood, No religion now but somewhat important in life)

Some parents whose religious family background had positively influenced them to have children appeared to have been more openly encouraged, or to have been exposed to role models which perhaps subconsciously encouraged them more, to set partnership and parenthood as goals in life, *alongside* education and career. Parents in three larger families also mentioned church-based pre-marriage counselling that encouraged them to consider partners' family size preferences, which according to Cannold (2005) is particularly important in avoiding circumstantial childlessness:

We never seriously considered only two [children]... [It was] three even before we were married. People who marry you often say it's good to think about these things, and we did then, and three was... sort of the aim.

(Father, age 36, upper-middle status area, 3 children aged 2, 4 and 6,
Uniting Church weekly in childhood and now, very important now)

In summary, all of the interview themes discussed suggest that religious upbringing and religious communities are acting as cultural resources which can influence the number of children people have, and that they can support people to have larger families through providing social support and validation for parenting. These aspects could be more widely considered by demographers in developed countries and those interested in exploring religion's influence in society. The findings also support Southworth's (2005:77) observation that faith communities and religious organisations continue to influence contemporary social life and behaviour despite the secularisation paradigm.

Religion in demography: future directions

The research discussed in this chapter occurred at an opportune time, with Bouma (2002) believing that globalisation and the events of September 11 have focussed attention on religion per se, and McQuillan (2004:25) seeing recent developments in demography, including research on

fertility change in Muslim populations, as generating renewed interest in the “old question” of religious influence on fertility. This is also reflected in new research proposals stimulated by the re-introduction of a religion question in the United Kingdom’s 2001 Census (Howard & Hopkins 2005) as well as several papers related to fertility in the USA (Lehrer 2004) and Spain (Adsera 2006). A variety of issues around family size and fertility could be further explored in social science, including pathways of influence associated with religious upbringing (including religious socialisation or lack thereof in childhood); links with current beliefs about religion versus spirituality; differences between those affiliated with traditional and newer denominations, or between those attending growing and youthful congregations compared with declining and ageing ones; influences related to attitudes towards marriage and partnership; the influence on family size of religious family and community support for parenting (or lack thereof); and pathways by which university-educated women with “No Religion” have smaller families or no children. However, in researching religious influence it should be remembered that behaviour is not purely a reaction to the contemporary environment but also reflects a lifetime of accumulated experiences. People of childbearing age today (age 20 to 40, born roughly mid-1960s to mid-1980s) were not only socialised in these eras but are also likely to have been influenced by the attitudes, views and values of their parents who grew up probably between the 1930s and 1950s. Hence, a variety of religious influences from any time over the previous three-quarters of a century could have influenced today’s parenting generation, so that research on contemporary issues should benefit from including the life course perspective which has become more popular in social science over the last few years, along with a family history perspective which is often ignored.

Conclusion

This chapter provides research insights for those interested in religion in particular and those interested in social science in general. It argued that lack of attention to religious influences on contemporary Australian fertility resulted partly from researchers adhering to an unquestioning belief in the hegemony of secularisation, along with a continued preference for aggregate level quantitative analysis at the expense of qualitative methods, which effectively contributed a “closed shop” on research topics. The empirical project highlighted how, through mixed method research, qualitative methods can provide room for new themes to emerge or old themes to be rediscovered, while quantitative data can test emerging hypotheses. The chapter also showed benefits in

disaggregating data rather than aggregating to traditional groupings that may hide important trends and differences. In particular, the chapter shows how qualitative research methods which talk to “the actors” allow the voices of those in faith communities to be heard and explored, rather than the research being limited by traditional theory, disciplinary interest or popular debate. The former quite clearly leads to a broader and deeper understanding of influences on social behaviour, and in relation to fertility encouraged (re)exploration of *social and family* influences on fertility which have been overshadowed by the contemporary research focus on *economics* (work and finances). This chapter will hopefully leave readers encouraged to be more reflexive about the beliefs, assumptions, theories, methods and politics that colour their research so that the knowledge they help build comes closer to the truth about how the world really is for those who are the focus of their research.

REFERENCES

- Adsera A (2006), ‘Marital fertility and religion in Spain 1985 and 1999’, *Population Studies*, 60(2):205-221.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004). *Australian Social Trends 2004*, catalogue no. 4102.0, [online] available URL: <www.abs.gov.au/ausstats> 5 March 2005.
- Borrie WD (1975). *Population and Australia: A Demographic Analysis and Projection*. First Report of the National Population Inquiry. AGPS, Canberra.
- Bouma G (1997), ‘Increasing diversity in religious identification in Australia: comparing 1947, 1991 and 1996 census reports’, *People and Place* 5(3), <<http://elecpress.monash.edu.au/pnp/free/pnpv5n3/bouma.htm>> Accessed: 25 May 2005.
- Bouma G (2002), ‘Globalization and recent changes in the demography of Australian religious groups: 1947 to 2001’, *People and Place*, 10(4):17-23.
- Bouma G (2006). *Australian Soul: Religion & Spirituality in the 21st Century*. Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne.
- Broom D (1995), ‘Masculine medicine, feminine illness: gender and health’, in GM Lupton & JM Najman (eds), *Sociology of Health & Illness: Australian Readings*, 2nd edition, MacMillan Education Australia:99-112.
- Cannold L (2005). *What, No Baby?* Curtin University Press, Fremantle.
- Carmichael GA & McDonald P (2003), ‘Fertility trends and differentials’, in S-E Khoo & P McDonald (eds), *The Transformation of Australia’s Population: 1970-2030*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney:40-76.
- Coleman D (2000), ‘Book Review of *Demographic Methods* (Hinde 1998), in *Population Studies*, 54(3):357.
- Day LH (1965), ‘Family size and fertility’, in AF Davies & S Encel (eds), *Australian Society: A Sociological Introduction*, Cheshire, Melbourne:156-167.
- Greenhalgh S (1996), ‘The social construction of population science: an intellectual, institutional and political history of twentieth-century demography’, *Comparative Studies in Society & History*, 38(1):26-66.

- Howard D & Hopkins PE (2005), 'Editorial: Race, Religion and the Census', *Population, Space and Place*, 11(2):69-74 .
- Hugo GJ (2004). *Recent Fertility Trends in South Australia*. Report to Planning SA. Department of Geographical & Environmental Studies, The University of Adelaide.
- Inglehart R (1977). *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ.
- Inglis KS (1965), 'Religious behaviour', in AF Davies & S Encel (eds), *Australian Society: A Sociological Introduction*, Cheshire, Melbourne:43-75.
- Lehrer EL (2004), 'The role of religion in union formation: an economic perspective', *Population Research & Policy Review*, 30(4):1-25.
- Lesthaeghe R (1977). *The Decline of Belgian Fertility 1800-1970*. Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ.
- Lesthaeghe R (1998), 'On theory development: applications to the study of family formation', *Population & Development Review*, 24(1):1-14.
- Lesthaeghe R & Willems P (1999), 'Is low fertility a temporary phenomenon in the European Union?', *Population & Development Review*, 25(2):211-228.
- McDonald P & Kippen R (1999). 'Population futures for Australia: the policy alternatives', Research Paper No. 5, 1999-2000. [online], available URL: <<http://aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rp/1999-2000/2000rp05.htm>> 25 July 2005.
- McQuillan K (2004), 'When does religion influence fertility?', *Population & Development Review* 30(1):25-56.
- Meyer R (1999), 'Which Australians are having three or more children?', *People & Place*, 7(3):31-38.
- Newman LA (2006). *Images and Impacts of Parenthood: Explaining Fertility and Family Size in Contemporary Australia*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Geographical & Environmental Studies, The University of Adelaide.
- Newman LA & Hugo GJ (2006), 'Women's religion, fertility and education in a low-fertility setting: evidence from South Australia', *Journal of Population Research*, 27(3):41-66.
- Presser HB & Sen G (2000) (eds). *Women's Empowerment & Demographic Processes: Moving Beyond Cairo*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Ruzicka LT & Caldwell JC (1982). 'Fertility', in United Nations, *Population of Australia*, Country Monograph Series no. 9, Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok: 119-229.
- Southworth JR (2005), 'Religion in the 2001 Census for England and Wales', *Population, Space & Place*, 11(2):75-88.
- Thurer SL (1994). *The Myths of Motherhood*. Houghton Mifflin Co, Boston MA.
- United Nations Secretariat (2000). *Replacement Migration: Is it a Solution to Declining and Ageing Populations?* Population Division, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York.
- van de Kaa DJ (1996), 'Anchored narratives: the story and findings of half a century of research into the determinants of fertility', *Population Studies*, 50(3):389-432.
- Westoff CF & Potvin RH (1967). *College Women and Fertility Values*. Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ.
- Weston R, Qu L, Parker R & Alexander M (2004). *It's Not for Lack of Wanting Kids: A Report on the Fertility Decision Making Project*. Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.