

References

- ¹ Birrell, R. 'The Politics of the Refugee Issue', *People and Place*, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 17
- ² Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, 'Onshore Refugee Program Annual Summary, 1992-93 Financial Year', DIEA, Canberra
- ³ Commonwealth of Australia, Parliamentary Debates, Senate, Estimates Committee F, 12 November 1993, p. 201
- ⁴ Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, 'The Pre and Post 20 June 1989 PRC Nationals', 1993, p. 4
- ⁵ *ibid*, p. 17
- ⁶ Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Selected Higher Education Statistics - 1993*, AGPS, Canberra, p. 78
- ⁷ Birrell, *op cit*.
- ⁸ Commonwealth of Australia, Parliamentary Debates, *op cit*, p. 201
- ⁹ Katrina Willis, 'Government Expands Concessions for Chinese Students', AAP Release, 1 February 1994

RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION AND MARRIAGE

■ A.C. Gariano

The question of marriage across religious boundaries has long been vexed in Australian society. This study uses unpublished 1991 Census data to analyse the extent to which contemporary Australians are influenced by religion in their choice of partner.

INTRODUCTION

This study analyses religious intermix in Australia for both married and de facto couples. It uses 1991 Australian Bureau of Statistics customised matrix data purchased by the author. The matrix classifies male religious adherence by female religious adherence according to relationship type (married and de facto).

Religious intermix, like ethnic intermix, is an indicator of the effects of multiculturalism. If multiculturalism has encouraged mutual respect across religious and ethnic boundaries we might expect barriers against intermixing to have declined. Analysis of religious intermixing may also be used as an indicator of the way religion shapes our choice of partner. This analysis allows us to monitor the extent to which religious intermix is occurring between the dominant groups (Catholics, Anglicans, and other Protestants and minor Christian groups here referred to as 'other Protestants') and as a consequence it can be used as an indicator of the extent to which religious prejudice is

declining. Conversely, low levels of religious intermix can point to entrenched religious taboos against intermixing. Out-marriage in some religions (Catholicism, Judaism, Islam) is not readily accepted nor encouraged.¹

The data used in the present study are limited by: the non-mandatory nature of the census question on religion (hence the 10.2 per cent non-response rate); the inability to control for couples who had been married previously or in a de facto relationship; and the inability to take into account those who had converted or were in the process of converting to their spouses' or partners' religion. In addition, the data did not allow investigation into the motives for marriage (or entry into de facto relationships) and we cannot use them to distinguish between levels of religious commitment. The matrix did not contain birthplace, occupational, age, period-of-residence and other identifiers which could have further enhanced the analysis of religious intermix.

AUSTRALIA'S RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION

According to the 1991 census, Catholics and Anglicans combined represented 51.2 per cent of the population (27.3 per cent were Anglicans and 23.9 per cent were Catholics). The remainder of the population consisted of 'other Protestants' (22.8 per cent), and various minor religions (0.9 per cent Muslims, 0.8 per cent Buddhists, 0.5 per cent Judaism and 0.5 per cent other non-Christian). Those who indicated 'no religion' accounted for 12.9 per cent. The non-response rate of 10.2 per cent was 1.7 percentage points lower than that for the 1986 census.²

Of the minor religions, Judaism has accounted for around 0.4 to 0.5 per cent of the population since 1881. Muslims first appeared in large numbers (22,311 or 0.2 per cent of the population) during the 1971 census. Growth in adherents to Buddhism has occurred since the 1981 census when Buddhists accounted for 0.2 per cent of the population. Recent migration from the Middle East and South East Asia has ensured a significant increase in both Muslims and Buddhists. A higher fertility rate for Muslims and Buddhists has also contributed to their growth.³

Since Australia's religious composition is relatively mixed, it can be expected that a certain degree of religious intermixing will occur when men and women choose their partners.

DE FACTO AND MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

Previous studies on intermix (ethnic and religious) have concentrated on marriage statistics. Little research has taken account of de facto unions, which are becoming more common. In the 1986 census, de facto unions accounted for 6.0 per cent of coupled families.⁴ By the 1991 census they had risen to 8.1 per

cent, or 283,192 couples. Couples in marital relationships numbered 3,197,074 by 1991. The remainder of the population (9,811,039),⁵ are either below the marital age and/or unattached.

Table 1 reports the overall religious intermix rates for de facto and married couples. It shows that religious intermix is considerably higher for de facto unions than for married couples. For married couples, the intermix rate refers to the proportion of all married persons in one of the religious categories considered who have married persons in a different religious category. The same formula is applied when the reference is to de factos (or to all those coupled in relationships, or to separate gender categories). For example, if we have 100 married couples, and in fifty of these couples both partners are Catholics, and in the other fifty there is a Catholic and Anglican partner, the intermix rate for Catholics will be 33 per cent, that is we have 150 Catholics of whom a third have married out.

The high rate of intermix for de facto couples indicates that, for these individuals, religious identity is far less important, and/or that religious intermix in a de facto union is more acceptable (within the family and/or community) than intermix through marriage.

Table 1: Religious intermix by type of relationship, couples

Type of relationship		Intermix
De facto	Per cent	49.4
	Number	139,803
Married	Per cent	28.5
	Number	910,516

Source: ABS matrix tables

DOMINANT RELIGIOUS GROUPS

De facto Relationships

Table 2 reports religious intermix for the dominant religious groups in

Australia (Catholic, Anglican and 'other Protestants'). As indicated by the 1991 census, 8.1 per cent of Anglicans in coupled relationships were engaged in de facto unions compared to 7.2 per cent of Catholics and 5.6 per cent of 'other Protestants'. In all instances females were more likely to form de facto relationships than males. Their male partners outside the dominant religious categories were mainly drawn from those indicating no religion.

Although Anglicans recorded a higher rate of de facto unions than others, their rate of intermix in these de facto unions was lowest. It was 52.1 per cent, compared to that of Catholics, 60.2 per cent, and 'other Protestants', 64.2 per cent. For these religious groups the data indicate that, as the rate of de facto unions increases, the rate of religious intermix decreases. Amongst these groups females tended to intermix at a greater rate than males.

Marital Relationships

Table 3 reports the intermix rates for married persons identifying with the dominant religions. The pattern displayed is not unlike that for de facto

unions. The intermix rate for Anglicans was the highest at 34.7 per cent. Catholics recorded the lowest rate at 29.9 per cent. For both Anglicans and 'other Protestants', females tended to marry out at a greater rate than males. For Catholics the proportion was roughly equal with 30.1 per cent of males and 29.8 per cent of females marrying out.

There has been a substantial increase in intermixing since 1961. Mol found that Catholics out-married at a greater rate than Anglicans (21.2 per cent versus 20.1 per cent, based on the 1961 census), despite the fact that traditionally there 'has been hostility in the Church to inter-faith marriages...'⁶ Since 1961, out-marriage for Catholics has increased by 8.7 percentage points. This is despite the effects of post war immigration when there was a high influx of 'Catholic families from homogeneously Catholic countries and regions of Europe'.⁷ Catholic objection to out-marriage has not stopped an increase in intermixing. Out-marriage for Anglicans has also increased, with a growth of 14.5 per cent since 1961.

Table 2: Intermix rates amongst dominant religion persons in de facto relationships

Religion	Religious intermix (percentage)			De facto population			Percentage in de facto relationships		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Anglican	50.2	53.9	52.1	71,883	77,694	149,577	7.9	8.3	8.1
Catholic	59.8	60.6	60.2	65,813	67,180	132,993	7.1	7.3	7.2
Other Protestants	61.0	66.9	64.2	38,706	45,607	84,313	5.3	5.8	5.6

Table 3: Intermix rates amongst dominant religion married persons

Religion	Religious Intermix (%)			Married Population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Anglican	34.0	35.4	34.7	835,144	853,046	1,688,190
Catholic	30.1	29.8	29.9	860,705	857,166	1,717,871
Other Protestants	29.0	33.9	31.5	691,424	741,899	1,433,323

OUT-MARRIAGE PATTERN FOR DOMINANT RELIGIONS

Table 4 reports the out-marriage pattern for the dominant religions. Anglicans, when marrying out, tend to marry Catholics rather than 'other Protestants'. This pattern is especially pronounced amongst males.

Catholics likewise tend to marry Anglicans at a considerably higher rate than 'other Protestants' with this pattern being pronounced for females. However, 'other Protestants' tend to out-marry more with Anglicans than Catholics.

The effects of immigration cannot be explored here but unpublished ABS data suggest little difference in the out-marriage rates for Catholic, Anglican and 'other Protestants' when controlling for Australian-born and overseas-born groups.

MINOR RELIGIONS

De facto relationships

Only a very small proportion of those identifying with the minor religions were involved in de facto relationships. For example, only 2.1 per cent of Greek Orthodox people, 2.5 per cent of Muslims, and 5.0 per cent of Jews were in such couples. But within these couples there were high rates of intermix, reaching 70.1 per cent for the Greek

Orthodox, 42 per cent for the Muslims and 45.1 per cent for the Jews. The data also indicate that males identifying with minor religions have a greater propensity to be in de facto relationships and to intermix than do females. Intermixing through de facto relationships may be seen as far more acceptable than intermixing through marriage. Nevertheless, the proportion of people belonging to minor religions and living in de facto relationships was lower than for people belonging to dominant religions. Our attention therefore needs to be focussed on marital couples.

Marital relationships

The major finding here is that, aside from the 'no religion' group, all minor religious groups show a strikingly low rate of out-marriage. The lowest level is amongst the Muslims with just six per cent out-marrying, and the highest amongst the Buddhists. But even with this latter group the level of 15.6 per cent is still very low. (See Table 5.)

Unlike other minor religious groups, the out-marriage rate for female Buddhists is greater than that of males, with 7.3 percentage points difference. This is the only minor religious group to display a similar pattern to that of the dominant religious groups where more females marry out than males (see Anglicans and Protestants, Table 4).

Table 4: Out-marriage patterns for dominant religions, males and females

	Per cent of partners who are				Total partners	
	Anglican	Catholic	Protestant	Other Religions*	%	No.
Males						
Anglican	66.0	17.8	13.1	3.1	100.0	835,144
Catholic	16.0	69.9	9.5	4.6	100.0	860,705
Protestant	14.6	11.9	71.0	2.5	100.0	691,424
Females						
Anglican	64.6	16.2	11.8	7.4	100.0	853,046
Catholic	17.3	70.2	9.6	2.9	100.0	857,166
Protestant	14.7	11.1	66.1	8.1	100.0	741,899

* Includes 'no religion' and 'not stated'

Table 5 : Minor religions, intermix rates amongst married persons

Religion	Religious Intermix (%)			Married Population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Greek Orthodox	13.6	10.5	12.1	85,557	82,535	168,092
Other Orthodox	15.6	11.4	13.6	28,174	26,830	55,004
Islam	7.8	4.1	6.0	28,880	27,772	56,652
Buddhism	11.8	19.1	15.6	23,763	25,912	49,675
Judaism	14.5	11.6	13.1	16,208	15,684	31,892
Hinduism	14.0	13.0	13.5	9,590	9,478	19,068
Other Non Christian	23.9	23.8	23.9	6,993	6,991	13,984
No Religion	31.0	19.0	25.5	321,446	273,879	595,325
Not Stated	14.2	10.0	12.2	289,190	275,882	565,072

The low out-marriage rate for Jews is well documented. In 1981, fourteen per cent of Jewish males and 11.2 per cent for Jewish females had married 'out'.⁸ These figures are much lower than in America where 'more than half of Jews wed since 1985 (married) non-Jews'. Of these Jews marrying out, 28 per cent are raising their offspring as Jews. In fact, the American Jewish leadership is very concerned that there will be a net loss to the core Jewish population by the next generation.⁹ The Australian Jewish leaders need have no such worries. Between 1981 and 1991 the intermix rate for males and females increased only slightly to 14.5 per cent and 11.6 per cent respectively. The overall rate of out-marriage for Jews now stands at 13.1 per cent.

Rubinstein claims that the rise in out-marriage amongst Jews (though tiny) is the 'result of out-marriage among the children of migrants'¹⁰ and, possibly, out-marriages that took place prior to emigration, notably from Russian immigrants. He also draws attention to the fact that intermix rates include the union of Jews with those claiming no religion or not stating a religion and that a proportion of these may, in fact, be Jewish by background. Whilst he states

that 'the number of such responses has risen'¹¹ he offers no real evidence for this claim.

An important point concerning the Jewish group is the meaning of Jewish identity. Some consider Jewishness a cultural attribute, some consider it a religious attribute and others both. Under these circumstances a proportion of the 'no religion' and 'not stated' responses may include persons who only consider themselves to be Jewish in a cultural sense and their numbers may lead to an overstatement of the rate of out-marriage. This means that if we define Jewishness as a cultural rather than religious attribute, rates of out-marriage may be much lower than the 13.1 per cent shown in Table 5.

Table 5 reveals other patterns that are rather more surprising: the low out-marriage rates of people professing 'no religion' and of those who do not answer the question on religion. Only 25.5 per cent of married people with 'no religion' choose a religious spouse and the people who do not answer the question are even more exclusive. Only 12.2 per cent of married people who do not answer the question choose partners who do.

NO RELIGION AND NOT STATED RESPONSES

If married people in these two categories, and their partners, are excluded from the totals, and the figures for members of minor religions marrying out are recalculated as a percentage of this smaller total, the pattern changes. The exclusion has the greatest effect on the Buddhist group, reducing the overall intermix rate from 15.6 per cent to 10.6 per cent (a five per cent reduction). The difference in male and female intermix rates for Buddhists is reduced (4.7 per cent points difference compared to 7.3 per cent points difference) but the fact remains that, unlike all other minor religious groups, Buddhists females tend to intermix at a higher rate than males. (See Table 6.)

Rubinstein's statement that the 'no religion' and religion 'not stated' categories may be overstating Jewish out-marriage more than for other religious groups is to some extent validated. Exclusion of the two categories lowers the overall Jewish intermix rate by 3.4 per cent (2.9 per cent for males and 4.0 per cent for females).

For each of the dominant groups the exclusion of these categories produces a fall in intermix rate of about 3 per cent. However, the impact is greater for women than men. Prior to exclusion of the no-religion and religion-not-stated categories, Anglican males intermixed more than females. After the exclusion, the reverse is the case with a 1.6 percentage points difference. The direction also changed for Catholics. Prior to exclusion, an almost equal proportion of males and females married out while, after exclusion, the tendency is for females to marry out at a greater rate, albeit with only a 1.2 percentage points difference.

CONCLUSION

These data indicate that religious intermixing in Australia is only numerically significant amongst dominant religious groups. However, it is particularly high for de facto relationships even after taking into account the effects of the 'no-religion' and 'not-stated' responses. It seems that in de facto relationships religious adherence has little effect on choice of partner.

Table 6: Married persons, variation in intermix rate when people reporting 'no religion' and 'not stated' and their partners are excluded

Religion	Religious Intermix				Total ^(a)	
	Male		Female			
Anglican	(34.0)	32.2	(35.4)	30.6	(34.7)	31.4
Catholic	(30.1)	27.5	(29.8)	28.7	(29.9)	28.1
Other Protestant	(29.0)	27.4	(33.9)	28.5	(31.5)	28.0
Greek Orthodox	(13.6)	12.8	(10.5)	9.2	(12.1)	11.0
Other Orthodox	(15.6)	14.7	(11.4)	9.9	(13.6)	12.3
Islam	(7.8)	6.6	(4.1)	2.8	(6.0)	4.7
Buddhism	(11.8)	8.2	(19.1)	12.9	(15.6)	10.6
Judaism	(14.5)	11.6	(11.6)	7.6	(13.1)	9.7
Hinduism	(14.0)	12.2	(13.0)	9.6	(13.5)	10.9
Other Non Christian	(23.9)	18.8	(23.8)	14.9	(23.9)	16.9

Percentages in brackets include out-marriages with 'no religion' and religion 'not stated'.

Although this is speculative, one may conclude that religious intermixing through de facto unions is preferred over mixed marriages for those religions where out-marriage is not readily acceptable (Greek Orthodox, Islam, Judaism and Catholicism). This may indicate that mixed de facto unions are preferred over mixed marriages in ethnic communities which put great stress on cultural maintenance.

Females tend to intermix less frequently than males, but this trend is more prominent in de facto unions than in marital unions. The clear exception to this rule are Buddhist females who tend to out-marry at a far greater rate than their male counterparts. At first glance this can also be said of female Anglicans but, when controls for 'no-religion' and 'not-stated' responses are put in place, the male out-marriage rate exceeds that of females.

Minor religions in general display lower rates of intermixing when compared to the dominant religious groups. Muslims are the least likely to engage in out-marriage and in intermixed de facto relationships. Few will be surprised that rates of intermixing are low amongst newly-arrived communities like the Muslims and Buddhists. But the continued success of longer established groups, notably the Jewish and Greek Orthodox groups, in maintaining their boundaries against out-marriage is striking. By now many people in these communities would be second or third generation Australians.

On the other hand the fact that intermixing amongst Catholics, Anglicans and Protestants is now much higher, at around 30 per cent, is a sign that the social barriers which were once such a notable feature of Australian society appear to be crumbling. The stigma against Catholics previously found

amongst other Australians also seems to be fading. At least that is what the data seem to be saying when we note that just over 17 per cent of Anglican men and women are now married to Catholics.

Acknowledgments

The author is grateful for the assistance of Sonia Coulston for the provision of data and Dr Susan Rutland for her valuable assistance.

Disclaimer

Whilst the author has made every attempt to ensure that the data presented in this article are accurate, the quality and accuracy of raw data provided in the matrices purchased remain the sole responsibility of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

References

- ¹ H. Mol, *The Faith of Australians*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1985
- ² G. Bouma, 'Religious identification in Australia: 1981 to 1991', *People and Place*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1993
- ³ A. Borowski and J. Shu, *Australia's Population Trends and Prospects 1991*, Bureau of Immigration Research, AGPS, 1992
- ⁴ A. Borowski and J. Shu, *ibid.*
- ⁵ Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, July 1993. '1991 Census Data - The Early Bird Tables', *BIPR Bulletin*, AGPS, Canberra, p. 59
- ⁶ H. Mol, *Western Religion: A Country by Country Sociological Inquiry*, Mouton, The Hague, Paris, 1972
- ⁷ H. Mol, 'Family and Religion', in J. Krupinski and A. Stoller, (ed.) *The Family in Australia*, Pergamon Press, Australia, 1974, pp. 126 - 142. Mol defined the out-marriage rate by the same method as adopted in this article. This defines percentage intermix as $(\text{intermix}/(\text{intermix} + \text{intramix}))$. Intramix is doubled in order to count the total number of individuals in the specified religion.
- ⁸ W.D. Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History, Vol. 2, 1945 to Present*, William Heineman, Australia, 1991
- ⁹ A. Day, 'Troubling Times for U.S. Jews', *Tell*, vol. 13, no. 3, Jan/Feb 1994
- ¹⁰ Rubinstein, *op. cit.*
- ¹¹ *ibid.*