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THE CHANGING SHAPE OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN AUSTRALIA

© Gary D Bouma 2020 *Sources:* ARC DP 180101664 *Rel Div & Soc Coh* (Ezzy, Bouma, Baarton, Halafoff, Beaman and Jackson); ARC DP 160102367 *AGZ* (Rasmussen, Bouma, Halafoff, and Singleton); Bouma, Gary and Anna Halafoff 2017 'Australia's Changing Religious Profile—Rising Nones and Pentecostals, Declining British Protestants in Superdiversity: Views from the 2016 Census' *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion* 30: 129-143.

MY AIMS

- **Present facts about the current changes in the Religion – Society Nexus**
- **Context: recent major changes in Australia's religious profile from**
 - Brit Prots, to Catholics, to 'none' as dominant
 - Religious vs Secular, to a diversity of diversities within and between
 - Postsecularity
- **Data on Aus Gen Z – your students**

AUSTRALIAN DIVERSITY I

INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

- **40,000 to 50,000++ years of history here**
 - 250+ languages 600+ dialects
 - Richly diverse cultures
 - Many societies / nations / religions
- **2.8% of Australians identify as indigenous**
- **RELIGIOUS / CULTURAL DIVERSITY IS PART OF OUR DEEP HISTORY/NORMAL**

RELIGIOUS CHANGE IN AUSTRALIA: MAJOR GROUPS (>4%) GENERATIONS

% in	1911	1947	1966	1991	2006	2016
Anglican	38.4	39.0	33.5	23.9	18.7	13.3
Catholic	22.4	20.7	26.2	27.4	25.8	22.6
MCPRU	26.5	22.1	19.4	12.9	8.7	6.0
Pentecostal*					2.7	3.7
CHRIST'N	96.9	88.0	88.2	74.1	63.9	52.1**
'NONES'	0.2	0.3	0.8	12.9	18.7	30.1
Other Rels	0.8	0.5	0.7	2.6	5.6	8.2

*Pent + Xtn nfd.**note Christians a majority only in NSW and QLD

IN 2016 – Next tier Groups (>0.4%)

- More Pentecostals (3.4%) than Uniting (3.3%)
- More Muslims (2.6%) than Pres (2.3%)
- More Buddhists (2.4%) than Orthodox (2.1%)
- More Hindus (1.9%) than Baptists (1.5%)
- More Sikhs (0.5%) than Jews (0.4%)
- 3 X Witches (6.6k) as Quakers (1.7k),
- Pagans (15.2k), Baha'i (14.0k)
- Atheists* (32k; 0.14%) Agnostics (26k, 0.11%)

• * same number in 2006 and 2016.

STATE OF VICTORIA 2016 'top 15'

• Catholic	23.0 %	Baptist	1.3%
• Anglican	9.0	Sikhism	0.9
• Uniting	3.4	Judaism	0.7
• Pentecostal	3.3	Lutheran	0.5
• Islam	3.1	Mac Ortho	0.3
• Buddhism	3.1		
• Gk Orthodox	2.7	NONE	32.1
• Hinduism	2.3	CHRIST-N	48.9
• Presbyterian	1.9		



BASIC DRIVERS OF CURRENT CHANGE

- **MIGRATION**

- Diversity (Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs)
 - > Keeping Catholics afloat
 - > Nones (Chinese and European)

- **Conversion**

- To Pentecostal (from other groups/ not 'none')
- To 'NONE', but most are born none

- **FAILURE OF BOOMERS AND GEN X TO PASS RELIGION ON TO CHILDREN**

A NEW AUSTRALIA I:

‘Nones’ the dominant group

- **‘Nones’ are the most numerous in each age group till 65+ (2016 Census)**
- **‘None’ is the new normal (AGZ data)**
 - 52% of those 13-18 identify as ‘no religion’
 - 58% of teens never attend religious services
 - Imp Rel Faith: no 36%, some 42%, very 22%
 - > Not religious, but not anti-religious
- **Now those who have a religion have to explain themselves being in the minority**
 - Many not comfortable being in minority

A NEW AUSTRALIA

- **Passing of White British Protestantism**
 - Fading effect of White Australia Policy
 - We are all minorities!!!
- **Churches are becoming sects - oppositional**
 - reactionary nostalgic binaries vs. new diversities
 - Re-differentiation – harden boundaries
- **New Reality = vibrant youth, hyper-diversity**
- **Religion out of the control of formally organised groups and the state**

Diversity Compounded – *Internal Difference*

- To this point Australia viewed as a mosaic
- But what of the ‘one-colour’ pieces
 - E.g. 1.6 Billion ways to be a Muslim
- Religion and spirituality are out of the control of both ‘church’ and state.
 - > Freely, immediately available at a click
 - > FRB issues rise as religion is politicised
- Religious identity tells very little, and less
- As an examination of Aus Teens tells us

AUSTRALIAN GEN Z: OUR APPROACH:

- **First we conducted focus groups all over Australia in High Schools in order to hear what teens had to say, what spirituality and religion meant to them.**
- **Drawing on this we constructed the questions for a national representative RDDM survey of teenagers conducted in late 2017.**
- **Then we used latent class analysis to identify types of ‘spirituality’.**
- **Plus follow-up interviews**

Summary of birth cohorts (generations) in Australia

Generation	Birth Years	Age in 2016	Size of cohort in 2016	% of popn. In 2016
			'000	%
Silent	1932-1945	71-84	2287.7	9.7%
Boomers	1946-1964	52-70	5071.7	21.7%
Generation X	1965-1980	36-51	4991.1	21.3%
Millennials	1981-1996	20-35	5264.9	22.5%
Generation Z	1997-2016	0-19	5786.1	24.7%



Comparison of religious identities in SGY Survey 2005 and Gen Z Survey 2017 (% of age group)

Sources: SGY Survey 2005 Mason, Singleton and Webber; AGZ survey 2017

Religious Identity	Millennials in 2005 Age 13-18 %	Gen Z in 2017 Age 13-18 %
Catholic	23	19
Other Christian	25	20
World Religions	4	7
None	48	52
Total	100	100



Change in Aus Teens 2005-2017

MILLENIALS

IN 2005
13-18 YEARS OLD

GEN Z

IN 2017
13-18 YEARS OLD

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

49%

Believe in God

55%

Definitely believe in life
after death

40%

Definitely believe in
the existence of
angels

15%

Attend weekly
services

37%

Believe in God

47%

Definitely believe in life
after death

35%

Definitely believe in
the existence of
angels

12%

Attend weekly
services



Australian Gen Z (aged 13-18): Belief in Higher Being by Religious Identification (% of group)

Source: AGZ Survey 2017.

Belief:	Religious Identification				
	Catholic	Other Christian	World Religion	Nones	Gen Z
No Belief in God/higher-being/life force	6%	1%	14%	42%	24%
Believes in God	66%	83%	58%	6%	37%
Belief in higher being or life force, but not God	22%	13%	25%	39%	30%
Don't know or unsure	6%	3%	3%	13%	9%
Total	100	100	100	100	100



Gen Z Teens: Spiritual, Paranormal and Supernatural Beliefs by Gender (% of gender)

Source: AGZ Survey 2017

	Gender		
DEFINITELY BELIEVES IN:			
	Male	Female	Gen Z
Astrology, that stars and planets affect people's fates	15%	24%	20%
Karma, that our actions, both good and bad, come back to us in another life	45%	55%	50%
Reincarnation, that people have lived previous lives	27%	32%	29%
The possibility of communicating with the dead	20%	30%	25%
Ghosts	27%	35%	31%
UFOs	24%	17%	21%



Australian Gen Z (aged 13-18): Self-identification by Religious Identification (% of group)

Agreement with the statement:	Religious Identification				
	Catholic	Other Christian	World Religion	Nones	Gen Z
I am a religious and spiritual person	27%	41%	32%	0%	16%
I am religious but not spiritual	28%	25%	17%	0%	12%
I am spiritual but not religious	13%	10%	25%	29%	22%
I am none of these things	10%	8%	12%	60%	35%
Can't Choose	22%	14%	11%	11%	14%
Total	100	100	100	100	100



The spirituality types of Australian teens (% of population aged 13-18) I

- **THIS-WORLDLY: 23%** There is no place in their worldview for religious, spiritual or non-material possibilities
- **INDIFFERENT/QUESTIONERS: 15%** Indifferent to religion, spirituality, and atheism
- **SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS: 18%** God, faith, religion are not important to them, but the door is open. (passive)



The spirituality types of Australian teens (% of population aged 13-18) II

- **SEEKERS: 8%** They have a decidedly eclectic worldview, seeking out their spiritual truth. (Active)
- **NOMINALLY RELIGIOUS: 20%** Culturally religious, mainly following their parents/guardians or community identity
- **RELIGIOUSLY COMMITTED: 17%** Religious faith, Christian (mainly Pentecostal and evangelical), Islam, Buddhist, Hindu or something else, is a big part of their lives.

How Does Spirituality Relate To Attitudes I

		SPIRITUALITY TYPE						
		THIS-WORLDY	INDIFFERENT	SBNR	SEEKERS	NOMINALLY RELIGIOUS	RELIGIOUSLY COMMITTED	Total
		Column N %	Column N %	Column N %	Column N %	Column N %	Column N %	Column N %
LGBTQI SUPPORT, ATTITUDES TO SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN SCHOOL	ENDORSERS	47%	40%	43%	48%	25%	13%	35%
	OPENS	47%	57%	51%	46%	60%	49%	52%
	RESISTERS	6%	2%	6%	6%	15%	39%	13%
ALL RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN AUSTRALIA SHOULD BE FREE TO PRACTISE THEIR RELIGION AS THEY WISH	ST/DISAGREE	11%	6%	10%	5%	8%	11%	9%
	NEITHER	3%	3%	2%	0%	1%	4%	2%
	ST/AGREE	85%	92%	88%	95%	92%	85%	89%



Spirituality and Attitudes to Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims

		This Worldly	Indifferent	SBNR	Seekers	Nominally Religious	Religiously Committed	TOTAL
ATTITUDES TO BUDDHISM, HINDUISM AND ISLAM	NEGATIVE	3%	3%	2%	0%	4%	14%	5%
	MODERATE TO NEUTRAL	22%	22%	23%	9%	22%	22%	21%
	POSTIVE	75%	75%	75%	91%	74%	64%	74%

Follow-up Interviews

1. Teens agreed with the types and their location in them
2. Teens appalled that religious groups are given exemptions from Human Rights legislation.
3. Teens totally opposed to any discriminatory actions by anyone toward LGBTIQ+ people

WAGZ SUMMARY

- **Australian AGZ(13-18) are awash, but NOT adrift in a sea of diversity.**
 - They know who they are.
 - Are very comfortable with difference – religious, gender, sexuality.
 - 14% LGBTQI, 85% schools to allow openness
 - If curious – will engage respectfully/Whatever.
- **People can live ethically w/o religion (83%)**
- **Multi-faith → Aus better place to live (91%)**

Hyperdiversity and Postsecularity

- **A great increase in the diversity of diversities**
 - Migration from South Asia
 - No diversity free zone in Melbourne
 - Successful rural communities – diverse
- **No binaries apply**
 - No single us vs them, religious vs secular
- **= Post secularity (not a return to the past)**
 - A whole new world

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A more contested, and confused policy context

- **The ‘seriously’ religious minority demand respect, freedom, protection, more separate schools, clear boundaries**
- **Rise of SBNRs → respect for diversity, fluidity**
- **Rise of no religion → freedom *from* religion**
- **More pressure for/against: school chaplaincy, SRI pgms, education about religions, accept complexity in ways of being – diversity.**