

1997

Attitudes of Young Adult Catholic Women Towards Religious Life and Related Issues

L. J. Worthington
Edith Cowan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Worthington, L. J. (1997). *Attitudes of Young Adult Catholic Women Towards Religious Life and Related Issues*. Edith Cowan University. https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/687

This Thesis is posted at Research Online.
https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/687

Edith Cowan University

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorize you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.
- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. Where the reproduction of such material is done without attribution of authorship, with false attribution of authorship or the authorship is treated in a derogatory manner, this may be a breach of the author's moral rights contained in Part IX of the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).
- Courts have the power to impose a wide range of civil and criminal sanctions for infringement of copyright, infringement of moral rights and other offences under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

**Attitudes of Young Adult Catholic Women
Towards Religious Life and
Related Issues**

**L. J. Worthington
B. A. (Hons) (Religious Studies)
1997**

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ATTITUDES OF YOUNG ADULT CATHOLIC WOMEN

**TOWARDS RELIGIOUS LIFE AND
RELATED ISSUES**

BY

L. J. WORTHINGTON

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of

Bachelor of Arts (Honours)

at the Faculty of Arts, Edith Cowan University

Date of Submission: 31st October, 1997.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	4
Declaration	5
Acknowledgements	6
 CHAPTER	
 1. INTRODUCTION	 7
Background in its Historical Setting	7
Significance	8
Outline of the Study	10
 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	 13
Attitudes	13
Values	14
Conservatism and Liberalism	16
Stages of Faith Development	18
 3. LITERATURE REVIEW	 21
Australia's Young Adult Catholics	21
Commitments	23
Community	26
Sisters	29
Religious Life	33
Religious Vows	39
Social Justice	44
Summary or Literature Review	51
 4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	 54
Form of Research and Analysis	54
Design	54
Content	55
Testing and Adjustments to Questionnaire	57
 5. ADMINISTRATION AND RECOVERY OF FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE	 61
Sampling	61
Distribution and Recovery of Questionnaire	63
Description of Sample	64

CHAPTER	Page
6. RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE	68
Commitments	68
Community	76
Values	85
Sisters	89
Religious Life	100
The Vows	105
Social Justice	117
7. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	126
8. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	147
Conclusions	147
Suggestions for Further Research	151
A Note in Conclusion	152
LIST OF REFERENCES	154
INDEX OF APPENDICES	160
1. Fowler's Stages of Faith Development	161
2. Summary of the <u>Mercy Sisters [sic] Research</u>	167
3. Participating Groups in Survey	169
4. Test for Conservatism or Liberalism (C-L Test)	176
5. Continuum of Conservatism to Liberalism in Participating Groups	177
6. Final Questionnaire	178
LIST OF REFERENCES FOR APPENDICES	199

ABSTRACT

This study examines the attitudes of a sample of young adult Catholic women from Perth, Western Australia, towards women's religious life in the apostolic tradition¹. Respondents' ages range from 18 to 35 years. Their attitudes towards other issues relating to religious life are also examined, including commitments; community; religious sisters; the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience; and social justice issues relevant to Australia.

The study also analyses participants' values and the relationship between these and their commitments. Differences in responses are highlighted through the concept of conservatism/liberalism and the framework of Fowler's Stages of Faith Development is used to understand these differences.

¹ Religious orders in the apostolic tradition live a communal lifestyle but work in the general community, as against contemplative orders, which carry out works within the walls of their institutions.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature.....

Date..... 31st October, 1997

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This has been a work born out of love for the Mercy Sisters of Perth, from whom I received my entire schooling and whom I consider my friends. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Sister M. Raphael Coady, RSM, with whom I spent many hours discussing the initial project. Sister Raphael provided me with an intimate insight into women's religious life following Vatican II and also steered me towards a considerable amount of relevant literature.

The assistance of the two pilot groups, who helped formulate and test the questionnaire, was greatly appreciated. Many thanks to the community and group leaders, school principals and university personnel, who facilitated distribution and recovery of the surveys. Of course, a study of this kind does not happen without respondents. I am indebted to the young women who took the time to fill out and return the questionnaire.

My gratitude to Dr. Lawrence McGrath for his interest and discussions throughout the whole project and for his suggestions following the first draft of the report.

Thanks are also due to Elaine Pascoe, whose advice on the presentation of the statistical component of this report was invaluable.

Lastly, but certainly not least, my sincere thanks go to my supervisor, Anne Harris, for her ready availability, guidance and constructive criticism, her encouragement when I felt I was 'drowning' and her wicked sense of humour that was never far from the surface.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study lies in the field of Religious Studies, in particular, the History of Religion and the Sociology of Religion and, to a lesser degree, the Psychology of Religion. In the context of this study, 'young adult women' is used to refer to women aged between 18 and 35 years.

Background in its Historical Setting

The background to the study is the decline of vocations to women's religious life in the Catholic Church² in the late twentieth century. It is a problem identified with religious orders of the Western World (Ebaugh, 1993, p. 73). O'Murchu (1995) reported that history has shown this decline to be part of a cyclical pattern, in which particular styles of religious life last for approximately three hundred years. They rise in response to an urgent need in the world, rather than in the Church, for it is this focus on the world that makes Christian religious life unique. According to O'Murchu, religious life is a cultural phenomenon, not a religious one. After a time of expansion and consolidation, disintegration takes place. Some congregations die out; a few survive in new forms, in response to new needs in the world (O'Murchu, 1995, pp. 24-29). Religious life, as we know it in the late twentieth century, is undergoing the decline phase.

The dismantling process now seems irreversible We are undergoing a classical paschal journey of death and resurrection We are witnessing one of the great paradoxes of universal life: rebirth through death. (O'Murchu, 1995, p. 11)

² Hereinafter referred to as 'the Church'.

The current decline of religious life has not happened in a vacuum. The Western World has experienced great change and uncertainty. Long established economic and cultural structures and dominance are under threat (Arbuckle, 1993, pp. 130-131). This simultaneous upheaval in social and Church structures is, again, history repeating itself. In the Mediaeval era, a latent function of the Church, through its hierarchy, sacralised the privileged position of the established order and its leaders and, at the same time, the prophetic function, via its lower class priests, provided leadership and an ideology of protest for the lower middle class. Old feudal structures of both Church and society were disturbed (O'Dea & O'Dea Aviad, 1983, pp. 91-92).

Times of social change and disorganisation result in people engaging in a 'quest for community'. They desire to become part of some group which can give them new values by which they can live. They seek communal and moral structures which they have failed to find in society or Church. At these times, charismatic leaders often meet the needs of those searching and fuel the smouldering fires within (O'Dea & O'Dea Aviad, 1983, pp. 71, 74). In the current crisis, it has not been to traditional religious life that contemporary young women have turned, but to a variety of new religious communities arising within the Church.

Significance

Most research to date, on the causes of this decline and what action should be taken, has been carried out from within the confines of religious life itself. There is very little research with lay subjects. Two Australian enquiries, one from Perth and one, which does not acknowledge a site, but most probably from one of the Eastern States, have been limited in their

scope. This research centres on a broader field of young Catholic women, who are actively participating in movements within the Church and who, in an earlier era, may have considered entering traditional religious life. It also includes schoolteachers and nurses, operating in Catholic institutions and carrying out the work that was once the domain of religious sisters and brothers.

Contemporary young adults have different experiences than their predecessors, therefore their attitudes, values, world view and search for spirituality, in all probability, will be different. At the same time, post-Vatican II³ religious life is lived out differently than in the past. The vows of chastity, poverty and obedience have been redefined. Most lay people would be unaware of this redefinition. By seeking new ministries outside Catholic schools and hospitals, religious sisters⁴ have lost valuable contact with young people and, as they are no longer as visible as they were when they all wore religious habits, people are often unaware of the new ministries in which Sisters are engaged.

There appears to be a lack of communication between the two groups, that is, between Sisters and young adult women. If young people are to be recruited, then first they must be understood. If religious life is to be seen as attractive, it too must be understood. The current views of the vows need to be made known and presented as valuable. The new work in which Sisters participate has to be seen to be worthwhile.

In order to gain a better understanding of contemporary young women in relation to religious life, this research examines the values of young Catholic women and their attitudes towards religious life and related issues. It adds to the body of knowledge that is being built up around this

³ Second Vatican Council.

⁴ Hereinafter referred to as 'Sisters'.

historic decline of religious life. For socio-historical scholarship, it is important to record this information while the decline is in process. It is primary research and, therefore, a fact-finding exercise, opening up a new field of enquiry into the relevance, form and future potential of religious life.

Outline of the Study

Rather than treating people in a survey as 'objects' to be 'used', those designing interview schedules should provide participants with an opportunity to reflect and to be empowered to develop (Leavey and Hetherington, 1988, p. 4). With this thought in mind, this study was designed not only to gather data, but to put before young women certain issues for their reflection; issues which, while directly related to religious life, impinge on all walks of life: commitments, values and a sense of community, leading to a sensitivity towards social justice. These four topics were intended to shed some light on the respondents themselves. The section on the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience was designed to give information, as well as to gather it. The sections on Sisters and religious life were designed, not only to gain information, but to put before young women both positive and negative aspects of religious life, as a lifestyle worthy of consideration.

When the idea of this study was still in its embryo stage, it appeared, from both literature read (O'Hara, 1990; Hughes, 1994) and discussions held with some Sisters (personal communications, 1995, 1996), that a change in the attitude of young people towards commitments was seen as one of the reasons for the decline of vocations. Yet, Turner's 1993 research suggested commitments were still important to young people. The hypothesis applied in the section on commitments, then, was that contemporary young adults made commitments regularly, some of which

they valued highly. The study established what the commitments of the young women in the sample were and the value they placed on them. It also gauged their general attitudes towards commitments, including breaking them.

The importance of taking values into account in the study of any group has been stated by Williams (1968) and Robbins (1993). Rokeach (1976) saw values as strongly motivating and Hill (1994) made the connection between people's value systems and the choices they made. This study established what respondents held as values and the relationship between these and their commitments.

Many of the respondents were drawn from the new communities operating in the Church. The study looked at the factors that influenced them joining their communities or groups, how they viewed those groups and, if they saw them in more than one category, which was the most important to them.

The section on Sisters examined whether recent contact with Sisters affected how respondents viewed them. It also gauged the influence of that contact on respondents' awareness of the ministries in which Sisters were engaged in Perth. This section also endeavoured to gain some indication as to whether the topic of a vocation was discussed amongst family and friends and if the new Church communities were taking over the traditional role of the family, as the place where religious vocations are, or will be, nurtured.

Respondents' views on aspects of religious life were sought, together with their thoughts on the return of conventional religious attire and the need for and possible future of religious life. Although part of religious life, the vows were put into a separate section for the benefit of respondents. Their

attitudes towards each vow were sought, as well as whether they thought religious life would be more attractive if vows were made optional. Information was given on the post-Vatican II interpretation of the vows to see if this new view would make any difference to their attitudes. To add depth, respondents were invited to comment on either the vows, as they saw them, or the new interpretation that was given in the survey schedule.

The section on social justice was included to ascertain the attitudes towards social justice issues, particularly in relation to matters of concern in Australia. It was also intended to highlight any section of the sample which might be likely to take on a prophetic role of criticising Church or political structures and to see if a portion of the sample would be prepared to give one year of their life towards helping the poor.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Attitudes

Rokeach (1976) defined an attitude as a relatively enduring organisation of interrelated beliefs about an object or situation. When stimulated, it was a predisposition to act. All attitudes incorporated beliefs but not all beliefs were part of an attitude. Rokeach argued against Chein (1948), Smith, Bruner and White (1956) and Katz and Stotland (1959), who claimed an attitude need not necessarily have a behavioural component. Rokeach maintained the attitude could not be detected without that predisposition to act (Rokeach, 1976, pp. 110-121). Oppenheim (1986) concurred with Rokeach, adding that attitudes were mostly dormant and only expressed when aroused by the objects of the attitudes. Attitudes were reinforced by the cognitive and emotional components of individuals' belief systems, leading to particular forms of behaviour (Oppenheim, 1986, pp. 105-106).

An important factor in predicting behaviour was the intensity with which an attitude was held (Oppenheim, 1986, p. 108). Rokeach believed behaviour was a function of the interaction between two types of attitudes: to the object and to the situation. When the types interacted, one was always the stronger. This accounted for a person apparently acting contrary to his/her attitude toward an object, when in fact the behaviour was in conformity with the situational attitude (Rokeach, 1976, pp. 127-128).

Rokeach and Oppenheim both saw attitudes as factors influencing a

person's behaviour. This present study focuses on respondents' attitudes towards religious life and related issues, in an effort to shed some light on why they joined religious groups other than traditional religious life.

Values

Values are one of many factors to be taken into account when studying or predicting human behaviour (Williams, 1968, p. 284). Robbins agreed, adding the importance of values in the study of groups or organisations, because they not only influence group behaviours but also their attitudes, motives and perceptions (Robbins, 1993, p. 172).

Values are types of beliefs which influence the worth individuals and societies place on beliefs, experiences and objects, affecting people's attitudes and behaviours (Rokeach, 1976, pp. 124, 157, 160; Williams, 1968, p. 284). They set the standard for making judgments on goals and what to treasure (Hill, 1994, p. 117) and are strongly motivating (Rokeach, 1976, p. 157). Features common to all values are cognitive elements; a selective or directional element (behavioural component); and an affective component (Williams, 1968, p. 283; Rokeach, 1976, p. 157).

When a belief is strong or important enough to influence behaviour consistently, then that belief is committed to a value and people tend to make choices consistent with their value systems (Hill, 1994, pp. 154-155). Value systems are the ranking of people's values in the order of importance in which they are held (Robbins, 1993, p. 171), affecting how decisions are made and conflicts settled (Rokeach, 1976, p. 161). Values arise out of human experience and are affected by social, cultural or environmental conditions playing into that experience. They can change in line with normal changes in people's lives (Williams, 1968, p. 286; Watson, 1987, p. 77),

particularly if the underlying convictions are no longer relevant (Robbins, 1993, p. 172). However, once established, values are relatively stable and enduring. The process of questioning them often reinforces held values (Rokeach, 1976, p. 160; Robbins, 1993, p. 172), affecting reactions to old and new circumstances (Williams, 1968, p. 286).

Personal values influence the choices people make in accepting themselves and becoming themselves (Kelly, 1992, pp. 30-32). People commit themselves to values that give their lives meaning and value, confirming their identity. They tend to place value on others, things and institutions, which give a sense of self worth. There is also a tendency for people to attach themselves to certain sources of power, which promise to preserve their interests and values and help them to deal with their insecurities and fears (Fowler, 1984, p. 69).

Values impact on the well-being of society as a whole (Wuthnow, 1993, p. 155). Moral values are at the centre of the stabilising mechanisms of a culture's social system (Williams, 1968, p. 286). To be associated with one's culture gives a healthy sense of self-identity and adds a sense of duty to society. Critical loyalty to the democratic system moves the person beyond personal needs to that of the common good (Hill, 1994, pp.19, 109, 133). Yet, the common good is not something impersonal to which the good of the individual must be sacrificed, but the state of affairs necessary to ensure individual goods are safeguarded (Kelly, 1992, pp. 45-47). Conflicts of values are present in all societies and there is often a gap between individual and social standards. Under conditions of rapid social change, more stress is put on value integration and, when the socio-cultural systems are under pressure for survival, they place ever increasing restrictions on personal values (Williams, 1968, p. 286).

One's feelings and commitments develop according to one's values and behavioural norms (Fowler, 1981, p. 154). The present study analyses the relationship between respondents' values and their commitments.

Conservatism and Liberalism

In this study, the focus of conservative/liberal differences is on the religious aspect and 'liberalism' refers to the broader liberal perspective of Christianity, not Protestant Liberalism. However, because of the nature of religion itself, any examination of religious conservatism/liberalism must draw from other disciplines.

Boguslaw (1992) suggested the conservative/liberal contrast was based on different psychological frameworks of conservative traditionalism versus liberal autonomy. Conservatives were controlled by emotions, which they believed needed to be disciplined. Liberals relied on reason (Boguslaw, 1992, pp. 1113-1115). Conservatives were obedient to the authority and institutions that articulated laws based on Scripture and to principles that guarded against human sinfulness. They emphasised individual conversion, stability and moral decency (Minogue, 1972, pp. 196, 198; Boguslaw, 1992, p. 1115; Wuthnow, 1993, pp. 147-150). Rights were earned by service, obedience and the cultivation of virtue and self-restraint (Boguslaw, 1992, p. 1115). On the other hand, liberals favoured individual rights and the freedom to exercise conscience, self-determination or collaborative authority (Pierard, 1986, p. 634; Boguslaw, 1992, p. 1118; Miller, 1983, p. 325; McDonough, 1991, p. 175).

Conservatives appealed to the experience of the past (Boguslaw, 1992, p. 1115). Traditions were rationalised into ideologies and inflexible

dogmas. Conservatives were hostile to radical change and the idea that humans could control their own lives (Minogue, 1972, pp. 195, 197). Social change was accomplished slowly through moral change but with the awareness of Providence moving social forces (Boguslaw, 1992, p. 1115; Minogue, 1972, p. 196). Liberals had more forward ideas about radical change. They were more likely to examine institutions and their practices (Boguslaw, 1992, p. 1114) and emphasise structural changes, stressing the ethical significance of Christianity (Miller, 1983, p. 325). Having little respect for the status quo (Boguslaw, 1992, p. 1115), they saw tradition as a barrier to improvement and progress (Minogue, 1972, p. 197).

Conservatives believed in bodily resurrection and salvation through Jesus. They spoke of Jesus more than God and referred to a mythical base and biblical principles (Wuthnow, 1993, pp. 140).

Liberals aimed to make religious ideas meaningful to modern culture and thought (Pierard, 1986, p. 631). They assumed a broadly ecumenical attitude and were open to truth, regardless of its source. Using modern scholarship, they demythologised Scripture (Pierard, 1986, p. 634; Miller, 1983, p. 324). Catholic liberals referred to postconciliar⁵ theologies (McDonough, 1991, p. 175).

Liberalism favoured divine immanence. God was the soul and life of the world as creator, not dualistically positioned above. Creation and revelation were ongoing processes (Pierard, 1986, p. 632-633; Miller, 1983, p. 324). This led many to pantheism. For some, the resurrection of Jesus was the continuation of his spirit and personality: the essence of the risen body after death (Pierard, 1986, p. 632).

Sin or evil was seen as imperfection, ignorance and immaturity. It

⁵ From post-Vatican II documents.

could be overcome by education and changing social and political structures, which caused social evils. Their removal was salvation (Pierard, 1986 p. 632; Miller, 1983, p. 325).

Wuthnow (1993, p. 14) felt that the terms 'conservatism' and 'liberalism' suggested a polarity. They reflected the diversity that existed within community: opposite ends of a continuum, with a wide space in between. The present study makes use of this concept to highlight differences that appear to exist in the two polar extremes of the sample.

Stages of Faith Development

Fowler (1986) suggested people's faith developed along a predictable pattern of seven stages, although few people moved through all stages. For Fowler, faith was part of the human condition, 'a given', which progressed along certain lines. It was concerned with meaning-making: a way of knowing and being, through which one shaped one's life according to convictions or assumptions about reality. Faith was developed through relationships and reason (cognitive/affective knowing). It was also generated from one's attachments and commitments to centres of ultimate value, which had the power to bring unity to one's life experiences (one's world) and, with it, significance and meaning (Fowler, 1986, pp. 15-26). Paradoxically, one's values and the commitments one made were dependent on one's stage of faith development (Fowler, 1981, p. 154).

Movement from one faith stage to the next was not dependent on age, maturation or psychological development, although they influenced one's readiness for transition to that next stage. Rather, movement to the next stage was brought on by crises or challenges to one's faith structures and

the values and meaning of one's world. Progress to the next stage marked significant changes in both the structures of a person's knowing and valuing; in the individual's perspectives and the way he/she justified them. Transition was traumatic because life's meanings were at stake (Fowler, 1984, pp. 57-58; 1986, p. 27).

The following is a brief outline of Fowler's Stages of Faith Development⁶. The sources are Fowler, 1984, pp. 51-71; 1986, pp. 28-37.

Primal Faith

From 0-2 years. Development of basic trust and sense of self-worth.

Stage 1. Intuitive-Projective Faith

From approximately 3-7 years. Illogical thought results in intuitive knowing. Egocentricity projects child's own perspectives onto others. Meaning-making is based on experience and story.

Stage 2. Mythic-Literal Faith

From approximately 7 years to early adolescence. Stories and concepts are taken literally and concretely. Emerging logical thought leads to more stable meaning-making. Ritual and tradition are important for identity and self-worth. There is a strong sense of fairness. God is consistent, caring and just.

Stage 3. Synthetic-Conventional Faith

From early adolescence. This stage is characterised by formal operational thinking. It is a conformist stage, with values, worth and identity linked to those of significant others. Lives are synthesised around the faith position of the group or significant others, without question. Relationship with the deity is personal.

⁶ For a fuller description of Fowler's Stages of Faith Development, see Appendix 1.

Stage 4. Individuative-Reflective Faith

From late adolescence but often not until 30s or 40s. This stage signifies a critical examination of identity and faith to satisfy a need for authenticity and consistency. This is a stage of polarities, in which one pole is chosen and the other discarded. Awareness extends beyond the group to others with whom there is an affinity. There is still a certain amount of group bias and firm boundaries. Scripture is demythologised and symbols provide ideas for meaning-making.

Stage 5. Conjunctive Faith

Unusual before mid-life. New dimensions of awareness dawn. The firm boundaries of Stage 4 become porous and permeable. Paradox is now seen as richly ambiguous and part of truth. Truths of other traditions are recognised. Many names are used for the Transcendent. Myth is once again used to express meaning, in a more sophisticated way than previously and the richness of mystery is recognised. Internalised authority is further developed. An extended outreach to others includes those with whom there is no affinity.

Stage 6. Universalising Faith

Exceedingly rare. This requires complete emptying of the self. Perspectives are balanced with those of other traditions and states: the universal community. The valuing process is in cooperation with the Creator for creation. It entails a total response in love and personal unity with the deity.

Respondents' faith development will colour their views on life in general and topics surrounding religious life. Fowler's stages of faith will be used to help understand trends in the sample's responses.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Australia's Young Adult Catholics

Young Australians, born between 1960 and 1975, were raised in the post-Vatican II era and grew up with the changes that ensued. Their formative years were very different from those of their parents (Pirola, 1993, p. 315), most of whom would have been reared in years of religious certainty, where laws of God and Church were taught and obeyed almost without question (Turner, 1993, p. 72).

Post-Vatican II children in Catholic schools were encouraged to think for themselves; to question and discuss ideas and beliefs (Flynn, 1985, p. 77; Turner, 1993, p. 133). If the same questions were taken home, most parents thought it not right to question religious beliefs. Children received mixed messages (Turner, 1993, p. 133). Topics covered other world religions and world views, including atheism, along with evidence for the existence of God. These were immense changes from the pre-Vatican II era (Turner, 1992, pp. 127-128).

Ex-students were critical of the Religious Education they received at Catholic schools in the 1970s and 1980s. These were experimental times and religious instruction varied with each teacher. Students saw religious lessons irrelevant to modern life (Turner, 1992, p. 120; 1993, pp. 130-135, 145-148). The BCJDP⁷ Report, (1996, p. 27) agreed with this last point. There was a serious lack of knowledge in basic areas of students' faith and students called for more attention to be given to moral problems in Religious

⁷ Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace.

Education classes (Flynn, 1985, p. 159).

A major concern for the Church since 1976 has been the steady loss of its young people. Those seeking guidance and a faith community could not always find them in the Church, whose liturgies and teachings were frequently seen as irrelevant to their lives and whose parishes often lacked community spirit. Many met their intimacy needs in small-group experiences of church (Turner, 1993, pp. 119, 124; Flynn, 1985, pp. 252-253); many left to seek more relevant religions. Others, while rejecting the institutional Church, still considered themselves Catholic. When they disagreed with the Church's stance on issues, they followed their consciences (Turner, 1993, pp. 124, 138, 146, 153), without the guilt of previous generations, because their formative years included a different psychology (Pirola, 1993, p. 316).

Many contemporary young adults saw the Church as authoritarian, patriarchal, rule bound and only acting socially when it was safe to do so (Turner, 1993, pp. 97, 102, 111; Hughes, 1994, p. 8). It was widely regarded as being out of touch with young people's lives (BCJDP Report, 1996, pp. 26-27).

Young people had a strong desire to relate to an immanent, personal God. Their spiritual development was central to their lives and covered a search for meaning and self-transcendence. It was connected with their interpersonal relationships (Flynn, 1985, p. 362, Turner, 1993, pp. 119, 153), which were immensely important (Pirola, 1993, p. 318). Along with interpersonal relationships and Church/spiritual development, other issues of critical concern for youth were identity (with related issues of substance abuse, boredom and suicide) and unemployment (BCJDP Report, 1996).

Commitments

Young People and Commitments

Cultural and historical factors influence the modern outlook on commitments. Times of rapid change produce personal and institutional instability, changing people's needs and making it difficult to look too far into the future (Schneiders, 1986, p. 194, 199; O'Connor, 1992, p. 694). Young people, nurtured in this environment of rapid change and uncertainty, were hesitant to engage in long term commitments as they entered adult life (Schneiders, 1986, pp. 195, 197; McLay, 1990, pp. 47, 57; O'Connor, 1992, p. 694; White, 1994, p. 365).

O'Hara connected the downward trend in religious vocations to "the lack of acceptance by young people today of the value of commitment to anything, least of all to a 'state' of life, including the married state" (O'Hara, 1990, p. 44). Hughes claimed Australians allowed their feelings and preferences to dominate their decision making, rather than judging what was good. He believed there was no longer any guarantee of long term loyalty (Hughes, 1994, pp. 5-12). In defence of the young, Schneiders pointed out that the cultural experience of most young people regarding long term commitments was that they were not always kept. A consumerist society encouraged self-centredness and a throw away society rid itself of what no longer worked, thereby discouraging perseverance. Young people suffered from poor role modelling, not only in the form of unstable marriages but also from departures from religious life (Schneiders, 1986, pp. 194-198). McLay concurred on this last point, saying young people were often seriously affected when Religious they knew broke commitments and left religious life (McLay, 1990, p. 47). As the idea of permanent commitment was so qualitatively different to what it was for the previous generation, Schneiders

suggested this be taken into consideration when criticising contemporary young people's attitudes to commitments (Schneiders, 1986, p. 199).

Contrary to what O'Hara and Hughes claimed, Turner found that commitments were important to young Australians, especially in relationships, although these may have been considered temporary. She also found their commitment to their spiritual development and a search for a 'God of all peoples' was a deliberately chosen part of their lives (Turner, 1993, pp. 119, 153, 158). Agreeing with this, the BCJDP (1996, p. 27) added that the commitment to spiritual development and relationship with God was not always manifest in formal religious observance. Johnston believed that, although many young people turned to secular meditation because established religions failed to fulfil the craving for religious experience, the religious dimension was still present. Consequently, their commitment to their prayer lives had not been abandoned, rather, its style had merely changed (Johnston, 1993, p. 20).

Until recently, both marital and religious commitments were entered into at far too young an age, often for the wrong reasons and encouraged by culture and Church. In these cases, annulments and dispensations were probably the best solutions (Schneiders, 1986, pp. 196-197). In contrast to this, the current phenomenon, of extended adolescence and delayed entry into young adulthood, has seen young people taking on lifestyle responsibilities much later than in previous generations (O'Connor, 1992, p. 695). Erikson (1968) called this prolonged adolescence a psychosocial moratorium, which allowed the individual more time in solving the identity struggle, in order to make a better life choice (cited in Peterson, 1984, p. 287). In many instances, this would be seen as a development for the overall good. However, in some cases, it could provide an excuse for not

taking the responsibility of making long term commitments.

Deciding to Keep or Break a Commitment

Kanter (1968) believed the higher the price (personal sacrifice and energy) one paid in making a commitment, the more value one placed on it and the more difficult it was to abandon that commitment later (cited in Nelson, 1987, pp.142-143).

McLay reported that contemporary young adults considered the quality of a commitment, more than the length of its endurance, as the vital factor (McLay, 1990, p. 48). Schneiders suggested that, considering the cultural-historical obstacles to lifetime commitments, "the important thing [was] not that one spen[t] a whole life doing something but what one [did] with one's whole life and how one [did] it" (Schneiders, 1986, p. 204). She added that to change and grow towards the fullness of life, one may need to change one's state of life. A life commitment was an ongoing involvement with life, not some kind of a trap (Schneiders, 1986, pp. 204-205). This implies that lifestyle commitments, such as marriage or religious life, may be abandoned under certain circumstances, which, in turn, brings in the question of informed conscience.

Gula (1989) described conscience as the basic knowledge and capacity to know and do good; the ability to perceive what ought to be done or avoided; and the judgment of what one must do in the particular situation. The mature conscience made its own informed decisions on the best course to take in the given situation and in accordance with the individual's values. It was not subject to external control, as was the superego (Gula, 1989, pp. 123-124, 126, 131). Schneiders saw the commitment to God as the source and justification for all authentic commitments. Truth informed conscience

had the final say in a conflict of commitments. The guide was, not faithfulness to commitments but, to the truth as it was seen, fulfilling the commitment to God (Schneiders, 1986, pp. 81-83).

Community

At the heart of a community was a sense of communion between members and the quality of their bondedness (Arbuckle, 1990, p. 71; Woodward, 1988, p. 41). This sense of communion gave a feeling of belonging, leading to relationships; the sense of bondedness gave a sense of identity and significance (Arbuckle, 1990, pp. 71-72; Schneiders, 1986, pp. 255-256; Fiand, 1993, p. 79). In addition to personal growth and exchange with one's own generation, community also provided the forum for adults to nurture the next generation. Generativity⁸ within one's own community could spill over in ministry to addressing the needs of the wider community (Schneiders, 1986, p. 258). As the genuine community fostered human and spiritual growth, so the community itself was strengthened (Seelaus, 1990, p. 137).

Religious Communities

There was consensus among women Religious that to live in community was an essential dimension of religious life (Fiand, 1993, p. 7; Letourneau, 1994, p. 12). In the religious community, where there was bondedness, members empowered 'individuation', that is, ongoing growth and maturation, in each other. Community was fostered where there was trust and openness to meet and be met in each others' vulnerability (Fiand,

⁸ Endeavour of middle adulthood by which individuals pass on their knowledge and skills to a younger generation.

1993, pp. 79, 84-86). The quality of the relationship between members was sustained by mutuality and empathy (Woodward, 1988, p. 95).

Community life empowered members to mission. There was a tension between the community's mission and community life itself (Fiand, 1993, pp. 76-77; Woodward, 1988, p. 37). The challenge was to maintain a healthy balance between the two (Fiand, 1993, p. 90). The call for religious communities was to witness to the unity in their own lives and to witness Kingdom values to all others. To be a witness, religious life had to be visible and this was not as automatic as it was in the past (Schneiders, 1986, pp. 263-264). Women Religious believed more flexible models of religious life were required to enable them to work amongst those they wished to serve (Letourneau, 1994, p. 12).

New Forms of Religious Communities

In the 1970s and 1980s, new religious groups and communities started to emerge within the Church, answering the needs the Church was perceived as failing to fulfil. Sex discrimination was eliminated in all but a few (Turner, 1992, p. 358). Collins described them as genuine new forms of lay religious life, signalling the coming to consciousness of the laity. Having different levels of commitment, the new communities were more flexible than traditional religious communities. They were more autonomous and less dependent on Church hierarchy but still required Church approval to call themselves Catholic (Collins, 1986, pp.84-85).

However, Collins saw two problems. Firstly, the laity wanted more than just a passive role in the Church and, in spite of Lumen Gentium's⁹ directive of equality, ministry in the Church still remained under clerical control (Collins, 1986, p. 87). O'Dea agreed that, while the relationship

⁹ Vatican II, Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), 1964.

between clergy and laity had undergone change, hierarchy still maintained control: reform had not taken place in this area (O'Dea, 1973, pp. 238, 241-242). Secondly, Collins saw some movements as healthy, while he saw others, such as fundamentalist movements, as decidedly unhealthy (Collins, 1986, pp.88-90). In support of this, Dilanni's enquiries showed recruits with features of psychological dependency and security needs and he believed some members would need community support for life (Dilanni, 1993, p. 755). This was a repetition of a problem in previous generations, when people entered religious communities for the wrong reasons. Their concern and awareness of others' needs was, in reality, a cry from the neglect they suffered in their own upbringing (Schneiders, 1986, p. 37; Fiand, 1993, p. 100). Groups, that attracted recruits with dependency needs and looking for security in structure, ran the risk of developing cult-like characteristics (Bradley, 1990, p. 82).

Fowler (1981) pointed out that faith communities had an 'expected level of development for adults' towards which the practices and styles of leadership aimed. Recruits were attracted by this modal developmental level and younger members were encouraged to grow into that level but not beyond it. Fowler believed that the challenge for communities was to avoid the tendency to remain at the expected level of development and to encourage lifelong development in faith (Fowler, 1981, pp. 294-295). Leavey and Hetherton (1988) believed a community's influence on individuals' faith development was dependent on its ability to sponsor and encourage members' spiritual quests and meaning making processes (Leavey & Hetherton, 1988, p. 21).

Factors Influencing People Joining Communities

The most important human influence on recruits joining religious

communities was contact with a Religious who was happily fulfilled in religious life (Ewens, 1990, p.58). White agreed, adding 'searching for something' was another important factor (White, 1994, p. 365). Dilanni's study revealed that the three factors attracting recruits to new religious communities were explicit religious goals, an intense community life and a passion for worldwide evangelisation (Dilanni, 1993, p. 748).

Sisters

Sisters: From Virgins to Nuns to Sisters - A Brief History

The concept of religious life for women has been evolving from early Church times. For women, different forms of the religious calling emerged in response to different historical and social dictates (Neal, 1990, p. 15; O'Murchu, 1995, p.22).

The first period (early Christian era - 1600) arose in response to the absence of a legitimate role for women outside marriage (Neil, 1990, p. 15). This saw the eventual recognition of **Virgins** and **Widows** as living in holy states and the introduction of the vow of chastity/celibacy (Schneiders, 1986, pp. 48-49; Neal, 1990, pp. 14-15).

The Christian **eremitic movement** started in the fourth century when men and women fled Hellenistic society to live the Gospel more fully in the desert as hermits. They embraced a life of solitude, prayer and ascetic practices, including celibacy and poverty (Schneiders, 1986, pp. 50-51).

The fifth and sixth centuries saw the development of enclosed monasteries and convents for **contemplative Nuns**, who lived a life of prayer, meditation and ascetic practices. Nuns wore religious habits and took vows of chastity, poverty and obedience to the abbess (Neal, 1990, pp.

17-22; Schneiders, 1986, pp. 51-54).

The second period (1600-1950) arose initially in response to urban poverty in Europe and continued in further response to the problems caused by bourgeois revolutions. It began in 1633, when a group of women, without convent or religious habit, formed the Daughters of Charity to minister to the sick poor. The Church deemed this radical group's consecration less authentic than the consecrated life of Nuns and only allowed these **Sisters** to take temporary vows annually. In 1990 they were finally recognised as true religious congregations¹⁰ (Neal, 1990, pp. 24-26).

When monasteries were outlawed in parts of Europe, Sisters moved to America and other European colonies. Here they quickly took up work with the poor and in education. Their work continued to flourish until the 1950s. Tensions developed within religious life over the priority of prayer or service to the poor, reaching a point where Sisters engaged in active ministry had to prove their spiritual commitment by some external display of piety (Neal, 1990, p. 26).

The Modern Sister

A third period (1950-the present) has been one of modernising. By 1950, Sisters staffed schools, hospitals and welfare centres throughout the world. They also worked as missionaries. In response to an increased need for professional competency and Rome's call to update, they undertook professional training. By 1966, most religious Sisters in the Western World were highly educated. Vatican II documents gave them new insights into their mission and vows. Sisters reviewed their mission statements for work

¹⁰ A congregation is the total group of religious men or women who live by the rules of their founder or foundress. The rules, approved by Rome, are known as the constitutions of that congregation.

amongst the poor and towards changing structures. They modernised their attire and customs to suit their new mission, which involved working with lay professionals and other groups (Neal, 1990, pp. 28-36; Campion, 1990, p.17).

Through ongoing formation programmes, Sisters responded quickly to the demands of Vatican II and became far more theologically and pastorally updated than their male counterparts (Arbuckle, 1993, p. 134). However, they were often criticised for neither looking nor acting like 'true religious', nor passively submitting to the patriarchal leadership. Arbuckle put this criticism down to a powerful and well planned restorationist force, within Church hierarchy, which he believed was driven by fear and uncritical pre-Vatican II attitudes (Arbuckle, 1993, pp. 134-136).

Coinciding with the updated education was an increase in departures from religious life. Sisters, now capable of critical social analysis, were able to identify exploitation and oppression (Neal, 1990, pp. 32-34).

Sisters In Australia

In 1838, five Sisters of Charity arrived in Sydney, marking the beginning of the story of women Religious in Australia. They worked amongst deprived adults and towards improving conditions for women. Similarly, the early Good Samaritan Sisters in Melbourne worked amongst prostitutes and orphans and engaged in other social works (Campion, 1990, pp. 13-14). Arriving at Fremantle in 1846, the Sisters of Mercy were the first religious teaching Order to establish schools in Australia (McLay, 1992, pp. 6-7; Killerby, 1996, pp. 125-126). By organising the building of schools, hospitals and homes, the pioneering Sisters stepped outside the normal divisions of labour recognised between the sexes at the time (McLay, 1992,

p. 72).

While acknowledging their contribution to health care and social work, education is the work most associated with Sisters in Australia. When state aid for Church schools was withdrawn, the bishops turned to religious congregations to staff and keep the schools open. In time, Catholic schools became the hubs of parish life. Sisters staffing them had their fingers on the pulses of respective parishes. This pastoral role went almost unnoticed (Campion, 1990, pp. 15-16), as did their contribution to the social and cultural life of the community, through their music teaching (McLay, 1992, pp. 123, 141-149).

Life for Sisters in Australia was not always easy and has been well documented (Campion, 1990; McLay, 1992; O'Brien, 1994; Gardiner, 1994; Killerby, 1996). Sisters faced physical and emotional hardships with practical-mindedness. They refused to see themselves as victims of the sexism "operating strongly within Australian society and church" (McLay, 1992, p. 6).

Australian Sisters, like others in the Western World, responded to the call to update. They branched out into new ministries - parish work, chaplaincy, publishing and social work with minority groups (Campion, 1990, pp. 17-18). These 'new' ministries were similar to those in which the pioneering Sisters engaged in the early days. The ministry of religious Sisters in Australia has come a full circle.

Local Research

In the late 1980s, the Mercy Sisters of Perth commissioned independent research to measure levels of interest of young women becoming Mercy Sisters or Mercy Associates. The researchers drew their sample from upper high school students, from three Perth Mercy Colleges,

and ex-Mercy students as subjects. Some 285 women were surveyed, with ages ranging from 16-40 years (Mercy Sisters [sic] Research, c. 1989). The unpublished report revealed some interesting statistics. Evidence of reliability was provided but because of the limited scope of the sample, results cannot be generalised to the wider population. However, the sample was Perth based and results will provide an interesting comparison with the results of this present study. Results relative to the current research are summarised in Appendix 2.

Religious Life

Crisis In Religious Life

"That a crisis in Religious Life occurred in the mid-1960s, and is still occurring, is beyond doubt" (Murphy, 1995, p. 93). The crisis was a dramatic decrease in numbers of recruits and a flood of departures. Statistics showed religious life was in serious decline (Murphy, 1995, p. 93; Woodward, 1988, p. 4; McLay, 1990, p.55; Arbuckle, 1990, p.19), as was its cultural impact (O'Murchu, 1995, p.10).

1. External causes.

1.1. Socio-cultural changes. Religious life was a cultural phenomenon (O'Murchu, 1995, p.29), affected by history and socio-cultural conditions (O'Murchu, 1995, p. 22; Neal, 1990, p. 15). The Western World's economic and cultural structures were threatened and undermined, as society showed signs of turmoil and loss of traditional values (Arbuckle, 1993, pp. 130-131). The world offered different challenges for religious life than in the past: altered values, rejection of authority and the sexual revolution, with its flow-

on opportunities for women, to name a few (Letourneau, 1994, p. 8; McLay, 1990, pp. 47, 55; Ebaugh, 1993, pp.72-73).

1.2. Vatican II documents. Religious life lost its exclusive identity when Lumen Gentium stated religious life was not a state on its own, but participated in both pastor and lay states, and Gaudium et Spes¹¹ declared the Church's solidarity with all peoples (Fleming, 1990, pp. 32-33; McLay, 1990, pp. 42-43; Schneiders, 1986, pp. 24-27; Neal, 1990, p. 42). With its identity undermined, religious life became insecure (Arbuckle, 1990, pp. 52-57; 1993, p. 132). Perfectae Caritatis¹² opened up the possibility for new life to emerge but its guidelines were inadequate to address the complex issues facing contemporary religious life (O'Murchu, 1995, p. 23).

1.3. Further effects of Vatican II. Prior to Vatican II, religious life's model for group living was that of a family. This resulted in immature consciences, and psychological damage. New structures were needed (Schneiders, 1986, p. 247; Fiand, 1993, p. 91; Neal, 1990, pp. 89, 96). Constitutions were re-worked, particularly in relation to governance and obedience (Schneiders, 1986, p. 247; Woodward, 1988, p. 4; Neal, 1990, pp. 89-90) and interpersonal relationships and celibacy. There was a flood of departures (Woodward, 1988, p. 4).

Dilanni believed congregations failed to attract candidates because they opted for individual autonomy, rather than group identity, or Religious took on lifestyles more appropriate to lay communities (Dilanni, 1993, p. 747). Fleming agreed with the last point, saying it was detrimental to their own community lives and affected their ability to witness effectively to the wider community (Fleming, 1990, pp. 34-35) .

¹¹ Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), 1965.

¹² Vatican II, Perfectae Caritatis (Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life), 1965.

For most religious institutions, the period of experimentation with new forms of living was either over, or very nearly so, when Rome intervened and issued the revised Code of Canon Law of 1983. This, in effect, limited what Religious could do and created a crisis that could not be minimised. By ignoring the efforts women's congregations had undergone to adapt their charisms to the mission of the Church, Rome ran the risk of alienating some of its most committed members (Neal, 1990, pp. 91-93).

2. Internal causes.

O'Murchu placed the primary cause of the decline within religious life itself and external factors as secondary. Drawing on Raymond Hostie's work, O'Murchu saw the current decline of religious life as part of a cyclical pattern that evolved approximately every three hundred years. The cycle moved through sequential stages of birth, death and rebirth of new forms, or revitalisation of a few survivors into a new cycle (O'Murchu, 1995, pp. 24-27).

O'Murchu believed the survival of religious life's present form was in doubt. Religious life had become over concerned with itself and its survival, neglecting its prophetic role. It lost touch with its life-giving myth. Also, excessive Church control saw religious life too closely identified with the institutional Church and its rules (O'Murchu, 1991, pp. 56, 73-74; 1995, pp. 11, 26-29). On this last point, there was both agreement (Johnson, 1994, p. 16; Fleming, 1990, p. 41) and disagreement: most Sisters understood themselves as being Church, rather than working for the institutional Church (Letourneau, 1994, p. 13).

Murphy agreed that the cause of the decline was within religious life itself and that O'Murchu was on the right track, in as far as he went. Murphy drew on Wilber's theory of transpersonal psychology, stating that religions

moved through hierarchical and sequential stages to the ultimate stage of mysticism. Religious life, as a legitimate religion¹³, had moved in periodic cycles of death and rebirth because of its refusal to take the transformative leap to the next highest stage. Instead, it had moved horizontally and undergone surface translation¹⁴, so archetypal values became revamped expressions of their original identity. Murphy said O'Murchu knew archetypal values and liminal qualities led to new, purified expressions of religious life. Transpersonal psychology added that the challenge was not only to purify but to move to the next highest level. Religious life's failure to make that transition was the real cause of the crisis (Murphy, 1995, pp. 5, 47, 52, 94-100, 111, 188).

Suggestions of Ways out of the Crisis

1. Own status or lay status.

Fleming believed the crisis would not be resolved until religious life was once more recognised as having its own identity (Fleming, 1990, p. 41). Yet, Letourneau reported a consensus among Sisters of the need for consecrated religious life to reclaim its lay status (Letourneau, 1994, p. 11). Being lay was a characteristic of emerging religious life, identifying it with the greater majority of the Church, not the clerically ordained (Gottemoeller, 1993, cited in Harmer, 1995, p. 96).

¹³ Legitimate Religion - system of thought and behaviour which holds groups together, protects against other world views, fulfils needs of group and gives meaning and purpose by way of customs, rules and written documents (Murphy, 1995, p. 223). Religious life also holds Smart's six dimensions of a religion.

¹⁴ Surface translation occurred in attempts to stabilise surface structure to hold the level together. Rules could be changed at surface to preserve the religion's nature at the deep level, or understanding could be purified, e.g., from concrete understanding of myth to applying demythologised truth (Murphy, 1995, p. 45).

2. Return to prophetic role.

Many called for religious life to return to its prophetic role (Fleming, 1990, p. 41; Johnson, 1994, p. 15; Chittister, 1993, p. 4; Letourneau, 1994, p.15). Arbuckle believed religious communities needed prophetic refounding leaders, who could act as agents for dynamic change, by reinterpreting the Gospel message for the age. They were also needed to lead congregations back to their sacred founding times, so they could become invigorated and inspired. Arbuckle considered these prophetic refounders were rare people, at least in Fowler's Stage 5 (Conjunctive Faith) and moving on to Stage 6 (Universalising Faith) (Arbuckle, 1988, pp. 28, 111; 1990, pp. 62-68; 1993, p. 131).

While Arbuckle advocated prophetic individuals, O'Murchu suggested liminal prophetic groups to act as catalysts for change. The task was to challenge both society and Church, denouncing systems that worked against the New Reign of God. A new theology had to align itself with the New Reign, not the institutional Church. Religious life had to be the sign that led the world to humanity, witnessing to values through relationships. This meant creating communal structures that promoted interrelatedness and unity. This included connecting with social justice movements outside the Church and establishing right relations with the Earth (O'Murchu, 1991, pp. 136-137; 1995, pp. 66-72; 123-125).

3. Transformation.

Murphy suggested that the proposals for change in the hope of refounding (Arbuckle) and revitalising (O'Murchu) were both futile horizontal moves. The only hope of religious life being transformed to a higher level

was in the people who displayed trans-law characteristics¹⁵ and who were capable of being instruments of transformation. These people would be firmly established on the rational-individuated¹⁶ level of religion. When there were enough of them, they could take religious life to the next highest level of authentic religion (Murphy, 1995, pp. 48, 52).

Murphy thought that until society in general arrived at a well integrated level of rational-individuation, forms of religious life at this level would be few. New forms of religious life, for the most part, would continue to be reemerged forms of mythic religion in ever more purified forms. When there were sufficient numbers in a group at the rational-individuated level, they would then face their own crisis to move on to the next level of mysticism and direct experience of God (Murphy, 1995, p. 217).

Australian Research

In 1990, McLay led two sessions of reflection on religious life, one with youth, the other with adults. Details of the discussion groups were not provided but the enquiry was commissioned by the National Council of the Major Superiors of the Religious of Australia. This was in response to the results of the first part of the Major Superiors' 'Project on Australian Religious Life', published under the title Which Seeds Shall Grow (Turner, 1988). The discussion groups' reflections on religious life were part of the

¹⁵ Trans-law characteristics - willingness to work within the law but, in the face of higher values, to move beyond the law to what the law did not cover; or to act contrary to the law if circumstances dictated (Murphy, 1995, p. 48).

¹⁶ Rational-individuated religion - a secular phenomenon or an overtly religious one. Full rational thought with true perspectivism and recognition of self as a unique individual with rights and needs. If overtly religious, sees beyond concrete and historical to universality of archetypes and conscious of their reality in the person's life. For non-religious expression, surface structure takes the form of science, philosophy and history; religious expression applies modern scholarship to study of Scripture and myths on which religion is based (Murphy, 1995, pp. 224-225).

second stage of that 'Project'.

Results suggested lay Catholics were confused about contemporary religious life. Some felt it no longer offered challenge; others felt it needed a 'PR job', to spell out more clearly its new relationship with the world. The majority did not favour a return of the religious habit.

Attitudes varied with age. The younger group no longer saw religious life as holy. Even though they related well to individual Religious, the message was negative for religious life as a genre. They criticised Religious for not practising what they preached and acting in a superior manner. This contrasted with the Mercy Sisters [sic] Research (c. 1989, p. 29), in which the 'Mercies' were seen as friendly, sincere, down to earth and committed to the oppressed. McLay's adults were more realistic, seeing Religious as humans with both weaknesses and positive attributes. Expectations of Religious still ran high. While acknowledging Religious were less than perfect, McLay's adults thought they were still needed as role models to help the laity strive for higher ideals. Female Religious were seen to be more in touch with reality than male Religious, because any real changes seemed to come from the women (McLay, 1990, pp. 41-45).

Religious Vows

"A vow . . . is . . . a free and deliberate promise made to God of something that is both possible and good" (McDonough, 1991, p. 930). That the vow was made to God distinguished it from any other promise and helped the person to keep it. Vows could be dispensed if people were incapable of fulfilling them, even if taken with the best intentions at the time (McDonough, 1991, pp. 930, 932).

In the past, the vows primarily meant renunciation (O'Murchu, 1995, p. 56; Fiand, 1993, p. 35) of things that were basically good in themselves (Reiser, 1995, p. 596). Over time, vows became structures which served and preserved the institution but were ineffective in the modern world (Schneiders, 1986, pp. 97-98).

Religious vows were intended to develop attitudes and behaviours in key dimensions of human living (McLay, 1990, p. 45; O'Murchu, 1995, p. 58). At the personal level, chastity or celibacy dealt with affectivity; poverty with possessions; and obedience with power. At the social structural levels, these corresponded to the social, economic and political spheres of society (McLay, 1990, p.45; Schneiders, 1986, p. 101). Whereas previously, the focus was more on the personal aspect, between the individual and God, contemporary interpretations focused more on the social structural viewpoint (McLay, 1990, pp. 45; Reiser, 1995, p. 598). Yet, the personal dimension was not abandoned, rather actions flowed on from the ideals that beckoned and inspired individuals to a heightened awareness of the sacredness of all creation (Fiand, 1993, pp. 48-49). By taking the 'preferential option for the poor', religious life entered the political, social and economic realities of the world (Reiser, 1995, p.599). This required a shift of values (Woodward, 1988, p. 223). Since the vows were now regarded as values of engagement, O'Murchu suggested renaming them in line with current interpretations: relatedness for celibacy; stewardship for poverty; and partnership for obedience (O'Murchu, 1995, pp. 57-58).

Chastity

Previous interpretations of chastity or celibacy were negative towards sexuality and placed marriage as a lesser vocation (Schneiders, 1986, p. 91). For too long, celibacy and lack of intimacy were coupled together and

many practices under the name of celibacy were psychologically unhealthy and damaging (Woodward, 1988, p. 237; Schneiders, 1986, p. 92; Fiand, 1993, p. 87; Neal, 1990, p. 80).

While celibacy was not denied, the vow of chastity was intended to be much more. It claimed there were modes of loving, other than that expressed genitally (Fiand, 1993, pp. 81-82; Neal, 1990, p. 78; Woodward, 1988, p. 224). Chastity was a process of growth towards total self-giving and all-embracing love, which did not rule out intimacy. True intimacy in relationship did not pose a threat to individuality but allowed space for growth (Woodward, 1988, p. 237; Fiand, 1993, pp. 95-97, 82). The bonding that ensued worked towards mutual empowerment (Fiand, 1993, pp. 97-98).

The vow of celibacy was the vow of community life (Fiand, 1993, p. 89) and a commitment to its development (McLay, 1990, p. 47). Celibacy in community was a commitment to love one another, through non-possessive love, and an openness to honest encounter (Fiand, 1993, p. 82; Neal, 1990, p. 80). Celibacy reached out to the world and was complementary to marriage (Schneiders, 1986, p. 92).

Influenced by the women's movement, society underwent a change from a patriarchal status to one based on the mutuality of the sexes. Religious life was affected by this change. Some members, seeking their own growth in intimacy, realised religious life was no longer an option for them. This caused many departures from religious life and influenced the decline in vocations (McLay, 1990, p. 47). Interviews with 60 young Irish women regarding religious life revealed celibacy was seen as problematic (White, 1994, p. 365).

Poverty

Past practices of the vow of poverty resulted in emotional and economic dependency and a lack of control over the individual's life project (McLay, 1990, p. 46. Fiand, 1993, p. 66; Schneiders, 1986, p. 91).

After Vatican II, Religious were expected to move from a preadolescent dependency to adult interdependence, requiring a mature change of heart. A central concept was releasement, where goods were used without attachment (Fiand, 1993, pp. 68-70). Goods were assessed according to their value to the work of the mission (Harmer, 1995, p. 59).

The vow of poverty meant more than material poverty. It called for a surrender of personal time and space (Woodward, 1988, p. 224), which was central to the concept of solidarity with the poor and the modern religious way of life. Solidarity was impossible without sharing another's experience. The essential mandate for the vow of poverty was awareness of one's own poverty and the impermanence of all material things. Only then, could one reach out to others in their poverty (Fiand, 1993, pp. 55-62).

Poverty was about stewardship: respecting the rights of all humans and stressing the equitable distribution of goods among all (McLay, 1990, p. 46; Schneiders, 1986, p. 103; O'Murchu, 1995, p. 57). It meant challenging exploitation of peoples and the earth and aiding the struggle for a just economic order (Schneiders, 1986, p. 91; O'Murchu, 1995, p. 58; Neal, 1990, p. 81).

McLay's discussion groups judged Religious harshly for their material possessions and apparent hypocrisy in adhering to the vow of poverty. At the same time, they saw the negative aspects of economic dependence on others (McLay, 1990, p. 45).

Obedience

The pre-Vatican II model of leadership in many congregations was authoritarian. Too often it looked to the needs of the congregation, ignoring those of individuals (Drennan, 1993, pp.66, 69). Under authoritarianism, those who obeyed did so without question or responsibility for the consequences (Fiand, 1993, pp. 112-113). This led to psychological and moral immaturity and dissatisfaction (Schneiders, 1986, p. 92; McLay, 1990, p.50; Drennan, 1993, p. 66; Fiand, 1993, p. 115). Blind obedience was fostered because it was convenient to the system (Fiand, 1993, p. 114) and was justified by equating the superior's will with the will of God (Schneiders, 1986, p. 92).

Since Vatican II much has changed, yet, at the beginning of this decade, Neal believed that full participation in decision making, together with accountability and shared responsibility for the consequences of those decisions, were goals not fully realised (Neal, 1990, p. 86). This was more a crisis of leadership than obedience (Drennan, 1993, p. 69). Currently, authority and obedience are viewed very differently within communities and between communities (Drennan, 1993, p. 70; Ruffing, 1994, p. 327). For most religious women, authority is seen as being shared amongst communities of equals (Ruffing, 1994, p. 327). Those who have made this change have rewritten rules and constitutions with goals and objectives determined through a participative process involving all members (McLay, 1990, p. 50).

The vow of obedience was the vow to obey the will of God. The challenge was to discern that will in the present time (Neal, 1990, p. 82). Only by discerning the will of God and responding creatively could Religious engage in transforming the world. If laws were unjust, autonomous

obedience could require disobedience (Fiand, 1993, pp. 123-124). McLay (1990, p. 50) and Neal (1990, pp. 83-85) linked the vow of obedience with the vow of poverty, with Neal adding that obedience to the will of God demanded taking an option for the poor. These comments all suggest acts of mature moral consciences, as described by Gula (1989, pp. 124, 131).

In spite of what had been accomplished in the way of collaborative leadership, some still felt a leader was required (White, 1993, p. 143; Drennan, 1993, pp. 71-73), Drennan suggesting that leadership be one of Christ-like service, rather than one of power (p. 73). While McLay agreed that superiors relinquish their power in favour of service, she maintained that shared leadership and democratic government provided a more mutually beneficial model for organisation. (McLay, 1990, pp. 50, 52).

Social Justice

Since 1891, the Church has developed a body of literature on Catholic social teachings, mainly through Papal documents, recorded homilies and papers from synods of Bishops. Schultheis, DeBerri and Henriot (1988), in summarising these documents, called their paper Our Best Kept Secret: The Rich Heritage of Catholic Social Teaching. Walsh shed some light on why the body of literature might have been called 'our best kept secret', saying: "Many Christians of the United States have little or no interest in activity on behalf of justice and peace" (Walsh, 1985, p. xiii).

Walsh went on to explain this indifference. As people moved through stages of faith (Fowler), so too did cultures. Cultural Christianity was presently moving from Stage 3 (Synthetic-Conventional Faith) to Stage 4 (Individuative-Reflective Faith). This transition, which began in the mid-

sixties and was still in progress in the mid-eighties (and may still be in progress), moved in a series of quantum leaps and different cultures moved at different paces. Many clung to Stage 3, with little interest outside the immediate group. Challenging the causes of poverty or injustice was merely an option not central to their Christian lives (Walsh, 1985, pp. 11-18, 47-48).

Only when people moved to a higher stage were they prepared to help others outside their group and challenge systems that caused injustice and conflict. Walsh believed those in Stage 4, who thought in terms of changing systems, were a small minority. The majority of cultural Christians were not interested (Walsh, 1985, pp. 18, 46-48). Collins confirmed this. Previously marginalised Australian Catholics, having gained their own rights, were now unwilling to stand up for the rights and justice of the new marginalised and voiceless (Collins, 1986, p. 221).

In 1990, the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) stated that the call to work for justice was often not heard and the majority of Australian Catholics were not even aware of the existence of the Church's social justice teaching (ACSJC, 1990, pp. 5, 7). This suggests Australian Catholicism may not have progressed very far in its transition to Stage 4.

Dorr pointed to two diametrically opposed types of spirituality at play. Firstly, an old or dualistic spirituality was concerned with the 'holy' or 'spiritual' and tended to support the status quo. Secondly, a prophetic type of spirituality challenged structures and sought the kinds of radical changes that social justice required. Both types reacted against each other but Dorr believed a synthesis could be achieved (Dorr, 1985, p. 124). Those with the old spirituality would be in Stage 3. Those of prophetic spirituality would be at Stage 4 or beyond.

Action for social justice worked on two models: the social welfare

model, which alleviated the pain and suffering and focused on individuals and small groups; and the social change model, which worked on eliminating the causes of injustice in institutions and structures. Both methods were necessary: one to assist the victims of injustice, the other to address the causes. Each model needed to be open to, and to live in creative tension with, the other (ACSJC, 1990, p. 27). The social welfare model would suit those in Stage 3, with the old type spirituality, while the social change model would suit people of Stage 4 or higher, with prophetic type spirituality.

Surlis (1993) believed contemporary moral thinking erroneously identified morality primarily with sexual issues. This placed political, economic, social and environmental issues secondary, or even beyond moral evaluation. Surlis pointed out that Paul VI's call for a justice based international morality and John Paul II's reference to socio/political issues as moral issues, set a pattern for moral theologians to shift their paradigms (Surlis, 1993, pp. 47-49).

On Justice, Peace and Tolerance

Mater et Magistra¹⁷ called on industrial countries to respect the cultures of developing countries and to offer aid without designs to dominate the recipients (Schultheis, DeBerri & Henriot, 1988, p. 28).

Pacem in Terris¹⁸ declared peace was an empty word if it did not rest upon truth, justice, charity and freedom (Schultheis, DeBerri & Henriot, 1988, p. 33) and Gaudium et Spes stated it was not just the absence of war, but the human drive for justice, that brought peace and harmony (Walsh, 1985,

¹⁷ John XXIII, Mater et Magistra (Christianity and Social Progress), 1961.

¹⁸ John XXIII, Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth), 1963.

p.85).

In 1985, John Paul II warned against a 'conspiracy of silence' which blocked dialogue for those seeking justice and peace (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, 1986, pp. 6-7, 20). In line with this, the ACSJC equated silence with indifference, when people failed to protest against injustices, or remained silent in misguided efforts to keep the peace. Tolerance was not always appropriate and offences against human dignity should never be tolerated (ACSJC, 1995, pp. 5, 8-12, 17-19).

On the Australian Scene¹⁹

1. On refugees, migrants and indigenous people.

Populorum Progressio²⁰ stressed a duty to welcome foreigners and suggested closer dialogue between those who gave and those who received, to ensure aid was more effective (Schultheis, DeBerri & Henriot, 1988, p. 42). Of particular concern to marginalised groups was the right to participate in decision-making on matters concerning individuals and their communities (Dorr, 1991, p. 172). It was the most profound oppression, when people, through deep moral apathy, had no desire to shape their own history (Cullinan, 1975, pp.10, 12). Applying this to refugees, Dorr believed they should not be left for long in a state of dependency but should be helped in a manner that empowered them to take responsibility for their lives (Dorr, 1991, p.122).

Justice in the World²¹ stated that respecting people's rights meant allowing them to develop according to their cultures, providing this did not work against the common good (Schultheis, DeBerri & Henriot, 1988, p. 49).

¹⁹ Literature cited in this sub-section, although not specifically for Australians, applies well to the Australian scene. The exception, Common Wealth for the Common Good, was written by Australians, for Australians.

²⁰ Paul VI, Populorum Progressio (On the Development of Peoples), 1967.

²¹ From the 1971 Synod of Bishops.

Dorr agreed on both counts. Pressuring migrants to conform to the majority's ethos, particularly regarding language, was unjust (Dorr, 1991, pp. 25, 33).

2. On poverty and unemployment.

Regularly, since 1961, the Church has challenged the world to address the chronic states of poverty existing throughout the world.

Mater et Magistra (1961) pointed to the imbalance of wealth between nations. It called for a more fair distribution of wealth and for the affluent to help the needy (Walsh, 1985, p. 74). While Australia has its own poverty problem, it still has duties abroad (Australian Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church (AECRCC), 1992, p. 23).

Populorum Progressio (1967) attacked the causes of poverty. Merely feeding the starving was not enough. It demanded that unjust situations be challenged and public authorities establish goals to stimulate activity. The first aim for developing peoples was basic education to empower them to live humanely. Both individuals and affluent nations had the responsibility to make this happen (Schultheis, DeBerri & Henriot, 1988, pp. 41, 46). Part of the Christian vocation was empowering the poor to take responsibility for their lives and helping them keep up the fight against the structures that created their marginality (Cullinan, 1975, pp. 78-79).

Redemptor Hominus²² (1979) highlighted again the gap between affluent, developed societies and the numerous poorer societies. It criticised the world economy and politicians for being incapable of meeting the challenges and ethical demands of the situation. Yet again, in 1980, Dives in Misericordia²³ warned the inequality between the rich and the poor was

²² John Paul II, Redemptor Hominus (Redeemer of Humanity), 1979.

²³ John Paul II, Dives in Misericordia (On the Mercy of God), 1980.

getting worse (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, 1986, pp. 4, 6).

In 1981, John Paul II used homilies and Laborem Exercens²⁴ to attack unemployment, reminding governments of their moral duties in this regard (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, 1986, p. 12; Schultheis, DeBerri & Henriot, 1988 p. 58).

Common Wealth for the Common Good²⁵ (1992) highlighted the essential dignity and freedom of all persons; the need for all people to work for the common good; and that to stand beside the poor and work for social justice was not an option but a duty. This enquiry showed there was a high imbalance of wealth in Australia. Poverty existed in spite of apparent affluence. Australian ideology, based on consumerism and success, promoted individualism and widened the gap between the successful and the poor. This enquiry called on people to change their attitudes, in particular, to analyse underlying structures responsible for social inequalities and to translate their findings into just and compassionate policies. It also recommended Australia offer more generous aid abroad and advocated a fairer distribution of the goods of the earth, which were to be extracted without exploitation (AECRCC, 1992, pp. 2-5, 8-11, 15-18, 23).

The Church and Social Injustice

Justice in the World (1971) stated that the Church must do justice. Those speaking about justice must be seen to be just themselves. Within the Church, people's rights needed to be preserved and all should be given responsibility, including the laity and especially women. (Schultheis, DeBerri, & Henriot, 1988, pp. 9, 48-9).

²⁴ John Paul II, Laborem Exercens (On Human Work), 1981.

²⁵ Summary of the findings and recommendations of the Australian Catholic Bishops' enquiry into the distribution of wealth in Australia, 1992.

At the 1983 and 1987 Synods of Bishops, Canadian Archbishops warned that Church statements on raising the status of women would lose their impact, and the Church would lose its credibility as a witness, if it did not grant its women full equality. It was recommended that the issue of women's ordination be pursued, as the reasons put forward against such a move were unconvincing, especially to young people (Sheehan, 1993, pp. 162-165).

The Code of Canon Law was seen to supply the justification for perpetuating injustices within the Church. Doyle, drawing on Boff and Baum, argued that, while canon law did not dictate injustice, the fault rested in basing the interpretation of divine law on systematic exclusion. The Church saw itself as obediently following the plan of Christ for the Church. Those with decision-making authority within the Church, and those who blindly followed, were most affected by this 'ideological blindness' (Doyle, 1993, pp.127-130).

Walsh, casting a critical eye on the Church, summed up the above by saying the Church had passed on an admirable message of justice and peace. However, its own practice left much to be desired, especially in its 'maldistribution' of power (Walsh, 1985, p.50). Dorr supported this, accusing the Church of, "giving a counter-witness to the truth" (Dorr, 1991, p. 39). An ex-religious, commenting on this inconsistency, is quoted by Turner (1992, p. 281) as saying:

In the area of justice, the Catholic Church is quite schizophrenic. On the one hand, her social justice encyclicals are magnificent and, on the other, Church practice is often blatantly out of keeping with its own vision. I agree with Henriot who says the social teaching of the Church is the Church's best kept secret [T]he Church . . . [is] limping badly on its one male leg while 62 per cent of its membership [is] feminine and silently present in the pews.

Summary of Literature

The above literature suggested Australia's young adult Catholics, raised in the post-Vatican II era, had a different outlook on life and spiritual matters than their parents. It disclosed two extremes: one, freely critical of the Church as irrelevant to life, and another of insecure young people, seeking intense community life.

Contemporary young people were accused of lack of commitment and loyalty. Other researchers suggested commitments were still important to them but, due to their different nurturing environments, they viewed or fulfilled them differently, seeking quality more than length of endurance. The decision to keep or break a solemn commitment was viewed in the light of informed conscience.

The literature showed a consensus among women Religious, who believed that to live in community was essential to religious life. Community life and the mission of the community stood in tension with each other, the former providing the empowerment for the latter. In the 1970s, new, more flexible forms of religious life emerged. These were seen to fulfil a need the Church failed to meet. However, the type of dependent recruits some of them attracted was a concern, suggesting a repetition of the past, when people joined religious institutions for the wrong reasons.

For background information, a brief history traced the development of forms of women's religious life from Virgins through to the modern Sister, with the gradual introduction of the vows. In each instance, the form taken was a response to socio/historical dictates. The literature also acknowledged the contribution of religious Sisters to Australian society. Research, from both sides of Australia, on the attitude of young people

towards Sisters and religious life will provide comparisons for this study.

The current demise of religious life was examined for the external and internal causes and suggestions were put forward for ways out of the crisis. While there was clear consensus on the decline of numbers, the causes and possible cures of the crisis were still open for discussion. Murphy's diagnosis and suggested remedy were both interesting and possible but, by his own admission, something for the distant future. Recovery will be slow.

The purpose of the vows and their new interpretation were discussed. This new understanding and the mode in which they were to be lived were radical changes from the past: changes which emphasised positive values and encouraged individual growth, rather than the renunciations of the past, which often stifled growth.

The literature on social justice revealed fine ideals of social justice but a tardiness in putting them into action, mainly by a Church hierarchy reluctant to practise what it preached and a disinterested laity. Those who criticised this failing were the prophets, crying in the wilderness: a clear example of the cut-off between Fowler's Stage 3 and Stages 4 and beyond.

A theme that ran throughout was change. Since Vatican II, contemporary religious life and young adults were shown to be different from their predecessors. The literature showed the current decline in religious life to be part of a pattern of change that has occurred regularly throughout history, in response to the social needs of the time. Reactions to the current changes were handled differently, depending on the life experiences and world-views of the individuals involved. The use of paradigms helps one to understand these differences. In this study, differences will be highlighted through the paradigm of conservatism/liberalism. A second paradigm,

Fowler's stages of faith development, will be used to place these differences into the broader scenario of respondents' journeys towards their God.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Form of Research and Analysis

The form of the research was a survey, quantitative in design and qualitative in the request for respondents to add their comments. What distinguishes a survey from any other research is its form of data collection and the method of analysis (de Vaus, 1995, p. 3). Variables are collected on a number of cases (respondents), so comparisons can be made. The tool used for collection of data was a mail questionnaire schedule. Advantages of the mail questionnaire are superior sampling, easy analysis and elimination of interview errors, thus raising the likelihood of reliability and validity. Disadvantages include researcher bias, respondent bias, distortion by opinions of other people and poor response rate (Oppenheim, 1986, pp. 32-33; Moser, 1958, pp. 175-177; de Vaus, 1995, pp. 110-111). How these disadvantages were overcome are dealt with below.

Responses were coded and analysed via the Ed-Stats computer package (Knibb and Edith Cowan University, 1995-1996).

Design

To help eliminate researcher bias, the assistance of a small pilot group of 5 young women (group 1) was sought to help formulate questions and statements. This group consisted of four teachers and a nurse, all of whom had personal contact with Sisters, either professionally or privately, since leaving school.

The questionnaire was designed to use the following methods for gathering data:

1. Attitude measurement. Using Likert's method, attitude statements were compiled. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement by selecting a number on a 5 point scale from strongly agree (5 points) to strongly disagree (1 point). Some items were worded in reverse to detect respondents who carelessly marked straight down one column of numbers. The advantages of the Likert method include reasonably high validity and reliability, ease of preparation and elimination of researcher bias, by being based on the empirical data of the subjects' responses (Burns, 1995, pp. 337-338).

2. Nominated and chosen data. Respondents were to nominate different items and to rate them on a scale of 1-7. Similarly, items chosen from lists provided were to be rated on a 7-point scale.

3. Closed items. Respondents were asked to choose from two or three fixed alternatives. The advantage of using closed items is uniformity of measure, enhancing reliability and facilitating coding (Burns, 1995, p.349).

4. Comment. To add depth, respondents were also invited to include their comments if they wished.

Content

The questionnaire covered eight topics:

1. Commitments

1.1. Chosen items. A list of ten items relevant to various walks of life (for example, marriage, study, spiritual development, etc.) was given. Respondents were asked to indicate to which of these they were committed and how they rated them on a seven point scale.

1.2. Likert-style statements. Twenty-six Likert statements were included to gauge respondents' general attitudes towards commitments.

2. Community

2.1. Nominated data. Respondents were asked to nominate two factors which influenced their joining their particular groups.

2.2. Chosen items. A list of six categories was given, from which respondents were to indicate how they viewed their groups.

2.3. Likert-style statements. Twenty-three Likert statements were included to ascertain respondents' attitudes towards community in general; towards their own particular groups; and whether their sense of community reached beyond group interest.

3. Values

Nominated data. Respondents were to nominate three values they considered important and to rate them on a seven point scale.

4. Sisters

4.1. Nominated data. Respondents' knowledge of Sisters' current ministries in Perth was sought.

4.2. Likert-style statements. Twenty-two Likert statements were included to see how Sisters were viewed by the sample.

4.3. Closed questions. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had recent contact with Sisters or not.

They were also asked to indicate the anticipated positive or negative reactions of family and friends, if respondents decided to become religious sisters, and if those reactions would affect their decisions.

5. Religious life

Twenty-four Likert-type statements were included on secular religious life for women.

6. Religious vows

6.1. Likert-style statements. Twenty Likert statements on the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity were included.

6.2. Information supplied. A brief description of a reinterpretation of the vows in the light of modern circumstances was given, followed by a question to gauge if the vows were seen as an attraction or a deterrent under this new definition.

7. Social justice

Twenty-three Likert-type statements were included to test the general feeling towards various areas of social justice, relevant to the Australian scene.

8. Demographic data

Supporting information was sought on age, country of origin, ethnic background, level of education and if that education was received at a Catholic institution or other.

Note: See appendix 6, Final Questionnaire. The pilot questionnaire had the same format as the final questionnaire and very similar statements.

Testing and Adjustments to Questionnaire

A second pilot group of 37 (group 2) was used to test the adequacy of

the questionnaire. Group 2 consisted of Catholic teachers, nurses, university students and members of an Antioch Youth Group. Thirty-three questionnaires were returned but one was not filled out and another was rejected for inconsistency (marking down one column of numbers, regardless of items worded in reverse). The usable return rate was 83.78% (N=31).

1. Sets of Likert-style statements. Sets, covering commitments, community, Sisters, religious life, religious vows and social justice, were put to the test for reliability (coefficient alpha) and item analysis. Items for each set were separately analysed. As items with discrimination values close to 0 are not generally consistent with other items in their set (Knibb, 1995), twelve items were eliminated for having discriminations below 0.15. These included five items from the set on Sisters, two each from the sets on commitments, community and social justice and one from religious life. One other statement was eliminated from the religious life set because a high number of respondents (42%) used the 'not sure' option and this was deemed unsatisfactory. Reliability readings for the sets of statements after these eliminations are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1.

Reliability of Likert Statements (Pilot Group 2)

Topic	Coefficient alpha	Mean	SD
Commitment	0.67	3.74	1.02
Community	0.79	4.04	0.70
Sisters	0.78	3.50	1.04
Religious Life	0.73	3.30	1.07
Religious Vows	0.74	2.93	1.12
Social Justice	0.72	3.60	1.09

Apart from those eliminated, other items with discriminations below 0.3 were either modified or reworded, after consultation with members of pilot group 1. Some additional items were included from findings and predictions of reliable and validated research reports of Leavey and Hetherington (1988) and the unpublished Mercy Sisters [sic] Research (c. 1989). Statements were also added to test ideas from other relevant literature. The introduction of new items meant that the pilot study alpha levels would not apply to the main study. New alpha levels are reported in each section of the main study.

2. Chosen data. The purpose of the pilot test for chosen items was to delete items in the lists that were not chosen; or add items which came up regularly in the 'other' option, indicating they should have been listed. In the commitment section, study/work/career were listed together. Results from the pilot test indicated that 'study' should have been listed separately. This was the only alteration made.

3. Religious vows. When statements were being formulated with pilot group 1, it became apparent that the majority were unaware that most religious congregations had reinterpreted the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, to bring them more in line with modern circumstances. It was decided to present a list of statements to test attitudes to vows, followed by a brief explanation of the modern interpretation of the vows (Schneiders, 1986; Neal, 1990; Fiand, 1993; O'Murchu, 1995). This was to see if the vows, under the new definition, would be seen as attractions or deterrents. As this was an unusual procedure for a questionnaire, the purpose of its inclusion in the pilot study was to see if it was worth carrying over to the main study, that is, if there was any difference (practical or significant) between those who saw the vows as attractive or negative after reading the new

interpretation. The frequency (f) by which each vow was seen as an attraction or a deterrent by pilot group 2 (N=29) is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2.

Religious Vows Seen as Attractions or Deterrents (Pilot Group 2)

Vow	Attraction (f)	Deterrent (f)	Chi-Square	p. value
Obedience	14	15	0.03	0.85
Poverty	10	19	2.79	0.09
Chastity	8	21	5.83	0.02

Note: All df = 1

Table 2 shows that, amongst the pilot group, the vows were seen more as deterrents than attractions. While the differences in the frequencies for obedience and poverty were both non-significant, there was a practical difference between the number who saw the vow of poverty as a deterrent and those who viewed it more positively. The number who saw the vow of chastity as a deterrent was significantly different from those who saw it as an attraction. It was decided to carry this section over to the main study.

A full detail of the final version of the questionnaire, which was used in the main study, is given in Appendix 6.

CHAPTER 5

ADMINISTRATION AND RECOVERY OF FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Sampling

1. Target Population

Participants were Catholic women, 18-35 years, who had joined Christian groups mainly within the Catholic Church. It was thought many of these women, had they lived in an earlier time, may have presented as candidates for religious life.

2. Identification of Groups

To sample a good cross section of the types of Catholic women who belonged to Christian groups in Perth in 1996, it was decided to seek respondents from fourteen known groups or communities operating in a diversity of ministries in the Perth Metropolitan Area. These included charismatic communities; live-in and live-out communities; action groups; prayer groups; youth and young adult groups; university students; and teachers and nurses working in Catholic institutions. For a full list of these fourteen groups see Table 3 on page 64.

3. Selection of Groups

Three methods of selection were used:

3.1. Common knowledge. Well known groups or communities

operating in Perth, as well as parish and Archdiocese based groups.

3.2. Telephone directory. Use of the Catholic section of the Perth Metropolitan telephone directory.

3.3. Word of mouth. Recommendation by interested persons.

4. Sampling Within Groups

4.1. Cluster sampling. Respondents were drawn mainly from intact clusters of Catholic women, 18-35 years, within groups or organisations. Clusters of students from Edith Cowan University came from under-graduate and post-graduate students, undertaking courses in Catholic Education, as part of the requirement for teaching in Catholic schools. Clusters were taken from all groups except students from University of Notre Dame Australia (NDA), members of the Christian Centre for Social Action and nurses and carers.

4.2. Random sampling by computer. Random sampling was used for larger organisations. Two random samples of Perth's Catholic schools were taken: from those with Sisters on staff and from those fully staffed by lay teachers. A ratio of 1:4 reflected the ratio of schools with a Religious presence to those without. Clusters of female Catholic teachers within the age range were used from these selected schools. Computer generated random selection was also used to choose participants from NDA.

4.3. Opportunity sampling. A problem arose in obtaining samples of Catholic nurses and carers. It was intended that samples be drawn from Perth's three Catholic hospitals. However, entry into the hospitals was refused on the grounds that it was against policies to allow staff to be surveyed. All of Perth's Catholic nursing homes were then approached but most staff were either above the age range or non-Catholic. Only 11

completed questionnaires came from this source. This small number was supplemented by another 4 from nurses who worked in two of the Catholic hospitals and who were contacted privately. "Opportunity sampling . . . should be used only if the elements of the population of interest in the study cannot be found in any other way" (Burns, 1995, p. 72). Because of the nature of the Christian Centre for Social Action, samples from this source would also have to be regarded as opportunity samples.

Distribution and Recovery of Questionnaire

Principals or leading persons of each group were contacted by phone for permission to enter. A brief summary of the research and the considered importance of the particular group's participation were given. To encourage a high return rate, it was decided to deliver all the questionnaires to the groups or their leaders and, wherever possible, to collect them on completion, rather than have them posted. Times for delivery and collection were set when permission was granted. Experience quickly showed that a phone call prior to collection and a possible extension of time saved extra trips to pick up slower returns.

To help deter influence and bias, the importance of respondents answering what they felt, not what they thought they should be saying, was pointed out to all groups. To eliminate any stress this may have caused and to ensure maintenance of confidentiality, all questionnaires were delivered in unsealed, self-addressed envelopes. On completion, each questionnaire was sealed in its envelope and held by some allocated person pending collection. The return rate for collected replies was 84.11%.

Owing to the nature of some groups, collection was impossible and, in

these cases, the addressed envelopes had stamps affixed. The return rate for posted replies was 41.65%, justifying the decision to collect responses whenever it was possible.

Altogether, 255 surveys were distributed over fourteen groups; 207 replies were received of which 2 were not filled out. The usable return rate was 80.39%.

Description of Sample

1. Numerical Break-Down

A brief summary of each group is given in Appendix 3. Table 3 shows the fourteen groups from which the sample was drawn. The table also gives a numerical break-down of each group and an indication of abbreviations used in further tables and results.

Table 3.

Numerical Break-Down of Groups

Name	Abbreviation	Number
University students	(UNI)	44
Schoolteachers	(Teachers)	33
Antioch Youth Group	(Antioch)	30
Bethel Covenant Community	(Bethel)	24
Disciples of Jesus Covenant Community	(DOJ)	23
Nurses and Carers	(Nurses)	15
Neo-Catechumenate	(Neo-Cats)	8
Catholic Youth Ministry - Young Adults	(Young Adults)	6
Christian Centre for Social Action	(CCSA)	6
Redemptorist Prayer Group	(RPG)	5
Focolare Movement	(Focolare)	4
Holy Spirit of Freedom Community	(HSOF)	3
Companions Volunteer Community	(CVC)	3
Divine Mercy Apostolate	(DM)	1

2. Education Levels

A feature of the sample was its high level of education: 78.54% had the benefit of tertiary education. The remaining 21.46% all had high school education, many with some additional form of technical training.

3. Ethnicity

Multiculturalism was evident in the sample, which consisted of 50.73% of people who were either themselves migrants or from at least one migrant parent. This provided a good cross section of cultures. Countries represented were:

England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Irish Republic,
Spain, Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Italy, Malta,
Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Russia,
Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, United Arab Republics,
India, Burma,
Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia,
Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mauritius,
Canada, Trinidad, Chile,
New Zealand.

Australians born of Australian parents constituted 49.27% of the sample. However, there was no indication whether Australian Aboriginals were included in this figure. The Vietnamese, one of Australia's latest Catholic migrant groups, were not represented.

4. Outlook of Sample

Conversations with group leaders while distributing the questionnaires indicated that some groups would be on the conservative side, while others would not. It was felt this would affect how respondents completed the questionnaire. At this stage of the research, it was too late to include any scientifically recognised test to gauge levels of conservatism or

liberalism. Instead, nine Likert-type statements, which looked on face value to indicate a conservative or liberal outlook, were extracted from the questionnaire to test respondents' apparent levels of conservatism or liberalism. These nine statements are listed in Appendix 4 and are later referred to as the C-L test. A reliability test on these statements was strong with coefficient alpha at 0.87. Using the means of respondents' replies to indicate in which direction they leaned, those with mean scores of 2.00 and below, or with 8 individual scores of 2 or below, were deemed conservative (N=34). Those with means of 4.00 and above, or with 8 individual scores of 4 or above, were considered to be liberal (N=23). Those whose scores lay between these extremes were considered to be moderate (N=148). At this point it is stressed that these divisions were used to show what appeared to be practical differences in outlook. They were not intended to be taken as scientific proof. The point of applying the labels was not to classify individuals as 'more advanced' or 'less advanced' but to show there were differences within this sample and to classify them so comparisons could be made.

Whilst the term 'conservative' was used, it must be pointed out that all groups were endeavouring to conserve particular elements of the Gospel message and, therefore, could be considered 'conservative'. In this study, 'conservative' was used to indicate caution in veering from what was traditional Catholic structure and practice, for example, unquestioning obedience. 'Liberal' was used to indicate an element of autonomy: more readiness to follow conscience and to challenge structures. Here at play was a tension between two functions of religion: the conservative function as agent for stability and structure and the prophetic function as agent for social change.

Appendix 5 provides a break-down of apparent conservatism to liberalism by group. While the majority of the sample could be considered moderate, small groups appeared to show a greater tendency towards either conservatism or liberalism.

Eighty-six percent of respondents received their education at Catholic schools in the post-Vatican II 'experimental times' referred to by Turner (1992, p. 120). Students' outlooks would have been influenced by what was being taught and emphasised at the time, that is, age could be a factor in determining the outlook of this sample. Taking respondents' ages and using the means from the C-L test, a correlation test was non-significant (Pearson $r=0.14$, $p=0.30$). Age did not appear to play a part in determining either conservatism or liberalism in this sample.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

For reliability, alpha was set at 0.05 and p values refer to $p_{2\text{tail}}$. Likert statements that were worded negatively were reverse scored and the means marked * when displayed in tables. The purpose of reverse scoring is to maintain consistency, that is, the higher the mean score, the more positive the attitude.

Section 1 - Commitments

Questions to be answered in this section were:

1. To what were young women in this sample committed and what value did they put on these commitments?
2. What were their general attitudes towards commitment?

1. How the Sample Valued Their Commitments

Sections 1 (a) and (b) of the questionnaire asked respondents to choose from a list items to which they were committed and to rate them on a scale of 1-7, seven being the most highly valued. The commitments fell into four categories: interpersonal relationships; God and the world; to oneself (personal growth and well-being); and security and finance.

Table 4 indicates the frequency with which commitments were chosen and the percentage of the sample this represented. Means and medians are on a 7-point scale. All medians were 5 or more suggesting all commitments were highly valued.

Table 4

Frequency and Rating of Commitments

Commitment to:	No.	% of Sample	Mean Rating	SD	Median
<u>1. Interpersonal relationships</u>					
Friendships	180	87.80%	5.73	1.23	6
Marriage/relationship	123	60.00%	6.37	1.27	7
Family	37	18.05%	6.49	1.17	7
<u>2. God and world</u>					
Spiritual development (God)	150	73.17%	5.86	1.45	6
Social justice (the world)	53	25.85%	4.79	1.38	5
<u>3. Oneself</u>					
Personal development	132	64.39%	5.52	1.21	6
Study	110	53.66%	5.09	1.53	5
Sport/recreation/travel	109	53.17%	4.66	1.49	5
<u>4. Security and finance</u>					
Career/work	134	65.37%	5.29	1.32	5
Purchase house/car	104	50.73%	4.61	1.65	5

1.1. Interpersonal relationships. Although commitment to friendships was the most popular nomination, commitments to marriage/relationships and family were more highly rated. 'Family' was not included in the list of commitments but it was the most frequently nominated from those who filled out the 'other' option. Although the number (37) is relatively low, 95.61% of the sample agreed with a Likert statement that they would always have a sense of commitment to their immediate families (Mean on a 5-point scale=4.71, SD=0.60).

1.2. Commitments to God and world. Nearly three-quarters of the sample were committed to their spiritual development, with a high mean rating but only one-quarter was committed to social justice, with a lower

mean rating. Whilst 100% of those deemed conservative were committed to spiritual development, only 70% of those considered liberal chose this commitment. This suggested the effects of conservatism or liberalism may have been at play. Using the means of the C-L test, a correlation test suggested a moderate and significant relationship between conservatism and commitment to spiritual development (Pearson $r=0.48$, $p=0.0004$). Although 43% of liberals were committed to social justice, against 21% from the conservative group, the relationship between liberalism and commitment to social justice was practical but not significant (Pearson $r=0.43$, $p=0.08$).

1.3. Commitments to oneself. All three commitments in this category were nominated by more than half the sample. The commitment to personal development was the most frequently nominated and highly rated. It was thought that the older part of the sample might have been more committed to personal development and the younger ones more committed to study and sport, etc. Correlation tests between age and the ratings for commitments to oneself were non significant. In each instance Pearson $r<0.12$ in magnitude and all $p>0.05$. In this sample any influence of age on commitments to oneself was negligible.

1.4. Commitments to security and finance. Here the sample rated the commitment to career/work more highly than the financial commitments of purchasing house or car. Individual groups with the highest numbers committed to their careers were teachers (91%) and nurses (93%).

A moderate relationship between commitment to career/work and the financial commitments (Pearson $r=0.51$; $p=0.000001$) was not surprising. No doubt the security of employment facilitated entrance into financial agreements.

2. General Attitude Towards Commitments

A set of twenty-four Likert-type statements was used to test the attitude of the sample (N=205) towards commitments. Three statements with discriminations below 1.00 were eliminated as not consistent with the rest of the set, making coefficient alpha 0.70. Statements were scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The overall mean of 4.03 (SD=0.99) suggested the sample had a positive attitude to commitments. Results were divided into four main categories: temporary commitments; long term commitments; willingness to make and keep commitments; and breaking commitments. As well as being grouped into categories, all Likert statements in this and other sections were analysed separately.

2.1. Temporary commitments. The overall attitude to temporary commitments was positive (M=3.97, SD=0.94). Table 5 gives results to individual statements.

Table 5

Attitude to Temporary Commitments
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Feel comfortable making temporary commitments	85%	8%	4.08	0.88
Prepared to commit to help others for a short time	93%	4%	4.35	0.77
Could make a one year commitment	59%	10%	3.75	1.00
Could make a three year commitment for a worthwhile cause	56%	8%	3.70	0.96

Table 5 shows that although a good majority were comfortable about making temporary commitments, as the proposed length of time increased,

the frequency of those prepared to be involved decreased, as did the mean.

2.2. Long term commitments. The overall attitude to long term commitments was also positive ($M=4.31$, $SD=0.91$). Results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Attitude to Long Term Commitments
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Easier to make long term commitment when it is valued	91%	1%	4.39	0.69
Possible to commit oneself for life to another person	88%	6%	4.45	0.96
Marriage would be a lifetime commitment	97%	1%	4.83	0.52
Would always have a sense of commitment to family	96%	1%	4.71	0.60
Search for meaning of my life an on-going commitment	79%	7%	4.07	0.97
My spiritual development is an ongoing going commitment	89%	3%	4.42	0.79
Committed to my prayer life	66%	13%	3.72	0.98
Working for social justice could become part of my life	51%	13%	3.48	0.92
Religious life calls for a high level of commitment	97%	1%	4.72	0.57

In Table 6, results suggested a strongly positive attitude towards long term commitments concerned with lifestyles, that is, to marriage, spouse and family and to religious life, with a high overall mean of 4.67 ($SD=0.74$). However, one respondent who agreed with it being possible to commit oneself for life to another, added: "But it may well be impossible to keep the

commitment in reality, even if it was made with the best intentions at the time", showing development of conscience. The overall mean on statements on ongoing spiritual commitments, to the search for meaning, spiritual development and prayer, was also high at 4.07 (SD=0.96).

Lowest scoring was the statement on working for social justice (M=3.48). It was felt that the difference between conservative and liberal outlooks may have had some influence here. Using the means of the C-L test, a correlation showed a significant but small relationship between liberalism and preparedness to work for social justice permanently (Pearson $r=0.32$, $p=0.02$).

A technical problem saw the first batch of questionnaires being delivered without the inclusion of two statements on the relationship of meditation to prayer and to the search for meaning. A separate analysis was made on responses (N=165) to these two statements and is detailed in Table 7. Mean=3.12, SD=1.09.

Table 7

Meditation
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Meditation is part of my prayer life	42%	32%	3.11	1.08
Meditation helps in my search for the meaning of my life	42%	30%	3.13	1.11

There was a moderate relationship between those for whom meditation was part of their prayer lives and their commitments to their prayer lives (Pearson $r=0.55$, $p=0.000000$). There was also a weak

relationship between those who were committed to the search for meaning and who thought meditation helped them in that search (Pearson $r=0.36$, $p=0.000002$). These results were not used in any other analyses but were included in this report as an indication that a reasonable number of young people in this sample are using a meditative form of prayer to help them in their search for meaning.

2.3. Willingness to make and keep commitments. Responses suggested a willingness to make and keep commitments ($M=3.89$, $SD=0.97$). Table 8 gives statement analysis.

Table 8

Willingness to Make and Keep Commitments
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Prefer not to make commitments	8%	88%	4.17*	0.88
Hide when people seeking volunteers	13%	67%	3.69*	0.89
Find difficulty keeping commitments made to self	26%	60%	3.47*	1.11
If I felt called by God to make a commitment it would be deeply held	83%	1%	4.23	0.79

Note. * Reverse scored items.

Results in Table 8 suggest the majority of respondents were quite comfortable making commitments and prepared to keep them, especially if respondents felt they had been called by God to make that commitment.

2.4. Breaking commitments. There was a certain difference of opinion whether commitments could or should be broken ($M=3.58$, $SD=1.05$). Table 9 shows these results.

Table 9

Attitude Towards Breaking Commitments
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
The more given up to make a commitment the harder it would be to break it later	78%	3%	4.02	0.78
Because people grow and change long term commitments should be open for review periodically	56%	23%	3.38	1.15
Commitments may be broken in exceptional circumstances	71%	11%	3.71	0.89
Vows taken before God may be broken for a serious reason	47%	25%	3.20	1.13

In Table 9, the mean of the first statement suggests most respondents would have agreed. Results of the last three statements suggest differing opinions about reviewing and breaking long term commitments, even for a serious reason, and more uncertainty with breaking vows.

It was thought the outlook of respondents might have influenced the last three results. Taking the overall means of these three statements and using the means of the C-L test, there appeared to be a significant and moderately strong relationship with liberalism and agreeing with long term commitments being reviewed periodically and breaking commitments for serious reasons (Pearson $r=0.65$, $p=0.000000$). This suggested the liberals would be more inclined to review and break commitments, if the circumstances dictated, than the conservatives would. One of the younger respondents, who agreed with the periodic review of long term commitments, commented: "Sometimes our values and ideals change and so our commitments don't [sic] mean anything. A commitment is worthless

unless you believe in it".

Section 2 - Community

Questions to be answered in this section were:

1. What were the motivating factors influencing respondents joining particular groups and how strong were these influences?
2. How did they view their groups and if seen in terms of more than one category, which was the most important to them?
3. What were their attitudes towards community and did their sense of community extend beyond their own particular group?

1. Motivation

Respondents were asked to list the two most important factors influencing their decisions to join their particular groups or communities and to indicate the strength of those influences on a scale of 1-7. Overall mean of the 198 responses was 6.08, with standard deviation of 1.04. Table 10 illustrates that responses fell into four main categories and shows mean, standard deviation and median for each category. Category 1 (Relational) has three sub-divisions.

The table shows the most frequently nominated influence for joining groups was existing members or those who had been involved in the group or profession. The items rated as strongest influences were a felt calling/mission and career/income.

Table 10

Influencing Factors for Joining Groups
Mean and Median Strength of Influence

Influence	No.	Mean Strength	SD	Median
<u>1. Relational</u>	170	5.87	1.13	6
(a) Members in group	96	5.74	1.23	6
(b) Parents/family	45	5.96	0.98	6
(c) Seeking friend- ship/community	29	6.17	0.93	6
<u>2. Calling/mission</u>	87	6.48	0.71	7
<u>3. Personal quest</u>	56	5.84	1.14	6
<u>4. Career/income</u>	46	6.35	0.80	7

1.1. Relational influences.

1.1.1. Influence of members in the group.

Factors included:

invitation by current members;
 experience of group before joining;
 Catholic background/education (teachers, nurses and
 NDA University students).

1.1.2. Influence of parents/other family.

In many instances parents/family were or had been members
 of the group or were involved in the profession.

1.2.3. Seeking friendships/community.

Factors included:

seeking friendships, social life, communal lifestyle, Christian
 group;
 linking with a spiritual group;
 linking with a network involved in radical Christian action.

1.2. Calling/mission.

Factors included:

feeling of having been called by God/Spirit;
desire to be involved in the mission of the group or profession;
attraction of the Catholic ethos of the establishment.

1.3. Personal quest.

Factors included:

personal development, learning experience;
sense of purpose, meaning making;
spiritual development, commitment to God;
faith - education/support/development;
development of social justice in self, direction in social issues;
seeking direction.

1.4. Career/income.

Factors* included:

career fulfilment, career advancement;
job opportunity, income.

*Nominated by teachers, nurses and university students only.

2. Perception of Groups/Communities

Respondents were asked to indicate, from a given list of items, how they perceived their groups and to choose which was the most important to them. Table 11 shows responses in order of frequency of choice (f).

Table 11

Respondents' Perception of Their Group or Community

Perception of group	f	% of sample (N=197)
Avenue of spiritual growth	151	76.65%
Social group	101	51.27%
Career oriented	75	38.07%
Another form of religious life	32	16.24%
Avenue of social justice	29	14.72%
Other	15	7.61%

Table 11 shows a large number of respondents saw their groups as avenues of spiritual growth and/or social groups. Only teachers, nurses and university students selected 'career oriented' for their groups.

The selection of the category of most importance reflected areas of interest of the groups involved, as Table 12 illustrates. The level of importance of the category to each group is indicated by the percentage of each group's members who nominated the category.

There was a high nomination of 'avenue of spiritual growth' in both perception of groups (Table 11) and most important category (Table 12). Figures at the top of the right hand column of Table 12 suggest that conservatism may have exerted an influence. A Chi-Square showed a significant difference between the percentages of liberals (17%) and conservatives (79%) who nominated 'avenue of spiritual growth' as most important (Chi-Square=40.04, df=1, p=0.000000).

Table 12

Nominated Most Important Categories
and Indication of Importance to Certain Groups

Most important category	% of sample (N=197)	%* of groups' members who nominated category	
Avenue of spiritual growth	47.21%	HSOF)	
		DM)	100%
		Neo-Cats)	
		Bethel	88%
		Young Adults	83%
		DOJ	70%
		CVC	67%
		RPG	60%
		Antioch	55%
		Focolare	50%
Career oriented	29.95%	Teachers, nurses and UNI	69%
Social group	9.64%	RPG	40%
		Antioch	34%
Avenue of social justice	6.09%	CCSA	83%
		CVC	33%
Another form of religious life	3.05%	Charismatic groups	10%
Other (aspects of Christian life)	4.06%		

Note. * With the exception of the combined Charismatic groups' nomination of 'another form of religious life', group percentages below 33% were not included.

3. Attitude Towards Community

In section 1 (c) of the questionnaire, a set of twenty-three Likert-type statements were used to test attitudes of the sample (N=202) towards community. Coefficient alpha of 0.89 suggested strong reliability. Results suggested a positive attitude towards community existed (Mean=4.20,

SD=0.78). Statements covered three areas: respondents' attitude towards community in general; feelings about their own group or community; and if their sense of community extended beyond their own groups.

3.1. Attitude towards community. The results of eleven statements on community in general were all positive (Mean=4.23, SD=0.73). Results in Table 13 show most respondents preferred to work with others and saw the benefits of belonging to a community in terms of increased efficiency and opportunities of personal and spiritual growth. It also shows respondents acknowledged that membership carried the responsibility of outreach to other members.

Table 13

Attitude Towards Community in General
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
I would rather work on my own than with others	9%	60%	3.65*	0.86
It is easier to be enthusiastic when you have community support	97%	-	4.50	0.57
More is accomplished when ideas are pooled	87%	2%	4.14	0.68
Sharing with others helps develop a sense of community	99%	-	4.44	0.52
I see community as an avenue of personal growth	91%	1%	4.31	0.66
Sharing ideas with a group broadens my vision	95%	-	4.45	0.62
Being in a group helps people to think beyond themselves	94%	1%	4.44	0.62
Wherever one is there is always an opportunity to help others	88%	2%	4.29	0.72
Group members should feel responsible towards each other	84%	4%	4.07	0.75
Belonging to a community implies responsibility	90%	3%	4.22	0.68
Working for a group could be a way of enhancing my spiritual growth	78%	5%	4.03	0.82

Note. * Item reverse scored.

3.2. Attitudes towards one's own group/community. Once again, responses to nine statements indicated a positive attitude towards respondents' own communities ($M=4.13$, $SD=0.87$), as shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Attitude Towards Respondents' Own Groups / Communities
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Belonging to my group helps awareness of others' needs	98%	2%	4.44	0.56
Working with other group members gives me a sense of purpose	83%	3%	4.10	0.73
Belonging to this group assists in my search for meaning	69%	7%	3.94	0.96
Belonging to this group enriches my life	88%	3%	4.31	0.76
Participation in this group deepens my sense of belonging	81%	4%	4.17	0.81
Praying together has a binding effect on our group	72%	6%	4.10	0.99
I feel a close bond to most members in my group	64%	12%	3.74	1.00
This group has been the means of my making valued friendships	81%	8%	4.23	0.96
There is a felt sense of solidarity when my group works together as a team	82%	1%	4.13	0.72

In table 14, the first three statements are concerned with personal growth and the last six with psychological benefits of membership. Results showed benefits of membership were acknowledged across the sample.

Because of Dilanni's 1993 suggestion of recruits with psychological dependency, it was decided to test whether these psychological benefits meant more to liberals or conservatives. A t-test was taken, using the overall means of the six statements in Table 14. Results showed a significant difference between the means of the two groups ($t=4.60$, $df=55$, $p=0.00003$). The means and standard deviations are shown in Table 15.

Table 15

Appreciation of Psychological Benefits of Membership
for Liberal and Conservative Groups
Means and Standard Deviations

Group	No.	Mean	SD
Liberal	23	3.87	0.73
Conservative	34	4.55	0.38

Table 15 shows both groups scored highly. The conservative mean suggests their appreciation was stronger.

3.3. Attitude towards the wider community. Three statements on the wider community - Australia, the world and the Church - were included to see if respondents' sense of community extended beyond their own groups. Overall $M=4.28$, $SD=0.71$. Table 16 shows results.

Table 16

Attitude Towards the Wider Community
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
As an Australian I must be concerned about poverty in Australia	89%	2%	4.21	0.68
As part of world community, Australians must speak against injustices overseas	88%	1%	4.26	0.70
The Church is community by nature	88%	2%	4.38	0.74

Following on from the belief that belonging to a community implied responsibility (Table 13), results of the first two items in Table 16 suggest this

sense of responsibility extended beyond respondents' individual groups. Using the overall means of these two items and the means of the C-L test, correlation results suggested a significant but small relationship between this sense of responsibility and liberalism (Pearson $r=0.34$, $p=0.01$)

Although a good majority agreed the Church (as the people of God) was community by nature, it did not escape criticism:

The church is community by nature but not necessarily by practice.

The Catholic church is more structure than community.

It depends very much on what you choose to mean by 'Church' - does a group of people gathered together under a pope constitute a community or does 'Community' require something more. I see 'The Church' primarily as a hierarchical and alienating political structure - there are many communities that exist within it however.

The first two comments came from respondents deemed moderate in the C-L test but both leant towards the liberal with mean scores in the test of 3.78 and 3.89 respectively. The third criticism came from a strongly liberal respondent.

Section 3 - Values

Questions to be addressed in this section were:

1. In what areas did respondents' values lie and how did they rate them?
2. Was there a relationship between these values and the chosen commitments from section 1, that is, commitments to interpersonal relationships, God and world, oneself and to security and finance?

1. Types of values

Respondents were asked to nominate three important values they held and to rate each value's importance to them on a scale of 1-7.

Responses (N=203) showed an overall high mean rating of 6.50 (SD=0.69). Nominations fell into four categories: personal, interpersonal, cultural and social justice values. Although nominations for some categories were small, it must be pointed out that many items in all categories could have easily crossed boundaries. Table 17 shows mean ratings, standard deviations and medians of these categories. Category 3 (cultural values) has two sub-divisions.

Table 17

Nominated Values
Mean and Median Ratings

Value categories	No.	Mean rating	SD	Median
<u>1. Personal values</u>	59	6.42	0.72	7
<u>2. Interpersonal values</u>	139	6.57	0.65	7
<u>3. Cultural values</u>				
(a) Democratic	164	6.57	0.62	7
(b) Religious	67	6.33	0.84	7
<u>4. Social Justice values</u>	57	6.47	0.71	7

Table 17 shows all values were rated highly, with medians of 7. Values held highly in Australian society were most frequently nominated, followed by interpersonal values.

1. 1. Personal values (N=59).

Nominations included:

belief in self, assertiveness;
individuality;
self-discipline, strength, high moral values;
commitment, determination, persistence, perseverance,
trying hardest;
personal dignity, personal integrity, self-respect;

sincerity, being genuine, true to self;
happiness with self, joy;
inner peace, depth.

1.2. Interpersonal values (N=139).

Nominations included:

Love, caring, compassion, mercy, understanding;
kindness, thoughtfulness, cooperation, selflessness
friendship, relationship, family;
faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty, dedication;
hospitality, openness to others;
sensitivity, being a good listener;
setting good example.

1.3. Cultural values.

1.3.1. Democratic values (N=164).

Nominations included:

honesty, integrity, truth, trustworthiness;
responsibility, reliability, dependability;
enthusiasm, optimism, excellence;
wisdom, patience;
freedom, liberty, religious freedom, traditions;
security.

1.3.2. Religious values (N=67).

Nominations included:

search for meaning, openness to direction;
loyalty to God and prayer, love of God and neighbour;
obedience, obedience to Christ's teaching/Church teaching;
orthodoxy;
Christian attitudes;
faith, trust;
hope;
charity, sharing, generosity;
poverty of spirit, humility;
chastity, purity, premarital celibacy;
morality.

1.4. Social justice values (N=57).

Nominations included:

justice, equality;
respect, tolerance, acceptance, inclusiveness;

dignity and respect for human life, serving others;
 simplicity of living, solidarity with the poor;
 environmental care, building a right relation with all of
 creation.

Social justice values show influence from two areas: cultural values and ecological ethics. The first three groupings of nominations could have been just as easily at home in either division of the cultural values section; the last two groupings fall into the area of ecological ethics.

2. Relationship Between Values and Commitments

2.1. Personal values. Of the 59 who nominated personal values, 88.14% had also nominated one or more of the commitments relating to themselves (personal development, study and sport/recreation/travel) and 79.66% were committed to their spiritual development. Taken overall, personal values seemed to manifest themselves in commitments relating to respondents' personal or spiritual development or their well-being in 96.61% of the cases. However, while there appeared to be a practical relationship between personal values and personal commitments, no statistically significant relationships were found, with Pearson $r < 0.26$ and $p > 0.05$ in each instance.

2.2. Interpersonal values. Of those who nominated interpersonal values (N=139), 88.49% paired these up with commitments to friendships and 63.31% with commitments to marriage/relationship and/or family. Again, while these figures showed what appeared to be a practical relationship between interpersonal values and interpersonal commitments, correlations showed no statistically significant relationship, with Pearson $r < 0.19$ and $p > 0.05$ in each case.

2.3. Cultural values.

2.3.1. Democratic values. Altogether, 164 respondents nominated democratic cultural values. There appeared to be some translation from these values to respondents' commitments consistent with the Australian lifestyle, that is, the freedom to pursue personal and religious development; a chosen career path; to enter into financial commitments, especially that of the Australian dream of home ownership; and to commit oneself in marriage/relationship to a partner of one's choice. Using the overall mean ratings of all these selected commitments and the mean rating for democratic values, Pearson r was 0.37 ($p=0.000001$). There appeared to be a small but significant relationship between nominated democratic values and commitments associated with the Australian lifestyle.

2.3.2. Religious values. Of those who nominated values relating to their religious culture ($N=67$), 79.10% were also committed to their spiritual development. This practical relationship was not statistically significant (Pearson $r=0.20$, $p=0.15$).

2.4. Social justice values. Of the 57 who nominated values relating to social justice only 43.86% were able to translate this to a commitment to social justice issues. Again, this result was not statistically significant (Pearson $r=0.02$, $p=0.93$).

Section 4 - Sisters

The purpose of this section was to establish:

1. Respondents' awareness of Sisters' secular²⁶ ministry in Perth.
2. How Sisters were seen in the eyes of the respondents.
3. Effects of recent contact with Sisters on points 1 and 2 above

²⁶ Ministry of work in the general community, as distinct from Nun's life and work in cloister.

4. Influence of family and friends in the event of a religious vocation.
5. If results from point 4 suggested that the new Church communities or groups were taking over the traditional role of the family, as the place where religious vocations were nurtured.

1. Awareness of Sisters' Secular Ministry

Respondents were asked to indicate their awareness of the ministries in the Perth community in which Sisters were involved, but to exclude those to schools and hospitals. The purpose was to see if religious life is still recognised through its works, in spite of diminished visibility through many abandoning the religious habit.

Nominations fell into four categories: welfare and social justice; adult education; chaplaincy; parish assistance and other.

1.1. Welfare and social justice (N=262).

Nominations included:	<u>No.</u>
Social justice, social work, counselling, welfare;	76
youth work, youth crisis, child care;	43
relief, soup kitchens, charity, poor;	35
care of aged, handicapped, mentally retarded;	28
crisis care, refugees, abused, homeless;	22
minority groups: migrants, refugees, Aborigines;	21
family planning, pregnancy help, ante natal care,	
young girls, marriage support and counselling,	
ministry to divorced;	14
prison visitation;	9
AIDS respite/hostel;	8
Alcohol and drug addicts.	6

1.2. Adult education (N=52).

Tertiary institutions, Catholic Education Office;	32
adult faith education seminars, retreats, witness.	20

Although Sisters are active in NDA University, it is a telling factor that

only three NDA students nominated this ministry.

1.3. Chaplaincy (N=11).

Chaplaincy, spiritual direction, hospice, palliative care.

1.4. Parish assistance and other (N=95).

Parish work, pastoral care, intercessory prayer; music and liturgy, evangelisation.	86
other (archives, research, media, bioethics, hospitality)	9

Although the above showed a broad awareness, the number of known ministries per person varied from 0 to 8 and averaged only 2.08 nominations per person. Only 12.68% were able to nominate 5 or more ministries, while 27.32% were unable to nominate any.

2. How Sisters Were Viewed

A set of twenty-two Likert-style statements was used to test respondents' (N=203) viewpoints regarding Sisters. Three statements with discriminations below 1.00 were eliminated as not consistent with the rest of the set, making coefficient alpha 0.80. The overall mean was 3.72 (SD=0.95), suggesting sisters were regarded positively by the sample.

How Sisters were seen has been divided into three areas: as a pastoral presence; in terms of efficiency; and as people. Some criticism is also included.

2.1. Sisters viewed as a pastoral presence. Six statements were used as a test of respondents' views of Sisters as a pastoral presence. An overall mean of 3.90 (SD=0.80) suggested they were viewed highly in this regard. Table 18 gives frequency of responses, means and standard deviations of each statement.

Table 18

Sisters Viewed as a Pastoral Presence
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Sisters are seen as agents of the Church	87%	2%	4.17	0.71
Sisters are very focussed as parish workers	61%	4%	3.94	0.81
Sisters are very good listeners	60%	3%	3.75	0.78
Sisters show genuine concern for others	83%	2%	4.17	0.73
A Sister's presence in a school or hospital adds a special dimension	78%	3%	4.02	0.79
Sisters do not make a difference to other people's religious lives	11%	59%	3.59*	0.84

Note. * Reverse scored item.

Table 18 suggests Sisters were commonly seen as agents of the Church, who were genuinely concerned for others. The last two statements drew comments from respondents. On their presence adding a special dimension in a school or hospital, one teacher commented:

One of the sisters . . . teaches our children music . . . before and after school. Often [the sisters] will come down for morning tea. I find them extremely easy to talk to and care about. It's [sic] like having a great aunty around.

The statement on Sisters not making a difference to other people's religious life drew mixed comments, for example: "The sisters I have met . . . have all had a huge impact on my religious life", while, to the contrary: "In Australia today they seem to be making less difference through seeking to blend in and become like everybody else".

2.2. Sisters seen in terms of efficiency. Five statements on this topic

showed an overall mean of 3.77 (SD=0.82), suggesting a moderate number saw Sisters as efficient workers. Table 19 has the details.

Table 19

Sisters Seen as Efficient Workers
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Many sisters are qualified professionals	68%	6%	3.80	0.84
Sisters are efficient workers	72%	1%	3.88	0.71
Sisters add an extra personal touch to their work	58%	1%	3.73	0.76
They usually show determination when the task is difficult	60%	2%	3.63	0.66
Because they no longer wear habits, people are often unaware of their work	72%	14%	3.79	1.03

Table 19 shows the majority saw Sisters not only as efficient workers but also qualified professionals in many cases. Although a good number agreed that people may not be aware of Sisters' works because they were not recognised out of religious habit, more disagreed with this statements than with the other ones. One respondent thought they were recognisable, not by their clothes, but by their "immense ability to show love and care for anyone".

2.3. Sisters as people. Seven statements were used in this section. An overall mean of 3.63 (SD=1.10) was influenced by mixed feelings on certain items. Details are shown in Table 20.

Table 20

Sisters Seen as People
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Sisters are deeply spiritual people	83%	2%	4.13	0.75
Sisters are very committed people	89%	1%	4.26	0.66
As friends, Sisters are very loyal	57%	1%	3.70	0.75
Sisters need affection like anybody else	98%	1%	4.51	0.55
Sisters are rather conservative	38%	32%	2.94*	1.00
Most Sisters are elderly	65%	25%	2.55*	1.11
I find it hard to relate to older Sisters	25%	49%	3.28*	1.07

Note. * Denotes reverse scoring.

Table 20 shows respondents thought Sisters were very committed and deeply spiritual people. In statement 3, a large 42% expressed uncertainty that Sisters would make loyal friends, in spite of most having thought them like everyone else in the psychological need for affection.

A correlation showed a moderate inverse relationship between the means of the C-L test and the scores on the statement regarding Sisters being conservative (Pearson $r=0.50$, $p=0.00006$). This meant more conservatives disagreed that Sisters were conservative and more liberals were inclined to agree with the statement.

Although a moderate majority thought most Sisters elderly, just under half thought elderly Sisters were not hard to relate to.

2.4 Constructive criticism. An incident raised by pilot group 1 suggested that some Sisters lacked understanding of family needs, due to Sisters not being married. It was decided to test out this observation.

Results showed mixed feelings (reverse scored $M=3.13$, $SD=1.00$), with only 39% believing the Sisters did have that understanding, 27% said they did not, with 34% unsure. A correlation with the C-L test showed a moderately strong inverse relationship with more conservatives believing Sisters understood family needs and more liberals saying they did not (Pearson $r=0.73$, $p=0.000000$). Responses from teachers and nurses were interesting, especially as some were still working with Sisters. A break-up of their responses showed a much higher inclination to criticise in this area than the rest of the sample (Table 21).

Table 21

Teachers' and Nurses' Views of Sisters
as Understanding of Family Needs

Group	No.	Sisters understand	Sisters lack understanding	Not sure
Teachers	32	21.88%	50.00%	28.12%
Nurses	15	26.67%	46.66%	26.67%

Another criticism came from a teacher, whose answers in this section were not used because of inconsistencies. She wrote:

I have had one bad experience with a Religious sister and this strongly colours my view. I can't [sic] truthfully answer this as I feel a strong bias. It is sad that one bad apple or example of outrageous hypocrisy [sic] was allowed to be in a position of power and that her congregation was aware of it and she was allowed to continue to damage people's self-esteem and to intimidate them. I stood up on a case of social justice and suffered for 5 years.

3. Effects of Recent Contact With Sisters

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had any contact

with Sisters over the past three years. There was a significant difference in the number who had contact (N=161) and those who had not (N=44) (Chi-square=66.78, df=1, p=0.000000). The difference in the number of respondents in these two groups (those with recent contact and those without) was too large for calculating t-tests. To compensate for this, a computer generated random sample (N=44) was taken from the group who had contact. Independent groups t-tests in this sub-section only were taken using responses from this random sample and from those who had no contact.

3.1. Effect of recent contact on knowledge of Sisters' ministries in Perth. An independent t-test showed a difference in ability to name Sisters' Perth ministries between those who had contact with Sisters over the past three years and those who had not (t=3.37, df=86, p=0.001). Table 22 shows the means and standard deviation of the t-test.

Table 22

Effect of Recent Contact With Sisters on
Knowledge of Their Ministries in Perth

Contact	No.	Mean no. of ministries named	SD
Recent contact	44	2.73	2.05
No contact	44	1.41	1.63

Table 22 shows a higher mean number of ministries named from those with recent contact. From this we can say contact with Sisters appears to play a significant role in increased awareness of Sisters' involvement in ministry.

3.2. Effect of recent contact on how respondents viewed Sisters.

Using the overall means of the Likert statements on Sisters, an independent groups t-test was taken to see if recent contact affected respondents' views of Sisters. Means and standard deviations of results ($t=2.04$, $df=85$, $p=0.04$) are shown in Table 23.

Table 23

Effect of Recent Contact with Sisters on Respondents' Viewpoints of Sisters

Contact	No.	Mean viewpoint	SD
Recent contact	44	3.76	0.36
No contact	43	3.61	0.34

Table 23 shows a higher mean from those who had recent contact. This suggests recent contact with Sisters appeared to make a small increase in the positive view in which respondents held Sisters.

4. Influence of Family and Friends on Vocations

Respondents were asked to indicate the expected reactions of families and friends if told they (respondents) wanted to become religious sisters and also to indicate if these reactions would affect their decisions.

4.1. Expected reactions. Table 24 shows the whole sample's expected reactions of family and friends in the event of a vocation, followed by the same expectations of liberal/conservative groups. Where respondents made a distinction between friends within their religious group and those outside the group, the group friends' reactions were used, being more relevant to this questionnaire.

Table 24

Frequencies of Expected Reactions of Family and Friends
in the Event of Respondents' Vocation to Religious Life

Group	Fam. or Friend	No.	Positive	Negative	Not sure
Sample	Family	205	42.93%	19.02%	38.05%
Sample	Friends	205	28.29%	19.03%	52.68%
Liberal	Family	23	26.09%	17.39%	56.52%
Conserv.	Family	34	61.76%	20.59%	17.65%
Liberal	Friends	23	17.39%	34.78%	47.83%
Conserv.	Friends	34	70.59%	8.82%	20.59%

Figures in Table 24 suggested the sample as a whole would expect more support from family than friends in the event of a religious vocation. However, the high 'not sure' figures suggested the topic may never have been raised in more than one-third of their families, nor with more than one-half of the sample's friends. Comparison of liberal/conservative expectations showed a much higher expectation of support from conservatives' families and friends, with friends' support being the strongest. Roughly half of the liberals were unsure of either family or friends' reactions and contrasted with conservatives' confidence of support.

4.2. Influence of family and friends. Table 25 shows a similar break-up to that of Table 24. The likelihood of family and friends' influence on the sample is shown, followed by similar expectations from the liberal/conservative groups.

Table 25

Frequencies of Likely Influence of Family and Friends
in the Event of a Religious Vocation

Group	Fam. or Friend	No.	Influence	No influence	Not sure
Sample	Family	205	40.00%	42.93%	17.07%
Sample	Friends	205	23.41%	56.10%	20.49%
Liberal	Family	23	47.83%	39.13%	13.04%
Conserv.	Family	34	32.35%	52.94%	14.71%
Liberal	Friends	23	34.78%	47.83%	17.39%
Conserv.	Friends	34	20.59%	67.65%	11.76%

Figures in Table 25 suggested that families' reactions to a religious vocation would have more influence on respondents' decisions than those of their friends. Figures also suggested that although conservatives would expect more encouragement from both families and friends than the liberals (Table 24), liberals would be more inclined to be affected by family reactions than conservatives would have been (Table 25).

**5. New Church Groups or Communities Versus Family as Place
for Nurturing Vocations**

Figures under item 4 suggested that although the topic of vocations may not have been raised in approximately one-third of the sample's families of origin, there was still more likelihood of it having been raised among families than among friends. More positive reactions were expected from families. The number of respondents who would have been influenced by family was also higher than those who would have been influenced by friends. Even though 67.65% of conservatives thought the reactions of their friends would not have affected their decisions to join religious life, the high

expectation of encouragement from their friends (groups) would have been supportive. Figures from item 4 suggest that, rather than seeing these groups or communities as overtaking the traditional role of families in nurturing vocations to religious life, at least some should be seen as avenues of support and perhaps further development of vocations.

Section 5 - Religious Life

The purpose of this section was to gather information on respondents' views on some aspects of religious life²⁷:

1. As an avenue of personal growth and outreach.
2. Its visibility and the religious habit.
3. The likely future of secular religious life.
4. Their response to criticism raised by pilot group 1 and other literature.

Twenty-four Likert-type statements were used to test respondents' (N=204) viewpoints on the above. Four statements with discriminations below 1.00 were eliminated as not consistent with the rest of the statements. Coefficient alpha, after eliminations, was 0.75 (Grand mean=3.41, SD=1.17), suggesting the sample's attitude to religious life lent to the positive but there would be some reservations.

1. Religious Life as an Avenue of Personal Growth and Outreach

The results of six statements on this topic showed an overall mean of 4.11 (SD=0.72). Table 26 shows these results.

²⁷ Respondents' views on the religious vows were dealt with separately in the next section.

Table 26

Religious Life as an Avenue of Personal Growth and Outreach
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Religious life:				
- provides opportunity for spiritual growth	96%	1%	4.29	0.57
- is one way of deepening one's relationship with God	98%	1%	4.37	0.57
- fosters concern for others	82%	3%	4.08	0.73
- helps to nurture the call to reach out to others	87%	3%	4.17	0.72
- calls for involvement with the world	78%	3%	4.00	0.74
- provides a balance between personal development and reaching out to others	63%	5%	3.74	0.81

Table 26 shows the majority saw religious life as being about personal and spiritual growth. Results displayed high mean scores. Respondents also saw it about reaching out to others but frequencies and means were slightly lower. However, they were not as definite that there was a balance between personal development and outreach.

2. Visibility and the Religious Habit

This section carried four statements. The low overall mean of 3.07 (SD=1.19) resulted from agreement with some statements and disagreement with others. Results are shown in Table 27.

Table 27

Visibility and the Religious Habit
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Rel. life is not as visible as it used to be	88%	5%	4.08	0.75
Rel. life might recruit more members if people knew about their good works	63%	11%	3.65	0.86
People would recognize Rel. life at work if Sisters wore a clearly visible symbol, e.g. a veil.	47%	34%	3.13	1.16
For better recognition, Sisters should return to wearing a habit suitable to our climate	27%	52%	2.59	1.20

Table 27 shows the majority agreed with the first two statements and the lower means in the last two statements were caused by the higher number who disagreed.

Some respondents, who had agreed on Sisters wearing a clear symbol, indicated they would have preferred something more like a small cross or badge, not a veil. Taking the overall means of the last two statements on religious attire and using the means from the C-L test, a correlation showed a moderate inverse relationship, with more conservatives agreeing with a return to conventional attire for better recognition and more liberals disagreeing (Pearson $r=0.57$, $p=0.000003$).

3. Thoughts About the Future of Religious Life

Seven statements were used in this section. An overall mean of 3.07 (with $SD=1.15$) suggested contention about the future of apostolic religious life. Table 28 give the results.

Table 28

Likely Future of Religious Life
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
It is important for Rel. life to continue as a role model for the community	71%	13%	3.91	0.80
Society would lose out if Rel. Sisters ceased to exist	73%	10%	3.87	0.97
Secular Rel. life for women is no longer necessary	17%	47%	3.31*	0.96
The varieties of careers open to women today make Rel. life appear less attractive	68%	14%	2.39*	1.20
The exclusion from having a family would prevent many from considering joining a Rel. order	74%	14%	2.08*	1.13
Rel. life might be more attractive if the commitment were temporary	44%	27%	3.18	1.10
Rel. life in <u>its present form</u> will probably die out	40%	19%	2.76*	0.96

Note. * Denotes reverse scoring.

Table 28 shows the majority of the sample agreed with the first two statements dealing with religious life's importance to the community. Taking the overall means of the two statements and using the means from the C-L test, a correlation showed an inverse relationship, with most conservatives agreeing with the statements and just over half of the liberals disagreeing (Pearson $r=0.46$, $p=0.0003$). The third statement shows not even half thought religious life was still necessary. As this statement was used in the C-L test, it could not be included in any correlation involving conservatives or liberals.

The last four statements on the table dealt with what might be seen as

negative aspects of religious life. There was clear agreement that exclusion from having a family was a deterrent. One respondent saw it as "the main deterrent". The last statement on the present form of religious life dying out showed mixed feelings. Taking the overall means on these four statements and the means from the C-L test, a correlation showed a moderately strong inverse relationship, with more liberals agreeing with the statements than conservatives (Pearson $r=0.52$, $p=0.00003$).

4. Criticism of Religious Life

The three items in this section were all reverse scored. Generally, results suggested a mixed reaction to the criticism, with overall mean of 2.84 (SD=1.23). Table 29 gives the results.

Table 29

Criticism of Religious Life **Frequency of Responses and Results**

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Rel. life is too controlled by Church hierarchy	43%	30%	2.75*	1.25
Rel. life is too restrictive	46%	39%	2.81*	1.25
Women's Rel. life has failed to keep up with the times	33%	33%	2.95*	0.96

Note. * Denotes reverse scoring

Table 29 shows divided opinions. With item 2, respondents were more definite, that is, more both agreed and disagreed with this statement than with the other two statements. This meant less were unsure.

The first two statements were also used in the C-L test, so no correlations were taken for statistics relating to liberals and conservatives. A correlation between scores on the last statement and the means of the C-L

test suggested a moderately strong inverse relationship (Pearson $r=0.79$, $p=0.000000$). Most liberals agreed and most conservatives disagreed that religious life had failed to keep up with the times.

Section 6 - The Vows

The aim of this section was:

1. To ascertain respondents' (N=205) views on the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity.
2. To see if respondents felt that religious life would be more attractive if the vows were made optional, rather than obligatory.
3. To give information on how Religious have interpreted the vows since Vatican II and to see if respondents saw the vows as an attraction or a deterrent under this new definition.
4. To obtain respondents' comments on the new interpretation of the vows as they saw fit.

1. Respondents' Views on the Vows

Twenty Likert-type statements were presented. These were divided into seven statements on obedience, six each on poverty and chastity and one on taking the vows by choice. Coefficient alpha was 0.619 (grand mean=3.31, SD=1.18). These low results were brought about by differences of opinions between responding groups and between liberals and conservatives.

Five of the statements were used in the C-L test (see Appendix 4), so no correlations were taken on these statements for differences between liberal/conservative views. Instead, where appropriate, tables show how some of the natural groups responded differently.

1.1. Obedience. An overall mean of 3.83 (SD=1.15) suggested the majority had a positive attitude towards the vow of obedience. Table 30 gives the results.

Table 30

Attitude Towards the Vow of Obedience
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
If a rule is made by group consensus members should obey that rule	82%	5%	3.94	1.17
Obedience is like any other club rule or boundary	61%	30%	3.33	1.17
Obedience helps to develop humility	64%	8%	3.76	0.95
I would rather follow my conscience than submit to a vow of obedience	53%	20%	2.55*	1.14
If a Sister's conscience dictated that she should break an agreed rule, she should follow her conscience	42%	24%	2.73*	1.09
Obedience is not relevant in today's autonomous society	26%	56%	3.69*	1.01
Obedience is an old fashioned commitment	19%	68%	3.68*	1.09

Note. * Denotes reverse scoring.

Table 30 shows all means came out in favour of obedience except statements 4 and 5 on following conscience.

It was felt conservatives might associate humility with obedience more than liberals would. A correlation was taken with the results of this statement and the means of the C-L test. Results suggested a strong inverse relationship, with more conservatives agreeing and more liberals disagreeing that obedience helped develop humility (Pearson $r=0.81$, $p=0.000000$).

Although just over half of the respondents indicated they preferred to follow their consciences, only 42% thought that a Sister should follow hers. Both these statements were used in the C-L test so a comparison of how natural groups answered is given in Table 31. It was felt some groups would show a preference for obedience, while others would favour conscience in both statements. Only groups with at least one main preference of 50% or more are included.

Table 31

Groups' Preferences for Following Conscience or Obedience

Group	No.	% of group for own		% of group for Sisters'	
		conscience	obedience	conscience	obedience
CVC	3	100%	-	100%	-
Nurses	15	80%	-	53%	20%
Focolare	4	75%	-	50%	25%
CCSA	6	67%	-	83%	-
Teachers	33	67%	-	58%	9%
UNI	44	66%	4%	64%	16%
RPG	5	60%	-	60%	20%
Antioch	30	53%	27%	20%	37%
Young Adults	6	50%	17%	17%	17%
DOJ	23	17%	70%	9%	48%
Neo-Cats	8	25%	50%	12%	88%
HSOF	3	-	33%	-	100%

Table 31 shows the first seven groups listed showed a preference for following conscience both for themselves and Sisters. The last three listed showed preferences for obedience.

The statements on conscience versus obedience drew respondents' comments. One student strongly agreed that both she and any Sister should follow their consciences, adding: "All people are bound by their consciences. One must always follow their [sic] conscience. This is more

important". A DOJ member stated she would rather submit to obedience to God/Church than follow her conscience, which is consistent with her group's response shown in the table. Others pointed to the importance of informed conscience: one asking how informed the sister's conscience was; while another commented that sometimes her conscience was incorrect.

1.2. Poverty. The overall mean response for statements on poverty was 3.43 (SD=1.07), suggesting overall moderately positive views on this vow.

Table 32 gives the results and shows a large portion of the sample agreed on the vow of poverty being a response to Christ's call to service, and that sharing everything would make one less selfish. There was considerable disagreement whether Sisters practised the vow of poverty any more. Only 32% thought they did and 45% were unsure. There was moderate agreement that Sisters need to own certain goods and that respondents themselves would find it difficult sharing all.

Table 32

Attitude to the Vow of Poverty
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
The vow of poverty is a response Christ's call to serve others	82%	6%	3.98	0.80
Religious keep the vow of poverty by working with the poor	51%	27%	3.29	1.03
Sisters do not seem to practise the vow of poverty any more	23%	32%	3.11*	0.87
For efficient functioning, it is practical for Sisters to own certain goods	70%	11%	3.70	0.95
The goal of sharing everything would help one to be less self-centred	83%	4%	4.01	0.75
I would find it difficult sharing every- thing I had	64%	23%	2.46*	1.09

Note. * Denotes reverse scoring.

It was thought liberals might have been more inclined to appreciate Sisters' practical needs for owning certain items than some conservatives would. A correlation with results of this statement and the means of the C-L test showed a moderately strong relationship between liberalism and agreeing with the statement (Pearson $r=0.73$, $p=0.000000$).

1.3 Chastity. The overall mean for statements on chastity was 3.08 (SD=1.29). This suggested an overall diversity of opinion, as results show in Table 33.

Table 33

Attitudes to the Vow of Chastity
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Celibacy frees one to give oneself wholeheartedly to the needy	43%	37%	3.11	1.26
In a religious community celibacy makes practical sense	47%	28%	3.26	1.24
Celibacy in religious life does not exclude close friendships	74%	8%	3.87	0.91
A lifetime of celibacy is unnatural	42%	38%	2.93*	1.32
The vow of chastity would prevent many from considering religious life	76%	8%	1.94*	1.01
Today one can belong to a religious community without being celibate	51%	21%	3.37	1.12

Note. * Denotes reverse scoring.

In Table 33, only the third and fifth statements show definite direction and, while the third is on the positive side, the fifth is on the negative. Results of the rest of the statements show mixed opinions, which not only influenced the low overall mean for statements on chastity, but also affected the alpha level shown at the beginning of this section.

That only half agreed that one can belong to a religious community today without being celibate was surprising and only one respondent pointed out that her community included married couples.

The statement on a lifetime of celibacy being unnatural was used in the C-L test, so a comparison of group responses was taken. Table 34 gives an indication of the outlook of those groups whose main frequency was above 50%.

Table 34

Frequency of Groups' Thoughts on Lifetime Celibacy
as Unnatural

Group	No.	% of group who agreed	% of group who disagreed
Teachers	33	70%	12%
Nurses	15	60%	27%
RPG	5	60%	20%
UNI	44	52%	27%
Neo-Cats	8	25%	75%
DOJ	23	22%	65%
Bethel	24	17%	62%

It would appear from Table 34 that the communities (last three groups listed) have a greater appreciation of celibacy as a lifetime choice than other groups. One respondent from a community pointed out: "Lifetime celibacy is not unnatural for some people, but for most of us it is".

Excluding the statement on lifetime celibacy, overall means for conservative/liberal groups on the rest of the statements on chastity were correlated with the means of the C-L test. Results showed a moderate inverse relationship, suggesting that, taken overall, conservatives had a more positive attitude to the vow of chastity than did liberals (Pearson $r=0.61$, $p=0.000001$).

2. Making the Vows Optional

Just over half (52%) agreed that religious life might be more attractive if the taking of the traditional vows were a matter of individual choice; 19% disagreed ($M=3.45$, $SD=1.18$). There was a strong relationship between liberalism and those who agreed that optional vows might enhance religious

life's attractiveness (Pearson $r=0.82$, $p=0.000000$).

One of the conservatives agreed chastity would prevent many from joining religious life and that religious life might be more attractive if the vows were a matter of choice, but added: "They should still remain". A young Antiochian thought beyond the statement and saw a connection between choice and gradual rejection. She thought religious life might be more attractive without the vows altogether but debated: "What would it be like without them? Somehow, it would not be the same".

3. Vows Seen as Attractions or Deterrents Under the New Interpretation

Respondents (N=204) were given a brief explanation of how some Religious (both men and women) had reinterpreted the vows since Vatican II. With this new definition in mind, they were asked to indicate whether they would see each vow as an attraction or a deterrent if they were contemplating joining religious life. Table 35 gives the frequencies (f) of responses and Chi-square results.

Table 35

Vows Seen as Attractions or Deterrents Under New Interpretation **Frequency of Responses and Chi-Square Results**

Vow	Attraction (f)	Deterrent (f)	Chi-square	p value
Obedience	151	53	47.08	0.000000
Poverty	139	65	26.84	0.000000
Chastity	99	105	0.18	0.67

Note. In each case $df=1$.

Table 35 shows significantly more respondents would find the vows

of obedience and poverty attractive under the new definition, compared to those who would find them deterrents. The difference between those who would find chastity attractive and those who would find it a deterrent was non-significant.

One respondent pointed out that even though she was aware of her positive attitude towards the vows, she would still not class them as an 'attraction' for herself. Another added: "I don't [sic] believe any of the three would be a definite attraction/deterrent to joining religious life. They would have to be three points I believed in whole heartedly!!" Yet another said:

To me the vows are a large and important part of religious life/commitment. So, whether they were attractive or not, I would still have to accept them. If I didn't [sic] fully agree with or understand the vows, I wouldn't [sic] make final vows until I did!!

Lastly, one respondent thought it was not a matter whether vows were attractive or off-putting, religious life was a "vocation from God, a calling".

4. Comments on the Vows in General and Their Reinterpretation

Respondents were asked to add their thoughts on either the vows or on the new interpretation. Not all commented. Comments were thoughtful and diverse. The main points are reported under the heading of each vow separately and a general heading.

4.1. Obedience.

4.1.1. Concerns with the new interpretation.

A potential for disunity.

Communities would be looking for consensus, not obedience.

Superiors would be little more than facilitators.

If conscience were followed, wrong decisions could be made: a

need for informed conscience.

Little room for 'dying to self'.

Explanation weak and insipid.

4.1.2. Restorationism.

Still need for governing authority.

Responsibility should be given over to Superior in major decisions.

'Woe to those' who misused God given authority.

4.1.3. Praise.

Aspect of shared responsibility appreciated.

4.1.4. Praxis.

Gap between the definition and what respondents saw practised.

Dualism of hierarchy and submission still practised.

4.2 Poverty.

4.2.1. Concerns.

Difference between theory and practice. Loss of respect for

Religious not being seen to practise poverty.

Poverty will always exist. Choosing to practise poverty will not help.

Sisters do not live in poverty. They do not go hungry or cold.

4.2.2. Social justice.

Social justice issues were seen by some as side issues, only warranting a minor role.

4.2.3. How poverty should be lived.

Detachment from things of the world and relying on God's providence.

Being poor in spirit.

Living with the poor and simply loving them.

4.3 Chastity.

4.3.1. Against the Vow.

Chastity in religious life still meant celibacy, which was a deterrent.

One respondent saw the vow as the cause of much child 'molestation'²⁸.

4.3.2. Praise of reinterpretation.

A beautiful explanation.

Appealing.

4.3.3. Reinterpretation misunderstood.

'Freedom to choose' misunderstood as allowing sexual relationships if one chose it.

4.3.4. Restorationism.

'Satan tempted us most' in the area of sexual and intimate relationships. Denying this was naive and open to further temptation.

Definition sounded very dangerous.

Sisters should return to the safe confines of the convent to avoid compromising situations.

4.3.5. A broader view.

The calls to celibacy and religious life were two separate calls.

One could be called to one and not the other. It was helpful if one were called to both but not necessary.

²⁸ In fairness to women Religious, this comment followed wide media coverage of child sex abuse in male run Catholic orphanages and schools, the effects of which have obviously influenced the thoughts of the community at large.

Although the vow ruled out intimate sexual relationships, spiritual growth could and did occur through this form of relationship. Sisters were not free to explore this, but for some "it may be that it is also part of their journey in life".

4.4. General comments on the vows and the reinterpretation.

4.4.1. Reinterpretation seen as unsatisfactory.

Some respondents felt the vows had been reinterpreted in an effort to make them more appealing. Comments were:

Vows are meant to be challenging, not appealing.

Power of the vows lies in the way they are lived, not their appeal.

Description detracts from the noble commitment of religious life.

Vows have been watered down. They might as well not be taken.

A definite deterrent, if this is how Sisters live today.

Other respondents questioned the source of the definitions and if they were based on Church teaching.

4.4.2. Vows seen as avenue of growth and witness.

A means of freeing the soul to love God and others, rather than restrictions.

A radical commitment to Christ, not mere welfare work.

A witness of a life given to God.

4.4.3. Suggestions of name change.

Current names seen as 'loaded' and off-putting. Other names suggested were:

For poverty - simple living; solidarity.

For obedience - responsibility; following the call of the Spirit.

For chastity - reaching out.

Section 7 - Social Justice

The purpose of this section was:

1. To obtain the sample's response to comments put forward by the Church on social justice, peace and tolerance.
2. To gauge the sample's feeling on social justice issues relevant to the Australian scene; and to see if ethnic background influenced responses to specific items.
3. To ascertain whether there was a section prepared to criticise Church or political structures as being inadequate or unjust.
4. To see what percentage of the sample would be prepared to work constructively for the poor for one year.

Twenty-three Likert-type statements were presented. After responses (N=205), one statement was eliminated for being inconsistent with the rest of the set (discrimination=-0.14). Alpha after this adjustment was 0.64, with an overall mean of 3.78 (SD=1.03). While this suggests a positive attitude towards social justice, a high number of 'not sure' responses, particularly on controversial issues, suggests there could be an element of apathy present.

1. Response to Church Comments on Justice, Peace and Tolerance

Four statements were used in this section. Results showed an overall mean of 3.96 (SD=0.73), suggesting general agreement with the statements. Table 36 gives the frequency of responses and results.

Table 36

Statements on Social Justice, Peace and Tolerance
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Those working for social justice must be prepared to speak out against the dominance of the powerful over the weak	94%	-	4.31	0.59
"Peace at any price" does not guarantee justice will be served	90%	1%	4.12	0.57
Tolerance makes social living possible	73%	8%	3.78	0.78
Tolerance must always be discerning to prevent condoning injustice	48%	15%	3.61	0.76

Table 36 shows the greater majority agreed with the Church's statements on justice and peace and to a lesser degree with the first statement on tolerance. The last statement posed more of a dilemma, with 37% unsure and only the CCSA had all members agreeing.

2. Social Justice Issues Relevant to the Australian Scene

Thirteen statements were used to test respondents' attitudes to five areas of social justice relevant to the Australian scene: boat people²⁹ and migrants; domestic violence and shelter; the drug problem; youth and Aboriginals; and AIDS³⁰ victims and the disabled. Some topics drew clear agreement; controversial topics resulted in high 'not sure' responses. The overall mean was 3.77 (SD=1.05). While this suggests an overall positive attitude towards these issues, attention is drawn to the high number of 'not sure' responses on controversial topics, meaning the attitude was not as positive as the 3.77 suggests. Results are shown in Table 37.

²⁹ Those who arrive illegally in small boats and claim refugee status.

³⁰ Acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Table 37

Social Justice Issues Relevant to Australia
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Not sure	Mean	SD
Boat people still in detention one year after arrival should be allowed to stay	29%	34%	37%	2.90	1.05
Boat people should be sent home immediately they arrive	22%	43%	35%	3.28*	1.13
Migrants should be made to learn English	52%	28%	20%	2.79*	1.09
Neighbourhood watch ³¹ could be extended to reporting known acts of violence	85%	3%	12%	4.04	0.69
More women's shelters are needed	67%	1%	32%	3.94	0.80
Drug addicts should be given government aid	41%	27%	32%	3.16	1.05
Drug dealers should be dealt with more severely in the courts	81%	4%	15%	4.28	0.89
Youth programmes are needed to help prevent gang warfare	74%	3%	23%	3.94	0.76
Aboriginal footballers could be engaged to work with Aboriginal youths as role models	89%	1%	10%	4.17	0.64
Aboriginals should be encouraged take a larger share of responsibility in improving their health standards	85%	3%	12%	4.13	0.71
AIDS victims have the right to be treated like anyone else	95%	2%	3%	4.50	0.66
I would feel embarrassed to be seen in public with someone obviously mentally disabled	4%	84%	12%	4.23*	0.87
I would feel comfortable going out with a physically disabled person	69%	15%	16%	3.76	1.10

Note. * Denotes reverse scoring.

³¹ Community scheme whereby neighbours watch one anothers' properties and report suspected crimes.

Table 37 shows areas where respondents clearly agreed were on equal treatment for AIDS victims; reporting of domestic violence; harsher penalties for drug dealers; Aboriginal involvement in their own programmes and more programmes for youth. Respondents also indicated they could mix comfortably with the disabled on a social footing. Issues that have been the subject of public discussion, such as aid for drug addicts, treatment of boat people and migrants learning English, drew high 'not sure' responses.

2.1. Boat people and migrants. Feelings were mixed on the fate of boat people, with more than one-third unsure on each statement. One respondent aptly pointed out: "This is a major discussion topic and not easily discussed with a circle on a page". Another statement that drew mixed responses was that of migrants being 'made' to learn English. Only two respondents picked up that they should be 'encouraged' not 'made' to learn the language. Another thought: "It may seem hard, but it would be better for them in the long run".

T-tests were taken on the results of the statements on boat people and migrants to see if there was a difference in the means of respondents of ethnic background (that is, with at least one parent of non-Australian origin) and those of Australian background. All results were non-significant, with $p > 0.1$ in each case. Ethnic background did not appear to influence the sample's responses in this instance.

2.2. Domestic violence and shelter. A good majority thought known acts of violence should be reported via "Neighbourhood Watch". A smaller majority thought there was a need for more women's shelters.

2.3. The drug problem. Respondents showed mixed feelings about whether drug addicts should be given government aid. Several added their

comments, all specifying the aid should be in the form of rehabilitation only. The sample showed more certainty regarding drug dealers. Clearly there was little sympathy for those who peddle drugs. One suggested: "Introducing the death penalty/capital punishment should be a step in the right direction".

2.4. Youth and Aboriginals. Nearly three-quarters agreed youth programmes were needed as a preventative measure against gang warfare. One respondent thought the programmes should be appropriate and put together in consultation with the people for whom they were designed. Another queried whether gang warfare was a problem in Australia.

A good majority agreed Aboriginals should be encouraged to take more responsibility in improving their health standards. One respondent added: "They should be given greater autonomy to do what they need to do in the ways they need to do it". Although there was strong agreement with Aboriginal footballers being used as role models for Aboriginal youth, one respondent pointed out: "They are not always good role models".

2.5. AIDS victims and the disabled. AIDS victims received overwhelming support in that they had the right to be treated like anyone else, although one respondent pointed out some situations required safety precautions to be taken.

A good majority indicated they would not be embarrassed to be seen in public with someone who was obviously mentally disabled and a moderate majority would have been comfortable going out with a physically disabled person.

3. Criticism of Church and Political Structures

Two issues were chosen to test the sample's willingness to criticise

existing structures. They were the Church's policy on women in regard to one of its largest structures, the priesthood; and Australian Government practices in handling unemployment. Three statements were used and the overall mean was 3.42 (SD=1.24). Results are shown in Table 38.

Table 38

Criticism of Church and Political Structures
Frequency of Responses and Results

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
The Church's stance on women priests is against social justice	33%	38%	2.88	1.34
The Government should be doing more for the long term unemployed	74%	9%	3.92	1.34
The dole ³² promotes laziness	55%	27%	3.46	1.22

Table 38 shows there was more willingness to criticise the Government and its structure than Church policy on one of its structures.

3.1. Criticism of Church structure. The statement on the priesthood was used in the C-L test, so no correlation for liberals or conservatives could be taken. Instead, Table 39 gives an indication of the main frequencies of some groups' responses and suggests the topic evoked strong reaction from some quarters. Groups whose main frequencies were below 60% were not included.

³² Common name for Government funded "Job Search Allowance" paid to unemployed.

Table 39

The Church's Stance on Women Priests is Against Social Justice
Frequency of Group Responses

Group	No.	% of group agreeing	% of group disagreeing
CVC	3	100%	-
CCSA	6	100%	-
Neo-Cats	8	-	100%
DOJ	23	-	96%
Bethel	24	4%	71%
HSOF	3	-	67%

Table 39 shows all members of the two groups committed to social justice agreed with the statement, while a large portion of Neo-Catechuminate and charismatic groups disagreed.

There was a moderate relationship between those who agreed the Church's stance on women priests was against social justice and those who showed a preference for following conscience rather than obedience (Pearson $r=0.50$, $p=0.000000$). There was also a moderate relationship between those who criticised the Church in this instance and those who thought religious life was too controlled by Church hierarchy (Pearson $r=0.67$, $p=0.000000$).

3.2. Criticism of political structure. Nearly three-quarters were prepared to criticise the Government for inadequate handling of the long term unemployed. All respondents from RPG, CVC, CCSA and HSOF agreed the Government should be doing more in this regard.

Just over half criticised the 'dole' for promoting laziness. It is interesting to note that all members of the CCSA and HSOF, whose replies

were against the Government's handling of the long term unemployed, disagreed with this statement. The nature of both these groups suggests this would be more out of compassion for the unemployed than siding with Government procedure. The unemployed were also criticised. Some criticisms suggested many were unemployed because they chose to be; that they should be doing more for themselves; and the 'dole' encouraged those who were already lazy.

4. Response to the poor

Two statements were included on poverty and showed clear understanding that the poor need more than food, yet only 52% were prepared to do something about it. Overall $M=4.05$, $SD=0.83$. Results are shown in Table 40.

Table 40

Attitude Towards Poverty **Frequency of Responses and Results**

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Mean	SD
Whilst urgent and necessary, merely feeding the starving will not eradicate poverty	97%	-	4.43	0.58
I would be willing to work for one year towards removing either the causes or results of poverty.	52%	6%	3.67	0.87

Table 40 shows strong agreement with the first statement and although just over half were willing to work constructively for the poor, a high 42% were unsure if they could make that commitment.

All members from the CVC, CCSA, RPG and the Focolare movement

would have been willing to make this commitment, as well as 74% from the DOJ and 60% from the Antioch group. One member of the DOJ indicated that if she were single, she would have been prepared to work at this full-time, but now she was married, she would still be prepared to work part-time. Another member from the same group has already given a year working for the poor and wanted to make this her life's work. An Antioch member said she would work in an area of education as she saw lack of education as both a cause and an effect of poverty.

A summary of these results and discussion is provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

What follows is a summary of the main findings of the questionnaire and a discussion thereof. Questions each section was intended to address are repeated to assist the reader.

Section 1 - Commitments

Questions to be addressed in this section were:

1. To what were young women in this sample committed and what value did they put on these commitments?
2. What were their general attitudes towards commitment?

1. Respondents' Commitments and How They Valued Them

Results suggested that the young women in this sample have made serious commitments on which they placed considerable value. Commitments covered four areas: to interpersonal relationships; to God and world; to oneself; and to security and finance. These corresponded with the concerns of youth disclosed by the BCJDP (1996), namely, relationships, the Church, identity and unemployment. Respondents rated these commitments highly, from 5 to 7, on a 7-point scale, confirming the research of Turner (1993) that commitments are important to young people.

1.1. Interpersonal relationships. The highest rated commitments were to family and marriage/relationship, which 96% saw as lifetime

commitments. The most frequently nominated was the commitment to friendships. This suggested the human need to relate was being met in both family life and their respective groups. This ran contrary to the psychologically damaging practices of the past, when Religious stifled friendships under the celibacy rule (Schneiders, 1986; Woodward, 1988). The high value placed on commitments to relationships further confirmed the research of Turner (1993) and the BCJDP (1996).

1.2. Commitments to God and the world. With an overall high level of commitment to spiritual development and a lower level of commitment to social justice, results suggested many people in this sample could be in Fowler's Stage 3 of faith development (Synthetic-Conventional Faith). People in Stage 3 were strongly aware of personal growth and were more likely to work towards social welfare than to attack the causes of social injustice. Members from the CVC and the CCSA tended to be in a higher faith stage. All members of the CVC were committed to social justice as were 83% of CCSA members. Both groups were committed to examining the causes of social injustice and to bringing about changes in the structures that caused them. Results suggested respondents who leant towards liberalism were more prepared to work for social justice permanently, whilst there was a moderate and significant relationship between conservatism and the commitment to spiritual development.

The quest for spiritual development and the search for meaning were seen as ongoing, confirming the Turner (1993) and BCJDP (1996) findings that spiritual development and the search for a relationship with God were important to young adults. Prayer was part of that commitment for at least two-thirds of the sample. For 42% (of the smaller sample of 165), this included meditation, which was helping in their search for meaning. This

confirmed Johnston's (1993) suggestion that young people had not abandoned their prayer lives but were changing their style.

1.3. Commitment to oneself. Commitments to themselves through personal development and study and to their well-being, via recreational activities, were healthy antidotes to the youth concerns of substance abuse, boredom and suicide reported by the BCJDP (1996).

1.4. Commitments to security and finance. The value placed on the commitment to career/work reflected youths' concerns regarding unemployment (BCJDP, 1996). The commitment of 65% to their careers agreed with the suggestion that the sexual revolution had opened up more opportunities for women (Mercy Sisters [sic] Research, c. 1989; Letourneau, 1994).

It must be of some reassurance to religious women that so many of those taking over their roles (91% of teachers and 93% of nurses) saw their careers as worthy of commitment.

2. General Attitude Towards Commitments

Respondents' general attitude toward making commitments was positive. They were willing to make short term commitments and many indicated they were already involved in long term commitments of both relational and financial natures. Ninety-one percent thought long term commitments were easier to make if they were valued. There was also a strongly positive attitude to lifestyle commitments, plus high levels of commitment to marriage and family. This refuted claims of Hughes (1994) and O'Hara (1990), that young people lacked loyalty and a value for commitments concerned with states of life. Moreover, some respondents indicated they regarded their commitments to their religious communities as

lifetime commitments. It cannot be the inability to make long term commitments concerned with states of life, nor the lack of value for them, that is preventing young women from joining religious life.

Opinion differed on whether commitments could or should be broken and results suggested liberals would be more inclined than conservatives to review and break commitments for serious reasons. Although 97% considered marriage a lifetime commitment, 56% agreed long term commitments should be open for review periodically. The literature shed some light on this apparent contradiction. Judging by the sample's other comments, Schneiders' (1986) suggestion that a throw-away society disposed of what no longer worked, would only apply to commitments not strongly held. For strongly held commitments, such as marriage, poor role modelling (Schneiders, 1986; McLay, 1990) may have had some effect. Other more likely reasons were, firstly, the quality of the commitment was more important than its length of time (McLay, 1990; Schneiders, 1986), as one respondent said: "Sometimes our values and ideals change and so our commitments don't [sic] mean anything". Secondly, a concern for the quality of life may prompt the use of informed conscience as a guide to the truth and action required in the given situation (Schneiders, 1986; Gula, 1989).

The agreement of 47%, that vows taken before God could be broken for serious reasons, was consistent with the idea of informed conscience (Schneiders, 1986; Gula, 1989). Yet, even though it is general knowledge that the Church grants annulments and releases Religious from their vows in extenuating circumstances, approximately half of the sample expressed uncertainty, or disagreed that they could be broken in these situations. This unwillingness to 'turn their backs on God', even when circumstances dictated vows should be abandoned, again suggested Fowler's Stage 3

faith development (obedience to the highest authority). Only those in Stage 4 (Individuative-Reflective Faith), or beyond, could take that step. This also pointed to the difference between a person following the commands of the superego and one following the commands of the mature moral conscience (Gula, 1989).

Seventy-eight percent confirmed the relationship between the high price of membership and difficulty of leaving later. Kanter's (1968) 'cost of membership' and strength of commitment was illustrated by a respondent from a live-in group: "My family has not supported my joining this group. After four years my mother is still not happy because I gave up a really good job - but for me this is definitely a calling for life".

Section 2 - Community

Questions to be answered in this section were:

1. What were the motivating factors influencing respondents joining particular groups and how strong were these influences?
2. How did they view their groups and if seen in terms of more than one category, which was the most important to them?
3. What were their attitudes towards community and did their sense of community extend beyond their own particular group?

1. Motivation for Joining Groups

Contact with existing or past members was the most frequently nominated influence on respondents' decisions to join respective groups. This agreed with previous studies (Ewens, 1990). An important factor of this influence was that existing members had invited them to join. The second highest nominated, and strongest rated, influence was 'being called' or the

attraction of the group's mission. The Mercy Sisters [sic] Research (c.1989) reported most common reasons given for considering a vocation were a good relationship with a Sister and a feeling of having been called by God.

2. Perception of Groups / Communities

Results suggested groups/communities were answering more than one need in their members. The high nomination of 'avenue of spiritual growth', in both perception of groups and importance, showed respondents had made a connection between their commitment to spiritual development and the rituals and practices of their groups. This confirmed Turner's (1992) statement that the new communities were succeeding where the Church proper was perceived to be failing its people. Significantly more conservatives than liberals nominated avenue of spiritual development as most important category.

Although Collins (1986) saw these new communities as genuine forms of religious life, only 16% of the sample saw them as such. Just over half saw them as social groups, indicating for these, the need for friendships and to relate was being met, yet less than 10% saw this as the most important category. Nomination of most important category reflected areas of interest of groups involved³³.

3. Attitude Towards Community

Results suggested a positive attitude towards community. Most respondents preferred working with others and saw the benefits in terms of increased efficiency. They also saw community as providing opportunity for personal and spiritual growth and agreed membership implied responsibility

³³ See Table 12 on page 80.

to other members.

Respondents believed their own groups gave them opportunity for personal and spiritual growth, assisted their search for meaning and enhanced their psychological well-being. Psychological benefits appeared to be more strongly felt by conservatives than liberals, raising concern that psychologically dependent types may have been attracted to some groups, as suggested by Dilanni (1993). Concern for personal growth and a strong psychological dependence on significant others again suggests Fowler's Stage 3. Loyalty to these significant others, would make it difficult to move on to Stage 4, unless leadership itself were in at least Stage 4. Sixty-nine percent said their groups assisted in their search for meaning. Leavey and Hetherton (1988) saw this assistance in the meaning making process as an essential element in a community's ability to influence faith development. Another factor in the community's ability to influence its members' faith development was its own modal level of development and whether the community and its leaders were prepared to move beyond that level (Fowler, 1981). It is suggested that if leaders themselves were embedded in a particular stage, they would be highly unlikely to encourage members to move to the next stage, particularly if that leadership were authoritarian.

Respondents' sense of responsibility extended beyond their own groups in at least the two areas tested. There was a significant but small relationship between liberalism and responsibility beyond their own groups, suggesting some of the sample would be at least in transition to Fowler's Stage 4. Yet, one conservative, who agreed with Australians being vocal against injustices overseas, added: "But first, let's [sic] get more vocal about injustices in Australia - 89,000 abortions, for example". This represented Stage 3 thinking. Others from her community also mentioned abortion. In

this instance, the respondent was conforming to group interest and subordinating other obligations to a higher authority (Church teaching).

Those who criticised the Church as being community by nature but not in practice, came from respondents who were either liberal, or moderate but leaning towards liberal. The ability to criticise the Church suggests at least transition to Fowler's Stage 4 faith development.

Section 3 - Values

Questions to be addressed in this section were:

1. In what areas did respondents' values lie and how did they rate them?
2. Was there a relationship between these values and the chosen commitments from Section 1, that is, commitments to interpersonal relationships, God and world, oneself and to security and finance?

1. Respondents' Values and How They Were Rated

All values nominated were rated highly. In each category the median was 7, on a 7-point scale. Nominated values fell into four categories: personal, interpersonal, cultural (democratic and religious) and social justice values. Many values could have been placed in more than one category.

Democratic cultural values were the most frequently nominated. This was in line with Williams' (1968) and Watson's (1987) theories that values arose from cultural experiences. Hill (1994) said holding democratic cultural values enhanced self-identity (relevant to those in Fowler's Stage 3) and moved beyond personal needs to that of the common good (assisting those in transition towards Stage 4).

Interpersonal values had the second highest nomination. This was consistent with the importance of relationships already discussed. Values

nominated, such as 'setting good example', 'fidelity' and 'cooperation' gave an indication of respondents' awareness of responsibility in relationships.

Social justice values were the least frequently nominated, but had the third highest mean rating. Many of the values in this category could have been included in either division of the cultural values, while others fell into the area of ecological ethics, complying with the AECRCC (1992) recommendation of care of the earth and fair distribution of its goods.

2. Relationship Between Respondents' Values and Commitments

The categories into which respondents' values fell corresponded with associated areas of commitments, confirming the suggestion of a relationship between values and commitments (Fowler, 1981; Hill, 1994). However, while these relationships were practical, for the most part, they were not statistically significant. The only exception was the relationship between nominated democratic cultural values and selected commitments relevant to the Australian lifestyle. While this relationship was small, it was statistically significant.

Section 4 - Sisters

The purpose of this section was to establish:

1. Respondents' awareness of Sisters' secular ministry in Perth.
2. How Sisters were seen in the eyes of the respondents.
3. Effects of recent contact with Sisters on points 1 and 2 above.
4. Influence of family and friends in the event of a religious vocation.
5. If results from point 4 suggested that the new Church communities or groups were taking over the traditional role of the family, as the place where religious vocations were nurtured.

1. Awareness of Sisters' Secular Ministry in Perth

Awareness of Sisters' ministries covered a wide range. Most frequently nominated were aspects of welfare and social justice, followed by parish work. The average number of nominations was 2.08 per respondent. Only 12.68% could name 5 or more ministries, while 27.32% were unable to name any. This confirms a need for better public relations, as suggested by both the Mercy Sisters [sic] Research (c. 1989) and McLay (1990). That only 3 NDA students named Sisters' ministry in that university suggests visibility may be a factor in raising people's awareness of religious life at work. This was supported by 72% of respondents, who felt most people were unaware of the work Sisters did because the majority no longer wore habits.

2. How Sisters Were Seen

Results suggested Sisters were viewed positively. In spite of most Sisters wishing to reclaim their lay status (Letourneau, 1994; Gottemoeller, 1993), most respondents saw them as agents of the Church. This confirmed that religious life was closely identified with the institutional Church and its rules (O'Murchu, 1991, 1995; Johnson, 1994; Fleming, 1990). Respondents thought Sisters' presence in a school or hospital added a special dimension. They were seen to be deeply spiritual, committed, genuinely concerned for others and efficient. Many Sisters were seen as qualified professionals. The Mercy Sisters [sic] Research (c. 1989) had similar favourable comments but McLay's (1990) report was less supportive.

Respondents agreed Sisters needed affection like anyone else, yet only half thought they made loyal friends. Most saw Sisters as elderly and just under half felt comfortable relating to them. Liberals tended to agree and conservatives disagree that Sisters were rather conservative. In

contrast to this, the Mercy Sisters [sic] Research (c. 1989) reported 'Mercies' were seen as approachable, joyful, friendly and good fun but agreed with Sisters being elderly and rather conservative.

There were mixed feelings to the criticism that Sisters lacked understanding of family needs: 27% agreed with the criticism, 39% disagreed and 34% were unsure. There appeared to be a moderately strong relationship with conservatism and those who said Sisters understood family needs. Teachers and nurses were the most frequent critics on this matter.

3. Recent Contact With Sisters

Respondents who had recent contact with Sisters viewed them more positively than those without that contact. Recent contact also resulted in a higher awareness of Sisters' involvement in ministries. This verified the Mercy Sisters [sic] Research (c. 1989) claim that contact with Mercy Sisters resulted in a wider knowledge of their new ministries.

4. Influence of Family and Friends

In the event of a vocation, respondents would expect more support from family than friends and family reactions would exert more influence on their decisions to enter religious life³⁴. Conservatives' expectation of support from both families and friends was much higher than that of liberals but liberals would have been more influenced by family reactions than conservatives would have been.

That 43% believed their families would have supported a vocation is encouraging. However, the number who were unsure suggests the topic of

³⁴ See Tables 24 and 25 on pages 98 and 99.

religious vocations may never have been raised in more than one-third of the homes of origin of this sample. In the Mercy Sisters [sic] Research (c. 1989), 108 respondents had considered becoming Sisters at some stage in their lives. Only 39 had discussed this with their families and of these, 28% received a favourable reaction and 33% a negative one. This suggests a higher incidence of non-communication and a reverse reaction to the current sample's expectation of their families.

Seventy-four percent of the DOJ believed their friends would support them. This was not surprising, considering the DOJ's association with the Missionaries of God's Love³⁵. Another high expectation of friends' support came from the Young Adults Group (83%).

5. Church Groups or Communities Versus Family as the Place for Nurturing Vocations

Results suggested the family was still the place where vocations to religious life would be nurtured. However, some of the groups or communities, such as DOJ and the Young Adults Group, should be seen as avenues of support, if not further development of vocational aspirations.

Section 5 - Religious Life

The purpose of this section was to gather information on respondents' views on some aspects of religious life:

1. As an avenue of personal growth and outreach.
2. Its visibility and the religious habit.
3. The likely future of secular religious life.
4. Their response to criticism raised by pilot group 1 and other literature.

³⁵ See Appendix 3.

1. Religious Life as an Avenue of Personal Growth and Outreach

A strong majority saw religious life as a means of personal and spiritual development and of reaching out to others. Sixty-three percent thought it provided a balance between these two aspects.

2. Visibility and the Religious Habit

The majority agreed religious life was not as visible as it had been previously and that Sisters might recruit more members if people were more aware of their work. Just under half thought a clearly visible symbol might help recognition. Some indicated they would not want this to be a veil. More than half rejected a return of the religious habit for better recognition. There was a moderately strong and significant inverse relationship with more liberals rejecting the return of traditional attire and more conservatives agreeing with its return. McLay's 1990 discussion groups were also against a return of the religious habit.

3. The Likely Future of Religious Life in the Apostolic Tradition

A moderate majority confirmed the Mercy Sisters [sic] Research (c. 1989), that two factors deterring women from joining religious life were the exclusion from having a family and the number of careers open to contemporary women. Letourneau (1994) and Ebaugh (1993) had also nominated 'more opportunities for women' as a reason for the decline of vocations.

McLay's 1990 discussion group suggested the community still needed Religious as role models. The majority in the current study agreed the community would benefit if religious life remained but less than half saw that it was necessary. One respondent illustrated Fowler's Stage 4 thinking,

by displaying an openness to change and suggesting religious life's current structure was inappropriate for contemporary circumstances.

Only 19% thought that religious life in its present form would survive, whilst 40% accepted it would probably die out. Forty-four percent agreed that traditional religious life might be more attractive if commitments were only temporary. Two reactions from this last statement illustrated differing viewpoints. One replied: "It might be more attractive, but not necessarily what God would want". The other thought religious life should be presented to members of Church groups "to encourage people to think about it as a temporary life style choice . . . there needs to be as much flexibility as possible if young people are to be encouraged".

Results suggested conservatives were more inclined to support and maintain the status quo, while liberals were more inclined to view problems realistically and look at structural change. Maintaining the status quo suggests Fowler's Stage 3, while examining structural change is a function of Stage 4.

4. Response to Criticism

Responses to the three criticisms levelled against religious life were inconclusive with means in each case indicating divided opinions. As two of the statements were used in the C-L test, a correlation for conservative/liberal influences could only be taken on the third statement. Most liberals agreed and most conservatives disagreed that religious life had failed to keep up with the times. This again suggests Fowler's Stage 3 (inability) and Stage 4 (ability) to criticise what was perceived as an agency of the Church.

Section 6 - The Vows

The aims of this section were:

1. To ascertain respondents' views on the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity.
2. To determine if respondents felt that religious life would be more attractive if the vows were made optional, rather than obligatory.
3. To give information on how some Religious had reinterpreted the vows since Vatican II and, to ascertain if respondents were to consider joining religious life, would they see the vows as attractions or deterrents under this new definition.
4. To obtain respondents' comments on the new interpretation, or the vows, as they saw fit.

Views and Comments on the Vows and Interpretation, in Respect of Aims 1. and 4. Above

Obedience. Results suggested a positive attitude towards the vow of obedience and that there was still a place for obedience in people's lives.

There was a strong inverse relationship with most conservatives agreeing and most liberals disagreeing that obedience helped develop humility. Respondents thought rules set by group consensus should be kept and a moderate majority saw the vow of obedience as a rule. While 56% thought obedience was still relevant in modern society, just over half preferred to follow their own consciences. However, only 42% thought a Sister should follow her conscience. Certain groups showed a preference for following conscience, while other groups favoured obedience³⁶. As less respondents favoured Sisters following their consciences, the idea of 'blind

³⁶ See Table 31 on page 107.

obedience' for Religious may still prevail in some quarters. This conclusion was strengthened by some expressing a concern that the new interpretation would cause disunity, saying an authoritative figure was still needed. This conformed with the opinions of Drennan (1993) and White (1994). Other respondents favoured shared responsibility, agreeing with McLay (1990) and Ruffing (1994). Some noted that the theory of the new interpretation was not always put into practice and authoritarianism still existed.

Poverty. The general attitude to the vow of poverty was positive. Most saw it as a response to Christ's call to service but many agreed sharing everything would be difficult. While half thought that Religious kept the vow by working with the poor, one believed taking the vow made no difference to the poor. Only one-third thought Sisters still practised the vow. Comments included the view that Sisters appeared neither to live in poverty, nor to practise it, causing loss of respect. These concurred with those in McLay's (1990) group who inferred Religious practised poverty insincerely.

Seventy percent acknowledged contemporary Sisters needed to own certain goods for efficient functioning. There was a moderately strong and significant relationship between liberalism and agreement with this statement. This suggested an appreciation among liberals that the new call of active involvement in the world (Woodward 1988) necessitated Sisters owning goods to accomplish this mission (Harmer, 1995). Commenting on the new interpretation, some conservatives gave the social justice aspect of the vow a minor role, indicating consistency with Fowler's Stage 3 thinking.

Chastity. Opinions on the vow of chastity were varied. Conservatives appeared to have a more positive attitude to the vow than liberals. It also

appeared that the new communities, rather than other groups³⁷, had a greater appreciation of celibacy as a natural lifetime choice. Nearly three-quarters understood close friendships were no longer excluded by the celibacy rule.

The majority agreed the vow of chastity would prevent many from considering religious life and only half realised that one could now belong to a religious community without being celibate. The practical significance here was that 49% of the sample were either unaware that many of the new communities in the Church were open to married couples, as well as singles, or, if they were aware of this, they did not think of them as 'religious communities'. Only 16% had seen their own groups as other forms of religious life³⁸.

Chastity still meant celibacy and some saw this as a deterrent. While some accepted the new interpretation, others had narrow ideas about sexuality, one calling for a return to the safe confines of the convent. A broader approach saw celibacy and religious life as two separate callings. It helped if one were called to both. Another believed that, although the vow ruled out sexual intimacy, a loving sexual relationship could also be spiritually enriching and part of life's journey for some Sisters. Schneiders (1986) had suggested that one may need to change one's state of life in order to grow towards the fullness of life and McLay (1990) attributed some departures from religious life to people seeking further growth in intimacy.

2. Optional Vows

Just over half agreed that religious life might be more attractive if taking the vows were a matter of choice. There was a strong and significant

³⁷ See Table 34 on page 111.

³⁸ See section on Community.

relationship with liberalism and this opinion, while 76% of conservatives disagreed. Again, this can be seen in the light of faith development, with Stage 4 liberals willing to make changes and Stage 3 conservatives wishing to maintain tradition.

3. Vows as Attractions or Deterrents

Significantly more respondents found the vows of obedience and poverty attractive under the new definition than those who found them off-putting. Although more saw chastity as a deterrent, the difference between those who saw it as an attraction or a deterrent was non-significant.

One conservative likened the vows to the 'uncomfortable challenge' that Christ gave the rich young man, saying it was inappropriate to think of them as 'appealing'. Such idealism is not practical. In terms of analysing a lack of recruits, the vows must be viewed realistically as attractive or deterring. Fiand (1993) believed the vows were horizons that beckoned and inspired individuals.

4. Respondents' General Comments

Some saw the vows as avenues of spiritual growth and witness. Like O'Murchu (1995), two respondents felt the names of the vows were either inappropriate or off-putting and suggested alternatives. Some members from the new communities clearly did not like what they perceived as 'watered down' reinterpretations, which they thought detracted from religious life. They also questioned the source of the explanation and if it was based on Church teaching. Others saw a difference between theory and practice. Comments suggested many were unaware that Sisters had reinterpreted their vows for contemporary life.

Section 7 - Social Justice

The purpose of this section was:

1. To obtain the sample's response to Church statements on justice, peace and tolerance.
2. To gauge the sample's feeling on social justice issues relevant to the Australian scene; and to see if ethnic background influenced responses to specific items.
3. To ascertain whether there was a section of the sample prepared to criticise Church or political structures as being inadequate or unjust.
4. To see what percentage of the sample would be prepared to work constructively for the poor for one year.

1. Response to Church Statements on Justice, Peace and Tolerance

The majority agreed with Church statements on social justice when they were seen as uncomplicated. The statement suggesting there were times when tolerance meant injustice, which involved deeper thought, drew a high 37% 'not sure' response. Only the CCSA had all members agreeing with the statement. The ACSJC (1995) discussion paper, Tolerance, distributed to parishes throughout Australia, clearly stated when tolerance was inappropriate. This raises the issue of how many read the paper.

2. Social Justice and the Australian Scene

Similarly, on the Australian scene, most respondents were able to agree on uncomplicated statements. Statements on controversial topics, regarding refugees, migrants and drug addicts, drew high 'not sure' responses, in spite of their having being widely discussed in the local media.

This high incidence of 'not sure' replies could have been the result of genuine uncertainty or unformed opinions. On the other hand, the uncertainty on both tolerance and controversial social issues may have been an indication of the apathy to social justice referred to by Walsh (1985), Collins (1986) and the ACSJC (1990). This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that only one-quarter of the sample were committed to social justice issues, only 28% nominated values that were classed as social justice values and some comments on the vow of poverty indicated that action for social justice was considered as a minor role. This suggests that approximately two-thirds of the sample could be in Fowler's Stage 3 of faith development.

That nearly one-third were unsure about the need for more women's shelters could have been another example of genuine uncertainty. Alternatively, some could have seen it as a threat to marriages, complying with Fowler's Stage 3 loyalty to a structure on which the existence of many depended.

Ethnic background did not appear to influence responses on refugees or migrants. Fifty-two percent of respondents thought that migrants should be made to learn English. While two respondents indicated they thought 'making' migrants learn English was too strong, they suggested migrants should be 'encouraged' to learn the language. Another thought that it may seem hard but could be better for them in the long run. Forcing people to learn another language could be seen to run contrary to the right of minorities to preserve their identity through their own language, as suggested by Dorr (1991). On the other hand, respondents' strong agreement that Aborigines be involved in their own programmes linked in with the idea that marginal groups be encouraged to participate in, and be

responsible for, their own development (Dorr, 1991; Cullinan, 1975).

3. Criticism of Church and Political Structures

Respondents appeared much more at ease in criticising a political structure than criticising a Church structure. Only one-third were prepared to criticise the Church. There were moderately strong relationships between this third and those who thought religious life was too controlled by Church hierarchy; and between these critics and those who showed a preference for following conscience, rather than obedience. Only those in at least Fowler's Stage 4 could or would criticise the Church. Stage 3 groups would be unable to attack the Church, because their existence depended on it, and their members conformed to the highest authority. They could criticise the Government and its structures, because their democratic right of free speech gave them permission. While criticising the Government and its handling of unemployment, some showed compassion for the unemployed but others criticised them as well.

Results suggested the groups most likely to criticise both Church and Government structures were the CVC and the CCSA.

4. Response to the Poor

Most agreed just feeding the hungry would not eradicate poverty and that at least half would have been prepared to commit one year towards the removal of either its causes or results was encouraging. However, a high 42% of 'not sure' responses further reinforces the suggestion that a portion of the sample may be apathetic to social justice issues.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Conclusions

This study has sought to reveal the attitudes of some of Perth's young adult Catholic women towards religious life and related topics. It centred on a field of young women who are actively participating in communities or groups associated with the Church. The study has been a fact-finding exercise. On some points it has confirmed other researchers' claims or suggestions of other writers; on other points it disagreed with previous conclusions. From the survey results and discussion, in the previous section, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Young Adult Women's Commitments and Values

1.1. Commitments are important to young people, especially in regard to interpersonal relationships and their spiritual development. This confirms the research of Turner (1993).

1.2. Young adults find long term commitments are easier to make if they value them. It is not a lack of value for states of life, nor lack of commitment to them, that is preventing young women from joining Apostolic religious life. This argues against O'Hara (1990) and a popularly held opinion among some Sisters, which was expressed to the researcher prior to this enquiry.

1.3 Results confirmed Kanter's 1968 suggestion, that the higher the cost of making a commitment, the harder it would be to break it later.

1.4. However, while the ideal of lifetime commitments was highly valued, if the commitment lost quality or value, some would see it as no longer worth pursuing for commitment's sake. The openness to following conscience to break a vow was dependent on the individual's stage of faith development.

1.5. To Johnston's (1993) suggestion that young people had not abandoned their prayer lives but were changing their style to accommodate their search for religious experience, we can now add 'and their search for meaning'.

1.6. While results confirmed a relationship between values and commitments, for the most part this relationship was more practical than statistically significant. The strength of the relationship must depend on other factors.

2. New Religious Communities

2.1. There is a need to educate the Catholic community regarding the new forms of religious life and active ministries that are flourishing in Perth. At the present time, few see their potential as new forms of religious life.

2.2. Together with increased career opportunities for women, these new communities, which have flexible criteria for membership, place religious congregations in a much more competitive market for recruiting, than in the past.

2.3. However, some of these communities should be seen as avenues of further development of aspiring vocations.

2.4. It is a matter of concern, and one expressed by Dilanni (1993),

that some of these new communities may be attracting psychologically dependent types.

2.5. Over time, the more traditional types of groups will probably experience the same cyclical rise and fall that religious life has experienced. Few will survive a rebirth. Only time will tell if movements like the CVC or CCSA will survive, according to Murphy's (1995) prediction. A few may survive in new purified forms, according to O'Murchu's (1995) theory of revitalising.

3. Sisters, Religious Life and the Vows

3.1. In spite of Sisters' desires to reclaim lay status, they are still seen as agents of the Church. This has negative connotations for the future of religious life.

3.2. In the eyes of many young people, religious life has lost its relevance. Less than half saw it as still necessary, or that temporary commitments would make it any more attractive.

3.3. Decreased visibility may be a factor in lay awareness of Sisters' secular ministry in Perth. However, the return of the religious habit, as a way of improving visibility, was rejected.

3.4. That only 39% thought Sisters understood family needs has serious implications for Sisters ministering to families and employing staff with family responsibilities. Sisters should be made aware of this criticism.

3.5. The brief explanation of the new interpretation of the vows did not appear to make any difference to the overall attitude toward each vow.

3.6. The vow of chastity prevents many from considering religious life. This acts in favour of the new religious communities.

3.7. A higher expectation for obedience from Sisters than from

respondents themselves suggests the idea of 'blind obedience' for Religious may still exist in some quarters.

3.8. Results of this research and McLay's 1990 discussions suggest a lack of understanding, by both groups of respondents, that the vow of poverty extends beyond material goods. This illustrates the need to explain to the laity the value of the new interpretations.

3.9 From most of the above comments, it is clear that better public relations and information are required, confirming the suggestion by McLay (1990) and the Mercy Sisters [sic] Research (c. 1989).

3.10. Sisters, wishing to recruit new members, must reestablish meaningful contact with young people. In so doing, Sisters must show themselves to be joy-filled and loyal friends, approachable and open to others' needs. Simultaneously, some sharing of the value of their vision and mission must take place and potential recruits must be invited to join them.

3.11. As the Religious presence in Catholic schools phases out and contact with adolescents diminishes, the new groups and communities of the Church could provide the forum for Sisters to reestablish that meaningful contact with young people. In this setting, Sisters could also act as catalysts for members to further their faith development.

3.12. The family is still the place where vocations will be nurtured. That the topic may not be raised in many Catholic homes constitutes a factor for the future of religious life. This also has serious implications for the shortage of priests.

4. Social Justice

4.1. Results suggest that many in the sample show little interest in social justice issues. This can be attributed to the fact that at least two-thirds

of the sample appear to be in Fowler's Stage 3 of faith development.

4.2. Until more people move into Fowler's Stage 4, or unless there are more Stage 4 recruits, Catholic assistance to the poor will come from an imbalance of volunteers, with more people assisting victims of injustice and less addressing its causes, ensuring poverty's continuance.

4.3. Sisters, looking for recruits, associate members or co-workers to help in their work for social justice, may do well to contact such people as the CVC or CCSA, who are committed to the 'social change model'. On the other hand, should they have projects requiring workers for a 'social welfare model', they could seek the assistance of some of these other communities, such as the HSOF, or DOJ, whose members are already active in the field.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. The strength of the relationship between values and commitments appears to depend upon other reinforcing factors, for example, behavioural norms and stage of faith development (Fowler, 1981). What other factors, both internal and external, strongly influence the conversion of values into commitments?

2. It was suggested that the stage of faith development of leaders could have either a positive or negative influence on the faith development of group/community members. At what stage of faith development are some of these leaders? What effect is this having on the faith development of their members? Gaining the cooperation of leaders could prove to be a major problem.

3. The concept of conservatism/liberalism was used to illustrate different outlooks and what appeared to be conservative and liberal tendencies in the sample. Using scientifically approved tests, to what extent do conservatism and liberalism exist in the groups/communities surveyed, or other groups in the Church? This information would need to be handled sensitively, given the ethical implications, but could be useful to those recommending groups/communities to people desirous of joining a group.

4. There appeared to be practical relationships between those deemed conservative and Fowler's Stage 3, and between those deemed liberal and those in at least Fowler's Stage 4. Are there relationships between true conservatism and Stage 3 and between true liberalism and Stages 4 and beyond? If so, are they statistically significant or just practical?

5. Some respondents were born into the Bethel Covenant Community, or joined as children when their parents joined. How many of these remained to make adult commitments and how many left? What were the reasons why some stayed and others left?

A Note in Conclusion

The current decline of religious life is part of a pattern of similar events that appear to punctuate history in approximately 300 yearly cycles. What is unique about the current crisis is that advanced scholarship has enabled religious life to tell its own story, recording events and analysing them as the decline unfolds.

This study has sought to contribute to this analysis by introducing a group that, until now, has all but been neglected. The group deals with the young women, who, in another time, may have committed themselves to apostolic religious life but, in the current situation, have placed their commitments elsewhere. By doing so, they are unwitting players in the decline. This study endeavoured to shed some light on a sample of these women, by looking at their attitudes, values and commitments. It was suggested that their outlooks, decisions and behaviours were influenced by their levels of faith development.

Having made this small start, it is hoped others will add to this information with continuing research. Clearly, this will assist those concerned with religious communities and their place in the life of the Church of the future.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Arbuckle, G.A. (1988). Out of chaos: refounding religious congregations. New Jersey: Paulist Press.
- Arbuckle, G.A. (1990). Understanding refounding and the role of conversion. In G.A. Arbuckle & D.L. Fleming (Eds.), Religious life: rebirth through conversion (pp. 51-79). New York: Alba House.
- Arbuckle, G.A. (1993, May/June). The survival of religious life? Religious Life Review, 32 (160), 130-137.
- Australian Catholic Social Justice Council. (1990). Social justice in everyday life. Melbourne: Collins Dove.
- Australian Catholic Social Justice Council. (1995). Tolerance: a Christian perspective on the International Year of Tolerance. North Blackburn: Dove.
- Australian Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church. (1992). Common wealth for the common good. North Blackburn: Collins Dove.
- BCJDP Report. See Consultation on Young People and the Future 1996.
- Boguslaw, Robert. (1992). Liberalism/conservatism. In Encyclopedia of sociology (Vol. 3, pp. 1112-1120). New York: Encyclopedia of Sociology.
- Bradley, Ritamary. (1990). Religious life in the future: historical precedents for emerging paradigms. In D. Steinberg (Ed.), The future of religious life: the Carondelet Conference (pp. 73-87). Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.
- Burns, R.B. (1995). Introduction to research methods (2nd rev. ed.). Melbourne: Longman Australia Pty Ltd.
- Campion, Edmund. (1990). A historian reflects on religious life in Australia. In A. McLay (Ed.), Men and women in religious life (pp. 11-18). Melbourne: Collins Dove.
- Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace. (1986). Founded on justice and peace. Mulgrave: Brownhall Printing.

- Chittister, Joan. (1993, 30 September). A need for the prophetic dimension. Signum. 21 (17), 2-14.
- Collins, Paul. (1986). Mixed blessings: John Paul II and the Church of the eighties. Ringwood: Penguin Books.
- Consultation on Young People and the Future. (1996). Lean on Me. (First Main Report, Bishop K.M. Manning, Coordinator). Sydney: BCJDP.
- Cullinan, Thomas. (1975). If the eye be sound. Slough: St Paul Publications.
- de Vaus, D.A. (1995). Surveys in social research (4th ed.). St Leonards: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd.
- Dilanni, Albert. (1993). Religious vocations: new signs of the times. Review for Religious. 52 (5), 745-763.
- Dorr, Donal. (1985). Spirituality and justice. Quezon City: Clareton Publications.
- Dorr, Donal. (1991). The social justice agenda: justice, ecology, power and the Church. Melbourne: Collins Dove.
- Doyle, D.J. (1993). Social justice and canon law: the legacy of the Second Vatican Council and the future of the Church. In P.M. Hegy (Ed.), The Church in the nineties: its legacy, its future (pp. 120-138). Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.
- Drennan, M.J. (1993, March-April). Leadership in change. Review for Religious. 32 (159), 66-73.
- Ebaugh, H.R. (1993). The growth and decline of Catholic religious orders of women worldwide: the impact of women's opportunity structures. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion. 32 (1), 68-75.
- Ewens, Mary. (1990). Lessons from the Quinn Consultation. In D. Steinberg (Ed.), The future of religious life: the Carondelet Conference (pp. 57-71). Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.
- Fiand, Barbara. (1993). Living the vision: religious vows in an age of change. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Fleming, D.L. (1990). Understanding a theology of religious life. In G.A. Arbuckle & D.L. Fleming (Eds.), Religious life: rebirth through conversion (pp. 21-50). New York: Alba House.

- Flynn, Marcellin. (1985). The effectiveness of Catholic schools. Homebush: St. Paul Publications.
- Fowler, J.W. (1981). Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning. Blackburn: Dove Communications.
- Fowler, J.W. (1984). Becoming adult, becoming Christian: adult development and Christian faith. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Fowler, J.W. (1986). Faith and the structure of meaning. In C. Dykstra & S. Parks (Eds.), Faith development and Fowler (pp. 15-42). Birmingham: Religious Education Press.
- Gardiner, Paul. (1994). Mary MacKillop: an extraordinary Australian. Alexandria: E.J. Dwyer (Australia) Pty Ltd.
- Gula, R.M. (1989). Reason informed by faith: foundations of Catholic morality. New York: Paulist Press.
- Harmer, C.M. (1995). Religious life in the 21st century: a contemporary journey into Canaan. Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications.
- Hill, B.V. (1994). Teaching secondary social studies in a multicultural society. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire Pty Ltd.
- Hughes, P. (1994). A maze of a system? Changes in the world view of Australian people. Christian Research Association Research Paper, 2. Kew: Christian Research Association.
- Johnson, E.A. (1994, January-February). Between the times: Religious life and the postmodern experience of God. Review for Religious, 53 (1), 6-28.
- Johnston, William. (1993). The mystical way. London: Fount Paperbacks.
- Kelly, K.T. (1992). New directions in moral theology: the challenge of being human. London: Geoffrey Chapman
- Killerby, C.K. (1996). Ursula Frayne: a biography. South Fremantle: The University of Notre Dame Australia.
- Knibb, Ken (1995). EdStats for educational measurement and evaluation [User's Guide]. Mount Lawley: Edith Cowan University.
- Leavey, C., & Hetherington, M. (1988). Catholic beliefs and practices. Melbourne: Collins Dove.

- Letourneau, Marguerite. (1994, May 26). The consecrated life and its role in the church and the world: An overview of responses to the Lineamenta. Signum, 22 (10), 7-16.
- McDonough, Elizabeth. (1991, March-April). Beyond the liberal model: quo vadis? Review for Religious, 50 (2), 171-188.
- McDonough, Elizabeth. (1991, November-December). Solemn vows and simple vows. Revue for Religious, 50 (6), 930-934.
- McLay, Anne. (1990). Lay people reflect on the religious life. In A. McLay (Ed.), Men and women in religious life (pp. 40-57). Melbourne: Collins Dove.
- McLay, Anne. (1992). Women out of their sphere: a history of the Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia. Perth: Vanguard Press.
- Mercy Sisters [sic] Research. (c. 1989). Unpublished report, Perth, Western Australia.
- Miller, D.E. (1983). Liberalism. In A. Richardson & J. Bowden (Eds.), A new dictionary of Christian theology (pp. 324-325). London: SCM Press.
- Minogue, Kenneth. (1972). Conservatism. In Encyclopedia of philosophy (Vol. 1 & 2, pp. 195-198). New York: Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
- Moser, C.A., (1958). Survey methods in social investigation. London: Heinemann.
- Murphy, Desmond. (1995). The death and rebirth of religious life. Alexandria: E.J. Dwyer (Australia) Pty Ltd.
- Neal, M.A. (1990). From nuns to sisters: an expanding vocation. Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications.
- Nelson, G.K. (1987). Cults, new religions & religious creativity. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- O'Brien, Lesley. (1994). Mary MacKillop unveiled. North Blackburn: Collins Dove.
- O'Connor, D.F. (1992, September-October). Seeking a sense of direction in a time of transition. Review for Religious, 51 (5), 691-706.
- O'Dea, T.F. (1973). Adaptation of traditional religion in a secular age. In T.F. O'Dea & J.K. O'Dea (Eds.), Readings on the sociology of religion (pp. 229-244). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

- O'Dea, T.F. & O'Dea Aviad, J.K. (1983). The sociology of religion (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- O'Hara, M.L. (1990). Heralds of hope. In D. Steinberg (Ed.), The future of religious life: the Carondelet Conference (pp. 33-55). Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.
- O'Murchu, Diarmuid. (1991). Religious life: a prophetic vision. Hope and promise for tomorrow. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press.
- O'Murchu, Diarmuid. (1995). Reframing religious life. Slough: St Pauls.
- Oppenheim, A.N. (1986). Questionnaire design and attitude measurement. Aldershot: Gower.
- Peterson, C.C. (1984). Looking forward through the life span: developmental psychology. Sydney: Prentice-Hall of Australia Pty Ltd.
- Pierard, R.V. (1986). Liberalism, Theological. In W.A. Elwell (Ed.), Evangelical dictionary of theology (4th rev. print, pp. 631-635). Michigan: Baker Book House.
- Pirola, Teresa. (1993, July). Children of Vatican 2: young adults in the Church today. The Australasian Catholic Record, LXX (3), 314-321.
- Reiser, W. (1995). Reformulating the religious vows. Review for Religious, 54 (4), 594-599.
- Robbins, S.P. (1993). Organizational behaviour (6th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall International, Inc.
- Rokeach, M. (1976). Beliefs, attitudes and values: a theory of organization and change. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Ruffing, J.A. (1994, May-June). Leadership a new way: women, power and authority. Review for Religious, 53 (3), 326-339.
- Schneiders, S.M. (1986). New wineskins: re-imagining religious life today. New York: Paulist Press.
- Schultheis, M.J., DeBerri, E.P. & Henriot, P.J. (1988). Our best kept secret: the rich heritage of Catholic social teaching. London: CAFOD.
- Seelaus, Vilma. (1990). Toward a more contemplative church. In D. Steinberg (Ed.), The future of religious life: the Carondelet Conference (pp. 133-143). Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.

- Sheehan, M.E. (1993). Roman Catholic bishops on women's equality: some post Vatican II developments. In P.M. Hegy (Ed.), The Church in the nineties: its legacy, its future (pp. 158-171). Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.
- Surlis, Paul. (1993). Moral theology: a tradition to be rejected? Toward a new paradigm in moral argument. In P.M. Hegy (Ed.), The Church in the nineties: its legacy, its future (pp. 42-49). Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.
- Turner, Naomi. (1992). Catholics in Australia: a social history. Vol. 2. North Blackburn: Collins Dove.
- Turner, Naomi. (1993). Ways of belonging: stories of Catholics 1910-1990. North Blackburn: Collins Dove.
- Walsh, John. (1985). Evangelization and justice: new insights for Christian ministry (3rd print). New York: Orbis Books.
- Watson, Brenda. (1987). Education and belief. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.
- White, Teresa. (1993, May-June). By whose authority? Obedience in a small community. Review for Religious, 32 (160), 143-147.
- White, Teresa. (1994, November-December). Fostering vocations. Summary of the report 'Vocations Ministry in Ireland, the Way Forward'. Religious Life Review, 33 (169), 364-365.
- Williams, Jr. R.M. (1968). The concept of values. In International encyclopedia of the social sciences (Vol. 16, pp. 283-287). U.S.A.: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press.
- Woodward, Evelyn. (1988). Poets, prophets & pragmatists: a new challenge to religious life. Blackburn: Collins Dove.
- Wuthnow, Robert. (1993). Christianity in the 21st century: reflections on the challenges ahead. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

INDEX OF APPENDICES

	Page
1. Fowler's Stages of Faith Development	161
2. Mercy Sisters [sic] Research	167
3. Participating Groups in Survey	169
4. Test for Conservatism or Liberalism (C-L Test)	176
5. Continuum of Conservatism to Liberalism in Participating Groups	177
6. Final Questionnaire	178

APPENDIX 1

Fowler's Stages of Faith Development³⁹

Fowler said faith development started with Primal Faith in infancy and lasted until approximately two years. It developed from trust in the reliability of the prime carers. From this came basic trust, a sense of security and self-worth.

Stage 1. Intuitive-Projective Faith (from approximately 3-7 years). Here the principal ways of knowing were influenced by perception, feeling and imaginative fantasy. Thought was illogical, so knowing was intuitive. Meaning-making came from the stimulation of experience, story, symbols and example. Religious stories and liturgies nourished an expanding horizon of meaning. Deep and long lasting images could be formed, especially if the child's imagination were exploited to reinforce taboos and moral expectations. Children in this stage were awakening to the world around them but were the centre of their own worlds and projected their own perspectives onto others.

Stage 2. Mythic-Literal Faith (From approximately 7 years to early adolescence). Although thought was still concrete, emerging logical operations led to more stable conscious interpretations of experience and shaped meaning. There was increasingly less dependence on feeling and fantasy in interpreting experience. The relation between cause and effort was now understood, so the world was more predictable. People in this stage could recognise the perspectives of others as different from their own. They thought in terms of right or wrong; good or evil. There was a strong sense of fairness based on reciprocity. Story was important, as were its

³⁹ Unless stated otherwise, this information on Fowler's stages of faith development was taken from Fowler, 1984, pp. 51-71 and Fowler, 1986, pp. 29-37.

details, for it justified experience. Stories, symbols and concepts were viewed concretely and literally. Faith relied on story, moral rules and the rituals, beliefs and values of the family or traditional community. This background information was important for identity and self-evaluation. People were defined by their affiliations and what they did, not their personalities. External structures were used in meaning-making, based on fairness. God was a consistent, caring father or a just ruler, who rewarded the good and punished the bad. Fowler believed there were a small number of adults and a considerable number of adolescents still in this stage.

Stage 3. Synthetic-Conventional Faith (From early adolescence).

Synthetic was used in the sense of a synthesis, not something artificial; conventional meant taking the faith position of the group. Essential to this stage was formal operational thinking - abstract thought and the possibility of considering ideals and hypothetical situations. People in this stage could see others' perspectives and expected others to see theirs. Their identity and personality were important and there was a new interest in their inner life and that of others. Their values, commitments and relationships were associated with their identity and worth. Worth was tied to the approval and affirmation of significant others. There was a tension between the mirrored self from significant others and their self-conceptions. They selected beliefs and convictions taught by significant others or groups and formed values that cultivated trust and loyalty towards members. They took the beliefs and values of these significant people without question to form a unity with them. In this way they pulled together their self-identity, the meaning of their lives and of life in general. This synthesis was both deeply supportive and sustaining, and was strongly held but neither questioned nor examined. Strongly aware of personal growth, they were embedded in their faith and

outlook and took their identity from the group. They were in a conformist stage, bound to expectations and authority of significant others, and unable to take an independent stance. If there were conflicting authorities, Stage 3 people would submit to the authority of the time, for example, parents when with parents, or peers when with peers. If it were a case of a choice between authorities, then submission would be to the highest or most important authority. They lacked the insight and autonomy to challenge systems and had difficulty dealing with social justice (Leavey & Hetheron, 1988, pp. 30-31).

Stage 3 people had a personal relationship with the deity. God knew them and others intimately, so they were linked with either the depth or height of ultimacy. Having brought their systems to harmonious syntheses, many remained in this stage. Leavey and Hetheron pointed out Fowler had suggested a large proportion of church people remained in Stage 3. This put them at risk of not further developing their autonomy and moral systems. Also, if betrayed by persons they looked up to, this could see them losing faith in a personal God, or seeking a naive relationship with God, which was out of touch with life's realities (Leavey & Hetheron, 1988, p. 31).

Stage 4. Individuative-Reflective Faith (From late adolescence). Life experiences forced people to place elements of their identity and faith under critical examination. This required breaking the balance of Stage 3. Whereas beliefs, values and commitments were previously unquestioned, in Stage 4 they were critically scrutinised, carefully chosen or replaced and organised into a more explicit system.

People in Stage 4 valued initiative, creativity, independence and evaluative criticism. They needed to be authentic and to match reality, even if this meant challenging structures. They thought in terms of changing

systems. Stage 4 people could not yet cope with all criteria for making value judgments, so they engaged in either/or exercises. This was a stage of polarities: logic versus feelings and intuition; organisations versus the individual; own spiritual life versus service to others, etc. They could not cope with these differences, so chose one and scrapped the other (Walsh, 1985, pp. 5, 8, 18).

Stage 4 people no longer followed blindly, nor relied on the group for authority. Instead they took responsibility for their own judgments. Two features necessary for the emergence of Stage 4 were a move from an external source of authority to an internalised authority system, plus a critical distancing from the value systems of the groups with which they identified in Stage 3 (Fowler, 1981, p. 179). Identity was self-derived from the choices they made and their new found self-authority and responsibility. Where once they derived identity from their roles, now the roles were an expression of themselves. Authenticity and consistency were important. Awareness now went beyond the group and there was a willingness to reach out to other racial, class or national groups. However, this was only to those with whom they felt an affinity. Principles of ideal justice still carried a certain amount of group bias (Walsh, 1985, pp. 8-10).

Because of logical thought, Stage 4 people engaged in demythologising, so faith could maintain its integrity. They started to take responsibility for their own faith and converted the meaning of myths and symbols into conceptual frameworks, unaware of what was lost in the process. Symbols were used as a matrix to provide ideas and concepts for meaning-making.

Fowler believed this stage was not often reached until people were in their 30s or 40s. This could be traumatic because networks of relations were

disturbed. Also, sometimes people made a half-transition. They may have critically examined their beliefs and values and made necessary changes, but not shifted their locus of authority to themselves. Or, they may have developed their consciences but not examined or regrounded their beliefs and values. When this occurred, they remained in transition between the two stages.

Stage 5. Conjunctive Faith (Unusual before mid-life). With the onset of this stage came a new dimension of awareness. The firm boundaries of Stage 4 became porous and permeable. Walsh called this paradoxical faith. Individuals absorbed good from opposite polarities because they could now deal with paradox and dialectic, moving freely from one to the other (Walsh, 1985, p. 6). Fowler said there was an awareness of the need to hold together the polar tensions in the individual's life. Stage 5 people came to cherish paradox as part of truth. Truth went past the either/or category of Stage 4. It was now seen as more complex, multi-dimensioned, rich in ambiguity and needed to be seen from at least two or more dimensions simultaneously. There was now unity in diversity and a genuine, disciplined openness to the truths of other traditions and communities. This was based on commitment to the truths in their own traditions, while at the same time acknowledging no single view held all the truths and that truths needed challenge and correction. To avoid idolatry and honour paradox, many names for the holy or Transcendent were used. However, Leavey and Hetherington (1988, p. 29) pointed out that the openness to understand others' viewpoints and traditions rather than their own, placed them at risk of having their own perspectives, values and/or material conditions altered, thus making them vulnerable.

The confident ego became humbly aware of the power and influence

of the individual, social and archetypal unconscious on their own reactions and behaviours. Stage 5 people moved past the stage of reducing myths, symbols and ritual to conceptual meanings. Symbols and myths were once again used to express meaning and truth in a much more sophisticated way than in earlier Stages 1 and 2 and the richness of mystery was recognised.

Authority was further internalised by development of new structures and critical awareness, which now included multiple perspectives and comprehensive role taking (Leavey & Hetherington, 1988, p. 28). Social justice was for all. Barriers could now be transcended and outreach to others was possible, even if there was no affinity with them. Moral behaviour was driven by a transforming vision, deciding what should be done and endeavouring to do it, yet hampered in its own loyalties (Walsh, 1985, pp. 9-10).

Stage 6. Universalising Faith (Exceedingly rare). Stage 6 required a complete 'decentration' from the self. There was a qualitative readiness to balance one's own perspectives with those of a wide range of others, from any of the other states and from any other tradition, so their community was universal. Stage 6 people experienced kenosis, a complete emptying of self or detachment. The valuing process participated in the values of the Creator, for all creatures. One's affections were drawn beyond the finite centres of value and power that gave meaning and security. This was a total response in love and trust: a radical love and personal unity with the Transcendent.

APPENDIX 2

Mercy Sisters [sic] Research

The following is a summary of results of the Mercy Sisters [Sic] Research (c. 1989), relative to the present study. To avoid repetition, page numbers only are referenced.

How respondents saw the Sisters of Mercy. Mercy Sisters were viewed positively. They were seen to act with sincerity and integrity and to be non-judgemental and warm, generous, compassionate, concerned for others and committed to the poor. They were seen to show enthusiasm and determination; to be educated and talented; capable of taking responsibility; practically oriented and unafraid to take risks. Respondents also saw them as approachable, joyful, friendly and good fun but elderly and rather conservative (pp. 29, 33).

Awareness of Mercy Sisters' ministry. Over 90% of respondents thought the Mercies were involved in teaching and 87% of those over 26 years thought they were still involved in nursing. Respondents under 18 had a greater awareness of the various ministries in which Mercy Sisters were currently involved. Only a small percentage above 19 years seemed to know of these new ministries. Those at school showed more awareness, which researchers said pointed to a need for the Sisters to establish better public relations for those who had left school (pp. 41-42).

Expected future of the Sisters of Mercy. Fifty-one percent of respondents believed the Mercy Associates would take over from the Mercy

Sisters, whom they expected to die out. Only 37% foresaw the Sisters of Mercy and Mercy Associates as a strong team (p. 21).

Reactions to the possibility of a religious vocation. Of 108 respondents who had considered a vocation to religious life, 36% discussed it with their families, 51% with their friends and 21% with a religious Sister. Reactions from families were 28% positive and 33% negative; from friends, 33% positive and 42% negative; and from sisters 78% positive and 5% negative. While the Sisters had responded more positively, reactions from family and friends were more negative (pp.16-17).

Reasons for considering a vocation. The most common reason given was having a good relationship with a Sister. Another popular reason was the feeling of having been called by God (p. 17).

Respondents suggestions for decline of vocations. Contemporary women lived in a society not oriented towards church (p. 4) and women were offered more choices than in the past (pp. 3, 66). Women could now experience a Christian community without committing to traditional religious life (pp. 14, 65). That religious life precluded women from having a family was also seen as a deterrent (p. 14).

APPENDIX 3

Participating Groups in the Survey

Antioch

Antioch consists of parish based youth groups coordinated by the Catholic Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Brought from the U.S.A. to Australia by the Pirola family in 1981, Antioch is a spiritual programme for young people from 15 to approximately 22 years. The aim is to provide young people with opportunities to listen, discuss and better understand the meaning of being a Catholic today and to help them develop a love of Jesus and the Church, through a welcoming and supportive community. It is youth ministering to youth. Recruitment is mainly conducted through the Antioch Weekend, which runs from the Friday night, through to Sunday night. The weekend is intended to be a conversion experience, aimed at changing direction and lifestyle: individuals are personally called to holiness because they are the body of Christ. It is also about evangelisation: they are all called to evangelise. The adult support or married couples connected with each group play a background role, providing maturity, guidance and the outlook of married couples. They support and assist the young where needed. Antioch operates in the parish without the direct assistance of the priest, although he, too, is in the background. An important element of Antioch is, being parish based, it gives the young a sense of parish identity (Turner, 1992, pp.150-152).

Bethel Covenant Community Ltd

This Community was founded by members of the Charismatic Renewal who felt called to live out their faith in community. The Community,

for mixed membership of married or single people and their children, is a patriarchal society under the leadership of four elders, who meet with the Perth Archbishop quarterly and their chaplain weekly. To date, women cannot become elders and only lead prayer groups in the absence of a man.

Criteria for admittance is strict, after a structured programme of spiritual exercises and study. Candidates are asked to show how God operates in their lives. When the probationary period is completed, elder approval is required for passing on to the final course on community and practice, before joining the Community. Life commitments to the Community can be made after elder approval. Children who have grown up in the Community and who wish to join follow a similar programme of initiation at about 17 years of age.

The aim of the Community is to build a strong body of Christians who can witness to and evangelise others. Married couples meet monthly but are segregated into small same sex support groups where family or marriage problems are discussed and assistance is given where needed. Counselling is suggested where necessary. They are expected to seek group advice before family decisions are made. Monthly prayer, social and recreational activities are held but family commitments usually prevent women from participating. A general Community gathering is held on Sundays which combines religious and social activities (Turner, 1992, pp.139-41).

Catholic Youth Ministry - Young Adult Group

This group is an Archdiocese based ministry for young adult married couples and singles between ages 20-35 years. The group promotes practical ways of living as young Catholics in today's world and drawing

people into a deeper relationship with God, by following the example of Jesus. Activities include mini-courses with invited noted speakers, weekend retreats, youth rallies and a performing arts ministry. About 50% of recruits are drawn from ex-Antiochians (M. Fennessy, Catholic Youth and Young Adult Ministry, personal communication, 1996).

Christian Centre for Social Action

The Christian Centre for Social Action is an ecumenical movement, which aims to develop a spirituality of faith, inspired by the Spirit, grounded in the teaching of Scripture and expressed through action for social justice.

Members engage in prayer and discernment before joining others of goodwill to challenge the powerful who dominate and exploit the powerless. Their work is confrontational in challenging the institutional causes of poverty and other injustices. They see themselves as agents of change when established orders fail to uphold the dignity and freedom of peoples. Taking an option for the poor, members examine their own lifestyles in relation to power and money and work with the needy to empower them to state their rights and agendas in order to carry out their lives with dignity (Stewart and Stewart, n.d.).

Companions Volunteer Community

This community consists of men and women from 20-30 years who live a simple life in community. They commit their lives for one year working for justice and peace by serving the poor and marginalised. They also work towards bringing about structural change by examining the causes of social injustice and supporting empowering programmes that teach the poor to help themselves. Companions are supported financially by the Sisters of Mercy and the Jesuits and their spirituality is based on that of the Mercies,

Jesuits and Christian Brothers. Through this spiritual development, which unfolds out of a simple, communal lifestyle of Gospel values, prayer and social justice work, they discover and develop their own gifts which can be carried forward to later life. At the end of their year, most Companions go on to work in some field of social justice (Leavey & O'Neill, 1996, pp.95-6; J. O'Connor, Coordinator of the group, personal communication, 1996).

Disciples of Jesus Covenant Community

This is a charismatic group for men and women, married and single. Their aims are to live a life of holiness under the power of the Spirit, to renew the Church and to bring the Kingdom of God into society. They endeavour to renew themselves through prayer, to live out Baptismal promises through their covenant to each other and to be a sign of committed love to the world. Their mission is evangelisation and outreach. The youth mission team is active in visitation and presenting playlets at Perth's Catholic schools, as well as evangelising on the streets of Fremantle on Friday nights. The Disciples have developed a cooperation with celibate religious life. Emerging from the Disciples of Jesus are the Missionaries of God's Love, two separate groups for single men and women who feel drawn to consecrated life and live radically under the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience (Leavey & O'Neill, 1996, pp.109-10; Member of the group, personal communication, 1996).

Divine Mercy Apostolate

This Apostolate meets monthly in prayer, invoking the Divine Mercy of Jesus. The devotion was founded by visionary, Blessed Faustina Kowalska of Poland, following instructions she received in visions of Jesus in the early

1930s. The message, God's forgiving love and mercy will be open to all who repent, spread throughout the world and the Feast of the Divine Mercy is celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. For the nine days preceding this feast, commencing on Good Friday, a novena to the Divine Mercy is made, with a different intention for each day.

At the monthly meetings, a chaplet is said, using the standard rosary beads for counting. This is offered up in atonement for the sins of the world and begging divine mercy. Membership is mixed, open to Religious and Lay, married and single, male and female (Marian Helpers, n.d.).

The Focolare Movement

Focolare means "hearth" or "fireside" to suggest the warmth of family love. Founded in Rome, the world wide movement has centres in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney. Initially Catholic, it is now ecumenical. Membership is either residential or associate and members try to bring unity into whatever environment they find themselves: the aim is a united world. The Apostolate is to all walks of life, especially family and youth. Vocations to Focolare are recognised by the Church, with a two or three year formation taking place near Florence, Italy. Residential members take private vows and prayer life is both private and communal (Leavey & O'Neill, 1996, pp. 42-3; Member of the Group, personal communication, 1996).

Holy Spirit of Freedom Community

This group is Charismatic, Eucharistic, Marian and obedient to the Pope. Membership is for men and women, married or single, intended to be ecumenical but is Catholic in practice. Members work on the streets of Perth and Fremantle at night, befriending street kids, drug addicts, prostitutes and

others, bringing the love of Jesus to the marginalised through their friendship. Overnight emergency accommodation is provided and they visit jails, homes, hospitals and support others in need. Members' prayer life is paramount: a personal relationship with Jesus is the foundation on which their action is built. There are various levels of committed membership. Level 1 entails living in community in total reliance on Divine Providence and making a binding commitment of entire abandonment to God and service to the poor. Level 2 is a preparation for the Level 1. Members live in, where possible, and continue studies or maintain outside employment. Commitments at levels 1 and 2 are temporary, up to four years, but can be renewed at the end of the term. Some believe their calling is for life. Each member has a spiritual director outside the group, as a safeguard on the direction in which the group is heading. Co-members and auxiliary members are involved with the ministry and join the group weekly in prayer but live together or in private accommodation. Prayer supporters commit themselves to pray for the community and street kids (Leavey & O'Neill, 1996, pp 96-7; Members of the group, personal communication, 1996).

Neo-Catechumenate

The first Neo-Catechumenal community was founded in 1964 in Spain by Francisco (Kiko) Arguello. It began with a catechesis for Gypsies and it was from the teaching (kerygma) that a community was formed. This began the New-Catechumenal Way, which is based on renewal promoted by Vatican II and which has now spread throughout the world. The 'Way' is a way of living the experience of the early Christian communities and is a way of faith and conversion. It is a way of evangelisation. The local bishop sends catechists, in cooperation with parish priests, to invite parishioners to

adult catechesis. It is a post-baptismal catechumenate, in which the riches and responsibilities of baptism, not before realised, are discovered.

The New-Catechumenal community sees itself as the Church of Jesus Christ. Individual communities are parish based, presided over by a presbyter and work in cooperation with the parish priest. The prime purpose of communal meetings is to celebrate the Word of God and the Eucharist. While the essential teaching is the Resurrection of Jesus, kerygma is through all Scripture and Pauline themes are strongly emphasised. The Neo-Catechumenal Way is a way of the Spirit for the contemporary Church to bring people to salvation but it does not claim to be the only way (Blazquez, 1988, pp. 7-91).

Redemptorist Prayer Group

Prayer group, run by the Redemptorists, that meets monthly for prayer and fellowship.

Teachers and Nurses

Catholic women employed as teachers and nurses/carers in Perth, work that was traditionally done by Sisters in Catholic schools, hospitals and nursing homes.

University Students

Students from Perth's Catholic university, University of Notre Dame Australia, and a public university, Edith Cowan University, Mount Lawley Campus. The majority of Edith Cowan students were studying Catholic units for accreditation for employment in Catholic schools.

APPENDIX 4**Test for Conservatism or Liberalism (C-L Test)**

The following statements from the questionnaire were used as a test to gauge respondents' conservative or liberal outlooks.

1. The Church's stance on women priests is against social justice.
2. Religious life is too controlled by Church hierarchy.
3. Religious life is too restrictive.
4. Secular religious life for women is no longer necessary.
5. I would rather follow my conscience than submit to a vow of obedience.
6. If a sister's conscience dictated she should break an agreed rule, she should follow her conscience.
7. Obedience is not relevant in today's autonomous society.
8. Obedience is an old fashioned commitment.
9. A lifetime of celibacy is unnatural.

APPENDIX 5

Continuum of Conservatism to Liberalism in Participating Groups

A break-down of apparent conservatism and liberalism in participating groups is shown in Table 41. The tendency towards conservatism and liberalism lies in a continuum. Percentages at the left and right of the table show the percentage of apparent conservatism or liberalism in each particular group. Bracketed figures in the moderate column indicate moderates' leaning towards either conservatism or liberalism.

Table 41

Continuum of Conservatism to Liberalism

Group and No.	% of group Conserv.	<u>Conserv- ative</u>	<u>Moderate</u>		<u>Liberal</u>	% of group Lib.
			Mean below 3	Mean over 3		
Neo-Cats (8)	87.50%	7	(1)	1	(0)	-
DOJ (23)	73.91%	17	(4)	6	(2)	-
HSOF (3)	66.67%	2	(1)	1	(0)	-
Bethel (24)	20.83%	5	(18)	19	(1)	-
Antioch (30)	10.00%	3	(13)	26	(12)	1
DM (1)		-	(1)	1	(0)	-
Focolare (4)		-	(1)	4	(3)	-
RPG (5)		-	(0)	5	(3)	-
Young Adults (6)		-	(1)	5	(3)	1
CCSA (6)		-	(1)	5	(4)	1
Nurses (15)		-	(3)	12	(8)	3
UNI (44)		-	(15)	35	(16)	9
Teachers (33)		-	(8)	26	(17)	7
CVC (3)		-	(0)	2	(2)	1

APPENDIX 6

Final Questionnaire

The final questionnaire, as delivered to participants, follows.

Note: Likert statements, that were included in the questionnaire but eliminated from the final analysis for having discriminations below 1.00, are marked *.

Allocated number.....

SURVEY OF ATTITUDES OF YOUNG ADULT CATHOLIC WOMEN
18 - 35 YEARS TOWARD RELIGIOUS LIFE.

As you are probably aware the number of religious sisters is decreasing rapidly. This survey is designed to help find out why young women are not being attracted to **secular religious life**, i.e. religious who work out in the community, **not** cloistered religious life. Please be **strictly honest** in filling out this form.

You have been selected as a representative of your group or institution. Whenever the survey refers to your group or institution please answer as a member of _____.

Your reply is **confidential**. Please **do not** put your name on the survey sheet. A number on the side is to assist me in determining all sheets are returned.

Please complete all sections.

1. COMMITMENTS

(a) Here is a list of things to which some people are committed. Please circle only those that apply to you.

- Purchase house/car
- Sport/recreation/travel
- Study
- Career/work
- Personal development
- Spiritual development
- Friendships
- Marriage/relationship
- Social justice issues
- Other (Specify)_____

(b) You are now asked to rate **only those you have circled** on a scale of one to seven to show how important they are to you. **Seven** will indicate what is of **most importance** to you, whereas **one** will indicate **lesser importance**.

1. Place an **X** under the appropriate number. Only put one X on each line.
2. Each item is to be a separate and independent judgment.
3. Without being careless, do not puzzle over items. Your immediate feeling is what is wanted.

COMMITMENTS							
Your commitment	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Now, please count the number you circled and the number you have listed to ensure you have not left any out.

(c) I am interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read each one carefully and then **circle the number** that indicates your feeling, e.g. a circle around 5 would indicate you strongly agreed, a circle around one would indicate you strongly disagreed, etc.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I could commit myself to help others in some way for a short time.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel comfortable about making temporary commitments.	5	4	3	2	1
I could commit myself to joining a committee for one year.	5	4	3	2	1
I could devote three years of my life working for what I consider a worthwhile cause.	5	4	3	2	1
When people are looking for volunteers I duck for cover.	5	4	3	2	1
I prefer not to commit myself on anything.	5	4	3	2	1
I find it difficult keeping commitments I make to myself.	5	4	3	2	1
*It is easier for me to honour a commitment where others are involved than to honour commitments I make just to myself.	5	4	3	2	1
I find it easier to make a long term commitment when I value what it is I am being asked to commit myself.	5	4	3	2	1
If I made a commitment to marriage it would be a lifetime commitment.	5	4	3	2	1

Continued next page

I will always have a sense of commitment to my immediate family.	5	4	3	2	1
It is impossible to commit oneself for life to another human being.	5	4	3	2	1
*The responsibility of pet ownership calls for a commitment for the lifetime of that pet.	5	4	3	2	1
My spiritual development is an ongoing commitment.	5	4	3	2	1
I am committed to my prayer life.	5	4	3	2	1
Meditation is part of my prayer life.	5	4	3	2	1
Meditation helps me in my search for the meaning of my life.	5	4	3	2	1
The search for the meaning of my life is an ongoing commitment.	5	4	3	2	1
Working for social justice could become part of my life.	5	4	3	2	1
Religious life calls for a high level of commitment.	5	4	3	2	1
* Religious life would be more attractive if the commitment were only short term.	5	4	3	2	1
Because people grow and change long term commitments should be open for review periodically.	5	4	3	2	1
Commitments may be broken in exceptional circumstances.	5	4	3	2	1
Vows taken before God may be broken for a serious reason.	5	4	3	2	1
If I felt I had been called by God to make a certain commitment, then that commitment would be deeply held.	5	4	3	2	1

Continued next page

The more I gave up to make a commitment, the harder it would be to walk away from that commitment later.

5 4 3 2 1

2. COMMUNITY

(a) What were the two main motivating factors for you joining **this group or institution** - who or what influenced you the most? (Your answer can be two things, two people, or one of each - if people, state if they are also in the group.)

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

On a scale of one to seven, indicate how strong these influences were by **circling the number**, with **seven** being the **strongest** influence and **one** the **least strong** influence.

Influence 1.	Strongest	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Least strong
Influence 2.		7	6	5	4	3	2	1	

(b) How do you see **this group or institution** to which you belong? (Please **circle** as many as appropriate.)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Social group | Avenue of spiritual growth |
| Career oriented | Avenue of Social Justice |
| Another form of religious life | Other(specify)_____ |

If you chose more than one, which is the **most important** to you?

(c) I am interested in finding out how you feel about community in general. Please indicate with a **circle** how you feel about these statements.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Being in a group helps people to think beyond themselves.	5	4	3	2	1
Being part of this group helps my awareness of others' needs.	5	4	3	2	1
Working with others in my group gives me a sense of purpose.	5	4	3	2	1
Sharing ideas with a group broadens my vision.	5	4	3	2	1
I would rather work on my own than with others.	5	4	3	2	1
When ideas are pooled more is accomplished.	5	4	3	2	1
This group has been the means of my making valued friendships.	5	4	3	2	1
I feel a close bond to most members in my group.	5	4	3	2	1
Group members should feel responsible towards each other.	5	4	3	2	1
When my group works together as a team there is a sense of solidarity between us.	5	4	3	2	1
Praying together has a binding effect on our group.	5	4	3	2	1
Working for a group could be a way of enhancing my spiritual growth.	5	4	3	2	1
Being part of this group assists my search for the meaning of my life.	5	4	3	2	1

Continued next page

Wherever you are there is always an opportunity to help others.	5	4	3	2	1
Sharing with others helps develop a sense of community.	5	4	3	2	1
I see community as an avenue of personal growth.	5	4	3	2	1
It is easier to be enthusiastic about a project when you have a supportive community behind you.	5	4	3	2	1
Belonging to this group or institution enriches my life.	5	4	3	2	1
My participation in this group deepens my sense of belonging.	5	4	3	2	1
Belonging to a group or community implies responsibility.	5	4	3	2	1
As an Australian I must be concerned that there is poverty in this country.	5	4	3	2	1
As part of the world community Australians must be vocal against injustices in other countries.	5	4	3	2	1
The Church is community by nature.	5	4	3	2	1

3. VALUES

I am interested in knowing the values (e.g. honesty, etc.) young adults hold. Could you list **three** important values **you** hold?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Please rate their importance to you by **circling** the number, where **seven** shows a rating of **most importance** and **one** the **least importance**.

	Most								Least
Value 1.	Importance	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Importance
Value 2.		7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
Value 3.		7	6	5	4	3	2	1	

4. SISTERS (Remember we are only dealing with sisters who work out in the community.)

(a) **Not** counting schools and hospitals, in what **works in Perth** are you aware of that religious sisters are currently engaged? Please list as many as you can.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____
5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

(b) The purpose of this section is to find out how young women see the sisters. **From your own experience**, please indicate by **circling** the appropriate number the extent to which you agree or disagree with these statements.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Sisters are seen as agents of the Church	5	4	3	2	1
Many sisters are qualified professionals.	5	4	3	2	1
Sisters are efficient workers.	5	4	3	2	1
When a sister does a job she seems to add an extra personal touch to it.	5	4	3	2	1
The presence of a sister in a school or hospital adds a special dimension.	5	4	3	2	1
Because the sisters no longer wear habits people are often unaware of the work they do.	5	4	3	2	1
Sisters are very committed people.	5	4	3	2	1
Sisters are deeply spiritual people.	5	4	3	2	1
Sisters show genuine concern for others.	5	4	3	2	1
Sisters are very good listeners.	5	4	3	2	1
As parish workers sisters are very focussed.	5	4	3	2	1
Sisters don't make much difference to other people's religious life.	5	4	3	2	1
Sisters are rather conservative.	5	4	3	2	1
Most sisters are elderly.	5	4	3	2	1

Continued next page

I find it hard to relate to older sisters.	5	4	3	2	1
* Sisters are often misunderstood because people do not really know them.	5	4	3	2	1
Sisters need affection like anybody else.	5	4	3	2	1
* Religious sisters are just the same as anybody else.	5	4	3	2	1
As friends sisters are very loyal.	5	4	3	2	1
* I tend to expect higher standards from a sister than from other women.	5	4	3	2	1
Sisters usually display determination when the task is difficult.	5	4	3	2	1
Not being married, some sisters lack understanding of family needs.	5	4	3	2	1

(c) Have you had any personal contact with a religious sister in the last three years?

Please tick **yes** ____
 no ____

Continued next page

(d) If you were to tell your family you wanted to become a religious sister would their reaction be -

(Please circle) **positive**
 negative
 not sure

Would your friends' reactions to the news be -

(Please circle) **encouragement**
 ridicule
 not sure

Would your family's reaction affect your decision?

(Please circle) **yes**
 no
 not sure

Would your friends' reactions affect your decision?

(Please circle) **yes**
 no
 not sure

You are now more than half-way through this survey. I suggest you take a break before commencing the last three sections.

Continued next page

5. RELIGIOUS LIFE

The object of this section is to establish young adult women's attitudes toward **secular religious life for women**. As you did previously please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these statements.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The religious lifestyle provides opportunity for spiritual growth.	5	4	3	2	1
Religious life is one way of deepening one's relationship with God.	5	4	3	2	1
Religious life helps one to nurture the call to reach out to others.	5	4	3	2	1
A religious lifestyle fosters concern for others.	5	4	3	2	1
Religious lifestyles provide a balance between personal development and reaching out to others.	5	4	3	2	1
Secular religious life calls for involvement with the world.	5	4	3	2	1
*When the sisters stopped working in schools and hospitals they lost identity as a group.	5	4	3	2	1
Religious life is not as visible as it used to be.	5	4	3	2	1
*For people to know about religious life sisters must be seen in action.	5	4	3	2	1
People would recognise religious life at work if sisters wore some clearly visible symbol, e.g. a veil.	5	4	3	2	1
To be recognised as religious, sisters should return to wearing a habit, but one appropriate to our climate.	5	4	3	2	1

* Religious orders need to advertise their work and lifestyle.	5	4	3	2	1
Secular religious life <u>in its present form</u> will probably die out.	5	4	3	2	1
Society would lose out if religious sisters ceased to exist.	5	4	3	2	1
It is important for religious life to continue as a role model for the community.	5	4	3	2	1
The variety of careers open to women today makes religious life appear less attractive.	5	4	3	2	1
Religious orders might recruit more members if people were aware of the worthwhile causes in which the sisters are involved.	5	4	3	2	1
Religious life might be more attractive if the commitment were temporary.	5	4	3	2	1
Religious life is too controlled by Church hierarchy.	5	4	3	2	1
Women's religious life has failed to keep up with the times.	5	4	3	2	1
Religious life is too restrictive.	5	4	3	2	1
The exclusion from having a family would prevent many from considering joining a religious order.	5	4	3	2	1
Secular religious life for women is no longer necessary.	5	4	3	2	1
* Newer forms of religious life are replacing secular religious life.	5	4	3	2	1

Continued next page

6. RELIGIOUS VOWS

(a) This section is to establish young women's attitudes toward the traditional religious vows of obedience, poverty and chastity. Once again please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these statements.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Obedience is like any other club rule or boundary.	5	4	3	2	1
If a rule is made by group consensus then members should obey that rule.	5	4	3	2	1
Obedience helps to develop humility.	5	4	3	2	1
I would rather follow my conscience than submit to a vow of obedience.	5	4	3	2	1
If a sister's conscience dictated that she should break an agreed rule she should follow her conscience.	5	4	3	2	1
Obedience is not relevant in today's autonomous society.	5	4	3	2	1
Obedience is an old fashioned commitment.	5	4	3	2	1
The vow of poverty is a response to Christ's call to serve others.	5	4	3	2	1
Religious keep the vow of poverty by working with the poor.	5	4	3	2	1
Having the goal of sharing everything would help one to be less self-centred.	5	4	3	2	1
I would find it difficult to share everything I had.	5	4	3	2	1
In order to function efficiently today it is practical for sisters to own certain goods.	5	4	3	2	1

Continued next page

Sisters do not seem to practise the vow of poverty any more.	5	4	3	2	1
Celibacy frees one to give oneself wholeheartedly to the needy.	5	4	3	2	1
In a religious community celibacy makes practical sense.	5	4	3	2	1
Celibacy in religious life does not exclude close friendships.	5	4	3	2	1
Today one can belong to a religious community without being celibate.	5	4	3	2	1
A lifetime of celibacy is unnatural.	5	4	3	2	1
The vow of chastity would prevent many from considering religious life.	5	4	3	2	1
Religious life might be more attractive if the taking of the traditional vows were a matter of individual choice.	5	4	3	2	1

Please complete section (a) above before continuing on to the next section (b).

Continued next page

Do not return to section (a) above after doing section (b). The idea is **not** to “catch you out” but to see if a clearer understanding of the vows makes any difference to people’s attitudes. Please be strictly honest.

(b) THE VOWS

All societies need rules or boundaries. Traditionally, the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience have been rules for religious life. In modern times, rather than being seen as a set of “do’s and don’ts”, the vows are now seen as a commitment to personal growth and a practical witness of surrendering one’s life for others in imitation of Christ. Under this new understanding, they are interpreted thus:

Poverty. Solidarity with Christ’s poor in humble recognition of one’s own poverty and sin. It is compassionately being with others in their pain; choosing to live with less so others may have enough; working for justice, mercy and mutual empowerment for the poor. Poverty appreciates the goods of creation and promotes responsible stewardship, this means becoming involved in the politics of social justice.

Chastity. Seen in the past as “giving up” or “going without”. Celibacy is not denied but is seen more today as friendship and support for others, developing into bonding and relationships through non-possessive love. Chastity claims there can be other modes of loving - authentic relationships, intimacy and sexuality do not have to be genitally expressed. In chastity the freedom to choose is expressed.

Obedience. Commitment to seeking the will of God as it is revealed in different situations. It is a response to one’s own conscience for the sake of justice and therefore a free act of responsibility requiring sensitivity, careful thought and discipline. Obedience in community is no longer blind submission but involves shared authority and shared responsibility for decisions made together.

Continued next page

If you were contemplating joining religious life would you find the vows under this new definition an attraction or a deterrent?

	<u>Attraction</u>	<u>Deterrent</u>
Poverty (please tick)	_____	_____
Chastity	_____	_____
Obedience	_____	_____

If you would like to add any comments on your feelings about the vows (before or after the definition) please do so on the back of this page.

7. SOCIAL JUSTICE

This last section is to determine how young adults feel about Social Justice. Please read the statements carefully and indicate with a **circle** how you feel on these issues.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Those working for social justice must be prepared to speak out against the dominance of the powerful over the weak.	5	4	3	2	1
The Church's stance on women priests is against social justice.	5	4	3	2	1
"Peace at any price" does not guarantee justice will be served.	5	4	3	2	1
Tolerance makes social life possible.	5	4	3	2	1
Tolerance must always discern against injustice.	5	4	3	2	1
If boat people are still in detention one year after arrival they should be allowed to stay.	5	4	3	2	1
Boat people should be sent home immediately they arrive.	5	4	3	2	1
Migrants should be made to learn English.	5	4	3	2	1
Neighbourhood watch could be extended to reporting known acts of violence in the neighbourhood.	5	4	3	2	1
More women's shelters are needed.	5	4	3	2	1
Drug addicts should be given government aid.	5	4	3	2	1

Drug dealers should be dealt with more severely in the courts.	5	4	3	2	1
AIDS victims have the right to be treated like anyone else.	5	4	3	2	1
* AIDS sufferers should be encouraged to wear medi-alert bracelets.	5	4	3	2	1
The Government should be doing more for the long term unemployed.	5	4	3	2	1
The dole promotes laziness.	5	4	3	2	1
Youth programmes are needed to help prevent gang warfare.	5	4	3	2	1
Aboriginal footballers could be engaged to work with Aboriginal youths as role models.	5	4	3	2	1
Aboriginals should be encouraged to take a larger share of responsibility in improving their health standards.	5	4	3	2	1
I would feel embarrassed to be seen in public with someone who was obviously mentally handicapped.	5	4	3	2	1
I would feel comfortable going out with a physically handicapped person.	5	4	3	2	1
Whilst urgent and necessary, merely feeding the starving will not eradicate poverty.	5	4	3	2	1
I would be willing to work for one year towards removing either the causes or results of poverty.	5	4	3	2	1

PLEASE TURN OVER

Thank you for your participation. In order for me to code your answers please fill in these personal details:

Year of your birth _____ Country where you were born _____

Country where your Mother was born _____

Country where your Father was born _____

Where you were educated (Indicate where and if Catholic or other)

Primary _____

Secondary _____

Tertiary _____ Special field _____

Other _____ Special field _____

LIST OF REFERENCES FOR APPENDICES

- Blazquez, Ricardo. (1988). Neo-Catechumenal communities: a theological discernment (P. Corbishley, Trans.). Slough: St Paul Publications.
- Fowler, J.W. (1981). Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and the quest for meaning. Blackburn: Dove Communications.
- Fowler, J.W. (1984). Becoming adult, becoming Christian: adult development and Christian faith. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Fowler, J.W. (1986). Faith and the structure of meaning. In C. Dykstra & S. Parks (Eds.), Faith development and Fowler. (pp. 15-42). Birmingham: Religious Education Press.
- Leavey, C., & Hetherington, M. (1988). Catholic beliefs and practices. Melbourne: Collins Dove.
- Leavey, C., & O'Neill, R. (1996). Gathered in God's name: new horizons in Australian religious life. Sydney: Crossing Press.
- Marian Helpers. (no date). Novena to the Divine Mercy & Chaplet of the Divine Mercy. [Brochure]. Stockbridge, Canada: Author.
- Mercy Sisters [sic] Research. (c. 1989). Unpublished report, Perth, Western Australia.
- Stewart, Peter & Stewart, Marya. (no date). A vision statement for the Christian Centre for Social Action. [Brochure]. Perth, Western Australia: Christian Centre for Social Action.
- Turner, Naomi. (1992). Catholics in Australia: a social history. Vol. 2. North Blackburn: Collins Dove.
- Walsh, John. (1985). Evangelization and justice: new insights for Christian ministry (3rd print). New York: Orbis Books.