

RELIGION AND THE FAMILY CYCLE

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Résumé — Cette étude examine la déclaration de religion, telle qu'elle a été mesurée par le recensement canadien, en termes des caractéristiques démographiques de base de population (âge, sexe, état matrimonial) et des tendances entre 1971 et 1981. En édifant à partir de cette revue, on a présenté le rapport entre la religion déclarée et le cycle familial. Les familles à deux parents ont été évaluées selon les caractéristiques du cycle familial (âge de la femme, pas d'enfants, enfants présents, pas d'enfants au foyer). On a aussi examiné l'homogénéité religieuse (c'est-à-dire, même ou différente religion du mari et de la femme, pas de religion) dans le contexte du cycle de vie familial. On a tiré des conclusions sur le rapport entre la religion déclarée et l'organisation familiale et sur les tendances de ce rapport pour la décennie.

Abstract — This paper examines the declaration of religion, as measured by the Canadian census, in terms of basic demographic characteristics of the population (age, sex, marital status) and trends between 1971 and 1981. Building on this review, the relationship between declared religion and the family cycle is presented. Husband-wife families are assessed by family cycle characteristics (age of wife, no children, children present, no children at home). Evidence on religion homogeneity (that is, husband-wife same/different religion-no religion) is also reviewed within the family lifecycle. Conclusions are drawn as to the relationship between declared religion and family organization and trends in this relationship for the decade.

Key Words — religion, family cycle, census, children, demographic, homogamy

"Family variables have proved to be especially recalcitrant to any effort to order them in accord with some logical, scientific, or evolutionary pattern" (Goode, 1968:303).

Introduction

Religion remains an enigma for the social scientist. The enigma involves both problems of measurement and meaning. Measuring is an issue because religion is inherently a subjective phenomenon (Turner, 1981). Religion can imply beliefs, values, sentiments and related behaviour. On the other hand, religion may only connote formalistic, nominal attachment to an institutional religion. Also religion has elements that are highly individualistic but at the same time collective in expression and support systems (Berger, 1967; D'Antonio *et al.*, 1982).

These latter aspects especially are what instigated this research initiated on the relation of religion to the family. Religion is personal, privatized (Parsons, 1969) but, in most societies, it operates to reinforce, "collect" people both by institutional support and in socialization (Chalfant *et al.*, 1981). One intense setting for such apparently contradictory roles is within the family, that is, to what extent does a family share religion? Subsequently, are there compositional characteristics of the family which indicate both (1) differences in the presence of religion, by *some* definition, and (2) differences in the sharing within the family of a religion?

To extend the enigma of religion and its relevance to society, there is the complex question of assessing the trends in religion in society (Demerath, 1968). A common theme is that religion is declining or, at least, changing in relevance (Crysdale, 1976; Wuthnow, 1979) with an increasing secularized, non-traditional set of values. Certainly there are measures or indicators to support that view especially in terms of behaviouristic conformity to traditional religious values, for example, birth control, religious practices, abortion, monetary contributions, etc. (Bibby, 1979, 1983; Hiller, 1976; Riche, 1982). Bibby, using the results of a 1980-81 national survey, sees the results as substantiating "the continuing influence of secularization in Canada" (Bibby, 1983:15). He found that although some 90 per cent of Canadians claim to be Protestant or Catholic, the vast majority are better described as "a-religious" or perhaps keeping more religious options open. Bibby would not see religious commitment being abandoned but only changing. "For the most part, Canadians have not abandoned traditional religion. They have stayed, preferring the old affiliations to anything new, including the option of no affiliation" (Bibby, 1985:303).

One of the most interesting recent studies of modern societal trends in religion (and its relation to the family) is found in the return to Middletown research (Caplow *et al.*, 1983). Balancing the familiar caveats regarding the "representativeness" of Middletown to North American society is the fact that Middletown is a case study with in-depth, interval observations and assessments extending over a considerable period of time, namely, the 1920s, 1930s and 1970s. Using a variety of measures of religion and religiosity, Caplow and associates concluded:

As we have shown, the general level of religious belief and practice in Middletown is not very different today from what it was a half-century ago, and the leading tenets of popular theology have remained virtually the same. There is much more tolerance among churches and a good deal of ecumenical good will that was formerly lacking, but no more cooperation than before toward common goals. The denominations of Middletown are perhaps more significant as sources of personal identity today than they were two generations ago, but the difference is small and is counterbalanced by a modest decline in religious endogamy. The Reverend Rip van Winkle, Methodist minister, awakening in Middletown after a sixty-year sleep, would hardly know he had been away.

Recently, two of the authors unequivocally put it this way: "Not only do religion and family life in Middletown seem as vigorous as they were 50 years ago, but it appears that the vitality of these two institutions is related" (Bahr and Chadwick, 1985:413).

This revisit to Middletown and the examination of the functions of religion leaves the thread throughout that religion and the family are intensely private — but interwoven — institutions. Some years ago, Berger (1967:373) captured this notion quite succinctly:

As we might expect from the similar fate undergone by the institutions of religion and family in industrial society, religion has found itself in a state of social "proximity" to the family in the private sphere. The family is the institutional area in which traditional religious symbols continue to have the most relevance in actual everyday living. In turn, the family has become for the religious institutions the main "target area" for their social strategy.

If Berger is correct, the privatizing of the family ("bastion against the outside world" concept is akin to this), denuded of previous economic and socializing functions, has brought religion also within that private social sphere.

Source of Data

Data from both the 1971 and 1981 Canadian Censuses of Population were used for this study. Both censuses included beyond basic demographic information on age, sex, marital status and household relationships, data on fertility ("number of children ever born") and religion. Although the religion question was the same for both censuses ("What is your religion"), there were minor differences. In 1971, the question format was:

16. What is your religion?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| ☐ Anglican | ☐ Pentecostal | ☐ No religion |
| ☐ Baptist | ☐ Presbyterian | |
| ☐ Greek Orthodox | ☐ Roman Catholic | |
| ☐ Jewish | ☐ Salvation Army | |
| ☐ Lutheran | ☐ Ukrainian Catholic | |
| ☐ Mennonite | ☐ United Church | |



Other, write here

and in 1981:

27. What is your religion?

■ *Mark one box only*

- | | |
|--|---|
| 41 ☐ Roman Catholic | 49 ☐ Ukrainian Catholic |
| 42 ☐ United Church | 50 ☐ Pentecostal |
| 43 ☐ Anglican | 51 ☐ Jehovah's Witnesses |
| 44 ☐ Presbyterian | 52 ☐ Mennonite |
| 45 ☐ Lutheran | 53 ☐ Salvation Army |
| 46 ☐ Baptist | 54 ☐ Islam |
| 47 ☐ Greek Orthodox | 55 ☐ No religion |
| 48 ☐ Jewish | |

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☐

Other (specify)

Without doubt, the use of the census question as a measure of "religion" vs. "no religion" is an over-simplification (Hiller, 1976). However, the major merits of this census inquiry are: the number of observations; national, small area comparability over time; and, since 1971, self-declaration by the respondent of having/not having a religion.

Self-enumeration was introduced to the census in 1971 and, as now realized, is an important factor in measuring "no religion" on a comparable basis (Scott, 1976). The question on religion was asked of a one-third sample in 1971 and of a one-fifth sample in 1981. For both censuses, response to the question on religion is considered acceptable. In 1971, on a national level, 99 per cent of the population responded. This compares with 95 per cent on average for all the one-third sample questions (Scott, 1976). In 1981, the response rate was 98.6 per cent nationally¹ with non-response varying regionally from 1 per cent in the Atlantic Provinces to 2 per cent in the provinces west of Ontario (Mori, 1983). In 1981, inmates of institutions (some 260,000) were excluded from the tabulated data. In terms of wording, method of enumeration, response rates and processing procedures, the 1971 and 1981 census religion questions are considered highly comparable.

Of course, responses to posed questions on religion vary considerably based on the question. The census in asking "What is your religion?" obtained "no religion" responses from 4.3 per cent of the population in 1971 and 7.3 per cent in 1981. Asking Canadians if they had a "religious preference" produced some 8 per cent with none in 1975 (Bibby, 1979). Gallup polls asked: "Is organized religion a relevant part of your life at the present time or not?" and obtained 50 per cent positive answers in 1973, 52 per cent in 1978 and 44 per cent in 1984 (with wide variations in all years by age, sex and region). Gearing questions variously to (declared) identification, preference, commitment, affiliation, membership, involvement, attendance, etc. will elicit, understandably, a considerable range of responses from Canadians (Himmelfarb, 1975). As recognized previously, the census question ("What is your religion?") is simplistic and gives no indication of degree of commitment or motivation. Nonetheless, the question is explicit and leaves little room for rationalization especially between declaring a religion vis-à-vis no religion. Condran and Tamney (1985) suggest three basic reasons for "religious nones", namely, isolation from religious institutions, worker alienation for pro-management church leaders and rejection of dominant belief systems. The religion/no religion dichotomy is not merely a distinction of degree, but a delineation involving a fundamental distinction within the population.

Demographic Variables

From various literature, it can be surmised that in our modern society, religion and the family are not randomly associated, even demographically. On the individual level, there is a relation, albeit under-studied, of, for example, age and religion (Hoge and Roozen, 1979; Maves, 1960; Orbach, 1961; Reid *et al.*, 1978; Roozen, 1979; Veevers and Cousineau, 1980). In terms of basic demographic variables, there is evidence that not only age but sex, marital status and rural-urban residence have specific associations with "religion" vs. "no religion", as a simple dichotomy. Of course, beyond demographic measures, there are other social and economic distinctions as well (Condran and Tamney, 1985; Mueller and Johnson, 1975). Figure 1 shows the distinct trend at all ages for a higher proportion of males indicating "no religion". The figure shows the effects of proxy reporting at the young ages, the peaking for the 25-34 year old period and then the gradual decline in "no religion" reporting with increasing age. Figure 2 shows the differences in the reporting of "no religion" by marital status. Levels are highest for those divorced or separated and lowest for those currently married or widowed.

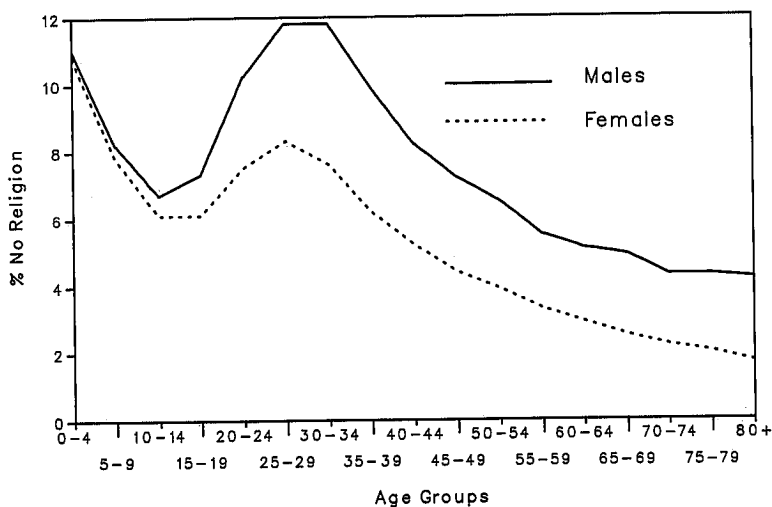


FIGURE 1. PROPORTION OF POPULATION DECLARING "NO RELIGION", BY SEX AND AGE GROUPS, CANADA, 1981

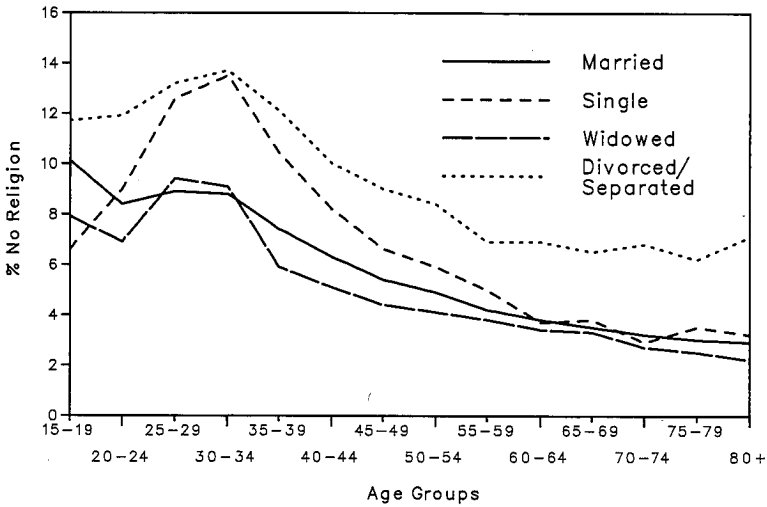


FIGURE 2. PROPORTION OF POPULATION 15 YEARS AND OVER DECLARING "NO RELIGION", BY AGE GROUPS, MARRIED, SINGLE, WIDOWED, DIVORCED/SEPARATED, FOR CANADA, 1981

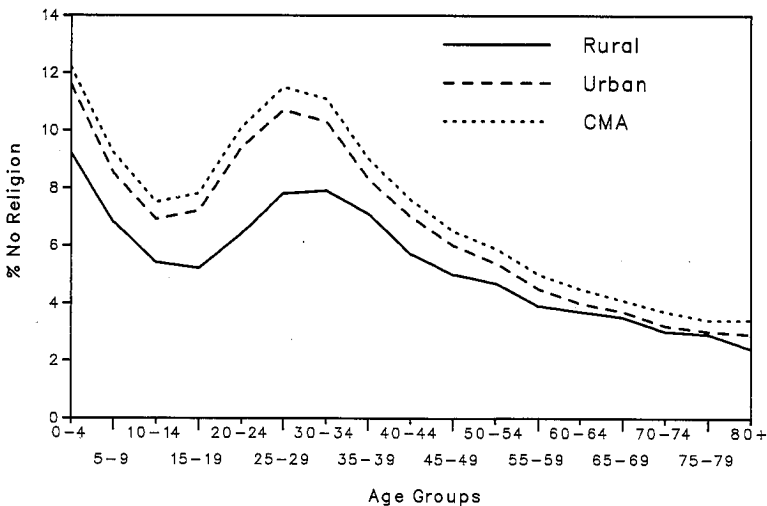


FIGURE 3. PROPORTION OF POPULATION DECLARING "NO RELIGION", BY AGE GROUPS, RURAL, URBAN AND CMA, FOR CANADA, 1981

TABLE 1. PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION REPORTING
"NO RELIGION", 1971 AND 1981 FOR AGE COHORTS IN 1981

<u>Age in 1981</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1981</u>
0-9	-	9.5
10-19	4.5	6.6
20-29	3.5	9.4
30-39	6.4	9.0
40-49	5.2	6.3
50-59	4.1	4.8
60-69	3.4	3.8
70-79	2.9	3.1
All Ages	4.3	7.3

Figure 3 illustrates the effects of residence, with Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) residents for both sexes having larger proportions of "no religion" reporting. The unambiguous gender, marital status and residence patterns here suggest the relationship with more traditional values usually associated with (or assigned to) women and rural residents.

Table 1 shows the proportion of the population reporting "no religion" by age groups for ten-year cohorts in 1971 and 1981. As can be seen, the percentage increased from 4.3 per cent in 1971 to 7.3 per cent in 1981, and increases were observed for all age cohorts. The largest increase was for the cohort 20-29 in 1981 — 3.5 per cent of this cohort reported "no religion" in 1971 (when they were aged 10-19) compared to 9.4 per cent in 1981. Part of this increase may be accounted for by the fact that for younger age groups there may be proxy reporting by parents.

If basic demographic characteristics have a specific connection with religion, as declared, the apparent question is: how are the combined demographic and compositional characteristics of such families associated with respondent identifications with religion or the explicit rejection of such identification?

Family Lifecycle Analysis

Analysis of the family by stages in its "life course" has developed as a basic ordering mechanism to deal with the "recalcitrant" nature (as quoted from William Goode at the beginning of the paper) of family variables and changes. The family cycle framework has been developed and enhanced over time (for example, Elder, 1977; Priest, 1982; Rodgers and Witney, 1981; Sweet, 1977).

In terms of aggregations of significant demographic events and conditions, the limits of the framework are basically the availability and capacity of the model to absorb additional information. The stages used here incorporate (marital) unions prior to presence of children, children present and children departed. Age of wife is incorporated in order to ascertain inferences on childless unions. Of course, other characteristics including language, labour force participation, occupation and income could subsequently be added if social class emerges as relevant (and if the data base can sustain such disaggregation). Cross-sectional census data are not ideal for tracing "life courses" versus the advantages of longitudinal data. However, these limitations are offset by the coverage and additional characteristics available from a census data set.

The relationship between family structure and religious participation has been considered in earlier studies (for example, Lazerivity, 1961; Mueller and Johnson, 1975; Nash, 1968). These studies have considered participation by different lifecycle groups, but the results have been inconsistent. The presentation herein should be viewed as an initial exploration of the interplay between family cycle stages and the declared religion status of husbands and wives. Comparisons between 1971 and 1981 provide benchmarks for changes in these characteristics over a decade.

Findings

As indicated above, the census question "What is your religion?" has many limitations in that it provides no indication of religious participation or commitment. Nevertheless, the scope of the census and the large sample size (20 per cent in 1981 and 33 per cent in 1971) provide an opportunity to investigate the relationship between self-declared religious affiliation and the family cycle. Given the association between declaring a "religion" vs. "no religion" and the basic demographic variables of age and sex, any further investigation of family variables requires that the analysis control for these demographic variables. Such an investigation would not be possible without such large sample sizes as provided by the census.

In this section, the focus is on the association between declared religion and family status. Families are divided into lone-parent and husband-wife families. To further investigate associations with family composition, husband-wife families are broadly classified by the presence or absence of children in the home, with the latter category being further subdivided into families in which the wife has reported no children ever born and families in which the wife has children but none of the children are currently living in the home.

TABLE 2. PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS REPORTING "NO RELIGION" BY SEX, AGE GROUP AND CENSUS FAMILY STATUS, CANADA, 1981

	Age Group			
	18-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Males				
Family Persons	9.1	8.4	6.4	4.5
Non-Family Persons	18.0	14.8	9.9	6.7
Females				
Family Persons	6.9	5.4	3.9	2.6
Non-Family Persons	11.7	9.4	5.3	2.6

Finally, both lone-parent and husband-wife families with children are distinguished by the age of the children. Since earlier studies (Roozen, 1979) report a relationship between the presence of school age children and measures of religiosity, families with children were classified into three mutually exclusive groups: (1) at least one child was of school age, 6-16 years; (2) no child was of school age, but at least one was of pre-school age, 0-5 years; and (3) all children were 17 years of age or older.

Most of the analysis focuses on the basic dichotomy of declared "religion" vs. "no religion", although in the case of husband-wife families some attention is given to differentiating couples reporting the same religion in contrast to those reporting different religions. The categorization of religions into "same" vs. "different" was done on the basis of major groups. Initially, all religions aside from the "no religion" category were classified into four major groups: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Other. Husbands and wives were classified as having the same religion if they reported a religion in the same group. While only a very crude categorization, particularly in view of the residual category "Other", this allowed for at least a cursory consideration of the association between homogamy of religion and the family cycle. The impact of the categorization can be seen from the fact that using these groupings, 81.2 per cent of all husband-wife families in 1981 are considered to have the same religion, while if each of the 87 individual religious groups in the census is considered distinct, 74.1 per cent of all husband-wife families would be considered as having the same religion.

Table 2 shows the percentage of persons reporting "no religion" by census family status. Overall, the incidence of "no religion" is much higher for non-

family persons. Differences are greatest for young males aged 18-34, where 18 per cent of non-family persons declared "no religion" compared to 9.1 per cent of family persons. Differences are consistent across all age-sex groups, with the exception of older females where the proportions reporting no religion were the same (2.6 per cent) for family and non-family persons.

Tables 3, 4 and 5 show the association between declared religion and family types for husband-wife families. As indicated in Table 3, data for 1981 show that in 81.2 per cent of all husband-wife families, both spouses declared the same religion, while in a further 10 per cent of families, both spouses declared a religion but a different religion. In the remaining 8.8 per cent of families, at least one spouse declared having "no religion", and in 4.0 per cent of the families, both spouses reported "no religion". Table 3 also shows the comparison with the 1971 census. For 91.2 per cent of husband-wife families, both spouses reported a religion in 1981, down from 94.1 per cent in 1971. Within this group there was also a shift away from homogamous marriages. The basic trends between 1971 and 1981 were similar for all age groups, although the movement away from a declared religion was much higher among younger families when the wife was less than 45 years of age.

Table 4 shows the association between declared religions of husbands and wives and type of family. It is clear that families with no children at home report a much higher incidence of "no religion". For example, in families where the wife is less than 35 years, 15.8 per cent of childless families and 17.2 per cent of families where children were not living in household had at least one spouse declaring "no religion", compared to 10.7 per cent of families where there were children at home. (Of course, for this age group especially, children born but not living at home are heavily weighted no doubt to situations of adoption, children in foster homes, children deceased or custody of children in divorces placed elsewhere.) Furthermore, the incidence of homogamy in religion was much higher (76 per cent) when children were at home compared to when there were no children at home (64.1 per cent). In general, after controlling for age, the differences between childless families and families where the children were no longer living at home were much less than the differences between either of these types of families and those where children were at home. The lower incidence of "no religion" in families with children at home may in part be due to differential fertility as well as to an increased tendency to declare a religion — and perhaps the same religion as your spouse — when raising younger children. Another explanation, of course, could be the selective survival of "same religion" marriages. Again relationships are consistent across all age groups although the differences are less pronounced for older families.

TABLE 3. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES BY RELIGION OF HUSBAND AND WIFE BY AGE OF WIFE, CANADA, 1971 AND 1981

	1971	1981
Age of Wife-All Ages	100.0	100.0
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	87.4	81.2
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	6.7	10.0
3) One Spouse No Religion	3.4	4.8
4) Both Spouses No Religion	2.5	4.0
Number of Families	4,585,220	5,611,495
Age of Wife - less than 35 years	100.0	100.0
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	83.0	73.0
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	9.2	14.7
3) One Spouse No Religion	4.4	7.0
4) Both Spouses No Religion	3.3	5.3
Number of Families	1,712,255	2,184,205
Age of Wife 35-44 Years	100.0	100.0
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	88.4	82.4
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	5.9	8.8
3) One Spouse No Religion	3.1	4.6
4) Both Spouses No Religion	2.5	4.2
Number of Families	1,039,605	1,191,960
Age of Wife 45-54 Years	100.0	100.0
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	89.6	87.0
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	5.6	6.7
3) One Spouse No Religion	2.8	3.2
4) Both Spouses No Religion	2.0	3.1
Number of Families	918,005	971,365
Age of Wife 55 Years or Over	100.0	100.0
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	92.1	89.7
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	4.2	5.5
3) One Spouse No Religion	2.2	2.7
4) Both Spouses No Religion	1.5	2.2
Number of Families	915,385	1,263,980

Thus far the evidence clearly points to an association between family membership — and, in particular, the presence of children in the home — and the self declaration of religion. In Table 5 this association is further pursued by

TABLE 4. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES BY RELIGION OF HUSBAND AND WIFE BY TYPE OF FAMILY AND AGE OF WIFE, CANADA, 1981

	<u>Type of Family</u>		
	No Children Ever Born to Wife	Children Living at Home	No Children Living at Home
Age of Wife - less than 35 Years	100.0	100.0	100.0
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	66.6	76.0	64.1
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	17.5	13.3	18.7
3) One Spouse No Religion	9.3	6.0	10.2
4) Both Spouses No Religion	6.5	4.7	7.0
Number of Families	647,380	1,496,690	40,135
Age of Wife - 35-44 Years	100.0	100.0	100.0
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	71.5	83.6	72.0
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	13.8	8.2	14.4
3) One Spouse No Religion	7.8	4.3	7.7
4) Both Spouses No Religion	7.0	3.9	5.9
Number of Families	71,315	1,078,560	42,075
Age of Wife 45-54 Years	100.0	100.0	100.0
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	79.6	88.4	84.2
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	12.0	5.9	7.9
3) One Spouse No Religion	4.6	2.9	4.1
4) Both Spouses No Religion	3.9	2.8	3.8
Number of Families	56,835	705,230	209,295
Age of Wife 55 Years or Over	100.0	100.0	100.0
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	86.9	91.0	89.7
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	8.1	4.7	5.3
3) One Spouse No Religion	2.9	2.4	2.7
4) Both Spouses No Religion	2.1	2.0	2.3
Number of Families	146,275	318,375	799,320

classifying husband-wife families with children at home by the ages of the children. The results show that families with school-age children reported the lowest incidence of "no religion". Moreover, while the classification of families by

TABLE 5. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES BY RELIGION OF HUSBAND AND WIFE BY AGE OF CHILDREN AT HOME AND AGE OF WIFE, CANADA, 1981

	No Children Ever Born/ No Children At Home	No Children Age 6-16 But at Least One Age 0-5	At Least One Child Age 6-16	All Children 17 Years or over
Age of Wife - less than 35	100.0	100.0	100.0	
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	66.5	74.4	77.6	
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	17.6	14.4	12.3	
3) One Spouse No Religion	9.3	6.3	5.6	
4) Both Spouses No Religion	6.6	5.0	4.5	
Number of Families	687,525	762,690	731,940	*
Age of Wife - 35-44 Years	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	71.7	74.0	84.2	82.7
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	14.0	13.4	8.0	8.2
3) One Spouse No Religion	7.7	6.7	4.1	4.7
4) Both Spouses No Religion	6.6	5.9	3.7	4.4
Number of Families	113,395	51,915	924,135	102,510
Age of Wife 45-54 Years	100.0		100.0	100.0
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	83.2		88.7	88.0
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	8.8		6.0	5.7
3) One Spouse No Religion	4.2		2.7	3.1
4) Both Spouses No Religion	3.8		2.6	3.1
Number of Families	266,130	*	378,835	323,610
Age of Wife 55 Years or Over	100.0		100.0	100.0
1) Husband-Wife Same Religion	89.3		90.6	91.0
2) Husband-Wife Different Religions	5.7		5.2	4.6
3) One Spouse No Religion	2.7		2.2	2.4
4) Both Spouses No Religion	2.2		1.9	2.0
Number of Families	945,610	*	519,915	265,920
* Less than 3,000 families				

age of children does not rigorously adhere to a family cycle model, there is some evidence of an evolution of declaring a religious affiliation as families move through the family cycle. Evidence for this is summarized in Table 6.

TABLE 6. PERCENTAGE OF HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES WHERE AT LEAST ONE SPOUSE DECLARED "NO RELIGION" BY STAGE IN FAMILY CYCLE AND AGE OF WIFE, CANADA, 1981

	<u>Age Group of Wife</u>			
	less than 35	35-44	45-54	55+
No children ever born to wife	15.9	14.8	8.5	5.0
No children age 6-16 but at least one child age 0-5	11.3	12.6	*	*
At least one child age 6-16	10.1	7.8	5.3	4.1
All children 17 years or over	*	9.1	6.2	4.4
No children living at home	17.4	13.6	7.9	5.0

* Less than 3,000 families

For example, in families where the wife is aged 35-44, the proportion of families with at least one spouse declaring "no religion" was highest (14.8 per cent) for families where no children were ever born to the wife. The proportion decreased to a low of 7.8 per cent for families with school-age children and then increased to 13.6 per cent for families where children were no longer at home.

Tables 7 and 8 show the incidence of declaring "no religion" for lone parents. As indicated in Table 7, in 1981 6.4 per cent of female lone parents and 9.7 per cent of male lone parents reported "no religion" in response to the census question. As was generally observed, the proportion declined with age. Moreover, between 1971 and 1981, the proportion of lone parents declaring "no religion" increased for all age-sex groups. Overall, the increase for females was from 3.6 per cent to 6.4 per cent compared to an increase from 6.3 per cent to 9.7 per cent for males.

Table 8 compares the declared religion of parents in lone-parent families with those in husband-wife families, where the families have been categorized by the age of children. Two basic findings emerge from the table. First, for all types of families in all age-sex groups except elderly females, lone parents tend to report "no religion" more often than parents in husband-wife families. This may in part be explained by religious differentials in marital dissolution

TABLE 7. PERCENTAGE OF LONE PARENTS REPORTING
"NO RELIGION" BY SEX AND AGE GROUP, CANADA, 1971 AND 1981

	1971	1981
Females		
All Ages	3.6	6.4
Less than 35 years	6.2	9.3
35-44 years	4.7	7.4
45-54 years	3.1	5.3
55 years and over	1.5	2.7
Males		
All Ages	6.3	9.7
Less than 35 years	8.9	14.4
35-44 years	7.5	11.8
45-54 years	6.3	9.5
55 years and over	3.8	6.4

(see Bumpass and Sweet, 1972). The second finding from Table 8 is a confirmation of the association between declared religious affiliation and the family cycle as indicated by the ages of children. As in husband-wife families, the lowest incidence of "no religion" is reported by lone parents with school-age children.

Conclusions

Despite the many limitations of the census data on religion, the extensive coverage of the census allowed an opportunity to explore the association between self-declared religious identification and family characteristics. The results confirmed the pervasiveness of the association between declaring "no religion" and the basic demographic variables of age and sex. Regardless of the kind of family structure, males reported a higher incidence of "no religion" than females, and for both sexes the incidence uniformly declined with age. The declaration of "no religion" on the census increased from 4.3 per cent of the population in 1971 to 7.3 per cent in 1981, with increases observed for virtually all population groups.

When husband-wife families were categorized according to the family cycle as indicated by the presence of children (that is, no children ever born, children

TABLE 8. PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS REPORTING "NO RELIGION" BY SEX, AGE GROUP¹, FAMILY TYPE AND FAMILY COMPOSITION, CANADA, 1981

	No Child Age 6-16 But at Least One Age 0-5	At Least One Child Age 6-16	All Children 17 Years Or Over
Females			
Less than 35 Years			
Lone Parents	9.9	8.8	*
Wives in Husband-Wife Families	6.7	5.9	*
35-44 Years			
Lone Parents	9.8	7.3	7.6
Wives in Husband-Wife Families	7.5	4.6	5.5
45-54 Years			
Lone Parents	*	4.9	5.7
Wives in Husband-Wife Families	*	3.1	3.8
55 Years or Over			
Lone Parents	*	4.1	2.5
Wives in Husband-Wife Families	*	2.3	2.5
Males			
Less than 35 Years			
Lone Parents	13.7	14.9	*
Husbands in Husband-Wife Families	9.5	8.7	*
35-44 Years			
Lone Parents	*	12.0	11.0
Husbands in Husband-Wife Families	10.9	6.9	7.9
45-54 Years			
Lone Parents	*	8.8	10.0
Husbands in Husband-Wife Families	*	4.7	5.6
55 Years or Over			
Lone Parents	*	7.9	6.0
Husbands in Husband-Wife Families	*	3.6	3.9

at home or no children at home), there was clearly a lower incidence of "no religion" for families in which children were at home. Differences were largest for younger families where the wife was less than 45 years of age. Furthermore, in families where both husband and wife reported a religion, there was a higher level of homogeneity in religion where children were at home.

To further pursue these associations, families with children were further categorized by the ages of the children. The results indicated that the incidence of "no religion" was lowest where there were school-age children at home, was somewhat higher when younger or older children were at home and was highest at the beginning of the family cycle where children were not yet born or later in the cycle after children had left home. The lower incidence of "no religion" and higher levels reporting homogamy in religion when school-age children are present may indicate a tendency of spouses to reduce conflict during the family years of increased socialization and the raising of children. This may also be brought on by a requirement to make certain religious decisions concerning significant events in the child's lifecycle (for example, baptism, school attendance, confirmation, etc.). It is of interest to note that there was relatively little difference in the reported incidence of "no religion" between families in which the wife reported no children ever born and those where the children were not living at home. This suggests that if there is a tendency towards conflict reduction while children are at home, this would not seem to have a lasting effect, but would rather be present only to minimize conflict during the child rearing years. This hypothesis could be further investigated by controlling for other variables such as multiple marriages and duration of marriage.

The findings for lone-parent families confirmed the association between the presence of school-age children and a lower incidence of "no religion". However, a comparison between lone parents and parents in husband-wife families revealed that for both males and females, there was a higher level of "no religion" reported for lone parents than for parents in husband-wife families. While it may be due in part to religious differentials in marital dissolution, this difference also reflects the fact that among lone parents, religion tends to be more privatized as there is no similar need nor opportunity for the sharing of religion that might occur in husband-wife families.

While the findings from the census data support the hypothesis of conflict reduction in families during the childrearing ages, the findings are based on a cross-sectional analysis that has many inherent limitations. Clearly, firm conclusions concerning religion and the family cycle could only be made on the basis of a detailed cohort study.

Implications

General statements on family dynamics are difficult to formulate. Such inferences that can be drawn from the data here are highly speculative and can only suggest issues worth further consideration. One fundamental issue remains:

what is happening to religion as a value and/or function? Religion, as measured here, is basically a minimal indicator. Within the family, religion appears as a private variable, but is related to the family social group and its composition. There is some indication of declining, but still high, adherence to religion. However, lacking external supports or threats, the question remains as to what extent religion remains latent and internalized, even within the intimacy of family life.

The evidence of higher religion identification among people with school-age children present suggests that religion is a conscious matter of compromise and negotiation. Perhaps, "surviving families" do tend to reach agreement on religion in order to remove a potential source of conflict. Heer and Hubay (1975) have documented the increasing levels of inter-religion marriage in Canada. The proportion of cross-faith (Protestant, Catholic, Jewish) marriages in Canada gradually rose from 5.8 in 1927 to 21.5 in 1972.² What would be ideally valuable would be evidence of religious identification before meeting partner of union, at time of marriage or union, and at later points in marriage or union. The hypothesis emerging from the study at hand would suggest considerable transfer or conversion in religion by partners leading to increasing homogamy between couples. In turn, divorce of partner may also bring a reversal or reverting in religious identification.

An additional point of speculation is the extent to which families use religion as a means of social control (Berger, 1967). Given that presence of children has been shown to be associated with higher religion identification, there are grounds for conjecturing that parents, may, at times, be motivated to declare and/or exercise religion as a means of bringing compliance and control upon each other and/or children. This scenario may fit well the recent observation that:

Current research is putting an end to the premise that children can be understood without knowledge of the developmental experience of parents, or that adults can be understood apart from the children in their lives (Sherrod, 1983:11).

What can be said at this juncture is that religion, in all its meanings, cannot be discounted as a part of this family developmental experience.

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Footnotes

1. This response rate of 98.6 per cent compares favourably with selected other 1981 census inquiries: age (98.9); marital status (98.7); class of worker (95.4); industry (96.6); and occupation (95.8).
2. Updating of these figures from Heer and Hubay can only be partial because after 1973, religions of marrying persons are not available for all provinces. Based on available data, the proportions of cross-faith marriages were 26.7 in 1974 (excluding Quebec) and 29.6 in 1983 (excluding Quebec and Alberta). Excluding Quebec probably inflates these proportions to some extent given the past low proportions of such marriages in Quebec, that is, from 2.6 in 1927 to 5.7 in 1972.

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