

DOES RELIGION MATTER? -: WHITE WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE ON CHILDREARING

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted to the degree of Master of Arts (Sociology) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

(Name of candidate)

_____ day of _____, 2005.

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Abstract

This study explores perceptions of religion and attitudes towards childrearing of white women. The focus on whites is motivated by the misconception that they comprise a homogeneous population group in South Africa.

These perceptions of religion are measured through a focus on religiosity, in other words, religious commitment. Different levels of religiosity are then identified, through a number of indicators, including women's own views on what religion means to them. A scale of three levels of religiosity is consequently used to observe to what extent religion influences childrearing attitudes.

In terms of childrearing, the analysis identifies four major components in which religion informs, in different ways, childrearing attitudes: attitudes towards children's education, attitudes towards the family, attitudes towards the children's future, and the role of the partner in childrearing.

This analysis is located as well within the context of the 'secularisation debate', where we try to find out to what extent the identified religiosity corresponds to trends in regards to secularisation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TERMS	vi
 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	 1
 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	 4
2.1: INTRODUCTION	4
2.1.2: DEFINING RELIGION	4
2.1.3: DEFINING RELIGIOSITY	14
2.2: RELIGION, CHILDREARING, AN WHITES IN SOUTH AFRICA	15
 CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	 20
3.1: SURVEY	20
3.1.1: DATA COLLECTION	20
3.1.2: ANALYSIS	21
3.1.3: FUNCTION OF THE SURVEY	21
3.1.4: SAMPLING	22
3.2: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS	23
3.2.1: DATA COLLECTION	24
3.2.2: ANALYSIS	24
3.3: ETHICS	25
3.4: LIMITATIONS	25
 CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS	 27
4.1: STRUCTURE OF THE ANALYSIS	28
4.2: RELIGIOSITY	30
4.2.1: CRITERIA FOR ANALYSING RELIGIOSITY	31
4.3: CASE STUDIES	39
COMPONENTS OF CHILDREARING	
4.4: ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILDREN'S EDUCATION	45
4.5: ATTITUDES TOWARDS FAMILY LIFE	50
4.6: EXPECTATIONS FOR CHILDREN	52
4.7: THE ROLE OF THE PARTNER IN CHILDREARING	57
4.7.1: THE ROLE OF THE PARTNER	61
4.8: SECULARISATION AND RELIGIOSITY	66
 CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	 75
CONCLUDING REMARKS	78
 REFERENCES:	 80
APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE	82
APPENDIX 2: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE	86

List of Hebrew Terms

- A'shem: God
- Daven: to pray
- Frum: religious Jewish
- Kashrut/kosher: Jewish laws for food/legal food
- Pesach: Passover
- Shabbes/Shabbat: the Sabbath
- Shul: Synagogue
- Rosh a Shana: Jewish New Year
- Torah: Old Testament
- Yamacha: Jewish male cap
- Yom Kippur: Day of Atonement