

## Religious involvement and civic engagement of World Youth Day attenders<sup>1</sup>

Ruth Webber  
Australian Catholic University, Melbourne  
[Ruth.Webber@acu.edu.au](mailto:Ruth.Webber@acu.edu.au)

A paper presented at the  
Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion  
Denver CO, October 2009

### Abstract

This paper explores pilgrims' social concern and civic engagement, before and after World Youth Day 2008. First, it examines whether WYD had any real impact on their view of themselves and relationships with others. Were they more altruistic after than before? A large proportion of young pilgrims said they were striving to be more caring and tolerant of others as a consequence of attending WYD. Over a quarter were anticipating getting involved with a group working for social justice and half were anticipating giving time as a volunteer in a helping organisation. Second, the paper explores the extent to which pilgrims' social concern and civic engagement were linked to their spiritual experience at WYD, and how they themselves understood this link.

**Keywords:** social concern, civic engagement, volunteering.

### Background

#### *Rates of volunteering*

Volunteering has become an important issue in Australia, United States and across the globe. Australia has a low rate of volunteering in comparison to many other countries with Australians much more inclined to provide help to family, friends or neighbours than strangers (ABS, Social Trends 2006). An Australian Government report states that 32% of those 18 years and older volunteered some time in the past 12 months, which was considerably lower than the proportion in the US or UK (ABS, 2000). Since that time the volunteer rate in Australia has slowly risen but is still considerably lower than many other Western countries. In 2006, 5.2 million people, 34% of the Australian population aged 18 years and over, participated in voluntary work (ABS, 2007). Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) studies consistently find that a greater proportion of older rather than younger people volunteer (ABS, 2000, 2004 & 2007). The IEA<sup>2</sup> Civic Education Study tested and surveyed 90,000, 14-year-old students in 28 countries and 50,000, 17- to 19-year-old students in 16 countries throughout 1999 and 2000. Participants comprised nationally representative

---

<sup>1</sup> The research team includes Michael Mason and Ruth Webber from Australian Catholic University and Andrew Singleton from Monash University, Australia.

<sup>2</sup> International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement

samples, with 3000 Australian students in 115 schools taking part (Mellor & Kennedy, 2003). The study found that 'Australian students' scores were significantly below the International mean on three of the four scales which make up the Civic Engagement dimension' (Mellor, Kennedy & Greenwood, 2002, p.49). Only four other countries registered below the international mean on the three of the four scales with the following countries significantly above the international mean: Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Romania and the United States. As researchers have sought to understand the factors that influence volunteer rates they have turned their attention to looking at the role that religion plays in introducing young people to volunteering and in adopting values that underpin it.

### *Religiosity and civic engagement*

Decades of research from many countries show the positive influences of religion and spirituality in young adults and adolescents on civic engagement and volunteerism (Crystal & DeBell, 2002; Regnerus, 2003 & 2007; Sinha, Cnaan & Gelles, 2007; Smith, 2005).

Highly religious people are more likely to be involved in volunteering and give a greater amount of time and money than non religious people (Gibson, 2008; Regnerus, 2003 & 2007; Sinha, Cnaan & Gelles, 2007; Smith, 2005). Putnam (2000) stated that in the United States, religion is a crucial source of civic engagement and that nearly half of all associational memberships in the US are church related, with half of all personal philanthropy going through religious institutions and half of all volunteering occurring in a religious context.

Religion rivals education as a powerful correlate of most forms of civic engagement, and it is an especially strong predictor of volunteering and philanthropy. Metz and Youniss (2003) found that high school students who identified themselves as religious were more prone to volunteer, take part in school organisations, and have higher grade point averages. Further, religious students were more likely to have parents who volunteered and also more likely to be female. Likewise, Crystal and DeBell (2002) in a study of American 6th, 8th, and 10th graders found that religious valuation predicted feelings of effective community service and involvement in church projects such as soup kitchens.

The link between religiosity and volunteering has also been found in Australia with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004) reporting that of the 23% of Australian adults over 18 who had participated in church or religious activities within the three months prior to interview in 2002, just over half (52%) had also done unpaid voluntary work for an organisation within the previous 12 months. In comparison, less than a third (29%) who had not participated in church or religious activities had done such voluntary work (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). Likewise data from the *Australian Giving and Volunteering*<sup>3</sup> study of 6209 people aged 18 years and over found that those with a religious identity were significantly more likely to volunteer than people with no religion. The study also found that among those who volunteer, those with a religious identity on average volunteer more hours than volunteers with no religious identity (Lyons & Nivison-Smith, 2006a & b).

---

<sup>3</sup> The survey was part of wider study of Australian philanthropy, the 'Giving Australia' 2005 project which was an initiative of the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership.

It has been found that the holding religious beliefs (i.e. without practice) is not a significant motivation for volunteering, whereas intense religiosity, measured in terms of behaviour (frequent church attendance) and beliefs (theological conservatism) significantly increased the likelihood of teens volunteering (Wymer, 1997). Gibson (2008) analysed data from the NSYR<sup>4</sup> survey of 3,370 America teenagers aged between 13 and 17 to assess the impact of intense religiosity on adolescent volunteering. He found that there was an association between intense religiosity (as measured by frequent church attendance and conservatism) and frequently helping others.

Those who attend religious services for social or other non-religious reasons (the extrinsically religious) are significantly different in respect to generosity of time and money from those who attend for religious reasons (intrinsically) even if they attend the same amount of time (Finkelstein, 2009). Organisational participation, frequency of prayer and religious reading were found to be important factors related to volunteerism (Gibson, 2008, Lam, 2002; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Religious life has been found to generate social capital which results in young people volunteering outside the institutional life of the church thus creating a pool of volunteers (Greeley, 1997). It has been consistently found that religious salience not religious identity, predicts volunteering and generosity.

Does an increase in religiosity immediately translate into greater concern for others or greater volunteering rates? It has been noted that when the level of religiosity changes, people do not automatically change their behaviour or values and beliefs – this takes time (Woodberry, 2003). This implies that the impact on community participation rates after a major religious event like WYD may take some time to emerge.

#### *Volunteering and membership of church based groups*

Religious salience typically involves the person being connected to one or more religious social groups. Membership of such groups has been shown to be linked to an increase in volunteering rates both within the church community and within the wider society. (Woodberry, 2000). The group effect should not be under-estimated. But how is this link explained?

Firstly, as Putnam (2000) suggests, the tie between religion and civic engagement reflects religious values. Religious institutions and places of worship promote and value community charity and encourage values and worldviews that promote a focus on issues lying outside the self (Smith, 2009). Religious traditions help people to change and assess the match between their stated beliefs and their behaviour. This allows members of church-based groups to challenge the behaviour of others in the group and encourage them towards altruism (Woodberry, 2000; Wymer, 1997).

Secondly, religious-based groups such as prayer and bible study groups provide mentoring relationships that foster the link between beliefs and civic participation (Crystal & DeBell,

---

<sup>4</sup> Based on wave 1 of National Study of Youth and Religion

2002). At religious-based groups, issues of public concern are discussed and the venue itself is used periodically to recruit people for community service (Crystal & DeBell, 2002).

Thirdly, members who are already volunteers assist others to join organisations both within and outside the church community and they assist newcomers to assimilate into the new organisation by providing information, emotional or social support (Donnelly Matsuba, Hart, & Atkins, 2006). There is a three-to four-fold increase in volunteering amongst people who receive personal requests from associates (Wymer, 1997). Andolina et al., (2002) found that simply an invitation to participate can make a critical difference to volunteering for those aged 15 to 25. Because religiously active young people have more friends who volunteer than the disengaged and thus more networks, these friends encourage them to become involved in civic participation, thus creating a snowballed effect (Smith, 2009).

### *Religion and social compassion*

Religious salience has also been found to influence social compassion and altruism by exerting influence on adolescent attitudes and actions (Regnerus & Uecker, 2007). Furrow, King and White (2004) in a study of 801 public high school students in Los Angeles, demonstrated the relationship of religious self-understanding and its positive association with a concern and compassion for others. Their findings revealed a positive relationship between religious self-understanding, personal meaning, and pro-social personality. King (2003) suggested that identity formation within a religious context may encourage a young person to transcend the self and promote a sense of commitment to the wider society that fosters civic responsibility, including social compassion and generosity.

### *Religion and generosity*

Previous studies using data from many different countries have demonstrated that religion does matter in respect to generosity (Lyons & Nivison-Smith, 2006a & b; Regnerus, Smith & Sikkink, 2003; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2004). In a US study, Regnerus, Smith, and Sikkink 2003 (p.488) found that those who are non-religious are significantly less likely to give money to organisations that assist the poor than those who are religious, regardless of the type of religion. They also reported the more frequent the church attendance and the greater the importance that religious faith holds to life, the more money respondents give regardless of religious identity. This pattern has been found to be repeated for donating to charity generally. Brooks' (2003) analysis of data from the 2000 *Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey* (SCCBS) found that the differences in giving to charity between secular and religious people in the US are dramatic. Religious people are 25% more likely than secularists to donate money (91% to 66%) and 23% more likely to volunteer time (67% to 44%) and that religious practice is more important than actual religion in predicting charitable behaviour.

### **The Pilgrims Progress 2008 Project**

World Youth Day is an international youth-oriented Catholic event which is held every two or three years. The 10th international World Youth Day was held in Sydney, Australia. The World Youth Day (WYD) research project 'Pilgrims' Progress 2008' was a three-stage project

that was conducted at Australian Catholic University and Monash University, with the support of the World Youth Day Administration. The project studied the experiences of pilgrims who attended World Youth Day in Sydney in July 2008. Pilgrims were surveyed and interviewed before and after World Youth Day.

As my colleagues have discussed in the previous two papers (Mason, 2009; Singleton, 2009), the level of religious commitment of Pilgrims who came from overseas was considerably higher than those who came from Australia. Overseas pilgrims were on average considerable older than pilgrims from Australia.

## **Method<sup>5</sup>**

This paper reports only on the pilgrims who were aged 15-24 years at the time of the second survey unless otherwise stated, and focuses on the effect of WYD on civic engagement and civic values. Only a small proportion of pilgrims were under 16 years (6%). Pilgrims are grouped into two aged groups, namely 15-18 (49%) and 19-24 (51%). Pilgrims have been grouped according to geographic regions: Australia/New Zealand, US/Canada, UK/Ireland and Asia. Other regions are grouped together.

As indicated in papers one and two<sup>6</sup> of this symposium, pilgrims are classified into different types based on level of their level of religious commitment and orthodoxy (measured by Mass attendance and personal prayer, commitment to Catholic teaching, strength of Catholic identity and commitment to religious exclusivism). These groups are called: the Devoted, the Involved, the Open, and the Social. Pilgrims were also grouped according to whether they had recorded a stronger, more decisive indicator of stronger commitment to their faith in what is described as 'Commitment' change.

## **Results**

The paper explores the effect WYD had on pilgrims' civic attitudes and civic behaviour as well as pilgrims' attitudes and actions towards others. It is clear from the post-WYD interviews and the pre- and post-WYD surveys that there were changes in the ways in which many pilgrims thought about and responded to others, and that they attribute the changes to their participation in WYD. Firstly, the manner in which pilgrims relate to other people is outlined and analysed according to pilgrim type, age, gender and region.

### *Membership in Catholic groups or organisations*

As noted earlier Catholic organisations provide religious experiences as well as opportunities to link Christian values with the way we relate to the wider society (Putnam 2000; Smith 2009). With this in mind we sought to ascertain the extent to which pilgrims were involved

---

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed outline of the methodology and theory refer to colleagues' papers in the SSSR 09 Symposium 'World Youth Day: Strategies for the Retention of Catholic Youth'. i.e. Singleton, A. (2009). 'The impact of World Youth Day on belief and behaviour'. Mason, M. (2009). 'The underlying dynamics of World Youth Day'.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

in a Catholic organisation, movement or group. Older pilgrims (19-24) were more likely to belong to a group than younger pilgrims (15-24) and males more likely than females to belong to a group. Table 1 shows that 47% of pilgrims indicated that they were involved in one or more Catholic groups.

**Table 1: WYD Pilgrims (aged 15-24): Number of Catholic groups to which pilgrims belong (percent of pilgrim type)**

No of Catholic organisations	Devoted	Involved	Open	Social	Total
None	32%	49%	60%	66%	53%
One or two	58%	43%	31%	26%	38%
Three to five	10%	8%	9%	8%	9%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Religious salience was a factor in group membership as indicated by significant differences between pilgrim types with Social pilgrims (66%) being less likely to belong to a Catholic organisation or group than Devoted pilgrims (32%).

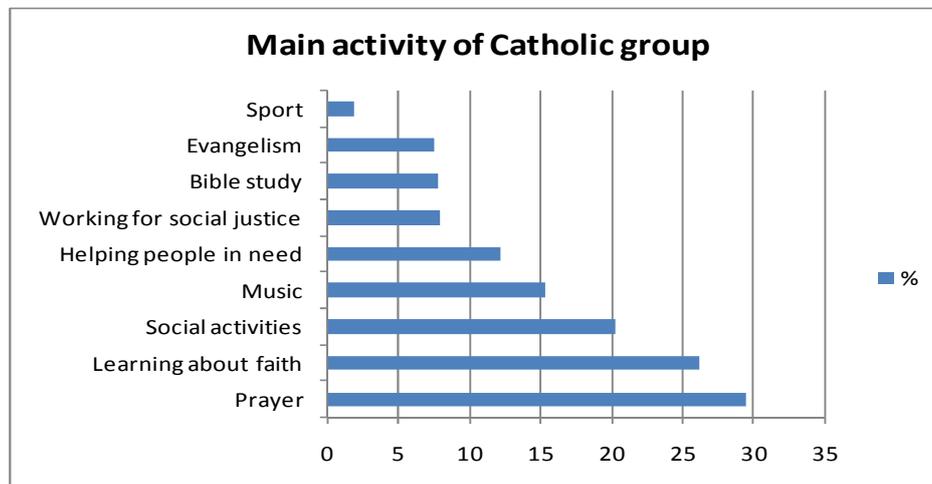
Regional differences in group membership were apparent, with pilgrims from Asia (67%) and UK/Ireland (57%) being most likely to belong to one or more Catholic groups and pilgrims from Australia/NZ (41%) and US/Canada (49%) least likely to belong to a Catholic group.

Pilgrims were also asked if they joined a group as a result of WYD. Thirty percent of pilgrims said that they became involved in one or more Catholic groups as a result of WYD, with pilgrims from the US/Canada (19%) less likely to say they joined as a result of WYD than pilgrims from other major regions. Pilgrims from Asia (37%) were most likely to have joined a Catholic group as a result of WYD and to have joined a group with a religious rather than a social justice focus.

#### *Main activity of Catholic groups*

The 46% of pilgrims who indicated that they were involved in a Catholic group were asked to note the main activity of the groups to which they belonged, out of a list of nine given activities (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: WYD Pilgrims (aged 15-24): Main activity of Catholic groups to which pilgrims belong (% of pilgrims).**



Prayer (29%) and learning about faith (26%) were most frequently cited as the main activity of the group. Twelve percent of pilgrims belonged to groups where the main activity was *'Helping people in need'* and 8% to a group focussing on *'Working for social justice'*.

#### *Social Compassion*

As a way of assessing their level of social compassion, pilgrims were asked in the survey how much they care about a number of social issues (Table 2).

**Table 2: WYD Pilgrims (aged 15-24): Compassion by pilgrim type (percent of pilgrim type)**

Care/care very much	Devoted	Involved	Open	Social	Total
Needs of the poor in your country	69%	73%	68%	73%	71%
People's right to equal treatment whatever their race, religion or culture	86%	92%	90%	91%	90%
Living conditions and quality of life in developing nations	82%	81%	81%	84%	82%
Environmental issues (e.g. climate change, animal extinction)	48%	59%	61%	73%	61%

There were no large pilgrim type differences except in relation to the question on the environment, where Social pilgrims (73%) were more concerned than were Devoted pilgrims (48%). These results are quite different from those of our earlier national study of young Australians, where those who were most religious showed significantly more compassion on similar items than less religious spirituality types (Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007, p.280). The reason for this difference is that those who attended WYD were already connected to the Catholic Church and had at least some level of religious experience and faith, whereas those in the earlier Gen Y study were randomly selected from across Australia with half either not believing in God or unsure if there was a God (p.83).

Females care more than males on all items in Table 2 except Environmental issues where there is no gender difference. The younger group (15-18) care more on all items except *'Needs of the poor in your country'*, where there was no age difference between the younger (15-18) and older (19-24) groups.

Pilgrims from Australia/NZ (73%) and US/Canada (73%) cared a lot more about *the needs of the poor* than did UK/Ireland pilgrims (60%) and those from Asia (61%). This pattern was repeated for the questions about *people's right to equal treatment whatever their race, religion or culture*. Pilgrims from Australia/NZ and US/ Canada were more likely than pilgrims from the other regions to say that they care a lot about the *'living conditions and quality of life in developing countries'*. Pilgrims from Asia and Australia/NZ cared more about *'concern for the environment'* than pilgrims from all the other regions with pilgrims from US/Canada caring the least (54%).

Belonging to one or more Catholic group influenced the likelihood of pilgrims being more compassionate to the *'Needs of the poor in your country'*, with fewer pilgrims who belonged to no group (69%) caring a lot about this issue than those who belonged to 2 or more groups (83%).

#### *Determined to be different*

In the survey, participants were asked if *'you could honestly say that your WYD experience has made you really determined to be different in any of the following ways?'* Table 3 shows group differences for this question.

**Table 3: WYD Pilgrims (15-24): Determination to be different by pilgrim type (percent of pilgrim type)**

<b>Do more after WYD</b>	<b>Devoted</b>	<b>Involved</b>	<b>Open</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Total</b>
1. To match my behaviour to my faith	46%	51%	43%	36%	44%
2. To be more 'Christ-like' in my behaviour	42%	48%	34%	30%	38%
3. To be more forgiving, patient, tolerant	44%	57%	59%	54%	54%
4. To accept Jesus as Lord in my life	26%	38%	34%	30%	32%
5. To be a follower of Christ, and live as he wants me to	42%	43%	35%	29%	37%
6. Be more considerate of others	35%	41%	44%	46%	42%
7. To actually put others before myself	32%	39%	37%	37%	36%
8. I already was committed to these things before I went to WYD	23%	11%	7%	12%	12%
9. I'd like to change in some of these ways, but I don't feel ready yet	3%	7%	9%	10%	8%
10.No, I don't feel my WYD experience has had this effect	3.5%	1.8%	3.7%	5.1%	3.5%

While Devoted and Involved pilgrims are more likely than Social pilgrims to say they are determined *'to match my behaviour to my faith'*, *'to be more Christ-like in my behaviour'*,

and *'to be a follower of Christ and live as he wants me to'*, this pattern is not repeated for the other items.

At first glance it appears that as a result of WYD, Devoted pilgrims are much less likely than Social pilgrims to want to be *'more forgiving, patient, tolerant'* or to be *'more considerate of others'*. The explanation for this unusual pattern is that Devoted pilgrims were already doing these things prior to WYD. One in four Devoted pilgrims and only one in eight Social pilgrims claimed that they were *'already committed to these things before I went to WYD'*. In other words, Devoted pilgrims were starting from a higher point than were Social pilgrims prior to WYD.

We were interested to discover if a religious 'Commitment' change was associated with a change in the way pilgrims relate to others. All of the religious variables (1 to 5) are strongly related to Commitment change. For example, those intended to be *'more Christ-like'* in their behaviour were much more likely to report a Commitment change than those who did not. Experiencing Commitment changes is highly related to pilgrims endeavour to act in a manner that is reflective of their faith. This pattern is repeated for the next set of items (6 & 7) which are about changes towards others with 52% of pilgrims committed to change but only 30% of the rest claiming they will be more considerate of others.

Younger pilgrims (aged 15-18) were more likely than older pilgrims (aged 19-24) to say they will try to be *'more considerate of others'*, *'to actually put others before myself'* and *'I'd like to change in some of these ways, but I don't feel ready yet'*. Older pilgrims were more likely to say *'I already was committed to these things before I went to WYD'*. Females are more likely than males to say they were determined *'to be more forgiving, patient, tolerant'*.

There were few regional differences in the first seven items with the exception that pilgrims from Asia are much more likely than pilgrims from the other regions to say they are determined to *'be more Christ like in my behaviour'*.

The survey findings concerning pilgrims' determination to change are supported by the post WYD interviews during which they were asked: *'As a result of going to WYD, do you think there's anything that you're going to change in the way you think or believe or act?'* A number of young pilgrims admitted to personal failings such as unkindness, intolerance and rudeness and said that they were genuinely trying to improve.

*WYD was a great experience that changed the way I react in new situations by putting others before myself (male, aged 17).*

*It enabled me to be kinder to more people (male, aged 15).*

There was also a strong desire by some pilgrims to link the way they lived their lives with a greater understanding of scripture and the Church's teachings. When pilgrims were asked in the post WYD interviews their reasons for a heightened involvement in community engagement, a number of explanations were provided, many of which related to their spiritual or religious life.

*I think the Masses and stuff was a way for me to look around and go: 'Okay well we're here as one, what are they going to be like when they get home' and I think, that's my big spiritual thing, I think me being so into social justice issues, that's my whole spiritual thing (female, aged 16).*

Some pilgrims said in the interviews that attending the WYD Masses and catecheses provided them with a moral framework in which they were more oriented towards helping others.

#### *Motivation to changing behaviour*

In the survey, participants were asked whether, as a result of WYD, they felt more motivated to engage in actions that benefit others (Table 4).

**Table 4: WYD Pilgrims (aged 15-24): Motivated to change behaviour as a result of WYD by pilgrim type (percent of pilgrim type)**

<b>Do more after WYD</b>	<b>Devoted</b>	<b>Involved</b>	<b>Open</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Total</b>
Be tolerant towards someone hard to get along with	55%	64%	61%	61%	61%
Stand up to a bully	22%	26%	26%	33%	27%
Forgive someone you've been angry at	47%	65%	58%	58%	58%
Spend time with someone who needs some extra care for some reason	50%	53%	52%	57%	53%
Not as a result of WYD	24%	14%	17%	18%	18%

There were some small but significant differences between Social pilgrims and Devoted pilgrims on some 'motivation to change' items, with more Social than Devoted pilgrims claiming that they were motivated to '*stand up to a bully*' and '*forgive someone you've been angry with*'. It can be argued that many Devoted pilgrims had no need to change in these ways because they were already behaving in a 'kindly' manner prior to WYD as a result of their faith.

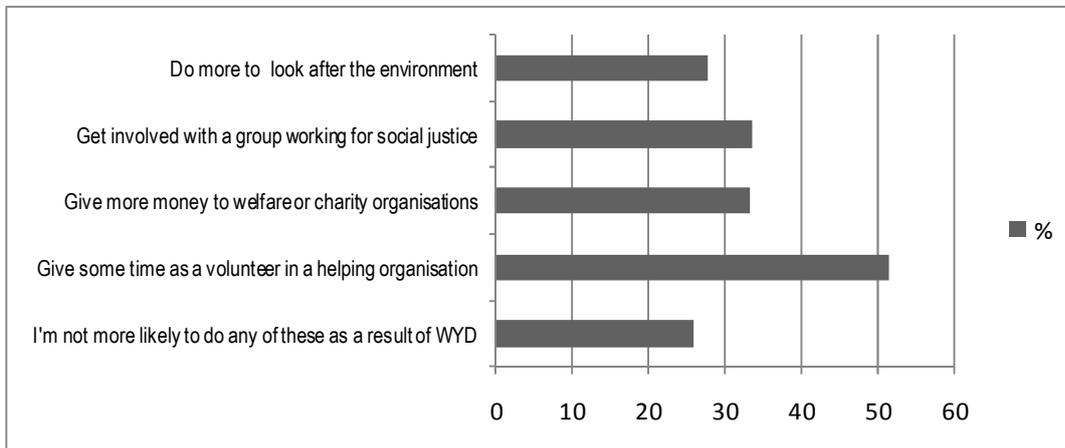
There was a significant difference on religious Commitment changes between pilgrims who reported a Commitment change and those who did not, with the former more likely to say they would '*be tolerant towards someone hard to get along with*' (69% v. 51%), '*stand up to a bully*' (31% v. 22%), '*forgive someone you've been angry with*' (68% v. 46%) and '*spent time with someone who needs some extra care*' (63% v.41%). Pilgrims reporting a Commitment change were less likely to say they were '*not more motivate as a result of WYD*' than those who were not committed to change (10% v.27%).

There were few gender differences on these items with the exception that females were more likely than males to say they would '*Forgive someone you've been angry at*' as a result of WYD. The younger group (13-18) were more likely than older pilgrims (19-24) to say they would '*Be tolerant towards someone hard to get along with*', '*stand up to a bully*' and '*forgive someone you've been angry at*'. There were few regional differences on the motivation to change questions.

### *Intention to change level of civic engagement*

In the pre WYD interviews, pilgrims were invited to give examples of the ways in which they helped others. Consistent with previous studies (e.g. ABS Social Trend 2006) we found that most young people demonstrated caring and respectful attitudes to those in their social network, particularly family and friends. Less are involved in assisting those outside their immediate family, church or local community. We were anxious to see whether WYD had an impact on pilgrims' desire to increase their level of civic engagement. With this in mind, pilgrims were asked in the post WYD survey a series of further questions about how WYD impacted on their civic activities. Figure 2 provides a visual account of their responses to the question: *'Because of your WYD experience, do you feel more motivated to do any of the following? Check any that apply, or if none, check No'*.

**Figure 2: WYD Pilgrims (aged 15-24): Motivated to do more civic activities as a result of WYD attendance (percent of pilgrims)**



A large proportion of pilgrims indicated that they are planning to do one or more of the items in the motivation to do more civic activities list as a result of attending WYD.

Pilgrims from Asia were more likely than pilgrims from the other regions to say they were motivated do more to look after the environment. Pilgrims from Australia/NZ (38%) were the most likely to say they were motivated get involved with a group working for social justice and were also the most likely to already belong to a Catholic group with this focus (12%). Pilgrims from UK/Ireland (13%) were the least likely to indicate a future involvement with a group working for social justice.

Males and females were equally as likely to claim to be motivated to do more of the four activities noted in Figure2. With the exception of giving money to welfare or charity organisations, younger pilgrims (15-18) were more likely to say the intended to do more of each of the other activities than were older pilgrims (19-24).

Table 5 examines intention to do more social action by pilgrims' reported religious Commitment change.

**Table 5: WYD Pilgrims (aged 15-24): Intention to do more social action by Commitment to religious change**

Intention to do social action after WYD	Not Reporting 'commitment' change	Reporting 'commitment' change
Do more to look after the environment	23%	32%
Get involved with a group working for social justice	26%	40%
Give more money to welfare or charity organisations	27%	38%
Give some time (or more of it than in the past) as a volunteer in a helping organisation	42%	59%
I'm not more likely to do any of these as a result of WYD	37%	17%

Pilgrims who reported a Commitment change were more likely than those who did not report a Commitment change to say they intended to do each of the four social action items (see Table 5). They were also less likely to say that, *'I'm not more likely to do any of these as a result of WYD'*. This is a clear pattern that is repeated through all the civic engagement questions with those reporting a Commitment change more likely than those who do not report such a change, to act in a compassionate manner.

Table 6 reports on social action intentions according to pilgrim type, with Social pilgrims outperforming Devoted pilgrims. In terms of the environment item this result is not so surprising, whereas the other three items about the intention to do more social action appear to be inconsistent with previous research (Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007). Volunteering and generosity are two of the well documented areas that have been associated with religiosity and religious salience.

**Table 6: WYD Pilgrims (aged 15-24): Intention to do more social action by pilgrim type (percent of pilgrim type)**

Social action after WYD	Devoted	Involved	Open	Social	Total
Do more to look after the environment	16%	25%	29%	33%	25%
Get involved with a group working for social justice	20%	27%	32%	38%	29%
Give more money to welfare or charity organisations	26%	34%	34%	35%	32%
Give some time (or more of it than in the past) as a volunteer in a helping organisation	43%	47%	51%	49%	47%
I'm not more likely to do any of these as a result of WYD	38%	28%	25%	26%	30%

The next section will focus on two of the social action outcomes of WYD namely generosity and volunteering and offer an explanation for the unusual results in regards to the pilgrim types.

### *Generosity*

Based on the results noted In Table 5 on pilgrims' intention to '*Give more money to welfare or charity organisations*', it might seem that Devoted pilgrims (26%) are less generous in giving to charity than Open (34%) or Social (35%) pilgrims. However, if we look at what Devoted pilgrims are already giving, this impression is shown to be false. This is illustrated in Table 7.

**Table 7: WYD Pilgrims (all ages): Level of giving (\$) prior to WYD by pilgrim type by pre-existing level of giving by pilgrim type**

	Money given to other organisations or causes in past year (mean)	Money given to a church or religious organization in past year (mean)	Total
<i>No intention to give more</i>			
Devoted	\$338	\$1100	\$1,438
Involved	\$142	\$575	\$717
Open	\$181	\$235	\$416
Social	\$167	\$177	\$344
<i>Intention to give more</i>			
Devoted	\$262	\$575	\$837
Involved	\$194	\$315	\$509
Open	\$126	\$170	\$276
Social	\$192	\$237	\$429

How to read this table: Columns show how much money on average each pilgrim type has given away in the past year by whether they intend to give more or not. i.e. Devoted pilgrims who do not intend to give any more money away have given already \$1,438 in past year, while Socials who do not intend to give any more have only given \$837 in this time period.

The reason why Devoted pilgrims are less likely than Social pilgrims to say they intend to give more money to a church/religious organisation or another organisation as a result of going to WYD can be explained by the fact that they were already giving a lot more prior to WYD

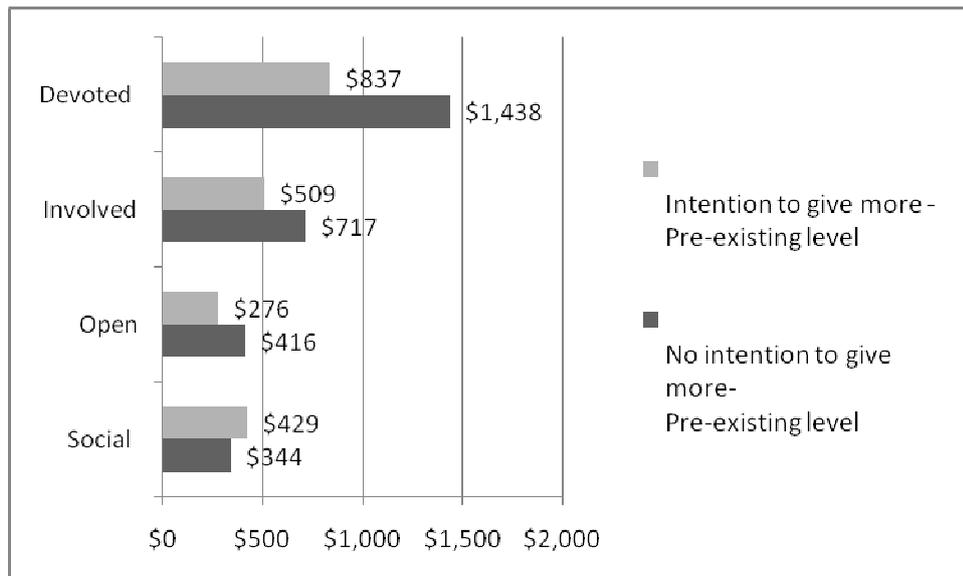
Pilgrims were asked in the pre-WYD survey: '*How much of your own money have you given to a church or religious organization in past year.*' Looking at just the matched cases<sup>7</sup>, Devoted pilgrims (of all ages) who said they were not likely to give more money to other causes were already giving at a far higher level than all other pilgrim types.

In the pre-WYD survey, pilgrims were also asked '*In the last year, about how much of your own money have you given to other organizations or causes?*' Devoted pilgrims from the matched sample, irrespective of whether they intended to give more money away, were already giving more money away than any of the other pilgrim types.

<sup>7</sup> Pilgrims who completed both pre and post WYD surveys.

To clarify further, irrespective of their intention to donate further, Devoted pilgrims had already given more money in total in the past year to various causes than any other pilgrim type (Figure 3). This finding supports the results from other studies which have also shown a strong link between religious salience and donating money (Brooks 2003; Regnerus et al 2004).

**Figure 3: WYD pilgrims (all ages): Level of giving (\$) prior to WYD by pre-existing level of giving by pilgrim type**



### *Volunteering*

Pilgrims were asked in the post WYD survey if they intended to 'give some time (or more of it than in the past) as a volunteer in a helping organisation' as a result of WYD. Younger pilgrims (15-18) were just as likely as older pilgrims (19-24) to have done at least some volunteering in the past year; however older pilgrims were more likely to have devoted more time to it than younger pilgrims.

There were regional differences with pilgrims from US/Canada (78%) much more likely to be engaged in at least some volunteering than Australia/NZ (55%), UK/Ireland (59%) and Asia (53%) and they were also likely to have done more weeks of volunteering in the past year. Australian pilgrims' lower rate of volunteering in comparison with pilgrims from other regions reflects the findings from previous studies (ABS, 2007).

At first glance, as illustrated in earlier in Table 5, it seems that Social pilgrims are more inclined to do more volunteering as a result of attending WYD than are Devoted pilgrims. This assumption is incorrect as can be demonstrated by examining the volunteer levels of pilgrims prior to WYD (Table 7).

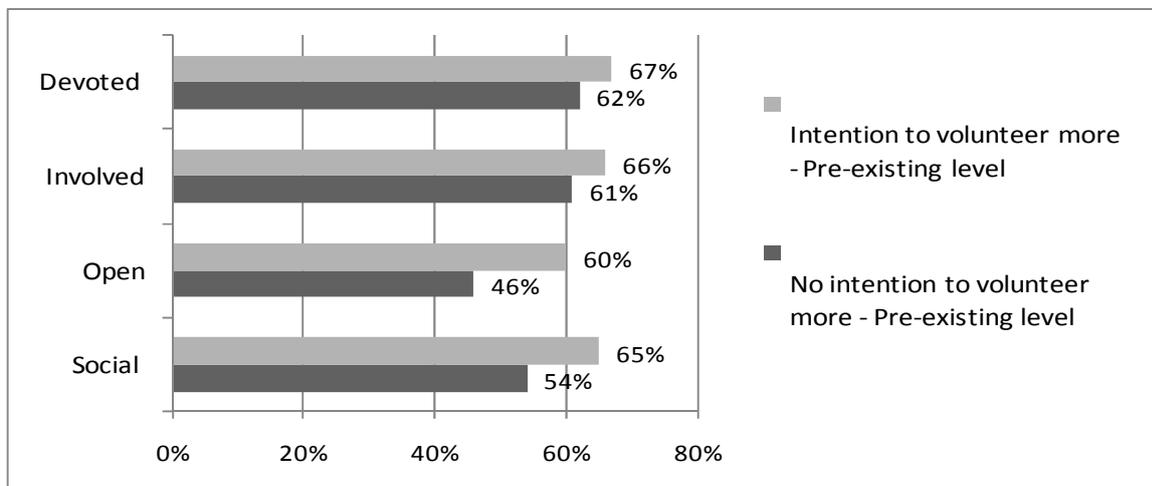
**Table 8: Pilgrims (all ages): Intention to volunteer more by pilgrims' pre-existing volunteer level by pilgrim type (percent of pilgrim type)**

<i>All ages</i>	Level of Volunteering prior to WYD		
	none	Up to once a week	2-3 weeks or more
<i>No intention to do more</i>			
Devoted	38%	26%	36%
Involved	39%	27%	33%
Open	54%	26%	20%
Social	46%	29%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%
<i>Intention to do more</i>			
Devoted	33%	30%	37%
Involved	34%	35%	32%
Open	40%	33%	27%
Social	35%	39%	27%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Devoted pilgrims who claimed they did not intend to do more volunteering were already doing more volunteering prior to WYD than were Open or Social pilgrims. Devoted pilgrims were also likely to have done a greater amount of volunteering than Open or Social pilgrims in the past year.

In order to further clarify, in Figure 4 the categories have been reduced to include Pilgrims who did any volunteering irrespective of the amount.

**Figure 4: Pilgrims (all ages): Intention to volunteer more by pilgrims' pre-existing volunteer level (prior to WYD) by pilgrim type (percent of pilgrim type)**



The post WYD interviews also explored the link between faith and service to others with

many pilgrims demonstrating this link and being able to clearly articulate it as demonstrated by this pilgrim: *'You feel like you're doing some of God's work'*.

#### *Volunteering and Catholic group membership*

The result on rates of volunteering indicates that 49% of pilgrims were doing some volunteering in the past year. This proportion is greater than has been found in studies done on whole populations. Previous research has found that belonging to a religious group enhances the chances of young people being involved in volunteer activities (Woodberry, 2000). Further, those who belong to more than one such group are much more likely to do a week or more of volunteer work than those who belong to none or only one group. Our results support this finding, with those who belong to one or more Catholic groups volunteering to a greater degree than those who belong to no groups, and volunteering more often (Table 9).

**Table 9: WYD Pilgrims (aged 15-24): Number of Catholic groups to which pilgrims belonged by volunteer weeks per year**

Volunteering weeks	Number of organisation pilgrims to which belong		Total
	no orgs	one to five orgs	
None	49%	31%	41%
Up to a week	30%	37%	33%
Two weeks or more	21%	32%	26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

How do we explain this result? As found in previous studies, being a member of a religious group encourages behaviour that matches the teachings of the Church and also encourages pilgrims to be involved in helping other.

*Now I have friends who are there to support me when there are decisions to be made. Sometimes it is to follow all the rules of the Church. I think just having met those and having those people continually in my life it's a bit of a reminder, it keeps you in check (Female, aged 23).*

#### **Conclusion**

The findings confirm earlier studies that have reported a positive relationship between religiosity and civic engagement. Specifically, our research has demonstrated that as a result of attending WYD, many pilgrims were determined to change their behaviour and the way in which they relate to others, and that this determination was related to their desire to increase their religious commitment. The relationship between pilgrims reporting a 'Commitment' change and their intention to increase their level of concern and social action is an indication of the impact WYD on pilgrims.

The research also shows the relationship between young people belonging to a religious organisation, movement or group in terms of civic actions. Such membership influences their inclination to donate more money to both church related agencies and to other community agencies as well as to engage in volunteering and at a higher level. While intentions are not always acted upon, or those who begin can fall back to an earlier position, however it can reasonably be assumed that at least some of the young people will carry out their intentions and that change to their behaviour and attitudes is long standing.

## References

- Andolina, M., Jenkins, K., Zukin, C., & Keeter, S. (2003). Habits from home: Lessons from school: Influences on youth civic engagement. *Political Science and Politics, April*, 275-280.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2000). *Voluntary Work*. Canberra, Cat. No. 4441.0: AGPS, Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2004). *Voluntary Work- Australian Social Trends*. Canberra: AGPS, Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2006). *Voluntary Work- Australian Social Trends*: AGPS, Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2007). *Voluntary Work- Australian Social Trends 2006*. Canberra: AGPS, Bureau of Statistics.
- Brooks, A. (2003). Religious faith and charitable giving. *Policy Review, Oct/Nov*, 39-50.
- Crystal, D. S., & DeBell, M. (2002). Sources of civic orientation among American youth: Trust, religious valuation, and attributions of responsibility. *Political Psychology, 23*(1).
- Donnelly, T., Matsuba, K., Hart, D., & Atkins, R. (2006). The relationship between spiritual development and civic development. In E. C. Roehlkepartain, P. Ebstynne King, L. M. Wagener & P. L. Benson (Eds.), *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (pp. 239-265). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Finkelstein, F. (2009). Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivational orientations and the volunteer process ... *Personality and Individual Differences, 46*(5-6), 653-658.
- Furrow, J. L., King, P. E., & White, K. (2004). Religion and Positive Youth Development: Identity, Meaning, and Prosocial Concerns. *Applied Developmental Science, 8*(1), 17-26.
- Gibson, T. (2008). Religion and civic engagement among America's youth. *Social Science Journal, 45*(3), 504-514.
- Greeley, A. M. (1997). Coleman revised: Religious structures as a source of social capital. *American Behavioral Scientist, 40*(5), 587-594.
- King, P. E., & Boyatzis, C. J. (2004). Exploring Adolescent Spiritual and Religious Development: Current and Future Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives. *Applied Developmental Science, 8*(1), 2-6.
- Lam, P.-Y. (2002). As the flocks gather: How religion affects voluntary association participation. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 41*(3), 405-422.
- Lyons, M., & Nivison-Smith, I. (2006a). The relationship between religion and volunteering in Australia. *Australian Journal of Volunteering, 11*(2), 151-173.
- Lyons, M., & Nivison-Smith, I. (2006b). Religion and giving in Australia. *Australian Journal of Social Issues, 41*(4), 419-436.
- Mason, M. (2009). The underlying dynamics of World Youth Day. Paper presented at the SSSR conference: Denver (October).
- Mellor, S., & Kennedy, K. (2003). Australian students' democratic values and attitudes towards participation: indicators from the IEA civic education study. *International Journal of Educational Research, 39*, 525-537.

- Mellor, S., Kennedy, K., & Greenwood, L. (2002). Citizenship and Democracy: Australian students' knowledge and beliefs. The IEA Civic Education Study of Fourteen Year Olds. *Commonwealth of Australia*.
- Metz, E., & Youniss, J. (2003). A Demonstration That School-Based Required Service Does Not Deter - but Heightens - Volunteerism. *Political Science & Politics* (April), 281-286.
- Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Touchstone.
- Regnerus, M. D., & Uecker, J. E. (2007). Religious Influences on Sensitive Self-Reported Behaviors: The Product of Social Desirability, Deceit, or Embarrassment? *Sociology of Religion*, 68(2), 145-163.
- Regnerus, M., Smith, C., & Sikkink, D. (2003). Who gives to the poor? The influence of religious tradition and political location on the personal generosity of Americans towards the poor. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 37(3), 481-493.
- Salamon, L., & Sokolowski, S. (2004). *Global civil society: Dimensions of the nonprofit sector* (Vol. 2). VA: Kumarian Press.
- Singleton, A. (2009). The impact of World Youth Day on belief and behaviour, Paper presented at the SSSR conference: Denver (October).
- Sinha, J. W., Cnaan, R. A., & Gelles, R. J. (2007). Adolescent risk behaviors and religion: Findings from a national study. *Journal of Adolescence*, 30(2), 231-249.
- Smith, C. (2005). *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, C., & Snell, P. (2009). *Souls in transition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wilson, J., & Musick, M. (1997). Who cares? Towards and integrated theory of volunteer work. *American Sociological Review*, 62, 697-713.
- Woodberry, R. (2000). *The Long-Term Influence of Religious Traditions on Levels of Democratization*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion.
- Woodberry, R. (2003.). Researching spiritual capital: Promises and pitfalls. .*Working paper of the Spiritual Capital Research Program* (accessed 30/09/09), [http://www.metanexus.net/spiritual\\_capital/pdf/Woodberry.pdf](http://www.metanexus.net/spiritual_capital/pdf/Woodberry.pdf).
- Wymer, W. (1997). A religious motivation to volunteer? Exploring the linkage between volunteering and religious values. *Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing*, 5(3), 3-17.