RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY AND THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy

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DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement data of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Susan P. Ennis

Date
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have influenced and supported the researcher on the journey that culminated in this PhD. The first influence was my father who believed in education for women and had compassion for the Jewish refugees he met while working in his textile company in Melbourne. Second, Alan Matheson and Phil and Barbara Andrews challenged a church youth group in 1973 to go and live with the ‘poor’ and not just help from a distance. Without this challenge I would have never begun this journey. It was in the early 1970s in Richmond (where I still live) that I first met refugees in my voluntary community work, and later taught their children. The third influence includes the many people of different faiths I met or worked with overseas. The fourth influence was meeting the many refugees and, in particular, ethnic support workers while teaching in the immigration department’s program in various parts of Melbourne. Of particular influence was my professional involvement with the immigration department’s transit accommodation for refugees in the west of Melbourne. The fifth influence was the Religious Society of Friends, its Meeting for Learning committee and its supporters; in particular, Frances Thorsen. Without her assistance this thesis would not have commenced.

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In conclusion, the guiding principle in this research has been:

Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?
Do you approach new ideas with discernment? (Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1995 1.02.7)
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SUMMARY

This qualitative study uses a grounded theory and in-depth, semi-structured interview style approach to explore the question, **What role does spirituality and religion play in refugees’ flight from their home country, their asylum experiences and during their resettlement in the host country?** The literature review showed there was minimal research on this area. The objectives of this study were the following: 1) to ascertain whether the refugee experience is impacted by the holding of religious or spiritual beliefs; 2) to examine any shifts in religiosity and religious affiliation within the individual during the refugee experience; 3) to determine whether the holding of religious and spiritual beliefs supports or hinders refugee settlement in a host country; 4) to analyse the refugee experience in terms of Fowler’s theory of faith development (Fowler, 1995, 1996, 2000), and in terms of refugee flight and acculturation theories; and 5) to make recommendations regarding the religious, spiritual, educational, welfare, settlement and psychological needs of refugees.

The research question was explored by an analysis of the voices of nineteen (in total), (some of whom used interpreters) Melbourne-based adult refugees from Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and Iraq. The refugees were of various Christian, Muslim and Animist backgrounds. These voices were complemented by observations of refugee settlement workers, religious leaders and academics. In total, over ninety interviews were conducted, mostly with refugees.

Regarding the first objective and the overall research question, the study found that for nearly all nineteen refugees their religiosity assisted or greatly assisted them during the civil disturbances and chaos that caused their flight, in their varying places of asylum and during initial settlement in Melbourne. Concerning the second objective, the study found that nearly half of the refugees reported a shift in their religious meaning system or the beliefs that they had held prior to the civil chaos that had triggered their escape or during initial settlement. The study found that the refugees’ religiosity generally increased in their place of asylum, then weakened in Australia, but this level was still higher than that
during the events which caused civil chaos in their home country. Refugee support personnel interviewed also observed that refugees’ religiosity increased in Melbourne.

Concerning the third objective, to determine whether the holding of religious and spiritual beliefs supports or hinders refugee settlement in a host country, the study poses: *A Model of Religiosity and the Refugee Experience: Shifting Typologies at Each Stage of the Refugee Journey* which arose from the grounded theory approach. This model is relevant for the nineteen refugees of Christian, Muslim and Animist backgrounds who fled from Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and Iraq mostly between the 1990s and the early 2000s, and then settled in Australia.

This model resulted in a shifting typology of several religious and spiritual responses to the various stages of the refugee experience with the responses being:

1. **Refugee religious maintainers:** refugees who remained committed to their traditional religious belief systems in which they had been raised. They represented nearly three-quarters of those interviewed. This grouping has one sub-group:
   (a) **Intensified religious maintainers:** refugee religious maintainers who became more intensely committed to and/or practised their belief system in a more intense way.

2. **Refugee religious shifters:** refugees who substantially shifted from the beliefs in which they had been raised during the refugee experience or settlement in Australia. This was nearly a third of those interviewed. This grouping is divided into three sub-groups:
   (a) **Intensified religious shifters:** refugees who for various factors shifted to being more intensely committed to their belief system.
   (b) **Religious switchers:** refugees who converted to another religion or did an intra-faith switch.
   (c) **Religious questioners:** refugees who questioned their traditional belief system or practised it with less intensity.
3. **Non-religious refugees**: refugees who may or may not have been born into a religious culture; however, prior to events that caused their refugee flight they did not have a religious belief system. During this study only one refugee fitted this category.

The model analysis suggests five factors influenced refugee religiosity prior to, and at the various stages of, the refugee experience; namely: (i) **Home-External Variables**; for example, colonial history, socialism, Christian and Islamic missionaries, global shifts in religiosity and influence of the global media; (ii) **Home-National Background Variables**; for example, socio/political and religious history, governments’ religious policies, contact with the ‘other’; (iii) **Individual Variables**: for example, family religiosity, contact with the ‘other’, marital situation, age at flight; (iv) **Flight and Asylum Variables**; for example, asylum context, religious experiences, contact with the ‘other’, and (v) **Host Country Variables**, for example, the overall host country context, religious experiences, attitudes of refugee religious leaders to the ‘other’, secular education are also presented in the models. Such variables caused shifts between the type and sub-types posed in the typology of religious and spiritual responses refugee experience.

This study also suggests religious refugees (religious maintainers, refugee switchers and refugee intensifiers), both Christians and Muslims, appear to understand the refugee experience through their particular religious meaning system, which gives meaning to, and prescribes ways of coping with, their experience. For example, the study found the often extensive use of religious rituals, even by some refugee religious questioners, at times of need.

A fourth objective was the study’s interaction with various theories. The literature review showed a lack of theoretical engagement with the issue of refugees’ interaction or non interaction with their religion. For example, acculturation theorising had not engaged with religion as an issue. A relevant acculturation finding from this study was one

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1 ‘Other’ in this thesis refers to people of a different religious beliefs which included intra/inter religious differences, Animists, secularists, humanists, socialists etc.
refugee participant’s religiosity, which appears to prescribe how to relate to the ‘other’ in ‘inclusivist’-accepting or non-accepting ‘exclusivist’ ways. The study suggests this can affect how refugees settle in multi-faith, secular Australia. Kunz’s refugee flight theory (1973; 1981), little known in Australia, is of relevance for host country settlement agencies. Another finding was that about a quarter of the refugees interviewed appeared to use study in another country as a flight method. Given the globalisation of education, this may be a new refugee flight pattern. Streib’s concepts of ‘revision’ and the influence of the life-world dimension, to Fowler’s sequentially staged adult faith development model accounted for the shift to more rigid belief during the refugee experience.

Regarding the fifth and final objective, the conclusion to study’s final chapter, suggests how the proposed model could be used when anticipating how, or if, new refugee flows interact with religiosity at the various stages of the refugee experience and settlement in a host country. In addition, Appendix 7 presents various practical implications which arose from this study for the immigration department, and educational, health and psychological support agencies in Australia and possibly beyond.

Finally, several incidental findings on methodological and ethical issues arose.

The motivation for this study has been the researcher’s personal interest in religious/spiritual matters in Australia and beyond, and her long observations as an English as a Second Language teacher to adult immigrants and refugees, in particular, the often observed disconnect between the refugees’ religious world and the approaches of the various agencies that settle refugees. This issue has become more pertinent after 9/11.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives the background to this research on the central question: What role does spirituality and religion play in refugees’ flight from their home country, their time in asylum\(^2\) and during their resettlement in the host country? It presents the motivation for the enquiry and the reasons for the neglect of the subject. It describes why Somali, Iraqi, Ethiopian and Sudanese refugees of Christian, Muslim and Animist\(^3\) backgrounds were researched with regard to their religion or spirituality: 1) in their home situations, 2) during their refugee flight, 3) in their places of asylum and 4) their subsequent settlement in Australia.

1.1 Religion, Spirituality and Refugees: A Teacher’s Observations

For nearly 30 years, the researcher has been a Melbourne-based teacher of English as a Second Language (ESL) to adult refugees and immigrants. In addition, the researcher has coordinated language programs to assist refugees and immigrants at various sites. From the mid 1990s to the early 2000s, the researcher coordinated one site, the major catchment school for refugees from the immigration department’s transit flats. At this time many of these refugees were from Africa and the Middle East. As well, the researcher has a longstanding interest in religious and spiritual matters, which has been deepened by her teaching of English and travel in several developed and developing countries – in some instances during times of civil unrest (see Chapter 2 for more details). Thus, the motivation for this study is the researcher’s personal interest triggered by observations on the interaction between religion, spirituality and the refugee experience.

The following two vignettes, written by the researcher and presented below, and the following section present further motivating factors and how the study was conducted:

\(^2\) Throughout this study ‘asylum’ means the country or places a refugee transits through

\(^3\) In recognition of the significance of the Animist meaning system a capital letter will be used for Animists throughout this study.
Story 1: Trinh’s second baby was born on a bamboo bed. I heard that as a quiet comment, a mere snippet. A bamboo bed in the jungle! Her husband was a surgeon and she was a member of the Hue elite, as I later found out from her community – never from her. He was conscripted to work with the Viet Cong. I learnt of this by way of a conversational snippet years later. But what I saw was a tenacious woman in her seventies, living alone in a one-bedroom Housing Commission flat, wearing blue mittens to soothe her chilblains.

Story 2: A student came to tell me that Ismail had a sore left arm. When I went to him, I found him crying. ‘Something is wrong,’ I thought. The other male students were worried. Heart attack! Yes! How can I get him, a proud man, to hospital? I said: ‘I am the teacher, you must go home. You are in pain.’ I whispered to another male refugee student, ‘Drive him home, but take him to hospital if the pain gets worse’. Men of his age were better at looking after him than I was. … Then a snippet came my way; it was not his heart. A quick word, prison, … [inferring] torture. ‘Don’t ask more,’ I told myself, ‘He knows I understand.’ Just a snippet. There was more. The doctors said an operation would not fix it. After that, when he was in pain in class, he stayed in class and sat on the sofa. There was no reason to go home (Ennis, 2001 p. 62).

‘Trinh’ and ‘Ismail’ were refugees taught by the researcher. Within their religious tradition the respected pair appeared deeply religious, one Buddhist, the other a Shi’ite. Both were observed mixing well with others in their multi-faith Australian environment.

Conversely, the researcher has had challenging experiences with students in regard to religion, spirituality and settlement. For example, ‘Jose’, a Central American Christian, tried, on several occasions, to convert fellow Buddhist students. In another episode the researcher supported a female teacher of Muslim background who was told several times by ‘Ali’, a traditional Muslim Horn of Africa male refugee, ‘Inshallah, we hope next term you will wear the veil.’
For Ali and possibly Jose, it appeared that religion provided a framework for coping. Ali, often ill, appeared at times bewildered by his settlement context. It was known he had been imprisoned in his home country for many years. Was this when religion had become important or had it always been? In Melbourne he was a voluntary community leader with young people: how important was his religion in this work? Did his religion assist or hinder his settlement in multi-faith Australia?

As both teacher and site coordinator, the researcher had worked closely with both refugees and refugee settlement agencies. During this time the researcher had observed that refugee practitioners (the various professionals or paraprofessionals who work with refugees) had a range of attitudes to a refugee’s religion or spirituality: simple acceptance, idealistic embracement, detachment, confusion, disregard, fear, repressed hostility, occasionally outright hostility, or, in rare instances, considerable knowledge of this complex part of a refugees’ life. Such attitudes became more apparent after 9/11.

The researcher contends that in order to assist refugee settlement, refugee practitioners need understandings of various religions and spiritualities, particularly of how this part of the refugee’s life interacts with the refugee experience. Such understandings may often be at variance with the refugee practitioner’s own belief system or views about religion or spirituality. For some practitioners, this may be confronting, even if a practitioner has a well-developed understanding of their own religion or spirituality. Besides this, for individual practitioners and their support organisations, such interactions can be religiously, politically, legally and culturally sensitive.

Two overseas studies resonated with these observations. Firstly, Gozdziak (2002) has observed that US agencies working with refugees of different faiths are often ill-equipped to deal with this religiosity. Secondly, her further study noted that the interaction between refugees and religion was largely neglected across the world:

*Despite the diversity of religious and spiritual beliefs and practices that sustain many refugees and forced immigrants in*
their displacement, migration and integration into the host society, contemporary considerations among both researchers and policy makers tend to neglect the role of religion and spirituality as a source of emotional and cognitive support, a form of social and political expression and mobilisation, and a vehicle for community building and group identity. This neglect can also be seen in scholarly treatments of religion and spirituality among refugee populations (Gozdziak & Shandy, 2002 p 129).

Thirdly, Shandy and Gozdziak corroborated the researcher’s observations of refugees such as Ali:

… religion operates in compelling, competing, and contradictory ways as it shapes the experiences of refugees, serving as a source of resiliency as it both facilitates and impedes the integration process (Gozdziak & Shandy, 2002 p 131).

Finally, Gozdziak (2002) pinpointed a new issue that the separation between church and state can mean that religious organisations in the United States of America (USA) funded to settle refugees are wary of engaging in religious issues for fear of being seen as proselytizers. As a consequence, the researcher decided to examine the issue.

Regarding the choice of participants, a literature search showed some studies on religion and Indo-Chinese refugees, but few studies on Muslim refugees or current refugee groups from Africa or the Middle East. Thus, the researcher decided to focus on refugees with these backgrounds.

Gozdziak and Shandy also suggested that the story of religion and forced migration had chapters waiting to be written, and that the chapters were in host countries, refugee camps
and countries of first asylum. They further commented that these ‘chapters’ are needed to inform academic research and forced migration policies and practice. Thus, this study will allow recent refugees, nineteen in total, now residing in Melbourne from Somalia, Iraq, Ethiopia and the Sudan, to tell their stories, stories of how their religious practice, religious belief or other beliefs interacted with the various stages of the refugee experience. In addition, their stories are framed by the observations of the refugees’ religious leaders, cultural consultants (professionals who have knowledge of the particular communities), refugee practitioners and some relevant academics.

1.2.1 The Overlooked Dimension of Religion

Religion is also under-researched by international migration experts despite the obvious intersection (Akcapar, 2006). For example, the importance of religious beliefs, identity and the social organisation of diasporas has been underestimated (Kokot, Tololyan & Alfonso, 2004).

However, in recent times religion has become more evident globally and not least because of migration, including refugee flows. Further, cultures and religions are mixing more than at any other time in human history (Nielsen, 2000; Smart, 2002). The increased salience of religion has emerged in post-socialist societies (Kokot et al., 2004; Varga, 1993). Recent world events such as 9/11, the Bali and London bombings have catapulted religion to the centre of world stage (Cahill, 2003); in particular, the perceived conflict between Islam and Christianity. Bouma and Ling (2007) state that this global resurgence takes three forms: increased intensity in religiosity, the increased importance in identity and the rise of puritanical extremes. These factors have resulted in an increase in religious engagement in the political process in many countries and increased intra-faith conflict in the major faiths between liberal and conservative groups.

Regarding the refugee context, Gozdziak and Shandy comment that ‘missionising’ religions are involved in refugee camps or in emergency settings. Moreover, in host countries such as the USA (Gozdziak, 2002) and Australia, since early 2000 refugee resettlement programs have been contracted out by governments to non-government
organisations (NGOs) some of whom are religiously based groups (for example see DIAC, 2005).

Regardless of the sustained interaction between religion and refugees, both internationally (Musalo, 2002; Wilkinson & Skandrani, 2001) and in Australia (Jupp, 2001, 2009a), this interaction is under-researched. Why?

To answer this question the ideological constructs that drive Western academics and various refugee agencies need brief examination. Firstly, Nietzsche, Lenin and Bertrand Russell, among others, predicted that religion would die (Cahill, 2003). Social theorists in the 1960s and 1970s also anticipated the rise of secularism and the ‘death of God’ (Rumbold, 2002), with Smart (2002) stating that influential groups, the intelligentsia and professional classes in the Western world, hold secular humanist, liberal atheist, socialist and Marxist views. Further, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the Australian immigration department and many international aid groups who assist refugees, both in Australia and internationally, are funded or governed under secularist frameworks. Hence, the lack of research.

Regarding the Australian context, this country is considered one of the most secular in the world (Bouma, 2006), with religion and spirituality not on the training agenda for Australians in general, nor for health professionals (Tacey, 2003), social workers (Lindsay, 2002), psychologists (Passmore, 2003) or professionals involved in palliative care (Rumbold, 2002).

In contrast, many refugee groups and/or individuals the researcher has taught or assisted in settling have been religious, if not highly religious. The lack of research both internationally and in Australia, has two outcomes. Firstly, as Tacey warns for health professionals, this lack of engagement can result in an inability to fully understand and thus support this important part of a patient’s, or in this instance a refugee’s life. Secondly, the researcher agrees with Bouma (2006) and Lochhead (1998) that secularism
can be an ideology, as can Islamic political activism or Christian evangelism, with Lochhead adding:

\[ ... \text{a secular view of the world and its secular theology can be no less imperialist, no less isolationist, than the colonial view and its missionary theology that it replaces (1998 p. 11).} \]

1.3 Research Question and Study Objectives

As already mentioned, the study is focused around the following research question: **What role does spirituality and religion play in refugees’ flight from their home country, their time in asylum and during their resettlement in the host country?**

The objectives are the following:

- to ascertain whether the refugee experience is impacted by the holding of religious or spiritual beliefs
- to examine any shifts in religiosity and religious affiliation within the individual during the refugee experience
- to determine whether the holding of religious and spiritual beliefs supports or hinders refugee settlement in a host country
- to analyse the refugee experience in terms of Fowler’s theory of faith development and in terms of refugee flight and acculturation theories
- to make recommendations regarding the religious, spiritual, educational, welfare, settlement and psychological needs of refugees at all stages of the refugee process.

1.4 Background Context

The initial guidelines for the protection of refugees were instigated by the League of Nations, the forerunner to the United Nations (UN). Jewish Holocaust victims were paramount in the minds of the drafters of the 1951 Convention. Thus, in the UNHCR Handbook, the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, persecution for the
reasons of religion is one of the five grounds for gaining refugee status (Musalo, 2002; Wilkinson & Skandrani, 2001).

Initially, after World War II it was hoped that this refugee situation would end promptly; however, new refugee flows emerged. These refugees generally originated from totalitarian states, such as those of the Soviet Union. Thus, the 1967 UN protocol was added. This removed the temporal and geographical limitations stipulated in the original 1951 convention (Wilkinson & Skandrani, 2001).

Australia, a host country, became a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention and the later 1967 Protocol which broadens the definition of a refugee to a person who:

\[
\text{... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (UNHCR, 2007).}
\]

Regrettably the displacement of people continued around the globe; for example, during the refugee crisis in Southern Africa and Algeria in the late 1950s and 1960s. Thus, in 1969, a broader conceptualisation of refugee status was formalised in the African Refugee Convention (Reid, 2005; UNHCR, 1969; Zolberg, Suhrke & Aguayo, 1989). Later, in 1984 the Latin American Cartagena Declaration was formalised. These and later conventions or statements were made when various international crises occurred. As a result, 60 years after the 1951 convention was first used to protect displaced Europeans, the convention is now relied upon by millions of uprooted peoples across the world (UNHCR, 2006; Wilkinson & Skandrani, 2001).

Regarding a definition of religion it is perhaps surprising that international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights do not define religion (Gunn, 2003; Musalo, 2002). This absence is not uncommon, as most national constitutions are accepting of religious freedom, yet have not defined religion (Gunn, 2003). The determination of religious persecution is
conducted without a universally accepted definition of the terms *religion* or *belief*. However, the *UN Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status* gives assistance when interpreting claims of religious persecution (Gunn, 2003; Musalo, 2002).

### 1.4.1 United Nations High Commission, its Refugee Regime and Religion

A brief statement from the Office of the UNHCR’s Department of Protection at a 2002 Roundtable conducted in Washington on religious-based refugee claims with regard to the 1951 and 1967 protocols is relevant. At this round-table two commissioned papers were presented: Musalo’s (2002), which focused on religious claims for refugees seeking asylum in Western countries, and, more relevantly, Gunn’s (2002) exploration of the theoretical and factual matters underlying claims of religious persecution. The resultant statement, although not professing to be fully comprehensive, was intended to clarify issues surrounding religiously based refugee claims. Using the UN protocols mentioned above, the statement contends that religious claims may be established on one or more of the following criteria briefly stated below:

- ‘Belief’ should be theist, non-theist, Animist and non-belief. However, persecutors will often consider others to be superstitious, heretical or apostate.
- ‘Identity’ is not a matter of belief, but membership of a community with common beliefs. However, some persecutors may define some communities or groups as a threat to the persecutor’s identity or legitimacy.
- ‘Religion’ is a ‘way of life’; for example, clothes, festivals, religious duties, rituals. However, to a non-adherent such ways of living may seem trifling.

Further, the Statement contends that no person should be forced to hide their religion or its practice. In establishing religiously based claims, factors can include:

- persecution, including physical assaults on property or religious symbols
- discrimination, restrictions on the right to earn a living or normal rights to education
• major restrictions on religious practice
• forcible segregation
• forced conversions or forced compliance, including children’s education.

The statement declares that the agents of religious persecution or coercion can be the State, different religious communities or groups within a religion. Gunn (2002) adds more detail, stating that societal groups, with or without religious leaders or formal sanctioning of religious communities, can force conformity.

Further, regarding conversion or depth of belief, a refugee claimant does not need to have a detailed knowledge of their religion as knowledge does not necessarily correlate to sincerity of beliefs as it may relate, for example, to freedom of access. In addition, the Statement called for proper and regular training for all involved in the refugee claimant process.

1.4.2 Current World Refugee Situation

The 2009 Global Trend (2010) for refugees compiled by the UNHCR stated that by the end of 2009, a total of 43.3 million people had been forcibly displaced by conflict, the highest number since the mid-1990s. Of these, 27.1 million were internally displaced persons (IDP) and nearly a million are under UNHCR care due to being in the process of applying for asylum. Those classified as refugees were 15.2 million, which included 4.8 million Palestinians who fall under a special UN provision. This leaves 10.6 million under the UNHCR’s full range of protection and assistance recognised by the 1951 Convention, the 1967 protocol and the 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention for Governing the Specific Aspects of the refugee problem. In 2009 most of these refugees were from Africa or the Middle East.

With regard to durable solutions for the UNHCR-designated refugees, 251,500 were voluntarily repatriated in 2009. This included some 38,000 Iraqis and 33,100 Sudanese. Others were locally integrated, though numbers are difficult to accurately measure. Only 119,000 refugees were resettled by the UNHCR in nineteen, mostly Western, countries in
2009. Of these, 79,900 went to the USA, 11,100 to Australia, 12,500 to Canada, 1,900 to Sweden and 1,400 to Norway (UNHCR, 2010). Thus, only a minuscule number of refugees are settled in Western host countries.

1.4.3 The Host County Australia: Refugee Categories

The Australian government accepts approximately 13,000 refugees per year. It divides these humanitarian entrants into several visa categories. The Program has two components (DIAC 2009):

1. Offshore resettlement program. This program has two overarching categories:
   - Refugees, normally 4,000–6,000 persons per year and comprises various groupings such as: In-country Special Humanitarian, Emergency Rescue, Women at Risk.
   - Special Humanitarian Program (SHP), normally between 5,000–7,000 per year. These persons are not technically refugees according to the UNHCR, yet they have been subject to gross violations and discrimination, and are proposed by organisations or people resident in Australia.

2. Onshore protection – for people already in Australia.

The researcher decided only to interview the offshore arrivals – those arriving with a legal visa for permanent stay in Australia.

1.4.4 Refugees in Australia

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) states more than 700,000 displaced persons and refugees have resettled in Australia since World War II (DIAC,

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4 Regarding refugees, in Australia the Department of the Parliamentary Library produced, Australia and refugees 1901–2002: an annotated chronology based on official sources (York, 2003).
2008); according to Jupp (2001; 2003), after World War II, Australia, as well as Canada and the USA, selected refugees from European refugee camps for settlement. Thus, for example, refugees came from Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Poland in the 1980s. In the 1970s and 1980s, refugees arrived from Vietnam, Cambodia and South-East Asian refugee camps. Jupp states that the central features of this post-World War II intake were host country selection of refugees. Later, there was an influx of refugees from Lebanon, Chile and El Salvador, which resulted in special visa arrangements being made for these groups.

Then, in the early 1990s, contrary to expectation, the number of refugees increased worldwide. The various reasons for this were: unrest in the Middle East, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War, which resulted in civil war in some countries. These changes caused a less orderly influx of refugees to Australia from the Horn of Africa, the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East and other countries (Jupp, 2001).

When this study commenced the major refugee groups coming to Australia were from Africa and the Middle East. Then, in 2007–2008, the intake of African Sudanese was reduced primarily because of government concerns about their settlement (Jupp, 2009c). In contrast, the number of Asians, chiefly from Myanmar (DIAC, 2008), and of Christians from Iraq after representations from Christian lobbyists was increased (Jupp, 2009c).

### 1.4.5 Australia’s Religious Context

Australia the host country has a particular religious context. According to Bouma (2006), one of Australia’s major religious researchers, Australia is one of the most advanced multicultural, multi-faith, post-modern, secular countries in the world. Further, Bouma states: ‘Australians hold their spirituality gently in their hearts, speaking tentatively about it’ (Bouma, 2006:2). On the other hand, Tacey (2000) contends that Australians have a fear that talk of religion may be divisive. It is into this host country that Sudanese,
Somali, Iraqi and Ethiopians (in the researcher’s experience, often religious or highly religious refugees\textsuperscript{5}) settle.

Historically, Australia has had indigenous spiritualities, which after the arrival of the colonialists, were suppressed, ignored or seen as inferior. Regarding interfaith contact, there is some evidence of northern coastal indigenous groups having contact with Muslim coastal traders several hundred years before white settlement (Cahill, Bouma, Dellal & Leahy, 2004; Cleland, 2002). With the arrival of the British First Fleet in 1788, convicts of Christian and other faiths arrived. Initially, Anglicans were the dominant faith since they were allied with colonial political power that later groups of Protestants and Catholics challenged. Later still, different groups such as the Orthodox Christians started arriving in the late 1800s (Cahill et al., 2004).

Bouma (2006) and Cahill et al. (2004) agree that the impact of conversion and migration, and by inference refugees, mainly after World War II, has meant Australia has increased in its diversity of religious groups and private spiritualities. For example, after World War II came Jews and others from Eastern Europe, immigrants from Greece who were often Orthodox and Italian Catholics. In the 1970s, a large influx of Turkish Muslims settled in Australia, to be followed by Indo-Chinese of various Buddhist and Catholic backgrounds. Since the late 1980s, African refugees have come to Australia (Jupp, 2001). Thus, each wave of immigrants or refugees brought with them their religions (Jupp, 2001, 2009a).

With regard to legal rights, Sidoti (1997) stated that Section 116 of the Australian Federal Constitution allows for religious freedom and the right not to have a religion; it does not allow the federal government to establish a religion. However, the Constitution does not offer a guarantee of freedom of religion. In addition, such laws do not apply to the states. Thus, Sidoti states freedom of religion in Australia basically depends on the goodwill of people and the governments, not on legal protections.

\textsuperscript{5} To clarify highly religious-refugees, refugees who pray very often each day and/or attend their places of worship more often than other religious refugees, usually several times a week.
On the other hand, Sidoti (1997) states that the Federal Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Law 1986 and the Racial Discrimination Act 1976 and similar state governments’ Acts prohibit discrimination on religious grounds. Other relevant laws and policies also assisting with religious freedom is federal government funding of religious schools (since the 1960s) achieved after a long struggle by the Catholic Church and policies of multiculturalism (Cahill et al., 2004) initiated by the 1970s Labor government (Jupp, 2001).

Studies (Bouma, 2002, 2006; Cahill et al., 2004) of Census 2006 show some shifts in religiosity over the last ten years; for example:

- Islam rose 69 per cent from 1996–2006 to 1.7 per cent of the total population
- Hinduism rose 120 per cent from 1996–2006 to 0.75 per cent of the total population.

Other shifts were also reported

- those without religion rose 28 per cent from 2001–2006 to 18.7 per cent of the population
- ‘not stated’ rose 21 per cent from 2001–2006 to 11.2 per cent of the population (Cahill, 2007).

Various studies comment on these shifts (Bouma, 2002, 2006; Cahill et al., 2004). Firstly, the rise in Hinduism and Islam is due to immigration and the arrival of refugees. Regarding the rise of secularism, Bouma (2007) has argued that it would be inaccurate to say that 19 per cent of Australians are not religious. Rather, this may reflect that Australians do not believe in organised religions; yet, may call themselves spiritual.

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6 Bouma (2006) broadly classifies the various Australian religious groups as: (i) major religions, which includes Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikh; (ii) new religious movements, which includes Mormonism, Japanese movements and so forth; and (iii) nature religions, which includes shamanism and Wicca.
Thirdly, there is a shift away from rational forms of Christianity; that is, Presbyterian and Uniting Church numbers are declining, but charismatic churches or sections within a denomination are rising. Bouma (2006) labels this style of Christianity orthopassy, meaning correct ‘feelings’ about God.\(^7\)

Comparing this second and third shift with other countries similarities emerge. The shift to secularism is not unique, as it is occurring in other developed Western countries (Cahill et al., 2004). Bouma and others (2003; 2006; Bouma & Ling, 2007) contend that the shift in Australia from rational argumentation of one’s faith to emotional attachment is also occurring across the world. Cahill et al. (2004) suggests the rise in Christian evangelism and Pentecostalism is due to the negative effects of globalisation.

Two further comments by Bouma (2006) are pertinent. Firstly, on a scale of religious identification, belief and practice, Australia is mid-way between the highly religious USA and Ireland and barely religious Japan and Scandinavia. Secondly, unlike in Denmark or Germany, both secular Western countries, in Australia there is no need for government approval to establish religious groups. Further, unlike in the USA, where only secular schools are funded and Canada, where only secular and Catholic schools are funded by the government, in Australia Australian federal government funds are given to both secular and religious schools.

Thus, Australia is religiously diverse, multi-faith, shifting and rising in religiosity. Certain sections are becoming more politically engaged (Bouma, 2006), yet some sections are less politically engaged than in the USA (Jupp, 2009b). Struggles by previous religious lobby groups, particularly Irish Catholics in the nineteenth century, have meant that immigrant Muslims and refugee religious groups have various freedoms and protections in Australia (Cahill, 2003; Jupp, 2009a).

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\(^7\) Bouma suggests that both these forms of Pentecostal Christianity and New Spiritualities are rising in Australia as they are: ‘Religions of self-help, offering success theologies focused on wholeness for the person and requiring emotional honesty rather than intellectual rigor-celebration, not cerebration’ (2006 p: 92).
1.5 Key Definitions

Much time could be spent on definitions. For the purpose of this research, several definitions are particularly important: 1) refugee, 2) settlement, 3) religion and spirituality. In addition the various approaches to religion are mentioned.

1.5.1 Operational Definition of a Refugee and the Refugee Experience

A working definition of a refugee will include the findings of The Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture (VFST) (Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture and Trauma, 2002). Their report suggests persons coming under the SHP can have refugee-like experiences prior to arrival in Australia. Thus, in this study ‘refugees’ can include persons who came under this program (see section 1.4.3).

For the purposes of this research the refugee experience is defined; as the events and prior events which caused the refugee to flee their home country, their experiences on flight, and in the various place prior to and in settlement in a host country.

1.5.2 Operational Definition of Settlement

The second definition is of ‘settlement’ and two available descriptions come from the Report of the Committee for Stage 1 of the Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services (Jupp, 1986). The first description comes from the earlier Galbally report:

[Settlement] is a long-term process affecting all immigrants [including refugees] and particularly those coming from cultures different from the dominant in Australia or without a well-established ethnic group here. Its end point is the acceptance by and the feeling of belonging to the receiving society. It implies change in both the individual and in the host society (1978 p.29).
The second description quoted is from Shergold and Nicolaou:

*The fact that the ‘settlement process’ – perceived as the movement toward full participation and equitable access to Australian society – is determined by far more than length of residence. The extent of settlement over time will depend on the conjuncture of the migrant’s life cycle (age and family status at the moment of migration); individual characteristics (sex, education, occupation, wealth, language and culture); Australia’s economic cycle (labour market demand, availability of housing, business opportunities, price movements and the supply of welfare benefits). This does not simply mean that the process of settlement will vary between individuals and ethnic groups, or between migrants who arrive in different periods. More importantly, it suggests that the needs of an NES migrant may increase over time, and the demand for the provision of community language, culturally-sensitive services actually rise* (1986 p.62).

These descriptions of settlement have been chosen as definitions, as they acknowledge that settlement is a two-way process for both refugees and their host country.

**1.5.3 Various Approaches towards Religion and Spirituality**

There are five main approaches to religion, with most examined in Wulff (1997): philosophical, sociological, psychological, psychoanalytical and anthropological. In addition, much has been written on the interaction between religion and spirituality. Of particular relevance to Australia is Bouma et al (Bouma, Cahill, Dellal & Zwartz, 2011) recent report. However for the purposes of this research the research data and analysis will drive the approach. Thus, the research merges a number of these approaches towards religion.
The adult educator Sinnott provides a definition of the interaction between religion and spirituality:

*Spirituality is one’s personal relation to the sacred or transcendent; a relation that then informs other relationships and the meaning of one’s own life. Spirituality may or may not include world views, dogmas and practices shared by any subculture. Religion, on the other hand, refers to practices and beliefs related to a particular dogma system. Religion may be the external sign of a spiritual orientation or simply a set of cultural cohesive practices, beliefs and habits* (Sinnott, 2001 p. 199–200).

This definition was chosen as it raises a number of issues that emerged in the research. In addition, it comes from the adult education sector.

1.6 Overview of the Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into ten chapters. After this brief introduction, the literature review is in Chapter 2 and is broad in scope due to the needs of analysis. Thus, it covers religion and the refugees by examining understandings such as the response of different religions to suffering, religious conversion theories, fundamentalism and shifts to fundamentalism. It also explores some refugee and acculturation theories. It concludes by presenting literature on refugees and religion in asylum and in host countries including inter/intra faith relations. Chapter 2 which follows contains the methodology.

Chapter 4 entwines refugees and other interviewees’ data with brief political, social and religious histories at both the collective and individual refugee level. The importance of this chapter arose from the analysis as it gives the formation of both the individual refugee and/or their collective religious meaning system for each of the four countries. It also explores the interaction between religion and flight. Finally, any shifts in religiosity
because of the refugee experience can be measured from this base. Thus it is a pivotal chapter.

Chapter 5 examines the various aspects of the refugee’s religious experience and coping that emerged during social unrest or war prior to flight, on flight, in the place of asylum and in Australia. Chapter 6 analyses, explores and compares different Christian and Muslim religious or cultural rituals that assisted refugees at the various stages of the refugee experience and settlement in a host country. Chapter 7 examines the interaction between the refugee experience and the refugees’ particular religious meaning system that arose from analysis. It also examines notions such as the ‘after-life’ and attitudes to suffering. Shifts in religiosity during the refugee experience are examined in Chapter 8. Chapter 9 then explores the understandings gained from this study on refugee flight and acculturation and adult faith development theory. The final chapter draws the conclusions together to thus allow a model and typology of how these nineteen refugees’ religiosity or their religious meaning system interacts with the refugee experience.
CHAPTER TWO

RELIGION AND THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE:

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Punch (1998) states that the role of literature in grounded theory is to assist at the analysis stage so that the data rather than the literature drives the emerging theory. As a consequence, this literature review on religion, spirituality and the refugee experience is interdisciplinary and broad in focus. The first section examines the religious dimension and various frameworks, then religion and suffering followed by a section on religion, religious rituals, religious experience and coping. This is followed by an examination of religious conversion, shifting religiosity and patterns in attitudes to the ‘other’. The fifth section reviews refugee flight together with acculturation theories. The next two sections explore refugees’ religiosity in asylum and then in various host countries, before the exploration of popular religiosity, trauma and religion. An examination of inter/intra-faith relations and typologies of Australian Buddhists, Christians and Muslims concludes the chapter.

Two approaches have been used in order to limit this review and study. Firstly, the study focuses on the refugee literature since the 1970s and so does not examine in detail studies, for example, such as on Jewish refugees from World War II. Secondly, the important issue of the interaction between identity and religion (Batrouney & Goldlust, 2005; Kokot et al., 2004) is not fully explored, as this study’s aim is to explore the refugees’ lived religious or spiritual experiences, and how these experiences are aligned to the research objectives.

8‘Other’ in this theses refers to people of a different religious beliefs which included intra/inter religious differences, Animists, secularists, humanists, socialists etc.
2.1 Religion, Its Dimensions and Frameworks

This section examines three areas; namely, cross-cultural religious frameworks or dimensions, the concept of religious meaning systems and adult faith development theories.

As this research ranges across belief systems, Tarakeshwar et al.’s (2003) dimensional framework, based on the work of Smart (1996; 2002) and others, arose in response to cross-cultural journals historically neglecting religion, despite the fact that for many people across the world, belief in God and associated religious practice are of considerable importance. The five dimensions are the: ideological, ritual, experiential, social and intellectual dimensions of religion (see Appendix 5 for more details). This framework has been used in a number of cross-cultural studies (Aflakseir & Coleman, 2009; Safdar, Lewis, Greenglass & Daneshpour, 2009; Tweed & Conway, 2006), yet there is no in-depth evaluation of the framework. Despite this, the framework influenced the formulation of interview questions and the framing of several chapters.

Other well-respected researchers’ comments on the interaction between religion and personal difficulties are relevant to this study. Spilka et al. (2003) state that when under threat or in ‘highly ambiguous situations’, religious explanations are a response to the need for meaning. Paloutzian (2005) states that spiritual transformation, religious or otherwise, occurs when people confront difficulties in life that can cause them to construct a new meaning system, as the old meaning system is no longer sufficient. As well, a growing body of research suggests meaning is important in coping with everyday events as well as with adversity (Pargament, 1997; Park, 2005a; Silberman, 2005a).

This understanding on the centrality of meaning arose from the Jewish Holocaust survivor, Victor Frankl (1962), and the work of other existential psychologists (Paloutzian & Park, 2005b). Recent understandings in cognitive, evolutionary and developmental psychology (Paloutzian & Park, 2005b), and the rise in religious ‘fundamentalism’ (Hood et al., 2005), have caused a resurgence in the concept of meaning in psychological modelling.
Currently, many active researchers in the psychology of religion, and some within the social sciences, accept the overarching construct: religion as a meaning system (Hood et al., 2005; Paloutzian & Park, 2005a, 2005b; Silberman, 2005a, 2005b). Regarding this concept of religion as a meaning system, Park (2005a) agrees with Pargament et al. (2005) that religion with both its beliefs and practices offers transcendent surrender to a higher power, forbearance and faith even when life is uncontrollable and beyond rationality. Park (2005a) places religion, which is central to many people, under the overarching category of a global meaning system, with Park and Pargament et al. (2005) further agreeing that as a meaning system religion is unique as it focuses on what is perceived to be sacred and so provides a comprehensive meaning system (Pargament, Magyar-Russel et al., 2005). Hence, religious meaning systems will be an important theme in this thesis.

‘Meaning-making’ comes from global meaning and comprises three factors: belief, goals and subjective feelings. Further, these global meaning systems are usually constructed unwittingly, tend to be outside individuals’ awareness, and are acquired from the surrounding culture and through oral traditions (Park, 2005a; Silberman, 2005b). As well as individual religious meaning systems, there are parallel collective religious meaning systems, again consciously and unconsciously formed through a variety of common culturally socialised processes and which are more inflexible than individual meaning systems (Silberman, 2005b).

Paloutzian (2005) and Silberman (2005a) summarise the various studies on religion as a meaning system with Silberman’s the more comprehensive. She suggests the components as:

- self and world beliefs; that is, concept of the sacred, sin and a next life
- contingencies and outcome expectations; that is, rewards, attitudes to others, predictions of a utopia or an apocalypse
• goals; that is, motivation towards the sacred
• actions; that is, appropriate and those proscribed inappropriate
• emotions; that is, prescribing, encouraging.

Park and Paloutzian (2005) state that religious meaning systems need to take into account psychological understandings of emotions. Thus, this review will investigate both religious meaning and emotion. Several other understandings on religious meaning are noteworthy. First, Park and Paloutzian (2005) state that some religions by their nature are collectivist (for example, the Jewish faith), whereas others (for example, Evangelical Protestants) are individualist. Second, several researchers call for more research on non-Christian religions so that emic and etic approaches can be understood (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2002). Finally, Paloutzian’s (2005) comment, which links into the next section that a religious meaning system cannot be separated from faith, refers to Fowler’s (1981) statement that faith is an orientation of the total person, giving purpose and goals to one’s hopes, and is integral to a person’s life and is not, as classically understood, a separate domain.

For this research of adult refugees and religion/spirituality, an understanding of adult faith development is relevant. Again, most of the studies in this area have been conducted on Western Christians, often Protestants.

In the adult development literature there are two influential paradigms. One is the Life Event and Transition paradigm (Reeves, 1999), with events triggering adult learning and growth. Bridges adds that there are three stages of transition: starting points, neutral zones where little change occurs and new beginnings (as cited in Reeves, 1999 p 23). The second paradigm comprises the stage or phase theories with notable research conducted by Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2002) and Gilligan (1982) on women’s development, Levinson’s theory on life structures and change development (Reeves, 1999), and Loevinger’s (1976) theory of ego development.
One theory from the second paradigm, Fowler’s Theory of Adult Faith Development, developed from the work of Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg, has relevance to the research question (Fowler, 1995, 1996, 2000). The theory, first developed in the late 1970s, is widely accepted in the field of adult faith development (Berger, 2008; Cartwright, 2001; Peterson, 1996). It suggests that religious and spiritual faith is a sequential developmental process. His theory arises from data gained from over 300 interviews with people from various Christian denominations and some of the Jewish faith. The theory poses six developmental stages of faith, mostly age related, summarised as: 1) intuitive-projective, 2) mythic literal, 3) synthetic-conventional, 4) individuative-reflective, 5) conjunctive and 6) universalised (Fowler, 1995, 1996, 2000; Peterson, 1996). In addition to these stages, Fowler (1996) suggests there are two main groupings in US Christians and Jews:

- orthodox temper, the synthetic-conventional stage
- progressive temper, the individuative-reflective stage.

He states there are virulent struggles between the tempers and suggests the ‘orthodox temper’ across religions may have commonalities.

Some criticism of Fowler’s theory is relevant for cross-faith/cultural research. In particular, the theory’s hierarchical nature, the assumption of developmental growth, that a higher stage of development is more ‘worthy’ (Courtenay, 1994) are questioned. The claim that the six stages of development are universal is also questioned due to the theory being based on a limited religious and cultural sample. Despite this, Levenson et al. (2005) state the later stages do correspond to similar concepts in Sufism and Buddhism. However, the authors believe the posing of the universality of the theory is problematic and so refer to other studies they feel are more appropriate. The most recent criticism of Fowler’s theory comes from Streib (Streib, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2005, n.d.; Streib, Hood, Keller, Csoff & Silver, 2009; Streib & Keller, 2004) a German religious academic,

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9 See 8.1.1 for more explanation.
10 Sufism is generally considered the mystical or esoteric side of Islam, with Esposito adding that it is the ‘internalization and intensification of the Islamic faith and practise’ (2003:302), and a striving to be aware of God’s presence with action and emotion is more important than legalism (Esposito, 2003).
who states the theory is not sufficient to explain revivals, regressions or partial regression in a faith stage (2005) with regard to individual or global fundamentalism (2002).

Thus, Streib has revised Fowler’s theory to the multi-layered ‘religious styles perspective’, suggesting that broadly religious development is the entanglement of:

a.themata, individual experiences – sometimes traumas in past life histories call for a religious response. Thus, the themata changes when social, personal or interpersonal changes occur during one’s lifetime.

b. schemata or styles, ‘interpersonal relational styles which the person applies in the processing of experiences of self-other and the world’ and these may differ across domains (Streib, 2001b, 2002).

Streib states that four dimensions, not just cognitive development, are important for understanding adult religious development with the dimensions being: (i) the psychodynamic–interpersonal dimension relationship, (ii) the relational–interpersonal dimension relationship, (iii) the interpretative–hermeneutic dimension, and (iv) the life–world dimension.

As a consequence of various studies, Streib has modified Fowler’s stages to five religious styles, which he states are more in keeping with Loewinger’s (1976) ‘milestone’ model of adult development (Streib, 2001a). He describes a religious style as distinct modi of practical–interactive (ritual), psychodynamic (symbolic) and cognitive (narrative), both reconstructions and appropriations (2001a). Streib suggests styles take account of the noted revisions to religious fundamentalism. He states a shift to fundamentalism in the religious domain even by some educated and intelligent persons is a revival of Fowler’s mythic–literal stage mixed with Rizzuto’s (1979) concepts of God images interacting with parental images which Fowler also mentions. This is Streib’s second style, named as
the *instrumental–reciprocal* religious style (Streib, 2001a). Similar to Fowler, Streib describes this style as a literalist understanding of a god who requires performance and perfection from a believer with failure leaving a believer with feelings of guilt or shame (Streib, 2001a). Streib states that styles are multilayered, which in healthy conditions are worked through. Yet at certain times in life, undefined by the author, a particular stage appears more prevalent and can take over in un-reflected and unquestioning ways, structuring most of one’s religious activity and social and interpersonal relations. He suggests at certain times in one’s life, though not explored in depth, certain styles may come to the surface. Thus, earlier styles are ‘revitalised’ and become meshed and merged, which he names as the *heterodyning* of styles (2001a; 2002). As a consequence, the earlier stage of group power and systemic-rational argument, and the fundamentalist style, dominates. Thus, Streib (2002) agrees with Cartwright (2001) that cognitive development is not necessarily across all domains of an adult’s life.

Some suggest the stage development paradigm may not be relevant in non-Western societies (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2002). Streib also states that his new religious model is currently not suitable for making cross-cultural comparisons as much of his research was on cult deconversion and Christian fundamentalist groups (Streib & Keller, 2004). Despite these criticisms, Fowler’s model is accepted, yet not critically examined in generalist core adult psychology or life span textbooks (Berger, 2008; Peterson, 1996), nor by some respected adult educators (Tisdell, 1999). Yet, Australian research on social work students (Lindsay, 2002) places the model in a more complex framework. Despite this, no Australian study can be found that discusses Streib’s model, a model that appears to combine the Life Event and Transition, and the Adult Faith Development paradigms.

Despite these concerns, and in the absence of any other cross-cultural model of adult faith development, it was decided Fowler’s model with Streib’s modification would be used, but with some caution. This was to test whether such frameworks assist or are relevant in understanding how adult refugees of many different backgrounds engage with their religious faith during the refugee experience.
2.2 Suffering in Religious Perspective

The comments of two respected refugee researchers are relevant to suffering: that traditionally, religions provided frameworks for understanding human suffering (Summerhill, 2000) and that refugees’ views need to be taken into account (Gozdziak, 2002). Thus, this section briefly examines Muslim and Christian views of suffering and relevant studies regarding the suffering of refugees.

The seminal text is Bowker (1970) on the problem of suffering in the major religions. His second monograph (1997), written for a broader audience, gives a brief overview of the topic. He states the various religious meanings systems are profoundly different, thus the experience of suffering for a Jew and Christian is different. Further, all religions have a commitment to elevate suffering and have generous ways of supporting believers. Except for Hinnells and Porter (1999), it appears that no other text examines the issues across a number of religions. Research on refugees and suffering is again minimal.

Scattered literature can be found on Buddhist refugees. Regarding Tibetan refugees in India, Samuels (1999) noted the use of traditional Tibetan health practices to assist refugees, and Holtz (1998) found psycho-spiritual factors unique to Tibetan Buddhism, which may have increased the resilience of monks and nuns who survived torture, as suffering in this life is a result of bad actions in one’s past lives and so one’s karma is increased through suffering. Further, Chester (as cited in Welaranta, 1993) also stated some Khmers saw torture in karmitic terms, as a consequence of past lives. In contrast, Welaranta (1993) suggests Theravada Buddhist teachings about a peaceful death and reincarnation may contribute to a refugee’s emotional problems. For example, such teachings restricted them from taking steps to save their family or to take revenge, and thus save them from remorse. Welaranta suggests the Khmers coped by projecting

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11 Refugees to Australia have been from the three different schools of Buddhism. Each school, with some variation within, are slightly different (Adam & Hughes, 1996; Bowker, 1970; Skorupski, 1999). The first school, the Theravada, started in 1st Century CE, with adherents coming from Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. The second school started in 3rd Century CE. The Mahayana come from China, Korea and Vietnam. The third school, from 7th Century CE, the Vajrayana (Tantric) come from Tibet, Mongolia, the Himalayas, and parts of China and central Asia. Schools have differences in beliefs, practices and attitudes, including towards suffering (see above texts).
positive thoughts on the dead, rather than the destructive or hateful thoughts of the Khmer Rouge killers – thus positive coping strategies to build their futures. The author adds that the Khmer Rouge forced Khmers to kill, drink, lie, steal and eat animals, all against Buddhist precepts, which caused them subsequent suffering in the USA. Finally, Ngaosoyvathn’s (1993) writing on Laos gives an additional understanding by postulating that one of the factors of successful settlement was a form of fatalism with its roots in Buddhism that led these refugees to accept their life in Australia.

2.2.2 Suffering in Islam

Islam and Christianity have different approaches to suffering. Bowker (1970) states that for Christianity, suffering presents a problem as to how can a loving God allow it, yet for Islam suffering is part of what it means to be alive, part of the omnipotence of God, part of His purpose and plan for human ‘betterment’; it requires submission to God’s control of all events. Generally speaking, in Islam suffering has two purposes: as a form of punishment for sin and as a spiritual test or trial. Bowker adds that under suffering man will form his character or expose his flaws with despair being considered blasphemy. Sachedina, (1999), in a as well, suffering requires sabr, translated as both patience and endurance.

Although the literature is scattered and often limited in its examination of theological differences; how Sunni, Shi’ite and the mystical Sufis traditionally view suffering is often pertinent to the refugee experience. Bowker (1970) and others (Glasse, 2002; Küng, 2007; Sachedina, 1999; Saeed, 2004; Saeed, 2006; Smart, 2002) state that suffering in Islam is framed within two major schools of theological debate, dating back to the 700s CE. The first school of debate is that of the Mu’tazilities – influenced by Greek philosophical thought, Christian understandings, as well as other influences current at the time – who believe in free will. The other school, that of the al-Ash’ari believe in determinism or pre-determinism. Küng’s (2007) and Saeed’s (2006) succinct overview states, generally speaking, that Sunni are al-Ash’ari – the traditionalists who believe in kash (acquisition): the power to act belongs to God alone, thus religious determinism. Sachedina states that the al-Ash’ari view that God wills all events in the world is a form
of optimism about disease, poverty and injustice, which are just and right, and not a result of injustice, accidents or human evil. Conversely, most Shi’ites (Twelvers, *Imamis* and Fivers) are influenced by, or could be considered extensions of the *Mu'tazilities* (Saeed 2006) – the rationalists who believe in free will, the justice of God and moral values. Küng (2007) adds that this school believes human reasoning is capable of understanding the rational causes of events combined with revelation.

Various authors give other pertinent information relevant for Shi’ite and refugees who had a more Sufi approach. Armstrong (2001) and Bowker (1970) state that since Shi’ite foundations, the school has a well-developed view of suffering, as its founders suffered greatly from Sunni persecutions. For example, Shi’ism has yearly passion plays that remind Shi’ites of the persistence of evil and reaffirm that in the end goodness will prevail. Further, Sachedina (1999) states that pious Shi’ites view the world as full of sorrow and suffering, yet for the faithful it is a road to salvation. Thus, he contends Shi’ites accept suffering as part of obtaining God’s mercy and purifying the soul, resulting in a positive outlook on suffering. In contrast to most Shi’ites, for Sufis suffering is similar to Christian asceticism – it is a necessary part of a Sufi’s ascetic life (Bowker 1970), as part of God’s journey and being blessed by God (Schedina 1999). According to Bowker this approach is the optimistic *al-Ash’ari*. Aldwin (2007), an expert on coping theory, gives additional information, stating that Sufis such as Rumi have a developmental perspective on suffering, yet she does not fully detail this.

According to Bowker (1970), though not sufficiently explored by him (1970), the historic Sunni/Shi’ite schism relates to debate on free will versus pre-destination. Conversely, Sachedina (1999) states that the theological policy of pre-destination was used to control political discontent between the Persian Abbasids during the Arab Umayyad rule (660–748 CE). However, Küng (2007) and Bowker (1970) not allude to this. Given the dominance of Sunnis in the world, the *al-Ash’ari* view dominates much of the medical, historical and scientific theory (Sachedina, 1999).^{12}

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^{12} The researcher was given Ashy’s article on Islam and Health (1999) by a refugee support person. The Care for Muslim Patient (Aziz & Abdul Rashid, 2001) is another text used by Australian health students.
A few cross-cultural studies mention how Muslims managed their sufferings. Tarakeshwar et al. (2003) mention the use of religious cassettes to heal people suffering with schizophrenia in Saudi Arabia. In a study of bereavement and loss in Muslims from Bali and Egypt, Wikan (1988) indicates that more complex forces are involved than simply one’s religion, as both culture and religion shape and organise these communities’ response to coping.

With regard to Islamic refugees, Tiilikainen (2003) found, for Somali women in Finland, Islam helped to heal their suffering from the civil war. Gozdziak (2002) found that Kosovar refugees in US transit camps saw their suffering in a religious and political context, and turned to their religion, seeking solace in Islam. Shoeb et al. (2007) found Islam gave meaning to the suffering of some Iraqi Shi’ite refugees through public and private religious rituals to ease stress, loneliness and so on when living in the USA. Islam also gave a causal reason for the difficulties; namely, God’s will – God is empowered to determine all things, yet humans are responsible for choosing their actions. In addition, the belief in the hereafter transcended the refugee experience or their settlement difficulties. They also found gender differences: males shaped and anchored their identity as Muhajirin – those who leave home in Allah’s cause and will return in triumph. Yet for women, suffering was more acute as in the USA their social world collapsed. Thus, Shoeb found religion provided meaning as these Shi’ite refugees lived in religious time and space. For example, Assal (2004) states that the Arabic word qurbaha\textsuperscript{13} for the Somalis and ghorba for the Sudanese, with their related religious concepts, describes the experience both physically and psychologically of living abroad. Thus this is managed by these diasporas engaging in homemaking activities such as close social networks and religious, social and communal activities which create a sense of ‘home’.

In conclusion studies do not fully explore two pertinent issues. Firstly, for example, Shoeb mentions, but does not explore how refugees’ religiosity can be maladaptive in the

\textsuperscript{13} Or ghurbah.

Both these books appear to be Sunni texts with a pre-determinism approach, thus not so relevant for Shi’ite refugees.
Western host country context. Secondly, there are theological differences between Shi’ite, Sunni and Sufi with regard to suffering.

### 2.2.2 Suffering and the Christian

Bowker’s (1970) chapter on Christianity and suffering mentions the Old Testament and New Testament, and the cultural contexts of Christianity. He states the Christian response to suffering is predicated on the acceptance of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus with its assurance of hope and victory, as there is no final defeat of God. Melling (1999) adds that both Jesus and God are sharers in human suffering. Further, Melling states that for Christians suffering can be uplifting with the resurrection showing the power of God to bring about salvation with evil being resisted. Thus, it is a positive. Bowker (1970) also states that the Sermon on the Mount and gospel writings clearly detail blessings for sufferers, and prescribe attitudes towards suffering and its perpetrators. Thus, Aldwin (2007) states that in Christianity suffering is metaphysically important as it makes possible human salvation.

The scattered literature gives varying attitudes to suffering, with little mention of denominational differences towards suffering. For example, Melling (1999) states that suffering can be seen as a transforming gift which can reshape one’s life either permanently or temporarily. Yet, Bowker (1970) states that suffering is to be seen as real, with even Jesus questioning God as to His suffering. Melling also mentions that at a popular level, Christians, including preachers, have been known to mention misfortunes as punishments from God, but Christian theology has normally rejected this. Yet again Bowker gives a deeper understanding, stating there are two theological positions on suffering: 1) the Iranian – humans have a capacity for goodness which may not as yet be realised; and 2) the Augustinian – that of original sin, where man has had a defect since Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden. Ware (1997) states most Orthodox theologians would agree with the first view, that guilt arises from the negative exercise of free will. Roman Catholicism regards pre-destination as heretical (Livingstone, 1997). On the other hand, since the Reformation, Protestants have mostly believed the second view of pre-destination and being ‘chosen’ by God (Smart, 2002).
With regard to managing and avoiding suffering, Melling (1999) briefly mentions different types of Christian healing practices. For example,

- the use of holy water and oil by both Eastern and Oriental Christians
- the importance of the dabtara, the cantor, in the Ethiopian Orthodox church, as such persons give sacred objects to stave off misfortune and sickness, or to assist with healing.

Again there is minimal literature on Christian refugees. One study is important for our purposes. LeMarquand (2006), on southern Sudanese Anglicans, found that African Christians, in general, including Sudanese, see themselves reflected in Biblical stories about Africans: the Queen of Sheba, the escape of the Holy Family to Egypt and Simon of Cyrene, a black man. LeMarquand states several Old Testament Bible texts have been particularly important for southern Sudanese; in particular, Isaiah 18, popularised by a Sudanese Christian prophet, Paul Kon Ajith. He preaches that God is punishing the southern Sudanese as they did not destroy the clan fetishes or repent. Other common ideas are that the civil war was prophesised by Isaiah in ‘the Cush’ land – present-day Sudan. The author explains the relationship between the Sudan and Christianity. He states a common belief of southern Sudanese is that the eunuch in Acts 8: 27 was Sudanese, not Ethiopian (in fact, the Good News Bible translates it as a Sudanese eunuch). This implies that Christianity reached the country well before Islam. The recent Sudanese civil war is

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14 There are different groups within Christendom, each relating to different splits and each represented in this research. The first split occurred in the fifth and sixth centuries with the Oriental Orthodox Church dividing itself off from the main group of Christians who were loyal to Rome and held the belief that Jesus Christ had two natures: human and divine (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004). Within the Oriental are two groups: 1) ‘Non-Chalcedonian’ or ‘Monophysite’ – the largest branch includes five churches: Egyptian Coptic, Syrian Orthodox, the Mar Thomas Church of India, the Armenian Orthodox and the Ethiopian Orthodox; and 2) the Church of the East, sometimes called the Assyrian, Nestorian, Chaldean or East Syrian Churches, found mostly in Iran and Iraq. The second and more major split, which arose in 1054 CE, resulted in Western Europe remaining under the control of the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern and South Eastern Europe under the control of the Byzantium Empire, thus becoming the Eastern Orthodox (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004; Ware, 1997). The third split occurred at the time of the Reformation (fourteenth to seventeenth centuries) when Protestants split away from the Roman Catholic Church (Cross & Livingstone, 1997; Ware, 1997).

15 Or Kush in some Bibles.
understood in terms of Isaiah 18:7, where fighters from Cush fought those against Israel, and the prophecy of Psalm 68: 31, which foretold of the Sudanese conversion to Christianity.

Daniel 3 is another key text for the Sudanese, with LeMarquand (2006) stating that selected Bible texts are a way of managing suffering. LeMarquand states that the oral-tradition Southerners have created several songs and stories which tell how they have been put in ‘fire’ – the long civil war with the northern Muslims. As well, southerners, forced to flee their homes, identify with Old Testament stories such as: the Jewish Exodus to Egypt, the wandering in the desert and the suffering under a Pharaoh. Most southern Sudanese believe that God is leading them as His chosen people to battle with the northern Muslims and to final liberation. Therefore the civil war is seen as a test by the southern Sudanese of their Christianity, and so they are not to lose faith. Unlike their fickle clan ancestors, the author states, southerners venerate a cross (often large),16 which represents God who suffers with them, and which is carried everywhere. Thus, in southern Sudan the Bible has become a tool of resistance to oppression; southern Sudanese have died, but God was not defeated.

2.3 Religion, Religious Rituals, Religious Experience and Coping

Refugees have reported that religion assisted them in coping with the refugee experience. What does the literature tell us about religion and coping? Aldwin (2007) and Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) give recent overviews of coping theory in general. The seminal text, The Psychology of Religion and Coping, is by Pargament (1997) who analyses numerous studies. In the last decade there has been a sharp increase in research on coping and religion (Pargament, Ano & Wachholtz, 2005).

The definition by Pargament (1997) is well accepted: coping is a search for significance at a time of stress and a process that involves an encounter between an individual and a situation which is multi-dimensional, multi-layered and contextual, and involves

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16 The researcher has observed in the course of her work with refugees that some young men on initial arrival have worn large crosses around their necks; such crosses are not to be seen as fashion statements.
possibilities and choices. Pargament (1997) and others (Pargament, Ano et al. (2005); Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger & Gorsuch, 2003) talk of ‘an orientation system’ as a way of viewing the world which consists of values, relationships, habits, generalised beliefs and personality, and further this general system influences religious coping and affects coping. Further, Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) and Aldwin (2007) state that religious coping and meaning-making (previously examined) have emerged as new developments in the coping field, with Aldwin adding that it is now understood that an individual’s coping can entail the possibility of the transcendent.

Pargament (1997) speaks of three distinct religious coping methods: (i) the self-directing approach – people rely on God-given resources for coping; (ii) the deferring approach – people passively defer responsibility to God to solve the problem; and (iii) the collaborative approach – people work together with God (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Klassen, Mc Donnald & James, 2007; Pargament, 1997). Over the years, Pargament and his colleagues have produced several scales using the three approaches for understanding religious coping (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Klassen et al., 2007); for example, the RCOPE, a religious coping scale and, more recently, the Hindu Coping Scale.

Pargament (2005) states religious coping can be both helpful and harmful, with a number of generally accepted understandings emerging. In difficult situations, religious coping is more helpful to the more religious. Park (2005b) agrees with the last finding, adding that after a stressful event the more religious initially have a disruption to their meaning system. However, in the long term this does not affect wellbeing. In difficult situations an individual is more likely to make events fit with religious beliefs, even at the expense of logic (Park 2005b). For example, Paloutzian (2005) mentions how opposing information which causes a person to doubt can have two outcomes: a decrease or increase in belief. Aldwin (2007) found religious coping is one of the best predictors of stress-related growth. Park (2005b) suggests that the more religious have more growth, and situational appraisals are linked to peoples’ global beliefs and goals with meaning-making attempts to see an event in a better light. On the other hand, Pargament et al.’s (2005) overview of
coping suggests Ano and Vasconcelles’ (2005) meta-analysis assists in understanding negative religious coping strategies.

Their overview also suggested that although not yet comprehensive for all cultures, there are five key religious coping functions – meaning, mastery, control, comfort and closeness to God – many of which Aldwin (2007) mentions. In their recent extensive review of the literature on religion, spirituality and coping, Klassen et al. (2007) calls the coping functions promising. Klassen et al.’s review details differences between countries, cultures and religions. For example, individual coping studies found:

- Regarding breast cancer, religious Hispanic Catholic women had more distress than Hispanic Evangelical women (Alferi, Culver, Carver, Arena & Antoni, 1999).
- Catholics had more negative coping strategies, such as pleading to God, and religious discontent than Protestants (Osborne & Vandenberg, 2003).
- Koreans appraised losses as something to be accepted, whereas Westerners protested. Koreans and Filipinos scored higher on distancing and escape avoidance scales as a way of coping than Westerners (Bjorck, Cuthbertson, Thurman & Lee, 2001).

Some research is relevant to the refugee groups being studied. A study on Iranian, presumably Shi’ite, war veterans found the concept of God’s will, religious practices and other factors assisted their mental health (Aflakseir & Coleman, 2009). Some Sudanese refugees were also assisted in several ways by believing their fates were in God’s hands, their religious practices and cognitive reframing either normalising the experience or developing inner strength and other approaches (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer & Greenslade, 2009). Other related research includes Safdar et al. (2009). Their research on proactive religious coping of some 180 North American and United Kingdom (UK) practising Christians and Muslims found Muslims score higher than Christians on social cynicism, religiosity and fate control.
Recent cross-religions research on personality, hope and religious coping is of interest. Rioli, Savicki and Cepani (2002) found that Kosovo Albanian refugees residing in both the USA and Albania had developed resilience related to personal attributes; namely, a mixture of high optimism learned early in life, openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion and controlled coping (proactive, taking charge). Ai et al. (2003) found Kosovo and Bosnian Muslim refugees also demonstrated optimism related to positive religious coping, which was correlated to higher education and increased religiosity. Hope was positively associated with education, and negatively associated with negative religious coping strategies predicted more severe trauma.

The issue of emotion and coping was raised in Folkman and Moskowitz’s (2004) review, finding it integral to the coping process. Emmons (2005) gives an overview of the religious aspect of the topic which Silberman (2005a) mostly agrees with. The findings were that religion influences the meaning attached to a situation and influences emotional responses; that is, hope, awe and gratitude and, as well, it prescribes the level of intensity of emotions with different religious groups stressing different emotions. For example, the contemplative traditions stress the calming of passion, whereas the charismatic movement cultivates intense positive emotions. In addition, sacred emotions are more often experienced by religious or spiritual people and are described as emotions more likely to occur in religious settings (such as in places of worship) than in non-religious settings, or emotions which emerge as a consequence of, for example, religious practices. Also, similar emotions are experienced by others in their particular religious tradition, with secular events being experienced through the lens of religious significance. Finally, Emmons states that there has been some research into religion and mal-adaption, but little into religion and positive emotions.

Other frameworks stress the importance of religion at various stages of life – for example, adolescence, old age and difficult times. Spilka et al. (2003) state that religion assists the less powerful in society. This is of relevance to this research (Paloutzian & Park, 2005a; Spilka et al., 2003).
To conclude, several authors state religious coping research is still in its infancy. More research is needed on: longitudinal outcomes, negative appraisals, coping either across religions or groups within a religion, the effect of such coping and the efficacy of religious versus secular coping (Klassen et al., 2007; Pargament, Ano et al., 2005; Park, 2005b), and how cultural and/or religious beliefs interact with coping (Tweed & Conway, 2006).

### 2.3.1 Religious Rituals and Coping

Religious rituals, prayer in particular, have been reported as significant to refugees. As with previous literature, it is mainly from Christian studies. Spilka (2005) describes rituals as: prescribed forms of behaviours, which include some rigidly patterned, often repetitive and formulaic, behaviours used in specific situations. Erickson and others state that ritual behaviours assist people by creating a sense of safety (Spilka, 2005); they do this by channelling emotions (Pargament, 1997) that reduce mental disturbance, as well as helping adaptation and coping.

Studies refer to prayer in general, stating that it is the most often-performed practice of religiosity (Spilka, 2005; Spilka et al., 2003). Aldwin (2007) states that the use of prayer in coping is complex. There are various classifications of prayer, with Spilka et al. (2003) summarising them as: meditation, confessional, petitionary, ritualistic, intercessionary, self-improvement, habitual and thanksgiving. Yet there is little research on how effective different types of prayer are (Pargament, Ano et al., 2005; Spilka et al., 2003). Some researchers suggest that in virtually all faiths a ‘mature’ faith asks for God’s will to be done (Spilka, 2005). Conversely, recent research (Ai, Tice, Huang, Rodgers & Bolling, 2008) across religions found a petitionary prayer style, meaning the asking of recovery from surgery mediated through optimism, had more positive health outcomes when compared with a conversational-style prayer approach, meaning dialogue with God.

Of relevance to this cross-cultural research are several other recent findings. Regarding meditation it is agreed that the practice reduces stress; however, the impact of confession is unclear (Pargament, Ano et al., 2005). A small-scale study of Sudanese Christian
refugees suggested that praying to God was one of several factors which assisted them in managing their unhappiness and loneliness in Australia (Schweitzer, Greenslade & Kagee, 2007). Regarding Muslim prayer, only a brief examination was made in Fontana (2003) and followed by a statement that for both the theist and non-theist religions (that is, Buddhism) prayer is important. Finally, Wernik (2009) briefly mentions the cross-religious history and use of prayer beads by Muslims, Orthodox, Roman Catholics (see Dublin, 1987).

In conclusion, core texts relating to the psychology of religion and related studies do not adequately examine non-Western Christian rituals, such as the anointing of the sick for Eastern Orthodox (Young, 2000), or the dark side of rituals, such as obsessive rituals that have the potential to take over one’s life (Spilka, 2005). Thus, more research is needed on the effect of different prayer or ritual styles across religions or within a religion.

2.3.2 Religious Experiences and Mysticism

Refugees can report having mystical experiences. Several chapters are devoted to mysticism in the core psychology of religion texts (Fontana, 2003; Hood, 2005; Spilka et al., 2003; Wulff, 1997) with Spilka et al. (2003) presenting a comprehensive overview and Smart (1996) presenting some cross-religious understandings. The authors also outline three main approaches towards mysticism found in the social sciences: mistaken ascription (Freud), heightened awareness (James) and evolved consciousness; however, Hood (2005) only mentions the latter two, dismissing the Freudian approach.

Regarding mystical experiences, the various authors give several words and concepts, and they report numerous scales developed to measure the various facets of the mystical dimension, including one for Iranians, not stated but presumably Shi’ite Muslims (Hood et al., 2001; Spilka et al., 2003). Researchers often classify mystical experiences as (i) numinous, with a sense of presence, thus allowing the experience of the Holy Other God or Allah; and (ii) the transcendent, a mystical sense of union with God (Hood, 2005; Hood et al., 2001; Spilka et al., 2003), which Spilka et al. state can be numinous as well. Spilka et al. offer a practical way of understanding mystical experience: by firstly stating
that the mystical tends to be impersonal and the numinous more personal; and secondly, by suggesting that religious ritual and myth are interwoven in three ways:

- the supernatural is brought into this world
- the Divine is called on to help
- the experimental is where divine power comes to an individual (Spilka, 2005).

Spilka et al. (2003) further state that the triggers for mystical experience can be: significant life events, church attendance, prayer, nature and other triggers. Cultural factors can affect the religious experience (Fontana, 2003; Hood, 2005; Spilka et al., 2003); for example, language shaping and naming religious or spiritual experiences, the linguistic richness of reports and, if an image is illusionary or not, it depends on the culture in which the experience is embedded. Of final relevance is Exline and Rose’s (2005) review of spiritual struggles, which examines some of the literature on the issues of possession and diabolic attributions in both Muslim and Christian worlds. No study was found examining the refugee experience in terms of mysticism.

2.4. Conversion, Shifting Religiosity and Attitudes to ‘Others’

Religious conversion, shifts to religious fundamentalism and other religious shifts have been noted in refugee lives. Therefore this section will briefly examine religious conversion and deconversion, then fundamentalism and shifts to fundamentalism with an exploration of prejudice and personality to follow. It concludes with an examination of patterns in religious attitudes to ‘others’ that, although not mentioned in refugee studies, has become an area of exploration in this study. Again, this section is examined through an analysis of core texts in the domain of the psychology of religion and some religio/sociological texts.

2.4.1 Religious Conversion

Religious conversion was one of the first psychological areas of study at the end of the nineteenth century – during the infancy of formal psychology (Paloutzian, 2005; Spilka et al., 2003). Initially, conversion was considered a sudden phenomenon (‘classic’
conversion paradigm). It emphasised sin and guilt, while a joyous conversion is still over-represented in the literature. Later, conversion was understood as being gradual, taking up to several years (‘contemporary’ paradigm). Early conversion frameworks combined sociological and psychological factors; later this was broadened to encompass historical, social and cultural factors (Spilka et al., 2003). Most studies, then as now, investigate conversion among North American Protestants.

Despite this, several recent frameworks are relevant. Spilka et al. (2003) suggest that conversion is associated with five common phenomena: apostasy, deconversion, intensification, switching, and cycling-disengagement and re-engagement. She suggests that these phenomena can vary over a person’s life. The second framework is Rambo’s (1993) multidisciplinary, interconnecting stage model of conversion, which combines the understandings of missionologists, anthropologists and sociologists who examine both the Western and non-Western worlds. It has a seven-stage framework: context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequences.

Paloutzian (2005) contends that conversion is a sub-section of spiritual transformation and part of a broader phenomenon relating to a person’s meaning system. He states that transformation and conversion occur because individuals confront difficult situations that require a new meaning system – old constructs are no longer sufficient for the new situation. Thus, Paloutzian (2005) appears to have extended Rambo’s category of ‘spiritual transformation’, particularly by adding individual cognitive changes that reflect what the person is committed to. He suggests that spiritual transformation manifests itself in different ways: the decrease or increase of religiosity or world view, a change to a completely new or different religion or world view, a change in some elements, and the taking of different views or purposes, yet still maintaining one religion or world view. Further, spiritual transformation can have positive and negative aspects.

Researchers largely agree on several aspects of ‘conversion’. For example, for ‘conversions’ to occur there needs to be articulated or unarticulated doubt, pressure and motivation to change (Paloutzian, 2005). Conversions, normally but not always, occur in
adolescence, with some research showing that it is not uncommon for converts to follow conversion careers, shifting from one religious group to another (Levenson et al., 2005; Spilka et al., 2003). Some aspects of personality change in conversion and others do not. Thus there is not a total change in personality, but there can be behavioural changes; that is, the ceasing of drug taking (Paloutzian, 2005). Some individuals may seek out conversion, and for such individuals behavioural changes precede their conversion (2003). On the other hand, Levenson et al. (2005) find that personality may in fact be a predictor of conversion rather than be changed by it. Despite this, research suggests that converts had more childhood emotional distress, with convincing evidence to support the claim (Emmons, 2005; Ullman, 1989). Thus, conversion or spiritual transformation causes a difference in life purposes, goals, behaviours, values and so forth (Paloutzian, 2005; Spilka et al., 2003). Several authors have called for more longitudinal studies on conversion; for example, its interaction with emotion (Emmons, 2005; Levenson et al., 2005).

2.4.2 Non-Christian Conversion, Deconversion and Apostasy

Although refugees have been known to deconvert, there is minimal psychological research on conversion and deconversion among non-Christians (Fontana, 2003; Paloutzian, 2005; Pargament, 1997; Spilka et al., 2003; Wulff, 1997). Although there are no definitive conclusions, Spilka et al. (2003) report some intra/interfaith similarities; for example, Ullman’s (1982) study found converts to Baha’i, Jewish Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Hare Krishna faiths had less positive relations with their fathers and more childhood and adolescence stress. Other research by Snow and Machalek (1984) indicates that converts to Buddhism, Pentecostal and Evangelical Christianity were brought by social networks which Rambo (1993) labels as an ‘advocate’.

One study of a religio/sociological basis is particularly relevant regarding non-Christians. Rambo’s (1993) conversion model suggests there is success in converting persons from indigenous cultures in times of crisis and in colonial settings, particularly when there is consonance with the indigenous cultures’ core values and attitudes, or when conversion is perceived to be an advantage and other consonances.
Deconversion is another area of investigation, as research shows some refugees deconvert. Three texts are of particular relevance. The first text is Spilka et al. (2003), which refer to several small deconversion studies, mostly on New Age groups in the West. These studies concentrate on the process of leaving, but not the predictors or correlates. One study comparing Hare Krishnas, fundamentalist Christians and Unification Church members found, as with conversion, that deconversion can be gradual or sudden, and is triggered by emotional or cognitive factors. Another study showed that for a few Buddhists, Hindus and charismatic Christians, alongside other studies on New Age groups, there were two causes of deconversion: dissolution with the charismatic leader and social dissolution. On the other hand, Levenson et al.’s (2005) review of religious development in adolescence and middle adulthood states that religious doubt increases with age and education, even for those of high religiosity.

The third and more pertinent text is Streib et al.’s (2009) recent cross-cultural study on deconversion. This text analyses previous deconversion studies; for example, it mentions the classifications of mono-converts, lateral-converts (Fowler, 1991) and multiple-converts. It details research findings from their study involving some 1,000 questionnaires and 180 in-depth interviews, mostly with Christians, conducted in East/West Germany and in the USA. The research methodology incorporated: personality scales, Fowler’s Adult Faith Development Stages, Streib’s Religious Schema Scale, and wellbeing and fundamentalist scales. The findings pose five deconversion trajectories: heretical exit, privatising exit (termination of formal membership, but private religion continues), integrating exit, oppositional exit and secular exit (termination of concern with religious beliefs). The authors also pose a model called Deconversion Dynamics in the Religious Field Quantified, which explains how the five trajectories interact with the:

1) un-organised segment of the religious field – classified as the unorganised religious with its spiritual actors or invisible religious actors’ scene (that is magicians or mystics)

2) organised segment of the religious field with its two sections:
a. religious organisations – tension, meaning groups that can either be oppositional or accommodating to the larger society
b. religious organisations – no tension, meaning groups that integrate into the larger society.

Several findings are relevant. For example, the secular exit is more often from the organised segments and the privatised exit from the religious organisation – tension. A cultural difference emerged. A deconversion in Germany is associated with loss or crisis, whereas in the USA it is associated with spiritual growth and autonomy. Streib et al. suggest that the broader religious field in the USA (that is, the greater range of religiosities in the USA as compared with Germany) is the reason for the difference.

In order to understand deconversion and apostasy in Islam, two non-empirical texts are relevant: Küng (2007) and Saeed and Saeed (2004). The first text states that particular historic and current attitudes are of importance; however, the second book is more accessible on current issues surrounding apostasy. Saeed and Saeed state that apostasy is a sensitive issue for Muslims, as it is connected with:

- well-resourced Christian missionary activities in poor Islamic countries
- Westernisation or what some Islamists call ‘Westoxification’
- conversion as a result of marriage or to escape an ‘intolerable’ marriage to a Muslim
- misuse of Islam by political authorities
- increased contact with other religious or political groups
- inappropriate Islamic guidance to Muslims (that is, Western youth)
- influence of human rights discourse.

Further, Saeed and Saeed (2004) state apostasy reminds Islam of its competition with Christianity, with generations of memories of Islam as a dominant power before the Crusades, European colonialism, the arrival of Christian missionaries, secularism and
‘Orientalism’. The authors add that currently Muslim thinkers have three attitudes towards apostates:

1. The pre-modern position restated: the death penalty as apostasy is prohibited and there is no obligation to recognise freedom of religion.
2. The pre-modern position revised: apostasy is considered treason with penalties prescribed according to Sharia law.
3. The pre-modern position challenged: total freedom to move to or away from Islam.

As well, there can be a fear of apostasy in the Islamic world based on fears of ‘desertion of one’s “tribe” so to speak’ (Saeed & Saeed, 2004 p. 118). Further, the mere accusation of apostasy can create a climate of fear, endanger a person, or it can be misused to justify personal acts of violence or to suppress dissent. The authors contend that Islamic scholars need a deeper examination of apostasy to consider ways and means of limiting its misuse and bringing the pre-modern apostasy laws and punishments in line with the modern period with its debate on human rights.

2.4.3 Fundamentalism and Shifts to Fundamentalism

Religious fundamentalism has touched or influenced, often in complex ways, some of the refugees in the past and during the refugee experience.

The term ‘fundamentalism’ arose from the title of pamphlets published by a conservative group of Protestants in the USA in the 1910s as a reaction to scientific modernisation and secularism (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005; Armstrong, 2001; Hood et al., 2005; Jupp, 2009b). There are three groups of Christian fundamentalists: Evangelicals, Pentecostals and ‘Born Agains’. Each group has slightly different beliefs (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005; Hood et al., 2005; Wulff, 1997), with a range of these appearing to have touched refugee lives.

There is some debate if the word fundamentalist can be transferred to Muslims (Esposito, 2003; Glasse, 2002). For example, Aly (2007) succinctly states that this transference is
inappropriate as fundamentalism is a Christian construct, a reaction to modernity and particular scientific learnings. Aly further states that Islam has experienced less conflict between faith and reason, thus, he contends minority groups such as Wahabbis,17 are profoundly untraditional and thus not fundamentalist and cannot be cured by reformation as they are the reformation. On the other hand, Aly (2007) would term such an approach as devout traditionalism, not fundamentalism.

Regardless of Aly’s (2007) and others’ (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005; Armstrong, 2001; Hood et al., 2005) objections, several authorities on fundamentalist Christians, Muslims and Jews state that they have similar beliefs: all three reject the separation of state and religion and so reject secularism. They hold dogmatic beliefs, are prejudiced towards intra/inter-religiosity and to the secular community, they are rooted in fear and in contrast to popular belief, they are not throwbacks to the past, but are a modern invention to sacralise society. Hood et al. (2005) more clearly than others state that for fundamentalists across religions, the promise of the next life informs their present life, with most fundamentalist groups believing in the afterlife and heaven and hell, with the present life being a preparation for the eternal bliss of ‘heaven’ or the eternal ‘hell’ of isolation from God. Hood et al. (2005) state that in fundamentalism there is a transcendence of death with eschatology being important for such groups. The authors suggest that this belief may explain findings by Sethi and Seligman that fundamentalists had a greater level of optimism than liberal religious groups (Hood et al., 2005; Pargament, Ano et al., 2005).

Hood et al. (2005) have proposed a way of examining the psychology of ‘fundamentalism’ across religions; the intra/inter-textual model. This model states that for fundamentalists of many religious backgrounds, religion is a primary meaning system in which fundamentalists ‘elevate the role of the sacred text to a position of supreme authority’ (Hood et al., 2005p.13) – the intra-textual model, a literalist approach. In

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17Wahhabis originated in the eighteenth century with some commentators stating from the Hanbali school. The founder was Muhammad ibn ’Abd al Wahhab. Wahhabis dominate sections of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, are strict observers of Islamic practice and are in opposition to Sufi saints and music. Wahhabis have a hard line approach to Muslims who do not observe correct practice (Esposito, 2003; Glasse, 2002; Saeed, 2006).
contrast is the inter-textual model, where no one sacred text speaks for itself. Hood et al. (2005) state that this fundamentalist intra-textual meaning system provides a unified philosophy and sense of cohesion, in that it provides a person’s need for meaning; that is, purpose, value, efficacy and self-worth.

Several studies are relevant to the subject of how people become fundamentalists. Recent psychological studies that suggest fundamentalist parents pass on these traits to their children is only partly true (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005). Other studies on psychobiology and fundamentalism have begun to raise the issue of genes and exposure to rigidity (Ellens, 2004).

As some refugee youth have joined fundamentalist groups during the refugee experience, Altemeyer and Hunsberger’s (2005) compilation of studies concluded that fundamentalist religions attract disaffected youths in times of crises, particularly those raised with no religion, with the youth being attracted by such groups’ love and sense of belonging. For some, the refugee experience is known to increase religiosity, with this interaction with fundamentalism being of final relevance. Paloutzian (2005) refers to various studies that provide indicators of an increase in religiosity as: the strength of, and elements in, the person’s meaning system, personality (that is, closed and open cognitive styles), the extent of fundamentalist mindset (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005), and the larger cultural environment (Rambo 1993) and the group context (Galanter, 1989).

Some non-psychological studies are also relevant to this complex interaction between fundamentalism and refugees. Marty and Appleby’s (1991-1995) extensive five-volume, ten-year study which examines histories and contextual frameworks for a number of ‘fundamentalist’ groups is summarised in Almond, Appleby and Sivan Cahill’s (2004) brief overview of globalisation and Christian fundamentalists is relevant, as is Zarzar’s (2009) study of new fundamentalists in Egypt, a country several refugees in this study transited through.
To conclude, there is considerable academic research on Protestant and Muslim fundamentalists, but less on other religious groups (Orthodox), with no research on exploring refugees and fundamentalism.

2.4.4 Fundamentalism and Prejudice

Refugees have been known to be prejudiced to others of different beliefs. The link between religion and prejudice has always been of interest to psychology and it was Allport’s groundbreaking research on prejudice in the 1950s and 1960s that first illuminated the connection. Since this research, several scales and measures have evolved (Spilka et al., 2003; Wulff, 1997) with Hunsberger and Jackson (2005) providing a complex yet accessible overview of the topic, including its meshing with group relations theory and current understandings on religious fundamentalism and religious meaning systems. Most studies comment that religious groups can be intolerant or prejudiced to out-groups and that religion prescribes and non-prescribes prejudice across religious communities and that prejudice can be unconscious. Despite these understandings researchers call for more research, including cross-cultural, on the topic.

Writers also call for more cross-cultural studies (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005; Spilka et al., 2003) that are relevant to refugees. Despite this, two models appear relevant to this cross-cultural research. Firstly, detailed by Spilka et al. (2003), the religious orientation of religious fundamentalism (RF) was first alluded to by William James. Later, the eminent social psychologists Altemeyer and associates confirmed the link between right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and prejudice. The authors state that most authoritarians are fundamentalist and right-wing authoritarian (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005), with various scales developed to measure this and other religious orientations (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005; Hill, 2005). For Altemeyer and Hunsberger (2005) there are two types of authoritarian personalities: (i) authoritarian leaders, social dominators who may or may not have religious leanings; and (ii) authoritarian followers, who more often are religious or RF (with few left-wing today). The authors further state that RWA is not a political stance, but a co-variation of three attitudinal clusters within an individual: authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submission and conventionalism. They summarise the RWA
character and backgrounds as having limited experiences, their opinions come from authorities, such people mix with like-minded people, divide the world into ‘good’ and ‘bad’, are ethnocentric, and are highly prejudiced; for example, towards homosexuals. Although not mentioned in the study above, Hunsberger, Alisat and Pratt (1996, 1994) add an additional understanding, the construct of high and low RF suggesting such types perceive and deal with religious experience in different ways, possibly due to different cognitive styles.

The second relevant model is Fontana’s (2003) classification of religious and spiritual beliefs, which extends Wulff’s (1997) recognition of two dimensions of belief inclusion of transcendence/exclusion of transcendence and the literal-symbolic. Fontana modified this into transcendence-immanence and tender-tough. In the model, Fontana plots various religious groups. In the transcendence-tough divide are Islam, Orthodox Jews, Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. On the other hand, Unitarians, Buddhists and other non-theists are classified as immanence-tender, in the sense of tolerance to other faiths. The model also makes allowance for different groups within a religion; that is, some Hindu groups fell into both categories.

2.4.5 Patterns in Religious Attitudes to the ‘Other’

Refugees in their home countries can mix with people of different beliefs. On the other hand, for some refugees mixing in the host country can be a new experience. Thus, a brief history of interfaith relations, religious issues surrounding the international human rights agenda and a model of how religious groups can relate to ‘others’ is necessary to explore in this context.

Küng, the prominent interfaith scholar, wrote an earlier noteworthy text (1986) that examines the historic relation between faiths. He states there is a famous saying of the Prophet Muhammad that all people are born into the primeval Islamic religion and afterwards their parents, or their surrounding culture, make the person a Christian, Jew or other. Historically, racial differences are not part of Islam, but racial differences have been part of the Christian world. During Christian Byzantium times, Jews had
difficulties; however, later under Muslim rulers, both Jews and Christian groups had defined rights and autonomy. However, Küng states that tolerance in Islam is not the same as currently in the West, as it does not include civil liberties. He adds that ‘tolerance prevented persecution but it did not prevent discrimination’ (1986, p. 105). Further, Muslim conversion of Christians in the past was not by ‘fire’ or ‘sword’, but by gradual attrition over hundreds of years, yet the Muslim approach to the ‘pagan’ world of African and India was at times by the ‘sword’.

Models of interfaith interaction have relevance to this research, as it gives an understanding of how a refugee’s religion and religious refugees may relate to each other. Several authors (Nielsen, 2000; Pratt, 2003) state that interfaith dialogue is a phenomenon, particularly in the latter part of the twentieth century; however, some commentators argue there had been dialogue between Muslims and Christians; for example, during the Byzantine Empire (Wingate, 1988). Even so, Lochhead (1998) states that throughout history, people’s knowledge of other religions has been a ‘product of isolation’, sociologically and not geographically determined. Lochhead (1998) constructed an accepted model of interfaith dialogue. Phillips (2003) and Pratt (2003) state that Lochhead’s model gives different mentalities or perspectives that affect interfaith dialogue with these being: the ideologies of isolation, hostility, competition or partnership. Lochhead contends that the most constructive perspective is the integrative, and it is not a search for agreement, but rather a search for understanding and sharing. Lochhead also warns that both theological and ideological dimensions of religious theology can justify social attitudes from liberalism to hostility.

Regarding attitudes of Christian and Muslim refugees to ‘the others’, two models are presented. First, Nesbitt (2003) presents Race’s (2001) three broad categories of Christians, with variations within such as:

(i) exclusivists, who believe that outside the church there is no salvation
(ii) inclusivists, who believe that Christ is working in faiths other than Christianity, but it is salvation in Christian terms
(iii) pluralists, who affirm different faiths as valid.

Second, Küng (2007), Aly (2007) and Saeed (2006) provide some classifications of Muslims internationally. Saeed’s typology is the most accessible:

(a) Secular Muslims, who see their religion as personal. They may be believers, non-believers or pious Muslims, yet they see no need for an Islamic state.
(b) Legalist traditionalists, who blindly follow pre-modern schools (before mid-nineteenth century) of Islam law and their theological teachings.
(c) Political Islamists, who are interested in following socio-political orders in the Muslim communities and wish for an Islamic state.
(d) Theological Puritans, who are concerned with correct practice and are literalists who seek to purify society of its perceived un-Islamic practises such as the veneration of saints and Sufi practices. They reject, for example, Westernisation, nationalism. Living in the land of non-believers raises difficulties. They follow recent sects such as Wahhabism.
(e) Militant Extremists, who emerged in the later part of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century, and who participate in national and international struggles; for example, the conflict in Afghanistan. They are anti-Western and concerned about the stealing of Muslim resources. Such people follow individuals such as Osama bin Laden.
(f) Progressive *ijtihadis*, which Saeed (2006, p. 157) defines as:

… the exercises of independent reasoning by a jurist [Islamic] to arrive at a solution to a legal problem; effort made by a scholar to derive a ruling on a question of law.

Saeed (2006) comments that these final groups are from a range of backgrounds and this is a trend, not a movement. Many are thinkers and activists who wish to bring change; for example, on issues of human rights and pluralism. Such a trend believes in both modernism and Islamic traditions. Such people have often shifted from modern to neo-modern, and now are progressives or can be called liberal Muslims.
2.5 Refugee Flight and Acculturation Theories\textsuperscript{18}

This section examines refugee flight, acculturation and cultural theories that can interact with a refugee’s religiosity. This section also examines acculturation in asylum and how this interacts with religion.

Kunz\textsuperscript{19} theory of refugee displacement (Kunz, 1973, 1981) is important for this thesis and is unfortunately not well known. It is based mainly on an analysis of the refugee movements of World War II, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution is of relevance to these refugees being studied. Kunz modified the simple, traditional migration model of push–pull factors to give a theory of refugee exile and resettlement.

This theory incorporates three interrelated factors (see Figure 2.1)

\textsuperscript{18} The author of this thesis would like to note the recent literature on settlement and integration available after the completion of this review. The literature is: 1) Zetter’s articles (ie 2007) on issues surrounding refugee labelling and globalisation, 2) Ager and Strange’s (2008), A conceptual framework defining core domains of [refugee and asylum seeker] integration (see and excellent summary in Valenta and Bunar (2010)) and, 3) The September 2010, special edition of the Journal of Refugee Studies, on issues surrounding critical reflections on refugee integration. It should be noted that this literature does not allude, in any major way, to the themes of this research nor does it alter the research findings.’

\textsuperscript{19} He was a Hungarian refugee who worked for many years at the Australian National University.
Figure 2.1 Kunz’ Refugee Flight Theory

**HOME RELATED FACTORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification marginality</th>
<th>Attitude to displacement</th>
<th>Ideological -nationalist orientation abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority identified</td>
<td>Restoration activists</td>
<td>The passive hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive fate-groups</td>
<td>Integration seeking realists</td>
<td>Eager assimilationists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events alienated</td>
<td>Purpose groups</td>
<td>Self alienated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISPLACEMENT RELATED FACTORS**

Anticipatory movement

`push`  →  `permit`

**Acute movements:**

- **Vintage ‘A’**
  - E.g. Mass Flight

- **Vintage ‘B’**
  - E.g. Deportation

- **Vintage ‘C’**
  - E.g. Mass Flight

- **Vintage ‘D’**
  - E.g. Deportation

- **Vintage ‘E’**
  - E.g. Army in flight

- **Vintage ‘F’**
  - E.g. P.O.W’s

- **Vintage ‘G’**
  - E.g. P.O.W’s

- **Vintage ‘H’**
  - E.g. Group Escapes

- **Vintage ‘I’**
  - E.g. Group Escapes

**HOST RELATED FACTORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural compatibility</th>
<th>Population policies</th>
<th>Social receptiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close</td>
<td>Augmentative</td>
<td>Monistic (assimilationist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augmentative</td>
<td>Monistic (integrationist)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant</td>
<td>Self-sufficient</td>
<td>Tolerant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Home-related factors have three elements:

- ‘identification marginality’, which refers to the refugees’ attitudes to their home country with three types: majority identified, event alienated and self-alienated
- ‘attitude to displacement’, which has two sub-groups: reactive fate groups and purpose groups
- ‘ideological-nationalist orientation abroad’, which has six sub-elements in the form of a typology: (i) restoration activists, (ii) the passive hurt, (iii) integration-seeking realists, (iv) eager assimilationists, (v) revolutionary activists and (vi) founders of idealist colonies.

2 Displacement-related factors have three elements:

- ‘anticipatory refugee movement’
- ‘acute refugee movement’
- ‘intermediate situations’

The anticipatory movement refers to those who escape before the country dissolves into conflict and chaos – these ‘refugees’ can easily be confused with immigrants in host countries. The acute movement arises from the political crises or military interventions. Kunz identifies various refugee movements. These comprise different forms of initial displacement for example: 1) by flight comprising mass flight and group or individual escape 2) by force of discipline (for example, an army in flight, prisoner-of-war forced labour, banishment and civilian evacuees) and, 3) by absence, delegation and those out of the country at the time of civil unrest. The goal of these acute movements is to reach safety with the three responses to their asylum situation being: (i) to take the risk and leave the place of asylum, (ii) to stay in the camps or (iii) to return home. The third element is the ‘intermediate situation’ when an asylum situation becomes acute, as the country of asylum comes under pressure.
This theory also gives some predictable demographic characteristics relating to these initial forms of displacement. It predicts the age, sex and educational backgrounds of the refugees. For example, anticipatory refugees are often family groups, well educated and politically savvy.

3 Host country-related factors have three elements:

- ‘cultural compatibility’ from close to distant to the host society; for example, closeness or distance to host country of language, values, religion, food, interpersonal relations and so on
- ‘population policies’, which are either augmentative or self-sufficient
- ‘social responsiveness’ monistic-assimilationist, pluralist-integrationist or sanctuary societies-tolerant.

This theory has a predictive hypothesis, which constructs typologies of refugee settlement in host countries. Kunz states that there are ‘vintage-wave patterns’ of acute or anticipatory refugees; for example, a vintage’s date and reason for departure is significant. The acute movements have various vintages that can make up a wave of refugees. Kunz states that different vintages may have different attitudes, backgrounds and circumstances, and therefore may settle, and relate differently to each other, in the host country. For example, ‘event-alienated’ refugees who arrive as ‘anticipatory’ refugees are well-educated, well-to-do and settle well. The ‘majority identified’, ‘reactive fate’ groups suffer shock, particularly if the host country is assimilationist or has an alien tradition with the young assimilating, and with the more educated resisting. The ‘revolutionary activists’ will not be focused on settlement in a host country, but want to reverse the existing situation in the home country.

Religion is relevant to the notion of refugee vintages/waves. Al Rasheed’s (1994) study of Iraqi refugees in London found that the Christian Assyrians, whose forefathers had assisted the British colonial administrators, did not aspire to return home and so viewed themselves as settlers. Conversely, Arabs, inferring Muslim Iraqis, aspired to the ‘myth
of return’, the ‘ideological-nationalist orientation’. They viewed themselves as ‘guests’ and were waiting to return when ‘normalcy’ would return to the home country.

Viviani (1996), writing on Vietnamese refugees to Australia, describes four broad waves from 1975 to the final wave of 1995 from those of the Hong Kong and Indonesian camps. Regarding religiosity by inference, the first wave was more Catholic, and the third wave comprised ethnic Chinese business class members (thus less Catholic). Although Daw (1994) does not directly write on Kunz’s theory, her data states that the North Vietnamese Catholic ‘vintage’, cut off from the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, had a more communal approach towards keeping the village aspects of religion, whereas Southern Vietnamese Catholic vintages were more open to alternative approaches. Cahill et al.’s (2004) writing on religious leadership and hostility diffusion in Australia state that the most numerous refugees are the ‘passive hurt’ if led by integration-seeking realists; eager assimilationists adapt, if not assimilate, into Australia. However, the religious leaders’ task is made more difficult if ‘revolutionary activists’ whip up or involve the ‘passive hurt’ in activities to overthrow their home country regime, thereby ignoring host country communal settlement issues.

In conclusion, although there are some useful texts that use the theory there is no updating of Kunz’s thirty-year-old refugee flight theory. For example, the theory gives minimal reference to the varying situations and the places of asylum, yet refugees are known to be affected by transit country experience. The theory accepts religion as a cultural compatibility factor, yet there is no examination of how this can effect settlement.

2.5.1 Acculturation Theories

As refugees come from many countries to settle in Australia, acculturation theory is relevant to this cross-cultural research. Sam (Sam and Berry 2006, p. 11), in the introduction to *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, states that acculturation ‘covers all the changes that arise following “contact” between individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds’. The actual term of acculturation comes
from anthropology and studies in ‘primitive’ societies. However, acculturation research does not examine religion; rather, it incorporates it into culture (Allen, Vaage & Hauff, 2006; Berry, 2006b; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001).

Masgoret and Ward (2006) state that there are three main approaches to acculturation theory initially proposed by Ward et al. (2001): the stress/coping approach (Berry, 2006c), the cultural learning approach (Masgoret & Ward, 2006) and the social identification approach (Liebkind, 2006). In addition, the editors of the Cambridge Handbook of the Psychology of Acculturation, Sam and Berry (2006), link approaches to two psychological concepts:

- personality, such factors as self-monitoring, self-orientation, extroversion, the need for cognitive closure, locus of control (fate) and other personality factors (Oppedal, 2006)
- development, such as cultural competence (Kosic, 2006).

Berry’s (2006a) clear diagram of the three approaches to the conceptualisation of psychological difficulties during acculturation – behavioural shifts, acculturation stress and psychopathology – is of relevance. In particular, how these three approaches interact with what he labels as the five main events over time appear relevant to this multi-faceted study with the five elements being: 1) acculturation experience: life events, 2) appraisal of experience: stressor, 3) strategies used: coping, 4) immediate effects: stress and 5) long-term outcomes: adaptation (see Figure 2.2).
Figure 2.2 Berry’s: Three Approaches to Conceptualizing Psychological Difficulties during Acculturation

Several cultural frameworks are relevant for refugees and host countries. Berry (2006a) states that societies differ in a number of ways, referring to the cultural dimensions as:

- diversity – levels of variation within the society
- equality – in term of status and rewards, including the rigidity of religious hierarchies
- conformity – systems of norms and obligation, and conversely, freedom to do as one pleases
- wealth – money, possessions and the distribution of such
- space – the use of space and orientation within it

Earlier authors (Gudykunst, 1998; Hofstede, 1991; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997), using a cultural learning approach (Masgoret & Ward, 2006), mention most of these concepts. Other additional understandings are the pace of life and cultural distance (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). Researchers generally agree that the greater the difference in cultural distance, the greater the acculturation difficulties (Berry, 2006b; Masgoret & Ward, 2006; Ward et al., 2001).

Berry suggests that there are four main ways ethno-cultural groups acculturate into host societies: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation (Berry, 2006b; Sam, 2006). Of relevance to the religious investigation of this study are Berry’s findings, which state that most non-dominant groups seek out goals of equity and diversity – most immigrants wish for integration. According to some research there are exceptions – the Turks in Canada and Germany who prefer separation (Berry, 2006b). Second, research by Georgas, van de Vijver and Berry (2004) suggest there is a relationship between eco-social indicators, religion and affluence across different nations. The study suggests that indicators of wealth comprise individualism, utilitarian commitment and wellbeing. For example, Protestants in the USA, Finland and Denmark privilege such factors and have higher affluence. In contrast, for example, Muslim countries and Roman Catholic
countries privilege higher interpersonal power – hierarchy and loyalty have lower affluence.

Three frameworks specifically relate to the refugee experience. The first is Berry’s (1991) six phases of refugee acculturation, with some of the effects being:

- pre-departure violence
- flight – loss of attachments, wealth and material possessions
- first asylum – length of time, health issues, safety, relations with locals
- claimant period – waiting or turned away
- host country settlement policies.

The second framework is the ‘Migration Contingencies and Acculturation’ refugee model, developed from the work of Berry, Beiser and Liebkind (Liebkind, 1996), and uses the stress/coping approach (see Figure 2.3).
Figure 2.3: A Model of Migration Contingencies and Acculturative Stress (NOTE. Modified from Figure 4 in Berry (1992) and Figure 3 in Besier (1991))

The refugee model is divided into four sequential intersecting elements. The first relates to the ‘socio-demographic characteristics’ of refugees. The second element has three parts: 1) ‘pre-migration experiences’, 2) ‘social context in the host country’ and 3) ‘post-migration experiences’. The third element is ‘acculturation attitudes and degree of acculturation’, meaning how a refugee chooses to relate to the host country. For example, Liebkind’s research (1996) of Vietnamese refugees in Finland shows that the worst response with regard to acculturation is marginality, and contends that only a balanced positive orientation to their minority culture and the majority culture generates the most successful psychological outcomes in the host country. The fourth and final element is ‘acculturation stressors’; namely, lowered self-esteem, anxiety/depression and psychosomatic symptoms.

The third framework for refugee acculturation is Allen et al.’s (2006) proposed preliminary model, which is divided into two overarching sections: cultural/group level and psychological/individual level (see Figure 2.4).
Figure 2.4 A Preliminary Framework for Understanding Refugee Acculturation within an Integration Human Rights Conceptual Framework: Cultural and Psychological Levels (adapted from Berry, 2003) Note. From ‘Refugees and asylum seekers in societies’ Allen, J Baslier, Vaage, B, and Hauff E. The Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology p. 205 Cambridge University Press. 2006
Within the cultural and group level there are five connecting parts which affect contact: 1) for the refugee: the culture of the refugee group and, 2) human rights violations; 3) for the host country: the culture of the receiving country, 4) resettlement policies and; 5) cultural changes that occur as a result of acculturation contact between the receiving country and refugee group culture. Within the psychological/individual section there are three parts. The first comprises individual characteristics of the refugee, with the component parts being: human rights violations experience, development factors, services and social support, and personality characteristics; for example: temperament, coping strategies. The second and third parts are relevant to host countries and refugee groupings, psychological acculturation, and adaptation of both groups and individual.

Allen et al. (2009) and Liebkind’s (1996) models have many similarities relating to gender and age differences, and how host government policies all affect settlement. On the other hand, Allen et al.’s model with its human rights perspective does not appear to engage in a few of the more complex factors mentioned in Liebkind’s model: acculturation attitudes of the refugees, for example, adaptation or rejection of the majority host country culture, maintenance or rejection of one’s own culture, or maintenance of or change in refugees’ ethnic identity. This difference between models is possibly due to Allen et al. being affected by the current international issue of stateless asylum seekers, whereas Liebkind’s model relates to refugees who obtained permanent settlement in Western host counties. Finally, with regard to religion, it should be noted there is no reference to religion as a separate entity; rather it is incorporated into the concept of culture.

Regarding research studies, Allan et al. (2009) suggest that there have been inconsistencies in the findings due to methodological issues with regard to acculturation in general and refugees in particular. Thus, the authors propose some refugee areas that need investigation, such as:

- the effect of pre- and post-migration experiences on acculturation
- the effect of refugee acculturation as multi-dimensional and dynamic
• the effect of breadth of divergent refugee experiences in asylum and in host countries.

2.5.2 Patterns in Asylum Situations and Acculturation Theory

In order to understand the refugee experience, an understanding of the variety of asylum situations including internally displaced refugees (IDP) prior to arrival in Australia is pertinent. Although Berry’s (2006b) four stages are applicable, Dona et al.’s (2006) review of refugee acculturation states there has been little research on short-term acculturation in non-Western societies, such as when a refugee lives in a camp or settlement. Further analysis suggests there is even less on how religious acculturation in the place of asylum affects refugee settlement in a host country.

Schmidt’s (2003) research guide for the Oxford Refugee Centre gives an overview of various situations and several typologies of the varying asylum situations: 1) camps, 2) planned settlements and 3) spontaneous refugee self-settlement. Most refugee host countries prefer to manage refugees in camps or in planned settlements (Jacobsen, 2001), with Jacobson’s five parameters of a refugee camp or settlement – size or density, freedom of movement, mode of assistance/economics, mode of governance and designation – appearing to be generally accepted (Schmidt, 2003).

Regarding the social, political and aid context of refugee camps, Jacobson (2001) states that extended family members, the elderly, women and children frequently live in the camp where they can have access to assistance, whereas the others, usually the males, self-settle themselves in order to obtain work. Thus, people move in and out of camps. Further, a substantial amount of literature states that refugee camps, even in some instances those that are UNHCR managed, can be unsafe, as they can have direct armed attacks, or non-military threats by locals or the host country, violence between refugees and violent crimes. Also, the international political situation can affect how aid is used in refugee camps; for example, after the end of the Cold War and the 1989 military coup in the Sudan, US food aid to refugees in Sudan was reduced (Arafat, 2003). This resulted in voluntary repatriation and the movement of refugees to urban centres where exploitation
and harassment occurred (Bagenda & Hovil, 2003). Another recent study (Kibreab, 2004) and a response article (Harrell-Bond, 2004) have begun to explore the moral, yet not discussed, issue of refugees ‘cheating’ with regard to the receiving of international aid. Finally, Schmidt (2003) mentions there has been and still is considerable debate (Black, 1998; Crisp & Jacobsen, 1998; Harrell-Bond, 1998) regarding the best settlement situation for refugees in the short and long term.

Jacobsen (2001) states there is little research into the area of self-settlement, when compared with refugee camps, even though many millions live in self-settlement (Ghazaleh, 2003). Of relevance is Ghazaleh (2003) on the difficulties faced by Sudanese in the slum ‘settlements’ in Cairo. Such difficulties include scapegoating, harassment and the occasional murder, as they were highly visible [by colour] and more educated than the Egyptians.

Finally, unlike refugees, IDPs have no organised international body to provide assistance or protection (Schmidt, 2003). Muecke (1992) mentions that the needs of IDPs are hidden from Westerners and few studies have examined this area. Recent reports have changed this; for example, a Forced Migration Review Supplement (Refugee Studies Centre, 2005) and other reports (Fawcett & Tanner, 2002), including on the UNHCR website.

Dona and Ackermann (2006) state that the location and setting (camp/settlement/self-settlement) of a refugee in the country of asylum has been found to affect acculturation. Asylum host country policies of forced segregation, the degree of access in and out of the camps, informal contacts and attitudes of refugees to host countries or vice versa and other factors are known to affect acculturation. Further, aid workers, often of the asylum host country background, play a significant role in the acculturation process.

This analysis suggests there is little known of religious acculturation in the place of asylum and how or if this effects refugee settlement in a host country.
2.6 Refugees and their Religiosity in Transit Countries

This section examines the scattered literature on religion in the various transit countries where refugees reside prior to arrival in a host country. Thus, it covers various areas known to touch refugees’ lives in asylum: religious activities, conversion and religious switching, religious attitudes to others, and the interaction between welfare and religion.

2.6.1 Religious Activities in Transit

The available, if slight, literature shows several trends. First, various refugee groups since World War II have established religious communities, places of worship and religious education programs in transit situations. This is shown in studies of the Latvians (Sīkālns, 1988) in western Germany after World War II, Vietnamese, Khmer and Lao Buddhists and Christians (Dorais, 2007; Raper, 1988; Van Esterik, 2003).

Several studies have given differing reasons for the reported rise in religiosity in refugee camps. Some studies indicate that these religious activities were triggered by a lack of other activities and boredom (Dorais, 2007; Sīkālns, 1988; Sunjic, 2004), or due to a way of being resettled in the West (Sunjic, 2004; Van Esterik, 2003), or regardless of religious affiliation for the Vietnamese in camps (Dorais, 2007). Raper (1988) has also suggested that lively church activities helped resilience, although he later questioned this.

Little refugee research can be found on Muslim religiosity when in asylum; however, Ayaan Hirisi Ali in her biography (2007) details the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in camps and when living as self-settled refugees in Kenya (as well as in Somalia). In Kenya, the Brotherhood conducted madrasas and cassette ministries, and lent Islamic books.

Religious leadership is an area for exploration in this study, thus issues of leadership in the place of asylum are relevant. Again there appear to be few studies with minimal detail. Studies of Indo-Chinese refugees showed some religious communities were led by religious leaders who were themselves refugees, others were supported by overseas Christians (Dorais, 2007; Raper, 1988; Van Esterik, 2003). Regarding how the religious
leadership lived, Van Esterik comments that Vietnamese Catholic priests in one camp lived ‘like kings’ and were strict, while ordaining Buddhist monks was difficult in camps, as in transit such ordinations may not have been legally binding. Some UNHCR reports on more recent refugee groups on peace education (Sommers, 2001a) and the administration of justice in refugee camps (da Costa, 2006) have minor references to religious/ethnic leadership. On the other hand, Sunjic (2004), employed by the UNCHR in Southern Africa, writes of money making by self-appointed religious prophets.

### 2.6.2 Conversion and Denominational Switching

Religious conversion and denominational switching is a topic worth exploration. Over the last 50 years in the various types of asylum situations, for various refugee flows, conversion of refugees to Christianity has occurred. Several reasons for conversion were given by most authors (Dorais, 2007; Ong, 2003; Silkalns, 1988; Van Esterik, 2003): to gain welfare assistance in the camps from overseas Christians and to increase the chance of resettlement. For example, Dorais found Evangelical Christians promised to hasten resettlement, and this particularly appealed to young unmarried Vietnamese males without family in the camp. On the other hand, for some Indo-Chinese Christian converts this did not mean a total rejection of Buddhism, as some continued to practise aspects of their original faith (Ngaosoyvathn, 1993; Van Esterik, 2003).

Some studies showed more complex reasons for conversion. Van Esterik states that conversion to Christianity by Lao Animists was a way of neutralising attacks by ‘bad’ cultural spirits; as well it could be an expression of gratitude to the Christian workers as Indo-Chinese camps were dependent on volunteer Christian NGOs. For example, in one Indo-Chinese camp, other than UNHCR and Red Cross, there were 22 Christian NGOs and only one Buddhist group, yet many of the refugees were Buddhist. Van Esterik states that this dependency was difficult to interpret, as both service providers and refugees were reluctant to discuss it. Another study, Akcapar’s (2006) on conversions of Iranian Shi’ites in Turkey, found that although conversion was initially used as a tool for migration to the West, later Iranians who had been in transit for a long time became believers in Christianity. Akcapar postulates that Christianity symbolised the West,
modernity and prosperity. For some Iranians, being ‘born again’ offered a cleansed identity, a way of breaking away from the past, yet keeping family values. Regarding Africans, Sunjic (2004) states that Christianity is sweeping across Africa in general, and is not stopping at the refugee camps; for example, in one Mozambique camp there were thirty to forty churches for the 5000 Congolese inhabitants.

Regarding religious switching, Sommers (2001b) suggests some religious groups are more adaptable to the refugee situation. For example, he found Pentecostalism was more ‘portable’ for refugees than Catholicism, the previous denomination of most Burundis, as it provided better networks across boundaries and support. As well, the Pentecostals provided a positive survival network to the young refugees in an urban situation living as fugitives surrounded by ‘sin and danger’.

Regarding converts to Islam, little data could be found. Kibreab (1999) suggests that some Sudanese Christian and Eritrean refugees living in the Sudan, in order to be less identifiable as refugees, ‘switch’ to Islamic names and wear Islamic clothes in order to survive, migrate to Saudi Arabia, gain a job, or continue their political activities.

A few studies mention inter/intra-faith friction in the various transit situations. Van Esterik (2003) reports that traditional healing centres for Lao and Khmers were opposed by Christian health workers in camps, as they felt they were about ‘magic’. Regarding self-settled refugees in Cairo, Moro (2004) mentions there was little socialisation between southern Sudanese, inferring Christians, and northern Muslims; however, politicians associated across the divide. As to intra-faith relations in camps, Christian Tutsi and Hutu reportedly refused to pray together (Sunjic, 2004).

2.6.3 Religious Interaction and Welfare in Asylum

Complex relationships exist between religion and welfare. The literature shows how different religious communities, such as the Christian and Muslim, have supported or not supported their refugee community in exile; some problems existed with such support.
With regards to Christians, Danis (2005) states that the Iraqi Christian Church in Istanbul and local Christians established informal domestic work placements for female refugees in homes of the non-Muslim elite. Thus, for these unemployed women their Christian networks and identity offered them leverage into this job market and protection. Moro’s (2004) research on the Sudanese in Cairo mentions assistance from a Sudanese NGO consisting of northern intellectuals, a Sudanese human rights group. However, most support came from Anglicans, the Roman Catholic Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church and Presbyterians. These groups have health services, schools and social activities. Some refugee researchers used such churches to access refugees (Briant & Kennedy, 2004; Coker, 2004), with some subsequent findings implemented by refugee and church support agencies (Briant & Kennedy, 2004). Some criticisms emerged as Grant (2002) challenged Catholic relief agencies to rethink and supply more than goods, and to ‘provide language and meaning for refugees’. Some Sudanese Muslims complained that the Christian Sudanese received more assistance from Cairo church groups (Ghazaleh, 2003; Moro, 2004), thus resource allocation can be divisive for refugees (Moro, 2004).

Regarding Muslims, Hassan (2008) gives a brief background to Islamic philanthropy and details the habits of a number of Muslims from different countries. While Muzaffer (2001) states that although most of the world’s refugees in 1994 were Muslim, most economic support for refugees came from non-Muslim sources. This, he and Assal (2004) state, is paradoxical, given the Islamic principle of social justice and support for refugees. Muzaffer poses several reasons for this lack of support:

- the local autonomy of Islam results in a lack of global welfare structures
- the Qur’an does not address the resettlement of refugees
- recent transnational Islamic issues have rendered national interests more important.

Muzaffer suggests these difficulties can be overcome at an Islamic international level. In another study, the well-respected refugee researcher, Barbara Harrell-Bond, wondered why mosques did not have programs to assist Sudanese Muslims in Cairo (Ghazaleh, 2003). Ghazaleh gave several reasons: since the War on Terror, NGOs associated with
Islamic movements have had difficulties. For example, the Egyptian authorities restricted their work to poor Egyptians, not refugees.

In contrast, two authors refer to Muslim welfare to refugees. Ali (2007) states that the Muslim Brotherhood assisted with welfare activities for refugees in Kenya and, unlike other Somali groups, the Brotherhood was known to be relatively honest. However, it has a morally uncompromising view of the world. Kirmani and Khan (2008), writing on the British-based Islamic relief agency which assists refugees across the world, explore the advantages of Islamic help (for example, refugees trust Islamic groups more than secular NGOs) and disadvantages (for example, whether it is difficult for other agencies to differentiate this group from political Islamic groups). The article also details partnerships with secular and other non-Muslim faith-based groups.

Finally Sommers (2001b) wrote that there was little linking the African Christians or Muslim African groups, and the larger international humanitarian network in urban settings. He called for more study into this area with regard to youth.

### 2.7 Refugee Religiosity in the Host Country

This section examines how religion supports refugees in a host country. Firstly, it examines religion as a settlement support, and then the interaction between refugee welfare and religion. This follows with studies on religious leaders and settlement. An examination of refugees’ religiosity in Australia and other host countries is then presented. All these issues are known to impact on refugee settlement in host countries.

Literature on religion and settlement is not found in one text, but rather from four sets of sources. The first set is the few books, journal articles and theses specifically examining religion/spirituality and refugees, mostly with regard to a particular group of refugees resettling in a Western host country (Daw, 1994; Dorais, 2007; McMichael, 2002; Mella, 1994; Shoeb et al., 2007; Van Esterik, 2003). The second consists of individual studies of a particular community’s settlement in Western countries, which makes some reference to religion (Assal, 2004; Gow, 2002; Ong, 2003; Welaranta, 1993). The third set of
sources gives the sociological background of one or so refugee communities and has passing reference to religion (Batrouney, 1995; Beiser, 1999; Jupp, 2001; Viviani, 1996). The fourth source is the two edited volumes on religion and identity by Ata (1989a; Ata, 1989b); Jupp’s (2001) *The Australian People*; Jupp’s latest edited volume, *The Encyclopaedia of Religion in Australia*; and some informative summaries in the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research annotated bibliography on *Migrants and Religion* (1996). Finally, in contrast to the above sets, only scant reference to religion is made in two Australian government-funded refugee settlement studies, including on rural refugees (Brotherhood of St Laurence., 2005; Nsubuga-Kyobe & Dimock, 2002).

It is generally accepted that ethnic and religious communities play an important role in the lives of newly arrived immigrants, and by inference refugees in various host countries in the past and currently. For example, the psychological wellbeing of Vietnamese refugees in the USA was enhanced by Vietnamese community support (Tran, 1987). Beiser’s (1999) research on Canadian Indo-Chinese confirmed the critical mass theory that refugees settling in areas where their ethnic community is established have a mental health advantage. Recent research suggests Sudanese refugees in Australia also reported being assisted in forming social links, with material aid and with settlement information by their particular church (Schweitzer et al., 2007). Regarding religion, some studies by Bouma (1994; 1997) suggest religious groups assist with the immigrant (some of whom would be refugees) settlement process, and Van Esterik (2003) found churches and temples were important places; that is, for Laos and Khmer refugees. Further, some comparative US reports suggest that Somali Muslims and southern Sudanese Christians’ religious communities are important when refugees have no extended family (Shandy & Fennnelly, 2006).

A few studies mention that refugee communities can also cause difficulties. Kamalkhani (2001) mentions how issues of power emerge within refugee communities with Griffiths (2000) agreeing. His research on Turkish Kurds and Somalis showed cohesion in the first and fragmentation in the second London community. As well, Beiser (1999) states that
for the Indo-Chinese in Canada the initial positive buffer of the ethnic enclave disappeared after five years.

Several studies on religious groups and on refugees mention different factors or patterns with regard to their communal religious practice. For example, different religions have different regularity in meeting: Buddhism does not revolve around weekly congregational meetings as many Christian groups do (Adam & Hughes, 1996); for example, the Orthodox who celebrate more festivals, with Easter being important (Godley, 1996). Further, Buddhist Vietnamese have comparatively more groups than Catholics in both Canada and Melbourne (Dorais, 2007; Ngo & Cahill, 2001).

Gender differences emerged with regard to the practice of religion and other religio/cultural issues in host countries, with much literature examining Muslim, not Christian, women. For example, Bouma and Bace-Govan (2000) found greater involvement of Buddhist women in the temple, such as in leading the worship, whereas Muslim women had less involvement in the mosques. As well, some Muslim women reportedly bought houses close to the mosques to meet and worship separately from the men. Further, during Ramadan, Oromo women stayed at home while their husbands attended the mosque, with Gow (2002) adding that the men had more Islamic education than their women. Regarding gender freedom, Assal (2004) states that Somali women have less freedom than their Muslim Sudanese counterparts, yet Kamalkhani (2001) states that Somalis traditionally have more freedom than Arab Muslim women. Kamalkhani writes about distinctions between Australian Muslim women; for example, Somalis are against birth control, yet Middle Eastern Muslims are for reducing family sizes. An Iraqi woman who didn’t wear a hijab was ostracised by her community. Somali and Iraqi women are more religious than Afghans, with Somali women having home-based Qur’anic schools in Australia. The author adds that the above Muslim women, without their traditional home female support structures, were more under male control.

Religious education for children has always been important, with various immigrant and refugee communities having different methods of religious education and concerns about
their children’s religiosity in Australia (Ata, 1989a, 1989b; Jupp, 2009a). Cahill et al. (2004) and Sherington (2009) give an overview and background to religious education in Australia. For example, unlike in some countries (Minkenberg, 2007) in Australia religious education can either occur in mainstream, religious or cultural weekend schools that can be funded by the Australian government. An Australian study shows refugee parents took up a number of educational options such as, unlike in Bosnia and Somalia, state-funded Muslim schools, so some took advantage of the option (Bouma & Bace-Govan, 2000). On the other hand, Daw (1994) reports Catholic Vietnamese refugees educated their children in mainstream Catholic schools. In contrast, for Vietnamese Buddhists, religious maintenance among their children was not of major importance. For these Buddhists, Christianity and Buddhism were viewed as mutually enriching and so some sent children to Catholic schools. In contrast, the Laotians in Australia were concerned about their children moving away from Buddhism (Ngaosoyvathn, 1993), as were Somalis and Sudanese Muslims in Norway about their children moving away from Islam (Assal, 2004).

2.7.1 Welfare, Religious Leaders and Settlement

Information on the interaction between a refugee’s religion and welfare can be found in a number of texts. For example, the Catholic Vietnamese community established structures to serve their communities’ religious and welfare needs (Ngo & Cahill, 2001), as did Australian Catholic organisations and nuns (Daw, 1994). The Detroit Chaldean Catholic community, fiercely independent, had well-organised welfare and employment structures. However, in the 1970s numbers increased and it was unknown if this independence could continue (Sengstock, 1982). Australian studies by Ata (1989a; 1989b) and Jupp (2001; 2009a) often give brief accounts of how various religious groups assisted refugees. On the other hand, an international study reported church sponsorship of non-Christian Southeast Asian refugees in Canada resulted in higher levels of depression than for similar refugees sponsored by the Canadian government (Beiser, 1999). In Australia, the only in-depth study is Cox’s (1982) 30-year-old examination of religion and immigrant/refugee welfare, which still raises some relevant issues.
There is some scattered, but not in-depth research on religious leaders’ involvement with refugee settlement. Khmer and Lao monks in North America (Van Esterik, 2003), Chaldean priests (Sengstock, 1982) and Somali imams (Farah, 2007) all reportedly assisted settlement as well. Adam and Hughes (1996) state that for initial groups of Vietnamese Buddhists from camps it was vital for them to have religious leaders of their own background.

Some literature mentions that religions can have different leadership roles or education standards when compared with the host country. For example, an imam’s role is to lead the prayers, thus it is different from a Christian priest (Bouma, 1994). In contrast, Farah (2007) wished for imams to be used if there was a social conflict in Melbourne. Chaldean religious leaders were central to community settlement life, becoming quasi lawyers and social workers in the USA (Sengstock, 1982). The Vietnamese priest had more authority than Australian priests (Daw, 1994). Some Sudanese Christian leaders switched denominations in the USA, due to several religious groups having lower education requirements (Shandy, 2002).

Issues surrounding the role of religious leaders in multi-faith Western societies are raised in various studies. Saeed (2003) comments that most imams coming to Australia are ‘imported’ from overseas, can have an inability to communicate in English and they have a lack of awareness of Australian culture. Also, some mosques have a single ethnic group attending. A literature search shows that the importing of religious leaders and the associated problems is not a new phenomena (Godley, 1996; Ngaosoyvathn, 1993; Phoumirath, 2001). Cahill et al. (2004) suggest that religious leaders of immigrants, and particularly refugee communities, can play an important role in defusing hostilities and hatred in Australia. Conversely, other leaders, particularly from the Middle East communities, can be locked into past sociological stereotypical attitudes and conflicts. A Finnish study also noted this dichotomy – some Somali sheiks had a positive attitude to integration while others did not (Tilikainen, 2003).
The influence of the Internet in host countries is raised by Cahill et al.’s (2004) finding that prejudice, bigotry and skewed versions of history can be fed and spread through the Net’s use by faith communities or from schisms within. For example, Assal (2004) states that Norwegian Sudanese and Somali Muslims received fatwas and advice, often not suitable, on how to live in Norway via such technologies from overseas imams.

2.7.2 Refugees’ Religiosity in Host Countries

Several issues emerged with regard to shifts by refugees in religious practice and/or intensity, conversion or switching in a host country.

The pace of life in a Western host country and the demands of initial settlement caused a decrease in attendance at the place of worship. For example, for Chaldeans and Chileans Mella (1994) and Sengstock (1982) found that participation in weekly Mass was low, whereas participation in religious ceremonies such as baptisms, First Communion, funerals, Christmas and Easter was extremely high, at least for the first generation (Sengstock, 1982). According to Men (2002), there have been considerable consequences for US Khmers due to the lack of regular meetings at the temple, the custom in rural Cambodia. This has resulted in a breakdown in social relationships, both at community and family level, as family members hold different religious views and beliefs.

Some data from a range of communities suggest that the refugee experience mostly strengthens refugee religiosity in host countries; that is, Vietnamese refugees of various religious backgrounds in Canada (Dorais, 2007) and Vietnamese Catholics (Daw, 1994), Oromo (Gow, 2002) and Somalis (Kamalkhani, 2001) in Australia. With regard to Somalis, Tiilikainen (2003) found that in Finland women’s Islamic knowledge increased and became a way of moving towards modernity. On the other hand, Daw quotes Croucher (1989), stating that Buddhism adapts when it enters a new culture and this is

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20 This literature shows statistics for the second generation US-born children. As this is not part of the research question these figures will not be used.
seen as a virtue. Daw suggests this approach may be a reason why Buddhist belief was declining within the Vietnamese as they adapt to the Australian context.

Some of the more recent in-depth examination of the rise in religiosity is on Bosnian, mostly Muslim, refugees. These studies briefly examine how war and settlement re-intensify the various Bosnian religiosities, resulting in post-war Bosnians being more religious. One of the causes is the Arab missionary influence in Bosnia during the 1990s war (Behloul, 2007; Vujcich, 2007). Thus, a number of Bosnians (refugees) went to Switzerland with a more Arab or Wahhabist ‘purified’ or ‘neutral’ orientation towards Islam, not ‘Bosnian’ Islam. Behloul (2007) states that this led to a split in the Bosnian Muslim community based in Switzerland – between the less religious pre-war people and the post-war religious intensifiers. In Australia, Colic-Peisker (2002) states that former Yugoslavian rural people, mostly less educated, resided around Bosnian community centres in Perth, and this assisted their settlement and self-reliance. On the other hand, refugees of mixed religious marriages, mostly non-rural people, stayed away from Bosnian activities but formed networks of like-minded people. Conversely, Vujcich states post-war Bosnian Muslims who on arrival in Perth had a low level of Islamic knowledge tended to internalise values of the more conservative Australian Bosnian Muslims, whereas other post-war Bosnian Muslims with developed Islamic understandings resisted such beliefs and continued their same religiosity in Australia. He suggests that the influence of specific Bosnian institutions rather than pan-Islamic religious institutions was the cause of the less knowledgeable individuals becoming more conservative Muslims.

Several intra-faith shifts were reported. First, intra-faith shifts in religiosity have occurred in host countries over a number of years. For example, 5 to 10 per cent of newly arrived South Americans changed their religious affiliation after initial settlement in Australia (Cahill, 1986). Dorais (2007) found often that young unattached Vietnamese males converted in camps, switched away from Vietnamese congregations to neighbourhood mainstream US churches after settlement. The Nuer refugees (a southern Sudanese tribe) also changed their denominations after settlement in America (Shandy, 2002). The
second issue was experiencing different intra-faith groups in host countries. For example, Shandy (2002) states that the Nuer in America found a wider range of Christian denominations (than in the Sudan), which they can and do worship with. Daw (1994) found that on arrival in Australia the Vietnamese Catholics had to come to terms with a more diverse form of Catholicism than that which the Vietnamese had experienced in Vietnam. According to Daw, within the Vietnamese Catholic community there were two main groups of Catholics. Those from the north had more of a village tradition of Catholicism, and because of the political isolation of the north they had not been influenced by the Second Vatican Council. Then there were the southern Vietnamese Catholics who had been more involved with the South Vietnamese government and less isolated than the northerners. Thus, Vietnamese Catholics were being welcomed by a post-Vatican Two Australian Catholic community. Behloul (2007) found that different styles of Islam (that is, Pakistanis with long beards in Switzerland) were confronting to some Bosnian Muslims. Thus, these Bosnians wanted to distance themselves and become ‘unproblematic European foreigners’ for inclusion purposes. On the other hand, celebrating Muslim festivals and attendance at mosques in Norway caused a breakdown of ethnic and clan divisions within and between the Somali and Sudanese (and possibly some Sufis) (Assal, 2004). Third, in contrast to the Christian context no studies suggest Muslims changed denominations (that is, from Sufi to Shi’ite or Sunni) in host countries.

No in-depth Australian study examines the causes of conversion. However, several American and Australian studies are of relevance. Over a considerable period of time, different refugee groups have converted to mostly Christian groups in host countries. For example, some Buddhists from Laos, Vietnam (Van Esterik, 2003) and Cambodia (Ong, 2003) have converted to Christianity in North America. With regard to Australia, a small number of Buddhist Vietnamese reportedly converted to Catholicism (Daw, 1994), as did Lao Buddhists to Christianity (Ngaosoyvatthn, 1993). Regarding refugees from socialist countries, particularly pertinent to this research, Van Esterik (2003) found that socialism in the home country can affect young people’s beliefs after host country settlement. She states that young Laotians from Buddhist families educated in Pathet Lao areas never participated in Buddhist rituals, thus in the USA these young refugees either converted to
Christianity, became secularised, or internalised or privatised Buddhist practices or rejected religion. Thus, studies suggest that younger refugees, even those of non-religious backgrounds, may convert to Christianity in host countries.

North American studies on Khmers illuminate some of the complex issues involved in conversion. Men (2002) found, similar to Van Esterik (2003) that Laotian Buddhists, in refugee camps, converted to Christianity as it offered more spiritual protection than Buddhism and as gratitude to those Christians who assisted them. However, Men’s additional factors that conversion offered assimilation and advancement were new. The other study by Ong (2003) found more in-depth insights: Khmer females and Sino-Cambodians, but not rural Khmers, converted to gain social mobility in America. Further, Protestantism, more than Buddhism, offered practical ways of living in the new culture. As well, Ong details how Khmer females achieved upward mobility by marrying white Mormon males; however, young Khmer males did not convert as they disliked the discipline. Ong states the factors that caused these females who resided in inner urban America to convert were English classes, welfare assistance, numerous protected social activities and important emotional support. In addition, Mormonism was a suitable alternative to secular America as it had similar values to Buddhism: patriarchy and discipline. Although Mormonism did not respect Khmers’ traditional beliefs, it allowed a blending with Khmer Buddhism more than other religions. Further, Ong found Mormonism was spiritually appealing to Khmers in her study. For example, the Catholic model of Jesus’ suffering and death was less appealing to immigrants, as was Buddhism with its self-sacrifice and attitudes surrounding suffering. Yet, Mormonism, with its belief in victory and material success in this world, was appealing, as was the Mormon ritual of proxy baptisms. This ritual allows a convert ‘to become living substitutes for dead souls who, thus baptised, can enter heaven’ (Ong, 2003:208). Consequentially, this ritual offered Khmer Buddhists a way of uniting in heaven with all their family. Thus, this was a way of managing their grief.

Most literature on Indo-Chinese converts stated that the refugees did not totally reject their traditional beliefs in Buddhism, Animism or ancestors, but rather mixed them with
their new beliefs (Daw, 1994; Men, 2002; Ong, 2003; Van Esterik, 2003). As well, a number of these studies on Indo-Chinese refugees showed that after conversion in asylum or in the host countries some de-converted later in the host country. For example, Khmers who converted in the USA later switched back to Buddhism (Men, 2002). Several reasons were given for deconversion: the Khmer no longer felt obliged to be grateful to Christians, unlike on arrival and after a few years; a Khmer temple, monks and transnational links were established so the refugee’s Buddhist beliefs could now be supported. Regarding the Iranian Christian converts in Turkey, Akcapar (2006) calls for more research to see if their Christian religiosity continues in Western host countries.

Several studies show a refugee’s religion can frame and assist settlement in host countries. For example, Dorais (2007) found that for the whole of the journey and settlement in Canada, religion was a source of comfort and hope for Vietnamese. McMichael (2002) found Islam provided a framework of support which aided resilience during their journey into exile and then settlement in the host country. Mella (1994) found for Chileans in Sweden, whether religion was a survival strategy, an escape, a way of reflecting on suffering and so forth, without doubt it assisted with the stress of being a refugee in that country. According to Sossou et al.’s (2008) US study of a small group of Bosnian refugees, this group declared themselves as not belonging to a religious group, but reported that spirituality, defined as a belief in a higher power, dead relatives or ‘something inside’ them to assist when in difficulty, assisted their resilience in resettlement.

To conclude, several studies have found that for a number of refugees their religion or spirituality aided settlement. However, exactly how or why this occurs needs more in-depth examination.

2.8 Popular Religiosity, Trauma and Religion in Host Countries

This section examines issues surrounding refugees’ popular religiosity and then trauma and religion, mostly from the host country situation as both factors are known to effect refugee settlement.
Studies suggest that for refugees, popular religiosity has always been part of their religious frameworks, including in the host country. For example, Laotians whether Buddhist, Catholic or Christian, all believe in *phi* spirits (Ngaosoyvathn, 1993; Phoumirath, 2001) in their home country and in Australia. For Vietnamese Buddhists and Animists, traditional beliefs in spirits and ancestors were important (Daw, 1994); however, although not conclusively, Daw (1994) suggests their importance slightly lessened in Australia. For the Oromo Muslim and Christian, Gow (2002) states that their indigenous *waaga* – the divine – is influential in both Australia and the home context. For Khmers, Men (2002) states some, but not all, Khmer religio/cultural *spirits* were believed to be present in America.

Several studies detail how popular religiosity assisted Chileans, Indo-Chinese and Ethiopians in coping in host countries. Mella (1994) found that for Chilean refugees in Sweden it was of extreme importance as it provided a way to communicate with the supernatural. This religiosity emerged from the meeting of Hispano Catholicism with Chilean indigenous culture of female gods such as mother earth. For example, the Catholic Chilean immigrants (including refugees) sometimes used *manda* to access the Divine via Mary, other saints or martyrs, a promise to pay not with money, but by sacrifice or personal effort for a particular request. Gow (2002) found Oromo women’s collective rituals in Melbourne, in particular the traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony *buna qal*, a fecundity and fertility ritual, assisted in coping with ‘outside’ pressures. The rituals are accompanied by prayers, dancing and songs that relate to the cosmic indigenous Oromo world. Van Esterik (2003) states that the Buddhist community and household celebrations was one of the most therapeutic mental health strategies for Southeast Asians in the USA. The rituals were *soukhouan*21 and *kruatna*, the feeding of the Buddhist monks – again these rituals greatly assist with settlement and the binding of the community in the camps and in Canada.

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21 The Laotian ritual of *soukhouan*, which incorporates pre-Kramatic indigenous beliefs, is the core of Theravada Buddhist practice. It is described as a regular communal ritual to celebrate rights of passage, trips, military service and so forth.
In contrast some studies report religious groups, religious leaders or religious people may be resistant to popular religiosity. For example, Mella (1994) states the Catholic Church in Sweden was shocked and hostile to Chilean popular religiosity, as it was not in line with the official modern teachings. Gow found Christian pastors and imams regarded Oromo cultural rituals as ‘silly’; even so, Oromo rituals were increasing as part of the emergence of Oromo nationalism in Melbourne (Gow, 2002). For example, rituals not easily performed in Ethiopia due to politics now occur at community celebrations. These include rites of passage, naming days and welcoming ceremonies for new arrivals. As well, in Melbourne a traditional coffee ceremony reportedly finished with an Oromo blessing given for peace, strength and freedom, yet concluded with an Arabic-Islamic blessing (Gow, 2002). Finally for the Oromo, songs and traditional singers recall their past and link it to their present. Somali women’s cultural practices in Norway were seen as different to Islam, although some women resisted the change and still practised spirit rituals of *jinns* (Tilikainen, 2003), as did some Harari and Palestinian women in Toronto. As Gibb and Rothenberg (2000) state, some of the Hararian traditional cultural practices (performed across the gender and class divide) were visiting and tending shrines to the saints (of both genders), the using of the saint as an intermediary, the burning of incense to dispel the devil and evoking the protection from spirits of their ancestors. In Canada these cultural practices were seen as backward and contrary to Islam. As a result, Harari (and Palestinian) Diaspora women have embraced ‘normative’ Islamic practice at the expense of female religio/cultural practices (Gibb & Rothenberg, 2000) An example are the Hararians who traditionally wore coloured veils, but who now wear the traditional *hijab* in Toronto.

One study showed how a ritual changed in a host country due to the changed gender roles. For Khmers, Men (2002) states as part of the changed gender roles that women and not men control the finances; that a Khmer ritual normally performed to protect men was now performed on women. On the other hand, ritual offerings to ancestors during the Khmer New Year continue unchanged.
The importance of death rituals emerged in two studies. Burial rituals performed by Khmer refugees on return visits aided settlement in North America, as burying dead family members meant ghosts of the dead or *kmauit* ceased their wandering and became reborn (Welaranta, 1993). Conversely, Shoeb et al. (2007) stated that Iraqi Shi’ites aspire to be buried in *the Valley of Peace* in Najaf, as on Judgement day they would be raised up with Imam Ali (their Shi’ite founder). This may not be possible, due to their displacement to the USA. Thus, the changed burial place can be a great concern for some Shi’ite refugees.

Some studies suggest cultural festivals also assist settlement. For example, the Hmong, on arrival in Australia (Lee, 1983), were reluctant to carry out their rituals, but then became comfortable enough to carry out such rituals during their New Year, funded by the Australian government as part of its multicultural policy, which the Hmong viewed as supportive of their culture. In addition, literature suggests that the Vietnamese, Buddhist and non-Buddhist celebrate various religio/cultural festivals (Ngo & Cahill, 2001).

To conclude, although there can be some resistance, it seems clear that popular religiosity can assist settlement in host countries.

### 2.8.1 Trauma and Religion

How religion interacts with trauma is an area of investigation as its effects can clearly influence refugee settlement. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is not a new phenomenon; its recorded beginnings go back to Homer’s *Iliad* and also to World War I (Brunner, 2000; Valent, 1998). It covers many symptoms (Freer, 1993; Herman, 2001). Considerable research with regard to PTSD and refugees is summarised in Ward et al. (2001) and Nicholl and Thompson (2004).

As with PSTD, religion and mental health in this research should not be isolated from other research on wellbeing and refugees’ social circumstances. Thus, a brief overview of significant studies is pertinent. For some decades the medicalised PTSD model for refugees has been questioned, firstly by Eisenbruch (1991). He suggested that cultural
bereavement symptoms in Indo-Chinese refugees perhaps masked PTSD. Of relevance to this is Steel et al.’s (2002) longitudinal Australian research finding that for Vietnamese refugees, trauma tended to diminish with time for all but a small group of individuals who continue to need psychological support. Some research suggests refugees in host countries are more concerned about settlement issues than past trauma. Tempany (2009) suggests that some Sudanese were concerned about current family problems in host countries, which was similar to Beiser’s Canadian refugee finding that unemployment and discrimination caused more mental illness than pre-migration trauma (2006). Guerin and Guerin (2002) would agree with this, stressing that for Somalis the missing of family, difficult economic circumstances and the shock of being exposed to Western culture affect settlement (Guerin, Guerin, Diiriye & Abdi, 2004). Porter and Haslam’s (2005) socio-demographic finding suggest that refugees and IDPs who were older, more educated, female and rural, and those who had a higher pre-displacement socio-economic status, had worse post-displacement mental health outcomes. Finally, two studies mention the complex interaction between the host country welfare system and the medical model. Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003) suggest that the medicalised trauma assistance settlement model can influence refugees in Australia into accepting a passive victim role. Ong (2003) states that a few unemployed low-skilled and low-paid Khmers have used the label of PTSD as a way of securing more welfare and medical assistance during cutbacks in the Reagan era. In conclusion, Nicholl’s and Thompson’s (2004) review of refugee health suggests that there is a dearth of good studies and concludes the area is in its infancy with regard to refugees. Recently, Porter’s (2007) extension of his meta analysis (Porter & Haslam, 2005) suggests moving to a multi-disciplinary approach that meshes psychological, biological and social domains. The last, he contends, is understudied.

Over decades, various scattered studies suggest refugees’ belief systems can frame or assist refugees in managing their distress in host countries. Yet, why is there so little research in the refugee trauma area? Weaver et al.’s (2003) review of trauma research found there was little research into religion, spirituality and trauma, postulating this is

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22 Other studies are also mentioned in the section on suffering in this chapter.
due to the low rate of religious involvement of psychologists and psychiatrists. Despite this, a few trauma experts use models which incorporate spirituality, some of which are referred to also in other studies (Valent, 1998).

Scattered studies show refugees can religiously frame their refugee experience. With regard to Indo-Chinese, Taon Anh states that in Confucian Buddhist societies refugee women’s suffering, resulting from being raped on fleeing boats, was framed through traditional cultural legends where women can be offered to invaders as a gift, a sacrifice to be endured throughout life (as cited Carrington, 1994). Concerning the refugees being studied, Iraqi Christian and Muslim refugees, Shoeb et al. (2007) suggest PTSD was an inappropriate label; instead, the authors’ proposed religio/cultural idioms of distress (see previous sections above). Tempany’s (2009) review of literature on mental health and Sudanese refugees, another group being studied, also suggests the individual PTSD model may be inappropriate for the Sudanese – being collectivist they view themselves as inseparable from others. She suggests that studies have found the Sudanese can function quite adequately with PTSD symptoms. Her review found that religion, social support, stoicism, repression and other factors were important; however, more knowledge is needed on how mental health and wellbeing are conceptualised by Sudanese.

The importance of religious rituals for healing is raised by the research. Animist healing rituals assisted the reintegration of child soldiers into their home village (Honwana, 2001). Khmer ritual healing modes, altars to the dead, physical therapy and prayers assisted by a krou Khmer – a traditional healer – were of assistance (Ong, 2003), and religious rituals also assisted Kosovar refugees (Gozdziak, 2002). Guerin et al. (2006) state that mental health within the newly arrived New Zealand Somali community was assisted by regular collective religious and cultural celebrations, including the communal preparations.

Two studies found the lack of performing religious rituals for dead family members in the home country prior to flight had a negative impact on settlement. Welaranta (1993) states that for Buddhist Khmer, PTSD is magnified by the distressed way family members and
others died, the inability to care for the sick or tortured, and the lack of religious rites which enabled the Buddhist construct of the transfer of merit at the time of death. Ong’s (2003) findings appear to agree with this as American Khmers who returned to Cambodia to bury their dead were significantly emotionally assisted by this ritual.

Several studies examined how in some instances traditional or a mixture of religio/cultural traditional healing and Western therapeutic methods at times, with the assistance of elders, helped refugees at the various stages of the refugee experience or people who have been involved in war. Traditional cultural/religious proverbs and tales assisted survivors of the Rwandan massacres (Bagilshya, 2000). Dramatic narratives based on religious stories assisted Ultra Orthodox Jews, a number of whom were war veterans (Witztum & Goodman, 1999). Mehraby (2002; 2003) states that the use of bicultural counsellors, group work, reciting suras from the Qur’an, the using of Islamic stories or parables from the life of the Prophet as part of the therapeutic cognitive restructuring process was of assistance. Innovative cultural, religious and Western therapeutic measures were combined to assist Cambodians (Van De Put & Eisenbruch, 2002) and Tibetan refugees in India (Ketzer & Crescenzi, 2002). In asylum, Vouglaridou et al. (2006) found that working with Somali elders (in the forming of gatherings, support groups and the use of Islamic stories to restructure meaning) assisted the Somali refugee community.

Religious leaders’ assistance with trauma or illness in host countries is mentioned in several studies. Khmers visited traditional religious healers who performed rituals, but also prescribed herbal medicines and mediation with the spirits (Ong, 2003). Indo-Chinese refugees tell their symptoms of sadness to family members, clergy or a fortune teller rather than to a Western doctor (Beiser, 1999). Somalis were ambivalent about Western medicine, yet most felt that religious leaders and the reciting of the Qur’an medically assisted them (Bailes, 2004). In addition, military imams assisted Kosovar refugees in the USA (Gozdziak, 2002). Two non-refugee studies are also of relevance. Richard’s and Bergin’s (2000) brief detailing of how different religious leaders could possibly be used in therapy raised some other issues of relevance to refugees and religion.
For example, the Orthodox may have a relationship with a spiritual father. Weaver et al.’s (2003) review of religion, spirituality and trauma found that although religious leaders are on the front line in disasters or work with trauma survivors, there is minimal research into this area.

Comments on how Western or bi-cultural professionals assist refugees with regard to the religio/cultural management of trauma is of relevance. Bales (2004) found that Somalis’ mental health constructs are at variance to those of Australian service providers, as they were religio/cultural constructs. Conversely, Ong (2003) states that some Asian-American doctors and nurses in PTSD refugee clinics claim to be culturally sensitive, but in fact have not changed the Western medical model of treatment, with some workers trying to ‘modernise’ Khmers away from their spirit-based belief system. Finally, Mehraby (2004) states that a therapist needs to be realistic when working with non-Western collective cultures, as the client’s cultural expectations require a different style of psychotherapeutic relationship.

To conclude, this area is in need of more in-depth investigation to find commonalities and constraints.

2.9. Intra/Interfaith Relations in Host Countries

It is known that intra/interfaith relations can be difficult for some refugees. Thus, this section examines these relationships in host countries and then presents typologies of Australia Buddhists, Muslims and Christians.

Studies show intra-faith friction is not uncommon in Buddhist and Christian communities. Some show why intra-faith friction can occur among refugee Buddhists. For example, Vietnamese refugees to Australia are predominately Mahayana (Daw, 1994). For various reasons, traditionally the Mahayana have viewed the Theravada as selfish (Adam & Hughes, 1996), less sophisticated and a lesser school (Adam & Hughes, 1996; Skorupuski, 1999; Spuler, 2000; Van Esterik, 2003). At the time of the Vietnamese arrival there were few Mahayana adherents in Australia and so the refugees had to
establish their own religious communities (Adam & Hughes, 1996). In contrast, Laotian refugees, being Theravada, had no temple, but joined with the Theravada Thais on arrival in Australia (Ngaosoyvathn, 1993). According to Daw (1994) some Vietnamese Catholics feel more Catholic than Western Catholics; initially, the Australian Catholic Church was less spiritually accommodating to Vietnamese refugees. Mella (1994) states that Chileans in Sweden appeared to have a less than positive response from the Swedish Catholic Church to their more ‘cultural’ form of Catholicism.

Regarding Muslim refugees and intra-faith friction, no specific literature on Australia can be found (Cleland, 2002; Saeed, 2003; Saeed, 2004; Saeed, 2004), although the Muslim social commentator Aly (2007) details some general issues and Hassan’s (2008) cross-nation study details differences and labels it as a struggle between hybridity and the ‘authentic’ Islamic way of life. One international study by Assal (2004) found that for Somali and Sudanese refugees, mosques were places of intra-Muslim conversation.

Tribal or clan friction has and has not been reported in religious groups in host countries. Allen (2009) found that in rural US Sudanese Catholic communities, there was tribal friction. The author also reported clan friction within the Somalis, with the mosque being the rare community space where division was left outside. On the other hand, Assal (2004) states that Somalis functioned in clans more than in religiosity.

Regarding interfaith relations and refugees the few comments worthy of reporting showed no overall patterns. For example, Vietnamese Buddhists appeared to have more Australian friends than did Catholic Vietnamese (Daw, 1994). As for religious conversion, Ong (2003) found that Khmer Buddhist parents, although not happy, accepted their children’s conversion to Mormonism in North America. Regarding Muslims, for Somalis in Norway mixing with others was problematic (Assal, 2004). On the other hand, Gow (2001) observed the broader Melbourne Ethiopian community, Muslim, and non-Pentecostal Christians, appeared tolerant of other religions; however, there was significant hostility between the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Pentecostals.
On the other hand, two studies show some patterns, but not distinctly for refugees, which can effect interfaith relations in host countries. Krindatch (2002), the first study, found the Oriental Orthodox historically functioned as a minority in the Muslim world and so are accustomed to living as a religious minority in the USA. In contrast, the Eastern Orthodox in the USA had difficulty in keeping and maintaining their ethno-cultural identity due to the shift from majority to minority status. In the second, an Australian study, Cahill et al. (2004) state that interfaith relations can be affected by: the exclusivist theology of Bible literalists (such as low church Anglicans, Evangelicals and Pentecostals), Christian groups, propaganda on websites, lack of knowledge of world faiths and the lack of Australia-wide central leadership of some religions (for example, Buddhism).

Well-documented host country discrimination towards Muslims has occurred in Australia since 9/11 (Cahill et al., 2004; Poynting, 2004) and even before (Cox, 1982; Hawthorne, 1994). In addition, the media has placed Muslims in a defensive position in Australia (Aly, 2007) and internationally (Assal, 2004). Recent research on rural refugee settlement in Australia found Shi’ite Iraqis felt discriminated against, yet Sudanese Christians did not (Taylor, 2005), and Casimiro et al. (2007) in Perth also found that Muslim refugee women felt fear, uncomfortableness and isolation.

Some recent studies show complexities with regard to discrimination, work, unemployment and religion. Fozdar and Torezani’s (2008) study on the interaction between wellbeing and discrimination had a paradoxical finding. Although refugees from Yugoslavia, Africa and the Middle East reported high levels of discrimination in work and in everyday life in Western Australia, they simultaneously reported positive wellbeing, although some disappointment and other factors were reported. Possible reasons for this paradox were posed as personality factors, social support, religion, intelligence and/or the ‘relative deprivation theory’; that is, experiences of difficulty produce positive wellbeing. Research on Muslim and Christian Lebanese, by inference mostly refugees, found differences between Muslims and Christians, as Muslims had higher levels of unemployment, larger family sizes and were less educated than their
Christian Lebanese neighbours in Sydney (Betts & Healy, 2006). Assal (2004) raised this issue of welfare and religion by stating that Sudanese and Somalis living on welfare in Norway asserted their religion as a way of regaining their autonomy, with some stereotyping the West as evil and bad, thus by inference they discriminated. Further, Assal states that Somalis can become cantankerous when on welfare and feel discriminated against.

Finally, rare studies raise the issue of religious meaning systems prescribing suitable employment or possibly affect employment training for refugees in a host country. Welaranta states that success is different for Khmers (the non-French elite) when compared with the Vietnamese, as for Theravada Buddhist Khmers passivity is a desired attribute, not competition. Thus, high-status jobs and wealth are not of importance to Khmers in the USA, but rather doing good deeds to gain merit in the next life. Further, non-refugee literature (Hood et al., 2005) states that for Protestant fundamentalists becoming a religious leader or pastor is a significant full-time employment option.

To conclude, generally the studies report more intra-faith than interfaith friction in host countries.

2.9.1 Typologies of Australian Buddhists, Muslims and Christians

Australian studies of Christians’, Muslims’ and Buddhists’ differing religiosity is particularly pertinent when examining refugees’ intra/interfaith contact during the refugee experience.

Regarding Australian Buddhists some patterns are presented by Spuler (2000) and Adam and Hughes (1996). In Australia, the Vajrayana school attracts Anglo-Australians. However, Cambodian and Laotians are Theravada, whereas the Vietnamese are Mahayana (Skorupski, 1999; Van Esterik, 2003). In Australia, Buddhist ecumenical bodies mix the three schools; however, Spuler suggests that Buddhist ecumenicalism in

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23 The researcher in the course of her work has observed a number of Chin from Myanmar and some Sudanese Christians who are in training to become religious leaders or pastors.
Australia is not as well developed as overseas, and there are some isolated incidents of prejudice between schools. Spuler quotes Croucher (1989), who suggested Australia has a history of oppositional groups, for example, Theravada versus the Mahayana, the anti-Christians versus universalists, and immigrant (again by inference refugees) against the Anglo-Australian.

For Muslim refugees, McMichael (2002) found that in Australia individual Somali refugee women had a range of Islamic views and practices. Assal (2004) also found differences in Norway and posed three categories of Muslim Sudanese and Somali refugees:

- religious – those interested in contact with fellow religious people rather than fellow nationals
- non-religious – those who are considered by the religious to have strayed
- in between religious and no religion – those who have contact with both groups.


Regarding Australia, some typologies of Muslims have emerged. Vujcich (2007) gives three trajectories of identity for Bosnian Muslims in Perth: secular, ethno-religious or universal-religious. These were not necessarily rigid categories. For example, some secular refugees did not distance themselves from issues that affected other Muslims. In addition to the previously mentioned study, Saeed’s (2003) study details four major typologies with several variations in trends of Australian Muslims (not international Muslims as detailed in section 2.4.5):

1 Neo-revivalists:
   - Group A: those who view Western values and institutions as non-Islamic or anti-Islamic, and are often linked to anti-Western, neo-revivalist twentieth century Islamic thinkers.
   - Group B: those who are critical of Western values, but not as hostile as group A.
2 Traditionalists:
   • Those who are committed to pre-modern Islam; that is, Sharia law. They believe that in the West one cannot fully function as a Muslim, as Australia is not politically or legally Islamic.
   • They follow traditionalist rituals and practices, but are not overly concerned about political and legal frameworks.

3 Neo-modernists:
   • They have relaxed attitudes to values, institutions and ideas in Australia.
   • They believe there is no intrinsic conflict between modernity and Islam.

4 Liberals:
   • They comprise practising and non-practising Muslims, often with a secular outlook.

Compared with other typologies, Saeed (2003) appears more relevant as he describes Australian Muslims and gives approximate numbers. Thus, many Australian Muslims fall into the neo-modernist trend, a very large number into the liberal, and only a small number are hostile to the West and to Australia. These are traditionalist and neo-revivalist groups (A and B). No literature can be found that examines or explains if Muslims with a more Sufi approach or Shi’ites have different typologies or can indeed fit into suggested typologies in Australia (Bouma, 1994; Saeed, 2003; Saeed, 2004; Saeed, 2004), even though there are theological and historical differences.

Other comments by Saeed (2004) are pertinent to Muslim settlement. Firstly, most Muslims live as a majority in their country of origin; however, moving to a minority context is not “unique or unsolvable”. Further, some Muslims have more freedom in Australia than in Muslim countries that have dictatorships or restricted religious freedom.

Regarding Christian typologies in Australia, Bouma (2006), Tacey (2000; 2003) and Jupp (2009a) explore different types of spirituality or religion, with all examining fundamentalism. However, typologies of Australian Christians (Bentley & Blombery, 1992) may assist with the differences Christian refugees can encounter in Australia.
1 Conversionists – Christians who have been saved. They consider the world as evil, but as they have been redeemed by God and Jesus, they see that the primary role of the church is to convert.

2 Devotionalists – Christians who have a personal access to a loving God.

3 Conventionalists – Christians who see that the Word reflects the divine, giving values to live by rather than access to a living God.

4 Principalists – Christians whose faith gives values to live by. They believe that the world is a good place and the role of the church is to educate people in fundamental principles.

2.10 Conclusion

This review shows that there is no organised body of literature, such as a particular journal on the topic of religion, spirituality and refugee. Nor is there a model on how or if religion and spirituality at the individual, collective or cross-religious level interact with the various stages of the refugee experience. In addition, this review found acculturation and refugee theorising has paid minimal attention to religion.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This research on religion, spirituality and the refugee experience has adopted a mostly qualitative methodology, using the grounded theory approach. Data were collected in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The bulk of the data came from approximately three point five interviews with all nineteen participants purposefully selected from the Somali, Sudanese, Iraqi and Ethiopian-born communities in Melbourne. Within each community, a range of religious affiliations, levels of religiosity and socio-cultural backgrounds formed the selection criteria. Some were interviewed using interpreters. Additional data were also collected from five refugee support personnel, twelve Muslim and Christian religious leaders, and five academics with religious expertise.

Two modifications were made after the first phase of the interview process. Firstly, a minor questionnaire to aid trustworthiness and data verification (Punch, 1998) was administered to the refugees, adding to the richness of the study. Paloutzian et al. (2005b) state that this enables rich theory to be generated in the domain of religion and spirituality. Secondly, five cultural consultants were added as a new participant group.

3.1 Theoretical Perspectives and Paradigms of the Research Study

Regarding theoretical perspectives, Blaikie (2007) raises several issues. Firstly, he outlines four research strategies: inductive, deductive, retroductive and abductive, with either a ‘bottom-up’ or ‘top-down’ approach. The major research approach for this study was abductive, the starting point being the world of the refugees, mostly a ‘bottom-up’ approach. In the main the study examined data from the viewpoint of refugees and other interviewees. However, the use of theories regarding refugee flight, adult faith development and acculturation prescribed the use of deductive strategies – a top-down approach. Thus, this study had a mixture of approaches.
Secondly, Blaikie (2007 p.13) states that ontology is ‘a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of what exists’. Blaikie and Crotty (1998) state that traditional ontological debates in the social sciences have been condensed into two mutually exclusive categories; realists or idealists, with Blaikie listing the categories as realists, shallow realists, conceptual realists, cautious realists, depth realists, idealists and subtle realists. He further suggests that the ontological understanding meshes with the epistemological understandings to guide the research, the research strategies and the methods. The ontological understanding of this research is idealist, which Blaikie (2007 p.16) defines as ‘the external world consists of representations that are creations of individual minds’.

In contrast, Crotty (1996) believes that it is difficult to keep the ontological and epistemological understandings separate. Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge and to what actually counts for knowledge; that is, the relationship between what is being researched and the researcher (Creswell, 1998; Punch, 1998). In Crotty’s view, there are three ways of interacting with knowledge: objectivism, subjectivism and constructionism. On the other hand, Blaikie (2007) lists epistemological understandings as empiricism, rationalism, falsificationism, neo-realism, constructionism and conventionalism. Therefore, given that the research is about how refugees internally and socially construct their world, a constructivist epistemology was used. Constructionism, as described by Crotty, is a way of interacting with knowledge where there is no truth waiting to be found, but rather truth emerges from an engagement with the world.

Thirdly, Blaikie (2007) defines the relationship between the researcher and the researched into three stances: outside/insider, expert/learner or conscientiser. From the researcher’s stance, generally speaking the researcher would be termed an ‘outsider’, standing back observing the phenomena, combined with a ‘learner’, setting aside preconceived ideas to observe how refugees view the world.

Several research frameworks are given by various authors (Blaikie, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Sarantakos, 1998) with Crotty’s the
most clear. Crotty details several theoretical frameworks 1) positivism 2) interpretivism 3) critical theory 4) feminism and other frameworks. Given that the research is to understand how refugees internally and socially construct the world, interpretivism was considered the most appropriate, as its foundations are in phenomenology and hermeneutics, and it is described by the literature as ‘the empathic understanding of human behaviour’ (Sarantakos, 1998:35). Finally, interpretivism allows for individual and collective reconstructions (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) of the nature of knowledge; in this instance, how individual refugees or groups of refugees interpret and continually and effectively construct the refugee experience. There are some criticisms of this framework, with Blaikie (2007) giving the most accessible and comprehensive criticism. As in interpretivism, social actors may be unaware of the effect of institutional structures and, as a paradigm, it is unable to account for historical change.

Crotty details various methodologies with several being considered. For example: 1) the ethnographic approach; the study of a recently arrived, refugee group’s journey to and settlement in Melbourne; 2) the phenomenological approach; a study of the phenomenon of religion and refugees, 3) survey research, 4) grounded theory. The grounded theory method (Charmaz, 2000, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 1998) was chosen for several reasons (Creswell, 1998; Creswell & Clark, 2007). Firstly, this methodology is appropriate when there is no existing satisfactory theory and little research to begin a theory (Punch, 1998). As the literature review shows, this has been the case with religion, spirituality and the refugee experience. Secondly, the approach involves the generation of theory from the data, and the bulk of the data, in this case, is the narrating of refugee experiences. The aim of the grounded theory approach is to allow a substantive level theory to emerge relevant to several refugee groups at a particular time so later researchers can conduct further empirical testing.

Further, as this research is cross-cultural in nature, Matsumoto’s (1994) guidelines for conducting such research were relevant. Matsumoto suggests that issues arising out of research are mostly extensions of issues pertaining to research in general. However, some issues are important for the researcher to be personally aware of, and reflect on,
throughout the research. These are the concepts of: etics-universal concepts and emics-cultural-specific concepts, ethnocentrism and stereotyping (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2002). Other matters raised by Matsumoto were incorporated into the research design and are mentioned throughout this chapter.

Thus, assumptions underpinning this research study have been constructionist in epistemology, interpretivist in theoretical perspective and are from an outsider/learner stance, and in methodology a grounded theory approach is used. In addition, it is cross-cultural in nature.

3.1.1 The Researcher as a Tool

The attitude of the researcher is paramount in the qualitative approach in general, and there are several opinions on this matter. According to Charmaz, Glaser (2002) states in grounded theory that data ought to be at arm’s length from the researcher, yet Charmaz contends ‘no analysis is neutral’ despite the researcher’s claims (Charmaz, 2005 p.510).

Hence, as this research focused on religion, spirituality and refugees, for transparency purposes the relating of various factors in the researcher’s background is necessary. The researcher was born into a Methodist family. For a short time, the researcher became a fundamentalist Christian. Then, in the 1970s, she joined a house church in inner suburban Melbourne, on a public housing estate, involved with social justice issues (tenants’ councils, family camps, road closures and other issues), but not evangelism. Many newly arrived Southeast Asian and South American refugees lived in these estates. The researcher taught their children at the local primary school. Several years later she travelled through Asia and Africa, including Uganda, the Sudan and Egypt, eventually working in Israel and then Turkey. Later she taught English in Fuzhou, China, during the Tiananmen Square incident, and in Cambodia during the United Nations mandate. Thus, it was through these experiences she became more aware of Buddhism, Islam and the Jewish faith.
After working for the Quakers (the Religious Society of Friends) in Cambodia, since 1992 the researcher has been involved with, and is now a member of, the Quakers. She still lives in Richmond where new refugees continue to settle with the most recent being Sudanese.

In addition, the researcher had a difficult personal experience that has assisted her work with refugees. Quite a number of years ago after her involvement with fundamentalist Christians, the researcher was violently attacked by a religious Scandinavian who several years later committed suicide. Of relevance is that the attack was in Israel, and the male’s sudden psychosis appeared to have been greatly affected by both the Holocaust and being at the place of Jesus’s crucifixion. During this experience and after, the researcher felt protected by God or by some inner strength that she was able to draw on. This raises the question, how does religion or spirituality assist or not assist at times of extreme crisis? Is it religion, God or something innate? What is it that appears to assist people – in this instance, refugees – and make them resilient?

3.2 Selection of Participant Groups and their Community Backgrounds

Matsumoto (1994) states that issues arising out of cross-cultural research are mostly extensions of research issues in general. Thus, to overcome some of the challenges that cross-cultural research poses, the defining of participant groups will occur before methods can be discussed, as the method of data collection needs to be culturally appropriate.

Initially, three Melbourne ethnic communities were chosen – Iraqi, Sudanese and Ethiopian – because they are fairly recent refugee groups and have a range of religious and spiritual beliefs. Later, the religiously homogenous Somalis were added.

Matsumoto states that cross-cultural researchers need knowledge of the underpinning psychological dimensions of culture. Various methods have been applied to understand the refugee background.
3.2.1 Method of Participant Selection and their Backgrounds

Matsumoto states that in cross-cultural research, a sample of research participants needs to adequately represent its culture and that the samples across cultures should be as far as possible equivalent to each other, which some call fair subject selection (Ellis, Keating, Yusuf, Lincoln & Nur, 2007).

In selecting a sample from within each refugee community, the refugees as far as possible ranged from traditional to liberal, in religious or spiritual terms, be it Animist, atheist or agnostic as was appropriate. English ability was also a variable with one to two participants from each community having low levels of English, and so interpreters were required to allow for the voices to be heard of the often less educated or older refugees who struggle with English.

Regarding sampling approaches, there were three: maximum variation sampling, then stratified purposeful sampling, and, later to a minor extent, snowball sampling (Creswell, 1998). These approaches were used to select previously unselected sub-groups within a birthplace group and to have variation in adult ages, gender, education, and rural and city backgrounds in order to facilitate comparisons.

Opinion is divided on whether the recounting of refugee stories to researchers is therapeutic or harmful, the latter effect being balanced with the need for research to assist refugees (Ellis et al., 2007; McMichael, 2003). Thus, the researcher used various strategies to minimise as far as possible any harmful effects of the interview process. The first strategy was to interview refugees who had been in Australia more than two years. This was so the refugee participants would be more emotionally and socially settled. Taking the above factor into account and the variable of adolescence shifts in religiosity, the researcher interviewed mature adults.

Generally speaking, a range of educational levels reflected levels within the refugee Australian community. In order to take account of cross-cultural variables and differing histories, the intention was to interview across nationalities from the beginning.
Most refugees whom the researcher contacted wished to be interviewed; however, five refused. As the topic is sensitive, no one was pressed as to the reason for refusal; one wanted to assist but felt it would be too upsetting, others were too busy with work or family commitments, with one suggesting a family member who agreed. In each case the researcher assisted the refugee’s withdrawal so they did not feel embarrassed or ashamed, particularly as the researcher could be seen as an authority figure.

More than other refugee groups, Somali refugees – not their religious leaders – did not wish to be interviewed. For example, the researcher approached some Somalis she had known during their initial arrival phase, and unlike most other refugees, three Somali females did not wish to be involved. Further, some Somalis not known to the researcher wished to be paid, the only group to ask for payment. The patterns of this group’s lack of interest in participation was discussed with a Somali researcher who suggested that by nature Somalis were suspicious or did not wish people to probe into facts about their backgrounds. Despite this, eventually three Somalis agreed to be interviewed. This difficulty became a research query. Recently, Ellis et al. (2007) also found that for various reasons Somalis resident in the USA were resistant to research.

Nineteen refugees were finally interviewed for an average three point five in-depth interviews. Three were Somali, four Ethiopian, seven Sudanese and five Iraqi. Ten were female and nine were male. Six were brought up in the capital of their country, nine in provincial cities, two in towns and four, all southern Sudanese, in rural areas. Prior to arrival in Australia, six had completed high school, nine had a higher diploma or a degree, one had nine years education and three had no formal education. Religiously speaking, prior to flight, the eight Christians were: two Orthodox, two Protestants, three either Anglican or Catholic, and one of an unknown denomination. The nine Muslims were: three Shi’ites, five Sunnis and one Sufi. In addition, one was an Animist and one had a secular/human rights belief system. A range of religions was not present in the Somalis, as most Somalis are Muslim. In addition, there was a range of levels in

24 See Chapter 4 as to how these identifications were established.
religiosity and levels of English with six needing interpreters. A total of sixty seven interviews (over ninety in total) were held with refugee participants (see Table3.1). All, with one exception, had been in Australia for more than two years.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Birth &amp; Name</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religion Pre-Flight</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>No of Interviews</th>
<th>Estimated Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Education Prior to Arrival in Australia</th>
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<td>Capital city</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0 Only Islamic</td>
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<td>Provincial City</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>35</td>
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<td>Dinka</td>
<td>Rural</td>
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<td>Hussan</td>
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<td>12 + Tech</td>
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<td>Uni</td>
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<td>Provincial city</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12 + Tech</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All names and some details have been changed to protect identification. For southern Sudanese, three from different tribal groups were interviewed, but to protect privacy the tribal references are omitted.

# An interpreter assisted with the interview.
In this final selection, nine of the refugees were known to the researcher, at least one or two from the communities referred to above; none was or had recently been in a dependent relationship with the researcher. Other refugees were found via: refugee support personnel, cultural consultants or other settlement professionals (not interviewed). Finding psychologically stable refugees of particular backgrounds in a few instances was difficult. Therefore, other purposeful sampling strategies were needed with this outlined in later sections.

3.2.2 Participants: Refugee Support Personnel

Five refugee support personnel were interviewed in order to gain knowledge of their religion, spirituality and the refugee experience. To achieve maximum variation (Creswell, 1998) purposeful sampling was used in selecting five refugee support personnel. Professionally they were mental health and health professionals, settlement workers and others involved in settlement services. Most had spent more than 10 years working with refugees; however, one only had spent a year in a refugee area. The researcher had professionally known some of the workers.

3.2.3 Participants: Religious Leader

Religious leaders were chosen in order to gain a deeper understanding of the refugee’s beliefs and their communities, and to gain understanding of the leader’s engagement with and knowledge of multi-faith Australia. The manner in which the religious leaders were contacted needed to be culturally appropriate. Thus, the researcher’s other contacts assisted. The religious leaders or the religious community were contacted and generally speaking they decided who was to be interviewed.

Twelve religious leaders from various parts of Melbourne were interviewed: a Sunni Somali Muslim, an Oromo Sunni Muslim, a Shi’ite, an Iraqi Christian, a Bosnian Muslim, two Sudanese Christians, an Ethiopian Orthodox and an Evangelical Ethiopian. In addition, two Anglo-Saxons, one Muslim and the other Christian, and both with considerable work experience and knowledge of refugee communities, were also interviewed.
3.3 Ethical Considerations Prior to Interviewing

Issues of power and social and emotional dependency are present in all research (Kumar, 2005; Punch, 1998; Sarantakos, 1998), and particularly with refugee participants. In addition, given the current international situation, interviewees may be wary of discussions on religious and spiritual matters with unknown individuals. Thus, refugee interviewees, unknown to the researcher, were approached by individuals known to them and it was hoped, trusted by them. This was to sensitively test out if the refugees wished to be involved. Only recently have these ethical complexities been discussed in refugee research literature (Ellis et al., 2007; Leaning, 2001; Mackenzie, McDowell & Pittaway, 2007), but mostly in contexts such as camps, not host countries. In fact, Ellis et al. (2007) state that the identification of ethical issues regarding refugee research is in its infancy.

Transparency is necessary when collecting data from vulnerable groups such as refugees and some other participants. This is particularly important, as most refugees and some others interviewed had had refugee-like experiences of being exploited or persecuted by authorities. This anticipated hesitancy or resistance to research is again mentioned in studies mostly relating to refugees in camps (Ellis et al., 2007; Mackenzie et al., 2007). This was anticipated for the refugee participant group, and the data collection revealed this hesitance or resistance that also came from religious leaders and some refugee support personnel.

Thus, issues of vulnerability, particularly for the refugee participants, the need for professional distance, the management of language difficulties, transparency of process and content were taken into account in the wording and explanation of: informed consent, the plain language statement, the use of interpreters and the way in which the interviews were conducted.

3.3.1 The Use of Interpreters

It should be noted that the *National Statement on Ethics and Human Research* (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council & Australian Vice-
Chancellors’ Committee, 2007) has no specific ethical or practical guidelines on how to use interpreters. Thus, the researcher’s background experience assisted.

The researcher has long had ethical concerns about using unpaid interpreters. Funds for interpreters were unavailable from RMIT University. However, a grant of $1,500 was asked for and received from the Religious Society of Friends to pay for interpreting. The researcher’s supervisor and the RMIT Ethics Committee Chairperson were informed of this non-conditional grant.

It was anticipated that interpreters, National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) Level 3, would be used for six refugee participants’ interviews. As far as humanly possible, privacy considerations in the selection of interpreters for refugees were taken into account. As a consequence, two types of interpreters were used: (i) ‘formal interpreters’ selected by the researcher and interviewees on the recommendation of refugee settlement professionals who were either professional interpreters, welfare professionals or paraprofessionals; and (ii) ‘informal interpreters’ – two refugees preferred family members. All formal interpreters were paid Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS) rates. It was presumed all ‘formal interpreters’ were bound by their professional codes of ethics and debriefing procedures would be part of their normal work life.

Regarding the deployment of interpreters two strategies were used. Firstly, Matsumoto’s (1994) approach of using an interpreter as a co-researcher was to enhance the collection and verification of data. Secondly, as previously mentioned, for some communities finding suitable and stable refugee participants was difficult. Thus, interpreters were used to find two interviewees previously known to the researcher and another interviewee.

3.3.2 Informed Consent

Recent studies have raised the important yet complex issue of truly informed consent (Ellis et al., 2007; Mackenzie et al., 2007). Due to the complexity of refugee communities and the number being interviewed, it was not possible to form a research partnership with
a refugee community as Ellis suggested. Thus, to obtain appropriate and credible access to refugee support personnel, cultural consultants and refugee participants, it was initially envisaged that written agreement would be necessary with a particular refugee support organisation. This process proved unnecessary as all cultural consultants and refugee support personnel appeared content to be approached as individuals, given the assurance that their agency would not be identified. In a number of cases, agency managers knew the researcher and knew of the research. Each participant was given a consent form (see Appendix 6) at the beginning, or in most cases sent to participants prior to the interview. This form had been translated into Arabic and back translation was used to check the translations.

The fact that either the researcher or interviewee could terminate an interview was made clear in the statement to the participants and at the beginning of the interview process. Permission for audio tape-recording of the interview was also requested. In addition, interviewees were informed they could request a copy of the transcript and if they wished, they had the right to delete or alter any part of their transcript.

Because of client confidentiality and, in one instance, political sensitivities, several professionals requested that particular data not be used. These requests were recorded in the particular transcripts and observed in the thesis. In a few instances the researcher confirmed the final text with the interviewee.

3.3.3 Plain Language Statement

An individual plain language statement was written for each participant group (see Appendix 6). In clear English it explained who the researcher was, why the research was being conducted, who were the participants, why they were chosen, the kinds of questions to be asked, who the researcher supervisor was, how to make a complaint and other explanations.
Compared with other participant groups, the refugees’ plain language statement was more extensive, due to the need for transparency with refugees. It explained Western cultural issues and for most their linguistic needs required clear simplified English.

Prior to commencing the research, a research worker stated the custom was that when their particular agency conducted research, participants were paid a small amount. Therefore, this question was anticipated and so the custom of students not paying for interviews was explained. Secondly, given the political environment at the time of the interview, it stated clearly that the research was not for the Australian government.

Because of the personal nature of the research and the participants’ refugee status, it was necessary to clearly detail that interviews could be distressing for some refugees. Thus, people resident in Australia several years were selected. So as not to cause the refugees any shame or guilt, it was made clear, for some refugees, that this may not be an emotionally suitable time for them to tell their stories. Also, it stated that either the researcher or the interviewee could terminate the interviews at any time and that counselling was available if the interview process was distressing.

In order to facilitate counselling, prior to commencing interviews, the researcher approached the VFST to assist, if necessary, with counselling if a refugee participant was adversely affected by the interview process. In fact, it appears no interviewees attended VFST.

Finally, the fact that some money was available for a refugee participant or religious leader to pay for interpreters was added to the two statements and that this could be jointly arranged.

**3.4 Methods**

Various authors give the range of methods broadly as qualitative and quantitative (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Polkinghorne, 1995; Sarantakos, 1998). Again Crotty’s was the most comprehensive, listing methods as: sampling, questionnaire, measurements and scales,
observation, focus groups, case studies, interviews, life histories and other methods. Two of these strategies were believed to be an efficient way of obtaining data from individuals on religion and the refugee experience. The first, a qualitative approach, comprised of interviews for all participant groups. Secondly, as a result of the pilot study, a small questionnaire using measurement and scaling for the refugee participants, a minor quantitative approach was added.

3.4.1 Interviews and Interview Schedule

A semi-structured interview supported by an interview guide/schedule (Patton, 1990) to enable a more focused approach was chosen. This guide had both open-ended and closed questions. Three interview schedules were developed for each participant group (see appendices 1–5), each with its different aims.

- **Refugees**: to gain information on their religious and non-religious background, their religious experiences during the refugee flight and settlement in Australia and on their religious beliefs. Further parts asked questions in terms of Tarakeshwar et al.’s (2003) cross-cultural religious dimensions, and examined any shifts in religiosity and whether their religiosity supported or hindered the refugee experience (see Appendix 5).

- **Refugee religious leaders**: to achieve an understanding of their religious and non-religious background, their understandings of Australia, their intra/interfaith involvement, information on the spiritual and practical concerns of the refugee community they serve, their understanding of adult faith development, their opinion on whether religion supported or hindered the refugee experience and a final area concerning theological views, for example, on suffering.

- **Refugee support personnel**: to achieve an understanding of their work with refugees, their own belief system and how that interplays with their work, comments and observations were requested on this aspect of a refugee’s life at a communal and individual level, and their opinion whether a refugee’s religion/spirituality helps or hinders their journey and settlement in Australia.
The interviews were dependent on the establishment of rapport and trust with the interviewee, and the credible ‘casting’ of the researcher as a learner, not a government agent. Thus, high-level expertise in interviewing (Kumar, 2005; Patton, 1990) and awareness of interviewer biases (Kumar, 2005) was necessary.

Various cross-cultural considerations were taken into account during the study. Firstly, Brislin et al.’s (1973) design guidelines on cross-cultural interviews were implemented. Secondly, Fontana and Frey’s (2000) warning that interpreters and bilingual workers can filter information and that when interviewing different cultures, an ability to grasp layers of meaning is necessary were noted.

3.4.2 Data Collection

The interview process had different styles of data collection. All but two interviewees gave permission to tape record the interview. Several early transcripts were transcribed by the researcher. Later, scripts were transcribed by a paid employee who had assisted immigrants and refugees in their previous employment, and so had a good grasp of different accents. This became invaluable. Instruction was given to record strong emotions and when interpreters spoke, only the English interpretations were to be transcribed. However, if the interviewees spoke in another language, in many instances in Arabic, this was phonetically recorded in the transcript.

The researcher, using the audiotapes, then checked the transcripts. Some difficulties were experienced with different accents. Thus, a strategy was developed from the early interviews onwards of stopping the interview, checking the word or concept, with the researcher stating the correction clearly on the tape. This alleviated the vast majority of problems caused by accents or the quality of the tape recording.

Every interview produced observation notes on setting, family interactions, body language, emotions expressed during the interview, further areas to research and other relevant comments. Comments made by interpreters were included in the data or observation notes.
All transcripts and observation notes were printed and collated into individual booklets that were continually analysed by the researcher throughout the research process. Every participant was offered a copy of the transcript to make alterations if they wished.

3.5 Interview Procedures for Participant Groups

As the bulk of the data was from the refugee participants, most interviewees were interviewed four times. Interviews were conducted usually in the refugee’s home, but in other instances in workplaces, church offices, a restaurant, a shop, community centres and a library. In contrast, cultural consultants, refugee support personnel and religious leaders were interviewed once and in a few instances twice. Interviews occurred in their offices, places of worship, community hall and sometimes in their homes.

The early part of the interview was set aside to develop rapport, particularly if the interviewees were not well known to the researcher. At the beginning, in the case of the refugee participants, the researcher explained the interview process. In addition, all interviewees were given the appropriate plain language statement and the consent form in English and Arabic (see the appendices). For those few languages not catered for, it was decided not to use written translations as some refugee interviewees could not read in their own language, but could understand spoken but not written English. Therefore, the researcher read the plain language statement and consent form onto an audiotape and mailed it to them. If this was not possible, interpreters were used to explain the forms. This was preferably done before the formal interview; however, if this did not occur it was carried out at the beginning of the first interview.

In terms of language difficulties the use of interpreters assisted the interview process. The researcher’s long experience with interpreters also assisted. For example, questions and information were kept short and to the point; if there were difficulties in understanding, the researcher asked for the meaning of the concepts rather than a direct translation. Issues surrounding how this interacts with scientific validity are discussed in Ellis (2007). Thus, from a linguistic point of view, the interview process proceeded smoothly.
Each taped interview was about 45 minutes to one hour 15 minutes, with some taped interviews being longer. In most instances, because of issues of cultural politeness the researcher stayed much longer with refugee participants, often two to three hours, during which time some observations were made.

All interviewees, bar one, signed the consent form; because of the need for transparency, signing was carried out at the end of a series of interviews. In one instance, a form was not signed; however, explicit permission was given in front of an interpreter, as the signing in this instance did not appear culturally appropriate. The complex issue of informed consent with refugees in refugee camps settings is addressed by Mackenzie et al. (2007) and Ellis et al. (2007).

During the interview session deep respect for the stories of all participants was imperative. This attitude was particularly important when the interview material at times was culturally, religiously and intellectually at variance with the researcher’s religious meaning system.

### 3.6 Grounded Theory Coding and Analysis

Corbin’s and Strauss’s (Charmaz, 2000, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 1998; Creswell, 1998; Creswell & Clark, 2007; Punch, 1998; Sarantakos, 1998) grounded theory approach was used with the traditional procedures for analysis being:

- open coding: to enable initial categories and sub-categories to emerge;
- axial coding: data is assembled in different ways, to enable a central phenomena with causal conditions and strategies (interactions or actions that result from the central phenomena) to emerge
- selective coding: to connect the categories together and results in propositional coding
- a visual portrait of a conditional matrix that indicates influences on the central phenomena.
For the purposes of this research all four participant groups, including the observation notes, were coded separately.

Prior to commencing interviews, the researcher spent considerable time researching the four source countries. This resulted in extensive background notes that became an invaluable tool in overcoming two warnings: firstly, by Charmaz (2005), that grounded theorists can often separate interactions from context, implied meanings and so forth; and secondly, by Matsumoto (1994), that cross-cultural researchers when studying a particular group need an awareness of variables such as socio-economic status, place of birth, upbringing and other variables.

**Phase One: Selected Trial**

Selected Iraqi-born and Sudanese-born colleagues of the researcher trialled the refugee participants’ interview schedule and process. Two issues arose: the asking of multiple questions instead of one, and the need for more silence to allow time for a second language learner to reflect and then speak in English.

Several changes to the refugee interview process were made. Firstly, a new participant group, the cultural consultants (see Appendix 1), was introduced. The aim was: to assist with deepening the researcher’s knowledge, to further clarify the cultural suitability interview process for a particular group, and to assist with the analysis process. In selecting these consultants purposeful sampling was used (Creswell, 1998) and achieved by ascertaining which support agency had extensive work experience with each community, and then ascertaining the most experienced and reflective worker. Thus, an Iraqi, Ethiopian, Sudanese, Somali and an Anglo-Celtic Australian were interviewed. It should be noted that the individual did not, or was seen to, represent their whole community as often they were of a particular refugee vintage themselves.

Secondly, the researcher felt that she lacked first-hand knowledge of refugee camps and settlements. Therefore an additional sub-group of the refugee support personnel was
Thirdly, the refugee interview schedule of three interviews, thematically structured on Tarakeshwar et al.’s (2003) cross-cultural religious dimensions (see Appendix 5), proved problematic as it led to broad generalisations rather than specific data. For example, shifts in the religiosity at the various phases of the refugee journey proved difficult to ascertain.

Three other issues were noted. 1) The need for a high standard of English and/or interpreting when speaking on religious or spiritual matters. 2) The gender of the researcher could affect data collection (Fontana & Frey, 2000). 3) Patience would be and was needed as the pilot study evidenced: due to work constraints, one interviewee cancelled twice, another one was late and another, being interviewed at home, had an unexpected visitor and so the interview was terminated.

The trialling of the refugee support worker interview schedule with two workers produced two modifications. In order to set the tone the questions on the refugee support personnel’s belief system was one of the first questions. In order to assuage worker’s apprehension, all were sent the questions prior to the interview.

Phase Two: Refugee Participants Only
As a consequence of the issues mentioned above, the refugee semi-structured schedule was restructured in three ways. Firstly it was reformatted into a mostly chronological biographical approach (Creswell, 1998; Sarantakos, 1998). Thus, the first interview was on the formation of the refugee’s religious meaning system in their home country, the second and third interviews on how their religion interacted with their journey to and settlement in Australia. A fourth interview explored religious or spiritual understandings; for example, on suffering, on God’s plan for their lives. The addition of a short questionnaire was part of the final interview. Primary questions, probes and open-ended questions were used either to verify data or collect new information (Punch, 1998; Sarantakos, 1998). The style of the minor questionnaire was modelled on Cox’s study (1982) on immigrants, religion and welfare. Some verbal responses used Likert and attitudinal scales (Punch, 1998; Sarantakos, 1998).
Most new areas explored in the reformatted approach arose as a result of analysis and theory speculation from the phase one trial. Some areas were influenced by Fowler’s adult faith development interview schedule (1995).

Some authors have concerns about the use of questionnaires (Punch, 1998; Sarantakos, 1998). These concerns were moderated by the refugee questionnaire being designed with a cultural consultant and reviewed by relevant cultural consultants and interpreters. Further, the questionnaire was trialled by several refugees of relevant backgrounds, and resulted in some minor modifications in scales and wording in the final version (see Appendix 5).

Thus, the research approach became both qualitative and quantitative (the latter only with refugee participants’ data and in a minor way). Such an approach is supported by Paloutzian et al. (2005b) in the introduction to the *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* as the authors state it can develop rich theory in the domain of religion and spirituality.

**Analysis of Data**

The computer program Nvivo was used to assist with coding. Charmaz (2000) has some concerns about the use of computer programs with a grounded constructionist approach. For example, software can over-emphasise coding over nuanced interpretation. This criticism was overcome by the use of several strategies. Open coding into initial categories and sub-categories was carried out by hand, including reported emotion or silences, first roughly on the transcript, then by Nvivo. The data were coded, not word-by-word, but line-by-line, or paragraph-by-paragraph, in open coding according to the content requirements. Interview transcripts, interpreters’ comments and observation notes were analysed and coded in the same manner.

The Nvivo program proved efficient in allowing the large amount of data from the refugee participant group initially to be recoded chronologically, into home, journey,
Australia. As well, the data at each phase could be cross-coded for religious themes. Thus, new sub-codes emerged: religious education, prayer, rituals, attitudes to God or to others and suffering. Selective coding allowed shifts in religiosity to be analysed at the various phases of the refugee experience and cross-linked to sociological factors.

At the selective coding stage the asking of theoretical questions, writing of memos, seeking of new data, asking of new questions and theory testing occurred (Corbin & Strauss, 1998; Sarantakos, 1998). Selective coding was also aided by all four participant groups’ codes being summarised on to Excel spreadsheets. This resulted in more theoretical memos being constructed and tested.

Silences in data were observed and analysed with a critical eye. As Charmaz (2005) states, they can reveal invisible social structures and feelings that cannot be expressed. For example, few refugees talked of enduring hunger during their journey, only one refugee spoke of the bribes needed to flee or other ‘illegal’ activities. The issue of religion and female circumcision was not mentioned by Somali refugees, but arose in a cultural consultant’s data. The researcher speculates these silences were present for various possible reasons: in order to show the refugee participant in a positive light, or, as the researcher has experienced in her work with refugees, to protect her from the harsh reality of the refugee experience. On the other hand, the questioning why God had allowed the refugee to suffer was mostly absent in Muslim data, initially a concern to the researcher became a point of theoretical understanding.

The Interface between Literature and Data
As mentioned in Chapter 2, Punch (1998) states that the role of literature in grounded theory is to assist at the analysis stage, when the theoretical directions are clear, so that data, not literature, drive the analysis. In reality, in this study different bodies of literature were needed at different stages of the research process and used in several ways.

Firstly, refugee birthplace background notes produced prior to the first interview allowed for historic and religious knowledge from early in the research process. As well, analysis
showed additional birthplace background reading was needed throughout the whole of the research processes. Later analysis showed many of these background factors formed the refugees’ conscious and unconscious religious meaning system, with much of this information becoming part of the fourth chapter.

Secondly, the various theories mentioned in the objectives of the research were loosely taken into account in the interview schedule. For example, related comments were coded in open and later axial coding with a more in-depth exploration of the various literatures to assist with theory testing. An issue arose as to how detailed analysis should be with regard to the various theories: Kunz’s (1973; 1981) refugee flight theory, Fowler’s adult faith development theory (1995; 1996; 2000) and acculturation theory in the thesis. Regarding Fowler’s theory, prior to phase one, discussions were held with Christian theologians and/or ministers, and with a spiritual director, all of whom understood Christian adult faith development in multi-faith Australia, to ascertain if Fowler’s theory was of current relevance. Some suggestions were made and additional literature read. No discussant mentioned two new understandings: that of Streib (2000; 2001a; 2001b: 2002; 2003; 2005; Streib & Keller, 2004) which updates Fowler’s theory, and Paloutzian and Park (2005b) and Silverman’s (2005a: 2005b; 2005) studies on the concept of religious meaning systems. These studies were found when the researcher was analysing data. As this research is explorative in nature, it was decided against an in-depth analysis of the above theories, as this would limit other religious understandings. Therefore, a broad analysis of relevant data and some new understandings are presented in Chapter 9.

A third strand was religious literature; for example, various attitudes on suffering or interfaith attitudes were initially anticipated. However, later more in-depth literature illuminated differences in some data. The fourth strand of literature, previous research on refugees and religion, also allowed for a deeper analysis of the data with analysis reflecting patterns in other refugee flows.
3.7 Trustworthiness and Verification in Cross-Cultural Contexts

Standard grounded theory has established ways of verification, codes and memos that were used. In addition, due to the complexity of the research question and the range of participant backgrounds, other ways of verification and trustworthiness were incorporated into the research process.

Firstly, the inclusion of the minor refugee questionnaire was of great assistance with verification and trustworthiness. Secondly, the summarising of all coded data and the questionnaire on to Excel spreadsheets aided comparisons and theory testing. However, a few inconsistencies emerged. After further analysis it appeared the in-depth data were more accurate than the questionnaire responses.

Thirdly, Matsumoto’s (1994) guidelines were incorporated into the research; for example, the inclusion of informants who understand the cultures being researched; formal interpreters/co-researchers and the cultural consultant participant group. Further, birthplace briefing notes and various cross-cultural checking strategies mentioned below were used to reduce cultural misunderstandings (Patton, 1990).

Other strategies for verification of data or theory testing were deployed by the use of various strategies listed below. The researcher actively solicited different opinions or answers, knowing that, at a particular stage, there might be many answers or none. The discovery of literature, either contradictory or supportive, the writing of reflective journals, discussions with the researcher’s supervisor, cultural consultants, religious leaders, interpreters, academics, some refugees and others involved in refugee settlement or in Christian adult religious education all assisted in the process. For example, the researcher discussed data on different Muslim religious meaning systems with two Muslim academics and audited an undergraduate unit on Islamic Philosophy at Melbourne University’s Islamic Studies Centre in 2006 to gain a better understanding of the data. In addition, data were shown to two Christian Orthodox academics for their comments. Various chapters or sections of the thesis were read by several additional
people, either academics or fellow postgraduate students, mostly of the national backgrounds being researched for verification. Some of their comments were included.

3.8 Ethical and Methodological Issues Arising from the Research

3.8.1 Refugees

When interviewing refugees several issues emerged: the need for researcher patience and flexibility, withdrawals from the interview process and modification of the interview schedule. These are examined below.

Extreme patience was needed when making an appointment, as often these were cancelled. In the researchers’ experience, when interviewing Vietnamese and Chinese, punctuality for a teacher or other professionals is considered important. However, the research process showed that time, personal organisation and family commitment is different, particularly for some Sudanese and Ethiopian refugees interviewed (Brislin & Kim, 2003). Thus, the researcher developed the technique of telephoning when driving to the planned interview. Underlying all this is the cultural attitude to time.

Several southern Sudanese withdrew from the interview process prior to completion. It appeared that one moved and for two others it is not known, although in one case it was felt that if the researcher was younger the interviews would have continued!

Some refugees wished to know the outcomes of the research or what portion of their data the researcher had used. This was freely told to the refugees.

A few cultural slips were made by the researcher; for example, the researcher carried a Qur’an and Bible to interviews with ‘post it’ labels on them. Eventually, a refugee gently mentioned that the Qur’an should be carried in a more respectful way; that is, ‘post it’ labels were seen as inappropriate.
Gender differences between the female researcher and male refugees previously known to the researcher were managed differently. For example, a Shi’ite family had a female family member present, during the first interview, but by the second interview they were nearby in the kitchen. In contrast, the researcher interviewed a Somali male alone as his wife was out shopping. This was not at all compromising for this urbane man, but rather the researcher felt uncomfortable from what she perceived as a Somali cultural point of view.

Regarding the issue of professional distance, Allotey and Manderson (2003) commented that in the refugee camp situation, ethically the researcher had to give practical assistance at times. This was also the researcher’s experience in Australia. For example, the researcher gave a lift after an interview, the copy of an article on their country, assisted with a legal interview, followed up the result of a religio/racial attack, supported a child with a homework project and wrote a letter of support and other matters. On the other hand, two refugees asked for considerable financial assistance, which the researcher gently declined. Both had relatives in Europe and were from high-status families from cultures where patronage occurs. The researcher suspects that for one refugee this may have been one of the few times in their life such a request had been declined.

3.8.2 Managing the Intensity of the Research

When interviewing, care was taken not to cause unnecessary distress. Thus, a psychologist experienced with assisting traumatised refugees was consulted on how to manage the anticipated intensity of the data for some refugees. The psychologist suggested strategies such as at the end of the first interview, the researcher ask how the interview was for the refugee and mention that interviews can raise issues and, if these persist, it may be useful for the refugee to talk to someone. Both these strategies were used. In addition, managing this sensitive part of the interview process was assisted by the researcher’s experiences in leadership roles in the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) and her training, prior to commencing the research process, from the VFST and Quaker education programs.
Several times some refugees appeared or were visibly upset. Sometimes silence and waiting were needed. At other times, the interviewer pulled back to reduce the level of intensity or changed the question. This occurred after consulting the refugees, after observing the interpreter’s body language or asking the interpreter or refugee. Sometimes the researcher out of a duty of care solely decided. In some instances, the researcher arrived at the appointed time to conduct an interview and found that the refugee was ill, had personal issues relating to the refugee experience or was upset about political events in their home country. In all instances, the researcher did not proceed with the interview.

Although debriefing was explained and offered, as far as it is known, none took the debriefing option. This was unsurprising as many refugees are culturally unfamiliar with debriefing even when it is explained to them. Thus, in order to provide moral, not necessarily legal care, the researcher developed additional approaches such as suggesting appropriate people the refugee had mentioned during the interview such as friends, a partner, or a religious leader who could support them if needed. The second modus operandi was used after the initial interview, and after nearly all interviews with refugees a phone call was made by the researcher, ostensibly to thank the refugee and at times to arrange the next interview, but mostly to see if the process had been supportive. Thirdly, formal interpreters were twice asked to contact their interviewee as the researcher felt the refugee might need some support. Care was taken not to over-emphasise the emotional difficulties as this could also be seen as diminishing the refugee’s resilience. For example, much to the researcher’s dismay, a Somali older widow stated that she had to do some religious de-stressing with her prayer beads after the second interview. This was sensitively discussed with her interpreter, who was close to the refugee, and it was decided to go on with future interviews. If the researcher had terminated the interview this could have been seen by this proud, coping woman as an insult. After the interview process was finally completed, nearly all refugees were telephoned or visited to thank them for their participation.

Finally, a possible pattern began to emerge for some, but not all single mothers or some single males with little family support in Australia, not wishing to be interviewed or
withdrawing from the interview process as it was too confronting or perceived to be so. This may be a reason why a Sudanese Christian widow and two Somali single mothers, previously mentioned did not wish to participate. On the other hand, for the two Somalis there also appeared to be issues of suspicion and another factor mentioned above, a wish for payment.

3.8.3 Religious Leaders, Refugee Support Personnel and Cultural Consultants

Several issues emerged when interviewing religious leaders: the management of language problems, difficulty in contacting some leaders, the questioning of the researcher’s religious meaning system, transcript issues and modifications to the interview schedules.

The religious leader’s plain language statement included an offer of the use of an interpreter. However, no leader took this option as most in the researcher’s professional opinion appeared to have an International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR) Level 3–4 in speaking English, a sufficient level of English to be interviewed. However, two religious communities suggested less senior religious leaders to interview as their principal religious leader, they stated, did not have sufficient English. In one instance, this did not appear to be so, but perhaps this was, understandably, a way of managing the prime religious leader’s workload. Again, patience was needed when arranging an interview.

Other issues emerged from some Evangelical African religious leaders. For example, a Sudanese and an Ethiopian both quizzed the researcher on her religious beliefs with one wishing to know if the researcher belonged to a creedal church. One asked her age and marital status, appearing to be possibly concerned about the implications of interviewing a woman alone in the church office. The following interview was held in his home where his wife was present. Finally, one appeared sceptical about the researcher’s motivation, suggesting the researcher was conducting the research for the prestige of the qualification. This mistrust has also recently been reported by some researchers studying Somali-born refugees in refugee camps, IDP situations and in the USA (Ellis et al., 2007; Mackenzie et al., 2007). This raises a question as to where this religious leader’s mistrust
first developed. Regardless of this the researcher responded to the reason about her
motivation for the research as honestly as possible, with her answer including aspects of
her religious background.

A quarter of religious leaders made changes to their transcript; for example, one made
substantial changes, others small corrections, for one the interview had to be done again
as notes taken when the cassette player broke down were not considered satisfactory. No
patterns emerged with regard to religion or ethnicity. However, some other issues
emerged: a Muslim wished to be informed if his name was used publicly; a Muslim was
concerned about seeing what was written about him and a Protestant Sudanese Christian
wished for his name to be included in the thesis.

Regarding the ten refugee support personnel and cultural consultants, most were of
immigrant/refugee backgrounds. Some were of the relevant refugee groups being studied
while others were not, or were of an Anglo-Celtic background. Data from the two
participant groups assisted with some verification and theory testing.

The sensitive nature of the data was apparent as a few refugee support personnel, not
cultural consultants, were tentative about being interviewed as they did not feel they
knew enough about religion and refugees, even though some had worked with refugees
for a considerable period of time.

To conclude, on the whole, Muslim leaders were easier to access or interview, and
generally speaking were on time. In general they did not ask questions about the
researcher’s faith. With regard to the refugee support personnel, but not cultural
consultants, some were tentative on speaking about such matters.

**3.8.4 Issues Arising from the Use of Interpreters or other Interpretation Aides**

Several issues emerged with regard to interpreters. The first and only interview with an
illiterate Ethiopian widow suggested how easily, but inappropriately, issues of power,
obligation of a refugee towards an interpreter or to the researcher could be used as a
leverage for obtaining interview permission, particularly with the less educated or those from less assertive cultures. Some of these matters are discussed in recent studies on refugees in crisis settings overseas (Mackenzie et al., 2007). Secondly, gender differences between a refugee and an interpreter can affect data. For example, the only registered interpreter for one language group was a male who was used to interpret for a female.

There were issues relating to the effect on data collection of the use of informal interpreters. In two instances, older teenage children of the refugee participant and in another instance a religious official were used. The researcher suspected one refugee participant viewed the interview as a vehicle for her teenager’s religious education, thereby showing how audiences can affect the data. In all instances, the informal interpreters appeared to give accurate interpretations. Despite the above issues the assistance of informal interpreters enabled the voices of those who could not speak sufficient English to be heard.

Although not customary in studies, anonymous personal comments or responses by formal interpreters were appropriately noted and included in the thesis for three reasons. Firstly, the interpreter’s personal comments showed some of the religious understandings of people who normally work with or support refugees. Secondly, in two instances their comments created or added to hunches which resulted in two unreported theoretical understandings: how the different intra-faith experiences in the refugee’s place of asylum can effect settlement and the use of Islamic massage to reduce stress. Thirdly, the possibility of how the interpreter’s religiosity, religious or sociological experiences can interfere or act as a gatekeeper to data collection arose. For example, the researcher bowed to the interpreter’s advice when the interpreter suggested that a question on the devil was not appropriate; various constraints resulted in it not being discussed with the interpreter after the interview. Further, intra-faith difference in asylum mentioned above would not have emerged if the researcher had not twice gently overridden the interpreter’s advice regarding the question on whether the strict religiosity of Saudi Arabia was a surprise to the refugee interviewee. In the interpreter’s opinion this was not a relevant question. The interpreter was genuinely surprised by the refugee’s response.
Finally, because of the researcher’s ESL elicitation techniques, in some incidences the refugee and the researcher were able to speak without formal or informal interpreters. At times the researcher solicited sensitive data when family members were out of the room. However, when difficulties occurred, family interpreting support was called for and received. In addition, bilingual dictionaries, the Qur’an and Bibles in various languages, were invaluable resources.
CHAPTER FOUR

REFUGEES, RELIGION AND THEIR HOME COUNTRY CONTEXT

This chapter, albeit briefly, weaves the religious, historical, socio-cultural and political backgrounds of the four countries, with data drawn mostly from the refugees themselves and, where relevant, from cultural consultants, interpreters and religious leaders, as well as the literature. Each of the four countries is examined with the themes arising from the analysis; namely, 1) home historical socio-religious backgrounds, 2) particular collective religious beliefs, 3) cultural issues 4) colonial and socialist influences, 5) intra/interfaith issues and 6) the relationship between religion and the refugee flight. Accordingly, it provides a baseline for understanding the nineteen refugees’ worlds and a place from which subsequent shifts in religiosity can be measured. Thus, it is a pivotal chapter.

4.1 Somalia

Among the interviewees were three Somali Muslim refugees, including two females, Asha (55 years old) and Meriam (40), together with Mohammed (60). By religio/cultural background the researcher assumed the Somali refugees were Sunni although none said this. Two Somali religious leaders, two cultural consultants and two interpreters were also interviewed. It must also be noted that Somalia’s historical and religious background is not well-researched. Regarding the host country, in 2006, the Australian census stated there were 4,310 Somali residents living in Australia, with most coming via Kenyan refugee camps as refugees or under the family reunion program. Almost all (95 per cent) are Muslim, by inference Sunni. Ethnically speaking, Somalis are homogeneous, but they are fragmented along clan divisions (DIAC, n.d-c; Jupp, 2001).

4.1.1 Religious and Cultural Background

Somalia is a clan-based society (Metz, 1992; Samatar, 1988; UNHCR, 1996) of over 9.5 million (SBS, 2008). All three refugees appeared to be ethnic Somalis, a people closely related to the Ethiopians (Lewis, 2002), and who make up 85 per cent of the Somali population. The remaining 15 per cent are mostly Bantu, recent descendants of African
slaves (Griffiths, 2003) or coastal Arabs (International Rescue Committee, 2003; SBS, 2008). All three refugees had previously lived in simple urban areas in Somalia, in contrast to 71 per cent of the population who in 2000 worked in agriculture (SBS, 2008).

The religious practice and way of life of the Somali interviewees was very similar to that portrayed by Metz (1992) and Lewis (2002) in describing Sunni religious life in Somalia; that is, for example, regular prayer, fasting at Ramadan. Islam is thus the mainstay of Somali culture across all walks of life (Lewis, 4th edition 2002; Metz, 1992; Mukhtar, 1995).

Although the refugees mentioned that they were Muslim, none of the following facts was stated. Somalia is predominantly Sunni of the Shafii\(^{25}\) School\(^{26}\) (Glasse, 2002). Other Muslim types in Somalia were not mentioned (Esposito, 2003; Glasse, 2002), such as Zaydis Shi’ites ‘Fivers’ originally from Yemen, mostly in Mogadishu and nor was the disagreement as to when and where Islam first came to Somalia.\(^{27}\)

Religious education consisted of rote-learning the Qur’an at small neighbourhood schools. These classes were conducted by clan sheikhs,\(^{28}\) whose role was to teach the Qur’an and carry out other duties. For example, Asha’s parents paid a small amount to a

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\(^{25}\) There are numerous spellings of Islamic words; however, for the purpose of this research, spellings will be taken from *The New Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Glasse 2002).

\(^{26}\) There are four main schools of Sunni law, each in different regions of the world:

1. Shafii law predominates in South East Asia, Egypt and Somalia. This was the most prominent school before the appearance of the Ottoman Empire.
2. Hanafi school emphasises reason and is the dominant school in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Turkey, where it rose during Ottoman times.
3. Maliki school, to a degree, favours text over reason, is strong in North and West Africa and Sudan.
4. Hanbali school is heavily reliant on text and can be intolerant of those with different views, though some are tolerant. This school is found in Arabia, the Persian Gulf and some in Sudan (Saeed, 2006).

\(^{27}\) Some literature states in the thirteenth century (Castagno, 1973) others state the fourteenth century (Metz, 1992), and either via the north or via the southern Benadir coast at a much earlier date (Mukhtar, 1995).

\(^{28}\) The terms ‘sheikh’ and ‘imam’ need exploration. Lewis states in the Somali context ‘wadads’ or ‘sheikhs’ are those who devote their lives to God and practise as men of God, learned men who fulfil the role of teaching mediation on family matters and directing the religious life of the community. Esposito (2003) and Glasse (2002) agree with this normal classification. The role of an imam (Bouma, 1994; Esposito, 2003) in the Sunni context is to lead prayers in the mosque. With this study, subjects and informants sometimes use the words interchangeably; in other instances, there is a clear distinction.
local sheikh who taught both young girls and boys in a local neighbourhood room, not a mosque. For Asha the 55-year-old, this was the only formal education she received prior to arrival in Australia. In contrast, both Mohammed and Meriam, the younger woman, were high school graduates and could read the Qur’an in Arabic. Given there was no written Somali language until the 1970s (Metz, 1992), the fact that two refugees could also read the Hadith,29 meant both were comparatively well-educated. In contrast, in rural areas, the locals were taught by wandering teachers, not well versed in Islam, who stayed only long enough to teach the basics, then moved on (Metz, 1992). Finally, with regard to the religious training of the clan sheiks and religious leaders, Metz (1992) states that religious training was possible in urban areas or where rural mosques were prior to the civil war. Some religious leaders interviewed went to various Middle Eastern and Asian countries to receive their religious education prior to arrival.

Some religio/cultural differences emerged from the comments and literature with regard to gender differences. For example, Mohammed mentioned how he would regularly pray at his local mosque once or several times a day. Thus, gathering outside the mosque became a regular networking place for Somali men, not women, as women traditionally prayed at home. For Somali women, full veiling was not the norm unless they were very devout.30

With regard to Somali clans, most interviewees had strong links with clan leadership. However, asking about clan membership represents an intrusive question and this was again confirmed to the researcher by community members. Closer questioning showed many, but not all, find clans divisive and so the topic is to be avoided.31 Most interviewees appeared to be from minority clans or from a mixed clan marriage. Notwithstanding this, a rudimentary knowledge of Somali clans is necessary for several reasons: some clans or groups are apparently more religious; flight and settlement

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29 The Hadith, the second most sacred text containing the reported sayings, practices and description of the Prophet (Esposito 2003; Saeed, 2006).
30 Permanent marriage is not always the norm in Somalia; divorce is said to be high and women traditionally have accompanied husbands into battle, assisting the wounded, conducting intelligence work and encouraging the fighters (Castagno, 1973).
31 The researcher in her work has also experienced this reticence even with Somali colleagues.
patterns in Western host countries or in different parts of host cities are often clan-based. For example, discussions suggest Bantu and Daarood are more prevalent in the USA than in Australia.

Somali clans have two main lineage lines. Traditionally, clanship offered a way of surviving in a harsh environment, though there are some disadvantages as short-term clan and sub-clan alliances have promoted instability (Griffiths, 2003; UNHCR, 1996).

Two interviewees mentioned that two groups of Somalis were more religious, which appears to concur with studies. Mansur (1995) suggests (i) the Sheekhaal, a Hawiye sub-clan, of Arab origins, though Australian members claim it is not a sub-clan, but rather has an alliance with the Hawiye clan; and (ii) the Benadir people from the urban southern port area were more religious. The Sheekhaal clan is mentioned by Metz as comprising the wandering teachers with a lineage that can allegedly be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad (Mansur, 1995). According to oral tradition, the Benadir are also religious and were originally of Persian origins (Mukhtar, 1995) from the Shiraz area (Castagno, 1973), and this was confirmed by relevant studies (Kassim, 1995; Reese, 1998). Reese (1998) states that the Benadir group has a handful of religious scholars and merchants who over several hundred years had traded in Arabic, a language little known in Somalia, with the Gulf, China, East Africa, as well as the Arab states (Kassim, 1995; Metz, 1992; Mukhtar, 1995).

The interaction between clan and religious leadership emerged as an issue in the data. Authors, not the refugees themselves, state that some Somali clans claim direct lineage to

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33 There are various clan genealogies (Mansur, 1995; Samatar, 1988); however, for the purposes of this report, Mansur’s genealogy and spellings will be used.
34 Sab-Sedimentary farmer clan in the south; that is, Digil and Rahanweyn. Samale-Nomadic pastoralist’s main clans are, for example, Isaaq Daarood (the largest) in the south and in the north the Hawiye (Griffiths, 2003; Mansur, 1995)
35 Reese (1998) contends that by the asserting of their Islamic identity and their monopoly on Arabic language, the Benadir became important in post-colonial Somalia – a way of distinguishing these urbanits from the numerous rural poor. It appears this group is more prevalent in the US than in Australia.
Various issues arose in the data; firstly, regarding the duties of religious leaders, one interviewee reported that their clan had two imams, one leading prayers and the other mediating in business disputes. Another interviewee’s clan appeared to have two hereditary imams: one was responsible for marriages and arbitrating inter-clan disputes, and the second for leading prayers. Discussion with Melbourne leaders found only one clan is known to have this mix. In addition, another duty emerged with the imam and the clan leadership group having to give approval for a clan member to seek a Somali government seat which appeared to contradict Lewis’ (2002) statement that Somalia’s religious leaders are generally not politically involved.

As several Somali interviewees (and a Sudanese Muslim) referred to Sufism in their data, this section of Islam will be examined below. Sufism, which emphasizes the mystical dimension of Islam, has greatly influenced Somalia (Castagno, 1973; Glasse, 2002; Metz, 1992), first arriving along trade routes several hundred years ago. Sufis are organised in *tariqah* schools or brotherhoods of mystics, and were important in earlier centuries when Sufism had mass popularity (Esposito, 2003; Glasse, 2002; Saeed, 2006). The *tariqah* in Somalia are (Esposito, 2003; Glasse, 2002; Metz, 1992; Saeed, 2006): Qadiriyyah, Rifaiyya, Salihiiyyah, Ahmadiyah-Idrisiyah (only Metz states this) with differences being, for example, that some schools of Islam allow music, and others trances.

With regard to Sufi leadership, all trace their brotherhood back to the Prophet and if a teacher becomes renowned, the school may be named after him (Glasse, 2002). Leadership is transferred either by spiritual seniority or within a family line (Esposito,

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36 Robinson (2004) states that such appropriation is not an uncommon phenomenon in the Islamised African, a type of competition for spiritual ascendancy. Whether this relationship is myth based or factual is not easily proven. Some contend it is a way of bolstering certain Somali clans and suppressing others (Mukhtar, 1995).

37 A 1996 UNHCR report writes of three levels of leadership in Somalia: traditional clan leaders, the sheikhs and secular modernisers.

38 This was the traditional way Islam has spread (Saeed, 2004; Smart, 2002).

39 Glasse (2002) states the word *tariqah* has several meanings. It is a generic term referring to methods of mysticism to doctrine. Also, it applies to a school or a brotherhood of mystics.
Historically, Sufis have instigated reform, revivals, missions and organisations to resist foreign rule (Esposito, 2003). Concerning Somali studies in northern Somalia, lineage ancestors were accommodated into Islam as ancestors became Sufi saints (Metz, 1992). Some suggest historically northern Somalis have been more Islamic (Declich, 1995). Conversely, in the south ‘Sufi saints’ were not related to lineage ancestors (Metz 1992; Lewis 2002).

Evidence of religio/cultural ritual usage emerged. A male interviewee reported taking part in exorcisms of ‘spirits’ (with the use of the Qur’an) from women while in Somalia, a ritual similar to Declich’s (1995) and Tiilikainen’s (2003) descriptions described as pre-Islamic practices. The anointing of the next hereditary Imam, and a special clan festival that slaughtered animals which could not be confirmed by the literature were also reported; both interviewees clearly stated such activities were cultural, not religious, practices. One interviewee reported that an Islamic religious leader in Somalia considered that the sea festival came from the ‘devil’. Further, this interviewee questioned Sufism’s current influence in Somalia and claimed that it was declining (Declich, 1995; Mansur, 1995), suggesting this decline was linked to the arrival of ‘Arabic books from Egypt, Saudi Arabia’, some 40 years ago, when many Somalis could not speak Arabic.

Of relevance to this refugee’s comments on Sufis is that they can be seen as deviant or unorthodox by both Sunni and Shi’ite opponents (Saeed & Saeed, 2004), with Wahhabis and Salafis also denouncing Sufism (Saeed, 2006). Further, Esposito (2003) and Glasse (2002) contend that Sufism is being scapegoated for the backwardness of Muslim countries. Saeed (2004) suggests this negative attitude is due to minority excesses, while Esposito states it is politically driven.

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40 Tiilikainen (2003) states that such rituals appear to be pre-Islamic Cushitic religious beliefs combined with Sufism. with ‘spirits’, called jinns being expelled by the reading of the Qur’an. Some state this is the ‘zar cult’ (Csordas & Lewton, 1998; Metz, 1992; Tiilikainen, 2003).

41 Castango (1975) states rainmaking, holy trees and the celebration of seasonal festivals also occur in Somalia.

42 Salafis began in the early twentieth century as a modernisation movement to accommodate Islam to secularism. They have been influential throughout the Muslim world; that is, the influential Muslim Brotherhood. Today the term is applied not to rationalists, but to fundamentalist and uncompromising movements (Glasse, 2002), or the more moderate definition by Esposito (2003) as traditional reformers.
4.1.2 Colonial Influence on Somali Refugees

Christian missionary activity was evident as most interviewees reported that they or their parents were partly educated in Catholic mission or British colonial schools (Castagno, 1973) or had considerable family business with Somalia’s Christian colonisers or had family members who had studied in Italy or Britain. Thus an understanding of Somalia’s colonial history is useful as it gives the collective background in how the interfaith attitudes of the refugees were formed.

During the nineteenth century the Somali people came under the control of some European powers (Metz, 1992; Samatar, 1988; SBS, 2008). Firstly, Britain intervened in 1875 when Egypt attempted to take the north of Somalia. However Britain stopped this intervention by declaring the region a British protectorate called Somaliland. The British did not colonise it, but rather utilised it for its strategic importance. Later in 1885, Italy claimed the Benadir coast but, unlike Britain, colonised it with Italian nationals (Castagno, 1973). In 1943, after Italy was defeated in World War II, southern Somalia was returned to Italy, eventually to become a United Nations trusteeship from 1950, until both the British north and the southern protectorate gained independence in 1960. Thus, in Somalia the two main clan lineages were divided by territory, according to foreign occupation and the colonial past, with the north British and the south Italian. Finally, in 1963, Kenya gaining independence from the British and in 1973 Djibouti from the French (UNHCR, 1996) meant that many ethnic Somalis now lived in Kenya and Djibouti, and that some were in Ethiopia. Ethnic Somalis from these three nations all currently live in Melbourne.

Generally speaking, in Africa and, by inference, Somalia, during the colonial era, missionary education was linked to colonialism. The British, Italian Catholics and the Egyptian government established schools in Somalia (Castagno, 1973). Mission education is said to have introduced Western thought and provided the formation of educated African elites (Habte, Wagaw & Ajayi, 1999; Robinson, 2004; Sundkler & Steed, 2000). However, colonial powers also subsidised some Qur’anic schools in Somalia (Castagno, 1973). Studies show there was considerable resistance to
missionaries by African Muslims (Tshibangu, Ajayi & Sanneh, 1999), with Christian missionaries being less successful in Somalia than in other parts of Africa (Sundkler & Steed, 2000).

Several differing responses to Christian colonialism were found. Two interviewees, both from the traditional leadership stratum, had some of their education at Christian schools. One instance of resistance to missionary activity was collected. One interviewee’s close relative refused to join a Sayyid’s struggle in the north. The Sayyid was Muhammad bin Abd Allah Hassan, an important Sufi figure in Somalia’s history who from 1895 for 20 years led failed attacks against the British and Italian domination of Somalia (Metz, 1992; Samatar, 1988). In contrast, two Somalis interviewed independently stated Sayyid was seen as a hero by some Somalis, not an uncommon view (Esposito, 2003; Metz, 1992; Sundkler & Steed, 2000), whereas the British called him the ‘Mad Mullah’ (Glasse, 2002; Sundkler & Steed, 2000). Some Islamic commentators contend that this resistance was inspired by the Madhi who instigated the 1881 uprising against the British in colonial Sudan (Glasse, 2002). However, some Somali clans resisted Sayyid’s strict form of Islam (Samatar, 1988). The effect of the resistance to Sayyid was the death of the interviewee’s close relative, which resulted in the family being forced to move from north to south Somalia.

Two additional responses to colonialism occurred. The only refugee not educated in a Christian school stated that her Italian non-Islamic way of dressing and wearing her hair became a concern to her after flight. Secondly, with regard to the Christian mission education reported in the data, allowing for possible exaggeration on the part of the Somali participants, or sensitivity to the researcher’s known cultural background, the collated data suggested that for the refugees or their families, Christian mission education appeared a positive interfaith experience with this having consequences in Australia (see Chapter 9).

43 In this instance a title of respect for the descendants from the Prophet’s family through Fatima the Prophet’s daughter and Ali ibn Abi Talib (Glasse, 2002).
44 Meaning in Arabic ‘the Guided One’, a figure believed to appear before the end of the world (Glasse, 2002).
4.1.3 Socialism in Somalia and the Counter-reaction

As well as an understanding of colonialism, an understanding of Somalia’s socialist past is also necessary, as comments show a refugee’s religious meaning system has been consciously or unconsciously influenced by the socialist eras when complex international relations were played out.

Independence in 1960 did not bring peace or political stability to Somalia. One early instance of instability was when the Barre socialist government (1969–1991) launched and lost a war (1977–1978) over Ethiopian ownership of the disputed Ogaden province. As a result of the Soviet Union’s actively supporting Ethiopia in 1978 (SBS, 2008) the Barre government switched allegiances from the Soviet Union to the USA, with Somalia becoming part of the battle for control of the Horn of Africa ‘as a Cold War proxy for the USA and Soviet Union’ (International Crisis Group, 2005). In 1991 the three liberation movements of Somalia jointly overthrew the Barre government (Griffiths, 2003; SBS, 2008).

Since 1991 Somalia has been in considerable turmoil. In 1992, the former British colony of Somaliland proclaimed independence (Griffiths, 2003). This was followed by the 1992 United Nations, US-led peacekeeping mission that went to Somalia to protect food convoys. This mission was aborted in 1995 and since then there has been an ongoing civil war. In 2007 Ethiopia, supported by the USA, assisted the Transitional Nationalist Government (SBS, 2008). According to the International Crisis Group, Islamists have since tried to remove the Ethiopian troops (2008), who at the time of writing are still present. Currently, the situation is very fluid, with the country for some time divided into three areas.45

One well-informed interviewee recalled events and issues as they viewed the past. For example, an increase in Christian missionary activity during the Ogaden War, the

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45 Somaliland, previously the north province, was proclaimed in 1993. It is predominantly of the Isaaq clan. Puntland in the northeast was proclaimed in 1998. It is predominantly of the Harti and Daarood clans. Somalia is in the southern provinces, including Mogadishu within it (SBS, 2008).
unfortunate incident of the beating to death of a missionary by a Somali and imams allegedly stopping the establishment of a British university in northern Somalia. They concluded stating only a minuscule number of Somalis were converted to Christianity.

During Barre’s rule, despite the government’s policy that scientific socialism and Islam were compatible (Castagno, 1973), two incidents of religious conflict were reported by interviewees and confirmed by the literature. Firstly, two interviewees reported Soviet-style property rights for women were introduced, which conflicted with the traditional Somali Islamic rights of men inheriting property (Esposito, 2003; Metz, 1992). The subsequent protests resulted in some religious leaders being executed by the Barre government in 1975 (Esposito, 2003; Lewis, 2002; Metz, 1992). In addition, a young woman, known to a refugee, was jailed because she wore the veil to school. Both incidents were reported by Africa Watch (1990).

The third issue focused on the influence of globalised movements. One well-positioned interviewee mentioned the influence of sexual liberation, even of Buddhism in their northern Somali high school, and the counter-reaction, with some students becoming more involved in Islam, and an increased dialogue on the wearing of the veil. The interviewees also reported some students challenged the morality of traditional Somali religious leaders living a ‘luxury life’ from the proceeds of religious services. Africa Watch (1990) at the time documented the persecution of some Islamic northern Somali students.

In the early 1990s, at the time of the refugees’ flight, studies of Somalis indicate Islam appeared to be strengthening. The ideological clashes with the Barre government mentioned above caused the formation of Islamic opposition groups and a subsequent Islamic revival (Esposito, 2003). Other commentators state (Metz, 1992) that militant Islam sprang up to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of Somalia in 1991. Some suggested the rise of militancy, as with the al-ittihad group, which arose as a by-product of hardship (UNHCR, 1996). This al-ittihad al-Islam (Islamic Unity Movement), which some say has had links to Iran and Sudan, is prominent in western Somalia near the
Ethiopian border (Esposito, 2003; Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004). In contrast, some researchers state that al-ittihad was financed by Saudi Arabia and been operational since the 1960s, or perhaps the 1970s (Mukhtar & Castagno, 2003), and continued to fight for Ogaden’s independence from Ethiopia (UNHCR, 1996). According to one religious leader, since 1991 powerful clans have used religion as a way of gaining control over the mostly uneducated Somalis, shifting then to a Wahhabist, rigid style of extremism.

**4.1.4 Somali Refugees and Their Flight**

Two of the three Somali refugees concurred that the refugee flow resulted from a civil war between clans (Lewis, 2002), the result of the Barre socialist government gaining control which favoured the Majerteen, a Daarood sub-clan. The government’s stated rhetoric was to unite the clans (UNHCR, 1996), and yet it persecuted the Isaaq and the Hawiye clans as they had supported the previous government (Report, 1990). Some commentators state another cause of the civil war was the effect of the historic partitioning of the country into two by the British and Italian colonisers (Assal, 2004). However, the International Crisis Group’s (2008) recent overarching view appears more accurate. The report suggests several factors: colonialism and then the cold war proxy status of Somalia. Further, the Barre government and consequent Daarood clan gained weapons and finance from corruption, as a result of the inappropriate use of foreign aid, a consequence of the 1992 US intervention. These later factors resulted in other clans taking action against the Barre government, which resulted in the collapse of the State.

What was clear in the data and the 1996 UNHCR report was that minorities or minority clans, a third of the Somali population (Griffiths, 2003), were persecuted by majority clans. These persecuted minorities were: Bantus, Digil and Rahanweyn clans, and other minorities, some of whom adopted Benadir as a generic minority term (Griffiths, 2003). In contrast, Metz (1992) states some Somalis view their civil war as being caused by Muslims straying from the ‘path’ and is perceived as punishment from God.

The third Somali refugee left their home to take up an Egyptian government university scholarship in Cairo. According to Moro (2004), Egypt gives many scholarships to
Africans. Of relevance, the interviewee had attended student protests against the Barre government, just narrowly escaping arrest. In Egypt, the interviewee married a refugee and thus gained a visa for Australia. Had the refugee not married, they would have returned to Somalia after completing their postgraduate education.

4.2 Ethiopia

Four Ethiopian refugees were interviewed, two females, the Muslim Shegee, and Semira, a Lutheran, both 35 years old, and both Oromo. Two males were also interviewed, Haile, also 35 years old, Amharic Ethiopian Orthodox by birth, and Ali, a 60-year-old ethnic Somali Sunni Muslim. Pertinent information from Ethiopian religious leaders, two cultural consultants and interpreters was also gained.

The Australian 2006 census identified 5,640 Ethiopian-born residing in Australia with 55 per cent in Victoria. The first wave of Ethiopian refugees arrived in the mid-1980s, with the vast majority coming after 1991, towards the end of Mengistu’s rule. Most of the Ethiopians came on humanitarian/refugee visas (Jupp, 2001). Prior to arriving, most had lived in refugee camps in Somalia, Sudan, Kenya or Djibouti. The Ethiopian religious groups in Australia are generally divided along ethnic lines: the Tigray and Amhara (the majority) are Orthodox Christians, while the Oromo and Hari are generally Muslims. There is also a small percentage of ethnic Somalis. Census data showed the following profile: Oriental Orthodox 21.9 per cent, Eastern Orthodox 21.6 per cent, Catholic 6.7 per cent, Islam 22.2 per cent, and other 27.6 per cent (DIAC, n.d-a; Gow, 2001), many of whom presumably are Protestant Pentecostals/Evangelicals.46

46 It was beyond the scope of this research to define if the Christian refugees were Evangelical or Pentecostal, so the term Evangelical will be used. Literature gives the differences as:

1) Evangelicals are Protestants such as Billy Graham, who emphasise the divinity and teachings of Christ, who stress sin and the need to be born again (Hood et al., 2005; Wulff, 1997).

2) Pentecostals, with their varying groups, emphasise the experiential over the rational and have a carefully worked out theology which includes the input of the Holy Spirit in the revelation of scripture and other revelatory powers (Hood et al., 2005).

Hood et al. (2005) also state that fundamentalists view their relationship to the surrounding culture through the imagery of warfare, whereas Evangelicals are more conciliatory towards the broader culture. Further, Evangelicals and Fundamentalists regard themselves as different and so can be hostile to each other.
4.2.1 Ethiopia: Religious and Cultural Background

Ethiopia, with a population of 78 million (SBS, 2008), according to the 1994 census, has 78 different ethnic groups (Dessalegn, 2004), with eight major groups, including the Oromo (40 per cent), Amhara and Tigre (32 per cent), Sidamo (9 per cent) and Somali (6 per cent) (SBS, 2008). The religious breakdown is estimated to be Muslim (40–45 per cent), Ethiopian Orthodox (35–40 per cent), Animist (12 per cent), and other 3–8 per cent, which includes some Jews (Edelstein, 2002; SBS, 2008). Ethiopia has 80 languages and 200 dialects, although Amharic is the official language (Dessalegn, 2004).

For centuries there has been a struggle for power between the Amhara and Tigrayans. The Amhara, traditionally a highland power, are a minority and are mostly Ethiopian Orthodox. Over the centuries, the Amhara and Ethiopian Orthodox have controlled the commercial and administrative parts of the government (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1991). Tigrayans, also a highland power, are mostly Ethiopian Orthodox, though some are Muslims (Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2001).

In contrast to Somalia, Ethiopia, as a multi-faith and multiethnic nation, is the oldest Christian state and the oldest independent country in Africa (Esposito, 2003). Christianity arrived in Ethiopia in the fourth century via the Egyptian Coptics (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004), and was adopted by the State. Thus, the emperor became the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, appointed by the Egyptian Copts until the 1950s. The Church was and is controlled mostly by ethnic Amharas (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1991; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2001).

With regard to colonial domination, Eritrea, a coastal region of Abyssinia (the previous name of Ethiopia), was occupied by Italians (1886–1941), then the British (1941–1952) (SBS, 2008). In 1941, Emperor Haile Salassi’s power was restored by the League of Nations. In 1962, Eritrea was annexed by Ethiopia and a 30-year war commenced. Initially the war was led by the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), then predominantly Muslim nationalists and Christians of labour movement backgrounds (Zolberg et al.,
This war caused many Eritreans to seek refuge in the Sudan (Zolberg et al., 1989). Then in 1974, Emperor Salassi, supported by the USA, was deposed by the Ethiopian military (Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2001). No refugee in this study was Eritrean.

Three studies (Library of Congress, 1991; Parry, Melling, Brady, Griffith & Healey, 1999; Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004) give pertinent information on Ethiopian Orthodoxy, one of the five Monophysite churches (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004; Ware, 1997). Ethiopia follows the Oriental Orthodox thirteen-month Julian Calendar with 250 fast days (the laity observes 165 days). The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has many special religious festivals that require prolonged singing, priestly dancing, drumming and feasting with only the ritually pure dancing in an inner ring and taking communion. Thus, most believers dance in the outer ring. The liturgical language is the ancient Ge’ez language with psalms being particularly important. The Ethiopian cross and the ark dedicated to the church’s patron saint are prominent features. Saint Cyril is an important patron saint for Ethiopians. As well, each local church has a patron saint and individual believers also have their own saint. Thus, praying through saints and angels to God is a common practice for Ethiopian Orthodox and the Orthodox in general. Finally, pilgrimages to places inside Ethiopia and to Jerusalem are also important.

The church has a long-established indigenous religious education system (Habte et al., 1999), with ranking according to Ethiopian Orthodox (EO) religious knowledge. In 1970, 20 per cent of the adult male population were priests. Some churches had between 100–500 priests, with most coming from the peasantry. The priest’s role was to celebrate the Eucharist, conduct baptisms and funerals, act as a confessor and other duties. In addition, there were other leadership structures:

- deacons
- monks

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47 See Chapter 2 for more details.
• *debteras*, 48 who act as choristers, dancers, poets, herbalists, astrologers, fortune tellers and scribes
• nuns, rare within the EO, though older women do perform specific tasks (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1991; Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004).

By the 1970s, prior to socialist rule, the EO Church had been firmly established for more than a thousand years. Thus, Ethiopia was hierarchically structured, a feudal kingdom with the Ethiopian Church owning more than 90 per cent of arable land, while the majority of Ethiopians were destitute (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1991; Sundkler & Steed, 2000).

### 4.2.2 Islam and Animism in Ethiopia

Ali, the oldest refugee, came from the territorially disputed Ogaden province of Eastern Ethiopia and had an Islamic education similar to the Somali males interviewed. His Muslim community (culturally assumed by the researcher as Sunni) functioned well in multiethnic and multi-faith Ethiopia.

Several differences with the Somali data were noted;
• his local mosque held religious education sessions that he attended in his youth
• the mosque was also a place where travellers stayed
• another level of religious leadership, ‘pious’ men, existed.

Studies show several other differences emerged between Ethiopian Muslims and Somali Muslims. Ethiopian Muslims are mostly Sunni of the Hanafi School, with some Malikis near the Sudanese border (Glasse, 2002). Some Sufi orders are present, but appear not to be influential or as organised as in Somalia (Library of Congress, 1991). As with Christianity, Islam has a long history in Ethiopia as, around 600 CE, Muhammad’s daughter was given refuge by the Abyssinian king and this was given as one reason why Arab Muslims did not invade Abyssinia at that time (Glasse, 2002; Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004). Similar to Somalia, Muslim traders combined trade and Islamic proselytising

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48 Or spelt as *dabtara* see Section 2.2.2 for more details.
Ethiopian Muslims generally have been small traders (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1991), with urban Muslims more able to practise their religion than nomadic people (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1991). Thus, by the nineteenth century Ethiopian Muslims were found in the ruling class, as agriculturalists and pastoralists (Robinson, 2004). During Haile Salassì’s rule, Islamic courts were available for family and inheritance matters (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1991). However, Arabic was not taught in Ethiopian schools (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004).

Ethnically speaking there are several groups of Ethiopian Muslims (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004):

1. Harer, city dwellers who have long been Muslims
2. ethnic Somalis
3. Oromo, who were later converts to Islam.

All are present in Melbourne

In contrast to Meriam, the Somali Muslim female mentioned in the previous Somali section, Shegee, had quite a different level of Islamic practice as Shegee could not read the Qur’an, neither did she attend an Islamic school. She outlined the extent of her Islamic practices:

*Any Muslim people in Ethiopia in the city, any [stressed] of them do not wear hijab and when I was in Ethiopia. I told you, Friday, we just put cover, our little tiny thing [scarf], we put in the bag and we go normal* [gesturing trousers].
Prior to being Muslim (the researcher assumed Sunni), Shegee’s Oromo family would have been Animists. Various studies state there are a range of Animists in Ethiopia, mainly in the south (Dessalegn, 2004). Oromo, the major ethnic group, are Cushitic-speaking people related to the Somalis (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004). This group believes in the divine waaga, the Sky God, as the source of all life, the creator of all things (Bartels, 1983; Gow, 2002). The Oromo have traditional leadership structures called the gada (as do the Sudanese Nuer). Some of the most important are ritual leaders, similar to high priests (Bartels, 1983). Society is structured according to clans or lineages that have four social strata (Bartels, 1983). In addition, Semira’s family, prior to their conversion to Christianity, were also Oromo Animists. Such conversions will be examined below.

4.2.3 Missionaries in Ethiopia

In contrast to Shegee and Haile, Semira is an Oromo Lutheran, brought up in a highly religious household where church attendance, learning the Bible from the same-sex parent and prayer were important parts of family life. In fact, her grandmother, previously an Animist, was converted by Lutheran Swedish missionaries. Later, both her mother and grandmother were involved in Christian evangelism.

As in Somalia, missionary education was evident. Shegee was partly educated in a Lutheran school. Haile and Ali, the ethnic Somali, were both educated by Roman Catholics. Thus, how did Catholicism and Lutheranism come to this Ethiopian Orthodox State?

Several studies show different Christian missions came to Ethiopia. The first time was when neighbouring Muslims invaded in the sixteenth century (Esposito, 2003; Glasse, 2002). The then Ethiopian emperor, aided by the Portuguese, eventually repelled the attack from the ‘Galla’ (Glasse, 2002), a derogatory name for the Oromo (Gow, 2002; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2001), tribesmen from Somalia (Glasse, 2002; Sundkler & Steed, 2000).
After these Portuguese Catholics, the next missionaries were Anglicans in the 1840s and then other missionaries followed. For example, Swedish Lutherans were the first to direct missions in the 1860s to the Oromo (Sundkler & Steed, 2000). Again this was a difficult relationship between the State and these non-Oriental Orthodox groups. The different emperors allowed, regulated or expelled the missionaries. The various approaches depended on the emperor’s perception of the need for health services, education, and development or leverage for military aid that foreign missionaries brought (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004).

In the 1940s, the last emperor, Haile Salassi, divided the country into two parts. One area was designated for the Ethiopian Orthodox where no proselytising could occur and the other, an ‘open’ area, mostly of non-Orthodox people, where proselytising by various Christian missionaries was allowed (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1991; Sundkler & Steed, 2000). Thus, the Oromo ‘pagans’ were targeted for proselytising (Bartels, 1983; Sundkler & Steed, 2000).

Missionary activity dramatically increased with the arrival of North American missionaries in the twentieth century (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004). Some churches were and are growing exponentially as a result of indigenisation of the leadership, a strategy used by Australian Evangelicals and those of other nations (Donham, 1999). Donham points out that the foreign missionaries saw themselves as apostles, not Evangelists. Conversion for the locals meant a total change of life and, unlike in other parts of Africa, in Southern Ethiopia this did not mean a mixing of indigenised culture with Christianity.

One of the largest, indigenised groups is the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus, an outcome of Lutheran missionary work with the Oromo. This church is involved in famine relief and health and welfare programs (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004). Shinn and Ofcansky state that currently foreign missionaries have a small presence as indigenous Evangelical Protestant groups have taken root. In contrast, in the 1960s prior to the fall of the Emperor, there were approximately 900 foreign missionaries in Ethiopia, but only 1.5 per cent of the population were converts (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles,
Now it is contended that 5 per cent have been converted as a result of missionary activity (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004). However, these figures are in dispute.

Thus, these studies shed light on the conversion of Semira’s Oromo grandmother and the indigenised Evangelical activities of both her mother and grandmother. Taking into account other data, evidence strongly suggests that Semira’s family belonged to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus. With regard to the Christian converts in Shegee’s family, given that there were various missions targeting the Oromo, all that was known was they were Christians.

In contrast to the refugees’ positive response to Christian missionaries and their education system, a cultural consultant of Ethiopian Orthodox background gave a less favourable response:

… most of Africa was colonised without having a single shot-bullet, just through the missionaries [inferred non-Ethiopian Orthodox Christians] they divided people … [and] gave all the information to the colonisers … they came as the conquerors.

Such an anti-colonialist attitude appeared more prevalent in studies on Muslim responses to colonialism (Habte et al., 1999). However, Matsuoka and Sorenson (2001) raise a further observation of Ethiopian Orthodox exiled in Canada strengthening their minority identity by articulating anti-colonial attitudes. In contrast, analysis suggests the Canadian observations did not appear accurate for this cultural consultant, or for other Amharic refugees interviewed in Melbourne.

4.2.4 Socialist Rule and Refugee Religiosity

The religiosity of the three younger refugees was affected by the socialist rule of Ethiopia. In 1974, the Emperor was deposed. Three years later Colonel Mengistu established a Marxist-Leninist government that brutally ruled (Wolde Giorgis, 1989).
Ethiopia until 1991 (SBS, 2008). The Somali government, taking advantage of the internal disorder, invaded the territorially disputed Ogaden region of Ethiopia. This resulted in many ethnic Somalis fleeing to Djibouti and Somalia (Zolberg et al., 1989). However, with military assistance from the USSR, Cuba and others, formerly Somalia’s allies, the Mengistu government forced the Somalis out of Ogaden. During this time, refugees were used as political pawns between the countries (Zolberg et al., 1989). This was when Ali fled his city, dressed as a rural peasant, only narrowly escaping being shot by Cuban forces.

In the 1970s, two groups took up arms against the Mengistu government. These were the Tigrian Peoples’ Liberation Front (TPLF), closely allied to the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), which some say (Zolberg et al., 1989) was mainly Muslims espousing a pan-Islam ideology (Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2001), and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), fighting for an independent Oromo homeland. In the 1980s, in addition to the war, there were major famines in Ethiopia and the international media focus brought in Western aid (SBS, 2003). The war against Eritrea ended with it achieving independence in 1993 (SBS, 2008). However, since then there have been some violations of the subsequent agreement (International Crisis Group, 2006a).

How did a socialist government affect religion in Ethiopia? Ware’s (1997) comments are pertinent for Ethiopia: under Soviet communism the Russian Orthodox Church was both protected and persecuted. Similarly to the Soviet communists, Ethiopian socialists promoted atheism, were anti-religious and either oppressed or at times eliminated religious institutions (Sundkler & Steed, 2000; Ware, 1997). Further, the Ethiopian Orthodox (EO) Church leadership was imprisoned or murdered, and their facilities were destroyed. In addition to suppressing the EO Church, the government tightened its grip on Catholics and Protestants (Sundkler & Steed, 2000). For example, one consultant suggested there were spies in the Orthodox churches. Some studies (Eide, 2000) state that the EO church collaborated with the regime and was complicit in repressing other Churches that the last Emperor had defended. Further, Falashas, or Ethiopian Jews,
suffered under Mengistu’s repression with 14,000 being air-lifted to Israel in 1991 (Edelstein, 2002; Sundkler & Steed, 2000).

The Mengistu rule affected the three younger refugees’ religiosity in several ways. Firstly, it marginalised religious expression and practice. For example, one religious leader and a cultural consultant stated that the government was ‘anti-religion’ and that religious people were seen as ‘not good communists … not advanced persons’ (Sundkler & Steed, 2000). Secondly, unlike in previous generations, the three younger refugees attended socialist schools for most of their education. Previous to the Mengistu rule there had been EO and Islamic schools and traditional Animist ways of educating children (Habte et al., 1999) and Christian missionary schools. Although data suggest home-based religious education and education sessions, it appears many children did not receive their traditional religious EO education. As well, at government schools there were no religious education classes. Thus, the collective political system that dominated Ethiopia during the three refugees’ childhood and teenage years did not support religion. Therefore, it was not surprising that Haile, Semira and Shegee did not have a strong religious meaning system. For example, as one stated ‘I finished my high school, I became a bit tired of the Bible’.

Finally, for two of the three, both from the small Ethiopian urban middle class, the economic collapse at the end of the Mengistu rule had mental health consequences. One reported having a mental breakdown because of difficult family circumstances, with the final trigger being the failure to gain acceptance into an Ethiopian university. The second refugee appeared to overcome depression by switching religious affiliation. This will be examined in a later chapter.

4.2.5 Christian Inter-Denomination Hostility and Cordial Interfaith Relations

A considerable amount of data and studies confirm the paradox of inter-denominational hostility between Evangelicals/fundamentalists and the EO Church, and relatively little between Muslims and Christians (Eide, 2000; Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004; Sundkler & Steed, 2000). Hostility between the two Christian groups appears to have been
exacerbated by an increase in the number of non-Orthodox churches in Ethiopia. The
Orthodox religious leader suggested two reasons for this rise. Firstly, the 1985 Ethiopian
famine meant many Western Christians gave food and clothing to Ethiopia. He
suggested, unknown to donors or their churches, groups such as World Vision (possibly
the USA) would use these donations to ‘buy’ Ethiopians into their Protestant churches.
He suggested the Americans (Pentecostals) are the most aggressive of all the Christian
groups in their use of aid for missionary purposes. Secondly, the religious leader stated
Western Christian groups thought the EO had collaborated with the Mengistu
government’s ‘communism’, an ideology that many Protestant churches oppose and so
they sent groups to Ethiopia. Such comments appear to deny the fact that the Mengistu
government appointed a ‘new’ Patriarch and hierarchy, which Eide states resulted in the
consequent collaboration (Eide, 2000; Sundkler & Steed, 2000).

Other causes of hostility were more deeply religious, and deeply felt. The EO religious
leader explained that the Western Church had lost ‘tradition’ at the time of the
Reformation. Conversely, an Evangelical Ethiopian stated that the EO Church believed in
angels, saints and Mary more than Jesus, and placed religious laws before the spirit of
God. The Evangelical further stated that EO are not born again. Thus, these comments
exhibit interdenominational prejudice due to differences in religious beliefs and practices.
Although there is some possible exaggeration, a cultural consultant’s reflection is that
both denominations in Ethiopia talk of each other as ‘devils, evil, we have to kill them’.

Interview data supported by the academic studies agree Christian interdenominational
hostility has increased since the entry of Western Evangelical/Fundamentalist missions in
Ethiopia, Christian foreign aid programs and the fall of the Mengistu government. This is
not surprising, given the dominance of the traditional EO Church with its surrounding
structures, control of lands and wealth in Ethiopia. Such Protestant competition would be,
and is, threatening in such an impoverished country; particularly as Ware (1997) states
that some Orthodox view themselves as the guardians of ‘the’ true faith.
Even allowing for idolisation of the home country, the interviews revealed little hostility between Muslims and Christians. For example, in Addis Ababa, Haile and Shegee spent their youth in a state of mixed ethnicity, class and religion, with friendships made at school or in their neighbourhoods. Further, Shegge, the Oromo, had Christians and Muslims in her immediate family and reported no religious difficulties. Further, when she had a ‘mental breakdown’ and all else failed, she was taken to a Christian church for healing, a seemingly not uncommon occurrence. As well, one Muslim Oromo religious leader stated that in Ethiopia, Christian and Muslim Oromo and others lived peacefully side by side with little talk of religion. Thus, these comments appear to agree with Esposito’s (2003) statement that in Ethiopia Christian–Muslim hostility was not a historic nor a colonial legacy (also see Coffey (2003)). On the other hand, the Oromo who went to a provincial Lutheran primary school reported little interfaith mixing. In understanding this finding a study which suggests rural people were homogenous in ethnicity and religion is pertinent (Library of Congress, 1991).

Further studies and data contrast with the fact that historically, Islam has been treated as a secondary religion in Ethiopia and so Muslims were discriminated against (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004). Various studies suggest historically the majority tribe, the Oromo, were oppressed by the Amhara (Gow, 2002; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2001; Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004), with some Ethiopian emperors using the forced conversion of Muslims and Animist Oromo to the EO Church as a way of expanding territory (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004). In addition, within the Oromo and other Animists there was a gradual shift to Islam by Animists as well as forced conversions (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004).

4.2.6 Culture and Religion

Most of the Ethiopian data showed the intertwining of cultural and religious practices. Three examples highlight this. Firstly, Shegee, the Oromo Muslim, mentioned the Ethiopian coffee ceremony (see more details in Chapter 6) she would participate in with her Addis Ababa neighbours. Studies show that Ethiopian Jews have similar coffee

49 Robinson (2004) suggests two jihads, or as the EO Church might contend, crusades occurred between the Orthodox and Muslims in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
rituals (Edelstein, 2002) associated with zar or evil spirits. The Library of Congress study states that the belief in zars is present among Christian, Muslim and Animist Ethiopians, with all believing zars are either male or female and have various personality traits, and that zars can cause misfortune. Shinn and Ofcansky (2004) state while most Oromo have been converted to Islam, Protestantism or Orthodoxy, some still hold several Animist beliefs as in Shegee’s case.

Ali gives the second religo/cultural example; namely, a healing ritual, similar to the Somali ritual. Studies show both Ethiopians and Somalis (Library of Congress, 1991; Tiilikainen, 2003) use the ritual to assist women with mild psychiatric illnesses. Ali gave more detail; men read a Surat from the Qur’an that requests the jinn or bad spirit to leave the person. Through an interpreter, he stated:

So there are people who read the Qur’an, they [jinn] say ‘no we don’t leave you’. You have to leave this person or we burn [metaphorically] you with the Qur’an, we continue, we continue [reading the Qur’an].

He then described what occurs after the reading of the Qur’an:

They [the person] become very excited and very talk. Jinn talk inside of the person and they explain why they are harming this person. They sometimes said this person he killed our children [jinn’s children].

Only one person expressed disapproval of what he termed witchcraft activities, possibly those of EO Church debteras. His switch to a more Evangelical style of Christianity appears to have been the trigger. In conclusion, the data confirmed cultural and religious rituals, particularly surrounding the placation, or the managing, of evil spirits present in everyday life for both Muslims and Christians.
4.2.7 Rise in Religiosity in Ethiopia

Robinson (2004) comments that both Muslims and Christians did not fare well under the Mengistu socialist rule, yet according to one refugee, Haile, religiosity increased in Ethiopia. This appears to reflect studies that show during the Mengistu rule, Christian churches survived and in fact grew by developing extensive underground networks. In addition, a new lay leadership emerged in the EO Church (Sundkler & Steed, 2000). Since the 1991 fall of the socialists, Protestant/Pentecostal activities have increased with many indigenous groups being converted (Eide, 2000; Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004).

With regard to the Oromo Muslims, Bartels (1983) suggests Islam increased its power because of the Oromo’s aversion to Amharic oppression or as a reaction to Western colonial imperialism. Robinson (2004) states that, since independence Islam has had a revival in Eritrea. In contrast to this, Shinn and Ofcansky (2004) suggest Ethiopian Muslims are not receptive to Islamic fundamentalism. However, another study states the Sunni militant movement, al Itihad al-Islam (Islamic Unity Movement), is active in the ethnic Somali area. This is the region where in the 1890s the Somali, Muhammad bin Abd Allah Hassan, led the rebellion against the colonialists (Shinn & Ofcansky, 2004).

Finally, a cultural consultant mentioned the rise of ‘extreme’ EO in Ethiopia. Matsuoko and Sorenson (2001) call this ‘Abyssinian fundamentalism’, which has emerged in post-socialist Ethiopia and in its Diaspora. In addition, Varga (1993) suggests a link between Orthodoxy, identity and the rise of nationalism in post-communist Orthodox countries generally.

4.2.8 Religion and the Refugee Flight

Religious persecution was not the reason for the flight of Ethiopian refugees. There were other reasons. Firstly, the Ethiopian Somali minorities were labelled as the ‘enemy’ during the Ogaden War. Secondly, for Oromos and Amharas, the reasons given were the lack of university places and social and economic collapse at the end of the Mengistu rule. Thirdly, two female Oromos used the opportunity to study in other parts of Africa as a way of escaping. There also appeared to be other individual factors; for example, one
refugee’s family appeared to be a collaborator with the Mengistu regime, and in another, a business family was unpopular with Mengistu’s socialist regime. The final refugee fled to avoid fighting in Eritrea, a war he did not believe in.

Regarding the granting of Australian visas, Ali received a special humanitarian visa to join his family in Australia. The three others met and married their spouses who had gained refugee visas in their place of asylum. It is unknown as to the spouses’ refugee circumstances, but it is suspected that one or two were persecuted by the Mengistu government. All appeared to be love marriages, though there was awareness by one that visas were easier to obtain for married couples.

Zolberg et al. (1989) state there were different vintages (Kunz, 1973, 1981) of Ethiopian refugees within the early flight groups. The first was a small number of officials from the Imperial regime who fled in 1974, and a second flight occurred in the late 1970s, after a period known as the ‘Red Terror’ (Matsuoka & Sorensen, 2001). These were mostly leftist students who opposed Mengistu’s rule. Again, vintage differences occurred in settlement in host countries with Gow (2001) stating that in the 1980s and 1990s the more privileged and educated chose residency in North America. Thus, Australia received the less educated Ethiopian refugees, with the vast majority coming after 1991 (DIAC, n.d-a).

4.3 Sudan

Seven Sudanese refugees were interviewed. Some of their tribal names are not mentioned, as some interviewees would be identifiable. Interviewees were two northerners of Arab Muslim background, Khalid, a 40-year-old male, and Samma, a 38-year-old female, and five southerners, James, a 50-year-old male and southern Sudanese Animist, and Paulo, a 35-year-old male of Animist and Christian background. Those of Christian background were: Peter, a 40-year-old male, together with Margaret and Rebecca, both in their thirties. In addition, information was gathered from three religious leaders, including a non-Sudanese, and a cultural consultant.
In 2006, 19,050 Sudan-born were living in Australia; 32.6 per cent resided in Victoria, with the others scattered across Australia. The first wave of Sudanese arrived between 1992–1997, many under the humanitarian program. Many from this wave were of Coptic or Greek Orthodox background, and only a minority were Muslims. All tended to be better educated than the average Australian. Most fled to Ethiopia, the Congo, Kenya or Uganda prior to arrival. The second wave of Sudanese refugees arrived between 2001–2006, with a huge 287.7 per cent increase in Sudan-born arrivals. Most were from South Sudan, with nearly all coming under the humanitarian program. Religiously speaking, the majority of Sudan-born are Christian, with 18.9 per cent being Anglican, 35.8 per cent Catholic and 11.1 per cent Oriental Orthodox. Thirteen per cent are Muslim with 21.1 per cent belonging to the ‘other’ category; for example, Egyptian or Greek minority background (DIAC, n.d-d; Jupp, 2001).

4.3.1 Multi-religious Context of the Sudan

The Sudan is ethnically and religiously divided along north and south lines with a population of 40 million; 22 per cent live in urban areas where most of the refugees had resided. The literacy level is 59 per cent with life expectancy at 50 years. The official language is Arabic, which most interviewees could speak (SBS, 2008).

The ethnic composition is 52 per cent black Africans mainly in the south and 39 per cent Arab in the north (SBS, 2008), with several tribal groupings (Holt & Daly, 2000). The south is also tribal, with over 500 ethnic groups (Moro, 2004; SBS, 2008). Interviewees came from four Southern tribes.  

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50 Collins (2008) states that one-third of Sudan is non-Muslim. It comprises sixty main tribal groupings, a number of whom are present in Australia. Some are listed as:

1) Western Nilotodes: Luo, Shilluk, Achol, Dinka (largest) Nuer etc.
3) Azande (Niam-Niam) recent arrivals to Sudan who are of the Niger-Congo linguistic family. Other studies give slightly different groupings. It should also be noted that not all the literature names such Southern groupings and tribal names for the one group (Holt & Daly, 2000; Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1991b; Deng, 1994). For example, Beswick (2004) gives another grouping, Western Nilotic, which comprises of Jieng (Dinka), Naath Colo (Shilluk) and Acholi.
The religious profile is that 70 per cent of the northerners are Sunni Muslim Arabs (SBS, 2008), including some Sufis (Glasse, 2002). The southerners are 25 per cent Animist, with the percentage of Christians contested as some studies state 5 per cent, (CIA World Book, 2007; LeMarquand, 2006; Ruay, 1994; SBS, 2008) with one suggesting (Akol Ruay, 1994) a possibly exaggerated 30 per cent.

The first background examined is Animist. James, the Dinka, (a southern Sudan tribe) was one of the two refugees born into what data revealed as an Animist family. Studies show that traditionally, southern Sudanese were Animist with different tribal Gods. One of the two was James, who learnt his Dinka beliefs and practices from his father, highlighting the importance of the oral traditions, festivals, drumming, singing, song writing, cows and their sacrifice, and the family’s polygamist lifestyle common to the Dinkas (Deng 1972). Since childhood, James has had a strong sense of God protecting and surrounding him. For example, James believed God saved him from wild animals in the southern Sudanese bush when he was young.

Similar to most Sudanese interviewed, James was from a tribal leadership family where religious beliefs and leadership appeared intertwined. As a tribal elder James’s father had taught him to serve his tribe:

... what my dad did, he used to help the people, he used to pray to [for] the people; and the first thing he do was just call God and he believe in God, that God is there. It’s only person who created us so we must pray, and if we pray God will give to us the answer that we want.

His father believed:

Seminal anthropological studies have been written on southern Sudanese tribes: the Dinka (Deng, 1972) the Shilluk (can also be called Collo (Verney, 2006)), Nuer and others (Evans-Pritchard, 1972; Mair, 1974; Middleton, 1965).
God created the world and God is responsible for the rain nobody else … God who created us and we should do good things in front of God.

Thus, God was seen as creator and ‘watcher’. Traditional Dinka beliefs suggest that different people have different Gods, each having power over a particular tribe. However, there is only one God, who has power over all the people.

James for a long time toyed with the idea of becoming a Christian. However, a seemingly negative dream the night before his scheduled baptism delayed his conversion in the Sudan, but he was reluctant to give details. Perhaps it was a traditional clan spirit or yieth (Deng, 1972) that advised him against conversion.

The second religious background was Muslim. Samma, questioning by the researcher revealed she was of Sufi background for several generations and Khalid from an Arab Muslim family were interviewed. It appeared as if Khalid’s family were initially Sunni. However, Khalid subsequently shifted away from Islam. Sudanese Muslims are generally of the Maliki rite, with the legal system influenced by Hanafi law (Glasse, 2002). Historically, the history of Egypt and the Sudan has been interwoven (Metz, 1991; Robinson, 2004; SBS, 2008).

By the early 1800s, a loose Sunni Ottoman–Egyptian administration had been established in the Sudan (International Crisis Group, 2006b), with Egyptian Copts and Lebanese being sent to assist (Fluehr-Lobban, Lobban Jr & Obert Voll, 1992; Robinson, 2004; Sundkler & Steed, 2000). This ‘colonial’ administration was resisted by northern Sudanese Muslims, with the best known rebellion being the 1881 uprising by Mohammed Ahmed, the Mahdi who defeated General Gordon to rid the Sudan of the Ottoman/Egyptian/British ‘pagan’ influence (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1991b; Robinson, 2004; Sundkler & Steed, 2000). This uprising, called the Mahdiyah, resulted in the establishment of the first Sudanese Islamic government, which
ruled until 1898 when Britain and Egypt again took control. In 1956, the Sudan finally gained independence from foreign powers. Thus, this historical colonial context was formative in both Muslims’ religious meaning systems.

Samma prayed five times a day at home, but, as she stated, there was no Islamic requirement for women to attend the mosque on Fridays. However, she did attend at Ramadan and other festivals. Like James, she was taught by her father, and God was an important fact in Samma and her family’s life. All of her family could read the Qur’an and the Hadith. She had Sufi leanings; her comments strongly suggested her family were also Sufis, though whether of the same order or groups within the order was unclear. Studies show traditionally there are several orders or *tariqah* in the Sudan, the main ones being (Glasse, 2002; Holt & Daly, 2000):

- *Qadiriyyah*, the first Sufi school founded by a Baghdad Islamic saint engaged in trance dancing
- *Shadhili*, who follow the Maliki School and who believe in plain dress.

There was a third group, *Sanusiyyah*, about whom expert opinion is divided. During Ottoman-British-Egyptian times, some Sufi grew in importance and in opposition to this oppression (Robinson, 2004), and because colonial Britain used Egyptians and Egyptian institutions such as the al-Azhar University (Sunni Islamists) to control the Sudanese. Hence, Sufism arose to counteract this manipulation.

The third religious group in the Sudan was Christian. Margaret, a non-Dinka, was born into what data revealed as an Anglican family. The activities she was involved in were:

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52 Robinson (2004) suggests the *Mahdi* of Sudan had a vast impact on the Muslim world, as well as influencing how Westerners perceived Islam.
53 Esposito (2003) calls them an order, Glasse (2002) calls them a political-religious organisation and Saeed (2006) a movement. As well, Glasse states that they espouse an exocentric puritanical religion similar in style to Wahhabism, yet Saeed states that although they are revivalist Sufis, they are less fanatical and moderate in faith (Saeed, 2006). Finally, this group rejects dancing and singing (Esposito, 2003; Saeed, 2006).
54 It should be noted that other Sufi orders were also active in the Ottoman Empire during this time. However, in 1929, a few years after formation of the Secular Turkish Republic, its founder Kemal Atatürk closed Sufi orders and shrines (Esposito, 2003).
church attendance, Bible studies, dancing, ancestral and modern singing – sometimes these songs were of ancestors – and attending Sunday school. Rebecca, of an Eastern Nilotodes grouping, possibly Protestant, was also involved with the church where she learnt the Bible from her mother. Peter, the Anglican of Dinka lineage, mentioned the church’s collective rituals were important to him.

Comments showed nearly all southern Sudanese interviewees or their forefathers had had contact with Christian missionaries:

• one told stories of the first mission boat coming along the Nile and their tribe’s resultant conversion
• one told of great grandparents, grandparents or parents who converted to Christianity
• one had a grandmother who became an indigenous Christian missionary
• one attended a medical clinic run by European nuns.

When, how and why were African Animist Sudanese converted to Christianity? Christianity was in the Sudan prior to colonial rule and even prior to the Muslim era, coming in the third century, possibly via the Egyptian Copts, to the Nuba Mountains in West Sudan. There it ruled for about 1,000 years and then declined in influence (Fluehr-Lobban et al., 1992; Sundkler & Steed, 2000). Much later, in the mid-1800s Christian missionaries arrived, including the Australian Inland Mission (Ruay, 1994), mostly moving to the South (Sundkler & Steed, 2000).

Several scholars state Christianity was spread in Africa by the colonial powers and missionaries (Ray, 1976; Sundkler & Steed, 2000). For a range of reasons, Christian missionaries in Sudan divided up the south into denominational areas in 1905. This resulted in conversions and subsequent denominational membership being generally along tribal lines. Thus, the Nuer became Presbyterian, the Shilluk Presbyterian or Catholic and the Dinka Anglican (Sundkler & Steed, 2000). Yet according to a Melbourne academic most Dinkas are Evangelical Anglicans or Catholic.
Refugee comments highlighted two additional issues. Firstly, as to how long they and their families had been Christian, two Christian Sudanese were elusive and vague in answering, or they exaggerated by a generation or so. Yet Paulo mentioned, possibly accurately, that ‘85 per cent of southern Sudanese, especially over the age of thirty, they were not born Christians’. Secondly, denominational shifting occurred for reasons such as inter-church marriage, being baptized Anglican, but attending Catholic Church, or, as one refugee expressed it, because when ‘on the run’ during civil strife away from your denominational ‘area’, different churches assisted them.

4.3.2 Muslim Religiosity Shifts

Comments by the two Sudanese Muslims show they have been privy to many debates with regard to Islamic rule (O’Fahey, 1996). Khalid’s father, born into the religious and socio-political context of northern Sudan mentioned above, had shifted away from Islam due to the democratic era of the 1950s. A second shift was the result of Khalid’s involvement in ‘global’ discourses on human rights and secularism in reaction to the rule of the Nationalist Islamic Front (NIF). Both shifts are examples of Saeed’s (2004) contention that Westernisation, democracy and human rights discourses have caused conversion away from Islam. Thus, the post-independence climate in Sudan was the context for the formation of Khalid’s meaning system.

Independence in 1956 did not bring stability to the Sudan. In 1958 General Aboud seized power, introducing Islamisation, including the teaching of Arabic to both north and south Sudanese (Collins, 2008; Holt & Daly, 2000). During this time the first war named Anya Nya 1 (1955–1972) with the southern Sudanese took place (Holt & Daly, 2000). From 1965 onwards, there was civilian rule (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1991b), with parties of different Islamic and political persuasions in power. For example, the UMMA (Peoples’ Party) and the Democratic Union Party ruled during times of social and economic turmoil. In 1969, there was a swift and relatively bloodless coup when

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55 According to the Esposito and Voll’s (2001) study, Makers of Contemporary Islam, the Sudan has produced a remarkable number of Islamic intellectuals and political leaders of varying persuasions, all with innovative Islamic thinking.
Colonel Numayri took control of the Sudan. In the early 1980s, Numayri instigated Islamic (Sharia) law which angered moderate Muslims and southern Sudanese (Holt & Daly, 2000; International Crisis Group, 2006b).

Eventually Numayri was deposed by a popular uprising in 1985, but leadership struggles occurred until 1989 when the National Islamic Front (NIF) took control with the main opposition group being the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) (Collins, 2008; Holt & Daly, 2000; SBS, 2003). The government’s Islamic agenda and support of violence, for example, the harbouring of Osama bin Laden (Collins, 2008; International Crisis Group, 2006b) and its support for Iraq’s war on Kuwait, caused the international isolation of the Sudan (Holt & Daly, 2000; SBS, 2003). This action caused moderate Muslims who had fled to form an alliance called the NDA in 1996. It was made up of some opposition groups and trade unionists (Collins, 2008; Holt & Daly, 2000). Later the alliance included the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army or Movement (SPLA/M) (Collins, 2008; Esposito, 2003; SBS, 2008). Since 1998, the National Congress, in reality the NIF with Al Bashir as its President, has ruled Sudan (Collins, 2008; SBS, 2008; Verney, 2006).

4.3.3 Education, Colonial Rule and Conversion

Several issues arose with regard to the refugees’ education and its interaction with religion. Three southern Sudanese Christians attended primary school, some being mission-run. Two who moved to the north appeared to have won scholarships to high schools or universities run by the Islamic government. The other two, Margaret and James the Animist, received no formal education other than tribal or Sunday school until they arrived in Australia.

Comments and studies showed education and Christian missions have long been intertwined in Sudan. The British colonial administration in the south initially left education in the hands of Christian missionaries, with English being the language medium (Mazuri, 2001; Sundkler & Steed, 2000). However, in 1898 the British, sensitive to Sudanese resistance, restricted Christian missionaries from establishing themselves in the north of Sudan, except for a few schools in Khartoum (Deng, 1972; Sundkler &
Steed, 2000). Both Muslims and Christians wanted to convert Animists during this time. The next change occurred in 1957, directly after independence when the Sudanese government took control of all mission schools, forbidding new mission schools and introducing Arabic, not English, as the language of instruction – this being one step towards the Islamisation of the south (Collins, 2008).

The interaction between tribes, education, religion and power is evident in southern data and studies. For example, Paulo, the second Animist (a non-Dinka), revealed friction between his tribe and the Dinka. Beswick (2004) contextualises this, stating that for over 100 years the Dinka have been moving south and intermarrying with other tribes such as the Nuer as a form of integration. Thus, in the Sudan, the Dinka have become the dominant southern group (Beswick 2004).

Paulo also stated that he went to a rural Christian boarding school in the south for his primary education. He explained how education, religion and identity were politically intertwined in the Sudan. He stated this began at school on the first day; Animists had to choose either a Muslim or Christian name to be henceforth labelled. Paulo chose a Christian name (Beswick, 2004). Thus, unlike the Somali interviewees, none of the Sudanese Muslims attended missionary schools. Both attended government Islamic schools and universities in Khartoum, where one encountered political difficulties that will be examined later.

4.3.4 Inter-religious Relationships in Sudan

Other inter-religious encounters were found. Although one Muslim’s forefathers resisted colonial rule, the two Muslims had had more positive inter-religious experiences than the Christian refugees. Of the two Muslims, one learnt English in a church, most probably Catholic, due to his place of residence (Sundkler & Steed, 2000), stating that there was no pressure to convert. The other mixed with Christians at university and work. She reported some Copts being ‘scared’ of living among Muslims. She, a tertiary-educated Muslim, insisted that this fear was unwarranted due to the rights of Christians being protected in the Sudanese Constitution. This refugee’s comment appeared to deny the fact that Copts
and Greek Orthodox fled from northern Sudan as a result of the government policies of Islamisation (Jupp, 2001).

In order to understand the southern Christian refugees’ inter-religious attitudes to Muslims, an understanding of the various factors in the Sudanese government relations with the Africans in the country’s south is necessary. The first factor, as previously mentioned, was the war with southern Sudanese secessionists, the Anya Nya Movement, which started in 1955 and ended in 1972 with General Numayri agreeing to southern regions becoming self-governing. However, for reasons such as the discovery of oil and the continued Islamisation of the south, this was later disregarded. This first war caused some southern Sudanese to seek refuge in Uganda and Ethiopia (Holt & Daly, 2000; Moro, 2004). The second factor was the instigation in 1982 by the Numayri government of Sharia law throughout the Sudan. This angered moderate Muslims and also caused the re-emergence of the southern rebellion led by the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army or Movement (SPLA/M), at this stage anti-separatist in its views (Holt & Daly, 2000). The third factor was the relations of neighbouring governments with the National Islamic Front. After the Ethiopian government of Mengistu collapsed in 1991, the SPLA was weakened as it was previously supported by Ethiopia. This caused a split within the SPLA and created inter-ethnic fighting in southern Sudan, causing another wave of refugees and IDPs (Moro, 2004; Verney, 2006). Thus, Eritrea became a base for southern opposition groups (SBS, 2003) in general (Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2001) as did Kenya, being a safe haven for dissidents (Holt & Daly, 2000). The fourth factor occurred in 1995 when a peace agreement was signed and it was agreed that Sharia Law would be restricted to the north (International Crisis Group, 2006b). Finally in 2005, the NIF signed another peace accord that includes self-autonomy, oil revenue and the promise of a referendum on independence (SBS, 2008). Currently there is a war in Darfur in the west of Sudan (Holt & Daly, 2000; International Crisis Group, 2006b; Verney, 2006) based on aspirations for similar autonomy (SBS, 2008). Further, Verney states the NIF government has been accused of supporting the Lord’s Resistance Army (Moro, 2004), which has been attacking the east of Sudan where the oil pipeline is. Thus, it is within this political context that inter-religious relations occur.
A number of instances of discrimination towards Christians was reported in varying situations in Khartoum, in the south of Sudan or when individuals were IDPs. One occurring at Khartoum high school was pivotal in forming the refugee’s belief that Sudan was not one but two countries (Verney 2006). Two refugees in the south had minimal contact with Muslims, prior to flight, but were negatively impacted by NIF’s Islamic policies. A Christian interviewee had been stoned and imprisoned for proselytising in northern Sudan. Two studies are relevant when examining this comment; Saeed and Saeed’s (2004) statement that the Islamic world is sensitive to Christian missionary activity and Gunn’s (2002; 2003) contention that for some Christian groups evangelism is a core practice. Finally, it was reported that some Christians converted to Islam in order to survive or to maintain their ‘lifestyle’.

Christian and Muslim relations with Animists were a further inter-religious issue. Paulo, the Animist convert mentioned above, stated that at his Christian-run school he was indirectly taught that the ‘beliefs [tribal Animist] I got at home was not a good belief’. Various studies show both Christians and Muslims endeavoured to evangelise the south, with both having the mistaken view that a spiritual vacuum existed there (Deng, 1972; Nikkel, Deng & Malwal, 1997; Sundkler & Steed, 2000).

These studies appear not to take into account prescribed religious attitudes or cultural beliefs about Animists. For example, Robinson states that the Muslim attitude to Animists arose from stories in the Qur’an and the Bible of Noah’s grandson, Canaan, son of Ham. Due to an improper action by Canaan, he becomes cursed by Noah and so became a servant. Thus, the ‘Hamitic Myth’ of the black servant developed. The studies do not examine prescribed attitudes in sections of the Qur’an to idolaters as examined in Saeed and Saeed (2004), or that fundamentalist and Evangelical Christians believe that Jesus is the ‘only’ way to heaven (Hood et al., 2005).

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56 Robinson (2004) states this myth was strengthened by cultural beliefs that only people of temperate zones such as the Mediterranean were civilised and those to the north and south were barbarians.
Not mentioned by refugees, yet worthy of brief exploration, is slavery, which has and continues to effect relations between Muslims and African Sudanese. Traditionally, the southern Africans were sold by Muslim, Arab and Ottoman traders to work in Arab countries or to be soldiers (Holt & Daly, 2000; Robinson, 2004; Verney, 2006). Islam recognised the enslavement of ‘pagans’ and had requirements for their protection (Robinson, 2004). Slavery is still being practised today in the Sudan and Somalia due to the continuation of warfare (Esposito, 2003; Verney, 2006).

4.3.5 Interaction between Culture and Religion

Sudanese comments on culture and religion were minimal (possibly due to interview constraints), but worthy of exploration. Samma, the Sufi, stated the Sudanese were not culturally Arabic because of their indulgences in smoking and cultural wedding practices such as dancing and the drinking of alcohol. On the other hand, one refugee, a third-generation Anglo-Catholic Christian, appeared to have lost her indigenous beliefs, stating her tribe no longer retained such practices. Conversely, a Dinka Anglican felt Christianity was compatible with Dinka culture. For example, the male responsibility for the family and cows as a dowry was retained. Further, this well-informed refugee suggested the mixing of religion and tribal culture also occurred with the Nuer and Shilluk. Although the literature mentions the importance of amulets (Owusu-Ansah, 2000; Robinson, 2004), ghosts (Deng, 1972) and spirits-zar (Csordas & Lewton, 1998), none was mentioned in the interviews.

Finally, all southern Sudanese Christians, except for Paulo, appeared to accept without questioning the conversion of their parents or grandparents from Animism to Christianity, due to the influence of either the colonial missionaries or indigenised churches.

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Robinson states that at the time of colonisation the emancipation of slaves was a political and social issue in Britain and America. He contends that Christianity, civilisation and commerce were the aims of colonisation, but suggests the abuses of slavery were used as a justification for the colonial occupation of Africa.
4.3.6 The Resurgence of Religion and Intra-faith Shifts

Various interview comments, both from Christians and Muslims of various participant groups, hint that the salience of religion is increasing and shifting in the Sudan.

A shift towards Sufism as a counterweight to the fundamentalist Muslim NIF government rule was mentioned by several well-informed Muslim interviewees who stated that there was a rise in Sufism in Sudan to counteract the rise in rigid Islamic rule. This comment may reflect Willis’ review article on religion in Sudan (2003), and Esposito’s and Voll’s (2001) writings on power struggles within Muslims between the forces of renewal-tajdid by *ijtihad*-scholarly reasoning by analogy and the forces of imitation/rigid conformity to the past-taqlid.

One interviewee was involved with a Christian group. An Internet search showed this group’s aim was to preach in the Muslim world and appeared to be funded by Evangelical Europeans or possibly Americans. This Christian believed in competition between Christianity and Islam, with both religions presenting logical arguments so individuals could make a choice (Lochhead, 1998). This interviewee stated he was imprisoned and stoned several times as a result of proselytising Muslims.

Of relevance is Nikkel et al. (1997) and Beswick (2004) who state Christianity is rapidly spreading in southern Sudan. For example, in 1997, some claimed the Sudanese Episcopalian (Anglican) Church was the fastest growing in the world (Nikkel et al., 1997), with Livingston (1997) commenting that in Africa Anglicanism is Evangelical and so it is in opposition to Anglo/Catholic liberalism. Interestingly, Beswick (2004) and LeMarquand (2006) state that although there is a long history of missionary activity with the Dinka it is only in the last few decades there has been a rapid rise in conversion.

Nikkel et al. (1997) and Beswick (2004) generally agree that the rise of Christianity in southern Sudan is due to:

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58 The group cannot be identified as the refugees’ identity would not remain confidential.
• the Christian identity being seen as a symbol of unity for the southern Sudanese national movement in their struggle against Arabisation
• Christianity being used either consciously or unconsciously to counteract the threat of the Islamist government
• traditionally at times of crises, tribal prophets emerge; hence, the rapid increase in the Sudan of Evangelical churches.

To contextualise these findings in the wider African context, the well-respected researcher, Gifford (1998), states that Christianity is rising in black Animist Africa, the result of a new wave of evangelism by Pentecostal or charismatic churches, closely related to the fundamentalist missionaries of the USA.  

4.3.7 Religion and the Refugees’ Flight

Generally speaking refugees’ comments show ‘moderate’ Muslims fled Sudan and southerners fled for a number of reasons closely related to religion. The two moderate Muslims gave political, not religious, differences with the NIF government as the cause for leaving. One was a result of torture to coerce conformity to NIF Islamic views (Gunn, 2002, 2003; Verney, 2006). The other suffered because of the family’s moderate Muslim stance. Again, both these refugees used the pretext of study in Egypt to escape.

The flight of James the Animist had two triggers: imprisonment by state-sanctioned militia for supposed involvement with the SPLA/M and state-sanctioned coercion to become a Muslim (Gunn, 2002, 2003).

For the southern Christians, various reasons were given or emerged:

• Peter: his race, identity and ethnicity were the cause for his persecution; thus, as Gunn states, mixed motives were at play. However, his comments show some political involvement in his past.

59 A review of Christianity in Africa (Meyer, 2004) also noted a shift from the traditional African Independent churches to such churches, adding there is minimal research into this shift.
• Margaret: her first flight was during the Anyanay War and the second when the SPLA/M invaded her village. Thus, it was inter-tribal warfare that caused the final flight to ‘try to get a better life [for their family] ... somewhere else’.

• Rebecca: an IDP for several years due to the war in the south. Her husband, while studying in Egypt, was unjustly accused of being an SPLA/M supporter and imprisoned by the Egyptian government. On his release, Rebecca joined him in Egypt. She personally felt she could return to the Sudan, but would not due to the accusations against her husband.

• The fourth Sudanese Christian convert: he was granted refugee status initially in East Africa because of the differences between the NIF and the Ethiopian government during the Mengistu rule. He stated ‘I used religion as a weapon so I can be accepted by Ethiopia to become a refugee’. This at first appears as a calculated move to use interfaith persecution to gain refugee status. However, this conscious realisation occurred only after several years in Australia. This is an issue examined again in a later chapter.

Comments by some Christian refugees, as attested by the literature, show that the war in the Sudan (1983–2005) was not simply friction between Christians and Muslim, but rather:

• The northern Muslim government that imposed Sharia upon the Christians/Animists (SBS, 2003).
• The ‘Civilisation Project’ that was an Islamic government project of social engineering initially in the Nuba Mountains (Verney, 2006).
• Oil was found in the southern areas (Adar, 2000; Verney, 2006).
• The conflict between Arab Muslims and black Africans due to racial differences and issues such as slave trading (Beswick, 2004; Deng, 1972).

Various studies make some interesting points. Verney (2006) clearly states that many southern Sudanese are still Animists, the emphasis on the Christian-Islamic aspect of the war can be misleading as, in the past, Muslims have fought Muslims in the north and
Christians have fought Christians in the south. Beswick (2004) states Muslim holy men are in the SPLA/M (Beswick, 2004) and Adar (2000) details foreign Christians, the People’s Republic of China and the USA as supporters of various factions.

In conclusion, Verney’s observation that Arabisation and Islamisation by the Khartoum government affected not only Christians and Animists but moderate Muslims (Verney, 2006), appears to be verified in this study.

4.4 Iraq

Among the five Iraqi interviewees were two who self identified as Christians, both females, aged 45 and 50 years old. The Assyrian Orthodox was Sohelia, together with the Catholic Chaldean, Sofia. Of the three Muslims, all were Shi’ites, with two being Arab and one from a minority ethnic group. Two mentioned and the other’s data inferred they were of Shi’ite background. They were Hussan, a 55-year-old male, Abbas, a 50-year-old male, and Khadija, a 40-year-old female. Regardless of religious background, all but Abbas, the non-Arab, came from traditional or highly religious homes, and all had resided in Baghdad or large towns most of their lives. They were well educated, with all but Khadija obtaining degrees or diplomas in Iraq. In addition, relevant comments from two consultants, refugee support personnel and two religious leaders were included.

According to the 2006 Australian census there were 32,520 Iraqi-born with 26.5 per cent based in Victoria. In 1976, there were 2,273 Iraqi-born, but by the end of the Gulf War in 1991 this doubled to 5,186. During 1991–1992 extra places under the refugee and special humanitarian programs were made available. Later new arrivals came under the family migration and skilled migration categories. A subsequent wave was arriving at the time of writing, those who assisted the Australian Army in Iraq. The 2006 Iraqi-born population was made up of Kurds, Assyrians, Turks, Turkmen and Jews. Religiously, 37.6 per cent are Catholic, 13.2 per cent are Assyrian Apostolic, 60 per cent Muslims (presumed mostly to be Shi’ites) and 14.4 per cent ‘other’. Within the Christians there are three

60 Undefined in census discussion on Australian Iraqis.

4.4.1 The Historical and Religious Contexts of Iraq

Iraq is multiethnic and has a population of 28 million. Sixty-eight per cent of the population live in urban areas. The ethnic composition is 75–80 per cent Arab, 15–20 per cent Kurd, 3 per cent Persian and 2–3 per cent Turkoman (Marr, 2004; SBS, 2008). Literacy levels are 44 per cent and life expectancy 69 years (SBS, 2008). Currently, Iraq’s religious breakdown is 97 per cent Muslim, 60–65 per cent Shi’ite, and 32–37 per cent Sunni. Only 3 per cent are Christian (Marr, 2004; SBS, 2008), but some estimates are as high as 8 per cent (Inati, 2003). There are other religious groups, including Jews.

In ancient and recent times Iraq has been more of a multi-faith country, with Christians and Jews (before their 1948 flight) holding positions of power (Basri, 2003; Gat, 1997; Inati, 2003; Marr, 2004). Some suggest 30 per cent of the Iraqi population was Christian in the early twentieth century, but Marr states that the figure was much lower than this (Inati, 2003).61

Thus, understanding the various religious histories is of importance. It is necessary to go back to 3000 BCE when Iraq’s recorded history first began with the sophisticated, pantheistic Sumerians. At about 1200 BCE the Assyrians conquered the area (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1988; Polk, 2005; Smart, 2002), then in 612 BCE the Chaldeans took control (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1988). The Persians (551 BCE) ruled until Alexander the Great conquered the area in 330 BCE. Next the Sassaniads invaded, bringing Persian culture (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1988; Polk, 2005). Around 636 CE a Muslim invading army defeated the Persians and brought Islam to the predominantly Christian Iraqi tribes (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1988). In 750 CE, the Abbasid dynasty gained power. Some call this the Golden Era of Islam, when science, medicine and intellectual life

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61 Marr (2004) states that in 1951 there were only 6 per cent non-Muslim; however, Hourani (1947) suggests 25 per cent, but this included Kurds who are mostly Sunni.
flourished, and drew on Persian and Greek influences (Marr, 2004). In 1219 the Abbasids lost power to the Mongols who were later defeated by the Seljuks. After this, Persian Safavids-Shi’ites gained power. Later there were other conquests (Marr, 2004; Polk, 2005).

Eventually, in 1534 the Turkish Ottoman Empire (Sunni) took control until the end of World War I. During Ottoman rule several wars with the Persians occurred (Abdullah, 2003), and a split emerged within urban Iraqis between Sunni-Turkish and Shi’ite-Persian sympathisers (Polk, 2005). The Ottomans ruled Iraq, as three separate provinces formed around the cities of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra (Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1988; SBS, 2003; Tripp, 2002). The Sunni minority was in control and had access to power and wealth (Marr, 2004). After the Ottoman defeat in World War I, Iraq became a British mandate until 1920, when an Iraqi monarchy was established. However, Iraq was effectively under British control until the end of World War II.

Let us hear subsequent events through refugee eyes.

4.4.2 Shi’ite Interview Subjects

Stories from male and female Shi’ites showed that religion, daily prayers and Ramadan were the focal points in most Shi’ite lives. A cultural consultant and a religious leader suggested that for many Shi’ites, religion is the essence of their philosophical, intellectual and social life. For example, one refugee stated:

*Because in my country, you know, they not go to cinema, or go to party, or go to drink; no, they sit together afternoon, after pray, after 7 o’clock or 8 o’clock everyday, sometimes one day yes, … they sit in X house, or X house or Y house, the men sit, laughing and talking something, some new, some religion, some many, many, many things they’re talking. And they teach from each other. Like school!*
Thursday nights are traditionally a special night for Shi’ites when all, including women and children, go to the mosque. The visiting of Shi’ite mosques at particular times in the Shi’ite calendar was mentioned by one. Comments and studies (Nasr, 2006) show some Shi’ite religious festivals, such as Ashura, were restricted by the Ba’athists under Saddam Hussein. Finally, regarding religious education, both males and females could read the Qur’an, Hadith and other Shi’ite books, with two males reporting having many religious books in Iraq.

Ten per cent of the world’s Muslim population is Shi’ite, mostly residing in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon. Australia census figures do not make a distinction. Glasse (2002) contends differences between Sunnis and Shi’ites were mostly overlooked in the earlier twentieth century, but not in more recent times. Iraq is such a country where clashes between the ruling Sunni minority and the Shi’ites, now the majority, have occurred between the 1970s (Tripp, 2002) and the early 2000s. Hence, a brief examination of the historic split and religious differences between them follows.

The Shi’ite grouping arose as a result of a succession dispute within Muslims after the Prophet Muhammad’s death (632AD). The dispute centred on who should be the Caliph, meaning the successor. As with Sunnis, among them numerous Shi’ite divisions, are three main branches each named after the imam they follow: 1) The Twelve Imamis, 2) 

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62 For Shi’ites this is the unfortunate anniversary of the murder of Husayn by the Caliph Yazid troops, which has been publicly observed by Shi’ites since 962 CE. The celebration is the culmination of ten days of mourning, an event as emotionally powerful as Christ’s crucifixion, and is remembered to this day by the annual Ashura commemoration (Glasse 2002).

63 The Census only lists the generic category of Muslims (not Shi’ites, Sunni, Sufi and so on). Two Melbourne-based Islamic academics tentatively suggested that Shi’ites represent about 30 per cent of Australian Muslims.

64 The Sunni followed Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, a non-relative chosen to lead immediately after the Prophet’s death. Whereas the Shi’ites, meaning the ‘party of Ali’ followed Ali, the fourth Caliph, the Prophet’s son-in-law, the closest male relative of the Prophet. The cause of the split was when Ali’s son, Huseyin, was killed by Yazid, who as a result became the second Umayyad Caliph. As a consequence, Hasan’s brother Husayn led an unsuccessful yet valiant revolt, being killed in Karbala, Iraq, in 680 CE (Glasse, 2002; Halm, 2004; Marr, 2004; Nasar, 2006; Saeed, 2006).

65 The Twelve Imamis Shi’ites, the largest group of Shi’ites, and, according to some, the most moderate. For over 1,000 years this branch of Islam has been the official religion of Persia. Most Muslims residing in Iran, Lebanon and Iraq belong to this branch (Esposito, 2003; Halm, 2004). The second largest group of Shi’ites is the Zaydis, ‘Fivers’, who reside in Yemen and some parts of Somalia (Glasse, 2002). The third group is the Ismailies or ‘Seveners’, who mainly live in Central Asia, Iran, Syria and East Africa.
The Zaydis, ‘Fivers’, and 3) The Ismailies or ‘Seveners’. There are different beliefs and practices within these groupings. Twelvers believe in supernatural or magical powers, or that imams are supernaturally endowed representatives of God on earth (Glasse, 2002), whereas the Fivers believe the opposite. Furthermore, the Twelvers have temporary marriage practices,\(^{66}\) whereas Zaydis do not (Glasse, 2002).

### 4.4.3 Iraqi Christians

For the Christian Iraqis, religion was also a central part of family life. The Catholic Chaldeans, residing in northern Iraq, attended church several times a week, participated in baptisms, appointed Godparents, were confirmed, took confession, had communion; all of which are important rituals for the Orthodox (Ware, 1997). Sofia’s northern Iraq local church had age-related religious groups for youth, mothers and older persons. These were supported by nuns, and several priests trained at a Baghdad seminary (O’Mahoney, 2004).

On the other hand, the wealthier Assyrians living in the south and in Baghdad only attended church on Sundays. Religious rituals occurred in Sohelia’s family home in Baghdad on a daily and weekly basis. Sunday was a ‘huge’ day; candles were lit, prayers and Bible readings occurred and special food was made. The refugee’s father educated all the family in the Bible and in the Assyrian language.

In order to understand the reported differences, background information is needed. Firstly, as previously mentioned, Iraq had been a Christian area prior to Muslim rule. The Ottoman Empire did not have a policy of proselytising (Varga, 1993) and was more tolerant of others than were the previous Byzantine rulers (Hourani, 1947). Thus, during Ottoman times religious minorities were ruled by the *millet system*, where the heads of the churches represented their flocks and a council was autonomous in spiritual and certain administrative and judicial matters. The minorities had to pay extra taxes and

\(^{66}\) See Halm (2004), page 136.
were reduced in numbers due to a ban on proselytising (Hourani, 1947; Smart, 1996; Zubaida, 2000), so that in reality they were second-class citizens (Smart, 1996).

The Iraqi government recognised fourteen Christian communities. The Eastern rite Catholics, also known as the Chaldean Catholics, are the majority Christian community. The Church of the East, a division of the Oriental Orthodoxy, sometimes called the Assyrian (or Nestorian) Church, is a smaller community (Inati, 2003; Marr, 2004; O’Mahoney, 2004).67

Historically, a major difference between Chaldeans and Assyrians was the result of a split in 1552 CE over a succession dispute (Marr, 2004; O’Mahoney, 2004). As a consequence, an hereditary appointment took effect in the Oriental Rite, later called the Church of the East-Assyrians (O’Mahoney, 2004). Some bishops opposed this and sought union with the Roman Catholic Church and were called Chaldeans by the Pope (O’Mahoney, 2004). As with Eastern rite Catholics, they are autonomous, having their own liturgy with their theological and canonical traditions (Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church, 1999–2005).

Traditionally, Chaldean churches have Byzantine and Roman traditions in art and decoration; however, Assyrians avoid all representations in their churches because of Islamic influence (Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church, 1999–2005). Both churches have similar liturgies, with the liturgical language being Aramaic (Syriac dialect), the language of Jesus (Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church, 1999–2005; Inati, 2003; Pitrus, 2009).

Regarding the Assyrians, an Australian study details a further 1964 split within this grouping, the result of a dispute on the use of the Julian or traditional Gregorian calendar. As a result of the split, the ancient and mainstream church is officially called the Holy

67 Other denominations of Iraqi Christians are: 1) Protestants and Anglicans from nineteenth-century missions; 2) other Eastern rite Catholics: Syrians, Armenians and Greek Melkite Catholics; and 3) some additional Orthodox: Syrian Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and a small Coptic Community (Inati, 2003; Marr, 2004; O’Mahoney, 2004).
Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East, or commonly called the Assyrian Church of the East. Its Patriarch is based in Chicago. The other group is named the Ancient Church of the East, which still uses the Julian calendar. Both churches are present in Iraq and in Australia (Darmo, 2009).

Despite these differences, no Iraqi refugees or their leaders mentioned inter-denominational difficulties in Iraq, but rather cited examples of inter-marriage. Comments did show only the Assyrian used the Julian calendar and each group chose Godparents and bridesmaids in a different manner. However, for both, baptisms were more important than weddings.

### 4.4.4 Kurds and Turkomans and their Religious Traditions

Since Abbas and the other Iraqi-Australian refugees were from minority ethnic groups, some background is of relevance.

Kurds, the largest non-Arab minority are mainly Sunni Muslims residing in northern Iraq and other neighbouring countries. Religiously speaking, Kurds can be Yazidis and follow a mixture of Zoroastrianism, paganism (Marr, 2004), Islam and Christianity (Chanaa, 2005). Others are influenced by the Sufi, Qadiri and Naqshabandi orders, and some are Shi’ite (Tripp, 2002).

Turkomans are the largest non-Kurdish minority (Wanche, 2004). They are traditionally village dwellers from north-east Iraq (Chanaa, 2005). Currently, Turkomans are mostly Sunnis (Marr, 2004; Wanche, 2004).

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68 Prior to the Iran–Iraq War most Iraqi Kurds were rural people living near the Iranian and Turkish borders (Chanaa, 2005; Tripp, 2002).
69 Some say the Turkoman came in Seljuk times (Marr, 2004) and others since Ottoman times (Wanche, 2004). Some were wealthy merchants (Lukitz, 1995) and were used by the Ottomans as administrators.
70 Marr (2004) states that a disproportionate number were found in the Iraqi bureaucracy, adding that they were considered well integrated into Iraqi society.
71 A Melbourne Islamic academic of Iraqi origin contradicts this by stating that most Turkomans in Iraq are Shi’ite.
4.4.5 Minorities’ Histories and Ba’athist History

Various findings emerged on inter-religious mixing. All of the Iraqi Muslim refugees interviewed mentioned mixing with Christians, and one noted social mixing with Jews at schools or in their neighbourhoods. Interestingly, a Shi’ite stated he was ‘brought into the world’ by a Christian female doctor. No Muslim spoke of difficult childhood inter-religious experiences. In contrast, the Christian refugees stated they experienced difficulties due to their religion. The Assyrian gave several incidents:

- when living in southern Iraq her family felt pressure to convert to Islam; however, this diminished when they moved to Baghdad
- it appeared she felt unsafe to linger outside church on Sundays
- her university and work choices were diminished due to her Christian background.

On the other hand, the poorer northern Chaldean mentioned some religious prejudice, but not to the extent the Assyrian did – neither did it affect her work. Other inter-religious interactions were mentioned by refugees: poor Muslim women would visit Assyrian churches during special religious festivals to obtain food, and Muslim women would go to a local Assyrian shrine to receive a blessing, which an Islamic academic suggested could be possible.

To contextualise the refugees’ comments on inter-religious relations, background information on pre-Ba’athist rule is necessary. Some studies (Inati, 2003) mention that the Assyrians were relatively new arrivals, fleeing Sunni Turkey during World War I for northern Iraq during the British Mandate (Al-Rasheed, 1994; Tripp, 2002; Zubaida, 2000). The Assyrians sought and were given protection by the British as fellow Christians. These trusted ‘Christians’ were then employed (Al-Rasheed, 1994; Tripp, 2002; Zubaida, 2000) to police Arabs and Kurds (O’Mahoney, 2004; Polk, 2005; Tripp, 2002; Zubaida, 2000). Later, the Assyrians moved south and were employed in the new British-owned petroleum industry, as were the Chaldeans (O’Mahoney, 2004). Some say the Assyrian tribes were only united by religion and were different from other non-Muslim minorities in Iraq. Even during Ottoman times, they had a special relationship
with Christian Europe (Zubaida, 2000). Thus, the Assyrians were seen by the Muslims and more so by the Kurds as collaborators with the British (Marr, 2004).

After the conclusion of World War I, the victorious European powers, principally Britain and France, divided up the Middle East with the Kurds, viewing this shift as an opportunity for self-rule (Chanaa, 2005; Tripp, 2002). Others reported several persecutions around this time; for example, during World War I, when Chaldean bishops and 70–100,000 faithful were killed (O’Mahoney, 2004), although a Melbourne Islamic academic questions this high figure. Later, in 1933, hundreds of Assyrian villagers were massacred by the Iraqi army, which was allied with the Kurds (Tripp, 2002). In 1931, the Assyrians, and to a lesser extent the Turkomans (Lukitz, 1995), fearing reprisals for collaborating with the British, joined with other minorities in appealing to the League of Nations for autonomy; however, this autonomy was not forthcoming (Tripp, 2002).

In 1958, the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown and the Iraqi Republic established. Later, several Iraqi political parties emerged. In 1968, originally established in Syria, the Arab nationalist party, the Ba’athist Socialists, took over power in Iraq in a military coup. Subsequently, in 1979, Saddam Hussein became President of the Republic (Marr, 2004; Tripp, 2002).

After the Republic’s formation, alienated from the mainstream, many Assyrians fled from the 1960s onwards to England (Al-Rasheed, 1994). Later, in the 1960s to 1970s, rural northern Chaldeans and Assyrians had their villages and churches destroyed because of conflict between the Kurds and Iraqi army. As a consequence, they were forced to re-establish their communities in Mosul and Baghdad (O’Mahoney, 2004).

Most studies do not detail historic, sociological differences between the various Christian denominations, nor possible political differences (Inati, 2003; Marr, 2004; O’Mahoney, 2004). Conversely, some studies do, for example, Hourani (1947) states that traditionally ‘Christians’, undefined, were better educated than Muslims, with some being professionally educated. Yet, another states ‘Christians’ were farmers in the rural north
(Chanaa, 2005; Library of Congress Country Study Profiles, 1988). A final study states the ‘Assyrians’ in the cities were politically engaged (Zubaida, 2000).

Despite Wansche’s (2004) finding that Iraqi Christians, when in asylum in Greece, did not speak of systematic religious repression in Iraq, what is clear is that the Assyrian refugee interviewed viewed it so. Thus, it appears this interviewee and some studies (Inati, 2003) did acknowledge a number of socio/political and historic factors:

- In the past, Muslim rulers were more tolerant of ‘People of the Book’, but not of Shi’ites or fringe Islamic sects, than were the previous Byzantium rulers. However, protection did not mean an absence of discrimination (Hourani, 1947).
- Assyrian refugee families were employed by British Petroleum and also by the British in the north of Iraq, with such Assyrians being viewed by Muslims and Kurds as collaborators (Marr, 2004).
- The Ottoman millet system created closed communities, which looked at others with suspicion and hatred (Hourani, 1947).
- Assyrians historically were seen as fighters and were more politically active (Hourani, 1947), particularly prior to World War II (Marr, 2004).

Comments by two Iraqi refugees on the subject raised other factors: some wealthy Christians had more difficulty and it was common knowledge in Iraq that Assyrians isolated themselves from mainstream Iraq more than the Chaldeans.72

To conclude, Wanch’s (2004) study on Iraqi refugees states that Assyrian and Chaldeans ‘feel as one’, and that the Iraqi government created divisions. This latter comment appears to diminish some of the religio/political differences mentioned above.

72 A well-informed Shi’ite refugee stated that it was common knowledge in Iraq that since Iraqi independence, Assyrians wanted to separate, whereas the Chaldeans did not, for they were more politically Arabised (Parry et al., 1999), socially integrated and less nationalistic than the Assyrians (DeKelaita, n.d).
4.4.6 Shifts, Differences and Tension between Sunni and Shi’ite Views

Regarding shifts in religiosity, a theme of this research, comments showed two Shi’ite families had only been Shi’ites for a few generations. For example, one stated:

My grandfather moved to another area and the Shi’ite was too much there and he changed his religion from Sunni to Shi’ite.

Background information on Sunnite and Shi’ite differences is relevant, as it became evident in data collected. These comments concur with the contention of Tripp (2002) and Nakash (1994) that there has been a shift towards Shi’ism in Iraq, the result of Sunni tribes’ settlement in urban areas from the eighteenth century onward. The reasons for this shift were Shi’ism was a way of uniting tribes in an urban environment and as a reaction to Sunni Ottoman rule.

Differences in practice and schools of law are pertinent to this research. With regard to prayer and leadership, Shi’ites pray with their hands at their sides, whereas Sunnites clasp them (Nasr, 2006), and Shi’ites require the moral purity of the one who leads prayer (Glasse, 2002). Regarding law, for Sunnis the law is closed to new interpretation and their allegiance is to a school of law. For Shi’ites it is the opposite – the law is open to new interpretation and their allegiance is to a superior authority, a living Ayatollah (honorable title of a high-ranking religious Shi’ite leader) or mujtahid73 (a religious authority). Such people interpret the law, making judgments of canon law (not by precedent), can give an *ijtihad* (an independent judgment on something that is not in the Qur’an) or *Sunnah*-customary or precedential law (Esposito, 2003; Glasse, 2002; Saeed, 2006). Finally, Esposito makes a pertinent distinction: Sunnis tend to reject excessive rationalism or over-intellectualism, but focus on the intent and spirit of the Qur’an.74

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73 Another title is *Mulla*, a title accorded to a religious scholar and dignitaries (Glasse 2002).
74 Shi’ites also have several doctrinal supports: divine unity (*tawhid*), prophecy (*nubuwwah*), resurrection of the body on Judgement Day (*ma’ad*), and the notion of Imamate – whereby the imam has supernatural authority, as well as civil power, and is seen as an intermediary between God and man and justice.
With regard to intra-faith relations in Islam, Nasr (2006) states that Shi’ism and Sufism have more in common in both beliefs and outlook than either groupings do with Sunnism. However, Saeed states that Sunnis and Shi’ites exchange accusations of heresy and extremism, with Sufis viewed by their opponents as deviant (Saeed, 2006).

4.4.7 Culture and Religion in Iraq

With regard to religion and culture three issues emerged. Firstly, similarities were observed between Shi’ites and the Assyrians. Both mentioned the presence of ‘spirits’ in their lives:

- the Shi’ite claimed to have had ghosts in his Iraqi house. He conducted séances, not a traditional Shi’ite practice
- an Assyrian also had a visitation from a religious/cultural spirit, ‘Breshmone’.

No study could be found on this cultural spirit. However, discussion with an Australian Assyrian religious leader found saints are important for Assyrians in general, and Breshmone is a well-accepted, pre-Christian spirit for women known for protecting children.

As well, another Shi’ite and the Assyrian, both women, ritually used water to gain spiritual protection. Firstly, both reported the importance of visiting holy shrines where revered religious leaders were buried. A cultural consultant and an academic suggested these were important emotional visits for Shi’ites, as at such a place ‘they could cry and pray to God and their imam to unburdening themselves, then, returning home feeling relieved’.

Secondly, similarities in religious leadership were found. For the Assyrians, there was one particular priestly tribe. Within the Shi’ites, there is also a religious hierarchy led by the Sayyid (descendants from the Prophet’s family (Glasse, 2002)), then Mullahs and Ayatollahs, who had considerable respect and power. One Shi’ite commented that Sayyids’ homes were regularly visited in order to obtain blessings.
4.4.8 The Iraqi Constitution and Religious Education

Hourani insists that at the instigation of the secular Republic of Iraq, the constitution stated that Islam (by inference Sunni Islam) was the official religion of the State, but that there was also freedom of religion and protection for indigenous religious minorities. For example, minorities could have their own schools and training institutions, were equal under the law and had some control over family law within their communities (Hourani, 1947; O’Mahoney, 2004).

Regarding whether the Constitution protected religious freedom, all the Shi’ites interviewed said there were few difficulties between Sunni and Shi’ite in their youth. However, this quote by a Shi’ite refugee encapsulates the later change:

Until the Iranian revolution in 1979 the people know that that one [meaning a person is] Sunni, that one Christian and that one Shi’ite, but they [people] don’t discuss this matter.

Unlike some socialists, the Ba’athist government schools had weekly Islamic education classes that appeared to be one of the ways the Shi’ite interviewees were educated.

The protection provided by the Constitution was not implemented for the Iraqi refugees. Firstly, Christians did not have their own religious education classes at government schools, nor did the Christian interviewees attend Christian primary or secondary schools, although one appears to have attended a Christian kindergarten. Further, Hussan the Shi’ite who believed the Shi’ite Twelvers and their leaders ‘are the best men in Iraq’, reported having difficulties with the Ba’athists due to government policies of co-education and the selling of alcohol near mosques.

To conclude, O’Mahoney’s (2004) statement appears to contextualise some of the religious realities mentioned by both groups. He states that the 1974 nationalisation of the education system presented difficulties for both Christians and Shi’ites. Further,
O’Mahoney states in 1976, that the Ba’athist government in effect ‘nationalised’ Shi’ite religious leaders by putting them on the government payroll. This was later proposed for Christians, but was never implemented.

### 4.4.9 Causes of Refugee Flight

Comments and studies showed that there were various waves of refugees which will be examined group by group:

**Shi’ites:** Since the 1970s several Shi’ite refugee waves have departed Iraq, a result of disputes with the Sunni minority, although Shi’ites constitute the majority of the population. The first flight was in 1974 (Chanaa, 2005), when the Faili Kurds were forced into Iran on the pretext that they, as Shi’ites, were not Iraqi (Tripp, 2002).

In 1980, Iraq, with the support of the USA, attacked Iran, ostensibly to bring the regime under Iraqi power (Tripp, 2002). This war killed over one million Iraqis and Iranians, and when it ended in 1988, it led to subsequent reprisals against the Shi’ites and the Kurds within Iraq. This caused the second flight prior to, during and after the Iran–Iraq War, with the mass exodus of both Iraqi-Persian Shi’ites and Iraqi Shi’ites who had been involved in opposition parties. One such political group was the Da’wa, and their flight was mainly to Iran. Thus, this was the second refugee flight. One of the interviewed refugees, Hussan, was part of this flight, possibly due to his being a member of Da’wa.

In 1990–1991, during the Iraqi–Kuwait War, the USA did not support Iraq, but rather attacked it for having violated another’s territory. At the war’s conclusion, Kurds, as well as Shi’ites, believing the USA would assist them, rebelled against the Ba’athists. The failure of this rebellion caused Shi’ites to flee to Iran or to Saudi Arabia’s Rafha camp (Chanaa, 2005). This was the third refugee flow, during which Khadija left.

In the aftermath of the Kuwaiti War, as punishment for their rebellion, the Iraqi army led brutal campaigns to crush southern Shi’ites and northern Kurds (Chanaa, 2005; Tripp, 2002). In 1994, the Marsh Arabs (Thesiger, 1975) living in the south of Iraq, fled as the
government drained their marshes, causing social and economic havoc. This caused a fourth Shi’ite refugee flow. Then in February 1999 the fifth flow occurred after Ayatollah Sadiq al Sadr, the spiritual leader of the Iraqi Shi’ites and other prominent Shi’ites, were murdered (Chanaa, 2005). An outcome of this was that many Shi’ites fled to other countries, principally Iran, thus prompting the sixth Shi’ite flight of refugees.

**Kurds and Turkomans:** As one refugee is from a non-Arab minority, the various causes of the flight of these groups is of relevance. In 1970 the Ba’athist Party offered Kurds some autonomy. However, for reasons such as the finding of oil this did not eventuate (Chanaa, 2005; Tripp, 2002). Then in 1974, a revolt initially supported by the Shah of Iran occurred between Kurds and the Iraqi government. Then, during the Iran–Iraq War the Kurdish support for Iran resulted in their being forced to relocate to towns and cities in the north of Iraq, where Christians also lived (Abdullah, 2003; Tripp, 2002), with a further punishment: the 1988 chemical weapons attack on Halabja, which caused their flight to Turkey (Chanaa, 2005; Tripp, 2002). In the aftermath of the Kuwaiti War, Kurds again rebelled, but no support came from the USA. Fearing reprisals, many Kurds fled to Iran and Turkey. However, the Turks closed their border. In an effort to curb a humanitarian disaster a no-fly zone was instigated by the USA in northern Iraq.

Most Turkomans lived in Kirkuk, where vast oil reserves were found. Both Kirkuk Kurds and Turkomans were subjected to Arabisation policies in the 1970s. By 1990 they were not allowed to own property or even rent, as Arabs took over their property, which caused their flight (Wanche, 2004).

**Christians:** Both Christians had family members who had fought and sometimes died in the Iran–Iraq War, with the Assyrian contending that the Iraqi Christians were put in dangerous combat positions. Even so, the refugees stated that Saddam Hussein’s rule was preferred by Chaldeans, as Saddam Hussein protected Christian minorities from Muslim ‘extremists’. O’Mahoney’s (2004) study throws some light on these comments. Firstly, O’Mahoney states Iraqi Christians fought, and a disproportionate number died, in the
Iran–Iraq War to ‘protect Iraq’ against a Muslim theocracy, believing Christians would be worse off under Shi’ite Iran.

The Assyrian was more negatively affected by Ba’athists than the Chaldean refugee. For example, the Assyrian’s relatives had been arrested and beaten: one who consequently fled Iraq for refusing to join the Ba’athist Party, and the other to gain information on the relative who fled. This may concur with O’Mahoney’s finding that after the Iran–Iraq War Christian support for the Iraqi government fell away because of:

- growing lawlessness around the country
- the 1991 Basra massacre of Chaldeans
- the growing Islamisation of Iraq (O’Mahoney, 2004).

### 4.4.10 Religion and the Refugee Flight

Nearly all Iraqi refugees mentioned religious persecution as one of the factors for flight (Chanaa, 2005; Tripp, 2002). For two Shi’ites, a mixture of intra-religious persecution and politics caused theirs. For example, for highly religious Hussan, his Shi’ite beliefs were a ‘way of life’ as prescribed by Islam (Gunn, 2002, 2003; Office of the UNHCR & Protection., 2002) that resulted in his joining an opposition party, and this led to his repeated imprisonment. Khadija’s spouse was accused of involvement in politics. The third, Abbas, was a non-Arab ethnic minority member and a Shi’ite, and he was labelled a threat by the authorities.

Regarding the two Christians, one unjustly accused of a crime had to flee, as structurally within the Iraqi social system Christians were scapegoated when crimes occurred. The other fled to escape the cycle of the death of male family members dying in wars.

Studies give various reasons why conflict with Christians, Shi’ites and other minorities occurred during the Ba’athist rule (Abdullah, 2003; Tripp, 2002) Of relevance is Zubaida’s (2000) statement on Assyrians that the continuation of the Ottoman self-
administered closed *millet* system, which was not abolished after Iraqi independence, aided sectarianism.

**4.6 Conclusion**

The main and specific findings of this chapter on the religious, historical, socio-cultural and political backgrounds of the source countries was that there were both similarities and differences in the refugees’ individual or collective religious meaning systems or the formation of their particular meaning system prior to flight.

Differences were noted with regard to scales of birthplace diversity; there was a range from Ethiopia, the most multiethnic and multi-faith, to Somalia, which is religiously homogenous. Several birthplace similarities were noted. Each country had been ruled or occupied by colonial powers, with all showing instances of resistance, particularly by Muslims in Sudan and Somalia. All four countries showed shifts in religiosity, prior to and as a consequence of foreign influences, with these confirmed by studies or comments by academics. Except for Ethiopia, the other countries achieved independence from colonial powers in the 1960s and 1970s. Another similarity was that all source countries were at one stage ruled by socialist-style governments that had weak governance. Similarities and differences emerged in how these various socialist-style governments managed religion. The Somali, Iraqi and Sudanese governments combined the socialist and Islamic factors, but only the latter two had Islamic education at government schools.

Many similarities were found in the refugees’ religious backgrounds and home contexts. More than half the refugees were from a traditional leadership stratum that often included a mixing of community and religious leadership. One finding was that refugees had different levels and ways of religious education, which mostly depended on factors such as age and gender, as well as each religious group’s particular political situation. A pattern emerged of older Muslim males, not older females, having more religious education. Thus they could read the Qur’an and other religious texts. A further pattern was that different socialist governments allowed or disallowed Islamic education, with this limiting some younger refugees’ religious education. On the other hand, Sudanese
Muslims, Iraqi Shi’ites and EO refugees living in socialist societies reported mostly functioning religious communities.

Other patterns emerged surrounding inter-religious relations. Half of the interviewees, or their parents, meaning at least one from each country (except for Iraq), were partly or totally educated in colonial Christian schools mostly prior to socialist times. Three of these were Muslims with their schooling appearing to be a positive interfaith experience. A Somali and Sudanese Muslim refugee and an EO interviewee showed family resistance or reported instances of resistance to European Christian colonial rule.

Other major findings emerged. Religio/cultural factors often linked to pre-Christian and pre-Muslim times were important for many refugees, and this was evident in data from all country groups. On the other hand, some Muslims and some Africans converted by foreign Christians or indigenous Christian groups had abandoned or shifted from their cultural religiosity.

With regard to minorities with religious restrictions, religious life and religious education were managed in different ways. The Chaldean, Protestant/Evangelical groups in Ethiopia and Sudanese Christians appeared to have well-organised religious communities and systems of education. On the other hand, Animists and the Lutheran Ethiopian reported being educated by their same-sex parent and the Assyrian at home by their father. Regardless of protections afforded by the different countries’ constitutions, the refugees reported that many of these religious communities and some of their religious leaders functioned with some level of discrimination or persecution from the wider community or their government. Despite this, in one instance, there was denial of Christian persecution in the Sudan by one Muslim refugee.

Prior to flight approximately three-quarters of the refugees (14 out of 19) had traditional religious meaning systems. They practised their religion according to what was ‘normal’ for that community. Four others had different religious or non-religious meaning systems.
The importance of these major and minor findings will become evident in the next five chapters.
CHAPTER FIVE

REFUGEES’ RELIGIOSITY IN ASYLUM AND AUSTRALIA

This chapter presents the religiosity in the various places of asylum and in Australia the host country. Firstly it presents some overall patterns in the refugee religious experience from home to Australia. Later religious coping in flight, asylum and in Australia. In order to contextualise these experiences, a brief overview of the refugees’ religious communities in the various places of asylum and the host country is presented. Thus, the chapter examines what Tarakeshwar et al. (2003) label the ‘experiential’ and ‘social’ dimension (in part) of the refugee experience.

5.1 Patterns in Refugee Religious Experience

Nearly all nineteen refugees gave information on how much their religion or God/Allah had helped them during the refugee experience. The information was generated by the analysis of the in-depth data collection and question six of the minor questionnaire which was used to assist with triangulation, Did your religion/spirituality/belief system or Allah/God help you…? The situations were: before persecution, after persecution, on the journey and in Australia. The responses are given in Table 5.1. Their actual notions of God/Allah and religion/spirituality are examined in Chapter 8.

The definition of persecution was left to the refugee. In reality, it meant that the refugee or a family member had been imprisoned or experienced incidents of harassment or the effects of civil unrest and so forth. In addition, three difficulties emerged for some refugees: 1) for some refugees there was a clear distinction between God and religion, for others not so; 2) the situation, ‘after persecution’, in reality meant during persecution; and 3) some interviewees had not experienced or did not perceive they had been persecuted.
Table 5.1  The Refugee Journey and Their Religiosity
Question 6: Did your religion/spirituality/ belief system or Allah/God help you before persecution, after persecution on the journey? and in Australia? With the possible answers: a lot, some, a little, not much, not at all and harmful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before persecution</th>
<th>After persecution</th>
<th>On the journey</th>
<th>In Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Somali refugees</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed</td>
<td>not stated</td>
<td>a lot (God)</td>
<td>a lot (God)</td>
<td>a lot (God)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asha</td>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>a lot+ (SS data)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meriam</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>a lot</td>
<td>a lot *less initially</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Ethiopian refugees** |                   |                  |               |              |
| Ali                    | not asked         | not asked        | *a lot        | *helped me   |
| Haile                  | not much          | a lot            | a lot+        | a lot        |
| Semira                 | N/A               | less at home     | lot           | lot+         |
| Shegeee                | not all           | not at all       | a lot         | harmful God and religion different |

| **Sudanese refugees**  |                   |                  |               |              |
| James                  | not asked         | not asked        | *helped a lot | *helped a lot |
| Paulo                  | N/A               | N/A              | N/A           | decreased    |
| Margaret               | not asked         | *increased       | *increased    | *increased   |
| Peter                  | God some, a lot   | God some, a lot  | Go some, a lot religion | God some, a lot religion |
| Rebecca                | not asked         | not asked        | not asked     | not asked    |
| Khalid                 | N/A               | N/A              | N/A           | N/A          |
| Samma                  | a lot             | a lot +          | a lot         | a lot        |

| **Iraqi refugees**     |                   |                  |               |              |
| Abbas                  | religion a little | same             | same          | same         |
| Hussan                 | a lot             | a lot            | a lot         | a lot+       |
| Khadija                | ‘normal’          | lot              | lot +         | same         |
| Sohelia                | Some              | a lot            | a lot         | a lot        |
| Sofia                  | not asked         | some             | some          | some         |

* is for data from the semi-structured interview, not the questionnaire
+ more than a lot.

N/A not applicable as were not a “refugee” or they were not religious.
Not asked was due to time constraints.
Although not the main focus of the research, six refugees stated that some aspect of their religion or God had helped them before persecution, with four stating it helped ‘a lot’. On the other hand, two highly religious refugees from Iraq, a Shi’ite and an Assyrian Orthodox, said that at this stage their religion or God was of ‘some’ or ‘normal’ help. In contrast, four refugees, not highly religious at the time, said that their religion was of ‘little’ or ‘not much help’. At this stage, Peter the Sudanese Christian was the only refugee who made a distinction between God and his religion’s help, as it appeared that his communal religious practices helped ‘a lot’, whereas support from God was only of ‘some help’.

Thirteen commented on how much their religion or God had helped them after the persecution or civil disturbance. More than half answered ‘a lot’, with Semira and Peter stating more than ‘a lot’, and another suggesting it ‘helped’. It should be noted that of those who said ‘a lot’ or more than ‘a lot’, some were known to have been in prison, most probably tortured, or had had close family members imprisoned.

On the refugee journey, out of a possible sixteen, three-quarters stated that their religion or God had helped them ‘a lot’. In contrast, Abbas, the Shi’ite who critically questioned his beliefs, and the deeply religious Chaldean Catholic who throughout her life had held strong beliefs, stated their religion was of ‘some’ help. Again, Peter and now Shegee made a distinction between Allah and religion, stating that in asylum their religion did not help them ‘at all’, but God helped ‘a lot’.

When in Australia, about half explained their religion or God had helped them ‘a lot’; two stated it was ‘more than a lot’. In contrast, the two who viewed religion and God as different had different answers. Shegee, who began to question her religiosity, again said God helped her ‘a lot’, but her religion ‘not at all’. In fact, she stated her Islamic religion was harmful in Australia (see Chapter 8). Four others of the seventeen said religion had assisted ‘somewhat’ and others commented it ‘helped’. One Muslim Somali refugee, a university graduate who was traditionally religious, contradicted herself. Initially stating
that on arrival in Australia she was ‘confused’ about God, she later stated her religion and God helped her ‘a lot’. When gently asked about the contradiction, she denied it.

Of interest was that Khalid, the Sudanese secular human rights activist, stated his meaning system had considerably deepened during his period of torture and imprisonment; ‘a lot’ in asylum and slightly more than ‘a lot’ in a country such as Australia, where he stated his meaning system is accepted and supported, particularly in the tertiary education system.

To conclude this section, the data from both the minor questionnaire and interviews showed some shifts in how refugees perceived they were assisted by God or their religion. Some refugees were assisted during times of stress, prior to ‘persecution’, but more were assisted during persecution, and nearly all stated they were assisted very much in asylum. However, in Australia this religious support based on either their religious belief system or God declined to one half (See Chapter 8).

5.2 Flight: Their Religious Experience and Coping

This section examines refugees’ religious experience and coping during the flight from their home country. For two reasons, not all refugees were asked or answered the questions: Did your religion/spirituality/belief system help or not help your journey? What kept you going on this journey and living in a country as a refugee or asylum seeker? The first reason was that body language and tone of voice showed the actual flight experience was still raw. Thus, sensitivity was needed when exploring or even embarking on the topic. The second reason, for the lack of data, was that six refugees did not flee and so did not give data. As a consequence, unsolicited comments from six refugees (Ali, Haile, Sofia, Sohelia, James, Peter) show how religion and coping interacted as the refugees fled.

Khalid stated he had secular beliefs. The researcher suggests data shows he had secular and human rights beliefs. For ease of writing, his belief system will be considered secular/human rights.
For all the six, first suggested pattern was that God was a companion in flight. For example, Haile, who switched to being an Evangelical prior to flight, was representative of how both Muslims and Christians approached their refugee flight journey:

... we gave everything to God. Because ... we don’t know the place, we don’t know the country, we don’t know how we reach there, but just be with us, help us and lead us.

Sohelia, the traditionally religious Assyrian Orthodox, emotionally and physically exhausted as a consequence of deciding to flee within a 24-hour period, went further by surrendering even to a negative flight outcome:

Believe me, believe me, I pray, I said ‘Please God, please, you know if it’s going to happen I’ll accept it’ [if her family was sent back to Iraq].

For the six God was the guarantee of protection and the insurance against risk.

The second pattern concerned ‘miracles’ perceived as instigated by God that occurred during the flight of two refugee women. The first as told by Sofia, the traditionally religious Chaldean widow, occurred the day her family was escaping in a series of taxi rides through northern Iraq. Sofia reported that at a northern Iraqi checkpoint, the normally fierce Muslim female security guard who was never ill was ill that day. To their relief, the family were able to pass unhindered through this security checkpoint. Sofia attributed this escape to God, stating:

... because of the prayers and the blessing, that day the lady wasn’t there. I swear never before she wasn’t there.
The second ‘miracle’ occurred at another checkpoint, this time at a Middle East airport, and resulted in the refugee’s family being the only family on that particular flight which was not deported back to Iraq. The explanations for this unlikely escape were firstly, ‘He [God] was with me every single step’. Secondly, she inferred that a series of miraculous events occurred as ‘God did everything, God encouraged those people [the customs officials] to put me in the front’ of the queue, then a mysterious ‘door opened’ – in the wall of the customs area to an outside street where a taxi stood waiting.

Visitations by spirits was the third pattern:

- Ali, the religious ethnic Sunni Somali, spoke of angels who guarded him and his family night and day while on their long flight journey which was taken on foot.
- Sohelia, the Assyrian Orthodox, felt Breshmone, a cultural spirit, was protecting her and her family ‘all the time’ as they fled over the mountains.

The final pattern was that God’s intervention operated in ‘sending’ people to assist them on their journey. Haile was ‘led’ to a Christian woman who linked him to Christians in southern Africa. James, the Animist who later converted to Christianity (see a later chapter), was taken by what the researcher considered to be a people smuggler, to a church in Cairo where refugees were assisted. However, James did not consider this paid service as exploitive, but rather that the smuggler was ‘sent’ by God in a time of need.

5.3 Asylum: Refugees and Their Various Situations

To understand the refugee experience and coping presented in the previous and next section, some background knowledge of 1) the varying flight contexts and/or 2) the various or varying places of asylum that refugees found themselves in is of relevance.

Somalis: Of the three Somalis, one fled with their family to Mombasa where they self-settled. However, because of harassment by Kenyan police the family ‘escaped’ to a

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76 Confidentiality requires not naming the airport.
77 Names will not be used and some place names will not be used as this could affect anonymity.
Kenyan refugee camp. This UN camp was mainly comprised of Somalis and was physically divided along clan lines, but, unlike in Somalia, there were reportedly few clan difficulties. Another Somali initially fled in the 1980s to Saudi Arabia and later returned. Because of the civil war the refugee fled again, this time to a Kenyan refugee camp. Then, after several years of going in and out of Somalia, he finally joined his family who had previously fled to Egypt. A final Somali did not flee, but went to study in Cairo. Both of the latter refugees lived in Egypt for a number of years.

**Ethiopians:** Of the four Ethiopians, the ethnic Somali fled to Djibouti during the 1978 war with Somalia and then, to financially support his family, he worked in Saudi Arabia. Later he returned, walking for several months to Ethiopia and lived as an internally displaced person (IDP) moving in and out of camps. Meanwhile, his wife and children had escaped to Egypt. The second Ethiopian was taken over several weeks by people smugglers overland, in planes and by boat to southern Africa where he self-settled. Two others did not flee as one went to study in Cairo and another to help their family and study in East Africa.

**Sudanese:** One southern Sudanese had been a refugee most of her life, first fleeing in the 1970s during the Anya Nya War and again fleeing during a ‘second war’ with the SPLA/M in the 1990s – this time to the Kukuma refugee camp in northern Kenya. Another male lived in a refugee camp on the border of Ethiopia. Often he went back into Sudan and so moved in and out of the camp. One Christian fled to Cairo, another did not flee but travelled to be with her husband, who for political reasons could not return home. Prior to taking this action, this refugee and another were IDPs for a number of years. Finally, the two Muslim Sudanese fled to Egypt, with one living as a self-settled refugee and the other as a student.

**Iraqis:** Prior to flight, two of the Iraqi Shi’ites mentioned that they themselves or a spouse had become IDPs as a result of being detained by the Ba’athist regime. Two Shi’ites fled with their families after the Iran–Iraq War and lived in Iran. Later, unable to gain citizenship in Iran, one went to Pakistan. Another Shi’ite family fled via Jordan and
Syria and then to Lebanon. With the Christians, one fled to Turkey and the other to Greece.

To conclude, the nineteen refugees were in a variety of refugee asylum situations, a phenomena observed by Jacobsen (2001). Two female refugees lived in refugee camps, while at least three male refugees interviewed moved in and out of camps, which concurred with a pattern found in Jacobson’s research. Others lived as self-settled refugees in southern Africa, Kenya, Iran, Pakistan, Greece and Turkey, but mostly in Cairo. In addition, a few had been IDPs.

5.3.1 Religious Communities and their Support in Places of Asylum

Responses to questions during the in-depth interview such as *What kept you going on this journey and living in a country as a refugee or asylum seeker?* showed the various and varying religious communities had varying support for refugees in asylum. Below is a brief overview of the religious groups the self-settled refugees living in cities came into contact with in their places of asylum.

Some Ethiopian Protestant/Evangelical groups were reported to be present in southern Africa and Kenya. Refugees mentioned attending church and participating in other activities such as choir practice, Bible study groups, Sunday schools, youth and adult groups, pastor training and revival meetings. Regarding the EO they had a church in Djibouti and only recently in Kenya, but not in southern Africa where a number of refugees lived. A leader stated that in places or refugee camps where there were no EO churches or priests, believers improvised with temporary leadership structures.

For southern Sudanese Christians, although there were still reported restrictions in Egypt, active Presbyterian, Anglican and Catholic Sudanese groups reportedly assisted in welfare and religious activities. In addition, there were substantial religious leadership structures and leadership training. One church reportedly conducted a school for Sudanese children who could not attend Egyptian schools.
Regarding Iraqis, Iraqi Christians in Turkey had church service on Sunday, as well as Sunday schools for children. Iraqi Christians in Greece had services each Sunday. Iraqi Shi’ites in Iran had more religious freedom than in Iraq. However, a refugee in Lebanon found that because of distance it was difficult to get to a Shi’ite mosque each Thursday, yet ‘every day get the call to prayer reminded you when to pray’. As well, their children received Qur’anic education at local schools.

Sunni and Sufi Muslims from Somalia and Sudan transported their religious practices with them to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, with men reportedly going to mainstream mosques on a Friday and participating in the Festivals of Ramadan and Eid.

Three patterns in religious communities’ assistance to refugees emerged. The first related to transnational religious networks. Seven refugees, close to half, reported engagement with their transnational networks. Two southern Sudanese refugees fleeing to Cairo and an Ethiopian Protestant Evangelical fleeing to southern Africa to live as self-settled refugees, were linked to their religious community from day one of arrival. The Assyrian, the Chaldean Catholic and some Iraqi Shi’ite refugee participants were also linked to their religious community or other Orthodox communities in Greece and Turkey.

The second pattern was that religious groups assisted self-settled refugees to gain work. Seven refugees or a family member either worked for or obtained employment with, or through, their religious communities:

- two Shi’ites were exiled in Iran; one worked for an Ayatollah, the other for the religious police
- a southern Sudanese woman worked for a foreign missionary as a housekeeper
- a daughter of the Chaldean obtained employment in a niche market, as a housekeeper for wealthy Istanbul families (also see Danis 2005).
Four others, mostly Muslims, obtained work through apparently non-religious sources. Two Muslims found work through a neighbour, the other worked for a private company and two Sudanese worked for NGOs.

The final pattern was refugees receiving assistance in asylum in a number of ways. Two Shi’ites received direct support: staying in a mosque with simple accommodation and food when UNHCR payments were reduced. A Sufi stayed in a Muslim student hostel. The Iraqi refugees were assisted by individual Greek Orthodox members. Others, mostly Muslim, were assisted by non-religious persons such as individuals and neighbours, and another by a secular Iraqi foundation. Two Muslims and a Christian received Egyptian government bursaries to study in Egypt which according to Moro (2004) was not an uncommon occurrence. Finally, two Iraqi Christians and two Somalis were assisted by family members in the West.

Contrasting expectations of assistance from their religious community emerged from Muslims. Firstly, the traditionally religious Khadija was shocked that the local Lebanese Shi’ite imam, knowing of her families’ desperate plight, did not bring assistance to their home. This was different from Iraq where she as a ‘Sayyid’ regularly assisted those in need:

\[
\text{\ldots we know this lady needs help \ldots we go straight away \ldots or someone come to us, \ldots she doesn’t say nothing \ldots because all the people [neighbours] know each other.}
\]

Khadija mentioned that a Shi’ite mosque did offer assistance, but her husband, out of pride, was ashamed to collect it, although refugee women did go ‘disguised’ in burqas. In contrast to Khadija, a Sunni Somali in asylum in Egypt stated that the imam at a mosque where he regularly prayed had little in-depth knowledge of foreign refugee attendees’ situations or of a welfare assistance scheme. This Sunni, who received money from their family in the West, did not expect the mosque’s support.
Thus, almost all refugees received some assistance from their religious community.

5.3.2 Asylum: Religious Experiences and Coping

In contrast to comments about flight, nearly all of the nineteen commented on the questions mentioned in 5.1 in relation to their religious experiences in the varying places of asylum.

Slightly less than half the refugees stated that in asylum ‘miracles’ or paranormal experiences, attributed to God, were of great assistance with two trends emerging. Firstly, refugees reported ‘miracles’ often involving the receiving of money; that is, in unusual ways from friends or family members at times of desperate need. Other reported ‘miracles’ were:

- Shegee inferred that God ‘sent’ a woman to support her during the birth of her first baby.
- Sohelia thought it was miraculous that precious baby food for her daughters finished the exact day she left for a host country.
- James was regularly ‘saved’ from police round-ups of illegal Sudanese in Cairo.

Secondly, several paranormal experiences were recounted. The ‘devil’ or evil was experienced by several Christians and Muslims; for example, Haile felt deeply tempted by the devil. James, through his interpreter, explained how he viewed and coped with such tests by the devil, stating:

\[ I \text{ had so many tests by the devil the only thing that can help him [me] is God. He [I] put God first. God help [me] him a lot during the many tests [I] he faced. } \]

For Semira a dream from God was critical in deciding whom she would marry. She stated that ‘something hard wake up [from her sleep] like this’; she gestured with a hand
touching her shoulder to wake her up. This ‘presence’ directed her to a Bible reading.\textsuperscript{78} Believing this was a direct message from God, this confirmed her acceptance of a marriage proposal. Finally, for the traditionally religious Shi’ite Hussan, a séance he conducted while in prison for illegally residing in Pakistan, predicted the exact time of his release.

Regarding religion and coping, a content analysis showed five approaches, and a mixture of these was used by six interviewees. Most were highly religious refugees. Nearly all six gave comments that suggested a surrendering to God in the place of asylum. Hussan the Shi’ite would ‘look to God’ for help, with Khadija another Shi’ite, adding ‘Allah knows everything’ in asylum, ‘People can’t do anything’. Finally, Haile’s impassioned statements were indicative of how most refugees viewed God’s assistance in the place of asylum:

\begin{quote}
We don’t have money, we don’t have food, nothing. We’re just waiting for our God … That’s true I can tell you! Here [in Australia] there is social security [meaning Centrelink payments], there [in southern Africa] … [the] only social security there, is only God’s security.
\end{quote}

A second coping approach was used by three, James and the two Iraqi Christians. God had been with them since childhood and so was with them in asylum. The third approach was the ability to use their religiosity to transcend the refugee experience. For example, two Muslims already appeared to have transcended their own death. Hussan was representative of what both stated:

\begin{quote}
I believe that, I believe to Allah and I believe that there is a death, I will die one day. So I don’t think of fear of dying tomorrow or the day after. I believe that in every minute,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{78} Acts, Chapter 10, verses 9–20; in particular, verses 15 and 19.
It is unclear exactly when Hussan’s realisation first occurred, either during the war or during his various imprisonments. However, Asha who shifted to a more intense religiosity in asylum (see later) added this was how she coped with fear from the war in Somalia and then in Australia.

Another approach, the religiously learnt strategy of coping a day at a time was reported by two refugees. Hussan, the Shi’ite, learnt it from his religious books early in life and Semira from her Evangelical Bible study group, which she switched to in asylum (see next chapter). The fifth and final coping strategy, used by two Muslims and a Christian, was that of constantly reminding themselves that others suffered more than them; for example, Jesus in Egypt or Jesus on the cross, or other refugees.

5.4 The Refugee Religious Communities in Melbourne

Again, in order to understand the refugee experience in the host city of Melbourne, a brief background knowledge, mostly compiled from comments from the four participant groups, is presented below. Some of these comments are supported in the entries in Jupp’s *The Encyclopaedia of Religion in Australia*.

**Somalis:** According to the 2006 census 2,620 Somali-born were living in Victoria, with most in Melbourne. Somali clan divisions are significant, so there can be wariness towards unknown people (Williams, 2003). Somalis have settled in Melbourne generally along clan lines, with the Sheekhaal (a traditional religious leaders’ clan) and the Hawiye predominately in the city’s north, and the Daarood and the Majeerteen sub-clan in the west.

Somalis with no ethno-specific mosque attend several mosques around Melbourne. Their clan religious structure had imams and elders. They gathered for small group meetings, often in homes, to give each other religious support. Religious/cultural education of
adults and children occurs at various community centres (that is, in public housing areas) in Melbourne over the weekend.

**Ethiopians:** According to the 2006 census there were 3,100 Ethiopian-born in Victoria, mostly in Melbourne. The EO community has one church in the west of Melbourne. At the time of study, the church was raising funds for a larger church with space for both religious and other activities. There was also a small but growing, number of Ethiopian Evangelicals with several churches in the west and south of Melbourne, one associated with the Assemblies of God. Some of these Evangelical churches actively supported their members with settlement in Melbourne, as well as having Christian education activities for all the family.

The Ethiopian Muslims, also with no ethno-specific mosque, attend different mosques in Melbourne, with most Ethiopians not speaking Arabic but rather Oromo. There appears to be several sheikhs across Melbourne, though there is only one principal leader based in the south of Melbourne. A weekend cultural and language school is based in Kensington.

**Sudanese:** The 2006 census showed that there were 6,210 Sudanese-born in Victoria, with most living in Melbourne, but with some based in provincial cities such as Warrnambool and Colac (Shepley, 2007; Taylor, 2005). The northern Sudanese are a minority in Melbourne, and while most are practising Muslims, a few are non-practising. The southern Sudanese are the majority and come from a number of different tribes, with religious affiliation generally along tribal lines: the Dinka, in the majority, are mostly Anglican, while the minority Nuer are Presbyterian, and the Shilluk and Equatorial are approximately 70 per cent Anglican and 30 per cent Catholic. The Nuer have generally settled in Melbourne’s south and the Dinka in the city’s west. Most appear to have ethno-specific services in mainstream church buildings. There are other churches catering to the community’s needs and they appear to be active with prayer meetings and various religious education activities occurring at various churches, or sometimes in homes and in community halls.
Iraqis: The 2006 census showed there were 8,610 Iraqi-born in Victoria, most living in the north of Melbourne. However, some Shi’ites live in Shepparton and Cobram (Shepley, 2007; Taylor, 2005). There is only one Shi’ite mosque, currently in Fawkner, with a number of housani, one known to have a gym for young people, in some suburbs. The Chaldean Catholics have a large church in Campbellfield, with activities such as youth groups, a nursing home, a supportive local Catholic school and several church services on Sunday, with Pitrus (2009) detailing a lively religious community. The Assyrian Church of the East, also concentrated in the north of Melbourne, has a slightly smaller but still active congregation (Darmo, 2009). As well, there is the Ancient Church of the East in the north of Melbourne (Darmo, 2009). There are also a number of Iraqis of Christian backgrounds who belong to Pentecostal/Evangelical churches, having converted since embarking on the refugee journey.

To conclude, most refugees’ religious communities have been re-established in Melbourne. All have weekly worship. It appears that the Iraqi Christians, the Ethiopian Evangelicals, Sudanese Christians and Shi’ites have additional activities, such as mid-week meetings alongside some welfare and support services.

5.4.1 Religion and Coping in Australia

This section details the responses to a series of questions – *How has your religion, spirituality or belief system helped or not helped settlement in Australia?* – and other associated questions. Two patterns emerged.

Firstly, five refugees out of the nineteen felt God was constantly with them in Australia. For example, a Sufi enjoyed God’s creation, ‘the birds, the green scenes and the valley, the sunset and the fresh air’. A Shi’ite sometimes felt deeply ‘joined’ to God when he prayed at home and the Assyrian reported a transcendent experience while in her

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79 Or spelt husayni.
80 The housani or husayniyyah is either a permanent or temporary building where ritual ceremonies commemorating the Martyrdom of the Shiite Imam Husayn are held (Esposito, 2003). Other monographs (Halm, 2004) state that husayniyyah began in the nineteenth century in Iran to perform plays dedicated to the remembrance of Husayn.
Melbourne church, stating ‘sometimes I’m praying … sometimes I have a moment make me, it take me a moment, it take me somewhere very, very, close to something’. An illiterate Sudanese Christian felt God guided him around Melbourne, as he could not read a street directory.

The second pattern was that nearly three-quarters of the refugees reported experiencing perceived minor ‘miracles’, paranormal incidents and the presence of the devil or jinn in Australia. Many ‘miracles’, attributed to God, again focused around the receiving of goods or assistance at a time of great need. For example, Margaret, a religious single mother from Southern Sudan on a pension, when needing two new beds, stated:

\[I \text{ was wondering where I can get beds … then abruptly the government was paying six hundred dollars for each child … it is really God’s will, not only John Howard who gave that money, but God who uses him.}\]

A different style of ‘miracle’ was reported by Shegee (who began to question her faith in Australia). She is also a single mother. Soon after the Bali bombings, which she understandably believed caused animosity towards Australian Muslims, she believed Allah answered her prayers for assistance. On the day before an operation, unexpectedly a foster parent of non-Muslim background took all her children for the time she was ill.

The paranormal experiences recorded were:

- Margaret’s sister came to her in a dream. The next morning, ‘I was really very happy, but I had that feeling that now I am very far, I don’t know when I will really see [them again]’.
- A Somali felt strongly that her sister was calling her in a spiritual way back to Somalia before she, the sister died. Unfortunately, the refugee did not arrive before her sister’s death.
• The Assyrian had two visitations, one by a ‘spirit’ who moved objects around her house and again by Breshmone, the Assyrian spirit.

Experiencing or being tested by the devil or jinn in Australia was mentioned by just over half the refugees (this is examined further in Chapter 8). For example, a Somali mentioned how jinns were in toilets, and another said how a jinn had come to a friend in Australia, via a letter:

... the jinn came from there [Kenya], that's according to her beliefs. But now she’s got the jinn ... All the way to Australia comes to her ... And then she got sick after receiving that letter. She started you know that behaviour. Yelling [inferring possession].

Most refugees commented how God had assisted them to cope in Australia, several patterns emerged. Firstly, unsolicited data show that a third of the nineteen mentioned how in Australia God or their religious beliefs assisted them in coping with the after-effects of torture, trauma or flashbacks. Asha (who shifted to a more intense religiosity in the refugee camp (see Chapter 8) said:

... in general all Somalis. What we have seen is very horrible things ... if you ask me every minute, every second, talk about it, I will talk about it as long as you wish. It doesn’t put me under stress or depression. Because I believe that whatever happens it happens, and I believe in Allah.

Margaret, who had flashbacks in English classes, stated ‘it was only through God’s faith that I was able to live and able to come up to this stage’, implying functioning in Australia. Another three stated they or a family member continued to suffer in Australia mentally or physically, as a result of torture in their home country.
A second pattern was seen with four refugees, all female- some widows. They suffered or were depressed due to a lack of extended family or neighbourhood support in Australia. All mentioned how God assisted them in managing stress and depression. Each reported ways of religious coping. A Somali widow stated her religious meaning system kept her ‘strong’ and assisted in managing depressive symptoms that she had not experienced prior to arrival in Australia. A religious Shi’ite regularly visited a psychiatrist, seemingly for clinical depression due to factors such as loneliness and managing the effects of her husband’s torture. She stated her beliefs helped her. The female Sufi, well educated and psychologically attuned, was able to articulate how her religiosity assisted her psychologically in Australia:

> When you are single or not single in every situation when you are happy or not happy, when you are afraid, when you are sad or anxious, if you ask God [Allah] to help you, He will help you. At least you will be psychologically settled and if you are psychologically settled, you can think better and you can practically put yourself in the right situation according to that action or that situation.

A third pattern, clearly articulated by the religious Christian widow from Sudan, was that her belief in the afterlife\(^{81}\) assisted her coping with her lack of family in Australia. She stated:

> My belief teaches me that I am a stranger even in my country, we all are strangers on Earth, we have own permanent, yes

\(^{81}\) With regard to this thesis, the afterlife is synonymous with the next life, the Hereafter. Regarding Christians, it is common knowledge that most believe in the afterlife. Writing on fundamentalism, Hood, Hill & Williamson (2005) state that most fundamentalist religious groups and all Christians fundamentalists believe in the afterlife or the next life of heaven and hell (Hood et al., 2005). Esposito states (2003) that Muslims also believe in the same concepts, adding that Muslim believers who have led moral lives and performed good works will go to heaven; unbelievers and evil doers will go to hell. Hood et al. (2005) also state that both Muslim and fundamentalist Christians view the present life as a preparation for eternal bliss or eternal isolation from God.
we have our permanent home in Heaven, and that’s one of the things that helped me here in Australia.

Their coping in Australia, including with the loss of social and occupational status, was embedded in their religious faith, particularly in the promise of afterlife. Two Christians and a Muslim, all women, were concerned about their tertiary-educated husbands’ mental and physical wellbeing due to their working below their professional level in Australia. The Muslim’s husband was a factory worker, ‘he’s killing himself, inside he’s dying’.

A Christian southern Sudanese related:

We went to this place in Juba [southern Sudan] and we came to Khartoum and in Khartoum we couldn’t settle, we came to Egypt and now we are in Australia, so we don’t have to think of a place to settle, just believe and pray, and one day we [he] will find a job in Australia, and that’s how we came to accept that there are some ups and downs in life, and we don’t have to question anyone, just question your belief and ask because we believe that if we pray and trust in our prayer it will be accepted. One day our prayer will be answered, and my husband will find a job, he will teach here in Australia because I do believe that Australia is my home, any place on earth is my home, and it is not my permanent home, though I have my own permanent home in heaven. So I can settle anywhere. It doesn’t bother me anymore.

A final pattern was seen in three refugee women of Somali, Iraqi Christian and Ethiopian Evangelical backgrounds. They mentioned how God assisted their work in human services in Australia. One stated she silently prayed for her patients, ‘someone needing healing, someone have a problem’. A second said that her beliefs had intensified in Australia due to:
... first for my job because I see the people suffering problems. I need to be very strong and close to them, and the other change when you have growing [raising] kids.

The third stated that:

... my belief [in Allah] helped me very much, because otherwise it’s hard [for her to do her job]. Further, I had observed many secular Anglo-Saxon clients suffered more by asking this question you could go crazy, like you could lose it.

However, she stated that:

... if you have a belief system it will help you to understand crisis happen[s] to everybody in this earth and in different times ... it's not only you.

A number of refugees or their spouses did not want to leave Africa or the Middle East and come to Australia (see Chapter 9). The following case study shows how this third refugee, a tertiary educated Sunni, coped.

**Case Study**

Meriam’s husband, the refugee applicant, accepted an Australian refugee visa for his family without consulting her. Given her high aspirations and clan status in Somalia, her university education and the possibility of a comfortable life in Africa, moving to Australia seemed like a disappointment. In Australia she had lost status, was comparatively less affluent, did housework with both her husband and herself having jobs below their skill level. She reported coping with the diminishment by ‘I believe that everything that happens to you, it's been written before you [meaning it was
predetermined by God]. So it helps you to accept it’. She said the only thing she could do was:

more prayer and ask [Allah] to help you to get through that
time, you do more prayers.

The comments of a cultural consultant experienced in settling Iraqi and Horn of African groups concurred with Merriam’s case study. The consultant suggested that for many high-status refugees, religious beliefs ‘stopped a sense of bitterness’ with the disappointments experienced in Australia when compared with ‘the imagined possibilities’ of their lives if they had not been forced to flee. This consultant also suggested that some refugees never really resolve the grief. According to the cultural consultant, many women thus framed their suffering through:

…well, Allah, this is what Allah has meant for us, a sense of
connection I suppose of fate and Allah.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined what Tarakeshwar et al. (2003) label the ‘experiential’ and ‘social’ dimension (in part) of the refugee experience. It found that the nineteen refugees had varying modes of flight, and lived in or transited through various countries, living in various refugee camps or as self-settled refugees. As well, it found about a third did not flee, an issue examined more fully in Chapter 9.

The existence of many functioning religious communities in asylum was very evident. Christians who fled and self-settled were quickly linked to their religious community. Self-settled Shi’ites, not Sunnis, and a number of Christian’s procured work and welfare assistance via their religious groups. Discussions appeared to confirm the researcher’s observation that for various structural reasons Shi’ites have more welfare structures than many, but not all Sunni groups.
Regarding religious experience, various patterns arose. Unsolicited comments from a third of refugees mentioned, for example, God as a flight companion and God sending ‘helpers’ when fleeing. In asylum, three trends emerged: nearly a half reported ‘miracles’, visitations by and the experiencing of ‘devil’ or ‘paranormal spirits’, and the use of religious coping strategies such as: surrendering to God, religiously transcending death and coping a day at a time. In Australia, about a quarter of the refugees felt God accompanied them all the time and nearly three-quarters reported experiencing minor ‘miracles’, the devil, *jinn* or paranormal experiences. Analysis shows that most who reported such experiences in Australia also reported similar experiences in asylum, on flight or in their home country.

More than half the refugees in Australia commented that their belief or their religion assisted in coping with difficulties; for example, with, their loneliness, differences in culture, difficulties relating to work or lack of work, and the perceived disappointment of life in Australia. A third commented that their religion assisted in coping with the psychological consequences of torture and trauma. It appeared that religious coping was especially pertinent, though not always, for those widowed or divorced with children and few family members in Australia.

To conclude, generally speaking, three-quarters of the refugees reported either religious experiences or religious coping, with some appearing to use more intense coping at times of need, for others this was a new experience or approach. Even two of the three refugees who questioned their religiosity reported using religious coping approaches. In contrast, the one non-religious refugee did not report such religious experiences nor religious coping.

This chapter raised the issue of religious ritual usage during the refugee experience. This is explored in the next chapter.
CHAPTER SIX

RELIGIOUS RITUAL AND THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

The use of religious rituals during the refugee experience emerged as a major theme in this study. Tarakeshwar et al. (2003) describe religious rituals as the expected behaviours of a believer such as attendance at a mosque or church, religious practices (fasting, pilgrimages or prayer) and rituals at certain critical stages in the life cycle (birth, marriage or death).

The initial focus of this chapter will be an overview of ritual usage, followed by an examination of refugees’ attendance at places of worship and prayer practices during the various stages. Then, the focus is on critical life stage rituals followed by patterns in Muslim and Christian ritual usage in asylum and Australia. This analysis is followed by an examination of religious objects/artefacts and religio/cultural rituals that assisted refugees. The next focus is on shifts in religious rituals and concerns about their use in Australia. As there are few studies on Muslim rituals, these are examined in more detail. The conclusion will introduce an emergent typology for refugees’ interaction with religion.

6.1 Overview of Reported Use of Religious Rituals

For this section, data came from several sources. Firstly, from a re-examination of the question, *Did your religion/spirituality/belief system help or not help you during your journey?* examined in Chapter 5 and secondly from the question: *How much did you practise your religion?* at the various phases of the refugee journey. Responses are shown in Table 6.1.
### TABLE 6.1 Question: How much did you practise your religion (attending places of worship, religious festivals, prayer etc.)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before persecution</th>
<th>After persecution</th>
<th>In asylum</th>
<th>In Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Somali refugees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed #</td>
<td>lot/same</td>
<td>some</td>
<td>some</td>
<td>lot/same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aust./Som.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Som./Aust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asha #</td>
<td>not much</td>
<td>not much</td>
<td>not much/lot</td>
<td>lot +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meriam #</td>
<td>lot</td>
<td>lot</td>
<td>some</td>
<td>some –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethiopian refugees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali #</td>
<td>less before war</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>less (appeared to not understand the question)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shegee</td>
<td>not at all</td>
<td>not much</td>
<td>not much</td>
<td>not much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haile</td>
<td>not at all/lot</td>
<td>lot</td>
<td>some</td>
<td>lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semira</td>
<td>not applicable</td>
<td>lot</td>
<td>lot +</td>
<td>some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sudanese refugees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James #</td>
<td>not asked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulo</td>
<td>*some</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*much less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(increase)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>lot</td>
<td>some</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>lot +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca #</td>
<td>not asked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1 interview)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalid</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samma</td>
<td>lot</td>
<td>lot +</td>
<td>lot</td>
<td>lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iraqi refugees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbas</td>
<td>little</td>
<td>some</td>
<td>some</td>
<td>some/usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hussan</td>
<td>lot</td>
<td>some</td>
<td>lot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khadija</td>
<td>some</td>
<td>lot</td>
<td>lot +</td>
<td>some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sohelia</td>
<td>some +</td>
<td>lot</td>
<td>lot +</td>
<td>lot +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofia #</td>
<td>some +</td>
<td>some +</td>
<td>lot</td>
<td>lot +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some information is missing in the questionnaires – from those refugees who did not wish to be interviewed three to four times. However, relevant comments from the semi-structured interviews are included in brackets as this was relevant.

# interpreter used
+ more than
- less than
In answering these and other questions, the refugees made many comments. The overall finding was seventeen of the nineteen refugees found religious rituals assisted them during the various stages of their refugee journey and subsequent settlement. This chapter will mostly concentrate on ritual usage during transit and in the host country.

6.1.1 Patterns and Contexts of Communal Rituals in Transit Places

During transit, attendance at religious rituals in places of worship and participation in communal religious activities appeared to be influenced by several factors. Attendance and participation were heavily influenced by the desperation of the refugee camp situation and the lack of other activities. Another factor for self-settled refugees was whether they belonged to the majority religious community in the country of transit. For example, one Shi’ite living in Iran and self-settled Ethiopian Evangelicals in southern Africa could more freely practise their faith than when in Orthodox or socialist Ethiopia, though Christian Sudanese in Egypt were restricted because of the harassing activities of the police. Even in minority contexts, religious practice was possible. Conversely, Sofia, living in Sunni Istanbul, freely attended a Greek Orthodox Church and Sunday Chaldean services (see Chapter 9 for more details).

Contrary to the prevailing pattern, individual attitudes or circumstances caused a reduction in religious practice for only three refugees. Body language indicated the sensitivity of this topic. These reductions were due to establishing a business, having insufficient privacy for prayer or Bible study, being confused and being simply too busy surviving. A change in several refugees’ work status or in their family responsibilities resulted in changes in religious practice.

Regarding communal rituals, several patterns or shifts in practice emerged when in transit. Ethiopian Evangelicals and Sudanese Christians reported worshipping in their own places of worship in southern Africa, whereas Iraqi refugees worshipped in Greek
Orthodox churches in Greece and Istanbul, as they did not have their own church. In addition, as well as weekly services, Protestant, Evangelical, Anglicans and Sudanese Christian refugees had mid-week Bible study and prayer groups that were small. For Muslims, one strong difference emerged – in their home country, several males and one Shi’ite female prayed daily or weekly in their neighbourhood mosques, whereas in asylum, prayer took place in their residence. One reason given for this shift was the distance to the mosque.

6.1.2 Weekly and Yearly Religious Rituals in the Settlement Country

Some broad trends emerged on communal weekly and yearly rituals in Australia. All but one refugee regularly or fairly regularly attended their place of worship. For example, most Muslims fasted during Ramadan and participated in other festivals, while Christians talked about attending Christmas and Easter liturgies. One Sudanese Christian nostalgically stated that he missed the seven days of dancing and singing at Christmas in the Sudan.

About half the refugees lived within walking distance of their new worship place, while others had no difficulty travelling there. For example, Ali and Rebecca walked to their local mosque or church, the church shared with other immigrant communities. Asha worshipped with other Somalis in a public hall under her inner urban public housing block. A Shi’ite family regularly visited their local ‘housani’, as well as their mosque.

Some shifts in practice emerged. Sofia for the first time in her life lived a long distance from her church, but organised a special room in her home to pray until she was able to move to within walking distance of the Chaldean church. The Assyrian who drove to church was considering moving closer in retirement. Some Sundays the family substituted their church attendance by watching a US televangelist program in their outer suburban home. In addition, the family continued their ancient religious practice on Saturday night by putting:

82 For thousands of years Greeks (as has the Ecumenical Patriarch) have lived in Istanbul, though most left in the early 1920s.
... incense in my house and I put candle on my dinner table in front of my cross, or whatever, and all my kids, they come in front of the cross.

Another lived over fifteen kilometres from the Shi’ite mosque, a difficulty not faced in transit or at home, as they had resided in a majority Arabic-speaking country. Yet in Melbourne they discovered the local mosque was not Arabic speaking. The family during Ramadan broke the fast at the nearby houses of different Iraqi friends, and not the mosque. One Sudanese took a free, but unreliable, bus to church some Sundays. For some refugees the ability to drive or own a car, being older or a single mother, and the cost of fuel, appeared to be factors restricting these low-income families from attending their places of worship.

Conversely, three refugees preferred to live away from their community or place of worship. A Somali from a minority clan lived far from other Somalis as documented in the USA (Kemp, 2006). For these, daily prayers and sometimes Friday prayers were performed at home, as had been done while in transit. In contrast, for a fourth, a Sufi, her ritual practice, although done mostly alone, was similar to that in Sudan.

6.2 Prayer and the Refugee Experience

Analysis showed prayer was the most frequently used religious coping strategy, mentioned by all but one refugee. Comments showed several patterns: prayer during difficulties, during flight, in their place of asylum and in Australia.

6.2.1 Prayer during times of War and Persecution

Seven refugees said they used prayer to cope with war and persecution in their home environment. Communal prayers greatly assisted three refugees during persecutions prior to flight. The Sudanese Christian, Rebecca, found collective praying helpful when her husband, living in asylum in Egypt, was wrongly imprisoned for his involvement with the
SPLA/M and Israel. A daily vigil, attended by some religious elders at her Khartoum home, involved prayer and the sharing of Bible stories such as:

... about the Walls of Jericho, yes ... When the Christians [inaccurate as it was an Old Testament story] march around the Walls of Jericho, their prayers and praises were answered and [statements like] we are coming today to put [Rebecca’s husband] in God’s hands, through our prayer he [her husband] will be released.

Khadija, after her husband’s arrest by Iraqi authorities, also found communal family prayers of assistance, as did Asha who stated that her family, numbering more than thirty, prayed during the time of civil unrest. Mohammed also mentioned that during the bombing, they would run to the mosque, and praying as ‘we say that time ... [a] hard time, is good for praying’. Finally, Asha added that during the civil war, Mogadishu’s sheikhs and imams collected some money for a communal day of prayer for all its residents.

Thus, for some, regardless of religion, communal prayer with the extended family or a local religious community in times of great stress or violent civil unrest was of great support. In two women’s cases their prayers appeared to be answered as their two husbands were released from jail.

6.2.2 Prayers with Religious Leaders before Flight

Three of those fourteen who fled reported a chance to prepare beforehand, with each demonstrating similar religious behaviours prior to flight. Sofia, the Chaldean Catholic, the night before flight, was visited by her priest who prayed with this widow, giving words of ‘encouragement’ and a blessing, and he presented some religious objects, pictures of St Mary and St George, and to her youngest child a small Bible to take. Sofia
also secretly visited some nuns who also prayed, blessed her family and gave her a rosary, which she still possesses.

Ali, the ethnic Somali, revealed after some probing that the night before escaping he went to the mosque at sunset and secretly told a small group of trusted religious elders of his plans. These leaders prayed ‘Allah, you know him, save him’. The researcher suggested this was a blessing. Rather, according to the interpreter, it was normal for religious leaders to pray for people when asked. The third refugee, a Sudanese Christian, also secretly met and prayed with church elders prior to flight: a prayer of thanksgiving, for flight documents received, then a petitionary prayer centred on asking for ‘God to help’ at the airport’s security check point, normally the most dangerous part of flight.

The data suggested that for the Muslim and Christians, pre-flight prayers by their religious leaders were of great emotional support for their dangerous journey. For example, one stated ‘I feel safe and I feel the relief’ as ‘God was helping me’. Another said that as a consequence the journey was ‘very easy for me’. Finally, Ali stated:

*I was very happy inside when I get this prayer from pious people, happy, happy, inside. But at same time I knew there was danger ahead of me.*

**6.2.3 Prayer during Flight**

Body language and tone of voice showed that the flight memories were raw, and sensitivity was needed in collecting flight data or even pursuing the area. Even so, many of those who fled mentioned how prayer assisted their journey. It appeared that many refugees were in a prayerful state during all or most of their flight journey. For example, Sohelia the Assyrian Orthodox prayed constantly while being taken by ‘people smugglers’ over the mountains and out of Iraq. Eventually, the prayer was deciphered, it was the Lord’s Prayer with Sohelia emphatically stating:
Like I was thinking [of] my Christianity, my prayer that's [was] my gun to protect me.

Unbeknown to Sohelia at the time, her husband was also silently repeating the same prayer as they both carried their children who were ‘sedated’ by the ‘people smugglers’ to ensure silence on this dangerous night journey. The Lord’s Prayer, learnt in childhood and coupled with her strong belief in Christianity, greatly supported Sohelia during the journey.

Ali and his family walked for over two months on this dangerous refugee journey. Ali stated that he prayed all the time and, ‘I was taking out [the prayer beads] and I continue [walking and gesturing using beads] while I walking, walking ... speaking the 99 names of Allah’.83 Discussions with religious leaders and academics suggest Ali’s prayer was communion with God, as well as a protective ritual from what Ali called ‘bad things’ on the journey. Further, the use of the beads and reciting the 99 names were reportedly common behaviour for rural people in Somalia. This refugee, though not a rural person, was an older, quietly religious man from a provincial town.

6.2.4 Prayers in Asylum

Generally speaking, a little under half of the refugees who gave data reported their praying in the various places of asylum increased. For example, several Muslims, even one who was less religious, commented that it was normal for people to pray more when in difficulty, it was ‘usual’ for refugees because as one stated ‘I have many, many problems, I was confused, I can’t understand everything’.

Most Muslim refugees also continued their daily prayer rituals, and for many these were more intentional and emotionally supportive than prior to the difficulties. There appeared to be no predominant classification of prayer. Some prayed for forgiveness; a Shi’ite stated he prayed from the ‘heart’ – with sincerity, when he was in a particularly difficult situation in prison, and so did a Sunni when in transit. A Shi’ite woman prayed an

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intercessionary prayer to Fatima Ali,\textsuperscript{84} for support, as her family were Sayyids, said to be direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad.

Several Christians also mentioned how they individually prayed more when in transit. For example, for both Somali and Sudanese women their praying increased in refugee camps. As well as praying at the local Greek church, Sofia used the rosary for a few hours a day or before she attended a meeting regarding her refugee status or after the police had harassed her family for a bribe. Thus, slightly more than half the refugees, regardless of religion, prayed more while waiting in transit than at home prior to fleeing.

\subsection{6.2.5 Prayer in Australia}

As for praying in Australia several findings emerged. Seven of the nine Muslims practised their regular daily prayer rituals. Comments showed many of these prayers incorporated the asking for forgiveness. Hussan, the Shi’ite, and Asha, the Somali, specifically stated that they ‘\textit{pray to God to forgive what I had done’}. It appeared a Somali male may have exaggerated praying the full five times a day – \textit{salah}\textsuperscript{85} as he suggested. However, it appeared he prayed both morning and night, and possibly privately to himself at the other times. Four Christians regularly prayed at home; however, it is possible more Christians did because of their high level of religiosity. Some regularly prayed at night using formulaic prayers, learnt from childhood. Chaldean Sofia kept up her daily or twice-daily rosary practice, as well as her daily or twice-daily attendance at church.

Even those three who deeply questioned their religion prayed. Shegee, without extended family in Australia and a single mother, called herself ‘\textit{not a good Muslim’}; and yet, at

\textsuperscript{84} Fatima is the wife of Ali and mother of Muhammad Hasan and Husayn. She is believed by many to be sinless and an exemplary mother, wife and daughter (Esposito, 2003). Nasr (2006) states that in Shi’ite piety, Fatima, and her daughter Zaynab are strong and brave figures. There is no such parallel in Sunnism, and Shi’ites often visited her shrine.

\textsuperscript{85} Names of the five prayer times (Glasse 2002). According to Glasse (2002) Muslims have three types of prayer:

- \textit{dua} – individual spontaneous prayer, petitioning God and expressing sentiments. One sub-category of dua is Ya Latif, prayer at moments of serious illness or distress
- \textit{salah} – the five-time daily ritual prayer to God
- \textit{dhikr} – silent or aloud remembrance of God.
times God was her companion, someone to discuss things with, to question, to argue with and to plead with not only during the asylum process, but even more so during settlement. Abbas, the Shi’ite, timidly stated he did not pray the five times a day, although his family members did. However, he prayed for his family when things were beyond his control. Even Paulo, who switched from Christianity back to his Animist beliefs, believes that ‘pray[ing] to God [is] the main thing’.

Analysis showed the social context of Australia can affect prayer rituals in several ways. Firstly, for working mothers, the pace of life in Australia meant less time to pray. One created a new way to ‘communicate with him’ [Jesus], praying and singing while she swept the floor at work. A Sunni did quick prayers at lunchtime, then prayed more on non-working days. The non-Muslim context of Australia caused Khadija some difficulties, as in Iraq and during the transit time, surrounded by a majority Muslim culture, prayer was easy as everyone in the neighbourhood prayed. However, in Australia, getting her young and adolescent children to pray regularly was a major difficulty:

Every time, in the morning maybe 5 or 4.30 they say [call from the mosque] wake up to pray in the morning, in the lunch time 12 o’clock the same, afternoon Salat, Maghrib, Salat, Asr86 five times. If you don’t want to do prayer, but you heard something, you remember you’re Muslim. But here nothing … nothing!

According to a Muslim religious leader, the call to prayer is a reminder, as well as providing a sense of spiritual comfort and security. In contrast to this, two male Shi’ites did not find the non-Muslim social context a difficulty. One was less religious and the other, a highly religious person, had made a pact with his family prior to arrival to practise their religion in Australia and he humbly thanked God that all his extended family, including the young, have held to it.

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86 Names of the five prayer times (Glasse 2002).
To conclude, nearly all the refugees prayed regularly in Australia. Some evidence hinted at prayer being more prevalent among non-working widows, single mothers who needed support and some non-working older Muslim males due to more available time. Further, the non-Muslim context and pace of life in Melbourne could affect prayer rituals.

6.3 Critical Life Stage Rituals in Asylum and Australia

Most refugees gave examples of how critical life stage rituals such as funerals, memorial services, vigils or rituals for the sick, as well as critical crises, were utilised in either Australia or in asylum.

In the refugee camp, the two widows without extended family support found religious rituals and the traditional communal religious activities an immense support. For Asha, the traditional ritual of men reading the Qur’an over her sick husband, assistance in burial and communal female support, greatly assisted her. For Rebecca, prayer with a group who visited her helped, as she said:

*I really felt that these prayers helped me … I was really in a critical situation and conditions were very terrible, and so I felt that the prayers helped me a lot at that time.*

In addition, the researcher observed the arrangements for a Somali funeral, unexpectedly organised in a refugee’s home. They stated clan leaders would be present on the day, women would provide food and people would stay with the grieving person for a number of days. The women would sit on the floor, eating popcorn, dates and serving *kawa* (traditional coffee) to all who came for the three days. An older woman (if it was a women’s-only group) who knew the Qur’an, would recite it, then ‘everybody prays for the dead’, which a religious leader said was a prayer such as:

*... may Allah take your mother to heaven … forgive her … whatever she’s done in the world when she was alive. May*
Allah give [the grieving person] the patience to forget her, not all the time to be in her head and you know, to clean her mum away from her.

This is so the mourner would not be ‘haunted’ by the deceased family member.

In addition, memorial services for family members who had died in recent conflicts in the Sudan or Iraq were regular occurrences. The Assyrian reported they attended ‘two to three a weekend’ in Australia. A religious leader stated that for Sudanese Christians it was culturally important that the ‘whole’ Sudanese community attended such services. This religious leader stated how debilitating this continual mourning can be for the Melbourne community. Also, the memorial services had become political platforms for various factions, not prayerful services. Thus, funeral services had been relocated to a church hall.

In Melbourne, four refugees mentioned attending or holding vigils for sick adults and children. For example, Mohammed read the Qur’an over sick people in hospital; another had an ill elderly woman who stayed with her while Asha spiritually and practically assisted her. On the other hand, Samma had a different experience, mentioning a terminally ill child in hospital who was regularly visited by the Sudanese Muslim community. However, they did not read the Qur’an over him, because in ‘your culture [meaning Australian], we can’t’.87 Discussion showed she mistakenly believed that it was not culturally acceptable or legally allowed. Eventually, the child was taken home where others could read the Qur’an. For Semira the Evangelical from Ethiopia, when her daughter was having a complex operation, ten to twelve church members prayed with her at the hospital and at church services where they ‘called on God and Jesus’, and laid hands on her daughter. This vigil was of great support, as was the fact that the specialist mentioned to her he was a Born Again Christian – the doctor ‘knows God [so] he do something good’, although she stated no miracle came. With regard to who directs such

87 The researcher explained to the refugee that they could in fact read the Qur’an over the child in hospital, and suggested she speak to a hospital nurse, social worker or visiting religious leader to assist the community when such an event occurred again.
rituals, generally speaking, for the Evangelicals, they appeared to be church-appointed leaders whereas for the Muslims they appeared clan or communally appointed.

Similar religious rituals using holy water to heal the sick, used both in transit and in Australia, were reported by a Christian and a Muslim Iraqi. When family members were sick the Assyrian Orthodox Sohelia or her husband would take a bowl of water (sometimes from the Holy Land), and trace a cross on the ill person’s forehead to heal them, not an uncommon ritual for Orthodox Christians. Khadija the Shi’ite reported that when needed an ill person would drink water from a brass bowl. This ritual bowl had all the names of Allah engraved inside it, and on the outside, Surah 112, from the Qur’an and the names of the Prophet’s family. Sometimes fragments of a rock called a turbah88 from the holy city of Karbala in Iraq would be put in the water – after drinking from the bowl a person generally felt better. Discussion with a Shi’ite religious leader and a Muslim academic, both from Melbourne, found this ritual was unknown to them. However, its use was subsequently confirmed by an Iran-based Shi’ite academic,89 as well as another Shi’ite interviewee who stated it was a practice used in Ancient Iraq now performed by ‘traditional’ people. During the asylum process, this ritual, performed in a borrowed bowl, appeared of great comfort, as Khadija’s family had limited funds to purchase medicines or even the bowl when in transit. The ritual was also repeated in Australia.

Other rituals were mentioned by several refugees. For example, some refugees were married without family present or others attended weddings during asylum and in Australia. Sudanese refugees and a religious leader mentioned how Dinkas had a special cultural/religious ceremony to mark puberty. This ceremony did not involve the traditional slaughtering of bulls and ritual scarring of young males, as currently this was not practised in many parts of the Sudan, due to the Christian influence. One shift in ritual occurred in Australia, as the traditional complex inter-tribal Godparent arrangement

88 Turbah, also called a muhr, is a cake of baked earth from Karbala, the place where Imam Husayn was killed and buried. It is placed between the ground and a person’s head when praying, so the forehead touches the ground. It is sold in Iran and Iraq in Shi’ite holy places (Glasse, 2002).
89 The researcher met this religious academic at the Parliament of the World’s Religion held in Melbourne in December 2009.
within the Assyrian community was not always possible due to various tribes not being present in Australia.

6.4 Overarching Patterns in Religious Rituals in Both Asylum and Australia

Several overarching patterns of assistance emerged in the analysis relating to the various Muslim rituals that centred on the Qur’an, the Sufi prayer style and pilgrimages. In contrast, for particular groups of Christians, small prayer/Bible study groups assisted them in coping with the refugee experience. These patterns are examined below.

6.4.1 The Protective Power of the Qur’an

Two Muslims detailed the ritual use of the Qur’an at a time of persecution, during civil unrest and in asylum. The first, Khadija the Shi’ite, stated how she read the Qur’an when her husband was in jail in Iraq:

\[\ldots \text{reading Qur’an and reading, reading when I’m tired and close the Qur’an and kiss … Kiss the Qur’an … Yes, kiss the Qur’an and say to my God, ‘please! help me, please!’}\]

Secondly, for Asha, the Qur’an helped when bombing occurred in Mogadishu, while thirty of her family:

\[\ldots \text{strongly kept on reading the verses of the Qur’an, and praying. And if you believed to [in] Allah nothing would happen to you.}\]

Again Khadija, living in poverty in Lebanon, survived bombing and was greatly assisted by her faith. She stated that all the family, including adults, surrounded her, and children clung to her while she read the Qur’an to protect them, stating:

\[\text{I bring the Qur’an [silently] and start read, read, read, read, but it shake like that [noise given, boom, boom]. I … read.}\]
After maybe 30 minutes it finish and we went outside and asked my neighbour next door. They said the Israeli people they came.

Both refugee women stated the reading or reciting of the Qur’an had a calming effect, as Khadija stated ‘when I read Qur’an I feel I’m better and stronger’. Asha said that:

… if we didn’t have beliefs and reading the Qur’an and all that, we couldn’t get through all this situation. Because it was not easy, the war was not easy.

In fact, most Muslim refugees mentioned reciting or reading the Qur’an during times of difficulty. In reaction to being shown this data, a Muslim academic stated:

The Qur’an is the word of God so you are actually reciting the word of God … you are seeking help, protection from God.

Further, a Muslim academic stated that many Muslims believe when in difficulty, ‘if you read the Qur’an you get comfort, you are protected from harm, you become calmer’.

6.4.2 Surat for Protection

The power of a surah – a chapter of the Qur’an to provide protection – was evident in comments from most Muslim refugees. Several detailed examples will be given.

Khadija used ‘Idol Curse’, a short surah, Surah Al-Ikhlas.

Sincerity 112

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90 Surat is the plural of surah (Glasse, 2002).
In the name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful
Say: ‘He is Allah, the only One,
Allah, the Everlasting.
He did not beget and is not begotten,
And none is His equal’. (Translation of the Qur’an by Fakhry, 2004)

This is the surah that Khadija would repeat over and over again as a mantra when in difficulty. She stated she had learnt this surah in Grade 4 at her Iraqi public school in her religious education class:

... this is good surah ... good word, this is like security for us.
If you always read this surah it’s very good for everybody.

She was taught to recite it everyday and when in difficulties. Ali on the journey back to Ethiopia with all his family used a ritual of reading\textsuperscript{91} Surat 112, 113 and 114 before sleeping with all of his family on the side of the road. He stated:

You read three times [all the surah] and you blow and you [across the body] yourself and you sleep [clapped hands].

Ali reported that he performed this religious ritual so ‘you didn’t be disturbed by jinn or nothing’, meaning attacks from bad spirits, soldiers, jackals or hyenas when they slept. Even Abbas, who deeply questioned his beliefs, recited Surah 112 when events in his life were beyond his control. He learnt it from a secular Iraqi, at a time of difficulty in his late adolescence.

Regardless of levels of religiosity, about half the Muslim refugees mentioned using Surah 112 at various stages of their refugee journey or in Australia. This may have been the

\textsuperscript{91} It is unclear if Ali actually was able to carry a Qur’an on the journey. It may have been that he recited the surat.
surah that Asha, one of the first to be interviewed, stated ‘all’ (possibly an exaggeration) Somalis had written on a piece of paper in their pockets.

Wherever they are feeling very bad and they may be fear or whatever they kept on reading that verse[s] of Qur’an. …

Discussion on Surah 112 with a Muslim refugee religious leader found than ‘when people are not so educated then they just take it [Surah 112] literally’, meaning some Muslims believe this surah is ‘equivalent to a third of the Qur’an’ as:

... it is about the attributes of God, the oneness of God, how unique God is in his own way of creating and ruling the Universe.

The leader continued, stating surat 112, 113 and 114 are the last three chapters and the shortest chapters93 of the Qur’an, and so the first taught, probably why some remember it. On the other hand, the religiously well-educated Sufi was too upset to remember larger sections of the Qur’an during her prison visits to see a relative, and so recited the short surat 112, 113, 114 and 110.

Discussion with Muslim religious leaders and an academic found that the recalling of the protection surah is ‘typically’ used when a Muslim is in difficulty. It is common practice to recite these surat morning and night, and it is important for the petitioner to be ‘sincere in heart’ when reciting. The religious leader summarised the effect as:

... [it] keeps you rooted to God because you are not bringing in anybody else [stressed a little], just God and his attributes [the qualities of God].

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92 A Melbourne Islamic academic has a different view from this religious leader. The academic questions the word ‘some’, stating that there are various authentic prophetic reports which explain that this surah is equivalent to a third of the Qur’an, and some but not all Muslims believe this.

93 The longest chapters of the Qur’an are at the beginning and the shortest are at the end. Children normally learn the shortest first as they are the easiest.
Thus, the sincere recitation of the *surah* keeps a refugee under God’s protection.

### 6.4.3 Sufi Chanting

For the Sudanese, Sufi praying, meditational in style, was confirmed by an Islamic academic; it assisted in managing the difficult pre-flight circumstances. Samma, in addition to reciting a *surah* after visiting a relative in prison, coped by:

> *When I am in a taxi, to keep me strong and to not collapsed … I started to read [say internally] in my heart the Qur’an, a small surah.*

> *I was crying, I could not concentrate [enough] to read a surah, but I can say Allah walking a long way up to the asphalt or the road. Coming from that [road] crying while I am crying, saying ‘Ya Allah, Ya Allah, Ya Allah.*

> *When you say Allah you say aaaa [showing the interviewer her breathing out].*

Asha, the Somali also demonstrated this Sufi type of chanting used during the bombings in Mogadishu, chanted *Ya Allah*, which was translated to the researcher as ‘*Oh God*’. When asked how often she chanted, she stated:

> *Every time, every single minute whenever … Allah, Allah … Even going to bed we keep on saying, we keep on repeating, ‘Ya Allah, Allah, Muhammad Yes, Peace be upon Him’.*

The Sudanese Sufi also suggested that breathing with the chanting was of assistance. In contrast to the breathing, Asha mentioned she used prayer beads when chanting.

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94 *A surah* is a chapter of the Qu’ran and an *ayat* is a verse (Glasse 2002).
An Islamic academic suggested that Sufis have a slightly different way of calling for protection compared with other Muslims, having ‘*their own particular formula or particular forms of saying*’, which would be intensely repeated thousands and thousands of times. The mantra ‘Oh God, Oh God’ is repeated until a person is completely absorbed. This, the academic stated, is a ‘calling to God’, a prayer directly to God for protection. Discussion with a Somali religious leader confirmed the use of prayer beads was common in the Muslim world, as was the chanting of ‘Ya Allah’.

Analysis of the refugees’ experience, and that of their religious leader and an academic, demonstrated that for Muslims the belief that God was protecting them, coupled with a meditational prayer style, had a calming effect. As the tertiary-educated Sufi said, it was ‘like healing … Ya Allah, Ya Allah and the tears come’. Also:

> It calms your soul. It is good, like it works, like a therapy. If you are very upset yourself. If you feel alone ‘Ya Allah, Ya Allah’ … it will help you.

## 6.4.4 The Hajj and Visitations of the Saints or Tombs

Several refugees mentioned that visitation of the tombs or the *Hajj* emotionally assisted them either in asylum or in Australia. For the Sufi the highlight of her time in Egypt were regular Friday visitations to Sufi tombs. At the tomb she would pray, stating:

> … it was deeper, very deep. When you pray by yourself, you can pray deeper, but in the mosque … You think it is one soul … Like flying … in heaven something like that. That is what makes me really go to the mosques. To feel that relaxation feeling.

This experience she found very uplifting, as in the Sudan it was not always possible to go to the mosque, but in Egypt she could.
Body language, in particular facial expressions of happiness, showed that attending the Hajj was a significant inner religious experience for an older Somali widow and a Shi’ite, as both had done the Hajj from Australia. Two other refugees had done the Hajj during the civil unrest in their country, but this was not discussed.

Discussion with a Muslim religious leader appeared to confirm these religio/cultural understandings. For example, if one is sincere one’s prayers are more likely to be heard by God. Further, studies show the Hajj is considered meritorious and a way of absolving previous sins (Esposito, 2003). As well, a Somali interpreter/co-researcher stated widows on such pilgrimages could ask for forgiveness and protection by God for their deceased husband’s afterlife.

6.4.5 Role of Christian Prayer and Bible Study in Transit and in Settlement

Small communal prayer meetings and/or Bible study groups or religious support groups were of some, if not great, assistance to many Sudanese Christians and both Ethiopian Evangelicals in transit and in Australia. For example, Semira attended a women’s group every week when in the transit country, describing the activities as:

\[
\text{Bible study, worship time … we pray for our process} \\
\text{[refugee], we pray for our family, we pray for our country, we} \\
\text{pray for Nairobi, we pray for all the world come peace, we} \\
\text{pray for everything what’s happening in the world … [It] is a} \\
\text{very strong prayer group.}
\]

Peter in Cairo regularly met for small group meetings to pray and read a particular Bible passage, with various people giving their interpretation. Margaret was involved in similar activities in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.
Refugees also mentioned attending groups in Melbourne. For example, two Sudanese Christians attended such groups, with a third appearing to be an elder of a women’s group, with the group meeting once or twice a month in a different woman’s home, and:

We start with prayer and then some verses from [the] Psalms, then we go to the Bible study. We do like this, four of us can pick two verses or three verses from any, any of the topics in the Bible.

She stated that this group personally helped her ‘a lot’.

Refugees’ comments, including those who were tertiary educated, suggested such groups were of emotional and religious support. For example, a refugee had a special religious support meeting, as he stated he was ‘completely down’ and under pressure, mostly due to an unexpected death in the Sudan. Thus, his wife invited a support group to his home:

People don’t come and sit and just pray and go. No. They will come and pray and bring examples from Bible, examples relevant to your situation … how the disciples handled that issue. And then you feel okay, now my situation is similar to that situation and then they [the group members] will explain more and bring other examples from the community and all the church …

After the meeting the refugee stated he felt ‘a bit of relief and you found it okay’ to take on community leadership in Melbourne again.

Two Sudanese Christian religious leaders and one Evangelical Ethiopian mentioned their particular Melbourne churches had well-organised small group prayer and Bible group meetings, with some of the Sudanese being just for women. Such groups were run by the
attendees themselves, there was some help from their religious leaders or elders, with most Bible interpretation appearing to be literal.

6.5 Other Religious Rituals and Settlement Assistance in Australia

Religious rituals that assisted settlement emerged. These were religious devotion and protection rituals, stress reduction rituals, Islamic massage and religio/cultural support rituals.

6.5.1 Devotional and Protectional Rituals

Nearly half the refugees used religious rituals of protection in Australia occasionally or even daily. For all, these appeared to assist their functioning in Australia. Two refugees performed, or attended, a farewell ritual before arrival in Australia. Haile stated his friends had a gathering for him where ‘there was a ceremony’, ‘prayer’ and he gave a speech on how God had assisted him in asylum. Asha, with only her nuclear family in Australia, conducted a ritual on arrival in Melbourne as she ‘was worried’, so:

\[
I \text{ asked Allah to protect me from anything to me and to my kids to not happen to us, to protect us within the society that we are living in.}
\]

The following examples show the range and the extent of these rituals.

- The Assyrian Orthodox and her husband, on arrival in Australia, went with a bowl of water and put a cross above the front door so ‘if any person come with like, the devil inside [or] something bad’, the cross will protect their family. In addition, she had her house blessed by her priest.
- The Chaldean Catholic took her key ring, which had St George on it, her patron saint, and the Virgin Mary, when she went out, as she believed the saints protected her family ‘when I close the door’. In addition, she took her rosary, even to hospital in Australia, as she always sleeps with it under her pillow.
• A Somali recited a *surah* to keep the ‘*jinn*’ away each time he went to the toilet.\(^{95}\)
• A Shi’ite recited *Surah* 112, which was strategically placed above her front door, prior to leaving home, and also recited it when starting her car.
• The Dinka convert prayed before starting his car engine every morning.

### 6.5.2 Rituals to Assist Stress Reduction

Nearly half the refugees mentioned the use of rituals to assist in coping with stressors in Australia or the effects of the refugee experience.

• The Assyrian mentioned how nightly prayer rituals, praying directly to God and then some ritual of appreciation in the morning, assisted her.
• The Chaldean Catholic used her rosary beads when worried about family issues.
• The Dinka convert had a ritual of praying at night when stressed or when he had many things on his mind. He’d go into a quiet room and ‘I ask my dad and God and Jesus Christ to help me’. He stated at this time that his Christian beliefs and the support of Dinka deceased ancestors assisted him.
• The Sufi stated that deep prayer, meditational in style, was better than a psychologist, friend or family member in assisting her with family problems.
• The Shi’ite who did not pray regularly recited *Surah* 112 when he had family problems beyond his control in Australia.
• Asha the Somali mentioned, much to the researcher’s concern, how after an interview she felt upset. Thus, she used her normal de-stressing rituals of reciting the 99 names of Allah while using her prayer beads and playing tapes of the Qur’an after the interview. This resulted in her feeling ‘*OK*’.

Although not the main theme of the research, incidental data showed religious rituals assisted two Muslim refugees in managing their refugee trauma and depression. Mohammed, the Somali, particularly when his wife was away, found it difficult to sleep due to his lingering war trauma. Thus, he used the ritual of saying *surat* 95 and 94 at night, and then blowing metaphorically on the Qur’an, which appeared similar to what

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\(^{95}\) In the course of her employment, the researcher has observed that some Somalis engage in this ritual.
Ali did on the journey. After this Mohammed stated he slept well. He also mentioned he used other *surah* to control himself when he was angry, such as, ‘*I say in the name of God, please God kill the devil*.’ Asha also stated that religious rituals and her belief kept depression at bay, a phenomenon not experienced in Somalia. She stated:

... *because we didn’t know [in Somalia], such as stress and depression, that exist here [in Melbourne]. So by praying and reading Qur’an and keeping myself busy with praying and reading Qur’an ... that spiritual belief that I have ... it makes me relief and not ... stress.*

6.5.3 Islamic ‘Massage’

Three instances of religious massage were reported by Muslims of the three different branches of Islam. Khadija the Shi’ite mentioned that when a child had ‘bad dreams’ or was scared, she would gently massage her child, saying the words ‘*Bismi Llahi*’ according to the Qur’an, ‘In the name of Allah the compassionate’. This, Glasse (2002) calls a pious expression, a Qur’anic expression with this particular statement being the most important one that must be spoken at the beginning of all rituals or lawful activity. Khadija stated this ritual caused her children to ‘*relax and not [be] scared*’, and fall back to sleep.

A Somali interpreter incidentally mentioned a similar religious ritual session. When upset about a failed job application, she went to a Somali elder who massaged her. The interpreter stated:

... *when I go to Aunty [name] she just gives me massage, while massaging she just keeps on reading [saying] ‘Bi-ism Allah al-rahman al-rahim’.*

The interpreter commented that the massage ‘*relieved that tension*’.
Analysis shows this was the longer version of the same pious expression Khadija used above. The elder also used what appear to be additional pious statements, with the interpreter translating them as:

- **Allahu Akbar** – God is the greatest
- **La ilaha illa Allah** – There is no God beside Allah.
- **Subhan Allah** – By the name of Allah, the creator of the world.

The same religious massaging ritual was reportedly used by some in the Sufi community in the Sudan when someone was ill or stressed.

A Somali religious leader commenting on this data stated that massaging, more accurately described as gentle pressing by elders, was common among rural people. Such physical contact, discussion, the quoting of situational specific prayers and *surat* to a younger person operated not only as a comfort, but also a religious reminder. In contrast, to the male Somali leader’s comment about the use of massage in rural communities, two of the three who mentioned the massage ritual was of support were tertiary educated, not rural people. In the female co-researcher’s well-informed opinion, Somalis found this massaging ritual by an elder more supportive than the Western counselling method of ‘*talking and talking and talking*’.

### 6.6 Other Religious Objects/Artefacts and the Refugee Experience

Other patterns emerged in relation to religious rituals and the refugee experience. For Christians of Orthodox and Chaldean Catholic backgrounds, icons of patron saints and statues of the Virgin Mary for the Assyrian were important ritual objects (Ware, 1997), observed or mentioned in these refugees’ homes. An Ethiopian Orthodox religious leader stated if believers were:

... worried about something you just talk to the icon, you know, kneel down and pray [and touch them]. Knowing that
Thus, praying through icons is supportive and comforting. Further, the importance of taking icons when on refugee flight appears evident. The Assyrian Orthodox refugee stressed several times that if her bags had been checked when on flight through a Middle Eastern airport, she would have been deported back to Iraq. Most probably she had religious artefacts and other objects in her bags, a clue to customs officials of her non-tourist intentions.

Two, Christian intra-faith differences were noted. One was Bible study/prayer groups which were not so important for the Iraqi Christians. The other, praying and the regular receiving of communion in their church, was very important for the Chaldean Catholic and the other Orthodox. Discussions with an academic revealed that the importance of praying in the church is derived from the continual real presence of the sacrament, meaning God ‘is’ mysteriously present in their church building.

Prayer beads\textsuperscript{96} or the rosary were used by both Muslims and Christians. The Chaldean used rosary beads for both thanksgiving and in times of difficulty. Two Sunni Muslims and a Shi’ite older male also used prayer beads with another Shi’ite refugee, stating they were not used by younger Iraqis. Regarding Muslim usage, a Somali religious leader stated there are different styles, fashions, colours and variations in the number of prayer beads. A Somali refugee added that, if one did not have prayer beads, the joints in one’s fingers, 33 in number, could be used in prayer – a device used by the Prophet Muhammad (Glasse, 2002). A biography (Ali, 2007) and discussion with a Somali religious leader showed that this ritual is not an uncommon practice for Somalis.

For Muslims, books other than the Qur’an were mentioned. One Shi’ite had another religious object, a book with special prayers used in different circumstances, as did an older Somali. These books were not the Hadith. Given the differences between the Sunni

\textsuperscript{96} See Glasse (2002) for the different intra-faith styles and methods of use.
and Shi’ite it was expected that these were prayer books from the different traditions of Islam.

Regarding amulet usage, only Ali the ethnic Somali commented. He laughed when asked if he had an amulet and stated people ‘who give the amulets’ are traders and some traders could put ‘bad spirits’ on them, bringing bad luck to those who carry them. A Somali religious leader mentioned that some Muslims carried small stones or pieces of paper with surat written on them; adding that some Muslims were opposed to amulets, believing they were not in line with ‘normal’ Islamic practices.

6.7 Religio/Cultural Support Rituals

The support afforded by religio/cultural rituals emerged in the accounts of three females. Firstly, one Somali interviewee participated in a female collective ritual with some more modern yet still religious Somali friends engaged in communal smoking of shisha – a water pipe. The ritual was explained by some Somalis:

... have a common interest, sitting and having shisha ... That bring us together and also the common interest in talking like in some common thing. ... [Some] Somali women who don’t have a shisha as a common interest, but do visit each other.

Discussion with a Somali religious leader confirmed some Melbourne Somali women met in this manner. He also added some have a belief in Fatima, the wife of Ali. Studies state that an example of the Persian influence unknown in other Sunni groups is the veneration of Fatima, which in Somalia has developed into women’s ritual memorial meetings and the chanting of poems – a cult for women (Mukhtar, 1995). The religious leader stated some Melbourne women wish to keep this religio/cultural female tradition going and so participate in such activities.

Some female refugees appeared to have adopted new rituals in Australia as a result of cultural mixing. The religious Meriam at home used the religio/cultural incense burner, a
New Age burner and an ‘evil eye’, not Somali rituals, with the latter being a gift from a Turkish friend. When asked why she used the artefacts she stated:

_Because I’ve got my own culture. Because I mix with different people, people have different beliefs and that’s what I added to my culture, so that’s what I’m saying I have got my own culture._

Shegee, the Sunni Oromo, when asked if she had brought any religious objects with her, told this surprising story: ‘I have from my mum this. This is Buddhist’, and revealed a long gold chain around her neck with an attached small chilli and a small gold and jade Buddha – a gift from her mother. Prior to this, Shegee mentioned her mother, as well as being ‘a joker’, regularly sold jewellery in Saudi Arabia. When giving the chain to her, Shegee’s mother reportedly said:

_… look, this is a good luck and if you have any problem … if you feel distressed if Allah, she just funny, if God does not listen to you maybe this man [Buddha will], listen to you [slight laugh]!_

Shegee, a single mother, adopted a new ritual when distressed at night in Australia, walking around the house praying, holding the Buddha in two or three fingers. She stated ‘it feels [like] something you talk to’, as well she repeated the word ‘Oh God’, which was similar to Samma’s and Asha’s use of ‘Ya Allah’. Shegee then stated when she was in an Australia maternity ward, next to a Buddhist woman, this fellow patient told her to take the gold chain off and put it on her new baby as:

_If people keep saying your child is good, beautiful, beautiful your child; she is not going to be sick because He [Buddha] protects her._
As a result, Shegee put the Buddha on each of her children when they were babies. Now she wears it herself.

To conclude, the prayer ritual and the adapted protection ritual appear to have greatly supported Shegee; however, for Meriam it appeared a more superficial adaptation. It may or may not be significant that the stories above came from African Muslims whom studies show have a cultural and Islamic history of amulets (Mbiti, 1975; Robinson, 2004). Finally, the *Shisha* practices appear different to the possession cult mentioned in Diaspora study (Tiilikainen, 2003). It is unknown if they are similar to Mukhtar’s description or a new adaptation. Finally, the Somali leader stated some Muslims would call this Fatima ritual unacceptable, an issue examined further below.

6.7.1 Shifts Away from Religio/Cultural Rituals

Several shifts away from religio/cultural rituals were noted. Shegee, the Oromo Muslim, mentioned how she greatly missed the ritual of the Ethiopian coffee ceremony in which she participated at different women’s houses in Addis Ababa and in inner Melbourne where she would meet with her neighbours:

*I do candle and I do the coffee in here* [in a sitting room], *and*

*I sit down, then the people, my friends come here, they sit down at the table, the food. Then I say, one person can you do ‘dura’, you know, prayer.*

*... Then we put our hands up and then ‘please God give us this’, then one person she say, all the others would say ‘amen, amen, amen’.*

The wording of the prayer was *‘Thank you God for … a nice sleep’* and *‘God, give us a nice day’* and protect our children. Then at the end of the ceremony the women would raise their hands to God and after that action kiss each other. Then, if there was any coffee left, it would be thrown on the doorstep so *‘evil will go away from the house’*. This
protective ritual Shegee found comforting. But now, living in an outer suburb isolated from other Ethiopians, Shegee did not attend these gatherings.

In addition, Hussan finally stopped holding séances as ‘they [a religious leader] told me that the ghost will come to us … and it is not good’. It is unknown if the religious leader told him to desist in Australia or before. As well, Asha stated that after seven years of residing in a refugee camp, in Melbourne she was not using the ritual of incense burning described in home country studies (Declich, 1995; Library of Congress, 1991; Metz, 1992) and by Asha as:

\[\text{... after you put that [incense in the burner] you ask ‘May Allah protect us from everything, from evil, from all things that are, anything that you created in this world that is going to harm us, either Muslims, Christians non-believers, anything that is going to hurt us’.}\]

Yet on arrival for one interview the researcher noticed the incense burner had been used.

A Somali Muslim and a Sudanese Christian commented that some religio/cultural practices were reducing, or now did not exist in their home country. An Evangelical Ethiopian refugee stated that some cultural rituals were contrary to Christianity; that is, ‘witchcraft’. A Somali religious leader also stated some in the Islamic community believed such practices were contrary to Islam. Thus, data shows a shift away from religio/cultural rituals by some Islamic and Christian refugees and their groups. Perhaps this is why Asha denied she was doing the ritual.

### 6.8 Concerns about Religious Rituals

Generally speaking, from the refugee’s perspective, religious rituals very positively assisted many at each stage of the journey and settlement in Australia. However, a cultural consultant, refugee support personnel and analysis raised several concerns:
• large ritual burners could affect health in enclosed homes
• the belief that religious rituals could cure mental illness
• over-fervent fasting by an Ethiopian layperson.

Two other issues were raised. Firstly, a large number of rituals were deemed to keep evil at bay. Secondly, there are different religio/cultural perceptions about ‘worrying’ rituals. For example, the researcher observed a man, obviously Ethiopian and aged in his thirties, standing prayerfully but purposely outside the gate of the EO church in Melbourne. Consulting an EO religious leader about this behaviour, the man stated that the Ethiopian man was probably standing there because:

He didn’t feel really good. Maybe I [he] did some silly things, they may be small or minor things and I don’t feel comfortable so I go outside. I go to church from outside and I kiss [the gate] from outside and pray from outside and go home. It could be weeks or a year [that he did this].

Thus, the man’s ‘strange’ behaviour was not of concern at that stage to the religious leader.

6.9 Conclusion

From the refugees’ perspective, religious rituals assisted or greatly assisted nearly all refugees at a particular stage or during the various stages of the refugee experience.

Regarding collective worship, generally speaking, if a refugee’s religiosity was the same as the majority in the place of asylum it was easier to practise. Despite this, for various reasons in the case of a few religious refugees, their communal rituals reduced. In Australia, nearly all refugees attended their places of worship, some choosing to live close to them and some not. Several shifting patterns emerged in collective worship. Some Muslims in Australia, as in asylum, practise their religion at home; for a number of Muslim men this was new, whereas, for the Sudanese Sufi and Somali Sunni women, this
was their custom in their home country. For a few refugees their non-attendance was due to their low income. Only one refugee reported a difficulty with their religious practice; a young Shi’ite Muslim family living for the first time as a religious minority.

Prayer was the most frequent ritual coping strategy used. This concurs with the mostly Western studies of religion (Spilka et al., 2003). For both Muslims and Christians, prayer emotionally assisted them at times of war and persecution, during flight and in Australia; in particular, praying with religious leaders prior to flight, and prayer during flight, was important. Generally speaking, for Muslims and Christians praying increased in asylum as it was a time of great need. In Australia, it appears that many prayed regularly. For a number of non-working, single parents or grandparents their prayer life increased in Australia. For Muslim refugees, generally speaking, in times of difficulty, their salah (five times daily) prayer appeared to be at a deeper level. Often the Muslims use the Qur’an, particular surat or other rituals to assist with prayer. Both Christian and Muslims reported that both individual and collective prayer had a calming influence.

Several Muslim ritual coping styles emerged.

- Sufis have a more individual meditation prayer style and visiting the tombs of Sufi saints is important
- Attending the Hajj can be a way of being absolved of previous sins (Esposito, 2003)
- Islamic religious ritual that incorporates massaging reportedly assisted a Shi’ite, Sunnis and Sufis with stress reduction.

Overall, analysis showed that some more Islamically literate Muslim refugees appeared to have a larger range of religious coping rituals, but this did not appear to indicate improved religious coping.

Regarding Christians, intra-faith differences emerged. For EO, Chaldeans and Assyrians, religious artefacts were of assistance; that is, icons for Ethiopians, the statue of the Virgin
Mary for an Assyrian. For Evangelical Ethiopians and southern Sudanese communities their well-organised, mid-week prayer, Bible study groups and support groups assisted these Christians with coping.

Some intra/interfaith similarities in the use of ritual objects or intercessionary rituals were observed. For example, the use of holy books, holy water rituals, prayer beads and some helpful rituals at critical life stages in asylum or in Australia was mentioned. For some Shi’ite and Somali females intercessionary prayers to Fatima appeared of assistance; a similar popular devotional role to the Virgin Mary in Orthodoxy and Catholicism (Nasr, 2006). Further, religious rituals prior to arrival, protection and stress reduction rituals, some similar and others not, assisted or greatly assisted settlement in Australia.

Other findings emerged. Some religio/cultural rituals were of assistance in settlement as reported in other Diaspora studies (Gibb & Rothenberg, 2000; Gow, 2002; Tiilikainen, 2003). This study (as did the studies above) found some Christians and Muslims, including refugees, disapproved of the mostly female religio/cultural rituals used. Shifts in ritual practice for some female African Muslims emerged, a result of cross-cultural experiences in Australia. Finally, a large number of rituals are about placating evil and the reported possibility that ritual practice could become extreme exists.

A typology of how religion interacts with the refugee experience was further developed in this chapter. Generally speaking, those refugees who used religious rituals are labelled as religious refugees. At this stage there are two major sub-types: refugee religious maintainers – refugees who maintained their traditional religiosity throughout the refugee experience; and refugee religious shifters, those who shifted in their religiosity. These latter were the most frequent users of ritual, with some at a more intense level. Finally, all refugee religious questioners (a sub type of shifter), those were who began to question their traditional belief system, reported using prayer at times of extreme need.
The particular religious/cultural belief system, level of religiosity, age and gender (although this needs further exploration), appear to suggest the type of religious ritual, religious objects and artefacts used.

The next chapter will examine another dimension; namely, the deeper theological issues that underpin many of these rituals.
CHAPTER SEVEN

REFUGEES AND THEIR RELIGIOUS FRAMEWORKS

This chapter examines the refugees’ particular religious meaning systems interaction with the refugee experience. Its contents present the deeper religious understandings sought in the later stages of the interview process. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the refugees’ understandings of, for example, God, war and religion. An examination of notions such as God’s plan for one’s life, religion and suffering, and the issues which arose such as ‘tests’ by God, the devil, and the afterlife follows. Next is an analysis of data on, for example, forgiveness, suffering are examined. This is followed by perceptions on the interaction between health and religion together with the conclusion that presents the various findings as they relate to the developing typology.

7.1 Refugees: The Meaning of God, Religion, War

This section presents data from various questions and/or findings on the refugees’ understandings of God/Allah, religion and spirituality. It then presents, from the refugees’ religious perspective, their view of war or civil unrest, and perhaps surprisingly the obtaining of their Australian visa.

Almost all refugees answered the twofold question, *Do you see religion/spirituality and Allah/God as the same or different?* This question was designed to ascertain the refugees’ understanding of these religious notions. Several findings emerged: some clear, others not, some similar across the religious divide and some not. Regarding God and religion, five of the respondents, Muslim and Christian, viewed God and religion as the same, while three others believed there was a difference. For example, for Muslims some clear findings emerged. Over half the Muslims gave the classic Islamic understanding that religion comes from Allah, and religion and Allah are inextricably interwoven. Khadija the Shi’ite best exemplified this:
Because religion came from Allah, because first thing Allah and then religion come from Allah. How I can know my religion? First, I know my God and then my religion.

Conversely, a few Muslims considered religion and God as separate, while some others who were questioning of their religion, were unsure. On the other hand, regardless of religion, for several other refugees the distinction between God and religion was something not considered before.

In contrast to the above, a clear pattern emerged on the notion of religion and/or spirituality. Religion appeared to be the word nearly all refugees used. Concerning spirituality, it appeared only the two of three who spoke English well and had had more contact with mainstream Australia used the term.

As well as the monotheistic God, several other religious figures supported the refugee during the refugee experience:

- for the Evangelical Christians, it was Jesus
- for the Chaldean Catholic, it was the Virgin Mary
- for the Assyrian female, it was the well-accepted cultural spirit, Breshmone
- and for the Sufi, it was a spiritual leader or master.

Twelve refugees answered the question: Why do you think there is war, conflict or persecution by one group or another? About half the refugees viewed war or the civil unrest that caused flight through their religious meaning system. For example, the Evangelicals and the Iraqi Christians stated, ‘the devil ... loves to control’ people and ‘there will always be wars’, quoting from the Bible. A Somali refugee viewed the Somali civil unrest as a punishment from God:

97 Regarding definitions, in this research God will mean Allah.
... in Kenya, by learning more about the Qur’an and what it, what the messenger was saying and all the requirements, we believed the reason that the war ... was because of lack of practice of Islam and the anger of Allah to us.

Incidental comments suggested that her interpreter, tertiary educated in Australia, also believed this. Discussions with a leading Australian Islamic academic found it is not uncommon for Muslims or for Somalis (Metz, 1992) in general to view war or natural disasters as punishments from God.

Some non-religious understandings on war emerged, mostly from Muslims, some of the more educated Christian Sudanese, and the human rights activist. Such refugees viewed the civil unrest or war in their country as due to a struggle between the USA and Soviet Union, or the folly of man. One Christian’s reflection on the war in the Sudan is worthy of note. Paulo reflected that war, supposedly due to friction between Christians and Muslims, was at variance to the traditional southern tribal wars that were traditionally over ‘women and cows’ – not because of different Animist beliefs – as studies also mention (Deng, 1972; Mair, 1974; Mazuri, 2001; Mbiti, 1975). Now, as an adult in Australia, he believes the war was primarily about ‘the lack of infrastructure in the south [compared with the north]’, and that in his youth Christian leaders influenced the ‘young’ into believing it was about religion.

Religious perspectives on the obtaining of a permanent Australian visa is examined in this final section. In the first refugee interview, a strong pattern of God’s ‘direct’ involvement in its granting was clearly evident. Slightly less than half of the refugees made direct comments such as:

- ‘God helped me get sponsorship’
- ‘Allah saved me and got me to Australia’
- ‘It’s God work that I came here’.
Other data revealed this was a deeply held view, not a pragmatic approach. Even, Shegee, who in Australia deeply questioned her faith, stated and other data revealed that she felt Allah saved her as she ‘was always praying to get out of Ethiopia’.

For three, gaining the visa was perceived as a near ‘miracle’. One received money during political unrest when it was impossible to receive mail. In two other cases, the death of husbands caused them to miss selection for the USA, yet they received protection status in Australia.

In contrast to the data above, two refugees (a Christian and a Muslim) gave non-religious reasons for gaining their visas – their political difficulties with the Sudanese government. A third, a Somali refugee, gave confusing answers: in one interview he stated, ‘Allah accepted my praying and so I left that difficult country and came here’, yet in another interview he said he was ‘lucky’.

### 7.2 God and the Purpose of Life

A revealing set of themes emerged from the questions: What do you think is the purpose of your life? Do you think there is a plan for your life? The main finding was that sixteen of the nineteen refugees gave answers which suggested they believed in predestination or religious determinism. For example, five Christians commented that ‘God planned everything’, ‘God plans everything for everybody’, and for the Chaldean it was too obvious a question as ‘[we] Christians believe that!’

Generally speaking, Muslim refugees showed a greater range of answers to the above question. Two-thirds of the Muslim refugees believed that God had planned or predetermined their lives and there was little or no choice. For example, several Sunnis spoke of their destiny being planned in their mothers’ ‘tummy’. Khadija, the primary schooled Shi’ite, also believed in predestination. The Sufi, the most formally educated of all interviewees, was the first to allude to the debate within Islam between free will and predestination. She too believed primarily in religious determinism. She stated her parents, her religion and her ethnicity were:
Not my choice. But of course I have choices too. To smoke, to have alcohol or not, to marry or not, to go to something, a little bit [of choice].

In contrast, four of Muslim background, did not see their life as totally or mostly planned by God. Hussan, the Shi’ite, believed in free will:

[We do] not live like the animals. We are human and the human have a mind and he will … arrange for his life.

Interviewer: Do you think, for example, that Allah has a plan for your life?
Some from Allah, some, but most of it we will make it. The people must make it.

Khalid (by birth a Sunni) held a human rights meaning system. He viewed education and obtaining a ‘good’ job as his life’s plan, stating:

If you didn’t do anything and just stand and look, Allah can give you everything; that is not a plan!

The refugee experience shifted a Shi’ite and a Sunni to a stronger belief in free will and human agency. Abbas, a Shi’ite, stated that before the Iran–Iraq War he believed ‘destiny is written in your face’; that is, predetermined by God – not the normal Shi’ite stance. However, when he saw the Iran–Iraq War end on TV with the USA and USSR presidents shaking hands, this taught him ‘everything is in the hand of the person and that war was planned by man, not Allah!’ Shegee in Australia had shifted (as reported in Chapter 8) to believing her life was guided both by Allah and her own ‘hard work, not just destiny’, which had been her Sunni belief.
This section suggests four patterns or trends in religious determinism across the religious divide. The most interesting pattern became evident early in the interview process. Analysis shows that in Australia the Sunnis, the Sufi and one of the three Shi’ite refugees appeared to believe in predestination and religious determinism, as did the Evangelicals, some Sudanese Christians and the two Iraqi Christians. This data appeared in contradiction with the traditionally held views of Iraqi Christians and Shi’ites that:

- Orthodox churches and Catholics doctrinally accept free will (Flinn, 2007; Livingstone, 1997; Ware, 1997)
- Shi’ite, Twelvers traditionally believe in free will, the Mu’tazilite stance,98 (Bowker, 1970; Sachedina, 1999; Saeed, 2006).

Discussions with an Iranian-based religious academic suggested that people less educated in Shi’ism may hold such a view, which did not appear true in this one refugee’s case.

A second pattern was that three refugees (two Ethiopian Evangelicals and a Somali) mentioned God’s direct involvement regarding whom they should marry in their home country or in asylum where the two resided without family support. In the next pattern, four of the sixteen who worked in human services in Australia (two were Christians and a Sunni Muslim), all tertiary educated overseas, believed in God’s plan.

A final trend emerged on how some refugees’ collective religious meaning systems of the more Evangelical persuasion framed their refugee experience. For example, Peter, a southern Sudanese leader’s humble explanation was that his community viewed his 1990 flight to Egypt in Biblical terms. He stated that his religious community viewed him as on:

... [a] sort of mission, ... every person who is struggling in Khartoum for our people and got a chance to get out [of]

98 See section 2.2.1.
The second is a case study which shows how another collective religious meaning system can frame settlement in Australia.

**Case Study: An Ethiopian Evangelical Refugee**

An Ethiopian Evangelical refugee believed his group was sent by God; ‘to comfort people [Australians], to counsel people’ in a country economically blessed by God, a result of being founded by ‘righteous Christians’. He described his Evangelical group’s role as ‘Like Esther, their role was to stand before God and advocate for these people [Australians]’. An Ethiopian religious leader from the same group also implied that his religious community (as predicted by his Ethiopian Evangelical leader), was on a divine evangelising mission. This was shown in several comments including this one:

*We know the revival [Christian ‘Awakening’] will come because we [his religious group and possibly other Australian-based Evangelical groups] are a solution for this country [Australia], we’re not problems. We’re bringing healing, we’re bringing deliverance.*

Thus, this particular refugee and his Evangelical church viewed itself as having a divine mission to bring Australians ‘back to God’.

**7.3 Suffering and the Refugee Religious Framework**

This section examines seventeen refugees’ comments on suffering, mostly generated by the questions – *How do you explain the suffering that you have lived through and seen? Was there a high point/happy experience? Was there a low point/difficult experience? –* during the refugee journey and settlement. Content analysis showed fourteen out of a

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99 According to Livingston, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1997) states how the Book of Esther in the Old Testament tells of how the Jew, Esther, a royal consort, was able to use this position to save her fellow countrymen from extermination by the King.
possible seventeen, regardless of education levels or religion, viewed their suffering through their particular religious meaning system. The various trends and patterns are presented below.

Nearly all the Sudanese Christians and Evangelical Ethiopians framed suffering through the suffering of Jesus, selected Bible stories, or Christian notions. For example, the Anglican Sudanese suggested Christianity had given him strategies that assisted survival:

... in my religion you are taught how Jesus suffered and ...
afterward ... you will overcome this suffering.

The Chaldean Catholic linked her suffering with Jesus as ‘Jesus dies on the cross for us all’ and ‘there is no suffering because Jesus suffered for us’. The Evangelical Ethiopian Haile viewed the suffering in his flight experience as similar to the wandering of the Israelites for forty years in the wilderness.

Regarding Muslims, the Somali Mohammed summed up what many religious Muslim participants believed, ‘religion is a path and your life is a path’ regardless of being in prison or in other great difficulty during the refugee experience. This concurred with traditional Islamic beliefs (Küng, 1986). As well, a Sufi perspective emerged in Samma’s response:

My experience through my life, for the nice things you do not learn. But you will learn when you are disappointed in a friend ... That is one. When you have political issues ... When you have any problems in work... [or a] regime in your country and that is a lot of suffering through life.
Even if you are a painter or a poet or a sculptor, I think when you suffer you create and in the creation you will be more fantastic than to live without suffering.
Her observation appears to reflect Sachedina’s (1999) study, which found suffering to be a necessary part of the Muslim mystical Sufi’s aesthetic life.

Most of the refugees’ religious meaning systems appeared to give frameworks for managing their suffering. For example, a religious Sunni believed that suffering did not harm you. Several other Muslims mentioned the importance of praying with sincerity when you were suffering, which a religious leader stated was one of the tenets of Islam.

The Sufi stated that each person is not given more suffering than what they can cope with. An Assyrian’s religious mother taught her that God gave people the power to overcome suffering and the Chaldean Catholic stated that suffering was like ‘fasting’, an important facet of Chaldean religiosity.

On a slightly different track some religious Christians stated one must rejoice. For example, an Evangelical quoted from the New Testament:

Romans 5:3 You must rejoice in your suffering, be proud of your suffering. The Amharic Bible says, when you understand the purpose, you praise God.

The Chaldean also stated one must accept suffering even if it was difficult and gave an example of the need for acceptance. She stated her relative, still a refugee in a place of asylum, was ‘upset’. Further probing revealed Sofia’s deep belief that he needed to accept God had decided he was not to come to Australia.

Finally, the Dinka Anglican stated a religious testimony assisted his suffering after his arrest and deliberate placement (by Muslim prison officers) in an Egyptian prison cell with Muslim religious ‘extremists’. The testimony was of a Muslim Sudanese convert to Christianity (thus an apostate), who suffered numerous adversities in jail, only just escaping death.
7.3.1 The Refugee Experience and Religious Testing

A word search showed nearly half the refugees, regardless of religion, viewed their refugee experience as a ‘test’ from God with a few viewing it as a ‘test’ from the devil. Semira, the Sunni, Khadija, the Shi’ite, and Sohelia, the Assyrian, used words to the effect that God was testing them. Ali, the Sunni, mentioned he had passed the first test of the flight journey, when he escaped the Cuban troops who were present in Ethiopia. Ali stated during the refugee experience that ‘you are in an examination’ by God, and finally the Sudanese convert James stated God had helped him to face tests by the devil throughout the refugee experience.

Regarding Muslim data, several patterns in attitudes to God’s test emerged. Firstly, nearly all of the religious Muslims stated that they gave prayers of thanks to God during each test. For example, when Asha’s husband died in the refugee camp, leaving her with many children, she said ‘Thank you to Allah for giving me [my] husband’, stating:

\[... \text{regardless of the pain and hurt that you are feeling, but again you thank Allah that he brought you as a gift [meaning her husband].}\]

A number of Muslims believed one could not question God and his giving of the test. For example, Ali stated:

\[\text{You cannot say He is unjust, you can not say He is. Allah is free from all injustice, everything. Every bad things whatever. ‘al-hamd li-Allah’}^{100}\text{ means I thank God. Allah is great. Allah is great.}\]

Ali also stated ‘Allah will see you, but you cannot see Allah’, meaning Allah was always observing him. Two Muslims (a Shi’ite and a Sunni) believed that God could bring more

\[^{100}\text{‘Hamdalah’ – ‘praise to God’ are Qur’anic formulas of wonder, praise, thanks and acceptance. Glasse names such as pious statements (2002, p. 362–3). These sacred statements used in life show unflinching reliance on God.}\]
difficulties to their lives. Khadija stated ‘he [God] can make it worse if he wants’ and she would be ‘happy with it’, meaning that she should accept whatever came.

In contrast to the Muslims’ data, two African Christians suggested it was not always easy to accept tests. Peter, the Anglican, said that when you are in a difficult situation you ‘feel you are a worthless human being ... because you can’t help yourself, that is why you suffer’, with Haile, the Evangelical, adding that although tests can be difficult, ‘God will give you the grace’ to accept.

Two further patterns arose across the religious divide. Firstly, over a quarter of the refugees stated that out of these ‘tests’ or difficult situations something good or a ‘blessing’ could occur – something one Muslim religious leader interviewed also alluded to. Khadija’s response reflected many such comments:

Maybe this is problem, for no good now, but after change everything and after this Allah give to us many, many, things. Maybe a lot of money or food or good job.

As well, some refugees appeared to link passing either the test or God hearing their prayers to their gaining ‘freedom’. For example, two, both Iraqi Christians, stated after suffering they had gained their freedom, meaning permanent residence in Australia. Three other Muslims stated that God heard their prayers because now they resided in Australia. In contrast, Peter appeared to have a more pragmatic approach, and said that ‘sometimes you struggle and say, “look this could come to an end and life could change”’.

A final pattern emerged as nearly a quarter of those interviewed gave religious or religio-cultural explanations suggesting that because of their particular religious status they were ‘saved’ from the refugee experience by God. From Ali’s pre-flight visit to the mosque, it inferred that God saved ‘pious’ people. Discussions with a religious leader
found the saving of the righteous is another tenet of Islam. The Shi’ite Khadija, from a Sayyids\textsuperscript{101} family, used her special religious status to plead to God:

\begin{quote}
I ask you, if you love Muhammad or Muhammad’s family, 
please help me! Please! Because I’m from Muhammad’s family, please give me some help ... if you love Ali [the founder of the Shi’ites], please give me some help!
\end{quote}

Discussion with a Sunni leader concluded that it depended on the particular Islamic culture as to how important Sayyids were. For example, Nasr (2006) states in Shi’ism it is a mark of nobility. For a third, an Iraqi Christian (who also came from a traditional religious leaders’ tribe) indirectly hinted that her religious status with God may have been the reason why only her family escaped the initial flight journey. She stated that:

\begin{quote}
It did worry me [that only her family escaped], but sometime I believe that God, he was to show us, he want to show us, that we can’t get everything. But, I’ll [meaning God] show you have I the power to do anything!
\end{quote}

Finally, the Somali Mohammed had a different understanding of why some refugees are rescued more promptly than others. He told a religio/cultural story, illustrating why sometimes good people wait a considerable amount of time for a visa, whereas bad people receive one quickly. Bowker (1970) states that in Islam several traditions suggest that the good suffer longer, which appears to concur with a Somali leader’s comments on Mohammed’s religio/cultural story.

\textsuperscript{101} See section 4.5.7.
7.3.2 Judgement Day, the Afterlife and the Refugee Experience

Another significant finding emerged: about two-thirds of the sixteen refugees linked the refugee experience and suffering with the afterlife and Judgement Day.

Seven refugees, nearly half of those interviewed, appeared to cope with the refugee experience by viewing their life on Earth as temporary, with several understandings emerging. Three refugees, all Sudanese Christians, stated that their life on earth was only transitional. As one said:

... living on Earth? My point is it is a transitional place, the permanent life is in Heaven or Hell, so nowadays [in Australia it is] a sort of transitional life.

Three Muslims also made similar statements that suggested a longing for the afterlife. For example,

I always dream of the Second Life, I think more comfortable life ... I said comfortable because I am suffering in my life [on Earth].

This life is nothing for me because we wait another life, the Last Life is very important.

The lure of the afterlife appeared to cause a shift in religiosity for three interviewees. An Ethiopian Evangelical refugee, an Ethiopian Evangelical and a Sudanese Protestant, the latter two now pastors in Melbourne, all stated that the main reason for switching denominations or becoming reinvigorated in Christianity was the promise of eternal life.

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102 Judgement Day: Muslims, as do Christians, believe that at the end of time, all humans will have to face God and be judged (Esposito, 2003). Prior to this, Muslims believe there will be great cosmic and environmental upheaval with false messiahs and a battle with Satan’s forces. God’s forces will be led by the Madhi and Jesus (Esposito, 2003). This battle will end with a ‘golden age’ (Esposito, 2003; Glasse, 2002).
Analysis showed the two pastors’ circumstances were similar to Haile’s Ethiopian conversion context (see Chapter 8 for details), as all were from cultures in crisis, converted in their late adolescence when, at a low point in their lives, they attended a Christian revival meeting with a revivalist preacher being the prompt. One pastor reported that at a revival meeting in Sudan he argued extensively with the African preacher:

... that there was no single person got eternal life, but God really worked his miracles. He showed me many things, that make me know, that I should be really very confident in Jesus and believe in him and receive the eternal life, and be sure of that.

The other pastor in asylum in Eastern Africa gave an understanding of the internal process after hearing an American preacher:

... if we live a good life we can reach 120. But no life after that. But this life I’m talking about is eternal life, that life is in Jesus Christ only. ... now, eternity started now. ... It gives you meaning. It gives you that peace and a joy and that rightness with God and also love ...

As with Haile (see Chapter 8 for more detail) after these interviewees’ ‘conversions’, both, while in Africa, started religious training and missionary work. Thus, conversion appeared to give meaning, an educational and work pathway and possible status for these young men in crisis.

A further understanding arose as about half the Muslims openly implied that their suffering during the refugee experience would assist them on Judgement Day in the afterlife. The various responses raised a number of understandings. For example, Mohammed, not the most religious of the refugee religious maintainers, stated that
'because when I suffer ... tomorrow, on Judgement day [it] will be a help’. The Sufi had a similar response, stating there were two prizes for her suffering, one in heaven and the other in this life as people respect one’s suffering.

Three Muslim refugees linked the afterlife, Judgement Day and good actions. Ali stated that his motivation for participating in this research was that one of the requirements of Islam was to tell people about Islam; if this were not done, he might be negatively judged by God on Judgement Day. Both Asha and Khadija appeared to believe the performance of good deeds, both during the refugee experience and during life in general, would help them in the afterlife as Khadija commented:

... If I did good things in first life I think I get something in next life. No one hurt me in next life, not one say to me you're wrong, ... [it will be a] relax life, next life ... when I did many, many things [inferring in this life] good receipt for me in next life.

Two of these refugees appeared extremely worried about Judgement Day. Khadija stated that when she thinks or talks about it, ‘I feel shake my body, I feel my heart squeeze’ and ‘I want to cry, I swear’. Asha stated ‘only the person who Allah wants, will go to heaven ... even though you’re doing things it may not be accepted’, and likened her reinvigorated religious practice as a job ‘to get that credit after death’. Küng’s (2007) observation that in the Qur’an both Hell and Heaven are vividly described may assist with understanding this palpable fear that the researcher observed and Mehraby has noted (2003).

Asha the Somali and Sohelia the Assyrian, both reinvigorated in their religiosity due to the refugee experience, were concerned about their children’s diminished religiosity in Australia. Both of their religious meaning systems would suggest this could result in their children or grandchildren’s estrangement from God in the afterlife. One coped with this by placing the blame on the perpetrators of the war.
Finally, not all Muslim refugees had such beliefs about Judgement Day. For example, the Shi’ite religious questioner, whose mother did not believe in destiny, stated he was ‘scared of dying, just of dying’, not Judgement Day.

7.4 Refugees’ Notions of the Devil and Evil

The planned question on evil was discarded early in the interview process, as it was considered too direct and very confronting. Despite this, regardless of religion or education, more than half of the refugees, exhibited a belief in the devil: the ‘presence’ of iblis, Satan or jinns, including during the refugee experience.

Three Muslims, each from a different branch of Islam, gave details. For Khadija, it appeared that the devil operated as an internal conscience:

... inside like someone talk to me like you talk to me, like that
you hear some voice ... like voice in my mind or in my body.

What the iblis was asking her was to earn money by ‘dancing and singing’, when the family was in financial difficulties during the refugee experience, or to ‘go with a handsome man’. In response she commanded this iblis to ‘go’ from her mind. The second Muslim, a Sunni, stated that Allah created human beings and jinn:

... they [jinn] are like human being. It is a creation like us ...
They can transform ... They can make also aspect of animal.
We don’t know…. They are real but we can’t see them.

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103 *Iblis* or ash-shayta (al Shaytan) means the devil (Glasse 2002). Küng (2007) states that in the Arab world in the seventh century, at the time of the Prophet’s birth, there was a belief in angels, the devil and jinns, and it has continued to this day.

104 According to Glasse (2002), Satan in Islam is considered to be a jinn, originally an angel; however, as he disobeyed God he forfeited his angelic nature. The jinn’s English translation is genie, and they inhabit the subtle and immaterial world. Saeed (2006) clarifies this by stating jinns are imperceptible beings. Esposito (2003) gives his explanation, stating that jinns are parallel to humans, but made of a different composition (fire), whereas humans are made of clay. Like humans, they can choose to be good or bad, but are considered to be less virtuous than humans. In folk religion they can provide magic cures for people suffering from illness due to an imbalance of internal and external jinns. Esposito also states such beliefs were from pre-Islamic times.
Ali the Somali felt that jinn were in his country, ‘they lived in the animals and around the area’, but jinn had not come to Australia, ‘because it was not the same environment’. Conversely, Asha believed jinn had come to Australia. Samma, the well-educated Sufi, gave more details, stating that jinns were different from humans and Satan and, without iblis – the devil – one would not know the difference between good and bad. She continued that the Qur’an states that everyone has good and bad inside them and iblis has an army of ‘bad people’, which can make one an alcoholic or an addict; if you become a ‘friend of Satan’ it is hard to give up. She then told a story of how the Prophet Muhammad met Satan in the desert and by making a particular statement, now recorded in the Qur’an as the Ibls Curse,\(^\text{105}\) the Prophet could make Satan vanish. Samma went on:

> Iblis is very important because, if iblis is not there, life, I think, would be neutral; if everything is good, I think the life is not, the life will be, no excitement. I don’t know how to explain. If everything is bad, everybody will destruct the world. I think it is a matter of balancing the creating of iblis.

As previously mentioned, Sufis see suffering as part of one’s aesthetic life, reflecting an optimistic view (Sachedina, 1999). Samma’s comments appear to mirror Sufi beliefs.

With regard to the Christians, three-quarters of the southern Sudanese, the Evangelical Ethiopians and the Assyrian mentioned the devil a few times.\(^\text{106}\) James and Haile the Evangelical believed they had been tested by the devil, particularly in asylum, as had Sohelia in Australia. As well, Haile felt tempted by the devil via naked women on a web page or in women’s magazines in Australia and so used the ritual of meditating on God, ‘loving God more than these bad things’.

\(^{105}\) Surah Al-Ikhlas – Sincerity number 112 of the Qur’an.

\(^{106}\) According to Stanford (1996), Christians and Muslim have different understandings; for example, for Muslims the devil is a minor irritant to both mankind and Allah.
An incidental finding worthy of note is that the interpreters, all tertiary educated in humanities in Australia believed in the devil. For example, one believed that her unemployment-related stress was created by Satan. She stated ‘that sort of thinking’, meaning the questioning of Allah’s existence which emerged from questioning why she was not getting a job ‘is evil thinking which is Satan. You know Satan?’ The other interpreter stated that unlike Muslims, Westerners do not believe in the devil. In response, the researcher stated that some Christians do believe in the devil, and this surprised the interpreter.

In contrast to the above, a number of refugees did not mention experiencing the devil during the refugee experience. These were the Chaldean and an Anglican Dinka. Several refugees did not appear to believe in, or totally believe in the notion of the devil. For example, Shegee did not now believe in zar,107 and Abbas could not make up his mind on the devil, stating that ‘it is not clear from when [I was] young until now’.

Finally, Khalid the human rights activist had a more secular approach. He stated he had read books by Colin Wilson on evil and jinn, stating these were ‘common beliefs in poor countries’, and he had thought a great deal about ‘these things’. However, he believed it depended on ‘your psychology’, but did not explain further.

### 7.5 Refugees on Forgiveness, Afterlife and the Imminent End of the World

Due to interview constraints only ten refugees answered the question: Given the difficult experiences you have had, what does forgiveness mean to you? Several themes emerged. A strong theme was that forgiveness was part of their Christian, Muslim or Animist belief system. A second theme was the link between forgiveness and the afterlife. Three Muslims and a Protestant Evangelical linked forgiving others as a prerequisite for God to forgive them, or for them to receive ‘blessings’ in the present and afterlife. Another theme was that forgiving family members and/or people close to them was easier than forgiving perpetrators of war or civil disturbances. Many, regardless of religion, stated

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107 According to Lewis’ Somali study and Csordas and Lewton (1998), zar is a popular healing cult for women common in the Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt.
that forgiveness was in the hands of God. A Somali added that traditionally Islam makes no distinction between religious and political leadership, thus she could forgive such perpetrators only if there were genuine repentance.

In contrast, a few did not view forgiveness of perpetrators in religious terms. Khalid the human rights activist felt that he needed more information before he could decide whether to forgive those who persecuted him in Sudan. However, Abbas felt someone like Saddam Hussein had to be judged by Iraqi courts. In contrast, Abbas added that he had had enough difficulty forgiving himself for undisclosed actions he had taken against the state-sanctioned killing of a close relative.

Another point to emerge was when a Somali also mentioned that forgiveness or rewards in this life could be transferred to ancestors in the afterlife. For example, an interpreter confirmed the Somali religio-cultural belief that if an ancestor built a mosque or a well; ‘and they [people who used the well would] ask Allah to bless … and forgive him [the dead ancestor]’ for inappropriate deeds in his previous life, that ‘Allah will reward’ their ancestor who is now ‘residing’ in the ‘afterlife’.

A related concept emerged about belief in the imminent ‘end of the world’. Ali, the Ethiopian Somali, believed that ‘He [Allah] will finish and the World will finish. He has that plan’. Ali suggested that the current war in Iraq, uncovered Muslim women and the moral corruption in Saudi Arabia were signs of the coming of the end of time, as would Jesus’s second coming (Glasse, 2002).108

108 Regarding pre-millennialism, there are two different attitudes to the second coming of Christ:
   1) The apocalyptic pre-millennialism view is that the world is in decline and will come to a dramatic end, with the supernatural return of Christ, leading to the establishment of 1,000 years of His rule. This view arose in the late 1900s in the US, as a reaction to secularism, a more pessimistic view.
   2) The traditionally optimistic post-millennialism view is that the gospel would spread until the Holy Spirit and human effort brings about God’s kingdom and Christ’s rule; this is also an enlightenment view held by liberal Protestants (Armstrong, 2001; Hood et al., 2005).
7.6 Suffering in Australia and Growth from Refugee Suffering

Studies on refugees tend to medicalise trauma (Eisenbruch, (1991); Guerin and Guerin, (2002); Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003)) yet the researcher wished to examine the growth aspects of suffering during the refugee experience. Hence, the question: *What have you learnt positively and negatively from suffering?* Analysis of the responses showed eleven refugees framed their attitudes to their suffering through their religious meaning system with four main themes emerging. Firstly, six mentioned the religious understandings gained from suffering, even one who was questioning her home background religiosity:

- Haile, the Evangelical, learnt what ‘*God is*’, meaning how he could rely on Him
- Semira, the *switcher* to evangelism, said, ‘*Tomorrow does not belong to us*’ – it belongs to God, so she was more reliant on God
- Sofia, the Chaldean, learnt when facing difficulties ‘*God will give you the power to go on*’
- Shegee, the questioning Sunni, spoke of ‘*the worst stuff*’, meaning the problems, ‘*I give to God*’.

With the second theme, regardless of religious background, more than half of the eleven stated they had learnt patience or endurance. In the third, again more than half stated that suffering increased their inner personal strength. The fourth and final theme showed that the refugees’ emotional state could affect their attitude to God and suffering. For example, Shegee’s questioning of God as to why her children suffered appeared to be when she was in periods of despair, as at other times she seemed to have a close relationship with God.

7.7 Refugees and Support Personnel: God and Physical and Mental Health

Although not a major focus of the research, seventeen refugees provided data on: *Does your religion have a positive or negative effect on your health [including] mental health?* A similar question was also asked of refugee support personnel and cultural consultants.
More than half of the seventeen stated there was a link between religion and health. For example:

- the Assyrian stated that her belief helps her ‘everywhere’ in her life, including her health
- a Somali stated that when she becomes ill she goes to Allah to seek His help
- the Chaldean Catholic stated ‘of course’ there was a link, as ‘if you are close to the church’, which included God, ‘you are comfortable inside’, inferring not just physically but also mentally and spiritually
- a Shi’ite narrated several miraculous stories of people’s illness being ‘cured’ by God.

Several others had less firm attitudes to God’s involvement with health. One, Mohammed, a Somali, again told a story illustrating the power of belief, not just religion. He told the story of how one day a doctor made an injection of distilled water to reduce ‘swelling’, then gave it to a patient and unknowingly the patient believed ‘today the doctor giving me the best medicine!’ Mohammed said the swelling went down because ‘Why? Believing’, inferring the power of the placebo effect. Another refugee, the questioning Shi’ite, saw even less of a link. Religion for him was about the soul and actions that science could not understand. He viewed the religious impact on health as abstract, scientific and moral. For example, ‘cleansing the body’ before prayers and ‘don’t gossip’.

Six refugees and other interviewees evidenced a relationship between mental health and religion. Two refugees, both high school graduates, who switched to Evangelical churches due to the civil unrest or the refugee experience, viewed their sadness or stress in either asylum or Australia as attacks by the devil. For example, one stated her tiredness in Australia as:

… the Bible say the devil is around you 24 hours like lion. If he have a way he come to attack you, for different way
Her beliefs suggested the way to cope ‘Because of that [devil attacking] we give our day to God’. No evidence suggested this refugee was mentally ill. Five other refugees gave examples of religion assisting people who were mentally ill. Two of the seven suggested the Bible is of great help when assisting the mentally ill. The Evangelical Haile suggested

... spending a lot of time sharing the word of God. We have make a brain wash by that one. We cast the devil [out] in Jesus’s name.

Interviewer: Casting out, yes.

The possession one, you need the word of God … continuously to deliver [save] his life.

Regardless of this, Haile and two others, who did not endorse exorcism, also stated that curing mental illness can be difficult. Khadija reported that her Australian Iraqi-born psychiatrist reportedly stated, ‘I know you’re Muslim and you have belief, strong belief you can’t [won’t] kill yourself’. Thus, although she was reportedly depressed, her ’strong’ religiosity indicated that she was less likely to commit suicide, although one study (Ferrada-Noli & Sundbom, 1996) appears to question this religio/cultural assumption. Abbas, the Shi’ite, mentioned a further mental health issue. Recalling his reflections on state-sanctioned martyrdom in the Iran–Iraq War while in asylum in Iran, he stated that religion could negatively influence refugees who are ‘sad’ or have mental health issues. Although he had not met any, he suspected some can become ‘I think the terrorist people’. By this he meant they become refugees and ‘confused’, and ‘someone influences’ them to do ‘bad things’. Finally, one Muslim who had training in psychology and sociology overseas stated that this gave them a better understanding of the complexities involved in mental illness.
As previously mentioned, the refugee health professional spoke of the protective support of religion after torture, and how it reduced suicide and substance abuse. For example:

- there was less substance abuse by unattached Hazara refugee males due to their religiosity
- sitting in an Orthodox church was of assistance to an Orthodox asylum seeker.

One consultant reflected more deeply on her observation that Somali and Shi’ite Iraqi women after finding no relief from prescribed anti-depressives turned to their religion and spirituality – for some this was a re-engagement, a way of coping with settlement. Thus, by praying, becoming more involved with and giving service to their religious communities they managed their depression. The consultant noted that occasionally some become extreme in their religiosity and this could become a problem for the family.

Two refugees and two cultural consultants reported on how their health attitudes and practices shifted in Australia. Shegee came to a realisation that Islam could negatively affect women’s health as some Muslims, particularly males, do not believe in contraception and so their wives suffer greatly in Australia with large families since they have little extended family support. A Somali cultural consultant detailed how her work-based training in women’s health issues shifted her beliefs in zar to understanding it as a symptom of clinical depression, including after childbirth. Similar to Mohammed, she emphasised the power of belief. She also reported that some Somali women who did not find success with Western medicine went to traditional religio-cultural mingus rituals and were helped as, ‘in their mind they felt it’s been, it’s [post-natal depression] been removed from them’. It is unclear if such rituals actually occur in Australia, although Tiilikainen (2003) reported them in Norway. The consultant suggested these rituals were not popular with the younger reinvigorated religious Somalis.

In contrast to the above data, a second refugee, an Evangelical, shifted away from a Western medical approach. Ill with asthma, yet uncured, the refugee decided to ‘wait on my God with faith without this medicine’ and was cured. The trigger for stopping
treatment was meeting a Christian Scientist soon after arrival in Australia, and taking her advice that God would cure him.

Interestingly, the Sudanese human rights activist of Muslim background stated that his involvement with a church trauma support group and human rights work greatly assisted him in managing the effects of torture. In asylum in Egypt, he regularly attended a refugee support group run by an Anglican church. Below are the details:

… X. Church in Egypt, she [an Australian woman from the church] have a very, very nice program. The name is Hearing. Anyone, all of us sit as a group and discuss. Everyone speaks about his problem. Yes, and she and all of us, we try to discuss, how we can find a nice solution for these problems.

In addition, he attended a special program at an Egyptian university where he studied and wrote on human rights abuses that also assisted his trauma. It is to be noted that Khalid was the only refugee who mentioned using Australian government health information, either in pamphlet or video format, or as the result of information learnt at a refugee leadership training program, to assist his family’s health.

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the refugee experience through the prism of the refugees’ religious meaning system, thus adding to the developing typology. The chapter presents how most, but not all, the nineteen refugees viewed their refugee experience through their particular religious meaning systems, and except for the Evangelicals interviewed, this sometimes included religio/cultural understandings. Indeed, for a few the refugee experience caused shifts in some of these understandings.

The refugee religious maintainers described nearly three-quarters of the refugees. All maintainers appeared to view their refugee experience, including the receiving of their
Australian visa, through various aspects of their particular religious meaning system with answers showing both diversity and some similarities. Some of the major findings were, firstly, for Muslims, religion was a path of life and suffering was part of life’s journey as either punishment for sin or a spiritual test or trial with patience the response. Some intra-faith differences also emerged. For Sufis, suffering was perceived to be part of the ascetic life. All these empirical findings concurred with religious studies (Bowker, 1970; Küng, 1986; Sachedina, 1999). The Christian refugee religious maintainers framed and managed their suffering through Jesus’s suffering or Bible stories that for Sudanese concurred with LeMarquand’s study (2006). Chaldean Catholic data likened suffering to fasting, an important practice for Eastern Christians (Ware, 1997). Contrary to Bowker’s (1970) contention, for these Christian refugees suffering did not seem to be an articulated religious issue.

Secondly, most refugee religious maintainers believe that their lives were governed or predetermined by God’s plan; the Sufi, two Sunnis, the Evangelicals and some Sudanese believed in forms of predestination, a traditional belief for these groups. In contrast, only two Shi’ites held the traditional Shi’ite approach of considerable free will. It also appeared that the Assyrian Orthodox and the Chaldean Catholic who traditionally believe in free will appeared to have an approach closer to predestination. Thirdly, regardless of religion many maintainers appeared to view the refugee life on earth as temporary. For example, several Muslims showed a longing for the afterlife, with some believing their sufferings would assist them on ‘Judgement Day’, findings which appear to concur with two refugee studies: Shoeb et al. (2007), who found the belief in the afterlife assisted Iraqi Muslims with their sufferings, and Holtz’s (1998) study on Tibetan refugees which found that suffering in the current life can increase one’s karma, aiding refugee resilience. This was in contrast to Mella’s (1994) study of Chilean Catholic refugees in Sweden, which found that the afterlife and devil were not so important, though the reasons were not explored. Fourthly, although the Chaldean and a few Sudanese Christians did not mention the word ‘test’, most of the other maintainers viewed the refugee experience as a test from God and/or the devil. In addition, some maintainers
suggested other constructs surrounding the ‘test’, with the understandings concurring with Islamic studies.

Only one clear interfaith difference emerged. Christians could question God’s purpose as to their suffering, whereas Muslims could not since suffering was part of Allah’s purpose and plan for human ‘betterment’. Thus, a Muslim believer was required to submit to God’s tests – questioning was considered as blasphemy (Bowker 1970). Another less certain finding was that for the Christians interviewed, Judgement Day did not seem to be a major stressor or of major importance when compared with some Muslim interviewees.

Although not definitive, other findings emerged for maintainers. With the exception of some educated Muslims and a Christian, most maintainers viewed war and the unrest triggering their flight in religious terms. A number – including the Assyrian, a Sunni and a Shi’ite – believed that God ‘saved’ them due to their righteousness or their family’s religious status. Finally, a Shi’ite and a Sunni believed God could bring more difficulties to their lives.

Regarding health and religion, although there was little data from Sudanese Christians, all other maintainers stated there was a strong relationship between the two, with some believing the devil could affect one’s mental health.

Regarding refugee religious shifters, two new sub-types began to more clearly emerge. One sub-type was intensified religious shifters, those who intensified in their religiosity due to the refugee experience. One belief appeared to have been responsible for a shift in intensity; that is, for a Somali, the Islamic belief that war was a punishment from God (Metz, 1972). The other sub-type was religious switchers, those who did an intra-faith switch due to the refugee experience. For one refugee, in their home country, the promise of the afterlife was the cause of this EO refugee switching to an Evangelical denomination, as it was for two pastors interviewed. Both these sub-types had mostly similar beliefs to the refugee religious maintainers. In contrast, the previously mentioned sub-type of shifters, religious questioners, comprised three refugees. They held different
understandings. Some or all of their beliefs appeared to be that: 1) war and social unrest were due to political and sociological factors; 2) they did not believe in or totally believe in predestination or religious determinism; 3) they did not believe in or had shifted in their belief in the devil; and 4) they had a greater but not totally scientific understanding of health.

The other type of refugee, the non-religious refugee, represented by the human rights Sudanese activist of Muslim background, appeared to have held such beliefs since Sudan. These beliefs were: the civil war in the Sudan was about power, not religion; his purpose in life was to be educated, and finally he held a more scientific and psychological understanding of health and evil.

The next chapter examines in more detail shifts in refugees’ religiosity, mentioned in this and previous chapters.
CHAPTER EIGHT

SHIFTS IN RELIGIOSITY DURING THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

This chapter analyses shifts in refugee religiosity during their refugee experiences. It commences by summarising data reported in Chapter Four on patterns in shifts within their collective religiosity and then at an individual refugee level. Then it examines the same issues while in asylum and then in Australia. Throughout this examination the nineteen refugees’ individual shifts in religiosity were assessed using Fowler’s adult faith development theory and other additional frameworks. The latter part of the chapter presents additional findings on the effects of the media and new technologies on refugee religiosity. It then presents the observations of refugee support personnel and cultural consultants regarding refugee religiosity in Australia. The chapter’s conclusion includes a table summarising the nineteen refugees’ shifts in religiosity during the refugee experiences.

8.1 Home Religiosity Shifts

This section examines shifts in refugees’ religiosity in country of birth by both examining and combining several sources of data and some frameworks. The first and most important source is gained from the in-depth refugee interviews. The second is from various questions such as: Did your religion/spirituality/belief system or Allah/God help you before persecution? It also re-examines the question, How much did you practise your religion? The third source is relevant comments from religious leaders, refugee support personnel and religious academics. The purpose of these data sets is to triangulate the findings, which are summarised in a table in the conclusion.

This first section presents the importance of the religio/sociological and political context for individual shifts in refugees’ religiosity that became apparent throughout this study. Systematic shifts in religiosity, in all four source countries (as noted in Chapter 4), are revisited in summary form – shifts such as 1) in Iraq from Sunni to Shi’ite Islam since the eighteenth century, 2) as in southern Sudan, shifts from Animism to Islam or Christianity
since colonial times, 3) as in Somalia, from pre-Islamic beliefs to Islam, and 4) as in Ethiopia, the forced conversion of Animists to Ethiopian Orthodoxy or Islam, again more apparent since colonial times.

Another major finding was that the rise and then fall of socialism and subsequent wars or civil unrest and civil collapse in all countries appears to have caused shifts or increases in religiosity, with some shifts being politically motivated by internal or external factors:

- In Iraq, Sunni Ba’athist policies from the late 1960s caused an increase in Sunni–Shi’ite hostilities and hostilities with minorities. In addition, Shi’ism increased its influence.
- In Somalia, there appears to be a shift away from older cultural Animist practices and from Sufism to a more traditional Sunni Islamic agenda, particularly since socialist rule in the 1990s.
- In Ethiopia, the active presence of US and European Evangelical groups to assist during the 1980s famines and after the post-socialist collapse (from the early 1990s onwards) caused conversions.
- In Sudan, the struggles between Islamic groups for either renewal-\textit{tajdid} or conformity to the past \textit{taqlid} have occurred, particularly since the NIF gained power in 1989.
- In South Sudan, Christian Animists have been shifting towards Protestant/Pentecostal beliefs, and there has been a counteracting rise in Islam that appears to have occurred since post-independence in the 1950s.

Thus, prior to flight the refugees or their ancestors had experienced religiosity shifts in their families or communities.

\subsection*{8.1.1 Refugees’ Religiosity and Adult Faith Development in the Home Context}

This section differs markedly from the section above, as it examines the individual nineteen refugees’ religiosity in their home religious context. This examination is carried

An overview of the refugees’ data using Fowler’s stages suggested that in their home country, over half of the nineteen refugees, regardless of religion, and, irrespective of age at the time of flight, were a mixture of:

- the second *mythic-literal* stage meaning: a person’s faith is reliant on rules and stories of their family/religious community. As such, it is a world based on reciprocal fairness and religious symbolism as, for example, refugee comments showed reciprocal fairness and stories of religio/cultural spirits were part of their belief system.

- the third *synthetic-conventional* or ‘orthodox’ stage meaning: personal stories, beliefs, values and stories that support a person’s identity, formed around the non-questioning adoption of culturally ordained religious/spiritual values and beliefs as was evident in much of the refugee’s data.

In another eight cases other faith development stages were more evident. Some shifts emerged prior to flight. Two refugees who were adolescents at the time of flight were already questioning their family’s *synthetic-conventional/mythic-literal* beliefs. Such questioning, Fowler and Spilka et al., (2003) contend, is not uncommon in adolescence. Their backgrounds were Christian and Muslim Ethiopian high school graduates educated during socialist rule. Both were from what appeared to be nominal religious families. A third refugee, a Sudanese Muslim, developed a non-religious human rights meaning system. The triggers appeared to be: his father’s belief in democracy, his high school education and exposure to Western books and, at university, his experiencing of different political and social ideas. A fourth refugee, a Dinka, was beginning to shift from Fowler’s *mythic-literal* stage in the movement from Animism to Christianity.

Two refugees appeared to be near an *individuative-reflective* or ‘progressive’ (Fowler, 1996) stage as their comments showed: self-awareness of personal choice in values and
beliefs, the demythologising of one’s self-identity and the beginnings of critical reflection. One, a Sufi from a religious family with a good religious education, appeared to be moving to an *individuative-reflective* stage with a possible trigger being the study of sociology. The other, a Shi’ite, from a nominally religious family, reported it was reflections on a family death and a TV program that shifted him both towards and away from his home beliefs. This and the seventh are presented as case studies:

**Case Study (a): The Complexities of Shifts in Individual Religiosity**

Abbas the non-Arab Shi’ite from Iraq stated that in late adolescence (in socialist Iraq), he stopped believing in predestination, a belief that came ‘from my family, from friends’. The next shift was to believe that Sunni rule of a country, not Shi’ite rule, was better as Sunni countries were then, in his opinion: ‘secular’, more ‘educated’, ‘advanced’ and ‘wealthier’. Another shift occurred when politics became more influential than religion. This was a substantial shift, as traditionally in Islam politics and religion are intertwined. The prompt for this third shift was witnessing a Shi’ite family member, a minor religious leader, killed by the Ba’athists as they incorrectly viewed the family member as a political threat. By eighteen, Abbas stated his beliefs were ‘close to zero’. Then, a shift back to belief occurred:

*I saw on television one man who was Muslim, he went to many countries and came back and he [was] interviewed … he said ‘I was 25 years searching about the belief, I returned to my belief again’.*

Abbas also added that in adolescence he had learnt not to question religion in public or even with friends, as such questioning in Iraq could inaccurately label one a communist. His father, a practising believer, counselled him only to discuss these matters with him, which was what Abbas did. Thus, prior to flight Abbas was deeply questioning his family and community’s *synthetic-conventional* beliefs.

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109 Not the traditional Shi’ite belief.
Case Study (b): A Denominational Switcher

This case study is examined in considerable detail as it reflects a number of issues that emerged in later refugee shifts in religiosity. Haile, EO by birth, yet educated in socialist Ethiopia where no religious education was allowed in schools in his later adolescence, switched to the indigenised Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus or a similar type of indigenised Evangelical/Protestant group. The trigger for this switch was the civil collapse at the end of Mengistu’s rule which resulted in a bleak future for youth. Religious coping theory (Pargament, 1997) suggests that people ‘grab’ what is available and conveniently use it as one of two religious coping strategies: transformation or conservation. For Haile it was transformation in that he became a believer in Jesus and this, he believed, saved his life.

Conversion literature is useful in analysing the data. The ‘classic’ sudden conversion, (Spilka et al., 2003) appears apt in Haile’s case. As Paloutzian (2005; 2003) states, for ‘conversion’ to occur, doubt and pressure, or a motive to change, must exist (Paloutzian, 2005; 2003). In Haile’s case all were present. Finally, Rambo’s (1993) seven-stage conversion theory was present in Haile’s life in Ethiopia. In a simplistic manner the stages were contextual, in as much as the chaos at the end of the Mengistu government rule led to youth unemployment, the abduction of young men to fight against Eritrea and so forth. This led to a crisis where life seemed hopeless, with little hope of obtaining a university place or a job. Thus, Haile started mixing with the wrong crowd, chewing *chat* (an indigenous narcotic) and getting into fights. As the result of some problems with the police, Haile began a quest trying to change his friends and his way of life. Haile wanted to change. Then came the encounter one night when a friend (advocate in Rambo’s framework), seeing him upset, took him to an Evangelical Orthodox revival church. At that revival meeting a Bible story, told by the local preacher, transformed his whole way of life. The Bible story was:

> Jesus said to Martha, Martha if you believe in me he will not die and you will see the glory of God ... everything’s dead everything’s finished, but God said today there is another life,
The emphasis at the revival meeting on the promise of the bright ‘afterlife’ at a time of ‘despair’ was pivotal in Haile’s switching denominations. In the interaction, Haile made a commitment to God that night and this conversion gave his life meaning and a vocation as a Christian missionary. The result of this commitment was that Haile’s life drastically changed. As a consequence, Haile became very active in the Evangelical church. Thus he had a personal support structure and a collective superstructure in which to function. To conclude, Haile’s emotional situation prior to switching was, ‘I was desperate, that is why I grabbed on to God, always I want to change’.

Donham (1999) states that at variance to Western conversions, in Ethiopia it means a total change of life and a giving up of culture. This is what appeared to have occurred in Haile’s case. The local Ethiopian Orthodox priest tried to frighten his mother by saying Haile ‘would not be put in a grave when he died’.

Finally, regarding Haile’s denominational switching and Fowler’s sequential adult faith development theory, it is Streib’s modification (for example, 2005, 2002) of ‘revision’ that accounts for Haile’s shift to an intense and rigid Evangelical meaning system.

8.2. Shifting and Increasing Religiosity in Asylum

Various significant shifts in religiosity occurred during asylum, with some shifts being a trend across a particular refugee community. More than a quarter of the nineteen had major shifts (conversions and denominational shifts) in religiosity, while refugee religious maintainers increased their religiosity. Both findings are similar to Dorais’ (2007) study on Vietnamese Buddhists and Christians who fled by sea to camps. Several examples of major shifts are presented in the case studies.
Case Study (a): A Convert from Animism while in Asylum

James finally converted from Dinka Animist to Catholicism, while in Egypt he switched to Anglicanism. He gave the reason for his first conversion:

... the Bible tell us about Jesus himself, He was a refugee in Egypt. What faced Jesus in Egypt and his family, it was horribler than what happened to me! So I decided if Jesus was here and God look after Him and after his family, why doesn’t he also [look after me]. I have to be baptised because I know Jesus is here with me. So that’s why I decided to be baptised in the Egypt.

James suggested there was little difference between his Dinka and Christian beliefs. Thus, the shift was not so great.

I think that my Dad was thinking the same way as Christianity. Because what my Dad did, he used to help the people, he used to pray for the people, and the first thing he do was just call God and he believe in God that God is there, it’s only person who created us. So we must pray, and, if we pray, God will give to us the answer that we want. So the only difference between what my Dad would say and Christianity is that my father doesn’t go to the church because there [was] no church actually at that time. But at [in] the end I believe that what my Dad was doing is a gift from God. God gave that power to do this. So actually there was no difference at all.

Furthermore, he was able to replace his Dinka rituals of Animist sacrifice with Christian notions of sacrifice:

Yes the blood [of a cow being ritually sacrificed] is saying that [is] a sacrifice that animal ... But in Christianity we
don’t have that [sacrifice of animals] ... because Jesus sacrificed his life for us.

As well, James combines his Dinka and Christian beliefs:

[What is] good in Dinka culture I can keep it with me. But what things conflict with Christianity, I can leave it.

Rambo’s (1993) theory on conversion is again relevant. Firstly, he notes across the world conversions are occurring with indigenous, Animist cultures in crisis; in this instance, in the Sudan. Secondly, conversion is dependant on the degree of consonance of values and symbols that James evidences in the second quote. Thirdly, James’ Christian encounters allowed for the mixing of beliefs that Rambo labels as a ‘combination’.

In contrast, two southern Sudanese refugees, both from Christian families for two or more generations, appear to have been, as Rambo puts it, ‘cleansed’ of their Animist beliefs. Discussion with a Christian academic illuminated these differences. The academic stated that some Christian missionaries to Africa allowed a ‘combination’ of tribal culture and Christianity, whereas some other missionary groups did not.

Interestingly, James later switched again, this time to Anglicanism after not receiving a loan of money from his Catholic church. He stated, ‘the day I got X [assistance], I changed my church’. A simple analysis may call this switch opportunist; however; there were other factors. Firstly, James, known for assisting others, was deeply hurt by this religious leader’s lack of trust. Secondly, James’ Christian gospel meaning system prescribed:

*God says – go to the door and knock on the door; if people welcome you, they are welcoming me and, if they refuse you, leave there and go to someone else who will help you.*
Thirdly, as Shandy (2002) has noted among Sudanese refugees, denominational shifting is common in the USA.

Regarding how representative James’ shift is, two refugees, a religious leader and the cultural consultant, mentioned how southern Sudanese Animists converted to Christianity to Anglican, Catholic and some Protestant denominations. Thus, such a shift appears not uncommon for Animist Sudanese. In addition, the cultural consultant, a Muslim, gave additional information stating that camp churches gave ‘good care … education … good support’ and ‘inspiration’ for refugees to ‘keep going’.

8.2.1 Christian Switching

Analysis showed another significant shift in asylum with two Christian refugees switching denominations. Haile, the Evangelical Ethiopian, switched to another Evangelical church that other Ethiopians attended. He described it as like ‘Hillsong’ in Sydney. A second Christian shifter was the Oromo (another seemingly nominal Christian) who questioned her beliefs prior to flight – she switched from Lutheranism to an Evangelical church. Her story was as follows:

Case Study (b): Lutheran to Evangelical

Semira in her late adolescence switched from Lutheranism to becoming an Evangelical/Pentecostal while living as a self-settled refugee in Kenya. The exact timing and circumstances of the switch are unknown. However, it is clear that at an emotionally low time, due to many of her friends obtaining visas and leaving for the West, she was greatly influenced at that time by an American female preacher, flown in from the USA for an Easter revival meeting. The preacher spoke directly to her at her local women’s study group with a message. She stated that was ‘not from her [but] from the Holy Spirit’ and told her Jesus was going to ‘do something’ in her life, then ‘my door [will] is open’, meaning God will open up a new life path for her. However, until then she must wait in asylum for God to do ‘what He wished with her’.
After six months, Semira’s door ‘opened’. Initially she thought the ‘door’ meant God’s path for her was missionary work, not an uncommon career wish for an Evangelical.

However, this was not what occurred. Rather, it was a dream (see Chapter 5) that led her to marry a partner below her family’s status. It was this marriage to a refugee that brought about her later arrival in Australia.

For Semira, coming from a stratified and privileged background, finding herself in asylum with little money and no family support, having God’s direct advice appeared to be a new occurrence. Furthermore, Semira’s new highly organised church also gave her a support community. Thus, in asylum Semira switched denominations and increased the intensity of her religiosity. The triggers for Semira’s shift appeared as: group support, religious explanation for the refugee experience and other religious coping methods. Again, it was not Fowler’s theory, but Streib’s concept of ‘revision’ (for example, 2005, 2002) that was an appropriate explanation of Semira’s shift in asylum to a more rigid religiosity.

Regarding the presence of Evangelicals in asylum, nearly half the nineteen refugees mentioned their presence. Three religious leaders, Muslim and Christian and a cultural consultant, also gave instances of these religious groups’ activities in both camps and in the places where self-settled refugees resided. Thus, how representative was Semira’s shift?

Extensive comments indicated that a number of EO and Chaldean Catholics switched to Evangelical forms of faith with several reasons given for this. Firstly, as one consultant remarked, refugees were desperate to get out of the ‘appalling’ refugee camps or obtain any assistance they could.110 This Ethiopian consultant said North American-based Ethiopian Pentecostals would send money to people in camps who were ‘paid’ to convert

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110 Data collected, but not used, from a Muslim Bosnian male who accused Caritas of only giving food if people ‘crossed’ themselves. On the other hand, his Serbian wife, who had been assisted by Caritas, disagreed with him.
refugees. He contended that the rate of conversion was ‘extremely high’ – possibly an exaggeration. He mentioned the method of conversion was to say to refugees:

... the way [of] praying [by the EO] ... is not the right way so that God will not listen to you. But if you pray in this way [through Jesus] God will immediately listen. Your application will be successful.

Other data suggest some Evangelical groups target refugees for conversion. For example, Sofia, the Chaldean Catholic in Istanbul, stated her family was regularly visited by European and Northern American Protestant Evangelicals.

... they always used to talk about Jesus [and read the Bible].
Jesus, he will help us ... Jesus will get you out of here.

Sofia reported that such people offered help with visas, food and money. She always refused, but ‘a lot’ of Chaldean Catholics switched to the Evangelical forms of Christianity.

On the other hand, for the Chaldean and EO communities it appears that one reason for the switch was a lack of religious leadership in asylum. A cultural consultant inferred that EO priests did not flee as refugees, thus in asylum believers set up quasi-EO leadership structures. However, because of extreme need many switched to the well-organised Protestant Evangelical churches. The consultant also stated he had observed that the religiosity of many Ethiopians increased in the asylum situation. Another leader, the Chaldean Catholic, also stated that Chaldeans switched to such groups, as priests were unable to accompany refugees into exile. The Iraqi government was strongly opposed to Chaldeans fleeing Iraq. He added that if the Chaldean Patriarch sent priests to refugee camps or countries of asylum, it would have negative consequences for their community in Iraq. Thus, the leader observed that in the camps, Pentecostal groups, consisting of Arabic Christians from Europe and the USA, supplied food and assistance to apply for
visas. Without animosity, this Chaldean leader stated that quite a number of Chaldeans switched, as they needed support, implying spiritual and material.

8.2.2 Muslim Shifts in Religiosity in Asylum

Three shifts in religiosity were noted within the Muslims interviewed, with two detailed below. Firstly, only one of the nineteen refugees shifted further away from their belief system in asylum. This was Abbas, mentioned in a previous case study, who became what the researcher describes as a refugee religious questioner in asylum.

Case Study (c): The Continuance of Questioning One’s Religiosity

Abbas, living in a small room with four family members in Iran, worked in an illegal factory at night and in the day in an Ayatollah’s office to support his family. It was here that he began to shift away from Shi’ite beliefs that his father had taught him; that Ayatollahs were ‘special’, meaning divine leaders who were persecuted by Saddam Hussein. This first shift in asylum, the result of observing how an Ayatollah’s family members used their position for personal gain, was to view Ayatollahs ‘like others [normal people], the difference is just the job’. As a consequence, he viewed them as ‘religious scientists’, yet unlike scientists they cannot be challenged, as he stated:

... religious leaders all time usual man, but he cover it by religion ... you can’t discuss, you can’t criticise him, that difference I changed my mind.

The second shift was the consequence of observing Islamic state leadership in Iran and in the Middle East via the media. Thus, he stated:

I thought the Middle East way the religion man before ...

1990 it is good way to rule. But when I saw by experience in Iran and Afghanistan [via the media] it is not useful.

As a result, he came to the conclusion that Islamic states were ‘like communism … Just idea, just idea. Ideas of course, are different by practice!’ Thus, in Iran:
... I changed my idea to the democracies ... are the best way to rule the world. I know there are many wrongs in democracies. Like Churchill say ... I know that democracies is bad way. But there are not better ways than democracy to rule the State.¹¹¹

Sunni Muslim shifts towards Christianity in asylum were also noted. Shegee and her family, while in Cairo, shifted towards Christianity, yet did not convert. She explained the shift was a way of gaining ‘protection’ for her family and for her husband employment as he spoke English, the result of being a housekeeper to Westerners in Saudi Arabia. She states:

> To be a refugee in Egypt you have to cooperate with church people ... In Egypt it is not easy otherwise, if the police catch you, straight away you go back where you come from. So the only thing for him to find a job was around Christians.

Shegee’s family started attending church on Sunday, although she stated that there was no compulsion, as her husband’s employer did ‘not care about religion at all’. For Shegee this shift may not have been so significant as, as previously noted, her extended family had both Muslim and Christian members, as did her Oromo tribe.

Finally, Asha reported an uncommon occurrence, seeing a Somali convert preaching Christianity to Somalis in a camp. The lack of other data suggests such shifts and conversions of Muslims to Christianity were uncommon occurrences.

### 8.2.3 Muslim and Christian Increase in Religiosity in Refugee Camps

Two refugees, a Muslim and a Christian, showed significantly increased religiosity in refugee camps. Several factors appear to have caused this. Firstly, religious education

¹¹¹ A comment made by this refugee after the interview process was completed suggested that he has since changed his view after observing what is happening in Iraq.
programs appeared to increase religiosity. For example, Margaret in the Kakuma camp stated, ‘People were not busy, so they spent much time together doing prayers and Bible study’. In Margaret’s camp the education sessions were conducted by older Azande (a southern Sudanese tribe) women – members of a ‘revivalist’ group who also advised younger women. Asha attended religious study groups, after UN sewing classes in a mainly Somali refugee camp in Kenya. This was comprised of ‘listen, memorise and explain it [the Qur’an] to one another’.

A Somali religious leader also spoke of Islamic schools for adults and children run without outside assistance by Somalis in the refugee camps. The aim was ‘teaching people that they should not lose touch with their faith’. According to the religious leader, many Somali adults he met in Melbourne had first learnt the Qur’an in the camps, not in Somalia. This Somali leader humorously gave another reason why religious education occurred in camps:

I tell my children to learn the Qur’an [in Melbourne]. I say learn more and they say, ‘Oh Dad, do you want us to do like the refugee camp! They don’t have anything there’ [implying nothing else to do]. I say [to them] you have a point!

In contrast to this several Melbourne Somali leaders suggested that some Somalis shifted away from their traditional Sunni/Sufi beliefs towards Wahhabism in the Kenyan refugee camps, as a result of Wahhabi missionary activities.

Becoming widowed appears to have been another factor for the intensification of religious belief. Asha and Margaret became more intense in their religiosity after their husbands’ deaths in the refugee camp. The cause of their deaths was a lack of medicine or money to purchase medicine. The presence of God appeared to be of great emotional assistance for these widows who had a number of children. As Margaret stated, God gave her the ‘power to cope’, God gave Asha the power to ‘keep going’.
8.2.4 Shifts in Asylum and Fowler

As already indicated, more than a quarter of the refugees shifted in their religiosity during asylum. Using Fowler’s adult development stages as a guide, the Dinka Animist shifted to a synthetic-conventional stage with some aspects of the mythical-literal stage; that is, reciprocal fairness still being evident. Two Christians switched denominations, one to a more rigid Evangelical Church. Similar to the Christians, a Somali Muslim shifted to a more rigid and Arab Islamic approach. In contrast, a Shi’ite became more firmly placed in the individuative-reflective stage.

To conclude, two of the five shifters switched to a more rigid style of belief. This appeared to be a coping mechanism and seemingly not uncommon patterns for some within the Somali and Ethiopian refugee communities in asylum. Thus, Streib’s modification of ‘revisions’ rather than Fowler’s theory explains this shift to rigidity.

8.3 Shifting Religiosity in Settlement

Shifts in refugees’ religiosity in Australia are examined in this section. Data for this analysis came from various sources and gives an overview of the shifts during settlement. Firstly, fourteen refugees answered the question: How much does your religion/spirituality/beliefs system influence your life here [in Australia] compared with your home country? The responses were: God, Allah, religion, more, same, less, no change, total change and not at all. Five out of the possible fourteen, or a quarter, answered that their belief system was of ‘more’ influence in Australia than in their home country. Nearly double that number, eight, stated that their belief was of the ‘same’ importance.

For various reasons, in-depth data collected from four of the eight appeared to contradict the questionnaire answer that their belief was the ‘same’, with all four appearing to have increased belief in Australia.

• Semira expressed sadness and guilt that as an Evangelical due to work and family constraints she had little time for personal prayer, Bible study or evangelism.
However, as a way of overcoming this, she hoped that her son would become a pastor, a meaningful occupation for an Evangelical (Hood et al., 2005).

- Shegee, the Oromo Muslim, showed a greater engagement with her religious meaning system while in Australia than in her Ethiopian adolescence or in asylum. For example, she increased praying, fasting at Ramadan, wearing a headscarf even after her divorce and encouraging her children’s religious education. However, in Australia she had become disillusioned with her religion, while still having a close prayerful relationship with Allah. She reiterated her strong belief in Allah that had helped her several times. Despite this she called herself a ‘bad’ Muslim.

Two other Muslims also showed an inconsistency. The researcher suggests that these two and possibly a third (Shegee), by saying the ‘same’, distanced themselves from ‘extremist’ Muslims they were deeply concerned about.

Thus, in-depth refugee interview data appeared, as a research instrument, more accurate than the minor questionnaire. Therefore, analysis of all data showed that of the fourteen, nearly three quarters stated that their beliefs had increased in Australia when compared to their beliefs in their home country. On the other hand, for the remaining four it appears there had been no shift.

### 8.3.1 Major Shifts in Religiosity in Australia

In Australia, only two refugees shifted stages or shifted within a stage of Fowler’s adult faith development. These refugees appeared to shift from the synthetic-conventional/mythical-literal stage towards a more individuative-reflective stage. As previously mentioned, the researcher labels these as religious questioners.

**Case Study (d) Shifting in Australia**

Paulo shifted from his Christian beliefs which were first accepted at his mission primary school in the Sudan, as a result of reading books on colonialism, missionaries and religion at a Melbourne university. These were books not available in Africa. In such books he learnt that the missionaries educated the elite, which is confirmed in various
studies (Deng, 1972; Habte et al., 1999; Sundkler & Steed, 2000). Now, Paulo’s belief system is about equality and sharing, important values he attributes to his political and Animist tribal belief system. He stated, ‘I don’t take religion [in this instance, Islam and Christianity] as the primary thing at all’. In fact, he had shifted to a universal God figure once in Australia. In an unsolicited comment Paulo stated if he had never come to Australia, he probably would still be a Christian fighting the war in the Sudan, by inference he would not have had access to the books that shifted his beliefs. Finally, experience of Christmas in Melbourne also caused him to question his adopted religion.

The second case study is of Shegee. As already mentioned, the Oromo Muslim’s husband, after working in Saudi Arabia and during asylum in Egypt, shifted towards Christianity. Then, on arrival in Australia, he started mixing with a different style of Ethiopian-style Islam. This is examined below.

Case Study: (e) A Husband Shifts to ‘Extreme’ Religiosity
Shegee’s previously mentioned husband worked for an church in order for his family to survive in asylum. However, in Australia her husband shifted to what she and data suggested was an abusive (domestically violent and controlling religious) ‘extremist’ in the 1990s. Comments show that there were some difficulties in the marriage in asylum. However, the first sign of a religious shift occurred on the plane just prior to arrival in Australia. Shegee, who normally wore trousers, put a scarf on her head as her husband requested. The reason for covering up he stated was ‘It’s hard to communicate with our people in Australia, if you are not covered’. Shegee commented that on arrival at Melbourne Airport an Ethiopian Muslim woman came and covered her even more. Shegee stated that at the airport:

**Interviewer:** I just wondered because when you said the woman came [with]?

**Shegee:** Like a shawl [gestures putting around her like a skirt]

**Interviewer:** A shawl and she put it round you?
**Shegee:** Quickly she come, and instead of welcome, she did not kiss me, she did not do anything. She just quickly come and she cover me.

Shegee was shocked as her husband did nothing to discourage the woman covering her.

In Australia, her husband became much more authoritarian, insisting on not only a change in her dress, but also having to get permission for her and her children to watch TV, not being allowed to work, being regularly locked in the house and not allowed to attend English class, even though she had completed high school. Violence, on one occasion, led to hospitalisation. Shegee eventually instigated and obtained a divorce due to her husband’s shift. When asked what had changed him, Shegee stated ‘People changed him. Like a drug when you start doing drugs, like on TV’. The researcher asked: ‘Where? In Saudi Arabia, Australia or in Egypt?’ Shegee replied with emotion: ‘Right here [in Melbourne]!’

Shegee began to question her religiosity as a result of this marital experience and other factors mentioned below. She stated, ‘When I come the Australia, the woman she does not need anyone to protect her’, something her culture and religion does not endorse. Further, inappropriate support from her religious leaders during this marriage (see Chapter 9) and learnings from scientific documentaries on the TV (see later in this chapter) resulted in Shegee now only trusted Allah, inferring this relationship was not to be mediated by Islam, nor by imams which she had previously trusted.

Regarding the term ‘extremism’ and how representative this shift to ‘extremism’ was several comments are pertinent. Firstly, what Shegee calls ‘extremist’, Saeed’s (2003) typology of Australian Muslims (see section 2.9.1) would label such a person as, neo-revivalist, sub-type (A) as reported comments showed the husband viewed Western values and institutions as un-Islamic or anti-Islamic. Secondly, Shegee suggested there were several women in her community who had such husbands, yet unlike her they were

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112 This was in the early to mid-1990s.
afraid to speak out. In addition to Shegge, Asha and her interpreter, a community leader, also expressed concern about some Melbourne Somali mothers, whom they considered to be religiously ‘very extremist’, as such mothers did not allow their children to watch TV, eat McDonald’s or to go to the movies – things they did with their children.

Regarding Shegee’s relations with her religious leaders, another negative experience with male Christian religious leaders caused a shift in another female refugees’ locus of religious authority. According to Semira, her Evangelical leader shifted from being consultative, to being an authoritarian leader, which was extremely painful for her. As a result, she shifted to trusting Jesus and Bible guidance, not her religious leader.

In concluding this section, some similar socio-demographic factors emerged in the backgrounds of these two questioners (Haile and Shegee) and in Abbas the other questioner (previously mentioned). They came from families who were not highly religious nor were they from the religious leader stratum; for two, their fathers had died in their childhood, all had been raised during socialist times, all were high school graduates who had sufficient English on arrival, and two were in late adolescence at the time of flight. A final factor appeared to be that observing religious life caused two, one in Australia and one in Iran, to shift from their birthplace religiosity.

8.3.2 Increased Religiosity in Australia

An analysis of questions 6 and 7 of the questionnaire and in-depth interviews showed an increased belief, though not necessarily a shift in adult development stages in Australia for about a quarter of the refugees interviewed. This intensification appeared more apparent for refugee religious maintainers and some refugee religious shifters. Although the sample is small this increase appears to have been caused by several factors

(i) External religious influences on refugees, prior to Australia

Prior to arrival in Australia for a Somali, contact with an imam in a refugee camp and, for several others, involvement with Evangelicals and/or other Christians in asylum resulted in intensification of – for example, Asha’s and Semira’s – religious beliefs in both
asylum and Australia. This was manifest in, for example, Asha being more veiled – the result of an inward shift.

(ii) Age and family commitments
Quite a number of older, non-working refugees, Muslim and Christian, showed an increase in religiosity in Australia. Asha and Ali, both in their early 60s, appeared to be preparing themselves for Judgement Day and the ‘next life’, as did the older Chaldean. Studies (Paloutzian & Park, 2005a; Spilka et al., 2003) show that this is not an uncommon occurrence for older people in the West. Some younger refugees without the daily survival pressures had more time. A single Muslim woman appeared to be taking spiritual stock of her life thus far, and a single Evangelical male could devote more time to study and God.

Conversely, most of the married working women with children had less time to pray or attend their places of worship than in asylum or their home country. However, these women did feel God was with them in their daily life; for some, this appeared more intense in Australia.

(iii) New Minority Status and the Possible Moral Corruption
When faced by the different Australian culture, two response patterns appeared to result in an increase in religiosity. Hussan believed that his new minority situation increased his beliefs, some of which he was jailed for in Iraq. He stated:

> When I come here to Australia it is different, all the life is not Muslim, everything no Muslims. No shop for me, no restaurant no, no, and I will take care for that thing when I make some food to buy [meaning halal\textsuperscript{113} food].

> ... I be care for that. And I become very strong ...

> [meaning in his religion] ...

\textsuperscript{113} One Somali religious leader stated that some Muslims believe they would be spiritually contaminated if they ate non-halal food.
Hussan managed his minority religious status thus: ‘If your mind is good, no different between here, or everywhere if you are Muslim’. However, living in a Muslim society was ‘easier’. In contrast, an incidental comment from his daughter-in-law suggested there had been a difficulty: inappropriate childcare in an outer suburb with few traditional Shi’ites resulted in the withdrawal of the child.

The second response was manifested in an Oromo Sunni Muslim religious leader who arrived in Australia as an unattached youth. On his arrival many years ago his religiosity increased as:

> Out of your culture, out of your parents, out of your people, when you come to this totally different culture, different people in culture and religion, if you don’t have your own spiritual thing you could lose your way easily. I could go to the bad way easily. There are alcohol, womanising, a lot of terrible things could have happened to me.

Thus, this leader stated that becoming involved with religion was a moral protection strategy for young refugees.

(iv) Freedom of Religion

Three refugees mentioned that religious freedom in Australia allowed more religious practice. For example, Ali stated: ‘sometimes in the Muslim countries you are not allowed, for example, to stay for something in the mosque after you pray’. Saeed (2004) would agree with this. Peter stated that in Australia there was more freedom than in the Sudan or in Egypt, where they were in danger if they conducted Bible studies in homes. Also, as they were Sudanese illegal residents they could have been rounded up after attending church services in Egypt. In contrast, Shegee stated there was too much freedom and not enough accountability with regard to religion, and it was one reason why her unemployed husband shifted to being a religious ‘extremist’ in Australia.
8.3.3 Trends in Switching across Refugee Communities

Several patterns in intra-faith switching were found in the data. The first trend was after arrival in Australia, most of the Christian refugees had either shifted or were attending or had attended a different Christian denomination in Australia.

The most prevalent intra-faith switchers were the Sudanese Christians. For example, two Sudanese moved between the Anglican and Catholic Churches, and James the convert shifted denominations (it should be noted that these churches had special language services for Sudanese). Such switching was confirmed by other interviewees, and a religious leader’s statement, which concluded that denominational switching did not appear to be an issue for Sudanese Christians. The reason given for this was that Sudanese Christians do not have the historic denominational hostilities of Western churches. The leader added that a church’s engagement in settling refugees can also result in newly arrived refugee’ gravitating to a particular church. For example, he stated that on arrival in Australia, Sudanese who settled in the west of Melbourne joined the Anglican Church with its extensive refugee support systems. Then, once settled or with more permanent housing, they appeared to move denominations in line with their tribal leadership, returning to their original denomination or switching to a ‘mainstream’ church closer to their new home. The leader concluded by stating that Sudanese are a very vibrant church-going and spiritual people, and hinted that some mainstream Australian churches can offer membership ‘carrots’ such as buses to church, financial loans or housing by way of competition for such new members.

Three other shifts were noted with most being patterns across a refugee community. One Sudanese attended two churches, a Sudanese church and her local mainstream church, with this being not uncommon for Sudanese in Melbourne. The Chaldean religious leader reported another trend: most of the Chaldean Catholics who switched to Evangelical groups in asylum due to need, switched back to their original church in Melbourne. An Ethiopian Evangelical gravitated between her ethno-specific church and a mega-
Pentecostal Church, as she felt this mega-church was spiritually richer for her teenage children.

In contrast to Christian data, intra-faith switching between Sunni, Shi’ite or Sufis was not detected. On the other hand, three Muslim refugees, two Sunni and a Shi’ite, gave unsolicited comments on their concerns about shifts towards ‘extreme’ religiosity within a small section of the Muslim refugee community. None mentioned terrorist activities.

8.4 The Non-religious Refugee and Shifts

For the one clear non-religious refugee, Khalid’s secular human rights belief system had been shaken, but not extinguished by difficult interpersonal relations in Egypt. In his extremely poor communal home situation, Khalid found some of his fellow northern Sudanese student activists began ‘not sharing’ money, were ‘selfish’ and ‘stealing’. These experiences did not cause him to shift his beliefs, but rather he stated they ‘broke’ his ‘heart’; as he stated, activists ‘should not behave in such ways!’ In direct contrast to this, he found the Australian tertiary education and social systems supported his secular human rights beliefs, beliefs that were difficult to hold in Sudan.

8.5 The Varying Influence of the Media and Technologies on Religiosity

Analysis suggests the media and the new technologies reportedly influenced refugees’ religiosity, causing some shifts or near switches in Australia. Prior to examining this, some background information is necessary.

Half of the refugee participants used a variety of technologies at a personal, family or religious community level. Cassettes were used to listen to the Qur’an or a particular Sufi sheikh- the refugee’s spiritual master. Videos were also used individually as educational or informational tools, as one Evangelical church had a ‘video ministry’, meaning that it lent Christian videos. Religious videos were informally circulating in the Somali community; one concerned an American Somali-born Christian who converted back to
Islam. A video of an Evangelical refugee participant preaching in southern Africa was proudly shown to the researcher.

In addition, more than half of the refugees were linked either by satellite or Internet. The following was observed:

- Muslim families watching religious and other programs on Middle Eastern channels via satellite dishes in Arabic
- the Friday prayers in Qom, Iran, where the sermon was on Iran’s right to nuclear technology
- an adolescent son, deeply interested in Islam, with an Ayatollah on his screen saver and undertaking Islamic studies in London via the Internet.

In contrast to this, the small language groups, such as the Oromo and Dinka, did not have television or satellite programs in their language. Only the Amharic had a Special Broadcasting Service radio program.

Although the data were not sufficient for major findings, the anecdotal evidence suggests the following: global Christian TV programs and American books appeared to be supporting and deepening Evangelical beliefs. For example, Haile listened to Foxtel Christian television, stating that whereas in asylum it was difficult to have time or the necessary money, in Australia everyday:

*I watch preaching and teaching … Amazing preachers from all over the world. Mostly from America. So I am very blessed.*

For an Iraqi Christian, such religious programs appeared to have slightly shifted the refugee to a more Evangelical stance. The refugee mentioned how on Saturday night their family greatly enjoyed watching a Christian program on Foxtel, commenting:
If I’m going to say what this man, what he’s talking is absolutely wrong, look how many people are sitting, it’s like a football stadium, thousands and thousands, and you can tell they are very, very highly educated people sitting there and listening to him. And the way that he is describing and the way that he is talking make you feel don’t want to lose one second of what he’s talking about because you need to know more and more.

These two quotations raised two issues 1) media literacy and 2) how the middle-class nature of the televangelists with their ‘prosperity gospel’ may be appealing to refugees who have diminished status in Australia. In addition, not accounted for in Fowler’s theory, but accommodated by Streib’s finding, is the Assyrian Orthodox who shifted within the synthetic-conventional/mythic-literal stage to accept Protestant Evangelicalism. This could be considered to be a major shift for an Orthodox believer.

According to a Muslim cultural consultant, religious programs can assist with settlement. For example, she had noticed her ‘very religious’ elderly mother watched Middle Eastern religious programs in Arabic and would:

… really feel relaxed to listen to a religious lecture and religious news and she was thrilled when we got this satellite dish. We can feel it. Previously she … was bored, not happy and now she’s really comfortable.

Now, as a family, they would at times discuss some of the new religious and socio-political issues raised on Arabic TV, which this tertiary-educated consultant personally found ‘it[such TV programs] really healing as well’. In addition, she reported her mother was learning about the intra-faith variety within Islam.
Conversely for Shegee, TV programs were another cause for her to shift away from her Muslim beliefs. She stated that she was influenced by TV documentaries; for example, one on contraception, as ‘when I see now it is more than Allah, [it is] science’ how a baby is conceived. As a consequence of the documentaries and observing life in Australia she stated:

_Allah is in Africa! Believe me! When I was in Africa, 100 per cent I believed in Allah, too. You know, I really believe in Allah, the way how life be in there. But in here when I see how I learn in my country, Allah how it is and now in here in Australia every thing’s changed._

Finally, Khalid stated that the Internet supported his belief system as it kept him in touch with human rights groups across the world.

8.6 Increased Religiosity – The View of Refugee Support Personnel

Comments by the vast majority of cultural consultants and refugee support personnel interviewed show a refugee’s religion or spirituality was supportive, if not very supportive. Most of the six refugee support personnel had extensive experience with a particular refugee group or a range of groups for a number of years noticed the refugee’s religiosity increased in Australia.

With regard to Somalis, the two cultural consultants over a number of years had noticed religion had become more important at Somali social events in Melbourne. Another who had assisted with research in her community stated that Islam was the only constant in their lives and, in Australia. Far from their relatives it was prayer, meditation and reading the Qur’an that had greatly assisted them. However, she stated that not all Somali women believe religion helped them, as some became ‘mixed up’ on arrival and some decided to take off scarves at job interviews in order to increase their job opportunities. Of relevance was the Sudanese consultant’s comment that of all the Horn of African groups the Somalis were the most definite in their religiosity in Australia.
Regarding the Iraqis, the cultural consultant stated that Iraq had become more religious as a result of the Iran–Iraq War in the 1980s. Thus, refugees fleeing Iraq after the Gulf War in the 1990s were said to be more religious than the previous waves of Iraqi refugees.

The Ethiopian consultant stated that many Ethiopians gave the ‘credit to God’ for their arrival in Australia, and that religiosity was increasing for both Muslims and Christians with some taking it ‘too far’. For example, some EO laity fast more than ‘normal’ for laity and Muslims said that a woman wearing a black burqa as seen in Melbourne was not a normal occurrence in Ethiopia.

No clear comment emerged as to whether belief had increased within the Sudanese community. However, one consultant stated that the Sudanese Muslims are considered the most moderate of the Horn of African Muslims. Another stated that southern Sudanese were considered deeply spiritual, but only recent converts to Christianity with their allegiance appearing to be more towards their tribe and tribal authority than to Christianity, and that Christianity was not a banner to overcome tribal barriers. The informant stated that this was understandable as tribalism was of such underlying importance as this is how the communities had survived for thousands of years. Comments from one or two interviewees suggest tribal cultural practices still occurred in Melbourne; for example, a case of Christian bigamy and a cow dowry paid via the Sudan for brides.

Other comments were of particular importance. Several noted that there were differences in religious observance between groups of Muslim refugees or refugee groups in general. For example, religious observance was more important for Iraqis than for Bosnians. Secondly, another worker mentioned the phenomenon of increased religiosity with refugees in general, not just the groups studied.
8.7 Conclusion

The findings on the interaction between the refugee experience and shifts in religiosity are summarised below and in Table 8.1 at the conclusion of this chapter. As noted in Chapter 4, shifts in religiosity are not new phenomena in the four birthplace countries, as shifts have occurred over several centuries; for example, in Iraq.

Regardless of religion, in their birthplace countries over half of the refugees were a combination of Fowler’s *synthetic-conventional* and *mythic-literal* faith development stages. For the other eight a range of stages were noted, one was a *mythic-literal* Animist, while two, educated in a socialist system, were questioning of their families’ *synthetic-conventional/mythic-literal* beliefs. A Christian and Muslim were more *individuative-reflective*, and the fourth, an EO, switched to a more rigid Evangelical group, partly due to civil unrest in Ethiopia. The final refugee had shifted from a Sunni Muslim background to a non-religious human rights belief – a *non-religious* stance maintained both in asylum and during settlement in Australia.

In asylum several shifts were noted. The Sudanese Animist finally converted to a Christian *synthetic-conventionalist* belief system and then switched denomination in Australia. One in asylum switched from a Lutheran to an Ethiopian Evangelical church, and finally the religiosity of two (a Sudanese Christian and a Somali Sunni) who became widows in the camp intensified, and these were named *intensified religious maintainers*.

In asylum, conversion and switching were not uncommon for EO, Chaldean Catholics and Sudanese Animists in general. Often they switched to an Evangelical style of belief. Causes for these general shifts appeared to be: 1) as a way of coping with the refugee experience, which included widowhood; 2) due to a lack of religious leaders for the EO and Chaldean Catholics; 3) due to the fact that religiosity increased in refugee camps through education classes and having spare time; and 4) the impact of some Evangelicals, local and foreign, and Wahhabists who appeared to target refugees.
In Australia, several trends in shifts in religiosity were noted. Firstly, about half the refugees reported a shift to increased religiosity, when compared with their home country. This increased religiosity was confirmed by the professional support personnel. Some, but not all, the reasons for this shift appear to be the: 1) freedom that religion enjoys in Australia, again as a way of coping; 2) perception of moral corruption in the West; 3) response to new minority status; 4) the greater amount of free time; and (5) the ageing process. Secondly, more than a quarter of refugees, and nearly all switchers and intensifiers, regardless of religion, shifted to more rigid religious views. Thirdly, an observed shift to religious ‘extremism’ in the Muslim Australian community was stated as a concern by a number of Muslim refugees. Some religious leaders and two cultural consultants also noted this concern in Muslim communities, and in some instances within the EO in Australia.

In contrast to the above general patterns, three refugees, one in asylum and two in Australia, shifted away from rigid beliefs to questioning their religiosity. All shifted towards the *individuate-reflective* stage and in so doing shifted from their *synthetic-conventional/mythic-literal* beliefs held prior to flight. Triggers for one or two shifts appeared to be the influence of the media and observing religious life in both Australia and asylum, tertiary education in Australia and sociological factors such as coming from families with mixed levels of religiosity or beliefs, being in late adolescence on arrival, being educated during socialist times, and being an adolescent when war or civil unrest broke out in their home situation.

The varying effects of the media and other technologies on refugees was an incidental finding. Watching religious programs was a comfort to an older Sunni woman. For an Evangelical, televangelists supported his beliefs. An Iraqi Christian appeared to be moving to a more Evangelical style of belief due to televangelism. Finally the non-religious refugee was linked to others in the human rights community.

Analysis suggests that there appears to be a trend to a more rigid religiosity and a less cultural approach during the refugee experience, which in some instances flowed
through to Australia. In theoretical terms, this shift is better explained by Streib’s concepts of ‘revisions’, an effect postulated by Streib’s life–world dimension, than by Fowler’s theory framed on personal cognitive and sequential faith development.

Thus, this chapter suggests that external factors which affected the refugees’ adult faith development were: 1) colonial influences, for example, ‘missionaries’ (Christian and Muslim) with their prescribed approach to the acceptance or non-acceptance of the convert’s former beliefs/culture; 2) socialist rule, which often, but not always, disallowed religious education; 3) civil unrest, which was often caused by external power groups; or 4) other factors leading to an individual’s flight. The final two factors, which influenced the refugees’ faith development during asylum, were contacts with the other and settlement in a Western secular society.

Although Fowler’s framework with Streib’s modification is of use for this research, it does not totally assist with understanding if refugee religiosity supports or hinders settlement in Australia. This question is examined further in the next chapter.
Table 8.1: Significant Affiliation and Religiosity Shifts During the Refugee Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Somali Born</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Education Prior to Arrival</th>
<th>Religiosity at Home</th>
<th>Religiosity in Transit</th>
<th>Religiosity in Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed</td>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sunni Muslim</td>
<td>Religious maintainer</td>
<td>Religious maintainer (shifting? less?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asha</td>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 Only Islamic</td>
<td>Sunni Muslim</td>
<td>Religious maintainer (intensified)</td>
<td>Religious maintainer (intensified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meriam</td>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Uni</td>
<td>Sunni Muslim</td>
<td>Religious maintainer</td>
<td>Religious maintainer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shegee</td>
<td>Oromo</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sunni Muslim (nominal)</td>
<td>Nominal but prayerful</td>
<td>Questioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sunni Muslim</td>
<td>Religious maintainer</td>
<td>Religious maintainer (intensified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haile</td>
<td>Amharic</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Born EO shifted to Evangelical EO</td>
<td>Switcher</td>
<td>Religious maintainer (intensified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semira</td>
<td>Oromo</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12 + Tech</td>
<td>Lutheran (nominal)</td>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>Evangelical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Dinka</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Animist</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulo</td>
<td>S.Sudanese tribe</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Animist to Christian</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Questioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Margaret</td>
<td>S.Sudanese tribe</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Anglican/Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Peter</td>
<td>S.Sudanese tribe</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Uni</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Rebecca</td>
<td>S.Sudanese tribe</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalid</td>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Uni</td>
<td>Secular human rights (background Sunni)</td>
<td>Secular human rights</td>
<td>Secular human rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Samma</td>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Uni</td>
<td>Sufi</td>
<td>Religious maintainer (intensified)</td>
<td>Religious maintainer (intensified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbas</td>
<td>Non-Arab</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12 + Tech</td>
<td>Shi’ite (nominal)</td>
<td>Shi’ite questioner</td>
<td>Shi’ite questioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Hassan</td>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12 + Tech</td>
<td>Shi’ite</td>
<td>Religious maintainer</td>
<td>Religious maintainer (intensified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khadija</td>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Shi’ite</td>
<td>Religious maintainer (intensified)</td>
<td>Religious maintainer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sohelia</td>
<td>Assyrian</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Uni</td>
<td>Assyrian</td>
<td>Religious maintainer</td>
<td>Religious maintainer (intensified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>Chaldean</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12 &amp; Tech</td>
<td>Chaldean</td>
<td>Religious maintainer (intensified)</td>
<td>Religious maintainer (intensified)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For some of those not interviewed the full four to five times it was difficult to gain an accurate understanding of shifts in intensity, yet for others, it was possible to measure shifts in intensity. In contrast, shifts in affiliation were more easily measured.
CHAPTER NINE
PATTERNS IN REFUGEES’ INTERACTION WITH THE ‘OTHER’

The findings presented in this chapter are relevant to social science theories posed in the research objectives. The chapter presents and analysis of the refugees ‘contact’ with the ‘other’ persons of the same or different beliefs-religious and non religious) in both asylum and Australia. This follows an examination of Australia as a destination and refugees and mixing in Australia. The section concludes by suggesting patterns in home and asylum experiences can interact with host country settlement. The involvement of the religious leaders of the refugee groups in their settlement in secular and multi-faith Australia is analysed is next. This is followed by the observations and knowledge of the refugee support personnel. The chapter’s final section presents how the findings of this study, in total, have implications for refugee settlement theory and suggests modifications to Kunz’s Refugee flight model.

9.1 Refugees in Asylum: Their Interaction with Religious Groups

The responses to the questions, Tell me about the other people you mixed with in the camp or settlement (NGOs, religious groups, ethnic groups). How were these experiences: positive or negative? produced several intra-faith relational patterns. For two-thirds of the Muslims, transit through Egypt, Iran and Lebanon, countries with strong Muslim presences, produced no new intra-faith understandings. Conversely, for about half the Muslims intra-faith contact produced some shocks and surprises. An Iraqi Shi’ite was shocked at Pakistani Muslims’ low level of Islamic education and their violent or hostile attitudes towards Shi’ites. For two Somalis who fled to Wahhabist Saudi Arabia, there were some surprises, such as observing black African Muslims reading the Qur’an and the restrictive attitudes to women. One Somali, tertiary educated in Australia, described Saudi Arabia’s version of Islam as ‘very rigid, very extremist’, with the possibility of being ‘whipped’ with a ‘stick’ (presumably by the religious police) to enforce attendance at mosques.114

114 This was surprising to the refugee’s interpreter, a traditionalist Muslim who had resided in asylum in Europe.
Some previously religiously restricted groups identified more freedoms. One Shi’ite living in Iran stated, ‘I free [I can practise] how I like’, which was not so in Ba’athist Iraq. An Evangelical Ethiopian in southern Africa also felt ‘freer’ than in socialist or Orthodox Ethiopia. In addition, one Iraqi Christian mentioned the emotional impact of residing for the first time in her life in a wholly Christian country: ‘When I arrived in Greece … I felt like, as I said, we are human beings’.

According to individuals from various participant groups, intra-faith contact in transit led to ‘switching’. Some Iraqi Christians and EO switched to Evangelical groups supported by US, European or indigenous groups. Several such groups reportedly targeted refugees. southern Sudanese Christians switched between Anglican, Catholic and Protestant denominations, yet no southern Sudanese reported denominational hostility in Egypt or mentioned where the funding for welfare and church activities came from. Finally, two Somali religious leaders suggested that some Sunni Somalis had shifted to more extreme views in the refugee camps in Kenya due to the influence of Islamist groups.

Regarding interfaith contact in asylum, nearly all the refugees made comments and many issues were raised. Several Christian and Muslim refugees reported mostly positive interfaith relations in majority Muslim or majority Christian countries. For example, a Chaldean, although harassed by local police, reported positive relations with locals in Istanbul. For others there was a range of comments. A Somali, to his surprise, met Bosnian refugees at the Cairo UNHCR office, yet two urban Muslims, an Oromo and Sudanese, reported less interfaith mixing in Cairo.

Some negative experiences were reported by nearly all Sudanese Christians; for example, some hostilities between Muslims and Christians in Cairo, police harassment and unjust imprisonment for bribes. The abduction of Christians by Muslims for body parts was
mentioned by a refugee.\textsuperscript{115} Two refugees reported ‘negative contact’ with Somalis in refugee camps. The first, a Christian Sudanese, stated that in a Kenyan refugee camp:

\begin{quote}
They [Somalis] used not to respect us Christians … they would throw stones at us and when we go to fetch water, the tap is washed if we touch it first that [suggests] we are not clean.
\end{quote}

Some data from refugees and other interviewees showed the interaction between interfaith contact and conversion. The Sudanese Animist converted in asylum to Catholicism and another Sudanese suggested converting to Christianity was not uncommon for southerners when in asylum. As well, one Sudanese Christian refugee and two Christian religious leaders reported being involved in missionary activities in either northern Sudan (living as an IDP) or during the refugee experience. In addition, a female Somali refugee mentioned a Somali convert came to preach Christianity in her camp with the response being:

\begin{quote}
What happened to him was everyone, small to big, all stoned him and kicked him out of the area … where all Somalis were living.
\end{quote}

This refugee appeared shocked to encounter a Somali convert – stoning was a way of dealing with apostates. Finally, an Ethiopian Evangelical perceived the relationship with his Muslim business partner as an opportunity for him to make a conversion to Christianity.

However, not all Muslim–Christian contact was about conversion or hostility. Two Muslims, in Cairo, reported positive experiences with no pressure to convert, one with an Anglican church and the other with a Christian landlord, most probably Coptic. In

\textsuperscript{115} Coker (2004) after considerable investigation could not find any such ‘organ stealing’. However, she contends that rumour, myth and stories are a way the Sudanese coped with cultural loss, cultural contact and so forth in Cairo.
addition, a case of interfaith cooperation emerged. One Sudanese stated how an IDP camp controlled by Muslim Sudanese initially refused help from Christians, for fear of being converted, but later agreed to her Christian group entering the camp as Christian south Sudanese residents were in great need. Some refugee participants stated that some refugees preferred to die than take assistance from someone from an ‘opposing’ religion.

9.2 Australia as a Destination

The general question Briefly tell me about your life … how you came to Australia ie visa and other related data raised several issues. Firstly, as previously mentioned, a belief in God’s direct involvement in obtaining a permanent Australian visa was clearly evident for about half of the refugees. Despite this, only about a third of the refugees nominated Australia as their country of first choice, with the reasons given as: family reunion, healthy climate, less violence and better old-age pensions. Other responses were:

- a Sudanese Christian wanted to stay in Africa and fight
- a Somali wanted to stay in Egypt
- a Shi’ite refugee’s husband and an Ethiopian Evangelical wished to stay in their place of asylum as businesses they established were going well
- a Somali wished to be resettled with family members in the UK
- a Shi’ite and an Assyrian wished to be resettled ‘anywhere’.

Secondly, regarding their pre-arrival perceptions of the ‘other’ in Australia, three refugees commented on their prior perceptions of Australia’s religiosity. For a Sudanese Christian, Christianity was initially perceived as a positive factor; however, for two Muslims it was a matter of concern. The Shi’ite Hussan, prior to leaving Pakistan for Australia, a Western country that, he considered, did not know the difference between ‘haram and halal’, put an ultimatum to his family. They were free to go to Australia, but he would only go if all the family continued to practise their religion. All had done so. For Asha, the Somali, it was the performance of a religious ritual (discussed in Chapter 6) that alleviated the difficulty of settling in a Christian country.
9.2.1 Settlement in Australia

Question 2 of the minor questionnaire, with its five-point scale (*How settled do you feel in Australia: a lot, some, a little, not much or not at all?*) and other in-depth data collection, was designed to give an understanding of the refugees’ feelings on the topic. Of the nineteen, twelve (eight Muslims, four Christians) stated they were very settled, while four (three Christians, one Muslim) were moderately settled. In contrast, three stated they had never really settled in Australia (one Sudanese Christian, one Assyrian and one Shi’ite), although the Shi’ite later contradicted this response.

Thus, the Muslim refugees interviewed seemed more settled than the Christians, with educational levels and length of residence not appearing to be significant variables. The researcher suspects the ‘politeness imperative’ (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008) may have been an issue in the finding, but only to a minor extent.

Two other issues emerged. The settlement satisfaction of four refugees, mostly Christians, would have increased if either they or their partner had obtained professional employment in Australia. Finally, four of the nineteen had made a return visit to Iraq or the Sudan; while this assisted one Shi’ite, it appeared not to help some others. For example, the secular Sudanese stated that after his home visit he only felt settled ‘to some extent’.

9.2.2 Settlement and Religiosity

In order to obtain comments on difficulties experienced in Australia, either practically or spiritually, the refugees were asked: *What causes or does not cause your suffering here [meaning in Australia]? Was there a high/happy point here? Was there a low/difficult experience here?* Other related questions produced a range of findings. Out of thirteen who responded, only three refugees (two Muslims and a Chaldean Catholic) indicated no suffering in Australia. They were ‘happy’, having sufficient food and medical support. Two viewed this lack of suffering in religious terms – one said that God was protecting her family in Australia, and the other stated they had already suffered prior to arrival.
Other patterns surfaced, the first not uncommon (Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture Inc., 1998) – the continued civil unrest in both the Sudan and Iraq caused suffering in Australia. For example, John the Dinka, indicating some guilt at not being home:

Yes, we are really in a good place. We are safe, no more suffering. I can say that, but we are suffering because when we look back home and see our people, they are suffering. …
But I am not happy because I am here and I good life, but my people there [in Sudan] are suffering.

Four commented on how the refugees’ religious community can generate psychological pain in Australia. A Muslim and a Christian, both female, mentioned disillusionment with their Melbourne religious leader who had generated a major emotional upset. In addition, two Christians and a Muslim had been deeply hurt by criticisms they received while holding leadership positions in their Melbourne community.

During the course of this research, it became apparent that a Shi’ite and a Sudanese refugee, previously a Christian, did not wish their community to know how deeply they questioned their religious faith because the consequence could be social isolation. For example, the Shi’ite stated that in Iraq, Iran and Australia one needed to be careful about publicly questioning one’s faith. This refugee was not concerned for himself, but rather for his family becoming isolated because of his religious questioning. A case study exemplifies this isolation.

Case Study
Shegee, the Oromo Muslim, at the time of interview, was isolated from members of her community, a consequence of divorcing her ‘extremist’ and violent husband. Her motivation to participate in this research was that she believed ‘many’ Ethiopian Muslim women suffer with ‘extremist’ husbands in Australia, with few being able to speak out. She also added that her religion caused suffering because ‘all the time’ there are
pregnancies, as many husbands in her community religiously opposed contraception.\textsuperscript{116} Shegee stated that her community did not deal with these issues and so Shegee has begun to seriously question many aspects of her religious meaning system. For example, why does Allah make women suffer in childbirth?

\textit{Sometimes I have to be honest with you. I ask myself, is it really Allah [who] exists, really what I am saying is, when I see my kids suffer, when I see myself and I can’t go outside. When I go outside, I can’t find my own people and these things when he [ex-husband] go worst. Why this is happened [does] really, really God exist?}

For a number of reasons, ten refugees appeared unconcerned about their children’s religiosity in Australia. One reason was that politically and socially Australia was less dangerous, as two fathers stated: in Somalia young men could be kidnapped into the armed militia and in Iraq and Iran life was more difficult due to drug problems and youth unemployment. An additional reason was articulated by the Chaldean Catholic mother: the pace of life in Australia decreased her family’s attendance at church; however, she felt their moral and religious education came from home, thus the lack of attendance was not a problem. One questioning Shi’ite male was concerned because of his daughter’s increased religiosity, her wearing of the veil in Australia and the lack of education for women in Muslim countries.

In contrast, only three refugees – a Shi’ite, a Sunni and the Assyrian – mothers or grandmothers, out of a possible thirteen were very concerned about their children’s decreasing religiosity in Australia. As Asha stated:

\textsuperscript{116} Glasse (2002) states that most contraception methods are allowed, as long as it is acceptable to both parties. Esposito (2003) states the Qur’an gives no explicit or clear direction on the matter, with the vast majority of Sunnis and Shi’ites allowing various types of birth control; however, a minority do not allow it. Aziz et al. (2001) give more details on the current situation; however, it should be noted that the literature may not be relevant to the schools of Islam represented in the refugee groups in Australia.
... for the future of my children and the grandchildren,
and for all the Somali children, their future ... how would they believe in Allah and their religion and the culture?
Somali culture?... Everything would [will] be gone!

The Assyrian mother believed ‘testing’ by God continued in Australia, as she was having difficulty with her teenage daughter due to the rejection of her mother’s religious views and her inappropriate behaviour. For Asha, her belief system assisted her as she appeared to be comforted by the belief that ‘Allah ... is going to punish’ perpetrators of the civil war in Somalia who ‘forced’ Somali children to come to Australia, a land which is ‘peaceful’ and will give her children and grandchildren a good education. However, the perpetrators will ‘suffer’ in the afterlife because of the religious and cultural consequences of her children’s flight and settlement in Australia.

Of those few concerned about their children’s diminished religiosity all were women. Some were from the traditional religious leadership stratum in their cultures and for two, a Muslim and a Christian, their religiosity had intensified during the refugee experience. When presenting such factors, it should be noted that at the time of interview four refugees who were not concerned, three men and one women, did not have young children, adolescents or pre-schoolers at the time of interview. Thus, their children’s or grandchildren’s religiosity may become a later concern.

A trend emerged: the continuance of suffering in Australia for two of the nineteen refugees. Both were tertiary-educated Iraqis who appeared to be physically and economically (although one spouse was underemployed) settled in Australia with extended family members. Both, either verbally or by body language, showed they continued to suffer in a marked way in Australia, and that they only felt settled in their home country.

The first was Hussan who could be described as a ‘pious Shi’ite’, who views the world as full of sorrow and suffering, with trials being a way of keeping to God’s will and
obtaining mercy through patience and endurance (Sachedina, 1999). The other was the Assyrian who surprised the researcher when she stated she had suffered more than other Iraqis she had met, yet this statement clarified her flight circumstance:

... if they caught me, if they send me back to Iraq they will destroy me, they will kill me and my family, the whole family, even my parents, even my in-laws.

In fact, probing showed Sohelia viewed her suffering as:

... routine, routine, we born to be suffer, we born, this is our destiny we born in this country [Iraq], well this is our destiny, that's it, you know, this is the routine of the life.

Comments on her childhood showed her parents taught her ‘don't forget you are Christian and turn the other cheek’. Then in Australia, after some training on discrimination, she stated that in Iraq:

... we didn’t even think about discrimination because we think this is our destiny, or some people they think it is, this is the rule.

Thus it was then she realised that discrimination ‘happened to us, it happened to me’ in Iraq.

When reflecting on the data several trends emerged. Both refugees had come from communities that had been discriminated against and persecuted in Iraq. Unlike the Chaldean Catholic, Sohelia (even after the learnings presented directly above) appeared to view her suffering in Iraq only in religious terms – ‘Christians’ being persecuted by ‘Muslims’. Such an approach appears to deny some other historical, sociological and political factors, or the reportedly different attitudes between the Assyrians and
Chaldeans to the Iraqi republic as previously mentioned (Hourani, 1947; Marr, 2004; Zubaida, 2000). Thus, it appears that for both the Assyrian and Shi’ite their religious meaning systems (or possible their approach to these) appeared to support the notion that their suffering continued in Australia.

The final issue was easily rectifiable. Although settled by the immigration department, a Shi’ite initially suffered because of not finding or being shown where to obtain halal food. Discussions with a Sunni Muslim religious leader suggested eating non-halal food is a significant ritual impurity for Muslims.

9.3 Refugees in Multi-faith Australia

This part is divided into several sub-parts in response to questions such as: Do you mix with people who have a different belief system from you? (religious and secular). What setting? What do you know about them and how did you learn about them? What did you know about Australia before you came? Have your views/knowledge changed since arriving in Australia? Various clusters of findings arose as a result of Australian ‘contact’.

9.3.1 Christian and Muslim Intra-faith Contact

Differences emerged due to the contact refugee Christians had with their counterpart community. As previously mentioned, for most refugees Australia was not their preferred country for re-settlement. However, once visas had been issued, prior to arrival, two, an Evangelical Ethiopian and the Assyrian, were excited about coming to a Christian country.

On arrival, for a few Christians there were some surprises and shocks. A Sudanese reported being surprised at the many denominations, the number of old people and the lack of families in churches. A more shocked response was reported by an Evangelical:
... you celebrate Christmas with drinking! The meaning of Christmas for me was because Jesus was born that day born for my salvation.

In contrast to most Christians, most Muslim interviewees attended places of worship where ethnic intra-faith mixing was possible. For some, this was a new experience; for others, this was part of their asylum experience. For example, most Sunnis interviewed attended multiethnic mosques and Shi’ites attended their particular mosque, which appeared to have Lebanese, Iranian and Iraqi attendees. On the other hand, one Shi’ite family mentioned attending a local Turkish (by inference Sunni) mosque, but later ceased attending because the service was not in Arabic, their language.

Several points of Muslim intra-faith contention emerged. The non-veiling of some Lebanese and Turkish females was an issue for a religiously revitalised Somali female and two religious Shi’ites. For example, one Shi’ite female reported gently trying to get her Bosnian friends to cover. In contrast, the Oromo complained that at a mosque the women were trying to make her daughter cover, something not done in Ethiopia. Secondly, a Shi’ite was somewhat angry about Lebanese Australians he met:

... don’t know anything about the Arabic language. In the future, how can they take [learn] their religion?

Finally, as previously mentioned, a third of Muslim refugees were concerned about Muslim extremism in the world. Three implied, but did not articulate that there were ‘extremists’ in Melbourne. For example, a Shi’ite recounted that as an older Melbourne university student he was approached by some young Muslims who asked how they could join extremist Islamic groups. Further, he mentioned how at a local government school, after Muslim parents complained, the state school principal replaced someone responsible for giving religious education classes to children. This person appeared to be a Wahhabist.
9.3.2 Attitudes to Different Religiosities and Asians

All the Muslim refugees commented favourably about Christians with a typical comment being: ‘We believe in God, we believe in Allah: that is the same, OK?’ Several referred to the Qur’an, prescribing tolerance to People of the Book (Küng, 1986). Samma the Sufi and Ali, when speaking on predestination, gave the prescribed Islamic explanation of why there are different religions. Samma stated children are born into different religions; for example:

*I didn’t choose my parents, I didn’t choose my country, my home country, I didn’t choose Islam … you see. I am by birth, I am an African, Arabic, Muslim … and you by birth*

[inferring the researcher was Christian].

Esposito’s (2003) and Glasse’s (2002) according to the Quran and Islam every child is born with a *fitrah*, but it is a child’s parents who make them a Jew or a Christian, as such prior to their parent’s choice, every child is born Muslim.

It is suspected one or two exaggerated their positive attitudes to interfaith relations, possibly due to the current international climate, because the researcher was considered Christian or due to the ‘politeness imperative’ (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008).

In contrast, half of the Christians had less favourable attitudes to Muslims. For example, the two Ethiopian Evangelicals’ verbal and body language suggested this hostility. One had a ‘soft attitude’, meaning a more accepting attitude to people of other faiths or denominations. This refugee had been brought up in multi-faith Addis Ababa, where he reported positive experiences, both in asylum and in informal cultural sharing in AMEP English classes in Australia. In addition, these two reported trying to convert fellow students or workers to ‘Jesus’, with the ‘softer’ refugee stating it was more difficult to

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117 Esposito spells it as *fitra*.
118 *Fitrah*, the primordial norm – the original nature of humans – unity between man and God, as existed in the Garden of Eden (Glasse 2002).
convert people in Australia than in Ethiopia. In Australia he needed to make his life a witness to his faith.

southern Sudanese (Bible literalist Protestant, Catholic, Anglican) also had a ‘softer’ view of other faiths. For example, two Dinkas were known to regularly assist Muslims with settlement in Melbourne. A non-Dinka Sudanese Christian, with no formal education, asked how she would explain different faiths to her children:

If they ask me, what I will say is that even different people believe in ways, the ways [have different Gods or beliefs] … I will just tell them that it is divisions that human beings have created for themselves. But there is one God who unites everybody together.

Thus, mixing did not appear to provide opportunities to convert the ‘other’.

Two issues arose as a result of mixing with Asians in Australia. Firstly, regardless of backgrounds most were surprised at finding Asians in Melbourne. One Ethiopian Evangelical stated:

Before I came here … I was not expecting Asian people, so, first when I get in the airport I saw many Asian people [slight laugh]. Oh! this is an Asian country.

Nor did this refugee expect to be in an English language class with immigrants/refugees from all over the world. Another found Christians of Indian and Chinese backgrounds surprising, even though he had had contact with such groups in Somalia. The human rights activist stated the Australian government’s refugee information discussed multiculturalism and different religious faiths, but had not informed him to ‘expect to find Asians’. In contrast, one Somali with family in Australia knew Asians were present and so was not surprised.
Differing attitudes to Asian beliefs arose as the second issue. For example, the Ethiopian Evangelical’s tone of voice was again hostile when commenting on Asian faiths:

*I was surprised when I saw in a Chinese shop that they put oranges and bananas and something like a God!*

*Asking the lady … ‘What’s this?’ [the religious shrine]*

*‘This our God’ she said.*

*I said* *My God inside my heart! Not in oranges!!*

*… Bible say if you believe something not alive, that’s a sin!!*

In contrast, a Sudanese Christian was accepting of Asians, stating that his father’s Animism was like Buddhism. In Australia he was pleased to find Buddhists, Animists and Christians mixing peacefully. Hence, the Muslim refugees generally had favourable attitudes to Christians, whereas only about half of the Christians reciprocated these feelings.

**9.3.3 Reaction to Agnosticism and Western Freedoms**

Four refugees, again irrespective of religion, expressed surprise to find agnostics in Australia. For example, finding that her English teacher was agnostic shocked one Somali. A Somali community leader appeared to underestimate the number of secularists, perhaps this was a comfort to him. A Sudanese Christian, a university graduate from the Sudan, was greatly surprised at the levels of agnosticism in his human service workplace and in the general community.

Another four refugees were unsurprised. Two Shi’ites stated that atheists were also in Iraq, and the Ethiopian Somali stated he had seen naked Animist tribal people in Ethiopia, which was a revelation for his Somali interpreter. For the human rights activist, it was also not a surprise, and in fact he felt more at home in secular Australia than in the Sudan.
In contrast to her accepting attitude to people of other faiths, a southern Sudanese Anglo-Catholic had a hostile (hard-line) attitude to agnostics:

\[
I \text{ think … some of the people who feel that whatever I need, I can make it for myself. It is not God who can do anything for me, and this kind of feeling is from people who [are] filled up with the desire of the devil.}
\]

The final issue was the sexualised behaviour in Australia, which shocked some, including two highly religious refugees, an older Shi’ite and the younger Evangelical, both males. Haile the Evangelical experienced temptation by the devil via magazines at work and websites that had ‘beautiful naked women’. He added, ‘the devil don’t give up even when you are married’.

### 9.3.4 Experiences of Discrimination in Melbourne

Slightly less than half of the refugees gave instances of discrimination, often religious, in Australia. Most, but not all, were Muslim. The first set of incidents reported by two Muslims and a Christian related to their primary schoolchildren wearing a hijab or being called ‘black’.

Such incidents were not reported to the school. A third mother reported how local children did not come and play at their house after 9/11. The second set of incidents were religiously motivated; for example, the harassment of a covered Shi’ite female. Another incident, the worst reported, resulted in a husband being hospitalised after being attacked in the presence of his wife and children when repairing the family van on the side of a road. The refugee stated that she was greatly comforted as non-Muslim passers-by assisted them after the attack. In contrast to these incidents, four other covered Muslim women, when asked, reported no personal harassment. All four lived in areas where, as one husband commented, in ‘this area [covering] is normal’. Other problems were with real-estate agents.

\[119\] In both incidents, the researcher strongly advised the mothers to report this to the classroom teacher and, if that was not sufficient, to the principal.
The final issue concerned Australian law, which was viewed by some refugees as either a protector or a restrictor of religious and personal freedoms.

- A black African refugee, unlike in the Kakuma camp with the Somalis, felt laws in Australia relating to equality protected her.
- A religious Muslim stated that unlike in some Muslim countries, in Australia he had freedom of religion.

In contrast, an Ethiopian Evangelical stated that the law restricted their religious expression. A church friend warned her that discussing religion in the workplace can be considered dangerous; for example, one could be charged with harassment, which she did not know about until told. Thus, this Evangelical developed a new strategy to evangelise, singing Christian songs while sweeping the ward in a nursing home so people would ask her about the songs.

Finally, a Dinka was lonely in Australia due to Australian child custody rulings giving custody of their children to his wife. Traditionally, in Dinka culture after marital breakdown children remain with the husband’s family while the wife marries again and has other children (Deng, 1972). He commented his beliefs gave him a way of coping. Without animosity he stated, ‘I just thank God and nothing else I can do’.

9.4 Impact of Home Factors and Asylum Experiences upon Mixing in Australia

A refugee’s intra/interfaith interaction or non-interaction in the home country or in asylum appears to be a factor affecting contact with the ‘other’ in multi-faith Australia.

This study suggests several home country factors (as detailed in Chapter 4): colonial contact, colonial structures, differing education systems, neighbourhood and business inter/intra-religious or cultural contact can be a factor that produced refugees of varying capacities and attitudes towards contact with the ‘other’ in multi-faith Australia. For example, data suggest:
• Muslim interviewees (Ethiopian and Somali) who received colonial mission education had positive attitudes to mixing in Australia.

• Somalia’s colonial structures appear to have produced different pre-arrival ways of relating with Christians. Southern Somali clans had lived and mixed with the Italian (Catholic) colonisers. In contrast, northern clans under the British (Church of England) protectorate spoke English however colonial structures meant both groups did not live or mix together.\textsuperscript{120}

• Long-term childhood, school or family business contact with ‘others’ of different faiths appears to produce a ‘soft’—an accepting attitude toward the ‘other’ in Australia.

It is pertinent to note that many refugees who were interviewed, in particular the Somalis who agreed to participate, had a family or background history of mixing with people of different beliefs in their home country.

Analysis tends to suggest that the different asylum situations can positively or negatively impact on a refugee’s acceptance of the ‘other’ in multi-faith Australia. Several trends are presented below.

Southern Sudanese Christians who fled south, spending their asylum in predominately Christian Uganda or in Kenya (SBS, 2003), had not mixed with Muslims before arrival in Australia. In contrast, southern Sudanese Christians, who went to study in Khartoum, then fled or went to Cairo to study, mixed with local Muslims prior to arrival in Australia. Regardless of educational levels, data from several sources suggest that the southern exit group have less positive attitudes to mixing with Australian Muslims.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{120} In the course of this research, the researcher observed Dinkas from the Bor area, more often than other south Sudanese are employed to assist with the settlement of their fellow refugees. It appears that the long history of the Anglican mission educational system in this area produced well-educated individuals who can speak English.

\textsuperscript{121} Discussion with a Muslim ESL teacher alerted the researcher to a less accepting attitude by a ‘lost boy of Sudan’. The trigger for this observation was the boy’s eventual non-acceptance of the teacher’s offer of voluntary educational assistance. Informal discussion with a Sudanese Christian leader showed he would agree with this observation, adding that many of these boys and indeed he himself would have difficulty
Similar to the Sudanese, a well-informed Somali religious leader stated that the Somali asylum experience produced different settlement capabilities. Those who spent asylum in Cairo were ‘calmer’ and were ‘more integrated’ into the Melbourne (multi-faith) context. In contrast, those who came via the Kenyan camps had been affected by undefined Muslim mission groups and became more religious in Australia and were suspicious of non-Muslims. A third group were the children of Somali refugees whose parents had fled to find work in the Gulf States. In exile they developed Sunni Arab Islamic, not a Somali, religio/cultural identity. Another leader added that this third group were very fervent in belief in Australia.

The older Shi’ites and Sunnis who went to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia or Iran before coming to Australia appeared to have a broader view of how religion and politics can intertwine and clash in differing Muslim societies. This contrasted with other Muslim interviewees (including an interpreter) who had not had such experiences.

In contrast to this, some other data emerged on how for a few young Muslims intra/interfaith interaction in asylum did not result in positive attitudes to the ‘other’ being transferred to Australia. For example, the Oromo Muslim’s husband who became an ‘extremist’, holding negative hard-line attitudes to the ‘other’ in Melbourne, had worked with Christians in Saudi Arabia and in Egypt.

9.4.1 Transference of Misinformation and Religious Prejudice to Host Country

The transference of misinformation about religious groups and possible fear of them, leading to prejudice and bigotry in Australia, is an important issue.

A third of the refugees, all tertiary graduates, showed evidence of the transference of religious misinformation or religious prejudice from their home country to Australia. For example, several in the home country had been misinformed by their reading of Arabic accepting assistance from a Muslim due to many or all of their family members being brutally killed by Sudanese Muslims.
translations or books. Two Shi’ites strongly believed that only 100,000 Jews died in the Holocaust. Even a *refugee religious questioner* – the most reflective of all – was misinformed about Australians’ levels of religiosity, as in the 1970s he had read a book in Iraq that stated that 40 per cent of Australians had ‘no religion’. On the other hand, this refugee stated that ‘it is good we find Australian people without religion’ because ‘if people care about religion’, there is more religious discrimination, as in the Middle East.

A second pattern was the Muslim denial of prejudice towards Christians in Muslim majority countries. For example, a Somali Muslim strongly disagreed with resident Australian Copts who stated they were discriminated against in Egypt, and a Sudanese Muslim denied discrimination towards Copts in Sudan.122

Several comments showed that hostility between the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Ethiopian Evangelicals has been transferred to Australia. Haile the Evangelical detailed some of the causes. Firstly, different interpretations of Christianity; for example, only Jesus was important for Evangelicals, while for the EO, saints were also important. Further, the EO annually renew their baptismal vows (Parry et al., 1999), whereas Evangelicals, baptised once, do not. Secondly, supposedly different behaviours caused friction. For example, he stated ‘if you believe in Jesus you change … you don’t have to go to clubs and take drugs’, yet ‘all [EO] … do all those kind of things’. Two cultural consultants and two other refugees also commented on the tensions between these Christian denominations in Australia. The consultant stated tension was less in Australia, as opposing churches are not in close proximity, yet inter-denominational or interfaith marriages within the Melbourne Ethiopian community had led to difficulties, including an alleged suicide.

More than other Christians interviewed, the overt body language and comments of the two tertiary-educated Iraqi Christians suggested the strength of anti-Muslim prejudices, though not necessarily expressed in behaviour towards Australian Muslims. As noted in Chapter 4, both had suffered varying degrees of prejudice or persecution in Iraq.

122 In the course of this researcher’s work, she has come across two other tertiary-educated Muslims who also deny discrimination towards Egyptian Christians. Discrimination towards Christians has been confirmed in a 2009 Amnesty International Report on Egypt.
However, some differences in attitudes and belief emerged: the Assyrian viewed the cause of her flight only in terms of Muslim hostility towards Christians, whereas the Chaldean stated she fled because of the war. Analysis of various pieces of data suggests the poorer Chaldean from Northern Iraq appeared to have a ‘softer’ attitude to Muslims in general, whereas the Assyrian appeared to have a ‘hard-line’ attitude.

Fear of an Islamophobic backlash in Melbourne was raised by the veiled Muslim single mother from the long-persecuted Oromo tribe of Ethiopia. In particular, her fear was that had they frequented the local shopping centre (where there are few Muslims) during the Bali bombings, they would have been attacked. In addition, this refugee was in regular video cam contact with her family in North America, who were strongly advising her to take off her veil so she would be safe.

9.5 The Role of Religious Leaders in Settlement

Refugees noted the engagement of their religious community and its leaders in their settlement in Melbourne. The religious leaders’ questionnaire sought information on their engagement with refugees in questions such as: *Could you tell me about the practical and spiritual issues that refugees face in Australia? Are there other issues? What is the difference in your role between your home country and Australia?* Answers raised several matters, such as their varying engagement with refugee settlement, the issue of government funding for settlement support, the strategies for dealing with marital difficulties and their engagement in ecumenical and intra-faith matters.

Ten of the twelve religious leaders were or had been directly involved with the physical and emotional settlement of refugees, mostly of their own background. Examples were:

- Chaldean Catholics sponsored refugees and provided material aid and social support for newcomers.
- An Ethiopian Evangelical religious leader assisted members to find a home.
- The main Shi’ite leader provided finance for a young man to do Islamic Studies in London online and for a refugee widow to do the *Hajj.*
• A Somali leader mentioned that some Somalis came to small group discussions he organised on the very day they arrived in Melbourne!

• An Ethiopian Evangelical stated that loneliness led to excessive drinking and drug usage in the Ethiopian community. As a response he reported establishing small support groups in addition to the numerous other church-based activities.

Although not the main focus of this study, different approaches and attitudes emerged on how the various communities assisted settlement. For Somalis, on arrival, clan groupings were re-established in various parts of Melbourne, offering social, practical and spiritual support. As well, the Somalis, reportedly more than Iraqis, used the DIAC refugee settlement services, welfare agencies and other services – these were seemingly sufficient. For the Chaldeans at the time of interview, the Chaldean church community had well-established links with the local Migrant Resource Centre, which had bilingual Iraqi workers. On arrival, Sudanese Protestants, Catholics and Anglicans received help from their Australian counterparts.

Two of the twelve religious leaders mentioned their inability to assist their refugee community with their welfare or settlement needs. Both mentioned that their churches, not DIAC-contracted agencies, were settling refugees. The Anglican Church in the west of Melbourne had become a settlement hub for the large influx of southern Sudanese. For the EO there appeared to be other issues.

The EO leader raised the issue of the Australian federal government’s selective funding of some churches to provide welfare, stating:

_In Australia, when we talk about the Church and the State is separated how many billions and millions the Australian government channels to the Salvation Army, the Catholic Church, and the Anglican Church, all these big well-established churches?_
He then went on to challenge the Australian government to fund his religious community, as his church is a:

... [a] place of counselling for refugees. Those places are a place to provide both spiritual and practical assistance. Someone is sick, or someone is detained we don’t have money, what do we do?

In contrast, the Chaldean, Evangelical Ethiopian and Shi’ite leaders did not mention the need for government funding, with the Chaldean leader stating, ‘We don’t ask for the money, and if there’s any money we don’t accept it’.

It is interesting to note that the Sudanese human rights activist was surprised to see churches such as the Salvation Army delivering employment services and training to refugees in Australia.

9.5.1 Marriage Disputes and Religious Leaders

The basis for this section arose from interview data as two spoke of their religious leaders’ assistance with marriage difficulties. The Oromo Muslim, a high school graduate from an urban family, was dissatisfied with the support she received from several Melbourne imams. She stated that her experiences were dismissed in a patriarchal way. She explained how after some discussion with her and her husband (who was on unemployment benefits) one imam stated:

... you [husband] pay $100 and we forgive you and ... give this money for poor people and you go back together.

This was particularly concerning, as the marital violence led to hospitalisation, which the imam knew about. In contrast, she stated an ‘Australian’ Muslim woman at the mosque gave her some useful advice, and she noted how her divorced Oromo Christian friend
was offered very good support from an Ethiopian (Evangelical) church after her separation. 123

Other more successful leadership interventions were noted. A separated male Sudanese Christian was satisfied with the regular support he received from his Australian religious leader, even though his wife did not return. A Christian Sudanese women’s group was also concerned about marriage break-ups in their community, as this was contrary to Christian teaching, and so they had established informal forms of assistance. One member reported that they sensitively contacted women known to them to see if they wished for a visit. If so, the women’s group would go, pray and read Matthew Chapter 5 about divorce, and have a discussion with the particular women.

About a quarter of the religious leaders commented on their engagement with marriage issues. A Chaldean and three Sudanese Christian leaders stated that marriage breakdowns were more prevalent in Australia because women had more options. The ‘incentive’ of the single mother’s benefit was given as an example. 124 One lamented that, when marriage disputes occurred, the first action taken by women was to ring ‘000’ for the police. As a consequence, one Sudanese Protestant leader said how disappointed he was that he was used less in marriage disputes in Australia than in Egypt, his place of asylum. In contrast, an imam from Somalia mentioned that he was often consulted on marriage problems here.

Later discussions with refugees and a cultural consultant confirmed that traditionally women in their home country have the support of family members, including brothers, when there are marriage difficulties. However, in Melbourne, with little extended family, some appeared to seek help from their religious leaders. Discussion with them and consultants showed that religious leaders and possibly their communities’ engagement

123 According to Shegee, her ex-husband went and brought out a new wife from rural Ethiopia. She was reportedly fourteen years old at the time of marriage. The inference was that at this age she would be more traditional and manageable. She was given a visa to Australia as she reportedly had a false birth certificate and being pregnant she looked older.

124 For over 20 years the researcher has heard of ‘marriage break ups’ occurring as one way of obtaining government housing when refugees were in difficult housing situations.
with marriage disputes may be a new or extended role, and is more complex in Western cultures where women often have more financial options and laws for protection.\footnote{Comments from an interpreter showed that one settlement agency in Melbourne has been organising marriage support programs for new African communities. It appears the support model is Western in style.}

### 9.5.2 Religious Leaders on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relationships in Melbourne

Nearly all religious leaders responded to the questions: *Could you tell me about other agencies/groups/faiths you mix with in Australia? Could you tell me about your involvement with these?* In some instances, Lochhead’s (1998) model of four approaches to interfaith dialogue (isolation, hostility, competition and partnership) became relevant when analysing in the religious leaders’ data. Firstly, ‘partnership’ across some Christian groups was noted:

- Iraqi Christians cooperated across denominations on youth and marital issues.
- Following the EO communities’ arrival in the early 1990s, their church leadership sought and received help from the Victorian Council of Churches.
- The Sudanese on arrival also received help from ‘mainstream’ Anglicans and Catholics.
- One Ethiopian Evangelical religious leader regularly met with members of the mainstream Evangelical network, which comprised various ethnicities.

‘Hostility’, another approach suggested by Lochhead, between Evangelical Ethiopians and the EO in Melbourne, was also apparent in data from two religious leaders. Given Ethiopia’s religious history and the Evangelical Christians’ success in switching some EO in Ethiopia, in asylum and in Melbourne, to Evangelism, the reported hostility is probably not surprising.

Concerning Muslim religious leaders, several comments on intra-faith relations emerged. Firstly, as a Sunni religious leader pointed out, most recent Muslim refugees at the time were Shi’ites: Iraqi or Hazari, or Afghans. This leader stated that Shi’ites would not be comfortable worshipping in a Sunni mosque and ‘they more or less separate themselves,'
from the mainstream Muslim community’ in Melbourne. This leader suggested that the Melbourne Islamic leadership needed to reach out more to these new Shi’ite refugees. Information gathered in 2009 suggests there was still little contact or that there was hostility between the Shi’ite and the Melbourne Sunni leadership.

Secondly, several leaders mentioned intra-faith differences within the Melbourne Muslim community:

- the Ahmadiyyah\textsuperscript{126} were not considered Islamic
- Turkish Muslims in Melbourne’s north traditionally were separated from the Melbourne Arab Muslims
- ‘Wahhabist extremists’ and ‘Tabligh Jamaat extreme traditionalists’ were present in Melbourne, and some of the interviewees stated that these extremist groups recruited marginalised youth or new converts; however, most did not remain with them.

Thirdly, varying attitudes to interfaith relations emerged in the religious leaders’ comments. With regard to Muslims, interfaith contact occurred in different ways. Oromo Muslims and Christians have a long history of mixing in both Ethiopia and Melbourne, with a Muslim leader stating:

\begin{quote}
\textit{... we come together as Muslims and non-Muslims – it doesn’t matter, as Oromo, and we just discuss together and we take a decision.}
\end{quote}

The leader reported that official interfaith discussions occurred at the Islamic Council of Victoria – not with Oromo religious leaders. He stated further that there was more such dialogue in Melbourne than in Ethiopia. For Somalis, most internal and personal religious

\textsuperscript{126} Glasse (2002) states that their founder viewed himself as a \textit{mujaddid}, a renewer with this group formed in the Punjab in the 1880s. It is a reaction against Christian missionaries, yet Glasse states that the group identifies with the Christian West, as it has theological links to Christianity and adopted the Protestant approach of proselytisers – via missionaries. Esposito (2003) sums up Glasse’s comments by stating they are a ‘controversial’ Messianic group and seen by some as heretical.
matters were managed within their clan. However, at the time of data collection for all formal interfaith matters, Somalis were represented by the one religious leader, the imam at the main Melbourne City Mosque. This sheikh, also on the Islamic Council, is a regular participant at various interfaith activities. As a comment, a leader reported that the Islamic Council of Victoria received positive support from the Roman Catholic, Uniting Church and Anglicans after 9/11. Thus, most Muslim religious leaders interviewed appeared to be involved in some interfaith partnerships.

In contrast, Christian leaders’ comments showed both engagement and non-engagement. For example, an Anglican leader working with the Sudanese appeared to have contact with Muslim refugees, and an Iraqi Christian leader was not against such contact. At variance to this a Sudanese Protestant stated, ‘I don’t think I need it’, meaning interfaith engagement in Melbourne. He commented that Islam and Buddhism, but not Christianity, were being promoted by Australian government-funded agencies. When the comments were followed up, it emerged that these beliefs stemmed from cultural training sessions focused on Chinese immigrants and Iraqis and yoga sessions for staff. The religious leader added that in Sudan it was relatively easy to talk about God and give your testimony, although other data from this religious leader would question this statement. However, in Melbourne, he found it was difficult to give testimony due to personal boundaries (which he did not define) and the need to ask for permission. This particular leader wanted competition between religions, so that people could decide which to follow, based on each religion’s merits. One example of this boundary difference was that some Sudanese Christian women wished to visit hospitals and pray with people. The Anglican religious leader had to explain that in Australia there were various procedures necessary and restrictions on how this can be carried out. Finally, an Evangelical Ethiopian gave the theological underpinnings for his attitude that interfaith dialogue is of no importance, or may even be considered as listening to the ‘forces of darkness’:

Yes, you see, as far as God is concerned, there are two kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of
Thus, these African Evangelical religious leaders implied that outside their church there is no salvation. However, this did not imply no contact with people from other faiths; one stated, for example, that he would help any Muslim requesting assistance.

In contrast, a refugee support person related how some Sudanese Protestants had contact with a liberal Jewish synagogue. In the Sudan some Christian refugees had been accused of being ‘Zionist spies’ (wrongly), thus the Sudanese appeared to want to meet Jews in Australia. The interfaith activities were joint family social events and discussion. In contrast, this Jewish group at the time was having difficulty in establishing interfaith activities with Melbourne Muslims.

9.6 Refugee Professionals and their Knowledge of Religiosity and Settlement

Analysis of the interview data from five refugee support personnel and seven cultural consultants showed a range of understandings of how a refugee’s religious community and their religious leadership interact with settlement.

Regarding the five refugee support personnel, the main focus of this section, some had knowledge of local religious leaders or religious communities. For example, two had worked closely with the leaders in settling refugees, running volunteer programs and counselling a religious leader’s family member. However, the knowledge of the most recently employed was scant. For other support personnel, their knowledge was of one rather than many communities. As well, for some refugee support personnel and cultural consultants, religion appeared a sensitive topic, both personally and professionally. For example, one experienced consultant had to be encouraged to admit that she actually knew something about the topic. Other interviewees appeared apprehensive about engaging in a deep reflection. Despite this wariness, three issues emerged. Firstly, a refugee support person suggested that the community development model of working with religious communities to settle people through churches was:
Not what we appreciate [implying settlement agencies], what they [refugees] appreciate. But most of the community development workers are not aware of that.

This worker suggested that parenting programs run at churches would have a much larger attendance. Another experienced refugee support person similarly commented that ‘I think … the mosque [for the Shi’ites] much more important in their lives as holding that community together’. Secondly, unlike the religious leader none of the ten raised the issue of DIAC contracting refugee settlement work to religious organisations. Thirdly, at the time of interview it appeared that only one of five possible agencies had well-structured policies of working with religious leaders or religious communities at a grassroots level. For example, this agency:

- employed a refugee community leader who was also an imam
- supported refugee elders on a local Juvenile Justice Panel supported by the Victorian government127
- had a policy of linking a worker to a particular Christian refugee community and its religious leaders
- had official religious celebrations of the different faiths for both staff and clients, and organised a multi-faith response to 9/11.

9.6.1 Refugee Religiosity: Comments of Professional Support Personnel

Comments from the eleven refugee professionals were solicited on the role of religious leaders in settlement. No pattern emerged, but some issues were mentioned by a few professionals. The first was the issue of power being intertwined with religious leadership and some of its effects; for example, the suspected lack of financial transparency in some Evangelical churches where the finances are controlled by the religious leader. The second issue reported was the suspected intra/interfaith prejudice coming from Sudanese and Ethiopian Christian pulpits. Thirdly, some religious leaders are less open to

127 Indigenous groups also had such panels.
cooperating with mainstream settlement agencies, and particularly refugee psychological support agencies, with one worker noting how an Evangelical religious leader believed mental health problems could be cured by prayer, not medication.

Solicited comments on observed religious hindrances to settlement raised several points. Firstly, religiosity can reinforce, as expressed in prejudice, the opposition of Christian Sudanese refugees to Muslims and the mixing of Ethiopian Orthodoxy with nationalist extremism. With regard to health, there were the religious use of incense in confined spaces and the belief that mental health problems can be cured by prayer, not by medication (see Chapter 6). Regarding family matters, domestic violence towards Muslim women and religious extremism, or very rigid Islamic views within the Oromo and Somali Muslim communities, were mentioned. Regarding issues surrounding child-rearing practices, restrictive practices for girls was mentioned as a problem within a small section of the Ethiopian Muslim community, as this could limit the girl’s long-term integration and employment options in Australia. Finally, extreme generational clashes between highly religious Shi’ite and Somali parents and their less religious children were mentioned.

Regarding the refugee professionals’ religious knowledge, three points emerged, again only from one or two workers. The first was a refugee support person’s lack of understanding of the different role of Christian and Muslim religious leaders – the traditional role of a Sunni imam is to lead prayer and not to undertake pastoral care, which is part of most Christian leaders’ role as evidenced in:

>I think the Sudanese seemed to have fairly good relationships with their [religious leaders when they had a difficulty with a child and the police] … I can’t think of any Muslim women, say from the Middle East or Africa, who would, who’ve even told me about going off to visit the imam. I don’t think they’re approachable figures for women, don’t know but I don’t think so.
Secondly, some workers made a distinction between refugee groups and their religiosity. For example, a Sudanese consultant gave more informative comments, stating that different groups of Muslims from the Horn of Africa had different religiosities due to home country or asylum factors. For example, Somalis and Eritreans in refugee camps in eastern Sudan, near Kassala, which is close to the Gulf countries, were more fundamentalist than the northern Sudanese Muslims who are more influenced by Sufism and the colonial era. The Sudanese consultant further mentioned that Ethiopian Harri (an ethnic group) are stricter Muslims than the Oromos who are both Christian and Muslim. Thirdly, only one professional mentioned the complex issue of identity and Islam.\textsuperscript{128}

The issue of professional training in religion was canvassed in the questionnaire. Comments showed that only one, a health professional, had some brief university training in the area. Most professionals gained their knowledge of refugees’ religions informally through discussion with ethnic workers or refugees, by reading, or attending workshops. A few mentioned being satisfied with their knowledge, though a few others would be happy to learn more, depending on what was offered, and one preferred to learn as they worked with new groups.

\textbf{9.7 Implications for Refugee Settlement Theory}

This section concludes by presenting the learnings from this study for acculturation theory; in particular, how a refugee’s religiosity affects contact with ‘others’ encountered or how they settle in secular and multi-faith Australia. Due to the small number of participants, definitive conclusions cannot be drawn; however, some trends appear to have emerged.

Analysis suggests that \textit{religious refugees} approach settlement through their particular religious meaning system. The meaning system can affect how they prepare for or view

\textsuperscript{128} The experienced refugee support personnel reported that in the 1990s, Russian Jews attended free English classes apparently conducted by the Salvation Army. It emerged that they had to agree to Bible class before English class. For the worker this was a concern; however, they reported the Jewish refugees did not see it as such a problem.
settlement in ‘Christian’ Australia. One tendency was for a refugee’s religiosity to prescribe attitudes to ‘other’ beliefs encountered in Australia. For example, Muslim refugees mentioned how Islam prescribes tolerance towards People of the Book. Conversely, the study found some Evangelicals and one Iraqi Christian had ‘hard-line’, non-accepting attitudes, though not necessarily anti-Muslim behaviours, yet other Christians interviewed had ‘soft’-accepting attitudes to Muslims. The study found some, but not all, religious refugees were shocked at Asian beliefs and Western freedoms, and a few, but not all, were concerned at that stage about their children’s diminishing religiosity in Australia. A final issue, a Shi’ite and the Assyrian religious maintainers, both from historically persecuted minority groups, appeared to make a virtue of their suffering. This seemingly religiously prescribed attitude towards their suffering rendered them less content in Australia.

A further aspect was how host country residents responded to refugees. A number, mostly Muslims, gave instances of religious or ethnic prejudice towards them, with one extreme incident causing a husband to be hospitalised. On the other hand, two did not wish the questioning of their religiosity to be known for fear of isolation from their Christian or Muslim religious community. Another trend, even for tertiary-educated refugees of various intensities of religiosity, was that religious misinformation, fear of religious backlashes and intra/interfaith prejudice, particularly between Orthodox and Evangelical Ethiopians, was transferred to Australia.

Contact with foreign and/or indigenous Evangelical Christianity and less cultural, more rigid Sunni or Wahhabist Islam appears to have shifted some refugees (possibly adolescents more than adults), often in asylum and in some instances in Australia, to more exclusivist religiosities. Such religiosities can bring about less than positive attitudes to the ‘other’ encountered in asylum or Australia. On the other hand, the study also found various historic home country factors, and contact with the ‘other’ in the home country or in asylum can often positively prepare refugees for their acceptance of the ‘other’ in multi-faith Australia.
The study found religious leaders engage consistently with the physical and emotional settlement of refugees. For various reasons some leaders wished for more support for their religious community from the Australian government and others did not. Data show that some religious leaders are mixing with other faiths in Australia; on the other hand, some religious exclusivists, in this study a few Evangelical and Protestant refugee religious leaders, did not believe in or were against the value of interfaith activity in Australia.

Not all the ten refugee support personnel appeared comfortable or were able to engage with some of the complex or sensitive issues with regard to religion and settlement. Those with the most knowledge on how a refugee’s religion affects settlement appeared to be workers who personally had an inclusivist religious, not a secular, meaning system – a number of these had switched or converted from their religious meaning system of their upbringing. Other factors were length of time in the field and the range of refugee groups they had worked with.

9.8 Modifications to Kunz’ Refugee Flight Model

This study was influenced by Kunz’ (1973; 1981) theory of refugee displacement. This study uncovered the international student group who had anticipated the civil unrest or war situation by relocating to study in another country or who had fled the strife back home to study or used this acceptable pretext to flee or who had been studying overseas (or their partner) but could not return. The researcher suggests that about a quarter of the refugees interviewed belonged to this group, but were not part of Kunz’s model.

Regarding the style of flight, the anticipatory cluster comprised two Muslims and a Christian, all Sudanese. The displaced by absence group comprised overseas students who due to changed personal or home political circumstances could not return home. This displacement cluster comprised a Somali, an Ethiopian and the partner of a Sudanese Christian.
These were the children of wealthy or middle class parents, or those in tribal leadership able to access study overseas as a means of flight. All were either high school graduates or university educated prior to flight. Four were single young women and two were men, two Christians and four Muslims. Although a few did not link this to their flight, most had experienced persecution or difficulties in their home country: imprisonment, involvement in protests, family members imprisoned for political reasons or family members who had already escaped. For one or two it appears to be that their families, not the students themselves, anticipated this method of flight.

Nearly all the students had gone to study in Egypt, where they supported themselves in different ways: three received university scholarships, not uncommonly from the Egyptian government (Moro, 2004), while one obtained a scholarship from an Islamic Foundation and two were supported by their families who lived in their home countries or as refugees in North America. Four of the six married fellow nationals and had refugee status, mostly prior to marriage. All marriages appeared to be love marriages and none appeared to marry as a way of escape; however, it should be noted that all were at the age when they were culturally expected to marry. Three, all women, reported that living in Egypt was the happiest and most carefree time of their lives. To conclude, ‘the flight to study escape’ was possibly a safer and more legitimate way of removing young people, particularly women, from the upper sections of society at a time of crisis or loss of opportunity. Given the globalisation of higher education, this may become a more active method of anticipatory flight.

Although not conclusive, and needing further investigation, Kunz’s classification of reactive fate groups – people who have had a long history of minority persecution – could be relevant for the finding that some religious refugees were not concerned about their children’s religiosity in Australia. However, in one instance this home reactive fate group’s lack of concern appears to have been overridden by the revitalisation of their religion due to the engagement with religious groups during the refugee experience.
Thirdly, the influence of the place of asylum and how this affects settlement in host countries is under-examined by Kunz. For example, this includes factors such as (1) length of time in asylum or transit, (2) place/s of asylum (including camps, settlements and refugees who self settle) and (3) mixing with ‘others’.
CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

This chapter draws together the various conclusions of this study. It outlines the findings within the framework of the research aims and presents a model that is relevant for the nineteen refugees of how their religion/spirituality interacted with the refugee experience and settlement in Australia. It concludes by posing ways in which the proposed model is of relevance for the settlement for future refugee waves or vintages.

Appendix Seven presents the fifth aim of the study, practical recommendations for refugee academics, policymakers and refugee practitioners.

10.1 The Importance of Religion and Shifts in Religiosity

This research study focused on the research question: *What role does spirituality and religion play in refugees’ flight from their home country and during their resettlement in the host country?* Below is an examination of three of the five research objectives. It should be noted the findings on the fourth objective is in Section 10.6 and the fifth objective is presented in Appendix Seven. The first three objectives were:

1. to ascertain whether the refugee experience is impacted by the holding of religious or spiritual beliefs
2. to examine any shifts in religiosity and religious affiliation within the individual during the refugee experience
3. to determine whether the holding of religious and spiritual beliefs support or hinder refugee settlement in a host country.

Regarding the first objective and the overall research question, the study has one overall finding: for nearly all nineteen refugees, their religiosity assisted, or greatly assisted them during the civil disturbances and chaos that caused their flight, it assisted them in their
varying places of asylum, and finally their religiosity assisted them during their initial settlement in Australia.

Regarding the second objective which concerned shifts in religiosity and religious affiliation, nearly half of the refugees reported a shift in their religious meaning system or the beliefs that they had held prior to flight or during initial settlement. As well, the refugees’ religiosity generally increased in their place of asylum, then weakened in Australia, but their level was still higher than prior to the civil chaos that triggered their escape. In addition, refugee support personnel’s interview data also found that refugees’ religiosity increased in the host country.

In order to answer the third objective whether the holding of religious and spiritual beliefs support or hinder refugee settlement in a host country, the study poses a model which emerged from the patterns and findings of this grounded style approach. The model (see Figure 10.1), named A Model of Religiosity and the Refugee Experience: Shifting Typologies at Each Stage of the Refugee Journey, resulted in several religious and spiritual responses to the refugee experience and initial settlement.

This model with its typologies is relevant for the nineteen refugees of Christian, Muslim and Animist backgrounds who fled from Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and Iraq mostly between the 1990s and the early 2000s, and then settled in Australia. The several responses to the refugee experience were:

1. **Refugee religious maintainers**: refugees who remained committed to their traditional religious belief systems in which they had been raised. They represented nearly three-quarters of those interviewed. This grouping has one sub-group:
   (a) **Intensified religious maintainers**: refugee religious maintainers who became more intensely committed to and/or practised their belief system in a more intense way.

2. **Refugee religious shifters**: refugees who substantially shifted from the beliefs in which they had been raised during the refugee experience or settlement in Australia
This was nearly a third of those interviewed. This grouping is divided into three sub-groups:

(a) *Intensified religious shifters:* refugees who for various factors shifted to being more intensely committed to their belief system.

(b) *Religious switchers:* refugees who converted to another religion or did an intra-faith switch.

(c) *Religious questioners:* refugees who questioned their traditional belief system or practised it with less intensity.

3 *Non-religious refugees:* refugees who may or may not have been born into a religious culture, but prior to the events that caused their refugee flight did not have a religious belief system. In this research this type related to only one refugee.

The various types emerged from a constellation of factors that influenced the three stages of the refugee experience. This resulted in the typology with its types and sub-types. Each of the constellations, which contained several variables, presented in previous chapters, is summarised in Figure 10.1 and in more detail below.
Figure 10.1 A Model of Religiosity and the Refugee Experience: Shifting Typologies at Each Stage of the Refugee Journey.

**Home-External Variables**
- Impact of Colonial History
- Impact of Socialism on Regional Governments
- Impact of Christian and Islamic Missionaries
- Global Shifts in Religiosity
- Influence of Globalised Media

**Home-National Background Variables**
- Socio-Political and Religious History
- Government Religious Policies
- Effect and Cause of Civil Unrest or War
- Ethnicity
- Religious Influences
- Particular Religiosity
- Religiously Prescribed Attitudes to the ‘Other’
- Contact with the ‘Other’

**Individual Variables**
- Ethnicity
- Family Religious Background
- Family Religiosity
- Religious Education: Formation in Traditional or Colonial Schools
- Individual Religiosity
- Contact with the ‘Other’
- Age at Flight

**Flight & Asylum Variables**
- Overall Asylum Context
- Religious Community Support
- Religious Experiences
- Religious Influences
- Contact with the ‘Other’

**Host Country Variables**
- Overall Host Country Context
- Religious Experiences
- Religious Influences
- Refugees Religious Communities’ and Leaders’ attitude to the ‘Other’
- Contact with the ‘Other’
- Influence of the Media /Technologies
- Secular Education

**Typology (Birth Place, Asylum and Australia)**
1. Refugee Religious Maintainers
   a. Intensifiers
2. Refugee Religious Shifters
   a. Intensifiers
   b. Switcher
   c. Questioners
3. Non-Religious Refugees
   a. Human Rights Activist
10.2 The Interplay of Varying Factor Sets: Home, Asylum and Australia

The model’s first and second constellation of variables are the Home-External variables and Home-National Background variables, presented in the pivotal Chapter Four. This chapter highlighted how macro-religio/historical events or movements that occurred both hundreds, or even thousands, of years ago, or in more recent decades, can influence the collective and individual refugee experience and initial settlement in Australia.

Regarding the Home- National Background variable constellation, data showed that shifts in religiosity was not a new phenomenon, as shifts had occurred in all four countries; for example, shifts to Shi’ism by Iraqi tribes. Regarding the external variable of colonialism and shifts in religiosity, various issues emerged. In all four countries, nearly all religious groups and most individual refugees were directly affected or influenced by colonial conquests. For example, individual variables emerged as some refugee families embraced or resisted Madhi uprisings against the mostly Christian colonisers at that time. As well, half of the nineteen refugees or their parents were educated in colonial Christian schools, mostly prior to socialist regimes. Thirdly, some of the Sudanese and Ethiopian Animists, individually or collectively, were converted to Christianity, usually by foreign missionaries. As a counter reaction to this, particularly in the Sudan, Islamic influence, sometimes from external forces increased religiosity.

Another variable factor was the fall of colonialism in the 1960s and 1970s that led to the three countries gaining independence. This resulted in the emergence of nationalist or socialist governments, as did the collapse of Emperor Haile Salassi’s rule in Ethiopia. These political events in all four countries were often linked to the broader power play between two external super powers, namely, the United States and the former Soviet Union. Such pressures had considerable effect on refugee religiosity. At the time, the four countries had various collective approaches to religion with some combining socialist and Islamic/Christian features. For example, Sudanese and Iraqi Sunni Muslims had mainstream Islamic education classes in government schools, whereas the Ethiopian and Somali Muslim governments had an anti-religious approach. Thus, depending on the
country and religiosity, a number of refugees educated at that time had a more limited religious education than in the past. Finally, regardless of the religious protection afforded by the different nations’ constitutions, individual refugees and studies report incidents of religious leaders and minority groups, particularly Sudanese and Iraqi Christians and Shi’ites, being persecuted. Despite these persecutions, analysis shows that there were still mostly functioning or clandestine religious communities in all four countries.

The rise and collapse of socialist governments from the 1970s onwards triggered continuing wars, or subsequent wars or civil unrest, in all four countries, as mentioned, which were affected by foreign influences. Such disruption resulted in collective shifts or increases in religiosity, with some religious shifts being externally motivated. For example:

- in Ethiopia, the active presence of US and European Protestant/Evangelical groups resulted in conversions
- southern Animists appeared to shift towards Christian beliefs.

Regarding the nineteen refugees’ religiosity prior to flight, fourteen appeared to have ‘traditional religious meaning systems’, that is, they practised their religion according to ‘normal’ mode for their particular community at that time in history. Among the nineteen was a range of individual religiosities from very religiously committed to low levels of religious commitment.

Conversely, at the time of flight, five of the nineteen could not be called ‘traditionally religious’. These comprised two males – a 30-year-old Shi’ite and a 20-year-old Sudanese of Muslim background, who had secular human rights-based beliefs – and two Ethiopians, one a Lutheran the other a Sunni. A fifth, an EO by birth, during adolescence became an Evangelical Christian, triggered by civil unrest in Ethiopia and the theological support offered by the Ethiopian Evangelical Church. Several, but not all, home background, factors were common to these five: one parent was not so religious; they
were educated in a socialist education system that was anti-religious; they were in adolescence prior to flight and none came from the religious leadership strata.

It should be noted that Individual variables as presented in the model (Figure 10.1) are presented in this and the following sections.

**10.3 Asylum and Host Country Variables and Shifts**

Regarding the fourth and fifth variable constellation of Flight and Asylum and Host Country variables several factors emerged. It should be noted some variables were similar and others different from the home situation with some variables causing a shift in refugee’s religiosity.

One influence was the presence or absence and the style of functioning religious communities in asylum. For example, Sudanese Christians, who fled and self-settled, were quickly linked to their religious community. Self-settled Shi’ites and a number of Christians procured work and welfare assistance via their religious groups. Islamic academics appeared to confirm the researcher’s observation that for various structural reasons, Shi’ites have more welfare structures than most Sunni groups a difference which is currently unexplored in literature.

In asylum, about half of the fourteen refugee religious maintainers and all refugee religious switchers reported an increase in religious practice and belief. Even refugee religious questioners used religious coping rituals. Some situational variable factors that caused these increases were: difficult personal experiences in flight and asylum, the experience of widowhood, the need for religious support, the presence of religious education in camps, and ‘free’ time to participate. In contrast the religious practices of a few religious maintainers and even a switcher were reduced in asylum, due to the demands of survival.

Three patterns appear responsible for the intensification in religiosity, or a switching in asylum. The first pattern, confirmed in the literature (Metz, 1992), was the Islamic belief
that war was a punishment from God. This caused a Somali, and reportedly other Somalis, to intensify their religious belief. The second pattern was the promise of the ‘afterlife’. This caused Christian denominational switching by an Ethiopian refugee and an Ethiopian and a southern Sudanese (both had become religious leaders during the refugee experience). A third pattern, was contact with Christian groups (mostly Evangelical), which produced switching or conversion for three refugees, and within the larger Ethiopian, Sudanese and Iraqi Christian refugee communities. Such groups, either indigenous or foreign, were supportive religiously and practically in times of need. Conversely, Muslim interviewees said they were assisted by churches in Egypt, but none converted to Christianity, although one or two conversions of others were alluded to.

In Australia the host country, nearly all refugees, including *refugee religious questioners*, attended their places of worship, which other studies suggest assists with settlement (Bouma, 1994; Daw, 1994; Sengstock, 1982; Van Esterik, 2003). For a few economic factors and long travel distances restricted their attendance. Only one refugee mentioned this as a problem: a Shi’ite Muslim family from Iraq living for the first time as a religious minority. Some Muslims in Australia, as in asylum, practised their religion at home; for several Muslim men this was a new practice that appeared to socially isolate them in Australia. However, a Sufi, Somali and Sunni women who mostly prayed at home in Australia had done so in their home country.

In Australia, regardless of religion, it appeared that the religiosity of refugee *religious maintainers, intensifiers* and *some shifter/converts* increased. The increase was less than when in asylum, but it was an increase in their home country religiosity. Variables that caused the increase were: the ageing process (Spilka et al., 2003) and for some Muslims, their new minority status (Cahill et al., 2004) – this was also noted in other studies. Other variables linked to the rise in religiosity mentioned in some studies, but generally under-explored, were:

- more free time, which may include unemployment
- the perceived possibility of sexual corruption in westernised Australia
freedom of religion in Australia
- the refugee experience
- contact with both foreign and indigenous Christian Evangelicals and Muslim groups in asylum.

Three patterns were found unreported in other studies. The first pattern was that several Somalis, Ethiopians and an Iraqi refugee reported that some within the Muslim community, possibly some refugees, had become religious ‘extremists’, appearing to be neo-revivalists in Australia (see Saeed, 2003). Cultural consultants and some experienced refugee support personnel also noted this rise in religiosity of individual refugees in Australia, with one or two suggesting that a few Somali, Oromo Muslims and some E O had become more extreme in their religiosity in Australia.

The second pattern, several refugee religious intensifiers, more than refugee religious maintainers, were concerned about their children’s diminished religiosity in Australia. Although studies (see Ata, 1989; Jupp, 2009) show this is not an uncommon concern for refugees or immigrants, the reported concerns of refugee intensifiers is worth further exploration.

A third pattern, although not conclusive, was a shift from external to internal control. Two females, an Evangelical intensifier and a refugee religious questioner (of a Sunni background) after difficulties with authoritarian male religious leaders, shifted to directly trusting Jesus or Allah, not their Australian religious leader – unlike in their home country.

The number of questioners did not increase in asylum, but in Australia their number increased a little. The triggers for the shifts were similar to home country shift factors plus the influence of the media and global technologies, their observations on religiosity, for example their lack of Christianity in Australia or asylum, and the non-involvement in a religious revival during the refugee experience and Australian tertiary education. A further pattern emerged that some, but not all, of this group were apprehensive about
community reaction to their questioning their home religious meaning system. Two refugees felt that if their community knew of this it might lead to community isolation.

Patterns in variables emerged on intra-faith switching in the varying places of asylum and in Australia, particularly for Christians. Interdenominational shifting occurred both in asylum and in Australia among the Sudanese Christians and Ethiopian Orthodox. For the Sudanese, shifts in Australia appeared related to cultural rather than theological or intensification factors. For the Ethiopians it appeared that the Evangelical groups offered more spiritual and community support in both situations. It seems only the Chaldean Christians switched away from Evangelical Protestantism and back to their home beliefs in Australia. Finally, no Muslims switched, meaning directly from Sunni to Shi’ite or from Sufi to Sunni. However, one or two Muslim refugees interviewed shifted away from a more culturally based Islam to a more Orthodox Sunni Islam, a shift currently occurring across the globalised Muslim world (Saeed, 2006).

10.4 Refugee Beliefs and Practice: the Typological Divide

The first most prominent divider of the varying sub-types was how refugees religiously and spiritually viewed the refugee experience.

The research suggests refugee religious maintainers all seemingly viewed the refugee experience with its sufferings through their traditional collective belief system. For some this included religio/cultural understandings.

- Muslim refugee religious maintainers considered religion was the path for life with suffering part of it. Suffering was viewed as punishment for sin or a spiritual test or trial with the religious response being patience. Some believed that God could bring more difficulties. One denominational difference emerged: Sufis stated that suffering was part of the ascetic life, as it is with some Christian ascetics. Most of these findings concurred with studies (Bowker, 1970; Küng, 1986; Sachedina, 1999).
Christian refugee religious maintainers did not view suffering as a religious problem, which was at variance with Bowker’s statement (1970). Many Christians framed and managed their suffering in terms of Jesus’ sufferings or Bible stories. The Chaldean Catholics related suffering partly to fasting, an important spiritual practice for Eastern Christians (Ware, 1997).

Refugee religious maintainers also had patterns across the varying religiosities. For example, the acceptance of predestination or religious determinism by Sufi, Sunni, the Evangelicals and some Sudanese Christians. For such groups this was a traditional belief. Even some Iraqi ‘Eastern’ Christians (Ware, 1997) believed in predestination and religious determinism, as did some Shi’ites. In fact, only two Shi’ites held the traditional belief in free will. Regardless of religion, many maintainers appeared to view the refugee life on Earth as ‘temporary’, with the next life, the afterlife, being more important. This finding appears similar to two studies (Shoeb et al. (2007) on Iraqi Muslims and Holtz’s (1998) study on Tibetan refugees) which found that suffering in the current life can increase one’s karma and so aid resilience. In addition, except for a few Muslim maintainers, most viewed war and unrest that caused their flight through religious not political constructs. Finally, although there was little data from Sudanese Christians, regardless of religion or education, most maintainers appeared to view matters surrounding health through their traditional religious meaning systems, for example, that God had power over their health and that the devil could affect one’s mental health.

Some other data emerged that was worthy of note, but insufficient to suggest a pattern. The Assyrian from a religious leader’s clan and a Sunni Sayyid believed that God saves righteous persons. Two Shi’ites and the Assyrian, both from historically persecuted minority groups, appeared to make a virtue of their suffering even after several years in Australia, with this Shi’ite attitude appearing to parallel general Shi’ite attitudes to suffering (Armstrong, 2001; Bowker, 1970; Sachedina 1999).

One clear interfaith difference emerged between Christian and Muslim refugee religious maintainers. Christians could question God as to their suffering, whereas for Muslims a
believer was required to submit to God’s tests of faith – questioning is considered blasphemous, although one Muslim religious leader did not quite agree.

Concerning the refugees who were not religious maintainers several clear patterns emerged. First, refugee religious switchers and refugee religious intensifiers mostly had similar beliefs to the maintainers with many appearing more intense. Conversely, a refugee religious questioner had quite different views, with some or all of their beliefs being that they:

- did not believe in or totally believe in predestination or religious determinism, or
- did not believe in or had shifted in their belief in the devil, or
- had a more, but not totally scientific understanding of health, or
- believed that war and social unrest were due to political actions and sociological factors.

The non-religious refugee, the human rights activist believed that his purpose in life was to be educated in order to assist one’s family and society, and he believed the war in Sudan was about power. Further, he had a more psychological understanding of evil and a scientific understanding of health.

Regarding the reported assistance of religious rituals, the proposed typology assisted in understanding ritual usage. Religious refugees were assisted by religious rituals during the various phases of the refugee experience. Even refugee religious questioners used religious rituals at times of need or desperation. Generally speaking, religious rituals calmed emotions and provided a feeling of protection.

A number of patterns in the uses of religious rituals and artefacts emerged. Prayer, either collective or individual, was the most frequent ritual-coping strategy used. Differences emerged within religiosities, as confirmed by academic Sufis who have a more individual meditation prayer style. Religious holy books and religious artefacts also supported refugees, with Muslim refugees using the Qur’an (Bailes, 2004; Mehraby, 2002, 2003),
and particular *surat*. For the EO and the Chaldean Catholics, icons and other intercession objects in their homes were of assistance. In contrast, for the Evangelical Ethiopians and southern Sudanese, it was not religious artefacts but their well-organised group ritual of prayer and literalist Bible study that was of assistance. One ritual that appeared common across Islamic divisions was ritual massaging, which reportedly assisted with stress reduction. This finding is not reported in other studies.

Some intra/interfaith similarities in ritual practices or attitudes were observed and mostly confirmed by studies. For example, prayer beads/rosaries and intercession prayers were used by some Shi’ite and Somali females to Fatima, and by Iraqi Christians to the Virgin Mary. Second, rituals regarding cultural spirits and religio/cultural practices not of Christian or Muslim origin were used by some *refugee religious maintainers*, and even one refugee *religious questioner*. There was some disapproval of these often-female cultural practices, with this disapproval appearing to relate to attitudes of the original Christian missionary group, or due to a shift towards more ‘rigid’ Sunni or Shi’ite practice.

The support of religious rituals was mentioned by Islamic academic consultants. As well, the mainly Christian studies in the psychology of religion found prayer is the most often-performed practice of religiosity (Spilka, 2005; Spilka et al., 2003); rituals help adaptation and coping, and they reduce anxiety and possibly mental disturbance. However, there can be some negative factors such as obsession (Spilka, 2005).

**10.5 Typology and Settlement in Multi-faith Australia**

To further answer the study’s third objective as to whether religious beliefs support or hinder refugee settlement in multi-faith Australia, several understandings and patterns emerged. Firstly, for *religious refugees* and even for one refugee *religious questioner* their religiosity appeared to have assisted their settlement in Australia. For example:

- a belief in God’s direct involvement in their gaining of an Australian visa
- God was with them in Australia
• incidents of ‘miracles’
• the support of religious protection rituals and stress-reduction rituals
• coping with the psychological consequences of torture and trauma
• coping with the loss of social status and unemployment in Australia.

Secondly, it appeared in Australia (and often in asylum) that religious coping, (both rituals and beliefs) was frequently more important for women, particularly those widowed or divorced with children and few family members. Only a few concerns about ritual usage were noted by some refugee support professionals or cultural consultants.

Regarding refugees’ attitudes to ‘others’ of a different belief system a number of patterns emerged. The first pattern was that home religious intra-faith attitudes were both transferred and not transferred to Australia. Hostilities between the Orthodox, in this case Ethiopian and Protestant Evangelicals, (not a new phenomena in Australia (Ata, 1989a, 1989b)), had been transferred. Sunni–Shi’ite hostilities appear not to have been transferred, with there appearing little contact between the two in Australia even at a university academic level.

The second pattern was surprise at the variety of beliefs and behaviours encountered in the host country. A number of refugees regardless of religion or subtype (shifter or non religious), expressed surprise at Asian beliefs and the large number of Asians in Australia. Refugee religious maintainers, intensifiers and switchers were confronted and shocked by agnosticism, and all nationality groupings were shocked at the overt public sexual freedom in Australia, as was noted in New Zealand (Guerin et al., 2004).

A third pattern was religious mis-information and/or discrimination by a number of tertiary-educated refugee religious maintainers, shifters and intensifiers, and even one Muslim questioner, also emerged. For example:

• Muslims denied reported prejudice or discrimination towards Christians resident in Middle Eastern countries
• Muslims were mis-informed on Jews
• Iraqi Christians appeared hostile towards Muslim Australians.

The fourth pattern was some Christians and Muslims found that Australian laws supported their religious freedom. Conversely, some Evangelical Christians and their religious leaders lamented that Australian law restricts their evangelism.

A final pattern an incidental finding which can also effect refugee settlement in Australia was the belief that prayer rather than medicine could assist mental illness. Such a belief was held by some Ethiopian Evangelical leaders; other data suggest this may not be an uncommon attitude among such Christians.

Several patterns emerged with regard to overall patterns in attitudes to ‘others’. One might predict that, for example, the Ethiopians’ settlement in multi-faith Australia would be easier as Ethiopia is multiethnic, whereas for Somalis, coming from a mono-cultural country, settlement would be more difficult. This supposition may be partly true. However, this research found individual Somalis interviewed had a ‘softer’, more accepting attitude to mixing in multi-faith Australia- the study found other home, asylum host country variables. Taking into account what Fozdar and Torezani (2008) name as the politeness factors, analysis suggests another model for understanding how refugees and their religious leaders related to the ‘other’; this study suggest refugees can have ‘soft’ or hard-line attitudes to the ‘other’ which is partly included in the analysis below.

Generally speaking, the study found that most religious refugees interviewed had ‘soft’ attitudes, meaning an acceptance of the other. For example, all Muslim refugees interviewed evidenced a ‘soft’ attitude to Christians; in contrast, a few Christians appeared to have ‘hard-line’, meaning hostile or dismissive non-accepting, attitudes to ‘others’ of different beliefs, including those of other intra-faith groups. It is unknown if this ‘hard-line’ attitude extended to discriminatory behaviours to Muslims and non-believers.
Analysis suggests the difference in attitudes to the ‘other’ was often but not always due to a number of variable factors which are presented below (also see an overview in the model).

1) This study suggests several Home-Country Background and Home-External and Individual variable factors such as colonial contact, colonial structures, differing education systems, neighbourhood and business inter/intra-religious or cultural contact can be a factor that produced refugees of varying capacities and attitudes towards contact with the ‘other’ in multi-faith Australia. For example, both positive and negative attitudes to ‘others’ in their home country can be transferred to the host country, Australia. Positive individual inter/intra-faith experiences or contact with atheists in the home country can positively affect attitudes to ‘others’ in Australia. Conversely, some Christians reported difficult interfaith experiences in Iraq and the Sudan, which translates to negative attitudes to Muslims in Australia.

2) Mixing with ‘others’ in the various places and situations of asylum can also affect attitudes to the ‘other’ in Australia. Difficult Muslim intra-faith experiences in Iran and Saudi Arabia positively assisted settlement. Interfaith mixing in Cairo appeared to be a positive experience for a Somali and some Sudanese Christians. Conversely, some southern Sudanese who resided in refugee camps in Kenya, and an Iraqi in Greece, had little direct contact with Muslims, with these appearing to be additional negative factors that further affected their attitude in this instance to Australian Muslims.

3) The refugee’s particular collective religious meaning system’s prescribed attitude to ‘others’. For example:

   - Islam prescribes acceptance of People of the Book, something often quoted by Muslim refugees in interviews, and studies show this does not extend to atheists (Saeed & Saeed, 2004).
• Recent hostility within the Ethiopian community is also due to the rise in Orthodoxy and nationalism in post-socialist communist societies.

4) The presence of Evangelical/Pentecostal missionaries in Africa, at all stages of the refugee experience, including in Australia, and for some Muslims contact with Sunni ‘missionaries’, produced switching and conversions, another variable factor. As a consequence this revitalised religiosity appeared exclusivist, resulting in some but not all having ‘hard-line’ attitudes to ‘others’.

5) Refugee religious leaders can either support or hinder settlement in multi-faith secular Australia. Given that most refugees attended places of worship this can be an important variable. For example, a few religious leaders interviewed actively engaged in inter/intra-faith activities in Melbourne and others suggested they would have if they had time. On the other hand, a pattern emerged as some, but not all, Sudanese and Ethiopian Christian Evangelical leaders of refugee background did not believe in interfaith engagement with the ‘other’ (this finding concurs with Cahill et al. (2004) on Christian leaders of a literalist background). Some refugee professionals hinted that several religious leaders were to be gatekeepers to refugee mental health services (viewed as the ‘other’); on the other hand, one Muslim leader wished for such services to select an appropriate imam to work with mental health professionals.

Some final trends emerged as to why refugees, but not in all cases, had ‘softer’ approaches to others ‘others’. These variables appear to be: being younger on arrival in Australia, having positive experiences with ‘others’ in the home country, in asylum or in Australia, not being affected by religious exclusivists during the refugee experience and being, for example, in the AMEP classroom. In addition, some data hinted that personality factors could be an additional variable (for example, as noted in Ai et al.’s (2003) related research on religion and coping).
Analysis of data from refugees, their religious leaders and others suggests studies and typologies of Muslims, Christians, both in Australia and beyond, can assist in understanding patterns in prescribed attitudes to ‘others’ found in this research.

- Saeed’s (2003) category of neo-revivalist Australian Muslims, particularly Group A (those who view Western values and institutions as non-Islamic or anti-Islamic, often linked to anti-Western, neo-revivalist twentieth-century Islamic thinkers) would probably have less accepting attitudes to the ‘other’. This category appeared to apply to one refugee’s husband.
- Race’s (2001) classification of exclusivist-Christians, who believe that outside the church there is no salvation, appeared to be how the Ethiopian Evangelical and a number of Sudanese Christian refugees related to the ‘other’, having either ‘hard-line’ or ‘soft’ attitudes.

An incidental trend the varying effects of the globalised media and some new technologies during the refugee experience, particularly during settlement. For an older woman the watching of religious programs via satellite was both an emotional comfort and an enlightener on intra-faith differences within Islam. For others, the watching of US televangelists appeared to intensify their ‘exclusivist’ religiosity. For others, various TV programs caused them to question their ‘exclusivist’ religiosity. Finally, the speed and amount of information or mis-information via new technologies was found to impact on refugee settlement.

A variable factor not extensively examined in this research is how host country attitudes and varying government policies (Minkenberg, 2007) can affect refugees. For example, a few refugees directly experienced various levels of religious or racial discrimination in Australia. Thus, host country nationals can also have ‘hard-line’ or less inclusive attitudes to the ‘other’ in multi-faith Australia.

To conclude, this study suggests religion in its facets, intersects with refugee settlement in multi-faith Australian. This is a complex interaction that depends on many factors.
presented in the model (Figure 10.1). Such factors are under-researched and under-acknowledged in refugee literature and need investigation beyond this study.

10.6 Other Theoretical Findings

A fourth objective of this study was to: **analyse the refugee experience in terms of Fowler’s theory of adult faith development, acculturation theories and refugee flight theory.**

Regarding the interaction between adult faith development theory and the refugee experience, Fowler’s adult faith development theory was not sufficient for understanding religion and the refugee experience, nor the spiritual aspects of their settlement in a host country. Despite this limitation, Fowler’s theory is valuable for understanding the division between progressive *individuative-reflective*, orthodox *synthetic-conventional* temperament, or at the *mythic-literal* stage, and to examine any shifts in refugees’ religiosity. In contrast, Streib’s modification to Fowler’s theory, the concept of ‘revisions’, correlated with the inconsistencies in the collected data. A number of the nineteen refugees appeared to shift to more rigid beliefs – ‘revision’ during the refugee experience and some on settlement in Australia. It is unknown if this ‘revision’ continues beyond the initial settlement.

The literature review showed a lack of engagement with religion in acculturation theories in general and refugee acculturation in particular. Acculturation theory suggests the greater the cultural distance the greater the acculturation stressors. Thus, one might suggest for Muslims that acculturation in secular or Christian Australia would be more difficult than for Christian refugees. This research suggests such an assumption would be simplistic as other factors appear to effect acculturation in Australia.

This study also suggests *religious refugees*, both Christians and Muslims, appear to understand acculturation through their particular religious meaning system, with some of these factors being: how they religiously appraise Australia, including the gaining of their visa, how they should cope in Australia and how heaven, not Australia, is their real home.
In addition, their particular religious meaning system appears to prescribe how to relate to ‘others’ of different faiths or backgrounds. For example, some but not all religious refugees and some religious leaders interviewed held exclusivist attitudes. These were often the Christian refugee religious maintainers or switchers, with some of these exclusivists holding ‘hard-line’ attitudes towards contact with ‘others’, yet other exclusivists had ‘soft’ attitudes to contact. The researcher suggests ‘hard-line’ attitudes can affect how the refugee or their leaders integrate or participate in multi-faith secular Australia.

Although the study is small in number, contact in the home country and in asylum appeared to shift a number of religious refugees’ attitudes: in particular, most but not all Muslims who had contact with more extreme Islam appeared to better manage their religious acculturation in Australia. On the other hand, small shifts in Australia for ‘inclusivists’ may in fact be a major shift; for example, an Assyrian who now accepts Evangelical Christianity.

Given the rise of religiosity internationally, and the rise of more exclusivist forms, more research is needed into acculturation and religiosity. In particular, how the various sub-types of refugees (for example, those with ‘soft’ and ‘hard-line’ attitudes and behaviours) posed in this research acculturate in the long term in the host country.

The refugee flight theory of Kunz (1973; 1981) which is little known both in Australia and beyond is of relevance for host country settlement agencies with several sets of findings emerging in this study. These findings could lead to Kunz’s theory being updated. Firstly, analysis showed two additional clusters – forms of initial displacement. About a quarter of the refugees interviewed were either the flight to study group, which appear to be a new anticipatory cluster, or an addition to the displaced by absence group, a cluster of overseas students who due to changed personal or home political circumstances could not return home. Both clusters were mostly children of the leadership stratum. The researcher suggests the globalisation of higher education may cause this to become a more active method of anticipatory flight for this stratum.
Secondly, Kunz’s classifications – for example, reactive fate groups – may interact with a religious refugee’s concern or non-concern regarding their children’s religiosity in Australia. Thirdly, as mentioned above, under-examined by Kunz is the influence of the place of asylum on settlement in host countries.

A final finding, several papers were extremely pertinent in understanding Home Country Background Variables on the interaction between religion and flight. Of particular relevance was Gunn’s papers (2002; 2003) which analysed of the relationship between the claiming of refugee status on the grounds of religion. For example:

- southern Sudanese had mixed reasons for the gaining of refugee status, related to race, identity and ethnicity
- in Iraq it was the state-sanctioned persecution of minorities and Shi’ites.

In contrast, for the Ethiopian and Somali refugees interviewed religious persecution was not the cause of flight.

10.7 Definitions: Refugees, Religion and Coping

This research suggests several definitions of religion are of relevance to refugee researchers and refugee practitioners. Refugee participants’ data is of relevance when examining the overlapping and distinct definition of religion and spirituality posed in Chapter 1. Generally speaking refugee participants’ data showed that the definition of ‘religion’ reflected the refugee experience more accurately than the definition of the term ‘spirituality’ as those few who mentioned the later term used it as a learnt terminology. On the other hand, the combined use of the term ‘religion and spirituality’ in the title of this research may be a way of engaging those who assist refugees with this important dimension of the refugees’ lives. Hence the importance of using of both terms. The next definition, which this research tends to agree with, is the recent widely accepted one within the discipline of the Psychology of Religion, the concept of religious meaning system posed by Park (2005a), Silverman (2005b) and Pargament et al. (2005), which is summarised as:
• religion has a unique meaning as it focuses on what is perceived to be sacred and so provides a comprehensive meaning system
• individual religious meaning systems are constructed unwittingly and tend to be outside an individual’s awareness
• collective meaning systems are conscious or subconscious and culturally determined by common socialisation processes, and are more inflexible than individual meaning systems
• religion is important for coping and interpreting everyday events or extreme events in one’s life
• the majority of people come through a crisis with their religious beliefs intact, even at the expense of logic.

This study has highlighted the importance of the particular collective religious meaning system with its prescribed beliefs and practices; in particular, religious ritual usage, prescribed attitudes to ‘others’ and so forth. During the refugee experience such factors affected and supported religious refugees, including those who were tertiary educated.

Regarding religion and coping, this study does not totally agree with Pargament’s contention that religious coping is helpful to the more religious, as it found that religious coping mechanisms assisted refugee religious questioners at times of extreme need. Conversely, the study’s findings do agree with Park’s (2005b) and Pargament et al.’s (2005) calls for more research into the efficacy of religious versus secular coping, and negative coping strategies.

10.8 Methodological and Ethical Understandings

Some methodological understandings regarding the intersection between refugees and religion arose. When exploring the area a multidisciplinary approach towards the literature is necessary, as this enables an exploration of the interaction of macro and micro, historic, religious, sociological, cross-cultural and theological factors on a refugee’s life. A mixed method approach was and is useful for verification, and for
gaining deep insights is supported by Paloutzian et al. (2005b) in the introduction to the *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. Regarding the relevance of cross-cultural (religious) frameworks, Tarakeshwar et al.’s (2003) framework for incorporating religion into the social sciences was of some use, though there were some difficulties in separating data into distinct intellectual and ideological dimensions, an issue not discussed in the model. Recent literature on religion as a meaning system appears to combine these two dimensions. Thus, this study suggests future research could use Tarakeshwar et al.’s (2003) model, combining this with Silberman’s (2005a) five-fold approach to understanding religion as a unique meaning system: 1) self and world beliefs, 2) contingencies and outcome expectations, 3) goals, 4) actions, and 5) emotions. Although this recent study was not used as a framework, it appears to reflect a number of this study’s findings.

In relation to ethical issues this research found that the National Statement on Ethics and Human Research needs modification to address three issues:

1. the ethical and practical use of interpreters
2. the need for more guidelines on appropriate and inappropriate reciprocity, an issue only mentioned in relation to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people
3. protocols for the ethical care of researchers when conducting research on vulnerable groups.

Regarding the third finding, the understanding that professionals can be vicariously exposed to trauma is evident in refugee professional literature (Mehraby, 2002; Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture and Trauma Inc., 1998), but not in research protocols. In the absence of such a protocol the researcher developed a range of strategies: discussing some matters with the researcher’s supervisor, personally employing a de-briefer and developing personal debriefing strategies – particularly after some interviews, when data were being summarised or when international events impacted on refugees, or at other times.
10.9 Implications for Future Refugee Flows

In order to anticipate how religion and spirituality interact with the refugee experience for
new waves or vintages of refugees, the author suggests that the proposed model (Figure
10.1) with modification and variation and other frameworks could assist in understanding
how a refugee’s religion/spirituality interacts with the refugee experience, or when
settling a host country such as Australia with this being summarised below.

Figure 10.1 A Model of Religiosity and the Refugee Experience: Shifting Typologies at
Each Stage of the Refugee Journey suggests possible religious and spiritual responses to
events that caused flight, residence in various places of asylum and settlement in a host
country. The author suggests that an in-depth understanding of five variable refugee
background factors presented in the model (Figure 10.1) is pertinent to understanding the
interaction between religion/spirituality and the refugee experience for new refugee
waves or vintages. The variables constellations comprise of: 1) Home-External Variables,
2) Home-National Background Variables, 3) Individual Variables. These are factors that
form a refugee’s individual and collective religious, or other meaning systems, and their
particular coping framework. In addition, an in-depth understanding of: 4) Flight and
Asylum Variables and 5) Host Country Variables, is also pertinent.

This particular model found three main religious responses, with variations within, to the
refugee experience:

1) Refugee religious maintainers: (a) Intensified religious maintainers
2) Refugee religious shifters: (a) Intensified religious shifters, (b) Religious
switchers, (c) Religious questioners, and
3) Non-religious refugees.

New or different waves or vintages of refugees will probably produce new factors and/or
variables not posed in the model. Thus, this could result in modifications or additions to
the various variables or the typology of several religious and spiritual responses to the
various stages of the refugee experience. In fact, for some refugee groups religion and
spirituality may not be an important part of their individual or collective meaning system in their home country or during the refugee experience.\textsuperscript{129}

In addition to the model, the author suggests that two additional pieces of information will assist with new refugee groups. First, Gunn’s (2002; 2003) understandings of religion and the legal granting of refugee status. Second, discussions with relevant refugee agencies and/or individuals from refugees’ home countries or asylum agencies, and observations by refugee practitioners, religious leaders and religious academics in Australia would also add additional information on new refugee groups and their religious or non-religious meaning systems.

The author hopes that the model (Figure 10.1) will be the beginning of frameworks that assist refugee practitioners in understanding how this part of the refugee’s life interacts with the refugee experience.’

\textsuperscript{129} In 2010 the researcher worked with Iranian Kurds. Superficial observations that followed after discussion with some refugee support personnel appeared to confirm the researcher’s observations that this group seemed not to have a strong religious meaning system. Literature also suggests Kurds in asylum in Greece developed a stronger sense of ‘Kurdishness’ (Wanche, 2004).
REFERENCES


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Shergold, P. & Nicolaou, L. (1986). Why don’t they ask? We’re not dumb!: A study of the experiences of specific target groups in Australia. *FECCA, 1*. 389


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Interview Schedule 1: Cultural Consultants

*Discussion of cultural appropriateness of the refugee interview schedule and questionnaire for a particular refugee group

1. your work with refugees
2. your religious background
3. an overview of the community in Australia
4. an overview of the religious groupings within the community
5. comments and observations on this aspect of a refugee’s life at a communal and individual level
6. comments on if a refugee’s religion/spirituality helps or hinders their journey and settlement in Australia
7. any comments on issues the researcher needs to be aware of with regard to this research
8. vintages
9. health
## APPENDIX 2: Interview Schedule 2: Refugee Worker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Function</th>
<th>Support Personnel Data Sought</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
<td>Religious affiliation</td>
<td>What is your background?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background interference</strong></td>
<td>Ethnic background</td>
<td>• ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interference with work</td>
<td>• socio-economic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effect of work on belief system</td>
<td>• family belief system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• political background</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Personal professional learning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What have you learnt (if anything) at a level of your involvement with refugees?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Has there been an impact (if any) of work your belief system?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Could you mention why or why not?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interfaith/Secular</strong></td>
<td>Experience with other religions</td>
<td>How have you found refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge of other religions</td>
<td>• individually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hostility, isolation, competition, partnership</td>
<td>Attitude to other religions</td>
<td>• group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Level of mixing:</td>
<td>• particular community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• as an individual (friend)</td>
<td>Mixing with others?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• as a family</td>
<td>• of their own religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• of their religious community</td>
<td>• within their group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• of their community</td>
<td>• out of their group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• of other communities</td>
<td>• with secular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• secular.</td>
<td>• with government / NGO agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends with people of other religions secular</td>
<td>Could you make any tentative generalisations?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Any comments on community leadership and mixing with others?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Level of training (refugees in general and religion)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Private reading</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ethnic workers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content with level of understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wish for further training</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place of training</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How have you learnt about refugee’s beliefs system?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How happy are you in your understanding of the religious/spiritual part of a refugee’s life?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Support/hinders</td>
<td>Your opinion (if any) of where religion/spirituality supports/or hinders:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the journey to Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• settlement in Australia.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowlers’ level</td>
<td>Any other comments you wish to make?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any comments you want to make?

**Checking Questions**
If I understood you correctly
Can you give me an example of it?

**Source Questions**
Do you remember how you first learnt about it?

**Probing**
Anything else?
Have you got any other reason?
Can you give me another example?

**Joining Questions**
You said earlier … can you explain …

**Feeling**
What did you feel about this?

**Experimental Questions**
If you had to give an adult relative of yours same sex some advice about surviving as a refugee what would you tell them?
APPENDIX 3: Interview Schedule 3: Refugee Camp Worker

1. your work in the refugee settlement/camp
2. your own belief system and how that interplayed with your work
3. your comments and observations on this aspect of a refugee’s life at a communal and individual level
4. religious groups in the camp
5. religious organisation in the camp
6. conversions/shifts
7. if a refugee’s religion/spirituality helps or hinders their life in the camps/settlements
APPENDIX 4: Interview Schedule 4: Religious Leader

1. Describe your family background?
   a. What is your ethnic/religious/spiritual background?
   b. Did you mix with other religions before? Give details.

2. Describe your job?
   a. In your experience is there a difference between immigrants and refugees from a spiritual or physical perspective

3. Could you tell me about the practical and spiritual issues that refugees face in Australia?
   a. Are there other issues?
   b. What is the difference in your role between your home country and Australia?

4. What did you know about Australia before you came?
   a. How have you learnt about Australia and its social and political beliefs?

5. Tell me about your religious training
   a. Cultural aspects of religion
   b. Any further training would you like
   c. Who supports you spiritually? (is this sufficient?)

6. How do you explain (EXTRA QUESTION):
   • suffering
   • ideas about religion and politics
   • their relationships (with other faiths)
   • to your community?

7. Could you tell me about other agencies/groups/faiths you mix with in Australia?
   • Officially
   • Unofficially
   a. Could you tell me about your involvement with these?
      Good things
      Some of the challenges
8. How happy are you in your understanding of other religious/spiritual communities or ways of life?

a. If so, what have you learnt and why? If not, what do you want to learn?
APPENDIX 5: Interview Schedule 5: Refugee

(3 to 4 interviews)

Confidential: Name ………………………

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefly tell me about your life, where you were born and how you came to Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Choice to come (later question)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tell me about your family background: for the past few generations, education, work, politics
| • Tell me about your family/individuals beliefs (secular political values religious) and values |
| • Where are they now? |
| • Religious practices festivals |

**Ritual, Social, Intellectual**

Tell me about the larger community you/your family live in
| • Different religions |
| • Individuals |
| • Groups |
| • Organisation |
| • Government |

How did your religion/spirituality or belief system help or not help you when you first started to feel persecution?

Why did you become a refugee?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about your journey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What kept you going on this journey and living in a country as a refugee or asylum seeker?

Did your religion, spirituality or belief system help or not help your journey? How or how did it not?  
**What about Allah/God?**
<p>| • Ritual |
| • Social |
| • Intellectual |
| • Experimental |
| • Ideological |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Was there a <strong>high point/good experience</strong> in your refugee experience?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Was there a low point/difficult experience?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Experimental, Social, Ritual, Intellectual)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about the other people you mixed with in the camp/settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NGO, religious groups, ethnic groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How were there experiences: positive/negative?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me a little about you life since arrival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If, or how your religion, spirituality or belief system has helped or not helped settlement in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What about Allah/God?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ritual (see attached sheet for information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intellectual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Was there a high/happy point here?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Was there a low/difficult experience here?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Experimental, Social, Ritual)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What contact have you had with religious leaders here?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is that different from your home country?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Or on your journey to Australia?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What family/friends have you in Australia?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tell me about your social life in Australia?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Social/Ritual)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What did you know about Australia before you came?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spiritualities/religions here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You do not have a religious faith?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Secular institutions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do you know about them and how did you learn about them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have your views/knowledge changed since arriving in Australia?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are there things in Australian life which have … your beliefs/practices?
• changed
• supported
• undermined
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you think your culture and religion mix?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has your refugee experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• deepened</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• shifted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• changed your original understanding of Allah/God/religion or your belief system?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you feel about this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think is the purpose of your life?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do you think there is a plan for your life?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you use the Koran/Bible/other books/rituals to help you with new experiences you have faced?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you explain the suffering that you have lived through and seen?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What have you learnt positively and negatively from suffering?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What causes or does not cause your suffering here?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Others who did not survive?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What about evil?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your religion have a positive or negative effect on your health?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give examples.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example, with mental health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given the difficult experiences you have had, what does forgiveness mean to you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Done to family members?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Towards people who hurt you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To governments?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• For things that you have done?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a sense of hope? Why/Why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment on if/where you feel a sense of peace in Australia.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What values are important to you now?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Values you would like to pass on to your children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have these changed since your becoming a refugee?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why do you think there is war, conflict or persecution by one group or another?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
QUESTIONNAIRE (REFUGEE)

Name…………………………………………………………………………….Date………………

1. What do you see yourself as one, all or a mixture? Or which is first and which is second

   Is any more important to you or less?
   • Your nationality
   • Australian
   • Your ethnicity
   • Your family (mother, father, son, wife brother etc.)
   • Your religion
   • Your spiritual beliefs
   • Your political beliefs
   • A human being
   Other……………………..
   Has this altered because of the refugee experience?

2. How settled do you feel in Australia?
   • A lot
   • Some
   • A little
   • Not much
   • Not at all

3. When you look back on your resettlement experience what things helped or did not help?

4. How much did you practice your religion:
   before persecution? after persecution? on the journey? in Australia?

| • A lot | • A lot | • A lot | • A lot |
| • Some  | • Some  | • Some  | • Some  |
| • A little | • A little | • A little | • A little |
| • Not much | • Not much | • Not much | • Not much |
| • Not at all | • Not at all | • Not at all | • Not at all |
| • Don’t know | • Don’t know | • Don’t know | • Don’t know |
5. Do you see religion/spirituality and Allah/God different or the same or different for you?

6. Did your religion/spirituality/belief system or Allah/God help you when you lived in your country?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion/Spirituality</th>
<th>God/Allah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before persecution</td>
<td>After persecution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>A little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>Not much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not much</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Harmful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Did your religion/spirituality/belief system help you when you left your country and here in Australia?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion/Spirituality</th>
<th>God/Allah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>A lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>A little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not much</td>
<td>Not much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmful</td>
<td>Harmful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. How much does religion/spirituality/beliefs system influence your daily life here in Australia compared with your home country?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion/Spirituality</th>
<th>God/Allah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>No change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total change</td>
<td>Total change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Do you mix with people who have a different beliefs system from you? (Religious and secular)
   - A lot
   - Some
   - A little
   - Not much
   - Not at all
   - Don’t know

   What setting?

10. Do you think people in Australia understand your religion/spirituality/belief systems?
    - A lot
    - Some
    - A little
    - Not much
    - Not at all

    Is that important to you?
Outline of Tarakeshwar cross-cultural religious framework (Tarakeshwar et al., 2003) including some additions

Ritual
- Place of worship
- Attendance
- Rituals: birth, death, puberty, marriage, cleansing, illness, sickness, spirits, seasons
- Practices: prayer type, pilgrimages, fasts
- Health
- Rituals festivals celebrated: what did they mean to you? (in a spiritual sense as well)
- Nature

Social
- People/leaders
- Male/female differences
- Education
- Their role in the community
- Mentor/religious
- Cultural issues: male/female, individual, collective, authoritarian/non-authoritarian
- Relations with others of you own religion but of a different grouping

Intellectual
- Knowledge of religion, how learnt
- What is important: founders, creation stories, parables, history
- Knowledge of cultural impact
- Level of devotion (Muslim prayer times each day, Orthodox attendance at church, Christian prayer, study and church)
- Interaction between religion and politics
- Video/books/Internet

Experiential
- Inner practice
- Peak and low experiences
- Miracles
- Magic/superstition
- Dreams
- Music, dance, poetry
- Stories, people, parables and so on that kept you going
- Health/illness
- Zar, icons, amulets, good luck charms
- Sayings and stories that were important
Ideological

- Reason for life
- Nature of the divine
- Path to the divine
- Values
- Sayings
- Suffering
- Evil
My name is Sue Ennis and I am writing to ask for you to consider being interviewed for a research project on:

“Religion, Spirituality and the Refugee Experience”

Currently I am studying for a Doctorate of Philosophy (part time) at RMIT. My supervisor is Professor Des Cahill from RMIT University, and he is an expert in the area of immigration and refugee issues. It is hoped that the research will be published so that people involved with the settlement of refugees in Victoria will know more about this relatively unresearched part of a refugee’s life.

It is a legal requirement from RMIT that I explain exactly what the research is about so you have an informed choice when considering participation. Thus, below are some details.

The research will examine: why people become refugees, their journey to Australia, and their settlement in Melbourne. I have chosen to interview refugees from Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Bosnia and Ethiopia for three reasons:

1. they come from different parts of the world
2. they have fairly recently arrived in Australia
3. they comprise a range of ethnic and religious backgrounds.

As an English as a second language teacher, I have taught some members of these communities, therefore I have some access to them.

Five refugees will be interviewed from each nationality. I will also interview five religious/community leaders and five social/welfare workers who work with refugees and come from a range of organisations across Victoria.

Participation in this research is voluntary. The place and time of the interview can be arranged to suit you, the participant. I could interview you in your place of worship/work place or home or wherever you feel comfortable. I probably will only need to interview you once or possibly twice with each interview taking about one to one and a half hours.

In the course of the interview I will be asking you some questions on:
• your work with refugees
• your personal belief system (not in detail)
• an overview of the Somali community
• an overview of the religious groupings within the community
• comments and observations on this aspect of a refugee’s life at a communal and individual level
• comments on if a refugee’s religion/spirituality helps or hinders their journey and settlement in Australia
• any comments on issues the researcher needs to be aware of with regard to this research.

I am particularly interested to see whether there are patterns in refugee experience across the different religions/spiritualities/belief systems, or whether there are differences, or maybe whether the religious/spiritually/belief systems did or do not assist refugees.

If you agree, I would like to audio-record the interview so I can transcribe it later. If you do not want to have the interview recorded, I can take notes. It is your right at any stage to ask for a copy of the tape or transcription so you can make any alterations or deletions. As participation is voluntary, you are free to withdraw at any time.

For confidentiality and privacy reasons your name, your organisation or religious community’s name will only be known to the researcher and their supervisor. It will not be recorded in the report and all the information that you give the researcher will be confidential. The information will be kept in a secure manner by the researcher for five years, at which time it will be destroyed in the manner prescribed by RMIT for such documents.

If you would like any further information about this research or you have concerns about the research you can contact Professor Desmond Cahill on at RMIT on 9925 4403. If you are willing to participate in this research could you contact my self the researcher mobile 0400 069014 or email sensa@bigpond.net.au

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Sue Ennis

All complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research and Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne 3001.

The telephone number is (03) 9925 1745.

Details of the complaints procedure are available for the above address.
Dear

My name is Sue Ennis. I am writing to ask for you to consider being interviewed for a research project on:

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Currently I am studying for a Doctorate of Philosophy (part time) at RMIT. The research has arisen from my over twenty five years experience in teaching English to newly arrived adult immigrants and children as well my voluntary community work. My supervisor is Professor Des Cahill from RMIT University, and he is an expert in the area of immigration and refugee issues. It is hoped that the research will be published so that people involved with the settlement of refugees in Victoria will know more about this relatively unresearched part of a refugee’s life.

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1. they come from different parts of the world
2. they have fairly recently arrived in Australia,
3. they comprise a range of ethnic and religious backgrounds.

As an English as a second language teacher, I have taught some members of these communities, therefore I have some access to these communities.

Five to ten refugees will be interviewed from each nationality. I will also interview five religious/community leaders and five social/welfare workers who work with refugees and come from a range of organisations across Victoria.

Participation in this research is voluntary. The place and time of the interview can be arranged to suit you, the participant. I could interview you in your place of worship/work place or at home or wherever you feel comfortable. I probably will only need to interview you once or possibly twice, with each interview taking about one to one and a half hours.
In the course of the interview I will be asking you some questions on:

- your work with refugees
- your own belief system and how that interplays with your work
- your comments and observations on this aspect of a refugee’s life at a communal and individual level
- if a refugee’s religion/spirituality helps or hinders their journey and settlement in Australia.

I am particularly interested to see whether there are patterns in refugee experience across the different religions/spiritualities/belief systems, or whether are there differences, or maybe religion/spiritually/belief systems, did or do not assist refugees.

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Sue Ennis
Dip.Ed. B.Ed. (TESOL), M.Ed.

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As an English as a second language teacher, I have taught some members of these communities, therefore I have some access to these communities

Five refugees will be interviewed from each nationality. I will also interview five religious/community leaders and five social/welfare workers who work with refugees and come from a range of organisations across Victoria.

Participation in this research is voluntary. The place and time of the interview can be arranged to suit you, the participant. I could interview you in your place of worship/work place or home or wherever you feel comfortable. I probably will only need to interview you once or possibly twice with each interview taking about one and a half to two hours.

In the course of the interview I will be asking you some questions on:
your background and your work
the practical/spiritual concerns of your religious community
your understandings of adult faith development
observations on refugees and non-refugees in your community
involvement with the wider Australian community
if a refugee’s religion/spirituality helps or hinders their journey and settlement in Australia.

I am particularly interested to see whether there are patterns in refugee experience across the different religions/spiritualities/belief systems, or whether there are differences, or maybe religion/spiritually/belief systems, did or do not assist refugees.

If you agree, I would like to audio-record the interview so I can transcribe it later. If you do not want to have the interview recorded, I can take notes. It is your right at any stage to ask for a copy of the tape or transcription so you can make any alterations or deletions. As participation is voluntary, you are free to withdraw at any time.

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RMIT Human Research and Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box
2476V, Melbourne 3001.
The telephone number is (03) 9925 1745.
Details of the complaints procedure are available for the above address.
Dear

I am Sue Ennis. I have taught English to newly arrived adult refugees and immigrants for the past twenty years. I am writing to ask if you, or a refugee you know, would give consent to be interviewed for my research on:

“Religion/Spirituality and the Refugee Experience”

I am a part time Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) student at RMIT University, Melbourne. This research is not for the Australian government. I want to learn more about this part of a refugee’s life. I hope, when it is completed, the research will help people who are involved in settling refugees, in Victoria, will know more about this part of the refugee experience.

The research I am doing is on why people become refugees, their journey to Australia and their settlement in Victoria. I have chosen to interview refugees from Sudan, Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia and Ethiopia for three reasons:

1. they come from different parts of the world
2. they have recently arrived in Australia
3. they have a range of ethnic and religious/spiritual backgrounds.

Some refugees from each nationality will be interviewed. Some will be older, some young adults, some male, some female and also of different faith or non-faith backgrounds. I will also interview eight religious/community leaders, one from each community and five social/welfare workers or volunteers who settle refugees in Victoria.

As the aim of my research is to hear refugees’ stories in detail so I would like to interview you three or four times. I will be asking you to tell me some stories about:

- Why you became a refugee?
- If, or how your religion, spirituality or belief system has helped or not helped your journey to, and settlement in, Australia.

My experience as a teacher is that some refugees are happy to tell of their experiences. Others do not wish to remember their journey to Australia because for some the telling of their journey would be too painful and upsetting. Therefore, it may be not a suitable time for you to tell your story. For some refugees, this may be an opportunity to tell your story.

It is your right in Australia to choose to be interviewed or not interviewed by me. If you agree to participate then and decide you do not want to continue, you can withdraw from this research. Also, if you agree to participate, but then find that telling
the stories is too upsetting as they bring back too many painful memories therefore, you have the right to stop the interview at any time. The researcher is a teacher, not a counsellor. Therefore, if you find that after the interview you are distressed for longer than is usual, and you want information about who you could continue to talk things over with or receive assistance, I would suggest that you tell me or others. If you wish, I could arrange for you to see someone to talk to.

The place and time of the interview can be arranged to suit you. I could interview you in your home, or at a community centre or wherever you feel comfortable. Each interview will take about 1.5 hours. Probably there will need to be four interviews. It is not a custom to pay you for helping students with research, as participation is voluntary. However, your travel expenses will be covered.

If you agree, I would like for accuracy purposes to audio tape the interview so that afterwards I can transcribe what you have said. If you do not want to have the interview recorded, I can take notes. You can ask for a copy of the audio-tape, notes or what I transcribed so you can make any corrections or changes. You may like to keep a copy for your family. If you wish, you will be given a copy of the research conclusions, or you could see a copy of the final published research.

All the information you give me will be confidential and your real name will not be recorded, given to anyone, or included in the published research. The information you give me will be kept in a secure place for five years. Then the information will be destroyed in the manner RMIT suggests for confidential documents.

Some money is available to pay for interpreters so if you would like to have an interpreter at the interview, this can be jointly arranged.

If you would like any further information about this research, or you have concerns about the research, you can contact my Professor Desmond Cahill at RMIT on 9925 4403. If you are willing to be interviewed you can contact Sue Ennis, the researcher, at RMIT – phone 9925 7877, mobile 0400 069014 – or tell the person who gave you this letter so they can tell me.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sue Ennis
Diploma of Primary Education (State College of Victoria, Melbourne University), Bachelor of TESOL (La Trobe University), Master of Education (La Trobe University). PhD candidate RMIT University, Faculty of Education, Language and Community Service

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بيان اللغة الواضحة
(لاجئون)

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT
(Refugees- Arabic)

حضرة

انا سواسم واترك لأسألكم إذا كنت أو تعرفون لاجنا يقبل أن تجري معه مقابلة لتمام البحث الذي يقوم به حول "الدين وخريطة اللاجئ".

"Religion and the Refugee Experience"

انا طالبة في جامعة معهد ملبورن الملكي للتكنولوجيا الفلسفية بدوام جزئي. هذا البحث ليس للحكومة الاسترالية. أريد أن أعرف إلى المزيد عن الدين في حياة اللاجئ وخبراته. ويوفر بالإشراف على دراسيي البروفسور ديموند كاهيل الملكي للتكنولوجيا في ملبورن وهو خبير في هذا المجال شؤون اللاجئين والجهة ويدعمني في هذا البحث وتعلم حين يهدف هذا البحث أن يساعد الاشخاص المهمكين في استقرار اللاجئين في فكتوريا في اختيار أكثر على هذا الجزء من خبرات اللاجئ.

البحث الذي أقوم به هو السؤال لماذا يصبح الأشخاص لاجئين وعن رحلتهم إلى استراليا واستقرارهم في فكتوريا.

وقد اختبرت أن أجري مقابلات مع لاجئين من السودان والعراق والبوسنة والصومال والنيجيري لسبب ثلاثة:

- لأنهم يأتون من اجزاء مختلفة في العالم
- لأنهم وصلوا حديثاً إلى استراليا
- لأن لديهم خلفيات دينية وروحية وثنية متنوعة

سوف أطرح عليكم بعض الاستفسارات وأطلب منكم أن تخبروني بعض القصص عن:

- مهتمة به بشكل خاص هو: هل ساعدت أو لم تساعد، أو كيف ساعدت أو لم تساعد دينية اللاجئ أو انتماكم إلى نظام روحية أو معتقد ما هذه الرحلة الى استراليا والاستقرار فيها.
- لماذا أصبحت لاجئة

تشير خبرتي كمدرسة أن بعض اللاجئين ساءدا في التحدث عن خبراتهم وآخرهم لا يرغبون في أن يذكروا رحلتهم الى استراليا لأن خبراتهم على رحلتهم قد تكون مهينة جدا ومزعجة. لهذا فقد يكون الوقت غير مناسب لكم للاستراحة قد تكون مناسبة. يمكن أن يكون بعض اللاجئين متمكين، يعلمون بابطالهم، يعلمنا أو يدرسون. ويمكن أن يكون بعض اللاجئين متمكين. التفكير في أمور عدة تتعلق من أجزاء مقابلة في الوقت الحاضر. وقد تكون فرصة لبعض اللاجئين للاستراحة أو قصصهم.

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انه من حكّم في استراليا أن تختاروا في أن تجرو المقابلة معي أو لا. إذا وافقتم على المشاركة في هذا البحث وقررت فيما بعد أنكم لا تريدون المتابعة، يمكنكم الإعتراف بهم. أيضاً إذا وافقتم على المشاركة ووجدتم فيما بعد أن تجرو مقابلاتكم تسبب الإزعاج الشديد لكم، لا ترى أنتم لكم كنارك كتيرات كثيرة مؤممة جدا، عندما بلقى للباحث أو للمشاركين أن يوفر مقابلة في أي وقت كان.

إن الباحث هو معلم وليس مرشداً أو مستشاراً. إذا وجدتم أنفسكم بعد المقابلة في مهنة وألم لمدة أطول من العادة وتحتاجون إلى معلومات عن مكان تقدم المساعدة أو التحدث اليد، فكرتم أنكم تعلموني بالإصرار أو تخبزوا آنرين هذا الشأن. وإذا رغبت، يمكنكم ترتيب الأمر لكم لكي تروا أลำاً للتتحدث اليد.

وأما أن الهدف من البحث الذي أقوم به هو الاستماع إلى قصص اللاعبين والتفاعل فاني أرغب في إجراء مقابلات معكم مرتين أو ثلاث. ويمكن ترتيب مكان وقتم المقابلة ليتلام معاكم. يمكنني إجراء المقابلة في منزلكم أو في مركز خدمة المجتمع أو في مكان تختارون اليد. وتستغرق هذه المقابلة حوالي ساعة ونصف. ليس هناك عادة لدفع أجر لمساعدة الطلاب في إحسانهم لأن المشاركة في هذا هو عمل تطوعي، لكن يمكن تغطية تكاليف المصروفات.

إذا كنت توافقون، أرغب في تسجيل المقابلة حتى يتسنى لي فيما بعد نقل ما اقصستهم بهدف. إذا كنت لا ترغبون في تسجيل المقابلة، يمكن أن تكونوا عن نسخة من الشريعة أو الملاحظات التي يتسنى لكم إصلاح الأخطاء أو أي مقول مبتلف. ربما ترغبون في الاحتفاظ بنفسة لعائلكم. سوف تحصلون على نسخة من استنتاجات البحث أو يمكنكم رؤية النسخة النهائية من البحث عند نشره.

إن جميع المعلومات التي تتولون بها تتسم بالسرية التامة ولن يسمح أسمكم أو يعثر لأي فرد أو ينشر في البحث. إن المعلومات التي ستتعلم منهما سوف تجف في مكان أمن لمدة خمس سنوات وبعد ذلك ينففر جميع المعلومات بطريقة تقتربها جامعة ميودي ميلورن الملكي للتكنولوجيا تتعلق بالوافق السرية.

يتوجب بعض المال لغطية تكاليف المترجمين. إذا اردتم ترجيح أداء المقابلة، يمكن ترتيب هذا معا.

إذا رغبت في مزيد من المعلومات حول هذا البحث أو يساركم القلق بشأنه، يمكنكم الاتصال بالبروفسور ديموند هيل في جامعة ميودي ميلورن الملكي للتكنولوجيا على الرقم 925409. إذا رغبت في أن تجري مقابلة معكم يمكنكم الاتصال بسو أب، الناشطة في جامعة ميودي ميلورن الملكي للتكنولوجيا على الرقم 9278877 أو الهاتف المحمول 4000690140 أو أخبروا الشخص الذي اعطيكم هذه الرسالة لكم يمكن من ابلايغ.

شكركم لأخذ بعض الوقت لقراءة هذا.

سو أب

جائزة على دبلوم في التعليم الابتدائي من جامعة ميودي ميلورن
The Secretary, RMIT Human Research and Ethics Committee, University
Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne 3001
(03) 9925 1745

يمكن توجيه جميع الشكاوى المتعلقة بمشاركتكم في هذا المشروع الى:

La Trobe University, Melbourne University (State College of Victoria, Melbourne University)

Tuition in the TESOL Secondary Education Program at La Trobe University preparates for University of Melbourne.

لا يمكن توجيه جميع الشكاوى المتعلقة بمشاركتكم في هذا المشروع إلى:

The Secretary, RMIT Human Research and Ethics Committee, University
Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne 3001
(03) 9925 1745
RMIT HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Prescribed Consent Form For Persons Participating In Research Projects
Involving Interviews, Questionnaires or Disclosure of Personal Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACULTY OF</th>
<th>Education Language and Community Service</th>
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<tr>
<td>DEPARTMENT OF</td>
<td>Language and International Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name of participant:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>Religion, Spirituality and the Refugee Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name(s) of investigators: (1)</td>
<td>Susan P. Ennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone: Research Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Ph. 9925 7877</td>
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1. I have received a statement explaining the interview/questionnaire involved in this project.
2. I consent to participate in the above project, the particulars of which – including details of the interviews or questionnaires – have been explained to me.
3. I authorise the investigator or his or her assistant to interview me or administer a questionnaire.
4. I acknowledge that:
   (a) Having read Plain Language Statement, I agree to the general purpose, methods and demands of the study.
   (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
   (c) The project is for the purpose of research and/or teaching. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
   (d) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
   (e) The security of the research data is assured during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to RMIT University in thesis form for journal publication and possible presentation at conferences. Any information which will identify me will not be used.
   (f) I give my permission to be audio taped.

Name: ___________________________ Date: ________________
(Participant)

Name: ___________________________ Date: ________________
(Witness to signature)

All complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research and Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne 3001.

The telephone number is (03) 9925 1745.

Details of the complaints procedure are available for the above address.
لجنة أخلاقيات البحوث البشرية في جامعة أوام أتي

استمرار القبول الإلزامي للأفراد المشاركين في مشاريع البحوث التي تشمل على المقابلات أو الاستبيانات أو
الاختيار عن المعلومات الشخصية.

الكلية: تعليم اللغات والخدمات الاجتماعية
قسم: اللغات والدراسات الدولية
اسم المشترك:

عنوان المشروع: الدين والروحانيات وخبرات الاجئين
اسم الباحثة (1): سوسن أنس
هاتف: مكتبة الأبحاث 77
9925787

أوافق على المشاركة في المشروع المذكور أعلاه، وأن خصائصه التي تتضمن تفاصيل المقابلة أو
الاستبان قد شرح لي.
أوافق الباحث أو مساعد لأجراء مقابلة معي أو يدير الاستبان.

1. بما أنني قرأت بيان اللغة الواضح، أوافق على
   مهاد العام واساليب ومتطلبات الدراسة.
2. تم إبلاغي بأنني حر في أن أسحب من المشروع في
   أي وقت كان وأن أسحب أي معلومات أو معلومات أعتني سابقا ولم تتحمل.
3. أن المشروع غاية البحث أو التعليم وقد لا يكون ذات
   منعك مباشرة لم.
4. أن خصوصية المعلومات الشخصية التي أقدمها
   ستستفتي في مكان أمن ويفصح عنها فقط في المجالات التي وافق على الإفصاح عنها
   أو حسبما يطلب قانونا.
5. أن تديب معطيات البحث مصممة خلال الدراسة
   وبعد اتمامها. ويمكن نشر المعلومات التي جمعت أثناء الدراسة وفقا لتفصيل عن
   نتائج الدراسة إلى جامعة معهد ملحوظة تكنولوجيا في شكل آخر يمكن
   استخدام بعض قواعد ومعطيات في اصدار صحفية أو عرضها في
   مؤتمرات أو في كتاب أو فيلم. لن تستخدم أي معلومات بأي حال من الأحوال.
   أنني أسمح بأن يسجل حديثي.

قبول المشترك

الاسم: ____________________________
(المشترك)
التاريخ: ____________________________

توقيع الشاهد

يمكن توجيه جميع الشكاوى المتعلقة بمشاركتكم في هذا المشروع إلى:

The Secretary, RMIT Human Research and Ethics Committee, University
Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne 3001

رقم الهاتف هو 99251745 (03)

تفاصيل إجراءات الشكاوى متاحة من العنوان المذكور أعلاه
APPENDIX 7: Implications of the Study for Agencies Assisting Refugees

This study’s fifth objective was to make recommendations regarding the religious, spiritual, educational, welfare, settlement and psychological needs of refugees at all stages of the refugee process. Therefore this appendix presents the findings and recommendations of the study for DIAC, settlement agencies, education programs for refugees, refugee psychological support agencies and the engagement with religious leaders and various refugee communities.

Regarding the ten refugee support personnel who had various and varying religiosities and ethnic backgrounds a variety of findings emerged. Generally speaking, discussing religion was a sensitive topic personally and professionally for these interviewees. For a number, their knowledge of a refugee’s religiosity was only scant or of one or so religious communities, with only some of the five asked being interested in more training. Only one of the six settlement agencies, represented by the ten personnel, appeared to have some structured approach to working with the various religious communities and their leaders. On the other hand, refugee professionals, formally or informally, consciously or unconsciously, engaged in intra/interfaith education in their settlement work. Thus, it is recommended that some inter/intra-faith programs, including an exploration of adult faith development theories, be jointly developed and to facilitate a deeper and more conscious and comfortable engagement with the issues presented in this study.

Several interactions were noted between refugee settlement and their religious leaderships’ involvement. Firstly, all twelve religious leaders interviewed were involved to varying degrees in assisting refugees with settlement. Different attitudes and experiences emerged with regard to the leaders’ engagement or non-engagement with government-funded refugee settlement services. This study suggests that for a number of leaders, their home country’s religious structures or their political histories meant that in
Australia they wished for more engagement with DIAC-funded settlement agencies. For example, one of the major factors for the reported limited engagement with Iraqi Christians and Shi’ite groups appeared due to the transference of the traditional *millet* isolationist, self-reliant approach to Australia.

Thus, depending on the refugee communities’ level of religiosity, (see Figure 10.1 and Section 10.9: Implications for Future refugee Flows) different strategies may be necessary to assist refugee settlement in multi-faith Australia. For example, with refugees groups who have considerable numbers of *religious refugees*, different approaches to initial settlement are needed. A cultural consultant suggested that DIAC support located at a place of worship (as a community development approach) would assist with initial settlement. Some majority religious communities shifting to minority religious status would often need more acculturation support; for example, by DIAC linking refugee religious communities and their religious leaders to a range of purposely selected religious groups, not always of the same affiliation (see Vujcich, 2007) who have made such a shift. It should also be understood that for a few refugees, regardless of being Christian or Muslim, difficult individual or communal experiences (often for many generations), or particular religiously prescribed attitudes, can result in hard-line attitudes to the ‘other’ in multi-faith Australia. Thus, the researcher, if the above factors are not anticipated, understood or assisted with, can affect *religious refugees*’ settlement in multi-faith Australia.

In light of these findings this study recommends several actions. Firstly, that an audit be conducted by DIAC on how the various settlement agencies and individual refugee support personnel work with refugees’ religious communities and their religious leaders to examine best practice, gaps in practice or non-engagement with particular religious groups. Such findings could be combined with studies on previous refugee religious communities’ initial and long-term settlement in multi-faith Australia.

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130 Religious refugees as previously defined are refugee *religious maintainers, refugee switchers* and *refugee intensifiers*. 
Regarding the religious leaders, some recommendations are made. The Monash religious leaders’ training course funded by DIAC needs reactivation for both Christian and Muslim religions leaders. Given the understandings gained in this study and a reading of the course report (Bouma et al., 2007) this raises the possibility of the course needing to be modified due to the religious leaders, their attitudes (for example, ‘inclusivist’ or ‘exclusivist’ behaviours, conceptual frameworks toward mental health) and their practical needs (for example, issues surrounding marriage guidance). It may be that English language level groupings or interpreters are required in the course. Perhaps this course needs to be linked to the obtaining of a religious leaders’ work visa. If this is not possible, targeted formal and informal methods of engagement with ‘exclusivist’ religious leaders who do not or will not attend such training courses may also be needed; for example, matching a leader with a specially selected AMEP volunteer. Finally, this study recommends more in-depth research into religious leaders’ interaction with refugee settlement in multi-faith Australia in the short and long term.

The finding that different typologies of refugees (see Figure 10.1) framed the refugee experience, health and mental health attitudes through their particular religious meaning system has implications for health and psychological services to refugees. For example, refugees of various typologies reported that religious rituals assisted their coping with trauma and stress. The findings suggest more research needs to be conducted into ritual usage; for example, personality and usage. Despite this the researcher suggests a working group of appropriate religious leaders, psychological and various cultural support personnel examine the various DIAC-funded psychological services to see if they are sufficient or appropriate for religious refugees.

With regard to information and education programs for refugees, several recommendations are made. Firstly, Australia’s pre-embarkation and post-arrival programs for refugees need to be examined and modified in terms of how they assist refugees in adjusting to a multi-faith secular Australia. Secondly, a 2009 check shows that there needs to be more information and education on religion and acculturation. For example,
• pre-arrival information sessions
• on-arrival settlement information sessions
• AMEP’s Certificate in Spoken and Written English
• the Australian citizenship course

This needs to also include their various support documents.

Thus, this study suggests a working group comprised of DIAC, AMEP researchers and curriculum designers, adult interfaith academics/practitioners and interfaith leadership groups, and selected religious leaders to examine these programs, curricula, teacher training and literature to make suggestions and/or modifications.

Although not found in this study, DIAC and settlement agencies need to be aware that some volunteers or other individuals may view their work as a way of ‘gaining souls’, issues discussed in American literature but not in Australia. On the other hand, religiously inclusive volunteers and individuals may be useful in assisting religious refugees with settlement. As Gozdziak states (2002) the secular funding requirement may in fact restrict such religious support. Thus, an examination of the DIAC-funded settlement agencies’ training, monitoring and the finding of inclusivist best practice of volunteers and professionals with regard to their religious interactions with refugees is in order.

This study also suggests that the United Nations, the UNHCR and other agencies jointly conduct research into the short- and long-term effects of ‘inclusivist’ and ‘exclusivist’ religious groups, either local and foreign involvement with refugees: during civil disturbances, in the places of asylum and in host countries. Such issues have been raised before in relation to the asylum situation; for example, moral questions surrounding ‘exclusivist’ Christian missionaries’ methods and reasons for engagement with refugees (Van Esterik, 2003). Comments also hint that rigid Islam is increasing in some refugee
situations. Such research needs to be mindful that proselytising is a requirement of some belief systems.

To conclude, this study recommends that DIAC, refugee settlement, educational, health and psychological support agencies both in Australia and beyond need to explore their policy and programs to see if they adequately reflect four factors:

1. for various reasons, religion is on the rise globally
2. depending on the refugees’ level of religiosity, their belief system helped them frame, survive and cope with the refugee experience
3. internal and external factors may or may not cause a rise in a refugee’s religiosity during the refugee experience
4. some refugees and their religious leaders may hold prescribed ‘hard-line’ exclusivist attitudes to others encountered; for example, in multi-faith or secular Australia.

Finally, these factors may challenge government and agency secular frameworks or individual refugee practitioners’ secular beliefs. Conversely, ‘religious exclusivism’ may see the examination of these issues as an opportunity of gaining influence. Hence, when examining issues surrounding religion and the refugee experience, an ‘inclusivist’ or ‘pluralist’ approach is necessary.