Spiritual But Not Religious? Beyond Binary Choices in the Study of Religion

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"Spirituality" often has been framed in social science research as an alternative to organized "religion," implicitly or explicitly extending theoretical arguments about the privatization of religion. This article uses in-depth qualitative data from a religiously diverse U.S. sample to argue that this either/or distinction not only fails to capture the empirical reality of American religion, it does no justice to the complexity of spirituality. An inductive discursive analysis reveals four primary cultural "packages," or ways in which people construct the meaning of spirituality in conversation: a Theistic Package tying spirituality to personal deities, an Extra-Theistic Package locating spirituality in various naturalistic forms of transcendence, an Ethical Spirituality focusing on everyday compassion, and a contested Belief and Belonging Spirituality tied to cultural notions of religiosity. Spirituality, then, is neither a diffuse individualized phenomenon nor a single cultural alternative to "religion." Analysis of the contested evaluations of Belief and Belonging Spirituality allows a window on the "moral boundary work" being done through identifying as "spiritual but not religious." The empirical boundary between spirituality and religion is far more orous than is the moral and political one.

Keywords: spirituality, modern religion, religious discourse, definition of religion, individualism.

INTRODUCTION

In popular commentary, it is not hard to find claims that there is a "growing division between organized religion and spirituality" (Ellingson 2001), but the evidence is often ambiguous at best. Chaves (2011) reports, based on General Social Survey data, that since 1998, the number of Americans who describe themselves as spiritual but not religious has increased from 9 percent to 14 percent, with the most marked increase among those under 40. What he is actually reporting is that more people answer "not" or "slightly" when asked, "To what extent do you consider yourself to be a religious person?" and answer "moderately" or "very" when asked, "To what extent do you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?" These two answers are used to create a two-by-two table—both spiritual and religious, religious only, spiritual only, and neither. Over the last two decades, sociologists and psychologists have paid increasing attention to spirituality as a distinct concept, but efforts to go beyond this simple two-by-two definition have floundered. Chaves notes in his reporting of the trend that "[i]t is difficult to know what people mean when

they say they are spiritual but not religious" (2011:41). Like many others, he conjectures that it has something to do with dissatisfaction with organized religion; but also like most of those who have gone before, he offers little insight into what either they or their spiritual-*and*-religious compatriots (the vast majority) may mean by being "spiritual." The study reported here is an initial step in answering that question.

Sociological attention to the study of "spirituality" increased significantly with the cultural shifts of the 1960s (Albanese 2001; Wuthnow 1976). Studies of seekers (Roof 1993; Wuthnow 1998) and the "spiritual marketplace" (Roof 1999) have provided valuable analyses of a growing religious sector that includes broad new religious possibilities. This attention has come alongside the growth of a religiously unaffiliated population, and some have suggested that as organized religion is declining, some form of residual spirituality may still be present among those who freely choose not to affiliate (Hout and Fischer 2002; Pew Forum 2008). Indeed, much of the attention to new spiritualities has implicitly assumed a sociological meta-narrative of declining religious institutions and rising religious individualism. From Berger's (1969) classic exposition of secularization and privatization to Bellah and colleagues' *Habits of the Heart* (1985), the discipline has been guided by the notion that the differentiation of modern societies has shrunk the domain of religion to sectarian "sheltering enclaves" and to individual consciousness, an argument that echoes Durkheim's ([1898] 1975) observations from earlier in 20th century. In Europe, where the declines in religious belief and participation are far more dramatic than in the United States (Davie 2000), sociologists of religion have increasingly turned their attention to the new and revived spiritualities that are present in the wake of Christianity's apparent demise (Flanagan and Jupp 2007). Heelas and Woodhead (2004), for example, document a "holistic milieu" including yoga classes, Reiki practitioners, and more, speculating that spiritual loyalties are being transferred from old institutions (churches) to new ones.

In Europe and in the United States, both scholarly and popular perceptions seem to tell a story of declining "religion" and growing "spirituality"—a zero-sum movement from one to the other. What is declining in this picture is "religion," usually assumed to be organized, traditional, and communal, while "spirituality" is often described as improvised and individual.[1] In his study of the spirituality of artists, for instance, Wuthnow notes that his subjects see spirituality as "more authentic" than organized religion because they themselves have created it (Wuthnow 2001). Accepting that individualized view has often meant that sociologists have ignored spirituality entirely, sticking to measures of organized religiosity and relegating spirituality to the domain of psychologists and religious studies scholars. As Bender (2010) argues, when we define a phenomenon as an interior individual "experience," we place it conceptually beyond the reach of sociological explanation.

Sociologists who have taken spirituality seriously and have resisted the zero-sum reading of the trends have discovered that there is actually a good deal of overlap between spirituality and religion, at least in the American population. In Chaves's (2011) reading of the General Social Survey, fully 80 percent of American adults claim to be *both* religious and spiritual. Marler and Hadaway (2002) compared data from several surveys to show that the people who consider themselves most strongly spiritual are also the most religiously active. In addition, Roof (2003) has provided an in-depth exploration of the overlap. As Pargament notes, one of the several problems with the "polarization of religion ('the institutional bad-guy') and spirituality ('the individual good-guy')" is that it does not fit the empirical evidence (2011:31).

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[1]Even while attempting to provide a more nuanced picture of spirituality, some of the most prolific psychologists of spirituality have made the same link between the decline in mainstream institutions and the growth of spirituality (Zinnbauer et al. 1997; Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott 1999).

Much of the research on spirituality comes, in fact, from psychologists and health researchers, and they have spent a good deal of energy lamenting the absence of adequate definitions and measures.[2] Even when attempting to explore and clarify, however, many still boil things down to the same two-by-two table (Chatters et al. 2008; Zinnbauer et al. 1997). A significant exception is the work sponsored by the Fetzer Institute, aimed at developing a more nuanced measure that could be used in the burgeoning studies of religion and health (Abeles et al. 1999; Idler et al. 2003). Within this multidimensional measure of different forms of religiosity is a set of experiential questions about feeling God's presence, feeling guided by God, finding comfort in religion, being touched by the beauty of creation, and the like. As Koenig (2008) reports, both the long and short forms of this measure of spirituality are rapidly becoming the standard in health research. Still, questions of definition linger. This scale begins with the researchers' conjectures about individual experiences or capacities that may be producing health effects, but what underlying cultural meanings are being tapped by these survey questions?

The state of the art in sociology, then, would seem to be two self-assessment measures, cross-tabulated.[3] The state of the art in psychology is a much more nuanced and robust survey measure, but with uncertain conceptual validity. And in many other cases spirituality remains something of an unexamined black box—simply whatever religion isn't. If we believe that spirituality, like religion, is a category subject to sociological analysis, more adequate ways to understand it are essential.

This article aims to begin to unpack the black box of spirituality by analyzing accounts people give of what they designate as "spiritual" in their everyday lives. Such culturally constructed discourse can provide a window on the underlying social meanings that shape contemporary religious and spiritual domains. Much as Swidler (2001) has asked us to unpack the cultural meanings of "love," I endeavor here to develop a taxonomy for a term, spirituality, which is increasingly important to any sociology of contemporary religion. It begins with an inductively derived taxonomy and moves toward identification of the cultural packages within which meanings are clustered and the institutional locations in which they find their homes. Finally, it returns to the question of the "spiritual but not religious" to examine the distinct cultural functions of that either/or discourse.

METHODS OF THE STUDY

This article begins with the meanings of spirituality used in the vernacular speech of everyday life, drawn from conversations that took place over the course of several different kinds of research activities that were part of a larger project (Ammerman 2013). As with other efforts to map new territory, our methods were designed to provide wide-ranging and deep explorations, rather than generalizable data from a large statistically representative population. Still, the sample of 95 participants for this study was carefully designed to allow access to a broad range of the religious and nonreligious population. The study's participants were recruited in Boston and Atlanta, two cities with quite different religious cultures. These locations by no means represent the full diversity of the United States, but allowed us to talk with people in contrasting religious settings. Within the two settings, I used a quota sample designed to mimic the national distribution of adults across Christian and Jewish traditions, as well as people who are unaffiliated and might or might not be "seekers."

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[2]See Zinnbauer and colleagues (1997) for a very thorough review of methodological strategies and definitions as they existed in the late 1990s.

[3]An important exception to this comes from a recent Italian study to be discussed later (Palmisano 2010).

Researchers recruited unaffiliated people through posters in cafes, on community bulletin boards, and on campuses; we also tapped participants in on-line spiritually focused discussion groups. To find religiously affiliated participants, we identified a set of congregations of Catholics, conservative and liberal white Protestants, African-American Protestants, Jews, Mormons, and a group of Neo-Pagans. The latter four groups each provide a distinct religious contrast to the dominant white Protestant and Catholic traditions, and they were proportionately oversampled in order to have more than one or two participants in each. This, in turn, necessitated a small undersample of white Protestants and Catholics. In each religious community, a person knowledgeable about the membership (usually the clergy person) provided information that allowed us to develop sampling frames based on frequency of attendance, age, and gender; we selected five persons from each congregation's list to meet overall sampling targets. A description of our resulting group of 95 participants is contained in Appendix 1. With a small sample and several criterion variables, we came close to matching our targets, but it was not possible in every case.

It is important to note that these participants were not selected because they were especially "religious" or "spiritual." If anything, there are fewer highly committed religious participants in this sample than national numbers would dictate, and over a third of the project participants rarely or never attend religious services.[4] The proportion who are at least somewhat regular participants in traditional religious communities (64 percent) is typical of the U.S. population, where 61 percent of the adult population claims membership in a local religious group (Pew Forum 2008). This sample provides, then, the possibility for examining how spirituality enters the discourse of people who are active religious participants, as well as those who are not. We also have the ability to listen for differences from within the broad families of religious tradition that make up the mainstream and some of the margins of American religious culture. Not included are the wide variety of other traditions beyond Jewish and Christian, the wide variety of other "new spiritualities," or any of the very important non-English-speaking populations (especially Latina/o) within Christian and other traditions. The populations that *are* included, however, encompass well over 90 percent of the U.S. religious landscape.

While the sample is relatively small, the data gathered are quite deep. Researchers observed religious services in each of the congregations, parishes, temples, and sacred circles to which their participants belonged, providing a sense of the organizational culture. For each participant, the project began with an interview in which the basic contours of his or her life history were explored, inquiring about religion alongside questions about family, work, leisure, and other pursuits. The interview encouraged narrative responses more than evaluative or categorical assessments (Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett 2008). Included in this interview were demographic questions that describe the person's social location. At the end of the initial interview, participants were given a disposable camera and a simple set of instructions to photograph "important places in your everyday life." When they were finished taking pictures, we picked up the cameras, had the pictures developed, and then returned to ask them to tell us the stories behind the photos.

The final piece of our individual data gathering was an oral diary project. We established a mutually agreeable schedule of two separate one-week periods, roughly four to nine months apart, and asked subjects to set aside 5–15 minutes each day to record stories on the digital recorder we gave them. We provided them with a list of prompts for suggested kinds of stories but told them we were interested in hearing about whatever they considered memorable about the day. We said that we were interested in hearing about their religious or spiritual experiences and practices if those were important, but they were encouraged not to introduce such elements if they would not normally do so.

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[4]Affiliates who rarely attend are especially difficult to recruit through key informants, since those informants are unlikely to know them. This study overrepresents "typical" attenders and somewhat underrepresents both the most and least active affiliates.

All our participants knew that we were interested in studying religious and spiritual ideas and experiences,[5] but throughout the project, those who were religiously inactive and spiritually uninterested freely told us so and told stories about their lives that were largely free of any reference either to religious institutions or to spirituality of any sort. Participating in this project, like participating in any research project, inevitably sensitized people to the phenomena they were asked about (Gibson 2005; Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett 2008; Mishler 1986). Some participants undoubtedly introduced religious and spiritual content into their narrations in ways that might not have occurred without the sensitizing context. The aim here, however, is to analyze *how* they did so rather than whether and how much.

The sets of recordings of diaries, photo elicitation interviews, initial life history interviews, and field notes—330 texts in all[6]—were transcribed and analyzed with the assistance of the qualitative analysis software MaxQDA. All of the texts were coded around emergent themes and categories grounded in a thorough qualitative reading. Because the present analysis is focused on discourse concerning spirituality—on what people mean when they use this term—the texts were also coded using a lexical search for places were the search string "spirit" occurred. After eliminating instances where that term referred to meanings not related to spirituality (the "spirit" of the times, for instance) and instances where the term was introduced by the interviewer, but not used by the participant, the remaining 1,163 instances were analyzed in their narrative context to inductively generate a list of definitional categories. In each case, what sort of meaning is being constructed in the stories where "spirituality" is in play? And what are people talking about when they mark a boundary between "religion" and "spirituality." That list of 11 inductively derived categories is described in Table 1. Having derived the initial taxonomy of meanings, the entire body of data from each participant was coded again, this time for the presence or absence of each of the 11 meanings. The result is a picture, for each participant, of the range of meanings that characterize spirituality as they see it. Which array of meanings is present in the stories told by each person? Finally, a combination of factor analysis and additional qualitative coding made it possible to identify the cultural packages in those arrays.

<p style="text-align:center"><small>FINDINGS</small></p>

An Initial Taxonomy[7]

This analysis of the definitional boundaries of religion and spirituality emerges, then, not from answers to explicitly definitional questions, but from observing how "spirituality" is used discursively in the telling of everyday stories—what spirituality is as a cultural phenomenon rather than whatever its psychological (or theological) essence may be. As project researchers talked with participants, we were resolute in refusing to define "religious" and "spiritual" for them. We often used those terms interchangeably or in combination and inquired about a broad range of activities, interpretations, and experiences, depending on how the participant took the conversation. They often ruminated aloud about what might count or what those words might

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[5]The informed consent document said: "This is a research project aimed at understanding whether and how elements of religious and spiritual experience and tradition are incorporated into the way ordinary people tell the stories of their everyday lives. It is being funded by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation. We are interested in who and what are most important to people? What events stand out or are turning points? To what extent are religious or spiritual factors important?"

[6]Eighty-two of the 95 who were interviewed completed the photo exercise, 80 did at least one week of oral diaries, 73 completed a second round of diaries.

[7]A preliminary sketch of this taxonomy formed one portion of the argument contained in Ammerman (2010).

Table 1: Spirituality: A taxonomy of meanings

Spirituality is:		Number who invoke this meaning in at least one story	Example
1. A religious tradition	Identifying with or participating in a religious tradition	75	"As far as the spiritual … I was brought up to go to church, communion, confirmation, Sunday school, the whole thing." *Mary Poulsen, Catholic, Boston (interview)*
2. Ethics	Living by the Golden Rule, acting as a caring person	69	"Christ has no hands but our hands and no voice but our voice, and that's what we're here for, to imitate the life of Christ. To be there for people … as I grow spiritually, and it's a long journey, that's what it is about." *Phyllis Carrigan, Catholic, Boston (interview)*
3. God	Acknowledging and experiencing Divine presence	69	"As a Christian man I'm aware of my spirituality, i.e., my relationship with God and that I have a friendship with him and I try to walk with him." *Andrew Hsu, evangelical, Boston (oral diary)*
4. Practices	Activities in pursuit of spiritual development	58	"I'm going back this evening to finish reading the *Ensign* because I do need to be spiritually fed." *Marjorie Buckley, Mormon, Boston (oral diary)*
5. Mystery	Things that can't be explained by ordinary means	52	"You know, there are so many things that can't be explained scientifically . . . . there are things out there that can't be explained and, uh, let's recognize it for what it is." *Hank Matthews, Episcopalian, Boston (interview)*
6. Meaning	Wholeness and purpose in life	48	My work is about "being part of the order of the universe, part of God's order of the universe." *Sam Levitt, Jew, Boston (oral diary)*

(Continued)

Table 1: (*Continued*)

Spirituality is:		Number who invoke this meaning in at least one story	Example
7. Belief	Believing in God	47	"I'm spiritual. I don't go to church, um, but I am very spiritual. I believe in God." *Barbara Robinson, African-American Methodist, Atlanta (oral diary)*
8. Connection	Transcendent sense of connection to others	48	"Some people when they come up to me at Communion, I look at them and they look at me and it just gives me shivers . . . . It's kind of a cool thing that, for some reason, we've touched each other spiritually." *Margi Perkins, Catholic, Atlanta (interview)*
9. Ritual	Symbolic invocations of spiritual presence	45	"I went to Holy Thursday service tonight, it's Holy Week and I hadn't been to one in some years . . . It was a very impressive service, the music was beautiful and it was very spiritual and I'm glad that I went." *Mary Hage, Catholic, Atlanta (oral diary)*
10. Awe	Transcendent sense of wonder or beauty	40	"Although I'm not spiritual, it was quite a spiritual experience, [being in a] pristine wilderness, and the closest I can come to serene, calm and beauty." *Alicia Waters, secular, Boston (oral diary)*
11. Self	Sacred inner uniqueness of the person	29	"Everyone has something that is a gift that they can offer that is really distinctive of their personality, and those people I think are in a zone. It's almost like spiritual alignment with that purpose." *Alex Polani, seeker, Boston (interview)*

mean, and we always turned the question back to them. Theresa Collins,[8] a 66-year-old active Boston Episcopalian spoke about her experience in her diary.

> Spirituality is certainly something that, first of all it's hard to define in a way, but, um, it's important to me and I still do believe that it's, you know, the focus of my life really. It should be the focus of everybody's life. I mean we all have spirits and our spirits are going to live forever.

Hard to define, but important—that was a theme often heard. Spirituality often provoked this sort of explicit definitional musing, suggesting that there is wide recognition of the degree to which the term is both emergent and contested.

The themes that emerged indirectly, by listening to what was described as spiritual, form a fairly long list, explicated in Table 1. In each case, people might or might not claim to *be* spiritual in this way, but they *use* these categories to point toward the things they think of as spiritual. At first glance this is a wide-ranging list. Some of these descriptions are easy to link with traditional measures of religiosity. Some fit traditional sociological notions that religion and spirituality have to do with things that are "supernatural" or "super-empirical," but others have a largely this-worldly orientation.[9] Some suggest the sort of thing that could be called sacred or life orienting, but others are more ephemeral.[10] Some point to individual experiences, but others are clearly communal.

It is also clear from the numbers that all our participants—affiliates and nonaffiliates, active and inactive alike—employed multiple definitional tacks over the course of their contributions in the interview, diaries, and descriptions of their photos. Indeed, the vast majority of their references to spirituality moved across multiple categories—Awe and God, Ritual and Mystery, Meaning and Morality—often even within the same story. The cultural world in which they live supplies them with multiple ways to indicate the things that belong in the spiritual realm, and they seem, at first glance, fairly indiscriminate in drawing from that cultural repertoire. Does this mean, then, that there is no coherence in this cultural field? Is "spirituality" indeed a signifier that can mean whatever each person wants it to mean?

Cultural Packages

Looking more closely at how this array of Americans described their lives, we can see some important clues to larger cultural and institutional patterning that is at work. We can begin to see those patterns by asking how the various definitions cluster. While they are each used (to varying degrees) across the entire population studied, does this long list hide any underlying structure of cultural meanings? And if so, where are we most likely to find those meanings in use, and to what degree do they overlap or oppose each other?

Discovering the underlying patterns required a combination of qualitative and quantitative forms of analysis. As an exploratory exercise, a factor analysis was run with all 11 definitions shown in Table 1. In initial results, one item—Ethical Spirituality—was not part of any larger cluster of items. Returning to the stories themselves showed that this was a widely used and conceptually distinct discourse about spirituality. In recent Italian research (Palmisano 2010),

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[8]This is a pseudonym, as are the names of congregations, although details about age and social location correspond to the actual data for each subject.

[9]This intersection of supernatural and nonsupernatural meanings leads me to doubt the adequacy of the theory developed by Riesebrodt (2010). I appreciate his turn to practices in defining religion, but our participants only sometimes engaged religion in search of help and only sometimes saw spiritual powers as capable of supernatural assistance. Nor was there a neat divide between that form of discourse and the more this-worldly and moral forms.

[10]For this reason, I am reluctant to agree with Pargament (2011) that spirituality is about the search for the sacred.

where there were multiple items tapping a similar set of ethics-related meanings, a distinct "ethic spirituality" factor was identified, as well. It seems justified, then, to identify uses of an "Ethical Spirituality" discourse in this study based on that single definitional item.

In the case of the "ritual" item, placement in a statistical factor was also problematic, but for different reasons. An examination of the stories that had been coded as "ritual" revealed that uses of this discourse were so tradition-specific that there was an imperfect conceptual fit with the other meanings of spirituality that more easily spanned traditions. Identifying spirituality as ritual activity encompassed everything from lighting Sabbath candles to personal rituals and observing Lent. It is important to note that talk about spirituality sometimes conjures such practices, but there is no broader cultural pattern here.

With these two items removed, three factors emerged from the remaining nine.[11] That is, from among all the possible uses to which the notion of spirituality is put, several tend to be used together. If a person talks about spirituality in one sense, other ways of describing it are likely present, as well. A return to the themes of the qualitative coding suggested that indeed these factors seem to describe discernible cultural packages—Theistic, Extra-Theistic, and Religious forms of discourse about spirituality. They can be analyzed along with the Ethical discourse to assess the larger contours of spirituality and its intersections with what sociologists define and measure as religion. Ethical, Theistic, and Extra-Theistic spiritualities represent discourses where both meaning and evaluation cohere—those who use these meanings also largely approve of what they are describing. I will turn to the Religious Package last because in this discursive terrain evaluations diverge. People agree on what it is, but not necessarily on whether it is a good thing. Here are hints of the "spiritual not religious" tension to which I will return at the end.

(1) *The Theistic Package*

Those who employ a Theistic genre for describing spirituality move easily among three definitions—spirituality is about God; spirituality is about practices intended to develop one's relationship with God; and spirituality is about the mysterious encounters and happenings that come to those who are open to them. This cluster of definitions draws in a very general way on the institutionalized beliefs, practices, and experiences that are fostered in the United States, primarily within the organizations associated with Christian traditions, but it is more about naming the presence and actions of a personal god(s) than about specific beliefs.

When this discursive package is in use, gods and goddesses embody and personify what spirituality means. Theresa Collins showed us the picture she took of the family's boat and said, "I love to be out on that boat on the ocean for the same reason I like to be in my garden, 'cause I feel close to the Lord and the beauty of the world." Hers is an expansive definition of spirituality, but it centers on "the Lord." People like her were also likely to talk about spirituality as something to be pursued. One of the ways our participants talked about being spiritual was to identify specific activities—activities that would evoke the spirit, discipline the spirit, and help the spirit to grow stronger. Andrew Hsu, a young software engineer and member of an evangelical church in Boston, said, "I need to be nurtured and nourished in my relationship with God, so what are those things that I should be doing?" The spiritual practices he named included prayer,

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[11]Using SPSS, the method chosen was principal component analysis with varimax rotation. Nine items were entered, each representing the absence or presence (0, 1) of the indicated mode of discourse about spirituality in the cumulative data for each participant. The three factors account for a total of 52 percent of the variance. Factor loadings for the Theistic factor were .806, .751, and .556 for God, practices, and mystery. Factor loadings for the Extra-Theistic factor were .724 (meaning), .700 (self), .472 (connection), and .417 (awe). For the Religious Spirituality factor they were .832 (belief) and .771 (religious tradition). As indicated in the text, the presence or absence of Ethical Spirituality and Ritual Spirituality are, for different reasons, not included in the factor analysis.

Bible reading, and staying in touch with Christian friends. Religious institutions have helped him establish habits, routines, and intentional practices that he associates with a spiritual view of the world.

The result of this focus on one's spiritual life is, at least for many of our participants, openness to seeing a miraculous dimension in life. Sociologists and other modern philosophers have long posited that religion is what provides explanations for what might otherwise be unexplainable. Indeed a dose of magic and mystery have been seen as essential to the power of religious leaders (Weber [1922] 1963:47–48). Things operating in the spiritual realm, by this reading of the world, are mysterious forces causing outcomes that cannot be explained by ordinary means. This is not the most common way our participants used the term "spiritual," and even those who used it were not always claiming that supernatural forces are the *causes* of the events they described. But for those conversant with the Theistic package of meanings, a layer of mystery alongside everyday visible reality is part of what spirituality entails.[12] Sometimes these mysterious happenings were intrusions that break into the mundane world in ways religious communities have provided categories to explain. Our participants, that is, spoke in ways they share with the religious communities of which they are a part, using symbols developed in the long history of religious efforts to organize, categorize, and encourage human experiences of transcendence (Berger 1969:esp. 42–44).

Organized Religion and the Production of Theistic Spiritualities

What we hear in these uses of spirituality, then, is a seamless adoption of the term as an adjunct to theism. Far from standing in opposition to religious understandings of the world, gods and goddesses, introduced in the lore of religious traditions, define this spiritual genre. The boundary between talk about spirituality and talk about deities beyond oneself is completely permeable. In discursive practice, the largest portion of our American sample (71 percent) talks about spirituality in these god-defined and god-oriented terms, terms they have learned from religious traditions.

That is not to say that the resulting picture of spirituality takes its contours from specific doctrinal teachings. Few of our participants ever quoted chapter and verse (or lines from a catechism) to explain their understanding of spirituality. The discursive package being used here is far more general. Indeed, these images of a god who intervenes and gives meaning to life are widely available in American media culture, as well as in the churches and synagogues (Clark 2003). Theistic spiritual discourse, that is, can be available for use by people who are not themselves active in religious communities, so long as there are other theistic culture producers at work.

But the stories of our participants make clear that actual religious organizational participation matters in the production and maintenance of a Theistic mode of discourse about spirituality. It is not simply "out there." It has a specific social location (see Table 2). It is more often the dominant discourse among those who are in Christian traditions than among Jews and nonaffiliates, more likely among those who attend services regularly than among those who seldom darken a church door. This is not, in other words, a cultural product equally used by all. Rather, it is primarily a product of the specific interactions and cultural activity sustained in particular religious institutions. Nonaffiliates and nonattenders are much less likely to employ these traditionally theistic terms to describe spirituality, while Christians who are actively engaged in their congregations, across the various denominations we included, are very likely to talk about the spiritual life in religious terms centered on God and to speak about the ways their traditions

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[12]A number of theorists have explored the distinction between everyday "rationalistic" or "immanent" perceptions of reality and the ability to perceive a second layer of consciousness, among them James ([1936] 1994) and Taylor (2007).

Table 2: Use of theistic discourse

	Percentage with "broad" use of Theistic meanings
Religious traditions***	
Mainline Protestant (14)	86
Conservative Protestant (20)	95
African-American Protestant (10)	90
Catholic (20)	60
Jewish (10)	30
Mormon (5)	100
Neo-Pagan (5)	80
Nonaffiliates (11)	27
Attendance***	
Rare or never (34)	50
Average or more (61)	82
Education*	
Less than college (12)	92
College or more (83)	67
Age*	
65 or less (81)	67
Over 65 (14)	93
Ethnicity*	
African American (12)	92
All others (83)	67
Gender	
Men (35)	69
Women (65)	72
Overall average	*71*

$*p < .10$; $**p < .05$; $***p < .001$.
Note: Broad use is defined here as telling stories that draw on at least two separate Theistic meanings. Differences among categories are assessed by comparisons of means, with a one-way analysis of variance.

have taught them to expect God to meet them—in prayer, in scripture, in the occasional times when what happens seems to demand a divine explanation. Similarly, the Neo-Pagans in our study were just as conversant with a Theistic spiritual discourse, even if with a different set of deities. They too understood spirituality to be about the actions of gods and goddesses, about practices of connecting with that spiritual world, and about embracing spiritual mysteries. Other theistic religious traditions would likely provide their own versions of a spiritual discourse focused on the divine, as well.

(2) *The Extra-Theistic Package*

In everyday usage, the majority of Americans use a Theistic spiritual discourse that is anchored in participation in religious organizations, but there is also a spirituality that is not anchored in theistic images and religious participation. Here, too, the cultural patterns are not random. A cluster of definitions emerges from the stories we heard and speaks of a world of experiences that do not depend on the Christian (or any other) god. They speak of spirituality in terms of a different kind of transcendence, of experiences "bigger than me" and beyond the ordinary. Here spirituality is located in the core of the self, in connection to community, in the sense of awe engendered by the natural world and various forms of beauty, and in the life philosophies crafted by an individual seeking life's meaning.

These ways of thinking about spirituality are often described in the literature as "immanent," flowing from the person, the community, and the natural world and needing no authority beyond the person's own experience.[13] That may be so, but when our participants talked about this kind of spirituality, they spoke of rising beyond the mundane and the everyday. What they were describing seemed akin to what Taylor (2007) called "fullness," places where ordinary life is touched by an affectively charged perception that things have meaning, where the modern "immanent frame" of explicability and calculation is opened to something beyond. What they are describing may not come from a transcendent deity, and it is certainly not supernatural, but it is nevertheless transcendent in character.

Works of art, music, nature, and other objects of beauty, for instance, were "spiritual" when they evoked awe, when they asked a person to stop, step out of the ordinary business of life, stretching the mind and imagination. This is not about explanation, but about affect, a feeling evoked when a reality is greater than the sum of the parts that can be seen. If anything, it is an anti-explanation. Jonathan Snow, one of our secular participants in Atlanta said: "Experiencing things that are calming and healing in what might almost be a spiritual way—I've had that from lots of things. Music, movies that I love, and books. Even poetry, although I'm not a big poetry person." Rebecca Klein, a member of Congregation Sinai on Boston's North Shore, noted: "every night we hear the ocean and it puts us to sleep and it's quite something. It is spiritual." Encountering beauty in all its forms seems to evoke for many of our respondents "rumors of angels" (Berger 1970), hints of "something beyond." If our secular participants have any spiritual sensibility at all, this is it.

Just as the beauty of the natural world sometimes signals spirituality, so too spirituality sometimes is described as transcendence found in the social world. Finding (or losing) oneself in the ocean of a common human spirit is another of the things people can mean when they say something is spiritual. Durkheim ([1912] 1964) would, of course, not be surprised. In the "collective effervescence" of rituals and the sense of solidarity engendered by group symbols, people experience themselves as part of something beyond themselves, something they identify as a god, but that is actually, Durkheim argued, the transcendent reality of society itself. Indeed, some of our participants spoke of spirituality in terms of the interconnectedness of all of life, the importance of "community," or of experiencing a deep sense of compassion. That sense of interconnection was especially strong in the stories told by the members of the Georgia Neo-Pagan group. Emma Cooper said: "Everything around you is a manifestation of the divine, and we're all part of it. We're all pieces. It's all really, really interconnected."

Transcendent moments in nature or in community were ways of describing spirituality that often appeared alongside talk about seeing a meaningful pattern in one's own life. Much of sociological theorizing about religion has taken "meaning making" as a starting point. Human beings are, as Berger (1969) taught us, animals who must construct a meaningful world for themselves. Not all meanings are spiritual, but an individual life of meaning and a meaningful cosmos are often connected. The seekers among our participants often talked about what they were seeking in terms of a "path" or "truth" that would guide their lives. Alex Polani, an active seeker we found in an Internet chat room, spoke in his diary of how he had "been influenced by metaphysics a lot recently and a lot of movies that are out, and a lot of books I've been reading and paralleling each other," sometimes getting "a strong hunch about a certain area regarding my path." As Greg Collins (a lapsed Catholic) put it: "There is a bigger purpose and you have to set aside time to, I don't know that you ever figure out that purpose, but you have to set aside time to at least open yourself up to thinking about that purpose—to being open to some purpose that doesn't come from inside of you." Others were not so sure that meaning and transcendence had

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[13]This distinction is often present in theoretical discussions of the "autonomous individual" (e.g., Davie, Woodhead, and Heelas 2003; Hammond 1992; Seligman 2000).

Table 3: Use of Extra-Theistic discourse

	Percentage with "broad" use of Extra-Theistic meanings
***Religious traditions	
Mainline Protestant (14)	57
Conservative Protestant (20)	25
African-American Protestant (10)	50
Catholic (20)	60
Jewish (10)	70
Mormon (5)	40
Neo-Pagan (5)	100
Nonaffiliates (11)	91
**Attendance	
Rare or never (34)	71
Average or more (61)	49
Education	
Less than college (12)	42
College or more (83)	59
*Age	
21–35 (22)	50
36–65 (59)	64
Over 65 (14)	36
Ethnicity	
African American (12)	42
All others (83)	59
Gender	
Men (35)	60
Women (65)	55
Overall average	*57*

$*p < .10$ (boomers compared to all others); $**p < .05$; $***p < .01$.
Note: Broad use is defined here as telling stories that draw on at least two Extra-Theistic meanings. Differences among categories assessed by comparisons of means, with a one-way analysis of variance.

to come from outside. Spirituality can also be linked with the inner self, with finding one's own "spark of the divine." As Alex said: "Everyone has something that is a gift that they can offer that is really distinctive of their personality."

PRODUCING AND LOCATING EXTRA-THEISTIC SPIRITUALITIES

Listening to these stories, it is evident that religiously indifferent and religiously active participants alike are relating them. Whereas people who are not part of religious communities only thinly use the Theistic cultural discourse, this Extra-Theistic package is part of a vocabulary available beyond the churches. Our nonaffiliated participants and the members of the Neo-Pagan group were collectively the most likely to speak of spirituality in these Extra-Theistic terms (see Table 3).

It is, however, a discourse also widely used by those who do participate in traditional religious communities. Mainline Protestants, African-American Protestants, and Catholics who attend church regularly were almost as likely to use these discourses about spirituality as were our nonattending and unaffiliated participants. Mainline Protestants and African-American Protestants (and to a lesser extent Catholics) who are active attenders, in fact, employ a robust set of

Extra-Theistic images *along with* their array of Theistic ones. They are conversant with the spiritual language of their traditions, but they also see spirituality in experiences beyond those traditions. The churches themselves sometimes promote just this sort of cross-over, offering classes in meditation or yoga, for instance, that are framed in generic ways that obscure their religious roots and emphasize development of one's interior self. The permeable boundaries between established Christian communities and the larger culture can be seen in this mixed discursive field.[14]

The participants in some other Christian communities, however, were less likely to describe spirituality in these broader terms. Conservative Protestants and Mormons are distinctive among our participants for the relative absence of spiritual language that moves beyond theism. Both conservative Protestants and Mormons inhabit a spiritual world saturated with symbols and experiences that focus on a clearly identified deity, and they have a long list of things one can do to be in relation to that deity. What happens in the natural world—as well as in their own souls—has specific theological significance and does not depend on any broader, generic spiritual language. We cannot directly tell from the stories we heard whether these conservative traditions actively *discourage* Extra-Theistic spirituality, but there are hints that they do: active conservative Protestants, for instance, are far less likely to invoke Extra-Theistic themes than are their inactive conservative compatriots. Part of being "sectarian" is having a comprehensive and relatively exclusive cultural repertoire for defining the spiritual world.

Use of Extra-Theistic discourses is far more a matter of religious affiliation (and nonaffiliation) than a matter of the usual demographic and social divisions. Men and women, African Americans and Euro-Americans all use Extra-Theistic terms with equal likelihood. While predictably our oldest participants were the most likely to use Theistic categories and the least likely to use Extra-Theistic ones, the most likely users of these Extra-Theistic spiritual categories are not the youngest cohort, but the middle ones (those born between 1942 and 1972). The particular cultural trends of the Baby Boom and the years since are discernable here as they have been in other studies of religion and spirituality (Frisk 2010).

There are hints in our data, then, that cultural currents make people discourse more and less available in various corners of the population. Boomers seem open to a broad definition of spirituality, and some liberal religious institutions are at least friendly to Extra-Theistic spiritualities. While the effect of college education is not statistically significant, the difference is in the direction we might expect. College campuses can be important settings in which a broad Extra-Theistic discourse about spirituality is encountered. But no single set of organizations maintains primary cultural production rights over this more loosely wrapped discursive package; it is most prevalent among precisely those who are not affiliated with the religious institutions who produce and standardize spiritual vocabularies for others.

There are, of course, deep traditions and myriad contemporary cultural products on which people can draw. From the spiritualists of the 19th century to the New Age and beyond, spiritual ideas and practices have long proliferated in American culture (Albanese 1990; Schmidt 2005; Sutcliffe 2003). Today's expressive individualism has its roots in Romanticism, and Pragmatist philosophies have long provided alternative, nontheistic ways to describe the moral life. All of these ideas and trends are widely available to well-educated readers and subtly inform an Extra-Theistic form of spiritual discourse. Bender (2010), for instance, noted the ubiquitous presence of James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* ([1936] 1994) on the shelves of the "new metaphysicals" she interviewed in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She also discovered, however, that participants in nontraditional spiritual practices are prevented from seeing their own shared

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[14]Mainline Protestant ways of embracing the larger culture, including its orientation toward cultivating the self and exploring broader spiritualities, are explored in a number of studies (Besecke 2001; Davie 1995; Ellingson 2001; Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens 1994).

history by their insistence on a discourse of individual quests and personal authenticity. The underlying cultural patterns are there, but they are obscured by the rhetoric of individualism.

Despite wide exposure in popular media, the Extra-Theist package is less prevalent than the Theistic one (57 percent of our participants, compared to 71 percent with a broad use of Theistic meanings). Extra-Theistic meanings are also less dominant in this U.S. sample than many European studies suggest is the case there. Comparing our findings with those of one of those European studies provides further confirmation of the ways spirituality is culturally packaged. While many studies simply start from the *assumption* that European spirituality, to the extent that it exists at all, has taken an inward turn away from church authority and toward a personal journey, Palmisano (2010) stepped back from that assumption to ask what sorts of spiritualities do exist and how they are and are not related to traditional religious institutions and ideas (see also Barker 2004; Davie, Woodhead, and Heelas 2003; Pessi 2013). Asking respondents, "What does the word 'spirituality' mean to you?" the Italian Spirituality Project offered a list of 10 possibilities, each of which could be accepted or rejected. "Seeking the inner self, developing your spiritual qualities" was the third-ranked response, behind similar items about striving "for a state of harmony and inner peace" (number 1) and "seeking the meaning of life" (number 2), each garnering assent from over 80 percent of the respondents and together constituting a factor Palmisano (2010) labels "inner-self spirituality." In our sample, by contrast, similar assertions about the inner self and seeking meaning emerged from the narratives of half or less of the participants. While the methods are different, the comparisons are nevertheless suggestive. In Italy, with almost no conservative Protestants to suppress the use of Extra-Theistic categories, and with a far larger nonparticipating and functionally unaffiliated population that lacks regular immersion in institutions where Theistic categories dominate, we would expect Extra-Theistic discourses about spirituality to be dominant—as they are.

(3) *Ethical Spirituality: A Common Denominator*

Theistic and Extra-Theistic discursive strategies each represent a package of ways of marking the distinctive, but overlapping, cultural locations occupied by spiritualities. The one thing agreed upon across both those terrains, however, is that real spirituality is about living a virtuous life, one characterized by helping others, transcending one's own selfish interests to seek what is right. Olivia Howell, a 36-year-old Southern Baptist in Atlanta, was explicit about what real spirituality means: "The whole point is, though, if you don't love your neighbor, anything that's accomplished, even in God's name, right, even if you say you're doing good in God's name, it does not matter." Roughly three-quarters of both the Italian sample and this U.S. sample identified spirituality in moral terms not unlike those used by the people I described as "Golden Rule Christians"[15] (Ammerman 1997). I identified this as America's mainstream form of religiosity, with a focus on living one's faith everyday and a relative disinterest in doctrinal orthodoxy. Synagogue members fit this profile, as well, and some of those least connected to religious communities opined that this is what *should* count. If people are going to claim to be spiritual, unbelievers want to see it in the way they live. When our participants told stories about their everyday worlds, they saw hints of spirituality in "random acts of kindness."

In both the Italian responses and our own, this emphasis on an Ethical spirituality exists both inside and outside the religious communities and thoroughly permeates every demographic corner of the culture. While we might be tempted to chalk this up to a distinctly American pragmatism, it seems to stretch beyond American boundaries. In the face of resolutely materialist societies

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[15]Similarly, Pessi's (2013) research on Finns who are in the "fuzzy" category of belonging, but being not especially active or devout, suggests that their strongest expectation of religious communities is that they provide clear and authentic ethical words and deeds.

dominated by "rational actors," seeking the well-being of others is nonordinary. To live an ethical life is a form of spiritual discipline.

(4) *Belief and Belonging Spirituality: A Contested Category*

For roughly half our participants, spirituality is understood to be about believing in God and doctrines about God, and for more than three-quarters it is about being part of a religious tradition; and those two discursive uses are tightly clustered together. Here we find the elements that constitute the way "religiosity" is typically measured.[16] What that masks, however, is that our participants varied widely on whether they thought this sort of spirituality was a good thing. Some people who are active religious participants included these indicators in their understanding of spiritual life. But so, in roughly equal numbers, did secular participants who have *rejected* religious institutions. A closer look at the stories themselves made clear that the meaning of this form of spirituality is contested.

Believing, for instance, could either be a way of talking about devout spirituality or a way of describing superstition. Belonging can represent a positive identity or a symbol of being trapped in an authoritarian tradition. Those who are actively engaged with a religious tradition were very likely to link their belonging positively with their sense of what spirituality is. Being part of the Jewish people, belonging to a local church, claiming a Catholic identity, were interwoven with positive stories about spirituality. Those who have rejected traditional religious participation, on the other hand, link belonging with an absence of spiritual authenticity. Samantha Bailey contrasts what she sees in her evangelically dominated southern community with the choice she has made to become part of a Pagan community. "I find that a lot of people, and I don't know if it's just around here or everywhere, they just go through the motions . . . . You log in your time at church every Sunday to buy your ticket into heaven." This sort of Belief and Belonging Spirituality is not something she values.

Those inside religious communities, then, tend to wrap belief and belonging together as a positive expression of spirituality. By contrast, those who have rejected religious participation, associate religious belief and belonging, as one person put it, with "a structured organized check all the boxes" regime. This is the spirituality they think religious people have, and it is a spirituality they reject. These differing evaluations begin to tell us something about those "spiritual but not religious" claims we hear so often.

Finding the "Spiritual But Not Religious"

The results presented so far indicate that there are distinct discourses about spirituality, each with its own cultural location—a Theistic package located disproportionately among those active in organized religious communities, especially conservative ones; an Extra-Theistic package used by those who are not religiously active, but also by nonconservative religious participants; and an Ethical spiritual discourse located across all segments of the population. Spirituality has recognizable cultural contours that are neither monolithic nor distinct from religion, but Belief and Belonging Spiritual discourse is a place where definitional tensions are apparent.

The world most of our participants inhabit is, in fact, both spiritual and religious at the same time, just as the large survey studies have shown. For a large majority, spirituality is defined by and interchangeable with the experiences their religious communities have offered them and taught them how to interpret. For most of those who are actively involved in a congregation,

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[16] A "Religious Spirituality" factor was present in the Italian data, as well, questions about belief in God, belief in a higher power, and going to church garnering 76 percent, 71 percent, and 51 percent responses, respectively (The Italian Religion and Spirituality Project, detailed results made available by Stefania Palmisano to the author.)

there was no necessary conflict between "religion" and "spirituality." Similarly, in the Italian study referenced earlier, even with wide acceptance of what Palmisano (2010) calls "immanent" understandings of spirituality,[17] only 8 percent of the Italian respondents claimed to be "spiritual, but not religious," while 64 percent claimed both.

In spite of the overlap in reality, the spiritual-but-not-religious rhetoric persists. We did not force respondents to say yes or no to questions about religion and spirituality, so we could simply listen for when they invoked this oppositional rhetoric, even if they were describing others, rather than themselves. What sort of spirituality were they talking about, and what picture of religion did they invoke?[18] It was present in the stories told by about a third of the participants, often by those who are neither (organizationally or personally) religious nor spiritual.[19] Robin Mitchell, a secular financial planner from Boston (raised as a secular Jew), was among the more eloquent among our participants. In one of her diary entries, she mused:

> If there's anything in the Bible that I would resonate with it would be the idea of Jesus. Not the idea of Jesus, excuse me, the teachings of Jesus. He seemed sort of like a John Lennon type, and I think it's just a shame that what has been layered onto Christianity obscures so thickly the basic message of loving thy neighbor and taking care of other people.

Robin talked at length about the moral lapses of organized religion and why she decided not to be affiliated, but neither is she particularly interested in practicing other forms of spirituality. When she talks about a spirituality that she sees as legitimate, it is Ethical Spirituality.

This link between nonaffiliates and a discourse that distances spirituality from religion may seem predictable, but at the other end of the scale of religious salience are conservative Protestants who are just as likely to talk this way as are their secular neighbors. They too draw an explicit distinction between "religion" and "spirituality," with a preference for the spiritual. Among them we heard a discourse about "mere" religion not being sufficient; what is required is a personal spiritual relationship with Jesus. Jessica Fletcher, a member of a Vineyard Community Church in Atlanta, recounted her life before her conversion, "I didn't have a relationship with God or with Jesus at that point anyway. It was just a relationship with the religious aspect of it." When we hear that someone does not want to be religious, then, it may not signal distancing from religious communities, but distancing from one kind of religiosity by those who favor a different kind.

So who really fits the "spiritual not religious" label? The vast majority of our participants were either both (49) or neither (24).[20] Five of our participants were spiritually engaged, but inactive in their religious communities for pragmatic reasons, but another five seem to fit—in practice—the "spiritual-not-religious" pattern. They are at least moderately spiritually engaged, but have distanced themselves from organized religion. Only one of them, however, fits the profile of the "seeker," actively engaged with alternative spiritualities and long since distanced from his

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[17]Here she distinguishes them from religious spiritualities located in an external god beyond this world, following other European researchers in emphasizing the this-worldly character of these "new" nontheistic spiritualities (Frisk 2010; Heelas and Woodhead 2004).

[18]Discursive definitions of religion could be analyzed much as this study has analyzed uses of 'spirituality', but that is beyond the scope of the present analysis. Here we are primarily interested in the use of religion as a category that stands in opposition to spirituality.

[19]Smith argues that among the emerging adults he studied, "the Irreligious are not interested in 'spirituality,' other than to criticize it" (2009:295).

[20]Participants were coded on a scale of 0–5 for expressed salience of spirituality, on a scale of 0–4 for frequency of religious service attendance, and from 0–15 for the number of stories they told about spiritual practices in which they engage. The correlation (Kendall's tau b) between salience and attendance was .60 and between practices and attendance was .64. Note that there are also 12 participants active in religious communities despite being personally disinterested in spiritual pursuits.

religious upbringing. The other four remain religiously affiliated—two mainline Protestants, one Catholic, and one Jew—and are more neutral than antagonistic toward their religious communities. Grace Shoemaker, an occasional attender at All Saints Episcopal north of Boston, is one of them. She told us, "I think of myself as spiritual. Because it doesn't matter what church I'm in. I am who I am." The dearth of actual practitioners of "spirituality" who are not also drawing on religious communities and traditions reinforces the empirical picture that has consistently emerged from surveys as well. People who choose one designation (spiritual) but not another (religious) do not necessarily represent a prevalent new form of religiosity, so much as a prevalent form of cultural rhetoric.

Discussion: "Spiritual But Not Religious" as a Moral Category

The places where the "spiritual-not-religious" discursive boundary is drawn are, then, not necessarily the same places occupied by actual spiritually attuned, but not organizationally involved people. That disjuncture, along with the contested meanings of Belief and Belonging Spirituality, suggests that political and not descriptive work is being done, that people are engaged in moral boundary work (Lamont 1992), setting out distinctions that allow status comparisons based on qualities judged as virtuous. When conservative Protestants say that they do not wish to be merely religious, they have in mind others who they think *are* merely religious and from whom they wish to distinguish themselves. The rhetoric identifies a moral boundary between godly people and ungodly ones. For them Theistic Spirituality is used to define a specific moral universe that is strongly reinforced by active participation in conservative religious communities, a participation that is itself also seen as spiritual.

The other group positing a "spiritual-not-religious" category is drawing boundaries as well. Robin insists that religiosity amounts to hypocrisy and empty rituals that do not lead to a good and caring life. Like some modern social theorists, from Marx to Foucault, the secularists and disaffiliated among our participants often see organized religion as an oppressive power, depriving individuals of personal and political freedom; and like Enlightenment philosophers for multiple centuries, they pit religious belief against reason.[21] One theme in the secular stories we heard was an encounter with ideas, usually during their college years, that challenged the religious beliefs they had been taught and caused them to reject organized religion as implausible. Lily Mattison, an ex-Catholic in Atlanta, described the "annoying" religious people on her campus. "They had all these views that they didn't substantiate with any like factual reasoning, and we were in college, and I felt like you needed to at least have some kind of academic or intellectual reasoning behind things." People who fail to provide reasons are, in this moral universe, people from whom "my kind of people" tend to distance themselves.

Spiritual-but-not-religious, then, is more a moral and political category than an empirical one. If Ecklund's study of elite scientists can be taken as a guide here, it might be suggested that those who see religion as an enemy are likely to be fairly inarticulate about what religion actually is (2010:27). The "religion" being rejected turns out to be quite unlike the religion being practiced and described by those affiliated with religious institutions. Likewise, the "spirituality" being endorsed as an alternative is at least as widely practiced by those same religious people as it is by the people drawing a moral boundary against them. Paying attention to this discourse is an important part of understanding contemporary American religion, but researchers should not take the rhetoric as a guide for understanding either spirituality or religion *per se*.

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[21] In both cases, the realities of these theorists' views are more complicated than they might seem. Marx clearly wishes humanity to transcend religion, but recognizes a necessary role for the comfort of religion in the midst of suffering (Marx 1963). Foucault ([1978] 1999) both condemned and admired the power of organized religion and maintained a strong interest in various forms of spirituality and mysticism (Carrett 1999).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This exploratory research has identified three distinct cultural discourses within which talk about spirituality takes place, as well as a contested fourth cultural package whose meaning is shaped by the same rhetorical boundary that separates "religion" from "spirituality" in the popular imagination of some. Spirituality is, then, a cultural category that is neither utterly variable (whatever each individual takes it to mean) nor an undifferentiated domain on the other axis of the two-by-two table from religion. Future research on spirituality should neither presume it to be primarily an extra-institutional phenomenon nor presume that a single umbrella designator can describe the varieties of spiritualities present in U.S. (and European) culture. Rather than assuming that "religion" is best measured by organizational belonging and traditional belief while spirituality is best seen as an individual experiential creation, we would do well to recognize that both have institutional producers. A fuller understanding of religion requires the incorporation of attention to Extra-Theistic and Ethical spiritualities, as well as to Theistic ones. And it requires attention to the ways both traditional religious organizations and nontraditional cultural sites play roles in producing each of these ways of expressing human connections to transcendence.

This kind of work is one more step in removing the theoretical blinders supplied by secularization theories, blinders that took for granted the growing irrelevance of traditional religious institutions. Over the past century, the nature of religion and its place in society has indeed changed, but not always in the directions the founders would have expected. Not only has religion proven empirically resilient in the face of modernization, it has also refused to yield ground in the face of its presumed replacement by diffuse individualized spiritualities. At least in the United States, the most pervasive spirituality is the Theistic one defined and practiced by participants in religious institutions. Yet all but the most conservative of them are *also* willing to occupy Extra-Theistic and Ethical spiritual discursive territory alongside their secular neighbors.

One implication of this strong overlap is that our measures of religiosity need to be broader. "Modern" societies found it convenient to organize religion into a distinct set of organizations, with well-articulated rules, authorities, membership, and credentials. Modern sociologists followed suit, defining the object of study in terms of those rationalized ideas and organizations that seemed to contain the phenomenon at hand (Asad 1993). But in modern and nonmodern societies alike, religion always seemed to leak out of the box. From anthropology to history to sociological ethnographies, research over the last generation has made clear just how diverse human spiritual life is (McGuire 2008). There may be occasions for studying religion by asking questions about orthodox Christian doctrinal beliefs and summing up the answers, but that routine sociological habit leaves much religious life untested and unexplained. The research reported here suggests that "religion" must be understood to *include* a spiritual domain.

That is certainly the case for the United States and Europe, but even more so in the rest of the world. This research has only scratched the surface of the ways in which religion is often a fraught political category, not simply a category of everyday experience and voluntary organizations.[22] What has been addressed here, however, suggests that the sociological study of religion is not neatly contained in binary categories of organized v. individual, religious v. spiritual, theistic and transcendent v. nontheistic and immanent. All these things are contained within the discourses about spirituality we heard; and all of them exist within religious institutions, as well as outside those institutions. Our categories of analysis need to encompass the large areas of overlap, but they also simply need to be redrawn. Understanding religion requires that we take spiritualities as seriously as we have always taken belief and belonging.

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[22]Denton Jones (2010), similarly, points to how the use of the descriptor "religion" does political work for Buddhists in today's China. Some Buddhists claim the term as a way to protect the legal legitimacy of their practices, while others reject it because they are in routine interactional settings where the dominant meaning of "religion" is superstition. For them, the practice of Buddhism is described as rational techniques and scientific learning.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

Table A1. Religious Distribution of Sample Compared to National Population.