

The Spiritual Revolution and the New Age Gender Puzzle

The Sacralisation of the Self in Late Modernity (1980-2000)*

*Dick Houtman
Stef Aupers*

Forthcoming in
Giselle Vincett, Sonya Sharma, and Kristin Aune (eds),
Women and Religion in the West: Challenging Secularization,
Aldershot: Ashgate.

Postal address
Department of Sociology
Faculty of Social Sciences
Erasmus University
P.O. Box 1738
3000 DR Rotterdam
The Netherlands

Telephone
+31-10-4082118/2085

Fax
+31-10-4089098

Email
Houtman@fsw.eur.nl

* Delivered as a keynote lecture by the first author at the conference *Religion and Gender*, BSA Sociology of Religion Study Group, Lancaster University, April 11-13, 2005, this chapter has benefited greatly from research conducted during his visiting professorship at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Marseille, France (November 2003). The authors further thank Sabine Lauderbach, Peter Mascini and Peter Achterberg for their useful comments on an earlier draft – especially Peter Achterberg’s statistical advice was as useful as ever. Finally, they wish to acknowledge Linda Scheelbeek, because it was her Master’s thesis (2003) that put the first author (who acted as her supervisor) on the track of the solution to the gender puzzle proposed here.

About the authors

Dick Houtman is an associate professor of sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and a member of the Amsterdam School for Social Science Research (ASSR). His principal research interest is cultural change in late modernity, with a focus on its political and religious ramifications. His latest book is *Class and Politics in Contemporary Social Science: 'Marxism Lite' and Its Blind Spot for Culture* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2003) and he is currently preparing a book that is provisionally titled *Beyond Faith and Reason: New Age, Postmodernism and the Disenchantment of the World*.

Stef Aupers is a postdoc of sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. He participates in the research program *Cyberspace Salvations: Computer Technology, Simulation and Modern Gnosis*, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). He has published widely on New Age and has in 2004 defended his Ph.D. thesis *In de ban van moderniteit: De sacralisering van het zelf en computertechnologie* [Under the Spell of Modernity: The Sacralisation of Self and Computer Technology] (Amsterdam: Aksant).

The Spiritual Revolution and the New Age Gender Puzzle

The Sacralisation of the Self in Late Modernity (1980-2000)

Dick Houtman and Stef Aupers

Introduction

Secularisation theory, once sociology of religion's proud theoretical flagship, has run into stormy weather since the 1980s. Once considered an empirically sound theory by the social-scientific community, many now feel that it has been exposed as a mere ideology or wish dream, intimately tied to the rationalist discourse of modernity (e.g., Hadden, 1987; Stark and Finke, 2000; Meyer and Pels, 2003). It is hardly contested, to be sure, that church membership, adherence to traditional Christian doctrines and values, and participation in church rituals relating to birth, marriage, and death, have all declined considerably in Western-European countries. But precisely because of the one-sided attention to those prominent processes of religious decline, it is still quite unclear whether 'new' or 'alternative' types of religion have come to blossom outside the traditional Christian realm (e.g., Luckmann, 2003; Knoblauch, 2003; Stark et al., 2005).

Some observers have recently argued that such is indeed the case. What we are witnessing today, they argue, is not simply a process of secularisation, but rather a decline of traditional Christian religion that goes along with a slowly unfolding spiritual revolution (Houtman and Mascini, 2002; Heelas et al., 2004).¹ Contemporary spirituality is held to be an outgrowth of what emerged as the 'New Age' movement in the 1960s' counter culture as an offshoot of the tradition of Western esotericism

(Roszak, 1969; Zijderveld, 1970; Hanegraaff, 1996).² With its gradual disembedding from this countercultural fringe, New Age has since expanded into the very centre of late-modern culture (Van Otterloo, 1999). Sutcliffe and Bowman do not even seem to exaggerate when they observe that ‘contrary to predictions that New Age would go mainstream, now it’s as if the mainstream is going New Age’ (2000: 11). The once typical belief in a dawning ‘New Age of Aquarius’ has waned in the process and the ‘New Age’ label has increasingly been replaced by that of ‘spirituality’.

Unfortunately, there is hardly any hard evidence that spirituality has indeed become more widespread. Houtman and Mascini (2002), for instance, rely on one-shot-survey data, interpreting differences between age categories as processes of historical change. Heelas et al. (2004) offer convincing evidence, but assume that the bulk of spirituality can be found in the spiritual milieu – an assumption that seems unduly restrictive.³ Judging from its virtual omnipresence on the internet and its prominence in contemporary business life, for instance, spirituality has by now moved well beyond the boundaries of the spiritual milieu (Aupers and Houtman, 2005; Aupers and Houtman, 2006; Aupers et al., submitted for publication). A first aim of the present chapter, then, is to provide evidence for the spread of spirituality during the last few decades by studying spiritual beliefs and self-designations among the general populations of Western countries.

This chapter’s more important second aim is to refine Houtman and Mascini’s (2002) theory that the spread of spirituality is caused by a process of detraditionalisation. This refinement is called for, because in its original form it cannot explain the high levels of affinity with spirituality among women (although it does a good job in explaining those among the younger age cohorts and the well educated). With men and women being identical when it comes to levels of post-traditionalism, the question why women nevertheless display more affinity with spirituality than men remains ‘an intriguing and theoretically important puzzle to be solved’ (Houtman and Mascini, 2002: 468). Solving this ‘gender puzzle’ (Heelas et al., 2004) requires gendering the theory of detraditionalisation (see also Woodhead 2005, forthcoming

2006). The second aim of the present chapter, in short, is to develop and test a gendered version of the theory of detraditionalisation.

Conceptualising Contemporary Spirituality

Writings about contemporary spirituality typically invoke an image of a veritable implosion of religion and consumer choice, speaking of ‘do-it-yourself-religion’ (Baerveldt, 1996), ‘pick-and-mix religion’ (Hamilton, 2000), ‘religious consumption à la carte’ (Possamai, 2003) or a ‘spiritual supermarket’ (Lyon, 2000). This type of discourse is even used by defenders of secularisation theory and New Agers, two otherwise radically different groups. The former use it to construct spirituality’s widespread contemporary presence as confirming rather than contradicting secularisation theory: ‘The New Age is eclectic to an unprecedented degree and ... is ... dominated by the principle that the sovereign consumer will decide what to believe I cannot see how a shared faith can be created from a low-salience world of pick-and-mix religion’ (Bruce, 2002: 105).⁴ New Age apologetics use this type of discourse to highlight the enormous variety within the spiritual milieu, so as to emphasise its openness to diversity and seemingly unprecedented opportunities for individual choice and liberty, characterising the Christian churches as dogmatic and authoritarian in the process. The following explanation of a spiritual trainer of a Dutch New Age centre provides a good illustration:⁵

New Age is like a religious supermarket. All aspects of religion ... are put together on a big pile and people can choose what is best for them at that moment in time. And that’s the good thing about the New Age world – that nobody claims to have a monopoly on wisdom. Whereas the old religions argue “We possess the absolute truth and this is the only way to God”, we say “There are ten thousand ways” and “There are as many ways as there are people”.

Although, to be sure, those positions are not completely mistaken, they overestimate the individualistic character of spirituality. True, the well-packed shelves of the spiritual supermarket enable one to sample one's personal spiritual diet, but underneath the resulting diversity lies a shared belief that has been neglected all too often: 'The great refrain, running throughout the New Age, is that we malfunction because we have been indoctrinated (...) by mainstream society and culture' (Heelas, 1996: 18). The latter are thus conceived of as basically alienating forces, held to estrange one from one's 'authentic', 'natural' or 'real' self – from who one 'really' or 'at deepest' is:

Perfection can be found only by moving beyond the socialised self – widely known as the 'ego' but also as the 'lower self', 'intellect' or the 'mind' – thereby encountering a new realm of being. It is what we are *by nature*. Indeed, the most pervasive and significant aspect of the *lingua franca* of the New Age is that the person is, in essence, spiritual. To experience the 'Self' itself is to experience ... 'inner spirituality'. ... The inner realm, and the inner realm alone, is held to serve as the source of authentic vitality, creativity, love, tranquillity, wisdom, power, authority and all those other qualities which are held to comprise the perfect life (Heelas, 1996: 19, his emphasis, DH/SA).

This, then, is the key tenet of spirituality: the belief that in the deepest layers of the self the 'divine spark' – to borrow a term from ancient Gnosticism – is still smouldering, waiting to be stirred up and succeed the socialised self. This constitutes a basically romanticist conception of the self that 'lays central stress on unseen, even sacred forces that dwell within the person, forces that give life and relationships their significance' (Gergen, 1991: 19). Re-establishing contact with such a 'true', 'deeper' or 'divine' self is held to enable one to reconnect to a sacred realm that holistically connects 'everything' and to overcome one's present state of alienation. No wonder, then, that spirituality is deeply influenced by humanistic psychology and that '... "personal growth" can be understood as the shape "religious salvation" takes in the New Age

Movement: it is affirmed that deliverance from human suffering and weakness will be reached by developing our human potential, which results in our increasingly getting in touch with our inner divinity' (Hanegraaff, 1996: 46).

This 'sacralisation of the self' encourages people to 'follow their personal paths', rather than conform to authoritative role models. Those concerned do not pursue meaning and identity from 'pre-given' sources located outside the self (e.g., the institutionalised answers offered by the Christian churches), but want to rely on an 'internal' source, located in the self's deeper layers. As such, spirituality conceives of itself as an epistemological third way of 'gnosis', rejecting both religious faith and scientific reason as vehicles of truth. Rather, it is held that one should be faithful to one's 'inner voice' and trust one's 'intuition':

According to (gnosis) truth can only be found by personal, inner revelation, insight or 'enlightenment'. Truth can only be personally experienced: in contrast with the knowledge of *reason* or *faith*, it is in principle not generally accessible. This 'inner knowing' cannot be transmitted by discursive language (this would reduce it to rational knowledge). Nor can it be the subject of *faith* ... because there is in the last resort no other authority than personal, inner experience (Hanegraaff, 1996: 519, his emphasis, DH/SA).

Although the emergence of a pluralistic spiritual supermarket confirms Luckmann's (1967) classical predictions, it has simultaneously blinded many observers to the shared tenet of self-spirituality – the belief that the self itself is sacred. It is precisely this idea that not only accounts for the diversity at the surface of the spiritual milieu – an inevitable outcome when people feel that they need to follow their personal paths and explore what works for them personally –, but that also provides it with unity at a deeper level. Spirituality is certainly individualistic, in short, but it is so neither because a shared worldview is absent, nor because those concerned are as authentic as they typically believe they are. It is individualistic because of its shared idea that personal

authenticity needs to be attained by expressing a ‘real’ self, basically ‘unpolluted’ by culture, history and society.

Mapping the Spiritual Revolution

The World Values Survey (1981-2000)

Studies about spirituality are typically based on qualitative research, employing semi-structured interviews, ethnography, case studies, content analysis, etcetera. Those studies do not permit a systematic comparison of countries and periods, so as to find out whether spirituality has indeed become more widespread within a particular country, whether the same applies to other countries, and in which countries it has expanded most. These types of questions, addressed in the current chapter, require survey data and quantitative research methods.

Although good scales for the measurement of spirituality have become available during the last few years (e.g., Granqvist and Hagekull, 2001; Houtman and Mascini, 2002), such scales are unfortunately absent from the large international survey programs that enable comparisons between countries and across time. The *World Values Survey* (WVS) is no exception to this general rule and hence precludes a theoretically sophisticated measurement of the extent to which one identifies with spirituality. We nevertheless feel that it can be used to measure it in a satisfactory, albeit crude, way by strategically combining answers to some of its questions. And whereas no better data sources are available to satisfy our research needs, we feel that some pragmatism is justified— especially so, because the data of the *World Values Survey* are otherwise perfectly suited for our purposes. This is so for three reasons.

Firstly, the three available waves of the WVS (1981, 1990 and 2000) cover a range of twenty years. Of course, one would prefer to also have comparable data for 1970, or even earlier. But then again, twenty years is quite an impressive time span, especially if we realise that the large surveys fielded today hardly include better measures for spirituality. Moreover, it is often argued that the expansion of spirituality

has particularly taken place during the 1980s (e.g., Hanegraaff, 1996; York, 1995), after its first emergence in the 1960s and 1970s counter culture (e.g., Roszak, 1969; Zijderveld, 1970). Secondly, the WVS covers a substantial number of countries. Obviously, not all of those have been included in all three rounds of data collection, not all of those are Western countries with a Christian heritage and the crucial questions have not always been asked. We nevertheless have sufficient data to map and explain the spiritual revolution in fourteen Western countries: France, Great Britain, West-Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, Spain, Ireland, United States, Canada, Norway, Sweden and Iceland.⁶ A third reason why the WVS perfectly meets our needs, is that it strongly emphasises the measurement of adherence to traditional moral values. This makes it highly useful for testing our theory on why a spiritual revolution has occurred in the first place, as we will explain below.

Measuring Spirituality

The questionnaire of the *World Values Survey* contains one very simple question that explicitly and unambiguously taps spirituality as distinguished from traditional Christian religion. Respondents have been asked which of the following four statements comes closest to their personal beliefs: ‘There is a personal God’, ‘There is some sort of spirit or life force’, ‘I don’t really know what to think’ and ‘I don’t really think there is any sort of spirit, God, or life force’. The second answer, belief in some sort of spirit or life force, implies belief in the immanence of the sacred – in stark contrast to traditional Christianity’s belief that ‘The truth is “out there” rather than within; ... transcendent rather than immanent’ (Heelas et al. 2004: 22). Indeed, those who answer that they believe in ‘some sort of spirit or life force’ prove to score substantially higher on a valid and reliable scale for New Age affinity than those who give any of the three other answers (Houtman and Mascini, 2002: 462-463).

Although the questionnaire contains no other questions that explicitly and unambiguously tap affinity with spirituality, we feel that four additional dichotomous indicators can be constructed by capitalising on the circumstance that spirituality sets itself apart from both the Christian churches and secularist rationalism (e.g., Hanegraaff,

1996). Consequently, answers that may crudely indicate spirituality, but may also tap less orthodox Christian affinities, can further be polished by combining them with answers that unambiguously reveal that one critically distances oneself from the Christian church. Likewise, answers indicating such a critical distance can be polished by combining them with answers that indicate a rejection of secularist rationalism. The former strategy enables us to demarcate spirituality from Christianity; the latter to demarcate a rejection of the Christian churches from secularist rationalism.

The first additional indicator arrived at in this way robs the belief of a life after death from its traditional Christian associations by combining it with the feeling that the churches do not give adequate answers to people's spiritual needs. We take the combination of belief in a life after death and this criticism of the churches to indicate spirituality and the three remaining combinations to indicate its absence. The second additional indicator combines a belief in reincarnation (a principal tenet of New Age, closely related to the belief in an immortal self) with an absence of belief in God (compare Heelas, 1996: 112). Those first two additional indicators solve the awkward problem of demarcating the boundary between spirituality and secular-humanist conceptions of 'expressive individualism' (e.g., Bellah et al. 1985; see on this boundary problem: Heelas, 1996: 115-117). Both indicators are precisely convincing, because they do not simply tap (arguably secular) self-expression as a key value, but indeed express belief in the existence of a self that is essentially immortal.

The circumstance that spirituality presents itself as an alternative for both Christian religion ('faith') and secularist rationalism ('reason') is used to construct two further additional indicators. Both capture the idea of spirituality as a third way beyond faith and reason. The first has been constructed by cross-tabulating whether or not one considers oneself a convinced atheist (reason) and whether or not one belongs to a religious denomination (faith). We take a rejection of both of those identities (not belonging to a religious denomination, but not considering oneself a convinced atheist either) to indicate spirituality, coding the three remaining categories as its absence. Likewise, we conceive of having no or not very much confidence in the churches,

although not considering oneself a convinced atheist, as a final indicator for spirituality. Table 1 displays the five resulting indicators.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

More than 40 per cent consider themselves neither convinced atheists, nor have confidence in the churches. As such, this indicator generates the highest level of spirituality. At the other end, a mere 3 per cent believe in re-incarnation but do not believe in God. The three remaining indicators take up positions between those two extremes. We do not claim that a combination of those five dichotomous indicators constitutes a theoretically sophisticated measurement of spirituality. What we do claim is that an index based on those indicators can serve as a crude measure that can meaningfully be used for our purposes: mapping and explaining the spiritual revolution in fourteen Western countries since 1981.⁷

All five dichotomous indicators (1: spirituality; 0: no spirituality) have first been standardised and next combined into an index ranging 0 through 10. Correcting for the number of valid scores, scores have been assigned to all respondents with a valid score on at least three of those five indicators. For one of the 42 year-country combinations – Norway, 2000 – scores could not be assigned due to missing values. This produces measurements of affinity with spirituality for 92 per cent of the 61 352 respondents.

Results

Table 2 displays the distribution of spirituality across the fourteen countries and three years. Italy, Canada and Iceland prove exceptions to the general pattern of change that emerges in that spirituality has declined in those three countries since 1981.⁸ With the exception of those three countries, however, the general pattern of change is clear enough. In the eleven remaining countries spirituality has become more widespread since 1981. The overall trend confirms the idea that a spiritual revolution has been going on during the last two decades.

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Spirituality has expanded most in the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland and the United States. In the latter two countries, despite this substantial growth, it was least

widespread in 1981 and those two countries still lag behind today (only for Italy, in which spirituality has declined since 1981, lower levels of affinity are found in 2000). The countries that lead the way with highest levels of affinity with spirituality are France, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Sweden. It is clear from those findings that spirituality has become more widespread since 1981, confirming the occurrence of a spiritual revolution in late modernity.

But are we really dealing with a process of historical change here? Are differences across this twenty-year period really caused by an intergenerational replacement of older age cohorts with typically Christian affinities by younger age cohorts with spiritual ones? Because our data cover a time range of twenty years and because of the large number of respondents, we can distinguish age from birth year and, hence, disentangle ‘age effects’ and ‘cohort effects’.⁹ This enables us to test whether the higher levels of affinity with spirituality in the most recent period are caused by cohort replacement.

We have done so by means of multilevel analysis with Maximum Likelihood estimation. This method of analysis is used to analyse so-called ‘nested’ data, i.e., data in which cases defined at a lower level (typically, and also in this case, respondents) are embedded in contexts defined at a higher level (in this case: combinations of countries and years). Multilevel analysis enables one to assess the importance of both levels for explaining a variable defined at the individual level, to find out which contextual and individual variables are (most) consequential and to analyse whether the effects of variables defined at the individual level vary across contexts.

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

All variables have been standardised so as to produce standardised regression coefficients (betas) that enable a straightforward comparison of the strengths of the effects found. In this case, aimed at the explanation of individual-level spirituality, the explanatory role of the contextual level proves limited. Only about 6 per cent of the differences at the individual level can be attributed to differences between the years and countries, whereas the remaining 94 per cent is caused by individual characteristics (Table 3). Table 3 demonstrates that the higher level of spirituality in the more recent

period emerges from the circumstance that respondents who most typically embrace spirituality have been born more recently (model 4 as compared to model 2). This means that the spiritual revolution is driven by cohort replacement: younger age cohorts with stronger affinities with spirituality have replaced older age cohorts with more typically Christian affinities.

Explaining the Spiritual Revolution

Detraditionalisation and the Sacralisation of the Self

Despite its shortcomings, to be discussed below, conventional secularisation theory offers a fruitful point of departure for explaining the spiritual revolution. It is hardly contested, after all, that a process of rationalisation has undermined religion's grip on social life (e.g., Wilson, 1982; Luckmann, 1967, 2003). This is so, because rationalisation entails institutional differentiation: social functions are increasingly dealt with by specialised institutions. With increased specialisation and institutional separation of the economy, the family, the state, science, art, etcetera, those increasingly come to be governed by their own particular institutional logic (compare Bell, 1976). This causes a value pluralism that erodes the unquestioned legitimacy of the traditional moral values bound up with the Christian tradition that once morally overarched all of society as a sort of 'sacred canopy' (Berger, 1967).

The ensuing process of 'detraditionalisation' (Heelas, 1995) or 'individualisation' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) is not simply the aggregated result of individual choice or desire, in short, but a more or less inevitable outcome – 'Individualization is a fate, not a choice', as Bauman (2002: xvi) aptly remarks. As the grip of external and authoritative sources of meaning and identity declines, the range of biographical and lifestyle options nevertheless widens considerably: 'It is ... (the) level of pre-conscious "collective habitualizations", of matters taken for granted, that is breaking down into a cloud of possibilities to be thought about and negotiated. The deep

layer of foreclosed decisions is being forced up into the level of decision making' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 6).

Although all of the foregoing is by and large agreed upon, two radically different theoretical positions can be distinguished as far as the consequences for individual religiosity are concerned. The first, secularisation theory, assumes that Christian religiosity and traditional moral values give way to a sort of rationalist worldview: 'People increasingly think that they can control and manipulate "their" world. They act more in terms of insight, knowledge, controllability, planning and technique and less in terms of faith (Dobbelaere, 1993: 15, our translation from Dutch, DH/SA). In a similar vein, the late Bryan Wilson claims that '(i)n contemporary society, the young come to regard morality – any system of ethical norms – as somewhat old-fashioned. For many young people, problems of any kind have technical and rational solutions' (1982: 136). Conceiving of rationalism as the 'other' of religion, in short, this logic of secularisation extends the process of rationalisation to the level of individual consciousness. Given this theory's prominence in the recent past, there is embarrassingly little evidence that supports this assumption, however. More than that, '... a diminishing faith in rationality and a diminishing confidence that science and technology will help solve humanity's problems ... has advanced farthest in the economically and technologically most advanced societies' (Inglehart, 1997: 79).

Although the assumption that rationalism replaces religion as a worldview may thus simply be mistaken, our ambition here is to explain a spiritual rather than a rationalist revolution. This is where a second theoretical logic comes in, that argues that the declining grip of external and authoritative sources of meaning and identity robs late-modern individuals of the protective cloak of 'pre-given' meaning and identity and throws them back upon themselves in dealing with their 'precarious freedoms' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1992: 16). Under those circumstances, nagging questions haunt those who crave for the solidly founded answers that the late-modern condition precludes: 'What is it that I really want?', 'Is this really the sort of life I want to live?', 'What sort of person am I, really?'. Because it is ultimately only one's feelings and intuitions that remain as sources of answers to those questions, 'a shift of authority:

from “without” to “within” (Heelas, 1995: 2) easily takes place, driving a voyage of discovery to the deeper layers of the self. And as we have seen above, this is precisely the key tenet of spirituality: the belief that ‘real’ meaning and ‘real’ identity can only be derived from such an ‘internal’ source.

Detraditionalisation and the Gender Puzzle

The well-established research finding that spirituality is more typical of the young and the well educated than of the elderly and the poorly educated (e.g., Becker et al., 1997; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985; Houtman and Mascini, 2002) can easily be reconciled with the hypothesis that increasing levels of post-traditionalism drive the spiritual revolution. As it happens, the young and the well educated stand out as two of the most post-traditional demographic categories. To cite the most influential example only, Inglehart (1977, 1990, 1997) demonstrates that ‘postmaterialism’ is especially found among the younger age cohorts and the well educated and that it is strongly related to post-traditionalism, conceived of as a rejection of traditional values pertaining to gender roles, sexuality, child-rearing and so forth (1997: 47). Studies into the propensity to obey authorities have always arrived at precisely the same conclusion: the young and the well educated are least likely to do so (see Houtman, 2003, for a review of the relevant studies). The spiritual affinities of the young and the well educated seem attributable to their high levels of post-traditionalism, in short.

Besides the young and the well educated, however, women of course also stand out with high levels of affinity with spirituality. This constitutes a difficult problem of explanation, because men and women do not differ with regard to post-traditionalism (e.g., Houtman, 2003; Houtman and Mascini, 2002). As a consequence, unlike those of the young and the well educated, women’s affinities with spirituality cannot simply be attributed to a high level of post-traditionalism. Instead, gendering the theory of detraditionalisation is called for, so as to give due to the circumstance that detraditionalisation means different things to men and women.

And indeed, detraditionalisation is likely to engender gender-specific burdens and anxieties (see also Woodhead, 2005, forthcoming 2006). Whereas traditional male

gender roles virtually coincide with the role of the breadwinner, traditional female gender roles, organised around the provision of care for others, are defined precisely in contrast to this work role. Although due to the more general process of detraditionalisation discussed above, normative acceptance of those traditional gender roles has declined, this does not mean that traditional gender arrangements and role expectations have dissolved altogether. As a consequence, many women who reject traditional gender roles still find themselves confronted with the corresponding role expectations and face a 'second shift' when returning home after a day's work (Hochschild, 1989; see also: Hochschild, 1997).

Even apart from the double weight on their shoulders this produces, women's work experiences acquire radically different meanings from those of men, because they are also measured against traditional female gender roles that situate women in the domain of the household and the family: 'In the space of a few generations, women have made a leap between ... two frames of reference which men have never experienced in the same way' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1992: 75). Detraditionalisation produces burdens and anxieties for working post-traditional women, in short, to which working post-traditional men remain by and large immune.

Although the domain of work, increasingly invaded by women during the last few decades, is likely to be of overriding importance, other life spheres also add to post-traditional women's burdens and anxieties. The erosion of traditional female sexual prohibitions, for instance, engenders a new experience of the sexual domain: 'Without a strict "no" imposed from the outside, (women) must increasingly find their own rules and behaviour' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1992: 69). Contraception by means of 'the pill', for instance, requires rational and conscious planning in advance, that easily contradicts with a desire for romanticism – to 'simply let it happen' when romance strikes like lightning.

Even though the loss of the protective cloak of 'pre-given' meaning and identity creates tensions and anxieties for men and women alike, women are substantially more likely to become caught up in new webs of contradiction and ambiguity, in short (see also Bobel, 2002). Post-traditional women are therefore more likely than post-traditional

men to be haunted by the questions of meaning and identity that are evoked by detraditionalisation and that stimulate late-modern individuals to explore the depths of their souls – ‘What is it that I really want?’, ‘Is this really the sort of life I want to live?’, ‘What sort of person am I, really?’. Post-traditional women are more likely than post-traditional men to embark on a spiritual quest and sacralise their selves, in short.

Testing the Gendered Theory of Detraditionalisation

We test the gendered theory of detraditionalisation by means of a second series of multilevel analyses. Following Houtman (2003: 83-102) and Houtman and Mascini (2002), post-traditionalism is operationalised by combining three measures that tap acceptance or rejection of traditional moral values (i.e., acceptance or rejection of the traditional hierarchical relationship between parents and children, of traditional values pertaining to sexuality and of traditional male and female gender roles) with Inglehart’s index for postmaterialism.

First, self-direction or conformity as a parental value is measured by means of respondents’ selection of a maximum of five from a list of qualities that may be encouraged in children. Their evaluation of six of those qualities is used here: ‘determination/perseverance,’ ‘imagination’ and ‘independence’ (indicating ‘self-direction’) and ‘obedience,’ ‘religious faith’ and ‘good manners’ (indicating ‘conformity’). With all of those qualities coded either 0 (‘not chosen’) or 1 (‘chosen’), the more goals one selects from the former three and the less from the latter three, the higher one’s level of post-traditionalism.¹⁰

Second, sexual permissiveness is measured as judgements about the acceptability of five activities: married men/women having an affair, sex under the legal age of consent, homosexuality, prostitution and abortion. Scores range from ‘never justified’ (1) to ‘always justified’ (10) and high scores are taken to indicate high levels of post-traditionalism.¹¹

Third, three questions are used to measure the degree to which traditional gender roles are accepted or rejected. The first two are statements that ‘a woman has to have children to be fulfilled’ and that ‘a single woman should have the right to have a child’

and the third is a question about whether or not one feels that marriage is an out-of-date institution.¹²

Fourth and finally, Inglehart's index for postmaterialism is constructed on the basis of the prioritisation of four political goals by the respondents. Those who select 'Giving the people more say in important government decisions' and 'Protecting free speech' as the two most important goals are coded 'postmaterialists' and those who choose 'Maintaining order in the nation' and 'Fighting rising prices' are coded 'materialists'. Remaining respondents are coded as a mixed category in between.¹³

As expected, those four measures are strongly related among themselves. A second-order factor analysis produces a first factor that explains 46 per cent of the common variance with factor loadings of 0.65 (rejection of traditional gender roles), 0.59 (postmaterialism), 0.68 (emphasis on self-direction rather than conformity as a parental value) and 0.77 (sexual permissiveness). Scores for post-traditionalism are therefore assigned as mean standardised scores to 98.7 per cent of the respondents with valid scores on at least three of those four measures. In effect, those who are postmaterialists, critical of traditional gender roles, critical of conformity as a parental value and sexually permissive receive highest scores on post-traditionalism.

[INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Our second series of multilevel analyses confirms the gendered version of the theory of detraditionalisation. As expected, the higher levels of spirituality in the most recent period are caused by a process of detraditionalisation (model 2 in Table 4) and precisely those who stand out as most post-traditional embrace spirituality (model 4 as compared to model 2). Moreover, all affinity with spirituality of the well educated and a substantial part of that of the younger birth cohorts is caused by post-traditionalism (model 4 as compared to model 2). Whereas traditional men and traditional women are equally unlikely to embrace spirituality, post-traditional women are more likely to do so than post-traditional men (i.e., the significant interaction effect of post-traditionalism and female gender in model 4). Hence, the female drift toward spirituality applies to post-traditional women only. This confirms our theory, based on the assumption that

detraditionalisation produces stronger tensions and anxieties in post-traditional women, making them more likely to sacralise their selves than post-traditional men.¹⁴

[INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

Correlations between post-traditionalism and spirituality have been computed for men and women separately to be able to inspect the statistical relationships that underlie the interaction effect of gender and post-traditionalism in more detail (Table 5). Post-traditionalism is positively related to spirituality in each of the fourteen countries studied. Although this applies to men and women alike, the relationship is stronger for women than men in all of those countries, with the single exception of Sweden (in which there is no difference). It is evident that those findings confirm our gendered version of the theory of detradditionalisation: spirituality is more typically embraced by post-traditional women than by post-traditional men.

Conclusion and Debate

Traditionally considered as inevitably incompatible, many today conceive of modernity and religion as mutually accommodating. Woodhead and Heelas' anthology *Religion in Modern Times* (2000), for instance, juxtaposes theories of secularisation and theories of sacralisation, rejecting the idea that those are necessarily incompatible. Indeed, our findings indicate that the decline of the Christian churches in most Western countries has gone along with an increasing sacralisation of the self. What we are witnessing today, then, is not so much a disappearance of the sacred, but rather its dramatic relocation from Christian heaven to the deeper layers of the self.

And yet, theoretical controversy persists. Heelas et al. (2004) predict a future in which spirituality supersedes religion, we ourselves envisage one in which religion does not only give way to spirituality, but to secularism, too (Houtman and Mascini, 2002), and Bruce (2002) forecasts a by and large secular future.¹⁵ Two issues seem vitally important for pushing the frontiers of knowledge further forward and clarifying the futures of spirituality and secularism: processes of socialisation through which people

come to adopt a spiritual discourse about the self and the role played by problems of meaning and identity in making people amenable to such a discourse.

Processes of socialisation into a spiritual discourse about the self have been seriously neglected in empirical research, probably due to sociology of religion's orthodoxy – originating from Luckmann (1967) – that spirituality is 'not institutionalised', 'purely privatised', and 'strictly individualistic', so that socialisation into spirituality 'is unnecessary and it is impossible' (Bruce, 2002: 99). As we have emphasised above, however, the ethic of self-spirituality constitutes a remarkably coherent doctrine of being and wellbeing, and it would therefore be sociologically naive to assume that no processes of socialisation are taking place. This is not to suggest that this type of socialisation remains necessarily confined to the spiritual milieu, of course. With spirituality's strongly increased significance in the public domain of work, for instance, even management courses may today stimulate one to embark on a spiritual journey to the deeper layers of the self (Aupers and Houtman, 2006). Be this as it may, predictions about the future of spirituality cannot be made without insight into the social mechanisms through which it spreads, but precisely this is a badly neglected research area (see however: Luhrmann, 1989; Hammer, 2001, 2004; Hanegraaff, 2001).

The role played by problems of meaning and identity constitutes a second important issue for future research. Post-traditionalists may after all either embrace spirituality or adopt a secularist posture (Houtman and Mascini, 2002) and we have argued that the experience of problems of meaning and identity decides which of both occurs. Our finding that, as predicted, post-traditional women more typically embrace spirituality than post-traditional men is consistent with this argument, but does not necessarily prove it. It is vital, therefore, to study in future research whether this difference is really caused by post-traditional women being haunted more severely by problems of meaning and identity, as our gendered version of the theory of detraditionalisation suggests. Such a study promises not only highly relevant insights into what causes post-traditionalists to convert to either secularism or spirituality, but above all constitutes the definitive test of the proposed solution to the New Age gender puzzle.

References

- Adler, Margot, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).
- Aupers, Stef, and Dick Houtman, 'Oriental Religion in the Secular West: Globalization, New Age and the Reenchantment of the World', *Journal of National Development*, 16 (2003): 67-86.
- Aupers, Stef, and Dick Houtman, "'Reality Sucks": On Alienation and Cybergnosis', in Erik Borgman, Stephan van Erp, and Hille Haker (eds), *Cyber Space – Cyber Ethics – Cyber Theology*, special issue *Concilium: International Journal of Theology*, (2005): 81-89.
- Aupers, Stef, and Dick Houtman, 'Beyond the Spiritual Supermarket: The Social and Public Significance of New Age Spirituality', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 21 (2006) (forthcoming).
- Aupers, Stef, Dick Houtman, and Peter Pels, 'Cybergnosis: Technology, Religion and the Secular' (book chapter; submitted for publication).
- Baerveldt, Cor, 'New Age-religiositeit als individueel constructieproces' [New Age-Religiosity as a Process of Individual Construction], in Miranda Moerland (ed.), *De kool en de geit in de nieuwe tijd: Wetenschappelijke reflecties op New Age* [The Fence, the Hare, and the Hounds in the New Age: Scientific Reflections on New Age] (Utrecht: Jan van Arkel, 1996).
- Bauman, Zygmunt, 'Foreword: Individually, Together', in Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences* (London: Sage, 2002).
- Beck, Ulrich, and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences* (London: Sage, 2002).
- Becker, J.W., J. De Hart, and J. Mens, *Secularisatie en alternatieve zingeving in Nederland* [Secularization and Alternative Religion in the Netherlands] (Rijswijk: SCP, 1997).

- Bell, Daniel, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).
- Bellah, Robert N., Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).
- Berger, Helen A., *A Community of Witches: Contemporary Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft in the United States* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).
- Berger, Peter L., *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociology of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).
- Bibby, Reginald, *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 2002).
- Bobel, Chris, *The Paradox of Natural Mothering* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002).
- Bruce, Steve, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).
- Dobbelaere, Karel, 'Individuele godsdienstigheid in een gesecculariseerde samenleving' [Individual Religiosity in a Secularized Society], *Tijdschrift voor Sociologie* 14 (1993): 5-29.
- European Values Study Group and World Values Survey Association, *European and World Values Surveys Integrated Data File, 1999-2002, Release I* (computer file) (Netherlands: Netherlands Institute for Scientific Information Services (NIWI)/Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (distributors), 2004).
- Gergen, Kenneth J., *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).
- Granqvist, Pehr, and Berit Hagekull, 'Seeking Security in the New Age: On Attachment and Emotional Compensation', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 40 (2001): 527-545.
- Hadden, Jeffrey, 'Towards Desacralizing Secularization Theory', *Social Forces* 65 (1987): 587-610.

- Hamilton, Malcolm, 'An Analysis of the festival for Mind-Body-Spirit, London', in Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman (eds), *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).
- Hammer, Olav, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).
- Hammer, Olav, 'Contradictions of the New Age', in James Lewis (ed.), *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of New Age Religions* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 2004).
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J., *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J., 'Prospects for the Globalization of New Age: Spiritual Imperialism versus Cultural Diversity', in Mikael Rothstein (ed.), *New Age Religion and Globalization* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2001).
- Harvey, Graham, *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997).
- Heelas, Paul, 'Introduction: Detraditionalization and its Rivals', in: Paul Heelas, Scott Lash, and Paul Morris (eds), *Detraditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).
- Heelas, Paul, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
- Heelas, Paul, Linda Woodhead, Benjamin Seel, Bronislaw Szerszynski, and Karin Tusting, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).
- Hochschild, Arlie, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* (New York: Viking, 1989).
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell, *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* (New York: Metropolitan, 1997)
- Houtman, Dick, *Class and Politics in Contemporary Social Science: 'Marxism Lite' and Its Blind Spot for Culture* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2003).

- Houtman, Dick, and Peter Mascini, 'Why Do Churches Become Empty, While New Age Grows? Secularization and Religious Change in the Netherlands', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41 (2002): 455-473.
- Inglehart, Ronald, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).
- Inglehart, Ronald, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- Inglehart, Ronald, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Countries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- Knoblauch, Hubert, 'Europe and Invisible Religion', *Social Compass*, 50 (2003): 267-274.
- Luckmann, Thomas, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (London: MacMillan, 1967).
- Luckmann, Thomas, 'Transformations of Religion and Morality in Modern Europe', *Social Compass* 50 (2003): 275-285.
- Luhrmann, Tanya M., *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
- Lyon, David, *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2000).
- Meyer, Birgit, and Peter Pels (eds), *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
- Pearson, Jo, 'Assumed Affinities: Wicca and the New Age', in: Jo Pearson, Richard H. Roberts, and Geoffrey Samuel (eds), *Nature Religion Today* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).
- Possamai, Adam, 'Alternative Spiritualities and the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *Culture and Religion* 4 (2003): 31-45.
- Roszak, Theodore, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Doubleday, 1969).

- Scheelbeek, Linda, *'Ik ben een God in 't diepst van mijn gedachten'* [I am a God in the Depths of my Thoughts], MA thesis sociology (Rotterdam: Erasmus University, 2003).
- Stark, Rodney, and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
- Stark, Rodney, and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
- Stark, Rodney, Eva Hamberg, and Alan S. Miller, 'Exploring Spirituality and Unchurched Religions in America, Sweden, and Japan', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 20 (2005): 3-23.
- Sutcliffe, Steven J., and Marion Bowman (eds), *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).
- Van Otterloo, Anneke H., 'Selfspirituality and the Body: New Age Centres in The Netherlands since the 1960s', *Social Compass* 46 (1999): 191-202.
- Wilson, Bryan, *Contemporary Transformations of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).
- Wilson, Bryan, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).
- Woodhead, Linda, 'Gendering Secularisation Theory', *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning* 1 (2005): 24-35.
- Woodhead, Linda, 'Why So Many Women in Holistic Spirituality? A Puzzle Revisited', in: Kieran Flanagan and Peter Jupp (eds), *The Sociology of Spirituality* (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming 2006).
- Woodhead, Linda, and Paul Heelas (eds), *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).
- World Values Study Group, *World Values Survey, 1981-1984 and 1990-1993* (computer file) (Netherlands: Netherlands Institute for Scientific Information Services (NIWI)/Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (distributors), 1994).

York, Michael, *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995).

Zijderveld, Anton. C., *The Abstract Society: A Cultural Analysis of Our Time* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970).

The Spiritual Revolution and the New Age Gender Puzzle

The Sacralisation of the Self in Late Modernity (1980-2000)

[Tables]

Table 1. Five indicators for affinity with spirituality (N=61,352).

Indicators for affinity with spirituality	% no affinity	% affinity	% valid
• Believes in the existence of a spirit or life force.	68.0	32.0	90.3
• Believes in a life after death, but thinks that the churches do not give adequate answers to people's spiritual needs.	83.7	16.3	69.9
• Believes in re-incarnation, but does not believe in God.	97.0	3.0	69.9
• Does not belong to a religious denomination, but does not consider oneself a convinced atheist either.	85.0	15.0	92.3
• Does not consider oneself a convinced atheist, but has not very much or no confidence in the churches.	58.9	41.1	89.7

Table 2. Mean affinity with spirituality in fourteen western countries in 1981, 1990, and 2000 (N=56,513).

Country	1981	1990	2000	Total	Change (Pearson's r) ¹
France	1.61	1.97	2.07	1.90	0.11***
Great Britain	1.83	2.33	1.97	2.07	0.04**
West-Germany	1.57	1.87	1.70	1.74	0.03**
Italy	1.74	1.46	1.37	1.50	-0.10***
Netherlands	2.26	2.76	3.03	2.67	0.16***
Denmark	1.43	1.71	1.62	1.58	0.05**
Belgium	1.35	1.69	2.10	1.76	0.17***
Spain	1.51	1.67	1.86	1.67	0.09***
Ireland	1.02	1.27	1.53	1.26	0.18***
United States	1.04	1.44	1.57	1.29	0.17***
Canada	1.89	1.89	1.71	1.82	-0.04**
Norway	1.53	1.77	-	1.65	0.09***
Sweden	1.78	1.84	2.29	1.97	0.14***
Iceland	1.88	1.53	1.65	1.70	-0.06***
Total	1.55	1.77	1.86	1.72	0.08***

¹ One-sided test

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001

Table 3. The spiritual revolution as a historical change process (multilevel analysis, betas).

Predictors	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	0.020	0.024	0.025	0.027
<i>Contextual level</i>				
1981 (reference category)				
1990		0.063		0.032
2000		0.085*		0.016
<i>Individual level (fixed effects)</i>				
Year of birth			0.222*	0.189***
Age			0.031	
-2 Log Likelihood	157230.3	157226.3	154168.7	154168.3
Variance contextual level	0.063	0.058	0.059	0.058
Variance explained contextual level (%)	0.0	7.9	6.3	7.9
Variance individual level	0.943	0.943	0.912	0.912
Variance explained individual level (%)	0.0	0.0	3.3	3.3

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4. Explaining the spiritual revolution from detraditionalisation (multilevel analysis, betas).

Predictors	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Intercept	0.020	0.025	0.021	0.026
<i>Contextual level</i>				
1981 (reference category)				
1990		0.022	-0.000	0.005
2000		-0.010	-0.064	-0.038
Mean post-traditionalism		0.151***	0.135**	0.055
<i>Individual level (fixed effects)</i>				
Year of birth			0.170***	0.102***
Education			0.068***	-0.006
Female				-0.015
Post-traditionalism				0.276***
Post-traditionalism*female				0.036***
<i>Individual level (random effects)</i>				
Year of birth			0.004***	0.004***
Education			0.002*	0.001*
Female				0.002**
Post-traditionalism				0.008***
Post-traditionalism*female				0.000
-2 Log Likelihood	157230.3	157213.9	148670.9	143236.0
Variance contextual level	0.063	0.042	0.043	0.036
Variance explained contextual level (%)	0.0	33.3	31.7	42.9
Variance individual level	0.943	0.943	0.901	0.837
Variance explained individual level (%)	0.0	0.0	4.5	11.2

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001

Table 5. Zero-order and partial correlations of post-traditionalism and affinity with spirituality by gender and country.

Country	Pearson's r^1			Partial r^2		
	Men	Women	N	Men	Women	N
France	0.25	0.28	3,614	0.18	0.22	3,506
Great Britain	0.21	0.28	3,454	0.19	0.23	3,294
West-Germany	0.31	0.39	4,065	0.27	0.31	4,018
Italy	0.32	0.44	5,172	0.30	0.40	5,105
Netherlands	0.34	0.41	3,086	0.27	0.33	3,041
Denmark	0.16	0.27	2,948	0.11	0.20	2,913
Belgium	0.26	0.35	5,390	0.22	0.27	5,108
Spain	0.21	0.31	8,015	0.19	0.21	7,447
Ireland	0.40	0.45	3,159	0.30	0.37	3,056
United States	0.27	0.31	5,075	0.24	0.27	4,742
Canada	0.31	0.32	4,158	0.27	0.28	4,055
Norway	0.29	0.42	2,392	0.25	0.34	2,326
Sweden	0.15	0.21	2,824	0.13	0.13	2,663
Iceland	0.20	0.24	2,549	0.17	0.18	2,466
Total	0.27	0.35	55,901	0.23	0.29	53,736

1. All zero-order correlations significant at $p < 0.001$ (one-sided test).
2. All partial correlations, controlling for year of birth and education, significant at $p < 0.001$ (one-sided test).

Notes

¹ Heelas et al. only wish to speak of a ‘spiritual revolution’ when more people participate in the spiritual milieu than in the Christian congregational domain. Because in Kendall, United Kingdom, where they conducted their ‘body count’, five times as many people are involved in the latter as compared to the former, they conclude that ‘it is thus perfectly clear that a spiritual revolution has not taken place’ (2004: 45). In the current chapter, we use the notion of a ‘spiritual revolution’ differently. Following Inglehart’s (1977) conceptualisation of the ‘silent revolution’, we do not consider the achievement of a majority position decisive, but rather the occurrence of a process of historical expansion that operates by way of cohort replacement and is caused by a medium-long term process of change that is unlikely to reverse.

² There is an ongoing discussion about whether the neo-pagan movement (most notably Wicca) is a movement in its own right or part of the New Age movement. Although some argue that the two should be treated as different (cf. Adler, 1979; Graham, 1997; Pearson, 1998) and are obviously not identical (York, 1995), the most common position seems to be that neo-paganism is a distinguishable subculture within the broader New Age movement (cf. Hanegraaff, 1996; Heelas, 1996). Because even specialists in neo-paganism such as Berger (1999: 5) and Luhrmann (1989: 30-31) take this position, we regard spirituality as affiliated with ‘New Age’, because New Age includes neo-paganism.

³ This is of course not to suggest that survey research enables one to estimate how many people are involved in spirituality (or traditionalism, racism, or whatever). This is impossible, because the percentage found depends on two more or less arbitrary decisions: 1) What particular items from a principally unlimited universe are to be used to measure it? and 2) How much agreement with the selected set of items is necessary to be able to speak of a ‘real’ New Ager (traditionalist, racist, or whatever)? Depending on decisions regarding those two questions (with especially the first one supplying the researcher with enormous degrees of freedom), one can in principle produce any percentage between 0 and 100. What survey research does permit, however, is studying whether – given the way one has decided to measure affinity with spirituality – the average score on this scale or index increases or decreases across time. This is precisely what we will do in this chapter.

⁴ In a similar vein, the late Bryan Wilson argued already thirty years ago that the post-Christian cults ‘represent, in the American phrase, “the religion of your choice”, the highly privatized preference that reduces religion to the significance of pushpin, poetry, or popcorns’ (1976: 96; see for another example: Becker et al., 1997).

⁵ Interviewed in the context of a previous study (Aupers and Houtman, 2003).

⁶ For re-unified Germany in the data collection of 2000, we have included only the

Länder that used to be part of West-Germany in our data analysis.

⁷ With a mere five crude dichotomous indicators, it is hardly surprising that Cronbach's alpha is not higher than 0.42. Nevertheless, all zero-order correlations between the indicators are positive and significant ($p < 0.001$) and item-total correlations range from 0.17 through 0.30. A principal component analyses yields a first factor that explains 30 per cent of the common variance. The two lowest factor loadings are 0.44 (for belief in a spirit or life force and for belief in a life after death, while feeling that the churches do not give adequate answers to people's spiritual needs) and all others are higher than 0.50. We feel that those findings justify our decision to combine those five indicators into a crude index for spirituality.

⁸ Probably due to a different operationalization, this finding for Canada is inconsistent with Bibby's (2002) observation that more Canadians say they're spiritual today than 30 years ago.

⁹ Disentangling 'age effects' and 'cohort effects' is impossible, of course, when 'one-shot-survey data' are analysed. The correlation between age and birth year is then exactly -1.00. Because even with a 20-year period we face a strong negative correlation between both variables, the extremely large sample is helpful in preventing problems of multicollinearity.

¹⁰ An overall factor analysis produces a single factor with an eigenvalue higher than one, explaining 28 per cent of the common variance. All six factor loadings are higher than 0.40 and the signs of the loadings for the indicators for self-direction are positive, whereas those for conformity are negative. If a factor loading for a particular indicator was below 0.30 for a country-year combination, it has been coded missing for that particular country-year combination. After reversing the scores on the indicators tapping conformity, scores have been assigned as mean standardised scores to all respondents with at most two missing values. This produces valid scores for more than 99 per cent of the respondents.

¹¹ An overall factor analysis produces a single factor with an eigenvalue higher than one, explaining no less than 54 per cent of the common variance. All factor loadings are higher than 0.65 and scores have been assigned as mean scores to all respondents with no more than two missing values, yielding valid scores for 96.9 per cent of the respondents.

¹² Response categories for those three questions are, respectively, yes/no, yes/depends/no (recoded into yes versus depends/no) and yes/no. An overall factor analysis produces a single factor with an eigenvalue higher than one that explains 40 per cent of the common variance with factor loadings of 0.41, 0.73 and 0.71, respectively. Scores have been assigned to 97.6 per cent of the respondents with at most one missing

value.

¹³ Valid scores are available for 89.9 per cent of the respondents.

¹⁴ Finally, the strengths of the effects of birth year, gender and post-traditionalism vary between contexts (model 4, random effects): they are stronger in some years and countries and weaker in others. Additional analyses, not shown in Table 4, point out that those differences cannot be attributed to the circumstance that some years and countries are more post-traditional than others.

¹⁵ The exact nature of secularism is a seriously neglected issue in the research literature, however. Due to the strong focus on the decline of the Christian churches in the west, ‘few attempts have been made to look at the other side of the equation, at what has been called the “left-over”, if one may say so’ (Knoblauch, 2003: 268). Whereas secularisation theory assumes that religious worldviews are increasingly being replaced by rationalist ones, there are also indications that rationalist conceptions of the self increasingly give way to postmodern ones (e.g., Gergen, 1991).