Mapping a Field: Why and How to Study Spirituality

BY

Courtney Bender & Omar McRoberts
*Co-Chairs, Working Group on Spirituality,
Political Engagement, and Public Life*

October, 2012

What does "spirituality" mean in America today, and how can social scientists best investigate it? This paper identifies new approaches to the study of American spirituality and emergent horizons for interdisciplinary scholarship. In contrast to the longstanding sociological practice that identifies spirituality in distinction or comparison to religion, we begin by inquiring into the processes through which contemporary uses of the categories religion and spirituality have taken on their current values, how they align with different types of political, cultural, and social action, and how they are articulated within public settings.[1] In so doing, we draw upon and extend a growing body of research that offers alternatives to predominant social scientific understandings of spirituality in the United States, which, we believe, are better suited to investigating its social, cultural, and political implications. Taken together, they evaluate a more expansive range of religious and spiritual identities and actions, and, by placing spirituality and religion, as well as the secular, in new configurations, ought to reset scholars' guiding questions on the subject of the spiritual.

This paper also highlights methods and orientations that we believe are germane to the concerns and questions that motivated our recent project on spirituality, public life, and politics in America, but that also extend beyond them. It draws into relief the space that has been opened up by recent analyses of spirituality and identifies the new questions and problems that are taking shape as a result. These novel directions in scholarship offer challenging and potentially powerful new ways of understanding the role of both spirituality *and* religion in shaping American civic and political life. The methods highlighted below do not treat either spirituality or religion as core or stable identities or qualities, nor do they assume that "spirituality" is in some way to be contrasted or opposed to "religion" (as in the formula "spiritual-not-religious"). Indeed, they do not operate on the presumption that "spirituality" *necessarily* holds any particular categorical relation whatsoever to "religion" (cf. Bender 2007; Taves and Bender 2012; Ammerman 2011). Instead, we propose a robust investigation of the historical and contextual specificities of those relations, such as they are enacted in scholarship and in the world. What these methods provide, accordingly, are ways of illuminating the relationships that develop—within particular political, civic, and other settings—between "religious" and "spiritual" identities, discourses, and concepts.

But why, first of all, is this subject a significant one? And why does it appear especially pertinent at precisely the present moment? To begin with, growing numbers of "religious nones," that is, people who have limited or no religious affiliation yet still claim to believe in some kind of divinity, signal an unprecedented shift in the American religious landscape (Hout and Fischer 2002), and many scholars who have sought to understand this phenomenon have indicated that something like "spirituality" might capture an important aspect of their outlook, if not their "identity" (Vargas 2012; Lim, MacGregor, and Putnam 2012; Baker and Smith 2009). We, for our part, certainly agree that this is a socially significant shift. Yet we also note that much of the interpretation and ensuing discussion about the "religious nones" draws upon and continues to assert uninvestigated understandings of religion and spirituality, where we would argue that the shifts underway

1

should elicit some reconsideration of the terms that are deployed to analyze and interpret this allegedly "new" phenomenon.

Social scientists frequently juxtapose spirituality to religion and identify the former by way of what it lacks in comparison to the latter. In particular, spirituality would appear to lack institutions, authority structures, community, and even history—all of which are considered integral to religion, such as it is widely understood today. Congregational identity, membership, and attendance are key markers for studies of Americans' religious convictions, and the congregation, therefore, is taken to be an especially important, if not the definitive, site for the political and social mobilization of religious Americans. Against this backdrop, the rising number of "religious nones" (as well as shifts in congregational styles [see Chaves 2009]) emerge not only as new empirical facts but, insofar as their presence is measured against a norm of voluntary participation, also appear to engender a certain anxiety on the part of the scholars who study them (e.g., Olson 2010; Putnam and Campbell 2010). Though "religious nones" may be believers, they appear to lack the kinds of social connectivity that are recognizable to scholars, and that the latter have deemed essential to voluntary political participation. Insofar as spirituality emerges as a term associated with such individuals—and one that seems to sound the alarms about the problems of individualism—it appears as either the weak cousin or the crazy uncle of the norm that continues (or that should continue) to endure (see, e.g., Bellah et al. 1985), or as the spark of regeneration and the movement toward a "new" social order (e.g., York 1995).

Rather than take sides in the debate over the political possibilities of spirituality, we have decided to take a closer look at the way in which it has been framed and mobilized. We observe, for example, that social scientific definitions of religion have been and remain tightly interwoven with ideals of civic participation, putative and legally enforced distinctions between private and public life, the historical development of voluntarism, and discourses of individual and collective rights. "Spirituality," in this respect, is often used to mark religious forms that do not ostensibly align with these norms. In other words, it is used to designate what are perceived to be extra-social or anti-social modes of religion, which in turn reinforces norms of both sociality and political mobilization. It is fair to note that this use of "spirituality" also carries some positive associations, however: some of those who take on a spiritual identity, it is said, are actively choosing to opt-out of political and institutional-religious interactions, in favor of something that they imagine to be more real, more personal, or more authentic than what they understand by religion—or, for that matter, by politics.

By focusing our attention on the emergence of various uses of "spirituality" and the intersections between its scholarly and public acceptations, we are orienting our investigation toward the relational work that religion and spirituality do in shaping our perception of individual, religious, and political possibilities. We might then ask, for example, how the continued preponderance of an academic discourse on American religion that enshrines voluntarism, religious freedom, and civic participation as essential (and essentially American) virtues determines our view of the spectrum of possibilities for political action. If as a result of closer attention to the phenomenon of spirituality scholars are able to view "religion" and its intersections with American politics in more complex ways than those sustained by the conventional lore centered on congregational life and voluntarism, the payoff would be significant.

Spirituality, we also note, is challenging to study, not so much because it lacks definition (or a relational counterpart, like "religion," to make it meaningful), but because it suffers from an excess of definitions, each of which shapes a particular set of discourses and empirical investigations into various social phenomena. Scholars and journalists, religious

and secular people, clergy and laymen, and even politicians invoke spirituality in numerous ways. For example, some identify it as a *component* of religion (whence people can be both "spiritual and religious"), which implies a contrast between the two, though it may also suggest that the former is an underlying, universal element that religious communities or individuals draw upon or are inspired by (e.g., Berger 1979). Closely related are descriptive uses that frame "spirituality" in terms either of emotions or of an ethically developed habitus that may operate both within and outside of formal institutional frameworks (Stanczak 2006; Roof 1993, 1999). Spirituality is also a term that some philosophers have used to gesture toward an unarticulated "more" (e.g., C. Taylor 2007; Connolly 2005a), and in such cases it takes on the connotation of something relatively inchoate or undefined, yet present and powerful in human life. Others have defined it in a less favorable fashion, conceiving of it as a post-religious and narcissistic drive to self-improvement, in contradistinction to religion, which (unlike spirituality) is able to intervene significantly in matters of the commons (Carrette and King 2004; Ehrenreich 2009; see Mitchell 2010 for a critique). Spirituality's apparent ubiquity and its multiple meanings, but also its oft supposed "self-evidence," make it difficult to employ with precision either as a descriptive term or as the index of a particular type of subject. Sometimes this fuzziness makes spirituality seem weak and limited in its effects, while at other times this same fuzziness lends it a sheen of pervasive and untapped power. Even those who appear to endorse or embrace this or that articulation of spirituality give vent to such concerns (e.g., E. McAlister 2010; van der Veer 2009; Connolly 2010). In short, the efflorescence of spirituality—its multiple concurrent uses and interpretations—makes it difficult to identify what spirituality is or to classify the people who identify themselves through it, let alone to understand its effects.

Much of the "problem" of analyzing spirituality in the social sciences emerges from and reflects the perpetually unresolved business of defining and understanding religion. But the question of whether spirituality is categorically distinct from, somehow connected to, or merely a weak mirror of "religion" bespeaks, above all, the sclerotic scholarly and "religious" framing and boundary-marking that, whether for strategic or analytical purposes, distinguishes the category of religion from some things while associating it with others—in ways often belied by empirical observation (Bender 2012a). We do not believe that investigations of spirituality will settle the definitional issues that continue to shape social scientific discourse about it, and we do not plan in this paper to offer a definition of what spirituality "is" or what it "does." Rather, having observed that recent work on spirituality has paid very little attention to its history (either as a term of scholarly investigation or as a set of experiences in the world), to the relationships that it connotes (between itself and religion, as well as other things to which it is or may be compared), or to the broader landscape in which the arguments about spirituality and politics take on relevance and force, we advance an approach that demands that these problems be placed front and center in any analysis, in such a way that new studies of spirituality (and religion) maintain the critical and analytical depth that is called for in this moment of apparent religious change.

Cross-disciplinary dispositions/mapping a field through method

In the course of our project we paid especial attention to studies—highlighted throughout the following pages—that critically examine the concept of spirituality and its appurtenances in terms of its genealogies and the locations of its production and transformation. This afforded us a different point of departure and allowed us to focus on the ways in which spirituality (like politics, religion, and other cultural and social forms) is socially embedded and engendered but also productive, in turn, of political and cultural dispositions, modes of organization, events, etc. Such research inquires, principally, as to when, where, and how spirituality develops the peculiar qualities that it is ascribed, and why it is (or appears) capable of producing particular effects, at different historical conjunctures.

3

The emerging body of scholarship constelled around questions bearing on the historicity and the locations of spirituality marks a sufficiently radical departure from the extant literature that we take it to constitute, in effect, a new and developing field. In what follows, we elaborate what we take to be the three distinct yet interrelated focal points around which this emergent field has taken form: the genealogy of spirituality, its social and spatial localization and circulation, and the historical interplay between academic and popular constructions of the category of the spiritual.

Genealogies of spirituality/spiritual genealogies

One evident point of departure is to ask how the meaning of "spirituality" has changed over time through its shifting intersections with other concepts. When, for example, did Americans begin to invest spirituality with its current acceptations? How—and with what consequences—has it developed the valences we perceive it to have today? What resources (semantic and perlocutionary, theoretical and political, etc.) are suppressed or disclosed at the various transformational moments of its history? These and similar questions form the analytic grid of genealogical approaches to the discourse and manifestations of the spiritual.

While broadly historical studies of spirituality are not new, recent work in religious studies and anthropology distinguishes itself by attending in particular to the ways in which objects and organizations, practices and aspirations that Americans identify as "spiritual" (whether in contrast or otherwise in relation to religion, or not) have interacted with social institutions throughout American history, including political and religious movements (e.g., Schmidt 2005), scientific and transnational institutions (e.g., Albanese 2006; White 2008; Klassen 2011; Modern 2010), and so on. A further distinguishing characteristic of this recent work is its attention to how spirituality develops historically in ways that nevertheless assert its categorically perennial or its connate, emotional foundations. Such assertions, in effect, deflect attention from spirituality's historicity as a concept or discursive operator, and from its changing applications, connotations, and effects over time (see Bender 2010). Thus calling attention to the multiple genealogies of spirituality already amounts to an implicit challenge to popular and scholarly uses that treat it as an ahistorical descriptive category of mood or disposition, as a universal property of the self (whether inherent or cultivated), or as a perennial phenomenon, effectively outside of time and space. And, as recent work on the history of spirituality suggests, its analysis demands attention to the practices and the rhetoric that normalize it as something simply "given" and that cover its historical tracks.[2]

Genealogical inquiries are frequently motivated by a desire to untangle the complexly reticulated practices and discourses whose taken-for-granted status occludes the processes of fission, fusion, and re-articulation that created them. Genealogical studies have the added benefit of emphasizing that complexity, far from an epistemic impediment to be overcome, is an inherent characteristic of historical processes of displacement, translation, and appropriation. Such inquiries take shape, of course, through investigations of the past— not, however, by driving "postholes" into historical moments whose significance is already familiar or whose itinerary is obvious (for example, by studying the etymology of the word spirituality), but rather by identifying moments at which a plurality of alternative meanings had the potential to take root, and at which some in fact did, while others were deemphasized or repressed. To do so is to upend entrenched visions of the way the world

---

[2] We should also note that there is nothing especially neutral or innocent about our beginning here and not elsewhere. To focus on the various pasts of spirituality and their discontinuous re-apparitions in history is itself an approach entangled in implicit (and politically charged) claims about what spirituality is and how it operates.

works now—but it also invites a further step, beyond disaggregation, toward constructively advancing unforeseen approaches to pressing issues, indeed, toward elaborating new perspectives on the present moment by revising our understanding of the historical strata underlying it.[3]

As a constellation of concepts and discourses, the contextual force of "the spiritual" and the relationships in which it is implicated are hardly clear, let alone self-evident. In fact, this obscurity seems to account in part for the power that spirituality has for many who would invoke it: it is both ostensibly self-evident and obstinately elusive, both manifest as a factor in social and religious life and yet difficult to pin down with any precision. It became clear in the course of this project, for instance, that scholars studying the implications of spirituality in various contexts would need to take account of the ways in which the discourses and practices associated with it are bound up with different sorts of secular and religious (and, not least, hybrid) social imaginaries (cf. C. Taylor 2007). A genealogical approach to spirituality opens up these imaginaries to investigation, helping scholars to tease out otherwise undetectable answers to abiding questions, to generate new questions, and to reframe old ones in more productive ways than had previously been possible.

John Modern's genealogical analyses of spirituality (2010, 2011), for example, identify a variety of ways in which it developed in relation to emergent formations—conceptual and colloquial, technological and scientific, as well as political—of "the secular" in the nineteenth-century United States. Closely examining the various uses of the language of "the spiritual" across different settings, Modern argues that

> what is most interesting […] is how spirituality was, simultaneously, a mode of discipline and a means of resistance. For in achieving corporeal status, the concept of spirituality was integral to the imagination and maintenance of a subject who was wholly rational, truly religious, who felt at home in an uncanny world. (2010, 5)

Modern draws on multiple examples of nineteenth-century institutions (including tract societies, prisons, and literature) to highlight the development of spiritual forms of practice and subjectivity, and to trace their gradual naturalization—and, he argues, their "disenchantment"—in the nineteenth-century social imaginary (2011, 39). Modern's fruitful use of a genealogical mode of inquiry should serve as an invitation to other scholars to investigate the processes through which various historical actors come to inhabit particular expressive styles and identities, and hence to actualize differentiated potentials for action.[4]

Genealogical methods can help to identify both the practices and the structures that engender and shape the experience, or the feeling, of spirituality. However, they may also call attention to the ways in which such practices and structures have, at various times, developed and taken effect within specifically public or civic environments—a topic that, in one way or another, animates much of the research discussed herein. In this light, it is germane to note, as sociologist Andrew Perrin suggested during a project workshop, that a spiritual "public" can be elicited—that is, not just evoked or represented but contoured and instituted—by polls and the resultant statistical aggregations. The creation of publics—or the shaping of publics' understandings of themselves as "reading" or "thinking" or "believing" citizens—is an issue that scholars have taken up in recent decades (see, e.g., Perrin 2009; Igo

---

[3] This paragraph draws on comments presented by William Connolly (2010) at one of our SSRC workshops.
[4] In a quite different, twentieth-century context, Winnifred Fallers Sullivan (2009, 2010) pursues a similar set of questions in identifying the specific regulative and juridical procedures that have contributed to the development of a "spiritual subject" in modern American life.

2008; Schudson 1998; Warner 2002; Anderson 1991). Genealogical research thus might seek in the future to identify, in particular, the role of mass polling and social surveys in shaping the ability (and the inclination) of contemporary Americans to identify themselves as either religious or spiritual.[5] At the same time, a focus on the historically changing significance of what it means to be a spiritual person should be placed in conversation with research on changing ideals of the good citizen and other notions of the liberal self.[6]

Genealogical studies also open up new perspectives from which to explore the praxilogical aspects of spirituality and its history. Studies of practices associated with spirituality illuminate the broad range of secular and religious networks that shape spirituality's contemporary manifestations. Such research might focus, for example, on the development of spiritual practices within imperial and colonial contexts, in both the past and the present. Numerous scholars have identified the preponderant role that colonial contact with India, Japan, and China played in shaping nineteenth-century spiritual practices in the United States (e.g., van der Veer 2009; Prothero 2002). Others have investigated these issues in arenas closer to home—for example, how governmental and missionary encounters with, and management of, Native American religion, ritual, and politics have translated the latter into spirituality (e.g. Mitchell 2010; Promey 2011). Spirituality's definition as a "way of life," as applied in the Native American context, translates the religious and political into the aesthetic and mystical, altering and limiting political, land-based, and identity claims in ways that enable further forms of both spiritual appropriation and political dominance (e.g., Wenger 2009; G. Johnson 2002).

Spirituality has been caught up in webs of tendentious usage for at least a century, with culturally and politically fraught results (see Schmidt 2005; Bramen 2001). Tracing the uses of a practice such as yoga, historically and across distinct national and sub-cultural domains, highlights the vexed transformations that such a seemingly anodyne practice may both undergo and contribute to effecting in the course of its dissemination. "Yoga" has been invested with considerable meaning and power since the rise of early-modern national movements and remains so today (Alter 2004; see also Aruvamudan 2006); it also informed concepts of the liberal religious self such as they were communicated to new audiences by religious missionaries—whether Vedanta or Anglican—in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (van der Veer 2007; Klassen 2011). Practitioners and observers have attached a wide range of meanings to yoga over the past century, as recent scholarship makes evident. But these meanings are far from being purely personal or experiential. As Joseph Alter (2004) argues, in India yoga is explicitly connected to the formation of an ideal modern Indian (and masculine) body, while in the U.S. it has seemingly shed itself of "political" meaning, hastening its adoption as a strategy of relaxation that softens the liberal body into a docile subject (Singleton 2010). Historical and genealogical analysis of the intersecting meanings and practices of yoga establishes a broader platform on which to query the projects to which "spirituality" and its associated practices have been lent.

---

[5] As Perrin emphasized during the workshop, to take note of the capacity of polling and surveys to determine public concepts of spirituality (as opposed to merely tallying up their subscribers) is hardly to suggest that polling on such topics should not proceed. It should, however, lead scholars to be more circumspect about the impact of their methods, questions, and interventions.

[6] Since self-identification as spiritual has become one means among others to signal particular kinds of political and religious openness and tolerance as well as conviction and belonging, an issue of continued interest and concern is when and how the language of spirituality is used (or avoided) in public contexts. Paul Lichterman's (2010) research on "group styles," particularly in religiously mixed or ambiguously religious civic groups, offers a model for such investigations, and one which might be coupled fruitfully with the genealogical analysis of spiritual discourses.

In short, genealogical methods belie the supposed self-evidence of conventional categories by tracing the emergence, the variant usages, and the apparent naturalization of concepts. Genealogical approaches to spirituality, in particular, have the capacity to unsettle accepted understandings of the ways in which it is employed and experienced, historically and at present (see, e.g., Fessenden 2010; Mitchell 2007).

Sites of spirituality: production, media, circulations

A second point of departure in studying spirituality is to examine how spiritual discourses, practices, and identities are produced and the channels through which they circulate in social space. Whereas much of the literature on spirituality has indicated the problems and difficulties of thus situating it (at times even querying whether there is any "there there" to study), we would ask, in contrast, how spiritual practice and knowledge are cultivated, and how various discourses and institutions (including secular ones) shape, identify, and reproduce spiritual dispositions and idioms. Investigating the locations of spirituality's production opens up another path toward a more refined understanding of how it is instituted and mediated, and why it serves (or does not serve) as a resource for various actors. By situating spirituality within particular configurations of space and place (in opposition to its conventional connotation of something ethereal and pneumatic, lacking social and spatial specificity), such an approach, like the genealogical strategy, focuses attention on the ways in which spiritual discourses and practices accrue power and authority across different contexts.

An important facet of this approach is the examination of how spiritual concepts, authorities, and identities develop within "secular" settings, including commerce (Gregory 2011), medicine and psychiatry (Klassen 2011; Cadge 2012; White 2008), popular media (Lofton 2011; Stolow 2006), law and governance (Marshall 2009; Sullivan 2007), and science (Bender 2010; Taves 2009; Farman 2011). Indeed, a growing body of research spanning a number of disciplines calls attention to the ways that "the spiritual" takes shape in, and gains authority through, "secular" institutions and cultural projects (see, e.g., Taves and Bender 2012; Bender 2010). In some cases, the attribution of "spirituality" to activities within secular settings provides both a language and an experience of value and authority that comparable attributions of "religion" are unable to underwrite. Investigating the ways that spiritual authority and value are produced in non-religious settings thus also calls attention to the ways that spiritual meaning and authority may be linked to, for example, scientific method, theories of mind, progressive, modern rationality, and other modern modalities of authority. Ongoing research into the multitude of settings in which "spirituality" is identified and used (and thereby reproduced) challenges, in effect, the distinction between secular and religious institutions that is deeply ingrained in many social scientists' understanding of the relation between religion and U.S. politics, while studies that identify the ways in which secular life is "spiritualized" raise questions about both the pervasiveness of "spirituality" and the enchantment of markedly secular institutions and projects (see, e.g., Lofton 2011).

An additional, and related, approach to the study of spirituality's location analyzes the various modes of dissemination by which spiritualities are transmitted and transformed. One straightforward avenue of investigation, in this respect, concerns the different media (television, radio, the internet, print material, etc.) through which spiritual ideas and idioms circulate. Yet media are themselves generative of specific modalities of spirituality and spiritual subjectivity (Stolow 2006; Peters 1999). In many cases, the development of new communication technologies has elicited new spiritual imaginations, enabling Americans to "encounter" and experience religious possibilities in new ways, and thereby to reinterpret their work as missionaries, healers, mediums, etc. The nature of these interactions, both

within the United States and globally, is undergoing deep and rapid change, as Manuel Vasquez (2010), Elizabeth McAlister (2010), and Melani McAlister (2008) all argue. A focus on media and the processes and technologies of mediation that not only transmit but inflect spirituality in particular ways also renders discernible the degree to which media are invested by various spiritual groups with powers and values of their own, enabling not only both real and imagined connections with far flung peoples and beings—spirits, astral projections, ghosts, God, aliens, and even robots—but also the transformation of their users' understandings of the relations that it is possible to have with other persons, with the earth, and with the cosmos altogether (see Csordas 2010; Pike 2001; Brown 2007).

In addition to ongoing research into spirituality's mediation and embeddedness in media networks and technologies, future work locating the phenomenon of spirituality might focus on a range of discrete issues. We know very little, for instance, about the geographic scope, distribution, and interactions of the institutions that generate the various forms of this phenomenon manifest in the contemporary United States. For example, given regional variations in religious belief, practice, and participation, we ought to investigate whether similar variations in "spiritual" identities obtain. How, then, might investigations into the multi-sitedness of spirituality's reproduction, in quite different institutions and settings, in turn shape inquiries into regional and other kinds of distribution?

Spirituality as an emic and an etic category

Examining spirituality through genealogical and situational analysis elicits important observations that recalibrate the terms in which we identify and discuss it. These approaches thus also call attention to the fact that many currently vernacular understandings of spirituality have scholarly or "scientific" pedigrees. Spirituality, that is, is simultaneously an emic and an etic term. The overlap and interaction between scholarly and lay-public interest in spirituality is present wherever and so long as spirituality is, and it makes the study of spirituality—of the meanings with which it is imbued and the effects that are imputed to it—particularly complex as well as inevitably charged with political and normative investments.

The terms emic and etic refer, classically, to different kinds of descriptions and explanations of the same event. An emic account is one that an anthropologist's or sociologist's respondent or informant provides in vernacular terms, and that thus is embedded in a web of meaning and interpretive associations such that the account is taken to represent the view of someone "within" the community of believers (or the kinship system, ethnic group, class, and so on). An etic description, by contrast, is the outsider's. It may or may not be more "objective" than the one given by the informant, but it is, in any event, oriented toward a scholarly community's interpretive framework, wherein emic uses are viewed as data, and etic definitions, in contradistinction, as being freed from the normative power or the specific cultural value of the emic term.

The particular challenge posed by spirituality's simultaneous use by various constituencies is magnified by the limited attention that scholars have paid to this semantic blurriness. More than merely confounding attempts at definitional clarity, it also enables "spirituality" to be invoked across a range of scholarly and nonscholarly, secular and religious, high and low domains. As with the term "religion," which some argue emerged from within comparative, academic frameworks and only belatedly came into lay and "religious" use (see especially Smith 1998), the development of "spirituality" is complicated and equivocal. The history of the category of spirituality, however, is somewhat different, in that, once a term that belonged predominantly to the argot of clergy and laypeople, it came to be taken by some in the academy to designate a phenomenon freighted with scientific and

philosophically normative meaning (White 2008). In other words, the term accrued an etic purchase that it had not formerly possessed, whereas its emic usages and their authority were and remain variously derived—including, presently, from those philosophical or scientific discourses that had appropriated it, and not solely (or most importantly) from religious institutions and authorities.

To put it bluntly, the story of "spirituality" and its various settings, from psychology to hospital therapy, from the most down-at-the-heels excesses of popular therapeutic culture to its most elevated invocation in high-culture circles, is less one of religious organizations conceptualizing spirituality in the process of extending their authority into secular settings than one of secular settings drawing from and cultivating spiritual language for their own purposes. In many instances, the translation or de novo emergence of "spiritual" language has taken shape on the boundary between liberal religious and secular projects. For example, Christopher White (2008) describes how the development of American psychology at the turn of the twentieth century was motivated by liberal religionists who were invested in different ways in the articulation of a progressive and modern religion underwritten by scientific methods. The purchase of "spirituality" in psychology today does not derive directly from these interventions, but the processes initiated and the paths laid in the past no doubt reverberate in the interest that it has for contemporary psychology (Taves 1999).

Contemporary spirituality developed, then, not only (and not mainly) within religious organizations, but also in a variety of secular, including scholarly, settings where it was identified and described as a component of human life consistent with the liberal self (whose interior and exterior self is both rational and manageable, sovereignly self-possessed), yet it also troubled that ascription insofar as it indexed the extensive—ambient and non-agential—"connectivity" of that same self (Modern 2010; Albanese 2006). This development of a spiritual subject took shape, furthermore, in and through philosophy, psychology, and sociology (Vaca unpublished; Bender 2012b). "Spirituality" has indicated a human quality identified sometimes as universal, that is, as a property of all human beings (Schmidt 2003), and sometimes in a racialized or "genetic" way (Deutsch 2009). As an attribute of the liberal subject, "spirituality" thus could be used to frame and bolster the individualism of modern life or to redound upon it in ways that complicated and challenged its own self-conception.

The multiple uses, definitions, and possibilities that spirituality currently enjoys are the consequence, not solely of religious and "lay" explorations, but rather of such explorations as they have been shaped by interactions with—and, at times, the articulation of spiritual qualities within—the sciences and humanities themselves. Paying attention to these entanglements relieves us from the pressure of trying to identify a purer, less politically burdened definition of spirituality, or of extracting it from its involvement in these disciplinary projects. At the same time, it demands careful attention to the authority that the natural and social sciences, as well as philosophy and historiography, have in interpreting, defining, and creating spiritual secularities.

* * *

Taken together, these three methodological dispositions emphasize that "spirituality" is constitutively relational; socially, spatially, and historically situated; and irreducibly political. Given the extent to which religion has been defined and categorized by its others, including the academy (Masuzawa 2005; Smith 1998), and always with a politics either in place or at stake, the critical study of spirituality likewise calls for an evaluation of the politics enacted in and through its heterogeneous (including its academic) articulations. In what follows, we will begin to articulate how these approaches challenge common understandings of spirituality in the social sciences, which often use it as a marker of

irregular, and potentially asocial, forms of American religion, as well as to question uncritical appropriations of the term that take it to indicate something universally given or to signal something simply "more than *x*." We begin by noting, however, that what emerges from the following critiques, and the attendant reconceptualizations, is not an additive, or a better, notion of "spirituality" that would serve only as a corrective to past and present studies of religion. Rather, as noted above, we see these historical-genealogical, situated, and epistemic shifts as shaping a new field of inquiry that enfolds both the spiritual and the religious, and one that is amenable to empirical research as well as to ethical and political discussion and debate. If we are justified in making this claim, it is because under these optics there emerge a range of phenomena the precise contours of which earlier studies, given their limitations, were unsuited and unable to apprehend.

Challenging old rubrics

The methodological dispositions that we advance both challenge current paradigms and introduce new horizons of inquiry. Specifically, they challenge predominant understandings of spirituality premised in terms of interiority, individuality, and institutional closure. In their common usage, these categories have allowed us to grasp certain aspects of spiritual phenomena, but they have also tended to force our understandings of the spiritual into sterile dichotomies between internally and externally oriented experiences, individualistic and private versus communalistic and public activities, and affiliated as opposed to unaffiliated individuals.

The emergent orientations outlined in the previous section indicate, not only that scholars today are beginning to rethink received ideas of both the individual and the institution, interiority and exteriority, but also that such oppositions are being "bridged" by the languages and the practices associated with "spirituality." In many instances, actors invoke spirituality in response to the perceived chaos and indeterminacy of political and economic conditions. This bridging of "internal" and "external" realities, it seems to us, is what is commonly connoted by spirituality in its contemporary usage, and it is the reason for the latter's civic relevance. Rather than being flatly individualistic or purely "internal" in nature, spirituality appears today to designate an ensemble of (often disparate) technologies—linguistic, ritual, praxilogical, associative, etc.—through which inner and outer worlds are connected. In order to arrive at this insight, however, it has been necessary to critique the assumptions that have circumscribed earlier studies of spirituality—a critique stimulated and enabled by the methodological dispositions discussed above.

Challenging the enclosure of interiority

Spirituality is often invoked in reference to "internal" experience—particularly to the experience of indeterminacy, liminal or interstitial states, mystery, chaos, and the unidentifiable (McRoberts 2004). In light of this typical focus on individual interiority, it is notable how frequently in our meetings valences of the spiritual were conjured in relation to the experience of chaos and indeterminacy in "external"—that is, specifically, sociopolitical and economic—realms. For instance, David Hamilton Golland's research (2011) on Arthur Fletcher, founder of the United Negro College Fund, explains how this enigmatic civic figure constructed a political spirituality in the wake of the ironic and tragic birth of a post-civil rights underclass. In a similar vein, Ian Lowrie (2011) shows how the work of a crypto-spiritual organization of UFOlogists has responded to the movement of mainstream science into quantum indeterminacy. Indeed, to these subjects, the very mystery of UFOs and the unresolved nature of questions about extraterrestrial life signal a scientific crisis: since it has failed or refused to identify the unidentifiable, mainstream, bureaucratic science no longer has the authority to dictate the epistemological habits of these explorers. In other words, the

spirituality of the UFOlogists may be understood as a political response to the perceived hegemony of a mainstream science that they perceive to be fundamentally flawed. Similarly, Karen Gregory's study of Tarot readers in New York City (2011) uncovers a culture not easily characterizable as oriented toward internal experience in a solipsistic way. Rather, the Tarot readers whom she studies help to salvage the psychic lives of people who have become casualties of a national economic crisis. The Tarot thus becomes a medium of social critique as well as subjective repair; while helping individuals make sense of personal suffering, it also helps them identify the source of that suffering in a collapsing macroeconomic structure.

Each of these studies identifies how "external" social circumstances motivate "internal" spiritual processes. Spirituality, even as a set of internal experiences and practices, is political because it emerges in response to challenges that are themselves political in nature. Rather than amounting to a retreat from concrete sociopolitical circumstances, spirituality seems to link "worldly" concerns with personal ones. It appears as a technique, or rather a range of techniques, for interpreting, negotiating, and responding to the complex conditions and challenges of contemporary society. These techniques function in part through the designation of a "space" of interiority (as, among other things, the locus of spirituality), which may offer subjects a sense of mooring in a nebulous and unstable environment. Yet, we must not *a priori* take a reference to interiority as a negation of the environment. Rather, interior practices and experiences may refer directly to the environment that conditions them, and in ways that should be understood as political.

Our goal, then, is to complicate the idea of the self-enclosed spiritual interior as an analytical category while also exploding, although not utterly transcending, ideas about the work that individuals and institutions are doing as they mediate spiritual expression and practice. To be certain, we continue to think in terms of the individual and the institution, but we also challenge the uses of those categories that continue to inform most scholarly and popular considerations of the role (or lack thereof) of spirituality in the civic realm. By presuming the purely interior nature of spirituality, those considerations largely neglect aspects of the spiritual that arise specifically in relation to sociopolitical realities and that motivate critical engagement with them. Such neglect leads us to take as relatively unproblematic terms such as "politicized religion," "public religion," and even "civil religion," while failing to imagine such things as political, public, or civic spiritualities.

Challenging the idea of the individual as the focal point of spirituality

Approaching spirituality as a matter amenable to phenomenological investigation can have the effect of complicating common ideas and ideals of individuality. Notions of the soul, or of a singular and internal space of spiritual experience, do not necessarily overlap, for one thing, with common conceptions of the individual qua political subject. The liberal political subject is typically understood as a sovereign, rational entity that makes choices regarding its degree and type of participation in the civic realm and the ends to which that participation is affixed. An ethic of individualism is possible because the liberal subject is presupposed to be constitutively autonomous in the first place. It is also assumed, however, that there are individuals who choose to focus on the cultivation of their individuality at the expense of the commons—not least among them, those who identify themselves as "spiritual-not-religious," and who appear to be concerned first and foremost with the autonomy of the person over and against civic influences, and hence are often associated with individualism's political ills. Spirituality has often appeared, in other words, as a retreat from the civic into the personal realms of liberal subjectivity.

Spirituality may also, however, be the frame within which the radical autonomy of the liberal subject is upended. In many instances, invocations of "spirituality" index shared concerns that articulate bridges across otherwise atomized modern settings and that provide imaginative space, and sometimes social space, within which the problems of individualism are actively confronted. We observe, thus, that the language and experience of spirituality both reassert and trouble the conditions and claims of liberal autonomy. For example, Sophie Staetzel (2011) describes evangelical spirituality as a phenomenon that plays itself out within the psychological space of the individual person; yet, what the person finds inside is *plural*—a "family" composed of both the Holy Trinity and the personal soul, which thus broaches the boundary between the "interior" and the "exterior" of the individual subject. The individual's experience of the self as a set of relationships rather than as a sovereign unit opens him or her to civically oriented relationships within and without the church. In other words, while the idea of a personal relationship with God may be understood as individualizing or individualistic in nature and effect, it may also be psychologically pluralizing. Similarly, Arshad Ali (2011) considers religious identity to be composed of multiple parts that are arranged in shifting hierarchies or constellations, the configuration of which is contingent upon the power dynamics of given social contexts. In Ali's work among Muslim American youth, spirituality denotes precisely the practice of managing a multiplicity of personal identities, which must be so calibrated as to allow the person to navigate a shifting civic and religious terrain.

What are the implications of these and other forms of internal pluralization for the spiritual subject's encounter with the commons? How might psychically pluralizing spiritual practices and experiences play into patterns of political behavior? More research on this question is necessary, but that which we already have challenges the assumption that the personalistic rhetoric conjoined with various forms of spirituality leads individuals to civic apathy or to planes of political abstraction where practical engagement is moot. A reading of first-hand and historical accounts of the United States Civil Rights Movement certainly points to the influence of spiritual dispositions that pluralize the individual's internal landscape by tying the very reality of the personal soul to a historically active God, a broken humanity requiring acts of repair, and a cosmos that arches toward justice (for instance, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s autobiography [2001] and *Essential Writings and Speeches* [1991], and Charles M. Payne's *I've Got the Light of Freedom* [1997]). In such cases, spirituality indicates, not the atomization of individuals—it did not lead would-be activists to retreat into realms of ideological abstraction and mystical solipsism divorced from tangible political activity—but a response to the political moment and a commitment to emerging institutional forms that facilitate protest and other organized, worldly activities.

Challenging the fetish of the formal organization as the site of political mobilization

Perspectives that take formal organizations to be privileged sites of political mobilization tend to rule out *a priori* the political significance of spiritualities not rooted in religious institutions. This perspective not only renders invisible the potential of unaffiliated spiritual sorts to be mobilized but also obscures some of the actual mechanisms that make organizations, both formal and informal, effective. Many social scientific works conceptualize churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques as containers or enclosed spaces. Members, accordingly, are inside their boundaries and so enjoy all the benefits that can be accrued on condition of belonging. These benefits may include, for example, civic skills (Verba et al. 1995) and interpersonal connections (Ammerman 2005; Putnam and Campbell 2010) that can be applied outside the communal boundaries, in politics and civic life, etc. Indeed, the civic itself is implicitly understood as comprising a set of mutually relevant but essentially bounded institutional spaces. The very metaphor of a "public sphere" (see Habermas 1991),

by virtue of its evocation of a discrete and self-enclosed shape, evokes the purported institutional boundedness of civic space.

We approach social organization, however, as a system of interconnected networks, rather than one of mutually reinforcing boundaries. From this perspective, formal institutions are points of convergence enmeshed within widely ramifying relational ensembles; churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples, for instance, are particular nodes in such networks. Network-based perspectives point to the potential for exchange across organizational boundaries and remind us, not only that the formal institution is not the only kind of organization, but also that the boundary between formal and informal organizations is both mutable and porous.

In a study of several megachurches whose members were active in the protests around the indictment of the "Jena Six," in 2007, Stephanie Greenlea (2011) finds that effective political mobilization was possible, not only because many of the people involved were collected within the bounds of church membership, but also because each member could send "email blasts," post on Facebook, and otherwise activate networks extending beyond the churches in question. It is possible to look at such networks as sites of spiritual activity as well as modes of organization, thus retaining a useful analytical emphasis on structures as mediating factors, while also enabling us to think more expansively about the empirical data that we encounter. Indeed, the act of mobilization itself may challenge existing institutional boundaries. According to Luis Leon (2011, 2), Cesar Chaves, founder and leader of the United Farm Workers Union, crafted a spirituality *of mobilization*, which combined "the mandates of Mexican Catholic sacrifice, Gandhian non-violence, a Franciscan vow of poverty, and a Baptist optimism mimicking Martin Luther King in the service of social justice," among other elements drawn from various corners of the cultural environment. The resulting spirituality, referred to as *La Causa,* was used to mobilize populations that might not have been reached as effectively through the efforts of pre-existing organizations and movements. Political mobilization, then, may imply or require the redrawing of boundaries and the reworking of cultural tropes from sundry institutional sources. From this standpoint, what institutions do is coalesce the linguistic and ritual technologies—the "cultural toolbox" (Swidler 1986)—that allow people to respond to the phenomena, whether unsettling or inspiring, indeterminate or overdetermined, that they encounter in the world at large in ways that resonate with their experiences of both individual and institutional interiority.[7] Such technologies, which may fairly be called "spiritual," link the world of external events, many of which may appear chaotic or incomprehensible, with the experiential worlds of individuals and communities.

New horizons

The implications of the methodological dispositions discussed here are not limited to the critique of existing approaches; more importantly, they also help to identify and to

---

[7] Linguistic technologies include metaphor and simile (in this respect, we have already pointed out the example of the "inner family," which certain evangelicals use to link the believer's inner world with the outer world). Ritual technologies may be understood as operations of attuning and directing internal experience toward socially recognizable ends. Religious institutions do ritual work on raw experience and perception and move them into relationships with a plurality of beings and events in the world. Musical ritual, for example, accomplishes this in a way that most will recognize: it both calls forth certain kinds of interior experience and reinforces them collectively. But these ritual and linguistic technologies are not necessarily the strict purview of discrete, formal organizations. Technologies circulate within larger networks of meaning—which is why Cesar Chaves and Arthur Fletcher, for instance, were able to appropriate certain idioms from formal religion and rework them toward political purposes without themselves remaining within formal religious-institutional structures.

13

illuminate several new horizons of inquiry. These comprise new approaches to power, political difference, and "enchantment" in a transnational environment, and to the multiplicity of spirituality itself, as well as its mobilization along lines of both plurality and commonality within differing political and cultural contexts.

Reconsidering enchantment in an expanded global context

We began this project with a focus on "domestic" politics and questions about how spiritual Americans might be engaged (or better engaged) politically. In much of this context, especially as it refers to those who deem themselves "spiritual-not religious," spirituality marks an "immanent frame" of being—that is, one can be secular *and* spiritual, as we have noted (and as Charles Taylor makes clear in his recent writings [2007]). In this respect, spirituality becomes a frame for discussing and assessing, in William Connolly's parlance, moods and orientations, or the different ways in which Americans (and others) define and live out the aspiration to "fullness," as Taylor puts it, whatever that might be. Certainly, many of the "spiritual-not-religious" discourses current in the United States are in some sense non-transcendent, or at least agnostic as to whether, or the degree to which, they imply the presence of divine forces or beings. And, as historian Leigh Schmidt has suggested, the significance of such non-transcendent (or agnostically transcendent) spiritualities is their force within the liberal Christian (particularly Protestant) milieus that have largely shaped progressive politics in the United States (Schmidt 2010).

Nonetheless, Americans inhabit lifeworlds traversed by various transnational and global channels of communication, migration, and exchange that complicate the valences and connotations of spirituality within the U.S. context. In short, investigations of the spiritual and its political force require attention to the influence of transnational flows on American spiritualities and to the reach of American spiritual activism beyond U.S. borders. In the course of this project, we turned not only to the various adventitious spiritualities and "spirits" that Americans engage in the world but also to how they refashion spiritual politics and the politics of spirituality in the United States. These observations, we believe, will continue to provoke future research on spirituality and politics, particularly as they may upset the view that American "spirituality" in the progressive mode is unproblematically disenchanted and immanent. Spirituality as disposition, mood, subaltern style, or extra-institutional potential frames a quite different view of its relation to politics than do enactments of spirituality invested heavily in the reality of spirits. Highly enchanted, the latter occupy a different sort of space and, we might say, do so actively, by calling spirits to attention and designating them as factors in both American and transnational politics (see, e.g., Curtis 2011). Far from the imagined pacific spirituality of yoga, meditation, and the like, Americans' and others' investments in, for instance, transnational religious pilgrimages and stories of traveling spirits, spirit possession, and "getting the Holy Ghost" unsettle the somewhat more palatable relations between American politics and less enchanted—or even avowedly secular—spiritualities.

The tension between invocations of "spirituality," on the one hand, and of "real spirits," on the other, emerged in our discussions of transnationalism in ways that suggest that such tensions are, in fact, highly politicized within a geopolitical landscape in which religious and spiritual Americans play active roles. Both conservative American Pentecostals and liberal-minded "new age" tourists are actively mapping the world in spiritual terms, seeking out and identifying spirits and spiritual energies in various places and articulating their respective religious and spiritual orientations (not to mention their political orientations) in ways that reinforce or reconfigure boundaries between here and there, us and them, etc., and that, in some cases, perform exorcisms or enchantments, as it were, of their own.

Our interest in "spirits" extends also to institutional settings and realms of economic, cultural, and political production and circulation where various powers "possess" populations in ways that are not always understood or seen by people themselves, yet that impact how they behave as citizens (P. Johnson 2011; Appadurai 2008). Markets, nation-states, and corporations, for instance, can be understood as peculiar kinds of agents insofar as they inoculate populations with the "spirits" of consumerism, political docility, or civic enthusiasm, as the case may be (Lofton 2011). At the same time, each such form of possession points to areas where agency, critique, creativity, and resistance are possible. Thus, where instances of this kind of spiritual hegemony are identified, so, too, are opportunities for the study of political activity motivated by subaltern and counter-hegemonic "spirits." The term "spirit" here refers to forces that are at once concrete and efficacious as well as anonymous and atmospheric, and therefore difficult to pin down or to trace with precision; however, even in this sense, the term may be employed in ways that are more or less explicitly pneumatic or enchanted.

To provide but one example, Paul C. Johnson's (2011) "genealogy of spirit possession" in the transatlantic context raises questions about the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century development of a distinction between the modern liberal subject, a holder of "possessions," albeit one infused with the "spirits of capitalism," and African and New World subjects said to be possessed by spirits—and, to be sure, possessed by Europeans. Johnson's essay considers spirits as part of a global history of capital and its political interests. And the distinction between possessed or possessable and possessive selves is not only a matter of the past: Johnson argues that an ongoing remapping of spiritual and political territories and bodies also shapes the contemporary world (see also M. McAlister 2008; Meyer 2012). The case of transnational Pentecostalism calls such distinctions forcefully to our attention, inasmuch as it conjures a variety of "spirits" (whether the Holy Spirit, the spirit of industry, ambition, and austerity—i.e., of capitalism—or demonic forces) as presences that shape global politics, but that also fashion what it means on an experiential level to be a "spiritual" person.

In this vein, we also note anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's (2008) suggestive concept of political "magic" (from a recent essay on how Americans envision the process of voting). Writing of the power that many Americans (and not just on the Left) felt in the wake of the 2008 presidential elections, Appadurai argues that magic should be recovered as a term through which to explore terrains of feeling and power basic to modern life that, nevertheless, often fall outside of the scholarly purview. What Appadurai calls the "opening" is a space in which to consider the operations of "the numinous" that have been indicated by other scholars (including Habermas and Taylor), yet that comprise much more than the decidedly "religious" potentials with which most scholars appear to be more comfortable. Most scholars' work on religion, he notes, leaves magic "firmly excluded" from the discussion:

> In the public discourse of the United States, […] magic is mostly a pariah
> word. Voodoo economics, satanic cults, Las Vegas legerdemain by
> professional illusionists, get-rich-quick schemes, telephone spiritual advisors,
> these are the contexts in which the word 'magic' is most likely to occur in our
> public discourse. In its benign form, magic appears in the soft focus language
> of greeting cards, romantic soaps, and sappy self-help talk. But is [sic] not a
> word for serious grown-ups.

Appadurai argues that a recovery of "magic as it used to be" "would let us name the un-nameable and it would let us enjoy our means even without certainty about our ends." This bygone sense of magic would recuperate a kind of enchantment that is "primarily about the management of risk and uncertainty" through various techniques and practices.

Appadurai's bid to recuperate magic may indeed be worth exploring. Nonetheless, even this positive, playful engagement with "magic" resonates with the unmarked politics of enchantment and race to which Johnson and others call our attention. Recent work by Ruth Marshall (2009) on spiritual politics in Nigeria (with regard to Pentecostalism in particular), as well as work by Elizabeth McAlister (2010) that traces shifts in the language of spiritual warfare in the wake of the Haiti earthquake, and Marla Frederick's (2010) research on T.D. Jakes's spirit-filled racial and religious interventions in South African and American contexts all make clear, to reiterate, that a "recovery" of inquiry into the things that modern people experience as enchanted would unquestionably take shape in a political space wherein "magic" already has significance and power.

Recasting the "one and the many": spirituality as plural or singular

Is spirituality (whether the spirituality of "spiritual-not-religious" people or the respective "spiritualities" of different religious—and secular—traditions) a single phenomenon, or does spirituality designate, rather, many different phenomena? Scholars and religious leaders, as well as politicians, have both implicitly and explicitly addressed this question in various ways. Liberal religious and political leaders, for example, have long claimed that a shared "spirituality" is what unites religious traditions and makes possible interactions and shared activities and commitments despite doctrinal (or political) differences. Others—both conservative and liberal—have, contrariwise, frequently made claim to a particular political purchase said to emanate from a specific spirituality in contrast to others, be it Catholic, African-American Christian, Jewish, and so on. With this in mind, the questions that William James raises in "The One and the Many" (1981) still resonate. If the world that philosophers, scientists, and others seek to understand is "One," as many claim—that is, if its organization is a coherent totality of which each part is connected in some fashion—then, James asks: "What is the oneness known as? What practical difference will it make?" (1981, 63).

James's questions and concerns about "the One" are situated within cultural, political, and philosophical currents saturated with the captivation of (and concerns about) various forms of holism and universalism, as well as a nascent cosmopolitanism (see Schmidt 2003). James's interest in the "whole" and, moreover, his critiques focus on issues of method and follow, in particular, from the contention that claims to universality limit rather than extend philosophical and empirical inquiry. His claim that "the many" (indeed, a "pluralistic universe") would be a more useful grounding for such inquiry remains salient for those studying spirituality today. The tension, both political and philosophical, between "the one and the many" continues to reverberate, in both new and old ways, in contemporary politics, in religious studies, and in the interests of secular projects and institutions.

Our emphasis on the locations and genealogies of spirituality in place, we simultaneously affirm the plurality of spiritualities, on the one hand, and consider, on the other, how various academic, political and popular concepts of plurality and pluralism (whether religious, ethnic, or cultural) are tightly woven into the politics of spiritual pluralism. As our discussion of spirituality's many meanings and bases of authority make clear, different concepts of spirituality circulate and jostle one another in public and civic discourse. The studies on which we have drawn throughout are evidence enough of the multiplicity of phenomena, discourses, and histories of the spiritual that offer themselves up to scholarly research. Religious traditions articulate different "spiritualities," both among their own multiple constituencies and in relation to other traditions. The nexus of issues, practices, and aspirations linked to the historical and contemporary expression of Catholic spirituality, for example, are quite different from those connected with Jewish spirituality (Orsi 2010). Investigations of spirituality thus should continue conscientiously to identify the

16

effects of a universal or perennial concept of spirituality in different contexts, rather than assume that spirituality itself simply is something universal and/or perennial. While spirituality is often used to designate the ligaments of a shared humanity spanning deep cultural and political divides (Schmidt 2003), and sometimes cultivated in liberal interventions in colonial and mission contexts (Klassen 2011; Wenger 2009), such projects diminish interest in and attention to—in fact, they occult—what might be called an actually existing (spiritual) pluralism.

Thus, we cannot fail to note that the criticisms of perennialist and universalist visions of spirituality that issue from contemporary research are nonetheless shaped by frames of "pluralism" that have shared equally in contemporary political contexts wherein the co-existence of difference is tendentiously celebrated as a condition and sign of a fully functioning political order—and as the apotheosis of freedom (Bender and Klassen 2010; Hicks 2010). As Jodi Eichler-Levine and Rosemary Hicks (2007) show, for example, "Save Darfur" organizers consistently used rallies to celebrate the multiple spiritualities (including Muslim spiritualities) of those involved, and likewise implicitly and explicitly imagined a free, multi-spiritual America as both a resource and a symbol that could work against oppressive states around the world. In this case, an affirmation of spiritual pluralism becomes the frame through which political projects, including those mobilized against the limitations that others place on what in liberal contexts are deemed essential freedoms, articulate a developing evaluation of spirituality that plays off of ongoing political negotiations of the one and the many.

More research will contribute to our understanding of how intersecting public and scholarly arguments about multi-religious and pluralistic societies are mobilized and engaged through the deployment of spiritual concepts, discourses, and experiences. It is at this juncture of spirituality and pluralism that we both see fertile interactions taking place in progressive movements (see Stout 2010; Lichterman 2010) and believe more critical commitment to understanding the genealogies of spirituality that shape those movements and political investments (see Gunn 2008, Fessenden 2007) is most vital.

Political horizons

The literature on political identity and mobilization is typically framed in terms of units of collective identity and the social networks that emanate from them. Within this framework, spirituality is all too frequently squeezed into the same conceptual space that religion occupies. As a consequence, our understanding of spirituality and its relations to a complex field of phenomena in public and political life often lacks precision and critical clarity. Most studies of "spirituality" fail to help us understand how spiritual identities, actions, and projects have become a part of our shared public and political discourse. They add little to our collective understanding of how spirituality works, and thus likewise offer little to our ability to evaluate how spiritually oriented political mobilization might be promoted and engaged by funders and activists. Fortunately, however, our endeavors in this project—and the growing field of research that we have identified—point to innovative ways of thinking about these topics.

As should be clear, spirituality (and all that it implies) not only cohabitates in complex ways with both religion and secularity but is also entangled, down to its roots, in the political discourses of liberalism and pluralism, the historical appurtenances of which are by no means monolithic or unequivocal. It is tempting to ask, furthermore, given the glut of recent survey research identifying a demographic of "spiritual-not-religious" Americans (and "religious nones"), whether such subjects can be effectively mobilized toward political

17

participation, particularly around progressive issues and policy agendas.[8] Depending on how one defines "spirituality," the answer to this question may be either yes or no.

The negative (and more common) answer is recognizably shaped by a particular narrative about spirituality, which situates its subjects in contradistinction to those who are mobilized in and by the religious organizations to which they belong. Accordingly, the "spiritual-not-religious," the story goes, cannot be mobilized to the same extent and effect as religious adherents, as they lack precisely what makes religious institutions propitious places for political mobilization—namely, face-to-face contact and collective commitment to a voluntary organization wherein they participate in rituals that reinforce solidarity, acquire common idioms in which to express their political interests, and are galvanized by community leaders (see, e .g., Putnam and Campbell 2010; Olson 2010; Wuthnow 1998). Summarily speaking, research in sociology and political science that analyzes spirituality within a framework derived from the conventional representation of religious life in the U.S.—which, for example, privileges congregations and other voluntary organizations, and which construes religious identity as singular, confessional, and ascribed—tends to conclude that "spiritual" or "spiritual-not-religious" people are not socially connected in ways conducive to collective mobilization. Thus, while some have argued that "spiritual-not-religious" Americans can in fact be seen to share certain convictions and concerns as regards current political issues (e.g., B. Taylor 2010; Eller 1995), scholars, nevertheless, have by and large reiterated the view that such convictions and concerns are irrelevant absent the social settings in which group identity and collective mobilization have historically gone hand in hand. Some scholars, accepting this notion, even identify spirituality itself as a factor that discourages the formation of civic bonds and shared political commitments (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Others, adopting the framework of this argument but not its conclusions, contend, by way of contrast, that the case of "spiritual" subjects and associations offers counterexamples to these critiques and that there are lessons to be learned from their endeavors (e.g., Stanczak 2006; McFarland 2009).

In working through recent research and attempts to theorize the intersection of spirituality and politics, as well as our own analyses, we have arrived at a different set of conclusions. We believe, first of all, that the approaches that social scientists have taken to the political mobilization of religious communities cannot be accurately translated into the study of spirituality and politics in the United States today. Given the many instances in which claims to the possession of spiritual experiences or truths invest individuals and groups with an authority that eclipses both theological and secular political vindications, it is important to attend to the particular configurations of power, autonomy, authority, etc., that emerge through spiritual discourses, experiences, and rituals. This is not to suggest that what "spirituality" marks is merely a tendentious claim and the displacement of one modality of authority by another; on the contrary, such claims are powerful precisely because

---

[8] This temptation results, in part, from the (not unwarranted) perception that conservative movements and politicians have, to great effect, been able to mobilize religious adherents around a range of issues—and from the desire, among progressives, to counterbalance this concerted, and in many ways successful, effort on the part of the Right. But it is aided along by well-publicized survey results that have identified "religious nones" as being, on average, better educated and more liberal than their counterparts. Some, furthermore, conjecture that a distaste for the "politicization of religion," starting with the "culture wars" of the 1980s and continuing into the present (Hout and Fischer 2002), has contributed to the growth of this segment of the U.S. population. We note as a caution, however, that "religious nones" are not a self-identified group but a demographic engendered as such by the survey research that identifies and names it, and that this designation itself refers to what its constituents refuse ("religion") rather than to what they profess. Finally, whether "religious nones" in fact align with the "spiritual-not-religious" is a question, and perhaps a debate, that is only beginning to take shape.

they reflect and articulate registers of feeling, desire, and motivation (and experiences of agency) that escape, or that seek to escape, from established—and, in the eyes of many, corrupt or ineffectual—institutions and organizational forms (Wilcox 2010). The place of spirituality in politics and public life, accordingly, ought to be understood in and for its idiosyncrasies, rather than as a derivative or deviant form of organized religion.

Given all of the above, we caution against an uncritical reliance on the capacity of surveys and polls to apprehend the connections between spirituality and politics. While these instruments certainly pick up important trends, they simultaneously conceal other patterns of identity and behavior by operationalizing spirituality and politics in very narrowly circumscribed ways. This is an example of how the tools of research make the object of study, not unlike the way media may be said to create the very categories and events which they claim only to transmit or reflect. Rather than react to surveys and polls as if the terms in which their findings are framed were ontologically stable, funders might consider how to support modes of research—and media production, for that matter—that uncover more of the complexity of spirituality in its intersections with the political. Accordingly, we would also caution against the assumption that spiritual people are necessarily politically progressive and that political progressives are uniformly secular. We do not believe that spiritual identities are equally distributed in the American political landscape, but, at the same time, the claims and power of "spirituality" are not contained within, nor are they the birthright of, liberal or progressive political actors. Rather, spirituality is a phenomenon with ties of various kinds to organized religions and to a wide range of secular institutions.

Conclusion

In this paper we have attempted to disrupt common scholarly thought routines regarding the nature of spirituality by highlighting novel methodological approaches, exploding inherited conceptualizations, and identifying promising topics for future research. We have delineated a space within which are emerging powerful and challenging new ways of understanding the place of spirituality—and, indeed, of religion—in the landscape of American civic and political life. In so doing, we have avoided approaching the category of spirituality as though it denoted a set of essential or immutable qualities. Likewise, we have not taken spirituality to be deeply contrary to, or locked into any one set relation with, "religion." Our aim has been to problematize these distinctions and relations, and to present promising modes and areas of investigation into the historical, institutional, and political specificities of spirituality, including its operation within particular civic settings, and the relationships that it entertains with religious identities, discourses, and concepts.

Our methodological framework hinges in part on genealogical historiography, which upsets the self-evidence of conventional categories by investigating the emergence, the variant usages, and the apparent naturalization of concepts. Genealogical approaches usefully unsettle accepted understandings of the category of the spiritual and all that it evokes. Since the development and entrenchment of current notions of spirituality have hitherto been obscured, genealogical exploration is very much in order. A second methodological point of departure is the examination of how spiritual discourses, practices, and identities are produced, reproduced, and circulated. This type of investigation aims to situate spirituality within particular configurations of culture, place, and history, rather than assume that spirituality inherently lacks such specificities. The third methodological hinge of our approach focuses on spirituality's use as both an emic and an etic term and seeks to identify how these contrasting usages have both commingled and inflected one another historically.

19

In sum, these methodological moves are intended to bring spirituality into focus in its own terms, rather than as merely one of religion's many others. Of course, religion, too, is notoriously difficult to define. Scholars disagree, for example, as to whether Buddhism is a religion, or whether civil religion is a religion proper or simply a rhetorical style. Yet the study of religion and its civic influences has for the most part proceeded without sustained hand-wringing about its definition or ontological status. Indeed, it can be said that spirituality as a scholarly object has inherited much of its own definitional notoriety from the unresolved fuzziness of religion. "Spirituality" has become the signifier of all that is indeterminate in the latter. By forcing a hard conceptual distinction between spirituality and religion, scholars seem to render religion something solid enough to study as an isolable variable—that is, as a cause or condition of recognizable and specifiable effects. Our methodological undertaking seeks to liberate the idea of spirituality from its stultifying role as religion's sloppy shadow: the crazy uncle upon whom the dysfunction of the entire family is projected.

As we've already noted, however, the broader project articulated here ushers in a new field of inquiry, empowered by the methodological dispositions discussed above, concerned with both the spiritual and the religious, and lending itself, we believe, to empirical research as well as to debates around politics and public ethics. The critiques that have been necessary in order to cleave a space for this emerging field highlight how reified notions of the individual and the institution, interiority and exteriority, are concretely exploded as spiritual practices put inner worlds in conversation with material—and political—realities. This bridging of the "internal" and the "external," rather than a cordoning off of inner, spiritual states from exterior, public ones, is commonly connoted by spirituality in its contemporary usage, and it is the source of its potential and actual relevance in the civic realm. In presenting these critiques, we also mean to challenge the insistence on linear causality that dominates much of the research on "religious nones" and public life. Recent studies have sought to discover whether people who identify as "spiritual-not religious" are more or less politically active than self-identified religious people. Yet, since they tend to presuppose that religion is organized, collectivist, and politically active, and that spirituality is opposed to it term for term, their "findings" are built into the variables from which they set out. To be sure, questions of whether formal religiosity (or spirituality) is associated in such a fashion with civic participation remain important. Even so, by freeing spirituality from its default status as an independent variable opposed to religion, we emphasize that all kinds of identities, practices, and experiences should be understood also as resources and energies that can be deployed in complex ways to justify and fuel a wide range of civically significant activities. In short, we challenge future scholarship on spirituality to elaborate the dynamic and relational aspects of the latter as well as its possible operation as an independent, causal variable.

The horizon of research into spirituality and its civic presences is vast. We have endeavored here, not only to point to this vastness, but to map within it a field of study shaped around an intellectually liberating set of methodological and conceptual habits. These habits distinguish our work from research that classifies spiritual or "spiritual-not-religious" people as a discrete and coherent demographic defined by a consistent set of practices and commitments. As we have already intimated, the latter approach risks occulting the real ramifications of spirituality in U.S. politics in favor of tidy and easily reproducible classifications. The field is also directed by a broad orienting concern: How is spirituality defined and deployed in relation to particular political (and, as the case may be, religious) projects across various contexts and situations? Within that concern are countless points of investigation, including the questions about the civic habits of "religious nones" that first inspired this paper. Regarding that question, and based on the state of research in this field to date, we can at least assert the following: people who identify as "spiritual" or "spiritual-

not-religious" are amenable to political mobilization, but such mobilization will look different—indeed, already does look different—from the image of mobilization in formal religious communities that is familiar to the social sciences. Accordingly, we encourage scholars to consider how different understandings of the spiritual—and their various invocations in social settings—may work either for or against different interests and strategies, rather than to assume that, whatever spirituality may be, it is at bottom one thing. Likewise, we encourage scholars to risk more expansive and nuanced conceptualizations of spirituality—but also of such fundamental categories as the individual and the institution, the community and the congregation—so as better to apprehend the phenomena that confront us.

References

Albanese, Catherine. 2006. *A Republic of Mind and Spirit*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Ali, Arshad. 2011. "Between Politics, Race and Theology: The Forging of Public Muslim Youth Identities." Paper presented at the SSRC Conference on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, June 3-4, 2011.

Alter, Joseph. 2004. *Yoga in Modern India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ammerman, Nancy. 2011. "Spiritual but not Religious? Beyond Binary Choices in the Study of Religion." Unpublished paper.

—. 2005. *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso.

Appadurai, Arjun. 2008. "The Magic Ballot." The Immanent Frame. http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2008/11/07/the-magic-ballot/ (accessed April 24, 2011).

Aruvamudan, Srinivas. 2006. *Guru English: South Asian Religion in a Cosmopolitan Language*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Baker, Joseph O. and Buster G. Smith. 2009. "The Nones: Social Characteristics of the Religiously Unaffiliated." *Social Forces* 87: 1251–64.

Bellah, Robert, et al. 1985. *Habits of the Heart*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bender, Courtney. 2007. "Religion and Spirituality: History, Discourse, Measurement." Social Science Research Council Forum: The Religious Engagements of American Undergraduates. http://religion.ssrc.org/reforum/Bender.pdf (accessed August 4, 2011).

—. 2010. *The New Metaphysicals: Spirituality and the American Religious Imagination*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Bender, Courtney. 2012a. "Things in Their Entanglements." In *The Post-Secular in Question*. Philip Gorski, John Torpey, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and David Kyuman Kim, eds. 43-76. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Bender, Courtney. 2012b. "Spirit." In *Rethinking Therapeutic Culture*. Timothy Aubry and Trysh Travis, eds. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press (forthcoming).

Bender, Courtney and Pamela Klassen, eds. 2010. *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Bramen, Carrie. 2001. *The Uses of Variety: Modern Americanism and the Quest for National Distinctiveness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brown, Bridget. 2007. *They Know Us Better Than We Know Ourselves: The History and Politics of Alien Abduction*. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Cadge, Wendy. 2012. *Paging God: Religion in the Halls of Medicine.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Carrette, Jeremy and Richard King. 2004. *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Connolly, William E. 2005. *Pluralism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

—. 2010. Notes from the SSRC Meeting on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, October 29-30, 2010.

Csordas, Thomas J. 2010. "Spiritual Politics/Politics of Spirituality: Schism, Ritualization, Theocracy, Tolerance." Paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, September 24-25, 2010.

Curtis, Finbarr. 2011. "The Soul-Killing System: J. Gresham Machen's Critique of Progressive Reform." Paper presented at the SSRC Conference on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life June 3-4, 2011.

Deutsch, Nathaniel. 2009. *Inventing America's Worst Family: Eugenics, Islam, and the Fall and Rise of the Tribe of Ishmael.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2009. *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking has Undermined America.* New York, NY: Henry Holt.

Eichler-Levine, Jodi and Rosemary Hicks. 2007. "'As Americans Against Genocide': The Crisis in Darfur and Interreligious Political Activism." *American Quarterly* 59: 711-735.

Eller, Cynthia. 1995. *Living in the Lap of the Goddess: The Feminist Spirituality Movement in America.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Farman, Abou. 2011. "Informatic Cosmologies: NBIC, Singularity and the Conscious Universe." Paper presented at the SSRC Conference on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, June 3-4, 2011.

Fessenden, Tracy. 2007. *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

—. 2010. "UnSpirituality." Paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, March 26-27, 2010.

Frederick, Marla. 2010. "Black Neo-Pentecostalism and Globalization." Paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, March 26-27, 2010.

Golland, David Hamilton. 2011. "A Mind Is a Terrible Thing to Waste: Arthur Fletcher, Spirituality, and the American Underclass." Paper presented at the SSRC Conference on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, June 3-4, 2011.

Greenlea, Stephanie. 2011. "Free the Jena Six! Black Technospiritual Practices and Racial Justice in the Digital Age." Paper presented at the SSRC Conference on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, June 3-4, 2011.

Gregory, Karen. 2011. "Enchanted Entrepreneurs: The Mediated Labor of Psychics in New York City." Paper presented at the SSRC Conference on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, June 3-4, 2011.

Gunn, T. Jeremy. 2008. *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion.* Westport, CT: Praeger.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1991. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.* Trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Hicks, Rosemary. 2010. "Saving Darfur: Enacting Pluralism in Terms of Gender, Genocide, and Militarized Human Rights." In *After Pluralism.* Courtney Bender and Pamela Klassen, eds. 252-276. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Hout, Michael and Claude S. Fischer. 2002. "Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations." *American Sociological Review* 67: 165-190.

Igo, Sarah. 2008. *The Averaged American*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

James, William. 1981. "The One and the Many." In *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing.

Johnson, Greg. 2002. "Tradition, Authority and The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act." *Religion* 32: 355-381.

Johnson, Paul C. 2011. "An Atlantic Genealogy of 'Spirit Possession.'" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53: 393–425.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1991. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.

—. 2001. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing.

Klassen, Pamela. 2011. *Spirits of Protestantism: Medicine, History and Liberal Christianity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Leon, Luis. 2011. "A Revolutionary Spirit: The Myth of Cesar Chavez." Paper presented at the SSRC Conference on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, June 3-4, 2011.

Lichterman, Paul. 2010. "A performance approach to public religion." Paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, September 24-25, 2010.

Lim, Chaeyoon, Carol Ann MacGregor, and Robert Putnam. 2012. "Secular and Liminal: Discovering Heterogeneity among Religious Nones." *Journal for the Social Scientific Study of Religion* 49: 596–618

Lofton, Kathryn. 2011. *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Lowrie, Ian. 2011. "Pragmatic Engagements, Transcendent Orientations: An Ethnographic Study of the Center for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence." Paper presented at the SSRC Conference on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, June 3-4, 2011.

Marshall, Ruth. 2009. *Political Spiritualties: the Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria*. London, UK: University of Chicago Press.

Masuzawa, Tomoko. 2005. *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

McAlister, Elizabeth. 2010. "Possessing the Land for Jesus: Public Spectacles of Spiritual Warfare in Haiti." Paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, March 26-27, 2010.

McAlister, Melani. 2008. "What is Your Heart For? Affect and Internationalism in the Evangelical Public Sphere." *American Literary History* 20:4, 870-95.

McFarland, Sarah Taylor. 2009. *Green Sisters*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

McRoberts, Omar. 2004. "Beyond Mysterium Tremendum: Thoughts toward an Aesthetic Study of Religious Experience." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 595: 190-203.

Meyer, Birgit. 2012. "Religious and Secular, "Spiritual" and "Physical in Ghana." In *What Matters? Ethnographies of Value in a Not So Spiritual Age*. Courtney Bender and Ann Taves, eds. 86-118. New York: Columbia University Press.

Mitchell, Kerry. 2007. "Managing Spirituality: Public Religion and National Parks." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 1: 431-49.

—. 2010. "I hope you like circles." Paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, September 24-25, 2010.

Modern, John Lardas. 2010. "Chapter 3: Toward a Genealogy of Spirituality." Paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, March 26-27, 2010.

—. 2011. *Secularism in Antebellum America.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Olson, Laura R. 2010. "Who are the 'spiritual but not religious'?" The Immanent Frame. http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/08/04/who-are-the-spiritual/ (accessed August 4, 2011).

Orsi, Robert. 2010. "The Catholic Heresy, Again." The Immanent Frame. http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/06/09/the-catholic-heresy-again/ (accessed August 9, 2011).

Payne, Charles M. 1997. *I've Got the Light of Freedom.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Perrin, Andrew. 2009. Notes from the SSRC Meeting on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, October 29-30, 2009.

Peters, John Durham. 1999. *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Pike, Sarah. 2001. *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans in Search of Community.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Promey, Sally. 2011. "Hawaii Volcanoes National Park (HVNP)" *Frequencies: A Collaborative Genealogy of Spirituality.* http://freq.uenci.es/2011/10/18/hawaii-volcanoes-national-park-hvnp/ (Accessed August 17, 2012).

Prothero, Stephen. 2002. *Purified By Fire.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Putnam, Robert D. and David E. Campbell. 2010. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us.* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Roof, Wade Clark. 1993. *Generation of Seekers.* San Francisco, CA: HaperSanFrancisco.

—. 1999. *Spiritual Marketplace.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Schmidt, Leigh Eric. 2003. "The Making of Modern Mysticism." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71: 273–302.

—. 2005. *Restless Souls.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.

—. 2010. *Heaven's Bride: The Unprintable Life of Ida C. Craddock, American Mystic, Scholar, Sexologist, Martyr and Madwoman.* New York, NY: Basic.

Schudson, Michael. 1998. *The Good Citizen.* New York, NY: The Free Press.

Singleton, Mark. 2010. *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Postural Yoga.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Smith, J.Z. 1998. "Religion, Religions, Religious." In *Critical Terms for Religious Studies.* Mark Taylor, ed. 269-284. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Staetzel, R. Sophie. 2011. "From 'Rules' to a 'Relationship': The Spiritual Faith and Political Passions of American Evangelicals." Paper presented at the SSRC Conference on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, June 3-4, 2011.

Stanczak, Gregory. 2006. *Engaged Spirituality*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Stolow, Jeremy. 2006. "Techno-Religious Imaginaries: On the Spiritual Telegraph and the Circum-Atlantic World of the 19th Century." *Working Papers.* Institute on Globalization and the Human Condition, McMaster University. http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/sites/ighc.html (accessed on August 9, 2011).

Stout, Jeffrey. 2010. *Blessed are the Organized.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Sullivan, Winnifred Fallers. 2007. *Prison Religion.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

—. 2009. "We Are All Religious Now. Again." *Social Research* 76: 1181-1198.

—. 2010. "Spiritual Governance." Paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, March 26-27, 2010.

Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51: 273-286.

Taves, Ann. 1999. *Fits, Trances and Visions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

—. 2009. *Religious Experience Reconsidered*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Taves, Ann and Courtney Bender. 2012. "Things of Value" in *What Matters? Ethnographies of Value in a Not So Secular Age*. Ann Taves and Courtney Bender, eds. 1-33. New York, NY: Columbia University Press/SSRC.

Taylor, Bron. 2010. *Dark Green Religion*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vaca, Daniel. Unpublished. "Spirituality and the Social Sciences, 1890-1925: A Bibliographic Compilation." New York: Columbia University Department of Religion.

Vargas, Nicholas. 2012. "Retrospective Accounts of Religious Disaffiliation in the United States: Stressors, Skepticism and Political Factors." *Sociology of Religion* 73: 200-223.

Vasquez, Manuel. 2010. "Toward a Transnational Post-Hegelian Phenomenology of the Spirit." Paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, September 24-25, 2010.

van der Veer, Peter. 2007. "Global Breathing: Religious Utopians in India and China." *Anthropological Theory* 7: 315–328.

—. 2009. "Spirituality in Modern Society." *Social Research* 76: 1097-1120.

Verba et al. 1995. *Voice and Equality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Warner, Michael. 2002. *Publics and Counterpublics*. Brooklyn, NY: Zone.

Wenger, Tisa. 2009. *We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

White, Christopher. 2008. *Unsettled Minds: Psychology and the American Search for Spiritual Assurance, 1830-1940.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Wilcox, Melissa. 2010. "'None' Nuns: Spirituality and Politics in the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence." Paper presented at the SSRC Workshop on Spirituality, Political Engagement, and Public Life, September 24-25, 2010.

Wuthnow, Robert. 1998. *After Heaven.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

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

Notes

2-8 Hour and Fischer 2002

2-9 (Vargas 2012; Lim, MacGregor, and Putnam2012; Baker and Smith 2009). We, for our part, certainly agree that this is a socially

significant shift. Yet we also

9-2 An emic unit is a type of abstract object analyzed in linguistics and related fields. Kinds of emic units are generally denoted by terms with the suffix -eme, such as phoneme, grapheme, morpheme. An emic unit is defined by Nöth (1995) as "an invariant form obtained from the reduction of a class of variant forms to a limited number of abstract units". The variant forms are called etic units (from phonetic). This means that a given emic unit is considered to be a single underlying object that may have a number of different observable "surface" representations.
The various etic units that represent a given emic unit of a certain kind are denoted by a corresponding term with the prefix allo-, such as allophone, allograph, allomorph (corresponding respectively to phoneme, grapheme, morpheme). The relation between an emic unit and the corresponding etic forms is sometimes called the allo/eme relationship.

12-1 Is this not what religion was throughout the Middle Ages?

12-5 Good definition of the liberal, autonomous self.

14-1 Porous boundaries between church and society.