Quaestiones Infinitae

New Spirituality and Social Engagement

Nieuwe spiritualiteit en sociale betrokkenheid

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

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door

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geboren op 27 september 1955 te 's Gravenhage

To the memory of my parents
Joan Voormolen and Kees van Dijk

Contents

Introduction

Anything from serious introspection to beauty treatments.
(Voas and Bruce (2007) about contemporary spirituality)

Spirituality is the conceptual space that suggests the promotion of wholesome ethical values, but only by perpetuating a form of ethical myopia that turns our attention away from social injustice. It does this by turning the social ethic of religion into a private reality for self-comfort and self-consumption. …[I]t becomes locked into isolating practices that alienate people from each other and from moral responsibility for the collective good.
(Carrette and King, 2004: 68; 81)

To create your own little world now and then with your partner or with people you love; you can do this with a drink or a joint; just get some inspiration without violence; a little incense, a bath, and just enjoy.
(survey respondent describing spirituality, this study)

Spirituality is a way of life. It doesn't have to be related to belief in God. For me, spirituality is to believe in goodness and to do good. To live in the here and now. To take care of each other. To accept people as they are.
(survey respondent describing spirituality, this study)

Nothing happens by coincidence and everything is interconnected; therefore I can help others with my experiences and they can help others in turn.
(interviewee on spirituality and social engagement, this study)

If you can feel that self-love, then you will also take care of other people, but always starting with: is it good for me to do this?
(interviewee on spirituality and social engagement, this study)

It's a combination of your 'skills', your gifts; it's a combination of experiences in life and self-development, up to the point that you have developed yourself, and that, yeah,… that you can help others with. One person you can help with one piece of yourself, and another person with another.
(interviewee on spirituality and social engagement, this study)

If you don't take care of yourself, you can't be there for someone else.
(interviewee on spirituality and social engagement, this study)

Social bonds in intermediary groups such as the family, the village, religion, and politics create feelings of belonging, as well as feelings of commitment to the welfare of others. Durkheim stated that social cohesion is always expressed in a religious way, and that is why he regarded religion as necessary for the proper function of moral life. Religions provide moral rules, such as concern for others, and reinforce these by collective rituals. The more people are integrated, the more they will comply with the norms of the group (Durkheim, 1897, 1915; Schuyt, Smit, and Bekkers, 2004). Norms lead to responsibilities, especially towards others in one's own group, but many social groups also view solidarity with outgroup members as positive (Schuyt, Smit, and Bekkers, 2004). Religions prescribe solidarity with others in particular. The Golden Rule, an ethical code often formulated as 'do not do unto others what you do not want done to yourself', is found in many religious traditions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Baha'i religion (Momen, 2009; Bakker, 2013).

Industrialization, increasing prosperity, and development of the welfare state are closely connected societal trends in Western countries that went hand in hand with a decline of cohesion in several intermediary groups in the early twentieth century. Concerns about this decline, especially those related to a decline of mutual responsibility and commitment to society have continued to surface until the present (Putnam, 2000). Individualization and autonomy have been praised as achievements of modern society (Taylor, 1991) *and* lamented as moral decline and narcissism (Lasch, 1979). The lives of individual people become more fragmented, their social roles tend to multiply, and their involvement with groups tends to become shorter and less consequential (Gergen, 1991). Contemporary culture is seen as focused on autonomy and individual experience as well as on consumerism and self-indulgence (Heelas, 2008).

Religious institutions are among the intermediary organizations that are declining in membership and influence. This decline, characterized as secularization, has been explained as institutional differentiation (the fragmentation of social life, the diminishing central role of churches), privatization (the increasing relegation of religion to the private sphere), pluralism (the presence of competing religions and worldviews, undermining the credibility of each), individualization (the tendency to pick and mix among various religious options), and rationalization (the increase of scientific explanations of the world) (McGuire, 2002). The few forms of religion that prosper these days are the evangelical denominations and the non-institutional new forms of spirituality. What they have in common is the contemporary emphasis on individual experience and development, albeit in quite different interpretations (Van Harskamp, 2000). In this study, new forms of spirituality are central.

These 'new' forms of spirituality are not really new but represent the continuation of the Western esoteric tradition that can be traced back to the early Renaissance and underwent a thorough process of modernization during the 19th and 20th centuries, through movements like transcendentalism, mesmerism, spiritualism, New Thought, Theosophy, and most recently and specifically, New Age (Hanegraaff, 1998; Hammer, 2005). What is new about 'new spirituality' is that, although it started out as countercultural, it has become mainstream. Hanegraaff (1998) discerns the spiritual counterculture of New Age *sensu stricto*, a type of Western esotericism that grew out of Theosophy and UFO cults and proclaimed the advent of a new age of spiritually awakened living, that developed into the less easily confined and more world-accommodating New Age *sensu lato* with a focus on holistic health, personal growth and spiritual eclecticism. New spirituality has become a prominent religious expression in Western Europe. In this milieu, the religious quest is highly individualized, and self-realization is even expected from participants – Hammer (2010) calls this the 'individualistic imperative' – but, at the same time, the textual and experiential arsenal available to the members is limited and almost canonized (Von Stuckrad, 2013). In the same vein, Houtman and Aupers (2010) speak of a 'shared doctrine of self-spirituality that hence provides the milieu with its ideological coherence'. New spirituality has been popularized and commercialized (Carrette and King, 2004, Heelas, 2008). In the Netherlands, the number of people who self-identify as religious or spiritual but not affiliated to a group or institution amounts to 26% of the population (Kronjee and Lampert, 2006), but new spirituality ideology is also found among church members (Hanegraaff, 1997; Berghuijs, Pieper, and Bakker, 2013a). Versteeg (2007) and De Groot, Pieper, and Putman (2013) observed that mainline religion has absorbed New Age ideas, for instance in the spiritual centres that some churches have established in the Netherlands.

What are the consequences for social responsibility arising from these changes in the socio-cultural and specifically the religious landscape? Many social tasks formerly performed by churches and other independent organizations have now been transferred to the social security system of local or national governments. People are no longer dependent on charities; rather, social services have become rights. Does this have consequences for morality and the social commitment of individuals? Is solidarity with others declining or is it being transformed into commitment to the self and a small circle of family and friends?

While it is well-known that involvement with established religion is related to relatively high levels of volunteering, charitable donations and other expressions of prosocial behavior (e.g., Reitsma, 2007; Bekkers and Schuyt, 2008; Schmeets, Van Herten, and Frenken, 2009; Van Ingen and Dekker, 2011; De Hart, 2011), people involved in new forms of spirituality have often been

characterized as egocentric and lacking in social engagement (e.g., Heelas, 1996; Bloch, 1998; Bruce, 1998; Hanegraaff, 1998; Hay and Hunt, 2000; Bruce, 2002; Carrette and King, 2004; Dekker, 2004; Höllinger, 2004; Van Harskamp, 2003; Wuthnow, 2006; Farias and Lalljee, 2008; Webster, 2012). The discussion is complicated because there is no consensus among authors as to whom exactly they are writing about ('New Agers', 'people involved in (alternative) spirituality', or in 'unaffiliated spirituality') and what exactly the criticism is ('self-indulgence', 'narcissism', 'self-absorption', 'self-gratification', 'atomisation', lacking in 'social responsibilities and obligations', and having 'no impact in the world'). Whereas there is hardly any (quantitative) empirical evidence for these critical judgments, the discussion is being recycled (see chapter 1).

A more positive approach to societal changes in general and new spirituality in particular is also possible. Durkheim (like, among others, Simmel, Troeltsch and Weber) already predicted individualization of religion. He characterized its emergence as follows:

> À mesure que les sociétés deviennent plus volumineuses et plus denses, elles deviennent plus complexes, le travail se divise, les différences individuelles se multiplient, et l'on voit approcher le moment où il n'y aura plus rien de commun entre tous les membres d'un même groupe humain, si ce n'est que ce sont tous des hommes. Dans ces conditions, il est inévitable que la sensibilité collective s'attache de toutes ses forces à cet unique objet qui lui reste et qu'elle lui communique par cela même une valeur incomparable. Puisque la personne humaine est la seule chose qui touche unanimement tous les cœurs, puisque sa glorification est le seul but qui puisse être collectivement poursuivi, elle ne peut pas ne pas acquérir à tous les yeux une importance exceptionnelle. Elle s'élève ainsi bien au-dessus de toutes les fins humaines et prend un charactère religieux (Durkheim, 1897: 296).

Durkheim did not view this development as problematic, because this 'cult of humanity' would not be an egoistic pursuit but instead lead to commitment to others:

> ...the religion of the individual ...is the sole link which binds us one to another...Thus the individualist, who defends the rights of the individual, defends at the same time the vital interest of society; for he is preventing the criminal impoverishment of that final reserve of collective ideas and sentiments that constitutes the very soul of the nation (Durkheim, 1898, translated by Lukes, 1969:27-28).

Durkheim (1915) noted that religious individualization is accompanied by religious cosmopolitanism. Simmel (1908) had already elaborated on this parallel development in other terms: as citizens in modern societies become affiliated with a higher number of groups ('cross-cutting social circles'), the sense of belonging and commitment to each of these groups will decrease, but feelings of involvement with society in general will increase. Simmel argued that cross-cutting social circles lead to higher levels of individualization. In turn,

more individualization means lower ingroup altruism, which is a key factor in breaking down boundaries and building bridges among social groups (Selway, 2011).

Religious cosmopolitanism may be reflected in the fact that people involved in new spirituality show a relatively high commitment to nature and the environment (Becker, De Hart, and Mens, 1997; Bernts, Dekker, and De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2011), showing a concern with humanity in general and future generations. Some suggest that people involved in new spirituality show solidarity with others in more individual and informal ways related to their own biographical situations (e.g., De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2011) and highly selective buying and boycotting behavior based on their personal ethics (Chandler, 2011). But comparative empirical evidence supporting these suggestions is lacking.

This study therefore takes up the subject of the relationship between new spirituality and social engagement, with a special focus on the situation in a highly secularized country, the Netherlands. The study is relevant for several reasons.

− It will make the group of people involved in new spirituality more 'visible'. Since a considerable number of former church members have affinity with new spirituality themes and activities (De Hart, 2011) they represent an important factor in the process of de-institutionalization. However, research on this group, especially quantitative research, is quite scarce. Barker (2008) regrets that the RAMP survey did not include more questions that would enable researchers to explore the distribution and content of New Age-type spiritual ideas and practices. Houtman and Aupers (2007) have the same complaint about the questionnaire of the World Values Survey. The group involved in new spirituality tends to be 'forgotten', especially in social engagement studies, because comparisons are usually made between church members and non-church members. In such studies, the group is 'invisible' (as in Schmeets, Van Herten, and Frenken, 2009: see Berghuijs, 2009).

− It will contribute to the conceptualization of spirituality. The popularization, commercialization (Carrette and King, 2004; Heelas, 2008), and 'secularization' (Hanegraaff, 1998) of new spirituality makes it increasingly hard to define and to distinguish from religion and secularity (e.g., Hill et al., 2000; Moberg, 2002; Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005; Salander, 2012; Westerink, 2012). If we look at the media, the Internet, advertising, and bookshops, the word 'spiritual' is seen, as might be expected, in a variety of combinations: in 'spiritual' teachings, books, and therapists, courses and workshops as well as, surprisingly, in 'spiritual' movies, holidays, gardening,

slimming, beauty treatments, and divorce.[1] A study like the one proposed here will have to deal with the difficulty of demarcating new spirituality and the people involved in it in a decisive way to be able to compare their level of social engagement with that of other groups or the population in general.

− It will assess the veracity of the critical judgments that have been made, thereby doing justice to the people involved.

This study will be explorative and will not take a position in the debate or formulate a hypothesis. It will focus on clarifying the discussion by a literature review, followed by empirical, quantitative, and qualitative research. Its aim is to assess the possible relation between new spirituality and social engagement.

The research questions are:

1. What arguments are used in the discussion on the relation between new spirituality and social engagement?
2. What is spirituality and how can the group involved in new spirituality be delimited?
3. How should social engagement be defined and measured?
4. Are people involved in new spirituality less socially engaged than others?
5. If there is a relation between new spirituality and social engagement, how is that expressed in peoples' lives?

Question 4, 'Are people involved in new spirituality less socially engaged than others?' is the central question and clearly involves comparing groups. This question is obviously best answered by carrying out a representative, empirical study. Therefore, the characteristics of new spirituality among Dutch people have been portrayed, largely through a survey study, as well as through an inventory of their social engagement compared to that of other groups in the population, specifically adherents of traditional, institutional religion and secular groups. The reader should note that question 2 starts with 'spirituality' in a broader sense, and then focuses on 'new spirituality'. The first, broader part of the question is included because spirituality is not only present in society in its popularized 'new' forms. Spirituality used to be seen – and is still seen by many – as inseparable from religion (Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005). We want to know if 'new spirituality' is clearly differentiated from 'spirituality' in a religious

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[1] See e.g., http://www.amazon.com/Spiritual-Gardening-Creating-Sacred-Outdoors/dp/1930722249;
http://books.google.nl/books/about/Spiritual_Slimming.html?id=_VFDPK0FLkQC&redir_esc
=y; http://www.psychicsuniverse.com/articles/spirituality/attracting-positivity/spiritual-beauty;
http://books.google.nl/books/about/Spiritual_Divorce.html?id=iifdXOYEI3MC&redir_esc=y
(all: last accessed 20-6-2013).

sense and if it is mainly found outside established religion or also within churches and other religious communities. The quantitative data have all been generated by means of the LISS panel of CentERdata in Tilburg[2]. In October 2009, our questionnaire (see appendices to chapters 3 and 4) was presented to a random and representative sample consisting of half the panel (4402 respondents); the response rate was 60% (2622). Data obtained in previous surveys in the panel have also been used. The survey information has been complemented by a series of ten in-depth interviews that provided insights into the nature of each person's spirituality, the motivations for their social engagement and the role of spirituality in their social engagement. The interviews took place during the summer of 2009 and during the fall of 2011.

The body of this study consists of six chapters. The first five chapters are based on co-authored articles. I wrote all the texts and am primarily responsible for them, but, for reasons of consistency, the personal pronoun 'we' will be used throughout the volume.

Chapter 1, '*Are people involved in new spirituality egocentric and lacking in social engagement? A critical review of the sources'*, is a literature review that deals with research question 1. It shows that references to the critical judgments are numerous, persistent, and sometimes extreme in their wording. Most scholars, however, only repeat – or sometimes exaggerate – the expressions they find in their sources; only a small number of them support the criticism and only a few supply empirical evidence. Moreover, we also found arguments invalidating the criticisms. Most sources show a rather imprecise indication and delimitation of the group that is criticized. Furthermore, the nature of the critical judgments varies. The chapter concludes with some recommendations for the design of an empirical study that will decisively contribute to resolving the discussion.

Chapter 2, '*Conceptions of spirituality among the Dutch population'*, deals with the first part of research question 2. In this study, we explore the conceptions of spirituality in our survey sample. Apart from a large percentage of respondents who distance themselves from 'spirituality' in a neutral or negative sense, they describe spirituality mostly in cognitive terms, especially in the form of general references to a transcendent reality (e.g., 'more between heaven and earth'). Experiential expressions are also often used, followed by descriptions in consequential and ritual terms. In addition, we detected a number of important patterns in the descriptions, including spirituality as the transcendent God, spirituality as inwardness, and spirituality as mental health. We paid special attention to differences in conceptions of spirituality between

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[2] See http://www.centerdata.nl/en/survey-research/mess-liss-panel, latest access date: November 11, 2013.

people within and outside religious institutions, and between people who self-identify as 'spiritual' and those who do not.

Chapter 3, '*Being 'spiritual' and being 'religious' in Europe: Diverging life orientations*', approaches the question 'What is spirituality?' in another way. It shows that the self-designations as being a 'spiritual' or a 'religious' person are becoming different life orientations for a large part of the population. As far as we can tell for the first time a representative sample from a European country shows that these orientations are reflected in two coherent clusters of beliefs, experiences, and practices of what we call new spirituality on the one hand, and traditional, church-related religion on the other. In addition, it appears that 'only-spiritual' (and not 'religious') people and 'only-religious' (and not 'spiritual') people have a less 'intensive' spiritual/religious life than people who describe themselves as 'both spiritual and religious'. This 'both' category is not homogenous, probably as a result of the different conceptions of the terms 'spiritual' and 'religious' that its members have. It can be subdivided in two subgroups with different profiles.

Chapter 4, '*New spirituality and social engagement*', deals with research questions 2 and 3 and answers the question that is central to this study, research question 4. After deciding on an adequate demarcation of the target group (people involved in new spirituality), we established a concept of social engagement that distinguishes between behavior that is and behavior that is not driven by egocentric motivation. Using measures based on this conceptual model, we surveyed our representative sample of the Dutch population. We found that, according to most measures, people involved in new spirituality are less socially engaged than those affiliated to a religious group or traditionally religious people but more engaged than 'secular' people. However, they are more committed to organizations for environmental protection, peace, or animal rights than others. Overall, demographic factors – especially level of education and age – are stronger predictors of social engagement than religious and spiritual beliefs, experiences, or practices. Some spirituality variables do have a predictive value: connectedness to self, others and nature is the most important one. In the addendum to chapter 4, we further explore the role of the most important independent variables and suggest some additional factors that might add to the explanation for the 'middle position' in the social engagement of people involved in new spirituality. We also show the results on social engagement of alternative choices in demarcating the target group.

Chapter 5, "*We are all connected like dominoes falling over*", adds qualitative insights to the quantitative evidence presented in chapter 4; it deals with research questions 4 and 5. In ten semi-structured interviews with individuals who call themselves 'spiritual' and 'not affiliated to a religious group' we looked for possible relations between respondents' individual form of spirituality and their social engagement. We analyzed their life attitude in terms

of agency and communion as developed by McAdams et al. (1996), their individual expressions of spirituality, and the presence, nature and motivation of their social engagement. In three cases no relation was found. In the other seven we found relational patterns that we called *Crisis, coping, and sharing* (sharing of insights and spiritual gifts developed after illness or other problems) *Proactive connectedness* (connectedness to self, others and nature leading to social engagement*)*; and *Supportive individualism* ('spiritual' individuals standing up for other individuals).

In chapter 6, *'Conclusions and discussion',* we summarize and integrate the results of the whole study following the order of the research questions. We reflect on methods to study (new) spirituality, discuss the results of the study in relation to previous research, and deal with the limitations of the research project.

Chapter 1

Are people involved in new spirituality egocentric and lacking in social engagement? A critical review of the sources[3]

Abstract

Adherents of new forms of spirituality have been judged as being egocentric and lacking in social engagement. This literature review shows that references to such critical judgments are numerous, persistent, and sometimes extreme in their wording. Most literature sources we studied show a rather imprecise indication of the group that is criticised and the nature of the critical judgments. Many authors only repeat – or sometimes exaggerate – the expressions in their sources; only a limited number of authors support the criticism, and only a few supply some empirical evidence. Moreover, we also found arguments invalidating the critical judgments.

> *Spirituality is the conceptual space that suggests the promotion of wholesome ethical values, but only by perpetuating a form of ethical myopia that turns our attention away from social injustice. It does this by turning the social ethic of religion into a private reality for self-comfort and self-consumption.…[I]t becomes locked into isolating practices that alienate people from each other and from moral responsibility for the collective good.*
> (Carrette and King, 2004: 68; 81)

Introduction

Spirituality used to be seen – and is still seen by many – as associated with religion (Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005). But forms of spirituality ever more prominently appear outside religious contexts. 'Spirituality' is a term that is rising in popularity and has conquered the market (Carrette and King, 2004; Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005). The meaning of the terms 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' have changed in the course of time. Nowadays 'spirituality' appears to replace former popular terms like 'New Age', 'esotericism', and 'Mind-Body-

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[3] A slightly different version of this chapter has been submitted as an article to *Nova Religio*. Authors are: Joantine Berghuijs, Jos Pieper, and Cok Bakker.

Spirit'. Spiritual books, lectures, workshops and courses, objects, and even spiritual holidays, are on offer. Subjects covered in these products include religious worldviews with pre-Christian or exotic roots, or more secular 'art of living' worldviews, alternative healing systems like Reiki, acupuncture or crystal healing, esoteric knowledge systems like astrology and Tarot, health-oriented methods like yoga and Tai chi, and different spiritual-psychological techniques. Subjectivity and inner experiences play an important role. The people who are involved in new forms of spirituality are often sketched as shoppers in the spiritual supermarket, who feel free to pick and mix elements that fit them best and in that way construct their own, idiosyncratic religious/spiritual way of life. Heelas introduced the term 'self-spirituality' (Heelas, 1996: 2).

A frequently mentioned point of critique on followers of new forms of spirituality is that they would be self-centred or even narcissistic, foremost concerned with themselves and hence lacking in social engagement. They would have no real concern with others and with the larger community. We came across expressions concerning new spirituality as 'self-indulgent' (Bauman, 1998: 70); 'annexed by liberal utilitarian culture' (Hanegraaff, 1998: 523), 'utterly narcissistic' (Fuller, 2001: 158), 'fostering excessive self-absorption' (ibid: 159), 'self-gratification' (Hunt, 2002: 43), promoting attitudes of 'atomization' and 'political myopia' (Carrette and King, 2004: 21-22), 'ultimately socially disruptive' (Chandler, 2008: 245). The critical judgments along these lines will be the subject of this chapter. Heelas (2008) shows that these judgments are part of a broader criticism on the *significance* of what he calls 'spiritualities of life'. New spirituality would perfectly agree with modern culture and its individualism, materialism, superficiality, hedonism, moral subjectivism, utilitarianism, emotivism, consumerism and commodification. Critics claim that new spirituality does not only have little or no impact at the personal level, but is also powerless as an instrument to change the world, because people are too busy with themselves to pay attention to major public issues. While Heelas himself (2008) does not agree with this view, Bruce (1996, 1998, 2000, 2002) is a great defender of it, as we shall see.

It is easy to understand how the critique could emerge. After all, the term 'self-spirituality', with its focus on the self, inner experiences and insights, is suggestive of self-absorption and selfishness. Moreover, the anti-institutional attitude of adherents of new spirituality is easily associated with the absence of social commitment, binding ethical prescriptions and concerted social action (Bruce, 1998; Hay and Hunt, 2000). Finally, commercialization of 'spirituality' can lead to hedonistic and noncommittal contents (Carrette and King, 2004). The critical judgments sound plausible, but are they based on 'solid' evidence?

The present study

In this chapter, we will study the critical judgments that followers of new spirituality are egocentric and consequently, lacking in social engagement, by close reading of the sources. The subject is studied by answering the questions:

1. Which publications address the issue?
2. How exactly do the authors describe the target group that they criticize in these publications?
3. What exactly are the arguments, and how are they substantiated?
4. Are there arguments and is there evidence pointing in another direction?

We will use the term 'new forms of spirituality' or 'new spirituality' and avoid the term 'New Age'. Both are umbrella terms indicative of expressions that are probably equally hard to delimit, but 'New Age' has the flavour of referring to a period that lies behind us. Many of the 'new' forms of spirituality are not really new, but represent the continuation of the Western esoteric tradition, which can be traced back to the early Renaissance, and underwent a thorough process of modernization during the 19th and 20th centuries, through movements like transcendentalism, mesmerism, spiritualism, New Thought, Theosophy and New Age (Hanegraaff, 1998). If authors we cite use 'New Age' we will of course follow their terminology.

1. The sources

We found the critical judgments of new forms of spirituality in a number of publications (Lasch, 1987; Bauman, 1998; Bloch, 1998; Hanegraaff, 1998; Hay and Hunt, 2000; Bruce, 1996, 1998, 2002; Heelas, 1996; Bibby, 2004; Carrette and King, 2004; Dekker, 2004; Höllinger, 2004; Wuthnow, 2006; Taylor, 2007; Farias and Lalljee, 2006, 2008; Webster, 2012). In addition, we found a number of publications in which the criticism is referred to by authors who do not support it themselves (York, 1995; Wuthnow, 1998; Hedges and Beckford, 2000; Fuller, 2001; Marler and Hadaway, 2002; Dillon, Wink, and Fay, 2003; Possamai, 2005; Wink, Dillon, and Fay, 2005; De Hart and Dekker, 2006; Heelas, 2006, 2008; Saroglou, 2006; Campbell, 2007; Chandler, 2008, 2010, 2011; De Hart, 2011; Oh and Sarkisian, 2012). We will focus on scholarly sources. Nevertheless, we came across comparable judgments by scholars in more popular sources, where they feel free to give their personal opinion (Lasch, 1987; Dekker, 2004, 2007; Webster, 2012). Lasch, for instance, is much more critical than in his famous book (1979), when he writes in an editor's magazine:

> What is missing in the new surrogate religions is spiritual discipline… eclecticism in general makes few difficult demands, as a believer can shuffle the ingredients to suit his requirements for psychic comfort. Religion, on the other hand, aims to produce not so much inner peace as a sense of falling short of an absolute ethical ideal (Lasch, 1987: 82).

For the Netherlands, the sociologist of religion G. Dekker (2004, 2007) is a critical voice in the popular press. He speaks of 'ego-religion' (2004). Some scholars refer to such popular sources in their scholarly work, like Heelas (1996), who refers to Lasch's (1987) popular article cited above. If not handled with care, such a reference then tends to be 'upgraded' to the level of a scientific source. Hanegraaff (1998) shows that there are also critical voices and warnings for excesses from within the New Age movement itself. In this literature analysis, we do not claim to be complete; nevertheless we think that we can give an impression that will depict the situation adequately. In what follows, we distinguish between primary and secondary sources; in primary sources the authors directly express the criticism; in secondary sources the authors refer to others when mentioning the criticism. Remarkably, we found that some secondary sources tend to exaggerate the expressions of their primary sources. Chandler states that critics of religiously unaffiliated spirituality argue that it is 'ultimately socially disruptive' (2008: 245), but we could not detect such an extreme expression in the sources she mentions (Lasch, 1979; Bellah et al., 1985; Bruce, 2002; Bibby, 2004). Heelas, after extensively citing Bruce (1996, 2002), concludes that Bruce's opinion is: 'in sum, New Age spiritualities of life are socially precarious – pointing to an endpoint of *very* weak social significance, perhaps even social collapse' (Heelas, 2006, italics in original). Bruce himself does not arrive at such an extreme conclusion. Such far-reaching expressions in secondary sources indirectly imply 1) that large fractions of a population are followers of new spirituality, and 2) that religion and spirituality are the most important factors determining social cohesion – or a lack of it. Other secondary sources tend to leave out some of their sources entirely, for instance Fuller (2001), who puts critical expressions in the mouth of unidentified 'secularists and church leaders', 'others', and 'critics' who apparently call 'these alternative systems' 'superficial and faddish', 'utterly narcissistic', 'fostering excessive self-absorption', and 'while they might help us feel good about ourselves, they do little to help build a world that can sustain such feelings of well-being over time' (158-159).

2. The target group

How exactly do the authors describe the target group that is criticized in their publications? Often, it is not very clearly delimited: it is referred to in vague terms like 'New Agers' (Heelas, 1996; Bloch, 1998, Possamai, 2005; Farias and Lalljee, 2008); 'people involved in (alternative) spirituality' (Bloch, 1998; Campbell, 2007), 'subjective-life spirituality' (Heelas et al., 2005), or '(New Age) spiritualities of life' (Heelas, 2006, 2008). If specifications are given, we can discern two tendencies:

1. Some authors emphasize institutional aspects: they focus on the unchurched and individual character of the religiosity or spirituality of the people involved (Hay and Hunt, 2000; Fuller, 2001; Chandler, 2008, 2011). They refer to people who call themselves spiritual and/or religious, but who are not affiliated to a religious or spiritual organization. If this indication is used as a criterion for selecting respondents in an empirical study, and if the selection is not taken from a representative sample of the population, or if further selection criteria are used (Hay and Hunt, 2000; Chandler, 2011), prudence is called for when the results of such studies are compared. Chandler (2011) specifies her target group as 'spiritual but definitely not religious', eliminating every possible residual affinity with organized religion by further questions. Fuller (2001) writes about the 'spiritual, but not religious', whom he equates with the 'unchurched'. Curiously, many of the beliefs he describes, are also adhered to by church members, as he himself acknowledges.

2. Other authors focus on the substance of the spirituality they study, and give a description of the views, experiences and practices of the people involved (Heelas, 1996; Possamai, 2005; Bloch, 1998). Those who undertake quantitative studies are likely to delimit their target group by including people who have a high affinity with a limited number of specified beliefs and practices (Dillon, Wink, and Fay, 2003; Wink, Dillon, and Fay, 2005; Höllinger, 2004; Farias and Lalljee, 2008). Farias and Lalljee (2008) recruited a group of visitors after a lecture in a New Age centre, obviously assuming a similarity in their spheres of interest; Höllinger (2004) selected groups of students on the basis of involvement in certain spiritual practices; De Hart (2011) did not construct a target group, but compared social engagement activities as related to a number of separate beliefs and activities associated with new spirituality.

To complicate matters further, some authors who refer to the debate we study focus on the relation between being 'spiritual' and social engagement, or the comparison of social engagement between 'spiritual' versus 'religious' individuals. (Saroglou et al., 2005; Saroglou, 2006; Oh and Sarkisian, 2012; Saslow et al., 2013). However, being 'spiritual' is quite something else than being involved in new forms of spirituality. Many people self-identify as 'both

religious and spiritual', and this group varies from orthodox church members to unchurched individuals deeply involved in new spirituality (Berghuijs, Pieper, and Bakker, 2013a).

If a group of people is criticized, it should be expected that it is compared with other groups or with the population in general. A number of sources do not specify such a comparison (Bloch, 1988; Hanegraaff, 1998; Hay and Hunt, 2000; Wuthnow, 2006). In other cases, explicit or implicit comparisons are made with people belonging to a religious community, who would have a higher social ethic (Hay and Hunt, 2000; Carrette and King, 2004; Dekker, 2004; De Hart, 2011; Chandler, 2011). Most advocates of what we shall call the 'low social engagement'-hypothesis provide no quantitative comparative material (Heelas, 1996; Bloch, 1998; Hay and Hunt, 2000; Bruce, 2002; Van Harskamp, 2003).

Another remarkable point is that a number of often-cited primary authors do not associate their criticism directly with New Age or new forms of spirituality. Authors like Lasch (1979) and Bellah et al. (1985) discuss the individualism of American culture or Western culture in general. In such cases new spirituality may be seen as just one of the expressions of this culture of individualism. Other critical authors who are cited write about the trend to introspection in the therapeutic culture of their days (Schur, 1976; Rosen, 1977; Rieff, 1985), which may be related to but is not the same as new spirituality. Of course this does not devalue the different criticisms expressed by the primary authors, but it makes the secondary sources lose cogency.

Finally, some authors, who have a negative opinion about new forms of spirituality, are not referring to ordinary people involved in those spiritualities, but to the motivation and methods of the suppliers of products promoted as 'spiritual'. Hammer (2004) states that the real, hidden purpose of the spokespersons of the esoteric tradition (including New Age) is: gaining power and authority for themselves. Carrette and King (2004) accuse the producers of what they call 'capitalist spirituality' of promoting 'self-comfort and self-consumption', but it is obvious that they fear negative influences from the suppliers on the buyers. Hanegraaff (1998) has little doubt that in many New Age texts 'the balance tends to swing to the side of 'narcissistic egoism'.

In conclusion, the target group on which the criticism is directed varies and is often not very clearly delimited. Attempts at demarcation are mostly based either on ideas and practices associated with new spirituality, or on the unchurched and individual character of the religiosity or spirituality of the people involved. These two approaches are not identical. Much ideology associated with New Age also has adherents who are church members (Hanegraaff, 1997), and reversely, being unchurched, 'believing without belonging' (Davie, 1994) can include quite traditional Christian beliefs. Finally,

a number of authors who are cited by others, do not write about new forms of spirituality, but about either much broader or much more specific subjects.

3. Arguments and their substantiation

In this paragraph we concentrate on the sources that are left when we leave out the secondary sources, the sources older than 25 years, the sources in the popular press, the primary sources criticizing products on offer, and the primary sources criticizing other people than adherents of new forms of spirituality. If we leave out these sources, a limited number of critical publications remain. In this paragraph, we summarize the arguments in these publications.

<u>Liberating the Self first</u>

We start with an important author on new spirituality, Paul Heelas. In his 1996 study of the British 'popular' New Age expressions, Heelas sees a unity in the diversity of New Age expressions, a *lingua franca* related to the human (and planetary) condition and the possibilities for its transformation. This transformation starts with self-transformation, through what he has called 'self-spirituality'. The Self must be liberated from its enslavement by mainstream society with its institutions, rules and traditions. Instead New Agers try to focus on their true, spiritual nature. To experience the 'Self' is to experience God, inner wisdom, creativity, love, tranquillity and power. The means for obtaining such experiences is to let the ego, that internalised socialized mode of being, lose authority. To this end New Age provides a large range of spiritual disciplines e.g., meditation, activities similar to those found in psychotherapies, physical labor, dance, shamanic practices, and magic. New Agers emphasize that you are responsible for your own life, and consequently, you should not interfere with the lives of others. Heelas (1996) is generally quite positive about New Agers. Nevertheless, he also sees a negative point:

> .. consider the … criticism … that New Agers are basically concerned with healing and perfecting themselves, rather than with the community or other aspects of public life. Here, I think, critics have got a stronger case … given the widespread New Age assumption that everything which is human or natural is interconnected, one would expect New Agers to be doing more to improve or 'transform' the quality of life at large …. With notable exceptions, New Agers do not often go out into the community, working with the poor, the elderly, or the violent. There is less engagement with the realities or consequences of modernity than might be expected (203).

He suggests a possible reason: the majority of New Agers try to transform their *own* lives, either as an 'inner' revolution that takes time and that has to precede an 'outer' revolution, or as an attempt to change their experience of society by detaching themselves from it, instead of trying to change it.

Nothing but the self

Taylor (2007) states that 'the new kind of spiritual quest' is often undemanding, and 'a variety of invitations to self-absorption, without any concern for anything beyond the agent, whether the surrounding society, or the transcendent' (508, 512). Heelas (1996) recognizes the danger that self-spirituality can eventually lead to an excessive focus on the self:

> … the more the New Age is detraditionalized or otherwise anti-authoritarian, the more likely it is that participants take advantage of their freedom to lapse into 'trivialized and self-indulgent' versions of supposed Self-spirituality (214).

Wuthnow (2006) also observes this symptom:

> … contemporary spirituality often smacks of gullibility and irrationality – the kind of wishful thinking and self-indulgent fantasizing about miracles and wonders that makes more sober-minded folks blanch (24).

Although his study is based on 400 interviews and a representative national survey (N = 1530), this specific citation is not based on quantitative empirical results, and appears to have the character of an opinion. Later on in the same book, he states:

> Perhaps the most significant of all the concerns about contemporary spirituality is that it just doesn't matter. This is the *self-indulgence* problem. People talk about spiritual growth, pray, give lip service to religious teachings, and even go to church, but they do so for purely self-interested reasons. They never find enough strength to serve others (47, italics in original).

Bruce (1996) speaks about New Age activities as 'foreign holidays for the self' that 'illustrate the zenith of individualism, and have little or no impact on the world at large (118, 122).

Höllinger (2004) does provide an empirical foundation for the self-interested attitude of a certain type of New Agers. He studied life orientations, political interest and participation, and moral values using a sample of 3970 university students from American and European countries and Israel, and two Austrian samples of 1628 respondents in total. He found two principal types of New Agers. The first is concerned with 'self-perfection': improving their psychic

and physical state by means of spiritual exercises, alternative methods of healing, and psychotherapies. The other is primarily concerned with analysing their own personality by means of 'esoteric methods', such as astrology, Tarot cards, I Ching, consulting fortune-tellers, and interpreting dreams. Höllinger (2004) concludes that the general level of social participation and activism among New Agers is above the average of the population. Whereas this pertains fully to the 'self-perfection' type, among those engaged in esoteric methods a narcissistic and hedonist lifestyle is more widespread:

> … individuals practising esoteric methods declare more frequently than others that it is not wrong to cheat the taxman, which means that they are more concerned about personal advantage than social responsibilities and obligations (303).

So according to the findings of Höllinger (2004) there is a subgroup of New Agers interested in esoteric methods who are more hedonistic, and who tend to narcissism and a lower social ethic more than other people.

Additional empirical data suggestive of a more self-centred attitude are provided by Chandler (2011). Her study is the only one up till now that is specifically dedicated to the relation between new spirituality and social engagement. Using an online survey that circulated through Canada, she sampled 265 'spiritual but definitely not religious' people (SDNRs). She also used material from 32 interviews. While her research suggests that SDNRs are as much involved in civic life as most other Canadians, they show much lower levels of volunteering and charitable giving compared with the most religiously committed, and even average Canadians. Her interpretation of these data, however, is a more positive one, as will be explained later.

No social incentives

Some authors ascribe the self-centred attitude of New Agers to the fact that they are not subjected to the ethical incentives issued by church communities that preach social commitment and change. In the opinion of Bruce (1998, 2002) it is logical that New Agers show little social engagement:

> With no comprehensive or binding ethical code, in the New Age, there is always the danger that pursuing self-growth actually means pursuing self-interest (1998: 28).

He argues that New Agers, while criticizing many aspects of the modern world, make little or no effort to change it, and such efforts as they do make are not amplified by being concerted. He compares New Age with Methodism, which profoundly changed those people who adopted it and profoundly changed their society. In his opinion, the new Age has changed very little:

> Or, to put it rhetorically, where are the New Age schools, nurseries, communes, colleges, ecological housing associations, subsistence farming centres, criminal resettlement houses, women's refuges, practical anti-racism projects, and urban renewal programmes? … the New Age will never become more than the sum of its transient and relatively uncommitted parts (2002: 97).

> Whatever it does for how those involved feel and think about the world, the New Age has … little or no impact in the world at large. The state, civic society, the polity, and the economy remain unaffected (1995: 118).

He stresses the functional character of the New Age:

> …good health, self-confidence, prosperity and warm supportive relationships are not the accidental by-product of worshipping God as in the past; they are the goals sought through the spiritual activity (2002: 85).

Hay and Hunt (2000) studied people who have no contact with any religious institution (traditional or alternative), and yet consider themselves to be either spiritual or religious, in 4 focus groups (total 31 respondents) and 29 individual interviews. The notion that religion could be demanding did not appear very often in the conversations. In the opinion of the authors, this attitude can be changed by the beneficial influence of the churches, if only they knew how:

> The churches are in theory the national institutions best equipped to give a lead in the reconstruction of the moral commonwealth. However, the isolation of spirituality from a communally agreed means of public expression dissipates its potential to influence political and social policy. How can this hidden spirituality be reintegrated into the community to provide the energy for its renewal? (section 1.4).

In other words, unaffiliated spirituality cannot contribute to social coherence and morality except when led by institutions, specifically by the churches.

Adaptation instead of change

Another argument is that spirituality is used only to adapt to mainstream society that is criticized so much. In the view of Bruce (1996, 2000, 2002) even those New Age therapies that claim to be life transforming or empowering often do more to reconcile people to their place in the world than to change it. This is in accordance with the view of Hanegraaff (1998), that New Age has developed from a countercultural spirituality to a more world-accommodating one. The aversion against social commitment was also noticed by Bloch (1998). He interviewed 22 'people involved in alternative spirituality': a convenience sample

of New Agers and Neo-Pagans in the U.S., recruited through personal contacts during fieldwork and ads in strategic locations in different states. He observed:

> No one had the illusion that their spirituality was powerful enough to change mainstream society – or even that it was necessary to change it at all. Instead, all twenty-two people emphasized utilizing their spirituality to adapt as best they could to all that they did not like about mainstream society (79-80).

Virtual connectedness

Followers of new spirituality often stress the connectedness of the individual to the inner self, and to others and 'everything' (Heelas, 1996; Hanegraaff, 1998). However, some authors argue that this connectedness is only restricted to ideology and perhaps to feelings, but does not result in real social involvement and commitment. Farias and Lalljee (2008) think that New Age holism is not a category of social contextualization but of cosmological belief, less a determinant of daily life and more a background principle. They call it, paradoxically, 'holistic individualism'. Individualism is the 'social locus'; holistic integration of the individual in the cosmos is the central belief of New Agers. On the other hand, they argue, holistic ideas are sometimes expressed in almost moral terms, especially in the way the New Age stresses values of self-transcendence, but to what extent these ideas find a social embodiment or remain an abstract principle is still an open question. In their study, they aim at elucidating the type of individualism espoused by New Age individuals and find out how it contrasts from that of other people. They recruited their 159 respondents 'after a talk at New Age centres', and compared them with groups of Catholics (recruited after mass) and non-religious individuals. They conclude that New Age's individualistic nature stands out when compared to adherents of traditional religion. New Agers see themselves as integrated in a larger whole, but their self-concept is highly personal and more abstract than that of Catholics and non-religious people, rather than socially embedded. The authors conclude that the subjective holism of New Agers is of a fundamentally different nature from that found in collectivist settings, for it is built upon weak social ties and it features a universalistic stance that shifts the typically collectivist ingroup relatedness toward an abstract form of loose (magical) connectedness to the larger cosmos.

Van Harskamp (2003) discusses the question how individuals who have a calculating and economistic agenda can form a society together. This requires the dissolution of the tension between the individual's striving for autonomy on the one hand and his desire for community on the other. In a fundamentalist view, the individual has to submit to society. On the other end of the spectrum,

he places the 'spiritual' view. 'Spiritual' people emphasize autonomy, and at the same time abandon the endless negotiations with others to form a real community. They experience a transcendent power, and accordingly a connection with all that is, a cosmic self, including other people. But, he goes on, in practice this connection is illusory. Van Harskamp suggests that the cosmic self may even be a substitute for or a flight from real participation in a community.

Conclusion

The critical judgments are expressed on two levels. First, on the level of personal traits, e.g., self-interest, self-indulgence, and narcissism. Second, they are expressed on the level of social characterizations, e.g., weak social ties, no urge to change society, low social ethic, or low in volunteering. In most of these sources, the criticism is predominantly substantiated in a theoretical way, by referring to the anti-institutional character of the people involved, their possible excessive focus on the self, while entertaining an ideology of connectedness that is only 'magical', the absence of social incentives, binding ethics and collective objectives and actions. Such arguments may be indicative of a feeling that people care less about each other outside authoritative institutions, a feeling that may well lay at the root of accusations towards followers of new spirituality in the popular press. In the case of Hay and Hunt (2000) this attitude is accompanied by a wish to bring the unaffiliated spiritual people back into the churches. Importantly, only in the studies of Farias and Lalljee (2008), Höllinger (2004), and Chandler (2011), the target group is compared to other groups or the population in general. Looking at the large list of authors who mention egocentrism and lack of social engagement in people involved in new spirituality, this literature review shows that the discussion is persistent but that there is only a small number of researchers who support the criticism, and only a few who supply some evidence.

4. Arguments and evidence pointing in another direction

We have seen that many authors do not agree with the critical judgments about people involved in new spirituality. We also found a number of arguments and some empirical evidence against the 'low social engagement'-hypothesis.

Individualism is not the same as egocentrism

First of all, there are some counter-arguments of a more theoretical nature. One of them is that egocentrism should not be confused with individualism (see e.g., De Hart and Dekker, 2006; Bernts, Dekker and De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2008). Individualism is a general trend in society, and not limited to people involved in new spirituality. The self as a source of insights – epistemological individualism (Heelas, 1996; Partridge, 2004; Van Harskamp, 2006; Campbell, 2007) – does not imply that the self is also the ultimate goal of intentions and actions. In such opinions, there may be an element of linguistic circularity or tautology involved: an emphasis on the 'self' is equated with being 'selfish' (York, 1995: 14). Individualists tend to stand up for the rights of individuals, not only those of themselves but also those of others (Bernts, Dekker and De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2008). In some studies, individualism has even been shown to be positively related to certain forms of social engagement (Allik and Realo, 2004; Kemmelmeier, Jambor, and Letner, 2006; Chandler, 2008, 2011).

Narcissism is not the same as egocentrism

There is also terminological confusion about the word 'narcissism'. As Wink, Dillon and Fay (2005) explain, the term is often used in an incorrect way. In the clinical literature, different forms of narcissism are discerned. 'Healthy' or 'normal' narcissism includes creativity, wisdom, and empathy that express a robust and autonomous level of self-investment. Pathological forms of narcissism are characterized either by external grandiosity ('willful narcissism') or by resentment and relational problems due to a covert sense of entitlement and grandeur ('hypersensitive narcissism'). The authors think that critics of new forms of spirituality incorrectly refer to the hypersensitive type. They studied the relationship between these three types of narcissism and involvement in psychotherapy in a longitudinal sample from California. Spirituality was coded and rated in terms of the importance of a number of non-institutionalised or non-tradition-centred religious beliefs and practices. Their results indicate that in late adulthood spirituality is positively associated with autonomous narcissism, and unrelated to the pathological types. Among the three narcissism scales only autonomy correlated positively with spirituality in late adulthood. In another study, they showed that individuals belonging to the autonomous narcissistic type were likely to be socially responsible for the well-being of others and their community (Dillon, Wink, and Fay, 2003).

Empirical evidence

Furthermore, the criticism on people engaged in new spirituality is almost never substantiated by empirical data and often lacks comparison with other groups (Chandler, 2008). Recently, Chandler's (2011) empirical results for the Canadian situation suggest that SDNRs are higher in social trust and in some associational activities than the average population and than the religiously committed. Notwithstanding their lower rates of volunteering and charitable giving, she found that they are

> generally active and engaged in their communities. They have many close friends and socialize with them often. They also belong to many types of leisure associations as well as more formal, civic ones. There is nothing, therefore, supporting the thesis that they are inherently atomistic, socially disengaged, citizens (227).

Interestingly, she found that involvement in spiritual groups was related to higher rates on some forms of social engagement: social trust, meeting with friends, membership of professional associations, local actions for social or political reform and rate of voting in elections. In the Dutch situation, De Hart (2011) found that non-church members highly involved in spiritual network activities have high ratings on collective activism. This means that there might be some truth in the argument that community life promotes social engagement.

Oh and Sarkisian (2012) compared three forms of Mind-Body-Spirit activities. They found a positive relationship between the intensity of involvement in these activities on the one hand and altruistic behavior and participation in non-religious voluntary associations on the other.

Relationality and humanity

Heelas et al. (2005) emphasize the relationality of 'subjective-life spirituality'. Heelas (2008) admits that 'spiritualities of life' can be consumeristic and self-indulgent, but he stresses that they often go beyond. Many participants in holistic activities are seeking to change aspects of their lives. Often, distressful introspection is encouraged, which has nothing to do with hedonism. Many attach great significance to working with others in order to 'grow' by way of relational experiences. And even if participants are exploring their own selfhood, it is likely that the majority do so because they want to become better people for others. And even if one's own health or well-being is central, it will enhance the quality of what one has to offer others, 'perhaps as simply as by being happy' (126). In addition, Heelas (2008) argues that spiritualities of life are imbued with the ethic of humanity, which is experienced as emanating from within. Hedges and Beckford (2000) argue along the same lines.

Commitment to different causes

It is suggested that people involved in new spirituality show another kind of social engagement than the usual measures of formal volunteering and charitable donations, by showing solidarity in more informal situations related to their own biographical situation (De Hart and Dekker, 2006; De Hart, 2007). Chandler (2011) mentions political consumerism, e.g., the deliberate purchase of or refusal to buy certain goods and services for ethical reasons, and partaking in alternative forms of political campaigns like signing petitions. There is evidence that they show a more than average commitment to nature, environment and animal welfare (Becker, De Hart and Mens, 1997; Bernts, Dekker and De Hart, 2007; Chandler 2011).

Gentle influences in mainstream culture

Heelas (2008) argues that spiritualities of life may not be as radical as during the counterculture of the 1960s in attempting to develop new and alternative ways of life, but nevertheless they are contributing to the quality of life by showing real engagement with the mainstream. The initiatives are often devoted to small-scale matters, very often relatively gentle. Meanwhile, inner-life spirituality has permeated a great deal of the culture and its institutions, in a number of new practices, for instance in education (child-centred approach), health (Complementary and Alternative Medicine, patient-centred nursing), hospices, business (manager-centred 'soft capitalism', and 'spiritual' products and provisions on the market).

Authority in the New Age

Hammer (2004) helps us to cast some doubt on the argument that the absence of authority would be a reason for egocentrism. In analyzing esoteric texts from Theosophy to the New Age, he shows that, in a more subtle way than in traditional religion, there is also authority within new spirituality. Hammer exposes the appeal to personal experience as a discursive strategy directed at adding credibility to the religious claims made in these texts, and at adding authority to their authors. These authors argue that there are other roads to insight than the rational mind: intuition, emotions and revelation; these are democratized, available to all. As an example, Hammer explains how it is possible that so many spiritual 'techniques' apparently 'work'. Texts in which these techniques are described, are supported with examples that in fact function as templates for the subsequent expectations and experiences of the followers. In

this way, the doctrines presented will be the truths 'discovered' by the followers. Descriptions are in reality prescriptions. Followers who do not experience the truths or effects, 'are not ready' for them, they 'block the energy', they are 'too impatient', or they benefit from a victim role (2004).

Aupers and Houtman (2006) came across empirical evidence of authority in the New Age. In interviews, New Age teachers told them about the process of their involvement with new spirituality. Typically, after an identity crisis and a quest for meaning earlier in their lives, these people came in contact with a consultant or coach who revealed the latent discomfort in their present way of life. This was followed by a process in which they were socialized step by step in a new cognitive frame of interpretation and subsequent new experiences that helped them to give a new direction to their lives. Aupers and Houtman (2006) conclude that spirituality is socially constructed and that knowledge (teachings) precedes experience.

Relative importance of spirituality

Several authors point to the fact that religion/spirituality is not the only or the best predictor of social engagement. Level of education in particular is an important factor (Bekkers, 2004; Schmeets, Van Herten and Frenken, 2009; De Hart, 2011).

Conclusions and discussion

For some decades now, adherents of new forms of spirituality have been criticized of being egocentric and lacking in social engagement. We have seen that many authors just mention the critical judgments, without agreeing to them. Furthermore, there is not much clarity about the specification of the group that is criticized, neither about the nature of the criticism. Moreover, comparison with other groups in the population is often lacking. Sometimes, authors exaggerate the criticism given by others, or they just mention the criticism without concrete references. On this weak basis, judgment of people involved in new spirituality as lacking in social engagement is being recycled (e.g., Webster, 2012). Focusing on primary sources, where the authors themselves take on the critical attitude, our study shows that a number of critical judgments is based on insufficient empirical evidence, unjustified or imprecise use of terms (individualism, narcissism), and on doubtful assumptions regarding the cause of egocentrism. Probably because of all this confusion, the literature appears to

point in two opposite directions: people involved in new spirituality are reported to be either socially engaged or not.

In our opinion, each attempt to clarify and further the discussion should start with reflection on an adequate specification of the target group and on the concept of social engagement. Subsequently, in an empirical study, social engagement should be operationalized and measured, comparing the target group with other groups, for instance church members, and the population in general, using a representative sample. Meanwhile, our literature review shows that the critical judgments are not firmly substantiated. Whereas the discussion continues, only a limited number of authors support the criticism, and only a few of those supply some empirical evidence. Moreover, we also found arguments suggesting a positive influence of new spirituality on society.

Chapter 2

Conceptions of spirituality among the Dutch population[4]

Abstract

In this chapter, we explore the conceptions of spirituality in a large and representative sample (N = 2313) of the general population in the Netherlands. The respondents describe spirituality mostly in cognitive terms (54%), especially in the form of general references to a transcendent reality (e.g., 'more between heaven and earth'). Experiential expressions are used in more than a quarter of the descriptions. Important patterns in the descriptions are: spirituality as the transcendent God, spirituality as inwardness, and spirituality as mental health. In the sample, 21% distance themselves from spirituality; among people with a secular outlook this percentage is 35%. We paid special attention to differences in conceptions of spirituality between people within and outside institutional religious contexts and between people who self-identify as 'spiritual' and those who do not.

Introduction

'Spirituality' is an increasingly popular term that has conquered the market during the last decades (Schneiders, 2003; Carrette and King, 2004; Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005; Popp-Baier, 2010). 'Spiritual' books, lectures, workshops and courses, objects, and even 'spiritual' holidays, are on offer and promise the buyers knowledge and abilities that will make them wiser, happier and healthier. Subjects covered in these products include religious worldviews with pre-Christian or exotic roots, or more secular 'art of living' worldviews, alternative healing systems like Reiki, acupuncture or crystal healing, esoteric knowledge systems such as astrology and Tarot, health-oriented methods such as yoga and Tai chi, and different spiritual-psychological techniques. Subjectivity and inner experiences play an important role. The people who are involved in new forms of spirituality are often sketched as anti-institutional, and as shoppers in the spiritual supermarket, who feel free to pick and mix elements that fit them best

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and in that way construct their own, idiosyncratic religious/spiritual way of life. Heelas (1996) introduced the term 'self-spirituality'. These popular forms of spirituality mostly appear outside established religion. But many church-affiliated people also call themselves 'spiritual' (e.g., Barker, 2008; Berghuijs, Pieper, and Bakker, 2013a). Is it possible to formulate a single definition of spirituality that covers all these manifestations, or is the variety of interpretations too large? Are we talking about one-and-the-same concept 'spirituality' within and outside church settings? And is there a difference in conceptions between those who self-identify as 'spiritual', and those who do not see themselves as 'spiritual'? These questions form the primary focus of the present chapter.

Researchers in the social sciences argue about an adequate and universal definition of spirituality (e.g., Hill, et al., 2000; Moberg, 2002; Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005; Salander, 2012; Westerink, 2012), as they have always argued about the definition of religion. The complexity increases as the discussion includes the relationship between spirituality and religion as well (Salander, 2012). Should they be seen as each other's opposite, should one of the two be seen as the broader construct, fully incorporating the other (Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005), or should the two be seen as partly overlapping constructs, with a common core (Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Stifoss-Hanssen, 1999)?

Some authors specify one or more essential elements to the term 'spirituality', like 'the sacred' (Hill et al., 2000; Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005), 'transcendence' (Belzen, 2009), 'ultimate concern' (Tillich, 1952, see Hill et al., 2000; Emmons, 2000), and 'a meta-empirical framework of meaning' (Hanegraaff, 1999). Other definitions focus around 'connectedness and meaning' (Salander, 2012). Stifoss-Hansen (1999) suggests a broad definition of spirituality as 'people's search for meaning, in relation to the big existential questions', because a focus on existentiality allows for atheistic and agnostic spiritualities, as well as references to a 'higher power' and to 'the sacred'. Others, like Pargament (Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005) argue for a more narrow definition of spirituality, as part ('the heart and soul') of religion, which would be more continuous with past research within the psychology of religion. Such a definition clearly does not cover the broad variety in the manifestations of new spirituality.

Each of these approaches has its disadvantages. Efforts to distinguish between spirituality and religion may lead to unnecessary polarizing and restrictive perspectives (Hill et al., 2000; Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005; Popp-Baier, 2010). Efforts to capture the essence of spirituality in another term, such as 'the sacred' may lead to circular lines of reasoning since such terms again tend to be problematic constructs with theological implications (Popp-Baier, 2010). Moreover, in our view, Zinnbauer and Pargament (2005) in their enthusiasm about 'the sacred', expand the scope of

this term to include, for instance, health, marriage, work, and music, if and as long as such aspects of life are considered as 'holy, worthy of veneration or reverence'. In such a way the term is hardly distinctive and another pitfall emerges: a too-broad and vague definition of spirituality. If spirituality can mean anything, it means nothing (Hill et al., 2000; Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005; La Cour, Hordam Ausker, and Hvidt, 2012; Salander, 2012). Moreover, a broad definition of spirituality will result in overlap with other constructs such as well-being, connectedness, and quality of life, which can lead to false and tautological correlations between, for instance, spirituality and mental health (Moreira-Almeida and Koenig, 2006; Salander, 2012). Overlap in definitions among spirituality and psychological constructs or existential questions is also seen as undesirable, because such definitions are too inclusive and therefore violate the self-perceptions of all those people who perceive themselves as not at all religious or spiritual (Popp-Baier, 2010; Salander, 2012). On the other hand, the disadvantage of narrow definitions is that they foster programs of empirical research with limited value since they do not meet the reality in which individuals find themselves (Hill et al., 2000; Stifoss-Hanssen, 1999; La Cour, Hordam Ausker, and Hvidt, 2012).

In these discussions, little attention is paid to the question of whether the definitions suggested by scholars are in agreement with common parlance. One may wonder whether it is possible – or desirable – to construct a general definition of spirituality, which is shared by most people (Belzen, 2009). Should researchers rule out some conceptions? La Cour, Hordam Ausker, and Hvidt (2012) discovered at least six very different understandings in the associations that Danes have with the term 'spirituality'. The authors concluded that it is not possible to define spirituality in a way that accounts for all these understandings, because some of them have too much overlap with other concepts such as well-being. However, to empirical researchers and social and health workers a definition or a description of spirituality including the whole variety of understandings will increase their awareness of its different manifestations in practice. It will help them attune to their respondents or clients when talking about spirituality because a shared understanding cannot be assumed (cf. Belzen, 2009; Stifoss-Hanssen, 1999; Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005).

A number of researchers argue that context must be accounted for when studying the spirituality of individuals and groups (Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005; Churchill, 2009; Popp-Baier, 2010; La Cour, Hordam Ausker, and Hvidt, 2012). Popp-Baier (2010) thinks that researchers should analyze how people position themselves in different discourses, and which vocabularies they use in different contexts to articulate and interpret their activities, experiences, and worldviews. Some authors propose a diversification of definitions leading to multiple 'spiritualities'. McSherry and Cash (2004) suggested a 'spiritual taxonomy' of definitions in eight categories ranging from spirituality based on

religion and theist ideals on the one extreme to secular, humanistic, and existential spirituality on the other. Jespers (2011) proposed a typology of theistic (traditional), holistic, and secular 'spiritualities'.

A specific subject that is often discussed regarding contexts is the suggestion that unaffiliated forms of spirituality are egocentric and lacking incentives for social commitment (see Heelas, 1996; Bloch, 1998; Hanegraaff, 1998; Hay and Hunt, 2000; Bruce, 2002; Carrette and King, 2004; Dekker, 2004; Van Harskamp, 2003; Höllinger, 2004; Wuthnow, 2006; Farias and Lalljee, 2008). Reasons given for this lack in social engagement are, for instance, that followers of unaffiliated spirituality do not accept external authority and are primarily focused on their own spiritual experiences and development (Heelas, 1996), or that they miss the moral guidelines and incentives for social engagement issued by church communities (Bruce, 2002). Not all authors specify with which 'others' they compare the people they criticize (Bloch, 1988; Hanegraaff, 1998; Hay and Hunt, 2000; Wuthnow, 2006). Therefore, as another focus of our research, we will investigate if the conceptions of spirituality of this 'unaffiliated spirituality' group reflect an attitude that is more egocentric than that of others. We will explore the situation in a secularized country, the Netherlands.

Previous research on conceptions of spirituality

There are two types of empirical studies on conceptions of spirituality. The first investigates associations that people have with spirituality, presenting respondents with a predetermined list of characteristics or qualifications that they can endorse or value. Two recent studies of this type are those by La Cour, Hordam Ausker, and Hvidt (2012), and by Keller et al. (2013). The second type analyses the definitions of spirituality given by their respondents (Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Gallup and Jones, 2000; Rose, 2001; Marler and Hadaway, 2002; Hodge and McGrew, 2006; Schlehofer, Omoto, and Adelman, 2008; Gall, Malette, and Guirguis-Younger, 2011). As for the first type, La Cour, Hordam Ausker, and Hvidt (2012) found six important understandings of spirituality in Denmark: spirituality as positive dimensions in human life and well-being (accounting for 9.3% of the variance); spirituality as New Age ideology (7.9%); spirituality as integrated part of established religious life (5.8%); spirituality as a vague feeling, opposed to religion (3.3%); spirituality as selfishness (3.0%), and spirituality as ordinary inspiration in human activities (2.7%). Interestingly, one of these themes is spirituality understood as selfishness, representative of a negative opinion held by a number of people who endorsed associations such as self-absorbed', and 'egoism'. Using semantic

differential questionnaires, Keller et al. (2013) showed that both in the United States and Germany spirituality is seen as a much broader term than religion, with generally more positive (or less negative) evaluations. Only in their 'highly religious' groups – people who indicated that they were more 'religious' than 'spiritual' – evaluations of spirituality and religion resembled one another and were both positive. In the German sample the 'neither spiritual nor religious' tended to have negative judgments of spirituality ('powerless'; 'empty'). This first type of study produces very elegant and illuminating results. Once the list of characteristics is made the study can easily be repeated or carried out elsewhere for comparison. In the light of our research purpose, however, this type invokes several questions. Is the variety of conceptions and associations in the population covered by the terms selected by scholars? Is it not artificially enlarged or restricted? What would the outcome be if the respondents had not been given the opportunity to choose from a set of previously selected items, but instead had been asked to give their own associations with spirituality? They might have come up with a different set of terms that only partly overlaps the predetermined list or, in some cases, with nothing at all – they just don't know.

The second type of study analyses respondents' own descriptions of spirituality. These studies usually focus on differences in conceptions of spirituality and religion. Generally, people see religion and spirituality as different but related concepts. Spirituality is more often seen as the broader concept encompassing religion (Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Rose, 2001; Marler and Hadaway, 2002; Schlehofer, Omoto, and Adelman, 2008). It is mostly described in personal or experiential terms (Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Rose, 2001; Marler and Hadaway, 2002), whereas religion is usually associated with both personal beliefs and commitment to the beliefs system and practices of a church or organized religion (Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Schlehofer, Omoto, and Adelman, 2008); it might be called 'organized spirituality' (Marler and Hadaway, 2002).

Some of these studies report respondents' self-identifications as 'religious' and/or 'spiritual', but only Zinnbauer et al. (1997) compared the descriptions of spirituality of these categories. Those who identify as 'spiritual but not religious' are often associated with new forms of spirituality or New Age (Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Fuller, 2001; Barker, 2008).

Zinnbauer et al. (1997) selected people from different groups of church members, New Age groups, students, nursing professionals, and nursing home residents in Pennsylvania and Ohio. The descriptions of the 'religious and spiritual' (74%) and 'spiritual but not religious' (19%) groups were compared. In both groups, a large majority of respondents described spirituality either in terms of experiencing connectedness to God/higher power or as personal beliefs/values. More than half of both groups referred to what the authors call 'traditional concepts of the sacred' (e.g., God, Christ, higher power, holy, Divine, the Church), but the 'spiritual but not religious' relatively more often referred to

'non-traditional concepts of the sacred' (e.g., transcendent reality, ground of being, nature).

Gallup and Jones (2000) explored understandings of spirituality among a randomly selected sample of American adults (N = 100). They found eleven categories of conceptions, including belief in God/seeking to grow close to God, belief in a higher power or something beyond oneself/sense of awe and mystery in the universe, inner peace/state of mind, seeking to be a good person/lead a good life, and seeking the inner self/the being within your body/the essence of your personal being. Almost a third defined spirituality with no reference to God or a higher power, although 79% believed in God without any doubt; 72% viewed spirituality in a personal and individual sense, while 21% saw it in terms of organized religion and church doctrine.

Rose (2001) studied the conceptions of religious professionals from the big five religious traditions and non-traditional respondents professionally involved with spiritual ideas. Two concepts were used most of all: connection with the Divine, envisaged theistically or non-theistically, and awareness of the Divine. These concepts are more related to personal experience than to any specifically religious or doctrinal exteriority or activity.

Marler and Hadaway (2002) interviewed a group of American 'marginal Protestants' who identified themselves as less religious and less active in church than they had been in childhood. Respondents mostly saw spirituality as the connection between the individual and some larger, usual supernatural reality, or as a moral compass. However, almost a third were not familiar with the term. Most viewed religion and spirituality as different but interdependent concepts. They recognized the possibility of both a 'naked' spirituality and an empty or soul-less religion. Some of them who admitted that they are 'less religious' said they were 'spiritual' by default: '*It is what is left*: a residual spirituality that is described as also something less, something 'naked' or 'less powerful'' (Marler and Hadaway, 2002; italics in original).

Hodge and McGrew (2006) studied the conceptions in a random sample of 303 American graduate-level social work students in a telephone survey. They found nine categories of answers: spirituality as personally constructed (e.g., set of beliefs) with no reference to the transcendent (33%), belief in/experience of higher power (23%), belief in/experience of God (13%), something beyond the individual (11%), don't know/no answer (9%), connection to others/world/universe (5%), application of religion (3%), unclassifiable (2%), and something we don't understand (1%).

Schlehofer, Omoto, and Adelman (2008) examined conceptions of religion and spirituality amongst 64 mainly protestant older adults living in three retirement communities in California. All respondents self-identified as 'religious' as well as 'spiritual'. Descriptions of spirituality used most often encompassed experiencing connectedness to God/higher power and living in

accordance with one's beliefs/values. In spite of their self-identification as 'spiritual', 19% expressed ambiguity when describing spirituality or did not know how to describe it.

Gall, Malette, and Guirguis-Younger (2011) studied the conceptions of spirituality in an Internet survey, which attracted 234 respondents from a variety of countries around the world. They detected seven categories: spirituality as core self, life perspective, relationship with God or higher power, connection with mystery, connection with the world, religion, meaningless. Europeans were much less likely to link spirituality to a sense of the Divine or God than all other country groups. Examples of the descriptions are "Spirituality is a strength, a power that I believe is within all people regardless of faith or personal beliefs", and "Discovering meaningfulness residing outside of an egocentric self, feeling connected to some higher force or meaning but not necessarily being able to name it or define it for others".

From these studies we can conclude that most respondents describe spirituality in personal or experiential terms and that there is a wide variety of descriptions, mostly with positive connotations or related to well-being; that references to God or a Higher Power, the sacred or the transcendent are certainly not always present, even in samples where many respondents believe in God or self-define as 'religious'; and that a number of people are not familiar with or uneasy in relation to the concept, or have difficulty defining it, even if they say that they are 'spiritual'. Finally, we noticed that some have a negative view of spirituality.

The second type of study gives a clearer view on people's own (combination of) associations with spirituality. Methods of analysis used are either previously designed coding schemes (Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Schlehofer, Omoto, and Adelman, 2008), or methods without preconceptions, for instance Grounded Theory approaches (e.g., Hodge and McGrew, 2006; Gall, Malette, and Guirguis-Younger, 2011). The disadvantage of previously designed coding schemes is that they try to squeeze one diversity of expressions into another. Zinnbauer et al. (1997) used 13 content category codes, and assigned one code to each description. A large majority of descriptions (70%) was coded with one out of only two of these codes, 17% was uncodable, while the other codes were hardly ever assigned. In our opinion, too many concepts were lumped together in those two often-used codes. Schlehofer, Omoto, and Adelman (2008) combined the Zinnbauer-scheme with the theoretical views of Hill et al. (2000), and thereby introduced 'the sacred' as a preconceived essence of spirituality and religiousness. Even if 'the sacred' is conceived, as Hill et al. (2000) do, in the broad sense of 'a person, an object, a principle, or a concept that transcends the self', such a system systematically disqualifies descriptions that do not meet these criteria of involvement with 'the sacred', for instance conceptions like well-being or inner peace. Analysis without preconceptions will 'catch' more

diversity. The results may be hard to compare across samples but they will most likely reflect the differences in sample characteristics.

Most studies cited here were performed in the United States, where a majority of respondents view themselves as 'religious and spiritual' (Marler and Hadaway, 2002). Barker (2008) found that in Europe only 37% self-identify as 'spiritual and religious' whereas 35% are 'neither spiritual nor religious', 15% 'religious and not spiritual', and 12% 'spiritual and not religious'. Therefore, research in more secularized countries or in countries from other continents, or in countries where another religion than Christianity is dominant, will be a good complement to what has already been found, which may lead to more diversified descriptions of spirituality. In addition, most studies we discussed used selected groups such as students, church affiliated persons, or church staff and other, often highly educated groups. Therefore the conceptions that these studies report can be seen as representative of certain contexts – specifically contexts with linguistic abilities. In order to present a realistic picture the research sample should include people from all levels of education. Most preferably the sample would be representative, leading to insight into the use – and non-use – of the word in a population. We are not aware of a previous representative content study of conceptions of spirituality. In such an explorative phase, we prefer a study using no preconceptions in its analysis.

The present study

In the light of the considerations and questions above, we studied the conceptions of spirituality among a representative sample of the Dutch population, using respondents' own descriptions of spirituality. The aim of the study is to discover, in a secularized country, if there is one overarching concept 'spirituality' in use, or rather a variety of conceptions, which differ within and outside church settings, and depend on the self-identification as being 'spiritual'. A representative sample will also enable the variety of conceptions to be quantified and so to assess the importance of certain types of expressions. As such, the study may contribute to the efforts of those definition-makers who wish to account for common parlance in their definitions.

The research questions are:
1. What is the variety and distribution of conceptions of spirituality among the Dutch population?
2. Do conceptions of spirituality differ between people who are affiliated to a church and those who are not, and between people who self-define as 'spiritual' and those who do not?

3. Does the 'unaffiliated and spiritual' group give descriptions of spirituality in more self-centred terms than other groups?

Method

Participants

As part of a broader study on new forms of spirituality and social engagement, we used a random sample of 4402 members ages 16 years and older from the LISS panel (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences) of CentERdata (2013) in October, 2009. The panel is based on a true probability sample of Dutch households drawn from the population register by Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (2013) and consists of 5000 households and 8000 individuals. Households that cannot otherwise participate are provided with a computer and Internet connection. The members of this panel receive an online questionnaire each month. They are paid for each completed questionnaire.[5] The response on our questionnaire was 2622 (59.6%). We could use demographic and other data from previous surveys in the panel. Differences between the study's response group and the sample that received the questionnaire are as follows: younger groups (15-44) are underrepresented by 2.8-3.3%; older groups (55 and over) are overrepresented by 4.8%. Women are overrepresented by 1.2%. Nevertheless, the response group consists of a wide variety of demographic characteristics that approximates representativeness: it includes 1215 men (46%) and 1407 women (54%), with ages ranging from 16 to 96 years (M = 48.7). The educational level of the response group hardly differs from that of the selection sample (measured in six educational levels, the largest difference was 1.1%). We checked if the response group tended to contain fewer atheists than the selection sample, and this was hardly the case (22.5% in the selection and 22.1% in the response).

Survey questions and specification of groups

The open question about spirituality was formulated as follows:

> What do you understand by spirituality? Please give your own description in 50 words at most.

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[5] For further information on the LISS panel, see http://www.centerdata.nl/en/survey-research/mess-liss-panel, latest access date: November 11, 2013.

To answer the second and third research question, we had to discern subgroups in the sample. For this purpose we decided to use two items of self-determination: being affiliated to a religious or spiritual group, and being 'spiritual':

- − I count myself as part of a religious or spiritual group or a group based on a worldview.
- − I am a spiritual person.

We left out those respondents who answered 'don't know' on these items as well as those who did not complete the questions. This left a sample of 2313 respondents. Four categories were constructed: the 'unaffiliated and not spiritual' or 'secular' group (belonging to a group: no; spiritual: no), the 'unaffiliated and spiritual' group (no; yes), the 'affiliated and spiritual' group (yes; yes), and the 'affiliated and not spiritual' group (yes; no).

Method of analysis

As discussed above, we chose not to use a preconceived coding system. Codes were formulated *in vivo,* on the basis of what emerged from the descriptions of the respondents. The coding system was developed inductively and optimized by two coders. The first 700 descriptions were used to develop and refine the codes, and to agree on some rules of application. The first coder started by noting key conceptions (words and phrases) from the descriptions. Each description of spirituality might contain one or more key concepts. Then she combined these concepts to codes covering related terms. In an early phase it appeared that codes could be assigned to general dimensions of spirituality on a higher abstraction level, inspired by the five dimensions of religiosity discerned by Glock and Stark (1965): the intellectual, the ideological, the experiential, the ritualistic, and the consequential dimensions. Faulkner and De Jong (1966) found that the intellectual and ideological dimensions are highly correlated. We also found that knowledge and ideology are difficult to distinguish in the descriptions; therefore we combined the intellectual and the ideological dimension into the dimension 'cognition'. The system was refined in an iterative process where independent coding in portions of 50 descriptions, discussion of the differences, and reformulation of codes alternated. After about six rounds, the process resulted in the 26 content codes listed in table 2.1.

The development of the coding scheme was a very intensive, time-consuming, and frustrating process. We endeavored to develop a system that was neither too abstract nor too detailed. A scheme on a high level of

abstraction, for instance on the level of dimensions of spirituality, would lead to little insight into the rich variety of answers. A scheme on a very detailed level would lead to loss of agreement between the coders. Due to the fact that many descriptions of spirituality in the sample were imprecise, fragmentary, or ambiguous, each scheme appeared to lead to problems related to the boundaries between dimensions and the boundaries between codes, both in design of the scheme and in agreement among coders.

The first coder applied the final codes to all 2313 descriptions of spirituality. The second coder checked two random samples of 50 descriptions each. For the 26 content codes, the intercoder agreement varied from 89 - 100% per code with an average of 91%, but Cohen's kappa varied from -.029 to 1.00 with an average of 0.44 (SD = .37), which can be qualified as 'moderate' (Landis and Koch, 1977). Looking at agreement per description of spirituality and remembering that multiple codes could be assigned, the situation was as follows. There was complete agreement in 50% of the cases, partial agreement in 33%, and no agreement in 17% of the cases.

Results

Conceptions of spirituality among the Dutch population

Table 2.2 shows the results of the coding process. Looking at the frequencies in the total coded sample (last column), it can be seen that a high percentage of people (21%) distance themselves from spirituality in a neutral or negative sense. In a number of cases, those who give a negative opinion also give an additional description, demonstrating what it is in spirituality that they do not like: e.g., "religion", "the non-perceptible", "life after death", "the spirit world", "incense", "soothsaying", and other activities seen as paranormal or "hocus-pocus". In addition, 7% of the total sample indicates that they do not know what spirituality is. Of course this can mean that they really do not know, or that they are having difficulty putting it in words, or just that they wish to avoid the effort.

The dimension of cognition is present in a majority of descriptions (54%), followed by the experiential (29%), consequential (16%), and ritual (7%) dimensions. So spirituality is mostly seen in terms of ideas and feelings.

Table 2.1. The coding system

Dimension	Content code, short indication	Content code, description, specification in terms used by the respondents
Cognitive: knowledge and ideology	Transcendent reality	The existence of higher powers, a transcendent reality: more between heaven and earth, the supernatural, the afterlife (general conceptions)
	Religion	Reference to faith/belief, religion (general conceptions)
	Christian religion	Specific Christian terms: trinity, church etc.
	God	Use of the word 'God', 'Allah', 'the Almighty', etc. in a cognitive sense
	Paranormal reality	(Belief in) the paranormal, spirits, the spirit world, mediums, ghosts, the occult (specification of transcendent reality or religion)
	Immanent transcendence	(Belief in) the divine in yourself, your soul, reincarnation; we are part of the divine source etc.
	Non-material	Reference to the non-material, non-perceptible, intangible, inexplicable (emphasis on negative wording: non-; in-)
	Human mind	Reflection, (way of) thinking, mental, concerning the human mind, consciousness; insight
	Philosophy of life	Philosophy of life, world view, purpose of life, meaning giving
Experiential	Transcendent reality	Experience of a transcendent reality
	Faith	Experiencing your faith (general conceptions)
	God	(Experiencing your) relation with God, Jesus, the Divine; experiencing God's guidance in life (specification of experiencing transcendent reality or belief)
	Paranormal reality	Paranormal experience or sensitivity (specification of experiencing transcendent reality or belief)
	Centripetal connectedness	Contact with yourself, your innermost, your source, the Divine in yourself, your feelings, soul; loving yourself; self-confidence
	Non-material	Experiencing the non-material, non-perceptible, intangible, inexplicable
	Centrifugal connectedness	Experience of connectedness to others / nature / feeling part of a larger whole
	Well-being	(Striving for) (mental) well-being / relaxation; enjoyment, contentment, balance
	Vitality	Experiencing vitality, energy, inspiration

Table 2.1, continued

Dimension	Content code, short indication	Content code, description, specification in terms used by the respondents
Ritual	Spiritual/religious	Spiritual or religious practices, without Christian context: meditation, yoga, prayer, ascesis, alternative therapies
	Christian	Christian practices: e.g., Bible reading, church attendance, or other practices mentioned in a Christian context, e.g., praying, meditation (specification of spiritual/religious rituals)
	Paranormal	Evoking paranormal experiences or insights (specification of spiritual/religious rituals)
Consequential	Life attitude	(Mental) life attitude, the way you face life (general conceptions)
	Ethics	Norms, values, living up to your convictions, responsibility, conscience (general conceptions)
	Christian	Living according to the Christian faith; the Bible as source of inspiration for one's conduct (specification of ethics)
	Golden Rule	Being good to others; solidarity with the weak; sharing; giving love; respect towards others (specification of ethics, aimed at people)
	Nature/environment	Dealing responsibly with all that is; leave behind an inhabitable world, etc. (specification of ethics, aimed at nature/environment)

Miscellaneous	Non-content codes	Description
	Takes distance	Distance from spirituality in a neutral or negative sense, e.g.: vague, vogue word, nonsense, nothing to me, no worth for me; something I am not involved in; something I don't think about; no meaning to me
	Don't know	Don't know; can't explain; ?; x
	Uncodable	No code applicable; incomprehensible

Table 2.2. Frequencies (%) of codes for groups based on self-designation
Each description of spirituality could be assigned more than one code

Code, dimension	Unaffiliated and not spiritual n = 1031 (44.6%)	Unaffiliated and spiritual n = 517 (22.4%)	Affiliated and spiritual n = 506 (21.8%)	Affiliated and not spiritual n = 259 (11.2%)	Total N = 2313 (100%)
Cognitive dimension	**45.1**	**63.1**	**63.4**	**54.8**	**54.2**
Transcendent reality	14.8	22.8	17.6	20.1	17.8
Religion	10.6	12.2	14.8	9.7	11.8
Christian religion	0.8	0.6	5.9	5.4	2.4
God	1.6	2.7	6.9	3.1	3.2
Paranormal reality	2.8	5.2	1.2	2.3	2.9
Immanent transcendence	0.7	3.5	4.0	2.3	2.2
Non-material	13.0	13.2	11.5	9.7	12.3
Human mind	11.3	18.0	16.2	11.6	13.9
Philosophy of life	4.5	12.2	10.7	4.2	7.5
Experiential dimension	**19.3**	**42.2**	**39.7**	**17.0**	**28.6**
Transcendent reality	1.6	2.1	2.2	3.5	2.1
Faith	0.7	0.8	3.4	1.2	1.3
God	0.1	1.2	5.9	2.3	1.9
Paranormal reality	2.2	5.2	3.0	1.2	2.9
Centripetal connectedness	7.7	17.4	12.5	3.1	10.4
Non-material	1.6	3.3	2.2	2.3	2.2
Centrifugal connectedness	0.7	5.0	2.8	1.2	2.2
Well-being	5.8	12.4	10.7	3.9	8.1
Vitality	1.4	5.8	5.1	1.5	3.2

Table 2.2, continued

Code, dimension	Unaffiliated and not spiritual n = 1031 (44.6%)	Unaffiliated and spiritual n = 517 (22.4%)	Affiliated and spiritual n = 506 (21.8%)	Affiliated and not spiritual n = 259 (11.2%)	Total N = 2313 (100%)
Ritual dimension	**6.6**	**5.8**	**8.3**	**7.3**	**6.9**
Spiritual/religious	4.9	4.8	7.1	4.2	5.3
Christian	0.0	0.2	0.6	0.4	0.2
Paranormal	2.4	0.8	0.6	3.1	1.7
Consequential dimension	**8.2**	**22.1**	**27.3**	**8.9**	**15.6**
Life attitude	3.6	9.1	7.9	3.9	5.8
Ethics	1.9	5.2	6.3	0.8	3.5
Christian	0.2	0.2	2.4	1.5	0.8
Golden Rule	2.4	10.1	13.4	2.7	6.6
Nature/environment	0.0	1.4	2.0	0.4	0.8
Takes distance	35.4	2.7	2.4	35.1	20.8
Don't know	11.5	1.4	2.4	12.0	7.3
Uncodable	3.4	2.9	1.8	2.3	2.8

In what follows we give examples of descriptions by the respondents, which are representative of the highest scoring code(s) per dimension. The descriptions are translated from Dutch by the authors. The reader must keep in mind that these are not scientific definitions but lay descriptions that often lack precise wording, and sometimes include opinions. The part of the description that represents the code is printed in italics. The highest scoring cognitive code is 'transcendent reality' (18%). Quite often this transcendence is expressed as "more between heaven and earth". Another example of this code is:

> Mental/spiritual (Dutch: geestelijk) life, *that which is called 'higher'. Higher powers, one can believe in them* but their existence cannot be proven, even if the believer provides all kinds of so-called evidence. In my opinion it is a method to make people toe the line.

Only in some cases transcendence is specified as 'God' (3%). Fourteen percent of the respondents use codes that describe spirituality in terms of the human mind/spirit, such as:

> *Something to do with the human mind/spirit, the exact meaning depends on context* (religion, personal experiences, etc.).

The non-material, non-perceptible is referred to in 12% of the cases:

> *Something you cannot describe, see or comprehend* if you don't believe in it.

Religion in general terms is also referred to in 12% of the descriptions:

> *Faith or religion: not only Islam, Judaism or Christianity, but also "I believe that there is something up there",* or people who believe in ghosts.

The most important of the experiential codes is centripetal connectedness (10%):

> *Spirituality is what you experience in the innermost of your being.*

It is followed by (striving for) well-being (8%):

> *A good external balance (between yourself and life) and a good internal balance (between your feelings and your ratio).*

Descriptions in ritual terms are mostly seen in terms of spiritual/religious practices without a specified religious context (5%), for instance:

> Spirituality can be different things. *Clairvoyance, meditation, reading of cards,* contact with the hereafter.

> *For me, spirituality means to meditate, to let go all conscious thoughts*, in order to make my mind intuitive and calm.

Among the consequential expressions, the Golden Rule is the most used (7%):

> Spirituality is a way of life. It does not have to be related to belief in God. *For me, spirituality is to believe in goodness and to do good.* To live in the here-and-now. *To take care of each other. To accept people as they are.*

Specifically Christian notions are only present in a limited number of descriptions, represented by the four codes 'Christian religion' in a cognitive sense (2%), the experience of a relationship with God (2%), reference to Christian rituals (0.2%), and living according to the Christian faith (1%). This does not mean that there is only a small percentage of Christians among the respondents. It means that only a small percentage associates spirituality exclusively with Christianity, as in:

> *For me spirituality means that I have a personal relationship with God the Father, with Jesus, and that his Spirit lives inside me* (experiential).

> *Something with church* (cognitive).

There were almost no specific references to non-Christian religions, in spite of the fact that the sample contains 4.5% Muslims. In two descriptions, "Allah" is mentioned, and Buddhism/Buddha in seven cases, but mostly as examples of religion in general:

> I do not believe in God, Allah or whatever other god, but I do respect believers….

> Meditation, Yoga, Buddhism, belief in 'something' that makes one feel good.

More often spirituality is specified as related to the paranormal, in a cognitive (3%), experiential (3%) or ritual sense (2%):

> *Spirituality makes me think of premonitions, soothsayers and mediums, who can, for instance, make contact with dead people or predict the future!* (experiential, ritual).

> For me, spirituality means more between heaven and earth. *The spirit world,* maybe something vague, *the Derek Ogilvie phenomenon* (cognitive).

Patterns in the descriptions of spirituality

In order to detect possible patterns in the combinations of codes, we performed a Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation, using all content codes. With KMO = .54 and Bartlett's significance =. 000, there is enough correlation

Table 2.3. Factor loads (>= .4) in the Principal Component Analysis

Component number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Variance explained (%)	5.9	5.4	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.2	4.1
Average score on codes (%)	1.3	3.7	5.5	8.1	3.3	2.2	3.9	10.5
Cognitive dimension								
Transcendent reality								.685
Religion								
Christian religion	.665							
God								.394
Paranormal reality					.400			
Immanent transcendence							.407	
Non-material				-.534				
Human mind								
Philosophy of life							.410	
Experiential dimension								
Transcendent reality						.484		
Faith								
God	.430						.394	
Paranormal reality								
Centripetal connectedness				.530				
Non-material						.678		
Centrifugal connectedness								
Well-being			.726					
Vitality			.519					

Table 2.3, continued

Component number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Variance explained (%)	5.9	5.4	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.2	4.1
Average score on codes (%)	1.3	3.7	5.5	8.1	3.3	2.2	3.9	10.5
Ritual dimension								
Spiritual/religious			.482		.474			
Christian	.539							
Paranormal					.686			
Consequential dimension								
Life attitude				.613				
Ethics								
Christian	.727							
Golden Rule		.809						
Nature/environment		.776						

between the codes to allow the analysis. The results are given in Table 2.3. Eleven components have an eigenvalue above 1.0 and together they explain 50% of the variance. Omitting factor loadings below 0.4, the last three components only contain one code factor, and were left out. We interpret the components as follows.

1. Spirituality as a *Christian way of life*, clearly visible in all dimensions;
2. Spirituality as *responsibility* towards others and nature;
3. Spirituality as striving for *mental health:* well-being, contentment and balance; vitality, energy and inspiration and the practices that are meant to produce such feelings;
4. Spirituality as a life attitude of *inwardness;*
5. Spirituality as *the paranormal,* expressed in beliefs and practices;
6. Spirituality as *experiencing the transcendent and the non-perceptible;*
7. Spirituality as *experiencing the immanent God;* and
8. Spirituality as *the transcendent God.*

The first component, spirituality as a Christian way of life, contains the codes that show the highest correlations, and so they form the most 'coherent' pattern. Nevertheless, this pattern is only visible in a very small percentage of the sample. The components containing the highest scoring codes are component 8, spirituality as the transcendent God, component 4, spirituality as inwardness, and component 3, spirituality as mental health. All listed components represent meaningful patterns, but the Cronbach's alphas of the contributing codes are too small to transform the components into variables. La Cour, Hordam Ausker, and Hvidt (2012) did reach high Cronbach's alphas, but their study was differently designed. In fact our codes are already clusters of terms used by the respondents, whereas La Cour, Hordam Ausker, and Hvidt (2012) started with a list of 115 individual terms that could be combined into clusters of highly related items. Remarkably, some of our highest scoring content codes (the cognitive codes 'religion' and 'human mind') do not appear in a component with factor loadings above 0.4. This is due to the fact that they both appear in combination with four different other codes – their content is 'scattered' among different components – which is an indication that these very general conceptions 'religion' and 'human mind', when used, are often and very differently specified or supplemented with other concepts in the descriptions.

Conceptions of spirituality within and outside church settings

To answer the second research question, we compared the unaffiliated 'spiritual' category with the affiliated 'spiritual' category. These people describe their own

spirituality. We also compared the unaffiliated 'non-spiritual' category with the affiliated 'non-spiritual' category. These people describe the spirituality of others. Table 2.2 shows the results for the four categories.

Being 'spiritual' within and outside church settings

The affiliated and the unaffiliated 'spiritual' categories both have the same eight codes above 10%: the cognitive codes related to transcendent reality, human mind, the non-material, religion, and philosophy of life; the experiential codes centripetal connectedness and well-being; and the consequential code related to the Golden Rule. Only the order of importance differs. The two most important codes, the cognitive codes related to transcendent reality and to human mind, are the same for both categories. Conceptions of spirituality for 'spiritual' people have apparently not developed in totally different directions within and outside church settings. The eight highest codes refer to very general cognitive conceptions, and to individual experiences and moral guidelines. Spirituality is therefore less often associated with specific religious (Christian) expressions, like God, Church, or Bible. As for the differences between the two 'spiritual' categories, the 'unaffiliated and spiritual' have higher scores on six of the eight highest scoring codes than the 'affiliated and spiritual'. The differences in the order of importance indicate that the 'unaffiliated and spiritual' put more emphasis on the experiential dimension (centripetal connectedness and well-being), while the 'affiliated and spiritual' attach more importance to the consequential dimension (Golden Rule). In the lower scoring codes, the 'unaffiliated and spiritual' refer far more often to expressions related to the paranormal and to centrifugal connectedness; the 'affiliated and spiritual' refer much more often to expressions related to (Christian) faith and God, in all dimensions.

In both categories, only small percentages do not know what spirituality is (or have no words for it) or distance themselves from spirituality (in spite of the fact that they do call themselves 'spiritual'). If respondents write down more than just "don't know", we see expressions such as "difficult to write down", "I love spirituality but I cannot give a definition", "I do believe in it but I find it very unusual". These expressions are indicative of a certain uneasiness around spirituality. As for taking distance from spirituality, both categories often use the word "vague". Some indicate that they do not agree with everything that goes under the name 'spirituality'. The 'affiliated and spiritual' sometimes indicate that they are not all that engaged in spirituality, and in some cases they compare spirituality with their faith: "obviously something different from believing as in religion". There are also some who warn against "dissoluteness" or the danger of "spiritualism". One respondent writes:

> For me, spirituality belongs to the Christian faith. Again and again I notice that the spirituality of Happinez [a popular 'spirituality' glossy magazine, JB.] has a noncommittal character. A number of recent experiences have made me return to my old 'norms and values'.

Being 'non-spiritual' within and outside church settings

Both the affiliated and the unaffiliated 'non-spiritual' categories have a very large number of respondents who take distance from spirituality (35%). The percentages of 'don't know' are also large (12%). We found that level of education plays an important role: lower educated respondents distance themselves much more often from spirituality, and far more often they do not know what spirituality is than those who are higher educated. It appears that 'spirituality' is something of an 'elite' word. Which opinions or feelings do these large percentages coded as 'distance' and 'don't know' represent? Most of the time, respondents from both categories just write "don't know" or indicate that they are not interested. 'Secular' respondents who take distance from spirituality often do this in a neutral way ("nothing for me"), but there are also many cases where a negative qualification is added, such as "vague" (very often), "talking with the dead", "quackery", "swindle", "abracadabra", "unnatural", "soft", "dream world", "superfluous", "bullshit about the ghost world", "remedy for people who have trouble with reality". Sometimes they give a negative opinion about people who are involved in spirituality, for example, indicating that they "strive for extra attention", "have trouble with reality", "talk too much and act too little", "are unable to make their own choices" or "unable to solve their own problems", "don't have their feet firmly on the ground", or "don't understand what real life is about". These descriptions present a qualification of 'spiritual' people as weak and dependent. When the 'affiliated and non-spiritual' take distance from spirituality, we see a clearly disapproving attitude. Apart from the ubiquitous "vague" there are also associations such as "supernatural mediums", "it gives me the creeps", "fantasizing", "sinful", or spirituality is seen as opposed to the Christian faith. Some illustrative examples are:

> The word 'spirituality' makes me think of vague types, paranormal fairs, incense, hippie clothes. It also reminds me of the Celestine prophecy, although I have not read it, and such books.

> That they can tell you everything and claim to be able to cure you from something, nothing for me.

> I view it as the supernatural, which is something I cannot approve of, except for my Christian faith.

As for the content codes in the non-spiritual categories, high scores are only present in cognitive codes: transcendent reality, religion, the non-material, and the human mind. The main difference between the two non-spiritual categories is that the 'affiliated and not spiritual' have a much higher score on transcendent reality than the 'unaffiliated and not spiritual', who refer to the non-material more often. In the lower scoring codes, the 'affiliated and not spiritual' refer to (Christian) religion and God much more, whereas the 'unaffiliated and not spiritual' have a higher score on centripetal connectedness. Just as in case of the 'spiritual' categories, we cannot conclude that spirituality has developed into radically different concepts within and outside religious communities.

'Egocentric' descriptions by the 'unaffiliated spirituality' group?

Do followers of 'unaffiliated spirituality' describe spirituality more often than others in egocentric terms? Because we designed the coding system in an inductive process, a specific code was not designed to answer this question. If we consider references to centripetal connectedness (connectedness to one's inner self) and striving for well-being as the most 'egocentric' types of descriptions of spirituality, the 'unaffiliated spirituality' category uses such references in 17% and 12% of the cases, whereas 13% and 11% of the 'affiliated spirituality' category use these expressions. This may be an indication of egocentricity, but it can also just underline the unaffiliated character of the spirituality among these individuals. It does not mean that they are not socially engaged. The 'Golden Rule' code could be an indicator of social commitment. For both the 'unaffiliated and spiritual' (10%) and the 'affiliated and spiritual' (13%) this code belongs to the eight highest scoring codes. Therefore, these outcomes cannot be interpreted as convincing evidence or even strong indicators of more egocentrism among the 'unaffiliated and spiritual' group. In both non-spiritual categories the percentages for the three codes involved are very much smaller, but comparison with these categories is difficult because 35% takes distance from spirituality without giving an additional description.

Discussion

An important difference between this study and previous research is that our sample was representative and therefore included respondents of all educational levels, whereas other researchers often used highly educated groups. Moreover, our respondents were not especially invited to partake in a survey on spirituality;

it was just a monthly questionnaire in their panel. These characteristics made it possible to detect the relatively high percentages of people who take distance from spirituality (up to 35% among the 'non-spiritual'), or who do not know what it is. A negative opinion, especially "vague", was often seen as characterization of spirituality. The representativeness also enabled us to conclude that 'spirituality' is an 'elite' word, a word that is relatively more in use among the higher educated.

The first research question was about the use of the term 'spirituality' among the general population. There is a large variety in conceptions of spirituality among the Dutch population. More than half of the respondents see spirituality in cognitive terms, often in very general or vague terms such as "more between heaven and earth", or "higher powers", or other general references to another, transcendent reality. Others used more specific references to transcendence: God, the paranormal, or immanent transcendence. However, many did not refer to transcendence, but to aspects of human life, like the human mind or a philosophy of life.

After cognitive descriptions, references to experience, and therefore individual, personal expressions, are the most seen. Their character is invariably positive. Here transcendent elements are also seen, such as connectedness to a transcendent or paranormal reality or with God, but more often inner feelings are mentioned, like well-being, vitality, or connectedness to your inner self. The ritual and consequential dimensions are less prominent.

This wide spectrum of patterns shows an overlap between 'spirituality' and concepts from psychology, religion and philosophy. Therefore, based on this inventory of conceptions it is not possible to define spirituality in a way that minimizes overlap with other constructs. A definition of spirituality based on common parlance will only be possible in a family-resemblance-format. However, if definition-makers wish to take common parlance aspects into account, this study points at the elements transcendence and positive inner feelings as paramount. In quantitative studies that aim to investigate the relationship between spirituality and other variables, especially those related to health or well-being, it is inevitable to use a more precise, narrow definition of spirituality (cf. Moreira-Almeida and Koenig, 2006; Houtman, Aupers, and Heelas, 2009; Salander, 2012). But researchers who conduct such studies should be well aware that they do not measure the relation between the subjective 'spiritualities' of their respondents and their dependent variables.

A Principal Component Analysis produced eight patterns in the descriptions. It is possible to arrange these patterns in a continuum of 'spiritualities' ranging from purely secular on the one extreme to established religion on the other. The range could be as follows: spirituality as mental health – spirituality as responsibility – spirituality as the paranormal – spirituality as inwardness – spirituality as experiencing the transcendent and the non-

perceptible – spirituality as experiencing the immanent God – spirituality as the transcendent God – spirituality as a Christian way of life. The three most important patterns in the PCA in terms of average scores – spirituality as the transcendent God, spirituality as inwardness, and spirituality as mental health – also reflect the two elements mentioned above: transcendence and positive inner feelings. As in the general analysis, the PCA shows that spirituality as a Christian way of life is a relatively strong but numerically small pattern.

When comparing our results with the studies we reviewed, especially the earlier studies in the USA, it is obvious that in the secularized Netherlands less reference is made to religion. Only a minority explicitly links spirituality with religion, and an even smaller minority uses explicitly 'Christian' expressions. Among the Dutch population 'spirituality' is a concept that has evidently broken away from 'religion' (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). Moreover, references to the 'sacred' in the sense of Hill et al. (2000) are not prominent. There is a large portion of more neutral and 'everyday' descriptions, like the non-material, reflection, the human mind, and well-being. This tendency is also present in the more recent American studies (Hodge and McGrew, 2006; Gall, Malette, and Guirguis-Younger, 2011), as well as in the Danish study (La Cour, Hordam Ausker, and Hvidt, 2012). Our results suggest that spirituality is a broader concept than religion, but we cannot be sure, because unlike several other researchers we did not ask people's description of religion. In a way this restriction to spirituality is also an advantage, because we thus avoided evoking artificial oppositions between people's ideas about spirituality and religion.

The second research question was if the conceptions of spirituality of those involved in church communities differ from those who are not involved, and if the conceptions of spirituality differ between those who self-define as 'spiritual' and those who do not. Descriptions of spirituality by 'spiritual' respondents within and outside church settings do differ, but the differences are only relative. While both groups describe spirituality mainly in cognitive terms, followers of unaffiliated spirituality use experiential terms (in particular centripetal connectedness and well-being) relatively more often than 'affiliated spiritual' respondents. The descriptions of both groups correspond to the general tendency: they do not often refer to religion. Differences between 'non-spiritual' groups within and outside church settings were also not large. The unaffiliated group used relatively more experiential expressions. Differences between 'spiritual' and 'non-spiritual' respondents appear to be more outspoken. More than a third of the 'non-spiritual' respondents take distance from spirituality, compared to less than 3% of the 'spiritual' categories, and 12% does not know what it is, compared to less than 3% in the 'spiritual' categories. Therefore, the answer to the second research question is: no, the use of the word 'spirituality' has not developed into quite different concepts within and outside church settings. In both cases there is a tendency to see spirituality as a general

indication of transcendence or as related to individual positive feelings. However, those who do not view themselves as 'spiritual' tend to have a negative opinion on spirituality.

The bad image of spirituality among a large part of the population is a point of attention for future research. Just as today, nobody identifies as a 'New Age' adherent any more – a term still widely used by researchers – it may be that being 'spiritual' as identification label is getting out of fashion because of its negative associations. In their descriptions people often expressed that spirituality is too vague for them, because they are sober or objective. Even those who self-identify as 'spiritual' sometimes criticize the spiritual expressions of others. Chapter 5 will present the results of an interview study with 10 individuals who all self-identified as 'unaffiliated and spiritual'. Seven of them, however, had difficulty with the word 'spirituality', because of less positive associations with the term. They qualified it as "difficult", "suggestive", "New Age-like", "too broad", "unpleasant", or they said that what passes for 'spirituality' is not always 'spiritual' to them. It may be that being 'spiritual' will be replaced by other identifications, for instance by terms related to consciousness ('being conscious of…'), a term often encountered in the present chapter.

The third research question was if followers of unaffiliated spirituality describe spirituality in more self-centred terms than others. Our findings produced no evidence of a more egocentric attitude among the 'unaffiliated and spiritual' group.

Finally, we will highlight limitations of this study, and give some recommendations for future research. The inductive method of analysis caused many struggles, as has been described in the method section. In comparison, a previously designed list of terms in combination with a PCA appears to be more attractive in use, although constructing the list will be time-consuming too, and, as mentioned before, we find the method too suggestive. We realized that in our case, as a second step in the analysis, a PCA is not the most suitable approach, because clusters of expressions have already been made by creating codes. A possible way to combine inductive analysis with PCA in future research would be to count the use of individual words used by the respondents, for instance using corpus analysis software (Sinclair, 1991)[6] and subsequently to perform a PCA on those words. Such a procedure would minimize subjectivity, and increase comparability with research in other samples or with the same sample in the future.

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[6] Corpus linguistics is the study of language in use through collections of naturally occurring samples that are stored electronically. Corpus analysis software can produce overviews of frequently used words and phrases in the corpus that is studied.

The fact that more cognitive than other expressions were found needs some reflection. It may be that the question ("What do you understand by spirituality?"), was more suggestive of cognitive answers. In addition, the two coders agreed that in descriptions that evoked doubt between cognitive and experiential coding, cognitive would be chosen.

Another point is formed by the construction of the categories based on 'affiliation' and being 'spiritual'. The question about 'affiliation' can be interpreted in very different subjective ways, especially by fringe church members. One out of two people in exactly the same situation may answer "yes", and the other "no". This is a well-known problem inherent to many studies that deal with secularization, and it is not easy to solve. The same can be said about being 'spiritual': people with the same ideology, experiences and practices may answer in a different way, in line with their differing associations with the term 'spiritual'.

Of course this study is only a picture at a given moment in time, and carried out in one European country. Knowing that the meaning of the word 'spirituality' is subject to change, and realizing that it most probably differs per language region and maybe even per country (Stifoss-Hanssen, 1999), we recommend repeating the study after some years, but also complementing it with studies in other countries and with a focus on other contexts. More research is necessary in other European countries, comparing secularized and less secularized countries, but also countries on other continents, and countries where another religion than Christianity is dominant.

Chapter 3

Being 'spiritual' and being 'religious' in Europe: diverging life orientations[7]

Abstract

This chapter shows that being 'spiritual' and being 'religious' are becoming different life orientations for a large part of the population. As far as we can tell, for the first time, a sample from a European country shows that these orientations are reflected in two coherent clusters of beliefs, experiences, and practices of what we call 'new spirituality' on the one hand and 'traditional, church-related religion' on the other. In addition, it appears that 'only-spiritual' (and not 'religious') people and 'only-religious' (and not 'spiritual') people have less 'intensive' spiritual/religious lives than people who describe themselves as 'both spiritual and religious'. The 'both' category is not homogenous, probably as a result of the different associations which its members have with 'spiritual' and 'religious'. The people in this category can be divided in two sub-groups that show different profiles.

Introduction

Spirituality used to be seen – and is still seen by many – as inseparable from religion (Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005). But in surveys, a growing number of people now define themselves as 'spiritual but not religious'. Marler and Hadaway (2002) found that in the United States the percentage of those who do so steadily increases from the oldest generations to younger age cohorts. Barker (2008) found that the same applies to the European situation. A rhetoric of spirituality is used in the various mass media as well as in the context of (religious) organizations trying to improve advertising for their products (Popp-Baier, 2010). It is clear that at least the term 'spirituality' is popular in the Western world. But what does it mean? Are the terms 'spirituality' and 'spiritual' simply fashionable labels or are they representative of a particular life

orientation which differs from and possibly substitutes a 'religious' life orientation? We can approach this question from several angles. We can analyze the growth in the 'consumption' of products labelled 'spiritual' and compare it with participation in activities related to institutional religious, i.e. Christian contexts. We will briefly look at the literature on this approach, to see where it leads. Another approach is to ask: what do people mean when they call themselves 'spiritual' or 'religious'? Do 'spiritual' people display other beliefs, experiences, and activities than 'religious' people? The latter questions form the main focus of this chapter. We will present new empirical data from a European country, the Netherlands, to examine them.

Spirituality: Opposing or complementing religion?

Are 'spiritual' activities replacing religion, that is Christian, church-related activities? Heelas et al. (2005) compared participation in activities offered as 'spiritual' in the British town of Kendal, in what they called the 'holistic milieu', and participation in services of the congregational domain. They found very little overlap between the 'two worlds' in Kendal. 'Spiritual' activities included, among other things, acupressure, the Alexander technique, aromatherapy, Buddhist group practices, dance, homeopathy, massage, Reiki, Tarot card readings, Tai Chi, and yoga. Heelas et al. (2005) see a growth in the holistic milieu that will cause a 'spiritual revolution' in the years 2020 - 30 if the growth continues at the same rate and if the congregational domain continues to decline. They extrapolate their predictions to Great Britain and the USA. Carrette and King (2004) note how commercialized forms of 'spirituality' or 'capitalist spirituality' are attempting to take over 'the cultural space traditionally inhabited by 'the religions' (4). Other authors do not see a 'spiritual revolution' because of the simultaneous and larger rise of non-religiosity (Barker, 2008; Houtman and Mascini, 2002) or because the term 'spirituality' is used in too broad a sense (Popp-Baier, 2010), e.g., for activities that should be counted as leisure (Voas and Bruce, 2007). Therefore, in this discussion, much depends on what is counted as being part of contemporary 'spirituality'.

      There is a growing number of authors who mention consensus in beliefs related to the new forms of 'spirituality', e.g., the 'sacralization of the self' or 'self-spirituality', the notion of a 'perennial wisdom' as the source of all religious and spiritual expressions, a tendency to syncretism, and the idea of monism or holism and interconnectedness. Such notions provide a kind of meta-ideology that at the same time unites followers of new spiritualities and gives them freedom to develop individual symbolic systems, which leads to a high degree of diversity in beliefs, experiences, and practices (Bloch, 1998; Hanegraaff,

1998; Carrette and King, 2004; Hammer, 2004; Höllinger, 2004; Aupers, 2005; Possamai, 2005; Heelas et al., 2005). But the very fact that an underlying unity can only be described on a high level of abstraction makes it easy to call many things 'spiritual' just to evoke a vague association with this meta-ideology. Further, we may ask whether some of the beliefs associated with contemporary spirituality may also be adhered to by people belonging to church communities who self-identify as 'religious'.

Critics argue that the term 'spiritual' is only a fashionable label used in the promotion of products. Voas and Bruce (2007) remark that it 'may be used for anything from earnest introspection to beauty treatments' (44). A scholarly definition of spirituality will probably not end the discussion about the 'spiritualization' of society. At most, it will neatly categorize phenomena as spiritual or non-spiritual, but it will include presuppositions about spirituality, which may be far from daily life. Therefore, Popp-Baier (2010) suggests that the social scientific study of religion should instead identify and reconstruct the many current meanings of terms like 'spirituality' as used by people in different contexts to articulate and interpret their activities, experiences, and worldviews. In line with her recommendations, we think that it is more fruitful to study which beliefs, experiences, and practices go with being 'spiritual'. In addition, there is the question in what way 'spiritual' people have other beliefs, experiences, and practices than 'religious' people. Is there an overlap or are we looking at two different life orientations? So far, only a few studies have dealt with this subject. We shall take a look at them now.

In the United States, Zinnbauer et al. (1997) found that 93% of respondents (N = 346) identified themselves as 'spiritual' and 78% as 'religious'.[8] They carried out additional analyses of the categories of 'spiritual and religious' (74%) and 'spiritual but not religious' (19%) on the basis of a number of standard measures of religious attitudes and behavior. Results showed that the 'spiritual but not religious' were less likely to evaluate religiousness positively, less likely to engage in traditional forms of worship such as church attendance and prayer, less likely to hold orthodox or traditional Christian beliefs, more likely to be independent from others, more likely to engage in group experiences related to spiritual growth, more likely to be agnostic, more likely to characterize religiousness and spirituality as different and non-overlapping concepts, more likely to hold non-traditional 'New Age' beliefs, and more likely to have had mystical experiences' (561) than those who defined themselves as 'spiritual and religious'. The 'spiritual but not religious' appear to use spirituality as a means of rejecting religion (Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005).

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[8] The sample was composed of eleven different religious and professional groups, including one New Age group.

Marler and Hadaway (2002) provide an overview of five American surveys. A majority of 59% - 74% identify themselves as 'both spiritual and religious'.[9] In Marler and Hadaway's (2002) own sample of marginal Protestants, the majority see 'being religious' and 'being spiritual' as different but interdependent concepts. As the two authors see it, spirituality is about a connection between the individual and some larger, usually supernatural reality; religion is the expression of that connection, 'organized' or 'institutionalized' spirituality' (295).

In line with these observations, Shahabi et al. (2002) found that in their representative sample (N = 1422) of the US population, 52% of respondents identified themselves as 'both spiritual and religious'. This group had a higher frequency of attending church services, praying, meditating, reading the Bible, and having daily spiritual experiences than the other three groups (10% 'only-spiritual', 9% 'only-religious', and 29% 'neither spiritual nor religious').

For the European situation, we mainly rely on data from the Religious And Moral Pluralism (RAMP) project, which was conducted in eleven countries. Barker (2008) presents the results relevant to our study, although the wording of the questions in the survey was slightly different from other studies. People were asked if they considered themselves a religious person; in addition, they were asked if they had a spiritual life. The results are included in table 3.1. We follow Barker (2008) in naming the four resulting categories as follows: 'neither religious nor spiritual' ('neither'); 'religious but not spiritual' ('only-religious'); 'spiritual but not religious' ('only-spiritual'), and 'both spiritual and religious' ('both').

Table 3.1. Self-reported religiosity and spirituality in Europe (%)
Sample size N = 7378 (from Barker, 2008)

Category	Percentage
Both (spiritual and religious)	37
Only-spiritual	12
Only-religious	15
Neither (spiritual nor religious)	35

Compared to the American studies, the European 'both' category (37%) is remarkably lower. This is not only a result of the 35% 'neither' category, which is indicative of the higher degree of secularization in Europe, but also caused by larger percentages of the other categories: 12% define themselves as 'only-

[9] However, only one of the studies used a random national sample; the others consisted of specific groups.

spiritual' and 15% as 'only-religious'. In her analysis of the RAMP data, Barker shows that the younger the respondents, the higher the percentage of the 'only-spiritual' (up to 17% for those under 25) and the 'neither' (41% for the same cohort), while the percentage of 'both' increases with age. However, the use of the conception of 'spirituality' does not compensate for the drop in religiosity among the younger generations. Barker (2008) indicates that such a pattern may be related to age rather than to changes in society as a whole and that similar results might have been obtained 50 years ago. Another possibility is that young people are not practising or believing something fundamentally different from their elders but are merely using a different concept – spirituality. Barker (2008) calls for more research into both these possibilities. However, the 'only-spiritual' category differs from the other categories in many aspects, for instance, in the concept of God. People in this category are more likely to believe that God is 'something within each person, rather than something out there' (35%) or 'an impersonal spirit or life force' (28%) than 'a God with whom I can have a personal relationship' (9%), whereas 62% of the 'both spiritual and religious' category favor this last option, as do 45% of the 'only-religious' category. The 'only-spiritual' are also more likely to believe in reincarnation, but less likely to believe in the power of prayer than the other categories. Barker (2008) concluded that the people in this category were located close to the 'spirituality' ideal-type she describes. Remarkably, her 'both' category was to be located closer to her ideal-type of 'scriptural religiosity' than the 'only-religious'.

The above survey of the literature shows that, in the United States, a majority of people call themselves 'both spiritual and religious' and integrate what they see as spirituality with Christian beliefs and practices. In Europe, the situation is more differentiated. In both areas, the number of people calling themselves 'only-spiritual' appears to increase. Researchers have focused on how this group differs from those who are 'both spiritual and religious'. But at the same time, a category of 'only-religious' people has appeared that has not received much attention. Is their turn away from spirituality related to the emergence of the 'only-spiritual' group? The 'only-spiritual' tend to distance themselves from traditional forms of worship, such as church attendance and prayer and orthodox or traditional Christian beliefs; their spirituality is associated with New Age-like beliefs and practices and with experiences of a connection between the individual and some larger, usually supernatural reality. However, it is unclear in which specific ways these categories differ in their associations with the terms 'spiritual' and 'religious'. Are the two terms and their associations becoming opposites? Regarding Europe, several researchers complain about the lack of surveys with a sufficient number of questions on contemporary 'spirituality', which would allow them to characterize and

distinguish what it means to be 'spiritual' from what it means to be 'religious'.[10] Our study is an attempt to start addressing this *lacuna*.

The present study

In this chapter, we study what it means to be 'spiritual' and what it means to be 'religious' to people in the Netherlands, using a survey sample from the population. The research questions are specified as follows:

1. Do 'spiritual' people differ in their beliefs, experiences, and practices from 'religious' people and, if so, which expressions contribute to the differentiation and which do they have in common?
2. What does it mean to be 'both spiritual and religious', 'only-spiritual' or 'only-religious'? To which expressions are each of these categories related and how do they differ from each other?

In obtaining answers to these questions, we can show whether and how being 'spiritual' and being 'religious' are overlapping or diverging life orientations in the Netherlands. In this study we use the term 'new forms of spirituality' or 'new spirituality' and we avoid the term 'New Age'. Both are umbrella terms indicative of expressions that are probably equally hard to delimit, but 'New Age' has the flavour of referring to a period that lies behind us, notwithstanding the fact that many 'New Age' expressions have continued as forms of 'spirituality'. Where authors use the notion of 'New Age' we follow their terminology.

Method

Participants

The present study is part of a broader study on new forms of spirituality. We used a large sample of the Dutch population, consisting of a random selection of

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[10] Barker (2008) regrets that the RAMP survey did not include more questions that would enable researchers to explore the distribution and content of New Age-type spiritual ideas and practices. Houtman and Aupers (2007) have the same complaint about the questionnaire of the World Values Survey.

4402 members of the LISS panel of CentERdata[11] in October 2009. The responses to our questionnaire amount to 2622 (59.6%). The sample consists of 1215 men (46%) and 1407 women (54%). Their ages range from 16 to 96 years (mean = 48.7). We left out the 11% who either did not answer the questions about being spiritual or religious or answered one or both questions with 'don't know', which reduced the sample to N = 2334.

Operationalization of concepts

We asked the respondents to identify themselves as 'spiritual' or 'religious'. To measure possible expressions of spirituality or religion, we used sets of questions taken from or inspired by the writings of a wide range of authors (Batson and Ventis, 1982; Becker, de Hart and Mens, 1997; Bloch, 1998; de Jager Meezenbroek et al. (2012); Hanegraaff, 1998; Carrette and King, 2004; Hammer, 2004; Hill, 2004; Höllinger, 2004; Aupers, 2005; Delaney, 2005; Heelas et al., 2005; Possamai, 2005; Bernts, Dekker and de Hart, 2007; Jespers, 2007; Reitsma, 2007; Van IJssel, 2007; Stam, 2010). The survey items, as well as the reliability of the resulting scales, are provided in the appendix to this chapter. A number of these items and variables are usually associated with contemporary spirituality and with the self-designation of 'spiritual' or 'only-spiritual', but we sought to find out whether this exclusive association is justified. Examples of the items are: the notion that all answers are to be found inside oneself, the idea that one can combine different teachings and practices to what fits one best, and the belief in reincarnation and karma. Conversely, beliefs and practices that are usually seen as representative of Christianity and the self-designation of 'religious', like praying, believing in a personal God, and believing in heaven, may well apply to 'spiritual' people, too. Regarding many of the items related to experiences, we had no idea to which self-designations they would relate, for instance, the experience of connectedness (to self, others, and nature). It is important to emphasize that to render all questions suitable both for people who use the word 'spiritual' or 'religious' for themselves and for people who do not, we avoided 'spiritual' and 'religious' in the wording of the questions. We simply asked about beliefs, feelings, and practices.

A principal components analysis with Oblimin rotation on all scale variables representing beliefs, experiences, and practices produced a two-

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[11] The LISS panel (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences) is based on a true probability sample of Dutch households. Universities, research schools, and individual academics can submit research proposals, which they can carry out using the LISS panel. See http://www.centerdata.nl/en/survey-research/mess-liss-panel, latest access date: November 11, 2013.

component solution that explains 55% of the variance in the data.[12] The first component comprises the variables spiritual transformation, monism, spiritual knowledge, syncretism, quest, New Age expectation, belief in paranormal issues, reincarnation and karma, the practices of self-perfectioning, pursuit of esoteric knowledge, experiences of connectedness, and non-religious transcendent experiences, with factor loadings ranging from 0.56 to 0.81. We called this component 'new spirituality'. The second component consists of orthodoxy, affiliation, attendance, frequency of prayer, and religious transcendent experiences. We called this second component 'traditional religion'. Factor loadings range from 0.81 to 0.88. Reliability for scales based on the two components are given by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91 for both new spirituality and traditional religion. We constructed the corresponding variables 'new spirituality' and 'traditional religion' standardizing all composing variables to a maximum score of 5.

Results

What does it mean to be 'spiritual' or 'religious'?

In our sample of respondents, more people defined themselves as 'spiritual' (44.5%) than 'religious' (41.3%). There is a correlation between being 'spiritual' and being 'religious' ($r = 0.37**$).[13] To which beliefs, experiences, and practices are these self-designations related? Do they correspond to the two distinct clusters of expressions we just found, representative of an orientation toward new spirituality or toward traditional religion? To answer these questions, we calculated the correlations between all the expression variables and the cluster variables on the one hand and self-designated spirituality and religiousness on the other hand. The results are given in the two left-hand columns of table 3.2. Remarkably, almost all correlations are significant and most are positive. The two right-hand columns in table 3.2 give a much clearer picture, because the correlation between 'being spiritual' and 'being religious' is 'filtered out'. There are no more (or only extremely weak and/or negative) correlations between being 'spiritual' and the variables belonging to the traditional religion cluster.

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[12] Oblimin rotation is a specific form of component rotation, used when a correlation between the latent components is expected.

[13] For all reported correlations in this chapter, r stands for Pearson's correlation coefficient, * means significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), and ** means significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3.2. Correlations between self-designated spirituality and religiousness and all expressions and clusters of expressions

	Spirituality	Religiousness	Spirituality controlled for religiousness	Religiousness controlled for spirituality
Spiritual transformation	.61**	.35**	.55**	.18**
Monism	.51**	.31**	.45**	.15**
Spiritual knowledge	.41**	.33**	.32**	.22**
Syncretism	.37**	.09**	.36**	-.05**
Quest	.40**	.19**	.36**	.05*
New age expectation	.36**	.21**	.32**	.09**
Belief in paranormal issues	.49**	.14**	.48**	-.06**
Reincarnation	.36**	.05*	.36**	-.10**
Karma	.38**	.01	.41**	-.15**
Self-perfectioning	.41**	.16**	.38**	.01
Pursuit of esoteric knowledge	.30**	.06**	.30**	-.06**
Orthodoxy	.28**	.70**	.04	.67**
Affiliation	.39**	.78**	.17**	.75**
Attendance	.16**	.67**	-.05*	.66**
Frequency of prayer	.24**	.74**	.02	.72**
Connectedness	.41**	.29**	.34**	.16**
Non-religious transcendent experiences	.52**	.36**	.44**	.22**
Experiences of religious transcendence	.37**	.69**	.17**	.64**
Paranormal experiences	.46**	.23**	.42**	.08**
New spirituality	.63**	.29**	.59**	.08**
Traditional religion	.33**	.84**	.04	.82**

*; ** Pearson correlation is significant at the .05; .01 level (2-tailed).

Alternately, there are no more or only weak and/or negative correlations between being 'religious' and the variables belonging to the new spirituality cluster. As for 'being spiritual' (controlled for 'religious'), the strongest correlations are those with spiritual transformation, belief in paranormal issues, monism, experiences of non-religious transcendence, paranormal experiences, and karma. As for 'being religious' (controlled for 'being spiritual'), the correlations with variables from the traditional religion cluster hardly change. We can conclude that 'being spiritual' does indeed correspond with the new

spirituality cluster of expressions and 'being religious' corresponds with expressions from the traditional religion cluster. This is confirmed by the strong correlations between the cluster variable 'new spirituality' and 'being spiritual' (0.59**) and between 'traditional religion' and 'being religious' (0.82**). Almost all variables contribute to the distinction between the two clusters in considerable measure. Only in the case of spiritual knowledge, connectedness, and non-religious transcendent experiences are the differences in correlations somewhat smaller (but still above 0.2). However, despite the fact that 'being spiritual' and being 'religious' are not the same, there are people who use both self-designations. Do they combine new spirituality and traditional religion? This question and others related to the categories of self-designation are answered in the following section.

What does it mean to be 'spiritual and religious', 'only-spiritual' or 'only-religious'?

The distribution of respondents in our sample over the four categories is given in table 3.3. Unlike samples in previous American studies, our sample includes a high number of people who define themselves as 'neither religious nor spiritual' (40%). This is higher than the percentage of 35% for Europe, which Barker (2008) found. In our study, the 'only-spiritual' and the 'only-religious', when taken together (35%), form a larger group than the 'both spiritual and religious' group (25%). This is an indication that, at least at the level of self-designation, a divergence in orientation between 'religious' and 'spiritual' is manifest. We calculated the correlations between the different categories and all expressions. As might be expected, the 'neither spiritual nor religious' have no affinity at all with any of the expressions listed. For this category, all correlations are negative.

Table 3.3. Self-reported religiosity and spirituality in our sample

Category	n	%
Both spiritual and religious	593	25.4
Only-spiritual	446	19.1
Only-religious	372	15.9
Neither spiritual nor religious	923	39.5
Total	2334	100.0

Those who are 'both spiritual and religious' display a preference for expressions belonging to traditional religion, but also for some variables from the new spirituality cluster, especially spiritual transformation (0.40**) and monism

(0.32**). Their highest affinity is with affiliation (0.55**), experiences of religious transcendence (0.53**), frequency of prayer (0.46**), and orthodoxy (0.44**). This suggests that, generally speaking, the 'both spiritual and religious' are more focused on traditional religion than on new spirituality. They complement the former with some elements from the new spirituality cluster. This category, a quarter of our sample, represents people for whom spirituality and religiousness have apparently not become diverging life orientations. Remarkably, their correlations with the variables belonging to traditional religion are stronger than those of the 'only-religious'. Likewise, their correlation with a number of the new spirituality variables – spiritual transformation, monism, connectedness, and experiences of non-religious transcendence – and also with paranormal experiences are higher than 0.30** and stronger than those for the 'only-spiritual'. Moreover, even some of their weak correlations with other new spirituality expressions are higher than those of the 'only-spiritual' category. Apparently, being 'both spiritual and religious' is associated with a more 'intensive' religious/spiritual life than being 'only-spiritual' and 'only-religious'.

The 'only-spiritual' show no strong correlation with any of the expressions listed. Further, they have negative correlations with variables related to traditional religion, albeit only weak ones. Their highest correlations are with belief in karma (0.29**), belief in paranormal issues (0.28**), and spiritual transformation (0.25**). These are beliefs from the new spirituality cluster. In relation to the measures we took, the 'only-spiritual' generally appear to have a less 'intensive' spiritual life than those who are 'both spiritual and religious'. This observation could indicate that being 'only-spiritual' is a transitional stage between a religious and a more secular way of life (Barker, 2008; Marler and Hadaway, 2002). Our findings do not suggest that these people are 'highly active seekers – a term introduced by Roof (1993) – as suggested by Zinnbauer et al. (1997). Their correlation with quest is only 0.21**, which is lower than that of those who are 'both spiritual and religious' (0.23**).

The 'only-religious' tend to have positive correlations with expressions of traditional religion only; however, their affinity with those expressions is lower than that of the 'both spiritual and religious': correlations are all below 0.40. Apparently, traditional religion does not always play an important role in their lives.

To elucidate the characterization of the four categories, a scatter plot of the scores on new spirituality and traditional religion is given in figure 3.1, showing the distribution of individual cases. The first striking element is that those who are 'neither spiritual nor religious' show the strongest concentration: most of them, as might be expected, have no affinity with either new spirituality or traditional religion. Remarkably, a large section of the 'only-spiritual' is

Figure 3.1. Relationship between new spirituality and traditional religion for individual cases, per category

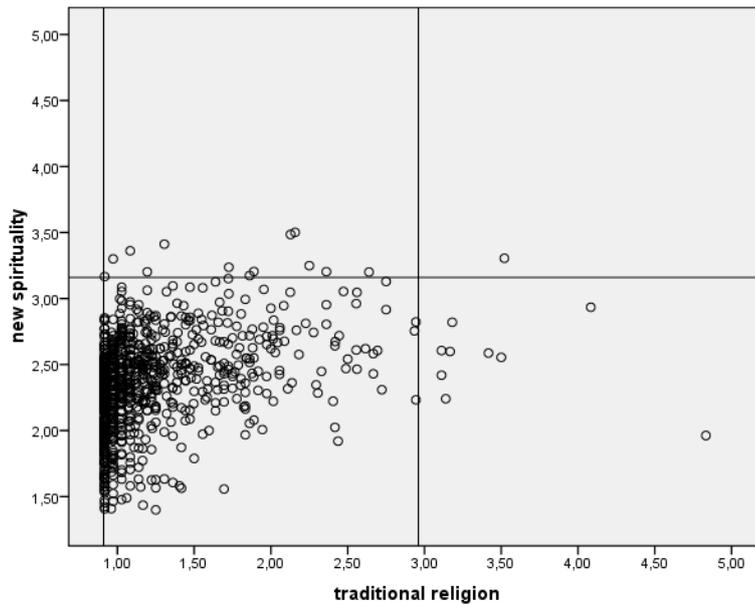**Both spiritual and religious (n = 541)**

Only-religious (n = 349)
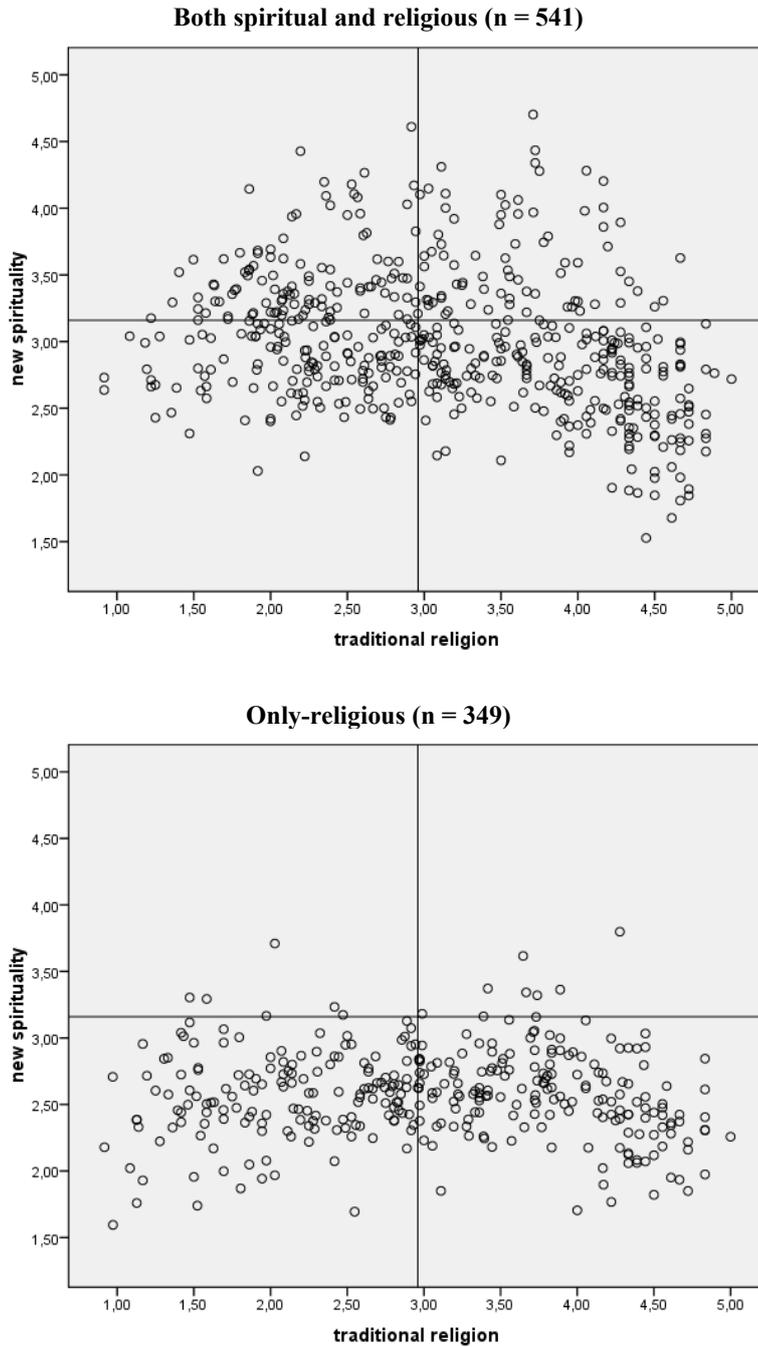
Positions in the lower quadrants mean negative associations with new spirituality; positions in the left hand quadrants mean negative associations with traditional religion.

Only-spiritual (n = 398)
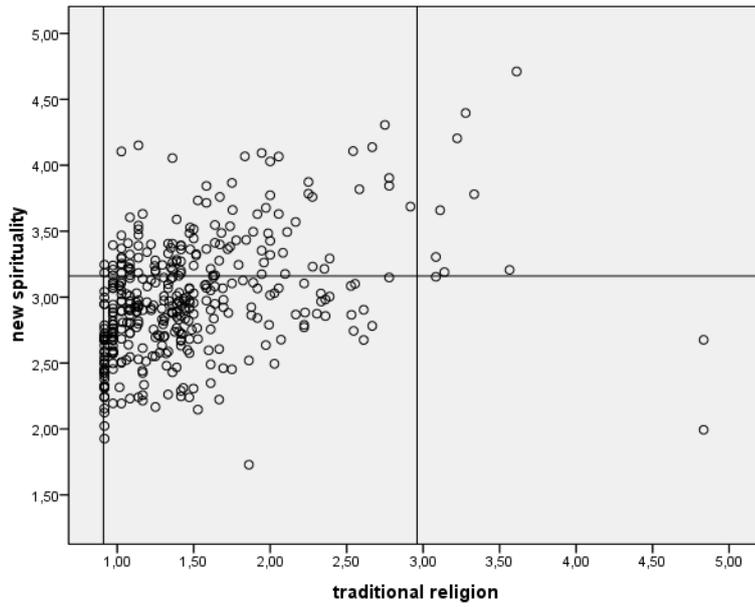
Neither spiritual nor religious (n = 860)

located in the same quadrant. The 'only-religious' clearly distance themselves from new spirituality, appearing for the most part in the lower quadrants. It can also be seen that being 'only-religious' can correspond with a large range of intensities concerning commitment to expressions of traditional religion.

The 'both spiritual and religious' show the greatest dispersion over the four quadrants. Being 'both spiritual and religious' can obviously mean many things. It does not represent one specific orientation in relation to the measures we took in this study. We should consider the possibility that the category of 'both spiritual and religious' consists of different subcategories. To analyze this possibility, we undertook a cluster analysis of cases, using k-means cluster analysis on the category 'both spiritual and religious' using all expression variables. Different from the 'variable oriented' principal components analysis, the k-means cluster analysis produces segments of the sample displaying different 'profiles' in their scores on the variables used. Choosing two clusters and excluding cases pair-wise, we could obtain a division that led to a first cluster concentrated in the right-hand quadrants and a second cluster located in the left-hand quadrants. The people included in the first cluster (n = 304) have a very strong focus on traditional religion and score very high, especially on frequency of prayer, affiliation, and attendance of religious gatherings. However, their score on new spirituality is only slightly lower than that of the 'only-spiritual'. This is a strong indication that new spirituality is developing inside the churches as well as outside. People belonging to the second cluster (n = 237) have the highest focus on new spirituality that we have seen so far. Their scores on traditional religion variables are low. Unlike the 'only-spiritual', they probably consider some or all of their expressions of new spirituality as 'religious'.

Returning to the four categories, the preferences for certain God images presented in table 3.4 may further elucidate their profiles. Among all respondents (column 'total') atheism ('I do not believe in God') is the most endorsed choice, followed by the other end of the spectrum: belief in God without any doubt and belief in a 'higher power' as the third option. The other God images clearly have lower scores. If we look at the categories, we see that those who are 'neither religious nor spiritual' score high on atheism, as could be expected. Nor is it surprising that the 'only-religious' tend to score mostly on belief in God without doubt, followed by belief in God with doubt. Those who are 'both religious and spiritual' also show that order in their preferences. The 'only-spiritual', however, have the strongest affinity with the 'higher power'. In addition, they score extremely low on the three God images including the words 'I believe in God', compared to the other two religious/spiritual categories – they

Table 3.4. Images of God (in % per category)

God image	Both spiritual and religious	Only-spiritual	Only-religious	Neither spiritual nor religious	Total
	n = 593	n = 446	n = 372	n = 923	N = 2334
I do not believe in God	1.8	25.9	1.7	43.1	22.8
I do not know if God exists, and I do not believe that we have any way of knowing	3.7	18.4	3.7	24.7	14.8
I do not believe in a God that is personally involved with each of us, but I do believe in a higher power	16.6	39.6	10.3	14.9	19.2
At some moments I do believe in God, at other moments I don't	9.8	7.0	12.6	8.6	9.2
I believe in God, although I have my doubts	24.5	5.0	24.0	5.9	13.4
I believe without any doubt that God exists	43.5	4.2	47.7	2.8	20.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100.0

A chi-square test indicated that significant differences (at the .01 level) are present in the table.

appear to dislike the concept of 'God'. As for the two different clusters of the 'both spiritual and religious', we see that, among those belonging to cluster 1 with its combined focus on both traditional religion and new spirituality, 87% believe in God with doubt (27%) or without doubt (60%) compared to 43% (including 22% with doubt) in cluster 2 with its focus on new spirituality only. Apparently, those in cluster 2, unlike the 'only-spiritual', have less problems with the use of the word 'God'. In the second cluster, the first choice is belief in a 'higher power' (31%), whereas only 6% in cluster 1 prefer that option.

In sum, we can conclude that being 'only-spiritual', 'only-religious', and 'neither spiritual nor religious' correspond with rather clear profiles, while being 'both spiritual and religious' can mean different things. The 'both spiritual and religious' category is not homogenous and can be sub-divided into two subgroups: one that combines a strong orientation toward traditional religion with new spirituality and one that is mainly oriented toward new spirituality.

Discussion

Are the self-designations of being 'spiritual' and being 'religious' becoming different life orientations? According to our study, this appears to be the case. Whereas American studies have found an absolute majority of people who describe themselves as spiritual as well as religious, and whereas the authors of such studies conclude that most people associate spirituality with traditional religion (Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Marler and Hadaway, 2002), the European situation is different. In our empirical study of the Dutch, as well as in Barker's (2008) study of European data, the percentage of the 'both spiritual and religious' is much lower. This is not only due to a majority that designates itself as 'neither spiritual nor religious'; more importantly, considerable proportions of respondents identify themselves as 'only-spiritual' or 'only-religious'. In our study, the 'only-spiritual' and the 'only-religious', taken together (35%), form a larger group than the group that is 'both spiritual and religious' (25%). Being 'spiritual' is associated with a cluster of expressions (beliefs, experiences, and practices) that can be identified as new spirituality and that is clearly differentiated from another cluster of expressions belonging to traditional, church-related religion. Being 'religious' is associated with the latter cluster. The categories of 'only-spiritual' and 'only-religious' also reflected these clusters.

In our study, the 'only-spiritual' distinguish themselves by a higher affinity with syncretism, belief in paranormal issues, reincarnation, and karma, compared to the other categories; on the other hand, their affinity with almost all the other variables in the new spirituality cluster is lower than that of those who are 'both spiritual and religious', for instance in the case of spiritual transformation, monism, and spiritual knowledge. It appears that they have a less 'intensive' spiritual life than those who are 'both spiritual and religious'. Another possibility is that being 'spiritual' for these people is expressed in a very different way from that represented by our variables. That they have a negative affinity with traditional religious expressions is no surprise; this tendency confirms the observation made by other authors that the 'only-spiritual' are opposed to traditional religion (Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Fuller, 2001; Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005). Their God image is more likely to be the notion of a 'higher power' or they are more likely to be agnostic, compared to other categories. They may have an aversion to traditional religious concepts, which is related, for instance, to avoiding the word 'God'. Nevertheless, we cannot confirm the conclusions of Zinnbauer et al. (1997) and Marler and Hadaway (2002), who likened the American 'only-spiritual' category to the 'highly active seekers' who have 'mystical experiences' in the baby boomer generation as reported by Roof (1993). In our study, the 'only-spiritual' have a low relation with the 'quest' attitude and an even weaker correlation with transcendent (mystical) experiences.

The 'only-religious' are generally church attenders, who are very likely to have a belief in God beyond doubt; they have no affinity with new spirituality items. Being 'only-religious' appears to be a specific life orientation, where religion is expressed in terms of traditional religion, but where the latter does not always play an important role.

In contrast, the category of people calling themselves 'both spiritual and religious' is less easy to interpret. For them – a quarter of our sample – the categories of being 'spiritual' and being 'religious' have not become diverging life orientations. At first sight, they seem to combine an attraction to traditional religious beliefs and behavior, which is stronger than for those who are 'only-religious', with an affinity with new spirituality, which is stronger than that of the 'only-spiritual'. This is what Barker (2008) found, to her surprise, for the aggregate of European countries. She ended up classifying the 'both spiritual and religious' category at the most traditional religious end of the spectrum, although people in this category also scored high on characteristics of what she defined as the 'spirituality ideal type'. We showed that the 'both' category should not be regarded as a generally homogenous group, at least not in the Dutch – and possibly not in the European – context. In our study, the 'both' category can be divided into two different clusters. The larger one (13% of the total sample) combines a strong focus on traditional religion with an interest in new spirituality that is only slightly lower than that of the 'only-spiritual'. This is a strong indication that new spirituality is developing inside as well as outside the churches. New spirituality with its focus on inner experiences and syncretistic tendencies may have complemented and enriched traditional religion. The smaller cluster (10% of the total sample) comprises people who are opposed to traditional religion and instead involved in expressions of new spirituality on a varying basis, but generally more than the other categories. They appear to associate the new spiritual expressions with being 'religious', which may indicate that these expressions are not to be considered superficial fads, but as important to them as traditional religious expressions are to committed church members. It is very likely that both clusters have different conceptions of the terms 'spirituality' and 'religion'.

Interestingly, and contributing to an explanation of our findings, the data discussed by Marler and Hadaway (2002) suggest that calling oneself 'only-spiritual' can be a kind of default option, something less powerful, something that remains, chosen by people who no longer see themselves as religious: a 'naked' spirituality. Likewise, calling oneself 'only-religious' may be indicative of a 'soul-less' religion (295, 297). This means that spirituality has the best chance to blossom within the framework of a particular religion and that religion needs spirituality to survive.

Our results suggest that for most people being 'spiritual' is not related to traditional religion, but is predominantly related to expressions of the new

spirituality that we measured. The results of this study support the view that studies of spirituality and religiosity must go beyond the use of single-item self-designations and explicitly operationalize religiousness and spirituality in terms that reflect the variety of expressions (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). Knowledge of the conceptions of spirituality in our sample would further improve the interpretation of the results. In our survey, we also asked respondents an open question: 'What do you see as spirituality?' In chapter 2, we have presented the results of a content analysis of the answers. The present study can of course only show the picture at a given moment in time in one European country. Knowing that the meanings and associations of the word 'spirituality' are subject to change and realizing that these are most likely to differ across regional languages and maybe even across countries (see e.g., Stifoss-Hanssen, 1999), we think it would be a good idea to repeat the study in a few years and complement it with studies in other European countries.

Appendix to chapter 3. Survey questions used

In brackets behind the (scale) variables, the mean score in the focused response sample (N = 2334), and, if applicable, Cronbach's α for the reliability of the scale, are given. Percentages agreeing per item are also given.

Self-designation

To what extent do you agree with:
   I am a spiritual person (45%; mean 2.3 on a scale of 1-4)
   I am a religious person (41%; mean 2.2 on a scale of 1-4)

Beliefs

Spiritual transformation (mean 3.0 on a scale of 1-5; α = .89). To what extent do you find it important:
   to pursue the development of your higher or deeper Self? (33%)
   to try to find back your divine origin? (14%)
   to work at expanding your consciousness? (41%)
   to become more intuitive and more sensitive? (38%)
   to pursue a balance between body and mind? (57%)
   To discover and develop your hidden talents? (62%)
Monism (mean 3.2 on a scale of 1-5; α = .89). To what extent do you agree with:
   There is a force or life energy that connects us all (40%)
   We are all part of a larger consciousness (37%)
   Everything is energy (43%)
   Everything is connected to everything (44%)
Spiritual knowledge / self-spirituality (mean 3.2 on a scale of 1-5; α = .76). To what extent do you agree with:
   All answers can be found within yourself (32%)
   You should rely on your inner voice (65%)
   It is important to pursue self-knowledge (79%)
   Knowledge of self is knowledge of God / the divine (17%)
   Personal insight, based on inner experience, is the only thing you should listen to (26%)
   Each of us has a unique role to fulfil on this earth (52%)
Syncretism and Perennialism (mean 3.3 on a scale of 1-5; α = .83). To what extent do you agree with:
   It is good to experiment with wisdom and practices derived from different traditions to find out what works best for you (28%)
   There are many sources of wisdom which we can draw from (69%)
   You can combine different teachings and practices to what suits you best (60%)
   There are many paths of wisdom, but they all originate from the same eternal source (28%)

Quest (mean 3.2 on a scale of 1-5; α = .78). To what extent do you agree with:
  I am never entirely certain about the truth I adhere to (32%)
  Each new insight is provisional (47%)
  In my experience, questions are more important than answers (30%)
  In my experience, it is important to keep searching for deeper insights (34%)
  Doubts and uncertainties are often very valuable to me (43%)
  The experience of a personal crisis contributes significantly to my obtaining deeper insights and ideas (54%)
New Age expectation (mean 2.5 on a scale of 1-5; α = .83). To what extent do you agree with:
  We are on the threshold of a new age (24%)
  Mankind is currently experiencing a profound change in consciousness (23%)
  Major changes are imminent because we are entering the Aquarian Age (7%)
Belief in paranormal issues (mean 2.2 on a scale of 1-5; α = .93). To what extent do you agree with:
  I am convinced of the healing power of gemstones and crystals (9%)
  I am convinced of the effectiveness of Reiki (14%)
  I am convinced that it is possible to retrieve memories of a former life (12%)
  I am convinced of the existence of chakras (invisible energy centres in our body) (24%)
  I am convinced that astrology and horoscopes can provide valuable insights (11%)
  I am convinced that laying Tarot cards can provide valuable insights (6%)
  I am convinced of the existence of angels or other invisible beings that can help us (25%)
  I am convinced that it is possible to contact people who have died (19%)
Belief in reincarnation (mean 1.5 on a scale of 1-3)
  Do you believe in reincarnation? (14%)
Belief in karma (mean 1.6 on a scale of 1-3)
  Do you believe in karma (the law of cause and effect)? (19%)
Religious orthodoxy (mean 1.7 on a scale of 1-3; α = .86)
  Do you believe in a life after death? (37%)
  Do you believe in the existence of heaven? (30%)
  Do you believe in hell? (11%)
  Do you believe in a devil? (14%)
  Do you believe Adam and Eve existed? (26%)
  Do you believe that it makes sense for you to pray? (39%)

Experiences

Connectedness to self, others and nature (mean 2.1 on a scale of 1-3; α = .80). To what extent does this apply to you:
  I experience an inner strength (56%)
  I experience my life as valuable (94%)
  My life has a purpose (85%)
  I feel connected with other people, even if they are quite different from me (86%)
  I feel connected to all life around me (72%)
  I feel strongly connected to nature (72%)
  Nature helps me connect to deeper dimensions within myself (35%)
  In nature, I have the most intense experiences (38%)

Experiences of religious transcendence (mean 1.4 on a scale of 1-3; α = .90). Which of the following experiences have you had:

 An experience of the presence of God / the divine / a higher power (30%)

 A feeling of connectedness to God / the divine / a higher power (36%)

 An experience of receiving help as an answer to my prayer (34%)

Experiences of non-religious transcendence (mean 1.4 on a scale of 1-3; α = .84). Which of the following experiences have you had:

 A feeling of connectedness to a universal power (23%)

 An experience in which I seemed to become part of a power greater than myself (16%)

 A concurrence of events in my life which made me feel: this is cannot be a coincidence (56%)

 An experience in which the nature of reality became clear to me (30%)

 An experience in which all things seemed part of a larger whole (27%)

 An experience in which everything seemed perfect (27%)

Paranormal experiences (mean 1.2 on a scale of 1-3; α = .72). Which of the following experiences have you had:

 An experience of finding myself outside my body (11%)

 Seeing a deceased person or another experience of contact with a deceased person (21%)

 A recollection of a former life (7%)

 A contact with a 'guide' or inner voice (15%)

 An experience of an invisible power that somehow offered me council, advice, or guidance (26%)

Practices

Self-perfectioning (mean 1.2 on a scale of 1-3; α = .66). Do you practice

 Yoga (13%)

 Tai Chi (3%)

 Breathing exercises (34%)

 Acupuncture (6%)

 Reiki (7%)

Pursuit of esoteric knowledge (mean 1.1 on a scale of 1-3; α = .66). Do you practice

 Dream interpretation (21%)

 Consulting Tarot cards (5%)

 Consulting the I Ching (2%)

 Consulting your horoscope (30%)

 Visiting a soothsayer (2%)

 Visiting a medium (5%)

 Visiting a paranormal fair (5%)

Intensity of affiliation (mean 2.1 on a scale of 1-4). To what extent do you agree with:

 I view myself as belonging to a religious or spiritual group or a group based on a worldview (32%)

Attendance (mean 1.1 on a scale of 0-6)

 Aside from special occasions such as weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious gatherings?

Frequency of prayer (mean 1.9 on a scale of 0-6)

 Aside from religious gatherings, how often do you pray?

God images

Which of the following statements best matches your idea of God?
  I do not believe in God (23%)
  I do not know if God exists, and I do not believe that we have any way of knowing (15%)
  I do not believe in a God that is personally concerned with each of us, but I do believe in a higher power (19%)
  At some moments I do believe in God, at other moments I don't (9%)
  I believe in God, although I have my doubts (13%)
  I believe without any doubt that God exists (21%)

Chapter 4

New spirituality and social engagement[14]

Abstract

New spirituality has often been accused of being egocentric and thus lacking incentives for social engagement. The discussion on this subject is complex because authors differ in specifying who they are writing about and what the criticism is. After seeking an adequate demarcation of the target group (people involved in new spirituality), we established a concept of social engagement that distinguishes between behavior that is and that is not driven by egocentric motivation. Using measures based on this conceptual model, we surveyed a representative sample of the Dutch population. We found that on most measures people involved in new spirituality are less socially engaged than affiliated or traditionally religious people but more engaged than 'secular' people. However, they are more committed to organizations for environmental protection, peace, or animal rights than others. Overall, demographic factors – especially education, age, and gender – are stronger predictors of social engagement than religious and spiritual beliefs, experiences, or practices. The most important spirituality variable that predicts some social engagement measures is connectedness to self, others, and nature.

Introduction

Scholars as well as the popular press have often criticized new forms of spirituality for being egocentric and lacking incentives for social engagement (e.g., Heelas, 1996; Bloch, 1998; Bruce, 1998; Hanegraaff, 1998; Hay and Hunt, 2000; Bruce, 2002; Carrette and King, 2004; Dekker, 2004; Höllinger, 2004; Van Harskamp, 2003; Wuthnow, 2006; Farias and Lalljee, 2008). Others, however, mention or discuss this criticism but argue against it (e.g., York, 1995; Wuthnow, 1998; Hedges and Beckford, 2000; Fuller, 2001; Marler and Hadaway, 2002; Dillon, Wink, and Fay, 2003; Possamai, 2005; Wink, Dillon,

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and Fay, 2005; De Hart and Dekker, 2006; Heelas et al., 2005; Heelas, 2006, 2008; Campbell, 2007; Chandler, 2008, 2011; De Hart, 2011).

Close reading of the sources reveals that this lack of consensus is mainly caused by differences in specifying both the group that is being criticized (the target group) and the groups with which the target group is being compared. In some cases no comparison is made at all. In addition, the various sources characterize their criticisms differently. Just a few prominent examples will illuminate the broad diversity on these points. Heelas (1996) observes that New Agers prefer to work on transforming their own lives rather than on serving the community. In a later book, however, Heelas et al. (2005) stress that this subjective turn need not imply that they will be atomistic, discrete, or selfish; above all else their spirituality is 'holistic', involving a self-in-relation rather than a self-in-isolation. Farias and Lalljee (2008) found that a group of 53 visitors to London New Age centres scored lower on measures suggestive of self-sacrificing goals (vertical individualism/collectivism) and higher on Schwartz values of hedonism, self-direction, and stimulation than did a group of 53 Catholics recruited after mass. Chandler (2011) found that a group of 265 'spiritual but definitely not religious' Canadians she studied scored lower on volunteering and charitable giving than the general population in Canada but higher in social trust and electoral politics. Among 3970 European students, Höllinger (2004) identified a subgroup of New Agers interested in esoteric practices (astrology, Tarot cards, I Ching, consulting fortune-tellers, and interpreting dreams) who are more hedonistic and who tend more to narcissism and a lower social ethic than other people. Carrette and King (2004) argue that 'spirituality' not only has become a commodity in the global marketplace but it also promotes attitudes of atomization and alienation from responsibilities for the collective good. This brief overview explains, at least in part, why the controversy surrounding this subject has not yet subsided. The studies we mentioned – with the exception of Chandler (2011) and (in part) Farias and Lalljee (2008) – are not dedicated specifically to the relationship between new spirituality and social engagement. Nevertheless, these and other studies are recycled as part of a discourse on that relationship.

In our opinion, any attempt to clarify the issues and further the discussion should start with reflection on an adequate demarcation of the target group, and on the concept of social engagement. The purpose of this chapter is to do just that and, with the insights acquired, to answer the question: do people involved in new forms of spirituality show a lower level of social engagement than others? Put thus simply, the question clearly involves comparing groups and is obviously best answered by carrying out an empirical, quantitative study. The next two sections are dedicated to, first, specifying target and comparison groups and, second, clarifying the concept of social engagement. Each section begins with an analysis of the differences among the sources. Based on these

differences, we theorize on the distinctive features of the discussion and develop our own concepts and an approach designed to answer the research question empirically.

Target groups and comparison groups

<u>The sources</u>

The target group is often not very clearly delimited in the various sources: it is usually referred to simply as 'New Agers' (Heelas, 1996; Bloch, 1998; Possamai, 2005; Farias and Lalljee, 2008), or as 'people involved in (alternative) spirituality' (Bloch, 1998; Campbell, 2007) or '(New Age) spiritualities of life' (Heelas 2006, 2008). When specifications are given, we can discern two tendencies:

1. Some authors emphasize institutional aspects: they focus on the unchurched and individual character of the religiosity or spirituality of the people involved (Hay and Hunt, 2000; Fuller, 2001; Chandler, 2008, 2011). They refer to people who call themselves spiritual and/or religious but who are not affiliated with a religious or spiritual organization. If this indicator is used as the criterion for selecting respondents in an empirical study, and if the selection is not taken from a representative sample of the population (Hay and Hunt 2000) or if further selection criteria are used (Chandler 2011), prudence is called for when the results of such studies are compared.

2. Other authors focus on the substance of the spirituality they study, dwelling on the views, experiences, and practices of the people involved (Heelas, 1996; Possamai, 2005; Bloch, 1998). When this criterion was specified for quantitative studies, quite different selections resulted: Farias and Lalljee (2008) recruited a group of visitors after a lecture in New Age centres, obviously assuming a similarity in their spheres of interest. Höllinger (2004) selected groups of students on the basis of involvement in certain spiritual practices. De Hart (2011) did not construct a target group, per se, but compared social engagement activities in relation to a number of separate beliefs and activities associated with new spirituality.

A number of scholars do not specify with which 'others' they compare the target group (Bloch, 1988; Hanegraaff, 1998; Hay and Hunt, 2000; Wuthnow, 2006). Most advocates of what we shall call the *low-social-engagement hypothesis* provide no quantitative comparisons (Heelas, 1996; Bloch, 1998; Hay and Hunt, 2000; Bruce, 2002; Van Harskamp, 2003). In a number of cases, explicit or implicit comparisons are made with people belonging to religious communities

(Hay and Hunt, 2000; Carrette and King, 2004; Dekker, 2004; De Hart, 2011; Chandler, 2011).

Our approach

The two tendencies we detected in the designation of the target group are not insignificant. The first one – a target group consisting of spiritual individuals with no church affiliation – unaffiliated spirituality – in fact amounts to relying on self-determination by the respondents and does not in any way consider the substance of their spiritual beliefs and/or practices. In contrast, the second tendency – a target group that has certain beliefs and practices characteristic of new spirituality – disregards affiliation. However, it is known that a number of people who are attracted to new spirituality are also church members (e.g., Hanegraaff, 1997; Berghuijs, Pieper, and Bakker, 2013a).

As noted, the differences in target groups have made results hard to compare. Therefore, we set out to define the target group in two different ways, in conformity with the two tendencies we discerned in the sources: one focusing on unaffiliated spirituality and the other on affinity with certain 'typical' expressions of new spirituality. The 'unaffiliated spirituality' group is relatively easy to determine via a few questions in a survey. To delimit the 'new spirituality' group is more complicated. As is generally acknowledged, the large diversity in expressions counted as 'new spirituality' makes it hard to define or operationalize (Heelas et al., 2005; Popp-Baier, 2010). Determining which individuals should be counted as involved in these new forms of spirituality is equally difficult. However, a growing number of authors point to a common or 'typical' worldview underlying the many expressions that differ so much at first sight. Most sources mention ideological consensus about key concepts like the 'sacralization of the self' or 'self-spirituality', the notion of a 'perennial wisdom' as the source of all religious and spiritual expressions, a tendency to syncretism, and the idea of monism or holism. Such notions provide a kind of meta-ideology that unites followers of new spiritualities while at the same time giving them freedom for individual wielding of symbolic systems, leading to a high degree of diversity in views, experiences, and practices (Bloch, 1998; Hanegraaff, 1998; Hammer, 2004; Aupers and Houtman, 2006; Heelas et al., 2005; Possamai, 2005). Therefore, we have used affinity with such expressions as a criterion to select the 'new spirituality' group.

As for statements about the level of social engagement of a target group, they make sense only if the target group is compared to other groups. To make such comparisons, we will have to select the target groups and comparison groups using a representative sample of the general population and not a specific subset group such as students. To respond to authors who compare the target

group with people belonging to a religious community (Hay and Hunt, 2000; Carrette and King, 2004; Dekker, 2004; De Hart, 2011; Chandler, 2011) we will compare the 'unaffiliated spirituality' group with people affiliated with a religious institution, and the group based on affinity with new spirituality expressions with people who have affinity with traditional (Christian) expressions. In addition, we will compare the target groups with 'secular' groups.

Social engagement

The sources

In the sources, the nature of the indicators of 'low social engagement' also varies. If we omit the popular sources and concentrate on scholarly publications supporting the critical suggestions of egocentrism in *adherents* of new forms of spirituality, only a limited number of publications remain.[15] Those who disagree with this negative view of new spirituality refer to both popular and scholarly sources and provide arguments, and sometimes empirical material, to contradict the criticisms. It is crucial to examine the arguments of both the advocates and the opponents of the low-social-engagement hypothesis to find out how their criticisms are formulated and why they differ in their conclusions. Our objective in doing so is to get a clearer image of which elements of a conception of social engagement are essential if social engagement is to be seen as the opposite of egocentrism.

The argument presented by advocates of the low-social-engagement hypothesis seems unambiguous. It can be summarized as follows: many people involved in new spirituality are highly opposed to how society is organized and, especially, institutionalized. Although it doesn't even occur to some of them that religion could be socially demanding (Hay and Hunt, 2000), for many, churches are among the institutions they most dislike. They see traditional religion as hierarchical and dogmatic (Heelas, 1996; Bloch, 1998, Aupers and Houtman, 2006). As a result of their anti-institutional attitude, they miss out on the social incentives that accompany social structures, like church communities that issue moral guidelines and preach social commitment (Bruce, 2002). Instead, New Agers focus moving beyond the 'socialized self' to the 'spiritual Self' (Heelas,

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[15] Often-cited authors like Lasch (1979) and Bellah et al. (1985) discuss the individualism of Western culture in general; therefore, their criticism cannot be counted as directed at new spirituality as such. Carrette and King (2004) and Hammer (2004) question the motivations of suppliers of 'spiritual' products.

1996), and they focus on 'following their personal path' guided by their own experiences instead of 'blindly' accepting religious teachings and ethics (Aupers and Houtman, 2006). Therefore, each of them is engaged in and principally committed to his or her own spiritual development. Heelas (1996:2) introduced the term *self-spirituality* for this attitude. These people generally find it impossible or unnecessary to put effort into changing societal structures; instead they use their spirituality to adapt themselves to the inescapability of mainstream society rather than trying to change it (Bloch, 1998; Bruce, 2002). Some see the focus on self-perfection as a necessary step preceding any possible change of the world into a better place (Heelas, 1996). New Agers therefore focus on changing themselves into what they see as more spiritually conscious and therefore better functioning people, aware of their connectedness to all that is (Heelas, 1996; Bloch, 1998). Some authors label this purported experience of connectedness as 'illusory' (Van Harskamp, 2003) or as a 'magical' and 'abstract' connectedness to the larger cosmos that is not socially embedded (Farias and Lalljee, 2008). This self-spirituality may lead to self-indulgence (Wuthnow, 2006), and, especially among those interested in esoteric methods, to a self-centred life relatively low in social ethics (Höllinger, 2004).

The foregoing characterizations of new spirituality are mainly based, on the one hand, on personal observations or interviews (Heelas, 1996; Aupers and Houtman, 2006; Bloch, 1998; Hay and Hunt, 2000; Bruce, 2002), or on theorizing (Bruce, 2002) and opinions (Wuthnow, 2006) of the authors, on the other. Only Farias and Lalljee (2008) and Höllinger (2004) provide quantitative and comparative material, but as we have noted above, their samples were quite specific and therefore their conclusions cannot be extrapolated to the population in general. We must conclude that although the theory looks logically sound, the evidence is limited.

Opponents of the low-social-engagement hypothesis make three main points. First, a number of authors state that in this discussion individualism is incorrectly confused with egocentrism (De Hart and Dekker, 2006; Bernts, Dekker, and De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2008). Individualism is a general trend in society and is not limited to people involved in new spirituality. The self as a source of insights – epistemological individualism – does not imply that the self is also the ultimate goal of intentions and actions (Heelas, 1996; Partridge, 2004; Van Harskamp, 2006; Campbell, 2007). Moreover, there may be an element of linguistic circularity or tautology involved: emphasis on the 'self' is equated with being 'selfish' (York, 1995). Actually, according to some sources, individualists tend to stand up for the rights of individuals, not only for their own rights but also for the rights of others (Bernts, Dekker, and De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2008). Individualism has even been shown to be positively related to civic engagement and trust (Allik and Realo, 2004) and to charitable giving and volunteering (Kemmelmeier, Jambor, and Letner, 2006). Second, people

involved in new spirituality are at least as much engaged in society as others through their contacts with relatives, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances in other social networks (Chandler, 2011; De Hart, 2011). Third, the suggestion is made that although people involved in new spirituality tend not to spend time or money on institutionalized charitable organizations (Chandler, 2011), their individualism and anti-institutionalism lead to other forms of social engagement such as solidarity with people in more individual and informal ways related to their own biographical situations (e.g., De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2011), and highly selective buying and boycotting behavior based on their personal ethics (Chandler, 2011). Furthermore, empirical evidence reveals a relatively high commitment to nature and the environment (Becker, De Hart, and Mens, 1997; Bernts, Dekker, and De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2011).

Our approach

In a sociological sense, people involved in new spirituality appear to be integrated in social life at least as much as others (Chandler, 2011; De Hart, 2011). But looking at the arguments from a psychological point of view, we can ask ourselves if all the attitudes or activities presented as evidence against the low-social-engagement hypothesis should also be interpreted as the opposite of egocentrism. Looking at motivations for prosocial behavior, Batson, Ahmad, and Tsang (2002) point to the importance of 'ultimate motives': prosocial activities can be driven by egoistic motives as well as by commitment to others or society at large. For a given individual in a given situation, more than one of these motives may be present, in which case the motives may either conflict or cooperate with one another. In society this is natural. We are dependent on one another; giving and receiving usually alternate. For the present study, however, it is important to realize that prosocial behavior may be driven solely by egoistic motivations. Batson, Ahmad, and Tsang (2002) give the example of a student who volunteers at a local nursing home to add community service to her curriculum vitae. Her action may benefit the community but it is egoistically motivated. Applying this observation to our subject, we may wonder if displaying a relatively higher level of social trust, involvement in networks of family, friends, and professionals, and a higher level of political activity such as voting and signing petitions (Chandler, 2011), or displaying a higher than average rate on collective activism (De Hart, 2011) should be interpreted as unambiguous contraindications of egocentrism. Involvement in networks as such may just as well stem from egoistic motivations (status, power). Joining collective demonstrations may just as well stem from personal preoccupations (strikes for better wages, action against the factory in one's backyard). As for the more individual and informal forms of solidarity with others, the argument made, for

example by De Hart (2007), is of a suggestive nature or, as in Chandler's study (2011), based on a non-representative sample.

All in all, the critical suggestions as well as the arguments opposing those criticisms differ greatly, are not always convincing from a psychological point of view, and not always accompanied by quantitative evidence and comparison with other groups in the population. Therefore, we decided to formulate a 'narrow' conception of social engagement, one that distinguishes between behavior that is and behavior that is not driven by egocentric motivation:

> *Social engagement is commitment to others that benefits individuals, groups, or society at large.*

Commitment to others means an attitude of solidarity and responsibility; *that benefits* implies that the commitment translates into prosocial actions aimed at improving situations for others; *individuals, groups, or society at large* refers to those thought to benefit from the actions. This definition covers the spectrum from institutional to more informal and individual situations. We count people as socially engaged only if they display both attitudes of solidarity and prosocial behavior. Prosocial actions can be measured: volunteering, informal care, contributing to charitable causes, and so on. It is possible to get an impression of people's attitudes towards others by asking them about the value they place on pro-social characteristics such as being helpful, forgiving, and loving. One especially useful tool in this regard is the concept of 'philanthropy' developed by Schuyt (2006). Building on theories of Durkheim and Simmel, Schuyt states that many social relations can be seen as a form of direct or indirect exchange in 'intermediary' groups such as the family, the village, and religious or political associations. These groups typically view contributions to their own group as well as to outgroup members as laudable. Over the course of the twentieth century, cohesion in some intermediary groups declined. This decline seemed to parallel an increase in a more abstract feeling of connection with others. As citizens become affiliated with a greater number of groups, their sense of identification with each individual group lowers, but the feeling of involvement with society in general increases. Philanthropy is the modern expression of such feelings of more generalized benevolence, encompassing a sense of civic duty, stewardship, and social responsibility for the well-being of society as a whole. Philanthropy is often expressed in intentions of solidarity related to humanitarian and environmental causes because these exclude or minimize relations with personal interest or profit (Schuyt, Smit, and Bekkers, 2004; Schuyt, 2006). Therefore, our operationalization of social engagement focuses on values and philanthropy, on the one hand, and on prosocial actions with minimal personal profit on the other.

Method

Participants

We presented our questionnaire to a large sample taken from the Dutch population, consisting of a random selection of 4402 members of the LISS panel of CentERdata in October 2009.[16] The total panel of 5000 households, comprising 8000 individuals, is based on a true probability sample of households drawn from the population register by Statistics Netherlands. Members receive a questionnaire each month. It is possible for researchers to combine their dataset with previous LISS datasets. The response on our questionnaire was 2622 out of 4402 (59.6%): 1215 men (46%) and 1407 women (54%). Their ages range from 16 to 96 years (mean = 48.7). We delimited the sample of respondents to those who answered all questions in our own questionnaire. We left out those respondents who answered 'don't know' on one or both of the self-determination items: 'I am a spiritual person' and 'I view myself as belonging to a religious or spiritual group or a group based on a worldview'. This resulted in a sample of 1995 respondents.

Measures

All survey questions are listed in the appendix to this chapter. The 'unaffiliated spirituality' group ('spiritual' and not affiliated to a spiritual or religious group) can be constructed using the two items of self-determination just cited. This target group is compared to those who are affiliated – irrespective of their being spiritual – on the one hand, and to non-spiritual, non-affiliated ('secular-1') people on the other. To construct the 'new spirituality' group and its comparison groups of people dedicated to traditional (Christian) religion on the one hand, and the 'secular-2' rest group on the other, we have formulated a large number of items presented in the literature as 'typical' expressions of spirituality or religion: beliefs, experiences, and practices. These were taken from or inspired by the writings of a wide range of authors (Batson and Ventis, 1982; Becker, De Hart, and Mens, 1997; Bloch, 1998; Hanegraaff, 1998; Carrette and King, 2004; Hammer, 2004; Höllinger, 2004; Aupers, 2005; Delaney, 2005; Heelas et al., 2005; Possamai, 2005; Bernts, Dekker, and De Hart, 2007; Jespers, 2007; Reitsma, 2007; Van IJssel, 2007; Stam, 2010; De Jager Meezenbroek et al., 2012). A cluster analysis of these variables enables us to construct the target

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[16] For further information on the LISS panel, see http://www.centerdata.nl/en/survey-research/mess-liss-panel, latest access date: November 11, 2013.

group and comparison groups on the basis of those items considered to be typical. Because all questions should be suitable for both people who use the word 'spiritual' for themselves, and people who do not, we avoided the terms 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' in the wording of the questions and just asked about opinions, feelings, and practices.

To measure social engagement, we included the philanthropy scale developed by Schuyt (Schuyt, Smit, and Bekkers, 2004; Schuyt, 2006) to test attitudes of solidarity. We also used items from the LISS 'Personality' core study (Marchand, 2009), asking about the importance of values like being helpful, forgiving, and loving. To test prosocial actions, we designed a set of questions about environment-friendly living. In addition, we used items from the LISS core study 'Social Integration and Leisure' (De Bruijne, 2010) about donations, memberships, volunteering, and informal care. As for donations and memberships, we included only those related to (a) organizations for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities, or migrants and (b) organizations for environmental protection, peace, or animal rights, with the objective of minimizing the probability of personal profit. As for volunteering, we included a larger scope of organizations, and we also distinguished between volunteering for religious and for secular organizations.

To assess the importance of spiritual and religious variables compared to demographic factors, we measured age, gender, level of education, and net income. Finally, we measured participation in (spiritual or religious) networks, a factor found to be important for social engagement by Chandler (2011) and De Hart (2011).

Results

The 'unaffiliated spirituality' group, based on self-designation, consists of 22% of the respondents. As comparison groups, we took the 'unaffiliated and not spiritual' (45%) and the 'affiliated' (33%), irrespective of their self-designation as spiritual. To construct the target group based on affinity with new spirituality, we proceeded as follows. To find out if the religion and spirituality variables can reasonably be allotted to the two distinct life orientations we are looking for, namely, new spirituality and traditional (Christian) religion, we performed a principal components analysis (with Oblimin rotation) based on two components and using all variables representing beliefs, experiences, and practices listed in the appendix. The resulting two components together account for 55% of the variance: the first factor for 38% and the second for 17%. The first component comprises the variables concerning spiritual transformation (factor loading .709), monism (.766), spiritual knowledge (.708), syncretism (.756), quest

(.587), neopaganism (.657), New Age expectation (.688), belief in paranormal issues (.808), reincarnation (.617), connectedness (.571), non-religious transcendent experiences (.639), paranormal experiences (.637), self-perfectioning (.584), and pursuit of esoteric knowledge (.621). We called this component 'new spirituality'. The second component consists of orthodoxy (.825), religious transcendent experiences (.817), intensity of affiliation (.834), attendance of religious gatherings (.889), and frequency of prayer (.883). We called this second component 'traditional religion'. Reliability for scales based on these two components are given by a Cronbach's alpha of .91 for new spirituality, and also .91 for traditional religion. We constructed the corresponding variables 'new spirituality' and 'traditional religion', standardizing all composing variables to a maximum score of 5. Pearson correlation between new spirituality and traditional religion is .276 (significant at the .01 level), which means that the two constructs explain only 7.6 percent of each other's variance. As a comparison, Flere and Kirbiš (2009) found higher correlations between 'New Age' and 'religiosity' in samples of students from four different countries (.32 to .55, significant at the .001 level). As Houtman, Aupers and Heelas (2009) showed in response to Flere and Kirbiš (2009), definition and operationalization of concepts like 'New Age' and 'religiosity' in 'sympathetic' or 'antagonistic' ways can influence outcomes greatly. Houtman, Aupers, and Heelas (2009) also showed that in more secularized countries, the overlap between the two will probably be smaller. Therefore, it is no wonder that in the highly secularized Netherlands, we see only a small overlap. Moreover, the principal components analysis is aimed at maximizing the difference between the resulting components.

To determine membership of the target group and its comparison groups, we performed a cluster analysis of cases, with all variables representing beliefs, experiences, and practices in a k-means cluster analysis using z-values and aimed at obtaining three clusters. Different from the 'variable-oriented' principal components analysis, a k-means cluster analysis produces segments of the sample displaying different 'profiles' in their scores on the variables used. Table 4.1 gives the results of the cluster analysis, in terms of mean scores of the clusters on all variables. The following pattern appears in the cluster analysis: cluster 2 is the target group and its members score high on 'new spirituality' variables and low on 'traditional religion'; cluster 3 represents people who have affinity with 'traditional religion' and score low on 'new spirituality'; cluster 1 consists of respondents who have affinity with neither new spirituality nor traditional religion. Due to the skewness of many variables, we calculated the significance of differences between the groups with Mann-Whitney tests per

Table 4.1. Results of the cluster analysis: mean scores of clusters on beliefs, experiences and practices

	Groups based on affinity with expressions							
	Affinity with neither new spirituality nor traditional religion ('secular-2') n = 1064		Affinity with new spirituality n = 484		Affinity with traditional religion n = 447		Total N = 1995	
Variable (scale)	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Spiritual transformation (1-5)	2.57	0.82	3.79	0.63	3.25	0.75	3.01	0.92
Monism (1-5)	2.80	0.87	4.05	0.63	3.31	0.83	3.22	0.96
Spiritual knowledge (1-5)	2.93	0.61	3.68	0.50	3.29	0.55	3.19	0.65
Syncretism (1-5)	3.15	0.69	3.89	0.54	3.17	0.82	3.33	0.75
Quest (1-5)	3.00	0.63	3.57	0.46	3.26	0.55	3.20	0.62
Neopaganism (1-5)	1.43	0.50	2.29	0.76	1.59	0.52	1.67	0.68
New Age expectation (1-5)	2.27	0.71	3.26	0.74	2.56	0.67	2.57	0.82
Belief in paranormal issues (1-5)	1.87	0.68	3.21	0.73	1.93	0.61	2.21	0.88
Reincarnation (1-3)	1.27	0.53	2.22	0.79	1.16	0.43	1.47	0.72
Connectedness (1-3)	1.88	0.37	2.35	0.37	2.15	0.36	2.05	0.41
Transcendent experiences non-religious (1-3)	1.17	0.21	1.76	0.43	1.48	0.35	1.38	0.40
Paranormal experiences (1-3)	1.06	0.13	1.47	0.39	1.17	0.21	1.18	0.29
Selfperfectioning (1-3)	1.08	0.16	1.38	0.34	1.13	0.17	1.16	0.25
Pursuit of esoteric knowledge (1-3)	1.06	0.10	1.27	0.25	1.05	0.08	1.11	0.17
Orthodoxy (1-3)	1.33	0.34	1.84	0.47	2.38	0.54	1.69	0.60
Transcendent experiences religious (1-3)	1.08	0.19	1.64	0.54	2.03	0.53	1.43	0.56
Intensity of affiliation (1-4)	1.30	0.63	2.21	1.06	3.51	0.79	2.02	1.18
Attendance (1-7)	1.31	0.66	1.79	1.05	4.14	1.49	2.06	1.51
Praying frequency (1-7)	1.44	1.11	3.05	2.21	6.15	1.51	2.89	2.42

combination of two groups. The target group differs significantly (on the .01 level) from the 'traditional religion' and 'secular' groups on all variables.

Table 4.2 gives the overlap in target groups and comparison groups based on self-definition and cluster analysis. The target groups overlap only about 50%. The 'new spirituality' group (24% of the sample) is somewhat larger than the 'unaffiliated spirituality' group (22%). This means that ideas, experiences, and practices belonging to the new spirituality cluster have a wider dissemination than just among those who call themselves unaffiliated and spiritual. Moreover, as much as 29% of the affiliated (9% of the total sample) has affinity with new spirituality. This is a sign that the new spirituality is also present in churches. On the other hand, 6% of those who call themselves unaffiliated and not spiritual, or 3% of the total sample, also have affinity with

Table 4.2. Overlap in target groups and comparison groups in numbers and (in brackets) percentages of the total sample

		Groups based on affinity with spiritual/religious expressions (cluster analysis)			
		Affinity with neither new spirituality nor traditional religion ('secular-2')	Affinity with new spirituality	Affinity with traditional religion	Total
Groups based on self-designation	**Unaffiliated and not spiritual ('secular-1')**	802 (40%)	53 (3%)	37 (2%)	892 (45%)
	Unaffiliated and spiritual	191 (10%)	243 (12%)	12 (1%)	446 (22%)
	Affiliated	71 (4%)	188 (9%)	398 (20%)	657 (33%)
	Total	1064 (53%)	484 (24%)	447 (22%)	1995 (100%)

new spirituality. New spirituality is apparently becoming part of mainstream culture, even among people who do not consciously see themselves as 'spiritual'. This may be further illustrated by percentages of agreement with certain expressions in the total sample. For instance, 40% of the respondents believe that there is a force or life energy that connects us all, and 37% believe that we are all part of a larger consciousness. Furthermore, 24% believe in chakras and 14% in reincarnation (see the appendix to this chapter for more examples), and these beliefs are not confined to members of the target groups. We also see that

43% of the 'unaffiliated spirituality' group (10% of the total sample) is not attracted to the expressions belonging to the new spirituality cluster. They may be the ones who have left the churches, but who still believe in 'something', albeit not a very specific belief. Marler and Hadaway (2002) suggest that calling yourself 'spiritual' can be some kind of a default option – something less powerful, something that remains – chosen by people who no longer see themselves as religious: a 'naked' spirituality (295).

Tables 4.3a and 4.3b give the scores on the social engagement variables of the target and comparison groups. We see that the unaffiliated spirituality group as well as the new spirituality group both score highest on commitment to organizations for environmental protection, peace, or animal rights, both in donations and in memberships. In all other cases, the affiliated and traditional religious groups are equal or higher than our target groups. However, except for volunteering for religious organizations, and volunteering total, the differences are not large and not always significant. Remarkably, the secular groups are lowest on almost all measures. As a result, the target groups do not clearly distinguish themselves from the total sample.

Given these results, the question arises: should new spirituality be counted as an important predictor of social engagement at all? Therefore, we performed regression analyses to test the combined influence of all independent variables (of new spirituality, traditional religion, demographic background variables, and network activities) on each dependent social engagement variable. We used linear regression for philanthropy and environment-friendly living, and logistic regression for all dichotomous variables, and also for the variable 'values' because of the skewness of its distribution. Because many people scored high on values, we designed a dichotomous variable distinguishing scores higher than 5.5 from those equal or lower than 5.5.

For each social engagement variable we proceeded as follows: first, we performed the analysis per group of independent variables: new spirituality beliefs, experiences, and practices; traditional religion beliefs, experiences, and practices; and demographic variables.[17] With those variables that emerged as significant, we then performed a final analysis. The results of the analyses are given in tables 4.4 and 4.5.

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[17]Because of the large number of new spirituality beliefs, we divided these in two subgroups: a) spiritual transformation through quest, and b) neopaganism through belief in reincarnation. Because the unaffiliated spirituality group did not differ significantly in connectedness from the affiliated group, we included the variable 'connectedness' both in the group new spirituality experiences and in the group traditional religion experiences. We included the variable 'network activities' in both the group new spirituality practices and traditional religion practices.

Table 4.3a. Social engagement of groups based on self-designation

Variable (scale)	Unaffiliated and not spiritual ('secular-1') n = 892		Unaffiliated and spiritual n = 446		Affiliated n = 657		Total N = 1995	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Values (1-7)	5.85	0.77	5.84[C]	0.76	6.06	0.76	5.92	0.77
Philanthropy (1-5)	3.52	0.44	3.74[AC]	0.41	3.84	0.42	3.67	0.45
Environment-friendly living (1-3)	1.77	0.56	1.93[Ac]	0.56	2.01	0.55	1.88	0.57
Donations to an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants (0-1)	0.21	0.41	0.28[Ac]	0.45	0.34	0.47	0.27	0.44
Donations to an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization (0-1)	0.17	0.38	0.24[A]	0.43	0.21	0.41	0.20	0.40
Member of an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights. minorities or migrants (0-1)	0.04	0.20	0.06	0.24	0.07	0.26	0.06	0.23
Member of an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization (0-1)	0.09	0.29	0.13[a]	0.33	0.11	0.31	0.11	0.31
Volunteering for a religious or church organization (0-1)	0.00	0.06	0.01[C]	0.08	0.18	0.39	0.06	0.24
Volunteering for one or more non-religious organizations (0-1)	0.18	0.39	0.22	0.42	0.25	0.43	0.21	0.41
Volunteering total (0-1)	0.18	0.39	0.22[C]	0.42	0.35	0.48	0.25	0.43
Informal care (0-1)	0.18	0.38	0.22	0.42	0.27	0.44	0.22	0.41

Significances calculated with Mann-Whitney tests per combination of two groups.
A; a = target group differs significantly from secular group on the .01; .05 level
C; c = target group differs significantly from affiliated group on the .01; .05 level

Table 4.3b. Social engagement of groups based on affinity with expressions

Variable (scale)	Affinity with neither new spirituality nor traditional religion ('secular-2') n = 1064		Affinity with new spirituality n = 484		Affinity with traditional religion n = 447		Total N = 1995	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Values (1-7)	5.81	0.77	5.98 [Ac]	0.84	6.13	0.65	5.92	0.77
Philanthropy (1-5)	3.55	0.44	3.80 [A]	0.41	3.83	0.41	3.67	0.45
Environment-friendly living (1-3)	1.79	0.57	1.99 [A]	0.54	1.98	0.56	1.88	0.57
Donations to an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants (0-1)	0.22	0.41	0.29 [Ac]	0.45	0.37	0.48	0.27	0.44
Donations to an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization (0-1)	0.18	0.39	0.24 [a]	0.43	0.21	0.41	0.20	0.40
Member of an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants (0-1)	0.05	0.22	0.05	0.22	0.08	0.27	0.06	0.23
Member of an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization (0-1)	0.10	0.30	0.14 [aC]	0.35	0.08	0.28	0.11	0.31
Volunteering for a religious or church organization (0-1)	0.00	0.05	0.02 [AC]	0.15	0.25	0.43	0.06	0.24
Volunteering for one or more non-religious organizations (0-1)	0.20	0.40	0.20 [c]	0.40	0.27	0.44	0.21	0.41
Volunteering total (0-1)	0.19	0.40	0.21 [C]	0.41	0.40	0.49	0.25	0.43
Informal care (0-1)	0.18	0.39	0.26 [A]	0.44	0.26	0.44	0.22	0.41

Significances calculated with Mann-Whitney tests per combination of each two groups.
A; a = target group differs significantly from secular group on the .01; .05 level
C; c = target group differs significantly from traditional religious group on the .01; .05 level

Table 4.4. Linear regression analyses for philanthropy and environment-friendly living

| | Beta coefficients | | | |
| | Philanthropy | | Environment-friendly living | |
	Analyses per group	Final analysis	Analyses per group	Final analysis
Spiritual transformation	.362***	.219***	.174***	.094***
Monism				
Spiritual knowledge	-.053*	-.122***		
Syncretism				
Quest	.113***	.063**	.167***	
Neopaganism			.139***	.074***
New Age expectation	.156***		.167***	
Belief in paranormal issues				
Belief in reincarnation			-.136***	-.117***
Connectedness	.373***	.204***	.400***	.267***
Non-religious transcendent experiences			-.063*	
Paranormal experiences				
Self-perfectioning	.184***		.192***	.056*
Pursuit of esoteric knowledge			-.065**	
Networks	.223***	.059*	.115***	.067**
Orthodoxy	.168***			
Connectedness	.334***		.385***	
Religious transcendent experiences	.101***		-.050*	-.122***
Intensity of affiliation	.173***	.088***	.105***	
Attendance				
Praying frequency				
Networks	.156***		.089**	
Age	.226***	.150***	.369***	.274***
Sex (female)	.178***	.122***	.046*	
Level of education	.251***	.172***	.143***	.098***
Net income				

Table 4.4, continued. R^2 per analysis

Groups of variables	R^2 of model per group of variables	
	Philanthropy	**Environment-friendly living**
New spirituality		
beliefs, first group	.163	.089
beliefs, second group	.024	.060
experiences	.104	.137
practices	.057	.054
Traditional religion		
beliefs (orthodoxy)	.028	.000
experiences	.148	.136
practices	.090	.031
Demographic variables	.121	.144
R^2 of model in final analysis	.276	.254

In table 4.4 we see that philanthropy is explained for 28 percent, the most important predictors being spiritual transformation, connectedness, level of education, and age. Environment-friendly living is explained for 25 percent, mainly by age and connectedness. In table 4.5, the Wald values indicate the relative importance of the independent variables that contribute to explaining the values of social engagement variables. Apart from connectedness and spiritual transformation, religious and spiritual expressions are less influential than demographic variables, especially level of education, age and sex (being female).

Looking at the two tables, both connectedness and spiritual transformation are related to intentions of solidarity and the more individually oriented social engagement measures like environment-friendly living and donations, while the demographic factors are important in the whole range of measures, including the more socially embedded proactive activities like volunteering and informal care. Monism contributes positively to having high values, but negatively to donations, which seems a contradiction. Neopaganism has a positive relation with environmental issues. Remarkably, in those cases where belief in reincarnation plays a role, it shows negative relations with social engagement variables. Spiritual or religious network activities, mentioned as important by Chandler (2011) and de Hart (2011), are only important for volunteering. On the basis of the Beta coefficients from the linear regressions and the Wald values in the logistic regressions, it is clear that on the whole, demographic factors are the most influential, especially the level of education, which plays an important role

for all social engagement variables except for informal care. After level of education, age is the most important, followed by connectedness, sex (being female, except in case of volunteering for non-religious organizations, where being male is more important), and spiritual transformation.

Conclusions and discussion

In this chapter, we endeavored to answer the question: do people involved in new forms of spirituality show a lower level of social engagement than others?

A literature analysis shows that authors contributing to the discussion differ in their demarcations of who they are writing about, which aspects of social engagement they are dealing with, and with which others the target group is being compared. To clarify and contribute decisively to the discussion, we defined the target group in two ways that correspond with two tendencies that we detected in the literature. We distinguished between an 'unaffiliated spirituality' group (based on being spiritual and non-institutionalized) and a 'new spirituality' group (based on affinity with 'typical' new spirituality expressions). We compared the 'unaffiliated spirituality' group with people affiliated to a religious institution, and we compared the group based on 'affinity with new spirituality expressions' with people who have affinity with traditional (Christian) expressions. In addition, we compared the two target groups with 'secular' groups. All these groups were compared on their level of social engagement. We developed a specific conception of social engagement, focused on attitudes of solidarity, on the one hand, and selected prosocial actions with minimal personal profit on the other.

The results show that it makes sense to distinguish between the two target groups. They overlap only about 50 percent. This finding underlines the importance of definition and demarcation of the target group, just like Houtman, Aupers, and Heelas (2009) indicated. Future research will have to take this into account. In our case, the 'new spirituality' group has a more distinctive profile in regard to social engagement than the 'unaffiliated spirituality' group; however, when it comes to comparisons with the other groups, the results for social engagement are almost the same for both these target groups.

In the first place, the target groups do not clearly distinguish themselves from the population in general. Therefore, as a group, they are not less socially engaged than 'other people' in general.

Second, if we compare the target groups with the affiliated and traditionally religious groups, the answer to our research question is: yes, people involved in new spirituality are less socially engaged than affiliated or tradition-

Table 4.5. Results of the logistic regression analyses

Variables	Values > 5.5		Donations humanitarian aid, etc.		Donations environmental protection, etc.		Member organization humanitarian aid, etc.		Member organization environmental protection, etc.	
	B	Wald	B	Wald	B	Wald	B	Wald	B	Wald
Spiritual transformation	-.310**	8.62	.211*	4.93	.286**	7.69			.293*	4.07
Monism	.193*	3.85	-.239**	7.72	-.371***	16.3				
Spiritual knowledge	.289*	4.02							-.462*	6.38
Syncretism										
Quest										
Neopaganism									.329**	6.61
New Age expectation					.185*	4.13				
Belief in paranormal issues										
Belief in reincarnation			-.216*	4.53						
Connectedness	1.015***	28.8	.414*	5.93	.734***	17.3				
Transcendent experiences non-rel.										
Paranormal experiences										
Self-perfectioning										
Pursuit of esoteric knowledge										
Networks										
Orthodoxy									-.440*	4.36
Transcendent experiences rel.					-.247*	4.44				
Intensity of affiliation										
Attendance										
Praying frequency										
Age	.021***	21.2					.018**	7.07	.015**	7.36
Sex (male)	-.397**	7.67	-.537***	17.7	-.355**	8.25				
Level of education	-.139**	8.38	.130***	10.4	.203***	24.1	.304***	19.1	.247***	16.1
Income	-.089*	5.53	.092**	8.61					.103*	6.13
Significance model	.000		.000		.000		.000		.000	

Table 4.5, continued. Results of the logistic regression analyses

Volunteering for a religious or church organization		Volunteering for one or more non-religious organizations		Volunteering total		Informal care		Variables
B	Wald	B	Wald	B	Wald	B	Wald	**Variables**
								Spiritual transformation
								Monism
								Spiritual knowledge
								Syncretism
								Quest
								Neopaganism
								New Age expectation
								Belief in Paranormal issues
		-.219*	5.20	-.214*	4.77			Belief in reincarnation
								Connectedness
								Transcendent Experiences non-rel.
								Paranormal experiences
								Self-perfectioning
								Pursuit of esoteric knowledge
1.174***	19.4			.511***	11.3			Networks
								Orthodoxy
								Transcendent experiences rel.
.618**	9.35							Intensity of affiliation
.593***	25.0			.164**	8.51			Attendance
								Praying frequency
		.010**	7.22	.012**	9.42	.028***	49.5	Age
		.366**	8.01	.328**	6.87	-.754***	37.9	Sex (male)
.190*	5.76	.218***	25.4	.223***	28.0			Level of education
		-.069*	3.94					Income
.000		.000		.000		.000		Significance model

ally religious people. These findings seem to confirm the arguments put forward by adherentsof the low-social-engagement hypothesis. However, the conclusion must be nuanced. Except for volunteering (especially in religious organizations), the differences are not large. In addition, the general conclusion does not apply to commitment to organizations for environmental protection, peace, or animal rights, where there the target groups score (a little) higher than the comparison groups. These findings are in conformity with those of Becker, De Hart, and Mens (1997), Bernts, Dekker, and De Hart (2007), and Chandler (2011). In the regression analyses we see that, in general, demographic factors are stronger predictors of social engagement than religious and spiritual beliefs, experiences, and practices. Especially education, age, and sex (being female) are important. The low-social-engagement hypothesis is not rejected by these findings, but its significance is affected.

Third, when we compare the target groups with the secular groups, the conclusion is different. The target groups are equal or generally higher in social engagement expressions than their secular counterparts. Therefore, we must conclude that at least a number of new spirituality worldviews, experiences, and practices do have a predictive value for social engagement. The new spirituality variables that are most influential are connectedness (predictor of attitudes of solidarity, environment-friendly living, and donations) and spiritual transformation (predictor especially of attitudes of solidarity). These two variables are not specific, well-defined doctrines or practices but sets of feelings and opinions about the self and the self-in-relation. Both the 'new spirituality' group and the 'traditional religion' group score above average on those variables. Both our target groups show higher levels of spiritual transformation than all comparison groups, but for connectedness the case is different. The 'new spirituality' group shows a higher level of connectedness than the 'traditional religious' group, but the unaffiliated spirituality group does not differ significantly in connectedness from the affiliated group. Although feelings of connectedness may be experienced through church attendance and church-related social encounters more than elsewhere, such feelings are also found among people involved in new forms of spirituality. The importance of connectedness in a general sense is also conform with Durkheim's view, as elaborated by Schuyt, that the decline of cohesion in intermediate groups parallels an increase in a more abstract feeling of connection with others (Schuyt, Smit, and Bekkers, 2004). Is this 'abstract' feeling 'illusory' as Van Harskamp (2003) suggests, or is it a kind of 'magical' connectedness to the cosmos that is not socially embedded in the case of people involved in (new) spirituality, as Farias and Lalljee (2008) assert? Compared to the affiliated and traditional religious groups, there may be some truth in these views. Our regression analyses show that connectedness obviously translates into donations and environment-friendly living, evidence of a more 'abstract' but still prosocial

connectedness, but it does not translate into the more relationally embedded actions of volunteering and informal care.

To summarize, our study confirms the low-social-engagement hypothesis in the case of comparison with traditionally religious and affiliated groups; it contradicts the hypothesis in the case of comparisons with the population in general or with secular groups; and it rejects the hypothesis when it concerns organizations for environmental protection, peace, or animal rights, where people involved in new spirituality show more commitment than all other groups. The suggestion made by Chandler (2011) that unaffiliated spiritual people distinguish themselves in other than 'institutional' forms of social engagement, such as solidarity with people in more individual and informal situations, is not confirmed in our study. If we take informal care as our measure of such solidarity, our unaffiliated spirituality group fails to distinguish itself on that variable, both in comparison with the affiliated and in comparison with the 'secular' parts of the population. The reason for these contradictory findings is that Chandler's (2011) target group is different (more restricted) and not representative. All in all, the controversy falters when we see that demographic factors such as education and age are more important predictors of social engagement than spirituality or religion. However, the finding that 'secular' people are lower in social engagement expressions than both spiritual and religious people allows us to claim with confidence that both people involved in religion and new spirituality show commitment to others.

Finally, we recommend that this study be repeated in other countries. The Netherlands is a very secularized country. Houtman, Aupers, and Heelas (2009) show that the degree to which New Age (spirituality) and Christian religiosity overlap differs per country and is greater in less secularized countries. Therefore, a comparable study carried out, for instance, in massively Catholic Poland or Portugal may reveal levels of social engagement that differ even less between traditional religious and new spirituality groups.

Appendix to chapter 4. Survey questions used

Percentage agreeing per item in focused response sample (N = 1995), and mean of variable and Cronbach's α per scale are given in brackets

Self-designation

> I am a spiritual person (44%)
>
> I view myself as belonging to a religious or spiritual group or a group based on a worldview (33%)

Beliefs

Spiritual transformation (mean 3.0 on a scale of 1-5; α = .89). To what extent do you find it important:

> to pursue the development of your higher or deeper Self? (32%)
>
> to try to find back your divine origin? (14%)
>
> to work on expanding your consciousness? (41%)
>
> to become more intuitive and more sensitive? (39%)
>
> to pursue a balance between body and mind? (58%)
>
> to discover and develop your hidden talents? (62%)

Monism (mean 3.2 on a scale of 1-5; α = .89). To what extent do you agree with:

> There is a force or life energy that connects us all (40%)
>
> We are all part of a larger consciousness (37%)
>
> Everything is energy (43%)
>
> Everything is connected to everything (45%)

Spiritual knowledge / self-spirituality (mean 3.2 on a scale of 1-5; α = .76). To what extent do you agree with:

> All answers can be found within yourself (32%)
>
> You should rely on your inner voice (66%)
>
> It is important to pursue self-knowledge (80%)
>
> Knowledge of self is knowledge of God / the divine (17%)
>
> Personal insight, based on inner experience, is the only thing you should listen to (27%)
>
> Each of us has a unique role to fulfil on this earth (52%)

Syncretism and Perennialism (mean 3.3 on a scale of 1-5; α = .83). To what extent do you agree with:

> It is good to experiment with wisdom and practices derived from different traditions to find out what works best for you (32%)
>
> There are many sources of wisdom from which we can draw (70%)
>
> You can combine different teachings and practices to what suits you best (61%)
>
> There are many paths of wisdom, but they all originate from the same eternal source (28%)

Quest (mean 3.2 on a scale of 1-5; α = .78). To what extent do you agree with:

    I am never entirely certain about the truth I adhere to (33%)

    Each new insight is provisional (48%)

    In my experience, questions are more important than answers (30%)

    In my experience, it is important to keep searching for deeper insights (34%)

    Doubts and uncertainties are often very valuable to me (44%)

    The experience of a personal crisis contributes significantly to my obtaining deeper insights and ideas (54%)

Neopaganism (mean 1.7 on a scale of 1-5; α = .83). To what extent do you agree with:

    I feel attracted to nature-based religions (6%)

    Magic rituals can bring you into contact with the Goddess (3%)

    I feel attracted to Wicca, druidism or shamanism (2%)

New Age expectation (mean 2.6 on a scale of 1-5; α = .82). To what extent do you agree with:

    We are on the threshold of a new age (23%)

    Mankind is currently experiencing a profound change in consciousness (22%)

    Major changes are imminent because we are entering the Aquarian Age (7%)

Belief in paranormal issues (mean 2.2 on a scale of 1-5; α = .93). To what extent do you agree with:

    I am convinced of the healing power of gemstones and crystals (9%)

    I am convinced of the effectiveness of Reiki (14%)

    I am convinced that it is possible to retrieve memories of a former life (12%)

    I am convinced of the existence of chakras (invisible energy centres in our body) (24%)

    I am convinced that astrology and horoscopes can provide valuable insights (11%)

    I am convinced that laying Tarot cards can provide valuable insights (6%)

    I am convinced of the existence of angels or other invisible beings that can help us (24%)

    I am convinced that it is possible to contact people that have died (19%)

Belief in reincarnation (mean 1.5 on a scale of 1-3)

    Do you believe in reincarnation? (14%)

Religious orthodoxy (mean 1.7 on a scale of 1-3; α = .86)

    Do you believe in a life after death? (37%)

    Do you believe in the existence of heaven? (29%)

    Do you believe in hell? (11%)

    Do you believe in a devil? (13%)

    Do you believe Adam and Eve existed? (26%)

    Do you believe that it makes sense for you to pray? (38%)

Experiences

Connectedness to self, others and nature (mean 2.1 on a scale of 1-3; α = .80). To what extent does this apply to you:

I experience an inner strength (56%)

I experience my life as valuable (95%)

My life has a purpose (86%)

I feel connected with other people, even if they are quite different from me (86%)

I feel connected to all life around me (72%)

I feel strongly connected to nature (73%)

Nature helps me connect to deeper dimensions within myself (35%)

In nature, I have the most intense experiences (38%)

Experiences of religious transcendence (mean 1.4 on a scale 0f 1-3; α = .89). Which of the following experiences have you had:

An experience of the presence of God / the divine / a higher power (30%)

A feeling of connectedness to God / the divine / a higher power (35%)

An experience of receiving help as an answer to my prayer (34%)

Experiences of non-religious transcendence (mean 1.4 on a scale of 1-3; α = .83). Which of the following experiences have you had:

A feeling of connectedness to a universal power (23%)

An experience in which I seemed to become part of a power greater than myself (16%)

A concurrence of events in my life which made me feel: this cannot be a coincidence (58%)

An experience in which the nature of reality became clear to me (31%)

An experience in which all things seemed to be part of a larger whole (28%)

An experience in which everything seemed perfect (27%)

Paranormal experiences (mean 1.2 on a scale of 1-3; α = .73). Which of the following experiences have you had:

An experience of finding myself outside my body (11%)

Seeing a deceased person or another experience of contact with a deceased person (21%)

A recollection of a former life (8%)

A contact with a 'guide' or inner voice (15%)

An experience of an invisible power that somehow offered me council, advice, or guidance (26%)

Practices

Self-perfectioning (mean 1.2 on a scale of 1-3; α = .65). Do you practice

Yoga (13%)

Tai Chi (4%)

Breathing exercises (33%)

Acupuncture (6%)

Reiki (7%)

Pursuit of esoteric knowledge (mean 1.1 on a scale of 1-3; α = .64). Do you practice

    Dream interpretation (21%)

    Consulting Tarot cards (5%)

    Consulting the I Ching (2%)

    Consulting your horoscope (30%)

    Visiting a soothsayer (2%)

    Visiting a medium (5%)

    Visiting a paranormal fair (5%)

Intensity of affiliation (mean 2.0 on a scale of 1-4). To what extent do you agree with:

    I view myself as belonging to a religious or spiritual group or a group based on a worldview (33%)

Attendance (mean 2.1 on a scale of 1-7, SD = 1.5)

    Aside from special occasions such as weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious gatherings?

Frequency of prayer (mean 2.9 on a scale of 1-7, SD = 2.4)

    Aside from religious gatherings, how often do you pray?

Network activities (mean 1.4 on a scale of 1-3; α = .69)

    Do you regularly (once in 2 months or more frequently) visit a religious or spiritual gathering? (20%)

    Did you participate in any course or workshop regarding religion or spirituality, in the last 12 months? (9%)

    Are you involved in any discussion group about religious or spiritual topics? (7%)

    Do you view your best friends as religious or spiritual persons? (31%)

Social engagement

Values indicative of solidarity (mean 5.9 on a scale of 1-7; α = .90). Which values act as a guiding principle in your life and which values are less important to you?

    Sincere and truthful (98%)

    Responsible (97%)

    Forgiving (86%)

    Open-minded (88%)

    Courageous (76%)

    Helpful (94%)

    Loving (96%)

    Happy (89%)

    Polite (91%)

Philanthropy (mean 3.7 on a scale of 1-5; α = .73). To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

    (-) People on the other side of the world are no concern of mine (28%)

    (-) I find it hard to donate money to goals that do not benefit me (7%)

    Society is in danger because people are increasingly indifferent to each other (78%)

    (-) Earth's climate problem is grossly exaggerated (24%)

    The world needs responsible citizens (88%)

    (-) I often think: "live today, worry tomorrow" (14%)

    I donate to charitable goals, no matter what the government or the corporate sector does (46%)

    Humankind is a community (82%)

    We must pass the world on to the next generation in a good state (92%)

    (-) I do not feel responsible for the well-being of society (11%)

Environment-friendly living (mean 1.9 on a scale of 1-3; α = .62). To what extent does the following apply to you:

    I am involved with one or more nature or environment organizations (19%)

    I donate to one or more nature or environment organizations (44%)

    I try to restrict my use of packaging materials (72%)

    I prefer to buy foods produced in my own country (33%)

    I have introduced energy-efficient modifications in my home on account of environmental considerations (62%)

Donations to humanitarian organizations

    Have you donated money over the last 12 months to an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants? (27%)

Donations to environmental and peace organizations

    Have you donated money over the last 12 months to an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization? (20%)

Memberships of humanitarian organizations

    Are you a member or were you a member in the last 12 months of an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants? (6%)

Memberships of environmental or peace organizations

    Are you a member or were you a member in the last 12 months of an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization? (11%)

Volunteering for religious organizations

    Have you performed voluntary work during the last 12 months for a religious or church organization? (6%)

Volunteering for non-religious organizations (mean 0.25). Have you performed voluntary work during the last 12 months for

a sports club or club for outdoor activities? (8%)

a cultural association or hobby club? (5%)

a trade union? (1%)

a business, professional or agrarian organization? (1%)

a consumers organization or automobile club? (0.4%)

an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants? (3%)

an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization? (1%)

a political party? (1%)

a science, education, teachers or parents association? (2%)

a social society; an association for youth, pensioners/senior citizens, women or friends club? (3%)

other organizations that you can freely join? (5%)

Informal care

Did you perform any informal care over the past 12 months; that is, did you regularly help someone in your surroundings requiring help due to a disease or other affliction? (22%)

Addendum to chapter 4

In chapter 4, we found that our target groups occupy a 'middle position' in social engagement between the secular groups and the affiliated / traditionally religious groups. We also assessed which of the independent variables that we included in our study are the most important for social engagement. After completing the analyses for this chapter, which has been published as an article, we felt the need to further explain the results. Therefore, in this addendum we will present additional information to improve our understanding of the results presented earlier:

- by further exploring the role of the most important independent variables for social engagement in relation to the characteristics of the target groups;
- by suggesting some additional factors that might add to the explanation of the 'middle position': the role of former church members, and the role of employment status, and
- by showing to which results alternative choices in demarcating the target group will lead.

The role of the most important independent variables

In their social engagement, the target groups do not distinguish themselves from the population in general, except for their higher commitment to environment, peace and animal rights. In order to further understand the middle position of these groups between the 'secular' and the affiliated and traditionally religious groups, we will first take a closer look at the variables that are most influential for social engagement, both separately and in combination. Table 4.6 gives an overview.

In our set of independent variables, level of education was the most important predictor of social engagement. This is not surprising. Bekkers (2004) found that level of education, together with other social factors like church attendance, are far more important predictors of giving and volunteering behavior than personality characteristics. This was even true in the absence of social incentives, as in the case of anonymous money donations to charities. However, van Ingen and Dekker (2011) found that in the Netherlands, the role of education in volunteering is decreasing. In 1975, higher educated respondents were much more likely to volunteer than the lower educated. From 1975 to 2005 the differences between the lower and higher educated are still present, but have become much smaller. The authors suggest that this is caused by an increase of welfare among all groups, reducing barriers to volunteering among the lower educated, and by a lower level of time pressure among the lower educated than

Table 4.6. Group scores on the most important independent variables

	Level of education	Age	Connectedness	Sex	Spiritual transformation
	(1-6)	(yrs)	(1-3)	(% women)	(1-5)
Groups based on self-designation					
Secular-1 group	3.2	48	1.9	48	2.5
Unaffiliated spirituality group	3.7[A]	47[C]	2.2[A]	60[A]	3.5[A]
Affiliated group	3.5	54	2.2	56	3.4
Groups based on affinity with expressions					
Secular-2 group	3.4	48	1.9	46	2.6
New spirituality group	3.6	48[C]	2.4[AC]	68[AC]	3.8[AC]
Traditionally religious group	3.4	55	2.2	53	3.3
Total	3.4	50	2.1	53	3.0

A; a = target group differs significantly from secular group on the .01; .05 level
C; c = target group differs significantly from affiliated/ traditionally religious group on the .01; .05 level

among the higher educated. In our sample, level of education plays an important role for all social engagement measures except for informal care. Generally spoken, higher educated individuals are more likely to be socially engaged. Both target groups have a higher educational level than all comparison groups (although the differences are not significant in all cases). However, the influence of education alone is not enough to explain all the differences in social engagement scores; apparently it is tempered by other influences, because the target groups are lower in social engagement than the (lower educated) affiliated and traditionally religious groups.

Age has a role as a predictor of values, philanthropy, environment-friendly living, memberships (both types), non-religious volunteering, volunteering total, and informal care. For environment-friendly living and informal care, age is the most important variable. Older respondents are more likely to be socially engaged than the younger groups. This is in conformity with other findings, e.g., Van Ingen and Dekker (2011) found that the age groups 55-69 were highest in volunteering. In our sample, the age groups above 45 are higher in informal care than other groups, probably because they have their old parents to care for. Table 4.6 shows that the groups that score highest on most social engagement measures have the highest average age. These are the

traditionally religious and the affiliated groups: they score higher than the new spirituality group, the secular groups, and the unaffiliated spiritual group. Age can explain the differences in overall levels of social engagement between the target groups and the affiliated and traditionally religious groups, but not the differences between the target groups and the secular groups.

Sex is a relatively important predictor of high prosocial values, philanthropy, donations, non-religious volunteering and informal care. On all these social engagement variables women score higher than men, except in case of volunteering for non-religious organizations, where being male is more important. Being female is the second most important predictor (after level of education) of donations to humanitarian causes, and also the second important (after age) in informal care: 27% of the women give informal care, compared to 15% of the men. The fact that women have paid jobs less often (58%) than men (67%) may explain that they have more time to give informal care, but it does not explain the higher volunteering rate of men. Additional explanations for the high difference in informal care may be that women are higher in empathy than men (Markstrom et al., 2010; Rosenkranz and Charlton, 2013), or that women, especially in holistic spiritual milieus, are attracted to the combination of authentic selfhood and relational care that is promoted there (Sointu and Woodhead, 2008). As for comparison between the groups we distinguished (see table 4.6), both target groups have larger percentages of women (60 and 68%) than the affiliated and the traditionally religious groups.[18] It is well-known that women outnumber men in alternative spirituality (Woodhead, 2008). In our sample, the influence of being female can explain the difference in social engagement between the secular groups and the other groups, but not the difference between the target groups and the affiliated and traditionally religious groups.

The new spirituality variable that emerged as most influential in the regression analyses was connectedness to self, others and nature. The target groups and their affiliated and traditionally religious counterparts are clearly higher on this variable than the secular groups. The new spirituality group shows a higher level of connectedness than the traditionally religious group, but the unaffiliated spirituality group does not differ significantly in connectedness from the affiliated group. Therefore, again, connectedness helps to explain the difference between the secular groups and the other groups, but not the difference between the target groups and the affiliated and traditionally religious groups. Earlier in this chapter we have seen that connectedness does not translate into the more relationally embedded actions of volunteering and informal care. However, it does translate into philanthropy, donations and environment-friendly living, evidence of a more 'abstract' but still prosocial

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[18]This is lower than the 80% Heelas et al. (2005) mentioned as participants and practitioners in the holistic activities in Kendal. Our way of determining target groups is apparently broader than the specific group that Heelas et al. (2005) studied.

connectedness, that is certainly not 'magical' (Farias and Lalljee, 2008) or 'illusory' (Van Harskamp, 2003).

The second new spirituality variable that was influential was spiritual transformation, meaning the importance attached to self-knowledge and self-perfectioning. Higher levels of spiritual transformation are related to higher scores on philanthropy, environment-friendly living, donations, and memberships of organizations for environmental protection. Both our target groups show higher levels of spiritual transformation than all comparison groups. Remarkably, spiritual transformation has a negative relation with high scores on prosocial values. Here we must remember that most respondents had a high score on values; therefore in the logistic regression analysis a dichotomous variable was created distinguishing scores lower and higher than 5.5 on the scale of 1-7. It may be that people with high scores on spiritual transformation, that is people attaching a high importance to self-knowledge and self-perfectioning, are so busy with themselves, that they do not display an *extraordinary* level of prosocial values. Looking at the scores in table 4.6, spiritual transformation again adds to explaining the difference in social engagement between the secular groups and the other groups, but not the difference between the target groups and the affiliated and traditionally religious groups.

Combined influence of the most important variables

When we look at the combined influence of the most important independent variables on social engagement, the lower position of the secular groups compared to the target groups is easy to explain: the secular groups have a lower education, and lower percentage of women; they also score lower on connectedness and spiritual transformation than the target groups. All these differences are related to lower rates of social engagement. As for age, the new spirituality group is older, but the unaffiliated spirituality group is slightly younger than its secular comparison group.

The lower social engagement of the target groups compared to the affiliated and traditionally religious groups is less easy to explain. It is not caused by education, because their educational level is higher. It is not caused by sex, because their percentage of women is higher. It has nothing to do with their connectedness and spiritual transformation, because on those measures they are higher than or equal to the affiliated and traditionally religious groups. The only important variable in our data set that predicts lower social engagement for the target groups is age: on average, they are much younger. The largest difference is that between the unaffiliated spirituality group (47) and the affiliated group (54). There are two possible implications to this finding. First, a cohort effect: people generally become less socially engaged than they

used to be, and social engagement in our society is decreasing. And second, a developmental effect: older people are more socially engaged than younger ones, and this has always been so. In that case, we do not have to worry about a decrease in social engagement. However, in their study on volunteering, Van Ingen and Dekker (2011) found that the total proportion of volunteers declined between 1975 and 2005. In the same period, the average age of the population increased from 33 to 39 years (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek). Therefore, these findings point in the direction of the cohort effect explanation: people generally become less socially engaged than they used to be in the past, at least with regard to volunteering.

Additional explanations for the 'middle position' in social engagement of the target groups

Apart from the influence of the variables included in the regression analysis discussed above, the middle position in social engagement of the target groups may be caused by other variables or by the presence of subgroups with lower and higher scores on social engagement.

Employment status and social engagement

Van Ingen and Dekker (2011) found that employment status explains the age differences in volunteering to a large extent. From 1975 to 2005, volunteering has become more common among the economically inactive (pensioners and homemakers) at the expense of the employed. As age and being economically inactive are inherently connected, this means that the population of volunteers is getting older. The employment status of the different groups in our sample is given in table 4.7. The affiliated have a lower employment rate than the unaffiliated spirituality group; our finding that they also have the highest social engagement is in conformity with what Van Ingen and Dekker (2011) found for volunteering. In case of the groups based on affinity, the traditionally religious group has a lower employment rate than the new spirituality group; this is also in conformity with what we might expect. However, employment status obviously does not add to explaining the lower social engagement of secular groups, as they do not significantly differ in employment rate from the target groups. In our total sample, those without paid work were not only significantly higher on religious volunteering, but also on values, environment-friendly living, and informal care. Those with jobs were significantly higher in member-

Table 4.7. Group scores on employment status.

	Employment status (% paid work)
Groups based on self-designation	
Secular-1 group	58
Unaffiliated spirituality group	60[A]
Affiliated group	46
Groups based on affinity with expressions	
Secular-2 group	59
New spirituality group	56[A]
Traditionally religious group	42
Total	55

A = target group differs significantly from
affiliated/traditionally religious group on the .01 level

ships of environmental organizations. It might be a good idea to include employment status in future research on social engagement.

The role of former church members

Because affiliated and traditionally religious groups are higher in social engagement than our target groups, we wonder if former church members among the target groups will show higher rates of social engagement than formerly secular people. In the case of volunteering, Dekker and De Hart (2002) suggest that religious volunteering may be an important intermediary or 'stepping stone' from church participation to volunteering in other, 'secular' settings. Therefore, former church members may have continued their volunteering activities after their involvement with new spirituality. We tested this suggestion, and the results are given in table 4.8. Former church members do indeed show significantly higher social engagement on a number of variables than formerly secular people. They have left their church communities, but they have apparently preserved their prosociality. This finding has important consequences for the future. If church membership continues to decrease, the proportion of former church members in new spirituality could decrease in time, and so would social engagement of the target groups, if nothing else changes. To

Table 4.8. Social engagement of former church members and formerly secular people within the target groups

Variable	Unaffiliated spirituality group, non-church members*		New spirituality group, non-church members	
	Former church members (n = 133)	Formerly secular people (n = 229)	Former church members (n = 120)	Formerly secular people (n = 182)
Values	5.8	5.8	5.9	6.0
Philanthropy	3.8[a]	3.7	3.8	3.7
Environment-friendly living	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.0
Donations to an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants	.33[a]	.23	.26	.22
Donations to an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization	.24	.21	.17	.21
Member of an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants	.11[a]	.04	.09	.04
Member of an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization	.15	.13	.16	.16
Volunteering for a religious or church organization	.00	.00	.00	.00
Volunteering for one or more non-religious organizations	.33[A]	.15	.29[A]	.15
Informal care	.27[a]	.17	.29[a]	.17
Connectedness	2.21	2.14	2.37	2.30
Spiritual transformation	3.68[A]	3.43	4.00[A]	3.65
Level of education	4.1[A]	3.6	3.9[A]	3.4
Age	49[A]	44	49[A]	43
sex (% women)	53	63	68	72

A; a = former church members differ significantly from formerly secular people on the .01;.05 level

* = not only in the new spirituality group, but even in the unaffiliated spirituality group, there is a number of people who have indicated that they *are a member* of a church or other religious organization. The demarcation question for constructing the unaffiliated spirituality group (in addition to 'being spiritual') was worded as: '*I view myself as belonging to...*' etc.

explain these differences further, we added the scores on the five most important predictors of social engagement in the regression analyses. The former church

members have a significantly higher level of spiritual transformation, and a significantly higher age and level of education than the formerly secular groups. Sex differences and differences in connectedness are not significant.

## Alternative choices in demarcation of the target group

Our group constructions are based on a demarcation between groups with life orientations informed by either secularity, new spirituality, or traditional religion. This choice was based on the intention to answer to the critical judgments found in the literature, directed at the people involved in new spirituality. In this section, we consider two other group constructions.

1. Obviously, in practice, the boundaries are not so sharp. As we saw in chapter 3, there are people who are attracted to both new spirituality and traditional religion (Houtman and Mascini, 2002), in the churches (Hanegraaff, 1997) as well as outside (Berghuijs, Pieper, and Bakker, 2013a). If we could identify such a group, would these people distinguish themselves in some way from the groups we have studied up till now in their social engagement?
2. Some authors who refer to the debate that we have studied, focus on the relation between being 'spiritual' and social engagement (Oh and Sarkisian, 2012), or the comparison of social engagement between 'spiritual' versus 'religious' individuals (Saroglou et al., 2005; Saroglou, 2006; Saslow et al., 2013). As we have seen in chapter 3, being 'spiritual' is different from being involved in new forms of spirituality. The critical judgments in the literature may be vaguely formulated, but they definitely relate to new forms of spirituality and not to spirituality in general. Many people self-identify as 'both religious and spiritual', and this group varies from orthodox church members to unchurched individuals deeply involved in new spirituality. Therefore, although we do not agree with the approach of the authors who focus on 'spiritual' groups, we will compare the social engagement of self-defined 'spiritual' versus 'religious' individuals using our own data.

Inclusion of a group that has affinity with both new spirituality and traditional religion

We constructed the variables 'new spirituality' and 'traditional religion' in the same way as in chapter 3. Figure 4.1 gives a scatterplot of the individual scores on those variables for the whole sample.

Figure 4.1. Affinity with new spirituality and traditional religiosity in individual cases
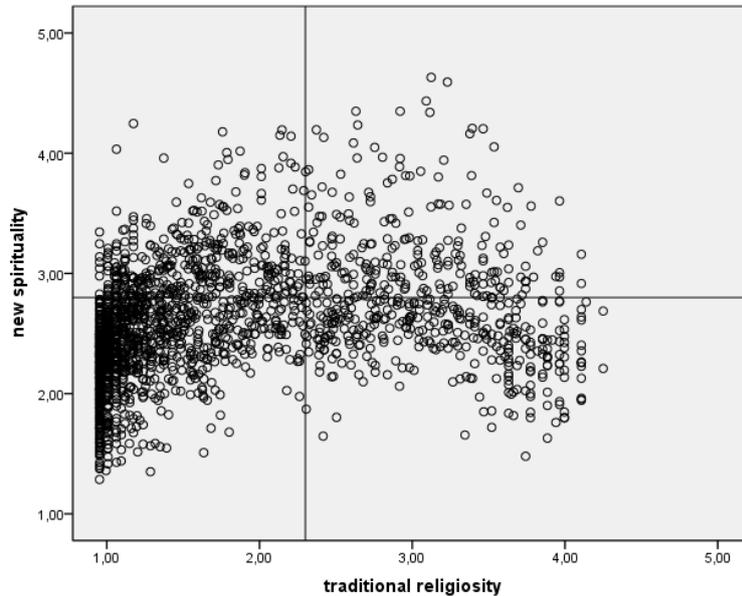
The lower left quadrant shows individuals with a secular orientation. The upper left quadrant consists of people only attracted to new spirituality. Those who are exclusively dedicated to traditional religion are located in the lower right quadrant. The 'mixed' group we are looking for is located in the upper right quadrant. The division lines in the figure are drawn – by trial and error – in such a way that a) the secular group is just about the same size as in the group division obtained with the cluster analysis in chapter 4, and b) both the new spirituality group and the traditional religion group obtained in the cluster analysis are reduced in size by creating the 'mixed' group. The scores on the religious and spiritual expressions of the newly designed groups are given in table 4.9. The mixed group is highest on most new spirituality expressions and second in the expressions of traditional religion. The social engagement of the groups is given in table 4.10. The mixed group is highest in a majority of social engagement measures: values, philanthropy, environment-friendly living, donations to humanitarian and environmental organizations, and informal care. The exclusively new spirituality group is higher in membership of organizations for environment and nature; the exclusively traditionally religious group is highest in memberships of humanitarian organizations, and in volunteering for both religious and non-religious organizations. Most differences are significant. Apparently, new spirituality and traditional religion can enrich and reinforce each other, leading to a relation between an intensive and varied spiritual /

religious life and strong social engagement. The differences can be explained by their high scores on connectedness and spiritual transformation, but age and sex differences also partly contribute to the explanation.

Table 4.9. Characteristics of groups based on affinity with new spirituality and traditional religion, including a mixed group

	Secular group	Exclusively new spirituality group	Mixed group	Exclusively traditionally religious group	Total
Variable	(n = 1055)	(n = 377)	(n = 223)	(n = 339)	(N = 1994)
Spiritual transformation	2.57	3.68	4.02^{ABD}	3.00	3.01
Monism	2.79	3.94	4.17^{ABD}	3.10	3.22
Spiritual knowledge	2.93	3.58	3.85^{ABD}	3.14	3.19
Syncretism	3.15	3.83	3.95^{ABD}	2.94	3.33
Quest	3.01	3.55	3.62^{AbD}	3.12	3.20
Neopaganism	1.43	2.19	2.26^{AD}	1.48	1.67
New Age expectation	2.26	3.12	3.36^{ABD}	2.41	2.57
Belief in paranormal issues	1.86	3.10	2.98^{AbD}	1.81	2.21
Reincarnation	1.25	2.14	1.96^{AbD}	1.12	1.47
Self-perfectioning	1.08	1.32	1.37^{AbD}	1.11	1.16
Pursuit of esoteric knowledge	1.06	1.24	1.21^{AbD}	1.04	1.11
Transcendent experiences non-religious	1.18	1.66	1.85^{ABD}	1.40	1.38
Orthodoxy	1.33	1.65	2.29^{ABD}	2.44	1.69
Intensity of affiliation	1.36	1.86	3.27^{ABd}	3.41	2.02
Attendance	1.35	1.49	3.21^{ABD}	4.15	2.06
Praying frequency	1.42	1.89	5.99^{ABD}	6.50	2.89
Transcendent experiences religious	1.09	1.41	2.17^{ABD}	2.00	1.43
Connectedness	1.88	2.32	2.45^{ABD}	2.05	2.05
Paranormal experiences	1.07	1.40	1.47^{ABD}	1.13	1.18

A; a = significant difference with secular group on the .01; .05 level.
B; b = significant difference with exclusively new spirituality group on the .01; .05 level.
D; d = significant difference with exclusively traditionally religious group on the .01; .05 level.

Table 4.10. Social engagement of groups based on affinity with new spirituality and traditional religion, including a mixed group

Variable	Secular group	Exclusively new spirituality group	Mixed group	Exclusively traditionally religious group	Total
	(n=1055)	(n=377)	(n=223)	(n=339)	(N=1994)
Values	5.81	5.91	6.22[ABD]	6.07	5.92
Philanthropy	3.56	3.76	3.88[AB]	3.80	3.67
Environment-friendly living	1.80	1.97	2.13[ABD]	1.89	1.88
Donations to an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants	.22	.29	.37[Ab]	.34	.27
Donations to an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization	.18	.24	.29[AD]	.17	.20
Member of an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants	.05	.05	.06	.08	.06
Member of an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization	.10	.14	.10	.08	.11
Volunteering for a religious or church organization	.01	.01	.12[ABD]	.26	.06
Volunteering for one or more non-religious organizations	.21	.20	.19[d]	.27	.22
Informal care	.18	.25	.30[a]	.24	.22
Level of education	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.4
Age	48.0	47.4	55.7[AB]	52.4	49.5
Sex (% women)	46	67	63[Ad]	54	53

A; a = significant difference with secular group on the .01; .05 level.
B; b = significant difference with exclusively new spirituality group on the .01; .05 level.
D; d = significant difference with exclusively traditionally religious group on the .01; .05 level.

Being 'spiritual' or 'religious' and social engagement

Saroglou et al. (2005) found that religiousness was positively related to willingness to help close targets, but not to helping unknown targets, whereas spirituality did not follow this distinction: it was related to willingness to help both close and unknown targets. Saslow et al. (2013) found that spirituality is

related with higher levels of compassion and altruistic behavior than religiosity, more specifically, their study showed that 'more spiritual' people display more altruistic behavior towards strangers than 'more religious' people, and this behavior was mediated by compassion. They interpreted their findings by suggesting that spirituality appears to be the emotional core of religion, an emotional response not only to the divine or the sacred, but also to other people.

We correlated the levels of spirituality and religiosity of our sample with our measures of social engagement. The results are given in table 4.11.

Table 4.11. Correlations between spirituality, religiosity and social engagement

Variable	Spirituality	Religiosity	Spirituality corrected for religiosity	Religiosity corrected for spirituality
Values	.055[*]	.178[**]	-.010	.177**
Philanthropy	.315[**]	.262[**]	.252**	.169**
Environment-friendly living	.151[**]	.150[**]	.095**	.118**
Donations to an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants	.108[**]	.118[**]	.076**	.098**
Donations to an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization	.078[**]	.018	.089**	-.007
Member of an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants	.080[**]	.020	.074**	-.030
Member of an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization	.044	-.036	.067**	-.068*
Volunteering for a religious or church organization	.113[**]	.354[**]	-.004	.328**
Volunteering for one or more non-religious organizations	.052[*]	.050[*]	.040	.030
Informal care	.064[**]	.097[**]	.028	.093**

 *; ** Pearson correlation is significant at the .05; .01 level (2-tailed).

Most social engagement variables are significantly and positively correlated both with spirituality and with religiosity (left hand columns), although most correlations are weak, partly because a number of our social engagement

Table 4.12. Comparison between the categories of self-defined spirituality and religiousness

	Neither spiritual nor religious	Only-spiritual	Both religious and spiritual	Only-religious	Total
	(n = 802)	(n = 377)	(n = 481)	(n = 310)	(N = 1970)
Values	5.82	5.81	6.07^{AB}	6.06	5.92
Philanthropy	3.51	3.73	3.87^{ABD}	3.70	3.67
Environment-friendly living	1.77	1.94	2.00^{Ad}	1.92	1.88
Donations to an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants	.21	.26	.36^{ABd}	.29	.27
Donations to an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization	.18	.23	.22	.18	.20
Member of an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities or migrants	.05	.06	.08^{aD}	.03	.06
Member of an organization for environmental protection, peace organization or animal rights organization	.09	.15	.11	.08	.11
Volunteering for a religious or church organization	.00	.00	.16^{AB}	.16	.06
Volunteering for one or more non-religious organizations	.18	.22	.24^{a}	.26	.21
Informal care	.17	.22	.27^{A}	.26	.22
Connectedness	1.87	2.17	2.28^{ABD}	2.05	2.05
Spiritual transformation	2.43	3.48	3.65^{ABD}	2.96	3.01
Level of education	3.3	3.8	3.6^{AD}	3.1	3.4
Age	47.2	46.5	53.0^{AB}	53.5	49.5
sex (% women)	47	57	59^{A}	57	53

A; a = significant difference with 'neither spiritual nor religious' group on the .01;.05 level.
B; b = significant difference with 'only-spiritual' group on the .01;.05 level.
D; d = significant difference with 'only-religious' group on the .01;.05 level.

variables are dichotomous. From these columns, it cannot be concluded that spirituality is related to higher rates of social engagement than religiosity. If we correct spirituality for religiosity and vice versa, the correlations become even weaker, as can be seen in the right hand columns. Therefore, our data are not in line with the findings of the authors cited above, except perhaps in the case of philanthropy (which, in our case, is directed at unknown targets), where

spirituality is clearly related to higher scores than religiosity. The data do, however, suggest that being 'both spiritual and religious' is related to higher rates of social engagement than being 'only-spiritual' and 'only-religious'. To test this suggestion, we compared the social engagement of the categories of religiousness and spirituality that we discerned in chapter 3. The results are given in table 4.12. As expected, the 'both' category is highest in social engagement (except for memberships of organizations for environmental protection). As we have seen in chapter 3, this 'both' category represents people with a highly intensive spiritual and religious life, who are to be found inside as well as outside churches. Apparently, such a life is also related to higher levels of social engagement. A life orientation as 'only-spiritual' or 'only-religious', qualified by Marler and Hadaway (2002) as 'naked spirituality' and 'soul-less religion', is less rich in spiritual and religious expressions but also in social engagement. The significantly higher levels of connectedness and spiritual transformation of the 'both' group compared to all other groups help explain these outcomes. Level of education, age and sex only contribute partially to explain the difference. In sum, those who compare differences in social engagement between 'spiritual' and 'religious' individuals, had better take a look at the 'both' category.

Conclusions

In this addendum to chapter 4, we have further explored the differences in social engagement between our target groups of people involved in new forms of spirituality and the various comparison groups, by taking a closer look at the five most important predictor variables of social engagement. We found that

- The higher level of social engagement of the target groups as compared with the secular groups is easily explained by their higher level of education, their larger percentage of women, and their higher scores on connectedness and spiritual transformation.
- The lower level of social engagement of the target groups compared to the affiliated and traditionally religious groups cannot be explained by these variables, because their scores point in the opposite direction. The only important variable that can explain the difference is age: the target groups are much younger than the affiliated and traditionally religious groups. Employment status – not unrelated to age – was an additional explaining variable: the target groups had a higher employment rate than the affiliated and traditionally religious groups, and the unemployed scored higher on a majority of social engagement variables.
- Within the target groups, former church members show higher social engagement on almost all variables than formerly secular people. This

finding adds to explaining the middle position of our target groups in social engagement between the secular groups and the affiliated and traditionally religious groups. When we look at the most important predictor variables in the regression analyses to explain these differences, we see that the former church members have a significantly higher level of spiritual transformation, and a significantly higher age and level of education than the formerly secular groups.

We also investigated the consequences of alternative group comparisons.

- In the group construction based on affinity with certain expressions, we included a group that has affinity with both new spirituality and traditional religion. This 'mixed' group is higher in a majority of social engagement measures than the other three groups: the secular, exclusively new spiritual, and exclusively traditionally religious groups. Apparently, new spirituality and traditional religion can enrich and reinforce each other, leading to a relation between an intensive and varied spiritual / religious life and strong social engagement. The differences can be explained by their high scores on connectedness and spiritual transformation, but age and sex differences also partly contribute to the explanation.

- We compared the social engagement of 'spiritual' with that of 'religious' people. Except for philanthropy, there are no indications that the 'spiritual' have a higher social engagement than the 'religious'.

- Being 'spiritual and religious' is related to higher levels of social engagement than being 'only-spiritual', 'only-religious' or secular. The significantly higher levels of connectedness and spiritual transformation of the 'both' group compared to all other groups help explain these outcomes. Level of education, age and sex only partially contribute to the explanation.

All these additional and alternative comparisons point in one direction: combining (traditional) religion and (new) spirituality increases the probability of showing higher levels of social engagement. This tendency can be explained by their higher levels of connectedness and spiritual transformation, and it is reinforced by the fact that these groups sometimes have a higher age and higher level of education than their comparison groups.

Chapter 5

"We are all connected like dominoes falling over": Relation between non-institutional spirituality and social engagement[19]

Abstract

Are people involved in non-institutional forms of spirituality more egocentric than others, as a number of critical authors claim? And if not – as recent quantitative research indicates – does their spirituality motivate social engagement in any way? We investigated these questions in a series of interviews. To improve our understanding of the role of spirituality in the lives of our respondents, we analyzed their life attitude in terms of agency and communion set out by McAdams et al. (1996). We assessed their individual expressions of spirituality, and the presence, nature and motivation of their social engagement. We detected three relational patterns between spirituality and social engagement: *Crisis, coping, and sharing* (sharing of insights and spiritual gifts developed after illness or other problems), *Supportive individualism* (spiritual individualists standing up for the rights of other individuals), and *Proactive connectedness* (connectedness to self, others, and nature leading to social engagement). Connectedness appeared to be a central theme in the social engagement of many respondents but was not always part of their spirituality.

Introduction

It is common knowledge that involvement with a church community is related to relatively high levels of volunteering, charitable donations, and other expressions of social engagement (e.g., Reitsma, 2007; Bekkers and Schuyt, 2008; Van Ingen and Dekker, 2011; De Hart, 2011). In contrast, authors have different opinions about the social engagement of people involved in contemporary, unaffiliated forms of spirituality. In scholarly and popular sources, new forms of spirituality have often been criticized as being egocentric and lacking incentives for social engagement (e.g., Bruce, 1998, 2002; Carrette and King 2004; Farias and Lalljee, 2006, 2008). The discussion on this subject is

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[19] A slightly different version of this chapter has been submitted as an article to *Journal of Religion in Europe.* Authors are: Joantine Berghuijs, Jos Pieper, Jolanda Kooij and Cok Bakker.

complex because authors differ in their specifications of the group they are criticizing, and the nature of the criticism also varies (Berghuijs, Pieper, and Bakker, 2013c). This difficulty clearly shows up in quantitative studies on the relation between non-institutional spirituality and social engagement when researchers use measures of social engagement that may be motivated by both altruism and egoism. For instance, we may wonder if displaying a relatively higher level of involvement in networks of family, friends, and professionals (Chandler, 2011) or a higher than average rate on collective activism (De Hart, 2011) should be unambiguously interpreted as contradicting egocentrism. Involvement in networks as such may stem just as well from egoistic motivations (status, power), just as partaking in collective demonstrations may be motivated by self-interest (e.g., strikes for better wages). To untangle the discussion and assess the truth of the accusations, an empirical study should apply measures of social engagement that give evidence of commitment to others and exclude or minimize direct personal profit. Apart from common measures like volunteering, charitable donations, and informal care, these measures involve, for instance, an attitude of solidarity with people in developing countries and environment-friendly behavior to improve living conditions for future generations.

A recent study applied these principles (Berghuijs, Pieper, and Bakker, 2013c). The authors studied the nature and level of social engagement in a large sample of the Dutch population (N = 1995): prosocial values, philanthropy, environment-friendly living, volunteering, informal care, and involvement with organizations for humanitarian or environmental causes. The target group of people who defined themselves as 'spiritual' and 'not affiliated to a religious group' did not differ on any of these measures compared to the population in general. But they did differ from specific other groups. On almost all measures of social engagement they scored lower than those affiliated with a religious group but higher than those who define themselves as neither 'spiritual' nor affiliated – i.e., the 'secular' rest of the population. Only in the case of involvement with organizations for nature and the environment did the target group score higher than the other two groups. Therefore, the criticism of relatively more egocentrism among people involved in unaffiliated spirituality is not justified if we look at the population in general, but it is justified if the group is compared with people affiliated to a religious organization. The differences in social engagement between the groups were partly explained by the combination of a number of demographic variables (especially level of education and age), and some of the variables related to spirituality. 'Connectedness' (to self, others and nature) was the most influential spirituality variable. This variable does not represent a very specific religious or spiritual doctrine or practice but is simply a set of feelings about the self and its relations in life. The group involved in unaffiliated spirituality and the affiliated group had the same score on

connectedness, which was higher than the score of the 'secular' group. It is not clear as yet, however, how connectedness is related to social engagement.

This chapter aims to add qualitative insight to the findings of Berghuijs, Pieper, and Bakker (2013c) through a series of interviews with people engaged in non-institutional spirituality, adding personal stories with more depth and nuance to the general tendencies obtained through the quantitative approach. An interview provides an opportunity to get a more complete picture of individuals' spirituality and the way it functions in their lives, and it will reveal the nature of and motivation for social engagement (if social engagement is present). Additional influential factors not included in survey studies may arise in the analyses. Moreover, an interview will give a general impression of the life attitude of the respondents in a broader sense, and especially of their focus on the self or on others, when they relate their life story and the interpretations they give to important life events.

For McAdams et al. (1996), agency (focus on individuality) and communion (focus on participation) are the central thematic lines in the self-defining stories that adults construct to provide their lives with unity and purpose. Originally developed by Bakan (1966), agency and communion are described as 'two fundamental modalities in the existence of living forms'. Agency refers to the 'existence of the organism as an individual', manifesting itself in self-protection, self-expansion, and mastery of the environment. In contrast, communion refers to 'the participation of the individual in some larger organism of which the individual is a part', as manifested in union, love, and intimacy (Bakan, 1996). In our view, egocentrism belongs to an agentic life attitude, whereas social engagement as we define it, namely, as motivated by commitment to others, belongs to a communion type life attitude. According to McAdams et al. (1996), the idea that human lives are animated by two broad and contrasting tendencies resembling Bakan's concepts of agency and communion is an idea that is at least 2000 years old. The pre-Socratic philosopher, Empedocles, argued that strife and love were the two great organizing principles of the universe. Contemporary authors use different terms for similar conceptions. For example, Rank (1936) argued that the prime internal movers in human behavior are the fear of life (which motivates one to separate from others) and the fear of death (which motivates one to unite with others); Angyal (1941)[20] divided human motives into the needs for autonomy and surrender. McAdams et al. (1996) further refined agency and communion into different themes (see the section on method).

The central themes in this study will be unaffiliated spirituality and social engagement. To broaden our view of the role of spirituality in the respondents' lives we will use the agency and communion themes developed by McAdams et

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[20] Bakan (1966), Rank (1936), and Angyal (1941), all referred to by McAdams et al. (1996).

al. (1996) to analyze their life attitude. To assess social engagement in our specific conception we will focus on motivation for prosocial actions.

The present study

To explore the nature of possible relationships between new spirituality and social engagement, we decided on a series of in-depth interviews with people engaged in unaffiliated spirituality. Our research questions are:
1. What is the life attitude of the respondent and, more specifically, which attitude towards self and others does he or she show?
2. Which are the characteristics of his or her spirituality?
3. What kind of social engagement does the respondent show and how is it motivated?
4. Is there any relation between the respondent's spirituality and his or her social engagement? And if so, how can this relation be described?

Method

Participants

We recruited candidates with short questionnaires. We conducted ten interviews in two series of five. The main selection criterion was that candidates considered themselves both 'spiritual' and 'not affiliated to a religious or spiritual group'. We found the first five respondents through our own contacts, at a spiritual fair, and through a spiritual forum on the Internet. For the second series we took a different approach. Because people involved in new spirituality are relatively more often committed to nature and the environment (Becker, De Hart, and Mens, 1997; Bernts, Dekker and De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2011; chapter 4, this study), and show highly selective buying behavior, motivated by their personal ethics (Chandler, 2011), we recruited candidates by distributing questionnaires in a local health food shop. In the first series, we recruited four women and one man; in the second, only one man completed the questionnaire out of 26 respondents, and he did not meet the main selection criterion. Therefore, we ended up – even though it was not our intention – with nine women and one man. Of course, this was not complete coincidence; it is known that more women than men are involved in new spirituality (Woodhead, 2008). The ages of the respondents varied from 19 to 66, but most were above 40. We changed the names of our respondents to protect their privacy.

Interview method

The first author interviewed eight persons, and the third two. The first series of interviews took place during the summer of 2009, the second during the fall of 2011. Seven interviews were conducted at the homes of the respondents, where the interviewer could get an impression of their personal environment. In three cases this was not possible for different reasons (divorce, family members disliking spirituality). The interviews generally lasted around two hours (in one exceptional case – Tamara – four). In none of the interviews was a third person present. All interviews were recorded with a voice recorder.

We used semi-structured interviews. The questions differed in some aspects between the two series of interviews. In both cases we started with introducing ourselves and our research project. In our opinion, it would not have been wise to reveal the exact focus of our study to the interviewees. Because we expected socially desirable answers, we introduced the subject in a broader but not untruthful way, announcing our interest in the question if people involved in unaffiliated spirituality have another life attitude than others. The respondents had seen this introduction before since it was attached to the short questionnaire used for recruitment.

Then we asked the respondents to tell us their life story, so we could (a) get a first impression of their life attitude in terms of agency and communion from what they talk about spontaneously, and (b) better understand and interpret the answers on the more specific subsequent questions. These were questions about spirituality (conception, associations, ideas, experiences, practices) and social engagement (volunteering, informal care, charity, opinions about society, and possible intentions to contribute to change), and about the respondents' motives for shopping at the health food shop (in case of the second series). In the second series, we also paid special attention to connectedness; we asked the respondents about the size of the circle of people whom they feel connected to, and where their feelings of connectedness originated.

At the end of the interview, respondents were invited to reflect on the interview, and to give additional information they thought was relevant. All respondents showed enthusiasm about the interview, using phrases such as "great opportunity", "brought some deep memories", "gave me more insight into the beautiful way everything is connected", "interesting to hear myself talk like that", "nice that someone comes to ask about such things, at last, I would almost say, not for me that is, but for spirituality as such".

After the complete transcription of the interviews, the respondents were given the opportunity to read them and to provide adjustments or additions. Five did this, but there were no major changes.

Method of analysis

In analyzing each interview, we proceeded as follows (see Baarda, De Goede, and Teunissen, 1995). The interview was split up into fragments that contained one subject each and codes were assigned to each fragment. Our coding system, as will be specified in more detail in the following sections, comprises a total of 17 codes related to life story, life attitude, spirituality, social engagement, and motivation. Multiple codes could be assigned to each fragment. The first author coded all ten interviews and collected significant citations. The coding process resulted in a list with short indications of all the coded text fragments, sorted per code. After completion of the list, it was assessed which codes were prominent in the sense of often occurring or important. Subsequently, it was possible to answer the research questions per respondent, in an iterative process of using and combining the codes, reflecting on the complete interview and reading through parts of it again. The second author read through five of the ten interviews and agreed with the conclusions of the first. Finally, the results and conclusions of all interviews were compared, and relevant resemblances and differences were recorded. In the following paragraphs, the coding system is explained.

Life story

Codes for self-image ("I am …"), nuclear life episodes, and important others were applied to make a short biographical sketch, and to support the other analyses.

Spirituality

It is generally acknowledged that the large diversity in expressions counted as 'new spirituality' makes it hard to define or operationalize it (e.g., Heelas et al., 2005; Popp-Baier, 2010). Therefore, we did not define our own conception of 'spirituality' beforehand, but started with the respondents' own accounts that we coded as ideology, experiences, practices and consequences (Glock and Stark, 1965) that they indicated as belonging to their spirituality.

Life attitude

The distinction between agency and communion, as developed into eight central 'motivational themes' by McAdams et al. (1996) provide an adequate instrument for studying study the life attitude of individual respondents in interview

situations and especially their focus on the self or on others. The themes can be coded as present or non-present. We summarize the descriptions of the themes as follows.

Themes of agency

- Self-mastery: attaining autonomy vis-à-vis one's environment and then seeking to control that environment and perfect the self. Striving to master, control, enlarge or perfect a self that has already attained some measure of autonomy. Through forceful and effective action, thought, or experience, the person is able to strengthen the self and become a larger, wiser, or more powerful agent in the world.

- Status: the autonomous agentic figure may also strive to attain heightened status, position, or prestige; he may seek recognition or honors from others, especially in competitive situations.

- Achievement/responsibility: the person seeks to do well, be successful, and move steadily onward and upward into the future as an effective and competent agent, meeting successive challenges, accomplishing successive goals, and building on successive achievements to create a bigger and better legacy of the self. Also, the person feels proud, confident, and successful in taking on major responsibilities for other people and assuming roles that require the person to be in charge of things or people.

- Empowerment: the person feels empowered, and the source of power is not necessarily the self but rather some larger or more potent outside force, such as God, nature, the universe, or some highly charismatic or inspiring figure. While highly agentic persons may strive to attain autonomy from their peers, they may also respect and seek to benefit from the power of especially agentic others, toward which or whom they feel awe rather than competitiveness.

Themes of communion

- Love/friendship: both passionate love and close friendship with a more or less exclusive quality.

- Dialogue: when people engage one another in reciprocal and non-instrumental dialogue of various kinds as well as the desire for intimacy to share one's innermost feelings with another person.

- Care/help: expressions of altruism, sympathy, care, and helping others in need, provided or received by the individual.

- Community: integration into larger groups and communities, rootedness in society and a network of enduring social relationships and cultural institutions. Experiencing a sense of oneness, unity, harmony, synchrony, togetherness, belongingness, allegiance or solidarity with a group of people, a community, or even all of humankind.

We view agency themes as representative of an attitude that is self-centred, even if the person is taking responsibility for others, for in that case the ultimate

motive is self-expansion. In the communion themes, others are important for their own sake.

Social engagement and motivation

The communion theme 'care and help' resembles our conception of social engagement. We see social engagement as 'commitment to others, to the benefit of individuals, groups, or society at large'. This definition implies an attitude of solidarity and responsibility that translates into prosocial actions and is not primarily focused on direct personal profit (Berghuijs, Pieper, and Bakker, 2013c). We include commitment to nature and the environment in this theme, because it shows concern for the future of humanity. McAdams et al. (1996) did not specifically pay attention to the possible presence of different motivations in the communion themes. Batson, Ahmad, and Tsang (2002) point to 'ultimate motives': prosocial activities can be driven by egoistic motives as well as by commitment to others or society at large. More than one of these motives may be present in any individual in a given situation. But Batson, Ahmad, and Tsang (2002) add that prosocial behavior may be driven by egoistic motivations only. They give the example of a student who volunteers at a local nursing home to add community service to her curriculum vitae. The act may benefit the community but it is egoistically motivated. In our view, real commitment to others is questionable in this case, and we would not see such volunteering as real social engagement. Therefore, we endeavored to trace respondents' motivation by coding 'care and help' fragments on self-directed (egoistic) and other-directed motives.

Results

Life attitude in terms of agency and communion will be central in reporting the results per respondent. Expressions of spirituality will be mentioned in relation to the agency and communion themes that they are related to.[21] Social engagement will be reported as 'care and help' activities with special attention to

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[21] It is remarkable that seven respondents have difficulty with the word 'spirituality', notwithstanding the fact that they were selected on the basis of being 'spiritual'. Five have less positive associations with the term: it is "difficult", "suggestive", "New Age-like", "too broad", "unpleasant", or they say that what passes for spirituality is not always spiritual to them; Willem simply finds it difficult to describe and only uses it once during the interview as: "spiruility or so" (Dutch: "spiruïliteit [sic] of zo"). Two respondents do not like to attach names to things.

motivation. Agency and communion themes are present in all ten interviews. In three of the ten respondents agency is dominant: Tamara, Ellen, and Toos (the 'agency types'). In five communion clearly emerges as more important: Dorien, Willem, Marion, Inge, and Hanny (the 'communion types'). In two, agency and communion are more balanced: Hilde and Joke (the 'balanced types'). In each of the following sections, we give a conclusion in terms of relational patterns between spirituality and social engagement.

The 'agency types'

Tamara (55) is divorced from her first husband, and is now divorcing her second. She has worked as a manager in various dress shops. Tamara had a difficult childhood: her father was an alcoholic and her mother tried to keep up the appearances of an ideal family. As a consequence, she had trouble getting close to people, even in relationships. She has never read the newspaper or followed the news in any other way because she could not "absorb" all the misery. Five or six years ago she came into contact with spirituality, which she describes as "the journey of exploration of yourself and your divinity". Now she has a coaching practice to lead people on the path to self-knowledge and self-confidence. She is a member of various spiritual networks with high ambitions for transforming the world.

Tamara's whole life seems to be dominated by understanding and overcoming the difficult experiences of her childhood and her two failed marriages (self-mastery); her primary resource for achieving this is her spirituality: "I have learned to put my soul in charge". She is convinced that she lives in a new energy and a new consciousness where no dualism exists. She feels enormously empowered by this new energy and those who taught her (empowerment). Self-acceptance and self-love are completely central in her spirituality. One can admit all one's old "aspects" or "survival strategies" into this energy, and then they disappear because they are illusions. With the new, divine consciousness one can overcome everything and attain everything. It is important to Tamara that she is able to transform her own problems and distress into lessons for life and remain unaffected by the misery and negative emotions and expressions of others (self-mastery), including those still coming from her father, with whom she now claims to have contact on the level of their higher selves. She is also very focused on status and achievement and takes pride in being far advanced in spirituality and always involved in the latest developments. Communion themes are scarce here. The most important other for her is her new partner: "a real soul mate" (dialogue). As for social engagement, she claims she is able to understand everybody, to have a great deal of compassion, to be an example for others, an "angel on earth", and to be able to guide dead people to the higher spheres. Although she states that her life of

complete self-love simultaneously implies love for the earth and all people, her accounts of 'care and help' activities are mainly related to (commercial) activities in her coaching practice. Financial aspects are mentioned several times. She clearly shows a self-centred attitude: "If you can feel that self-love, then you will also take care of other people, but you always start with: is it good for me to do this?"

Ellen (57) is divorced and has two children. In her youth, her own spiritual sensitivity (paranormal gifts) was not recognized, except by her uncle who helped her accept and interpret it. She was trained to be a nurse. After a period with personal problems and breast cancer she was declared unfit to work as a nurse, but these events also made her focus again on her spirituality. For her, spirituality is step-by-step development, reflection on your life, introspection, and learning from experiences, including negative ones. She practices Reiki and has been training as a New Age children's coach.

Ellen prefers to operate as independently of others as possible. She has gained a lot of self-insight from her uncle, from Reiki, and from spiritual forums on the Internet. Her spirituality helped her to develop a new perspective on life after the troublesome period of her divorce and breast cancer (self-mastery). She is proud of her spiritual gifts, her training, qualifications and accomplishments (status, achievement). Helping people is her life theme, she says. When she was a nurse, she helped her mother who wished to die at home. She uses Reiki both in her own practice and as a team coach for children with sports injuries (care and help). After the interview a strong impression remained of someone who likes to help people but does this primarily from agentic motives: "You get so much satisfaction from people who are ill". She never mentions any strong emotional attachments or feelings of connectedness. In writing poems, which she considers as a spiritual activity, she deals with difficult feelings towards others.

Toos (51) is married and has two daughters. She wanted to become a physician but was more talented in the area of the humanities and therefore studied law and now works for the public prosecutor. She came into contact with spirituality through her daughters' food allergy and her own burnout. The courses she took (energy training, healing, reading, orthomolecular psycho-neuro-immunology therapy) taught her self-knowledge and a new outlook on life in which food, energy and health are central. She experiences that food can be a medicine and that good food gives more energy (self-mastery). Toos cannot separate spirituality from other aspects of her life. She describes it as "being present on earth; being in contact with yourself everywhere, in respect towards others and towards yourself". It is related to energy and love. She has her own healing practice, and she teaches about energy, food, and health, which she sees as essential parts of spirituality. Toos has succeeded in her professional life, and

her spirituality brought her new professional challenges. She is proud of what she has achieved and what she can mean for others with her professional and spiritual skills (status, achievement). She has grown beyond the help of personal spiritual guides, she says, and she sometimes feels lonely at her own level, where everyone asks her advice and seems to think that she knows everything (status). She has a strong bond with her partner (love and friendship), her daughters mean a lot to her, and she has some close friends, one of them a real "soul mate" (dialogue). She is convinced that everything is connected and that each individual action has influence on the whole world (community). She enjoys helping restore people to health and she is proud that she can do so much for young people in her work (care and help). However, the only time when she mentions compassion, it is directed towards those at a lower spiritual level than she herself has reached: "they are not so far advanced" (status).

We have qualified these three women as agentic and self-centred. Although questions can be raised about the extent of and motivation for their social engagement, they all have a 'spiritual' practice in which they help people. The three show similar patterns in the way spirituality has become important in their lives. It has helped them through the severe problems they encountered, and now they use their spiritual insights and skills for the benefit of others. We characterize this pattern as *Crisis, coping, and sharing.*

The 'communion types'

Dorien (19) is a communications student and comes across as intuitive and creative. She was born into a Protestant family in a predominantly Christian village. Family ties are strong. As the eldest granddaughter, she feels responsible for her cousins. Friends are also important to her (dialogue, community). She does not like the rules and certainties of Christianity, and during the last five years has developed an interest in spiritual and paranormal issues. For Dorien, spirituality is a certain way of thinking, acting, reacting, and developing, as well as a kind of belief, the core of all religions. She talks about spirituality with friends, reads about it, and partakes in a spiritual forum where she has posted several poems. She sometimes goes to paranormal fairs. She is the youngest of the respondents and is rather focused on her own development, both in self-confidence and in self-insight in a spiritual sense (self-mastery), but she also has a strong sense of connectedness to others that she expresses visually by an image of dominoes falling over:

> that it is all connected. uh ... yeah, that's all interconnected, a sort of domino effect actually. So uh, one thing puts something else in motion .... So if something happens to me uh, uh, suppose that I, suppose that I, uh, well, suppose I die, for example, then for people who know me well, that event can – at least the way they cope with it – can

> be another tile that falls over, and they can push over a tile for someone else by the way they respond to someone else, and yes ... that in turn can bring new things in someone else's life ....

This connectedness is an integral part of her spirituality (community). She volunteers for the hockey club (care and help), but this is obligatory. In Dorien's view, no matter if one is more or less active in relation to others, one is always part of the chain of events, the falling over of the dominoes, and so people inevitably affect one another. Therefore it is better to commit oneself to having a positive impact in that chain. Dorien realizes that she can choose to commit herself more actively to others and expresses the intention to do so.

Willem (53) is an accountant who lives with his second wife and her children. After his divorce from his first wife, he was prevented from seeing his own son and daughter. One of his former employers swindled him out of a great deal of money, and since then he has found it difficult to trust people. Human relationships and sharing life's joys and sorrows are of central importance in his life (dialogue). He is interested in spirituality for several reasons. He is curious about things that indicate that there is 'more between heaven and earth', such as paranormal knowledge, and uses several spiritual 'techniques' like meditation to help him stay calm in the midst of his personal problems (self-mastery). But spirituality is certainly not central in his life. In his work as a self-employed financial advisor he tries to take human considerations into account; he finds pleasure in helping people. Willem does not volunteer but prefers helping others on a one-to-one basis, on the principle: "Walk with the one who makes the slowest progress" (care and help).

Inge (66) lives alone; her life has been "messy", as she puts it. She has a daughter who is quite important to her, and she had a very good (female) friend who recently died (dialogue). She was educated as an artistic therapist and was a painting teacher in recreational groups. She is inspired by Anthroposophy. For her, human contacts are of paramount importance in life. She believes that in every man there is a special spiritual being. She feels connected to all humanity because all are permeated with spirit, but she also feels connected on the very concrete level of the influence choices and actions have upon others (community):

> I went to Paris … and at a certain moment I had no more money left …. I came across a few Americans and they gave me ten francs, I do not remember what it was then, but the equivalent of about ten euros or so, so that was, well, quite a lot of money. That was fifty years ago. And uh, and then I said "Yes, but I don't know you. I can't give it back to you, see?" And then he said, "No, you don't have to give it back to me. Just give it to someone else". And that is something that is a very, uh yeah, that, that .... I forget a lot, but I will never forget this. That, I think that, uh, it has to do with that

connectedness, uh, to the world. Yes. And with passing on and being together, and with relations, yes.

She emphasizes people's own responsibility, and she actually commits herself (care and help), both on an individual basis (informal care, buying in the health food shop) and collectively (correcting a newsletter, looking for other voluntary work). She is very enthusiastic about initiatives worldwide to create a more sustainable society where people are more committed to one another. She supported the foundation of a health food shop financially and is involved in a local barter organization (care and help). Nevertheless, she thinks she should become more loving.

Marion (46) lives with her partner and two sons. She grew up in the country, where her love for nature originated. She studied and worked in the field of business economics. She describes spirituality as her sensitivity to the atmosphere and energy that humans and other living beings radiate, and her talent in conveying energy to others. As such, spirituality has always been an integral part of her life, and she does not mention any spiritual development. It simply is there, and it inspires. She enjoys relationships with people and nature most, and she attaches great importance to the healthy development of her own children and those of others (dialogue, community). Her spirituality has a function in energizing relationships, volunteer groups engaged in open space planning, and people in her work (dialogue, care and help). She is very service-oriented, but not focused on status. She likes to take the lead in "building a green and happy world", but her focus is primarily on responsibility rather than achievement. She donates to several nature organizations (care and help). Her "green" and relational activities are an expression of who she is: a person integrated in life in a natural way:

> And then a certain energy … emerges. A, uh … a form of contact. Life. I call it Life. And we are part of Life. I can also see it … I cannot see it as separate.

Hanny (55) lives with her second partner. She worked as a librarian, in finance, and now as a personnel officer. In her spare time, when she feels like it, she is active in her home practice as a spiritual coach. For her, spirituality is related to insight in life and development through a number of lives (self-mastery). She is inspired by a number of 'wise masters' and draws energy from the cosmos (empowerment). She meditates and visits several spiritual groups and events. There is much that she enjoys in her life: nature, the starry sky, contacts with people in her work, cycling in the rain, and all kinds of material and spiritual things. Enjoying life and being together with her partner and others are central for her (love and friendship, dialogue), but she also gives priority to inner and outer harmony and balance (self-mastery). She feels connected to her partner and sons, relations, friends, colleagues, but also to people close to her who have

died (dialogue, community). Although there are many communion elements in her story, everything seems to revolve around her own pleasure, abilities, and (spiritual) development. She is committed to nature – both to enjoying it and for environmental reasons –, she does not own a car (care and help). She says that as a result of her spirituality, she is no longer an organ donor.

The importance and joy of living in relation with others is clearly visible in these 'communion types'. For Dorien, Inge, and Marion, their spirituality also has a relational character: connectedness is a main theme, as illustrated by the image of the dominoes falling over or the view or experience that everything is permeated with energy or spirituality. This connectedness makes them aware that their actions influence others, and therefore commitment to others is natural and important to them. We call this pattern *Proactive connectedness*. For Willem and Hanny, social relations are also of crucial importance in their lives, but they use their spirituality mainly in an agentic way: to gain insights and experiences (both), to overcome problems (Willem), and for personal development (Hanny). For Hanny, her spirituality even resulted in reduced social engagement: for spiritual reasons she is no longer an organ donor.

The 'balanced types'

Joke (63) lives with her partner; they have no children. She was trained as a nurse, and has changed jobs a number of times. She most enjoyed her last position as coordinator in the voluntary terminal care she had until she developed cancer. She recovered after five years, but could not go back to work for lack of energy. In the process, she learned to live more consciously and in the here-and-now. She associates spirituality with the notion that 'there is more', without being able to describe it, and with some experiences she had as well. Once, while on vacation, she had a strong feeling of becoming one with nature. Without spirituality, life would be meaningless to her. She seeks silence and inspiration (self-mastery), and contacts with like-minded people, such as those whom she meets at different courses (dialogue). An important spiritual insight for her is that everything contains energy, light, and power: not only living beings and inanimate objects but also events. She has always had respect for nature. Her spirituality gives her more self-knowledge and self-confidence (self-mastery). She expresses concern and compassion for others in less privileged circumstances, and she commits herself to their needs through donations, informal care, and as a volunteer (care and help). But her reason for participating in collections for the disabled after her period of illness has everything to do with herself: "I can do something again". She is also committed to nature and the environment.

Joke's spirituality is of an agentic nature, but it is related to a varied number of social engagement activities through her spiritual insight that there is energy, power, and light in everything. In her 'respect for nature' she desires for herself and others, animals and people, good health and development, and helps the weak, where they come across her path. Her approach is: take care of yourself and help others, especially the disadvantaged, to thrive too: "I try to choose charities that not everyone chooses, I mean, so that they also get a chance". We call this pattern *Supportive individualism*.

Hilde (59) worked as a civil servant and in the fashion business before her marriage. Some impressive experiences, including a near-death experience, inspired her to get involved in spirituality: she realized that "there is more". She studied many alternative healing methods, 'for fun' and for her own use, and she practices foot reflexology. Insight into how the body works is her main concern. For her, spirituality is related to universal energy that she can experience and use, to affection, admiration, or happiness, and to feeling at one with people she treats. Hilde's spiritual activities give her a sense of safety and self-confidence (self-mastery). Her husband dislikes her spirituality, but she tries to avoid conflict because she does not want to give up her marriage (love and friendship). Contacts with kindred spirits are of great value to her; they confirm the veracity of her spiritual experiences (self-mastery, dialogue). One female friend is a real 'soul mate' (love and friendship, dialogue). Spontaneous compassion for others and commitment to nature come naturally to her. She volunteered for the Alzheimer foundation for many years, and she provided informal care to her mother and a neighbor (care and help).

Hilde's life attitude and her spirituality are agentic, mainly located within the area of her own experience. Her social engagement activities are unrelated to spirituality, as she also indicates herself: "Those are little things that you just do". Her social engagement clearly shows connectedness, but, as in Willem, this connectedness is not directly related to her spirituality.

Conclusions and discussion

We have explored the relationship between spirituality and social engagement in interviews with ten respondents who self-identify as 'spiritual' and 'not affiliated to a religious or spiritual group'. To broaden our view of the role of spirituality in the respondents' lives we have used the agency and communion themes developed by McAdams et al. (1996) to analyze their life attitude. McAdams et al. (1996) claim that the agency and communion themes are primarily suitable for analyzing positive life scenes, and less applicable for the coding of negative accounts. In our case, where respondents told us about their difficult childhood

or other problems, they tended to add accounts of how they overcame these problems, and we could code the episodes as self-mastery without any problem.

As for spirituality, we focused on respondents' own descriptions of the content of their spirituality. To characterize their social engagement, we departed from our own specific conception of social engagement, which implies a combination of other-directed motivations and prosocial actions. To assess motivation, we looked for egoism and other-directed motivations (Batson, Ahmad, and Tsang, 2002). Finally, reflecting on each interview in its totality, we searched for relational patterns between social engagement and spirituality.

Motivations were the most difficult to code. This was so, in the first place, because we did not ask for the respondents' motivations for each activity since this would disturb the atmosphere of the interview. Second, during our analysis we noticed that it is hard to code activities as solely egoistic or other-directed. And, of course, they are mixed on many occasions. When relationships and cooperation are important, helping someone benefits both subject and object. Only in the case of anonymous gifts to charities do other-directed motivations prevail. Third, some respondents had their own practice in one of the spiritual healing techniques, which makes it hard to distinguish altruistic (helping others) from egoistic motivations (making money). And, finally, motivation may not always be a conscious factor in decision making; many decisions are taken intuitively (Epstein, 1994; Baumeister, Masicampo, and Vohs, 2011).

To most respondents, their spirituality appears to be focused primarily on gaining insights, personal development, gaining experience, and overcoming problems (self-mastery). The majority also give evidence of intentions of solidarity with others arising from their spirituality. A number devote themselves to passing on their own spiritual talents or experiences they are so enthusiastic (achievement) about or to assisting others with their spirituality (care and help).

In three respondents, agency was dominant; in five community was more important; and two we characterized as 'balanced': agency and communion were equally important. The 'agency types' do not show much evidence of social engagement; they all have a spiritual practice in which they help others out of agentic (including financial) motivations. They show the pattern of *Crisis, coping, and sharing* (Tamara, Ellen, and Toos). This pattern recalls the study by Aupers and Houtman (2006) who describe the 'typical' careers of a number of spiritual trainers for business life. These people started their careers in 'normal jobs' in that world. After a period of uneasiness and an identity crisis in their former, often highly demanding, careers, they come into contact with spirituality and gradually acquire new worldviews and corresponding experiences. They quit their jobs and start sharing their new insights and experiences on a professional basis. As we have seen, the altruistic motivation of our agentic respondents, who showed the pattern of *Crisis, coping, and sharing*, was questionable, but, in principle, the pattern can also work in an altruistic setting.

In the seven 'communion' and 'balanced types', social engagement was visible in a more prominent way, except in Hanny, whose social activities mainly revolve around her own pleasure, abilities, and (spiritual) development. Of course, an egoistic motivation can also be present in the care and help activities of the other 'communion types' (Marion hopes that her involvement with municipal green projects will result in a job), but they show a clearer focus on others too. We found the pattern *Proactive connectedness* in Dorien, Marion, and Inge, although Dorien's social engagement is mainly operative on the level of intention. A sense of connectedness to the inner self and with others and nature is often described as part of new forms of spirituality (cf. Heelas et al., 2005; Heelas, 2008). Heelas (2008) emphasizes the relationality of new spirituality; he argues that it often takes an expressivistic, humanistic, and universalistic form, and that it has much to offer in bringing about a better world. Connectedness was shown to be a relatively important predictor of social engagement (Berghuijs, Pieper, and Bakker, 2013c). We must keep in mind, however, that connectedness is not always specifically related to spirituality, as Willem and Hilde show. In theory, new spirituality focuses on changing oneself into what is seen as a more spiritually conscious and therefore better functioning individual, aware of his/her connectedness to all that is and should therefore lead to an ethic of caring for others because one's own well-being is linked to the well-being of others (e.g., Heelas, 1996; Chandler, 2011). Some authors claim that the theme of connectedness in new spirituality functions on an ideological level only, as 'illusory' (Van Harskamp, 2003), or as a non-socially embedded 'magical' and 'abstract' connectedness to the larger cosmos (Farias and Lalljee, 2008). We saw such 'virtual' connectedness in Tamara, but connectedness was certainly not 'virtual' in Dorien, Inge, and Marion.

Joke shows the pattern we called *Supportive individualism.* Individualism is sometimes equated with egocentrism, but this is not correct: individualists tend to stand up for the rights of individuals, not only their own but also those of others (Bernts, Dekker, and De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2008). Individualism has been shown to be positively related to charitable giving and volunteering (Kemmelmeier, Jambor, and Letner, 2006). Although people involved in unaffiliated spirituality tend to spend less time and money on institutionalized charitable organizations (Chandler, 2011), it has been suggested that their individualism and anti-institutionalism lead to other forms of social engagement: it is reflected in solidarity with people in more individual and informal situations related to their own biographical situation (De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2011) and in highly selective buying behavior based on their personal ethics (Chandler, 2011). This is what we see in a number of our respondents. But just like connectedness, individualism is certainly not always motivated by *spiritual* considerations.

Although it is not possible to draw general conclusions from ten interviews, we can still note some tendencies. The spirituality of our respondents

was not related in all cases to social engagement as we define it. In a number of respondents, spirituality was predominantly used for their own benefit or self-gratification. In those cases social engagement was either present but not related to spirituality (Hilde, Willem), or their prosocial activities had strong self-centred elements (Tamara, Toos, Ellen, Hanny), even if spirituality was shared with others in the *Crisis, coping, and sharing* pattern. In three of the ten cases we found the *Proactive connectedness* pattern (Dorien, Marion, and Inge). Connectedness, a typical communion theme, plays a role for many respondents, either in a cognitive or an experiential way, when they assert that everything is permeated with energy, or with the spiritual, that everything is connected to everything, that we all come from one source, that the chain of events is like dominoes falling over, that they feel connected to or at one with others. Connectedness can be a motor for social engagement: because one realizes one is connected with others in a material, energetic, emotional, or mental way, or through activities, it makes a difference what ones thinks and does. For Marion, Inge, and Dorien, such a line of reasoning plays a role in their conscious commitment to others or their intentions to do so. We may surmise an analogous but less conscious motivation to the social engagement of the others: Joke is convinced that everything contains energy, light, and power and respects all life. For Willem, good interpersonal relationships come first; Hilde finds it quite natural to sympathize with others and to commit herself to them. So, for our respondents, connectedness leads to social engagement in quite a number of cases. But connectedness is not always an explicit part of the respondents' spirituality.

As for the question why people affiliated to religious groups are more socially engaged than adherents of new spirituality, we can only give a suggestion. We can start with the notion that empathic concern for others is an inborn and emotion-based characteristic developed during evolution. We have an 'empathic impulse' when we see others in distress. However, following that impulse by helping others is not an automatism: it can be rationally resisted (De Waal, 2013). The altruistic motivation is stimulated in established religion, (Bruce, 2002). In the ideology of unaffiliated spirituality, social engagement is not as central as it is in Christianity. There is no official external authority. People focus on 'following their personal path', guided by their own experiences instead of accepting teachings and ethics without questioning (Aupers and Houtman, 2006). Therefore, each of them is involved in and principally committed to his or her own spiritual development. The focus on the self, which to many just functions to correct an overemphasis on altruism in the churches, may run the risk of forgetting social justice and real compassion for the suffering, and can therefore lead to self-indulgence (Wuthnow, 2006), self-inflation (Farias and Lalljee, 2006), or to a self-centred life scoring relatively low in social ethics (Höllinger, 2004). On the other hand, authority is certainly not absent from new spirituality; it is exercized by the suggestions of authors

and practitioners in more subtle ways (Hammer, 2004; Heelas, 2008). Altruistic behavior may be promoted by a holistic worldview, implying the connectedness of the self to all there is. We saw in the interviews how respondents felt connected to others in cognitive and experiential ways. In the 'communion types' we often see expressions of sympathy with certain groups or individuals in less favorable circumstances. Therefore, our suggestion is that in unaffiliated spirituality the risk of egocentrism is larger than in church contexts, due to a less clear stimulation of altruistic behavior.

Bekkers' findings (2004) support this view. He found that empathic concern for others is the most important personality characteristic predicting giving and volunteering behavior. But social factors like level of education and church attendance appeared to be far more important than personality characteristics. This was even true in the absence of social incentives, as in the case of anonymous money donations to charities. In addition, he found evidence that church attendance mediates effects of specific personality characteristics. It appears that more empathic persons attend church more regularly and are therefore more likely to give and volunteer. We found empathy/connectedness in a number of respondents outside religious institutions. Instead of the incentives for altruism preached in the churches, these individuals gave evidence of the influence of their spirituality on social engagement by their accounts of connectedness on a cognitive (ideological), experiential, or consequential level.

In sum, new spirituality can be related to social engagement in various ways, depending on the nature and importance of spirituality in the respondents' lives and also on their life attitude as an individual (agency) or as a participant in a larger whole (communion). Among our interviewees, those with an agency lifestyle had a stronger tendency to use their spirituality primarily for overcoming problems and for gaining insights and experiences, but they also proceeded to help others with their spiritual insights and skills, thereby adding to their self-esteem and self-confidence (*Crisis, coping, and sharing*). Those with a communion lifestyle tended to show social engagement through their sense of connectedness to others (*Proactive connectedness*). In one person who showed a balance between agency and communion we found that that her individual form of spirituality was related to a commitment to others in less privileged circumstances (*Supportive individualism*).

The scope of this explorative study is relatively small. Further interviews with people involved in unaffiliated spirituality could substantiate the results found here or produce additional patterns in the relation between new spirituality and social engagement. Interviews with individuals affiliated to church communities might produce comparable or different patterns, thus helping explain the higher social engagement level found in church members as a group.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and discussion

In this study, we have endeavored to contribute to the understanding of new forms of spirituality in the Netherlands, from an empirical point of view, focusing especially on the subject of the purported egocentrism and lack of social engagement of followers of new spirituality. In this final chapter, the results are summarized and presented in accordance with the research questions formulated in the introduction. We also reflect on methods for studying (new) spirituality, discuss the results of the study in relation to previous research, and deal with the limitations of the research project.

Answers to the research questions

The research questions are:

1. What arguments are used in the discussion on the relation between new spirituality and social engagement?
2. What is spirituality, and how can the group involved in new spirituality be delimited?
3. How should social engagement be defined and measured?
4. Are people involved in new spirituality less socially engaged than others?
5. If there is a relation between new spirituality and social engagement, how is that expressed in peoples' lives?

To answer these questions, we carried out a literature review, an empirical study consisting of a survey among a representative sample (N = 4402) of the Dutch population, and a series of ten in-depth interviews with people involved in new spirituality.

1. <u>What arguments are used in the discussion on the relation between spirituality and social engagement?</u>

In chapter 1 we evaluated the critical judgments about followers of new forms of spirituality as egocentric and lacking in social engagement. We found that references to the critical judgments are numerous, persistent, and sometimes

extreme in their wording. Most scholars, however, only repeat – or sometimes exaggerate – the expressions used in their sources; only a small number of them support the criticism.

Advocates of the 'low social engagement' hypothesis argue, for instance, that, as a result of their anti-institutional, anti-dogmatic, and highly individualistic attitude, adherents of new spirituality miss out on the social incentives that accompany social structures like church communities that issue moral guidelines and preach social commitment (Bruce, 2002). Instead, these individuals are primarily committed to their own spiritual development (e.g., Heelas, 1996). Although they may feel connected to 'all that is', this connectedness may be 'illusory' (Van Harskamp, 2003) or 'magical' (Farias and Lalljee, 2008), and in some cases they lead a self-centred life that is low in social ethics (Höllinger, 2004). Many find it impossible or unnecessary to put effort into changing social structures (e.g., Bloch, 1998), and they use their spirituality to adapt to mainstream society they dislike so much. Only a few critical authors supply some empirical evidence (Höllinger, 2004; Farias and Lalljee, 2008), and this evidence is not representative of the population as a whole.

Opponents of the 'low social engagement' hypothesis argue that individualism is not the same as egocentrism (De Hart and Dekker, 2006; Chandler, 2008), and that people involved in new spirituality have just as many contacts in society as others (Chandler, 2011). Some suggest that their social engagement takes other forms, such as solidarity with others in more individual and informal ways related to their own biographical situation (De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2011).

The discussion is complex, because most sources show a rather imprecise indication and delimitation of the group that is criticised; in addition, the nature of the critical judgments varies. Therefore, results of the few empirical studies that are available (Höllinger, 2004; Farias and Lalljee, 2008; Chandler, 2011; De Hart, 2011) are hard to compare. The arguments are recycled without any decisive answer in sight. In our opinion, any attempt to clarify the issue and further the discussion should start with reflection on an adequate demarcation of the target group and on the concept of social engagement. Answering the question: 'Do people involved in new forms of spirituality show a lower level of social engagement than others?' clearly involves comparing groups and is obviously best answered by carrying out an empirical, quantitative study.

2. What is spirituality and how can the group involved in new spirituality be delimited?

It is generally acknowledged that the large diversity in expressions categorized as 'new spirituality' makes it hard to define it. Determining which individuals

should be seen as involved in these new forms of spirituality so that we can include them in a quantitative study is equally difficult. In this study, much attention has been devoted to these issues. Chapters 2 and 3 focused on answering the first part of the question (what is (new) spirituality?). Building on the findings of chapter 1, chapter 4 answered the second part (how can we demarcate the group involved in new spirituality?). In answering both questions, we proceeded in a practical, empirical way.

2a. What is spirituality?

Researchers in the social sciences argue about an adequate and universal definition of spirituality, just as they have always argued about the definition of religion. The complexity increases if the discussion includes the relationship between spirituality and religion as well. In an empirical study, using a definition of spirituality to demarcate a group has major disadvantages because it will include and exclude conceptions of spirituality in a way that may not correspond with the conceptions and self-conceptions of the people studied. This study therefore used a bottom-up approach for the question 'What is spirituality?'

In chapter 2, we asked our survey respondents in an open question what they understand by spirituality. In their answers (N = 2313), 21% of our sample take distance from spirituality in a neutral (e.g., 'nothing for me') or a more negative way (e.g., 'nonsense'). That percentage even increased to 35 among people with a secular outlook, i.e. those who do not see themselves as 'spiritual'. Moreover, spirituality appeared to be something of an 'elite' word, used much more by higher educated people. Respondents describe spirituality mostly in cognitive terms (54%), especially in the form of general references to a transcendent reality (e.g., 'more between heaven and earth'). Experiential expressions are also often used (29%, e.g., 'experiencing contact with your inner self'), followed by descriptions in consequential (moral, 16%) and ritual (practices, 7%) terms. In addition, we detected a number of important patterns in the descriptions that can be arranged in a continuum of spiritualities ranging from purely secular on the one extreme to established religion on the other: spirituality as mental health – spirituality as responsibility – spirituality as the paranormal – spirituality as inwardness – spirituality as experiencing the transcendent and the non-perceptible – spirituality as experiencing the immanent God – spirituality as the transcendent God – spirituality as a Christian way of life. We paid special attention to differences in conceptions of spirituality between people within and outside institutional religious contexts and between people who self-identify as 'spiritual' and those who do not. Descriptions of spirituality by self-defined 'spiritual' respondents within and outside church settings do differ, but the differences are only relative. While both groups describe spirituality mainly in cognitive terms, followers of unaffiliated

spirituality use experiential terminology (in particular, connectedness to your inner self and well-being) relatively more often than 'affiliated spiritual' respondents, while the latter attach relatively more importance to the consequential dimension (specifically, expressions related to the 'Golden Rule'). Differences between 'spiritual' and 'non-spiritual' respondents appear to be more explicit. If the 'non-spiritual' do give a description, they mainly rely on cognitive terminology; in comparison with the 'spiritual' respondents they are much less inclined to express themselves in experiential or consequential terms. We also investigated the question if followers of 'unaffiliated spirituality' describe spirituality more often than others in egocentric terms. This was not the case. We concluded that 'spirituality' in common parlance has clearly broken away from 'religion' and developed into a word mainly used to refer to transcendence and positive inner feelings, including purely 'secular' ones.

In chapter 3, we approached the question 'What is spirituality?' from another empirical perspective. We asked if the self-designations as 'spiritual' and 'religious' are becoming different life orientations. Contrary to the American situation, where a majority of people describe themselves as 'spiritual' as well as 'religious' and where most people associate spirituality with traditional religion (e.g., Marler and Hadaway, 2002), in our study the percentage of the 'both spiritual and religious' is much lower. This is not only due to a large 'secular' group of people who consider themselves 'neither spiritual nor religious' (40%). More importantly, considerable proportions of respondents identify themselves as 'only-spiritual' (and not 'religious') or 'only-religious' (and not 'spiritual'). In our study, the 'only-spiritual' and the 'only-religious' together form a larger group (35%) than those who are 'both spiritual and religious' (25%). This is an indication that, at the level of self-designation as well as that of description, there is a divergence in orientation between 'religious' and 'spiritual'. We showed that these orientations are reflected in two coherent sets of beliefs, experiences, and practices. The first set, which we called 'new spirituality', comprises, among others things, belief in monism, syncretism, the paranormal, and reincarnation, the practices of self-perfectioning, pursuit of esoteric knowledge, and experiences of connectedness and non-religious transcendence. The second set, which we called 'traditional religion', comprises, among other things, belief in heaven and hell, church attendance, prayer, and experiences of a relationship with God. We called this component 'traditional religion'. The categories of 'only-spiritual' and 'only-religious' also reflected these components. Remarkably, 'only-spiritual' (and not 'religious') people and 'only-religious' (and not 'spiritual') people appeared to have a less 'intensive' spiritual/religious life than those who describe themselves as 'both spiritual and religious'. The latter combine an attraction to traditional religious beliefs and practices, which is stronger for them than for those who are 'only-religious', with an affinity with new spirituality, which is stronger than that of the 'only-spiritual'. Apparently, for this category – a quarter of our sample – being 'spiritual' and being 'religious' have not become

diverging life orientations. This finding is also a strong indication that new spirituality is developing both within and outside the churches. The findings in chapters 2 and 3 indicate that spirituality is used in settings that are purely secular as well as religious or related to non-institutional forms of spirituality. Therefore, it is important that researchers in empirical studies on spirituality be aware of possible discrepancies between their own conceptions of spirituality and those of their respondents. In quantitative studies that aim to investigate the relationship between spirituality and other variables, especially those related to health or well-being, it is inevitable that a narrow definition of spirituality be used that avoids overlap with the other variables being investigated (cf. Moreira-Almeida and Koenig, 2006; Houtman, Aupers, and Heelas, 2009; Salander, 2012). Such a narrow definition might focus on transcendence. Researchers who conduct such studies, however, should be well aware that they are not measuring the relation between the subjective 'spiritualities' of their respondents and their other variables.

2b. How can the group involved in new spirituality be delimited?

As we saw in chapter 1, the literature sources are rather vague in their indication of the group they criticize. Where specifications are given in the sources, we detected two tendencies.
- Some authors emphasize institutional aspects: they focus on the unchurched and individual character of the spirituality of the people involved (Hay and Hunt, 2000; Fuller, 2001; Chandler, 2008, 2011). They refer to those who call themselves spiritual and/or religious but who are not affiliated with a religious or spiritual organization; we call this the 'unaffiliated spirituality' approach.
- Others focus on the substance of the spirituality they study, dwelling on the 'typical' views, experiences, and practices of their respondents (e.g., Bloch, 1998; Heelas, 1996; Farias and Lalljee, 2008); we call this the 'new spirituality' approach.

Because this study is intended to be a response to the critical authors, we decided to demarcate our target group in two ways, in conformity with those two tendencies. The procedure is elaborated in chapter 4 as follows.
- The 'unaffiliated spirituality' group is relatively easy to determine via a few questions in a survey, and this demarcation in fact amounts to reliance on self-determination (as 'spiritual' and 'not affiliated'). This target group is best compared with the group that is affiliated with a religious institution on the one hand, and with 'secular' people (not affiliated and not 'spiritual') on the other (the 'secular-1' group).
- Delimiting the 'new spirituality' group is more complicated. However, notwithstanding the large diversity in expressions counted as 'new

spirituality', a growing number of authors point to a common or 'typical' worldview underlying the many expressions that, at first glance, differ so much from one another (e.g., Bloch, 1998; Hanegraaff, 1998; Hammer, 2004; Aupers and Houtman, 2006; Heelas et al., 2005; Possamai, 2005). Therefore, we have used affinity with such expressions as a criterion for selecting the 'new spirituality' group. This group is best compared with the group that has affinity with traditional religion. In chapter 3, we found a way to construct two coherent sets of beliefs, experiences, and practices representative of 'new spirituality' and 'traditional religion'. To determine membership of the target group and comparison groups, we performed a cluster analysis of cases, that resulted in three clusters: the target group, high on 'new spirituality' variables and low on 'traditional religion', the comparison group high in 'traditional religion' and low in 'new spirituality', and the 'secular' rest group having affinity with neither new spirituality nor traditional religion (the 'secular-2' group).

For the interviews (chapter 5), we selected respondents on the basis of the first criterion, 'unaffiliated spirituality'.

3. How should social engagement be defined and measured?

We elaborated our concept of social engagement in chapter 4. Social engagement may be seen as social capital: involvement in networks of family, friends and other relations, social trust and shared values, voting and other political activities, and participation in different organizations (Putnam, 2000). However, if we wish to use such indicators in answering our research question, they lack the dimension of motivation. People can have intense social networks and interactions and still be egocentric and lacking in solidarity with others. Involvement in networks as such may also stem from egoistic motivations (status, power), and joining collective demonstrations may just as well stem from personal preoccupations (strikes for better wages, demonstrations against the factory in one's backyard). Of course, in daily life, motivations are often partly egoistic and partly altruistic (Batson, Ahmad, and Tsang, 2002). This is natural. For this study, however, a 'narrower' conceptualization of social engagement is necessary, one that is the opposite of egocentrism and distinguishes between behavior that is driven and behavior that is not driven by egocentric motivation. Therefore, we defined social engagement as follows:

Social engagement is commitment to others that benefits individuals, groups, or society at large.

This definition implies an attitude of solidarity with others in combination with prosocial actions. To measure social engagement in the survey, we included a philanthropy scale (Schuyt, Smit, and Bekkers, 2004) and a number of items asking about the importance of values like being helpful, forgiving, and loving. To test prosocial actions, we asked about donations, memberships, volunteering, and informal care. As for donations and memberships, we included only those related to (a) organizations for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities, or migrants and (b) organizations for environmental protection, peace, or animal rights, with the objective of minimizing the probability of personal profit. As for volunteering, we included a larger scope of organizations, and we distinguished between volunteering for religious and for secular organizations. In the interviews (chapter 5) we asked respondents about their social activities in a broad sense, and endeavored to find out their motivation for these activities.

4. Are people involved in new spirituality less socially engaged than others?

Using the insights, specifications, and procedures developed above, we could answer the central research question in chapter 4.

The two target groups overlap only about 50%. The 'new spirituality' group (24% of the sample) is somewhat larger than the one based on self-defined 'unaffiliated spirituality' (22%). This means that ideas, experiences, and practices belonging to the new spirituality cluster have a wider dissemination than just among those who call themselves unaffiliated and spiritual. Moreover, as much as 29% of the affiliated (9% of the total sample) have affinity with new spirituality. This is a sign that the new spirituality is also present in churches. On the other hand, 6% of those who call themselves unaffiliated and not spiritual, or 3% of the total sample, also have affinity with new spirituality. This means that new spirituality is apparently becoming part of mainstream culture, even among people who do not consciously see themselves as 'spiritual'.

Although the two target groups only partly overlap, their scores on the social engagement measures are almost the same. We found that, on most measures, people involved in new spirituality score lower than the affiliated or traditionally religious groups but higher than 'secular' groups. In fact, they do not clearly distinguish themselves from the total sample. Therefore the answer to the research question is twofold: no, people involved in new forms of spirituality are not less socially engaged than 'other people' in general; and yes, they are less socially engaged than affiliated and traditionally religious people. Only in their commitment to organizations for environmental protection, peace, or animal rights, did the target groups score higher than the other groups.

The fact that the target groups are more socially engaged than 'secular' groups, is an indication that at least a number of new spirituality worldviews, experiences, and practices do have predictive value for social engagement. In a

number of regression analyses we assessed the relative influence of spiritual, religious, and demographic variables. On the whole, demographic factors appear to be the most influential, especially the level of education, which plays an important role for all social engagement variables except for informal care. Higher educated people generally show more social engagement than the lower educated ones. Age and sex also emerge as important: a higher age and the female sex are generally related to higher levels of social engagement; only in the case of volunteering for non-religious organizations is being male more influential. The only religious/spiritual variables that have some influence on social engagement are connectedness (to self, others and nature), and spiritual transformation (the importance attached to self-knowledge and self-perfectioning). Higher levels of connectedness are related to higher scores on philanthropy, donations, and environment-friendly living; higher levels of spiritual transformation are related to higher scores on philanthropy, environment-friendly living, donations, and memberships of organizations for environmental protection. Connectedness and spiritual transformation are not specific spiritual or religious expressions, but both represent sets of feelings and opinions about the self and the self-in-relation. Remarkably, in our study none of the variables related to traditional religion (like church attendance) belongs to the most important predictors of social engagement.

In the addendum to chapter 4, we presented some additional analyses to improve our understanding of the results, specifically the 'middle position' in the social engagement of our target groups between the secular and the affiliated/ traditionally religious groups We took a closer look at important predictor variables of social engagement. The higher level of the social engagement of the target groups compared with the secular groups is easy to explain by their higher level of education, their larger percentage of women, and their higher scores on connectedness and spiritual transformation. The lower social engagement of the target groups compared to the affiliated and traditionally religious groups is less easy to explain. It is not caused by education since their educational level is higher; it is not caused by sex since their percentage of women is higher; it has nothing to do with their connectedness and spiritual transformation since they are higher than or equal to the affiliated and traditionally religious groups on those measures. The only important variable in our data set that predicts lower social engagement for the target groups is age: on average, they are much younger, and younger age cohorts have a lower social engagement than older groups.

We compared the social engagement of former church members to that of formerly secular people within the target groups and investigated the consequences of several alternative group constructions, for instance, one including a group that has affinity with both new spirituality and traditional religion. All these additional and alternative comparisons point in one direction: combining affinity with (traditional) religion and (new) spirituality increases the

probability of showing higher levels of social engagement. This tendency can be explained by higher levels of connectedness and spiritual transformation and is reinforced by the fact that these 'combined' groups sometimes have a higher age and higher level of education than their comparison groups. Apparently, new spirituality and traditional religion can enrich and reinforce each other, leading to a relation between an intensive and varied spiritual/religious life and strong social engagement.

All in all, our findings are not in line with the 'low social engagement-hypothesis' at all. People involved in new spirituality are not distinguishable from the population in general on social engagement. They score higher in social engagement than secular groups, and the only variable that helps explain their lower social engagement compared to the affiliated and traditionally religious groups is not some spiritual or religious characteristic but their lower age. Moreover, their commitment to nature and the environment is higher than all other groups. Finally, combining (new) spirituality and (traditional) religion leads to higher levels of social engagement, that can be explained both by spiritual and demographic variables.

5. If there is a relation between new spirituality and social engagement, how is that expressed in peoples' lives?

The results of chapter 4 showed that connectedness and spiritual transformation are the most important spiritual/religious variables that are related to social engagement. They do not represent very specific religious or spiritual beliefs or practices but are just sets of ideas and feelings about the self and the self-in-relation. These findings do not, however, explain how the relation 'works'. Because our study focuses on people involved in new forms of spirituality, we decided on a series of ten semi-structured interviews with individuals belonging to the unaffiliated spirituality group, to get more insight into their spirituality, the way it functions in their lives, and the possible relation of their spirituality with social engagement. Chapter 5 describes the interview study. We started the interviews with a broad question about the respondents' life story and subsequently asked about spirituality and social activities. In the analysis of the interviews, we used the 'agency' and 'communion' themes as developed by McAdams et al. (1996) to broaden our view of the role of spirituality in the respondents' lives. Agency is focused on the existence of the organism as an individual, while communion is focused on the participation of the individual in some larger whole. In our view, egocentrism belongs to an agentic life attitude, whereas social engagement as we define it, namely, as motivated by commitment to others, belongs to a communion type life attitude. To assess social engagement in our specific conception we focused on motivation for prosocial actions. In three of the ten cases, no relation was found between

spirituality and social engagement. In the other seven, we found relational patterns. Those with an agency lifestyle had a stronger tendency to use their spirituality primarily for overcoming problems and for gaining insights and experiences. But they also proceeded to help others with their spiritual insights and skills, thereby adding to their self-esteem and self-confidence in a pattern we called *Crisis, coping, and sharing*. Those with a communion lifestyle tended to show social engagement through their sense of connectedness to others in a pattern we called *Proactive connectedness*. In one person, who showed a balance between agency and communion, we found a pattern we called *Supportive individualism*. Her individual form of spirituality showed a strong respect for nature, related to the idea that there is energy, power, and light in everything. Therefore she wishes herself and others, animals and people, good health and development, and she helps the weak, when they come across her path.

Connectedness to others in a cognitive or experiential way appeared to be a central theme in the social engagement of many respondents, but it was not always part of their spirituality. Therefore, even though we found that spirituality often includes connectedness, the converse is not necessarily true, i.e., connectedness does not always include spirituality. For our survey results this finding adds to the conclusion that demographic factors and general feelings about the self and its relations are more important for social engagement than specific spiritual or religious expressions.

Mapping the fuzziness of new spirituality: The merits and results of different research methods

What is new spirituality? Is it 'anything from serious introspection to beauty treatments', as Voas and Bruce (2007) say? Our study indicates that there is certainly some truth in their suggestion. In commercial offers, the variety of associations with spirituality is amazing, ranging from 'spiritual' teachings, books, therapists and advisors, courses and workshops to 'spiritual' movies, holidays, gardening, slimming, beauty treatments, and divorce.[22] In the eyes of our respondents, however – ordinary Dutch men and women – the variation is less extreme. In a very general sense, many Dutch people tend to see spirituality in terms of transcendence (both religious and non-religious) and positive inner

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[22] See e.g., http://www.amazon.com/Spiritual-Gardening-Creating-Sacred-Outdoors/dp/1930722249 ;
http://books.google.nl/books/about/Spiritual_Slimming.html?id=_VFDPK0FLkQC&redir_esc=y ;
http://books.google.nl/books/about/Spiritual_Divorce.html?id=iifdXOYEI3MC&redir_esc=y
(all: last accessed 20-6-2013).

feelings. Only in very rare cases was it associated with bodily pleasure, such as 'a drink or a joint' or 'a little incense, a bath' (see citation at the beginning of chapter 1).

If one thing has become clear from our study, it is that there is no single, absolute answer to the question 'What is (new) spirituality?' Researchers in the social sciences argue about an adequate and universal definition of spirituality (e.g., Hanegraaff, 1999; Stifoss-Hansen, 1999; Hill et al., 2000; Moberg, 2002; Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2005; Belzen, 2009; Salander, 2012; Westerink, 2012). A general discussion on a 'universal' definition of spirituality can go on forever without finding a definite answer. In our view, the answer on the question depends on the context. Who is asking and for what purpose? Definitions are top-down instruments suitable for theoretical debates and for policy issues like 'mission statements' of a research group, or for determining what subjects to include in courses. But they are not very suitable for empirical research unless further specified in concrete measures. Spirituality scales are such specifications, and many have been developed (for a review see De Jager Meezenbroek et al., 2010). A broad specification of spirituality will, however, result in overlap with other constructs, such as well-being, connectedness, and quality of life, which can lead to false and tautological correlations between, for instance, spirituality and mental health (Moreira-Almeida and Koenig, 2006; Salander, 2012). It also tends to be too inclusive and therefore to violate the self-perceptions of all those people who do not see themselves as religious or spiritual at all (Popp-Baier, 2010; Salander, 2012). If one wants to know the relation between spirituality and health, for instance, in a quantitative study, one needs a specific, narrow definition that does not result in any overlap with health aspects, and this will certainly be quite difficult to attain. Moreover, such a study will not yield insight into the relation between the respondents' conceptions and experiences of spirituality and their health but only into the relation between the researcher's conception of spirituality and the respondents' health.

Another, related approach is to select people on the basis of their affinity with a set of certain expressions of spirituality that are considered 'typical' for (new) spirituality, as we did in chapter 4 to construct our target group, and subsequently to compare this group with other groups in the population by the dependent variable that one wishes to study (in our case social engagement). Just like a number of spirituality scales, this approach treats spirituality as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, and it is based on empirical observations. If used in quantitative empirical research, however, as a number of separate items that respondents can agree with, how many of those items should one agree with to count as an individual belonging to the milieu, to be, as it were, 'diagnosed' as involved in new spirituality? Selection can be done in an 'absolute' way by selecting those individuals who agree to all the selected statements or in a more family-resemblance way (Wittgenstein, [1953]/2001), as we have done in our study using cluster analysis. None of the items is an absolute and indispensable

requirement for belonging to the target group, but agreement with a sufficient number would qualify one for being included. The disadvantage of this approach is, much like the spirituality scale approach, that it is a top-down approach as well, and it relies on preconceptions about the content of new spirituality. However, we did use it in the context of our specific research question, and we used characterizations that we found in the literature that we wished to respond to.

We think that, generally speaking, it is better to use a bottom-up approach in empirical research and to take the respondents' own expressions of spirituality as a starting point (cf. Popp-Baier, 2010). One way to do this is by using self-definitions (e.g., 'I consider myself as: not/a little bit/very spiritual'). Saroglou (2013) promotes this approach because it is a very easy and 'clean' method in the sense that it can never be too broad or too narrow, too inclusive or too exclusive, or too prejudiced. We also used this approach in our quantitative study in chapter 4 to construct our target group in another way. The disadvantage of this approach is obviously that it does not say anything about the content of people's self-defined spirituality. This disadvantage can be repaired by asking 'spiritual' respondents what they see as spirituality, as we did in chapter 2.

If the question 'What is spirituality?' arises from an interest in how the term is used in a group or population there are two approaches. The first type of study investigates associations that respondents have with spirituality, presenting them with a predetermined list of characteristics or qualifications that they can endorse or value (e.g., La Cour, Hordam Ausker, and Hvidt, 2013; Keller et al., 2013). They used a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) to detect patterns in the answers. This approach easily produces elegant and illuminating results. Once the list of characteristics is made, the study can easily be repeated or carried out elsewhere for comparison. But the question is: is the variety of conceptions and associations in the population covered by the selected terms? It may be artificially enlarged or restricted, and the answer 'I don't know' will not arise often. The second type of study avoids this problem but raises another. It analyses respondents' own descriptions of spirituality (e.g., Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Schlehofer, Omoto, and Adelman, 2008). The problem here is the analysis that can be quite complicated and time-consuming. A preconceived coding system or a bottom-up (grounded theory-like) system can be used. We analyzed descriptions of spirituality in chapter 2 by using a bottom-up coding method, whose development and application was quite problematic. A possible way to combine inductive analysis with PCA in future research would be to count the use of individual words used by the respondents, for instance using corpus analysis software (Sinclair, 1991)[23] and subsequently to perform a PCA on those words. Such a procedure would minimize subjectivity, and increase

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[23] Corpus linguistics is the study of language in use through collections of naturally occurring samples that are stored electronically. Corpus analysis software can produce overviews of frequently used words and phrases in the corpus that is studied.

comparability with research in other samples or with the same sample in the future.

If the question is what role spirituality plays in people's lives, observation, participation, and interviews are appropriate methods. In chapter 5, we used interviews to find out how the relation between new spirituality and social engagement 'works' in individual cases. Obviously, the disadvantage of interviews is that the results can never be representative of larger communities or populations.

It is our experience that combining a number of different methodological approaches can enrich the results and eliminate or at least diminish the disadvantages attached to each individual method. Combining the 'contentless' self-definition of being 'spiritual' with the insights on the conceptions of spirituality of 'spiritual' people showed that this group has a focus on transcendence and (more than other groups) on positive inner feelings, specifically connectedness to one's inner self and well-being, vitality, and connectedness to others and nature and 'all there is'. The importance of connectedness was confirmed in the interviews with unaffiliated, 'spiritual' individuals. Another example is the combination of the two methods we used to construct our target group in chapter 4, the approach based on a self-definition as 'spiritual', and the approach based on affinity with certain 'typical' new spirituality expressions. The fact that the target groups only half overlapped, shows that a) a number of people who call themselves 'spiritual' are engaged in other types of spirituality than those covered by the list of 'typical' new spirituality expressions, and b) that not everyone who has affinity with a number of new spirituality expressions calls these expressions 'spiritual'. Both in the survey results elaborated in chapter 2 and in the interviews we saw that a number of people who call themselves 'spiritual' when asked do not like to use that word.

We have emphasized that, when an attempt is made to underpin a claim about a certain group of people, a comparison with other groups is implied and it is necessary to use a representative sample of the population. Chandler's study (2011) was dedicated to the same subject as our study, but the target group she studied was constructed in a very specific way. Using an online survey that circulated through Canada, she sampled 265 'spiritual but definitely not religious' people (SDNRs) by means of a list of criteria. Because of this sampling method, and especially the first step – self-selection through the Internet – her target group cannot be seen as representative of the group involved in new spirituality in her country. In our study, we were very happy to be able to use the LISS panel of CentERdata,[24] so that we could use a representative sample. We found that 22% of the Dutch population self-identify

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[24] http://www.centerdata.nl/en/survey-research/mess-liss-panel, latest access date: 11-11-2013.

as 'unaffiliated and spiritual' and that 24% have affinity with 'typical' expressions of new spirituality. However, the importance or intensity of 'unaffiliated spirituality' will vary widely from the 'default' option of a spirituality that is in fact 'naked' (Marler and Hadaway, 2002) to a highly intensive spiritual life that is often combined with religion.

In sum, we have tried to approach and 'catch' new spirituality in a number of ways. We have 'mapped' the Dutch spiritual landscape but used a bird's eye view. The bird only landed on a few spots to explore the hills and valleys, and there is still a lot more to discover.

The individual and society in new spirituality

New spirituality is certainly not 'invisible religion' (Luckman, 1967; Bibby, 1983), especially since it has become part of the mainstream (Hanegraaff, 1998). Besecke (2005) argues that it is very visible. She states that the 'invisible' nature of religion in modern societies can be made visible by conceptualizing religion as an evolving societal conversation about transcendent meaning. She argues that, just like other meanings, transcendent meanings are products of interaction and communication: they do not emerge wholesale in people's minds, nor are they the exclusive province of religious institutions. In other words, non-institutional religion is not equal to private religion. Much of the religious phenomena that have been labelled private take place in public places: cafes, bookstores, lecture halls, discussion groups that are open to members of the public and available for public scrutiny. But what are its contributions to society? Our study has indicated that there is no reason to suspect new spirituality of being 'ultimately socially disruptive', as Chandler (2008) summarizes the critical voices in the literature. On the contrary, being involved in new spirituality is related to higher levels of social commitment than having a secular outlook on life (chapter 4). However, since we mainly focused on the level of individual prosocial activities, we do not feel confident in expanding our conclusions to large-scale predictions about the influence of new spirituality on the structure and functioning of society in general. We also think that it is too early to tell. With these reservations in mind, we will take a look at the observations of some other authors on this subject, and try to relate our findings to these observations.

First, we must say something about Chandler's study (2011). In chapter 4, we noted that her measures of social engagement do not account for motivation. They were based on social capital indicators (Putnam, 2000) like social trust, involvement in networks of family, friends, and professionals, and political activity such as voting and signing petitions. In our view, having intense social contacts and being politically active can still be egoistically motivated. Because

we wished to respond to the critical authors, we developed our own, narrower definition of social engagement and corresponding measures of prosocial activities based on minimizing the chances of personal profit. Nevertheless, for the adequate functioning of society, reciprocity is quite healthy and normal (Mauss, [1922]/1990), which of course means mixed motivation (Batson, Ahmad, and Tsang, 2002), including egoistic motivation. Therefore, our study and Chandler's concur: both highlight aspects of social functioning of people involved in new spirituality: Chandler shows that they are not isolated or alienated, and we add that they have a 'normal', i.e., average level of social engagement in the sense of commitment to others.

But does their spirituality inspire them to change society for the better? Bloch (1998), Bruce (2002), Carrette and King (2004) do not think so. They state that people involved in new spirituality tend to find it impossible or unnecessary to put effort into changing societal structures; they use their spirituality to reconcile themselves with or adapt themselves to all that they dislike in the unavoidable social reality instead of trying to change it. We wonder, however, how different this is from the way many people in established religion proceed. Moreover, it is not logical to expect people with anti-institutional inclinations to engage in large-scale initiatives by, for instance, establishing new institutions. In some of the interviews (chapter 5), we have seen this functional attitude in those respondents who use their spirituality mainly for coping with difficulties they meet in their personal lives: Tamara, Willem, Toos, Joke and Ellen. However, in spite of this agentic use of spirituality, these people do display initiatives in helping others, even if these are not related to their spirituality and/or based on purely agentic motivations.

Our study has revealed that the influence of new spirituality on social engagement is limited. The only elements related to new spirituality (but not exclusively to new spirituality) that have some influence on social engagement are connectedness (to self, others, and nature) and spiritual transformation (the importance of self-knowledge and self-perfectioning). Those elements represent a balance between internal harmony and relationality reaching outward. Therefore, we think it plausible that people involved in new spirituality tend to focus on small-scale initiatives and other than 'institutional' forms of solidarity (Chandler, 2011; De Hart 2007), such as solidarity with people in more individual and informal situations. These suggestions are in line with Heelas' (2008) views on new spirituality as a blend of romantic expressivism and the ethic of humanity. Although the former emphasizes authenticity and the latter universality and egalitarianism, the two are combined in new spirituality in the sense that the moral values, the ethic of humanity, is experienced as emanating from within oneself and as freely adopted, although researchers may observe that they are acquired through socialization. Heelas (2008) argues that, although spiritualities of life may not be as radical as during the counterculture of the 1960s in attempting to develop new and alternative ways of life, they do

contribute to the quality of life by showing real engagement with mainstream society. The initiatives are often devoted to small-scale matters, very often relatively gentle. Heelas (2008) suggests that it is perhaps best to start with the self, and the gentle path may be more effective than radicalism. We saw these small-scale and bottom-up initiatives in our interviewees: in Inge (involvement in local barter, financially supporting a food health shop) and Marion (energizing relationships and 'green' initiatives). Heelas (2008) concludes that research is needed to prove that spiritualities of life serve the self *and* what lies beyond. He warns that micro-activities where change might be tracked can be virtually inaccessible to the academic. He believes, however, that it is probably more difficult to prove the 'no impact' case.

There may not be any 'New Age schools, nurseries, communes, colleges, ecological housing associations, subsistence farming centres, criminal resettlement houses, women's refuges, practical anti-racism projects and urban renewal programmes' (Bruce, 2002: 97), but, as Heelas (2008) observed, new spirituality has permeated a great deal of the culture and its institutions in a number of new practices in, for instance, education (child-centred approach), health (complementary and alternative medicine, patient-centred nursing), hospices, business (manager-centred 'soft capitalism'), and 'spiritual' products and provisions on the market. The magnitude of this influence is hard to assess, and may be difficult to distinguish from humanistic/secular initiatives. Moreover, adaptation to mainstream society even results in the emerging institutionalization in certain areas of new spirituality. In the Netherlands, Jespers (2013) mentions examples like spiritual centres, 'glossy' spiritual magazines like *Happinez,*[25] and the Hogeschool Geesteswetenschappen (College of Humanities) in Utrecht.[26] Worldwide, there are associations of practitioners, like the Reiki Alliance. Therefore, it seems to us that new spirituality is influencing and gently changing society from within and bottom-up, always remembering that changing the world should start with changing oneself.

Limitations of this study and possibilities for future research

Looking back on the project, there are a number of issues that could have been approached differently and a number of subjects that could have been included if we knew then what we know now, not even counting the numerous ways in which the scope of the research could be expanded in the future. In this section we will mention those limitations and future possibilities.

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[25] Circulation 250 000; compare this to one of the most well-known newspapers, *De Volkskrant*: 273 000 (source: http://www.missmag.nl. Last accessed 11-11-2-13).
[26] Not to be confused with the Faculty of Humanities of Utrecht University or with Hogeschool Utrecht.

This study was a picture of the situation at a given moment, and therefore cannot report trends and developments over time like the influence on the social engagement of a changing composition of the target groups in age, level of education, and proportion of former church members. The study was carried out in one country, the Netherlands, with its own culture and high degree of secularization; in other countries, such as those where the division between new spirituality and traditional religion is less prominent, the results concerning social engagement may be different (Houtman, Aupers, and Heelas, 2009). The number of interviews was limited and restricted to members of the target group.

In spite of the fact that there are many varieties of new spirituality (e.g., Heelas et al., 2005; Heelas, 2008; Jespers, 2011, 2013) we tried to construct our target groups using more or less common denominators: a self-definition on the one hand and affinity with a number of 'core' expressions on the other. In our study, we tried to stay as close as possible to the qualifications used by critical authors. Our two different approaches to new forms of spirituality did not yield very different results regarding social engagement. Nonetheless, knowing that the groups only half overlapped, results on other measures might differ significantly.

Some further remarks on our specification of new forms of spirituality are apropos here. The way in which spirituality is specified and the way in which the group of people involved in new spirituality is demarcated influence the relationship to other variables (Houtman, Aupers, and Heelas, 2009; Huber and Macdonald, 2011). In chapter 2 we noted the danger of overlap between spirituality and other constructs, like well-being and quality of life, which can lead to false and tautological correlations between, for instance, 'spirituality' and mental health (Moreira-Almeida and Koenig, 2006; Salander, 2012). Important for our study is the fact that our specification of new spirituality did not include items related to prosociality or altruism like, for instance, the spirituality scale of Elkins et al. (1988). Our specification of unaffiliated spirituality through the two self-identification questions of being 'spiritual' and not 'affiliated to a religious or spiritual group', avoids the problem altogether. A problem here might be that a number of respondents who self-identify as 'spiritual' and 'affiliated' are in fact people who are not involved in traditional religious communities but in pagan or other groups in the 'alternative' milieu. We were able to analyze our sample on this issue: in the total survey sample (N = 1995), there were only three individuals who belonged to such a group; their identifications were: 'Wicca/witchcraft', 'magic-pagan', and 'native'.

Our research project has resulted in several important insights and recommendations concerning the specification of (new) spirituality. First, there is no single, absolute answer to the questions 'What is new spirituality?' and 'Who can be viewed as involved in new spirituality?' Second, the definition or specification of such a complex conception should be contemplated anew in each individual project and should stay close to the origin and goal of the

research question. And third, it might be useful to test and compare different approaches. When interpreting and comparing the results of other studies, caution is called for if specifications differ.

We did not compare ingroup and outgroup social engagement in our study, as some others have (e.g., Saroglou et al., 2005; Reitsma, 2007). Saroglou et al. (2005) showed that 'spiritual' people tend to help unknown targets more than 'religious' people. But our conception and specification of social engagement is especially designed to measure prosocial actions with minimal personal profit for the one who performs them, like commitment to environmental and humanitarian organizations. Admittedly, in, for instance, volunteering and informal care, minimal personal profit is not obvious. This was partly compensated by including measures for prosocial intentions (values and philanthropy).

We did not include other forms of informal helping behavior besides informal care. We saw in chapter 5 that the anti-institutional attitude of people involved in new spirituality does not promote their rates of 'regular' institutional volunteering. Instead, their prosocial activities tend to be other forms of social engagement, such as solidarity with people in more individual and informal – and maybe less structural ways (e.g., De Hart, 2007; Heelas, 2008; Chandler 2011). Such activities are less easy to measure, and future research should study the possibilities of doing so.

We did not study the intrinsic and extrinsic quality of the religion or spirituality of our subjects. We did, however, include a modified quest scale, avoiding the word 'religion' or 'spirituality' in the wording of the items. An extrinsic religious attitude makes religion a means to another (personal) end, like certainty, comfort, social contacts and status; intrinsic religiosity gives religion itself priority; other needs are subordinate to religiosity (Allport and Ross, 1967). Batson (1976) added a third category, 'quest' religiosity. People may see their religious efforts as a quest: they are characterized by openness concerning existential issues. The three religious attitudes do not exclude one another but can be seen as three different dimensions of religious orientation (Batson and Ventis, 1982). It is not quite clear, however, in what way intrinsic or extrinsic attitudes are the best way to distinguish egoistic from altruistic motivation. While we may assume that extrinsic religiosity (and spirituality) is egoistically motivated, previous research has shown that the motivation of the intrinsically religious in helping behavior is not always altruistic but can also be egoistic: the need to be perceived by others as good and non-consideration of the real needs as expressed by the those asking for help are dominant (Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis, 1993). We asked our respondents what their reasons were for performing spiritual activities.[27] The five most important reasons were relaxation and rest

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[27] This question was asked if respondents had endorsed one or more of the following activities: Yoga, Tai Chi, meditation, praying, breath exercises, acupuncture, Reiki,

(68%), improving their health (48%), dealing with problems (32%), giving direction to their lives (29%), and dedication to God (25%). 'Fun' was mentioned in 2% of the cases. Therefore, most reasons were self-directed. A quest orientation is related to reduced intolerance and increased sensitivity to the needs of others (Batson et al., 2001). Our target groups scored significantly higher on the quest dimension than the comparison groups did, and the relation between quest and social engagement was significantly positive on almost all variables (although most correlations were weak). This correlation is in conformity with a helping behavior that is sensitive to the circumstances, as we have clearly seen in the interviews with Joke and Willem.

Our investigations have not brought much insight into directions of causality. Future research might profit from taking a few of the most important predictors of social engagement in our study and testing models of causality, with connectedness being a likely candidate.

We did not explicitly study possible hidden agendas in the critical authors. Several authors make comparisons between the target group and people belonging to religious communities (Hay and Hunt, 2000; Carrette and King, 2004; Dekker, 2004; De Hart, 2011; Chandler, 2011), some of whom might be motivated by the idea of bringing the lost sheep back into the fold (e.g., Hay and Hunt, 2000). This type of study is quite different from what we have done, and therefore has remained beyond the scope of our activities.

Finally, we need to say something about social desirability. The problem of a tendency to give socially desirable responses in surveys is serious only when some types of respondents are more likely to give socially desirable responses than others (Bekkers, 2004). The social engagement measures in our survey study were self-report indications, and not observations. Most of them were taken from two previous surveys among the same group: one on personality (Marchand, 2009) and one on social integration and leisure (De Bruijne, 2010). Therefore, these measures are less likely to have been influenced by ideas about how to answer from a religiously or spiritually inspired morality. Only the variables philanthropy and environment-friendly living were included in our own questionnaire. Of course, socially desirable answers may still have occurred. We did use the Crowne-Marlowe scale (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964) of social desirability from the LISS personality database (Marchand, 2009), but the reliability was not very good (Cronbach's alpha = .535, see also Bekkers, 2004). When, nevertheless, we did construct a social desirability variable using this scale, the target groups scored lowest and the affiliated/traditionally religious groups were significantly higher (5% higher) than the target groups. In the interview situations, we tried to avoid social desirability in several ways. We did not reveal the exact focus of our study to the interviewees. Because we

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explanation of dreams, consulting Tarot cards, consulting the I Ching, consulting their horoscope, visiting a soothsayer, visiting a medium, and visiting a paranormal fair.

thought that socially desirable answers would be possible, we introduced the subject in a broader but not untruthful way, announcing our interest in the question if people involved in new spirituality have a different life attitude than others. Moreover, we asked questions about volunteering and informal care as part of the information about our respondents' activities in their spare time.

General conclusions

Our most important findings can be summarized as follows.

- We clarified the discussion about new spirituality and social engagement. Our literature review has put the extent and severity of the criticism into perspective. We found exaggerations, unjustified use of terms, and lack of empirical evidence for the criticism that people involved in new spirituality are less socially engaged than others.

- We investigated the use of the word 'spirituality' in a representative sample of the Dutch population. We concluded that 'spirituality' in common parlance has clearly broken away from 'religion' and developed into a word used mainly to refer to transcendence and positive inner feelings. Among secular respondents there was a strong tendency to take distance from spirituality.

- We have assessed the percentage of people involved in new forms of spirituality among the Dutch population in two ways: as 22% who define themselves as 'unaffiliated and spiritual' and as 24% who have affinity with a number of 'typical' new spirituality expressions. Because these groups show only partial overlap, the total number of people somehow involved in new forms of spirituality in the Netherlands may well be over a quarter of the population. However, the importance or intensity of their spirituality will vary widely.

- We found that people involved in new spirituality are not distinguishable with respect to social engagement from the population in general. They are less socially engaged than groups affiliated with a religious community or involved in traditional religion but more socially engaged than groups with a 'secular' outlook on life. In their commitment to organizations for environmental protection, peace, or animal rights, however, they surpass the other groups.

- We found that the role of new spirituality for social engagement is limited compared to the influence of demographic factors (level of education, age, and sex). Moreover, there are no specific 'spiritual' or 'religious' expressions that account for the lower social engagement of the groups involved in new forms of spirituality compared to the affiliated and traditionally religious groups. The only variable that helps explain this difference is their lower

age. The experience of connectedness (to one's inner self, to others and to nature), and an ideology of spiritual transformation (the importance attached to self-knowledge and self-perfection) are the spirituality variables that are relatively most important for social engagement.

- Combining (new) spirituality and (traditional) religion leads to higher levels of social engagement that can be explained by connectedness, spiritual transformation, level of education, age, and sex.
- Our study has found no evidence whatsoever that people involved in new forms of spirituality are less socially engaged than others as a result of their spirituality. If our society is evolving towards more individualism, egocentrism, and less social engagement, there is no reason to blame this group for it. On the contrary, being involved in religion or new spirituality is related to higher social engagement than being secular is.

Nederlandse samenvatting

Industrialisering, de toegenomen welvaart, en de ontwikkeling van de verzorgingsstaat zijn onderling nauw verwante maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen in westerse landen. Deze ontwikkelingen zijn hand in hand gegaan met een afname van de cohesie in verschillende groepen in het maatschappelijk middenveld vanaf de vroege twintigste eeuw. Sindsdien hebben velen hun bezorgdheid daarover geuit, vooral over de afname van de onderlinge verantwoordelijkheid en gemeenschapszin (Putnam, 2000). Sommigen juichen individualisering en autonomie toe als de verworvenheden van de moderne samenleving (Taylor, 1991), anderen klagen erover en zien deze ontwikkelingen als moreel verval en narcisme (Lasch, 1979). Het leven wordt gefragmenteerder: naarmate een individu meer sociale rollen krijgt en in meer groepen participeert, wordt de betrokkenheid bij elke groep minder intensief (Gergen, 1991). In de ogen van velen is de huidige cultuur sterk gericht op autonomie en individuele expressie, maar ook op consumptie en genot (Heelas, 2008).

Religieuze organisaties behoren tot de groeperingen waarvan de ledenaantallen en de invloed afnemen. Deze secularisatie wordt op verschillende manieren verklaard: als institutionele differentiatie (en daarmee afname van de dominantie van kerken als maatschappelijke instituties), als privatisering (toenemende verschuiving van religie naar de privésfeer), pluralisme (het bestaan van verschillende religies en wereldbeschouwingen naast elkaar, waardoor de geloofwaardigheid van elk daarvan ondermijnd wordt), individualisering (de neiging om 'op eigen gezag' elementen uit verschillende tradities te combineren), en rationalisering (toename van wetenschappelijke verklaringen van de wereld) (McGuire, 2002). De weinige vormen van religie die gedijen zijn evangelische richtingen en niet-geïnstitutionaliseerde nieuwe vormen van spiritualiteit. Wat zij gemeen hebben is de hedendaagse nadruk op individuele ervaringen en ontwikkeling, zij het op heel verschillende manieren (Van Harskamp, 2000). In deze studie staat nieuwe spiritualiteit centraal.

Die 'nieuwe' vormen van spiritualiteit zijn overigens niet echt nieuw, maar vormen de voortzetting van de westerse esoterische traditie die in de vroege Renaissance opkwam en die een ingrijpend moderniseringsproces doormaakte gedurende de 19e en 20e eeuw, via bewegingen als transcendentalisme, mesmerisme, spiritualisme, New Thought, theosofie, en ten slotte en vooral, New Age (Hanegraaff, 1998; Hammer, 2005). Het 'nieuwe' van nieuwe spiritualiteit is dat zij begon als tegencultuur, maar inmiddels onderdeel is geworden van de mainstream. Nieuwe spiritualiteit is een belangrijke vorm van religie geworden in West-Europa. Het nieuw-spirituele milieu wordt gekenmerkt door een sterk geïndividualiseerde religieuze zoektocht, en zelfverwerkelijking wordt zelfs verwacht van degenen die zich ermee bezig houden – Hammer (2010) noemt dit de 'individualistische imperatief'. Maar tegelijkertijd is het

aantal beschikbare teksten en uitdrukkingswijzen waarover de deelnemers kunnen beschikken beperkt en bijna gecanoniseerd (Von Stuckrad, 2013). Houtman en Aupers (2010) spreken over een 'gedeelde leer van zelfspiritualiteit die daarmee het milieu van zijn ideologische coherentie voorziet'. Nieuwe spiritualiteit wordt gepopulariseerd en commercieel uitgebuit (Carrette en King, 2004, Heelas, 2008). In Nederland zijn er velen die zich religieus of spiritueel noemen, maar zich niet verbonden achten aan een religieuze groep of organisatie: de 26% 'ongebonden spirituelen' (Kronjee en Lampert, 2006), maar de ideologie van nieuwe spiritualiteit is zeker ook te vinden onder kerkleden (Hanegraaff, 1997; Berghuijs, Pieper en Bakker, 2013a). Versteeg (2007) en De Groot, Pieper en Putman (2013) zagen hoe New Age ideeën ook binnen de 'traditionele' religieuze instellingen leven, bijvoorbeeld in de spirituele centra die sommige kerken hebben opgezet in Nederland.

Wat zijn de gevolgen van deze veranderingen in het sociaal-culturele en religieuze landschap voor maatschappelijke verantwoordelijkheid? Veel maatschappelijke taken die voorheen door de kerken en andere particuliere organisaties werden uitgevoerd zijn overgeheveld naar het systeem van sociale zekerheid van gemeentelijke of nationale overheden. Mensen zijn niet langer afhankelijk van liefdadigheid: sociale voorzieningen zijn rechten geworden. Heeft dat gevolgen voor de moraal en voor de sociale betrokkenheid van mensen? Neemt de solidariteit met anderen af of wordt die beperkt tot de zorg voor jezelf en een kleine kring van familie en vrienden?

Het is bekend dat betrokkenheid bij gevestigde religies gerelateerd is aan relatief hoge niveaus van vrijwilligerswerk, donaties aan goede doelen, en andere uitingen van prosociaal gedrag (zie o.a. Reitsma, 2007; Bekkers en Schuyt, 2008; Schmeets, Van Herten en Frenken, 2009; Van Ingen en Dekker, 2011; De Hart, 2011). Van nieuwe spirituelen daarentegen is vaak gezegd dat ze egocentrisch zijn en minder sociaal betrokken (o.a. Heelas, 1996; Bloch, 1998; Bruce, 1998; Hanegraaff, 1998; Hay en Hunt, 2000; Bruce, 2002; Carrette en King, 2004; Dekker, 2004; Höllinger, 2004; Van Harskamp, 2003; Wuthnow, 2006; Farias en Lalljee, 2008; Webster, 2012). Terwijl er vrijwel geen (kwantitatief) empirisch bewijs is voor deze kritische uitingen, blijft de discussie toch rondzingen. In deze studie zijn die stellingnamen nader onderzocht.

Er is ook een positievere evaluatie mogelijk van de genoemde maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen in het algemeen en nieuwe spiritualiteit in het bijzonder. Durkheim voorspelde (evenals anderen zoals Simmel, Troeltsch en Weber) de individualisering van religie al, en karakteriseerde de opkomst ervan als een gevolg van de toegenomen grootschaligheid en complexiteit van de samenleving, waarin mensen op den duur niets anders gemeenschappelijks meer hebben dan dat ze mens zijn. Aan het menszijn wordt vervolgens een uitzonderlijke belang toegekend, dat religieuze trekken aanneemt (Durkheim, 1897: 296). Durkheim zag deze ontwikkeling niet als problematisch, want deze 'cult of humanity' zou in zijn ogen niet leiden tot egoïsme, maar juist tot

betrokkenheid bij anderen, doordat individualisten zullen opkomen voor de rechten van het individu, en dus ook voor die van andere individuen (Durkheim, 1898, in Lukes, 1969:27-28). Durkheim (1915) zag dat religieuze individualisering samen ging met religieus kosmopolitisme. Religieus kosmopolitisme van nieuwe spirituelen zou wel eens weerspiegeld kunnen worden in het feit dat zij relatief sterk betrokken zijn bij de bescherming van natuur en milieu (Becker, De Hart en Mens, 1997; Bernts, Dekker en De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2011), waarmee zij hun betrokkenheid bij de mensheid in het algemeen en volgende generaties tonen. Enkele auteurs suggereren dat nieuwe spirituelen op een meer individuele en informele wijze solidair zijn met anderen (De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2011). Hiervoor ontbreekt echter vooralsnog empirische onderbouwing.

In het licht van bovenstaande ontwikkelingen en vragen richt deze studie zich op de vraag of er een relatie is tussen nieuwe spiritualiteit en sociale betrokkenheid en zo ja, hoe die eruit ziet. Zij is specifiek gericht op de situatie in een sterk geseculariseerd land, Nederland, waar de invloed van kerken en andere religieuze gemeenschappen relatief klein is. Dit onderzoek is relevant om verschillende redenen:

− Het maakt de groep mensen die zich bezig houdt met nieuwe spiritualiteit meer zichtbaar. Een aanzienlijk aantal kerkverlaters heeft affiniteit met thema's en activiteiten uit de nieuwe spiritualiteit (De Hart, 2011), en zij vormen daarom een belangrijke factor in het proces van de-institutionalisering. Ondanks dat is er nauwelijks onderzoek gedaan naar deze groep, en met name weinig kwantitatief onderzoek. De groep nieuwe spirituelen dreigt te worden 'vergeten', zeker als het gaat over sociale betrokkenheid, omdat meestal alleen maar vergelijkingen worden gemaakt tussen kerkleden en niet-kerkleden. In zulke rapportages is deze groep 'onzichtbaar'. Dat is bijvoorbeeld het geval bij Schmeets, Van Herten en Frenken (2009), zie Berghuijs (2009).

− Het draagt bij aan de conceptualisering van spiritualiteit. Het populaire en commerciële gebruik van de term (Carrette en King, 2004; Heelas, 2008), en de 'secularisering' (Hanegraaff, 1998) van nieuwe spiritualiteit maakt dat het steeds moeilijker is om het begrip te definiëren en te onderscheiden van het religieuze en seculiere domein (zie b.v. Hill et al., 2000; Zinnbauer en Pargament, 2005; Salander, 2012; Westerink, 2012). In de media, op internet, in advertenties en in boekwinkels kan het woord 'spiritueel' worden aangetroffen in een veelvoud van combinaties, van 'spirituele' boeken en therapeuten, cursussen en workshops, tot 'spiritueel' tuinieren, afvallen en scheiden.[28] Het onderzoek draagt een voorstel aan voor afbakening van de

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[28] Zie b.v. http://www.amazon.com/Spiritual-Gardening-Creating-Sacred-Outdoors/dp/1930722249 ;
http://books.google.nl/books/about/Spiritual_Slimming.html?id=_VFDPK0FLkQC&redir_esc

groep mensen die bezig is met nieuwe spiritualiteit, op zodanige wijze dat hun niveau van sociale betrokkenheid kan worden vergeleken met dat van andere groepen of van de bevolking in het algemeen.
- Het onderzoekt het waarheidsgehalte van de kritische opmerkingen die zijn gemaakt over de doelgroep, en doet daarmee recht aan hen die er deel van uitmaken.

Het onderzoek is exploratief, neemt in het debat geen positie in, en formuleert geen hypothese. Het richt zich op het verhelderen van de discussie door middel van een literatuuronderzoek, gevolgd door een empirische studie. De onderzoeksvragen zijn:

1. Welke argumenten worden gebruikt in de discussie over de relatie tussen nieuwe spiritualiteit en sociale betrokkenheid?
2. Wat is spiritualiteit en hoe kan de groep mensen die bezig is met nieuwe spiritualiteit worden afgebakend?
3. Hoe kan sociale betrokkenheid het beste worden gedefinieerd en gemeten?
4. Zijn mensen die zich bezig houden met nieuwe spiritualiteit minder sociaal betrokken dan anderen?
5. Als er een relatie is tussen nieuwe spiritualiteit en sociale betrokkenheid, hoe komt die dan tot uitdrukking in het leven van mensen?

Vraag 4, 'Zijn mensen die zich bezig houden met nieuwe spiritualiteit minder sociaal betrokken dan anderen?' is de centrale vraag in dit onderzoek, en wijst in de richting van het vergelijken van groepen. Zo'n vraag kan het beste beantwoord worden met een representatief, kwantitatief onderzoek. Daarom is een enquête als instrument ingezet, waarin de 'spirituele kenmerken' van Nederlanders in beeld zijn gebracht, en ook hun niveau van sociale betrokkenheid is gemeten, waardoor een vergelijking tussen groepen mogelijk wordt. Daarbij is vooral gelet op de doelgroep aan de ene kant, en aanhangers van 'traditionele' (kerkelijke) religie en 'seculiere' groepen aan de andere kant. Het is niet zonder betekenis dat vraag 2 begint met 'spiritualiteit' in algemene zin, en vervolgens inzoomt op 'nieuwe spiritualiteit'. Het eerste, bredere deel van de vraag is meegenomen omdat spiritualiteit niet alleen leeft in de populaire, 'nieuwe' vormen. Spiritualiteit wordt door velen nog steeds beschouwd als onlosmakelijk verbonden aan religie (Zinnbauer en Pargament, 2005). Dit onderzoek probeert onder andere helder te krijgen of 'nieuwe spiritualiteit' duidelijk verschilt van 'spiritualiteit' in religieuze zin: of het vooral aangetroffen wordt buiten of ook binnen kerken en andere religieuze gemeenschappen.

Alle kwantitatieve gegevens zijn verkregen met behulp van het LISS panel van CentERdata in Tilburg[29]. In oktober 2009 is de vragenlijst (zie de appendices bij de hoofdstukken 3 en 4) voorgelegd aan een willekeurige, representatieve steekproef die bestond uit de helft van het panel (4402 respondenten). Het responspercentage was 60% (2622). Data uit eerdere enquêtes onder het panel zijn ook gebruikt. De informatie uit de enquête is aangevuld met een serie van tien diepte-interviews die inzicht geven in de aard van de spiritualiteit per respondent, de motivatie voor zijn of haar sociale betrokkenheid en de rol van spiritualiteit bij die sociale betrokkenheid. De interviews zijn gehouden gedurende de zomer van 2009 en de herfst van 2011. De hoofdstukken 1 t/m5 zijn gebaseerd op artikelen die in overleg met de daar genoemde medeauteurs tot stand zijn gekomen. Ik heb alle artikelen zelf geschreven en ben verantwoordelijk voor de inhoud ervan, maar om redenen van consistentie zal in wat volgt het persoonlijk voornaamwoord 'we' gebruikt worden in de tekst.

Hoofdstuk 1, '*Are people involved in new spirituality egocentric and lacking in social engagement? A critical review of the sources*' is een literatuuronderzoek waarin we de kritiek evalueren dat aanhangers van nieuwe spiritualiteit egocentrisch zijn en minder sociaal betrokken. Door de jaren heen wordt steeds weer aan deze discussie gerefereerd, soms in zeer extreme bewoordingen. De meeste auteurs herhalen echter slechts de kritiek die zij in hun literatuurbronnen aantreffen – of overdrijven die. Slechts een klein aantal onderschrijft de kritiek zelf, en er is vrijwel geen empirisch bewijs. We troffen daarentegen ook argumenten aan die de kritiek ondergraven. De discussie is complex, omdat de betrokken auteurs niet overeenstemmen in hun beschrijvingen van de groep waarom het gaat ('New Agers', 'mensen die bezig zijn met alternatieve spiritualiteit', of met 'ongebonden spiritualiteit') en van de aard van de kritiek ('genotzucht', 'narcisme', 'egocentrisme', 'zelfgenoegzaamheid', 'individualisme', gebrek aan 'sociale verantwoordelijkheden en verplichtingen', en 'zonder invloed in de wereld'). Als we proberen de uitingen van de kritische auteurs te integreren in een algemene beschrijving luidt die als volgt. De anti-institutionele, anti-dogmatische en zeer individualistische houding van aanhangers van nieuwe spiritualiteit heeft tot gevolg dat zij niet worden blootgesteld aan de oproep tot sociaal gedrag die uitgaat van groepen zoals kerkgemeenschappen die morele richtlijnen geven en sociale betrokkenheid prediken (Bruce, 2002). In plaats daarvan zijn zij vooral gericht op hun eigen spirituele ontwikkeling (zie o.a. Heelas, 1996). Ofschoon zij zich vaak verbonden zeggen te voelen met 'al wat is', zou dit gevoel van verbondenheid wel eens 'illusionair' (Van Harskamp, 2003) of 'magisch' (Farias en Lalljee, 2008) van aard kunnen zijn, en soms leiden tot een egocentrisch

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[29] Zie http://www.centerdata.nl/en/survey-research/mess-liss-panel, laatst bezocht op 11-11-2013.

leven waarin sociale normen en waarden nauwelijks een rol spelen (Höllinger, 2004). Velen beschouwen het als onmogelijk of onnodig moeite te doen om iets te veranderen aan de maatschappij (zie b.v. Bloch, 1998). Zij gebruiken hun spiritualiteit vooral om zich aan te passen aan de maatschappelijke structuren waar zij zo'n hekel aan zeggen te hebben. Onderzoekers die het niet eens zijn met de kritiek stellen bijvoorbeeld dat individualisme niet hetzelfde is als egocentrisme (De Hart en Dekker, 2006; Chandler, 2008), en dat aanhangers van nieuwe spiritualiteit net zoveel sociale contacten hebben als anderen (Chandler, 2011). Sommigen suggereren dat de sociale betrokkenheid van nieuwe spirituelen op een andere manier vorm krijgt, op meer individuele en informele basis (De Hart, 2007; Chandler, 2011).

De resultaten van de weinige empirische studies (Höllinger, 2004; Farias en Lalljee, 2008; Chandler, 2011; De Hart, 2011) zijn moeilijk vergelijkbaar, met als gevolg dat de discussie steeds opnieuw opduikt zonder dat er een beslissend antwoord komt. Wij zijn van mening dat elke poging om tot zo'n beslissend antwoord te komen moet beginnen met reflectie op een adequate afbakening van de doelgroep en op een adequate formulering van het concept 'sociale betrokkenheid'. Daarna kan de vraag 'Zijn aanhangers van nieuwe spiritualiteit minder sociaal betrokken dan anderen?' beantwoord worden door middel van een empirisch, kwantitatief onderzoek.

Hoofdstuk 2, '*Conceptions of spirituality among the Dutch population*', behandelt het eerste deel van onderzoeksvraag 2 ('Wat is spiritualiteit?'). We vroegen de respondenten in onze enquête wat zij onder spiritualiteit verstaan. Uit de antwoorden (N = 2313) blijkt dat 21% afstand neemt van spiritualiteit op een neutrale ('niets voor mij') of op een negatieve wijze ('onzin' e.d.). Dat percentage is zelfs 35% onder mensen met een 'seculiere' levensbeschouwing. Bovendien bleek spiritualiteit enigszins een 'eliteterm' te zijn, want lager opgeleiden weten vaker niet wat het is dan hoger opgeleiden. We analyseerden de inhoudelijke antwoorden met een systeem van codes die we ontwikkelden vanuit het materiaal zelf. De respondenten beschrijven spiritualiteit voornamelijk in cognitieve termen (54%), vooral in de vorm van algemene verwijzingen naar een transcendente werkelijkheid (zoals 'meer tussen hemel en aarde'). We zien ook veel beschrijvingen in ervaringstermen (29%, bijvoorbeeld 'de ervaring van contact met je diepste innerlijk'); daarna volgen beschrijvingen in consequentiële/morele (16%) en rituele (7%) termen. Verder ontdekten we een aantal patronen van combinaties van codes die regelmatig voorkwamen. Die patronen kunnen gerangschikt worden in een continuüm van 'spiritualiteiten' van puur seculier tot traditioneel religieus: spiritualiteit als geestelijke gezondheid – spiritualiteit als verantwoordelijkheid – spiritualiteit als het paranormale – spiritualiteit als innerlijkheid – spiritualiteit als de ervaring van het transcendente en niet-waarneembare – spiritualiteit als de ervaring van de immanente God – spiritualiteit als de transcendente God – spiritualiteit als een christelijke levenswijze.

De beschrijvingen van spiritualiteit gegeven door 'spirituele' respondenten binnen en buiten de kerken verschillen wel van elkaar, maar de verschillen zijn slechts relatief. Beide groepen beschrijven spiritualiteit voornamelijk in cognitieve termen, maar 'ongebonden spirituelen' gebruiken wat vaker ervaringstermen (met name gerelateerd aan verbondenheid met je diepste zelf en aan welbevinden). Kerkleden hechten relatief meer aandacht aan de consequentiële (morele) dimensie, en gebruiken met name meer uitdrukkingen gerelateerd aan de 'gouden regel'. We onderzochten ook de vraag of 'ongebonden spirituelen' spiritualiteit vaker dan anderen in egocentrische termen beschrijven, en dat was niet het geval. De algemene conclusie in dit hoofdstuk is dat in het Nederlands taalgebruik 'spiritualiteit' duidelijk los is komen te staan van 'religie', en zich ontwikkeld heeft tot een woord dat vooral gebruikt wordt om te verwijzen naar transcendentie en positieve innerlijke gevoelens, die lang niet altijd met religie verband houden.

Hoofdstuk 3, '*Being 'spiritual' and being 'religious' in Europe: Diverging life orientations*', benadert de vraag 'Wat is spiritualiteit?' vanuit een andere empirische invalshoek. We vroegen ons af of mensen die zichzelf beschouwen als 'spiritueel' ingesteld verschillen van hen die zich 'religieus' ingesteld qua overtuigingen, ervaringen en praktijken. In tegenstelling tot de situatie in bijvoorbeeld de Verenigde Staten, waar een meerderheid zich zowel 'spiritueel' als 'religieus' noemt, en waar mensen spiritualiteit associëren met gevestigde religie, (zie b.v. Marler en Hadaway, 2002), is in onze steekproef het percentage van mensen dat zich 'spiritueel en religieus' noemt veel lager. Dat komt niet alleen door een grote 'seculiere' groep van respondenten, gedefinieerd als hen die zich 'noch spiritueel, noch religieus' noemen (40%), maar vooral ook doordat een aanzienlijk aandeel van de bevolking zich als ofwel 'alleen spiritueel' (en niet 'religieus') ziet, of als 'alleen religieus' (en niet 'spiritueel'). De twee laatstgenoemde categorieën samen vormen een grotere groep (35%) dan degenen die zich 'spiritueel en religieus' noemen (25%). Dat betekent dat, in elk geval op het niveau van zelfdefinities, er een verschil is tussen 'religieus' en 'spiritueel' zijn. We toonden aan dat deze verschillende oriëntaties weerspiegeld worden in twee coherente sets van variabelen gerelateerd aan overtuigingen, ervaringen en praktijken. De eerste set, die we 'nieuwe spiritualiteit' genoemd hebben, omvat onder andere geloof in monisme, syncretisme, het paranormale en reïncarnatie, ervaringen van verbondenheid en niet-religieuze transcendentie, en de praktijken die we samenvatten onder de namen zelfperfectionering en esoterische kennisverwerving. De tweede coherente set variabelen, die we 'traditionele religie' genoemd hebben, omvat onder andere het geloof in hemel en hel, kerkbezoek, gebed, en de ervaring van een relatie met God. Het viel op dat de 'alleen spirituelen' en de 'alleen religieuzen' een minder 'intensief' spiritueel/religieus leven lijken te hebben dan degenen die zich 'spiritueel en religieus' noemen. Laatstgenoemde categorie heeft een affiniteit met traditioneel religieuze overtuigingen en praktijken, die sterker is dan die van de 'alleen

religieuzen', maar ook een affiniteit met nieuwe spiritualiteit, die sterker is dan die van de 'alleen spirituelen'. Het lijkt erop dat voor deze groep – een kwart van onze steekproef – 'spiritueel' en 'religieus' nog geen uiteenlopende levensoriëntaties zijn geworden. Ook vormt dit gegeven een sterke aanwijzing dat nieuwe spiritualiteit zich zowel binnen als buiten kerkelijke kaders ontwikkelt.

Hoofdstuk 4, '*New spirituality and social engagement*', behandelt het tweede deel van onderzoeksvraag 2: 'Hoe kan de groep mensen die bezig is met nieuwe spiritualiteit worden afgebakend?' en onderzoeksvraag 3: 'Hoe kan sociale betrokkenheid het beste worden gedefinieerd en gemeten?', en beantwoordt vervolgens ook de centrale onderzoeksvraag 4: 'Zijn mensen die zich bezig houden met nieuwe spiritualiteit minder sociaal betrokken dan anderen?'

Het is bekend dat de grote verscheidenheid aan uitingen van 'nieuwe spiritualiteit' het moeilijk maakt het begrip te definiëren. In de hoofstukken 2 en 3 is dit nog eens bevestigd. Het ter wille van een kwantitatieve studie identificeren van wie wel en wie niet tot de groep behoort die zich met 'nieuwe spiritualiteit' bezighoudt, is minstens zo moeilijk. In hoofdstuk 1 zagen we al dat de kritische auteurs vrij vaag zijn in hun aanduiding van de doelgroep. Als er al specificaties worden gegeven, zijn er twee tendensen. Sommige auteurs leggen de nadruk op institutionele aspecten: zij schrijven over mensen die zich spiritueel en/of religieus noemen maar niet verbonden zijn aan een religieuze groepering (Hay en Hunt, 2000; Fuller, 2001; Chandler, 2008, 2011). Wij noemen de aldus aangeduide doelgroep: 'ongebonden spirituelen'. Anderen leggen meer nadruk op de inhoud van de spiritualiteit die zij bestuderen, en beschrijven de ideologie, ervaringen en praktijken die zij typerend voor nieuwe spiritualiteit achten (b.v. Bloch, 1998; Heelas, 1996; Farias en Lalljee, 2008). Wij noemen de door hen beschreven groep: 'nieuwe spirituelen'. Omdat ons onderzoek een reactie is op de geuite kritiek, besloten we de doelgroep op pragmatische wijze af te bakenen in overeenstemming met deze twee tendensen. Dat is vrij eenvoudig te doen voor de groep 'ongebonden spirituelen' met behulp van enkele vragen in een enquête, die neerkomen op een zelfdefinitie als 'spiritueel' en 'ongebonden' (niet behorend tot een religieuze of spirituele groep). Deze doelgroep kan qua sociale betrokkenheid het beste vergeleken worden met enerzijds degenen die 'gebonden' zijn (behoren tot een religieuze of spirituele groep), en anderzijds met hen die 'niet gebonden' en 'niet spiritueel' zijn (de 'seculier-1' groep). Het afbakenen van de groep 'nieuwe spirituelen' is ingewikkelder. Er zijn echter steeds meer auteurs die wijzen op een gemeenschappelijk of 'typerend' wereldbeeld dat ten grondslag ligt aan de vele vormen van nieuwe spiritualiteit die op het eerste gezicht zo van elkaar verschillen (zie o.a. Bloch, 1998; Hanegraaff, 1998; Hammer, 2004; Aupers en Houtman, 2006; Heelas et al., 2005; Possamai, 2005). Daarom hebben we affiniteit met dergelijke uitingen als criterium genomen om de doelgroep van de

'nieuwe spirituelen' af te bakenen. In hoofdstuk 3 hadden we al vastgesteld dat het mogelijk is twee coherente sets variabelen samen te stellen van overtuigingen, ervaringen en praktijken, die representatief zijn voor 'nieuwe spiritualiteit' en 'traditionele religie'. Om te bepalen welke respondenten tot de doelgroep behoren, gebruikten we een clusteranalyse, die resulteerde in drie clusters: (1) de doelgroep, die hoog scoort op 'nieuwe spiritualiteit' en laag op 'traditionele religie', (2) de 'traditioneel religieuzen', waarvoor het omgekeerde geldt, en (3) de 'seculier-2' groep die met geen van beide sets variabelen affiniteit heeft.

Ons concept van sociale betrokkenheid werkten we ook in hoofdstuk 4 uit. Sociale betrokkenheid kan gezien worden als sociaal kapitaal, zoals Chandler (2011) dat doet: het deel uitmaken van netwerken van familie, vrienden en andere relaties, maatschappelijk vertrouwen en gedeelde waarden, politieke activiteit, en betrokkenheid bij verschillende maatschappelijke organisaties (Putnam, 2000). Maar als we dergelijke indicatoren zouden gebruiken om onze onderzoeksvraag te beantwoorden, ontbreekt daaraan de dimensie van motivatie. Mensen kunnen intensieve sociale netwerken onderhouden en toch nog steeds egocentrisch zijn en weinig solidariteit met anderen tonen. Deel uitmaken van netwerken kan op zich net zo goed voortkomen uit egoïstische motieven (status, macht); deelname aan politieke acties en demonstraties kan net zo goed voortkomen uit persoonlijke overwegingen (staken voor een hoger loon, demonstreren tegen de fabriek in je achtertuin). Natuurlijk zijn in het dagelijks leven motivaties vaak gemengd: deels egoïstisch en deels altruïstisch (Batson, Ahmad, en Tsang, 2002). Voor ons onderzoek is echter een 'smallere' definitie van sociale betrokkenheid noodzakelijk, een definitie die het tegengestelde is van egocentrisme, en die onderscheid maakt tussen gedrag dat wel en dat niet gemotiveerd is door egocentrische motivatie. Daarom definieerden we sociale betrokkenheid als volgt:

Sociale betrokkenheid is betrokkenheid bij anderen, die ten goede komt aan individuen, groepen, of de maatschappij als geheel.

Deze definitie impliceert een houding van solidariteit met anderen in combinatie met prosociale activiteiten. Om solidariteit te meten in onze enquête, gebruikten we een schaal voor filantropie (Schuyt, Smit, en Bekkers, 2004); ook vroegen we naar het belang dat mensen hechten aan een aantal waarden zoals hulpvaardig, vergevingsgezind en liefhebbend zijn. Om prosociale activiteiten te meten, vroegen we naar donaties, lidmaatschappen van organisaties, milieubewust leven, vrijwilligerswerk en mantelzorg. In het geval van donaties en lidmaatschappen vroegen we alleen naar organisaties die zich bezig houden met (a) humanitaire hulp, mensenrechten, minderheden en migranten, en (b) milieubescherming, vrede of dierenrechten. Dit met als doel om persoonlijk

voordeel zo veel mogelijk uit te sluiten. In het geval van vrijwilligerswerk vroegen we naar een ruimere diversiteit aan organisaties, en we maakten onderscheid tussen vrijwilligerswerk voor religieuze en niet-religieuze organisaties.

De twee doelgroepen blijken elkaar voor slechts ongeveer de helft te overlappen. De groep 'nieuwe spirituelen' (24% van het totaal) is iets groter dan de groep 'ongebonden spirituelen' (22%). Dit betekent dat affiniteit met de ideologie, ervaringen en praktijken die horen bij nieuwe spiritualiteit voorkomt onder een bredere groep dan degenen die zich ongebonden en spiritueel noemen. Bovendien heeft maar liefst 29% van de 'gebonden' groep affiniteit met nieuwe spiritualiteit. Dit betekent dat nieuwe spiritualiteit ook in de kerken voet aan de grond heeft gekregen. Aan de andere kant heeft 6% van degenen die zich 'ongebonden' en 'niet spiritueel' noemen (de 'seculier-1' groep) ook affiniteit met nieuwe spiritualiteit. Dat betekent dat nieuwe spiritualiteit blijkbaar deel van de mainstream is geworden.

Ondanks de onvolledige overlap tussen de doelgroepen, zijn hun scores op de variabelen van sociale betrokkenheid vrijwel gelijk. In de meeste gevallen scoren de doelgroepen lager dan de 'gebonden' of 'traditioneel religieuze' groepen, maar hoger dan de 'seculiere' groepen. Ze onderscheiden zich in feite niet van de bevolking als geheel. Daarom is het antwoord op de onderzoeksvraag tweevoudig: nee, mensen die zich bezig houden met nieuwe vormen van spiritualiteit zijn niet minder sociaal betrokken dan 'anderen' in het algemeen; en ja, ze zijn minder sociaal betrokken dan mensen die bij een religieuze organisatie horen of 'traditioneel religieus' ingesteld zijn. Alleen in hun betrokkenheid bij natuur en milieu, vrede of dierenrechten scoorden zij hoger dan de andere groepen.

In een aantal regressieanalyses onderzochten we de relatieve invloed van spirituele, religieuze en demografische variabelen op sociale betrokkenheid. Demografische factoren blijken de meeste invloed te hebben, vooral het opleidingsniveau, dat een belangrijke rol speelt bij alle variabelen van sociale betrokkenheid behalve mantelzorg. Hoger opgeleiden als groep zijn in het algemeen meer sociaal betrokken dan lager opgeleiden. Leeftijd en geslacht zijn ook van belang: een hogere leeftijd en vrouw zijn, zijn in veel gevallen gerelateerd aan hogere niveaus van sociale betrokkenheid. Alleen in het geval van vrijwilligerswerk voor niet-religieuze instellingen treden mannen meer op de voorgrond. De enige spirituele/religieuze variabelen die relatief belangrijk zijn voor sociale betrokkenheid zijn gevoelens van verbondenheid (met jezelf, anderen en de natuur) en spirituele transformatie (belang hechten aan zelfkennis en zelfperfectionering). Een hoger niveau van verbondenheid is gerelateerd aan hogere scores op filantropie, donaties en milieubewust leven; een hoger niveau van spirituele transformatie is gerelateerd aan hogere scores op filantropie, donaties, milieubewust leven, en lidmaatschap van organisaties voor milieubescherming. Verbondenheid en spirituele transformatie zijn echter geen

heel specifieke religieuze of spirituele karakteristieken, maar staan voor een aantal gevoelens en opinies over jezelf en relaties. Het is opmerkelijk dat in ons onderzoek geen van de variabelen gerelateerd aan traditionele religie (zoals kerkbezoek) behoort tot de belangrijkste voorspellers van sociale betrokkenheid.

In het addendum bij hoofdstuk 4 hebben we enkele aanvullende analyses opgenomen om meer inzicht te krijgen in de resultaten, en in het bijzonder in de 'middenpositie' van de doelgroepen met betrekking tot sociale betrokkenheid, tussen de 'seculieren' en de 'gebonden' of 'traditioneel religieuze' groepen. De grotere sociale betrokkenheid van de doelgroepen in vergelijking met de 'seculiere' groepen kan eenvoudig toegeschreven worden aan hun hoger opleidingsniveau, hun groter percentage aan vrouwen, en hun hogere scores op zowel verbondenheid als spirituele transformatie. Het lagere niveau van sociale betrokkenheid van de doelgroepen in vergelijking met de 'gebonden' en 'traditioneel religieuze' groepen kan eigenlijk alleen verklaard worden door hun lagere gemiddelde leeftijd. De andere belangrijke onafhankelijke variabelen wijzen in de richting van meer sociale betrokkenheid.

We vergeleken ook de sociale betrokkenheid van kerkverlaters met die van voormalig 'seculieren' binnen de doelgroepen, en onderzochten de gevolgen van diverse alternatieve groepsconstructies. Al deze analyses wijzen in één richting: bij mensen die (traditionele) religie en (nieuwe) spiritualiteit combineren is er een grotere kans op een hoger niveau van sociale betrokkenheid. Blijkbaar kunnen nieuwe spiritualiteit en traditionele religie elkaar verrijken en versterken, en leidt dat tot de combinatie van een intensief spiritueel/religieus leven en een sterke sociale betrokkenheid.

Hoofdstuk 5, '*We are all connected like dominoes falling over*', voegt een kwalitatieve analyse toe aan het kwantitatieve materiaal van hoofdstuk 4. Het concentreert zich vooral op onderzoeksvraag 5 ('Als er een relatie is tussen nieuwe spiritualiteit en sociale betrokkenheid, hoe komt die dan tot uitdrukking in het leven van mensen?'). In hoofdstuk 4 was duidelijk geworden dat 'verbondenheid' en 'spirituele transformatie' de belangrijkste spirituele/religieuze variabelen zijn die gerelateerd zijn aan sociale betrokkenheid. We weten echter niet hoe die relatie 'werkt'. Daarom besloten we tot een serie van tien semi-gestructureerde interviews met individuen die tot één van onze doelgroepen behoren – de 'ongebonden spirituelen' – om meer inzicht te krijgen in de wijze waarop spiritualiteit in hun leven vorm krijgt en in de mogelijke relatie tussen hun spiritualiteit en sociale betrokkenheid. We begonnen de interviews met enkele brede vragen gerelateerd aan de levensgeschiedenis van de respondenten. Vervolgens vroegen we naar sociale activiteiten en spiritualiteit. In de analyse van de interviews gebruikten we de 'agency' en 'communion' thema's van McAdams et al. (1996) om het zicht op de rol van spiritualiteit in het leven van de geïnterviewden zo breed mogelijk te maken. 'Agency' thema's geven weer hoe het individu zich handhaaft en profileert ten opzichte van anderen; 'communion' thema's belichten hoe het individu functioneert als onderdeel van

een groter geheel. Onze interpretatie is dat egocentrisme hoort bij een 'agency' levensstijl, terwijl sociale betrokkenheid zoals wij dat definiëren (gemotiveerd door betrokkenheid bij anderen), hoort bij een 'communion' levensstijl. Om sociale betrokkenheid van onze respondenten te achterhalen, probeerden we te weten te komen wat de motivatie achter hun prosociale activiteiten was. In drie van de tien gevallen was er geen relatie tussen spiritualiteit en sociale betrokkenheid. Bij de andere zeven respondenten vonden we relationele patronen. Degenen bij wie een 'agency' levensstijl dominant was, neigden ertoe hun spiritualiteit vooral in te zetten om problemen te boven te komen en persoonlijke inzichten en ervaringen te verkrijgen. Zij hielpen echter ook anderen met hun spirituele inzichten en vaardigheden, en dat hielp henzelf weer om hun gevoel van eigenwaarde en zelfvertrouwen te vergroten. Dit patroon noemden we *Crisis, coping, and sharing*. Degenen bij wie een 'communion' levensstijl dominant was, neigden ertoe sociale betrokkenheid te tonen die voortkwam uit hun gevoel van verbondenheid met anderen in een patroon dat wij *Proactive connectedness* noemden. Verbondenheid in cognitieve of experiëntiële zin bleek een centraal thema te zijn in de sociale betrokkenheid van veel respondenten, maar deze verbondenheid maakte niet altijd deel uit van hun spiritualiteit. Hoewel we vonden dat spiritualiteit vaak verbondenheid inhoudt, is het omgekeerde dus niet noodzakelijkerwijs het geval.

In hoofdstuk 6, *'Conclusions and discussion',* vatten we de resultaten van het onderzoek samen in de volgorde van de onderzoeksvragen. Daarnaast reflecteren we op diverse methoden om (nieuwe) spiritualiteit te bestuderen, we vergelijken onze resultaten met die uit eerder onderzoek, en we bespreken de beperkingen van het onderzoek.

De vragen 'Wat is spiritualiteit?' en 'Hoe kan de groep mensen die zich bezighoudt met nieuwe spiritualiteit worden afgebakend?' kunnen op een aantal manieren beantwoord worden. Antwoorden moeten steeds in relatie met de context worden gezocht. In empirisch onderzoek is een definitie minder geschikt, omdat die opvattingen in- en uitsluit ten opzichte van de vele verschijningsvormen van 'spiritualiteit' in de praktijk. Datzelfde geldt ook voor spiritualiteitsschalen. Onderzoekers dienen zich bewust te zijn van verschillen tussen hun eigen interpretaties van spiritualiteit en die van hun respondenten. In kwantitatief onderzoek waarin de relatie tussen spiritualiteit en andere variabelen wordt bestudeerd, en in het bijzonder als die andere variabelen gerelateerd zijn aan gezondheid of welzijn, is het noodzakelijk om spiritualiteit 'smal' te definiëren en af te bakenen, omdat bij een brede definitie overlap met de afhankelijke variabelen ontstaat, en daardoor vals-positieve en tautologische relaties gevonden kunnen worden (vgl. Salander, 2012). Het nadeel van het gebruik van een smalle definitie is dan weer dat dan niet de relatie tussen de spiritualiteit van de respondenten en de andere variabelen wordt gemeten, maar die tussen een door de onderzoeker beperkte interpretatie van spiritualiteit en de andere variabelen. Het afbakenen van de groep 'nieuwe spirituelen' in ons eigen

onderzoek op basis van hun affiniteit met een aantal expressies uit de nieuwe spiritualiteit lijkt op het hanteren van een spiritualiteitsschaal, maar verschilt daar toch van. De gebruikte clusteranalyse resulteert in een flexibele afbakening op basis van een soort *family-resemblance* operationalisatie (Wittgenstein, [1953]/2001). Het gevaar van overlap met de afhankelijke variabelen van sociaal engagement is in ons geval niet aanwezig, omdat gezondheid en welbevinden daar geen deel van uitmaken. Van belang in relatie met de context is ook dat de expressies uit de nieuwe spiritualiteit ontleend zijn aan het werk van de kritische auteurs waar ons onderzoek een reactie op is. In algemene zin zijn wij echter van mening dat een bottom-up benadering van spiritualiteit in empirisch onderzoek de voorkeur geniet (vgl. Popp-Baier, 2010). Daarom maakt onze andere methode om de doelgroep af te bakenen gebruik van zelfdefinities ('Ik ben spiritueel ingesteld' en 'ik reken mezelf niet tot een spirituele of religieuze groep'). Zo'n zelfdefinitie kan nooit te breed of te smal of op welke wijze dan ook bevooroordeeld zijn (Saroglou, 2013). Het nadeel van deze methode is natuurlijk dat die geen informatie geeft over de inhoud van de spiritualiteit van 'spirituelen'. Dat nadeel kan deels verholpen worden door 'spirituele' mensen te vragen wat zij onder spiritualiteit verstaan, op de wijze die we in hoofdstuk 2 beschreven hebben, of door interviews, zoals in hoofdstuk 5. In onze ervaring kan de combinatie van een aantal verschillende methoden de resultaten van elk van die methoden verrijken en de nadelen ervan elimineren of tenminste verminderen.

Nieuwe spiritualiteit is zeker geen 'onzichtbare religie' (Luckman, 1967; Bibby, 1983), maar zij is onderdeel gaan uitmaken van de mainstream. Ook is nieuwe spiritualiteit zeker niet 'ontwrichtend voor de samenleving', zoals Chandler (2011) de kritische geluiden samenvatte. De resultaten van ons onderzoek liggen in feite in het verlengde van die van Chandler (2011): beide studies belichten aspecten van het maatschappelijk functioneren van aanhangers van nieuwe spiritualiteit. Chandler laat zien dat ze zeker niet in isolement leven, en wij voegen eraan toe dat ze een 'normaal', dat wil zeggen gemiddeld niveau van sociale betrokkenheid hebben in de zin van iets over hebben voor anderen zonder er iets voor terug te verwachten. We hebben aangetoond dat de invloed van nieuwe spiritualiteit op sociale betrokkenheid beperkt is tot gevoelens van verbondenheid (met zelf, anderen en de natuur), en spirituele transformatie (belang van zelfkennis en zelfperfectionering). Die variabelen kunnen geïnterpreteerd worden als het streven naar een balans tussen innerlijke harmonie en 'uitreiken' naar anderen. Daarom achten we het plausibel dat nieuwe spirituelen vooral blijk geven van solidariteit op kleinere en niet-institutionele schaal, bijvoorbeeld in meer individuele en informele situaties gerelateerd aan hun eigen biografische situatie, zoals Chandler (2011) en De Hart (2007) suggereren. Dat past bij de visie van Heelas (2008) dat nieuwe spiritualiteit minder radicaal is dan in het verleden, en bijdraagt aan de kwaliteit van leven door kleinschalige en relatief gematigde initiatieven. Daarom denken

wij dat nieuwe spiritualiteit invloed heeft op de maatschappij van binnenuit en van onderop, en bijdraagt tot verandering, uitgaande van het motto: verander de wereld en begin bij jezelf.

De belangrijkste bevindingen uit dit proefschrift kunnen als volgt worden samengevat:

- In de literatuur over nieuwe spiritualiteit en sociale betrokkenheid bleek sprake van napraten, overdrijven, onjuist gebruik van terminologie, en gebrek aan empirisch bewijs voor de kritiek dat nieuwe spirituelen minder sociaal betrokken zijn dan anderen.
- 'Spiritualiteit' blijkt zich onder Nederlanders duidelijk ontwikkeld te hebben als een woord dat los staat van religie, tot een term die vooral wordt gebruikt in relatie tot transcendentie en positieve persoonlijke gevoelens. Een groot deel van de 'seculiere' (niet 'spiritueel' en niet 'religieus' ingestelde) mensen distantieert zich van spiritualiteit, in neutrale ('niets voor mij') of zelfs negatieve zin ('vaag', 'onzin').
- Het percentage van mensen dat zich bezig houdt met nieuwe vormen van spiritualiteit in Nederland kan worden afgebakend als een groep van 22% zelfbenoemde 'ongebonden spirituelen', maar ook als een groep van 24% die we 'nieuwe spirituelen' noemden en die we selecteerden op basis van hun affiniteit met een aantal 'typerende' kenmerken van nieuwe spiritualiteit. Omdat deze twee groepen elkaar slechts gedeeltelijk overlappen, zou het totale aantal mensen dat zich in Nederland op één of andere wijze met nieuwe spiritualiteit bezig houdt wel eens meer dan een kwart van de bevolking kunnen bedragen. Daarbij moeten we bedenken dat het belang van spiritualiteit binnen de groepen sterk kan uiteenlopen.
- Mensen die zich bezig houden met nieuwe vormen van spiritualiteit blijken zich niet te onderscheiden van de bevolking in algemene zin qua sociale betrokkenheid. Ze zijn weliswaar minder sociaal betrokken dan de religieus 'gebonden' mensen en dan mensen die affiniteit hebben met 'traditionele religie', maar méér dan mensen met een 'seculiere' levenshouding. In hun betrokkenheid bij organisaties voor natuur- en milieubescherming, vrede, of dierenrechten, scoren zij zelfs hoger dan alle andere groepen.
- De rol van nieuwe spiritualiteit bij sociale betrokkenheid is beperkt in vergelijking met de invloed van demografische kenmerken (opleidingsniveau, leeftijd, en geslacht). De twee 'spirituele' variabelen die relatief het meest van belang zijn voor sociale betrokkenheid zijn de ervaring van verbondenheid (met het eigen innerlijk, met anderen en met de natuur) en de ideologie van spirituele transformatie (het belang dat wordt toegekend aan zelfkennis en zelfperfectionering).
- Er zijn geen 'spirituele' of 'religieuze' variabelen die de lagere sociale betrokkenheid van de doelgroepen verklaren ten opzichte van de groepen van religieus 'gebonden' mensen en mensen die affiniteit hebben met

traditionele religie. De enige variabele die bijdraagt tot de verklaring van het verschil is de lagere gemiddelde leeftijd van de doelgroepen.

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Curriculum Vitae

Joan Tine Berghuijs was born on September 27, 1955 in The Hague, The Netherlands. She obtained a MSc in Environmental Sciences from Wageningen University in 1983 (*cum laude*) and subsequently worked as a researcher at the Institute of Land and Water Management in Wageningen and as a secretary at the Health Council of the Netherlands. After a period of active involvement in local politics, she started to study World Religions at Leiden University, where she obtained her BA (*cum laude*) in 2005 and a Research Master in Religious Studies (*cum laude*) in 2008. Subsequently, she was appointed as a PhD candidate at the Department of Theology (now Philosophy and Religious Studies) of the Faculty of Humanities at Utrecht University, where she wrote this thesis. Next to her PhD research project, she lectured in 'Religious Communication' and 'New Spirituality'. She is currently employed as a postdoctoral researcher in the project 'Multiple Religious Belonging' at the Department of Philosophy of Religion and Comparative Study of Religions of the Faculty of Theology of VU University in Amsterdam. Her latest publications were in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, the *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, and the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion.*

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