Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review 2024, XX:XX 1–28
https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srae009

The Spiritual Turn and "Feminization": Turning a Gender Lens on Spirituality

Galen Watts*
University of Waterloo, Canada

Francesco Cerchiaro
Radboud University, Netherlands

Landon Schnabel
Cornell University, USA

Although women and men identify as "spiritual" in similar numbers, far more women participate in the holistic milieu. We seek to solve this "gender puzzle" by fleshing out the gender scripts the holistic milieu fosters, and their varying relationships to the wider gender order. Surveying existing scholarship, we show that, for women, participation serves to naturalize a script of postfeminist femininity that combines gender essentialism with politically liberal commitments, is consonant with "difference" feminism, and holds an accommodationist relationship to the wider gender order. By contrast, for men, participation in the holistic milieu naturalizes a script of feminine masculinity (or male femininity) that, while also shaped by postfeminist culture, is comparatively counter-hegemonic, embodying a more radical challenge to the current gender order. This theoretical perspective enables us to explain not only why more women than men participate in the holistic milieu, but also why some women opt out, while some men opt in. Furthermore, it illuminates the pivotal place of gender in ongoing trends in the religious, and increasingly spiritual, landscape.

Key words: Spirituality; New Age; Feminization; Gender; Intersectionality.

Direct correspondence to Galen Watts, Department of Sociology and Legal studies, Office 2059, PAS Building, N2L 3G1, Waterloo, ON, Canada. Email: galen.watts@uwaterloo.ca.

INTRODUCTION

Although women and men identify as "spiritual" in similar numbers, far more women participate in the holistic milieu. We seek to solve this "gender puzzle" by fleshing out the gender scripts the holistic milieu fosters, and their varying relationships to the wider gender order. Surveying existing scholarship, we show that, for women, participation serves to naturalize a script of *postfeminist femininity* that combines gender essentialism with politically liberal commitments, is consonant with "difference" feminism, and holds an accommodationist relationship to the wider gender order. By contrast, for men, participation in the holistic milieu naturalizes a script of *feminine masculinity* (or male femininity) that, while also shaped by postfeminist culture, is comparatively counter-hegemonic, embodying a more radical challenge to the current gender order. This theoretical perspective enables us to explain not only why more women than men participate in the holistic milieu, but also why some women opt out, while some men opt in. Furthermore, it illuminates the pivotal place of gender in ongoing trends in the religious, and increasingly spiritual, landscape.

The religious landscape is changing. Across North America and Western Europe, traditional religious organizations—especially the Christian churches—struggle to retain active members (Drescher 2016; Thiessen and Wilkins-Laflamme 2020). Some suggest secularization is the only story of the day (Bruce 2017; Voas 2009; Voas and Chaves 2016; Voas and Crockett 2005), yet the rapid decline of established churches has been coterminous with another development—what has been labeled a "spiritual turn" (Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Houtman and Mascini 2002; Steensland, Kucinskas, and Sun 2022; Watts 2022b). The growing embrace of "spirituality," in tandem with the moniker *spiritual but not religious* (SBNR) and shifts toward a therapeutic self-help "religion" even among secularists, illustrates this shift (Davari-Torshizi 2023; Kucinskas and Stewart 2022; Parsons 2020; Steensland, Kucinskas, and Sun 2022; Tromp, Pless and Houtman 2022). Studies make clear that the turn from "religion" to "spirituality" does not challenge the fact of overall religious decline (Kasselstrand, Zuckerman, and Cragun 2023; Wilkins-Laflamme 2021). Yet, this fact aside, the empirical significance of the spiritual turn cannot be denied. SBNR identity overwhelms atheist identity among Americans (Jones, Cox, and Raney 2017) and, while particularly common in the United States (22% of Americans identify as SBNR; Alper et al. 2023), it is a substantial phenomenon in Western Europe as well (11% of Europeans; Pew Research Center 2018). While the SBNR label carries diverse meanings across national contexts (Ammerman 2014; Steensland, Kucinskas, and Sun 2018), it nevertheless marks more than a semantic shift. The growing literature on the spiritual turn highlights a variety of expressions and labels—including but by no means limited to "spirituality"—that in many (if not most) instances signals a coherent meaning system illustrating a "New Age" discourse (Hanegraaf 1996; Heelas 1996; Watts 2022a; Tromp, Pless, and Houtman 2024).[1]

[1]The scholarship on spirituality is replete with neologisms; common terms for this discourse include "holistic spirituality," "alternative spirituality," and "self-spirituality." For simplicity's sake, we refer to it as *spirituality*.

The emergent spiritual discourse suggests that within each individual lies an authentic self, which it is their life's purpose to realize. This "true self" enables every individual unique access to the divine or the sacred, which is believed to permeate the material world as an impersonal spirit or life force. As a result, new perspectives focusing on self-realization and individualization across the West enjoin individuals to "look within" for moral and epistemological guidance, finding and actualizing their "true self" (Schnabel et al. 2023). Research shows this discourse has become popular in North America (Watts 2022b), the UK (Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Trusting and Woodhead 2018), and Western Europe more generally (Altglas 2014; Knoblauch 2008; Lambert 2004)—although it remains the case that it exhibits regional variations (e.g., Fedele 2012; Palmisano 2010; Torre, Zuniga, and Huet 2016).

What caused this turn to spirituality? Heelas and Woodhead (2005) note that since the eighteenth century, Western culture has placed increased cultural emphasis on subjective-life (see Taylor 1991). The basic thrust of this "massive subjective turn," they contend, has been "a turn away from life lived in terms of external or 'objective' roles, duties and obligations, and a turn towards life lived by reference to one's own subjective experiences" (Heelas and Woodhead 2005:2). Despite much earlier origins in the Romantic movement, it was not until the 1960s that it was incorporated into the cultural mainstream—a by-product of the counter-culture reshaping the hearts and minds of the baby-boomer generation (Bellah et al. 1985; Roof 1999; Wuthnow 1998). Since this period, as Heelas and Woodhead remark, "both self-understanding and socio-cultural arrangements have been developing in a 'person-centred' or 'subjectivity-centred' direction" (5). Present across an array of institutional spheres—education, healthcare, and the arts—this progressive shift from materialist to postmaterialist values has been widespread, as Inglehart (1977) began documenting in the 1970s. Hence Heelas and Woodhead propose what they call the *subjectivization thesis* to explain the turn to spirituality: the cultural logic of the subjective turn aligns with that of spirituality—the sacralization of the inner self.

Houtman and Aupers (2007) offer a complementary hypothesis they label the *detraditionalization thesis* that similarly highlights the sacralization of individual liberty and a concomitant rejection of traditional values. Drawing upon insights from the secularization paradigm (Tschannen 1991), they note that institutional differentiation leads religion—and with it, the religious sphere—to become one among many ways to seek meaning, explain uncertainty, and structure life. Religion no longer functions as a "sacred canopy," failing to offer the existential certitude it once did in premodern societies (Berger 1967). This fragmentation of the sacred canopy means individuals in late modernity are confronted with a pluralism that corrodes the authority of traditional values bound up with the hegemony of Christianity. Of this process of "detraditionalization," Houtman and Aupers (2007:308) write: "As external and authoritative sources of meaning and identity lose their grip on individuals, the range of biographical and lifestyles choices nevertheless widens considerably." While some experience this as

liberating, it can also be disorienting—individuals today are forced to choose from a dizzying array of life and identity options (Berger, Berger, and Kellner 1973). Houtman and Aupers contend this pluralism buttresses the cultural logic of subjectivization. As the authority of all external authorities—be they religious, scientific, or otherwise—is weakened, individuals must increasingly rely on their own subjective experiences, granting what they *feel within* increased moral and epistemic authority.

A notable consequence of the subjectivization and detraditionalization theses, as they were originally articulated, is that while they seemed to account for general trends, they were nevertheless unable to make sense of a specific, yet stubbornly recurring, finding: while women are a bit more likely to identify as SBNR,[2] far more women than men are active in the holistic milieu—the associational territory comprising spiritual activities, workshops, and organizations (these include but are certainly not limited to: acupressure, acupuncture, aromatherapy, art therapy, astrology, circle dancing, energy management workshops, flower essences therapy, foot massage, healing groups, homeopathy, hypnotherapy, kinaesiology, massage, meditation groups, meridian therapy, naturopathy, nutritional therapy, osteopathy, pagan activities, palm readings, play therapy, psychic consultancy, reflexology, reiki group, shiatsu, spinal touch therapy, vision therapy, wild women groups, women's spirituality groups, and yoga groups).[3] Indeed, the asymmetry in active involvement is striking. Heelas and Woodhead (2005:94) found in their large-scale study of the holistic milieu in England that 80% of participants were female, 78% of groups were led or facilitated by women, and 80% of one-to-one practitioners were women. Since then, a host of studies have replicated their findings (for a review see Keshet and Simchai 2014). The highly gendered pattern of active involvement in the holistic milieu suggests theories of subjectivization and detraditionalization, as general explanations suggesting society-wide shifts, miss part of the story since it remains unclear why women would have been more affected or shaped by these macro social processes than men (Houtman and Mascini 2002). A puzzle emerges, therefore, about why arguably general macro patterns affecting people across society (i.e., the spiritual turn) would be so imbalanced with ratios (e.g., 80% to 20%) far surpassing many other gender gaps, including gender gaps in religiosity.

In response to this "New Age gender puzzle," proponents have endorsed what they call *gendering* their theories (Houtman and Aupers 2008; Woodhead 2008a,

[2]In the United States, those identifying as SBNR are 54% women and 46% men (Jones, Cox, and Raney 2017).

[3]Heelas and Woodhead (2005) write, "The primary concern of the Kendal Project was to study what we came to think of as the *heartlands* of religious and spiritual life…. One was obvious: the very public activities of church and chapel, a heartland we came to call the *congregational domain*…. The other was less obvious: the more 'invisible' activities of what is often called alternative or New Age spirituality—a heartland we came to refer to as the *holistic milieu*" (8). For more on the holistic milieu see the appendix of *The Spiritual Revolution*.

2008b). Building on structural location theories of religious differences (e.g., Vaus and McAllister 1987), Woodhead (2008a) highlights the fact that, in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, the public world of work and politics became the primary site of men, while women were relegated to the private domestic sphere. Stereotypes of men as "breadwinner" and women as "homemaker" and "caretaker" emerged, which began to change as women entered the workforce en masse but, nevertheless men continue to derive comparatively more of their sense of identity from work and women from caretaking (Woodhead 2008b). According to Woodhead, women face gender-specific burdens and anxieties that men do not: men have more opportunities to seek the fulfillment and self-realization emphasized by processes of subjectivization through work and culturally dominant leisure pursuits (e.g., sports). However, because women's primary role is associated with the domestic sphere, and because they face the added time burden of domestic work—what Hochschild (1989) referred to as the "second shift"—this option is less available to them. In turn, Woodhead reasons that women are vulnerable to a kind of *double deprivation*—deprivation due to their work role as well as their traditional role of caretaker—which makes them far more likely to seek meaning and fulfillment in the holistic milieu. Furthermore, women's greater existential insecurity and lack of social status can promote looking beyond "worldly" pursuits and seek affirming communal experiences (Schnabel 2016).

In a similar vein, Houtman and Aupers (2008) contend that the holistic milieu provides a context where women can seek subjective satisfaction and realize their "true selves" away from the potentially repressive and alienating spheres of work and home. They conclude, "Post-traditional women are… more likely than post-traditional men to be haunted by questions of meaning and identity… evoked by detraditionalization and that stimulate late-modern individuals to explore the depths of their souls—"What is it that I really want?", "Is this really the sort of life I want to live?", "What sort of person am I, really?". Post-traditional women are more likely than post-traditional men to embark on a spiritual quest and sacralise their selves…." (Houtman and Aupers 2008:110)

Now, on the face of it, these gendered versions of the subjectivization and detraditionalization theses seem to retain the integrity of the original versions, while offering a compelling explanation for the gender puzzle. The problem, however, is that they are not borne out by the empirical data.

Trzebiatowska and Bruce (2012) observe that, according to these modified theses, women who experience less satisfaction in the public world, have more family and caregiving concerns, and face deprivation should be the most involved in the holistic milieu. They reason, in turn, that women who belong to the working class rather than middle- to upper-classes, married women, and mothers should be those most likely to seek refuge in the holistic milieu. Yet this is not the case. On the contrary, Heelas and Woodhead's work makes clear that the holistic milieu is most popular among university-educated middle-class women (especially teachers, healthcare practitioners, social workers, and the like)—precisely

those who are most likely to enjoy and embrace their working roles. Furthermore, Trzebiatowska and Bruce note that, according to the gendered versions of these theories, it should be married women with children who are most drawn to the holistic milieu. But, revisiting Heelas and Woodhead's own data, they observe that "participants were less likely than average to be married and had fewer than average children" (Trzebiatowska and Bruce 2012:69). Women who are more disadvantaged, who are married, and who are mothers are more religious and may be more likely to generally identify as "spiritual," yet it is often the more privileged and/or independent women who are found as active participants in the posttraditional holistic milieu—as well-illustrated by participation in, for example, yoga, reiki, acupuncture, art therapy, and mindfulness meditation retreats.

How then to resolve the "New Age gender puzzle?" In a follow-up article, Trzebiatowska and Bruce (2013:24) make important strides toward an answer, noting that "Much of the holistic spirituality milieu is designed by women for women." In their view, the gender puzzle may lie in the lack of engagement among males, as opposed to the existence of specific structurally induced needs in women. Indeed, given that "spiritual" identity is not nearly as skewed as active participation in the holistic milieu, they contend the answer may lie less in initial predispositions and more in processes of *how the activities themselves are gendered*. Trzebiatowska and Bruce (2013) argue that a feedback loop exists, whereby the high number of women begets more women, while discouraging men from joining and staying, stressing that *both* spirituality and the holistic milieu are gender-typed *feminine*. Research in this area does in fact repeatedly observe that spiritual discourse and practices have "feminine" traits and qualities, center the experiences and interests of women as a group, and explicitly contest hegemonic forms of masculinity (e.g., Fedele and Knibbe 2020; Keshet and Simchai 2014; McGuire 2008; Sointu and Woodhead 2008; Zwissler 2007). Trzebiatowska and Bruce suggest men's reluctance to enter and remain within the holistic milieu is ultimately the result of a fear of stigma, masculinity threat, and being associated with femininity: "Women risk less of a social stigma if they associate themselves with New Age activities because the latter are perceived as compatible with a feminine worldview" (38).

We think Trzebiatowska and Bruce (2013:37) are correct in emphasizing processes of "feminization" to explain the fact that more women participate in the holistic milieu than men. However, significant questions remain. For one, while it is true that "the content of the holistic spirituality milieu is heavily oriented to women" (Trzebiatowska and Bruce 2012:71), it is also true that many women do not engage with it at all. Furthermore, structural inequalities and cultural resources may also contribute to why women, and perhaps especially women who are frustrated with the arguably patriarchal nature of some forms of organized religion, would choose to instead participate in the holistic milieu. The *feminization framework* leaves us with the question of why *some* women are attracted to the holistic milieu while others are not—a fact which broad appeals to the existence of "a feminine worldview" clearly fail to elucidate, given that some participants

are particularly progressive and may be less likely to be as traditionally "feminine" as active participants in organized religion. Moreover, how do we account for the men who participate in the holistic milieu?[4] And how should we account for the differences across occupations (both women *and* men in social, education and health professions are more likely to be active in the holistic milieu than those in other professions)? Finally, what explains why men do not differ as dramatically in terms of their initial interest in spirituality as their participation in the holistic milieu?

We agree with the idea that spirituality and the holistic milieu are feminine-typed and that this is a central part of the story. But we believe that to more comprehensively address the New Age gender puzzle, a more fine-grained, intersectional analysis is needed. We hope to show that such an analysis will not only shed light on the gender differences regarding spiritual identification and participation in the holistic milieu but may also help to explain the spiritual turn more generally.

In what follows we first review recent sociological scholarship on gender and religion, explicating what it means to take a gender lens on spirituality. Next, we review the scholarship on the gendered character of spirituality and the holistic milieu. Undoubtedly—and as Trzebiatowska and Bruce make clear—understanding spirituality as feminine-typed helps explain why more women than men are attracted to it. Despite the merits of their account, however, more attention could be given to theorizing the complexity inherent to processes of "feminization" such as the *specific* scripts of normative femininity and masculinity reified and naturalized within the holistic milieu. Guided by recent scholarship exploring intersections of gender and religion, we approach the "New Age gender puzzle" by fleshing out the particular gender scripts the holistic milieu fosters. Surveying research on spirituality, we show that participation in the holistic milieu entails quite distinct gendered consequences for women and men: for women, participation generally serves to naturalize a script of *postfeminist femininity* that combines gender essentialism with post-traditional (politically liberal) commitments to moral autonomy and empowerment, is consonant with "cultural" or "difference" feminism, and holds an accommodationist relationship to the wider gender order of late modern societies. By contrast, for men, participation in the holistic milieu tends to naturalize a script of *feminine masculinity* (or *male femininity*) that is subordinated and counter-hegemonic, and thus embodies a more radical challenge to the wider gender order. This theoretical perspective adds important detail and depth to existing accounts of the gender gap, enabling us to explain not only why more women than men participate in the holistic milieu, but also why some women opt out, while some men opt in. It also sheds light on the role of gender in fueling the turn away from "religion" to "spirituality" more generally. In the

[4]Trzebiatowska and Bruce (2013:38) make progress on this question when noting: "Men … would need to embrace an alternative or nonhegemonic masculinity in order to engage fully in holistic spiritualities," yet fail to theorize *precisely* what this form of masculinity consists of.

concluding section, we discuss the implications our analysis holds for studies of religious change.

Turning a Gender Lens on Spirituality

For decades, sociologists of religion studying gender were narrowly preoccupied with explaining what was long considered a cultural universal: that women are more religious than men (Sullins 2006; Vaus and McAllister 1987). This narrow focus has since widened, in part because scholars have found this "universal" is in fact specific to Christianity (Schnabel 2015; Schnabel, Hackett, and McClendon 2018), but also because of a growing interest among scholars in integrating the insights of gender studies into the sociology of religion (e.g., Avishai, Jafar, and Rinaldo 2015; Baker and Whitehead 2015; Schnabel 2015; Schnabel et al. 2022). Although this attempt at theoretical integration remains in its early stages, three guiding theoretical tenets can be discerned.

First, this scholarship shifts from seeing gender only as an individual characteristic and recognizes it as a social structure, operating at the micro, meso, and macro levels, both constraining and enabling action (Risman 2004). Furthermore, gender often functions as a "primary frame" (Ridgeway 2009) within which our core identities are formed, through which our social status is maintained, and with which we learn to perform, "do," our gendered sense of self (West and Zimmerman 1987). Relating this to the study of religion, then, we can say that *religions are always gendered*, and in multiple ways (Schnabel, McClendon, and Hackett 2018). For example, discourses of gender may legitimate specific religious discourses (as in nineteenth-century scripts of femininity and evangelicalism; Brown 2009), while practices and performances of gender may strengthen or constitute particular religiosities (Sullins 2006). Gender regimes, relations, and roles may serve to uphold and enforce the organizational structures of particular religions (Du Mez 2020), such that we can think of religion as "a *gendered* social structure" (Schnabel 2018:61).

Second, some early sociological scholarship on gender differences in religion presupposed a binary biological essentialism, which grounded differences in supposedly natural sex differences. In an early attempt to rectify this, Edward Thompson Jr. (1991), and others (e.g., Francis and Wilcox 1996; Francis et al. 2001), distinguished analytically between "sex" (e.g., man/woman) and "gender orientation" (e.g., masculine/feminine), yet these scholars continued to assume a static binary. More recent scholarship departs from the essentialism and binarism of earlier work, introducing the analytic distinction between *gender identity* (e.g., man/woman) and *gender expression* (e.g., masculinity/femininity), while also making sure to attend to the *spectrums of variation within-gender categories* (Schnabel 2017). Inspired by work in gender studies which foregrounds the pluralization and hierarchization of gender identity and expression (e.g., Berkowitz, Windsor, and Han 2023; Butler 1990; Halberstam 1998), this research questions the presumed linkages between femaleness and femininity, maleness and masculinity, and in the process, it gives close attention to the way that "gendered identities and religiosity operate in tandem" (Schnabel 2015:552).

Third, rather than treating religion and gender as stand-alone categories to be studied in isolation, sociologists of religion have begun using an intersectional approach recognizing gender as a social structure operating alongside and in interaction with other social structures in matrices of domination, inequality, identity, and expression (e.g., Avishai 2016; Baker and Whitehead 2015; Schnabel 2016). Religion and gender comprise two aspects of our intersectional selves, such that we must attend to both *between*-gender differences and *within*-gender differences (Schnabel 2016). Recent work considers how gender and other factors interact with religion in ways that carry varied social and psychological costs, benefits, and expectations (Schnabel 2019). Religion can be a resource that structurally disadvantaged groups can draw upon and, simultaneously, a traditional institution that legitimates power structures and hierarchies (Schnabel 2021). Along with having social and psychological benefits that vary across axes of identity, religion can also carry gendered costs, including expectations and negative social evaluations when breaking expectations; therefore, in addition to potentially getting more out of religion, women may also face more social sanctions for not participating or men for participating in particular ways (Edgell, Frost, and Stewart 2017). While religion can carry benefits, and gendered expectations can keep women in religion, some forms of religion can also be patriarchal, which can make it surprising that women are more involved (Schnabel 2017). But women may be more religious not because of, but in spite of, how religion can subordinate women. If religion is feminine-typed and/or carries gendered benefits, one might expect spirituality to be even more gendered and appealing to women as it carries the benefits without the patriarchal baggage, providing a way for women to gain benefits and avoid sanctions for being secular (Schnabel 2019). An intersectional perspective therefore enables us to better account for factors intersecting with gender, such as education, political ideology, age, and occupation in structuring engagement with spirituality and the holistic milieu, and explaining why some women (and men) are more involved than others.

In what follows, we apply these three theoretical tenets to the sociology of spirituality.

Spirituality and Gender Scripts

A large body of scholarship holds that both spiritual discourse and practices are feminine-typed (e.g., Fedele and Knibbe 2020; Keshet and Simchai 2014; McGuire 2008; Sointu and Woodhead 2008; Zwissler 2007). For instance, Erjavec and Vocic (2009:95) write of spirituality that this "discourse emphasizes that which is predominantly connected with 'feminine' or 'femininity.'" Potrata (2004:371) writes, "New Age and the neopaganism that is related to it celebrate values that are culturally identified as 'feminine.'" In a study examining perceived gender-typing of spirituality, religion, and various religious traditions, Schnabel (2019) found that while religion and Christianity are perceived as feminine, spirituality is perceived as far more feminine (and less masculine), associated with traditionally feminine-typed traits like being comforting, gentle,

and sympathetic. Keshet and Simchai (2014:81), in their review of the literature on gender and spirituality, conclude, "the main characteristics of the realm of CAM [Complementary and Alternative Medicine] and holistic spirituality tap into femininity."

Why are spirituality and the holistic milieu feminine-typed? A historical perspective makes clear that the cultural structure of spirituality has roots in nineteenth-century alternative religious movements such as Spiritualism, Devotionalism, Christian Science, and New Thought—all of which allowed women "greater participation and recognition than was available in mainline Protestant denominations" (Gross 1996:35). Not only were these movements more accepting of women's active participation and even leadership than the established Christian churches run by men, but their teachings tended to valorize women's experiences (Albanese 2007). Spiritualism, for instance, attracted a predominantly female following because it "elevated the importance of the 'feminine' qualities of passivity and receptivity" and endorsed rituals—the séance—that were to be practiced in "the domestic setting" (Tumber 2002:33). Devotionalism, otherwise known as "heart religion" because it "relied for evidence of grace on the strength of religious feeling" (27), did much the same thing. Similarly, women in the nineteenth century flocked to Mary Eddy Baker's Christian Science teachings because it "imagined the divine through the prism of middle-class women's domestic sensibility" (45). Tumber argues that the rise of New Thought "reflected the ascendency of feminism" (9).

This longstanding ideological and cultural alliance between the "feminine" and spirituality sheds important light on the gendered character and consequences of the spiritual turn. Moreover, it highlights how noteworthy it is that many younger men increasingly identify with "spirituality." At the very least, this fact suggests that younger men have become more open to the historically and culturally "feminine"—at least at the level of discourse, if not practice. We will return to this argument later but, for now, we wish to focus on explaining the gender gap within the holistic milieu. That is, why do women far outnumber men as regards participation in spiritual activities, workshops, and communities?

In *Secular Societies, Spiritual Selves*, Fedele and Knibbe (2020:2) assert, "when people claim the label of spirituality, their aim is to do things differently when it comes to gender." We could not agree more. But we think this insight needs to be complemented with that of Paechter (2006), who argues that we should think of masculinities and femininities as learned in what she calls "communities of practice." Paechter (2006) writes: "the learning of what it means to be male or female within a social configuration results in shared practices in pursuit of the common goal of sustaining particular localised masculine and feminine identities. It follows from this notion that the localised masculinities and femininities within which these identities are developed and sustained can be seen as communities of practice." (71)

Paechter's theoretical approach encourages us to think of the holistic milieu as a community (or set of communities) of practice, wherein specific normative

scripts of femininity and masculinity are naturalized, learned, and embodied. In other words, participation in the holistic milieu does not simply entail a process of developing, through various individual and collective practices, one's "spiritual" life. It also entails cultivating and consecrating a particular *gendered* self. Of course, all communities of practice necessarily exist within a wider gender order, whose institutions and norms may support or contest their own. In turn, it becomes crucial to examine both the gender scripts naturalized within a given community, along with those scripts' relationship to the wider gender order. In what follows, we survey the extant scholarship on spirituality to demonstrate that follows that participation in the holistic milieu holds different gendered consequences for women and men, owing to the respective gender scripts naturalized, and their varying relationships to the wider gender order of late modern Western societies.

Normative femininity in the holistic milieu Because normative scripts of femininity and masculinity are socially imposed on female and male bodies, participation in the holistic milieu holds different consequences for men and women. When a person who identifies as a woman participates in the holistic milieu she will quickly encounter not just the discourse of spirituality, but with it, a normative script of femininity, with which she will be (implicitly) expected to conform. We refer to this script as *postfeminist femininity*. The concept of "postfeminism" holds a variety of meanings within feminist scholarship (McRobbie 2004, 2009).[5] We draw from the work of Gill (2007), who characterizes postfeminism as a cultural "sensibility" which, among other things, treats femininity as a bodily property, views the female body as "women's source of power" (149), celebrates individual empowerment and choice, and which combines feminist with gender essentialist ideals. Gill describes "postfeminism" as a "sensibility" in order to highlight its flexibility and adaptability, yet we believe this concept usefully captures the script of femininity naturalized in the holistic milieu.

While spirituality may be feminine-typed, consecrating historically "feminine" traits, competencies, and roles, most *spiritual but not religious* women reject the nineteenth-century evangelical ideal of "True Womanhood," comprised of what were considered the "four cardinal virtues" of femininity: "piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (Welter 1966:152). Indeed, given the politically liberal and postmaterialist commitments common to SBNR identification (Watts 2022b), what is considered valuable and worthy of preservation are only those "feminine" traits and competencies that can be squared with a postfeminist

[5]Within feminist scholarship, the status of postfeminism remains hotly contested. For some feminists, postfeminism represents a hostile "backlash" to feminism itself (e.g., Holmlund 2005; McRobbie 2009). We seek to sidestep these normative debates about what is authentically feminist by focusing on the sociological dimensions of postfeminism.

commitment to individual autonomy and female empowerment.[6] As Sointu and Woodhead (2008:260) remark, an important reason why women choose to identify as "spiritual" as opposed to "religious" is precisely owing to a "desire to move away from traditional roles ascribed to feminine subjects." Accordingly, any script of femininity that explicitly or implicitly legitimates patriarchy, anti-female sexism, or denies female agency will likely not find support in the holistic milieu. Yet it is also the case that the script of femininity naturalized within the holistic milieu partakes of gender traditionalism, in that it traffics in gender essentialism of various kinds (Burns 2015; Crowley 2011; Zemp and Liebe 2019). For instance, it is common for women spiritual practitioners to praise the following traits and competencies and to also frame them as "feminine": empathy, care, emotional intelligence, sensitivity to other's feelings, embodied and intuitive knowledge, compassion, communication, and relationality. This emphasis from spiritual practitioners parallels general perceptions of spirituality in Schnabel's (2019:76) study in which people explained why they saw spirituality as particularly feminine. Participant statements included: "Spirituality isn't about trying to act like a tough guy, it's more compassion and sympathy," "it embodies traits that include more sensitive, intuitive, and spiritual connection," spirituality and women "tend to be more peaceful and caring," and spirituality is "meditative and earthy... I associate that with women."

The research makes clear that a central social function of the holistic milieu is precisely to provide women (and men) a space where these allegedly "naturally-feminine" traits and competencies can be cultivated, expressed, and conferred social recognition. For instance, in a study of women's circles in Belgium, Longman (2018) found that most participants (predominantly female) were motivated by a desire to explore their femininity, and "bring more of this femininity into the world" (7). What this entailed, practically, was engaging in guided meditation, whose purpose was to permit practitioners to "descend" into their body "and thereby connect to feminine power or energy" (8). Longman concludes that women are drawn to women's circles because they offer "a space for personal empowerment through re-connecting with one's feminine self" (11). Likewise, in a study of Blessing Way, a spiritual childbirth and pregnancy ritual in Australia, Burns (2015) found this ritual provides women participants with "a powerful vehicle with which to connect with 'womanhood,'" while creating "an environment of innately female authoritative knowledge" (794). Studying the Goddess Spirituality movement in Italy, Palmisano and Pibri (2020:63) observe that the movement's goal is to awaken "awareness of the female principle … among both women and men." No doubt, these case studies are in some ways distinctive, given their overt emphasis on female identity, but the wider literature

[6]Much scholarship on postfeminism views this sensibility as "neoliberal" owing to its emphasis on individual choice and empowerment, yet, as Watts (2022c) has argued, this common critique overlooks the fact that the tradition of liberalism—and not just *neo*liberalism—also endorses these ideals.

on spirituality makes clear that this normative script of postfeminist femininity is typical of many activities and groups within the holistic milieu (Crowley 2011; Fedele and Knibbe 2020). Whether it is mindfulness meditation, yoga, reiki, art therapy, or soulful singing, much of the discourse one finds within the holistic milieu presupposes that these spiritual practices seek to reclaim and revive a "lost femininity," and to cultivate those "feminine" traits and competences which are widely perceived as synonymous with "being spiritual" (Becci, Farahmand, and Grandjean 2020). One can think of the holistic milieu as a set of communities of practice where women collectively seek to realize a version of their "true self" that follows the script of postfeminist femininity.

In line with this, Sointu and Woodhead (2008) argue that, when institutionalized in the holistic milieu, the discourse of spirituality functions to both *legitimate* and *subvert* traditional practices and discourses of femininity. For just as it emphasizes women's traditional work of relational, emotional, and bodily care, it simultaneously insists on the need for female empowerment and moral autonomy: "Although they affirm a relational mode of selfhood, these practices also insist that an individual's first responsibility is to her- or himself. The consistent message is that you have to attend to, understand, and care for self first, and that this is the only proper basis for responsible care for others" (270). In contrast to traditional hegemonic femininity—which can normalize women's material or psychological dependence upon men, promote self-surveillance and self-regulation in service to men's interests, or emphasize "feminine" ideals of submissiveness and unconditional self-sacrifice (Schippers 2007)—the script of postfeminist femininity women are socialized to adopt within the holistic milieu encourages and facilitates female empowerment, autonomy, and community. Furthermore, the script is largely consonant with what feminist scholars refer to as "difference" or "cultural" feminism.[7]

According to Alcoff (1988), "Cultural feminism is the ideology of a female nature or female essence reappropriated by feminists themselves in an effort to revalidate undervalued female attributes" (408). Thus, the "cultural feminist … construes woman's passivity as her peacefulness, her sentimentality as her proclivity to nurture, her subjectiveness as her advanced self-awareness" (407). Cultural or difference feminism came to prominence in the 1980s, and is often associated with the work of Gilligan (1982), who argued that women and men exhibit different moral reasoning styles, with men taking a more abstract, detached approach, while women reason in more relational terms. Although "cultural" or "difference" feminism has since fallen out of favor among feminist scholars (see Lucas 2015), as Crowley (2011) notes, "it remains alive and well in popular culture, especially in New Age culture" (163)—perhaps owing to its revival under the guise of postfeminism (Gill 2007). In her book, *Feminism's New Age*, Crowley contends that, in the wake of the 1960s, spirituality and the holistic milieu became a central site of feminist energy and aspiration. Tracing the ideological affinities

[7]According to Gill (2007), "A key feature of the postfeminist sensibility has been the resurgence of ideas of natural sexual differene" (158).

between feminism and spirituality, Crowley argues that "New Age practices are … implicitly feminist" (54). While voicing strong criticisms of what she views as the racialized and individualizing aspects of spirituality, Crowley nevertheless concedes, "Women in New Age culture experience many of the rituals, healing methods, and self-improvement techniques not just as spiritual self-exploration but also as a validation of themselves as women" (54). Crowley's analysis usefully highlights the utility of taking a gender lens on spirituality. For in Crowley's view, the reason women are attracted to the holistic milieu (when they are) does not derive (or at least not solely) from modernity-induced feelings of existential deprivation, but rather because of the (postfeminist feminine) gendered script and ideal it reifies and naturalizes. In other words, rather than assuming that women today are seeking to escape the burdens of womanhood, Crowley contends that the normative script of postfeminist femininity women find upon entrance into the holistic milieu should be understood as one of its main draws (163).

In a similar vein, Zwissler (2020:151) argued that "the category spirituality provides an alternative 'third space' from which nondominant groups, including women, can launch critiques of the institutions of secular state and religious authority." If we interpret Zwissler correctly, she seems to be drawing attention to the fact that, as institutionalized within the holistic milieu, the discourse of spirituality permits women to challenge *both* the traditional ideals of femininity (i.e., the cult of True Womanhood) they associate with "religion" and Christian notions of "Biblical Womanhood" (Barr 2021), *as well as* the "masculine" ideals they associate with the "secular" (i.e., rationality, aggression, stoicism, emotional detachment) (Schnabel et al. 2016). If this is true, it would seem that identifying as "spiritual" and participating in the holistic milieu can be understood as a means for women to signal (consciously or unconsciously) their normative support for a distinctly postfeminist gender regime.

If the above analysis is correct then it follows that it is a profound oversimplification to say that women participate in the holistic milieu because it is "compatible with a feminine worldview" (Trzebiatowska and Bruce 2013:38). And the reason for this is that *there is no such thing*; rather, there exist plural scripts of femininity (and masculinity), which often exist in tension and conflict both within and between persons. Thus, it is more accurate to say that the holistic milieu will tend to attract women with politically liberal and postmaterial values, who reject conservative scripts of femininity but do not wish to do away with gender essentialism, because it is they who are likely to perceive a cultural "fit" between this postfeminist milieu and their desired gendered self. Furthermore, a corollary of this is that women who do *not* identify with this particular script of femininity—for instance, women who subscribe to a female masculinity (see Halberstam 1998)—will likely experience the holistic milieu as an alienating, if not hostile, environment. Indeed, this explains why, among third-wave feminists (who reject the sensibility of postfeminism and the politics of cultural or difference feminism; see Schippers and Sapp 2012), only a very small percentage identify as either "religious" or "spiritual" (Aune 2011). And it perhaps also explains

why feminist scholars have tended to be quite critical of both spirituality and the holistic milieu, perceiving in them a threat to feminist political aspirations and goals (see Crowley 2011).

Normative masculinity in the holistic milieu We argued above that when a woman enters the holistic milieu, she will be implicitly encouraged to adopt a script of postfeminist femininity. By contrast, when a person who identifies as a man participates in the holistic milieu, we contend he will be implicitly encouraged to adopt a different gender script—which we refer to as *feminine masculinity* (or what could also be thought of as form of *male femininity* (Barringer, Gay, and Lynxwiler 2013). This variety of masculinity is also shaped by the context of postfeminism (see Macaluso 2018; Rumens 2017), but is more transgressive of gender norms that value masculinity for all and femininity only for women, explores androgyny, and challenges gender essentialism and, in some ways, even the gender binary itself (Connell and Masserschmidt 2005; England 2010). Crucially, then, our argument is that, given the normative imposition of gender scripts upon male and female bodies, when men participate in the holistic milieu they will not be expected to adopt the same gender script as that of women, but rather will be expected to integrate the "feminine" traits and competencies consecrated by the discourse of spirituality into a distinctive script of a more androgynous masculinity.

This is made apparent in the empirical literature. For instance, in her research on yoga classes offered in male penitentiaries, Griera (2020:198) documents how the classes function to facilitate the "refashioning" of masculinity. That is, through the practice of yoga men are taught to unlearn the hegemonic masculinity (which prizes stoicism, aggression, and dominance) they have internalized and adopt an alternative script of masculinity that frames the "feminine" traits of vulnerability, emotional openness, empathy, and caring as "masculine" virtues. Outlining this process, Griera writes, "violent attitudes were read as part of the 'false' self, while more positive and conciliatory attitudes were considered as 'signs' from their authentic inner self" (210). Griera describes how the yoga community functioned as a community of practice, wherein this feminine masculinity could be safely and supportively cultivated: "On some days, in the yoga class, and especially in the high-security prison, there were inmates that started to cry or to show emotional signs while practicing. These kinds of emotional expressions usually generated signs of solidarity and friendship, and most of the fellow inmates expressed that they had also had a "breakdown" at some point in the yoga class." (210–11)

Griera thus concludes that the holistic milieu functions as a source "from and through which new models of femininity and masculinity emerge" (201).

Similarly, in their study of an exclusively men's meditation group in England, Lomas et al. (2016:296) found what they define as "new ways of doing manhood." That is, men used the mediation group to become more emotionally open, more comfortable sharing their feelings, and more caring, thereby distancing themselves from a model of (hegemonic) masculinity

they identified with the archetype of "the macho role" (298). Moreover, many of the male participants came to the group precisely owing to a dissatisfaction with "expectations around masculinity" (297), conceiving of their participation as "hinting at new possibilities of living" (297). Yet, at the same time, Lomas et al. found that, for some men, sustaining a commitment to the meditation group created tensions in their lives, as the script of androgynous, if not feminine, masculinity normalized in the group conflicted with the script of hegemonic masculinity they were encouraged to adopt in other social spheres. This tension was particularly acute as regards identifying as "spiritual," which many of the men initially equated with irrationality and thus "femininity" (302). Indeed, illustrating how this tension was experienced, Lomas et al. report that some men "likened admitting to being spiritual to coming out as gay" (306). Nevertheless, Lomas et al. conclude that "this alternative environment encouraged men to adopt fresh ideas and behaviors (intimacy, abstinence, and spirituality) that collectively constituted a new way of being a man" (296). These illustrative case studies reveal that although spirituality is feminine-typed, this does not make it inimical to masculinity as such. On the contrary, within the holistic milieu, the discourse of spirituality is encoded in a way that naturalizes a distinctly *feminine masculinity* that frames certain feminine-typed traits and competencies as "manly." From within this gender script, "real men" share their feelings rather than bottle them up, empathize with those weaker than them rather than intimidate or bully them, respond with compassion rather than aggression, and adopt a gentle, as opposed to aggressive, way of being in the world.

It is perhaps worth noting, then, that the holistic milieu serves a similar function for men as does the congregational domain: offering a site wherein alternative and "feminine" forms of masculinity can find support and recognition (Barrett 2023). Yet what distinguishes *spiritual but not religious* feminine masculinity is, first and foremost, its political progressivism and postmaterialism. Thus, in contrast to the "godly masculinity" that Gerber (2015) found within the ex-gay evangelical movement, which she describes as "queerish" while maintaining a conservative gender ideology, the feminine masculinity one finds within the holistic milieu is markedly progressive, associated with high levels of education, and more readily apparent in particularly contexts—for example, how meditation has permeated Bay Area tech culture (Chen 2022)—perhaps contributing to a new form of masculinity among some of those with standing and status. Furthermore, although the feminine masculinity found in the holistic milieu certainly supports a postfeminist gender essentialism insofar as it endorses talk of "masculine" and "feminine" energies, it can also encompass more gender-nonconforming and gender-queer scripts such as feminine masculinities, male femininities, androgyny, and even nonbinary gender expressions because, unlike the script of postfeminist femininity, which grounds femininity in the female body, spiritual postfeminist masculinity stresses the

notion that men are equally capable of tapping into, channeling, and exhibiting "feminine" energies.

Explaining the "New Age Gender Puzzle"

Having outlined the normative gender scripts commonly naturalized within the holistic milieu, we believe the answer to the "New Age gender puzzle" comes into view once contextualized with broader change in the wider gender order. Research demonstrates that much of the change consists of women moving into areas previously the domain of men, with women adopting traditionally masculine-typed roles and occupations (England 2010). Various incentives promote this shift as many of the roles, spheres, and jobs that were traditionally associated with men are valued by society—although these incentives vary across social location, highlighting both intersectionality and the diversity of femininities and masculinities (England 2011). There are fewer incentives, and importantly also more social sanctions, for men adopting traditionally feminine-typed roles, behaviors, and expressions: for example, it has become normative for women to do things such as join the labor force and wear pants, but men adopting roles as homemakers or wearing skirts would entail a refashioning of the gender order (Kane 2006). Men—especially those who most strongly endorse traditional masculinity—can become insecure and experience masculinity threat if they engage with or act in ways that they associate with women, and end up overcompensating in order to not be viewed as feminine (Willer et al. 2013). The holistic milieu becomes a place where some women can embrace a certain form of femininity—and not worry about it reducing their status as is the case in many other domains including work—whereas, given the hegemony of traditional masculinity, men's involvement requires a new type of more secure and flexible masculinity.

As we have shown, women's attraction to the holistic milieu is not universal, but rather dependent upon the endorsement of a script of *postfeminist femininity*. This, in turn, raises the question: how prevalent is this gender script in late modernity? In line with recent feminist scholarship, we would argue that postfeminist femininity has, since the 1960s, become increasingly prevalent (Dosekun 2015; Gill 2007; McRobbie 2004), and thus remains an "emphasized" form of femininity (Connell and Masserschmidt 2005). In support of this claim are the dual facts that "cultural" and "difference" feminism has become increasingly mainstream (Crowley 2011), and that postfeminist femininity seems entirely consonant with the ideology of *egalitarian essentialism*—support for gender egalitarianism in the public realm of work and the simultaneous acceptance of gendered responsibilities in the private realm of families—which has gained considerable public support in recent years (Scarborough, Sin, and Risman 2019). The "doing" of religion and spirituality and "doing" of gender are inextricably entangled and can help explain both why women tend to be more involved in the holistic milieu *and* why men's participation frequently involves a reimagining and "redoing" of masculinity (Darwin 2018; Schnabel 2018). We suggest the script of postfeminist

femininity one finds in the holistic milieu, in the main, does *not* pose a radical challenge to the wider gender order of late modernity, but rather accommodates to it. By contrast, men's participation in the holistic milieu presupposes an endorsement of a script of *feminine masculinity* (or *male femininity*), which is *not* as prevalent, and which is subversive of the wider gender order. Thus, unless they already adopt an alternative or nonhegemonic script of masculinity, men will find it harder to "fit" the scripts of masculinity they are required to perform in other social spheres, with that required of them within the holistic milieu. Consequently, our analysis lends support to Trzebiatowska and Bruce's (2013) assertion that an important reason for the gender gap in the holistic milieu is that, in general, women risk less of a social stigma in participating than men.

However, in light of the fact that many women do not participate in the holistic milieu, while some men do, a more layered explanation is required. And in our view, the crucial missing piece is a combination of culture, politics, education, and, importantly, *occupation* (and what that entails, including selection based on outlook, personality, and gendered traits, as well as training, socialization, and networks). It seems evident that postfeminist femininity is likely to be more attractive to women who work in what have been called HEAL (health, education, administration, and literacy) occupations (Reeves 2022), given that it is these professions which require, as a matter of human capital, the presence or acquisition of the "feminine" traits and competencies which the holistic milieu consecrates. Moreover, it is precisely these professions where the feminine masculinity naturalized within the holistic milieu may provide social and economic dividends for men, which explains why men who work in HEAL professions are more likely to participate in the holistic milieu. Following this, we cannot help but wonder whether the gender gap within the holistic milieu cannot be explained in a way that coincides with the considerable gender gap that exists in HEAL professions (only 26% of HEAL jobs are done by men; Reeves 2022).

The Spiritual Turn and "Feminization"

Given the utility of an intersectional gender lens in explaining the "New Age gender puzzle," can it help to shed light on the spiritual turn more generally? We believe so. A key explanation for the turn to spirituality derives from large-scale changes taking place across the gender order of Western societies since the 1960s.

As is well known, second-wave feminists in the 1960s mounted concerted attacks on the Christian churches, charging them with legitimating patriarchy, sexism, and homophobia, and were quite successful in tarring "religion" among liberals and progressives especially as some forms of religion doubled down on conservative gender and sexual politics in response to social change (Feltey and Poloma 1991; Gross 1996; Lynch 2007). Politically liberal women (and feminist men as will be noted below) during and in the wake of this period came to view traditional scripts of femininity as oppressive and sexist, and many disaffiliated

from "religion" on this basis (Brown 2009; McLeod 2007). In turn, many of these same women—who, as the subjectivization and detraditionalization theses would predict, tend to be younger and more educated (Houtman and Mascini 2002)—came to embrace what we have called postfeminist femininity.[8] Accordingly the turn away from "religion" to "spirituality" among women largely reflects an (age, class, and occupation correlated) embrace of this gender script.[9]

Furthermore, given its symbolic associations with patriarchy, sexism, and anti-woman attitudes, many politically progressive men have disaffiliated from "religion." Some of these men choose to embrace the masculine-typed identity of atheist or agnostic (Schnabel et al. 2016). But many, as we have seen, choose to identify with feminine-typed "spirituality." How do we account for this? We contend the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" among younger educated men is spurred, in part, by an increasing openness, if somewhat reticent, to more "feminine" forms of masculinity, gender egalitarianism, and acceptance of gender and sexual diversity. This hypothesis is grounded in work in masculinity studies finding that younger highly educated men increasingly reject scripts of masculinity premised upon "antifemininity" (Anderson 2008:605). Anderson and McCormack (2018) summarize this research thus: "This body of research has shown that many young straight men: reject homophobia, include gay peers in friendship networks; are more emotionally intimate with friends; are physically tactile with other men; recognize bisexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation; embrace activities and artefacts once coded feminine; and eschew violence and bullying." (548)

What this means, Anderson and McCormack conclude, is that "femininity in men" has, since the 1960s, become "less stigmatized," and that there has taken place "a fundamental shift in the practices of masculinities" (549). Indeed, this shift has been so seismic that Anderson refers to this new male figure as the "new age man" (Anderson 2008:608). In line with this, Roberts (2018:274) found that among younger men in the UK, "a full 42% of men under 24 felt that masculinity has negative connotations." He, therefore, concludes, "The set of behaviours and characteristics that underpinned the relatively monolithic, culturally idealized version of manliness in western societies for most of the twentieth century is waning" (274). These scholars note that this is primarily a generational or cohort-replacement-driven shift centering on changing beliefs and values (see Hout and Fischer 2014); older men who formed their gender expression in an earlier period remain highly committed to traditional masculinity, as compared to men from more recent cohorts. Thus, connecting this to the scholarship on spirituality, we contend

[8]One reason for this may to do with the fact that atheism and agnosticism are gender-typed masculine (Schnabel 2019; Schnabel et al. 2016).

[9]In this way, just as evangelicalism "pietiesed femininity" (Brown 2009:59) in nineteenth-century Britain, so, too, does spirituality "pietise" postfeminist femininity today.

that younger men's greater openness to forms of feminine masculinity helps explain why they are also more likely to identify as "spiritual" than their older counterparts.

Importantly, this increasing openness to feminine masculinities among younger educated men is intimately bound up with wider macro shifts. A large body of scholarship makes clear that, with the rise of postindustrial society, have come significant changes within the domestic, cultural, and economic spheres, which are deeply gendered. According to Illouz (2008:124), as therapeutic discourse has increasingly infiltrated the private sphere, romantic relations within the middle classes have led to the "feminization of emotional culture." Moreover, Illouz finds what she calls "the inscription of femininity" within the postindustrial workplace, as post-1960s management styles have required of managers to "revise traditional definitions of masculinity and incorporate into their personality so-called feminine attributes" (78). According to Illouz, then, traditional masculinity is gradually losing public esteem and social status, such that we are currently witnessing significant changes within the wider gender order. Illouz's claims find support in the sociology of emotions, where scholars have documented what they call the "'feminization' of masculine emotionality" (Lupton 1998:131), defined as the willingness to display emotions previously stigmatized as feminine (Boscagli 1992; De Boise and Hearn 2017). And further evidence lies in the growing use of the term "feminization" across the social sciences; sociologists have recently spoken of "feminization" when studying sites as diverse as the family (especially fatherhood) (e.g., Gottzen and Kremer-Sadlik 2012; Hofmeister and Baur 2015; Offer and Kaplan 2021), healthcare (Adams 2010), highbrow culture (Purhonen, Gronow, and Rahknoen 2011), the beauty industry (Barber 2008), management (Simpson 2006), and the army (Baaz and Stern 2011).

In sum, we argue the spiritual turn is, in part, fueled by the rise of postfeminism, understood as both a sensibility and a set of gender scripts. According to Macaluso (2018), "Postfeminism—in its various forms, discourses, and sensibilities—is all around us, whether we see it or not" (8). In agreement, we argue postfeminism informs both the "emphasized" form of femininity (Connell and Masserschmidt 2005) within the gender order, as well as an androgynous if not feminine masculinity that arose in the postfeminist context which is gradually gaining ground on the traditional masculinity which currently reigns. If the above analysis is correct then it follows that, should trends continue, the gender gap found within the holistic milieu could gradually begin to close. This could happen because more men begin to work in HEAL professions, where a feminine masculinity is economically or socially valued, or because the holistic milieu becomes integrated into more corporations competing for workers as part of "wellbeing" programs as seen clearly in some tech companies (Chen 2022). Or it could occur because of changes within the wider gender order, as diverse forms of gender expression become more accepted and men from more recent cohorts—who are more open to feminine masculinities—begin to take on positions of authority and influence in society. Over time, this could shift the balance of power between hegemonic masculinity and its "feminine" others, such that the risks men currently face in

participating in the holistic milieu would be significantly reduced. Of course, the gender gap could also close owing to a large-scale rejection, on the part of women, of postfeminist femininity, as perhaps many third-wave feminists would hope for.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we have taken a gender lens to the sociology of spirituality in order to solve its persistent "gender puzzle." In so doing, we hope to have demonstrated the utility of such an approach, not only for making sense of the spiritual turn in the West, but also for the study of religious change more generally. If, as gender scholars suggest, religion is a gendered social structure, which always exists within a wider gender order, then ignoring the pivotal role of gender in fueling or mitigating religious change becomes empirically indefensible. It follows, then, that accounts of secularization, religious polarization, and religious revival remain incomplete without a thorough accounting of the role of gender in processes of religious change. Religious changes are always also gendered changes; thus we should resist the belief that we can study one without the other.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the participants in the cultural sociology reading group at KU Leuven's Centre for Sociological Research for providing critical feedback on an early draft of this essay. We would also like to acknowledge Evan Stewart for providing helpful suggestions at a later stage. Finally, we are grateful to the *Sociology of Religion* anonymous reviewers, whose comments did much to improve this article.

FUNDING

Funding for this project was generously provided by the Flanders Research Foundation (Belgium) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

REFERENCES

Adams, Tracey L. 2010. "Gender and Feminization in Health Care Professions." *Sociology Compass* 4(7):454–65.

Albanese, Catherine L. 2007. *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Alcoff, Linda. 1988. "Cultural Feminism Versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory." *Signs* 13(3):405–36.
Alper, Becka A., Michael Rotolo, Patricia Tevington, Justin Nortey, and Asta Kallo. 2023. "Who are 'Spiritual but Not Religious' Americans?" *Pew Research Center*. December 7, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/12/07/who-are-spiritual-but-not-religious-americans/
Altglas, Véronique. 2014. *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Ammerman, Nancy T. 2014. *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Anderson, Eric. 2008. "Inclusive Masculinity in a Fraternal Setting." *Men and Masculinities* 10(5):604–20.
Anderson, Eric, and Mark McCormack. 2018. "Inclusive Masculinity Theory: Overview, Reflection and Refinement." *Journal of Gender Studies* 27(5):547–61.
Aune, Kristin. 2011. "Much Less Religious, a Little More Spiritual: The Religious and Spiritual Views of Third-wave Feminists in the UK." *Feminist Review* 97: 32–55.
Avishai, Orit. 2016. "Theorizing Gender from Religion Cases: Agency, Feminist Activism, and Masculinity." *Sociology of Religion* 77(3):261–79.
Avishai, Orit, Afshan Jafar, and Rachel Rinaldo. 2015. "A Gender Lens on Religion." *Gender & Society* 29(1):5–25.
Baaz, Maria Eriksson, and Maria Stern. 2011. "Whores, Men, and Other Misfits: Undoing 'Feminization' in the Armed Forces in the DRC." *African Affairs* 110(441):563–85.
Baker, Joseph O, and Andrew L. Whitehead. 2015. "Gendering (Non)Religion: Politics, Education, and Gender Raps in Secularity in the United States." *Social Forces* 94(4):1623–45.
Barber, Kristen. 2008. "The Well-Coiffed Man." *Gender & Society* 22(4):455–76.
Barr, Beth Allison. 2021. *The Making of Biblical Womanhood*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos.
Barrett., Rusty. 2023. "Male Femininity as Spirituality among Radical Faeries." In *Male Femininities*, edited by Dana Berkowitz, Elroi J. Windsor, and Winter Han, 290–306. New York: New York University Press.
Barringer, M. N., D. A. Gay, and J. P Lynxwiler. 2013. "Gender, Religiosity, Spirituality, and Attitudes Toward Homosexuality." *Sociological Spectrum* 33(3):240–57.
Becci, Irene, Maneli Farahmand, and Alexandre Grandjean. 2020. "The (b)earth of a Gendered Eco-spirituality: Globally Connected Ethnographies Between Mexico and the European Alps." In *Secular Societies, Spiritual Selves? The Gendered Triangle of Religion, Secularity and Spirituality*, edited by Anna Fedele, Kim E. Knibbe, 90–108. London, UK: Routledge
Bellah, Robert N., Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton. 1985. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
Berger, Peter, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner. 1973. *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*. New York: Vintage.
Berger, Peter L. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor Books.
Berkowitz, Dana, Elroi J. Windsor, and Winter Han, eds. 2023. *Male Femininities*. New York: New York University Press.
Boscagli, Maurizia. 1992. "A Moving Story: Masculine Tears and the Humanity of Televised Emotions." *Discourse* 15(2):64–79.
Brown, Callum G. 2009. *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000*. 2nd ed. London, CA: Routledge.

Bruce, Steve. 2017. *The Secular Beats the Spiritual: The Westernization of the Easternization of the West*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Burns, Emily. 2015. "The Blessingway Ceremony: Ritual, Nostalgic Imagination and Feminist Spirituality." *Journal of Religion and Health* 54: 783–97.
Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
Chen, Catherine. 2022. *Work Pray Code*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Connell, R. W., and James W. Messerschmidt. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society* 19(6):829–59.
Crowley, Karlyn. 2011. *Feminism's New Age: Fender, Appropriation, and the Afterlife of Essentialism*. New York: State University of New York Press.
Darwin, Helena. 2018. "Redoing Gender, Redoing Religion." *Gender & Society* 32(3):348–70.
Davari-Torshizi, Mehdi. 2023. "The Religiosity of the Secular: The Case of Self-Help." *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* 13(2):119–31.
De Boise, Sam, and Jeff Hearn. 2017. "Are Men Getting More Emotional? Critical Sociological Perspectives on Men, Masculinities and Emotions." *The Sociological Review* 65(4):779–96.
de Vaus, David, and Ian McAllister. 1987. "Gender Differences in Religion: A Test of Structural Location Theory." *American Sociological Review* 52(4):472–81.
Dosekun, Simidele. 2015. "For Western Girls Only? Post-feminism as Transnational Culture." *Feminist Media Studies* 15(6):960–75.
Drescher, Elizabeth. 2016. *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Du Mez, Kristin K. 2020. *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
Edgell, Penny, Jacqui Frost, and Evan Stewart. 2017. "From Existential to Social Understandings of Risk: Examining Gender Differences in Nonreligion." *Social Currents* 4(6):556–74.
England, Paula. 2010. "The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled." *Gender & Society* 24(2):149–66.
England, Paula. 2011. "Reassessing the Uneven Gender Revolution and Its Slowdown." *Gender & Society* 25(1):113–23.
Erjavec, Karmen, and Zala Volcic. 2009. "Management Through Spiritual Self-help Discourse in Post-socialist Slovenia." *Discourse & Communication* 3(2):123–43.
Fedele, Anna. 2012. *Looking for Mary Magdalene: Alternative Pilgrimage and Ritual Creativity at Catholic Shrines in France*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Fedele, Anna, and Kim E. Knibbe. 2020. "Introduction: Spirituality, the Third Category in a Gendered Triangle." In *Secular Societies, Spiritual Selves? The Gendered Triangle of Religion, Secularity and Spirituality*, edited by Anna Fedele and Kim E. Knibbe, 1–29. London, UK: Routledge.
Feltey, Kathryn M., and Margaret M. Poloma. 1991. "From Sex Differences to Gender Role Beliefs: Exploring Effects on Six Dimensions of Religiosity." *Sex Roles* 25-25(3/4):181–93.
Francis, Leslie J, Susan H. Jones, Chris J. Jackson, and Mandy Robbins. 2001. "The Feminine Personality Profile of Male Anglican Clergy in Britain and Ireland: A Study of Employing the Eysenck Personality Profiler." *Review of Religious Research* 43(1):14–23.
Francis, Leslie J, and Carolyn Wilcox. 1996. "Religion and Gender Orientation." *Personality and Individual Differences* 20(1):119–21.
Gerber, Lynne. 2015. "Grits, Guts, and Vanilla Beans: Godly Masculinity in the Ex-Gay Movement." *Gender and Society* 29(1):26–50.
Gil, Rosalind. 2007. "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10(2):147–66.

Gilligan, Carol. 1982/1993. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Gottzen, Lucas, and Tamar Kremer-Sadlik. 2012. "Fatherhood and Youth Sports: A Balancing Act between Care and Expectations." *Gender & Society* 26(4):639–64.
Greira, Mar. 2020. "Is Yoga a Girl's Thing?: A Case Study on Working-class Men Doing Yoga in Jail." In *Secular Societies, Spiritual Selves? The Gendered Triangle of Religion, Secularity and Spirituality*, edited by Anna Fedele and Kim E. Knibbe, 198–215. London: Routledge.
Gross, Rita. 1996. *Feminism & Religion: An Introduction*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
Halberstam, Jack. 1998. *Female Masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 1996. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. New York: Brill.
Heelas, Paul. 1996. *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
Heelas, Paul, and Linda Woodhead. 2005. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
Hofmeister, Heather, and Nina Baur. 2015. "The Idealization of the 'New Father' and 'Reversed Roles Father' in Germany." *Family Science* 6(1):243–58.
Holmlund, Chris. 2005. "Postfeminism from A to G." *Cinema Journal* 44(2):116–21.
Hoschschild, Arlie. 1989. *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home*. New York: Penguin.
Hout, Michael, and Claude Fischer. 2014. "Explaining Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference." *Sociological Science* 1: 423–47.
Houtman, Dick, and Stef Aupers. 2007. "The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981–2000." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46(3):305–20.
Houtman, Dick, and Stef Aupers. 2008. "The Spiritual Revolution and the New Age Gender Puzzle: The Sacralization of the Self in Late Modernity (1980–2000)." In *Women and Religion in the West: Challenging Secularization*, edited by Kristin Aune, Sonya Sharma, and Giselle Vincett, 99–118. London, UK: Routledge.
Houtman, Dick, and Peter Mascini. 2002. "Why Do Churches Become Empty, While New Age Grows? Secularization and Religious Change in the Netherlands." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41(3):455–73.
Illouz, Eva. 2008. *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-help*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
Inglehart, Ronald. 1977. *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Jones, Robert P., Daniel Cox, and Art Raney. 2017. "Searching for Spirituality in the U.S.: A New Look at the Spiritual but Not Religious." Public Religion Research Institute. https://www.prri.org/research/religiosity-and-spirituality-in-america/
Kane, Emily. 2006. "'No Way My Boys are Going to be Like That!' Parents' Responses to Children's Gender Nonconformity." *Gender & Society* 20(2):149–76.
Kasselstrand, Isabella, Phil Zuckerman, and Ryan T. Cragun. 2023. *Beyond Doubt: The Secularization of Society*. New York: New York University Press.
Keshet, Yael, and Dalit Simchai. 2014. "The 'Gender Puzzle' of Alternative Medicine and Holistic Spirituality: A Literature Review." *Social Science & Medicine* 113: 77–86.
Knoblauch, Hubert. 2008. "Spirituality and Popular Religion in Europe." *Social Compass* 55(2):140–53.

Kucinskas, Jaime, and Evan Stewart. 2022. "Selfish or Substituting Spirituality? Clarifying the Relationship Between Spiritual Practice and Political Engagement." *American Sociological Review* 87(4):584–617.
Lambert, Yves. 2004. "A Turning Point in Religious Evolution in Europe." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 19(1):29–45.
Lomas, Tim, Tina Cartweight, Trudi Edginton, and Damien Ridge. 2016. "New Ways of Being a Man: 'Positive' Hegemonic Masculinity in Meditation-based Communities of Practice." *Men and Masculinities* 19(3):289–310.
Longman, Chia. 2018. "Women's Circles and the Rise of the New Feminine: Reclaiming Sisterhood, Spirituality, and Wellbeing." *Religions* 9(9):9–17.
Lucas, Margery. 2015. "Difference Feminism Now." *Society* 52: 499–502.
Lupton, Deborah. 1998. *The Emotional Self: A Sociocultural Exploration*. London: Sage.
Lynch, Gordon. 2007. *The New Spirituality: an Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-first Century*. London, UK: I.B. Tauris.
Macaluso, Michael. 2018. "Postfeminist Masculinity: The New Disney Norm?" *Social Sciences* 7(221):221.
McGuire, Meredith. 2008. *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
McLeod, Hugh. 2007. *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
McRobbie, Angela. 2004. "Post-Feminism and Popular Culture." *Feminist Media Studies* 4(3):255–64.
McRobbie, Angela. 2009. *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. London, UK: Sage.
Offer, Shira, and Danny Kaplan. 2021. "The 'New Father' Between Ideals and Practices: New Masculinity Ideology, Gender Role Attitudes, and Fathers' Involvement in Childcare." *Social Problems* 68(4):986–1009.
Paechter, Carrier. 2006. "Masculine Femininities/Feminine Masculinities: Power, Identities and Gender." *Gender and Education* 18(3):253–63.
Palmisano, Stefania. 2010. "Spirituality and Catholicism: The Italian Experience." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 25(2):221–41.
Palmisano, Stefania, and Roberta Pibiri. 2020. "Goddess Spirituality in Italy: Secular and Spiritual–two Sides of the Same Coin?" In *Secular Societies, Spiritual Selves?: The Gendered Triangle of Religion, Secularity and Spirituality*, edited by Fedele, A., and K. E. Knibbe, 51–67. London, UK: Routledge.
Parsons, William B. 2020. *Being Spiritual but not Religious: Past, Present, Future(s)*. New York: Routledge.
Pew Research Center. 2018. "Being Christian in Western Europe." Pew Research Center. May 29.
Potrata, Barbara. 2004. "New Age, Socialism and Other Millenarianisms: Affirming and Struggling with (Post)socialism." *Religion, State & Society* 32(4):365–79.
Purhonen, Semi, Jukka Gronow, and Keijo Rahkonen. 2011. "Highbrow Culture in Finland: Knowledge, Taste and Participation." *Acta Sociologica* 54(4):385–402.
Reeves, Richard. 2022. "Why America Needs More Men Working in Health Care and Education." *Time*, October 19. https://time.com/6222798/america-needs-more-men-working-in-health-care-and-education/
Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2009. "Framed Before We Know It: How Gender Shapes Social Relations." *Gender & Society* 23(2):145–60.
Risman, Barbara J. 2004. "Gender as a Social Structure: Theory Wrestling with Activism." *Gender & Society* 18(4):429–50.

Roberts, Steven. 2018. "Domestic Labour, Masculinity and Social Change: Insights from Working-class Young Men's Transitions to Adulthood." *Journal of Gender Studies* 27(3):274–87.

Roof, Wade Clark. 1999. *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rumens, Nick. 2017. "Postfeminism, Men, Masculinities and Work: A Research Agenda for Gender and Organization Studies Scholars." *Gender, Work and Organization* 24(3):245–59.

Scarborough, William J, Ray Sin, and Barbara Risman. 2019. "Attitudes and the Stalled Gender Revolution: Egalitarianism, Traditionalism, and Ambivalence from 1977 through 2016." *Gender & Society* 33(2):173–200.

Schippers, Mimi. 2007. "Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony." *Theory and Society* 36: 85–102.

Schippers, Mimi, and Erin Grayson Sapp. 2012. "Reading Pulp Fiction: Femininity and Power in Second and Third Wave Feminist Theory." *Feminist Theory* 13(1):27–42.

Schnabel, Landon. 2015. "How Religious are American Women and Men? Gender Differences and Similarities." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54(3):616–22.

Schnabel, Landon. 2016. "The Gender Pray Gap: Wage Labor and the Religiosity of High-Earning Women and Men." *Gender & Society* 30(4):643–69.

Schnabel, Landon. 2017. "Gendered Religiosity." *Review of Religious Research* 59(4):547–56.

Schnabel, Landon. 2018. "More Religious, Less Dogmatic: Toward a General Framework for Gender Differences in Religion." *Social Science Research* 75: 58–72.

Schnabel, Landon. 2019. "Gender, Religion, and Politics." *Unpublished PhD Dissertation*.

Schnabel, Landon. 2021. "Opiate of the Masses? Inequality, Religion, and Political Ideology in the United States." *Social Forces* 99(3):979–1012.

Schnabel, Landon, Eman Abdelhadi, Katherine Ally Zaslavsky, Jacqueline S. Ho, and Angie Torres-Beltran. 2022. "Gender, Sexuality, and Religion: A Critical Integrative Review and Agenda for Future Research." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 61(2):271–92.

Schnabel, Landon, Conrad Hackett, and David McClendon. 2018. "Where men appear more religious than women: Turning a gender lens on religion in Israel." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 57(1):80–94.

Schnabel, Landon, Matthew Facciani, Ariel Sincoff-Yedid, and Lori Fazzino. 2016. "Gender and Atheism." *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion* 7(1):75–97.

Schnabel, Landon, Ilana Horwitz, Peyman Hekmatpour, and Cyrus Schleifer. "Breaking Free of the Iron Cage: The Individualization of American Religion." Paper presented at the 2023 meetings of the American Sociological Association.

Schnabel, Landon, David McClendon, and Conrad Hackett. 2018. "Where Men Appear More Religion Than Women: Turning a Gender Lens on Religion in Israel." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 57(1):80–94.

Simpson, Ruth. 2006. "Masculinity and Management Education: Feminizing the MBA." *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 5(2):182–93.

Sointu, Eeva, and Linda Woodhead. 2008. "Spirituality, Gender, and Expressive Selfhood." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47(2):259–76.

Steensland, Brian, Jaime Kucinskas, and Anna Sun. 2022. *Situating Spirituality: Context, Practice, and Power*. New York: Oxford University Press

Steensland, Brian, Lauren Chism Schmidt, and Xiaoyun Wang. 2018. "Spirituality: What Does it Mean and to Whom?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 57(3):450–72.

Sullins, D. Paul. 2006. "Gender and Religion: Deconstructing Universality, Constructing Complexity." *American Journal of Sociology* 112(3):838–80.

Taylor, Charles. 1991. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Thiessen, Joel, and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme. 2020. *None of the Above: Nonreligious Identity in the US and Canada*. New York: New York University Press.
Thompson Jr, Edward H. 1991. "Beneath the Status Charateristics: Gender Variations in Religiousness." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30(4):381–94.
Torre, Renée de la, Cristina Gutiérrez Zuniga, and Nahayeilli B. Juárez Huet, eds. 2016. *New Age in Latin America: Popular Variations and Ethnic Appropriations*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
Tromp, Paul, Anna Pless, and Dick Houtman. 2022. "A Smaller Pie with a Different Taste: The Evolution of the Western-European Religious Landscape (European Values Study, 1981-2017)." *Review of Religious Research* 64(1): 127–44.
Tromp, Paul, Anna Pless, and Dick Houtman. 2024. "Do 'spiritual' self-identifications signify affinity with New Age religion? Survey evidence from the Netherlands." *Journal of Contemporary Religion*. Advance Online. doi: 10.1080/13537903.2024.2315809
Trusting, Karin, and Linda Woodhead. 2018. "Kendal Revisited: the study of spirituality then and now." In *Spaces of Spirituality*, edited by Nadia Bartolini, Sarah MacKian, and Steve Pile, 120–34. London, UK: Routledge.
Trzebiatowska, Marta, and Steve Bruce. 2012. *Why are Women More Religious Than Men?* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Trzebiztowska, Marta, and Steve Bruce. 2013. "'It's All for Girls': Re-visiting the Gender Gap in New Age Spiritualities." *Studia Religiologica* 46(1):23–39.
Tschannen, Oliver. 1991. "The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30(4):395–415.
Tumber, Catherine. 2002. *American Feminism and the Birth of New Age Spirituality*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
Voas, David. 2009. "The Rise and Fall of Fuzzy Fidelity in Europe." *European Sociological Review* 25(2):155–68.
Voas, David, and Mark Chaves. 2016. "Is the United States a Counterexample to the Secularization Thesis?" *American Journal of Sociology* 121(5):1517–56.
Voas, David, and Alasdair Crockett. 2005. "Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor Belonging." *Sociology* 39(1):11–28.
Watts, Galen. 2022a. "The Religion of the Heart: 'Spirituality' in Late Modernity." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 10(1):1–33.
Watts, Galen. 2022b. *The Spiritual Turn: The Religion of the Heart and the Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Watts, Galen. 2022c. "Are You a Neoliberal Subject? On the Uses and Abused of a Concept." *European Journal of Social Theory* 25(3):458–76.
Welter, Barbara. 1966. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860." *American Quarterly* 18(2):151–74.
West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender & Society* 1(2):125–51.
Wilkins-Laflamme, Sarah. 2021. "A Tale of Decline or Change? Working Toward a Complementary Understanding of Secular Transition and Individual Spiritualization Theories." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 60(3):516–39.
Willer, Robb, Christabel Rogalin, Bridget Conlon, and Michael Wojnowicz. 2013. "Overdoing Gender: A Test of the Masculine Overcompensation Hypothesis." *American Journal of Sociology* 118(4):980–1022.
Woodhead, Linda. 2008a. "Gendering Secularization Theory." *Social Compass* 55(2):187–93.
Woodhead, Linda. 2008b. "Why so Many Women in Holistic Spirituality? A Puzzle Revisited." In *A Sociology of Spirituality*, edited by Kieran Flanagan and Peter C. Jupp, 115–26. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Wuthnow, Robert. 1998. *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Zemp, Annika, and Ulf Liebe. 2019. "Exploring the Relationship between Holistic Spirituality and Gender Essentialism Among Swiss University Students." *Social Compass* 66(2):238–55.

Zwissler, Laurel. 2007. "Spiritual, But Religious: 'Spirituality' Among Religiously Motivated Feminist Activists." *Culture and Religion* 8(1):51–69.

Zwissler, Laurel. 2020. "Gendering the Spiritual Marketplace: Public, Private, and In-Between." In *Secular Societies, Spiritual Selves? The Gendered Triangle of Religion, Secularity and Spirituality*, edited by Anna Fedele and Kim E. Knibbe, 147–65. London, UK: Routledge.