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Beliefs About Religion & Spirituality Among Young Adults Discerning Their Call

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Common among those with no religious preference is the argument that a person may be spiritual or practice spirituality without being a religious person. Do the religiously affiliated also maintain that a difference exists between being a religious person or a spiritual person? Participants of an event for those interested in pursuing ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church were queried about their understanding of a religious person and a spiritual person. Findings indicate that these young adults (aged 18-26) attribute different but often complementary qualities to being a religious person as compared to a spiritual person. Religious is often associated with institutions, traditions, and rituals while spirituality is often associated with an individual, personal relationship with God and following the spirit. Implications of such an understanding are discussed.

Commonly, the subjects of research about spirituality are the “unchurched” or those who claim no religious preference but instead claim to be “spiritual but not religious.” Typically, those claiming to be spiritual but not religious do not adhere to a particular religious tradition, but do maintain spiritual elements or practices in their lives. By definition, these persons assert that spirituality has qualities that distinguish it from religion. Attention has been paid to the theology of the “unchurched” and the “seeker generation” (Fuller 2001; Roof 1993), but less attention has been paid to people who are the “churched.” Do people who are involved in religion, also believe differences exist between the religious and the spiritual?

To examine this question, I analyze data from an online survey of young adults aged 18-26 (born between 1980-1988), who participated in a discernment event (EXPLORATION 2006). The event was geared toward those interested in entering ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church (UMC). In what follows, I show that respondents, those who may potentially become ordained, do make distinctions between the spiritual and

the religious. Although most consider themselves as both, when asked to describe their views, respondents identified qualities of a religious person different from qualities of a spiritual person.

In this study current interpretations of the religious-spiritual relation are confirmed and extended through the addition of the perspectives from young adults who are involved in religion and considering ordained ministry in the United Methodist Church. The findings of this research provide a glimpse into the understanding of religion and spirituality from the perspective of two groups not often included in research on religion and spirituality - young adults and those considering ordained ministry. Their responses help to deepen our understanding of how religion and spirituality is viewed by these groups.

Literature

Traditionally, spirituality was considered synonymous with religion; it was simply another way of stating the same thing (Fuller 2001; Zinnbauer et al. 1997). Over time, the concept of spirituality has come to be defined separately from the concept of religion. This occurred partly in response to a need for a language to describe “religious” activities and practices that were taking place outside traditional religious settings. Fuller (2001:5) argues that an increasingly educated population became unable to subscribe to traditional religion and “began to associate genuine faith with the ‘private’ realm of personal experience rather than the ‘public’ realm of institutions, creeds and rituals.” Over time, “religious” became

associated with the public and external expressions of religion while “spiritual” indicated private and internal expressions.

Often credited with the commencement of scholarly interest in understanding spirituality separate from religion is the work of Robert Bellah (1985) and colleagues in *Habits of the Heart*. There, an interviewee, who does not attend traditional religious worship, is quoted as having developed her own private, individualized religious practice she calls “Sheilatism.” Greer and Roof (1992) set out to see if “sheilatism” or privatized religion defined as a “highly subjective, deeply personal form of religion” could be measured. Using a series of questions from the General Social Survey about personal religiosity they found, as might be expected, high privatization among people who did not claim a religious preference and that privatization varied among Protestants. Further, Greer and Roof (1992) found that Baby Boomers illustrated a greater amount of privatization than either the older or younger cohort groups.

A variety of research sought to understand these private expressions and spiritual practices, especially among the Baby Boom generation (see, for example, Roof 1993; Wuthnow 1998; Zinnbauer et al. 1997). That scholarship challenged commonly held assumptions about the unchurched, nonaffiliated, those with no religious preference. For example, Wade Clark Roof (1993:243) examined the spiritual journeys of the Baby Boom generation and described them as a generation that “grappled hard in search of a holistic, all encompassing vision of life.” This “spiritually creative generation” was searching for

something they could not find, or that could not be met in the religious landscape of the time. Research generally found that among Baby Boomers distinguishing between being religious or being spiritual was important (Hoge, Johnson, Luidens 1994; Roof 1993; Wuthnow 1998). The question, then, is whether the distinction continues to have salience.

Two important projects, the first of Zinnbauer et al. (1997), and the second Marler and Hadaway (2002), began to examine what is meant when the terms religious or spiritual are used. In a questionnaire distributed to various churches, institutions, and age groups in Pennsylvania and Ohio, Zinnbauer et al. asked respondents to write their own definitions of religion and spirituality. They found that the most common definition of religiousness involves belief or faith in God, a Higher Power, or the Divine. The next most common view referred to organizational practices or activities followed by commitment or adherence to organizational beliefs. For spirituality, they found a connection or relationship to God/Higher Power to be the most common, followed by personal belief or faith in God/Higher Power, and then integration of beliefs with behavior. That research is important to better understand the criteria respondents use when they self-identify as spiritual or religious. These definitions for religion and spirituality often overlapped. Missing from that research is identification of how people differentiate between the two concepts.

Penny Long Marler and C. Kirk Hadaway (2002) began to close that gap through their research with a national sample of American Protestants. These scholars sought to understand not only what is meant by being religious or spiritual but also whether people

saw these concepts as different. Similar to Zinnbauer, they found that spirituality is associated with “a kind of internal moral compass that is strengthened through religion” and as “being connected.” Importantly, Marler and Hadaway (2002) discovered that respondents who reported being religious and spiritual were less likely to think there was a difference between the two; but those who claimed to be only spiritual or only religious saw differences between the two concepts. They found that the percentage claiming to be religious *and* spiritual decreases with each age cohort (oldest, born 1927-45, Baby Boomers, Baby Busters). Meanwhile, those claiming to be spiritual only increases across the cohorts. Marler and Hadaway (2002) point out that the net effect is that the Baby Bust cohort is less spiritual than other cohorts - findings not inconsistent with the findings of Greer and Roof (1992).

Finally, Mark Regnerus (2007) analyzed data from the National Survey of Youth and Religion (NSYR) and other sources to examine how religion shapes adolescent sexual lives. Based on the interview data from teenagers aged 13 - 17 years old (in 2003), he reported that “only about 8 percent of American adolescents (in the NSYR) confidently self identify as spiritual but not religious. When we asked adolescents in interviews about this phrase, we often drew blank stares. Even most adolescents who fit the label of spiritual but not religious tend toward answers of ‘I don’t know’, or ‘I never heard of that,’ or ‘huh?’” (Regnerus 2007:13-4). In other words, some teens do make distinctions between religion and spirituality but for others, distinguishing between the two appears to be confusing or at least unfamiliar.

Little research examines religion and spirituality from the perspective of the church, and none of the research that I am aware of examines this topic from the perspective of those who may become ordained. This research examines how young adults interested in ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church understand the concept of being a religious person and being a spiritual person. In addition this research attempts to identify whether there are distinct qualities thought to define being a religious or a spiritual person.

Methodology

Hosted by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) of The United Methodist Church (UMC), EXPLORATION is an event designed to assist young people who have expressed interest in ordained ministry to discern whether they are called to a life of ordained ministry in the UMC. Young people from across the country voluntarily participate in these three-day events. Just over one-year after the event (January 2008), student participants were invited to complete a survey as part of a longitudinal study designed to assess the effect of EXPLORATION over time.

Invitations to complete the web-based survey were sent to the e-mail address that participants listed during online event registration. Only those registrants who were at least 18 years of age and those that attended at least some part of the event were surveyed. E-mailed invitations were sent only to non-duplicate e-mail addresses. Where one e-mail address was listed for multiple participants, an e-mail address was not listed, or the e-mail address was incorrect, the survey was sent via postal mail. First follow-up was sent two

weeks after the initial invitation. At three weeks, all non-responders were sent a paper survey¹. One month later, a “last chance” postcard reminder was sent. The survey was closed one month later; responses were collected from January to April 2008.

Of the 510² registrants who were sent the survey, five declined to participate and six opened the online survey but did not complete any of the questions. Survey response rate was 36% (186) of the 510 EXPLORATION registrants, more than one third of the participants. A response rate of 36% is an average to high response rate for a web-based survey (Sims 2007).

This paper is based on analysis of 162 surveys (32% of 510 registrants) where respondents completed the religion and spirituality section of the survey (Twenty-four discontinued participation by this section). These discontinuers may have suffered from survey fatigue as the religion and spirituality section began at question item number 34. They did not, however, differ in age or gender from those who fully completed the survey.

This is a non-probability, non-random sample of participants of a denomination wide event. Results are not generalizable to all young adults or all United Methodists. This research does, however, provide valuable information from the perspective of young adults who are interested in ordained ministry and may become future leaders in the church and the world.

¹ Only one participant completed the survey in paper form. After receipt of the paper form, several called to provide an email address to complete the survey electronically.

² 515 registered, but five registrants did not meet the survey criteria (one registrant did not attend EXPLORATION and four registrants were under the age of 18).

MEASURES

Respondents were queried about their religious identity and participation: “Do you consider yourself to be a United Methodist?” was followed by a question of church membership: “Are you a member of a church?” Response choices were “Yes, member of a United Methodist Church”; “Yes, member of church in another denomination”; “Not a member but attend a United Methodist church regularly”; “Not a member but attend a church in another denomination regularly”; “Not a member and do not attend church regularly.”

In an attempt to limit overestimation of church attendance, separate questions were posed for church worship attendance and participation in church groups, events, and activities, respectively: “During the past 12 months, how often did you attend an event, group, fellowship or activity at your church (not including Sunday worship services)?” Response choices were “More than once a week”; “Once a week”; “Nearly every week”; “Two to three times a month”; “About once a month”; “Less than once a month”; “I did not attend in the past 12 months.” This question was followed by “How often did you attend Sunday worship at your church over the past 12 months (not including participation in other events/activities at church)?” Response choices were “Every week”; “Nearly every week”; “Two to three times a month”; “About once a month”; “Less than once a month”; and “I did not attend during the previous 12 months.”

A variety of questions were posed to assess the respondent's level of engagement with the church. Respondents were asked: "Are you involved in any of the following church programs or groups?" and invited to choose from a list of eight church groups or programs. Respondents were also given the opportunity to write in any other groups or program in which they participate. Later, from a list of fourteen denomination wide groups/events respondents selected those they had participated in during high school and/or college.

To measure their self-identification as religious or spiritual respondents were asked, "Do you consider yourself to be a religious person?" with response choices: "Yes," "Somewhat," "No," or "Don't know." Respondents were then queried, "Would you describe yourself as a religious person to someone else?" The scaled response choices were "Definitely," "Probably," "It depends," "Probably not," and "Definitely not." The same two questions were posed about being a spiritual person – "Do you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?" and "Would you describe yourself as a spiritual person to someone else?" Similar to the methodology of Zinnbauer (1997) and Marler and Hadaway (2002), no pre-defined definitions of religion or spirituality were offered. As the beginning point of this analysis is the perspective of the individual, respondents answer based on their personal understanding rather than from the researcher's understanding of the concepts.

These identification questions set the stage for the question "Do you believe there is a difference between being a religious person and being a spiritual person?" Response choices were "Definitely," "Probably," "It depends," "Probably not," and "Definitely not." No matter

the response, an open-text field followed in which respondents were asked to “please explain your response.”

The question ordering and wording was deliberate and personalized the questions. Respondents were first asked how they define themselves – Do you consider yourself to be a religious person? After answering, the next question appeared – Do you consider yourself to be a spiritual person? Respondents are to define themselves thus providing a more concrete measure or reference point rather than discussing the concepts in the abstract. Because the question of whether they view themselves as spiritual appears afterward, on a separate page, the respondent was not considering which of the two to select. Finally, respondents are queried whether they believe a difference exists between being a religious person and a spiritual person.

Data Analysis

Surveys were collected using a web-based survey administration tool. Data were exported to Excel and then imported into SPSS for quantitative analysis. Qualitative responses were printed and manually grouped and coded. Respondents often described characteristics of being a religious person and characteristics of being a spiritual person separately (“Religion is...”; “Spirituality is...”); therefore separate coding schemes were developed for the spiritual from the religious.

Respondent Characteristics

Respondents range in age from 18 to 26 years old. The mean age is 20.83 (2 missing). Of those who responded, two-thirds (66%, 100) are female and one-third (34%, 51) are male (11 missing). The majority (85%, 126) is White/Caucasian, 9% (14) is African American/Black, and 6% (9) is Hispanic/Latino/a, Asian, Native American, multiracial, or Pacific Islander (13 missing).

None of the 157 who responded was attending high school at the time of the survey. Most, 78% (123) were in college; 5% (7) were in community college or technical school, 2% (3) were attending graduate school, and 7% (11) were already enrolled in seminary. Among those not already in seminary, most had plans to attend - only 9% (13) responded that they are not considering seminary although more than one fourth (26%, 39) were unsure and 13% (19) did not respond.

The EXPLORATION 2006 survey respondents had previously participated in a variety of other United Methodist- related events and programs. Respondents selected from a list of events/activities those they were involved in during high school and/or college³ (Table 1). The majority (75%, 121) of the respondents had been on a mission trip during high school and/or college. Commonly, these respondents were also involved in the United Methodist Student Movement or Campus Ministry (62%, 100) during high school and/or college.

³ Previous EXPLORATION and Youth gathering events were not included in the table because of the small N for each. Two respondents attended EXPLORATION 2000; six attended EXPLORATION 2002; 7%, 12 attended Youth 2003; and 6%, 9 attended Youth 2007.

Table 1. UMC Event/Program Involvement

| | H.S. And/Or College | No Involvement | TOTAL |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Mission Trip | 75% (121) | 25% (41) | 100% (162) |
| UM Student Movement / Campus Ministry | 62% (100) | 38% (62) | 100% (162) |
| Summer Camp | 59% (95) | 41% (67) | 100% (162) |
| Camping Ministries | 40% (64) | 61% (98) | 100% (162) |
| Camping Ministries Leadership | 33% (54) | 67% (108) | 100% (162) |
| Youth Annual Conference | 22% (36) | 78% (126) | 100% (162) |
| Emmaus/Chrysalis | 20% (33) | 80% (129) | 100% (162) |
| Lay Speaking Training | 18% (29) | 82% (133) | 100% (162) |
| Student Form | 12% (20) | 88% (142) | 100% (162) |

Religious Affiliation

The event, geared toward those interested in ordained ministry in the UMC, attracts a variety of participants, not all of whom consider themselves to be United Methodist. The majority of the respondents (91%, 146) were members of a United Methodist church, but fewer (86%, 139) thought of themselves as United Methodist (Table 2). Another 2% (3) attended a United Methodist church regularly, but were not members of the church, and 7% (12) were members or attended church regularly in another denomination. The vast majority (97%, 135) of those who consider themselves to be United Methodist are also members of a United Methodist church.

Table 2. Respondent UM Identity and affiliation

| | Identify as United Methodist | Member of United Methodist church |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Yes | 86% (139) | 91% (146) |
| No | 7% (11) | 9% (15) |
| Don't Know | 7% (11) | N/A |
| TOTAL | 100% (161) | 100% (161) |

Often, immediate family members of the respondents are United Methodist. Eighty-two percent (126) of the respondents' mothers are United Methodist and 66% (99) of the respondents' fathers are United Methodist⁴. Moreover, at least one family member (parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle) of 32% (52) of the respondents was an ordained clergyperson and 18 respondents report that family members' ordination was in The United Methodist Church.

Respondents report frequent attendance at Sunday worship for themselves and their parents. Over the previous 12 months, 77% (125) of the respondents attended Sunday worship weekly or nearly every week (Table 3). And, more than half (56%, 91) of the respondents participated in a church-related activity at least once a week (not including their attendance at Sunday worship). Respondents were involved in a variety of church groups: 38% (63) involved in a youth group, 33% (53) attended Sunday school, 29% (47) Bible study, 21% (34) sang in the choir and 36% (59) are involved in a college group. The majority (75%,

⁴ Missing religious preference of mother for 8, and father for 13.

113) of respondents' mothers attends worship services weekly or nearly weekly, and 59% (86) of the respondents' fathers attend weekly or nearly weekly.

Table 3. Frequency of attendance previous 12 months

| | Sunday Worship | Church Events |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| > Once a week | N/A | 35% (56) |
| Every Week | 38% (61) | 22% (35) |
| Nearly every week | 40% (64) | 9% (14) |
| 2-3 times/month | 9% (15) | 14% (23) |
| Once a month | 6% (9) | 10% (16) |
| < Once a month | 7% (11) | 9% (15) |
| Did not Attend | | 1% (1) |
| Missing, NA | 1% (2) | 1% (2) |
| TOTAL | 100% (162) | 100% (162) |

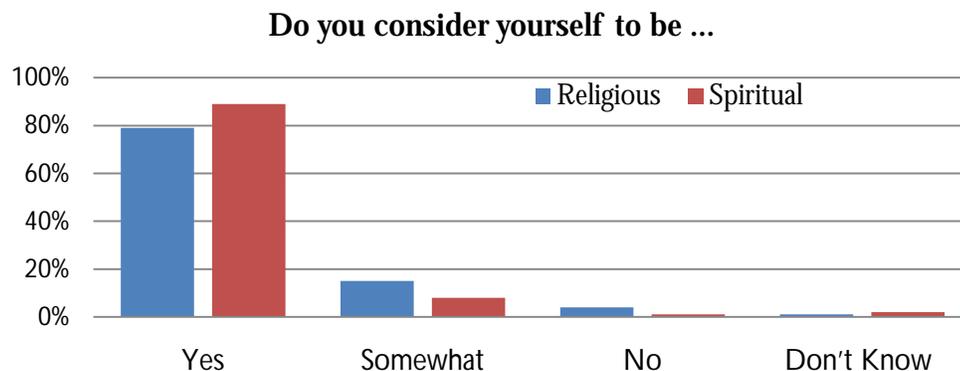
Overall, respondents are quite active in their local church and denomination. They were likely raised United Methodist, most claims a United Methodist religious identity and membership in The United Methodist Church, they attend worship and other church functions regularly, and are involved in a variety of local church and denomination wide groups and events.

Results

RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL SELF – IDENTITY

The majority (79%, 128) of the respondents consider themselves to be a religious person (Figure 1). Also, the majority (88%, 143) consider themselves to be a spiritual person. In other words, 9% more respondents consider themselves to be spiritual than consider themselves to be religious. Very few (4%, 7) responded no, they do not consider themselves religious and even fewer (1%, 2) does not consider themselves to be spiritual. A greater percentage is unsure, 15% (25) are “somewhat” religious and 7% (12) are “somewhat” spiritual. Few (1%, 2) “don’t know” if they consider themselves religious and 2% (3) don’t know if they consider themselves spiritual.

Figure 1. Percentage of Respondents who are religious/spiritual



Among those who consider themselves to be religious, 95% (120) also consider themselves to be spiritual (Table 4). This may indicate that little difference exists between being religious and being spiritual for these respondents. Among those who are not religious, however, 100% (6) consider themselves to be spiritual. It would seem that for

these respondents, there is a difference in being religious and being spiritual or, as previous research has described them, the “spiritual, but not religious.” Similarly, among the somewhat religious, 64% (16) are also spiritual and 28% (7) are somewhat spiritual. These respondents do not consider themselves to be fully religious or fully spiritual, but also are not willing to completely deny being religious or spiritual.

Table 4. Respondent religious and spiritual

| | | RELIGIOUS | | | | Total |
|-----------|----------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| | | Yes | Some- what | No | DK | |
| SPIRITUAL | Yes | 95% (120) | 64% (16) | 100% (6) | 50% (1) | 89% (143) |
| | Somewhat | 4% (5) | 28% (7) | 0% (0) | 0% (0) | 8% (12) |
| | No | 0% (0) | 8% (2) | 0% (0) | 0% (0) | 1% (2) |
| | DK | 2% (2) | 0% (0) | 0% (0) | 50% (1) | 2% (3) |
| | Total | 100% (127) | 100% (6) | 100% (25) | 100% (2) | 100% (160) |

There does appear to be a difference between being a religious person and being a spiritual person for some respondents. How respondents present themselves to others (Goffman 1956) may be different from how they view themselves. Among respondents who consider themselves religious, 73% (94) would definitely describe themselves to another as religious and 20% (25) probably would. On the other hand, among those who are not religious, under half (43%, 3) definitely would not describe themselves as religious, 43% (3) probably would not, and for 14% (1) ‘it depends’ whether they would describe themselves as

religious to another. This means that although they do not view themselves as religious they may describe themselves as religious to others.

Similarly, among those who consider themselves spiritual 76% (109) would definitely describe themselves as such to someone else and 20% (29) probably would. Of the two who are not spiritual, one definitely would not and one probably would not describe as spiritual to another. Again, these results may indicate that respondents perceive differences between being a religious and a spiritual person.

DIFFERENTIATING A RELIGIOUS FROM A SPIRITUAL PERSON

Asked directly, over half (53%, 86) believe there definitely is a difference between being a religious person and being a spiritual person. Another 25% (40) believe there probably is a difference while 16% (25) of respondents are uncertain. Very few, believe there is not a difference; 3% (5) believe there is probably not a difference and 2% (3) believe there definitely is not a difference.

Interestingly, among those who consider themselves to be religious, there is wide variation of response to this question. For example, 49% (62) of those who consider themselves religious believe there definitely is a difference between being a religious and being a spiritual person; 29% (36) believe there probably is a difference, 17% (21) are uncertain, 4% (5) believe there probably is not a difference and 2% (2) believe there definitely is not a difference. Meanwhile, 100% (7) of those who do not consider themselves religious believe there definitely is a difference between being religious and being spiritual.

To understand how these concepts are viewed, respondents were requested to “please explain your response.” The majority (70%, 113) of the respondents provided an explanation. On race, gender and age, no significant differences were found between those who provided an explanation and those who did not. There is, however, a statistically significant difference between those who provided an explanation and those who did not in whether they believe there is a difference between religion and spirituality (Pearson Chi-square 26.093 p. < .000).

The majority who provided an explanation (64%, 71) believe there definitely is a difference between being religious and being spiritual (Table 5). Those who did not provide an explanation seem less sure; 31% (15) believe there definitely is a difference and 33% (33) are uncertain whether there is a difference.

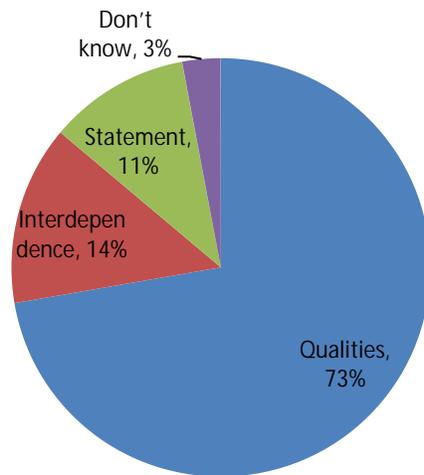
Table 5. Explanation whether difference exists

| | | Explanation | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | Yes | No | Total |
| Whether Difference | <i>Definitely Is</i> | 64% (71) | 31% (15) | 54% (86) |
| | <i>Probably Is</i> | 25% (28) | 25% (12) | 25% (40) |
| | <i>Uncertain</i> | 8% (9) | 33% (16) | 16% (25) |
| | <i>Probably Not</i> | 1% (1) | 8% (4) | 3% (5) |
| | <i>Definitely Not</i> | 2% (2) | 2% (1) | 2% (3) |
| | TOTAL | 100% (48) | 100% (111) | 100% (159) |

Most (73%, 82) of the respondents who provided an explanation described the qualities or characteristics of a religious person and of a spiritual person (Figure 2). Others

(14%, 16) did not describe specific qualities, but instead pointed explicitly to the interdependence of the two concepts, for example “Religion is a way of expressing and studying spirituality.” Similarly, 11% (12) made a general statement, such as “For sure, especially in my generation.” Finally, 3% (3) simply wrote “I don’t know.”

Figure 2. Explanation Themes: Religious and Spiritual



The majority of respondents who described qualities or characteristics of a religious/spiritual person believe that there definitely is a difference between the two concepts (Table 6). Those who described the interdependence of the two concepts were less certain, half (8) believe there probably is a difference. Those making general statements equally believed there definitely is (50%, 6) or probably is (50%, 6) a difference. Not surprisingly, those that wrote “I don’t know” were uncertain about whether there is a difference.

Table 6. Whether Difference Exists by Response Theme

| | Qualities | Dependent | General | DK | Total |
|--|-----------|-----------|---------|----|-------|
| | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Definitely Is | 76% (61) | 25% (4) | 50% (6) | - | 64% (71) |
| Probably Is | 18% (14) | 50% (8) | 50% (6) | - | 25% (28) |
| Uncertain | 5% (4) | 13% (2) | - | 100% (3) | 8% (9) |
| Probably Not & Definitely Not | 1 (1%) | 13% (2) | - | - | 3% (3) |
| TOTAL | 100% (80) | 100% (16) | 100% (12) | 100% (3) | 100% (111) |

QUALITIES OF BEING RELIGIOUS / SPIRITUAL

Those who described qualities or characteristics often described qualities of religious and then qualities of the spiritual (religious is...spiritual is). Separate coding schemes were therefore developed. The theme of qualities is composed of three subthemes for the religious: institution, tradition, and ritual and three subthemes of the spiritual: relationship/connection, living out/following spirit, and personal/broad understanding.

Consistent with previous research, respondents often described the religious dimension as the physical, visible, and external expression, and the spiritual dimension as the non-physical, internal, and personal expression. Descriptions of the religious often employ the adjectives of particular and specific: specific religion, specific practices, specific beliefs, and specific rules. On the other hand, the adjectives of broader, deeper, and larger are often used to describe the spiritual. Descriptions of the religious often depict group participation, such as attending or participating in church, while the spiritual is often described using language of the individual, such as individual faith or based on own self awareness.

A key difference found in this research, unlike previous research is that respondents appear to explain different dimensions of the same concept rather than attempting to justify a stance of spiritual, but not religious. Rather than offering a justification, such as I am spiritual because ..., respondents in this survey simply state what they believe the difference to be – religion is...spiritual is.... Although respondents were first queried about their self identification, most did not then attempt to justify their personal understanding.

The most common (38%, 31) of the three religious qualities subthemes describes the religious *Institution* - institutional religion, organized religion, religious association, or denominational and local church affiliation, and membership. Some responses in this theme describe communal or institutional participation and rules. Just slightly fewer responses (35%, 28) the second subtheme describes religious *Tradition* - the history, doctrine, and traditions found in religion, a common doctrine or teaching, following tradition, knowing the Bible or religion, and what are defined as the “facts.” The third theme describes religious *Ritual* emerged from 27% (22) of the responses and points to the practices, rituals, rites, and actions as examples of the religious.

The most common theme found in 38% (31) of responses describes spirituality as *Relationship/Connection*. The spiritual person is described as having a relationship (personal) with, or connection to God and/or Jesus Christ. The second most common theme, 36% (29) of responses is *Living Out/Following Spirit*. Responses describe the spiritual person’s intent - to follow God and to live out the spirit of the text and the spirit of the religion. The

third theme found in 26% (21) of responses describes spiritual in terms of a *Personal and Broad Understanding* referring to a private and personal understanding developed by the individual and the spiritual as large or broad extending beyond religion.

The most common religious theme, institution, and the most common spiritual theme, relationship/connection to God, each occurred with the same frequency (31). These were not, however, the same respondents. As shown in table 7, the combination of institution/relationship was found in less than half of the responses (42%, 13). An equally common combination when respondents describe the religious as an institution is to describe the spiritual as personal and broad (42% 13). Much less common (16%, 5) combination when religious is described as institution is to describe the spiritual as following God or living out the Spirit.

Table 7. Intersections of Religious and Spiritual These of Qualities

| | | <i>Religious</i> | | | Total |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | | Institution | Tradition | Ritual | |
| <i>Spiritual</i> | Relationship | 42% (13) | 36% (10) | 36% (8) | 38% (31) |
| | Spirit | 16% (5) | 50% (14) | 46% (10) | 36% (29) |
| | Personal/Broad | 42% (13) | 14% (4) | 18% (4) | 26% (21) |
| | Total | 100% (31) | 100% (28) | 100% (22) | 100% (81) |

The most frequently (50%, 14) occurring combination is to describe the religious as tradition and the spiritual as following God and living out the spirit of the religion. More than one-third of respondents (36%, 10) who describe religion as tradition then describe

spiritual as relationship or connection to God. Similarly, when religious is described as rituals, 46% (10) describe the spiritual as following God and living out the spirit and 36% (8) describe the spiritual as a relationship or connection to God.

Summary and Conclusion

Previous research has shown that the religiously unaffiliated believe a difference exists between being a religious person and being a spiritual person. Here, I have shown that a perception of difference is also present among young adults who are religiously affiliated. Although more respondents believe they are spiritual than are religious, most respondents to this survey believe they are both religious and spiritual. Respondents often described qualities of the religious and qualities of the spiritual that are not in opposition, but describe different dimensions.

Respondents' self-identity and whether they will describe themselves to others using that self-identity both suggest that respondents view the concepts of the religious and the spiritual differently. Asked directly, respondents provide explanations of difference describing religious qualities of institution, tradition and ritual and spiritual qualities of relationship/connection, living out/following spirit, and personal/broad understanding.

Some of the respondents do not believe there is a difference between religion and spirituality for themselves or in their lives, but are able to articulate a commonly held perception of difference. Similar to Zinnbauer et al. (1997) the most common description of spirituality is connection or relationship to God or a Higher Power. For the religious,

Zinnbauer's two themes of organizational practices and activities followed by commitment or adherence to organizational beliefs are quite similar to the three themes of institution, tradition, and ritual found in this research. The most common religious theme in Zinnbauer involves belief or faith in God, a Higher Power, or the Divine. Remarkably, reference to God is generally absent from the qualities attributed to being a religious person in my research. On the other hand, God or Jesus Christ is central to the descriptions of spirituality – relationship with God, following God.

Inconsistent with Marler and Hadaway's (2002) findings, I found that even respondents who report being religious and spiritual believe that there is a difference between the two concepts. Perhaps this may be explained by the age of respondents, the generation, or that these respondents are religiously affiliated. Additional research is needed to fully understand whether these differing results may be explained by such factors as changes in the culture, changes in age or generation, religious affiliation, or denominational affiliation. These findings may lend support to Flory and Miller's (2008, 17) claim that a new religious type is emerging—"expressive communalism"—that seeks "spiritual experience and fulfillment in community and through various expressive forms of their spirituality, both private and public."

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