THE GENERATIVE SOCIETY

CARING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

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AMERICAN RELIGION, GENERATIVITY, AND THE THERAPEUTIC CULTURE

MICHELE DILLON AND PAUL WINK

There are strong theoretical and empirical links between religion and generativity. From a Western theological perspective, the ultimate generative act may be seen in Jesus Christ dying on the cross so that through his death and redemption humankind could have eternal life. Indeed, Erik Erikson's writings on generativity invoke Christian themes. He emphasized that the generative ethic of selfless care for others had a clear parallel with Christian teachings and referred, for example, to the "perfection of charity in the words of Christ" (Erikson, 1964, p. 151). Erikson cited the prayer of St. Francis as paradigmatically expressing the "active choice" involved in generativity—"Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace; where there is hatred let me bring love . . . where there is darkness, let me bring light" and the consequence that "in giving we receive" (p. 232).

The generative act, therefore, produces mutuality; it strengthens both the doer and the recipient and thus enhances individual and collective identities (Erikson, 1964). The core of generativity is enshrined in the Golden Rule summarized by, as Erikson noted, the Christian injunction to "love thy neighbor." Importantly, however, the all-inclusive Golden Rule is a basic ethical principle that transcends any one religion. Erikson emphasized the

universality of its "basic formula" evident in its affinity with the Hindu idea of "maintenance of the world" and the principle of Karma (p. 220), the Kantian imperative to see people as ends rather than means, and the "simple political creed" of Abraham Lincoln: "As I would not be slave, I would not be master" (p. 221).

RELIGIOUS INDIVIDUALISM IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

The historical dominance of Christianity in American society and the iconic status of Abraham Lincoln in public culture should combine to provide powerful bedrock for the flourishing of generative ethics in American society. Yet, the same Christianity that preaches the Golden Rule is also the cultural basis of the individualism that governs all aspects of American life from the economic marketplace to family relations. American religiousness itself is characterized by a strong individualistic orientation, and from colonial times to the present the autonomy of the individual has intertwined church participation and religious vitality (e.g., Finke & Stark, 1992). The plurality of diverse denominations, churches, and sects in America both reflects and has been an engine driving the cultural emphasis on individual freedom. Americans, unlike, for example, Europeans, "shop around" for a church or congregation that suits their particular interests and freely switch churches for personal (e.g., dislike of a pastor), practical (convenience), and theological reasons. Further, notwithstanding the comparatively high rates of religious belief and church attendance in America, mainstream religious behavior tends to be characterized more by individual authority than strict adherence to church doctrines and regulations (Dillon, 1999). Many people go to church but see themselves rather than church leaders as the architects of their religious identity.

Thus one of the deeply puzzling paradoxes of American society is how a culture grounded in individualism simultaneously produces high levels of religious and communal involvement. Observers from Alexis de Tocqueville (1835–1836/1969) to contemporary writers suggest that the tension between individualism and community in America is balanced by the often precarious mix of utilitarian and ethical concerns (e.g., Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). On the one hand, Americans largely define their life goals in terms of self-seeking and a self-reliant economic success (Bellah et al., 1985). On the other hand, John Winthrop's exhortation to his fellow Puritans to "choose life that you *and your descendants* [italics added] may live" has provided a powerful cultural motif encouraging Americans to think and act beyond their own immediate self-interests and hence to fuse individualistic and communal or generative interests.

Church involvement has long been seen as tempering an instrumental or utilitarian individualism. As discussed by Bellah et al. (1985), participa-

tion in a religious tradition anchors individuals within a "community of memory" whose "practices of commitment" define the patterns of loyalty and social obligation that maintain the community's vibrancy. In this process, the individual is anchored to the past and, importantly, also to the future as a "community of hope," or what we might call a generative or regenerative community. More specifically, for many generations, religious affiliation and church membership have provided both the motivating scripts and the opportunities for realizing an ethic of social responsibility. Thus the religious autonomy of the individual, as the American sociologist Talcott Parsons (1967; following Max Weber) has argued, should not be seen as absolving the individual of responsibility; rather "the element of mutuality inherent in Christian ethics" means that the individual is responsible "for results and to other persons and collectivities" (p. 419). Consequently, as Nancy Ammerman (1997) has pointed out, American religion is about "right living more than right believing." It is a "Golden Rule Christianity" that emphasizes "practices of doing good and caring for others" (Ammerman, 1997, p. 197).

Given the Golden Rule morality institutionalized in American religion, it is not surprising that there is a positive statistical association between religiousness and concern for others across many dimensions of familial, social, and communal participation (e.g., Putnam, 2000; Rossi, 2001; Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). Frequent churchgoers have larger social networks and are engaged in more socially supportive relationships than are nonattendees (Ellison & George, 1994). They are more likely than their nonreligious counterparts to have positive intergenerational family relationships (e.g., King & Elder 1999; Pearce & Axinn, 1998); to volunteer in youth, health, and other community organizations (e.g., Rossi, 2001); and to donate more time, money, and material goods to charity (Gallup & Lindsay, 1999; Putnam, 2000). Churches are major providers of social services (e.g., for homeless individuals and families) and are increasingly active in community development projects in underprivileged urban neighborhoods (e.g., Wood, 2002). In sum, churches play a substantial role in the production of a generative society. They provide scriptural narratives of exemplary generative acts that help awaken generative interests and motivations, as well as the social networks and organized opportunities that provide the means for individuals to act on their generative concerns.

THE EMERGENCE OF SPIRITUALITY IN A THERAPEUTIC CULTURE

In recent years, however, social scientists have observed a change in American religion. The cultural and lifestyle experimentation associated with the protest movements and social upheavals of the 1960s is seen as having a

transformative impact on American religion. The 1960s, according to Robert Wuthnow (1998, pp. 53–54), "reshaped Americans' understanding of freedom itself." The religious individualism so long expressed within religious institutions began to move beyond institutional walls to improvise new ways of spiritual seeking. And this quest was made easier by a greatly expanded and innovative "spiritual marketplace" that has allowed Americans to choose from and blend together an ever-increasing array of Western and non-Western religious and spiritual resources (Roof, 1999). Consequently, since the 1960s, there has been a move away from the communal, public, cosmopolitan, and intellectual emphases of religion to a focus on personal, private, local, and emotional religious experiences (Marty, 1993). The importance of tradition-centered religious beliefs and practices (such as attending church and reading the Bible) is being displaced to some extent by an emergent popular consensus that spiritual meaning can be found outside of established places of worship and by exploring Eastern (e.g., Buddhist meditation, yoga) and mythic traditions (e.g., Celtic spirituality).

Because of the established relation between traditional forms of religious involvement (e.g., church attendance) and social commitment, some scholars have responded with considerable concern to the post-1960s' emergence of a more privatized and individuated form of spirituality. They focus attention on whether a spiritual individualism that is autonomous of institutionalized religious beliefs and practices threatens to undercut Americans' sense of social obligation (e.g., Bellah et al., 1985). The long-standing cultural emphasis on responsible individualism is seen as having shifted toward a more self-centered, narcissistic individualism bolstered by the post-1960s' therapeutic culture, the triumph of "psychological man" for whom personal well-being is an end in itself rather than an outcome of socially meaningful activities (Rieff, 1966).

A self-defined spirituality that encourages mystical withdrawal from the world, either in accord with the monastic strand within Christianity or the ascetic self-disciplined practices within Eastern spirituality, is not necessarily anathema to community. But in the contemporary American context, the concern is that a self-defined spirituality is essentially a mechanism to glorify the self, a sort of "cosmic selfhood" wherein "God is simply the self magnified" (Bellah et al., 1985, p. 235). Because in American society historically people have sought to give expression to the self through communal ties and community participation, the new spiritual individualism raises concern that a personalized spirituality, if driven by the narcissistic needs of the self, will have little if any place for the "practices of commitment" and the attendant external obligations imposed by participation in a communal religious tradition (Bellah et al., 1985). The narcissistic individualism associated with spiritual seeking is seen as significantly altering the balance between individualism and community that a socially responsible religious individualism has been able to hold, but that a spiritual individualism be-

cause of its privatization and autonomy from formal communal expectations and practices may not. On this view, American spiritual individualism, a religion befitting the contemporary therapeutic culture, is perceived as causing a decline in American generativity. It is seen as directly resulting in a decline in communal participation and care for others and, indirectly, by fostering a self-centered and self-satisfied view that nothing is wrong with the world and therefore nothing needs fixing (Bellah et al., 1985; Wuthnow, 1998). Thus instead of fostering a critical reflexivity and broad social perspective, a self-seeking spirituality can instead suppress awareness of social inequalities and the motivation to try to ameliorate them.

This rather bleak assessment of the social implications of spirituality has begun to be questioned as a result of new empirical studies. Roof's (1999) research among middle-age baby-boomers challenges the purported narcissistic implications of spirituality. Roof conceded that the focus of today's religious energies has shifted from a concern with issues of social belonging to an emphasis on personal meaning. At the same time, however, he found that baby-boomers who have had spiritual experiences are far more likely to value self-giving than those who have not. Openness to self-growth, Roof argued, translates into a predisposition toward more generative personal and interpersonal social relations on the part of individuals who are spiritually engaged. On this view, spiritual individualism does not necessarily threaten communal involvement (Roof, 1999). Rather, spirituality, similar to other personalist ideologies (Lichterman, 1995), can be nurturing of communal-oriented commitments. After all, spirituality usually means that the individual has developed an awareness of a sense of connectedness between self and others and the world at large (Underwood, 1999). Consequently, spirituality should be conducive to achieving the broader societal perspective that leads to generativity, although as argued by Bellah et al. (1985), the "romantic and psychological pantheism" reflected in belief in the unity of all living things offers only the "vaguest prescriptions about how to live in an actual society" (p. 81). Nonetheless, the newly emerging attention to the positive communal implications of spirituality highlights the idea that although a spiritual quest energizes the autonomy of human agency, it may also lead to practices that encourage the communal integration of the self (Bakan, 1966; Kotre, 1996).

The expectation that spirituality should lead to an increase in generative interests fits well with diverse psychological theories that link spiritual growth to higher levels of cognitive development and self-actualization. Both Jungian (Jung, 1964) and postformal (e.g., Sinnott, 1994) theories of development see spirituality as intertwined with the maturational processes and life experiences (McFadden, 1996; Stokes, 1990) associated with the second half of adulthood. This is because the development of spirituality requires the kind of personal autonomy and awareness of contextual relativism that typically develop only around midlife, once the individual has established

his or her place in society and begins to experience physical signs of aging (Jung, 1964). Adult development theories thus emphasize the relation between spirituality and a sense of human connectedness, integration of the self, and openness to new experiences (Erikson, 1963; McFadden, 1996; Sinnott, 1994). According to Tornstam (1999), gerotranscendence, the spiritual-based progression toward maturation that is characterized by a heightened awareness of the connection between the self and earlier generations, a decline in self-centeredness, and a decreased focus on this-worldly success and material assets, is a phenomenon of older adulthood. This psychological portrait of spirituality captures well the essence of classical formulations of the personal implications of humanistic religion (Fromm, 1950) and self-actualization (Maslow, 1954).

The view that both an individuated spirituality and a more communally anchored religiousness can lead to generativity fits with the idea that there is, in fact, more than one type of generative impulse or motivation. Recent theories of generativity emphasized that it fuses agential and communal interests (e.g., MacDermid, Franz, & De Reus, 1998; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). As postulated by McAdams and Logan (this volume, chap. 2), generativity springs from both selfish and selfless desires, or from what we suggest might be seen as self-expanding and communal orientations. On the one hand, the more self-directed or agential generative impulse originates in a variety of sources, including the desire to outlive the self and attain immortality (Kotre, 1996), the need for power and impact on others (McAdams, 1995), and creativity (Erikson, 1963). In this sense, an important aspect of generativity entails a healthy transformation of narcissism (Kohut, 1977). On the other hand, generativity is also a manifestation of a deeply felt need for nurturance, caring, and fusion with others that is the hallmark of communion (Bakan, 1966).

Although there is a large body of empirical data supporting the links between religious involvement and generativity or caring for others, the empirical relation between spirituality and generativity has not been systematically investigated. This gap exists in part because, as indicated, spirituality is a relatively new concept in the social sciences and existing research projects have been slow to include questions on spirituality notwithstanding its popularity in public culture and its prominence in scholarly debates about individualism and community. The other, and perhaps more challenging, obstacle to research assessing the impact of spirituality on social behavior is a lack of consensus as to how spirituality should be defined. The conceptual ambiguity is due primarily to the multiple meanings of the term spirituality, which can be applied equally aptly to a pious individual who expresses devotion within the context of a traditional religious institution (Pargament, 1999), a New Age seeker (Roof, 1999), a person who has mystical experiences (Atchley, 1997), and a nonreligious individual who seeks answers to life's existential dilemmas (Stifoss-Hanssen, 1999). Clearly, because of the com-

plexity in the relation between religiousness and spirituality, it is impossible for any one definition to capture all the nuances of both constructs (Moberg, 2002).

RELIGIOUS DWELLING AND SPIRITUAL SEEKING

In our research we have investigated religiousness and spirituality as two dimensions of individual difference using Wuthnow's (1998) distinction between dwelling and seeking. According to Wuthnow, *religious dwellers* tend to accept traditional forms of religious authority; they inhabit a space created for them by established religious institutions and relate to the sacred through prayer and public communal worship. By contrast, for *spiritual seekers*, individual autonomy takes precedence over external authority (Wuthnow, 1998) and the hold of tradition-centered religious doctrines. They are explorers who create their own space by typically borrowing elements from various religious and mythical traditions, and they frequently blend participation in institutionalized Western religious activities with Eastern religious practices. Unlike religious dwellers, spiritual seekers place a greater emphasis on self-growth, emotional self-fulfillment, and the sacredness of ordinary objects and everyday experiences. They typically construe their religious beliefs in terms of a connectedness with a sacred Other (e.g., God, Higher Power, nature, other individuals; Underwood, 1999). What differentiates dwellers and seekers is their relation to religious authority and tradition but not necessarily the seriousness of effort to intentionally incorporate the sacred in their lives. It is important to note that both dwellers and seekers, especially when they engage in intentional practices (that may be privatized or communal), can grow in their faith; they simply tend do so in different ways.

Wuthnow's (1998) model, of course, does not capture all the nuanced meanings embedded in the distinction between religiousness and spirituality, but it does offer a salient understanding of how the two constructs are used in public culture (e.g., Farina, 1989; Marty, 1993). Equally important, because it requires that an individual systematically engage in intentional religious or spiritual practices, it avoids the undisciplined, ad hoc, and idiosyncratic forms of spirituality that tend to inform much of the scholarly discussion about the narcissistic motivations and implications of spiritual seeking (Bellah et al., 1985).

In our research we have explored the relations of religiousness and spirituality to social participation and psychosocial functioning in a longitudinal sample of close to 200 older-age American men and women who were born in the 1920s. Participants in the study, which originated at the Institute of Human Development (IHD) at the University of California, Berkeley, were studied intensively in childhood and adolescence and interviewed in depth about all aspects of their lives in early, middle, late middle, and, most re-

cently in late adulthood when two thirds of the study participants were in their late 60s and one third were in their mid-70s (see Clausen, 1993; Eichorn, Hunt, & Honzik, 1981; Wink & Dillon, 2002). Although there is a good distribution of social class, almost all of the interviewees are White, most still live in California, and the majority are members of mainline Protestant churches. The generalizability of findings from our research to the larger population is thus restricted by the absence of ethnic, religious, and regional diversity. The strength of the study, however, lies in the richness of its interview data and the fact that the same people were followed over 60 years of the life course. Further, because California was and continues to be at the vanguard of the cultural shift in American society that had its origins in the 1960s, the IHD participants offer an excellent opportunity to compare the psychological and sociological implications of adherence to institutionalized or tradition-centered religious beliefs and practices with engagement in spiritual beliefs and practices that are relatively autonomous of institutionalized traditions.

SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In our quantitative research on the implications of religiousness and spirituality in late adulthood, we found that both constructs were associated with various indicators of positive functioning (e.g., Wink & Dillon, 2001). Of direct relevance to the themes discussed in this chapter, we found that both religiousness (dwelling) and spirituality (seeking) were positively associated with well-being in older adulthood (Wink & Dillon, in press). But as might be expected, highly religious individuals were more likely to derive well-being from mutual interpersonal and social activities, whereas highly spiritual individuals were more likely to derive their well-being from an emphasis on personal growth, a difference reminiscent of Bakan's (1966) distinction between communion and agency. Similarly, we found that both religiousness and spirituality were positively related to scores on the self-report Loyola Generativity Scale (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992) and the California Adult Q-Set (Block, 1978) Generative Realization scale (Peterson & Klohnen, 1995), with high scorers on both religiousness and spirituality tending to see themselves and to be described by others as generative. However, once the overlap between religiousness and spirituality was taken into consideration (i.e., statistically removed), only high scorers on religiousness tended to be described by observers as giving toward others, protective of those close to them, ethically consistent, and productive, whereas only high scorers on spirituality tended to describe themselves as being engaged in activities that have an impact on others, feeling needed and wanted by others, and involved in creative activities (Dillon, Wink, & Fay, in press). They also believed that their legacy would continue to be recognized after their death. Observers

tended to describe highly spiritual individuals as being socially incisive and able to see to the heart of important problems.

On closer examination, and by way of summary, it was apparent that religiousness was significantly more likely to be associated with the communal and interpersonal caring aspects of generativity, whereas spirituality was more strongly related to the self-expansive and creative activities that enable generative individuals to "outlive the self" (Kotre, 1996). Our findings also showed that there was long-term stability in the relations between religiousness, spirituality, and generativity. In other words, we found that if an individual scored high on religiousness in early adulthood (age 30s) or high on spirituality in late middle adulthood (late 50s/early 60s), they would also score high on generativity in late adulthood (age 70s), time intervals of close to 40 and 15 years, respectively (Wink & Dillon, in press).

Further, despite the purported association between narcissism and spirituality (e.g., Bellah et al., 1985), our research findings showed no connection between spirituality and narcissism. There was a negative, but statistically nonsignificant, relation between spirituality and narcissism and a negative and statistically significant relation between religiousness and narcissism (Wink & Dillon, in press). Overall then, findings from our study indicating a positive relation between religiousness, spirituality, and generativity and a negative relation to narcissism should help dispel concerns about the excessive self-absorption of spiritual seekers (e.g., Bellah et al., 1985).

GENERATIVE LIVES IN A CHANGING CULTURE

As a way of illustrating and elaborating the statistical patterns that have emerged in our research, we now discuss three lives to show how both traditional religiousness and newer types of spiritual engagement can nurture and facilitate the realization of generative behavior.[1] We first introduce and compare two women, Laura and Jane, who have fairly similar social backgrounds and personalities. Both scored high on generativity in late adulthood, but whereas Laura was one of the most religious individuals in our study, Jane was one of the most spiritual. Then, because the empirical link between spirituality and generativity is less well established than for religiousness, we introduce Peter, one of the more spiritual men in the study and who over time became generative.

Both Laura and Jane were born in 1928 to middle-class parents, and they grew up in economically comfortable families unimpeded by the Great Depression. Religion was not emphasized in either family. Both went to col-

[1]Names and other personally identifying information has been changed to preserve the interviewees' anonymity.

lege where they met their respective husbands who subsequently forged successful business careers, and reflecting post–World War II American demographic trends, both had four children. Laura and Jane also had somewhat similar personalities; each from an early age was independent, strong, and resourceful, and both enjoyed athletics and outdoor activities. Both of Laura's parents were very active socially and highly involved in political and community affairs, and although Jane's father was socially reserved, her mother was very active in the community. Laura's and Jane's early life experiences sensitized them too to emotional loss. Laura's adored father died when she was in her early teens, whereas loss in Jane's life dates to her birth not long after an older sibling's death left a huge emotional gap in her mother's life that Jane assumed she had to fill. At age 8, a childhood illness meant that Jane had to spend 6 months out of school, a period she experienced as a time of emotional and social isolation.

Notwithstanding their sociobiographical similarities, Laura and Jane show quite different trajectories and patterns of generativity. Laura's generativity is tied to her religiousness, and like her religiousness, it is relatively stable, socially responsive, and action-oriented. Jane's spirituality develops in late middle adulthood and is dialectically related to the cultural changes of the 1960s and 1970s in a way that Laura's is not. Jane's generativity is grounded in a relatively privatized quest toward understanding the self and therapeutically connecting with others. It is expressed in creative activities and also, like Laura, in caring for others, but the context of care frequently intertwines Jane's inner needs.

Laura

The 1950s stand out as a high point in American religiousness (Wuthnow, 1998) and like so many young mothers of her generation, Laura was very active in the church during this decade. She was attending weekly Episcopalian services, something she had started doing while in junior high school, and, among other activities, was directing the church's youth group. Religion was her "wonderful crutch," but it also bolstered her strong sense of social responsibility and commitment to living out rather than simply professing Christian values. Illuminating American Golden Rule Christianity, Laura emphasized how much she tried to be a good "practicing" Christian by helping out in various church and community activities. She commented that she tries "to see the best in everyone . . . to look at things in a positive way and give people the benefit of the doubt" (1958, at age 30), a worldview aided by her belief that God gave each of her "children and perhaps everyone in the world something special." It was evident that Laura admired self-giving people such as her mother, whom she described as someone who "sort of dedicates her life for others." Demonstrating moreover the mutuality that is so characteristic of generativity (Erikson, 1964; McAdams, Diamond, de St.

Aubin, & Mansfield, 1997), Laura, at age 42, observed how getting a middle-ear infection and temporarily losing her hearing had been a positive experience for her because she "came out with a totally beautifully new understanding of deaf people."

The church and Laura's deep religious faith was a constant resource for her throughout her adult life, and when in her mid-40s she was confronted with her unexpected divorce, prayer and religious books helped her cope with the emotional and financial losses she incurred. In view of Erikson's use of the prayer of St. Francis as an exemplar of generativity, it is noteworthy that when asked about her usual response to trouble, Laura, at midlife, referred to that prayer as one of the "beautiful things" to which she turns for strength. Although Laura experienced chronic and debilitating health problems throughout adulthood, the focus of her generative concerns was invariably communal rather than agentic or self-oriented. Thus, for example, after a close relative was tragically killed, Laura and her husband had the bereaved children live with them for several years.

Up until midlife, Laura's social clock followed the typical "feminine" role pattern of marriage, mothering, and church involvement, and her caring for others was defined within these traditional contexts. But Laura did not need to read *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) to alert her to alternative role possibilities for women. Already in 1958, 5 years before Betty Friedan's best-selling book exploded the myth of the happily passive housewife, Laura made no bones about her independence even as she intimated her awareness that this was culturally renegade:

> Well I'm one of those awful people; I feel I'm me and no one can run my life. I tell him [husband] if I feel it's not his jurisdiction. I've maintained my own independence. . . . I'm certainly more emotionally independent than dependent. . . . I've always felt that if something should happen to [husband] I could take care of myself. That gives a clue to how independent I am.

It was not until she was in her 40s, however, that Laura expanded her social roles. Buoyed perhaps by the spirit of the Women's Movement, Laura started teaching in the late 1960s and subsequently received her diploma in special education. "Physically and mentally exhausting," Laura's occupational decision to teach "superdependent" emotionally troubled children and adolescents was clearly generative. Her subsequent work showed an even broader communal orientation when in 1980 she and her second husband, catching the rebounding wave of public concern about the environment (e.g., Putnam, 2000), started a nature store in the Southwestern United States. They saw the store not as a money-making enterprise but in terms of service to a larger good. As Laura said: "It's a thrilling store and we don't look to it as a means of making money. We feel very good about what we're doing. If it's just a message to the public and we can scrape out a living from it, that's all we want"

(1982, at age 54). Fifteen years later, Laura and her husband were still working full time in their low-profit nature store despite her continuing health problems. Weekly church attendance and daily prayer continued to be a central part of her life, but as she also pointed out, her religion was very much "the here and now and on earth." Thus, not surprising, Laura was still emphatic about her social responsibility to do good, to "contribute to society," and to make a difference in the world. She commented:

> We have made a living for ourselves but not much more than that. We're very happy with what we're doing. We believe in what we're doing. One of our major things is trying to make people aware, particularly children and the young generation, how fortunate we are to have this beautiful world and to try and take better care of it. (1997, at age 69)

Jane

The generative resources that Laura drew from established religion, Jane had to achieve through an inner journey of self-discovery and healing. If generativity, as Erikson noted, means loving thy neighbor as thyself, Jane's life can be seen as an illustration of the psychosocial insight that one has to learn to love and accept oneself before having the capacity to be self-giving toward others. When interviewed at age 30, Jane described her late-20s as the "absolute low" of her life brought on by the death of her father, her "steady rock" to whom she had been very close. His death, moreover, occurred at the same time as one of her children was diagnosed with a serious illness. To deal with her despair, Jane sought psychiatric counseling, and during the 1958 interview, was somewhat optimistic: "I feel I'm on the way to some sort of solution and understanding of [the depression]. . . . I have to accept my life as it is." At the same time, Jane was wistful that she did not share her husband's strong Catholic convictions, something she felt that anchored him in ways that she was not. Although involved in their children's religious education, Jane said she was unable to bring herself to adopt such beliefs. For Jane, God was "some nebulous force behind the universe," and as she commented, she did "not feel responsible to a God."

Jane's continuing journey toward self-insight and self-acceptance took her into psychotherapy in the late 1960s, and she also started participating in the newly expanding range of encounter groups. Illustrating how sociocultural change can impact individual change, Jane emphasized how important therapy had been in advancing her self-understanding. She commented:

> I feel that my life has just completely changed. My feelings about myself, like about what I'm doing here on earth. And I'm still growing. I don't think it will ever stop now. . . . I've never felt better about myself. I'm more confident and I feel very strongly my identity, and I feel I can do pretty much what I want to do. . . . I feel I'm worth something. (1970, at age 42)

Further reflecting the therapeutic culture of 1970s' America (Bellah et al., 1985) and her belief in inner-awareness as a pathway to personal growth, Jane, when asked about future goals for her children, said she would like to teach them "to be able to be in touch with themselves and their feelings."

Paralleling her experiences in psychotherapy and encounter groups, Jane's process of self-growth also included an expanded spiritual awareness. In the mid-1970s she became interested in Eastern meditation practices that at the time were still relatively new to American society. Pointing to the cultural intertwining of spiritual and therapeutic interests, Jane attended a lecture for mental health professionals given by an Eastern guru. As described by Jane:

> Something happened the first time I walked into that place, into the ashram. It's an indescribable something, but I felt a real internal shift inside me. Something profound was happening and I didn't understand it but I knew it felt really good. (1982, at age 54)

After a couple of return visits to the ashram, Jane subsequently started to learn meditative practices and subsequently began to experience intensive meditation. These "profound experiences in meditation" brought her, she said, "a strength and a peacefulness and a protection" that she had never before experienced, and "all of it came from within." Jane continued to do intensive meditation and 20 years later, in her 70s, meditation and other spiritual rituals continued to be a very meaningful part of her life.

The reason Jane attended that first Eastern spirituality lecture was that she herself had trained to become a family therapist in the early 1970s. For Jane, being a clinician was rewarding not just because she was helping others but because she also found it integral to her self-growth. At the time of the 1982 interview, Jane was doing group therapy with families; she was enjoying the work immensely and also found it to be "part of [her] own healing."

Like Laura, Jane responded to the increased structural and cultural opportunities for women's employment in the 1970s and expanded her social roles at midlife. Although both women entered caring professions, it is noteworthy that whereas Laura chose the more traditional domain of teaching as the initial productive outlet for her more communal interests, Jane chose the more culturally fashionable and inner-directed, therapeutic domain. Nonetheless, Jane's spiritual and therapeutic experiences helped her achieve a broader communal perspective and thus enhanced the realization of generative behavior in older age. She carved a productive career training other therapists and traveling extensively giving workshops until she retired in the early 1990s. Following her retirement Jane became more involved in her long-standing artistic pursuits, especially working in her garden where she had created some natural shrines, spaces that she regularly used for meditation. She also spent a lot of time writing poetry, painting, and sculpting, thus accumulating a creative legacy. It is important to note that Jane had also

become an active volunteer. Prior to her husband's cancer and subsequent death in the mid-1990s, she had taught English to immigrants, worked with undereducated adult prisoners, and ran a caregivers' group for families of patients with Alzheimer's disease.

Like Laura, Jane too was proud of the contribution of her work to others' well-being and to a larger social good, but in Jane's case, there was additional pride in how it also reflected on her own self-growth:

> I think the [family counseling] work I did when I was working was terribly important. . . . And I feel really good about that. And the people I helped along the way. And then it's who I have become that I feel proud of too. . . . I have come to a greater depth of understanding and forgiveness. And I'm in a whole different place through it.

It is thus that Jane gives realization to Erikson's (1968) emphasis that the generative ethic "commands us always to act in such a way that the identities of both the actor and the one acted upon are enhanced" (p. 316).

Peter

Unlike Laura and Jane whose social roles maintained a good fit with American cultural expectations over successive decades, Peter, born in 1929, had a hard time carrying the role mantle of a dominant, independent, and high-achieving male. Although highly intelligent, charming, healthy, and handsome, Peter suffered chronically low self-esteem from childhood through most of his adult years. Both his parents were college graduates, and his father owned a successful business that he had taken over from his father-in-law but that became very badly hit by the Depression. Financial difficulties and insecurity, exacerbated by the spending and social habits of Peter's status-conscious mother, characterized Peter's life until junior high school when his family's economic situation improved considerably. In addition, both parents had suffered nervous breakdowns in their late adolescent years, and the legacy of this emotional instability endured into Peter's upbringing. Religion did not figure prominently in Peter's family, but his mother occasionally attended Congregational and Unitarian church services and was an active volunteer in the community (notwithstanding the family's economic straits). Peter went to a Christian Science Sunday school for a while when he was 9, and he was also a member of the Boy Scouts at the local Episcopalian church. But as a socially awkward and curious child, he was much more interested in magic and doing chemistry experiments for the transformations they caused. In adolescence he described himself as agnostic.

Peter's sole and older brother, who was boisterous and troublesome to his parents, was Peter's "friend and protector" and got him into a high school fraternity that greatly improved his social life. Nonetheless, Peter felt "socially inadequate and generally incompetent" as an adolescent. Unable to

achieve the high grades his parents expected, midway through college, Peter was drafted into the army. After basic training, which to his surprise he enjoyed, he returned to Berkeley, married a woman whom he did not know so well, and after a week's honeymoon, went to Korea. He was assigned to a logistics division at headquarters and found the desk work frustrating, and getting commendations for it, hypocritical.

On returning from Korea, Peter went back to college, changed his major from physics to business administration, and got better grades. After graduating in 1955, Peter went to work with his father in his wholesale deep-freeze business. Commenting on this decision when interviewed in 1958, Peter said that if he were "more mature and self-confident" he would quit working for his father although he nonetheless felt some loyalty to him and his business. Work was not the only source of frustration for Peter; his marriage was also in trouble. His wife had a troubled personal background and was suffering from depression. Peter himself felt sexually incompetent and was further frustrated because having built his wife and young son "a new home with all mod cons," he thought this would improve their relationship, but it had not.

When interviewed in 1970, Peter's life had spiraled downward. He and his wife, although they had adopted a son and daughter, divorced in 1967; and he had been very depressed, out of work, and living in a boarding house for a few months prior to the interview. His brother, moreover, had had a nervous breakdown. Although Peter had found work managing a frozen foods wholesale branch, he was in debt as a result of his prior unemployment and experienced bouts of depression. Nonetheless, Peter was trying to take hold of his life and give it some direction. Like Jane who found new resources and opportunities for self-growth in the newly expanding therapeutic culture, Peter, and indeed most of his friends, were involved in a Transactional Analysis (TA) therapy group that met once a week. Peter felt that the TA helped him deal with his depression, and as well as looking into yoga and meditation, he was even thinking of going back to college to become a therapist. It was clear that Peter was quite taken with TA and throughout the interview he frequently drew on its therapeutic vocabulary in trying to explain his own self-perception and behavior. He explained, for example:

> One of the concepts they have is that of a good guy. . . . The good guy is somebody who's too worried about their image and functions in terms of how they think other people want them to function . . . so that rather than doing what they feel is the right thing to do, they look and say "I wonder what so-and-so would think, if I did this, would they like it?" . . . I think I have a tendency to be a good guy . . . one of my contracts [tasks] in TA is to get over being a good guy because I don't particularly like it. Over the years I have found it very destructive. (1970, at age 41)

It was through church that Peter had first found out about TA: Some friends at the Unitarian church that he had been attending on and off for

several months first told him about it. What he liked about Unitarianism, he said, was that he "didn't have to have all kinds of religious beliefs to fit in."

Twelve years later, Peter's life seemed to have taken a positive turn. After selling a service station that he had owned for a few years, Peter had gone back to college and received a master's degree in ecosystem management and technology. With the new opportunities that, as we saw with Laura, had become available in the post-1970s environmental-friendly marketplace, Peter had at last found a vocational niche. He had set up a small wood stove business and was also engaged in other alternative energy projects and organic farming. Peter was also in another marriage, his third, after a second short and stormy marriage in which he had another son. His second wife had been active in the Bahai religion, and she in turn got him involved; it was through Bahai activities that he subsequently met his current wife. Both had subsequently left the Bahai religion because of what they felt was its hypocrisy, especially over women's equality. As Peter explained, in the personally authoritative and self-oriented language that Bellah et al. (1985) knew so well, "we replaced the faith with our beliefs regarding energy and self sufficiency. And how we want to handle our own lives and where we are going" (1982, at age 53). His wife, a nurse, was younger than him, but "mature and level headed"; they had a son together and seemed to have carved a happy and cohesive family life.

When interviewed in late adulthood, Peter was still happily married and had a very close relationship with his youngest son, although he was not close to any of his older children. Describing his marriage as "very good," Peter did not invoke the therapeutic language one might have anticipated based on past interviews but used a more old-fashioned vocabulary, commenting: "Finally I recognize that what it takes for a marriage to work is commitment, almost more than anything else." At this time in his life, Peter was also very committed to community participation. Although "a neo-pagan" who regularly engaged in nature spirituality practices, he also attended the Unitarian church most weeks, was on its board, and had served on its worship committee. He was also an organizer of a local farmers' market for organic foods, ran a wholesale foods buying club for 12 families, and was on the board of the community hall and of the local conservation district. Given all of these activities, it is not surprising that Peter described his values thus:

> My values tie in right with this earth's spirituality. . . . I think my values are very, very environmental and I'm very concerned that we as human beings are destroying our home, our earth. And I'm concerned that it's going to affect my son's life and my grandchildren's lives. Not mine necessarily. . . . So my values are very much values of attempting to live lightly with the earth. (1998, at age 69)

For someone who in adolescence and early adulthood had felt deeply inadequate, it is clear that from middle adulthood onward, and after many

work-related troubles and personal calamities brought on by his lack of maturation, Peter carved a stable and committed life. His dabbling in various religions (Congregationalism, Unitarianism, Bahai) illustrates well the cafeteria-type religious shopper whom we might expect would end up dissatisfied with all religions and disconnected from the "practices of commitment" that link individuals to communities beyond the self. Yet, Peter managed to commit to Unitarianism and an earth-centered spirituality whose obligations in turn connected him to a whole web of personal and communal relations. By late adulthood, his generative concerns and activities encompassed his family, the local community, and the environment at large. Accordingly, self-growth for Peter achieved the Eriksonian demand that the self be a relational self, one that meaningfully incorporates and integrates others into its orbit.

We do not rule out the possibility that Peter's achievement of a generative and integrated identity may have resulted from the maturational or aging process itself. We are struck, however, that changes in the post 1960s' cultural environment provided mechanisms that enabled Peter to journey toward the creation of a purposeful and generative lifestyle. Although his parents' mental health histories may in any case have motivated Peter to seek psychotherapy at some point, the cultural accessibility of TA in the 1970s and its apparent suitability to Peter's specific needs may have enhanced his growth and maturation. Similarly, the expanded range of religious options in post-1970s America including, for example, the increased visibility of the Bahai religion and of unconventional forms of spirituality such as paganism, also played a critical role in creating new resources and social opportunities for Peter. At the same time, the culture's new environmental consciousness, and perhaps the increased societal recognition that not all men need to be "organization men," provided a legitimate outlet for his comparatively less utilitarian avocational interests.

CONCLUSION: SPIRITUALITY AND COMMUNAL COMMITMENT IN A THERAPEUTIC SOCIETY

The cultural transformation of the 1960s toward a narcissistic and therapeutic individualism and the emergent popularity of spiritual vocabularies and practices that are autonomous of tradition-centered religion raise concern that spiritual individualism may undercut Americans' social commitments. It is this broadly changed cultural context that we have used to probe the relation between religiousness, spirituality, and generativity in our research among White Christians who were born in the 1920s.

In thinking about cultural change, it is important first of all to point out that one should be cautious not to overstate the popularity of new forms of spirituality. Although there is no shortage of spiritual groups, books, and materials in the public culture, the data on the extent of the new religious–spiritual transformation are somewhat ambiguous. There has been a rela-

tively small but statistically significant decline in religious affiliation and church attendance in America over the last several years (Hout & Fischer, 2002). At the same time, however, although the proportion of Americans who identify with non Judeo-Christian religions has increased considerably since the 1970s, the most recent reliable survey evidence suggests that less than 3% of American adults report either having a "personal religion" or following non-Western religions (see Smith, 2002). Certain skepticism, therefore, is prudent so that we do not overstate the extent of the transformation of the American religious–spiritual landscape.

It remains true, nonetheless, that the 1960s do represent a cultural watershed, and the changed understanding of the scope and nature of individual freedom has clearly affected religious and spiritual behavior. The importance of our research lies in part in showing that both traditional forms of religiousness and an individualized, seeker-oriented spirituality provide links to the awakening and realization of generativity. Although we found that spirituality had a stronger connection with the more self-expansive aspects of generativity and religiousness with its more communal dimensions, both, nonetheless, were significantly related to generativity. Moreover, we found no evidence of a connection between spirituality and narcissism. It is evident, therefore, that when spirituality is construed as a disciplined, systematic, and intentional practice, paralleling how social scientists customarily define the behavioral dimensions of religiousness, it is not as transitory, flimsy, and self-indulgent as is intimated frequently in popular discourse.

Our studies highlight the importance of recognizing that just as generativity is itself a multidimensional concept, so also there are multiple pathways toward its realization. Although involvement in a religious tradition provides individuals with more structured and socially accessible ways of engaging and realizing generative concerns, the individual journeying and self-growth associated with spirituality are also conducive to the development of the sense of connectedness and social commitment that expresses and enhances generativity. As we saw with both Peter and Jane, spirituality provided the social merger and connectedness yearned for from childhood and enabled both to become generative older adults. Their spiritual journeying was clearly self-seeking and therapeutic, but its outcome resulted in social participation rather than disengagement. In this, perhaps they illuminate the power of American culture to orient action in a pragmatic and this-worldly rather than a more mystical and inner-worldly manner. Accordingly, just as American religion has historically emphasized socially responsible action in the everyday world, so too it would seem that American therapeutic culture, if harnessed to a disciplined spirituality, can lead to a socially responsible expression of the newfound self. In this, both tradition-centered institutionalized religion and newer forms of spirituality may share more in common than is assumed by scholars who are concerned about the possible negative social consequences of spirituality (Bellah et al., 1985). If spiritual-

ity has gained in prominence among members of the baby-boom generation (Roof, 1999; Wuthnow, 1998), then our research findings augur well for the aging boomers' ability to transcend the therapeutic self and to care for others in a generative way.

It is also important to recognize that the ways in which generativity is expressed are contingent on sociocultural context. It is not coincidental that Americans' community involvement and church attendance peaked during the 1950s decade of post–World War II suburban family affluence. At the height of the Cold War, having "faith in faith" and showing one's religious (as opposed to one's atheistic or "communist") identity by going to church (Herberg, 1960) expanded the opportunities for voluntary activity both within the church (e.g., teaching Sunday school) and through church-related community service. This kind of religious involvement provided the motivation and outlet for much of Laura's generativity as a traditional mother in the 1950s. Her subsequent generative behavior, however, was in part influenced by sociocultural changes in role expectations. Both she and Jane, similar to many other American women who responded to the changes in women's status, entered the world of work in the 1970s, getting involved in caring professions. It was the loosening of gender role boundaries that also, in part, enabled Peter to settle on work commitments (alternative energy and organic farming) that might be seen as more expressive than utilitarian. The realization of these roles was in turn contingent on changing structural and cultural resources and their accessibility. Thus, whereas Jane and Peter were directly influenced by the post-1960s' therapeutic culture, and by the expanded range of spiritual resources publicly available in post-1960s' American society (e.g., Eastern meditation and Bahai rituals), Laura and Peter availed of new opportunities stemming from the post-1960s' environmental awareness movement.

In sum, our research shows that both religiousness and spirituality are associated with the development and realization of generativity. Connecting with a sacred Other, so long as it involves discipline and systematic practices, would appear to be conducive to transcending the self and caring for others, and thus to appreciating the interdependence of self, society, nature, and ultimate reality (Bellah et al., 1985). Therefore, although cultural change and associated changes in the religious and spiritual landscape necessarily alter the shared social and physical context in which people live their lives, generative behavior can endure. Its narratives and outlets may change, but such change is not necessarily the harbinger of the decline of a generative society.

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