

EDUCATION AND SPIRITUAL INTERNALIZATION

by

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## ABSTRACT

A growing body of research has addressed the relationship between religiousness and spirituality. In addition, recent research focuses on the variations in definition and operationalization of the two concepts. Most of this literature examines spirituality as a construct under religion. Conceptualizing those who are spiritual but non-religious has received far less attention. This study uses recent data from the General Social Surveys to assess the relationship of those who are spiritual but not religious with education and a number of socio-demographic variables. The analysis shows that there is a positive relationship between one identifying as someone who is spiritual but secular and educational attainment. Directions for future research are discussed.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

GSS      General Social Survey

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Everyone in society has some type of belief; these beliefs are formed during the socialization of the individual through the family, school, church, and other social institutions. Some beliefs become widespread to the point where they are the norm; the belief in god is an example of this. Although spirituality does not place emphasis on belief in god, being spiritual has long been associated with religiosity; however, some studies have shown an increase in the number of people who identify as spiritual with no religious ties (Roof 1993, Zinnbauer et al. 1997). This has led researchers to investigate what variables are specifically related to spirituality. Much like other research; the focus has been on sociodemographic variables in order to determine which individuals are strictly spiritual with no religious ties.

For many, spirituality is undoubtedly tied to everyday life. In recent years there has been a rise in new age internalization and practices, which are often associated with individuals who are spiritual. Yoga is one such example of a spiritual practice. There are yoga instructors and studios sprouting up across the United States. Although yoga is often associated with Buddhist practices, recently it has been used by people in all faiths; and even by those who identify with no religion. Clearly many spiritual practices such as yoga transcend religious boundaries.

Meditation specifically is the spiritual aspect of these types of practices. Much like prayer, meditation focuses on quiet reflection and deep thought. However, meditation is not necessarily tied to some religious deity. Instead, it is used to explore one's self; and therefore, can be said to be a spiritual practice. Clearly, there is a connection between religiosity and spirituality. The difficulty for researchers is being able to isolate each and determine which

factors specifically relate to one without the influence of the other.

Intuitively, one might think that religious people are considerably more spiritual than the average person; however, research tends to suggest that this may not be as cut and dried as many would like to believe. Therefore, it is necessary to discover the link between religiosity and spirituality and to determine where the fine line lies in order to specifically target spirituality in research.

The purpose of this study of spirituality is to show that being spiritual is not dependent upon religion and determine if people who identify themselves as spiritual tend to have more or less formal education. This is clearly important with the steady increase of individuals who do not identify with a religion but instead, take part in spiritual practices or identify themselves as spiritual.

This research aims to find out who is most likely to fall into this group of spiritual secularists. In particular, this study attempts to augment the current literature by examining whether or not higher educational attainment is related to more spiritual internalization. This research also includes a number of sociodemographic variables as controls.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on spiritual and religious belief is somewhat mixed. There are some researchers who refute a correlation between religious belief and spiritual internalization; these researchers appear to be in the overwhelming minority. For the most part, research points to a relationship between these variables (Torgler 2007; Orenstein 2002, McKinnon 2003, Zinnbauer et al. 1997, Philstrom 2007, Dudley 1999). Even early research shows links between spirituality and religion, as one early study showed that the two were not mutually exclusive (Xenakis 1964). The terms *spirituality* and *religiosity* have been used interchangeably in much of social science research. The tendency to use these two terms as synonyms suggests that spirituality and religiosity name the same set of feelings, values, and experiences. This leads research to question if this really the case.

### What is the Relationship of Spirituality and Religiosity?

Although there are significant overlaps between spiritual and religious experience, empirical evidence suggests that lay people make important distinctions between these two constructs (Zinnbauer et al. 1997). Perhaps the most persuasive evidence that there are substantive differences between spirituality and religiosity comes from self-report studies in which individuals indicate that they are more spiritual than religious (Zinnbauer et al. 1997). In a study of African American women, in-depth interviews revealed their feelings regarding religion

and spirituality and showed several major differences. First, spirituality is defined as the internalization of positive values (Roof 1993). Second, religion is conceptualized as a journey and spirituality as an outcome. Finally, whereas religion is tied to worship, spirituality is associated with relationships (Mattis 2000).

There are only a handful of examples pointing to a negative correlation between religiosity and spirituality. Among studies arguing that a negative correlation exists, voluntary participation in religious activities presents the strongest negative impact on spirituality (Torgler 2007; Orenstein 2002, McKinnon 2003). Therefore, church attendance and participation have been shown through these studies to cause a reduction in practices and feelings that many would associate with spirituality. Roof (1993) also hypothesized that individuals who came from homes in which they attended religious services infrequently were more likely to grow up and identify with being spiritual instead of religious. Dudley (1999) shows that individuals are more likely to subscribe to religious ideas than strictly spiritual ones because they are regarded as more socially acceptable, but notes that only a weak correlation exists.

In an argument for the distinction between religious belief and spiritual internalization, Pihlstrom (2007) offers no explanation as to the difference between religiosity and spirituality. Instead, simply states that there is no correlation and that they should be regarded separately within a religious framework. Similarly, Dudley (1999) stated that the correlation was weak and that religious beliefs were more socially acceptable and therefore more prevalent. Through looking at communist countries in which the government attempted to shut down organized religion, Torgler (2007) postulates that spiritual practices may be used by some to take the place of religion when those individuals are outside of the religious mainstream. This means that

nonreligious people may use spiritual beliefs to compensate for lack of religious beliefs. Therefore, for these individuals, being spiritual may be regarded as an alternative for religion that serves the same function. This would mean that while they are similar, religion and spirituality are interchangeable in some circumstances, but not correlated. Clearly, the argument for no correlation between religious belief and spiritual internalization is somewhat weak, and therefore leads researchers to wonder which direction, if any, the correlation takes.

Studies that show a positive correlation between religiosity and various practices and forms of spirituality have been conducted using multiple samples throughout various countries. One such study used qualitative interviews with Catholics in Britain to show that traditional Catholic ideas have become intermingled with spirituality (Hornsby-Smith, Lee, & Reilly 1985). It also explores the spirituality of traditional and newer religious people, using Catholic only as well as Multidenominational samples (Hornsby-Smith, Lee, & Reilly 1985). In research comparing American and Finnish students, Americans were found to have a higher total belief in the paranormal events as well as traditional religious belief (Tobacyk, Pirttila-Backman 1992). Clearly, traditional religious belief is the norm and therefore, it is important to note that even those who adhere to this borrow heavily from what researchers consider spiritual systems. Another example of this is Kim (2005) who did research to determine the relationship between traditional religion and spiritual practice in Korea. It was determined that Koreans who identify with official religion also adhere to or believe in some of the spiritual practices of nonofficial religions.

Jagers and Smith (1996) found that internal religious motivation was a significant predictor of spirituality among African Americans, whereas divine causality and religious well

being were the significant predictors for European Americans. Roof (1998) concludes that spirituality is reclaiming the spiritual and experience-oriented aspects of religion. Many studies have presented the notion that spiritual internalization is highly related to religious participation or to intrinsic beliefs of religion (Kahoe 1977), in that it presents the guidelines for acceptable behavior (Kim 2005). Being more religious, contrary to attendance (as mentioned earlier), presents a statistically significant positive correlation with being spiritual (Torgler 2007; Jagers and Smith 1996; Roof 1998; Kim 2005; Wuthnow 1978). When comparing religiosity to superstitious variables (good luck charms and fortune tellers), the effects were substantially positive (Torgler 2007). Therefore, the more religious one is, the more likely he or she is to believe in fortune tellers (Prophets) or good luck.

Perhaps people who are more receptive to religious ideas are also more open to alternative spiritual experiences or notions (depending on affiliation). This was explored through a comparison of people who definitely believe versus those who do not believe in god. Robert Wuthnow (1978) found that those who do believe in god are more likely to believe in ESP (extra-sensory perception). Wuthnow (1978) also argues that there is a similarity between religious and other beliefs: “ESP and religion both affirm the existence of realities beyond the mundane existence of everyday life “(160). Other studies have confirmed this positive correlation between religiosity and spirituality. Orenstein (2002) finds that among those surveyed, of those with the highest religious belief, almost forty percent are high on spiritual belief practices. Similarly, McKinnon (2003) finds that when controlling for attendance and participation at religious services, religiosity and spirituality are positively correlated. Furthermore, in a sample of 80 undergraduates who were separated by those who were religious and those who were

nonreligious, religious subjects exhibited significantly higher total belief scores (Schumaker 2001). Additionally, religious subjects in this research not only had more spiritual belief; but also their beliefs were more extensive (Schumaker 2001). So perhaps as these data suggest, people who have one type of belief are more open to adopting others, or maybe spiritual and religious belief are very closely related. One study by Peltzer (2002) confirms this notion. In regards to the positive correlation he offers the explanation that they (religious, spiritual) have shared values or act as compensatory attributes.

Schiebe and Sarbin (1965) demonstrate several examples of how religion and spiritual belief, specifically superstition, are historically tied to one another. One such example is in da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper, in which Judas is portrayed as knocking over the salt. From that point on spilling salt was considered bad luck. Prayer is another example which they noted (Schiebe and Sarbin 1965). In prayer, one believes that it is advantageous in changing the course of their future, and since there has been an appeal to the powers that be, one can then rest comfortably. Moreover, MacDonald (1995) finds a relationship between the frequency of prayer and reporting of telepathy, in that those who pray more often generally report believing more in telepathy. This supports other research because frequency of prayer is often positively associated as an indicator of religiosity, and telepathy is a belief associated with spiritual secularists. Other studies have also demonstrated how higher levels of belief in the paranormal, ESP, telepathy, precognition, astral projection, and psychic healing were all found to positively correlated with religiosity (Irwin 1993).

Wuthnow (1950) argues that spirituality is a reaction to the stifling nature of religion. He describes two types of spirituality, the former being more connected to religion than that of the

ladder. He juxtaposes the two by referring to one as “dwelling” and the other as “seeking.” According to Wuthnow, there is a transition from that of dwelling to seeking. Dwelling spirituality is grounded in religious dogma, inhabiting the sacred space and being secure in the rituals and teachings. Whereas seeking is exploring new avenues of spirituality and being open to new teachings and rituals. Thus, the two are related in that seeking is a reactionary transition from dwelling. Spirituality as defined today occupies the seeking realm; it encompasses individuals who are open to spiritual growth without necessarily using the teachings of a specific religion or sect. Thus modern notions of spirituality evolve from religiosity. In *The Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, Wade Clark Roof (2003) notes that it is important to study spirituality outside of a religious context because modern spirituality is less confined by traditional religious structure and people are increasingly aware of it as an alternative to religion. He continues to say that although the greatest majority of people are overlapping in religious and spiritual ideas (in that they have both); there are people who fall under one or the other, and some who are neither religious nor spiritual. Therefore, spirituality is a completely different entity from religion, although related in many ways, and some might say augmented by religion. It is theoretically possible to study spirituality separately from religion.

Clearly, there is a wealth of literature that supports a positive correlation between religiosity and other types of belief. However, it is unclear if it is just the similarity between the belief systems or if there is something else contributing to individuals’ beliefs, perhaps they are more easily convinced. Education would seemingly make one harder to convince. Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore the relationship between religiosity and spirituality with educational attainment.

### Educational Attainment and Beliefs

The more informed one is will likely affect how they view the world and form their perspective. Therefore, looking at one's educational attainment as a possible variable that impacts belief is important. Research on this relationship is varied, not only can researchers not agree on which direction the correlation takes, but there are some who argue that there is no relationship whatsoever. To determine which argument holds the most support, it is imperative to explore each position.

### Is There a Correlation?

There is not an overwhelming amount of literature that aligns with the view that education has no effect on beliefs, but there are a few examples. In a study of South Korea, one researcher found that spiritual practices are held by individuals regardless of educational background (Kim 2005). Similarly, Orenstein (2002) argues that the effects of education on belief is so small that it is hardly worth paying attention to and therefore, may be passed over. Finally, a group of theorists found no correlation between those who consume new age materials and education level. This is worth noting because new age materials are associated with practices of spiritual secularists (Mears & Ellison 2000).

### Does Education Reduce Spirituality?

Most of the literature regarding the effects of education on one's beliefs is split between whether a positive or negative correlation exists. The negative correlation associated with education is discussed by several researchers. Peltzer (2003) shows that, in general university students in South Africa are greater disbelievers than their secondary school counterparts. This indicates that higher levels of education may influence one to believe less. For each of the variables used in a previously mentioned study to represent spiritual belief (good luck charms, fortune tellers, stars, and horoscope), education had a negative correlation. The more education one has, the less likely he or she is to subscribe to any of these practices. One criticism of this part of the research done by Torgler (2007) is that two of the variables were not statistically significant, which by his own admission does not allow education to be as analytically important as one would prefer. Lawrence (1995) also argues that education is one basic cause of intensity of belief. In his notion, the more education one has, the more likely they will form their perspective based on what beliefs are acceptable. In turn, education and spiritual internalization are negatively correlated because educated individuals are more likely to adopt popular ideas instead. In other research, it was found that the notion that "all spiritual truth is within me" was negatively correlated with education level (Donahue 1993 p180). Finally, belief in spiritualism, astrology, and UFOs was found by Irwin (1993) to correlate negatively with educational attainment. Donahue (1993) found the same for astrology, and Wuthnow (1978) indicates that there is a steady decline of belief in astrology as education level increases.

## Does Education Increase Spirituality?

There are many researchers who argue that instead of a negative correlation, education in fact is higher among those who are more spiritual. For example, Roof (1993) hypothesized that self-rated spirituality would be positively correlated with, among other things, higher education. Zinnbauer et al. (1997) tested this hypothesis and found that it held true, i.e. self-related spirituality was positively correlated with educational attainment. Although they did not find a correlation between persons who purchased new age goods and education level, Mears and Ellison (2000) did stress that such “New Age Beliefs” could be more suited to educated people. Interestingly, both Roof (1993) and Zinnbauer et al. (1997) found new age feelings and practices to be more prevalent in the higher educated, who also rated themselves higher on spirituality. It is believed that individuals with higher education are more individualistic. Therefore, they feel less inclined to be identified with a group or mainstream religious ideals. Instead, these individuals adopt a spiritual journey or quest (Roof 1993). Educated people have also been shown to be more likely to report paranormal phenomena, as both reports of telepathy (MacDonald 1995) and UFO abduction (Bader 2003) were more likely to be made by individuals with higher levels of educational attainment. In addition to these examples of belief; ESP, psi belief, and witchcraft all have been shown to correlate positively with educational attainment (Irwin 1993). Similarly, reporting déjà vu was found to be correlated with higher educational attainment (Fox 1992). Indeed, there are examples on both side of the fence with regards to education and one’s spirituality. One just has to read the literature and then decide, although it would appear that the difference is *which* specific beliefs are affected positively by educational

attainment.

Clearly, more research needs to be done on an individual belief basis, where research focuses on the effects of education on each of the different aspects of non-religious internalization. Because of a relatively small amount of research delving into these types of spiritual internalizations/practices and educational attainment, it is necessary to extrapolate from other relationships. Meaning that since spirituality is correlated with religiosity, it is important to see what the research says about the educational attainment of religious individuals. Takyi and Addai (2002) set out to discover the link between religiosity and educational attainment among females in Ghana. Their findings confirm that religion positively correlates with the educational attainment of these women. A similar study was done in America, where it was determined that religion has an indirect bearing on educational attainment, in that religion will guide values and emphasize the importance of certain aspects of life (Keysar & Kosmin 1995). Thus, it was determined that certain sects emphasize the importance of education more, leading to increased educational attainment. Even Meuller (1980) concedes that religion imposes an effect of educational attainment, although this effect was not very large. In a study to determine the role of religion in social mobility, Brown and Gary (1991) found that religion explains some of the variance among African Americans with regards to educational attainment. Gallagher and Cormack (1994) determined that there were disparate amounts of educational attainment within different denominations, showing that some religious denominations generally achieved higher levels of education in Ireland than others. All of these findings on religion and education attainment are important to consider in order to determine whether the link between belief and education truly exists. It becomes apparent that what one believes in can be highly correlated

with their education, whether talking direct links from belief and spirituality or the indirect route through religion. Regardless, the link appears to be evident, helping to add promise to future studies which will explore it in greater detail.

### Summary

Research has demonstrated that there is more than likely some relationship between religion and spirituality. This relationship, while debated, has considerably more arguments siding with a positive correlation. That is to say, an individual who is very religious is likely to be spiritual as well. There is also a relationship between educational attainment and beliefs, and while the research is not clear as to what direction this correlation goes, there are many good arguments for a positive correlation. So religious people are more likely to believe in the spiritual (even if the religion itself is not categorized as such), and believers in both surprisingly show higher levels of educational attainment in general (Takyi & Addai 2002; Keysar & Kosmin 1995; Mueller 1980; Brown & Gary 1991; Gallagher & Cormack 1994; Mears & Ellison 2000; Bader 2003 MacDonald 1995; Irwin 1993). This research area clearly needs more study; a direction of the correlation must be determined in a more concrete sense, at least with regards to how education impacts one's belief. For the purpose of this study, I examine the extent to which educational attainment and spirituality are related to one another. That is, do higher education levels lead to higher spirituality? Therefore, the hypothesis in this study is that higher educational attainment leads to a greater internalization of spirituality.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

I use 2006 and 2008 General Social Survey (GSS) data to examine educational differences in people who identify themselves by varying levels of spirituality. The data in these surveys were collected from nationwide samples. Each survey is independently drawn from English-speaking persons over the age of eighteen, living in non-institutional arrangements within the United States. The GSS is an appropriate data set because it offers a large sample and contains items that tap into religiosity, spirituality, and education.

### Dependent Variable

Two variables are used to identify respondents who report being spiritual but not very religious. The first variable, SPRTPRSN, measures spirituality as a 4 point scale, values in the scale range from 1-4 (one being very spiritual and 4 being not spiritual at all). The exact wording of the question is as follows: “To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person? Are you...” Responses are coded as; (1) very spiritual, (2) moderately spiritual, (3) slightly spiritual, and (4) not spiritual at all.

The second variable, RELPERSN, is a measure of self-rated religiosity. This question is important because it allows me to separate the religious from the spiritual. The GSS specifically asks; “To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person? Are you..” with responses coded as; (1) very religious, (2) moderately religious, (3) slightly religious, and (4) not religious

at all.

By combining these two variables, I am able to create a dependent variable to specifically study those who are “Spiritual Secularists.” These individuals are those who report being “very spiritual” or “moderately spiritual” as well as “slightly religious” or “not religious at all.”

### Independent Variable

To examine the hypothesis, I chose the independent variable DEGREE which represents the highest degree earned. Dummy variables representing the education of the respondent are imperative to the analysis in determining educational attainment for spiritual people. This variable is crucial to discover the links between spiritual internalization and educational attainment, the question and appropriate response categories are as follows: the GSS asks respondents to identify their highest degree earned with responses: (0) less than high school, (1) high school, (2) associate/junior college, (3) bachelors, (4) graduate. Three dummy variables are created to represent respondents who did or did not finish high school, who have a bachelors degree, and respondents who hold a graduate degree respectively. Those who have an Associates or equivalent degree serve as the reference category.

### Control Variables

As noted in the introduction, many studies demonstrate that a number of factors affect one’s beliefs. The impact of attendance at religious services, race, gender, marital status, income, and whether or not the respondent lives in the South will be used as control variables in this analysis.

Attend, or attendance at religious services, is an ordinal-level variable that ranges from 0 (never) to 8 (several times a week). Attendance is important to include in the analysis simply because previous studies have shown it to be a significant predictor of spirituality. The question is as follows: “How often do you attend religious services?” with responses coded as; (0) never, (1) less than once a year, (2) about once or twice a year, (3) several times a year, (4) once a month, (5) two to three times a month, (6) nearly every week, (7) every week, (8) several times a week.

Marital status is an important variable in predicting religious attitudes and possibly spirituality (Swenson 1998). The GSS asks “are you currently-married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?” Responses are coded as (1) married, (2) widowed, (3) divorced, (4) separated, (5) never married. Marital status will be represented by creating dummy variables for married respondents and never married respondents. These dummy variables will represent those who are married (1 or 2), those who are never married (5), and respondents who have “broken up” (3 or 4) as a reference category.

If religiosity is any indication, women may score differently in self-reported spirituality (Mattis 2000; Meselko & Kubzansky 2006) therefore, a dummy variable is constructed so that females are coded (1) and males are coded (0) to represent gender differences. Similarly, race is a significant predictor for religiosity and spirituality and is included as a control (Mattis 2000). A dummy variable representing African Americans with whites as the reference category is constructed.

The GSS measures family income through the use of different scales depending on the survey year. The GSS asks “In which group did your family income, from all sources, fall last

year before taxes?” This variable is measured on a 23 point scale with responses coded as; (1) family income under 1,000, (2) family income between 1000 and 2999, (3) family income between 3000 and 3999, (4) family income between 4000 and 4999, (5) family income between 5000 and 5999, (6) family income between 6000 and 6999, (7) family income between 7000 and 7999, (8) family income between 8000 and 8999, (9) family income between 9000 and 9999, (10) family income between 10000 and 12499, (11) family income between 12500 and 17499, (12) family income between 17500 and 19999, (13) family income between 20000 and 22499, (14) family income between 22500 and 24999, (15) family income between 25000 and 29999, (16) family income between 30000 and 34999, (17) family income between 35000 and 39999, (18) family income between 40000 and 49999, (19) family income between 50000 and 59999, (20) family income between 60000 and 74999, (21) family income between 75000 and 89999, (22) family income between 90000 and 109999, (23) family income 110000 or over, (24) is refused to answer, (98) is don’t know, (99) is no response, and (BK) is not applicable. Income is rescaled to percentages to standardize the measurement across years (Lynxwiler and Gay 1994).

A final control variable is the region of residency for the respondent. The GSS codes these regions as such; (1) New England, (2) Mid-Atlantic, (3) East North Central, (4) West North Central, (5) South Atlantic, (6) East South Central, (7) West South Central, (8) Mountain, and (9) Pacific. South Atlantic, East South Central, and West South Central will be used to create a dummy variable to represent southern residence.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics regarding the 4351 respondents used in the analysis. The table shows that almost 16 percent of the respondents fall into the category of “spiritual secularists,” or those who internalize spiritual beliefs. Once again, these respondents report high levels of spirituality and low levels of religiosity.

Table 1 also exhibits the distribution of the respondent’s educational attainment. Just over 9 percent of the sample have graduate degrees, 17 percent have bachelors, and just fewer than 65 percent had high school educations.

The table then presents the means or proportions and standard deviations for the socioeconomic variables. Most of the people in the analysis were female (55 percent). Just fewer than 16 percent are black. Over 37 percent of the sample resides in the South. Almost 56 percent of respondents are married whereas over 18 percent are divorced. The mean attendance indicates that respondents attend religious services between several times a year and once a month.

*Table 1*

Descriptive Statistics for the Study Sample

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Internalization	.1465	.3537
Grad School	.0923	.2894
Bachelors	.1754	.3803
High School	.6444	.4788
Females	.5562	.4969
Blacks	.1571	.3640
Income	53.9571	29.8892
South	.3755	.4843
Attendance	3.56	2.796
Married	.5586	.4966
Divorced	.1874	.3902

Valid N=4351

Table 2 presents the results of the Logistic regression models used to assess the impact of educational attainment on the likelihood of being a spiritual secularist. Two models are presented. Model I has a Chi-Square of 26.897 and is significant at the .001 level. Model 1 only includes the dummy variables representing the various levels of educational attainment.

Respondents with an Associates Degree or equivalent are the comparison category. Model 1 in

Table 2 demonstrates that those holding a graduate degree or equivalent are more likely to identify as spiritual secularists than the reference group. Model 1 also shows that holding a high school diploma or less show no significant differences.

*Table 2*

Education and other Socio-demographic Variables on Spiritual Internalization

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2
High School Education	-.168/.845 (.145)	-.144/.866 (.161)
Bachelor's Degree	.134/1.143 (.162)	.171/1.186 (.181)
Graduate Degree	.457/ 1.579** (.176)	.633/1.883*** (.198)
Age		-.011/.989*** (.003)
Females		.067/1.069 (.091)
Married		-.432/.649*** (.124)
Divorced		.145/1.155 (.133)
Income		.004/1.004* (.002)
Black		-.134/.875 (.142)
Southern Residence		-.310/.733** (.100)
Religious Attendance		-.234/.791*** (.019)
Cox & Snell R square	.005	.072

N=4921

Note: Entries are listed as: B/ Exp(B) with the Standard Error in parentheses.

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001

Model 2 in Table 2 includes the sociodemographic and behavioral control variables. The model has a Chi-Square of 323.720 and is significant at the .001 level. Consistent with Model 1, those holding a graduate degree or equivalent remain more likely to report being spiritual secularists even when controls are entered into the model. The table also shows that older age groups are less likely to consider themselves spiritual secularists. This is also the case for married respondents. Divorced and never married show no significant differences.

Not surprisingly, attendance at religious services also exerted a strong influence on whether or not one was spiritual but not religious. There was a significant negative influence on spiritual internalization from frequency of attendance (  $B = -.234, p < .001$ ). Therefore the more often one attends religious services the less likely they are to internalize spiritual beliefs with no religion in mind.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The intent of this investigation has been to discover the relationship between spiritual internalization (being spiritual but not religious) and educational attainment in a multivariate context using data from the GSS. Conceptualizing spiritual internalization as something that is affected by the life course provides a theoretical foundation for the findings presented. There is qualified support for the general hypothesis that higher education leads to becoming spiritual but not religious. The influence of higher education remains significant even when controlling for other sociodemographic variables.

Of the educational variables, clearly grad school is the most consistent predictor of spiritual internalization. Those with higher education are more likely to embrace their own spirituality while not being confined by the institution of religion. In terms of educational attainment, individuals with bachelors and graduate degrees were positively inclined toward spiritual internalization. Obtaining only a high school degree was shown to produce a negative influence on spiritual internalization. However, of the three, graduate degrees were the only significant predictor of spiritual internalization. Despite that, the results for educational attainment clearly support the hypothesis. The notion that grad school increases the likelihood of being spiritual but not religious is compelling evidence that more education leads to viewing personal spirituality outside of a religious context (Roof 1993; Zinnbauer et al. 1997; Mears & Ellison 2000). While grad school was a significant predictor of higher internalization, increases in age of respondents directly related to lower spiritual internalization. Thus, the argument that perhaps it is life experience, not educational attainment, which impact ones spiritual perspective,

is thwarted by this analysis.

Religious research shows us that religiosity scores tend to decrease during teenage years and twenties. Consequently this is the same age that young people venture out of their parent's home to attend college. Individuals go to college clinging to the religiosity learned from their family. Because of the environment they grew up in, for many, attitudes toward religion and spirituality are entirely learned. Upon leaving the comfort zone of their own homes, individuals are able to evaluate these ideas from new points of view.

Through education individuals are exposed to a new array of ideological perspectives and are encouraged to find their individuality. It seems as if the longer one is exposed to this type of environment, the more likely he or she is to form their own ideas about the world. These new perspectives include students forming new religious ideas. Over time some students may find that their personal spirituality is in no way tied to traditional religion. As a result, it seems that those who obtain a graduate degree are more prone to view spirituality as separate from religiosity.

Being married, living in the South, and more frequent attendance at religious services all negatively influenced spiritual internalization. The reason for each is presumably due to religious affiliation. The institution of marriage is largely surrounded by religious overtones. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that those who are married are more religious than those who have never been married. The negative impact of living in the South is likely because of religion as well. The Bible Belt stretches across much of the region labeled 'South' in this analysis. Therefore, this region is possibly the most religious, and was picked as a control variable for that reason. Similar to previous studies, attendance at religious services exerted a negative influence on

spiritual internalization (Torgler 2007; Orenstein 2002, McKinnon 2003). . Those who attend religious services more often are obviously focused on their religion. This focus may prevent them from viewing spirituality outside of a religious framework.

When we isolate spiritual secularists from the general population a few things become evident. First, religion has an impact on whether or not one feels they are spiritual but not religious. Often times this effect may be indirect. Hence those who live in a more religious area are less prone to view spirituality as separate from religion. The effect is similar for those who are married and attend religious services. Religious attendance has been cited in previous research as a negative predictor of spirituality, the case is no different here (Torgler 2007; Orenstein 2002, McKinnon 2003). The reason would seem to be that those who attend more often have less contact with solely spiritual ideas. The second major finding is that as one gets older they are less likely to be spiritual but secular. This means that life experience and maturity are moot points when looking at spiritual internalization. This finding leads to the final conclusion that higher education is an important reason that individuals view spirituality as separate from religion.

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