

ABSTRACT

The New New Age: An Analysis of the New Age Participant from a National Random Sample

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The New Age movement has not received the same level of scholarly attention as other new religious movements, in part because of the difficulty of analyzing the movement quantitatively. Because of this, past research has been mostly limited to anecdotal evidence and speculation. In addition, many aspects of the New Age movement enjoy relatively high levels of mainstream acceptance, making this analysis is particularly timely. The Baylor survey allows for the most complete analysis of the New Age movement to date, as it addresses both beliefs in the New Age and quantifiable consumption of New Age goods. In this research, I consider previous theories on participation in new religious movements, and find that none completely explains New Age participation

The New New Age: An Analysis of the New Age
Participant from a National Random Sample

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Review of Previous Literature

Introduction

The goal of this analysis is to determine from a national sample a profile of who participates in the New Age. I will predict both a set of general New Age beliefs (see Bainbridge 2004; Mears & Ellison 2000; Donahue 1993; Lewis & Melton 1992) and a set of quantifiable New Age consumption measures. While the New Age movement in quantifiable terms has not drawn the same scholarly attention in the sociology of religion as other movements, the Baylor Survey provides an opportunity to study the New Age from a statistically valid national sample. Many factors concerning the New Age movement enjoy relatively broad mainstream acceptance, making this analysis particularly timely.

Furthermore, the New Age movement is relatively different from many new religious movements in that its overall success is close tied to how well it distributes its materials such as literature and multimedia (Mears & Ellison 2000). While the Baylor survey provides us with an opportunity to study the acceptance of New Age beliefs, it also affords us the opportunity to measure New Age participation in quantitative terms, by measuring particular New Age consumption practices. This analysis will add to the scarce existing research regarding the New Age in quantitative measures.

The New Age Movement: A Brief History

There have been extensive studies on the New Age movement, but precisely defining the movement itself is a difficult task at best because of its inherent complexity. The term “New Age” can be thought of as encompassing many movements, beliefs, and practices (Bainbridge 2004; Frost 1992; Houtman & Mascini 2002; Mears & Ellison 2000). While a variety of groups and practices have been grouped under the umbrella term of New Age since the seventies, the roots of the movement itself can be traced back to the ideas of New Thought and Theosophy in the nineteenth century (Alexander 1992:30).

The earliest source of New Thought is evident in the writings of Austrian hypnotist Franz Anton Mesmer and Swiss pseudo scientist Emanuel Swedenborg earlier in the 1700s (Alexander 1992:31). Mesmer and Swedenborg’s early experiments and ideas concerning mysticism and hypnotism led to new ideas concerning the potential powers of the occult and human mind, and the New Age movement is still generally regarded as consisting of pseudoscientific and para-religious beliefs (Bainbridge 2004:383). The New Thought movements developed later in the nineteenth century and continued to grow as interest in the healing powers of the mind expanded. The Theosophy movement developed at around the same time as the New Thought movement, with relatively similar stated goals, including forming a “Universal Brotherhood of Humanity” without racist, sexist, and other discriminatory practices (Alexander 1992:31).

The movements continued to evolve and change into what we consider the New Age movement today. This was also influenced by the human potential movement and

the development of Transpersonal Psychology in the 1950s and 1960s (Alexander 1992: 43-44). Beliefs and practices from these earlier movements combined with aspects of Eastern religions to form the New Age Movement in the 1970s and 1980s (Mears & Ellison 2000). While the movement evolved over time and is relatively different from the earlier New Thought and Theosophy movements, it still maintains many similar aspects, such as interest in the powers of the mind and belief in the powers of united humanity, as well as aspects of parapsychology in some instances (Bainbridge 2004; Bloch 1998).

To define the New Age movement in more modern terms, Lucas (1992) considered the works of other scholars who had analyzed the New Age such as Albanese, Melton, Ellwood, and Bednarowski and identified the New Age movement as an American social and religious movement with four major characteristics. Followers of the New Age movement generally have theology that includes “belief that the earth and its peoples are on the verge of a radical spiritual transformation,” an “eclectic embrace of a wide array of healing therapies as well as spiritual beliefs and practices,” “adoption of an ethic of self-empowerment, which focuses on the realization of individual goals and aspirations as a prerequisite for efficacious societal transformation,” and “the desire to reconcile religious and scientific worldviews in a higher synthesis that enhances the human condition both spiritually and materially” (Lucas 1992:192).

Many social scientists use the term New Age to cover a variety of topics, such as UFOs, the supernatural, and the paranormal (Bainbridge 2004; Mears & Ellison 2000; Donahue 1993). Goode (2000) argues that there are two basic types of supernatural beliefs: “classic supernatural” and “traditional supernatural.” The term traditional

supernatural refers to supernatural events or beliefs that are within the dominant belief system (in this case, Christianity). Belief in aspects of Christianity that are beyond scientific proof would be considered “traditional supernatural.” These beliefs are often widely accepted in a given culture. Classic supernatural beliefs are those which are outside of the dominant belief system, and still cannot be proven by science (Goode 2000). In this case, these would be things such as the power of astrology, belief in UFOs, or belief in monsters such as Bigfoot. Those who are thought to believe in supernatural events outside of the accepted mainstream culture are often thought of as deviants (Goode 2000). It is generally accepted to group a variety of these items together to determine people’s level of belief in the New Age movement.

These definitions of the New Age encompasses a wide variety of ideas, and along with the absence of a central text or organization and the fact that many who subscribe to all or part of the vast array of beliefs are also part of other religious denominations, makes it difficult to study the New Age movement in quantitative terms (Lucas 1992:193). Given these facts, Mears and Ellison (2000) conclude that the analysis of the movements’ success might be best studied by how well the movement is able to distribute its materials, such as publications, media and other items.

Review of Previous Literature

Mears and Ellison (2000:292) argue that participation in the New Age movement should be “broad-based, with little or no variation across diverse populations.” This is due to the fact that the New Age movement encompasses a wide range of beliefs, both American traditional and imported in nature. Some who consider themselves New Age devotees believe in the paranormal, such as UFOs or monsters (Goode 2000). Others

believe in the healing power of the mind and look to the New Age movement for guidance in the practice of self help or self empowerment (Lucas 1992). They might want to better themselves financially or just to better themselves terms unquantifiable. Still others may consider themselves part of the movement simply because they practice yoga or meditation. Albanese (1993) finds that the New Age is actually more tied to American culture than to the roots of theosophy discussed previously. In spite of this, a variety of factors from other case studies and anecdotal evidence suggests that demographic and religious factors might be predictors of New Age participation.

There is an absence of literature regarding definitive effects of socioeconomic status on New Age participation and existing evidence is largely inconsistent. For example Brown (1992) predicts that New Age participation might be greater among persons with higher levels of education. In addition, persons with higher levels of income would likely be able to purchase more New Age materials (Mears & Ellison 2000). From this perspective, the New Age would exhibit aspects that can be defined with elite theory. There is some evidence to the contrary, however. Albanese suggests (1992) that New Age participation may be greater among a population with lower levels of education and income. This could be a result of the movement's emphasis on elimination of racism and sexism, as well as a general emphasis on equality (Alexander 1992:31). This has been attributed to deprivation/marginalization theory which proposes that members of society who are outcasts or considered deviants are more likely to reject conventional beliefs (such as traditional supernatural) and consider alternatives, such as the New Age movement (Rice 2003). The movement also advocates self improvement and self empowerment, and distributes materials related to these themes (Lucas

1992:192; Heelas 1996:59). Research on paranormal beliefs which overlap New Age beliefs also indicates that acceptance of these beliefs is negatively correlated with education (Goode 2000). Mears and Ellison (2000:302) find that in a Texas study, persons with lower levels of education and who had been unemployed were more likely to purchase New Age materials. Furthermore, Heelas notes (1996:77) that traditional schooling instills conventional values in pupils and these values are often at odds with New Age beliefs. There are several schools established by particular New Age movements however, as well as more 'progressive schools' that share similarities with some New Age teachings (Heelas 1996:78).

The relationship between political ideology and New Age participation has not been fully investigated in previous research. Mears and Ellison (2000) argue that because the New Age movement is generally an advocate of social change, belief in the movement is likely to be higher among those holding liberal or moderate political views. People holding more conservative views are more apt to resist socio-political change and are therefore more likely to resist the movement (Mears & Ellison 2000:293). Similar results were observed when focusing on the more broad area of paranormal beliefs (Goode 2000).

The relationship between gender and the New Age movement is less complicated. In polls addressing paranormal or New Age beliefs, women generally exhibit greater acceptance (Goode 2000). Alexander (1992:31) emphasizes that New Thought and Theosophy, two of the predecessors of the modern New Age movement, were "early dominated by the concerns and interests of feminine leaders." The New Age movement effectively allows women to "break away from male-centered ideology and religious

institutions” (Feher 1992:183). Mears and Ellison (2000:293) find that in some New Age groups, aspects of spirituality such as intuition may be focused on with greater emphasis. It is aspects such as this that are often tied to femininity, which has long been shunned by many mainstream religions. Their 2000 study of New Age consumption in Texas finds women no more likely than men to purchase New Age materials, however (Mears & Ellison 2000:302).

In other research, Feher (1992:188) found that New Age practitioners in astrology were overwhelmingly female, even going so far as to argue that New Age astrology might be a “feminist spirituality.” This is because unlike many mainstream religions, women’s voices are not excluded in the New Age movement. Most previous research has identified the New Age movement as being more popular among females, so it is likely that females will express greater levels of New Age beliefs and will be more likely to purchase New Age materials.

Brown (1992:90) finds that New Age religion was “carried by a single generation, the baby boom generation” through which it expanded out to other parts of society. This has also been noted by other New Age scholars, in part because of the size of the population this segment represents. Brown (1992:90) also argues that “baby boomers see the world in a different light, and New Age religion, although it has its roots in the American religious past, is an expression of this.” Multiple factors in the development of American society were present that allowed the New Age movement to expand and continue to develop due to the efforts of persons born during the baby boom period (Mears & Ellison 2000:293). These included a period of great economic prosperity in the United States, the mass development of televisions, differences in child rearing that often

was becoming more relaxed and focused on the child than in previous generations, and a general change in the American character (Brown 1992: 91-93). Mears and Ellison (2000:302) suggest in their study of Texas respondents that it is a younger generation that is more likely to purchase New Age materials.

Some previous research indicates that in addition to being more popular among members of the baby boom generation, the movement is also more popular among whites than ethnic minorities (Melton 1986: 116; Roof 1993:160-166). There is little strong literature in the United States that directly confirms this relationship, however. More current research actually indicates that Latinos were more likely to consult psychics or astrologers (Goode 2000). Another exception to this is Mears and Ellison's (2000:302) study of Texas respondents that actually found that Latinos and African Americans are more likely consumers of New Age materials than non-Hispanic whites.

There is evidence to suggest that persons with lower ties to their religious network are more likely to accept the teachings of new religious movements (Stark & Bainbridge 1980). These individuals might also be more likely to participate in the New Age movement. Previous research has also found many mainstream religious teachings to be at odds with the New Age movement (Mears & Ellison 2000; Donahue 1993). Indeed, Bainbridge and Stark find that participation in a variety of aspects of the New Age is greater in states where church attendance is low (Bainbridge 2004:382). Mears and Ellison (2000:305) find that respondents who attended church several times a week were less likely to make New Age purchases, while those who never attend would be more likely.

There is also some indication of differences in New Age acceptance among religious denominations (Donahue 1993). Donahue (1993:180) found participation levels to be lowest among members of the South Baptist Convention. These findings should not be surprising, considering Finke and Stark's (1992) book showing that participation in alternative religious movements is lower in more strict denominations. Mears and Ellison (2000:305) found Baptists no less likely to make New Age purchases, however.

There is some general evidence that New Age beliefs would be positively associated with consumption of New Age materials, but there is little empirical evidence to support this conclusion (Lewis & Melton 1992). An exception is Mears and Ellison's (2000:306) study in Texas that found support for New Age beliefs being a fairly strong predictor of consumption of New Age materials. In a national sample, it is likely that this relationship will continue to be supported.

Also of importance in this consideration of the New Age is Rice's (2003) observation regarding the methodological and generalizability limitations of many previous New Age or paranormal studies. For example, Rice's (2003) own data comes from the Southern Focus Poll. Mears and Ellison's (2000) study of New Age beliefs and consumption used a random sample from Texas only. Goode's (2000) study of paranormal beliefs relies on a sample of undergraduate students, as does Rudski's (2003). These differences in sampling could in turn lead to variations in the findings. In addition, many speculations on who participates in the New Age rely on anecdotal evidence (Mears & Ellison 2000). This analysis will likely overcome some of the limitations from previous studies by providing a comprehensive look at New Age participants from a random, national sample of U.S. citizens.

Hypotheses

Considering the review of previous research, a general set of predictions can be made regarding support for New Age beliefs and consumption of New Age goods. It is likely that females will continue to participate in the New Age movement at a greater rate than males, for the variety of factors discussed above. It is also predicted that participation will be greater among respondents who are more likely to reject traditional institutions and beliefs, such as marriage, political ideology, and traditional religiosity. Participation should also correlate positively with respondents having lower levels of education and income. Respondents who attend religious services more often will likely have lower levels of participation, as will conservative protestant such as Evangelicals and those who interpret the Bible literally. My hypotheses here are a result of careful research on the previous literature New Age literature and the application of deprivation theory. There is generally some debate about directly applying deprivation theory to study of the New Age, so it should be remembered that the theory of the New Age movement as an elite movement also receives scholarly attention.

CHAPTER TWO

Data and Methods

The Baylor Survey

This study relies on the national survey “The Values and Beliefs of the American Public,” which was conducted by The Gallup Organization for Baylor University. The survey was designed to provide the most complete perspective on religious life in the United States ever conducted with a national random sample. In addition, the survey also asked a wide variety questions concerning values and beliefs in general of the American Public. The survey also asked an expansive set of questions regarding New Age beliefs and consumption of New Age materials.

Gallup utilized a mixed-mode sampling design for this survey consisting of telephone surveys followed by self administered mail surveys. To begin the process, Gallup collected 1002 telephone interviews from a national sample of the general population of adults 18 years of age or older. The telephone survey relied on a sample from random digit telephone exchanges serving the continental United States. This sample avoided unnecessary bias by drawing from listed, unlisted, and not-yet-listed telephone numbers. The random number selection within banks ensured that all numbers in the bank had the same probability of inclusion within the sample, whether they were listed or not. The sample generated by the telephone survey was therefore representative of all residential households with telephone service in the continental United States. were also mailed to households in Gallup’s random-digit dialing database. The total result was 1721 completed self-administered surveys. Several selected items from the

self-administered questionnaire were included in the telephone survey, such as frequency of church attendance. The final response rate for the surveys was 46.5 percent.

Measuring New Age/Paranormal Beliefs

The Baylor Survey addressed the New Age/Paranormal in great detail. The first model was designed to predict New Age beliefs. The items from the survey concerning New Age/paranormal beliefs were combined together to measure overall beliefs in the movements. For these items, respondents were asked to rate on a scale of (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree their level of agreement with the statements concerning the New Age. Many of these items came from previous literature. Specific New Age items included: (a) We are approaching an entirely new age that will radically change our view of science, spiritual knowledge, or humanity (Approaching a New Age); (b) Ancient advanced civilizations, such as Atlantis once existed (Atlantis once existed); (c) Some alternative treatments are at least as effective as traditional medicine (Alternative medicine); (d) It is possible to influence the physical world through the mind alone (Mind influences the world); (e) Astrologers, palm-readers, tarot card readers, fortune tellers, and psychics can foresee the future (People foresee future); (f) Astrology impacts one's life and personality (Impact of astrology); (g) It is possible to communicate with the dead (Communicate with dead); (h) Places can be haunted (Haunted places); (i) Dreams sometimes foretell the future or reveal hidden truths (dreams reveal hidden); (j) Some UFOs are probably spaceships from other worlds (UFOs exist); (k) Creatures such as Bigfoot and the Loch Ness Monster will one day be discovered by science (existence of some monsters). This part of the analysis is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Acceptance of New Age/Paranormal Beliefs

Belief Measures	Mean	S.D.	Percent Agree or Strongly Agree	N
New Age Beliefs				
Approaching a New Age	3.09	1.238	42.3	1637
Atlantis once existed	3.18	1.089	41.2	1633
Alternative treatments are effective	3.84	0.898	74.5	1638
Mind can influence the world	2.73	1.119	28.2	1633
People foresee future	2.06	1.061	12.8	1641
Impact of astrology	2.12	1.090	14.3	1627
Communicate with dead	2.32	1.179	19.9	1636
Haunted places	2.79	1.274	37.2	1634
Dreams reveal hidden	3.24	1.190	52.0	1640
UFOs exist	2.61	1.191	24.6	1628
Existence of some monsters	2.43	1.106	17.9	1647

The New Age belief scale is comprised of all of the New Age belief items, as this is statistically the best way to group the items (Cronbach's Alpha=.804). Each statement a respondent agreed with received a score of 1, while each statement that was strongly agreed with received a score of 2. Disagree or undecided responses received a score of 0. This gives the scale possible values ranging from 0 to 22 to assess support for New Age beliefs.

Measuring New Age Consumption

Previous literature has generally focused on the New Age movement itself as opposed to New Age consumption as a measure of how well the movement is spreading its information. Mears and Ellison quantified the concept of New Age consumption in their 2001 analysis of the New Age in a Texas study. They asked respondents if in the past year they had "purchased, read, or listened to any 'New Age' materials (books,

magazines, audio or videotapes)” (2001). In their study, the term ‘New Age’ is left undefined for the respondent.

This study measures New Age consumption in a similar but slightly different way. The Baylor Survey of The Values and Beliefs of the American Public asks a variety of New Age questions regarding New Age consumption. For this analysis, respondents were asked: 1) How many times in the past year they had visited a New Age/metaphysical bookstore; 2) How many times in the past year they purchased something from a New Age/metaphysical bookstore; 3) Whether they read a book, consulted a web site, or researched the New Age movement in General. Items 1, 2, and 3 were recoded into binary variables to distinguish whether or not the respondent engaged in New Age consumption. This was due to relatively low levels of New Age consumption overall. To measure New Age consumption, another binary variable was created, distinguishing between respondents who did not participate in New Age consumption and those who did, regardless of the level in which they participated. New Age consumption is summarized in Table 2.

Notice that in this study, the term New Age is not defined in the consumption questions. If the term had been more narrowly defined in the questions, the consumption levels could have been significantly lower. This is because as indicated by previous literature, the New Age movement has multiple definitions, and participants in the movement often share only some very general characteristics (Frost: 1992; Heelas: 1996; Lewis & Melton 1992; Mears & Ellison: 2000).

Table 2
Consumption of New Age Goods

Consumption Measures	Frequency	Percent	N
New Age Consumption			
Visited New Age Store	155	9.9	1574
Made purchase at New Age store	108	6.8	1581
Researched New Age	211	12.2	1721

The consumption and belief variables will then be tested in several models with control variables for demographics, religiosity, religious tradition, and New Age beliefs, according to previous research. This will allow discovery of who participates in the New Age movement from the perspective of a national random sample.

Demographic and Religious Factors

The age item was self-reported on the survey and recorded in number of years. Mean age of respondents was 49.84, with a standard deviation of about 16.59 years. For the following analyses, age is measured linearly. Education level was measured categorically, with seven levels ranging from “8th grade or less” to “postgraduate work/degree.” The largest category was “some college,” with 27.6 percent of respondents with postgraduate studies as the category for comparison. The income variable is also measured categorically with seven levels of income. This analysis compares the income categories to respondents making over \$150,000 annually. Respondents were categorized in the survey according to their region of the country (east, midwest, south, west), binary variables are created for this analysis comparing other regions to south. Current marital status was also measured categorically in the survey,

and a binary variable is created here to distinguish never married respondents from all others. While race is also measured categorically in the survey, a binary variable is created here to compare whites and nonwhites.

The survey measures religion and religious tradition in a variety of ways. For this analysis, the RELTRAD measure is selected as a standardized measure of religious traditions (Steensland, et al., 2000). This measure has categories to compare Evangelicals, Mainline Protestants, Black Protestants, Catholics, and no religion. The religious traditions are compared to Evangelical Protestants in this analysis. The church attendance variable is also measured categorically in the survey, ranging from those who never attend to those who attend several times a week. Respondents attending weekly or more are the comparison category. Whether respondents interpret the Bible literally is also included in the analysis. Descriptive statistics are illustrated in Table 3 on the following page.

Analysis

The first part of the analysis involves measuring respondent support for New Age beliefs using OLS regression. The New Age belief scale will be used in the second part of the analysis, as New Age beliefs have shown to be a predictor of New Age consumption (Mears & Ellison 2000). The second part of the analysis is a series of logistic regression models predicting consumption of New Age goods. Consumption is measured in four ways, including researching the New Age, visiting a New Age bookstore, making a purchase at a New Age book store, and whether the respondent had done one or more of the other behaviors. Each consumption measure is modeled twice.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Analysis

Variables	Mean/Percentage	S. D.	Minimum	Maximum
Demographics				
Age	49.84	16.59	18.00	93.00
Male	0.47			
White	0.86			
Marital Status				
Married	0.57			
Living as Married	0.04			
Never Married	0.16			
Divorced	0.15			
Widowed	0.08			
Separated	0.02			
Income	60998.91	41249.59	10000.00	150000.00
\$20,000 or less	0.17			
\$20,001-\$50,000	0.33			
\$50,001-\$100,000	0.32			
\$100,001-\$150,000	0.11			
Greater than \$150,000	0.06			
Education				
Less than High School	0.08			
High School Graduate	0.18			
Some College	0.28			
Trade/Vocational/Technical	0.11			
College Graduate	0.19			
Postgraduate	0.16			
Region				
South	0.30			
Midwest	0.24			
East	0.23			
West	0.23			

(Table continues)

Variables	Mean/Percentage	S. D.	Minimum	Maximum
Political Ideology				
Independent	0.21			
Democrat	0.38			
Republican	0.41			
Religiosity				
Literally interpret Bible	22.30			
Church attendance				
Never attend	0.22			
Less than monthly	0.32			
Less than weekly	0.16			
Weekly or more	0.31			
Religious Tradition				
Catholic	0.21			
Black Protestant	0.05			
Evangelical Protestant	0.33			
Mainline Protestant	0.22			
None	0.12			

The first model for each measure uses demographics and religious factors as independent variables to predict New Age consumption. The second model controls for acceptance of New Age beliefs. This analysis allows for the testing of hypotheses suggested by previous literature regarding who consumes New Age materials.

Results

Support for New Age Beliefs

Some results from this study support the initial hypotheses. The New Age movement is traditionally more popular among females than males (Alexander 1992; Feher 1992; Goode 2000; Lewis & Melton 1992). This study finds support for this as well, with males being statistically less likely than females to support New Age beliefs. Age negatively effects support for New Age beliefs when measured linearly. Whites are less likely than nonwhites to have higher levels of support on the New Age belief scale. I also find in this study that persons with less than a high school education and those with technical school training are more likely to support New Age beliefs when compared to those with a post graduate education. This gives credibility to the idea that the movement is more attractive to people who are not able to obtain financial success using traditional means, or as described by Albanese (1993) as the undercurrents of American culture. The New Age ideas go against traditionally accepted beliefs, so they will likely be more popular among people who haven't enjoyed success using traditional means. None of the income categories is more likely to support New Age beliefs than the highest earners, however. There is also no significant difference observed in the regional variables as compared to the South. I find Democrats and independents are also no more likely to support New Age beliefs than more conservative Republicans.

Some of the religious factors appear to influence support for New Age beliefs. Never attending church or attending less than once a month are positive indicators of support for New Age beliefs when compared to respondents who attended church at least once weekly. Catholics are more likely than Evangelical Protestants to support New Age

beliefs, as predicted. This can be at least partially attributed to the mystical nature of Catholic theology. There is no statistical difference with Black or Mainline Protestants when compared to Evangelical Protestants. Literal interpretation of the Bible is also not statistically significant. The initial hypotheses predicted that New Age participation would be greater among respondents who did not participate in traditional religious institutions. This would suggest that respondents who indicated “no religion” would be more likely to support New Age beliefs. I confirm this in my analysis presented her. The results of the New Age beliefs analysis are presented in Table 4 on the following page.

In conclusion, some of the initial hypotheses concerning support for New Age beliefs were supported, consistent with previous research and theoretical considerations. While some predicted effects were not observed, my findings from this part of the analysis are adequate to create a profile of respondents who exhibit support for New Age or paranormal beliefs in a national random sample.

Consumption of New Age Goods

A total of eight logistic regression models are analyzed here in regard to the four New Age consumption indicators. The first model in each set uses demographic and religious considerations as predictors of New Age consumption, while the second controls for support for New Age beliefs. The New Age participation models are arranged in order of increasing levels of participation. The models indicate participation in the New Age in the forms of researching the New Age, visiting a New Age bookstore, making a New Age purchase, or engaging in any of the previous three behaviors.

The first model set analyzed New Age consumption in the form of researching the New Age. In this model set, respondents in almost all of the education categories were

Table 4
Regression for Support for New Age Beliefs on Selected Predictors

Variables	B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta
Demographics			
Age	-0.032 *	0.007	-0.148
Male	-1.022 *	0.201	-0.144
White vs. others	-1.122 *	0.355	-0.104
Never Married vs. others	0.532	0.300	0.055
Income (vs. over \$150,000)			
\$20,000 or less	0.616	0.503	0.063
\$20,001-\$50,000	0.558	0.440	0.074
\$50,001-\$100,000	-0.052	0.426	-0.007
\$100,000-\$150,000	0.237	0.489	0.021
Education (vs. postgraduate)			
Less than high school	2.150 *	0.500	0.147
High school graduate	-0.015	0.351	-0.002
Technical school	0.984	0.399	0.084
Some college	0.259	0.313	0.033
College graduate	0.361	0.325	0.041
Region (vs. South)			
East	0.253	0.289	0.030
Midwest	0.099	0.265	0.012
West	0.169	0.284	0.019
Political affiliation (vs. Republican)			
Independent	0.389	0.271	0.045
Democrat	0.030	0.239	0.004
Religiosity			
Literally interpret Bible	-0.446	0.275	-0.052

(Table continues)

Variables	B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta
Church Attendance (vs. more than weekly)			
Never attend	1.291 *	0.340	0.149
Less than monthly	1.086 *	0.264	0.146
Less than weekly	0.414	0.312	0.042
Religious Tradition (vs. Evangelical)			
Catholic vs. Evangelical	0.646 *	0.289	0.076
Blk Protestant vs. Evangelical	-0.484	0.588	-0.028
Mainline vs. Evangelical	0.270	0.273	0.033
None vs. Evangelical	-0.498	0.383	-0.047
Constant	5.867 *	0.705	-
R ²	0.132		
*p<.05			

statistically less likely to engage in this form of consumption, even when controlling for New Age beliefs. I also find respondents with no religious tradition more likely to engage in New Age behavior in the first set of models.

In the second set of models, consumption is measured in the form of visiting a New Age bookstore. I find males less likely to participate, even when controlling for New Age beliefs. In addition, the education variables behave similarly to the previous model. This set of models also indicated greater New Age participation by respondents with no religious tradition when compared to Evangelical Protestants. Another religious finding from this model set indicates that literal interpretation of the Bible negatively influences the likelihood of participation. In the third set of models, find the effect for only one education category. Respondents with less than a high school education are less likely to purchase from a New Age bookstore. This model indicates that whites are less likely to purchase from a New Age bookstore even when controlling for New Age

beliefs. Religious findings mimic the previous models, with the none category being more likely to participate. In the final model, I examine all forms of New Age consumption, and find that whites are again less likely to participate, as are respondents with lower levels of education. I also find similar results when comparing the none category to Evangelicals. As predicted, the support for New Age beliefs positively influences whether a respondent will engage in New Age consumption in each model. The only initial hypotheses that received support in this model concerned persons with no religion and persons with support for New Age beliefs.

In the second set of models, New Age consumption is measured in the form of visiting a New Age store. The effect of education is positive in this model also, but respondents indicating “no religion” were not statistically more likely to visit a store. Males, whites, and respondents who interpreted the Bible literally were less likely to visit a New Age store. Respondents age 18-29 were more likely to engage in this consumption measure, as were political independents compared to Republicans. When controlling for acceptance of New Age beliefs, several effects are still significant. Males were almost forty percent less likely to visit a New Age store. Independents were still more likely when compared to Republicans, and persons with no religion as compared to Evangelicals. The effect of education is also still positive. Literal interpretation of the Bible also negatively influences New Age participation in this model. As with the previous consumption model, support for New Age beliefs is still a relatively strong positive effect, with each unit increase in the scale resulting in almost 25% greater likelihood of visiting a store.

The third model represents the true New Age consumption measure: making a purchase at a New Age store. This model again predicts age 18-29 and no religion respondents to be more likely New Age consumers. Education is again a positive effect, while males and whites are less likely to purchase. When controlling for acceptance of New Age beliefs, the age and male effects become statistically insignificant. Education remains a positive indicator of New Age consumption. Even when controlling for acceptance of New Age beliefs, whites are less likely than others to make a New Age purchase. The acceptance of New Age beliefs variable produces a positive effect similar to the previous models.

The final model represents whether a respondent engaged in any of the previous consumption measures. In the demographic model, the effect of being male is negative and statistically significant in predicting New Age consumption. Again, independents are statistically more likely than Republican to engage in New Age consumption. Education remains a positive effect, as does no religion. When controlling for New Age beliefs, being male is no longer significant. Whites are still less likely to engage in New Age consumption, but the effect of education remains positive. Support for New Age beliefs yields an effect similar to the previous models.

Each model produces slightly different results, but several trends can be clearly seen. From the combination of these models, a profile of the New Age participant can be presented. Results of the statistical analysis are reported in Table 5 on the following pages.

Table 5
Regression for New Age Consumption Measures on Selected Predictors (Odds ratio reported)

Variables	Researched		Visited		Purchased		Consumed	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Demographics								
Age	1.001	1.013	0.987	0.993	0.986	0.992	0.993	1.001
Male	0.499 *	0.789	0.417 *	0.583 *	0.616	0.936	0.566 *	0.832
White vs. others	0.620	0.749	0.449 *	0.524	0.308 *	0.326 *	0.471 *	0.549 *
Never Married vs. others	1.360	1.137	1.657	1.588	1.588	1.364	1.061	0.932
Income (vs. over \$150,000)								
\$20,000 or less	1.985	1.958	0.423	0.455	0.621	0.694	1.409	1.426
\$20,001-\$50,000	1.753	1.538	0.520	0.436	0.744	0.669	0.985	0.869
\$50,001-\$100,000	1.169	1.364	0.479	0.552	0.498	0.618	0.727	0.817
\$100,000-\$150,000	1.124	0.934	0.498	0.446	0.232 *	0.181 *	0.642	0.596
Education (vs. postgraduate)								
Less than high school	0.301 *	0.177 *	0.167 *	0.054 *	0.413	0.180 *	0.320 *	0.177 *
High school graduate	0.239 *	0.219 *	0.414 *	0.364 *	0.701	0.663	0.292 *	0.263 *
Technical school	0.692	0.551	0.684	0.415	1.009	0.686	0.769	0.582
Some college	0.553 *	0.505 *	0.467 *	0.375 *	0.581	0.538	0.596 *	0.504 *
College graduate	0.594	0.524 *	0.957	0.735	1.111	0.873	0.763	0.638
Region (vs. South)								
East	0.413 *	0.368 *	1.009	1.039	0.940	1.028	0.626	0.608
Midwest	0.806	0.765	1.440	1.514	1.056	1.146	1.088	1.052
West	0.062	1.042	1.078	1.142	1.465	1.632	1.069	1.066

(Tables continues)

Variables	Researched		Visited		Purchased		Consumed	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Political affiliation (vs. Republican)								
Independent	1.514	1.496	2.221 *	1.895	1.863	1.716	1.735 *	1.617
Democrat	1.490	1.545	1.480	1.329	1.292	1.187	1.490	1.499
Religiosity								
Literally interpret Bible	0.805	0.934	0.231 *	0.217 *	0.430	0.452	0.749	0.573
Church Attendance (vs. more than weekly)								
Never attend	1.790	1.103	1.069	0.851	0.962	0.633	1.295	0.829
Less than monthly	1.140	0.848	1.618	1.520	1.333	1.129	1.225	0.997
Less than weekly	0.800	0.883	0.942	1.098	0.865	1.019	0.859	0.879
Religious Tradition (vs. Evangelical)								
Catholic	1.152	1.026	1.074	0.880	1.195	1.055	1.068	0.893
Black Protestant	0.788	1.085	0.636	0.737	0.716	0.778	0.511	0.657
Mainline	0.963	0.805	1.138	0.960	1.517	1.402	0.994	0.923
None	1.942 *	2.545 *	2.541 *	3.006 *	3.001 *	3.800 *	1.970 *	2.585 *
Support for New Age Beliefs								
		1.269 *		1.257 *		1.260 *		1.244 *
Constant	0.204	0.032	0.610	0.142	0.374	0.074	0.695	0.160
Pseudo R ²	0.15	0.26	0.19	0.28	0.16	0.26	0.13	0.24

*p<.05

CHAPTER THREE

Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion

Several trends from previous literature are supported in this analysis of the New Age. First of all, males are less likely than females to be New Age participants across several of the models. As expected, acceptance and support for New Age beliefs significantly affected all consumption measures. Males were also statistically less likely to support New Age beliefs. When the effect of being male disappears in some of the models when support for New Age beliefs is added, it is because males are less likely to support New Age beliefs in general. The same can be said for any of the other predictor variables when their net effect disappears after controlling for acceptance of New Age beliefs.

Some of the results from this study are also contrary to suggestions of previous literature. The education variable is significant and positive in every model presented. This is somewhat counterintuitive, as the white variable is significant and negative. Albanese (1993) suggested that New Age participation might be greater among the “undercurrents” of American society, while Mears and Ellison (2001) made similar predictions. Indeed, Wuthnow (1978) also predicted that experimentation in Eastern religions would be greater among persons with lower levels of attachment to conventional society. These ideas receive some support, but are contradicted by the effect of education. Also as predicted, people with low ties to traditional religious

denominations are more likely to participate in the New Age. The effects of church attendance and literal interpretation of the Bible are less clear. Church attendance appears to have no significant effect on New Age participation, while literal interpretation of the Bible is significant only in the model analyzing visitation to New Age stores. There are also no significant effects when comparing other Protestant groups to Evangelicals.

Several interesting explanations arise from this study. First of all, Wuthnow (1978) explains that greater levels of education lead to greater exposure to new ideas such as New Age beliefs and New Age materials. I find in this study that persons with lower levels of education are less likely to engage in the consumption measures than their counterparts with greater than a bachelor's degree. This aspect of the New Age movement is supported by elite theory. Considering the nature of the New Age movement itself, however, there is reason to believe that this explanation would be inadequate on its own.

Deprivation theory as summarized by Albanese suggests that detachment from the mainstream is a predictor of participation in alternative movements. I confirm that in several instances with this study, as respondents who identified as having no religious tradition consistently engage in greater levels of consumption. This would also include persons who were minorities but also people with lower levels of income, greater job and family related stress, and general life instability (Mears and Ellison 2000; Wuthnow 1978). My results here are mixed with this regard, and again, I find that just the ideas of deprivation are inadequate. I find New Age consumption lower among whites and males in several instances, and my income measures do not indicate greater consumption at

lower levels of income. There is also evidence to suggest that deprivation is also likely to lead to experimentation in things such as the New Age movement or unconventional things such as astrology (Wuthnow 1978). My results indicate that it is greater levels of education that is related to greater consumption.

As with much previous research on the New Age, the results here are mixed, but are the beginning steps in answering lingering questions about exactly who the modern New Age participant is. Future research would be wise to follow where this study leaves off and move toward analyzing the New Age movement quantitatively, as this allows for actual measurement of the movement as opposed to a relatively diverse set of New Age and paranormal beliefs. The results of this study lend support to several notions from previous literature, but also provide results contrary to previous studies. Regardless of these facts, the results here suggest a clear direction for future research on the New Age. It is likely that more can be learned from measuring the New Age quantitatively because of the unique nature of the movement than from trying to predict beliefs. Researching the beliefs was one of my goals for this study, but in conclusion, the movement can be best studied when the respondents define the movement themselves, as I have presented in the consumption parts of this analysis

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