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The "New Age Movement": A Case Study

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Abstract

THE NEW AGE PATTERN: A CASE STUDY

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Within the last two decades, the United States has witnessed the growth of a phenomenon which the media has referred to as "The New Age Movement". This multi-faceted social pattern includes astrology, meditation, mysticism, and eastern philosophies, the popularity of which have increased significantly in the 1980's. This thesis is a case study of the "New Age Movement". First, I develop a descriptive model of the key ideological themes and organizational structures of this social pattern. Subsequently, I organize this model in terms of several sociologically based theoretical frameworks including activity fads, social movements, and sociocultural shifts, in order to provide the most appropriate classification system. The results suggest that a synthetic model which utilizes elements of each of the individual perspectives is the most useful framework for analyzing a social pattern that is as broad and complex as "The New Age Movement".

CHAPTER I

During the height of the social unrest in the 1960's, as interest in drug experimentation, eastern religions, and altered states of consciousness (ASC) increased, a group of people began to coalesce around the belief that they were witnessing the dawning of a new age. Astrology, which some people designate as the oldest "science" in the world, contributed quite a bit to this belief system. Astrologers have predicted for thousands of years the development of history in ages which are characterized by the signs of the zodiac. Plotting the movement of the planets reveals patterns in the sky that can be associated with important stages of human history. According to astrologers, the new age, or "Age of Aquarius" began when the planets formed the harmonic convergence in 1988. It is said to be an age marked by individual "intuitive growth" and "expression" that will lead ultimately to a "social" or "community consciousness".

As these people began to coalesce-hippies, mystics, psychics, astrologers-they structured their behavior around one common belief: personal intuitive development will lead to individual transcendence, and as more people transcend our social structures will have to be transformed or modified to meet the needs of the newly transcended population. However, the emphasis is on the personal level because they believe

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that social change can only occur after personal change has occurred. This movement toward introspection and intuitive development has been called the "New Age Movement". Although it has been in the public eye and acknowledged by newspaper journalists, religious leaders, and sociologists, little is known about how New Age advocates have come to interpret their reality and the extent to which they have structured their lives around this ideology. The media has referred to it as a passing fad of affluent California communities. Some sociologists believe that with its emphasis on individual expression and immediate experience that it is a secular cult and therefore a movement away from the traditional religions. Still others point out that since the ultimate goal of the New Age advocacy is social change, it must be an attempt to alter social structural arrangements. Consequently, they refer to it as a social movement. If this is true, then we may ask what <u>are</u> the objectives of the movement and what kinds of strategies is it employing to achieve them? For my purposes, however, I will refer to it as the New Age "pattern" so as to not imply that it is a (social) movement.

The goals of my research are to address this New Age pattern as a whole system and to define the characteristics of the whole system that distinguishes it from others, and, determine how these characteristics are manifested in the parts. "This holistic quality is not only the manifold interrelations of the parts that appear in the original but

also the unique characteristics, distinctive qualities and patterns that differentiate this system from others" (Diesing, 1971). The primary purpose of this study is to collect various kinds of data on this New Age pattern in order to describe its fundamental characteristics, and then to theoretically organize these data with various sociological frameworks in order to classify it in sociological terms.

I have chosen a qualitative approach to conduct my investigation. A case study approach is the most appropriate method for addressing a social system as broad and complex as the New Age pattern. This particular method utilizes various field research techniques such as participant observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and document analysis.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the sociological literature in collective behavior and social movements reveals little research that focuses on this social pattern. There is very little information concerning the ideology or organizational structure of the New Age pattern within the social scientific community (Babby, 1990; Hannigan,1988; Melton,1989; Neity,1990). There are, however, a few sources of literature outside of sociology that describe the "New Age Movement". Therefore, an exploratory research strategy that utilizes this

literature is the most practical approach at this point.

After I have identified the dominant ideological themes and social structural arrangements that characterize the New Age pattern, I will apply several sociological perspectives in an effort to classify this social phenomenon. Since the New Age designates a collectivity of individuals whose behavior is structured by a common ideology, a couple of theories from collective behavior research may be applicable. An analysis of this phenomena in terms of either "activity fads"(Miller,1985) or "social movements" may prove to be appropriate. A third theoretical perspective lies outside the collective behavior and social movement school and it emphasizes cultural or societal shifts. Both Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigm shifts in the scientific community and Pitirim Sorokin's theory of sociocultural change will be applied in this framework.

Activity fad

An activity fad is usually short lived and outmoded by another activity before it becomes serviceable (made more accessible to the public). Some activity fads are so rebellious that they will never become serviceable. However, activity fads that are more socially acceptable like bridging (jumping off of high bridges with a bunji cord tied around your feet) may change quite a bit or fade altogether before sport and/or hobby stores can provide the necessary media

coverage and paraphernalia.

An activity fad usually develops through four stages that are not distinct, but flow from one stage into the next (Miller, 1985). During the **latent period**, the activity is known to a limited and often small group of people. Soon, however, the first group either introduces the activity to another group or other groups discover the activity themselves. This is considered the **breakout period.** As the activity catches on and spreads, the media is usually the first to label the activity as a fad and even more people become exposed to the activity. This is referred to as the **peaking period**. However, the speed with which the activity spreads will determine how long lived it may be. If the activity spreads quickly, it reaches a "saturation point" and at that point it ceases to be a novelty. The **decline period** is when the activity fades rapidly and disappears. Neil Smelser regards activity fads as similar to fashion in the sense that they are both a means of expression and are subject to the rapid changes of what is "in" and "out" in the social world. He also adds that as fads and fashions disappear, evidence of their prior novelty is hard to find (Smelser,1962).

Social Movement

Another important theoretical perspective in the area of collective behavior research is the analysis of social

movements. "A social movement is a collectivity acting with some continuity to promote or resist change in the society or group of which it is a part"(Turner & Killian,1987). Most theorists in social movements would agree on this definition. However, differences of opinion arise as to where the focus of investigation should be.

An influential theorist who has investigated social movements in America is William Gamson. In his book, <u>The Strategy of Social Protest</u> (1975), he illustrates how the pluralistic nature of the American, democratic, political system is the root of most, if not all, social conflict. The stresses and strains of a pluralistic society may lead to one of three kinds of social movements. The class-oriented movement organizes itself around some specific interest of its class adherents. The status-oriented movement is concerned with the enhancement or maintenance of a group's prestige. The third type of movement is the expressive movement. It is characterized by the pursuit of goals that are unrelated to the group's original discontent. In all three cases, the character of the public and the character of the ideologies provide the major explanations of the movements content.

Anthony Oberschall (1973) also places a strong emphasis on the interests and goals of a movement's adherents but he also is concerned with the strategic problems associated with social conflict and mobilization. He outlines six components of conflict that he suggests should be investigated: The types

of conflict; the causes of conflict; how conflict groups originate; the confrontation of conflict groups; conflict resolution; and reform versus revolution. In sum, Oberschall places a lot of emphasis on the structural components of societies that produce conflict, as does Gamson. However, Oberschall places more emphasis on how these components influence the strategies for social action within a conflict group.

Neil Smelser (1963) also identifies six important components of a social movement in his Value-Added approach: structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of a generalized belief, precipitating factors, mobilization of participants for action, and the operation of social control. The main difference in Smelsers' approach is that "every stage is a necessary condition for the appropriate and effective addition of value into the next." The success or failure of conflict groups is predetermined by the combination of every necessary but not sufficient condition. The logic is that the latter stages cannot be executed properly unless the former stages have occurred normally. This represents Smelser's attempt to account for the dynamic nature of social movements. Obstacles, at any stage, may arise which could potentially thwart the progress of a conflict group. When this happens, the group may have to back up and modify their ideology and/or strategy in order to avoid the same obstacles. As the value-added process moves forward, it narrows

progressively the range of possible outcomes for the conflict group.

The theoretical approaches up until now have primarily focused on the origins and development of conflict groups into social movements within a particular social system. What has been ignored for the most part has been the organizational structure within a social movement and how it works. An analysis of social movement organizations (SMO's) may help us understand why some social movements are more successful than others.

Mayer Zald and John McCarthy (1979) have contributed a useful theoretical perspective, known as "resource mobilization", that focuses on the organizational structure of social movements. The main premise behind the resource mobilization model is that "people's shared grievances, interests, and aspirations are less problematic than their capacity to act on them collectively." Such a perspective addresses the "costs and benefits selectively meted out to potential constituents, contingent upon whether or not they contribute to collective action." Therefore, research within the resource mobilization perspective focuses on how organizers bring together constituents with common interests by appealing to their sense of solidarity and principles, and develop opportunities and strategies for collective action.

The model is a structural one that is concerned with how social movement organizations (SMO's) gather resources, deploy

them, and place limits on the use of these resources. The model is broken down into four parts which have many components. The first part addresses how SMO's mobilize resources that consist of tangible goods like money and space, as well as intangible goods which are usually comprised of people (constituents). The second part addresses the constraints on these resources. Here the effects of values, past experiences, reference groups, expectations, and relations with other target groups are examined. The third part examines the SMO structure and internal environment. The governing body is either centralized or decentralized; the movement adherents interact through associations or communally; the membership is either inclusive or exclusive; the SMO is either isolated from or integrated with the social system; And the nucleus of the SMO is either a leader or a group. The fourth part of the model focuses on the expectations about potential targets. This part addresses the following questions: What opportunities are available to the movement? What kind of social control measures will be taken? And what kind of an effect is the movement having on the general population?

In sum, the value-added approach seems more appropriate for examining and defining a social movement in relation to broader structural factors, and the resource mobilization model is more appropriate for examining the organizational structure within social movement and determining or predicting

its fate.

The area of social movement research that seems to apply best to the New Age pattern is the resource mobilization perspective. The application of this perspective would provide us with not only a description of how this particular social system is organized but it may also help us to understand and predict its impact on the society as a whole. Could this group of people actually succeed in altering the structural arrangement of our society? Or will it be coopted and rendered ineffective as a source of fundamental social change? Or will it simply fade away and become forgotten like so many other unsuccessful conflict groups.

Sociocultural Shifts

A third theoretical perspective that may prove to be applicable is the concept of cultural or societal paradigm shifts. The concept of paradigms was introduced by Thomas Kuhn in his book <u>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</u> (1970). Kuhn described two types of paradigms. One is smaller and is determined by the **exemplars** of a particular scientific community. He refers to the larger one as a "disciplinary matrix" or a "constellation of group commitments" and it encompasses the former paradigm but also includes: **symbolic generalizations** that allow you to see the nature of your scientific problems in a certain way; **faith** that a scientist has in the symbolic generalizations and

exemplars that constitute the body of knowledge in that scientific community; and **values** that determine, not only how problems are to be prioritized in a particular scientific community, but also the predictive ability of the theories that are to be utilized. According to Kuhn, when a particular component of the "disciplinary matrix" is called into question, the matrix itself can shift, which in turn, can cause a shift in the world view.

It is possible that the New Age pattern signals something akin to Kuhn's "paradigm shift". If a new paradigm is supplanting the old one, then we should expect the New Age pattern and similar phenomena to become more numerous, and other social systems that have evolved from the old paradigm (like the scientifically based human sciences) to fade away.

One more theoretical perspective that may prove to be useful within this third framework is the system proposed by Pitirim Sorokin. In his Book, <u>Social and Cultural Dynamics</u> (1957), Sorokin introduces his theory of sociocultural change. According to Sorokin, any sociocultural system is subject to change, and the roots of the change are within the system itself and is not due to any external forces. As a result, he refers to this theory as the theory of "immanent change". Sorokin maintains that any sociocultural system changes because it is a "going concern". It is made up of living organisms who change and effect the course of the social system of which they are a part. Furthermore, any

sociocultural system is made up of many different subsystems that are interrelated and whose sum make up the whole system. Any change in one of the subsystems will affect, not only all of the other subsystems, but the system as a whole as well.

Sorokin further suggests that sociocultural change over time is cyclical. The dominant sociocultural patterns throughout history have either been the "sensate", pertaining to the senses, or "ideational" which is considered to be supersensory or superrational. A third pattern becomes dominant when one of the former dominant patterns is in decline and the other is emerging. This pattern which is called "idealistic" incorporates the view that reality is partly sensory and partly supersensory. Sorokin describes historical change as a dialectical movement from one dominant cultural pattern to the other. He also suggests that this cycle has occurred four times since the beginning of Greco-Roman history. The medieval ages are characterized as a period when the "ideational" cultural pattern was dominant. During this period, the supersensory, God and the supernatural were the prevalent concepts within the civilized world. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries however, the "ideational" pattern was on the decline and the "idealistic" cultural pattern became dominant. By the sixteenth century the "sensate" became the dominant cultural pattern. Science, rationality and the "age of enlightenment" began to shape and mold the world. This pattern remained dominant until the

early twentieth century.

   In another book, <u>The Crisis of Our Age</u> (1941), Sorokin describes how our "sensate" culture is currently in decline. The power of science and rationality is diminishing and is giving way to a more "idealistic" sociocultural pattern. This decline is experienced in all of the subsystems ranging from contractualism and personal relationships, ethics and law, politics and government, religion, and the arts.

   At the end of this study, the data will be organized to fit each of these three frameworks in an attempt to find the most appropriate classification system for the New Age pattern.

METHODS

   Since the New Age pattern is a multifaceted social phenomenon, a case study is the most appropriate methodological strategy. The techniques available to the researcher in a case study include participant observation, structured and unstructured interviews, written or documentary evidence, and any other data that may give us some insight into how New Age advocates experience, interpret, and structure their lives (McCall and Simmons, 1969). Dominant and/or recurrent themes are organized into a descriptive model that identify the major characteristics of the New Age pattern. The available data include newsletters,

journals(magazines), catalogs, documents, publications[1], as well as, interviews, work shops, classes[2], audio and video tapes[3]. As these data were gathered, common themes emerged, themes that constitute integral parts of the whole. A thorough and complex descriptive model of these social patterns was then constructed. The model addresses the following questions: What is the ideology of the "New Age" collectivity and where did it originate? In what ways is the behavior of these people influenced by this ideology? How does this collectivity organize various resources? As more and more data are incorporated into the model, its contextual validity increases. The final model serves as an analytical description of a complex social system. An analytic description is necessary because the people who are involved in the social system are often unaware of the full dimensions and complexity of the social pattern of which they are a part. Therefore, the researcher must be prepared to reformulate the model as more data are included (Burgess,1984). It is important to point out that my descriptive model of the New Age ideology is representative of the national pattern. The data that I collected, publications and other literary sources, are available on the national level, and they reflect a common ideology. However, it would be virtually impossible to address in this study the complex organizational structure of this social pattern on the national level. As a consequence, the organizational structure of this social

pattern was investigated on the local level.[4] The existence of several New Age networking organizations within the Richmond Metropolitan area allowed me to conduct several structured and unstructured interviews with the heads of these organizations . I have been interested in their goals and the strategies that they are using to achieve them, but more specifically, their allocation and distribution of various kinds of resources. I have also been involved in participant observation at these various establishments and witnessed first hand how these people disseminate the New Age ideology.

CHAPTER II

The New Age Ideology

One of the primary goals of participant observation
research is to ascertain how a group of people come to know
and experience a shared reality. This conceptual framework
of reality is known as a belief system and it allows the
people who adopt it to establish a shared reality, to develop
similar values, and to structure their lives around common
goals. An ideology, on the other hand, is a belief system
associated with specific economic and/or political interests.
Groups which share a common ideology are concerned with
enhancing their economic or political interests and they
structure their lives around those common goals. A belief
system is usually larger and it encompasses religious or
secular interests as well.

One source of data on the New Age ideology are the
various New Age bookstores found in many U.S. communities.
Each bookstore typically has hundreds of publications,
journals(magazines), newsletters, fliers, audio/video tapes,
as well as, weekly and monthly classes, workshops, and
seminars that meet in rooms that are provided by most
bookstores. Every resource that is available is, in some way,
associated with the New Age ideology which stresses individual

intuitive growth and transcendence with the ultimate hope of social transformation. In the course of my research I have identified four major themes that constitute this general ideology. The first three are concerned with individual transcendence: the exploration of **psychotechniques**, the awareness of **extra-sensory faculties**, and the notion that as these are utilized one can **create one's reality**. This is where individual transcendence begins. The fourth theme is concerned with a "higher awareness" that the individual experiences and with this "higher awareness" comes a "higher" order of **values**. I will now elaborate on each of these themes.

Psychotechniques

Most of the resources that are available in New Age bookstores are concerned with the intuitive development of an individual. Most individuals involved in the New Age have sought intuitive development during a "personal crisis" of some kind when other, more traditional, modes of assigning meaning to the situation have failed. This intuitive development has been more informally referred to as the search for "higher self". There are many different techniques available to the individual for their intuitive development. In fact, people are inventing or discovering new ones everyday. These techniques are more commonly known as **"psychotechniques"** and they are simply different ways of

altering one's state of consciousness.

Many of the psychotechniques are borrowed from the far east. They include various styles of meditation, Zen (Sekida,1975), Tibetan (Rahula,1974), Buddhist (Sole-Leris,1986), Christian (Rama,1983), Transcendental (Denniston,1975), Kabbalist (Richman,1989), Kundalini (Colton,1978). These techniques allow the individual to either clear the mind of all thoughts or focus on one particular object, thought, or sound.

Psychotechniques also include many styles of mind/body work such as T'ai chi Ch'uan (Klein,1984), an ancient Chinese system of physical exercise based on the principles of effortless breathing, rhythmic movement, and weight equilibrium. Aikido (Yamada,1969) is an ancient Japanese martial art that emphasizes complete body control and "union with the universal life force". Kum Nye (Tulka,1978) is a Japanese method of deep and painful massage. Yoga (Taimni,1986), of which there are many forms, generally requires concentration on a specific point while maintaining a certain posture and breathing discipline. Autogenic training (Kravette,1979) is a European technique of self-relaxation where the individual self-suggests that the body is becoming relaxed. Other techniques focus primarily on breathing such as rebirthing (Leonard,1983; Orr and Ray, 1977) where an individual is guided by an instructor to breath deeply while maintaining an uncomfortable body position. When

the individual becomes more relaxed he is verbally guided back in his life in order to relive bad experiences during this relaxed and subdued state. Self hypnosis (Morris,1974) is also performed by a breathing discipline and under this state an individual is able to utilize other faculties of the mind, more commonly known as ESP (extra-sensory perception).

Some techniques are borrowed from primitive societies like Sufi stories (Shaw,1967), which are tales that have been told by Sufi masters for centuries. These stories are said to increase perception "whereby through the effort of will, man can originate new faculties". Dervish dancing (Shaw,1967), or the "Whirling Dervishes", are a sect within the Sufis who spin around in circles in order to obtain the right state of consciousness for prayer. Shamanism (Nicholson,1987), or Earth religion, is characteristic of the native people in every continent. Shamans believe that everything that is natural on earth- plants, rocks, mountains, animals- is alive and is conscious. Shamans can go into trances and communicate with all of nature, travel on spiritual journey's, and utilize magic and psychic abilities. Magical techniques (Weinstein,1981), usually referred to as "white magic", originated in these primitive societies but have also existed in many forms in developing and modern societies.

Other techniques require the use of equipment like biofeedback machines (Stearn,1976). With the help of these

instruments, individuals can learn to control different brain waves which were previously thought to be beyond our control. Flotation or isolation tanks (Hutchison,1984) are used for sensory deprivation which allows the individual to experience many altered states of consciousness. Hallucinatory drugs (Castaneda,1971) like LSD are also used to obtain altered states of consciousness.

Many psychotechniques have been systematized and presented in seminars like est (Rhinehart,1976), which stands for the "Esalen technique" named after the Esalen Institute in Big Sur California. During this seminar, individuals are berated and broken down so that they are more receptive to a discipline which emphasizes personal responsibility and control. The Silva mind control technique (Silva,1983), developed by Jose Silva, is a 40-48 hour course that can train anyone to remember what appears to be forgotten, to control pain, to speed healing, and to abandon unusual habits among other things. Science of mind (Holmes,1988), developed by Ernest Holmes, is a similar discipline in which he details the powers of the mind and how to use them.

Some have even been developed into contemporary psychotherapies like Victor Frankl's Logotherapy (Frankl,1967), which involves a search for meaning and the use of "paradoxical intention", the direct confrontation of the source of fear. Primal Therapy (Janov,1975; 1981) attempts to summon up experiences of early childhood pain. Psychodrama

(Moreno,1969) forces an awareness of roles and role playing. The Fischer-Hoffman process (Ferguson,1980) which is similar to rebirthing, commences with a reentry into childhood followed by an intense use of imagery for reconciliation and forgiveness of one's parents for any negative experiences. And Gestalt therapy (Riet et al.,1980) makes the patient aware of subtle body language or gestures that tend to contradict their dialogue.

What is common in all of these psychotechniques is that individuals learn to experience altered states of consciousness, and as a result they become more aware of themselves and the relationship between mind and body. One particular technique is not considered better than any of the others; what is important in this first stage of intuitive development is for the individual to find the technique that works for him or her. The results are generally the same for everyone, a raised awareness. For a more complete list of the various psychotechniques that are available please refer to appendix A.

Intuitive Faculties

The second theme refers to the next stage of intuitive development. While the individual explores various degrees of consciousness he or she will begin to experience the world through **"extra-sensory faculties"**. Some of these faculties include channeling (Roman and Packer,1987), where the

individual allows an entity or spirit to possess their body in order to communicate with other living beings. Individuals who practice channeling are called "mediums" because they consider themselves to be the medium through which spiritual beings can communicate with living beings. Some of these faculties are more commonly known as extra-sensory perception or ESP (Burns, 1985) and they include clairvoyance and clairaudience. These are abilities that allow one to see and hear things happen, as they happen, from distances that exceed our normal capacities of perception. Telepathy is the ability to communicate with other living beings through the transmissions of thoughts. Precognition is simply the ability to see the future. Creative visualization (Gawain,1978) is the ability to focus one's thoughts on the task at hand to the point where total concentration is obtained and the task becomes effortless.

Systems of divination allow the individual to gain information concerning people, objects, or events by tapping into the "forces" within the psychic world. The ways in which these systems differ are in the tools and techniques that are used to tap into one common psychic world. Astrology (Sakoian and Acker,1973), the most popular system of divination, uses the rotation of the planets and how they relate to one's time and date of birth. The times, dates and positions of the planets are then calculated (or programmed into a computer) which produces a "chart" that can only be

read by a qualified astrologer. The chart can be used to choose the right soul mate, to determine the appropriate time for decisions or events, or simply to understand one's own personality. Tarot cards (Peach,1984), which are comprised of 78 symbols that represent elements of life and death such as love, prosperity, and despair, can be used for self guidance, meditation, or spiritual development. I Ching (Wing,1979) is an ancient Chinese method of divination. It involves tossing three coins 6 times. Each time you toss the coins, the results will determine how to draw each portion of a hexagram. After the coins have been tossed six times, you will have six different layers in the hexagram which in turn can be interpreted by a qualified individual. Numerology (Line,1985) provides a complete personality-lifestyle profile when you apply individual numbers to our birth names and birth dates. The numbers associated with the letters in our names will describe the attributes with which we are born. The numbers associated with our birth dates will describe things that we will learn or experience. Palmistry (Hoffman,1983) is similar to numerology in the sense that it provides a personality and lifestyle profile except the lines on one's hands are the focus of interpretation. Oracles or Rhunes (Willis,1986) originated in the ancient Germanic culture. They consist of 24-30 stones with a letter from the Germanic runic alphabet on each. They are placed in an opaque bag and the individual concentrates on the problem or question at hand

and then draws one stone from the bag and a qualified person will then interpret the answer. Graphology (Amend and Ruiz,1980) is simply the analysis and interpretation of handwriting in order to provide a personality and lifestyle profile. Dowsing and/or Pendulums (Blackburn,1983) can be used to discover objects below the surface of the earth like precious ores or liquid.

Another extra-sensory faculty is the ability to see a person's chakras and aura (Bruyere,1989). Chakras are energy centers in the human body and each individual has seven of them. Energy comes into the individual through tiny holes in the head and are filtered through these seven energy centers. Each energy center resembles a spiraling wheel and has a distinct color and intensity. Therefore, an unhealthy individual can be distinguished as one whose colors or intensity level is out of the normal range. The aura is the sum of all the energy centers and constitutes the whole physical body. If the individual is unhealthy it can usually be detected through the aura as well.

All of one's extra-sensory faculties are said to be enhanced with the use of Crystal power (Harford,1987). It is well known that crystals have tremendous energy stored in them because of their molecular structure. Individuals can allegedly utilize the energy within crystals to enhance their psychic abilities as well as assist them during the use of various psychotechniques.

As individuals learn to utilize these extra-sensory faculties, and incorporate them in their everyday lifestyle, they will experience what has been described as a kind of gestaltian shift. This is an immediate shift in perception that is often involuntary. The shift in perception is considered to be the beginning of one's transcendence: once you the process begins, one will continue to transcend, as long as the New Age lifestyle is maintained, and one will never perceive the world as before.

Creating Reality

This brings us to the third theme, the concept of individual transcendence or transformation. Once one becomes aware of one's ability to **"create reality"**, to be **"responsible"**, as it were, for the circumstances of one's existence, the existing reality will be transcended. At this stage of intuitive development the "higher self" is reached. It has been described as "waking up from a deep sleep" or an irreversible "heightened awareness". Many people have written about their "transformative journeys" -- Shirley MacLaine (1989) and Ruth Montgomery (1966) for example. Others have documented the experiences that support the notion that we create our reality. These include the meditative techniques (Kravette,1982) that allow you to become aware of and control your physiological state. Lucid dreaming (Laberge,1985; Taylor,1983) allows you to be in control of your dream world

and understand it better. Astral projection or out-of-body experiences (Crookall,1970; Melita and Osborne,1979) allow you to separate your spiritual body from your physical body during an altered state of consciousness. During such a state, your "astral" body can be projected through space, much like the cases of "near death experiences" where the temporarily deceased have seen their body on the hospital bed and on some occasions travelled to visit relatives. Higher creativity (Karagulla,1967; Harmon and Rheingold,1984) is the ability to tap those faculties in the mind that are purely creative, innovative and original. "Idiot savants" are prime examples. These individuals have an IQ score below 80, which is the standard measure of mental retardation. However, idiot savants have the ability to tap that "higher creativity" and are able to accomplish many tasks in seconds that would take your average person days to accomplish. Rebirthing, described previously, (Leonard,1983; Orr and Ray,1977) allows the individual to accept and understand the negative experiences in the past. Past life regression (McClain,1985) enables an individual to understand who they are now by exploring who they were in past lives. And the relationships (Keyes,1979) that we are involved in enable us to accept who we are, as well as the others in our lives. All of these, when experienced by the transformed individual, confirm to them, their ability to create and control their reality.

New Age Values

The fourth theme involves ideas related to the principle that as individual's transcend, so do their respective **values**. The elements of life and existence that are valued the most to the transformed individual are listed in bold type. The ways in which they pursue these values are listed after each element. The elements include **life transitions** such as birth (Ray,1986), death and dying (Kubler-Ross,1969; White,1980), near death experiences (Moody,1975; Atwater,1988), and reincarnation (Cooper,1987; Christie-Murray,1988); **spirituality** as it concerns mystics and masters (Howard,1981; Weed, 1988), native American rituals and lifestyles (Brown,1976), women (Marlow,1988; Spretnak,1982), and earth religions or shamanism (Nicholson,1987); **holistic health and healing** such as herbology (Beyerl,1984) and homeopathy (Vithoulkas,1980), the use of plants and extracts for medicinal purposes, nutrition (Berger,1987; Cousens1986), oriental and eastern medicine (Kaptchuk,1983; Lad,1984), preventive medicine (Bauman et al.,1985), and psychic healing or reiki (Wallace,1978; Ray,1988), which is a precise method of using "light energy" to restore and balance your own vital energy, physically, emotionally and mentally; **mind/body work** as it relates to movement (Feldonkrais,1977), polarity therapy (Stone,1987), massage (Hudson,1988), acupuncture and acupressure (Chung,1976; Houston,1974), chiropractic therapy (Holmquist,1985), and athletic training (Dillman,1979); **the**

planet and global concerns (Cohen,1987), earth changes (Jochmans,1980), earth spirit (Davidson,1983; Douglas,1987), ancient and current mysteries like Stonehenge, Atlantis, and UFO's (Donnelly,1971; Tompkins,1971; Gaunt,1979; Flammonde,1976); and **new lifestyles** that revolve around the relationship of humans and their environment instead of material concerns. These new lifestyles will affect our communities (McLaughlin,1985; Peck,1987), natural products (Dodd,1984), business and investment (Hills,1977), music (Watson and Drury,1989; Helene,1987), art (Prestini,1986) and science and media (Ferguson,1980). These areas, according to the New Age perspective, have been ignored and neglected by the western world. However, as more individuals transcend, and as they become more aware of the significance and relevance that these areas have for them and life itself, as well as the urgency with which they need to be addressed, the social structural arrangements will have to be modified to meet the needs of the newly transcended public.

In sum, the New Age ideology consists of four developmental stages. The first stage occurs when an individual becomes interested in personal intuitive growth. The individual begins to explore different altered states of consciousness by learning various **psychotechniques**. When the individual discovers a technique or combination of techniques that works for him or her, then s/he begins the actual intuitive development or growth.

The second stage begins when the individual becomes aware of other **mental faculties** that are at his or her disposal under these various altered states of consciousness. The individual can then explore these other faculties and learn to utilize them in his or her everyday life.

The third stage involves the experiences of a shift in the individual's perception of reality. This shift or **transcendence,** represents the final stage of the personal growth process. During this stage, individuals' recognize that they create their own reality, that they are responsible for their lives and behavior. This particular stage is characterized by a heightened awareness of one's life and potential.

The fourth stage occurs as these "transcended" individuals begin to network and coalesce around common **values.** The things that these individuals value differ significantly from the things that are traditionally valued by western culture. Whereas western culture tends to value material goods, wealth, competition and prestige, which contributes to an extreme form of individualism, the "New Agers" value things that we all have in common, that bring us together, such things as assuming responsibility for our planet, our spirituality, and our health. The New Age community believes that as more individuals become discouraged with the traditional way of life in the western world, they will look within themselves to find the answers. And, as more

individuals transcend, the structural arrangement will have to be altered to meet their needs.

However, the New Age agenda is primarily focused on enhancing awareness. It encourages individuals to seek knowledge about themselves, to become more aware of the relationship between mind, body, and spirit. And with this heightened "self awareness", comes a feeling of responsibility for actively addressing those aspects of humanity that have been historically disdained and/or ignored by western cultures.

The Organizational Structure

The next step of the analysis is to locate and describe any New Age organizations and/or groups that function to promote the New Age agenda. The primary concern in this part of the analysis is to identify and describe the organizational structure of the New Age pattern, as well as any leadership cadres and their ability to obtain and maintain organizational membership (or a constituency), money (in the form of dues and/or donations), time, and space. It is important to determine if a central organization exists within the New Age, and if one does, how it manages the acquisition and distribution of resources.

In general, the organizational structure of the New Age is highly decentralized. Each organization operates

autonomously, although an exchange of certain kinds of information takes place among some organizations. There is no central organization or New Age headquarters, regionally or nationally, which is responsible for developing strategies, acquiring and distributing resources, and mobilizing for action. There are no leadership cadres or central organization which is responsible for the promotion of the ideology and the raising of a constituency. The constituency that does exist consists of individuals who are interested in the New Age for either personal and/or business reasons. The remaining resources--money, time , and space,--are used to network people and information, in the same way that any other business would; to make available resources and information to people as part of a profit-making enterprise.

On the local level, two businesses were identified that act as networking organizations. These businesses, both of which function as bookstores, have large libraries of New Age literature which pertain to every stage of the ideology. Along with New Age literature each of these businesses also make other forms of information and resources available including; audio and video tapes, crystals, and New Age art and music. They also make available information concerning workshops, seminars and classes in the area. The function of each establishment is to provide New Age resources and to put people who are involved or interested in the New Age in touch with each other. In other words, they do not attempt to

convince or convert a constituency: they simply make these resources available to people who are interested, or otherwise, already involved in the New Age. This is evident in the fact that one does not hear or see the New Age ideology advertised. The function of advertising is to target a specific group, or the general public, and convince them that your product, or your ideas are worth their investment. One of the fundamental philosophies within the New Age is that one cannot change people, they must seek change voluntarily.

These businesses also operate autonomously. During structured and unstructured interviews, each of the owners revealed that there is no organizational "headquarters", locally or nationally. Each of the owners established their business both for personal reasons (each were involved with the New Age prior to their business endeavors), and to make a living. The original bookstore was established because the proprietor knew that a demand existed for New Age information and resources and there were no other New Age outlets in the area at the time. The business was so successful that within a couple of years the demand outgrew the limited space provided by the bookstore. Consequently, the second business was established and it now functions as more of a "center" than a bookstore. The clientele of this second bookstore consists of people from many different social groups and backgrounds all of whom share an interest in some aspect of the New Age. The money that is made from these businesses is

a considered personal income by the proprietors.   T i m e
and space resources are also influenced by the business
orientation of these networking organizations.   Both
businesses were originally bookstores but expanded to become
gathering places for people interested in the New Age. The
second bookstore saw the need for more of a New Age learning
center and meeting place. With that in mind, the business was
constructed with several small classrooms and one large class
room. But again, it is important to note that the space and
time provided is for the purpose of bringing together people
who are interested or otherwise already involved in the New
Age, and not for the purpose of building a constituency and
mobilizing for action.

On the national and international level, trade
organizations exist which also function as networks for
writers, publishers, and retailers of New Age literature.
These organizations function in the same way that the local
bookstores do by providing New Age information and resources
to people and businesses for the sole purpose of making a
profit. One such organization operating at the international
level provides these services for the United States Canada and
England. There are several other organizations which function
in the same way on the national level. However, none of them
function as a networking "headquarters". They operate
autonomously as well.

In 1980, one of the first books to describe the New Age

in its entirety was published. The book entitled, <u>The Aquarian Conspiracy,</u> by Marilyn Ferguson, was the first real attempt to address New Age pattern in all of its complexity. At the end of the book, in one of the appendixes, the author provides an extensive list of networks and organizations nationwide that are affiliated in some way with the New Age. The list includes some 41 organizations and over a dozen periodicals and resource directories.

Since <u>The Aquarian Conspiracy</u> was published in 1980, other organizations have appeared and disappeared all over the country. However, in 1988, the first <u>New Age Catalogue</u> was published by the editors of <u>Body Mind Spirit,</u> a New Age journal. This particular catalogue has been the most successful attempt to compile all the New Age information (Journals, articles, and other publications) and resources (organizations and networks) into one volume.

On both the local and national level one finds other New Age organizations that are concerned with specific stages of the New Age ideology. There are organizations that help people explore and utilize different psychotechniques like meditation, yoga, and self relaxation. Organizations that train individuals to experience and utilize the "higher" mental faculties like ESP and the various systems of divination also exist. Other New Age organizations are focused on the third stage of intuitive development, creating your own reality. These organizations typically promote

seminars, workshops, and classes and are oriented toward "self help" like est and the Silva mind control method. Others are oriented toward the twelve steps in the recovery of chemical or relationship dependencies. And finally, there are organizations that focus on promoting a "higher" awareness of the things and relationships around us. For instance, the surge of environmental awareness in the 1980's can be partially attributed to organizations like Greenpeace and Earth First. People are encouraged to cut their energy use and to recycle their bottles, aluminum, and plastics. Also, we have witnessed an increased interest in Hospice programs for the elderly and terminally ill. These programs are designed to help us understand death and dying in a much different way than we have in the past. Instead of prolonging death at any expense, Hospices simply make the dying patient as comfortable as possible and grant them their final wishes. Countless organizations and businesses can be identified that teach health maintenance through nutrition, exercise, and consumer awareness.

In sum, the organizational structure of the New Age pattern is decentralized with no apparent leadership. There is neither a leadership cadre nor any organization operating as a central headquarters, regionally or nationally. With respect to the raising of a constituency, the "New Agers" are not concerned with developing and/or maintaining any formal membership. The people who are interested in the New Age are

looked upon as either authorities on various aspects of the New Age, business people who are providing New Age products, consumers of those products, or more likely, some combination of the above. Since most of the people involved in the New Age are not formal members of organizations, in the sense of paying membership dues and/or donations, all the money that changes hands is from business transactions for goods and services rendered. The remaining resources of primary concern here is the time and space provided by these organizations. With respect to the networking organizations, the time and space is used for bringing people together to share and exchange goods, ideas, and information and not for the purposes of developing strategies and mobilizing for action. As far as the other organizations are concerned, resources are utilized to provide the goods and services which are needed for the business' survival. Although, New Age organizations are linked to one another by the local and national networking organizations, both the networking organizations and the organizations that deal with the various levels of the New Age are autonomous, and they rely on the laws of the marketplace to survive.

Classification

In this chapter I will utilize the ideological and organizational data on the New Age pattern described in the previous chapters to explore the usefulness of several theoretical frameworks for organizing these data. Within each framework, I will look at what characteristics of the New Age pattern fit and which ones do not. I conclude by determining which framework is the most useful for understanding the New Age pattern.

The first level of the analysis in this study focused on producing a descriptive model, a model that was developed from various data which reflect the values and beliefs of the people who represent the New Age collectivity. This type of analysis is consistent with Max Weber's concept of **Verstehen** in which we try to understand how a group of people experience and interpret reality by "walking in their shoes". However, by classifying this social pattern into a sociological framework, we can go beyond a descriptive account to predict the direction and ultimately the effect that this pattern will have on the social structural arrangements.

As I mentioned earlier, this group of people constitutes a collectivity because they all share a common ideology which, in turn, allows them to behave in similar ways that are

consistent with this ideology. As noted in chapter one, several sociological frameworks can be used to classify this collectivity. On the one hand, the New Age pattern may be a fad and the people who make up this collectivity may get bored or disillusioned and seek out another activity to occupy their time. On the other hand, if the adherents to the New Age ideology are successful in reaching large numbers of people, who in turn continue to spread the New Age ideology, we may be dealing with a social movement. To explore these possibilities, I will apply both an activity fad framework and a social movement perspective to the New Age pattern. A third theoretical perspective or framework that lies outside of the tradition of Collective Behavior is concerned more with broader social patterns or tendencies within societies. Thomas Kuhn's analysis of "paradigm shifts" may be the most useful framework for making sense of the New Age pattern. Finally, a fourth possible perspective which is also concerned with these larger social patterns is Pitirim Sorokin's cyclical theory of social change. Once again, my goal is to find the best and/or most accurate classification system for understanding the various dimensions and complexities of the New Age pattern. It is possible that the New Age pattern does not fit any of these sociological frameworks completely, in which case it may be necessary to employ a framework that synthesizes various perspectives.

Activity Fad

In order to classify the New Age pattern as an activity fad, we must first be able to agree upon the activity that we want to label as a fad. Is it meditating, or having your astrological chart read, or even participating in a self help seminar? The New Age pattern is made up of many different activities, some are ancient and some were devised more recently. Consequently, it may be many activities which, when lumped together, characterize a general activity, directed toward a search for self awareness or individual intuitive growth. If the New Age pattern is defined by such a general activity, it may fit within the fad framework.

Activity fads are usually replaced and/or outmoded before they are made serviceable. The New Age pattern is far from being outmoded or replaced and it has already been made serviceable to the public. In fact, there are hundreds of organizations and businesses nationwide which have invested in the current, as well as the long run demand for New Age resources and information. This pattern has already had a tremendous effect on our society; its rising popularity and strength suggest that it will be around for a while. According to the activity fad perspective, if the activity spreads quickly during the peaking period, then we can expect it to reach its "saturation point" and fade away. If the New Age pattern is an activity fad, then we could expect it to reach its "saturation point" very soon. However, as Edwin

Schur (1976) suggests in his book entitled <u>The Awareness Trap</u>, the New Age pattern is so appealing and it is so easy to incorporate it into ones life, the demand for it is likely to continue growing.

In sum, the persistence of the New Age pattern would lead us to question the applicability of the activity fad framework. The New Age pattern has withstood the test of time. The American marketplace has caught on to the rising demand of the New Age resources and information and has responded by making them more available to the public. Moreover, the increasing popularity of the New Age has fueled the growth of an entire industry that will further contribute to its persistence as a social pattern to be reckoned with in the future.

Social Movement

As I noted earlier, the primary goal of the New Age is to teach individuals to become more self aware and to develop their intuitive faculties. However, social structural transformation is a goal that they believe is also obtainable as a consequence of the success of this first goal. The growing popularity of the New Age and the religious and political reactions to it suggest the possibility that the pattern constitutes a social movement.

In order to classify the New Age pattern as a social movement, we must see if its organizational structure is

similar to that of a social movement. The resource mobilization perspective emphasis on social movement organizations (SMO's) makes it an especially useful framework for addressing this problem. By analyzing the organizations within the New Age with the resource mobilization model, we can determine whether or not this pattern resembles a social movement.

The primary concern of the resource mobilization perspective is to examine how organizers or leaders raise a constituency with common interests, raise valuable and necessary resources (money, people, and space), and create opportunities and strategies for collective action.

As noted in chapter one, the resource mobilization perspective attends to four issues. The first part focuses on how SMO's mobilize the aforementioned resources, money, people, and space. The second part addresses the accessibility of each of the resources and what kind of constraints are on each of them. The third part investigates the characteristics of the SMO itself, and the last part addresses the expectations about the potential targets and the social system as a whole.

Before applying this model to the New Age pattern, it is necessary to clarify the function of the model. The resource mobilization model analyzes the structural characteristics and operation of a SMO in order to predict the duration and impact of a social movement. It can help us determine not only the

longevity of a conflict group but, more importantly, the group's potential to reach its goals. It can also help us understand how it will affect the people and the society. Regarding the mobilization of a constituency, the resource mobilization perspective posits that a SMO will typically rely on various modes of advertising and word of mouth to reach a constituency with common beliefs and interests or convince people that "our interests are your interests". The money that is raised is usually in the form of membership dues and donations. The space for rallies and public or private gatherings is provided by members of the constituency as well as sympathetic groups and individuals who may not be directly associated with the movement itself.

The New Age organizations do not mobilize resources in the way proposed by the Resource Mobilization perspective. First of all, New Age organizations do not advertise their interests in the media and they do not try to win people over to their cause. In other words, they are not trying to raise a constituency. They are simply trying to reach one that already exists. Furthermore, the exchange of money is carried on as a business transaction. The organizations that are associated with the New Age pattern are businesses that operate to make a profit and not necessarily to alter the social structure. Organizing gatherings in the New Age community is usually undertaken for the purpose of networking businesses, and making information and resources available to

as many New Age consumers as possible. Organizing for collective action is not very common at all.

The second part of the model looks at the accessibility or constraints on resources. Whenever a conflict group emerges, groups and/or organizations that stand in opposition to the group can also emerge. These opposition groups will attempt to put constraints on the resources that the conflict groups seek. As far as New Age is concerned, the only formal opposition it has confronted involves certain Christian groups. In some religious services, as well as literature (Larson,1989), the religious (Christian) response is one of condemnation. They appeal to people's sense of the divine for guidance and enlightenment. The resources that the Christian community seek to constrain are people. However, the New Age resources and information continue to be in high demand. The persistence of a high level of demand for the New Age outside of the Christian community indicates the ineffectiveness of the religious campaign against New Age ideas and products.

Probably the most compelling evidence that the New Age pattern is not a social movement is the fact that it has no centralized governing body. There is no SMO that acts as the nucleus of the movement and there is no leader or group of leaders that guide it. All of the organizations within the New Age pattern operate autonomously except for the networking of information and business resources. The membership is inclusive. According to one New Age spokesman, "You don't

even have to know about the New Age to be a part of it...You just have to be concerned with personal growth and eternal love." The individuals who associate themselves with the New Age interact communally and in almost any major or middle sized city you will find a New Age community. And lastly, the New Age pattern is very integrated into our social system. While New Age ideas have existed throughout all of history the New Age pattern, itself, emerged in the early seventies and has been making inroads into the dominant culture ever since.

The fourth part of the model addresses the expectations about the potential targets and society as a whole. Since the New Age collectivity is not explicitly seeking or resisting change in some part of the social structure, we cannot identify any potential or specific targets. In fact, the real targets are individual consumers who are interested in the goods and services provided by the New Age advocates and not any particular group, organization, or institution. As far as the expectations about the social system as a whole, the general acceptance of this social pattern by the various institutions, except the Christian community, and the fact that it continues to thrive as an industry, indicates that the New Age pattern has successfully integrated itself into the American marketplace.

In sum, the organizational structure of the New Age pattern is not the same as that of a social movement. The structure and function of SMO's and New Age organizations are

fundamentally different. On the one hand, SMO's attempt to create a constituency, raise money and other resources like space, and then use them to mobilize for collective action. On the other hand, most New Age organizations operate as businesses in a free market system governed by the laws of supply and demand. What seems to be in demand now are alternatives to the typically "western" way of doing things.

Sociocultural Shifts

If this pattern is not just a passing fad, or a conflict group interested in changing or resisting change within the social structure, then what exactly is this collectivity all about and why now? Why is this collectivity growing and prospering now, in the 1980's and 1990's, as opposed to some other time in the past or future. Perhaps by analyzing the pattern within the third theoretical framework we can attend to some other characteristics of the New Age pattern that the former two perspectives neglected.

There are a couple of theoretical perspectives that address how cultural or societal values shift over time. One of these is Thomas Kuhn's approach which analyzes how paradigm shifts in the scientific community can cause a shift in the larger "world view". The second perspective, developed by Pitirim Sorokin over 60 years ago, proposes a cyclical theory of cultural change. I will now analyze the New Age pattern using each of these theoretical frameworks in an attempt to

understand why this pattern is growing now.

In a recent article entitled, <u>Hakomi Therapy</u> (1983), Kurtz uses Kuhn's concept of paradigms to describe and make sense of certain aspects of the New Age pattern. According to Kurtz, we are currently experiencing a "clash of paradigms" in the western culture. The old paradigm (Kuhn's disciplinary matrix) is significantly dependent on the Newtonian view of the universe and it led to a very materialistic and reductionistic "world view". In the recent past, the natural sciences, which are highly influenced by physics, have experienced a crisis due to breakthroughs in quantum physics, holography, and Einsteins Theory of Relativity. This crisis has led to the development of other paradigms which are better suited for addressing the anomalies that have been created by new technology and research. One of the more popular ones, described by Kurtz, is human centered and not "science" centered. It emphasizes subjectivity over objectivity. It is relativistic and holistic. This new paradigm has challenged the old world view and it emphasizes metaphysics and holistic values. The new paradigm is very consistent with the New Age pattern. Could the rise of the new paradigm and new "world view" be influencing the rise and popularity of the New Age pattern? Could they be one in the same? Further analysis of sociocultural shifts will help us answer these questions.

About a decade before Kuhn's analysis of Scientific

Revolutions, Pitirim Sorokin proposed a theory of cultural change. In his book <u>Social and Cultural Dynamics</u> (1957), Sorokin describes the cyclical nature of social and cultural change. Over the course of history, societies have moved through periods that are dominated by either "ideational, sensate, or idealistic" values and norms. According to Sorokin, "We are seemingly between two epochs: the dying sensate culture of our magnificent yesterday and the coming ideational culture of the creative tomorrow." Could the New Age pattern be a form of the rising "ideational" culture that Sorokin suggests will replace the declining "sensate" culture? After all, the New Age pattern may have already influenced the arts (Ferguson,1980; Helene,1987; Prestini,1986), belief systems (Steiner,1971; Gurdjieff,1975), politics (Satin,1978), relationships (Keyes,1979), and potentially institutional arrangements. Although this literature does not offer a systematic, social scientific treatment of these issues, it does provide us with some information as to the possible effect that the New Age pattern has had on these institutions. Further social scientific research in this area is required before we can draw any lasting conclusions. But it <u>is</u> possible to draw on this literature in describing the effect of the New Age pattern on various American social institutions.

New Age literature suggests that both music and art have been influenced by the spread of the New Age pattern. In

general, New Age art does not follow any of the traditional schools such as Baroque or Impressionism. Instead, artists are encouraged to be creative, original, and spontaneous. Creativity, in general, should not be restricted by any particular standards (Ferguson,1980). Visionary art is an art form that has arose from the New Age. It consists of images of shamanism and other native American cultural products (Prestini,1986). The colors used in New Age art are soft like pastels and are blended together so that they flow into each other. New Age music is also soft and ethereal . The typical instruments include string instruments like harps and acoustical guitar, and wind instruments like flutes. There is little to no percussion. The music and art is often used together to help establish a calm, tranquil atmosphere for exploring various psychotechniques (Helene,1987).

One effect of the New Age pattern has been to make already existing belief systems more available to the American public. These typically are from the far east and include Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. However, Theosophy and Gurdjieffian belief system both of which are not considered a religion, have become very popular to the New Age community. Theosophy is considered to be a "divine knowledge" or "science". It is an attempt to mesh all the religions in the world together around their commonalities. Unconditional love, brotherhood, and martyrdom are a few of the ideals that most of the world religions have in common (Steiner,1971).

This is very appealing to the New Age community because it is a unifying force and not a separating or differentiating force which are quite common within most religions. The Gurdjieffian belief system is very similar to theosophy although it does not address religion in a way similar to that of Theosophy. Instead it is mainly a philosophy of the nature of man's existence and his purpose. It could be interpreted as being very secular, however, it does make more than one reference to function of man's spirituality (Gurdjieff,1975).

New Age politics or the "third force", really stems from the social movements of the 1960's. It was at this time that people became more aware of the human condition which resulted in protests over human rights (civil rights, women's rights, gay and lesbian rights), animal rights, and environmental issues. Some of the precipitating factors that contributed to the emergence of this new form of politics include telecommunication, world war, and planetary deterioration (pollution, etc.). According to Mark Satin (1978) this was the beginning of a new form of politics that is characterized by awareness, coalition, and activism. Even in the 1980's we have witnessed the relative success of this new form of political activism.

In addition to these changes, interpersonal relationships are also being influenced by the New Age pattern. There are hundreds of books in the New Age literature concerning co-dependency, and how to love unconditionally. The most popular

of these include the many books by Ken Keyes Jr. The majority of his books deal with how to overcome or unlearn what we have previously known about interpersonal relationships. Some of the myths he exposes include: a relationship can be perfect; if something is problematic it is either your or your partner's fault; that love and sex are properly viewed as commodities. He also suggests several remedies which include: Relationships can never be perfect so accept things as they happen and work on them together. Ask for what you want and do not demand it. Give much more than you take so that there will always be a surplus of the things that each partner needs, physically and emotionally (Keyes,1979).

Kuhn's concept of paradigm shifts and Sorokin's theory of cultural change are similar in some respects. Both view perception and knowledge as being influenced by social and cultural changes. Both recognize the role of "science" in the aforementioned relationship. And both maintain that the latter half of the twentieth century will be characterized by a shift in the cultural and social "thought style". However, it should be noted that Kuhn's theory is a linear theory of change and Sorokin's is a cyclical theory.

In sum, the third theoretical framework addresses this social pattern by accounting for why it is occurring now. It is clear that the New Age pattern continues to thrive because there is a demand for it. This style of thought has been around, in one form or another, throughout history. According

to Sorokin, culture is dominated by either the sensate or ideational patterns, but not completely. Even during the peak of the sensate culture there exists an undercurrent of ideational patterns. However, during the 1980's we have witnessed more than an undercurrent of ideational patterns. The New Age pattern has become so popular and appealing to the general public that if the present trend continues, the New Age pattern may help usher in a new dominant "ideational" culture.

In sum, the three theoretical frameworks examined in this study provide us with a better understanding of the New Age pattern. Although none of these frameworks are adequate by themselves, the three, when applied together in a synthetic framework, contribute to our understanding of a social pattern that is as broad and multi-faceted as the New Age pattern. Each of these frameworks addresses a separate dimension of this social pattern and they highlight a different set of characteristics.

Chapter IV

Conclusions

Several important points emerge from the preceding analysis. First and foremost, none of the individual frameworks, are adequate for classifying the New Age pattern. Each framework highlights a particular dimension of it but fails to address its totality. Second, even though no framework captures the totality of the pattern, the most useful single framework is that of sociocultural shifts. And third, several problems concerning the nature of the New Age pattern account for these classification problems. I will now elaborate on each of these points.

The activity fad framework focuses on the first stage of the New Age pattern involving the exploration of various psychotechniques. I mentioned earlier in the study that the popularity of various psychotechniques changes very often. Some have prospered over time and others have disappeared and have been replaced by brand new ones. This is very consistent with the nature of activity fads. However, we must keep in mind that we can also address the various psychotechniques as a general activity involving the search for one's "higher self". This general activity has not fluctuated at all over the last fifteen years and its decline is not likely in the immediate future. Thus while the activity fad framework is

useful for analyzing the rise and fall of various psychotechniques, it is inadequate for addressing any of the other dimensions or the pattern as a whole.

In regard to the social movement framework, the resource mobilization perspective focuses on the organizational arrangements within this social pattern. It allows us to analyze the impact of the New Age pattern on the larger social system, as well as the cohesiveness of the pattern itself. The application of this framework calls our attention to the various networking organizations , locally and nationally, that advocate the New Age and the extent to which the New Age pattern has become integrated into our society. The New Age industry is prospering due to the high demand for New Age resources and information and the only real threat is the Christian communities campaign to discredit it. However, the majority of those interested in the New Age appear to be unaffected and they continue to consume New Age goods and services.

The application of this framework also addresses the latter stage of the New Age ideological agenda, the modification of the social structural arrangements to meet the needs of the newly "transcended" population. While the New Age pattern cannot be conceptualized as a social movement presently, there is some potential for the formation of a centralized leadership and the mobilization of additional resources for collective action in the future. However, the

current trend towards self absorption and individuality will distract from any legitimate efforts for social change. As long as this present trend continues, the only thing we can expect from the New Age pattern is the further development of the industry. Although the Resource Mobilization perspective does give us more insight into the organizational structure of the New Age pattern, as well as the New Age agenda, it also fails to address other aspects of the pattern. The third theoretical framework, that of cultural shifts, focuses on why we are witnessing the growth of the New Age pattern now. Since the New Age pattern has become an industry in the American marketplace, the success of it really reflects the attitudes and opinions of the general public. Whether or not it is in demand is no longer the question. We have determined that it is. The question now becomes why is it in demand at this point in time. Could it be the result of the decline of our western "sensate" culture? Are we in the middle of a "clash of paradigms"? Has science and technology failed to remain the dominant cultural pattern and is it now being challenged?

The application of the third theoretical framework has addressed these questions and has provided us with a possible explanation. It also appears to be the most useful framework for analyzing the New Age pattern. It succeeds in addressing more of the facets of this complex social pattern than any of the former frameworks and provides us with an explanation for

why we are witnessing the growth of the New Age pattern now. It justifies the use of "pattern" when describing the New Age because of the way it diffuses throughout society. However, it may be premature to attempt to reach any conclusions now. The study of cultural and social change must employ a longitudinal approach and this particular study is just the beginning. Subsequently, the New Age pattern merits further investigation in the coming years.

When we apply the synthetic framework and look at the various dimensions of the New Age pattern, may conclude that it is simply a group of loosely linked organizations with a common ideology whose fate is not necessarily in their own hands. How this pattern develops in the immediate future really depends on how its ideological agenda is interpreted by its advocates and opponents. If we focus on the ideological component, it could be interpreted as just another distraction (or fad) in a long list of American past-times. If this occurs, then it will probably be free to develop into virtually anything. However, if it is interpreted as a threat to the existing social order, we may see it coopted, sanctioned, or become centralized into a conflict group. Therefore, the fate of the New Age pattern is contingent upon not only the goals and strategies laid out by the ideology but the way in which the pattern is interpreted by social control agents and the general public.

The final point that I would like to address concerns two

problems associated with the emergent character of the New Age pattern. Each of the frameworks locate the pattern in different stages of its development. The activity fad framework locates the pattern in its early stages where the popularity of various psychotechniques come and go. The social movement framework directs attention to New Age organizational structure as it currently exists and allows us to speculate on the future development of the pattern given the nature of its (current) organizational structure. The sociocultural shift framework locates the pattern from its origins to the present. None of the frameworks, however, adequately address the dynamic nature of a social pattern in a social system. Each framework freezes the pattern in a particular time frame and consequently, each ignores important aspects of the pattern's past, present, and future potentials.

The second problem that I found was really a consequence of the first. Given that the New Age pattern is an emerging and evolving phenomenon, it has no definable boundaries. In order to be able to classify it in the existing frameworks, we must locate and define boundaries. However, the New Age pattern is like a cloud. It's edges, or boundaries, are fuzzy and are not distinct. It's shape and consistency is constantly changing due to external factors. With this in mind, we need to find or develop a classification system within sociology that not only takes into consideration the emergent nature of social patterns within a society, but also

addresses the fluidity of a social pattern that is as broad and complex as the New Age pattern.

Endnotes

1. <u>Massage</u> magazine,1990; <u>Meditation</u> magazine,1990; <u>Body Mind
   Spirit</u> magazine,1990; <u>Yoga Journal</u> magazine,1990; <u>NewAge
   Journal</u> magazine,1990; <u>Connecting Link</u> magazine,1990;
   <u>Shaman's Drum</u> magazine,1990; <u>Magical Blend</u> magazine,1990;
   <u>Woman Power</u> magazine,1990; <u>Clarion Call</u> magazine,1990.
   A representative sample of New Age publications cover the
   following subjects: meditation (<u>Zen Training: Methods and
   Philosophy</u>, 1975; <u>Complete</u> Meditation, 1982); rebirthing
   (<u>Rebirthing in the New Age</u>,1977; <u>Rebirthing: The Science
   of Enjoying All of Your Life</u>,1983); shamanism (<u>Shamanism:
   An Expanded View of Reality</u>, 1987; <u>Shamanism</u>,1964); ESP
   (<u>Develop Your Psychic Abilities</u>,1985); astrology (<u>The
   Astrologers Handbook</u>, 1973); crystals (<u>The Crystal Source
   Book: From Science to Metaphysics</u>,1987); astral
   projection and OOBE's (<u>The Llewellyn Practical Guide to
   Astral Projection</u>,1979; <u>Out-of-the-Body Experiences</u>,1970);
   dreamwork (<u>Lucid Dreaming</u>, 1985; <u>Dreamwork: Techniques for
   Discovering the Creative Power in Dream</u>,1983);
   reincarnation (<u>Reincarnation: A Hope of the World</u>,1987;
   <u>Reincarnation: Ancient Beliefs and Modern Medicine</u>,1988);
   spirituality (<u>The Politics of Women's Spirituality</u>,1982;
   <u>Voices of Earth and Sky</u>,1976). Two of the most current
   New Age Catalogs are <u>The New Leaf Catalog of Books for
   Growth and Change</u>,1990; and <u>The New Age Catalogue</u>,1988.
   A representative sample of New Age newsletters that
   circulate in the mid atlantic area include: <u>Sources</u>,1990;
   <u>Edgewise</u>,1989; <u>Coastal Pathways</u>,1990; <u>The Newsletter of
   The Center Bookstore and the Center For Awareness</u>,1990.

2. A representative sampling of the types of classes and
   workshops that were observed in this study include: Keys
   to Abundance; Yoga; Metaphysics 101; Imagery:
   Secrets/Healing; Metamorphosis; Jungian Venture Workshop;
   Astrology of Relationships; Rebirthing; Crystal and
   Jewelry Show; Dreamshift Workshop; Celebrating Woman
   Power; Healing/Christ Light; Lose your mind...;
   Transformation with Ritual; UFO group; Co-Dependency
   Groups; No More Shame:Compulsive Eating Group; Course in
   Miracles; Infant Massage; Way of Heart video; Clyde Ford
   Workshop.

3. A representative sample of the video tapes include: <u>Yoga
   Video Course</u>,1986; <u>The Way of T'ai Chi Ch'uan</u>,1986; <u>The
   Complete Guide to Channeling</u>,1986; <u>Crystal, Chakras, and
   Psychic Healing</u>,1987; <u>The Creative Visualization Workshop
   Video</u>,1985; <u>The Adventure of Self-Discovery</u>,1988;
   <u>Witchcraft:Yesterday and Today</u>,1990; <u>Intensifying Creative</u>

Ability,1986; Inner Workout,1988; Learning Tarot,1983.
A representative sample of two types of audio tapes
(Hemisphere Synchronization by the Monroe Institute and
Subliminal Persuasion by Potentials Unlimited) include
these topics: Focused Attention; Accelerating learning;
Stress and Tension Reduction; Sleep Enhancement; Pain
Control; Recharge and Refresh; Weight Loss; Smoking-
Dehabituation; Sports Improvement; Recuperative;
Planned Self-Evolution; Self Hypnosis; Affirmations;
Memory Improvement; Visualization.

4. The data that were used to develop an analytical
    description of the New Age organizational structure
    included several in depth, structured and unstructured
    interviews with strategic respondents in the New Age
    business community,1990. Other sources of data included
    New Age catalogs (The New Leaf Catalog of Books for Growth
    and Change,1990; The New Age Catalogue,1988); New Age
    newsletters (Sources,1990; Edgewise,1989; Coastal
    Pathways,1990; The Newsletter of The Center Bookstore and
    The Center of Awareness,1990; and New Age publications
    (The Aquarian Conspiracy,1980).

5. A representative sample of the New age music include:
    Andreas Vollenweider, Dancing With the Lion,1989; Bearns,
    R and Dexter, R., The Golden Voyage, vol. 1-4,1977-1980;
    Warner, Spirit Wind,1984; Warner, Quiet Heart,1982.

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Appendix A

I. **INDIVIDUAL TRANSCENDENCE**

Individuals seek altered states of consciousness through the exploration and utilization of **Psychotechnologies**:

1. Music

2. Biofeedback

3. Autogenic training

4. Hypnosis

5. Meditation
    -Zen
    -Tibetan
    -Transcendental
    -Christian
    -Kabbalist
    -Kundalini
    -Raja yoga
    -Trantic yoga
    -creative visualization

6. Sufi Stories

7. Dervish Dancing

8. Various Shamanistic and magical techniques

9. est (seminar)

10. Silva Mind Control

11. Dream Journal

12. Theosophy

13. Gurdjieffian Systems

14. Taoism

15. Science of Mind

16. Hatha yoga

17. Reichian

18. T'ai chi

19. Aikido

20. Rum Nye

21. Sensory overload (Drugs,LSD)

22. Sensory deprivation

23. Improvisational Theatre (Psycho-Drama)

24. Koans

25. Actualizations (seminar)

26. Arica

27. Logotherapy

28. Primal Therapy

29. Gestalt Therapy

30. Fischer-Hoffman

31. Intense physical activities
        -Athletic
        -Wilderness/Survival

32. Intense mental experience (spontaneous)
        -Religious/Mystical
        -Support group/recovery group (networks)

33. Rebirthing

I. **INDIVIDUAL TRANSCENDENCE** (con't)

While the individual explores different altered states of consciousness they become aware of other mental faculties, or capacities that enable them to experiences and come to know the world in a much different way. Some of these **Extra-Sensory Faculties** include:

1. Channeling

2. Clairvoyance/Clairaudience

3. Telepathy

4. Precognition

5. Psychokinetics

6. Chakras/Auras

7. Systems of Divination
     -Astrology
     -Tarot
     -I Ching
     -Numerology
     -Palmistry
     -Oracles/Rhunes
     -Graphology
     -Dowsing/Pendulums

8. Visualization

9. Crystal power

I.   **INDIVIDUAL TRANSCENDENCE**   (con't)

As the individual begins to utilize these other mental faculties in their everyday life experience, they come to realize that they **create their reality**, they have the ability to transcend and experience a reality that is much greater, much more meaningful, and more impressive than their previously perceived reality. Here lies the individuals transformation, like a gestaltian switch. Some of the experiences that individuals have during altered states of consciousness which persuade them that they create their own reality include:

1.   Transformative Journey's
        -Shirley MacLaine
        -Ruth Montgomery

2.   Self Help books and groups
        -Dianetics
        -Choices
        -est
3.   Meditative Techniques

4.   Dreamwork (Lucid Dreaming), Jungian Symbology

5.   Astral Projection/OOBE's

6.   Creativity (higher)

7.   Rebirthing

8.   Hypnosis

9.   Brain/Mind Technology

10. Search for Consciousness
        -Ken Wilber
        -Ken Keyes Jr.
        -Joseph Campbel

11. Pastlife regression

12. Rebirthing

13. Relationships

II.   **SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION**

As transformed individuals begin to network together, they work toward making the "New Age" ideology and resources more accessible to others who might not have access to it and/or been exposed to it. However, the "New Agers" emphasize that individuals must come to them with either curiosity or desire to entertain their ideology. This growing network of new agers have a **"higher order" of values** than your "typical" individual, and these values may one day instigate the modification of our social structural arrangements. They include:

1.   Life Transitions
        -Birth
        -Death and Dying
        -Near Death Experiences
        -Reincarnation
        -Walk-ins
        -means vs. ends

2.   Spirituality
        -Mystics and Masters
        -Spiritualism
        -Native America
        -Womens Spirituality
        -Earth Religions

3.   Holistic Health and Healing
        -Herbology
        -Nutrition
        -Homeopathy
        -Oriental and/or Eastern medicine
        -Holistic Health
        -Psychic Healing
        -Rebirthing

4.   Mind/Bodywork
        -Movement
        -Polarity Therapy
        -Massage
        -Alexander Technique
        -Acupuncture/Acupressure
        -Yoga
        -T'ai chi
        -Chiropractic Therapy
        -Athletic Training

5. The Planet
        -Planetary Visionaries (human rights, world peace, etc)
        -Global concerns (ecology, etc.)
        -Earth Changes
        -Earth Spirit
        -Ancient Mysteries
        -Current Mysteries

6. New Lifestyles
        -Communities
        -Natural Products
        -Business Investment
        -Media
        -Fiction
        -Music
        -Art
        -Science (Quantum Physics)

VITA